

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received APR 11 1986  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

MAY 8 1986

**1. Name**

historic Preuit Oaks

and or common

**2. Location**

street & number 3 miles So. of Leighton on the Cotton Town Road NA not for publication

city, town Leighton NA vicinity of Congressional District 5

state Alabama code 01 county Colbert code 033

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<u>NA</u> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Mrs. Hardy Evans and Mrs. Camilla Shull

street & number Box 62

city, town Leighton NA vicinity of Alabama 35646

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Colbert County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Tuscumbia state Alabama

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1970-present  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

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## 7. Description

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**Condition** excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Preuit Oaks Plantation is situated in rural Colbert County three miles south of Leighton, Alabama. Surrounded by relatively undisturbed woodland, the complex is approached by a mile-and-a-half drive flanked by rows of cedars and other natural foliage. The drive ends in front of the house providing access to the garages and space for informal parking.

The complex contains eleven wood structures constructed between 1847 and 1890 in a variety of structural and exterior treatments. Although much of the original hardware of the buildings has been replaced by machine-made counterparts, several examples of original hardware remain illustrating one of the on-site hand trades of the complex. In addition to the 19th century complex buildings, there are three buildings (two garages, Photo #27 and a stable building, Photo #28; c. 1940-50) with vertical board siding, a family cemetery, Photo #18, and a plantation bell, Photo #9. A pond, picturesquely sited in the clearing of the adjacent woodlands and a slave cemetery (greatly overgrown) are also within the boundaries of the complex. Fourteen of the structures and sites contribute to the nomination.

The center of the complex is a c. 1847 one-and-a-half-story gable roof plantation house (Photo #2) set on brick pillars and featuring gable roof dormers. The original exterior treatment of the building was weatherboards (still intact); however, the house has been recently covered with aluminum siding. The house also has two 20th century additions; a one-story screened porch (Photo #4) situated on the east side, and a small one-story shed roof section at the rear. In spite of these alterations the house still retains much of its antebellum detailing.

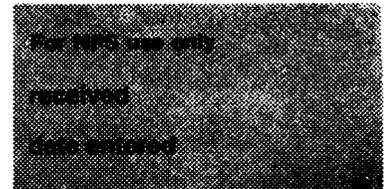
The facade features a pedimented portico supported by square wood columns and flanked by 12/12 windows. Gabled roof dormers containing 6/6 windows are symmetrically situated above the lower windows. Pilasters flank the central double doors (Photo #3). The doors each contain five faceted door panels and are framed with molding consisting of corner-blocks with bull's eye motifs, and sidelights and transoms fashioned after designs featured in early 19th century Asher-Benjamin Patternbooks. This treatment is repeated in the exterior window frames, gable roof dormers and is found throughout the interior in the door surrounds.

The house interior, which features a central hall and four-room floor plan has the original six-inch heart pine flooring, horizontally paneled doors with original hardware, chairrails in the dining room and ceiling medallions in the front and center halls with palmette motifs. The stairhall in the entrance room has a broad landing and features Vitruvian scroll or wave motif, a classical ornamentation typical of the Greek Revival Period. There are brick chimneys flanking the main block of the structure, and two flanking the gable at the rear are situated between the original section and the shed roof addition.

The support buildings included in the complex illustrate the periods of major development and expansion on this Tennessee Valley plantation. Overall, the buildings have suffered little alterations, yet in several cases stabilization is imperative for the survival of the structures.

