

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 1

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE

Other Name/Site Number: West Broad Street School

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 41 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Savannah Vicinity: N/A

State: Georgia County: Chatham Code: 051 Zip Code: 31401

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: X
Public-local:
Public-State:
Public-Federal:

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District:
Site:
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Property
Contributing
1
1
3

Noncontributing
buildings
sites
3 structures
objects
3 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this _____ nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. 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 Keeper

Date of Action

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Scarbrough House (see Photograph 1), located at 41 Martin Luther King Boulevard (historically known as West Broad Street) in Savannah, Chatham County, Georgia, is an outstanding example of early Greek Revival architecture. The building was designed and constructed by the English architect William Jay in 1818-19 as a town house for William Scarbrough. The house was modified by later owners; however, the historic plan is intact. It was rehabilitated by the Ships of the Sea Maritime Museum in 1996-97 based on extensive historical research. An associated historic brick wall structure (see Photograph 2) and archaeological site behind the house have also been identified.

The exact details of William Jay's building have been altered. There are no known pictorial images of the house prior to 1851. By that time, the house had already undergone changes and would undergo more before the end of the century. What follows is a description of the original appearance and a chronology of the subsequent physical changes according to current knowledge.

1803 - William Scarbrough purchased unimproved Lots 49 and 50 in the Village of St. Gall on Plank Road (later called West Broad Street) measuring 90 feet (street frontage) x 195 feet. Tax value listed as \$7,500.¹

1818-19 - William Jay designed and constructed a house on this property for William Scarbrough. According to tradition, total cost of the house was \$75,000. Tax value for property with improvements in 1820 was listed as \$20,000.² The following description of the original Scarbrough House is based on architectural and historical documentation. The house was placed in the southeast corner of the property, along the street facing east; possibly set back from the property line an estimated eight to twenty feet. (Expansion of the street width in subsequent years appears to account for loss of forecourt.) Jay's design was for a two-story building on a raised basement in "Grecian style"; measuring 60 feet 9 inches across the front facade by 59 feet 1 inch deep. Walls were constructed of brick with stucco (scored to simulate stone) and detailed with stone caps/trim. A parapet wall hid two low-pitch hipped roofs, one over the main structure, and the other over the rear ballroom and the central dome. The roof was covered with flat-seam tin, coated with red lead paint.

The symmetrical front facade emphasized a single-story projecting portico on raised platform. Straight flights of steps access the portico from the north and south sides; accented with a

¹ Historic Savannah Foundation. "Scarbrough House Chronology 1773-1851." Outline of major dates prepared by Historic Savannah Foundation, no date.

² HSF, "Chronology", no date.

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 5**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

balustrade of cast stone (similar to "Coade stone"). The portico features unfluted Doric columns supporting a classically proportioned entablature with triglyphs and unadorned metopes; no pediment (see Photographs 1 and 3). The front entrance has double doors and a simple pediment resting directly on the door framing. Arches on the sides of the portico are derived from a design of Villa Rotunda; blind semi-circular arch on front of raised platform echoes the Diocletian window above portico.

The portico entablature, without triglyphs and metopes, continues around the house as string course; repeated on parapet wall. Outside corners of the house are slightly recessed at a 90 degree angle to strengthen the vertical edge. Arched double-hung windows on the main floor are set in blind arches; wooden fan shutters accent rounded window heads. Rectangular double-hung windows are featured on the upper floor. The Diocletian window (an oversized semi-circular window) on the second floor features centrally placed French doors to the balcony on the portico roof (see Photograph 1). Arched and rectangular fenestration continues around the house; blind arches balance the facade on north and south sides.

Recesses on the rear corners of the house (southwest and northwest) allow for addition of single-story cast-iron porticos, probably ordered from pattern books of English firms specializing in structural cast-iron (see Photographs 4 and 5). The south portico is supported by a brick and stucco wall; with a diamond-pattern grate for flooring. It is unclear whether the north portico was completed in the original construction phase. A central exit (exact design unknown) from the back of the house opened onto a flagstone terrace and formal garden. Its original layout is unknown. Auxiliary or service buildings were probably located along the north and west edges of the property. A well (possibly attached to original plumbing system) was located off west end of south portico; no other wells or cisterns were located.³

The interior of house is based on a central hall plan. The front entrance opens into a two-story atrium (ceiling height approximately 27 feet 8 inches). Four fluted Doric columns support a Doric entablature and balustrade (similar to the exterior) and second floor gallery on all four sides of the atrium (see Photograph 6). Directly above the atrium was a shallow dome, believed to have been illuminated with hidden clerestory windows and painted to give the illusion of open sky (see Photograph 7; and Figures 1 and 2). The other prominent feature of the atrium was probably a central staircase with an unusual or complex configuration in atrium. (Some historians theorize no staircase was built in atrium; rather a discreet

³ National Heritage Corporation. "A Report on Archaeological Excavations at the William Scarbrough House, Savannah, Georgia." Report prepared for Historic Savannah Foundation, 6 August 1976.

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 6

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

staircase in north hallway only.)⁴ Exact designs for the dome and main staircase remain unknown. Plaster walls were marbled to imitate "Sienna" marble (shades of butterscotch); wood columns and trim may or may not have been marbled (see Photograph 6). A coffered wood ceiling was placed over the second floor gallery; floors were constructed of Georgia heart pine.

