Theme 3. Development of English Colonies, 1700-1775

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)

STATE:	
South Carolina	
COUNTY:	
Williamsburg	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
70.10.45.0041	10/28/70

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Thorntree (Witherspoon) House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: In Fluitt-Nelson Memorial Park, S.C. 527

CITY OR TOWN: Kingstree

STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
South Carolina	~~39~~ 45	Williamsburg	089

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☒ Building ☐ Site ☐ Structure ☐ Object	☐ Public ☒ Private ☐ Both	Public Acquisition: ☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered	☐ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied ☒ Preservation work in progress	Yes: ☒ Restricted ☐ Unrestricted ☐ No

PRESENT USE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

☐ Agricultural ☐ Government ☒ Park ☐ Transportation ☐ Comments
☐ Commercial ☐ Industrial ☐ Private Residence ☐ Other *(Specify)*
☐ Educational ☐ Military ☐ Religious developing as historic
☐ Entertainment ☐ Museum ☐ Scientific house museum

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Williamsburg County Historical Society

STREET AND NUMBER: 124 South Academy Street, P.O. Box 24

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE
Kingstree	South Carolina	~~39~~ 45

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Williamsburg County Court House, Clerk of Court

STREET AND NUMBER: 125 West Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE	CODE
Kingstree	South Carolina	~~39~~ 45

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: South Carolina Survey of Historic Places

DATE OF SURVEY: 1969 ☐ Federal ☒ State ☐ County ☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: S.C. Department of Archives and History

STREET AND NUMBER: 1430 Senate Street

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE
Columbia	South Carolina	~~39~~ 45

STATE:

COUNTY:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One) ☒ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated ☐ Ruins ☐ Unexposed	
	(Check One) ☐ Altered ☒ Unaltered	(Check One) ☒ Moved ☐ Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL *(if known)* PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

18th century frame plantation house; two-room type (great hall and parlor), end chimneys, piazzas front and back. Brick piers support hand-hewn heart pine beams, 12x12".

Exterior construction is 5/8-in. beaded clapboards 3/4-in. thick, overlapping at various widths. Piazza balustrade has beaded top rail; posts are square to height of rail, chamfered octagonally in center, square at top.

Of the 24 windows, all shuttered, 5 are on front second floor, 4 on front first floor, six over nine light. Solid pine paneled shutters fastened with strap hinges, hand-forged, and pintles reproduced from original.

Two types of roof rafters strengthened with tie beam joined to rafters by half dovetails. Cypress shingles fastened to original laths. Memory work dentil cornice under eaves.

Typical 18th century doors with 6 fielded panels. First floor front and back doors unusually large. Central door opens into 21x18' great hall. Partially recessed staircase.

Entire interior is pine: walls, ceilings, cornices, mantels and all overmantels except 2 that are plastered. Flooring of random-width yellow pine, quarter sawed. Wainscot of horizontally placed boards with vertical beaded boards above. Unique hand-carved memory work cornices and mantels.

Inner walls, except in great hall, of exposed post and beam construction with vertical beaded ship-lapped board partitions. Chimney breasts in parlor and small chamber room finished with panel of plastering.

In 2nd floor master chamber, memory work mantel and saw-tooth cornice. Nursery and small room adjacent. Second-floor walls in original unpainted condition. Hall closets with batten doors under stairs.

Hardware throughout includes hand-forged locks and HL hinges, original leather washers. Furniture and accessories are of 1759-1826 period when James Witherspoon and his son, Gavin, lived here. Victorian trims, south piazza and shed rooms added c. 1800, have been removed. House now stands as it was in 18th century.

Moved from inaccessible rural site (6 mi. south of Kingstree, S.C. 377) to preserve it. Original site was unavailable for purchase, unattractive, unprotected against fire and vandalism. Present site, within city, on land given as memorial park. Additional house museums,and archives and record building, planned.