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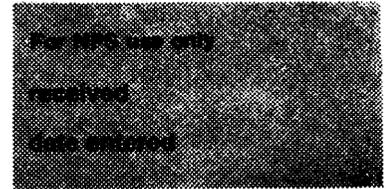
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1. Office (c. 1850); One-story frame (Photo #1) with tin clad gable roof, brick chimney, a central paneled door entrance and windows centered on each side of the building. This building was probably built by Dr. Napier shortly after the residence as his office and similarly utilized by Preuit.
2. Kitchen (1850); One-and-a-half-story frame (Photo #10) with front facing gable roof containing a loft door. The single six-over-six lights sash windows are slightly recessed and found on three sides of the building while the door is located on the east side of the front elevation and faces the rear of the residence. The building is situated directly behind the house and is joined by board covered walk raised with hand hewn logs. Logs also serve as steps for direct access to the yard.
3. Cook's House (1850); One-room hand hewn log structure (Photo #12) with a tin clad gable roof and brick chimney. The structure is situated directly behind the kitchen and has a centered batten door entrance facing east.
- 4,5. Corn Cribs (1870); Two one-story structures (Photo #13 and #14) with gable roofs and vertical board siding. Surrounding foliage has nearly covered three sides of both buildings.
6. Barn (c 1890); One-and-a-half-story structure (Photo #15) with vertical board siding and gambrel roof. Two ground level doors are situated to the far sides of the facade with loft door set in the facing of the gambrel roof.
7. Gin House (c 1850); One-and-a-half story structure (Photo #16) with structural supports of hand hewn timber and vertical board siding. Building has a gable roof containing a centered left opening. The roof of the building collapsed (Spring 1985); however, in spite of its deplorable state, several major elements of a horse-powered cotton gin remain intact inside. Manufactured by the Frick Company of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, the machinery rests on what was once the base of a column from a LaGrange College building. Mounted on the base is a pole (to which horses were hitched) surmounted by a gear wheel. Adjacent to the gear wheel is a blower attached to one of the half-story supports. Ironically, the gin machinery appears to be a stabilizing support for the building as it presently maintains the central section of the building.
8. Tenant House (c 1850-70); One-story double pen (Photo #22) with a tin clad gable roof and chimney. The exterior treatment of structure is vertical board siding; however, closer examination revealed a hand hewn timber structure adjacent to the chimney. The structure is thought to be a c 1850 slave cabin which was expanded in the 1870's as a tenant house. The front facade was reoriented to face the dog trot section in the transition. The structure is situated in the clearing of a grove of oak trees beside the complex pond adjacent to a field. The rather dense grove separates this structure from the concentration of other buildings in the complex.

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9. Smokehouse (c 1850); One-and-a-half-frame structure (Photo #23) with a steeply pitched side gable roof clad in tin. Centered on the front elevation is a hinged door of vertical boards and each gable contains a loft door.
10. Blacksmith Shop (c 1850); One-story structure (Photo #24) with vertical board siding and a gable roof. Gables are faced with weather boarding and the door has the remains of hand wrought hinges (Photo #25). Inside are several blacksmith tools (Photo #26).

The family cemetery is located at the northeast corner of the complex and is enclosed by a modern fence (Photo #18). The cemetery contains graves representing each of the families that have owned the property. Horizontal rows appear to be the major orientation for the lay out; this plan, however, is not absolute. There are a variety of markers in the cemetery including box tombs, monuments and headmarkers, but there is no particular concentration of either. The slave cemetery is situated beyond the pasture at the northwest corner of the complex. The cemetery has not been well maintained and overgrowth of the area obstructs the original orientation of the site.

The complex encompasses 156.7 acres, containing 14 structures and sites that are of architectural or historical significance, and fall within the defined period of significance of the property. One contributing structure (c. 1847 plantation house) has aluminum siding which should be removed, while three additional structures built during the mid-20th century do not contribute. The relatively undisturbed land which somewhat surrounds the concentration of buildings includes pastures, fields and sites of other buildings, allowing for the possibility of the plantation providing additional evidence and information on the development of Alabama cotton plantations in the Tennessee Valley.

Structures and sites that Contribute: 14  
Structures and sites that do not Contribute: 3

## 8. Significance

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 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 type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1847 - 1890 **Builder/Architect** unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### Criterion C - Architecture

The Preuit Oaks Plantation is significant as possessing one of the state's most complete complexes of buildings typical of a 19th century cotton plantation. The complex contains eleven structures (see attached sketch map) constructed between 1850 and 1890 in addition to a c. 1847 plantation house with Federal and Greek Revival features, and includes both a cotton gin building equipped with the basic elements of the original gin machinery and a c. 1870's tenant house speculated to have evolved from a slave cabin. Although several of the buildings are in poor structural condition, their contribution to the complex is essential, and renders them worthy of immediate stabilization and subsequent restoration.

