NPS Form 10-900 (Rev. 8-86) VLR-5/13/69 NRHP-11/12/69 NH -7/5/91 OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

This form is tot use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility lor individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Aquia Church

other names/site number DHR File 89-8

2. Location

street & number Intersection of US Route 1 and VA Route 610 N/A nor for publication

city, town Stafford N/A vicinity

state Virginia code VA county Stafford code k7G zip code 2255-

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
[X] private	[X] building(s)	1	2 buildings
[ ] public-local	[ ] district	1	0 sites
[ ] public-State	[ ] site	0	0 structures
[ ] public-Federal	[ ] structure	0	0 objects
	[ ] object	2	2 Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register [redacted]

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official — Date

Director, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the prow* [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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. [ ] See continuation sheet.
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[ ] removed from the National Register.
[ ] other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
RELIGION: religious structure	RELIGION: religious structure
FUNERARY: cemetery	FUNERARY: cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)	
COLONIAL: Georgian	foundation	BRICK
	walls	BRICK
	roof	STONE: slate
	other	STONE: sandstone (trim)
		WOOD SHINGLES (tower)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Isolated on a heavily wooded hilltop, Aquia Church is sheltered from a busy intersection and burgeoning development only by its buffer of trees. The third church on this site, the current building was constructed between 1751 and 1755, when it burned, and was rebuilt within the standing walls in 1757. Although cruciform churches were not rare, the true Greek cross plan was scarce among the Virginia churches built at that time. Two-story rural churches were even more uncommon, and Aquia's sophisticated architectural detailing increases its stature among surviving colonial churches. Constructed mainly of brick laid in Flemish bond, the building has quoins, door frames, and keystones of Aquia sandstone. The overall impression of the church itself is that of a solid, monumental structure, built to serve as one of the centers of a well-organized and sophisticated society. The churchyard is reached by a short, steep drive from Route 1, which winds past two noncontributing but architecturally compatible buildings: the parish hall and a pair of eighteenth-century frame houses that were reconstructed as one building when they were moved from another site. The church is surrounded on three sides by a cemetery, and the churchyard is enclosed by a nineteenth-century iron fence.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Aquia Church sits on a heavily wooded hilltop at the northeast corner of the intersection of US Route 1 and VA State Route 610, about thirteen miles north of Fredericksburg, Virginia. Reached by a steep, curving drive, the church and its cemetery are located in a clearing enclosed by a nineteenth-century iron fence.

Constructed of brick laid in Flemish bond with random glazed headers, the two-story Georgian church has a Greek cross plan with a tower and cupola on its western arm. The arms of the cross are each about sixty-four feet long and thirty-two feet wide. Among the structure's original details are keystones, quoins, and door frames carved from Aquia sandstone quarried at nearby Aquia Creek. The quoins appear on all eight corners of the church, and are

[X] See continuation sheet

supported by concrete bases which replaced the original stone in 1915-1916. The church is set on a water table of brick laid in common bond, which replaced the earlier water table in 1915-1916. The base of the building is lined with a modern concrete ground gutter.

All elevations but that on the east have pedimented and rusticated door frames of Aquia sandstone; all the raised-panel double doors themselves are twentieth-century replacements based on those at Vauter's Church. The design for the door frames may have been derived from plate XXIX in Batty Langley's Builder's and Workman's Treasury of Designs (1750). An architrave molding surrounds each door and is interrupted by rustication at the sides and a splayed flat arch with a scroll-faced keystone at the top. On the western elevation, the flat arch is superimposed over the base of a simple pediment, while on the other elevations the pediment surmounts both the lintel and the flat arch. The word Aquia was carved in the tympanum of the western door sometime before 1930. The tympanum of the southern door is filled with the inscription, "Built/AD 1751 Destroyed/By Fire 1754 [sic] & Rebuilt AD 1757/By Mourning Richards Undertaker William Copein Mason."

The first-floor windows on every facade have flat heads, while those on the second floor have arched heads. The original nine-over-nine sashes remain in the first-floor windows, but the muntins have been replaced. The three windows on each end elevation of the second floor have rubbed brick, semicircular arched tops; the rubbed brick is of finer quality than on the first floor. Both the flat and semicircular arches over the windows originally consisted of alternating stretchers and pairs of headers. The side elevations of each of the arms of the Greek cross have one window on each floor, matching the windows on the end elevations. The three entrances to the church are flanked by windows with rubbed brick jambs and flat arches.

