

United States Department of the Interior JUL 2 1987
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received MAY 29 1987
date entered JUL 22 1987

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

1. Name

historic Fitch House

and/or common Holman House

2. Location

street & number 3404 6th Street NA not for publication

city, town Tuscaloosa NA vicinity of congressional district 7

state Alabama code 01 county Tuscaloosa code 125

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>NA</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Dent Boykin

street & number 3404 6th Street

city, town Tuscaloosa NA vicinity of state Alabama 35404

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Tuscaloosa County Courthouse

street & number 714 Greensboro Avenue

city, town Tuscaloosa state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970-present federal state county local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Fitch House is located several blocks west of the State Capitol site and occupies a large lot at the corner of 6th Street and 34th Avenue in the earliest settled area of Tuscaloosa. The house faces south and is set on the edge of the lot on 6th Street. The Fitch House is a rectangular, two-story, two-room deep frame structure with a low hipped roof and a full-width two-story porch supported by slender columns. The wooden clapboard house rests on a 1 1/2 - 2 foot foundation of brick piers with later brick infilling and is flanked by two interior chimneys. The main facade has five bays with the double-entrance door centrally located and topped by a projecting second-floor balcony.

* * * * *

Built around 1830, the earliest portion was a frame, two-story, one-room deep side hall and parlor house. With the absence of documentation, an examination of the structure by architectural historian Robert O. Mellown strongly indicates that there existed an exterior chimney on the west elevation. One of the north windows, still surrounded by its original frame, is blocked and used as a bookcase while the other has been extended and serves as a door. On the west elevation is a seemingly original exterior side door.

The interior of the house remains intact and is an unusually fine example of Federal-inspired decorative woodwork. Dominating the original hall is a very delicate and graceful staircase, supported by an internal system of cantilevered joists. The mantel on the parlor's west wall is a unique variation of a popular Federal-style pattern which incorporates large and small turned spindles balanced on spheres. Portions of its overmantel are intact. The mantel in the front west second-floor room is typical Federal style with very light, subtle details. The high baseboards and deeply-carved doorframes are also original. The doors of the original section are six panel doors, one with an original lock.

In c. 1860 or as late as c. 1880 the Fitch House underwent major alterations that reflect the popular Greek Revival style and gives it its present identity. The front facade was extended to the east by building a two-story, two-bay addition. It appears as if the west facade was extended three feet from the original exterior wall to enclose the once exterior chimney, an effort to balance the facade. A full-width two-story porch supported by slender, boxed columns was also added. Above the centrally-located door an Eastlake-inspired projecting second-floor balcony was added in c. 1880. The rear facade was also expanded c. 1880 by adding several rooms. In the early twentieth century a one-story bay projecting on the northeast side and the present roof configuration were added.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates c. 1820s, c. 1860s **Builder/Architect** John S. Fitch

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion C: Architecture

The Fitch House is locally significant as an excellent example of Federal period interior woodwork and as one of the few early 19th-century structures remaining in Tuscaloosa. Of particular note is the finely-crafted cantilevered stairway unknown in houses of this modest scale and uncommon during this period. Additionally, its enlargement and application of Greek Revival exterior detailing in the 1850s reflects the evolutionary changes typical of the locality and period.

The house is also significant for its association with John Fitch, a master carpenter who constructed and occupied the house.

* * * * * * *

The builder and original owner of the Fitch house was John S. Fitch, a carpenter born in Norwich, Connecticut on October 15, 1792. Fitch was hired by the architect William Nichols to do the carpentry work in the new state capitol to be built in Tuscaloosa, 1827–1831. Fitch is also attributed for designing and building the 1832 Tuscaloosa County Courthouse. John Fitch built his own house several blocks from the state capitol around 1827. The most outstanding feature of the Fitch House is the elliptical stairway supported by an internal system of cantilevered joists. This construction technique is associated with grand stairways found in public buildings of the period, but not in domestic structures. Fitch has successfully scaled down the size of the stairway while retaining the sophistication of the design. The graceful stairway is very different from the heavy and massive architecture of the period so prevalent in Tuscaloosa. The stairway is one of the finest examples of residential stairways in the state. Another unique feature of the Fitch House is the mantel located in the original front west parlor. The turned-spool design is a variation of the popular type of Federal style found in pattern books of the period. The presence of an overmantel is a unique occurrence in Alabama, with only one other known example of an early overmantel in existence.

