

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Buckner Hill House

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

NE side S.R. 1354, 0.5 mi. SE of junction with S.R. 1356

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Faison

VICINITY OF

3rd

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Duplin

061

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 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 |
| | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: |

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Ruth Taylor Parks

STREET & NUMBER

Route 2

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Faison

VICINITY OF

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Duplin County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Kenansville

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Buckner Hill House, an unusually large, well-preserved Italianate house, has a cruciform floor plan, abundant decorative detail, and a site and architectural composition which divides interest among the four elevations. Two contemporary outbuildings stand behind the house.

The two-story, square frame building, five bays wide and five deep, originally had a center bay porch on each elevation. The west and south porches are essentially unaltered, the north porch has been enclosed, and the east porch has been replaced. A contemporary one-story kitchen wing projects from the northwest corner, with a shed porch extending along the east side of the wing. The building rests on high brick piers and is capped by a low deck-on-hip roof. Aluminum siding covers the wall surfaces. Only the northwest corner pilaster remains, but all four Doric corner capitals are still in place, giving visual support to the ornate cornice containing a flat-paneled frieze, unmolded dentil cornice and overhanging boxed eaves accented by curvilinear brackets with pendants. The east and west elevations have exterior end brick chimneys with single shoulders flanking each porch. Each chimney has a sloping water table with a mousetooth brickwork course--an unusual feature. The north chimneys are laid in one-to-five common bond, the south chimneys in irregular common bond. Large sash windows with simple molded surrounds and plain corner blocks pierce the main block. With the exception of the first-story east elevation, which has six-over-nine floor-length sash, the windows contain six-over-six sash.

A definite hierarchy is evident in the ornament of the entrances and porches. The east elevation is distinguished as the main elevation by the most ornate entrance, the floor-length windows, and originally by the largest porch. The west entrance is a simpler version of the east entrance, and the entrances and porches of the north and south chimney elevations have correspondingly simpler similar ornament. The main east entrance is a double door, each leaf with four flat panels of elongated octagonal shape. Five-pane sideights, each pane echoing the shape of the door panels, set between Doric pilasters articulated with applied strips of wood, flank the door, and a transom of like configuration surmounts the door. The original corner decorative elements have been removed. The second-story entrance is a double door, each leaf with two flat panels, with an eight-pane transom of elongated octagonal form and a surround identical to the window surrounds. Wide Doric pilasters, the only remnants of the original porch, flank the entrance. The original porch, either one-story with a deck or two-story, was replaced by a full-length shallow hip porch supported by turned posts. The west entrance differs only through the presence of a single flat panel beneath the sidelights and simple lintel ornament flanking the transom. The second-story entrance is a door with four flat panels surmounted by a plain, five pane transom, with a surround identical to the window surrounds. The west porch consists of fluted Doric posts and plain Doric pilasters which support a box cornice and hip roof. The molded handrails are present but the balusters have been removed.

The south and north entrances are almost identical: each is a double door with four flat panels per leaf, surmounted by a transom and set within a molded, crosssetted surround with a pointed lintel. The south transom is blind, and the door panels are

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identical to the east and west first-story doors. The north transom has six panes, and the door panels are plain. The south porch is similar to the west porch, except that the eave soffits are flat-paneled, the Doric posts have round-arched flat panels, and the original sawnwork railing remains. The north porch, the only pedimented porch, has been enclosed. The tympanum is sheathed with aluminum siding.

The gabled kitchen wing has a plain box cornice and beaded raking cornices. The exterior end kitchen chimney has been demolished. Nine-over-nine sash windows with mitered surrounds pierce the wing. Each of the east side windows is covered by a single louvered shutter, the only original shutters extant. The kitchen door, in the east elevation, has four flat panels. The shed porch is supported by replacement chamfered posts. Between the kitchen and the main block is a small shed storage addition.

The interior plan is Palladian in spirit, and consists at each level of a cruciform hall, twelve feet wide, with a single room located in each corner between the arms of the hall. All of the wall and ceiling surfaces are plastered, and each room has a molded baseboard. Each interior door at the first level has four flat panels and a blind transom. The spacious hall dominates the interior. The hall has wide molded surrounds, with plain corner blocks accenting the exterior door surrounds, and a molded plaster cornice, a central foliate medallion, and foliate corner cartouches. The south arm of the hall contains an open-string stair rising against the east wall in two flights with a landing. The railing consists of a heavy turned newel, shaped handrail and slender turned balusters. The north arm of the hall originally served as both hall and an extension of the porch space, for the flanking walls have sash windows, and this arm can be closed off at the junction from the other three arms by two pairs of double doors, the innermost doors hinged to the outer doors. This door is surmounted by a transom with eight elongated octagonal lights; this is flanked by an inner pair of Ionic pilasters and an outer pair of Doric ones, surmounted by a wide molded, shouldered parapet lintel.

