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 "NA" 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: Bellemonte  
   other names/site number: Dr. John F. Bellamy House

2. Location

   street & number: 3400 N. Wesleyan Boulevard  
   city, town: Rocky Mount  
   state: North Carolina  
   county: Nash  
   code & code: 127  
   NA  
   not for publication  
   NA  
   vicinity  
   zip code: 27804

3. Classification

   Ownership of Property: 
   - [X] private  
   - public-local  
   - public-State  
   - public-Federal

   Category of Property: 
   - [X] building(s)  
   - [ ] district  
   - [ ] site  
   - [ ] structure  
   - [ ] object

   Number of Resources within Property:  
   - Contributing: 2  
   - Noncontributing: 0

   Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

   Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

   As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

   Signature of certifying official: William S. Jennings  
   Date: 11/13/89

   State or Federal agency and bureau: 

   In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [X] 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: 
   - [X] 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:)

   Signature of the Keeper: 
   Date of Action: 

   State or Federal agency and bureau:
6. Function or Use
Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Domestic: single dwelling
Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Work in progress

7. Description
Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)
Georgian
Federal
Materials (enter categories from instructions)
foundation brick
walls weatherboard
roof tin
other wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Developed in several stages in the first half of the 19th century, Bellemonte represents an especially large and essentially intact antebellum plantation house in Nash County, North Carolina. While its basic form, style, and materials reflect other plantation houses of this period in the region, Bellemonte includes a host of unique features revealing the individual tastes of its first owner, as well as the essential vernacular quality and adaptability of local construction in this era.

ORIGINAL AND CURRENT SETTINGS

Facing south, Bellemonte originally stood on the north side of State Road 1545, at the heart of the estate of its first owner, Dr. John F. Bellamy. Bellemonte’s original site remained largely rural despite the presence of U.S. Highway 301, that runs north-south approximately 0.2 miles to the east. It is a level site shaded by century-old oaks and a small pecan grove, and retains a cluster of abandoned farm buildings all but one erected about 1940.

Plans to transform this site into a residential subdivision and accelerating vandalism prompted efforts to move the deteriorated house in order to preserve it. The house was moved in the late summer of 1988 to a location about 0.1 mile south, onto the campus of North Carolina Wesleyan College, previously part of Bellemonte plantation. The house was moved as a single unit including all four chimneys and their stacks. No damage to original material was caused by the move.

The new site is the level greensward at the front of the college campus, which is oriented to the highway to the east. The site is on the north side of the main entry drive, and is buffered from the red-brick, Colonial Revival college buildings to the west by a dense arboretum. Bellemonte retains its original southern orientation and is purposely visible from U.S. 301, for North Carolina Wesleyan College wishes to showcase this handsome early 19th century plantation house. Therefore, Bellemonte’s dignified presence on the land, diminished somewhat over the years due to the untended overgrowth around the original grounds, has been recreated.

THE PLAN

Bellemonte’s plan includes several distinctive features reflecting personal choices made in the internal use of space. To one viewing the house from the front, it appears to be a traditional five-bay-wide, central-hall I-house, a popular symbol of high social status throughout the region during the 19th century. Bellemonte, indeed, includes a formal central passageway. But whereas the standard central-hall I-house has one room on either side of the hall, the west side of Bellemonte was laid out with two rooms. Moreover, the dwelling's enclosed stairway is not in the hall, as is typical, but is located to the back of the east room and extends along the rear wall. Finally, Bellemonte, 1817, includes a two-story rear ell added on the

See continuation sheet
West side, creating an especially spacious home for this part of the state in the early 1800s. This wing is part of a separate structure, c. 1820, that was joined to the principal two-story, side-gable block in the 1840-60 period. Many of the features and construction of the ell are sufficiently related to Bellemonte to suggest a common builder.

