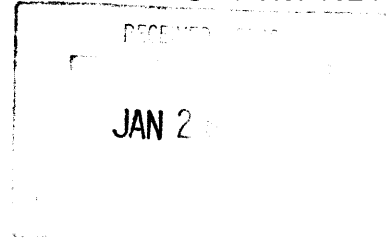


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Airmount Grave Shelter

other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number N side of AL 5, 0.5 mi w of county line not for publication N/A  
city or town Thomasville vicinity X  
state Alabama code AL county Clarke code 025 zip code 36784

**3. 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally      statewide X locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 1/20/99  
Signature of certifying official Date

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 for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

- I hereby certify that this property is:
- 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): \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action  
Edson H. Beall 2/24/00

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
_____	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
<u>1</u>	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

Historic and Architectural Properties of Clarke County, Alabama

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)**

Cat: FUNERARY Sub: graves/burials

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)**

Cat: FUNERARY Sub: graves/burials

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)**

N/A

**Materials (Enter categories from instructions)**

foundation BRICK

roof WOOD

walls BRICK

other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition on continuation sheet/s.)**

=====

**8. Statement of Significance**

=====

**Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance** 1853 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates** 1853 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder** unknown \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Explain significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

- Previous documentation on file (NPS) N/A**
- 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
- Name of repository  
Alabama Historical Commission

=====  
**10. Geographical Data**  
=====

**Acreage of Property** approx. 0.01 acres

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	436770	3536990	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====  
**11. Form Prepared By**  
=====

name/title Johnathan Farris, Survey Coordinator; Blythe Semmer, Historian with Trina Binkley, NR Reviewer  
organization Alabama Historical Commission date August 23, 1999  
street & number 468 S. Perry Street telephone (334) 242-3184  
city or town Montgomery state AL zip code 36130-0900

=====  
**Additional Documentation**  
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====  
**Property Owner**  
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Unknown (see Section 8)  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7, 8 Page 1

Name of Property: Airmount Grave Shelter

County and State: Clarke County, Alabama

7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Airmount Grave Shelter is located on the north side of State Route 5, 0.1 mile west of the Clarke/Wilcox County line in the Atkeison community. It is near the Airmount Presbyterian Church and is sited within the cemetery that lies south and west of the church. The surrounding cemetery is largely overgrown and some of the monuments have been toppled. The rectangular structure is 297' 3" due north of the south gatepost at the cemetery entrance on State Route 5.

The simple rectangular grave house measures approximately 23' 5" by 12' 4". It has walls of brick with open brick work in both gable ends, the north and south sides of the structure. Two panels of wood lattice work are inset on each of the long sides of the building, the east and west. The wood lattice work dates to the nineteenth century as evidenced by the presence of cut nails. The gabled roof possesses splayed eaves and is clad in standing seam metal. There is flushboard in the gable ends of the building, surrounded by a simple but heavy cornice. A wood door on the east side of the building opens into the interior space, which encloses the graves of five members of the Hope family. The interior has a distinctive wooden barrel vault roof. The date of construction under the patronage of John Hope, A.D. 1853, is painted in the north gable end of the interior.

Four white marble obelisks and one granite twentieth-century low headstone, which either replaced an earlier monument or was erected over graves that had never been marked, are sheltered within the structure. The obelisks mark the graves of the children of John Hope, namely Archibald H. Hope (5/20/1822-9/26/1850), John Allison Hope (10/3/1855-10/25/1856), and Jane A. Hope (2/9/1818-11/22/1852), as well as the patron's first wife, Margaret Hope (11/20/1797-May 1851). The graves in the fourth position south from the north wall are marked by the modern stone. They contain the remains of the patron's second wife, Sarah Jane Powell Hope (7/7/1829-7/7/1885) and the patron himself, John Hope (10/31/1791-4/6/1868). All of the obelisks, as well as the grave shelter, were erected during the 1850s. The monument of Sarah and John Hope is early twentieth century in design and material.

