

Site of National Significance

Christ Church (Alexandria), Virginia*

Location: Southeast corner of Cameron and Columbus Streets, Alexandria, Virginia.

Ownership: Fairfax Episcopal Parish, 118 N. Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia.

Statement of Significance

Christ Church, Alexandria, designed by James Wren and erected in 1767-73, is probably the finest surviving and least-altered example of the type of the small rectangular two-story brick church that was utilized in Virginia during the last third of the 18th century. Although Christ Church has been somewhat enhanced by the additions of galleries and a tower in the period 1785-1818, the structure has never been abandoned or had its interior completely stripped as is the case with the other extant examples of this late-Georgian type of church.

History

In 1765 Truro Parish was divided and Fairfax Parish, containing the congregation in Alexandria, was laid off. In 1765 the Vestry of the new parish decided to build two new churches, one at Alexandria and the other at Falls Church. The architect selected for both churches (and in 1769 he also did the plans for Pohick Church) was Colonel James Wren. James Parson served as the first contractor for Christ Church in Alexandria. Construction began in 1767, but he was unable to finish the structure. The Vestry then gave the second contract to John Carlyle and the church was accepted as completed on February 23, 1773. Total cost of the two contracts was 1820.

Built on a new rectangular plan, with two tiers of windows, Christ Church is about 60 feet long and 50 feet wide. The walls, 28 feet high, are laid in Flemish bond. The facades, five-bays long and three-bays wide, are symmetrically composed with rectilinear windows below and arched windows above. Stone quoins, painted white, emphasize the corners of the building and similarly painted keystones accent the flat-arched

*This church should be compared with Pohick Church, Virginia. Both are of the same general plan and type.

brick lintels of the first tier of windows and the arched brick headings of those above. The broad hipped roof rises above a continuous modillioned cornice to a short ridge and the roof was originally covered with cypress shingles. The east end wall is pierced by a two-tier-high Palladian window which is framed by four pilasters and a broken pediment in the Tuscan order. The entrances are located in the three-bay wide west end and were originally comprised of two doors separated by a center window. (The center window was converted to a third door in 1818, when the tower was added at this point). The two original entranceways are framed by rusticated masonry, Tuscan pilasters, and triangular pediments.

The interior has two east-west aisles, leading from the two original doors. The aisles have floors of tile laid on flagstone. The high box pews, arranged into three groups by the aisles, have pine floors. There is some question over the original arrangement of the pews and pulpit: some believe that the canopied raised pulpit, now centered before the fine Palladian window in the east wall, was originally located against the center of the long north wall. The existing wooden galleries which extend around the north, west, and south interior wall, were added at some date between 1785 and 1800. A rectangular tower, 16 feet wide and 17 feet deep, was added to the church in 1818. Centered on the west end, the brick tower is three stories high and supports an octagonal brick and wood belfry that rises in three stages and the whole is topped by a cupola.

Condition

Unlike most other Virginia churches, Christ Church was not abandoned during the Revolution and Disestablishment, and its interiors were not permitted to fall into ruins. Federal troops also occupied Alexandria during the Civil War and Christ Church continued to be used for religious purposes. Once again the building was spared the fate that befell most other Virginia churches. The exterior (walls, windows, doors, and exterior woodwork) is original and unaltered, except for the addition of the tower at the west end. The interior reflects organic change and includes both 18th and 19th century woodwork. The church is in excellent condition. Still active as a church, the building is also open to visitors.

References: Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952), 367; A. Coffin and A. C. Holden, Brick Architecture of the Colonial Period in Maryland and Virginia (New York, 1919), 15, 27; Aymar Embury, Early American Churches (New York, 1914), 80-82; Robert A. Lancaster, Historic Virginia Homes and Churches (Philadelphia, 1915); George C. Mason, Colonial Churches of Tidewater Virginia (Richmond, 1945); William B. O'Neal, Architecture in Virginia (New York, 1963), 133; James S. Rawlings, Virginia's Colonial Churches, An Architectural Guide (Richmond, 1963); Harold W. Rose, The Colonial Houses of Worship in America (New York, 1963); Edward F. Rines, Old Historic Churches of America (New York, 1936), 35-37; Virginia, A Guide

to the Old Dominion (American Guide Series) (New York, 1940), 179-181,202; Stephen P. Dorsey, Early English Churches in America, 1607-1807 (New York, 1952); Deering Davis, Stephen P. Dorsey, and R. C. Hall, Alexandria Houses, 1750-1750-1830 (New York, 1946), 70-71; Historic American Buildings Survey: (13 sheets, 1958; 51 photos, 1958, and 4 data pages, 1958).

