

Property Name Lanford, William, House

County and State Madison County, Alabama

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Federal

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

roof copper

walls wood

other wood

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition on continuation sheet/s.)

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.)

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance c. 1850 c. 1920

Significant Dates c. 1850 c. 1920

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Leadingham, William C. (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain significance on continuation sheet/s.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 112.03 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
1	16	527350	3841930	3	16	528140	3841000
2	16	528190	3841930	4	16	527520	3840940

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.)

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11. Form Prepared By

=====

name/title Harvie P. Jones, FAIA and Jeannette and Diane Simpson
organization N/A date March 3, 1994
street & number 104 Jefferson St. telephone (205) 539-0764
city or town Huntsville state AL zip code 35801

JSDI/NPS Registration Form

Property Name Lanford, William, House

County and State Madison County, Alabama

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Additional Documentation
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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)

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Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Oscar G. Simpson, M. D. & Jeannette Simpson

street & number 7400 (AKA 7270) Old Madison Pike telephone (205) 830-5592; 837-6250

city or town Huntsville state AL zip code 35806

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, House
~~name of property~~
Madison County, Alabama
county and State

Section 7 Page 1

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION (1)

The two-story, rectangular, three bay, gable-roofed 1850 William Lanford House is clapboarded Greek Revival with all its major elements of wood, including the tetrastyle pedimented portico with its heavy, two-story, boxed, tapered columns and pilasters. The foundation walls, portico base and four exterior chimneys are of brick. The main roof is side gabled. An undated photo of perhaps 1920-1950 shows that the torus moulds of the four portico columns were of moulded brick on a brick floor and plinths, which is probably the original condition since the use of large moulded bricks would have been unlikely in a post-1850 repair. Those bricks were probably stuccoed originally to blend them with the form of the column shaft. The moulded bricks eventually deteriorated and have been replaced recently with carved limestone in the same finished profile (and approximate effect) as the moulded, stuccoed brick torus and plinth. The brick steps and cheekwalls are also being repaired to match the apparent original condition shown in the old photograph and in site evidence.

A cantilevered balcony with a typical 1800-1850 type balustrade (round top-rail, thin rectangular balusters) is cantilevered over the entry, under the portico.

While the house is well-proportioned with properly heavy Greek Revival elements, there are several Federal Period holdovers present which are successfully incorporated; the trabeated entry with its heavy pilasters, architrave, frieze and cornice enframes a delicate sunburst-pattern elliptical fanlight with slender wood muntins. The four windows of the principal facade are three-part derivations (without fanlights) of the Venetian or "Palladian" window used in the late 18th and early 19th century. The end-gables of the main roof are cut flush to the wall (except for a cornice-mould) in the Federal Period manner rather than having typical Greek Revival projecting gable eaves. The balustrade at the portico balcony is very delicate, and there are mortise-traces in the portico pilasters and corner columns indicating that a similar delicate balustrade was once at each side (but not the front) of the portico platform.

The above mortise-traces tend to confirm that the portico floor was originally brick because there is a mortise for a bottom rail. If the portico floor had been wood, the balusters would most frequently have been mortised into the floor, as they are at the extant balcony.

The entry is a pair of doors with the above described fanlight. The double-door balcony entry is trabeated similarly to the entry below with a necessarily shorter entablature due to the proximity of the portico soffit.

At some point probably in the 1920-1950 period per the architectural evidence the solid paneled double front doors were replaced with 12-light glass-paneled wood doors to admit more light into the entry. The original pair of single-panel Greek Revival doors remains as evidence at the rear doorway, although 20th century 15-light glass doors have been added on the exterior face.

The four brick end-chimneys have typical stepped-out corbels at their bases (on the wide side only). The chimneys have sloped-brick shoulders rather than the typical 19th century step-corbel shoulders. The shoulders show, in the mortar joints, evidence that they were rebuilt at

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

Lanford, William, House
name of property
Madison County, Alabama
county and State

some point in this atypical fashion. Lime mortar was not strong enough to hold bricks on a steep slope, so it is unlikely this is an original detail and it is contrary to 19th century practice.