The Original House

Beginning in 1817, the main two-story block of the house is a 43-foot rectangle capped by a gable roof. Its largely intact exterior and interior reveal a variety of decorative elements reflecting a blend of Georgian and Federal influences. The front facade, consisting of five symmetrically placed bays on each story, is the major focus of embellishment. It includes nine-over-six sash windows with robust triple-molded jambs and heavy cushion sills. They are a vernacular reference to the Georgian style. Similarly, the molded weatherboarding and elaborate box cornice with modillions and dentils (repeated on the rear elevation and the ell) recall the Georgian style. The two-tier entry portico highlights the front facade. The portico includes diamond-patterned latticework inventively applied to the friezes. The Federal style is more evident in the porch pediment, which features a lunette with a carefully molded keystone ornament. Heavy round posts still support the friezes and roofs on both floors of the portico, though the upper and lower latticework railings (documented in photographs) are largely gone.

The lunette in the porch pediment has a duplicate on the west gable end flanked by two single-shoulder, Flemish-bond chimneys. These chimneys have paved shoulders, and there is evidence of glazed headers, though the brick has been painted red. The chimney stacks, constructed of common-bond brick, are later replacements. The east gable end is plainer than the west one, having no lunette and only one chimney in which the date brick was found. Although constructed of common-bond brick, this chimney appears to be original for it includes brick tumbling at the shoulder. Like the front facade, the siding of both gables as well as that on the rear elevation is molded.

Both the main block and the rear wing are supported by a raised Flemish-bond brick foundation that duplicates the original as closely as possible in color and surface. It is blended with the original chimneys by the addition of a wash of red paint to match the previously painted surfaces of the original chimneys. Along the main block was a solid brick wall that forms the above-ground walls of a cellar. On the new site, there is an English basement which is not obvious from the exterior.

Like the exterior, the interior includes handsome woodwork reflecting vernacular Georgian and Federal styling, as well as motifs that are clearly individual. Still intact and in place in the two first-floor main rooms are three-part Federal mantels that are paneled and reeded. A smaller, rear room on the main block's west side includes a distinctively decorated mantel featuring a molded diamond-shaped pattern probably added to the original three-part mantle at the time the ell was attached and echoing the lattice-work friezes on the portico. The two rooms and central hall on the first floor front are treated with similar beaded chair rail and baseboard. Doors and windows are original, featuring surrounds with simple molded architraves similar to those in the ell. The doors have six raised panels, some hung on rising butt hinges. The front door and surround which leads into the central hallway were early 20th century replacements and are now restored. The walls and ceilings of the first-floor rooms and hall are of lath and plaster, which are to be restored.

The second floor is treated with molded surrounds and six-paneled doors like those below. The mantels, which are original, are plainer than those on the first floor. They have simple molded architraves and thin shelves.
TWO- STORY ELL

The two-story ell, built about 1820, was attached to Bellemonte between 1840 and 1860. This gable roofed dwelling was built two stories high and survives as two bays wide, with only one original room and part of another on the first floor and two rooms above. Many original and early exterior elements survive. The original front facade, like the 1817 main block of the house, retains molded weatherboarding as well as nine-over-six sash windows with triple-molded jambs and heavy cushion sills. Its cornice is elaborately decorated with a row of undercut modillions banded below by a double course of dentils. The cornice embellishment was added when joined to the body of the house, for it only appears along the east side of the ell while embellishing both the front and rear elevations of the main block. The gable end of the ell also retains nine-over-six windows, and is dominated by a double-shoulder chimney with Flemish-bond brick and brick tumbling at the shoulders different from the other three in configuration and concept.

The interior of the ell was substantially remodeled. Serving as a kitchen during the 20th century and possibly for a much longer period, the first floor has lost its original mantel, some wainscot, some doors, and some window surrounds. Its most notable feature is an enclosed stairway in the west corner near the main body of the house. The stairway leads to two upper-story rooms. Originally bed chambers, these rooms retain three-part window surrounds and a door with six raised panels. The upstairs mantel, however, is a Victorian-era adaptation or replacement with simple classical treatment, including engaged colonettes.

