

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC GREEN-MELDRIM HOUSE--ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

NW and Sw corners of Bull and Harris Streets on the west side of Madison Square

CITY, TOWN

Savannah

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

STATE

Georgia

VICINITY OF

CODE

COUNTY

Chatham

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☒ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Saint John's Church Wardens and Vestry, Reverend William N. Ralston, Jr.

STREET & NUMBER

1 West Macon Street

CITY, TOWN

Savannah

VICINITY OF

STATE

Georgia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Chatham County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Wright Square

CITY, TOWN

Savannah

STATE

Georgia 31401

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE(a) Historic Savannah Foundation, Inc.

(b) Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

(b) 1933

b FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ a LOCAL ☒DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

(a) Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

CITY, TOWN

(b) Historic Savannah Foundation, Inc. 119 Habersham Street
Savannah, Georgia

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. John's Church

Alterations: Rear Chancel wall moved back to enlarge Chancel. One spiral staircase was added in rear of Church. Reredos added in 1924 and 1959.

The building is Gothic Revival in style with a square central tower, the steeple roof is copper. The brick walls are stuccoed on the exterior. In the belfry there is a set of bells, eleven of which date from 1854. The original building had a furnace and gas lights. Total expenditure at time of building was \$69,378.95. In the nave are three aisles and there are 23 pews on each side of the central aisle. The paneling in the Chancel is beautifully carved. The Reredos is especially beautiful and depicts symbolism of "The Christus Rex", Christ the King of "The Regnant Christ". The pulpit and eagle lectern are of carved brass. The ceiling beams are arched in the Gothic style and at the back of the Church separating the vestibule from the nave is an open screen of wooden columns. Two spiral iron staircases lead to the balcony over the entrance to the Church. Ten stained glass windows in the nave of the Church were fabricated by Moore & Co. of Liverpool, England, and were installed April 11, 1886. Two additional windows in the nave were fabricated by J. P. Reeves & Co., Philadelphia, Pa. and were installed in 1938. Frederick D. Nichols in "Early Architecture of Georgia" states: "Built in 1852 St. John's Episcopal Church, Savannah, represents the Gothic Revival at its best. With the Green-Meldrim House "Parish House" on the other trust lot it forms one of the few remaining civic compositions in this style in America. The stuccoed exterior has a central square tower with Gothic Revival detail, while the plan follows the typical small parish arrangement of the Church of England with an open trussed ceiling and windows in the Early English or Lancet style.

Green-Meldrim House (St. John's Parish House)

An 1861 description of the Charles Green House is found in the diary of William H. Russell. He writes the following about Savannah:

"The wealthier classes, however, have houses of the New York Fifth Avenue character: one of the best of these, a handsome mansion of rich red sandstone belonged to my host, who coming out from England many years ago, raised himself by industry and intelligence to the position of one of the first merchants in Savannah. Italian statuary graced the hall; finely carved tables and furniture, stained glass, and pictures from Europe set forth the sitting-rooms; and the luxury of bathrooms and a supply of cold fresh water, rendered it an exception to the general run of Southern edifices."

This two story brick Green-Meldrim House, with its oriel windows, crenellated parapet, and its profusion of iron work was, according to the Savannah Morning News of April 26, 1851, originally covered with stucco. However, when the stucco

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Green-Meldrim 1850-1854 BUILDER/ARCHITECT John S. Norris & Calvin N. Otis
St. John's Church 1852-53

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. John's Church

The church complex with the adjoining Green-Meldrim house is one of the most outstanding examples of the Gothic-Revival style. The present building was constructed for the second home of St. John's Church. The Church was organized in December 1840 and the property on which the present building stands was purchased in 1848. The corner stone was laid March 13, 1852 and the building was consecrated on May 7, 1853 and has been in continuous use ever since. At the time of the Civil War, during General Sherman's occupation of Savannah, the bells were removed from the belfry but upon the intervention of President Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton they were saved. This was brought about by the fact that they had been given by Mr. Joseph S. Fay in 1854 and he, at the time of the war, had returned to his native Boston and upon hearing that the bells had been removed, went to Washington to see the President in an attempt to have the bells saved. St. John's Hospital and Soldier's Aid Society was organized December 20, 1861 and St. John's Hospital, operated by the ladies of St. John's, was established in the house of Mr. Hiram Roberts at the corner of Liberty and Jefferson Streets on January 8, 1862. A record was kept of every patient of the hospital, giving name, company, regiment, county, state, date received, date discharged, disease and remarks concerning the case. This record is filed at the Georgia Historical Society in Savannah.

The architect Calvin Nicholas Otis of Buffalo, New York (b. June 23, 1814), practiced architecture after having served as a carpenter and joiner, then having some architectural training and having served three years in the Civil War, he then resumed the practice of architecture until he retired to Cuba, New York in 1870. He designed several churches in Buffalo, New York and also did work in Geneva, Niagara Falls and Auburn, New York and in a book entitled Sacred and Constructive Art: Its Origins and Progress published in 1869, a series of essays by Calvin N. Otis appears.

Church records indicate that Otis was the architect, Calvin Fay was the supervising architect and the builder was Daniel Lopez Cohen.

Green-Meldrim House (St. John's Parish)

The Gothic Revival Green-Meldrim House is primarily significant for its architectural merit, its association with the New York architect, John S. Norris, and as the home of the Charles Green family. It is now used by the adjacent

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES

A

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4	9	1	0	5	0
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3	5	4	8	4	2	0
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

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D

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All those certain lots, tracts or parcels of land situate, lying and being in the City of Savannah, County of Chatham, and State of Georgia, known and designated on the present map or plan of said City as Lots Twenty-five (25) and Twenty-six (26), Jasper Ward, said lots lying contiguous and being bounded as a whole, on the North by Harris Street, on the East by Bull Street, on the South by Macon Street and on the West by Whitaker Street.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

1/30/76

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington, D.C. 20240

STATE

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ____

STATE ____

LOCAL ____

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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became badly in need of repair, it was removed.