Archaeological Component: Although no formal archaeological survey has been made of this area, the potential for subsurface remains is good. Buried portions may contain information that may be useful in interpreting the entire area.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

CRITERION C: ARCHITECTURE

The Airmount Grave Shelter is significant under Criterion C as an unusually early and substantial manifestation of the grave shelter building type. The Airmount Grave Shelter is also eligible under Criterion C as its roof embodies a distinctive method of construction which has as antecedents several eighteenth-century church roofs in the Mid-Atlantic region. The splayed eaves of the grave shelter contain a frame buttress to the main truss, which helps keep the roof system in compression so that the barrel vault remains taut and the roof does not spread. This structure supports a vault known as a "compass" ceiling. The building is the only known use of this framing technology in the southern half of Alabama. The roof design traces its origin to east coast rural churches like Christ Church of Laurel, Delaware; Merchant's Hope Church of Prince George County, Virginia; and (to a lesser extent) Yeocomico Church of Westmoreland County, Virginia.<sup>1</sup> If the structure of the grave shelter closely follows its predecessors, the peak of the roof will actually contain a king post truss and the vault will be anchored into the collar beam. These "compass ceilings" are prone to structural failure and often end up having tie beams put in to keep the walls from spreading. Both Yeocomico and Merchant's Hope had tie beams either originally, or as a later repair. Only Christ Church, Laurel, Delaware, does not have tie beams and in this respect it may be

<sup>1</sup>For a brief discussion of this type of roof, see Dell Upton, Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 44-46.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 2

Name of Property: Airmount Grave Shelter

County and State: Clarke County, Alabama

the best structural precedent for the Airmount Grave Shelter. Roofing the grave shelter with a church roof type, though unusual, would have been comprehensible to some antebellum Alabamians, since burials of the eighteenth century were sometimes placed within churches. The permanence that the brick structure implies fits well within the funerary attitudes of South Alabama planters in the early- and mid-nineteenth centuries. Although many of these planters lived in sometimes less than enduring frame houses, substantial and oftentimes elaborate brick, limestone, and marble monuments intended to last for a very long time are common markers of their graves. The abodes of the departed were often more elaborate or monumental than the abodes of the living in antebellum South Alabama. Why display in death was often more marked than conspicuous consumption in life has yet to be sufficiently answered. One explanation is that since monuments were more portable than dwellings, a higher level of design was accessible to the settlers of Alabama in their grave markers than in their houses. One of the things that sets the Airmount Grave Shelter apart from other antebellum monuments is that it had to be constructed on site by a builder with past experiences that would give him the expertise needed to construct what, in Clarke County terms, was (and is) a fairly sophisticated structure. The above-ground nature of the structure very much suggests membership in the "grave shelter" typology but admittedly the substantial masonry walls of the structure show the influences of grave vault architecture of the Carolinas and Georgia. The Airmount Grave Shelter is therefore a unique structural type showing the influences of several ideas or traditions of how to cover "sacred" mortuary space. Why the structure was constructed in the form it was and what influenced the patrons and the builders to choose the "compass ceiling" architectural motif may, however, remain mysterious for many years yet to come.

Criteria Consideration C: Birthplaces or Graves. Although the nominated property contains graves, it derives its primary significance from architecture and the distinctive design features of the shelter and gravestones.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Grave shelters were widespread in the American South and enjoyed their greatest popularity in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Typical rural grave shelters were open frame sheds with a gabled roof supported by corner posts and often enclosed with a picket fence. These shelters guarded against erosion from rain and protected burials from the intrusion of farm animals, many of which ranged free in the nineteenth century. Hogs could be especially destructive to graves in rural areas where the luxury of a fenced cemetery was not feasible. The Airmount Grave Shelter fulfills the basic object of protecting the graves within, but its size and design are unusual for a rural grave shelter. The solid and gracefully proportioned structure is a sophisticated monument to the taste and status of the Hope family.

