

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED MAY 18 1979
DATE ENTERED JUL 10 1979

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 Sammis, John S., House

AND/OR COMMON

Bluff, Arlington, House

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

207 Noble Circle West

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Jacksonville

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Fourth

STATE

Florida

CODE

12

COUNTY

Duval

CODE

031

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Ronald L. Rice

STREET & NUMBER

207 Noble Circle West

CITY, TOWN

Jacksonville

VICINITY OF

Florida 32211

STATE

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Duval County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Jacksonville

Florida

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Duval County Survey

DATE

1975-76

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Florida Division of Archives, History & Records Management

CITY, TOWN

Tallahassee

Florida

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The John S. Sammis House is a 2½ story, double pile, frame house with a classical revival portico on the (southwest) entrance facade. The portico is two stories high and extends the full width of the facade. Four monumental Ionic columns, resting on square bases, support a plain entablature. The three-bay facade has a center entrance with a corresponding door opening onto a small balcony directly above.

The main structure is covered with a gable roof, while the two-story (southeast) addition and the (northwest) one-story addition are hipped. There is also a gable roofed two-story addition on the (northeast) rear.

No representation of the house prior to 1873 is known to exist. A promotional leaflet distributed by the Arlington Bluff Association, a land development corporation, shows two views of the house, which had been converted into a hotel. The present additions, except the one on the rear, did not exist, and all but twenty feet of that was removed in 1953.¹ The original incised porch on the facade was enclosed in the 1890s and the portico added in 1909.²

¹Matthews Weller to Dennis B. Downey, n.d., Sammis, John S. House file, Florida Division of Archives, History and Records Management, Tallahassee, Florida.

²Ibid.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1850

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The house is significant as the pioneer home of John S. Sammis, one of the early American settlers of Duval County, and a figure who contributed to the economic development and the political history of the area. Sammis was born in the state of New York¹ and immigrated to East Florida in the 1820s. He was for a time employed by Zephaniah Kingsley, a prominent planter and merchant, and, about 1830, married one of Kingsley's daughters, Mary. According to local legend, Sammis left Kingsley's employment in 1837 to manage a lumbermill owned by Francis Richard, his brother-in-law. After Richard died in 1838 or 1839, Sammis bought the mill and a more than 5,000 acre tract of land from Richard's estate. This included the property known as Fishcamp Bluff where the house is located.²

The exact date at which the house was erected is conjectural. Locally it is believed to date from before 1838 when it is said to have been occupied by Oran Baxter, another relative by marriage of Sammis.³ It appears to have been occupied by Sammis in 1850 when he gained possession of the lumbermill. Census records for the Jacksonville area show by 1850 Sammis had property with a cash value of \$20,000.00 including the mill and one house.⁴

Sammis had quit the lumber business by 1860 and had moved to Baldwin, Florida, about twenty-five miles west of present-day Jacksonville. He, however, retained most of his Jacksonville property, including the house.⁵ His real and personal property at this time was valued at \$120,000.⁶ By the spring of 1862, Sammis was back in Jacksonville to help establish, with other northern settlers, a Florida government opposed to secession. With the evacuation of federal troops, however, Sammis and other unionists were forced to flee the city for fear of reprisals.⁷ Sammis went to New York where he met Lyman D. Stickney at a meeting of Florida unionists in the summer of 1862. Through Stickney, Sammis was able to obtain appointment as a member of the Direct Tax Commission, created to enact in Florida the punitive Direct Tax Law⁸ which provided for the sale of land owned by Florida rebels for nonpayment of taxes.⁸ The other members of the commission for Florida were Stickney, a native of Vermont, who before the Civil War had tried to promote new agricultural settlements in Florida and Harrison Reed, a Wisconsin newspaper editor, who after the war became the Reconstruction governor of Florida. Sammis took up his post in Fernandina, Florida, in June 1863, but resigned later in the year because of disputes with Stickney.⁹ With the reoccupation of Jacksonville by federal troops in February 1864, Sammis returned to the city where in April he became one of the Florida delegates to the Republican Convention in Baltimore.

(See Continuation Sheet)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than One

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	7	4	4	1	1	4	0	3	3	5	4	4	4	0
ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING								

B

ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING							

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 9, together with Well lot lying northerly of said Lot 9, excepting the easterly 35 feet of said Well lot, all within Block 3 as shown on plat of Clifton Bluff, as recorded in Book 23, Page 72, of current Public Records Of Duval County, Florida.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

W. Carl Shiver, Historic Sites Specialist

ORGANIZATION

Florida Division of Archives, History and Records Management

DATE

October 5, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

Department of State, The Capitol

TELEPHONE

(904) 487-2333

CITY OR TOWN

Tallahassee

STATE

Florida

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

[Handwritten Signature]

TITLE

DATE

5/10/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

7-2-79

ATTEST:

[Handwritten Signature]

