

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**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 Liberty Hall (Bachelor's Hall)

AND/OR COMMON
Liberty Hall

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Alexander H. Stephens Memorial State Park

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Crawfordville

___ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
10th

STATE
Georgia

CODE
13

COUNTY
Taliaferro

CODE
265

3 CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | PRESENT USE |
|---|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE | PUBLIC ACQUISITION | ACCESSIBLE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: |

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks & Historic Sites

STREET & NUMBER
270 Washington Street, SW

CITY, TOWN
Atlanta

___ VICINITY OF

STATE
Georgia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Office of Clerk, Superior Court of Taliaferro County

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Crawfordville

STATE
Georgia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE 1936

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN
Washington

STATE
D. C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

One block from the Taliaferro County Courthouse, on a knoll just north of the entrance to Alexander H. Stephens Memorial State Park, stands "Liberty Hall." This structure and its predecessor on the same site were the homes of Alexander Stephens from 1834 until his death in 1883. The residence is today a historic house museum operated as part of the park.

The rear ell, dating from 1858-59, is the oldest portion of the existing house. Stephens erected the present main block later, about 1875. It replaced the main portion of the somewhat smaller first Liberty Hall, where Stephens had resided since his period of law study in the town, which began in 1834.

When Stephens first moved to Liberty Hall, it belonged to his stepmother's sister and her husband, with whom he came to board. After their deaths, in 1842, Alexander and other members of the family remained there. In the settlement of the estate, in 1845, Alexander purchased the property.

Stephens, who never married, apparently attached the name "Bachelor's Hall" to the place soon after he acquired title. Later, for reasons that are somewhat uncertain, he began to refer to it as "Liberty Hall," perhaps because he wished his callers to feel completely at ease there, or because of his passion for political liberty.

Liberty Hall is a two-story white frame structure. No major alterations have occurred since 1875. It has a one-story shed porch across the south, or front, facade, the one-story ell of two rooms at the rear, and a one-room semi-detached kitchen at the northwest corner. The roof of the main block is hipped and pierced by two interior chimneys. The front porch is supported by large square posts one story high.

The entrance door opens into a long and wide central hallway which cuts through the main block of the house. There are two rooms on either side of the hallway. The front one on the east was the master bedroom. The room behind it was Stephens' private sitting room. The front chamber on the west was a parlor. Back of it, in the rear northwest corner, is the dining room.

The upstairs contains four bedrooms, two to each side of a central hallway. Although Stephens was a bachelor, his numerous relatives, guests, and law students usually occupied these rooms. The rear left one, known as the "Tramp's Room," was kept available for wayfarers who happened to stop at Liberty Hall.

Extending at a right angle to a dogtrot, or breezeway, which runs across the back of the house, is the two-room ell. Porches border it on both the sides perpendicular to the main block. The ell is positioned so as to give the total house plan the general appearance of an inverted T.

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 type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input 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 E11, 1858-59;
Main House 1875

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Alexander Stephens' place in American history is assured by his role in key events during the ante bellum, Civil War, and Reconstruction eras. A master parliamentarian and orator, he was one of the stellar figures of the U.S. House of Representatives prior to the Civil War. During the 1850's, as a member of that body, he played vital roles in the passage of the Compromise of 1850 and of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

He was a partisan of the Whig Party, though he was always very independent-minded. Dissatisfied with Presidential nominee Winfield Scott's position on upholding the Compromise, he bolted the party in 1852, and with some other Georgians, formed the short-lived Constitutional Union Party. Soon thereafter he became a devoted follower of Stephen A. Douglas, on whose behalf he waged a vigorous campaign after the fractious Democratic Convention of 1860. Stephens is believed to have been Douglas' personal preference for the Vice Presidential nomination, though it was awarded to another Georgian, Herschel V. Johnson, an ally of Stephens. Stephens' course of action required considerable political courage because Georgian sentiment overwhelmingly favored John C. Breckinridge, the candidate supported by the secessionists.

Stephens believed ardently in the right of secession, but questioned its wisdom, and voted against it in the Georgia convention. Nevertheless, he endorsed the final secession ordinance and was sent by Georgia to the Montgomery (Ala.) Convention, which formed the Confederate States of America. Widely touted as a Presidential possibility, he was chosen Vice President after Jefferson Davis' selection as President.

Ordinarily United States Vice Presidents do not play a major role in political affairs. This would also have been true in the Confederate States of America, which had a very similar constitutional structure, except for Stephens' strong personality, personal prestige, and loyal following, which extended far beyond his native State.

