

‘...a small but convenient House of Brick’: A Tale of the St Paul’s Parsonage House, Hollywood, South Carolina, USA

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In 1707 ‘a small but convenient House of Brick’ (SPG, St Paul’s Vestry to SPG Secretary, January 20, 1715) was built and made ready for the newly arrived missionary of St Paul’s parish. In late July of 1715 it was burned during the Yamasee Indian War and never rebuilt. Other than that, very little was known from the historical records about this parsonage or others from this early Colonial period in the Carolinas. Early 18th-century structures in South Carolina are rare, and parsonages even more rare. This parsonage site is the only known early 18th-century Anglican parsonage location in the state. Therefore, the site offers insight into two aspects of early South Carolina history that have been under researched – early 18th-century architecture and the lives of the early Anglican missionaries. Here, using multiple lines of evidence, we will provide architectural interpretations, as well as present data supporting the hypothesis that the structure we have located archaeologically is indeed the St Paul’s parsonage.

The St Paul’s parish church site is located approximately 32km west of peninsular Charleston, South Carolina, USA, along the Stono River (Fig 1; Pyszka et al 2010). Its parsonage complex was located approximately 230m to the north of the church along what was once an active tidal creek. Today the area is wooded and there is no evidence of above-surface cultural features. Although the St Paul’s parsonage site has been ploughed in the past and more recently logged, the archaeological site appears to be relatively undisturbed.

Brief history of St Paul’s parish parsonage

With the passing of the Church Act in 1706, the South Carolina Assembly established the Church of England as the official church of the colony and it remained so until 1778. Originally 10 parishes were defined and they acted as local election units for the colony. Very quickly churches were erected, and within a couple

of decades, many parishes were expanded to meet the needs of the various congregations. As stipulated in the Church Act, the vestry of each parish was responsible for providing a parsonage to its assigned missionary. Letters sent to London written to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) by local missionaries provide few details about the St Paul’s parsonage. In 1715, the vestry from St Paul’s described the parsonage as ‘*a small, but convenient House of Brick erected there upon with a Small out Kitchen & some few other necessary timber buildings.*’ (SPG, St Paul’s Vestry to SPG Secretary, January 20, 1715). Unfortunately, the only reference made to the location of the parsonage is not specific and simply places it on a 71-acre narrow tract of land near the church (SPG, St Paul’s Vestry to SPG Secretary, January 20, 1715).

In 1707, the SPG assigned Reverend William Dun to be the first missionary for St Paul’s parish. He lived in the parsonage for only one year before departing South Carolina. Reverend John Maitland filled the vacancy

