

Food for the Soul: Historic Churches Itinerary

Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway

Religious pluralism was an unusual feature of colonial life and early nation building in Chesapeake Country. Four religious denominations flourished during the pre-Revolutionary War period. They included: Anglican/Episcopal, Catholic, Quaker (Society of Friends), and Methodism. Many chapels and churches dot the byway landscape and remain spiritually, historically, and architecturally significant to this day.

A drive along the Chesapeake Country National Scenic Byway will reveal many historic places of worship throughout the byway region. Many remain in active use and are the “tie that binds” many residents of our byway communities. Each site may have hours of operation or be only open for worship or for special events, though the grounds of most sites are open to the public. If adhered to, this itinerary could be completed in a day’s time, though there are many more chapels, churches, and other historical sites along the way.

Beginning on the southern end of the byway, Route 18 in Historic Stevensville, MD

Old Christ Church: 117 East Main Street, Stevensville:

A superb example of the Queen Anne style ecclesiastical architecture, Old Christ Church, on Stevensville’s Main Street, is an historic gem. Christ Church attests to Kent Island’s importance as the cradle of the Anglican Church in Maryland – being the site of the earliest Anglican settlement in the colony.

The congregation was first established at Claiborne’s settlement at Kent Point in the 1631 and the present building, constructed in 1880, is the fourth known church to be constructed by the parish. In 1995, the congregation relocated to a new, larger, facility on Rt. 8. Christ Church continues to be used as a house of worship.

The 1880 church is distinguished by a steep slate roof, and an unusual chimney designed in the medieval “lancet” style, and is garnished with simple yet pleasing stained glass windows arranged in three pairs along each side wall with larger arched windows in the south gable behind the altar. The bell tower adjoins the east facade. The church’s dramatic interior is dominated by the steeply pitched ceiling that rises heavenward above the congregation and is supported by open, stick-style trusses that divide the building into four bays.

The site of the 1652 Broad Creek Church and Cemetery, where three of the Christ Church congregation’s previous structures once stood, is located off Route 8 in Stevensville. The cemetery is currently being restored and is undergoing archaeological investigation. The cornerstones of the 1652 church have been unearthed, as well as 12 burial headstones, dating from 1746 to 1903.

Hours of Operation: First Saturday of the Month, May - October, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. as well as by appointment and special events. The grounds are open to the public.

Suggested time spent: 20-30 minutes, longer if facility is open or for browsing the church yard.

Continue along Route 18 East to Queenstown.

St. Luke's Episcopal Church – 7208 Main Street, Queenstown, MD.

This “very neat and commodious frame edifice” was constructed in 1840-1841 and consecrated by Bishop William R. Whittingham in April 1842. The church was erected on land donated by the owners of nearby Bowlingly plantation. The building is a marvelous example of the small country churches built in villages of the mid-19th century.

The rectors of St. Paul's Parish served the congregations of both St. Luke's and old Wye until 1859, when Wye Parish was created. After 50 years of service and a fire of undetermined origin, St. Luke's Chapel was in need of repairs and renovation. In 1890, the building was reconstructed, and it is assumed that the stained glass windows were part of the renovation.

William H. D. Wright of Blakewood presented a bell to St. Luke's Chapel in 1894. The bell was immediately installed in the bell tower, and it has been sounding the call to worship for more than a hundred years. There have been no significant architectural changes, either exterior or interior, since 1890. In 1989, an adjoining Parish house was constructed, providing much needed space for Sunday school and congregational gatherings.

Suggested time spent: 20-30 minutes.

Mileage: 11 Miles

Estimated drive time: 16 minutes

Continue on Route 18 to the Route 213 intersection; turn left onto Route 213 north. Park on Route 213 near the public library. Walk across Commerce Street (Route 213 North) to Liberty Street (Route 213 South) to see the next historic church.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 301 South Liberty Street (Southbound Route 213), Centreville, MD.

The history of Saint Paul's dates back to 1640 when its parish included the whole of Queen Anne's County except Kent Island, all of Caroline County, and a large portion of Talbot County. Beginning in 1672, three successive church buildings served Saint Paul's Parish at a location west of today's town. Moved from Hibernia in 1834, the church was entirely remodeled in 1893 when the old slave gallery was removed and the oak ceiling added. The church was enlarged in 1855 and again in 1892-95; the chancel was deepened and an apse-shaped sanctuary built. The parish hall was added in 1908-9. The communion service, given in 1719-1720 is still in use. Note the church's remarkable stained glass and windows, and the herb garden on the grounds, planted and maintained by the Queen Anne's County Garden Club.

