Plate 31. Hattie Burton House (3-34-5-211), From the East.

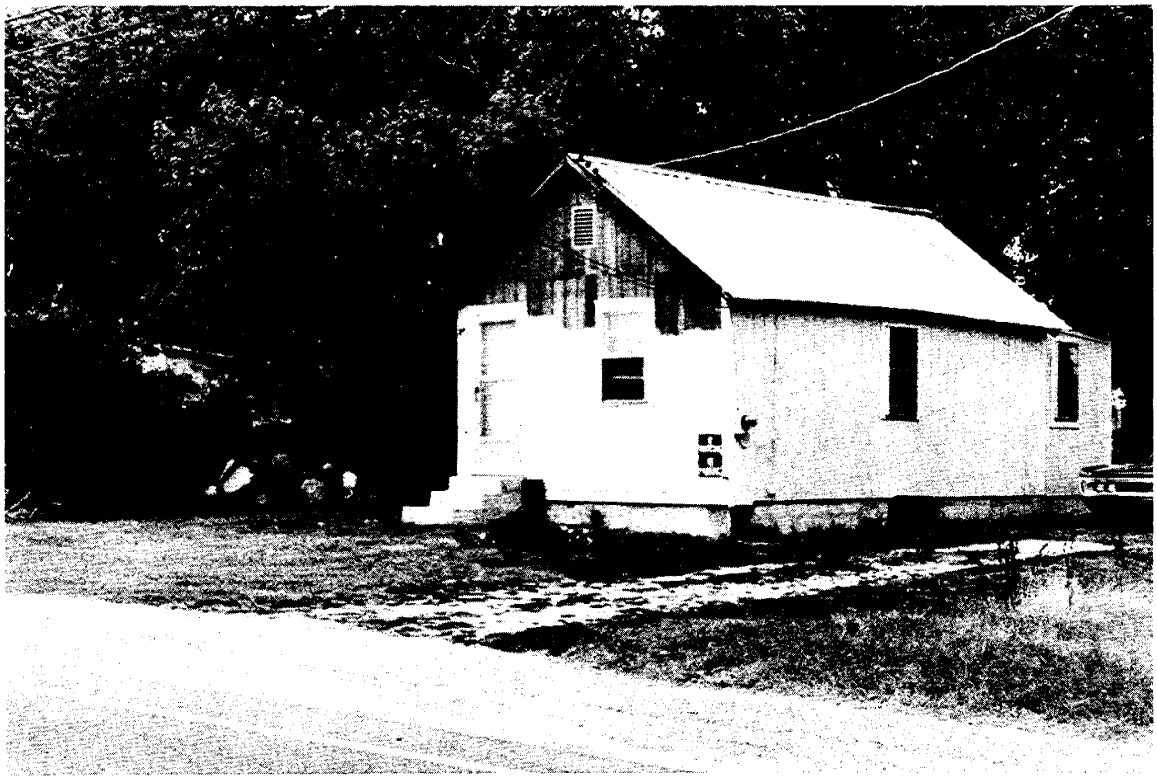


Plate 32. George W. Tunnell House (3-34-5-212), From the East.

