

391/132010

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

PART I

CHRISTIAN STREET HOUSES (#2,4,6,8,10,12)

INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

INDEPENDENCE - CHRISTIAN STREET HOUSES
2,4,6,8,10,12



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

INDE. 20303-
CRBIB# 002037
391/132010

IN REPLY REFER TO:
H30-DCA

☒	History
☒	Nat. His.
☒	Archeo.
☒	Publ.
☒	Museum
☒	Sec'y

Posted 6/21

JUN 20 1962

REGION FIVE		Initial
JUN 21 1962		Date
☒	Reg. Dir.	6/27
☒	Asst. to RD(PA)	6/28
☒	Program Coord.	
☒	Asst. Reg. Dir-Adm.	
☒	Finance & Pers.	
☒	Lands & Water	
☒	Personnel	
☒	Asst. Reg. Dir-Op.	
☒	History & Arch.	6/27
☒	Natural History	
☒	Oper. & Maint.	
☒	Ranger Services	
☒	Asst. Reg. Dir-Rp	
☒	Co-op Services	
☒	NP & Rec. Area	
☒	Rec. Res. Surveys	

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Region Five

From: Assistant Director Stratton

Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I, Demolition of Christian Street Houses, Independence

The Division of History and Archeology and the Division of Architecture have reviewed the report submitted with your memorandum of June 15.

There is complete concurrence among those who have reviewed it, which coincides with your recommendation. You may place my signature upon the report as approving it as of this date.


Assistant Director

Copy to: Chief, EODC
Superintendent, Independence

Region Five
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

H30

June 15, 1962

Passarelli
6/15

Nelly
6/15
C. W. C.
6/15/62

Memorandum

To: Director

From: Regional Director

Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I, Demolition of Christian
Street Houses, Independence

Enclosed for your approval is a copy of the subject report which is
recommended for approval by this office and the EODC.

(Sgd.) Ronald F. Lee

Regional Director

In duplicate

Enclosure

Copy to: Supt., Independence
Chief, EODC

CPassarelli

General
Daily
Area
Programs
Mr. Barnes

Historic Structures Rpt., Part I - Christ St. Houses
Independence

2nd
submission

Interpretation

✓	History
✓	Nat. Hist.
✓	Archaeol.
✓	Public
✓	Program
✓	Ecology
✓	Other
✓	
✓	
✓	

EC-5/8/62

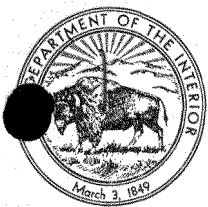
Operations

OPERATIONS	
✓	Ass't. Chief
✓	Chief of Staff
✓	Lands
✓	Program
✓	Architecture
✓	Ecology
✓	Other
✓	
✓	

4/5/7
Chas 5/4
EAC 5/7
JMS 5/7

Dr. Nelligan - Last

PLEASE REVIEW AGAIN. RPT. REVISED
PER OUR MEMO OF 4/27/62 ATTACHED



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Independence National Historical Park
420 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

IN REPLY REFER TO:

H30
(XD18)

May 1, 1962

REGION FIVE		INITIAL AND DATE
MAY 3 1962		
REG. DIRECTOR		
ASST. REG. DIR.		
OPERATIONS		
INFORMATION		
ADM.		
REC. RES. PLAN		
RANGER ACTS		
Postel		5/3

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Region Five

From: Superintendent, Independence NHP

Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part 1, Christian Street Houses

We are re-submitting above subject report with the changes suggested in your memorandum of April 27, on Nos. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12 Christian Street.

M. O. Anderson
M. O. Anderson
Superintendent

Enclosures

Copy to: Chief, EODC
w/enc.

H30-H

Eastern Office
Division of Design and Construction
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

May 1, 1962

REGION FIVE		INITIAL AND DATE
MAY 2 1962		
REG. DIRECTOR		
ASST. REG. DIR.		
OPERATIONS		
ADM.		
REC. RES. PLAN.		
RANGER ACT'S		

AVG 113
Posted CP 5/2

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Independence
From: Supervising Architect, Historic Structures
Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I, Christian Street Houses

We are returning our copy of the subject report as requested by
the Region Five Office.

Charles E. Peterson

Charles E. Peterson
Supervising Architect
Historic Structures

Enclosure

Copy to: Regional Director, Region Five —

Region Five
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

H30

April 27, 1962

Valley
4/27
@mil
4/27
Sal
4/27

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Independence

From: Regional Director

Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I, Christian Street
Houses

Enclosed for revision are the two copies of subject report. (By copy of this memorandum to EODC, that office is requested to return its copy to you, also.)

The Historical Data Section is quite adequate, and needs no revision. The Administrative Data Section, however, should be revised to include a specific statement from you (in the "Justification" Section) as to why these buildings should not be retained, ~~or~~ definite recommendation that they be demolished and the area landscaped, and cost estimates for so doing. Typing the Administrative Data Section on one page, or if necessary two--instead of using a separate page for each heading--is also suggested.