Suggested time spent: 20-30 minutes.

Mileage: 8 miles

Estimated drive time: 13 minutes

Continue on Route 213 North to Church Hill, Turn right onto Route 19. The next historic church will be on your left at the intersection of Main Street and Route 19.

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 401 Main Street, Church Hill, MD

It is said that Church Hill gained its name from this gorgeous brick church perched upon the high ground. The "church on the hill," or St. Luke's Episcopal Church, is one of the oldest intact brick church in the state having been built in 1732 at a cost of 140,000 pounds of tobacco. That tobacco paid for bricks to be brought over from England to replace the wooden church that had been erected in 1728. The bricks were laid in a handsome Flemish bond pattern.

During the Civil War, Federal troops reportedly used the church as a barracks, and allegedly damaged the interior, although no record appears in Vestry minutes of expenditures to replace pews or windows. In fact, by the close of the war, pews were rented to families for \$25 a year.

The church retains its historic 1735 gift from the Queen Anne's Bounty Fund - two wooden tablets with gold letters containing the Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed, and the Ten Commandments. According to church minutes, these tablets were old when they were originally given to the Church.

On the church grounds is a small brick building built in 1817 as the parish academy. The school was built to help supplement the rector's salary, as he also served as teacher for the school.

Hours of Operation: Sunday Services - 8:00 am and 11 am, also anytime by appointment; Open the first Saturday of every month, May - October, 10:00 - 2:00.

Suggested time spent: 45-60 minutes, or longer if facility open or browsing church grounds.

Mileage: 10 miles

Estimated drive time: 15 minutes

(Detouring off the byway East on Route 300, Crossing Route 301 onto Route 300 East, follow for approximately 2.5 miles to Benton Corner Road. Turn right onto Benton Corner Road)

Dudley's Chapel, 1110 Benton Corner Road, Sudlersville, MD.

Located off Route 300, west of Sudlersville, the chapel dates back to 1783 and stands as the first Methodist meeting house in the county – and one of the nation's earliest.

The Queen Anne's Methodists Society was organized in 1774 and oversaw the chapel's construction. The tract of land on which this chapel stands was known as Sarah's Portion. The deed for land describes the parcel as: "Beginning at a mark'd red Oak mark'd with six notches, and running due West sixteen perches, then North sixteen perches, then East sixteen perches, then South to the beginning tree, containing one and half acre of Land.... And to the intent they and their survivors of them do and shall permit such preachers of the Gospel l from time to time and at all times to preach in it and shall be appointed from the yearly Conference of the people called Methodists..."

True to the Methodist tradition, many early Methodist leaders preached at Dudley's Chapel, including Bishop Francis Asbury, Jesse Lee (first Methodist historian) and Freeborn Garrettson (first Native American Methodist minister).

This chapel is an outstanding example of an early rural church. With its rectangular plan and steep gable roof, it typifies late 18th century churches in Maryland. The use of brick in the chapel, rare for the times, attests to the importance of the church and the affluence of the congregation. The chapel remains part of the Sudlersville United Methodist Charge, and is used for special services such as Easter Sunrise Service and Christmas Eve Service.

Hours of Operation: Open by appointment and for special services.

Suggested time spent: 30-45 minutes or longer if facility open or for browsing the church yard.

Mileage: 8 miles

Estimated drive time: 10 minutes

Returning to Route 213 via Route 300 and continue North into Kent County. Once across the Chester River Bridge, turn left onto Cross Street at the first traffic light. Emmanuel Episcopal Church will be on your left across from Fountain Park. Stop in the Visitor Center at the corner of Cross & Maple St. for a Walking Tour of Historic Chestertown and other brochures.

Emmanuel Episcopal Church, 100 Cross Street, Chestertown, MD

The present building of Emmanuel Church is the third Anglican house of worship on this site. While it is not known when the first edifice was erected, vestry minutes refer to a wooden chapel being razed in 1720 to make way for a larger brick one. That second building was replaced in 1767 by a third one, which comprises the nave of the present church. Its impressive dimensions are 66 feet by 40 feet by two stories.

