

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic (DHL #100-104)  
ST. Paul's EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
and or common N/A

## 2. Location

street & number 228 South Pitt Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Alexandria N/A vicinity of  
state Virginia 51 county (in city) code 510

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Congregation of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, title vested in the  
trustees: Taylor Burke, Stanley King, F. Waller Dudley  
street & number 228 So. Pitt St.  
city, town Alexandria N/A vicinity of state Virginia 22314

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Alexandria City Court House  
street & number 520 King St.  
city, town Alexandria state Virginia 22314

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Survey  
title 1. Historic American Buildings/has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no  
date 1959 ☒ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Library of Congress  
city, town Washington state DC

2. Alexandria Historic District, Virginia, 221 Governor St., Richmond, Va. 196

## 7. Description

### Condition

☒ excellent  
☐ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

St. Paul's is an outstanding example of early 19th-century Gothic Revival architecture, located at 228 South Pitt Street, Alexandria, Virginia. The facade remains as constructed and designed in 1817-1818 with the exception of an application of stucco in 1923, the original plaster having crumbled badly. Originally the interior was a simple rectangle, 65' by 75', with a shallow alcove on the east wall used for a chancel, and three galleries on the other three walls. Minimal changes made to the church include placement of three large stained-glass windows in the east wall in 1872, replacement of clear glass panes with stained glass in the twenty-seven original windows in 1878, recessing of the chancel in 1906, placement of nine memorial stained-glass windows between 1878 and 1951, raising of the gallery seats in 1967, and construction in 1977 of a small chapel using the space south of the chancel which had been used from 1906 to 1977 for a sacristy and organ pipes.

### ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The west facade of St. Paul's contains the main entrance. The church is built of brick overlaid with stucco which originally simulated blocks. Three pointed Gothic arches rising the full height of the building below the gable create a shallow porch, through which the church is entered by way of three double doors. A stepped gable rises above the arches and is pierced with circular (blind) windows.

(see Continuation Sheet #1)

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	education	military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	commerce	exploration/settlement	philosophy	theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		other (specify)

Specific dates	1817	Builder Architect	Architect: Benjamin Henry Latrobe
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)		Builder:	Jeremiah Bosworth

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. Paul's Church is architecturally significant as the only surviving Gothic Revival-style structure designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe which has retained most of the elements of its original design. It is also significant for the roles it has played in the religious and social-humanitarian life of the City of Alexandria. Located only six miles from the heart of the nation's capital, St. Paul's has radiated life and energy into the community as the scene of the founding of the Virginia Theological Seminary and Alexandria Hospital; the first Sunday School in the nation to contribute to a foreign mission; the consecration of three bishops and confirmation of many missionaries; the baptisms, marriages, and funerals of many members of the Washington, Fairfax, and Lewis families; the center of town life on many occasions such as lectures, patriotic observances, Diocesan councils, and charitable endeavors. During the Civil War, St. Paul's suffered an incident without parallel in American history when its minister was arrested in the chancel.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

St. Paul's was founded November 12, 1809, as a result of a split within the congregation of Christ Church. The rector, the Rev. William Lewis Gibson, resigned precipitately on October 15, 1809, stung by personal criticism of his clerical garb and style of sermon delivery.<sup>1</sup> About half the congregation followed him and established a new church in a small unused meeting house on Fairfax Street. The new church flourished, and by 1817

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Hamlin, Talbot, Greek Revival Architecture in the United States, Oxford University Press, 1944

Kaye, Ruth Lincoln, The History of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Goetz Printing Co., Springfield, Va., 1984 (in publication)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Alexandria, VA.-D.C.-MD.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

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4	2	9	6	6	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning at the intersection of the easterly line of South Pitt Street and the northerly line of Duke Street, thence running northward along the line of South Pitt Street, North 09° 30'00" East, (See Continuation Sheet #9)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
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state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title (Mrs.) Ruth Lincoln Kaye, Chairman

organization St. Paul's Historical Commission date November 12, 1984

street & number 708 Braxton Place telephone 703/836-3286

city or town Alexandria, Va. 22301 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



