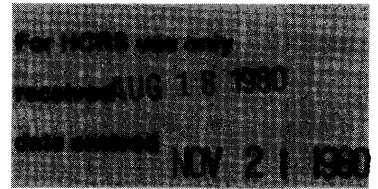


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections



## 1. Name

historic Forest Home

and/or common Absalom L. Davis House

## 2. Location

street & number Township 5S, Range 5W, Sec. 16 (SW 1/4)  
S. of U.S. 72 approx. 1.2 miles E of Trinity \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Trinity vic. \_\_\_\_\_  
Decatur \_\_\_\_\_  vicinity of congressional district 5

state Alabama code 01 county Morgan code 103

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: None

## 4. Owner of Property

name Joel Holmes Reagin, Inc.

street & number 2313 6th Avenue, South

city, town Decatur \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Alabama

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Probate Office, Morgan County Courthouse

street & number 302 Lee Street, N. E.

city, town Decatur \_\_\_\_\_ state Alabama

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Regional Historic Preservation Survey  
(NARCOG) June \_\_\_\_\_ has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
 regional

date June, 1979 \_\_\_\_\_  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N. Central Ala. Regional Council of Govts., 402 Lee Street

city, town Decatur \_\_\_\_\_ state Alabama

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Forest Home stands exactly half a mile due south of U. S. Highway 72, equidistant between the highway and the old Decatur-to-Trinity road. The House faces south toward the Trinity Road, from which it was originally approached by a half-mile long cedar-lined lane. A short section of this lane, extending perhaps a hundred yards south of the house, survives today, although the main entrance to the house and grounds have long been re-oriented northward to the main highway. While none of the mid-19th century dependencies remain, the dwelling complex includes, besides the house itself, two 20th century barns, two small sheds, a garage, a tenant house, and a privy. Remnants of English boxwood edge the overgrown brick walk which formerly led from the foot of the porch steps to the front gate. Immediately west of the walkway are the remains of a formal garden.

*> data from 1930s photo on outside of house*

As built, the main dwelling was a two-story frame rectangular structure with a gabled roof, end chimneys, and a story-gabled dining room ell at the northeast rear. There was a two-story pedimented porch with two flanking windows above and below. The ell also was apparently abutted on three sides by porches. About 1890, the original porch was replaced by the present double shed-porch with turned and bracketed supports. A kitchen addition, which supplanted the original detached "cookhouse," was built onto the end of the ell during the same period, and the porch at the east rear partially enclosed. Later still, about 1945, the porch at the reentrant angle of the ell was enclosed to provide a bath and connecting passage from the rear of the front hall to the ell. Except for these minor changes and additions, the house is virtually unaltered.

Both exterior trim -- cornerboards, cornices, and the surround of the main doorways -- and the interior woodwork are of modified Greek Revival design probably adapted from Minard Lefever. Tall, paneled double-leaf doorways, seven feet wide, with sidelights and transom, are located at the front and the rear of the main hallway and at the upper level of the front porch. The upper and lower doors of the facade are enframed by a heavy, molded architrave--eared and slightly battered and surmounted by a cornice. The same motif is repeated throughout the first floor and in somewhat simplified form, upstairs as well.

The interior follows the usual center-hall plan, with two large rooms, exactly 20 feet square, to either side of a 16'-wide passage. The ell dining room preserves the same dimensions. First -floor windows, ten feet in height, are paneled beneath. All sashing in the original portion of the house is double-hung, six-over-six. There is a wide molded baseboard upstairs and down, while the wooden mantelpieces which frame the fireplace opening in each of the five major rooms continue the Grecian motif, with their wide battered jambs and eared architraves topped by a cornice-like mantelshelf.

