United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Mary Ann Browne House

and or common "Oakley", "Oakley Grove", Faulcon-Browne House, Dr. LaFayette Browne House

2. Location

East side of S.R. 1530,
street & number 0.7 mi. south of junction with U.S. 158

city, town Vaughan

state North Carolina code 037 county Warren code 185

3. Classification

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4. Owner of Property

name Prentiss Anne Allen

street & number 422 Elm Street 919-834-3414

city, town Raleigh

state North Carolina 27602

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Warren County Courthouse, Register of Deeds

street & number Main Street 919-257-3265

city, town Warrenton

state North Carolina 27589

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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depository for survey records

city, town

state
Built in two parts, the Mary Ann Browne House is comprised of an Italianate-Gothic Revival main block with an earlier, Federal-style wing at the rear. The two-story, three-bay, single-pile frame Italianate-Gothic block was constructed around the last half of the 1850s and is in the style of Warrenton builder Jacob W. Holt. The story-and-a-half, three-bay frame Federal-style wing was constructed around 1800 or soon after that and was incorporated into the remodelling as a rear wing.

The house faces west, more or less, and is located on a rise about one-tenth of a mile east of S. R. 1530 in the eastern part of Warren County. There are a few old trees, including white oak, sycamore, and walnut in the vicinity of the house both north and south of it. A thicket of young pines along the road partially blocks the house from view from the road. There is a Browne family cemetery to the south of the house in a cluster of trees. The path from the road to the house approaches on the north (left) side of the house. North of the path, about halfway to the house, is a small, story-and-a-half, frame dormered building which is deteriorated. East of (behind) the house and some distance from it is a tobacco barn.

The west (front), main block of the Mary Ann Browne House sits on a raised basement of large bricks laid in one-to-five American, or common, bond with a soldier, or edge-laid, course at the top. The south half of the basement is finished and plastered while the north half is not. Entry is gained into the basement by a doorway near the west end of the south elevation.

The low-pitched, hipped roof is now covered with tin shingles, which probably date to the early part of this century. The house may have originally had a standing-seem tin roof, as this was a material which was used advantageously on the low-pitched roofs of the 1850s.

Below the roof is a wide eave supported by heavy brackets. The weatherboards are unbeaded, except on the south elevation where the siding removed from the earlier house may have been reused. Heavy, molded pilasters occur at the corners and have plain, Doric, Greek Revival capitals and bases.

The three-bay-wide facade contains paired four-over-four windows in which the upper rail of the top sash is shaped into a Tudor arch. In the center of the second story there is a glazed double door with a round, fanlight arch rather than the Tudor arch used for the windows. This doorway would have opened onto the roof of a one-bay-wide porch below. At first story level a heavy, molded surround encloses Tudor-arched paneled double doors flanked with a transom above. The top pane of the three-pane sidelights and the transom panes above them are Tudor-arched, and the four-pane-wide center part of the transom forms a single, wide Tudor arch.

The north elevation contains one paired four-over-four Tudor-arched window in the center of each story. The east elevation contains no windows. There are three six-over-six sash, two on the second story and one on the first, and a four-panel, flat-paneled door on the south elevation. These were apparently reused on this elevation as was the beaded siding.

The Italianate-Gothic block of the Mary Ann Browne House has a central-hall
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<td>plan with two rooms and a hall on each floor. The U-shaped stair climbs left to right winding across the rear portion of the hall with a closet under the stair. The stair has a rounded, ramped handrail and an urn newel. Some of the stair is missing. In the first floor north room the mantel was removed and a mantel from the second floor was moved downstairs in its place. The heavy door and window surrounds and deep, molded baseboards are intact. There are panels below the windows. The doors have four, molded, Tudor-arched panels. Throughout the house the floors are wide, heart yellow pine.</td>
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The east (rear) wing of the house is what remains of the Federal-style house that was built by Mary Ann Browne's father, Jacob Faulcon, around 1800, and occupied by Mary Ann and Lafayet during their marriage. The wing is located at the south end of the east elevation of the Holt addition and sits on a raised basement of bricks laid in one-to-three American, or common, bond with some fieldstones.

The steeply sloping shed roof owes its configuration to the high pitch of the roof of the original house. It, too, is now covered with tin shingles, but it would have originally had wooden shingles. The box cornice is molded; there are beaded, tapered rake boards; and the pattern boards are nicely profiled. The weatherboards and cornerboards are beaded.

