

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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

1. Name

historic St. Stephen's Church

and/or common n/a

2. Location

street & number 6004 Three Chopt Road n/a not for publication

city, town Richmond (Independent City) n/a vicinity of congressional district 3rd (Thomas J. Bliley, Jr.)

state Virginia code 51 county (in City) code 760

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Vestry, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, c/o Mr. William A. Young, Jr., Registrar

street & number P. O. Box 8500

city, town Richmond n/a vicinity of state Virginia 23226

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Richmond City Hall

street & number 900 East Broad Street

city, town Richmond state Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Virginia Historic Landmarks
Commission Survey

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1980 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, 221 Governor Street

city, town Richmond state Virginia 23219

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>n/a</u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church at the corner of Grove Avenue and Three Chopt Road is a long, narrow building constructed of rubblestone and cast-stone, echoing the Early English Gothic style. Originally built as a seven-bay edifice with a three-bay choir in 1927-28 by the Philadelphia firm of Frank R. Watson, Edkins, and Thompson, the church was enlarged to its present nine-bay form in 1950. A slate gable roof covers the basilica plan.

Set in a projecting vestibule on the church's west end, the main entrance is distinguished by three equilateral arched openings and paneled double doors below paneled transoms. Framing the doors are pointed arches with multiple jambs supported by clustered columns and pilasters. A decorative cast-stone frieze of repeated quatrefoils defines the vestibule roof. A pointed-arch, stained-glass window with reticulated tracery is set back from the vestibule in the nave wall. Clasp buttresses articulate the corners of the nave's west end, while a single cross marks the roof's ridge. The facade and vestibule were additions made to the building in 1950 under the direction of Washington architect Phillip Frohman.

The north and south sides of the structure are similar with rectangular stained-glass windows in the aisles and tall, narrow lancet-arch windows with geometric tracery above in the clerestory. Slender buttresses are set between the openings on both levels. The doorway on the south side was originally the main entrance. It is set into a vestibule which forms the base of a proposed stone tower eighty-eight feet high. Drawings in the possession of the church reveal Watson's design for the tower. A three-part, pointed-arch, stained-glass window with geometrical tracery breaks the rubblestone wall on the building's east end. Two arcades created by a series of rubblestone segmental arches form a cloister that connects the church and parish hall to the north.

St. Stephen's contains a distinguished interior. The plan consists of a nave with central and side aisles formed by the placement of the carved oak pews, separated by screens pierced by pointed arches, and a three-bay choir with its east bay forming a sanctuary. The choir is divided from the nave by a dramatically molded, cast-stone chancel arch. The nave is covered by an impressive exposed timber truss roof.

The Patriots' window over the west entrance was designed by the Willett Studios of Philadelphia and installed in 1947. The window was enlarged with the lengthening of the church. The dominant figure of the central lancet is the risen Christ bearing the flag of the Church Triumphant. The south aisle is lighted by windows of six of the Apostles designed by the J.&R. Lamb Studios, Northvale, N. J. The stained-glass windows on the north and west sides were added during the 1950 expansion of the church and were also furnished by the Willet Studios.

The focal point of the interior is the carved-oak, polychromed triptych reredos designed by Frank Watson. The reredos was carved under the direction of the DeLong Studios of Philadelphia by wood carvers from Oberammergau, Germany. Its main theme is the Ascension of Christ into Heaven, which is depicted in the three center units. The base consists of carved figures of the Evangelists and their symbols. The main altar is constructed of native stone, cut in a single block.

The altar and reredos are centered below the east stained-glass window or St. Christopher's window. Designed by the D'Ascenzo Studios, also of Philadelphia, the window illus-

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1927–8; 1950

Builder/Architect Frank R. Watson, Edkins, and Thompson;
Phillip Frohman

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The renewed and distinctively scholarly interest in Gothic architecture begun in England in the late 19th century and fostered in this country by Ralph Adams Cram and other leading architects resulted in some of the most beautiful and finely crafted churches ever erected in America. Richmond's St. Stephen's Church, designed by Frank Watson of Philadelphia and initially completed in 1928, well illustrates in its form, detailing, and materials, the loving care that was expended on these Late Gothic Revival buildings. Later expanded by Phillip Frohman, another leading proponent of the movement, the building also reflects the evolutionary quality of authentic Medieval specimens. Among the church's notable appointments are its outstanding collection of stained-glass windows by the Willet Studios and D'Ascenzo Studios, both of Philadelphia, and the J. & R. Lamb Studio of Northvale, N. J., and the oak reredos, designed by Watson and executed by the woodcarvers of Oberammergau, Germany.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The congregation of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church was officially organized in 1911 under the guidance of Rev. Zebulon S. Farland. That same year a simple brick chapel was erected near the end of Grove Avenue to house the group. As the neighborhood near the church grew, so did the congregation; thus in 1921 planning for a larger structure was underway. A lot west of the chapel, at the corner of Grove Avenue and Three Chopt Road, was purchased. The same year Rev. Giles B. Palmer assumed the duties of rector, which included overseeing the construction of a new building.