H. Bryan Mitchell, Director  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Division

date February 19, 1985

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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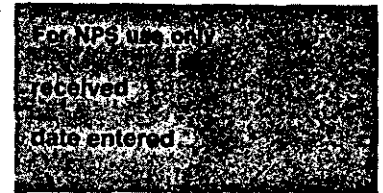
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The interior is a simple rectangle. The plan is symmetrical with a center aisle running from the street entrance at the west of the nave to the recessed chancel at the east. The recessed chancel replaced Mr. Latrobe's original shallow alcove-chancel, and was designed by Emmett C. Dunn in 1906. It is 40' in depth and about 50' in width, and is accessible by two shallow steps. Side aisles run beneath the north and south balconies. Seating flanking each aisle is provided in original wooden box pews on the floor of the nave, unaltered except for replacement of the worn pew railings with new railings in 1967. The sanctuary is entered through a tiled vestibule that spans the width of the west wall. An aisle parallel to the west wall was created by the removal of pews earlier in this century, in 1921. Removal of these pews and of the square box pews near the chancel at the time of recessing the chancel in 1906 has caused a reduction in the number of original pews from 103 to 96. The ceiling, covered in gold foil paper in 1967, is elipsoidal in cross-section.

Three galleries to the north, south, and west are supported by Gothic columns on the first floor. A pointed arch facade is found on the upper level of the north and south galleries. Access to the galleries is achieved by winding stairs at the north and south ends of the entry vestibule. The north and south galleries contain two tiers of bench seating and the west gallery accommodates the choir, organ console and pipes, following the original plan.

The chancel is a two-story space accessible from the nave through three two-story, pointed-arch openings. The floor of the chancel is approximately fourteen inches above the floor of the nave and is served by two continuous risers spanning the width of the chancel opening. Northward on this line of steps is the lectern, and southward is an elevated pulpit. The altar is located in the center of the space and is free of all walls. The east wall is flat and does not have an apse. The high ceiling is supported by pointed arches.

Adjoining the chancel to the south is a small chapel that was created in 1977 from rooms used from 1906 to that time for a sacristy and organ pipes. This space is on the same floor level as the chancel and is visible

(see Continuation Sheet #2)

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from the chancel through an arched decorative screen of wood and iron. The chapel is dominated by a stained-glass window by Rowan LeCompte memorializing William Wellford Smith. An unusual feature of the chapel is a small corner fireplace which was originally intended for the vestry room attached to the back of the east wall.

Interior walls are plastered and painted white, with woodwork in medium-toned putty gray. The decorative motif of the woodwork at the columns, wainscot, pews, and window tracery repeats in fine detail the Gothic arch. It was carved by W. H. Hannon in 1817-1818.

Windows, now colored, originally consisted of many small panes of clear glass, and are rectangular on the ground level and arched above. In 1872 a large window eight feet in diameter, described in vestry minutes as a "Catherine wheel window", was cut into the east wall and flanked with tall Gothic-arched stained-glass windows. The windows are memorials to Bathurst Daingerfield and William H. and Esther Fowle. When the chancel was recessed in 1906 these three large windows were carried back to the east wall, as seen today. In 1878 the clear glass of the twenty-seven windows on the four walls was replaced with stained glass made by W. W. Vaughn of the District of Columbia. The twelve gallery windows are extant, as well as the seven on the western facade. All the stained-glass windows on the north and south walls of the floor level have been replaced with elaborate memorial stained-glass windows. On the south wall the memorials and date of placement are, going from east to west: James Ertwisle (1878), James and Jane Green (1928), Sarah McLean (1878), and Emily C. Wheat (1878). The north wall memorial windows are mainly from the 20th century. From west to east they honor Arthur Herbert (1951), John W. and Fanny McArthur Green (1928), John A. and Fanny Chatham Dixon (1948), William Ball and Mary Ann Klipstein (after 1905), and Charles J. Wise (1898). The latter window was cut into the place of a "blind" window which was part of Mr. Latrobe's original design, and was executed by R. Geissler. The Herbert and Dixon windows were designed by Henry Lee Willet of Philadelphia, nationally known artist whose other local works include windows in the Paraclose Stair and Children's Chapel of the National Cathedral. The other artists are unknown.

(See Continuation Sheet #3)

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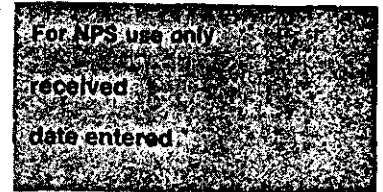
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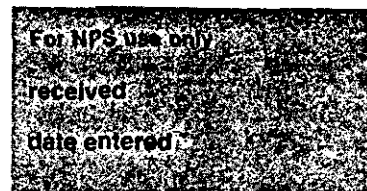
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The baptismal font of white marble, dating from 1886, was originally placed near the chancel and now stands close to the entrance door of the church. (The original font has recently been located in Trinity Episcopal Church in Washington, Virginia.) The font now used is a memorial to Rebecca Fowle Daingerfield. Two large tablets which originally hung in 1818 on the east chancel wall and which contain the Lord's Prayer, Creed, and Ten Commandments, were removed in 1906 and now hang in the parish building north of the church.