The three-bay-wide facade (rear) of the shed has a flat-paneled door in the center flanked by windows having nine-over-nine sash. There is one window on each side elevation (north and south) of the wing between the chimney and the outside corner of the wing. These windows both contain six-over-six sash. The attic windows contain four-over-four sash and are located between the chimney and the inside (junction with the main block) corner of the wing, one window on each side elevation of the wing. Only the original south chimney survives. Its stack has been heightened. It is laid in Flemish bond, with some glazed headers, and has single shoulders. The location of the original north chimney can readily be seen.

The rear wing of the house originally had a hall-and-parlor plan with an enclosed stair. At the time of the addition it was altered by removing the staircase and adding a partition to form a center-hall plan. The door and window surrounds are reeded and mitered and there are six-panel, Federal-style doors. The wainscot is flush. All of the mantels are gone.

The house attained its present form under the ownership of Mary Ann Browne. It reflects her taste, needs, and economic situation.
8. Significance

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Specific dates c. 1800, c. 1850s Builder/Architect attrib. to Jacob W. Holt

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Mary Ann Browne House is an example of a stylish Italianate-Gothic plantation house whose antebellum owners were wealthy tobacco planters. Their wealth was in land, on which they grew tobacco, and in slaves, who provided the labor for that labor-intensive crop. The house in its present form is stylistically attributed to Warrenton builder Jacob W. Holt, and was constructed for the widow Mary Ann Browne around the last half of the 1850s. Mary Ann's husband, LaFayette Browne, died in 1841 and therefore never saw the house as it is today. The Browns lived in what is presently the rear, Federal-style wing of the house. Mary Ann inherited the property from her parents after their deaths in the late 1820s. It was also in the late 1820s that she married Dr. LaFayette Browne, a medical doctor who practiced in Warren and Halifax counties. Even after LaFayette's death, in 1841, the plantation continued to expand up until the time of the Civil War under the management of Mary Ann and her sons. The Mary Ann Browne House is an example of a fashionable, but not ostentatious, expression of the affluence created by the antebellum tobacco-based economy of the eastern part of the piedmont region of North Carolina.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT:

C. The house exemplifies the influence of the Italianate and Gothic styles and the eclecticism of the 1850s on the fashion-conscious tobacco planters of the piedmont region of North Carolina, and its execution in a plantation house.
The earlier, rear, Federal-style part of the Mary Ann Browne House was probably built by John Faulcon around 1800 or soon thereafter. Mary Ann Browne was the elder daughter of John Faulcon and his wife Mary Ann, both of whom died between 1824 and 1829. The inventory of John Faulcon’s estate, taken in December 1824, listed seventy slaves and crops which included 590 barrels of corn, 150 bushels of wheat, and 10,000 pounds of tobacco.

Warren County's affluent planter society of this period was based on the production of tobacco. By the 1830s tobacco, which depended on slave labor for its production, was primarily confined to Warren and neighboring counties in the northern Piedmont along the Virginia border. It was here that there were the greatest number of slaves per square mile in North Carolina.

LaFayette Browne, Mary Ann's husband, is listed as the head of a household for the first time in the U.S. Census of 1830. It is likely that he and Mary Ann and their three small sons, all under 5 years of age, resided in the same Federal-style house, the rear part of the present house, that her parents had occupied at the time of their deaths just a few years before. LaFayette and Mary Ann Browne were both in their twenties in 1830. Although he managed a tobacco plantation, LaFayette Browne was trained as a medical doctor and practiced medicine in Warren and Halifax counties. In the 1840 U.S. Census he was the one person in his household listed as being engaged in the category of "learned professions and engineers".  

LaFayette and Mary Ann Browne's family increased in number during the 1830s and by 1840 included two daughters between the ages of five and ten years of age and two daughters under five years of age. One of the three sons listed in the 1830 census had apparently died, since in 1840 there were only two sons listed.

