

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

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

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Cedar Grove

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
SR 2136, .8 miles northeast of junction with SR 2131

CITY OR TOWN:  
Huntersville (The Hon. Charles Raper, Ninth Congressional District)

STATE North Carolina	CODE 37	COUNTY: Mecklenburg	CODE 119
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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"/> 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	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Richard Torrence Banks

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Rt. 3

CITY OR TOWN: Huntersville	STATE: North Carolina	CODE 37
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET AND NUMBER:  
700 East Trade Street

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

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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 type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Cedar Grove, situated on a knoll amid a grove of cedar trees, is a monumental plantation house. The mansion originally commanded an even more impressive view, for the present road was formerly located much farther south. The most prominent features of the two-story rectangular structure, executed in brick laid in Flemish bond, are the high stepped brick parapets with molded caps rising above the gables on each side of the house. The uppermost parapet steps also serve as chimneys. Further emphasis is provided by the corbeled brick cornice which outlines each gable, forming a pediment beneath each parapet.

The main block is five bays wide and three bays deep, with a central entrance in the main (south) facade and in the rear. The double door of the main entrance, each leaf containing five flat panels accented by heavy round moldings, is recessed, with a paneled soffit and reveals. As indicated in an old photograph, the plain transom above the entrance originally contained leaded tracery. The rear entrance is similar to that of the front but lacks a transom. The windows have granite sills and heavy plain architraves and are surmounted by flat brick arches. The first- and second-story windows have nine-over-nine sash, while in each gable is a smaller window with six-over-six sash. Flat-paneled shutters hung on iron strap hinges flank the basement windows, and louvered shutters protect the other windows of the structure. Beneath the overhanging eaves of the gable roof are simple frame cornices which are possibly replacements, since the corbeled brick cornice in the gables may have continued around the structure. A standing-seam tin roof has replaced the original wooden shingles. Gutter boxes located at the right and left corners of the main facade contain the date "1831." The full basement, of which one third is above ground level, is entered through a doorway in the east bay of the rear facade.

The Greek Revival character of Cedar Grove is embodied in the three-bay porches on the front and the rear. The front porch features four simple stuccoed brick columns with Doric capitals supporting a flat roof and wide granite steps. The foundation of the porch is of brick laid in common bond, with a heavy pier supporting each of the columns; between the piers on either side is a structural arch formed by alternating rowlocks and soldiers. Simple scroll brackets above each column alternating with flat panels now articulate the otherwise bare frieze of the porch. These are said to have been later additions. The frieze originally may have been plain, or perhaps contained a triglyph design similar to that of the portico of Mount Mourne, a contemporary mansion in nearby Iredell County. The rear porch is similar to the front porch, but the columns rest on a new brick foundation, and the double wooden steps ascending transversely from each side to the rear entrance are also new. Recesses in the wall surface beneath the steps indicate the location of the beams which supported the original steps.

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Possibly the finest feature of Cedar Grove is the quality of airy spaciousness of the interior, derived from the large scale of the doors and windows and of the rooms themselves. The first story contains two rooms on each side of a large central hall. Each room has heavily molded plaster cornices which break out around the chimney breasts. The doors have flat-paneled soffits and reveals and are framed by fluted architraves with corner blocks adorned with rondels. The treatment of the windows is similar, with the architraves extending to the floor, framing a flat panel beneath each window. The window openings are enormous, and the paneled soffits and reveals are splayed to admit even more light. In the two east rooms are flat-paneled wainscots, while the west rooms have plastered walls with molded chair rails. Each of the mantels in the west rooms consists of Doric colonettes supporting a plain frieze and molded shelf, while the mantels of the east rooms have Ionic colonettes instead of Doric. On each side, the larger front room and the smaller rear room are joined by a high opening containing flat-paneled folding doors. The ponderous dignity of the interior trim is balanced by the light elegance of the spiral staircase, which ascends from the rear of the central hall through three stories. The plain square balusters are surmounted by an oval handrail which twists in a scrolled newel at the base of the stairs. The tulip brackets of the open string stair, continuing around the attic stair well fascia in a slender foliate motif, accentuate its gracefulness. The overall design of the stair as well as the brackets appear, like many in the Piedmont area, to have been taken from Owen Biddle's Young Carpenter's Assistant.

The second-story plan is identical to that of the first story, but a portion of the northwest bedroom has been partitioned off to form a bathroom. The four bedchambers are finished like the simpler (west) first-floor rooms. Each of the Greek Revival mantels in the west chambers has molded pilasters and plain impostes supporting a molded frieze and a plain shelf. The mantel in each of the east chambers is even simpler, consisting of a molded architrave and molded shelf. The stair rises gracefully across the window at the rear of the hall on the second level and terminates at the attic level, which is finished with flush siding and divided into three rooms.