The main entrance to the house is located on Macon Street, a side street, with the drawing rooms opening on to a porch and garden facing Bull Street, the main street.

Frederick D. Nichols, in The Early Architecture of Georgia describes the Green-Meldrim House:

"An unusual portico of the period marks the entrance to the Green-Meldrim House. It has two arches supported by two octagonal columns, a pendant, and a parapet treated in the manner of the English perpendicular Gothic style of the fifteenth century. This portico is unique in America.

The noble double doors of the Green-Meldrim House, panelled with recessed arches set in studded stiles and rails, are framed with clustered colonnets supported on a double arch with a pendant, a motif which repeats the design of the portico.

The graceful, free-standing stair of the Green-Meldrim House is set in an exedra off the long entrance lobby with niches for sculpture and a domed ceiling. It is enriched with a superb wrought iron stair with S shaped balusters which are typical English Georgian design."

The oriel, or medieval bay windows, on the second floor have single sheets of glass without mullions, which style, according to Nichols, was introduced in the Gothic Revival period. The house is lavishly adorned with ornamental iron railings and grills. The roof is low, surrounded by a crenellated parapet.

The first floor of the house consists of a wide hall extending the length of the house, with a short hall at right angles to it on one side, and double drawing rooms, library, and dining room. The ceilings and cornices on this main floor are of elaborate plaster and the woodwork is intricately carved. There are marble mantels, some with rococo mirrors, in all the rooms on the first floor and the bedrooms on the second. Four mirrors are original and two chandeliers are original.

The second floor repeats the hall plan of the first floor and has five bedrooms plus a bathroom, which until 1968 had a bathtub built into an alcove with a tank above it to furnish running water. At the time (1943) that the Church bought the house, the tub was filled by bringing up water in buckets. Since the basin had faucets and was adjacent to the tub enclosure it is possible that the tank

(continued)

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furnished water for the basin as well as for the tub.

A wing containing rooms for servants, a stable, carriage house, kitchens and pantry extended on the west side of the house. The first floor consisted of a room for hanging dried meat, a baking kitchen, a cooking kitchen, carriage room and stable. The second floor contained a feed room with chutes to send feed down to the stalls in the stable below, a room for hanging dried vegetables and several rooms for servants. This wing has now been converted into an attractive house now used as the rectory of St. John's Church.

In the 1940's the garden around the house was cleared under the direction of Mrs. Charlton Theus. After digging to a depth of about three feet the outlines of flower beds were found and appeared to be the original plan of the garden. The flower beds were replanted in the original pattern but no attempt was made to discover what plants were originally in the garden. The beds were filled with azaleas and camellias. The garden is in front of a long porch on the east side of the house which really appears to be the front of the house as it faces Bull Street, the main street; however, the main entrance is on the south side of the house on Macon Street.

The information was provided by Effie B. Denny, St. John's Church.

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St. John's Church as a meeting place.

The Green-Meldrim House is a splendid display of the grandeur of mid-19th century Savannah high society. Rococo mirrors, marble mantels, intricately carved moldings and luxuries such as bathrooms with running water, gas lighted domes and multiple sliding doors present a structure of lavish construction. In design its Gothic forms reflect the fashion for medieval architecture which had swept England after the Houses of Parliament were rebuilt in this style.

The house, lavish in construction was completed by 1854 and was said to have been the most expensive house built in Savannah up to that time. According to the Green family records the cost was \$93,000. The two lots on which the house is built were purchased in June of 1850 and building was started July 24, 1850. The tax digest of January 1, 1854, indicates that the taxes at that date covered land and improvements. Family records indicate that improvements continued until 1861 (record of parties given in the house in 1856).

John S. Norris, listed in the New York City Directory in 1847-8 as an architect, is connected with the building of this house. According to the Green family records, there are receipts kept by Mr. Charles Green covering the building of the house which were signed by "John S. Norris as agent for Charles Green." Norris, credited with the designs for the Customs House, the Mercer Wilder House, the Low House, and 548 E. Broughton Street--Savannah structures all built about the time of the Green-Meldrim construction--could have been responsible for some part of the building, design or at least the supervision of the Charles Green House.

Mr. Charles Green, the house's original owner, was an Englishman who had come to Savannah in 1833. He was in the cotton and shipping business and was very successful. Being an Englishman and supposedly neutral in the Civil War, Green invited General William T. Sherman to make his Savannah headquarters in his home. This Sherman did and occupied the house from December 22, 1864, until February 1, 1865.

After Mr. Green's death the house became the property of his son, Edward Moon Green, and then it passed from his ownership to Judge Peter W. Meldrim on July 14, 1892. The Meldrim family owned the house until December 30, 1943 when it was purchased by St. John's Church for use as a parish house.

The house is also interesting to scholars and admirers of the author Julian Green, who is the grandson of Mr. Charles Green. Julian Green has recently been elected to the French Academy.

The house was completely renovated by St. John's Church in 1968 and is used for church meetings and functions and is open to the public four days each week.

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Church Records: Minutes of the Wardens and Vestry of St. John's and Minutes
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Records at Georgia Historical Society.

Other sources:

Mr. Olaf William Shelgren, Sr., Buffalo, New York, architect.

History Department, Buffalo Library.

Correspondence with Mr. S. Prescott Fay, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts.

Pictures by Robert Heriot, Savannah, Georgia.