DEPENDENCY

The only surviving early dependency was moved with Bellemonte. This small gable-end frame structure, apparently dating from the second quarter of the 19th century, survives intact, although its weatherboards and flooring appear to be 19th or early 20th century replacements. The frame has beaded ceiling joists and mortised construction.

PRESENT WORK IN PROGRESS

On its new site, Bellemonte is currently undergoing restoration. Phase I is now completed and the exterior, except roof surface and rear porches, is complete. The original colors have been restored. After the fund raising is completed for Phase II, work will begin on restoring the interior and the roof. The plans are to restore a historically accurate wooden shingle roof surface. North Carolina Wesleyan College intends to carefully restore Bellemonte for use as a visitor's center with perhaps two administrative offices. Projections are to continue work within a year. No original fabric has been removed from the structure.

NOTES

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  

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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
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Cultural Affiliation  N/A

Significant Person  N/A

Architect/Builder  Unknown (perhaps Mess. Bell and Joyner, Tarboro)

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

SUMMARY

Completed in several stages in the early 19th century, Bellemonte stands as one of Nash County's significant antebellum plantation dwellings. The essentially intact two-story frame house is eligible for the National Register primarily under Criterion C. Bellemonte is exemplary of the houses erected for Nash County's gentry class in this period. The dwelling is an inventive, well-executed blend of Georgian and Federal architecture, highlighted by a two-story entry portico with vernacular Chippendale features. Both the portico and the floor plan, consisting of three rooms organized around a central hall, are unique in the county. Bellemonte also is significant under Criterion A in the area of social history as a reflection of the lifestyle of Nash County's most prosperous planters during the antebellum era. This member of a group of notable plantation houses built in northern Nash County between the late 18th century and the Civil War was constructed for one of the area's major planters, Dr. John F. Bellamy, and served as the seat of a large plantation operated first by Dr. Bellamy, and then by one of his sons. In the summer of 1988, the house was moved from its original site onto the adjacent North Carolina Wesleyan College campus to prevent the dwelling's destruction. Bellemonte is currently undergoing restoration and remains eligible for the National Register under Criteria Consideration B. Although it has lost integrity of location and setting, the house retains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, association and feeling. The new site, close to the original and formerly part of the Bellamy plantation, resembles the original setting in its topography. Moreover, the house's orientation, relationship to the road it faces, and setback are approximately the same as on the original site.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

Bellemonte is a creative, vernacular mix of Georgian and Federal motifs that is, at once, emblematic of the tastes of the early 19th century Nash County planter class and reflective of Dr. John F. Bellamy's personal needs and choices of style. Bellemonte's Georgian-Federal style, including a crisp modillion cornice and decorative lunettes on the exterior and three-part mantels and horizontal wainscot on the interior, ranks the house among the county's most accomplished plantation dwellings of the early 19th century. For example, the house's cornice embellishment, fluted corner boards, and molded weatherboarding resemble the stylistic treatment on the Robert Hilliard house (The Meadows), which was listed on the National Register in 1973. The restrained, well-executed interior reflects a host of houses in the area, including The Meadows and Black Jack, the plantation home of John Hilliard (National Register, 1974).
Most notable is Bellemonte's Chippendale-inspired portico. It is a simple, vigorous interpretation of the style, consisting of heavy classical columns and fretwork. This portico is unique in the area, and must have set Bellemonte apart from neighboring plantation seats, most of which shared Bellemonte's basic rectangular shape and side-gable roof. Although locally distinctive, the Chippendale portico quite clearly illustrates the conservative tastes of Bellamy and other members of the Nash County elite. During the 1820s and 1830s, the Greek Revival was rapidly emerging as the nation's most fashionable architectural style in the eastern urban centers. But in Nash County, Bellamy and his social counterparts, as well as members of other social classes, continued to select Georgian and Federal styles. Not until the 1840s and 1850s did the Greek Revival regularly appear on the Nash landscape. Bellemonte, therefore, stands as physical evidence of the conservatism of antebellum Nash County society, as well as a vivid symbol of one planter's prosperity.

