UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM  

(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)

1. NAME
   COMMON:  
   Coolmore Plantation
   AND/OR HISTORIC:  

2. LOCATION
   STREET AND NUMBER:  
   Route 3 (US Highway 64 west of Tarboro)
   CITY OR TOWN:  
   Tarboro
   STATE:  
   North Carolina
   CODE:  
   37
   COUNTY:  
   Edgecombe
   CODE:  
   065

3. CLASSIFICATION
   CATEGORY  
   (Check One)
   [ ] District  [ ] Building  [ ] Site  [ ] Structure  [ ] Object
   [ ] Location  [ ] Building  [ ] Site  [ ] Structure  [ ] Object
   [ ] Public  [ ] Private  [ ] Both
   [ ] Public Acquisition:  
   [ ] In Process  [ ] Being Considered
   [ ] Preserved  [ ] Unoccupied  [ ] Unoccupied
   [ ] Preservation work in progress
   [ ] Open  [ ] Restricted  [ ] Unrestricted  [ ] No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)
   [ ] Agricultural  [ ] Government  [ ] Park
   [ ] Commercial  [ ] Industrial  [ ] Private Residence
   [ ] Educational  [ ] Military  [ ] Religious
   [ ] Entertainment  [ ] Museum  [ ] Scientific
   [ ] Transportation  [ ] Other (Specify)

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY
   OWNER’S NAME:  
   J. C. Powell
   STREET AND NUMBER:  
   Route 3
   CITY OR TOWN:  
   Tarboro
   STATE:  
   North Carolina
   CODE:  
   37

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
   COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
   Edgecombe County Courthouse
   STREET AND NUMBER:  
   301 St. Andrews Street
   CITY OR TOWN:  
   Tarboro
   STATE:  
   North Carolina
   CODE:  
   37

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
   TITLE OF SURVEY:  
   Historic American Buildings Survey
   DATE OF SURVEY:  
   1940
   [ ] Federal  [ ] State  [ ] County  [ ] Local
   DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
   Library of Congress
   STREET AND NUMBER:  
   East Capitol and Independence Avenue, S.W.
   CITY OR TOWN:  
   Washington
   STATE:  
   D.C.
   CODE:  
   11
Coolmore Plantation, a two-story frame mansion with small one-story wings, was begun in 1859. It was designed in the Italian Villa style by E. G. Lind of Baltimore. The main block has a hip roof intersected by decorative gables. The wide overhang is supported by very elaborate brackets. At the apex of the roof is a fanciful belvedere with stained glass windows. The north (front) facade is three bays wide, the center bay being slightly recessed. This bay features a one-story flat roofed porch with chamfered posts terminated by cornice caps. Above the porch is an elongated, stylized Palladian window. The flanking bays are divided at the second floor level by a simple heavy wooden stringer. On each level there are coupled pairs of windows. Those on the second floor have simple round arched heads. Those on the first are floor length, have segmental arched heads, and are sheltered by cornices supported on moulded brackets.

On the interior, Coolmore presents a series of unusual, elaborate rooms. The entrance hall is apsidal and treated with a profusion of wooden and plaster ornament including pilasters on pedestals supporting elaborate brackets and a false half dome. Behind this is the stair hall featuring a superb elliptical stair which ascends to and is lighted by the belvedere. At the rear is a small rectangular hall.

In the northwest corner is the parlor which retains its original furnishings, marble mantel, wallpaper, and superb painted ceiling in trompe l’oeil with flowers, panels, and other designs. Across the hall is a second parlor with walls painted to resemble polychromed panels, an elaborate painted ceiling, marble mantel, and most of its original furnishings. In the southwest corner is the dining room which has painted walls like those of the second parlor and features cupboards with glazed doors of red patterned glass on either side of the fireplace. The stair hall is painted to resemble polychromed panels like the second parlor.

