

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:  
North Carolina  
COUNTY:  
Northampton  
FOR NPS USE ONLY  
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Mowfield  
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
North side of N.C. 158, 1.8 mi. east of S.R. 1312  
CITY OR TOWN:  
Jackson vicinity  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
Second  
The Hon. L. H. Fountain  
STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37  
COUNTY: Northampton CODE: 131

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. and Mrs. Frank Blakeney Meacham  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
Longstreet Road  
CITY OR TOWN:  
Weldon  
STATE:  
North Carolina  
CODE:  
37

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Northampton County Courthouse  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
CITY OR TOWN:  
Jackson  
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:

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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 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

Mowfield is a large plantation house standing at the end of a lane amid the flat farmland of Northampton County. The form of the two-story frame dwelling is quite unusual, as is the combination of Georgian and Federal style finish. The house is L-shaped, with each section covered by a high, steep hip roof. The front section is five bays wide and two deep. Across the main facade extends a two-tier full-width porch, engaged under the high hip roof of the house. The ell extends two bays back from the two northwest bays of the rear (north) facade, and consists of a single room. Its hip roof is of equal height to that of the front block.

The exterior finish of the house is consistent and traditional: the walls are covered with robustly molded weatherboards and terminate in a handsome cornice with dentil courses above and below a band of undercut modillions, the lower dentil course being pierced. Three-part molded frames and molded sills occur at the windows, which have nine-over-nine sash at the first level and nine-over-six at the second. The house stands on a brick basement laid in common bond. Originally there was a chimney at either end of the front block and at the rear of the ell. That on the east side is gone; that on the west is an exterior end chimney with single shoulders, of brick laid in one-to-five common bond; that at the rear--evidently rebuilt--has an exposed face all the way up, interrupted only by the cornice (here consisting only of a single dentil course). At the rear, there are sections of the foundation which are of brick laid in Flemish bond.

Particularly interesting is the two-tier porch which covers the front (south) facade. At each level there are unacademic turned posts with neckings and four-sided capitals. Between them runs a replacement openwork balustrade. At the first level, the posts carry a cornice overlaid with wide semicircular arches. At the second, the elaborate classical cornice of the main block is repeated, and the lower element of it breaks out as caps over the posts. The first-story porch ceiling is sheathed, the second plastered. The central entrance is rather elaborately treated. A double door, each leaf with three raised panels, is set in a three-part molded frame. Flanking it are unusual fluted pilasters. rising in two stages, the second being quite short, flanking the transom. Springing from the top of the second stage is a heavy cornice adorned with a molded dentil band that rises to a triangular arch--forming, with the pilasters, a five-sided transom. The pilasters stand on well-defined bases and terminate in caps composed of bands of molding. Above the base and below the cap are demi-sunbursts. The shape of the transom as well as the ornament are evidently related to the Hermitage (a tripartite house at Tillery, Halifax County, not far away). The second-story door is more simply treated; it is a single six-panel door in a molded frame, beneath a five-light transom whose frame is considerably wider than the door. The rear door of the main section is also simple, a double door with molded frame and rectangular transom. Doors on either side of the rear ell are also simply treated.

The interior of the front section follows a center-hall plan one room deep, and the ell room is of roughly equal size to the west parlor, off which it leads. The main stair rises in the northwest corner of the hall, and a secondary stair, which is enclosed, rises along the wall between the

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west parlor and the ell room. (Thus, although it seems unlikely and surface treatment does not indicate it, the two west rooms, the parlor and the ell, can read as a hall-and-parlor plan with enclosed stair.)

The finish is generally consistent throughout, with walls plastered above a flat-paneled wainscot with Georgian half-round moldings. Doors generally have six raised panels and some retain HL hinges attached with rosehead nails and leather washers. The molded chair rail functions also as the window sills. The windows in the front rooms are framed in heavy crossetted architraves. The east mantel is gone; the west is a heavy post-Victorian replacement. The mantel in the ell room has a molded backband, two-stage fluted pilasters that carry a simple shelf, and a single raised panel across the frieze.

Of particular interest is the handsome, unusual Georgian stair that rises in the main hall. Three initial steps begin at the rear entrance, a turn is made with winders, and a single flight rises back-to-front to the second story. The open string of both parts has simple wave brackets, and there are heavy turned balusters carrying a robust molded handrail. The small initial flight has a swooping rail terminating in a vertical volute adorned on its sides by an incised sunburst. At the juncture of the flights is a tall, heavy chamfered post with molded cap, from which the upper handrail continues, beginning with an abrupt ramp. A much longer ramp occurs at the top, and there is a smaller chamfered post. The spandrel and soffit are fully flat-paneled, and a six-panel door leads to the closet beneath the stair. Altogether the stair is a striking composition, the vigor of its ornament emphasized by the compactness of its form.