The small brick outbuilding in the rear, which formerly contained both a well-house and a laundry, is laid in common bond, with flat arches above the openings, and is probably contemporary with the house.

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 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

Cedar Grove was built during the years 1831 to 1833 by James G. Torrence (the name is also frequently spelled "Torrance") on a large plantation he inherited from his father, Hugh. Hugh Torrence purchased a 667-acre tract of land in 1779, and in 1796 he owned at least 1300 acres. A surveyor's plat of that year notes the existence of Torrence's "brick house" on his plantation. James Torrence was the only son of Hugh and his wife, Isabella, and he inherited the property after their deaths in 1816. James was engaged in a wide variety of enterprises, for along with running a large and productive plantation that used about forty-five slaves and sent cotton to the Charleston market, he served as justice of the peace, operated a store, and mined gold on a neighbor's property. He also served as treasurer of Hopewell Presbyterian Church and as trustee of Davidson College.

By 1831 James Torrence was able to begin erecting a large brick house on his plantation, which is today the largest and finest brick house of the period in the area. The current owner of Cedar Grove has several receipts from the construction of the house, which include tin and copper from Phelps and Peck of New York; sash cord, wood screws, locks, and other hardware from Folger, Lamb, and Co. of the same city; pipe from Joseph Forman of Philadelphia; and labor including painting, scraping handrail and varnishing, and "glasing 600 and 30 lits of sashes," etc., from J. W. Thompson. These records illustrate the degree to which, despite the difficulty of travel and shipping at the time, the construction and finishing of a fine house was dependent upon manufactured items from the northeast, a source with which James Torrence, a merchant, was perhaps more familiar than most people of the area.

In the will of James G. Torrence, probated in 1848, he left the plantation to his seven youngest children and his third wife, Margaret Allison. She remained on the plantation, which, apparently with the help of overseers, continued to flourish. The 1850 census listed Cedar Grove as having 2,481 acres and sixty-five slaves. An 1862 agreement notes the employment of James Brown by Margaret Torrence to superintend her farm. This document is especially interesting for it outlines in elaborate detail the duties of the overseer and the treatment of livestock and slaves. Among the assignments described in the eighteen different articles of the agreement, he was to "arouse the Negroes in the mornings by the sound of his horn," to "have corned [sic] shelled regular," and to "take down the number

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of cows sheep & hogs & have them marked . . . & if any missing to watch at night they are not cooked by some of the Negroes." Mrs. Torrence apparently took some interest in the running of the plantation, for the second article specifies that Brown is to act "as may suit the wishes and best interest of said Mrs. M. Torrence to do and have done whatever she may direct from time to time."

Some years later, in 1868, James Torrence's son, Richard, who had been assigned the home tract in his father's will, purchased his mother's life estate in the land for \$5,505. By 1888 he and his wife, Eliza, had mortgaged the property and moved to Charlotte, where he became a county tax collector. He never lived at Cedar Grove again, and the mortgage was paid in full by 1891. When he died at the age of ninety-three in 1927, his estate went to his eleven children. A daughter, Delia T. Banks, received the home place in the 1928 land division. During the long period of absentee ownership, the house fell into disrepair; but through the efforts of Delia's son, Richard Torrence Banks, and his wife, Belle, the house was repaired and refurbished in 1949. Richard, who inherited the property, including the house and 152.8 acres, in 1962, is the present owner and resident.

Cedar Grove is especially representative of the Piedmont houses of Federal and Greek Revival eras in its massing and overall proportions. The applied porches were executed on a smaller scale than many of those in eastern North Carolina in the same period. Continuity with earlier buildings in the area is especially visible in the corbeled brick cornice of the gables, a standard feature in eighteenth and early nineteenth century brick houses of the upper Piedmont. The effect of the Greek Revival on an essentially traditional design is found in the Doric porch and the handsome interior woodwork, especially the mantels. Clarity and harmony remain, however, the dominant characteristics of the structure, the largest and probably the finest antebellum brick house in Mecklenburg County.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Boyer, Mary. "Cedar Grove." Unpublished report in (Survey) files of State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1971.

Davidson, Chalmers Gaston. The Plantation World Around Davidson. Davidson, North Carolina: The Mecklenburg Historical Association, 1969.

Mecklenburg County Records, Mecklenburg County Courthouse, Charlotte, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills.)

