

VLR- 12/5/01
NRHP 3/13/02

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
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. Christopher's School

other names/site number _____ VDHR File no. 127-5995

2. Location

street & number 711 St. Christopher's Road _____ not for publication
city or town Richmond vicinity _____
state Virginia code VA county Richmond (Independent City) 760 zip code 23226

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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] _____ Date 1/24/02
Signature of certifying official
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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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)

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Property Owner
=====

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

name _____ Church Schools of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia _____
 c/o Dr. David H Charlton
street & number _____ 110 W. Franklin Street _____ telephone _____ (804)-643-8451 _____
city or town _____ Richmond _____ state _____ VA _____ zip code _____ 23220 _____

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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.). Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.
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Section 7 Page 1

**St. Christopher's School
Richmond, Virginia**

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary

The nominated portion of St. Christopher's School in Richmond, Virginia consists of the core of the tree-shaded site that contains the oldest buildings in the complex. They range in size from the large three-story main building, Chamberlayne Hall, to the tiny one-story frame Murrell Bookstore. Dating from 1915 to 1943, they are arranged around an irregular quadrangle in a pleasantly unaffected manner. In their diversity they reflect the growth of the school from a collection of almost camp-like rustic buildings to a relaxed mixture of Georgian formality and picturesque vernacular utility. One catches vistas of playing fields and wooded verges from almost any vantage point. It is doubtful that this pleasant ambiance was consciously planned from the beginning, but it has been nurtured in the past quarter century as the school has grown. It is no coincidence that the school paper is called "The Pine Needle" for the towering pines very much define its sense of place. It is this informal combination of architecture and natural landscape that render the school eligible for the National Register under Criterion C.

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**St. Christopher's School
Richmond, Virginia**

Detailed Description

With its move to the Westhampton campus in 1914, St. Christopher's future form was changed from one that most certainly would have been compact and urban to one that (though now surrounded by residential streets) has remained open and park-like. At the time of the move the school began to build a series of frame structures to house different functions. The remaining buildings from this period are discussed individually below. As the years passed the school grew, new buildings were built, and old ones adapted. Adaptation has characterized the evolution of the school's buildings throughout its life.

The campus consists of gently rolling hills still shaded by many pines and a few deciduous trees. The shady bower-like ambiance has been a feature of the school from the start. Some spaces are defined by boxwood and a few magnolia trees and add variety to the scene. Very few institutions have preserved early small frame buildings as new masonry buildings have been funded. St. Christopher's offers an example worthy of emulation elsewhere.

Inventory of Contributing Resources

Chamberlayne Hall. This essay in the Georgian Revival Style, is a handsome formal two-and-a-half story building in Flemish-bond brick with dormer windows on the roof. The main entrance facing St. Christopher's Road features a frontispiece doorcase with engaged Ionic columns and a segmental pediment. The large windows have 12-over-12 sash. The movement for its erection as a monument to Dr. Churchill Gibson Chamberlayne began in 1904. The General Board of Church Schools granted \$75,000 toward construction of the new building, and \$50,000 was raised by subscription among alumni, patrons and friends of the school. Contracts were drawn up in October and November 1941, and groundbreaking ceremonies took place in January 1942. The Richmond-based architectural firm of Baskervill & Sons designed the new building and Eggers and Higgins of New York drew up the building sketches. Contractor James Fox and Sons completed it in the summer of 1943. When classes began in September the new Upper School building boasted 10 classrooms, two labs, library, study hall, administration offices, locker room and a large commons room. The 20,000-square-foot structure was hailed as the "newest and most modern school building in Richmond." In 1967 construction on the north end of the building added 5,000 square feet of classroom space. Refurbished in 1978 and 1999, Chamberlayne Hall is the focal point of the school's "historical corridor." ¹

Upper School Chapel. In May of 1917, arrangements were made by the Chamberlayne School for the construction of a new building at the northern side of the campus to house a gymnasium, recreation hall and drill room. The gymnasium fulfilled a tremendous need for the school, providing a basketball court and locker room with showers. For the next 19 years it served as the school's official athletic complex. Galleries for spectators were located at both

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**St. Christopher's School
Richmond, Virginia**

ends of the hall and were reached by outside stairs running up the sides of the buildings. The gym also served as an armory, housing uniforms, guns, "and other paraphernalia related to the war effort of the student. Beginning in the 1917-1918 session, an optional course in military training was added to the Upper School curriculum. The following year military training became mandatory in the Upper School. In inclement weather the student cadet company drilled in the gym. The military school format was discontinued in the fall of 1919 with the end of World War I.