#### Criteria A, B, C, D - Agriculture

The Preuit Oaks Plantation Complex is significant as an illustration of the cotton plantation as it developed in the Tennessee Valley region of Alabama; for its associations with W. Richard Preuit, one of the largest planters in the "Town Creek Triangle" area; and as one of Alabama's finest surviving collections of 19th century plantation buildings. The complex provides an almost complete record of the various support buildings - - barn, cribs, cotton gin, blacksmith shop, smokehouse, cook's house, tenant/slave house, office, kitchen and family cemetery - - that allowed for almost total self-sufficiency of one of the most successful plantations in the area. Additionally, since land surrounding the house has remained relatively undisturbed, the plantation has the potential to yield information on the distribution of slave and tenant houses, few of which survive.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property 156.7

Quadrangle name Leighton

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A	<u>16</u>	<u>453360</u>	<u>3837830</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<u>16</u>	<u>453520</u>	<u>3836250</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<u>16</u>	<u>453150</u>	<u>3836260</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D	<u>16</u>	<u>453170</u>	<u>3837850</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	NA	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shirley Qualls, Cultural Resources Coordinator

organization Alabama Historical Commission date October 4, 1985

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 205 261-3184

city or town Montgomery state Alabama

# 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 *Therese Clark*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 7-3-86

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*John A. Brown*  
Keeper of the National Register

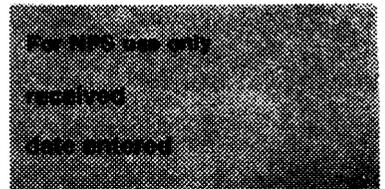
Entered in the   date 5/8/86  
National Register

Attest:   date  

Chief of Registration

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Historical Summary

Built in 1847, according to family traditions, by Dr. John S. Napier (c. 1817-89), the one-and-a-half-story frame Preuit Oaks plantation cottage became the center of one of Colbert County's most successful plantations. The property was originally owned by Aldridge Myatt whose daughter, Mary Curtis Myatt, married Napier in 1833. In the memoir of his childhood in Alabama, Preuit Hall states that this residence was sold to his grandfather, W. Richard Preuit (1809-82) of North Carolina in the 1850's, who acquired substantial acreage and developed a large cotton plantation.

During the first quarter of the 19th century, the average Alabama cotton planter gave little thought to soil conservation and very few used fertilizer or crop rotation. Land was a perishable property, to be worn out and not improved. The value and quality of the property was determined by the richness and levelness of the land, and as most land in Alabama was "rolling" (where top soil could be easily washed away) the Town Creek Triangle's level lands were considered prime property.

In the 1850 census, listed are over 200 families in what is now Colbert County whose real estate value was more than \$1000; but only 45, including Preuit, show real estate with values of \$15,000 and above. Like several others from the Carolina's, Virginia, Kentucky and Georgia, Preuit was attracted to the excellent level land called the "Town Creek Triangle." This area, located in the southeast corner of what is now Colbert County was home to at least four other prominent antebellum planters including Manoah B. Hampton, Sr., Amos Jarman, Hartwell King and Elisha Madding.

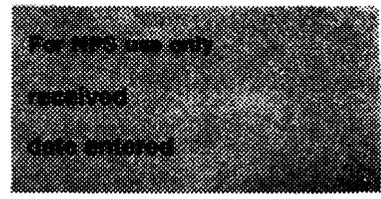
Between 1850 and 1860 Preuit Oaks peaked in its agricultural production. With a cash value of \$106,000 and 66 slaves Preuit produced 600 bales of cotton weighing 400 pounds each. Seized with the ambition of being the largest planter in the county, Preuit, according to Col. James Saunders in Early Settlers of Alabama, had some 1,500 acres of cotton before the Civil War.