Stephens soon came to be at odds with Jefferson Davis on the conduct of the war. By his forthright espousal of his positions, Stephens became as much a leader of the opposition as the Confederacy would experience. He was violently opposed to conscription by the central government and, even in the ultimate test of a war for survival, castigated any abridgements of civil liberties or States' rights.

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Liberty Hall

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The first room of the ell was Stephens' library; the one behind it served as his office. The library was the scene of Stephens' arrest by Union forces after the collapse of the Confederacy in 1865. The office was the location of his literary labors, notably the writing of A Constitutional View of the War Between the States (1868), in which he strove to vindicate his actions during the war.

The dogtrot terminates in a large one-room kitchen at the rear northwest of the house. This room was probably added by Stephens, at an unknown date. The kitchen alone is covered by vertical board and batten siding; the rest of the house is weatherboarded.

The grounds surrounding the house remain virtually as they have been for over a century, though they are no longer fenced as they were in Stephens' day. Directly in front of the house is the Alexander Stephens Monument. Just to the west and front of the monument are the graves of Stephens and his brother Linton, both enclosed by a low stone wall.

To the west of Liberty Hall and aligned along the same east-west axis is a one-story Confederate museum. This building, erected by the State of Georgia in 1952, rests on the site of the home once owned by Stephens' servants, Eliza and Harry Stephens, who were his slaves until emancipation.

The outbuildings, all of which are near the rear of the main house, include one of the two original slave quarters, also once used by Eliza and Harry Stephens. The others, all of which were reconstructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930's, include the wash house, the wood and smoke houses, a well, a privy, and a gas plant. The barn, carriage house, and chicken house were not rebuilt.

Behind the outbuildings is the garden site, enclosed by a white picket fence. Within it, a mound of rocks at one corner marks the burial place of Stephens' dogs, of which he was particularly fond.

Following Stephens' death, in 1883, and until 1886, his niece and her family and his nephew and his wife resided at Liberty Hall, though in 1884 the house was sold to the newly organized Stephens Monumental Association. That same year, Stephens' body was brought from Atlanta and reburied in its present place on the front lawn. Through the efforts of the monumental association the statue of Stephens was placed on the front part of the lot near the grave in 1893. Linton Stephens was reburied next to Alexander in 1914.

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From 1893 until 1932 the house was let as a residence, with the stipulation that Alexander's bedroom be kept as he had left it. At times, it also provided supplemental classrooms for the Alexander Stephens High School, which then stood on a lot just east of Liberty Hall. By 1900, many of the original furnishings of the house had been removed, though the bedroom did remain generally intact.

In 1932 the Stephens Monumental Association deeded the property to the State of Georgia. Since that time it has remained in State ownership and has been open to the public, with rare exceptions, since 1935. The State and civic groups, notably the United Daughters of the Confederacy, have refurnished the main house, kitchen, and outbuildings with original Stephens items and period pieces. The library room is currently used for the storage of many of Stephens' books, which are not displayed. The office serves the curator.

Except for the installation of an interior sprinkler system in 1962, which slightly mars the appearance of the rooms, and the addition of a new roof in 1966, the main house remains in excellent condition and essentially as Stephens knew it. The one surviving original slave quarters features some Harry and Eliza Stephens items. Its roof shows some signs of deterioration, but park authorities plan to remedy the problem. The reconstructed outbuildings built by the CCC in the 1930's are in good condition.

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Stephens' persistent conflicts with Davis probably weakened the Confederate cause to some extent. Davis, nevertheless, entrusted him with the task of leading the delegation that met Lincoln at Hampton Roads in February 1865. This Hampton Roads Conference, the last significant attempt at arranging a negotiated peace between the Confederacy and the national government, failed.

Stephens, despite his quarrels with Davis, remained Vice President until the end of the war. The victorious Union forces jailed him for 5 months at Fort Warren, Mass., but then permitted him to return to Liberty Hall. Elected to the U. S. Senate in 1866, by the first postwar government of Georgia, he was refused a seat when the Radical Republicans imposed military rule on the State. During this enforced retirement he remained an important symbol of the "Lost Cause," and gained sensational publicity and considerable income from the books he wrote expounding his viewpoint.

In the 1870's, as Republican dominance over the South began to ebb, a number of former Confederate leaders were chosen to the U.S. Congress and permitted to take their seats. Stephens was an important member of this group and served in the House of Representatives from 1873 to 1883. In 1882, he was elected Governor of Georgia, but died in 1883 after serving only a few months in office.

Stephens' career belies his frail physique and the numerous ailments he suffered in his long lifetime. Always sickly, after an accident, in 1869, he was confined to a wheelchair. His persistence and vigorous spirit, however, overcame his infirmities.

