

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Trinity Church

and/or common

2. Location

street & number E. side of US 258, 0.6 mi. S. of jct. w/SR 1118 not for publication

city, town Scotland Neck vicinity of congressional district Second

state North Carolina code 037 county Halifax code 083

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. William Holleman, Sr. Warden Rev. William S. McInnis, Rector

street & number 1305 North Church Street 1305 North Main Street

city, town Scotland Neck vicinity of state North Carolina 27874

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Halifax County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Halifax state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Historic and Architectural Resources of
title the Tar-Neuse River Basin has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Survey and Planning Branch, NC Division of Archives and History

city, town Raleigh state North Carolina

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<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 _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

(Old) Trinity Church, Scotland Neck, stands on a slight rise overlooking a reflective pond and surrounded by a landscaped cemetery with mature plantings. The brick, Gothic Revival church and its picturesque surroundings compose one of the most impressive landmarks in Halifax County. The trees around the church now nearly conceal it from view, so that its main visual impact to the passer-by is its crenellated tower rising amid the trees.

The design of the church, is attributed to Ecclesiological architect Frank Wills. It exhibits the straight forward plan and restrained character of the English parish church model promoted by the Ecclesiological movement as best for small Episcopal congregations. The building maintains its original character despite a fire of 1885 that destroyed much of the interior. A pre-fire photograph of the exterior shows that the church has not changed significantly in exterior appearance since construction.

The building is constructed of brick laid in 1:7 common bond. The main block is a rectangle, covered with a gable roof and with lancet windows punctuating the simply composed flanks. Simple double-hung Gothic sash fills these windows, which have narrow wooden frames and plain lancet shaped surrounds. The roof, which overhangs slightly, is covered with metal shingles.

Dominating the facade is the front central tower, where most of the ornamentation of the exterior concentrates. The tower is square in section and projects forward to create a vestibule. A double door in lancet frame marks the entrance level and is framed by an arched label. A second lancet marks the second level, and pairs of louvered lancet openings occur at the belfry level. Decorative corbelled brickwork defines the upper level. Corner buttresses outline the corners of the tower, increasing the vertical thrust; they are coped with stone. The roofline of the tower is crenellated, with stuccoed battlements.

To the rear projects the chance, and to the south extends a small entry with gable roof. Finish repeats that of the main block.

The interior of the church, as expected from the exterior, contains the small tower vestibule or narthex, a large open nave, and the chancel and rear entry way. The simple finish of the interior reflects the straightened circumstances after the 1885 fire and the fact that this church was reclaimed as economically as possible because of construction of a new Trinity Episcopal church in 1886 in Scotland Neck.

The utter simplicity of the interior communicates a serenity not found in the more ornately handled interiors of many contemporary Gothic Revival churches. The walls are simply finished in stucco, and the windows, set deep into the masonry walls, are plainly treated. Natural light, untouched by colored glass but filtered by the vegetation outside, streams through the clear glass windows. Only the trio of chancel lancet windows contains stained glass. The ceiling is finished now with sheathing of 4" wide boards. A central aisle defines the pews into two sections. The pews are 19th century ones of a typical form with straight seats and backs, but the ends like many in the region, are vigorously curved in profile.

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The chancel area, not surprisingly, exhibits the principal concentration of ornamentation. Above the three memorial windows--given in the 1950s in memory of William Ruffin Smith (1803-1872), Richard Henry Smith (1812-1895), and James Norfleet Smith (1817-1893)--runs a painted inscription, "We wait for thy loveing (sic) kindness O God in the midst of thy temple." Elaborately treated chairs with trefoils, crockets, and other Gothic detail flank the altar. The handsome altar rail dates from the 1880s as well.

The landscaping of the churchyard represents both the survival and the expansion of a plan provided by the Reverend Joseph Blount Cheshire during his tenure as priest here in the mid-nineteenth century. Interlocking curvilinear paths encircle the church itself and create a series of circles and other curvilinear forms (see attached diagram). Among the mature plantings, many of them dating from Cheshire's time, are crepe myrtle, cedar, cryptomaria, holly, oak, magnolia, live oak, and a deodora-like cedar.

The oldest section, nearest the church, contains the graves of parishioners of Trinity. To the south, however, is also an area containing graves. Downhill and slightly to the west is a large pool, near the present road, a body of water created recently. Though recent, it beautifully enhances the character of the church and churchyard.

