

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

**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 Twin Oaks

and/or common Twin Oaks, Winsor Hall

**2. Location**

street & number GA Georgia Highway 100 \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Greenville \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district 3rd-Jack Brinkley

state Georgia code 013 county Meriwether code 199

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> 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 Dr. J. Harper Gaston, IV

street & number 191 Estates Drive

city, town Piedmont \_\_\_ vicinity of state California 94611

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Superior Court

street & number Meriwether County Courthouse

city, town Greenville state Georgia

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Historic Structures Field Survey: Meriwether County, Georgia has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes  no

date December, 1976 \_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources

city, town Atlanta state Georgia

---

## 7. Description

---

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" 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**

House, Outbuildings, and Grounds

Twin Oaks consists of a house with outbuildings standing on a knoll surrounded by about 50 acres of mostly cleared land. The main house is a two-story, wood-frame, antebellum Greek Revival plantation house. It is nearly square in plan and cubical in massing, with a low-hipped roof and a raised masonry basement. The front facade features a two-story Doric portico, flush siding, and a doorway with side and transom lights. The interior is arranged in the standard four-over-four with central stair hall configuration. During the past, at least 16 outbuildings have been associated with the property; today, only five remain, and only one -- a detached kitchen to the rear of the house -- dates from the nineteenth century. Large trees, including several oaks, shade the house and its surrounding lawn.

The house is an antebellum Greek Revival plantation house whose appearance today is not unlike the original appearance approximately 125 years ago. A two-story, heavy frame structure, the house sits on a high stuccoed brick basement. Square, handhewn beams, mortised-and-tenoned together, support the main floor. Capping the house is a pyramidal hipped roof and a simple cornice and entablature. There are two pairs of interior end chimneys rising through the roof. The front facade has a monumental portico consisting of six fluted columns in the Doric order. The structure is five bays wide and four bays deep.

The exterior detailing of the Twin Oaks house is classically derived from such handbooks as those by Asher Benjamin. Each story of the front facade is articulated by a Greek Revival doorway, with transom and sidelights, which is flanked by a pair of windows. A notable feature of the six-over-six windows is the eared architrave. The shutters, painted green, appear to be original. Another notable feature is the fluted pilaster at each front corner of the house, mirroring the fluted columns of the porch. On the second story, the central cantilevered balcony has lattice railing; matching lattice work is found on the low railing which surrounds the front portico. The exterior is sheathed in clapboard except the front facade, which has flush siding.

The interior of the Twin Oaks house consists of a four-room-over-four room with central stairhall plan. Originally, the first floor consisted of a parlor and dining room on the north side of the hall and a drawing room and master bedroom on the south side. Today, the parlor is a dining room; the dining room is a modern kitchen; the drawing room is a living room and the master bedroom is a library. A stairway rising from the rear of the wide hall leads to the second floor. The stairway has molded railing and simple square balusters. All four rooms upstairs were originally and still are bedrooms. The heart-of-pine floors run east to west in the hallways and north to south in the side rooms. At the east end of the hall a trabeated door leads to the cantilevered balcony. At the west end of the hall a modern bathroom has been

[continued]

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) local history
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** ca. 1830/1855      **Builder/Architect** Elbert Wimbish/Builder

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Summary Statement of Significance

Twin Oaks is significant in terms of architecture, landscape architecture, local history, and historic archaeology. The main house is an excellent and well-preserved example of the antebellum Greek Revival plantation house found in this part of Georgia. The house displays design features, building materials, and construction techniques characteristic of its style and date. Like many houses from this period, it was built of wood, stone, and brick secured from the site. Furthermore, the house was built by a slave craftsman, Elbert Wimbish. The landscaping of the grounds, especially the planting of trees, and the siting of the house upon a knoll are characteristic of Greek Revival-period landscape architecture. J.M.C. Robertson, the original owner of the house, was a wealthy planter and cotton industrialist. Preliminary archaeological investigations carried out during the fall of 1979 produced data on the locations of several outbuildings, the configuration of the original front steps, and the landscaping around the house; they also indicated a great potential for recovering additional information through continued archaeological studies.