The chimney-stacks stand clear (by about 5 inches) of the clapboard gables, above the shoulders; a typical 19th century fire safety measure when ceramic flue-liners did not exist and a chimney fire could shoot 2000 degree air through an eroded or cracked brick-flue joint into the wooden attic and roof shingles. While the 3 bay south front facade is regular and well-proportioned, the gable end walls take a strictly functional approach, as was usual in the 19th (and other) centuries. The gable eaves are clipped and there is only one upper window at each gable to light the two second floor rooms at each gable. Wall space was tight by the chimneys at the smaller rear bedrooms, so end-wall windows were omitted there. An irregular window pattern on the side walls is the result. Each gable shows a trace of an attic window, now covered with clapboards.

The roof pitch is a fairly low +/- 20 degrees, usual and proper for the Greek Revival style, and a significant lowering from the previous Federal Period roof pitch of about 30 degrees or steeper.

To the rear northwest corner of the house is appended a 2 room and bath clapboard addition that appears to date from the mid-20th century. The historic photograph shows a cast iron balustrade around the flat roof of the south bay of this addition (photo #2) presumably indicating that this was a viewing deck. The balustrade is now gone. The rear northeast corner of the house has a small laundry and one car shelter of a similar time period. The rear of the house has a large glazed verandah that may have once been open but is probably not original. A large 20th century raised brick terrace parallels this room. The terrace overlooks a modern garden and lawn area to the north, containing a modern gazebo and two 20th century frame utility buildings. These resources count as 1 noncontributing structure and 2 noncontributing buildings. The three barns to the northwest, which are contributing resources, are described below.

While the basic plan of the house is a typical center hall layout with two rooms per side per floor, the plan has an unusual twist. The hall is very wide, about 15 feet by 35 feet deep, and can be completely opened to the adjoining parlor and dining room by means of multi-panel, tall (original) folding doors (folding walls in effect) on each side of the hall, creating a large T-shaped space of about 18 x 52 feet plus the "tee" space of about 15 x 17 feet containing the open stair. This is an open space of about 1,200 square feet, which must have been meant for, and highly suited for, expansive entertainment of large numbers of guests. Yet the large space could be divided into normal size rooms at will (see enclosed floor plan).

In addition to the formal rooms, the first floor northeast room must originally have been intended for service since it contains an original concealed narrow ell plan service stair to the second floor bedrooms. This room also adjoins the southeast dining room. The separate kitchen building was likely not too far from the northeast corner of the main house but no evidence or tradition of it is known.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 3

Lanford, William, House
name of property
Madison County, Alabama
county and State

=====

The first floor northwest room is now a study and perhaps originally served a similar purpose since there were 4 bedrooms on the second floor.

A partial basement is under the rear half of the house. It retains its split-lath and hair plaster ceiling, plastered brick walls, a board-and-batten door and a 19th century wood barred vent, all typical of mid-19th century construction.

The south (front) facade is strikingly similar to the 1851 Greek Revival Robert Donnell house about 15 miles away in Athens, Alabama (2). This resource is already listed on the National Register. Moreover, the very unusual mantels in the Lanford House are virtually identical to those in the Donnell House and to those in a mid-19th century northwest addition to the nearby National Register Hurn-Thach House (about 12 miles west) in Mooresville, Alabama (3). These mantels have very large, flamboyant, non-Greek Revival cyma-recta profile pilasters and architraves that are surely the invention of a local craftsman. There may be a relationship or at least influence among these three nearby and contemporary structures regarding the craftsmen and/or the owners. These unusual mantels have not been observed by the writer in other houses or in handbooks.

The doors throughout the 1850 rooms are the typical Greek Revival type with 2 vertical panels, a battered wide jamb face trim with rectangular backband about 1/2 x 2 inches, "Greek ear" architrave projections and flat architrave tops as opposed to the slightly gabled ones seen in more elaborate Greek Revival door frames (4). A pair of single panel Greek Revival doors at the second floor, front center hall opens onto a small balcony that is under the portico.