Flanking the atrium on main floor are twin front parlors (each 19 feet 6 inches x 21 feet 9 inches) with curved west fireplace walls (see Figure 1). Originally used as a sitting room (south) and a dining room (north). Service hallways were directly behind the curved walls accessed parlors, atrium and cast-iron porticos at the rear corners of the house. The north hallway features a low narrow wooden spiral staircase for servants/slaves and possibly a small private staircase for family.

The ballroom (26 feet x 41 feet 11 inches) dominates the west end of house on the main floor; accessed through two single doorways from the atrium. It featured a central exit to the garden, twin fireplaces, and four pairs of French doors accessing cast-iron porticos on sides of house (see Figure 1). A late 19th century newspaper article recalled walls were frescoed by "celebrated artists".⁵

The second floor featured a similar layout; the area over ballroom is divided into two chambers of equal size for a total of four rooms on the second level. The Diocletian window over the front portico is accessed through the east end of gallery and is a major source of light for the atrium (see Photograph 7; Figure 2).

All rooms featured 13 foot high ceilings, tall protruding baseboards, elaborate plaster cornices, heavy window and door trims, interior window shutters, marble mantels, wood floors and doors. Six panel doors featured graining (probably rosewood pattern); those located on curved walls were also curved. The nature of interior furnishings is unknown; but theorized to be in high style of Percier and Fontaine (neoclassical).⁶

Exact functions housed in the basement/ground floor uncertain; layout similar to second floor. Probably kitchen(s), wine storage, and slave/servant rooms.

⁴ James Vernon McDonough. "William Jay, Regency Architect in Georgia and South Carolina." Ph.D. dissertation. Princeton University, 1950.

⁵ "Where Revelry Reigned." Savannah (Georgia) Morning News, 23 May 1897.

⁶ Michael W. Berry. "Proposal for a Furnishings Plan for the William Scarbrough House." Report prepared for Historic Savannah Foundation, 1985.

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 7

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1828 - Deed from Charlotte Scarbrough to family trustee William Taylor lists property as 90 feet x 228 feet. Reason for discrepancy unclear.

1835 - William Scarbrough (in letter to Godfrey Barnsley) described house as "dilapidated"; other eyewitness accounts note same.⁷

1836-37 - Barnsley spent \$10,000 repairing and renovating the house.⁸ He added (or enclosed) the single-story rear gallery directly behind ballroom (see Photograph 8), added the third story to the main part of house (see Photographs 9 and 10), spiral staircase in south service hallway connecting second and third level, possibly north cast-iron portico, slate walks, "iron rail" fence across front of property and high brick wall on remaining sides (enclosing house, garden and auxiliary buildings.) He may also be responsible for the narrow straight staircase in the north service hallway connecting the first and second floors. It is also possible that the original main staircase in the atrium was removed at this time.

Third story addition (with gable roof and rectangular double-hung windows) made some attempt to conform to Jay design; only somewhat successful. Parapet walls were used as basis for extension; chimneys were extended in height. Stone caps were reused in third floor hearths. Third floor atrium ceiling was flat plaster (dome removed); balustrade did not imitate original.

Gallery (with gable roof) designed as multi-purpose room with dividers (of unknown nature). Barnsley office/gameroom was located on north end of room. Majority of space used as a "breakfast room" for informal family dining/gatherings. (The front parlors of the main house were used as sitting and music rooms; formal dining was moved to the ballroom.) South end of gallery featured exposed beam ceiling and large tripartite window; cast-iron decorative elements similar to south portico (columns, cresting, cornice) were featured on the exterior. Configuration of exterior gallery entrance is uncertain; early 20th century photograph suggests casement windows on west gallery facade and centrally placed pair of French doors (see Photograph 7).

Records of cast-iron shipments to Barnsley from England suggest construction of at least one (probably north) portico (see Photograph 11) or extensive changes/repairs to existing porticos

⁷ Raymond Earle Davis, Jr. "The Scarbrough House." Paper presented to Scarbrough House docents. Savannah, Georgia, 10 March 1978.

⁸ Raymond Earle Davis, Jr. "Scarbrough House Hosted Fancy Ball." Savannah (Georgia) Morning News, 19 November 1976, 4B.

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 8

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

(ie. - addition of iron staircase in floor of south portico.)⁹

Construction of a high brick wall may have included construction of the Doric-inspired "watergate" entrance adjacent to northeast corner of front facade. An oyster shell drive was located along north side of house behind gate. The single-story structure features an arched opening with wooden gates, paired Doric columns supporting an unadorned entablature and parapet. (Date of construction is uncertain; there is a small possibility of it being original to Jay's design.) No record of the design for the iron railing used by Barnsley for the front fence has been located.

Evidence suggests construction of an auxiliary building to house additional servants.¹⁰ No details have currently been located.

1850 - City surveyor records the lot as 90 feet x 223 feet plus 8 feet in front.¹¹ There is no clear explanation of discrepancy; possibly easement for expanded road. (Last of Scarbrough family vacated house December, 1850; Barnsley and family had left in 1843.)

House advertised for sale; described property as 90 feet x 230 feet on northwest corner of West Broad and Pine Streets, containing 22 rooms--mostly 20 feet x 25 feet, one 25 feet x 35 feet. Cast iron porticos on north and south. Carriage house (located directly behind watergate entrance), stable, large wine vault, large garden and "other requisite outbuildings"; all in brick with "blue slate or tile" roofs and enclosed in brick wall. Well water attached by pump and pipes to house (probably original). Property was sold to the O'Byrne family for less than \$17,000.¹²

1851 - Coffered wood ceiling of second floor atrium gallery was lowered six inches and finished with plaster; plaster cornice added. (Date and additional changes are theorized; only available evidence is significant change in tax value.)¹³

1865-72 - House was vacant the majority of the time with only minimal maintenance and upkeep.

