# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

#### SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 93001012 Date Lis

Date Listed: 10/15/93

<u>Idlewild</u> Property Name <u>Talladega</u><u>AL</u> CountyState

<u>N/A</u> Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Signature of the Keeper

10 07 93 Date of Action

Geographical Data:

The U.T.M. coordinates are revised to read:

Α.	16	588310	3703700
в.	16	588520	3703710
с.	16	588200	3703380
D.	16	588390	3703380

This information was confirmed with Melanie Betz of the Alabama SHPO.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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ited States Department of the Interior tional Park Service		AUG 11 199	3
ational Register of Historic Pla egistration Form	AUG 31 1993 NATIONAL REGISTER	Ala. Historical Co	mmission
s form is for use in nominating or requesting determin tional Register of Historic Places Registration Form (Na entering the information requested. If an item does nu hitectural classification, materials, and areas of signifi- ries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS	nations for individual properties and ational Register Bulletin 16A). Complet ot apply to the property being docum icance, enter only categories and sub	ete each item by marking hented, enter "N/A" for "r ocategories from the instru	"x" in the appropriate box or not applicable." For functions, actions. Place additional
Name of Property			
storic name <u>Idlewild</u>			
her names/site number <u>same</u>			
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State/Federal Agency Certification			
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In my opinion, the property  meets  does no	ot meet the National Register criteria.	( See continuation she	et for additional
comments.)		(	
Signature of certifying official/Title	Date		
State or Federal agency and bureau		·····	
National Park Service Certification	·····		
hereing certify that the property is: entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.	signature of the Keepe	r 11/2	Date of Action
determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.			' 1
determined not eligible for the National Register.			
removed from the National			
Register.			
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Name of Property		County and S	Ga CO. Alaba State	
5. Classification			<u></u>	
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Res (Do not include prev	ources within Prop riously listed resources in	erty h the count.)
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6. Function or Use				·····
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Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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8.	State	ment	of	Signifi	cance

#### 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.
- 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.)

#### 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.

Talladega County, Alabama County and State

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

ARCHITECTURE

### Period of Significance

1843

Significant Dates

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

#### **Cultural Affiliation**

<u>N/A</u>

#### Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibilography

(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:

Idlewild	Talladega County, Alabama
Name of Property	County and State
10. Geographical Data	
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<b>UTM References</b> (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)	
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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 <u>Camille A. Bowman/Preservation</u> Cons	ultant: Melanie A. Betz/AHC Reviewer
organizationRestorationConsultant	date January 8, 1993
street & number 2201 Ayers Drive	telephone <u>205-236-5455</u>
city or town <u>Anniston</u>	stateAlabamazip code 36201
Additional Documentation	
Submit the following items with the completed form:	
Continuation Sheets	
Maps	
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the p	property's location.
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties havir	ng large acreage or numerous resources.
Photographs	
Representative black and white photographs of the p	roperty.
Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)	
Property Owner	
(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)	
name_William B. McGehee, Jr.	
street & number P. O. Box 37	telephone362-2573
city or town Talladega	

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Idlewild, an imposing Greek Revival mansion (61" x 24') is located on a knoll in rural Talladega County, oriented to the east with a view of Cheaha Mountain, vast acreage of farm land, Highway 21, and the railroad line. This pastoral scene is repeated on all sides of the house--a setting that is perfectly intact, yet threatened with the proposed construction of the Talladega Bypass/Highway 21. The house was probably built after 1843 by General William Blount McClellan during the height of land-buying speculation as well as the height of the popular Greek Revival period of architecture. Contributing to the setting is an early barn which is located about 200' to the north of the house, while the original kitchen building stands about 9' perpendicular to the rear (and west) of the main house. The well-preserved and well-maintained estate--made up of the imposing Greek Revival home, its siting and accompanying acreage and outbuildings--all combine to present the feeling of a wealthy landowner of the 1840's and beyond.

