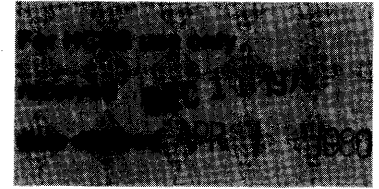


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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



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

1. Name

historic Jefferson Davis Capture Site

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Approximately 1-1/2 miles north of Irwinville not for publication

city, town Irwinville vicinity of congressional district 8th - Billy L. Evans

state Georgia code 13 county Irwin code 155

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name G. W. Paulk, Chairman, Irwin County Commission

street & number Irwin County Courthouse

city, town Ocilla vicinity of state Georgia 31774

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Superior Court

street & number Irwin County Courthouse

city, town Ocilla state Georgia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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

The 12,668-acre Jefferson Davis capture site is located approximately one-and one-half miles north of Irwinville, Irwin County, Georgia. The site is partly in relatively undisturbed woods, where a trace of the Old Abbeville Road cuts across a narrow swamp, while the rest of the acreage contains a small, one-story, brick museum, a one-story, brick caretaker's house, a small, concrete-block pavillion, restroom facilities, and picnic area. All of these structures on the site are intrusions and do not contribute to the significance of the nominated property. In addition, there is a granite memorial with bust, surrounded by an iron fence at the entrance to the trace of road.

The boundaries of the nomination conform to the boundaries of the Jefferson Davis Memorial Park. This boundary has been established as the reasonable extent of the capture and accompanying skirmish.

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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1865

Builder/Architect

Not applicable

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Jefferson Davis (1808-1889) was President of the Confederacy from 1861-1865. This site of his capture at the close of the Civil War is nationally significant in American political history and was the location of an event freighted with powerful psychological import for the nation.

After four years of war, it was clear by April of 1865 that the Union would soon be victorious. On April 9th, Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomatox, Virginia. Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, had been evacuated earlier that same week.

In late April, J.H. Wilson, lieutenant colonel of the Thirty-fifth Infantry and brevet major general in the Union Army, learned that Jefferson Davis had recently been in Charlotte, North Carolina, and was reportedly fleeing to the trans-Mississippi West. Wilson was headquartered in Macon, Georgia, commanding a force of 15,000 troops, when he learned of the possible path of Davis' flight. On May 4th, Lieutenant Colonel Wilson learned that Davis had reached Washington, Georgia, and that he probably intended to reach the trans-Mississippi West by way of the Gulf Coast, a route that would take him across south Georgia. Wilson, acting on this information, ordered General Croxton of the First Division, Cavalry Corps, military division of the Mississippi, to select his best regiment and commanding officer to march at once by way of Jeffersonville to Dublin, Georgia, and beyond, for the purpose of capturing Jefferson Davis and his party. Lieutenant Colonel Henry Harnden and a part of the First Wisconsin Cavalry were selected, and on May 7th, they began pursuing Davis. The following day, Harnden struck the trail of Davis and his party at Dublin, following the fleeing party across the Ocmulgee at Brown's Ferry. Still in pursuit of Davis, Harnden, just outside Abbeville, met with Colonel Pritchard and troops from the Fourth Michigan Cavalry. Pritchard and Harnden exchanged information at Abbeville concerning Davis' movements and Harnden continued on Davis' trail "in the direct line to Irwinsville [sic]." Colonel Pritchard and the Fourth Michigan continued down the Ocmulgee River to House Creek and Wilcox's Mill, where they turned southwest on another road leading to Irwinville. By marching all night, Pritchard's

[continued]

9. Major Bibliographical References

"'Running at the Heads': Being an Authentic Account of the Capture of Jefferson Davis," Atlantic Monthly, Vol. XVI, No. XLV (Sept., 1865), pp. 342-347.

Jefferson Davis ... A Memoir by His Wife. New York, 1890.