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings

Christ Church, Alexandria, Virginia

Christ Church, Alexandria, designed by James Wren and erected in 1767-1773 is a superior and little-altered survivor of the type of small rectangular two-story brick church that was utilized in Virginia during the last third of the 18th century.

Built on a new rectangular plan, with two tiers of windows, Christ Church is about 60 feet long and 50 feet wide. The walls are laid in Flemish bond. The facades, five-bays long and three-bays wide, are symmetrically composed with rectilinear windows below and arched windows above. Stone quoins, painted white, emphasize the corners of the building and similarly painted keystones accent the flat-arched brick lintels of the first tier of windows and the arched brick headings of those above. The broad hipped roof rises above a continuous modillioned cornice to a short ridge and the roof was originally covered with cypress shingles. The east end wall is pierced by a two-tier-high Palladian window which is framed by four pilasters and a broken pediment in the Tuscan order. The entrances are located in the three-bay wide west end and were originally comprised of two doors separated by a center window. (The center window was converted to a third door in 1818, when the tower was added at this point). The two original entranceways are framed by rusticated masonry, Tuscan pilasters, and triangular pediments.

The interior has two east-west aisles, leading from the two original doors. The aisles have floors of tile laid on flagstone. The high box pews, arranged into three groups by the aisles, have pine floors. There is some question over the original arrangement of the pews and pulpit. Some believe that the canopied raised pulpit, now centered before the fine Palladian window in the east wall, was originally located against the center of the long north wall. The existing wooden galleries which extend around the north, west, and south interior wall, were added at some date between 1785 and 1800. A rectangular tower was added to the church in 1818. Centered on the west end, the brick tower is three stories high and supports an octagonal brick and wood belfry that rises in three stages and the whole is topped by a cupola.

*Put in in late 1820's
Colonial Revival according
to photo groups in Library of
Congress CFP
6/2/78*

Unlike most other Virginia churches, Christ Church was not abandoned during the Revolution and Disestablishment, and its interiors were not permitted to fall into ruins. Federal troops also occupied Alexandria during the Civil War and Christ Church continued to be used for religious purposes. Once again the building was spared the fate that befell most other Virginia churches. The exterior (walls, windows, doors, and exterior woodwork) is original and unaltered, except for the addition of the tower at the west end. The interior reflects organic change and includes both 18th and 19th-century woodwork. Still active as a church, it is also open to visitors.

* * * * *

NSHSB: 1/5/70
C W S



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

A1619-DOS

APR 13 1970

Memorandum

To: Secretary of the Interior
Through: Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife,
Parks, and Marine Resources

LP
4/14

From: ^{Acting} Director, National Park Service

Subject: National Historic Landmark recommendations, 61st meeting
of the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites,
Buildings and Monuments

Enclosed herewith is the memorandum of the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments summarizing its findings and recommendations on the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings partial theme study of "Colonial Architecture." This memorandum makes two principal recommendations: (1) That 77 sites encompassed by this study be declared eligible for National Historic Landmark status. These are listed under Sections A, B, C, and D of the memorandum; (2) That 41 of these sites be given further consideration in long range plans for addition to the National Park System.

We recommend that you approve the Advisory Board's memorandum, and that it be returned to this office to become a part of the permanent record of actions recommended by the Board and approved by you.

Harthon L. Price

Enclosure

Approved: APR 15 1970

Walter Hickel
Secretary of the Interior



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

October 8, 1969

Memorandum

To: Secretary of the Interior

From: Chairman, Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments

Subject: National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings: Partial study of "Colonial Architecture" comprising sites in eighteen States and the District of Columbia

The Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments, at its 61st meeting in Washington, D. C., October 6-9, 1969, having carefully evaluated the partial study of "Colonial Architecture," submits the following statements with recommendations:

A. Of the sites included in the study, the following are recognized as nationally significant in illustrating or commemorating the history of the United States, and it is recommended that they be declared eligible for designation as Registered National Historic Landmarks with boundaries, as appropriate, described in attachments:

