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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Classical brick mansion, two-storied on an elevated basement, designed by Robert Mills for English-born Ainsley Hall, who became a wealthy merchant in Columbia. Built 1823 in center of entire city block of four acres.

Main entrance faces north, directly across from Hampton-Preston House, the mansion Hall had built first but sold immediately afterward to Wade Hampton. The front facade has an Ionic-temple portico with four massive columns rising from a raised brick arcade. Rear, or garden, entrance has seven-bay arched porch (the south colonnade). Center bay of the colonnade is slightly wider than the other bays and emphasizes the unusual entryway -- a concave, niched recess separating a pair of doors, a concave and ribbed arch-head creating a partial dome effect over the recess.

The windows are typical of Mills. The two principal front ones are set in recessed brick arches and have pilaster trim. In the rear are 3-part Venetian windows on both floors.

Each floor has four large rooms. Two matching drawing rooms and an entrance^m ш hall have curved ends and reflect the Mills genius for creating spaciousness in a small area. The entrance hall is a rectangle, about twice as long as broad, and terminates in a semicircular wall with a central apsidal niche. & 4 doors Doors flanking the niche open east and west into double parlors; the parlors open onto the garden porch. To make the two doorways symmetrical, the right hand door is false; the left-hand door leads to the stair hall. Departing from prevailing custom, the stairway does not dominate the hall but is סכ concealed from view. This aided in climate control -- a factor which interested Mills and caused the north-south placement of the house. Ο

The house was saved from the bulldozers when the Historic Columbia Foundation raised funds to purchase the property. The classical residence has been meticulously restored as an elegant mansion house. Direction was provided by the S.C. Chapter, American Institute of Architects. Albert Simons, FAIA, Charleston was the restoration architect.

م Three outbuildings (two flankers and a carriage house) have been re-constructed. Furnishings and decor are in the American Empire or Regency period. The collection includes fine English, French and early American pieces.

The park-garden represents gardening of the 1820s. A brick wall with ornamental iron fencing and gates has been completed around the entire block.



PERIOD (Check One or More as	Appropriate)		
Pre-Columbion	16th Century	18th Century	😰 20th Century
🗋 15th Century	17th Century	🔀 19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicab	le and Known) 1823		
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Architecture	🖌 Landscape	Sculpture	
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Conservation	Music	Transportation	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Robert Mills House and Park preserves architecture which is of national importance because of the period it represents, the quality and type of its design, the excellence of its restoration, and the fame of its architect.

It is of particular state and local importance as a focal point and stimulus to the preservation and development of historically-zoned areas in South Carolina's capital, especially since so few of the city's significant old residences remain.

The house is a primary delineation of Columbia's material-visual history, with distinctive characteristics of design. It is of a type becoming increasingly rare within the city and state, and is also in danger of becoming scarce nationally.

Its designer, Robert Mills (1781-1855), was a native South Carolina architect and engineer who studied under Hoban and Latrobe and became the first American-trained Federal architect, serving under 7 Presidents. He was the designer of the Washington Monument and was responsible, in great measure, for the national capital's early trend toward the classical style in its public buildings. In South Carolina, as elsewhere, Mills designs included churches, monuments, bridges, government buildings, and houses. Of the few Mills residences remaining in the United States, the Ainsley Hall House is considered one of the superior examples.

Historically, the house takes on significance as a center of Presbyterianism during many years of occupancy by Columbia Theological Seminary. Woodrow Wilson's father taught here (the Woodrow Wilson boyhood home is one block away). A noted professor was Dr. James Woodrow, who was deeply involved in the evolution controversy of the 1880s and later became president of the University of South Carolina. Such noted Presbyterian names as Dr. George Howe, the historian; Dr. B.M. Palmer, Dr. J.H. Thornwell, Dr. J.L. Girardeau Dr. Joseph R. Wilson, are listed on the faculty. Further educational and religious associations stem from the Columbia Bible College occupancy from the late 1920s to 1962. Winthrop, the South Carolina College for Women, was founded here in 1886.

Since Mr. Ainsley Hall died before the house was completed and it was never occupied or completely finished as a residence, it is more closely associated with the architect than the builder. In completing the residence as exactly and as elegantly as Robert Mills originally envisioned it, the

Historic Columbia Foundation is making it his monument.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

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6. Representation in Existing Surveys (Ainsley Hall House)

City of Columbia, Historical and Cultural Buildings and Sites List by Dr. Harold N. Cooledge, Jr., Alumni Professor of Art and Architectural History, Clemson University; May 11, 1966, revised January 3, 1967.



Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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AINSLEY HALL HOUSE

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