Significance and Historical Narrative

The house at Twin Oaks is significant in the history of architecture because it is a well-preserved example of antebellum domestic Greek Revival architecture. J.M.C. Robertson's plantation house was started about 1855. The highly skilled builder/craftsman Elbert Wimbish, a slave owned by Dr. Hezekiah S. Wimbish, was borrowed to build the house. Wimbish is known to have built the Greek Revival home of Dr. Wimbish, also in Greenville. The plantation is said to be made of handhewn heart-of-pine logs seasoned for not less than two years, and bricks which were mixed, molded and kiln-dried at the construction site. Throughout its history, the house has maintained an integrity of appearance and character.

The design of the house embodies the characteristics of classical architecture. The front portico is in the Greek Doric order with monumental columns and central balcony. Bilateral symmetry is the rule in this four-over-four with central stair-hall structure. The roof pitch is low. The windows and doors are trabeated. The structure is painted white. All these characteristics were thought to represent the classical temple form of the ancient Greeks.

[continued]

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

[see continuation sheet]

# 10. Geographical Data

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**  
**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

Acreage of nominated property Approx. 49 acres

Quadrangle name Greenville, Ga.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UMT References

A 

1	6	7	1	3	2	1	0	3	6	5	7	9	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

1	6	7	1	3	5	9	0	3	6	5	7	9	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

1	6	7	1	3	4	6	0	3	6	5	7	2	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

1	6	7	1	3	2	4	0	3	6	5	7	2	1	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary is described by a heavy black line that circumscribes property #13 on the attached "property/sketch" map.

### 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 a) Maurie Golsen-Williams, historic preservation planner  
b) Richard Cloues, architectural historian

organization a) Chattahoochee-Flint APDC  
b) Historic Preservation Sec., Ga. D.N.R. date April, 1980

street & number a) P.O. Box 1363  
b) 270 Washington Street, S.W. telephone a) (404) 882-2956  
b) (404) 656-2840

city or town a) LaGrange  
b) Atlanta state Georgia

# 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Elizabeth A. Lyon  
Elizabeth A. Lyon  
title Acting State Historic Preservation Officer date 6/9/80

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.	
<u>W. Ray Luce</u> Keeper of the National Register	date <u>8/26/80</u>
Attest: <u>Carol Subri</u> Chief of Registration	date <u>8/25/80</u>

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet    Description    Item number    7    Page    2

added. Each bedroom has a fireplace with simple Greek Revival mantels. On the first floor, the fluted pilasters on the mantel, transom door and facade all match.

The house has a full basement. Underneath the floor of the portico is a storage area closed by a thick wall. The basement originally consisted of a spinning room, kitchen, wine cellar, plantation office with a well under the floor, and a cellar with a clay floor. Today, the basement is mainly used for storage; a small one-bedroom apartment has been built in the area known as the spinning room and kitchen.

According to the archaeological survey by Dean Wood (December, 1979), there have been at least 16 outbuildings associated with the house. Today, all five standing outbuildings are behind the main house, toward the east. With one exception, all of these structures appear to have been built during the first half of the twentieth century. The exception is referred to as the cook's home and is assumed to have served as the plantation kitchen. It is a frame structure, a single story high, with a rock hearth and chimney.

A log dwelling, assumed to be the pioneer home of Jordan Rees, once stood about 20 meters to the northeast of the plantation home. It was removed recently when its partial collapse presented a safety problem. The present owners have salvaged the original building materials with the intention of reconstructing it. The foundation stones and chimney rubble of Rees' one-and-a-half-story log home are still clearly visible.

The foundation ruins of several structures are also located behind the main house. Some are made of concrete, and one has an unusual apparatus attached, constructed of 55-gallon oil drums placed end to end and resembling a horizontal flue to a large smokehouse (Wood: 1979:6).

In the 1930s, the plantation was rehabilitated by Roy J. Winsor. As part of the rehabilitation, the grounds were "improved" and "old decrepit cabins, former slave quarters, were torn down including the old smokehouse: and some dependencies too far gone to be worthwhile for renovation" (Davidson: 1971:300). Aerial photographs from 1941 and 1965 reveal several outbuildings that are no longer standing. Today, there are no above-ground remains of these structures. Two large barns, the cookhouse, and a utility structure all made of white clapboard still exist.

