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NATIONAL REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Lowther House Complex

other names/site number DesPortes House Complex

2. Location

street & number Lee County Road 318 N/A not for publication

city or town Smiths Station vicinity

state Alabama code AL county Lee code 081 zip code 35830

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

[Signature] 7-29-93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)
State of Federal agency and bureau

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

[Signature] 7/29/93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	Signature of the Keeper <u>[Signature]</u> Entered in the National Register	Date of Action <u>9/16/93</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.		
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.		
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.		
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:)		

Lowther House Complex
Name of Property

Lee County, Alabama
County and State

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
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
8		buildings
		sites
	1	structures
		objects
8	1	Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic
single family dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
walls Weatherboard
roof Asphalt
other _____

Narrative Description

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

see continuation sheet

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

Lowther House Complex
Lee County, Alabama

Narrative Description

The Samuel Lowther house is located in rural Lee county in the small community of Smiths Station. The dwelling, constructed in 1853, is a fine intact example of Greek Revival architecture, a prevalent style in the East Central Alabama region.

The main facade of the Lowther house faces Southeast, and the original approach was from highway 61. The lane, now closed off by a gate and overgrown with brush, led up to a raised clearing in which the house is situated. Today's less grand approach is from the right side, from highway 111, and shares a driveway with a mobile home.

The one story dwelling is raised up off of the ground on brick and stacked fieldstone piers. The piers located across the front of the house are covered in concrete and raked to resemble limestone block, similar to the faux treatment of Sturdivant Hall in Selma. The symmetrical building is U-shaped. Two wing additions in the rear provide this shape. The 6" exterior clapboard siding is original to the house; however, the asphalt shingles on the hipped roof are new. The small chimneys are exposed brick and have half-circle covers. There are three front porches; one large main porch and two small porches on the wings.

Slightly curved brick steps lead up to the main front porch, which runs the length of the large main section. This porch, approximately 5' 8" wide, has six square columns and five bays. A heavy entablature is supported by the square tuscanesque columns.

The front facade is covered with a 1" thick stucco emulating ashlar block, which coordinates with the detailing of the front piers. A 3" chair rail, located approximately 30" from the slightly sloping porch (which has been restored using new 6" x 6" pressure treated pine) runs horizontally across the faux ashlar surface. Four six-over-six windows are located across the front. Large operable wooden shutters protect the windows. The main double door entrance is flanked by 5-pane sidelights and topped by an 8-pane transom. The doors themselves are two-paneled solid wood and at one time (judging from the remaining hardware) had shutters comparable to the windows.

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Section number 7 Page 2

Lowther House Complex
Lee County, Alabama

The floorplan is based on a central hall, with two rooms located on either side. The wing additions contain bathrooms, kitchen, and spare room. The rooms in the left wing addition are connected by a narrow corridor. The rooms in the right wing addition are designed in a progressive order, gaining access by passing from one room to another. The floors in the original structure are 6" wide heart pine planks. All four main rooms are joined to the central hall by single doorways. The doors are solid wood with two long vertical panels, and are common throughout the house. The walls and ceilings are plaster. There are heavy baseboards painted white to match the plaster. The ceilings are 12' in height.

The parlor and dining room are located to the left of the central hall and are separated by a large opening. A pair of solid wooden doors (probably a later addition) can be closed to divide the space. A rather awkward threshold also separates the two rooms. The interior fireplace of the drawing room is centered on the west wall and flanked by windows. The wooden mantle, painted white, is simple in design. Two solid wooden columns rise up from the floor to support the horizontal mantle. A build-in mirror above the mantle is framed by shelves. The dining room fireplace is located on the north wall and is also flanked by windows, which have nine-over-nine pane configurations. A door located on the west wall leads to the left wing. One of a pair (and original to the house), this room has an exterior door opening on to a three columned, three bay porch. The fireplace is centered on the west-facing wall and is flanked by nine-over-nine windows. A walk-in closet is located in the upper left-hand corner of this room. On the east wall there is a door opening on to the rear U-shaped screened porch. Access to the kitchen is obtained by passing through a bathroom into a narrow hall. The large kitchen has two doors opening on to the screened porch area. One of the doors leading from the kitchen to the screened porch is wider than normal and has 16 panes. Another door on the west wall allows for exit, and has a covered stoop and brick steps leading to ground level. The ceilings in the wings of the addition are standard 8' in height.