Two free-standing parish buildings stand next to the church to the south and north, facing onto Pitt Street. They replace earlier and smaller buildings and were built in 1955 at a time of expansion at a cost of over \$350,000. Delos H. Smith was the architect. Carefully preserving the integrity of Mr. Latrobe's design, Mr. Smith made no changes to the church except for new interior side entrances, two on the north side of the church and two on the south, for easy access to the parish buildings. The one-story building on the north, Norton Memorial, stands at a distance of ten feet from the north wall of the church and is connected to it by covered interior halls. This building retains some elements of the original Norton Memorial, designed in 1898 by Emmett C. Dunn, in particular the eastern section. The three-story building to the south, Wilmer Memorial, is separated from the church by a children's playground about 20' by 40'. Access to the church is through a covered arcade running parallel to the street and leading from Wilmer to the southwest side corner of the front of the church, and at back by a door from the three-story wing to the side of the southeast corner of the original church building.

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the congregation had outgrown the first building. The minister at that time was the Rev. William Holland Wilmer, D.D., who had served as minister of St. John's in Washington from 1816 to 1817, resigning in 1817 to devote full time to St. Paul's. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, designer of St. John's in 1816, was thus well known to Dr. Wilmer, and also was a friend of one of the early members of St. Paul's, Bushrod Washington, Supreme Court Justice and a nephew of George Washington. Therefore it was logical that he should have been selected to design St. Paul's. He began in April of 1817, and the church was completed in one year at a cost of \$26,000.

Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764-1820) was born in England and came to this country in 1796. Appointed by President Jefferson in 1803 as Surveyor of Public Buildings in Washington, D.C., he completed the U. S. Capitol begun by William Thornton, and designed Statuary Hall and the former Supreme Court Room.<sup>2</sup> In 1807 he completed the White House, also restored it after the War of 1812. Among many other important buildings he designed in this country were five churches: the Roman Catholic Cathedral and the Chapel of St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland; Christ Church (1808) and St. John's of Lafayette Square (1815-1816) in Washington, D.C.; and St. Paul's in Alexandria. Three were Gothic in design: the Baltimore Cathedral (rejected in favor of his Classic design), St. Mary's Chapel, Christ Church (now called Christ Church Capitol Hill), and St. Paul's. Talbot Hamlin, a noted American architectural historian, describes St. Paul's and Christ Church: "In both, the exteriors are quaint rather than beautiful, but in both, despite the small cost, he achieved interiors of distinction and beauty perhaps all the more charming because of the occasional naive character of the Gothic detail..."<sup>3</sup>

Thomas Waterman in an address in 1939 at St. John's, in speaking of Latrobe's Gothic designs, notes: "Latrobe evidently treasured the idea of a Gothic church and in 1808 designed Christ Church, Washington, in this manner. In spite of alterations as drastic as those to St. John's, Christ Church maintains at least on the exterior, the original intent... The exterior is in traditional, if not well understood, English Gothic,

(See Continuation Sheet #5)

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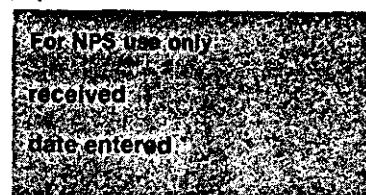
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with a tower rising from the roof over the entrance. This has all the features found in books on the style of the period: buttresses, wood pinnacles, tracery ornament and battlements. While Christ Church has more the appearance of an English perpendicular Gothic church, and perhaps is superior to St. Paul's in design, the latter has an arresting facade, reminiscent of that of Peterborough Cathedral in England."<sup>4</sup>

That the builder of St. Paul's, Jeremiah Bosworth, actually deviated from Mr. Latrobe's design for St. Paul's is chronicled in a series of letters fortunately preserved in Latrobe's papers. (Almost all of St. Paul's early records were destroyed in a fire during the Civil War; nothing remains of reference to Mr. Latrobe except for a statement of 1820 showing the church owed him \$17.) In these letters,<sup>5</sup> dated between July 4, 1817, and the following November, Mr. Latrobe is shown as greatly frustrated and aggravated by changes made to his design: addition of the entry vestibule, which he feared would cause loss of strength in carrying up the tower; erection of a gallery for blacks, which would "destroy in appearance the fifth part of the whole church and...be expensive and ugly";<sup>6</sup> omission of piers on the flanks in favor of thickening the flanks, considered by Latrobe to be an unnecessary expense of 25,000 additional bricks; lowering of the church eighteen inches and substitution of Gothic windows on the floor level with square ones. "What a confession of ostentatious poverty!:" he complains. "The congregation are proud enough to build a handsome front to show to passengers but too poor to be consistent in the flanks - too inconsistent in their opinion of their architect (whether of his honesty or skill I will not pretend to say) to believe that he is capable of judging as correctly respecting the body of a church as of its front."<sup>7</sup>

