

Pompion Hill Chapel  
Near Huger  
Berkeley County  
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-34

HABS

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of South Carolina

Historic American Buildings Survey

Prepared at Washington Office  
for District of South Carolina

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G. HUGG  
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POMPION HILL CHAPEL  
Near Huger, Berkeley County, South Carolina

Owner: Episcopal Church

Date of erection: 1763

Present condition: Good; very little changed from original

Description:

Brick, Flemish bond; jerkinhead roof; long elevation five bays, center door; all openings with glazed arched transoms; sash 12/12 lights; paneled shutters; projecting rectangular chancel east end, with pediment roof; Palladian chancel window; arched window either side chancel arch in east nave wall.

Unarchitectural vestry to west. Main cornice fully moulded above full frieze and architrave; full cornice forms rake mould of all gables. Interior has pulpit at west end, apsidal chancel at east end. All woodwork original. Ceiling coved. Floor brick laid in herring-bone pattern, with aisle of square tiles set diagonally. Chancel is trimmed with Doric pilasters supporting full entablature and is enclosed by a chancel rail of turned balusters. Communion table modern. Palladian window in recessed arch is trimmed with Doric colonnettes on mullions with full entablature above frieze enriched with strap ornament.

Pulpit is enclosed by low paneling with reading desk and is reached by short flight of stairs. All woodwork of pulpit natural wood, probably walnut, the front panel and soffit of sounding board being inlaid, the former with an "I. H. S." in a glory and the latter in compass design. The pulpit is a hexagon with "wineglass stem." The torus at the floorline is carved with pierced foliated pattern. The side panels have cut quadrant corners and are enriched with egg-and-dart carved panel moulds. The sounding board, supported by two Corinthian columns at back, has an ogee roof surmounted by an eagle.

Pews original bench-form, with scrolled ends supported on moulded cleats at base. Some pews painted white, some brown, said to indicate color of occupants.

Additional data:

First wooden church, 1703, superseded by existing brick church built in 1763. The building was probably designed by

Zachariah Villepontoux, whose initials appear in the brickwork of the interior. The initials of William Axon, as well as Masonic symbols, also appear.

Reference: Stoney, Plantations of the Carolina Low Country,  
p. 64.

Author: J. Lewis Waterman

Approved: 11/2/40

Pompion Hill Chapel  
Huger Vicinity  
Berkeley County  
South Carolina

Historical Data:

Pompion Hill, called "Punkin Hill", is a pleasant run of bluff land with a marsh-free landing on the Eastern Branch of the Cooper River. Here, between 1680 and 1700, a fair-sized community of small plantations grew up, owned mostly by Huguenots.

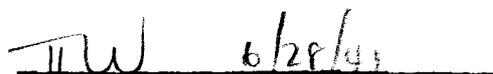
To serve this community, in 1703, a wooden church, which later became a Chapel of Ease of Saint Thomas and Saint Dennis Parish, was built at Pompion Hill.

By 1763, this church was in ruins and the congregation arranged for the building of the one now standing there. The considerable care and talent that went into its architecture and construction may be due to the work of Zachariah Villepontoux, a renowned maker of bricks. Pompion Hill has obviously borrowed the design of its chancel and its pulpit from those of Saint Michael's in Charlestown.

Bibliography:

Stoney, S. G. - Plantations of the Carolina Low Country.





ADDENDUM TO  
POMPION HILL CHAPEL  
Cooper River, south side  
Huger vicinity  
Berkeley County  
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-34

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of Interior  
1845 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

ADDENDUM TO:  
POMPION HILL CHAPEL  
Pompion Hill Lane  
Huger vicinity  
Berkeley County  
South Carolina

HABS SC-34  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### ADDENDUM TO

### POMPION HILL CHAPEL

HABS No. SC-34

Pages 1-3 were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress in 1940 and 1941

**Location:** Pompion Hill Chapel is located within the bounds of the town of Huger in Berkeley County, South Carolina, and accessed by a drive called Pompion Hill Lane off of Cainhoy Road. Once primarily accessible by river, today the main approach is a dirt road cut through a forested area. The chapel is located 0.5 miles southwest of the junction of State Routes 41 and 402, along the Cooper River.