The highlight of the interior, however, is the broad curving stairway in the main hall. Ascending from the right side of the hall in a short straight flight of six treads, the stair then springs unsupported, bannistered on both sides, in a quarter-circle arc to the second floor. A continuous balustrade with square tapering spindles terminates at the foot of the stair in a graceful scrolled volute. Applied fretwork trim embellishes the stringer beneath each tread, while the same Greek-key motif is continued along the fascia-board of the stairwell. The northeast corner of the upper hall is curved to follow the contour of the stair, forming a hollow space behind.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED AUG 18 1980  
DATE ENTERED NOV 21 1980

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Still unknown is the name of the artisan who created this unusual stairway, which perhaps has no counterpart anywhere in Alabama.

Unoccupied for nearly a decade, the house has suffered some vandalism, including broken windows and window-sashing. While both the Victorian-period front porch and the kitchen addition at the rear of the ell have deteriorated badly, the original portion of the house is still structurally sound in spite of much superficial disrepair.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	___ education	___ military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
___ 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1857-59                      **Builder/Architect** Unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

In an area where the attrition rate of significant rural structures has been very high, Forest Home is Morgan County's best remaining example of mid-19th century plantation-house architecture. Its form and plan -- a one-room deep two-story gabled main block with end chimneys and a one-story, one-room ell--reflect a house type once characteristic of the larger landholdings in the vicinity.

Other examples were the James T. Sykes House (1836, burned 1968): "Boxwood," the Elliott House (c. 1855, razed 1958); and "Walnut Grove," the James Fennell House (c. 1840, burned c. 1920). Today, Forest Home is the lone survivor, and one of but three extant antebellum plantation houses in the entire county. The others were "Westview" (1841) and the Dr. Charles W. Price House (c. 1855) at Priceville. The house contains Morgan County's most notable Greek Revival-style interior. Additionally, the house is significant for its associations with Absalom L. Davis, a leader of the Grange Movement.

\* \* \* \* \*

In 1856, the tract on which the house stands was deeded, in a 300 acre parcel, by Mrs. Mary Curtis King Fennel of neighboring "Walnut Grove" to her daughter and son-in-law, Ann and Absalom L. Davis. The tract was one of several contiguous acreages which Mrs. Fennel, the widow of James Fennel, gave to each of her children as they came of age and married. (It was James Fennel - 1803-1849 who in 1835 spearheaded the establishment and construction of the Decatur Branch of the State Bank of Alabama). Within the next three years, the Davises completed and moved into the house which they called Forest Home. During the same period, Ann Fennel Davis designed and laid out the "geometrical" garden immediately southwest of the house.

Absalom Davis was a teacher as well as a farmer, and an occasional instructor at LaGrange College near Tusculumbia, until it was destroyed during the Civil War. Davis also became a leader of the Grange Movement which swept through the Tennessee Valley during the 1870's, as planters and farmers alike reacted against monopolistic trade practices, declining farm prices, and soaring freight rates.

Forest Home remained the nucleus of a working cotton plantation. Life at the farm and in the surrounding community during the late 1800's has been vividly described by a daughter of the household, Mary Davis Henry (1878-1969) in two books: the autobiographical One Mile from Trinity (1955) and The Annals of Ann Fennel Davis (1962), a short biographical sketch of Mrs. Henry's mother. Ann Fennel Davis died in 1905; her husband, Absalom, in 1922. Forest Home then became the residence of their son and daughter-in-law, Jefferson and Mary Minor Davis. A daughter of the latter couple, Mrs. William E. Steed (nee Ann Davis), who died in 1973, was the last occupant of the house. Subsequently, farming activity ceased and, confronted with the pressures of suburban development, the Forest Home tract was sold by the Davis and Steed heirs in 1978. Despite nearly a decade of neglect, the house and its immediate setting retain the character and flavor of a 19th-century Tennessee Valley farm.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Henry, Mary Davis. One Mile from Trinity. Athens, Alabama: The Strode Publishers, 1955.  
 Henry, Mary Davis. The Annals of Ann Fennel Davis. Privately published by the author, 1962.

