

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Ervin, William E., House  
other names/site number Liberty Hall; Ervin, Armstrong, Fowler House

### 2. Location

street & number Route 4 Armstrong Road N/A  not for publication  
city, town Columbus  vicinity  
state Mississippi code MS county Lowndes code 87 zip code 39702

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Kenneth H. P. Paul October 19, 1989  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Miss. Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

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

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Alton Egan 12/1/89  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - Single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - Single dwelling

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Wood - weatherboard

roof Asphalt

other Porch - wood

**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

The William E. Ervin house is located three miles southeast of Columbus near the Armstrong Road. The house was originally adjacent to the Armstrong Road facing north but in 1922, due to storm damage and encroachment of a gravel pit, the house was moved one quarter mile east to its present location adjacent to the Ervin family cemetery, and facing west (Examiner, March 8, 1984).

The original house is a five bay, two story, central hall plan structure, one room deep with flanking rooms at each floor. It is constructed of wood frame with clapboard siding. The entrance portico has a pedimented gable with paired square Doric columns. A balcony with railing and square spindles extends from the second floor hall front doorway. The first floor porch railing is of similar design. All exterior mouldings are simple Greek Revival designs. Windows have eight over eight double hung sash with shutters. The four panel front entrance door has flanking three pane sidelights over fixed wood panels and a seven pane transom. The upper floor balcony door is identical except for the omission of the transom.

An addition to the rear of the house made shortly after the original construction provided a cross hall at the rear of the front rooms and two additional bedrooms at each floor. A second addition provided a side hall at the left of the first addition and a room that is currently used as a dining room, as well as a pantry and porch to the extreme rear. The north entrance has a four panel door with three pane sidelights over wood panels and a six pane transom. The panes are of alternating, blue and red glass. The east entrance is similar except that the transom is broken into a three pane panel above the door and single pane panels above the sidelights; all panes are clear glass.

The interior of the house has simple Greek Revival quirk-ovolo mouldings for door panels and for door and window casings. The doors are four panel design. Walls in the original front section of the house are plastered. Elsewhere the walls are horizontal wood boards except that the wall between the side hall and dining room consists of five doors, one of which is operable. Floors throughout the house are tongue and groove pine. Mantels are Greek Revival with pilasters and simple mouldings.

Stairways are located in the front entrance hall and in the rear cross hall. Both have simple round handrails, rectangular spindles, and unusual music cleft shaped bottom newels.

The dining room and hall have 42 wooden panels mounted on the walls above the door head height. The 27 panels in the dining room are painted with French coastal landscape scenes, attributed to an anonymous South Carolina artist and executed prior to the Civil War. Of the 15 panels in the hall, three were painted before the artist was forced to return to his home due to family illness. One other panel was painted recently.

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

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

(\*There is a cemetery located on the property.)

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

c.1836, 1849

c.1836, 1849,

Art

c. 1850s (paintings)

c. 1850s

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

The William E. Ervin house derives its significance from its architectural character (Criterion C) being an excellent example of vernacular Greek Revival architecture. The house represents a form and style characteristic of numerous houses of the early to mid-nineteenth century in the southeastern United States, many of which have been lost. It also derives significance in the area of art from the painted landscape panels located in the dining room which are attributed to a South Carolina painter during the 1850's (Fowler).

American Architecture adopted the Greek Revival style in the early 1800's and by the time of the settlement of north east Mississippi in the 1820's and 1830's, Greek Revival was the style most often used. The central hallway plan "I house", which had been popular as a Federal Style home in the Carolina's was often modified to the new style by incorporating a gabled single bay portico. This house form can also be seen in large numbers in Tennessee due to the influx of settlers from the Carolinas to that state. The Ervin House is very similar to Boxmere and the Lipscomb Place in Maury County, TN and the Howry-Wright-Purser House in Oxford, MS. (P'Pool).

The first recorded transaction involving the site of the Ervin house was May 16, 1827, when Silas McBee sold the property for "\$1 and other consideration," to his son Vardry (LCDB, Monroe, 104). Silas McBee was born in Spartanburg District, S.C. in 1765, but moved with his parents to Sumner County, TN. in 1787 and subsequently to Kentucky in 1799. He moved to Columbus, MS in 1818 (McBee Family, 1). He is credited with naming the town of Columbus and in surveying the original 211 lots in the townsite (Keeler). He owned a farm north of the Ervin house site on Magby (McBee) Creek. The Ervin house property was sold by Vardry McBee to William E. Ervin in 1836, effective Jan. 1, 1837 (LCDB, 6, 34). Vardry McBee had contracted consumption and traveled to Cuba for his health, dying on the return trip in February 1837 (McBee Family, 4).