Pompion Hill Chapel is located at latitude: 33.086295, longitude: -79.840362. The coordinate was obtained in 2016 using Google Earth (WGS84). There is no restriction on its release to the public.

**Significance:** Pompion Hill is one of South Carolina's best-preserved chapels of ease and is known for its unaltered Georgian interior and exterior. It is significant in regards to its architecture, association with historic figures, and role within the religious community and social structure of early south Carolinians. Pompion Hill Chapel was listed on the National Register in 1970.

The Chapel at Pompion Hill is the best surviving example of Anglican rural parish church architecture in the Lowcountry, if not the Western Hemisphere. While its holistic design is indicative of common English church-building practices of the early modern colonial period, the Flemish bond, mortar details, and transomed shutters distinguish it as a product of Lowcountry vernacular traditions. The interior fittings remain largely intact, save the nineteenth century pew bench replacements. Nonetheless, Pompion's design reveals the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Anglican liturgical focus on a balance of scripture and sacraments; the juxtaposition of the altar and the pulpit are positioned facing one another.

The remoteness of the site and infrequent use since the twentieth century contributes to the chapel's retention of original fabric and the fortunate maintenance of an authentic setting. Pompion Hill Chapel is located on a remote stretch of the Cooper River, isolated from major population centers. The seclusion and distance from Cainhoy Road have contributed to keeping the building, landscape, and churchyard unaltered over the last 250 years. The site is experienced today, much as it has been for all of its history, with uninterrupted views of the natural landscape and no modern conveniences with the exception of

watercraft that pass. The land across the Cooper River is a wildlife preserve and a National Forest surrounds the general area.

The detail of the pulpit has great commonality with the pulpit at St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Charleston. The entire pulpit was replicated from the Batty Langley pattern book, plate 114; this illustrates the connection of the Anglican Church in Colonial American to England. The intricate pulpit built in the fashion exported from England, it demonstrates the pride and material wealth that the plantation owners and parishioners invested in this structure.

**Description**  
**(Exterior):**

The building is of brick construction, set in a Flemish bond, and is one story in height. The sanctuary of the chapel measures 35' - 3 1/4" on the north-south axis and 48' - 6 1/4" on the east-west axis and is topped with a slate jerkin head roof. The chancel, which protrudes from the east elevation of the building, is centered on the building and measures 4' - 11" east to west and 13' - 2 3/4" north to south. The vestry extends from the west elevation and measures 15' 5 3/8" east to west and 16' - 1 7/8" north to south. The vestry is centered on the west elevation just as the chancel is on the east side of the building. The chancel is topped with a slate gable roof connecting it to the sanctuary with a pent eave. The vestry is topped with a slate gable roof.

At Pompion Hill both Villepontoux and Axson left signature bricks on the northern and southern facades of the building. These signature bricks, along with others left at churches across the Lowcountry, show a growing importance of colonial builders as designers of liturgical spaces. Both Axson and Villepontoux drew from architectural guides written by John Gibbes and others (Nelson 2008, 126). They also infused Lowcountry vernacular tradition into their designs. For example, Pompion Hill, a five by three bay structure, exhibits classic Georgian principles of symmetry and the windows and doors follow principles of ordered proportion; twice as tall as they are wide. At the same time the Flemish bond brickwork, transomed window shutters, and mortar joints exude Lowcountry vernacular building practices (Lounsbury 2007).

