

1019

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Monte Sano Railroad Workers' House  
other names/site number Terry Whatley's Outbuilding

2. Location

street & number 4119 Shelby Avenue not for publication N/A  
city or town Huntsville vicinity N/A  
state Alabama code AL county Madison code 089 zip code 35801

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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    nationally    statewide X locally. (    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 7/10/98  
Signature of certifying official Date

Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria.  
(    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] 8.14.98  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

USDI/NPS Registration Form

Property Name Monte Sano Railroad Workers' House

County and State Madison, Alabama

5. Classification

Ownership of Property    Category of Property    Number of Resources within Property  
(Check only one box.)    (Check as many boxes as apply.)    (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>  1  </u>	<u>      </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>  1  </u>	<u>      </u> Total

Number 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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic    Sub: Institutional Housing

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Vacant/not in use    Sub: \_\_\_\_\_

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: saddlebag

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

roof metal

walls wood

other \_\_\_\_\_

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

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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.) N/A

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation

Period of Significance 1888 - 1895

Significant Dates 1888

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder unknown

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS) N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository  
Monte Sano Historical Association

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 1 acre

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

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>16</u>	<u>543580</u>	<u>3844280</u>	3
2	_____	_____	4	_____
	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>			

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jane J. Barr, President, Harvie P. Jones, FAIA, and Trina Binkley, AHC Reviewer  
organization Monte Sano Historical Association date 7/28/97  
street & number 4618 Panorama Drive telephone (205) 534-5698  
city or town Huntsville state Alabama zip code 35801

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:  
Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Dr. Terry Whatley  
street & number 4119 Shelby Avenue telephone (205) 533-0669  
city or town Huntsville state Alabama zip code 35801

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Name of property: Monte Sano Railroad Workers' House  
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**Section VII. Description:**

The Monte Sano Railroad Workers' House is located southeast of Bankhead Parkway, north-east of Monte Sano Boulevard, and south of Nolen Avenue on the northeast plateau of Monte Sano Mountain in Huntsville, Alabama. The mailing address is 4119 Shelby Avenue, but it is also known as Clinton Street in the 1890 tax assessor drawings (Laura's View Addition to the Town of Viduta). Shelby Avenue was adopted in 1894 for Judge David D. Shelby who purchased the property. In 1954 the City of Huntsville annexed the property and mail has been received at this address/number for forty-three years.

This 1888 railroad workers house, the only extant building connected to the 19th century Hotel Monte Sano and the Monte Sano Railway, originally consisted of a saddlebag plan of two identical rooms with a central brick chimney, providing a fireplace in each room. The frame house has a standing seam metal gabled roof, vertical board and batten siding, 2/2 pegged sashes, and ashlar sandstone foundation piers. The brick chimney top is corbeled out and then back in again at the top in typical bulbous late nineteenth century detail. An early twentieth century shed addition exists on the rear.

The symmetrical front (west) facade consists of two, four-panel front doors of typical late nineteenth century with cast iron hinges with foliate relief and cast iron rimlocks similarly decorated. These doors are flanked by single 2/2 double hung wood windows. Portions of the pier foundation are filled in along this facade. The south elevation contains a window opening slightly off-center of the peak of the roof, while a four pane wood window is situated on the shed addition. The rear (east) elevation contains a four-panel wood door and an vent opening for a woodstove. The north elevation is virtually the same as the south.

The faded and weathered remnants of exterior paint appear to be the usual colors for railroad buildings of the late nineteenth century; dark green trim and yellow-orange siding. On the interior, the doors retain fairly-intact paint-graining in an oak color and pattern, an unexpected feature for a modest house. The studs, about two-to-three feet on center, are exposed on the interior, as was the back of the exterior vertical siding (now covered with modern felt and cardboard) which seems to indicate that the building was not intended for cold-weather habitation (the little railroad served a mountaintop summer resort, the Monte Sano Hotel). The two brick fireplaces have simple corbeled-brick mantel shelves of three projecting courses and a setback flue-stack, making a brick shelf of about 8 inches deep. The brick hearths are set flush with the wood floors and are in the most-typical nineteenth century pattern where each four inch wide row of flat-laid bricks turns the corner and runs back to the chimney. The floors are 1x4 tongue-and-groove pine, unfinished.