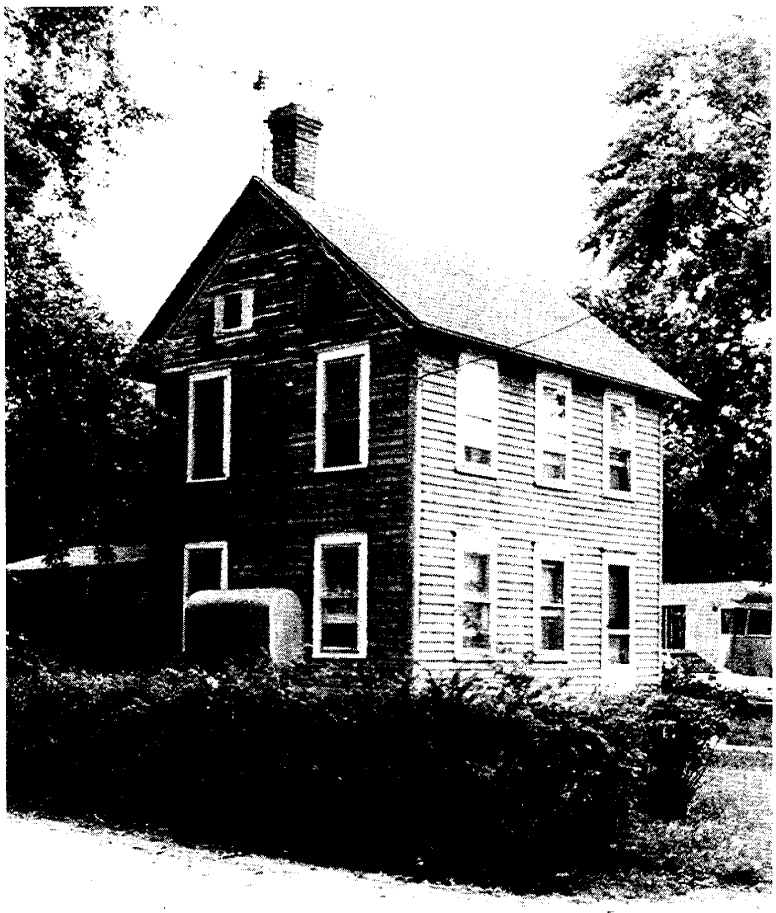


Plate 33. Paynter B. Ward House (3-34-5-214), From the North.

elevation two similar windows are arranged on each of the first and second stories, and two small square openings ventilate the attic story. On the southwestern elevation one 1/1 light sash window appears on the second story. All window and door openings are trimmed with plain surrounds and a molding atop the lintel which forms a hood mold. At the easternmost end of the rear addition a one bay shed roofed porch shelters a rear entrance, the porch roof supported on wooden posts. A small addition extends to the west of the rear addition as well. The Paynter B. Ward House has two brick chimneys, a corbeled chimney on the ridge at the easternmost end of the main block, and a plain stack at the center of the rear addition.

John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Property mid 19th c., early 20th c.
East side of Church Street (tax map #3-34-5-215)
Figure 36; Plates 34-36
CRS #S-882, S-907

Description: The John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Property contains a church and two houses. The church is a wood framed block raised on a masonry basement with a steeply pitched gabled roof. A smaller scaled wing adjoins the main block on the south, while a two staged entry tower with pyramidal roof adjoins the northeast corner of the block. Windows are modified lancets with art glass lights. They are regularly placed around the main block,wing, and second stage of the tower. Walls are covered with composite siding, the roof with composite shingles.

House 1 is situated near the corner of Church Street and Route 285. It is a one and a half story wood framed block with a gabled roof. A similar wing adjoins the main block on the north. A two bay facade dormer has been introduced on the street elevation, and the entire main block has been covered with wood shingles.

House 2 is situated east of House 1 and is a single story block with a shed roof. A central facade door is flanked by horizontal sash windows. The exterior is covered with similar wood shingles as House 1.

Unoccupied House c. 1920s
Route 9 (tax map #3-34-5-576)
Figure 36; Plate 37
CRS #S-8015

Description: The Unoccupied House is a rectangular one and a half story wood framed dwelling set on concrete block piers and covered with a gabled roof. The walls of both the main block and the one story shed roofed addition on the southeastern or rear elevation are covered with unpainted clapboards. The northwestern elevation, a gable end, faces Route 9 and forms a

Plate 34. John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Property (3-34-5-215), From the Northwest.