The foundation of Pompion Hill is constructed of brick and rests atop a spread footing. As the building has never been moved, the foundation dates to the original construction of the chapel, though there has been repair work on the foundation as part of the 2007 restoration. The type and origin of brick used for the foundation was likely to of the same source used in the buildings masonry walls. Given the era and other evidence, such as the builder's signature, it is likely that the bricks are locally sourced and produced. A drip irrigation system and 2' - 9" French drain were installed around the perimeter of the building as part of the 2007 restoration, due to issues of expansive soils

The majority of the windows and doors in the sanctuary of Pompion Hill are original. The principal entryways are through large, wooden double doors on the

north and south facades. Following Georgian principles of symmetry and proportion each door is twice as tall as it is wide. Each door has four raised panels, alternating squares and rectangles, arranged in a single column on each of the two leaves of the door. The hardware on the doors and windows are most likely original as well. The rim-locks on both the north and south entry doors are in excellent condition and are both fully operational. The north and south entries are secured by a vertical bolt latch mounted to the top of the door, and one mounted toward the bottom.

The windows are fully operational, resting in the original wooden frames. The windows are 4'-3" in width and 6'-8 3/4" in height with an additional 2'-4 3/4" to the top of the compass head. All windows in the chapel are recessed into the interior plaster walls and feature original wooden sills.

The vestry addition was torn down and restored in the 1970s, using the original brick for reconstruction. The exterior door leading into the vestry features a modern lock, and the interior door connecting to the sanctuary features a box lock. The windows in the vestry are modern as well, most likely installed during around the 1970s campaign, with modern tab locks.

The paneled shutters flanking the windows of the sanctuary are constructed with pinned, through tenon joints, and hung on wrought iron strap hinges. The rails, stiles, and panels of the doors and shutters are painted white. The beveled edges of the panels are painted dark grey. The characteristic grey and white paint scheme is repeated throughout various details of the chapel such as the door surrounds and window trim. Paint conservator Susan Buck discovered this original and unusual paint scheme through paint analysis as part of the 2007 restoration (Buck, 12).

Pompion Hill's jerkin head roof is one of its defining architectural features. The truncated hipped slate roof is book-ended by a gabled chancel projection to the east and gabled vestry abutment to the west; the east end also has a pent eave between the primary cornice and the jerkin head. The roofs of the sanctuary and chancel projection are comprised primarily of imported Welsh slates. The pent eave of the northeastern corner of the sanctuary, however, has North American slate as a part of the rebuilding campaign in 2007. The vestry roof is composed of North American slate. The ridges of the sanctuary chancel projection and vestry are topped by terracotta caps that are mortared together. Closer inspection of the ridge caps reveals they are stamped with "Dickey Birmingham." These appear to be early twentieth century replacements from the W.S. Dickey City Manufacturing Company which was established in Kansas City, Missouri in 1885.

**Description  
(Interior):**

The eighteenth-century fittings include a wine-stem pulpit appears to be a derivation from plate number 114 from Batty Langley's *Workman's Treasury Designs*. A simple reading desk sits under the pulpit, a common feature of rural

South Carolina Anglican spaces and a stark contrast to the imposing arrangements of Virginia and Maryland (Upton 1986). Today, raised paneled walls enclose the pulpit and desk. This partition is a reproduction but likely indicative of eighteenth-century practice. Set within a cove, the chancel is lit by a Palladian window. The interior likely featured paneled box pews during the initial phase. While no longer present, a comparable Lowcountry example survives at nearby St. James Santee, near McClellanville, South Carolina.

The interior walls and ceiling of the building are covered entirely in plaster with a coved ceiling that measures 21'-7 7/8" in height. The walls are about 15'-11 1/4" in height topped with a heavy 1'-3/8" cornice that continues around the perimeter of the room, breaking only above the Palladian window on the chancel end, or the eastern wall.

Originally, the interior walls had plaster applied directly to the load bearing masonry walls. In 1840 the interior walls were furred out and plastered and the original Georgian wood cornice was replaced by a plaster cornice. Above the cornice, the walls form a plaster cove 4'-8 1/4" high, which terminates at a slender 4" strip of plaster molding running around the perimeter of the ceiling.

