

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
Office of Archives and History  
Department of Cultural Resources

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Aldridge H. Vann House**

Franklinton, Franklin County, FK0290, Listed 1/9/2008

Nomination by Ellen Turco

Photographs by Ellen Turco, August 2007



Façade view



Rear view

(Oct. 1990)

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 Vann, Aldridge H., House
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 115 North Main Street N/A not for publication
city or town Franklinton N/A vicinity
state North Carolina code NC county Franklin code 069 zip code 27525

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 for 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 of certifying official/Title Date
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet
determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	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**  
N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC/Secondary Structure

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC/Secondary Structure

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVAL/Classical Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

\_\_\_\_\_

roof Terra cotta

other Metal

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

**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: n/a

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

1918

**Significant Dates**

1918

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Salter, James A., architect

**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):**

- 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:

Aldridge H. Vann House  
Name of Property

Franklin County, North Carolina  
County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** 1.3

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 728960 3998460  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

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name/title Ellen Turco  
organization Circa, Inc. date July 2007  
street & number 16 North Boylan Avenue telephone 919/834-4757  
city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27603

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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

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

name John and Sheila Allers  
street & number 115 North Main Street telephone 919/494-2662  
city or town Franklinton state NC zip code 27525

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**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 listing. 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 20303.

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Continuation Sheet**

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Aldridge H. Vann House  
Franklin County, North Carolina

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**Aldridge H. Vann House  
Section 7/ Physical Description**

This tan brick Classical Revival-style house was completed in 1918 for Aldridge H. (Ald) Vann, according to designs by Raleigh architect James A. Salter. The Aldridge H. Vann House is differentiated from its neighbors by its size, design, and innovative construction methods. The residence is easily identifiable by its green Spanish tile roof.

Setting

The Vann House is located at 115 North Main Street in Franklinton in southwest Franklin County. The house faces east. The old Raleigh and Gaston Railroad tracks parallel the east side of North Main Street. Main Street, formerly U.S. 1, has historically been Franklinton's main travel artery. At the south end of the street is the town's commercial district. Late nineteenth and early-twentieth century residences are concentrated along North Main Street. The house is centrally situated at the rear of a 1.3-acre parcel and faces east. A concrete semi-circular driveway cuts through the front lawn. This drive was added in the 1990s. The original driveway begins at the south corner of the property and travels around the rear of the house terminating in a circular planting median in front of the garage.

Landscape

The original parcel was larger than the 1.3-acre parcel of today. The lot spanned the block from North Main Street to the east and Hillsborough Street to the west. A servants' residence fronted Hillsborough Street. The dwelling is still present but is now a separate lot. A total of three lots have been cut from the land fronting Hillsborough Street. On the south side, Ald Vann's lot abutted a parcel owned by his parents. The original north property line encompassed another parcel where a brick Ranch-style house now stands. The Ranch house sits on the approximate site of the Vann's tennis court.

The Philadelphia firm of Thomas Meehan and Sons devised a sophisticated landscape plan for Ald Vann. The plan located 194 varieties of trees, shrubs, plants and bulbs in both formal and informal plantings. Ald Vann's granddaughter, Sallie Vann Whitmore, recalls the plan was implemented for the front and side yards, however, the rear yard deviated from the plan and contained a pecan orchard behind the house and a grassy "dog yard" south of the orchard. Three pecan trees survive behind the house. Documentary photographs reveal the beds around the house were planted with clustered shrubbery as per Meehan's design. A ginkgo tree and a blue spruce at the north end of the front yard remain and were indicated on the Meehan plan.

Most all of the early plantings have been removed, contributing to the current plain and pared-down feel to the lot. Today, the plan's basic hardscape elements such as concrete walkways, the curving driveway, and foundation planting terraces remain intact. Two tiers of terraces slope downward to a lawn that extends to North Main Street. At this time, the terraces are devoid of plantings.

Exterior

The Vann House is an impressive, two-story, tan brick house with both Colonial Revival and Italian villa influences. The house contains approximately 6,000 square feet of interior floor space. The massing is an asymmetrical "H," with the south wing of the "H" somewhat shorter than that of the north. The extra length of the north wing accommodates household service areas. Hipped roofs cover the north and south wings. A central section with a deck-on-hip roof connects the wings. This fifty-by-seventeen-foot viewing deck is covered with original copper and is accessed via an attic hatch. The dwelling's most distinctive feature is its green, Spanish tile roof. Much of the tile is original; however, a tree fell on the southwest corner in 2005 and that area has been replaced in-kind. Five hipped dormers pierce the roof; three on the front of the central section and one each atop the west wing, or service wing, and central section on the rear façade. Both side elevations (north and south) have an exterior end chimney. A third chimney is found on the north elevation of the service wing.