⁹ Davis, "Scarbrough", 1978.

¹⁰ Davis, "Scarbrough", 1978; NHC, "Report", 1976.

¹¹ "Deed by James M. Walker, trustee for Charlotte Taylor and children, dated 20 April 1850." Transcript prepared for Historic Savannah Foundation, no date.

¹² Daily Morning News. Savannah, Georgia, 8 January 1851.

¹³ National Heritage Corporation. "Preliminary Study for the Restoration of the 1819 Roof and Atrium." Report prepared for Historic Savannah Foundation, Savannah, Georgia, 19 October 1973.

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 9**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1873-78 - Property renovated for West Broad Street Colored School. Brick wall enclosing grounds was rebuilt in place; garden and grade under porticos filled and leveled with an average of 24 inches of cinders and dirt for playground. Windows under porticos and along basement level were partially in-filled.¹⁴ Barnsley's (or possibly Jay's original) staircase in atrium removed; a heavy straight staircase was added to upper floors, overwhelming the atrium's spatial design. Basement was used for storage. Decorative wall paintings were "whitewashed" over.¹⁵

1878-1965 - Nature and date of changes obscure. Stove heaters and electrical service were added over subsequent years. Deferred maintenance became a progressive problem. Rear stairs from gallery to playground replaced with metal. Roof lines/materials altered; fire escapes added. Tripartite window on south end of gallery were in-filled with clapboard. Iron rail fence across front of property was removed. North portico was severely altered or replaced with cast-iron and wood; makeshift breezeways added to connect house to toilets located in center of garden (see Photograph 11). Original well located off southwest corner of house was filled prior to 1925. Watergate removed at unknown date in this century; possibly sometime after World War II.

Sanborn maps indicate: 1884 - walls and watergate intact; one-story "shed" (approximately 20 feet x 30 feet) located immediately behind gate. No other outbuildings indicated. Both north and south porticos intact. 1888 - walls and watergate intact; shed gone. One-story outbuilding (estimated 12 feet x 20 feet) located near center of property; used as toilet facilities. (Concrete slab on that site removed in 1975 archaeological excavation.) 1898 - two-story wood frame classroom building (estimated 30 feet x 60 feet) located approximately 10 feet from west retaining wall. 1916 - no changes indicated. 1954 - covered breezeways indicated connecting north portico to toilet facilities and second classroom building. Watergate may have still have been intact.¹⁶

1965-73 - Building vacant; severe deterioration occurs.

1972-78 - Historic Savannah Foundation rehabilitated the property as an exhibition gallery, office and community meeting space. Preliminary archaeological excavations undertaken in 1976.

The third floor was removed entirely; direction and placement of the reconstructed roofs was determined from truss remnants

¹⁴ NHC "Report", 1976.

¹⁵ "Where Revelry Reigned," 23 May 1897.

¹⁶ Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, 1884-1954.

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 10**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

embedded parapet in wall. Steel reinforcement of superstructure was added. "Lantern" with barrel vault ceiling and clerestory windows was built in location of original dome; conjectural design was based on example in Bath, England from same era. Roofs rebuilt as needed in other areas; materials were replaced with asphalt shingle or standing-seam metal. Chimneys were lowered to original height; flues and dampers replaced. Cast-iron elements on south portico were replicated or replaced as needed (stairs to basement and diamond pattern floor grate were retained, louvers replaced); north portico (not original) removed entirely. Windows were repaired or replaced with metal as feasible. Entrance portico was restored. Structural bricks were repaired or replaced as needed; exterior surfaces were re-stuccoed. Modern plumbing, electric, and HVAC systems were introduced to structure.

The basement was outfitted as modern office space with kitchen and restrooms; ceiling height is 7 feet 8 inches. Plaster (considered not salvageable) and lath was stripped to the studs on all floors; atrium walls were stripped to the brick substructure. Metal lath and new plaster or wallboard were installed.¹⁷ The mid-19th century institutional staircase was removed from the atrium, but not replaced due to lack of clear, convincing evidence of its original configuration. The wood floors were not salvageable; replaced with comparable old growth heart pine salvaged from River Street (Savannah) warehouse. Balusters, cornice cresting and plaster moldings were replicated and repaired as needed. Atrium walls were marbleized according to historical evidence found on site. Original doors, trim and woodwork which had survived was restored. Non-original mantels were replaced with marbleized wood; no original mantels remained. Chandeliers dating from the 1850s were added to the ballroom. In compliance with the local fire marshall, fire stairs were added to south service hallway; north hallway staircase previously attributed to Jay was reconstructed. The original spiral servants staircase was closed off above first floor level but is still visible/accessible in basement. Second floor northwest and southwest chambers were subdivided into offices. Attic access was opened in ceilings of second floor hallways.

Rear gallery was retained; conjectural rear entrance and stairways constructed to garden. All outbuildings/remnants were removed. Plans were made for investigation and restoration of 14,000 square foot formal garden; subsequent plan estimated original garden at 21,500 square feet.

