



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Russell Family Historic District
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 35, 65, 85 No. Central, 228, 334 Robin Hill, 101 Russwood not for publication N/A
city or town Alexander City vicinity N/A
state Alabama code AL county Tallapoosa code 123 zip code _____

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Elizabeth Ann Brown March 9, 2006
Signature of certifying official Date

Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.
(___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
- See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

for Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Daniel J. Viker
3/21/06

Date of Action

Signature of the Keeper

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check only one box.)	Category of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>11</u>	<u>3</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>14</u>	<u>3</u> Total

Number of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Colonial Revival

Classical Revival

Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements: Bungalow/Craftsman

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

roof asphalt

walls brick

wood

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition on continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture _____

Period of Significance 1913-1914; 1937-1938; 1946

Significant Dates 1913-1914; 1937-1938; 1946

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Miller & Martin/ Miller, Martin & Lewis

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University – Auburn University
- Other

Name of repository

St. of Alabama Dept. of Archives and History

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 50

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
1 16 596760 3645580 3 16 597510 3645240
2 16 597500 3645500 4 16 596600 3644880
 See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Pamela Sterne King, Consultant and Christy Anderson (AHC Reviewer)

organization PSKing Associates date 8-31-2003

street & number 3307 Altaloma Way telephone 205-823-1679

city or town Birmingham state Alabama zip code 35216

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name multiple

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 2.7 Page 1

Name of Property: Russell Family Historic District
County and State: Tallapoosa County, Alabama

Addresses

North Central Avenue: 35, 65, 85

Robin Hill: 228, 334

Russwood: 101

Narrative Description

The Russell Family Historic District includes 17 resources, 14 of which are contributing. Six of these are primary residences, all of which are contributing, on land originally purchased by Benjamin Russell along North Central Avenue c. 1900 for his family to build their residences. Three were built in 1913-1914 (Inv. #s 4,5,6) and were designed by Miller and Martin, a prominent architectural firm from Birmingham. Two are very elegant two story Classical Revival designs (Inv. #s 4,5), and one is a fine two story brown brick Craftsman style house (Inv. # 6). Of these, only one faces a public street, North Central Avenue (Inv. # 6); the other have a North Central Drive address, but are located substantially behind it and are virtually invisible from it.

The remaining three houses were built a generation later (1937, 1938, 1946). They are accessed off Washington Street and face two private drives, Robin Hill and Russwood. The earliest of these was built in 1937 and was also designed by Miller and Martin, by then Miller, Martin & Lewis. It is an exquisite Classical Revival style (Inv. # 3) reflective of the fictional Tara House from the movie, "Gone With the Wind." One year later, the only Colonial Revival style house in the district was built (Inv. # 1), essentially an excellent replica of George Washington's Mount Vernon House. In 1946, the final house was built in the district (Inv. # 2), a two and one half story brick house with a distinct "New Orleans" flavor due to the very decorative wrought iron railing along the second floor balcony.

In addition to the six houses, the district also includes a number of outbuildings and landscape features. Of these additional resources, 8 are contributing and generally contemporary with the original construction of the houses, while 3 are non-contributing due to recent construction. The district remains remarkably intact and contains one of the best concentrations of well-articulated architecture designed by a master in the State.

Archaeological Component

Although no intensive archaeological survey has been conducted in the area, the potential for subsurface materials remains.

INVENTORY

All outbuildings and landscape features are immediately adjacent to their associated residence and are not noted on the site map. The exceptions to this are resources 3c and 3d, because they lie a greater distance away from the residence with which they were historically associated.

1. Thomas D. Russell House. 101 Russwood. (1938)

Two and one-half story, with left one story wing (added in the 1960s), Colonial Revival style weatherboard house with hip roof with cupola and three dormers. There are three brick interior chimneys, one large front exterior brick chimney on the one story wing, brick foundation, and front porch with six square wood columns and a decorative wood balustrade. There are 6:9 windows on front, 6:6 windows elsewhere, and one bay window on the left side. Elevator added in the 1980s. Original house designed by Miller and Martin.

