

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUL 3 1975
DATE ENTERED	SEP 18 1975

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

### 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Shelby Academy; Sylvan Shades

AND/OR COMMON

Doolan School

### 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

set KY + KY  
Southeast corner of Highway 55 at Highway 148.

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Finchville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

6

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

CODE

021

COUNTY

Shelby

CODE

211

### 3 CLASSIFICATION

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

### 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mrs. Rowena S. Runyon

STREET & NUMBER

Route 55

CITY, TOWN

Finchville

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

### 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Shelby County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Shelbyville

STATE

Kentucky

### 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky (Supplement)

DATE

1973

— FEDERAL  STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

401 Wapping Street

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

## 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		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Sylvan Shades is located near Finchville seven miles south of Shelbyville, on Highway 55 (at one time the Bardstown Turnpike). Many beautiful trees which give the house its name still surround the house. About ten acres of bluegrass separate the house from the roads on the north and west.

The house was built in 1837 by Benoni Newland. The existing original portion of the house contains four rooms, two downstairs and two upstairs. The back, weatherboard section of the house was torn down in 1930 and replaced with a new brick addition.

The house rests on a cut stone foundation. The facade is laid in Flemish bond, while the sides are laid in common. There are pilasters with brackets at the front corners of the house and one on either side of the front door. The main entrance is located in the center of the house with a five-light transom above and sidelights with three panes on the sides. Directly above the front entrance is an identical door opening out onto the balcony. The present porch is not the original, but was added sometime after 1880.

The front door opens into a central hallway with one room on either side. Immediately to the left is the door into the north parlor, while the door to the right parlor is off the center of the hall. Both parlor doors have three-light transoms above. There is a fireplace in each parlor in the east walls. The mantel in the north parlor is very simple, while the mantel across the hall has deeply carved oval sunbursts.

The downstairs floors were replaced when the addition was made in 1930, but the upstairs has the original wide ash flooring. There is a fourteen-inch baseboard in all the rooms and hallway. The woodwork around the doors and windows is simple. The ceilings in the four original rooms are about fourteen feet high.

The wide, plain, staircase is on the north side of the central hallway and there is a small landing across the back of the hall. The banister is cherry.

The only remaining outbuilding is the spring house of field stone, which is set to the side of the hill northeast of the house.

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1837;1930

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Benoni Newland

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The brick house long known as Sylvan Shades adjoins the site where Benoni Newland began a small but successful school known as Shelby Academy. The school was operated as a select co-educational preparatory school for about fifty years. Many men and women later prominent in public life in Shelby and nearby counties and in Louisville received training in this institution. The surviving main block of the house belongs to a mid-19th-century architectural type frequently found in Shelby County. Apparently it is the result of the addition of paired brackets above Greek Revival pilasters. (The usual date given for this house and several similar houses, 1837 in this case, seems too early for this transitional feature to be original.)

Benoni Newland purchased the land on which the school and residence were constructed in 1814. Twenty-three years later he constructed the house. Finchville provided schools for its young from the earliest times. A small school was built around 1800, which was supplanted by Buck Creek Seminary in 1823. Later Newland, who had traveled extensively in Europe, established his school at Sylvan Shades.

In 1867 the school and house were purchased by Thomas J. Doolan (1842-1899). Doolan was born at Dunman Way, County Cork, Ireland, and came to this country with his widowed mother when he was twelve. When he was seventeen, he attended Georgetown College. A few years later he married Rowena Weakley who was originally from Shelbyville and a graduate of the Kentucky Female College located in that town. Together they taught school at Christiansburg, until they moved to Finchville when they bought Mr. Newland's school. At the time of the purchase, 186 students were enrolled. The school, known as the Shelby Academy or more popularly "Doolan's School," consisted of a four-room brick structure with a separate one-room building used for teaching music. These buildings are no longer standing. Several teachers were employed, but after the Doolan's older children grew up, their sons, Esten and John, and daughter Elma, taught at the school. Many subjects including Latin and Greek were taught. A number of students came from a distance and boarded at the Doolan home and in the Finchville neighborhood. In addition to his teaching, Doolan also served as the county superintendent of schools.

The Doolans operated Shelby Academy for twenty-one years until shortly before Thomas Doolan's death in 1899. Sylvan Shades has continued to be owned and occupied by members of the Doolan family from 1867 to the present time.



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Shelby Academy, Sylvan Shades

CONTINUATION SHEET

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In the South before the establishment of public schools, small private schools, like the Shelby Academy, played an important role in the educational system. There were many such schools in Kentucky, a large number of them located in Shelby County. Even small villages and towns within the county had their own private schools. The most famous one in Shelby County, which was nationally known, was Science Hill School (see the National Register form on Science Hill School, Shelbyville, Shelby County, Kentucky, forwarded to Washington on July 14, 1975), one of the first Protestant girls schools in the South. The curriculum at the nearby modest Shelby Academy included music, Latin, and Greek in addition to the standard courses in reading and arithmetic. Many men and women prominent in the county in later life attended Shelby Academy.

The building is representative of a large number of similar mid-19th-century houses located in towns and in Shelby County and the surrounding area, but uncommon elsewhere in the State. The basic format of the house is Greek Revival, with colossal, but narrow, two-story pilasters flanking the entrance bay and at the corners of the main block. These features, however, are often combined with rudimentary Italianate brackets along the cornice or paired over the pilasters. The overall proportions are unusually tall and narrow, rather than cubic, like many of the major earlier Greek Revival mansions. Conventional central hall plans are often enlivened with spiral or curved ornamental staircases. Thus, while not architecturally outstanding, the Shelby Academy building is typical of its local vernacular version of Greek Revival.