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
NW	0 0 0	0 0 0		80°	53'	55"
NE	0 0 0	0 0 0		35°	23'	40"
SE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SW	0 0 0	0 0 0				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Eight 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

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Survey and Planning Unit Staff, John B. Wells, III, Supervisor

ORGANIZATION: State Department of Archives and History      DATE: 26 October 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:  
109 East Jones Street

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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 Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date 26 October 1971

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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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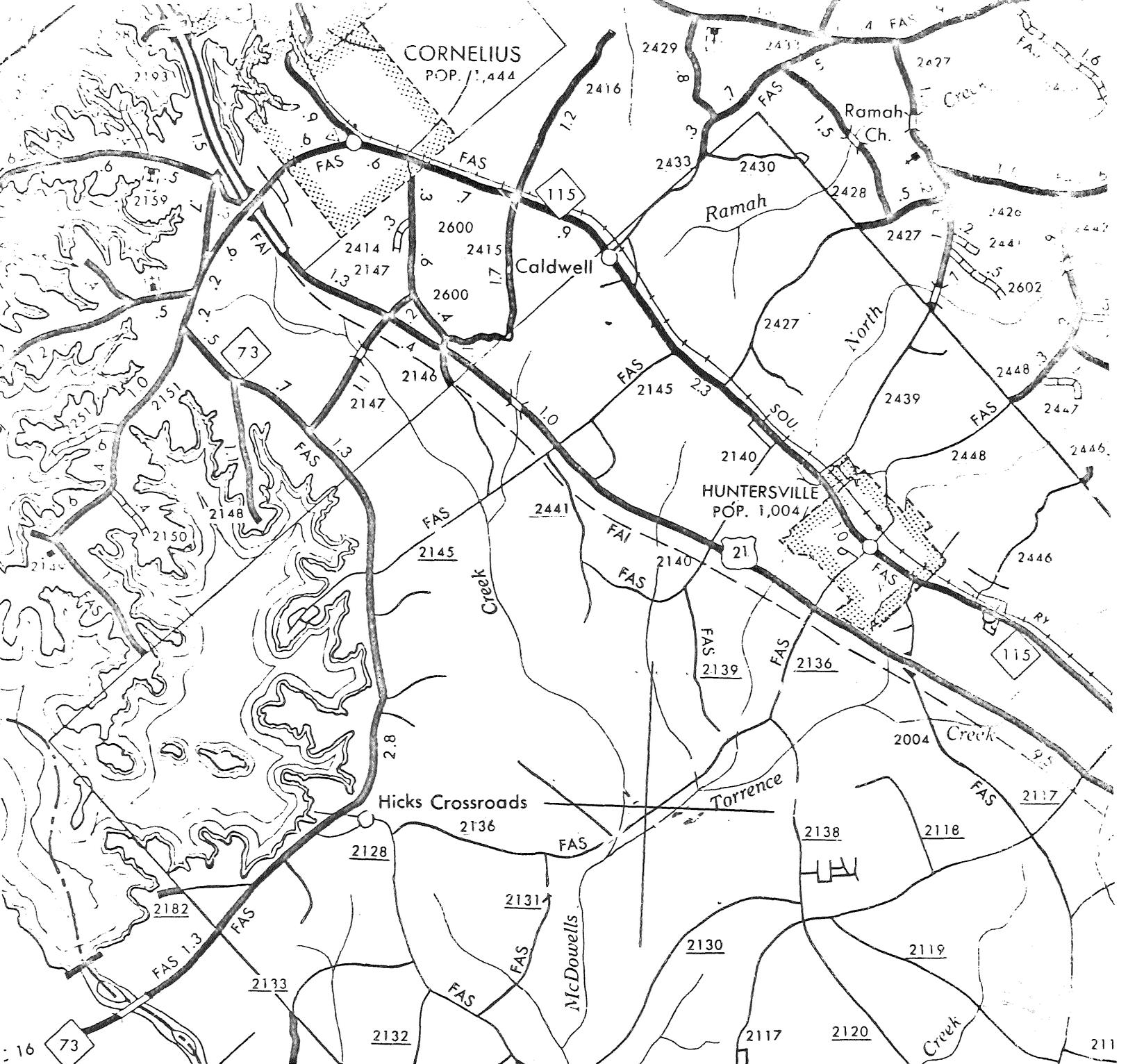
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Mecklenburg County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills.)

Torrence Family Papers, in possession of Richard T. Banks, Cedar Grove, Huntersville, North Carolina.



*Lake Norman South quad  
MK 4*



Cedar Grove  
SR 2135  
Huntersville, North Carolina

State Highway Commission  
Scale: 1"/1 mile  
January 1, 1970

Latitude  
degrees minutes seconds  
80° 53' 55"

Longitude  
degrees minutes seconds  
35° 21' 40"



