

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1081

1. Name of Property

historic name **Governor's Club**
other names/site number **Brunell House**

2. Location

street & number **11866 Magnolia Street** not for publication **N/A**
city or town **Magnolia Springs** vicinity **N/A**
state **Alabama** code **AL** county **Baldwin** code **003**
zip code **36555**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 forth 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.)

 July 28, 2000
Signature of certifying official Date

Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)
State or Federal agency and bureau

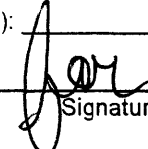
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register Edson H. Beall 8/31/00
 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 Keeper Date of Action

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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: hotel

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

 other: Coastal Cottage

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
 roof fiberglass
 walls WOOD: weatherboard
 other

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

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)

- X- 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.) N/A

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a 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)

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance 1924-c. 1930

Significant Dates N/A

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder N/A

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS) N/A

- 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
X Local government
University
Other

Name of repository: Mobile Historic Development Commission

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	16	425440	3362740	3
2				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.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Devereaux Bemis & Trina Binkley, AHC Reviewer

organization _____ date May 25, 1998

street & number 200 Summerville Ct. #82A telephone 334-208-7281

city or town Mobile state AL zip code 36607

Additional Documentation

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)

Property Owner

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

name Charlie and Janie Houser

street & number 101 River Route telephone 334-965-3174

city or town Magnolia Springs state AL zip code 36555

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Governor's Club
name of property
Baldwin County, Alabama
county and State

7. Narrative Description:

The Governor's Club is located on a large piece of land sited on the Magnolia River in Baldwin County, Alabama. The front entrance to the house is facing south, with the original bedrooms turned east fronting the water. It is a one story building under a gable on hip roof. A large attic space with pedimented vents gives the appearance of a one and a half story house. A deep porch under a shed roof is located across the front and east sides and partially down the west side and the rear. A portion of the west porch has been enclosed as a study. Victorian styled wood, turned posts support the porch with balustrade between the posts except at the stairs. A kitchen wing extended from the northwest corner perhaps originally connected by a breezeway. A large garage has been added to the rear at the side of the kitchen wing. An unusual feature that appears in the historic photographs is gabled glass skylights on the front and back porches at the doors.

A central hall separated the public rooms of a dining room and parlor on the west from the two bedrooms. The parlor (or perhaps third bedroom) is now used as a study and the enclosed porch area serves as an office. The kitchen has been modernized with expanded openings leading into the main portion of the house through the enclosed breezeway, indicating the original plan.

The central hall is accessed from the front and rear porches through double, half glass doors. The front doorway has sidelights. Unusual leaded lights fill the transoms and sidelights. Wood accents remain in the beamed ceiling and the paneled dado molding, but the beaded board is now gone. The entire woodwork has been painted. The brick fireplace surround and mantle use a molded rope motif. Reeded bulls-eye casements are used throughout the house.

On the west side of the house, the current study utilizes new bookcases and cabinetry. However the wood ceiling and walls remain as does the elaborate tile mantelpiece. The mantle uses plain round columns with an egg and dart motif near the top and a wave pattern at the arch of the opening. The dining room has a beamed ceiling like that of the central hall and recent elaborate wood paneling and mantelpiece.

On the east side of the house, the master bedroom retains its beaded board walls and ceilings and its fireplace matches that of the study. A portion of the intervening wall has been removed to create a dressing area in the rear bedroom. The rear of the second bedroom now contains the new bath.

The enclosed office on the west porch maintains the original ceiling slope and utilizes the wood used throughout the house. What may have been an open breezeway connects the dining room to the kitchen. These spaces have been reconfigured and the kitchen modernized. However, the original layout of the house is still evident. A large garage with dormered guest room has been attached to the northwest corner of the house.