To the rear of the central hall is another set of double doors opening on to the screened porch. To the right of central hall is the parlor and a bedroom. The parlor fireplace is centered on the east wall and is flanked by windows. A single doorway leads from the parlor to the bedroom. In this bedroom, a fireplace, flanked by nine-over-nine windows, is located on the north wall. A door leading to the second of the pair of wing additions is on the east wall. A fireplace with a simple wooden mantle is located on the east wall of this room. A small bathroom is off this bedroom, and contains one of the only two fireplaces flush with the wall. A small shelved passage leads from the bathroom to a small room in the rear of the house. All of the rooms in this wing open on to the screened porch. The bathrooms, kitchen, and small room are circa 1940 additions to the original structure.

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Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

Lowther House Complex
Lee County, Alabama

The massive entablature is still visible on the rear screened porch, which allows for the delineation of the original house from the addition, along with the change in roof lines and the porch floorboards. A built-in cloak hook with four prongs is located to the left of the rear double doors opening into the central hall. A wide set of brick steps located in front of the rear double doors leads from the sloping wooden rear porch to ground level.

A short distance off of the right wing addition is the well. A low shed protects the well from the elements. There is a wooden bucket and a built-in clothes ringer on top of the well housing.

Four of the original contributing outbuildings are still standing and are located within close proximity to the rear of the house.

- * a one and one-half story smokehouse that once had a central chimney (now gone) to the left of the house. Heavy timbers criss-cross and at one time allowed for adequate storage of meat. This structure has a tin roof. Board and batten siding covers the exterior.
- * directly behind the smokehouse is a 4-hole privy. Also constructed of board and batten siding, this structure has a tin shingle roof.
- * a small one-room dwelling, referred to as the cook's quarters is located to the right of the house. This clapboard-sided structure has a stacked fieldstone chimney and a shed porch. The roofing is tin.
- * A barn is located to the right a small distance from the house. This barn is constructed of split logs. Thought to be the original barn by the caretaker, this structure has a tin shingle roof.
- * Three other contributing sheds are located in close proximity to the original barn.

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.)

- 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.)

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

Circa 1853

Significant Dates

Circa 1853

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Lowther House Complex
Name of Property

Lee County, Alabama
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	6	6	8	2	7	6	0	3	6	0	2	1	1	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

2

Zone			Easting					Northing						

3

Zone			Easting					Northing						

4

Zone			Easting					Northing						

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 Edward Hooker, III/ intern; Melanie Betz/AHC Reviewer

organization Alabama Historical Commission date 11/30/92
P. O. Box 300900

street & number 468 South Perry Street telephone (205) 242-3184

city or town Montgomery state Alabama zip code 36130-0900

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Mrs. Leah DesPortes Hamer

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town Columbus state Georgia zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Lowther House Complex
Lee County, Alabama

CRITERION C: ARCHITECTURE

The Saumel Lowther House is a fine and intact example of a one-story Greek Revival residence implementing a central hall plan. The Greek Revival style, popular in Alabama from the 1830's through the 1860's and later, is common to this region of East Alabama and West Georgia. Constructed around 1853, the Lowther House is in excellent structural condition, and has retained the original features which characterize the Greek Revival style. The house was the seat of the Lowther plantation, which originally covered over 700 acres. Today, it is still owned by descendants of the original builder. Additions to the house made in the early 1940s do not detract from the overall appearance of the original structure.

The property is also significant for its surviving 19th-century outbuildings including a one-and-a-half-story smokehouse, a one-room cook's house, a split barn, a 4-hole privy and three early sheds.

