

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
Office of Archives and History  
Department of Cultural Resources

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**William R. and Elizabeth W. Smith House**

Whitsett vicinity, Guilford County, GF0605, Listed 2/27/2007

Nomination by Sarah A. Woodard

Photographs by Jerry Nix and HPO staff, March 2008 – façade, June 2006 – rear



Façade view – rehabilitation completed



Rear view with addition – during rehabilitation

**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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Smith, William Rankin and Elizabeth Wharton, House  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number 437 Brightwood Church Road **N/A** not for publication  
East side of SR 2758, .62 mile north of U.S. Highway 70  
city or town Whitsett  vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Guilford code 081 zip code 27377

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 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

Smith, William Rankin and Elizabeth Wharton, House  
Name of Property

Guilford County, North Carolina  
County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

### Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY/Greek Revival

OTHER: Coastal Cottage

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls WOOD/weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

### Period of Significance

circa 1846

circa 1854

circa 1885

### Significant Dates

circa 1846

circa 1854

circa 1885

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

unknown

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** approximately 2 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 627780 3993440  
Zone Easting Northing  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing  
4 \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Sarah A. Woodard  
organization Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc. date January 12, 2010  
street & number P.O. Box 1171 telephone 919 682-2211  
city or town Durham state NC zip code 27702

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## Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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## Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Jerry S. Nix  
street & number P.O. Box 101 telephone 336-274-0174  
city or town Whitsett state NC zip code 27377

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303

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## 7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The William Rankin and Elizabeth Wharton Smith House is located in eastern Guilford County less than three miles west of the Guilford-Alamance County line. The house faces west and stands approximately 150' east of Brightwood Church Road in the middle of a clearing at the end of an unpaved drive. Deciduous and evergreen trees screen the house from the road and encircle the clearing. The area features gently rolling terrain and creeks, namely Rock Creek—which flows north-south within a mile of the house's current location and its original site—and Little and Big Alamance Creeks to the south.

The Smith House was moved six-tenths of a mile north of its original site to its new location on Brightwood Church Road. The relocation removed the dwelling from its original setting on a busy highway that roughly follows the route of the eighteenth-century Hillsborough Road, but saved it from demolition during the redevelopment of the tract, which now contains a sprawling self-storage facility. The setback of the house from Brightwood Church Road is similar to its setback from the eighteenth-century Hillsborough Road, and the new location on a wooded lot is compatible with and in some ways better than its historic setting, which has been irreparably altered by the encroachment of new subdivisions and commercial development.

### Original Site

The Smith House originally faced south, and was located at 6605 Burlington Road (on the north side of U. S. Highway 70 at its intersection with Brightwood Church Road) on the residual eight acres of what had been a large farm. According to the 1850 census, William Rankin Smith farmed 216 acres. In 1862, he inherited additional land from the estate of his father, Eli Smith, and eventually amassed holdings of more than eight hundred acres.<sup>1</sup> Cultivated fields and pastures surrounded the house historically, but by the 1970s, when the house was recorded as part of a countywide architectural survey, mature hardwood trees shaded the grassy lawn and house. A small well house constructed around 1946 stood in the rear yard until 2005.

### General Appearance Before Move

The core of the Smith House is a one-story, side-gable-roofed, hall-parlor dwelling built circa 1846. The family added a room to the east around 1854 and built an engaged porch across the

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<sup>1</sup> Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Guilford County, North Carolina, Agriculture and Population Schedules, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (microfilm, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh); Guilford County Deed Book 53, page 17; Book 65, page 216; Book 61, page 150; Guilford County Record of Settlements, Book A, page 482; Guilford County Record of Appointments, Book M-1, page 6.

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entire façade.<sup>2</sup> The dwelling featured stepped-shoulder brick chimneys laid in common bond on each gable end; by the 1960s, both chimney stacks had been rebuilt. D. P. Foust, who purchased the house from the Smiths, added a two-room ell with a full-length porch to the rear circa 1885. The next changes occurred in 1945, when a small room was added to the west elevation of the circa 1846 section. A door—which replaced a late nineteenth century window—was installed next to the 1846 fireplace to provide access to this room from the main house. Also in 1945, the porch along the east side of the ell was enclosed to create a kitchen, and a bathroom was added on the rear elevation of the circa 1854 addition. This necessitated the enclosure of an original door opening in the circa 1854 room's north wall and the cutting of a new door a few feet away in that same wall. Most of the east wall of the 1846 parlor was removed in 1945 to create a larger room from the 1846 hall and the adjacent room in the ell. The vertical board partition wall between the original hall and parlor was also removed, expanding the hall to the south. A small closet was constructed on the north wall of the 1854 section at the same time, utilizing some of the wide boards removed from the partition wall. (This closet opened into the 1854 section, but the closet framing extended into the 1846 parlor.) A second closet was built under the enclosed stair. In the 1960s, this stair to the attic, originally a boxed winder stair, was altered: the winders, which extended into the room at the base, were removed and the stair was reoriented to descend and terminate at a door that opened onto the porch. At the same time, a porch, utility room and laundry room were added to the ell's northeast corner and the hall-parlor board partition wall (that had been removed in 1945) was replaced with a stud wall covered with sheet rock.

