

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

LISTED ON:  
VLR 03/18/2010  
NRHP 07/08/2010

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name St. Peter's Episcopal Church  
other names/site number VDHR #122-0047; The New Saint James Holiness Church of Christ Disciples

**2. Location**

street & number 1625 Brown Avenue not for publication N/A  
city or town Norfolk vicinity N/A  
state Virginia code VA county N/A code 710 zip code 23504

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination    request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets    does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally    statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 5/24/10  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria. (    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

   entered in the National Register  
   See continuation sheet.  
   determined eligible for the National Register Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
   See continuation sheet.  
   determined not eligible for the National Register  
   removed from the National Register Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_  
   other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion Sub: Religious Facility  
Funerary Churchyard

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion Sub: Religious Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late-19<sup>th</sup> Century: Carpenter Gothic Revival Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick  
 roof Asphalt Shingles  
 walls Cypress (board and batten) siding  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
x C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- x A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
[Blank lines for additional categories]

Period of Significance 1886-1912

Significant Dates 1886, 1887, 1912

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Unknown.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #

St. Peter's Episcopal Church

Norfolk, Virginia

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: VDHR

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing									
18	386430E	4078084N	2			3			4		

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Natalie S. Robertson, Ph.D. Historian and Senior Consultant  
 organization VANGUARD PREP, L.L.C. date September 18, 2007  
 street & number 820 Headrow Terrace telephone 757-344-8377  
 city or town Hampton state VA zip code 23666

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs** Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Trustees Jeremiah Ellerby, James A. Garris, Sr., and Donald R. Halsey  
 street & number 1625 Brown Avenue telephone 757 642-5111  
 city or town Norfolk state VA zip code 23504

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing

instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

**Summary Description:**

St. Peter's Episcopal Church (now named The New Saint James Holiness Church of Christ Disciples) is located in the Brambleton section of the City of Norfolk, less than one mile from the eastern branch of the Elizabeth River. Its north elevation faces Brown Avenue, its west elevation faces Park Avenue, and its east elevation faces Clay Avenue. Constructed in 1886, St. Peter's is situated on a lot that measures 120 feet wide. The edifice is a frame, gable-roofed building that consists of two contiguous sections: 1) the sanctuary; 2) and the fellowship hall (originally called the "parish house") beneath which exists an apparent family cemetery pre-dating the church's construction. St. Peter's is rendered in the Gothic Revival style of architecture. The exterior of the church is constructed of swamp cypress timbers (board and batten) laid in a vertical pattern, except in cases where they have been horizontally laid and stylized to give the appearance of being shingled. The exterior and interior of the church display architectural features that include arched stained-glass windows, arched-doors, an arched chancel, arched timber pillars rendered "in high relief," and wood scissor trusses, all characteristic of the Gothic Revival style.

Access to the sanctuary is by way of a small gable-roofed arched door elevated by a concrete porch. The sanctuary has large and small arched stained-glass windows, typical of the Gothic Revival style. The front (northeast) elevation of the sanctuary contains five arched stained-glass windows. The lower half of the window left of the access door has been augmented to accommodate an air conditioning unit. Its northwest elevation also contains five arched stained-glass windows (including a triplet of stained-glass windows that represent a special architectural feature of the sanctuary). These are the original wood-framed stained-glass windows, most of which slide vertically.

The fellowship hall was originally called the "parish house" by Thomas Townsend who was the Senior Warden of St. Peter's when the fellowship hall was constructed in 1912.<sup>1</sup> The fellowship hall continues the Gothic Revival theme. Its front or northern elevation contains two arched stained-glass windows. There are four arched stained-glass windows on its right (western) elevation; and, its left (eastern) elevation contains four arched stained-glass windows as well as one square window. Arched pillars, with trefoils in the middle of the arches, extend from the board and batten exterior surface of the fellowship hall. The pillars reinforce the ecclesiastical appearance of the edifice, pointing towards 'heaven.' Another feature that reflects the Gothic Revival style includes the prominent stained-glass window, with a quatrefoil design in its center, situated above the entrance door on the fellowship hall's north elevation that faces Brown Avenue.

**Detailed Description of the Exterior of the Sanctuary:**

The sanctuary has a gable roof that is covered with asphalt shingles. The sanctuary's roof was originally covered with slate shingles, but they were replaced with asphalt shingles in 1985. The sanctuary is a frame building that follows the common cruciform pattern in which the greatest length of the nave intersects with a north-south transept. The sanctuary's exterior surface consists of vertically-laid swamp cypress on its north, south, and west elevations (the east elevation connects to the fellowship hall). The swamp cypress

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has been painted white. The foundation consists of continuous brick, laid in a common bond pattern that extends around the sanctuary and the parish house.

The North (front) Elevation of the Sanctuary. The sanctuary's north elevation contains three arched stained-glass windows that are single-hung, with one pane per wood sash; these windows slide vertically. The other window consists of both a three-quarter length stained-glass pane and a one-quarter length stained-glass pane that pushes outward to allow for the passage of air. The sashes are constructed of wood. The north exterior extension of the transept is gable-roofed. From the gable-roof's apex to approximately five feet below the apex, the exterior of the north transept displays horizontally-laid cypress rendered in a vernacular design that gives the appearance of being shingled. This vernacular design represents a slight departure from the remainder of the sanctuary's exterior surface constructed of vertically-laid swamp cypress. Four inches below this design rests an octofoil tracery with lattice design. The exterior of the north transept also displays two single-hung arched stained-glass windows (with one pane per sash) that flank a gable-roofed entrance with a red wooden door that is buttressed by a small two-step cement porch. The gable-roofed entrance has two small arched single pane stained-glass windows with a lattice design on its west and east elevations. A wrought-iron fence extends the entire length of St. Peter's north elevation, separating the church grounds from the public sidewalk.

