

VLR-10/14/86 NRHP-1/7/87

VLR Listing - 10/14/1986

NRHP Listing - 1/7/1987

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

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

received

date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic EMMANUEL CHURCH (Preferred)

(DHL File No. 48-7)

and/or common EMMANUEL EPISCOPAL CHURCH

**2. Location**

street & number US Route 301

*& !-hot* for publication

city, town Port Conway

N/A vicinity of

state Virginia

code 51

county King George

code 099

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> site object	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<b>g o v e r n m e n t</b>
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<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 Diocese of Virginia, c/o Bishop Peter Lee

street & number 110 W. Franklin Street

city, town Richmond

N/A vicinity of

state VA 23219

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. King George County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town King George Court House

state VA 23219

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

1) Survey (File No. 48-7)

title 2) HABSI

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

1) 1969, 1971, 1973, 1986

1)

date 2) 1958

2)  federal state county local

1) Division of Historic Landmarks, 221 Governor Street

depository for survey records 2) Library of Congress, Washington DC

city, town 1) Richmond

state VA 23219

## 7. Description

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

### **Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

#### Summary Description

Emmanuel Church is located off US Route 301 in King George County. The small, one-story, brick church was erected in 1859-60 in the Gothic Revival style. It has undergone minimal alteration. The nomination consists of one contributing building, the church, set within a fenced churchyard.

#### Architectural Analysis

Emmanuel Church is located to the west of US Route 301 in the small settlement of Port Conway. It is constructed of stretcher-bond brick and covered with a gable roof. The facade of the church fronts on US Route 301 and faces east. It is dominated by a 2½-story entrance tower. Located on the first story, the principal entrance is set within an equilateral arch opening. It consists of paneled double doors topped by a transom. The transom is distinguished by a wheel-like motif. An equilateral arch opening with hung-sash windows and closed louvered shutters mark the tower's second story. The attic has a circular opening that has been blocked. The tower is covered by a pyramidal roof supported by brackets. The corners of the tower have angle buttresses which are also found on the side and rear elevations.

The side (north & south) elevations have two pointed arch openings that are separated by a buttress. The openings have elongated 6/6 hung-sash windows and louvered shutters that cover the arch transoms. The rear (west) elevation has a one-story, one-bay addition executed in five-course American-bond brick. The gable-roof addition has a 6/6 hung-sash window on the south wall and a paneled single door on the north wall. A small lean-to shed with a single door was added to the north wall. An entrance to the basement is found on the south wall. Standing seam sheet metal covers the church's gable roof.

The interior of Emmanuel Church is relatively plain. This may be due to the fact that the original decorative paint scheme is covered by white paint. The use of the Gothic style for the church as well as the date, 1859-60, would suggest that the church had originally a more elaborate interior paint scheme. The interior consists of a central aisle flanked by pews. The wooden pews have Gothic ends and are painted white. Evidence suggests that they were originally varnished. The western end of the church contains the raised sanctuary. Here, the recessed altar is framed by an arch and dates to the early 1960s. A Gothic-style wainscot runs along the west wall. The east end of the church contains a gallery. The gallery has additional seating as well as the original Henry Erban organ housed in a Gothic Revival-style case. A brass pseudo-colonial chandelier provides interior illumination.

A brick wall erected in 1960-65 defines the churchyard. The yard is used as a cemetery and contains the colonial gravestone of Harry and Elizabeth Turner upon whose original landholdings the church is built. The stone was moved to its present site. Nineteenth and 20th-century gravestones mark the churchyard.

## 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input 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** 1859-60

**Builder/Architect** attributed: Niernsee and Neilson

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Statement of Significance

Emmanuel Church at Port Conway on the Rappahannock River in King George County is significant as a member of Virginia's small but important collection of Gothic Revival-style country churches. While such churches were popular in the North where the Gothic Revival flourished, the style was rarely adopted by Virginians for their rural churches. Completed in 1859-60 and attributed on the basis of architectural evidence alone to the Baltimore architects Niernsee and Neilson, the church features excellent proportions, fine detailing, and an imposing tower which bears a stylistic comparison with Martin's Brandon Church, Prince George County, also attributed to Niernsee and Neilson. Although damaged during the Civil War, the church interior retains its original gallery and a Henry Erban organ that dates to the third quarter of the 19th century. The building is a familiar landmark to motorists crossing the Rappahannock River between Port Royal and Port Conway along U. S. 301.

Historical Background

The town of Port Conway was established in 1784 at the site of the Rappahannock ferry crossing from Port Royal. To attend church, Port Conway residents had to take the ferry south to St. Peter's Church, Port Royal or travel to St. Paul's at Owens or (after 1843) to St. John's Church, King George Court House. To end this inconvenience, Cornelius Turner (1812-1876) of Belle Grove donated plantation land for use as a church site.