Archaeological excavations indicated contemporary height of street at least 12 inches above its location in 1819. In-fill on the property ranges from 12-30 inches, with an average of 24 inches. As a result, the house appears slightly lower than it

¹⁷ National Heritage Corporation. "Specifications: Restoration William Scarbrough House." Report prepared for Historic Savannah Foundation, 1 August 1975.

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 11**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

was originally intended. One or possibly two extra steps on the front portico were located below the current sidewalk; two additional steps were located below grade level on cast-iron stairs under south portico. Several basement windows shortened to accommodate, notably along north and south sides of house.¹⁸

1980 - Watergate was reconstructed from historical evidence. Belgian block drive was added in front of gate. Additional restoration of ironwork on south portico occurred. Total restoration cost reported at over \$1,000,000 to date.

1982-84 - Garden restoration/rehabilitation undertaken jointly by Historic Savannah Foundation and Trustees Garden Club; includes flagstone terrace, major plantings of trees, etc. Open single-story "Mary Tiedeman Pavilion" constructed (1984) on approximate site of two-story wood frame classroom near rear of property. Structure designed to compliment main house; measured 13 feet 9 inches x 36 feet 3 inches x 15 feet 1 inch (height) for a total of 600 square feet.

1994-95 - Appraiser's report noted a minimum of \$145,000 in deferred maintenance needed immediately: new HVAC system, interior and exterior painting, isolated window replacement; exterior stucco repair. Also estimated another \$277,000 (minimum) need to prepare building for use as museum.¹⁹ Asphalt shingle roof was replaced with standing seam; stainless steel standing seam used on south portico roof. Electronic security system added. Additional repairs and refurbishing done on exterior and interior.

City exchanged 30 feet Congress Lane adjacent to south facade for 30 feet of land on south boundary of adjacent 1.096 acre lot. New masonry and stucco wall built along south to enclose house and garden; improved site measures 120 feet x 233 feet.

1996-97 - Second rehabilitation in preparation for use as museum. General refurbishing/repairs of exterior; stucco, paint, repaired Diocletian window, added balusters to front portico, repaired retaining wall and watergate as needed (Photographs 12 and 13). Expanded wall to camouflage surface parking lot adjacent to property (see Photograph 14). Front sidewalk rebuilt with flagstone. Garden terrace flagstones replaced with brick pavers; concrete walks removed. A new garden plan incorporated some of the earlier efforts, but was redesigned to include additional enclosed space on south end of enclosure and to reflect the general design aesthetic of the historic era. Pavilion was

¹⁸ NHC "Report", 1976.

¹⁹ Donna R. Butler. "Appraisal of the Scarbrough House, 41 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and the Adjacent 1.096 Acre Vacant Lot, 45 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, Savannah, Georgia." Report Prepared by Considine and Company for Ships of the Sea Museum, 29 August 1994.

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 12**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

rebuilt and partially enclosed with lattice. Cast-iron staircase was removed in south portico; replaced iron grating with wood floor. Hipped roofs were rebuilt/reoriented; lantern over atrium was replaced with dome based on original skylight design at another Jay mansion in Savannah (Telfair Academy). New rear gallery entrance portico constructed; Greek Revival style based on pediment framing front entrance (see Photograph 15).

Basement offices were reconfigured slightly. All utilities upgraded. Second floor kitchenette removed; office partitions removed to reflect original floor plan. Marbleized atrium walls repaired; all doors regrained. Wood floors refinished; historically appropriate carpets were added to front parlors on first floor and a painted floor cloth was added to atrium. Deteriorated non-original wood mantels were removed; first floor fireplace openings retained. Second floor fireplaces were sealed off until a more historically accurate treatment is determined or original materials located.

The contemporary appearance of the house reflects the general mass, form and stylistic character of Jay's original design, as it is currently understood, although the context of the neighborhood and use of the property has changed drastically. The 1973 and 1996 endeavors to preserve the house were conducted with a desire to understand its original physical qualities. It should be understood that both efforts have been rehabilitations rather than restorations.

The contributing elements of the property are the house, the extant historic south wall, and the garden site. Excavations in 1976 demonstrated this site is associated with the Scarbrough House. While a contributing resource, not enough documentation was accomplished to demonstrate the national significance of the site. Non-contributing elements of the property are the new masonry wall which partially encloses the property, the reconstructed watergate, and the contemporary garden pavilion.

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 13

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C X D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria: **4**

NHL Theme(s):

XVI. ARCHITECTURE**D. Greek Revival**

Areas of Significance: **Architecture**

Period(s) of Significance: **1819-1835**

Significant Dates: **N/A**

Significant Person(s): **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation: **N/A**

Architect/Builder: **William Jay**

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 14**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary Statement of Significance: The William Scarbrough House was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1973 because of its early use of the Greek Revival style by the notable English architect William Jay. It is nationally significant in Architecture under Criterion 4 in that it "possesses high artistic value" and "represents the work of a master." Within the NHL thematic framework, it relates to XVI - Architecture, D - Greek Revival (1820-1840).

As a result of extensive in-fill of the formal garden in preparation for the opening of the school, preliminary archaeological excavations (1970s) reported high integrity in the original garden design and artifacts from auxiliary structures present beneath the current grade. However, not enough work was accomplished to establish significance under Criterion 6.

* * Chronological History of William Scarbrough House * *

1818-19 - English architect William Jay designed and constructed house for wealthy Savannah merchant William Scarbrough at cost of \$75,000.