The property includes:

- 1a. A designed landscape with designed rock walls, terracing and contouring. The landscape is contemporary with the house.
- 1b. Wood frame, weatherboard garage (c. 1938).

Originally called "Russwood," this house is a near replica of Mount Vernon.

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Section 7 Page 2

Name of Property: Russell Family Historic District
County and State: Tallapoosa County, Alabama

2. Robert and Adelia Russell House. 334 Robin Hill. (1946)
Two and one half story brick veneer house with hip asphalt roof originally known as "Trillium." There is one decorative interior chimney, two exterior chimneys, wood brackets along the first floor porch ceiling, and a central entrance with sidelights and transom flanked by an octagonal bay at each end of the building. There is also a second floor full balcony/porch with a side gable and flat front roof, and very decorative wrought iron railing in the style of New Orleans architecture. Windows include mostly 6:6 double hung wood with 12:8 on the two end bays. There are sidelights and transom at the front door and French doors on the second floor with windows in between. An outdoor brick fireplace (1946) on an open porch attached to the house, which is part of the original house. Porch remains open and is trimmed with decorative cast iron.

The property includes:

- 2a. Greenhouse (1946)
- 2b. A one-story three bay , unattached brick garage (c. 1946). Originally was built as a two-car garage with a workshop to the side, third bay converted to another car space in the 1950s.
- 2c. Landscaped gardens, including a brick walled garden and two, non-functioning fountains contemporary with the house (c. 1946).

3. Alison House. 228 Robin Hill. (1941)
Two story brick, with wood on the rear wing, Classical Revival style house. There are two brick chimneys, 8:12 and 8:8 double hung wood windows, and two French doors on first floor and above the central massive arched entrance which has a very decorative surround including a cornice and dentils, sidelights and a fanlight. The full front porch includes a series of columns with Corinthian capitals, and there is a central second floor entrance with an entrance bay balcony with decorative wrought iron posts.

3a. Greenhouse (c. 1941)

3b. Garage (c. 1941)

Also located within the boundaries and historically associated with the house (ownership is retained by the family, not the current owner):

3c. A c. 1960s horse barn is also on the property. NC

3d. Tennis court, c. 1941.

Designed by Miller, Martin & Lewis Architects, this house, known originally as "Robben Hill," was built by Elizabeth Russell Alison and Cal Alison based on the fictional "Tara" House from the movie "Gone With the Wind."

4. Benjamin and Roberta M. Russell House. 65 North Central Avenue. (1913-1914; c. 2002)
Two story brick Classical Revival style house with c. 2002 hip metal roof, and a row of dentils and modillions along the roofline. There is a partial width recessed front porch with four wood columns with Corinthian capitals, arched entrance with a fanlight and sidelights, and a second floor balcony with a central entrance and a decorative wood balcony which opens into an interior ballroom. There are two brick interior chimneys, brick foundation and 9:9 double hung wood windows.

The property includes

4a. A pool house (1980s) NC

4b. Horse barn (1990s) NC

4c. A two-story garage with hip roof and 6:6 double hung wood windows (1913-14).

Miller and Martin Architects designed this house for Benjamin and Roberta Russell who entertained such guests here as Dr. George Washington Carver and Alabama Governor Frank Dixon. The house remains in the Russell family.

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Section 7.8 Page 3

Name of Property: Russell Family Historic District
County and State: Tallapoosa County, Alabama

5. Oscar and Sally Russell Thomas House. 85 North Central Avenue. (1913-1914)
Two story with basement brown brick Classical Revival style house with a one story weatherboard and brick rear wing, and a hip roof with wood dentils. There is a pedimented portico with dentils and four columns with Ionic capitals, front central entrance with a decorative wood cornice, second floor decorative wood balcony, 8:8 double hung windows, designed gardens and exterior walls, and a 1994 very decorative screened wood gazebo with a central arched entrance and columns with Ionic capitals, and in ground pool. Sally Russell was the sister of Benjamin Russell, and this house was the residence of three generations of Thomases until the mid-1980s.

