

510

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC Powell House

AND/OR COMMON

Trading Post

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

East side of Main Street, at corner of Orange Street NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Fair Bluff

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

7th

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

37

COUNTY

Columbus

CODE

47

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Rogers

STREET & NUMBER

Box 522

CITY, TOWN

Fair Bluff

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina 28439

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Columbus County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Whiteville

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Wooten-Powell House, known locally as the Trading Post, is a rambling one-story frame building located in the village of Fair Bluff, on the east bank of the Lumber River, separated from the river by a narrow road. The town is dominated by great trees densely draped with Spanish moss, which overhang the dark, smooth water of the Lumber River.

The structure is said to have functioned as a commercial outpost in the nineteenth century. The original building apparently consisted of two equal-sized rooms, with a small shed room abutting the south side of the west room and another abutting the north side of the east room. Engaged porches extend along the remainder of the north and south elevations. According to local tradition, the west section nearest the river served as a store and the east section served as living quarters. The present building consists of this original block, intact except for the north shed room, which has been removed, and late nineteenth century east and southwest wing additions which were made in several stages.

The first additions, made in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, consisted of a single room added to the east side and a kitchen-dining wing added southwest of the main block and connected to it by a breezeway which extended along the east side of the wing as an engaged porch. These were perhaps added simultaneously. In the late nineteenth century a room was added on the north side of this east addition, and ca. 1900 a room was added on the south side. The porches were then extended across the west sides of these added rooms, forming an L-shaped porch on each side. The north shed room was probably removed at this time to enlarge the north porch. An interesting late nineteenth century outbuilding stands about three feet east of the kitchen wing.

The main block, of vernacular Federal character, is covered with wide flush beaded sheathing beneath the porches and on the porch ceilings, and lapped siding elsewhere. The west gable end has beaded siding and a beaded raking cornice, the east gable end has a plain raking cornice, and the remaining eaves are boxed. The gable ends of the east wing have wide eave returns. An asbestos shingled gabled roof shelters the block. At the west end is an exterior single stepped shoulder brick chimney with no discernible bond. The original east exterior end chimney is now enclosed by the east additions. On the east side of the north room addition and the south side of the south room addition is an exterior single shouldered brick chimney with no discernible bond. The north porch, apparently rebuilt when the north room was added, consists of Doric posts with a balustrade of plain balusters and a rounded handrail. The south porch fabric consists of some chamfered and some plain posts. The original block has small six-over-six sash windows, with simple molded surrounds predominating and a few plain replacement surrounds. Four-pane casement windows with molded surrounds flank the chimney in the west upper gable end. The windows in the additions contain larger six-over-six sash with plain surrounds. Doors of six flat panels set in molded surround open into each original main room on the north and south sides. Several exterior entrances, each having a four raised panel door with a plain surround, open into the additions.

The interior of the original block betrays no sign of former commercial use. The two main rooms and the south shed room are finished in wide flush sheathing. Some of the original molded door and window surrounds remain, with plain replacements elsewhere. All of the original interior doors, identical to those of the exterior, remain. The east room contains a mantel, consisting of a three-part molded architrave surrounding the

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rectangular fire opening, which is perhaps original. The west room mantel, which appears to date from the mid-nineteenth century, consists of simple pilasters supporting a plain frieze with crosssetted molded corner blocks and a molded cornice and shelf. In the southwest corner of the east room, an interior stair rose in a single flight from the porch to the finished loft. This was removed in the twentieth century.

The addition rooms are also finished in flush sheathing, and each room contains plain door and window surrounds and a simple pilastered mantel. The oldest added room contains a molded baseboard, flat-paneled wainscot, and molded chair rail. Identical wainscots occur in the two original main rooms and on the east exterior wall of the south shed room, protected by the porch.

The kitchen-dining wing rests on brick piers, is covered with board-and-batten and capped by a gable roof with plain boxed cornices. In the center of the wing is an interior brick chimney. Two batten doors with plain surrounds open into the wing from the engaged porch on the east elevation, which connects with the main block porch. Windows with six-over-six sash set in plain frames pierce this wing. The kitchen occupies the south half of this wing; the dining room has a wainscot identical to those in the main block. Each room has a simple pilastered mantel.

The outbuilding, which rests on brick piers, is a small temple form building with a pedimented front porch covered with plain siding and finished with boxed shaped eaves with wide eave returns. In the east and west elevations is a six-over-six sash window with a plain surround and louvered blinds. In the main (north) facade are two doors each of four raised panels within symmetrically molded surrounds, opening into a partitioned area. The east section is covered with flush sheathing and is said to been built as the dairy. The west section, said to have been built as a store-room, is unsheathed. In the center of the partition wall is a wooden louvered ventilator.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES ca. 1803?

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Wooten-Powell House, also known as the Trading Post, is one of the oldest buildings in Columbus County. It is reported by local tradition to have been built by John Wooten about 1803, and to have served the Lumber River community of Fair Bluff as a trading center for the next half century.

What is now Columbus County remained largely unsettled until the 1760s when the General Assembly authorized the building of a road from Befont (present day Elizabethtown) to present day Whiteville. Expansion into the swampy region was slow, but by 1808 enough pressure existed to form a new county, to be called Columbus, from parts of Bladen and Brunswick Counties. The western border of Columbus County is the Lumber River, originally called Drowning Creek, which separated Columbus County from Robeson County.

The Lumber River comes into Columbus County from Robeson County and departs into South Carolina, eventually becoming part of the Pee Dee River. From the early eighteenth century the river was used for trading purposes, with furs, lumber, and naval stores being transported down the river. One spot on the Columbus County side of the river was known as the "fair bluff," and it was here that boats frequently tied up.² It was at this point that John Wooten built his house, said locally to have served as a trading post. In 1807 Wooten laid out plots for a town to be built at this spot, to be called Alexander.³ The town failed to materialize, however, and Fair Bluff was not incorporated until 1873.