1819-20 - As directed by Court, house sold in an effort to cover Scarbrough's insolvent debts. Brother-in-law Robert Isaac purchased property for its tax value of \$20,000. Family remained in residence; Scarbrough declared bankruptcy. Isaac purchased contents of house and personal property in court-ordered public sale; goods returned to house.

1827 - Isaac died; will bequeathed property and contents to oldest Scarbrough child, daughter Charlotte, to protect house from her father's creditors.

1828 - Charlotte placed property in family trust for the benefit of her mother and siblings.

1835 - Scarbrough proposed Godfrey Barnsley (husband of second daughter, Julia Henrietta) renovate the house and provide for financial upkeep of mother-in-law (Julia Bernard Scarbrough) and education of two youngest Scarbrough children still at home in exchange for five years free rent.

1836-37 - Barnsley renovated and added to house at a total cost of \$10,000. Costume ball thrown at a cost of additional \$10,000. Sharp drop in cotton market wiped out Barnsley fortune and placed him in debt.

1843 - Having recouped a comfortable amount of his fortune, Barnsley moved family to new home in north Georgia ("Woodlands" estate located in Adairsville, Bartow County; surviving gardens, currently known as Barnsley Gardens, are open to the public.) Charlotte Scarbrough Taylor filed suit

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

against family and husband (James Taylor) to regain control of property; in response to her personal financial difficulties.

- 1850 - After multiple appeals, U.S. Supreme Court overturned family trust and returned full ownership of property to Charlotte. Last of Scarbrough family given until end of the year to vacate. Mother (Julia Bernard Scarbrough) died the same year; most of family already gone.
- 1851 - House sold to Margaret O'Byrne, wealthy widow and executrix of the estate of Dominick O'Byrne; residence for Margaret, son Dominick and his wife.
- 1865 - Younger Mrs. O'Byrne fled house after explosion at a powder magazine used by occupying Union troops (exact location unknown); convinced the town was being burned, refused to return.
- 1865-70 - House largely empty; kept by only a few servants.
- 1870 - House sold to Roman Catholic Bishop (of Savannah) Augustine Verot for use as residence for boys orphaned by Civil War; a personal charity. No clear evidence it was ever used as such.
- 1872 - Leased by Verot's successor, Bishop Gross, to Chatham County Board of Education for use as free publicly-funded school for black children of both sexes.
- 1875 - Gross sold building to Bernard McKenna in order to help fund building of cathedral in Savannah; lease agreement continued.
- 1878 - School threatened with eviction during another impending sale; building purchased for \$5,000 by local philanthropist George W.J. DeRenne and donated to Board of Education for use as black school with condition that it revert to his heirs if it ceased to function in that capacity.
- 1873-1962 - Operated by Board of Education as West Broad Street (Colored) School; closed due to building's obsolescence and physical deterioration.
- 1962-65 - Board of Education used dilapidated structure for storage.
- 1965-68 - Property reverted to DeRenne heirs. Mrs. Craig (Elfrida DeRenne) Barrow donated her share to the Historic Savannah Foundation, Inc (HSF). HSF acquired remaining shares of the property at a cost of \$42,000 and sought new owner to restore.
- 1973-76 - HSF conducted multi-phase restoration/rehabilitation of property as community cultural center with offices, meeting

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 16**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

rooms, gallery, interpretive exhibits. Opened to the public November, 1976.

1973 - Property designated National Historic Landmark.

1990 - HSF vacated building; deeded over to Telfair Academy of Arts and Sciences (a Jay designed building) for continued operation as museum. (Telfair Academy also owns Owens-Thomas House. This sale placed all three surviving Jay structures in Savannah under one owner/curator.)

1994 - House deeded to Ships of the Sea Museum for anticipated use as community center. (Decision was ultimately made to rehabilitate the structure for use as a maritime museum.)

1996-97 - Second rehabilitation undertaken before reopening to public as Ships of the Sea Maritime Museum.

* * Criterion 4: William Jay's Design * *
(Architecture)

English architect William Jay (1792-1837) arrived in Savannah in late 1817 at the peak of the city's mercurial rise to prominence in the post-War of 1812 economic boom and Southern cotton frenzy. His nouveau riche clientele (including Scarbrough) had amassed sizable fortunes with their aggressive and sometimes precarious business dealings.¹ Before the full impact of the nation-wide Bank Panic of 1819 and disastrous events of 1820 (in Savannah) could take their toll on these fortunes, Jay had designed and constructed a handful of luxurious town residences in his highly stylistic interpretation of classical orders inspired by the architecture of English Neoclassicist John Soane.² His treatment of the Scarbrough House produced a muscular architectural statement based on a masterful use of the severe Doric order and introduced the city to classicism based on archaeological precedent -- the basis of the Greek Revival style.

The residences Jay designed and constructed in Savannah (1817-1821) were unlike anything that had been seen in the city before, rivaling anything in Charleston.³ Over the course of three years, he designed and constructed an extraordinary number of high style buildings under the zealous patronage of Scarbrough's elite circle of wealthy and prominent associates. (Of these structures, only three currently exist to allow for comparison: Owens-Thomas House, Scarbrough House, and Telfair (House)

¹ James, Pesea and Schwarze, n.p.

² Mills Lane, *Architecture of the Old South: Georgia* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1986), n.p.

³ Roger G. Kennedy, *Architecture, Men, Women and Money: 1600-1860* (New York:Random House, 1985), n.p.

Academy. All three were completed in 1819. All three are designated as National Historic Landmarks.

