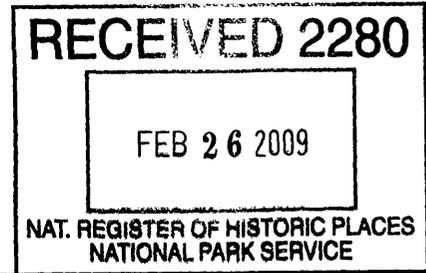


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

08 116



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

historic name Sunny Slope
other names/site number William F. Samford House; Samford House; Emrick House; Samford-Emrick House

2. Location

street & number 1031 South College Street not for publication N/A
city or town Auburn vicinity N/A
state Alabama code AL county Lee code 081 zip code 36832

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Elizabeth Samford 24 February 2009
Signature of certifying official/Title 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): _____

Patrick Adams 3/12/2009
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>5</u>	<u>0</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)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Mid-19th CENTURY/Greek Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: brick

roof: composite shingle

walls: wood/weatherboard

other: concrete

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

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)

Architecture

Period of Significance ca. 1857 - ca. 1935

Significant Dates ca. 1857

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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: Auburn Heritage Association

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4.9

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>16</u>	<u>642110</u>	<u>3606140</u>	4	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	5	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____	6	_____	_____	_____

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kit Conner; Ralph Draughon, Jr.; Mary Norman; Ann Pearson and Robert Gamble, AHC

organization Auburn Heritage Association date 06/01/08

street & number P.O. Box 2248 telephone (334)826-0390

city or town Auburn state AL zip code 36830

Additional Documentation

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)

Property Owner

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

name (SEE CONTINUATION SHEET)

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

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7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Now well within the corporate limits of Auburn, Sunny Slope sits on a partially wooded five-acre tract a short distance southeast of the intersection of South College Street and Kimberly Drive. The tract is a remnant portion of the 1700-acre Samford plantation which existed here in 1860. Irregular boundaries enclose the main dwelling, which is approached off-axis by a long driveway leading east from South College Street, and also the following structures (all contributing): an early dependency reputed to have been a meathouse, a garage, a well and wellhouse, and a barn. Contiguous land, no longer part of the Sunny Slope tract, was devoted to agriculture and pasturage.

The main dwelling is a one-story clapboarded residence on a brick-pier foundation (now in-filled with concrete block), overtopped by a shallow hipped roof. The west (front) elevation measures forty-six feet across and is distinguished by a full-length, six-columned veranda recessed beneath the main roof slope. The veranda screens a three-bay entrance elevation centering upon a broad main doorway framed by sidelights and transom, with a single nine-over-nine sash window to either side. (This superimposition of a five-bay portico over a three-bay façade is an unusual departure from classical canon, which dictates that window and door openings should align with the open bays defined by a porch or portico.) A molded baseboard running from either side of the doorway to each end of the gallery reinforces the traditional southern concept of the porch as a kind of outdoor living space. Square-molded caps obviously derived from a Greek Revival-era patternbook -- probably Minard Lafever -- embellish each square column of the portico. The three-part entablature above continues the theme of extreme simplicity. A low, half-hipped central dormer (ca. 1910) punctuating the roofline is the only significant visual change to the original facade.

Double-leaf doors open into the anticipated central hall, divided midway by a secondary partition through which a wide, single-leaf glazed door leads into a rear passage. A pair of rooms to either side is served by back-to-back interior fireplaces, now flanked by shallow closets. The back hall separating the two rear rooms opens into a large former dining room abutted on the south by one additional bedroom, formerly a kitchen, with a small bathroom extension. The present pine-paneled dining/kitchen wing at the extreme rear dates from around 1960.

Structural evidence suggests that the house originally may have been L-shaped, embracing only the colonnaded front porch, the main hall and large flanking front rooms, plus a single ell room (now the room on the south side of the rear hall). The rear hallway itself appears to have been an open porch. A large turn-of-the-century extension across the back produced the present configuration, excepting a still-later kitchen/dining wing added about 1960. Two-over-two sash windows on both the north and south side elevations probably date from the time of enlargement.

