

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

For HCRS use only
received **NOV 16 1982**
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 Mercer Hall

and/or common same

2. Location

street & number 902 Mercer Court N/A not for publication

city, town Columbia N/A vicinity of ~~congressional district~~

state Tennessee code 047 county Maury code 119

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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. and Mrs. Wally S. Beasley

street & number 902 Mercer Court

city, town Columbia N/A vicinity of state Tennessee

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Maury County Courthouse

street & number Public Square

city, town Columbia state Tennessee

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date N/A N/A federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" 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

Mercer Hall is an imposing Greek Revival style brick house located just south of Highway 43 at the end of Mercer Court in a 1930-1940s residential neighborhood of Columbia. The house is a large 2½ story rectangular-shaped house on a raised brick foundation. It has flanking one-story brick wings and features a monumental four-columned central portico. Mercer Hall was substantially remodeled and expanded, during its ownership by Bishop James H. Otey between 1848 and 1860, into a Greek Revival style house from an earlier building whose appearance and date of construction are unknown. Further changes made to Mercer Hall in the last half of the nineteenth century were the altering of the rectangular Greek Revival period facade windows into segmental-arched windows, exhibiting an Italianate style influence. Since these changes, the exterior of the house has been little-altered and the interior retains most of its Greek Revival period character and detailing. The house is in good condition structurally and retains its architectural integrity.

The Flemish bond brick facade of Mercer Hall faces north; its two-story central block is three bays wide and the one-story flanking wings are each two bays wide. The two-story central block of the house features a monumental two-story portico, supported by four Corinthian columns, in the central bay. Paired brackets ornament the portico's frieze. A straight parapet with corner pedestals extends across the cornice of the facade and portico. The parapet is pointed between the two pedestals above the portico cornice, forming a pediment to crown the portico. The bracketed frieze and cornice of the facade trims the roof line of all elevations of the house except for on the rear elevation, which has a plain boxed cornice. The house and its wings have hipped metal roofs. Brick interior chimneys, flush with the walls, are located two on each side elevation of the two-story central block of the house and one on each side elevation of the wings.

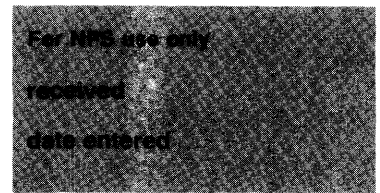
The facade's portico is reached by monumental concrete steps. A concrete porch covers the central bay of the house. A wood porch with lattice infill and an iron balustrade extends across the remainder of the facade on both sides of the concrete porch. Matching, elaborate double-leaf doors with transoms, corner lights, and side lights are located on the first and second stories in the central bay. Flanking windows at the right and left bays on the first story are floor-length and have 4/4 lights, segmented arches, segmented wood window heads, and wood louvered shutters. Second story windows placed directly above match the first story windows, except they are shorter and have 2/2 lights.

The one-story flanking wings of Mercer Hall have bricks laid in the common bond pattern on all elevations. The facades (north elevations) of the wings are each two bays wide. On each wing are located a single-leaf door, with segmental-arched transom and segmental-arched window head, in the bay closest to the central block of the house. In the other bay of each wing is a segmental-arched, floor-length 4/4 light window with segmental arched window head.

Side elevations, laid in common bond bricks, of the central two-story block of Mercer Hall have the first story structural openings concealed by the one-story wings. No second story structural openings are found on the east side elevation; two 6/6 light rectangular windows with flat corner block lintels and wood shutters are found on the second story of the west side elevation. The rear elevation of the two story central block of the house, like the facade, is three bays wide. A central raised, flat-roofed porch with plain cornice and square wood posts covers the first story double-leaf entrance with rectangular transom, corner lights, and side lights. Underneath the porch and directly below the first story entrance is a basement level entrance to the house. Flanking the porch on the west side is a 6/6 light rectangular window, and on the east side is a 4/4 light segmental-arched window. Three short 6/6 light rectangular windows are located on the second story.

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The wings have 6/6 light rectangular windows on the east and west side elevations. Both elevations have two windows at the southern half of the wall that are set close together. The rear elevation of the east wing has two 6/6 light windows over two basement windows (now closed with shutters, but having the same corner block flat lintels, as used on all rectangular windows of the house). A mid-twentieth century small shed-roofed frame addition, covered with asbestos shingles, is attached to the rear elevation of the west wing.

Mercer Hall has had a few structural alterations made in the twentieth century, and within the last ten years it has been sandblasted. The structural changes have been made to the rear of the house only. These consist primarily of two new (1940s) single-leaf doors that have been cut into the house and the addition of the small frame room at the rear wall of the west wing. The two new doors are located one at the far right (east) corner of the two-story central block and one at the adjacent corner of the east wing. These entrances share a tall concrete porch.

The interior of Mercer Hall has a central hall plan with two rooms to each side. Small halls divide the two side rooms on the second story and lead to the central hall. A long open attic room is reached by a staircase located in the second story west side hall. The plan of the central two-story block of Mercer Hall remains unchanged. The wings, however, have undergone minor (not irreparable) changes that result from a dividing of the house into apartments in the 1940s. Greek Revival period doors, the oval spiral staircase, and much of the molding around doors, windows, and baseboards remain virtually unaltered in the central two-story block of the house. The wings still have much of their original woodwork. Several original mantels in the house have been replaced in the twentieth century with ornate Victorian period mantels.