There have been many repairs to the brickwork, and the stonework has suffered from graffiti and other vandalism. Brick repairs can be seen around many of the windows, and many of the window frames have been replaced, along with the entire water table. Aquia stone is known for its softness and some visitors have carved their initials or names into the quoins at Aquia Church over the years. During the Civil War, for example, soldiers who occupied the church not only carved their names and units in the stone outside, but wrote all over the walls of the interior as well.

The exterior of the church evidently was painted before the mid-nineteenth century, for Bishop William Meade noted when he visited the church in 1857 that the "dingy walls were painted white, and looked new and fresh" compared to when he saw them last in 1837 or 1838.[1] Paint was cleaned from the walls sometime around 1930.

The horizonality of the western elevation is countered by the vertical thrust of the pedimented door frame and the peculiar pedimented tower above it. Only the west wall of the tower is brick, with quoins and a window matching those below in the body of the church. A belt course of stone runs across the west wall at the springline of the arch-topped window, and another runs along the base of the tower. The other three walls are frame sheathed in wood shingles. The tower rests on the hipped roof of the church, which has been clad in copper shingles for most of this century. The roof of the tower is cross-gabled, and the front gable is broken by the base of a small, square, conical-roofed cupola that presently is surmounted by a cross. A simple cornice with rectangular modillions appears at the eaves, both on the tower and on the body of the church.

The construction date of the tower is unknown. An 1857 illustration shows a ball finial instead of the cross, as well as a clock that fills the cupola. If the tower was intended for a clock, it may date from the early nineteenth century; of course, a clock could have been added later to a preexisting tower. Bishop Meade, in referring to his visit of 1837-1838, called the tower an "observatory," which could indicate an earlier date of construction. One architectural historian noted that the stonework in the tower (quoins, belt course, baseboard, and keystone) appears to be nearly identical in quality and execution to that of the rest of the structure, which suggests that it was built at about the same time.

Inside the church, the chancel fills the eastern arm of the cross. The eastern end wall--the only one without a doorway--has the same fenestration as the others, but an elaborate, original classical altarpiece fills the central space. A three-level pulpit topped by a hexagonal sounding board dominates the southeast crossing, and a handsome gallery provides a modern choir loft in the western arm. Much of the interior is original, and despite an abundance of austere white paint, the immediate impression is of a richness of detail.

The pedimented Ionic altarpiece frames four arch-topped tablets on which are painted the Ten Commandments (on two tablets), the Apostles Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. These tablets are of pine painted black--the rest of the altarpiece is painted cream--and are signed by the painter, William Copein. The pediment has a low slope, a modillioned cornice, and a raised panel within the tympanum. Two Ionic pilasters support the entablature of the pediment. The horizontal and vertical panels below each tablet are restorations that date from 1933 and are based on the originals. The communion rail and other altar furniture are modern.

Only six large pedimented architectural altarpieces survive in Virginia: Abingdon Church, Gloucester County, ca. 1755 (NRHP 1970); Aquia Church, Stafford County, 1757 (NRHP 1969); Christ Church, Alexandria, 1767-1773 (NHL 1973); Christ Church, Lancaster County, 1735 (NHL 1969); Little Fork Church, Culpeper County, 1774-1776 (NRHP 1969); and St. John's Church, King William County, ca. 1734-1765 (NRHP 1972), the altarpiece of which was removed in 1984 to St. Paul's Church, Norfolk, ca. 1739-1786 (NRHP 1971). Of these six, three have triangular pediments; those at Abingdon and Little Fork are broken while that at Aquia is complete.

The pulpit and sounding board rival the altarpiece for visual impact. The first level is the triangular clerk's desk which, as with the other two levels, is entered up steps from the altar side. The sides of the clerk's desk are sloped, so that the readings lie pitched toward the reader on the lectern. This has prompted one architectural historian to note that the whole pulpit resembles a ship's prow.[2] The clerk's desk has a raised panel on each side that is visible above the enclosing pew, and scrolls that connect it to the pew that supports it. The next level is the reader's desk where the minister stood to conduct the service; except during the sermon. This desk is square and is set at an angle to the crossing, facing the opposite corner. Each of its sides has two raised vertical panels topped by smaller horizontal panels. A short staircase with turned vase-and-column balusters leads ultimately to the top level of the pulpit; the stair has a short spur that allows access to the reading desk. The pulpit itself is hexagonal, matching the shape of the sounding board above it. The pulpit has a vertical and a horizontal raised panel on each of its sides. The upper pulpit is supported by a hexagonal column which curves to meet the sides of the pulpit, echoing the ogival top of the sounding board above the pulpit. The sounding board has a gilded hexagonal star on the raised panel of its soffit, and a finial at its top. The back of the pulpit is framed by pairs of

simple fluted pilasters. Only one other triple-deck pulpit survives intact in Virginia, at the 1735 Christ Church in Lancaster County (NHL 1969).