Woodwork throughout the main body of the house is largely original and adheres to the pattern

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

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of almost puritanical simplicity typical of the late antebellum period in the Auburn area. These include Greek Revival-derived two-panel doorways encased by narrow and idiosyncratic eared architraves, as well as unadorned post-and-lintel mantelpieces.

Some of the mantelpieces retain a certain delicacy of proportion more characteristic of the Federal-period detailing of the 1820s and 1830s than the heavier and plainer Grecian treatment of the 1840s and 1850s. Particularly notable is the mantel in the northwest front room, presumably the original parlor, with its narrow, molded overmantel. This is a feature seen elsewhere in the Auburn area.

There are three (3) additional contributing buildings on the property and one (1) contributing site. A few paces to the rear of the ca. 1960 kitchen/dining extension stands the small rectangular gabled structure, apparently of 19th century origin, which is said to have been used at one time as a meathouse. A frame rectangular garage (ca. 1935) is situated northeast of the main dwelling, while further away is a gambrel-roof barn -- allegedly dating from 1904 and used as a mule barn when sharecroppers tilled the surrounding acreage. The barn is clad in weatherboarding except for the east elevation, which retains an earlier sheathing of wide vertical boards. At the northern edge of the property, there is a hand-dug well believed to date from the mid-19th century. It is now covered by a shed-roofed ruinous wellhouse (ca. 1950).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMPONENT

Although no formal archaeological survey has been made of this property, the potential for subsurface remains is high. Properties of this type were sited within a constellation of dependencies such as kitchens and other outbuildings. Buried portions may contain significant information that may be useful in interpreting the entire property.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES¹
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 3

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

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[8] SIGNIFICANCE

Criterion C (embodiment of distinctive characteristics of type, period, etc.).

Architecturally, Sunny Slope is significant as one of the city of Auburn's six surviving examples of the single-story, hipped-roof Greek Revival cottage characteristic of east central Alabama during the late antebellum period. While individual examples might vary in scale, proportion, format, and overall plan, both exterior and interior detailing always tended toward the austere, with rooms being lofty and spacious in scale, but spartan in detail. On the cusp of the Civil War, outside detailing veered off into a kind of Greco-Italianate playfulness, with scrolled cornice brackets replacing conventional classical elements. Yet the essential form remained constant. Of the half dozen dwellings that survive, four --- including Sunny Slope -- exhibit a full-length "integral" portico or colonnade *recessed* beneath the front slope of the main roof. The remaining two houses feature a narrow, one-bay entrance portico *projecting* from the principal roof slope. [NOTE: Besides Sunny Slope, extant examples of the former type are the Harden-Poucher (or Meadows) and Kidd-Halliday-Cary houses in the Old Main Street National Register Historic District, as well as the Neva Winston house -- moved to a municipal park in recent years in order to prevent its demolition. The two surviving examples of the latter type, with a projecting central portico, are Pebble Hill (also listed on the National Register) and Pinetucket.]

At one time, Auburn also boasted a handful of two-story houses adhering to the same spare, symmetrical, hipped-roof Greek Revival format. But in 2004, the last of these gave way to student housing. Four other one and two-story examples of this distinctive local residential type which were recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey during the 1930s are now destroyed.

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

The period of significance extends from ca. 1857 -- ca. 1935 or the approximate date of construction for the main house (ca. 1857) to the approximate date of the latest contributing structure, the garage (ca. 1935).

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

At its inception before the Civil War, Sunny Slope was the seat of a 1,700-acre plantation situated a distance south of Auburn, in old Macon County. After the carving up of Macon County during the Reconstruction era, and the expansion of the "Loveliest Village of the Plains" in the twentieth century, the old plantation house now lies within the corporate limits of Auburn, in what is today Lee County.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES²
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 4

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

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A search of Macon County's land title records for information about Sunny Slope's origin has proven daunting, but county records offer some important clues. Lewis Jefferson Dowdell, an affluent landowner of Harris County, Georgia, acquired in 1842, 1845, 1847, and 1848 lands in the vicinity of Sunny Slope. (1) His brother, James Dowdell, did the same and eventually bequeathed to two of his children a 2500-acre plantation just to the south of Sunny Slope. (2)

Lewis Dowdell died suddenly in 1848 after struggling to put out a fire on his plantation. He left no will, to the dismay of his four surviving children: James Ferguson Dowdell, Susan Lewis Dowdell Samford (Mrs. William Flewellen Samford), Silas Dowdell, and William Crawford Dowdell. Among their responsibilities in settling their father's estate, the four relinquished and swapped title to their father's aforementioned property in Macon County, Alabama.

