Wheeler Plantation

A Preservation Plan

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Methodology

A historic structures report is an overview of a property's history and evolution that has been obtained through intensive documentary research and physical investigation. The report also provides recommendations for future use. This report on the Wheeler plantation is the product of a team research project for a combined graduate and undergraduate course in the Historic Preservation Program at Middle Tennessee State University. Seven graduate and six undergraduate students compiled this report under the guidance of Dr. James K. Huhta, during a three month period in the fall semester of 1988. The report was undertaken following a request from the Alabama Preservation Alliance for a study of the site. The report that follows contains an architectural description of the main dwellings and outbuildings as well as a structural analysis of these buildings, a brief history of the property and families associated with it, a section on the decorative treatment of the interiors as well as furnishings contained within, and measured drawings. The final section provides recommendations for reuse. The project represents a combined team-staff effort amounting to over six hundred hours. The report is provided as a public service by the Center for Historic Preservation in the hope that it will assist in the preservation of this significant property.

The team collected the necessary information for the report on the property during a lengthy three day site visit, as well as from related research activities between the end of August and late November 1988. Team members divided into groups to accomplish the tasks of recording interior and exterior measurements of the buildings, preparing inventories of
existing conditions, paint analysis, and documentary photography. Team members also undertook research about the history of the area in written and archival materials at Middle Tennessee State University, the Tennessee State Library and Archives, the Birmingham Public Library and the Moulton and Lawrence county courthouses and elsewhere. All of this effort was directed toward an accurate as possible determination of the history, significance and current conditions of the property.

Each member of the team participated in the planning stages of this project and in the writing of the final report. The team convened on a weekly basis to discuss the progress of the research, exchange information, and plan strategies for further investigation. Team members analyzed both the research and on-site evidence to provide the basis for recommendations concerning the Wheeler plantation's future use. They considered the properties' history, its component parts and existing problems. The report includes floorplans and a site plan made possible through use of AutoCAD, a computer assisted drafting software package. These drawings are sufficiently precise to provide the reader with a visual orientation to the main building, and its room arrangements as well as the site as a whole.

Following the completion of the research and recommendations, the team compiled and edited several preliminary drafts, which Dr. Huhta in turn reviewed. The Alabama Preservation Alliance and others will receive final copies of the report. The team hopes this report provides the foundation for a secure and prosperous future for this truly remarkable example of Alabama history.
Introduction

Secluded by oaks, overgrown boxwood, and remains of formal gardens from years gone by, the stately General Joseph Wheeler house has changed little since the Wheeler family lived there from 1870 to 1955. The uniquely intact interior of the home still reflects the family’s life there. Family furniture, china, clothing, papers, portraits and other personal items are all in their proper place, as if the family just stepped out into the garden. Two earlier homes and several outbuildings are also included on the property. A symbol of immense pride for the citizens of Alabama and the South, the Wheeler Plantation represents both a typical Southern plantation and the exceptional people who grew up on it.

The Wheeler Plantation, listed on the National Register for Historic Places, is located in Lawrence County, Alabama, west of Decatur, on Highway 20. The two story Greek Revival home, sits on 14,000 of the plantation’s original 17,000 acres. The Alabama Preservation Alliance requested that the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University, under the direction of Dr. James K. Huhta, prepare this Historic Structures Report (HSR). This HSR focuses attention on the future use of the property, and provides an overview of its history and structural evolution. Recommendations for future use, management, and promotion of the site complete this report.

This report provides not only the documentary and physical evidence regarding the property and its history, but also a viable plan for the future of the site. The report is as complete and thorough as is possible within the
sixty days available to research, analyze, write and publish it. Any information which may be discovered in the future may clarify or amplify this report, but should not significantly change it.

General Joseph Wheeler, a graduate of West Point, is an important figure in United States military and political history. At 26, he was commissioned Lieutenant General in the Army of the Confederate States of America, one of the youngest generals in the Civil War. General Wheeler served in the United States House of Representatives from 1884 to 1898 before serving in the Spanish-American War. He was the only person to serve as a general in both the Civil War and the Spanish-American War.

General Wheeler's daughter, Annie, devoted her life to public service and to preserving her father's name at their plantation home. At 30, she followed her father to Cuba, where she served as a nurse in the Spanish-American War and worked with Clara Barton. She also served in World War I as a nurse in France. At home in Alabama, she devoted her energies to educating and establishing schools for black and white children. She never married, and continued to live in the family home which she maintained as a shrine to her father until her death in 1955.

Repairs on the house in the last thirty-three years have been minimal. Interior wear and tear, caused by water damage and fluctuating climate, is extensive. However, examination has revealed that the foundation and load bearing members of the frame appear sound.

John LeGrand, the member of the family presently responsible for the property, has allowed the house to be opened to the public since Annie Wheeler's death. One of the family's employees since the 1930's, Mr. C. E. Turner, lives on the plantation and gives tours of the home. Now ninety years old, Mr. Taylor should be commended for his devotion and loyalty to the
Wheeler family. He has alone been largely responsible for the day-to-day operation and maintenance of the house since Miss Annie’s death in 1955.

Today, the plantation is a popular tourist stop, but has the potential to draw visitors from a much wider region. It is located twenty miles west of Decatur, where over sixty million dollars in private monies has recently been spent in the Decatur downtown revitalization. Increased visitation at the plantation would supplement Decatur’s tourist industry, where visitors are drawn to the Main Street area and Old Bank Museum. Along with the establishment of the Wheeler house as a major historic landmark will also come many benefits to other nearby communities and to the state. Businesses in the vicinity can benefit from increased tourism revenues, and tourism can also stimulate economic development in Alabama. The impact the development of the site can have on enhancing local volunteerism, pride, and quality of life cannot be measured in dollars alone.

In a national perspective, the site has the potential to become another major historic landmark in the South, along the lines of The Hermitage, home of former president Andrew Jackson. The Wheeler home is without question one of the most important historic resources in the South and the United States. The reknowned General Wheeler’s military exploits, for example, are an integral part in the history of our nation. Annie’s own history is less well known. The three houses on the plantation represent the evolution of early farm life in Alabama. A log structure, a clapboard structure, and the Wheeler home show how architecture changed over time. The home itself, in its unchanged state, gives a rare look at the everyday life of a family over a century of time. The artifacts in the house and the massive quantities of archival material, provide research material of national importance.
As nature continues to take its toll on the plantation, this valuable historic resource will fade away, and with it a source of education and pride. Time is the plantation’s enemy; but weathering and natural decay can be checked with proper professional care. This report can be a guide to the continued care of the plantation, or at the very least, if no positive action is taken, will serve as a valuable record of this significant historic resource.
HISTORY OF GENERAL JOSEPH WHEELER PLANTATION

John P. Hickman was the first person to settle on the land that eventually became the General Joseph Wheeler Plantation. According to the *Old Huntsville Land Office Records and Military Warrants from 1810-1854*, Hickman registered property in "Old Madison County," the mother county of Lawrence County, in the Alabama Territory in the years 1819 and 1825 (fig. 1 and 2). The 1820 United States Census notes that John P. Hickman lived in Lawrence County, Alabama on the present site of the Wheeler Plantation. According to the census, there were eleven family members in the Hickman household and fifty-six slaves.

Hickman sold his plantation to Colonel Ben Sherrod. Sherrod was born in Halifax County, North Carolina on January 21, 1786. The Sherrod family was from England and among the early settlers of North Carolina. Benjamin graduated from the university at Chapel Hill and became a planter. He later moved to Wilkes County, Georgia, continuing his occupation as a planter.

Migrating to Alabama in 1818, he established several plantations in the Tennessee River Valley that were worked by over seven-hundred slaves. Although noted for his great cotton plantations, he is most remembered for promoting in 1832 the third railroad in the United States and the first in Alabama, the Tuscumbia-Courtland Railroad.

As an example of his wealth and prominence, Sherrod (as president of the board of directors of the railroad) once paid debts of the corporation totaling $300,000.00 when the railroad proved to be a financial failure. Even with such an enormous financial outlay he still remained successful and
Fig. 1 map of Alabama Territory 1803 - 1820
Fig. 2 map of Alabama Territory 1820 - 1832
prosperous. Upon his death he bequeathed prosperous plantations to each of his children.

Colonel Sherrod had bequeathed the plantation referred to as "Pond Spring", later the Wheeler plantation, to his son Felix. Felix married twice. First to Margaret McGrau from Augusta, Georgia leaving no heirs. His second wife was Sarah Ann Parrish, daughter of Colonel Joel Parrish of Franklin, Tennessee. Felix and Sarah Ann had three children, Benjamin, Frank, and Alice. Felix and his family lived at Pond Spring. However, Felix died on January 21, 1845 before he could claim his inheritance. The property then passed to his son, Benjamin.

At the time Benjamin inherited Pond Spring it contained approximately seventeen thousand acres and slaves. Benjamin married Daniella Jones in 1859 (fig 3). Daniella was the daughter of Colonel Richard Jones. Benjaman and Daniella had two sons, both of whom died in their infancy. Benjamin died in 1861 leaving the plantation to Daniella.

Daniella Ellen Jones had been born on August 20, 1841 near Courtland, Alabama. Her parents were both important in their own right. Her mother, Lucy was the daughter of Governor Peter Early of Georgia. Her father Colonel Richard Jones was a lawyer and planter. They moved to Alabama in 1822, purchasing the Courtland plantation in 1829. Jones had become the third largest landholder in Alabama by this time. Daniella married General Joe Wheeler in 1866, two years after Benjamin's death.

Joe Wheeler was born in Augusta, Georgia on September 10, 1836, the youngest son of Joseph and Julia Wheeler. His family had moved to Augusta in 1819, migrating from Connecticut due to an economic depression in New England.

In Augusta, Wheeler's father became a banker, cotton factor, promoter,
Fig. 3 Daniella Jones Sherrod Wheeler (1841 - 1896)
and planter. He also helped to organize the Augusta Savings Bank.

Wheeler, however, was destined for failure in Augusta. Around 1840 he lost all of his family's fortune through his mismanagement of investments. To add to the family's misfortune in 1842 Julia Wheeler, General Wheeler's mother, died. With this added setback, the family decided to move back to Connecticut.

Upon the family's return to Connecticut, young Joseph Wheeler was sent to live with his mother's relatives in Cheshire. He attended school there at the Episcopal Academy.

On July 1, 1854, when he was eighteen years old, Wheeler was admitted as a cadet to West Point Military Academy in New York during the time Colonel Robert E. Lee served as the school's superintendent.

After graduating from West Point in 1859, Wheeler went to Cavalry School at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania to obtain additional military training. In June of 1860 he was stationed at Fort Craig, New Mexico (on the Rio Grande River, 150 miles south of Santa Fe) until the outbreak of the Civil War.

A Southerner at heart, Wheeler returned to Augusta, Georgia in March 1861 and resigned his commission as an officer in the United States Army. Wheeler served briefly as a lieutenant in the Georgia Militia until he secured an appointment as a colonel in the Confederate Army commanding the 19th Alabama Infantry. He gradually moved his way up the ranks in the Confederate Army until, after the Battle of Shiloh in April 1862, he was appointed to the rank of Brigadier General and was made Chief of Cavalry of the Army of Tennessee (fig.4).

In the fall of 1863, Wheeler and his command camped near the home of Colonel Richard Jones in Courtland, Alabama. It was here that Wheeler met
Fig. 4 General Joseph Wheeler (1836 - 1906)
his future wife, the widow Daniella Jones Sherrod, daughter of Colonel Jones.

During his service to the Confederacy, Wheeler was involved in over five-hundred skirmishes, and commanded in one hundred and twenty-seven battles. During the war thirty-six staff officers were wounded at his side and sixteen horses were shot out from under him. General Robert E. Lee said after the war that "the two ablest cavalry officers which the war developed were General J.E.B. Stewart of Virginia, and General Joseph Wheeler of the Army of Tennessee." 1

After the war, the General returned to Courtland to call upon Daniella Sherrod. The eventual outcome of this visit was their marriage on February 8, 1866. They immediately moved to New Orleans where they spent the next four years. While in New Orleans, Wheeler became involved in a hardware and carriage business partnership, Bouton, Smith and Company.

In 1870, Wheeler sold his share of the business and moved back to Lawrence County, Alabama with Daniella to live on the seventeen-thousand acre plantation Ella had inherited from her first husband Benjamin Sherrod. They began construction of a new house adjacent to the Sherrod house on the property. Under Joseph's supervision the plantation became a success and was profitable.

During this period Wheeler began to study law. After passing the bar in the late 1870's, he became the attorney for the East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia Railroad Company in 1880.

During the late 1870's Wheeler also became involved in politics. He was elected to the House of Representatives in 1880, but the election was contested by his opponent, William H. Lowe. The Committee of Elections

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overturned the election and removed Wheeler from office. William Lowe
replaced Wheeler but died shortly after taking office. A special election was
held to fill the seat and Wheeler was selected to fill the seat that had been
taken away from him. He returned to Washington in January of 1883.

