

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

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

1. NAME

COMMON:
Shell Castle

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
North side of N.C. 481, 1.7 miles west of Enfield on road about 1 mile north.

CITY OR TOWN:
Enfield (Second Congressional District, The Hon. L. H. Fountain)

STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37 COUNTY: Halifax CODE: 083

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 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) _____ _____ _____
Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Mr. Charles Whitaker	Mr. Meade Whitaker
STREET AND NUMBER: Shell Castle	19th Floor, First National-Southern National Bank Building
CITY OR TOWN: Enfield, North Carolina	Birmingham, Alabama
STATE: North Carolina	Alabama
CODE: 37	

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Halifax

STATE:
North Carolina

CODE:
37

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: North Carolina

COUNTY: Halifax

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

7. 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	<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

Built on a scale unusual for its period in North Carolina, Shell Castle is a frame dwelling two-and-one-half stories high beneath a gable roof. The main (east) facade of the L-shaped house is five bays wide, with central doorways at both levels. The north gable end is marked by two bays, the south by three. The two-story rear ell, covering the three south bays of the rear of the front block, extends four bays to the west; its gable roof runs perpendicular to that of the main block. The house features three interior chimneys: one rises at the north gable end of the front block; another occurs between the two rear rooms of the ell; a third, having a T-stack, is on the south side of the ell, just behind the juncture with the front section. It has been suggested that the T-stack chimney and perhaps the other ell chimney as well represent survivals from an earlier eighteenth century house on the site.

The exterior finish of the house is quite simple. It is covered by beaded siding. The windows contain nine-over-nine sash at both levels, but the diminution of fenestration is quite noticeable. The windows are set in molded frames above well-executed molded sills. The only ornamentation is the emphatic cornice of undercut modillions (apparently original). This is repeated on the full-height central entrance portico, a twentieth century addition which exaggerates the verticality of the house. Four pedimented dormers, in pairs flanking the pediment of the portico, mark the front roof. They are coeval with the portico but are said to have been constructed from the materials of early dormers, removed at one time, found in the attic. Each contains six-over-six sash beneath a flush tympanum; their cheeks are of horizontal boards. Sheltered by the portico are double doors, each leaf with six raised panels. Above are transoms at both levels; the balcony at the second story is contemporary with the portico. Other entrances occur on both sides and the rear of the ell.

The large scale of Shell Castle is reflected in the spacious interior of the house, particularly the central hall and the great south drawing room, the latter filling the two-bay width and three-bay depth of that side of the front block. The north side of this section is partitioned into two small rooms served by corner fireplaces. The ell has four main rooms: on the north, a stair hall that is an extension of the front central hall, behind it a small secondary hall and a third room to the rear; on the south, a large room and a smaller rear room.

The interior finish of the house is characterized by an almost stark simplicity. Narrow molded chair rails appear above flush-sheathed wainscots. The wainscot in the front hall is six feet tall; the others are of normal height. The hall, drawing room, and large ell room feature robust molded cornices. The mantels that occur in most rooms are quite unusual, consisting of flush boards and half-round moldings arranged in a configuration somewhat resembling that of a simple Georgian mantel, but totally devoid of fluting, panels, or any other ornamentation. Nearly all the doors throughout the house have six raised panels of the Georgian type, most of them being hung with HL hinges retaining their leather washers. Some of the ell rooms have been remodeled and contain mantels not original to the house, but the front block is essentially as built.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
North Carolina	
COUNTY	
Halifax	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7.

The stair hall, separated from the front hall by large double doors, is finished with flush sheathing. A compact open-string stair rises with initial winders along the west wall, with a transverse flight across the rear wall. A heavy molded rail is carried by balusters square in section and terminates in a curious downward curve on a newel that is simply a heavier baluster. The treads are ornamented by simple wave brackets, and reverse versions of the brackets occur above the treads on the opposite wall. The spandrel and soffit are flush sheathed. A small door pierces the spandrel and another door under the transverse flight leads to the dining room.

The plan and finish of the second story resemble the first. The main stair hall is at a somewhat lower level than the rest of this story, and the floor over the secondary stair hall to the rear is slightly elevated. The front hall has a narrow cove cornice. The attic follows the same plan and is plainly finished.

The outbuildings are apparently early, particularly the circa 1790 frame tack room (thought to use earlier materials) and the two-story kitchen. The office, some distance off, is seemingly of later Federal design and has six-panel doors, flush wainscots, and a handsome three-part mantel. The grounds are of considerable interest, as the following description indicates.