Today the five-bay, two-story brick home features a full-height central portico in antis with a cantilevered balcony on the second floor. (Originally, the two-story portico was supported by four Tuscan columns on the first floor level, and the full second story porch had four matching Tuscan columns, as well.) Centrally located are double front doors flanked by engaged multipaned sidelights and horizontal transom, while the smaller second story doorway is flanked by disengaged sidelights. There are four sets of 12/12 double hung windows on the front of the house; two sets of 9/9 windows flank each of two chimneys at the gable ends of the house. All pegged windows feature uniform muntins, ogee and cavello moldings in the surrounds, and are topped by rectangular stone lintels. It is believed that the handmade brick were made on the site by local labor.

The interior floor plan of the house features two main rooms (about 20 x 30) which flank a wide central hall on each floor. A central, engaged stairway connects the two floors. The interiors of the house feature Greek Revival detailing throughout: heavy, robust crownmolding and panelled wainscoat throughout the first floor; four mantels feature heavy carvings, often retarditaire in their robust detailing (note paterae on the parlor mantle); original 6-panelled doors remain intact in the house with original Carpenter locks in place, and doors and windows are framed by Greek Revival molding and bullseye corner blocks. Although the detailing features the highest-style Greek Revival features available, the scarcity of modern craftsmen is evident, as well. Pegged windows with tapered panelling on the interior window surrounds; flat-arched fireplaces with tapered openings; and small panes of window glass all combine to show trends in even earlier building techniques as well as the lack of up-to-date craftsmen or availability of materials.

The original brick kitchen (about 22' x 42') featured two large rooms on the first floor and two in the basement, all flanking a centrally located open fireplace. The building was originally plastered and finished with chairrail molding throughout, including the basement cooking area. (It is said that one room upstairs served as the dining room, another as a bedroom, originally, while the kitchen area was in the basement.) An original window remains intact on the west end of the kitchen building as do wooden vents at the basement level. These details, along with exterior brickwork, the basement door and structural timbers serve to date the kitchen very closely to the original main house. Further, the handmade bricks, laid in common American bond, are laid in tan mortar with white pencilled joints.

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Extensive alterations were undertaken after the Turner Jones family acquired the property. However, it is significant to note that all alterations have been designed by architects and retain all significant features of the property. Charles H. McCauley, Architects, were hired in 1945 to tie the kitchen building to the main house by designing a sunporch/breezeway. The alterations were unobtrusively carried out while converting the house to modern needs: the southern glass-paned breezeway serves as a den and sunporch, while connecting the two buildings. Additional changes were made to the buildings at the same time: closets and bathrooms were sympathetically added to three of the main rooms in the house; a modern kitchen was installed in the kitchen wing of the house (while the dining room remained as such); the dining room fireplace was closed and the mantel was moved to the adjacent wall; full-height, fluted Tuscan columns (salvaged from an earlier Talladega home, according to local oral history) were installed at the front portico, while eight single-story columns and pilasters were removed (ghost marks remain from the original pilasters); and five smaller columns (also salvaged) were installed on the north porch that runs along the kitchen wing. In 1974, Helen Davis, AIA, of Birmingham's Davis Speake Architects designed a bedroom/bath addition to the west of the sunporch enclosure. This single-story brick wing was built of old, reused brick and complements the original structures. Additional minor changes were made to the house over time: Mrs. Davis designed the double Chippendale storm doors for the front of the house, and Sylacauga marble panelling was applied to fireplace surrounds. After 1974, two landscape designers of Birmingham, Mary Carolyn Boothby and Jody Hamre, were hired to design a formal herb garden. Their plans were carried out, and the herb garden contributes to the serenity of the setting at Idlewild.

The early 72' x 32' barn remains very well-maintained in the low land north of the main house. Classically built of hand-hewn, mortised-and-tenoned timbers, the sills and purlins run the full 72' length of the structure. The sills lie on a randomly laid stone foundation, laid with no mortar. The purlins tie into notched rafter seats, thus dating the barn to before 1875, and they are pegged into place. Roofing on the barn has been replaced, so no longer is there evidence of the original ridgeboard treatment to aid more accurate dating. The barn has been resided in recent years, utilizing boards cut from trees on the property (trees that fell during a recent tornado). However, original board and batten siding remains intact on the western elevation, protected by the shed overhand that runs the length of the barn. Board and batten doors remain intact, although original hinges could not be located. However, wrought head nails were evident, placing the possible construction of the barn closer to the 1840's. Mill saw marks on the boards of the doors leads one to believe that a local mill may have been utilized in construction: perhaps the neighboring Jemison mill built on Choccoloco Creek in 1834 and one of the first in the county, according to Vandiver.