On the grounds are original servants quarters, gas house, smoke house, carriage house, and other dependencies all treated with cupolas. Some have bracket cornices in imitation of the main house.
### SIGNIFICANCE

#### PERIOD
- [ ] Pre-Columbian
- [ ] 15th Century
- [ ] 16th Century
- [ ] 17th Century
- [ ] 18th Century
- [x] 19th Century
- [ ] 20th Century

#### SPECIFIC DATES
(If Applicable and Known)

#### AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE
(Check One or More as Appropriate)
- [ ] Aboriginal
- [ ] Prehistoric
- [ ] Historic
- [ ] Agriculture
- [ ] Architecture
- [ ] Art
- [ ] Commerce
- [ ] Communications
- [ ] Conservation
- [ ] Education
- [ ] Engineering
- [ ] Industry
- [ ] Invention
- [ ] Landscape Architecture
- [ ] Literature
- [ ] Military
- [ ] Music
- [ ] Political
- [ ] Religion/Philosophy
- [ ] Science
- [ ] Sculpture
- [ ] Social/Humanitarian
- [ ] Theatrical
- [ ] Transportation
- [ ] Urban Planning
- [ ] Other (Specify)

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In 1845 Dr. Joseph J. W. Powell, a prominent Edgecombe County physician, acquired the Robert D. Wimberly plantation approximately four miles northwest of Tarboro. He lived in a small farmhouse until 1859 when he began construction of a mansion designed by E. G. Lind of Baltimore. The house was completed shortly before Dr. Powell's death in 1861 and the property was divided by the court, with his widow, Martha B. Powell, receiving one-third of the 1,165-acre estate including their new home "Coolmore." After Mrs. Powell's death the plantation passed to her son Joseph C. Powell. Joseph was a noted agriculturalist and an active member of the Edgecombe County Farmers' Alliance, serving as its secretary in 1889. His son, Joseph C. Powell, Jr., is now resident owner.

Coolmore is set in a grove of large magnolias and deciduous trees on a twelve-acre lawn. Since its construction the house remains almost unaltered with its outbuildings complete. Preserved in the house are many of the bills and invoices connected with the construction of the house as well as the architect's original drawing. Coolmore is one of the largest, finest, and best documented examples of a plantation house of its style and period in North Carolina.
Located near Tarboro in Edgecombe County is Coolmore Plantation. Its Italianate mansion house, built just before the Civil War and designed by the prominent architect E. G. Lind, is one of the finest examples of its kind in the region. Historically it reflects the nature and success of the large plantation cotton economy which dominated the coastal plain in antebellum North Carolina.

The house was constructed by its first owner Dr. Joseph J. W. Powell. Prior to coming to Edgecombe County, Powell was a prominent Halifax County physician and planter. His Halifax holdings included a large number of acres and 25 slaves in 1850. He had married Martha B. Whitaker in Halifax County in 1844. During the 1850s he came to the Tarboro area at the request of his uncle Richard Harrison (1768-1856), a wealthy landowner who served in the state senate for seven years in the early nineteenth century and owned considerable stock in the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad and the Bank of North Carolina. While living with his uncle, Powell evidently ran both the Edgecombe and Halifax plantations. When Harrison died in 1856 he left the Edgecombe property to his nephew. Before his uncle's death Powell resided in the house of a former overseer, but in the year following Harrison's death he began work on the present-day mansion.

During the construction of the house Powell continued to run a large and successful cotton plantation. As the owner of 106 slaves at Coolmore alone, he ranked among the top echelon of planters in terms of wealth in the South. The 1860 census shows that he had 900 acres under cultivation and produced a cash crop in that year worth $65,000. On hand he had 260 bales of ginned cotton weighing 400 pounds each. His slaves also produced 4,500 bushels of corn, 600 bushels of peas and beans, and slaughtered animals worth $1,900. He had $2,500 invested in farming implements and $7,000 in livestock.

There is also evidence that he practiced the new techniques of scientific agriculture and soil refurbishment as set forth by the famous Virginia agricultural revolutionist and political secessionist, Edwin Ruffin. In fact Ruffin came to Edgecombe County around 1858-1859 and may have visited Coolmore. In any event the systematic use of marl, which Ruffin discovered as an improvement to the soil, was practiced at Coolmore. In his will Richard Harrison refers to Powell using the lime fertilizer to improve Coolmore lands.