This property does not seem to have included Sunny Slope, but other evidence definitely connects the Dowdell inheritance to the plantation. Lewis Dowdell's daughter, Susan Lewis Dowdell Samford, became the first mistress of Sunny Slope. Furthermore, when her father's estate finally was settled in the mid-1850s, her husband, William F. Samford, received on his wife's behalf from the estate \$32,257.57, an enormous sum in those days. (3) The Dowdell inheritance obviously helped importantly to fund not only Sunny Slope but also William F. Samford's other activities as pamphleteer, newspaper editor, and political candidate. As if to underscore the connection of Lewis F. Dowdell to Sunny Slope, Susan Dowdell inherited two pieces of his furniture, a heavy mahogany card table and a massive mahogany sofa, and both of these articles adorned the parlor of her little plantation house outside Auburn. (4)

There can be little doubt that William F. Samford named Sunny Slope. He had a literary bent, an erudite style, and a knack for words. He provided striking names for his successive residences, including "Monk Barnes," "Hybla" (an ancient Sicilian city that produced honey and was the subject of an eighteenth century book of poems by George S. Carey), "Eyrie", "Cedre Villa", and "The Hills". "Sunny Slope" indeed is situated on a gentle slope where it catches the western sun, but the name also may have some literary derivation.

William and Susan Samford came to Sunny Slope about 1857. Immediately prior to that time they lived at "Eyrie," near Little Texas and outside Tuskegee, where Samford owned and edited the Tuskegee *True Union*. With characteristic restlessness and changeability, however, Samford decided to sell the newspaper very soon after purchasing it. He considered moving to Texas, where his aged parents had migrated, and he also had in mind Montgomery, where he hoped, in vain, to acquire the *Montgomery Advertiser*. Instead as his granddaughter wrote, he "...moved his family to a charming home, 'Sunny Slope,' near Auburn...." (5)

As pamphlets and articles emanated from William Samford's pen, Sunny Slope quickly became a center for the strident advocacy of southern rights. At the same time, it functioned as a plantation. The 1860 United States agricultural census and slave schedule for Alabama offers insight into Samford's agricultural activities – activities which he himself admittedly neglected in favor of political and polemical concerns as the nation headed toward war. (6)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES³
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 5

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

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Although in 1860, Samford continued to own agricultural properties near Tuskegee, the census figures appear to address only Samford's location near Auburn and apply only to Sunny Slope. They reveal that he owned 65 slaves. Historians consider five slaves a "substantial" holding and twenty-five slaves a "large" holding in 1860, so by these measurements Samford would be considered a very large slaveholder indeed. (7)

Samford's slaves lived in seven dwellings, which would average about nine or ten slaves per dwelling. In comparison, ten people (Mr. and Mrs. Samford and their eight children) occupied the Sunny Slope plantation house, which was not at all large in its original configuration. Furthermore, the Samfords had living with them for a time a boarder who was teaching the children penmanship and writing. (8)

According to the census, Sunny Slope had 700 acres of improved land while 1,000 acres remained unimproved. The cash value of the farm was listed as only \$1,500, which was very low compared to its neighbors. Furthermore, the plantation produced only 100 bales of cotton annually, which also was very low considering the large labor force Samford had at his command. (9)

Samford objected vehemently in his published writings to the southern planter's "rule of thumb" that each field hand should be responsible for the cultivation of 20 acres. To Samford, the supposed guideline did not take into account a slave's age, sex, or physical condition. As he said, "We ought to consider the claims of humanity." (10) Had he put the guideline into effect at Sunny Slope, he would have required only 35 slaves to take care of his 700 acres of cultivation. It therefore appears from the limited available evidence that he practiced what he preached and refused to utilize at Sunny Slope a guideline that he considered to be too onerous for his slaves.