In 1936 the role of the Gymnasium was assumed by a more modern masonry structure erected a short distance east of the existing building. In the 1950s, the Gymnasium was used as a dressing room for 6th, 7th and 8th grade football teams. Temporarily abandoned in 1961 when Scott Gymnasium was finished, the "Old Gym" became in succession a recreation room for boarders, the Day School lunchroom, and a weight training room. In 1944 Warren P. Elmer, Jr., St. Christopher's fifth headmaster, decided that the building would be converted into the school's chapel. The old pine floors were sanded and varnished, and the inside stairs leading to the galleries were built. Pews and kneelers found at an old army chapel no longer in use were arranged around a small podium situated along the center of the north wall. For many years the chapel was regularly used by the Upper, Middle, and Lower schools. Today the Chapel serves for morning services on Monday, Wednesday and Friday for the Upper School.²

Murrell Bookstore. Erected as the first Lower School, this is the second oldest surviving structure on the campus. It is a simple one-story structure with a low hipped roof. The central front door is sheltered by a small porch with pairs of paneled pillars. Painted with green blinds, this 1500-square-foot building was occupied by students in 1916. The interior flooring was rift-cut pine; the doors, porch, and columns were made of heart pine. A small entrance hall was lined with wall racks for coats and hats, and a small storage closet was located on the back wall. The northern end of the building was a classroom. A larger assembly room, "with nice seats and desks, a large number of black-boards" occupied the opposite end. In 1923 the Lower School was converted into a recreation hall for boarding students living nearby. A 6-foot wide brick fireplace was centered on the wall separating the reading and recreation rooms. Retaining the 1923 floor plan, the old recreation hall was for many years used as a bookstore and storage area. In 1995 the interior was refurbished and the building named Murrell Bookstore.³

Herrington Hall. In March of 1923 Baskervill & Sons completed plans for additions to the old Upper School building. During the summer a small office and three classrooms were added to the northern end of the school. (The school building itself was demolished in 1974.) A large all-purpose room was constructed at the southern end behind a central corridor that connected it to the existing school building. It was 41 by 51 feet and lit by 13 windows. It was in use by September and furnished with "new desks and the old piano." The brick basement remained unfinished until the 1930s. The building has served from time to time as an assembly room, history seminar classroom, a music program practice room and a general meeting room.

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**St. Christopher's School
Richmond, Virginia**

Stern Alumni Hall (Cottage No. 4). Built in the summer and fall of 1916, Cottage No. 4 (originally known as Dorm No. 1), is the oldest surviving structure on the St. Christopher's campus. In the school's early years it housed the older boarding students and a housemaster. There were few rooms in the dorm and most of the boys lived in small cubicles, each with a single iron bed, chest of drawers and a school chair. In the 1930s dorm masters lived in the two large rooms on the left and right of the present entrance. Over the years it has served as a dormitory, faculty residence and, most recently, as the alumni building. In 1926 a large 41-by-41-foot structure was constructed south of the existing building. The addition provided a recreation room and additional rooms for boarders. Today only the original portion of the building remains. In 1994 the house was refurbished and named Stern Alumni Hall.⁴

Middle School. Designed by Baskervill & Sons in 1926 to house the Lower and Middle schools, this was the largest structure on the campus prior to the construction of Chamberlayne Hall in 1942. In March 1927 classes began in the new building. The ground floor housed a kitchen, large dining room, play room, bicycle and coatroom, toilet, fuel and boiler room and a large bathroom. Two flights of stairs led up to the main floor where six classrooms, headmaster's office, teacher's room, toilet and assembly room (present day library) were located. The teacher's room opened to the small cast-iron balcony over the front entrance. In 1946 the ground level was remodeled and six more classrooms created. In 1956 one-story masonry wings were added to each end and an auditorium was built. These additions by Richmond architect Alan McCullough were designed in a way that left the original 1926 structure dominant in the composition. The additions were constructed by the Richmond contracting firm, Claiborne and Taylor. In 1968 the Lower School moved to a new building across St. Christopher's Road and the building became the Middle School.⁵

Non-contributing Resources:

The only non-contributing resource within the core area is the Gottwald Science Center completed in 1996. It stands northwest of and perpendicular to Chamberlayne Hall and is in a similar Georgian Revival style.