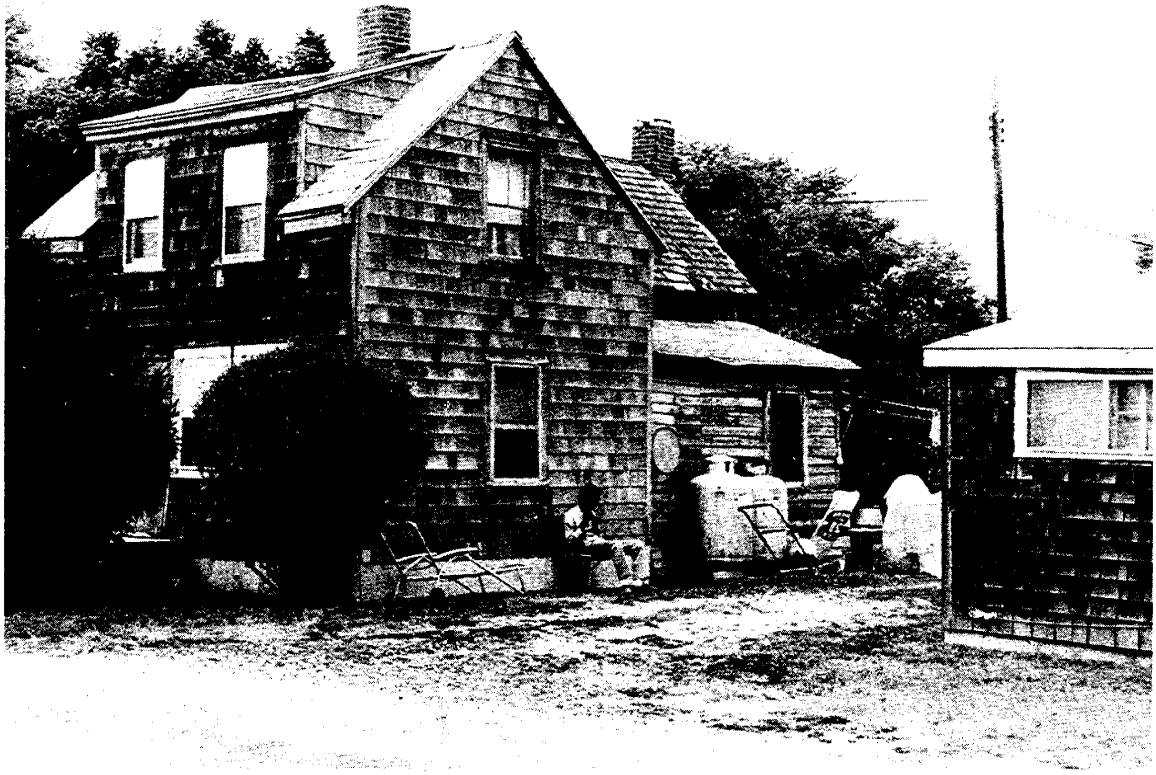


Plate 35. John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Property (3-34-5-215), House 1, From the Southeast.

Plate 36. John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Property (3-34-5-215), House 2, From the Southeast.

Plate 37. Unoccupied (owner unknown) House (3-34-5-576), From the North.

one bay facade on which a 1/1 sash window in plain surrounds is centered in the gable above an axial four light sash entrance door. Sheltering the entrance is a one story sloping porch roof supported on wooden posts and covered with corrugated metal. On the southwestern elevation of the main block are located two 4/6 light sash windows, and on the northeastern elevation is one 2/6 light sash window. No chimney is visible on the corrugated metal sheathed roof of the main block. One outbuilding stands on this property, a square wood framed outhouse with a gabled roof, the walls covered with plywood. It is located to the south of the dwelling.

Evaluation of the Belltown Historic District: According to local tradition, Belltown is named for Jacob "Jigger" Bell and dates to the 1840s (Eckman 1955:494). Bell, a free black, sold parcels of land to other free blacks with the intention of creating a new community. He also donated a lot to the community, suitable for the erection of a church.

Little is known about the early history of Belltown or its residents. Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred tax records, however, have yielded a little information about Jacob Bell. The earliest Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred tax record listing Jacob Bell, a free black, was dated 1822. He apparently had no property at that time because he was assessed only a poll tax. In 1833 tax records Bell was again listed without any property. By 1836, however, he had acquired a house and a small piece of land valued at $25. He appeared in the tax rolls in 1840, 1844, and 1848 with a house and a lot assessed each year at $25. In 1865 and 1876-1880 tax records he was listed as having a personal estate valued at $150. Bell apparently died sometime in the late 1870s because the next tax roll, dated 1880-1884, included an assessment of $100 for a house and lot owned by Jacob Bell's heirs.