Although no formal archaeological survey has been made of this property, the potential for subsurface remains is good. Buried portions may contain information that may be useful in interpreting the entire property.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 2

Governor's Club
name of property
Baldwin County, Alabama
county and State

8. Statement of Significance:

The Governor's Club is significant under Criterion A - Entertainment/Recreation as an intact and rare Baldwin County Example of a small resort hotel. Though south Baldwin County has been a popular resort area since the turn of the century, there are few surviving historic hotels. During the 1920s, a peak decade for the resort and vacation industry in the area, there were only five hotels in all of Baldwin County. Of these five hotels, two survive in the neighboring town of Fairhope in addition to the Sunnyside Hotel (NR 2/20/98) and the Governor's Club in Magnolia Springs. With its spacious wrap-around porch enhanced by turned posts and balusters, floor to ceiling windows, and great interior details, the Governor's Club stands as an important architectural survivor of Baldwin County's early 20th century resort years.

Historical Summary

The property on which the Governor's Club is located was assembled by Frank Brunell from 1901 to 1908. Mr. Brunell was a wealthy businessman from Chicago and acquired at least some of the property while still a resident there. The combined parcels resulted in the establishment of a large tract of land that served his house among other amenities. Brunell expanded his estate and during the time of the Governor's Club, there were cottages, a boathouse, an elaborate greenhouse, a water tower, various ancillary buildings and a working farm.

In October of 1923, Frank H. Brunell and his wife Jennie B. Brunell sold seven lots of the Lyman Addition to Magnolia Springs to Walter S. Richardson. The Brunells held the mortgage on the property for \$25,000. It indicates the house and some, if not all, of the ancillary buildings were present at the time of purchase. In May of 1924, Richardson conveyed the property to the Governor's Club for the express purpose

"...to conduct a recreation resort in Baldwin County, Alabama, which grounds, parks, club houses, cottages and other buildings and equipment thereto; to issue club memberships to its stockholders and such persons as it may select and upon such terms as it may prescribe; to operate said club houses, cottages and other buildings and equipment for the convenience, comfort, benefit and pleasure of its stockholders and its club members and their guests...."(Corporation Record Book 2, 178)

Walter Richardson retained 99% of the shares making him the de facto owner. The incorporation papers also contained a clause forbidding liquor in any manner being associated with the club under penalty of losing its charter. Liquor was an important consideration in the coastal regions since Prohibition had been passed in 1919 (repealed 1933), and there was some movement of illegal alcohol into the area by boats.

Prohibition and the name of the club led to a confusion in the community when considered with a 1925 incident. That year Alabama Governor William Brandon and group of friends were staying down river at another resort, the McQueen Camp. A raid was held and 13 quarts of 33-year-old Scotch along with several empty and partially empty containers were found in a room where the Governor was playing cards with his friends. All disclaimed any knowledge of the illegal substance. Little was made of the incident following a suggestion by the Governor that publicity would only backfire and hurt Baldwin County. Despite the implied threat, the full story was carried in *Liberty Magazine* a couple of years later and revived the scandal. Since that time, the Brunell House-Governor's Club has been associated with the incident. There has also been a suggestion that the Club was owned by the State of Alabama, though the State never appears in the records.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8/9 Page 3

Governor's Club
name of property
Baldwin County, Alabama
county and State

The Governor's Club changed hands several times and once again became a private residence in the 1930s. The property was subdivided and the cottages were sold or destroyed. Today the house is owned by Charles Houser. Numerous historic photographs of the complex exist and indicate the elaborateness of the facility.

Magnolia Springs is located at the headwaters of the Magnolia River in the southwest quadrant of Baldwin County, Alabama. The Magnolia River flows into Weeks Bay, which empties into Mobile Bay. From earliest times, the community has been accessible by small sailing craft and steam packets. Due to its natural springs and the abundant fish and wildlife, the area attracted European settlers as early as the Spanish Colonial Period.

In 1800 the Spanish granted a tract of land including what would become Magnolia Springs to Joseph Collins. Collins operated several turpentine stills in the area and a small settlement surrounded them. In 1855, Collins transferred his lands to Kennedy, Moore and Company which continued the turpentine operation on a larger scale. Much of the manual labor was performed by slaves. During the Civil War, Union troops destroyed the turpentine stills and the local economy collapsed. Prospects improved during the 1890s when Magnolia Springs began to attract the attention of winter-weary northerners. The warm climate, good fishing and peaceful setting became important assets. Brochures extolled the good life, "always cool in the shade, no matter how hot the sun shines. The influence of the saline breezes from the Gulf will bring you a good sharp appetite." (Rasmussen, "Rambling Notes") By 1892 there was a post office; and in 1894 a large parcel of land along and back from the River was subdivided into the Lyman's Addition to Magnolia Springs, creating 52 lots and several streets.

