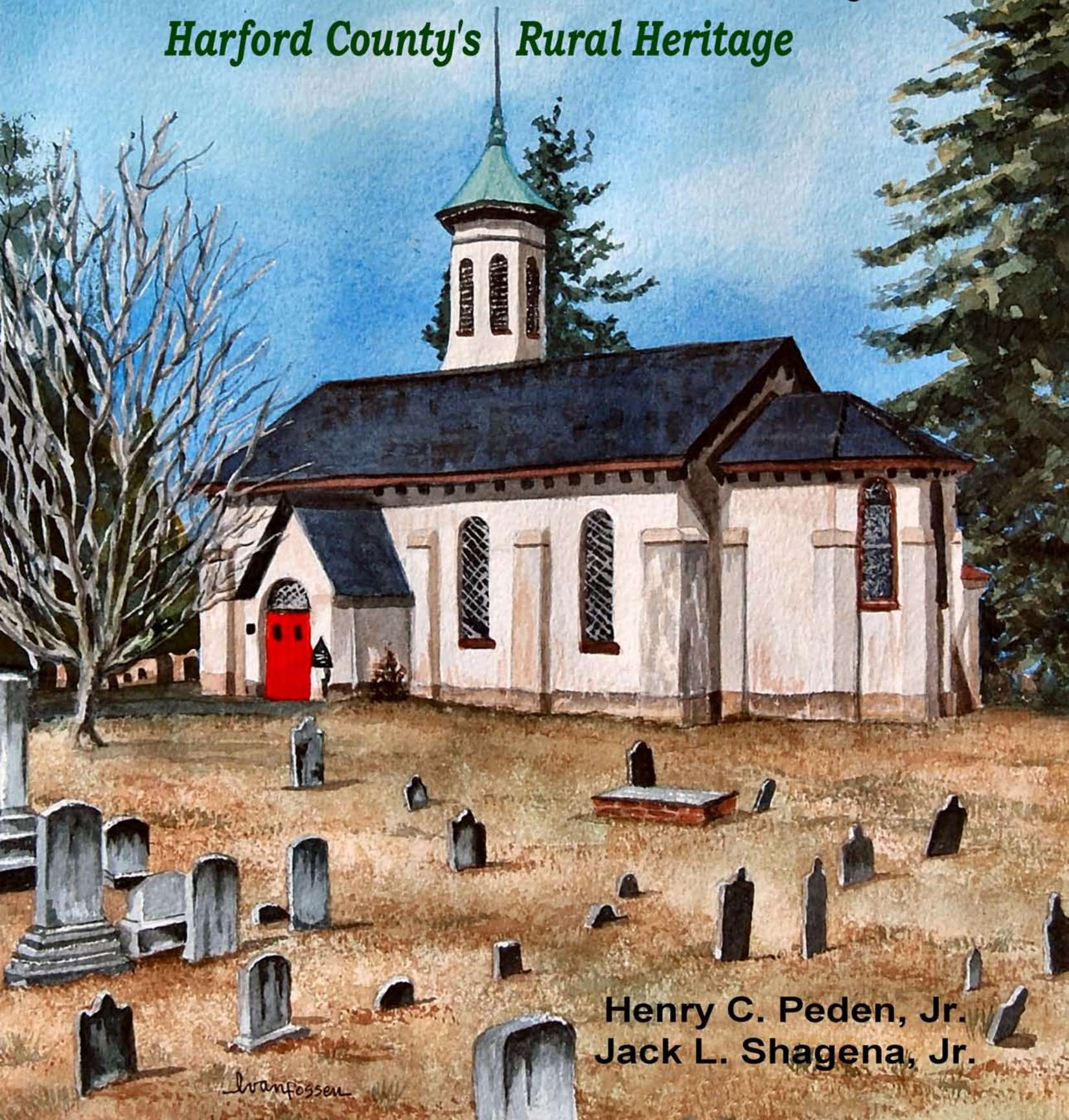


Churches

An Illustrated History

Harford County's Rural Heritage



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Introduction

This book is the fifth in a series on Harford County's Rural Heritage.

When the authors wrote books on barns and springhouses, it was recognized that only a representative sample of these structures would be found and included. For this church effort, however, particularly existing ones, it was initially thought that all could be included. Numerous databases were consulted including: the 2000 ADC Harford County map book, various telephone book yellow pages, list of tax-exempt county properties, several online church lists by denominations, and a list of federal tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations. From these a church database was generated and we set out to photograph them.

Surprise. We serendipitously found churches that did not appear on our list. Many were relatively new that had started in a commercial building in a strip mall, while others had simply escaped being captured by any of the consulted sources. Even after we thought all county churches had been found, a few popped up so we re-adjusted our 100% plan to a goal.

A chapel, tabernacle, synagogue, meeting house, mosque, or church is a physical structure built on earth by humans to pay homage to a spiritual being somewhere in the universe whose presence is believed to be throughout its walls inculcating the hearts and minds of those present. Churches would not exist were it not for religious groups or congregations of like-minded citizens desiring a common place of worship; therefore, the structure and their beliefs are inextricably intertwined. Conversely, there are groups of individuals who adopt their own personal beliefs irrespective of any established structure and find comfort in collectively associating with others who share similar values.

This book does not address personal or religious beliefs, or the absence thereof; rather, it principally focuses on still-standing structures – nearly all of which are currently in use. Over time a number of churches have come into existence but were later vacated for various reasons that included construction of a new church at a different location, mergers with other groups, poor leadership, financial hardship, and overall population shifts. Some structures were dismantled and the material employed in other buildings, a few were converted to alternative uses such as a funeral home, a handful are awaiting a new owner, and some fell into disrepair and today are ruins.

For years to come this book will provide a snapshot of those churches that existed in 2009 and is also a compilation of information and images from historical sources of churches that once existed but have faded from the landscape. It will also be a starting point from which those interested in writing the history of a church can consult before beginning.

Preface

What began as a relatively simple pictorial compilation of existing Harford County churches grew over time into a comprehensive history of churches both past and present. This came about as the authors sought to preserve another chapter in Harford County's history.

To place the growth of churches in perspective, Chapter 1 addresses the settlement of Maryland and the historically unique role occupied by the church based on the pragmatic tenants of the colony's first ruler Cecil Calvert, Lord Baltimore. This was simply the separation of church and state but was an idea far ahead of its time.

Chapter 2 discusses how mother churches of each denomination spawned daughter churches throughout the county. These are presented chronologically beginning with the Anglican Church that developed into the Protestant Episcopal Church. Many of Harford's historic churches are covered in this chapter.

Chapter 3 is a compilation of photographs of all found still-standing churches. Each photo is one-half page with the church's name and location identified.

Chapter 4 is a comprehensive digest of former and existing churches with historical information including many old images of existing churches and images of churches that no longer exist. It is alphabetical using the most well known name for a church with older and obscure names cross-referenced to the information. Some interesting church marquee messages are included.

The Appendix contains an alphabetical listing of architects and the Harford County churches they have designed. For a number of the deceased architects their images along with their birth and death dates have been provided to place them in historical perspective. If concurrence was provided, an image of a living architect was also included. Retired architect James Thomas Wollon, Jr., AIA, worked closely with the authors in compiling this section.

The index is thoroughly inclusive and will be very useful in assisting genealogist and church historians in their individual work.