

VLR-9/9/69 NRHP-10/15/66 NHL-5/30/61

Form 10-317
(Sept. 1957)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE Virginia	2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. Theme IX, Development of the English Colonies, 1700-1775
3. NAME(S) OF SITE Christ Episcopal Church, Lancaster County	4. APPROX. ACREAGE 13 acres
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) Three miles south of Kilmarnock on State Highway 3	
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) Christ Church Parish, Irvington, Va.	

7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)

Combining in its fabric typical early Georgian features with several which are unique, Christ Church is one of the very finest and certainly among the best preserved of colonial Virginia churches. Aside from the "elegant experiment" of its architectural design, the church is particularly valuable for the integrity of its interior furnishings. Few colonial churches, especially in the South, have so nearly escaped the ravages of war, natural disaster, and human "improvement." Without the necessity of extensive restoration, it stands as a superb example of its particular architectural style and period.

John Carter, founder of the noted Virginia clan, built a church on this site in 1669. Eventually the building became inadequate for the needs of its parishioners, and some agitation arose to construct a new church at some more convenient location. To prevent this, Robert "King" Carter, John's son and the leading Virginia entrepreneur of his generation, built the present Christ Church at his own expense in 1732. He died soon after its completion and is buried in the churchyard, in an elaborate marble tomb beside his two wives. The tomb of John Carter and his several wives, for whose sake the son built the church, is located in the chancel.

Architectural Historian Hugh Morrison, who characterized Christ Church as "a surpassing example of Georgian design and workmanship," described the building as follows:

"The cruciform plan of the church, with a nave only slightly longer than the equilateral transepts and chancel, was not unusual among Virginia Georgian churches, but the architectural style, with its fine and sophisticated detail, was entirely exceptional. The high walls and steep roof give the church a more vertical character than is usual, and the rich wood entablature at the eaves is of unusual fineness and elaboration. The tall

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8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works)

Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture From the First Colonial Settlements to the National Period (New York, 1952); Henry I. Brock, Colonial Churches in Virginia (Richmond, c. 1930).

9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, HABS, etc.)

Historic American Buildings Survey, 15 photographs, 1932-39.

10. PHOTOGRAPHS* ATTACHED: YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION Good	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Active church	13. DATE OF VISIT
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) <i>Frank B. Charles, Jr.</i>	15. TITLE Historian	16. DATE Sept. 21, 1961	

* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

UNITED STATES
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NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS
SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name, and the word (cont'd), as, 6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . .

STATE Virginia	NAME(S) OF SITE Christ Episcopal Church, Lancaster County
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arched windows, with rubbed brick dressings and cut-stone sills, imposts, and keystones, are remarkably similar to the fine stair windows of Rosewell /Gloucester County seat of the Page family, since destroyed/, begun six years earlier. The two transept doors, with their Doric pilasters and angular pediments, are executed with remarkable skill in molded and gauged bricks, with some stone trim, while the main entrance door at the west is more imposing with its arched lunette and high segmental pediment. All three doors are made of walnut, finely paneled, and are preceded by stepping-stones of Portland stone, cut to an elliptical curve. The workmanship in brick masonry, woodwork, and stone trim is unrivaled in American architecture of this period. The small oval windows over the doors and especially the splayed eaves of the roof, almost reminiscent of a Chinese pagoda, add a touch of playful grace to an otherwise dignified exterior.

Interior details match the exterior in quality of design and execution and are unique in their completeness and excellent state of preservation. High box pews, paneled dadoes, a tall pulpit with curved stair, hexagonal sounding board with ogee dome and finial, paneled gallery in the south transept, communion rail, altar, and reredos are all superb examples of craftsmanship. Most of the interior woodwork is in black walnut, contrasting effectively with the white plaster walls, which rise to a curved vault. Aisles are paved with dark blocks of Purbeck marble, and the graceful baptismal font, made of marble carved with acanthus leaves and cherubs' heads, was undoubtedly imported from England.

In 1958, the Foundation for Historic Christ Church, Inc., was established to carry out a long-term plan for the restoration of the church and its surroundings. Title to the one-acre church tract, formerly held by Carter descendants, has been vested in the Parish, as well as twelve acres of surrounding land. Dr. Frederick D. Nichols, utilizing the results of historical, archeological and architectural research made since 1958, has prepared an overall restoration plan to guide future work. The only major interior change will be the addition of conduits for air-conditioning and heating, which will necessitate no important visible alterations; the plant will be located in a separate structure. In the summer of 1961 the Foundation began a fund-raising campaign to implement restoration plans.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

The National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings

Christ Church, Lancaster County, Virginia

Combining in its fabric typical early Georgian features with several which are unique, Christ Church is one of the very finest and certainly among the best preserved of Colonial Virginia churches. Aside from its exterior architectural design, the church is particularly valuable for the integrity of its interior furnishings. Few colonial churches, especially in the South, have so nearly escaped the ravages of war, natural disaster, and "improvement."

