

(Rev. 10-74) VLR-2/21/78 NRHP-5/31/79

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

|                  |
|------------------|
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| DATE ENTERED     |

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Tabb Street Presbyterian Church

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 21 West Tabb Street

CITY, TOWN Petersburg VICINITY OF Fourth (Robert W. Daniel, Jr.)

STATE Virginia CODE 51 COUNTY (in city) CODE 730

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED          | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE              | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH               | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS    | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE                   | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION | <input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE          | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT                 | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS         | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED   | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED   | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT           |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> NO                  | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL           |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY             |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM               |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> PARK                 |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE    |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC           |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION       |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER                |

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Congregation of Tabb Street Presbyterian Church c/o Rev. James Allen

STREET & NUMBER Tabb Street Presbyterian church, 21 West Tabb Street  
CITY, TOWN Petersburg STATE Virginia 23803

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC Petersburg City Hall

STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN Petersburg STATE Virginia

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS (3) (See continuation sheet #1)**

TITLE (I) Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE 1959  FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN Washington STATE D. C.

## 7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION                                     |                                       | CHECK ONE                                     | CHECK ONE   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD                 | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS        | <input 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

The Tabb Steet Presbyterian Church is a monumental, temple-form structure of stuccoed brick with granite detailing, located at 21 West Tabb Street in Petersburg. Designed by Thomas U. Walter in 1843, the building is fronted by a massive Greek Doric pedimented peristyle portico consisting of six fluted columns and full entablature. The small area in front of the church is enclosed by a simple cast-iron fence with large stone piers at intervals for support. The enclosure is approached by stone steps, graded in accordance with the slope of the site.

The main (south) facade contains a high double doorway with wood paneling at both the opening of the balcony level and at the street level. The doorway is capped by a long granite head, in an otherwise unpierced wall framed by plain Doric pilasters at each corner. The side (east and west) elevations are composed of four bays consisting of double windows butted together, the window frame extending the height of the main floor and balcony. The balcony level windows are separated from those below by wooden Chinese lattice panels of a later date. The windows on the main floor are 9/9 double-hung sash, while the balcony windows are 6/6 double-hung sash. All the windows are framed by louvered shutters. Side entrances are provided at the basement level on both the east and west elevations. The rough-faced granite ashlar basement also has three windows on either side, aligned with those above. Attached to the rear is a large, three-story brick addition built in 1944 to house additional meeting rooms and the Sunday School. The wing, although insensitive to the older structure, is not obtrusive from the front. The original steeple, consisting of a tapered octagonal spire above a square pilastered belfry, was removed in 1938 and is preserved in the Exchange Museum in Petersburg. The steeple bell is still in the possession of the church.

The interior of the church consists of two full floors and a balcony. The ground floor, approximately 12 feet below street level, contains a cellar-like space below the steps with stone walls and vaulted ceiling. Its original purpose is unknown. A modern kitchen and auditorium complete the ground floor. The main floor, 5 feet above street level, contains the main church sanctuary and church lobby. A curved apse is fronted by a screen of six fluted tin columns. The columns have capitals freely adapted from the Temple of the Winds. The pulpit, located in front of the screen, consists of a series of simple decorative panels. The sanctuary ceiling contains a central medallion, which features a Star of David. From the star there projects a number of thin strips in a starburst pattern. This is further surrounded by a series of panels in a "donut"-shaped pattern. Around the edge of the ceiling is a paneled frieze. Egg-and-dart moulding defines both the medallion and the frieze. Along the auditorium walls is decorative paneled wood wainscot, 3 feet in height. The pews are original throughout the church. The paneled gallery is supported on slender iron columns and contains the choir loft and church organ, installed in 1867 and extensively rebuilt. Much of the original church furniture is preserved.

A two-story parish house stands to the west of the church. The brick, gable roof structure is stylistically Greek Revival and has unfortunately lost most of its original interior trim.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Tabb Street Presbyterian Church, Petersburg, Virginia

CONTINUATION SHEET #1

ITEM NUMBER 6, 7

PAGE 1

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

(2) Historic American Buildings Survey  
1968 Federal  
Library of Congress  
Washington, D. C.