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

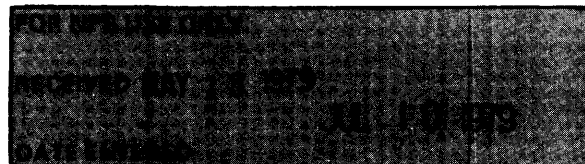
DATE

7/6/79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Sammis, John S., House

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

Sammis does not appear to have been significantly involved in post-war politics in Florida. In 1868 he became one of the founding officers of the Jacksonville and St. Augustine Railroad. Because of chaotic economic conditions in Florida at this time, however, the venture appears to have had little success.¹⁰

By 1870, Sammis had moved to Mandarin, Florida, a town south of Jacksonville.¹¹ His fortune appears to have been much diminished, and in 1873 he sold most of his Jacksonville property to the Florida Winter Home Association.¹² The corporation subdivided the property into residential lots, hoping to sell them to northern investors. The house, described in an advertising circular as "The late residence of Col. J.S. Sammis," was enlarged and fitted up as a boarding house to serve potential buyers and winter tourists.¹³ The development corporation was reorganized shortly after being founded and renamed the Arlington Bluff Association. The development schemes failed, but the name Arlington was retained when the subdivision became a part of Jacksonville.

Whether or not Sammis ever reoccupied the house after 1860 is not known. His last years were spent in Mandarin where he died on February 26, 1884 at the age of seventy-seven.¹⁴ After the collapse of the Arlington Bluff Association, the title to the property fell to the principals of the corporation, Issac Ward and William Matthews, through default. The house remained in the hands of the Matthews heirs until 1977.

¹United States Census, Florida, Population Schedules, Duval County, 7th Census, 1850.

²Duval County, Florida, Deed Records, Book D, p. 345 and Book F, p. 132, located in the Duval County Courthouse, Jacksonville, Florida.

³Account of Matthews Weller, Former owner of the house.

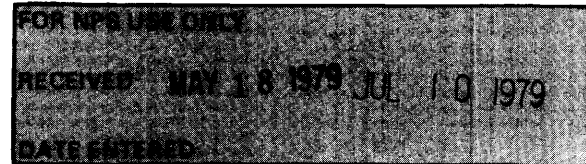
⁴United States Census, Florida, Agricultural and Industrial Schedules, Duval County, 7th Census, 1850.

⁵United States Census, Florida, Population, Agricultural and Industrial Schedules; Duval County, Records of the Clerk of the Circuit Court.

⁶Ibid.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

⁷George Winston Smith, "Carpetbag Imperialism in Florida, 1862-1868," Florida Historical Quarterly v. XXVII, No. 2 (October, 1948), p. 108.

⁸Ibid., p. 112.

⁹George Winston Smith, "Carpetbag Imperialism in Florida, 1862-1868 Part II," Florida Historical Quarterly v. XXVII, No. 3, (January, 1949), p. 274.

¹⁰Daniel Pleasant Gold, History of Duval County (St. Augustine: The Record Company, 1928), p. 60.

¹¹United State Census, Florida, Population, Agricultural, and Industrial Schedules Duval County, 9th Census, 1870.

¹²Duval County, Florida, Deed Records, Book X, p. 252, located in the Duval County Courthouse, Jacksonville, Florida.

¹³The Florida Winter Home Association, promotional circular, 1873.

¹⁴Duval County, Florida, Records of the Probate Court, located in the Duval County Courthouse, Jacksonville, Florida.

Item Number 9 -- continued

Duval County, Florida. Deed Records. Books D, F, X. Located in the Duval County Courthouse, Jacksonville, Florida.

_____. Records of the Probate Court. Located in the Duval County Courthouse, Jacksonville, Florida.

The Florida Winter Home Association. Promotional Circular, 1873.

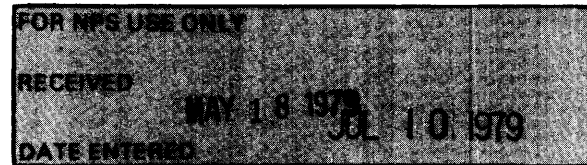
Gold, Daniel Pleasant. History of Duval County. St. Augustine: The Record Company, 1928.

Smith, George Winston. "Carpetbag Imperialism in Florida, 1862-1868." Florida Historical Quarterly, v. XXVII, No. 2 (October, 1948).

_____. "Carpetbag Imperialism in Florida, 1862-1868, Part II," Florida Historical Quarterly, v. XXVII, No. 3 (January, 1949).

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 2

United States Census. Florida. Population, Agricultural and Industrial
Schedules Duval County. Seventh Census. 1850.

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County. Ninth Census. 1928.

Weller, Matthews. Account of Matthews Weller.

_____. To Dennis B. Downey, n.d. Located in the Sammis, John S., House
File, Division of Archives, History and Records Management, Tallahassee,
Florida.