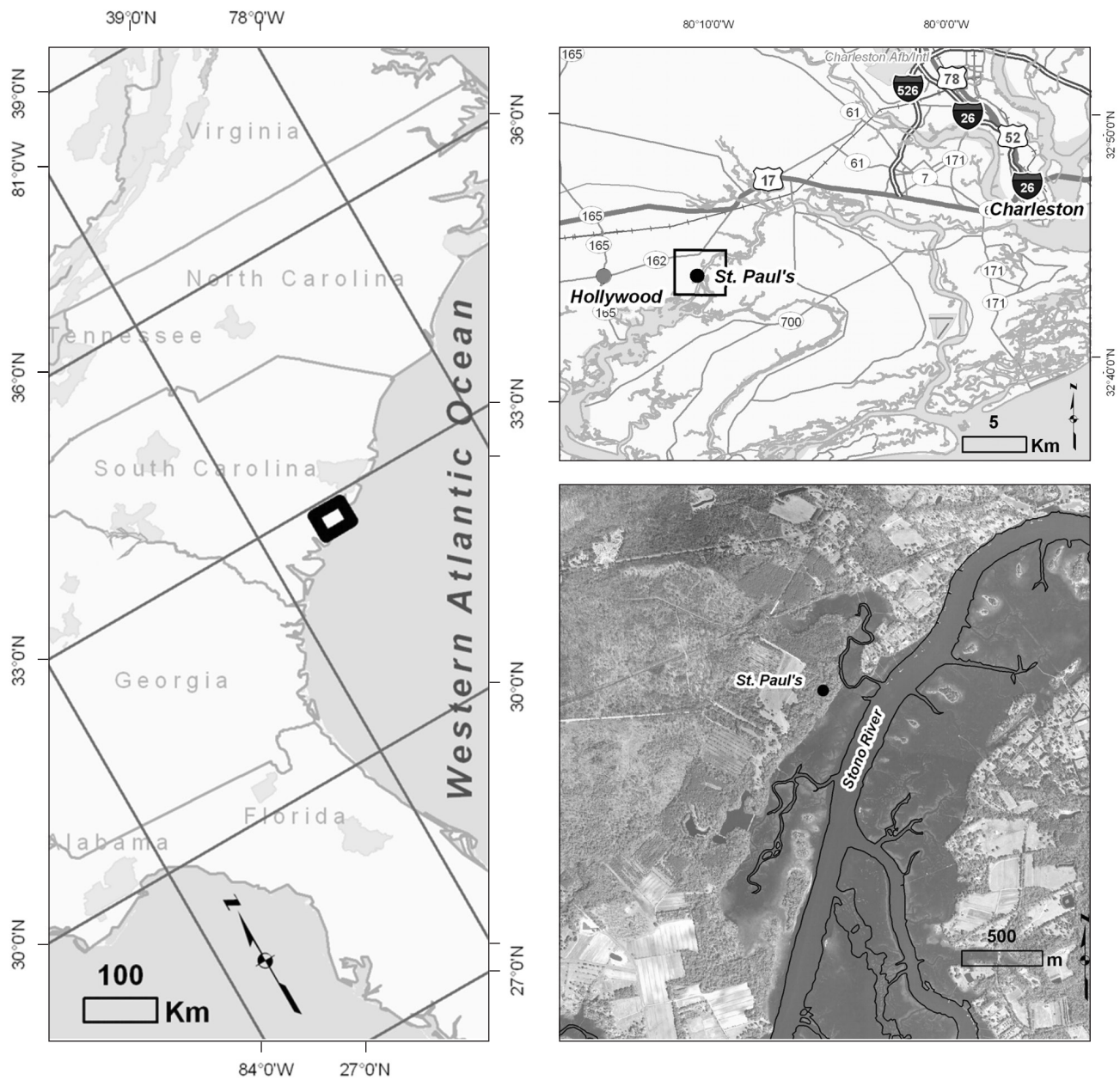


Fig 1
Site location (Harris in Pyszka et al 2010)

in 1708 and occupied the parsonage until he passed away in 1711 (SPG, Johnston to SPG Secretary, April 20, 1711 and Hasell to SPG Secretary, May 26, 1715). Unfortunately Reverend Maitland did not correspond regularly with the SPG, and the few letters he wrote did not provide any information about the parsonage. After Maitland's death St Paul's was left without a missionary for over a year and a half. During this period it is not know if the parsonage sat vacant, or if it was periodically occupied by visiting missionaries who came to minister. In December of 1712 the St

Paul's vestrymen elected Reverend William Tredwell Bull to serve as their minister (SPG, Hasell to SPG Secretary, May 26, 1715). He lived at the parsonage until July 1715. At that time members of the Yamasee Indian Confederation marched from the south through St Paul's parish on their way to Charles Towne. They burned nearly every plantation house along their path and Reverend Bull's parsonage was no exception. Bull wrote that the parsonage, most of his possessions, and all the outbuildings, with the exception of the out-kitchen, were severely damaged and the house was

uninhabitable (SPG, Reverend Bull to SPG Secretary, August 10, 1715 and Reverend Bull to SPG Secretary, February 6, 1716). For the next several years, St Paul's missionaries had to provide for their own housing because the parsonage was never rebuilt. In 1727 St Paul's parishioners donated money to purchase a 400 acre tract of land adjoining the current glebe lands. This property included a 'great house' that likely became the new parsonage (SPG, Reverend Standish to SPG Secretary, June 6, 1727 and Churchwardens and Vestry of St Paul's to SPG Secretary, February 5, 1729).

Methods

While a picture of St Paul's church was emerging (Pyszka et al 2010), we wanted to expand our knowledge of the entire church complex, in particular the parsonage. However, first we had to find it. The vestry's 1715 description of the parsonage location simply on a narrow tract of land near the church did little to narrow down the area for survey. The discovery of a plat (map showing land holdings) from c1807, illustrating two brick foundations to the north of the church on a small tidal creek, while dated to nearly 100 years after the parsonage was constructed, narrowed the search (Fig 2). By overlaying this plat with Google Earth a survey area was identified.

