

NHL

STATE:	ALABAMA	
COUNTY:	MARENGO	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER		DATE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON:
Gaineswood NHL

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
805 South Cedar Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Demopolis

STATE: Alabama CODE: 01 COUNTY: Marengo CODE: 091

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work In progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Alabama Historical Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:
305 South Lawrence Street

CITY OR TOWN: Montgomery STATE: Alabama CODE: 01

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Marengo County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Demopolis STATE: Alabama CODE: 01

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1935 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D. C. CODE: 08

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Stately in appearance and classical in massing, Gaineswood is a sprawling Greek Revival mansion with Italianate influences. Its exterior appearance is imposing, with its bold scale and its simple lines of the Doric order. The deep shadows of its columned porticoes add strength and depth to the structure.

The plan of the house is atypical. There is no grand entrance and no pattern of circulation. "One enters," notes architect Clay Lancaster, "from the porte-cochere and drifts into the reception rooms to either side, these being not clearly defined from the entry, or finds the doors to the drawing room or library; the staircase has its back turned to the visitor." After citing this list of what would be termed inadequacies in any other house, Lancaster goes on to explain something of Gaineswood's uniqueness. "Inside any of the principal rooms, one gets a deep sense of satisfaction from its symmetry, elaborate detailing, and self-containedness." Whitfield seems to have concentrated on and finished one remarkable room at a time, with little thought for axes, vistas, or flow of space between them.

The main mass of the house is two stories high and constructed of stone which was scored to resemble rectangular blocks, the blocks then being marbled with veins of grayish blue interlacing the lighter background.

Although the main entrance to the house is through the porte cochere, another entrance opens onto the north veranda which is the front of the house. The main part of the veranda is rectangular with a flat cornice supported by eight square pillars. A pedimented projection of the veranda is supported by four fluted wooden Doric columns.

The 20-by-30-foot drawing room at Gaineswood is somewhat cruciform in plan. Twin gray marble mantels face one another at the far ends of the room, and there are full-length mirrors imported from France in opposite recesses in the long walls, reflecting infinite motifs. Corinthian columns and pilasters modeled after those of the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates, lush friezes, rows of dentils, anthemion antefixes on the intersecting beams, center flowers in the variously shaped coffers of the ceiling, and stained-glass transoms over the doors give a right effect. The master's room beyond has, in one corner, a marble chimneypiece with Ionic colonnettes, and the chamber is bisected by a screen of two matching columns. A vestibule, with private stairs to an upstairs bedroom, connects with the mistress' room. The Lafever columns are placed in antis in the curved bay window that looks out on the concentric semicircular Doric gallery. This room has seven windows and three doors, which prompts the realization that most of the rooms are generously supplied with openings of assorted kinds and sizes.

The twin library and dining rooms at Gaineswood--the one instance in which rooms are arranged en suite--are crowned by ornamented domes having columned cupolas set atop their oculi. The motifs here are anthemion variations in plaster. Similar reliefs in cast iron are applied to the upper part of the door facings. The two main staircases in the house adjoin the vestibule between the library and the dining room, and they ascend to sections of the second floor separated by the roof pierced by the two lanterns. The

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7. Description--Gaineswood--Continued

upper floors are not actually on the same level, the back block of the house, balancing that of the drawing room, being divided into two stories. According to Lancaster, "Monticello presents an analogous situation, and one is tempted to compare these houses, over which Jefferson and Whitfield thought much, worked on their designs, built in part and then redeveloped, and eventually ended up with buildings so attractive in totality that one must forgive any shortcomings of individual parts."

The grounds at Gaineswood were embellished in the Romantic tradition with balustraded terraces, statuary, a circular garden temple, and a small lake (no longer there) encircling a tiny verdant island. The main gateway to the estate was composed of four square pillars capped by finials and bridged by lintels, the centermost, over the carriageway, displaying a handsome cresting, and there were wrought iron gates below.

The kitchen area of the house has been altered, with the original kitchen having been destroyed.

The Alabama Historical Commission plans to restore Gaineswood as nearly as possible to its former elegance.