After 1945, a "smokehouse' was constructed to the west of the kitchen wing. About 20' x 40', the brick and frame structure features a broken gable roofline. A non-contributing structure, the "smokehouse" serves mainly as a barbeque pit and storage shed. Also, after 1945, a non-contributing frame parking shed was constructed south of the smokehouse.

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#### OMB Approvel No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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### Criterion C: Architecture

Constructed after 1843 by General William Blount McClellan, Idlewild is a fine example of Greek Revival architecture with Federal style details. The building's massing-along with heavy ogee moldings and corner blocks over windows and doors--are just a few of the elements used by the builder to construct a fashionable Greek Revival home. The "high style" Greek Revival details were executed masterfully. However, throughout the house, there are elements that reflect popular earlier Federal designs and craftsmanship: the flat-arched fireplaces carry over from earlier masonry construction; and the smaller panes of window glass in the sidelights, fanlights, and 12/12 windows throughout the house prove that the larger panes were still difficult to acquire in the Alabama frontier. Today, the original, two-story portico (originally supported on each level by four Tuscan columns) has been replaced by a full-height central portico with a cantilevered balcony on the second floor. Although some changes have been made, Idlewild has retained many of its original features and is one of the finest surviving 19th century plantation houses in Talladega County.

### BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY AND ITS INHABITANTS

#### The Property, "acquired from the Indians"

Following the 1813 Battle of Talledega between "hostile" Creek Indians and General Andrew Jackson's army of "friendly" Creeks, the Treaty of Cusseta was signed in 1832, thus releasing Indian-held property to speculators. Numerous transactions took place in Talladega County, formed in 1832, between wealthy gentry and Indians: Robert Jemison bought 2880 acres in Che-ar-haw Town in 1834; the Seay brothers acquired 2,000 acres from Chief For-Se-Hatchee in 1834; and numerous other descriptive transactions took place in the area adjacent to Idlewild's site (Deed Book A, pp. 38-44). It is known that Indian Headmen were allotted 640 acres and Heads of Households had 320 acre allotments.

With a survey completed in 1832, property descriptions of these transactions match those of today and can be traced to 1843 when General William B. McClellan acquired the property. The site where Idlewild sits today is in the South 1/2 of Section 7, Township 18, Range 6. These transactions follow:

- 1. February 27, 1834: James Prewitt paid \$200 to Creek Indian Actiarchehadjo on [the above described property] "in the Coosa Land District and upon which was located by Number two on the Census Roll of the Chearhaw Town of Indians." This citing describes the land on which Idlewild sits today. (Deed Book A, page 44)
- 2. December 17, 1834, James A. Prewitt and wife, Nancy, sold their land for \$1,200 to Charles A. Brooks and James Headen, of Newton County, Georgia. (Deed Book A, p. 54)
- June 16, 1843, James Headen sold 320 acres to William B. McClellan of Talladega County, Alabama, including "the tenements and appurtenances thereunto belonging." (Deed Book D, p. 508)

In conclusion, in 1843, William B. McClellan acquired the land--and unknown numbers of existing buildings--on which Idlewild sits today. In 1942, the Turner Jones family bought Idlewild and the surrounding acreage described as "that certain tract known as the McClellan place" and as is "fully described in that certain deed from W. B. McClellan to W. G. McClellan dated February 20, 1860 and recorded in Deed Book L, page 459." (Deed Book 109, page 30, June 15, 1942) Turner Jones and his family continued to live at Idlewild until he conveyed the house and property to his daughter, Mrs. W. B. McGehee, who currently resides there with her husband.

