



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Dowling, Samuel Lawson, House  
other names/site number: Dowling-Murphree House

2. Location

street & number: 311 Owens Street not for publication: N/A  
city or town: Ozark vicinity: N/A  
state: Alabama code: AL county: Dale code: 045 zip code: 36360

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 4/25/96  
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 National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall 5/30/96

[Signature] \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

USDI/NPS Registration Form

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5. Classification  
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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	buildings
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	sites
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	structures
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	objects
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

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6. Function or Use  
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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: single dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Work in Progress Sub: professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: room and cell

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: BRICK, concrete block

walls: WOOD: weatherboard

roof: ASBESTOS

other: \_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition on continuation sheet/s.)

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.)

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)

Criterion C: Architecture

Period of Significance

circa 1870

Significant Dates

circa 1870, circa 1920

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Dowling, Samuel Lawson

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain significance on continuation sheet/s.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References  
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(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 # \_\_\_\_\_

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: \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Geographical Data  
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Acreage of Property: less than 1 acre

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

	Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing	
1	<u>16 - 629070 - 3480870</u>	3	_____
2	_____	4	_____

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  
=====

name/title Ed Hooker & AHC Reviewer

organization AHC date 4/17/96

street & number 468 South Perry Street telephone 334-242-3184

city or town Montgomery state AL zip code 36130-0900

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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 Dr. and Mrs. James R. Murphree

street & number 317 James Street telephone 334-774-5632

city or town Ozark state AL zip code 36360

(8-86)

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**Narrative Description**

The Dowling house is located in the city of Ozark, Dale County, in southeast Alabama. This region of the state is termed "Wiregrass," after the terrain the first settlers discovered here. The area proved to be unfit for cotton farming, so development of the region did not occur until around 1880 when the railroad was introduced. Initially a straggling, primitive settlement of log buildings in the sandy pine forests of southeast Alabama, Ozark experienced its first substantial growth after the Civil War, as immigrants from Georgia and the Carolinas pushed farther into the sparsely populated Gulf coastal plain. A further catalyst was Ozark's selection as the seat of Dale County in 1870. Arrival of the Eufaula and East Alabama Railroad in 1888 sparked a building boom still attested to by a number of surviving Victorian residences and a sprinkling of early brick commercial structures in the vicinity of the courthouse square. Today, the Dowling house sits on a single lot, and adjacent modern (post-1950) structures now occupy lots which were once a part of a larger area owned by the Dowling family.

The Dowling house dates from the early postbellum period; however, its basic layout and overall form represent the survival into the late 19th century of a much earlier house-type with origins in the vernacular traditions of the Atlantic seaboard South. Antecedents of the Samuel L. Dowling house can, indeed, be found in the coastal plain and the lower piedmont areas of South Carolina and Georgia, from which came most of the settlers who populated the Ozark region. Set close to the street, the house occupies a large lot that at one time evidently covered most of the block. No original outbuildings or non-historic dependent structures survive. The Samuel L. Dowling house represents that phase of Ozark's architectural development between the log construction of the first decades of settlement and the first real manifestation of "high style" architecture that began with the arrival of the railroad. If its construction material is sawn lumber instead of hewn logs, the form and layout of the house looks back to a pre-technological tradition.

The Dowling house is a five-bay, center hall version of the traditional "room and cell" plan consisting of a pair of rooms -- the larger in front, the smaller directly behind -- on either side of a center hall. As frequently occurs with this plan type, the back hall area between the two rear rooms (or "cells") has been expanded into a third quasi-chamber which may have originally functioned as an open recessed porch. Brick exterior end chimneys serve the two front rooms, with the "cells" behind being left unheated, a characteristic modification in the Deep South. Yet another typical lower Southern modification occurs in the construction of the chimneys themselves. Since ceilings were tall and garret space non-functional, the lower part of each chimney narrows immediately above the firebox into a tall, slender chimney stack which passes through the eaves. Each stack is broken away from the wall plane itself in a manner characteristic of the Chesapeake area southward from the Colonial period through most of the 19th century. The elongated chimney stack was a natural development where main-floor ceilings were high and the garret non-functional as a living space, hence requiring no fireplaces. A broad, high gabled roof covers the main block of the house.

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 Around the turn of the century, a two-room ell with flanking porches was added to the rear. The present front gallery, with its turned and bracketed posts and heavy connected balustrade, may also date from this period. The main doorway at the center of the front facade is recessed several inches from the main wall plane. A single-leaf door with one large pane of glass above three raised panels is surmounted by a transom and flanked by a pair of sidelights, each consisting of three panes above a sunken panel. (The exterior of the house is covered with vinyl siding that replicates the width of the intact lap siding underneath. Long-range renovation plans include the removal of the vinyl siding and restoration of the original siding.)

Just inside the front door, a single door to either side of the central hall opens into each front room. Stock trim found in these spaces is typical of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Interior walls are of horizontal beaded board, as are the ceilings. Doors are typical mail-order in a four-panel configuration. The original mantelpieces were destroyed early in the 1990's by a fire that consumed a rear storage shed where the mantles were being kept temporarily. Information from the owner suggests that they were of a simple Victorian design and will be replaced by antique mantles of the same style and vintage. Flooring throughout is heart pine.

Windows throughout the earliest portion of the house were originally 6-over-6. About 1920, nearly all of the windows were replaced with the present 6-over-1 sashes. A single original window survives at the rear. Windows in the later rear ell are 9-over-9. A number of the post-1900 houses throughout rural southern Alabama employed 9-over-9 sashing, a configuration normally associated with houses of earlier generations. Porches to either side of the ell were partially enclosed around 1945 to accommodate a pantry and bath. As a work in progress, the walls are exposed wood construction. Gypsum board will eventually cover the structural system.