The second-story walls are plastered and have a beaded baseboard and chair rail. The large west room contains an interesting vernacular mantel with two-stage fluted pilasters, the first stage defined by a molding adorned with incised sunbursts. The backband is gouged and has incised fans at the corners. A flat panel extends across the frieze, and the heavy molded cornice has an unusual dentil course with alternate dentils being rounded and pierced. The ornament of the mantel--particularly the demisunbursts and the unusual dentil cornice--is, like the entrance, related to that at the Hermitage. The east half of the second story is divided into a hall and three small rooms, with the hall entered from the main hall through an arch carried on pilasters. The ell room contains a mantel quite similar to that below. The enclosed stair serving this room is finished with flush sheathing.

To the rear of the house a small frame two-part outbuilding remains. The outline of the race track can also be determined at some times of the year.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	<u>Recreation:</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	<u>Racing</u>
<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 type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mowfield is a handsome plantation house of strikingly unusual form, with its dramatic high hip roof over a double porch, and an interesting combination of Georgian and vernacular Federal finish. It is of considerable importance as the seat of the colorful and prominent Amis family who were horse breeders of national reputation. Mowfield Plantation was also the home of Sir Archie, one of the greatest thoroughbred sires of the nineteenth century and certainly the champion of North Carolina's racing heyday.

As early as 1758, John Amis, a native of Middlesex County, Virginia, was owner of a small plantation in northwestern Northampton County. John, and his wife, Mary Dillard Amis, had two sons, William and Thomas. William came to manhood at the beginning of the Revolution, and on May 6, 1776, was appointed commissary of the Third Regiment of Continental Troops. A commissary combined the duties of quartermaster, purchasing agent, and ordnance officer. He remained in military service off and on until 1779, when, according to strong local tradition, he became a private purchasing agent for military supplies, and had made a large fortune out of the war by the time hostilities ended in 1783. That his purchasing power was increased, is evident in his acquisition of more than 8,000 acres of land in Northampton between October, 1781, and 1809. About 1783 William Amis married Susannah Wilburn, daughter of Robert and Lucy Wilburn of Northampton County, and purchased land from them that year.

In John Amis' will, exhibited in August Court in 1764, he gave "to my son William Amis my land & plantation at the death of my wife or marriage. . . ." William and Susannah Amis probably made their home at his father's plantation while William bought up land in the agriculturally rich Occoneechy Neck section of Northampton, which supported a wealthy planter class. William Amis, as the records of the county show, put together the Amis fortune that was a large and obvious force in northeastern North Carolina and southside Virginia for half a century. The contrast between William and his father is a clear example of how small planters of the colonial period moved into the large planter class of Jeffersonian times.

On January 6, 1802, William Amis purchased, for \$7,054, 1,364 acres in Northampton County, from John and Sarah Taylor of Southampton County, Virginia. This large plantation was put together by Thomas Williamson, a wealthy absentee planter of Southampton County, who at his death, left it

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to his daughter Sarah Williamson Taylor. Stylistic evidence would indicate that William Amis, who traditionally has been credited as builder of the Mowfield house, began his mansion soon after the purchase of the land in 1802.

William and Susannah Dillard Amis had two children, John Dillard Amis and Mary Amis. Both are said to have been born in the 1780s. John Dillard Amis entered the University of North Carolina in 1802, remained one year, and returned to Northampton to marry Elizabeth Bynum. The couple was settled by William Amis on a plantation west of Mowfield which they called the White House.

In 1816 William Amis received from Allan Jones Davie, son of General William Richardson Davie, a former governor of North Carolina and minister to France, the famous race horse, Sir Archie. Allan Jones Davie at the time was living on his New Hope plantation in Halifax County, and Amis received the horse, it is said, in repayment of a large debt.

Sir Archie was sired by Diomed out of Castianira and probably foaled at Mount Airy, the elegant estate of John Tayloe, III, in Essex County, Virginia. Both through his sire and dam, Sir Archie was descended from the Byerly Turk, Darley, and Godolphin Arabians, three of the most famous race horses in eighteenth century England. Sir Archie was an equally famous get in America who raced at all the prominent jockey club meets from New York to Charleston, and was the most successful and celebrated horses of his time. His career as a sire was even more notable than his racing record. Sir Archie died on June 7, 1833, and was probably buried at Mowfield. Today, all American thoroughbreds can trace a century-and-a-half back and there find Sir Archie in their pedigrees.

John Dillard Amis was an avid gambler and keen businessman. In his father's late years, he managed Sir Archie, though his doing so caused hostility between father and son.