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**  
**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 1.25 acres

Quadrangle name Trinity

Quadrangle scale 7 1/2'

### UMT References

A 

1	6	4	9	3	9	10	10	3	18	2	19	8	10	10
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing							

**Verbal boundary description and justification** In SW 1/4 of Section 16, Township 5S, Range 5W: Beginning at a point 1000' due E of the NW corner of said quarter (on the E side of an access road from U. S. Hwy. 72), thence 350' due E to a point, thence 350' due S to a point, thence 350' due W to a point, thence 350' due N to the point of beginning (inc. hse. & immed. grounds)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ellen Mertins/Robert Gamble

organization Alabama Historical Commission date July 30, 1980

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 832-6621

city or town Montgomery state Alabama

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

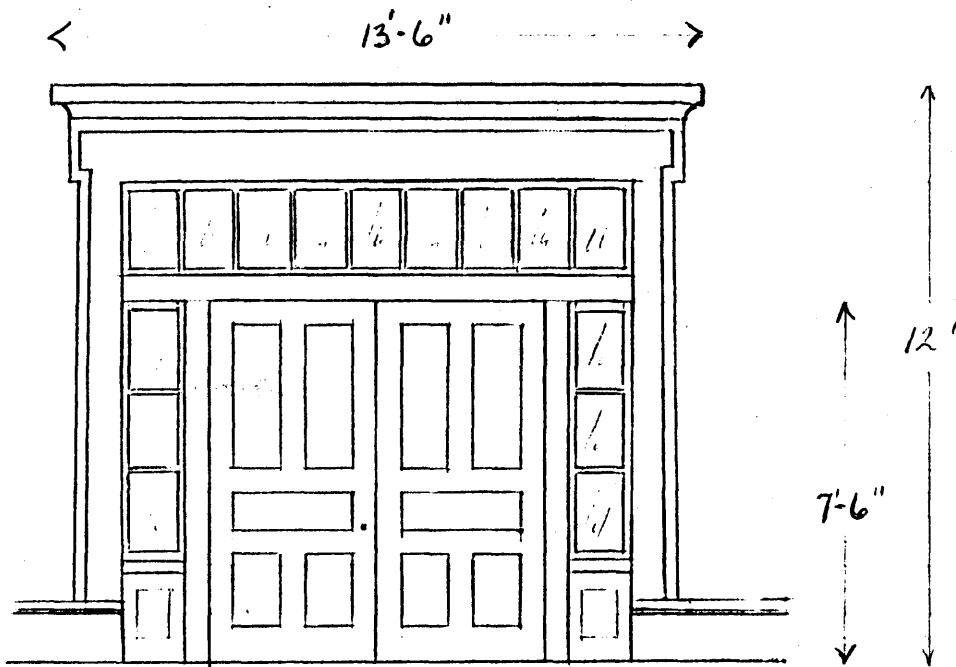
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Miss B. Howard Jr.

title SHPO date August 5, 1980

**For HCRRS use only**  
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register  
W. Ray Jones date 11/21/80  
 Keeper of the National Register  
 Attest: Ann D. [unclear] date 11/21/80  
 Chief of the [unclear]

FOREST HOME



MAIN DOORWAY  
(UPPER DOOR IDENTICAL)