The South (back) Elevation of the Sanctuary. The nave section of the south elevation contains three arched stained-glass windows (two are single-hung with one pane per wood sash; the third window contains a single stained-glass pane). The south exterior extension of the transept is gable-roofed. From the gable-roof's apex to approximately five feet below the apex, the exterior of the south transept displays horizontally-laid cypress rendered in a vernacular design that gives the appearance of being shingled (this feature is repeated on the north elevation). Below this feature, on the right side of the south transept, is one single-hung stained-glass window (one pane per sash) that contains a quatrefoil. Projecting from the south transept is a gable-roofed office with one smaller single-hung window, with two sashes with one pane per sash (covered with security bars), on its east elevation. There are two single-hung stained-glass windows, with one pane per wooden sash, that slide vertically on its south elevation. Both windows have a quatrefoil design in the stained-glass. The south transept adjoins the east (rear) elevation of a pastor's study/choir room, a horizontal structure that was constructed circa 1985. The rear elevation of the horizontal the pastor's study/choir room also contains a door that is not arched. Entry into this door is via three cement steps.

The West (right) Elevation of the Sanctuary. The west elevation of horizontal pastor's study/choir room adjoins the west elevation of the sanctuary, on the right side of a triplet of arched, single-paned stained-glass windows. Located to the left of the triplet is a couplet of single-hung stained-glass windows with two panes per sash. The pastor's study/choir room has a single-slope roof covered with EPDM membrane, has a white vinyl exterior, and has two rectangle windows flanking a gable-roofed door (the window situated to the left of the door is a double-hung window with two sashes with one pane per sash; the window situated to the right of the door is boarded-up). Entry into this addition is via a door and a flat porch over which hangs a gable-roof that is buttressed by two posts.

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The East (left) Elevation of the Sanctuary. The sanctuary lacks a distinctive east elevation that connects to the fellowship hall via a vestibule, access to which is by way of rectangular exterior double doors constructed of wood and buttressed by a rectangular cement porch with two steps and two wrought-iron railings. These double doors are used as the main entrance into the church.

**Detailed Description of the Interior of the Sanctuary**

The sanctuary's floor is constructed of the original wood planks that are laid in an east-west direction. The vertically-laid wood planking covers the two-stepped choir platform, as well. The top portion of the sanctuary's walls consist of plaster over which paneling has been laid. Separated from the top by wainscoting, the bottom portion of the wall consists of planks of original beadboard.

One row of original wooden pews is situated on each side of the aisle leading to the transept. The interior of the sanctuary has maintained its historical and architectural integrity, a special characteristic of which includes the beautiful mahogany wood scissor trusses between which are purlins. The mahogany scissor trusses span 23 feet 4 inches. The scissor trusses span both the nave and the transept, and a valley beam rests at the intersection of the nave and transept roofs. While chandelier-style lights extend from the trusses, the lights have not altered or damaged the architectural and aesthetic qualities of the trusses. The ceiling is covered in vertically-laid wood planks sectioned by mahogany beams that form a grid pattern. In keeping with the Gothic Revival architectural style, St. Peter's chancel is arched, and entry to the vestry room (pastor's study behind which is the choir room) is via the chancel's left side. A beautiful hand-carved arched door, with an inlay of arches, is located at the east end of the nave, permitting egress into the vestibule that connects to the fellowship hall.

**Detailed Description of the Exterior of the Fellowship Hall:**

The North Elevation of the Fellowship Hall. The Hall faces Brown Avenue. It is a frame structure whose exterior consists of vertically-laid board and batten siding, repeating an architectural characteristic of the sanctuary's exterior. The fellowship hall has a gable-roof that is covered with slate shingles, some of which have fallen away. At the apex of the fellowship hall's gable roof rests an octofoil tracery; below it rests a second, more abstract tracery on a secondary "A" frame that covers an arched door. Above the door rests a beautiful arched stained-glass window with a quatrefoil design in its center. The door is buttressed by two concrete steps that are flanked by wrought-iron railings. Two arched timber pillars, rendered "in high relief," flank the entry door. On the right and left sides of these pillars rest two double-hung arched windows with two sashes with one pane per sash; each window has a third pane at their apex. These windows are also flanked by two additional arched timber pillars. The fellowship hall's foundation is constructed of continuous brick laid in a common bond pattern.

The South Elevation of the Fellowship Hall. From the gable-roof's apex to approximately five feet below the apex, the exterior of the south fellowship hall displays horizontally-laid cypress rendered in a vernacular design that gives the appearance of being shingled. The south elevation has a tracery that is covered, and

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the tracery is flanked by two double-hung windows with two sashes with two panes per sash. These windows are attached to a small room (located above the kitchen) that is not accessible due to the poor condition of the wood stairwell leading from the kitchen to that room. Access to the south elevation of the fellowship hall (the kitchen) is via a door that is buttressed by five steps flanked by wood railings. On the right side of the door are two double-hung windows with two sashes with two panes per sash. On the left side of the door are three double-hung windows with two sashes with two panes per sash.

