

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only
received JUN 12 1985
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Tristram Bethea House

and/or common Bethea-Strother House, Strother House

2. Location

street & number SW of intersection with Alabama 28 and Co. Road 22 NA not for publication

Canton Bend Community
city, town (vicinity of Camden) NA vicinity of Congressional District 1

state Alabama code 01 county Wilcox code 131

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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" 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
	<u>NA</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name (1) Mr. Ellie Deer Strother (2) Mrs. Arcola Strother Young

street & number P.O. Box 192 102 Dawson Street

Franklin, AL 36444 Brewton, AL 36426
city, town (205 282-4481) NA vicinity of (205 867-6551) state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Judge of Probate

street & number Wilcox County Courthouse

city, town Camden state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic American Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1934 federal state county local

depository for survey records Library of Congress, Dir. of Prints & Photos

city, town Washington state DC 20540

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input 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

The Bethea-Strother house is a two-story, one-room deep brick structure with a single-story frame ell at the southeast rear. The front of the house faces northeast toward Wilcox County Road 28. The remnants of a century-old oak grove still partially screen the house from the main road, from which a lane winds through the trees to the steps of the portico. Behind the house to the south and west, the land falls away to a mixture of woodlands, pastures, old fields, and swampland.

The brick walls of the two-story main portion of the house are laid in common bond, with splayed jack arches above window and door openings. At the base of both the front and rear elevations, a series of ventholes admit air to the crawl space beneath the first floor of the house.

A full-height, distyle pedimented portico, sheltering superimposed fanlight doorways, dominates the five-bay facade. The upper doorway opens onto a narrow balcony enclosed by a plain wooden balustrade. The attenuated, rectangular piers of the portico carry a molded entablature, enriched with mutules, which completely encircles the house. The shallow tympanum of the portico pediment is pierced by a louvered lunette echoing the broad, segmentally arched fanlights of the doorways below. A single, flush end-chimney projects from the ridge at each end of the gabled main roof. Sashing is nine-over-nine below, and nine-over-six above, with the windows at the front retaining their original louvered blinds.

Inside, a broad hallway bisecting the main block of the house is flanked by a single large room to either side. A straight-run stair ascends in reverse flight from the rear of the hall to the upper floor, where the same plan is repeated. A molded baseboard and chairrail is found in all four of the main rooms, as well as in the hallways. The ceilings of the two downstairs rooms are also embellished with reeded and molded plaster cornices, accentuated by foliated corner blocks worked as a high-relief acanthus motif. A single large, foliated plaster centerpiece or medallion occurs in the lower hall. Wooden mantelpieces throughout the two-story are of a simple Federal design.

The frame, gabled-roofed ell of the house consists of two rooms with a single exterior chimney serving the chamber at the rear. A shed-roofed porch runs the length of the west side of the ell. In its present form, the ell postdates the main block and may have been erected toward the end of the last century to replace earlier construction. Physical evidence suggests that a shed-roofed porch may once have extended across the rear of the main block, abutting the earlier ell.

At the end of the ell porch stands, at right angles to the ell itself, a small rectangular gabled structure raised on brick piers. While the structure appears to be of mid-19th century origin, it may have been moved to its present site from elsewhere on the property. In the early 1900s, this structure served as a family dining room, linked by the porch to the kitchen which was situated in the last room of the ell. (The original plantation kitchen stood on the east side of the house, to which it was linked by a covered walkway.)

(see continuation sheet)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Situated approximately a hundred yards behind the house is a two-room gabled tenant dwelling, of board-and-batten construction, which according to the present owner of the Bethea-Strother property was built by his father about 1940. Likewise, part of the extant domestic complex is a frame barn which stands a short distance southeast of the main house. Sheathed with board and batten and covered by a standing-seam metal roof, the barn dates from 1917.

The house and the barn currently contribute to the complex; the tenant house will contribute when it is 50 years of age.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1842-44 **Builder/Architect** possibly William T. Mathews

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Architecture - Criterion C

The Bethea-Strother house is the only brick antebellum residence remaining in Wilcox County, and one of the few extant plantation houses left in the Canton Bend area. Its detailing is typical of Wilcox County architecture of the 1840s--a mixture of both Federal and Greek Revival influences applied to an essentially folk form, in this case a brick I-house with a frame ell.

Politics/Government - Criterion B

The builder of the Bethea-Strother house, Tristram Benjamin Bethea, was a prominent lawyer and Alabama legislator. Although he moved his permanent residence to Mobile in 1850, then later to Montgomery, the house served as a country residence for the family until 1860.