Fig 2
Portion of 'Plat of Stono River Land (1807)' illustrating St Paul's church ('Remains of Stono Church') and the brick foundations of the parsonage ('Brick foundations of house remains') and kitchen ('Brick foundations of house') (No 32-48-3 from the Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society; reproduced with permission)

Methods used to investigate the parsonage site included historic document research, ground penetrating radar, test pits at 20m intervals, and shovelled and hand-trowelled excavation units. All materials were screened through quarter inch mesh and soil samples were collected from each level for flotation. All artefacts were bagged, though only samples of brick and mortar were collected due to their abundance. The base of each level was photographed and mapped.

A 90 x 40m area near the tidal creek bed (now dammed and dry) was tested. Twenty-four test pits placed every 20m were excavated to subsoil. Near the centre of the grid, architectural debris (brick and mortar), and early 18th-century artefacts increased in density. Ceramics included manganese mottled wares, tin-glazed wares, and combed and trailed slipware. Other artefacts included tobacco pipes, 'black' glass, and gun flints. The manganese mottled wares were of particular interest because they are found only on colonial South Carolina sites that date from the late 17th century into the first two decades of the 18th century. The parsonage was burned and abandoned in 1715 so the presence of only two artefacts dating to after the mid-18th century lent support to the hypothesis that the two brick ruins on the c1807 plat were occupied for a short period during the early 1700's and no later.

The area of higher artefact concentration was further investigated by excavating 19 5 x 5ft (1.5 x 1.5m) units plus three 2½ x 5ft (0.75 x 1.5m) units to subsoil. Near where architectural debris was abundant, a soil probe was used to help identify intact brick foundations below the surface, to increase the probability that our excavation units would be positioned upon intact foundations.

Results of the parsonage excavations

With strategic placement of excavation units, all four walls of one brick structure have been uncovered, along with a brick-lined cellar. These walls indicate the structure would have measured 18 x 35ft (5.5 x 10.6m). Initially, these dimensions seemed a little large considering the original church was only 25 x 35ft (7.6 x 10.6m). However, based on dimensions of parsonages and other buildings from the 18th century in the colonies and in England, this size may not be unusually large. Both the foundation and the cellar walls were constructed of orange hand-made bricks and lime mortar with inclusions of crushed shell and brick.

The bricks and the mortar were similar to those found at the church site (Pyszka et al 2010). The foundation walls were two bricks in width and the bricks were laid in the English bond pattern with alternating rows of headers and stretchers, a typical bonding pattern used in early 18th-century structures and known for its stability (Fig 3).

Within the eastern portion of the structure, we identified a brick-lined cellar. Unlike the two-brick wide foundation walls, the cellar walls were only one brick in width, suggesting they were not substantial load-bearing foundations as seen elsewhere at the site. The cellar had a clay floor and measured approximately 11 x 11ft (3.3 x 3.3m) with a depth of approximately 4ft (1.2m). Evidence of a 3ft (0.9m) wide exterior access to the cellar was identified along the east wall by the presence of a soil colour change and a recessed brick sill on the cellar wall. A wooden ladder or small staircase would have likely rested upon this sill. Architecturally, this cellar is consistent with other late 17th- to mid-18th-century brick-lined cellars located within and under single-storey residential brick structures excavated at Williamsburg, VA, nearby Fort Dorchester, SC, and Willtown, SC (Agbe-Davies 1999; Bell 1995; Zierden and Anthony 2010). Similar to the St Paul's parsonage cellar, the Fort Dorchester cellar also allowed approximately 4ft (1.2m) of headroom and had a clay floor (Bell 1995).

In addition to the early 18th-century architectural evidence, hundreds of early 18th-century ceramics, bottle glass, pipe bowls and stems, colonowares and

wrought nails were also recovered. One of the more unique artefacts recovered was a silver Spanish reale. Coins such as this one were produced throughout Spanish America and were decorated with the current Spanish monarch's coat of arms on one side and a cross on the other. This coin is stamped with the Cruz Florenzada which was used only by Mexico between 1572 and 1733. The coin had been 'robbed' for its silver and was severely worn at the time it was lost, such that only the decorative embellishment, the cross, remained. Because the coin's monetary value had been significantly altered, the coin's value at the time of its loss may have been symbolic rather than monetary. None of the artefacts recovered during excavations dated past the 1720s.

