

Benjamin H. Averiett Houses

(Thematic Group)

Owner: Moretti-Harrah
Marble Company
Post Office Box 330
Sylacauga, AL 35150

Historic name: Benjamin H. Averiett House
Common name: Hudson Hamilton Place

Location: Talladega County approximately 7 miles southwest of Sylacauga on the south side of Highway 8 in the Fayetteville Community

Acreage: Approximately 6½ acres UTM: A. 16/558/520/3666/840
B. 16/558/800/3666/700
C. 16/558/620/3666/690
D. 16/558/620/3666/840

Verbal Boundary: Presently situated on a parcel of approximately 600 acres, boundaries for purposes of nomination are based on significant geographical features as well as current ownership. The northern boundary is a paved state road (Highway 8). The eastern, a natural spring on which the springhouse is located, and its branch. (Note that the branch was erroneously identified as a road on the Plat Map.) The southern boundary is the section line between Sections 6 and 7 T 22 R 3 E. The western boundary is an unnamed branch which flows northwest into Cedar Creek. The total acreage included in the nomination is approximately 6½ acres.

Date of Construction: c.1835

Statement of Significance:

Criterion A - Exploration/Settlement

The Benjamin H. Averiett House is significant because the Averiett Family's route of migration into Talladega County is representative of an important early Alabama immigration and settlement pattern. The Averiett's migration from Georgia to newly opened lands in Autauga, Lowndes and Talladega Counties, Alabama, as well as their successful subsistence and ultimate prosperity from the land, are representative of Alabama's settlement and thus her role in America's Westward Movement.

Criterion B- Exploration/Settlement

The Benjamin H. Averiett House is significant for its association with pioneer Alabamian, Benjamin H. Averiett whose activities between c.1830 and 1879 were determinative in the earliest settlement and growth patterns of Talladega County. During that period the house was Averiett's personal residence.

Criterion A - Agriculture

The Benjamin H. Averiett House is significant because of its place in the evolution of the Averiett family farming unit which is representative of Alabama's 19th and early 20th Century agricultural development. The Benjamin Averiett House (c.1835) is a pioneer dwelling representative of very early agricultural prosperity. The evolutionary refinement of the house further coincides with the family's economic growth through the cotton prosperous 1850s.

Criterion C - Architecture

The Benjamin H. Averiett House is significant as a Georgia folk type, transplanted and adapted to the Alabama frontier. One of the county's few surviving and uncommonly polished pioneer homes, it is further distinguished by its unusually fine interior which features handsome millwork richly grained and marbled.

Integrity:

The Benjamin H. Averiett House retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. With only superficial alteration and some natural deterioration the house retains its historic identity. Its plan, materials and design are intact as is its rural setting, including outbuildings. Most of the original architectural features and construction materials such as mantels, doors, baseboards, wainscotting and chimneys have survived as have significant interior wall finishes. The shed dormer, enclosed front porch and bathroom lean-to are twentieth century alterations.

Description:

The Benjamin H. Averiett House is a large six room clapboard house measuring approximately 50' x 55'. Built prior to 1840, the house features a wide center hall which is flanked by three rooms on each side, all of which have 7"-8" board walls, paneled dado, 6" pine tongue and groove flooring and separate fireplaces with exterior brick chimneys. While the whole of the house appears as one unit with few additions, there are indications, such as variations in brick types and construction methods in the chimneys, that the house may have been built over a period of years.

The large central parlors of the house have 12/9 wooden sash windows while the shed rooms have 6/6 windows. The dog-trot hallway also with paneled dado, has large bifold doors which served to close off the passage at the central parlors leaving open recessed "porches" on the front and rear of the house. Physical evidence, such as paint shadows and baluster anchor, indicates that a small stairway in the rear passage originally led to a brick floored basement room under the southeast corner of the house. It also indicates the presence of square columns and round handrail with square spindles along the porch edge, on both the front and back porches.

During the early twentieth century, the porches were enclosed with multipaned wooden sashes in the front and screen in the rear. At about the same time the four front windows of the house were replaced with six 4/4 sashes and a shed dormer was added. A c.1907 photo documents the original appearance of the porch and front windows.

The interior of the house features excellent examples of the mid-19th Century grainers' art, some of which has been painted over. One of the parlors retains its historic paint finishes including an exceptional marbleized mantelpiece and wood grained doors and dado. A pale blue finish on moldings and facings also seem to be historic finishes.

Resting on brick piers, the Benjamin Averiett House is variously underpinned with fieldstone and new marble. The wooden front steps have been replaced with cement and stone. The house is protected by a tin roof.

Facing north on Highway 8, the Benjamin Averiett property includes a hearty smokehouse of stone, timber and brick construction and a wood springhouse situated on the bubbling natural spring which empties into Cedar Creek.

Historical Summary:

At Benjamin Averiett's death, his wife, Sarah retained their house until she moved "down the road" to live with her son William's family. The Benjamin Averiett house was later left to Averiett's daughter, Ruby, and her husband, Hudson Hamilton. In 1963, the Hamilton's sold the old Averiett House to Moretti-Harrah Marble Company, Inc. It is now vacant.