Oak Street became the major thoroughfare, though never more than a country lane. Visitors arrived in Foley by train and took the long buggy ride to the Springs. The true thoroughfare of the community remained the River, and all life centered on the water. The fronts of houses faced the River as people traveled more frequently by boat than by land. It was during this period that Mr. Brunell began acquiring property in the area. He provided amenities for many travelers and hotels with cottages developed (See Sledge, John. "*Sunnyside Hotel, Magnolia Springs*," National Register Nomination. 1998.) His sale of the property did not halt the resorts that continued to thrive until the Depression.

The resorts had developed to serve the many northerners escaping the winters. The Depression ended the era of long term vacationers. The small community of Magnolia Springs continued but more as a cross roads in an idyllic setting. Today the Springs area is not for those who are passing through. With its the picturesque location Magnolia Springs is finding a new life as a bedroom and retirement community.

9. Bibliographical References

Abstract of title search in the possession of the owner, Charles Houser. Prepared 1929 by E.J. Ertzinger and Son, licensed abstractors of Baldwin County Land Titles. Containing information gathered from the official records of Baldwin County, Alabama; Cook County, Illinois; New York County, New York; and the State of Alabama.

Bemis, Devereaux. "*Brunell House, Magnolia Springs*," National Register Nomination 1995.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9/10 Page 4

Governor's Club
name of property
Baldwin County, Alabama
county and State

=====
"Magnolia Springs Cookbook." Edited by Doris Rich. Magnolia Springs Community
Association: Magnolia Springs, Alabama. 1992.

"Magnolia Springs, Old Times and Potluck." Edited by Doris Horder Rich. Magnolia
Springs Community Association: Magnolia Springs, Alabama. 1987.

"Pictorial Souvenir, Governor's Club, Magnolia Springs, Alabama". Collection of photographs dated January
1925. No publication information.

Rasmussen, Colonel E.L. "Rambling Notes: Magnolia Springs." Unpublished
manuscript, 1963.

Sledge, John. "Sunnyside Hotel, Magnolia Springs," National Register Nomination.
1998.

Untitled collection of bound historic photographs. No publication information.

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

Originally the Governor's Club was located on a large piece of land originally conveyed to Frank Brunell, and known as lots numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, and 53 in Lyman's Addition to Magnolia Springs, Baldwin County, Alabama as per the plat of same on record in the office of the Judge of Probate of Baldwin County, Alabama. However due to numerous land transactions concerning the large parcel, the nomination of the Governor's Club contains only the house and that portion of the property on which the house is located, known as 11866 Magnolia Street. The rectangular parcel is located at the northeast corner of Magnolia Street and River Street, running north along Magnolia Street 200 feet and east along River Street 150 feet, also known as Block C, Magnolia Plaza.

Boundary Justification

The nominated boundaries consist of the house and its immediate land. Originally there were a good number of resources located on the property; however, many have been torn down and those that are extant are not under single ownership. As such only the house and its immediate land were nominated.

