

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Southerland-Burnette House  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 201 North Chestnut Street N/A  not for publication  
city, town Mount Olive  vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Wayne code 191 zip code 28365

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>2</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	_____ objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>3</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register None

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

William S. Pina, Jr. 11-17-87  
Signature of certifying official Date  
State Historic Preservation Officer  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwellingDomestic/Secondary structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwellingSecondary structure/Domestic

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brickwalls Wood/Weatherboardroof Asbestosother Terra Cotta

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

**SUMMARY:**

Although a part of the Southerland-Burnette house was built ca. 1874 for Joseph A. Shine, the elegant appearance of the frame house today is due to extensive alterations executed for Benjamin W. Southerland about 1924. A two-story tetra-style portico covers the center of the three-bay Chestnut Street facade. The fluted Tuscan columns shelter a pedimented doorway which enframes a double-leaf door and its surrounding sidelights and transom. Thin pilaster strips frame the butted corners, rising from the brick foundation to the wide eaves which are decorated with molded, shaped rafter ends treated as dentils. The gable roof is covered with gray asbestos shingles resembling in color the original gray slates. The front, rear, and side gables and that of the one-story kitchen wing on the north are managed as deep pediments, each decorated with modillions and a demi-lunette. The 12 over 12 sash windows in the second story have simple 2-part surrounds while the 12 over 1 sash windows below are decorated with wooden keystones in the center of 2-part surrounds. The external end chimneys are connected to the end pediments with a weatherboard infill, indicating an alteration of the roof of the Shine house. The one-story kitchen and pantry wing on the north side continue the decorative scheme of the main block. A contemporary hip-roofed, 2-story garage and servants' quarters sits on the north corner of the lot. A three-foot high wall of pressed bricks with a corbelled cap encloses the lot on the two street sides. The center-hall plan interior contains simple pedimented casings and single-panel doors typical of the 1920's.

**ELABORATION:**

In 1871 and 1872 Joseph A. Shine of Duplin County bought in two purchases the south half of the block in the town of Mt. Olive bounded by Chestnut, James, Breazeale, and John Streets. By 1874, he had built on the eastern part of his property a two-story single pile house with an ell on the rear and a double gallery entrance porch on the Chestnut Street facade. This structure, Greek Revival in form, was typical of the imposing residences built by the conservative gentry of the area from 1840 to 1880.

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When the childless Joseph Shine died in 1887, he gave a life estate to his wife with reversion at her death to the children of R. J. Southerland, "my good and true friend . . . who has always and at all times acted as a brother towards me, assisting me in financial troubles on several occasions". The death of Caroline C. Shine in 1914 ended the 40-year residence of the Shine family.

In 1919, R. J. Southerland, Jr., Annie S. Wooten, and Kate S. Steele deeded their interests in the Shine property to their brother, Benjamin W. Southerland (1873-1925), who with his wife, Julia McGee Southerland (1875-1950), transformed the old residence. The remodeling by an unknown architect was so thorough as to constitute a rebuilding. It is doubtful that any surface of the Shine house can be seen today. The Southerland house, as described in the summary above, emerged as an unusually well-proportioned and graceful example of the classical revival style of the 1920's. In addition to the change in exterior decoration, the open arm of the ell was filled in with a "sun room" on the first floor and a nursery on the second, producing a full Georgian house plan. A small passage was built in the northeast corner to provide access from the kitchen to the north parlor.

From the tile floored portico, the center hall was entered through a vestibule. French doors opened into double parlors from which more French doors opened into the dining room and sun room beyond, creating an open flow from room to room. A one-story kitchen and pantry wing on the north adjoined the dining room. The interior woodwork was typical of the period -- mantel pieces with Adamesque ornament in the parlors and a massive craftsman-style brick chimney piece in the dining room. A light neo-classical-style, continuous-rail staircase rose on the north wall of the hall and returned on the south wall. A door beneath the stair landing opened onto a sitting porch on the rear. The second floor plan is identical with bedrooms and nursery in the four quadrants.

The grounds were equally well-developed. A surviving red pressed brick wall with brick gateposts ran down the James and Chestnut Street sides of the lot while privet and ligustrum hedges enclosed the other two sides. A red tiled walk beneath a wisteria-covered pergola led from James Street to the sun room entrance, while a carp pool was the principal feature of the north lawn. Several maple trees, a venerable magnolia, and the living stump of an ancient camellia bush remain of the original plantings. In the north corner of the lot was a hip-roofed two-story, two-car garage with servants quarters above. The lower story was brick veneered with gray bricks and the second story was weatherboarded. Driveways followed the lot lines from both James and Chestnut Streets entering the garage via folding doors on both the south and east sides. The southwest corner of the first floor of the structure was cut away, leaving the second story corner supported on an iron pole. Under this triangular porte cochere the driveways joined and the door of the boxed staircase to the servants' rooms and bathroom opened. The second floor rooms were pine-sheathed in the 1950's.

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The Southerlands and their only child, B. W., Jr. (1903-1952), occupied this palatial residence from 1924 to 1937. The Great Depression destroyed the family fortunes and the house was sold at forced public auction for \$6,000.00 in 1937. It was bought in 1938 by Charles D. and Esther H. Burnette inaugurating a 49-year residence. The Burnetts made only minor alterations. A bathroom adjoining the kitchen was enlarged inconspicuously and the sitting porch in the rear was enclosed. The former dining room became a bedroom, necessitating removing a set of French doors between that room and the north parlor. In addition, a large brick chimney piece was removed. About 1975, the slate roof was replaced with gray asbestos shingles.