The Coolmore mansion was completed in 1860 and its ornate construction displayed the elegance that the wealth of the South's most prosperous planters were able to secure for their homes. Baltimore architect E. G. Lind designed the house. Having planned or renovated a number of residential and commercial buildings in Tarboro, he had already gained a favorable reputation for his ability. Another of his Italianate works was the house of one of the town's leading merchants, W. L. Dozier. Of particular note at Coolmore is the trompe l'oeil and ceiling paintings done by a fresco artist named Dryer whom Lind brought to the area. When completed Coolmore House stood as a proper monument to wealth and influence in Edgecombe County.

Dr. Powell's stay in the new mansion, however, was short-lived, for he died in the spring of 1861-only a few months after the dwelling was completed. Although he had a will (now on file in the state archives), the county court judged him to have died intestate. In the subsequent settlement, Coolmore and 1,165 acres (a third of the estate's total acreage) went to his widow Martha B. Powell. At her death in the 1890s the property passed to her son Joseph C. Powell who continued to farm the tract, eventually converting
the plantation to primarily a stock and dairy farm. Like his antebellum predecessors, he attempted to employ the latest technological innovations to obtain the best yield from the farm. In 1894 he acquired a newly-developed separator for his dairy operation. The arrival of the device aroused the interest of the county's farmers and prompted a visit to Coolmore by some leading citizens and the editor of the Tarboro Southerner. "By special invitation of Mr. J. C. Powell," reported the newspaper,

the editor of the Southerner in company with Mr. George Howard, Jr., and Mr. Job Cobb, rode out to Coolmore Farm last week, to witness the working of a new separator, late purchased by Mr. Powell for his stock farm.

Mr. Powell has his separator nicely fixed up in the basement of one of his outhouses. This separator is run by a small oil engine, that is in itself a beauty. The inventor of this machine was present and operated it. In exactly seventeen minutes after the milk was poured into the reservoir, the cream had been taken from seventy-one pounds of milk. This separator has a capacity of nearly twelve thousand revolutions per minute. The working of this machine is splendid, and is now considered probably the best on the market, as it is guaranteed to get all the cream from the milk.

Mr. Powell is nicely fixed up for the dairy business. Mr. Barrigon [the inventor?] remarked to the crowd standing by, that he had never seen a dairy farm where everything was kept nicer and cleaner.

Mr. Howard, Mr. Cobb and the editor express their thanks to Mr. Powell for courtesies especially the elegant breakfast that was served.

Powell's success at farming led to his becoming a leader in the local Farmer's Alliance; he served as secretary of the organization in 1889. Since his death in 1909, Coolmore has remained in the family and is presently operated as a large cattle farm. The mansion house and outbuildings are relatively unaltered and have recently been designated a National Historic Landmark.
FOOTNOTES

1Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Halifax County, Population Schedule, 15; Slave Schedule, 187; Halifax County Marriage Bonds, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.


3Interview of McKelden Smith, III, architectural historian, with Mr. Joseph C. Powell, July 20, 1978, hereinafter cited as Powell interview.

4Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule, 329; Slave Schedule, 282-283.


6Powell interview; Catherine Bishir and Joe Mobley, "Tarboro Historic District," an unpublished National Register nomination, Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina, 13, 16.

7Edgecombe County Estates Records, Joseph J. W. Powell, 1861, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina, hereinafter cited as Edgecombe County Estates.

8Edgecombe County Estates, Martha B. Powell, 1894; The Southerner (Tarboro), August 16, 1894; J. Kelly Turner and Jonathan L. Bridgers, History of Edgecombe County (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1920), 291.

9Powell interview; Edgecombe County Wills, Joseph C. Powell, 1909, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.
As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

- National □
- State X
- Local □

Name: Dr. H. C. Jones
Title: Director, State Department of Archives and History
Date: October 5, 1970

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register


9.

Coolmore Plantation
Route 3 (US Highway 64 west of Tarboro)
Tarboro

Highway Map of Edgecombe County
North Carolina State Highway Commission
Scale: 2" = 1/4 miles
January 1, 1968

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