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#### General William Blount McClellan

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William B. McClellan was born 22 January 1798 in Knox County Tennessee and lived with his second wife, Martha Roby, near Sommerville, Alabama "on the [Tennessee] river." According to McLeane's family history, he was a large landowner and maintained several plantations and farmland in that northern area of the state. It is not known when or exactly why he relocated from his Tennessee River home. However, "following his appointment to West Point" (Alabama Members, p. 72) and as early as 1836-7, he was in the House of Representatives (Vandiver, p. 50) presumably out of Morgan County, and in 1838, he was State Senator from the Talladega district (which was made up of Talladega, Calhoun and Randolph counties).

William B. McClellan acquired quite a bit of property in addition to and adjacent to the 320 acres where Idlewild stands today: in 1843, he bought an undesignated amount of land (Deed Book D, p. 493); also in 1843, a Jemison transaction refers to a "branch" that is the "natural boundary between the lands of William B. McClellan (Deed Book D, p. 471); in 1845, he sold an undesignated amount of land (Book E, p. 326); and in 1849, he sold less than one acre to the Curry's (whose home stands nearby today) for \$1,700 (Deed Book F, p. 467).

In addition to buying and selling land, McClellan became both a communitywide and statewide leader. In 1847, McClellan was elected president of "The Agricultural Society," an effort to establish cheaper marketing of farm products.(Jemison, p. 111) In November, 1850, the Presbyterian Female Institute was being built, and McClellan was elected to the Board of Directors of the new school. (Jemison, p. 263) Also, in 1850, he was elected to the Board of Directors of the Alabama and Tennessee Rivers Railroad, a new line that would be constructed in sight of Idlewild and would become "one of the greatest assets of the Confederacy." (Jemison, p. 124) Later, McClellan served as Lieutenant Colonel of the 25th Regiment of Alabama in the Civil War, fighting at Murfreesboro, Shiloh, Missionary Ridge, New Hope, Franklin, Bentonville, and finally at Goldsboro, NC, where his troops surrendered.

General McClellan had three daughters, including Idora who became a published writer. The three McClellan daughters married three Plowman boys from Talladega. Idora grew up to be a successful writer, pen named "Betsy Hamilton," basing many of her works on life at Idlewild. Her books feature African-Americans as slaves on the plantation, their lifestyles and customs, and always their conversations were written in dialect. One such book, <u>Christmas on the Old Time Plantation</u>, describes her observations as a child, intermingling with the slave children during the holidays. Her descriptions relay a closeness between the owner's and the servant's families. Her publications remain significant as cultural documentation, and a memorial library was built in her honor at the University of Montevallo. (Hammond, p. 71) Judge Vandiver wrote of Idlewild: "No home in all the country was more delightful or more hospitable. It was the ambition of every young man of my day to go there courting the beautiful 'Betsy' (Idora), her lovely sisters, or their guests. It was a charming home, and a delightful household that one could not forget." (p. 72, Alabama Members)

On February 29, 1860, William B. McClellan divided his large landholdings among his many children; ten different transactions appear in Deed Book L, page 459, including that property on which Idlewild sits. Son, Walter Groce McClellan received 504 acres of land and the homeplace. Finally, on June 15, 1942, Turner Jones acquired "that certain tract known as the McClellan place" as described in "that certain deed from W. B. McClellan to W. G. McClellan dated February 20, 1860." (Deed Book 109, pages 30 and 31)

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### IDLEWILD: GREEK REVIVAL MASTERPIECE

The Greek Revival style of architecture exhibited at Idlewild is unmistakeable in its execution. The home's massing--along with heavy ogee moldings and corner blocks over windows and doors--are just some indicators of the builders' efforts to construct a fine, fashionable Greek Revival home. Building such a fine home in such an out-of-the-way frontier proved to be a feat. High style Greek Revival detailing was desired--and executed masterfully. However, throughout the house, there are cases of earlier popular designs and craftsmanship: pegged windows indicate that craftsmen were trained in earlier technology; the flat-arched fireplaces carry over from earlier masonry construction; and the smaller panes of window glass in the sidelights, fanlights and 12/12 windows prove that the larger panes still were difficult to acquire in the Alabama frontier. Robert Gamble writes of this trend to hold on to tenets of earlier design:

