

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

| |
|---------------------------------|
| STATE: South Carolina |
| COUNTY: Beaufort |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |
| ENTRY DATE |

1. NAME

COMMON:

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Robert Smalls House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
511 Prince Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Beaufort** CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

STATE: **South Carolina** CODE: COUNTY: **Beaufort** CODE:

3. CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY (Check One) | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC |
|---|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object | <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both | Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress |
| PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate) | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments |

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Marguerite G. Barnum

STREET AND NUMBER:
511 Prince Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Beaufort** STATE: **South Carolina** CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Beaufort County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
Bay Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Beaufort** STATE: **South Carolina** CODE:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Feiss-Wright Inventory of Historic Buildings (HABS 1965)

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Historic Beaufort Foundation

STREET AND NUMBER:
801 Bay Street (P. O. Box 11)

CITY OR TOWN: **Beaufort** STATE: **South Carolina** CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: **South Carolina**

COUNTY: **Beaufort**

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| CONDITION | (Check One) | | | | | |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> Good | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair | <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins | <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed |
| | (Check One) | | | (Check One) | | |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered | <input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered | <input type="checkbox"/> Moved | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The following information was compiled by the staff of Mr. Charles Lee, State Historic Preservation Officer, South Carolina. We are grateful to them for its use here.

Built in 1843, the Robert Smalls House is a good example of a large frame house with a two-story portico. The original structure has been considerably altered and the result is a square house with small wings on the north and east walls which extend the north-east corner of the house.

Currently, the south facade is shaded by a two-story balustraded portico which rests on bricked-in foundations with wooden supports. The main entrance, centered in the south front, is approached by a short flight of brick stairs which leads to the narrow, decorated doorway. Here, as upstairs, two shuttered windows flank the door to the porch. The roof is supported above the attenuated Doric columns of the verandah by a plain boxed cornice. A lightly decorated pediment sits over the center of the colonnaded porch; the roof is gabled with east-west pediments.

As originally built, the house had a one-story front porch and an Adam-styled front door which opened on to a central hall flanked by two principal rooms. The back of the hall led into the center of the three rooms which extended across the back of the house to form a one-story "T". Above the two principal rooms were two more of the same size; all four of these rooms had dados to the lower window sills. The room to the left on the main floor had an Adam-styled mantel which extended all the way to the ceiling. The ceiling had an elaborate wooden dentil moulding. The mantel and ceiling mouldings in the right-hand first-floor room were less elaborate than those in the one across the hall. There was a Palladian window to light the hall on the stair landing located two-thirds the way up the stairs. Six fireplaces in the main rooms of the house led into the two main twin chimneys.

Additions have been used to modernize and alter the house extensively. In 1850, a third bedroom was added over the center of the "T". This bedroom cut off the Palladian window and required the construction of an elevated access ganway on the second floor over the stair landing. At the same time, a glass transom was added to the entrance. Twenty years later, the front porch on the second floor was roofed over and the columns, additional one-story columns, were carried to the eaves. The center window in the upstairs hall was converted into the access door. In 1880, a back room was added to the main floor at the back of the "T". No further constructional additions were made until 1950 when the supporting pillars of the house, which had previously been connected only by latticework, were bricked in with old brick. Simultaneously, a lace brick wall was built on the front of the yard. The house, nevertheless, retains the flavor of the original; the overall presentation is that of an unusual but traditional white clapboard house of early Beaufort design.

Robert Smalls purchased the house in which he had lived as a slave at a tax sale in 1863. He and his descendants occupied the property for approximately ninety years. Smalls'

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

6. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1839-1851 & 1863-1953

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | <u>Afro-American History</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Robert Smalls, the hero of the Planter, state legislator, U. S. Congressman from South Carolina during the turbulent years of Reconstruction, and customs collector for the Port of Beaufort, deserves to be better known to the American Public.

Born a slave in Beaufort, South Carolina, in 1839, Smalls grew up in relative comfort in the John McKee household on Prince Street. By 1851, he was hired out by his "master" to Charleston where he lived until the outbreak of the Civil War. During that "war for freedom," as Smalls constantly referred to the Civil War, he distinguished himself first as the "abductor" of the Planter, an incident which catapulted him to national fame and attention, and as a guide for the Union ships attacking the Sea Island areas. Capitalizing on his heroism and fame during the war, he became a folk-hero and a natural candidate for public office during the years of black political influence that followed the war. He was elected first to the state Constitutional Convention of 1868 where he established a reputation for fair-mindedness, discretion as well as conviction, and as an advocate of the political, economic and social rights of his newly enfranchised race. He emerged from the convention as an effective champion of state supported free education for the children of all races in the state, a reflection of his firm belief that the maintenance of an intelligent government, "faithful to the interests and liberties of the people depended in great measure on the intelligence of the people themselves."

