

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

|                          |
|--------------------------|
| STATE:<br>North Carolina |
| COUNTY:<br>Warren        |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY         |
| ENTRY DATE               |

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Tusculum

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
End of S.R. 1635

CITY OR TOWN:  
Arcola vicinity

STATE:  
North Carolina

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
Second

THE HON. L. H. FOUNTAIN

COUNTY:  
Warren

CODE:  
37

CODE:  
185

3. CLASSIFICATION

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

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Mr. Billy King and Miss Ella King

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Route 3

CITY OR TOWN:  
Warrenton

STATE:  
North Carolina

CODE:  
37

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Warrenton

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:  
Warrenton

STATE:  
North Carolina

CODE:  
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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)

Excellent     Good     Fair     Deteriorated     Ruins     Unexposed

(Check One)

Altered     Unaltered

(Check One)

Moved     Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Tusculum is a large plantation house with interesting late Federal details. Two stories high beneath a gable roof, the frame house is covered with plain weatherboards, but a few beaded ones remain on the rear facade. The main (north) facade is five bays wide, with a handsome Palladian doorway in the central bay at each level. The handling of the doorways is similar to that at Elgin, Prospect Hill, Montmorenci, Dalkeith, and several other contemporary houses in nearby areas of Warren and Halifax counties. The narrow double door and sidelights are outlined by a distinctive engaged, turned element and framed by paneled pilasters. The pilasters support an entablature with paneled end blocks and frieze adorned with a carved, pierced lozenge band. The fanlight, with a delicate foliate center ornament, features floral bosses and is framed by a heavy molded arch. The remaining bays contain large windows with nine-over-nine sash at the first level and six-over-nine at the second. Each is framed by symmetrically molded pilaster strips that carry a simple entablature. The ends of the facade are defined by pilasters each with a long single panel outlined by the turned molding. They support an interesting, delicately arcaded wooden corbel cornice; each corbel terminates in a molded acorn-like pendant. A later shed porch with chamfered posts and a simple balustrade extends across the facade.

On each side of the house is a pair of tall single-shoulder chimneys of stuccoed brick. A window appears between them in both stories. The rear facade is like the front, except for the central bay. In the first story there are two simple doorways; above, the central bay is blank, but a cutout on the cornice suggests a former one-bay gabled porch at this level.

The interior of Tusculum follows a center-hall plan, two rooms deep. Very late Federal elements combine with Greek Revival ones to create a distinctly masculine feeling, as opposed to the often feminine delicacy of many of the contemporary late Federal houses in the area. The architraves are heavy and symmetrically molded, with well-defined roundel corner blocks. There is no wainscot, and the baseboards are high molded ones. The inside of the front entrance is treated with heavy, broad moldings and flat panels.

The most outstanding feature of the interior is the stair, which rises in three straight flights with landings at the rear of the hall. The newel and posts are square in section and topped with a rounded knob, with the thin balusters also square in section; they carry a rounded handrail that neither ramps nor eases. Echoing posts (but no rail) are embedded in the opposite plaster wall at the base and at each turning. The open string is beautifully ornamented: each tread is adorned with a scrolled "tulip" bracket, with the bud itself molded in relief. The string is defined by a bold band of delicate guilloche, also in relief between bands of molding. The spandrel is flat-paneled with heavy Greek Revival moldings. Above the first landing, the plastered soffit of the second floor is arched.

The two west parlors are joined by a wide, paneled folding door set in a symmetrically molded frame with roundel corner block; it extends nearly the width of the rooms. Each of the west rooms contains an awkward Greek Revival mantel with plain, turned colonnettes, a turned element across the frieze, and tall plain end blocks. Under each window is a flat panel framed

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| Warren           |      |
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|                  |      |

(Number all entries)

7.

by a floor-length architrave. The front room on the east contains a large three-part mantel with symmetrically molded pilasters and heavy moldings outlining each element of the tall frieze beneath a robust molded shelf. The other rooms were inaccessible but were said to be finished like those described.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input 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)

1830s

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             | _____                                    |
| <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 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

Tusculum is a large, late Federal plantation house, built for Samuel T. Alston probably in the 1830s. It is related by its distinctive and well-executed detail--especially the Palladian doorways--to the important regional group of vernacular late Federal houses of the Montmorenci school. The interior, which exhibits a combination of late Federal with Greek Revival motifs, features a handsome and unusual stair.

Among the most prominent and numerous of the planter families in prosperous antebellum Warren County were the Alstons, characterized in a late nineteenth century description as being "a large and distinguished family . . . practical, refined, civil and generous . . . provident; rich without ostentation; devotedly clannish to each other, and liberal to their friends and neighbors." A great proportion of the many notable plantation houses in now-depressed Warren County were built for members of this large family, who intermarried among themselves and among several other planter families, particularly the Williams clan.

Tusculum was built, according to family tradition, for Samuel Thomas Alston. Samuel T. W. Alston was the youngest son of planter Samuel Alston, who died in 1807 when the boy was only about a year old, the youngest of ten children. It is probable that Samuel T. Alston built Tusculum about the time of his marriage in 1831 to Ruina T. Williams, on land previously owned by his father, who had owned several thousand acres on Gunter's and Big Fishing creeks. (Samuel was assigned 657 acres in the division of his father's estate in 1812. His brother William F. received 580 acres and added to it by buying out interest of others; William F. died in 1827, leaving all his property to Samuel T., whom he specified as his executor as well.)