The gallery in the western arm of the church is supported by four slender fluted Doric columns set on tall plinths that reach more than a foot above the backs of the boxed pews. The paneled parapet of the gallery is divided by eight pilasters, four of which are paired. Within the center panel is a coeval dark wood tablet on which are painted the names of the minister and the vestry at the time of the construction of the church. There are two small, gilded, five-pointed stars within the side panels that may indicate a support system within the parapet of the gallery. The hand railing at the top is of dark wood, while the rest of the parapet is painted a cream color. The gallery is accessible by a stair that runs up the west wall of the church from the door to the north corner, then turns at a right angle and finishes its run up the north wall of the west arm of the church. It has turned balusters like those around the pulpit, and a dark wooden handrail. A modern organ and chairs now furnish the gallery, which is used as a choir loft.

All the pews are painted white, with a dark wood molding at the top, and all but the pew at the foot of the pulpit were cut down after the Civil War. The height of the original pew enclosure is defined by a vertical panel with a smaller horizontal panel above, while all the others are only the height of the vertical panel, the upper panels having been removed. The benches are arranged in a U shape within the pews that range the arms. Those at the crossings are large, square enclosures with benches on all four sides, except for the one at the northwest crossing, which has a spine of benches down the middle as well as around the sides. The christening pew is under the gallery, north of the aisle. The marble baptismal font was donated in 1917.

A wooden floor, which may have replaced an earlier stone floor, was itself replaced after the Civil War. The present floor is of irregular cut sandstone. A white marble cross was placed in the floor at the crossing in the 1930s, and the floor of the chancel was replaced with marble at the same time. There are several graves under the chancel that were not marked when the floors were replaced. The walls still have their original plaster, which is painted white. There is a coved cornice at the top of the walls, and the church now has a flat plaster ceiling, which replaces a nineteenth-century wooden ceiling.

The tower room is reached by a stair from the gallery that ascends from the north corner against the west wall. The tower room is a small space (nine and a half feet by eleven feet) with a very high ceiling and unpainted matchstick paneling on all four walls and the ceiling. The tower and this room may have been added after the fire of 1755, and it is likely that the clerk kept his office here. The tower's window is in the west wall and a door to the attic is in the east wall. The framing system is visible in the attic, dominated by a king post in the center.

The large cemetery is enclosed by a nineteenth-century iron fence. To the south of the church there are several eighteenth-century graves, some marked by table stones that were moved from nearby family cemeteries. The church cemetery is still in use. Southwest of the cemetery is a pair of noncontributing eighteenth-century frame houses that were moved to the site in 1988 and reconstructed as one building. The smaller one has a large stone chimney at its west end. Across the driveway from it is the noncontributing parish hall, a modern, T-shaped brick structure built on the side of the hill. Because of the slope, its southern end has two stories, but the northern end, which faces the church, has only one story. A semicircular, lightly wooded area fills the curve in the gravel driveway at the top of the hill, with a space for parking across from the cemetery.

Sarah S. Driggs

ENDNOTES

1. Bishop William Meade, Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1857), 1:204.

2. James Scott Rawlings, Virginia's Colonial Churches (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1973), 192.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
[X] nationally [ ] statewide [ ] locally

Applicable National Register Criteria [ ] A [ ] B [X] C [ ] D
Applicable National Historic Landmark Criterion: 4
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) [X] A [ ] B [ ] C [ ] D [ ] E [ ] F [ ] G
National Historic Landmark Criteria Consideration: 1

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
ARCHITECTURE	1751-1757	1751
NHL Theme XVI, Architecture		1755
Subtheme B, Georgian		1757