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**St. Christopher's School
Richmond, Virginia**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary Statement of Significance

St. Christopher's School in Richmond, Virginia is an important example of the efforts by dedicated individuals and religious institutions to broaden the availability of quality education and to foster Christian principles in the youth entrusted to their care. The early frame buildings that remain exemplify the camp-like facilities that housed many such institutions. The more urbane brick structures from later in the second quarter of the 20th century show an affinity with preparatory school and collegiate architecture typically found in east-coast states. It is eligible under Criterion A and Criterion C.

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**St. Christopher's School
Richmond, Virginia**

Historical Background

From the founding of the Virginia colony until after the Civil War there was no general program for the primary education of children. The rate of literacy was low and education was usually undertaken by family members, clergymen, tutors, and governesses and, in a few isolated cases, small private academies. In 1879 a public education system was established, but even then the emphasis was on teaching reading and writing to students, many of whom only went to school for five or six years. Though this was a great step forward, families desiring more concentrated learning, preparation for college, and advanced classes in science and languages, often turned to private schools to provide these and other supplementary instruction. There were several such schools in Richmond including the Richmond Academy that operated from 1905 to 1918, McGuire's University School founded in 1865 and closed in 1942, and St. Catherine's School still in operation since its founding in 1890. Across the state during the same period "finishing schools" for girls and military academies for boys were created to meet the same needs.

St. Christopher's School was founded in 1911 by Dr. Churchill Gibson Chamberlayne as the Chamberlayne School for Boys. It was representative of schools established by men and women of spiritual depth and intellectual stature as a means of passing on to new generations the classical and religious heritage from which they believed the best of western culture was derived. "Chamberlayne... (held) numerous degrees, including an M.A. and Ph.D. from the German University of Halle-Wittenberg. Dr. Chamberlayne understood boys and when his school opened in 1911 with sixteen of them, and Dabney S. Lancaster as assistant headmaster, it was the beginning of a notable adventure in the field of secondary education." (Dabney)

The school quickly outgrew its small building on the south side of Grove Avenue between Belmont and Auburn streets. In 1914 the school shifted operations to a seven-acre tract in the Westhampton section of the city. The school was housed in a group of frame buildings with a camp-like atmosphere. The historic central campus still includes buildings built immediately after the move and included in this nomination. To this rustic and somewhat Spartan complex "The young men... in short pants, long black stockings, high shoes, and carrying assorted styles of book bags, bounded off the car and took their way north. . . Tall pines, broomsedge and rabbit tobacco grew where there are now solid blocks of homes." (Hankins quoted in Dabney)

Organized religion has long had a special concern for education. Chamberlayne came from a devout family and the school reflected his own faith. To guarantee the economic stability of the school and to ensure the preservation of its educational ideals and focus, Chamberlayne transferred the operation of the institution in 1920 to a newly formed corporation known as Church Schools in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. At his request the name of the school was changed to "St. Christopher's School."

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St. Christopher's School
Richmond, Virginia

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point on the east side of St. Christopher's Road about 400 feet north of its intersection with Wesley Road and proceeding east about 1100 feet across the campus to the intersection of Henri Road and Fergusson Road, thence east along the north side of Fergusson Road approximately 750 feet then running north for about 400 feet then running west for about 900 feet and parallel to the rear walls of the Middle School building to a point on the service road immediately behind the Murrell Bookstore, thence north straight along that road about 250 feet and along its northwest curve for about 200 feet to a point just beyond the northeast corner of the chapel, thence west parallel to the north wall of the chapel and the parking area about 1000 feet to St. Christopher's Road and south along the north side of St. Christopher's Road 900 feet to the beginning point.

Boundary Justification

The area nominated includes the original core area of the school and all of the institution's oldest buildings. One non-contributing building falls within the area.