Descriptions of original appearance

Among the materials kept by the congregation concerning the history is a description of the church before the fire, written by Stuart H. Smith (undated) and contained in the History of Trinity Parish It reads:

I remember going to Sunday School at Old Trinity when a very small boy and being impressed with its beauty and sanctity. The most noticeable thing to me was three windows back of the altar. On one was the dove of the Holy Spirit. The other windows in the church were of leaded glass, gray in color. There were no memorial windows. Over the chancel were two inscriptions. I do not remember the highest. The other was, "We wait for thy loveing kindness O God in the midst of thy temple," in gilt letters. There was no pulpit but the minister stood on the right side when he preached. On the other side was a stand where he read the bible. At the foot of the chancel to one side was a white marble font. The woodwork was generally mahogany or walnut in color. The church was not sealed (ceiled) at the top. There was open woodwork with beams across the dark wood.

The walls were light tan stencilled by dark brown lines into blocks about 6 x 18 inches--exactly like the hall at the old Norfleet Smith place and the Hayes place in Edenton. There was only one aisle down the center. The choir sat in a railed gallery over the vestibule at the rear. There was a large and sweet-toned pipe organ. The seats went back under the choir gallery. There was a pretty red carpet down the aisle. At the end of each pew was a spittoon. There was no hymn board or litany desk. There were side lamps on the walls. In the vestibule was a stairway to the choir.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" 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	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	1855	Builder/Architect	Frank Wills (Attrib.) Rev. Joseph Blount Cheshire (landscape)	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Trinity Church and Churchyard embody important aspects of antebellum architecture, and landscape architecture, reflecting the prosperity and sophistication of the Halifax County plantation gentry who composed Trinity Parish. The parish was established in 1831 and the Gothic Revival church was erected in 1855, with the assistance of the Smith family, prominent parishioners. The design of the symmetrical, towered brick structure is attributed to New York architect Frank Wills, leading proponent of the Gothic Revival and especially of the ecclesiological movement. The church burned in 1885. After a new church was built for the congregation in nearby Scotland Neck, the old church was restored sufficiently for occasional services, but economy prevented restoration of the original elaborate interiors. Nevertheless the integrity of the exterior remains intact, and the simplicity of the interior has gained its own significance as a reflection of the stringent times following the Civil War. Around the church are lush and mature plantings that recall the landscape gardening work of longtime rector Joseph Blount Cheshire, who here and at Calvary Church in Tarboro created a landscape design and planted exotic and varied shrubs and trees, the benefit of his longtime interest in horticulture.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. Associated with the late 18th and early 19th century efforts to reestablish the Episcopal Church following the decline of the Anglican church in the wake of the American Revolution; and associated with the dominant and prosperous plantation gentry vital in the political, social, and economic life of Halifax and nearby Roanoke valley counties in North Carolina; and associated with the continued role in the community of the planter families amid powerful social, political, and economic change in the post-Civil War period and the early twentieth century.
- B. Associated with the locally prominent Smith family; and with Joseph Blount Cheshire, an Episcopal priest who had a strong cultural impact in Halifax and Edgecombe counties and whose descendants including Bishop Joseph Blount Cheshire and others have continued to be prominent in the state.
- C. Exemplifies distinctive characteristics of antebellum architecture and landscape architecture: it is the only probable example of the direct influence on North Carolina church architecture of leading Gothicist Frank Wills and one of the principal examples of the landscape designs of Joseph Blount Cheshire.
- D. May contain information about antebellum construction and landscaping ways.

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Trinity Parish was formed in Halifax County in 1831, with services provided once a month to a small congregation in the prosperous plantation country near the present town of Scotland Neck.¹ In 1833 the congregation was accepted into the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina, and a small frame church was consecrated the same year. The formation of the congregation took place in the context of earlier Anglican interests in the area, for of the twenty-five citizens of Scotland Neck who signed the organizing petition in 1833, eight are described as being "baptized members of the Colonial Church."² During the period from the Revolution to 1817, when the Diocese of North Carolina was organized, at least two Episcopal clergymen as well as several active laymen, lived in Halifax County.

The small congregation of Trinity Parish included members of several prosperous families prominent in the plantation gentry that dominated the Roanoke River area. Among them were members of the Baker, Hill, Lowries, and Smith families. Most of the members were connected by marriage, and most lived on plantations not far from the church site. The Smith family in particular took an active interest in the well-being of the church, contributing not only funds but also strong leadership to the parish. Richard H. Smith (1812-1893), elected delegate to the diocesan convention of 1833 when Trinity entered the diocese, served the congregation for many years as vestryman and senior warden.