Joseph Wheeler faced little opposition for his seat when he sought
reelection in 1884, and won handily. This trend was to continue for the next
fourteen years. Wheeler maintained his popularity by filling the needs of his
constituents. He did not affiliate himself with any political factions and
clung to a moderate political stance.

Wheeler gained national recognition for his opposition to protective
tariffs. He delivered a speech in Congress on May 4, 1888 in which he set
forth seventeen "conclusions" for opposing protective tariffs. The speech on
the floor lasted only five minutes but Wheeler extended his remarks in the
Congressional Record, compiling one of the longest treatises on the issue.
The final work covered 137 pages and provided a wealth of information on
the subject of tariffs. It would become a benchmark which others studying
tariff reform would later consult.

The industrialization that was taking place in the South also affected
Wheeler's district. Blast furnaces and iron mines were being developed in
the area. To facilitate the growth of industry, Wheeler called for Federal
money to be allocated to improve navigation on the Tennessee River.
Wheeler knew that the improvements would not only benefit
industrialization but the local farmers as well because they could get their
goods to market more quickly and economically. Many of the improvements
called for by Wheeler were not to be realized, however, until the creation of
the Tennessee Valley Authority over fifty years later.

Wheeler's career as a congressman ended with the coming of war with
Spain in 1898. He offered his services to President McKinley and was appointed Major General of Volunteers. A short time later he received orders to take command of the cavalry units in the American Expeditionary Force. He took part in the entire Cuban campaign before reporting to the Phillipines. He then served for one year in the Phillipines before retiring on January 15, 1900 (Fig. 5). After his retirement he spent the remainder of his life traveling in Mexico and Europe. He also spoke at engagements on the Atlantic Coast. He died in his seventieth year on January 25, 1906 in Brooklyn, New York, ten years after Daniella, and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Annie Early Wheeler, the second of Daniella and Joseph Wheeler's seven children, was the only one to gain local, national, and international prominence (fig. 6). Born July 31, 1868, her early childhood years were spent on the Wheeler Plantation under the tutelage of Nellie Brinkley, the children's governess.

During the period General Wheeler served in the United States Congress as representative from the Eighth Alabama District, the family lived in Washington, D. C., returning to Wheeler Station for holidays and breaks in legislative sessions. Annie was an attractive and popular member of the young social set in both places. Even so, Annie displayed a keen sense of public-spiritedness by spending time reading, playing games, and otherwise entertaining the patients in the St. John's Children Home in Washington. A devout Episcopalian, she incorporated her love of life and her belief in Christian service into a commitment she never abandoned.

After Daniella Wheeler's death in 1896, Annie's devotion to her father grew. General Wheeler volunteered in April of 1898 to serve in the Spanish-American War and was appointed Major General of Volunteers. When he
Fig. 5 General Joseph Wheeler
(1836 - 1906)
Presented to Queen Victoria of England, 1899

As a Red Cross nurse

in later years

at home

Fig. 6 Annie Wheeler (1868 - 1955)
was sent to Florida, Annie followed him and, against her family's wishes, made plans to serve her country in Cuba. Going through formal channels, Annie volunteered her services as a nurse but was not accepted because she lacked sufficient formal training. Taking a different approach, she applied through the Daughters of the American Revolution, hoping somehow her membership in the organization would weigh in her favor, but was again denied. She did not give up. It is not known exactly how she managed despite all obstacles to go to Cuba, but the desire to be close to her father motivated her to find a way to serve with him.

As a volunteer nurse on the first transport to enter Santiago Harbor after the defeat of the Spanish fleet, Annie again met resistance which she would not permit to hinder her. Non-immune nurses were not allowed into the city of Santiago because of the yellow fever epidemic. In consideration of her father's position, however, and against the advice of all in authority, Annie was allowed to land. Clara Barton, who later founded the Red Cross, befriended Annie, giving her a place to spend the night. This was the beginning of a long and devoted friendship between these two exceptional women. The next day Annie put on a nurse's uniform, was given charge of a newly organized hospital and began working side by side with Miss Barton.

There was much to be done. Annie's brother Joe was one of the yellow fever victims, and Annie rode nine miles a day to see to his needs. She tended all sufferers with dedicated devotion and never let her compassion crush her. The boat house of the Officers' Club was converted into a hospital, Wheeler Hospital, named not for the General but for the "Angel of the Hospital," Annie. She returned to the United States before 1899 on the transport "Olivette," nursing the wounded enroute to Camp Wickoff at Montauk Point, Long Island.
On January 13, 1899, a joint resolution was passed by the United States Congress recognizing the "patriotic devotion and unremitting attention of Miss Annie Early Wheeler as nurse to private soldiers of the Army of the United States during the War with Spain." The State of Alabama also acclaimed her services through a joint resolution passed in Montgomery on January 31, 1899 reading: "...Alabama's beloved daughter...inspired by patriotism, saw fit to follow the invading army...into Cuba...did administer to the sick and comfort the dying...amid the horrors of war and dread of plague..." This was the first time in the history of the state of Alabama that a woman was so recognized! The United States Congress designed a medal and presented it to the Director of the Mint, but there is some doubt that it was actually minted as it is not with Annie's personal memorabilia.

This acclaim did not conclude Annie's public service. The year was not over before Annie and her father were off to another battlefield. This time they went to the Philippine Islands where Annie served in Manila hospitals.

After returning from Manila, she traveled to Europe where she and one of her sisters were presented to Queen Victoria of England at the court of St. James. Upon her father's death in 1906, Annie returned to Alabama to live with her sister Lucy and focus her attentions on her beloved home. During this period she also invested time and money to provide educational opportunities for the children of the area. She built two non-denominational churches for the black and white tenants, their families and friends. For thirty years these churches were also used for schools on weekdays and Annie paid the teachers' salaries. In 1936, she helped the county build a larger school by donating five acres of land and $1000.

With the advent of World War I, Annie left Alabama once more to serve; first as a nurse in the United States and later in France. During this time,
her service to her country through Red Cross nursing proved invaluable and resulted in the highest commendations from both the Red Cross and military. Returning to Alabama in 1924, she devoted the rest of her life to improving the quality of life in the state. One of her special projects was helping physically handicapped children; paying for operations, buying shoes and braces, and taking the children for treatment in Memphis or Birmingham. During the depression years, she personally supplemented with food and clothing the efforts of other relief workers. At the outbreak of World War II, Annie continued her public service work by overseeing the programs of the Lawrence County Red Cross. Annie Wheeler at age eighty-seven died at the family plantation in 1955. She was laid to rest in the family cemetery on the plantation near the grave of her mother. To the end, her chief concern was the needs of others.

In many respects Annie Wheeler is an elusive individual. Despite her skills and accomplishments of local, national and international importance, the private side of her personality remains unknown. Her mission was service, and tributes to her focus on that aspect. An exceptional woman who responded in a practical manner to a lifetime of poverty and privilege, war and peace, sickness and death, whatever the circumstances, she did not avoid the challenge.
Architectural Description and Structural Analysis

The Wheeler home, noted in the Historic American Buildings Survey of the 1930s as House B (Appendix A), was constructed between 1870 and 1885. This two-and one-half story frame structure represents a modified form of the Greek Revival architectural style. The house follows a symmetrical four-square plan with rooms flanking a central hall. Its exterior decorative detailing has been upgraded, first through the addition of Victorian millwork and later with vinyl siding, in an attempt to conform to more contemporary stylistic standards and to, supposedly, reduce maintenance costs.

The house is situated on a foundation comprised of both brick and stone piers. Those on the perimeter of the house are brick with fieldstone infill and those on the interior are stone (fig. 1). For the most part the foundation is intact. There are some cracks in the summer beam, joists, and sill beam that are causing the floor above to sag. Wooden supports have been stacked on piers in an attempt to bolster these beams (fig. 2). There is also water accumulation under the west bathroom, room 304a, foundation. It could not be determined whether a leak from the drain or sewer pipes is causing this accumulation or whether water is coming in from the outside. The fireplace foundation next to the bathroom between rooms 303 and 304 has also experienced some failure and attempts have been made to secure it using concrete and brick infill (fig. 3). Boxwood roots and vines are growing under the house and weakening the foundation (fig. 4). Animals are also getting in under the house, and are ripping apart the wire mesh which holds the rock wool insulation in place (fig. 5).

The original weatherboard siding now lies under a sheathing of vinyl siding, which was added after 1955. This siding traps moisture, which is
Fig. 1. Brick piers with stone infill.

Fig. 2. Temporary wooden supports.
Fig. 3. Chimney bolstered by infill.

Fig. 4. Vines growing under Wheeler house.
Fig. 5. Damage done by animals.
causing the original wood clapboard siding to decay. The five-bay front, northern, facade is bilaterally symmetrical, with two windows situated on each side of a centrally-located door (fig. 6). Each window contains six-lights-over-six, with the rectangular panes of glass set in a wooden frame. Application of the vinyl siding forced the removal of all of the house’s original window shutters.

A one-story wooden porch, situated on a cut-stone foundation, extends across the full facade, covered by a sagging shed roof which is supported by six posts (fig. 7). The stone foundation is cracking and separating from the porch and stairways (fig. 10). The porch flooring consists of wooden planks of tongue-and-groove construction, some of which have been replaced. A deteriorating balustrade of Victorian-era millwork extends between these posts to the east and west, or left and right, of a central wooden stairway leading to the porch and the house’s front entrance (figs. 8 & 9). The stairway contains nine wooden steps which have structural weaknesses, as the risers are gradually separating from the steps. Iron piping serves as a central handrail for the stairway. Similar wooden stairways extend from the eastern and western sides of the porch to the ground level (fig. 10). The stairway on the west side of the porch contains seven wooden stairs; whereas the east stairway contains nine. The eastern stairway has deteriorated to a dangerous point, as the stairs have separated from the porch and are virtually free-standing (fig. 11).

The front facade also contains a centrally located door on the second-story level, which possibly indicates the former existence of a two-story porch or two-story Greek Revival portico with balcony (fig. 12). This second-story door lacks decorative detailing, merely being a double-leaf door with two long rectangular panes of glass situated over two short rectangular wooden
Fig. 6. View of Wheeler house.
Fig. 7. Front porch.
Fig. 8. Detail of millwork.

Fig. 9. Detail of balustrade.
Fig. 10. Western stairway and porch entrance.

Fig. 11. Eastern wooden stairway.
Fig. 12. Northeastern view showing second-story door and eastern facade.

Fig. 13. Greek-Revival entrance.
panels, covered by an exterior screen door. The first floor entranceway follows Greek Revival styling. A four-pane transom light and three-pane sidelights frame the door system, which consists of double-leaf, wooden panel double doors, with exterior double screen doors (fig. 13). Each door contains two long, narrow wooden panels over two shorter ones. The door located on the right side of the entranceway contains a brass eagle doorknocker, complete with nameplate engraved "J. Wheeler" (figs. 14 & 15). A manually operated doorbell is situated on the panelled section of the right, western, sidelight (fig. 16). Electric porch lights, located on each side of the door system, plug into individual electric outlets provided for them. An electric light hangs from the center of the porch ceiling in front of the double doors to illuminate the entranceway.

The house is apparently topped by a decorative galvanized steel gable roof that contains three interior brick chimneys (fig. 17). One extends in an east to west direction to the rear of the roofline on the western side of the house. A second chimney runs in a north to south direction and is located on the southern, rear, side of the house. Its foundation appears to have settled and is causing the floor in the central hallway on the first floor to sag. The third chimney, originally located on the exterior, eastern end of the house, to the front, or north, of the roofline, now lies to the interior of the vinyl siding.

The eastern facade of the Wheeler house was originally symmetrical, with four windows on the first and second floors, and two windows on the attic level (fig. 18). Each window contains six-lights-over-six in a wooden frame. A bathroom window, added in the center of the second story row of windows, altered the previously symmetrical window arrangement. This window is smaller than the original windows, but also contains six-lights-over-six. A vertical metal chase extends the full height of the house, covering
Fig. 14. Wheeler nameplate.

Fig. 15. Door knocker.

Fig. 16. Manual doorbell.
Fig. 17. Note placement of chimneys.
Fig. 18. Southern, rear facade.

Fig. 19. Western facade and addition.
plumbing pipes that service the second floor bathroom.

The southern or rear, facade also consists of a five-bay facade with two windows arranged symmetrically on either side of a centrally-located door (fig. 18). These windows conform to the style of others in the house, having six-lights-over-six set within wooden frames. The central entranceway resembles the one on the front facade. It also contains double doors framed by a rectangular transom with four horizontal lights, and sidelights composed of three vertical panes over paneled wooden sections. Each double door consists of double leaf construction with two long narrow rectangular wooden panels situated over two shorter rectangular ones. The right door features an eagle doorknocker, identical to the one on the front door. Double screen doors cover the two wooden ones.

Electric wires connect to one electric meter and two fuse/switch boxes which are located on the eastern side of the rear facade. A one-and-one-half foot wide metal electrical chase extends the first-story height of the facade. This chase and one fuse box are located between the door and window to its right. Another fuse box lies between the two windows on the eastern side of the facade. An electric meter is situated near the southeastern corner of the house.