The floors are typical for the 1850s and earlier with dense grained, mostly edge-grain 5.5 to 7 inch random width heart pine, 5/4 inch thick tongue and grooved, face-nailed with 2 cut nails (ell-head "sprigs") at each joist. The joists are about 2 feet on centers per usual 19th century practice.

The walls and ceilings are plaster. There are no wall cornices in any rooms, which is usual. Examples of pre-1860 wall cornices are almost non-existent. Only 2 rooms (in 2 different houses) are known in this area. Apparently wallpaper friezes were used in lieu of wall cornices (where anything was used) based on some hard evidence (2 houses) and literature and illustrations of the period.

Both the main and service staircases have the simple balustrade design of the 1800-1860 period consisting of a round rail of about 2.25" in diameter and slender rectangular balusters, two per tread, of about 5/8 x 1.25 inches with the wide sides parallel to the treads. The newels are similar to Tuscan colonettes but with an 1850s bulbous bottom to the shaft. The tread ends are devoid of any scrolls or other such elaborations that was fashionable in the Federal Period and the earlier part of the Greek Revival period. This is undoubtedly a stylistic desire for Greek simplicity and mass rather than an economic choice as this was an ambitious house.

The south front door has a Federal Period design feature, an elliptical sunburst leaded glass fanlight which is encased in a Greek Revival architrave while the rear (north) entry has a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 4

Lanford, William, House
name of property
Madison County, Alabama
county and State

typical rectangular toplight that now contains a Victorian-looking faceted and leaded glass
infill over the Greek Revival transom.

The secondary room mantels are typical of the Greek Revival period. They are simple rectangular pilasters and architraves with only a few heavy moulds at the pilaster plinth tops and bed moulds at the pilaster capitals and mantel shelves. Some mantels have the "Greek Ear" and battered pilaster motif like the door frames, capped by a simple mantel shelf.

Mid-twentieth century baths and closets have been inserted in several rooms (see the enclosed floor plans).

About 500 feet northwest of the house is a neat row of 3 barns of as many sizes and types which appear by their framing to be early 20th century. Each barn is for a different purpose. The small center barn appears to be a granary, with several planked compartments with raised wood floors, off an equipment side-aisle for wagons to bring in the feed stock to be unloaded into the appropriate compartment. The west barn is the cattle barn and has a side shed plan containing hay racks for feeding. This barn has an ingenious arrangement wherein the hay can be pitched down from the loft into the feeding racks, which are accessible to cattle from both inside the barn and under the side shed. The east barn is the horse or mule barn, with stalls on each side of a center aisle. Each barn has a loft. All three barns have a very slight gambrel roof of modern galvanized iron and vertical board siding, some of which is up to 19" wide. This, plus the sizes of the framing members (about 1/8" less than "nominal" and rotary-sawn) supports the probable c. 1900-1930 dates.

North of and behind the house are 3 small, noncontributing resources--a gazebo and 2 clapboard utility buildings that appear to be less than 50 years old.

The William Lanford House is located between the fast growing cities of Huntsville and Madison. About 150 feet east of the house, at its east property line, is an enormous earth excavation project in progress, in preparation for construction of an addition to the very large Huntsville Research Park which already contains dozens of large structures of up to 6 floors and several million square feet total. At least one city map indicates the proposed taking of the 1850 Lanford House and property for the research park. The two lane country road in front of the house is scheduled to become four lane. The house is thus endangered by this huge development only 150 feet away (5).

Furthermore, the city of Huntsville has also proposed a series of "Greenway Plans." One of these proposed greenways, the Indian Creek Greenway, will border the creek which lies on the western border of the William Lanford property. This greenway will take away from the natural state of the William Lanford House because "asphalt and concrete are the two preferred surface materials for multi-use trails." The city plans to cut trees, disturb a wetland along the William Lanford property and provide asphalt and concrete trails along the border of the property (6).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7

Page 5

Lanford, William, House
name of property
Madison County, Alabama
county and State