Examination of Sussex County deed records revealed no land transactions with Jacob or Jigger Bell listed as a grantee or a grantor. The earliest document offering proof that Bell's land was actually located in present-day Belltown was the 1868 Atlas of the State of Delaware. As can be seen in Figure 37, Bell was shown as one of the property owners in the area now called Belltown.

Title searches for four of the properties located in the vicinity of the Bell house shown on the 1868 map were undertaken. These specific properties were chosen because of their proximity to Bell's house and because they appeared to be the earliest remaining houses in Belltown as based on architectural evidence.

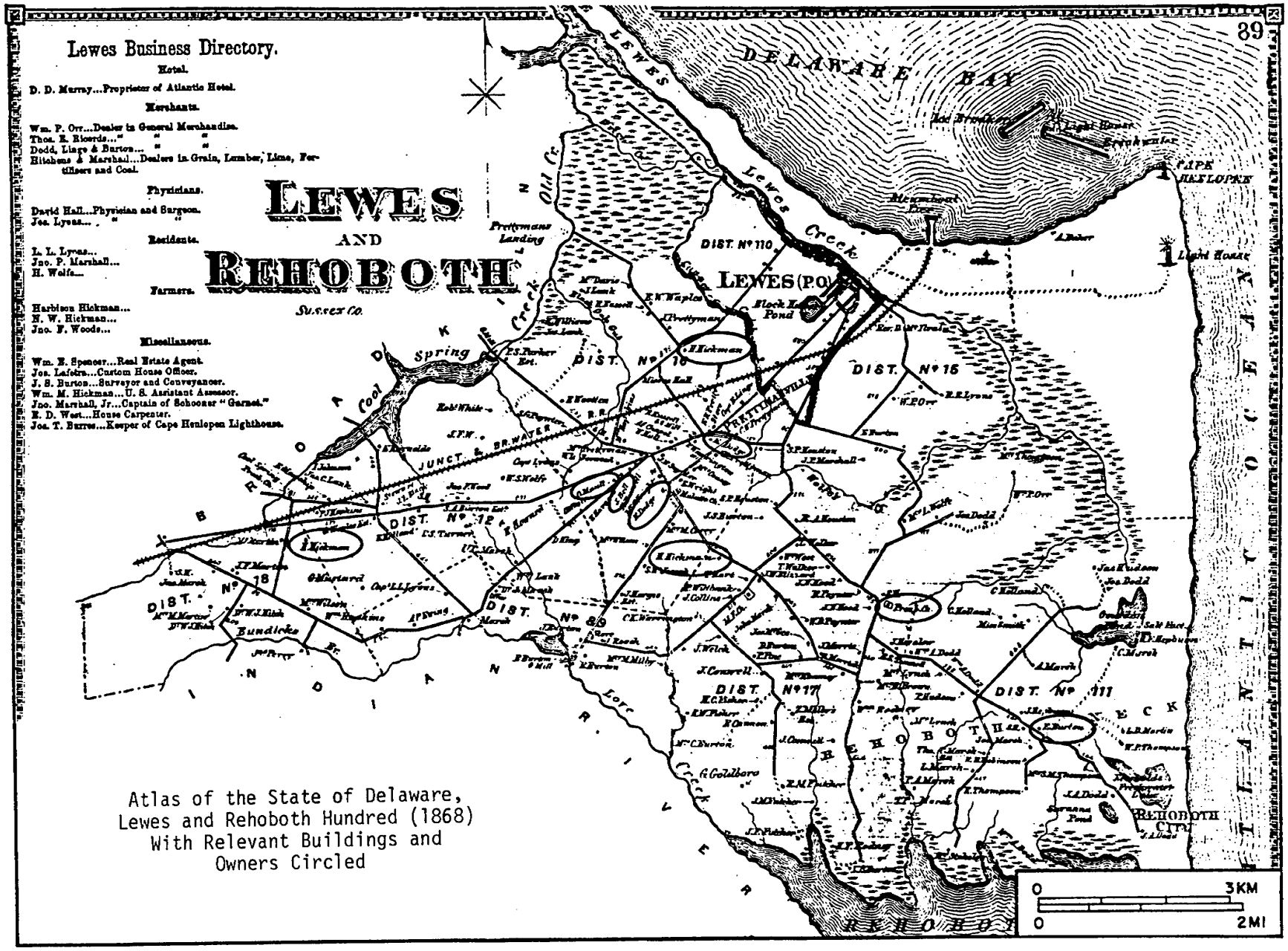
The John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church is located on parcel 3-34-5-215. Included on this property are two houses that face onto Route 285. The house located at the corner of Route 285 and Church Street was determined to be one of the earliest structures still remaining in Belltown (Figure 36). Deed research revealed that the church purchased the property for a dollar in 1912 from Hiram R. Burton, trustee for the estate of Ruth H. Burton (Deed Book 186:65). Earlier transactions for the property are unknown.

