

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: North Carolina	
COUNTY: Hertford	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Murfreesboro Historic District

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Murfreesboro

STATE North Carolina	CODE 37	COUNTY: Hertford	CODE 091
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" 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:
Public and Private

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Murfreesboro

STATE: North Carolina	CODE: 37
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Hertford County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Winton

STATE: North Carolina	CODE: 37
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1940 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:
East Capitol and Independence Avenue, S.E.

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE: D.C.	CODE: 11
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DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins
	(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 present city of Murfreesboro encompasses all of the original town plan plus parts of several adjacent antebellum plantations. It is situated on a small hill overlooking the Meherrin River to the north and Worrell's Mill Swamp to the east in the flat, peanut-growing section of northeastern North Carolina. The historic district includes all of nineteenth-century Murfreesboro which is located in the center of the present town. It is enclosed by Worrell's Mill Pond and Creek on the east and south, the Meherrin River on the north, and the present city limits on the west.

Although Murfreesboro is a college town with a population of 2,643 in 1960, an unusually large number of early stores and residences remain. These reflect Murfreesboro's past as a river port and business center for the area plantations. More than forty structures built prior to the Civil War have survived and are located in clusters on Main, Broad, and surrounding streets. Ten of the most significant and representative structures are briefly described below.

1. The William Rea Store (ca. 1790) is a two-story structure of brick laid in Flemish bond with a low hip roof. The display area was contained on the first floor and storage on the second. A one-story wing is thought to have served as an office.

2. The John Wheeler House (ca. 1800) is a two-story structure of brick laid in Flemish bond with a hip roof. The front features a two-story pedimented portico. The house is connected to a brick kitchen by a shed porch, which covers the rear of the house. The central hall has board-and-batten walls while other rooms retain traces of the original painted wallpaper.

3. The Myrick House (ca. 1810) is a two-story brick structure built on a raised basement. The house contains an interesting barrel stairway which connects the second floor with the attic.

4. Melrose (ca. 1810) is a two-story brick structure with a two-story wing on either side of the main block. The front features a heroic portico supported by Ionic columns. The interiors are both Federal and Greek Revival, showing the different dates of construction and alteration.

5. The Hertford Academy (ca. 1810) is a two-story structure of brick laid in Flemish bond with a low hip roof. It has a fine cornice with brackets which have a scroll modillion profile.

6. The Roberts-Vaughan House (ca. 1810) is a two-story frame structure with a large tetrastyle pedimented portico. The house features paneled wainscots with primitive wood graining and marbled paper still visible in most rooms. The older portion of the house contains unusual Federal mantels.

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7. The Dr. Isaac Pipkin House (ca. 1825) is a two-story frame structure featuring a two-story pedimented portico. It is a fine example of early Greek Revival architecture.

8. Rose Bower (ca. 1830) is a two-story frame structure with a low hip roof. It has large molded corner posts typical of the Greek Revival period. It apparently once had a portico similar to the Pipkin Home, but now has a single-story porch.

9. The Walter Reed House (ca. 1845) is a two-story frame structure with a gable roof and a single-story wing on either side. A single-story porch with a hip roof runs across the front of the main block.

10. The Columns (1852) is a massive late Greek Revival structure. It has the monumental scale and simple block-like massing common to examples of the "peripteral mode" found in the Deep South.

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Murfreesboro area was first settled about 1700 by farmers from nearby Virginia. In 1747 William Murfree, a farmer from Nansemond County, Virginia, bought a tract of land on the banks of the Meherrin River, encompassing most of the present town. In 1755 Murfree's landing on the river was designated a "King's Landing" by the colonial assembly and by the beginning of the Revolution it had become a haven for merchants in North Carolina's Albemarle section. Since the port of Edenton was threatened by British forces from Norfolk, the more cautious merchants sent their ships up the Meherrin and Chowan rivers. The landing quickly grew into a small community and in 1781 Murfree offered a 97-acre tract on which to incorporate a town. In January, 1787, the North Carolina General Assembly gave its consent and the new town of Murfreesboro was created. A board of commissioners with William Murfree as its head laid off rectangular lots from the present Moore Street on the east to Sycamore Street on the west. By 1792 Murfreesboro included a score of dwellings and several business places along Broad Street. The town was the area's principal port with ten "West Indiamen" visiting it in that year. But the growing prominence of other sections of the state and the war in Europe quickly curtailed Murfreesboro's short-lived success as a transatlantic port. In 1799 no transatlantic vessels docked at the town and by then most of the merchants had moved to Charleston, Petersburg, or New York. A description of the community by a northern visitor in 1809 reflected the decline: "There was not a church, a clergyman or a lawyer in the place. . . ."