While there are only a handful of burned artefacts present near the foundations, a burning episode is apparent in a profile near the east foundation. A thin layer of charcoal is discernible just below some architectural debris. Immediately below the charcoal layer is a thin occupation level just above the yellowish-brown sandy subsoil (Fig 4). We believe this charcoal represents the 1715 burning of Reverend Bull's parsonage, followed by the later collapse or razing of the burned structural remains. The evidence of burning, the early 18th-century architecture and the recovered artefacts all provide evidence that this is the site of St Paul's parsonage which was abandoned in 1715 and later destroyed by fire.



Fig 3
Left hand side: parsonage foundation two bricks wide; right hand side: cellar foundation one brick wide
(Photo: Pyszka)

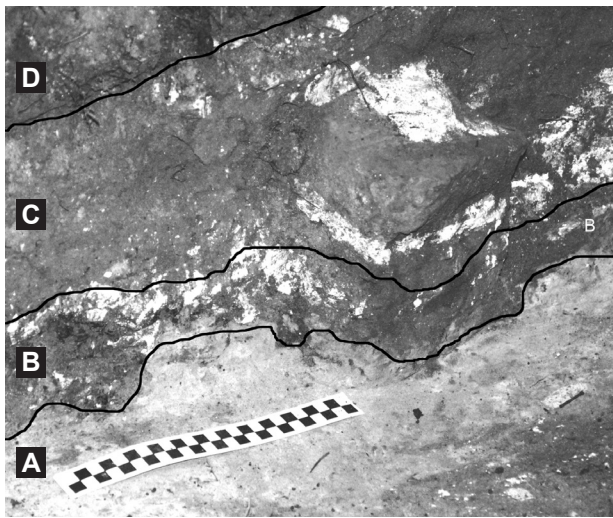


Fig 4
Close-up of profile illustrating 1715 burning of parsonage
A: subsoil; B: charcoal layer; C: deconstruction rubble;
D: top soil (Photo: Pyszka)

Early 18th-century parsonage architecture

Architectural artefacts and foundations provide clues to the overall physical appearance of St Paul's parsonage. However, using this data in conjunction with other lines of evidence provides for a more detailed description. In particular we have examined architectural designs of parsonages from mid-18th-century English architects, extant early to-mid-18th-century structures in the Carolinas, and descriptions of parsonages as provided by South Carolina's missionaries in the SPG letters.

Comparing early English and American parsonages is somewhat problematic because many English parsonages were modified, or even demolished, as architectural styles changed throughout the 18th century. The best examples of English parsonages of this period are from London during rebuilding after the Great Fire of 1660. Records indicate that when the parsonage for St James', Garlickhithe was rebuilt it measured 12 x 26ft (3.7 x 7.9m) while in 1693 the vestry of St Stephen's, Walbrook ordered that a 20 x 20ft (6.1 x 6.2m) rectory house be constructed on the former site of the one that burned (Bax 1964, 95). In general, architects designed the London parsonages built between 1660 and 1720 as rectangular buildings with hipped roofs. Small wings were built on some structures, but because symmetry was key, wings would have been added to both sides. Other common architectural details included eaves, cornices, pediments, and sash windows (Bax 1964, 98).

Architectural design books from the mid-18th century also provide information regarding the ideal size and layout of English parsonages. William Halfpenny's *Useful Architecture* (1752) and Isaac Ware's *The Complete Body of Architecture* (1756) include detailed plans for parsonages of varying sizes. Their floor plans illustrate one and a half storey parsonages with one large room and two or three additional rooms with bedchambers located in garrets on the upper level (Halfpenny 1752, 36–37). Later design books such as Thomas Rawlins' *Familiar Architecture* show more complicated floor plans as styles developed (Rawlins 1789, 20).

Based on early to-mid-18th-century extant buildings in the Carolinas, it is likely that the English parsonages designed by Halfpenny and Rawlins were grand in comparison to those found in South Carolina, especially in the rural parishes. As seen in extant structures in the Carolinas, contemporary brick construction was often limited to small, one and a half storey brick buildings using the hall and parlour plan. This floor plan, very common from Virginia to South Carolina during the colonial period, included either two or three rooms on the main level with a staircase leading to bedchambers above. In both styles, two central doorways were located along both long axes. These doorways would have led people into the larger hall where family activities and entertainment of guests often occurred. In the 2-room hall and parlour plan, the remainder of the main level served as the parlour, a room for more formal entertainment, which also often served as the main bedchamber of the house. In 3-room hall and parlour houses, the parlour and main bedchamber were separate rooms (Bishir 1990, 11).

