

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Virginia
COUNTY: Independent City
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
The Wythe House

AND/OR HISTORIC:
The Wythe House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
on Palace Green, adjacent to Bruton Parish Church

CITY OR TOWN:
Williamsburg

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
001

STATE: Virginia

CODE: 51	COUNTY: Independent City	CODE: 830
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<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 type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Colonial Williamsburg, Inc. Carlisle H. Humelsine, President

STREET AND NUMBER:
Williamsburg

CITY OR TOWN:
Williamsburg

STATE:
Virginia

CODE:
51

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET AND NUMBER:
Court Street (2 blocks south of Duke of Gloucester Street).

CITY OR TOWN:
Williamsburg

STATE:
Virginia

CODE:
51

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:

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 plan of the Wythe House is the standard eighteenth century central hall and four room arrangement known as a double pile. The house though, despite first appearances, is symmetrical East-West only, for the front rooms are slightly deeper than those to the rear. All four exterior elevations are, however, symmetrical.

The Wythe House is a small and unassuming one, but through the beauty of its lines and the quality of its brickwork, achieves a remarkably sophisticated appearance. The 54' X 39' building is two storeys, of brick laid in a Flemish bond above the water table, and an English bond below it. The whole is capped by a fine low-pitched hipped roof.

Detailing of the jambs and quoins above the water table (but not below it) is articulated in a restrained manner with the use of rubbed and gauged brick. All joints throughout the house, both horizontal and vertical are lined, giving a carefully executed sense to the whole, even if there is some lack of uniformity in the brickwork overall. The water table itself is of rubbed brick, while that restrained attempt to articulate detail, may be seen in the fact that only the one brick in each course nearest the various openings are rubbed. The belt-course across the building, as well as the jack arches over the windows and doors, are likewise done in rubbed and gauged brick.

Two other brick features should be noted: the substantial caps on the two chimneys, made up of courses of corbeled brick above and below a pair of fascia, and the oak nosings on the brick steps.

A curious feature of The Wythe House is an apparent attempt to scale up the second floor, by manipulating the window details. While it is a common feature of classical buildings to shorten the proportions of upper floor windows in order to appear larger, by also narrowing the window components, the builder of the Wythe House created an ambiguity of scale which in fact gives the impression that the building is smaller than it really is ** This problem is compounded by the design of the doors, and the exceptionally wide trim of the door frame. Doubtless, the builder was hoping to create a grandeur here on The Palace Green, but at least in his manipulation of the windows, did not help that cause. Happily, the composition of the house as a whole overcomes this window factor and the result is a very handsome and elegant Georgian house.

The design of The Wythe House is based upon a plate from William Salmon's Paladio Londinensis, or the London Art of Building, published in 1734.

The interior of the wide central hall features a finely-executed open-

** Lower windows are 4' wide, the uppers 3'6". Lower windows are 7'9" high the uppers 6'6". Panes: uppers 8"X10", lowers 10"X12". Sash: upper 1 3/8" lower 1 5/8" wide.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) built by Richard Talliaferro c. 1750

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Wythe House was built by Richard Talliefferro, a planter who on occasion undertook building works and may or may not have given the desgns for the buildings he erected. Recent research indicates that the most likely date for the construction of the Wythe House is about 1750 when Talliaferro was repairing and adding the ballroom wing to, The Palace. The Wythe House is Williamsburg's most handsome colonial house and one of Virginia's and the Nation's finest examples of a Georgian town house.

The house was occupied by George Wythe from about 1755 until 1791. He was a member of the House of Burgesses, mayor of Williamsburg, a signer of The Declaration of Independence, and first professor of Law in an American college. Among his students at the College of William and Mary were Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States, John Marshall, later Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and James Monroe, sixth President of the United States.

The remarkable beauty of the Wythe House derives from its good lines and its fine brickwork.

The Wythe House had fallen into very poor condition by the Twentieth Century and was purchased by Bruton Parish 1926 and between that date and 1931, was repaired and restored under the supervision of the Reverend Dr. William Goodwin. It was used as a parish house until 1937 when it was acquired by Colonial Williamsburg, Inc. which still owns and maintains the house in excellent condition.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952), 333-334, 347-348.
 Thomas T. Waterman, The Mansion of Virginia (Chapel Hill, 1946), 217-220, 424
 Marcus Whiffen, The 18th Century Houses of Williamsburg (Wmsbrg., 1972), 81
 71, 72, 126-128, 213, 74.
 Virginia, A Guide to the Old Dominion (American Guide Series) (New York, 1947),
 324-325.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	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	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

18.348980.4126180

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: One

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, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey, Landmark Review Project. DATE: 10/9/74

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

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

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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 James Dillon

Title Architectural Historian

Date _____

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

(NPS)

Landmark Designated May 19, 1970 date

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Boundary Certificate: James H. Haine 9-18-75 date

ATTEST: _____ date

Keeper of The National Register: 9/25/70 date

Director, OHP _____ date

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(Continuation Sheet)

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string stair, running along the South wall of that room. It is a very simple one, leading at least one historian, T.T. Waterman, to compare it to the "elegant simplicity of the great Quaker houses of Philadelphia". It is of walnut, with richly turned ballusters, three to a tread, has a square newel post, and the gallery-post features a fine, turned pendant. Other than the stair, the house has no interior woodwork of note, and probably never did, choosing instead the understated simplicity exemplified by the stair and the conservative East facade on the Palace Green.

The Wythe House was probably built about 1750 by Richard Talliaferro, a planter who on occasion undertook building works. The house was occupied by George Wythe from 1755 until 1791, whence the building derives its name. It has been changed very little. The Wythe House had fallen into very poor condition by the Twentieth century and was purchased by Bruton Parish in 1926 and between that date and 1931, was repaired and restored under the supervision of the Reverend Dr. William Goodwin. It was used as a parish house until 1937, when it was acquired by Colonial Williamsburg, Inc. Since then, all new mantels have been installed, and the steps at both the East and West facades have been replaced. The eaves cornice is of Nineteenth century vintage, although patterned on an Eighteenth century type. Virtually all else is original. All outbuildings on the property are reconstructed. The gardens are superbly maintained, as well as the house, by Colonial Williamsburg, Inc.

BOUNDARY INFORMATION

The site of the Wythe House is adjacent to the Bruton Parish Church, fronting East on Palace Green, and bounded on the North by Prince George Street. Since we are fortunate enough to be able to trace the 18th Century boundary on surviving deed maps, this is obviously the most reasonable boundary one could possibly impose upon the property.

That property map shows that The Wythe House originally occupied two lots, numbered 245 and 243. The South boundary of the property then is the 1749 wall of Bruton Parish Churchyard, and starting from its Northeastern terminus, runs Northerly for 192' and then turns West on Prince George Street for 222'6". At that point, it must turn South again to return to the wall of the churchyard and must do so at a slight angle to accommodate a line of 180 feet exactly, 12 feet shorter than the other North-South boundary line.

THE PALACE GREEN