In the mid 1940s, stucco was applied to the entire exterior. Although detrimental to the building's appearance, the stucco was applied to a wire mesh over the original weatherboards, leaving the weatherboards in moderately good condition.

### Move

In June 2005, the current owner moved the Smith House in two sections on two flatbed trucks to a new site north of the original location. The circa 1885 wing was moved to the site separately from the main block. During this process, many of the twentieth century changes were reversed. All of the 1945 additions to the west and north, the altered enclosed porch on the circa 1885 wing, the 1980 additions to the wing, and the exterior stucco were removed. The owner retained the original foundation stones to construct the new foundation. The brick chimneys could not be moved, nor could the bricks be salvaged and reused because they were too soft to withstand removal of mortar. New bricks, similar in size, texture and color to the mid-nineteenth century

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<sup>2</sup> Estimated construction date and order of nineteenth century additions is based on physical evidence, architectural style, and oral tradition.

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bricks, were used to replicate the original single-shouldered chimneys. Some salvaged bricks were used to face the new fireboxes and hearths on the interior.

### Exterior After Move

On its new site, the Smith House faces west. A side-gable roof shelters the north (circa 1846) section and the south (circa 1854) room, while a second gable extends from the rear of the north room above the circa 1885 rear wing. A low shed roof covers the new rear addition. Wide, flush boards cover the façade; the rest of the house is sheathed in weatherboards, many of which are original. The stone foundation under the main block of the house incorporates stone from the original foundation. The circa 1885 wing and the rear addition rest on a brick foundation laid in running bond. To accommodate modern utility systems, the new foundation is slightly higher than the original foundation—approximately eighteen inches.

The six-bay façade is composed of four windows flanking two doors; one door opens into the north (circa 1846) room, while the other provides access to the south (circa 1854) room. The windows have six-over-six sash and plain surrounds with one-inch-wide applied molding. Both historic front doors feature two long parallel Greek Revival panels and plain surrounds with one-inch-wide applied molding. The flush board sheathing on the facade terminates at a beaded corner board on the north end; the south corner board is not embellished in any way. The ceiling of the full-width engaged porch slopes down towards the porch posts, following the slope of the roof above. Five symmetrically-spaced square chamfered posts support the porch roof. Two posts are hollow and replaced earlier posts; three are solid pieces of lumber and are early or original porch elements; all five match in profile.

The north elevation features a new, single-shouldered brick chimney with a stone base. The door and window flanking the chimney—neither of which were original—have been enclosed. To the east, along the rear wing's slightly inset north elevation, a large six-over-six sash window illuminates the dining room and two small six-over-six sash windows are located over the kitchen sink. The paired windows replaced a larger six-over-six sash window around 1945. The rear wing's east (rear) elevation features a centered six-over-six sash window, molded gable returns, and a small, square, four-pane attic window.

On the south elevation of the circa 1854 room, two six-over-six sash windows flank the new, single-shouldered brick chimney, while small, square, four-pane attic windows flank the chimney stack. Both the north and south elevations have flush gable ends trimmed with narrow molding and beaded rake boards.

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### New Construction

In late 2005-early 2006, a one-story frame addition was constructed within the "L" between the main block and the rear wing. This low hipped roof addition is rectangular in shape and is covered in weatherboards. The roof of the addition somewhat overlaps the rear cornice of the main block, and the south wall cornice of the rear wing. The walls of the addition are set back slightly from the side walls of the main block and the rear wall of the rear wing. Two six-over-six sash windows pierce the east elevation of the addition, which is almost in the same plane as the east elevation of the circa 1885 ell. A modern door is located in a recessed area in the new addition south of the circa 1885 wing. Two six-over-six windows on the south elevation illuminate the master bedroom and bathroom. In order to distinguish the new construction from the historic house, the current owner constructed a brick foundation under the addition.

### Interior After Move

The main block of the Smith House is composed of three rooms. The north section, completed around 1846, originally included a partition wall between the hall and parlor. The partition wall, constructed of wide vertically-oriented boards, was later replaced with a sheet-rocked stud wall. The current owner reconstructed the partition wall using wide boards recovered from the attic (that appear to be those used in the original partition wall) and salvaged boards from the Eli Wilson House in McLeansville.