The 1870 and 1880 Agricultural Census entry for Preuit showed a marked decrease in the Preuit Oaks plantation holdings with the most profitable activity shown as the sale of slaughtered animals for \$800. However, Preuit fared the effects of the war far better than many of his neighbors as he was one of very few whose home and barns survived the 1863 devastation of Leighton and LaGrange that resulted in destroying more than 100 plantation homes in the area. When he died in 1882 Preuit's land holdings had depleted to 400 acres which were inherited by his son, P. Pryor Preuit.

The degree of local respectability payed Preuit is evidenced in his appearance on the 1862 Resident Board of Trustees of LaGrange Military Academy. Joined by the most distinguished Leighton area planters including Col. J. T. Abernathy, Hartwell and Oswald King, Warren Peden and Dr. E. B. Delony, Preuit also served on this board with Dr. Napier. Napier moved to Waco, Texas a few years later where he died in 1889.

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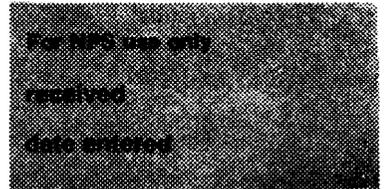
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Today the Preuit Oaks property is jointly owned by two of Pryor Preuit's daughters and includes the residence, two cemeteries and 11 19th-century outbuildings and structures.

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Saunders, James E. Early Settlers of Alabama. New Orleans: L. Graham & Son, 1899.

James, R. L. "Colbertians: History of Colbert County, Alabama and Some of Its Pioneer Citizens Before 1875" Alabama Historical Quarterly: Summer and Fall 1945. (Reprinted 1980)

Wyeth, John A. History of LaGrange Military Academy and the Cadet Corps (1857-62); LaGrange College (1830-1857). 1907.

Stephenson, J. C. A Genealogical Sketch of the Stephenson Family from Henry Stephenson of Scotland to the Present Time. Chattanooga: Privately published, 1906.

Hall, Preuit. "The Preuit Oaks" (a brochure privately printed by Mrs. W. H. Evans and written by her cousin) n.d.

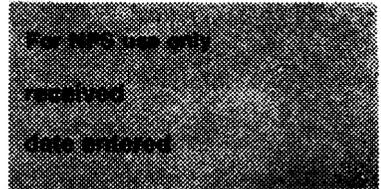
Lawrence County Agricultural Census - 1850-1880.

Lawrence County Slave Census - 1850-1860.

Franklin County Agricultural Census - 1850-1860.

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Beginning at the northwest corner of Section 29, Township 4 South, Range 9 West in Colbert County, Alabama,

Thence Easterly along the north boundary line of Section 29 a distance of approximately 1320 feet,

Thence Southerly a distance of approximately 5190 feet,

Thence Westerly along the south boundary line of Section 29 (also the northside of Cottontown Road) a distance of approximately 1320 feet,

Thence Northerly along the west boundary line of Section 29 a distance of approximately 5190 feet to the Point of True Beginning, and containing 156.7 acres as recorded on the Colbert County Ad Valorem Map #20-11-09. (See Red line on attached sketch maps.)

72 20

19 20

200' R.O.W.

20 2

30 29

29 2

01  
289 Ac.

06.01  
45.78 Ac.

06  
39.27 Ac.

01  
123.25 Ac.

02  
100 Ac.

03  
156.7 Ac.

Preuit Oaks Plantation Complex  
Colbert County, Alabama  
Section 29, Township 4S, Range 9W.  
(Map #20-11-09)

13  
78.8 Ac.

02  
78.8 Ac.

79.04'  
221.84'  
164.11'  
231.71'  
04

05  
92.5 Ac.

07  
36.11 Ac.

08  
36.11 Ac.



SCALE 1"=400'

DATE OF MAP

DATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

(80' R.O.W.)