The Fitch House is also significant for its evolutionary process which displays the various popular architectural tastes of the locality. Originally build in c. 1830 as a small Federal-style residence, the Fitch House underwent major alterations in c. 1850 that reflect a vernacular native-folk interpretation of the Greek Revival style. The structure was enlarged to create a central-hall plan, a symmetrical main facade, and a full-width, two-story, columned porch. A later alteration of c. 1880 includes the Eastlake millwork on the second-floor balcony.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2/3 an acre

Quadrangle name Tuscaloosa

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	4	4	5	9	1	0	3	6	7	4	0	3	0
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 See lot area highlighted in green on attached scale map.
Lot #84 is located on the southeast corner of the block bounded by 34th Ave. on the east and 6th St. on the south and 35th Ave. on the west and 5th St. on the north.

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

state NA code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Betsy Hayslip/Heritage Commission of Tuscaloosa County
Steven Kay/Historian

organization Alabama Historical Commission date August 19, 1985

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 205 261-3184

city or town Montgomery state Alabama 36130

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

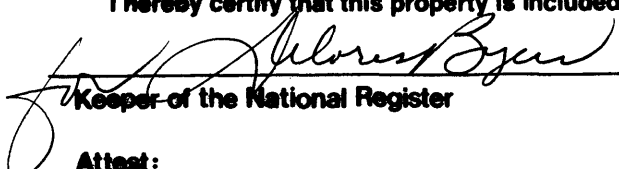
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 5/26/87

For NPS use only

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

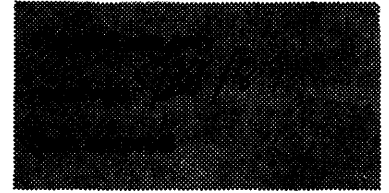

Keeper of the National Register

date 7/22/87

Attest: Chief of Registration date

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

**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet

Item number 8

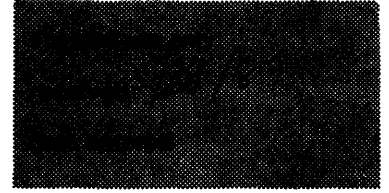
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Historical Summary

Tuscaloosa County was created by an act of the Territorial Legislature in 1819. It is geographically situated between Huntsville and Mobile on the Huntsville Road. The early settlement grew in size and importance when Tuscaloosa was selected as the site for the second state capitol in 1826. The state capitol was designed by architect William Nichols who hired John S. Fitch to do the carpentry work on the state capitol building. John Fitch, of German descent, was born in Norwich, Connecticut on October 15, 1792. While in Tuscaloosa Fitch bought lot #84 for \$260.00 on February 4, 1826. It was on this site that Fitch built his house. John Fitch died on September 20, 1870 and is buried in Tuscaloosa.

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Continuation sheet

Item number 9

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Personal Interview

Robert O. Mellow, Ph.D. Architectural Historian
Associate Professor of Art, University of Alabama