Jay's designs broke with prevalent trends in Savannah's architectural tradition. Although each of the houses he designed and constructed in Savannah is unique, certain basic traits appear repeatedly through out his work: a squarish mass with an overall sense of monumentality, usually two-stories set on a raised basement; brick construction covered with stucco, frequently scored to imitate stone; recessed corners (a play of light and dark which strengthens vertical edges); windows set deep in the wall, often framed with a recessed rectangular or arched panel; a low-pitch hipped roof, sometimes hidden behind a parapet featuring recessed or incised panels; a garden forecourt containing double flights of stairs leading to a central portico, based on classical orders, which dominates the facade; windows may be rectangular, arched or semi-circular (over the portico); a simple clean string course (visually separating main and second floors) and unadorned entablature give a strong horizontal emphasis to plain walls; elegant cast iron is incorporated into railings, balconies and a veranda which adjoins and shades the south facade; use of "Coade stone" (a durable cast stone originated in England in the 18th century) decorative elements such as columns, capitals, bases and balusters; and cast iron incorporated as a structural material.⁴

The interiors are based on a central-hall plan with a strong emphasis on spatial relationships in the entrance/stairway hall, often lit by oversized fanlights or skylights. Indirect lighting sources (a trait of John Soane's work) are often used. Staircases are often configured in dramatic or unexpected ways. High-ceiling rooms feature curved walls, a variety of geometric shapes and often shallow or deep dome ceilings, all configured with a sense of order and balance; classical Greek decorative motifs appear throughout, usually used in unorthodox or inventive ways and freely combined with Roman arches. Baseboards are tall and heavy; lighter cornices feature anthemion as well as other Greek motifs. Six-panel doors are curved to match walls and accented with wide heavy, fluted trim. Interior finishes are elaborate, often costly. Small backstairs for use by servants are introduced in Savannah for the first time.⁵

Jay's genius for invention within the classical vocabulary is evident when the Regency-inspired lyrical elegance of his earlier work is contrasted to the severity of the Scarbrough House. Using the austere Doric order and eliminating almost all exterior ornamentation, Jay created an emphatic, muscular exterior while

⁴ Sherry L. Johnson, "American Architecture by English Architect William Jay: A Multiple Property Submission to the National Register of Historic Places" (Master's Thesis, Savannah College of Art and Design, 1997), 7-8.

⁵ Lane, n.p.

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 18**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

adhering to the same basic design traits seen throughout his work. The two-story building is placed on a raised basement. It features a one-story central portico supported by unfluted Doric columns. A parapet wall obscures the low-pitch hipped roof. On the interior, the unadorned severity of the two-story domed central hall with its fluted Doric columns only accentuates a masterful manipulation of space.

This is the architect's most minimalistic work, reflective of the European Neoclassical principles and work of John Soane, George Dance, Jr. and Claude-Nicholas Ledoux (France).⁶ Because its purposefully stark use of the Doric order and arrangement of space bears such a close resemblance to ancient precedents, many architectural historians recognize this as one of the earliest examples of Greek Revival architecture in America and possibly the first in the Southeast.⁷

The radical nature of the architecture forcefully announces its individuality -- a characteristic which must have appealed to its owner. Only days before the house was complete and in preparation to host President James Monroe on his visit to Savannah, Scarbrough wrote to his wife expressing his deep satisfaction with the house and adding he hoped "Jay will begin to attain the prominence which low jealousy and perverted judgement would not before award him."⁸

The significance of William Jay's architectural work in America must be evaluated by examining the importance of specific accomplishments and the influence which it had on the continued development of architecture in the nation. Specific achievements attributed to Jay or his work in America include:

- * First professional architect in Georgia; one of first in South⁹
- * Ended domination of Georgian Palladianism on architecture in Georgia

⁶ William H. Pierson, Jr., *American Buildings and Their Architects: The Colonial and Neoclassical Styles* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1970), n.p.

⁷ Howard A. Colvin, *A Bibliographical Dictionary of British Architects: 1600-1840*, New York: Facts on Files, 1978; Kenneth Severens, *Charleston Antebellum Architecture and Civic Destiny*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988.

⁸ McDonough, 1950; William Scarbrough, Letter to wife Julia, 6 May 1819. William Scarbrough Papers, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah.

⁹ Hanna Hryniewiecka Lerski, *William Jay: Itinerant English Architect, 1792-1837* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), n.p.

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 19**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

- * Introduced new spatial arrangements and room placement to South: interiors exploit vertical impact of space; high style architecture adapted to climate; separate public, private and service areas (separate service stairs); curved walls and circular rooms; unique staircase configurations¹⁰
- * Earliest interpretive use of classical vocabulary in South¹¹
- * Earliest use of classical orders based on ancient precedent in South; among the earliest in America¹² (For Scarbrough House, architect used Doric order based on proportions of Parthenon and a floor plan based on ancient Greek domestic architecture.)
- * Designed some of the earliest Greek Revival buildings in America¹³
- * First large scale public building planning in South Carolina¹⁴
- * First theater in Georgia; among the earliest in South¹⁵
- * Introduced new materials/technology in Georgia: structural cast iron, Coade stone, indoor plumbing, French doors¹⁶
- * Earliest advocate of fireproof construction in Georgia; possibly earliest in South¹⁷
- * Earliest use of structural cast iron in Georgia; some of the earliest used in America¹⁸
- * One of the founders of Charleston's Academy of Fine Arts (1821) - second society of its kind in America; first in South¹⁹
- * Among the immigrant English architects of the era who influenced first generation of native-born and trained American architects: only one working in South
- * Illustrations of work included in *Dictionary of Architecture* by Edward Andrew Crane and Eric Ellis Soderholtz (London: T.Richards, 1892) which is considered one of the pioneering

¹⁰ Lerski, n.p.