Medway Plantation, located north of Charleston, South Carolina in Huger, provides an example of a 3-room hall and parlour plan. A description of the house from a 1738 advertisement states that Medway was, 'a good Brick-house 36 Feet in length, 26 in Breadth, Cellars and Kitchen under the house' (quoted in Korngold and Korngold 2002, 905). While the main house at Medway was added to over the years, the description above matches the stepped Dutch-gabled centre of the present-day house, believed to be the original c1705 house. Based on the floor plan of the original house and the above description, Medway was a 3-room hall and parlour house.

The Newbold-White house, located near Hertford, North Carolina, is believed to be the oldest building in that state. Estimates of its construction date vary from the 1680s through the 1730s (Bishir 1990, 11). The one

and a half storey brick structure measures 20 x 40ft (6.1 x 12.2m) and includes a steeply-pitched gabled roof, chimneys on the gable ends, and two centrally located entrances along the long axes. The walls of the structure were constructed in the Flemish bond pattern (alternating headers and stretchers) with glazed bricks used as decorative accents while the foundation was in the stronger English bond pattern (Bishir 1990, 11; Kornwolf and Kornwolf 2002, 842). Newbold-White is a 2-room hall-parlour with the staircase located in the front left corner of the hall. Also in North Carolina, the 1738 Charlton-Jordan house measures 25 x 45ft (7.6 x 13.7m) and was constructed with similar brick bond patterns as Newbold-White with the exception of a slightly raised main floor to accommodate the cellar below. Charlton-Jordan is a 3-room hall and parlour plan with additional bedchambers located upstairs accessed from a staircase located in the lower-level bedchamber (Bishir 1990, 12–13).

Beyond the mandate that the parish vestries provide a suitable residence for the missionary, no written documentation currently exists that dictated the details of parsonage construction. Decisions regarding design and construction of the parsonages, as well as the churches, were charged to parish church supervisors and they likely followed commonly used floor plans. There is no description of the floor plan of the St Paul's parsonage; however, the SPG letters provide a few clues to the layout and dimensions of other parsonages in the colony. In 1727, Reverend Varnod from nearby St George's parish wrote that he was preparing to move into three rooms of the new 25 x 34ft (7.6 x 10.4m) parsonage (SPG, Reverend Varnod to SPG Secretary, January 4, 1727). The parsonages for St James', Goose Creek parish and St John's parish each had two storeys, with two rooms per floor, along with a garret and a cellar (SPG, Reverend Ludlam to SPG, December 12, 1727 and Reverend Hunt to SPG, May 6, 1728). Reverend Morritt at St James', Santee parish described his own parsonage as one and a half storeys and 25ft square with a garden and orchard (SPG, Reverend Morritt to SPG Secretary, May 3, 1731). Just to the south of St Paul's parish in an even more remote area, Reverend Gowrie of St Bartholomew's parish wrote that the parsonage being built for him was 17 x 29ft (5.2 x 8.8m) with a Dutch roof (SPG, Reverend Gowrie to SPG Secretary, April 25, 1734). Most notable is Reverend Jones' description of his parsonage from Christ Church parish as 35 x 18ft (5.5 x 10.6m), the exact same dimensions seen archaeologically at St Paul's parsonage (SPG, Reverend Jones to SPG Secretary, June

5, 1721). These descriptions dispelled our concerns that the parsonage and the church at St Paul's were nearly the same size. A parsonage measuring 35 x 18ft (5.5 x 10.6m) would not have been unusual for the time period.

Interpretations and conclusions

The extant examples of early 18th-century structures, 18th-century architectural designs, descriptions from the SPG letters, and the archaeology conducted to date, provide clues to the architecture and design of St Paul's parish parsonage. The brick structure measured 35 x 18ft (5.5 x 10.6m) with an 11ft (3.4 x 3.4 m) square brick-lined cellar under the house at its eastern end. Because the foundation was only two bricks wide it probably only supported a one storey or one and a half storey building with a garret. Archaeology has revealed that bricks were used for the foundation walls in the English bond pattern. However, as seen at Newbold-White and Charlton-Jordan, it is possible that the above-ground exterior walls could have been laid in Flemish bond. The recovery of glazed bricks may suggest their use in some fashion to create a visual interest on the exterior as with the Newbold-White and Charlton-Jordan houses.