In March 1841 the young Dr. LaFayette Browne died intestate. He was no more than forty years of age at the time of his death. The July 1841 court delayed the sale of Dr. Browne's estate because of the all-important tobacco crop and Mary Ann Browne's pregnancy. When the estate was finally settled, Mary Ann was allotted the tract on which the house is located until her death. That tract was described as being 1,300 acres, more or less, lying one-half mile southeast of Vaughan Station on the "R&G [Raleigh and Gaston] Rail Road". Included in the inventory of LaFayette Browne's estate were 114 slaves. (He had listed 33 slaves in 1830 and 128 in 1840.) Also included were crops of corn, fodder, oats, and tobacco "made at the Home house" and on his other properties. His lengthy inventory also listed numerous farm animals and plantation utensils. Some of the personal property listed belonged to the estate of Jacob Faulcon, Mary Ann's brother, who had died in 1838 and whose estate LaFayette Brown had administered.

The name of Warren County builder Albert G. Jones appears among the list of names of people who purchased items at the sale of LaFayette Browne's personal property in December 1841. Jones' name, with that of David Dowton, also appears in a list of bonds due to the estate of Mary Ann's brother, Jacob Faulcon. Appar-
ently Jones' acquaintance with the Brownes and Faulcons was merely coincidental as the Italianate-Gothic addition to the house is not in Jones' idiom.

By 1850 Mary Ann Browne's sons, Ridley and Jacob Faulcon, were twenty-one and twenty years of age respectively. Ridley, following in his father's footsteps, was a physician and Jacob was a farmer, owning 2,930 acres. Only two of her daughters were still living at home with her. Seemingly Mary Ann, with assistance from her sons, had to undertake the responsibility of running the plantation.

Stylistically, when compared to similar Warren County and vicinity plantation houses, the front Italianate-Gothic style addition fits within the last half of the 1850s. This coincides with Mary Ann Browne's need for more living space for her older children and the economic prosperity in Warren County. In addition to the nearly 3,000 acres owned by her son Jacob, she owned 3,918 acres in 1850. Between 1850 and 1860 tobacco production in North Carolina increased from 12 to 33 million pounds, partially to the discovery of bright-leaf tobacco. In 1860 Warren was one of the two leading tobacco-producing counties in the state, with over five million pounds. Tobacco required much hand, which meant slave, labor and fertilizer, but a farmer could clear $400 to $700 per worker per year. Land values in the tobacco belt increased rapidly bringing enormous prosperity in the area in which it was the staple crop.

The two-story, frame, Italianate-Gothic style addition made to the front (west) of the house is attributed to Warrenton builder Jacob W. Holt. This attribution appears to be correct. Stylistically the addition is closely related to the Archibald Taylor House in Franklin County, also attributed to Jacob Holt. The Archibald Taylor House dates from around 1857 which seems to be approximately the time of the major addition that Mary Ann Browne made to her house. Both the Taylor House and the Mary Ann Browne House addition are raised on a high brick foundation, have heavy molded corner pilasters, broad eaves with generous brackets, low-pitched hipped roofs, and paired windows on the facade and end elevations with a second-story doorway in the center of the facade. The Browne House originally had a sturdy one-bay-wide portico which was probably quite similar in detail to the three-bay portico on the Taylor House.

Mary Ann Browne lived only about five years after enlarging the house. She died on September 4, 1863. At that time the "House Tract" of land only included 350 acres. Mary Ann's youngest daughter, Mary LaFayette Browne, inherited the house and lived there until her death. The name "Oakley" was probably given to the house at the time of the Holt addition, but in 1885 when the property was divided, the house was called the "residence of the late Mrs. Mary A. Browne". Mary LaFayette Browne bequeathed the house to her nephew W. B. Faulcon. When his estate was settled in 1898, the 111 acre tract containing the house was referred to as the "homeplace of W. B. Faulcon."

During the twentieth century the house has had several owners and was rental
property until 1982, when it was donated to The Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina, Inc., to be sold for restoration. The present owner purchased it in January 1985.

NOTES

1. John Faulcon died intestate in 1824. By November 1829 John's widow, Mary Ann, had died and their surviving children Mary Ann Faulcon Browne (along with her husband LaFayette Browne), and minors Jacob Faulcon and Lucy J. Faulcon were petitioning for the division of her estate. LaFayette Browne and Mary Ann Faulcon Browne were married between 1824 and 1829. Warren County Estate Papers, John Faulcon, C. R. 100.508.18, North Carolina Archives.

2. By 1790 one-third to one-half of the total population of Warren County were slaves and by 1860 sixty percent of the county's population were slaves. This was the highest percentage of slaves of any county in North Carolina. Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, The History of a Southern State: North Carolina, third edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 129, 315, 423; and Guion Griffis Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 53, 469.