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ENDNOTES

- (1) Prepared by Harvie P. Jones, FAIA, Huntsville, AL.
- (2) Robert Donnell House: Annotated photograph, Vol. #8, Harvie P. Jones; FAIA Historical Photograph Collection, Huntsville, AL.
- (3) Hurn-Thach House, Annotated photograph, Vol. #40, Harvie P. Jones; FAIA Historical Photograph Collection, Huntsville, AL.
- (4) The Beauties of Modern Architecture, Minard Lafever, 1838.
- (5) Harvie P. Jones and Diane Simpson.
- (6) Diane Simpson.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 6

Lanford, William, House
name of property
Madison County, Alabama
county and State

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The 1850 Lanford House is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for its architecture. The property is a good and intact example of the transitional Federal/Greek Revival style of architecture. It retains virtually all of its original features. The few 20th century insertions (baths, kitchen) and additions are done in a manner as to not detract from the original design. The front facade with its central portico is well-proportioned and presents a strong and dignified image.

The arrangement of the primary interior spaces is unique in this area in that it incorporates 2 original folding walls whereby the 15 foot wide central hall can be completely opened to the adjoining parlor and dining room to form a contiguous space of about 1,200 square feet for large entertainments, as well as for better summer ventilation.

The Lanford House is further significant in Madison County in that it is the only known surviving clapboarded, large Greek Revival house in the county. This single survivor of its type is endangered by the growth of an adjoining industrial park. The Lanford property retains 3 contributing early 20th century barns, each designed for a different and specific use. Since barns are generally not needed in today's agricultural practices, they are rapidly disappearing due to lack of need and maintenance. The 3 Lanford barns are well-maintained examples of a building type that, at the present rate of attrition in Madison County, will be largely gone in another 20 years.

The William Lanford House with its 3 early 20th century barns maintains a high degree of architectural integrity. The house illustrates how Alabama's residential architecture evolved from the Federal style to the Greek Revival style in the early nineteenth century. The barns are good, intact representations of early 20th century agricultural outbuildings.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

William Lanford was born in 1797 in Spawtsylvania County, Virginia and spent his boyhood in this county. He was the son of Robert Lanford, one of the earliest land speculators in Huntsville. In 1843, William purchased 1,975 acres from James W. Camp. He built the present mansion on this property.

William Lanford contracted with William C. Leadingham in 1850 to build the house. The house was to be "52 by 36 feet, with as many doors and windows as Mr. Lanford may choose to have, also stairways, the house two stories high with a basement story of brick." The contract further stipulated that the house was to have two porticoes and the windows were to have blinds. The house, when completed in the summer of 1851, would have a central hall plan and eight rooms (1).

Although no formal archaeological survey has been made of this property, the potential for subsurface remains are high. Plantations of this type were sited within a constellation of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 7

Lanford, William, House
name of property
Madison County, Alabama
county and State

=====
dependencies and areas of high activity such as kitchens, privies, wells, tenant houses and other outbuildings. Buried portions may contain significant information that could be important to interpreting the entire property.

ENDNOTES

(1) Pat Jones, paper written in 1933.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 8

Lanford, William, House
name of property
Madison County, Alabama
county and State

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

- (1) Prepared by Harvie P. Jones, FAIA, Huntsville, AL.
- (2) Robert Donnell House: Annotated photograph, Vol. #8, Harvie P. Jones; FAIA Historical Photograph Collection, Huntsville, AL.
- (3) Hurn-Thach House, Annotated photograph, Vol. #40, Harvie P. Jones; FAIA Historical Photograph Collection, Huntsville, AL.
- (4) The Beauties of Modern Architecture, Minard Lafever, 1838.
- (5) Harvie P. Jones and Diane Simpson.
- (6) Diane Simpson.
- (7) Pat Jones

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 9

Lanford, William, House
name of property
Madison County, Alabama
county and State

