Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC: Saint Michael's Episcopal Church

AND/OR COMMON: Saint Michael's Episcopal Church

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 80 Meeting Street — __NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN: Charleston — __ VICINITY OF — CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 001

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
South Carolina	45	Charleston	019

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	X RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME: Rector, Saint Michael's Episcopal Church (1975-Father Edwin Coleman)

STREET & NUMBER: 80 Meeting Street

CITY, TOWN: Charleston — __ VICINITY OF — STATE: South Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: (RMC) Registrar of Mesnes and Conveyances

STREET & NUMBER: P.O. BOX 726

CITY, TOWN: Charleston — STATE: South Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE: Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE: 1963, 1939, 1940, 1963 — X FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN: Washington, — STATE: D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
X EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
__GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In 1726, the English architect James Gibbs completed the church of Saint Martin-in-the-Fields on Trafalgar Square. It was a church with a very new sense of spatial monumentality, contrasting with the strong current of intimate spatial effects established in the City Churches by Sir Christopher Wren following the Great Fire of 1666. The interior fairly soars to its full two-story height, since the columns are only attached to the elaborate roof trusses and don't dominate the nave the way they might, were their structural roles more significant. The exterior too is monumental, combining two-story round arch windows with a giant order of column, classical pediment attached to the nave, and three-stage steeple rising from the vestibule space behind the pediment and directly through the roof. It can hardly be overstated, the extent to which this one building became a prototype for American churches for decades, and indeed centuries, after this one. Saint Michael's in Charleston is a very early study and certainly one of the finest colonial American churches.

The two-story structure of Saint Michael's is of brick, stuccoed over, and radiating its brilliant white paint skin in the sub-tropical Carolina sun. The classical portico, of course, dominates tremendously the Broad Street (west) front, and together with the steeple, dominates the whole exterior. It is a giant two-story portico with Tuscan columns, the first colonial church to have the giant portico. The columns are of stuccoed pie-shaped brick, the roof of slate, with a slight outward bend near the eaves, and the roof of the steeple of cypress sheathed in copper. The building is 130 feet long, and 60 feet wide, including the portico, while its steeple is 185 feet high. The ballustrade at the arcade level of the steeple was carved by one of Charleston's foremost colonial woodworkers, Thomas Elfe.

The powerful beauty of Saint Michael's derives from the manner of the architect's solution to the old and tested question of how to transform a square platform into a pointed steeple as gracefully as possible. Here, the use of three diminishing octagons achieves the effect of ordering the bulky vertical element. The square, rusticated tower platform of the steeple rises directly through the roof of the vestibule, another aspect tying it securely to Gibbs' Saint Martin-in-the-Fields where that was done for the first time.

The two-story seating arrangement of the interior is articulated at the exterior, by the two rows of round arched windows. Each window is surrounded by the Renaissance rustication that came to be known in England as the Gibbs surround, in France as Serlions. Pairs of windows are visually separated from others by a two-story pilaster, supporting the undecorated entablature.

The interior of Saint Michael's is a simple rectangle, with a smaller rectangular projection at the east end of the nave sheltering a half-dome there. Seating is in box pews, with a side aisle to either side of a main one, and a gallery around all but the East side, supported on fluted columns. The handsome coved ceiling lofts to its flat top which is bordered by a large band of Greek fret ornament and a modillioned cornice. The apse is surrounded by plaster pilasters, painted to match the cedar woodwork of the nave carved by Frederick Stroble and Henry Burnett. The little dome was stencil-painted in 1938.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
X 1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1751-1761 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Samuel Cardy/ ?

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Saint Michael's Church, Charleston, South Carolina, graphically illustrates the great increase in wealth and power in the Southern American colonies by the middle of the eighteenth century.

Although possibly designed by an unknown architect, and built by Samuel Cardy between 1752 and 1761, Saint Michael's shows a keen awareness of its architectural prototype by the English architect, James Gibbs, Saint Martin-in-the-Fields (1826). The use here in Charleston of the two-story portico, was the first such use on an American colonial church. Combined with the massively-proportioned steeple rising from directly behind the portico, the two form a monumental West Front of dominating force. The bulk of the seven bay rectangular main body of this three-aisled church however, remains visually dominant overall, making this a work retaining the Renaissance, horizontal tone which was doubtless intended. Richly carved of cedar on the interior and painted a gleaming white outside, the two-story stuccoed brick building is a factual and symbolic sparkling facet, in the heart of Charleston.

Saint Michael's Church was established in 1751, begun on February 17, 1752 with the governor of the colony of South Carolina laying the cornerstone, and was opened for its first service on February 1, 1761.

