

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

John Martin House

AND/OR COMMON

Rock House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER East side of S.R. 1186, in triangle formed by junction of S.R. 1186
with S.R. 1187 and 1175

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Flat Rock

VICINITY OF

5th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Stokes

169

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mrs. Norma Thore and descendants

Stokes County Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER

416 West Main Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Pilot Mountain

VICINITY OF

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Stokes County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Danbury

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" 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 John Martin House is a two-story stone ruin situated on the crest of a ridge overlooking Sauratown Mountain Range. The south elevation, which faces the mountain, is presumably the main facade, for the porch is centered on this facade, and it is logical that the house would face this breathtaking vista. The ruin is the remains of the late eighteenth century residence of John Martin; it has been a ruin since the late nineteenth century. Martin's grave is located at the bottom of the hill below the house. The strikingly picturesque structure will be stabilized and will serve as the chief attraction of a four-acre nature park which is being developed here.

The three-bay wide, rectangular structure is constructed entirely of irregular-shaped fieldstone, with the exception of the front porch, and has a high raised basement. The walls are generally intact throughout the first and second stories except for the west half of the south facade, where the stone has fallen away. Exterior end chimneys, each with single smooth shoulders, project from the east and west sides. A square two-story wing, approximately one-half the width of the main block, projects from the center bay of the north elevation. All traces of the roof have disappeared, although it was presumably gabled, as a portion of the west gable end is still in situ. The main entrance was apparently located in the center bay of the south facade, but no trace of it remains because this segment of the wall is missing. A segmental-arched rear entrance is located in the center bay of the main block, opening into the rear wing at both stories. The basement contains three very small, wedge-shaped window openings at ground level, which probably functioned primarily for ventilation. Larger window openings, all of which are segmental-arched, survive in the first-story east bay of the main facade and in the end bays of both stories of the rear elevation. The side elevations are windowless. In the northeast bay of the east side at ground level is a wide opening with a large stone slab lintel. The opening is built into the chimney on this side, presumably for added structural strength. Stone steps descend through this opening to the basement. A porch, which rests on a solid bed of rocks, occupies the middle section of the main facade. The stone steps which ascend to the porch, and the stone slabs which compose the porch floor appear to be quarried. Traces of stucco exist on the exterior walls, and are particularly noticeable on the east wall. The entire structure was apparently stuccoed at one time, perhaps originally.

The rear wing appears to be a later addition, for not only are the irregularly shaped fieldstones smaller and more consistently rectangular than those of the main block, but the wing slightly overlaps the second-story southeast window. The rear wing has an opening in the first-story center bay which was apparently a doorway. This opening is flanked by segmental-arched window openings. The only other window openings in the wing are in the second story of the east and west elevations.

There are no visible remains of the interior floors, ceilings, or trim. The set-backs in the east and west stone walls at floor and ceiling levels apparently supported wooden joists. The vertical niches in the east and west stone walls at floor and ceiling levels in the rear wing must have served the same purpose. Most of the stone partition wall located west of center in the main block is still standing, indicating a hall-and-parlor plan. The partition contains a segmental-arched door opening at the basement and

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first-floor levels. There are segmental-arched fireplaces at the basement and upper levels in both sides. Traces of plaster on the interior wall surfaces of the rear wing probably indicate the original wall finish. Historical research has shown that John Martin was a very prosperous man with a wealth of possessions. Archaeological artifacts probably exist beneath the rubble which has piled up within and around the ruin which will yield further information concerning the interior and exterior appearance of the house.

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__ PREHISTORIC	__ ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__ COMMUNITY PLANNING	__ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__ RELIGION
__ 1400-1499	__ ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__ CONSERVATION	__ LAW	__ SCIENCE
__ 1500-1599	__ AGRICULTURE	__ ECONOMICS	__ LITERATURE	__ SCULPTURE
__ 1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__ EDUCATION	X MILITARY	__ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
X 1700-1799	__ ART	__ ENGINEERING	__ MUSIC	__ THEATER
__ 1800-1899	__ COMMERCE	__ EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__ PHILOSOPHY	__ TRANSPORTATION
__ 1900-	__ COMMUNICATIONS	__ INDUSTRY	X POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__ OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__ INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Strong local tradition identifies the impressive stone ruin overlooking Sauratown Mountain as the eighteenth century dwelling of John Martin. Martin acquired land in the area soon after the American Revolution, in which he served as lieutenant. A large landowner, he was a colonel in the militia and held a number of political positions in Stokes County. The picturesque ruin, a reminder of what must have been among the grandest early houses in the area, is to be stabilized as part of a nature park.

The Rock House is believed to have been built by Colonel John Martin on 400 acres of land purchased from Micajah Clark in 1787. (Clark had acquired the land by state grant in 1784.) Local tradition has it that Colonel Martin laid the foundation for his house in 1770 and completed it in 1785. This is unlikely, however, as he would have been only fourteen years old in 1770. Furthermore, an 1845 division of Colonel Martin's former landholdings refers to his "Original home tract of Four hundred acres which was entered by Micajah Clark."

Martin served as a lieutenant in the Revolution and engaged in a skirmish at Colson's Old Fields. He is believed to have been wounded while on a scouting expedition near King's Mountain, which allegedly prevented him from participating in the important battle which took place there.

After the Revolution Martin returned to present-day Stokes County where he served for a time as a colonel in the county militia and married Nancy Shipp. He then began acquiring large quantities of land in Stokes and Surry counties and in Tennessee. Toward the end of his lifetime Martin owned nearly 9,000 acres of land in Stokes County alone.