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Mourning Richards (contractor)
William Copein (stonemason)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Aquia Church, which is located in Stafford County, Virginia, represents the epitome of colonial Virginia's ecclesiastical architecture. Its sophisticated Georgian design and fine craftsmanship reflect the wealth and substance of the colony's plantation society and established church. Although modest in scale compared to the urban churches of the North, Aquia, like many of Virginia's colonial churches, compensates with refined proportions and detailing. The church was completed in 1757 under the direction of Mourning Richards, contractor, and William Copein, master mason. Among the noteworthy features they incorporated into the scheme are its distinctive Greek Cross plan and superbly executed rusticated doorways of Aquia Creek sandstone, the design of which follows illustrations published in contemporary English pattern books by such architects as James Gibbs and Batty Langley. Its rare three-tiered pulpit, Ionic altarpiece, and west gallery front are all outstanding achievements of colonial joinery. With these elements blending into a cohesive, well-preserved whole, the church continues to embody the distinguishing characteristics of its type at its ripest stage of development, making the building an architectural work of national significance.

Aquia Church embodies the distinguishing characteristics of Georgian colonial ecclesiastical architecture including a Greek Cross plan, patternbook-inspired masonry details, and richly detailed woodwork. The church also is an outstanding and rare example of a rural colonial church of the southern colonies that survives with its architectural integrity essentially intact.

[X] See continuation sheet

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Anglican parishes of Overwharton and St. Paul's, in Stafford County, were created about 1700 from Stafford Parish and Chotank Parish respectively. In 1711 the Reverend Mr. Alexander Scott became the first full-time minister for Overwharton Parish, which then was about eighty miles long, twenty miles wide, and contained about six hundred and fifty families. By 1724 Scott preached regularly at Potomac Church, the parish church (now demolished) that stood a few miles northeast of Fredericksburg on Potomac Creek, and at two chapels elsewhere in Stafford County.

In 1731 the size of the county and the parish was reduced considerably when the House of Burgesses created Prince William County from Stafford County. Scott died on 1 April 1738 and bequeathed Overwharton Parish enough money to purchase a silver communion service that is still in the custody of Aquia Church. By the summer of 1738 the parish's new minister, the Reverend Mr. John Moncure, had arrived from England to assume his duties. It was during his ministry that Aquia Church was constructed.

Apparently a succession of frame churches stood at or near Aquia Church before it was built. Perhaps the patterns of settlement in Stafford County had rendered the old Potomac Church inconvenient to a majority of the parishioners. Or perhaps it was this location near the Rappahannock River and its tobacco plantations that persuaded the vestry to select it as the new site for the parish church. Whatever the reason, on 6 June 1751 the Virginia Gazette carried the following advertisement:

> The Vestry of Overwharton Parish, in the County of Stafford, have come to a Resolution to build a large Brick Church, of about 3,000 Square Feet in the Clear, near the Head of Aquia Creek, where the old Church now stands. Notice is hereby given, That the Vestry will meet at the said Place, to let the same, on Thursday, the 5th Day of September next, if fair, if not, the next fair Day. All Persons inclinable to undertake it are desired to come then, and give in their Plans and Proposals.[1]

Mourning Richards, a local builder, "gave in" the winning proposal to the vestry. Following the practice of the time, Richards used his own money to defray the costs of construction as they occurred.

The vestry, meanwhile, levied a special assessment on parishioners and paid Richards periodically in tobacco; it withheld most of the payments until he completed the project. Richards hired William Copein, a stonemason who later constructed Pohick Church (NRHP 1968), in Fairfax County, to lay up the walls and carve the doorways and quoins of Aquia Creek sandstone.

Copein's work signals one of the earliest uses of Aquia Creek stone, a honey-colored sandstone that was quarried a short distance from the church near the confluence of Aquia Creek and the Potomac River. Aquia Creek stone is one of the few reasonably durable building stones found in eastern Virginia, although it weathers unless it is carefully selected and cut, and from the mid-eighteenth century on it frequently was used for architectural details in the finer buildings. One of the best examples of its use in domestic architecture is at Mount Airy (NHL 1969), in Richmond County, where the rusticated center pavilions of the land and river front are both executed in the stone. By the end of the century whole buildings, especially such public buildings as the Capitol and the White House in the new capital city of Washington, were being constructed of Aquia Creek stone. Ironically, Aquia Church's doorways, although among the oldest surviving uses of the stone, are one of the best preserved examples. The quarry was closed in the twentieth century but the site remains undisturbed.