"The late 1830's in Alabama brought a decisive shift away from the Federal and Jeffersonian phases of neoclassicism to the more robust Greek Revival. Yet now and again . . . retarditaire Adamesque and Palladian features continue to recur, mixed unselfconsciously with elements of the newer style, until the middle of the century." (Gamble, p. 53)

Although it is unknown who built or designed Idlewild, several comparisons can be made between its Greek Revival execution and that of other homes during the popular Greek Revival period of architecure in Alabama - the 1830's and 1840's. "Sunnyside," the neighboring estate of Robert Jemison's, can be compared to Idlewild. "Sunnyside" was built in 1848 and features a two-story Doric portico and Doric pilasters flanking the double front doors. Further, the sidelights and horizontal fanlight at Sunnyside are very similar to those at Idlewild. Sunnyside's siting on a knoll overlooking Jemison's vast landholdings can compare to Idlewild's as well. Additionally, the heavy carvings on the mantles at Idlewild resemble very closely the carvings on the Federal style mantles at the Borders-Blackman House in Calhoun County, built around 1840-42. Construction of the Borders-Blackman House was supervised by two slave craftsmen, Lev and Griff, who built other houses in the Choccolocce Valley. (Gamble)

### ARCHEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Although no formal archeological survey has been made of Idlewild, the potential for significant subsurface cultural remains is high. Original Indian towns were located in the vicinity. Further, plantations were sited within a constellation of dependencies and other activity areas such as privies, wells, etc. Although the Indian remains and many of the later plantation outbuildings no longer stand, the buried portions may contain significant information that may be important in interpreting the entire property.

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#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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 McLeane, Bobbie Jones, compiler. The McClellans of Alabama and Arkansas. Washington County Historical Society, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1962. 15. McMillan, James B. Dictionary of Place Names in Talladega County, Alabama. Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 1985. 16. Moore, Idora McClellan or "Betsy Hamilton." Christmas on the Old Time Plantation. date unknown. 17. Stewart, James Douglas, Jr. The McClellan Family. typewritten manuscript, August 31, 1974. 18. Vandiver, Judge John Wellington. History of Talladega. typewritten manuscript. date unknown.

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#### Boundary Description:

The 14 acres named in the nomination are delineated on the State of Alabama Department of Revenue/Aerial Survey Map of Section 07, Township 18S, Range 6E and Section 18, Township 18S, Range 6E for Talladega County, Alabama. The Legal Description of the property follows:

Begin at the point of intersection of the north line of the Southeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter (SE 1/4 of SE 1/4) of Section 7, Township 18, Range 6, and the west line of the public highway known as the Talladega-Eastaboga Road; and run thence in a Southerly direction along the west line of said Talladega-Eastaboga public road a distance of 450 feet to the point of beginning of the tract here described. From said point of beginning, continue thence in a Southerly direction along the west line of said Talladega-Eastaboga public road a distance of 1200 feet to a point; thence South 87 degrees 00 minutes West to a point which would be located upon a straight line drawn from the Northeast corner of the Southwest Quarter of the Southeast Quarter (SW 1/4 of SE 1/4) of said Section 7 to the Southwest corner of the Northwest Quarter of Northeast Quarter (NW 1/4 of NE 1/4) of Section 18, Township 18, Range 6, which said line shall hereafter be referred to as Line "A"; thence in a Northeasterly direction along Line "A" to a point South 87 degrees 00 minutes West from the point of beginning; thence North 87 degrees 00 minutes East to the point of beginning, said tract of land lying in the South Half of Southeast Quarter (S 1/2 of SE 1/4) of Section 7 and the North Half of Northeast Quarter (N 1/2 of NE 1/4) of Section 18. all in Township 18 South, Range 6 East, Talladega County, Alabama.

### Boundary Justification:

The boundaries are irregular in a rural setting. Therefore, the boundaries, as drawn by the Department of Revenue and as described in the Legal Description, will serve as the boundaries for this National Register nomination.