Through the years the grounds were simplified, although the general organization of the space is unchanged. The brick wall, garage with servants' quarters, a single magnolia, and the remains of a venerable camellia bush survive from the Southerland era. Presently, the setting suffers from overabundant planting of pines and dogwoods and overgrown shrubbery intended to protect the residence from commercial encroachments on three sides. However, the wall and grounds alone offer adequate protection at present.

At the death of Esther H. Burnette in 1987, the house passed by gift to Mount Olive College for use as a residence. It is currently being prepared as a residence for the president of the College.

This nomination includes the house, garage, and brick wall specifically as survivors of the Southerland era.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  
Architecture

Period of Significance  
1924-1937

Significant Dates  
1924

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

Significant Person  
N/A

Architect/Builder  
Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SUMMARY:

The Southerland-Burnette house is significant as an unusually felicitous example of the Classical Revival style of the 1920's (Criteria C) and as an architectural expression of small town affluence in the post-World War I era.

ELABORATION:

Of five houses with heroic porticos erected in Mount Olive, North Carolina, from 1900 to 1925, none was as well-integrated and classically pure as the Southerland-Burnette house. The earlier columned houses, such as the residences of Y. H. Knowles, John Bell and M. C. S. Cherry, exhibited a profusion of porches and ornament with Victorian tensions evident in the complexity and number of parts. The Knowles house was razed about 1960 and the Cherry house (National Register, 1985) has been remodeled by removal of its complex porches, but the Bell house remains intact for comparison with the greater simplicity and clarity of the essentially unaltered Southerland-Burnette house. While the Southerland-Burnette house is not without ornament, the five pedimented gables, rows of modillions, curiously ornamented demi-lunettes, thin pilasters, and keystones of the lower window architraves are subordinated to the whole composition. The four fluted Tuscan columns rise unencumbered to a classically proportioned pediment, producing a serene and restful composition. The style inaugurated by the Columbian Exposition of 1898 reached its apogee in such residences.

The Southerlands, whose affluence produced this residence, were one of the most important families in Southern Wayne County. About 1870, Robert J. and Anna Witherington Southerland had come from Duplin County to the developing town of Mount Olive. Beginning as hotel keepers, they amassed a fortune through farming, mercantile, and real estate interests. In 1907, The Mount Olive Tribune was able to say that R. J. Southerland had "the most extensive mercantile business in this section of the state", and had "contributed more perhaps than anyone else towards the growth and development of Mt. Olive."

See continuation sheet

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The four Southerland children remained in Mount Olive, sharing equally in their father's estate. All of them built or bought imposing residences grouped around Chestnut Street. With the coming of the national economic boom after 1914, Mount Olive was poised for growth. The Southerlands were responsible for sub-division and development of the southwestern quarter of the town as it existed in 1950. The James Street, Pearl Street (now Breazeale Avenue), Cobbwell and Cobbwell Heights subdivisions were all Southerland enterprises.

Benjamin Witherington Southerland engaged in extensive truck farming and real estate development, but the foundation of his wealth was a large sales and exchange stable. He had engaged in the livestock business in Goldsboro and Wilmington briefly before returning to Mount Olive where he built a brick stable which stretched from Center Street 250 feet through a town block to Chestnut Street. Locally, it was believed to be the largest livery stable south of Richmond.

The Southerland houses, sub-divisions, farms, store buildings on the west side of Center Street, and stables on lower Center supported a lavish life style through the 1920's. When Ben Southerland left the turreted Queen Anne style house he had built on North Center Street about 1900, his new residence exceeded in elegance all others in town. He died within a year, but his wife and son lived on in the house. A forced-air furnace, fully tiled bathrooms, servants' quarters on the grounds, and mother-of-pearl electric bell pushes which popped up room numbers in the kitchen testify to a luxurious life style in the Southerland mansion.

The years 1924-1925 when the house was completed represented the high point of the Southerland fortunes. As the price of agricultural products fell in the late 1920's, the prosperity of the area declined, moving toward the total ruin of the Great Depression. The Southerlands were caught in the economic wreckage of the times and their properties were gradually lost to their creditors, the house finally going in 1937.

For the next generation -- children of the Depression -- the Southerlands passed into myth. "Mr. Ben and Miss Julia" became figures from another world who were said to have had a liveried chauffeur and uniformed house servants. Fabulous stories were told of young Ben's extravagant, jazz-age life style. They were told as cautionary tales for the young, but they made him a distant and glamorous figure. The Southerlands achieved their apotheosis in Sam Byrd's Small Town South when Byrd, in a chapter entitled "Mrs. Southerland Requests the Pleasure", described the Standard Oil [sic] dealer's children playing in Miss Julia's magnolia -- a clear sign to Byrd of the passing of the Old Order.

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Charles D. Burnette who bought the house in 1938 was a native of Pender County. He married Esther Hatch, who was descended from the old Wayne County families of Bass and Rhodes, and settled in Mt. Olive. Charles Burnette was the Amoco Oil distributor for 35 years and also had farm and real estate interests. For a short time he was the local dealer for Kaiser-Fraser automobiles. The four Burnette children grew up in the old Southerland house.



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Mount Olive Tribune, Mount Olive, North Carolina. Wayne County Bicentennial Issue, 1979.

Sanborn Map Company, 11 Broadway, New York. Mount Olive, North Carolina, 1912, 1926.

Wayne County, North Carolina, Deed & Probate Registries. Wayne County Courthouse, Goldsboro, North Carolina.





SOUTHERLAND-BURNETTE MAPS  
 201 N. CHESTNUT ST.  
 MOUNT OLIVE, N.C.  
 MOUNT OLIVE QUAD  
 2016 11 1:24000  
 EASTING 766780  
 NORTHING 3898690