In 1766, the Provincial Council of Maryland created Chester Parish out of land ceded to it by Kent County's two original parishes: St. Paul's, Kent and Shrewsbury. At the time of its chartering Chester Parish covered eighty-five square miles, extending north from the Chester River. The freeholders of the new parish met at the crossroads known as I.U., near the present village of Worton, and elected a vestry that made plans to build a new church on that site and to enlarge the chapel in Chestertown. Within a year, however, the vestry decided to build a new chapel on the Chestertown site, using the proceeds from the sale of fifty thousand pounds of tobacco that was collected as a tax levied on the freeholders of the parish for the support of the church.

Between the years 1766 and 1775, three rectors served the church and chapel in Chester Parish, supported by a tax of five pounds of tobacco levied on each inhabitant and collected by the sheriff. By 1776, however, the Declaration of Independence and the constitution of the newly established State of Maryland had deprived Anglican churches of their tax support. As the legislators in Annapolis joined in the rebellion against Britain, they required clergy to take an oath of loyalty to the cause of independence. Many Anglican priests refused, because they had sworn a previous oath of loyalty to the King of England at the time of their ordination. Persecuted clergy emigrated to England or Canada, and by 1780, there were only six priests of the Church of England remaining in Maryland. One was the Rev'd Samuel Keene, who assumed his duties as Rector of Chester Parish in 1779 and served one year. He left when parishioners failed to honor their promise to pay his salary of eight hundred bushels of wheat per year.

The Rev'd William Smith, D.D., filled the vacancy left by Mr. Keene. Dr. Smith had written the first curriculum for King's College (now Columbia University), served as first Provost of the College of Philadelphia (now the University of Pennsylvania) and would found Washington College, Chestertown, and St. John's College, Annapolis. In 1780, Dr. Smith arrived in Chestertown to organize a school. The vestry offered him six hundred bushels of wheat to take on the additional duties of Rector of Chester Parish. His first sermon in Chestertown, delivered on 4 July 1780, was a Thanksgiving for the Establishment of Peace and Independence in America.

By 1782, Dr. Smith's school had enrolled one hundred forty students, so he petitioned the Maryland General Assembly for a charter. George Washington graciously allowed the new college to bear his name.

The indefatigable Dr. Smith understood that other Anglican parishes shared Chester Parish's difficulties in meeting their financial obligations. Well-connected among the clergy of his day, he corresponded with church leaders throughout the colonies. In November 1780, in Chestertown Chapel, he convened a meeting of Anglican clergy and members of vestries from parishes in Kent and Queen Anne's Counties. The purpose of the meeting was to draft a letter to the Maryland General Assembly petitioning it to acknowledge the burdens that independence had imposed on the Anglican Church and to provide in some way for the public support of religion. At this meeting, the Rev'd James Jones, Rector of Shrewsbury Parish, moved that the *Church of England as heretofore so known in the province, be now called the Protestant Episcopal Church*. Dr. Smith and the others agreed to the name, which other regional conventions subsequently adopted. In 1789, the united Anglican Church in the former colonies adopted this name for the American branch of the Anglican Church.

In 1789, after the Pennsylvania legislature restored the charter of the College of Philadelphia, Dr. Smith returned to that city. The rectors who succeeded him served short tenures, and little is known about them until 1809, when, under the Rev'd William H. Wilmer, the Chestertown Chapel became the parish church of Chester Parish, while the church at I.U. Crossroads was allowed to fall into ruin. (It was not until 1860 that the present Christ Church I.U. was erected.) Meanwhile, Mr. Wilmer left Chestertown to serve St. Paul's Church, Alexandria, from which he helped to found the Virginia Theological Seminary.

Beginning in 1832, rectors serving long tenures expanded the church's ministry to the community and undertook to make improvements to the church building. It was not until the church was renovated in 1882 that it was consecrated and given the name *Emmanuel Church*. (Heretofore, it had been called *Chester Parish Church*.) The Rt. Rev'd Henry C. Lay, First Bishop of Easton, referred in his consecration sermon to this church as one of the most ancient in Maryland.