SOCIAL HISTORY CONTEXT

Situated above the falls of the Tar River in Nash County, North Carolina, Bellemonte vividly represents the plantation-oriented social and economic system that developed in the eastern part of the state, and especially in northern Nash County between the late 18th century and the Civil War. Even though it is not on its original site, it remains on the original plantation land.

By the turn of the 19th century, a significant planter class was starting to flourish in the vicinity of Hilliardston, 14 miles northwest of Rocky Mount. In this area prominent local families such as the Hilliards and Arringtons established large cotton plantations and erected notable two-story residences in the Georgian and Federal styles. Captain Isaac Hilliard, for example, owned approximately 20,000 acres around Swift Creek, and his sons, John and Robert, built handsome classical I-houses upon their shares of the vast Hilliard estate. Both houses, which still stand, are located only about 10 miles northwest of Bellemonte. By the 1830s, the area included a post of plantation seats, typically oriented to state routes that crisscrossed the upper half of the county. In Hilliardston, located on the Halifax Road, Drs. Joseph Drake and William Burt established sizeable farms and constructed imposing Federal-style houses on crests of land overlooking the highway. Several miles west of Bellemonte, William Dortch took occupancy of his elegant new Dortch House in 1810. By the 1830 census, Dortch was the head of a household that included 10 children as well as 34 slaves. Just to the south of Bellemonte, Stonewall Plantation was established by Bennett Bunn in 1820, and within the decade Bunn was one of Nash County's wealthiest planters, owning almost 100 slaves. By 1850, Nash County included 3,447 slaves (among a total population of 8,187) and 43 slaveowning families having 20 or more slaves. The majority of these families resided in Northern Nash.

BELLEMONTE'S HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Bellemonte was built on land owned by members of the Bellamy family and acquired by Dr. John F. Bellamy (1794-1846) in 1815. In that year Bellamy purchased 352 acres for $1,171 from his brother, William Exum Bellamy, and paid his uncle, Reverend William F. Bellamy, $1,000 for an adjacent parcel of 419 acres. By 1855, when a plat was drawn of "Belle Mont Plantation," the tract included 885 acres. At that time the land spanned both Nash and Edgecombe counties, and was drained by a small creek, Beach Run.

John F. Bellamy, a prosperous planter, had his house erected about 1817, the year of his marriage to Ann Nicholson. Facing south, it was oriented to the Raleigh-Tarboro stage route, which passed by to the southeast. Bellamy's second marriage, in 1836, was to Sarah Hunter Coefield. Bellamy and his first wife had two children, Ann W. and Dr. John I. Bellamy. Dr. John Thomas Bellamy and Joseph Clinch Bellamy survived from his second marriage.
While Bellemonte Plantation was therefore the home or birthplace of three physicians, nothing is known of Dr. John F. Bellamy's medical career. However, surviving records reveal that he ranked among the area's leading planters. His estate record, for example, shows that he owned 101 slaves—no other Nash resident on the eve of the Civil War owned more. At the time of his death, Bellamy possessed a sawmill, two cotton gins that had produced a stockpile of 5000 bushels of cotton seed in 1846, 275 hogs, 17 horses, and 50 head of cattle. In addition to his farming and medical careers, Bellamy was also justice of the peace in Nash County between 1818 and 1826, and was described by his son Joseph as the "financial manager" for the construction of several miles of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, which was built through a corner of the plantation in the early 1840s. Bellamy's son, John Thomas, inherited the Bellemonte tract in 1846 and maintained a thriving operation based on slave labor until the Civil War. The 1850 slave schedule shows that John Thomas Bellamy possessed 39 slaves, while the agricultural census for the same year recorded that the Bellemonte heir owned $1,400 worth of livestock and that the plantation yielded 140 pounds of wool, 12 tons of hay, and 25 bales of ginned cotton.

