

# INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR  THEMATIC NOMINATION

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC  
William Alston Rives House  
AND/OR COMMON

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER At end of SR 2183, .4 mile west of junction with SR 2187

CITY, TOWN Goldston  VICINITY OF Fourth  
—NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE North Carolina CODE 037 COUNTY Chatham CODE 037

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES, UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER vacant

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME  
W.B. Patterson

STREET & NUMBER  
309 Ridgeway Drive

CITY, TOWN Greensboro VICINITY OF \_\_\_\_\_ STATE N.C.

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC Chatham County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Pittsboro STATE N.C.

## 6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Ray Manieri

July 1, 1983

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Urban Research Associates

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1301 Cornwallis Drive

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Greensboro, NC

## 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 checked="" 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

Perhaps one of the oldest houses in the southern Chatham County township of Gulf, the William Alston Rives House possesses a number of unusual features which combine to make this frame, two-story house one of the most significant early nineteenth century Georgian/Federal style structures in Chatham County.

Resting on an all stone foundation with unusual wooden ventilators, the house with its three-bay facade is defined by a shed roof porch with turned posts, plain balustrade, and lattice work foundation cover, which probably replaced an original porch. The rustic but popular Federal style appearance of the Rives House is enhanced by such period elements as double-hung windows with nine-over-nine sash, encircled by mitered surrounds and plain sills; a box cornice with pattern board; gable end roof and exterior stone chimneys with brick stacks. Although this stone and brick combination is common throughout Chatham County, the western chimney possesses a stone double shoulder which is seldom found in the county. Shed rooms at the rear of the house appear to be alterations of original piazza rooms, which structural evidence indicates were part of the house. Windows in the rear wall of the living room originally opened into these piazza rooms, though these windows were filled in early and remain so today.

Laid out in a hall and parlor plan which is most often associated with one or one-and-a-half story dwellings in Chatham County, the interior of the Rives House features Georgian detailing which complements its popular Federal style exterior. The interior rooms, sheathed with wide flushboards, are served by handsome six-panel doors with butt hinges, and an enclosed quarter-turn stair with winders rising along the hall partition wall. The Georgian effect of the house's interior is complemented by a decorative chair rail and robust mantels with large panels, heavy molded shelves, and large fire openings.

Several outbuildings and a small cemetery plot are located just west of the Rives House along an overgrown lane. The buildings consist of a small covered well, a board and batten shed with iron strap hinges, a larger weatherboarded tobacco barn, and an even larger barn, which may be contemporary with the house and constructed of pit-sawn lumber joined by wooden pegs. A short distance further west, the Rives family cemetery contains the graves of several family members, including the occupant of the house, William Alston Rives (1803-1883). The graves are identified by simple rock markers, old marble tombstones, as well as modern head stones. Although many family and church cemeteries exist across the county, the Rives cemetery, because of its age and association with this particular house, may be one of the more significant ones in the county.

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

\_\_\_\_\_ NATIONAL      \_\_\_\_\_ STATE        X   LOCAL

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 checked="" 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/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 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 1825-1840

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The William Alston Rives House, home of one of Chatham County's earliest farming families, was probably erected during the period 1825-1840 and occupied by Rives after 1840. One of the best preserved and unaltered early nineteenth century homes in the county, the Rives House is primarily significant as a remarkably intact and substantial early farmhouse exhibiting the typical, traditional style and finish of early 19th century rural vernacular architecture in North Carolina.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. Associated with the settlement of the southern part of Chatham County and the development of large-scale farming activities in rural North Carolina during the nineteenth century.
- B. Associated with the life of William Alston Rives, one of the largest and most influential landowners in southern Chatham County during the nineteenth century.
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of vernacular Federal and Georgian style architecture popular in rural North Carolina during the first three decades of the nineteenth century.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

William Alston Rives was born into the wealthy antebellum planter society of southern Chatham County in 1803.<sup>1</sup> His father Edward came to Chatham County from Virginia about 1790<sup>2</sup> and married Ann Alston, a niece of wealthy local planter "Chatham Jack" Alston.<sup>3</sup> Edward Rives built his home, known locally as Peddler's Hill, in what is now Gulf Township just north of the present site of the town of Goldston<sup>4</sup> but his son was born in what is now Hickory Mountain Township<sup>5</sup> perhaps at the home of another Rives or Alston family member.

Although local tradition states that William Alston Rives built the house which now bears his name, historical data does not support this claim and it is not clear who actually built the house, when it was constructed, or when Rives' association with the property began.<sup>6</sup> The architectural style and construction techniques used on the Rives House indicate that it was probably built sometime during the period 1825-1840. According to Ramsey's Map of Chatham County, Rives occupied the house on the south side of Bear Creek in 1870.<sup>7</sup> Rives had owned land in that area since 1825 when he received a 200 acre tract from his father.<sup>8</sup> Although the deed giving Rives title to this tract makes no reference to an existing structure, the house may have been included in this, or later Rives land purchased in the Bear Creek area.