The Greek Revival style

The history of Greek Revival architecture in the South is a "confused story of local influences, of conservatism in taste, and of sudden and late flowering (1)." This style of architecture in the South appears "upon analysis to have been a much more profound and significant movement than would seem evident at first from the false and sentimental glamour (2)" associated with the Southern lifestyle. The Greek revival of the South stood for "a direct solution of practical problems, the frank acceptance of climate and ways of life, the breakdown of older traditions dating back to colonial times, and the attempt to create a new and American architecture (3)." The abundance of architectural handbooks, such as Asher Benjamin's The Architect, or Practical House Carpenter, dated 1830, and "especially those of Nocholson and Lafever were widely used and helped to spread the Greek gospel (4)." These books provided information suggesting designs for floorplans, molding treatments, mantles, doors, windows, and other elements. A historical survey completed by the Lee-Russell County of Governments in the early 1980's reveals that the Greek Revival style was very popular in this area of Alabama. A few examples of

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Section number 8 Page 5 Lowther House Complex
Lee County, Alabama

residences reflecting the Greek Revival style include the Neva-Winston house, circa 1857, the Ensminger home, circa 1846, and the Kidd-Halliday-Cary house, all of which are located in Lee County just minutes from the site of the Samuel Lowther house in Smiths Station.

In the South, dates of Greek Revival houses were constructed from the 1820's to the 1860's (5). However, the popular style continued on into the twentieth century. Adaptations of the Greek style appeared in various forms, but the most prevalent in the southern region was the traditional medieval box. Roof design ranging from gabled to hipped was shallow sloped. Pediments emulating the temples of ancient Greece were common on two story buildings, and often appeared on one-story buildings as well. Heavy entablatures with wide bands of trim were common, also. Ornate, decorative moldings disappeared, and more porches appeared. Smaller one story cottages and houses had front colonnades, and sometimes plain square or octagonal columns replaced fluted columns. Common exterior color treatments for these miniature temples were varying shades of white (6). A formal symmetry was attempted (and achieved) in the main facade of these houses, however; often the interior floorplans did not reflect this exterior symmetry. Elements of the Samuel Lowther house reflect these ideas.

Archaeological Component:

Although no formal archaeological survey has been made of this property, the potential for subsurface remains high. Plantations of this type were sited within a constellation of dependencies, and areas of high activity such as privys, wells, tenant houses, etc. Even though the cook's house, smokehouse, 4 barns, the well, and the privy that served the main house are still standing, there may be the possibility of others that are no longer standing, and buried portions may contain significant information that could be important to interpreting the entire property.

-
1. Hamlin, Talbot. Greek Revival Architecture in America: Being an Account of Important Trends in American Architecture and American Life prior to the War Between the States. New York: Oxford University Press, 1944. p. 192.
 2. Hamlin, p. 212
 3. Hamlin, p. 212
 4. Hamlin, p. 210
 5. Gamble, Robert. The Alabama Catalog. Historic American Buildings Survey. A Guide to the Early Architecture of the State. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1987. page 57.
 6. Howard, Hugh. How Old is this House? New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989. p. 99-100.

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Section number 8 Page 6

Lowther House Complex
Lee County, Alabama

Historical Summary

The earliest record of the Lowther family in Alabama appears in 1842 when William Lowther, a farmer from Jones County, Georgia purchased land in Russell County (1). Originally, the land was believed to have been bought from the Government by land speculators, and then sold to pioneer families (2). A genealogical synopsis of Russell County circa 1850 lists William Lowther, wife Elizabeth, and four children, and values their property at \$10,000 (3). The house, circa 1853, has been kept in the family and transferred to family members, with the property changing hands for as much as \$2,500 (4) and as little as \$5 . Today the house and approximately 354 acres are owned by Mrs. Leah DesPortes Hamer, a descendent of William Lowther (5).

-
1. Deed Book No. 4, 1842-44, page 270, Russell County Courthouse.
 2. Russell County Tract Book, office of the Secretary of State, Montgomery.
 3. A Genealogical Synopsis of Russell County, Alabama, Circa 1850, Chattahoochee Valley Community College, Genealogy Archives Room, Phenix City, Alabama.
 4. Deed Book P, page 349, Lee County Courthouse, Opelika, Alabama.
 5. phone interview with owner of property

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Section number 9 Page 7

Lowther House Complex
Lee County, Alabama

Deed Book No. 4, 1842-44, page 270, Russell County Courthouse.