¹¹ Frederick Doveton Nichols, *The Architecture of Georgia* (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1976), n.p.

¹² McDonough, n.p.

¹³ Colvin, n.p.

¹⁴ Lynn Harvey, "William Jay: A Conjectural Reconstruction of the Archibald Stobo Bulloch House, Savannah, Georgia" (Chicago, 1995), n.p.

¹⁵ Sherry L. Johnson, "Forgotten Applause: A Brief History of the Savannah Theater" (Savannah, 1996), n.p.

¹⁶ McDonough, n.p.

¹⁷ Harvey, n.p.

¹⁸ McDonough, n.p.

¹⁹ Harvey, n.p.

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 20**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

records of Southern architectural history²⁰

- * Included in the 1943 Metropolitan Museum's exhibit on "The Greek Revival in the United States"; acknowledged in introduction as "outstanding in the movement"²¹

The full impact of Jay's presence in America is still being assessed. A previous lack of widespread recognition for his accomplishments may be attributed to numerous factors -- the limited geographical area in which he worked, the brief time period of his activity, a general failure to address the unique aspects or trends represented in Southern architecture, or even a research bias which favors American architects over their European predecessors. More likely it is due to long-held misconceptions of the nature and development of the Greek Revival style in America.

Only with the broad recognition of social history as an integral part of its context have historians begun to analyze the psychological and social factors in American society which produced unique architectural responses to the environment. As a result, the development of Greek Revival is being re-evaluated as a creative and interpretive response to the search for "political order, social stability and national identity" which characterizes the 1820s-50s. Rather than a conscious effort to recreate America in the political or social image of Athenian democracy, Americans embraced the inherent stability of classical vocabulary as symbolic of their recovered self-confidence, commitment to order, and dominance of nature. Within that vocabulary, they felt justifiable freedom to celebrate their accomplishments.²²

The results are Grecian forms across the nation completely void of any ancient precedent yet staunchly identified as Greek Revival. In its most enduring and mythical form, Greek Revivalism gave the South a delusional sense of mastery over the indelicate and unstable nature of its social and moral minefield.²³

With this in mind, it becomes important to understand those factors which fostered and disseminated such a pervasive phenomenon. For the sake of this discussion, that must begin with an examination of William Jay's specific impact on subsequent architectural development.

²⁰ McDonough, n.p.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Roger G. Kennedy, *Greek Revival in America* (New York: Tabori & Chang, 1989), n.p.

²³ Patrick Gerster and Nicholas Cords, ed., *Myths and Southern History* (Chicago: Rand, McNally College Publishing Company, 1974), n.p.

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 21**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Despite the tendency of the founding fathers to favor classical imagery, a gap existed between the end of the Revolution and the rise of Greek Revival in the 1820s. This gap was bridged by those European architects immigrating to America in the face of the Napoleonic Wars. Their names have become synonymous with the finest American architecture of the era: Charles Bulfinch, James Hoban, Pierre L'Enfant, John Haviland, Benjamin Latrobe and George Hadfield.²⁴ Of these immigrant professionals, only Jay would produce a body of work in the South significant enough to influence (by example) that region's architectural evolution.

It is important to understand that Jay's work is part of a transitional phase in American architecture, but is not characterized by the awkward handling of an unfamiliar design vocabulary which often characterizes transitional styles. There appears to be a great dissimilarity between his more lyrical designs and the very austere Scarbrough House. However, both are based on the same Neoclassical ideals. Their differences are the result of the architect's genius for inventive interpretation within a certain stylistic context. This was a recognized and desirable trait in the philosophical tenets of Neoclassicism.²⁵ What resulted is a powerful visual catalog of variable options within the same classical framework.

From 1835-37, Godfrey Barnsley (the husband of Scarbrough's second daughter, Julia Henrietta) spent over \$10,000 in renovations and refurbishing of the house.²⁶ His major architectural changes included the addition of a third story, a rear gallery, possibly reconfiguring the central atrium stairs, possibly adding one or both cast-iron porticos, and enclosing the house and garden in a high brick wall. At the conclusion of this building activity in March, 1837, he threw a "Fancy Ball" in the house (at a cost of another \$10,000) which became legendary in local lore and briefly echoed the opulence and daring of Scarbrough's era.²⁷

At the direction of the Board of Education, the rented house was altered in December, 1873 to accommodate 300 school children in the city's first black public school. The building was purchased and donated to the Board in January, 1878 and may have undergone additional changes.²⁸ The most significant change of this era

²⁴ Pierson, n.p.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Frederick Doveton Nichols, *The Architecture of Georgia* (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1976), n.p.

²⁷ Davis, "Fancy Ball", 1976.

²⁸ Historic savannah Foundation, "George Wymberley Jones DeRenne's Gift to Negro Education: A Beginning." Grant application to the National Endowment for the Humanities,

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 22**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

was the addition of straight flights of stairs in the atrium which visually overwhelmed the space and obscured historic detail.