Window glass and lead window comes provide evidence for the use of glazed windows throughout the structure. White plaster indicates that at least some of the interior walls had been plastered. Based on the hall and parlour plan seen at the extant early 18th-century houses from North and South Carolina, and the descriptions of Reverend Varnod's three room parsonage and the two rooms per floor found at parsonages for St James', Goose Creek and St John's, it is likely the St Paul's parsonage was a hall and parlour design. If that is the case, two entryways should have been centrally located along the long axes and the main floor would have either been two or three rooms with a centre hallway. A staircase leading to a garret or loft is also likely based on these other plans. Excavating more of the structure's foundation in the future will hopefully address aspects of the architecture, including entryways, interior walls, chimney locations, and evidence of a staircase that currently we can only speculate about based on the architecture of other structures from the time period.

Based on the above evidence, the vestry of St Paul's provided their missionaries with a fairly substantial and well-appointed parsonage. Unfortunately there

has been little archaeological research into the architecture of early 18th-century residential sites in South Carolina due largely to the fact that only a few buildings survive, and those that have survived have seen extensive renovations. One notable exception is the Thomas Lynch Plantation house, located in Christ Church parish along the Wando River, South Carolina. Lynch had the main house constructed no later than 1713. Though he had seven other plantations, this was where he resided (Poplin and Huddleston 1998, 1). Lynch was a wealthy planter who served as a member of the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly several times between 1707 and 1721, was a Captain and later colonel in the Christ Church parish militia, and held a variety of other government positions until his death (Poplin and Huddleston 1998, 30). Archaeological investigations have identified the remains of Lynch's house. Based on the foundations, the main house measured 32.5 x 18ft (9.9 x 5.5m) and was a 2-room hall and parlour plan, with the hall in the eastern portion of the house. The foundations measured 18 inches across and were laid in the English bond pattern. While foundations of this width would have supported a 2-storey building, given traditional colonial architecture, it is more likely the house was one and a half storeys with bedchambers in the loft (Fig 5). A floor of brick pavers and a large amount of brick rubble suggest that the house was elevated, creating a large area for storage underneath the main living floor (Poplin and Huddleston 1998, 57).

In comparing the available data from the two sites, Lynch's house and the St Paul's parsonage appear to have been very similar. The sizes of the two structures are very similar – the parsonage measured 35 x 18ft (10.6 x 5.5m), while the Lynch house was 32.5 x 18ft (9.9 x 5.5m). The Lynch house had a 2-room hall and parlor plan and based on other sources previously discussed, it is very likely the parsonage house had either a 2-room or 3-room hall and parlour design. The foundation widths were the same at 18 inches and both sets of foundations were laid in English bond, suggesting both houses stood at one and a half storeys. The debris around both sets of ruins suggests that the buildings were constructed entirely of brick. The only apparent difference between the two houses is that while the Lynch house was elevated with a brick-paved ground floor for storage, the parsonage had a brick-lined cellar used for storage. Otherwise, the architectural features of the St Paul's parsonage point to the missionaries living in a house that rivalled that of a wealthy planter family.

*Fig 5
Reconstruction of Thomas Lynch House showing front elevation and hall and parlour floor plan. (Reproduced from Poplin and Huddleston 1998, with permission)*

Overall, church supervisors provided St Paul's missionaries with a residence that architecturally expressed the same level of prosperity as a wealthy planter family. There are a few possible reasons they may have done so. In England, ministers were considered to be a part of the gentry class and it was expected their housing would reflect that status. Considering that many of the vestrymen and all of the first SPG missionaries were recent immigrants from England, all parties would have expected parsonage houses to reflect the educated and genteel missionary that lived inside. The vestrymen of St Paul's may have also built a more substantial house as an incentive to attract the English missionaries to their frontier parish. In addition to being an indication of the missionary's status, the architecture of the St Paul's parsonage house may have been a reflection of the St Paul's vestrymen themselves. By providing their missionaries with such a house, St Paul's church supervisors made a statement with their parsonage about the Anglican Church's

presence in the religiously-tolerant colony of South Carolina, as well as its wealth. Second, such a house spoke to the generosity of the church supervisors and St Paul's vestry. In Virginia, vestries were often generous in the houses provided to their ministers as they '*represent the high value placed on the church and the ministry and, coincidentally, the good sense, cultivation, and responsibilities of the vestry*' (Nelson 2001, 53).

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