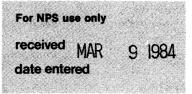
### **United States Department of the Interior** National Park Service

### 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 GF	RIFFIN-SPRAGINS HOU	SE	,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,	
and/or common	REFUGE PLAN	TATION HOUSE		·
2. Loca	ation swa	Greennille -	# 45\$2	
treet & number	Route 2; Box 335			N/A not for publication
ity, town	Greenville V, 🧉	$\underline{X}$ vicinity of		
tate Mississ	sippi cod	e 28 county	Washington	<b>code</b> 151
3. Clas	sification			
Category district L building(s) structure site object	Ownership public brivate both Public Acquisition N/A in process being considered	Status X occupied unoccupied work in progress Accessible X yes: restricted yes: unrestricted 2115 nooccupied back	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial	museum park _X_ private residence religious scientific transportation
I. Own	er of Prope	rty various a c	alogià io dize .	10-65 <b>10</b> 2 <sup>-00</sup>
	. C. A. Spragins		a ita a	
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ity, town	Greenville	Xvicinity of	state	<b>e</b> Mississippi
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ity, town	Greenville		state	e Mississippi
6. Repr	esentation	in Existing	Surveys	
	d Berm Cultural Res	source has this pro	perty been determined	eligible? <u>X</u> yes no
Survey late Febr	uary-March, 1981		<u>X</u> federal s	state county loca
epository for su	rvey records Corps	of Engineers, Vicks	sburg District	
ity, town	Vicksburg		state	e Mississippi

# 7. Description

#### Condition

Condition		Check one
<u> </u>	deteriorated ruins	unaltered
fair	unexposed	

**Check one** original site date <u>unknown</u>

Xmoved

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

Situated in a grove of ancient oaks within a stone's throw of the Mississippi River levee, which dominates the immediate landscape, the Refuge Plantation house is a one-story, frame, enlarged cottage structure build in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The building, though altered somewhat during at least one move from its original site due to the encroaching river, bears a strong stylistic relationship to the Greek Revival period of architecture which was at the apex of its popularity at that time in northern Mississippi.

The main body of the house is basically rectangular in plan with a hipped roof and sits on a four foot high brick pier foundation with intervening lattice panels. A large ell projects off the rear to one side and an L-shaped porch connects it with the main house. The five-bay principal (west) facade features a low hipped roof porch across its length supported on attenuated, chamfered post columns. The balustrade has a full-round handrail and square balusters. Wide wooden steps front the central bay leading to the main entrance which consists of paired, paneled doors with sidelights and transom. Two floor-length windows to each side of the entry have unusually deep frames and exterior louvered shutters. The windows, with very large lights, are in a two-over-six glazing configuration which permitted them, when raised, to provide maximum ventilation benefits. Additionally, both the windows and door assembly here feature robust molding surrounds which project a full three inches measured at the backband. Though the remainder of the exterior is clad in clapboard, the principal facade is in horizontal flushboard. Two pedimented dormers and a pair of interior chimneys with corbeled caps pierce the roofline. The minimal Queen Anne influence detected in the exterior is thought to result from the final relocation of the house late in the century, which would have neccessitated the rebuilding of the porches, chimneys, and possibly minor alterations to the roofline and dormers.

The south elevation of the main block features four short windows while the corresponding north elevation originally had two floor-length windows in the center bays, probably indicative of a side porch, now removed. The rear ell is gable-roofed and a chimney is positioned at about the midpoint of its length. A large end wall working fireplace was originally located in the kitchen at the extreme end of the wing. Several doors and windows opening into the rear porch from the main house and ell are original; a few openings have been blocked when the area was made into an interior space by the present owner. A covered cistern attached to the house by a latticed breezeway extends from the southeast corner.

The interior of the Refuge Plantation house features a typical central hall, eleven feet wide, with two 15 by 17 foot rooms to either side, each having its own door to the central hall. Fireplaces are in a back-to-back arrangement with one chimney between each pair of rooms. Mantel pieces have simple paneled areas and unadorned pilasters. A door, transom and sidelight assembly identical and opposite the main entry opens onto the rear porch. The wall between the right front parlor and central hall has been removed but otherwise the floor plan is unaltered with the exception of small bathrooms constructed in the corners of existing rooms. The rear wing, originally containing the dining room, has now been modified by the insertion of a middle room which connected it with the originally detached kitchen.

## 8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 X 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic X agriculture X architecture art commerce communications	community planning     conservation     economics     education     engineering     exploration/settlement	Iandscape architecture Iaw Iiterature military music philosophy politics/government	e religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	<b>Ca.</b> 1850	Builder/Architect	N/A	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·

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

Refuge Plantation is significant as an example of a mid-nineteenth-century plantation house in Washington County exhibiting a strong alliance to the emerging formal Greek Revival style, and as the nineteenth-century home of Francis Griffin and his son, John Griffin, influential Washington County residents.