Alaska

1. Church of the Holy Ascension, Unalaska
2. Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Kenai

California

3. Anza House
4. Jose Castro House
5. Estudillo House
6. Fort Ross Commander's House
7. Fort Ross Russian Orthodox Church
8. Guajome Ranchhouse
9. Los Alamos Ranchhouse
10. Los Cerritos Ranchhouse
11. Monterey Old Town Historic District
12. Petaluma Adobe
13. San Diego Mission Church
14. San Juan Bautista Plaza Historic District
15. San Luis Rey Mission Church
16. Vhay House

Delaware

17. Aspendale

Florida

18. Llambias House
19. Oldest House
20. St. Augustine Town Plan Historic District

Illinois

21. Church of the Holy Family
22. Pierre Menard House

Louisiana

23. Keller (Homeplace) Plantation House
24. Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop
25. Mayor Girod House
26. Madame John's Legacy
27. Parlange Plantation House
28. Presbytere

Maryland

29. Brice House
30. Chase-Lloyd House
31. Chestertown Historic District
32. His Lordship's Kindness
33. London Town Publik House
34. Montpelier
35. Mount Clare
36. Resurrection Manor
37. Tulip Hill
38. West St. Mary's Manor
39. Wye House

Missouri

40. Louis Bolduc House

New Mexico

41. San Estevan del Rey Mission Church
42. San Francisco de Assissi Mission Church
43. San Jose de Gracia Church

North Carolina

44. Chowan County Courthouse
45. Cupola House
46. Palmer-Marsh House
47. Single Brothers' House

South Carolina

48. Brick House Ruin
49. William Gibbes House
50. Hampton Plantation
51. Heyward-Washington House
52. Middleburg Plantation
53. Pompion Hill Chapel
54. St. James' Episcopal Church, Goose Creek
55. St. James' Episcopal Church, Santee
56. St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

Texas

57. Mission Concepcion
58. Spanish Governor's Palace

Virginia

59. Brandon
60. Bruton Parish Church
61. Carter's Grove
62. Christ Church, Alexandria
63. Kenmore
64. Sabine Hall
65. James Semple House
66. Shirley
67. Waterford Historic District
68. Wythe House
69. Yeocomico Church

Washington

70. Fort Nisqually Granary

B. Three sites included in the portion of Colonial Architecture that considered the Middle Colonies are recognized as nationally significant and it is recommended that they be declared eligible for designation as Registered National Historic Landmarks:

1. William Trent House, New Jersey
2. Christ Church, Pennsylvania
3. Carpenters' Hall, Pennsylvania

C. Two sites included in this study are recognized as nationally significant in Theme IV, "Spanish Exploration and Settlement." It is recommended that they be declared eligible for recognition as Registered National Historic Landmarks:

1. La Purisima Mission, California
2. Cathedral of St. Augustine, Florida

D. Two sites not originally included within this study are recommended for designation as National Historic Landmarks within Theme XX, Subtheme, "Architecture."

1. El Santuario de Chimayo, New Mexico
2. Peyton Randolph House, Virginia

E. Other Recommendations:

1. That the following sites be placed in the category of "Other Sites Considered:"

California

- (1) Avila House
- (2) La Casa de Cota de la Cuesta
- (3) La Casa de Eduardo de la Cuesta
- (4) Covarrubias Adobe
- (5) De La Guerra Adobe
- (6) El Cuartel
- (7) Guadalupe (Olivera) Ranch House No. 1
- (8) Hill-Carrillo Adobe
- (9) Ortega House

- (10) Plaza Church
- (11) Rocha House
- (12) San Diego Old Town Historic District
- (13) San Juan Capistrano Mission Church

District of Columbia

- (14) Alva Belmont House

Illinois

- (15) Cahokia Courthouse
- (16) Cahokia Historic District

Louisiana

- (17) Darby Plantation House
- (18) Ormond Plantation

Maryland

- (19) Emmanuel Protestant Episcopal Church
- (20) Genesar
- (21) Hammond Manor House
- (22) Kilmarock (Burleane Hall)
- (23) Ogle Hall
- (24) Otterbein Church
- (25) Patuxent Manor House
- (26) St. John's Episcopal Church, Broad Creek
- (27) St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Kent County
- (28) Talbot County Court House
- (29) Third Haven Meeting House
- (30) Trinity Episcopal Church, Dorchester County