Under the ownership of Historic Savannah Foundation, Inc. the house underwent a multi-phase restoration and rehabilitation between 1973-84, in which the property was carefully investigated and systematically returned to an earlier appearance approximating Jay's original design. The third floor was removed and the hipped roofs/dome reconstructed. Barnsley's gallery was retained and the late 19th century atrium staircase removed. Decorative finishes and elements were restored or replicated. The structure was reopened to the public in late 1976.²⁹

Without this intervention, the property would not have survived. As a result of it, the property's viability has been restored. Because of its architectural excellence and integrity, it was previously designated a National Historic Landmark (1973) under the theme XVI - Architecture, D - Greek Revival (1820-1840). Subsequent restoration and rehabilitation activity has only enhanced these qualities. Its designation under Criterion 4 in the area of Architecture should continue.

* * Preliminary Archaeological Findings * *

Under the direction of the Historic Savannah Foundation and conducted by the National Heritage Corporation, a preliminary archaeological excavation was undertaken (1976) in preparation for a full-scale restoration of the estimated 21,500 square foot formal garden area (thought to have been designed by Jay). It was determined that during the mid-19th century, a significant in-fill of the terrain occurred in preparation for the new school. As a result, artifacts and evidence of the garden layout and auxiliary structures have been well-preserved beneath the current grade at an average depth of 24 inches. Because of this fortunate and inadvertent preservation, the property has the potential of being the most intact example of an early 19th century garden in Savannah.³⁰

Despite tantalizing preliminary results, sufficient funding was not available and a full-scale excavation/investigation of the property or analysis of the recovered artifacts has never been done. For this reason, every effort should be made to protect this property until an investigation can be undertaken.

Washington, D.C., March, 1978.

²⁹ Emma Adler, "Reports of the Scarbrough House Committee." Restoration progress reports prepared for Historic Savannah Foundation, 1972-77.

³⁰ NHC, "Report", 1976.

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 23

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WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 24**

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WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 25**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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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.

X Designated a National Historic Landmark. **November 7, 1973**

X Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # GA-2147

____ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: # _____

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 26**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office **Georgia**
 Other State Agency
 Federal Agency
 Local Government

Ms. Beth Reiter
City Preservation Officer
Metropolitan Planning Commission
120 East State Street
Savannah, Georgia 31401

(912) 651-1440

- University
 Other (Specify Repository):

Ships of the Sea Maritime Museum
41 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard
Savannah, Georgia 31401

(912) 232-1511

Historic Savannah Foundation, Inc.
212 West Broughton Street
Savannah, Georgia 31401

(912) 233-7787

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 27

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATAAcreage of Property: **0.67 acres**

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting Zone Northing Easting

A 17 3549220 490820

Verbal Boundary Description:

The rectangular-shaped property is located on the west side of Martin Luther King Boulevard (former West Broad Street), within the northwest boundary of Savannah's Historic District (by local ordinance) and adjacent to the Savannah NHL District. In the records of the Chatham County Courthouse, this is identified as Lots 13 of Middle Oglethorpe Ward. Its north boundary is defined by the exterior brick wall of the adjacent building at 39 MLK Boulevard, running west from the street a distance of approximately 223 feet. The west boundary is defined by an eight (8) feet high retaining wall which runs south from the north property line a distance of approximately 120 feet. The same retaining wall turns 90 degrees to the east, running a distance of approximately 223 feet to form the south boundary. The wall turns 90 degrees to the north and runs a distance of approximately 30 feet to intersect with the front facade of the house. Facing east, the front facade of the house appears to be located on the zero property line. However, for this designation, the eastern boundary of the property should be relocated no less than 20 feet east of the front facade. Area to be designated measures approximately 243 feet by 120 feet or 29,160 square feet. Three contributing resources are located within the property as defined: the house (building), 19th century retaining wall (structure), and garden terrace (site).

Boundary Justification:

The location of the north and west boundaries corresponds to those recognized in historical records dating to the original purchase of the lots by Scarbrough and again by the City Surveyor in 1851.

The south boundary (as defined by a contemporary retaining wall) is located approximately 30 feet south of the historical property line. In 1996, the City of Savannah agreed to close one block of Congress Lane (historically known as Pine Street) which abutted the south facade of the house. The owners (Ships of the Sea Maritime Museum) received a Certificate of Approval from Savannah's Historic Board of Review to partially demolish the original retaining wall and construct a new wall which enclosed the road bed. The additional area is being interpreted as part of the garden. This provides a buffer zone around the house and

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 28**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

connection to the adjacent parking facilities which serve the museum. Portions of the original wall have been retained within the enclosure and clearly indicate the original property line. Although not historically exact, this treatment has been undertaken with particular sensitivity to the historical fabric, and has helped to mitigate the absence of historical context surrounding the property.

The east boundary appears to be defined by the front facade of the house. However, questions remain concerning the presence of a garden forecourt. Jay's propensity for setting houses back from the front property line and the construction of a front iron rail fence in 1836 support the possibility. Over time, this area may have fallen victim to the expanding width of the street. Until documentary and archaeological investigation can clarify this matter, it is important to protect the affected area. Therefore the east boundary is to be located 20 feet east of and run parallel to the front facade. This area will also enclose the central front portico which extends approximately 12 feet beyond the main facade.

WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE**Page 29**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: **Ms. Sherry L. Johnson**

Org.: **Ships of the Sea Maritime Museum/
William Scarbrough House**

Street/#: **41 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard**

City/Town: **Savannah**

State: **Georgia**

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