

**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 Mrs. William Robinson House

and/or common Quietdale

2. Location

street & number 401 Quietdale Drive, N.E. (SE 1/4 Sec. 24., T.3S, R.1W) not for publication

city, town Huntsville vicinity of _____ congressional district 5th

state Alabama code 01 county Madison code 089

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	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input 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. Guy S. Bishop Telephone (205) 536-2923

street & number 401 Quietdale Drive, N.E.

city, town Huntsville vicinity of _____ state Alabama 35811

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Probate Office, Madison County Courthouse

street & number Court Square

city, town Huntsville state AL 35801

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title TARCOG Historical-Architectural Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date June 1974 regional federal state county local

depository for survey records TARCOG Office, 350 Central Bank Building

city, town Huntsville state Alabama

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Quietdale is a two-story frame structure on a continuous brick foundation. The main block of the house measures 60 feet across by 44 feet deep, and breaks into a 20 by 32-foot ell at the northwest rear. The foundation, pierced by large wooden grilles morticed into cedar frames, raises the clapboarded superstructure four feet above grade-level. The roof configuration is that of a truncated hip, capped by an unglazed monitor forming the base of a rooftop deck. Over the ell is a shallow half-hip extension. Prominent stuccoed chimneys--a pair on each side and one at the end of the ell--buttress the exterior walls. The chimneys are neither flush nor completely extruded, but instead project a few inches from the main wall plane in a colloquial treatment to be seen elsewhere in the Huntsville area (e.g. Greenlawn). Single-story porches at the front and west side have slender octagonal supports whose corbeled caps form the base for a series of flat Tudoresque arches. An L-shaped two-tiered porch occupies the reentrant angle between the main block and the ell, and is composed of superimposed colonnettes of the more conventional Tuscan order. Sashing is six-over-six, while window openings are over four feet wide--matching the expansive scale of the house. An idiosyncratic feature is the odd wooden beltcourse that forms the transitional element between the brick foundation and the clapboarded walls above.

Heavily paneled double-leaf doors framed by ruby-glass etched with a grape motif open into the foyer. The interior follows a highly developed axial-hall plan, both upstairs and down, with no vestige of the former partitional arrangement that once distinguished the house. Paneled sliding doors connect the double parlors to the right of the foyer, each of which contains a white marble mantelpiece. Doorknobs in the formal area of the house are silver-plated.

Except for a small utility addition at the rear of the ell, and extension of the adjoining porch to connect with the adjacent servants' quarters, exterior changes have been negligible

The two-story servants' quarters directly behind the main structure contains three large rooms on each floor and is 54 by 30 feet in its overall dimensions. An inset double porch runs the length of the main or west elevation, while the ridge of the gable roof is broken by two interior chimneys serving back-to-back fireplaces in each of the rooms. At the north end of the building, a gabled shed encloses the steps which lead to an enormous brick-walled cellar.

Approximately thirty yards north of the house and servants' quarters is a small 20th-century garage and, just beyond, a gabled late-19th century frame barn. A horseshoe-shaped drive circles in front of the house, and scattered about the lawn are a few ornamental shrubs and cedars, recalling the manicured grounds that surrounded the house during the ante-bellum period.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion		
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science		
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture		
___ 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/		
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater		
___ 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation		
		___ invention		___ other (specify)		

Specific dates ca. 1854 **Builder/Architect** possibly George or Mathew W. Steele

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Quietdale is a lucid example of the mid-19th century shift in American architecture from an unalloyed neo-classicism to the freer forms of romantic eclecticism. Its design combines elements from both schools, retaining the basic form and proportions of neo-classicism while incorporating details which express the newer trend in architectural fashion. Thus, superimposed upon a symmetrical five-bay facade--the chief motif of which is a restrained entablature--is an ornate wooden porch composed of a series of shallow Tudoresque arches that carry eaves bracketed in the Italianate fashion. The same pattern is repeated in the architrave framing the inset doorway, as well as in a secondary porch extending along the west side of the house. Such detailing suggests the influence of A. J. Downing, Samuel Sloan, and other purveyors of the new architectural ideology whose works were beginning to have a measurable impact upon building design in Alabama by the early 1850s. Quietdale is significant as one of the earliest expressions of this impulse anywhere in the Huntsville area. Moreover, it is one of the few suburban mid-19th century mansions to have survived the city's later expansion.

* * * * *

The house was erected for Mrs. Caroline Moore Robinson, widow of Madison County sheriff William ("Black Bill") Robinson. A Virginia-born planter and speculator, Robinson had accumulated vast landholdings in Alabama and Mississippi by the time of his death in 1852, at the premature age of forty-four. Documentary evidence hints that the noted Huntsville architect George Steele or his son, Matthew W. Steele, may be responsible for the design and construction of Quietdale. The younger Steele, though never to achieve a reputation comparable to that of his father, intermittently practiced as an architect in Huntsville during the 1850s. George Steele himself died in the fall of 1854. But a note among his estate papers refers to a debt of \$1131.66 due from the "Estate of Wm. Robinson" for the "bal[ance] of work furnished by M.W.S. Ex[ecutor]," payable on January 1, 1856.

Certainly the original plan of the house followed George Steele's predilection for separating the formal interior spaces from the more intimate family living area. Thus a forty-two foot long drawingroom suite lay to the right of an entrance vestibule; to the left was a series of smaller and more informally disposed rooms extending into a rear ell. Directly behind the foyer, two stairhalls with parallel stairways led to completely separate bedroom suites on the upper floor. Why the upper floor was partitioned is not entirely clear: whether to isolate the guest chambers, or in deference to the custom observed in far more primitive Alabama houses of the period, of carefully separating the boys' and girls' sleeping quarters.

