

**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 Westview

and/or common Burleson House

2. Location

S. of Decatur

on section line between Secs. 26 & 27, T. 6S, R. 4W
street & number W. side of Indian Hills Rd. 3.8 mi. S of AL 67 not for publication

city, town Decatur vic. vicinity of congressional district 5th

state Alabama code 61 county Morgan code 103

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name William F. Burleson

street & number Route 6 Box 260

city, town Decatur vicinity of state Alabama

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Probate Office, Morgan County Courthouse

street & number 302 Lee Street, N.E.

city, town Decatur state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title none has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town _____ state _____

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

Westview is a two-story frame structure resting on an irregular ashlar foundation which reaches a height of eight feet at the rear, where the land falls away toward the nearby limestone bluff that bounds the site on the west. Overall dimensions of the house, excluding the later front and rear porches as well as the circa 1912 kitchen wing at the southwest corner, are approximately 48 by 42 feet. A shallow truncated hipped roof, terminating in an open balustraded deck, covers the main block; a slightly canted flat roof the colonnade. The present metal covering of the main roof dates from 1929.

The symmetrical facade is composed of a central doorway at porch and balcony levels, with a single eight-over-eight sash window to each side. Although these windows were installed as third-generation replacements of the originals in 1937, some early nine-over-nine sashing fills windows at the sides and rear of the house. (As with the 1835 Rhea-Burleson-McEntire house in nearby Decatur, it appears that the original front windows at Westview were larger than those of the other elevations, and filled with twelve-over-twelve sashing.) A pair of massive stuccoed chimneys abutting the south elevation are constructed of ashlar at the base, with brick above--as were the corresponding north chimneys, now removed.

Each of the two main floors is bisected by a twelve-foot wide hallway, with a pair of rooms of either side. On the first floor, the parlor and a bedroom lie to the right of the hall; the original dining room is to the left, with the "nursery" for the younger children behind. The latter is raised three steps above the floor-level of the other rooms so as to accommodate a basement room directly beneath which may have served as an auxiliary dining room in an earlier day. The nursery was connected to the "older girls' room" above by a narrow enclosed stairway, removed in the early 1900s. While trim in the parlor is 20th century in origin, woodwork elsewhere throughout the first floor largely dates from 1841. Doors have three horizontally arranged panels above two side-by-side vertical ones, a configuration seen frequently in the early architecture of the central and western Tennessee Valley. Especially noteworthy are the low dados--respectively paneled and plain--in the former dining room and nursery. In the hall and in the bedroom beyond the parlor, there is a molded chairrail and beaded baseboard with a later batten wainscoting between. The main stair, rising in straight flight from the right side of the hall, has slender urn-like turned newels and applied cyma trim beneath each tread. Upstairs, the trim dates from the circa 1890 renovation. Two original mantelpieces remain: one in the first-floor northwest bedroom; another upstairs, in the northeast bedroom. Both are unusual in their curvilinear pilasters.

The single basement room beneath the southwest corner of the house centers upon a massive, stucco-covered stone fireplace. Paneled about 1950, the room now serves as a den. Adjoining it are the present kitchen and utility area, contained in an early 20th century wing. A series of steps, rising into the entrance hall at right angles to and beneath the main stairway, connects the basement with the two floors above.

The separate frame kitchen building, razed early in this century, stood west of the house and was connected to the basement as well as the upstairs dining room by means of a covered way. (A door on the west side of the dining room fireplace, giving access to the covered way, has been removed.) None of the early dependencies, either in the immediate vicinity of the house or at the foot of the bluff, exist today. A garage, storage house, and barn scattered southwest of the main residence post-date the Second World War.

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 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 checked="" 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 1841 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Westview is the oldest of three ante-bellum plantation houses remaining today in Morgan County.¹ Although modified from its original appearance, the house preserves its essential form and typifies the better domestic architecture of a marginal plantation district. Its setting, however, on the brow of a low mountain near the edge of a 150-foot limestone bluff, is unusual for a plantation residence. This lofty situation reflects, perhaps, the attempt of early Tennessee Valley planters to escape the "sickly" lowlands in choosing homesites that were, at once, healthy and convenient to their farms. Thus at Westview, while the slave quarters, overseer's house, barns, blacksmith shop, and other dependencies were situated in the fertile valley below, the "big house" remained isolated atop its nearby bluff, reached only by a tortuous carriage road. Altogether, Westview's architecture and its setting, as well as its associated history, significantly illumine local plantation life.

The two-story frame house was built for Jonathan Burleson, a pioneer citizen of Morgan County. Incised on polished stone in a flowing cursive script, Burleson's name and the date "Oct^r 6th 1841" were affixed to the southeastern chimney of the house.² Jonathan Burleson was forty-three years old at the time. Born in North Carolina in 1798, he had been brought as a child to Alabama, where his family settled in Madison County, at Huntsville. In 1818, Burleson moved across the Tennessee River and located south of Decatur. Over the next two decades, he amassed a modest fortune in land and slaves. His first dwelling, a hewn-log house, stood in the lowlands near Flint Creek, west of and below the promontory which eventually took his name as "Burleson Mountain," and where he in 1841 built Westview.

