

VLR- 1/15/75 NR-HP- 3/17/95

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Coan Baptist Church
other names/site number Wicomico church; VDHR File No. 66-86

2. Location

street & number SR 638, E of jct. w/SR 612 not for publication N/A
city or town Heathsville vicinity X
state Virginia code VA county Northumberland code 133 zip code 22473

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X Locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Julie Rosmik Signature of certifying official/Title Date 2-1-95

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- x- private
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- x building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: contributing, Noncontributing. Rows include buildings, sites, structures, objects, and Total.

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGION Sub: Religious facility

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGION Sub: Religious facility, Church school, Cemetery, FUNERARY

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal
MID-19TH CENTURY: Greek Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
walls BRICK
roof METAL: tin
other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====
8. Statement of Significance
=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1846-1853

Significant Dates 1846

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Hall, Reverend Addison

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====
9. Major Bibliographical References
=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property 8.7 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	366910	4198390	2		
3				4		

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Douglas Rose
 organization Mary Washington College date Aug. 6, 1993
 street & number 1301 College Avenue telephone
 city or town Fredericksburg state VA zip code 22401

=====
Additional Documentation
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title
 street & number telephone
 city or town state zip code

=====
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Section 7 Page 1

**Coan Baptist Church
Northumberland, Virginia**

ARCHITECTURAL SUMMARY

Coan Baptist Church is located off State Route 612, adjacent to State Route 638, in Northumberland County. Built in 1846, it is a rectangular, two-story, gable-roofed, brick structure approximately forty-four feet wide and seventy feet in length. The church has a simple nave plan with a vestibule and side aisles, a configuration popular in mid nineteenth-century church construction in Virginia. The church displays strong classical architectural details and retains a high degree of architectural integrity in both plan and materials. A small wing containing several meeting rooms was added to the east corner of Coan Baptist Church in 1957. The church was enlarged again in 1975 when a baptistery and additional meeting rooms were added. The tract on which the church was constructed in 1846 includes the church building, its non-contributing additions, and two non-contributing cemeteries.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Coan Baptist Church is a large, two-story, gable-roofed, brick structure situated in a pastoral landscape in near Heathsville. Laid up in five-course American bond, its foundation is twenty-five inches thick. The three-bay, west gable end of Coan contains the church's principal entrance. At the center of the first floor is a double door flanked by a pair of pilasters and capped with an architrave, frieze, and cornice. A pair of windows, one directly above the other, also flank the main door. Above the entry at the second floor level is a tripartite window consisting of a six-over-six, double-hung sash flanked by a narrow, two-over-two, double-hung sashes. At the eaves level is a dentiled cornice that forms the base of a pediment. The raking cornices of the pediment have no dentils. A semi-circular fan light is contained in the tympanum.

All these windows are eight-over-eight, double-hung sash with stone lintels seven inches thick. The lower windows are 7'-7" tall while the upper windows are 5'-7" in height, a ratio that adds visual perspective to the elevation and gives the upper level a less massive appearance than the lower.

The five-bay north and south elevations of Coan possesses a neat, highly ordered symmetry in fenestration, dimension, and spacing. The first and second stories have narrow, equally-spaced windows creating equal ratios of solids, formed by the brick walls, to voids,

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formed by window openings. The gable roof is covered with standing-seam tin. Two asymmetrically-placed masonry flues that once served now-missing wood stoves still pierce the roof.

Two modern additions obscure portions of the east and south elevations. Extending twenty-four feet to the east of the original section of Coan of the church is a two-story, two-bay wing added in 1975. Its bricks are laid up in stretcher bond and the windows are smaller, uniform in size, and measure 3'-2" x 4'-4". The tar shingle roof also contrasts with that of the original section. An eighteen-foot hyphen built in 1957 at the south elevation connects the original structure to a Sunday school wing also added in 1957.

This latter addition copies some of the architectural motifs of the original facade. Its west elevation is faithful to the historical appearance of the church through the use of an entablature above the door and a circular, louvered opening resembling the fanlight in the tympanum. There is also a strong adherence to the symmetrical patterning of doors and windows. The south elevation of this addition ignores these architectural conventions. Furthermore, the wing extends to the east about eighty feet, offsetting and distinguishing it from the church. This arrangement clearly establishes the main structure as dominant to its additions and assists in preserving the integrity of the original design.