Twin Oaks is located within the Greenville city limits about 1.2 kilometers north of the courthouse between Georgia Highway 100 and U.S. Highway 27. The house and dependencies occupy a relatively level expanse of hill with steep slopes to the north. Tributaries of Kennel Creek are found to the north and south of the property. A few feet back from Georgia Highway 100 is a gate entrance made of gray concrete

[continued]

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Description

Item number 7

Page 3

with acorns sculptured on the two central piers. A gravel driveway leads up to the side of the house which is framed by massive oak trees; a terraced front walk, lined with trees, leads directly to the front door.

Boundaries

Twin Oaks was once at the center of a 300-acre plantation. During the twentieth century, this plantation was subdivided by two major highways. Outlying agricultural land was sold off, and some of it, especially to the west, was developed. Thus, Twin Oaks today is no longer part of a working plantation. Therefore, only the house, its outbuildings, its landscape setting, and the known archaeological resources associated with the house have been included within the boundaries of the nominated property. These boundaries, which as a matter of convenience have been drawn to coincide with the current legal description of the property, also conform to the prominent environmental features of the property; to the north and south are tributaries of Kennel Creek; to the east and west are highways, and contained within is the rise of ground upon which sits the house.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet      Significance      Item number      8      Page      2

The location of Twin Oaks is significant in the early history of Meriwether County as the site of a pioneer log structure built by Jordon Rees (Pinkston: 1974:22). Old photographs reveal that the structure was made of handhewn logs and mortise-and-tenon construction. The house had a single brick end chimney. It was one-and-a-half stories high; presumably the upper half was the sleeping area. Not much is known about Jordon Rees except that he acquired the land in Meriwether County after the 1825 treaty with the Lower Creek Indians and the distribution of land in the 1827 Land Lottery.

Jordon Rees sold his land to J.M.C. Robertson in 1839. The land conveyance consisted of Land Lot 186 (202-1/2 acres), the north half of Lot 199 (101-1/2 acres) and the southwest corner of Land Lot 187 (2-1/2 acres), all in the Eighth District of Meriwether County. James M.C. Robertson (1809-1886) came to Meriwether County from Clarke County, Georgia, in 1830. Three years after he purchased the land from Rees, he married Mary Park Holmes Kendel, who lived on a large plantation four miles south of Greenville. When their plantation home on Land Lot 186 was finished in 1860, the Robertson family called it "Twin Oaks" after the two oak trees planted in the front yard named for his two daughters, Mary Harris and Leonora Frances Robertson.

Mr. Robertson played a significant role in the early industrial history of the area. He and his partner, Thomas Leslie, built a pioneer cotton mill on Flat Shoals Creek, a few miles outside of Greenville in Troup County. It began operation in 1847. He was an early cotton industrialist in an area whose economy later was based on mill industry. He was also a prosperous planter. A 1903 article in the Meriwether Vindicator titled "Old Men of Meriwether" said that Mr. Robertson was one of the county's most successful antebellum plantation owners. The article describes "his corncribs were the largest in this section of the country ... his wheat crops large ... his porkers were numerous and of ponderous size and weight ... his cotton crops ... got the best prices. He had orchards of pears, plums, apples, and peaches." Robertson was known to have owned at least twenty slaves. The 1903 article describes the slave houses as "well built and located in a beautiful grove shaded by mammoth oaks and the tenants well fed and comfortably clad." The Vindicator reports that "his plantation was not only self sustaining but a source of annual profit." As he prospered he acquired more land in the county.

Mary Eliza Robertson inherited the home after the death of her parents. She died in 1928 and the plantation was sold to Eugene T. Strozier in 1931 at public auction.

Mr. Strozier sold the property to Mr. and Mrs. Roy J. Winsor in 1937. It was during their residence that the home was renamed Winsor Hall. When Mr. Winsor bought the estate, it was "run down," and tenants living there paid \$1.50 per month per room. The Winsors modernized the plumbing and electrical systems and did some cosmetic work such as replastering. Unfortunately, they took down many outbuildings which they felt were not worthy of renovation. Mr. Winsor is known for his

[continued]

10

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet    Significance

Item number    8

Page    3

invention of one-man power roadgraders. By 1935, he held several patent rights on several broad fundamental roadgraders. His efforts advanced the transportation industry of his time.