The house was originally flanked by an arrangement of outbuildings in the form of a square having three sides with the house in the center. Of these, the icehouse, on the northeast has disappeared; the office, on the southeast has been moved to another location. Otherwise, the arrangement is still intact, now having an L-shape, consisting of Tack House, family burying ground, rose garden, box garden. . . . The kitchen or vegetable garden extended east and west beyond the kitchen, terminating in a brick-floored asparagus bed. Parallel to this was the cutting garden, still used as such, at the end of which was [a] . . . greenhouse having brick walls and a glass roof. South, and below the house, there was an enclosed deer park, having an allee cut through it. At the upper end of this and just beyond the fence around the yard there was a paddock in which the fawns lived until old enough to be released in the park. Below this, there was a small rice field having irrigation ditches still discernible. North of the house and built over a branch there was a distillery, in which apple and peach brandy were regularly made from fruit grown in the orchard. Northeast of the house there was a fish pond in which carp were grown--a routine item on the breakfast menu before the Civil War.

8. 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 type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi- | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | osophy | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human- | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | itarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Shell Castle is an impressive Georgian style house distinguished by its monumental proportions and stark simplicity of detail. The dramatic height and unexpected grandeur of the great white house amid the dense woods that now cover most of the vast Whitaker plantation, together with the pervading presence of the past, make Shell Castle a place of memorable character unique in North Carolina.

Shell Castle was built by Matthew Cary Whitaker, a veteran of the American Revolution whose family had owned land in the Enfield area as early as 1760. In 1789 he bought from Richard Henry Bradford a tract of land containing "by estimation" 1,123 acres for which Whitaker paid 900 pounds. Shortly thereafter he began building Shell Castle, apparently incorporating the remains (including a T-stack chimney) of an earlier house. According to family tradition, farm produce from the plantation was sent to Norfolk on wagons which returned loaded with oyster shells to make mortar or plaster for the house, hence the name, "Shell Castle." Another account suggests that the name stems from the contrast between the ambitiousness of the exterior and the remarkable plainness of the interior. Construction of the house is said to have taken twelve years; 1802 is thought to be the completion date of the house, but a brick dated 1793 suggests a part may have been completed earlier. Numerous outbuildings once flanked the dwelling; several remain, including an early tack house, dairy, kitchen, and office. The size of the plantation and its considerable labor force give evidence that it was once a very ambitious enterprise. The plantation included apple orchards, a cider press, rice fields, a cotton gin, a fish pond, deer park, a formal garden. The house stands amid the remains of these.

Matthew Cary Whitaker left Shell Castle to his son and namesake in his will of 1814. The will directed that his "Cotton Machine with the tackle and gear" be sold but that his two "Cyder Stills" be reserved for the use of his son, Dr. Matthew C. Whitaker. The Agricultural Schedule of 1850 shows Dr. Whitaker in possession of 300 cultivated and 1,200 uncultivated acres worth \$8,000. In 1860 he held 34 slaves. Shell Castle has been owned continuously by the Whitaker family and remains, little altered, their property to the present. The furnishings, china, paintings, etc., that fill the house are those collected by the Whitakers during nearly two centuries of ownership.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Research by Charles Blume, survey specialist; architectural description by Catherine Cockshutt, survey specialist.
 Halifax County Records, Halifax County Courthouse, Halifax, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).
 Halifax County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).
 Whitaker, Charles. "Shell Castle," unpublished manuscript in survey files, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

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	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	36° 11' 23"	77° 42' 28"		0	" "	
NE	36° 11' 23"	77° 41' 56"				
SE	36° 10' 56"	77° 41' 56"				
SW	36° 10' 56"	77° 42' 28"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 160 acres

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Survey and Planning Unit Staff

ORGANIZATION

State Department of Archives and History

DATE

17 November 1972

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

Name

H. G. Jones

Title State Historian/Administrator

Date 17 November 1972

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

Shell Castle
 Enfield, North Carolina

USGS: Enfield Quadrangle, 7.5 series
 Scale: 1:24,000
 Date: 1961

HX11

	Latitude			Longitude		
	degrees	minutes	seconds	degrees	minutes	seconds
NW	36	11	23	77	42	28
NE	36	11	23	77	41	56
SE	36	10	56	77	41	56
SW	36	10	56	77	42	28