(Sgd.) Ronald F. Lee

Regional Director

In duplicate

Enclosures

Copy to: Chief, EODC

MHNelligan/cp

General
Daily
Area
Programs

1st
submission

HISTORIC STRUCTURES RPT., PART I - CHRISTIAN ST. HOUSES - INDEPENDENCE

INTERPRETATION

✓	History
	Nat. Hist.
✓	Archaeol.
	Publ.
	Monument
	Survey
✓	Nelligan

Agree w Hester Reed

9/27

These structures, in the perspective of the 21st Century, will represent a highly characteristic row-home unit which characterized the mid-19th Century. As such, they are of historical interest, even if they do not represent the period of the construction of Blaine Ave. They are a link between the 18th & the 20th Century.

OPERATIONS

When the N.P.S. has decided to tear them down (after, I assume, consulting EODC), I suggest archaeological inspection be made of the premises for prior evidence. J. C. Otter.

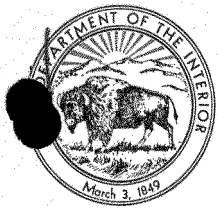
HISTORIC STRUCTURES RPT., PART I - CHRISTIAN ST. HOUSES - INDEPENDENCE

INTERPRETATION

OPERATIONS

cc 4/26/62

✓	Ass't. Chief	4/5/7
✓	Chief of Maintenance	
	Land	
✓	Programs	CHUS 4/26
✓	Architect	
✓	Engineer	
✓	Landmark	7/25/7



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Independence National Historical Park
420 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

IN REPLY REFER TO:

H30
(XD18)

April 26, 1962

Mr Lee

REGION FIVE		INITIAL AND DATE
APR 26 1962		
REG. DIRECTOR		
ASST. REG. DIR.		
OPERATIONS		
INTERPRETATION		
ADM.		
REC. RES. PLAN.		
RANGER ACT'S		

Chas 4/26

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Region Five
From: Superintendent, Independence NHP
Subject: Christian Street Houses - Gloria Dei NHS

We are submitting in response to your memorandum of March 21
subject above, Historic Structures Report, Part 1, Numbers
2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12 Christian Street.

M. O. Anderson
M. O. Anderson
Superintendent

In duplicate

Enclosure

Copy to: Chief, EODC
w/enc.

10-23
(November 1964)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
(Area)

FILE CODE: D13

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

Nos. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12 Christian Street

Prepared by:
Martin I. Yoelson
Historian
Independence National Historical Park
April 25, 1962

FROM:

TO:

IMPORTANT

This file constitutes a part of the official records of the National Park Service and should not be separated or papers withdrawn without express authority of the official in charge.

All Files should be returned promptly to the File Room. Officials and employees will be held responsible for failure to observe these rules, which are necessary to protect the integrity of the official records.

SIGNATURE SHEET

RECOMMENDED

M. Anderson Date May 1, 1962
Superintendent

Ronald F. Lee Date 6/15/62
Regional Director

Signed Robert S. Hill Date May 25, 1962
Chief, Eastern Office, Div. of Design & Construction

APPROVED

A.C. Stratton Date 6/20/62
Director

CHAPTER I

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Prepared by Superintendent M. O. Anderson

NAME AND NUMBER
OF BUILDING

Nos. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12 Christian Street.

Section 2

PROPOSED USE OF STRUCTURES
AND JUSTIFICATION

None.

The evidence presented in the Historical Data Section of this report establishes that the properties numbered 2 - 12 Christian Street are not of 18th-Century origin but have been erected sometime after 1833 and that they have no significant historical association. In view of this and of the fact that these buildings are not required for any administrative or interpretive purposes, either by the government or Gloria Dei National Historic Site, and because any proposed retention would appear to be inconsistent with the purpose of Public Law 85-709, we recommend that the buildings be demolished and the area graded and landscaped to provide a dignified, open setting for Gloria Dei (Old Swedes' Church). The estimated cost of development of total area, of which these six properties form only a part, will be \$429,500. This total figure breaks down as follows:

PCP R-11 (Ind.) Const. Walks & Curbs -	\$100,400
PCP M-19 (Ind.) Grounds Dev. - - - - -	304,900
PCP B-140 (Ind.) Demolition of Bldgs. -	<u>24,200</u>
Total - -	\$ 429,500

PROVISION FOR OPERATING SITE

To be maintained by rector and vestry of Gloria Dei as
part of Gloria Dei National Historic Site.

Section 4

**PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE OF COST OF
DEMOLITION AND LANDSCAPING**

See previous section.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL DATA

Prepared by Martin I. Yoelson

STRUCTURAL EVIDENCE
FROM DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

For the one hundred and forty years following the erection of Gloria Dei (Old Swedes') Church, located on Swanson Street below Christian Street, the area north of it remained an open area with the exception of a frame tenement of undetermined dimensions which stood at the southwest corner of these streets. The frame structure was erected in the 1780's and removed sometime after 1840.

