*Agency Official 106 Effect Report*

*Reconstruct the Basement Stairway Entrance Roofs at Chatham*

**U.S. Department of the Interior**
**National Park Service**
**Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park**
**120 Chatham Lane**
**Fredericksburg, Virginia 22405**
**Description and Purpose of Undertaking**

## Purpose

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park (FRSP) was authorized by an act of Congress on February 14, 1927 (44 Stat. 1091). The purpose of the park, as stated in the act, is "mark and preserve historical points connected with the battles of Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania Court House, Wilderness, and Chancellorsville, including Salem Church …" By Executive Order 6166 in 1933 the park was transferred from the War Department to the Department of the Interior to be administered by the National Park Service.

In 1975, FRSP took possession of Chatham and opened the site to the public the following year. Since then, Chatham has remained open as a visitor contact site and has also operated as the park administrative headquarters.

## Need

On both the northern and southern ends of the main house at Chatham there exist enclosed stairways that lead into the basement. It is not known when these exterior entrances were constructed, but photographic evidence shows that they were in place prior to the Civil War. The northern entrance appears to have been constructed of brick, with a wood frame pitched roof, while the southern entrance was constructed of wood with a sloped roof that attached to an enclosed entrance into the first floor of the house.

Photographic evidence further suggests that the roofs on both of these entrances had been removed as early as the 1920s. On the southern entrance, the wood enclosure was replaced by a brick enclosure, probably around the time that the roof was removed. For the past eighty years or so, both enclosed entrances have had flat roofs. This has led to major structural and maintenance problems. The flat roofs have no drainage systems and the rainwater either sits there until it evaporates or until enough water has accumulated to force it over the parapet sides of the roof. The result is that the flat roofs leak, causing considerable flooding in the basement as well as damage to the basement ceiling during periods of heavy rainfall.

FRSP proposes to solve to water issue by reconstructing the wood and shingle pitch roofs on both the northern and southern basement stairs entrances.

## Property Description

A. Major Physical Components – Chatham sits on 85.01 acres in Stafford County, Va. The tract is a mixture of open fields and wood lots, bisected by a few ravines that feed rainwater runoff to the Rappahannock River. East of the house is a maintained enclosed garden. Most of the open fields are under cultivation. The house itself is open to the public seven days a week.

B. Architectural Significance – The main structures at Chatham were constructed between 1768 and 1771 and served as a domestic site for over 200 years. According to the Historic Structure Report, "Chatham…meets the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places for the First Order of Significance. Architecturally, it is a classic example of a brick Georgian-style mansion that despite minor alteration has essentially retained its original integrity." Chatham is on the park's List of Classified Structures – LCS #00422.

C. Historical Significance – The house was constructed by William Fitzhugh, a prominent plantation owner in 18th century Virginia. Among his guests at Chatham were George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. During the Civil War, the Union army occupied Chatham beginning in the spring of 1862. President Abraham Lincoln visited his generals at Chatham during that period. In December 1862, Union generals again made Chatham headquarters and both during and after the Battle of Fredericksburg the house and grounds became a hospital for wounded soldiers. Both Clara Barton and the poet Walt Whitman cared for the wounded at Chatham.

**Description of Alternatives**

Alternative A – No Action
This alternative would fail to solve the issue of standing water on the flat basement entrance roofs. This will lead to the continued deterioration of fabric caused by water seeping into the building.

Alternative B – Install Drainage System
This option would entail the installation of drainage systems that could remove the standing water from the flat basement entrance roofs. Construction of a drainage system would require cutting into the brick enclosures and possibly the removal of some original fabric. A drainage system would also require routine maintenance to clean and clear leaves and other debris from any pipes that would need to be installed.

Alternative C – Reconstruct the Basement Stairway Entrance Roofs (Preferred) -
Under this alternative, the pitched roofs over the two enclosures would be reconstructed to allow for proper rainwater displacement. To accomplish this task, the following actions will be required:

1. North Basement Stairway Entrance – a sill plate will be installed on the existing brick parapet. Lag screws will be installed to hold the sill plate to the parapet mortar joints. A simple wood frame roof will be constructed, using the remaining ghost lines and historic photographs as guides for pitch and dimensions, on the building's north wall. The pediment will be constructed of horizontal boards and painted white. Slate shingles will be installed on the roof to match the shingles on the rest of the house. Terne-coated stainless steel step flashing will be installed where the roof meets the north wall of the building. The installation of approximately 12 feet of terne-coated stainless steel half-round

gutters will be necessary, as well as downspouts to move the rainwater away from the building's foundation.

2. South Basement Stairway Entrance - a sill plate will be installed on the existing brick parapet. Lag screws will be installed to hold the sill plate into the parapet mortar joints. A simple wood frame roof will be constructed, using the remaining ghost line and historic photographs as guides for pitch and dimensions, on the building's south wall. The pediment will be constructed of horizontal boards and painted white. Slate shingles will be installed on the roof to match the shingles on the rest of the house. Terne-coated stainless steel step flashing will be installed where the roof meets the south wall of the building. The installation of approximately 6 feet of terne-coated stainless steel half-round gutters will be necessary, which will be tied into the existing downspout system to move the rainwater away from the building's foundation.

**Description of Mitigation Measures**

A. All work will be managed by the park's restoration specialist.

B. The existing ghost lines from the original roofs will be used to guide the reconstruction.

**Park Consultation**

The proposal is being circulated to the park's Section-106 advisor for historic architecture for his review and comments.

The proposal is going through a 30-day public comment and review period. During this time, the project is being on the NPS public website. The park has contacted representatives of interested local organizations, such as Mary Washington College's Department of Historic Preservation, the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, and the Friends of the Fredericksburg Battlefield.

The project will undergo a 30-day comment and review period with the Virginia SHPO.

**Effect Analysis**

It is the park's opinion that, as proposed, this project adheres to the Secretary's "Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings." It is the park's belief that the project, as proposed, will result in the better long-term overall preservation and of the structure. For this reason, the park's opinion is that this undertaking will have "no adverse effect" on architectural resources.

**Report Prepared By**

Eric J. Mink
Section-106 Coordinator/Cultural Resources Management Specialist
(540) 371-6416