

Agency Official 106 Effect Report

*Replace Doors and Install Air Conditioning to the Chatham Public Restrooms
Stafford County, Virginia*

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

Purpose

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park 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 “to commemorate the Civil War battles of Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania Court House, Wilderness, and Chancellorsville, including Salem Church ... to survey, locate, and preserve the lines of the opposing armies in said battles, to open, construct, and repair such roads, highways, paths, and other approaches as may be necessary to make the historical points accessible to the public and to students of said battles ... and together also with such additional land as the Secretary of War may deem necessary for monuments, markers, tablets, roads, highways, paths, approaches, and to carry out the general purposes of this Act.” By Executive Order 6166 in 1933 the park was transferred 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

In 1981, the National Park Service rehabilitated a portion of the Chatham Carriage House for use as public restrooms. The Carriage House was built ca.1927 and consists of a brick stable and an “L” shaped wood carriage house. The men’s and women’s restrooms were installed in the larger portion of the structure, while the shorter section of the structure, often referred to as the “Boathouse,” continues to be used for storage. In the most recent update to the National Register (NR) documentation for Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania NMP (FRSP), the Chatham Carriage House, Stable, and Boathouse is listed as contributing resources to the park’s eligibility.

In the intervening years, time and weather conditions have deteriorated the two wood doors, which provide access to the restrooms. The park proposes to remove the two simple wood doors and replace them with simple metal doors. This will also include the replacement of the wood doors frames with metal frames.

The restrooms have always had electric heat, but have lacked air conditioning. The park now proposes to provide air conditioning for the public’s comfort during the warmer months. The proposal is to install a mini-split ductless HVAC system, one in each of the two restrooms.

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 walled garden. Most of the open fields are under cultivation. The house itself is open to the public seven days a week.

B. Historical Significance – The main 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. In the post-Civil War years, the house went through a number of owners, many of whom made changes and additions to the buildings and property. In the 1920s, the Devore Family constructed numerous support structures and developed the walled garden, which represents the work of Ellen Biddle Shipman, an early twentieth-century New York landscape architect.

C. Archaeological Significance – Numerous archaeological investigations have occurred on the grounds of Chatham. Most have focused on testing for the installation of interpretive signs. In 1977, archaeological investigations occurred around the foundation of the main house in preparation of NPS work to provide adequate drainage for the building's foundation. In 1979, an overall archaeological survey of the Chatham property was undertaken. Chatham is a significant archaeological site.

D. Historic Landscape Significance – The draft National Register documentation states:

“The Chatham Designed Landscape and the Chatham Walled Garden are significant under Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture as examples of the early twentieth-century work of landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman.”

A Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) was recently completed for Chatham. The Carriage House and Stable (to include the “Boathouse”) are recognized as contributing to the landscape's NR eligibility.

E. Architectural Significance - The main structures at Chatham were constructed between 1768 and 1771 and served as a domestic site for over 200 years. Additional structures were added in the first quarter of the 20th Century, to include the Chatham Stable and Carriage House (as well as the “Boathouse”). They are listed on the park's List of Classified Structures – LCIS #07877 – and are recognized as contributing to the park's NR eligibility.

Proposed Action

The park proposes to remove two wood doors of the restrooms and replace them with metal doors. The metal doors will be painted white to match the color of the existing doors. The metal doors will not be as heavy as the wood doors and will last longer.

The park also proposes to install a mini-split ductless HVAC system, one in each of the two restrooms. This will entail mounting a head/fan coil unit on an interior wall of each restroom. The units will be mounted to available wall studs and they will have small penetrations next to them to accommodate the suction, discharge, and condensation lines. These interior walls were built as part of the 1981 rehabilitation of the Carriage House and installation of the restrooms.

Suction lines (one for each restroom) and discharge lines (one for each restroom) will run from the head/fan coils through the overhead attic space and drop into the “boathouse” portion of the structure. A compressor unit, one per restroom, will be installed in the “boathouse” and the suction and discharge lines will connect with the compressors.

Power for both units will come from the 200 amp panel box located in the maintenance chase between the rest rooms. The power and low voltage wires will run through the overhead attic space.

No historic fabric will be affected by the installation of the doors or the HVAC system. Additionally, the compressor units for the HVAC system will be hidden from view inside the “boathouse.” The compressor units are quiet.

Effect Analysis

It is park’s opinion that the preferred alternative will have “no adverse effect” on the historic properties of Chatham.

Park Consultation

The proposal is being circulated to the park’s Section-106 advisors for landscape architecture and historic architecture.

The proposal is going through a 30-day public comment and review period. During this time, the project will be placed on the NPS public website. The park contacted representatives of interested local organizations, such as the University of Mary Washington’s Department of Historic Preservation, Stafford County, the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, the Friends of Chatham, and the Pamunkey Indian Tribe.

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

Attached Supporting Documentation

- A. Park Map
- B. Photos

Conclusion

At important historic sites, the proposed undertaking would foster fulfillment of the park's General Management Plan directives to protect cultural resources. This project will have "no adverse effect" upon historic resources.

Report Prepared By

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