The church was more than three years in the building and was nearly finished when an accidental fire destroyed all but the walls. The Virginia Gazette reported the disaster on 21 March 1755:

> We hear from Stafford County, that the new Church at Acquia, one of the best Buildings in the Colony (and the old wooden one near it) were burnt down on the 17th Instant [17 March 1755], by the Carelessness of some of the Carpenters leaving Fire too near the Shavings, at Night, when they left off work. This fine Building was within two or three Days Work of being completely finished and delivered up by the Undertaker, and this Accident, it is said, has ruined him and his Securities.[2]

Richards's financial woes were compounded by the fact that two years earlier he had become personally indebted to Colonel Nathaniel Harrison, of Eagle's Nest in Saint Paul's Parish, for a large sum. Through his friend Peter Hedgman, on 16 May 1755

Richards placed a notice in the Virginia Gazette and pleaded for understanding and assistance. His notice was addressed to "all charitable and well-disposed Christians" and recounted the tragedy of 17 February, which he wrote "has reduced him and his Family to very great Distress, he being utterly unable to rebuild the said Church. And, therefore, he most humbly prays your Aid and Assistance."[3]

At a time when fire insurance was virtually unknown in the colony, the vestry faced a difficult choice. It could either do without a church (the old one having been destroyed too) or tax the parishioners once more to rebuild what had burned. As a practical matter there was no choice, and Mourning Richards and William Copein set to work again.

Although Richards finished the task by the spring of 1757, his financial difficulties dragged on. Objecting to paying twice for the same building, some of the citizens of Stafford County petitioned the House of Burgesses on 18 April 1757 "complaining of the illegal, arbitrary and oppressive proceedings of the present vestry of [Overwharton] Parish and praying that the same may be dissolved." The burgesses rejected this petition, however, and instead on 8 June 1757 passed an act "to impower the Vestry of Overwharton Parish to levy for Mourning Richards a reasonable satisfaction for rebuilding a church at Aquia."[4]

Eventually, then, Richards received the balance due him. As a memorial to what must have been a frustrating experience to all concerned, William Copein cut a tablet for the tympanum over the south door of the church. It reads, "Built/AD 1751 Destroyed/By Fire 1754 [sic] & Rebuilt AD 1757/By Mourning Richards Undertaker William Copein Mason."[5]

Since the church was completed it has stood with few changes. Great changes took place, however, in the denomination and the society for which it was built. The dissatisfaction with the vestry expressed by many parishioners in 1757 did not abate with the final payment to Richards but continued until the Revolution. An especially vigorous protest against the vestry, for instance, was presented to the House of Burgesses in 1770 by many of the county aristocrats, including William Garrett, John Mauzy, and Bailey Washington.[6]

Attacked from within, the religious establishment was also attacked from without by dissenters. A measure of the religious diversity

that existed in Stafford County by 1771 despite official disapproval was presented in a Virginia Gazette advertisement for a plantation there. The owner, John Ralls, Sr., noted that among the many other advantages offered by the property, it lay seven miles "from Aquia Church, six from the Quaker Meeting House, five from the Baptist Meeting House, in Fauquier County, [and] four from Chapwasmick [Chappawamsic (Baptist)] Meeting House, in Stafford County."[7]

Dissatisfaction, lack of interest, and the Revolution all resulted in the disestablishment of the Church of England in 1786 by Thomas Jefferson's Statute for Religious Freedom. The statute forbade, among other things, the taxing of citizens for the support of any church--including the construction of a church building. Without such enforced support, however, the old congregations dwindled or disappeared. From the end of the Revolution until the Civil War the Protestant Episcopal Church declined and many of its churches decayed or were taken over by other denominations. Aquia Church was no exception. Bishop William Meade wrote in 1857 of the contrast between visits he paid to the church in that year and two decades earlier, when he beheld the churchyard

> which in other days had been filled with horses and carriages and footmen, now [1837 or 1838] overgrown with trees and bushes, the limbs of the green cedars not only casting their shadows but resting their arms on the dingy walls and thrusting them through the broken windows. . . . [In 1857] had I been suddenly dropped down upon it, I should not have recognised the place or building. The trees and brushwood and rubbish had been cleared away. The light of heaven had been let in upon the once gloomy sanctuary. At the expense of eighteen hundred dollars, . . . [the church] had been repaired within, without, and above. The dingy walls were painted white and looked new and fresh, and to me it appeared one of the best and most imposing temples in our land. The congregation was a good one.[8]

