STATEMENT OF WORK

Table of Contents

1. BACKGROUND

Historic St. Mary's City is a living history museum that sits on 850 acres along the banks of the St. Mary's River in St. Mary's County Maryland. It is Maryland's first capital established in 1634.

The mission of the Historic St. Mary's City Commission is to preserve and protect the archaeological and historical record of Maryland's first colonial capital and to appropriately develop and use this historic and scenic site for the education, enjoyment, and general benefit of the public.

The 1660s Chapel at St. Mary's City

The reconstructed brick chapel is located at 16721 Pt. Lookout Road, St. Mary's City, MD, the first English Catholic Chapel in the New World (originally constructed around 1667).

The Chapel was built in Maryland by the Jesuits at a time when Catholics were persecuted. The Calverts received a Charter to settle a Colony in the New World named Maryland. However, the Calverts insisted that the Colony be open to both Catholic and Protestant worship, and the First Act of Religious Toleration in the New World was passed by the Maryland Assembly in 1649 to formalize that institution. This law provided freedom to worship in the New Colony. Lord Baltimore also initiated a policy of having no state church, a first effort at separation of church and state. These were revolutionary ideas for the time in England and were the first kernels of our traditional American freedom of religion today.

Physically, on the landscape at St. Mary's City, town planners designed the town to separate the Catholic Chapel and State House at opposite ends of the town. The State of Maryland reconstructed the State House in 1934, and the Historic St. Mary's City Foundation completed the Chapel in 2009. This Chapel is the symbol of liberty of conscience and the separation of Church and State that became American traditions and law today.

Around the original Chapel site are buried the remains of hundreds of Maryland's earliest pioneers (1634-1720). Governor Leonard Calvert, the first Governor, is buried there. In archaeology investigations, we have discovered and disinterred three rare lead coffins in the original transept of the original Chapel, belonging to members of the Calvert family. Several other burials were also disinterred to avoid destroying them during Chapel reconstruction.

The Chapel is in the shape of a cross, and its exterior dimensions were 54 feet long and 57 feet across at the transepts, with a nave 28 feet in width.   It is 30 feet high with large, leaded-glass windows. The existing foundation ruins are approximately 3 feet wide all around the footprint of the building and extend about 5 feet into the ground.

2. SCOPE AND DESCRIPTION OF WORK

The project consists of the following elements:

Historic St. Mary's City (HSMC) is requesting proposals to finish the interior components in the reconstructed chapel.   This includes designing, fabricating, and installing the communion rail, altar, pulpit, and the fabrication of appropriate seating.

Our Research Department has done the historical and architectural research on the Chapel interior over the past 20 years. The Contractor will work closely with our research department in the design process to most accurately reconstruct the 17th century chapel interior. Attached are some preliminary conceptual drawings that will be used as a reference for the designing of this project. The design will include scaled drawings for all the components with detailed shop drawings that will be used to fabricate each component for the project. Upon completion of the project the contractor will supply as-builts for all the components that will become property of Historic Saint Mary's City Commission.

Reconstruction of the Communion Rail

This rail separates the chancel from the nave in the chapel and features a central gate for access to the altar. It served as the location where worshipers knelt to receive Holy Communion, and symbolically separates the sacred chancel from the public nave.   The rail is composed of top and bottom boards and elegantly turned balusters.   The two-part central gate closes to form a uniform rail during mass. The baluster design is based on period forms and surviving 17th-century examples in English churches.   An extant 1660's rail from St. Ninians Church in Cumbria is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Photograph of an original 1660s altar rail in St. Ninian's Church, Brougham, Cumbria, UK.
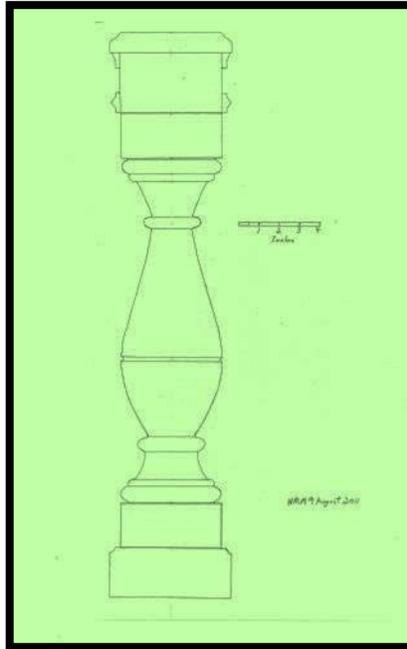
Figure 2. Cross-section design of the altar rail.

The figure above shows the design drawing for the cross-section of the Chapel rail. A superb, fine grained Red Oak log has been donated to HSMC for this element and the wood is now milled and dried, ready for lathe turning. In addition, wrought iron hardware is needed for the gate. This includes four sets of hinges and a latch mechanism. Finally, the labor for the fabrication and installation is needed.

The Altar

The altar is the most important part of the Chapel interior. It rests upon a three-step platform on the raised chancel area and against the east wall. The platform is already completed. Jesuit altars of this era consist of the altar itself, an enclosed table, a ledge behind it to hold candlesticks, and two large columns that support an architectural pediment. Between the columns is placed a large, framed painting depicting some type of religious art. For this element, HSMC was given several logs of fine black walnut by the late Jean Chandler that are now dried and milled and stored in the Bean Barn. Use of such a high-quality wood is to be expected for such a significant part of the interior. A schematic design of the altar is shown in Figure 3 below.