8. Significance--Gaineswood--Continued

determination to finish Gaineswood--a task which consumed more than a decade and a half of his energy. Other plantation owners were bringing in architects to design their homes, but Whitfield depended entirely on his own abilities. In his extensive library, he studied the various handbooks of architecture which were the main source of inspiration for the Neo-Classic builders. His late grandson, Jesse Whitfield, recorded that Whitfield referred to Vitruvius and to Stuart and Revett for design sources. Clay Lancaster speculates that he must have also used The Beauties of Modern Architecture, "as Lafever's original Corinthian order appears in the mistress' room." Relief decorations were ordered through a catalogue from Charles Frederick Bielefeld of London, inventor and sole manufacturer of an improved type of papier-mache ornament for interior decoration.

The builder of Gaineswood was a practical man. Once knowing the rough plan and the massing of the structure, he set up carpentry and plaster shops and kilns on the premises. He designed and made the lathes and pieces of machinery which were used to fashion the columns and cornices.

Gaineswood was finished just prior to the Civil War. When General Leonidas Polk's division of troops was camped at Demopolis in 1864, Polk stayed at Gaineswood, having been a classmate of Whitfield's at the University of North Carolina.

more

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SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1842-60

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

"The Alabama house best known for its architectural merits, both inside and outside the state, is Gaineswood," according to architect Clay Lancaster.

Gaineswood has been acclaimed by numerous authorities as one of the most impressive homes in America. "We regard Gaineswood as one of the most significant and important houses of its period for the history of American architecture in the entire United States," according to a letter from Denys Peter Myers, acting chief of the Division of Historic Architecture, United States Department of the Interior, to the governor of Alabama on July 9, 1970.

E. Walter Burkhardt, professor of architecture at Auburn University who directed the Historic American Buildings Survey in Alabama, called Gaineswood the "most magnificent of all" mansions in Alabama.

Gaineswood was begun in 1842 but not completed until 1860, and therein lies the reason for much of its charm. The builder, Nathan Bryan Whitfield, served as his own architect, keeping up with the latest in architectural styles. As he concentrated on completing one remarkable room after another, the stylistic preference in America shifted from Greek to Renaissance Revival or the Italianate. The balustrades and picturesque massing of Gaineswood are to be attributed to this later vogue.

Nathan Bryan Whitfield, born in 1799, was a native of North Carolina. He first came to Marengo County, Alabama in 1833 to visit his uncle and decided to buy a plantation there. His first plantation, called Chatham, was 15 miles from Demopolis.

In 1842, he purchased 1500 acres on the outskirts of Demopolis from his friend George S. Gaines, a Choctaw Indian factor and the man for whom Gaineswood is named. Already on the land was a log cabin, which he razed, and a giant oak tree which still stands. The oak, called Pushmataha Oak, is estimated to be nearly 375 years old and was the site of the signing of the treaty with Chief Pushmataha which provided for the removal west of the Choctaw Nation.

Although Whitfield had distinguished himself as a member of both the North Carolina House of Commons and the North Carolina Senate, any political aspirations he might have had in Alabama were sublimated to his zealous

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8. Significance--Gaineswood--Continued

Following the Civil War, the Whitfield fortunes declined. Bryan Watkins Whitfield bought the house from his father in 1868 and it was allowed to deteriorate. A mulberry tree grew through the floor of the dining room, and goats roamed the halls. It was bought by Bryan W. Whitfield's sister, Mrs. Charles Dunstan, in 1896 and restored. The house passed through several hands and was again in a neglected condition before it was bought and restored by Dr. and Mrs. J. D. McLeod in 1946.

Bought by the Conservation Department of the State of Alabama in 1966, Gaineswood was transferred to the Alabama Historical Commission by Legislative Act in 1971.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hammond, Ralph. Ante-Bellum Mansions of Alabama, New York: Bonanza Books, 1951.
 "History of Gaineswood; Detail of the Building of a Famous Plantation House, House and Garden, November, 1939, Vol. 76, pp. 41-43 +
 Lancaster, Clay. "Greek Revival Architecture in Alabama," Alabama Architect, January-February, 1968.
 National League of American Pen Women, Historic Homes of Alabama and their Traditions, Birmingham: Southern University Press, 1969.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	• • •	• • •		32° 30' 28"	87° 50' 04"	
NE	• • •	• • •				
SE	• • •	• • •				
SW	• • •	• • •				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 6.0 square acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Janice P. Hand, Information Specialist

ORGANIZATION: Alabama Historical Commission DATE: September 13, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:
305 South Lawrence Street

CITY OR TOWN: Montgomery STATE: Alabama CODE: 01

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Lisison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name Mils B. Howard Jr.

Title _____

Date May 15, 1973

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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