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The façade is three bays across and symmetrically balanced. The tile roof with deep overhanging eaves surmounts the main block. The walls of the house are veneered with running bond tan brick with wide and recessed joints of dark gray mortar. A soldier course marks the foundation. Window openings are accentuated with soldier courses, glazed brick corner blocks, and corbelled header courses above. First story windows are further emphasized with header courses down each side. Two corbelled rowlock and header brick courses, one projecting, delineate the frieze from the wall planes. Elbow brackets with twin guttae decorate the eaves.

The exterior displays a variety of window configurations. The primary window type is a wooden six-over-one double-hung sash. These are found paired on the first and second stories of the façade and rear elevations as well as singly on the side and rear elevations. The first-story façade and rear elevation also display triple banded windows made up of eight-over-one sashes adjoining narrow four-over-one sashes. Also on the façade, the second-story recessed entry bay has yet another six-over-one sash in the central location with paired sets of three light casements on either side. These casement sashes are repeated on either side of the main entry. Each of the dwelling's windows has a pressed concrete sill. Sometime in the 1990s the façade sills were painted white. On the second story of the facade the sills project and are "supported" by concrete false end beams.

The Vann House has three attached porches: a central entry portico and two sitting porches on each side elevation. The one-story, flat-roofed front portico spans the recessed central section. The porch shelters a set of half-glazed, paneled entry doors and clear-view wooden storm doors surmounted by a twenty-light transom. The porch's projecting roofline shelters a plain entablature supported by six hollow metal, fluted columns. Centered on the porch ceiling is a globe light fixture belted by "straps" of metal with a raised leaf pattern. This fixture is not present in a ca. 1950s photograph. Shallow niches are found on either side of the entry. The north and south hipped-roofed side porches are accessed from the dining room and living room, respectively. A set of twelve-light French doors, to the right of the dining room chimney, leads to the north porch. Two sets of French doors flank the living room chimney. The side porches measure twelve-feet by twenty-four feet. The entablature and columns of the front portico are replicated on the side porches. However, on the side elevations the columns are paired. Removable, floor-to-ceiling height, fixed glass windows converted the south porch to a solarium during the winter. Today, this porch is open. Smooth red tiles, specified by Salter as "promenade tile" on the plans, cover the porch floors and cover the façade-width "terrace" that spans the front of the house. A second-story sleeping porch is subsumed under the servant wing roofline. This porch is enclosed by brick and banded eight-light casement windows. A second enclosed porch, under the sleeping porch and adjacent to the kitchen's south side, is enclosed with fixed twelve light sash. A flat roof porch supported by metal posts shelters the enclosed porch as well as set of concrete steps leading below grade to the basement.

Drainage System

The property features a sophisticated storm water collection system. This system may have been used to maintain the gardens. Built-in gutters drain to copper downspouts that connect to underground drainage pipes. The front porch columns cleverly conceal downspouts. Drains are located in the basement light wells on the rear of the house. Additional brick drains with metal grates are found at several locations in the yard. Diminutive concrete drainage swales run the length of both sides of the driveway and drain directly to the street. A large water collection cistern is located in a crawl space under the southeast corner of the front terrace. This cistern is accessed via a wood hatch in the basement's east wall.

Construction techniques

The Vann House is Franklinton's only known house constructed of poured concrete. The structure is essentially a giant concrete box. Atop the box is a typical roof system of wood joists and rafters with x-bracing. The walls of the basement are fourteen inches thick. Above ground, the walls are nine inches thick with five inches of brick veneer. Nine-inch by nine-inch steel reinforced concrete beams project beyond the basement walls to support the poured concrete floors of the porches and terraces on the front and side elevations.

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Interior

The dwelling's public, family and servant spaces are hierarchically arranged. Public areas are located at the front (east) half of the house and family and servant areas are situated in the rear (west) half. Finish trim and materials reflect the same hierarchy. Floor plans for both the first and second stories are included in this nomination.

*Basement*

A wood stair at the northwest corner accesses the basement. The staircase leads to a large unfinished space lit by subterranean concrete window wells. Salter's specifications state the walls are fourteen-inch thick concrete. The floor is poured concrete as well. Six-inch metal posts support the first floor system of two-by-twelve-inch joists. A laundry room is partitioned from the southwest corner with tongue and groove boards. The laundry contains an enameled cast iron double sink. At the basement's north end is second partition wall, this one of brick, separating the furnace room and a coal storage room from the main space. The original furnace remains, although it is not functional.

