

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	North Carolina
COUNTY:	Chatham
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

1. NAME

COMMON:
Alston-DeGraffenried House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
North side U.S. 64, 4 mi. west of Pittsboro

CITY OR TOWN:
Pittsboro

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
Fourth
The Hon. Ike F. Andrews

STATE North Carolina	CODE 37	COUNTY: Chatham	CODE 037
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate):			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Mr. Ken Lessler

STREET AND NUMBER:
307 NWM Building

CITY OR TOWN:
Chapel Hill

STATE:
North Carolina

CODE:
37

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Chatham County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Pittsboro

STATE:
North Carolina

CODE:
37

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:
 Federal
 State
 County
 Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:

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DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Alston-DeGraffenried House is a large two-story plantation house flanked by large trees and approached by a walk between handsome boxwoods. To the rear are a number of outbuildings, including a one-story, three-bay kitchen with a massive stone chimney.

The form of the house--five bays wide, standing high on a raised basement and topped by a tall hip roof--is unusual in North Carolina and suggestive of the sophisticated Georgian and Federal houses of South Carolina. The exterior end chimneys and the simple detail of the finish, however, are more typical of Piedmont Chatham County. This contrast recurs inside as well: a rather sophisticated off-center-hall plan allows for a large east drawing room, finished with high-style woodwork and plaster, in contrast to the much simpler finish of the rest of the house and the plain stair. The overall impression of the house--consistent with the character of the builder family--is of a vernacular local version of a rather sophisticated and ambitious house-type.

There is evidence that the dwelling was originally a smaller gable-roof building, with a hall-and-parlor plan, that faced east or west and had end chimneys at north and south ends. This more modest house was expanded by the addition of a hall and two rooms to the east, the chimneys moved, and the roof raised to a high hip, creating a much grander house--perhaps for the 1822 marriage of John Jones Alston.

The house is of frame, covered with plain weatherboards, and it stands upon a raised brick basement and is covered by a hip roof. The main (south) facade is five bays wide, with a central entrance. The sides are three bays deep: on the east is a single chimney, flanked by a single window at each level to the front and two windows to the rear; on the west side are two chimneys, with a door at the first level between them and windows to front and rear. The chimneys are of irregular common bond and have single shoulders. The windows, which contain nine-over-nine sash at the first level and nine-over-six at the second, have simple molded cases and plain sills. The entrance consists of a single door surmounted by a graceful fanlight with molded surround and keystone. Pilasters on the facade between the door and flanking windows suggest the outline of a small entrance porch that antedated the present full-width Victorian porch with turned balustrade and bracketed posts. A similar porch extends along the west side of the house and the west half of the rear facade; on the east side of the rear of the house are a number of one-story additions.

The interior of the house follows an off-center-hall plan, two rooms deep, with the front rooms being considerably larger than the rear ones and the right (east) larger than the left. The finish throughout the interior is of simple Federal design with the exception of the large front east room, which is quite elaborate. This room features a handsome, academic three-part Federal mantel with symmetrically molded pilasters carrying a frieze adorned with sunbursts in high relief on the center tablet and end blocks. The molded cornice and shelf break out over all three elements. The wainscot is flat-paneled, with woodgraining to simulate concave cornered panels, a motif that recurs on the six-panel doors. The

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simple molded chair rail serves as window sills, and the window and door frames are symmetrically molded ones accented with plain corner blocks. The plaster work in this room is quite impressive: the ceiling medallion has concentric rings of acanthus and other foliate motifs, with a centerpiece of radiating acanthus; the cornice has a frieze of floral garlands beneath a course of modillions, each adorned with an acanthus outlined by a bead motif.

The two west rooms have simple Federal finish, including a flat-paneled wainscot and typical late Federal three-part mantel with symmetrically molded pilasters; the rear east room is unheated. The second-story rooms have plastered dados and plain mantels, each with a molded architrave and backband beneath a small, plain frieze and molded shelf. Throughout the house, the chair rail serves as window sills; most of the door and window cases are simple molded ones. The stair, which rises at the rear of the hall with two flights and a transverse landing, is quite plain; it has a square newel and posts each topped by a sphere, slender balusters, and a rounded handrail. The open string is unadorned, and the spandrel is flat-paneled. A simple secondary stair occurs along the partition wall in the west rear room, rising back-to-front.

5. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1810-1825

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi- | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | osophy | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human- | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | itarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Alston-DeGraffenried House was probably completed in the 1820s for John Jones Alston. The house is of particular interest as an unusual vernacular version of a rather high-style house type. The form--five bays wide with high hip roof and raised basement--and the off-center-hall plan are suggestive of sophisticated Georgian houses, akin to those in the east and in South Carolina; the relatively simple finish of the house--with the exception of the elaborately treated Adamesque parlor--is more typical of Piedmont North Carolina.

The Alston-Allston family, who settled in North and South Carolina early in the eighteenth century, came to be quite numerous and prominent among the close-knit antebellum planter society. Joseph John Alston settled in Halifax County, North Carolina, and was a member of the Assembly from Edgecombe County, from 1744 to 1746, and a justice of the peace. By his will, dated January 5, 1780, he left to his son, Joseph John Alston, "all my lands and plantation lying in the county of Chatham. . . ."

The younger Joseph John Alston, who came to be called "Chatham Jack," came to Chatham County--according to census records--between 1790 and 1800. He was a conspicuous public figure in Chatham County until his death in 1841. On June 1, 1791, he married Martha Kearney, and on March 17, 1792, their son, John Jones Alston, was born, perhaps on the Chatham County plantation. In 1800 Chatham Jack had eighteen slaves; by 1810 he had 168 slaves--making him one of the largest slave holders in the county.

The traditional date given to the house now known as the Alston-DeGraffenreid House is 1810. Local tradition states that Chatham Jack built the house on the Harland's (now Holland's) Creek property and settled his son in it. John Jones Alston was a student at the University of North Carolina in 1808-1809, and was there as late as 1812. He served in the state House of Commons in 1817. It is possible that a modest house was built about 1810 and expanded about 1822, the year of his marriage to Adaline Williams. John Jones Alston, like his father, was a prominent planter in Chatham County.

His title to his dwelling plantation was confirmed by his father's will, (dated September 30, 1839, probated 1841) in which John Jones Alston received a "tract of 300 acres lying on Harland's Creek including the house in which he lives. . . ." He survived his father only one year, for on November, 14,

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1842, Adaline Williams Alston was made administratrix of her husband's estate, which his verbal will of September 15, 1842, left to her, "to do with as she pleases." According to the transcript of his verbal will, Alston died "in his own dwelling house." His estate papers leave no doubt that his widow received the dwelling house in her dower partition of the plantation. After Adaline's death, the property went to their daughter Delia (1829-1914), wife of John Baker DeGraffenried, a descendent of Baron Christophe DeGraffenried, founder of New Bern, North Carolina.

The DeGraffenrieds purchased additional portions of the Alston estate, and left it to their only child, Pattie D. Peay. Mrs. Peay, in her late years, lived on her Chatham plantation, and on February 28, 1921 she deeded the 900-acre tract to her four daughters who kept it in good condition as a country retreat, opened during the spring and summer months of each year. In 1972 their heirs sold the plantation to Kenneth Cooper of nearby Pittsboro, who in turn sold the house and a small acreage to Ken Lessler of Chapel Hill.

Addendum, September 20, 1977:

A receipt dated November 20, 1810, for brick and plaster work on house of J. J. Alston, signed by Meleus Broome, tends to confirm the traditional 1810 date. This is contained in the Alston-DeGraffenried Collection (P.C. 1575.2) Archives.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Research by John Baxton Flowers, III, survey specialist; architectural description by Catherine W. Cockshutt, survey supervisor.
 Degraffenried, Thomas P. The DeGraffenried Family Scrapbook (Charlottesville) 1956.
 Chatham County Records, Chatham County Courthouse, Pittsboro, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Estates).
 Chatham County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Estates).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	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	35° 43 ' 59 "	79° 14 ' 32 "		0	0	
NE	35° 43 ' 59 "	79° 14 ' 43 "		0	0	
SE	35° 43 ' 44 "	79° 14 ' 43 "		0	0	
SW	35° 43 ' 44 "	79° 14 ' 32 "		0	0	

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 25 acres

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

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Survey and Planning Unit

ORGANIZATION: Division of Archives and History DATE: 25 September 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:
109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37

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 Robert E. Stipe

Title State Historic Preservation Officer

Date 25 September 1974

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

DEGRAFFENRIED PLANTATION - Ctr. Township, Chatham County (NOT TO SCALE)