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All that part of the Southwest Quarter of Section 1 and all that part of the Southeast Quarter of Section 2, Township 4 South, Range 2 West, Madison County, AL, beginning at a point on the North margin of Madison Pike, said point is more particularly described as beginning North 1 degree 18 minutes East 42.0 feet and South 88 degrees 27 minutes East 846.44 feet from the Southwest corner of said Section 1, Township 4 South, Range 2 West, thence from the place of beginning North 88 degrees 27 minutes West 1,505.50 feet to a point in the center line of Indian Creek; thence along the center line of said Indian Creek as follows: North 0 degrees 36 minutes East 158.90 feet, North 10 degrees 48 minutes West 201.50 feet, North 18 degrees 45 minutes West 197.80 feet, North 76 degrees 21 minutes West 100.0 feet, South 80 degrees 19 minutes West 88.80 feet, North 60 degrees 54 minutes West 97.73 feet, North 20 degrees 07 minutes West 146.50 feet, North 3 degrees 13 minutes West 147.92 feet, North 32 degrees 21 minutes East 380.0 feet, North 3 degrees 10 minutes East 201.40 feet, North 55 degrees 05 minutes West 89.0 feet, North 2 degrees 30 minutes West 400.0 feet, North 3 degrees 07 minutes East 124.0 feet, North 23 degrees 04 minutes West 185.10 feet, North 19 degrees 47 minutes East 222.35 feet, North 33 degrees 10 minutes East 100.0 feet, North 7 degrees 31 minutes West 110.80 feet, and North 35 degrees 37 minutes West 205.91 feet to a point on the half Section line of said Section 2, thence South 89 degrees 20 minutes East along the half Section line of said Section 2, 1,101.10 feet to the center of the West boundary of said Section 1 and the East boundary of said Section 2, then South 89 degrees 03 minutes East along the half Section line of said Section 1, 845.40 feet to a point, thence South 1 degree 18 minutes East 34.84 feet to the place of beginning and containing 112.03 acres more or less.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

These are the boundaries currently associated with the property.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Photos Page 10

Lanford, William, House
name of property
Madison County, Alabama
county and State

The following information is the same for all the photographs:

1. William Lanford House
2. Huntsville, Madison County, Alabama

The following information applies to Photographs 1 and 2 (historic photographs):

3. Unknown
4. Unknown
5. Unknown

The following information applies to Photographs 3 through 20:

