

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

FEB 1

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A) Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name Solomon A. Alt House  
Other name/site number 177-5400-1621

### 2. Location

Street & number 1335 SW College Avenue  not for publication  
City or town Topeka  vicinity  
State Kansas Code KS County Shawnee Code 177 Zip code 66604

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this **XX** 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 **XX** meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide **XX** locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Christy Davis February 3, 2005  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Kansas State Historical Society

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 official /Title Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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:)

Edson Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 3/23/05

Soloman A. Alt House  
Name of property

Shawnee County, Kansas  
County and State

**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	
1	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	1	total

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
0

**6. Function or Use**

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

DOMESTIC: single dwelling, residence

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

DOMESTIC: single dwelling, residence

**7. Description**

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

LATE VICTORIAN: Queen Anne

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Limestone  
walls WOOD: Weatherboard, Shingle  
  
roof OTHER: Composition  
  
other WOOD

**Narrative Description**  
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheets.

Name of Property Soloman A. Alt House County and State Shawnee County, Kansas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

- 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 likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or 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

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1909

Significant Dates

1909

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS): Primary location of additional data:

- 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 #

XX State Historic Preservation Office

- Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:



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**Description of Physical Appearance:**

The Solomon A. Alt House (c. 1909) is located at 1335 SW College Avenue in Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas (pop. 122,377). The free classic Queen Anne style property sits on the southwest corner of a busy residential block comprised of two-story early twentieth century residences. The brick sidewalk in front of the house has been replaced with concrete, but portions of the original brick sidewalk are still extant on this block. An alley runs the length of the College Avenue block behind the house. A non-contributing, one-story, gable roofed frame garage (c. 1921- 1923) stands behind the house, accessed from the alley. A non-contributing pool (c. 1991) lies in the back yard.

The two-story frame house sits on a high limestone block foundation and is surmounted by a gable roof with lower cross gables. The house has clapboard siding on both the first and second stories. The gables have square butt shingles made from cedar and the roof has asphalt composition shingles. The roof is a steeply pitched, pyramidal gable roof with a lower ridge cross gable. The façade elevation is defined by double gable projections; the secondary elevations employ a double gable projection.

A large porch wraps around the east and south sides of the house. The porch begins at the northeast corner of the house and then continues back to the south wrapping around and along the south facade. The floor of the porch is pine tongue and groove. The ceiling of the porch is tongue and groove wainscot. A small gable projects from the east side of the north end of the porch, above the front door. Other details of the wrap-around porch include a simple low railing with square supports between brick piers supporting the tapered style porch columns. A small back porch, at the northwest corner of the house, was built at an unknown time.

The front door sits at the north end of the east side of the house. The front door retains its large beveled glass with egg-and-dart detailed trim and ornate hardware. The door is 3-feet wide and made of solid oak. To the north of the front door is a double-hung window. To the south of the front door is a large double-hung window with a diamond design leaded glass in the top portion. The residence's sidewalk leads down from the porch in front of the front door and continues east where it meets the public sidewalk.

There are 22 double-hung, rectangular windows in the house. There are large picture windows on the first floor on the north and south sides of the house. Most of the first floor windows have diamond design leaded glass in the top portion. In addition, there are large diamond design leaded glass windows on the south wall of the dining room, the west wall of the study, and the north wall of the foyer by the staircase. Nearly all of the windows have metal storm windows that have replaced the original wooden storm/screen windows.

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The interior of the house maintains its original floor plan and architectural features. The house displays an asymmetrical floor plan, where a main staircase and foyer merge very close to the front door. The second level features a large center hall and the attic is a large, open space. A set of paneled, pocket doors separate the parlor from the dining room spaces of the first level. The second level has five rooms opening off the central hallway.

Most of the woodwork on the first level is oak; however, yellow pine was used in the study, kitchen and bathroom. All of the woodwork on the first floor is varnished, except in the kitchen and bathroom. The woodwork in the kitchen and first floor bathroom has been painted. The woodwork on the second floor is yellow pine. The woodwork in all four bedrooms as well as the hallway is varnished while the bathroom has been painted.

Upon entering the front door from the northeast corner of the house, one enters an area where the L-shaped main staircase rises on the right. The oak wood on the staircase is beautifully detailed with panels, spindles, newel post, and egg-and-dart carvings. An original light fixture hangs in the foyer with a matching wall sconce on the west wall towards the kitchen. South through a large doorway is the parlor. Large windows with leaded glass in upper sash are located in the east and south walls, and an original light fixture hangs from the ceiling.