The hierarchy of ornament continues in the first-story rooms. The southeast room, the main parlor, is the most ornate. The northwest room, the dining room, located diagonally across the hall, has similar, simpler trim. The northeast and southwest rooms have identical trim which is still simpler. The most striking feature of the main parlor is the ceiling plasterwork, which consists of a large central acanthus medallion and a cornice of egg-and-dart courses enclosing two wider courses of ornament. The room has wide molded surrounds with rondel corner blocks with spiral motifs retaining some of the apparently original gold paint. The wooden mantel is surprisingly plain, with Doric pilasters supporting a frieze with applied sawnwork ornament and a molded cornice and shelf. The dining room is similarly finished, but has plain corner blocks and a plain plaster ceiling. The northeast and southwest rooms have wide molded surrounds and mantels with plain friezes.

The second story has molded surrounds, slightly simpler than those of the first story, beaded baseboards, and doors identical to those of the first story. Most of the

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doors retain artificial graining. The mantels are identical to the first-floor mantels in the northeast and southwest rooms. In the southeast corner of the hall, the open-string attic stair rises in three flights with two landings against the east and south walls. The railing is identical to that of the main stair. This stair ascends to the roof deck, which was enclosed by a balustrade which has been removed.

The kitchen retains its original simple molded trim and Doric pilaster mantel. Horizontal wood sheathing covers the walls. The smokehouse, northwest of the house, and the storehouse, northeast of the house, are square frame buildings, each with a single batten door, exposed rafters, and a pyramidal roof with a wooden finial.

3 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 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Buckner Hill House, built shortly before the Civil War, is one of the best-preserved Italianate plantation houses in Duplin County. The elaborate vernacular house has lavish wooden and plaster ornament, and an unusual cruciform floor plan which is reflected on the exterior by the center bay porches projecting from the four elevations.

Buckner L. Hill was born in 1800 in Duplin County. He styled himself "Dr. Hill," yet the absence of academic records to show that he attended a medical college tend to support the tradition that he was a self-taught physician.

About 1840 Dr. Hill married Anna Maria Ward, a daughter of General Joseph Rhodes of Wayne County, North Carolina, and widow of General Edward Ward (War of 1812) of Onslow County, North Carolina. Anna Maria was a woman of wealth and refinement, who had returned to her native Wayne County in 1836, and had built a handsome house on her plantation, which she named Vernon.

From their marriage until just before her death in 1859, the Hills lived at Vernon, while Dr. Hill continued to expand his land holdings in both Wayne and Duplin counties. Anna Maria and Dr. Hill had no children. Apparently theirs was an unsettled relationship. Before Mrs. Hill died Dr. Hill removed to his Bear Swamp plantation on land he had inherited from his father, Thomas Hill, and expanded over the years. There he built a large Italianate style house, which tradition says was handsomely furnished with furniture from Baltimore. Dr. Hill's estate inventory tends to confirm this.

The 1860 Duplin County census shows that Dr. Hill had 133 slaves, 699 acres of improved land, 2,124 acres of unimproved land, and livestock valued at \$5,311. The plantations produced among other things, 77 bushels of rye, 6,000 bushels of Indian corn, 420 pounds of rice, 89 ginned bales of cotton (400 pounds each bale), 1,200 bushels of peas and beans, 3,300 bushels of sweet potatoes, 60 gallons of grape wine, 300 pounds of butter and 120 pounds of beeswax.

The Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, in which Dr. Hill was a stockholder, ran by his plantation, and tradition credits Hill with ordering costly items from northern merchants, and having them shipped to the plantation by rail.

Dr. Hill's will of February 9, 1860, was probated in January, 1861, included generous bequests to family and friends. Specifically, he left "unto Isaac Wright and Halstead Bowden and to the survivors of them to the heirs executors administrators and assigns

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my piece of land in Duplin County on the south side of Bear Swamp, where my new dwelling house is with the tenements hereditaments & appurtenances, And also my piece of land Known as the Mill tract on the north side of Bear Swamp . . . To Have and To Hold The said negroes and lands upon the confidence and in Trust for the use benefit and behalf of my son Thomas B. Hill, sometimes called Thomas B. Stephens, and his wife Betsy . . ."

Dr. Hill also left a cash bequest to his friend, Charles F. Deems, who was also to supervise the erection of a memorial stone at his grave.

Charles Force Deems was a native of Baltimore, and was from 1842 until 1865 a resident of North Carolina, where he was on the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, president of Greensboro College, and a practicing minister of the gospel in Wilson and Wayne counties. He returned to New York City in 1865, edited "The Watchman" and founded the Church of the Strangers. He became minister to Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt who, under Deems's influence, built an elaborate building for the Church of the Strangers (1870), and also established Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.

Thomas B. Hill and his wife had eleven children, all born at the Bear Swamp plantation. At Thomas Hill's death on January 23, 1881, the estate, as provided for in Dr. Hill's will, was divided among the wife and children of Thomas B. Hill. The house eventually came into possession of Malissa Hill who married Cenas Taylor. Mrs. Taylor lived in the house until her death on November 18, 1959, at the age of ninety-six, at which time the house went to her daughter, Ruth Taylor Parks who now makes her home there.

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Moore, Claude H. "The Hill Family of Duplin County." The Sampsonian. Clinton, North Carolina, December 4, 1969.
North Carolina Board of Health, Vital Records, Raleigh, North Carolina.
Wayne County Records, Wayne County Courthouse, Goldsboro, North Carolina (Subgroups: Wills, Deeds, Tax Lists, Estate Papers).
Wayne County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups: Wills, Deeds, Tax Lists, Estate Papers).