The plan of the church contains both classical and modern elements. Its rectangular massing contains a vestibule, nave with side aisles, choir, and chancel. Coan's main entrance in the west gable end leads directly into the vestibule. This room is 7'-9" deep and provides access through two four-paneled, heavy wooden doors into the nave. Two narrow, wooden, winding staircases lead to a gallery with pews. Rows of straight-backed, wooden pews fill most of the nave. Columns set along the side aisles support a full entablature and parapet that encloses the balcony. The pulpit is located in the middle of the chancel. Behind it is a raised choir.

Interior detailing is simple and well-executed. The walls are plastered and painted white. The ceiling consists of varnished tongue-and-groove boards. Large, unfluted pilasters that extend from floor to ceiling flank the chancel and the choir. They contain molded bases and capitals that support an architrave with plain dentil frieze and molded cornice. The chancel is separated from the nave by a recently-added balustrade with turned posts. A plaster medallion

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**Coan Baptist Church
Northumberland, Virginia**

rosette outlined with Greek-style moldings is set in the ceiling of the choir. A rectangular opening in the east wall above the choir opens into a small baptistery which was added in 1975. A large wooden cross is set on the rear wall of the baptistery. Of interest are three generations of lighting fixtures that survive in the nave. A brass six-armed oil lamp with glass globes is suspended from the ceiling as are early carbide gas lights. Recessed downlights are the most recent lighting features.

The U-plan gallery has simpler details than the first floor of the nave. Its pews, made from rough-sawn planks without end panels, are less refined than the modern pews on the first floor. The planks in the flooring are uneven and painted rather than varnished. The gallery pews are set in elevated rows but visibility of the pulpit is limited. At the time the church was constructed in 1846 the congregation had over 200 African members. It is likely the gallery was intended primarily to seat them.

The additions to the original section of Coan Church are like supplements to a text. The 1975 addition contains several meeting rooms and also provides access to the baptistery. The 1957 addition has a preparatory room measuring fifteen by eleven foot and a larger general purpose room thirty-one by twenty-nine feet. Small classrooms, a pastor's study, and rest rooms line a narrow corridor that leads away from the all-purpose room.

Renovations and modernizations to the church have occurred during the twentieth century, including the installation of electrical wiring in 1945, and the major renovations to the auditorium in 1965 and 1966. At this time, the walls of the auditorium were relathed and plastered, carpets laid on the floors, and new windows and pews were installed. Also during this renovation, the oil-burning brass chandelier was restored, electrified, and hung proudly in the nave of the church, where it had originally hung.

One of Coan's two cemeteries occupies several acres lying to the south of State Route 638. The headstones date primarily from the twentieth century and are generally arranged in rows. The most recent of about one hundred markers is dated January 16, 1989. Immediately behind the church toward the east there is a second, larger cemetery with headstones dating primarily from the late nineteenth century. Some are cracked and quite weathered, but most are still intact and legible. The oldest stone marks the grave of a four year old child who died

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**Coan Baptist Church
Northumberland, Virginia**

September 10, 1881. There are wide range of styles among the nearly two hundred grave markers.

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**Coan Baptist Church
Northumberland, Virginia**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Coan Baptist Church is a well-preserved architectural reflection of the Baptist revival which swept across the Northern Neck and Tidewater Virginia during the first half of the nineteenth century. As was true of other Baptist congregations during this period, Coan Baptist Church grew rapidly in membership from its founding as Wicomico Church in 1804 until its membership peaked in 1843. Shortly after this peak, the congregation, under the guidance of able pastor Addison Hall, planned to replace its "meeting house" with the present brick structure.

The building features design elements popular in other Protestant church structures in the area including the same block form, symmetrical facade with restrained details, gallery, and exterior door placement. During the construction of the new church in 1846 and 1847, members of the congregation worked under Reverend Hall's supervision to complete what was the largest church building in the Northern Neck, "[o]ur church is quite a spacious building," wrote a member of the congregation, "well designed, handsomely built and will be dedicated to the worship of God sometime during the fall."¹ Ironically, the construction of the church coincided with the end of rapid growth of the congregation, and the beginning of a period of stagnation that was evident by the end of Hall's pastorate.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Wicomico Baptist Church was formed on 17 November 1804, by former members of the Morattico Baptist Church and the Yeocomico Church, of Lancaster County and Northumberland County, respectively. The original congregation of twenty grew quickly under the leadership of their pastor, Samuel L. Straughan, and by 1806 they had grown to number one hundred and eighty-three.²

Reverend Jeremiah Bell Jeter became pastor of Wicomico Church in 1828. His pastorate followed a six year period during which the church had no pastor and membership had declined from 280 to 150. Under his guidance Wicomico Church grew dramatically and reached 533 members by the end of his tenure in 1835. Before he assumed the pastorate at Wicomico, Jeter was a domestic missionary who traveled throughout Sussex County to the seaboard and as far south as the North Carolina border. When he settled in the Northern Neck in 1828, he rapidly