Wide flush board sheathing, ceiling boards, and a replacement baseboard with a beaded edge (recreated based on the ghost marks of the original baseboard) finish the north room. The wide flush boards used to infill later window openings on the north wall came from the Gannon Log House in McLeansville. Some of the boards for the reconstruction of the partition wall between the hall and the dining room were found in the attic; the rest were salvaged from the Gannon Log House. The original pine floors were exposed when twentieth-century hardwood floors and baseboards were removed, but were in such poor condition they could not be salvaged. New random-width pine floor boards were installed. The narrow original chair rail was cut off flush with the wall sheathing boards, but will be replaced with a simple molded chair rail. A deep ovolo molding trims the two-panel door on the west wall. Windows on the west wall feature flat surrounds trimmed with a flat strip of molding. The tall, vernacular, Federal-influenced mantel on the north wall is composed of a narrow shelf above a molding featuring a prominent bead. Between this molding and the firebox opening are two horizontal flat recessed panels. The vertical members are simple flat boards with molding along the outer edge.

The parlor of the original house, located south of the hall, is a long, narrow space. The distance between the enclosed stair in the southwest corner and the north wall of the parlor is only about six feet. A six-over-six sash window illuminates the parlor and, like the hall, flush boards

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cover the walls. The enclosed stair is sheathed in flush boards, with the boards on the north wall running on a diagonal. The stair originally turned and terminated beneath the window on the west wall. In the 1960s, the winders were removed to give the stair a straight run to a door on the façade. Ghost marks visible under the stair and on the west wall indicate the original position of some of the winders. The treads and risers used to replace the lower run of stairs came from the Gannon Log House in McLeansville. On the south wall, a two-panel Greek Revival door opens into the south room.

The Smiths probably added the south room around 1854. Like the north room, it is finished with flush board sheathing, and the original oak floors were exposed when twentieth-century hardwood floors and baseboards were removed. The current owner installed a replacement baseboard with a beaded edge (recreated based on the ghost marks of the original baseboard). A two-panel door flanked by six-over-six sash windows pierces the west wall. Six-over-six sash windows occupy the bays on either side of the mantel on the south wall. Flat boards with plain, flat molding strips like those around the six-over-six sash windows in the north room surround the windows. Unlike the windows in the north room, the windows in the south room feature a wide skirt below the sill, and, at the windows flanking the fireplace, this skirt extends to meet the outer edge of the mantel. The mantel is a simple Greek Revival composition with flat posts rising from plain plinth blocks to support a wide lintel on top of which is a narrow shelf.

D. P. Foust added the two-room rear wing around 1885. A small, brick chimney, removed as part of the relocation, stood between the rooms. Bricks salvaged from the original chimney were used to construct the dining room hearth and firebox of the new chimney. The dining room walls were in poor condition and have been replaced with sheet rock. The rear wing's construction date—after the introduction of mass-produced millwork—is evident in the presence of molded door and window trim. The current owner installed a replacement baseboard with a beaded edge (recreated based on the ghost marks of the original baseboard). The recent discovery of photos showing the original, simple mantel flanked by a closet on the north side has prompted the current owner to reconstruct these elements of the dining room.

The kitchen is characterized by bead-board sheathing on the walls and ceilings, most of which is original. Some of the bead-board on the west wall was salvaged from the Eli Wilson House. The new kitchen cabinets have matching bead-board doors. The random-width oak flooring in the kitchen and on the south side of the dining room came from Architectural Salvage of Greensboro. Typical late-nineteenth-century, four-raised-panel doors connect the kitchen and dining room to the porch that ran the length of the wing's south elevation. The porch has been removed; the space now serves as the hall of the new addition.

The new addition consists of a hall with a coat closet and a large utility closet, a master bedroom and bathroom, and a smaller bathroom that opens into the hall and the south room

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of the main block of the house. The two-panel doors and the random-width oak flooring throughout the addition came from Architectural Salvage of Greensboro.

Original rafters, pegged together at the ridgeline, are visible in the attic above the north (circa 1846) section. Boards attached to the outside of the rafters provided a nailing surface for wood shingles, which remain intact beneath later roofing materials. The roof framing above the south (circa 1854) room also features pegged rafters braced with queen posts and short collar ties near the apex. Wood shingles covered the south section's roof. No evidence suggests that the attic was finished with wall sheathing or plaster, but stud framing standing to the south of the stair well separates the north and south sections. Cuts in the floor boards between the north and south sections indicate the site of the original 1846 south gable end.

