

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
(NATIONAL HISTORIC INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM  
LANDMARKS)

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Virginia
COUNTY: Isle of Wight
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Newport Parish Church; Old Brick; Saint Luke's Smithfield

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Saint Luke's Church

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Benn's Church, near Smithfield      CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 004

STATE: Virginia      CODE: 51      COUNTY: Isle of Wight      CODE: 093

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Historic Saint Luke's Restoration, Inc. Calvin Elder, President

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Smithfield      STATE: Virginia      CODE: 51

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Clerk of the Circuit Court

STREET AND NUMBER:  
on Route 258, with the Post Office and Court House

CITY OR TOWN: Isle of Wight 23397      STATE: Virginia      CODE: 51

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1934, 1936, 1958     Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Capitol Hill

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: D.C.      CODE: 11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Newport Parish Church, or Saint Luke's as it is more familiarly but unofficially known, is the most convincingly gothic church in America. Erected possibly as early as 1632, this is a small church of the English late-medieval period, with considerable gothic detailing.

Basically, Saint Luke's is a simple nave plan (29'4 and 3/4" X 65'7 3/4") with a twenty foot square tower at the west end. Its two-foot-thick walls are laid in a rough Flemish bond, including crude tracery in brick, forming pointed lancet windows. The large lancet east wall is a striking exercise in brick tracery. Deep wall buttresses project prominently from three bays of the north and south walls. They have sloping set-offs.

At both the east and west end of the church are crow-stepped gables, while unadorned turrets, corbelled slightly at their bases, decorate the corners of the building.

The tower at the west end of Saint Luke's is one of its most interesting features, with a suggestion on first sight that there may here be a suggestion of classical awareness in late 17th century America. The triangular feature over the doorway is a particularly intriguing one which one might think to be a crude example of the forever-used renaissance pediment. However, not only does its heaviness argue against the spirit of the renaissance, but the use of this feature may easily be traced to similar usage in English high-style architecture of the very late sixteenth century.

The shape and depth of the round arch below that triangle, also argues against anything but a traditional outlook by the builders. It is heavy and very three-dimensional (an effect created by cleverly turning the outside wall towards the inside of the arch with moulded bricks) giving the effect more of a Romanesque archivolt than anything classical.

The Newport Parish Church was doubtless planned with a tower but with one of only two storeys, which almost certainly terminated in Gothic crenellation. The quoining of those two storeys, which again could be interpreted as a classical reference, in fact is a feature to be found mixed together with medieval elements in English Architecture as early as the mid-sixteenth century.

Despite these few rebuttals to the arguments of a classical mixture in the tower of Saint Luke's however, it is certainly in fact that. In the third storey of that tower, added in the late seventeenth century, we have something that William Pierson calls "...precocious....forming a prophetic prelude of things to come...." A remarkable visual change from the earlier heavy quoining to much more delicate pilaster strips marks a new awareness of architectural trends acquired by men of increasing cultural pre-occupation. Based upon extensive research compiled by The Historic Saint Luke's Foundation in the 1950's, it seems safe to say that the

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |  |                                       |                                       |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **c-1632-late 1600's?**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |   |                                       |  |  |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal     | <input type="checkbox"/> Education    | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric    | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering  | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry     | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture    | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture   | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape    | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art            | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce       | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature   | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military     |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation   | <input type="checkbox"/> Music        |  |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The Newport Parish Church, more familiarly known as Saint Luke's, is the oldest remaining church of English foundation in the United States. Although there is still some question about the date of the building, research indicates 1632 to be the most likely date of its construction. Its interior appointments are in a later, more Jacobean spirit, now restored, but the fabric of the church places it firmly in the late-medieval English small parish church style. While Saint Luke's is not stylistically coherent, it instead provides examples of various periods of English gothic architecture. Its entrance for instance, with heavy round arch, is practically Romanesque; its brick-traceried lancet window in the east wall suggests high English gothic, while the crow-stepped gables at either end are suggestive of the late-gothic period. In the third storey of the tower, added several decades after the first two, we have a suggestion of the classical style of the English architecture of the late seventeenth century. Saint Luke's belongs as much to the history of Western Architecture as it does to that of early colonial America.

The dating of Saint Luke's has been a challenging task for researchers for some time. Best evidence however places the date at about 1632, with the interior completed only over the course of the next three decades. Colonel Joseph Bridger, who was definitely in the vicinity by 1657, commissioned the Driver brothers to complete the interior after that. The third storey was added to the tower at the west end of Saint Luke's in the late seventeenth century.