A wood hatch in the basement's east wall accesses a crawl space that runs the length of the façade. Approximately five-feet in height, the ceiling is comprised of the nine-inch by nine-inch reinforced concrete beams that support the concrete pad of the front terraces. Centered in the earthen floors is a large water collection cistern that receives water runoff from the gutters and downspouts and channels it to the storm sewer at the road.

*First Floor*

The central grand reception hall and stair, dining room, and living room are arranged across the front of the dwelling. Across the rear of the house are the library and den. The house's northwest wing contains the service areas: a secondary stair hall, bathroom, butler's pantry, storage pantry, and kitchen.

Colonial Revival finishes are found in the public and family rooms. Floors are oak. Plain surrounds are decorated with a backband molding. Door surrounds rest on plinths. Fourteen-inch baseboards with a molded top edge run throughout the house. Elegant, six-panel walnut doors with cut glass knobs are used throughout the house, except in the service areas where the knobs are brass. The dark wood of the doors contrasts with the white painted trim. The architect's plans specify "poplar trim to paint" in the reception hall, living room, dining room and library. "Cypress trim to stain" was specified for the den, but the trim is currently painted white.

While the trim and door schedule is the same throughout the family areas, the reception hall, dining room and living room are exceptionally detailed and deserve additional description. The entry hall, in particular, received the full force of Salter's enthusiasm for revival motifs. The rectangular hall measures twenty-four feet by eighteen feet. A wainscot consisting of one rectangular raised panel above a square panel is applied to the walls. The dwelling's transomed main entry is centered on the east wall and flanked by casement windows. The wainscot is broken on either side of the entry door where inset radiators are covered by geometric-patterned decorative grates. Across from the entry the graceful, curving stair rises from the room's southwest corner. Paneling covers the wall under the stair. Each paneled "pillar," comprised of three stacked rectangular panels, appears to support a step, each with an extra long decorative tread. A delicate balustrade of attenuated balusters with blocked ends terminates in a spiral at the newel. Rectangular paneled trim lines the curved stairwell opening. Under the stair is a cedar-lined coat closet. At the hall's north and south ends are large openings with sets of dark stained, raised panel, walnut pocket doors leading to the dining room and living room, respectively. The length of the hall is divided by an architrave in front of the stair. The architrave rests on two freestanding fluted columns. Exaggerated modillions are situated under each end where the architrave meets the wall plane. The architrave continues around the three walls of the hall, topped by a boxed cornice. A crystal chandelier, installed some time after 1977, hangs from the ceiling.



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Salter took great care to symmetrically balance the dining room. The approximately sixteen feet by eighteen feet room is entered via the north wall of the reception hall. Across from the doorway is a projecting firebox. To the right is a set of French doors leading to the north porch. Left of the firebox is a window. A classically inspired mantelpiece features fluted columns, a centered rectangular panel in the lintel, and a stepped mantel shelf. The tile firebox surround is painted black, as are the others throughout the house. A large rectangular window bay is centered in the east wall. Across the room on the west wall are two doorways. One conceals a china closet and other is a swinging door leading to the butler's pantry. A coved crown molding runs under the ceiling plane. The crystal chandelier is not original.

At the south end of the reception hall is the living room. The dimensions, arrangement, and trim of this room are identical to that of the dining room. The only exception is the walnut pocket doors in the west wall leading to the library and den suite. The library is trimmed as the living room. A projecting firebox is in the north wall. Its mantel is less ornate than those in the public rooms, with paneled pilasters instead of fluted columns. Half-height, built-in bookshelves with glass doors are set in three corners of the room. These shelves do not appear on Salter's plan, but they are thought to be original or added very soon after construction. An original brass light fixture with glass shades hangs from the ceiling.

The den is the simplest of the first story's family-occupied rooms. The rectangular room has doors at each end, one leading to the library and another to the hall. A double window is on the exterior wall. It lacks the coved crown molding but has a simple picture rail. The mantel in the south wall is the same as the one in the library. A set of open, half-height shelves fills the niche on one side of the projecting firebox. It is not known if these shelves are an original feature. The ornate light fixture came from a house at 201 N. Main Street. It was installed in the library in the 1980s (Allers 8/31/06). Originally, there was no ceiling fixture on this room (Whitmore, 11/14/06). The fixture is comprised of a substantial brass wheel. Suspended from it are a central glass globe and four flower-shaped shades.