William Ethelbert Ervin came to Lowndes County as a young man with his parents and several younger brothers and sisters from Sumter, South Carolina in 1831 (Dispatch, Feb. 27, 1972). He married Sarah Kennedy in October, 1833. Family tradition holds that William E. Ervin built the house for his bride in 1832 (Examiner, March 8, 1984). However, it seems likely that he lived with his father on his farm several miles to the north west on the west side of the Tombigbee River until he purchased the land in 1836. The house may have been built by McBee between 1827 and 1836 or by Ervin shortly after his purchase in 1836.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

"Liberty Hall is on Symposium Tour Here", The Commercial Dispatch (Columbus, MS), February 27, 1972.

"Liberty Hall Depicts Antebellum History Along With Family History", The Commercial Dispatch (Columbus, MS), April 9, 1980.

Lowndes County, Mississippi, Chancery Clerk, Deed Book.

Journal of William Ethelbert Ervin, 1839-1845, Lowndes County MS, Armstrong Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

Diary and Account Book of William Ervin, Lowndes County, MS, 1846-1856, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 52.5 acres

UTM References

A 1,6 | 37,48,0,0 | 3,70,49,4,0  
Zone Easting Northing

B 1,6 | 37,51,1,0 | 3,70,49,2,0  
Zone Easting Northing

C 1,6 | 37,54,3,0 | 3,70,46,9,0

D 1,6 | 37,54,3,0 | 3,70,45,2,0

E 1 6 3 7 4 8 2 0 3 7 0 4 5 4 0

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

All that part of the NW 1/4 - NW 1/4 Sec 29-T. 18 S. - R. 17 W. Lowndes County Miss., lying south of the south R/W line of the G.M. & O. Railroad; described as follows: Beginning at a point that is 310' S. 1 deg. 30" E. of the intersection of the west line of Sec. 20-T. 18 S. - R. 17 W. and the south R/W line of said G.M. & O. Railroad; thence S. 1 deg. 30' E. a distance of 1320' to a stake; thence S. 89 deg. 30' E. a distance of

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary was selected to include the present house site and its grounds, including the family cemetery, the original house site, and the driveway from Armstrong Road along which those sites are located.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Samuel H. Kaye, AIA  
organization Samuel H. Kaye, Architect date August 10, 1989  
street & number 114 5th Street South, P.O. Box 48 telephone (601) 327-6241  
city or town Columbus state MS zip code 39703

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The Ervin Journal of 1839-45 does not record any additions to the house, although it does refer to the construction of several other structures and homes. It would seem from the lack of mention of construction on the main house, that the first addition to the house was completed prior to commencement of the journal in 1839. The Ervin account book of 1846-1856 lists work on a study room in February 1849 and this probably is the dining room and pantry addition.

The paintings in the dining room are executed in oil on wood panels and show French Coastal landscapes. They are outstanding examples of 19th century primitive decorative art. Other examples of the technique may be found in the Marmion Room of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the Catawba Dining Room in the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts in Winston Salem, North Carolina and the Winterthur Museum in Delaware. The paintings are in the form of a series of panoramic views and resemble the technique of several landscape paintings of the period (Poesch, 217-301). The artist probably used illustrations of European art or wallpaper as his model. One painting shows Mont St. Michel without its spire, a condition that existed from 1769 until its restoration in 1900. The paintings are particularly significant in that the use of painted mural panels is unique to the area. The artist may have been one of the "number of artist-craftsmen, foreign-born or American, who plied their trade throughout the newer regions of the United States at this time, and whose presence, however transitory, contributed to some awareness of the arts among the populace" (Poesch, 286).

The Ervin house property has been in the possession of the family of William E. Ervin since his purchase of the property in 1836. The property was conveyed to Frank Ervin in 1878, to J. T. Armstrong in 1901, to Mrs. Sarah Armstrong in 1915, to Miss Caro Armstrong and Mrs. Penelope Armstrong O'Hair, and to Mrs. Sarah Livingston Fowler. The present owners have lived in the house since 1970. They made an addition of a carport and pantry at the rear of the house, enclosed a rear porch and enclosed a screened porch at the right rear on each floor to form two sitting rooms and a bathroom.