One of Samford's more profitable efforts at Sunny Slope showed his ingenuity. The railroad line had just been extended through Auburn, and Samford and a slave crew sold wood to the line, probably to stoke the locomotive but possibly to lay new tracks. His wife reported that Samford was selling "railroad wood" and in January 1860 made \$250.00 with five hands and two wagons. In March 1860 his "wood business" made up to \$300.00. (11)

Samford's prolific writings include numerous efforts to defend the institution of slavery. Nevertheless, as an ordained Methodist minister (but without a pulpit), he also argued for humane and considerate treatment of the bondsmen. (12) At Sunny Slope the quandary of human bondage proved especially troublesome to him. As his wife reported to their daughter:

Your father has caught Walter at last [;] he was gone five months and was put in jail in Paulding Co. Ga, more than a hundred miles from home. Your father does not know what to do with him, he promised so faithfully to do right for the future and seems so averse to being sold that he is at a stand[still?], he is a very smart boy, good worker, but I fear he will run away again. The affair has cost your father two hundred dollars besides the loss of his service. (13)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES⁴
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 6

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

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Considering the brutal punishment runaway slaves received from other masters, Mr. and Mrs. Samford treated Walter, who was a perpetual runaway, with unusual restraint. The master and mistress of Sunny Slope appear to have been kind-hearted slaveholders, and that may explain why their plantation wasn't more profitable.

William Samford also undertook to edit a local newspaper, the *Auburn Signal*, but it does not seem to have been very successful. Meanwhile, his energetic wife conducted a school for young ladies at Sunny Slope. Their son, "Willie," helped his parents by setting type at the newspaper and by assisting his mother with the school. (14)

At this point, to emphasize Sunny Slope's historical associations, Willie should receive a more formal introduction. William James Samford, a future Governor of Alabama, spent an important part of his boyhood at Sunny Slope. Just before the family moved to Auburn, twelve-year-old Willie was involved in an accident that almost killed him. He was playing around a barrel of gunpowder when by some means a spark ignited the barrel. It exploded, and Willie suffered very serious burns. Luckily he survived, but he was still afflicted with serious problems of skin irritation at Sunny Slope. (15) Perhaps his almost fatal accident amplified his parents' affection for him. He was very dear to them, and he inherited or somehow acquired their literary, educational, religious, and humanitarian concerns.

Willie attended Professor William F. Slaton's preparatory school for boys in Auburn, and later enrolled in the East Alabama Male College, where Slaton also taught. The East Alabama Male College is the progenitor of Auburn University, and the main building on the campus, Samford Hall, is named for Willie Samford. After a year at Auburn, Willie enrolled at the University of Georgia, but soon left the school to enlist in the Confederate army. Captured in Mississippi in May 1863 in the preliminaries to the Vicksburg campaign, he served eighteen months as a Federal prisoner of war at Johnson's Island, Lake Erie. By a happy chance, his teacher from Auburn, Professor Slaton, also was captured in Mississippi and arrived at the prison camp soon after Willie. This enabled Willie to resume his studies. As he wrote to his parents: "Maj [Major] Slaton is very well, he & I are going to take up law & mathematics in a day or two, I've recently reviewed Logic." (16) Slaton's conduct of a class for a former student at a prisoner-of-war camp has considerable significance. It could be considered the first example of an extension course ever taught from Auburn University.

Willie was released in a prisoner exchange towards the end of the war. He rejoined his regiment and did not return to Auburn until his parents had moved into another part of the village.