Parcel 3-34-5-211 is located three lots west of Church Street. The house faces onto Route 285 (Figure 36). This property is currently owned by Hattie Burton. She purchased the property from Gloria V. Brown in 1968 for one dollar (Deed Book 633:951). Brown had inherited the property from Charles Burton. In 1904 Charles Burton had acquired the property from William and Hannah Wiltbank (Deed Book 160:403). No earlier transactions for this property are known.

The third title search was conducted for parcel 3-34-5-210, which is located four lots west of Church Street (Figure 36). This house is currently owned by John H. Maker. Maker and his wife, Ruth, purchased the house and lot in 1985 from Elsie Johnson for $7000 (Deed Book 1366:111). In 1983 Johnson acquired the property from Christine Maull Redding for $5500 (Deed Book 1226:146). She had inherited the property from her son Theodore in 1979 (Will Book 91:558). Cyrus Maull, Jr. purchased the lot in 1913 from the heirs of Hannah Wiltbank (Deed Book 186:150). It remained in the Maull family for sixty years. The deed passing the property to Hannah Wiltbank was not recorded.

Parcel 3-34-5-197, located east of the alley running between Routes 9 and 285, has been owned by a member of the Johnson family since 1913 (Deed Books 1049:192; 1049:190; 931:36; Will Book 28:179). The current owner is Rose Johnson Davis of Camden, Delaware. In 1913 Rosanna Johnson purchased the property from the heirs of Orange Maull for one dollar (Deed Book 187:11). There were no transactions deeding any property to Maull. An O. Maull appeared on the 1868 Map of Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred, however, implying that the Maull's may have been Belltown residents at that early date (Figure 37).

Beatrice Wiltbank, widow of Albert Wiltbank, provided some information on the earlier transactions involving the Wiltbank family (Wiltbank 1987). She related that her mother-in-law, Hannah Wiltbank, had been the local midwife for families in Belltown and the surrounding area. In many of these cases Hannah received either goods or land in lieu of money as a fee for her services. As a result, Hannah became one of the largest landowners in the Belltown community. Hannah, in turn, gave



Atlas of the State of Delaware, Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred (1868) With Relevant Buildings and Owners Circled

Figure 37

parcels of land to family members as gifts on occasions such as marriage.

The lack of land records prior to 1904 for Belltown properties is probably tied to the fact that these individuals were black. Title clerks at the Sussex County Courthouse in Georgetown indicated that they often had encountered this problem when they were conducting searches on properties owned by blacks. This pattern in Sussex County probably relates to the strength of the Democratic party in the county. As discussed in the Historical Overview, the Democrats kept blacks from voting during the last quarter of the nineteenth century by keeping them off tax assessment rolls. It seems likely that if their land was officially registered in the Recorder of Deeds Office, they would have been taxed on it, thereby gaining the right to vote. Blacks were probably "discouraged" from registering their property.

Only one reference to the early Belltown church that stood on the land donated by Jacob Bell is known. Scharf, in 1881, reported that there were three "colored" churches in Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred, including one called Little Wesley (Scharf 1888:1221). He wrote that it had been built for African Methodists "many years ago, and becoming unfit for further use a new house was built in 1872." This new church, which dated to 1873 and not 1872, was named the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church (Zebley 1947:276). It was replaced by yet another church in 1908, this one constructed of cement blocks. This new church stood on a lot of land purchased from Hiram Burton in December 1912 (Deed Book 186:65). The church was enlarged in 1946 to its present size. The cornerstone bears the dates 1873, 1908, and 1946.