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**Coan Baptist Church
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converted residents to the Baptist faith, and baptized 176 in 1832 alone. During his pastorate, Wicomico built its first campground in 1832 near Lancaster Courthouse and held its first camp meeting in 1834. It is estimated he baptized approximately one thousand throughout the Northern Neck during the period 1828 to 1836.¹

For the first few years, the Wicomico Church has no house of worship, and met "in private houses in winter and at rude stages erected in the woods in summer".³ In 1811, the church acquired three small buildings for the purpose of worship; the Middle Meeting House was granted them from the Morattico Baptist Church, a building was purchased at Coan Stage, and a small frame building was moved to the site of the current brick church.⁴ This building came to be known as the Coan Meeting House and served as the primary house of worship for the Wicomico Baptist Church congregation until 1847.

After the death of Reverend Straughan in 1821, the Wicomico Church entered a six year period of severe decline in which membership dropped from 280 to 150 parishioners. Reverend Jeremiah Bell Jeter became pastor of Wicomico Church in 1828, and under his guidance the congregation grew dramatically and reached 533 members by the end of his tenure in 1835. Before he assumed the pastorate at Wicomico, Jeter was a domestic missionary who traveled throughout Sussex County to the seaboard and as far south as the North Carolina border. When he settled in the Northern Neck in 1828, he rapidly converted residents to the Baptist faith, baptizing 176 in 1832 alone. It is estimated by baptized approximately one thousand throughout the Northern Neck during the period 1828 to 1836.⁵ During his pastorate, Wicomico built its first campground in 1832 near Lancaster Courthouse and held its first camp meeting in 1834.

Wicomico Church's dramatic growth reflected a nationwide Protestant revival that had begun in the early nineteenth century. Though not as emotionally charged as the Great Awakening of the 1740s, the second awakening was similar in its evangelistic approach. The Baptist revival was manifested in its foreign missions efforts, its domestic schools for Christian education, and its General Tract Society (1824) propaganda for promoting missionary interests. At the local level, many "camp meetings" spread the faith. By the time the Southern Baptist Convention was founded in 1845, one in twenty-seven Americans were Baptist. Only Presbyterians were more numerous.⁶

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During the 1840s, Virginia became the third-largest Baptist state in the South. One of every sixteen Virginians was a Baptist. In 1840 the Baptists started many colleges, including one which later became the University of Richmond. The strength of Baptists increased through the 1840s, and by the end of that decade, the number of their associations grew to twenty-four and the number of churches to 516.⁷

It was in this religious climate that Reverend Addison Hall served Wicomico as pastor from 1836 to 1853. Hall was a talented and able man, and his influence at Coan was considerable. He was a store owner before he became a preacher and lived in the Northern Neck his entire life. He studied law on his own and became a member of the bar on February 7, 1824. Shortly after, he was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates and served for five years. During his term, he delivered occasional sermons until officially licensed to preach in 1828. While living on a farm on Indian Creek in the town of Kilmarnock, he was head of the County Militia with the rank of colonel.⁸

As a statesman, minister, and military leader, Hall was familiar with the national mood of religious expansion. He was one of forty-three delegates from Virginia to attend the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845 and kept in contact with J. B. Jeter, a leading Southern Baptist spokesman. Hall became a pastor of Wicomico in 1836, and the church's growth accelerated--particularly in the 1840s. Membership reached an unprecedented high of 952 in 1843. At this point, "it was deemed expedient at the last session of the Dover Association to divide and form a new association," and Wicomico became a member of the new Rappahannock Association.⁹

Shortly after on November 9, 1844, the Wicomico congregation agreed a new, more substantial building was necessary to replace the aging Coan Meeting House at the site. Addison Hall was requested to draw up the plans for the new "meeting house." He chose classical motifs and the adaptable nave plan for what would be the largest church building in the Northern Neck. The construction of Coan Baptist Church was part of an architectural movement that changed the face of Protestant building throughout much of the state. In fact, the classical architectural idioms that Coan and most other congregations choose were used almost exclusively from 1820 until the Civil War. This style developed out of the new nation's recognition of its individuality and its search for social and political stability. Professional and amateur architects adopted Greek and Roman forms to American taste that were shaped by the Jacksonian sense that America was a nation of self-sufficient agrarians.