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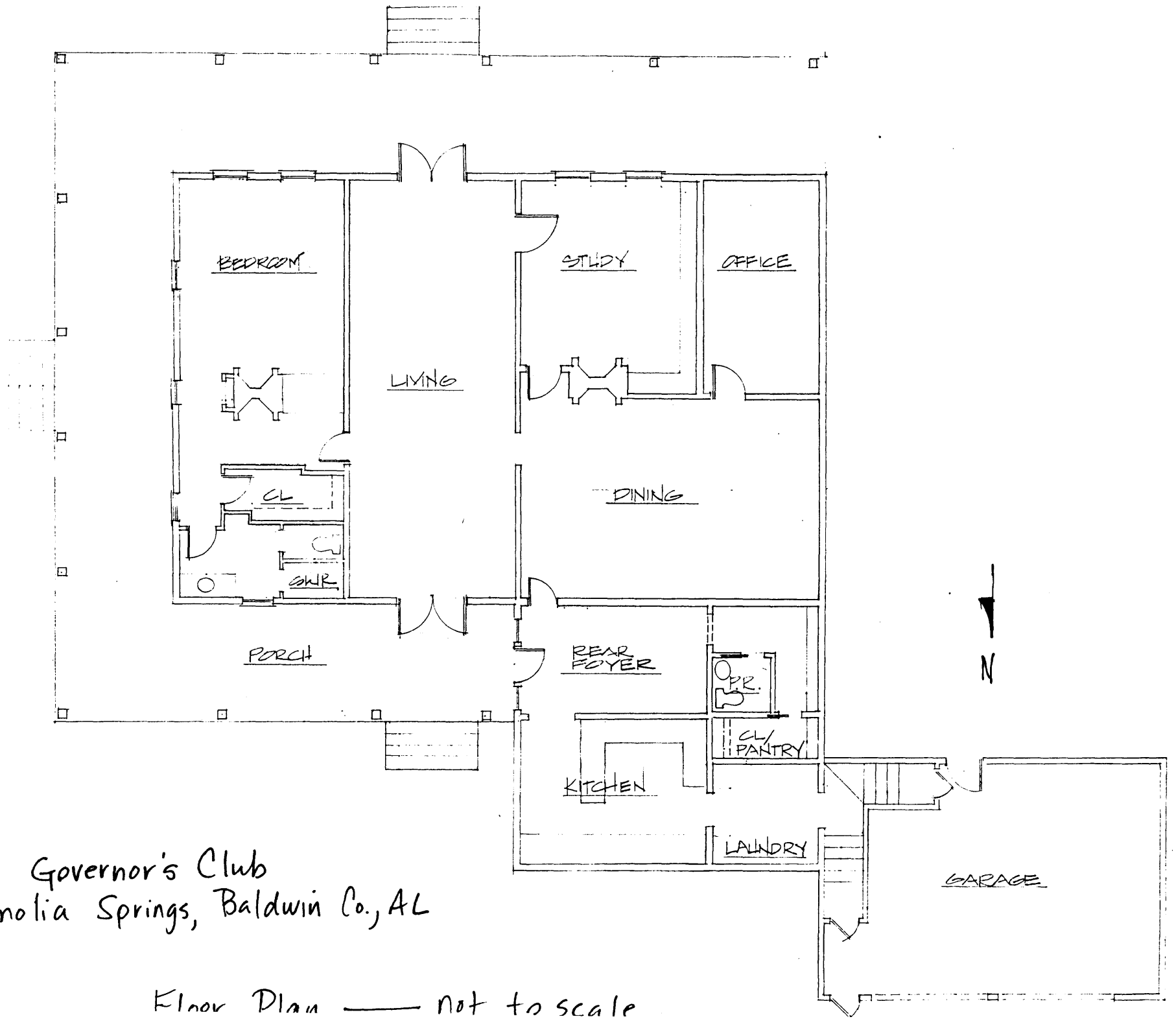
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Section **Photo log** Page 5

Governor's Club
name of property
Baldwin County, Alabama
county and State

Photo Log
Governor's Club
Magnolia Spring, Baldwin County, Alabama
January 1998
Devereaux Bemis, photographer

1. Facade, Camera facing N
2. Detail of front porch, Camera facing NW
3. E elevation with rear, Camera facing W
4. Portion of E elevation with rear, Camera facing W
5. Rear of house, Camera facing SE
6. General view of facade & W side, Camera facing NE
7. New garage on W side of house, Camera facing SE
8. Front door, Camera facing N
9. General view of W side & front with new garage, Camera facing NE
10. Central hall toward front, Camera facing S
11. Central hall toward rear, Camera facing N
12. Detail of central hall wall, Camera facing E
13. Study, Camera facing NW
14. Study fireplace, Camera facing N
15. Dining room, Camera facing SE
16. Master bedroom, Camera facing S
17. Master bedroom with missing wall, Camera facing NW
18. Master bath, Camera facing W
19. Office-enclosed study, Camera facing S
20. From kitchen, through connector to dining room, Camera facing S
21. Kitchen, Camera facing N
22. Kitchen toward new garage, Camera facing W



Governor's Club
Magnolia Springs, Baldwin Co., AL

Floor Plan — Not to scale