30 29

29

COTTONTOWN

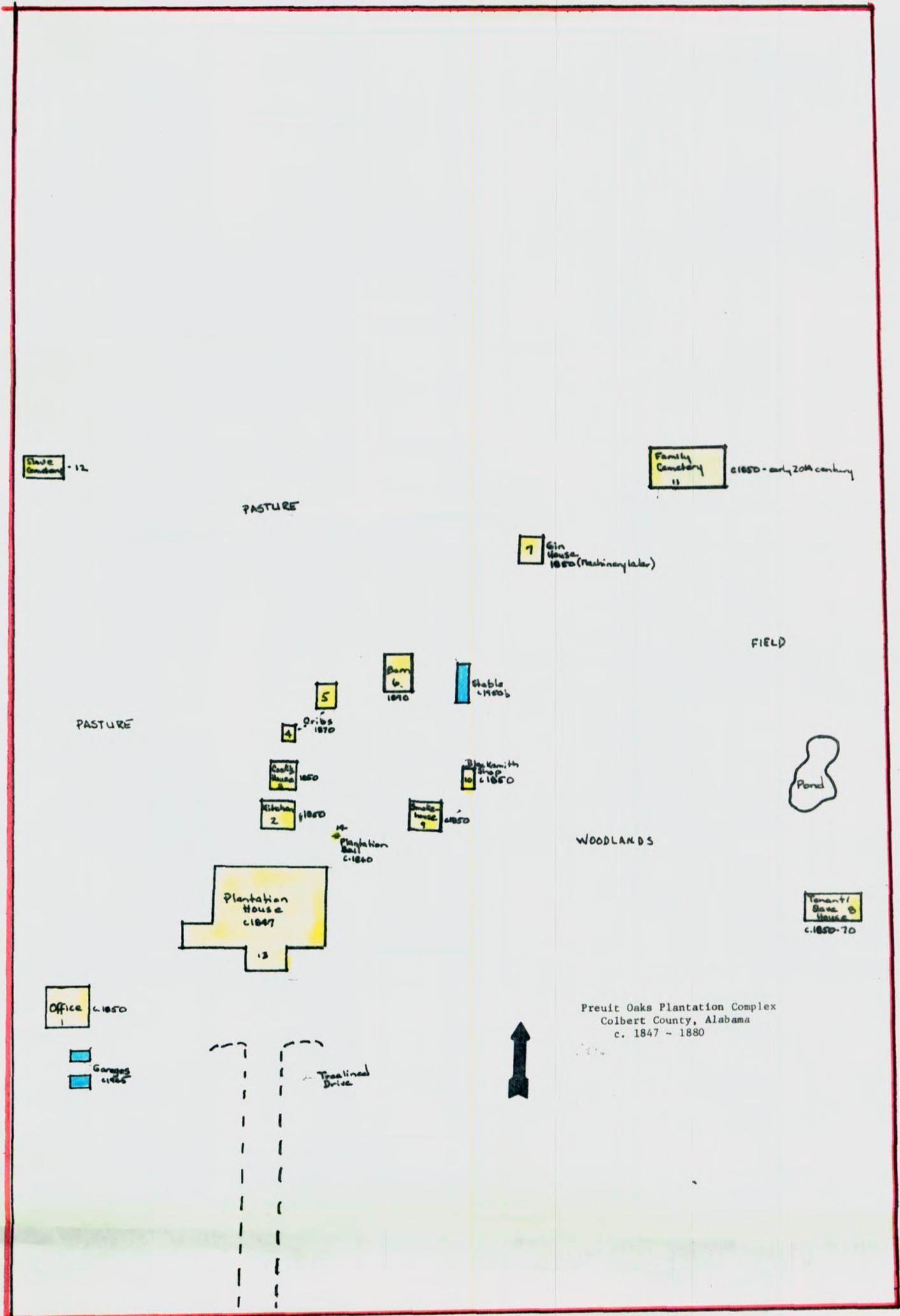
ROAD

64

NEW HOME

31 30





Pruit Oaks Plantation Complex  
Colbert County, Alabama  
c. 1847 - 1880

Contributing   
Non-contributing