The altar is built like a chest with a fixed lid, flanked by column bases and a retable behind. The turned columns have elaborated capitals and support the formal pediment that displays denticulation as decoration in the classical tradition. Workmanship on an altar must be of the highest quality. Set into the top surface of the altar is a small niche that holds an altar stone containing the relic of a saint. It is necessary for the Catholic mass. This will be designed for an actual stone donated to St. Cecil's Catholic Church in St. Mary's City at its dedication in 1974. Jesuit legend held that it was the stone originally
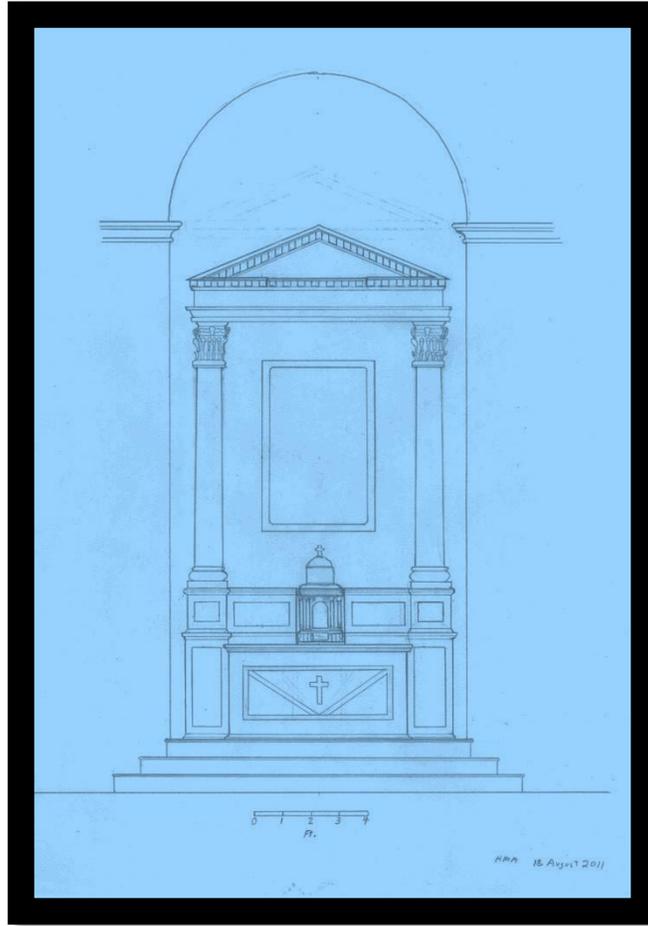
Figure 3: The preliminary design of the St. Mary's Chapel altar

used in the Chapel, although this cannot be verified. The stone would only be used for special occasions due to its rarity and value. We suggest that the columns themselves be purchased and of hollow construction. The capitals will require skilled labor to produce.

The altar also holds the tabernacle that is independent of the altar construction. To build this, HSMC will need to purchase the turned columns, as it does not have the capacity to manufacture such large elements. Labor is the major factor due to the requirement for excellent craftsmanship. Finishing costs may include faux painting of the columns to resemble polished marble and overall painting of the rest.

The Pulpit

Every church of this era required a pulpit for the reading of the gospel and sermons. Both tradition and archaeology suggest it was located on the north wall of the chapel, where the north transept began. There is no historical information about the chapel pulpit, but it would have been an elevated, enclosed box with stairs and displaying some level of decoration. Over it was a sounding board. There are multiple possibilities in the design and decoration of this item. Pulpits of this period are either supported by a central post or have four legs. The level of decoration can range from simple to exceptionally elaborate carving. We assume that the pulpit was made in Maryland and not imported. Therefore, the design is

simple and not overly elaborate in decoration. A common form found at similar sized chapels in the colleges at Oxford University in the 17th-century is a four-legged type with an architectonic decoration. While from a Protestant context, such a form would have been within the abilities of Maryland artisans and there is considerable overlap between pulpit forms in Protestant and Catholic churches of this era. Given the innovative use of perspective in the city plan of St. Mary's City, the decorative use of perspective on this pulpit would be appropriate; one possibility for consideration is adding a small cross on the far wall of each "device" to emphasize the religious nature of the setting.   Figures 4 and 5 show a good example found at Brasenose College, Oxford, which dates to the 1650s.

Figures 4 and 5: A 1650s pulpit at Brasenose College, Oxford, showing the four-legged form and a close-up of the architectural decoration used to create a sense of perspective.

A fine quality hardwood is appropriate for the pulpit. HSMC may be able to obtain this timber but that is currently uncertain. It is suggested that the pulpit be made moveable with concealed wheels to allow it to be moved out of the nave if extra space is needed.

Nave Bench Furnishings

Seventeenth-century Catholic practice did not include pews. However, it does seem likely that some benches would be provided, perhaps along the walls, for the elderly, infirmed or pregnant to sit upon. We propose making these of oak for durability, in a style similar to the benches in the 1676 State House (figure 6). Manufactured in 1934, these benches have stood up to 80 years of use and the style is appropriate for the period. Some lathe turning of the legs will be required to achieve the accurate style. Six benches are proposed to be acquired.

Figure 6: State House bench seating

Please contact Joe Kangas (Director of Facilities and Grounds) to set up an appointment to view the chapel and get any more information needed.

Joe Kangas
Director of Facilities and Grounds
Historic St. Mary's City Commission
PO Box 39
St Mary's City, MD 20686
Office 240-895-4964
Cell 301-247-9154
joseph.kangas@maryland.gov
www.HSMCdigsHistory.org