West of the parlor is the dining room. This room is separated from the parlor by large set of pocket doors with quarter-sawn panels and original hardware. Another door leads from the southeast corner of the room out to the south side of the porch.

West of the dining room is what appears to be a small study. The floor and woodwork in this room is yellow pine. An early light fixture hangs from the ceiling.

The kitchen is placed directly north of the dining room. A bathroom is located off the southwest side of the kitchen and a door in the southwest corner of the kitchen leads to the enclosed rear porch. The kitchen has been remodeled several times but retains the original cabinets and pantry.

On the east side of the kitchen are two doors. One leads up the back stairs to the second floor. The other leads down to the unfinished, limestone basement.

On the second floor there are four bedrooms and a bathroom. The plaster ceilings have been replaced with drywall. The plaster walls and wood floors, however, are still intact. The front bedroom sits in the northeast corner of the

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second floor. The east bedroom sits in the southeast corner of the house. West of the east bedroom is the master bedroom. This bedroom sits in the large bay area on the south side of the house and contains a walk-in closet.

West of the master bedroom is the upstairs bathroom. The bathroom has been remodeled several times at unknown dates. At the west end of the second floor hallway is the back bedroom. This bedroom still contains the original built-in wardrobe and chest of drawers. A door, on the west wall, leads out to a small deck that sits on top of the back porch.

Although the house has had ten occupants, the architectural integrity is remarkable. All the wood floors and plaster ceilings and walls are in excellent condition. The house has suffered no additions or extensive remodeling. The paneled doors, the baseboards, the pocket doors, brass hardware and grill plates, hardwood floors, high ceilings, period lights, and lead glass windows combine for an intact early twentieth century appearance.

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**Statement of Significance**

The Solomon A. Alt House (c. 1909) is being nominated to the National Register under criterion C for its architectural significance as a free classic example of the Queen Anne style. The house retains a very high degree of integrity.

**Architecture:**

The Queen Anne style was dominant in domestic architecture from about 1870 to 1910. The Alt House exemplifies the Queen Anne style with its high-gabled roof with lower cross gables, asymmetrical floor plan, wrap-around porch, and patterned shingles in the gable ends. Features on the porch, such as square box tapered columns, suggest a free classic subtype of the Queen Anne style. Other features displayed on the Alt House include leaded glass windows on the first floor and a window bay on the north elevation. These elements are also typical of the Queen Anne style for residences.

Interior details include intricate oak and yellow pine wood moldings around doors, ceilings and windows; pocket doors separating the parlor and dining room on the first level; a prominent front staircase; built-in pantry; and a continuation of detailed woodwork on the upper level. These elements, too, are typical of the late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> century styles of residential architecture and display a high degree of craftsmanship.

As an example of an early twentieth century, front-gabled house with intersecting cross-gabled, the building was constructed during a time of integrated building traditions and reflects muted elements of the Queen Anne style in its chaste yet substantial design. Classified by architectural historian Alan Gowans as a “comfortable house,” the Alt House represents a class of residential architecture that incorporated open, free flowing floorplans with well lit, spacious rooms.

The wide, gable façade of the Alt House speaks volumes about late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century residential architecture. The house displays recognizable features of the Queen Anne style, albeit somewhat streamlined and flattened. The side-bays are wide and flat, achieving angularity in its three-sided form rather than the traditional curvature associated with the earlier Queen Anne style. The fish-scale shingling that adorns the upper gable recalls the exuberance of the earlier curvilinear style but lies quietly flush against the flat wall plane.

The exterior of the house is clearly delineated into three visual bands. Fenestration patterns, the wide and generous porch and the strong gable presence associate both horizontality and triangularity with the house design. When combined with the central core access floorplan of the first and second floors, the home stands clearly in the “comfortable house” tradition of early twentieth century residential architecture.

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The comfortable house refers to the profusion of styles and types built in suburban settings from 1890- 1930. They were considered “modern” homes, built first and foremost for comfort and convenience. Indoor plumbing, built-in gas, electricity, and central heating were all luxuries a few decades earlier, but were becoming common in the early twentieth century. Laundry facilities began to appear in basements, instead of back yards or rear porches. Coal-fired heating systems almost entirely superseded the wood or coal-burning stoves in the post-Victorian period, even though they had been introduced in 1818. By the 1920s alternative heating systems utilizing steam, hot air, and hot water were available. (Gowans, 1987)

The popularity of the comfortable house forms like the front-gable type reflected desires among the middle class to be modern and progressive. Concerns that domestic buildings should be designed to be more responsive to new lifestyles and spatial relationships were also satisfied by the new house forms. New ideas and philosophies regarding residential architectural forms reached wide audiences via the popular press. The widespread availability of pattern books and mail-order house plans during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the advent of mass circulated magazines such as The Ladies Home Journal and Better Homes and Gardens in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century helped disseminate these ideas.