Restoration in progress.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

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

SPECIFIC DATE(S) *(If Applicable and Known)* 1749

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Aboriginal
- [ ] Prehistoric
- [ ] Historic

- [ ] Agriculture
- [x] Architecture
- [ ] Art
- [ ] Commerce
- [ ] Communications
- [ ] Conservation
- [ ] Education
- [ ] Engineering
- [ ] Industry
- [ ] Invention
- [x] Landscape Architecture
- [ ] Literature
- [x] Military
- [ ] Music
- [ ] Political
- [ ] Religion/Philosophy
- [ ] Science
- [ ] Sculpture
- [ ] Social/Humanitarian
- [ ] Theater
- [ ] Transportation
- [ ] Urban Planning
- [ ] Other *(Specify)*

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Oldest known residence in Pee Dee area, excellent example of earliest plantation houses constructed entirely of native materials.

Built by Irish immigrant James Witherspoon, 1749. About 6 miles south of the King's Tree, Williamsburgh Township. Progressive rural domestic design. Located in wilderness and adapted to New World, but with refinements recalling good life of Old World.

Nationally-known Museum Curator Meyric R. Rogers called Thorntree a "rarity" in architectural structure and an irreplaceable loss if not preserved. Particularly notable: mantels, cornices, general trim, hand-carved from memory, many in original condition and partial coloring. Placement and position of main stairway also unusual, marking trend toward formation of separate hall which characterized later architecture. Architecturally much as its builder left it, Thorntree preserves interesting combination of details showing European, West Indian and Carolinian influences.

Preservation of Thorntree especially important since most Revolutionary era houses in Kings Tree area were burned by Tarleton and Wemyss. Thorntree spared because Tarleton with his British dragoons and a large number of Tories encamped at plantation in August, 1780.

Thorntree influence reached into various phases of state and national life through Witherspoon family, among earliest settlers of this early-settled inland area. They were prominent in government, education and religion in 18th century. Gordon family were prominent 19th century owners.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Boddie, W.W. History of Williamsburg. Columbia, S.C. The State Co., 1923.

Davis, Henry E. History of Union Presbyterian Church And of the Salters, S.C. Community. n.p. 1963.

Meriwether, Robert L. The Expansion of South Carolina 1729-1765. Kingsport, Tenn: Southern Publishers, Inc. 1940.

McGill, Samuel D. Narrative of Reminiscences in Williamsburg County. Kingstree, S.C.: Kingstree Lithographic Co. 1952.

Stoney, Samuel G. Plantations of the Carolina Low Country. Columbia, S.C. The R.L. Bryan Co., 1955.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY						OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES					
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE			LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	33 °	39 '	53.89	79 °	49 '	48.46	°	'	"	°	'	"
NE	33 °	39 '	53.89	79 °	49 '	22 "						
SE	33 °	39 '	34.19	79 °	49 '	22 "						
SW	33 °	39 '	34.19	79 °	49 '	48.46						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 15.1

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Mrs. James W. Fant, Historic Resources Division

ORGANIZATION: S.C. Department of Archives and History

DATE: August 29, 1970

STREET AND NUMBER: 1430 Senate Street

CITY OR TOWN: Columbia

STATE: South Carolina

CODE: 45

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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 ☒ Local ☐

Name [signature]

Title Director, South Carolina Department of Archives and History

Date August 29, 1970

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

[signature]
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date OCT 28 1970

ATTEST:

[signature]
Keeper of The National Register

Date OCT 20 1970

Form 10-300a
(Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
South Carolina	
COUNTY	
Williamsburg	
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(Number all entries)

9. Major Bibliographical References:

Cook, Harvey T. Rambles in the Pee Dee Basin, S.C. Columbia, S.C.: The State Co., 1926.

Davis, Henry E. The Williamsburg Presbyterian Church. Charleston, S.C.: Walker, Evans, and Cogswell, 1961.

Wallace, James A. History of Williamsburgh Church. Salisbury, N.C.: Bell and James, Printers, 1856.

Wardlaw, Joseph G. Genealogy of the Witherspoon Family. Yorkville, S.C.: The Enquirer Office, 1910.

White, Elizabeth. "Witherspoon Home Proves a Rare Discovery," The State and Columbia Record, Columbia, S.C.: Sunday, May 21, 1967, p. 3-B.

Witherspoon, Robert. An Early Manuscript Copy of the Witherspoon Family Chronicle (originally written in 1780 by Robert Witherspoon, the son of James Witherspoon, the builder of Thorntree House), and Later Notes on Related Families. Columbia, South Carolina: The State Printing Co., 1967. Published for Williamsburg County Historical Society.

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