Although the architect of the church is unknown, we may certainly say that it is very much in the manner popularized by the English architect, James Gibbs, in his London churches, particularly St. Martin-in-the-Field. The matter is somewhat complicated not only by the lack of definite records, but by a contemporary newspaper account naming a certain Mr. Gibson as creator of the building. An architect-builder named Gibson did die in South Carolina in 1799, but an Irishman named Samuel Cardy is known to have done the actual construction work on St. Michael's. Even the notable early-American designer, Peter Harrison, a frequent visitor to Charleston, has been suggested as the architect. The building certainly has a stamp of individuality, no matter if it was fashioned after a plate in Gibbs' 1828 A Book of Architecture, which was such a godsend to many many colonists.

Both architecturally and historically, Saint Michael's should stand near the top of any list of eighteenth century churches built in America. This place has become, more than any other site, the principal point in Charleston, the symbol of that city's heart, having on its three other corners, the Courthouse (formerly the State House), the Post Office/Court House, and the City Hall.

Saint Michael's, just a little more than a decade after its opening, became the focal point of colonial resistance to the British. Its gleaming white stucco tower was painted

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

G. W. Williams, St. Michael's, Charleston, 1751-1951 (Columbia, S.C., 1951).
W. Pierson, American Buildings and their Architects: Colonial (New York, 1970).
H. W. Rose, The Colonial Houses of Worship in America (New York, 1963).
Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952).
Beatrice St. Julien Ravenel, Architects of Charleston (Charleston, 1945).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	17	600140	3626780	B			
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Since its establishment in 1751, and in fact even before that when the church of St. Phillip occupied this piece of land, Saint Michael's Church has extended over about an acre at the Southeast corner of Broad and Meeting Streets in Charleston. The only structure contributing to the national significance of the site here is the church building itself. Extending from the Southeast corner of Broad and Meeting, the boundary of the Church and churchyard extends southward along Meeting Street (cont'd)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: James Dillon, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION: National Historic Landmarks, OAHP — DATE:

STREET & NUMBER: 1100 L Street N.W. — TELEPHONE:

CITY OR TOWN: Washington — STATE: D.C.

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

TITLE — DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION — DATE 8/31/78

ATTEST: William Lebovich — DATE June 15, 1978

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Although the massive steeple of St. Michael's catches the eye and holds the attention, it is ultimately the horizontal bulk of the main body which predominates, giving the church the Renaissance, classical flavor that was intended. Both without and within, Saint Michael's established a fashion whose current ran long and deep throughout the South in the Eighteenth Century.

black, so as not to further help the offshore ship's gunners already using it to draw a bead on the city. (It turned out that black against a blue sky was an even better target). The leaden roof was melted down to make bullets, and the building was at one point used as a stable for the city's horses.

The tower has always served as both a defense and a fire look-out, serving the latter function until 1882, when an electric fire alarm system was installed in town. The bells of Saint Michael's are among the city's most beloved treasures, and represent her vigilance against intruders of any sort.

In the second war with Britain, in 1812, the church was again used as a look-out, and its walls sheltered many patriotic and civil meetings.

During the War between the States, Charleston was steadily bombarded, and serious damage was done to Saint Michael's on Saint Valentine's Day 1865, when a shell from Morris Island came crashing into the east end of the chancel. The bells of Saint Michael had been sent to Columbia to be melted down into ammunition, but happily, this never came about. The bells have a charming and adventuresome history of their own, having crossed the Atlantic no less than five times, having been smashed into a hundred pieces by General Sherman's Union Army, only to be saved and re-cast in the original moulds, and having finally been returned to their original tower at Broad and Meeting Streets.

In addition to the scars of war, Saint Michael's has suffered from fire, earthquake, and cyclone, but has each time been speedily repaired along the original lines, so that the architecture has changed very little through the years.

until it intersects with Saint Michael's Alley, thence along the Alley, Eastward, until meeting the edge of the property line which extends from a point 20 feet behind the chancel Southward parallel to Meeting Street until it meets the point on Saint Michael's Alley. The boundary on Broad Street extends from the corner of Broad and Meeting, Eastward to a point 20 feet East of the end of chancel.

This boundary is visually marked by the substantial brick wall surrounding the churchyard of Saint Michael's, which has been standing since the eighteenth century, The entrance gates on Meeting Street are splendid examples of the art of ironwork, having been crafted by J. A. W. Iusti, in 1840.

When the corner was fixed by Act of Establishment, June 14, 1751, as the location for Saint Michael's, it embraced the area bounded by Meeting and Broad Streets, by Saint Michael's Alley, and by a line on the East a short distance (20') from the chancel. The property is maintained in excellent condition by The Saint Michael's Corporation, 80 Meeting Street, Charleston.

WALL IS WITHIN BOUNDARIES,
IN ACCORDANCE WITH NR
USUAL INTERPRETATION OF BOUNDARIES
LEROVICH
6/13/78