The West Elevation of the Fellowship Hall. On the fellowship hall's west elevation are four arched timber pillars that separate four arched, single-hung stained-glass windows with two sashes with one pane per sash. On the roof's western slope sits a red masonry chimney whose bricks are laid in the common bond pattern. The roof's western eave is supported by decorative wood brackets.

The East Elevation of the Fellowship Hall. The east elevation contains five arched, single-hung windows with two sashes with one pane per sash. It also contains one double-hung window with two sashes with two panes per sash. The roof's eastern eave is supported by decorative wood brackets. Although it is a later addition, the architecture and aesthetic qualities of the fellowship hall continue the Gothic Revival theme.

**Detailed Description of the Interior of the Fellowship Hall**

The interior walls of the fellowship hall are covered primarily in plaster, with the remaining one-third consisting of vertically-laid beadboard. A semi-circular platform stage, measuring approximately three feet tall and fifteen feet wide, is attached to the south elevation that contains a door that provides access to the kitchen. On its west elevation rests the flue for the chimney on the roof's western slope. The floor of the parish house is constructed of wood planks, reflective of the flooring in the sanctuary. Its ceiling consists entirely of mahogany wood planks. Like the sanctuary, its ceiling is buttressed by mahogany scissor trusses briefly interrupted in the middle section by a ceiling heating unit. The fellowship hall contains two rows of hand-carved wood pews positioned in a north-south direction, facing the platform stage.

**Cemetery (non-contributing site)**

Beneath the fellowship hall is a small collection of footstones (thought to be footstones since they contain only initials) that appear to be part of a Dyson family cemetery. One of the footstones is inscribed with the initials "J.D." When the fellowship hall was constructed in 1912, Thomas Townsend, who was St. Peter's Senior Warden at that time, recorded the names of the individuals who are buried in the churchyard over which the fellowship hall was constructed. They include James Dyson (d. 1825), his wife Elizabeth Dyson (d. 1828), and their son, John Dyson (d. 1832).

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**Summary Statement**

St. Peter's exemplifies architectural, utilitarian, and aesthetic philosophies and specifications found in Richard Upjohn's pattern book for designing and constructing rural Gothic Revival-styled churches, as well as characteristics of the Gothic Revival style, a major architectural style of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Because St. Peter's embodies distinctive characteristics of a period and method of construction, the edifice qualifies for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for Architecture, with a period of significance of 1886 to 1912. It meets Criterion Consideration A (religious properties), as its significance is derived from its architecture. The building's distinctive exterior and interior architectural and aesthetic features (arched stained-glass windows, arched doors, arched chancel, and vernacular interior and exterior designs) characterize the Gothic Revival Style. Its exterior and interior elevations also contain design elements depicted in Richard Upjohn's rural church architecture pattern book.

St. Peter's is also one of six parish churches descended from historic St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church (currently listed on the National Register and the Virginia Landmarks Register), a religious focal point of the Elizabeth River Parish since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It may be associated with the history of the Dyson and Bramble families who were among the early settlers of the borough of Norfolk, and its history reflects the racial integration movement in Norfolk during the 1950s.

**Architectural Significance.**

Of the six mission parishes that descended from St. Paul's, St. Peter's is the only parish that has maintained its frame structure. The other churches have been rebuilt in brick. St. Peter's architectural significance is indicated by the fact that it is featured in Beth N. Rosheim's *An Illustrated Guide to the Major Architectural Styles in Norfolk, Virginia*, as a church whose architecture is exemplary of the Gothic Revival style.<sup>2</sup> After 122 years of existence, St. Peter's has maintained characteristics of the Gothic Revival style, particularly its arched stained-glass windows, its arched doors, and its scissor trusses described above. The *Historic Architectural Survey of The City of Norfolk* describes St. Peter's as "typical of the carpenter Gothic Revival style."<sup>3</sup> However, St. Peter's also exhibits several architectural and aesthetic elements contained Richard Upjohn's pattern book entitled *Upjohn's Rural Architecture: Designs, Working Drawings and Specifications for a Wooden Church, And Other Rural Structures*. That St. Peter's exhibits architectural and aesthetic features found in Upjohn's pattern book does not confirm or suggest that Upjohn himself built St. Peter's, as its architect remains unknown. What is known, however, is that Upjohn's pattern book set an architectural standard for the construction of inexpensive Gothic Revival-styled rural churches in the United States. A native of England, Upjohn is said to have "moved the High Church Anglican model into the American idiom, using his extraordinary skills to translate a medieval architecture of stone into wooden buildings suitable for the American frontier, adapted to new needs and available materials, without losing the qualities essential to the ecclesiological movement."<sup>4</sup>

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St. Peter's overall method of construction, its foundation, its exterior and interior design elements, its furniture, its doors, and its windows conform to design philosophies and specifications in Upjohn's pattern book on architectural, utilitarian, and aesthetic levels. St. Peter's structure is characteristic of the simple, "restrained" parish church designs of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>5</sup> The edifice is a frame building with board and batten exteriors constructed of vertically arranged swamp cypress timbers, not used in the construction of contemporary churches.<sup>6</sup> The use of board and batten exteriors is very much in keeping with Upjohn's architectural approach and philosophy that espoused a plain, simplistic method of construction.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the use of swamp cypress follows Upjohn's design philosophy of allowing geography to dictate the choice of materials used in the construction of parish churches.<sup>8</sup> Swamp cypress is found especially in the southern U.S., from Virginia to Florida. Because swamp cypress resists termites, it was highly valued for use in construction. The vertical direction in which the swamp cypress is laid on St. Peter's exterior is also consistent with church exteriors in Upjohn's pattern book (Plate 3).<sup>9</sup>