The ceiling are exposed 2x6 joists, about two feet on center with 1x4 planks above. The ceilings are about ten feet high. The interior walls, ceilings, and chimney are whitewashed. During the early twentieth century a rear shed addition was incorporated containing two rooms with vertical board and batten siding and sandstone piers similar to the front but of poorer materials and construction and five horizontal panel doors typical of this era.

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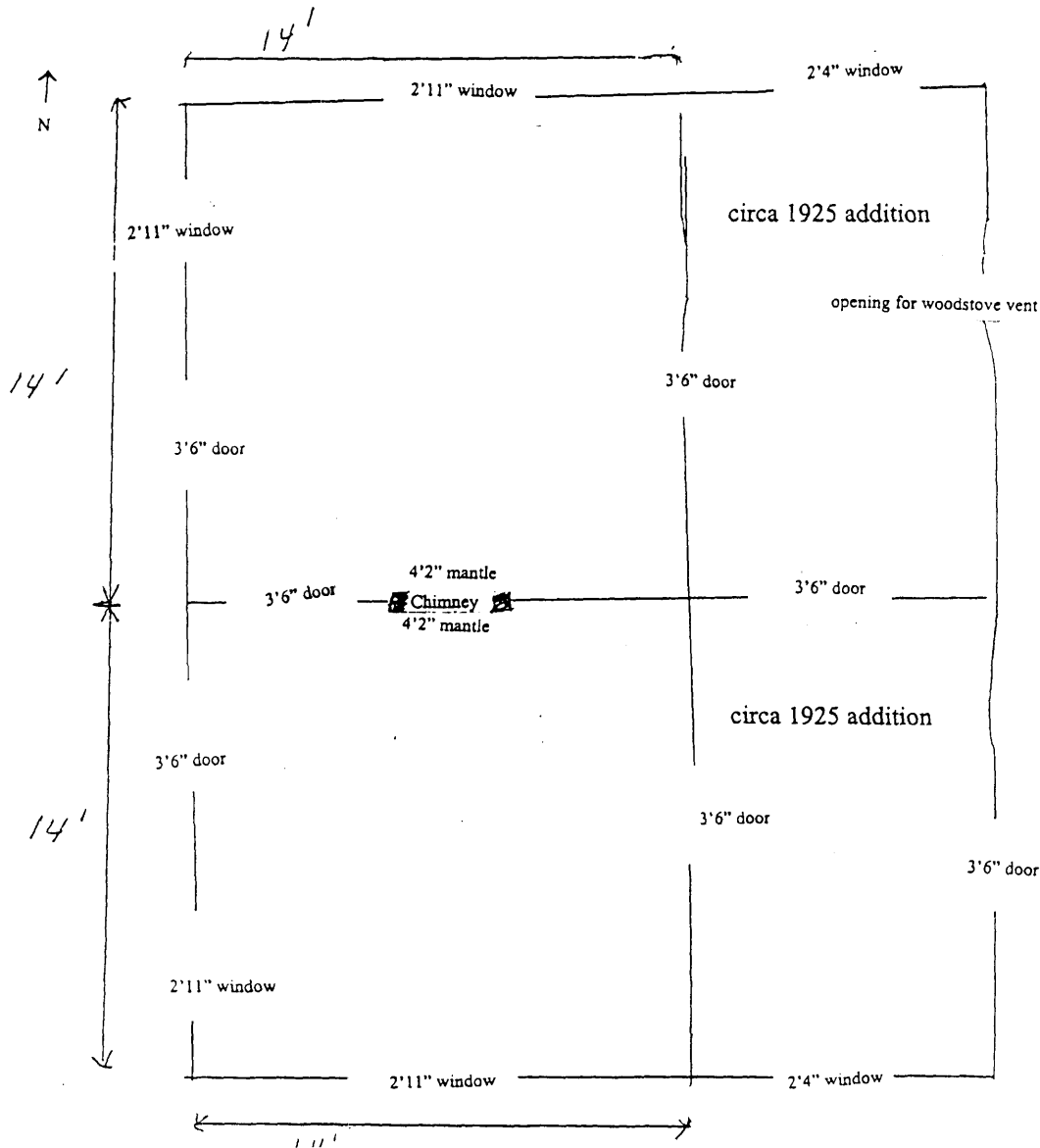
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**Archaeological Component**