But to continue the historical associations of Sunny Slope, the mistress of the plantation also deserves special note. William F. Samford was the progenitor of a dynasty of Alabamians distinguished by its service to the state even today. But perhaps Susan Lewis Dowdell Samford, the matriarch of Sunny Slope, deserves even more credit than does her husband for her illustrious offspring. Although almost totally unknown today, she brought the family a large fortune as an inheritance; she bore her husband thirteen children; she frequently managed all by herself the

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES⁵
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 7

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

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slaves, the plantation, and the household business; and, she nursed and propped up her husband during his lifelong physical and mental afflictions. Furthermore, she was intelligent and well read, and while she encouraged her husband in his literary efforts, she could turn a phrase as aptly as he could. She was at her best in describing the school for young ladies she conducted at Sunny Slope. As she wrote, with a glint of humor: "My school goes on very well, I am at a loss in what order to place it, whether as Academic or Peripatetic. [I] rather think Eclectic as I teach many branches in various ways."

The new President of the East Alabama Male College in Auburn, Dr. William J. Sasnett, had written many books, including one on female education in which he urged that women be educated in many different fields. Susan Samford obviously had read Sasnett's treatise, and she continued in a humorous vein to explain her "Eclectic" approach:

Fannie [an older daughter] cut and made her a dress last week. You see I am adopting Dr. Sasnett's plan of Female Education, teaching cutting & fitting, sewing and knitting, as well as Philosophy and Rhetoric. (17)

Throughout their married life, Susan's husband had suffered from some alarming and not very well diagnosed maladies. Several times he had to resign from important positions. As he himself explained:

For years I knew nothing of the great world – allowed my self to hear nothing – was confined to my chair, my carriage, doctor, nurse and wife.... vertigo, dyspepsia, with what Bulwer calls its 'grisly train of horrors,' nervous prostration...conspired to render life a burden." (18)

By the time Samford moved to Sunny Slope he was somewhat better, but he still occasionally became extremely nervous and relapsed into semi-invalid status. Medical authorities diagnosed his illness, or at least one of his illnesses, as dropsy. His grandson recalled that at the last of Samford's life he became so dropsical that he had to sleep standing up. (19) Although bothered by blisters on his feet, Samford took long walks to restore his health, and he consisted on a diet largely of baked potatoes, which for some reason only his wife could prepare for him. It is unclear why one of the Samfords' numerous slaves and servants could not undertake this task. Mrs. Samford was distressed when she was too busy with her other extensive activities to prepare this staple of her husband's diet. Besides, she had injured her hand, and it was slow to improve.(20)

There were a number of distinguished visitors to Sunny Slope when the Samfords lived there. Not least in importance was Mrs. Samford's elder brother, James Ferguson Dowdell, who served for several terms in the 1850s as United States Congressman from East Alabama. Unlike some southern congressmen, Dowdell was not flamboyant and worked very effectively behind the scenes in Congress during his tenure. He raised and led the 37th Alabama Regiment during the
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES⁶
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 8

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

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Civil War but was paroled in poor health after the fall of Vicksburg. He moved to Auburn after the war to become the second President of the East Alabama Male College, thus establishing another tie between his family and the Auburn institution.

A second visitor to Sunny Slope was Andrew Adgate Lipscomb, a prominent educator, writer, and Methodist clergyman who had married Susan Dowdell Samford's first cousin -- also named Susan Dowdell. Dr. Lipscomb in the late 1850s was President of the Tuskegee Female College. In the spring of 1860, Lipscomb and Congressman Dowdell set out to visit Sunny Slope from Tuskegee, but the Congressman's fine horse bolted, upset the buggy, and propelled its distinguished passengers on to the ground. Neither Lipscomb nor Dowdell were seriously hurt, (21) and Lipscomb soon went on to become a distinguished President of the University of Georgia, which Willie Samford briefly attended.