Missouri

- (31) Jean Baptiste Valle House

New Mexico

- (32) San Geronimo de Taos Mission Church

North Carolina

- (33) Bath Historic District
- (34) St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Edenton
- (35) St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Bath
- (36) Tryon Palace, Original (West) Wing

South Carolina

- (37) Branford-Horry House
- (38) Fenwick Hall
- (39) Medway Plantation
- (40) Thomas Rose House
- (41) Col. John Stuart House
- (42) Sword Gate House

Virginia

- (43) Berkeley Plantation
- (44) Brafferton Hall, College of William and Mary
- (45) The Glebe House
- (46) Noland's Ferry House
- (47) Pohick Church
- (48) President's House, College of William and Mary
- (49) Smithfield Plantation
- (50) Tazewell House

West Virginia

- (51) Crane (Lord Fairfax) House
- (52) Mordington (Happy Retreat)
- (53) Governor Tiffin House

2. That the following sites be given further study under this theme:

California

- (1) Olivas Adobe
- (2) San Gabriel Mission Church

Colorado

- (3) Baca House

Connecticut

- (4) Hatheway House

Delaware

- (5) Christ Church, Laurel
- (6) Prince George's Chapel

Florida

- (7) Spanish Treasurer's House

Louisiana

- (8) African House, Melrose Plantation
- (9) Creole Cottage
- (10) Louis Arceneaux House
- (11) E. D. White Memorial Cottage
- (12) Voisin Plantation House
- (13) Spanish Custom House
- (14) Erariste Blanc House
- (15) Montegut House
- (16) Bank of the United States
- (17) Absinthe House
- (18) Cathedral of St. Louis

Maryland

- (19) Carroll Mansion
- (20) Providence Plantation
- (21) Queen Anne's County Courthouse
- (22) Horatio Sharp (Rideout) House
- (23) Scott House
- (24) St. John's Episcopal Church, Hillsboro
- (25) St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Church Hill
- (26) St. Luke's Episcopal Church or Tuckahoe Chapel, Queenstown
- (27) Old Wye Church
- (28) Doughoregan Manor

New Mexico - Florida

- (29) Pascual Martinez Ranch House
- (30) Santa Fe and Albuquerque and Pensacola town plans

North Carolina

- (31) Breezeway type of Colonial House
- (32) Edenton Historic District
- (33) Hayes Plantation House
- (34) Sycamore Plantation

South Carolina

- (35) Edward's House
- (36) Edisto Hall

Virginia

- (37) Battersea
- (38) Blandfield
- (39) Carlyle House
- (40) Dulaney House
- (41) Elmwood
- (42) Hanover Tavern
- (43) Hanover Courthouse
- (44) King William Courthouse
- (45) Long Bridge Ordinary
- (46) Marmion
- (47) Powhatan Courthouse
- (48) Powhatan Tavern
- (49) Three-story wooden row houses, south side of 200 block of
Prince Street in Alexandria
- (50) Smithfield Courthouse
- (51) Washington Historic District
- (52) Wetherburn's Tavern
- (53) Fincastle Historic District

West Virginia

- (54) Harewood
- (55) Sweet Springs

F. The National Park System includes the following structures that are Importantly Related to this study:

1. Tumacacori National Monument, Arizona
2. Castillo de San Marcos National Monument, Florida
3. Fort Matanzas National Monument, Florida

4. Hampton National Historic Site, Maryland
5. Nelson House, Colonial National Historical Park, Virginia
6. San Jose Mission Church, Texas

G. Forty-eight sites related to this theme have been classified as possessing national significance in other theme studies. These are:

Importantly Related to Colonial Architecture

1. Russian Mission Orphanage, Alaska
2. San Xavier del Bac Mission Church, Arizona
3. Carmel Mission Church, California
4. Larkin House, California
5. Old Custom House, California
6. Royal Presidio Chapel, California
7. Santa Barbara Mission Church, California
8. Sonoma Pueblo Historic District, California (with boundaries enlarged and defined in the attachments)
9. Savannah Historic District, Georgia
10. The Cabildo, Louisiana
11. Ursuline Convent, Louisiana
12. Vieux Carre Historic District, Louisiana
13. Jackson Square, Louisiana
14. Colonial Annapolis Historic District, Maryland
15. Hammond-Harwood House, Maryland
16. Maryland State House, Maryland
17. Whitehall, Maryland
18. Ste. Genevieve Historic District, Missouri
19. Palace of the Governors, New Mexico
20. Old Salem Historic District, North Carolina
21. Miles Brewton House, South Carolina
22. Robert Brewton House, South Carolina
23. Charleston Historic District, South Carolina (with boundaries enlarged and defined in the attachments)
24. Drayton Hall, South Carolina
25. Mulberry Plantation, South Carolina
26. St. Michael's Episcopal Church, South Carolina
27. Presidio de La Bahia, Texas
28. Alexandria Historic District, Virginia
29. Bacon's Castle, Virginia
30. Christ Church, Lancaster County, Virginia