## Integrity Assessment

The William Rankin and Elizabeth Wharton Smith House retains historic features that convey its distinctive architectural characteristics and integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. Although the relocation reoriented the Smith House and necessitated the removal of the original chimneys, the new chimneys were carefully designed and constructed to replicate the originals. Overall, the alterations and additions made to the house since its move have not compromised the house's intrinsic integrity. The Smith House retains a high percentage of its original exterior elements and interior finishes in addition to its heavy timber frame. Most of the building's nineteenth-century elements remain intact, including mantels, flush-board sheathing, two-panel Greek Revival doors, windows, and door and window surrounds. Moving the house afforded the owner the opportunity to remove the twentieth century additions, and the new location provides the dwelling a setting more similar to its historical surroundings than its original site and saved the house from demolition. The new rear addition is slightly inset from the main block and the circa 1885 rear wing, and is not visible from the front of the house. The weatherboard exposure on the addition mimics the exposure on the older sections of the house.

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## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Summary

The locally-significant William Rankin and Elizabeth Wharton Smith House meets National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture and Criterion Consideration B as a property removed from its original location but significant primarily due to its architectural value. The Smith House's periods of significance correspond to important building dates: circa 1846, the construction date of the hall and parlor house; circa 1854, the approximate construction date of a one-room addition and front porch; and circa 1885, when a two-room rear wing was added. In June 2005, the house was moved six-tenths of a mile north of its original location. The relocation removed the dwelling from its original setting on a busy highway that roughly follows the route of the eighteenth-century Hillsborough Road, but saved it from demolition during the redevelopment of the tract, which now contains a sprawling self-storage facility. The setback of the house from Brightwood Church Road is similar to its setback from the eighteenth-century Hillsborough Road, and the new location on a wooded lot is compatible with and in some ways better than its historic setting, which has been irreparably altered by the encroachment of new subdivisions and commercial development. The nominated boundary encompasses approximately one acre around the dwelling.

The Smith House, located in North Carolina's Piedmont in eastern Guilford County, retains requisite architectural integrity and is a good example of a vernacular mid-nineteenth century house comparable to the coastal cottages seen in the state's eastern region. According to local tradition, Eli Smith had a hall-parlor house constructed around 1846 as a wedding present for his son and daughter-in-law, William Rankin and Elizabeth Wharton Smith. The Smiths added a room and front porch around 1854, creating the coastal cottage form, and the next owner, D. P. Foust, added a rear wing circa 1885. The dwelling features Greek Revival doors with two vertical panels, a Greek Revival post-and-lintel mantel and a vernacular Federal mantel.

Several similar examples stood in the vicinity and in other sections of the county according to an architectural survey conducted in the mid-1970s, but these houses have been lost or altered beyond recognition. Coastal cottages are one-story side-gable dwellings with inset or engaged porches that occur most frequently in the state's coastal plain. While not completely absent from the architectural repertoire of builders operating in Piedmont North Carolina during the nineteenth century, the form is unusual in the region and the Smith House serves as a substantially intact example.

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## Historical Background

Guilford County lies in the western half of North Carolina's Piedmont region, bounded to the north by Rockingham County, to the south by Randolph County, to the west by Forsyth and Davidson counties, and to the east by Alamance County. The area's gently rolling landscape, crisscrossed with streams and creeks, made it an attractive location for English Quakers, German Lutherans, and other European settlers and their slaves who began populating the land that became Guilford County in the mid-1700s. Most of Guilford County's early citizens held staunch religious convictions, and their numbers included Methodists and Presbyterians in addition to the Lutherans and Friends. With the exceptions of Jamestown, a Quaker settlement in western Guilford County that developed in the late eighteenth century, and the grouping of people and buildings at Guilford Courthouse, the county's scattered population of subsistence farmers did not coalesce into groups more significant than crossroads trading posts and loose communities near churches or schools until 1808, when county leaders platted Greensboro as the new county seat.<sup>3</sup>

Among the dispersed eighteenth-century settlers were members of the Rankin, Smith, and Wharton families. Brothers John (died 1814) and William Rankin left Delaware for Guilford County in 1764 and 1768 respectively.<sup>4</sup> As early as 1780, John Smith Jr. (1761-1822) purchased land in Guilford County, and in 1787, Watson Wharton (1746-1813) left his Delaware home for land on Buffalo Creek adjoining the Rankin brothers.<sup>5</sup> This section of eastern Guilford County, in the vicinity of Rock Creek and Buffalo Creek, became known as "Allamence." Like many of the farmers living in the area, the Rankins, Smiths, and Whartons followed Presbyterian teachings and helped establish Bethel Presbyterian Church in 1812.<sup>6</sup>