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**Coan Baptist Church
Northumberland, Virginia**

The exterior appearance of Coan, which survives today with only two modest and inconspicuous additions, is similar in form and detail to other rural churches in the Northern Neck. Morattico Baptist Church, built in 1853 and located in Lancaster County, is closely related. Both churches have brick walls heavily massed between windows, symmetrical facades with double doors, a central tripartite window, and a semi-circular opening within the pediment. Both have gallery balconies, and their exterior doors share identical locations. Also similar in appearance is Wicomico Methodist Church, built in 1856 nearby in Northumberland County.

The construction of Coan Church was a cooperative effort undertaken by members of the congregation. Robert Alexander had the wood cut to burn the bricks on a farm adjacent to the site. Cyrus Haynie furnished the window and door sills, joists, flooring planks, roof scantling, seats, and columns. Thomas S. Sydnor, Dandrige Cox, and Thomas B. Alexander purchased other materials for erecting the building. Construction of the church began in 1846 and finished in the fall of 1847. The total cost was 900 dollars.¹⁰

A crowd of several hundred attended the dedication of the new Coan Church on October 3, 1847. At this service Reverend Hall proclaimed "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former," meaning the previous frame meeting house. The beginning of a new era seemed apparent, and on the same day the congregation decided unanimously to adopt their informal, common name, officially becoming Coan Baptist Church.¹¹

Hall's prediction paradoxically marks the beginning of a decline in Coan's growth in numbers and coincided with an end of the national revival. A letter written in 1847 revealed a gloomy disposition, stating "the church has been very lukewarm in our Master's cause." Though membership was sustained at approximately 754 until the end of the Civil War, erosion of enthusiasm was well established by the time of Addison Hall resigned in 1853. Once again Coan followed a national trend, perhaps unwillingly, for by the early 1850s the Baptist revival in America was flagging. Church participation was seriously weakened in 1866, when 202 of 205 former slaves departed to form First Baptist Church.

Through the period of Reconstruction and into the twentieth century Coan Baptist Church was a diminished yet still important aspect of the religious life of Northumberland County. In 1891, in an effort to boost sagging membership, the church passed a resolution to build the Kirkland Grove Campground (separately listed in the VA SRHP, DHR 66-89), in honor of Dr.

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Northumberland, Virginia**

William Heath Kirk. Dr. Kirk was the assistant pastor of the church under Rev. Hall from 1836-1853, and then pastor from 1854 until his death in 1884, a service of thirty years.¹²

While the church would never again reach the glory of the decade of its construction, the congregation remained vigorous and its membership faithful, as evidenced by the two large cemeteries that have filled several acres to the south and east of the church. Agricultural prosperity that followed World War II enabled the church to build a classroom addition in 1957, and the need for additional educational space prompted a second expansion in 1975. Modest renovations to the interior of the church, also carried out at that time, are further evidence of the continued interest the congregation has in maintaining its historic church.

Coan Baptist Church's two decades of rapid growth in the first half of the nineteenth century enabled its congregation to build a large, brick structure embellished with the modest details found in other churches in Virginia and the nation between 1820 and 1850. The church, still in use, is a well-preserved reflection of the nineteenth-century Baptist revival and the reaction of one local congregation to its influence.

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**Coan Baptist Church
Northumberland, Virginia**

END NOTES

1. Hilda Swann and J. C. Barnes, Jr., comps., Stop and Look: The History of Coan Baptist Church (Tappahannock: Barbour Printing Services, 1979), 46.
2. Hilda Swann and J. C. Barnes, Jr., comps., Stop and Look: The History of Coan Baptist Church (Tappahannock: Barbour Printing Services, 1979), 20.
3. Swann and Barnes, Stop and Look, 21.
4. Swann and Barnes, Stop and Look, 25.
5. Swann and Barnes, Stop and Look, pp. 36-41.
6. Jesse L. Boyd, A History of Baptists in America (New York: The American Press, 1957), 158-160.
7. Boyd, History of Baptists, 189.
8. Swann and Barnes, Stop and Look, 51.
9. Swann and Barnes, Stop and Look, 44; Roger G. Kennedy, Greek Revival America (New York: Stewart Tabori & Chang, 1989), 3-4; Talbot Hamlin, Greek Revival Architecture in America (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1944), 315-326.
10. Swann and Barnes, Stop and Look, 46.
11. Swann and Barnes, Stop and Look, 47.
12. Swann and Barnes, Stop and Look, pp. 55, 74.

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**Coan Baptist Church
Northumberland, Virginia**

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Boyd, Jesse L. A History of Baptists in America. New York: The American Press, 1957.

Hamlin, Talbot. Greek Revival Architecture in America. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1944.

Kennedy, Roger G. Greek Revival America. New York: Stewart Tabori & Chang, 1989.