Perhaps the most prominent visitor to Sunny Slope, however, was William Lowndes Yancey, whom William F. Samford idolized. An outspoken advocate of southern rights, particularly in regard to the South's so-called "rights" in the American territories, Yancey has been dubbed the "Orator of Secession." And because Samford in his extensive writings so closely and vehemently echoed Yancey's sentiments, he has been called the "Penman of Secession." (22)

Yancey was a hero not only to the elder Samford but also to young Willie, of whom Yancey too was especially fond. The orator suffered from painful jangling nerves in his back, which were diagnosed wrongly as "neuralgia of the spine." He in fact had a serious kidney ailment. Nonetheless, because Yancey had such a difficult time getting rest, Willie would massage his hero's back when Yancey would visit Sunny Slope and thus enable the orator to relax and even sleep. (23)

Because William F. Samford so decidedly put the stamp of his personality on Sunny Slope, he remains the plantation's most important historical association. Furthermore, he put Sunny Slope on the map, and the plantation received mention in the national press from New York City to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as illustrated by the following news item in which the Milwaukee *Daily Sentinel* quotes the *New York Tribune*:

The Hon. William F. Samford of Sunny Slope, near Auburn, Alabama, is out for Gov. [Henry] Wise [of Virginia] for President. According to Samford, there is a great excitement in Alabama about Wise, not merely at Sunny Slope, but everywhere else in the State. (24)

The article neatly illustrates that, for better or worse, Samford's constant public political correspondence briefly put Sunny Slope in the national spotlight. When Samford wrote under his own name, he used "Sunny Slope" as his address or byline. But he also wrote under several different pseudonyms including, in the antebellum era, "Zeno" and "Uncle Ben." As an early twentieth century historian has noted, "Few Alabamians have exerted a stronger influence upon

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES⁷
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 9

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

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the political history of their State, or have enjoyed in their day a wider reputation.” Furthermore, Samford’s letters were known “not only through the South, but wherever the *New York Day Book* [an influential pro-Southern New York newspaper] circulated.” (25)

Samford attempted to influence public affairs through the pen and rarely made public appearances. Nevertheless, he became so incensed by current events that he actually entered the governor’s race in 1859. Instead of taking to the stump, he conducted an old-fashioned front porch campaign at Sunny Slope, which he never left.

He entered the race out of annoyance with Governor A. B. Moore, a State Rights Democrat almost certain of re-election. According to Samford, Moore was so peaceful and patient a man that the enemies of the South did not sufficiently fear him. Besides being, at least in Samford’s view, not strident enough in defense of the South, Moore also tolerated state internal improvements, which Samford believed to be unconstitutional.

Samford’s entry into the race seriously displeased many of his former admirers in the Democratic Party, but he persisted in his campaign. He of course did not win, but he made a quite respectable showing. And, again, he put the spotlight on Sunny Slope. , His residence became almost as well known as Samford himself.

Samford’s financial situation is difficult to evaluate. For example, in February 1860 his wife informed their daughter that he was economizing very carefully and paying only cash for purchases. Nevertheless, a few months later she reported that he was establishing a picture gallery at Sunny Slope and had hired an English artist to paint life-size portraits of himself, his wife, his father, his late father-in-law, and (in a smaller frame) a departed friend.(26) Samford’s extremely pious parents in Texas did not share their son’s fervor for a picture gallery. The elder Samford declared that he and his wife had “scruples” about such things, and they believed it would be sinful to have their portrait painted or to have a Daguerreotype made. (27)

When Alabama seceded from the Union and Fort Sumter was fired upon, Sunny Slope became a camp ground for Confederate troops mobilizing for war. One attraction was reputedly an abundant water supply from the still-extant well north of the main house. The 14th and 18th Regiments of Alabama Volunteers were formed there, and in the case of the 14th encamped there for some time. They first rendezvoused at Auburn at Sunny Slope on 7 August 1861, and they remained there until they left for Huntsville on 5 October 1861. At Sunny Slope, according to their regimental history, they “were partially initiated into the hardships of a soldier’s life.” Apparently, they were struck by disease, particularly measles, and at least three of the new recruits died in Auburn. (28) Meanwhile, the Samford family retreated to their former residence, Eyrie, in the country near Tuskegee. Thereafter, during the war years and beyond, they never

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES⁸
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 10

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

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again seem to have made Sunny Slope their fulltime residence. The Samfords returned to the Auburn area, however, and resided there -- on other family holdings -- during the Reconstruction years and afterward.