Upjohn's architectural mission was to "supply designs for cheap but still substantial buildings for the use of parishes, schools, etc."<sup>10</sup> Upjohn endeavored to make parish churches affordable, without sacrificing sound structure or ecclesiastical beauty. Toward those ends, St. Peter's foundation is continuous brick laid in a common bond pattern, as demonstrated in Plate 5 in Upjohn's pattern book. The sanctuary's ceiling exhibits purlins between the mahogany scissor trusses, as recommended by the pattern book, which specifies the use of tie beams such as those found in the ceiling of St. Peter's nave.<sup>11</sup> Two of the arched stained-glass windows in the triplet window on the sanctuary's west elevation, as well as the two arched stained-glass windows located to the left of the triplet window, measure two feet in width, measurements in keeping with the pattern book's specifications (Plate 13). Per Upjohn's specifications, the wood frames for these windows measure two inches in width.<sup>12</sup> The grooves for the arched stained-glass windows on the north and south elevations of the nave measure one-half inch deep, also per the specifications in the pattern book.<sup>13</sup>

According to Upjohn's pattern book, churches needed to be structurally sound as well as utilitarian, assisting parishioners in the realization of their spiritual mission. Entry into the majestic nave is via a beautiful hand-carved arched door with an inlay of "low-relief" arches, located at the east end of the nave. The door conforms to pattern book specifications, measuring one and three-quarters inches thick.<sup>14</sup> Upjohn's designs focused the parishioners' attention on the pageantry of religious ceremonies. In his opinion, "the object is not to surprise with novelties in church architecture, but to make what is to be made truly ecclesiastical—a temple of solemnities—such as will fix the attention of persons and make them respond in heart and spirit to the opening service—"The Lord is in his Holy Temple."<sup>15</sup> To achieve this, Upjohn specified that parish naves measure 21 feet wide x 54 feet long (Plate 12). St. Peter's nave measures 30 feet wide x 53 feet long. Although St. Peter's nave does not conform to the exact measurements specified by Upjohn's pattern book, it is still narrow, thereby, functioning to focus the parishioners' attention on the religious ceremony.

On another utilitarian level, Upjohn delineated specifications for church furniture which, according to his pattern book, was to be "made in strict accordance with the plans and well put together."<sup>16</sup> Thus, the pews in St. Peter's sanctuary were hand-carved. Having been in use for many years, the pews exhibit a beautiful patina. In accordance with Upjohn's architectural proclivity towards simplicity, the pews in the nave are arranged in two rows. The backs of the pews measure one inch thick, and the ends of the pews

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measure one and one-half inches thick, per the specifications in Upjohn's pattern book.<sup>17</sup> In addition to the sanctuary pews, the organ player's stool is also hand-carved. According to the pattern book, hand-carved parish furniture constituted an important element of a comprehensive parish church design scheme.

The pews are both art and artifact, having both aesthetic and utilitarian purposes. Aesthetically, the ends of the pews are decorated with quatrefoils (top) and half trefoils (bottom). Trefoils and quatrefoils are aesthetic features contained in Upjohn's pattern book (Plate 15). Both the usage, and the placement, of trefoils and quatrefoils in St. Peter's architecture conform to the specifications in Upjohn's pattern book. Accordingly, the trefoils and quatrefoils may be placed in the interior and on the exterior of the church. At St. Peter's, for example, trefoils and quatrefoils are also found in the wood framing around the organ pipes, in the hand-crafted wood balustrade (quatrefoil), and around the upper portion of the organ player's stool in the sanctuary. On the exterior elevation, Upjohn specifies placement of trefoil designs above doors, sometimes as an inset in a triangle (Plate 15). This feature served as an aesthetic focal point of the front elevation of a church. In keeping with this tradition, a quatrefoil set in a stained-glass arch was inserted above the door of the fellowship hall on its north elevation that faces Brown Avenue.

The use of a quatrefoil or a trefoil as an inset in a triangle is an aesthetic feature that is continued on the fellowship hall's east and west elevations that contain four timber pillars (the north elevation has six pillars). At the top of each pillar is an arch or triangle with trefoils in the center. This kind of arcading is showcased in Upjohn pattern book.<sup>18</sup> Comparatively, one finds this arcading rendered in stone in Upjohn-influenced churches and those he designed such as Trinity Episcopal Church in New York. To make the construction of rural parish churches more economical without sacrificing ecclesiastical beauty, Upjohn's pattern book allows for pillars to be constructed in wood rather than in stone. Upjohn's pattern book also specifies the use of the "octofoil" tracery as a design element in rural parish architecture (Plate 9). St. Peter's has one octofoil tracery, with a lattice insert, enclosed in a wood sphere above the gable-roofed arched door on the sanctuary's north elevation. Another octofoil tracery, enclosed by a wood sphere, is located at the apex of the fellowship hall's gable roof on its north elevation.