Designed by Miller and Martin Architects.

6. Thomas Commander Russell House. 35 North Central Avenue. (1913-1914).
Two story tan brick Craftsman style house with a hip roof and exposed wood rafter tails. There is a wide full front porch with brick columns, open left side screened porch with square brick columns, 1:1 double hung wood windows throughout which flank a central 3:3 window on the second floor, decorative side brick chimney, and a brick foundation. Thomas C. Russell, was the brother of Benjamin Russell, and served as Mayor of Alexander City from 1907 – 1947. This house was built on the site of their parents' original home, and remained in the family until 1989.

Designed by Miller and Martin Architects.

Statement of Significance

Architecture

The Russell Family Historic District is significant under Criterion C, Architecture, as the finest concentration of well articulated residential architecture in Alexander City. Four of the houses (Inv. #s 1, 3, 4, 5) have grand proportions with two or two and one half stories (Inv. # 1); cupola (Inv. # 1); grand arched entrances with sidelights and fanlights (Inv. # 3, 4), heavy decorative surround (Inv. # 3), or decorative cornice (Inv. # 5); second floor balconies (Inv. # 4, 5); and massive pedimented portico (Inv. # 5). Four have massive front columns including two with Corinthian capitals (Inv. #s 3,4), one with Ionic capitals (Inv. # 5), and one with square Colonial Revival style columns (Inv. # 1). The district contains outstanding examples of Classical Revival architecture (Inv. #s 3,4,5) all of which were designed by the master architectural firm of Miller and Miller including two c. 1913-1914, and one in 1937 (by then Miller, Martin & Lewis). There is also an excellent example of 1938 Colonial Revival architecture (Inv. # 1), and a large two story 1913-1914 Craftsman style house designed by Miller and Martin (Inv. # 6). The last house built in the district was constructed in 1946 and it, too, is large with two and one half stories and highly decorative "New Orleans" style wrought iron railing. All of the houses are situated on large lots, and five are situated away from any public street so that they are barely visible to passers-by.

Because four of the District's six primary resources were designed by Miller & Martin (later Miller, Martin & Lewis), it is also significant for what is likely the best concentration of the firm's work in the State of Alabama.

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Section 8 Page 4

Name of Property: Russell Family Historic District
County and State: Tallapoosa County, Alabama

Historical Narrative

In 1900, Benjamin F. Russell and his sons, Ben and Thomas C., as well as his daughter, Sallie Russell Thomas, established the Citizens' Bank of Alexander City. Two years later, the year of the disastrous fire that destroyed all of downtown and much of its adjacent residential neighborhoods, Benjamin Russell established the Russell Manufacturing Company to knit cloth and to cut and sew ladies' and children's underwear, and began to build a mill village for its workers. In 1908, Russell began spinning operations at the Russell Manufacturing Company; for the next decades, he, along with B. B. Comer who had established the Alexander City Cotton Mill Company (later Avondale Mills) in Alexander City in 1901, rapidly transformed the town from a trade and farming center to one of the region's most powerful textile producers (*Alexander City 125th Anniversary*).

In 1913, the family hired Miller and Martin, a prominent architectural firm out of Birmingham, to draw plans for their new houses to be constructed along North Central Avenue just north of Washington Street (Inv. #s 4,5,6) on land previously purchased by their parents, Benjamin F and Bettie Henderson Russell. Ben, the youngest son, and his wife, Roberta, built a two-story Classical Revival mansion from where they later entertained such famous dignitaries as Dr. George Washington Carver and Alabama governor, Frank M. Dixon (Inv. # 4). Sallie Russell Thomas and her husband, Oscar J. Thomas, likewise built a Classical Revival style mansion though, unlike her brother who preferred Corinthian capitals, she used Ionic capitals to adorn her magnificent residence (Inv # 5). The third of these houses was built by Thomas C. Russell who was elected mayor in 1907, a post he retained for the next 40 years. His house, a fine two story tan brick Craftsman style house was situated prominently facing North Central Avenue. This aspect distinguishes it from his siblings' residences which were set back from North Central Avenue, making them essentially invisible to the public eye.

