

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Georgia	
COUNTY: Wilkes	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Robert Toombs House

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Robert Toombs House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
326 E. Robert Toombs Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE: **Georgia** CODE: COUNTY: **Wilkes** CODE:

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)		OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Public	Public Acquisition:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied	Yes:
<input type="checkbox"/> Site	<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	<input type="checkbox"/> In Process	<input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> Restricted
<input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments	
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____	

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Mrs. Paul Goldsmith

STREET AND NUMBER:
104 Sims Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **Georgia** CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Wilkes County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **Georgia** CODE:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:	
COUNTY:	
ENTRY NUMBER	
DATE	

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7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Robert Toombs House is an imposing white frame house fronted by a veranda with two-story Doric colonnade. French windows lead from the veranda into high-ceiling rooms with furnishings much as they were a century ago. The main body is a two-story structure on a high basement erected between 1794 and 1801 by Dr. Joel Abbott. After Abbott's death the house was occupied by the Rev. Alexander Hamilton Webster, Alexander H. Stephens' teacher; Miss Ann Quigly, who conducted a private school here; and William L. Harris, who moved the house back and made several additions. The colonnade and western wing were built by Toombs after he bought the house in 1837. The eastern wing was built by him after the Civil War.

A wide front door with side and transom lights leads into a large central hall dividing four rooms, two in each wing. In the front parlor to the right, the brass picture molding, the wall paper with its dim gold pattern, and massive cast-iron gas chandeliers recall Toombs' occupancy. The chandeliers were lighted with gas from Toombs' private plant. To the left of the hall is Toombs' library containing his leather-trimmed bookcases.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1837-1885**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The life of Robert Augustus Toombs, Congressman and Senator from Georgia, illustrates the great dilemma of southern leadership in the years of ordeal prior to the Civil War. A passionate defender of Southern prerogative, he was no less a devotee of the Union and Toombs was, perhaps, the epitome of Southern desire for union turned by relentless events toward secession. He was a prominently active and vociferous leader of Southern unionist sentiment in Congress--sentiment which was shared by a good portion of Southern society. A great compromiser, he actively worked for the neutralization of radical secessionism and thereby contributed significantly to a decade of peace following the Compromise of 1850. Ultimately constitutional unionism failed to unify the South. Toombs became fearful of the sectional appeal of the growing Republican Party. Confronted with the new party's victory in 1860 he shifted his political energies to the secessionist circle and after the break was made Secretary of State of the Confederacy and later commissioned a general.

Biography

Robert Augustus Toombs was born into a wealthy cotton-planting family in the uplands of eastern Georgia. After his schooling he returned to Georgia and built a lucrative legal practice frequently interrupted by legislative service. While his investments were primarily in a plantation in southwest Georgia, his home was always in the town of Washington where life had a serenity not often disturbed by the storm of public affairs. There he spent the remainder of his life in the house he purchased in 1837.

Toombs spent two terms in the state legislature as a loyal and outstanding Whig remaining aloof from Federal questions. Elected to Congress in 1844, he was initially careful to avoid the debate on the extension of slavery but spoke instead against aggressive actions against foreign nations like Mexico. In 1849, in league with Howell Cobb, he dashed John C. Calhoun's attempt to assemble a Southern Rights Party instigated by opposition to a Congressional attempt to eliminate slavery in the District of Columbia. His belief

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Thompson, William Y., Robert Toombs of Georgia (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 1966.
 Coulter, E. Merton, Georgia: A Short History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 1947.
 Hesseltine, William B. and Smiley, David L., The South in American History, 2nd Ed., (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall), 1960.
 Work Projects Administration, The Story of Washington-Wilkes (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press), 1941

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 ' "	0 ' "		34 ° 44 ' 29 "	83 ° 43 ' 58 "	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **3/4 acre**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Benjamin Levy

ORGANIZATION **Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service** DATE **1/13/73**

STREET AND NUMBER:
1100 L Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE **D.C.** CODE

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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Robert Toombs House

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Significance Continued page 1

that his party was about to approve the Wilmot Proviso finally stirred him to aggressive defense of the South. On February 27, 1850, Toombs delivered a temperate and measured speech implying that the simple admission of California as a free-state would be inequitable. It was a clear appeal for compromise. However, on June 15 Toombs exposed his more vitriolic nature, when, with his patience worn thin, he delivered his "Hamilcar speech" warning his fellow legislators of the inevitability of the nation's disintegration unless a fair compromise was reached. The Compromise of 1850 emerged to his satisfaction. He defended it vigorously and canvassed the state to secure its ratification.

With the dissolution of the Whig Party, Toombs struck a gallant effort to construct a Constitutional Union Party which could emerge as a national party of compromising unionists. The new party prevailed in Georgia for some years but partisanship finally upset it and Toombs reluctantly joined the Democratic Party. The Kansas conflagration outraged Toombs. He sought new ways of compromise and joined Stephen Douglas in demanding popular sovereignty as the reasonable solution. His contribution to an attempted settlement of the Kansas warfare was a bill to establish a census of legitimate Kansas settlers and thereafter, enforce a strict referendum on the question of the extension of slavery to the prospective state. The bill passed the Senate but failed in the House.

The rising swell of Republican success was beginning to corner Toombs. His campaign of 1856 was largely a defense of President Buchanan, an attack on the recently popular Know-Nothings, and the need to sustain party loyalty in the face of a rising threat of Republicanism. By 1860 he continued to urge party harmony but when the Democrats fractured, Toombs felt constrained to support Breckenridge and Southern rights. Even so, he supported Crittenden's compromise proposal in Senate committee. When Republican members rejected the proposed pact, Toombs vacated his seat and wrote to his constituents urging them to elect secessionist delegates to the state convention. Chosen a delegate to that convention he took a principal part in the proceedings of that very critically balanced state and wrote the address adopted by the convention in defense of secession.

First serving as Secretary of State to the Confederacy, he was later commissioned a general. With the defeat of the southern armies he fled to Europe returning in 1867 to regain his law practice and enter state politics. In 1879 he took ill and died in 1885.

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