With the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Virginia during the 1780's, Newport Parish Church sank into a decline from which it recovered only in the twentieth century. Its use became intermittent only, over those years.

In 1828, a young deacon renamed the "Old Brick" Saint Luke's, but as Morrison points out, the new name was never validated by consecration or action of the vestry and the most appropriate name remains The Newport Parish Church. The building was again closed four years later.

By the late nineteenth century, the Old Brick had been long-neglected, and during a violent storm in the 1880's, the roof collapsed and bricks were dislodged from the walls. Several bricks were supposedly found then

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

William H. Pierson, Jr., American Buildings and their Architects: The Colonial Period. (New York, 1970).  
 Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952).  
 James Grote Vanderpool, "The Restoration of Saint Luke's, Smithfield, Virginia" in The Journal of The Society of Architectural Historians, Vol. XVII, No. 1, March 1958.  
 Henry C. Foreman, Virginia Architecture in the Seventeenth Century (Williamsburg, 1957).  
 Edward F. Rines, Old Historic Churches of America (New York, 1936).

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		UTM	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

18.358740.4089180

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **Five**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
 James Dillon - Review Project Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION: National Historic Landmarks, Landmark Review Project      DATE: 10/23/74

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 1100 L. Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: D.C.      CODE: 11

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK)  
 Designated: Oct. 9, 1960

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
 Boundary Commission

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK)  
 Chief, Hist. S. Arch. Serv.

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Description second page

building program there may be divided into work done before 1657, and work done after that. When compared with the nearby work of the 1660's at Bacon's Castle, which also shows a sense of social ambitiousness, we can see the same cultural self-consciousness in the post-1657 work at Newport Parish Church. The classical pilasters are a limited but definite piece of evidence of that striving.

The interior appointments of Saint Luke's were not added until a number of years after completion of the fabric of the building, and after 1657 Colonel Joseph Bridger commissioned Charles and Thomas Driver to complete the work and add the third storey to the tower. The roof has been rebuilt a number of times and doubtless originally had a steeper, more gothic, pitch. The tie-beam timber-truss, closed above the collar beam, has also been rebuilt but is based upon the original scheme as verified by reasearch.

Originally, a gallery existed at the west end of the nave, supported by a massive hewn oak beam, and this has been rebuilt, as has been the rood screen in the chancel and the square brick tiles in the floor of the church. The original stained-glass windows were replaced in the nineteenth century and those Victorian windows remain in place today.

While there has been an extensive refitting of the interior, the work has been based upon meticulous research over a period of several years and must be considered as "correct" as humanly possible. This conjectural restoration has not affected the external appearance of the church except for some change to the pitch of the roof.

The Newport Parish Church is located in the township of Benn's Church, Virginia, not far from Smithfield in Isle of Wight County, and in fact, is often referred to simply as "Saint Luke's Smithfield". Surrounded by a graveyard and a golf course, only part of the former is owned by the Historic Saint Luke's Foundation, and none of the latter. A rather complicated boundary winds through the churchyard, dividing land owned by the church and land owned by the Benn's Church Cemetery, confusingly called Saint Luke's Cemetery. A sketch map shows that separation.

Land immediately east of the church boundary is used as a golf course and the Foundation has recently purchased 2 acres of land directly behind the church and planted there a stand of pine trees which now contributes significantly to the visual integrity of the site. To the north of the church are a pair of small ponds, and a stream running east-west, a tributary of Jones Creek. A visitors-center building sits to the south and west of Saint Luke's at a distance of perhaps 75 yards. The land between the two is a tree-covered slope falling off towards the church, divided by a dirt road running north-south. Further south is private land used as pasture.

A reasonable boundary around Saint Luke's should be made in the

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following way: beginning on State Route 10 beside the more western of the two ponds and continuing east along the northern shore of both ponds and then along the creek to an arbitrary point at UTM 18.358840.4089340 then south to another point at UTM 18.358900.4089160 so as to include the two acres of land at the rear of the church providing an important visual protection there from the golf course to the east. The line should then come back west to route 10 (UTM 18.358620.4089080) running finally along the eastern boundary of the road to the starting point at the pond. This boundary will include the visitors-center, which is not part of the Landmark of course, but no other buildings than Saint Luke's. Although this will be a site of only about 5 acres, it is laid out in such a way as to present a serene and somewhat bucolic setting for a church whose associations, after all should hearken us back to an era of quiet, rustic charm. From the church, the slope of the hill towards the west and south safeguards our view. To the north, we see the ponds in the near distance, and to the east, a stand of pine trees planted as a screen by the Foundation. All of these features contribute significantly to the integrity of Saint Luke's surroundings.