Deed Book P, page 349, Lee County Courthouse, Opelika, Alabama.

Gamble, Robert. The Alabama Catalog. Historic American Buildings Survey. A Guide to the Early Architecture of the State. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1987.

Hamlin, Talbot. Greek Revival Architecture in America: Being an Account of Important Trends in American Architecture and American Life prior to the States. New York: Oxford University Press, 1944.

Howard, Hugh. How Old is this House? New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1989.

A Genealogical Synopsis of Russell County, Alabama, Circa 1850. Chattahoochee Valley Community College, Genealogy Archives Room, Phenix City, Alabama.

Phone Interview with Leah DesPortes Hamer, October 1992.

Russell County Tract Book, Office of the Secretary of State, Montgomery, AL.

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Section number 10 Page 8

Lowther House Complex
Lee County, Alabama

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: An imaginary line was drawn around the Samuel Lowther House Complex to include the main house and the seven contributing outbuildings. The boundaries, which form a rectangular around the main house, extend approx. 600 feet southeast of the front facade; approx. 420 feet northeast of the rear facade; approx. 105 feet northeast of the side facade; and approx. 135 feet southwest of the side facade. The property is located in Parcel "A", Section 20, Township 18 North, Range 30 East, as recorded in the Lee County Tax Assessor's Office, Auburn, Alabama.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: The boundaries were delineated to include the main house, the seven contributing outbuildings, and surrounding land.

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Section number ~~graph~~^{photo-} Page 9 Lowther House Complex
Lee County, Alabama

NAME: Samuel Lowther House
ADDRESS: Smiths vic., AL (Lee County)
PHOTOGRAPHER: Edward Hooker III
DATE: November 1992
NEGATIVES: Alabama Historical Commission

- Photo #1: Front Facade, Looking Northwest
Photo #2: Front Facade, Looking Northwest
Photo #3: View of Front Porch, Looking West
Photo #4: View of Side Porch, Looking West
Photo #5: Front and Side Facades, Looking North
Photo #6: Rear and Side Facades, Looking South
Photo #7: Rear Facade, Looking Southeast
Photo #8: Front Entranceway, Looking Northwest
Photo #9: View of Front Column
Photo #10: View of Front Column
Photo #11: View of Front Window and Shutter
Photo #12: View of Brick Pier
Photo #13: View of Rear Column
Photo #14: View of Rear Porch Roof
Photo #15: View of Rear Door
Photo #16: View of Rear Doors and Windows
Photo #17: View of Kitchen Door
Photo #18: Interior, View of Front Entrance