FOREST HOME - MORGAN COUNTY

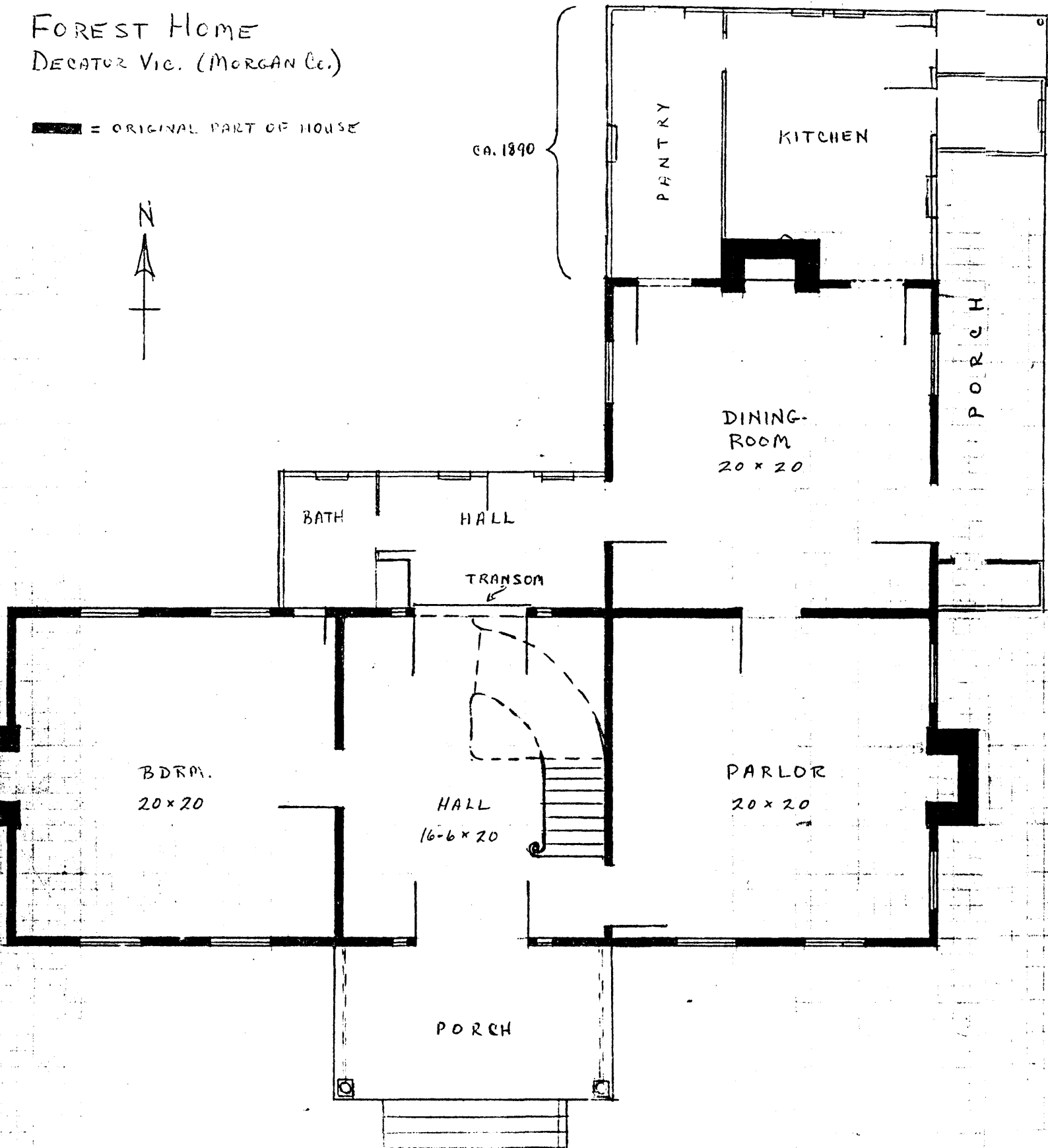
AUG 18 1980

300 1200

FOREST HOME  
DECATUR VIC. (MORGAN Co.)

— = ORIGINAL PART OF HOUSE

ca. 1890



Measured 2-78

FIRST FLOOR

0 4' 8'  
SCALE

15

FOREST HOME  
DECATUR VIC. (MORGAN CO.)



ORIGINAL  
TERMINATION



ROOF

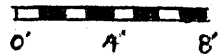
SHED ROOF

BDRM.

BDRM.

PORCH

SECOND FLOOR



Measured 2-18-80

AUG 10 1980