5. Warren County Estate Papers, Lafayette Brown, C. R. 100.508.7, North Carolina Archives. The estate was divided between Mary Ann Brown, his widow, and his children, Ridley Brown, Jacob Faulcon Brown, Alice Brown, Ida Brown, Vesuvia Brown, Mary Jane Brown, and Mary LaFayette Brown. Mary LaFayette Brown was apparently the child with whom Mary Ann was pregnant at the time of her husband's death. The 86-mile Raleigh and Gaston Railroad was chartered in 1835 and finished in 1840 and provided a ready means of transporting the Browne's and other Warren County tobacco to market. For further discussion of this railroad see Lefler and Newsome, 363.

6. Warren County Estate Papers, Lafayette Brown, C. R. 100.508.7, North Carolina Archives and Warren County Estate Papers, Jacob Faulcon, C. R. 100.508.18, North Carolina Archives. The 1850 U. S. Census lists Albert G. Jones as a carpenter living in the same general vicinity of Warren County as the Browne's. Jones was in his late twenties at the time of his acquaintance with Faulcon and the Browne's. Manuscript population schedule, Warren County, North Carolina 7th U. S. Census (1850), microfilm copy, North Carolina Archives.

8. Manuscript population schedule, Warren County, North Carolina, 7th U. S. Census (1850), microfilm copy, North Carolina Archives; and Lefler and Newsome, 392.


10. Catherine Bishir points out in her article on Jacob Holt, written for Winterthur Portfolio, that in the 1850s Holt reached beyond Warrenton into the county and neighboring areas and also that by the late 1850s with many projects under way at a time, Holt deployed workmen to several sites simultaneously under the direction of his most experienced employees, who had come from Prince Edward County, Virginia, to Warrenton with him. She also notes that, although most of Holt's houses were double pile, he sometimes reduced them to a single-room depth, especially in additions to existing dwellings and less costly houses. In addition Holt's architectural vocabulary changed in the early 1850s when he introduced his more ornate and eclectic detailing taken from William Ranlett's The Architect, including Gothic motifs. However, his basic form remained the shallow-roofed, cubic house, usually three bays wide, with a central hall. Bishir 4-5, 22, 13, 8.


9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2.43 acres
Quadrangle name Littleton, N. C.
Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

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Verbal boundary description and justification
See continuation sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Margaret Long Stephenson, Architectural Historian
organization Architectural Conservation Assoc. date September 1985
street & number 301 E. Broad Street telephone (919) 398-3554
city or town Murfreesboro state North Carolina 27855

12. 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature  
State Historic Preservation Officer date January 9, 1986

title State Historic Preservation Officer

For NPS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration


Beginning at a point in the center line of S.R.1530, which point is located 0.7 mile from the intersection of said S.R.1530 with U.S.158 and said point being located 1347.55 feet on a course South 20deg. 30 min. 40 sec. East from an iron pin, the most northerly corner of Jesse T. Crawford, Jr.; thence leaving said S.R.1530 and along new lines and to new corners for Jesse T. Crawford, Jr. North 83 deg. 06 min. 55 sec. East 444.24 feet to an iron pin (passing an iron pin 30.36 feet from the beginning of this course), South 04 deg. 40 min. 15 sec. East 280.55 feet to an iron pin located 4.0 feet southeast of a 24" diameter walnut tree, and North 85 deg. 01 min. 34 sec. West 472.10 feet to the center of S.R.1530 (passing an iron pin 30.04 feet from the terminus of this course); thence along the center line of said S.R.1530 North 02 deg. 00 min. 05 sec. East to the place of beginning, containing 2.43 acres, more or less.

The above boundary description is from the current deed for the parcel of land which surrounds the house. It is the identical land conveyed by Jesse T. Crawford, Jr. and wife to The Historic Preservation Fund of North Carolina, Inc. This is what remains with the house from the vast acreages of the ante-bellum period, when the plantation was at its prime.
John L. Hamme certifies that under my direction and supervision, this map was drawn from an actual field survey; that the error of closure of the survey as calculated by latitudes and departures is 1.18,000; that this map was prepared in accordance with G. 47-30 as amended.

Witness: John Lee Hamme

Saw to the Survey Plan before this 20th day of Dec., 1982.