Agriculture - Criterion A

The three structures which comprise the Bethea-Strother dwelling complex are the surviving elements of a recurring plantation domestic pattern: that of the main house plus one or more tenant dwellings, along with a brood of utilitarian agricultural structures. Changing agricultural patterns in the Alabama Black Belt have left increasingly few such complexes intact, thus making ever more important the historical significance of those complexes which survive in whole or in part. Besides extant structures, the sites of the mid-19th century kitchen and other destroyed edifices are known to be included in the nominated acreage.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Finlay, Louis (Jackson, AL) Manuscript notes on Bethea and Strother families.
Owen, Thomas M. History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography. (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1921), Vol. III, p. 140.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approx. 12 acres

Quadrangle name Camden North

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

16	467080	3546200
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

16	466960	3546020
Zone	Easting	Northing

C

16	466780	3546120
Zone	Easting	Northing

D

16	466960	3546360
Zone	Easting	Northing

E

Zone	Easting	Northing

F

Zone	Easting	Northing

G

Zone	Easting	Northing

H

Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification

(see continuation sheet)

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

state	NA	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert Gamble, Architectural Historian

organization Alabama Historical Commission

date December 10, 1984

street & number 725 Monroe Street

telephone 205 261-3184

city or town Montgomery

state Alabama

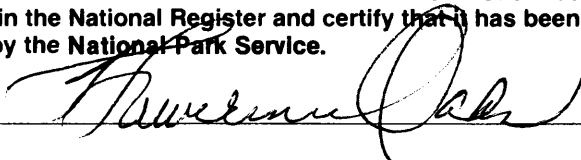
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 5-22-85

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 7-11-85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Continuation sheet

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HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Bethea-Strother House

This house was erected in 1844-46 for Tristram B. ("Trust") Bethea, Wilcox County planter, and his wife and first cousin, Eugenia (Bethea) Bethea. The contractor may have been William T. Mathews, who built a number of other plantation houses in the Canton Bend area.

The Bethea family came from Cheraw District, SC, to Mobile prior to 1820. Tristram Bethea (1810-1876) read law under Gov. Arthur P. Bagby of Alabama and Charles Conrad of New Orleans. In 1831 he married his cousin, Eugenia, daughter of David and Mary Ann (Pledger) Bethea at their Pleasant Ridge plantation in Canton Bend, on the Alabama River.

The Betheas moved to Mobile in 1850, and Tristram was subsequently elected to the State Senate in 1853 on the Democratic ticket. Two years later he was re-elected, this time as a candidate of the Know-Nothing Party. About 1860, after moving from Mobile to Montgomery, he sold his brick plantation home to Mrs. Bethea's sister and her husband, Dr. and Mrs. George Miller. The latter was the son of Dr. Abijah Miller, a graduate of the University of Edinburgh and an early resident of Canton Bend. (Miller's home still stands a short distance east of Canton Bend.)

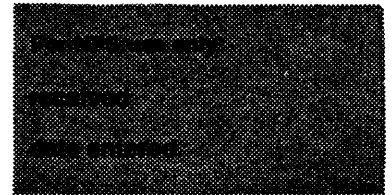
The Millers held the property only a few years before selling it to J. C. Stoddard. In 1873 Stoddard sold the house to Joseph E. Strother, whose descendants still own it in 1985.

Joseph E. Strother (1847-?) was a grand-nephew of Tristram and Eugenia Bethea, original owners of the house, through his grandmother, Sarah Bethea Strother. Joseph E. Strother willed the house and surrounding plantation to his son, Joseph Hicks Strother, from whom it passed in the 1940s to his three children: Ellis Deer Strother, Eugenia Strother, and Arcola Strother Young. At Eugenia Strother's death the house became the property of her surviving brother and sister. These are the present (January 1985) owners.

The house was last occupied by the Strother family in the 1940s. Since then it has slowly deteriorated and, more recently, has been periodically vandalized.

