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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions at National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Nance, Frederick, House

Other names/site number: Oak Grove, The Oaks, Gildercrest

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

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

### 2. Location

Street & number: 921 Jessica Avenue

City or town: Newberry State: SC County: Newberry

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide x local  
Applicable National Register Criteria:

xA \_\_\_B xC \_\_\_D

<u>Elizabeth M. Johnson</u>	<u>5/30/2014</u>
<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<u>Elizabeth M. Johnson, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer</u>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	
<u>South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.</u>	

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In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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**Signature of commenting official:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

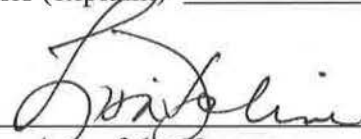
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**Title :** \_\_\_\_\_ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explains) \_\_\_\_\_

  
Signature of the Keeper

7/27/14  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

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**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling  
DOMESTIC/Secondary Structure

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Early Classical Revival

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Wood

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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**Summary Paragraph**

The Frederick Nance House is located at 921 Jessica Avenue within the city limits of Newberry, South Carolina. The house sits atop a rise facing northeast and downtown Newberry. It is an early-to-mid nineteenth century Classical Revival house (1822-1825), built of brick with limestone window and door sills and lintels. Set upon a low brick foundation and bevel-edged watertable, the house stands two and one half stories high, is five bays wide, two bays deep, and is approximately 4,400 square feet, not including the two-story back porch which was enclosed in 1946 and the adjacent bathroom that was added around 1903. Four fluted Roman Doric order wood columns support the front portico, with two fluted responding wood pilasters against the house's front wall at the outer edges of the portico. The interior floor plan consists of a center hall containing a right side-set, open-railed staircase with two rooms on either side of the hall on each floor. Behind the main house there was at one time a row of at least three one-story brick slave houses; however, only one survives. Other service buildings, known through historical maps, documents, and contemporary newspaper articles, no longer exist. Otherwise, the

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property is largely unchanged by the various owners who have lived here over a period of approximately 190 years. While no longer attached to the property on which the house sits, there is a large Nance family cemetery located a block and a half to the southeast of the house on Havird Street. Interred here are Frederick Nance and his first wife, Elizabeth Rutherford Nance (1772-1829); several of their children; and in-laws, including son-in-law, United States Senator Patrick Calhoun Caldwell.

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## Narrative Description

### Main House (1822-1825)

The Frederick Nance House is a large Classical Revival brick building standing two-and-a-half-stories high, two bays deep, and five bays wide. The house features lateral, pedimented gables. The front of the house boasts a full-height, monumental temple portico that is three bays wide and dominates the facade. The brick on the house's facade is laid in a running bond pattern with brick quoins of five courses each at the building's four corners. Remnants of penciling are still visible although hard to see in the photographs. This technique of making mortar joints appear straight and regular was applied to the exterior walls of the Frederick Nance House, its associated slave houses, and the wall around the family graveyard.<sup>1</sup> Many areas of penciling can still be seen on the walls and, under certain lighting conditions, areas of brick colored paint are also visible. The windows across the front are evenly spaced and arranged on each floor. They are large six-over-six, double-hung wooden sashes; most panes are original. Each window features a projecting limestone sill and flush limestone lintel.

The front entry is recessed with a web-traceried, elliptical fanlight with three-light sidelights flanking the paneled, single-leaf door. A beautiful paneled reveal frames this entry, while wood-carved sunbursts fill the spandrels of the transom arch. A rectangular limestone lintel spans the width of the entryway. The home's original front door entry was replaced in 1902 with oak, double, Edwardian, stained glass-paneled doors. These doors were removed and replaced by the current owner with one more in keeping with the construction period of the house. Because no physical evidence remained of the original entry and no photograph of its appearance has been found, the entry design was based on careful research and closely matches the characteristic features of one of South Carolina's best known, monumental historic brick houses of the period, the Ainsley Hall House in Columbia. First-hand examination of the Ainsley Hall House's front entry, as well as other doors of early houses of the period in Newberry and Charleston, South Carolina, were undertaken prior to drafting the final design. Following this study, detailed drawings for the Frederick Nance House's reconstructed entry were prepared. These drawings were then supplied to the AI Shouse Company, a business which specializes in the fabrication of doors and millwork for historic properties. Special cutters were designed and fabricated to duplicate the original panel moldings used on other doors of the Frederick Nance House. Due to the complexity of the design, a second millwork company was hired to do the actual fabrication of the fanlight. A trained carver at the company spent over seven days carving the sunrays on the upper corners spandrels of the fanlight. A third company secured, cut, and installed old period glass. Old hinges and a period iron surface lock similar to that on the door of the Ainsley Hall house were obtained and installed. Installation of the entry was carried out without the need for any modification to the original brick opening.

The Classical Revival portico is anchored visually to the front brick wall by two fluted Roman Doric order pilasters, and four fluted Roman Doric order wooden columns support the outer edge of the portico. A metal lantern hangs from a chain in the center of the portico's ceiling. The porch floor is not original but

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Lounsbury, ed., *An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1994), 266; the technique of penciling is identified in this source as "The practice of ruling mortar joints with a narrow white line [of paint] to enhance the appearance of brick masonry...applied after the entire wall had received a coat of red paint nearly matching the color of the brick."

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was changed from a wooden floor to a terra cotta broken tile (set in concrete) floor in 1950. The original piers for the columns, however, are still under the porch and are visible by looking through the vents in the walls under the edges of the porch. Photographs from 1926 and 1942 show wooden steps descending the full width of the porch; however the present steps are brick and only as wide as the middle bay.<sup>2</sup> The present porch foundation is composed of several types of brick, in all probability from the repairs when the porch floor was replaced. The portico's wooden entablature and pediment are unadorned, with ten evenly-spaced clapboards filling the tympanum of the pediment.

The entire ceiling of the portico is covered with bold, elongated panels similar to those on the soffit of the portico's entablature. The roof of the Frederick Nance House is presently of asphalt shingles and is not original, although the original rough-cut roofing boards with old projecting nails from a shake roof are still visible in the attic. Two evenly spaced interior chimneys rise several feet above the central, lateral ridge beam. The exposed upper chimney caps are not original but were reconstructed following a devastating tornado that tore through Newberry in the spring of 1984.

The walls of each side elevation (southeast and northwest) of the Frederick Nance House are laid in a common bond of ten rows of stretchers for each row of headers reaching up to the tops of the limestone sills above the first floor windows. Varying rows of stretchers for each row of headers as the walls continue upward to the wide fascia board below the projecting pediment cornice complete the side elevations' walls. Within the side pediments, a common bond brick pattern continues in an alternating pattern. The attic window in the pediment of each of the side gables is a six-over-six double-hung sash with a brick rowlock course as a lintel and a projecting limestone sill. Below the cornice, the gabled wall has two evenly and symmetrically spaced windows on each floor, each of which is a six-over-six double-hung sash with limestone lintel and projecting limestone sill. Most of the glass in these windows appears to be original. Above the short brick water table are five equally spaced vertical cuts in the brick. The opposite side wall is virtually identical.

The rear (southwest elevation) of the house has many of the same design elements as found on the rest of the house, including the projecting temple roof structure as found on the front, the tympanum, cornice, and wide fascia board beneath the cornice. Under this pediment is a second-story porch with arched wooden lattice screens on both sides and three arches with lattice across the center section. The balustrade has ornate, turned spindles. The entry from the upper porch leads down two steps to a double (vertical) door with eight lights and a panel on each door and a transom light of a semicircular fan. A projecting limestone lintel is above the entry, which also has a simple reveal the depth of the two steps. This doorway opens onto the stair landing inside the house. To the left of this entryway are two six-over-six double-hung sash windows, one under the pediment and the other on the exposed brick wall, directly in line with and identical to the northwest windows in front. Immediately to the right of this porch door is a French door up two steps from the porch floor. This door was placed where a window once hung, has six evenly-spaced lights in each door panel, and opens into a back bedroom. To the right of the French doors and outside the porch enclosure is another window identical to most of the other windows and in direct line to the upper northeast window at the front of the house. The porch ceiling is of painted tongue-and-groove boards.

The lower rear porch was originally open with balustrade and latticed arches identical to the upper porch but was enclosed in two phases. The first change was made around 1903 when one-third of the lower (southeast) porch was enclosed with brick in a running bond for use as a bathing room/storage area. There are two small windows in this area—one on the southeast wall and one on the south wall of this enclosure. The rest of the back porch (which would have been under the upper left two central latticed

<sup>2</sup> Postcard titled, "The Oaks, Residence of Mr. O. H. Johnson, Newberry, S.C." dated 20 May 1926, in the possession of William B. Cross, depicts the front lawn of the Frederick Nance House, then referred to as "The Oaks," and a portion of the northeast portico with wide wooden steps.

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arches) were left open and undisturbed until 1946 when it was enclosed with a wooden clapboard knee wall under eight large one-over-one double hung sash windows. The present owners were told by members of the Armfield family [owners from 1939–1978] that the original balustrade was left in place and the clapboard knee walls were built around it. The outer door has a large single light with two wood panels on the lower portion. The original brick piers are still visible, although they have been filled in with various bricks and two vent coverings.

On the rear (southwest) wall, a six-over-six double-hung sash is to the right [southeast] the first floor bathroom extension, directly in line with the window in front and directly below the rear bedroom window on the second floor. To the left [northwest] of the enclosed porch, however, the window, a six-over-six double-hung sash, though in line with the one above on the second floor, is significantly smaller. This smaller window was placed under the rise of the enclosed servants' staircase that rose to a landing and then turned in a reverse manner to ascend to the second floor. Because this staircase was unstable, the present owner removed it in 1998 in order to make more space in the kitchen area.

The interior of the Frederick Nance House features a four-over-four and central hall floor plan on both the first and second floors. The house has many features original to the house. All ceilings, both upstairs and down, are nearly twelve feet in height. All floors are heart pine and free of knots on the first floor. All interior doors are original as are the wooden louvered blinds. The downstairs central hall runs the full depth of the house from the front door to the original back door that leads to the enclosed back porch, now used as a family/sitting room. The original rear door entrance surround features three sidelights on either side but has no transom light in order to accommodate the main staircase landing. The original elongated, octagonal-paneled rear door is in place as are the panels under the lights on either side of the door and in the reveal. The large, original, well-worn threshold is still present as is a large projecting limestone lintel over the wide entry.

The entrance/central hall is spacious with inside measurements of over ten-and-one-half feet in width by thirty-seven and three-quarters feet in depth. When the present owner bought the property, there were no light fixtures or chandeliers present, only two interior ceiling fans and several "pigtail" lights in the downstairs area. Whatever electrical wiring there was in the house came well after the construction of the house. During Dr. James K. Gilder's 1903 renovation, the stairway's newel post was repositioned to accommodate a Victorian era wooden spindle screen. This later embellishment has since been removed. The stairway, with its elaborately turned spindles, rises from a point near the front of the hall to a landing, then reverses in a curving manner to continue to the second floor. The staircase consists of eighteen risers to the landing, and six additional risers from the landing to the floor of the upstairs central hall. At the second story floor level, the staircase's balustrade turns to the northwest along the edge of upstairs hall floor and dies into the wall. The staircase's wall surface features a baseboard and chair rail that is punctuated with engaged turned newels at the first floor level [in alignment with the original location of main stair newel], two on the landing level [opposite each other on either side wall of the central hall], and one on the upper floor level [opposite the railing and balustrade that dies into the central hall's northwestern wall].

The first door on the right from the front of the central hall on the main floor opens into the dining room. The door, like all others in the house, is a heavy, paneled, inverted cross design. This paneling matches the paneling under all three windows in this room. The inside top of the windows' reveals is trapezoidal in shape while the sides of the reveal are canted with recessed panels to accommodate wooden louvered blinds.<sup>3</sup> The windows are six-over-six double hung sashes with mostly original glass. One pane in the left front window has the name "Sue" etched on it at eye level, in all probability a reference to Susan

<sup>3</sup> John M. Bryan indicates that Mills' plans for Ainsley Hall's house also featured this same kind of interior shutters. John M. Bryan to Rodger Stroup, 26 February 2002, Frederick Nance House File, National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Files, South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Columbia, South Carolina.

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Griffin Nance, second wife of Frederick Nance, Jr.<sup>4</sup> The walls and ceiling of the dining room are of plaster with a heavy plaster crown molding. The flooring is of heart pine (a pinkish-tan color indicative of this area) and is knot free. The baseboards are nine and one-eighth inches high, painted black, with a two and one-half inch trim over that. The mantelpiece that was in place when the present owner purchased the property has been replaced and is stored in the attic along with the other mantelpieces found in the house when purchased. The replacement mantels in the house are either vintage [architectural salvage] or of new construction, but all are more ornately decorated than those that were in place when the current owner purchased the property.

To the left of the dining room fireplace is a four-paneled door leading into the kitchen, which was in a deteriorated condition at the time of the present owner's purchase in 1997. The kitchen was renovated at that time to suit the owner's needs; however, the large six-over-six double hung sash and smaller six-over-six window were left in place, as were the wooden, louvered blinds on both windows. This room does not have the paneled cutaway reveal below the windows but does have a large, deep sill at each window. As mentioned before, the derelict, enclosed staircase was removed to provide more kitchen space. The heart pine floorboards that had been damaged by sparks, termites, and water were replaced, but this amounted to less than ten percent of the total floor space in this room. The base of the chimney was rebuilt to keep further damage at bay. The kitchen has two more doors. One door opens onto a small space where the door to the storage area under the stairs is located; and the other doorway, with no door, leads out onto the enclosed back porch now used as a family/sitting room. This latter doorway was originally the servant's entrance from the original, open back porch.

Returning to the front entry and stairhall, the first door to the left after entering is the parlor. The windows in this room are identical to the ones in the dining room with their deep, paneled reveals, cut-away dados below, and double-tiered wooden, louvered blinds. The original plaster crown molding is intact with only a few places where it has been repaired. The original, plaster crown moldings in the parlor, dining room, library, and downstairs center hall are all still in place and demonstrate a high degree of integrity. The heart pine floors are all original, although there are two small areas of termite damage that require minor repair. A surprising discovery occurred when the wall-to-wall carpeting was removed and revealed that there were traces of a red and white or cream carpet hand-painted directly onto the floorboards. This detail has now been uncovered and remains visible. The firebricks in the firebox were added earlier in the twentieth century, and all eight of the fireplaces in the house have been converted to gas.

The last door on the left after entering the central stairhall from the front doorway is the library. This room has had another wooden floor installed over the original, which can still be seen from underneath the house. During the mid-1900s, this room was used as a bedroom; so the later layer was probably installed at that time to prevent pests from coming up through the cracks in the floorboards. To the left of the fireplace is a doorway to the parlor, and directly opposite is another doorway to a full bathroom. This doorway was created from a window, using the usual paneled area below the window to the top of the opening for the door. The other two windows are six-over-six double-hung sashes identical to the ones in the parlor and dining rooms. An intact crown molding adorns this room's ceilings as well. The bathroom, which had been created from one-third of the lower rear porch, has been renovated and is fully-equipped.

At the top of the central hall's staircase is a second floor central hallway as wide as the one below but is not as deep since the stairway takes up a certain amount of space. The edge of the flooring that meets the stairway is secured with a balustrade of turned spindles that continues on down as the banister. To the front of the hallway is a six-over-six double-hung sash window with the usual angled reveal and double-tiered wooden louvered blinds as the first floor. The flooring is of heart-pine boards; and the

<sup>4</sup> Marion R. Wilkes, *Rosemont and Its Famous Daughter* (Washington, D.C.: M.R. Wilkes, 1947), 20-21. In February of 1854 Susan Nance became a founding member and vice president of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union under the leadership of Ann Pamela Cunningham, a friend and neighbor.



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baseboards, like those throughout the house, are almost a foot high. All of the doors leading from this hallway are the usual inverted cross design with four panels [upper panels larger than lower panels].

The northeast corner of the second floor contains a bedroom the size of the parlor below. The arrangement of the fireplace, doors, and windows are placed exactly as the room below except that the six-over-six double-hung sashes with double-tiered blinds do not have the wide angled cutaway reveal below, but instead feature a straight wall with a very deep windowsill. The floors are of heart-pine and original as are all the other floors on the second floor except where the back staircase was removed. There is no closet in this room. The doorway to the right of the fireplace leads to the rear bedroom.

This southeast (rear) bedroom is the same size as the library below with the same arrangement of fireplace and windows. However, the doorway from the hall is not in direct alignment with the library door below because the short flight of the reverse portion of the stairway precludes the door from being centered as is the case with the library on the first floor. This room has a French door going out onto the upper rear porch. Windows in this room have deep windowsills and the floor is of heart-pine with high baseboards as in the northeast bedroom. A shallow closet is present in this room, however, from the right edge of the fireplace to the outer wall.

The northwest bedroom sits above the dining room and has the same arrangement of doors, fireplace, and windows. These windows, like the others on the second floor, are six-over-six double-hung sashes with double-tiered wooden louvered blinds with deep windowsills but no angled reveals below the windows. The flooring is original heart pine, and the baseboards are high. To the left and flush with the fireplace is a shallow closet that runs to the wall along the hallway. To the right of the fireplace is a doorway to what originally was another bedroom but at some point in the early twentieth century was divided into a bathroom and a stairway hall to the kitchen on the first floor and upward to the attic. This bathroom has the typical second-floor window, placement of fireplace behind the one in the northwest bedroom, and heart pine floors. The space previously containing the stairs to the kitchen has been floored with vintage heart pine boards. This area is now used as a storage (lumber) room.

The staircase to the attic is very steep and has a simple handrail and spool-turned spindles. This staircase opens into a small room finished with tongue-and-groove bead board and heart pine flooring. A large six-over-six double-hung sash window is located in the peak of the west gable. This small finished room contains a door to the right to enter the other two-thirds, or larger portion, of the attic. The flooring in this area was added in 1998 to accommodate storage and to install HVAC. The areas over and into the front and rear pediments are neither walled nor floored, and all of the pit-sawn and hand-sawn joists and rafters, the large wooden pins around the entire perimeter of the house which anchor the roof to the walls, and the original rough-cut board (many with bark) roof sheathing are all easily accessible. These features provide visual evidence of the integrity of the building, and the reliance on hand-hewn materials offers support for a construction date in the first half of the nineteenth century. Before the arrival of rail transport, which did not occur in Newberry until 1851, most building materials in the area were locally sourced and it was common to find evidence of extensive hand-tooling.<sup>5</sup> It was still possible to acquire machine-milled lumber, but prior to the development and widespread usage of the circular saw in the 1840s, pit-sawn lumber remained the standard for building construction.<sup>6</sup> The superficial marks indicating that the joists and rafters were pit-sawn does, therefore, lend support to the 1820s construction date.

<sup>5</sup> Jennifer Revels, *Historical and Architectural Survey of Newberry County, South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: Palmetto Conservation Foundation, 2003), 34, 44.

<sup>6</sup> J. Stanley Rabun and Richard Kelso, *Building Evaluation for Adaptive Reuse and Preservation* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 46.

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In addition to the main house on the property, there are several outbuildings and structures that show the history of the house, starting from the beginning of the plantation era to its conversion to a grand residence for some of the more elite families of Newberry. Although the Frederick Nance House retains most of its original features, it also represents minor changes made over the years by various owners, bringing the house from its early, grand plantation beginning to an in-town home for the present time.

### Contributing Outbuilding

**Slave House (1822-1825):** Located approximately fifty yards to the northwest of the main house is a one-story lateral-gabled brick two-room slave house. There were at least three of these buildings prior to 1865, and three were still extant as late as 1923. Only two were extant in 1940.<sup>7</sup> A small brick veneered house was built on the footprint of one of the slave dwellings in 1947. Half of another slave house fell down in 2007, and the rest of that dwelling was subsequently removed. The remaining slave house is side gabled brick with a double-sided central chimney with an opening on each side of the fireplace. There is a front and back door into each room with a window in each gabled side. The original floor was replaced years ago and is in rough shape again. Vent cuts for the crawlspace are nearly identical to the vents of the main house and to the one that fell down in 2007, indicating that the slave dwellings were likely built at the same time as the main house. Also, the top of the brick walls of the slave houses have/had trim of bull-nose brick. Remnants of penciling are also present on the brick walls. This remaining slave house is an intact example of a type of architecture that is rapidly disappearing in this state.

### Noncontributing Outbuildings

**Small House ( ca. 1947):** The house is a one-story, lateral-gabled brick residence east of the surviving slave dwelling and was built on the footprint of one of the three original slave dwellings as mentioned earlier. The house has been renovated and is presently used as an office, laundry, storage space, and guest house.

**Small House ( ca. 1955):** This house was built as a rental house by a previous owner. It is a one-story, lateral-gabled brick residence and, like the previously described house, has been renovated and is used by the current owner as office space and for display of an extensive collection of miniature, vintage, and antique doll houses.

<sup>7</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps, Newberry, South Carolina, 1923 and 1940.

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### 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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**  
1822-1825  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**  
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Frederick Nance House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for Architecture at the local level of significance. It is an essentially intact and significant example of antebellum classical revival architecture in Newberry County, South Carolina. The home was built on land owned by Frederick Nance, presumably by Frederick Nance, a prominent politician at the local and state levels who was appointed as Clerk of Court in Newberry in 1794 and later served as Lt. Governor of South Carolina from 1808-1810. The Frederick Nance House is distinct from other early nineteenth-century domestic architecture in Newberry for its scale, its use of masonry construction—not only for the house but the outbuildings as well—and its moldings and other exterior and interior detailing, which were all indicative of Nance's significance and stature within the community. The house is a rare example in Newberry County and the surrounding area of a brick, four-over-four, central hall plan, planter's home. The surviving brick slave quarters also appears to be a unique feature that is not often found in Newberry or the surrounding area.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### Architecture

The Frederick Nance House is significant under Criterion C at the local level of significance as a rare example of an early nineteenth-century plantation home in Newberry County. While the Frederick Nance House is not the only example of nineteenth-century plantation architecture in Newberry, it is a unique early example of a grand, masonry, Greek or Classical Revival home. Nearly all other contemporary examples of plantation homes in Newberry were examples of the Carolina I-house and were clad in weatherboard, not masonry. A few Classical Revival and Italianate buildings in Newberry do date from the antebellum period, but nearly all of these are also clad in weatherboard. It is extremely rare to see large-scale masonry construction in Newberry prior to the 1850s, when the railroad arrived in the town and expanded the range of materials that were accessible to local residents. Similarly, the Frederick Nance House exhibits an exceptional level of ornate detailing and trimwork for a home constructed in this region during this early period of settlement. While the precise architect of the building is not known with certainty, the house does display some of the characteristics of Robert Mills' domestic architecture.<sup>8</sup> It is possible that Mills' involvement in the project could help to explain the level of design detail that is evident at this property. Certainly, though, its association with Frederick Nance, one of Newberry's first settlers, as well as a successful businessman, planter, and respected public official is important for understanding the overall character of the home. In addition to serving in many local political positions, Nance was elected Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina in 1808 for a two-year term. He also served four terms in the State Senate, from 1812 through 1819, and was on the Committee on Public Buildings during his last term in the Senate. He later served as Commissioner of Public Buildings for Newberry District. The

<sup>8</sup> Architectural historian John M. Bryan, professor emeritus at the University of South Carolina and well-known authority on Robert Mills, visited the house and property in 2002, inspected it carefully, and attributed the design of the house to Robert Mills, stating, "Robert Mills' signature is all over the house." See also Bryan, ed., *Robert Mills, Architect* and John M. Bryan, *Robert Mills: America's First Architect* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001). Note that these two works were published prior to Bryan's investigation of the Frederick Nance House and his subsequent attribution of the design of the building to Robert Mills. In early 2002, Bryan concluded, based upon "circumstantial and physical evidence," that the Nance House merited attribution as a Mills-designed property. See John M. Bryan to Rodger Stroup, 26 February 2002, Frederick Nance House File, NRHP Files, SC SHPO, Columbia, South Carolina.