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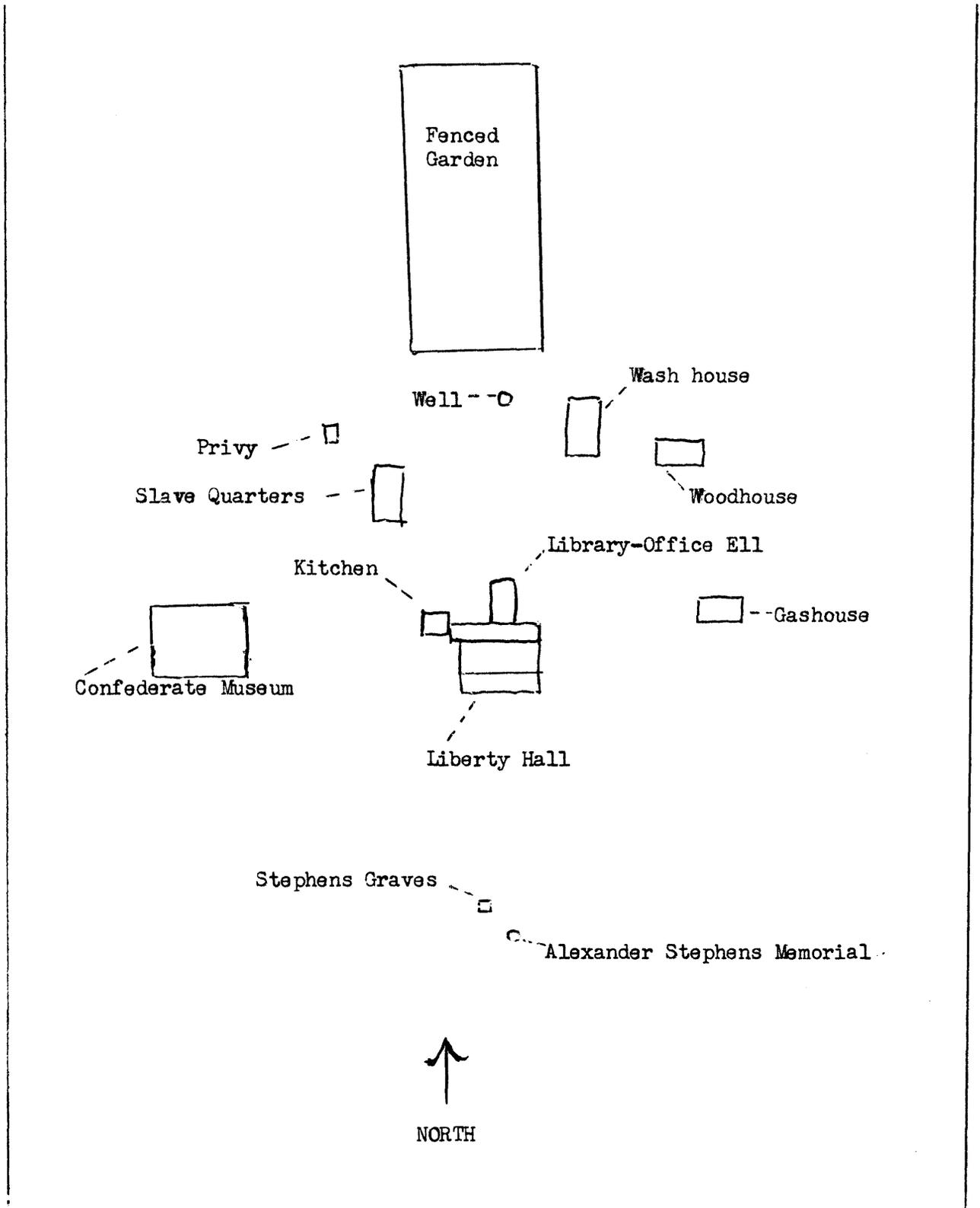
Mitchell, William R., Jr., Director, Georgia Historic Sites Survey. National Register Nomination Form. May 4, 1971.

Norwood, Martha. Liberty Hall: Taliaferro County, Georgia, A History of the Structures Known as Liberty Hall and Their Owners from 1827 to the Present. Atlanta, Ga.: Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 1977.

Phillips, Ulrich B. "Alexander H. Stephens," Dictionary of American Biography, vol. XVII, pp. 569-575. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.

Rabun, James Z. "Alexander H. Stephens and Jefferson Davis," American Historical Review. LVIII, No. 2 (January, 1953), pp. 290-291.

Von Abele, Rudolph. Alexander H. Stephens, A Biography. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946.



Sketch Plan of Liberty Hall