

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

For NPS use only

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

received APR 23 1986

date entered

MAY 22 1986

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

1. Name

historic Lawler-Whiting House

and/or common Orangevale

2. Location

street & number 5.6 miles south of Talladega on Alabama Hwy. 21 NA not for publication

city, town Talladega NA vicinity of congressional district 3

state Alabama code 01 county Talladega code 121

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 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
	NA	<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 Dr. & Mrs. Richard F. Bliss

street & number Route 2, Box 142

city, town Talladega NA vicinity of state Alabama

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Talladega County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Talladega 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

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

Located in rural Talladega County, the Lawler-Whiting House (Orangevale) is a two-story Greek Revival residence of wood frame construction with flanking one-story wing additions; one containing a kitchen wing, and the other a double garage. The house was completed in 1854 and recorded by HABS in 1936.

The portico spans a symmetrical facade with four 9/9 sash windows at each level. The centered entrance features double leaf main entry and balcony doors, each with pilasters, transoms and sidelights, the cantilevered balcony at the second floor level includes a wrought iron balustrade.

The full facade hexa-style portico is supported on fluted columns with a narrow, recessed paneled entablature above. The roof line of the portico has a wooden, recessed paneled parapet which matches the entablature directly beneath in design. The main block of the house is covered with a slightly pitched hip roof pierced at each side of the central ridge by an interior chimney -- each with a corbeled cap. The full width rear porch opens onto a brick patio and has six square columns which support a second-story porch, partially enclosed to accommodate bathrooms.

The floor plan, a typical Greek Revival element, encompasses a large central hall terminated at the back with double doors and flanked by double pile rooms. The interior of the house retains much of its original decorative details including cornices, ceiling medallions, unadorned mantels made on site and shouldered architraves. The stairway features simple, turned posts and a heavy hand rail.

There are eight buildings and structures situated on the 107 acres which were a part of the original 3,000-acre plantation, in addition to the identified sites of two wells (#7, #8) and two 19th century plantation buildings (#4-cook's house and #6-carriage house). Five of the buildings - a detached kitchen (#3), a smokehouse (#5), a well house (#2), a log cabin (#12) and a one-story frame caretaker's house (#11), and two stone-lined operational wells (#2, #13) are all 19th century contemporaries of the residence (#1) and contribute to the nomination while a c. 1830 log cabin (#9) does not contribute as it was moved to this site only 15 years ago. Total contributing resources 12 (6 buildings; 2 operational wells; 4 sites).

(Numbers (#) indicated above are keyed to attached scaled blue-line sketch map)

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/
<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1852-54 **Builder/Architect** H. H. Kirkland

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion B - Politics and Government

The Lawler-Whiting House (Orangevale) is significant for its associations with Talladega politician Levi Welborne Lawler (1816-c.1895), a wealthy businessman and planter who between 1860 and the late 1870's was very active in state politics. Serving as a delegate to the National Democratic Convention in both 1860 and 1878, Lawler was elected to the state legislature in 1861. He was re-elected in 1863 and served throughout the war period as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. In 1874 when Alabama Democrats regained state rule with the election of Governor George Houston, Lawler was appointed to the State Debt Commission, which is the group credited with devising the plan to settle the massive state debts following Reconstruction. Lawler built the Orangevale residence as the center of a 3,000-acre cotton plantation in 1852, and maintained the property until his death in the late 1890's.

Criterion C - Architecture

The Lawler-Whiting House (Orangevale) is significant as an outstanding example of a rural mid-19th century Greek Revival residence in northeast Alabama. Constructed between 1852 and 1854 the house exhibits unusual variations on the mainline Greek Revival design with the introduction of a disproportionately heavy paneled wooden parapet and an unusually light-scaled paneled entablature. This departure from the more typical three-part entablature with denticulation, triglyphs, etc., is compounded by the use of a column capital design that follows no particular order; however, this treatment is a stylized version of a pattern book design of the period based on the Corinthian order.

