

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

Verona
AND/OR COMMON

Verona

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

☒ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Jackson

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

#2

☒ VICINITY OF

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Northampton

131

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

☐ DISTRICT

☐ PUBLIC

☐ OCCUPIED

☒ AGRICULTURE

☐ MUSEUM

☒ BUILDING(S)

☒ PRIVATE

☒ UNOCCUPIED

☐ COMMERCIAL

☐ PARK

☐ STRUCTURE

☐ BOTH

☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

☐ EDUCATIONAL

☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

☐ SITE

☐ PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ ACCESSIBLE

☐ ENTERTAINMENT

☐ RELIGIOUS

☐ OBJECT

☐ IN PROCESS

☐ YES: RESTRICTED

☐ GOVERNMENT

☐ SCIENTIFIC

☐ BEING CONSIDERED

☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED

☐ INDUSTRIAL

☐ TRANSPORTATION

☒ NO

☐ MILITARY

☐ OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. Matt W. Ransom IV

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 728

CITY, TOWN

Roanoke Rapids

☐ VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Northampton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Jackson

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1969

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D. C.

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT

☐ GOOD

☒ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED

☐ RUINS

☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED

☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE

☐ MOVED

DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Verona stands on a slight rise in the flat farmland of Northampton County; it is surrounded by a large grove which also shelters a family cemetery to the west including the grave of Matthew Whitaker Ransom. The house is a one-story frame structure set on a raised basement of brick. It is an interesting example of the Tuscan villa school of architecture popular in the mid-nineteenth century. The building was originally T-shaped, with the main facade composed of one side of the stem of the T and the end of the projecting arm of the crosspiece of the T. Porches fill in the angles of the T, and there is a one-room rear projection at the base of the T. The house is covered with plain weatherboards and capped by a hip roof covered with standing-seam tin. Interior chimneys rise between the rooms.

The exterior finish is relatively simple, with heavy molded architraves around the doors and floor-length windows. The heavy overhang of the eaves is unadorned. In contrast to this simplicity is the fanciful character of the wooden ornament of the porch and canopies. The front porch, extending the length of the stem of the T, is carried on heavy chamfered posts with simple brackets, thus creating a porch for the basement level. The main porch has flat sawnwork posts of a complex geometrical openwork design, from which spring delicate openwork brackets that join to create trefoil arches at each of the six bays. The posts are linked by a balustrade with balusters creating an arcaded effect. The whole is a light, airy geometrical composition of unusual charm.

At either end of the top of the T and at the base of the stem are small porches serving the single full-length windows there; each has lower supports and balustrade of similar design to the front porch, and is sheltered by a scalloped canopy with pierced decoration. (The rear one has a replaced scalloped band.) Across the top of the T is another porch, a much-simplified version of the front porch; its center is infilled. The area in the angle of the T at the rear also contains a porch and, toward the top of the T, an extension of the inside hall, with an arched window.

The interior of Verona is characterized by simple, massive forms, large windows, and surprising spaciousness. The plan consists of two rooms sharing a central chimney in the crosspiece of the T, two more rooms sharing a chimney in the stem of the T, and a hall running across the stem just below the junction of the two elements. Rooms measure roughly 22 by 22 feet, and ceilings are 14 feet high. A single room occupies the rear projection. Walls are plastered above a very heavy molded baseboard. Doors are of four flat panels with moldings; the entrance doors at both ends of the hall have glazed upper portions, corresponding with the sidelights; both have elongated octagonal lights. The architraves of doors and windows are of particular interest, as they are quite massive and subtly tapered. Some have single crossettes. The mantels vary; some are of simple mid-nineteenth century design, with plain broad pilasters and frieze. That in the front room of the crosspiece of the T has an arched opening, paneled spandrels and a shield cartouche keystone. That in the T-stem room near the hall is of particular interest, reflecting the character of the door and window frames, as it is simply a tapered, crossetted frame around the opening, the outer edge heavily molded, with a simple shelf.