No original outbuildings to Mercer Hall remain. A mid-twentieth century frame, one-story garage is located to the rear of the house, and a gazebo is situated near the center of the extensive gardens in the rear yard. The gazebo was moved to Mercer Hall in 1960 from the grounds of the burned (1950s) Columbia Institute. It was located at the west end of the Columbia Institute, a large Gothic Revival college building for females established by Bishop Otey, that had become a local landmark. The gazebo was all that remained associated with the main building of the college. The gardens of Mercer Hall have been designed and developed by the current owners since their purchase of the property in 1957. These gardens, not formally planned, are arranged in the front yard inside the circular driveway and in the rear yard on a cross axis. The gardens contain large shrubs, trees, vines and overgrowth with various stone sculptures, rocks, benches, old street lamps, etc. that have been collected by the present owners.

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 type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" 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 1838, 1848-60, 1870s **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Mercer Hall is nominated under National Register criteria B and C for its association with the first bishop of the Diocese of Tennessee, James H. Otey (1800-1863), and for its architectural significance to Columbia and Maury County as an outstanding example of the Greek Revival style of the mid-nineteenth century. Predominantly of the Greek Revival style with its central Corinthian portico, the large 2½-story brick house with one-story flanking wings also exhibits a subtle Italianate period influence with segmental-arched windows, cornice brackets, and ironwork that result from a later modification of the house in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Hence, Mercer Hall derives further architectural importance from the example it serves of the modifying of an existing building with characteristics of a later style to reflect changes in architectural tastes and period influences.

Mercer Hall was built about 1838, according to circumstantial evidence, by an Episcopal rector, William Leacock. (The exact date and early appearance of the house are unknown.) Leacock conveyed the property to John B. Hays in 1840, including the house and 54 acres. A succession of short-term owners followed that included Jonas E. Thomas, sheriff of Maury County; William F. Cooper; and the President, Directors and Company of the Union Bank of the State of Tennessee.

James H. Otey acquired the property from the bank in 1848. The enlarging and remodeling of the house into the Greek Revival style occurred during his ownership between 1848 and 1860, and it was Otey who named the house Mercer Hall for his friend, Dr. William Newton Mercer of New Orleans, and for the boys school he operated in the house. The school was named Mercer Hall and chartered in 1844. Otey sold Mercer Hall in 1860 to Narcissa M. Martin after he had moved to Memphis in 1852.

The Martin heirs sold the Mercer Hall property in 1871 to L. D. Meyers, whose heirs sold the property to Margaret M. Owen in 1884. Mercer Hall remained in the Owen family until it was sold by Owen's daughter and her husband, George E. McKinnon, in 1947 to E. H. Griggs. During the Griggs ownership, the house was divided into apartments. Mercer Hall became a single-family residence again when it was purchased by the present owners in 1957.

Although Mercer Hall has had many owners, it is best known for its association with James H. Otey. Otey was born in Bedford County, Virginia, January 27, 1800 and died April 28, 1863. His gravesite is in the cemetery at St. John's Episcopal Church (NR 7-8-70) near Columbia. Otey entered college in 1817 and was educated at the University of North Carolina. He received his deacon's orders October 10, 1825, and the office of priest June 7, 1827 at the hands of Bishop Ravenscroft. Otey had married Eliza D. Panhill in 1821 and taught a short time in Virginia before coming in 1827 to Franklin, Tennessee where he taught and preached as Rector of St. Paul. Frequently preaching in Columbia,

9. Major Bibliographical References

Goodspeed's General History of Tennessee, reprinted, Nashville: Charles and Randy Elder Booksellers, 1973, from History of Tennessee, Nashville: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1887.

Moore, J. T. Tennessee, The Volunteer State, Nashville, 1923.

Turner, William B. History of Maury County, Tenn., Nashville, 1953.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.67

Quadrangle name Columbia, TN

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

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Verbal boundary description and justification The boundaries are shown on the accompanying Maury County property assessment map and are drawn to include the house, gazebo, and parcel of land on which they are located.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A
state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shain T. Dennison, Architectural Historian

organization Tennessee Historical Commission date September, 1982

street & number 701 Broadway telephone 615/742-6716

city or town Nashville state Tennessee 37203

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert L. Hays

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 11/10/82

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

J. Melvyn Byrum Entered in the National Register date 12/16/82

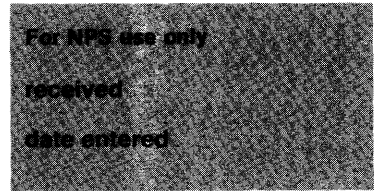
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet

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he moved there in 1836. He acquired the house built by William Leacock and remodeled and enlarged it. Otey was elected the first Bishop of Tennessee and received consecration January 14, 1834. In addition to operating the boys school in Mercer Hall, Otey founded the Columbia Female Institute (burned) and was a leader in the establishment of the University of the South at Sewanee.