A two-story porch dominates this southern facade (fig. 18). Eight 9' x 9' wooden posts, situated on the first-story level of the porch, support its second story level. A balustrade extends between eight 4" x 4" square wooden posts on the second story level porch, which support a shed roof. This balustrade consists of sections including eight balusters covered by a banister located between the eight supporting posts. The shed roof contains three single, individually hanging electric light bulbs that illuminate the second-story porch. A square hole cut in the shed roof on the southeastern side of
the porch exposes the shed roof beams and metal roof covering above.

The wooden tongue-and-groove floor on the second-story porch has been painted a blue-grey color, however, the underside of the second-story shed roof reveals the original, unpainted boards. The underside of the first-story ceiling has been covered with vinyl siding. Support posts on the first-story level rest on four three-inch square blocks that are stacked on top of each other in decreasing size. The first-story porch, added in approximately 1949, consists of a poured concrete slab over a cut-stone foundation. This porch extends the full length of the facade, and runs further westward to the breezeway which connects the Wheeler house to the earlier house. The first- and second-story porch levels are connected by a wooden stairway, with blue-grey painted four-inch square newel posts. A banister extends over balusters running beside twenty stairs which are covered with a metal tread. A small utility closet occupies space under the stairway, accessible through a small doorway facing the east.

Two steps, consisting of stone slabs placed over a stone foundation, lead to the first-story porch. Positioned in front of the rear entranceway, these steps are framed by two stone slabs that are laid vertically, extending southward from the porch over the stone foundation. A stone staircase located on the eastern side of the porch also provides access to this area. This stairway consists of four stone steps framed by larger stone slabs. Another stairway, located on the western side of this rear facade, consists of two poured concrete steps, and provides access from the ground level to the stairway extending to the second-story level of the porch. A metal pipe handrail runs to the right of the steps and connects to the second supporting post on the first-story level.

The western façade resembles the eastern façade, and was
symmetrical originally (fig 19). Four windows are arranged symmetrically on both the first and second story levels, with two windows on the attic level. Two casement windows have been added, one on each of the first and second floors, in order to provide light and ventilation for later bathroom additions. Electric wires connect to the house on this western side. Also, a metal chase, located to the right of the facade’s center, extends the full height of the facade for plumbing and electrical service for the added bathrooms.

The brick pier foundation on this western side of the house reveals the original piers, as well as spaces of later brick and cut-stone in-fill. Concrete has been applied over some sections of the foundation, in an effort to provide additional support.

A later addition abuts, but does not connect, the western facade (fig. 17). This small addition, originally covered with weatherboard siding, is topped by a northward sloping pent roof. The roof that covers the breezeway connecting the Wheeler house to the earlier house adjoins the roof of this addition. The addition has one door on its southern wall, next to the southeastern corner of the structure (figs. 20 & 21). Its wooden door is made up of five vertical planks and is covered by a screen door. The southern wall of this addition also contains a small window that has a six-inch shelf, supported by two plain brackets, extending from the window.

An exterior door, located on the southern side of the western facade, provides access to the house, via room 304, from the rear exterior porch and breezeway. As room 304 was used as a dining room during the Wheeler family occupation, this door probably led to an exterior kitchen. The door is composed of eighteen lights, arranged in six rows of three rectangular panels, set in a wooden frame, and covered by a screen door.

The house represents the establishment of the Joseph Wheeler
Fig. 20. Rear breezeway.

Fig. 21. Detail of rear balustrade.
household after his marriage to Daniella Hickman Jones. The earlier house, noted as A in the site plan, is noted later in this report. It served as the Hickman family home, and later home of Daniella and her first husband, Colonel Richard Jones. It began as a two-story double pen log cabin which was later covered with weatherboard siding and Greek Revival architectural detailing. Joseph and Daniella had their new house (House B) constructed between 1770 and 1885. The house conformed to a Greek Revival design scheme, which was popular during the mid-nineteenth century. The Wheeler House (B) has changed little over the past one hundred years. The removal of window shutters and addition of vinyl siding after 1955 accounts for the greatest change to the structure. Both House A and House B, in fact, retain their historical and structural fabric and integrity.

The earlier house on the Wheeler property, noted in the Historic American Buildings Survey of the 1930s as House A, was built about 1818 as a two-story I-house (fig. 22). An I-house is a particular classification characterized by a central hallway flanked by one room to each side on both floors (fig. 23). The original log portion of the house sits on a fieldstone foundation. The main section of the house is a double-pen log structure with half dove-tail notching. An inspection of the crawl space shows the foundation and the crawl space area dry and in good condition. The log floor joists are hewn only on their top side with the bark present around the exposed portions. The logs appear to be solid and rot-free.

Three bays across, the main house was built of wide beaded weatherboard now covered with vinyl siding and resting on a foundation of cut stone and brick. Two exterior brick chimneys, which have been repointed with Portland cement, are set in the east and west gable ends of the metal roof. A grand pedimented portico is the commanding feature of the symmetrical facade (fig.
Fig. 22. View of earlier Wheeler house.

Fig. 23. Portico of house A.
24). The pediment has a raking cornice and a weatherboarded tympanum. The portico is enhanced by squared columns and pilasters on the original plank porch supporting a balcony with a balustrade composed of both square and turned spindles (fig. 25).

The entrance on the first floor includes a double leaf, wooden paneled door with a double leaf screen door. The panels in the door are arranged with three panels horizontally across the upper portion and two vertically on the lower. To each side of the entry diamond-paned sidelights are positioned above wooden panels and a transom with gothic tracery crowns the entrance (fig. 26). Reeded pilasters divide the paneled door and the sidelights. On the second floor balcony, the door is identical to the one on the first floor but smaller in scale. Multi-paned sidelights complement the second floor door (fig. 27). Windows on the first floor are two twelve-over-twelve light double hung sash to each side of the portico. The original wooden louvered shutters were removed when vinyl siding was installed. The north facade of House A is striking in its symmetry with two twelve-over-twelve light double hung sash windows on the second floor placed exactly above those on the first floor.

The west elevation of House A includes an extension with a metal roof, and sits on a stone foundation, its shed roof facing west. The brick chimney at the end of the main body of the house is incorporated into the wall between the main structure and the more recent extension. This extension was added after 1955 and is recessed from the main house. The northern facade of the extension contains five windows, one four-over-four light double hung sash and a band of multi-paned casement windows. From the western elevation can be seen the chimney rising above the one story extension, its cap repaired. One twelve-over-twelve light double hung sash window is located on the first floor. Two twelve-over-twelve light double hung sash windows
Fig. 24. West elevation of House A.

Fig. 25. Balcony of House A.
Fig. 26. Sidelights and gothic tracery.
Fig. 27. Second floor door to balcony.
flank the chimney on the second floor in the west elevation. Another band of multi-paned casement windows is located in the western elevation of the extension. Behind this extension, in the west elevation and recessed from this shed extension, is an enclosed screened porch which was part of the original building. Access to the porch is obtained through a screen door leading into the main house through a single leaf wooden paneled door. One nine-over-nine light double hung sash window is situated in the southwestern rear of this elevation.

The eastern elevation includes an exterior brick chimney with a corbelled cap which has been repaired (fig. 28), one four paneled wooden door to the northeastern side and one one-over-one light double hung sash window on the first floor. The second floor features one twelve-over-twelve light double hung sash window which has been partially enclosed with a window air conditioner unit. To the rear of the main body of the house, in the east elevation, is a large wooden paneled double leaf door with a multi-paned transom. This portion of the house terminates in a projecting ell extension which features a small wooden door in the northern wall. This house connects with House B by a gallery resting on a later concrete walk with wooden posts supporting a combination gable and shed roof (fig. 29).

The rear of House A is composed of three gable projections from the main house, each with a gable roof configuration and exterior chimneys in two of the three projections. The middle section is open and served at one time as a type of covered porch space, possibly for the horse and buggy and later for automobiles. To the western side, the gable end includes the chimney and two small windows. To the eastern side, the gable end is composed of another brick chimney matching the one to the west, one small six-light window and one small single-pane window.
Fig. 28. East elevation/brick chimney.

Fig. 29. Gallery connecting House A with House B.
The interior court is a remarkably intact area that has a field stone floor and two large nine-over-nine light double hung sash windows with the original hunter green louvered shutters, one in the western wall and one in the eastern wall (fig. 30). In this court yard space can be found examples of the original beaded weatherboard and wooden shutters. The interior beyond this court yard features an arched passageway that connects the east and west ends (fig. 31). It appears that the archway was specifically designed to enhance cross-ventilation. The flow of air through this space could be controlled by this configuration. This "T"-shaped hallway and passage forms a unique architectural feature.

House A, as described above, served as the second residence on the property. The log cabin, which is discussed in detail in Chapter VII, "Landscape, Cemeteries, and Outbuildings", served as the original Hickman family residence.
Fig. 30. Examples of original weatherboard and louvered shutters.

Fig. 31. Arched passage.
Interior Description

This section describes and documents the present condition of the house, house B, built in 1880s for General Joseph Wheeler and his bride, Daniella Jones Sherrod. The floor plan of this substantial plantation house is based on the Georgian style, deriving its name from the English monarchs of the eighteenth century and the evolution of this style in England of that time (fig. 1) Both the first and second stories contain a central passage with two rooms of equal size opening from each side of the central hall. The four rooms on both the first and second floors contain two symmetrical bays in their exterior walls. The attic, divided into two rooms, provides both living and storage space.

The asymmetrical placement of fireplaces interrupts the typical Georgian form of the building. Three chimneys serve eleven fireplaces. The rooms to the right of the central hall are heated by fireplaces centrally located on their common interior wall. Fireplaces on the first and second floor, located centrally on the east wall, heat the front rooms to the left of the central hallway. The back parlor and bedroom above as well as both the first and second story central hall are heated by fireplaces located centrally on the interior wall common to both the back rooms and the hall.

The house rests on a solid foundation, composed of a series of brick piers and stone infill and requires a flight of stairs containing ten steps to reach the front porch and main entrance. Double doors give access to the central passage.

Room 302, the central hallway, measures approximately 40' by 14' and
Fig. 1. Floor plans.
runs in a north south direction (fig. 2). The flooring of the hallway is of five-inch tongue and groove planks also running north to south. A plain one-foot baseboard with quarter-round molding encircles the room. Both ceiling and walls are of plaster on lath. The stairway ascends to the second floor along the west wall rising to the south. This is the most elaborate detail of the hall. It features a large turned newel post and turned spindles topped by a graceful handrail. The newel consists of a square base topped by turnings rising to a tapered octagonal shaft, which is again topped by more turnings (fig. 3). Under the stair is a series of two square columns with beveled edges connected by an arch. This feature not only enhances the appearance of the hallway but also adds support to the staircase (fig. 4).

Also along the west wall are two doorways, one leading to Room 303, the other to 304. Both doors consist of a single leaf with two-over-two recessed panels. All door surrounds are a series of plain moldings extending to a width of about five inches. The south wall is dominated by the doorway leading to the back porch (fig. 5). This configuration consists of a double-leaf door with two-over-two recessed, beveled panels, flanked by sidelights of three panes over a beveled recessed panel and surmounted by a four light transom. Two Victorian screen doors have been attached to the outside of the doorway. These screen doors do not fit the door opening, as they extend above the top of the door frame.

The east wall contains a single-leaf doorway with two-over-two recessed panels which lead to Room 305, the back parlor. Next to this doorway is a fireplace with a brick hearth (fig. 6). The firebox has been closed and sealed. Its dark-varnished wooden mantle consists of two fluted pilasters topped by a narrow shelf. A series of applied moldings enhance the appearance of the mantle. A large coal/wood-burning heating stove is located just beyond the
Fig. 2. Central hallway.

Fig. 3. Newel post.
Fig. 4. Arch.
Fig. 5. Back door.
Fig. 6. First floor hall fireplace.
hearth. Its flue-pipe extends through a whole cut in the chimney. Also along
the east wall is a large opening into Room 306, the front parlor. Folding
doors of four leaves separate the hallway from the parlor (fig. 7). Two leaves
are hinged together to form the left and right halves of the door. Each leaf
consists of two-over-two recessed panels. A large wooden curtain rod extends
along the top of the door frame and supports several wooden hoops (fig. 8). It
consists of a twelve-foot round rod supported by scrolled brackets with a
carved floral design. Large turned finials are attached at either end of the
rod.

The north wall is dominated by the front doorway (fig. 9). This
configuration consists of a double-leaf door with two-over-two recessed
panels. It is bordered by three-light sidelights over a single recessed panel
and is surmounted by a four-light transom. The doors are secured by a large
one-foot by eight-inch brass dead-bolt lock. A nickel-plated door bell is
located under one of the sidelights.

The lighting for this room consists of a four-light brass, electric chandelier
near the front door in the northern end of the hall. This fixture probably
dates from the 1930's or 1940's. A single electric fixture, with a milk glass
shade, lights the southern end of the hall.