9. Major Bibliographical References

McSween, Judy Mitchell, "Orangevale: House Dead But Not Forgotten," Jacksonville State University, 1967.

"A Pleasant Reminisce." Alabama Historical Quarterly, 8 (1946), 373-377

(continued on cont. sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 107⁺

Quadrangle name Winterboro

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	5	7	7	7	7	0	3	6	9	1	3	2	0
Zone	Easting						Northing							

B

1	6	5	7	7	7	7	0	3	6	9	0	9	1	0
Zone	Easting						Northing							

C

1	6	5	7	7	7	3	0	3	6	9	0	6	6	0
Zone	Easting						Northing							

D

1	6	5	7	7	3	4	0	3	6	9	0	5	1	0
Zone	Easting						Northing							

E

1	6	5	7	6	8	9	0	3	6	9	0	5	2	0
Zone	Easting						Northing							

F

1	6	5	7	6	7	8	0	3	6	9	0	7	6	0
Zone	Easting						Northing							

G

1	6	5	7	6	9	9	0	3	6	9	0	9	9	0
Zone	Easting						Northing							

H

1	6	5	7	7	0	4	0	3	6	9	1	0	3	0
Zone	Easting						Northing							

I.

1	6	5	7	7	7	1	0	3	6	9	1	3	6	0
Zone	Easting						Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

See red line on the attached scaled blue line sketch map.

The boundary lines have been drawn to include all of the historic acreage and buildings currently under one ownership.

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 January 15, 1986

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 *[Signature]*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 1-15-86

For NPS use only

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

Entered in 5/22/86
National Register date

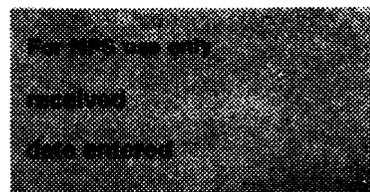
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

Historical Summary

The Lawler-Whiting House, or as it is more commonly known, Orangevale was built 1852-54 by Levi Welbourne Lawler (1816-c. 1895) as a summer home. Lawler, an outstanding post-Civil War politician and successful businessman was the son of Judge Joab Lawler. Young Lawler moved with his parents to Talladega County in 1835 where his father served as the first pastor of the Talladega Baptist Church and Receiver of Public Monies.

Levi Lawler began his professional career at the age of nineteen when he was issued a \$100,000 bond and appointed by General Jackson to succeed his father as Receiver for the Coosa Land District. After four years in office, Lawler was suspended because of his opposition to President Van Buren's administration; however, he was again appointed to the position by President Tyler in 1841 and served an additional four years. Although the Land Office was formed in Mardisville, and both Lawlers held the office of Receiver there, it appears that Levi Lawler served part of the time in DeKalb County because while a resident there, he was elected a brigadier general in the militia. After four additional years, Lawler returned to Talladega County and devoted his attention to planting.

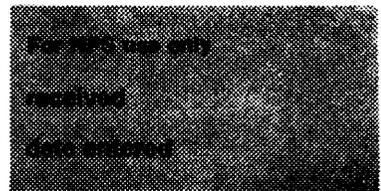
In 1848 Lawler apparently began to divide his time between Mobile and Talladega, as he became a member of the Mobile cotton brokerage house of Baker, Lawler and Company. He still remained; however, a prominent citizen of Talladega.

Lawler acquired the Orangevale property in a land grant signed by Andrew Jackson, giving him title to about three thousand acres of land formerly occupied by the Creeks. It is believed that the Old Sylacauga Highway, the major access highway to Orangevale, is also the Jackson Trace and that the trace abruptly heads off the main road and crosses the property. Although the trace is somewhat obscured, a 1915 marker placed by the Daughters of the Revolution serves as a good evidence and indication for plotting the trail.