In 1921, in large measure a response to the post World War I demand for cotton yarn, the Russell company built its third yarn mill known as Russco Mill which became one of the region's most important producers of warp yarn. Five years later, the company decided to begin its weaving operations, and in 1927 its first mill, Elizabeth Mill named for Russell's daughter, opened. Throughout the 1920s, moreover, the company built new houses for its workers as well as major new amenities such as its first company hospital in 1923 (Saunders, "The Russell Corporation").

By 1931, the company built an open bleachery ending its more cumbersome and traditional practice of sending fabrics to cities of the East for finishing. This bleaching operation spurred the company's growth significantly requiring new machinery, new workers, and new buildings. Two years later, the company installed long draft spinning at the Russco Mill (Saunders).

In 1937, the second Russell generation, sons and daughters of Benjamin and Roberta, began to build houses within the family compound. In 1937, Cal and Elisabeth Russell Alison hired Miller, Martin & Lewis to design "Robben Hill" a Classical Revival house similar to "Tara House" from "Gone With the Wind" (Inv. # 3). One year later, Thomas D. Russell built an equally imposing near replica of Mount Vernon (Inv. # 1) which he dubbed "Russwood" (Interview with Marsha Bankston).

In 1940, the Russell Manufacturing Company began its Athletic Division to design and manufacturing athletic wear, today one of the most productive sportswear manufacturers in the country (Saunders). Six years later, Robert and Adelia Russell built the last Russell house in the District (Inv. # 2). Known as "Trillium," this house was modeled after styles in New Orleans and Monterey, Mexico, according to local sources (Interview with Marsha Bankston). A two and one half story house, it is distinguished primarily by elaborate wrought iron porch and balcony trim.

Even though the 1938 and 1946 houses were not designed by Miller & Martin, the influence of the firm in the Russell Family History District is profound. The massive, but graceful, proportions of their work is, of course evident and the concentration of some of their finest work is likely unmatched anywhere else in the State.

In 1913, when the Russell family hired Miller and Martin, they had been in Birmingham only 13 years, but had already distinguished themselves. In 1903, they designed the Birmingham Athletic Club, and the no longer extant grand Craftsman style Birmingham Country Club (Unpublished Manuscript). According to architectural historian Robert Gamble, in fact, Miller and Martin's Birmingham County Club design "may have first heralded the Craftsman style in Alabama" (Gamble, p. 146). One

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Name of Property: Russell Family Historic District
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year later, the firm designed the classically inspired YMCA building in downtown Birmingham, which was razed in the early 1980s. In 1910 and 1911 respectively, they designed the Jewish Phoenix Club on Birmingham's Southside, and the Edgewood Country Club in the nearby affluent suburb of Homewood. About the same time, they also designed several department stores in Birmingham including especially Yielding Brothers in 1912, as well as the now demolished Empire Hotel the same year (*Ibid.*). In 1913, the Russell family commissioned them to design three family mansions in Alexander City.

In 1914, J. A. Lewis joined Miller & Martin. During the 1910s and 1920s, Miller, Martin & Lewis sealed their reputation as one of the state's most important architectural firms. In 1916, they designed the Saks Department Store (later Newberry's) in the heart of Birmingham's theater and shopping district; it was razed c. 1992 to build the McWane Science Center's IMAX Theatre. In the next decade, the firm was prolific with major commissions by the Birmingham Board of Education to design Avondale, Pratt (burned c. 1988), and Minor Elementary Schools, as well as Birmingham Southern College Student Activities Building, and the fabulous Classically inspired Birmingham Trust and Savings Company Building. They also designed the monumental First Methodist Church in 1921 in downtown Birmingham, as well as the Tudor Revival Avondale Methodist Church and McCoy Memorial Church and the Stockham House in Birmingham's affluent Redmont Park in 1924. Two years later, the firm designed the spectacular Tutwiler Hotel which was demolished in 1975 for a new bank. In the next several years, they designed additional homes in Redmont Park including the Ireland House and stores in upscale Mountain Brook and Five Points South (*Ibid.*).