Although no formal archaeological survey has been made of this property, the potential for subsurface remains is good. Buried portions may contain significant information that may be useful in interpreting the entire area, provide additional context to the railroad workers way-of-life, and the history of the Monte Sano Railroad and Hotel.

Floor Plan - *not to scale*



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**Section VI11. Statement of Significance**

**Criterion A, Transportation:**

The Monte Sano Railroad Workers' House in Huntsville, Madison County, Alabama is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its local significance in the area of transportation as example of railroad worker housing on a private railroad spur line connecting the Southern and L & N lines to the Monte Sano Hotel atop Monte Sano Mountain. The 233-room Monte Sano Hotel, which opened June 1, 1887, required transportation other than the horse-drawn carriage that traversed the mountainous switchback. In February 1888 work began on the Monte Sano Railway. At first the railway only ran from the Huntsville Depot to Laura's View Station on a plateau up Monte Sano Mountain, with the tallyho completing the remainder of the journey. However this line was soon extended the entire route up the mountain to Hotel Monte Sano. Workers were needed in building the railway and later in its operation, so residential quarters were constructed in 1888 to accommodate them.

The Monte Sano Railroad Workers' House is a good and intact example of 19th-century institutional housing. It was constructed specifically to house the railroad's seasonal workers from 1888 to 1895 when the railroad line ceased operation. The building has good integrity, retaining much of its original materials, plan, and design elements. The Monte Sano Railroad Workers' House is distinctive in that it was associated with a spur rail line which connected the Monte Sano health resort hotel to the main railroad lines in Huntsville. The Worker's House is in fact the only extant resource related to the Monte Sano Hotel and Railroad. As such, the building represents rare housing type, one specifically associated with a unique area of local transportation history.

**Historic Summary**

The history of the Monte Sano Railroad Workers' House is inextricably tied to transportation and recreation in Huntsville, Alabama. Monte Sano Mountain, which means "Mountain of Health," had long been known for its mineral springs and healthy climate. During the early-to-mid nineteenth century, people traveled up the mountain to drink the mineral spring water for medicinal purposes. However after Reconstruction, an initiative to built a health resort on the mountain began and in an August 14, 1878 edition of the *Huntsville Advocate* advocated the development of the mountain stating that it was very popular with local citizens. By 1883 plans were in the works for a turnpike to make the area more accessible for development. On Sept 12, 1883, the *Huntsville Democrat* further encouraged the prospect of a hotel by promoting the new turnpike up the mountain noting 'On Monday last, in order to protect a title to the Monte Sano turnpike, it was purchased by the new company consisting of John Rison, W. Echols, J. Stevens, O. Patton, and W. Newman.' The *Democrat* continued to promote a hotel on Monte Sano to take advantage of the healthy climate, beautiful view, and numerous spring sites making it well suited for a hotel.

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With the completion of a turnpike in the latter part of 1883, a number of businessmen began the first major push for the hotel's erection. Huntsville was growing and prospering at the time, having finally gotten back on its feet after the Civil War. Shares of stock were sold for \$25 in a major promotion effort. The initial response was not good; however, this changed in 1884 when an epidemic of yellow fever occurred, thus bringing the issue of the hotel to the forefront again.

By 1886, a well-organized group became involved: the North Alabama Improvement Company. Two wealthy New Yorkers, James F. O'Shaughnessy and his brother Major Michael O'Shaughnessy, provided needed capital and also built homes in Huntsville. The O'Shaughnessys had originally come to Huntsville in connection with their cotton oil business. Officers and members of the NAIC were: M. O'Shaughnessy, president, Samuel Buck, vice president, John Rison, secretary and J. O'Shaughnessy, Milton Humes, William Newman and George Harris. The NAIC purchased a great deal of commercial real estate and businesses in and around Huntsville and the development of a health-resort hotel on Monte Sano Mountain became one of their major projects. Construction began on the hotel February 23, 1886.