In the 1930s Works Progress Administration (WPA) fieldworkers conducted historical surveys in many states, including Delaware. Part of this research involved the collection of oral history and folklore. Their report for Delaware was published in 1955 and it contained some interesting, although unsubstantiated, information about the earlier history of Belltown (Eckman 1955:494).

> The village became known for its "Devil-Worshippers" - a sect led by Arnsy Maull, whose voodoo art is still remembered and probably still followed to some extent, his clientele includes whites as well as Negroes for miles around. His "conjurs" had the required power, it was said, to cure a misery or kill an enemy. The Devil Worshippers had a prolonged initiation period: a neophyte had to spend seven Sundays in the woods in solitary communion with the Devil, who on the seventh

> Sunday took possession of his soul and gave him supernatural powers.
>
> Arnsy Maull on his death bed repudiated this dark religion, ordering his followers, so the story goes, to get long whips and lash the air so as "to drive off the Devil and let the Lord in!" This they did all night, accompanying the cracks of the blacksnake whips with prayers, and exhortations. Arnsy's son Silas, an old man, disclaims any belief in Devil Worship but sells "charms" and "cures" made of herbs and other things.

Other information about Belltown was acquired through interviews with local residents. Ruth Maker (1987) stated that many families in the community were related to the early residents in Belltown and in many cases, more than one generation of the family still lived in the community. She indicated that in her family alone, there were four generations represented in the population.

Until recently most Belltown residents were quite poor (Maker 1987). During the first half of the twentieth century they managed to make a living by working as day laborers in nearby towns, such as Lewes, or on neighboring farms, such as the Knapp Family Farmstead (Marshall 1987). Often the families raised produce that they carried into town and sold to their employers. To supplement the produce from gardens, most residents raised pigs and chickens in their backyards (Maker 1987).

Perhaps the most prosperous period for Belltown residents was during Prohibition in the 1920s. Henry Marshall (1987) related that many Lewes residents purchased illegal liquor from Belltown families who were making moonshine somewhere in the nearby area. According to Marshall many of the homes in the area were either erected or greatly improved during this period of prosperity.

Modern conveniences, such as telephones and indoor plumbing, are fairly recent additions to most Belltown homes (Maker 1987). In fact, some houses are still not equipped with indoor toilets, and residents must depend on outhouses located behind the houses.

The Belltown Historic District appears to meet the Criteria for Evaluation of the National Register as an early black community in southern Delaware (Criterion A). The community has retained a great deal of social continuity since many of the families are descendents of early residents. In addition, the community has retained a relatively high level of architectural integrity, and most buildings have retained their original uses.

Recommendation: Eligible for the National Register.