Belle Grove itself was part of a land grant dating from the 1660s, the decade in which Governor Berkeley granted Thomas Chetwood and John Prosser 5,274 acres as consideration for transporting 100 persons to the colony. Less than three years after acquiring the tract, Prosser sold 1,000 acres to Anthony Sevedge. That portion of the tract then passed from the Conway family (1720-90) to the Bernard family (1790-1839) to the Turners (1839-93). George Washington was a frequent visitor to Belle Grove, and in 1751 the plantation became the birthplace of James Madison.

Emmanuel Church, Port Conway, was constructed 1859-60 and consecrated on July 2, 1860 by Bishop Johns. Unfortunately, the name of the architect is not recorded; however, on the basis of the design and the date, the church may be attributed to the Baltimore architectural firm of Niernsee and Neilson. The firm was responsible for building other churches in the Gothic style in Virginia which share similar design details with Emmanuel Church.

J. Crawford Neilson and John R. Niernsee practiced architecture in Baltimore. Neilson was born in that city in 1817 and studied civil engineering in Brussels, Belgium and subsequently practiced his profession in the United States, entering into a

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

- Davis, Vernon, and Rawlings, James. Virginia's Antebellum Churches.  
Richmond: Dietz Press, 1978.
- Fall, Ralph E. "Emmanuel Church and St. John's Church," unpublished manuscript.  
Archives File No. 48-7. Division of Historic Landmarks, Richmond, VA.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. one acre

Quadrangle name Port Royal, VA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	1 8	3 0 8 5 1 0	4 2 2 7 7 8 0	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

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 Division of Historic Landmarks

organization Division of Historic Landmarks Staff date 1986

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone 804/786-3143

city or town Richmond, state VA 23219

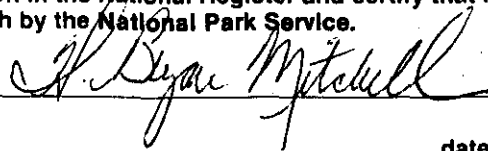
## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



H. Bryan Mitchell, Director  
title Division of Historic Landmarks

date December 5, 1986

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

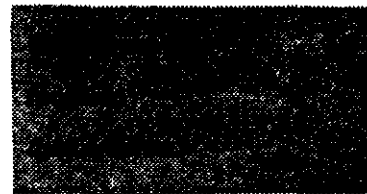
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

EMMANUEL CHURCH, King George County, Virginia



Continuation sheet 1

Item number 8

Page 1

8. SIGNIFICANCE—Historical Background

partnership with Niernsee in 1848. Niernsee came to Baltimore from Vienna, Austria, where he had attended the Vienna Polytechnic.

In Virginia the architects are thought to be associated with the design of two Episcopal churches: St. Paul's Church, Petersburg of 1855-57 and Martin's Brandon Church, Prince George County of 1855-56. St. Paul's is documented in the church vestry records as the work of Neilson and Niernsee. A Gothic Revival-style edifice, St. Paul's is among the most elaborate antebellum churches in Petersburg. Martin's Brandon is a country church also attributed to Neilson and Niernsee. While predominantly Italianate in style, Martin's Brandon Church, like Emmanuel, features a tall tower distinguished by an unusual flaring pyramidal roof. The design of the two church roofs suggests the same hand. Martin's Brandon Church is, of course, larger than Emmanuel. However, both churches have excellent proportions and fine detailing. The location of Emmanuel on the Northern Neck makes the attribution to Neilson and Niernsee more probable. During the 19th century, the proximity of the area to Baltimore exerted a marked influence on Northern Neck architecture. Baltimore is also known to have provided the Northern Neck with building components. It is therefore not surprising to learn that a Baltimore architectural firm may have designed a small country church for a Northern Neck congregation.

In 1861, the Rev. Alexander Shiras was rector of both St. John's Church, King George Court House and Emmanuel Church. He reported in 1862: "The war has borne somewhat heavily upon the Parish (Hanover Parish), scattering its families, carrying off its young men, and almost dissolving the congregation. Regular services were steadily kept up, and others held for the soldiers occasionally stationed in the neighborhood."<sup>1</sup>

The Rev. Henry Wall, who became the rector of Hanover Parish, King George County, in September, 1865, reported: "Emmanuel Church at Port Conway was now fit for occupation. It has been repaired by aid of the liberality of kind friends of the Church in Baltimore & New York, and by many personal friends of the subscriber in Alexandria."<sup>2</sup>

Ultimately, the church recovered from the war and has continued to serve the citizens of Port Conway to this day. The church retains its original interior gallery and its Henry Erban organ. The organ has a Gothic Revival-style case and dates to the third quarter of the 19th century.

