

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

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

For NPS use only

received FEB 7 1985

date entered MAR 7 1985

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

1. Name

historic Foster Home (Sylvan Plantation)

and/or common Cedar Hill

2. Location

street & number From Tuscaloosa: Hwy. 11 South to Fosters exit; continue one mile on Hwy. 11 to driveway entrance; gate on right NA not for publication

city, town Tuscaloosa County NA vicinity of Fosters Congressional District 7

state Alabama code 01 county Tuscaloosa code 125

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Henry B. and Millicent S. Moore

street & number Azalea Trace, Box 1-A (10100 Hillview Road)

city, town Pensacola NA vicinity of state Florida

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Tuscaloosa County Courthouse

street & number 714 Greensboro Avenue

city, town Tuscaloosa state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970-present federal state county local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This is a two-story weatherboarded "I" house constructed of heart pine on a brick pier foundation, with a one-story, two-room ell at the left (south) rear. The front of the house faces east.

The plan of the main block is of the single-pile type; one large room on either side of a central hall, above and below, covered by a gable roof and abutted by brick end chimneys. Nine-over-nine sashing occurs throughout the house. Double doors at the rear of the main hall opened originally onto a porch running the length of the two-room ell.

Brickwork for both the low foundation piers and the chimneys is laid in common bond. The chimneys themselves are corbeled at the base, with stepped haunches and a chimney stack which breaks away from the main wall plane of the house above the second-floor fireplace opening. Each chimney is topped by a five-course corbeled cap.

Tapered rakeboards defining each gable end are molded, and also mitered at the base against the box cornices which run the length of each eaves line. The soffit of the cornice embellishing the main facade is further enriched by a cyma recta-cyma reverse molding which, in the eighteenth century Carolina and Virginia fashion, stops about a foot short of each corner of the house. (The same feature may also be seen at the Marmaduke Williams house, one of the earliest extant residences in nearby Tuscaloosa.) The blinds, with their stationary louvers, are believed to be original or at least very early.

The central pedimented portico is composed of two rows of slender, turned Tuscan colonnettes with astragal moldings, superimposed four upon four. Like the upstairs windows, the upper colonnettes are slightly reduced in size according to standard Georgian rubric. Linking each series of colonnettes, above and below, is a light wooden balustrade which terminates against Tuscan half-columns that function as pilasters. That portion of the wall surface sheltered by the porch is sheathed with flush siding. Double-leaf doors opening onto upper and lower porches are each surmounted by a rectangular-light transom. Flanking sidelights may be of a somewhat later origin.

Inside, a straight-run stair ascends from the left side of the hall to the upper floor. Ceilings are eleven feet high downstairs and ten feet in height on the second floor.

Only the parlor to the right of the lower hall is plastered. Here, the plaster ceiling has a simple decorative centerpiece or rosette. Wall and ceiling finishes elsewhere in the house consist of smoothly planned, random-width horizontal boards, relieved by a molded chairrail. Mantelpieces are of a simple Federal design, that in the parlor, with its delicately fluted pilasters and a molded mantel shelf, being the most ornate. One novel interior feature is the peg rail in the front hall, intended originally for hanging coats and hats.

A two-room, gabled ell at the rear of the main block has a central chimney with back-to-back fireplaces serving each chamber. The rear ell room today functions as a kitchen, the second chamber as a study/sitting room. (The now-destroyed original kitchen was a separate structure.) The porch abutting the ell rooms, and linking them to the front hallway by means of double doors at the rear of the passage, was enclosed during the 1950's to serve as a dining room.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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The house was refurbished and very sensitively restored in the early 1960s, after being purchased by the present owners, Dr. and Mrs. Henry B. Moore. Overall changes have been minimal. Where chairrails were replaced or introduced, these were fashioned to conform in profile to the originals. Other alterations included installation of bathrooms and closets, and the introduction of modern cabinets and appointments in the ell kitchen. Nineteenth-century materials from the demolished George Michael and Gaius Whitfield houses in Demopolis were used for some of this renovation work. From the circa 1840 Whitfield house (situated two blocks north of Gaineswood) came, according to Dr. Moore, at least one and perhaps two colonnettes which were used to replace similar deteriorated elements on the lower front porch.

Part of this early 1960's renovation also included the addition, at the northwest corner of the ell, of a small, semidetached, one-room frame structure which currently houses the library. This early 19th-century building was originally a servant house on the adjoining Hardy Foster plantation. Restored by Dr. and Mrs. Moore in the 1950s, the story-and-a-half Hardy Foster house was destroyed by fire in 1960, prompting them to purchase and restore the Robert Foster house. The servant house, the sole surviving component of the Hardy Foster domestic complex, was then moved to its present site. Changes at that time included enlargement of the original windows and installation of nine-over-nine sashing to match the sashing of the main house. (Original windows in the servant house were approximately three feet square, unglazed, and closed by a batten shutter.)

Attached to the servant house in its original location at the Hardy Foster house site was an open, metal double carport. This, too, was moved in the early 1960s and positioned directly behind the original ell, parallel to and abutting the rear of the servant house-turned-library. The inner portion of the carport was then filled in to form a utility room and bath, while the remaining area has become a brick-floored porch.

Besides the house and its 1960's additions, there are two detached dependencies, neither of which pertained to the original complex. One is a circa 1940 tenant dwelling, moved to the backyard of the house from a site on the east side of the new U.S. Highway 11, which was improved in the 1950s and entailed the taking of some of the Foster acreage. (Two original dependencies, at some distance to the front and east side of the house, were taken by the highway.) The second extant dependency is a modern toolshed and storehouse.