Stress cracks in the plaster of the walls and ceiling and a sag in the
floor in the vicinity of the fireplace comprise the major structural problems of
this room. A vertical crack in the plaster just to the left of the fireplace
extends from the floor through to the second story ceiling. The settling of the
chimney's foundation, noted earlier in this report, is the likely cause of both
of these problems.

Room 303, located on the northwestern corner of the dwelling, served as a
bedroom during the Wheeler family occupation. It measures 19'8" x 19'11",
Fig. 7. folding doors.
Fig. 8. Curtain rod.

Fig. 9. Front door.
and access may be obtained from Room 302, located to the east; from Room 304, located to the south; and through Room 303a, which is a small bathroom adjoining Rooms 303 and 304. Due to this later bathroom addition, the western end of the southern wall of Room 303 angles into the room, from the western end of the chimney to the western exterior wall.

Interior walls and the ceiling are composed of plaster over lath construction, with the exception of the angled wall extending into the room from the bathroom addition, which is of tongue-and-groove construction. Flooring, also of tongue-and-groove construction, consists of wooden planks measuring five inches wide positioned in a north-south direction, following the front to back direction of the house. Two double-sash windows are located symmetrically on the western exterior wall and two are located symmetrically on the northern exterior wall, or front facade of the house. Each window measures approximately 6'2" x 2'10" and contains six-over-six lights, or rectangular panes of glass set in a wooden frame. Each window can be secured by a simple swing lock. Two interior doors, leading from Rooms 302 and 304, consist of single-leaf construction with two long rectangular panels over two shorter ones. Each door measures 6'11" x 3' and contains a metal rim lock with porcelain knob. A smaller, but similar door, measuring 6'5" x 2'6", provides access from room 303 to the bathroom, room 303a.

The room contains very little decorative treatment. A one-foot brown baseboard with a one-quarter-inch round molding adjoins the walls and the floor. Picture molding encircles the room, but breaks at the tongue-and-groove bathroom wall. Doors leading from Rooms 302 and 304 contain a small door knocker, indicating that the occupants desired a certain amount of privacy from other members of the household. A brass chandelier, consisting of four globes, hangs from the ceiling in the center of the room and provides
electric lighting. A fireplace, located on the southern wall, lacks extensive decoration (fig. 10). It measures 4'3" x 6'11" and contains a simple brown painted wooden mantle. Engaged wooden pilasters frame the firebox, measuring 2'8" x 3'3", and constructed of small tiles. A brick hearth extends 2'7" x 5'11". Room 303 lacks any heat source other than this fireplace.

Room 303 contains some structural problems. Plaster is falling on the walls and ceiling, as it pulls away from the lath beneath. The exterior wall on the western side of the room is separating from the floor. At present, a three-quarter-inch gap exists between the floor and the formerly adjoining wall. In addition, the floor sags from east to west across Room 303. The fireplace mantle also sags, and may pull from the wall in the future.

Room 303a consists of a small bathroom, located between rooms 303 and 304, which was added on the western side of the house in the early-twentieth century (fig. 11). It measures approximately 3'3" x 6'11" and occupies space formerly in Room 303. Its walls and ceiling are of tongue-and-groove construction, with bead board decoration. The east and south walls feature a ten and one-half inch wooden baseboard, and the west and north walls contain only a quarter round molding next to the floor. The flooring of Room 303a is irregular, consisting of wooden planks measuring three and one-quarter to three and one-half inches, extending in a north to south direction.

Two interior doors provide access to Room 303a. Each measures 6'5" x 2'6", and is composed of single-leaf construction with two long rectangular panels over two shorter ones. The western exterior wall contains one casement window, measuring 2'9" x 2'10". Composed of three-over-three lights, it swings open horizontally from right to left, in a north to south direction. A single electric light bulb hangs unadorned from the center of the ceiling and provides light for this small room. Room 303a contains routine
Fig. 10. Fireplace in room 303.

Fig. 11. Bathroom.
bathroom plumbing fixtures, including a claw-and-ball foot bathtub, toilet, and lavatory. Additional fixtures include chrome towel racks on the north and west walls. Water damage is causing the ceiling to sag and rot and the tongue-and-groove wall covering is warping.

Room 304, located on the southwestern corner of House B, served as a dining room during the Wheeler family occupation. It measures approximately 19'2" x 20'2" and access may be obtained from an exterior door located on the west wall, from Room 302, located to the east, from Room 303, located to the north, and through Room 303a, which is a small bathroom addition adjoining Rooms 303 and 304. The room has a uniform rectangular shape.

Interior walls and the ceiling are composed of plaster over lathe construction. Flooring, of tongue-and-groove construction, consists of wooden planks measuring three-and-one-quarter inches wide positioned in a north-south direction, following the front to back direction of the house. One double-sash window is located on the western exterior wall and two are located symmetrically on the southern exterior wall, or rear facade of the house. Each window measures approximately 6'2" x 2'10" and contains six-over-six lights, or rectangular panes of glass set in a wooden frame, and secured by a simple swing lock. Two interior doors, leading from Rooms 302 and 303, consist of single-leaf construction with two long rectangular panels over two shorter ones. Each door measures 6'11" x 3' and contains a metal rim lock with porcelain knob. The door leading to the bathroom addition, Room 303a, resembles the other interior doors, but measures 6'5" x 2'6". The exterior door, located on the southern side of the western wall, leads to the rear porch and breezeway which connects House A with House B. This door measures 6'2" x 4' and is composed of eighteen panes of glass, six rows in
three columns, set in a wooden frame.

A brown painted wooden baseboard, measuring ten and one-half inches tall with a one-half-inch round molding, adjoins the walls and the floor. Picture molding, twenty-seven inches below the ceiling line, encircles the room. The door leading to Room 303 contains a small door knocker. A brass chandelier composed of four globes, hangs from the ceiling in the center of the room and provides electric lighting for the room. The fireplace, located on the northern wall, contains classical elements and provides most of the structural decorative treatment for the room (fig. 12). It measures 4'9" x 6'7" and contains a white painted wooden mantle with dentil molding. Two small columns frame each side of the firebox, which measures 2'7" x 3'4", and is constructed of small tiles. A brick hearth extends 2'4" x 6'8", providing the only heat source for the room. The only damage to this room is the plaster falling off the walls and ceiling. Later alterations include the construction of a door in the northern wall, leading to the bathroom addition, Room 303a.

Room 305, the rear parlor, measures 23'6" x 20' and is similar in appearance to the front parlor; however, it contains less furniture and was likely used as a study room (fig. 13). The hardwood floors are of five inch wide plank tongue and groove construction, with a definite sag in the middle of the room. The ceiling and walls are of plaster on lath, and a picture mold runs along each wall, one and a half feet from the ceiling. The 12-inch high baseboard is of varnished oak with quarter-round molding. There is no evidence of wallpaper in the room. Along the north wall is a pair of folding doors leading into the front parlor, and a single four-panel door is found on the west wall leading into the hallway. These doors feature original latches and hinges and measure 3' by 7' for the single door and 5' by 8' tall for each of the folding doors. As in the front parlor, there are four six-over-six double
Fig. 12. Dining room fireplace.

Fig. 13. Rear parlor.
hung sash windows located in pairs in the north and east walls. The parlor's fireplace has a dark varnished wood mantle surrounded by glazed white tile, a brick firebox with metal frame, and a brick hearth. The floor sags in the vicinity of this fireplace. Lighting consists of one five-light suspended brass electric chandelier in the center of the ceiling and two single-bulb brass electric lamps on each side of the folding doors along the north wall. These lamps feature fluted glass shades identical to those in the front parlor.

Structural problems in this room include the sagging floor, moisture damage to the plaster ceiling, and stress cracks in the walls and ceiling. Much of the paint has chipped and peeled, and the windows show evidence of moisture problems.

Room 306, the front parlor, measures 23'6" by 20' (fig. 14). The flooring in this room consists of five inch wide plank tongue and groove hardwood. The walls and ceiling are of plaster on lath, with no evidence of wallpaper. A picture mold runs around the perimeter of the room, one and a half feet from the ceiling. The baseboard measures one foot high and is made of varnished oak. There are two pairs of folding doors in the room, one pair on the west wall opening into the other parlor, and one pair on the south wall opening into the hallway. These double-leaf doors are five feet wide by eight feet high, and feature original hinges and latches. The doors along the south wall include a wooden drapery rod, held by carved floral motif brackets with carved rings. There are four 6-over-6 light double hung sash windows in the room, two in the north wall and two in the east wall. The fireplace is made of dark varnished wood with a metal firebox surrounded by white glazed tile (fig. 15). The firebox has an applied tin covering on its top third portion and the hearth is made of brick. There are three lights in the parlor. The most prominent is a suspended brass five-light electric chandelier with glass
Fig. 14. Front parlor.

Fig. 15. Front parlor fireplace.
shades. This central ceiling light is accompanied by two single-bulb brass lights which hang on opposite sides of the folding doors on the south wall. On each side of the folding doors there are brass decorative brackets for hanging kerosene lamps. The parlor is in good overall condition, with the exception of stress cracks and fissures in the walls and ceiling, and peeling paint and plaster.

The second story contains four bedrooms and a large hall (fig. 16). The central stair hall, Room 402, runs the length of the house with large single leaf wooden paneled doors to the north facade and the south rear gallery. This great hall is about forty feet in length and almost twelve feet in width. Paneled, single leaf doors with plain surrounds and the original hardware open to the east and west bedrooms. The hall flooring is constructed of 5 inch wide tongue and groove hardwood. The ceiling and walls are plaster on lath, unadorned. The plain baseboards are about one foot high with quarter round molding. The hall area contains a large fireplace with a wooden mantel, pilasters supporting a plain wooden shelf and a brick hearth and firebox (fig. 17). Two electric light fixtures hang from the ceiling. On the east side of the hall enclosed stairs lead to the third floor attic (fig. 18). The stair treads are visible beyond the enclosure (fig. 19). The tongue and groove paneling, which resembles beaded board, encloses the stair and has been painted in areas to imitate door surrounds and baseboards (fig. 20). A small storage closet is under this enclosure and is entered from the north side. There is a sag in the vicinity of the fireplace directly over the same structural problem of the first floor.

The northwest front bedroom, Room 403, has matching hardwood flooring and ceilings and walls of plaster on lath. A picture encircles the room about one and one half feet from the ceiling. The plain baseboard is about one foot
Fig. 16. Second floor hallway.

Fig. 17. Second floor hall fireplace.
Fig. 18. Enclosed staircase.

Fig. 19. Exposed stair treads.
Fig. 20. Beadboard painted to imitate door surround.

Fig. 21. Fireplace in room 403.
high and exhibits a quarter round molding at the floor. Two single leaf wooden paneled doors with original hardware are included in this room, leading to the hall and to the south rear room. Windows are six-over-six double hung sash, two to the west side and two facing the north front. The fireplace features a brick hearth and a wooden mantel shelf supported by pilasters (fig. 21). Lighting consists of a brass fixture with glass globes in the center of the ceiling. A bathroom addition, enclosed with tongue and groove paneling that resembles beaded board, serves both this bedroom, Room 403, and Room 404.

The bathroom, identified as Room 403A, is a small irregular room with three and one quarter tongue and groove plank flooring. The ceiling is composed of bead board siding and plaster on lathe. The walls are a combination of bead board siding, plaster and tongue and groove planks. Two small wooden paneled doors access each bedroom. The single window is a small, high, multi-paned casement with simple hinges and a catch. The bath includes modern conveniences, including a hot water heater, toilet, pedestal sink and claw and ball footed bath tub. It is likely that this room, as well as the other bathrooms, is an early twentieth century addition.

The northeast front bedroom, Room 407, is about twenty-one feet square. Flooring is five-inch wide plank tongue and groove hardwood. The walls are of plaster on lath, matching the hall and other rooms. A picture mold runs around the room about one and one half feet from the ceiling. The plain baseboard is about one foot high. Two wooden paneled, single leaf doors with original locks and porcelain knobs are located to the south rear and in the west wall. Windows are six-over-six double-hung sash, two in the north front wall and two in the east exterior wall flanking the fireplace. The large fireplace is surrounded by a wooden mantel with a plain shelf supported by
pilasters and enhanced by a decorative medallion. The decorative daisy design runs the length of the room and is visible under subsequent layers of paint (fig. 22). White tiles encircle the metal firebox. Like Room 403, the lighting is a brass hanging fixture. A bathroom addition was created with bead board siding and is located in the east wall with access from both bedrooms, Rooms 407 and 406.

This bathroom, Room 406a, is similar to the other on the second floor and reflects an early twentieth-century effort to modernize the house. The floors are three and three-quarters-inch tongue and groove hardwood. The ceiling and walls are bead board paneling with quarter round as the only decorative element. Two small wooden paneled doors open to the bedrooms. One small six-over-six double-hung sash window in the east wall is an additional feature. The bath includes a pedestal sink, toilet, hot water heater, ball and claw foot tub, and several built in cabinets for storage.