The decline continued until after the War of 1812, when growing agricultural prosperity brought new prominence to the town. The area plantations attracted a wealthy and cultured population along with much new business. This period in Murfreesboro's past produced a surprising number of prominent figures including:

- (1) Richard J. Gatling, born near Murfreesboro, the inventor of the Gatling gun;
- (2) William Nathan Harrell Smith, chief justice of the State Supreme Court and a Confederate Congressman;
- (3) John Hill Wheeler, first U.S. Minister to Nicaragua, and Superintendent of the U.S. Branch Mint at Charlotte, North Carolina;

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(4) Junius B. Wheeler, professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and the author of several military textbooks;

(5) Solon Borland, U.S. Senator from Arkansas and a Confederate General;

(6) Jesse J. Yeates, U.S. Senator from North Carolina.

Murfreesboro's importance as a business and agricultural center during the first half of the nineteenth century was reflected in the number of important dignitaries visiting the town. Between 1820 and 1825, the Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, Prince Achille Murat (son of the King of Naples), Roman Catholic Bishop John England, and the Marquis de Lafayette made stops in Murfreesboro.

The town suffered another decline after the Civil War as did many communities in the South. Since 1910 with the aid of Chowan College and new industry, Murfreesboro is again establishing itself as a business center in northeastern North Carolina.

Despite this recent growth Murfreesboro has retained much of its pre-Civil War atmosphere. It contains one of the largest groupings of early nineteenth century structures for a town of its size in North Carolina with over forty buildings surviving. Ten of the most significant are listed below.

(1) The William Rea Store (ca. 1790) is one of the oldest commercial buildings in North Carolina. It was built by William Rea, a wealthy Boston merchant, who outfitted trading ships during the first half of the nineteenth century. Later the building became a service center for peanut harvesting equipment.

(2) The John Wheeler House (ca. 1800) is the birthplace of John Hill Wheeler who was the superintendent of the U.S. Mint of Charlotte and the first U.S. Minister to Nicaragua. Wheeler wrote an important history of North Carolina. His brother, Dr. Samuel Wheeler, was a well known authority on the history of the Baptist Church and the founder of the Murfreesboro Citizen newspaper. The house was later owned for a short time by U.S. Senator Jesse J. Yeates.

(3) The Myrick House (ca. 1810) was built by James Morgan, a prominent local businessman, who was a member of the reception committee for General Lafayette during his visit.

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(4) Melrose (ca. 1810) was first the home of the prominent Murfree family who founded both Murfreesboro, North Carolina, and Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Later it was the home of General Joseph F. Dickinson who commanded the American forces at Norfolk in the War of 1812.

(5) The Hertford Academy (ca. 1810) was first established in 1809 as a boys school. In 1848 it housed the newly formed Chowan Baptist Female Academy which later became Chowan College.

(6) The Roberts-Vaughan House (ca. 1810) was built by Benjamin Roberts, a wealthy local businessman and member of the first board of trustees of Hertford Academy.

(7) The Dr. Isaac Pipkin House (ca. 1825) was built by Dr. Pipkin, who subsequently moved to Louisiana. It was later occupied by the widow of General Joseph Dickinson.

(8) Rose Bower (ca. 1830) was built by Perry Carter, a wealthy landholder and businessman. His son-in-law, Charles Henry Foster, was forced to leave Murfreesboro just prior to the Civil War because of his Unionist views. In 1863 he led the invading Union armies into the town.

(9) The Walter Reed House (ca. 1845) was built by William Wise and served as a Methodist parsonage. Dr. Walter Reed lived in the house during his father's ministry in Murfreesboro and met his wife, Emily Lawrence, during that time.

(10) The Columns (ca. 1852) was built as the main school building for the Chowan Baptist Female Academy. It has been used for classrooms, a chapel, a dormitory, and as administrative offices since its completion. It has become an educational landmark in eastern North Carolina.

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McKnight, Edgar V., and Oscar Creech. A History of Chowan College.
Murfreeboro, North Carolina: Chowan College, 1964.

Parramore, Thomas C., The Ancient Maritime Village of Murfreeboro, 1787-1825. Murfreeboro, North Carolina: Johnson Publishing Company, 1969.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hertford County Records, Hertford County Courthouse, Winton, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Estate Papers.)

Hertford County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Estate Papers, Census Reports.)

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				
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	36°	26'	43"	77°	06'	40"			
NE	36°	26'	43"	77°	05'	24"			
SE	36°	26'	21"	77°	05'	24"			
SW	36°	26'	21"	77°	05'	40"			

Boundaries corrected before entering - see new map

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 630 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
John B. Wells III, Survey Specialist

ORGANIZATION: Department of Archives and History DATE: Nov. 30, 1970

STREET AND NUMBER:
109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37

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

H. G. Jones

Name _____

Dr. H. G. Jones

Title Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date November 30, 1970

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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