The dating of the house relies in part on circumstantial evidence--Samuel achieved his majority and received his inheritance from his brother in 1827; he married in 1831 and had a son in 1832--and in part on stylistic evidence--the detail of the house is similar to late Federal work at Montmorenci, Prospect Hill, Dalkeith, and Elgin, and is stylistically among the later members of this group. S. T. Alston was related to the builders of the first two and had dealings with the builders of the latter two. Elgin is believed to date from 1827-1832, and it seems to be somewhat earlier stylistically than Tusculum. Tusculum would seem to have been built sometime in the early 1830s.

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By 1850 Samuel T. Alston was a prosperous planter, holding 1,000 improved acres and 3,000 unimproved, a farm estimated at \$15,000. His personal property was estimated at \$17,000. He owned seventy-six slaves, an average number in that wealthy slave-owning county. The farm produced a wide range of crops, but no tobacco or cotton was listed. By 1860 the plantation was producing 30,000 pounds of tobacco, a moderately high quantity; 500 acres were improved, 3,279 unimproved, and there were eighty-three slaves in twenty slave houses. Samuel Alston was also the proprietor of a store at Arcola, a nearby village established in 1849, which he is said to have named after the Italian town Ercole, the location of one of Napoleon's battles--popularized by a print of David's painting of the general there. Alston is also believed to have named his estate Tusculum--after a villa of Cicero. Alston was nicknamed "Tom Thumper," according to a daughter because of his habit of drumming with his fingers.

Samuel Thomas Alston died in 1860, leaving all his property to his wife Ruina. The ledger of the widow's brother, A. D. Williams of neighboring Franklin County, records Ruina's paying \$60 "for coffin for husband;" later entries indicate Williams played a role as guardian for the widow and her family. His son Robert Williams Alston was his executor. Along with his four brothers, Robert served in the Civil War: he raised Company K, 12th North Carolina Regiment, became its major, and was wounded sixteen times.

After the war, Robert W. Alston handled his father's estate, selling off several tracts to settle debts. The widow, Ruina, bought for \$2,123.33 an 800-acre tract already in her possession. She sold off part of her land and mortgaged the remainder several times. She did not remain at Tusculum but moved to another house. A mortgage of 1889 referred to a Tharrington living on the place. In a deed filed March 8, 1892, she sold to Pattie D. Alston (wife of Robert W.) for \$2,451.60, a tract of 600 acres "upon which W. G. King and others now reside," which was bounded by Gunters Creek, the Arcola Road, and Big Fishing Creek. In the next deed, and on the same day, R. W. Alston and his wife Pattie mortgaged the tract to Thomas J. Connell to settle a debt of Pattie to him for \$2,451.62. Evidently the mortgage was never cancelled, and Connell came into possession of the land. His will of 1901, proved in 1905, left to his wife Addie May during her widowhood "my Tusculum plantation." After several transfers, B. B. Williams, trustee, delivered to J. G. Ellis, trustee of the Bank of Warren, a deed for Tusculum, 544.73 acres more or less. The Bank of Warren closed in 1931, and the property went into the hands of the Federal Land Bank, who sold the "tract of land being known as TUSCULUM" to John R. King, whose heirs now own the property.

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Research and architectural description by Catherine W. Cockshutt, survey supervisor.  
 Groves, Joseph A. The Alstons and Allstons of North and South Carolina. Atlanta, Georgia: Franklin Printing and Publishing Company, 1901.  
 Thorne, Edgar. Letter, August 14, 1974, to Catherine W. Cockshutt.  
 Warren County Records, Warren County Courthouse, Warrenton, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Court Records, Estate Papers).  
 Warren County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Court Records, Estate Papers).

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY |                         |                         | O<br>R | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY<br>OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES |                         |  |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------|---|-------------------------|--|
| CORNER   | LATITUDE                | LONGITUDE               |        | LATITUDE  | LONGITUDE               |  |
|  | Degrees Minutes Seconds | Degrees Minutes Seconds |        | Degrees Minutes Seconds   | Degrees Minutes Seconds |  |
| NW   | 36° 17' 19"             | 78° 01' 19"             |        |   |                         |  |
| NE   | 36° 17' 19"             | 78° 00' 54"             |        |   |                         |  |
| SE   | 36° 16' 49"             | 78° 00' 54"             |        |   |                         |  |
| SW   | 36° 16' 49"             | 78° 01' 19"             |        |   |                         |  |

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: 4 October 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 4 October 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



Tusculum  
Arcola vicinity  
North Carolina

N.C. Highway Commission Map (no USGS map available)

Scale: 1/2" = 1 mile

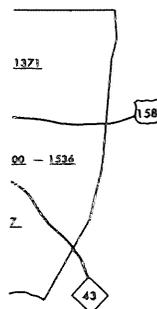
Date: 1974

|    | Latitude |         |         | Longitude |         |         |
|----|----------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|
|    | degrees  | minutes | seconds | degrees   | minutes | seconds |
| NW | 36       | 17      | 19      | 78        | 01      | 19      |
| NE | 36       | 17      | 19      | 78        | 00      | 54      |
| SE | 36       | 16      | 49      | 78        | 00      | 54      |
| SW | 36       | 16      | 49      | 78        | 01      | 19      |



NOTE: MAP INCLUDES ONLY STATE MAINTAINED ROADS OR IMPORTANT NON-SYSTEM ROADS. MILEAGE NOT SHOWN ON FRONTAGE ROADS. ROADS SHOWN AS OF JAN. 1, 1974.

KEY TO COUNTY ROAD NUMBERS  
ALSO NUMBERS 1001



WARRE

NO

DEPARTMENT OF T  
DIVISION OF HIGH

U.S. D  
FED