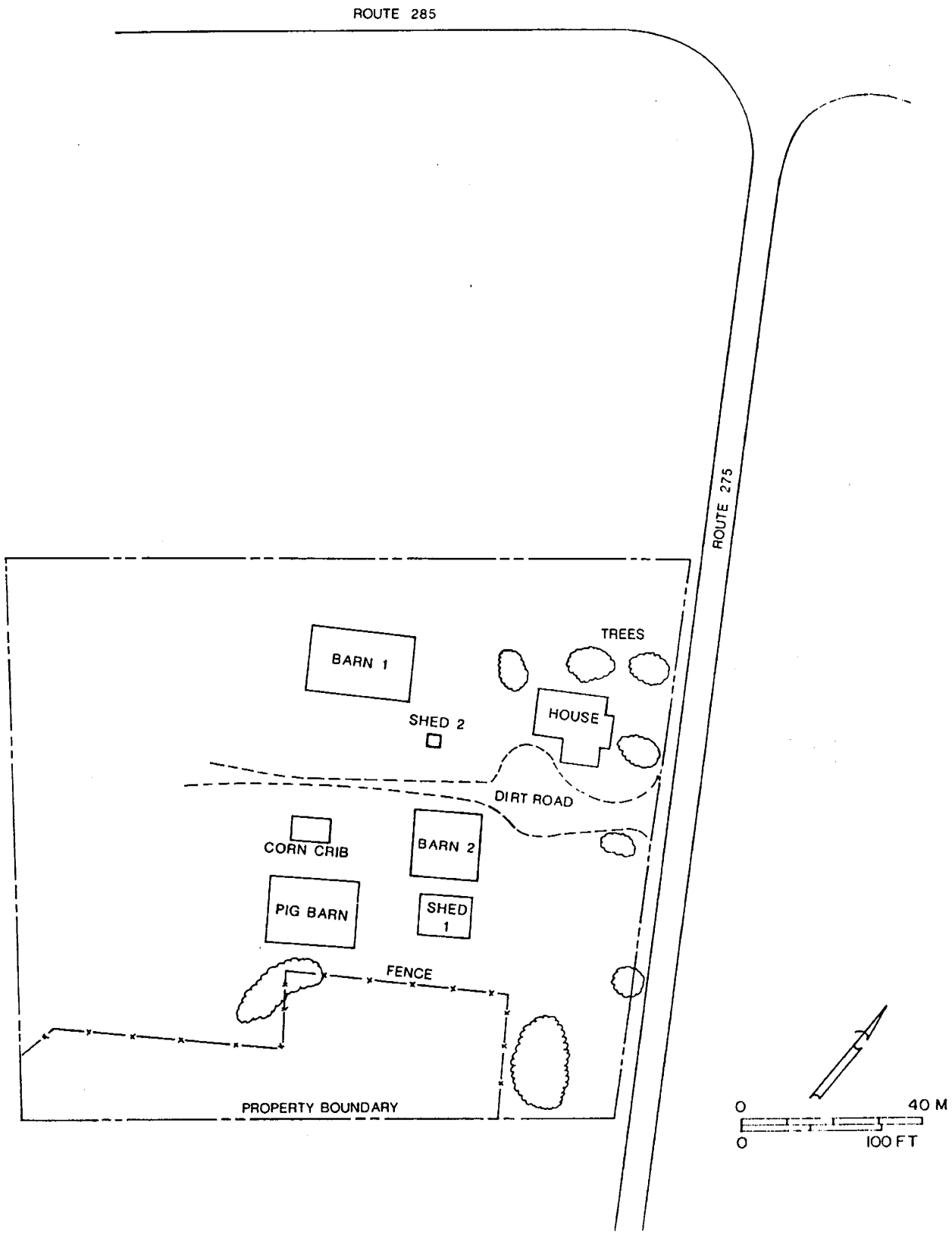
Boundary: The recommended boundary of the Belltown Historic District includes all of the properties contributing to the significance of the district and to the extent possible, corresponds to existing property lines.

Knapp Family Farmstead mid 19th-early 20th c.
Route 275, at northwestern corner of the intersection of Routes 275 and 285 (tax map #3-34-5-222)
Figures 33,38; Plates 38-42
CRS #S-954

Description: The Knapp Family Farmstead is bounded on three sides by Routes 275, 285, and 277. It is located to the south of Route 1, adjacent to the southeastern boundary of the Belltown Historic District. Seven buildings stand on this property: a house, a gambrel roofed barn, a pig barn, a corn crib, a gable roofed barn, a small shed and a shed adjacent to the gable roofed barn.

The house is a two and a half story five bay wood framed I-house, with a two story rear ell at the northwestern end creating an ell plan. A brick foundation, corbeled brick chimneys at either end of the ridge on the main block and at the southwest end of the ridge on the ell, and a symmetrical facade point to the persistence of regional tradition when this farmhouse was constructed. Metal siding now clads the exterior walls, and the slopes of the gabled roof are covered with composite shingles. The paneled entrance door is set under a transom light in the center bay of the northeastern elevation, which faces Route 275 and forms the facade. The two bays on either side of the entrance door and the five bays in the second story of the facade are filled with 2/2 sash windows, set in molded surrounds. A one story porch shelters the three bays at the center of the facade, with four turned wooden posts supporting the hipped roof. On the northwestern and southeastern elevation of the rear ell, a one story shed roofed addition contains two windows with large single fixed lights. The second story of the ell has two symmetrically arranged 2/2 sash windows on the southeastern elevation.