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historic association with Nance, a man quite familiar with the building arts and also a man of great standing, offers an important context for understanding the quality of materials and design that are evident in the construction of this house.

The Frederick Nance House is a unique example of a large-scale, masonry, Greek or Classical Revival building in Newberry County, South Carolina. That its construction may very well date from the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century makes it all the more rare. Newberry County, which was carved out of the old Ninety-Six District, was established as a political entity in 1785 and by 1787 the Newberry County Courthouse had begun to probate wills and record deeds. The area around the courthouse became the county seat, and was most often referred to as Newberry Courthouse, before it was later shortened to Newberry. John and Henry Coate owned much of the property around the courthouse and by the 1790s had begun to lay out town lots. Frederick Nance, who was appointed Clerk of Court for Newberry in 1794, was one of the first settlers in the town.<sup>9</sup> Many of the early settlers in Newberry were wealthy planters who moved west in order to capitalize upon the expansion of short-staple cotton production into the South Carolina upcountry.<sup>10</sup> There are, therefore, other examples of large plantation homes that are contemporaneous with the Frederick Nance House in Newberry. These include the Francis Higgins House (ca. 1820; NRHP listed 1980); the Caldwell-Wright House (ca. 1820; NRHP listed 1980); the Thomas Rhett House (ca. 1837; NRHP listed 1980); and Coateswood (1841; NRHP listed 1975). All of these properties exhibit the influence of the Greek Revival style, with their rectilinear forms and large, columned porches that dominate the facades.<sup>11</sup> While their styling links these properties to the Frederick Nance House, each of these examples represent vernacular adaptations of the Greek Revival style. All are clad in weatherboard and none exemplifies the high-style features evident in the Frederick Nance House.

Among the features that sets this house apart from other examples of Greek Revival architecture in Newberry is the Grecian entablature supported by four massive Roman Doric fluted columns with accompanying Roman Doric fluted pilasters. The large, full-height entry porch is not only the most striking feature of the house, but also one that it shares with other properties attributed to Robert Mills. A large portico with Grecian entablature supported by four massive Doric or Ionic columns, often with accompanying pilasters, is a defining feature, also, of the Ainsley Hall House (1823; NRHP listed 1970; NHL designation 1973) in Columbia, South Carolina, along with most of the South Carolina courthouses of Mills' design. It is important to note that the pediment of the Horry County courthouse (1825; NRHP listed 1971), which Mills designed, appears very similar to that of the Frederick Nance House. Features shared by the Frederick Nance House and known or attributed Mills-designed private houses include six-over-six windows with large glass panes, paneled cutaway reveals below the windows, stone lintels and sills, interior folding shutters, interior fireplace chimneys, handmade and bonded brickwork walls with penciled mortar joints, high ceilings having an average height of approximately twelve feet, large rooms on the order of twenty-by-twenty feet, large plaster crown moldings of similar design, door casings of exact or very similar design, door panels and moldings of the same design, and heart pine flooring in every room.

The floor plan is also indicative of Mills' designs. Mills' floor plans for private homes were uncomplicated and generally consisted of a center hall with two large rooms on either side. The Frederick Nance House shares this general design on both floors. (See attached floor plan.) The design for this house also

<sup>9</sup> Revels, *Historical and Architectural Survey of Newberry*, 12-13, 34; John Belton O'Neal, *The Annals of Newberry, Part First* (Newberry, S.C.: Aull & Houseal, 1892), 81.

<sup>10</sup> While Newberry County is not presently considered part of the South Carolina "upstate," during the period under discussion the region was understood as part of the "upcountry," as it was then known. On the historical definition of South Carolina regions see Rachel N. Klein, *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), esp. 307-309.

<sup>11</sup> Revels, *Historical and Architectural Survey of Newberry*, 43.

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included closets, an innovation in an age when wardrobes were commonly used for the storage of linens and clothing, yet one that is also found in other Mills-designed homes. Mills was an early proponent of these types of functional spaces, sometimes even outpacing his clients' willingness to incorporate them into their final designs.<sup>12</sup>

The remnants of penciling that are still visible on the exterior of the house also correspond to other buildings designed by Mills. An example of Mills' preference for this type of treatment for exterior brick walls is found in his specifications of March 7, 1825 for the construction of the Chesterfield (SC) Courthouse. There he specified that the "outside walls are to be painted brick colour and neatly penciled with white lead," and this detail is present also on many other brick buildings he designed.<sup>13</sup> Mills also deployed this technique in his domestic architecture, including at the Ainsley Hall House. While Mills was far from the only architect who utilized penciling, it was a feature that is associated with other of his designs and that was also applied to the exterior walls of the Frederick Nance House, the slave houses, and the wall around the family graveyard.

It must be noted, however, that while the Frederick Nance House shares many significant features with other Mills designed buildings, there are also some elements typically found in Mills' designs that are not present. For example, the Ainsley Hall House has a masonry stringcourse running below the second story windows. Mills also used this feature in several of his other private home designs, but it is not included on the Frederick Nance House. Also missing is the raised basement often found in Mills' designs, including at the Ainsley Hall House and South Carolina State Hospital building (ca. 1827; NRHP listed 1970; NHL designation 1973), both in Columbia, and the County Records Office (Fireproof Building) (1827; NRHP listed 1969; NHL designation 1973) in Charleston, among others. The Frederick Nance House also includes a stair in the central hall, which is out of character for buildings designed by Robert Mills. It was more typical to find the staircase located in a separate hall or stair chamber, as is the case both in the Ainsley Hall House and the Debruhl-Marshall House (ca. 1820; NRHP 1972), a building also attributed to the hand of Robert Mills. The wooden, fluted columns found on the front portico of the Frederick Nance House are also atypical for a Mills-designed building; he preferred unadorned masonry columns, a feature consistent with his belief in the importance of fireproofing. The absence of these features does not disqualify the attribution of the design to Robert Mills, and it was the case that these elements were sometimes absent from Mills' designs. Both the Richard Potts House (1817-19) and the John Hoffman House (1820-22), for example, lacked the string course feature present on the Ainsley Hall House, and the South Caroliniana Library (1836-40) on the campus of South Carolina College is an example of a Mills designed building that lacked a raised basement.<sup>14</sup> It should be noted, however, that the design of the library, which originally contained provisions for an elevated principal floor with an open carriage-way passing through the ground level, was dramatically altered during construction in order to control costs.<sup>15</sup> It is important to understand and consider all of these elements in the context of Mills' possible role in designing the Frederick Nance House. While the home includes many important elements attributed to Mills' designs, it lacks some others. Without definitive proof of Mills' involvement it then becomes important to consider other circumstantial evidence linking Mills to the design of this property, which will be discussed further below.

<sup>12</sup> Mills' mentor, Benjamin Latrobe, described his former assistant as "a very snug contriver of domestic conveniences," and among these were integrated storage closets. In a design he completed for his client Benjamin Chew in 1810, Mills originally included numerous closets and storage spaces. These plans proved too innovative for Chew, however, and he deleted nearly all of these features in the final phases of design. Robert Alexander, "The Young Professional in Philadelphia and Baltimore, 1808-1820," in *Robert Mills, Architect*, ed. John M. Bryan (Washington, D.C.: The American Institute of Architects Press, 1989), 37-40.

<sup>13</sup> Gene Waddell and Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, *Robert Mills' Courthouses and Jails* (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1961), 42.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander, "The Young Professional in Philadelphia and Baltimore", 50-52.

<sup>15</sup> John M. Bryan, *An Architectural History of the South Carolina College, 1801-1855* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1976), 85-95.

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Regardless of Mills' involvement, the Frederick Nance House remains significant within a local context for its architectural significance. Among other 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings in Newberry County, there are no real comparable properties. Most of the other Newberry County properties listed in the NRHP are of wooden frame and clapboard construction (Jacob Bedenbaugh House, 1860; the Burton House, 1857; the Folk-Holloway House, 1835; the Francis B. Higgins House, 1820; the Moon-Dominick House, 1820); or stuccoed brick (the Osborne Wells house, 1860); or a combination of clapboard and stuccoed brick (Coateswood, 1841). In Newberry County the Frederick Nance House stands alone as a rare example of a brick, four-over-four, central hall plan, planter's home. In addition, the surviving brick slave quarters appears to be unique in Newberry County. In neighboring Union County to the north, however, can be found the two-story, double-pile brick Nathaniel Gist House, built ca. 1855 with a monumental classical portico supported by stuccoed brick columns. Listed in the National Register on February 11, 2011, its walls were laid in American or common bond.

**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

Major Frederick Nance is believed to have built this house between 1822 and 1825 to serve as his plantation home. This construction took place after his retirement as a state senator but during his term as Commissioner of Public Buildings for Newberry District. Major Nance was one of Newberry's earliest settlers and he owned considerable property in and around Newberry. Nance had served as South Carolina's Lieutenant Governor under Governor John Drayton from 1808-1810 and in the South Carolina Senate from 1812-1819. While a state senator, he was a member of the committee that persuaded architect Robert Mills, a native South Carolinian who is perhaps best known for designing the U.S. Treasury Building, the U.S. Patent Office, and the National Washington Monument, all in Washington, D.C., to return to South Carolina and accept the position of State Engineer. Nance also worked with Mills during the design and construction of the Newberry Courthouse and jail, which were completed by 1827. This connection between Nance and Mills, and the timing of their association, suggests that Mills had the motive and opportunity to design the Frederick Nance House. While the architect of the property ultimately remains uncertain, other evidence, discussed below, lends further weight to the possibility that Mills designed this property.

While the Frederick Nance House is listed in the National Register as "Gildercrest" in the West Boundary Street Historic District, subsequent information has placed into question some material from that earlier National Register nomination. In 2002, architectural historian John M. Bryan visited and studied the property. Based upon his observations at that time, he attributed the design of the Frederick Nance House to Robert Mills. Bryan's attribution, along with other newly discovered information, suggests that this house was possibly built before 1825.<sup>16</sup> If that is the case, William F. Nance (b. 1836) could not have built the Frederick Nance House and James Hartwell Blease (1829-1898) could not have been the contractor. The argument below will outline the reasons for the 1822-1825 date of construction rather than the 1857 construction date found in the original nomination.

Marmaduke Coate, who prepared the earliest map of Newberry County, was a resident of Newberry and was one of nineteen surveyors hired by the state to survey each county. Although Coate's original survey is apparently lost, it was reproduced as the end paper of the first volume of Thomas H. Pope's *History of Newberry County* (1973). Coate's map depicts dwellings, taverns, mills, and meetinghouses, as well as roads and topographical features. This 1820 map shows no structure on the site of the Frederick Nance House.<sup>17</sup> Five years later Robert Mills used Coate's 1820 map in preparing the *Atlas of South Carolina*

<sup>16</sup> See John M. Bryan to Rodger Stroup, 26 February 2002, Frederick Nance House File, NRHP Files, SC SHPO, Columbia, South Carolina.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas H. Pope, *History of Newberry County, Vol. I, 1749-1860* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973).



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(1825). Mills received permission from the legislature to use the earlier surveys and he standardized the scales and symbols, edited, and added features to update and improve the earlier maps. In the resulting *Atlas*, Mills included a dwelling labeled "Nance." The inclusion of the "Nance" property on the updated map suggests that the Frederick Nance House was quite possibly constructed adjacent to the village of Newberry at some point between 1820 and 1825.

To further support this conclusion, William Lynn Shirley, Geographic Information Systems Manager in the Department of Geography at the University of South Carolina, aligned: (1) the 1825 Mills map, (2) a 21<sup>st</sup> century street map, and (3) an aerial photograph from Google Earth using a computer-based over-layer. This process involved selecting locations on the historic map that correspond to known locations on a present-day map, including features such as crossroads, places where streams split, and railroad crossings. In this case six points were identified and selected on each of the maps. Using what is referred to as an affine transformation, Shirley was able to coordinate the points on both the historic and modern maps. Because historic maps often contain irregular scales and the level of precision in placing features varies, there is necessarily some degree of error associated with this process. In this case Shirley estimated that the average variance between the historic and modern maps was 28.1 meters (30.7 yards), which is considered an acceptable level of deviation. Inherently, these distortions are not equally dispersed across the entire map and attempts to "fix" points in one area lead to increased distortions in others. For that reason, Shirley attempted to achieve the highest level of accuracy in the immediate area where the Frederick Nance House is located and therefore to minimize the level of distortion included on this portion of the map.<sup>18</sup> This over-layer revealed that the "Nance" dwelling on Mills' 1825 map and the present dwelling at 921 Jessica Avenue occupy substantially the same site.

In addition to putting the Nance property on his map, Mills made a glancing, but arguably significant, reference to the nature of its location in Mills' *Statistics of South Carolina*. *The Statistics* was an 808-page book written to supplement the *Atlas*. In writing about each county, Mills never directly claimed credit for his work. Instead, he obliquely called attention to a "court-house has been lately erected of brick, and is a great ornament to the town." (Georgetown, p. 559) Or in Greenville, "a handsome brick court-house (lately erected)..." (p. 598); or in York, "the new court-house just finished is an elegant structure, built of stone and brick..." In the same way, describing Newberry, he wrote, "A handsome court-house has within a few years been built here," and then went on to say, "To the south the ground rises and forms beautiful and healthy sites for residence" (p. 642).<sup>19</sup> While he does not mention constructing any dwellings in that location, just as he did not claim direct credit for the design of the various courthouses that are known or attributed to his hand, his specific description of the very landscape where the Frederick Nance House was built adds another layer of circumstantial evidence that possibly connects Mills to the design of this home.

Based upon the evidence presented above, as well as personal examination, John M. Bryan, an architectural historian and noted Mills scholar, concluded that the Frederick Nance House was built between 1822 and 1825, and was designed by Robert Mills. He suggested also that the house was most likely built by Mills' protégé, Charles Beck, for Major Frederick Nance. The original contract for the construction of the Ainsley Hall house lists Beck as the builder and he was also one of the contractors for the Newberry courthouse.<sup>20</sup> Mills' plans for the Newberry courthouse were approved late in 1821, and the

<sup>18</sup> William Lynn Shirley, personal communication, "Procedures for Modifying a Paper Copy of the 1825 Mill's Newberry County Map and Overlaying it with the Present-day Imagery and Maps," 16 February 2012, Frederick Nance House File, NRHP Files, SC SHPO, Columbia, South Carolina.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Mills, *Statistics of South Carolina* (Charleston: Hurlbut and Lloyd, 1826).

<sup>20</sup> Waddell and Liscombe, *Robert Mills' Courthouses and Jails*, 37. Bryan also based his attribution on the following physical and circumstantial evidence: 1) Nance's position in Newberry and likely association with Mills; 2) Mills' contemporaneous involvement in the design and construction of the Newberry County Courthouse; 3) the penciling, similar to that of the Ainsley Hall House; 4) the same number of boards in the face of the pediment as found in the pediment of the Horry County Courthouse; 5) interior shutters similar to those of the Ainsley Hall House; 6) "Millsian

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first payment for the construction of the courthouse was paid to Grafton and Beck. While no documentation has yet been found listing Beck as the contractor for the Frederick Nance House, it is clear that Beck was highly regarded by Mills and that Mills considered him not only a contractor but also his protégé. Because Beck was one of the contractors for the courthouse under construction in Newberry at the same time this property is thought to have been under construction, Bryan believes that Charles Beck was likely the contractor Mills would have chosen to build the Frederick Nance House.<sup>21</sup>

Major Frederick Nance died in February 1840. His will was very exacting as to the division of his estate. An 1831 prenuptial agreement with his second wife allowed only \$1,000 in cash to her upon his death. However, because she had "issue" (a daughter, Martha Caroline), Nance felt it only fitting to provide more comfortably for his widow, Tersea, and their daughter; so in 1839 he revised his will, stipulating that Tersea should have certain furniture, livestock, a plot of land, farming equipment, grain, and "other provisions," including the loan of another 300 acres of land. The widow, Tersea, and their daughter, Martha Caroline, were to have the use of this house and property until the daughter came of age, married, or died, at which time the property would revert to the estate. Drayton Nance, son and executor of Major Nance's estate, was named as guardian of Martha Caroline.<sup>22</sup>

The rest of Major Nance's property, both real and personal, was inventoried and sold to members of the family and other willing buyers. His son, Drayton Nance, purchased many personal items and several tracts of land, including ninety-one acres of land described as the "Home Place." Drayton died in September of 1856 and the executors of his estate, Frederick Nance, Jr. and John A. Banks, brought suit against Drayton's children to force the sale of the house. In the ensuing auction, William F. Nance, one of Drayton's sons and grandson of Major Nance, bought the house and 34.67 acres.

In 1857, William and his wife, Sarah (Sallie) Calmes Nance, began making minor renovations to his grandfather's home to "update" and freshen the premises. In a letter from James Drayton Nance (William's brother) to their sister Laura, James discussed some of the changes: "Billie and Sallie have moved in their house. Sallie is much pleased with the change from the kitchen to the rooms. I like the house quite much. It is altogether one of the most substantial and best-arranged houses I know of. The place is a beautiful one, indeed; and all in all I would rather own it than any place within my knowledge. You will be pleased with it, I have no doubt, when you come home."<sup>23</sup>

In June of 1862 William F. Nance sold the house and approximately thirty acres to Dr. Thomas L. O'Gier, a noted physician from Charleston who was also the head of the Medical Division of the Confederacy for South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. A "For Sale" advertisement in a local newspaper of May 16, 1866, suggests that the house was the center of a small, operating farm, and stated, "The House and Outbuildings are all of brick, and on the premises are Brick Barn, Dry Well, and Dairy. Attached to the yard are 25 acres of Farming Land, all of which is now under cultivation."<sup>24</sup>

In December 1868 O'Gier sold the property to Gouverneur Wilkins Armstrong as trustee for his wife, Sarah M. (Grayson) Armstrong, conveying the house and thirty acres as part of the sale. In 1870 William Henry Armstrong and his wife brought a lawsuit against Gouverneur Wilkins Armstrong and his wife, forcing the sale of the home and thirty acres of land to John R. Leavell as trustee for Elizabeth J. Leavell

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proportions"; and 7) the evidence that the exposed structural members—rafters and joints—were pit sawn. Most of these elements are also discussed separately elsewhere in this nomination. John M. Bryan to Rodger Stroup, 26 February 2002, Frederick Nance House File, NRHP Files, SC SHPO, Columbia, South Carolina.

<sup>21</sup> John M. Bryan to Rodger Stroup, 26 February 2002, Frederick Nance House File, NRHP Files, SC SHPO, Columbia, South Carolina.

<sup>22</sup> Will of Frederick Nance [typescript], Proved 13 February 1840, South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH), Columbia, SC, microform, series S108093, reel 20, frame 8.

<sup>23</sup> Photocopy of the letter is in the possession of the present owners.

<sup>24</sup> *Newberry Herald*, 16 May 1866, p. 3.

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in June 1871. Leavell was well known in Newberry, having served as the town's tax collector during the Civil War. By the 1870's Leavell was even better known as the owner of a funeral home, a monument business, and a furniture business. Soon after moving into the old Nance property, the Leavells began referring to the property as "Oak Grove," possibly because of the large number of oak trees found on the property.<sup>25</sup>

As Newberry grew, more and more land was sold from Oak Grove's acreage. After John R. Leavell deeded land facing Boundary Street to his son, Robert Y. Leavell, on which to build a home, the Frederick Nance House, now known as Oak Grove, consisted of twenty-five acres. In 1895 John R. Leavell and the trustees of his estate sold the house and remaining land to Lizzie W. Fant. A lawsuit in December of 1902 brought by Dr. James K. Gilder, guardian of C. White Fant, resulted in the sale of the house and property to Dr. Gilder for \$5,000. Dr. Gilder was well known in Newberry as a local physician, druggist, and appointed official.

In April 1920, Dr. Gilder sold of all of Oak Grove's acreage and home to Oliver H. Johnson. In July of 1925, Johnson subdivided the property into a total of thirty-three parcels. Johnson also changed the name of the house to "The Oaks," a name that was short-lived because the official name of the subdivision was "Gildercrest Sub-Division of Property of O. H. Johnson in Newberry, South Carolina." The public continued to call the house by the name of "Gildercrest." When Johnson auctioned off the lots that summer, Azile Parr Patrick purchased several lots, including the lot with the old home place and slave houses.

In November 1936, Azile Parr Patrick transferred title of the nine lots of the subdivided property to the Home Owners Loan Corporation. In 1939, the Home Owners Loan Corporation sold these same lots to Otto F. Armfield, owner and publisher of the *Newberry Sun*, which he printed for several years inside the easternmost slave house (no longer standing). Mr. Armfield built a new brick house on the footprint of the middle slave house in 1947 and another brick house to the southeast of the main house in 1955. Several smaller houses were built and sold on Pauline Street during his ownership. After her husband's death, Mrs. Armfield continued to live in the big house at Oak Grove until 1978.

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<sup>25</sup> Michael Frederick Comer to William B. Cross, 5 July 2011, Frederick Nance House File, NRHP Files, SC SHPO, Columbia, South Carolina. Comer is the grandson of Mary Beta Leavell, John Leavell's daughter, who was six years old at the time the house was purchased. Comer's explanation for the origin of this historic name records the early use of the name, though it does not necessarily preclude the possibility that the Nance family also knew it as Oak Grove long before Leavell's purchase. Oak Grove has had several additional owners since 1978. The present owner, William B. Cross, along with his wife, Mary Ann, have worked since his purchase in December of 1997 to repair and preserve the property at Oak Grove and correctly document its history.