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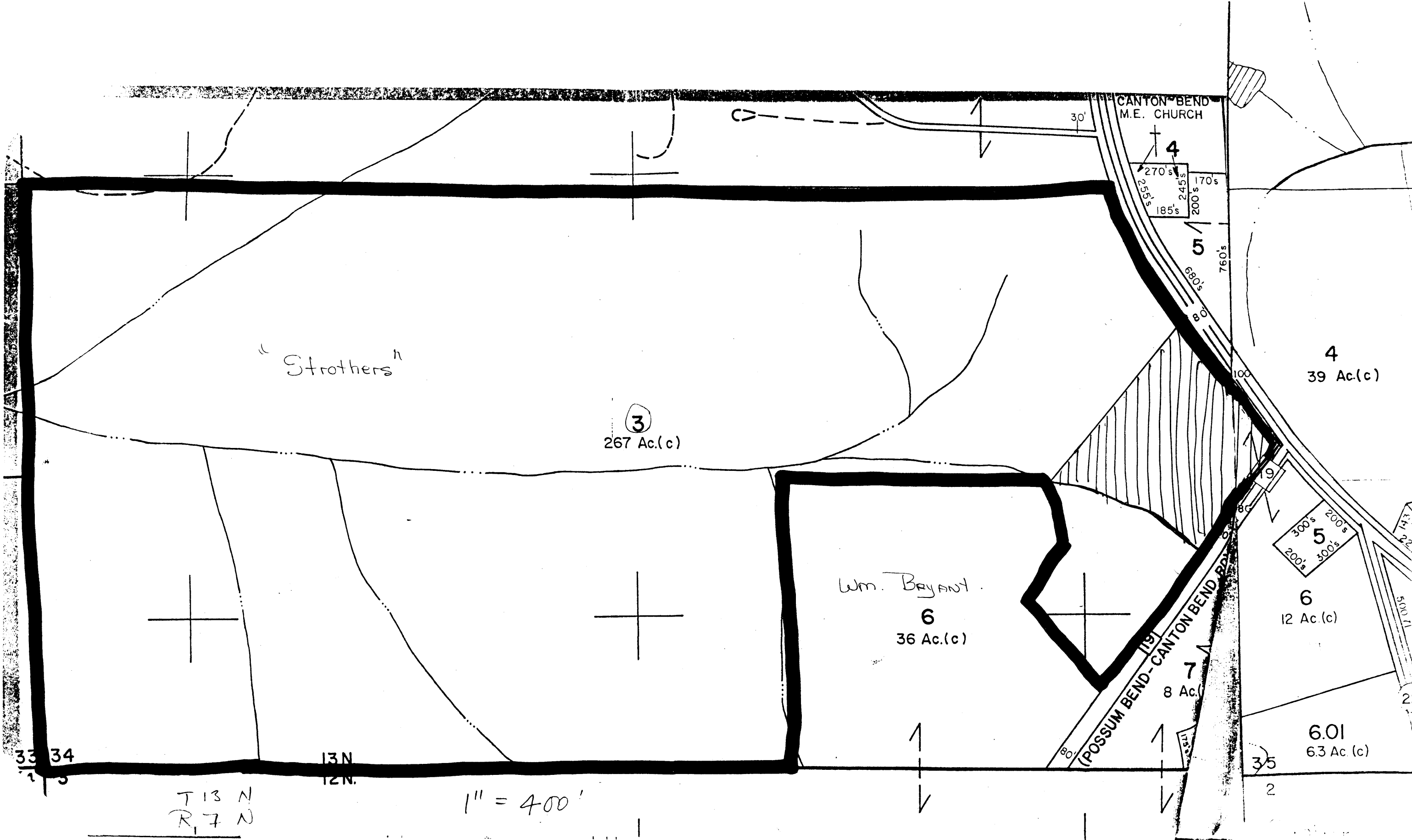


Continuation sheet

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Beginning at the northwestern corner of the intersection of Possum Bend-Canton Bend Road and Alabama Highway 28, proceed northwesterly approximately 750 feet along the southern right of way of Alabama Highway 28 to a fenceline; thence southwesterly along the fence-line approximately 950 feet to the northern bank of a stream; thence southeasterly along the northern bank of the stream approximately 800 feet to the western right of way of Possum Bend-Canton Bend Road; thence northeasterly approximately 600 feet along the western right of way of Possum Bend-Canton Bend Road to the point of beginning. This includes the house, outbuildings, immediate yard and encompasses approximately 12 acres.



CANTON BEND
M.E. CHURCH

"Strothers"

3
267 Ac.(c)

4
39 Ac.(c)

Wm. Bryant
6
36 Ac.(c)

5
12 Ac.(c)
6

6.01
6.3 Ac.(c)

7
8 Ac.

(POSSUM BEND - CANTON BEND ROAD)

T 13 N
R 7 N

1" = 400'

33 34

13N
12N.

35

2