The floors of Pompion Hill Chapel are made of brick. The majority of the flooring is original, however, there are portions that have been replaced in the pulpit and the northeast corner of the southeast quadrant. The central aisles form a cross and the bricks are 9" x 9" squares laid so that their sides are at forty-five degree angles to the long axes of the aisles. The north-south running aisle connects the two main entrances of the sanctuary; the east-west running aisle connects the pulpit and the chancel, the two liturgical centers of the chapel. The four quadrants outside of the cross are herringbone pattern. These quadrants delineate the placement of pews within the chapel. There is one row of 9" x 2" bricks dividing the two patterns. The intersection of the aisle has an intricate pattern of bricks which resembles Great Britain's Union Jack flag.

The vestry has the same herringbone pattern with a border of headers. The area within the pulpit railing has been replaced with courses of running bond brick.

The north and south elevations are mirror images of one another. Double doors are centered in each façade and act as the principle entrances into the chapel. Each door has iron HL hinges at the top and bottom. The doors are flanked by two twelve over twelve sash compass-head windows on each side.

The chancel is an apse centered in the east wall flanked by two compass head windows. The floor of the chancel is elevated 3 1/4" above the rest of the chapel. The elevated platform, referred to as the chancel step, protrudes 2'-11 1/8" from the interior east wall. A Palladian window is centered in the apse. The Palladian window consists of a nine over nine sash center compass head windows flanked by two four-paned sidelights. Each sidelight is flanked by two engaged fluted

pilasters. Each pair of pilasters is crowned with a 1' entablature made up of a plain architrave, a decorative frieze, and a cornice including a dentil molding. There are two engaged fluted pilasters on the Palladian window, evenly spaced around the semicircular wall of the chancel. The pilasters run from the chancel floor up 13'-3 3/8" to their capitals, topped with an elaborate 1'-6 1/8" cornice that curves along the wall of the apse.

A chair rail runs around the wall of the apse. The pilasters, cornice, and chair rail are all made of wood. A railing with turned spindles runs around the inside perimeter of the chancel step. A gate is centered in the long side of the chancel rail. As part of the 2007 paint analysis, Susan Buck discovered the engaged pilasters, cornice, chair rail, and chancel rail were originally painted a dark red-brown. This paint scheme was recreated as part of the 2007 restoration.

The pulpit is centered on the west interior elevation. It is a modified version of a pulpit pattern in the Batty Langley pattern book and is strikingly similar to the pulpit in St. Michael's Episcopal Church located in Charleston, South Carolina. The pulpit box is hexagonal in shape with paneled sides. The center panel is inlaid with an elaborate IHS monogram. The sounding board overhead is supported by two wooden Corinthian columns with an ogee shaped roof. The sun motif inlay in the pulpit soffit is an exact replica of the same feature in the Batty Langley pattern book. The pulpit is raised and a curved wooden stair with turned balusters leads up to the north side of the pulpit.

The pulpit is contained in a 10' 1/2" x 11'-11 1/8" square enclosure surrounded by a low wooden paneled wall. A 2'-3/8" wide gate lies north of the center on the eastern wall of the enclosure.

A door leading to the vestry is cut into the west elevation, 8'-10 3/4" from the north interior wall. The door is raised above the chapel floor and is accessed by the pulpit stairs. The west elevation includes two compass head twelve over twelve windows symmetrically placed on either side of the pulpit.

The vestry floor abuts the west exterior wall of the chapel. It is entered from the chapel by a door raised above the plane of the chapel floor and approached by the pulpit stairs. The door into chapel is a flat panel door with a rim lock on the vestry side. The vestry is almost square, measuring 14'-7 3/8" east to west and 14'-3 7/8" north to south between interior faces of the vestry walls. The vestry is also covered entirely in wood paneling with panels of various sizes, in no particular order, and a bead measuring 5/8" set between each panel. Underneath the chair rail, which sits about 3' off of the floor, the paneling is run horizontally. At the top of the wall is a 4" crown molding.