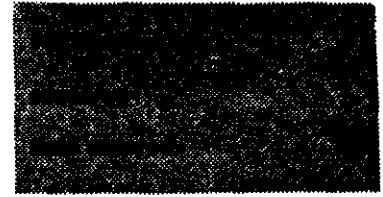
BC/RCC

## Notes:

1. Ralph E. Fall, "Hanover Parish, King George County," unpublished manuscript, Division of Historic Landmarks, Archives File No. 48-7, p. 3.
2. Ibid., p. 4.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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



EMMANUEL CHURCH, King George County, Virginia

Continuation sheet 2

Item number 10

Page 1

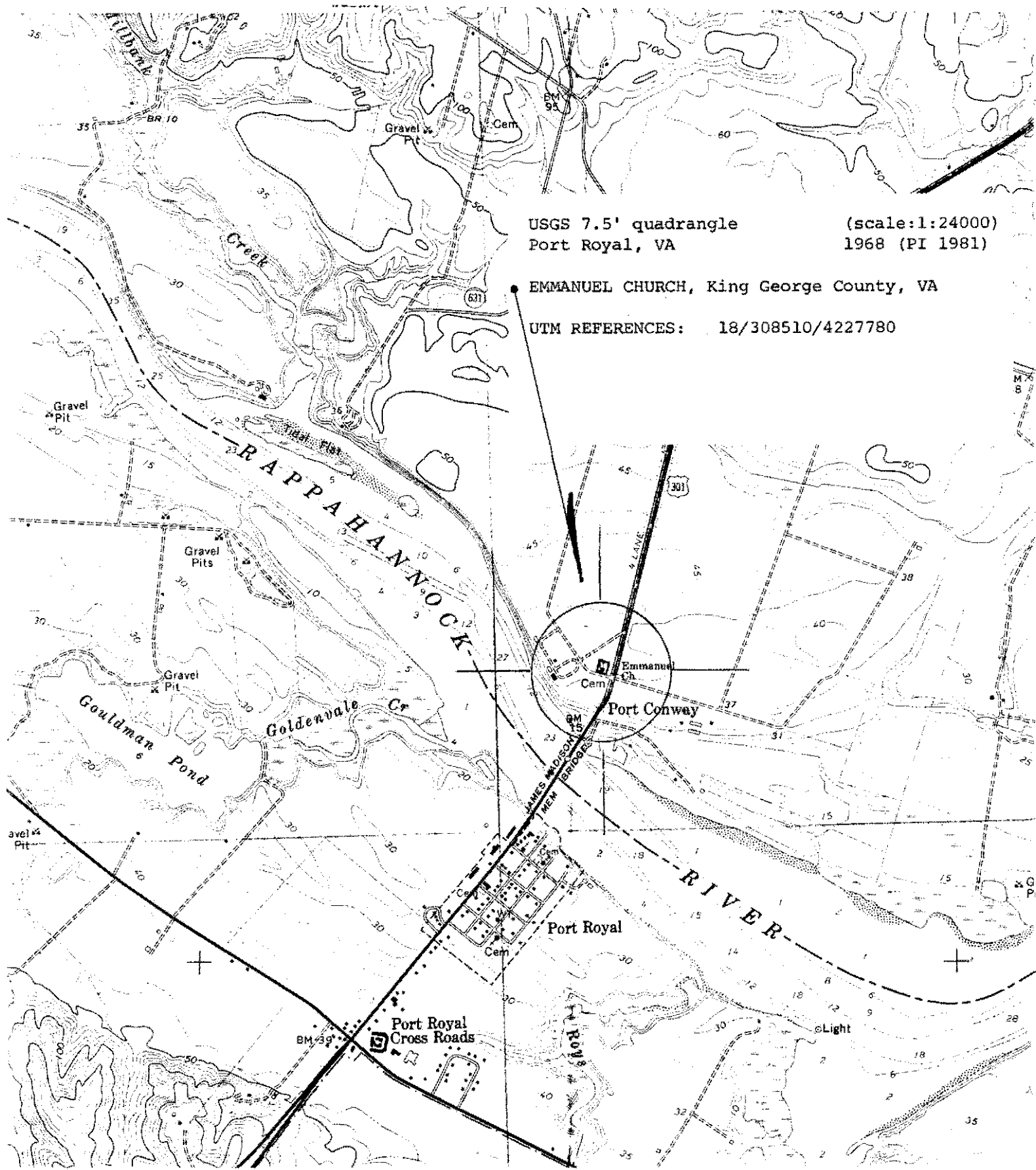
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA—Verbal Boundary Description

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point on the N side of a private drive approx. 100' W of US Route 301 and approx. 1050' (following US 301) NE of the Rappahannock River; thence approx. 150' W following N side of private drive; thence approx. 200' NNE; thence approx. 150' ESE; thence approx. 200' SSW to point of origin.

Justification

The nominated property consists of one acre. It includes a small parking lot in front of the church and the enclosed churchyard wherein sits Emmanuel Church.



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)  
Port Royal, VA 1968 (PI 1981)

EMMANUEL CHURCH, King George County, VA

UTM REFERENCES: 18/308510/4227780