The secondary status of service rooms is emphasized by the use of simple stained, rather than painted, yellow pine for doors and trim. Door and window surrounds are plain. Vertical five-panel doors are used, with the exception of the swinging butler's pantry door, which has six horizontal panels. The secondary stair hall retains its stained yellow pine beadboard wainscot, and is plastered above a chair rail. A square, capped newel post of Craftsman influence anchors the square picket balustrade. The stair leads to the servant's quarters on the second floor. The floors in the first floor service areas are maple.

Two pantries are situated between the dining room and kitchen. The walls of the butler's pantry are lined with stained yellow pine floor-to-ceiling storage cabinets. The lower cabinets consist of flat-panel cabinet doors and banks of slab-front drawers with brass pulls topped by a pine counter. A double leaf twelve-light glass door covers each upper cabinet bay. The storage pantry, or "lock pantry" is a narrow room with open shelving and a wood counter with large slab-front drawers.

The original kitchen was configured with a sink on the east wall, which is shared with the bathroom. A wood burning stove was situated in front of the chimney on the north wall. This stove remained in place until around 1950 when it was replaced by an electric stove in the room's northwest corner. Cabinets topped by a counter ran the length of the west wall and a floor-to-ceiling cabinet was on the east wall shared with the pantry. The original cabinetry was removed around 1960. The kitchen was remodeled a second time in the late 1990s. With the exception of the door and window placement and trim, now painted white, the present kitchen retains no original features. White rabbit-paneled cabinets are mounted on the room's north and west walls. A short run of lower cabinets returns from the north wall creating a small eating area.

*Second Floor*

An open stair leads from the reception hall to a spacious and bright second floor hall. On the east (front) wall is a sitting alcove delineated from the hall by an uncased arched opening. On either side of the alcove are closets. Each closet is lit by a window and sheathed with cedar beadboard. Door-width arched openings are on the opposite wall at both ends of the stairwell. There are five bedrooms on the second floor. The architect's floor plan identifies "chamber 1" in the

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southwest corner. The rooms are numbered chronologically in a clockwise fashion. The largest rooms are chambers 4 and 5 at the front of the house. These rooms are accessed directly from the hall, and measure approximately sixteen feet by eighteen feet. Slightly smaller are chambers 1 and 3 behind the front bedrooms. A dressing room-and-bathroom suite connects Chambers 5 and 1. A smaller passage-and-bathroom suite connects Chambers 4 and 3. Chamber 2, at the rear of the house, appears to be smaller secondary bedroom with only one exterior wall. It is accessed by a small, square hall off the main second floor hall. North of chamber 2 is a short passage and tiled bath. The passage is used as a laundry room by the current owner. Its original use was as a closet and dressing room.

The bedrooms and hall are finished similarly to the first floor. Wide baseboards, walnut doors and picture rails are found throughout this floor. Each bedroom has a mantel piece consisting of a plain lintel supported by paneled pilasters. Decorative plastic medallions are centered in the lintels. These were added by a previous owner in the 1990s. The floors in this part of the house are oak.

The bathrooms retain original tile floors and wainscot. The south bathroom originally had the lavatory on its east wall. A small square child's tub was next to the lavatory. These fixtures have been removed. A sink with a box vanity is now on the east wall. The original tub remains on the room's west wall. The north bathroom was a mirror image of the south bathroom except that it did not have a child's tub. This bathroom retains its original fixtures and inset medicine cabinet over the sink. In the south dressing room, original wooden open storage shelves remain on the north wall. To the left of the shelves was a curtained area for hanging clothes. A shower has been added in this area. The west bathroom is the most intact of the second floor bathrooms. It retains all of its original fixtures, including a corner wall sink, as well as a medicine cabinet, wall mounted radiator, and a half-glazed door with translucent privacy glass.

The northwest corner of the second floor is reserved for household staff. The servant's stair leads from the first floor to a small second floor hall. An interesting feature of this hall is the original, and functional, glass-front electrical box. The box retains porcelain fuses and is wired with a battery powered light bulb on a pull chain which can be lit during power failures. A half-glazed door leads from the servant's hall to the sleeping porch on the south side of the servant's bedroom-bathroom suite. These rooms are finished with stained pine trim and floors. The bathroom has simple plumbing fixtures and plastered walls.

Garage

Northwest of the house sits the tan brick, two-bay garage. It is a square, one-story building with a hipped roof covered with original green tile. The floor is concrete. Each side (east and west) elevation has two fixed wood twenty-light window sashes with concrete sills. The garage opening is on the south elevation and is spanned by a substantial concrete lintel. The segmental sliding garage doors hang from a metal track, and are made up of three segments each with sixteen lights above a bead board panel.