John Carter, founder of the noted Virginia clan, built a church on this site in 1669. Eventually the building became inadequate for the needs of its parishioners, and some agitation arose to construct a new church at some more convenient location. To prevent this, Robert "King" Carter, John's son and the leading Virginia entrepreneur of his generation, built the present Christ Church at his own expense in 1732. He died soon after its completion and is buried in the churchyard, in an elaborate marble tomb beside his two wives. The tomb of John Carter and his several wives, for whose sake the son built the church, is located in the chancel.

In 1958, the Foundation for Historic Christ Church, Inc., was established to carry out a long-term restoration plan for the church and its surroundings. Located three miles south of Kilmarnock on State Highway 3, the Church is owned by Christ Church Parish, Irvington, Virginia.

NSHSP5/29/61

CHRIST CHURCH, LANCASTER COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Location: Three miles south of Kilmarnock on State Highway 3.

Ownership: Christ Church Parish, Irvington, Virginia.

Significance: Combining in its fabric typical early Georgian features with several which are unique, Christ Church is one of the very finest and certainly among the best preserved of colonial Virginia churches. Aside from the "elegant experiment"¹ of its architectural design, the church is particularly valuable for the integrity of its interior furnishings. Few colonial churches, especially in the South, have so nearly escaped the ravages of war, natural disaster, and human "improvement." Without the necessity of extensive restoration, it stands as a superb example of its particular architectural style and period.

John Carter, founder of the noted Virginia clan, built a church on this site in 1669. Eventually the building became inadequate for the needs of its parishioners, and some agitation arose to construct a new church at some more convenient location. To prevent this, Robert "King" Carter, John's son and the leading Virginia entrepreneur of his generation, built the present Christ Church at his own expense in 1732. He died soon after its completion and is buried in the churchyard, in an elaborate marble tomb beside his two wives. The tomb of John Carter and his several wives, for whose sake the son built the church, is located in the chancel.

Architectural Historian Hugh Morrison, who characterized Christ Church as "a surpassing example of Georgian design and workmanship," described the building as follows:

The cruciform plan of the church, with a nave only slightly longer than the equilateral transepts and chancel, was not unusual among Virginia Georgian churches, but the architectural style, with its fine and sophisticated detail, was entirely exceptional. The high walls and steep roof give the church a more vertical character than is usual, and the rich wood entablature at the eaves is of unusual fineness and elaboration. The tall arched windows, with rub bed brick dressings and cut-stone sills, imposts, and keystones, are remarkably similar to the fine

¹ Henry I. Brock, Colonial Churches in Virginia (Richmond, c. 1930), p. 14.

stair windows of Rosewell /Gloucester County seat of the Page family, since destroyed/, begun six years earlier. The two transept doors, with their Doric pilasters and angular pediments, are executed with remarkable skill in molded and gauged bricks, with some stone trim, while the main entrance door at the west is more imposing with its arched lunette and high segmental pediment. All three doors are made of walnut, finely paneled, and are preceded by stepping-stones of Portland stone, cut to an elliptical curve. The workmanship in brick masonry, woodwork, and stone trim is unrivaled in American architecture of this period. The small oval windows over the doors and especially the splayed eaves of the roof, almost reminiscent of a Chinese pagoda, add a touch of playful grace to an otherwise dignified exterior.

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Present Condition

In 1958, the Foundation for Historic Christ Church, Inc., was established to carry out a long-term plan for the restoration of the church and its surroundings. Title to the one-acre church tract, formerly held by Carter descendants, has been vested in the Parish, as well as twelve acres of surrounding land. Dr. Frederick D. Nichols, utilizing the results of historical, archeological and architectural research made since 1958, has prepared an overall restoration plan to guide future work. The only major interior change will be the addition of conduits for air-conditioning and heating, which will necessitate no important visible alterations; the plant will be located in a separate structure. In the summer of 1961 the Foundation began a fund-raising campaign to implement restoration plans.

² Early American Architecture From the First Colonial Settlements to the National Period (New York, 1952), pp. 349-50.