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property 12.668
Quadrangle name Irwinville, Ga.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	7	2	7	3	7	8	5	3	5	0	5	8	1	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

1	7	2	7	3	4	5	0	3	5	0	5	4	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

1	7	2	7	3	7	7	0	3	5	0	5	3	8	5
Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Boundary is described by a heavy black line on the attached "Property/Sketch" map and circumscribes an area of 12.668 acres previously known as "Jefferson Davis Memorial State Park."

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

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Steve Henson, National Register Researcher
 organization Historic Preservation Section, Ga. Dept. of Natural Resources date October, 1979
 street & number 270 Washington Street, S.W. telephone (404) 656-2840
 city or town Atlanta state Georgia

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Elizabeth A. Lyon
 Elizabeth A. Lyon
 title Acting State Historic Preservation Officer. date 12/3/79 7

For HCRS use only I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register <u>W. Ray Luce</u> Keeper of the National Register	date <u>4/1/80</u>
Attest: <u>W. A. Dubri</u> Chief of Registration	date <u>4/1/80</u>

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

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forces reached Irwinville late in the night of May 9th. Apparently learning from residents that Davis' party had not passed through the town, but was camped north of the town on the direct road from Abbeville to Irwinville, which Colonel Harnden's forces had taken, Pritchard moved the Fourth Michigan north along this road about a mile until they neared the campsite. Apparently unknown to them, Colonel Harnden's troops were camped approximately one to two miles north of Davis' party. Pritchard sent a small force to circle the Davis campsite. At first light, Pritchard's men surprised the Davis party and captured them. In the confusion, however, with Colonel Harnden's troops also closing in on the camp, a skirmish occurred between the Fourth Michigan and the First Wisconsin, each thinking the other to be Confederate troops. Two Union soldiers were killed during the incident.

The captured Davis party included the Confederate President and his wife; his private secretary, Burton Harrison; Postmaster General Reagan; several aides; five supply wagons and three ambulances.

Northern and Southern newspapers alike had been following avidly the flight of Davis. Everyone was well aware of the significance of the capture of the President of the Confederacy. According to the New York Times on May 15, 1865, Davis "stands before the world as the foremost figure in this great rebellion. He has wielded all its power and put in execution all its desires...." The next day, the Times, speaking for Unionists everywhere, editorialized that, "the arrest of the arch-traitor [Davis] is the event which, of all others, has been most earnestly longed for by our people since the surrender of Lee. Every loyal mind has tried to calculate its chances, and the progress toward it has been the most frequent inquiry of every loyal tongue." Although no convincing evidence was later presented, during those few weeks since April 14th, Jefferson Davis had been widely accused of conspiracy in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. After his capture, Davis was taken to Fortress Monroe and, on May 26th, indicted by the Grand Jury in the District of Columbia for treason. The following day, the surrender of the Trans-Mississippi Department of the Confederacy ended all possibility of the continuation of war.

Although the importance of the Civil War in American history is continually being reassessed by historians asking new questions, its perceived significance to the Civil War generation was of preponderant momentousness.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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This site where Jefferson Davis was captured, therefore, is associated with an event of national political and psychological significance in American history.

The present 12.668-acre tract contains woods and swamps, as well as a museum, caretaker's house, and small pavillion. A commemorative marker is located at the entrance to the trace of road leading into the swamp area.

The capture-site property has been in public ownership since 1920. J.B. Clements, son of R.W. Clements, a Confederate soldier who saw the capture site shortly after the event and later bought the land, deeded four acres to the State of Georgia in 1920, for the purposes of creating a state park. Three additional parcels were added to the park between 1920 and 1952, bringing the total acreage to 12.668. In 1975, the State of Georgia determined to discontinue this property as a state park. In 1976, the 12.668 acres were deeded to Irwin County, which now maintains the park.

A major research effort was undertaken to establish that this tract was the site of the capture of Jefferson Davis. What follows is an outline of some of the research problems encountered and a summary of research methodology and significant findings.