Although Guilford County remained rural and agrarian during the first half of the nineteenth century, its residents—particularly the Presbyterians and Quakers—valued educational opportunities. David Caldwell, a physician and Presbyterian minister, emerged as a religious and educational leader during the late eighteenth century, and his influence stretched well into the nineteenth century. In addition to his service as pastor of Buffalo and Alamance Presbyterian churches in eastern Guilford County, Caldwell founded a "log college" in what is now northwest Greensboro in 1767. Caldwell's school quickly acquired an outstanding reputation. Boys came from across North and South Carolina and Virginia to study with him, and five graduates became governors of their states, including John Motley Morehead, North Carolina's chief executive from 1841 to 1845. Eventually, Caldwell was offered the presidency of the

<sup>3</sup> Alexander R. Stoesen, *Guilford County: A Brief History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1993), 1, 9; Salsi, Lynn and Burke, *Guilford County: Heart of the Piedmont* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 12, 20-21.

<sup>4</sup> S. M. Rankin, *The Rankin and Wharton Families and Their Genealogy* (Greensboro, N.C.: Joseph J. Stone and Company, Printers, 1930), 21, 23.

<sup>5</sup> S. M. Rankin, 47; Guilford County Deed Book G2, page 113, March 21, 1780.

<sup>6</sup> "Bethel Church History File" in William Calvin Rankin Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina; S. M. Rankin, 23, 49.

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University of North Carolina but chose to remain in Guilford County where he taught, preached, and practiced medicine until his death in 1824. As part of his work in Guilford County, Caldwell served as a visiting minister at Bethel Presbyterian Church (established 1812 as Cedar Creek Church), a congregation formed by Presbyterians in the Gibsonville area including the Whartons, Smiths, and Rankins.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, in 1826, William Swaim began printing the *Greensborough Patriot*, a weekly newspaper in which Swaim relentlessly advocated progressive ideas about farming, the economy, education, and his favorite topic: transportation. A circa 1808 map of Guilford County shows the “Hillsboro Road” (an east-west route connecting Guilford Courthouse and later Greensboro with Hillsborough), the Fayetteville Road, the Salisbury Road, and three unnamed roads leading in all directions from Martinsville, formerly known as Guilford Courthouse. Until the railroad arrived in Guilford County in the 1850s, however, poor transportation stymied the county’s prosperity, as well as that of the entire state. Farmers could easily spend half the value of their crops just getting them to a market, and manufacturers could not efficiently send their goods to larger markets or import raw materials. As a result, most North Carolinians functioned in a nearly cashless society with agriculture providing subsistence rather than profits and industries operating within a local barter system.<sup>8</sup> In 1839, stagecoaches began regular service in Guilford County, but substantial improvements had to wait for the arrival of the railroad.<sup>9</sup>

The Smith family, including Eli Smith (1789-1862), son of John Smith Jr., and grandson of John Smith Sr., (both of whom had purchased farms to the east of Greensboro during the eighteenth century), lived along the Hillsborough Road.<sup>10</sup> In 1810, Eli Smith married Jane Rankin, the daughter of William Rankin (who moved from Delaware to Guilford County in 1768).<sup>11</sup> Beginning in 1814, Eli purchased several tracts of land along the Hillsborough Road in the area known as “Allamence.”<sup>12</sup> Most parcels had belonged to Eli’s father, but he purchased at least one tract from his father-in-law, William Rankin. Eli built a house about two miles east of his father’s in the 1810s, either after his 1810 marriage or after his first land purchase in 1814, and he opened this house to overnight guests traveling the Hillsborough Road.<sup>13</sup> Eli and Jane farmed and raised three children, Madison D., William Rankin, and Nancy Ann. With the inception of stagecoach service in 1839, Eli’s house became the second stop on the Greensboro-to-

<sup>7</sup> Stoesen, 3; Robinson, Blackwell P. and Alexander R. Stoesen, *The History of Guilford County, North Carolina, U.S.A., to 1980, A.D.* (Greensboro, NC: Guilford County American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, 1980), 18-20.

<sup>8</sup> Salsi, 44; Stoesen, 11-12.

<sup>9</sup> Salsi, 44; Stoesen, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Guilford County Deed Book G2, pages 95, 96, 113; Book G5, page 265.

<sup>11</sup> S. M. Rankin, 157.

<sup>12</sup> Guilford County Deed Book 12, page 576; Book 19, page 516; Book 20, page 144; Book 21, page 138.

<sup>13</sup> “Smith Family File,” William Calvin Rankin Papers.