The resurgence of interest in the church brought about by the increase in the Episcopal congregation helped preserve the structure during the Civil War. After the war Providence itself appeared to have a role in preserving the remarkable interior. In

1869 Captain Sydney Smith Lee, the elder brother of General Robert E. Lee, agreed to demolish the high colonial pulpit and construct another at floor level, because one of the aged rectors found it difficult to mount the steps. As the vestry book put it, "While making preparations to carry out the above object, he [Captain Lee] departed this life," and the project died with him.[9]

Today Aquia Church stands largely intact, once again one of the "best Buildings"--not only in the former colony, but among the best of America's colonial period. Typical of the more sophisticated works of colonial architecture, the builders relied on English architectural patternbooks for decorative details. Most conspicuously, the beautifully executed Aquia Creek stone doorways, unusually fine examples of the stonemason's craft, are faithful adaptations of illustrations published in works by James Gibbs and Batty Langley, both of which were available in the Virginia colony. It seems likely that the specific source for the doorways is plate XXIX of Langley's The City and Country Builder's and Workman's Treasury of Designs (London: 1750). This work also contains designs for pulpits and altarpieces that may have inspired those features at Aquia as well.

With approximately forty-five surviving structures, Virginia possesses more colonial Anglican churches than any other state. Unfortunately, time, wars, and neglect have dealt harshly with the fabric of this group. Eighty percent have lost most or all of their original interiors: only Aquia, along with Christ Church, Lancaster County, and Christ Church, Alexandria, remain essentially complete, preserving pews, pulpits, and altarpieces. On a wider scale, Aquia Church stands out as being among the best-preserved rural colonial churches of the South. As in Virginia, a large proportion of the surviving rural churches of the former southern colonies have been either gutted or significantly altered. Fortuitously, from what is known of colonial church architecture, it can be said with assurance that Aquia Church ranked with the most sophisticated and refined rural churches not just of Virginia, but of the South. Aquia Church thus presents a very rare picture of the arrangement and appointments of a house of worship built to serve the colonial era's plantation society. Similar to the homes of the planters, Aquia Church is not big and showy as were many urban churches, but follows the typical planter's taste by being "plain and neat," with just enough detailing to provide accent. The church's restrained character is also a reflection of the lean ceremony of the eighteenth-century Anglican worship, a reaction to what were considered the papist tendencies of earlier times. Aquia

Church thus presents the opportunity to experience the quiet dignity of the religious side of the planter's life.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of Aquia Church is the strong contrast between the building's architectural sophistication and its isolated wooded setting. Isolation was not unusual for the Virginia colonial church; most were located not in villages or near settlements but were placed at spots most convenient to the plantation families--themselves scattered and isolated--that they served. Regrettably, that isolation is now being threatened by the ever-expanding suburban growth occurring in Northern Virginia. Although the church's immediate surroundings remain essentially undisturbed, its precincts, at an interchange of Interstate Route 95, are witnessing increasing development. The most recent threat to the church's setting is a proposed office park and retail center on a site just north of the church cemetery.

John S. Salmon/Calder C. Loth

ENDNOTES

1. Quoted in George H. S. King, The Register of Overwharton Parish, Stafford County, Virginia, 1723-1758, and Sundry Historical and Genealogical Notes (Fredericksburg, Va.: George H. S. King, 1961), 192.

2. Ibid., 193. See note 5 below for a discussion of the uncertainty over the date of the fire.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. The text is difficult to read and photograph, but is accurately quoted in Dell Upton, Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press for the Architectural History Foundation, 1986), 230. The date that the church burned, however, is 1755, not 1754; this is proven by the newspaper accounts previously cited (King, Register, 193-194). Rawlings, in his Virginia's Colonial Churches (185), suggests that what was meant was 1754 Old Style; the calendar, however, was changed in 1751/52, not 1754/55, and Old Style would have been used for dates before the change, not after. There also is confusion over the month in which the church burned. In his plea of May 1755 Peter Hedgman wrote that the fire occurred on the "17th Day of February last," but the first account of the fire published on 21 March 1755 refers to the "17th Instant." The word instant when used in such a context means the present month; therefore the writer referred to a event that had taken place just a few days earlier, on 17 March 1755.

