

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH036169x

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APR 19 1976

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OCT 22 1976

**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

~~Owen Plantation Home~~

AND/OR COMMON

The Owen House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER *S of Bessemer on*

Eastern Valley Road

CITY, TOWN

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Bessemer

VICINITY OF

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Alabama

01

Jefferson

073

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

West Jefferson County Historical Society, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 184

CITY, TOWN

Bessemer

VICINITY OF

STATE

Alabama

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Jefferson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

716 21st Street, North

CITY, TOWN

Birmingham

STATE

Alabama

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Like many early plantation homes, the Owen House was constructed in two stages and consists of an earlier one story, two room, frame cabin which now serves as a dining and kitchen wing for the two story, frame structure.

The main house is five bays wide and has a gabled roof with a box cornice and returns. End-exterior chimneys are located on either end of the main section. A single story, end-exterior chimney, located on a rear shed room has been rebuilt, as has the central chimney of the rear wing. A one story, half-hipped roof porch crosses the facade and is supported by eight tapered box columns with recessed panels. The area beneath the portico is distinguished by the use of shiplapped siding and paneled wainscotting painted to simulated marble. Similar wainscotting is found in the two front rooms of the ground floor and continues into the central hallway which remained unenclosed until the early 20th Century.

Interior walls are flush boards approximately 12" wide, doors have four panels and windows have simple architrave trim. Mantels are similar to those of the Saddler House, and have fluted pilasters and a paneled frieze. All of the three upstairs rooms have chairrailing.

The central hallway opens onto a rear porch flanked by a shed roof on one side and a shed room and the rear wing on the other. A stair on the back porch leads into the central room of the third floor, while a second stair, located in the ground floor bedroom, leads to the room above. Access to this room is gained only through the interior stair.

Alterations have been moderately minor and consist of the enclosing of the breezeway, the replacement of wooden shingles with a metal roof, and the addition of bathroom facilities on the rear porch. During restoration, the roof will be replaced with wooden shingles, the bathroom removed and the breezeway opened.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

*Changes made by
Lebovich at request
of MEERTINS 4/21/76*

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Owen House is one of the three houses in western Jefferson County which is being restored to depict the plantation life of this area during the early 19th Century. Like the nearby Saddler House (National Register, April, 1975), the Owen House is a fine example of an important folk house type in 19th Century Alabama. The two story frame structure with an unenclosed central hall or dogtrot is a common variation of what is generally called an "I" house, and represented a high economic and social status. Constructed during the late 1830's by Thomas H. Owen, the house reflects a taste for elegance in the wainscoting which is painted to resemble marble, the shiplapped wall treatment and paneled box columns of the front porch, and the finely executed mantels.

In 1833, the same year that he married Mellissa Saddler, Thomas Owen purchased several acres of land along the Eastern Valley Road and built a small, two-room house. By 1838, he had enlarged his land holdings and begun construction on a larger and finer house. The Owen family was one of the early pioneer families in Jefferson County, having arrived in 1816 from South Carolina, and like the other members of his family, Thomas Owen devoted much of his time to his community and church. A devout Methodist, he was one of the founders of the Pleasant Hill Methodist Church and was instrumental in the establishment of the Pleasant Hill Academy, one of the leading educational institutions in early Jefferson County. In addition to his plantation, Owen operated a small general store in Jonesboro.

During the Civil War, Owen established a small forge to supply iron for the Confederate Government. In partnership with Thomas Williams, he employed an expert iron worker from Tennessee, Thomas Bratton, to build and operate a small forge one mile south of Tannehill Furnace. The forge, which was missed by Union Forces, continued in operation until June of 1866 when it was destroyed by flooding.

At his death in 1884, Owen willed his house and plantation of over 1000 acres to his son, Rose W. Owen, who operated it for several years until he moved to Elyton, where he engaged in real estate speculation. A successful businessman, Owen was instrumental in the establishment of what is now Birmingham-Southern College, and donated the land for the campus of this prominent Methodist school. Owen continued to use the plantation house as a summer home, and it remained in the family until 1976 when it was donated to the West Jefferson County Historical Society for restoration as a house museum.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Love, T. R., "The Owen House, " A Journal of History, West Jefferson County Historical Society, January, 1972.
 Papers of Mittie Owen McDavid, in possession of Mrs. Rose McDavid Munger, 2603 Montevallo Road, Birmingham, Alabama.
 Walker, James Jr., Roupe Valley. Montezuma Press, 1972.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 6 acres
 UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>1,6</u>	<u>50,15,4,0</u>	<u>3,618,96,0,0</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

W. Warner Floyd, Executive Director and Ellen Mertins

ORGANIZATION

Alabama Historical Commission

DATE

April 14, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

725 Monroe Street

TELEPHONE

(205) 832-6621

CITY OR TOWN

Montgomery

STATE

Alabama 36130

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Phil B. Howard, Jr.

TITLE

SHPO Ala

DATE

April 16, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ACT. DIR. OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST:

John Z. [Signature]
[Signature]

DATE

10/22/76

DATE

10/22/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER