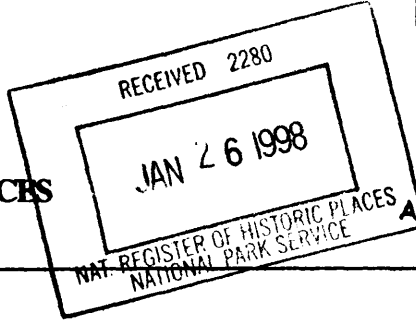


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



JUL 23 1997

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

Ala. Historical Commission

**1. Name of Property**

Historic Name: Thomhill

Other Names/Site Number: Hardie-Lewis House

**2. Location**

Street & Number 29229 Highway 21

Not for Publication: NA

City or Town: Talladega

Vicinity: NA

State: Alabama

Code: AL

County: Talladega

Code: 121

Zip Code: 35160

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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]*

1/16/98

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 Keeper  
Edson H Beal  
Date of Action  
2/20/98

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>7</u>	<u>2</u> 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

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Category:

Domestic

Agriculture/Subsistence

Commerce

Other

Funerary

Subcategory:

Single Dwelling

Secondary Structure

Animal Facility

Office

Horse Race Track

Cemetery

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Category:

Domestic

Funerary

Subcategory:

Single Dwelling

Secondary Structure

Animal Facility

Cemetery

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Mid-19th Century/Greek Revival

Other: I house

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

roof Asphalt

walls Wood

other \_\_\_\_\_

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

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**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.) N/A

- 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  
Social History

**Period of Significance**

1835 - 1901

**Significant Dates**

1835

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

N/A

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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### Bibliography

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

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS)

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

# HABS No. ALA-441

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:

Library of Congress (HABS)

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: 15 acres

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

Zone Easting Northing

A 16 579660 3696090 C 16 580160 3695980

B 16 579820 3696120 D 16 580000 3695740

XX 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.)

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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Name/Title: Gene A. Ford, Nathan Farris and Trina Binkley (Reviewer)- AHC

Organization: Private Consultant

Date: January 13, 1997

Street & Number: #10 Lakeview

Telephone: (205) 752-4599

City or Town: Tuscaloosa

State: Alabama

Zip Code: 35401

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**Additional Documentation**

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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)

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**Property Owner**

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

Name: Mr. and Mrs. M. P. Greene, Jr. Street & Number: 29229 Highway 21 Telephone: (205) 362-4046

City or Town: Talladega State: Alabama Zip Code: 35160

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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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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The Thornhill plantation property lies within the boundaries of Talladega County, Alabama. The historic property is situated adjacent to Highway 21 just outside of the southwestern city limits of Talladega. The plantation property encompasses a fifteen-acres site on which the "Big House," known as Thornhill (Contributing-C, building); the old plantation office, now a guest house (C, building); the old servants' quarters, also now a guest house (C, building); a late 1830s barn (C, building); the family cemetery (C, site); the circa 1872-1880 horse racetrack (C, structure); the historic road leading from present-day Highway 21 up to the farm and house complex of buildings (C, structure); a circa 1990 residence (Noncontributing-NC, building); and a 1994 chapel (NC, building). Constructed in 1835, Thornhill is a Greek Revival styled I house which features an L-shaped configuration, cross gable roof, five bay facade, central double bay entry, and pedimented portico. This historic house and its associated resources are in good condition and retain a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Thornhill lies within a section of Talladega County that is considered part of the Alabama Valley and Ridge physiographic region. A series of folded and faulted parallel ridges and valleys that trend northeast-southwest, typify the area (Mancini 1990). The valley and stream terraces are well suited to crop land, pasture land, and woodland (United States Department of Agriculture 1974). Thornhill's immediate environment is still somewhat rural, despite the fact that the farm is on the edge of the city of Talladega. A number of surrounding tracts of land in the area are currently being utilized for tree farming and the growing of agricultural products, such as soy beans (Meeks and Machen 1994).

Highway 21, which embraces the southeastern edge of the Thornhill property, encroaches upon this bucolic setting. A number of businesses have set up shop in buildings of recent construction along the highway route. The Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind Rehabilitation and Riding Arena occupies a parcel of land adjacent to the northeastern section of the Thornhill nomination boundaries. Talladega Creek meanders along the northern edge of the historic property. To the west are rolling woodlands. A tilled field extends southward to Highway 21.

A historic roadbed (C) from Highway 21 up to the house complex, initially snaking between woodland to the north and grasslands to the south, then heading northward toward the main residence with woodlands on either side.

A house of contemporary origins (NC) stands on the eastern side of the property. Built in 1990, the wood frame house features a gable roof and a wrap-around porch. The woodwork on the porch is reminiscent of late nineteenth century architectural styles. A white picket fence, built in 1990, surrounds the house.

The historic drive continues northward until it reaches a point where it forks, with the left fork veering west passing just south of the main residence. Portions of the circa 1872-1880 horse racetrack (C) remain west of the house, including the track bed and banked curves.

The chapel (NC) is situated in the midst of a stand of trees southwest of the main house. It appears as if it were a long time occupant of the space; however, it was erected in 1994. It features a front gable roof, double leaf entry with side lights and a transom, brick foundation, and three bays on either side of the nave. The interior is filled with Catholic icons from Eastern Europe.

South of the chapel lies the Hardie Family Cemetery (C) wherein is interred John Hardie (1797-1848) and

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his wife Mary Mead Hardie (1812-1872), the master and mistress of Thornhill, and several generations of their progeny. An iron fence configured in a rectangle surrounds the cemetery. In all there are twenty-four marked graves and one unmarked grave.

Going back to the fork in the road and continuing north toward the main house, the historic drive continues ending on the eastern side of Thornhill. A late 1830s, two-story frame transverse-type barn (C) is situated east of the house. Clad in board-and-batten, the barn contains a long gable roof with a recently added cupola, ample loft space for hay, and a stone pier foundation. The Greens currently board horses in the barn.

A building that once served as **servant's quarters (C)** stands east of the main house at the end of the drive. Constructed in circa 1840, the wood frame weatherboard building has a rectangular plan with a gable front roof clad in corrugated metal, gable front porch roof supported by wood posts with a wood slat balustrade, hand-made brick pier foundation on hand-hewn sill beams, an interior brick chimney, and a cellar. The front (south) facade and rear elevation contain centrally located entries, while the side elevations have two windows. This building is now used as a guest house.

The heart of the property is contained within a white picket fence and includes the **old plantation office (C)** and the **Thornhill plantation house (C)**. Inside the fenced grounds a walkway leads up to the front (south) facade of the house. Two large oaks, which were planted in the middle of the previous century, rise up and branch out just inside the fence. A healthy expanse of lawn stretches out in all directions. Shrubs and plants placed around the yard and perimeter of the house enhance the setting. The old plantation office, now a guest cottage, was constructed at the same time of the house, 1835. The office is one-story frame covered in weatherboard with a side gable roof and brick side chimney. Its north and south elevations feature an entry door and a double hung window.

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Thornhill, the central focus of the plantation setting, represents the embodiment of the I house genre. Its rooms are arranged in a classical one room deep, two rooms wide, and two stories high configuration. A central hall on each floor separates the rooms while a two-story ell projects off the northeast corner of the residence. In other words, Thornhill is an I house with a rear ell. The rear ell was built at the same time as the core of the home, or shortly thereafter.

A cross gable roof crowns the L-shaped configuration of the house. The roof is sheathed with a skin of asphalt shingles. A separate roof covers a two-story porch that is inset into the ell. Asphalt shingles sheath this roof. An exterior chimney stands at each of the three ends of the house. White weatherboards form a protective layer of exterior siding, and shutters flank either side of the windows.

The facade, or south side of Thornhill, favors Classical Revival architecture. With its five over five bay arrangement and centrally oriented portico, its composition is symmetrically balanced. An unembellished cornice crowns the top of the facade and ties into the cornice of the portico, thus unifying the two elements. Atop the portico cornice rests a modest pediment. Four box columns with a slight entasis support the pediment and complete the classical ensemble.

Other facade elements bear noting. There are nine-over-nine double hung sash windows. Weatherboards are arranged flush with each other around the two entries. A cantilevered second floor balcony projects out from the facade. A double leaf opening permits passage between the balcony and a second floor central hall. Multiple pane sidelights and a pair of pilasters flank either side of the doorway while a multiple pane transom crowns it. The treatment for the first floor entry is similar, but more ornate. Round, attenuated pilasters interspersed with a field of multiple pane glass surround the two recessed panel doors. A transom featuring an interplay of glass configured in the form of gothic arches with flanking round pilasters caps the doorway.

The fenestration on the east side of the house consists of four openings straddling the chimney that are uniform in size and fitted with nine-over-nine double hung sash windows. These four windows coincide with the main body of the I house, the remaining four with the rear ell. The bathroom window on the second floor, the smallest of the eight, lacks shutters and has only twelve panes. The adjacent bedroom window is a six over nine pane sash affair. The kitchen and diningroom feature six-over-six and nine-over-nine double hung sash windows, respectively.



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The north side of the ell is punctuated by seven openings. Near the top of the gable is a rectangular, louvered ventilator. Beneath it are four identical six-over-nine double hung sash windows. These windows coincide with two second floor bedrooms. On the first floor, there are four openings: a nine-over-nine double hung sash window, single leaf entry, and two large picture windows. The entry is concealed by a covered stairwell that leads to an attached wood frame carport with latticework embellishment.

A two-tiered L-shaped screened porch is nestled into the space between the west side of the ell and the north side of the main body. The openings between the vertical supports on the second floor are covered with latticework. Beneath the latticework is a series of recessed panels. Crowning the top of the exterior, first floor treatment is a band of latticework. Beneath it is a series of embellished screened panels and a single leaf entry.

The interior of the first floor central hall exhibits a stately yet simple decorum. Wide pine boards cover the floor. A stairwell rises to a landing and from it to second floor hall. The stairwell is composed of modest spindles, treads and risers, newel posts, scrolled stair end, applied trimwork, and handrails. On the first floor, there are three doorways off the hall: two, which face each other, lead to the formal diningroom and living room/parlor, respectively; the third permits access to the library. Cased with fluted molding and corner blocks, the recessed panel doors compliment the Federal detailing of the space.

The formal diningroom is situated east of the central hall. Like the hall, the diningroom conveys a sense of restrained taste. Paneled dado wraps around the four walls of the room. Fluted molding and corner blocks encase window and door openings alike. A floral motif molding is affixed to the ceiling above a chandelier. On the east wall of the room, a mantel reflective of Federal period sensibilities dresses the chimney openings. Pine boards cover the floor. A doorway in the north end of the room permits passage to the kitchen.

The livingroom/parlor, which flanks the west side of the hall, very much mirrors the diningroom in its details with the exception of furnishings.

The library, which is part of the rear ell, is situated on the north side of the central hall. An anteroom is sandwiched between the two rooms. In this interior space, a half bathroom is tucked into its east side and a closet on the other. The library is entered via a recessed panel door. Stained wood panels line the walls while boards cover the floors. Stained cabinets and bookcases rise from floor to ceiling on the east wall. A doorway is cut into this wall permitting cross traffic between the library and kitchen. The north wall features two picture windows. A doorway in the west wall provides access to the sun porch.

The kitchen is part of the rear ell as well. Stained boards comprise the flooring. The kitchen is actually divided into two spaces: the kitchen proper and an adjoining space that is utilized as informal dining. The two spaces are separated by a peninsula that features a stove and drawers and overhead cabinets. The sink is stationed below the smaller of the two windows punctuating the east wall. More

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cabinets and an oven are oriented along the south wall. A doorway cut into the north wall leads to an exterior staircase, which in turn leads to the carport. Next to the doorway is a mantel.

A bedroom flanks either side of the upstairs central hall. The arrangement of the two bedrooms are similar to that of the living room/parlor and formal dining room. The two bedrooms lack wainscoating; the windows feature plain molding; and the mantels are restrained in design. A short hall off the west bedroom accommodates an elevator, the first floor landing of which is off the library. An adjacent doorway provides access to a small bedroom in the rear ell. A doorway in the north wall of the east bedroom leads to a bathroom and office space in the rear ell. Providing an authentic historic touch is an autograph etched onto one of the south facing window panes in the east bedroom: "Annie Hardie, 1864." Annie, one of John and Mary Hardie's daughters, who was then 16, tested the authenticity of her diamond engagement ring by scratching her name on the window.

The small bedroom on the second floor of the rear ell has a bathroom tucked into the southeast corner. The hall along the west wall permits access to the porch. The north wall has an opening fitted with two six over nine pane sash windows. Yet another doorway, this one in the east wall of the bedroom, enables traffic to flow between it and the office.

There is a closet in the southwest corner of the office. Six-over-nine pane double hung sash windows pierce the north and east walls. A doorway in the south wall leads to the bathroom that is sandwiched between it and the east bedroom.

The extant buildings on the Thornhill plantation property developed in three basic stages. Thornhill came to fruition circa 1835. At that time, John Hardie built a home befitting a man of his stature. During this period, the barn, servant's house, and office were built. In 1959, Thornhill was renovated and modernized by one of Hardie's decedents. Some twenty-six years later the historic property underwent a facelift.

In 1835, John Hardie built Thornhill and a score of outbuildings on a 700-acre track of land. The appearance of the individual buildings and plantation as a whole in the mid nineteenth century is unknown; however, it can be partially reconstructed from various bits of information.

The configuration of and layout of rooms in Thornhill have changed very little during the last 150 years. Recently, Robert Gamble, a leading authority on Alabama architecture and long-time architectural historian with the Alabama Historical Commission, conducted an on-site analysis of the antebellum house. He concluded that the main body of the house and rear ell were built contemporaneously, or within a short period of each other. Structural evidence led him to believe that the bedroom above the library (originally a porch) was originally designed as such or resulted from a porch enclosure shortly after construction of the residence. Gamble considers the arrangement of a second-story enclosed room over a porch to be an atypical attribute of early nineteenth-century architecture in Alabama.

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In addition to the main house, the Thornhill plantation featured a score of satellite structures. The barn, office/guest house, and servants' quarters/guest house constitute the remains of the mid nineteenth-century plantation milieu. According to Pat Greene, there were a number of cisterns situated below ground (Personal Interview 1996). He has discovered several of them, one of which is located near the rear porch.

Several people have informed Greene about a house, which was once located between the Hardie cemetery and his son's home. One of these people is a very old African American woman now living in the Detroit area, who recalled living in the house as a very young child. Greene found some remnants (a number of bricks) of a structure in the vicinity of this reported house. Local lore has it that John Hardie lived in it while Thornhill was being built. A collection of slave houses once stood south of Highway 21 (Lewis 1928).

A photograph of Thornhill taken in 1927 reveals little if any change in the appearance. In 1927, the residence featured weatherboard siding, a five over five bay facade, and a pedimented portico. Eight nine-over-nine double hung sash windows flank the portico. A picket fence surrounded the house. By the time the Greens bought Thornhill, the fence had collapsed and had to be rebuilt. With its faded and worn mein, Thornhill was showing its age.

Between 1935 and 1936, the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), documented Thornhill. Unfortunately, the HABS recordation included photographs and a brief data sheet. However, the limited documentation brings some interesting facts to light. An exterior view of Thornhill's facade indicates that it remained unaltered between 1927 and 1935 with the exception of the addition of a balustrade on either side of the portico. The north side of the rear ell had fewer bays, as did the east side. The north side of the space that coincides with the present library was enclosed, and was bounded by a one-story shed room where now stands the two-tiered rear porch. This side of Thornhill was sans a carport in 1935.

Two interior shots, one of the first floor hall and the other of the mantel in the living room, show that much of the interior detailing has been retained.

A number of Thornhill's outbuildings were documented by HABS. According to the photograph, the office was much as it is today. In 1935, the barn did not have a cupola, and may not have had a shed addition on its east side. Its west side shed did not extend the full depth of the barn. The barn compound once included three other ancillary structures. The fence enclosing the space was in disrepair. The iron fence surrounding the cemetery, however, appeared to be in sound shape.

**Archaeological Component:** Although no formal archaeological survey has been conducted on the Thornhill property, the potential for subsurface remains is high. Buried portions may contain significant information that may be useful in interpreting the entire area.

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Statement of Significance

Criterion A: Social History

Thornhill is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for social history as a building complex that illustrates several patterns in elite lifeways of nineteenth century Alabama. The main house and its associated historic satellite buildings, structures, and sites (office, slave house, barn, racetrack, cemetery, and roadbed) function as cultural artifacts from the plantation system and post-Civil War period, providing information on the division of functions, social relationships, and general way-of-life associated with large-scale agricultural enterprises of the nineteenth century. Thornhill is particularly interesting in its evolution from an antebellum plantation, to the postwar tenancy system, to an absentee-owned farm used in part for recreational purposes in the late nineteenth century.

Thornhill was constructed by John Hardie, a Scottish-born merchant or factor, who immigrated to the United States, and following a typical pattern among many of his fellow countrymen who ended up in the South, made a substantial amount of money in commerce and subsequently invested his funds in a plantation. Land and slaves were the two most prominent symbols of status in Alabama at the time, and Hardie acquired them most likely to properly join the neo-feudal elite of the state rather than remaining simply a well to do "outsider" merchant. The main house, with its pedimented portico and neoclassical references, clearly states the planterly ambition of Hardie, while the core of the barn structure implies his need to travel in his mercantile capacity. Of course, the slave quarter and plantation offices illustrate the primary task of the planter in managing his chattel workforce.

Thornhill also has a strong association with the world of women in the nineteenth century. It is relatively clear that after John Hardie's death in 1848, his wife Mary Mead Hardie took over management of the plantation. With her widowhood, Mary Hardie's legal status moved from *femme coverte* to *femme sole*, that is, from a woman whose property is controlled by her husband, to a woman who herself controls her property. The plantation office clearly became a socially expedient space for Mary Hardie, as she could spatially utilize this structure to change societal spheres and to some extent identities. She could move from the main house, where her role was primarily as the keeper of the domestic realm, to the office, where she took on the masculine role of plantation manager. The spatial segregation between the two spaces allowed Mary Hardie to maintain her sway over both realms and maintained a social boundary whereby field laborers were kept out of the domestic realm of the main house. Upon Mary Hardie's death, the property was inherited by her daughter, Ann Eliza Hardie Lewis. Significantly, John and Mary Hardie had several sons, but the plantation property was left to a daughter. The sons were apparently left cash or assets which would help them in their pursuits of mercantile wealth, apparently always the predominant source of capital for the family. This relates to a traditional

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Anglo-American pattern of property distribution whereby the sons inherit cash and means of production while daughters inherit property associated with the domestic realm (here in actuality an entire domestic realm) to enhance their status as a housekeeper and wife. Of course, Ann Hardie Lewis was married and therefore a *femme coverte*, having little control over her own property. Her husband outlived her and eventually sold the property out of the family, ending the period of significance of this property for its social history significance.

Finally, Thornhill reflects broader changes in socio-economic organization which influenced life in the middle of the nineteenth century in Alabama. The plantation to operate under the system of slave labor. The slave quarter and plantation office stand as reminders to this. However, after the Civil War, the work force was freed and Mary Hardie decided to lease her agricultural lands to another farmer. Upon Mary's death in 1872, the Lewises became truly absentee landowners, as their main residence was in New Orleans. The Lewises used the property as a recreational retreat, building a race track and supplying ornamental elaboration to the barn. The age of plantation wealth had clearly fled and Thornhill had taken up a new function as a luxury property, a sort of rural resort more in keeping with the lifestyle of the Victorian upper-middle class than with the lifestyle of the plantation-oriented society for which it was built. Clearly, many of the nuances of elite lifestyles and attitudes towards property and gender in nineteenth century Alabama are strongly associated with Thornhill in a way that makes it an exceptionally important property to recognize and designate.

#### Criterion C: Architecture

The Thornhill plantation property is also eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an excellent example of an I-house vernacular form with Greek Revival detailing. With its simplified Doric motifs and interior Federal detailing, John Hardie's residence constitutes one of several manifestations of the Classical vocabulary evident in the design of the area's significant plantation houses. Hardie's choice for the design of the family residence derived from a strong southeastern architectural and social tradition. According to Alabama Historical Commission architectural historian Robert Gamble (1987), antecedents found in the British Isles devolved characteristics to the I house form, which was transplanted to the eastern seaboard, and the Tidewater region in particular, or what cultural geographer Fred Kniffen (1986) designated a "cultural hearth" for this particular vernacular form. From the Tidewater country, the I house form was conveyed to Tennessee and Georgia and then to Alabama in the early nineteenth century. During its Southern swing, it "became associated with economic attainment by agriculturists" (Kniffen 1986). Thus, Thornhill was a fitting symbol of Hardie's position as an upper middle class planter. In his monograph on Alabama architecture, *The Alabama Catalog*, Gamble states that the I house could achieve a surprising degree of refinement in rural Alabama by adding anything from Classical to Victorian detailing. Thornhill exemplifies the Classical variation of the I house form, standing out as one of the best examples of the Greek Revival style in the Talladega area.

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### Historical Summary

Thornhill's history is inextricably commingled with the themes of immigration and good fortune, manifest destiny and Indian removal, and settlement and development of the frontier.

Thornhill's history began nearly two hundred years ago in Scotland. Born in Saline in 1796, John was the sixth child of John and Isabel Cousin Hardie, who would have eleven children in all. History records John's father as a farmer (Martin 1988). John and his siblings grew up on farms near Saline and Kinross, the latter of which was known as "Thomy Hill."

Although agriculture was a predominant theme in young John's life, mercantile interests were not a mystery to him. His older brother Joseph operated a grocery and hardware store in Kinross, which is located twenty miles north of Edinburgh (Martin 1988). John is believed to have worked in his brother's store. He was educated to be a bookkeeper. Hardie continued to entertain the duality of agriculture and commerce throughout his life.

At the age of twenty, John Hardie set forth to make his fortune. He first plied his skills in the Edinburgh market but found the going difficult as times were hard (Lewis 1928). He then decided to journey forth to the New World, the land of opportunity. Thus, it was that he sailed for America in 1817 with memories of his family and Thorny Hill strong in his heart and thoughts.

The twenty-one year old fortune seeker was not without an entree into the American scene, though. Hardie elected to stay with the family of his deceased Uncle James. The family was established in New York city. Despite letters of introduction and familial connections, Hardie left New York eight days after arriving, citing competition with too many gentlemen's sons as his reason for leaving for more likely opportunities (Martin 1988).

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Heeding advice, Hardie decided to try his luck in up and coming Richmond, Virginia. There, he gained employment in a business house, but later transferred to another store (Lewis 1928). Ambitious, the young businessman saved his money until such time when he could make better use of it.

In late 1818, Hardie caught a fever of a migratory nature. Like many Virginians of the time, he moved to the newly opened Alabama Territory. He settled in Huntsville where he gained favorable employment with a Mr. Read, who headed the land office and a store (Lewis 1928). Hardie prospered and eventually became a partner with Read and James White in Ditto's Landing (later Whitesburg after James White), which is located south of Huntsville. His prospects continued to improve as he met Mary Mead Hall. They were married in 1828 and proceeded to start a family (Martin 1988). In 1830 the Hardies bought a large tract of land in the Whitesburg area, possibly with the intent of building a house to accommodate a growing family, but that was never realized (Martin 1988).

By the early 1830s, John Hardie had amassed a small fortune through mercantile interests. While a primary theme in his life, commerce did not distract him from returning to his agrarian roots. Some time in 1834 or 1835, Hardie bought 700 acres in what was then the recently established village of Mardisville near Talladega (Martin 1988).

After the Creek Indians officially ceded all their territory east of the Mississippi River in 1832, a land office was created at the site of Jumper's Springs. Shortly thereafter, the name of the site of the land office, which was the seat for the entire Coosa District, was changed to Mardisville in honor of Samuel W. Mardis, Congressman from Shelby County (Jemison 1959). In short time, settlers began to populate Mardisville, transforming the frontier village into a bustling center of activity for the then newly founded Talladega county. The county was created by an act of legislature on January 12, 1833.

Mardisville, attributed as the first white village in Talladega County, featured a collection of buildings. A Leonard Warrant built a log dogtrot home (Jemison 1959). One of the central fixtures of the community was a large sixteen-room tavern. Mercantile structures abounded with a cake shop, bakery, livery stable, wood shop, tailor shop, and John Hardie's store. Hardie retained his enterprises in Whitesburg as well as running the store in Mardisville (Martin 1988). A Presbyterian Church and a Methodist Church stood tall in the community. The town had two academies, one for boys, and the other for girls. Fine homes, among them the Waugh House (a dogtrot), the Micah Taul Home ( a two -story log structure), the Ansel Sawyer Home, and the residence of Dr. McAlpine, were the order of the day (Jemison 1959). And, of course, Thornhill, the Hardie plantation, was included among the ensemble, although it was actually situated a short distance from the village proper.

Thornhill was no mere idle fancy of a businessman. John Hardie developed his 700-acre farm into a major plantation. To his initial land acquisition, Hardie added 1,000 acres, giving him a total of 1,700 acres with which to grow cotton (Martin 1988). He retained a large working force on the plantation. The 6th Census of the United States recorded 52 slaves at Thornhill in 1840.

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While Hardie built a financial and agricultural empire, circumstances would be beyond his control in maintaining his business interests. After a particularly exhausting business trip in which Hardie journeyed to Mobile then was immediately summoned to Whitesburg, he contracted a fatal fever (Lewis 1928). Hardie could not shake the fever and died on August 17, 1848 at the age of 52. He left his wife to care for their nine children (at the time Mary was five months pregnant, so the number was soon to be ten), multiple commercial enterprises, and a 1,700-acre plantation.

In what amounts to a story of personal triumph, Mary Mead Hardie was equal to the task. Mary, who never remarried, had a large labor force to oversee. In 1850 she had 54 slaves and servants (United States Slave Census 1850). Her real estate was valued at \$10,000 (United States Census 1850). It is interesting to note that the census lists Mary Hardie as the head of the household but omits her occupation. This fact becomes more interesting when it is learned that her oldest son John T. was recorded as a merchant.

Mary Hardie continued to head Thornhill Plantation in the 1860s. In 1860, she owned 44 slaves and servants (United States Slave Census 1860). Her real estate was valued at \$12,500 and the value of her personal estate was set at \$48,000 (United States Census 1860). Interestingly enough, the census did credit her with being a farmer. Perhaps, she had earned a place in a man's world.

During the war years, Mary oversaw the plantation and prayed for those six of her sons who had volunteered to fight for the Confederacy. According to *Brothers In Arms*, which chronicles the deeds of the Hardie brothers in the Civil War (Hardie 1994), John joined the Confederate Cavalry; James served in the 59th Alabama; Joseph was Adjutant of the 4th Regiment Alabama Infantry; Robert attained the rank of Captain in Joe Wheeler's Headquarter's Scouts. For her part, Mary made clothes for her sons during their service (Martin 1988). She was involved in a skirmish of her own as Union troops raided Thornhill and absconded with a large quantity of livestock (Jemison 1959). Remarkably, all of the Hardie brothers returned home after the war.

The end of the Civil War spelled the end of the plantation system in the South. Slavery was officially abolished, thus setting free the captive work force on plantations in general and Thornhill in particular. In response to this development, Mary Hardie decided to lease her lands to another farmer (Martin 1988). The 9th Census documented Mary Hardie as "keeping house" (United States Census 1870). She kept house until her death in 1872.

Thornhill passed on to Ann Eliza Hardie Lewis, one of John and Mary's daughters, and her husband Jefferson M. Lewis in 1872. J.M. Lewis was a well established merchant in New Orleans. The Lewises initially used Thornhill as a summer home (Martin 1988). The Lewises, both fond of horses and horse racing, had a race track built on the Thornhill grounds, banks of which is visible a short distance south of the main residence, between 1872 and 1880 (Jemison 1959). Ann died in 1880. Her husband sold Thornhill to a H. P. Coffee in 1901 (Martin 1988).



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When Mary Welch Lee bought Thornhill sometime around 1936, she claimed to have been the first owner to live on the estate in fifty years (Martin 1988). Judging by the HABS photographs, the property had been neglected for a number of years. When Anna Meade Minnigerode, one of John and Mary Hardie's great-granddaughters, and her husband bought Thornhill in 1959, it was the first time in nearly 60 years that the estate had been in the family. The Minnigerodes began restoration of the buildings on the historic plantation. This restoration has been passed on to the Greene's, who bought Thornhill in 1985.

Although the acreage of the once vast plantation has been drastically reduced and many of the associated structures have been razed, the historic significance of Thornhill has not been diminished. Thornhill stands as a reminder of Alabama's agricultural past. It tells the story of John Hardie, an aspiring Scottish immigrant who became a successful businessman and planter in the New World. The historic property is one of only a few remnants of the ghost town Mardisville. Mardisville's prosperity declined after Talladega was chosen as the county seat, and the town quickly passed into extinction. Were it not for a cemetery, a historical marker, and Thornhill there would be no tell-tale signs to recall the history of the seat of the Coosa district.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the Thornhill plantation property are outlined on the accompanying base map at 1"=200' scale.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated boundaries were drawn to include the greatest number of resources historically associated with the Thornhill plantation, currently under single ownership.

**UTM References, continued:**

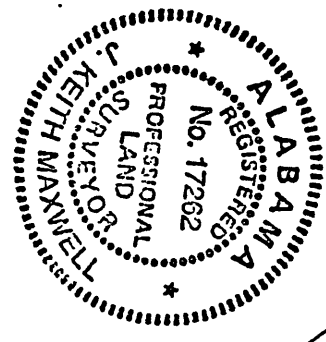
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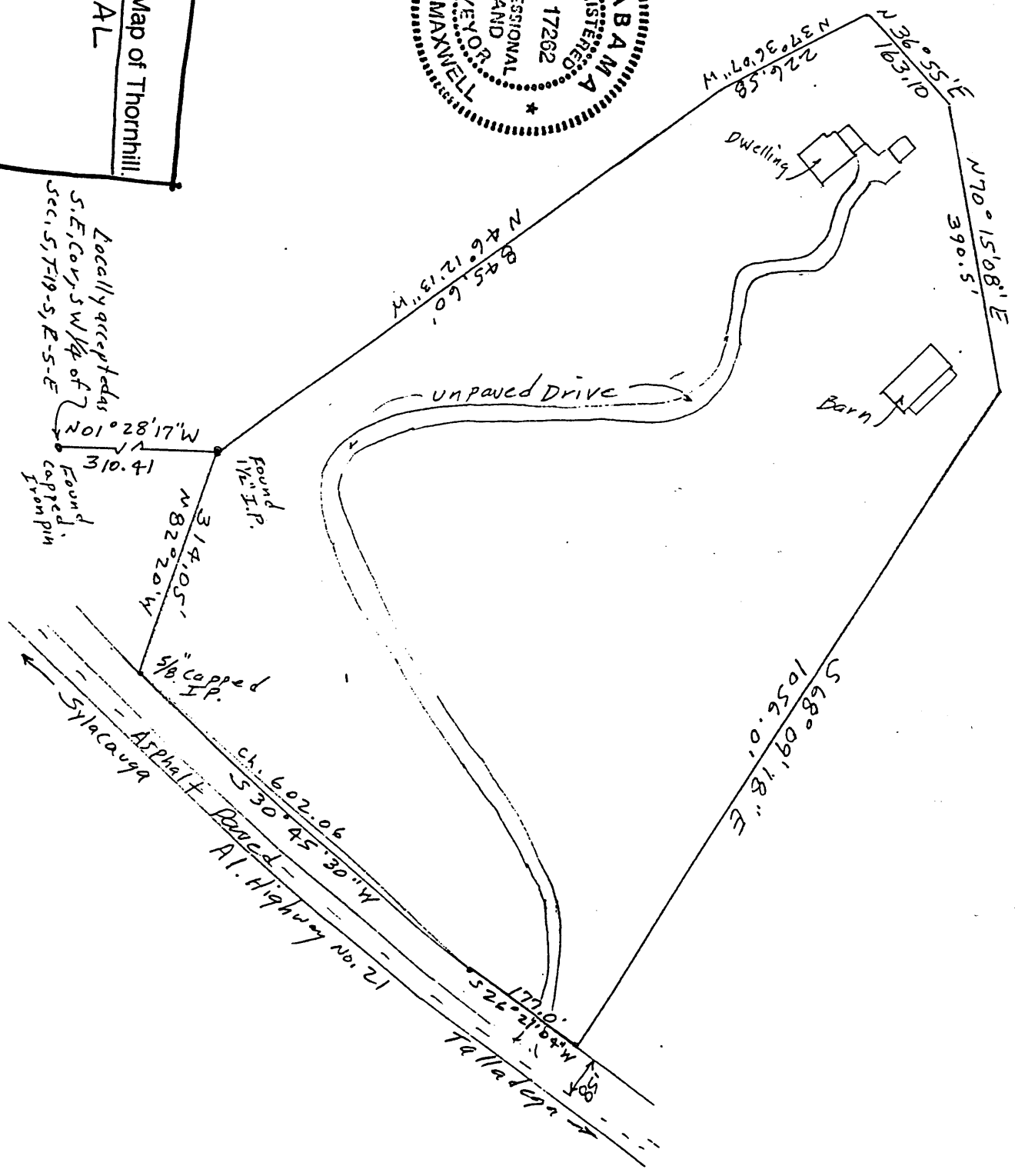
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J.E.M



# BASE MAP

Surveyor's Map of Thornhill,  
Talladega Co., AL

1" = 200'



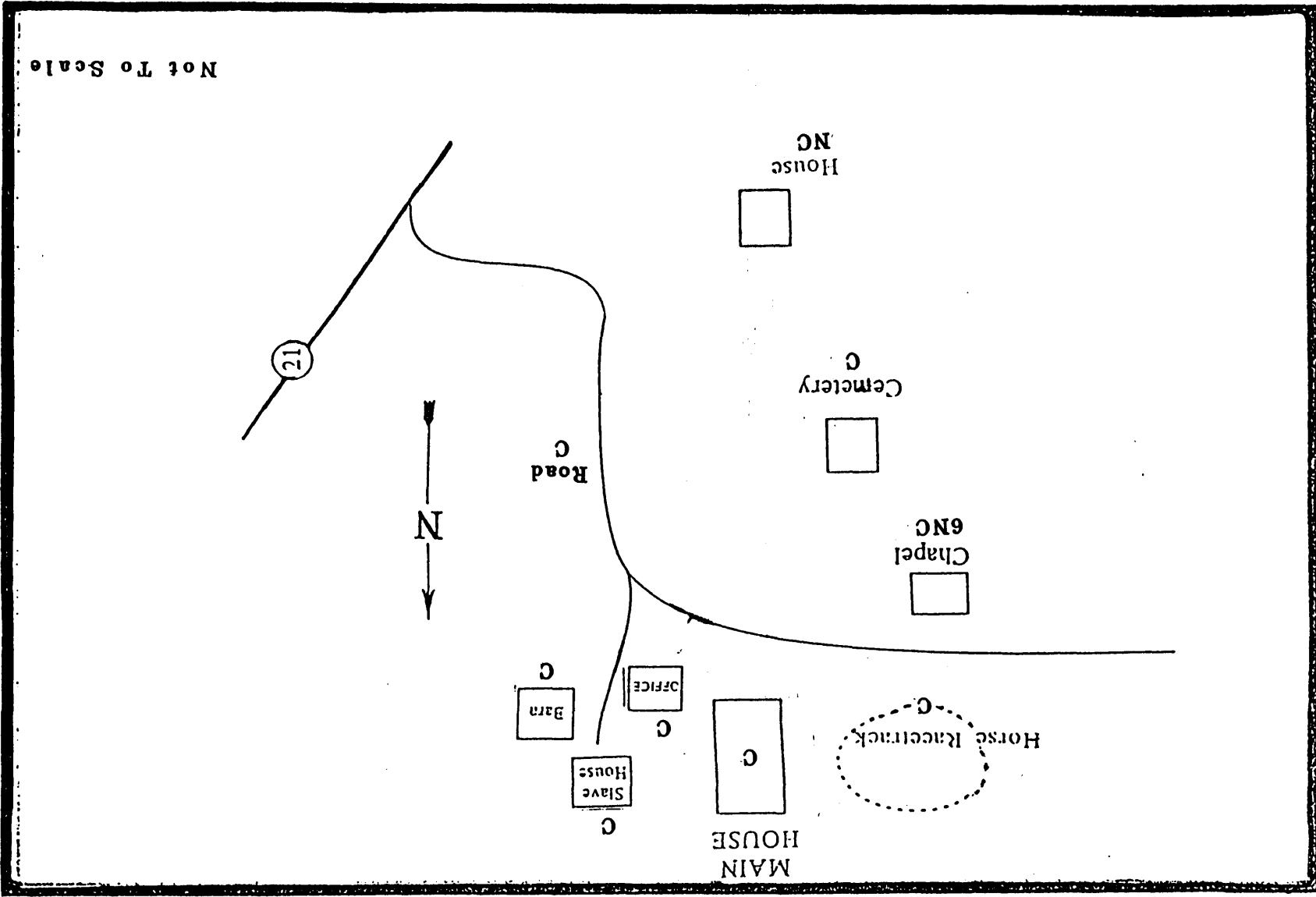
Locally accepted as  
S.E. Cor. 5 W 1/4 of 7  
Sec. 5, T-19-S, R-5-E

Found  
1 1/2" I.P.

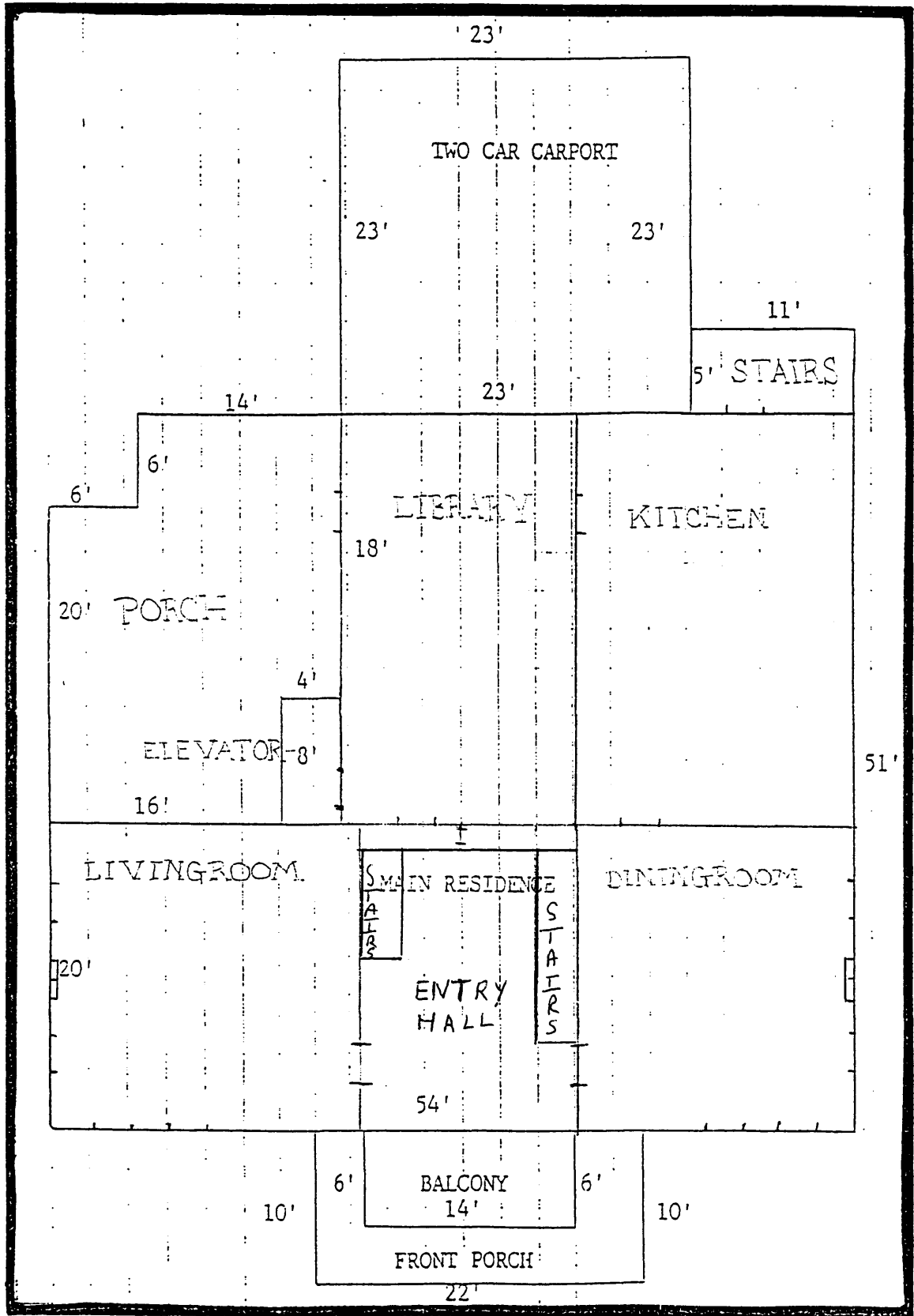
Found  
capped  
5/8" I.P.

Found  
Iron pin

Site Map of Thornhill, Talladega Co., AL



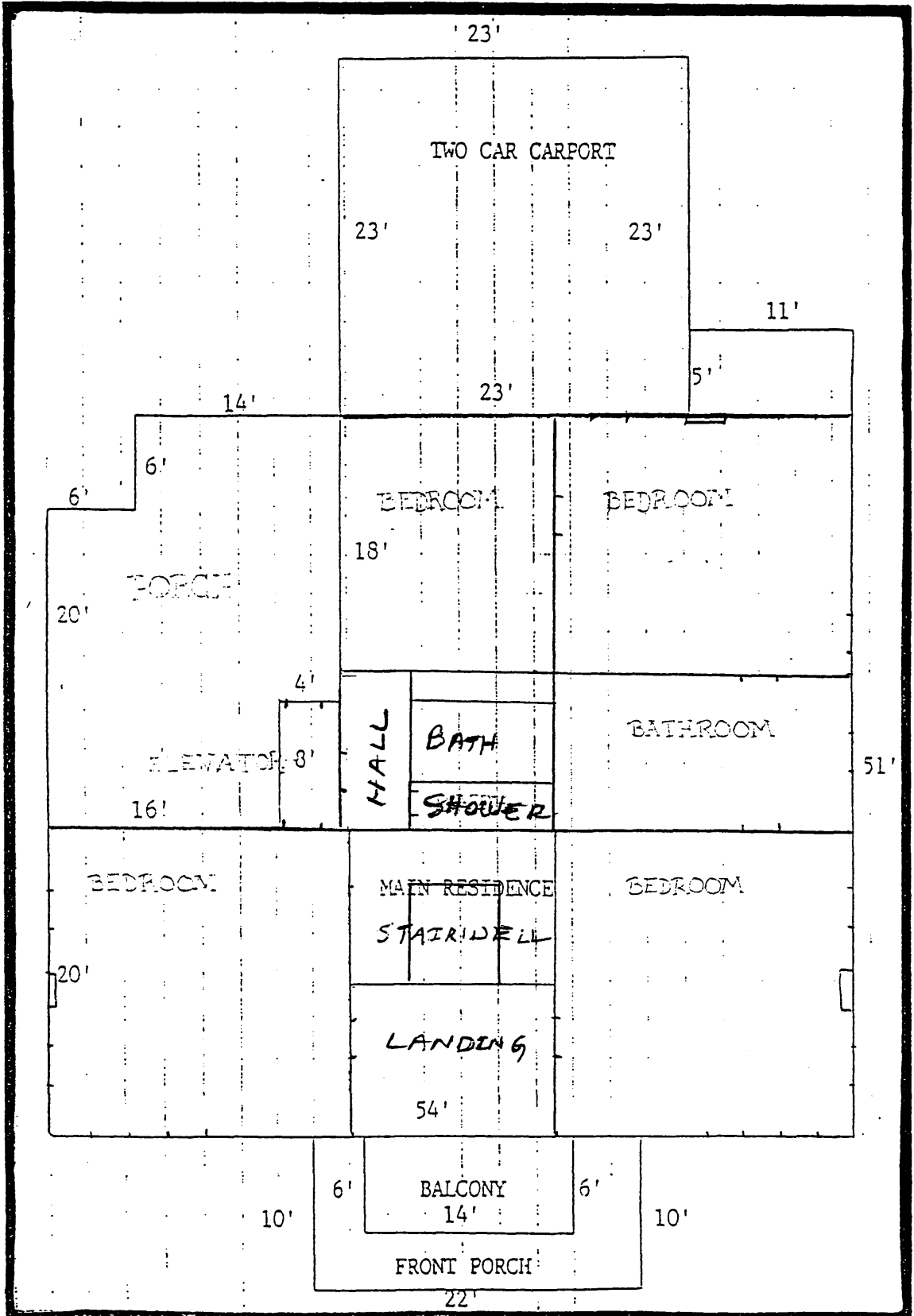
Not To Scale



First Floor Plan

not to scale

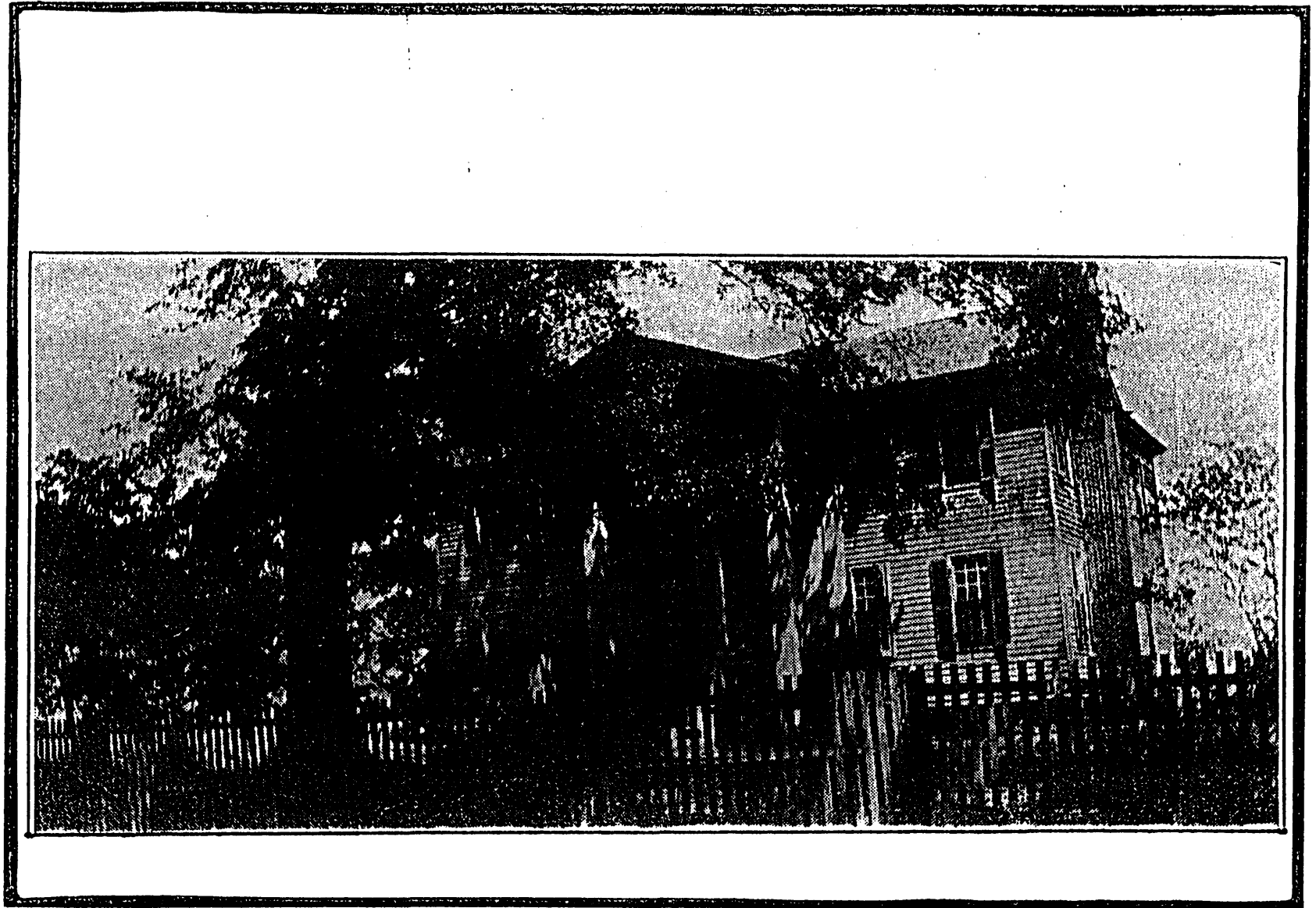
Thornhill, Talladega Co., AL



Second Floor Plan

not to scale

Thornhill, Talladega Co., AL



1927 Photograph of Thornhill, Talladega Co., AL





"Thornhill" (Tom Welch)  
2 mi. S. Talladega, Ala.  
Sylacauga Highway

HABS No. ALA-441

HABS  
ALA.

G. I. TALLA

1-1

(FILM  
NEG.

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Alex Bush, Photographer, May 8, 1935

FRONT AND WEST SIDE

HABS Photograph of Thornhill, Talladega Co., AL

"Thornhill" (Tom Welch)  
2 mi. S. Talladega, Ala.  
Sylacauga, Highway

HABS No. ALA-441

HABS  
ALA

61-TAL

1-2

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NE



HABS Photograph of Thornhill, Talladega Co., AL

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Alex Bush, Photographer, May 8, 1935

"Thornhill" (Tom Welch)  
2 mi. S. Talladega, Ala.  
Sylacauga Highway

HABS No. ALA-441

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HABS Photograph of Thornhill, Talladega Co., AL

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Alex Bush, Photographer, May 8, 1935

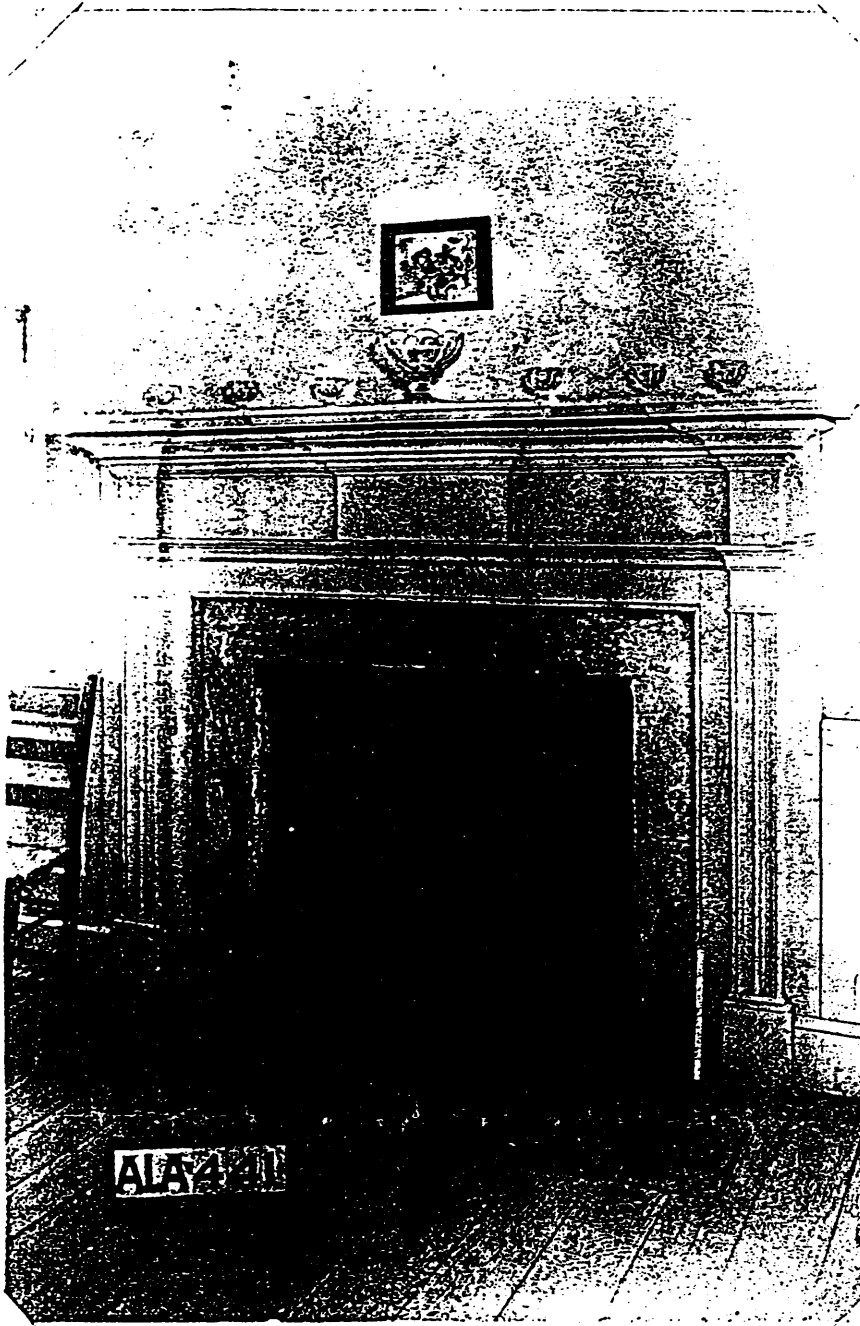
"Thornhill" (Tom Welch)  
2 mi. S. Talladega, Ala.  
Sylacauga Highway

HABS No. ALA-441

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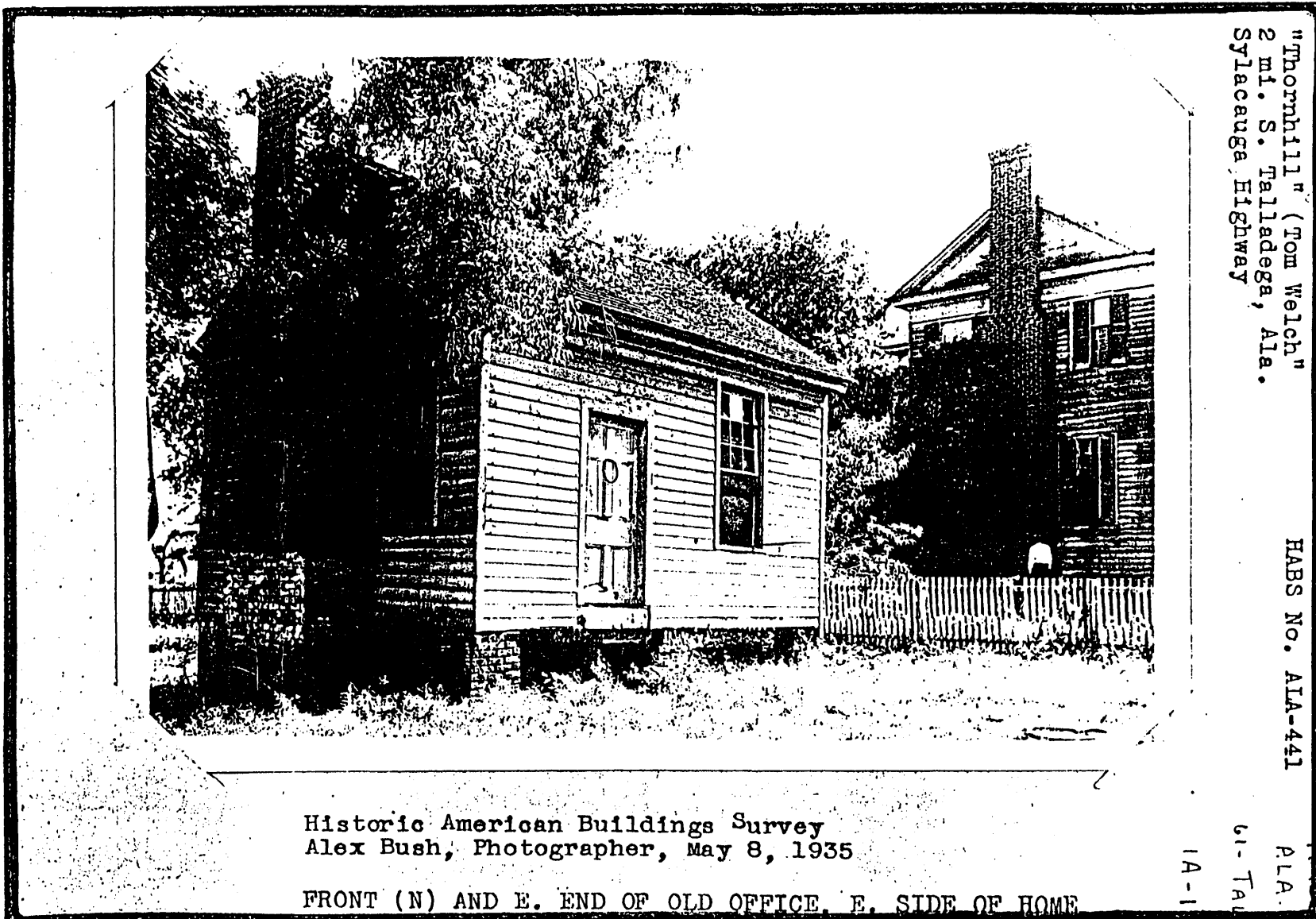
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Historic American Buildings Survey  
Alex Bush, Photographer, May 8, 1935

HABS Photograph of Thornhill, Talladega Co., AL



"Thornhill" (Tom Welch)  
2 mi. S. Talladega, Ala.  
Sylacauga Highway

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Historic American Buildings Survey  
Alex Bush, Photographer, May 8, 1935

FRONT (N) AND E. END OF OLD OFFICE. E. SIDE OF HOME

HABS Photograph of Thornhill, Talladega Co., AL



"Thornhill" (Tom Welch)  
2 mi. S. Talladega, Ala.  
Sylacauga Highway

HABS No. ALA-441

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Alex Bush, Photographer, May 8, 1935

FRONT (W) AND SOUTH SIDE OF BARN

CPIL  
NE

131

61-TA

ALA

HABS Photograph of Thornhill, Talladega Co., AL



"Thornhill" (Tom Welch)  
2 mi. S. Talladega, Ala.  
Sylacauga Highway

HABS No. ALA-441

ALA441

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Alex Bush, Photographer, May 8, 1935

GRAVEYARD, FRONT AND WEST OF HOME

(FILM  
NEG

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61-TAL

HABS  
ALA

HABS Photograph of Thornhill, Talladega Co., AL

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**Photographic Log**

Thornhill, Talladega, Talladega County, Alabama

Name of Photographer: Gene Ford

Date: July 10, 1996

Location of Original Negatives: Alabama Historical Commission

Front facade (south) looking north.

1 of 12

Front facade portico looking northwest.

2 of 12

North and west elevations looking southeast.

3 of 12

East elevation looking southwest.

4 of 12

Front facade entry looking northwest

5 of 12

Front entry hall stairs looking north.

6 of 12

Dining room mantle looking east.

7 of 12

South elevation of slave house/servant's quarters looking north.

8 of 12

South elevation of office looking north.

9 of 12

South and west elevations of barn looking northeast.

10 of 12

Entrance gate to Hardie family cemetery looking southwest.

11 of 12

Grave stones looking west.

12 of 12