

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

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

For NPS use only
received **AUG 3 1983**
date entered

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

1. Name

historic John Smiser House
and/or common Fairmont (preferred)

2. Location

street & number Mooreville Pike N/A not for publication
city, town Columbia X vicinity of
state Tennessee code 047 county Maury code 119

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Cary W. Pulliam, M.D.
street & number 2802-A Atlantic Avenue
city, town Sullivan's Island N/A vicinity of state S.C. 29482

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Maury County Courthouse
street & number Public Square
city, town Columbia state Tennessee 38401

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Maury County Comprehensive Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1982 federal state county local
depository for survey records South Central Tennessee Development District
city, town Columbia state Tennessee

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Completed in 1837, Fairmont is a two-and-a-half-story, brick house located on the east side of Mooresville Pike, two miles south of the Maury County seat of Columbia (pop. 21,471) in central Middle Tennessee. The Federal and Greek Revival building is distinguished by a two-story pedimented portico and flat-arched tripartite windows on its front (west) facade. The interior of the house contains almost all of its original millwork. The house has been little altered and retains most of its original features.

Facing west, Fairmont is situated on the crest of a low hill and is surrounded by open farm land. A herringbone pattern brick walk extends from the front of the house and is bordered by small boxwood shrubs. There are several mature trees located close to the house. A low stone wall, topped with a cast-iron fence of inconsistent design surrounds the main house.

The west facade, or front of the house, is the most elaborate. The brick on this wall is laid in Flemish bond, with occasional glazed headers. The middle of the three bays is slightly recessed; here the wall is covered with stucco. A two-story pedimented portico with a balcony projects from this central bay. The four Tuscan columns on both stories are made of curved brick and are covered with stucco. Plain paneled pilasters are located at the outside corners of the recess. Above the first floor porch is a molded entablature, on which rests the balcony. The brick columns on the second story are joined at balcony level by a balustrade with turned balusters. These columns support a deep entablature with a plain frieze. Above the whole is a pediment with a raking cornice; its tympanum is covered with shiplap boards. The central paneled doors on both floors are flanked by 6/6 double-hung sash windows set above dado panels. Door and window surrounds feature bulls eye corner blocks and fluted connecting members, and there is a transom with diagonal muntins inset above both doors. The left and right bays on the first and second stories contain tripartite windows with flat arches. Above the second-story is a box cornice with a molded architrave. The metal gutter boxes are decorated with paterae, stars, and eagles. The gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

The north and south facades are similar. Each is three bays wide, and has two tall brick chimneys set into the wall and connected at the top by a parapet. Windows have 6/6 lights, and are topped with wooden lintels with bull's eye corner blocks. A second-story window on the south side has been replaced with a paneled door which gives access to a fire escape installed in the 1940s.

The east (rear) facade is also three bays wide. An original shed porch which once spanned the entire rear of the house has long since been removed. The central doorway features two large paneled doors separated by a Tuscan column, and flanked by paneled pilasters. The doorway has been altered; the two large doors are fixed into position, and a new smaller door and a window have been cut into the doors. An original one-story brick ell, containing the kitchen and service rooms, extends from the northwest corner. There are two brick chimneys, the kitchen chimney being somewhat massive. Doors and windows in the ell have the same bull's eye corner blocks and lintels as the rest of the house.

Fairmont's interior contains almost all of its original millwork. Features include all of the original mantels, which are supported by engaged Tuscan columns; the original staircase; double parlours separated by sliding paneled doors, and original built-in closets. A ball-room occupies the entire third floor.

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Outbuildings on the property include a one-story brick building ten yards northwest of the rear ell. This was originally a two-story structure, the quarter for Fairmont's house-servants. The building burned in the 1940s; it has been reconstructed as a one-story building, considerably altered.

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

Specific dates 1837

Builder/Architect John Smiser and Nathan Vaught

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Fairmont, completed in 1837, is nominated under National Register criteria B and C for its architectural and historical significance to Maury County. The house was built by John Smiser, an important early settler who flourished in the area from about 1814 until his death in 1840. Smiser, who came to what is now Maury County from Natchez, Mississippi, was one of the first lawyers and an early sheriff of Williamson County. Fairmont, the home he built south of Columbia, is a good example of the transition from the Federal to the Greek Revival style in Middle Tennessee.