Directly behind this room is another bedroom, Room 406, which is about twenty feet square. The floors, walls and ceiling are identical to the rest of the second floor. A picture mold about fifteen inches from the ceiling rests on the top of the window surrounds (fig. 23). The plain wooden baseboard is about one foot high. Two wooden paneled, single leaf doors are located in this room, one to the hall and the other connecting the two bedrooms. The fireplace is surrounded by a wooden mantel with a plain shelf supported by pilasters. A medallion is a decorative detail on the mantel (fig. 24). The firebox rests on a brick hearth and is surrounded by white tile. The light fixture is brass with glass globes. Windows are six-over-six double hung sash, with two in the east wall and two in the south wall. The window to the southeast has been converted to serve as a door, an unusual adaptation, with a panel below the sill that has been cut and hinged (fig. 25). This room
Fig. 22. Fireplace in room 407.

Fig. 23. Deteriorated plaster and picture molding.
Fig. 24. Fireplace in room 406.

Fig. 25. Wall cut to form doorway.
shares the bath addition with Room 407 to the north front (fig. 26). A large section of plaster has fallen from the ceiling of Room 406 and the floor sags towards the fireplace.

To the southwest rear is the fourth bedroom, Room 404, which is identical to the other three. The five-inch wide plank hardwood flooring is tongue and groove. The ceiling and walls are plaster on lathe. Two wooden paneled single leaf doors lead to the hall and the north west front bedroom Windows match the others on the second floor. They are six-over-six double hung sash with two to the west and two to the south. The large fireplace is surrounded by wooden pilasters supporting a plain wooden shelf, and white tiles surround the firebox (fig. 27). A bath and closet are additions constructed from beadboard.

The enclosed staircase, in located on the second floor hall leads to the attic. This staircase opening is enclosed on the attic level also. The attic appears to have been used as sleeping quarters and storage. It is a half story space with sloped walls along the north and south side of the building. It contains two rooms with a partition running north to south. This partition lies above the interior wall dividing the central hall and the rooms on the east side of the building. The larger room, Room 501, which comprises the area of the central hall and two adjoining rooms on the west side of the house, is basically square, measuring 30' 1" by 30' 6". The floors are unpainted. The section of flooring above the central hall runs north and south, as in the hallway below, and is composed of tongue and groove planks 5" wide. The rest of this area is floored with planks running in a east-west direction. Lath and plaster cover the walls and ceiling in this room, large amounts of which have fallen from both the walls and ceiling (figs. 28 & 29). Numerous stress cracks are apparent, especially on the north and south
Fig. 26. Bathroom addition.

Fig. 27. Fireplace in 404.
Fig. 28. Attic ceiling, showing fallen plaster.

Fig. 29. Attic ceiling, showing fallen plaster.
walls. A six inch plain baseboard with a quarter round molding comprises the only decorative treatment in this area. The west gable contains two symmetrically placed six-over-six double hung sash windows (fig. 30). These windows measure 6' by 2' 9". Located just west of center, the chimney, which services the floors below, rises through the floor and out through the roof. A partitioned area fills the north east corner of the room and measures 20' 5" by 12' 2'. Within this space lies an access to the space above the front eaves. The partitioned area is entered through a doorway located on its shorter wall, which runs north and south. The door lies just to the left of center. Composed of vertical boards, it exhibits a metal rimlock and porcelain knob and is 2' 9" wide. The hinges are modern. The purpose of the enclosed area is unknown.

Room 502 measures 30' 1" by 19' 11". It is entered through a doorway just to the right of the staircase opening in Room 501. The door composed of vertical boards measures 2' 6" by 6' 7". It features brass knobs, a metal rimlock, brass escutcheons, and decorative hinges. The room is treated in much the same fashion as Room 501. Tongue and groove plank, running in an east-west direction make up the floor. Lath and plaster covers the walls and ceiling. The walls on the north and south side of the house are sloped. They both contain a small access door to the triangular area beyond and out over the eaves (fig. 31). A plain baseboard and quarter round molding provide the main decorative feature. The gable end features two symmetrically placed windows of the same composition as those in Room 501. Just to the left of these windows rises the chimney stack, which services the front parlor and front bedroom. A fireplace, located on the partition wall in the south west corner of the room, heated this area. It features a simple wooden mantel, which rests on decorative brackets. The fire box is much smaller than those
Fig. 30. Double hung window in gable end of room.

Fig. 31. Access door.
on the first and second stories. Both the firebox and hearth are composed of brick. The ceiling contains a hatch to the attic which is about four to five feet high at its peak. Rock wool insulation fills the spaces between the ceiling joists (fig. 32). An opening located in the attic allows access to the roof. Both Room 501 and Room 502 contain numerous stress cracks and large areas of fallen plaster. Several large trunks in both rooms contain letters, books, mementos, and uniforms which belonged to General Wheeler, his sons, and daughter, Annie. There is also an abundance of decorative furnishings stored in the attic.

This large Georgian plantation house contains three floors of living space. For the most part the house is in a fairly stable condition, but needs further maintenance attention to insure no further damages occur. The main problems are caused by the settling of an interior chimney foundation. Water damage is another source of the problems of the interior of the house and steps should be taken to prevent further damage if recent roof repairs have not solved the problem.
Fig. 32. Attic space accessible by hatch in attic ceiling.
Decorative Arts

The term decorative arts refers to the decoration, appointments, or ornaments employed in the interior of the Wheeler House. The decorative arts in the home reflect the personal taste, wealth, and status of the Wheelers as well as contemporary cultural tastes. Decorative art includes the furniture and other ornaments that decorate the rooms, the floor coverings and window treatments, and the wall and ceiling decoration such as wallpaper or painted finishes. The Wheeler collection is a remarkable assemblage that comfortably combines objects representing several decorative styles and periods and reflects changes the Wheelers made during their lives. The collection is an immensely valuable and irreplaceable research and interpretation tool for the property. The collection physically illustrates the Wheeler's local, national, and international exposure reflected in the oil paintings of prominent family members, objects collected from international travel, and military objects from The War Between the States and the Spanish-American War. The effort of Annie Wheeler to memorialize the life of her father, General Wheeler, is dramatically illustrated by his many personal belongings tenderly displayed in the house. There are several objects in the collection that pre-date Joseph and Daniella Wheeler's marriage in 1866: the Wheeler china, a family heirloom; antique European vases; and early American primitives from a sugar chest to a tin candle mold.

Some of the silver and china...and furniture in the house was brought in wagons from the residence of General Peter Early in 1823, when his daughter, Mrs. Richard Jones, the mother of Mrs. Wheeler, came with her young husband to a new country.¹

The furniture styles represented in the Wheeler collection include both
primitive and high style pieces. The American primitive style are locally made pieces whose designs continued substantially unchanged for generations. The high style includes pieces from the Empire style popular between 1810 to 1840; the Victorian style popular between 1840 to 1910; and twentieth century reproductions of Victorian marble-top tables and side chairs. There are also objects of glass, ceramics, metals, wood, textiles, photos, paper, and paintings illustrating the breadth of the collection. The majority of the objects are nineteenth and twentieth century machine-made pieces; however, the hoop skirt stools may have been made on the plantation (fig. 1).

At the time of this study, the original room uses in the house were not definitely known. It is reasonably certain, however, that the front and back parlors and the dining room reflect original room designations. There were four photographs discovered in the Wheeler papers, presently located at the Birmingham Public Library, that depict the front and back parlors. The date of the photographs, however, is not known. There are two views of the back parlor showing distinctly different decorative arrangements. The hallway (fig. 2), the front parlor (fig. 3), and the back parlor (fig. 4) in three of the photographs are profusely decorated with large potted plants and greenery trained around the doorways and windows. The rooms are sparsely furnished but appear to have sufficient seating arrangements to properly entertain guests of the family. Several family portraits adorn the walls and room-size carpets cover the wooden floors. The photographs depict a light color value on the walls contrasting with a dark value on the wooden door and window trim. The fourth photograph (fig. 5) illustrates the back parlor at a different date. There is no greenery in the room, instead, a dark curtain hangs on a rod at the sliding doors. It appears the room contains more
Fig. 1. Hoop Skirt Stool.
Fig. 2. Hallway
Fig. 3. Front parlor.
Fig. 4. Back Parlor
fig. 5. Pack Parlor
furniture at this date. There is now a covered rectangular table in the room
displaying several framed portraits. The following is a brief interior
description by an unknown author:

In the hallways are portraits of the sons of
Governor Early of Georgia, who was the grandfather of
Mrs. Wheeler, and a large life-sized portrait of the
General in the uniform in which he led the troops in
Cuba. Large bookcases filled with books, quaint
old-timey tables, old chairs, and a spinning wheel complete the hall.

The dining room...holds the most beautiful thing in the house, a
life sized picture of the General in the uniform of a Lieutenant General
of the Confederate Army. Around the walls of the dining room are
china closets filled with much rare and beautiful old china. Just
opposite the portrait are two white and gold pitchers with the
inscription in gold..."Joseph Wheeler 1831," belonging to the General’s
father.

The two large parlors are lined with old
pictures, portraits, photographs, and mirrors.
Pictures (include) the General’s children from babyhood
to grown men and women. A beautiful portrait of his
youngest son, Tim, in the uniform of an Annapolis
cadet, painted just before he was drowned at Montauk
Point.

Upstairs are the four rooms of the four
sisters...Each room is filled with old-timey furniture,
carved four poster beds and quaint old bureaus and high
boys, and a majestic wardrobe brought over from France
to New Orleans.2

Presently, five of the eight rooms (excluding the three bathrooms) are
furnished as bedrooms. They contain Victorian poster beds, a half-tester bed,
an assortment of Empire and Victorian chests of drawers, bookcases, and
small side tables. The dining room is furnished primarily in the Empire
style, containing a dining table, side chairs, china press, buffet, and a card
table (fig. 6). There is also a primitive sugar chest in the room. The front
and back parlors are furnished with a Victorian sofa, an Empire sofa, several
styles of side chairs and rocking chairs, bookcases, a piano, and a gilded
overmantel mirror (fig. 7).

The glass and ceramic collections include kerosene lamps, statuary,
Fig. 6. Empire Furniture in Dining Room.

Fig. 7. Sofa and Chairs in Front Parlor.
eighteenth century European vases, cut glass hurricane shades, glass tableware, and ceramic table settings (fig. 8). The metals collection includes military swords with scabbards, military and Red Cross service medals, electric brass floor lamps, kerosene lamps, early brass kitchen pots and kettles, a tin candle mold, and several tintypes. The textiles include military uniforms from The War Between the States and Spanish-American War, women’s costumes from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, bed linens, hand-woven coverlets, rugs, lace curtains, and upholstered chairs and sofas (figs. 9 & 10). Oil paintings and photographs of family members decorate the walls of all the rooms. Some framed photographs are also displayed on furniture throughout the house.

The attic of the Wheeler house has been used for years as storage (figs. 11 & 12). Objects are packed in trunks, boxes, and chests of drawers. Some objects are carefully labeled indicating their provenance or location in the house. There are original sets of draperies, ruby glass curtain tie-backs, and pressed metal gilded valances. The objects were packed tenderly away in storage with memories of beloved family and happy times.

A small number of the objects on exhibit in the house and in storage in the attic have been labeled by the Wheeler family. However, there has been no centralized record keeping of the collection. Volunteers under the guidance of staff from the Alabama State Museum are currently inventorying the Wheeler collection and have completed a majority of the first floor. Each object is examined and entered on a catalog worksheet that is transferred to computer memory. This inventory will be a valuable foundation for future collections registration, which is the process of creating, acquiring, and keeping records in the collection. It is a detailed worksheet that includes the provenance (a detailed history of the object), an object description, the
Fig. 8. Glass and Ceramic Collection in Dining Room.
Fig. 9. Women's Costumes Displayed in Wardrobe.
Fig. 10. Display of Military Uniforms.
Fig. 11. Northwest Attic.

Fig. 12. Southwest Attic.
condition of the object, and any conservation treatment on the object.

The condition of the object is an important section on the worksheet and should not be overlooked. This section identifies any damage or deterioration of the object that can be measured over time. This should alert the staff to accelerated deterioration and to the source of the problem, such as careless handling or an inappropriate environment. No value has been given any of the objects, with the exception of a Civil War-era Spencer repeating rifle valued at $450.00. If possible, licensed antiques appraisers might volunteer their time to estimate the current value of objects in the collection.

The inventory compiled by the Alabama State Museum provides an excellent foundation for future collections registration. Accurate records help the museum staff maintain control over the collection. Written records survive as museum staff come and go. These collections records should provide all known information on each object. They generate a variety of files including an objects file, donor file, accession file, and a gift agreement file, in addition to black and white photographs of each object.

At the present time, a donor file and a gift agreement file for the Wheeler collection are probably not necessary. However, acquisitions in the future may necessitate their creation. The objects file is arranged by the category the object falls into, such as kitchen utensils, bedsteads, quilts, or books.

The donor file is arranged alphabetically by the source name and lists the objects they transferred to the museum. The accession file is arranged in chronological order by a numbering system. This file contains a great deal of information on each object, including a description, measurements, provenance, donor, condition of the object, the location of the object in the museum, and a black and white photograph of the object.