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Hillsborough route. Eli also served as a justice of the peace, postmaster of the Allamence Post Office from 1826 to 1854, and owned twelve slaves.<sup>14</sup>

During the antebellum period, Guilford County's slow and steady growth continued. Residents remained spread out, but that isolation came to an end in 1856 with the completion of the North Carolina Railroad through the county. The route connected Goldsboro and Charlotte by way of Greensboro, crossing Guilford County in an arc from nearly the center of the county's eastern boundary to its southwest corner. The line gave Guilford County a reliable conduit to Wilmington and Weldon, North Carolina, and Petersburg, Virginia, whose ports and other rail connections linked North Carolina to the rest of the world. The county's subsistence farmers, who produced a mere 1,900 pounds of tobacco in 1850, rapidly transformed themselves into cash-crop agriculturalists and generated 724,348 pounds of tobacco in 1860.<sup>15</sup>

Among these farmers was William Rankin (W. R.) Smith (1813-1868), the second son of Eli and Jane Smith. In 1846, W. R. married Elizabeth Ann Wharton (1825-1893), and Eli built a hall-parlor home for them just east of his own dwelling along the Hillsborough Road, which was known by that time as the Raleigh Road or Highway.<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth was the daughter of John Wharton (1797-1891) and Rhoda Webb (1799-1849). The Whartons, like the Rankins, were from Delaware; John Wharton's grandfather, Watson Wharton came to the Buffalo Creek area from Delaware in 1787. All three families, the Whartons, Rankins, and Smiths, were active members of Bethel Presbyterian Church and bought and sold land among themselves.<sup>17</sup>

W. R. Smith was not enumerated as a head of household in 1840. At the time of the 1850 census, he was listed as a thirty-six-year-old farmer and merchant who owned 143 acres of improved land and 73 acres of unimproved land valued at \$1,000. Smith's household included twenty-six-year-old Elizabeth, and their children, Nancy, age four, and William R., age two. His livestock, valued at \$522, included 4 milk cows, 4 horses, 10 other cattle, and 12 swine; the farm produced 100 bushels of wheat, 45 bushels of Indian corn, and 150 bushels of oats. By 1860, Smith owned 420 acres, 200 of which were improved. The farm had increased in value to \$5,200. Additional livestock included twelve sheep and two oxen. Farm production also increased dramatically, with reported yields of 80 bushels of wheat, 230 bushels of Indian corn, 500 pounds of

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Stoesen, 14-15.

<sup>16</sup> William Rankin Smith is referred to as "W. R." in deeds and his wife's obituary. Deeds mention that his house was located adjacent to the dwelling of his parents. Jerry Nix stated that Eli built a hall-parlor house as a wedding gift for his son.

<sup>17</sup> Ruth F. Thompson and Louise Hartgrove, *Abstracts of Guilford County Marriage Bonds, 1841-1864* (Greensboro, N.C.: Guilford County Genealogical Society, 1983); "Phipps Thru Woodburn" family file, William Calvin Rankin Papers; *Greensboro Daily News*, May 12, 1949.

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tobacco, 40 bushels of Irish potatoes, and 100 bushels of sweet potatoes. W. R. Smith owned eleven slaves in 1860. He served as postmaster of the Alleman Post Office from 1851 to 1866 and represented Guilford County in the North Carolina House in 1862, 1865, and 1866.<sup>18</sup>

The births of Nancy in 1846 and William R. Jr. in 1849 were followed by the births of three more daughters: Zula C. in 1854, Mamie (or Mary E.) in 1860, and Lizzie in 1864.<sup>19</sup> W. R. Smith died intestate in 1868. His wife, Elizabeth, and their son-in-law, John H. Rankin (Nancy's husband), were appointed executors in 1869 and the family's lands were divided among the children in 1877. Elizabeth did not receive a parcel for herself, but retained dower rights on several tracts specifically for harvesting firewood and cutting timber to maintain her dwelling. One of the tracts on which she had dower rights included the house.<sup>20</sup>

The Smiths' children married during the late 1800s. Nancy (1846-1919), married her distant cousin, John H. Rankin. William (1849-1881) married Ada M. Albright. Zula (1854-?) also married a distant cousin, Alpheus Rankin. Mamie (1860-1949) married Ed Wheeler, and Lizzie (1864-1887) remained unmarried and died from a "gastro-intestinal inflammation" at the young age of twenty-three.<sup>21</sup> In 1882, Zula Smith Rankin sold the land she inherited from her father to an adjoining landowner, D. P. Foust, with dower rights retained by her mother, Elizabeth Smith.<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth also sold some of her dower rights to her son-in-law, John H. Rankin, and entered into a dower-rights agreement with Foust.<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Smith died on July 29, 1893. Her obituary noted that "the unusually large number of persons present showed the esteem in which they held Mrs. Smith."<sup>24</sup>

The Smith House then became part of the D. P. Foust farm and remained so well into the twentieth century when the Screen family purchased the house. In 1947, the Screens sold the house and an eight-acre tract to Robert and Mabel Laboyteaux.<sup>25</sup> The property then passed through several hands before Alamance Partners LLC purchased the lot in 2003 with plans to develop it and the

<sup>18</sup> Seventh Census of the United States, 1840-1860, Guilford County, North Carolina, Agriculture and Population Schedules, National Archives, Washington, D.C., (microfilm, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh).