The basement is so deteriorated as to be almost inaccessible, as the wooden floors have rotted out. The finish there is quite simple, and it is reached by a stair with faceted newel and rounded handrail, which leads from the rear hall.

SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Verona is a romantic mid-nineteenth century dwelling in the Tuscan villa mode with airy exterior sawn ornament, and interior spaces and woodwork of classical simplicity and monumentality. The plantation was part of land owned by the Exum family; the house was built for Martha Exum and Matthew Whitaker Ransom, Confederate brigadier general, United States senator, and minister to Mexico.

The plantation called Verona was part of the large land holdings of the Exum family until it came by marriage into the Ransom family. Joseph Exum, of a family from Isle of Wight County, Virginia, settled in North Carolina in the early eighteenth century, buying a plantation in 1744 "on the east side of Morratock [now Roanoke] river below the Occonicha . . .," which is in the same Occonneechee Neck area as Verona. His son James inherited his father's land and expanded his holdings; at his death in 1827, he left much of his land to his son Joseph John. Joseph John and Esther Roberts Exum (the daughter of prominent Murfreesboro merchant Benjamin Roberts) named their plantation, which bordered Exum's (now Barrows) Mill pond, Oak Grove. Another plantation, east of the mill pond, was added to Oak Grove after the death of Joseph John's brother.

In December, 1842, Joseph John Exum, one of the largest and most prominent planters in Northampton County, deeded all of his property to Nicholas M. Long and Thomas Bragg, Jr. They were to act as trustees for his wife, Esther, and two daughters, Mary and Martha (called Patty). Joseph John Exum died in 1844, and Esther died in 1845. In her will she directed that her brother, Dr. Thomas Vaughn Roberts, was to come and live at her home, and it was he who acted as guardian to his nieces.

Family tradition relates that when the Exum girls were young ladies, Mary, the eldest, had an ardent lover, who, one winter sent her a piece of music, entitled, "The Lauraine Gallopede," dedicated to the "Fair Maids of Verona." The girls liked the name Verona so well that their father changed the name of the plantation in its favor.

On April 28, 1849, Nicholas M. Long and Thomas Bragg, Jr., turned over the Exum estates to Mary and Martha Ann Exum. The Verona plantation alone contained about 1,200 acres, and there was a large number of slaves and valuable personal property.

On January 19, 1853, Martha Ann Exum married Matt Whitaker Ransom (October 8, 1826--October 8, 1904). He was the son of Robert and Pricilla Whittaker Ransom of Warrenton, North Carolina, both members of prominent North Carolina families. A

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE one

graduate of the University of North Carolina in 1847, Matt Ransom studied law, and in 1852 was elected attorney-general of North Carolina.

After their marriage, the Ransoms settled at Verona, where Ransom began to develop as one of the leading turfmen of the state. He was a member of the North Carolina House from 1858 to 1861, and in 1861 was chosen by the General Assembly to represent the state near the Confederate government, then forming in Montgomery, Alabama. He attained the rank of brigadier-general in the Confederate army. In 1872 he was elected to the United States Senate and served until 1895, when President Cleveland appointed him as minister to Mexico, where he served two years. He then retired to Verona, where he died and is buried with his wife and children.

The exact date of construction of the present house at Verona is uncertain. Strong family tradition states that it was begun before the Civil War and probably finished afterward. The Italian Villa style, used at Verona, became popular in the south just prior to the Civil War. The first house at Verona burned in the 1850s and the present house was probably begun shortly thereafter. After the war, General Ransom tried to put Verona back on a sound financial base. To his pre-war loan agents he wrote on February 5, 1867, that he had 600 acres in cotton with an estimated yield of \$45,000, 400 acres in corn, with an estimated yield of \$10,000, and 230 acres in wheat, with an estimated yield of \$5,525. To repay the loan that he proposed to contract, he promised that he would send the agents all the year's cotton and wheat crop. Soon afterward Ransom was being pressed by his creditors and seemed unable to meet the demands. His agricultural pursuits failed.