It is not clear when or how the Powell family came to possess the house. It is probable that Absalom Powell, Jr., purchased the land sometime in the 1820s. Powell family tradition claims that it was Wooten's trading post that Powell acquired. In addition to mercantile and agricultural interests, Powell served Columbus County as a member of the North Carolina House of Representatives in 1814 and 1840.⁴ Absalom Powell was a prosperous farmer, whose 4,000 acres were valued at \$5,000 in the 1850 census.⁵ He sold 100 acres including the house to his son Albert Franklin Powell in 1842.⁶ Albert was less prosperous in 1850,⁷ with real estate valued at \$2,000, half of this being his 50 acres of improved farmland.

The 1850 census lists Albert F. Powell as a farmer, rather than as a merchant.⁸ It is not certain when the Trading Post ceased its commercial operations. However, local tradition states that this occurred with the coming of the Wilmington and Manchester Railroad in the mid 1850s. This resulted in the cessation of large scale trading on the Lumber River and diminished the importance of the location of the store. Since that time, the Trading Post has served as a private home. It was passed from Albert Powell to his son Irdell Montgomery Powell in 1871. The 1880 census lists him as a merchant, but contemporary North Carolina business directories do not list him as a store owner in

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in the area.¹⁰ I. M. Powell owned 229 acres in 1880. All but four acres were undeveloped woodland, with the four cultivated acres being devoted to cotton. He owned \$175 worth of livestock, forty chickens, and twenty-six swine. Powell, along with his wife, four children, and sister-in-law were prosperous enough to afford a live-in servant.¹¹ Powell died on June 15, 1922, and shortly thereafter, his widow, Mary Powell, deeded the "Home place and Residence" of her late husband and herself to their¹² daughter, Narcissa Elizabeth Renfro, who had married Peter Renfro on April 24, 1895.¹³ The current owner, Mrs. J. C. Rogers, is the daughter of "Bessie" Powell Renfro.

FOOTNOTES

¹Bill Sharpe, A New Geography of North Carolina (Raleigh: Sharpe Publishing Company, 1958), II p. 738, hereinafter cited as Sharpe, New Geography. Due to the inadequacy of primary and secondary source material on Columbus County, accounts of the history of Wooten-Powell house depend on Powell family tradition.

²Sharpe, New Geography, II, p. 738, p. 755.

³William Powell, The North Carolina Gazeteer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), p. 166. One unfortunate by-product of the planning of Alexander is the fact that Columbus County deeds refer to specific plot numbers in the town of Alexander, and then make reference to a map of the town's plots which no longer seems to exist.

⁴John Wheeler, Historical Sketches of North Carolina: From 1584-1851 (New York: Frederick H. Hitchcock, Publisher, 1860), 108-109.

⁵Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Columbus County, Agricultural Schedule, hereinafter cited as Columbus County Census, 1850.

⁶Columbus County Deed Books, Columbus County Courthouse, Whiteville, North Carolina, Book G, p. 194.

⁷Columbus County Census, 1850, Population Schedule.

⁸Columbus County Census, 1850, Population Schedule.

⁹Columbus County Deed Books, Columbus County Courthouse, Whiteville, North Carolina, Book R, p. 585.

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¹⁰Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Columbus County, Population Schedule, hereinafter cited as Columbus County Census, 1880; Reverend L. Branson (ed.), The North Carolina Business Directory (Raleigh, 1872), pp. 73-75; Reverend L. Branson (ed.) The North Carolina Business Directory (Raleigh, 1878), pp. 80-83.

¹¹Columbus County Census, 1880, Agricultural Schedule, Population Schedule.

¹²Columbus County Index of Vital Statistics: Deaths; Columbus County Marriage Index; Columbus County Deeds, 116-154. Mary Powell was I. M. Powell's second wife, his first wife, Nancy Wiggs Powell, having died in 1891.

¹³Columbus County Deeds, Columbus County Courthouse, Whiteville, North Carolina, 218-35, 218-38.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Branson, Reverend L., ed. The North Carolina Business Directory. Raleigh: 1872, 1878.
- Columbus County Deeds. Microfilm Copy. State Department of Archives and History. Raleigh North Carolina.
- Columbus County Index to Vital Statistics. Subgroup: Deaths. Microfilm copy. State Department of Archives and History. Raleigh, North Carolina.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	6,8,0	2,9,0	3,7	9,8	2,6,0	B						
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			
C							D						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Description prepared by Ruth Little-Stokes, Survey Specialist
Significance prepared by Jim Sumner, Researcher

ORGANIZATION	DATE
Division of Archives and History	
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
109 East Jones Street	733-4763
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
Raleigh	North Carolina 27611

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE July 14, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
	DATE
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE
ATTEST:	DATE
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

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Columbus County Marriage Index. Microfilm copy. State Department of Archives and History. Raleigh, North Carolina.

Powell, William. The North Carolina Gazeteer. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968.

Seventh Census of the United States, 1850. Columbus County, North Carolina. Agricultural Schedule, Population Schedule. Microfilm copy. State Department of Archives and History. Raleigh, North Carolina.

Sharpe, Bill. A New Geography of North Carolina. 4 volumes. 1954-1968, II. Raleigh: Sharpe Publishing Company.

Tenth Census of the United States, 1880. Columbus County, North Carolina. Population Schedule. Microfilm copy. State Department of Archives and History. Raleigh, North Carolina.

Wheeler, John. Historical Sketches of North Carolina: From 1584-1851. New York: Frederick H. Hitchcock, Publisher, 1860.