3. Harvie P. Jones, FAIA
4. June, 1993
5. Harvie P. Jones Photographic Collection

Photo 1: Aerial photo of William Lanford House property

Photo 2: C. 1950 view of front facade
Camera facing north

Photo 3: Front facade
Camera facing north

Photo 4: Front portico with repairs in progress
Camera facing northeast

Photo 5: Rear elevation
Camera facing south

Photo 6: East (side) elevation and rear elevation
Camera facing southwest

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section PHOTOS Page 11

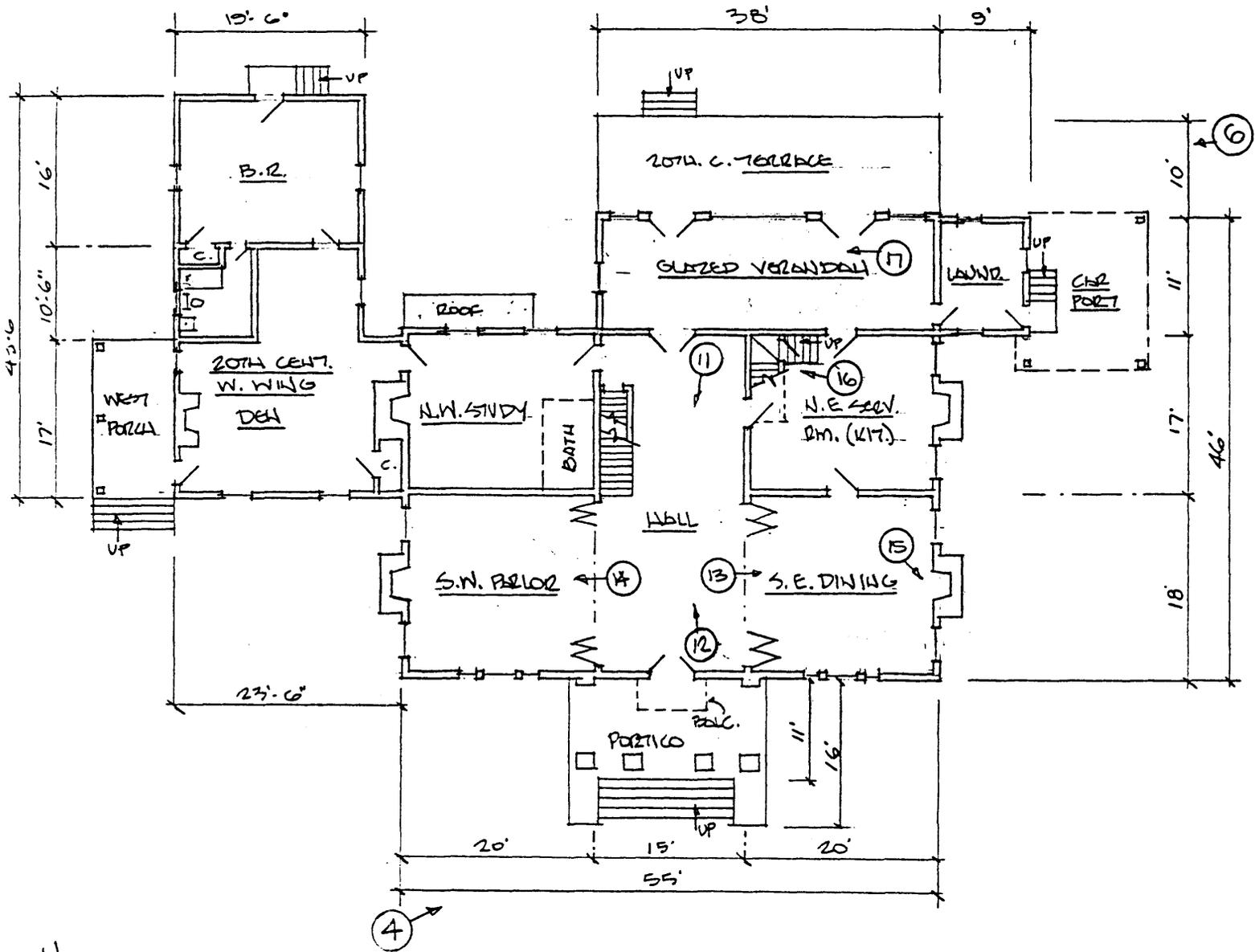
Lanford, William, House
name of property
Madison County, Alabama
county and State

- =====
- Photo 7: Outbuildings in rear yard
Camera facing north
- Photo 8: 3 barns
Camera facing northwest
- Photo 9: Raised floor storage cribs at the central side-hall barn
Camera facing north
- Photo 10: Hay manger at the west barn
Camera facing north
- Photo 11: Front door, first floor hall
Camera facing south
- Photo 12: Rear door, first floor hall
Camera facing north
- Photo 13: Dining room
Camera facing east
- Photo 14: Parlor
Camera facing west
- Photo 15: Dining room mantel
Camera facing east
- Photo 16: Rear original service stair
Camera facing northeast
- Photo 17: Enclosed rear verandah
Camera facing west
- Photo 18: Door, second floor stair hall
Camera facing west
- Photo 19: Southwest chamber, second floor
Camera facing west
- Photo 20: Rimlock, northwest chamber, second floor
Camera facing south