This property is described in J.B. Clements' History of Irwin County (1932) as the site of Davis' capture. Clements was the son of R.W. Clements, who bought this property after the Civil War, reportedly because he saw the campsite of the capture "only a few days after it happened" (History of Irwin County, p. 145). The problem, of course, was to verify this statement.

(1) Newspapers from May, 1865, from Macon, Augusta, Richmond, Va., and Washington, D.C. were read for reports of the capture. The capture was, of course, headline news, and all newspapers devoted extensive coverage to it. In addition, the reports of the involved Union commanders were consulted in the War of the Rebellion: Official Records Series.

(2) All reports describe the capture site as between one and two miles north of Irwinville.

(3) These reports also describe the skirmish between the two groups of Union troops involved in the capture, those commanded by Harnden and those

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commanded by Pritchard. These reports indicate that Harnden's troops had followed Davis' party from Abbeville on the same road, and that Pritchard's troops, after leaving Abbeville, Ga., continued south along the Ocmulgee to House Creek and Wilcox's Mill, where they took a road southwest to Irwinville. Reaching Irwinville in the middle of the night and learning that Davis' party had not passed through the town, Pritchard turned his troops north on the "direct road" from Abbeville to Irwinville, the road taken at Abbeville by Harnden's troops. Pritchard traveled approximately one mile north on this road, where he stopped near the Davis campsite and waited for "first light." Thus, in effect, Harnden and Pritchard had the Davis party in a "pincer" position, although apparently neither group of Union troops knew the whereabouts of the other. Thus, the cause of the skirmish between the two forces during the capture. Each thought the other's firing was from Confederate troops protecting Davis.

(4) All available maps from this period were consulted to locate the roads leading into Irwinville from the north. Unfortunately, these maps show only the road leading southwest from Wilcox's Mill to Irwinville, i.e., the one followed by Pritchard. The "direct road" taken by Harnden from Abbeville to Irwinville is not located on maps from this period. But reports do indicate that this latter road was less improved than the other road from Wilcox's Mill to Irwinville. This may explain why the "direct road" is not located on these maps and why the relatively small Davis party chose it for the route of their flight.

(5) A map obtained from the National Archives, Record Group 77, Office of the Chief of Engineers, Headquarters Map File, made shortly after the capture, shows the path of Davis' flight, as well as Harnden's and Pritchard's pursuit. On this map, the road is not shown, but it shows Harnden's pursuit as being in a direct line from Abbeville to Irwinville, where the unimproved road was.

(6) Topographic details in the reports of Davis' capture indicate that the capture took place just south of a small swamp/stream on this direct road north of Irwinville. A drawing in Harper's Weekly, June 17, 1865, accompanying reports of the capture, shows the site also as just south of this swamp.

(7) Detailed accounts of the capture were prepared and presented to Congress in 1867. These were commissioned by the Secretary of War to resolve a

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dispute concerning which Union forces should divide the reward money offered for Davis' capture. These accounts were read, and it was found that they also describe the capture and topography as indicated above.

(8) The site nominated conforms to these topographic descriptions and is one and-one-half miles north of Irwinville.

(9) In addition, of course, oral tradition from this area has always recorded this as the actual capture site, and there are various reports of minie balls being found on the site, apparently from the Union skirmish. Largely on the basis of this accepted tradition, the park was established and maintained as a historic site.

This site is significant in the history of the veneration of Civil War sites. Since the actual event of 1865, local people have preserved it and shown it to visitors as a hallowed site. The landowner virtually dedicated his remaining years to its preservation. When he failed to have it "properly" recognized by state authorities, he passed the mantle of family leadership to his son, who did succeed in getting the state to accept ownership. Although only recently has scholarship definitely proven this to be the capture site, several generations have visited the site, first in its totally unmarked, wilderness state, and later in its commemorated condition. Its veneration is similar to many other Georgia battle sites, dating from the Revolutionary War era, where the local landowners and community leaders have seen to their preservation long before any historic-preservation programs were undertaken.