Jonathan Burleson was twice married: first, to Elizabeth Byrd, by whom he had thirteen children; then to a widow, Mrs. Ann Roby Humphreys of Somerville, who bore him a fourteenth child. He was a County Commissioner, a Justice of the Peace, and a man of considerable local influence. With 64 slaves in 1850, he ranked as one of the largest slaveholders in the county. (Ten years later, only 1500 heads of household throughout Alabama owned as many as 50 slaves; they comprised three-tenths of one percent of the total population.) One of Burleson's sons, Dr. Rufus C. Burleson, immigrated to Texas in 1848 and three years later became a founder and the president of Baylor University. Another son, Richard Byrd Burleson, served for a number of years on the Baylor faculty and in 1861 assumed the vice-presidency of the insitution.

¹The other two houses are Forest Home (1857), added to the National Register in 1980; and Springwood, the Dr. Charles W. Price house (ca. 1855).

²Until 1970, another house likewise dated and signed survived in Morgan County: the 1836 William T. Sykes house hear the Trinity community.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Gamble, Robert S. Westview. Miscellaneous historical and architectural notes. North Alabama: Historical and Biographical. Birmingham: Smith and DeLand, Publishers, 1888.

UTM NOT VERIFIED
UTM NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 12.85

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle name Hartselle

Quadrangle scale 7 1/2 minute

UMT References

A

1	6	5	0	6	2	8	0	3	8	1	7	2	6	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

B

1	6	5	0	6	7	2	0	3	8	1	7	2	4	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

C

1	6	5	0	6	7	2	0	3	8	1	7	1	2	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

D

1	6	5	0	6	2	8	0	3	8	1	7	1	4	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

E

Zone	Easting		Northing											

F

Zone	Easting		Northing											

G

Zone	Easting		Northing											

H

Zone	Easting		Northing											

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a pt. on the W right-of-way of Indian Hills (Burleson Mtn.) Rd. approx. 4300' due N of section line between Secs. 26 & 35, T.6W, R.4W; thence due W to edge of Burleson Mtn. bluff; thence northerly & easterly along edge of said bluff to junction with section line between Secs. 26 & 27 of same Township & Range;

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 Robert S. Gamble, Architectural Historian

organization (for) Alabama Historical Commission date October 6, 1981

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 832-6621

city or town Montgomery state Alabama

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 Orlo B. Laward Jr.

title SAPO Alabama date October 6, 1981

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
Entered in the
National Register date 1/18/82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

FOR HCRS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	DEC 14 1981
DATE ENTERED	JAN 18 1982

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Commanding an uninterrupted vista north and westward across the Tennessee Valley toward Decatur and the Tennessee River, Westview became the site of a Union encampment during the Civil War. The housetop belvedere served as an observation post, while Northern soldiers camped beneath the limestone shelters at the foot of the bluff. Shortly after the war, Johnathan Burleson died at Westview and was buried at the now-destroyed family cemetery in the valley below. His landholdings, five separate tracts, were offered for sale in 1866. But the 2600-acre homeplace, Westview, stayed in the family when it was purchased by one of Burleson's younger sons. This was Dabney A. Burleson a veteran of the Confederate cavalry and in later years a merchant at nearby Hartselle. Dabney Burleson eventually deeded Westview to his only son, Jonathan Orr Burleson, who continued to administer it as a cotton plantation. During this period--the late 19th and early 20th centuries--the Burleson family lived at Westview only in the warmer months. Winters were spent in Hartselle or Decatur, or at Pass Christian, Mississippi, on the Gulf coast, where the Burleson sons attended military school. From Jonathan Orr Burleson, Westview passed to a son, Forrest E. Burleson (1895-1971), who in turn deeded it to his own son and Westview's present owner, William F. Burleson, in 1951.

About 1890, the house was extensively refurbished. New weatherboarding was applied, and the old portico was replaced by a narrow two-story porch with double windows to either side. Scrolled brackets and a wide dogtooth frieze composed of vertically matched boarding was added beneath the cornice. Inside, the first floor was left undisturbed. But upstairs, new doors and trim were installed as well as an Eastlake-style mantelpiece in the southeast bedroom and a modified Eastlake balustrade on the stair leading to the attic and belvedere.

The original kitchen, connected to the south side of the house by a covered way, remained in use until the early 1900s. About 1912, it was replaced by a ground-level kitchen wing off the high basement, at the southwest rear corner of the house. In 1937, an attempt was made to restore to the facade something of its ante-bellum character by replacing the narrow porch with a full-length square-pillared colonnade--recalling that which oral tradition described as having been formerly on the house. At the same time, more appropriate eight-over-eight sashing replaced the Victorian-period windows. Yet during this same period, the north chimneys, which had begun to lean dangerously away from the house, had to be dismantled. No major changes have occurred since then.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 3

Some features link Westview architecturally to the pair of pre-Civil War residences still standing in nearby Decatur: the Dancy-Polk house (1829) and the Rhea-Burleson-McEntire house (1835). Westview's main doorway replicates in somewhat simplified form that of the Dancy-Polk house, while the paneled dado in the southeast room--the former dining room--recalls the dado to be seen in the Rhea-Burleson-McEntire house. Interestingly, Dr. Aaron A. Burleson, another of Jonathan Burleson's sons, purchased the latter residence in the early 1840s and may be responsible for the addition of its colonnade--similar to that said to have fronted Westview.

Though Morgan County lies in the midst of one of the earliest settled regions of Alabama, few early to mid-19th century structures survive today. Linked socially and architecturally with this period, Westview is therefore one of the area's most important landmarks.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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

FOR HCRS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	1-8-82
DATE ENTERED	JAN 18 1982

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

thence due E to W right-of-way of Indian Hills Rd.; thence southwesterly along said right-of-way to the Point of Beginning. Includes house and immediate setting, plus lane.