Take a stroll up High Street to view 2 more significant Kent County churches.

Christ United Methodist Church, circa 1887, corner of High and Mill Street, Chestertown.

This church is circa 1887 and is located across the street from the Kent County Government Building. Despite the wide based appeal of Gothic Revival in America from the 1830's onwards, very few examples can be found today in Chestertown's historic district. This church is one of the most richly ornamented buildings ever constructed in town. Gothic arches, stained glass and buttresses are found all around, while the textures of brick, stone and slate might also be called "High Victorian."

First United Methodist Church, est. 1780, corner of High and Mill Street, Chestertown

According to Kent County land records dated May 5, 1780, the first Methodist Episcopal Meeting House in Chester Town was established on Princess Street “for the use of the people called Methodists, where would be preached no other doctrine than is contained in Mr. John Wesley’s notes on the New Testament and four volumes of sermons published by him.” In Reverend Frances Asbury’s journal is the notation made in 1786, “Sunday 9th, I preached in Kent Old Chapel.... In the afternoon and at night in Chester Town, I always have an enlargement in preaching in this very wicked place.” On Wednesday, May 13, 1789, Bishops Frances Asbury and Thomas Coke presided over a conference of 78 ministers with the Kent Circuit.

The congregation erected a new church on what is now known as Spring Street. The brick building at the west end of Fountain Park was completed in March of 1803 and is currently being used as offices and retail. Because of the growth of the congregation, in 1876, the “church on the hill” was constructed and now stands as the First United Methodist Church. First UMC was one of the earliest congregations to be set off as a “station”, or having one minister serving one congregation instead of itinerant preachers from which the Methodist denomination grew.

Visitors will note and maybe question why many small communities in the Chesapeake region have two Methodist churches in close proximity to one another. This is the result of divisions over the issues of slavery and the denomination’s official opposition to slavery. Maryland’s location directly south of the Mason-Dixon line meant numerous divisions between abolitionists and secessionists. These divisions were notably present in this region’s congregations. The 1844 General Conference voted to defrock a Southern bishop unless he freed his slaves. The decision raised questions (particularly among southern delegates to the conference) about the authority of a General Conference to discipline bishops. The 1844 dispute led Methodists in the south to break off and form a separate denomination, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Thus, communities throughout the Chesapeake and other regions had separate congregations.

Suggested time spent at all 3 historic Chestertown churches: 60-90 minutes.

Stop for a bite to eat in any number of eateries in Historic Downtown Chestertown.

Mileage: 13 miles

Estimated drive time: 21 minutes

Continue down High Street through Chestertown and follow Route 20 toward Rock Hall. Turn left onto Sandy Bottom Road.

St. Paul’s of Kent Episcopal Church, 7579 Sandy Bottom Road, Chestertown, MD

St. Paul's Parish is one of the thirty Anglican parishes established in Maryland in 1692 after William and Mary's ascension to the English throne. On January 30th of the following year, six members of the original Vestry met and agreed on the dimensions of a church to be built on land belonging to Mr. Michael Miller, one of their number, on the west side of Broad-noc Creek. Michael Miller's grave is located just north of the northwest corner of the present church.

The first church was a 40 by 24-foot frame building erected by Daniel Norris on this site in 1695-1696. It was not particularly well built, however, and the Vestry decided by 1711 that the building was no longer worth repair. In August of that year, they contracted with James Harris, William Potts and

James Smith to build a new and slightly larger church at a cost of 70,000 pounds of tobacco. As a result, St. Paul's Church is the earliest religious structure in Kent County and, with the possible exception of Old Trinity in Dorchester County, the earliest surviving Anglican Church on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

When the contract had been fulfilled, however, the church was incomplete. The Vestry therefore executed a number of subsequent contracts over the next 4 years to glaze the windows, install 34 pews, lay herringbone brick floors, and construct and plaster a balcony. Portions of the older church survived until 1720, when the Vestry finally directed they be dismantled and the materials salvaged. An archaeological excavation in 1992 uncovered a stone foundation about 40 feet north of the present church that may be a part of the earlier building.