A gift agreement file can also be arranged chronologically by the accession
number and contains all signed gift agreement contracts for object donations. The original records and a set of photographs should be kept off the property, perhaps in a safety deposit box, for safekeeping. The following are brief definitions of registration terms:

**accession**- an object or a group of objects in the museum collection from a single source acquired at one time. Accessioning is the process of registration which includes placing a description in the records, assigning a number, and creating other records as they are necessary.

**cataloguing**- assigning an object to one or more categories of an organized classification system.

**collections**- collected objects that are acquired and preserved because of their potential value as examples, as research sources, or as objects of aesthetic or educational importance.

**registration**- the complete process of creating, acquiring, and keeping records on the collection. 3

Before the process of registration begins, an accessioning system, usually a numbering system, should be detailed. Two methods of accession by the numbering system are the single number system and the two number system. The single number system begins with the number one and progresses onward. The first object in the collection is number 1, the one hundredth object is number 100, and so on. In the two number system, the year of accession of the object precedes the number of the object in the collection. For instance, the fifteenth object acquired during 1985 is numbered 85.15.

Collections records can be maintained in bound notebooks, looseleaf notebooks, index cards, or by computer. Whatever method the museum staff is most comfortable with and can accurately maintain.
Efficient record keeping manages a museum's collections on paper; however, the staff must physically manage the collection daily. The collection must receive the most professional care possible to prevent damage or possible destruction, whether on exhibit or in storage. A proper environment and diligent care for the collection prolongs the life of the object and minimizes conservation treatment. A proper museum environment refers to a climate controlled environment for the collections. It would certainly be possible a zoned heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning system (HVAC) to be installed in House B in the future without damaging the structural integrity of the house, which is itself a valuable artifact. Damaged objects can be treated by trained conservators, however the emphasis of conservation should be on damage prevention. Prevention is always better than treatment (please refer to the Selected List of Conservators in the appendices). Objects are damaged within a museum environment by: light, temperature, relative humidity, dust and pollution, inferior materials, pests, and unskilled handling.

Exposure to sunlight and fluorescent and incandescent fixtures often cause irreparable damage to collections. Objects can fade, change color, or become brittle after exposure to inappropriate light. Sunlight and fluorescent fixtures contain ultraviolet radiation, an extremely dangerous source of deterioration. Ultraviolet radiation can be blocked with UV filters available as film, tubes, or in acrylic sheets. Always cover fluorescent fixtures with UV tubes. Incandescent fixtures are a source of both light and heat. Never place an incandescent fixture inside an enclosed exhibit case. The length of time an object is exposed to light is also important, use light only when necessary. The "airing" of objects is not typically a good idea. No object should be exposed outdoors in bright sunlight.
Temperature and relative humidity (RH) can also be detrimental to the collection. A continually high RH encourages the growth of mold, mildew, corrosion, and foxing. An environment where the temperature and RH constantly fluctuate expose the collection to a great deal of stress. Extreme changes in temperature and RH produce more rapid deterioration than a constantly high temperature and RH\(^4\). Objects physically expand and contract as the climate of their environment rises and falls. An ideal constant environment measures 70 degrees with a RH of 50%\(^5\). Metals should be kept at 40% RH. It is extremely important that the RH remain as constant as possible. Do not store or exhibit objects near air-conditioning units, heaters, radiators, vents, or drafts.

Dust and pollution are common enemies of all collections. Usually disregarded as dangerous to collections, dust is impossible to clean off of some surfaces once it accumulates. Airborne pollutants and moisture thrive in dust particles. Resist the temptation to wash glassware and ceramics in warm dishwashing detergent and to dry clean or wash textiles. Conservators or specially trained staff should clean objects only after a safe method is decided upon for that particular object. A photographer’s blow brush can be used to dust off stable surfaces. Do not blow the dust off an object, breath moisture will cause dust to stick and saliva particles can be chemically damaging. Provide mats for visitors to wipe their feet on. Exhibit objects in tightly sealed cases and cover them when in storage. Vacuuming objects pulls the dirt away from the object as opposed to dusting, which might grind the dirt into the surface of the object. Only use the lowest suction possible on the vacuum cleaner. Hold a small nylon or fiberglass screen over the object and gently move the hose nozzle over the screen. Never vacuum a deteriorating or fragile object.
Unfortunately, collections come in contact with inferior materials in most museums. Inferior materials contain substances which actively attack and permanently damage objects. Paper, cardboard, plastics, pressure sensitive materials, wood, paint, vinyl, and rubber are examples of inferior materials. Pressure sensitive materials, cellophane tapes, masking tape, and labels should never be used on any object. Do not secure objects with paper clips, staples, safety or straight pins, or other metal closures; they rust and corrode causing permanent damage. Wire coat hanger will also distort textiles hung over them. Plastic, vinyl, and acetate are extremely unstable and quickly yellow, shrink, and crack with age. Do not use plastic dry-cleaning bags or ready-made vinyl products as storage or exhibit materials. Wood, papers (newspaper and tissue), cardboard, matboard, posterboard, and other paper products can emit organic acids and resins. Paper products made from ground wood pulp are virtually self-destructive because of the acidic content which can migrate to the object. Always substitute archival quality products for inferior materials. (please refer to the List of Suppliers) These products do not contain harmful materials such as acid, sulfur, lignin, and formaldehyde that deteriorate objects. Archival quality paper products are buffered or unbuffered, acid-free, and lignin-free and are available as tissue, boxes, and matboards. Plastics that are recommended for use in collections are polyester, polyethylene, polypropylene, and acrylics. Wood surfaces that come in contact with objects must be sealed. Linen, cotton, and polyester fabrics are considered non-threatening materials for collections. Fabrics are generally treated with finishes and should be washed out in distilled water before use.

Rodents and insects spread quickly and silently through a collection eating away valuable objects and leaving their offspring to continue.
OUTBUILDINGS, CEMETERIES, AND THE LANDSCAPE

The Wheeler Plantation today consists of approximately fourteen thousand acres, most of which are undeveloped. The two main houses, referred to throughout this Historic Structure Report as A and B (The Wheeler House), and the outbuildings to the southeast and southwest of these houses, are the historically significant buildings on the site. There are also two important cemeteries on the plantation which lie to the south of the dog-trot log cabin. The fields determined as significant to the overall interpretation of the site lie behind the houses and the outbuildings. (See site plan appendix "A".)

DOGTROT LOG CABIN

The dog-trot cabin, built in approximately 1818, is the original home built on the Wheeler Plantation lands (Fig.1.). The cabin is a log half dovetail structure that runs lengthwise in an east-west direction. The original pen listed in other sections of this report as pen one, shows this half dovetail notching and is located on the west end (Fig.2). This pen has one fifteen over fifteen double hung window on its south wall with operable plank shutters. There are two plank doors in this original pen, one is in the center of the north wall. The main entrance is in the center of the east wall. This pen also has a stone based chimney with a brick stack.

The second pen is located on the east end. It has two fifteen over fifteen light windows on the north and south walls. They are directly across the room from each other. The entrance to the east pen is a plank door in its west wall and leads to the porch. This pen also contains a stone based chimney with a brick stack.
Fig. 1. Original log home built on Wheeler Plantation.

Fig. 2. Illustrating dove-tail notching.
The dog-trot porch has plank flooring running in the same east-west direction as the ones in the pens. There is a gable (Fig.3) over all three sections, but the west pen's roof is not connected to the roof over the dog-trot and east pen.

The roof is covered with wood shingles and has open eaves. The gable over the east end is approximately three feet deep while the west one is approximately one and half feet deep. The front and rear eaves are shallow.

Under the cornice of the west pen, there is a log plate projecting above the wall. It runs through the east pen but is flush to the wall. The east end of the rear plate is badly bowed and under extreme stress (Fig.4).

The south side plate beam is attached to a beam on the west pen by narrow metal hinges, which support a beam extending into the east pen.

The log walls have plaster and wood block chinking. The wood block pieces measure approximately four inches by two inches by six inches. The walls under the gables are weatherboard.

Pen two, tilts slightly towards its northeast end. Square notches cut in the top of the plate beams are cut in the same manner on the west beam which is attached to the longer east beam. This may indicate a porch or roof once extended from the cabin (Fig.5).

The east end exterior chimney has a rubble stone base up to the wall where the gable ends. The chimney is then stepped with brick to a height of approximately three feet. From here the stack becomes square. This stepped brick is in the stretcher bond pattern. The top of the chimney stack has deteriorated (Fig.6).

The west end chimney is also stretcher bond. It appears to be of later construction than the east end chimney. This west end chimney is beginning
Fig. 3. View of porch and gable.

Fig. 4. View of east end of the rear plate.
Fig. 5. Pen two to the right.

Fig. 6. Pen two's exterior east end chimney.
to pull away from the wall, threatening its existence (Fig.7).

SCHOOLHOUSE

The schoolhouse is a nearly square building (Fig.8). It is capped with a gabled metal corrugated roof. The facade faces east with a single entrance door slightly off center. A six over six double hung window is located on the west wall (Fig.9).

The schoolhouse is cladded in weatherboard. The wood post foundation sits directly on the ground but is protected by weatherboard which helps keep it from rotting.

There is one brick chimney in stretcher bond centered on its south side. It is stepped halfway up the chimney and the stack itself is square. The chimney's top has deteriorated.

The single entrance door is on the facade and has three panels, two vertical below one horizontal. It is glazed one-third with six lights, three over three stationary panes. The door also has a small drip molding over it.

The porch is placed along the northern half of the facade. It has a stand up seam metal roof and plank flooring. Plain wood posts support the porch. However, the left corner support post is missing.

SHED

This shed is of board construction (Fig.10). It is supported by posts made of tree trunks. The roof is covered with standing seam metal sheets.

The shed is divided into three bays and is open on its north side (Fig.11). There is a loft in the center bay that is approximately 6-1/2 feet off of the ground. Lawn mowers, a kerosene lamp, barrels, cable wire, and other
Fig. 7. View of west end chimney, pen one.

Fig. 8. The school house.
Fig. 9. Schoolhouse window on its west side.

Fig. 10. View of shed.
Fig. 11. View of shec.

Fig. 12. View of tool shed.
tools are presently stored in the building.

**TOOL SHED**

The tool shed is approximately eight feet square (Fig.12). It has shifted significantly and is badly deteriorated. The east and north walls are constructed with vertical planks. The south and west sides have horizontal boards. The stand-up seam metal roof has a shed configuration that is higher on the east side and slopes towards the west. There is a door on the left side of the south elevation which has two side by side windows.

**THE CANTILEVERED BUILDING**

This structure which was possibly a store or a telegraph office is a rectangular shaped frame building with a one bay facade and a cantilevered roof over the entry.(Fig.13) The foundation is wood. The gable roof is pressed tin with a flower leaf design inscribed in a square.(Fig.14) The cornice has exposed plain rafter end tails.

The five inch thick entry is centered. It is a cross door with recessed bevelled panels. The walls are clad with narrow horizontal weatherboard and have cornerboards. The two bottom boards of the walls are shiplapped. The building is insulated with rock wool.

There are off-centered window openings on the north and south walls that have been closed with weatherboard to match the exterior walls. A stationery six light window is centered on the west side wall. There is a "ghost" above and below this window suggesting a door was once present.(Fig.15) The opening is high enough so that the building may have had a transom over the door.

In the gables a narrow frieze board is located under the eaves. The front cantilevered gable is supported by two brackets attached to the cornerboards. An attic opening exists in the center of the cantilevered
Fig. 13. Cantilevered building.

Fig. 14. Illustration of pressed tin roof with its flower design inscribed in a square.
Fig. 15. Back of cantilevered building showing ghost line below window.

Fig. 16. View of attic opening.
overhang which is finished on its underside. (Fig.16) There are also narrow fascia boards under the gable eaves.

OUTHOUSE

The outhouse measures 5'-8" x 4'-10". It is located east of the tractor shed and directly west of house A. The frame structure is clad with wood planks that are approximately eighteen inches wide and reinforced by diagonal bracing. The roof, which no longer exists, was a shed type with a stand up seam metal roof.

TRACTOR SHED

The tractor shed, situated southeast of the main house, is constructed in three stages (Fig.17). The facade is on its north side. The most eastern section of the shed is board and batten construction capped by a corrugated metal roof. The opening of this section is wider with one swinging leaf. The eaves have exposed rafter ends.

The middle section of the building is equal to the eastern section in depth. The building has one opening on the south side. It has two bay openings that differ by one foot in width. The corners of the openings are cut in forty-five degree angles. The cladding is board and batten construction and the batting is deteriorating. There is a frieze board and a saw tooth fascia board under the facade eave. The interior walls are unfinished paneling with plain horizontal boards. There is also a loft. It is possible that the east and middle sections of this tractor shed were used as a carriage house.

The third and most western section is wider and deeper than the other. The exterior walls are cladded with horizontal weatherboard. The eaves have exposed rafter tails. The facade door is off-centered towards its right end. The door is hinged to swing out and is made of vertical planks that are
Fig. 17. Tractor shed.

