

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
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DATE ENTERED	

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Holy Trinity (Old Swedes) Church

AND/OR COMMON

Holy Trinity Church

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

East Seventh and Church Streets

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1

STATE

Delaware

VICINITY OF

CODE
10

COUNTY

New Castle

CODE

3

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
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Protestant Episcopal Church, Diocese of Delaware, maintained by Holy Trinity

STREET & NUMBER

Church Foundation, Inc., 606 Church Street

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

VICINITY OF

STATE

Delaware

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

New Castle County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

1100 King Street

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

STATE

Delaware

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1934

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress/ Annex-Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE
D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> _DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> _UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> _GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> _RUINS	<input checked="" 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

The cornerstone of Holy Trinity Church was laid on May 28, 1698. John Yard, assisted by his sons, Joseph, John, and William, contracted to do the masonry; the carpenter was John Smart and the joiner, John Harrison (all from Philadelphia). By June 4, 1699, the church was complete and ready for consecration.

The church, measuring 66' X 36', was rectangular structure with hooded gable ends. Built of native graystone and plain on the exterior, the walls were 3' thick and 20' high. The doors were located at the middle of each side and the walls were also pierced by one large and four smaller arched windows, which were glazed by a Hollander named Lenard Osterson. All four exterior walls were adorned by inscriptions, in queer Latin abbreviations, set in iron letters made by Matthias de Foss. The steep-gabled roof was concealed inside by a hung ceiling of low segmental shape, with laths nailed to the arch of the roof. A smooth coat of plaster covered the interior walls and the vault. Box pews and a red brick floor, herringboned to form a central aisle, completed this simple interior.

By 1749, the church needed repairs: The stone walls, despite their thickness, were spreading from the outward thrust of the roof. To buttress the walls, a large arched porch of stone and brick was added on the south side. The next addition came in 1774, when a gallery holding 25 additional pews was added at the west end. This gallery was reached by an exterior stairway built within the south porch. Finally in 1802, a tower and belfry, built of stone and brick and measuring 12'X14' and 34' in height, was added at the west end, thus completing the church in the form it appears today.

In 1899, for the church's bicentennial, various features were restored. Changes made during an 1842 renovation were corrected in order to recreate the 18th century appearance. The original black walnut pulpit with its octagonal canopy was returned to its original position on the north wall, and a new base and banisters were added. The original altar of stone was enclosed with marble, and new pews were installed, which corresponded exactly in character and arrangement with the originals. Woodwork in the shingled roof, the belfry, and the columns supporting the gallery was replaced as well.

The church yard is in part, some 60 years older than the church itself, as it includes a portion of the original Fort Christina burial ground. The church, when it was built, stood partly on the burial ground, and partly on land donated by John Stalcop. In 1722, the church yard was surveyed, and Stalcop's sons officially conveyed a parcel of "three acres, eight perches, and twenty feet,"¹ to the trustees of the church. This area has been somewhat increased by later purchases.

The yard was originally enclosed by a wooden fence, until 1837 when a stone wall was erected. The iron gate, now in use on Seventh Street is believed to date from this construction. Within the church yard, the earliest decipherable

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" 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 1698

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1698 on the original burial ground of Fort Christina, Holy Trinity Church is the oldest surviving church of a Delaware Valley Swedish congregation. No other structure so closely related to Swedish settlement has so markedly retained its architectural integrity.

Although constructed after New Sweden's fall in 1655, the church was built to serve a predominantly Swedish community, and for nearly a century, its pastors came from Sweden. Under the rectangular graystone church, and in the cemetery, at 7th and Church Streets, in Wilmington, Delaware, lie the remains of thousands of Swedish settlers. Although established for a Swedish Lutheran congregation, it is presently affiliated with the Protestant Episcopal Church.

HISTORY

The earliest religious services in New Sweden were held in Fort Christina. Along the slope and hilltop north of the fort, the Swedes established their burying ground. A wooden church was erected across the Christina River from the fort, at Crane Hook, but following New Sweden's fall to the Dutch, there was no Swedish supervision of the colonial church, and the wooden church was abandoned.

About 1690, Andrew Printz, the young nephew of the former Governor of New Sweden was so impressed by the Swedish community on the Delaware which had continued to thrive under English rule despite a lack of books and clergy, that upon his return to Sweden, he informed King Charles XI of the situation. As a result, in 1697, three Swedish ministers arrived in the New World, and one of them, Eric Bjorck (1668-1740) remained at Christina. On May 28, 1698, shortly after Bjorck's arrival, a new stone church, Holy Trinity, was begun on the hill overlooking Fort Christina, within the old burial ground. Land was donated by John Stalcop, one of the church wardens. With the assistance of the congregation, the church was completed by artisans from Philadelphia, by July 1699.

Bjorck returned to Sweden in 1714, and was replaced by a succession of Swedish priests. Late in 1749, Israel Acrelius arrived, who administered needed repairs to the church and authored the famous History of New Sweden. The final pastor from Sweden, Lawrence Girelius, arrived in 1767, and found Swedish customs so deteriorated that he preached on alternate Sundays in

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Delaware (The American Guide Series) (New York, 1938).

Charles Curtis and Charles Reese, Old Swedes Church, Wilmington, Delaware, 1698-1938 (Wilmington, 1938).

Amandus Johnson, Swedish Settlements on the Delaware (New York, 1911).

Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3.5

UTM REFERENCES

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4	5	3	6	7	0
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4	3	9	8	6	5	0
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 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B

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 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Beginning at the southeast intersection of Church and Seventh Streets, proceed east along the southern curb of Seventh Street to Church Lane; thence south along the western curb of Church Lane to the Pennsylvania Railroad; thence southwest until the church fence abuts business property; thence north to the point of origin.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

7/22/75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L. Street

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

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

Landmark Designated: Nov. 5, 1961
date

Secondary Certified:

George F. Emery
June 10, 1977

DATE

6/24/77

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

1

ITEM NUMBER

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headstone dates from 1719, although there are presumably many earlier, unmarked graves.

Within the church grounds are two additional structures, the three story Parish House at the intersection of Seventh and Church Streets, built in 1893; and the one story stone structure south of the Parish House, which houses the office of the curator and church offices. These do not contribute to the national significance of the landmark.

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Swedish and English. In 1791, the Swedish superintendence of the parish was officially discontinued, and the transition of the church and congregation to the Protestant Episcopal faith was almost effortlessly effected. Holy Trinity continues to serve an Episcopal congregation to this day.