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Waddell, Gene, and Rhodri Windsor Liscombe. *Robert Mills' Courthouses and Jails.* Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1961.

Wilkes, Marion R. *Rosemont and Its Famous Daughter.* M. R. Wilkes: Washington, DC, 1947.

Frederick Nance House  
Name of Property

Newberry, SC  
County and State

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Oak Grove Archive, 921 Jessica Ave., Newberry, SC

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 1.76

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 34.267597 | Longitude: -81.624929 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

Frederick Nance House  
Name of Property

Newberry, SC  
County and State

**Or**  
**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the nominated property is shown as the black line marked "Frederick Nance House, 921 Jessica Avenue, Newberry, Newberry County, SC" on the accompanying portion of a Newberry County GIS map, parcel number 343-7-11-14.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is restricted to the contributing historic house and slave house, two noncontributing buildings and their immediate settings that make up the 1.76 acre parcel.

Frederick Nance House  
Name of Property

Newberry, SC  
County and State

---

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: William B. Cross (with assistance by the SHPO staff, SC Department of Archives and History)

organization: \_\_\_\_\_

street & number: 921 Jessica Ave.

city or town: Newberry state: SC zip code: 29108

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

date: May 27, 2014

---

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)



**Frederick Nance House**  
Name of Property

**Newberry, SC**  
County and State

### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

**Name of Property:** Frederick Nance House

**County:** Newberry

**State:** South Carolina

**Photographer:** Eric Plaag

**Date Photographed:** April 29, 2011

#### **Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

1. E oblique, looking W
2. NE elevation, looking SW
3. N oblique, looking S
4. NE portico, column detail
5. NE portico stairwell
6. NE elevation, main entry detail
7. SW elevation, S oblique
8. SW elevation, looking NE
9. NW elevation, looking SE
10. Center hall, looking SW
11. NE main entry, looking NE
12. Center hall staircase with French doors on landing
13. Staircase detail, looking W
14. SW entry door detail (exterior surface opened inward), looking SW
15. Dining room with kitchen egress, looking S
16. Dining room, looking W
17. Library, looking NE
18. Library, looking E
19. Library, looking W
20. NE wall of parlor
21. Parlor, looking E
22. Parlor hearth detail, SW wall
23. Second floor porch, looking SE
24. SW elevation, second floor window detail from porch
25. Second floor center hall with balustrade, looking NE
26. Second floor center hall, looking SW
27. N bedroom, looking N
28. N bedroom closet door, SW wall

Frederick Nance House

Newberry, SC  
County and State

Name of Property

29. E bedroom, window detail, NE wall
30. E bedroom, looking NW to N bedroom
31. S bedroom, looking E to closet door
32. Servant's staircase, second floor to attic, looking NE
33. Wooden roof pins detail, SE attic gable
34. 1947 house on site of former slave dwelling, looking W
35. 1955 house located S of Oak Grove main house, looking S
36. N oblique of NE elevation of surviving slave dwelling, looking S
37. S oblique, surviving slave dwelling, looking N
38. Low resolution scan of 1926 postcard of "The Oaks," provided by William Cross

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

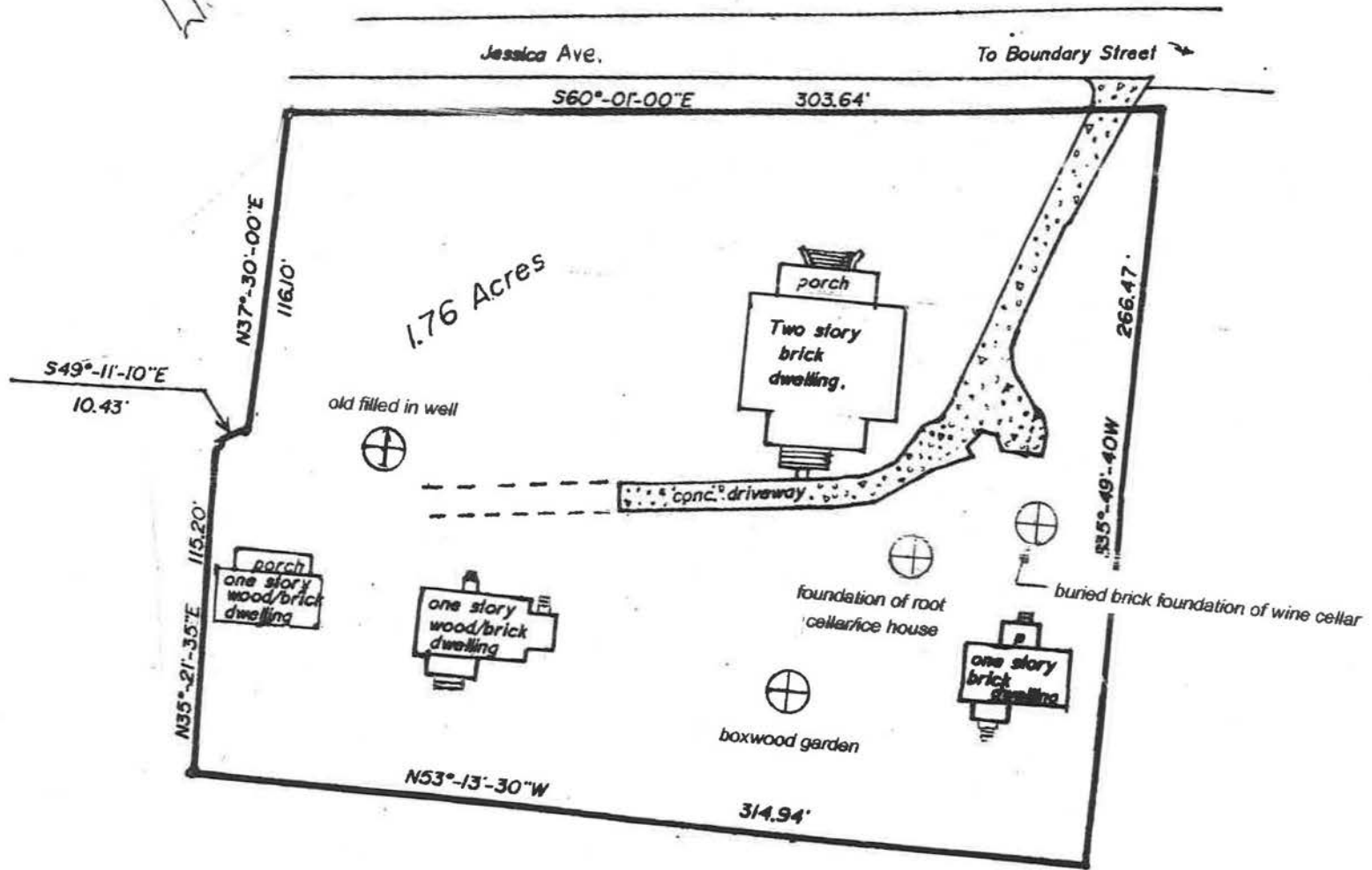
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

*Newberry County GIS*



\*\*\* THIS MAP IS NOT TO BE USED AS A PLAT \*\*\*

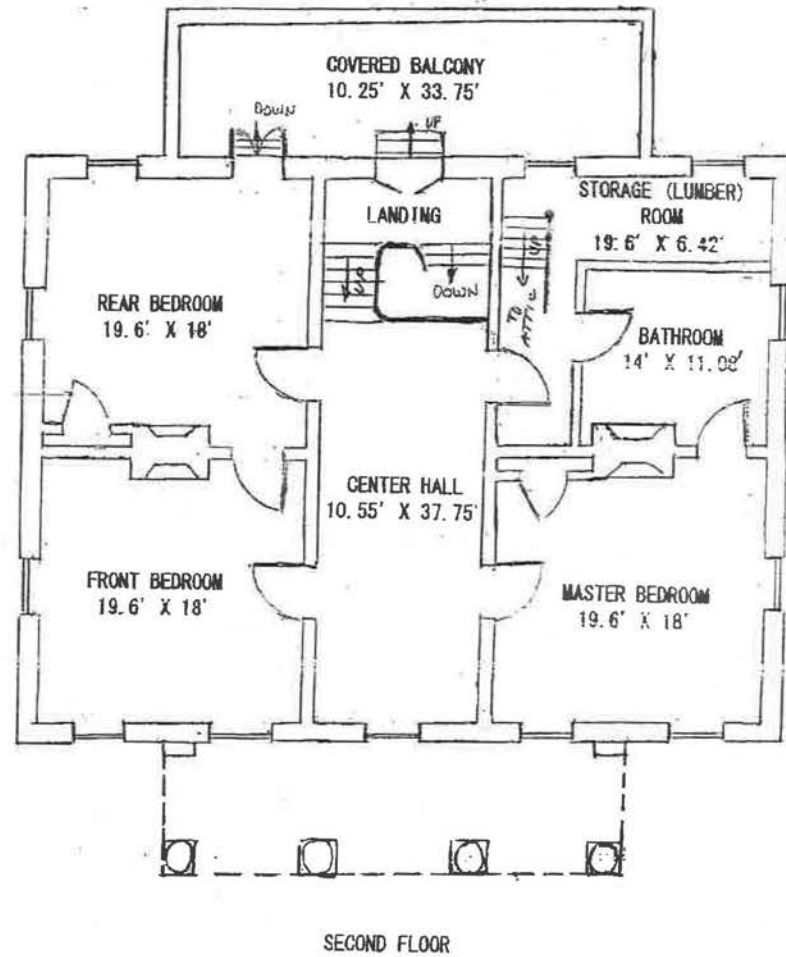
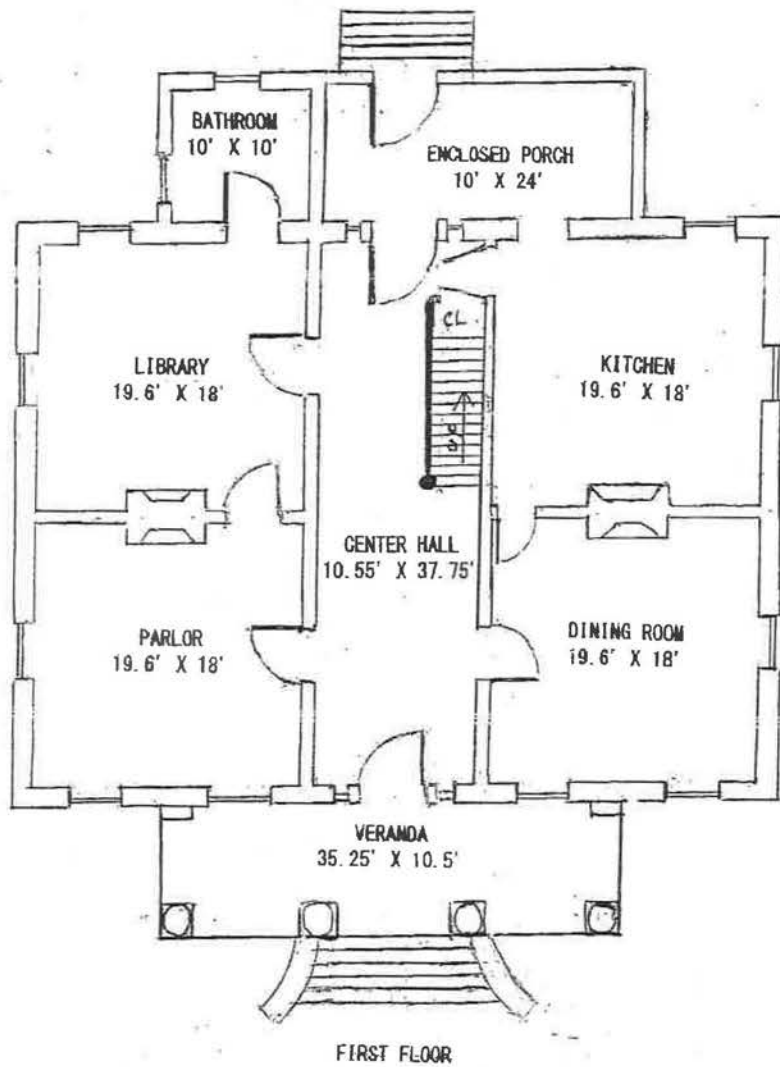
FREDERICK NANCE HOUSE  
921 JESSICA AVENUE, NEWBERRY, NEWBERRY COUNTY, SC



SKETCH MAP for FREDERICK NANCE HOUSE, NEWBERRY, SC  
Not to Scale



Frederick Nance House (New berry, New berry Co., SC)  
Latitude: 34.267597 Longitude: -81.624929



# FLOOR PLAN for FREDERICK NANCE HOUSE, NEWBERRY, SC

Not to Scale

# Newberry County GIS

Oak Grove  
921 Jessica Ave, Newberry























































































A square brick chimney is located on the roof of the building, positioned towards the back center.

A white door is leaning against the wall on the left side of the building, partially embedded in a large hole in the brickwork.

A window with a white frame and several vertical panes is located on the front wall of the building. The panes appear to be missing or broken.

A white electrical meter or control box is mounted on the brick wall to the right of the window.

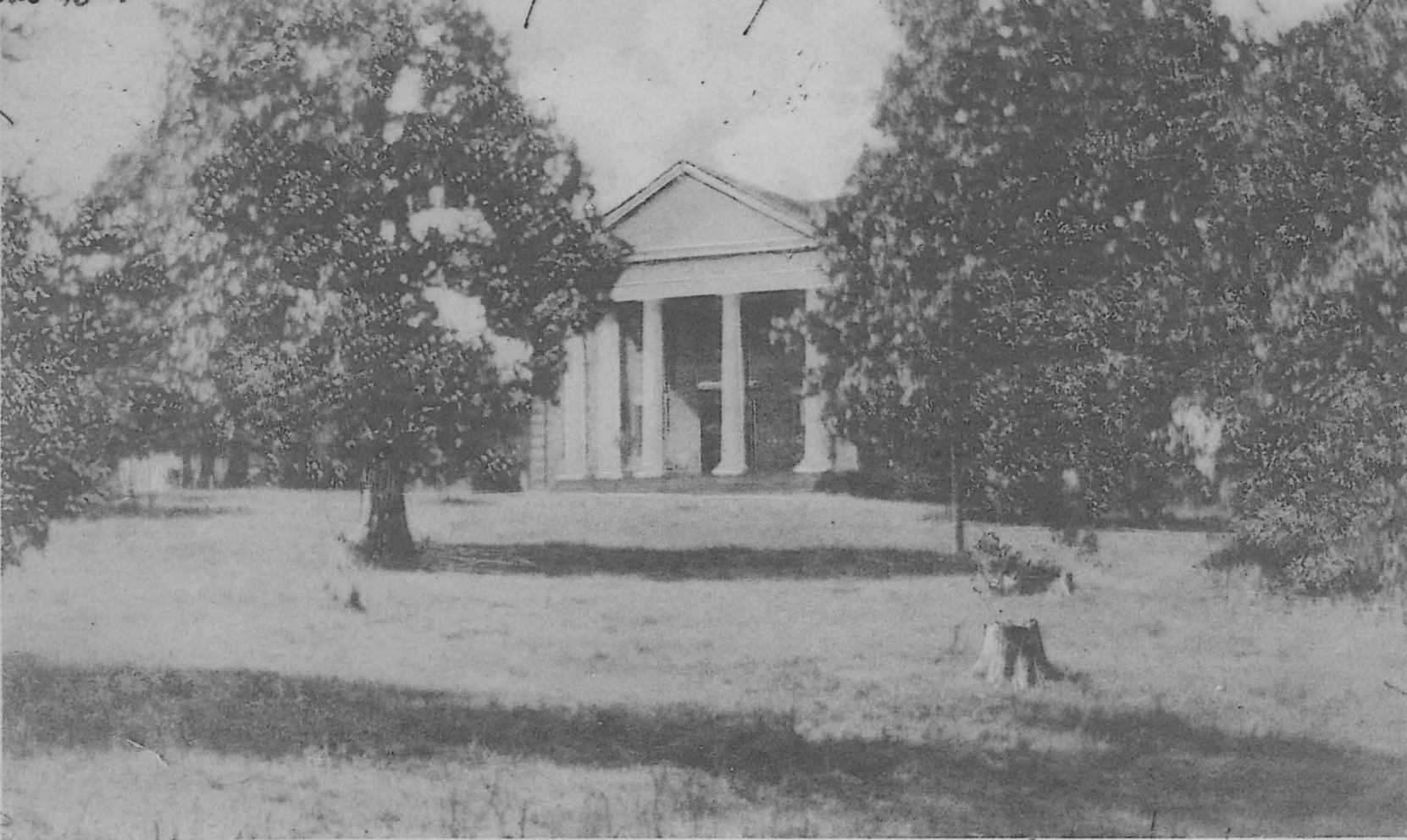
A long, thin wooden plank is leaning against the base of the brick wall in the center of the image.

A circular hole is visible in the brick wall on the right side of the building, possibly a vent or a small opening.

*The Shrimers sent out up - The firm did not come -*

*to meet Mrs & Cecil some day*

*the party will*



"THE OAKS," RESIDENCE OF MR. O. H. JOHNSON, NEWBERRY, S. C.

*4 June 11*

National Register of Historic Places  
Memo to File

# Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME:

~~Oak Grove~~ *Frederick Nance House*

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: SOUTH CAROLINA, Newberry

DATE RECEIVED: 6/10/14  
DATE OF 16TH DAY:  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/27/14

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000333

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 7/29/14 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Architecture local level 1822-1825  
individual nomination: Property listed  
as a contributing resource to the West  
Boundary St. H.D. in 1980.*

RECOM./CRITERIA C

REVIEWER [Signature]

DISCIPLINE [Signature]

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE 7/29/14

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



RECEIVED

MAR 05 2002

SC Department of  
Archives & History

DEPARTMENT OF ART

February 26, 2002

Dr. Rodger Stroup  
Head, South Carolina Department of Archives and History  
8301 Parklane Road  
Columbia, S.C.

Dear Rodger:

It was good to talk to you. As we discussed, I have recently examined a house in Newberry and have concluded that on the basis of both circumstantial and physical evidence it should be attributed to Robert Mills.

Here are my reasons for such an attribution:

- The house does not appear on Marmaduke Coate's survey of Newberry County but does appear as the Nance House on Mills map
- Frederick Nance was a legislator at the time and must have known Mills
- Mills was responsible for the Courthouse in Newberry at the time, and
- The house has several physical hallmarks of Mills' work, including (1) remnants of "penciling," the false mortar joints like the Ainsley Hall House, (2) the same number of boards in the face of the pediment as the Horry County Courthouse, (3) interior shutters

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similar to those at the Ainsley Hall House, and (4) Millsian proportions.

- The exposed structural members – rafters and joists – are pit sawn.

No documents have turned up yet, but I'm hopeful and still looking.

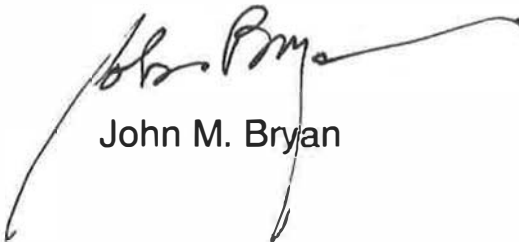
You mentioned that you could send this along to Tracy and put it in the Newberry County files. I hope he, or somebody on the staff, will come across a letter, a contract or mortgage, something linking Mills, Nance and the house which is now owned by Mr. & Mrs. William Cross.

It is a grand site. The house is largely unaltered. There are two brick slave buildings behind it. The site of a circular ice house is evident, and I am told there is documentation for a brick barn. The Crosses are in the process of preserving the Nance family grave yard (which I have not seen yet). Taken all together, the site is an impressive grouping or constellation of historic buildings.

On a personal note, I marvel that it has been overlooked, but at the same time, I'm heartened: it proves there's always more to be discovered, a reason as they say on Lake Woebegone "to get up and do what has to be done."

If you have anyone going that way, I suggest they call ahead and arrange a visit (Mary Ann and William Cross at 803-321-3933).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Bryan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John M. Bryan



16 February 2012

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

### **Procedures for modifying a paper copy of the 1825 Mill's Newberry County map and overlaying it with present day imagery and maps**

The process of making adjustments to the size, shape and positioning of an older paper map so that it overlays properly with newer digital images and maps is relatively straight-forward given today's computer applications. This process essentially involves selecting locations on the old map that can also be found on a present day map or image. Crossroads, places where streams split, and railroad crossings are oftentimes used. For a proper adjustment one should find at least four (4) locations that the old and current map has in common. Furthermore these locations should be evenly distributed across the map so that the adjustments based on local variations which can change in different parts of the map. Regardless, some older maps are so poorly drawn with respect to scale, location and shape of features that not all positions on an old map can overlay properly onto newer maps.

For this particular effort, the task of finding recognizable points in common on both maps was somewhat more difficult than first imagined, but eventually six points were found that could be used for the adjustment. The type of adjustment made is termed an affine transformation based on a least-squared fit of data and involved determining the error associated with shifting the old map based on the sum of all the control points used. The result of this process was that an average of 28.1 meters (30.7 yds) of variation existed in any point from the 1825 map once it was transposed to overlay the present-day map. This is considered an acceptable deviation for an original map of this era.

The inherent problem fitting this map to real-world maps is that the distortions in the old map were not consistent so that "fixing" one part of the map caused increased error in another part of the map. Thus the area around present day Newberry and the immediate southwest environment (where the prospective structure is located) were primarily considered in performing the overlay process.

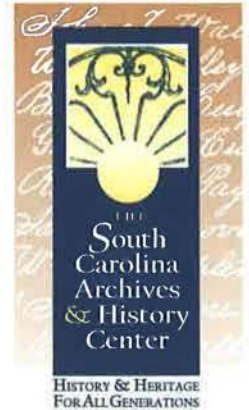
William Lynn Shirley

GIS manager/instructor  
709 Bull St. – room 320

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA • COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29208 • 803/777-5234 • FAX 803/777-4972

AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION / EQUAL OPPORTUNITY INSTITUTION



Friday, 5 April 2013

Ms. Carol Shull  
Interim Keeper, National Register of Historic Places  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
1201 Eye (I) Street, NW, 8th Floor  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Here is the National Register nomination for Oak Grove, in Newberry, Newberry County, South Carolina.

We are submitting this nomination for listing in the Register.