The Samfords also founded one of Alabama's dynastic families in the political and educational sphere. Son William James Samford (1844-1901) served as 31st governor of Alabama, while both Samford Hall at Auburn University and Samford University in Birmingham recall the role of other descendants in fostering education in the state for over a century.

William Flewellen Samford died in 1894, and his wife, Susan, three years later. Both lie buried in Auburn's Pine Hill Cemetery.

Postbellum county land records are confusing as to precisely how and when Sunny Slope left the Samford family. It is speculated that the Sunny Slope plantation may have been used as collateral, then subsequently lost. Clearly, a division of the plantation property took place, after which E. A. Heard and his wife, also prominent members of the Auburn community, acquired the 320 acres on which the plantation house itself stood. In 1888, the Heards sold the property to John P. Alvis and J. A. Cullars, well-known area businessmen, and about 1896 George A. Alvis - - presumably Alvis's son -- acquired full title. A *circa* 1900 enlargement and renovation of the house was presumably the work of then-owner George Alvis.

An Alvis daughter, Bessie, became one of the first women graduates of Auburn (then Alabama Polytechnic Institute) in 1904, later marrying fellow graduate Verle Emrick. Eventually, Sunny Slope passed to their son, Verl (without the "e") Emrick and his wife, Eleanor Craig. They were the last occupants of Sunny Slope. (29) Today (2008), the property is owned by their three children: Verl R. Emrick, Robert H. Emrick, and Bessie Emrick Whitten.

* * * * *

ENDNOTES

1. Macon County, Deed Book C (1842), 489, 490; Deed Book D (1845), 322; Deed Book G (1847-1848), 209, 210, 644.
2. William Davidson, *Pine Log and Greek Revival*, Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society Publication No. 6 (Alexander City: Outlook Press, 1965), p. 28.
3. Undated note [ca. 1856?], Samford Family Papers (at the time in the possession of Mary Samford Wooten and microfilmed by Dr. Malcolm C. McMillan), Microfilm Collection, Draughon Library, Auburn University.
4. Lan Lipscomb, Jr., "Lewis Jefferson Dowdell," in a Dowdell family history that Lipscomb is preparing (2008).

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES⁹
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 11

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

5. Mary Samford Wooten, "My Father, My Grandfather, and Me," Samford Family Papers.
6. The information from these reports is found in a valuable unpublished dissertation: Joseph Karl Menn, *The Large Slaveholders of the Deep South*, Ph.D., 1964, University of Texas (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1965), pp. 400-401.
7. J.G. Randall and David Donald, *Civil War and Reconstruction* (Lexington L D.C. Heath, 1974), p. 68.
8. Susan Samford to "My Dear Daughter" (Elizabeth Samford Fullilove), 12 May 1860, Samford Family Papers.
9. Menn, *Large Slaveholders*, pp. 400-401.
10. George L. Petrie, "William F. Samford: Statesman and Man of Letters," *Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society*, Vol. VI, Montgomery, p. 470.
11. Susan Samford to Daughter, 12 February and 1 April, 1860, Samford Family Papers.
12. Petrie, "Samford," 465-485.
13. Susan Samford to Daughter, 1 April 1860, Samford Family Papers.
14. *Passim*, Samford Family Papers.
15. *Ibid*.
16. Willie Samford to his parents, 31 December 1863, Samford Family Papers.
17. Susan Samford to Daughter, 1 April 1860, Samford Family Papers.
18. Petrie, "Samford," quoting Samford, 466-467.
19. T.D. Samford described his grandfather's difficulty to his own grandson, Albert Smith.
20. Susan Samford to Daughter, 12 May 1860, Samford Family Papers.
21. *Ibid*, 14 May 1860.
22. Petrie, "Samford," 465.
23. Ralph Draughon, Jr., "William Lowndes Yancey," unpublished manuscript, 570.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES¹⁰
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 12

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

24. *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, 10 January 1860.
25. Petrie, "Samford," 465.
26. Susan Samford to Daughter, 12 February and 14 May 1860, Samford Family Papers.
27. Thomas Samford to William F. Samford, 25 May 1860, Samford Family Papers.
28. M.B. Hurst, *History of the Fourteenth Regiment Alabama Volunteers*, a photostatic copy of the 1863 edition (Paint Rock, Alabama: Paint Rock River Press, 2002), p. 2 and *passim*.
29. Information from Verl R. Emrick of Maitland, Florida, and David Whitten of Auburn.