Gothic Revival church architecture is characterized by spirals and arches that symbolize the high, spiritual aspirations of various missions aimed at helping the poor; and, St. Peter's architecture embodies the Gothic Revival style in many regards. However, the most prominent aesthetic feature of St. Peter's design includes a triplet of arched stained-glass windows in St. Peter's arched chancel, on her west elevation. Upjohn's pattern book designates this triplet of windows as a "chancel triplet" or "triplet window," and it represents an important feature of Upjohn's architectural designs especially where churches are concerned (Plate 14). Indeed, the stained-glass triplet window is an aesthetic focal point of the sanctuary, guiding the parishioners' perspective towards the religious ceremonies transpiring in the chancel. Consequently, the parishioners' attention is focused on the religious messages and symbolism being conveyed by their religious leaders. Thus, there existed a symbiotic relationship between function and form in Upjohn's pattern book, a relationship that is exhibited in the architecture of certain rural churches like St. Peter's.

Although her architect remains unknown, St. Peter's is a fine example of a church rendered in the Gothic Revival style with vernacular aesthetic characteristics similar to those found in Upjohn's pattern book. It is imperative for St. Peter's current owners to implement a preservation plan to repair some

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structural and cosmetic damage sustained by the edifice over time. For example, the fellowship hall's slate shingles will need to be replaced, the exterior will need to be painted, and the truss bearing that connects the corner of the rear elevation wall and the left elevation wall of the south transept will need to be repaired. If not addressed, this structural and cosmetic deterioration could seriously threaten the architectural integrity of the edifice. Having conducted a feasibility study, the owners of the church have taken the initial steps to address these issues under the guidance of certified architects and engineers.

### **Historical Background**

The early history of St. Peter's is linked to historic St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church, formerly the "Borough Church," which serviced the Elizabeth River Parish commencing in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup> St. Peter's is one of six mission churches that descended from St. Paul's that was considered by historian Edward Ferebee, "the mother of all other Episcopal churches in the Norfolk area."<sup>20</sup> The other five mission churches include St. Paul's Chapel (Berkley section of Norfolk); St. Bride's (Chesapeake); Galilee Chapel (Virginia Beach); Church of the Ascension (Norfolk); and, St. Mark's (Lambert's Point, Norfolk). St. Peter's emergence as a mission of St. Paul's was linked to a broader trend of missionary expansion that began after the Civil War.<sup>21</sup> In order to advance the missionary objectives of St. Paul's into what was referred to as the village of Brambleton, the Right Reverend Bishop Beverley D. Tucker, the presiding rector of St. Paul's, convened a meeting in 1885 to discuss plans for a mission church in that area of the city.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, St. Paul's purchased a lot in Brambleton. The selection of Brambleton as a location for St. Peter's, less than one mile from the eastern branch of the Elizabeth River, is historically significant, since St. Paul's began its history as the focal point of the Elizabeth River Parish in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century in Virginia. In 1886, St. Peter's cornerstone was laid by the Right Reverend Francis McNeece Whittle, Bishop of the Diocese of Virginia.<sup>23</sup> St. Peter's was consecrated 1887, the same year in which the City of Norfolk annexed Brambleton.<sup>24</sup>

The mission for St. Peter's was, as with St. Paul's other parish churches, "to bring God's healing spirit to a broken world-through the faithful stewardship of its time, abilities, material resources, and its historical heritage and to bring love, fellowship, spiritual growth, charity, and Christian leadership to the entire community, and especially to the lonely, the dispossessed, and those in need."<sup>25</sup> This is corroborated by Beverly Tucker's grandson who, in a recent interview, said that, "Reverend Tucker would ride his horse and buggy to St. Peter's to ministry to a congregation comprised of working class whites, and he endeavored to bring religion to working class whites."<sup>26</sup> That St. Peter's congregation was comprised of whites only is explained by two factors. First, the Brambleton area in which St. Peter's was established was an exclusively white neighborhood. Second, racial segregationist practices prohibited blacks from worshipping alongside of whites and from becoming members of the polity in all white churches. The vestry books of the Episcopal Diocese, for example, are replete with discussions regarding separating "negro" congregants.

As early as 1883, the leaders in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia supported a "separate organization for the colored churches."<sup>27</sup> In its 1888 "Report from the Committee on Colored Organization," Diocese leaders argued that they should "formulate a plan for such separate organization for the colored race, or for such other plan as will guard against the anticipated evil likely to result from a mixed council,

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and submit the same for action of the next Annual Council of the Diocese.”<sup>28</sup> Those segregationist policies and practices are reflected in St. Peter’s 1888 parochial statistics of baptisms, marriages, communicants, and Sunday school teachers who were all white.<sup>29</sup> If any of the communicants of the various parish churches had been black, it was the practice to designate them as such in the vestry books. According to the vestry books, St. Peter’s contained no “colored” congregants before 1889. It was also the practice of City Directories to categorize churches based upon race. In the Norfolk and Portsmouth City Directory for 1889, for example, St. Peter’s is listed under the heading “Episcopal.” Had St. Peter’s been a black church, it would have been listed under the designation “Colored Churches.”<sup>30</sup>

From 1889 to 1947, St Peter’s maintained an “all-white” congregation. By 1947, however, the church began to experience some financial problems generated, in part, by a decrease in attendance by parishioners who had begun to leave the Brambleton area that was becoming increasingly populated by blacks. White-flight placed a financial strain on St. Peter’s coffers, prompting the church to seek assistance from its parent church, St. Paul’s.