If I may be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below, call me at (803) 896-6182, fax me at (803) 896-6167, or e-mail me at [power@scdah.state.sc.us](mailto:power@scdah.state.sc.us). I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

J. Tracy Power, Ph.D.  
Historian and National Register Co-Coordinator  
State Historic Preservation Office



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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Oak Grove  
other names/site number Gildercrest, The Oaks, Oak Grove Hall

### 2. Location

street & number 921 Jessica Avenue  not for publication  
city or town Newberry  vicinity  
state South Carolina code \_\_\_\_\_ county Newberry code 071 zip code 29108

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

X national     statewide     local

Elizabeth M. Johnson 4/5/2013  
Signature of certifying official Date

Elizabeth M. Johnson, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, South Carolina Department of Archives & History, Columbia, S.C.

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register     determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register     removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the 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**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	2	buildings
		district
1		site
		structure
		object
3	2	<b>Total</b>

OWNER: William B. Cross

ADDRESS: 921 Jessica Avenue, Newberry, SC 29108

PHONE: 803-271-1525

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

2

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC—Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC—Secondary Structure

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC—Single Dwelling

Returned

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: BRICK

walls: BRICK

roof: ASPHALT

other: WOOD

---

### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### **Summary Paragraph**

Oak Grove is located at 921 Jessica Avenue within the city limits of Newberry, South Carolina. It is an early 19<sup>th</sup> century Greek Revival house (1822-1825), built of brick with limestone sills and lintels. It stands two and one half stories high, is five bays wide, two bays deep, and is approximately 4,400 square feet, not including the back porch which was enclosed in 1946 and the adjacent bathroom that was added around 1903. Four fluted Tuscan order columns support the front portico, with two fluted pilasters against the wall at the back of the portico. The interior floor plan consists of a center hall containing the staircase with two rooms on either side of the hall on each floor. Behind the main house there was at one time a row of at least three one-story brick slave houses; however, only one still survives. Other service buildings, known through historical maps, documents, and contemporary newspaper articles, no longer exist. Otherwise, the property is largely unchanged by the various owners who have lived here over a period of 190 years. While no longer attached to the property on which the house sits, there is a large Nance family graveyard located a block and a half to the southeast of the house. Interred here are Major Nance and his first wife; several of their children; and in-laws, including son-in-law, United States Senator Patrick Calhoun Caldwell. Dr. John M. Bryan, a well-known authority on Robert Mills, visited the house and property in 2002, inspected it carefully, and attributed the design of the house to Robert Mills, stating, "Robert Mills' signature is all over the house." A formal letter of attribution was then sent to the South Carolina Department of Archives and History by Dr. Bryan.<sup>1</sup>

---

### **Narrative Description**

#### **Main House (1822-1825)**

Oak Grove was designed by Robert Mills and built between 1822 and 1825 as the plantation home of Major Frederick Nance, Sr. after his retirement as a state senator but during his term as Commissioner of Public Buildings for Newberry District. Major Nance, while a senator, had been a member of the committee that persuaded Robert Mills to return to South Carolina and accept the position of State Engineer. Major Nance worked with Robert Mills during the designing and construction of the Newberry Courthouse and jail. Major Nance was one of Newberry's earliest settlers and was always a dedicated public servant.

Oak Grove is a large, grand, Greek Revival brick house standing two and a half stories high, two bays deep, and five bays wide. The two sides are gabled. The front of the house boasts a dramatic, full-height, temple portico three bays wide. The brick on the front is a running bond with quoins of five rows on each corner of the structure in a projecting, segmented fashion. Remnants of penciling (painted, white mortar joints), a Robert Mills hallmark, are still visible although hard to see in the photographs.<sup>1</sup> There is a stunted brick water table, which projects slightly at the base of the walls on each side of the portico. The windows across the front are evenly spaced and arranged. They are large six-over-six, double-hung wooden sashes; most panes are original. Each window has a projecting rectangular limestone sill and lintel. The front entry is recessed with a wide webbed, elliptical fanlight with three-light sidelights flanking the paneled, single door. A beautiful paneled reveal frames this stunning entry, while a rectangular limestone lintel punctuates the width of the entryway. This Greek Revival portico is anchored to the front brick wall by two fluted Tuscan-style pilasters, and four fluted Tuscan-style columns support the outer edge of the portico. A metal lantern hangs from a chain in the center of the portico. The porch floor is not original but was changed from a wooden floor to a terra cotta broken tile (set in concrete) floor in 1950. However, the original piers for the columns are still under the porch and are visible by looking through the vents in the walls under the edges of the porch. Photographs from 1926 and 1942 show wooden steps descending the full width of the porch; however the present steps are brick and only as wide as the middle bay.<sup>2</sup> The present porch foundation is composed of several types of brick, in all probability from the repairs when the porch floor was replaced. The portico's wooden entablature and pediment are unadorned, and ten evenly spaced clapboards fill the face of the pediment like that of the Horry County Courthouse which dates to the same time period as Oak Grove and was also designed by Robert Mills.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Dr. John M. Bryan to Dr. Rodger Stroup, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 26 February 2002, attributing Oak Grove to Robert Mills.

<sup>2</sup> Postcard titled, "The Oaks, Residence of Mr. O. H. Johnson, Newberry, S.C." dated 20 May 1926, in the possession of Oak Grove's present owner, depicts the front lawn of Oak Grove and a portion of the northeast portico with wide wooden steps.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Bryan to Stroup, 26 February 2002.

The entire ceiling of the portico is covered with handsome panels that duplicate the panels inside the architrave wall and down the entry reveal. The roof of Oak Grove is presently of asphalt shingles and, obviously, is not original although the original rough-cut roofing boards with old projecting nails from a shake roof are still visible in the attic. Two evenly spaced interior chimneys rise several feet above the ridge beam, but these exposed upper chimneys are not original but were replaced in 1984 after a tornado tore through Newberry.

The side walls (southeast and northwest) of Oak Grove are made up of a common bond of ten rows of stretchers for each row of headers reaching up to the tops of the limestone sills above the first floor windows. We then see varying rows of stretchers for each row of headers as the walls continue upward to the wide fascia board below the projecting pediment cornice. Above the cornice and fascia board, the common bond brick continues in an alternating pattern. The attic window in the peak of the gable is a six-over-six double-hung sash with a brick header course as a lintel and a limestone sill. Below the cornice, the gabled wall has two evenly and symmetrically spaced windows on each floor, each of which is a six-over-six double-hung sash with limestone lintel and sill. Most of the glass in these windows appear to be original. There is a short brick water table which projects ever so slightly from the base of the wall, with five equally spaced vertical cuts in the brick above. Of course, the brick quoins previously described continue onto the corners of the side walls. The opposite side wall is virtually identical.

The rear (southwest) of the house has many of the same design elements as found on the rest of the house, including the projecting temple structure as found on the front, the tympanum, cornice, and wide fascia board beneath the cornice. Under this pediment is a second-story porch with arched wooden lattice screens on both sides and three arches with lattice across the center section. The balustrade has ornate, turned spindles. The entry from the upper porch leads down two steps to a double (vertical) door with eight lights and a panel on each door and a transom light of a semicircular fan. A projecting limestone lintel is above the entry, which also has a simple reveal the depth of the two steps. This doorway opens onto the stair landing inside the house. To the left of this entryway are two six-over-six double-hung sash windows, one under the pediment and the other on the exposed brick wall, directly in line with and identical to the northwest windows in front. Immediately to the right of this porch door is a French door up two steps from the porch floor. This door was placed where a window once hung, has six evenly spaced lights in each door panel, and opens into a back bedroom. To the right of the French doors and outside the porch enclosure is another window identical to most of the other windows and in direct line to the upper northeast window at the front of the house. The porch ceiling is of painted tongue-and-groove boards.

The lower rear porch was originally open with balustrade and latticed arches identical to the upper porch but was enclosed in two phases. The first change was made around 1903 when one third of the lower (southeast) porch was enclosed with brick in a running bond for use as a bathing room/storage area. There are two small windows in this area—one on the southeast wall and one on the south wall of this enclosure. The rest of the back porch (which would have been under the upper left two central latticed arches) were left open and undisturbed until 1946 when the wife of the owner decided she was tired of the rain coming in on the porch and had it enclosed with a wooden clapboard knee wall under eight large one-over-one double hung sash windows. The present owners were told by members of the Armfield family that the original balustrade was left in place and the clapboard knee walls were built around it. The outer door has a large single light with two panels below. The original brick piers are still visible, although they have been filled in with various bricks and two vent coverings.

To continue regarding this rear (south) wall, a six-over-six double hung sash is to the right of the first floor bathroom extension, directly in line with the window in front and directly below the rear bedroom window above. To the left of the enclosed porch, however, the window, a six-over-six double-hung sash, though in line with the one above on the second floor, is quite a bit smaller. This smaller window was placed under the rise of the enclosed back servants' staircase that rose to a landing and then turned back on itself to the floor above. This staircase was very unstable and was therefore removed by the present owner in 1998 in order to make more space in the kitchen area for his personal use.

It has been said that the interior of Oak Grove is no less impressive than its exterior. With a foursquare central floor plan on both the first and second floors, the house has many features original to the house. All ceilings, both upstairs and down, are nearly twelve feet high. All floors are heart pine and without knots on the first floor. All interior doors are original as are the wooden louvered blinds. The downstairs center hall runs the full length of the house from the front door to the original back door that leads to the enclosed back porch, now used as a family/sitting room. The original back door sports three side lights on either side but has no transom light since the landing of the staircase goes across where a transom light would have been. The original paneled back door is in place as are the panels under the lights on either side of the door and in the reveal. The large, original, well-worn threshold is still present as is a large projecting limestone lintel over the wide entry.

The entrance hall is quite spacious with inside measurements of 10.55 feet wide and 37.75 feet long. After Dr. Gilder bought the property in December of 1902, he changed the front entry to vertical double doors with stained glass panels in each door and a stained glass transom above. He also added a stained glass transom and door panel to the doorway to the balcony from the stair landing. When the present owner bought the property, there were no light fixtures or chandeliers present, only two interior ceiling fans and several "pigtail" lights in the downstairs area. During Dr. Gilder's renovation process, the current newel post was repositioned to make room for a Victorian hanging adornment of which he was very fond. These embellishments have since been removed, including all of the stained glass. The stairway, with its elaborately turned spindles, sweeps up from the front of the hall to the landing, then continues back on itself to the second floor—a beautiful and graceful structure!

The first door on the right from the front of the hall opens into the dining room. The door, like all others in the house, is a heavy, paneled, inverted cross design. This paneling matches the paneling under all three windows in this room. The inside top of the window reveal has a trapezoidal rectangle while the sides of the reveal are plain. Upper and lower wooden louvered blinds are attached to the outer edges of the window frame.<sup>4</sup> The windows are six-over-six double hung sashes with mostly original glass. One pane in the left front window has the name "Sue" etched on it at eye level, in all probability a reference to Susan Griffin Nance, second wife of Frederick Nance, Jr. In February of 1854 Susan Nance became a founding member and Vice President of the Mount Vernon Liberty Spring Association under the leadership of Ann Pamela Cunningham, a friend and neighbor.<sup>5</sup> This also seems appropriate since Major Nance's father's brother was an aide-de-camp to George Washington. The walls and ceiling of the dining room are of plaster with a heavy plaster crown molding typical of Robert Mills' designs. The original mantel has been replaced and is stored in the attic along with all the other original mantels. The firebrick inside the firebox was added at some unknown time. The flooring is of heart pine (a pinkish-tan color indicative of this area) and is knot free. The baseboards are nine and one-eighth inches high, painted black, with a two and one-half inch trim over that.

To the left of the dining room fireplace is a paneled, inverted standing cross door leading into the kitchen, which was in rough shape at the time of the present owner's purchase in 1997. The kitchen was renovated at that time to suit the owner's needs. However, the large six-over-six double hung sash and smaller six-over-six window were left in place, as were the wooden, louvered blinds on both windows. This room does not have the paneled cutaway reveal below the windows but does have a large, deep sill at each window. As mentioned before, the derelict, enclosed staircase was removed to provide more kitchen space. The heart pine floorboards that had been damaged by sparks, termites, and water were replaced, but this amounted to less than ten percent of the total floor space in this room. The base of the chimney was rebuilt to keep further damage at bay. The kitchen has two more doors. One door opens onto a small space where the door to the storage area under the stairs is located; and the other doorway, with no door, leads out onto the enclosed back porch now used as a family/sitting room. This latter doorway was originally the servant's entrance from the original, open back porch.

Returning to the front entry, the first door to the left after entering, is the parlor. The windows in this room are identical to the ones in the dining room with their deep, paneled reveals, cut-away dados below, and two-storied wooden, louvered blinds. The original, very wide, plaster crown molding is stunning and has only a few places where it has been repaired. Dr. John M. Bryan was very impressed during his first visit here that the original, plaster crown moldings in the parlor, dining room, library, and downstairs center hall were still in place and in such good condition. The heart pine floors are all original, although there are two small areas of termite damage that needs to be filled in with wood putty. A surprising find when the wall-to-wall carpeting was removed was traces of a red and white or cream carpet hand-painted directly onto the floorboards. The firebricks in the firebox were added earlier in the twentieth century, and all eight of the fireplaces in the house have been converted to gas.

The last door on the left after entering the center hall from the front doorway is the library. This room has had another wooden floor installed over the original, which can still be seen from underneath the house. During the mid 1900s, this room was used as a bedroom; so the later layer was probably installed at that time to keep little "critters" from coming up through the cracks in the floorboards. To the left of the fireplace is a doorway to the parlor, and directly opposite is another doorway to a full bathroom. This doorway was created from a window, using the usual paneled area below the window to the top of the opening for the door. The other two windows are six-over-six double-hung sashes identical to the ones in the living room and dining room. Another beautiful plaster crown molding adorns the top of the walls. The bathroom, which had been created from one-third of the lower rear porch, has been renovated and is fully equipped.

<sup>4</sup> Bryan to Stroup, 26 February 2002, indicates that Mills' plans for Ainsley Hall's house also featured this same kind of interior shutters.

<sup>5</sup> See Wilkes, Marion R. *Rosemont and Its Famous Daughter*, 1947. pp 20 and 21.



The hallway on the second floor is as wide as the one below but is not as deep since the stairway takes up a certain amount of space. The edge of the flooring that meets the stairway is secured with a balustrade of nicely turned spindles that continues on down as the banister. To the front of the hallway is a six-over-six double-hung sash window with the usual angled reveal and two-storied wooden louvered blinds as the first floor. The flooring is of heart-pine boards; and the baseboards, like those throughout the house, are almost a foot high. All of the doors leading from this hallway are the usual inverted cross design.

The northeast corner of the second floor contains a bedroom the size of the parlor below. The arrangement of the fireplace, doors, and windows are placed exactly as the room below except that the six-over-six double-hung sashes with two-storied blinds do not have the wide angled cutaway reveal below, but a straight wall with a very deep windowsill. The floors are of heart-pine and original as are all the other floors on the second floor except where the back staircase was removed. There is no closet in this room. The doorway to the right of the fireplace leads to the rear bedroom.

This southeast (rear) bedroom is the same size as the library below with the same arrangement of fireplace and windows. However, the doorway from the hall is not in direct line with the library door below because of the stairway connecting to the second-floor hallway. This room does have the French door going out onto the balcony as described earlier. Windows have the deep windowsills; there is heart-pine flooring with high baseboards as in the northeast bedroom. However, there is a shallow closet built from the right edge of the fireplace to the outer wall.

The northwest bedroom sits above the dining room and has the same arrangement of doors, fireplace, and windows. These windows, like the others on the second floor, are six-over-six double-hung sashes with double-tiered wooden louvered blinds with deep windowsills but no angled reveals below the windows. The flooring is original heart pine, and the baseboards are high. To the left and flush with the fireplace is a shallow closet that runs to the wall along the hallway. To the right of the fireplace is a doorway to what originally was another bedroom but at some point in the early twentieth century was divided into a bathroom and a stairway hall to the kitchen below and the attic above. This bathroom has the typical second-floor window, placement of fireplace behind the one in the northwest bedroom, and heart pine floors. The space previously containing the stairs to the kitchen has been floored with vintage heart pine boards. This area is now used as a storage (lumber) room.

The staircase to the attic is very steep and has a simple handrail and spool-turned spindles. This staircase opens into a small room finished with tongue-and-groove bead board and heart pine flooring. A large six-over-six double-hung sash window sits in the peak of the west gable. After entering this small finished room, there is a door to the right to enter the other two-thirds of the attic. The flooring in this area was added in 1968 to have easy access for storage and to install HVAC. The areas over and into the pediments are neither walled nor floored; and all of the pit-sawn and hand-sawn joists and rafters, the large wooden pins around the entire perimeter of the house which anchor the roof to the walls, the original rough-cut boards (many with bark) to which the original shakes were nailed, even the old nails are mostly there—are all easily accessible and fascinating to see!

Besides the main house at Oak Grove, there are several other outbuildings and structures that show the history of the house, starting from the beginning of the plantation era to its conversion to a grand residence for some of the more elite families of Newberry. Although Oak Grove retains most of its original features, it also represents minor changes made over the years by various owners, bringing the house from its early, grand plantation beginning to a marvelous home for the present time. Most of all, though long forgotten, Oak Grove is an important example of Robert Mills' domestic architecture.

### Contributing Outbuilding

**Slave House (1822-1825):** There is a large, brick, one-story two-room slave house located about fifty yards to the west of the main house. There were at least three of these buildings prior to 1865. One was torn down sometime before 1947 when a new brick house was built on its footprint. Half of another one fell down in 2007, so the rest of the house had to be removed. The remaining slave house is side gabled brick with a double-sided central chimney with an opening on each side of the fireplace. There is a front and back door into each room with a window in each gabled side. The original floor was replaced years ago and is in rough shape again. Vent cuts for the crawlspace are nearly identical to the vents of the main house and to the one that fell down in 2007, obviously indicating that the slave dwellings were built at the same time as the main house. Also, the top of the brick walls of the slave houses have/had trim of bull-nose brick, like that used on the reproduction carriage house at Ainsley Hall's home at Historic Columbia. Penciling is also present on the brick walls. This remaining slave house is an intact example of a type of architecture that is rapidly disappearing in this state.

### Contributing Archaeological Site

**Archaeological Potential of Oak Grove Property:** There are several archaeological sites that show potential for increasing the knowledge of upstate plantation life in early South Carolina and the history of Oak Grove. Among these sites are an old, filled-in well located about fifty feet from the southwest side of the house; a brick foundation wall for an old clay tennis court that dates to the early twentieth century and is now the site of a boxwood garden; a circular brick foundation of a root cellar or ice house, originally built about twenty feet from the back of the main house and having round brick walls and a wrought-iron staircase going down quite deeply underground. This was filled in during the 1950s by Mr. Armfield's son-in-law, Dr. Frazier Sanders, who lived in the upstairs of the main house with his wife and two daughters. Dr. Sanders told the present owner in 1999 that he was afraid the brick walls might collapse with his daughters inside, so they threw all sorts of debris into the cavity and that spinning wheels and looms were already in the subterranean area. Another relic from earlier days is a sinkhole that has appeared in the last couple of years about twenty feet or so from the southeast corner of the main house and twenty feet or so from the foundation of the above-mentioned root cellar. The top area that opened up is a perfectly edged rectangle about one and a half feet by two feet. When a large, powerful flashlight was shone inside the opening, the area, about six or seven feet deep with no dirt or debris there, contains the corner walls of an old brick structure. Without opening the area up further, it is impossible to see how large the structure is or what its use may have been. There are also a couple of trash pits near the one remaining slave dwelling. Another property facing Pauline Street but abutting the back yard of the slave house appears to have been the site of the blacksmith since the previous owners were always finding old iron and other metal pieces in that yard. The owners of Oak Grove have since bought that property. The owners are aware of the historical importance of archaeological digs and would welcome the opportunity to make their property available for this type of study..

### Noncontributing Outbuildings

**Small House ( ca. 1947):** The house is a one-story side gabled brick residence east of the surviving slave dwelling and was built on the footprint of one of the three original slave dwellings as mentioned earlier. The house has been renovated and is presently used by the present owners as office, laundry, and storage. It is also sometimes used as a private guest house for family members or friends.

**Small House ( ca. 1955):** This house was built as a rental house by one of the previous owners. It is a one-story, side gabled brick residence and, like the previously described house, has been renovated and is presently privately used by the present owner as the wife's office space and for display of her extensive collection of miniature, vintage, and antique doll houses.

**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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1822-1840

**Significant Dates**

1822-1825

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Nance, Frederick, Sr.

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Mills, Robert

Beck, Charles

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

Oak Grove was built for Major Frederick Nance, Sr. (1770-1840) between 1822 and 1825 and was designed by Robert Mills, the noted architect who served as South Carolina's Acting Commissioner for Public Buildings from December 1820 to 1822. Mills then became Superintendent of Public Buildings for South Carolina in January of 1823. Mills designed and oversaw construction and/or renovation of twenty-one courthouses and jails in the state at this time, including the design and construction of the Newberry courthouse and jail.<sup>6</sup> Major Nance was a Commissioner of Public Buildings for Newberry

<sup>6</sup> Bryan, John M., ed. *Robert Mills, Architect*. pp 156-165

District from 1818 thru 1828.<sup>7</sup> In this role, Major Nance worked closely with Mills and because of this close relationship had Mills design Oak Grove. Oak Grove ("Nance") is noted on Mills' map of 1825 of Newberry District.<sup>8</sup> Few other private properties are indicated on the map and was probably placed there because of Mills' involvement. It is also interesting to note that an earlier map (1820) of Newberry by Marmaduke Coate did not have the property noted. This adds confirmation to the Oak Grove construction date.

Marmaduke Coate, who prepared the earliest map of Newberry County, was a resident of Newberry and was one of nineteen surveyors hired by the state to survey each county. Although Coate's original survey is apparently lost, it was reproduced as the end paper of the first volume of Thomas H. Pope's *History of Newberry County* (1973). Coate's map depicts dwellings, taverns, mills, and meetinghouses, as well as roads and topographical features. This 1820 map shows no structure on the site of Oak Grove.<sup>9</sup> Five years later Mills used Coate's 1820 map in preparing the *Atlas of South Carolina*. Mills received permission from the legislature to use the earlier surveys; and he standardized the scales and symbols, edited, and added features to update and improve the earlier maps. The resulting *Atlas* (1825) has been recognized as the first systematic mapping of any American state. Mills placed a dwelling and labeled it "Nance" on his 1825 improved version of Coate's earlier map. Since maps are documents, this establishes that Oak Grove belonging to Major Nance, was constructed adjacent to the village of Newberry between 1820 and 1825.

Using a computer-based over-layer, Professor William Lynn Shirley, Geographic Information Systems Manager, Department of Geography of the University of South Carolina, has aligned: (1) the 1825 Mills map, (2) a 21<sup>st</sup> century street map, and (3) an aerial photograph from Google Earth. This over-layer demonstrates that the "Nance" dwelling on the Mills' 1825 map and the present dwelling at 921 Jessica Avenue occupy the same site.