On February 22, 1868, Matt Ransom, Jr., who was then at Horner's School in Oxford, North Carolina, wrote to his mother, asking "Have you moved to Garysburg yet?" According to family tradition the Ransoms did leave Verona, and as early as August 13, 1868, letters were being addressed to them at Garysburg, though some during 1868 were addressed to Weldon, a few miles west of Garysburg, and a larger and more important community. A letter to General Ransom, dated March 5, 1869, states, "I inquired for you when passing thru Weldon on yesterday. Was informed by Mr. Grant that you were in Raleigh and would be home today." After the move to Weldon, correspondence was addressed occasionally to Garysburg. General Ransom reopened his law practice in 1868 to make a living for his family, and judging by his correspondence he had a busy practice.

Verona was evidently closed up. Matt Ransom, Jr., then at Washington College in Lexington, Virginia, wrote to his mother on December 17, 1871, "do you ever go up to Verona now, I have almost forgotten how the place looks for I was not there last summer." In 1872 General Ransom moved to Washington, D. C., to take up his duties as senator, while Mrs. Ransom remained at home with the boys. Matt Ransom, Jr., again wrote to his mother, this time from Charlottesville, Virginia, where he was a student at the university, "do hope you will go to Verona for it seems we were so happy there."

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE two

He then went on to talk about how hard General Ransom was working to make ends meet financially. General Ransom had his son, Joseph Exum Ransom, with him in Washington, as his secretary. On April 10, 1876, young Ransom wrote to his brother, Matt, "I wish you and mother could come on here and stay in my place for I know you would enjoy it and I do not. How is the garden getting along? Has Lucas laid off the walks yet?" This letter, coupled with tradition, would indicate that Mrs. Ransom and the boys had returned to Verona and the grounds were being landscaped.

At General Ransom's death in 1904, he willed the house to Joseph Exum Ransom who was born December 21, 1857, and died unmarried on November 1, 1938, leaving Verona to his only nephew, Matt Whitaker Ransom, III, the son of Patrick and May Blakeney Meacham, a widow. Matt Ransom, III, was killed in action in 1944 in Italy, and Verona was willed to his young son, Matt Whitaker Ransom, IV, the present owner.

After the death of Joseph Ransom in 1938 the house was vacant until 1940 when Mr. and Mrs. Frank Blakeney Meacham lived there a year. Mr. Meacham was a step-son of Patrick Exum Ransom. Since 1941 the house has been vacant.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE one

Northampton County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina
(Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).

Ransom Papers in possession of Mrs. William Johnston, Littleton, North Carolina.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Malone, Dumas, ed. Dictionary of American Biography. Volume XV, (New York) 1935.
Matt Whitaker Ransom Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North
Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.
Northampton County Records, Northampton County Courthouse, Jackson, North Carolina
(Subgroups: Wills, Deeds).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 9½

L&L: 36° 23' 15" 77° 28' 51"

UTM REFERENCES

Figure 1 consists of two parts, (B) and (D), each showing three schematic diagrams for Zone, Easting, and Northing data. Part (B) shows data for a single point, with vertical lines representing the data points. Part (D) shows data for a line, with vertical lines representing the data points along the line.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Research by John Baxton Flowers, III, survey specialist;
architectural description by Catherine W. Cockshutt, survey supervisor

ORGANIZATION

DATE _____

Division of Archives and History

7 March 1975

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

109 East Jones Street

919/829-7862

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

North Carolina

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL _____

STATE X

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer DATE 7 March 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE _____

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

LATEST:

DATE _____

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 2

PAGE one

0.5 mi. southeast of N.C. 158, 1.5 mi. east of S.R. 1312.



Verona
Jackson vicinity
North Carolina

<u>Latitude</u>			<u>Longitude</u>		
degrees	minutes	seconds	degrees	minutes	seconds
36	23	15	77	28	51

N. C. Highway Commission Map (no USGS map available)

Scale: 1/2"; 1 mile

Date: 1/1/74

COUNTY