Northumberland County Deed Book A

Northumberland County Deed Book E

Northumberland County Deed Book G

Northumberland County Deed Book U

Northumberland County Deed Book FF

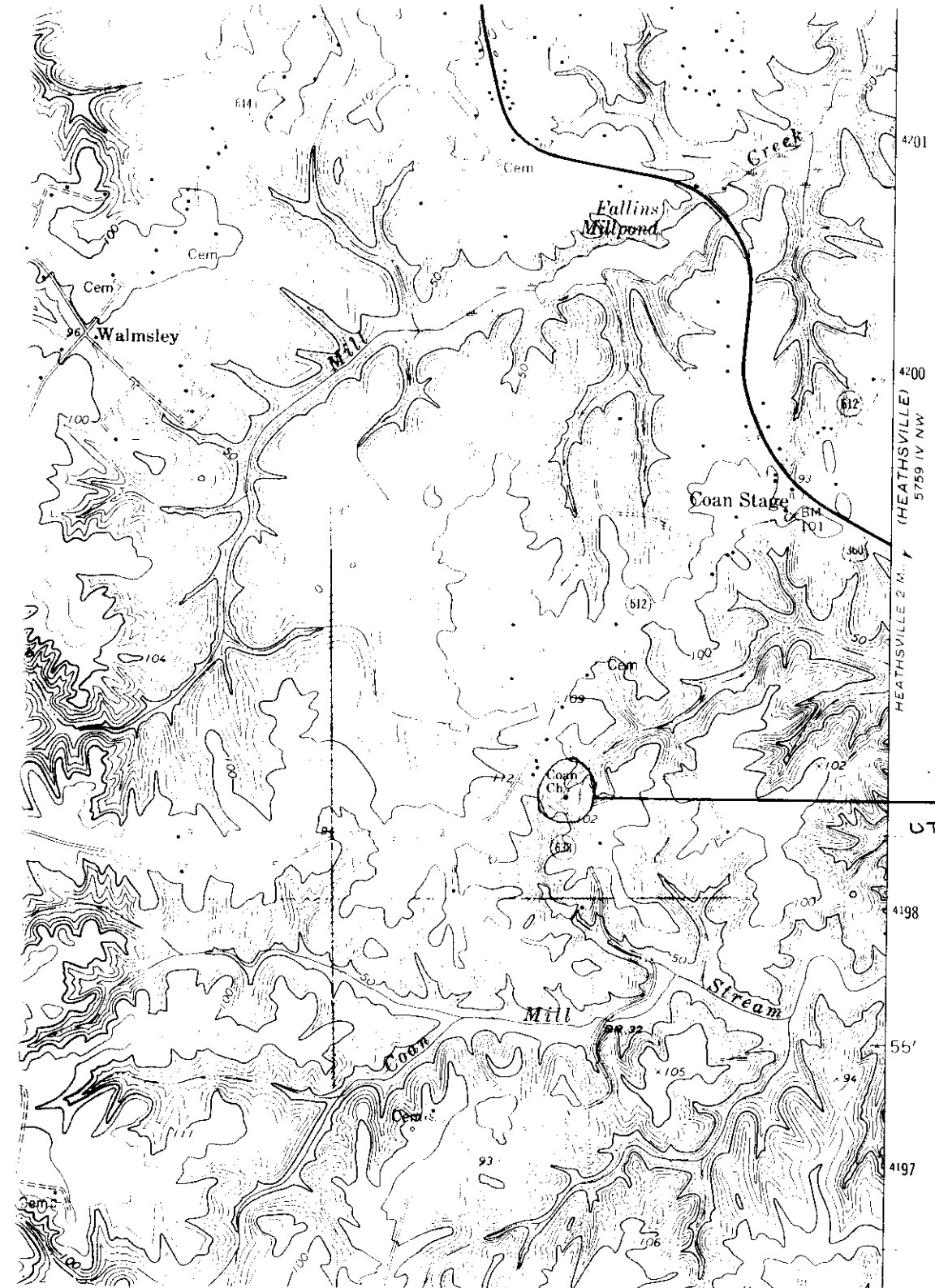
Northumberland County Deed Book 220

Northumberland County Deed Book 314

Northumberland County Record Book 19

Northumberland County Record Book 27

Swann, Hilda and J. C. Barnes, et. als., comps. Stop and Look: The History of Coan Baptist Church. Tappahannock: Barbour Printing Services, 1979.



4701

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HEATHSVILLE 2 M. N. 7
(HEATHSVILLE)
5759 IV NW

4198

55'

4197

Coan Bapt. Church
VDR 66-86

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