6. King, Register, 196.

7. Ibid.

8. William Meade, Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1857), 1:203-204.

9. King, Register, 202.

9. Major Bibliographical References

☒ See continuation sheet

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 # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:
- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository:
Va. Dept. of Historic Resources

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 8.5 acres

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	290380	4259940
B	18	290370	4259740
C	18	290120	4259810
D	18	290200	4260000

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the polygon whose vertices are marked by the following UTM reference points: use above.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary lines of the nominated property enclose the grounds presently owned by the church.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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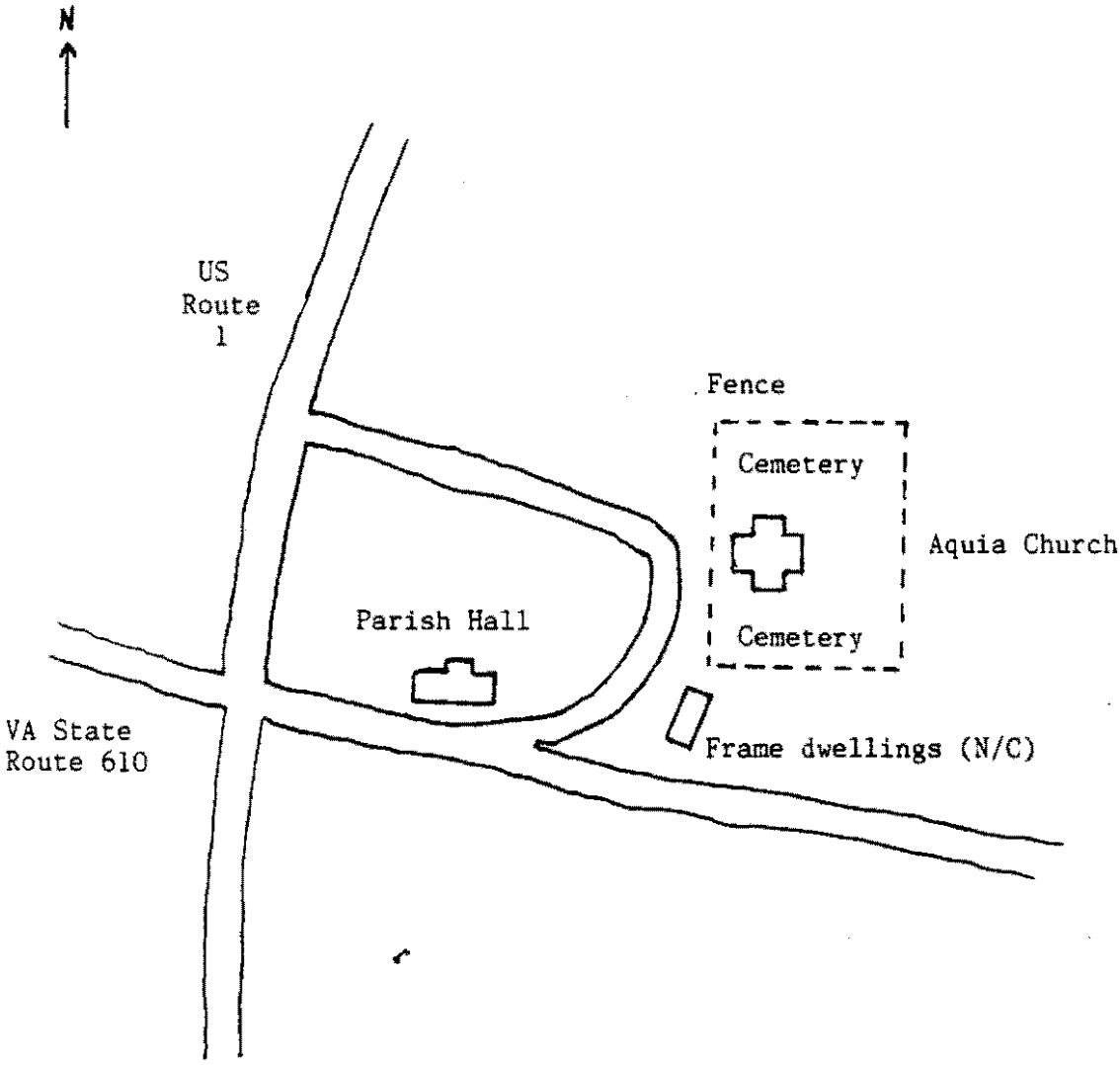
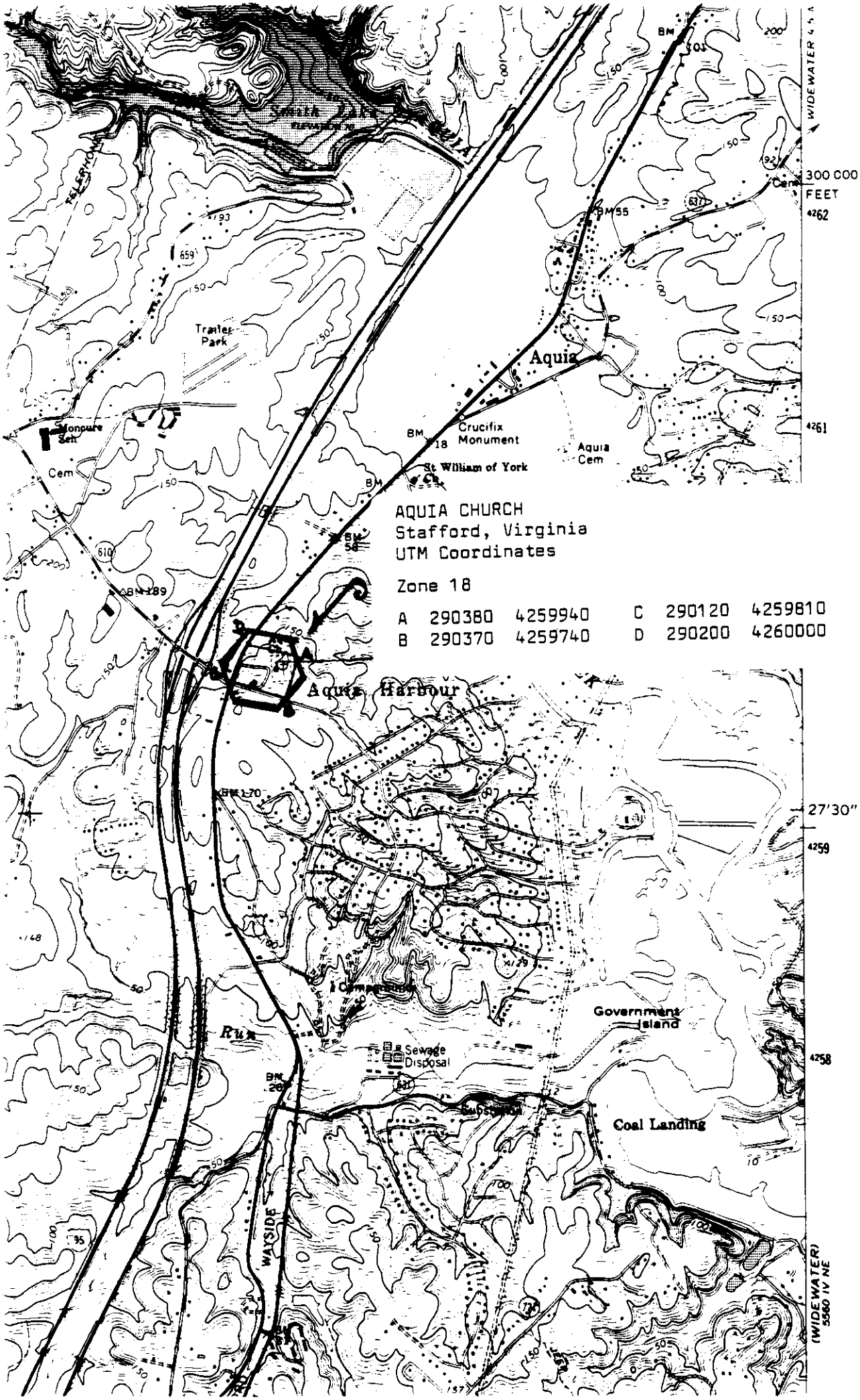
SITE MAP--not to scale




WIDEWATER 4.5 A
300 000
FEET
4262
4261
4259
4258
27'30"
Trailer Park
Aquia
Crucifix Monument
St William of York
Aquia Cem
Monpure Sch
Cem
BM 18
BM 55
BM 56
BM 189
BM 170
AQUIA CHURCH
Stafford, Virginia
UTM Coordinates
Zone 18
A 290380 4259940
B 290370 4259740
C 290120 4259810
D 290200 4260000
Aquia Harbour
Government Island
Sewage Disposal
Coal Landing
WAYSIDE
(WIDEWATER)
5560 IV NE