Even though the Rives House may have been constructed during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, historical evidence indicates that William Alston Rives may not have occupied it until after 1840. William Rives does not appear in the 1830 census for Chatham County. His father, Edward, does however appear and although William Rives would have been twenty-seven in 1830, he may have still lived on his father's farm.<sup>9</sup> William Rives married in 1828 and again in 1832 and fathered sons in 1838 and 1840. A family history states that Rives' second son, William Alston Rives, Jr., was born at Peddler's Hill, the home of Edward Rives, in 1840.<sup>10</sup> This knowledge indicates that Rives may have still been living on his father's farm in 1840. Further support for the belief that Rives did not occupy the house before 1840 is provided by the 1840 Chatham County census. Neither William Rives nor his father, who died in 1840, appear in the census records.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps William Rives left the state prior to 1840 and returned by 1850, when he first appears in the Chatham County census records.<sup>12</sup> Although local tradition related that William Rives built the house now bearing his name, it is more likely that he occupied the house during the period 1840-1850.

. . . Continued on additional sheet

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Burns, Mrs. Gordon. Interviewed March 6, 1983.

Chatham County Records. (subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Estate Papers, Tax Lists)

...Continued on additional sheet

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 4 acres

UTM REFERENCES

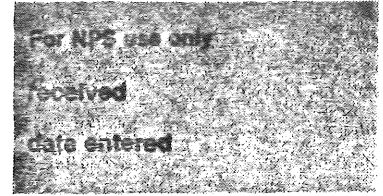
A	[1,7]	[6,5,3 3,9,0]	[3,9 4,3] 2 8 0	B	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	D	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property consists of four acres, which contain the main house, outbuildings, and cemetery, and which are bounded as shown on Chatham County Tax Map #9608.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

Local tradition which states that Rives owned a large cotton plantation worked by a number of slaves is supported by historical data. Census records reveal that Rives owned twenty-one slaves in 1850<sup>13</sup> and twenty-five in 1860.<sup>14</sup> Rives, therefore, would have had a much larger farming operation than most farmers who engaged in subsistence farming and owned few slaves, if any.

It is evident that William Alston Rives adjusted well to the social and economic changes brought about by the Civil War and the following period of reconstruction. At a time when the size of the average farm in Chatham County and across North Carolina was decreasing and farm tenancy rising, Rives was able to maintain a large farm. By 1880, when the average farm in North Carolina contained only 142 acres<sup>15</sup>, Rives owned 620 acres valued at \$800.<sup>16</sup>

Following Rives' death in 1883, his house passed through a succession of owners. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, it was owned by William T. "Buck" Dowdy, who also owned land west of the Rives House.<sup>17</sup> Dowdy gave the house to his son in 1897.<sup>18</sup> It became known locally as the "Lower Place", "Buck Dowdy's nearby home being the "Upper Place."<sup>19</sup> The house eventually passed into the possession of L.P. Dixon, who sold it to the present owner, W.B. Patterson, in 1942. Dixon, however, deeded the area containing the Rives cemetery to the heirs of the Rives family in perpetuity.<sup>20</sup>

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

NOTES

1. Wade Hadley, Jr., et al. Chatham County, 1771-1971, (Durham: Moore Publishing Company, 1971), p. 411.
2. Ibid.
3. J. Rives Childs, Relics of the Rives', (Lynchburg, Virginia: 1929), p. 2.
4. Hadley, Chatham County 1771-1971, p. 411.
5. Childs, Relics of the Rives', p. 2.
6. Mrs. Gordon Burns, interviewed March 6, 1983.
7. Ramsey's 1870 Map of Chatham County.
8. Chatham County Deeds, Book AA, p. 44-45.
9. Fifth Census of the United States, 1830, Population Schedule.
10. Childs, Relics of the Rives', p. 2.
11. Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, Population Schedule.
12. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Population Schedule.
13. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Slave Schedule.
14. Eighth Census of the United States, 1800, Slave Schedule.
15. Hugh T. Lefler and Albert R. Newsome, The History of a Southern State, North Carolina, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), p. 522.
16. Chatham County Tax List, 1880.
17. Chatham County Deeds, Book DN, p. 113. Dowdy was not related to Rives and no deed has been found to show how he received the land.
18. Chatham County Deeds, Book DN, p. 113.
19. Ibid, Book IV, p. 460.
20. Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