The present church exterior was erected in 1855, during the pastorate of Rev. Joseph Blount Cheshire. Cheshire (1814-1899) was called to the congregation in 1841 as a newly ordained priest, and he was to serve this parish twenty-eight years in conjunction with Calvary Parish in nearby Tarboro, where he made his residence.

Cheshire's son, Bishop Joseph Blount Cheshire, later recalled "Scotland Neck was a thickly inhabited neighborhood, with a village of a dozen or more houses nearby called Clarksville, . . . and the somewhat larger called Greenwood. But though the residences of the various families composing the congregation were rather closely grouped together in many cases, yet it was essentially a country parish and the people were farmers and planters and led the isolated life characteristic of their class. They did not live in community."³ Thus Cheshire chose the town of Tarboro as his residence.

Cheshire earned the respect and affection of his parishioners. He served not only as a beloved and effective rector but also, through his lifelong avocation of landscape gardening, enhanced the landscape design of Trinity, Calvary, and other church yards in the region as well as the surroundings of the prosperous plantation seats. His family became prominent in the state, especially his son who became bishop of North Carolina.

Cheshire also apparently shaped the character of the design of the new church building erected in 1854. His son, Bishop Cheshire, later recalled:

The manner in which the Church of Scotland Neck was built was, I believe, rather unique in this diocese. I have said that the Rector laid the matter before his vestry, but I doubt if a vestry meeting was ever held on the subject. He doubtless spoke to them, and enlarged in his enthusiastic manner upon the advantage of a beautiful Church, and organ, and solemn music, and the elevating

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and inspiring influence of proper accompaniments in public worship. I can dimly remember myself how much he dwelt on these things about this period, when both in Scotland Neck and Tarborough he began to find that the community was being slowly but surely won by his devoted labors among them. . . .

The proposition for a new Church being made, the three Smith brothers, William, Richard and James, concurred in thinking that it was needed, and as a consequence, that they would build it. They authorized the Rector to obtain such a plan as might meet his views of what the Church would be, and he wrote to Frank Wills, of New York, one of the best architects in the country, and had the plans and specifications prepared. There were no subscriptions solicited, nor any attempt made to solicit money. The three brothers set their men to work to burn the necessary brick and to get the lumber for the frame, and floors and roof out of the forests. They employed skilled mechanics for such parts of the work as their slaves could not do, and within a comparatively few months the building was completed. . . . some other smaller amounts were given by others; but no accounts were kept, or indeed could be kept, of the entire cost, and no one knew, and no one especially cared to inquire what the cost had been.⁴

This is the principal source of the attribution of the design of the building to architect Frank Wills. Wills, a leading proponent of the Gothic Revival in America, author of Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture and Its Principles Applied to the Wants of the Church at the Present Day (New York, 1850), was the official architect of the New York Ecclesiological Society Influenced by English Ecclesiologists (originally the Cambridge Camden Society). The group sought to educate Episcopal church congregations and clergy in America concerning suitable church architecture. The society promoted proper use of the Gothic Revival style and, specifically for small churches, the emulation of English parish church forms. As official architect for the society, Wills "was prepared to answer the queries of Clergymen who needed advice on the design and maintenance of churches." The society, as historian Phoebe Stanton points out, "inundated with requests," and "Wills was called upon to answer queries from puzzled clergymen as far away as St. Louis and North Carolina." Stanton mentions that Wills provided a design for a church in Maryland but does not cite such a service for the North Carolina parish. She also mentions that Wills illustrated many designs for churches in the society's publication, New York Ecclesiologist. Possibly one of these was used by the Trinity parish. She states also that Wills not only designed church buildings in response to specific commissions but also occasionally supplied "plans for parishes too poor to afford original drawings. . . . there are a number of Wills churches which originated in this way."⁶ Thus, though the specifics of Wills's role in Trinity's design remain uncertain, it is quite possible that Bishop Cheshire's recollection is accurate. Certainly Trinity's design reflects the character of the Ecclesiological models in its straight forward and restrained character.

Wills's authorship of the design adds considerably to the statewide and possibly even national significance of the small church. North Carolina has a modest but distinguished collection of antebellum churches exhibiting the interpretation of the Gothic Revival mode by the nation's leading proponents of the style. These include Richard

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Upjohn's Christ Church in Raleigh, an imposing stone structure of restrained Early English design and Upjohn's attributed, small frame chapel at St. Mary's School, also in Raleigh; Thomas U. Walter's towered and stuccoed St. James Church in Wilmington and the simpler brick Chapel of the Cross in Chapel Hill, recently documented as his work. Wills's design for Trinity, though the attribution at this time solely on the recollection of Bishop Cheshire rather than upon primary documentation in Trinity or Wills's records is an important component of a small but significant group of antebellum Gothic Revival churches in the state. Its design illustrates the proliferation of the Gothic Revival style not merely through pattern books but also through direct contact between remote but prosperous communities and urban style centers and designers.