The gambrel roofed barn (Barn 1) is sited to the southwest of the house, the ridge of its shingled roof paralleling the ridge of the rear ell. Above the concrete foundation, the exterior walls of the rectangular wood framed barn are covered with clapboards. On the northeastern gable end, window openings covered with hinged wooden doors light the interior on three different levels: two openings flank an axial entrance door on the lowest level, one opening is located on a second level, and two openings are positioned on a third level above. On the southeastern side elevations, a wooden sliding barn door is



KNAPP FAMILY FARMSTEAD, SITE PLAN

Figure 38

Plate 38. Knapp Family Farmstead (3-34-5-222), Site, From the East.

Plate 39. Knapp Family Farmstead (3-34-5-222), House, From the East.

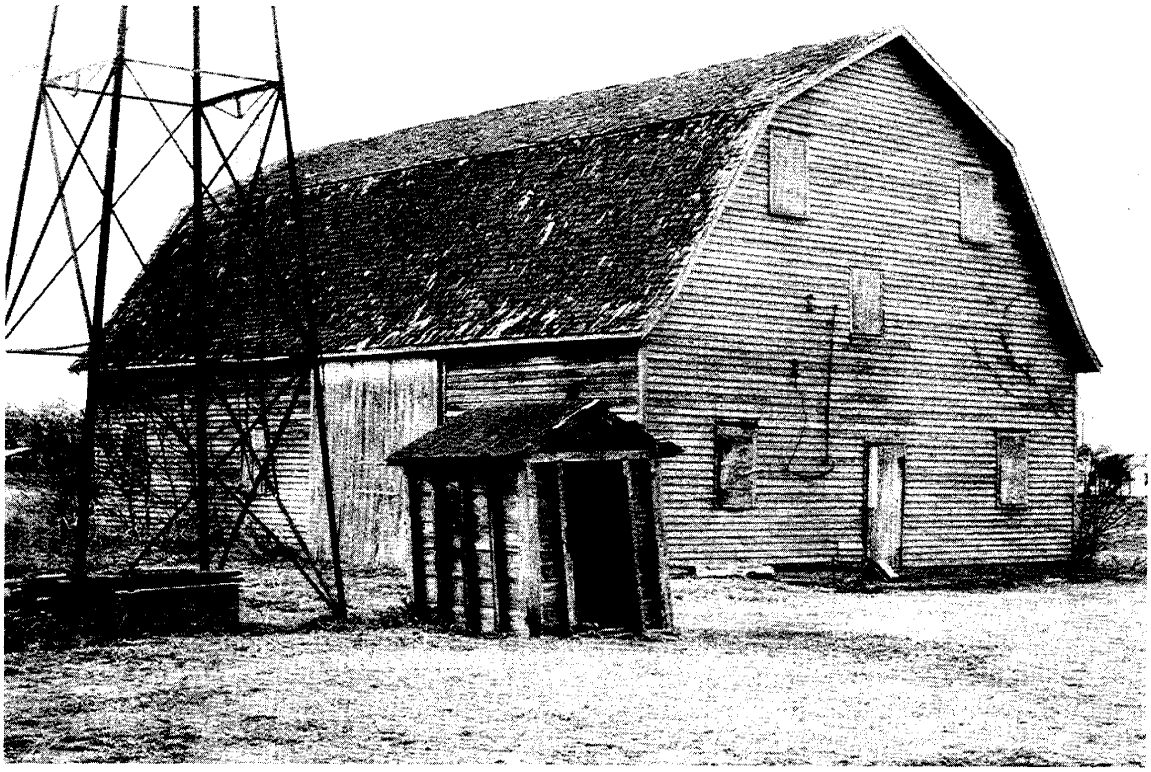


Plate 40. Knapp Family Farmstead (3-34-5-222), Barn 1, From the North.

Plate 41. Knapp Family Farmstead (3-34-5-222), Barn 2, From the West.