St. Paul's is one of only four 18th Century churches on the Eastern Shore to have a semicircular apse. The church walls feature uniform Flemish bond brickwork with both plain and glazed headers, convex mortar joints, and rubbed brick semicircular arches above the windows and doors. The modillions in the cornice on the south side of the building are an exceedingly rare feature on the Eastern Shore, and date from the original construction. The work is considered extraordinarily fine for the period.

The church was remodeled for the first time in the 1740's when an addition was built onto the north side to provide space for 23 new pews in which to accommodate the growing congregation. This addition was pulled down in 1824 when the congregation had dwindled and the church fell into disrepair. The patched brickwork is still visible on the north side of the building.

A second major remodeling occurred in 1841 when a wood floor was installed over the brick and a sacristy was built at the east end of the north wall.

St. Paul's Churchyard

St. Paul's has an extensive churchyard, considered one of the most beautiful on the Eastern Shore. We welcome visitors, and our Parish Secretary will help you locate specific memorials, if you should desire to do so.

Old St. Paul's churchyard covers some 19 acres overlooking a millpond produced by the damming of Broad Noc Creek. Michael Miller, whose grave lies near the door of the Church, sold the Vestry the original tract of about 8 acres of land out of his "Arcadia" holding on February 6, 1696 for 2,000 pounds of tobacco. Within a year of the sale, Miller returned the purchase price to the Parish. Another two acres were added through a purchase from Charles Ringgold in 1707. The remainder of the property has been acquired in more recent times, much of it from the Remington Arms Company. The churchyard is one of St. Paul's most attractive features. It is extensively planted and harbors over 40 different species of tree. It also contains both English Boxwoods (*Buxus sempervirens*) and American Boxwoods (*Buxus suffruticosa*), considered among the largest and finest in Kent County. The churchyard was once dominated by a grove of spectacular White Oaks. Unfortunately, all but one of these trees have succumbed to time and storms. The remaining example -- a Swamp Chestnut Oak (*Quercus Michauxwii*) -- was designated a Kent County Bicentennial Tree in July, 1976, by the Maryland Bicentennial Commission. This Maryland species champion stands near the main entrance to the churchyard from the parking lot and is 120 feet high, has a circumference of 23 feet 7 inches, a crown spread of over 90 feet, and is over 400 years old.

The majority of the marked graves in the churchyard date from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but there are a satisfying number from earlier times. The oldest section of the churchyard is the section around the church, itself, and many of the oldest graves are located quite close to the building. One of the more colorful is that of Daniel Coley who died in 1727. His headstone reads:

"Behold and see where now I lye,
As you are now, so once was I;
As I am now, so must you be;
Therefore prepare to follow me."

Despite the proximity to the Battle of Caulk's Field during the War of 1812, there are no soldier's graves in the churchyard. However, many other veterans' graves, including those of men from Kent County who fought in the War Between the States. Interested visitors will find two Confederate and three Union soldiers buried in the churchyard, including 1st Lieutenant Samuel Beck, Assistant Surgeon on the staff of General John H. Winder, the Provost-Marshal of Confederate Prisons. One modern grave that has occasionally excited interest is that of Tallulah Bankhead, located near the northeast corner of the "New Cemetery". A frequent visitor during her lifetime to the nearby home of her sister, Eugenia, she was buried at St. Paul's in 1968.

Suggested time spent: 60-90 minutes or longer if browsing the church yard.

Mileage: 12 miles

Estimated drive time: 20 minutes

Return to Route 213 and travel North, pass through the village of Kennedyville; 2 miles outside of Kennedyville, turn left onto Shrewsbury Church Road, the church and churchyard will be on your left.

Historic Shrewsbury Parish, 12828 Shrewsbury Church Road, 2 miles North of Kennedyville, MD

The Act of 1692, as it appears in "Bacon's Laws of Maryland" states, "The Church of England within this province (the Colony of Maryland) should have and enjoy all her rights, liberties, and franchises wholly inviolable, as now is, or hereafter established by law." On the 22nd of November, 1692, the Commissioners of the county, in pursuance of the Act of Assembly, laid out the Parish. Our Parish is one of the original thirty parishes created by the Act of 1692. The American Revolution changed our status and we became the Protestant Episcopal Church in Maryland. The Revolutionary Government of Maryland passed the Declaration of Rights on Nov. 3, 1776 preserved to the Church all of her property. In effect, we as a Parish changed from a Church of England to an American Parish during the American Revolution.