<sup>19</sup> S. M. Rankin, 157.

<sup>20</sup> Guilford County Deed Book 53, page 17; Book 65, page 216; Book 61, page 150; Guilford County Record of Settlements, Book A, page 482; Guilford County Record of Appointments, Book M-1, page 6.

<sup>21</sup> S. M. Rankin, 157; undated, untitled newspaper clipping in the "Smith Family File," William Calvin Rankin Papers.

<sup>22</sup> Zula Smith Rankin to D. P. Foust, October 16, 1882, Guilford County Deed Book 61, page 462. The D.P. Foust House (circa 1856 with a large 1870s addition) was listed in the National Register in January 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth W. Smith to John H. Rankin, July 26, 1883, Guilford County Deed Book 65, page 216; Elizabeth W. Smith agreement with D. P. Foust, January 25, 1882, Guilford County Deed Book 61, page 462.

<sup>24</sup> Undated, untitled newspaper clippings in the "Smith Family File," William Calvin Rankin Papers.

<sup>25</sup> F. G. Screen and Robbie M. Screen to Mabel P. and Robert Laboyteaux, Guilford County Deed Book 1064, page 2.

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surrounding land. In 2004, the group gave the house to Jerry S. Nix, who moved it to a tract on Brightwood Church Road which has been incorporated into the same parcel as that of the D. P. Foust House. The Foust House was listed in the National Register in 2005, but the Smith House site is not included in the acreage of that nomination.

### Architecture Context

The William Rankin and Elizabeth Wharton Smith House is a locally significant example of mid-nineteenth-century vernacular architecture in North Carolina's Piedmont region. It serves as an increasingly rare example of a small mid-nineteenth-century residence incorporating an engaged porch comparable to those seen on coastal cottages in the eastern North Carolina. In a rapidly developing county where many modest nineteenth century houses have been lost, it is also a good example of the type of houses constructed by the county's many middling farmers. The house retains its architectural integrity, and because new suburban and commercial development has encompassed its original site, the new location provides a setting more like its historically rural surroundings.

The Smith family built this house at a time when North Carolina's economy was poised to experience an agricultural boom. In the late 1840s, flue-cured tobacco, a product of Piedmont North Carolina, emerged as the preferred leaf for plug and twist tobaccos. By the early 1850s, the region's thousands of subsistence, cash-poor farmers became fully invested in the cash-crop system and devoted more and more acres to tobacco. W. R. Smith is certainly representative of this trend, as he did not report any tobacco production in 1850 and harvested 5,000 pounds in 1860.

During this era, Greek Revival designs spread across the country via pattern books, and in North Carolina a "spirit of improvement" took hold. Farmers prospered and desired new, stately homes and often employed Greek Revival architecture to emphasize their success and social standing.<sup>26</sup> Wealthy plantation owners incorporated Greek keys, porticos, wide door and window surrounds, and heavy moldings to create grand and imposing Greek Revival designs with center-passage plans and double-pile forms. Families with less means also used Greek Revival elements on a more modest scale, applying them in as much profusion as possible on smaller traditional house forms. I-houses, one-room, and hall-parlor dwellings were adorned with elements ranging from simple post-and-lintel mantels to door and window surrounds with corner blocks and more elaborate mantels with Greek key fretwork.

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<sup>26</sup> Catherine W. Bishir and Michael T. Southern, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Piedmont North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 38-39.

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The Smiths' original circa 1846 house and their circa 1854 addition clearly reflect the impact of economic prosperity and nationally popular architectural styles on the built environment of Guilford County. The 1846 section displays a sustained tie to earlier ideas about house-building: the Smiths installed a modest Federal mantel at a time when Greek Revival patterns and designs would have been coming into vogue, and likely would have been known to a family living, as the Smiths did, on a major road. Additionally, the hall-parlor plan, with a tight, boxed winder stair and unusually narrow parlor, was a relic from the eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries. By contrast, the changes the Smiths made in the 1850s reflect an awareness of fashion and a progressive, forward-facing outlook, albeit at a more restrained scale than that seen at larger plantation seats. The south room, added about 1854, features a simply-detailed but well-proportioned mantel and wider window skirts and window surrounds than those in the earlier room. The south room also incorporates two-panel Greek Revival doors; the two-panel Greek Revival door connecting the 1846 section to the porch may be an update made when the south room was added. The family built the full-width engaged porch with substantial square posts at the same time. Physical evidence in the attic suggests that the 1846 house did not have such a porch, although it is not known what kind of porch, if any, the dwelling originally had.