Fig. 18. View of deteriorating vertical planks.
deteriorating (Fig 18).

On this western section there is an opening used for storing wood. There is also a square opening in the top of the end gable. From examining the interior of this section one can see the exterior wall of the middle section which was once board and batten painted a soft gray.

**CONCRETE BLOCK BUILDING**

The concrete block building has a gable entry with three bays on the facade. (Fig. 19) The concrete blocks are made of an early material and the blocks placed on the corners are curved. The overall plan of the structure is rectangular and the foundation is concrete slab.

Openings exist only in the facade and are symmetrically placed. The entry is centrally located with a stationary four light window above. There are vent holes above this window. On each side of the door are four over four double hung windows with lintels. The window surrounds are wooden and there are horizontal bars over them.

The roof is gabled and covered with corrugated metal sheets. The gable ends have vents in their peaks made of hollow concrete blocks. There are frieze boards under the gables, the cornice is boxed, and a string course travels the length of the building.

**LOG BARN**

The log barn employs mortise and tenon construction (Fig. 20). There are three bays in the barn and its front faces east towards the main house (Fig. 21). The roof is gabled and clad with corrugated seam metal. The gable eaves are approximately three feet deep and have weatherboard siding underneath them. The gables also have three openings in them above the bays.

The barn has two long cribs separated by a central passage. There are
Fig. 19. Concrete block building.

Fig. 20. Log barn, mortise and tenon construction.
Fig. 21. View of facade of the log barn.

Fig. 22. View of west side of log barn.
three loft openings with an "X" inscribed in them. The central loft opening has double plank and brace gate doors.

There is a wide opening to the central passage in the center of the facade. The bays flanking this opening have vertical plank doors. There are no openings on the sides of the barn.

The west side of the barn is the same width as the east side (Fig.22). There are no openings to the cribs or in the center under the gable. The square openings have solid plank doors and are not opened like those on the front of the barn.

A shed to the south of the barn has a deteriorated roof which is not original to the structure (Fig.23). Also, there is a cattle pen to its south and west sides.

THE STABLE

The stable is a board and batten structure three bays wide (Fig.24). The passage entry is centered, taking up the entire width of the passage. Several stalls flank each side of this central passage (Fig.25) The doors are on a sliding metal track and of plank. The stable faces east towards the house and is approximately forty feet south of the log barn. Three openings exist on each side of the stable.

On the east side of the stables front there is a square window opening in the right hay. In the left bay a plank door is present with diagonal bracing. There are no openings on the west side.

On the north and south sides of the stable are three openings. On the north side all bays are windows and on the south side there are two windows and one door. The door is in the center of the south elevation and opens to a small cattle pen.

The gable roof is of vertical seam metal with exposed rafter ends. There
Fig. 23. Shed south of the barn showing deteriorated roof.

Fig. 24. View of stable.
Fig. 25. View of stalls flanking the central passage.

Fig. 26. View of dividing low plank walls.
is a deteriorated fascia board under the gable ends. The gable end has lost its battens.

The stalls have solid plank walls along the passage way. Saddle brackets hang in the passage on these walls. The stalls are divided from each other by low plank walls (Fig. 26). Full height plank walls exist on the left corner ends of the building. The left rear or northwest corner room has horizontal tongue and groove paneling. This room or the northeast room may have been an office or tack room and is in a state of disrepair.

**ICE HOUSE**

The ice house is a half dovetail log structure (Fig. 27). The chinking between the logs is a yellow beige color of plaster. Some of the logs, especially those sitting on top of the rock bearing east side wall, are beginning to collapse and the chinking has fallen out. The foundation and the underground wall are of limestone.

The building has a simple finished ceiling in a gambrel configuration. There are two four over four double hung windows under the gambrel ceiling, one on the east side, and one on the west side.

The ice house faces west and is approximately thirty-five feet from the back porch of house "B" to the southeast. The gable roof is covered with stand up seam metal and has rafter ends (Fig. 28). The gable has weatherboard siding and a four over four double hung window in the center with one plank shutter. The entrance is underneath this window.

An octagonal shaped well is in the middle of the ice house to collect water. Ghost lines on the north interior wall reveal the place where a ladder or balcony once led down to the bottom of the structure.

**CEMETERIES**

There are two cemeteries on the Wheeler plantation. The main
Fig. 27. The ice house.

Fig. 28. View of gabled roof on the ice house.
cemetery, which this report will refer to as cemetery A, is located approximately seventy-five yards behind the log cabin. It is accessible by a forty-eight yard long hedge lined walkway (fig. 29). Before entering cemetery A’s gate, a smaller, earlier cemetery, cemetery B, can be seen set back from the pathway. The only indication we have found stating that this is, in fact, a cemetery is from a set of drawings done by the Historic American Building Survey (HABS), in 1935. This report will continue to assume that this is indeed a cemetery based on the HABS drawings.

It is not known who is buried in cemetery B due to several factors. First, there are no known records identifying gravesites or burials. Second, due to disuse, cemetery B is heavily overgrown and in a state of disrepair (fig. 30). The overgrowth obscures the presence of possible extant tombstones. The overgrowth is also causing deterioration of the stone wall which surrounds the cemetery. And finally, the disrepair has jeopardized the integrity of the cemetery to the point where it may be lost. Cemetery B is approximately ten feet by ten feet, surrounded by a three foot high stone wall. It is roughly four feet from the fence surrounding cemetery A.

Cemetery A contains the gravesites of the Sherrod family and members of the Wheeler family, including Daniella, Lucy, Annie, Carrie, Julia, and a memorial to Thomas H. Wheeler, who drowned at Montauk Island, New York. Near the entrance to the main cemetery, is a monument to the Wheeler family and General Joseph Wheeler who is buried at Arlington National Cemetery (fig.31). There is also a monument to the Sherrod family, on the opposite side of the cemetery (fig. 32). An appendix contains the complete list of all those interred
Fig. 29. Access way to cemetery A.

Fig. 30. View of cemetery B.
Fig. 31. Wheeler monument.

Fig. 32. Sherrod monument.
and the tombstone inscriptions.

Cemetery A is approximately fifty feet by fifty feet, and is enclosed by a four and one half foot high wrought-iron fence (fig. 33). The main cemetery is also in a state of disrepair, but not to the degree of cemetery B. The wrought-iron fence is almost completely overgrown with vegetation, which has damaged the fence in several areas (fig. 34). Several of the monuments are also becoming covered by underbrush.

Most grave markers are in good condition, although, there are several which need repair and cleaning (fig. 35). The gravestone for Felix A.M. Sherrod, needs to be repaired, where the top is broken off (fig. 36 & 37). For the most part, other than being somewhat overgrown, cemetery A is in good condition.

There are several purposes that the cemeteries can serve in the overall preservation plan. The cemeteries can be used for educational purposes. Students can become aware of local history, knowledgeable of the people who built their community and become appreciative of their heritage. First, for students in grades K-12, many educational activities can be conducted. Activities could include, stone rubbings, data sheets for each grave site which include the information inscribed, as well as information about the shape of the headstone. This type of information is helpful in relating local history to the classroom, and introducing students to methods of historical research.

Another activity might be to study the gravestones for any symbolic features on the markers. Marker inventories can be made and studied by students, and would help to preserve the inscriptions on the markers. Several books on cemetery conservation and cemetery
Fig. 33. Cemetery A.

Fig. 34. Cemetery fence.
Fig. 35. Indistinguishable gravestone.
Fig. 36. Broken gravestone.

Fig. 37. Broken gravestone.
activities are listed in the appendix.

Studies in the cemetery could also supplement the history of the Wheeler family. This could parallel a local history study in the classroom, or provide background information for a study of the Wheeler family or their plantation. A genealogical study might also be developed, using information from the gravestones.

FIELDS

The plantation consists of close to 14,000 acres of land which ran from the main houses to the banks of the Tennessee River. There are three fields in the vicinity of the buildings which are considered in this plan. Field A is the closest to the barns and the smallest of the three (Fig. 38). Field B is connected by a short accessway from field A and is a large field to the southwest of the barns (Fig. 39). Field C is located due south behind the main houses (Fig. 40). At the present time the three fields are being used for grazing cattle. It is obvious that the fields have not been crop producing for a number of years, if in fact that was an original use. These fields can eventually be used to interpret the Wheeler property as a unique, yet typical plantation in Alabama.

Field A is a relatively square field which is partially enclosed on three of its four sides by trees. The fourth side is fronted by a dirt road, which leads past the cemeteries to the front of the main houses (Fig. 41). Field A has somewhat of a grass cover, and contains some fallen limbs and branches. There is an accessway in the southwest corner which leads to field B (Fig. 42). Field A is in fair condition, although there are some trees and undergrowth which give the field an unkempt appearance. The accessway to field B is defined by two treelines on either side. There is some undergrowth in this area as well.
Fig. 38. Field A.

Fig. 39. Field B.
Fig. 40. Field C.
Fig. 41. Dirt road between outbuildings and field.
Fig.42. Accessway between Field A and B.
Field B is a large rectangular field which is oriented on a north-South axis. It is enclosed by trees and in some areas, a wire fence. This field is a rather large field and is in much the same state as field A, being overgrown in some areas with trees and underbrush. Field B is connected to field C by a larger accessway than the previous one.

Field C is a large rectangular field, relatively parallel to field B, and may be slightly larger than field B. Field C is enclosed by trees and a metal fence, with the trees basically lining the two long sides of the field and the fencing at the head of the field (Fig. 43). Field C is in a state of disrepair, and disuse. Several items have been deposited in this field such as: trucks, truck parts, pipes, and other mechanical items (Fig. 44). There are also some large pieces of trash and building materials present. The field is also somewhat overgrown like the other two, and is unkempt. Field C is opens on to another field on its southern end.

A second area of the Wheeler landscape is the formal gardens, located to the rear of the icehouse, and in front of houses A and B (Fig. 45). At the present time the gardens are overgrown and somewhat unkempt, but most of the patterns are still visible. A major problem here is how they block the pathways to the front of house B. There is also evidence of possible root damage to the foundation from some large boxwoods growing too close to the house (Fig. 46). The larger gardens behind the icehouse are also in a state of disrepair, but the garden patterns still exist here too. These gardens can wait to be relandscaped until it is deemed financially feasible. However, some form of interim maintenance needs to be arranged in order to give visitors another area of the plantation to visit.

Another feature of the landscape at the Wheeler plantation is the arbors which are at several locations on the property. There is one at the
Fig. 43. Fence at head of Field C.

Fig. 44. Trash in Field C.
Fig. 45. Formal gardens behind icehouse.
Fig. 46. Root damage to foundation of House B.
beginning of the pathway leading to the front door of house B (Fig. 47 and 48). The structure of the arbor is in good condition, but it is overgrown with vegetation that needs to be cleared. A second larger arbor is located near the present entrance to the property (Fig. 47 and 49). The structure of this arbor is in decent condition, but it too needs the overgrowth trimmed back.

Another feature is the reflecting pond, which is between house B and the railroad tracks (Fig. 47 and 50). The pond wall is in a state of disrepair, but can be repaired. The pond contains much vegetation, and needs to either be cleaned out or drained, so as not to be a home to snakes or mosquitos in the summer months.

Two other features at the plantation, are the gravesite of the horse, Beatrice (Fig. 51), and a small outbuilding to the west of the barns (Fig. 52). The grave marker is in fair condition but could probably use some maintenance to protect it. The outbuilding was dealt with very quickly, and not much is known about it. The fields are, with the exception of field C, in fair condition. This will allow them to be left until a later phase of the restoration.
Fig. 48. Arbor in front of House B.
Fig. 49. Arbor near entrance to property.
Fig. 50. Reflecting pool.
Fig. 51. Gravesite of horse.

Fig. 52. Outbuilding to west of main house.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WHEELER PLANTATION

The following are recommendations for the preservation and conservation of the Wheeler home, the outbuildings, cemeteries, grounds, and interior furnishings and contents. They have been categorized in terms of apparent priority. Phase I recommendations require immediate attention and should be addressed as soon as feasible. Phase II covers recommendations which are important but not as critical and may be prioritized and implemented as resources permit.

This proposed preservation plan provides a framework for the development of a unique and comprehensive historic house museum, working plantation, and archival research center, concentrating on the time period 1870 to 1955. The Wheeler site could spawn new tourism in the region, serve as a stimulus to an enhanced quality of life and an awareness to support new economic development, and serve as a symbol of pride in the state and region.

Implementation of the plan could proceed, for example, over a period of ten years. Budgetary concerns, personnel needs, and community interests and other priorities may dictate modifications in the proposed schedule. With these recommendations, persons with responsibilities for the project will have the opportunity to become acquainted with the variety of possibilities inherent in this remarkable historic resource. A selected bibliography is provided in the appendices to assist with specific issues addressed in the development plan.