The three-story, Queen Anne-styled Monte Sano Hotel opened June 1, 1887 and contained 233 rooms. The NAIC promoted the hotel and the medicinal springs widely and it brought in people from all over the United States including the prominent Vanderbilt, Astor, and Gould families. Of course a great many people who came to the Monte Sano springs lived locally, such as North Alabamian, Helen Keller. However, the developers soon saw the need for better access to the hotel. In February 1888, work on the standard gauge Monte Sano Railroad began to transport passengers and baggage from Memphis and Charleston (predecessor to the Southern Railway) and the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Depots in Huntsville up Monte Sano Mountain to the hotel. The railroad was completed in two major sections; the first in the summer of 1889 and the last, later on that fall. The first section ran from the main depots in town, up the mountain to the plateau at Laura's View. From this point passengers took turns completing the remainder of the trip by horse-drawn coach. A small depot (no longer extant) was constructed on the plateau for the passengers to wait in between tallyho trips. Later that same year, the remainder of the railway was completed from Laura's View to the hotel.

The inhabitants of the Worker's House played an important part in the history of the Monte Sano Railway and the Monte Sano Hotel. The Monte Sano Railroad Workers' House was constructed in 1888 at Laura's View approximately 100 feet from the depot. Local historians believe that the house was originally built for the foreman in charge of the construction of the rail line; however, after the line was completed, the Worker's House was seasonally used as a dwelling for the men who maintained the line and worked the train. Given the steep and winding terrain of the mountain, maintenance of the line and trains was crucial. The line of tracks and right-of-way from the city of Huntsville to the hotel on the summit of the mountain was about eight miles in length (including the superstructure: cross ties, rails, bridges, trestles, and all other improvements connected with and forming a part of the railroad). Equipment included its rolling stock and all utensils and machinery used in operating the railroad. The rolling stock consisted of one twenty-six ton Baldwin locomotive, six passenger coaches, and two platform or flat cars. The train made six runs daily during the summer when the resort hotel operated.



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Apparently railroad workers were hired during the summer season, which continued until the Monte Sano Railroad line ceased operation in 1895 due to litigations among stockholders. The railroad was sold by creditors under a court order and during the following year, the rails were sold for scrap. The hotel continued to operate until 1904, despite the absence of the railroad, closing for financial reasons. In the end, the North Alabama Improvement Company (NAIC) was transferred and mortgaged and the hotel and its land, sold for use as a residence. In 1938 the Civilian Conservation Corps used part of the railroad bed for the Bankhead Parkway that was constructed up the mountain to the CCC Monte Sano State Park. After 1944 the hotel was sold for scrap and the land sold as part of a large residential land development. Fortunately an original section of rails and cross ties on the original bed still exist near the park entrance on Nolen Avenue.

**Section IX. Bibliography**

Dudley, Hugh. Interview by Jane Barr. July 11, 1997.

Gosdin, Wilma. Interview by Jane Barr. June 23, 1997.

*Huntsville Daily Mercury*, June 8, 1888.

Jones, Harvie. Interview by Jane Barr. May 23, 1997.

Sulzby, James F. *Historic Alabama Hotels and Resorts*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1960.

*The Weekly Mercury*, May 22, 1889.

Ibid, June 26, 1889.

Whatley, Terry. Interview by Jane Barr. June 23, 1997.

**Section X. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The Monte Sano Railroad Workers' House is located at 4119 Shelby Avenue in Huntsville, Madison County, Alabama and represented as parcel 3-1E-28 on the Madison County tax map. Beginning at a point 168 feet east of Shelby Avenue proceed east 95.70 feet then south 354 feet to Shelby Avenue then west 113 feet, then north 354 feet.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated boundaries contain the immediate extant historic property associated with the Monte Sano Railroad Workers' House currently under single ownership.