Other buildings on the property consist of a pool house and storage building located on the grounds at the rear of the house and a barn located in a wooded area nearby but not visible from the house. Also on the grounds are a swimming pool and gazebo located south of the house. A stable is located outside the boundary.

The Ervin family cemetery is located a short distance northwest of the house in a fenced enclosure. It contains the graves of William Ervin, William E. Ervin and numerous other family members. (The cemetery has been identified as a contributing element because of its historical association with the house and grounds. The pool house/storage building, barn, pool, and gazebo are all non-contributing elements.)

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Keeler, Oscar; Keeler's Almanac, Lowndes County Library, Columbus, MS, microfilm.

The McBee Family, William Dallion McBee, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK,  
no date, typescript in Lowndes County Library, Columbus, MS.

P'Pool, Ken, Interview, July 1989.

Fowler, Sarah, Interview, July 1989.

Poesch, Jessie, The Art of the Old South, Alfred A. Knopf, NY, 1983.

The American Wing, published by the Metropolitan Museum, New York, NY.

Catalogue of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Winston Salem, N.C.

Cantor, Jay E., Winterthur, published by the Winterthur Museum.

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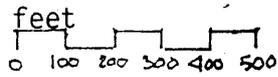
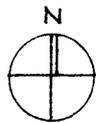
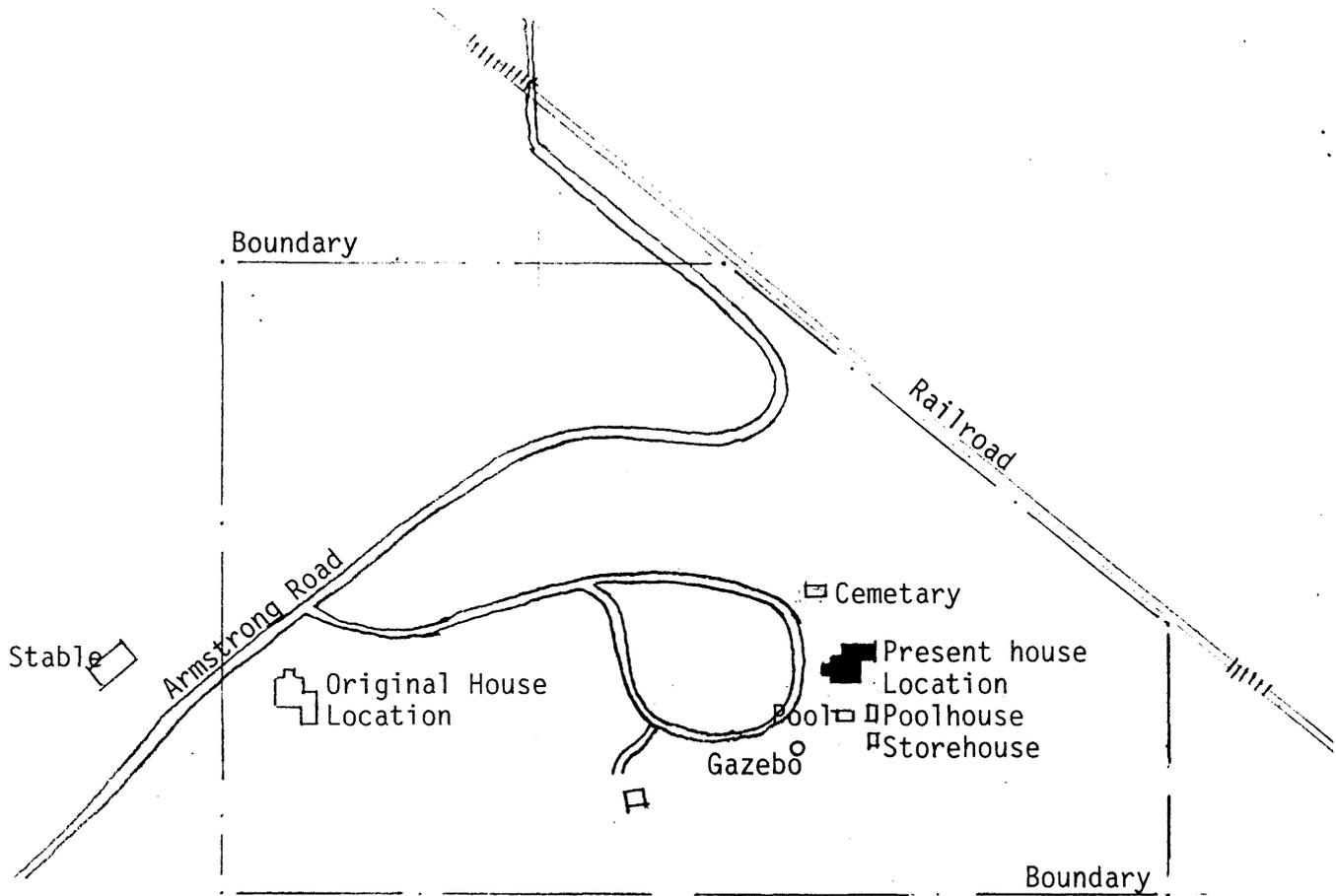
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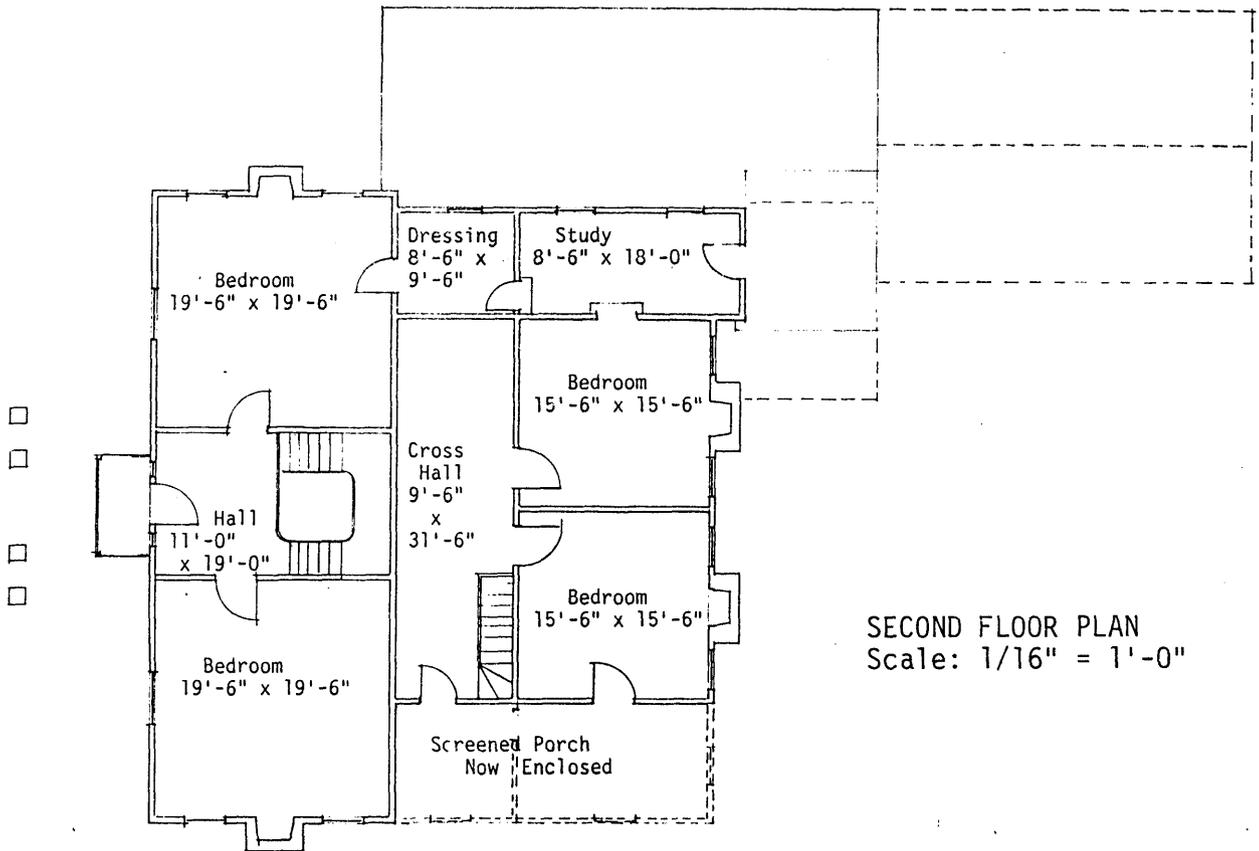
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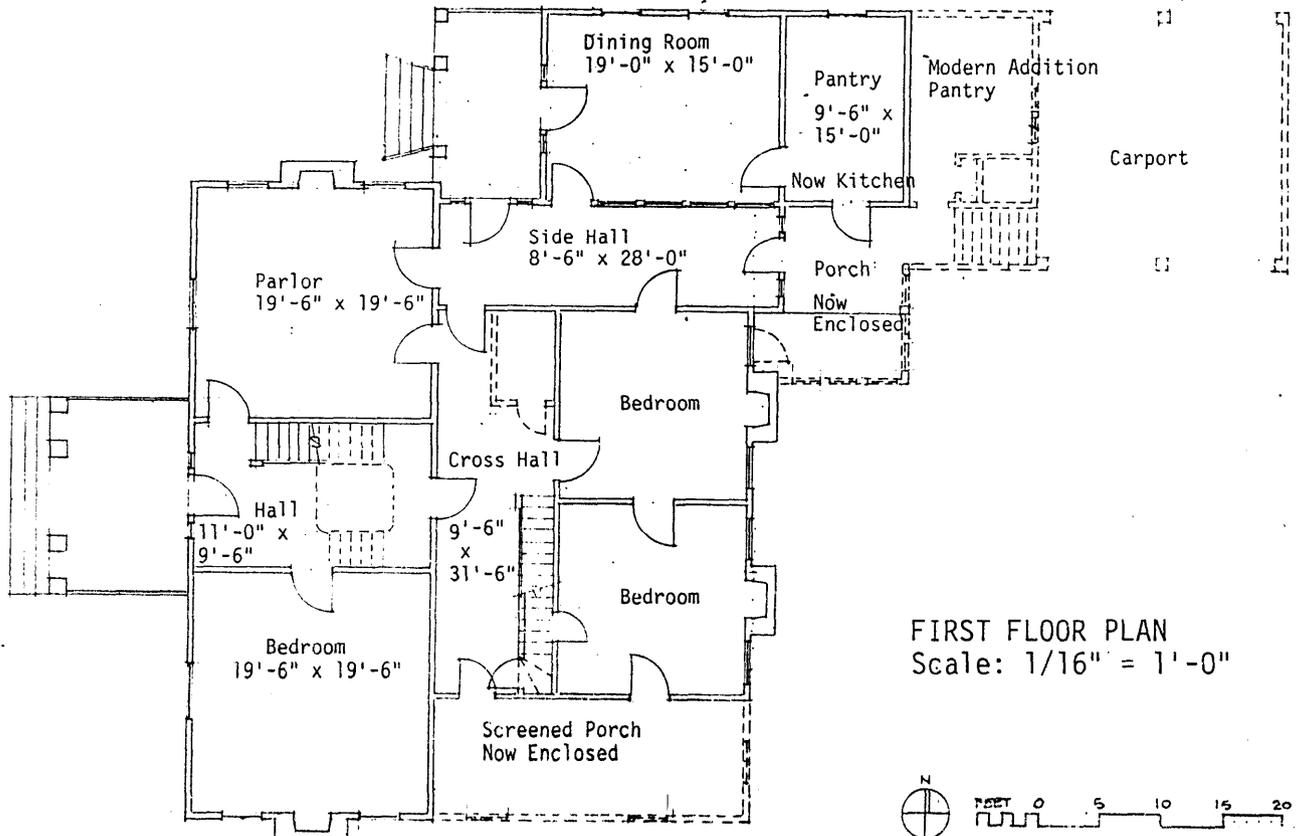
1302' to a stake; thence N. 1 deg. 30' W. a distance of 571' to a stake on the south right of way line to said G.M. & O. Railroad; thence N. 51 deg. W. along said R/W line a distance of 1210' to a point; thence N. 89 deg. 30' W. a distance of 390' to the Point of Beginning, and the East half of the North East quarter of the North East quarter of Section 30, Township 18 S, Range 18 W, Lowndes County, MS., containing 52.5 acres, more or less.



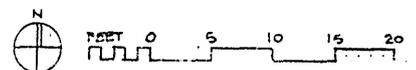
SITE PLAN  
scale: 1"=400'



SECOND FLOOR PLAN  
Scale: 1/16" = 1'-0"



FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
Scale: 1/16" = 1'-0"



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The following information is the same for all photographs:

- (1) William E. Ervin House
- (2) Columbus vicinity, Lowndes County, Mississippi
- (3) Samuel H. Kaye
- (4) July, 1989
- (5) Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Photo 1 - (6) Facade (west elevation), view to east

Photo 2 - (6) Facade, view to southeast

Photo 3 - (6) Facade (north elevation), view to south

Photo 4 - (6) Front stair, view to north

Photo 5 - (6) Parlor, view to north

Photo 6 - (6) Dining Room, view to southwest

Photo 7 - (6) Cemetery, view to northwest