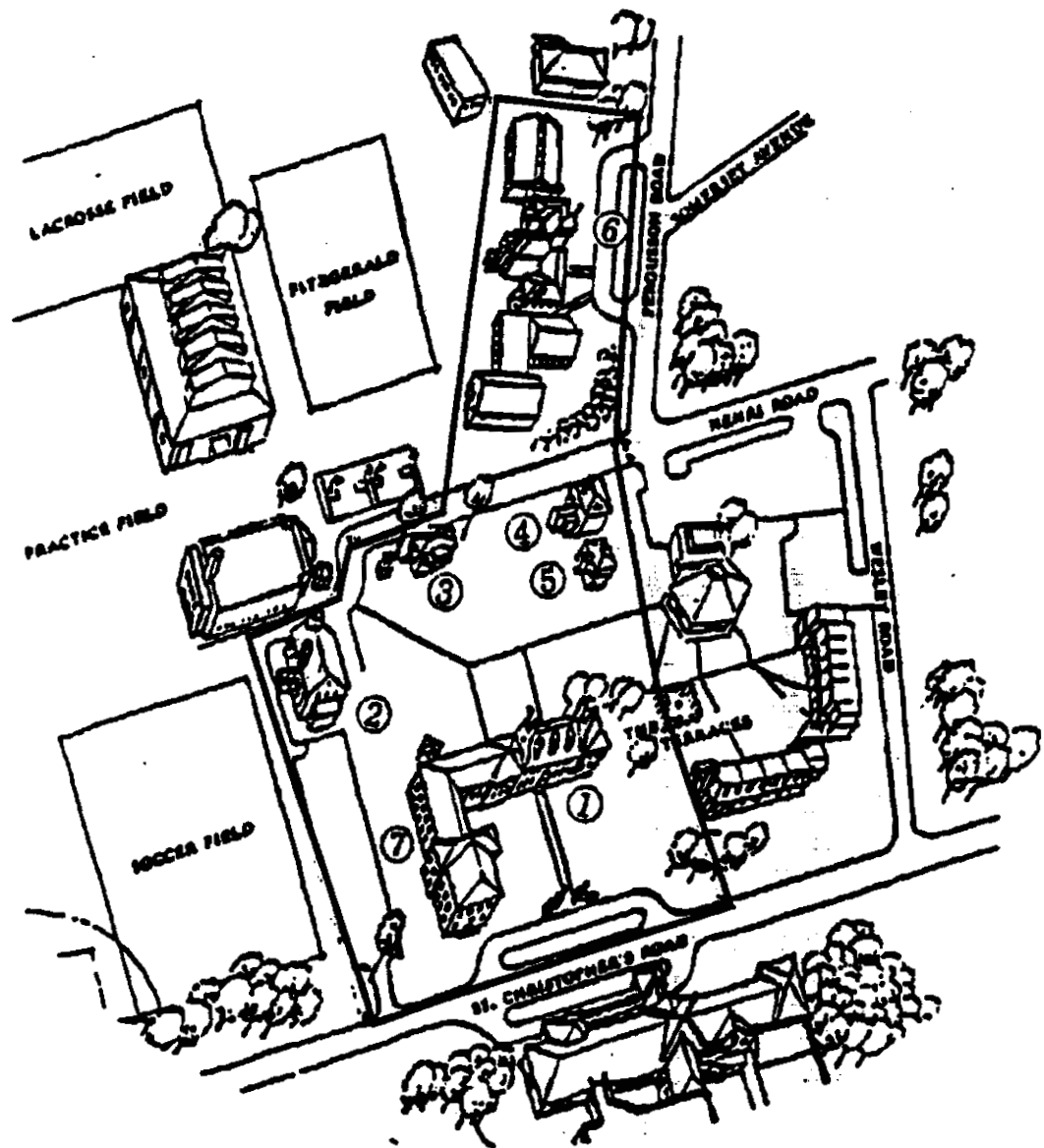
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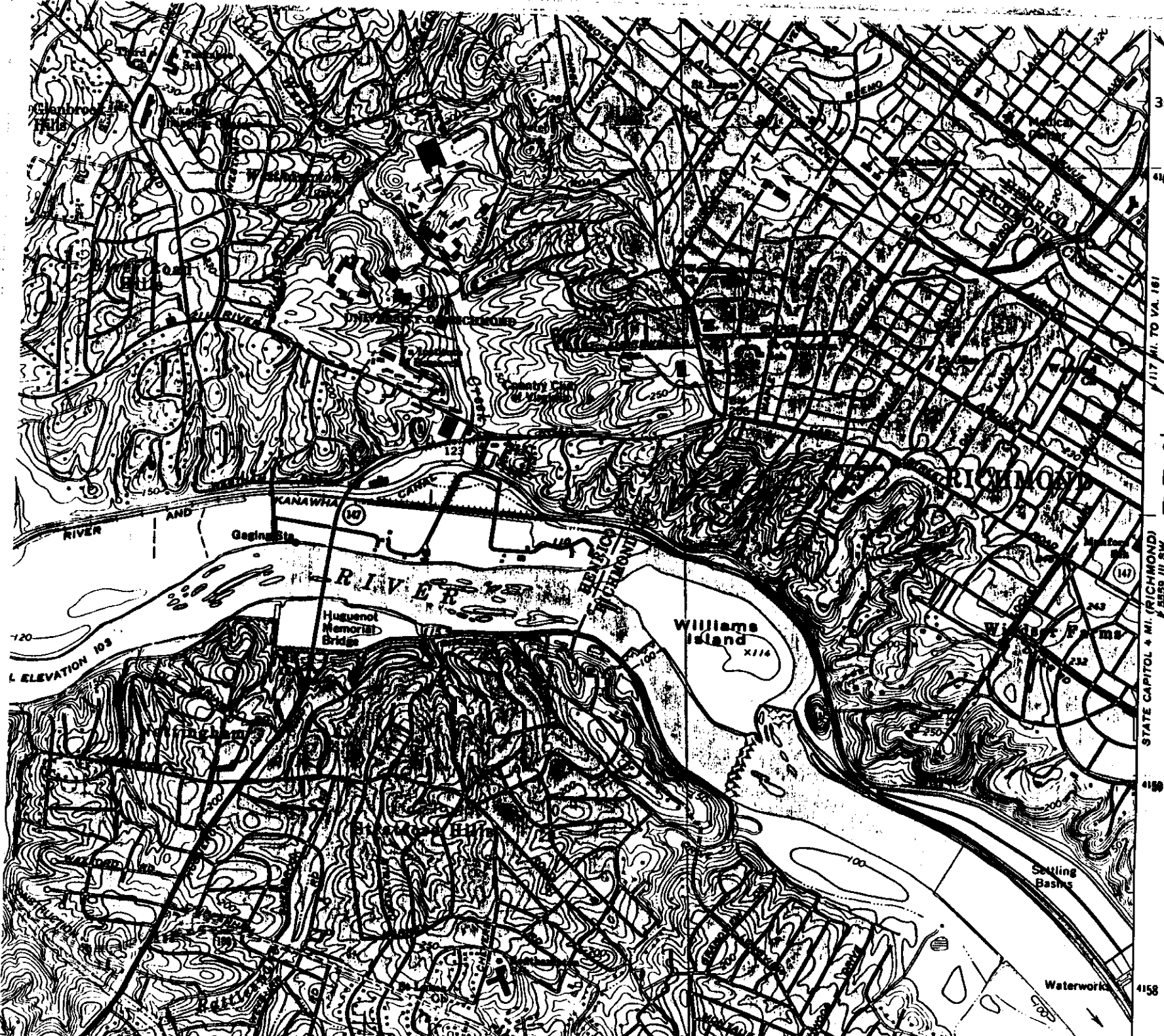
St. Christopher's School
Richmond, Virginia

St. Christopher's School
Sketch map delineating boundaries of nominated area



Key

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Chamberlayne Hall | 5. Alumni Hall (Cottage No. 1) |
| 2. Chapel | 6. Middle School |
| 3. Murrell Bookstore | 7. Gottwald Science Center
(non-contributing building) |
| 4. Herrington Hall | |



35'

4162

117 MI. TO VA. 161

St. Christopher's School
Richmond, VA.

Zone 18

Easting: 217380

Northing: 4162010

STATE CAPITAL 4 MI. (RICHMOND)
5559 III SW

4158

32'30"