About fifty yards west of the house lies the original family cemetery, enclosed by a cast iron fence and now overgrown. The cemetery contains the graves of Robert Savidge Foster and his wife, Ann Tompkins Foster, as well as those of several of their children and other family members. One of those buried in the cemetery is Wade Foster, one of the founders, in 1856, of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity at the University of Alabama.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates ca. 1820s **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion C - Architecture

Believed to have been built in the 1820's, the Robert Savidge Foster house represents what was, at that period, probably as advanced a type of domestic architecture as could be found anywhere in the plantation region of west Alabama. The house is likewise a relatively rare example of unalloyed Federal design in Alabama south of the Tennessee Valley. Salient elements such as the lightly scaled two-tiered Tuscan portico, the window openings which proportionately diminish from the first through the second floor, the tapered rakeboards at each gable end, and the pair of massive chimneys emphatically corbeled at the top, all reference late eighteenth and early nineteenth century building practices in the seaboard states of the older South. The superimposed portico itself is of a type known to have been quite popular in the Tuscaloosa area prior to the advent of the Greek Revival. But of several examples which stood as late as the 1920's, only the Foster house remains today. Illustrating an early manifestation of "style" on the Alabama frontier, while at the same time forming a three-dimensional link between the older planter society which was left behind and the new planter society which coalesced in Alabama between 1820 and 1840, the Foster house is architecturally a landmark of first importance to the Warrior-Tombigbee basin of Western Alabama.

Criterion B - Exploration/settlement

The Foster House (Cedar Hill) is significant for its associations with Robert Savidge Foster (1796-ca. 1839), an early pioneer of Tuscaloosa County. Foster moved from Columbia County, Georgia to the "Foster Settlement" in 1818, marking the first of the Foster migrations to Alabama. He had this house built shortly thereafter. Foster was soon followed by his mother, a sister and several of his brothers and their families. The Fosters built three homes at various sites on this settlement which became a large cotton producing plantation called "Sylvan." Today, only the Robert S. Foster House and the Elizabeth Savidge Foster House remain.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Owens, Thomas McAdory. History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography, 1921.
Lambert, Alton, History of Tuscaloosa Co., AL Vol. 1, 1977.

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property 4.13

Quadrangle name Fosters

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	4	3	4	4	3	0	3	6	6	0	2	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

See red line on attached sketch map.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	NA	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shirley Qualls, Historic Resource Coordinator; & Robert Gamble, Architectural Historian

organization Alabama Historical Commission date October 16, 1984

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 205 261-3184

city or town Montgomery state Alabama

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

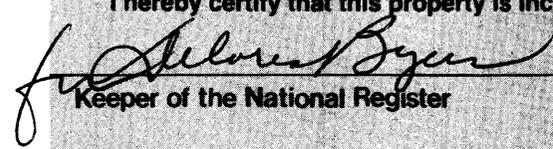
title State Historic Preservation Officer date January 29, 1985

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 3-7-85


Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

Historical Summary

Foster Home

The Robert Savidge Foster House (Cedar Hill) represents what was in the 1820s probably as advanced a type of domestic architecture as could be found in the plantation region of West Alabama. It was the first permanent residence constructed on the Foster Settlement, or, as it was later known, Sylvan Plantation. The Sylvan was a large cotton-producing plantation made up of lands allotted to Elizabeth Savidge and her sons. The settlement constituted one of the largest landholdings in Tuscaloosa County.

Tuscaloosa County became an American possession by the Choctaw Treaty on the Trading House in 1816. Strategically located in a fertile farming section on a greatly traveled trade route extending from Southern Alabama to Huntsville, the vicinity attracted primarily moderately wealthy planters from Tennessee, the Carolinas, and Georgia.

In 1818, Robert Savidge Foster (ca. 1796-ca. 1839), a planter from Columbia County, Georgia, came to the Foster settlement marking the first of the Foster migrations to Alabama. Foster was the son of Col. John Joshua Foster (1761-1821), a Revolutionary War Soldier. Col. Foster served with the Virginia Colonial Militia and the American Continental Militia. While Alabama was still a territory, Col. Foster was granted bounty land in Alabama. The colonel divided the land, granting portions to his wife and sons. Three houses were built at various sites on this land including the Elizabeth Foster House and the Hardy Foster House, which was destroyed by fire in 1960.

The second Foster brother, Hardy Foster, (1792-1848) came to the settlement in 1820. In 1823, shortly after the death of Col. Foster, Elizabeth Savidge Foster (their mother) and one of the Foster sisters (Elizabeth) followed. By 1833 most of the Fosters, including John Lovelace Savidge Foster (1800-ca. 1875) had joined Robert and Hardy Foster at the settlement. The family's land holdings in Alabama constituted several thousand acres, ranking the Fosters among the largest landowners in the county. The land was terraced to save soil and the cotton it yielded was loaded on boats at the Foster Ferry to be shipped to England.

Robert and Ann Foster raised seven children in the Foster House. Among them were William Lovelace (1830-1868), a scholar, Baptist minister and chaplain in the Confederate Army; Wade (1838-67), who assisted Noble Leslie DeVotie (class of '56) in the founding of Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity at the University of Alabama in 1856; and Dr. John Tompkins (1818-ca. 1880s) who served in the State Legislature (1861-1865), was a State Senator (1868-1874) and a Trustee (1865-68) and Regent (1870-75) of the University of Alabama.

Around 1842, following the death of Robert Foster, the family sold the plantation. The house was restored in the 1960s and still serves as a residence.