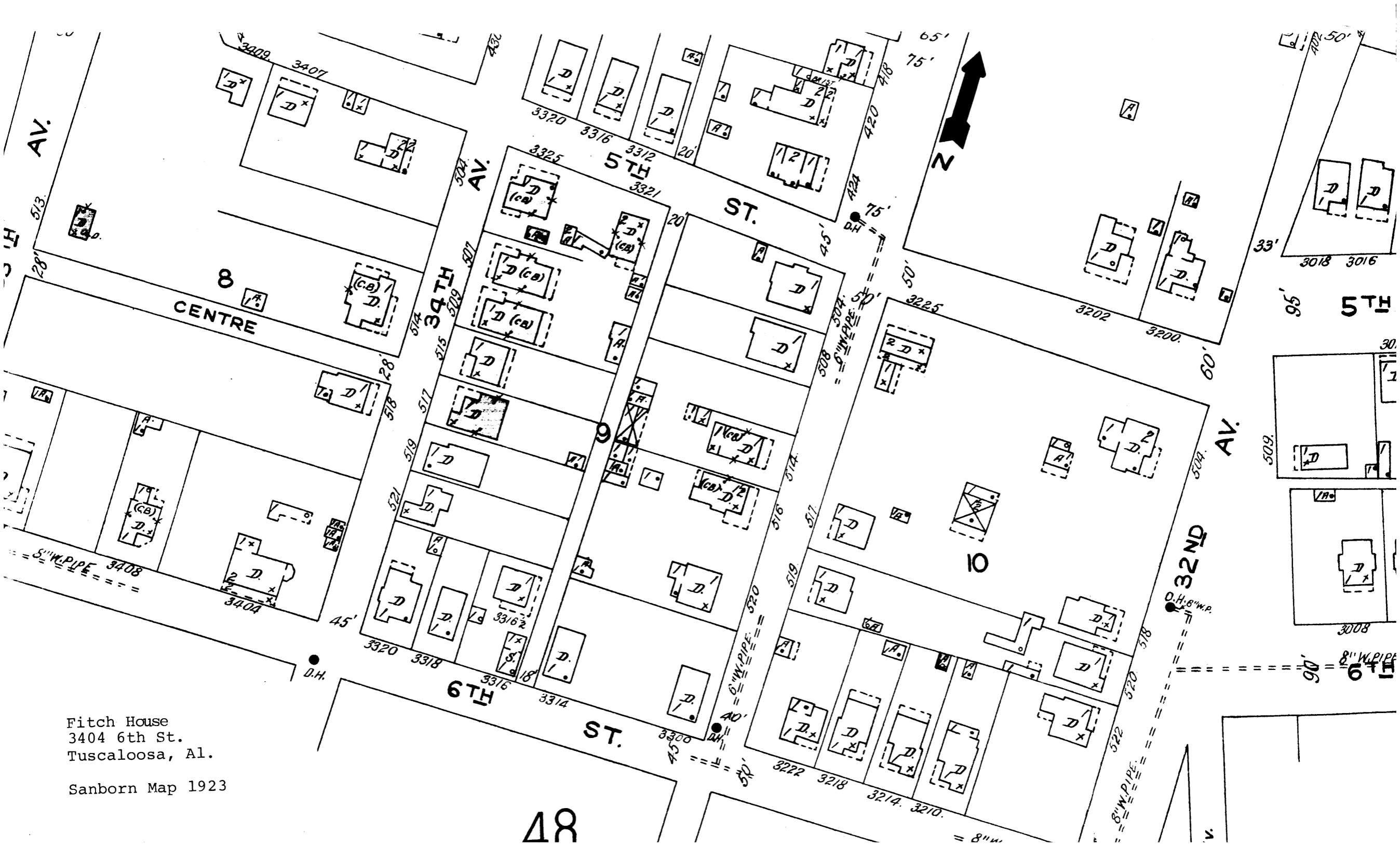
Smyth, Synia Keene, The Ante-Bellum Architecture of Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama 1929.

"Showcase of Detail." Colonial Homes, July - August 1984, pp. 79-81.

Clinton, Matthew William, Tuscaloosa, Alabama Its Early Days, 1816-1865, The Zonta Club Tuscaloosa, Alabama 1958.

Peatross, Ford C., and Mellow, Robert O. William Nichols, Architect. The University of Alabama Art Gallery 1979.

Past Horizons. 1st ed. 1 vol. Alabama: Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society 1978.



Fitch House
 3404 6th St.
 Tuscaloosa, Al.

Sanborn Map 1923

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