William Amis was left a widower by 1823, and about this time he fathered a natural daughter by a young woman of the county, which he provided for amply before his death in 1824. At his death, William Amis left Sir Archie to John D. Amis, and all his large land holdings to John's three sons, William Dillard, Thomas and Junius Amis. John and Elizabeth moved from the White House to Mowfield where, according to his father's will, he was to supervise the plantation for his sons, until they came of age. Junius Amis received several tracts including the Mowfield tract, which alone included 1,364 acres. He was regarded as the most troublesome of the three sons, who were wild and turbulent boys with hot and quick tempers. He was wilfull, fond of fine clothes, extravagant, and where he went, trouble followed. His elopement with Celeste Hawkins, daughter of a governor of North Carolina, against his father's wishes, caused a break in happy relations at Mowfield. His debts constantly embarrassed John D. Amis. Junius and William D. Amis were so hot-tempered and their escapades so numerous that neighbors coined the phrase: "A drop of Amis blood

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would poison the Atlantic ocean." The saying persists today in Northampton County, and present-day descendants point to the phrase as showing their individuality.

As adults, the Amis brothers' hot-tempered character continued, and finally one brother's adventures led to the departure of the family from the county. In the election year of 1834, William D. Amis announced on the Whig ticket for a seat in the North Carolina Senate. His popular and influential Democratic opponant was Colonel William B. Lockhart, a resident of the Occoneechy Neck. After a turbulent campaign, Lockhart was declared the winner. During the campaign William D. Amis tried to club a Lockhart supporter to death at White's Hotel in Jackson, North Carolina. Public outrage coupled with numerous other public embarrassments caused the father, John D. Amis, to emigrate to Mississippi. Thomas Amis and his wife accompanied John and Elizabeth Amis. William soon followed them, and after selling most of his inheritance in small tracts, Junius Amis sold Mowfield to Colonel Ethelred Peebles for \$10,750 on February 20, 1837. There is no proof that Junius Amis ever lived at Mowfield house after his elopement with Celeste Hawkins, who died soon afterward. They are said to have lived at Silver Hill, a nearby plantation, where Junius had a race course and continued his interest in horses. Junius Amis may have remained at Silver Hill until as late as December 14, 1840 when he sold his last bit of Northampton property to Colonel Peebles. Junius and his family finally joined the rest of the Amis family in Mississippi. He died in Louisiana just after the Civil War.

Colonel Ethelred I. Peebles was a large Northampton landowner, having purchased most of the Junius Amis property between 1833 and 1840. He is said to have made his home at Mowfield, and after his death the estate passed to his son, E. John Peebles, and soon afterward to his children, E. John Peebles, Jr., and Sarah B. Peebles, wife of George S. Urquhart of Southampton County, Virginia. On March 17, 1897, Peebles and the Urquharts, through William Wallace Peebles, their uncle and a local attorney, as trustee, sold the "land . . . known as Mowfield" to M. W. Ransom, of Northampton County.

Matt Whitaker Ransom was a wealthy planter, enthusiastic turfman, former Confederate brigadier general, senator, and minister to Mexico. His home, Verona, stood across the road from Mowfield. At the death of General Ransom in 1904, the Mowfield plantation was left to his son, Patrick Exum Ransom. Patrick Ransom married late in his life to May Blakeney Meacham, a widow with two sons, Cecil and Frank Blakeney Meacham. Patrick and May Ransom had one son, Matt W. Ransom, III. After the deaths of Patrick Ransom and his son Matt, III, Mowfield went to Mrs. Ransom's son, Frank B. Meacham.

Mowfield has been the subject of numerous artists, the most notable of these being Edward Hopper, who in the late 1930s did a watercolor of the house on commission from Elizabeth C. Blanchard, a descendant of Junius Amis. This painting was willed to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill at

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Mrs. Blanchard's death in 1956. More recently, Sarah Blakeslee, wife of Francis Speight, has done several watercolors of the Mowfield house, one of which has been added to the collection of the Northampton County Historical Society.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Research by John Baxton Flowers, III, survey specialist; architectural description by Catherine W. Cockshutt, survey supervisor.  
 Blanchard, Elizabeth Amis Cameron, and Wellman, Manly Wade. The Life and Times of Sir Archie. Chapel Hill, 1958.  
 Blanchard, Elizabeth Amis Cameron, Papers. Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.  
 Interview with Frank Blakeney Meacham, Weldon, North Carolina.  
 Interview with Henry W. Lewis, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.  
 Lewis, Henry W. "Horses and Horsemen in Northampton before 1900." North Carolina Historical Review, Vol. LI, No. 2, April, 1974.

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° 24' 10"	77° 28' 47"		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	36° 24' 10"	77° 28' 06"		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	36° 23' 39"	77° 28' 06"		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	36° 23' 39"	77° 28' 47"		° ' "	° ' "	

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 20 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

ORGANIZATION: Division of Archives and History DATE: 20 November 1974

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 Robert E. Stipe  
 Title State Historic Preservation Officer

Date 20 November 1974

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



Mowfield  
 Jackson vicinity  
 North Carolina

N.C. Highway Commission Map (no USGS map available)  
 Scale: 1/2" : 1 mile  
 Date: January, 1974

	Latitude			Longitude		
	degrees	minutes	seconds	degrees	minutes	seconds
NW	36	24	10	77	28	47
NE	36	24	10	77	28	06
SE	36	23	39	77	28	06
SW	36	23	39	77	28	47