While the dispute with the architect was not over money but design, the dispute in 1818 with the builder (as aired in the newspapers of the time) was not over design, but money. Jeremiah Bosworth is remembered in Alexandria as the builder of St. Paul's and as the framer of the city market steeple in 1817 (also attributed to Latrobe).<sup>8</sup> Bosworth considered himself underpaid, and the church thought him overpaid, having paid him

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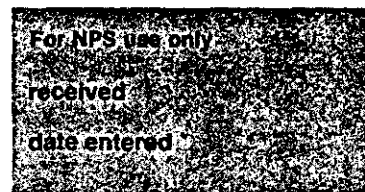
an average of \$105 a week rather than the contracted \$60 a week. Bosworth was dismissed one month before the church was consecrated on May 17, 1818.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the great national depression of the time,, the new St. Paul's began to flourish. In the ensuing 166 years the church has had a significant impact on religion in the City of Alexandria and the nation. Its Sunday School was founded in 1818 with classes for poor blacks, not only in Bible but in sewing, writing, and reading. Church records show 100 children in this group in 1822 and 250 in 1826, with a circulating library of over 200 volumes. In 1836 children of the Juvenile Mite Society of the church sent money to the Infant School in Greece and are thus said to have been first in the nation to contribute to a foreign mission. In 1829 when the Baptist Church of Alexandria was burned to the ground, St. Paul's offered the use of its Lecture Room to the Baptists until they rebuilt. In 1825 an ecumenical group of town Sunday School teachers was founded at St. Paul's. In 1823, largely as the result of the efforts of St. Paul's rector, the Rev. William H. Wilmer, D.D., the Virginia Theological Seminary was founded and held its first classes at St. Paul's. An evangelical movement in the form of a Sunday School for local Chinese existed from 1919 to 1921. From 1905 to 1946 St. Paul's sponsored a local mission on a church-owned lot at Fairfax and Franklin Streets. Called the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, it was a small frame structure serving the neighborhood, and was staffed by St. Paul's members and Seminary students till disbanded in 1947. (The name is perpetuated in the church's side chapel built in 1977.)

Finally, three Bishops were consecrated at St. Paul's: John Payne, first Bishop of Liberia, in 1851; Francis M. Whittle of Virginia, 1868; and Charles Penick, third Bishop of Liberia, in 1877. According to oral tradition, the Bishop of Alabama, Richard Hooker Wilmer, and Bishop of West Virginia William Loyall Gravatt were confirmed at St. Paul's, but no dates are available. Two former rectors of the church became bishops: Thomas Augustus Fraser, Jr., Bishop of North Carolina, in 1965; and William Henry Mead, Bishop of Delaware, in 1968. Many foreign missionaries have been confirmed at St. Paul's, a partial list including: the

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Reverends Launcelot B. Minor of Liberia, Edward Syle of China and Japan, John Payne (first Bishop of Liberia), Charles C. Penick (third Bishop of Liberia), James Chapman of Japan, and John W. Chapman of Alaska.

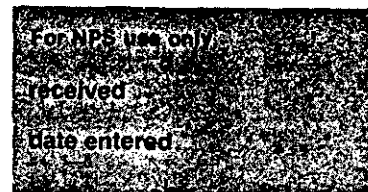
Other people associated with St. Paul's over the decades, many who were prominent Alexandrians, included the Washington and Fairfax families, Major Laurence Lewis (husband of Nelly Custis and a vestryman in 1822), Daingerfields, McLeans, and others. Supreme Court Justice Bushrod Washington was a member in 1812, George F. Washington a vestryman in 1822. Two grandchildren of Nelly Custis Lewis were baptized in the church, and one daughter was married by the rector. Several Washington family funerals were conducted by St. Paul's rectors, as well as the marriages of Montgomery Blair to Caroline Buckner and that of Gouverneur Morris to Patsey Carey.