Bishop Cheshire recalled that "as soon as the Church was finished" at Trinity, "the services began to assume a character more truly expressive of the spirit of devotion and reverence."⁷ The congregation grew from 31 members in 1855 to 57 in 1858 and 72 in 1861.

This growth, however, occurred on the eve of the Civil War, and the conflict and its aftermath would permanently and drastically change the plantation culture that had supported the little parish. The once prosperous planters, dependent on slave labor and staple crops to profit from their vast holdings, struggled to hold on to their land amid a new social and economic system. Cheshire's health forced him to resign as rector in 1868. His successor, Rev. A. S. Smith, reported to the diocesan convention in 1879, "Probably no church within the Diocese has suffered more in a pecuniary way than it has done. From being one of the strongest Churches in the Diocese, it has become one of the weakest, and will, after this, be able to support a clergyman only one quarter of the time."

Amid this decline came a dramatic blow to the congregation: on the night of March 29, 1884, the church caught fire--some suspected "the work of an incendiary"--and was burned to the brick walls. Longtime vestryman Richard Smith reported the fire to The Church Messenger and stated that the congregation intended to build anew, not at the old site but within the town of Scotland Neck. The town, where the railroad brought growth, had developed about a mile from the church site and was considered more convenient. Wrote Smith of the old church, "The base walls, without one brick being thrown from them, still stands in all their beautiful Gothic proportions, grand in their very desolation."⁹

Even though a new church was built, the old church was repaired as well, thanks to a donation provided by Martha Goodwin Clark (1815-1897). A native of Scotland Neck, she was living in Baltimore and was able to provide a generous bequest to stabilize the old church and to renovate the interior in simple fashion. No semblance of its former opulence was possible, but plain sheathing and plaster were installed and the church made suitable for occasional communion services and for funerals. (Fire struck the congregation again in 1924 when the new church built in Scotland Neck burned and was replaced.) During the twentieth century the old church, stabilized once by Mrs. Goodwin's gift, fell gradually into disrepair, and in 1946 a new effort at restoration began and was completed by 1953. As earlier, the Smith family continued to be active in the care of the church. At present, the church and churchyard are maintained by the small congregation. The church is a revered landmark in Halifax County, a prominently sited vestige of the prosperity of the plantation past, and one of the most architecturally sophisticated

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structures in the county.

The structure of course is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Cheshire, Joseph Blount, Bp. Memories of My Father. Raleigh: 1903 (unpublished typescript)
Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property Approximately 10 acres

Quadrangle name Scotland Neck, NC

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	8	2	8	9	0	4	0	0	2	1	6	0
Zone	Easting		Northing									

B

1	8	2	8	2	6	6	0	4	0	0	1	7	4	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

C

1	8	2	8	2	4	8	0	4	0	0	1	6	4	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

D

1	8	2	8	2	4	1	0	4	0	0	1	6	4	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

E

Zone	Easting		Northing											

F

Zone	Easting		Northing											

G

Zone	Easting		Northing											

H

Zone	Easting		Northing											

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary of Trinity Church is shown in red on the attached sketch map (not to scale) and includes approximately 10 or more acres.

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 Catherine W. Bishir, Head, Survey and Planning Branch

Division of Archives and History

organization Archaeology and Historic Preservation

date May 1980

Survey and Planning Branch

street & number 109 East Jones Street

telephone (919) 733-6545

city or town Raleigh

state North Carolina 27611

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date July 25, 1980

For HCRS 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

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Cheshire, Joseph Blount, Bp. Memories of My Father. Raleigh: 1903 (unpublished typescript). Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill.

Smith, Stuart Hall, and Smith Claiborne T., Jr. The History of Trinity Parish, Scotland Neck and Edgecombe Parish, Halifax County. Scotland Neck: 1955, privately printed.

Belongs to Baptist Cemetery

Sunnyside Cemetery

S.C.L. Railroad

Road to Sunnyside →

Baptist Cemetery

Trinity Cemetery

Old Trinity Church

Road

Road

New section

Pond

Highway 258

Marys Chapel Road

Trinity Church
Scotland Ne
Halifax Co.