8 9 10

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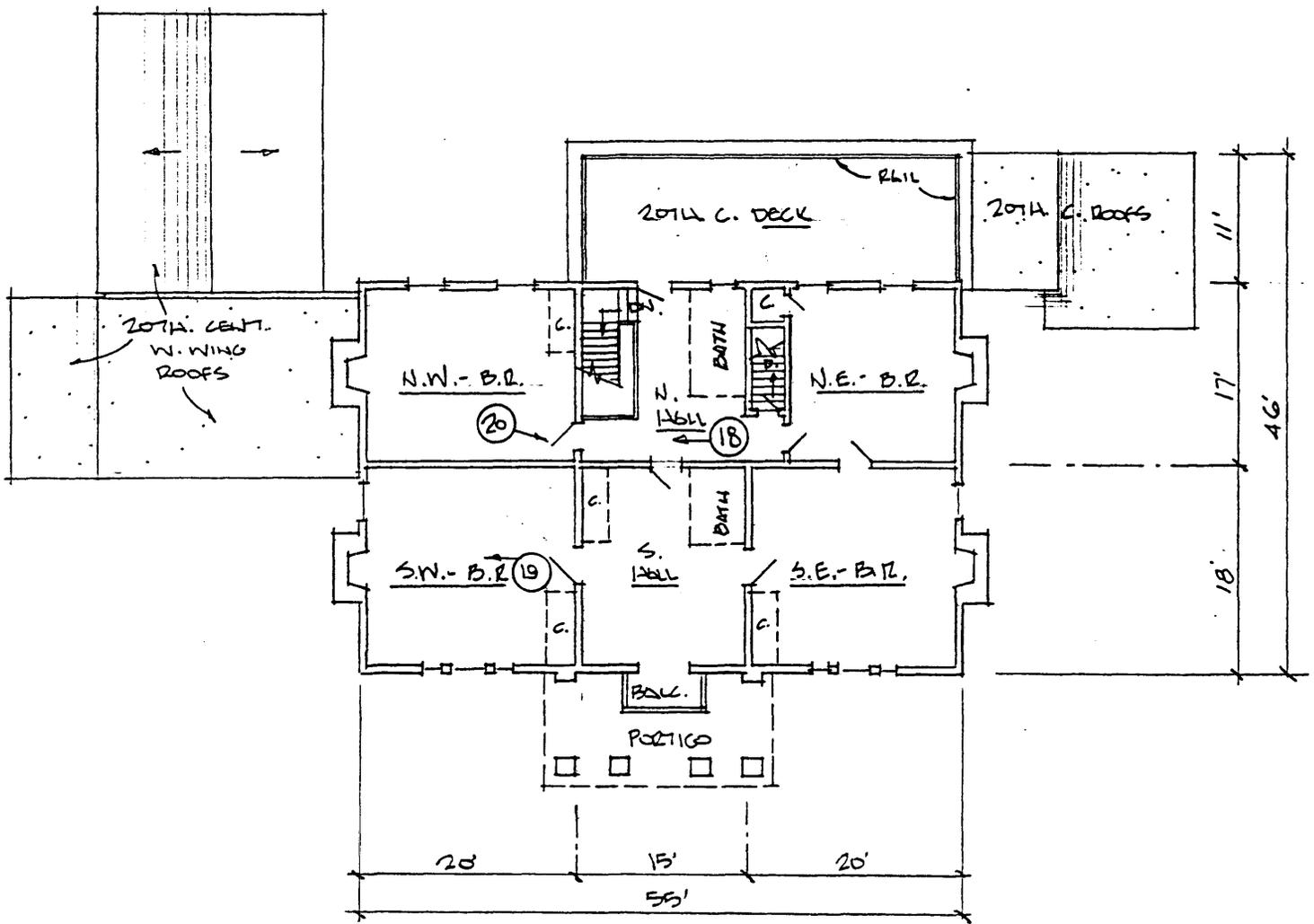


CIRCA 1850 WILLIAM LANFORD HOUSE
 MAIN FLOOR PLAN 1" = 16' APPROX.
 7400 OLD MADISON PIKE
 HUNTSVILLE, MADISON COUNTY, ALABAMA
 5 JULY 1993

HERVIE P. JONES, F.A.I.A., DEL.