31. Colonial Williamsburg Historic District, Virginia
32. Gadsby's Tavern, Virginia
33. Gunston Hall, Virginia
34. Mount Airy, Virginia
35. Mount Vernon, Virginia
36. St. Luke's Church, Virginia
37. Stratford Hall, Virginia
38. Adam Thoroughgood House, Virginia
39. Tuckahoe Plantation, Virginia
40. Westover, Virginia
41. Wren Building, College of William and Mary, Virginia

Also Related to Colonial Architecture

42. Erskine House, Alaska
43. St. Michael's Cathedral, Alaska
44. Commandant's House, Presidio of San Francisco, California
45. Las Trampas Plaza Historic District, New Mexico
46. Salem Tavern, Old Salem, North Carolina
47. The Alamo, Texas
48. Rising Sun Tavern, Virginia

H. The Board recommends that the Old State (Colony) House in Newport, Rhode Island, a Landmark previously placed in the category of Also Related to Colonial Architecture, be noted as being Importantly Related to Colonial Architecture.

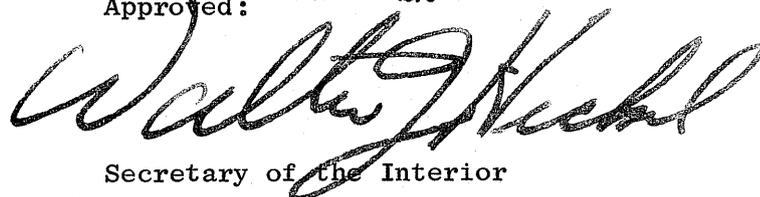
I. The following sites are judged of such prime significance as to merit further study for possible addition to the National Park System. It is recognized that many, such as Colonial Williamsburg, are being adequately preserved at present and are not available. Because unforeseen contingencies may change present circumstances, such sites should nevertheless be identified as potential units of the system and noted for long-range consideration in the evolution of the National Park System Plan.

1. Russian Mission Orphanage, Alaska
2. San Xavier del Bac Mission Church, Arizona
3. Fort Ross, California
4. Guajome Ranchhouse, California
5. Los Alamos Ranchhouse, California
6. Monterey Old Town Historic District, California

7. Petaluma Adobe, California
8. Royal Presidio Chapel, California
9. Santa Barbara Mission Church, California
10. Church of the Holy Family, Illinois
11. Parlange Plantation House, Louisiana
12. Vieux Carre Historic District, Louisiana
13. Colonial Annapolis Historic District, Maryland
14. Resurrection Manor, Maryland
15. Tulip Hill, Maryland
16. Whitehall, Maryland
17. Wye House, Maryland
18. Ste. Genevieve Historic District, Missouri
19. San Estevan del Rey Mission Church (Acoma), New Mexico
20. San Jose de Gracia Church (Las Trampas), New Mexico
21. Old Salem Historic District, North Carolina
22. Charleston Historic District, South Carolina
23. Drayton Hall, South Carolina
24. Mulberry Plantation, South Carolina
25. St. James Episcopal Church, Goose Creek, South Carolina
26. St. James Episcopal Church, Santee, South Carolina
27. Mission Concepcion (San Antonio Missions Park Proposal), Texas
28. Presidio de la Bahia (Goliad Complex), Texas
29. Alexandria Historic District, Virginia
30. Brandon, Virginia
31. Bacon's Castle, Virginia
32. Christ Church, Lancaster County, Virginia
33. Colonial Williamsburg Historic District, Virginia
34. Gunston Hall, Virginia
35. Mount Airy, Virginia
36. Mount Vernon, Virginia
37. St. Luke's Church, Virginia
38. Shirley, Virginia
39. Stratford Hall, Virginia
40. Adam Thoroughgood House, Virginia
41. Westover, Virginia


Emil W. Haury

Approved: **APR 15 1970**


Secretary of the Interior