In the southeast corner of the vestry is a built in cabinet measuring 3'-7 1/2" wide and 1' deep, east to west. The room has three six over six sash windows, one centered on the north wall and two evenly spaced on the west wall. The south wall

has one exterior modern door with modern hardware. This door leads outside to a small step that is covered by a shed roof.

**History:**

In 1703, Anglicans in what would become St. Thomas Parish chose a spot called ‘Pompion Hill’ on the Cooper River to erect their framed church of cypress. Pompion Hill Chapel was one of the three rural parish churches, along with Goose Creek and St. James Santee, to be constructed between 1670 and 1706 (Nelson 2008, 60). For rural congregations, chapels of ease served the function of ‘easing’ the burden of having to travel from plantations and outlying areas into the city and town centers of the colonial landscape. For church services they were able to worship near their homes. Rural rectors and ministers were required to rotate services throughout the liturgical calendar.

The Church Act of 1706 established the Anglican Church as the state religion of the Carolina Colony. A parish system was established for the Anglicization of the colony. By default, the existing frame chapel with the modest sanctuary at Pompion Hill became St. Thomas’ Parish Church.

By the mid-eighteenth century the life of the cypress frame building was coming to a close. Plans were devised to replace the building with a brick edifice. In 1763 the parish vestry approved the erection of a new chapel. They chose two men for the task. Zachariah Villepontoux, a Huguenot, was allocated £3000 to construct the exterior structure. After the shell was erected, the vestry then enlisted William Axson, at the cost of £1000 “to finish and adorn the Inside in a decent of complete manner” (Nelson 2008, 126).

The Chapel of Ease was constructed in 1763 and most original construction materials remain intact. Original bricks were reused when reconstructing the vestry in the 1970s, and for the repairs to the northeast corner of the main structure. The doors, windows, and door hardware of the chapel are all original. The deliberate act of not installing mechanical or plumbing systems within the chapel contributes to the natural preservation of the building. This in turn allows visitors to experience the site in similar conditions as the original congregation might have enjoyed.

Pompion Hill was renovated in the mid-nineteenth century (c. 1840). The interior walls were furred out and a new layer of plaster was applied. The wood cornice which adorned the walls from the mid-eighteenth century was removed and replaced with a run-plaster cornice. Remnants of the original cornice were identified during recent renovations. The original box pews were also removed in 1840 and replaced with the existing benches (Lounsbury 2007, 1). In the 1840s an attached vestry room was added to the western end of the sanctuary. The vestry featured opposing doors on the northern and southern facades of which only the southern door survives. This addition has failed and been rebuilt in several

campaigns, most recently in the 1970s. Extensive restoration of the sanctuary work took place in the mid-2000s coupled with paint and plaster analysis.

Today, Pompion Hill Chapel of Ease is privately owned and managed by the vestry of the church, and used twice a year for special church services. The graveyard to the west of the structure is actively in use. Though still accessible by river, visitors primarily drive the earth packed path from Cainhoy Road. This Georgian chapel is an incredible example of eighteenth century Anglican architecture and a relatively untouched landscape. The stable condition and reasonably unaltered fabric of the structure provide visitors and researchers alike with an experience similar to that of the original parishioners nearly 250 years ago.

Pompion's liturgical setting can be viewed as a material conversation the workers take from Anglican religious practice both after the English Restoration and in the North American colonies.

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**Historian(s):** Haley Schriber, Clemson University/College of Charleston Graduate Program, class of 2016.

**Information:** This project was completed by the 2016 graduating class of the Clemson University/College of Charleston Graduate Program in Historic Preservation under the direction of Professor Carter Hudgins and Assistant Professor Amalia Leifeste. The entire graduating class generated photos and measured drawings that were organized and edited by Jane Ashburn, Amanda Brown, and Haley Schriber. Haley Schriber synthesized classmate's research and authored the historical report. The documentation (drawings and history) was submitted to the 2016 Peterson Prize competition.