In addition to putting the house on his map, Mills made a glancing, but arguably significant, reference to the nature of its location in the *Statistics of South Carolina*. *The Statistics* was an 808- page book written to supplement the *Atlas*. In writing about each county, Mills never directly claims credit for his work. Instead, he obliquely calls attention to a "court-house has been lately erected of brick, and is a great ornament to the town." (Georgetown, p. 559) Or in Greenville, "a handsome brick court-house (lately erected)...." (p. 593) Or in York, "the new court-house just finished is an elegant structure, built of stone and brick....". In precisely the same way, describing Newberry, he says, "A handsome court-house has within a few years been built here," and he goes on to say, "To the south the ground rises and forms beautiful and healthy sites for residence" (p. 642). On reading Mills' description of Newberry, it is reasonable to ask: Why did he specifically mention the residential potential of the site of Oak Grove?

Dr. John M. Bryan, based on the above evidence and conclusions as stated in his letter to Dr. Rodger Stroup at the Department of Archives and History, believes beyond the shadow of a doubt that Oak Grove was built between 1822 and 1825, was designed by Robert Mills, and most likely built by his protégé, Charles Beck, for Major Frederick Nance, Sr. since Beck was also the contractor of the Newberry Court house and the Mills-designed Ainsley Hall house in Columbia.

#### Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

Oak Grove is significant under Criterion C for its contribution to national history as a rare surviving example of domestic architecture attributed to the renowned, 19<sup>th</sup> century architect, Robert Mills.

Oak Grove is also significant under Criterion B for its contributions as the plantation home of Frederick Nance, Sr. one of Newberry's first settlers. Major Nance, as he was called, was a successful businessman, planter, respected public official, and South Carolina Lieutenant Governor under Governor Drayton.

<sup>7</sup> Pope, Thomas H. *History of Newberry County*, vol. I, 1749-1860. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973. p 313.

<sup>8</sup> Mills, Robert. *Atlas of the State of South Carolina*. Baltimore: F. Lucas, Jr., 1825.

<sup>9</sup> Coate, Marmaduke *Map of Newberry County, South Carolina*. 1820.

Robert Mills (1781-1855) was a native of South Carolina and trained under Benjamin Henry Latrobe who designed the United States Capitol Building; worked with his friend and mentor, James Hoban, on the design and construction of the White House; and worked with Thomas Jefferson on the designs of the buildings at the University of Virginia. He enjoyed a strong reputation as the designer of the South Carolina Asylum in Columbia; The Fireproof Building in Charleston; The Washington Monument in Washington, D.C.; and scores of other institutions and government buildings in South Carolina and throughout the country. He is considered to be America's "first native-born architect" and is credited to be the first architect to insist on fireproof construction as the standard for public buildings. While not normally known for his domestic architecture, he did accept such commissions, especially during his early career or when necessary financially. Mills designed the Benjamin Chew House in Philadelphia in 1810 and the Waterloo Row Houses in Baltimore in 1819. Mills soon took on larger commissions, such as Ainsley Hall's house and Oak Grove, as his reputation grew.

In the context of early 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture in Newberry County, there are no comparables. Oak Grove is notably distinguished. Most of the other Newberry County properties listed on the HRHP are of wooden frame and clapboard construction (Jacob Bedenbaugh House, 1860; the Burton House, 1857; the Fold Holloway House, 1835; the Francis B. Higgins House, 1820; the Moon-Dominic House, 1820; or stuccoed brick (the Osborne Wells house); or a combination of clapboard and stuccoed brick (Coatswood, 1841). In Newberry County Oak Grove is a rare example of a brick, four-square, central plan, planter's home. In addition, the surviving brick slave quarters appears to be unique in Newberry County.

#### **Frederick Nance Sr.**

Oak Grove is also significant under Criterion B, representing the history of a rural, agricultural, plantation home of one of South Carolina's early lieutenant governors. It was constructed between 1822 and 1825 by Major Frederick Nance, Sr., an esteemed early settler of Newberry who had a long career in local and state politics, serving as Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina from 1808 to 1810 and then four terms in the South Carolina Senate from 1812 through 1819, during which time he served on the Committee on Public Buildings. He retired from state politics in 1820 but continued to serve locally as Commissioner of Public Buildings for Newberry District.

Major Nance died in February 1840. His will was very exacting as to the division of his estate. An 1831 prenuptial agreement with his second wife allowed only \$1,000 in cash to her upon his death. However, since she had "issue" (a daughter, Martha Caroline), Nance felt it only fitting to provide more comfortably for his widow, Tersea, and their daughter; so in 1839 he revised his will, stipulating that Tersea should have certain furniture, livestock, a plot of land, farming equipment, grain, and "other provisions," including the loan of another 300 acres of land. The widow, Tersea, and their daughter, Martha Caroline, were to have the use of this house and property until the daughter came of age, married, or died, at which time the property would revert to the estate. Drayton Nance, son and executor of Major Nance's estate, was named as guardian of Martha Caroline.

The rest of Major Nance's property, both real and personal, was inventoried and sold to members of the family and other willing buyers. Son Drayton Nance purchased many personal items and several tracts of land, including 91 acres of land described as the "Home Place." Drayton died in September of 1856; and the executors of his estate, Frederick Nance, Jr. and John A Banks, brought suit against Drayton's children to force the sale of the house. In the ensuing auction, William F. Nance, one of Drayton's sons and grandson of Major Nance, bought the house and 34.67 acres.

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#### **Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)**

In 1857 Oak Grove was purchased by Major Nance's grandson, William F. Nance. William and his wife, Sarah (Sallie) Calmes Nance, started making minor renovations to his grandfather's home to "update" and freshen the premises. In a letter from James Drayton Nance (William's brother) to their sister Laura, James discusses some of the changes: "Billie and Sallie have moved in their house. Sallie is much pleased with the change from the kitchen to the rooms. I like the house quite much. It is altogether one of the most substantial and best-arranged houses I know of. The place is a beautiful one, indeed; and all in all I would rather own it than any place within my knowledge. You will be pleased with it, I have no doubt, when you come home."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Photocopy of the letter is in the possession of Oak Grove owners.

In June of 1862 William F. Nance sold the house and thirty acres, more or less, to Dr. Thomas L. Ogier, a noted physician from Charleston who was also the head of the Medical Division of the Confederacy for South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. A "For Sale" advertisement in a local newspaper of May 16, 1866, suggests that the house was the center of a large, operating farm, stating, "The House and Outbuildings are all of brick, and on the premises are Brick Barn, Dry Well, and Dairy. Attached to the yard are 25 acres of Farming Land, all of which is now under cultivation.

A local historian, who compiles and publishes a quarterly magazine for The Newberry Historical Society, was visiting Duke University around 2007, and, while researching there, found two fragmented letters, one dated 10 December 1870, from an unknown mother to her son, "Bob," describing the house (Oak Grove) they were interested in purchasing: "We are still in our inconvenient house, but think we will buy in January, the brick house owned by Dr. Ogier during the war. Your father and I went to look at it a few days ago. We like the inside very much, but being of brick and no outside blinds, it presents rather a gloomy appearance. There are six very large rooms, and two not quite as large, fine brick out buildings and an extra fine stable and carriage house."

In December 1868 Ogier sold the property to Gouverneur Wilkins Armstrong as trustee for his wife, Sarah M. (Grayson) Armstrong, conveying the house and thirty acres as part of the sale. In 1870 William Henry Armstrong and his wife brought a lawsuit against Gouverneur Wilkins Armstrong and his wife, forcing the sale of the home and thirty acres of land to John R. Leavell as trustee for Elizabeth J. Leavell in June of 1871. Leavell was well known in Newberry, having served as the town's tax collector during the Civil War. By the 1870's Leavell was even better known as the owner of a funeral home, a monument business, and a furniture business. Soon after moving into the old Nance property, the Leavells began referring to the property as "Oak Grove," possibly in reference to an old family home in Virginia of the same name.<sup>13</sup>

As Newberry grew, more and more land was sold from Oak Grove's acreage. After John R. Leavell deeded land facing Boundary Street to his son, Robert Y. Leavell, on which to build a home, Oak Grove then consisted of 25 acres. In 1895 John R. Leavell and the trustees of his estate sold the house and remaining land to Lizzie W. Fant. A lawsuit in December of 1902 brought by Dr. James K. Guildler, guardian of C. White Fant, resulted in the sale of the house and property to Dr. Guildler for \$5,000. Dr. Guildler was well known in Newberry as a local physician, druggist, and appointed official. After buying Oak Grove, Dr. Guildler changed the name of the property to "Guildcrest," the name by which the house would be known locally and in print for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In April 1920, Dr. Guildler sold all of Oak Grove's acreage and home to Oliver H. Johnson. In July of 1925, Johnson subdivided the property into a total of thirty-three parcels. Johnson also changed the name of the house to "The Oaks," a name that was short lived because the official name of the subdivision was "Gildercrest Sub-Division of Property of O. H. Johnson in Newberry, South Carolina." The public continued to call the house by the name of "Gildercrest." When Johnson auctioned off the lots that summer, Azile Parr Patrick purchased several lots, including the lot with the old home place and slave houses.

In November 1926, Azile Parr Patrick transferred title of the nine lots of the subdivided Gildercrest property to the Home Owners Loan Corporation. In 1939, the Home Owners Loan Corporation sold these same lots to Otto F. Armfield, owner and publisher of the *Newberry Sun*, which he printed for several years inside the most easterly slave house (no longer standing). Mr. Armfield built a new brick house on the footprint of the middle slave house in 1947 and another brick house to the southeast rear of the main house in 1955. Several smaller houses were built and sold on Pauline Street during his ownership. After her husband's death, Mrs. Armfield continued to live in the big house at Oak Grove until 1978.

Oak Grove has had several additional owners since 1978. The present owner, William B. Cross, with his wife, Mary Ann, has worked since his purchase in December of 1997 to repair and preserve the property at Oak Grove and correctly document its fascinating history.

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<sup>13</sup> Letter, Michael Frederick Comer to William B. Cross, 5 July 2011, original in possession of the owners of Oak Grove. Comer is the grandson of Mary Beta Leavell, John Leavell's daughter, who was six years old at the time the house was purchased. Comer's explanation for the origin of this historic name is probably the most likely, although it does not preclude the possibility that the Nance family also knew it as Oak Grove before Leavell's purchase.

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Oak Grove  
Name of Property

Newberry, SC  
County and State

Scott, Pamela, ed. *The Scholarly Resources Microfilm Edition of the Papers of Robert Mills, 1781-1855*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1990.

Summer, George Leland. *Newberry County, South Carolina: Historical and Genealogical*. Newberry[?]: n.p., 1950.

Waddell, Gene, and Rhodri Windsor Liscombe. *Robert Mill's Courthouses and Jails*. Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1961.

Wilkes, Marion R. *Rosemont and Its Famous Daughter*. M. R. Wilkes: Washington, DC, 1947.

**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

Oak Grove Archives, William and Mary A nn  
Name of repository: Cross, Newberry SC

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 1.76

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	Zone _____	Easting _____	Northing _____	3	Zone _____	Easting _____	Northing _____
2	Zone _____	Easting _____	Northing _____	4	Zone _____	Easting _____	Northing _____

Returned

**Latitude / Longitude References**

Latitude 34.267511 – Longitude 81.625057

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary of the nominated property is shown as the black line marked "Oak Grove property, 921 Jessica Avenue, Newberry, Newberry County, South Carolina." on the accompanying portion of a Newberry County USGS map, reproduced at a scale of 1" = 100'.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundary is restricted to the contributing historic house and slave house, two noncontributing buildings, one site, and their immediate settings that make up the 1.76 acre parcel.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title William B. Cross (with assistance from John M. Bryan, Ph.D.)  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date November 24, 2012  
street & number 921 Jessica Ave. telephone 803-271-1525  
city or town Newberry state SC zip code 29108



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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** Oak Grove

**City or Vicinity:** Newberry

**County:** Newberry

**State:** South Carolina

**Photographer:** Eric Plaag

**Date Photographed:** April 29, 2011

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

1. E oblique, looking W
2. NE elevation, looking SW
3. N oblique, looking S
4. NE portico, column detail
5. NE portico stairwell
6. NE elevation, main entry detail
7. SW elevation, S oblique
8. SW elevation, looking NE
9. NW elevation, looking SE
10. Center hall, looking SW
11. NE main entry, looking NE
12. Center hall staircase with French doors on landing
13. Staircase detail, looking W
14. SW entry door detail (exterior surface opened inward), looking SW
15. Dining room with kitchen egress, looking S
16. Dining room, looking W
17. Library, looking NE
18. Library, looking E
19. Library, looking W
20. NE wall of parlor
21. Parlor, looking E
22. Parlor hearth detail, SW wall
23. Second floor porch, looking SE
24. SW elevation, second floor window detail from porch
25. Second floor center hall with balustrade, looking NE
26. Second floor center hall, looking SW

Returned

27. N bedroom, looking N
28. N bedroom closet door, SW wall
29. E bedroom, window detail, NE wall
30. E bedroom, looking NW to N bedroom
31. S bedroom, looking E to closet door
32. Servant's staircase, second floor to attic, looking NE
33. Wooden roof pins detail, SE attic gable
34. 1947 house on site of former slave dwelling, looking W
35. 1955 house located S of Oak Grove main house, looking S
36. N oblique of NE elevation of surviving slave dwelling, looking S
37. S oblique, surviving slave dwelling, looking N
38. Low resolution scan of 1926 postcard of "The Oaks," provided by William Cross

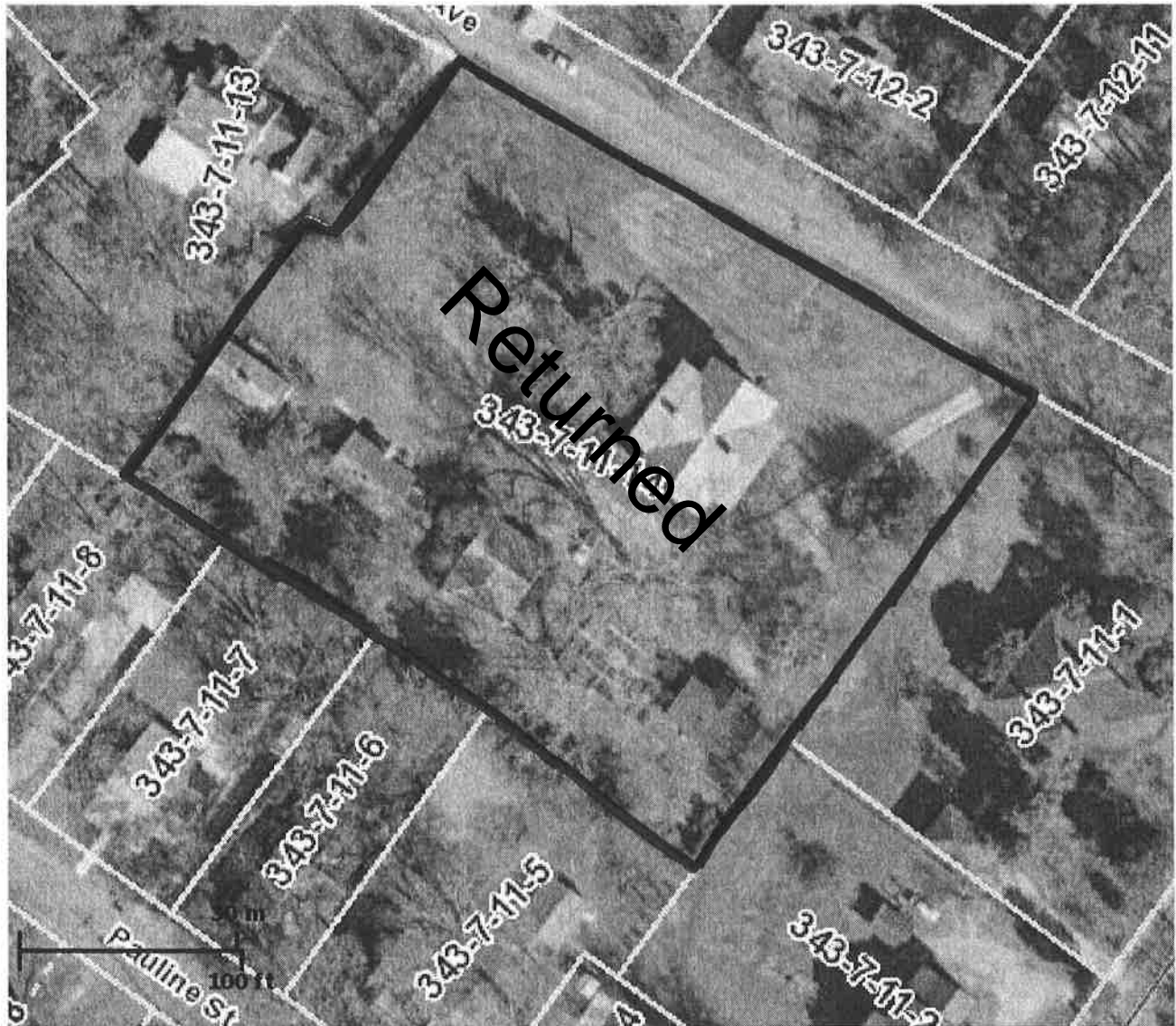
Returned

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

# Newberry County GIS

Oak Grove  
921 Jessica Ave, Newberry





921 Jessica Ave, Newberry, SC 29108, USA

Oak Grove (34.267511, -81.625057)

241 ft

© 2013 Google

Google earth

Google earth

feet  
meters



Returned

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Oak Grove

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: SOUTH CAROLINA, Newberry

DATE RECEIVED: 4/12/13      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/06/13  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/21/13      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/29/13  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000333

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    5/21/13 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA [Signature]

REVIEWER [Signature]

DISCIPLINE [Signature]

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE 5/21/13

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments (Y)/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places

### Comments Evaluation/Return Sheet

**Property Name:** Frederick Nance, Sr. House (Oak Grove)  
**Property Location:** Newberry County, SC  
**Reference Number:** 13000333  
**Date of Return:** July 1, 2013

The Frederick Nance, Sr. House (Oak Grove) is being returned for substantive and technical corrections. The nomination is being nominated under Criteria B and C at the national level with a period of significance from 1822 – 1840 and under the areas of significance of politics/government and architecture. The house, also known as “Gildercrest,” is already listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing property within the West Boundary Street Historic District, in Newberry County.

The nomination claims the property is nationally significant under architecture as an example of a Greek Revival-style plantation home designed by Robert Mills and is also significant under politics and government for the contributions made by Major Frederick Nance, Sr., a South Carolina State Senator and Lieutenant Governor. The nomination, however, does not provide a historic context from which to evaluate the property’s significance for architecture as a work of Robert Mills, nor does it provide any comparisons to other properties associated with Major Nance to determine that this property best represents his historic contributions.

While the nomination indicates that a well-known authority on Robert Mills stated, “Robert Mills’ signature is all over the house,” there is no comparative analysis of this house with other known Robert Mills buildings at the state or national level, and specifically, with the relatively few other known residences designed by Mills. What are the character-defining features that make this property a significant example of his classically-inspired architecture? Provide additional contextual information regarding the builder, Charles Beck. Since no original building plans remain, how does this building compare from other residences constructed by Beck?

The nomination claims significance under Criterion B as the home of Major Frederick Nance, Sr., a South Carolina State Senator and Lieutenant Governor. However, Nance retired from state politics in 1820. This house was constructed between 1822-1825, where he then lived and served as Commissioner of Public Buildings for Newberry District. There is no discussion of properties associated with Nance nor is there an explanation of why this house best represents his political career. Refer to the National Register Bulletin, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Properties Associated with Significant Persons* for additional guidance.

In Section 7, the narrative description indicates the original mantels are stored in the attic. Please clarify why these character-defining features were removed and why the replacement mantels are examples of Robert Mills' designs. What was the basis for the design used for the new front entrance door and surround? A revised narrative would benefit greatly by referencing specific photograph numbers to the feature description and by providing floor plans and a site plan with photographs keyed to these plans.

Technical Issues:

The historic name of the property should be the name that best reflects the property's historic importance or was commonly used for the property during the period of significance. Please refer to the National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, pg. 8, for additional guidance.

Lisa Deline  
National Register of Historic Places  
[Lisa\\_Deline@nps.gov](mailto:Lisa_Deline@nps.gov)  
7/1/2013

William B. Cross  
921 Jessica Ave.  
Newberry, SC 29108  
(803) 271-1525

SEP 10 2013

September 5, 2013

Andrew W. Chandler  
Architectural Historian/National Register Co-coordinator  
S.C. Department of Archives & History  
8301 Parklane Road  
Columbia, SC 29223-4905

Dear Andy,

Find enclosed a copy of the redrafted National Register of Historic Places nomination for Oak Grove. I have closely studied the comments supplied by Ms. Devine of the National Park Service and incorporated the corrections she requested.

After reading the NRB *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Properties Associated with Significant, Persons* it appears that Criteria B is not justified since Fredrick Nance did not live in Oak Grove during his highly productive years as a South Carolina Lieutenant Governor and Senator. Also, no records have been found of his prior homes that might support Criteria B.

As you will see, I have inserted a sizeable section that compares Oak Grove's features with those of other known Robert Mills designed houses. As requested, I have broadened the discussion of Charles Beck, builder of Oak Grove, to include more details of his work and building contracts.

The question raised regarding the replacement of Oak Groves' mantelpieces and the basis for design of the new front entrance has been carefully addressed and, I might add, in considerable detail.

I have added both a floor plan and a site plan as was requested. An extensive set of photographs has already been provided with detailed descriptive titles. I do not see any great benefit if their numbers were to be added to the floor or site plans. I believe some SHPO guidance is needed here.

Lastly, under "Technical Issues" I have referred to pg. 8 of the National Register Bulletin and believe Oak Grove is the "Historic Name" for the property as was submitted in the original nomination.



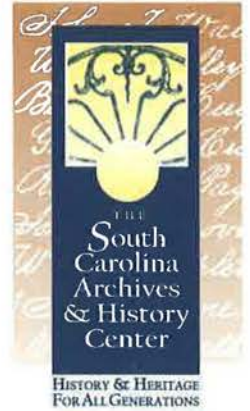
I look forward to your comments and any further corrections so that the nomination can be returned to the National Park Service for listing. Mary Ann and I thank you and all the other SHPO members for their past and future support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William B. Cross". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

William B. Cross

Cc: Elizabeth Johnson



Thursday, 12 September 2013

Ms. Carol Shull  
Interim Keeper, National Register of Historic Places  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
1201 Eye (I) Street, NW, 8th Floor  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Carol:

Enclosed is a revision of the National Register nomination for Oak Grove, in Newberry, Newberry County, South Carolina, prepared by Mr. William B. Cross, owner of the property.