Captain John Smith reported being in the Upper Chesapeake Bay in 1608. He sailed the "Sasquesahonock" river, which he named after the Indians he encountered in the area. Across the Bay from the Sasquesahonock, he came across the friendly "Tockwogh" Indians on what is now the southern bank of the Sassafras River in Kent County. He wrote in his journal: "Our order was daily to have Prayer, with a Pslme, at which solemnitie the poore Salvages much wondered..." He drew a map locating the House of the King of the Tockwoghs on a point east of what is now Turner's Creek. Quite possibly, this site, now Kenmore Park at the top of Shrewsbury Neck, is the first Place on the Eastern Shore of Maryland where white man set foot and prayers were said.

It is likely that there were no permanent English settlements in the Sassafras River area until almost a half-century later, when, in the late 1650's, the first Protestants migrated to the southern shores of the Sassafras from the Isle of Kent, now known as Kent Island. Until a treaty was negotiated with the Susquehanna "Indians in 1652, no colonists dared to settle permanently in Susquehanna territory which extended from the Choptank River north to the Elk River on the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay.

Cecil County was created in 1674 by proclamation of Governor Charles Calvert and comprised land, which is now the northern half of Kent County. Before that time, the Sassafras River area was part of Baltimore County. The earliest land patent for what is now called Shrewsbury Neck was granted in 1659 to Richard "Turner, for whom Turner's Creek was named, and the whole area was settled in 1681. The first Shrewsbury Church stood somewhere on Shrewsbury Neck, but the exact location may never be found because boundaries were imprecise and transactions often unrecorded.

Although local oral tradition dictates that the first church was built at Meeting House Point at the mouth of Turner's Creek near the present-day site of Kentmore Park, there is no historical evidence to support this claim. The original Shrewsbury Parish Church, a simple, frame structure measuring 24 feet by 30 feet, stood within several hundred feet of the site of the current church in what was then called Shrewsbury Town. This location was, at that time, near the head of a navigable branch of Turner's Creek, and easily accessible by water.

The naming of the church is not documented, but it is possible that it was done in honor of the Earl of Shrewsbury, Rt. Hon. Charles Talbot, Principal Secretary of State in England under King William and Queen Mary of England. The Earl of Shrewsbury was the colonists' direct line of communication with the King and the Maryland settlers corresponded with him often. There is also a borough of Shropshire, England, and the Shrewsbury Abby is located in that town. Perhaps the original Shrewsbury Vestrymen had ties with the English town.

The frame church was extensively repaired in 1701 when the vestry asked the court to tax Shrewsbury Parish "according to law for ye Reparations of ye Church." The fact that major repairs were required suggests that the first Shrewsbury church was twenty to thirty years old by this time. By 1703, the congregation had grown sufficiently to require a 20-foot addition to the original structure. The enlarged frame church adequately served the Shrewsbury parishioners until 1721. The second Shrewsbury church, a magnificent brick structure, measured 40 feet by 60 feet, and was as large as any in the colony.

The third structure, which still stands today, is more modest than its predecessor, measuring 30 by 45 feet.

The Shrewsbury Parish Churchyard

The first recorded burials in the Shrewsbury churchyard took place in 1730. Prior to that time, and throughout the eighteenth century, it remained common practice to hold funerals and burials at private homes rather than at a church. The Shrewsbury churchyard today has a unique distinction of being the final resting place for a veteran of every war fought by the United States of America. These graves have bronze markers denoting the war or wars where they fought.

The most famous veteran in the churchyard is General John Calwalader who was born in 1742 in Philadelphia. In 1777 at General George Washington's request, he organized the militia on the Eastern

Shore of Maryland. During the Revolutionary War, he fought battles at Brandywine, Germantown, Monouth, the environs of Philadelphia, and at the Battle of Princeton. After the war, Cadwalader closed his house in Philadelphia and retired to Shrewsbury Farm. His wife Elizabeth (Betsy) Lloyd, daughter of Col. Edward Lloyd and Ann Rousby Lloyd of Wye House in Talbot County, brought to her marriage this 2,478 acre farm on the Sassafras River. This area was known as Shrewsbury Neck. While he lived in the Kent County, he served in the county legislature. Calwalader died at Shrewsbury Farm in 1786 at the age of 44 after a bout of pneumonia. Dr. William Smith conducted his funeral service at Shrewsbury Church where the general was buried. Thomas Paine wrote his epitaph.