Various inventories of the personal property in Martin's possession at the time of his death suggest that the Rock House was the home of an educated man of considerable wealth. He was the owner of at least forty-one slaves and in his will bequeathed twenty-six of them by name to various heirs. He owned considerable personal property, including a large number of books on law and the classics. Among the more than eighty volumes in Martin's personal library were an encyclopedia; several law dictionaries and casebooks; Blackstone's Commentary; several English, Greek, and Latin grammars; biographies of Franklin and Washington; several geographies; and many early literary works including "Fieldings works," "Chesterfields letters," "Eesop fables lattin," Virgil, and a number of Greek and Latin books. The Rock House is said to have been widely known as a center of hospitality. Martin's residence is shown on the Price-Strother Map of 1808 (spelled "Marlin").

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Martin served as a magistrate on the Stokes County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions at various times from 1791 to 1818. In 1798 and 1799 he was elected as one of Stokes's representatives in the North Carolina House of Commons. He is said to have been a highly esteemed leader who spoke with a pronounced stutter. "SAURA," an anonymous spokesman for Stokes County who claimed to have been an eyewitness, penned the following anecdote concerning "Col. Jack" to a Raleigh newspaper in 1854:

When a requisition was made upon the militia of this State for the defence of Norfolk, I was present when the North Regiment of the County was paraded to stand the draft for its quota. Col. Jack Martin, who was the commander, formed them into a hollow square and made them a speech. I wish I could give you the speech; it was the best adapted to its purpose of any I ever heard. He then straightened them out into a line, and gave the word for every one that was willing to go, to march three paces in front. The drums rolled, the fifes squealed, the colors waved a flourish, and, at the word March!! every man, with a simultaneous step, moved forward three paces and halted perfectly in line!! The Col. rode down the regiment and picked out the number called for, and discharged the rest. --During the scene I have attempted to describe, a company of some dozen bare-footed boys with cornstalk guns, whether for frolic or to show their pluck, marched out too and joined in the same line with the volunteer regiment: and there they were when Col. Jack came along picking out his men. 'What, the bo-bo-boys, too! (he stuttered badly,) God bl-bl-bless you, boys!' said he. He then marched them out, riding along the line, to the tune of the white cockade, making a harangue, first to the boys and then to the selected men, (who were advanced somewhat in front,) and then to the Regiment generally; and such shouts and hurras were never heard! Glorious, glorious old Jack! He was a rough specimen of humanity, but he had the ring of true metal.

John Martin died April 5, 1822, at about the age of sixty-six. His will provided that his widow Nancy be provided a life interest in his homeplace and that at her death the property should pass outright to his son William G. Martin.

Nancy Martin died January 24, 1841. The Rock House apparently then descended to William G. Martin, who died intestate and without heirs the following year. In 1845 William G. Martin's lands were divided by court-appointed commissioners among his various brothers and sisters, or their respective heirs. It is uncertain from the land descriptions given in the division exactly who received the Rock House. No reference was made to it by name and an exhaustive examination of existing deed transactions between surviving members of the Martin and related families during the period after 1845 provided no clues as to the identity of the house's owner or owners.

In June, 1887, T. L. Sarles and his wife Malinda, residents of Surry County, conveyed to William K. Thoe (Thore) for \$900 a 133-acre tract of land in Stokes County. Where, when, and how the Sarles obtained the property could not be ascertained. In

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December, 1896, Malinda Sarles sold her interest in the 133-acre "Rock house tract" (the first reference to the tract by name) to Bettie Sarles (also of Surry County) for \$517. Four months later the Sarles sold a seventy-four-acre portion of their land, including the Rock House, to Jessie A. Ashburn and his wife (also of Surry), for \$532.

Local tradition has it that the house was reduced to ruins by fire (or by a windstorm) in 1897. As with so many other local legends concerning the Rock House and its early owners, however, this could not be substantiated by reliable evidence.

In May, 1899, the Ashburns sold the tract for \$700 to Thomas J. and Sarah E. Thore. The ruin has remained in the possession of the Thore family since that time. The present owner is Mrs. Norma Thore of Pilot Mountain.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Calendar of the Tennessee and King's Mountain Papers of the Draper Collection of Manuscripts. Publications of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Calendar Series, Volume III. Madison: By the Society, 1929.
 Connor, R.D.W., comp. and ed. A Manual of North Carolina 1913. Raleigh: North Carolina Historical Commission /Division of Archives and History/, 1913.
D A R Patriot Index. Washington: National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 1966.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 4

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 7	5 5 7 2 0 0	4 0 2 8 2 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Research by Robert Topkins, survey specialist; architectural description by Ruth Little-Stokes, survey specialist.

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Division of Archives and History

4/21/75

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

109 East Jones Street

919/829-7862

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

North Carolina

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

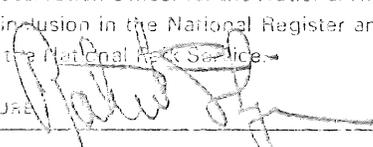
THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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 Historic Service~~.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE 

TITLE North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer DATE 4 April 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Raleigh Register. "The County of Stokes," November 15, 1854.

Secretary of State. Land Grant Office. Book 55.

Stokes County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions. Minutes, 1790-1793; 1815-1832.

Microfilm of originals, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Stokes County Records, Stokes County Courthouse, Danbury, North Carolina (Subgroups:
Deeds, Wills, Deeds).

Stokes County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina
(Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Estate records, Tax records).

Surry County Records, Surry County Courthouse, Dobson, North Carolina (Subgroups:
Deeds).

Surry County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina
(Subgroups: Deeds).