Perhaps the firm's most important building, however, is the exquisite 1927 Birmingham Library Board's Central Building constructed on Woodrow Wilson Park (now Linn Park). The same year, moreover, they designed two outstanding fire stations in Birmingham, a Spanish Revival building in East Lake and a Classically inspired one on Highland Avenue (razed c. 1990s and rebuilt in a similar, but larger, style) (*Ibid.*).

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Miller, Martin, & Lewis continued to design some of the State's most important commercial, residential, educational, religious, and medical buildings. In the early 1930s, they designed Alexander City's High School, as well as several school buildings for Birmingham Southern College. They also designed the Burger-Phillips Department Store in Birmingham and the excellent 1930 Art Deco Loveman, Joseph & Loeb Department Store in Birmingham's theater and shopping district. In the next decade, the firm designed dozens of upscale stores, including the Moderne style Bromberg's Jewelry Store in Birmingham's financial district, New Williams, and Odum, Bowers & White, as well as additional churches including Christ Church in Fairfield (*Ibid.*).

Miller, Martin, & Lewis also designed many industrial buildings during the 1940s including power plants and dams for Alabama Power Company, bath houses for the Tennessee, Coal, and Iron Company, and a mill for the Continental Gin Company. In 1942, they designed a huge hospital for the Russell Manufacturing Company which has since been demolished. Until at least 1949, according to an unpublished account, the firm continued to design throughout the State.

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Section 9, 10, photos Page 6

Name of Property: Russell Family Historic District
County and State: Tallapoosa County, Alabama

Bibliography

Gamble, Robert. The Alabama Catalog: A Guide to the Early Architecture of the State. University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press. 1987.

King, Pamela. Interview with Marsha Bankston, 3-6-03 and 8-11-03.

Saunders, Thomas Byron. "The Russell Corporation."

Saxon, Bob, editor. Alexander City 1873-1998. 1998.

Unpublished Manuscript on the history of Miller, Martin & Lewis. Located at the Birmingham Public Library Downtown Branch.

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Russell Family Historic District is shown on the accompanying map entitled "Russell Family Historic District," drawn to scale 2003.

Boundary Justification

The boundary lines of the Russell Family Historic District was drawn to include all of the houses built by members of the Russell family on land originally purchased by Benjamin Russell c. 1900 along North Central Avenue. Two private roads were built in 1913-14, one off North Central Drive and the other off Washington Street which feeds into North Central Drive. Five of the six houses face the private drives including two, however, which are set back from North Central Drive and list it as their address; one (Inv. # 6) was built immediately on North Central Avenue.

Photographs

1. Thomas D. Russell/Wellborn House
101 Russwood
Alexander City, Alabama
Tallapoosa County
Russell Family Historic District
View of front, grounds facing northwest
Pamela King; 2003
2. Robert and Adelia Russell House
334 Robin Hill
View of front facing northwest
3. Allison House
228 Robin Hill
View of front, grounds facing east
4. Ben and Roberta M. Russell House
65 North Central Avenue
View of front, grounds facing northwest
5. Russell House
85 North Central Avenue
View of front, grounds facing northwest
6. Thomas Commander Russell House
35 North Central Drive
View of front



RUSSELL FAMILY HISTORIC DISTRICT
 ALEXANDER CITY, AL
 TALLAPOUSA COUNTY
 1" = 200' DRAWN TO SCALE
 BOUNDARY ———