**Archaeological Potential**

Although no formal archaeological survey has been made on the lot of the Dowling-Murphree House, the potential for subsurface remains may exist. Properties of this type would have had dependencies such as kitchens and other outbuildings. Buried portions may contain significant information that may be useful in interpreting the entire property.

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**Criterion C: Architecture**

The Samuel Lawson Dowling House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for Architecture. The Dowling House is a significant example of a vernacular house type that was brought to southeast Alabama by migrants traveling south/southwest from the coastal plain and the lower piedmont regions of South Carolina and Georgia. The typology of this house consists of a traditional "room and cell" plan which is comprised of a central hall flanked by pairs of rooms where the front rooms are larger with smaller rooms behind them. The Dowling House is a late articulation of this house type and a rare, perhaps unique, survival from the first period of extant frame domestic construction in Ozark. As such, the house yields information regarding the house types and forms, construction methods, techniques and craftsmanship utilized in the community during its formative period. Although enlarged by a turn-of -the-century rear wing, the nuclear (original) portion of the Dowling House retains a good degree of integrity, with its overall form and interior configuration relatively unchanged.

**Historical Summary**

County records indicate that local contractor and builder Samuel Lawson Dowling (1841-1919) built this house about 1870. This is corroborated by stylistic and typological features manifested by the house itself. Dowling was also responsible for Ozark's now destroyed 1873 Methodist church, a simple, porticoed frame structure in a belated vernacular Greek Revival style.

Samuel L. Dowling himself was a son of one of the founding families of the county and community. The Dowling family came to Virginia from Ireland around 1643. The patriarch of the Alabama Dowlings, Robert Dowling, was born in 1730. In 1773, Robert moved his family to Darlington County, South Carolina, five years after the Methodist church was founded in America. Robert's grandson, Dempsy Dowling (1783-1865), son of John Dowling, left South Carolina in 1825 heading for Alabama. The journey took six months, and the Dowlings crossed the Chattahoochee River on March 1, 1826.

They settled in the newly-formed Dale County. Dempsy, a devout Methodist, helped form the Claybank Church (NR 11/07/76). Dempsy Dowling and his wife Martha Stokes had 14 children and 111 grandchildren. Dempsy's and Martha's 9th child, John Senior (1818-1900) was a Captain in the State Militia, and at the time of his marriage in 1841 to Charlotte Brackin, he owned two tracts of former government land. In 1853 he was licensed as a Methodist minister. By 1870, he owned 420 acres in and around the town of Ozark.

John Senior and Charlotte's oldest child, Samuel Lawson (1841-1919), was a Corporal in the 53rd Alabama Partisan Rangers. He served as a mounted infantryman, and was wounded in the Battle of Atlanta. Samuel Lawson married Sarah Jane Windham. His occupation was listed in the 1860 census as a farmer, although he was two-term treasurer for Dale



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County and a bridge and building contractor. He built the first Methodist church building ever erected in the town of Ozark in 1873. Samuel Lawson and Sarah Jane had 7 children.

At Samuel Lawson's death in 1919, his daughter Leila Belle Dowling assumed ownership of the parental home, acquiring the interests of her mother and six siblings. Only four months later, she sold the property to M.L and W.A. Lewis for \$2,000. The Lewis' owned the property until 1945, when they deeded the property to their three children for \$1.00. The property was later conveyed to Homer D. and Gladys E. Chambers, and in 1981 the property was sold to Judy C. and Terry Kellum. Dr. and Mrs. James R. Murphree purchased the property in 1988, and are the present owners.

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**Bibliography**

A Brief History of Ozark. Senior English Class, Ozark High School, 1955-56.

Dale County Cemeteries, Book 1. Alabama Department of Archives & History, 1975.

Lydia Hughes Grimes. Dale County, Alabama Kin. (La Grange: Martha S. Anderson & Associates, 1984).

Val. L. McGee. Claybank Memories: A History of Dale County, Alabama. Dale County Historical Society, 1989.

Thomas M. Owen. History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography. Volume I (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1921), pp. 443-46.

Fred S. Watson. Forgotten Trails: A History of Dale County Alabama. (Birmingham: Banner Press, 1968), pp. 44, 104-08, 240.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The Samuel Lawson Dowling House is located at 311 Owens Street in Ozark, Dale County, Alabama as represented on Dale County Tax Map # 26-06-08-33-1-007-0001.000.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated boundaries contain all the extant historic property associated with the Samuel Lawson Dowling House.

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**Name:** Dowling, Samuel Lawson, House  
**Address:** 311 Owens Street  
Ozark, Alabama 36360  
**Photographer:** Ed Hooker  
**Date:** April 1995  
**Negatives:** Alabama Historical Commission

- Photo 1. front facade looking North
- Photo 2. front and left side facade looking Northwest
- Photo 3. detail of front porch columns with corner bracketing; front door with sidelights and transom beyond
- Photo 4. close-up of front facade looking North showing turned porch columns, corner bracketing, front door and front steps
- Photo 5. view of triple-paneled front door with single pane surrounded by sidelights and transom.
- Photo 6. view of turned front porch column with turned balustrade
- Photo 7. view of turned front porch column with corner brackets
- Photo 8. left front parlor looking through hall into right front parlor
- Photo 9. right rear room looking through doorway into rear hall
- Photo 10. left front parlor looking into left rear room
- Photo 11. hallway looking into left front parlor
- Photo 12. rear ell looking at fireplace
- Photo 13. detail of fireplace in right front parlor
- Photo 14. rear of house looking NE
- Photo 15. house looking SE
- Photo 16. house looking SW
- Photo 17. house looking S
- Photo 18. rear porch running along side ell wing
- Photo 19. chimney detail looking NW