

**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 Bonny Oaks

and/or common Dent House, Bonny Oaks School

2. Location

street & number 5114 Bonny Oaks Drive not for publication

city, town Chattanooga vicinity of congressional district Third

state Tennessee code 47 county Hamilton code 065

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Hamilton County

street & number Seventh and Georgia Avenue

city, town Chattanooga vicinity of state Tennessee 37402

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hamilton County Courthouse

street & number Seventh Street and Georgia Avenue

city, town Chattanooga state TN 37402

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic American
Buildings Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1934 X federal X state X county X local

depository for survey records Library of Congress

city, town Washington state DC

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 Bonny Oaks plantation house is centrally located on the Bonny Oaks school grounds in northeast Chattanooga, Hamilton County. Constructed in 1854 as a private residence, the house and grounds were sold in the 1890's for use as a school for indigent children. Since then, the house has been used as a residence for the school's superintendent and family.

A representative example of the Greek Revival plantation house, Bonny Oaks is two stories in height with a gable roof and of brick construction covered with stucco. Originally rectangular in shape, the house has had a one story ell added to the rear. The five bay symmetrical facade has two windows on each floor flanking a two story pedimented portico which has plain but tapering columns. From early photographs, it appears that the portico was originally a double portico with a second floor landing instead of the single, two story portico with a small balcony that exists now.

The window treatment is symmetrical also. On the facade, as stated above, the paired twelve-over-twelve windows flank the portico. On the east and west elevations, on each floor a pair of nine-over-nine double hung windows is centrally located. On each side of these windows was originally a chimney; to the side of each chimney was one nine-over-nine window. This original arrangement still exists on the west elevation, but the two chimneys on the east elevation were removed at a relatively early date. Early photographs also show two windows and a vent in the gables; the windows have since been replaced with vents. The rear of the house apparently had a similar fenestration arrangement as the facade; the main difference being a door and a single second floor window instead of the portico. Currently, the ell covers the eastern portion of the rear. A transom and sidelights flank doors on each floor of the facade. The dentil, a typical Greek Revival decorative element, was used extensively. It appears on the cornice which surrounds the house, as trim in the side gables and front pediment, and for some window heads.

The interior was originally composed of two rooms on each floor flanking a central hall. For convenience, the room sizes have been altered in recent years. Much of the original woodwork does remain including wainscoting and the main staircase.

As is natural in the evolution of most buildings, minor alterations have occurred. Yet, Bonny Oaks retains the general appearance of the Greek Revival style. Its striking architectural appearance led one historian in the 1930s to describe "the beautiful old mansion" as "one of Hamilton County's finest residences in the antebellum period."⁽¹⁾ Today, it is one of the few buildings from the 1840-1860 period to exist in Hamilton County and is the County's only relatively pure Greek Revival plantation house.

Boundary Justification: The area being nominated includes only the Bonny Oaks house and fenced yard surrounding it which is less than one acre. It was felt that the entire 198 acre tract should not be nominated since the acreage no longer conforms to the size of the original plantation and since the existence of newer buildings detract

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

Specific dates	1854	Builder/Architect	Unknown
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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

BONNY OAKS SCHOOL

The house now used as the superintendent's residence at Bonny Oaks School was originally constructed as a home for Colonel Jarret Dent, a railroad contractor. Dent came to the Chattanooga area in the 1840's to construct two railroads, the Western and Atlantic Railroad and the Tennessee and Georgia Railroad. As one of Hamilton County's wealthiest citizens, Dent built his two-storied Greek Revival Mansion in 1854. During the Civil War, Dent and his family placed their loyalties with the Confederate Army; due to the strong Union feelings of his neighbors, Dent left the area and later moved to Texas.

Also, during the Civil War, local "bushwhackers" under a Major Moss used Bonny Oaks as a meeting place. These men pillaged neighboring plantations and then used the vacated Bonny Oaks house from which to sell their stolen goods.(1).

In 1898 the house, by then known as Bonny Oaks due to the stately trees surrounding it, was purchased for use by the Bonny Oaks Industrial School. This school was the result of a late nineteenth century national movement to encourage government agencies to assume more social responsibility. In Tennessee, Hamilton County led the movement on a county level and established Bonny Oaks as Tennessee's first institution to be operated for the benefit of dependent children--those considered destitute, delinquent, or handicapped. As such, Bonny Oaks accepted children of both sexes and of all races.

Although somewhat altered, the house is architecturally significant to Hamilton County. Although it is representative of many two-story Greek Revival plantation homes built in the 1840–1860 period in the South, nevertheless it is the only one of its type remaining in Hamilton County. Therefore, Bonny Oaks is a vital link to the South's antebellum architectural period. A mark of the building's architectural and historical significance can be seen in the fact that it was one of four buildings in Hamilton County selected to be surveyed in the original 1933–34 Historic American Buildings Survey.(2).

In summary, the Dent house at Bonny Oaks was the home of one of Hamilton County's leading citizens, Jarret Dent, a plantation owner significant in the development of the railroad industry in Chattanooga. As his home, Bonny Oaks is significant in Hamilton County's Civil War history. In the field of education, Bonny Oaks is the first institution to provide for dependent children to be operated by a county in

9. Major Bibliographical References

Adamson, Malcolm. Interview with school superintendent.

Chattanooga Times, 17 January 1934.

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name East Chattanooga

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

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 M.A. Carver, Preservation Planner

Chattanooga-Hamilton County

organization Regional Planning Commission

date March, 1980

street & number 200 City Hall Annex

telephone 615 - 757-5216

city or town Chattanooga

state Tennessee 37402

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 Herbert L. Hays

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 6/17/80

For HCRS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

W. Ray Grace date 8/11/80
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Kristin J. O'Connell date 7/24/80
~~Chief of Registration~~

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Bonny Oaks was surveyed in 1972 by the Tennessee Historical Commission; records are on file with this agency in Nashville, Tennessee. Also, Bonny Oaks was surveyed in 1976 in the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Architectural and Historical Survey; records from this survey are on file with the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

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from the historical and architectural integrity of the plantation house. No support buildings from the original plantation are known to exist.

(1) Chattanooga Times, 17 January 1934.

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Tennessee. Architecturally, the house is the only relatively pure example of a Greek Revival plantation house of the 1840-1860 period to exist in Hamilton County.

(1) Chattanooga Times, 17 January 1934.

(2) Ibid. The three other buildings are the 1850 Kennedy Home, Chattanooga; 1853 Shepherd Home, Tyner; and the 1803 Brown's Ferry Tavern, Chattanooga. Currently only the Tavern and Dent Home remain.

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Boundary

Centrally located on the Bonny Oaks School's 198 acre tract identified on County Assessor's Parcel Map No. 129 as P-B8, the Bonny Oaks plantation house is situated west of the school's curving driveway which is entered from Bonny Oaks Drive. The site is irregular in shape but conforms to the fenced yard surrounding the house. On the west and south sides the yard is bounded by an older metal fence which runs approximately 165' north-south and approximately 50' east-west. The north and east sides are bounded by a hedge which lies adjacent to the curving driveway thus creating an irregular boundary line.

See the attached maps.