

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER/GEORGIA REGISTER NOMINATION

1. Name: Alma Thomas House.

2. Location: 411 21st Street, Columbus, Muscogee County, Georgia.
USGS Quadrangle: Columbus.

3a. Description: The Alma Thomas House is located on a small, narrow rectangular lot in the Rose Hill neighborhood of the city of Columbus. This affluent residential suburb developed north of downtown Columbus from the mid-19th century into the early 20th century and includes substantial houses, businesses, and a number of community landmark buildings. Built c.1889, this is a one-story, wood-framed house. The house has a large, hipped roof with small, front-facing gables, and sits on an open brick-pier foundation. The influence of the Queen Anne style can be seen in the house's irregular form, steeply pitched hipped roof with front-facing gables, asymmetrical front façade with recessed porch and projecting cutaway bay, and decorative jigsawn ornamentation along the porch's roof line and in the three front-facing gables. The house's floor plan has a wide central hallway with rooms symmetrically placed on either side. The extant house has been restored following a 2001 fire.

3b. Period of Significance: c.1889-1907.

3c. Acreage: Less than one acre.

3d. Boundary Explanation: The nomination includes the property historically associated with the Alma Thomas House.

4a. National Register Criterion: A and C.

4b. National Register Areas of Significance: Architecture, Women's History, Ethnic Heritage—Black

4c. Statement of Significance: African-American artist, Alma Thomas, was born in this house on September 22, 1891. She was the oldest daughter of John and Amelia Cante Thomas. The Thomas family was an elite family that gained prominence in the biracial atmosphere that existed in the city of Columbus during the late 19th century. Inez Cante Thomas, Alma Thomas' cousin and W.E.B. Du Bois' administrative assistant, lived with the family for several years and typed her employer's influential work *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903). In 1906, the Atlanta Race Riot sparked a wave of racially motivated violence statewide. The following year, the Thomas family moved to Washington, D. C. when conditions in Columbus worsened. While Alma Thomas lived the remainder of her life in the nation's capital, her childhood experiences in Georgia had an influence upon her subsequent artistic career. When Thomas began painting in 1950, several of her pieces depicted scenes from her childhood spent with her extended family in the Columbus area, particularly colorful horticultural specimens from her father's garden. Thomas died in 1978.

The Alma Thomas House is significant in the area of architecture as a good example of Queen Anne-style architecture because of its representative form, massing, and ornamentation. The house is significant in the area of women's history and ethnic heritage—black as the childhood home of noted African-American artist Alma Thomas. In her later life, Thomas achieved national recognition for her works of art that to some degree were inspired by her childhood spent in Columbus during a period of growing racial tensions. The house is also significant because of its association with Inez Cante Thomas who helped W.E.B. Du Bois prepare *The Souls of Blacks Folks* following his brief stay in Columbus while researching the predominance of rural poverty among the state's African-American residents.

4d. Suggested Level of Significance: The property is significant at the state level because the house is a good example of Queen Anne-style architecture in Georgia and because of its association with Georgia-born African-American artist Alma Thomas.

4e. National Register Status: The property received final certification from the Tax Incentives Program, Technical Preservation Branch, National Park Service on August 15, 2003. The property received final certification from the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources for the state property tax abatement on September 10, 2002.

5. Sponsor: The nomination is sponsored by the property owner. Nomination materials were prepared by a consultant.