We are submitting this revised nomination for listing in the Register.

If I may be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below, call me at (803) 896-6179, fax me at (803) 896-6167, or e-mail me at [chandler@scdah.state.sc.us](mailto:chandler@scdah.state.sc.us). I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Andrew W. Chandler  
Architectural Historian and National Register Co-Coordinator  
State Historic Preservation Office



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Oak Grove  
 other names/site number Gildercrest. The Oaks, Oak Grove Hall

**2. Location**

street & number 921 Jessica Avenue  not for publication  
 city or town Newberry  vicinity  
 state South Carolina code SC county Newberry code 071 zip code 29108

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
 I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets        does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
X national        statewide        local  
 Signature of certifying official [Signature] Date 9/12/2013  
 Elizabeth M. Johnson, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, South Carolina Department of Archives & History, Columbia, S.C.

In my opinion, the property        meets        does not meet the National Register criteria.  
 Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
       entered in the National Register        determined eligible for the National Register  
       determined not eligible for the National Register        removed from the National Register  
       other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

Oak Grove  
Name of Property

Newberry, SC  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	2	buildings
		district
1		site
		structure
		object
3	2	<b>Total</b>

**OWNER:** William B. Cross

**ADDRESS:** 921 Jessica Avenue, Newberry, SC 29108

**PHONE:** 803-271-1525

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

2

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC—Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC—Secondary Structure

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC—Single Dwelling

Returned

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: BRICK

walls: BRICK

roof: ASPHALT

other: WOOD

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### Summary Paragraph

Oak Grove is located at 921 Jessica Avenue within the city limits of Newberry, South Carolina. The house sits on top of a rise facing the city of Newberry, the site was cited by Robert Mills as a prime location on which to build. It is an early 19<sup>th</sup> century Greek Revival house (1822-1825), built of brick with limestone sills and lintels. It stands two and one half stories high, is five bays wide, two bays deep, and is approximately 4,400 square feet, not including the back porch which was enclosed in 1946 and the adjacent bathroom that was added around 1903. Four fluted Tuscan order columns support the front portico, with two fluted pilasters against the wall at the back of the portico. The interior floor plan consists of a center hall containing the staircase with two rooms on either side of the hall on each floor. Behind the main house there was at one time a row of at least three one-story brick slave houses; however, only one still survives. Other service buildings, known through historical maps, documents, and contemporary newspaper articles, no longer exist. Otherwise, the property is largely unchanged by the various owners who have lived here over a period of 190 years. While no longer attached to the property on which the house sits, there is a large Nance family graveyard located a block and a half to the southeast of the house. Interred here are Major Nance and his first wife; several of their children; and in-laws, including son-in-law, United States Senator Patrick Calhoun Caldwell. Dr. John M. Bryan, a professor at the University of South Carolina and well-known authority on Robert Mills, visited the house and property in 2002, inspected it carefully, and attributed the design of the house to Robert Mills, stating, "Robert Mills' signature is all over the house." A formal letter of attribution, detailing his findings and reasons why it should be attributed, was then sent to the South Carolina Department of Archives and History by Dr. Bryan.<sup>1</sup>

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### Narrative Description

#### Main House (1822-1825)

Oak Grove was designed by Robert Mills and built between 1822 and 1825 as the plantation home of Major Frederick Nance, Sr. after his retirement as a state senator but during his term as Commissioner of Public Buildings for Newberry District. Major Nance, while a senator, had been a member of the committee that persuaded Robert Mills to return to South Carolina and accept the position of State Engineer. Major Nance worked with Robert Mills during the designing and construction of the Newberry Courthouse and jail. Major Nance was one of Newberry's earliest settlers and was always a dedicated public servant.

Oak Grove is a large, grand, Greek Revival brick house standing two and a half stories high, two bays deep, and five bays wide. The two sides are gabled. The front of the house boasts a dramatic, full-height, temple portico three bays wide. The brick on the front is a running bond with quoins of five rows on each corner of the structure in a projecting, segmented fashion. Remnants of penciling (painted, white mortar joints), a Robert Mills hallmark, are still visible although hard to see in the photographs.<sup>1</sup> Mills' treatment of exterior brick walls, was noted on page 49 in *Robert Mills's Courthouses & Jails*, where he specified that "The outside wall are to be painted brick colour and neatly penciled with white lead." This was included in his specifications of March 7, 1825, for the construction of the Chesterfield (SC) courthouse and many other brick buildings he designed. This hallmark of Mills was applied to the exterior walls of Oak Grove, the slave houses, and the wall around the family graveyard. Many areas of penciling can still be seen on the walls and under certain lighting conditions, areas of brick colored paint is also visible. There is a stunted brick water table, which projects slightly at the base of the walls on each side of the portico. The windows across the front are evenly spaced and arranged. They are large six-over-six, double-hung wooden sashes; most panes are original. Each window has a projecting rectangular limestone sill and lintel.

The front entry is recessed with a webbed, elliptical fanlight with three-light sidelights flanking the paneled, single door. A beautiful paneled reveal frames this stunning entry, while a rectangular limestone lintel punctuates the width of the entryway. Oak Grove's original front door entry was replaced in 1902 with oak, double, Edwardian, stained glass-paneled doors. These doors have now been removed and replaced with a reconstruction of the original entry. Since a photograph of the original entry could not be found, the entry design was based on careful research and closely matches the characteristic features of Mills' other South Carolina private homes. First-hand examination of both the Ainsley Hall house and the DeBruhl-Marshall house entries, as well as other doors of early houses of the period in Newberry and Charleston,

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Dr. John M. Bryan to Dr. Rodger Stroup, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 26 February 2002, attributing Oak Grove to Robert Mills.

South Carolina were undertaken prior to drafting the final design. Following this study, detailed drawings for Oak Grove's reconstructed entry were prepared. These drawings were then supplied to the Al Shouse Company, which specializes in the fabrication of doors and millwork for historic properties. Special cutters were designed and fabricated to duplicate the original panel moldings used on Oak Grove's other doors. Due to the complexity of the design, a second millwork company was hired to do the actual fabrication of the fanlight. A trained carver at the company spent over seven days carving the sunrays on the upper corners of the fanlight. A third company secured, cut, and installed old period glass. Old hinges and a period iron surface lock similar to that on the door of the Ainsley Hall house were obtained and installed. Installation of the entry was carried out without the need for any modification to Mills' original brick opening.

The Greek Revival portico is anchored to the front brick wall by two fluted Tuscan-style pilasters, and four fluted Tuscan-style columns support the outer edge of the portico. A metal lantern hangs from a chain in the center of the portico. The porch floor is not original but was changed from a wooden floor to a terra cotta broken tile (set in concrete) floor in 1950. However, the original piers for the columns are still under the porch and are visible by looking through the vents in the walls under the edges of the porch. Photographs from 1926 and 1942 show wooden steps descending the full width of the porch; however the present steps are brick and only as wide as the middle bay.<sup>2</sup> The present porch foundation is composed of several types of brick, in all probability from the repairs when the porch floor was replaced. The portico's wooden entablature and pediment are unadorned, and ten evenly spaced clapboards fill the face of the pediment like that of the Horry County Courthouse which dates to the same time period as Oak Grove and was also designed by Robert Mills.<sup>3</sup>

The entire ceiling of the portico is covered with handsome panels that duplicate the panels inside the architrave wall and down the entry reveal. The roof of Oak Grove is presently of asphalt shingles and, obviously, is not original although the original rough-cut roofing boards with old projecting nails from a shake roof are still visible in the attic. Two evenly spaced interior chimneys rise several feet above the ridge beam, but these exposed upper chimneys are not original but were replaced in 1984 after a tornado tore through Newberry.

The side walls (southeast and northwest) of Oak Grove are made up of a common bond of ten rows of stretchers for each row of headers reaching up to the tops of the limestone sills above the first floor windows. We then see varying rows of stretchers for each row of headers as the walls continue upward to the wide fascia board below the projecting pediment cornice. Above the cornice and fascia board, the common bond brick continues in an alternating pattern. The attic window in the peak of the gable is a six-over-six double-hung sash with a brick header course as a lintel and a limestone sill. Below the cornice, the gabled wall has two evenly and symmetrically spaced windows on each floor, each of which is a six-over-six double-hung sash with limestone lintel and sill. Most of the glass in these windows appear to be original. There is a short brick water table which projects ever so slightly from the base of the wall, with five equally spaced vertical cuts in the brick above. Of course, the brick quoins previously described continue onto the corners of the side walls. The opposite side wall is virtually identical.

The rear (southwest) of the house has many of the same design elements as found on the rest of the house, including the projecting temple structure as found on the front, the tympanum, cornice, and wide fascia board beneath the cornice. Under this pediment is a second-story porch with arched wooden lattice screens on both sides and three arches with lattice across the center section. The balustrade has ornate, turned spindles. The entry from the upper porch leads down two steps to a double (vertical) door with eight lights and a panel on each door and a transom light of a semicircular fan. A projecting limestone lintel is above the entry, which also has a simple reveal the depth of the two steps. This doorway opens onto the stair landing inside the house. To the left of this entryway are two six-over-six double-hung sash windows, one under the pediment and the other on the exposed brick wall, directly in line with and identical to the northwest windows in front. Immediately to the right of this porch door is a French door up two steps from the porch floor. This door was placed where a window once hung, has six evenly spaced lights in each door panel, and opens into a back bedroom. To the right of the French doors and outside the porch enclosure is another window identical to most of the other windows and in direct line to the upper northeast window at the front of the house. The porch ceiling is of painted tongue-and-groove boards.

The lower rear porch was originally open with balustrade and latticed arches identical to the upper porch but was enclosed in two phases. The first change was made around 1903 when one-third of the lower (southeast) porch was enclosed with brick in a running bond for use as a bathing room/storage area. There are two small windows in this area—one on the southeast wall and one on the south wall of this enclosure. The rest of the back porch (which would have been under the upper left two central latticed arches) were left open and undisturbed until 1946 when the wife of the owner decided she

<sup>2</sup> Postcard titled, "The Oaks, Residence of Mr. O. H. Johnson, Newberry, S.C." dated 20 May 1926, in the possession of Oak Grove's present owner, depicts the front lawn of Oak Grove and a portion of the northeast portico with wide wooden steps.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Bryan to Stroup, 26 February 2002.

was tired of the rain coming in on the porch and had it enclosed with a wooden clapboard knee wall under eight large one-over-one double hung sash windows. The present owners were told by members of the Armfield family that the original balustrade was left in place and the clapboard knee walls were built around it. The outer door has a large single light with two panels below. The original brick piers are still visible, although they have been filled in with various bricks and two vent coverings.

To continue regarding this rear (south) wall, a six-over-six double hung sash is to the right of the first floor bathroom extension, directly in line with the window in front and directly below the rear bedroom window above. To the left of the enclosed porch, however, the window, a six-over-six double-hung sash, though in line with the one above on the second floor, is quite a bit smaller. This smaller window was placed under the rise of the enclosed back servants' staircase that rose to a landing and then turned back on itself to the floor above. This staircase was very unstable and was therefore removed by the present owner in 1998 in order to make more space in the kitchen area for his personal use.

It has been said that the interior of Oak Grove is no less impressive than its exterior. With a foursquare central floor plan on both the first and second floors, the house has many features original to the house. All ceilings, both upstairs and down, are nearly twelve feet high. All floors are heart pine and without knots on the first floor. All interior doors are original as are the wooden louvered blinds. The downstairs center hall runs the full length of the house from the front door to the original back door that leads to the enclosed back porch, now used as a family/sitting room. The original back door sports three side lights on either side but has no transom light since the landing of the staircase goes across where a transom light would have been. The original paneled back door is in place as are the panels under the lights on either side of the door and in the reveal. The large, original, well-worn threshold is still present as is a large projecting limestone lintel over the wide entry.

The entrance hall is quite spacious with inside measurements of 10.55 feet wide and 37.75 feet long. When the present owner bought the property, there were no light fixtures or chandeliers present, only two interior ceiling fans and several "pigtail" lights in the downstairs area. During Dr. Coker's 1903 renovation, the stairway newel post was repositioned to make room for a Victorian hanging adornment of which he was very fond. These embellishments have since been removed. The stairway, with its elaborately turned spindles, sweeps up from the front of the hall to the landing, then continues back on itself to the second floor—a beautiful and graceful structure!

The first door on the right from the front of the hall opens into the dining room. The door, like all others in the house, is a heavy, paneled, inverted cross design. This paneling matches the paneling under all three windows in this room. The inside top of the window reveal has a trapezoidal rectangle while the sides of the reveal are plain. Upper and lower wooden louvered blinds are attached to the outer edges of the window frame.<sup>4</sup> The windows are six-over-six double hung sashes with mostly original glass. One pane in the left front window has the name "Sue" etched on it at eye level, in all probability a reference to Susan Griffin Nance, second wife of Frederick Nance, Jr. In February of 1854 Susan Nance became a founding member and Vice President of the Mount Vernon Liberty Spring Association under the leadership of Ann Pamela Cunningham, a friend and neighbor.<sup>5</sup> This also seems appropriate since Major Nance's father's brother was an aide-de-camp to George Washington. The walls and ceiling of the dining room are of plaster with a heavy plaster crown molding typical of Robert Mills' designs. The flooring is of heart pine (a pinkish-tan color indicative of this area) and is knot free. The baseboards are nine and one-eighth inches high, painted black, with a two and one-half inch trim over that. The mantelpiece that was in place when the present owner purchased the property has been replaced and is stored in the attic along with the other mantelpieces found in the house when purchased. The replacement of mantelpieces was quite common; *Robert Mills, Architect* p. 113, indicates that the Mills' original plans for the Ainsley Hall house called for "handsome mantel pieces." However, when the house was completed, cost restraints necessitated the substitution of "plain neat mantelpieces." These plain mantels have now been replaced with very handsome pieces. Mills' specification for Oak Grove most likely also called for handsome mantelpieces. However, the mantels found in Oak Grove when the present owners purchased the property were not handsome but, in fact, were very plain and had probably been created by a local carpenter. They did not reflect or compliment the beauty or quality of design displayed in other features of the house. Accordingly, the mantels in Oak Grove were replaced with handsome mantelpieces appropriate to the early nineteenth century period. All evidence indicates that Mills did not normally supply specific designs for the mantelpieces. Accordingly, it appears that the builder, together with the owner, made mantel selections. Apparently, the selections were made based on the owner's desires and any funding limitations.

<sup>4</sup> Bryan to Stroup, 26 February 2002, indicates that Mills' plans for Ainsley Hall's house also featured this same kind of interior shutters.

<sup>5</sup> See Wilkes, Marion R. *Rosemont and Its Famous Daughter*, 1947. pp 20 and 21.

To the left of the dining room fireplace is a paneled, door leading into the kitchen, which was in rough shape at the time of the present owner's purchase in 1997. The kitchen was renovated at that time to suit the owner's needs. However, the large six-over-six double hung sash and smaller six-over-six window were left in place, as were the wooden, louvered blinds on both windows. This room does not have the paneled cutaway reveal below the windows but does have a large, deep sill at each window. As mentioned before, the derelict, enclosed staircase was removed to provide more kitchen space. The heart pine floorboards that had been damaged by sparks, termites, and water were replaced, but this amounted to less than ten percent of the total floor space in this room. The base of the chimney was rebuilt to keep further damage at bay. The kitchen has two more doors. One door opens onto a small space where the door to the storage area under the stairs is located; and the other doorway, with no door, leads out onto the enclosed back porch now used as a family/sitting room. This latter doorway was originally the servant's entrance from the original, open back porch.

Returning to the front entry, the first door to the left after entering, is the parlor. The windows in this room are identical to the ones in the dining room with their deep, paneled reveals, cut-away dados below, and two-storied wooden, louvered blinds. The original, very wide, plaster crown molding is stunning and has only a few places where it has been repaired. Dr. John M. Bryan was very impressed during his first visit here that the original, plaster crown moldings in the parlor, dining room, library, and downstairs center hall were still in place and in such good condition. The heart pine floors are all original, although there are two small areas of termite damage that needs to be filled in with wood putty. A surprising find when the wall-to-wall carpeting was removed was that there were traces of a red and white or cream carpet hand-painted directly onto the floorboards. The firebricks in the firebox were added earlier in the twentieth century, and all eight of the fireplaces in the house have been converted to gas.

The last door on the left after entering the center hall from the front doorway is the library. This room has had another wooden floor installed over the original, which can still be seen from underneath the house. During the mid 1900s, this room was used as a bedroom; so the later layer was probably installed at that time to keep little "critters" from coming up through the cracks in the floorboards. To the left of the fireplace is a doorway to the parlor, and directly opposite is another doorway to a full bathroom. This doorway was created from a window, using the usual paneled area below the window to the top of the opening for the door. The other two windows are six-over-six double-hung sashes identical to the ones in the living room and dining room. Another beautiful plaster crown molding adorns the top of the walls. The bathroom, which had been created from one-third of the lower rear porch, has been renovated and is fully equipped.

The hallway on the second floor is as wide as the one below but is not as deep since the stairway takes up a certain amount of space. The edge of the flooring that meets the stairway is secured with a balustrade of nicely turned spindles that continues on down as the banister. To the front of the hallway is a six-over-six double-hung sash window with the usual angled reveal and two-storied wooden louvered blinds as the first floor. The flooring is of heart-pine boards; and the baseboards, like those throughout the house, are almost a foot high. All of the doors leading from this hallway are the usual inverted cross design.

The northeast corner of the second floor contains a bedroom the size of the parlor below. The arrangement of the fireplace, doors, and windows are placed exactly as the room below except that the six-over-six double-hung sashes with two-storied blinds do not have the wide angled cutaway reveal below, but a straight wall with a very deep windowsill. The floors are of heart-pine and original as are all the other floors on the second floor except where the back staircase was removed. There is no closet in this room. The doorway to the right of the fireplace leads to the rear bedroom.

This southeast (rear) bedroom is the same size as the library below with the same arrangement of fireplace and windows. However, the doorway from the hall is not in direct line with the library door below because of the stairway connecting to the second-floor hallway. This room does have the French door going out onto the balcony as described earlier. Windows have the deep windowsills; there is heart-pine flooring with high baseboards as in the northeast bedroom. However, there is a shallow closet built from the right edge of the fireplace to the outer wall.

The northwest bedroom sits above the dining room and has the same arrangement of doors, fireplace, and windows. These windows, like the others on the second floor, are six-over-six double-hung sashes with double-tiered wooden louvered blinds with deep windowsills but no angled reveals below the windows. The flooring is original heart pine, and the baseboards are high. To the left and flush with the fireplace is a shallow closet that runs to the wall along the hallway. To the right of the fireplace is a doorway to what originally was another bedroom but at some point in the early twentieth century was divided into a bathroom and a stairway hall to the kitchen below and the attic above. This bathroom has the typical second-floor window, placement of fireplace behind the one in the northwest bedroom, and heart pine floors. The space previously containing the stairs to the kitchen has been floored with vintage heart pine boards. This area is now used as a storage (lumber) room.



The staircase to the attic is very steep and has a simple handrail and spool-turned spindles. This staircase opens into a small room finished with tongue-and-groove bead board and heart pine flooring. A large six-over-six double-hung sash window sits in the peak of the west gable. After entering this small, finished room, there is a door to the right to enter the other two-thirds of the attic. The flooring in this area was added in 1998 to have easy access for storage and to install HVAC. The areas over and into the pediments are neither walled nor floored; and all of the pit-sawn and hand-sawn joists and rafters, the large wooden pins around the entire perimeter of the house which anchor the roof to the walls, the original rough-cut boards (many with bark) to which the original shakes were nailed, even the old nails are mostly there—are all easily accessible and fascinating to see!

Besides the main house at Oak Grove, there are several other outbuildings and structures that show the history of the house, starting from the beginning of the plantation era to its conversion to a grand residence for some of the more elite families of Newberry. Although Oak Grove retains most of its original features, it also represents minor changes made over the years by various owners, bringing the house from its early, grand plantation beginning to a marvelous home for the present time. Most of all, though long forgotten, Oak Grove is an important example of Robert Mills' domestic architecture.

### Contributing Outbuilding

**Slave House (1822-1825):** There is a large, brick, one-story two-room slave house located about fifty yards to the northwest of the main house. There were at least three of these buildings prior to 1865. One was torn down sometime before 1947 when a new brick house was built on its footprint. Half of another one fell down in 2007, so the rest of the house had to be removed. The remaining slave house is side gabled brick with a double-sided central chimney with an opening on each side of the fireplace. There is a front and back door into each room with a window in each gabled side. The original floor was replaced years ago and is in rough shape again. Vent cuts for the crawlspace are nearly identical to the vents of the main house and to the one that fell down in 2007, obviously indicating that the slave dwellings were built at the same time as the main house. Also, the top of the brick walls of the slave houses have/had trim of bull-nose brick, like that used on the reproduction carriage house at Ainsley Hall's home at Historic Columbia. Penciling is also present on the brick walls. This remaining slave house is an intact example of a type of architecture that is rapidly disappearing in this state.

### Contributing Archaeological Site

**Archaeological Potential of Oak Grove Property:** There are several archaeological sites (see site plan) that show potential for increasing the knowledge of upstate plantation life in early South Carolina and the history of Oak Grove. Among these sites are an old, filled-in well located about fifty feet from the northwest side of the house; a brick foundation wall for an old clay tennis court that dates to the early twentieth century and is now the site of a boxwood garden; a circular brick foundation of a root cellar or ice house, originally built about twenty feet from the back of the main house and having round brick walls and a wrought-iron staircase going down quite deeply underground. This was filled in during the 1950s by Mr. Armfield's son-in-law, Dr. Frazier Sanders, who lived in the upstairs of the main house with his wife and two daughters. Dr. Sanders told the present owner in 1999 that he was afraid the brick walls might collapse with his daughters inside, so they threw all sorts of debris into the cavity and that spinning wheels and looms were already in the subterranean area. Another relic from earlier days is a sinkhole that has appeared in the last couple of years about twenty feet or so from the southeast corner of the main house and twenty feet or so from the foundation of the above-mentioned root cellar. The top area that opened up is a perfectly edged rectangle about one and a half feet by two feet. When a large, powerful flashlight was shone inside the opening, the area, about six or seven feet deep with no dirt or debris there, contains the corner walls of an old brick structure. Without opening the area up further, it is impossible to see how large the structure is or what its use may have been. There are also a couple of trash pits near the one remaining slave dwelling. Another property facing Pauline Street but abutting the back yard of the slave house appears to have been the site of the blacksmith since the previous owners were always finding old iron and other metal pieces in that yard. The owners of Oak Grove have since bought that property. The owners are aware of the historical importance of archaeological digs and would welcome the opportunity to make their property available for this type of study.