In the churchyard, there are many names known in Maryland history. Many of the descendants from these families are still living on the Eastern Shore or within the present parish itself. One of these was parishioner and vestryman, Edward Blay. He had a great deal of influence in Shrewsbury's history. Blay received a patent in 1675 for 200 acres of land called Blays Range at the head of Turner's Creek, in what was then Baltimore County. Between 1678 and 1700, Edward Blay patented 3 more tracts, including all the property from Turner's Creek to Shrewsbury Parish Church. They were called Blay's Addition, Hopewell Unity and Staples Warren. In 1709, Blay donated 2 acres from Blay's Addition to Shrewsbury Church, which is the present day churchyard. The early church was already standing on this site. After the present-day boundaries of Kent County were proposed in 1706, Blay was appointed to serve as one of eight county commissioners to supervise the work of drawing boundary lines. The lines drawn by Blay and his fellow commissioners have not changed to this day. In 1822, the early members of the Blay family, who by that time had all been buried together at the Blay family burial ground near Shrewsbury church, were honored with an inscription placed on the vault stone. The stone on that vault was later moved to the Shrewsbury churchyard and was placed at the entrance to the church.

There are nine rectors buried in the churchyard of which 7 were rectors here. Their graves are marked with white crosses with brass plaques noting the dates they were rectors at Shrewsbury Parish Church. Some of the tombstones and monument are notable for their beauty and dignity, and others for their quaintness. Of the latter, one old brown stone, carved by a local amateur cutter, bears this inscription, "Here lye the bodies of Iervis and Hannah, son and daughter of Henry Spencer, who departed this life Feby the 10th, 1742/3: Iervis aged 13, Hannah aged 16. Farewell our friends and parents dear, we are not dead, but sleepth here. Our debts is paid, and our graves you see, Prepare yourselves and follow we."

Suggested time spent: 60-90 minutes or longer if browsing the church yard.

Mileage: 18

Estimated drive time: 27 minutes.

Return to Route 213 North to the intersection of Route 213 and 313. Turn Right onto Route 313 South. Olivet UMC will be ½ mile down 313 on your left, across from Galena Middle School.

Olivet UMC, 115 South Main Street, (Route 313) South of Galena, MD

Olivet Church began as a class meeting on March 13, 1773, led by Bishop Francis Asbury, a circuit riding Methodist preacher. Francis Asbury left England in 1771 for missionary service in America. He became a Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and one of its most famous evangelists, "the St. Paul of American Methodism". The Galena class first met at the home of a Mr. Dixon. At that time,

Galena was known as Georgetown Cross Roads. The first deed for the church bears the date of June 27, 1804. Cornelius Scott donated the land. The original church was built in 1808. In 1842, that building was moved to one side and used by slaves. Later, the original wooden church was sold to a group of African-American Christians and moved to Olivet Hill in Galena. A new church was built in 1842. In 1887, Frank H. Ruth added a bell tower in memory of his parents. The 800 pound bronze bell was cast by the McShane Bell Foundry in Baltimore, Maryland

Suggested time spent: 20-30 minutes or longer if browsing the church yard.

Galena has several eateries where you can find a bite to eat and learn some local lore.

Mileage: 5 miles

Estimated drive time: 10 minutes

Return to Route 213 North; go approximately 1 mile through the town of Galena. St. Dennis's Church will be on your left as you reach the outskirts of town.

St. Dennis Church, 153 North Main Street. (Route 213) North of Galena, MD

Dennis McCauley was the lay founder of St. Dennis' Parish and the one person chiefly responsible for the erection of the original St. Dennis Church. He was born in County Donegal, Ireland, on May 14, 1814. Coming to America as a young man, he first settled at Philadelphia where he became a very successful businessman.

In 1854, at the age of forty, Dennis moved his family to Kent County, Maryland, where he bought a large farm at Lambson's Station, two miles from the town of Galena, which was then known as Georgetown Crossroads. His interest in this area is said to have stemmed from the trips he used to make to the Eastern Shore to buy hay for his horses; and, if he was in the flour business, also probably to buy grain to make the flour. Once settled in Maryland, he soon became very successful in his new life as a Kent County farmer.