The St. Stephen's congregation was partial to both the English Gothic and Colonial Revival styles for their new church. Undecided on a style, the firms Cram and Ferguson of Boston, Goodhue and H. Upjohn of New York, and Frank R. Watson, Edkins, and Thompson of Philadelphia were considered for designs.

Although America's Late Gothic Revival architecture was promoted mainly by the architects practicing in the style, popular interest in the beauties and refinement of the mode was largely spurred by Henry Adam's influential work, Mont St. Michel and Chartres. The new approach was more scholarly and archaeologically correct than had been for previous interpretations of the Gothic, and many buildings, save for lack of wear, could almost be mistaken for authentic. A group of St. Stephen's parishioners became much interested in the Late Gothic Revival movement, and the acclaim received by Christ and St. Luke's Church in Norfolk, designed by Frank R. Watson, led them to select Watson as their architect. Watson specialized in ecclesiastical buildings and was well known for his designs of the Catholic Church of the Epiphany in Philadelphia and St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Frankford, Pennsylvania.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Brandon, Raphael and J. Arthur. Parish Churches: Being Perspective Views of English Ecclesiastical Structures... London: George Bell, 1848. Christian
Tyrrell-Green, E. Parish Church Architecture. London: Society for Promoting Knowledge, 1924.
"Vestry Minutes and Chronological History, St. Stephen's Church, 1910-1935." St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Richmond, Va.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 3 acres

Quadrangle name Bon Air, Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

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4	1	6	1	2	3	0
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Verbal boundary description and justification The boundaries encompass the lots which comprise 6004-6 Grove Avenue and 6004 Three Chopt Road and which are referenced as W021-03551015 and W021-03551016 in the Richmond City Tax Assessor's Records.

(See Continuation Sheet #1 for Boundary Justification)

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

state	n/a	code	county	n/a	code
state	n/a	code	county	n/a	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date January 1981

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3144

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director

title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

date MAY 10 1982

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

St. Stephen's Church, Richmond, Virginia

Continuation sheet

#1

Item number

7,8

Page

1

7. DESCRIPTION

trates St. Christopher and the Christ child. The chancel rail carries the motive of the four guardian angels, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel. The rail and pulpit were designed by George de Ris of the J. & R. Lamb Studios in 1941. The carved oak pulpit with sounding board is located against the southeast wall of the nave. Carved figures of St. Stephen, St. Peter, and St. John are included in the panels.

Chapels are located in the north and south aisles. The Chapel of the Holy Spirit is set behind a pointed arch of precast stone. The space contains an antique polychrome altar purchased in England and donated to the church by Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Weddell. Also there are a carved oak credence table, priest's seat, communion rail, and parclose screen all designed by Watson and donated by the Weddells. The expansion of the north aisle in 1950 created room for the inclusion of another chapel, and in 1965 the Chapel of the Good Shepherd was dedicated. Set under a segmental arch, the chapel wall is composed of symbols connected with the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ executed in mosaic.

The parish hall, which houses the church offices, was constructed in 1965 and was designed by Richmond architect Marcellus Wright. The structure, built of rubblestone, has a simple three-part arched entrance porch. The brick chapel, now called Palmer Hall, built in 1911 to house the original congregation, still stands directly east of the church. The remaining property consists of a well-kept lawn with low shrubbery and shade trees.

MM/CL

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property of St. Stephen's consists of three acres of land. The property is bounded on the south by Grove Avenue, on the west by Three Chopt Road, and on the north and east by adjacent city lots. The property fronts on 6004 Three Chopt Road. The nominated acreage includes the church, parish hall, and Palmer Hall.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

The members of the church suggested that the new structure be similar to rural English churches such as Fairfield Church in Sussex, Baginton in Warwickshire, or Pulborough in Sussex. Some members, still unconvinced of the superiority of the Gothic style, suggested the Georgian-style Center Church in New Haven as a model. Watson's firm thus furnished sketches of both Colonial Revival and English Gothic designs. Although the firm's plans were modified, a design in the Early English Gothic was constructed, and the first service was held in the church on March 18, 1928. The main modification of the original design was leaving off a large bell tower proposed by Watson. The contractors for the building were Conquest, Moncure, and Dunn of Richmond.

Continued growth of the congregation required the church to expand again in 1950. Under the direction of Phillip Frohman, the church assumed its present form. Frohman, best known as the architect of the Washington Cathedral, lengthened the church two bays at the

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

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**National Register of Historic Places
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St. Stephen's Church, Richmond, Virginia

Continuation sheet #2

Item number 8

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received 11/1/81
date entered

8. SIGNIFICANCE

west end, enlarged the north aisle and the Patriots' window, and created the west entrance. The result of the different building stages is a successful blending of the Early English and Decorated styles of Medieval English Gothic. Combined, the proportions of the building, the interior detailing, and the stained glass create one of the purest expressions of Gothic architecture in the state.

MM/MTP