After decisions are made concerning future ownership/management of the property, highest priority should be the preservation and historic interpretation of the Wheeler House, for its association with the Wheeler
family, particularly General Joseph Wheeler and Annie Wheeler. The second priority should deal with the interpretation of the plantation, as part of Wheeler family life, but also as representative of the changing farm in the South during Reconstruction and the early twentieth century. Third in priority is the interpretation of the outbuildings and gardens, for their association with the family and plantation life, and changes in architectural style and usage over time.

In addition to the preservation of structures on the Wheeler property, attention must be devoted to the proper care, preservation, and appropriate usage of the Wheeler family papers and other artifacts. Archival storage, at this early stage, can either be located on the Wheeler estate, or in repositories located elsewhere in Alabama.

After early negotiations between appropriate organizations and individuals has assured the donation and/or acquisition by purchase of the necessary buildings and land, a 501(c)3 non-profit tax exempt organization (see appendix for more information) should be established for acceptance, development, and management of the site. A board of directors could administer an endowment (created by special appropriations from the Alabama legislature) to meet initial stabilization costs and the initial cost of day-to-day operation of the site. Board members could be local and state public officials and other Alabamians interested in the state's heritage.

The board of directors should first agree upon on the exact purposes of the site for future reference. This will help to prioritize development plans and detail how the site will best serve the functions of interpretation, conservation, research, and collection.

The board of directors should early consider hiring a director for the site, one professionally trained or experienced in historic preservation and
site development. They should also develop an estimated five to ten year budget, with allowances for appropriate expansion of expenses and income. Fund raisers (see appendix for more information) could be planned for the future, to cover costs of special projects.

The structural problem issues addressed here concerning the main house are treated in a summary fashion. For a more extensive structural analysis, a qualified preservation architect should be retained to prepare final plans and specifications for cost estimating and bid purposes.

During phase one, the most immediate priority is to stabilize the structure of the main house. This includes some jacking, stabilizing the piers and the fireplace foundation, installing wire mesh hatch doors on the crawl space openings, and removing the shrub roots.

A climate control system also should be considered for the protection of the house and contents, as well as for the comfort of visitors. The electrical service will have to be upgraded at this time.

The most urgent problems which need to be addressed with the outbuildings are the stabilization of the log cabin and the implementation of minor repairs to the log barn. This must be done as soon as possible in order to assure their protection. The artifacts inside the cabin are deteriorating from temperature and humidity changes and need to be protected.

The most critical needs to be addressed concerning the cemeteries are the clearing of debris and cleaning. Cemetery "A" also needs to have the underbrush cut back around it. The mound in this cemetery is endangering several grave sites and needs to be dealt with. The gravestones need to be cleaned and repaired as necessary. Cemetery "B" requires repair of the wall surrounding it.

Relandscaping the area in front of the Wheeler House should be a major
priority, as it is highly visible to visitors. This should include reestablishing pathways and basic clearing of undergrowth.

Field C (see site plan-appendix A) needs to have all of the extraneous industrial trash removed from the field. This would stabilize the field so work pertaining to its interpretation can be addressed in a later phase.

The work to be addressed in the second phase may take place when it is financially feasible. These projects, though considered less crucial, are nonetheless important to the overall interpretation of the plantation.

During a second phase, the vinyl siding from the main house must be removed and the weatherboards exposed to prevent deterioration of the wood from moisture retention. The front porch steps need to be replaced. The porch foundation infill needs to be removed and replaced with lattice as historic photos indicate. Many of the decorative details of the front porch are decaying and need to be replaced.

On the interior, several rooms require replastering of ceilings and walls. The west wall of Room 406 needs particular attention. Throughout the interior of the house there are several chimneys that need to be properly cleaned and sealed. At present they are stuffed with newspapers and present a fire hazard.

In order for the outbuildings to become effectively incorporated into the overall interpretation as a working plantation, all of them need basic conservation. Some of the problems that need to be addressed are weatherproofing all the structures; and cleaning out the schoolhouse, the old store, and the concrete block building. The chinking on the east side of the icehouse has deteriorated and needs repair. The stable is unsafe and should be dismantled and reconstructed.

Also during this second phase, an accessway needs to be established.
from the main path which leads to Cemetery A. Some type of archaeological investigation might be possible to determine if this is in fact a cemetery. The investigation may also uncover any headstones which may have fallen over and are buried by undergrowth and erosion. Once the cemetery is cleared of the underbrush, the wall is repaired, and an accessway is established, some minor landscaping might be done as finishing touches. Grass seed may be planted and some tree screening may be added between the cemetery wall and the field to the north.

On the grounds, visitor and employee parking need to be logically planned out, so as not to interfere with or detract from the interpretation of the plantation. The duck pond wall needs to be repaired and the pond needs to be cleaned out. Also, a path needs to be reestablished leading from the house to the pond.

As a future consideration, to ensure the lasting preservation of the Wheeler plantation, a buffer zone of sufficient acreage should be established to protect the property from any future modern development. Considerations should be given to restrictive easements on the land immediately surrounding the site.

The interior furnishings and contents of the Wheeler home includes many valuable and irreplaceable items. The following are general guidelines for their documentation, conservation, and proper exhibition.

Registration: Accurate registration records will help the museum staff maintain control over the collection. The original registration records and a set of photographs should be kept off the property, perhaps in a safety deposit box, for safekeeping. The accession number should be applied to the object permanently, without damaging the object, and in an inconspicuous location. For glassware, ceramics, furniture, and metals, brush a small amount of good
quality lacquer on the object and write the number on the lacquer with India ink. Use a soft, #2 lead pencil to write the accession number on papers, manuscripts, and books. For textiles, write the accession number with a #2 pencil on a small length of cotton twill tape and baste the tape to the textile. Do not use any method that will permanently damage or stain the objects.

Collections: Collections care is not limited to professional conservation treatment; the major component is the daily care the collection receives in exhibit and in storage.

Always cover fluorescent fixtures with UV filters. Never place an incandescent fixture inside an enclosed exhibit case. The "airing" of objects is not typically a good idea. No object should be exposed outdoors in bright sunlight.

An ideal constant environment measures 70 degrees with a RH of 50%. Metals should be kept at 40% RH. Do not store or exhibit objects near air-conditioning units, heaters, radiators, vents, or drafts. Resist the temptation to wash glassware and ceramics in warm dishwashing detergent and to dry clean or wash textiles.

A photographer's blow brush can be used to dust off stable surfaces. Do not blow the dust off an object, breath moisture will cause dust to stick and saliva particles can be chemically damaging. Do not use feather dusters to dust objects. The feathers can easily loosen or pull off the surface of an object.

Vacuuming objects pulls the dirt away from the object as opposed to dusting, which might grind the dirt into the surface of the object. Only use the lowest suction possible on the vacuum cleaner. Hold a small nylon or fiberglass screen over the object and gently move the hose nozzle over the screen. Never vacuum a deteriorating or fragile object.
Pressure sensitive materials, cellophane tapes, masking tape, and labels should never be used on any object. Do not secure objects with paper clips, staples, safety or straight pins, or other metal closures; they rust and corrode causing permanent damage.

Wire coat hanger will also distort textiles hung over them. Costumes from the collection should never be worn for any reason. Do not use plastic dry-cleaning bags or ready-made vinyl products as storage or exhibit materials. Do not allow eating, drinking, or smoking around the collections.

Always use both hands to safely carry an object. Never lift an object by the handles or edges, these are often the weakest parts even if they were originally designed for carrying. Wear cotton gloves when handling metals, unglazed ceramics, stone, and textiles. Body oils and dirt on the hands can corrode objects. Do not allow visitors to touch objects.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

*Phase One*

**Interpretation**

The board of directors should give John LeGrand and Mr. C. E. Turner formal recognition for their part in keeping the Wheeler history alive, possibly naming Mr. LeGrand as honorary chairman or executive director and Mr. Turner as the site’s honorary historian. The staff director should request their assistance on many issues including hiring training docents to give tours of the plantation. A script should be written of Mr. Turner’s tour of the plantation and of both of their personal memories of the family and the plantation.

A brochure should be produced, detailing the history of the family and plantation, including a map of the grounds, hours and admission costs.
Site and Artifacts

Appropriate historic site signs should be put up on either side of the entrance to the house, as well as in Decatur and possibly Interstate 65. The State of Alabama could erect these high visibility signs on highways approaching the site from all directions. The Wheeler site should be given major coverage in tourist directories, maps, and on tourist information center displays. A brochure should be circulated to appropriate rest areas, the Chamber of Commerce, motels, restaurants, and other historic sites.

Adequate insurance coverage should be obtained and maintained for the site and the artifacts. Access for handicapped visitors should be provided. See appendix for suggestions on how this can be implemented.

The entrance, bridge and road, should be improved to make the entrance more visible. A railroad crossing sign could be obtained to provide additional warning at the crossing. The limited amount of railroad traffic at this time probably may not necessitate an automobile underpass.

Phase Two

Organization

As the budget permits, an education director, conservator, and docents could be hired. (See appendix for information about these specific job responsibilities). The Board could continue to actively pursue future fund raising opportunities.

Interpretation

With the assistance of Mr. Turner, a training manual for docents should be written, including a history of the family and plantation, brochure, list of other docents, room-by-room description of the Wheeler house and tips for interpretation.

Local student visits can be encouraged by providing special school tours.
The schoolhouse on the plantation could be restored to interpret 19th century schooling to students. To familiarize local teachers with the educational benefits of the site, an on-site teacher development program could be sponsored for teachers. During the program, a docent could incorporate ideas for class visits and pre and post visit activities into the tour.

Living history demonstrations could be used to help interpret everyday life, such as butter churning, quilting, cotton farming, gardening. These activities could be oriented to one special day, weekend, or week, either to coincide with a Decatur holiday or to supplement a special event.

A driving tour brochure could be developed to include the Wheeler depot (if reconstructed), the nearby Wheeler family summerhouse (if restored), church attended by the Wheeler family, and the city of Decatur.

**Site and Artifacts**

Plantation land could be leased for use by local farmers. The farming could be integrated into the interpretation of the site. A tour route, spatial allowance and optimal size for tour groups should be determined.

For additional space, the interior of House A could be remodeled in time. Offices and a meeting room (or museum) could be installed on the first floor, and storage and conservatory on the second floor. Interpretation of the architectural aspects of the exterior of House A should continue.

The store on the plantation could be used as a gift shop, selling appropriate Wheeler house mementos like postcards, books on the Wheeler family, seeds or bulbs from the garden, books on railroads, and 19th Century Dover publications and reproductions (see appendix for more information).

The gardens could be restored, following the original plans as faithfully as possible. The grounds on the eastern side of the house, with the reconstruction of the gazebo, could be rented out for public functions while
keeping the house open for tours. Weddings, receptions, outdoor concerts, church picnics or festivals could be held (for a fee) in the gardens.

**Phase Three**

**Organization**

The board of directors may consider increasing the professional staff of the site, if appropriate. For fund raising, the board of directors could establish yearly festivals and special Christmas programs.

**Interpretation**

Living history could be used as an integral part of the interpretation of the house. A docent could role play Annie Wheeler while giving a tour of the house.

To further publicize the site, the staff could consider putting together a traveling exhibit of Wheeler artifacts.

Through research using primary sources at the plantation, museum employees or local scholars could publish booklets or books on General Wheeler, Annie Wheeler, and plantation life in Alabama.

**Site and Artifacts**

As funds permit, a new, climate controlled conservatory/archives/storage facility could be constructed on the property. Conservation and archival activities could now be moved from House A to the new Conservatory. The extra space in House A could be used as a county history office, state research center, or a regional historic preservation office.

To accommodate growing numbers of visitors, the pond area could be developed for use as picnic grounds and recreation.

At this point, the board should consider developing a historic district to further interpret the Wheeler family history and the history of Alabama. The historic district could include the Wheeler plantation site, church, schools,
The General Joseph Wheeler Plantation is a very unique property because so much of it has been saved and is still extant. By developing and using the many resources available at this site, the State of Alabama can have a truly unique educational and historic resource.

The long term objectives of the Wheeler project could include the eventual interpretation of the site as a working plantation. This could involve interpreting the outbuildings, the cemeteries, and the fields, in addition to the main houses, so that continuity exists among them.

Using the plantation as a living history farm would require a well planned effort on the part of the Board of Directors. Suggestions to implement its use as such, for instance, could include leasing the fields to farmers in the area. This would serve a number of positive purposes. First, it could make the land a viable crop producing area. Second, there would be many educational opportunities to teach about farming in Alabama; particularly 19th century farming. There could also be an employment boost to the area by hiring people to give farming demonstrations, tours, and helping with the harvesting of crops.

Other things to consider include using the log barn and a reconstructed stable, to be built on the site of the present stable, as interpretative centers for the plantation’s living history program. Further, walking trails around the fields and the property in general could help aid in expanding the overall interpretation.

Developing the complete plantation could enhance an understanding, not only of the Wheeler family, but also of 19th century plantation life in Alabama.
and summer home.

For recreation and education, walking trails could be developed on the property, incorporating the interpretation of nature and agricultural development into the trail route.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


FOR FURTHER READING


