

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received FEB 7 1985

date entered MAR 7 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Svea Land Company Office

and/or common Oscar Johnson Memorial Library

2. Location

street & number South Sixth Street NA not for publication

city, town Silverhill N/Avicinity of Congressional District 1

state Alabama code 01 county Baldwin code 003

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Silverhill

street & number West Park Drive

city, town Silverhill N/Avicinity of state Alabama

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baldwin County Court House, Probate Division

street & number P.O. Box 451

city, town Bay Minette state Alabama 36507

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970-present federal state county local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<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

The Svea Land Company Office is a small rectangular frame building sited on a flat parcel of land among large oak and sycamore trees. The building was designed as a one-room space without a chimney. Centered on the facade over the entrance to the building is a two-story projecting square tower. A one-bay porch is created under the overhang of the tower and features square chamfered posts and a frieze of diagonal members set in a repeating X pattern. The entablature of the porch is adorned with simple scroll sawn brackets evenly spaced under the overhang of the skirt roof. This skirt differentiates the first and second stories of the tower. Two vertical one-light windows occur on the front of the tower at the second-story level. A slightly belled pyramidal roof with brackets under the overhang completes the tower design.

The roof of the main building block is a gable which runs perpendicular to the tower and entry way. There is a slight overhang to the roof formed by the roof decking; however, there are no projecting rafters. Small brackets matching those at the top of the tower are evenly spaced under the overhanging decking.

Exterior walls are sheathed in lap siding. Various types of windows can be found on the small structure; however, 6/6 light double-hung wood sash predominate. There are two gable end windows--the south window is 2/1 light while the north window is 1/1 light. All window frames are plain with a drip molding at the top.

The central entrance to the building is composed of two paneled wooden doors with a three-light transom above which spans their combined width. The entrance framing is also plain.

In the early 1900s when the building was used as the first school for the community of Silverhill, a small area on the interior was partitioned to serve as a student cloak-room. The partition was executed using matching tongue and groove boarding and an early wood door. Modifications to the interior have not occurred since that time.

The walls and ceiling are finished with tongue and groove boarding that has never been painted while the wide pine floors have been worn smooth from years of constant use. Window and door trims are flat and plain.

A small shed roof addition was placed on the south side of the building in the 1930s to accommodate a bathroom.

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 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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) immigration
Specific dates	1897	Builder/Architect	unknown	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

IMMIGRATION:

The Svea Land Company Office building is significant for its associations with the large influx of immigrants into agrarian Baldwin County in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. More specifically, this building, which was the second building and first non-residential structure to be built in Silverhill, served as a focus for the colonization of Silverhill by Swedish immigrants. Pockets of early settlement in Baldwin County are still clearly discernible today with native languages still spoken in such places as Elberta and Robertsdale.

Integrity:

The one-room Svea Land Office remains much as it was when it was constructed in 1897. The only interior modification took place c. 1900 when the building was converted to use as a community school. A small section of interior space was partitioned off to create a cloakroom for students. The only exterior change to the building occurred in the 1930s when a bathroom was added on the south side of the building. Neither modification substantially alters the original character of this building of simple vernacular design.

* * * * *

In 1890 the Svea Land Company was formed in Chicago for the purpose of colonizing farm land in the south. Lots were sold both in Chicago and at this company office in Silverhill. Reduced or free excursion railroad fares were made available to those interested in purchasing land in the colony and a brochure developed to advertise the company and the colony in Baldwin County.

Land was purchased for the colony in June of 1896 from Aaron Hartford. Following the purchase of this land by Oscar Johnson and J. O. Vallentin, they returned to Chicago to interest others in settling in Baldwin County.

Although the proposed name of the colony was "Svea" or Swedish, the name by which the colony was eventually to be known, Silverhill, derived from the location of the colony on the former site of a turpentine still. Oral history states that the owner of the still required all transactions to be made not only in cash, but in silver. Thus, on payday, people "went up the hill to get silver."

As the community grew, the need for a school became pressing. The land office was converted to use as a school c. 1900. Later the building was used as a meeting place for the newly-formed Baptist congregation. The building now serves as the Oscar Johnson Memorial Library.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Deeds and records from the Baldwin County Courthouse, Probate Division; written histories of Silverhill.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Silverhill

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

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

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification Located in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec 10, T6S, R3W. Block #22 in the Township of Silverhill, lots #7 & #8 = 100' X 125'.

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 Robin A. Lang, Research Historian; Anne Sieller, Assistant Director
Mobile Historic Development Commission; Ellen Mertins

organization Alabama Historical Commission date November 3, 1983

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone (205) 261-3184

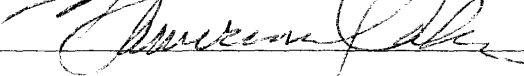
city or town Montgomery state Alabama 36130

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer date January 29, 1985

For NPS use only

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


Keeper of the National Register

 date 3-7-85

Attest: _____ date _____
Chief of Registration