Besides the religious affiliations already mentioned, in an outstanding example of community outreach St. Paul's was the scene of the founding of Alexandria Hospital when six women and two men, including the rector, met in the corner Lecture Room on December 12, 1872, with a "view to the formation of a Society to establish and control a Hospital for the sick among the respectable laboring classes". The church also sponsored the Education Society (1818), held classes of the American Grammar School (1826), helped found St. Agnes School for Girls (1924) and the Alexandria Chapter of the American Red Cross (1914), founded St. Paul's Nursery School and Kindergarten (1948, ecumenical) and Damascus House (1984, on church property at 413 Duke Street, to serve those in need). Its members have helped in various town programs for the sick and elderly, like Meals on Wheels, FISH, and ALIVE. The church has served as host to annual concerts of music prepared by Alexandria Choral Society and the Wondrous Machine, a chamber ensemble.

During the Civil War an incident occurred in the church which may be unparalleled in American history. On February 9, 1862, during Morning Prayer, the minister omitted the prayer for the President of the United States, whereupon he was arrested at gunpoint and taken out of the building by Federal soldiers, charged as a "rebel and a traitor". The church was then closed. Although the Reverend Mr. Stewart, locum tenens, was later

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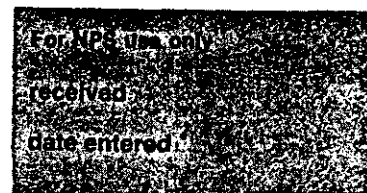
released by the military governor, General Montgomery, the local paper called it a scene "which...has perhaps never had a parallel among civilized nations, certainly not in the history of this country."<sup>10</sup> St. Paul's then became a general hospital for the duration of the war. Patients used the box pews as beds, with overflow placed in the Lecture Room; the organ was used as a medicine chest, and the rectory for surgeon's quarters. The church was again re-opened for divine worship on July 9, 1865.

In two other wars St. Paul's was helpful in providing beds for soldiers in Wilmer Memorial during World War I, and in opening a servicemen's lounge in Norton Memorial during World War II.

St. Paul's in 1984 is one of the largest churches in the Diocese of Virginia.

1. Minutes of the Vestry of Christ Church, Alexandria, Va., 1 July 1807; Alexandria Gazette, 26 May 1956, p. 8; Memoirs of Mrs. Louisa Slacum Benham, written in 1879, Alexandria Gazette, 26 May 1956, p. 8; Rt. Rev. William Meade, Old Churches and Families of Virginia, (Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott, 1906), Vol. II, p. 262, 271
2. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Journal of Latrobe, 1905
3. Talbot Hamlin, Greek Revival Architecture in the United States (Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 32
4. Thomas T. Waterman, address: "Benjamin Henry Latrobe and His Churches", given at St. John's Church, Washington, D.C., 10 February 1939
5. Photocopies in St. Paul's archives
6. The Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Maryland Historical Society (James T. White & Co., 1976), letter of 27 November 1817
7. Op. cit., letter of August 10, 1817
8. Penny Morrill, Who Built Alexandria? (Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, 1979), p. 21
9. Alexandria Gazette. April 17, 24, 27, 1818
10. The Local News, Alexandria, Va., 10 Feb. 1862, p. 1

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200.14 feet to a point; thence departing the line of South Pitt Street, South 80° 28' 40" East, 100.00 feet to a point, said point being 199.37 feet North of the northerly side of Duke Street; thence eastwardly with a line parallel to Duke Street, South 80° 55' 00" East, 28.21 feet to a point; thence southwardly with a line parallel to Pitt Street, South 09° 30' 00" West, 85.87 feet to a point; thence westwardly parallel to Duke Street, North 80° 55' 00" West, 14.75 feet to a point; thence southwardly parallel to Pitt Street, South 09° 30' 00" West, 1.97 feet to a point; thence North 81° 02' 40" West, 1.50 feet to a point; thence South 09° 28' 30" West, 21.08 feet to a point; thence westwardly parallel to Duke Street, North 80° 55' 00" West, 2.64 feet to a point; thence southwardly parallel to Pitt Street, South 09° 30' 00" West, 37.50 feet to a point; thence eastwardly parallel to Duke Street, South 80° 55' 00" East, 0.37 feet to a point; thence southwardly parallel to Pitt Street, South 09° 30' 00" West, 52.95 feet to a point on the northerly side of Duke Street; thence westwardly with the line of Duke Street, North 80° 55' 00" West, 109.71 feet to the point of beginning, containing 23,541 square feet or 0.54042 acres of land.

USGS 7.5' quadrangle  
Alexandria, VA.-D.C.-MD.

(scale:1:24000)  
1965 (PR 1979)

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, 228 S. Pitt St.,  
Alexandria, VA

UTM References:

18/322380/4296650