### Noncontributing Outbuildings

**Small House ( ca. 1947):** The house is a one-story side gabled brick residence east of the surviving slave dwelling and was built on the footprint of one of the three original slave dwellings as mentioned earlier. The house has been renovated and is presently used by the present owners as office, laundry, and storage. It is also sometimes used as a private guest house for family members or friends.

**Small House ( ca. 1955):** This house was built as a rental house by one of the previous owners. It is a one-story, side gabled brick residence and, like the previously described house, has been renovated and is presently privately used by the

Oak Grove  
Name of Property

Newberry, SC  
County and State

present owner as the wife's office space and for display of her extensive collection of miniature, vintage, and antique doll houses.

Returned

**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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1822-1840 1825

**Significant Dates**

1822-1825

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Mills, Robert

Beck, Charles

**Period of Significance (justification)**

Oak Grove was built for Major Frederick Nance, Sr. (1770-1840) between 1822 and 1825 and was designed by Robert Mills, the noted architect who served as South Carolina's Acting Commissioner for Public Buildings from December 1820 to 1822. Mills then became Superintendent of Public Buildings for South Carolina in January of 1823. Mills designed and oversaw construction and/or renovation of twenty-one courthouses and jails in the state at this time, including the design and construction of the Newberry courthouse and jail.<sup>6</sup> Major Nance was a Commissioner of Public Buildings for Newberry

<sup>6</sup> Bryan, John M., ed. *Robert Mills, Architect*. pp 156-165

District from 1818 thru 1828.<sup>7</sup> In this role, Major Nance worked closely with Mills and because of this close relationship had Mills design Oak Grove. Oak Grove ("Nance") is noted on Mills' map of 1825 of Newberry District.<sup>8</sup> Few other private properties are indicated on the map and was probably placed there because of Mills' involvement. It is also interesting to note that an earlier map (1820) of Newberry by Marmaduke Coate did not have the property noted. This adds confirmation to the Oak Grove construction date.

Marmaduke Coate, who prepared the earliest map of Newberry County, was a resident of Newberry and was one of nineteen surveyors hired by the state to survey each county. Although Coate's original survey is apparently lost, it was reproduced as the end paper of the first volume of Thomas H. Pope's *History of Newberry County* (1973). Coate's map depicts dwellings, taverns, mills, and meetinghouses, as well as roads and topographical features. This 1820 map shows no structure on the site of Oak Grove.<sup>9</sup> Five years later Mills used Coate's 1820 map in preparing the *Atlas of South Carolina*. Mills received permission from the legislature to use the earlier surveys; and he standardized the scales and symbols, edited, and added features to update and improve the earlier maps. The resulting *Atlas* (1825) has been recognized as the first systematic mapping of any American state. Mills placed a dwelling and labeled it "Nance" on his 1825 improved version of Coate's earlier map. Since maps are documents, this establishes that Oak Grove, belonging to Major Nance, was constructed adjacent to the village of Newberry between 1820 and 1825.

Using a computer-based over-layer, Professor William Lynn Shirley, Geographic Information Systems Manager, Department of Geography at the University of South Carolina, has aligned: (1) the 1825 Mills map, (2) a 21<sup>st</sup> century street map, and (3) an aerial photograph from Google Earth. This over-layer demonstrates that the "Nance" dwelling on the Mills' 1825 map and the present dwelling at 921 Jessica Avenue occupy the same site.

In addition to putting the house on his map, Mills made a glancing, but arguably significant, reference to the nature of its location in Mills' *Statistics of South Carolina*. *The Statistics* was an 808- page book written to supplement the *Atlas*. In writing about each county, Mills never directly claims credit for his work. Instead, he obliquely calls attention to a "court-house has been lately erected of brick, and is a great ornament to the town." (Georgetown, p. 559) Or in Greenville, "a handsome brick court-house (lately erected)...." (p. 598) or in York, "the new court-house just finished is an elegant structure, built of stone and brick....". In precisely the same way, describing Newberry, he says, "A handsome court-house has within a few years been built here," and he goes on to say, "to the south the ground rises and forms beautiful and healthy sites for residence" (p. 642). On reading Mills' description of Newberry, it is reasonable to ask: Why did he specifically mention the residential potential of the site of Oak Grove?

Dr. John M. Bryan, based on the above evidence and conclusions as stated in his letter to Dr. Rodger Stroup at the Department of Archives and History, believes beyond the shadow of a doubt that Oak Grove was built between 1822 and 1825, was designed by Robert Mills, and most likely built by his protégé, Charles Beck, for Major Frederick Nance, Sr.. The original contract for the construction of the Ainsley Hall house lists Charles Beck as the builder. Beck was also one of the contractors for the Newberry courthouse as noted in *Robert Mills' Courthouses & Jails*, p. 37. Mills' plans for the Newberry courthouse were approved late in 1821, and the first payment for the construction of the courthouse was paid to Grafton and Beck. Another interesting reference to Beck is contained in *The Story of Edgefield*, p. 28, and states that the third Edgefield courthouse (1839), inspired by Robert Mills, who had already left South Carolina, "was designed and constructed by his longtime protégé, Charles Beck, and includes more of the distinctive Mills features than almost any Court House designed by Mills himself." While no documentation has yet been found listing Beck as the contractor for Oak Grove, it is clear that Beck was highly regarded by Mills and that Mills considered him not only a contractor but also his protégé. Since Beck was one of the contractors for the courthouse under construction in Newberry at the same time Oak Grove was under construction, Dr. John M. Bryan believes strongly that Charles Beck was the contractor Mills would have used to also build Oak Grove.

<sup>7</sup> Pope, Thomas H. *History of Newberry County*, vol. I, 1749-1860. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973. p 313.

<sup>8</sup> Mills, Robert. *Atlas of the State of South Carolina*. Baltimore: F. Lucas, Jr., 1825.

<sup>9</sup> Coate, Marmaduke *Map of Newberry County, South Carolina*. 1820.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

Please note that Oak Grove is listed in the National Register as "Gildercrest" in the West Boundary Street Historic District. The listing contains several errors and incorrect information. The nomination mistakenly indicated that William F. Nance built Oak Grove in 1857.<sup>10</sup> It would appear that someone picked a builder and date in the early 1940s without going back to any primary records to document the story. Others used the 1857 date whenever one was needed again and again without researching any historical documents. Dr. John Bryan's study and his subsequent Robert Mills attribution and other newly discovered information proved without question that Oak Grove was built before 1825. Therefore, William F. Nance could not have built Oak Grove and James Hartwell Blease (1829-1898) could not have been the contractor. This nomination provides a basis for a future corrective action to the district listing.

Oak Grove is significant under Criterion C for its contributions to national history as a rare surviving example of domestic architecture attributed to the renowned, 19<sup>th</sup> century architect, Robert Mills. The house exhibits many distinctive hallmarks of Mills' domestic architecture. It is also significant under Criterion B for its contributions as the home of one of Newberry's first settlers. Major Nance, as he was called, was a successful businessman, planter, and respected public official. Besides serving in many local political positions, he was elected Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina in 1808 for a two-year term. He served four terms in the State Senate, from 1812 through 1819, and was on the Committee on Public Buildings during his last term in the Senate. He later served as Commissioner of Public Buildings for Newberry District. In addition, Oak Grove was the home of several of Newberry's most note-worthy residents, including a physician who was the head of the Confederate medical division for South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida; two newspaper editors, one of which had extensive ties to Charleston and the Citadel; several business leaders; and a leading local druggist/physician. It is also noteworthy that the daughter-in-law of Major Nance, Susan G. Nance, played an important role in the saving of Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington, by serving in a committee position under Ann Pamela Cunningham, in the founding of what is now the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association. She left her presence known by engraving her first name on the dining room window of Oak Grove.

#### **Architecture**

Oak Grove, a two and a half story, brick house, sits on a large lot in a residential neighborhood approximately one-half of a mile southwest of downtown Newberry and is significant under Criterion C at the national level as a remarkable, rare, startlingly intact, surviving example of the domestic architecture of Robert Mills, one of the nation's outstanding architects of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even though the house exhibited many of the hallmarks of Mills' style, Oak Grove remained virtually unrecognized as a Mills design until 2002, making it a stunning and fortunate discovery.

Oak Grove was constructed between 1822 and 1825 by Major Frederick Nance, Sr., who was the first settler at the county seat of Newberry County<sup>11</sup> he had a long career in local and state politics, serving as Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina from 1808 to 1810 and then four terms in the South Carolina Senate from 1812 to 1819, during which time he served on the Committee on Public Buildings. He retired from state politics in 1820 but continued to serve locally as Commissioner of Public Buildings for Newberry District.

As previously noted, Major Nance's involvement in state and local government would have brought him in contact with Robert Mills, who was serving as South Carolina's Superintendent for Public Buildings at this time and had already designed Newberry's courthouse and jail. Also, since Nance knew Mills had worked with Hoban, Latrobe, and Thomas Jefferson, and was now working on the courthouse and jail right here in Newberry, it would have been only logical that Nance would take advantage of this good fortune and ask Mills to design a house for him. At this same time, Mills was also working on another NRHP house, Ainsley Hall's home (1823) known as The Robert Mills House in Columbia, South Carolina. Mills had just finished the Debruhl-Marshall House in 1820. This property was listed on the NRHP in 1972 and attributed to Mills although there has been no evidence found to associate Mills with either the Debruhl or Marshall families. This Debruhl-Marshall House has many similarities in design and ornamentation to Oak Grove, as does Ainsley Hall's home. Also, the face of the pediment at Oak Grove has the same crown molding and number of boards as the face of the pediment of the Mills designed Horry County Courthouse. These comparables, along with the general "Millsian proportions" of Oak Grove, prompted the highly respected Mills authority, Dr. John M. Bryan, to attribute unequivocally the design of Oak Grove to Robert Mills in February 2002.

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<sup>10</sup> See letter from William B. Cross to Andrew W. Chandler South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 19 October 2011 for detailed discussion why the West Boundary Street Historic District Listing is incorrect.

<sup>11</sup> O'Neill, John Belton. *The Annals of Newberry, Part First*. Newberry, SC: Aull and Houseal, 1892. p 812.

Returned

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

Oak Grove is significant under Criterion C for its contribution to national history as a rare surviving example of domestic architecture attributed to the renowned, 19<sup>th</sup> century architect, Robert Mills.

Oak Grove is also significant for its contributions as the plantation home of Frederick Nance, Sr. one of Newberry's first settlers. Major Nance, as he was called, was a successful businessman, planter, respected public official, and South Carolina Lieutenant Governor under Governor Drayton.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance)

Please note that Oak Grove is listed in the National Register as "Gildercrest" in the West Boundary Street Historic District. The listing contains several errors and incorrect information. The nomination mistakenly indicated that William F. Nance built Oak Grove in 1857.<sup>10</sup> It would appear that someone picked a builder and date in the early 1940s without going back to any primary records to document the story. Others used the 1857 date whenever one was needed again and again without researching any historical documents. Dr. John Bryan's study and his subsequent Robert Mills attribution and other newly discovered information proved without question that Oak Grove was built before 1825. Therefore, William F. Nance could not have built Oak Grove and James Hartwell Blease (1829-1898) could not have been the contractor. This nomination provides a basis for a future corrective action to the district listing.

Oak Grove is significant under Criterion C for its contributions to national history as a rare surviving example of domestic architecture attributed to the renowned, 19<sup>th</sup> century architect, Robert Mills. The house exhibits many distinctive hallmarks of Mills' domestic architecture. It is also significant for its contributions as the home of one of Newberry's first settlers. Major Fredrick Nance, as he was called, was a successful businessman, planter, and respected public official. Besides serving in many local political positions, he was elected Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina in 1808 for a two-year term. He served four terms in the State Senate, from 1812 through 1818, and was on the Committee on Public Buildings during his last term in the Senate. He later served as Commissioner of Public Buildings for Newberry District. In addition, Oak Grove was the home of several of Newberry's most note-worthy residents, including a physician who was the head of the Confederate medical division for South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida; two newspaper editors, one of which had extensive ties to Charleston and the Citadel; several business leaders; and a leading local druggist/physician. It is also noteworthy that the daughter-in-law of Major Nance, Susan G. Nance, played an important role in the saving of Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington, by serving in a committee position under Ann Pamela Cunningham in the founding of what is now the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association. She left her presence known by engraving her first name on the dining room window of Oak Grove.

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Robert Mills (1781-1855) was a native of South Carolina and trained under Benjamin Henry Latrobe who designed the United States Capitol Building; worked with his friend and mentor, James Hoban, on the design and construction of the White House; and worked with Thomas Jefferson on the designs of the buildings at the University of Virginia. He enjoyed a strong reputation as the designer of the South Carolina Asylum in Columbia; The Fireproof Building in Charleston; The Washington Monument in Washington, D.C.; and scores of other institutions and government buildings in South Carolina and throughout the country. He is considered to be America's "first native-born architect" and is credited to be the first architect to insist on fireproof construction as the standard for public buildings. While not normally known for his domestic architecture, he did accept such commissions, especially during his early career or when financially necessary.

Oak Grove was constructed between 1822 and 1825 by Major Frederick Nance, Sr., who was the first settler at the county seat of Newberry County<sup>11</sup> he had a long career in local and state politics, serving as Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina from 1808 to 1810 and then four terms in the South Carolina Senate from 1812 to 1819, during which time he served on the Committee on Public Buildings. He retired from state politics in 1820 but continued to serve locally as Commissioner of Public Buildings for Newberry District.

As previously noted, Major Nance's involvement in state and local government would have brought him in contact with Robert Mills, who was serving as South Carolina's Superintendent for Public Buildings at this time and had already designed Newberry's courthouse and jail. Also, since Nance knew Mills had worked with Hoban, Latrobe, and Thomas Jefferson, and was now working on the courthouse and jail right here in Newberry, it would have been only logical that Nance would take advantage of this good fortune and ask Mills to design a house for him. At this same time, Mills was also working on another NRHP house, Ainsley Hall's home (1823) known as The Robert Mills House in Columbia, South Carolina. Mills had just finished the DeBruhl-Marshall House in 1820. This property was listed on the NRHP in 1972 and attributed to Mills although there has been no evidence found to associate Mills with either the DeBruhl or Marshall families. This DeBruhl-Marshall House has many similarities in design and ornamentation to Oak Grove, as does Ainsley Hall's home. Also, the face of the pediment at Oak Grove has the same crown molding and number of boards as the face of the pediment of the Mills designed Horry County Courthouse. These comparables, along with the general "Millsian proportions" of Oak Grove, prompted the highly respected Mills authority, Dr. John M. Bryan, to attribute unequivocally the design of Oak Grove to Robert Mills in February 2002.

In addition to public buildings and monuments, Mills is known to have designed private residences in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina. Notable are the Benjamin Chew House in Philadelphia in 1810, the Waterloo Row Houses in Baltimore in 1819 and the Ainsley Hall House in Columbia. His early designs for private dwellings located in the northern states were largely for row houses and encompassed the prevailing characteristics of the area. As he moved South he gradually began to favor a somewhat Americanized version of Greek Revival architecture in his designs. Sadly, there are few Greek Revival Robert Mills private residences known. Thus, in order to compare Oak Grove's features with other Mills' designed structures, one must take into account both private and public structures designed and built largely during his 10 years (1820-1830) while he was in South Carolina.

In providing a comparative analysis of Oak Grove with other known Robert Mills buildings, the Ainsley Hall House (also called the Robert Mills Historic House) in Columbia, South Carolina, is highly significant. It was constructed between 1823 and 1825, which generally coincides with the building of Oak Grove. The house, located approximately 40 miles from Oak Grove, is very well documented with Mills' drawings and a copy of the construction contract listing Charles Beck as the builder. In addition, the DeBruhl-Marshall House also located in Columbia, provides a valuable resource for comparison. Both houses and Oak Grove share many similar design and construction features. Both Mills' houses are city houses with English raised basements that provided space for storage, servants' quarters, and a kitchen. Because Oak Grove was originally built on 300 acres and was not restricted by lot size, separate outbuildings were constructed eliminating the need for a basement. In addition to these comparative private homes, the many Mills designed courthouses also provide a wealth of comparative architectural details.

The most striking feature found on Oak Grove and Mills' southern-designed homes and courthouses is a large portico with Grecian entablature supported by four massive Doric or Ionic columns, often with accompanying pilasters. Oak Grove, the Robert Mills House, the DeBruhl-Marshall House, and most of the South Carolina courthouses of Mills' design share this feature. It is important to note that the pediment of the Horry County courthouse appears identical to that of Oak Grove,

<sup>11</sup> O'Neill, John Belton. *The Annals of Newberry, Part First*. Newberry, SC: Aull and Houseal, 1892. p 812.



and photographs indicate that the same number of boards was used to construct the face of the pediment. Features shared by Oak Grove and the other Mills designed private houses include six over six windows with large glass panes, paneled cutaway reveals below the windows, stone lintels and sills, interior folding shutters, interior fireplace chimneys, hand made Flemish-bond brickwork walls with penciled mortar joints, high ceilings having an average height around 12 feet, large rooms on the order of 20 x 20 feet, large plaster crown moldings of similar design, door casings of exact or very similar design, door panels and moldings of the same design, and heart pine flooring in every room. Both the Ainsley Hall and DeBruhl-Marshall houses have similar main entrance doors with sidelights and fanlights. The Ainsley Hall and DeBruhl houses have a brick stringcourse running below the second story windows. Mills used this feature in several of his private home designs. Oak Grove does not have the stringcourse feature; however, Mills often did not include this. It is known that because of the extra cost, this feature was not implemented even when the design called for it. Mills' floor plans for private homes were uncomplicated and generally consisted of a center hall with two large rooms on either side. Oak Grove shares this general design on both floors. (See attached floor plan) For an age accustomed to wardrobes for storage of linens and clothing, closets were an innovation; however, Mills included them in his design for two of Oak Grove's bedrooms. His early commitment to closets is noted in *Robert Mills Architect* p. 40

In the context of early 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture in Newberry County, there are no comparables. Oak Grove is notably distinguished. Most of the other Newberry County properties listed on the HRHP are of wooden frame and clapboard construction (Jacob Bedenbaugh House, 1860; the Burton House, 1857; the Fold Holloway House, 1835; the Francis B. Higgins House, 1820; the Moon-Dominic House, 1820; or stuccoed brick (the Osborne Wells house); or a combination of clapboard and stuccoed brick (Coatswood, 1841). In Newberry County Oak Grove stands alone as a rare example of a brick, four-square, central plan, planter's home. In addition, the surviving brick slave quarters appears to be unique in Newberry County

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#### Frederick Nance Sr.

Oak Grove is also significant in representing the history of a rural, agricultural, plantation home of one of South Carolina's early lieutenant governors. It was constructed between 1822 and 1825 by Major Frederick Nance, Sr., an esteemed early settler of Newberry who had a long career in local and state politics, serving as Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina from 1808 to 1810 and then four terms in the South Carolina Senate from 1812 through 1819, during which time he served on the Committee on Public Buildings. He retired from state politics in 1820 but continued to serve locally as Commissioner of Public Buildings for Newberry District.

Major Nance died in February 1840. His will was very exacting as to the division of his estate. An 1831 prenuptial agreement with his second wife allowed only \$1,000 in cash to her upon his death. However, since she had "issue" (a daughter, Martha Caroline), Nance felt it only fitting to provide more comfortably for his widow, Tersea, and their daughter; so in 1839 he revised his will, stipulating that Tersea should have certain furniture, livestock, a plot of land, farming equipment, grain, and "other provisions," including the loan of another 300 acres of land. The widow, Tersea, and their daughter, Martha Caroline, were to have the use of this house and property until the daughter came of age, married, or died, at which time the property would revert to the estate. Drayton Nance, son and executor of Major Nance's estate, was named as guardian of Martha Caroline.

The rest of Major Nance's property, both real and personal, was inventoried and sold to members of the family and other willing buyers. Son Drayton Nance purchased many personal items and several tracts of land, including 91 acres of land described as the "Home Place." Drayton died in September of 1856; and the executors of his estate, Frederick Nance, Jr. and John A Banks, brought suit against Drayton's children to force the sale of the house. In the ensuing auction, William F. Nance, one of Drayton's sons and grandson of Major Nance, bought the house and 34.67 acres.

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#### Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

In 1857 Oak Grove was purchased by Major Nance's grandson, William F. Nance. William and his wife, Sarah (Sallie) Calmes Nance, started making minor renovations to his grandfather's home to "update" and freshen the premises. In a letter from James Drayton Nance (William's brother) to their sister Laura, James discusses some of the changes: "Billie and Sallie have moved in their house. Sallie is much pleased with the change from the kitchen to the rooms. I like the

house quite much. It is altogether one of the most substantial and best-arranged houses I know of. The place is a beautiful one, indeed; and all in all I would rather own it than any place within my knowledge. You will be pleased with it, I have no doubt, when you come home."<sup>12</sup>

In June of 1862 William F. Nance sold the house and thirty acres, more or less, to Dr. Thomas L. Ogier, a noted physician from Charleston who was also the head of the Medical Division of the Confederacy for South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. A "For Sale" advertisement in a local newspaper of May 16, 1866, suggests that the house was the center of a large, operating farm, stating, "The House and Outbuildings are all of brick, and on the premises are Brick Barn, Dry Well, and Dairy. Attached to the yard are 25 acres of Farming Land, all of which is now under cultivation."

A local historian, who compiles and publishes a quarterly magazine for The Newberry Historical Society, was visiting Duke University around 2007, and, while researching there, found two fragmented letters, one dated 10 December 1870, from an unknown mother to her son, "Bob," describing the house (Oak Grove) they were interested in purchasing: "We are still in our inconvenient house, but think we will buy in January, the brick house owned by Dr. Ogier during the war. Your father and I went to look at it a few days ago. We like the inside very much, but being of brick and no outside blinds, it presents rather a gloomy appearance. There are six very large rooms, and two not quite as large, fine brick out buildings and an extra fine stable and carriage house."

In December 1868 Ogier sold the property to Gouverneur Wilkins Armstrong as trustee for his wife, Sarah M. (Grayson) Armstrong, conveying the house and thirty acres as part of the sale. In 1870 William Henry Armstrong and his wife brought a lawsuit against Gouverneur Wilkins Armstrong and his wife, forcing the sale of the home and thirty acres of land to John R. Leavell as trustee for Elizabeth J. Leavell in June of 1871. Leavell was well known in Newberry, having served as the town's tax collector during the Civil War. By the 1870's Leavell was even better known as the owner of a funeral home, a monument business, and a furniture business. Soon after moving into the old Nance property, the Leavells began referring to the property as "Oak Grove," possibly because of the large number of oak trees found on the property<sup>13</sup>. It is also likely that previous owners and the Nance family also called the property "Oak Grove" however, no written record of its use has yet been found.