Typically, Dennis McCauley had been settled at Lambson's Station only a short time when he obtained permission from Baltimore Archbishop Kenrick to build a church on the farm. Deeding an acre of his best land for this purpose to the Archbishop on September 17, 1855, and ready at any time to give more if needed, Dennis personally contributed a large part of the \$3000 total cost of the 50 by 35 feet church, collected some funds from others, and made himself responsible for seeing that the church was paid for. Some time afterwards, a frame rectory was built next to the church, and the rest of the acre plot was reserved as a parish cemetery.

Regarded in his day as the lay theologian of Kent County, Dennis McCauley was ever conscious of the importance of regular religious instruction. Accordingly, he sent his two daughters, Elizabeth and Mary, to study at St. Joseph's Academy, Emmitsburg, Maryland. It was Mary, incidentally, who made the beautiful needle-point picture of Christ's Agony in the Garden that still can be seen in almost perfect condition just above the inside entrance to the present St. Dennis Church.

Matthew T. Sanders was the Jesuit priest responsible for attending to the spiritual needs of Catholics in the area. He had been the rector since 1852 of the Old Bohemia. While stationed at Old Bohemia, Father Sanders was responsible for the spiritual care of the Catholics in and around Chestertown, at Eastern Neck below Rock Hall at Willson's, and, in fact, for all of Kent County, including St. Dennis.

Suggested time spent: 20-30 minutes or longer if browsing the church yard.

Mileage: 0.4 miles

Estimated drive time: 2 minutes

Continue North on Route 213 to Cecilton. Turn Left on Route 282 off the byway to see the next historic church destination. Travel through Earleville, the church is along Route 282 on the right.

St. Stephens Parish, 14 Glebe Road (Route 282) West of Earleville, MD

An Act of Assembly established the North Sassafras Parish in 1692. The first vestry met January 10, 1693. The parish church was dedicated to the honor of Saint Stephens on March 25, 1706. The church has undergone renovations and construction in 1737, 1823, and 1873. This parish houses such items as 18th century silver, a sundial crafted in 1718, and a bell presented by Queen Anne. The first Negro south of the Mason-Dixon line was ordained here in 1834.

Suggested time spent: 20-30 minutes or longer if browsing the church grounds.

Mileage: 8 miles

Estimated drive time: 15 minutes.

Return to Cecilton via Route 282 and turn left to resume this byway itinerary. Turn right onto Old Bohemia Road and follow for several miles, turn left at the T-junction into the church lane. End your "Food for the Soul" historic church itinerary on the beautiful grounds of St. Francis Xavier.

St. Francis Xavier, Bohemia Church Road, Warwick MD

Founded in 1704, 72 years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, St. Francis Xavier is one of the earliest permanent Catholic establishments in the English Colonies. Located 2 miles north of Warwick, Maryland, it more familiarly known as "Old Bohemia" due to its proximity to Bohemia Manor and the branch of the Bohemia River. It is the oldest, and for many years was the only Catholic establishment in the area which now comprises the Wilmington Diocese. Old Bohemia, therefore, is truly the "Mother Mission Church".

Old Bohemia was the fountainhead of Christian tolerance from whence the Jesuit Fathers carried their missionary work into the surrounding territory and beyond. Father Matthais Manners who founded the first Catholic Church in Delaware and Father Charles Whelan, who aided in founding the Old St. Peter's Church in New York City, both worked from Old Bohemia and are buried in the churchyard here.

Bohemia Academy, founded at this location, number among its students Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Maryland's Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence, and his cousin, John Carroll, who later became the first Catholic Bishop of the United States. This little school was the forerunner of the oldest Catholic University in the US, namely Georgetown University, which was founded by Bishop John Carroll. The Old Bohemia Historical Society was founded in 1953 to restore and maintain the historic edifices at Bohemia.

Suggested time spent: 60-90 minutes or longer if church museums are open or if browsing the church grounds.

Mileage: 8 miles

Estimated drive time: 15 minutes.

References:

The contents of this itinerary were compiled from printed church documents, church websites, and information from the historical societies of Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's Counties.