The fact that the Smith House remained relatively unaltered from circa 1854 until 1885 also reflects the overall evolution of regional architecture during the period. After the Civil War, the state's economy recovered slowly and few people constructed new houses or made significant investments in their dwellings. Many focused on improving their economic situation by buying land as larger farms broke up while others fell into a cycle of poverty as sharecroppers. Still others began abandoning their farms and moving to mill villages and newly-industrializing towns. The Smith family stayed on their farm, and continued living in the house despite having sold it to D. P. Foust in 1882, but they were not able to make significant changes to the dwelling. As North Carolina regained solid economic footing, however, the Fousts were able to add two rooms to the house in 1885.

This addition reflected popular tastes and incorporated standard late-Victorian-era ornament and finishes. During the late nineteenth century, North Carolina and other southern states became increasingly industrialized, and along with the cotton mills, tobacco factories, and railroads came sawmills that could create standard millwork and lumber in ever-growing styles for ever-decreasing prices. As a result, new construction became more affordable and inexpensive standard milled ornament became fashionable. Home builders could select from an array of moldings, beaded board patterns, doors, windows, mantelpieces, and fanciful trim work.

At the Smith House, the Fousts used such materials in the construction of their rear wing. The new section features mass-produced doors, windows, moldings, and beaded board sheathing.

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Outside, moldings highlight the eaves and create gable-returns, which were also added to the gable ends of the earlier main block.

As the twentieth century advanced, other alterations reflected changing expectations about domestic architecture. In 1945, the owners introduced indoor bathrooms and created a more up-to-date kitchen on the rear wing's porch. Also, by 1945, most people no longer tolerated the nineteenth century custom of shared sleeping quarters so a bedroom was added to the north elevation. By the mid-twentieth century, probably influenced by the more open layouts introduced through Ranch house floor plans, the owners removed the wall between the 1846 room and the rear wing to create a free-flowing living space. The wall has been reconstructed as part of the restoration. Today, the house stands as an example of a modest rural farmhouse altered to meet the owners' changing needs and tastes over time.

The William Rankin and Elizabeth Wharton Smith House is a relatively rare example of a nineteenth century, Piedmont North Carolina coastal cottage comparable to the coastal plain cottages of eastern North Carolina. While builders in the state's mid-section did build coastal plain cottages and similar forms on a regular basis, the form's roots are in eastern North Carolina where many more examples stand. Only a few examples remain in the Piedmont where suburban development has precipitated the loss of many nineteenth century dwellings, particularly modest examples such as coast plain cottages. Houses similar to the Smith House (those with one or two rooms and an engaged or inset porch) are rare in Guilford County today. The Robert Glenn Smith House, recorded in the 1970s and again in 1996, stands nearby in the Sedalia vicinity, but it is abandoned and seriously deteriorated, and unlike the Smith House, it is a log dwelling. The Stuart House II, documented in the 1970s, was a mid-nineteenth century frame dwelling with flush board sheathing under the engaged porch. Although the house stood in the High Point vicinity, in a different section of the county from the Smith House, the two houses exhibited numerous similarities. The Stuart House II, however, has been demolished.

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## 10. Geographical Data

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The William Rankin and Elizabeth Wharton Smith House boundary encompasses approximately two acres around the dwelling. This tract is situated at the northwest corner of a twenty-three-acre parcel. The circa 1856 and 1870s D.P. Foust House (NR 2005), now the home of the Smith House's current owner, stands to the south near the center of the parcel. The remainder of the tract is wooded or open fields with a pond to the east of the Foust House. The Guilford County parcel identification number for the twenty-three-acre lot is 0205030100144N001. The William Rankin and Elizabeth Wharton Smith House boundary is shown in bold lines on the accompanying Guilford County tax map at a scale of one inch equals two hundred feet.

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The William Rankin and Elizabeth Wharton Smith House boundary encompasses approximately two acres surrounding the house. The site is sufficient to provide an appropriate setting for the dwelling, which is compatible with the setting, feeling, and appearance of the Smith House's original location.

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## Photographs

The following information applies to all photographs

William Rankin and Elizabeth Wharton Smith House

Whitsett vicinity, Guilford County, North Carolina

Photographer: Heather Fearnbach, Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc.

Date: October 2006

Negative: NCSHPO, Raleigh, NC

## Photographs:

1. Front and north side, looking southeast
2. Front and south side, looking northeast
3. Rear and addition, looking west
4. South wall, looking north
5. North room in main house, looking west
6. South room in main house, looking south
7. Middle room (parlor) in main house, looking west