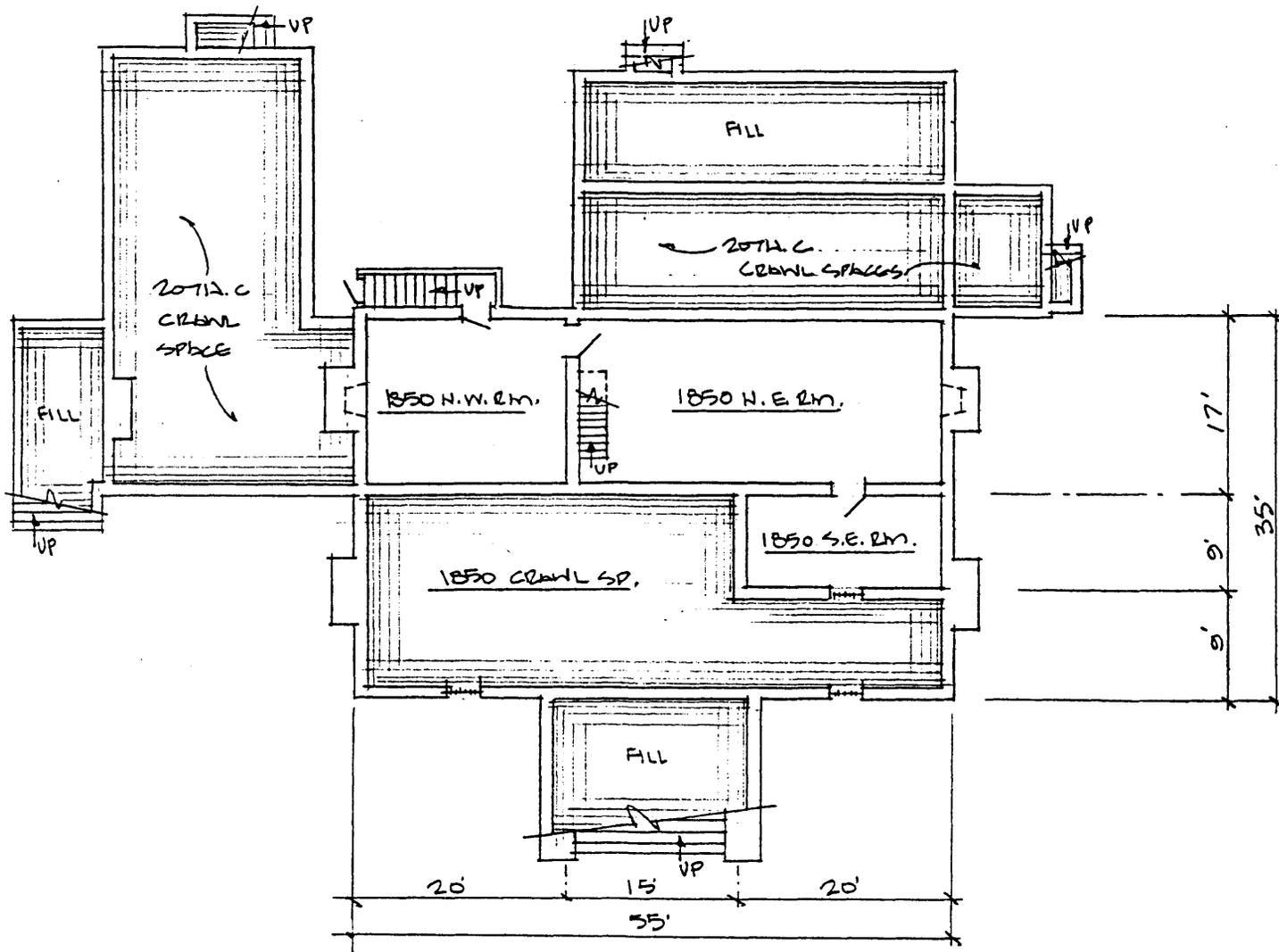
○ → = Photograph Number
 + Direction of Camera

3
2



N.

CIRCA 1850 WILLIAM LINFOLD HOUSE
 SECOND FLOOR PLAN 1" = 16' APPROX
 7400 OLD MADISON PIKE
 HUNTSVILLE, MADISON COUNTY, ALABAMA
 5 JULY 1993
 HARVE P. JONES, F.A.I.A., DEL...



N.
 - CIRCA 1850 WILLIAM LANFORD HOUSE
 RESEMENT PLAN 1" = 16' APPROX.
 7400 OLD MADISON PIKE
 HUNTSVILLE, MADISON COUNTY, ALABAMA
 5 JULY 1993
 HERVIE P. JONES, F.A.I.A., DEL.

William Lanford Home and Land
Huntsville, Madison Co., AL

— Not Drawn to Scale —