When Mississippi joined the Union in 1817, the lands in northwest Mississippi were an unproductive, unsettled area, due largely to swamps and inability to control the course of the rivers. From 1827, with the formation of Washington County, until 1858, and the establishment of the Levee Districts, the agricultural promise of the rich alluvial soil was largely unharnessed. A few ambitious speculators, such as Francis Griffin, established plantations on the few high ridges bordering the Miss-issippi River, and for those planters who could survive the vicissitudes of the river, or construct their own levees, farming in the Mississippi Delta was immensely profitable (Economic Survey of Greenville and Washington County 1944 [Greenville, Miss: Washington County Chamber of Commerce, 1944], no pagination).

As a youngster, Francis Griffin, first master of Refuge Plantation, emigrated from South Carolina to Mississippi with his parents in the first decade of the nineteenth-century. The Griffins settled in territorial lands in present day Warren County, and elder Griffin established Magnolia Plantation. Francis Griffin returned east to school in Kentucky, but during the War of 1812, enlisted in the army. Following his military services, he completed his education. Upon returning to Magnolia Plantation, Francis Griffin married Patsy Downs, who died within the first years of marriage. Later Francis Griffin married Leonora Scarlett, a cousin of his first wife. Their first child, John, was born at Magnolia Plantation in 1826. Soon after, the family sojourned to Florida to alleviate Leonora Griffin's health problems. Griffin's financial investments were poorly managed during their absence, and when the family returned, they faced a major financial setback. With the bulk of his fortune gone. Griffin sold Magnolia Plantation, moved up river with his family and slaves, and on May 23, 1831, purchased government land in Washington County. Because of the ill fortunes he had recently survived, Griffin named his new home Griffin's Refuge (William D. McCain and Charlotte Capers, eds. Memoirs of Henry Tillinghast Ireys, Papers of the Washington County Historical Society 1910-1915 [Jackson, Miss: Mississippi Department of Archives and History and the Mississippi Historical Society, 1954], pp. 158-159; Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi 2 vols [Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1891], 1:822).

Within a few years of establishing Refuge Plantation, as it was called, Griffin constructed a plantation house. Protected by the plantation's levee system and shaded by oak trees, the plantation house was constructed within view of the Mississippi River. Preceding the construction of Belmont and Mount Holly, two of Washington County's high style plantation houses, both constructed in the 1850's, Refuge Plantation was clearly built as the nucleus of a working plantation. In form the house can be described as an enlarged cottage structure employing Greek Revival detailing, massing, and construction methods interpreted in a simple, vernacular mode, perhaps as a result of the rather early date for this style in the region.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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

Griffin-Spragins House, Washington County, Mississippi Continuation sheet Item number

#### 8-SIGNIFICANCE

At the height of his prosperity Francis Griffin owned Refuge and Hollywood Plantations in Mississippi, the Point Chicot, Tecumseh, and Leland establishments in Arkansas, and a sugar plantation at Point Celest, Louisiana. Local historians record that Griffin was a major slaveholder and one of the largest cotton producers in the world. During his residency at Refuge, and following the death of his wife in 1837, Francis Griffin also served in the Mississippi legislature and as a judge of the County Court (McCain, ed., p. 159; <u>Biographical and Historical Memoirs</u>, 1:822).

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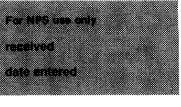
After a childhood on Refuge Plantation, John Griffin began his education at Holly Springs and later attended schools in Tennessee and Kentucky. He studied at the University of Virginia, graduated from the University of Louisville law school in 1857, and was admitted to the Bar. Griffin returned to Mississippi and assisted his father in the operation of Refuge Plantation. During this period, and throughout his lifetime, John Griffin experimented with refining Sea Island Cotton and inventing a cotton picking machine. He is credited by local sources with inventing the original roller skate (McCain, ed., pp. 160-162; Biographical and Historical Memoirs, 1:822).

While Francis Griffin, who died in 1865, believed in secession, his son John did not, and it is unknown how John Griffin spent the war years. Like most southern cotton plantations, Refuge suffered tremendously through the war. Eventually the political and economic uncertainties of reconstruction forced Griffin to relinquish Refuge Plantation and in 1879 he moved with his family to Greenville. John Griffin died in 1903 (McCain, ed., pp. 162-164).

Refuge Plantation passed through several owners during the next decades, and with the shift in agricultural markets and methods, its fields lay fallow for many years. Through all these years, the house appears to have been well maintained and protected. At least twice during the late-nineteenth century the house was moved back from its vantage point overlooking the Mississippi River to secure high ground. With each move, the building remained intact, and the placement of the original kitchen was carefully retained. Other architectural changes during the late-nineteenth century, such as chamfered columns and embellished chimney caps, reflect the owners' desire to keep the plantation house somewhat in the mainstream of the contemporary architectural styles.

In the early 1960's, Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Spragins purchased Refuge Plantation, and using modern equipment and technology, it once again became a profitable agricultural business. The plantation house was restored with care, and except for the removal of one major wall, the changes have been few. With its original kitchen, now attached, and in its excellent condition, Refuge Plantation House is one of the best examples of an mid-nineteenth-century plantation house in Washington County.

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