As Newberry grew, more and more land was sold from Oak Grove's acreage. After John R. Leavell deeded land facing Boundary Street to his son, Robert Y. Leavell, on which to build a home, Oak Grove then consisted of 25 acres. In 1895 John R. Leavell and the trustees of his estate sold the house and remaining land to Lizzie W. Fant. A lawsuit in December of 1902 brought by Dr. James K. Guildler, guardian of C. White Fant, resulted in the sale of the house and property to Dr. Guildler for \$5,000. Dr. Guildler was well known in Newberry as a local physician, druggist, and appointed official. After buying Oak Grove, Dr. Guildler changed the name of the property to "Gildercrest," the name by which the house would be known locally and in print for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In April 1920, Dr. Guildler sold all of Oak Grove's acreage and home to Oliver H. Johnson. In July of 1925, Johnson subdivided the property into a total of thirty-three parcels. Johnson also changed the name of the house to "The Oaks," a name that was short lived because the official name of the subdivision was "Gildercrest Sub-Division of Property of O. H. Johnson in Newberry, South Carolina." The public continued to call the house by the name of "Gildercrest." When Johnson auctioned off the lots that summer, Azile Parr Patrick purchased several lots, including the lot with the old home place and slave houses.

In November 1926, Azile Parr Patrick transferred title of the nine lots of the subdivided Gildercrest property to the Home Owners Loan Corporation. In 1939, the Home Owners Loan Corporation sold these same lots to Otto F. Armfield, owner and publisher of the *Newberry Sun*, which he printed for several years inside the most easterly slave house (no longer standing). Mr. Armfield built a new brick house on the footprint of the middle slave house in 1947 and another brick house to the southeast rear of the main house in 1955. Several smaller houses were built and sold on Pauline Street during his ownership. After her husband's death, Mrs. Armfield continued to live in the big house at Oak Grove until 1978.

<sup>12</sup> Photocopy of the letter is in the possession of Oak Grove owners.

<sup>13</sup> Letter, Michael Frederick Comer to William B. Cross, 5 July 2011, original in possession of the owners of Oak Grove. Comer is the grandson of Mary Beta Leavell, John Leavell's daughter, who was six years old at the time the house was purchased. Comer's explanation for the origin of this historic name records the early use of the name, however, it does not preclude the possibility that the Nance family also knew it as Oak Grove long before Leavell's purchase.

Oak Grove has had several additional owners since 1978. The present owner, William B. Cross, along with his wife, Mary Ann, have worked since his purchase in December of 1997 to repair and preserve the property at Oak Grove and correctly document its fascinating history

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

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Oak Grove  
Name of Property

Newberry, SC  
County and State

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Waddell, Gene, and Rhodri Windsor Liscombe. *Robert Mill's Courthouses and Jails*. Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1961.

Wilkes, Marion R. *Rosemont and Its Famous Daughter*. M. R. Wilkes: Washington, DC, 1947.

**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

Oak Grove Archives, William and Mary Ann  
Name of repository: Cross, Newberry SC

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 1.76  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

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

1	_____	_____	_____	3	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary of the nominated property is shown as the black line marked "Oak Grove property, 921 Jessica Avenue, Newberry, Newberry County, South Carolina." on the accompanying portion of a Newberry County USGS map.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundary is restricted to the contributing historic house and slave house, two noncontributing buildings, one site, and their immediate settings that make up the 1.76 acre parcel.

Oak Grove  
Name of Property

Newberry, SC  
County and State

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title John M. Bryan PhD and William B. Cross  
organization Bryan: 422 Barnwell St., Columbia, SC 29205 date November 24, 2012  
street & number Cross: 921 Jessica Ave., Newberry, SC 29108 telephone Cross: 803-271-1525  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** Oak Grove

**City or Vicinity:** Newberry

**County:** Newberry

**State:** South Carolina

sdfsdf

**Photographer:**

**Date Photographed:** April 29 2011

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

1 of \_\_\_\_.

Returned

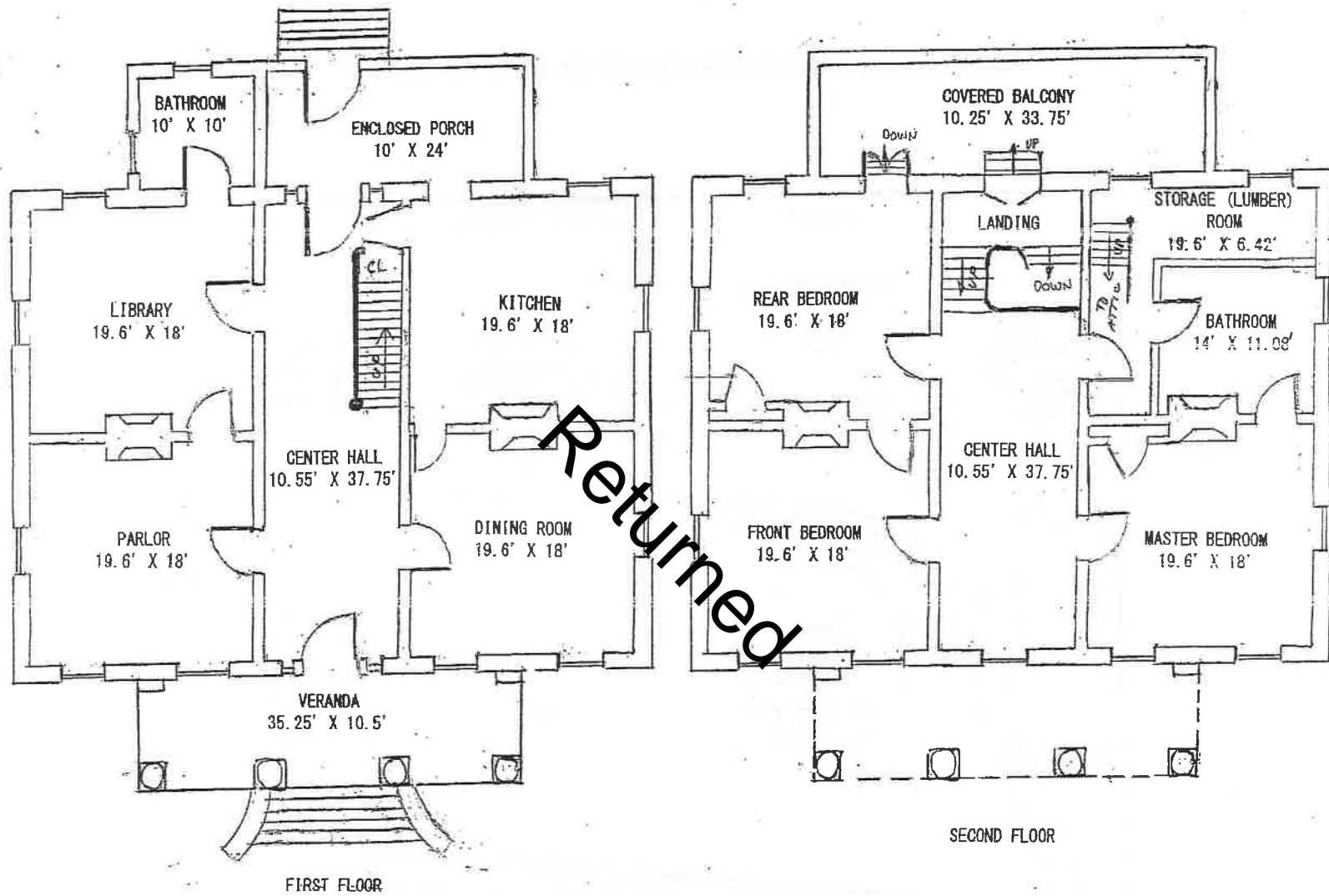
Oak Grove  
Name of Property

Newberry, SC  
County and State

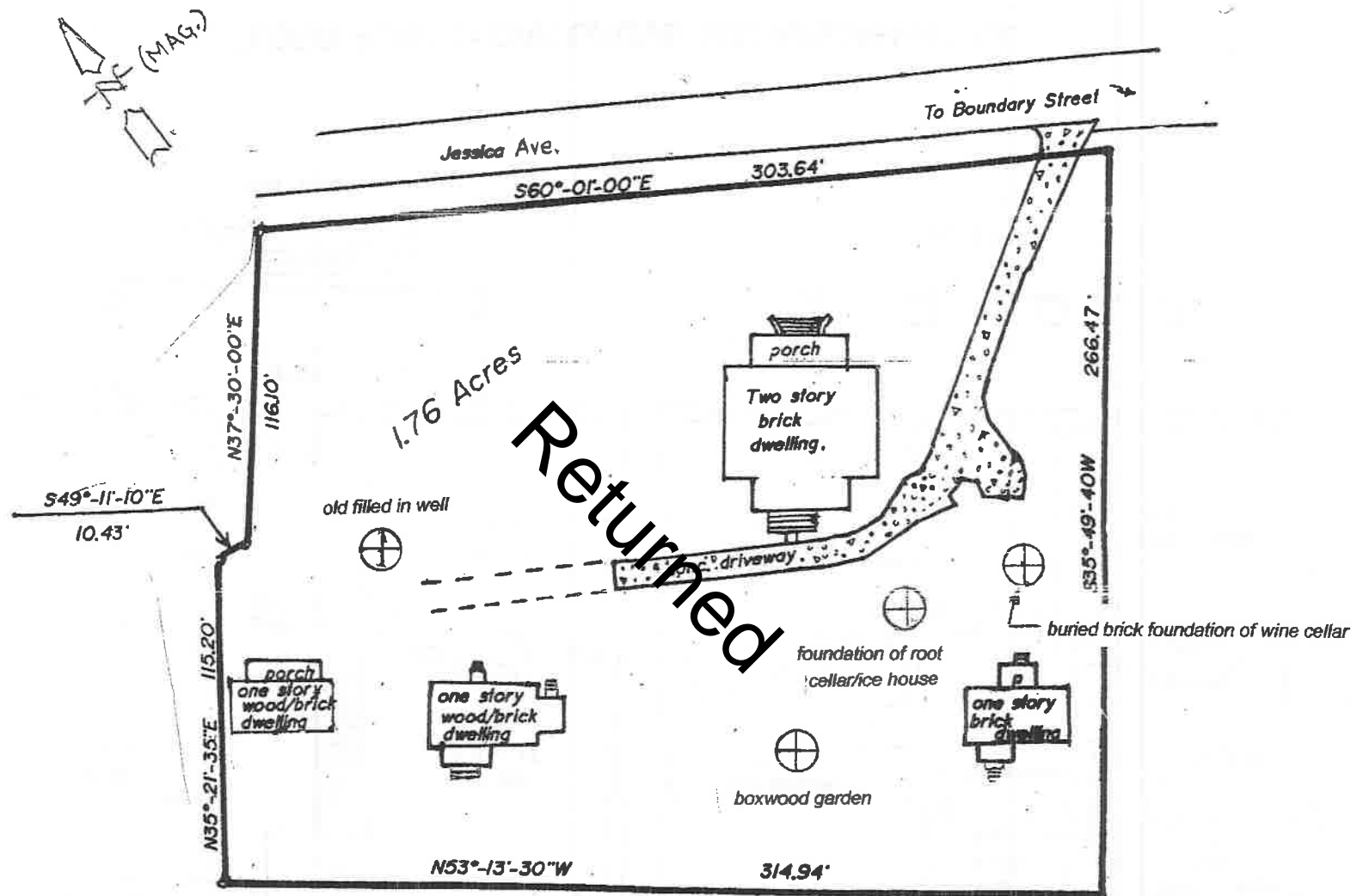
**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Returned



FLOOR PLAN for OAK GROVE 1822 NEWBERRY, SC



PLAT for OAK GROVE 1822 NEWBERRY, SC



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME: Oak Grove

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: SOUTH CAROLINA, Newberry

DATE RECEIVED: 10/18/13      DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY:      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/04/13  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000333

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    11/26/13 DATE

*2nd Return*

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*See attached comments*

RECOM./CRITERIA

REVIEWER

DISCIPLINE

TELEPHONE

DATE

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments  Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

*Return*  
*Wendell R. Lee*      *Historic*  
*11/26/13*



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20240

## United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places

### Comments Evaluation/Return Sheet

**Property Name:** Frederick Nance, Sr. House  
**Property Location:** Newberry County, SC  
**Reference Number:** 13000333  
**Date of Return:** November 26, 2013 (2<sup>nd</sup> Return)

The Frederick Nance, Sr. House is being returned for substantive and technical corrections. The nomination resubmission did not fully address the July 1, 2013 return issues; therefore, the following corrections are needed in order to complete further nomination review.

The nomination still does not make the case as an example of domestic architecture designed by Robert Mills. Documenting the work of American architects in the early years of the Republic has always been difficult, especially for private commissions, such as houses, where public records are less likely to be available. Neither of the two major Mills scholars, John M. Bryan (*America's First Architect Robert Mills*, published in 2001) or Rhodri Windsor Liscome (*Altogether American Robert Mills Architect and Engineer*, published in 1994), cites "Oak Grove" (the Frederick Nance Sr. House) as a possible Mills design. Bryan, in his comprehensive monograph, is careful in discussing the work of Mills documented commissions, such as Ainsley Hall. Neither author cites the NR-listed Debruhl-Marshall House as a documented Mills design, which the nomination wrongly states has also been attributed to Mills as a basis for National Register listing. According to the nomination, John M. Bryan examined "Oak Grove" and, stated, "Robert Mills signature is all over the house." Notwithstanding Dr. Bryan's analysis, the evidence is stylistic and circumstantial.

The circumstantial evidence does make a good case, given the architect's work in South Carolina as Superintendent of Public Buildings, of his undoubted contact with the owner, Frederick Nance, Sr., who was Commissioner of Public Buildings for the Newbury District. This connection leads to a statement in the nomination that, "it would have been only logical that Nance would take advantage of this good fortune and ask Mills to design a house for him." In this period of American history, it is equally possible that Nance designed his own house, perhaps with informal advice from Mills or other

well-known local builders. Indeed, the nomination references another source that claims that builder Charles Beck, Mills' "longtime protégé," designed and built a courthouse in Edgefield that "includes more of the distinctive Mills features than almost any Court House designed by Mills himself." This illustrates the perils of stylistic attributions. Without definitive documentation, the actual architect and contractor may never be known.

Therefore, please revise the nomination and delete references and idealized conclusions that the Nance house was indeed designed by Robert Mills and built by Charles Beck.

Notwithstanding the circumstantial and stylistic evidence amassed to support the attribution that Robert Mills was the architect, the nomination fails to document this property as a Robert Mills design and therefore, fails to make the case for national significance. At best the case could be made for state level of significance as an important surviving example of antebellum architecture *that illustrates the stylistic influences of Robert Mills* during his residency in South Carolina.

#### Technical Issues:

The historic name of the property should be the name that best reflects the property's historic importance or was commonly used for the property during the period of significance—1822-1825. The nomination states the name "Oak Grove" was used by John Leavell in the 1870s. The name, "Guildercrest" was how the property was "known locally and in print for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century." Please refer to the National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, pg. 8, for additional guidance.

Lisa Deline  
National Register of Historic Places  
[Lisa\\_Deline@nps.gov](mailto:Lisa_Deline@nps.gov)

Roger Reed  
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Rogers notes  
file use  
only

The SLR is issued to make the following substantive change:

### Section 8

Oak Grove, it is claimed, is significant under Criterion C “at the national level as a remarkable, rare, startlingly intact, surviving example of the domestic architecture of Robert Mills, one of the nation’s outstanding architects of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.” The nomination provides extensive documentation on the house, including detailed descriptions of the recent restoration work undertaken in the belief that the result would be faithful to the architectural legacy of Robert Mills.

Documenting the work of American architects in the early years of the Republic has always been difficult, especially for private commissions, such as houses, where public records are less likely to be available. Neither of the two major Mills scholars, John M. Bryan (*America’s First Architect Robert Mills*, published in 2001) or Rhodri Windsor Liscome (*Altogether American Robert Mills Architect and Engineer*, published in 1994), cites Oak Hall as a possible Mills design. Bryan, in his comprehensive monograph, is careful in discussing the work of Mills this are documented commissions, such as Ainsley Hall. (Nor does either author cite the NR-listed Debruhl-Marshall House as a documented Mills design, which the nomination wrongly states has also been attributed to Mills as a basis for National Register listing.) According to the nomination, John M. Bryan examined Oak Hall and, “believes beyond a shadow of a doubt” that Oak Grove was designed by Robert Mills. Notwithstanding Dr. Bryan’s analysis, the evidence is stylistic and circumstantial.

The circumstantial evidence does makes a good case, given the architect’s work in South Carolina as Superintendent of Public Buildings, and his undoubted contact with the owner of Oak Grove, Frederick Nance, Commissioner of Public Buildings for the Newbury District. This connection leads to a statement in the nomination that, “it would have been only logical that Nance would take advantage of this good fortune and ask Mills to design a house for him.” In this period of American history, it is equally possible that Nance designed his own house, perhaps with informal advice from Mills or well-known local builders. Indeed, the nomination references another source that claims that builder Charles Beck, Mills’ “longtime protégé”, designed and built a courthouse in Edgefield that “includes more of the distinctive Mills features than almost any Court House designed by Mills himself.” While the author of the nomination is not responsible for that particular claim, it illustrates the perils of stylistic attributions.

While it may be true that the stylistic comparison of Oak Hall with other designs by Robert Mills does, indeed, make a good case for the attribution, it does not follow that because the design *may* have been by Robert Mills, the house should be listed in the National Register under national significance as if it were a documented Mills design.

Moreover, there are troubling questions raised in regard to the integrity of the design as an example of the Greek Revival style from 1822-1825. There are references to renovations in 1903, including changes to the main entrance that has since been replaced

with conjectural reconstruction. Rather than preserve the (presumably) 1903 entrance, Oak Hall has reconstructed an entrance based upon Ainsley Hall and other period houses. The owners clearly spared little effort in obtaining high quality work, although the correctness of that design choice can be debated. (For example, unlike Ainsley Hall, the segmental arched fanlight is not structural as it was constructed beneath an historic flat stone lintel. This suggests that the original design would have had a rectangular transom over the door.) The interior features also raise questions regarding what is original to the 1823-1825 construction. Does the staircase, with its turned newel and balusters, and the southwest entry doors with their molded panels, date from the Greek Revival period?

The nomination also provides a justification for the replacement of the historic mantel pieces as they were "very plain" and "do not reflect or compliment the beauty or quality of design displayed in other features" of the house. While no photos have been provided for the mantels, (said to be in storage in the attic), we can assume that "too plain" may be synonymous with the more austere mantels associated with many examples of the Greek Revival style. Fireplace mantels may well be very important character-defining features that make this house a significant example of that style. At any rate, they more accurately reflect the period of significance of the original owner, Frederick Nance, and what Mills would have seen had he visited the house.

Notwithstanding the circumstantial and stylistic evidence amassed to support the attribution that Robert Mills was the architect, the nomination fails to document this property as a Robert Mills design. As the claim for national significance is based upon it being a documented Robert Mills design and that has not been documented, the level of significance should be at the state level as it expresses the influence of Robert Mills when he was active in South Carolina.

FEB 28 2014

February 27, 2014

William B. Cross  
921 Jessica Ave.  
Newberry, SC 29108

Dear Bill and Mary Anne,

Thank you very much for sending me the National register's Evaluation/Return Sheet (reference # 13000333, 11/26/2013) for your revised submission of the Frederick Nance, Sr. House. It was thoughtful of you to enclose copies of your correspondence with the South Carolina SHPO's office and the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form that you prepared and submitted.

It is gratifying to note the federal reviewer says "the circumstantial evidence does make a good case," and having said that, I would be the first to add that each bit of evidence available today is "circumstantial".

Nonetheless, taken as a whole, I still find the accumulation of "circumstantial" elements convincing.

The list of works and projects that can definitely be attributed to Robert Mills (the list appearing in the back of the book I edited for the American Institute of Architects) is based on letters, contracts, everything the Smithsonian Institution's Papers of Robert Mills Project had discovered up until c. 2005.

I am not aware of any new "documented" work having come to light; consequently, I took real pleasure in seeing, what I still find to be a convincing "chain of evidence" in the Coate/Mills/ GIS maps. As an older architectural historian, I enjoyed using, and believe in, the new technology.

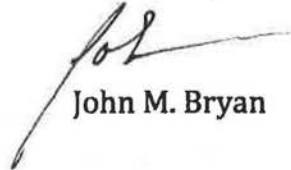
It is my conviction that the result of the map work is tantamount to a verbal document. However, even if the reader accepts "map evidence" as documentation, what does it say? It says that the Nance House was built between 1820 and 1825, when Mills was in Newberry working on the courthouse and jail, and it proves your house occupies the site designated as the Nance House on Mills' map.

I am not aware of any evidence to support Ms. Deline's suggestion that Charles Beck or Frederick Nance may have been capable of designing the house. On the other hand, we know that Mills was there, that he worked for Nance, etc. etc., and we have the stylistic evidence.

As Ms. Deline points out that the Register criteria are "definitive documentation," (meaning contemporary, verbal documentation); therefore, no weight of "circumstantial evidence" or "probability beyond reasonable doubt" will suffice.

Like you, I am disappointed, but thank you for saving the house, and for sending all of this to me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Bryan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John M. Bryan

CC:

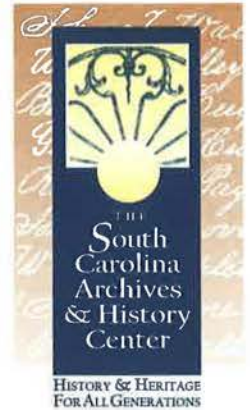


Andrew W. Chandler

SC Department of Archives and History

8301 Parklane Road

Columbia, SC 29223-4905



Tuesday, June 3, 2014

Ms. Carol Shull  
Interim Keeper, National Register of Historic Places  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
1201 Eye (I) Street, NW, 8th Floor  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Here is the National Register nomination for the Frederick Nance House, in Newberry County, submitted by our office for listing in the Register on September 12, 2013, and returned to us for revisions on November 26, 2013.

We are now resubmitting this nomination for formal listing in the Register.

If I may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below, call me at (803) 896-6182, fax me at (803) 896-6167, or e-mail me at [efoley@scdah.state.sc.us](mailto:efoley@scdah.state.sc.us). I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ehren Foley".

Ehren Foley, Ph.D.  
Historian and National Register Co-Coordinator  
State Historic Preservation Office  
8301 Parklane Rd.  
Columbia, SC 29223