Smalls was next elected to the state legislature, first the assembly (1868-1870) and then the state senate (1870-1874). Here, he continued his fight to use legislation to buttress the rights recently gained by the freedmen. He made himself a sort of watch dog for his constituents and race, in the face of the mounting opposition and increasing hostility of white South Carolinians. He championed the cause of honest and responsible government for South Carolina and spearheaded some of the investigations against those he felt had corrupted the political process in South Carolina. Although he himself was indicted and later convicted by the so-called redeemer government that took power in the state after the bitterly contested 1876 election, this conviction is best seen as political vendetta rather than a commentary on Smalls' dishonesty. His championship of the economic interests of blacks in these years also endeared him more and more to his Black constituents and contributed to his repeated re-elections, despite the determined opposition and sometimes questionable methods of the opposition.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Beaufort Newspapers - Free South, New South, Republican, and Tribune. Available only at the Beaufort Township Library.
 Carter G. Woodson Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. (Contains many of Robert Smalls letters.)
 Robert Smalls Custom File. National Archives.
 Uya, Okon E. From Slavery to Public Service: Robert Smalls, 1839-1915. Oxford U. Press, 1971.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY | | | | O R | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES | | | | |
|---|----------|---------|-----------|---------|---|---------|-----------------|---------|---------|
| CORNER | LATITUDE | | LONGITUDE | | LATITUDE | | LONGITUDE | | |
| | Degrees | Minutes | Seconds | Degrees | Minutes | Seconds | Degrees | Minutes | Seconds |
| NW | ° | ' | " | ° | ' | " | 32 ^D | 26' | 07"N |
| NE | ° | ' | " | ° | ' | " | 80° | 40' | 06"W |
| SE | ° | ' | " | ° | ' | " | | | |
| SW | ° | ' | " | ° | ' | " | | | |

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than 1 acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|--------|------|---------|------|
| | | | |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| | | | |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| | | | |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| | | | |

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
 Marcia M. Greenlee, Historical Projects Director

ORGANIZATION: The Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation DATE: December 1973

STREET AND NUMBER:
1420 N Street, N. W., Suite 101

CITY OR TOWN: Washington, D. C. 20005 STATE: _____ CODE: _____

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

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

 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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7. DESCRIPTION - page 2

ownership was contested in a legal case which ultimately was heard in the U. S. Supreme Court. The case was decided in Smalls' favor and established the validity of acts of Congress between 7 June 1862 and 6 February 1863 providing for direct taxes on property in occupied territory and penalties for non-payment.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE - page 2

In 1874, Smalls was elected to the Congress of the United States. Here, he continued his fight to protect black rights despite the rising tide of white intimidation and violence. His clashes with rather well-known National Democrats enhanced his image as a tough, unyielding fighter for freedom and drew the grudging admiration of National Republican figures. A firm believer in the spoils system, Smalls exploited Republican politics to the advantage of his constituency and although he did not always succeed in getting his proposals accepted by the Congress, it is significant that he tried so much in the face of overwhelming odds.

Smalls' next theater for political action was the Constitutional Convention of South Carolina which met in 1895 specifically to legislate into law black disfranchisement and general social and economic enslavement. Here, Smalls emerged as a tireless fighter for fairness, decency, truth, and the tenets of American democracy. He pleaded, not for special privileges for his race, but for "an equal chance in the battle of life." However unsuccessful his efforts, there was little doubt that Smalls' stand on this occasion was a brilliant moral victory.

As the customs Collector for Beaufort (1889-1913), Smalls remained in the public eye well into the declining years of his life. In 1915, the old hero passed away, thus ending a life that began in slavery, fought for freedom and reaped its fruits, witnessed frustration as the sun of black political power was setting, and witnessed the beginnings of a new form of slavery for his people.

The life of Robert Smalls, spanning these important years, is a valuable commentary on black aspirations, hopes, joys, fears, and frustrations. His dedication to the fight for freedom which led him to the very dangerous but extremely challenging act of abducting the Planter was in the best tradition of American heroism. His firm belief in the capacity and ability of the black man to make it if given an "equal chance" was also in best tradition of Black Nationalism. His toughness and courage in the face of overwhelming odds were also consistent with the dictates of true heroism. His leadership qualities were unquestioned. Indeed, if heroism is judged by dedication and total devotion to the fight for freedom, equality, dignity and opportunity for all, Smalls was certainly an authentic Black American hero.

Robert Smalls is of national historical importance because his abduction of the Planter is symbolic of the slave's passionate love of freedom; his abduction of the Planter is symbolic of the role of blacks, particularly as harbor pilots, in the American naval and maritime traditions; his public career in state and federal service, as a state legislator, U. S.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE - page 3

Congressman and customs collector, stretching from the Civil War to Woodrow Wilson's election, typifies, in several ways, the aspirations and hopes of many blacks during the Civil War and Reconstruction; and because he exemplifies the role of military leaders who become political leaders.