¹ Macon County, Deed Book C (1842), 489, 490; Deed Book D (1845), 322; Deed Book G (1847-1848), 209, 210, 644.

² Macon County, Deed Book C (1842), 489, 490; Deed Book D (1845), 322; Deed Book G (1847-1848), 209, 210, 644.

³ Macon County, Deed Book C (1842), 489, 490; Deed Book D (1845), 322; Deed Book G (1847-1848), 209, 210, 644.

⁴ Macon County, Deed Book C (1842), 489, 490; Deed Book D (1845), 322; Deed Book G (1847-1848), 209, 210, 644.

⁵ Macon County, Deed Book C (1842), 489, 490; Deed Book D (1845), 322; Deed Book G (1847-1848), 209, 210, 644.

⁶ Macon County, Deed Book C (1842), 489, 490; Deed Book D (1845), 322; Deed Book G (1847-1848), 209, 210, 644.

⁷ Macon County, Deed Book C (1842), 489, 490; Deed Book D (1845), 322; Deed Book G (1847-1848), 209, 210, 644.

⁸ Macon County, Deed Book C (1842), 489, 490; Deed Book D (1845), 322; Deed Book G (1847-1848), 209, 210, 644.

⁹ Macon County, Deed Book C (1842), 489, 490; Deed Book D (1845), 322; Deed Book G (1847-1848), 209, 210, 644.

¹⁰ Macon County, Deed Book C (1842), 489, 490; Deed Book D (1845), 322; Deed Book G (1847-1848), 209, 210, 644.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 13

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

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[9] MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 14

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

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[10] GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Property Address: South College Street, Auburn, Alabama

A parcel of land containing 4.9 acres and situated in the Southwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of Section 31, Township 19 North, Range 26 East, in Lee County, Alabama, and described as follows:

Beginning at a point on the south side of South College Street, approximately 70.96' southwest of the intersection with Kimberly Drive (southwest corner) and running southwest 279.80' to a point, thence southeast 495.21' to a point, thence northeast approximately 290.18' to a point, thence northwest approximately 54.43' to a point, thence northeast approximately 292.36' to a point, thence northwest approximately 199.45' to a point, thence southwest approximately 177.00' to a point, thence northwest approximately 110.00' to a point, thence northwest again approximately 237.51' to the Point of Beginning. Also see attached plat map.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

These are the boundaries currently associated with the property.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 11 Page 15

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

Property owners of Sunny Slope

Verl R. Emrick
16713 Kamalin Ct.
Clermont, FL 34715

Robert H. Emrick
121 Dolphin Circle
Alabaster, AL 35007

Bessie L. Whitten
102 Kimberley Dr.
Auburn, AL 36832

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Photographs Page 16

Name of property: Sunny Slope
County and State: Lee County, Alabama

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SUNNY SLOPE PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographers: Ann Pearson, Mary Norman, Robert Gamble

Date of Photographs: January, March 2008

Location of Original Negatives: Alabama Historical Commission, Montgomery

1. Main House and Approach Lane (looking southeast)
2. Façade of Main House (looking southeast)
3. Façade of Main House, porch detail and original banister (looking southwest)
4. Front entrance, Main House (looking southeast)
5. Northeast rear of Main House (looking west)
6. Northeast rear corner of Main House (looking west)
7. South elevation and southeast rear corner of Main House (looking north)
8. Main House interior, entrance hall and front door (looking northwest)
9. Main House, mantelpiece in southwest room (looking southeast)
10. Main House, mantelpiece in northwest room (looking southeast)
11. Main House, typical interior doorway (looking north from southwest room into main hall)
12. Dependency, reputedly old meat house (looking south)
13. Garage at northeast rear of Main House (looking east)
14. Barn northeast of Main House (looking northeast)
15. Ruined well house (looking northeast)