In 1947, an anonymous author drafted and forwarded a letter “To The Vestry of Old St. Paul’s,” in which the author requested help from the mother church in dealing with what was described as a “weakening congregation.”<sup>31</sup> Specifically, the author requested that St. Paul’s take on the rector of St. Peter’s in order to help with his salary. Indeed, the congregation was weakened by larger economic, demographic, and social changes beginning to occur in the Brambleton area as well as by the congregants’ responses to those changes. By 1947, Norfolk had become inundated with blacks migrating from rural Virginia and North Carolina. Sixty-six thousand additional blacks had migrated to Norfolk between 1910 and 1945, in an effort to secure factory and naval yard jobs in war-time economies.<sup>32</sup>

Blacks migrating from fields to factories, their relatives seeking new opportunities in the city, and black soldiers returning from war sought jobs, housing, and church membership in Norfolk. Blacks were met with racial segregationist practices in secular and sacred realms, in employment, in housing, and in houses of worship. In an interview with Reverend Constance Jones, author of *A Goodly Heritage: The Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia, 1892-1992*, Jones asserted, “in 1949, the Diocese desegregated, and it stopped discriminating against blacks in terms of representation. But, bigotry persisted among the congregants.”<sup>33</sup>

According to Reverend Beverly Tucker’s grandson, St. Peter’s had only a small congregation of whites left by the early 1950s, and the congregants could not financially support the Old St. Peter’s church on Brown Avenue which they wanted sell to get money to buy a new property on Military highway. Also, people started to come to Brambleton “from other parts,” said Tucker.<sup>34</sup> In keeping with the migratory patterns occurring on a larger scale in Norfolk, this statement indicates that the demographics of the Brambleton area had changed by the early 1950s, and it was no longer an exclusively white area.

In 1956, St. Peter’s leaders voted to move out of Brambleton.<sup>35</sup> In that same year, Harry F. Byrd, Sr., Senator from Virginia, endorsed *The Southern Manifesto* that opposed racial integration.<sup>36</sup> Norfolk’s residents remained embroiled in a struggle over integration. While some residents supported integration legislation, others opposed it particularly where the city’s schools were concerned. Norfolk’s U. S. District Court Judge Walter E. Hoffman ordered Norfolk’s School Board to integrate the city’s schools, and the

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Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Hoffman's order.<sup>37</sup> Norfolkians demonstrated Massive Resistance to Hoffman's orders, in particular, and to integration, in general.

As an anti-integration movement, Massive Resistance took several forms, ranging from segregationist legislation, closing of the city's schools to prevent blacks from entering, and violent cross-burnings on school lawns. Massive Resistance also manifested in a less confrontational form known as "white flight," wherein whites, who had occupied exclusively white communities that were being integrated, relocated to suburban areas. St. Peter's remained white until 1959, when its congregants vacated the property in favor of a new edifice on Military Highway in Norfolk.<sup>38</sup>

Relocation to the new edifice on Military Highway allowed St. Peter's white congregants to put some distance between themselves, the blacks, and the anti-integration violence that was taking place in urban areas on the dawn of the Civil Rights Movement. When whites left urban areas, they, in some cases, left their churches to blacks of the same denomination.<sup>39</sup> The practice of leaving churches to blacks, particularly when white congregations built new edifices, was a cross-denominational one initiated during Reconstruction.<sup>40</sup> Within the context of these historical and social trends, a new chapter in the history of Old St. Peter's began when the edifice was transferred to the "colored" trustees of Garretts Independent Community Church in 1959.

In 1967, St. Peter's was transferred to Garland E. Bensen, George W. Williams, and Ike Daniele, Trustees of what came to be known as Saint James Holiness Church of Christ Disciples.<sup>41</sup> Interviews with two of the founding mothers, Essie Halsey and Olivia Garris, shed new light on the early history of the church and the racial make-up of its congregation. Halsey and Garris are respectfully called "Mother Halsey" and "Mother Garris" by congregants. Mother Halsey is credited with coining the name "Saint James Church of Christ Disciples." According to her, the original congregation was a branch of Rosemont Disciples Church. However, Rosemont Disciples Church did not permit holiness or spirited worship in the form of handclapping, music-making, or shouting, elements that characterized African-influenced religious practices.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, she and other congregants split from Rosemont Disciples Church. When the old St. Peter's was acquired from the trustees of Garrett Independent Community Church, Halsey named the edifice "Saint James Holiness Church of Christ Disciples. According to Halsey, the words "Saint James" distinguished their edifice from those that had been named for other saints, and that the word "Holiness" reflected the fact that they now had the freedom to engage in expressive, spirited, jubilant worship that was prohibited at Rosemont Disciples Church.<sup>43</sup>

Mother Olivia Garris also attended Saint James from its inception. At ninety-three years of age, she recalled the composition of the polity of Saint James. According to her, Elder Otis T. Nixon was the first pastor of the church, followed by Elder Garland Benson.<sup>44</sup> He was succeeded by Elder Waverly Smith, and he was succeeded by Mother Martha Williams who is the current pastor and the first female to preside over the congregation. Referring to members of the polity as "mothers" and "elders" is a gesture of respect that is in keeping with African-influenced age-grade forms of governance in younger members of a community show deference to the senior rulers of that community. Regarding the early history of Saint James, Mother Garris also recalled that there were no whites in the congregation in 1967.<sup>45</sup> Her oral testimony corroborates written historical accounts about the racial dynamics of Brambleton at that time.