(3) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey  
1967, 1978 State  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
221 Governor Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

7. DESCRIPTION

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The register boundary has been drawn to include the church and the parish house west of it as well as the lots on which the two buildings are situated.

# 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 checked="" 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/HUMANITARIAN |  |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART                     | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING             | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                  | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER             |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899            | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE                | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT  | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY             | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION      |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900-                | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY                | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT    | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)     |  |  |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION               |   |  |  |  |

SPECIFIC DATES      1843      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Thomas U. Walter

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Erected in 1843 for Petersburg's Presbyterian congregation, Tabb Street Presbyterian Church is a moving example of the Greek Revival style. The church was designed by one of America's foremost architects, Thomas U. Walter of Philadelphia, who is best remembered as the designer of the dome of the United States Capitol. Although Walter worked in numerous historical styles, his proficiency in the Greek is well illustrated in the heroic yet graceful lines of Tabb Street Church. The interior, with its apse fronted by a curved screen of columns in a freely interpreted Temple of the Winds order, is one of the more dramatic spaces of its type in the country. In Tabb Street, as well as in two of his other Virginia commissions, Walter demonstrated how solemn classical forms could be adapted for Christian purposes and enhance the dignity of worship.

The present building is the third to serve the congregation, which was established in 1813. "We witnessed on yesterday evening the novel spectacle of the raising of the steeple of the Presbyterian church a new and handsome edifice which has recently been erected on Tabb Street, near the ruins of the place of worship formerly belonging to the same congregation," stated the Petersburg Republican on July 26, 1843. The earliest activities of Presbyterians in Petersburg occurred between 1746 and 1750, when the Rev. Samuel Davies preached at intervals to the town's small congregation. The Presbyterian doctrine did not, however, become permanently established in the town until 1812, when the Rev. Benjamin Holt Rice began his ministry in the winter of that year. A brick church was built during 1814 and 1815. The congregation grew steadily, and a new building was erected in 1823 with the cornerstone laid "agreeable to the ancient custom of the masonic society". It was this building that was to be referred to as "ruins" by the Republican, having been destroyed by fire on Nov. 7, 1841. The congregation worshipped in Mechanics Hall until the present edifice was dedicated on January 25, 1844.

RCC

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Biallis, Randall J. and John M. McRae. "Tabb Street Presbyterian Church," Historic American Buildings Survey Report, July, 1968.
- "One Hundredth Anniversary Celebration of the Dedication of Tabb Street Presbyterian Church, Petersburg, Virginia," Anniversary booklet, January 23-25, 1944.
- The Republican, Petersburg, Virginia, July 26, 1843.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1½ acres

UTM REFERENCES

|   |      |         |          |      |         |          |   |  |  |  |
|---|------|---------|----------|------|---------|----------|---|--|--|--|
| A | 1,8  | 2,8,6   | 5,8,0    | 4,1  | 2,2     | 9,4,0    | B |  |  |  |
|   | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |   |  |  |  |
| C |      |         |          | D    |         |          |   |  |  |  |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property consists of approximately 1½ acres located NE of the intersection of Tabb and Union streets and includes the church, the parish house, and the lots on which they sit.

*Deed recorded 12/1/1844; re-recorded 1/27/1970  
154' (frontage on Tabb St.) x 3 13'.*

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

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

February, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

221 Governor Street

TELEPHONE

(804) 786-3144

CITY OR TOWN

Richmond

STATE

Virginia 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

TITLE Tucker Hill, Executive Director  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE FEB 21 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

PETERSBURG QUADRA  
VIRGINIA  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOC  
NW/4 PETERSBURG 15' QUADRAN

285 25' 286 RICHMOND 21 MI. 287 2 320 000 FEET RICHMOND 21 MI. 0.4 MI. TO INTERCHANGE 4



U.S.G.S. 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)  
Petersburg, Va. 1969

TABB STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
Petersburg, Virginia  
UTM References:

18/286580/4122940