The house was next owned by Mr. and Mrs. Don Greenlees, who acquired the estate in 1962. After Mr. Greenlees' retirement from Sears, Roebuck and Company, the couple wanted an old Southern plantation house. The changes they made included lowering the ceiling in the master bedroom and paneling the room in mahogany, and screening the southeast end of the veranda. They built a modern kitchen in the old dining room and added a modern bathroom in the kitchen and at the end of the hall upstairs. A bathroom was also added to the basement. Gas heating was also installed. The Greenlees raised cattle, chickens and Tennessee walking horses, and sold shrubbery from a shop on the place.

In 1970, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Rodger, from LaGrange, bought the estate. They sold it in 1975 to the present owners, Drs. Ann and Harper Gaston, from California. The Gastons hope to recreate the original environs of the plantation and retire there.

An archaeological investigation by Dean Wood in 1979 at the Twin Oaks property has demonstrated that it has great potential for yielding information important to history and anthropology. Behavioral patterns can be examined among individuals of different socio-economic status residing on the site. Intra-site activity on an antebellum plantation may be distinguished by the distribution patterns of various classes of artifacts across the site. Historical and anthropological research at sites such as Twin Oaks may help address the problem of whether Southern plantations attained self-sufficiency or were dependent on trade with other regions of the country. Further investigation of the site may provide valuable information concerning the location of outbuildings as well as the possible burial ground of the slaves which is said to be on a steep slope of the hill, not far from the plantation. The investigation has already identified the locations of numerous outbuildings, confirmed the orientation of the front porch stairway, and provided information relating to the grade level immediately around the house.

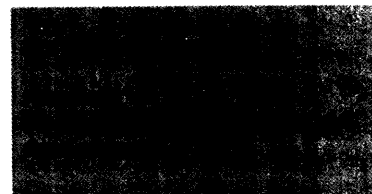
Preservation Interest

This nomination is sponsored by the current property owner who hired a consultant to prepare the necessary documents. Additional information and planning assistance has been provided by the Chattahoochee-Flint Area Planning and Development Commission preservation planner. The nomination is endorsed by the Executive Committee of the Meriwether Historical Society, Inc. The property owners intend to take advantage of the tax incentives provided by Section 2124 of the Tax Reform Act of 1976 to restore this property.



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Bibliography

Item number 9

Page 2

Davidson, William H. Brooks of Honey and Butter, Vol. II. Alexander City, Ala.: Outlook Publishing Co., 1971.

Pinkston, Regina P. Historical Account of Meriwether County, 1827-1974. Greenville, Ga.: Gresham Printing Co., 1974.

Smith, Henry Howard, AIA. Measured drawings of existing conditions, Atlanta, 1979.

Williams-Golsen, Maurie. Personal inspection and research, December, 1979.

Wood, Dean. Archaeological Investigation at the Historic Site of Twin Oaks. Athens, Ga.: Southeastern Wildlife Services, Inc., 1979.

Mitchell, William R., Jr. Draft National Register nomination, August, 1979.

JUN 25 1980

TWIN OAKS  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
LEGEND FOR FIGURE 1

- A Robertson house
- B Possible kitchen
- C Garage
- D Horse barn
- E Dairy barn
- F Subterranean silo
- G Ruins of log structure
- H Concrete foundation
- I Concrete foundation
- J Rubble pile, possible structure ruins
- K Possible tenant house observed on aerial photographs
- L Unknown structure observed on aerial photographs
- M Unknown structure observed on aerial photographs
- N Unknown structure observed on aerial photographs
- O Possible shed
- P Privy # 1 abandoned
- Q Privy # 2 abandoned

FROM: Wood, Dean. Archaeological Investigation at the Historic Site of Twin Oaks. Athens, Ga: Southeastern Wildlife Services, Inc., 1979, p. 5