The grounds are well-maintained near the church by the Foundation, even though a number of the grave lots are in private hands and would otherwise be overgrown. The building itself is excellently maintained by the resources of the Foundation and Saint Luke's is open to the public daily with an accompanying guide. It is used occasionally for funerals and weddings, while services are scheduled only three days of the year.

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8. Significance second page

with the date 1632 incised, settling once and for all the date of the first construction. It didn't.

The roof was rebuilt, but Saint Luke's was neglected again and by 1950 ominous bulges had appeared in the basement walls and the building seemed to be in danger of collapse. A dramatic nationwide appeal was mounted, and sufficient funds were raised to research and restore Saint Luke's to a respectable condition. Headed by James Grote Vanderpool, then Avery Architectural Librarian at Columbia University, an intensive and extended (1953-1957) historical and archeological program was developed to reconstruct much of the interior which had been altered during Georgian and Victorian periods, as well as to stabilize and restore the exterior. The March 1958 issue of the Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians contains an account of the particulars of the work done.

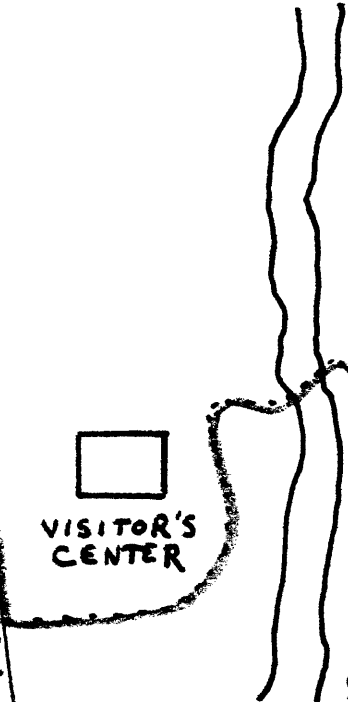
The church and a small amount of land around it is still owned and administered by The Historic Saint Luke's Foundation, which maintains it in excellent condition. The third storey of the tower has recently been filled with de-humidification equipment for the church.



STATE ROUTE 10



JONES CREEK TRIBUTARY

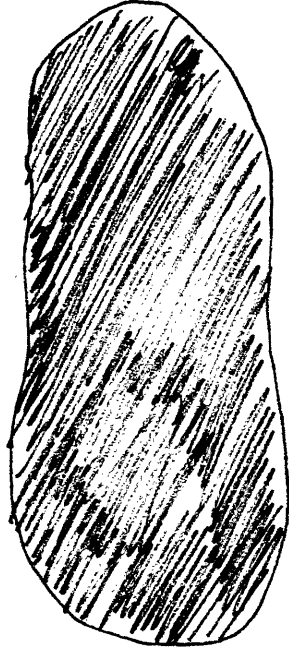


VISITOR'S CENTER

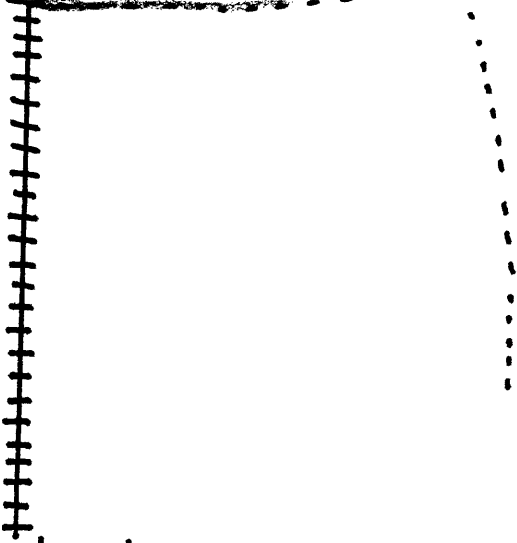
DIRT ROAD

ST. LUKE'S

2 ACRES  
RECENTLY ACQUIRED  
STAND OF PINES



GOLF COURSE



BOUNDARY FENCE

BOUNDARY ———

*A. Fisher 1/14*