The construction of Orangevale began in 1852. A meticulous record keeper, Lawler apparently kept account of all the supplies and services used in the construction. The discovery of a two-page handwritten account totals to over \$10,000 alone in supplies and services. It is unfortunate; however, that in this document he neglected to mention the architect or builders. Years after the completion of the house, its appeal still was evident. The house was photographed and used as the backdrop for Augustus Thomas' play Alabama which met with huge success when it opened in New York during the late 19th century.

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

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

Between 1860 and the late 1870's Lawler actively pursued politics. He served as a delegate to the 1860 Democratic Convention in Charleston and was elected to the State Legislature representing Talladega County the following year. He was one of the signers of the document, "To the citizens of Alabama" in 1861 which called for volunteers for the Confederate Army. In 1863 he was re-elected to the legislature and served throughout the Civil War, chairing the Ways and Means Committee.

The end of the war saw Alabama devastated, and her economy destroyed. Planters struggled to make a living, and in 1868 those in Talladega County organized under the name, "Planter's Club." The goals of this group were to regulate labor; estimate the probable yield of all products in Talladega County and secure the highest prices for their products; stop speculation in fertilizer, implements, etc. and to protect and generally promote farming interests. Lawler was an active member of this organization and served on the nominating committee.

Once again documentation indicates that Lawler may have maintained dual residency as he is recorded to have returned to Mobile to resume his commission business; however, he concurrently pursued political offices in Talladega County.

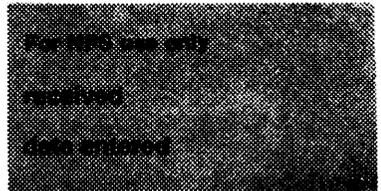
In 1874 when the Democrats regained state rule with the election of Governor George Houston, Lawler was appointed to the State Debt Commission to investigate the state debt and devise a plan of settlement. A repercussion of the Reconstruction period, the state debt rose from \$6,000,000 to approximately \$30,000,000.

In 1878 Lawler again served as a delegate to the state Democratic Convention, and for several years was a trustee of Howard College and also the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama (now Auburn University). Lawler married twice; first to a Miss Jenkins of Talladega County and finally to Susan Jane Smith, a granddaughter of Honorable William Smith of South Carolina.

The exact date of Lawler's death is unknown, but it appears that it was after 1895 as he is not listed in the obituaries of prominent citizens prior to that period. It is certain, however, that Orangevale was his last home and became the property of his daughter, Mrs. Julian Wythe (Ida Gracey) Whiting of Mobile, who was married at Orangevale in 1867, and also used it as a summer home. It remained the property of Lawler descendants until 1969.

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

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



Continuation sheet

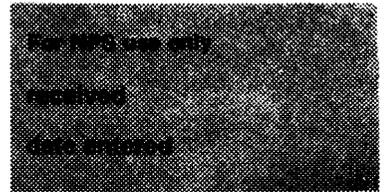
Item number 8

Page 3

Active preservationists Dr. and Mrs. R. F. Bliss acquired the property in 1969 and made it their home in 1970. Over the past 15 years the Blisses have sensitively restored and maintained the property and its history. Under the meticulous care of Mrs. Bliss, an interior decorator, "... the old white mansion ..." remains "... a silent reminder of Joab and his son Levi, both of whom had no small part in Alabama's building." *

* Peter A. Brannon's Adventures on the Highroad. Montgomery, Al.: Paragon Press, 1930.

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



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

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 1

Curry, J. L. M. "Reminiscences of Talladega." Alabama Historical Quarterly, 8 (1946), 349-368.

Garrett, William: Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama. Atlanta: Plantation Pub. Company's Press, 1872.

Lee, Mary Welch. "Old Homes of Talladega County." Alabama Historical Quarterly, 10 (1948), 81-93.

Owen, Thomas MacAdory. History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography. 4 vols. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Pub. Co., 1921.

Saunders, James Edmonds, Col. Early Settlers of Alabama. New Orleans: L. Graham & Sons, Ltd., 1899.

Bliss, Debbie, "Levi Welbourne Lawler" Birmingham Southern, 1973.