The name Bellemonte (also spelled Belle Mont and Belle Monte), which has existed since at least the 1855 plat map, reflects the planter class's penchant for giving their homes picturesque or romantic titles. Indeed, in northern Nash County before the Civil War there existed plantations with names such as Woodlawn (Isaac Hilliard), The Meadows (Robert C. Hilliard), Black Jack (John Hilliard), Oak Forest (Reverend William Bellamy), Stonewall (Bennett Bunn), and Rose Hill (Nathan and George Boddie). It is not known why Dr. Bellamy selected the name Bellemonte. The dwelling did not stand on a clearly defined rise of land, or "mount," but the French term does have a certain cache, and evokes an image of refinement. Moreover, as local historian Dr. Margaret Battle suggests, Bellamy might have preferred Bellemonte over other evocative labels because the two names—Bellamy and Bellemonte—sound so much alike.

In 1918, Joseph Clinch Bellamy, the sole surviving son as well as the owner/occupant of Bellemonte at the time, sold the property to M. C. Braswell. Braswell was a major landowner and merchant in the locality, and occupied a handsome Neo-Classical Revival home in nearby Battleboro. He, therefore, did not occupy Bellemonte, but rather rented the house to tenants who farmed the land. Tenant-occupied for much of the 20th century, Bellemonte has stood vacant for about the last decade. New ownership by Wesleyan College promises a new beginning for this handsome antebellum plantation house.

NOTES


3. For a discussion of the plantation society that developed around Hilliardston and across northern Nash County, see Richard L. Mattson, The History and Architecture of Nash County, North Carolina (Nashville, North Carolina: Nash County Planning Department, 1987), pp. 13-19; for a broader discussion that explores the plantation society in North Carolina, see Hugh T. Lefler, The History of North Carolina (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1973), pp. 411-430; Lefler defines the North Carolina gentry before the Civil War as those owning more than 20 slaves, see pp. 412-413.
4. For a map illustrating the distribution of pre-Civil War houses that survive in Nash County, see Mattson, p. 4; the majority of these dwellings are former plantation seats scattered across the upper half of the county.

5. Mattson, pp. 5, 15, 204, 205.


13. Bellemonte's orientation to the Raleigh-Tarboro state route is specifically addressed in a letter from Joseph Clinch Bellamy to M. C. Braswell, March 18, 1918. A copy of this letter is available within the Bellemonte file, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.


15. Ibid.


17. Bellamy to Braswell correspondence, March 18, 1918.


19. Mattson, pp. 11, 14-15, 159, 233, 237, 244.


21. Battle interview; Mattson, p. 262
9. Major Bibliographical References

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Belle Mont Plantation." Plat map executed in 1855 by Henry E. Odom, and traced in 1970 by W. S. Diehl.


10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Approximately 1.7 acres

UTM References

A Zone 1
East 7 2 5 9 2 0 0
North 3 9 8 9 3 6 0
B Zone 1
East 2
North 1
C Zone 5
East 1
North 1
D Zone 6
East 1
North 1

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary encompasses the present site of Bellemonte and approximately an area similar in size and configuration to those of the original domestic compound. The southern boundary is formed by the main entry to the campus (which extends westward from highway 301), 168' from the main block of the house and parallel to its main facade. There are some trees of several species including oak and pine bordering the roadway.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass an area similar in size, configuration and relationship to the house as those of the original domestic compound.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard Mattson, Consultant and Chris Wilson, Project Coordinator
organization Survey and Planning Branch, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh
street & number Rt. 1, Box 547 and Old Town Plantation
city or town Spring Hope, NC 3550 Cool Spring Road Rocky Mount
state NC zip code 27882 & 27804

device


United States Census Office. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Edgecombe County, North Carolina, Slave and Agricultural Schedules.

The western boundary is formed by the perimeter road of the campus that is parallel to highway 301 and is 97' from the main block of the house, parallel to its west facade. There are several pine trees near the south end of this boundary and several oaks at the north end. The northern or rear boundary is located 97' behind the house and parallel to the south boundary. A drainage ditch intersects the north line at right angles forming the east boundary, also 97' from the main block of the structure. The overall site, then is a rectangle 237' on the north and south sides and 313' on the east and west sides.