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Beneath the fellowship hall exists an apparent family cemetery that contains three footstones located in the front section of the crawl space (measuring seventeen inches from the bottom of the joist to the ground), near the fellowship hall's west elevation. The largest portion of each stone is covered by earth, concealing their inscriptions. However, one of the footstones (thought to be footstones since they contain only initials) is inscribed with the initials "J.D." When the fellowship hall was constructed in 1912, Thomas Townsend, who was St. Peter's Senior Warden at that time, recorded the names of the individuals who are buried in the churchyard over which the fellowship hall was constructed. They include James Dyson (d. 1825), his wife Elizabeth Dyson (d. 1828), and their son, John Dyson (d. 1832).<sup>46</sup>

William Meade's book entitled *Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia* describes the Dysons as "old friends of the Episcopal Church."<sup>47</sup> Mary Dyson, the wife of William Dyson (the son of James and Elizabeth) is buried at St. Paul's. The genealogy of the Dyson (sometimes spelled Dison) family is traced to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century in the borough of Norfolk. Court documents demonstrate that the Borough of Norfolk compensated James Dyson, whose occupation was that of a tailor, "417 pounds, 10 shillings for losses sustained in the burning of Norfolk and Portsmouth by Lord Dunmore in 1776."<sup>48</sup>

The William and Mary Quarterly Marriage Bonds, 1706-1825 documents that James Dyson married Elizabeth Bramble on August 29, 1772.<sup>49</sup> Born in 1754, Elizabeth Bramble was the daughter of Willis Bramble, the son of Robert Bramble and Mary Ewell. The history of the Bramble family is rooted in Norfolk Borough, and it spans more than two hundred years in Virginia. In fact, the Brambleton section of Norfolk, where old St. Peter's is located, was named for George Bramble, the owner of a large farm that was divided into plots and sold by his executor, E.H.C. Lovitt.<sup>50</sup> In 1886, the same year in which St. Peter's cornerstone was laid in Brambleton, 840 families lived in that community. Those families comprised a new parish for St. Peter's whose mission was to reach out to working-class individuals. The edifice has served that purpose ever since, albeit under different leadership.

After 122 years of successful existence, St. Peter's has achieved historical distinction as the last of St. Paul's mission churches to have retained its frame structure. Thus, the current owners are endeavoring to preserve St. Peter's historical and architectural legacies. Toward those preservationist goals, the current trustees recently received a donation from members of the new St. Peter's Episcopal Church on Military highway. The donation not only supports efforts to repair the structure of the old edifice, but it solidifies the historical link between the two congregations who are forging a new, cross-congregational vision for their collective preservation in the future.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

This property consists of Legal Parcel Number 82894800 in the City of Norfolk, VA.

**Boundary Justification**

St. Peter's historic boundaries have remained the same since its inception. The property is bounded on the north by Brown Avenue. The property is bounded on the west by a vacant lot that is, in turn, bounded on the west by Park Avenue. St. Peter's is bounded on the east by a single-family dwelling that is, in turn, bounded on the east by Clay Avenue. The property is bounded on the south by an apartment building owned by Patish Rentals.

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**PHOTOGRAPH LOG (This information applies to all the photographs listed below).**

**Property:** St. Peter's Episcopal Church (historic).

**Location:** Norfolk, VA

**Photographer:** Natalie S. Robertson, Ph.D.

Photographs 1-11 taken June 1, 2007, and photographs 12 and 13 were taken May 15, 2008).

- 1) Exterior of St. Peter's sanctuary (north elevation).
- 2) North elevation of fellowship hall.
- 3) West elevation of fellowship hall.
- 4) Close-up of North elevation of Fellowship Hall
- 5) Exterior west elevation of sanctuary
- 6) Interior hand-carved wood door leading to sanctuary.
- 7) Interior of sanctuary's nave looking towards chancel on west elevation.
  
- 8) Left side of wood paneled chancel with door to pastor's office/choir room.
- 9) Interior of fellowship hall (view towards stage/south elevation).
- 10) Stained glass arched triplet window on sanctuary's west elevation.
- 11) Interior view of nave looking towards hand-carved door leading to vestibule.
- 12) Original beadboard below wainscoting.
- 13) Hand-carved pew decorated with quatrefoil at top and half trefoil at bottom.

