

Alabama Historical Commission

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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Clark, Willis G., House other names/site number Beaver Meadow; MB7580

2. Location

street & number N/A not for publication city, town Gulfcrest vicinity X state Alabama code AL county Mobile code 097 zip code 36522

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: X private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal. Category of Property: X building(s), district, site, structure, object. Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 1, Noncontributing buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total 1.

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

4. 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. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: [Signature] Date: 12-14-89 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. Signature of commenting or other official: Date: State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: X 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:). Entered in the National Register: 1/25/80 Signature of the Keeper: [Signature] Date of Action: 1/25/80

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic
Single Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic
Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
walls Wood
Weatherboard
roof Asbestos
other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Greek Revival Clark house at Beaver Meadow is located in a rural setting with pastureland behind. The house is raised on brick piers and has a gable roof with exposed purlins; the roof is interrupted by a four flue chimney on the front slope and single flue chimney on the rear. The one and a half story structure presents two facades, one to the south and one to the west.

Each facade has a recessed porch; they wrap around to join each other at the southeast corner. The roof is supported on square, Tuscan columns separated by a balustrade of rectangular balusters dovetailed into the bottom rail. The west facade under the house gable has three first story bays with a central door, and two half story windows with a semi-circular vent above. The south facade is four bays with the door in the left central bay. The doors are nine lights over two panels and the porch windows are shuttered 6/9 to the floor slidebys.

The unusual two facade exterior is reflected on the interior by its asymmetrical plan. The first floor consists of three rooms and a stairhall leading to two bedrooms upstairs. A downstairs bathroom has been placed in a small storage area.

The interior is quite simple in keeping with the modest Greek Revival style. The fireplaces are tall being 5'4" though the mantels maintain a simple effect. There is a well articulated ceiling medallion in the parlor (probably added later); the downstairs ceilings are 11' high. The second story flooring is random width pine of ten to thirteen inches. The floor joists are hand hewn, mortised and tenoned.

On the east a semi-detached wing is set parallel to the house and is connected to the rear of the house by its front porch and by a door added later to the northeast room. This wing is one large room and probably served as the kitchen. There is a cellar below with access to the outside and to the northeast stair room.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Education

Period of Significance

c. 1865
c. 1865 - 1898

Significant Dates

c. 1865
c. 1865

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Clark, Willis G.

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Criterion C:
Architecture

The Willis G. Clark house is significant as one of the two best examples of the Greek Revival cottage in the northern part of Mobile County. Along with the Jacob Magee house in Kushla, the Clark house exhibits formal elevations, restrained decoration, classically inspired boxed columns and rectangular massing. However in contrast to the typical Greek Revival cottage of the City of Mobile and the County, the Clark House has an asymmetrical interior. In addition, the plan of the house is reminiscent of the Creole Cottage with interconnecting rooms, rather than the common Greek Revival Gulf Coast cottage plan with an axial hall.

Criterion B:
Willis Gaylord Clark

The home is associated with Willis G. Clark, the builder, who spent most of his productive life as a resident of this house. Clark achieved State and local significance through his work for public education in Alabama. He was instrumental in the founding of the Mobile Public School system, the first in the State, and was considered responsible for securing much needed State funds for the University of Alabama while serving on its Board. As president of Alabama's first paper mill, Clark was a key figure in the settlement of the Beaver Meadow/Gulfcrest area. In addition, he was a writer, newspaper and magazine editor, political activist, and honorary vice-president of the Alabama Historical Society. Mr. Clark wrote the definitive nineteenth century study, "The History of Education of Alabama", published by the United States Bureau of Education in 1889.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Clark, Willis G. History of Education in Alabama, 1702-1889. Washington: Bureau of Education, Government Printing Office. 1889.

Coulson, Charles. "The Story of an Old Dixie Newsprint Mill". Paper Industry and Paper World. Chicago: Fritz Publication, Inc. February 1941.

Mobile City Directories. 1850-1905.

Mobile County Probate Records. Various.

Owen, Thomas McAdory. History of Alabama & Dictionary of Alabama Biography. Volume III. Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, Publishers. 1978.

Sellers, James B. History of the University of Alabama. University Press. 1953.

Weeks, Stephen B. History of Public School Education in Alabama. Washington: Bureau of Education. 1915. See continuation sheet

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
- Other

Specify repository:

Mobile Historic Development Commission

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 3 Acres

UTM References

A 16 384540 3430340
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description Begin at the iron stake marking the NW cor of the N $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of sec. 32, T1N, R2W, then proceeding S 575.5' to the north side of the dirt road for the PLACE OF BEGINNING; THENCE E 400' more or less to the fence row; THENCE S along the fence 380'+; THENCE E along the line delineated by plantings marking the edge of the yard 240'+ to the road; THENCE in a NWly direction along the west line of the above mentioned dirt road 412' to the Place of Beginning.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification The boundaries include the house and approximate three acres which surround it and serve as its historic visual setting.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Devereaux Bemis/Architectural Historian; Steven M. Kay/Reviewer, AHC

organization Mobile Historic Development Commission date June 15, 1989

street & number P. O. Box 1827 telephone (205)438-7281

city or town Mobile state Alabama zip code 36633

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Historic Context

Willis G. Clark moved to the South from his native New York in 1848, traveling throughout the area from Georgia to Louisiana and finally settling in Mobile in 1849 where he was admitted to the bar in 1850. He became editor of The Southern Magazine and the Daily Advertiser eventually buying the Advertiser and devoting full time to it until the outbreak of the Civil War. At the close of the War he resumed editorship for the then combined Advertiser and Register for two years. In 1867, Clark was president of the Chickasabogue Manufacturing Company, builders of Alabama's first paper mill which was located near his home in Beaver Meadow. In addition to the paper mill the site included a corn and saw mill with a dam, holding pond and race-ways to supply water used in the manufacturing processes. The Chickasabogue Manufacturing Company disappears from the City Directories after 1873 and Clark is then associated with the Gulf City Paper Mills. Mr. Clark's varied business career continued as a dealer in wood products, U. S. Custom's collector and general agent of the New York National Building and Loan Association.