John Hope and his family moved from Rock Hill, South Carolina, in the 1830s. In 1840, John Hope appears in the Clarke County Federal Census as being the head of a household of two men between 15 and 20 years of age, one woman between 15 and 20 years of age, one woman between 40 and 50 years of age (his wife), and one man between 40 and 50 years of age (himself).<sup>2</sup> Twelve years after that census, three of this household were in the grave, presumably with obelisks to mark their passing. When John Hope had the grave shelter constructed in 1853, it was on his land, presumably as the beginning of a family cemetery. Hope went on to marry again during the 1850s and have additional young children even though he was in his sixties. The 1860 census finds Hope a sixty-nine-year-old prosperous middling planter (owning \$8,000 worth of real estate and \$39,196 of personal estate) with his 30-year-old second wife, the Tennessee-born Jane, and their three-year-old boy and baby girl of a few months.<sup>3</sup> John Hope gave the land on which the cemetery stands to the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America in 1862.<sup>4</sup> Hope would die before the 1860s were out, and is apparently buried with his second wife (who would not die until 1885) in the shelter. Their grave, however, is marked by a twentieth-century stone.

<sup>2</sup>1840 Alabama Federal Census.

<sup>3</sup>1860 Alabama Federal Census.

<sup>4</sup>Clarke County Deed Book K, page 316.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8, 9, 10 Page 3

Name of Property: Airmount Grave Shelter  
County and State: Clarke County, Alabama

OWNERSHIP OF AIRMOUNT GRAVE SHELTER

John Hope transferred ownership of the land around Airmount Grave Shelter to his pastor, Nathan Phillips, for the benefit of the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America in March 1862. The lot also contained the Airmount Presbyterian Church. This land transfer is the last recorded ownership of the property in Clarke County records.<sup>5</sup> The area around the grave shelter appears to have been used as a cemetery by other members of the Presbyterian church. A number of antebellum monuments are in evidence, although many are deteriorating and the lot is no longer maintained. A modern cemetery is now in use outside the boundary of this antebellum cemetery. Clarke County survey information indicates that the church building that stands north of the grave shelter is the Airmount Methodist Church, built on land acquired in 1866. This post-bellum land transfer may indicate declining fortunes on the part of the Presbyterian congregation. However, no corresponding land transfer has been located for the land on which the grave shelter sits. The survey further notes that the church building nearby is maintained by the Shady Grove Baptist Church, although the building is no longer used and appears to be abandoned.<sup>6</sup> This congregation may be responsible for upkeep of the modern cemetery nearby, although no one is maintaining the cemetery adjoining the Airmount Grave Shelter. County tax records do not currently show an owner for this area.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

1840 Alabama Federal Census.

1850 Alabama Federal Census.

1860 Alabama Federal Census.

Clarke County Deed Book K.

Little, M. Ruth. Sticks & Stones: Three Centuries of North Carolina Grave Markers. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Upton, Dell. Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property lies within the parcel identified as property number 01-08-33-0-000-017.000 in the tax records of Clarke County, Alabama. This parcel appears as number 17 on the corresponding tax map. The nominated structure is a fixed point 297'3" due north of the south cemetery gatepost on State Route 5.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes only the area covered by the grave shelter. This small plot is the historic Hope family burial area.

<sup>5</sup>Clarke County Deed Book K, page 316.

<sup>6</sup>Clarke County survey.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section photos Page 4 Name of Property: Airmount Grave Shelter  
County and State: Clarke County, Alabama

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Airmount Grave Shelter  
Clarke County, Alabama

Photographer: Johnathan Farris  
Date: February 5, 1999  
Location of negatives: Alabama Historical Commission  
468 S. Perry Street  
Montgomery, AL 36130-0900

- 1  
South elevation, facing north
- 2  
East elevation, facing northwest
- 3  
North and west elevations, facing southeast
- 4  
Interior, facing north
- 5  
Interior, facing south
- 6  
Gravestone detail