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- <sup>2</sup>Beth N. Rossheim, *An Illustrated Guide to the Major Architectural Styles in Norfolk, Virginia* (Portsmouth, Va.: Messenger Print. Co., 1982), 14-15.
- <sup>3</sup>*Historic Architectural Survey of The City of Norfolk*. Final Report (Prepared by Tracerics for The Virginia Department of Historic Resources and The City of Norfolk Department of Planning and Codes Administration, 1994), 36.
- <sup>4</sup>Christabel Gough and Ron Kopnicki, "The Serious Side of "Carpenter Gothic Revival:" Why Richard Upjohn Wanted to Build a Country Church in Maspeth." Juniper Park Civic Association, 2006-2007. [www.junipercivic.com](http://www.junipercivic.com).
- <sup>5</sup>Douglas G. Greene and Linda M. Griggs, *St. Paul's Church* (Norfolk, VA: St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1988), 5.
- <sup>6</sup>Freeman, 1.
- <sup>7</sup>Christabel Gough and Ron Kopnicki, "The Serious Side of "Carpenter Gothic Revival": Why Richard Upjohn Wanted to Build a Country Church in Maspeth." Juniper Park Civic Association, 2006-2007. [www.junipercivic.com](http://www.junipercivic.com).
- <sup>8</sup>Richard Upjohn, *Upjohn's Rural Architecture: Designs, Working Drawings and Specifications for a Wooden Church, And Other Rural Structures* (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1975), 1.
- <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.
- <sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.
- <sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.
- <sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup>Christabel Gough and Ron Kopnicki, "The Serious Side of "Carpenter Gothic Revival:" Why Richard Upjohn Wanted to Build a Country Church in Maspeth." Juniper Park Civic Association, 2006-2007. [www.junipercivic.com](http://www.junipercivic.com).
- <sup>16</sup>Upjohn, 4.
- <sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup>Dr. Frank Kowsky, "Richard Upjohn and the Gothic Revival Revival in Buffalo." Preservation Report. Volume 8, no. 2 (March/April 1986). Available at [www4.bfn.org](http://www4.bfn.org).
- <sup>19</sup>Nellie Wallington, *Historic Churches of America* (N.Y.: Duffield & Company, 1907), 207.
- <sup>20</sup>Edward S. Ferebee, *Norfolk's Borough Church* (Norfolk: Teagle & Little, Inc., 1977), 79.
- <sup>21</sup>For more information, see Edward L. Bond and Joan R. Gundersen, *The Episcopal Church in Virginia, 1607-2007* (Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, 2007).
- <sup>22</sup>Derris L. Raper and Constance M. Jones, *A Goodly Heritage: The Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia, 1892-1992* (Norfolk, Virginia: Pictorial Heritage Publishing Company, 1992), 231.
- <sup>23</sup>Eddie Freeman, "A History of Old St. Peter's." (1959): 1. Norfolk's Local History and Genealogical Collection. The Sargeant Memorial Room. Norfolk Public Library. Norfolk, Virginia.
- <sup>24</sup>Deed of Trust between the Trustees of Garretts Independent Community Church and the Trustees of Saint James Holiness Church. Clerk's Office. Corporation Court. City of Norfolk. Deed Book 6266. August 10, 1967.
- <sup>25</sup>Raper and Jones, 230.
- <sup>26</sup>Beverly Tucker, grandson of Reverend Beverly D. Tucker, interview by author, April 17, 2009. Telephone.
- <sup>27</sup>"Report From The Committee on Colored Organization." *Journal of the Diocese of Virginia* (1888): 40. Archives of the Diocese of Virginia. Norfolk, Virginia.
- <sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 72.
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 210.

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<sup>30</sup>*Norfolk and Portsmouth City Directory* (1889): 35. [www.npl.org](http://www.npl.org).

<sup>31</sup>"To The Vestry of Old St. Paul's." Anonymously written letter dated January 4, 1947. Located in File entitled "St. Peter's Church, Elizabeth River Parish." Archives of the Diocese of Virginia. Norfolk, Virginia.

<sup>32</sup>Earl Lewis, "Expectations, Economic Opportunities, and Life in the Industrial Ages: Black Migration to Norfolk, VA, 1910-1945," in *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender*, edited by Joe William Trotter, Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 23.

<sup>33</sup> Reverend Constance M. Jones, interview by author. April 18, 2009. Telephone

<sup>34</sup> Beverly Tucker, grandson of Reverend Beverly D. Tucker, interview by author, April 17, 2009. Telephone.

<sup>35</sup>"St. Peter's Church Approves Move Out of Brambleton Area." *Virginia Pilot*. 10 December (1956).

<sup>36</sup>Tony Badger, "Southerners Who Refused to Sign the Southern Manifesto." *The Historical Journal* 42, 2 (June 1999): 517-534.

<sup>37</sup>Thomas C. Parramore et. al., "Norfolk: The first four centuries" (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 362-366.

<sup>38</sup>"St. Peter's Church Approves Move Out of Brambleton Area." *Virginia Pilot*. 10 December (1956).

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>A. A. Taylor, "The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia: Religious Efforts Among the Negroes." *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 11, No. 3. (Jul., 1926), 438.

<sup>41</sup> Deed of Trust between the Trustees of Garretts Independent Community Church and the Trustees of Saint James Holiness Church. Clerk's Office. Corporation Court. City of Norfolk. Deed Book 6266. August 10, 1967.

<sup>42</sup>C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 352.

<sup>43</sup>Essie Halsey, interview by author, 16 July, 2009. Norfolk, Virginia. Handwritten.

<sup>44</sup>Olivia Garris, interview by author, 16 July, 2009. Norfolk, Virginia. Handwritten.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>"Grave Markers Under Old St. Peter's Parish House." Located in file entitled "St Peter's Church, Elizabeth River Parish." Archives of the Diocese of Virginia. Norfolk, Virginia.

<sup>47</sup>William Meade, *Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1861), 280.

<sup>48</sup>"Index to History o Norfolk Courts, Virginia and Representative Citizens," p. 363-64. Ancestry.com.

<sup>49</sup>*William and Mary Quarterly Marriage Bonds, 1706-1825*. Ancestry.com

<sup>50</sup>Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *Norfolk: Historic Southern Port* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1931), 286.

NORFOLK SOUTH QUADRANGLE  
VIRGINIA  
7.5-MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

784 17°30' 786 787 3 700 000 METERS 76° 15' 36° 52' 30"



81  
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79  
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74  
73  
47'30"

Zone 18  
386430 E  
4078084 N  
St. Peter's  
Episcopal Church  
Norfolk, VA  
DHR # 122-0047