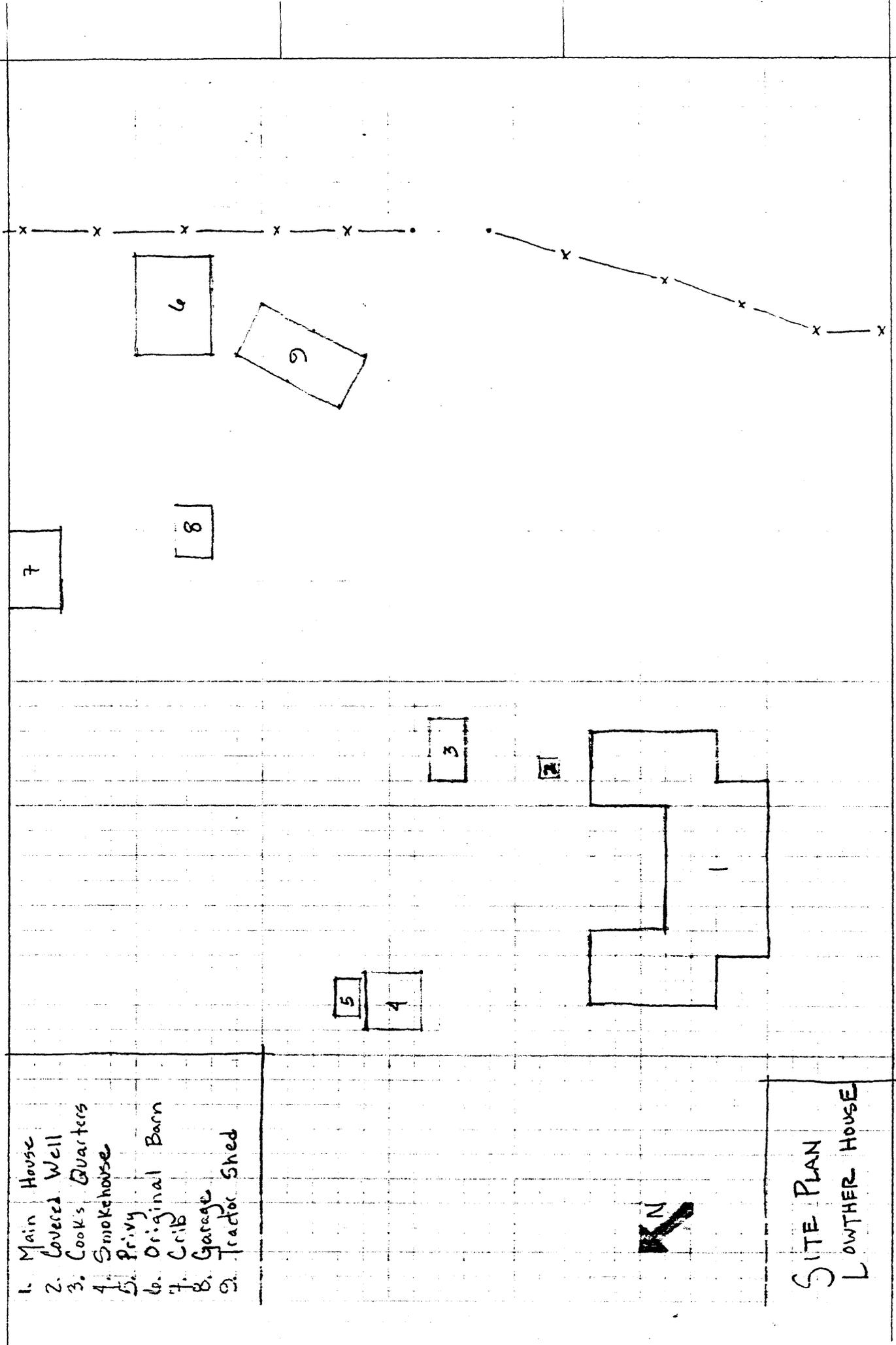
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Section number photo-
graphs Page 10

Lowther House Complex
Lee County, Alabama

- Photo #19: Interior, View of Door
- Photo #20: Interior, View of Window
- Photo #21: Interior, View of Window
- Photo #22: Interior, View of Front Parlor (Northeast) Fireplace
- Photo #23: Interior, View of Front Parlor (Southwest) Fireplace
- Photo #24: Interior, View of Baseboard
- Photo #25: View of Foundation
- Photo #26: View of Stone and Brick Piers
- Photo #27: View of Stone Piers
- Photo #28: View of Stone and Brick Piers
- Photo #29: View of Pump Enclosure
- Photo #30: View of Barn
- Photo #31: View of Outbuildings
- Photo #32: View of Outhouse
- Photo #33: View of Outhouse
- Photo #34: View of Cook's House, Looking Northwest
- Photo #35: View of Smokehouse, Looking Northwest
- Photo #36: View of Well, Looking Northwest



- 1. Main House
- 2. Covered Well
- 3. Cook's Quarters
- 4. Smokehouse
- 5. Privy
- 6. Original Barn
- 7. Crib
- 8. Garage
- 9. Tractor Shed

SITE PLAN
 LOWTHER HOUSE

THE LOWTHER HOUSE
SMITHS STATION
LEE COUNTY, ALABAMA
1992