A year after Mrs. Robinson's death, on January 30, 1885, the house and 57 surrounding acres were purchased by Erskine Mastin. Subsequent structural alterations included elimination of the separate stairhalls, which were replaced with a more conventional arrangement. In 1931, Quietdale passed to Mastin's five daughters, and in 1942 one of them, Sally Mastin Gill, acquired the interests of the others. Five years later she sold the house to Mr. and Mrs. Guy S. Bishop, who reside there today. One of Huntsville's most important 19th-century landmarks, Quietdale is currently for sale.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Huntsville Branch, American Association of University Women. Glimpses into Ante-Bellum Homes
 Huntsville: Hicklin Printing Co., 1976.
 Jones, Virgil Carrington (Pat). True Tales of Old Madison County. Huntsville:
 Johnson Historical Publication, undated.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property c. 6.5

Quadrangle name Meridianville

Quadrangle scale 7 1/2 minute

UMT References

A

1	6	5	3	8	9	9	0	3	8	4	5	9	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing							

C

Zone		Easting				Northing							

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F

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G

Zone		Easting				Northing							

H

Zone		Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

See red line on attached map. Includes house, grounds and dependencies

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 Robert S. Gamble, Architectural Historian

organization (for) Alabama Historical Commission date Jan 1981

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 832-6621

city or town Montgomery state Alabama

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 Chris B. Howard Jr.

title SHPO Alabama date 10/6/81

For HCRS use only

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

covered in the

National Register

date

2/4/82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

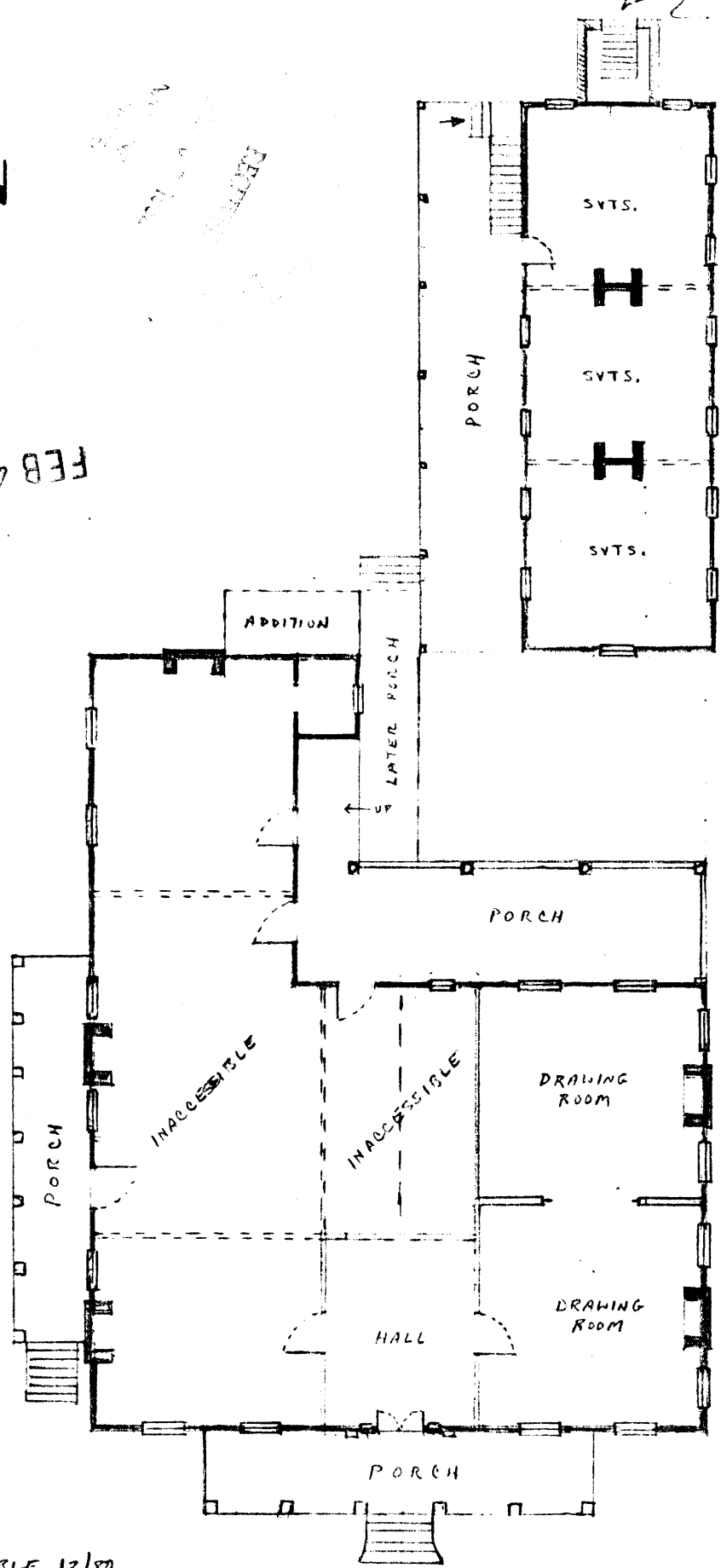
Chief of Registration

Harvey, Al

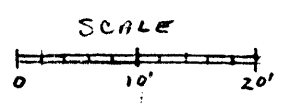
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