Sometime after 1833 but prior to 1844 a row of six, three-story brick dwellings (See Illustration) was erected on the south side of Christian Street, 60 feet east of Swanson Street. The buildings numbered 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12 Christian Street, were built by Thomas Mercer. To the east of number 2 Christian Street was a vacant lot. Along the west side of number 12 Christian Street ran a ten foot alley extending in depth 88 feet. In the background were the church and its associated structures.

Each dwelling was erected on a lot with a frontage of sixteen feet. The depths of the six lots varied, gradually increasing from 60 feet along the east side of number 2 Christian Street to 88 feet on the west side of number 12 Christian Street.

No insurance surveys, contemporary plans, or descriptive information for these buildings have been found.

Structurally each dwelling has a frontage of 16 feet and

extends in depth approximately 35 to 40 feet. At this point the structure narrows to a width of about eight feet and further extends some ten feet, giving the appearance of an attached three-story brick back building.

The six dwellings were erected by Thomas Mercer.

Examination of the basic source materials---chains of title, eighteenth and early nineteenth century tax records, and city directories, as well as iconographical collections and published works, revealed an absence of descriptions and plans, and indications of use or post-construction alterations. Thus a detailed structural account of the houses, the number and arrangement of rooms, etc., cannot be given.

The evidence is fairly conclusive that there were no buildings on this site prior to 1833, and perhaps not until 1844.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The ground on which these buildings stand was originally part of a larger lot. It fronted 350 feet on Christian Street. Its depth along the Delaware River was 34 feet and on the west 88 feet. This larger lot was granted in 1753 to Thomas White by the Swedish Lutheran Church.

In 1762 the property was purchased by four shipwrights: Warwick Coates, Arthur Donaldson, Joseph Marsh, and Simon Sherlock. One year later Donaldson sold his one-quarter interest in the property to Sherlock. Between 1783 and 1784 Joseph Marsh acquired the outstanding shares to become sole owner. He then sold the easternmost part of the lot to Robert Knox.

The lot of ground retained by Marsh fronted 153 feet on the south side of Christian Street and had a depth along Swanson Street of 42 feet. On the west its depth was 88 feet.

With the exception of a frame structure erected after 1784 on the corner of Christian and Swanson Streets, Marsh made no improvements to the property.

From 1793 until 1823 Marsh resided at number 23 Christian Street.

Marsh retained the Christian Street property until his death in 1826, bequeathing it to his son, Joseph, and daughters, Susan Rogers

and Elizabeth Josiah. In 1833 the heirs of Joseph Marsh sold the property, an open lot of ground with the frame structure, to Thomas Mercer, a grocer.

Between 1833 and 1844 Mercer erected the row of six brick dwellings on the westernmost part of the lot (frontage of 96 feet).

Mercer did not reside in any one of his newly constructed houses. From 1813 to 1828 he rented the frame tenement at the southwest corner of Christian and Swanson Streets and operated a grocery. In 1829 he removed to the southwest corner of Queen and Swanson Streets and continued this business.

By 1837, as indicated in the city directories, Mercer retired from business and moved to a new residence on Queen Street.

Information concerning the use and occupancy of the Christian Street houses is meagre. To obtain such would require a painstaking, page by page, examination of nineteenth century directories, a considerable task. There appears to be no justification for it.

In 1842 the Congregation of the Swedish Lutheran Churches was granted a two year option to the number 12 Christian Street property. The transaction was negated in 1844 and Mercer sold this holding to Archibald McMullin, a bricklayer. Nine years later Robert Ellefson, a mariner, purchased the property. The heirs of Ellefson in 1889 sold it to Caroline Maisel who retained ownership until 1911. For the next fourteen years there was frequent change of ownership. In 1925 Nathan Berger acquired the property.

The other five dwellings were retained by the heirs of Thomas Mercer until 1903 when they were purchased by William Bettie. In 1925 the heirs of William Bettie sold the properties to Nathan Berger who became the second individual owner of the row.

Between 1925 and 1960, when the Federal Government purchased the combined properties, there were seven subsequent owners.

HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE

No figure of historical importance is associated with the Christian Street Houses and no significant event took place there. The structures themselves were not erected until the mid-nineteenth century. The absence even of any local traditions in connection with the structures and their lack of age would seem to render a prolonged research program wholly unwarranted. The site on which the present houses are located was an open area for well-nigh one hundred and fifty years, presenting an excellent vista of Gloria Dei from the north. In sum, we cannot find any basis for recommending that the Christian Street houses be retained.

ILLUSTRATION

Chapter II
Illustration No. 1



The row of the six Christian Street
dwellings, looking southeastwardly, 1960.
Photo by National Park Service.