John Smiser, a native of Hagerstown, Maryland, married Mary Evie Turney of Paris, Kentucky, a relative of onetime governor of Tennessee Peter R. Turney. They moved to Natchez, Mississippi before moving again to the Fairmont site in 1814. Their first house, built in 1816, was a two-story cedar log house about a mile from the present house. It had a detached kitchen, and several slave quarters surrounded the house.

Nathan Vaught, Maury County's master architect, recalled in his memoirs that Smiser began the construction of Fairmont in 1831 or 1832. Vaught was responsible for at least some of the work on the house. The majority of the labor was contributed by the slaves, but master craftsmen were also imported for the job. The bill totaled \$9,999, a sum considered very extravagant at the time, and did not include the brass hardware for the house, which was imported from Great Britain.

The house was built from timbers cut on the property, and bricks made from clay dug on the land -- remains of the brickyard can still be traced. Lime for the mortar was burned on the farm, and the hair used as a binder for the plaster was trimmed from livestock who grazed here.

Fairmont was completed in 1837. John Smiser died less than three years later. His widow died soon afterwards -- both are buried in the family cemetery on the property. The home passed to their daughter, Ellen, who married James Gray Booker in 1835. Booker was the son of Peter R. Booker, Sr., a man of immense wealth who owned plantations in Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi. His Mississippi properties were so vast that they were measured in terms of miles, not acreage. James inherited a large share of his father's wealth, and social life at Fairmont reached its zenith.

In 1853 a yellow fever outbreak at New Orleans killed Mrs. Booker's brother-in-law and four of his daughters. Their bodies were sent to Fairmont for burial. The sight of the five hearses on the lawn was long remembered in Maury County.

Fairmont was the scene of a couple of minor events during the Civil War. A company of the 9th Tennessee Cavalry was organized on the farm and was drilled here. During Confederate General John Bell Hood's 1864 invasion of Tennessee Brigadier General John C. Brown and

9. Major Bibliographical References

Garrett, Jill K. "Fairmont -- Beauty on a Hill". (Columbia) Daily Herald, 26 Oct. 1964, F-4
Garrett, Jill K. "Seven Days in November". Daily Herald, 25 November 1964.
Orr, Gilbert M. "Old Homes in Tennessee". The Nashville Tennessean, October 4, 1942.

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Columbia

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	4	9	17	7	0	0	3	9	3	7	8	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

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 N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard H. Quin

organization South Central TN Development District date March 1983

street & number P.O. Box 1346 telephone (615) 381-2040

city or town Columbia state Tennessee

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.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert L. Hayden

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 7/27/83

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 9/1/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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his staff quartered here the night of the fiasco at Spring Hill eleven miles to the north. Brown drank too much to please his hostess; during the retreat from Nashville several weeks later he stayed at Elm Spring plantation across the road.

Somewhere on the place is the unmarked grave of Buck Booker, one of the most unusual residents of the farm. Buck was a stray dog brought to Fairmont by Peter R. Booker, Jr., several years before his death in 1849. The dog was still living in 1870 at the age of 26 years, and the Columbia Herald celebrated him as the Methusalah of the species.

The house passed through a number of hands until it was purchased in 1931 by Lex Watson (1892-1951), a pioneer in the development of the Tennessee Walking Horse and the developer of the miniature mule. Later the house was converted into a nursing care facility. Today the house is again a private residence.

Architecturally, the house is significant as a fine example of local craftsmanship, illustrating the architectural transition from the Federal to the Greek Revival style. The tripartite windows and lintels with bull's eye corner blocks are typical Federal features, while the heavy Tuscan portico clearly shows the influence of the Greek Revival style. The house is large and substantial, with brick walls eighteen inches thick. The house remains relatively unaltered, and retains most of its original interior and exterior elements. The portico is especially interesting; the columns of the two-story porch are made of curved brick covered with stucco. Doors and windows have elaborate surrounds, particularly on the front of the house. The interior exhibits fine millwork, including the original mantels supported by engaged Tuscan columns, the original stairs and built-in closets. The double parlor features fine paneled sliding doors, and a full ballroom runs the length of the third floor. The original ell contains a pantry and the original kitchen, which has a massive fireplace.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is a rectangular parcel measuring approximately 110 by 160 feet. It is bounded on the north, south, and west by a stone and cast iron fence and on the east by an imaginary line connecting the northeast corner of the servants house to the southeast corner of the southern fence line. The nomination includes the minimal land necessary to protect the architectural and historical integrity of the house.