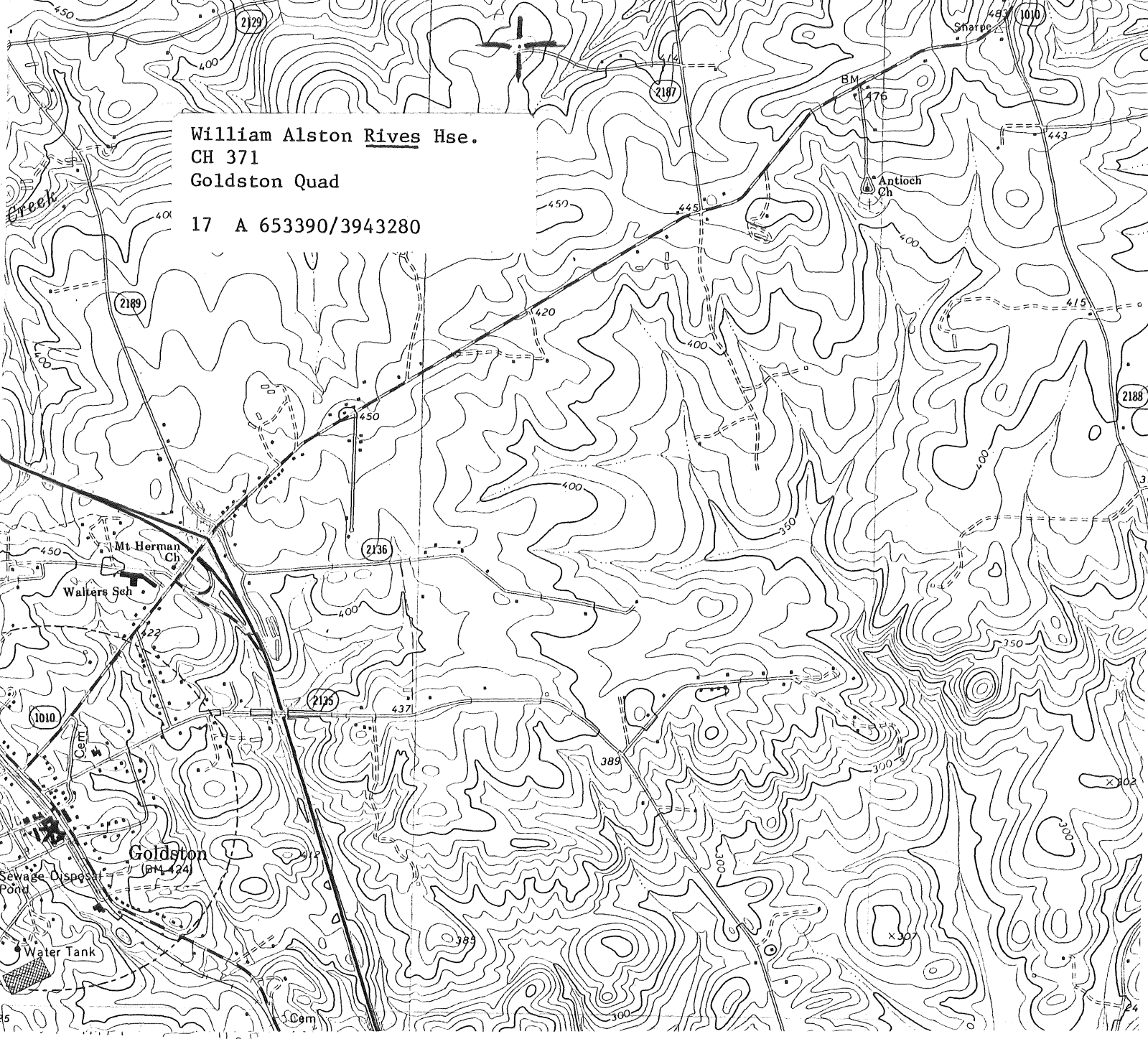
Page 1

- Childs, J. Rives. Relics of the Rives'. Lynchburg, Virginia: 1929.  
Unpublished manuscript in Rees Collection, Wren Memorial Library,  
Siler City, N. C.
- Dowdy Family History. Unpublished manuscript, no author, no date.  
Rees collection. Wren Memorial Library, Siler City, N. C.
- Eighth Census of the United States, 1860. Agriculture, Population,  
and Slave Schedules.
- Hadley, Wade, H., Jr., et al. Chatham County, 1771-1971. Durham:  
Moore Publishing Company, 1971.
- Lefler, Hugh T. and Albert R. Newsome. The History of a Southern  
State, North Carolina. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina  
Press, 1973.
- Ninth Census of the United States, 1870. Agriculture and Population  
Schedules.
- Patterson, W. B. Interviewed February 27, 1983.
- Seventh Census of the United States, 1850. Agriculture, Population,  
and Slave Schedules.

652 5155 III NE (SILER CITY NE) 654 17'30" 655

4.8 MI. TO N. C. 902

William Alston Rives Hse.  
CH 371  
Goldston Quad  
17 A 653390/3943280

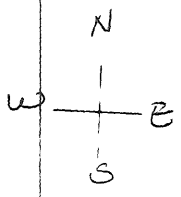




CALCULATED ACREAGE  
 LOT NUMBER  
 SUBDIVISION NAME 15 SUNSET HILLS  
 SUBDIVISION LOT LINES  
 ORIGINAL TRACT LINES  
 ROAD RIGHTS OF WAY

8356  
 99.60 A  
 (88.72 A)

6886  
 4.00 A  
 (3.37 A)



William Alston Rives House  
 CH 371  
 Tax Map #9608

8699	9609
8698	9608
8697	9607

PROPERTY MAP SI

**LANDMARK ENGINE**  
 P.O. BOX 100