His contribution to education began early in his career when in 1852 Willis Clark was editor of the Mobile Daily Advertiser. In that year the paper took "a zealous and leading part against the sale of the academy (Barton) and in favor of occupying it as the nucleus of a system of public schools..." An election in August of 1852 resulted in a vote of 2,225 to 244 against the sale. At the same election Clark and seven other were voted to the Mobile School Board on a no sale campaign. On September 17, 1852 the Board adopted the report which formed the nucleus of the Mobile School system. The first organized public school in the State of Alabama opened in Barton Academy on the first Monday of November 1852 with 400 pupils. By the beginning of the second quarter in the following February there were 854 students.

Willis G. Clark as chairman of the school committee was entrusted with the executive management of the schools. In July of 1853 he toured school systems in the northern part of the United States and instituted changes in the local system based on his findings. The system, though charging tuition to most students in the early years, subsidized those who could not afford to attend. Only during a brief period following the Civil War was tuition reinstated.

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Also following the War in 1867, the Board addressed the issue of educating black children in the public schools. In August of 1868 Clark, chairman of the joint committee on the subject of schools for black children, recommended the immediate establishment of three schools of suitable grades to be located as to accommodate the center of black population in the city. He also directed the county districts to make provision for black children in the county. His recommendations were unanimously adopted. The time lag was due to securing financing for the buildings from the Freedmen's Bureau and the American Missionary Association and the taxes paid by the black citizens of Mobile County.

On the state level Clark served as a trustee of the University of Alabama from 1865 to 1868 when the board was dissolved, but was again a member when it reformed under the new constitution of 1875. As a board member he achieved significance as chairman of the building committee, when, as a result of his efforts, the University secured funds from the Alabama General Assembly for much needed new buildings. The Board of Trustees resolution of June 1884 read: "Resolved, That the Public Buildings of the University of Alabama shall be known and named as follows: The rear buildings, being the one now occupied, shall be called Alva Woods Hall, in honor of the first president of the University; the west wing building, now in process of construction, shall be called Manly Hall in honor of the second president of the University; and the corresponding east wing, whenever built, shall be called Garland Hall, in honor of the third president of the University; and the central building, now in process of erection, shall be called Clark Hall, to commemorate the distinguished and unselfish services of the Honorable Willis G. Clark, as a member of this Board, and especially his eminent services in procuring the appropriation and conducting the work for our new buildings." In addition, Clark served on the University Land Grant committee and as president pro tempore of the board of trustee (the governor was president) leaving him with most of the actual duties. He remained on the Board until his death in 1898.

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Willis G. Clark House

Clark's public service during his life in Mobile made him a figure of importance throughout the state and brought him attention on the national level resulting in his appointment as Custom's collector, a position he held under two presidents. In 1888, at the request of the Commissioner of Education, Clark prepared a monograph on "The History of Education in Alabama: which was published the following year by the United States Bureau of Education. A prolific writer, Clark was also responsible for numerous newspaper articles and various papers as well as two chapters in the Memorial Record of Alabama of 1893. As might be expected, Clark was involved in politics serving as a member of the Democratic State Executive Committee, Chair of the Democratic Executive Committee in Mobile and of the Executive Committee for the First Congressional District during the Reconstruction Period. Upon his death, the Mobile School Board named the Willis G. Clark School at 311 North Conception in his honor. Clark is listed in T. M. Owen's History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography.

* * * * *

Supplemental

The commercial enterprise at Beaver Meadow in the north central part of Mobile County was a direct result of Willis Clark's newspaper experience. Purchasing a large tract of wooded land from the Mobile and Ohio Railroad in 1866, the Chickasabogue Manufacturing Company with Willis G. Clark as president began a substantial building and manufacturing endeavor. By the beginning of 1868, the company had completed a corn mill, a saw mill and the paper mill containing the most modern machinery available. In addition, a dam was constructed with race-ways to provide water for power and for use in the manufacturing processes. The mill apparently changed hands in 1873-1874 and finally closed in 1878. The machinery was removed during World War I and sold for scrap. All that remains evident of the original mill are the stone walls and partial flooring, and the home of Willis G. Clark built on property adjacent to the Chickasabogue Manufacturing Company's tract. The partial structure and various topographical features indicate an archaeological investigation could supply important information concerning Alabama's first paper mill.

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NOTE: There is little information on the construction of the Clark House at Beaver Meadow. The chain of title is post-dated and the early tax records are missing. However, Clark is listed as living in Beaver Meadow in the 1865 Mobile City Directory and this remains his residence throughout his life. It is therefore assumed that the house predated the mill, and the mills were built near his house rather than his house being built near a pre-existing mill.

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PHOTO LOG

The following information is true for all eight photographs listed.

1. Clark, Willis G., House
2. Gulfcrest (formerly Beaver Meadow), Mobile County, Alabama
3. Devereaux Bemis, photographer
4. April 1989
5. Mobile Historic Development Commission Photo File: MCRS #143

Photo #

1. South Facade, Camera facing N (Frame #2)
2. West Facade, Camera facing E (Frame #1)
3. East Side, Camera facing NW (Frame #4)
4. Rear, Camera facing SW (Frame #5)
5. Southwest Parlor, Camera facing NW (Frame #14)
6. Southeast Dining Room, Camera facing NW (Frame #17)
7. Stair hall, Camera facing W (Frame #18)
8. Kitchen, Camera facing SW (Frame #27)