The manner in which comfortable homes were constructed, and the development of an organized home-building industry reshaped American thoughts and ideas regarding residential construction. The widespread popularity of the gable-front house is significant as an important growing trend in architectural history that coincided with the growing significance of the middle class. Its popularity stemmed from an adaptability to different climates, settings and materials. Intimate, cozy interior spaces and unpretentious well-crafted exterior massing and detailing also contributed to the type’s success.

**Ownership:**

The Solomon A. Alt House sits on property owned in the late 1870s by John Ritchie. College Hill owes its beginning to John Ritchie, pioneer, and Peter MacVicar, President of Washburn College. Mr. Ritchie gave Washburn College its campus of 160 acres, then known as the Davis Farm. Washburn College moved into its location in the fall of 1874. John Ritchie bought land north of the campus and later sold it to Dr. Peter MacVicar, who developed it as a residential district. Thomas Lyon built a home for Professor W.A. Harshbarger in 1907 at 1401 College Avenue.

Mary V. Alt bought 2-1/2 lots on the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> and College Avenue, across the street and north of the Harshbargers, from Washburn College on March 24, 1909. The land was deeded from Washburn College, signed by Frank K. Sanders, President and James F. Griffin, Treasurer, to Mary V. Alt and a corporate warranty deed was filed. Building Permit #14199 was issued to S.A. Alt on April 28, 1909 with an estimated completion date of

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August 1, 1909 and an estimated cost of \$2,000. A mortgage in the amount of \$2,000, with K&L of Security was filed June 17, 1909.

The 1910 city directory shows Solomon Alt as the minister at the Auburn Presbyterian Church. He and Mary had two children who lived with them. Marian, a student at Washburn College, and Angelo who worked for Shawnee Fire Insurance Company.

There have been ten owners of the Alt House according to city directories. The Alts owned the home until sometime between 1916 and 1923. Wilbert F. & Effie Thompson then owned the home until 1952. John F. & Yulah F. Roswum owned the home until 1972. Ralph M. Graham, Jr occupied the home from 1973-1976. J.F. Johnson occupied the home from 1978-1980. Charles W. Howard occupied the home in 1981. Charles D. Shaw owned the home from 1983-1987. And Jack Kearns owned the home from 1988-2002.

Upon Mr. Kearns' move to a nursing home, the property was put up for sale. Michael L. and Joyce E. Smith purchased the home in September 2002. Portions of the house were covered with overgrowth and trumpet vines. The back yard was overgrown with wild and stray planting. However, the overgrowth did not damage the house beyond repair. All of the structures and details proclaiming its style and history are intact. The current owners plan to restore and rehabilitate the house for use as their home.

**Neighborhood:**

College Hill was founded in 1880 when Washburn College purchased land north of the campus to provide a residential area for faculty and boarding opportunities for students. In 1884 a horse-drawn trolley going from the Santa Fe shops downtown to the front entrance of Washburn traveled down College Avenue. The neighborhood grew to the east and west of the trolley route.

The name "College Hill" is derived from the gradual rise in elevation of the land which is 40 feet higher than downtown Topeka. Once a treeless prairie, College Hill benefited from a tree-planting project promoted by Dr. Peter MacVicar, then President of Washburn College, at the time of its platting. Trees of many varieties are over 100 years old.

Most homes in College Hill were built around the turn of the century when many architectural styles were featured out of Chicago. A mix of Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, American Foursquare, Craftsman and Tudor are found throughout. The neighborhood is bounded by 17<sup>th</sup> Street, MacVicar, Huntoon, and Washburn avenues.

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**Bibliography**

City Directories. Topeka, Kansas. 1909, 1923, 1955, 1967, 1973, 1978, 1983.

Gowans, Alan. The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture 1890-1930. (Cambridge: MIT, 1986).

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. (New York: Knopf, 1991).

Massey, James and Shirly Maxwell. House Styles in America: The Old-House Journal Guide to the Architecture of American Homes. (New York: Penguin, 1996).

The Shawnee County Historical Society. Bulletin. Number Thirty-Eight, December, 1962.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The South half of Lot 441 and all of Lots 443 and 445 on College Avenue, College Place Addition to the City of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes all land historically associated with the property.