Integrity statement

The integrity and condition of the Vann House is superb. The dwelling retains integrity of materials, massing, architectural detail and interior layout. The property retains its original two-bay garage, finished in a similar fashion to the house. While a substantial portion of landscape plantings have been removed, hardscape features such as the driveway, drainage swales, terraces and walkways remain. The circular drive through the front yard was added in the 1980s. Exterior changes to the dwelling are the painting of the concrete window sills, also in the 1980s, and the removal of the windows in the south solarium to create an open porch. The date of this change is unknown. Interior alterations are limited to the updating of the kitchen and upstairs bathrooms, the removal of some of the original light fixtures, and the addition of the brass wheel light fixture in the den.

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Statement of Significance

The Aldridge H. Vann House meets National Register Criterion C as an excellent example of an early-twentieth-century architect-designed residence combining elements from nationally popular styles. The dwelling is the only known poured concrete residence in Franklin County and is significant locally for both its design and construction. It retains exceptional integrity of design and materials. The dwelling's period of significance is 1918; the year construction was completed.

Aldridge H. Vann, owner of a local textile mill founded by his father and other Franklinton business enterprises, commissioned the house. Architect James A. Salter blended Classical Revival symmetry and detail with Italian villa influences to great effect. A distinctive roof of green Spanish tiles surmounts the two-story, three-bay, buff brick dwelling. The roof projects to create wide, overhanging eaves decorated with oversized elbow brackets. The tile roof, eave brackets and heavy concrete window sills supported by false end beams give the boxy, symmetrical facade an Italian villa flavor. The façade has a one-story columned porch, details of which are replicated on the side porches. The interior features a hierarchical arrangement of spaces for formal, family and servants uses. Formal spaces are trimmed with elaborate Colonial Revival woodwork while the service areas feature simpler treatments. The interior focal point is the twenty-four feet by eighteen feet reception hall with a curvilinear, paneled stair.

History

The Vann House was built by Aldridge H. Vann (known as "Ald") for his family in 1917-1918. Ald and his wife Bettie Henley Vann raised four daughters in the home: Sarah Dixon, Elizabeth Francis, Mary Beverly and Bettie.

Ald Vann was the son of Franklinton merchant and industrialist Samuel C. Vann, founder of the local Sterling Cotton Mill.<sup>1</sup> The family's various business enterprises were a driving force of the town's economy. The Vanns were generous to their hometown, funding the ca. 1925 James Salter-designed Franklinton Public School Street and the Franklinton Methodist Church, both south of the Vann House on North Main Street, among other philanthropic endeavors. The Vanns also built a mill village of one-story, gable-and-wing worker houses on East Green and Railroad streets. Upon Sam Vann's death in the early 1920s, Ald assumed oversight of the mill (Little Section 8.4). Like so many Americans, the Vann family hit financial hard times after the stock market crash of 1929. The Sterling Mill was closed in 1932 and sold at auction the following year to Mrs. J. A. Moore, Ald's sister. Ald continued to operate the mill until the early 1950s when he was succeeded by his nephew, John (Little Section 8.5).

The Vann House was designed by Raleigh architect James A. Salter (1874-1932). A native of Wisconsin, Salter completed his architecture studies at Rochester A & M. After apprenticing and working in Rochester from 1895 to 1911, Salter moved his practice to Raleigh in 1912 for unknown reasons (*Who's Who* 636). He became one of the leading architects in Raleigh with a long list of prominent clients. Fluent in the Classical Revival vocabulary popular at the time, Salter designed many houses for Raleigh's elite. His larger commissions include Longview, a stone Georgian Revival tour-de-force built in 1925 for Clarence Poe, owner and editor of the influential *Progressive Farmer* magazine; the brick Andrews-London House (Blount Street NRHD, 1974) a whimsical take on the Georgian Revival style built for Raleigh Mayor Graham H. Andrews in 1916; as well as other fine dwellings in Raleigh, Chapel Hill and Clinton. Salter's institutional commissions include the Franklinton Public School, the Lincoln County Courthouse (1924-1927), Steel Dormitory at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1920), the State School for the Blind (1924-1927), and the 1925 Sir Walter Raleigh Hotel (NR) on Fayetteville Street in Raleigh. Salter's designs are characterized by his adept use of nationally popular revival styles, particularly the Georgian Revival. He was an architect of statewide repute.

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<sup>1</sup> Sam Vann's home was located on an adjacent parcel on North Main Street south of where Ald built his house. The house has been demolished.

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How Ald Vann came to select Salter as the architect is not known. However, Salter would have been an appropriate choice for a prominent and well-to-do family. It is clear that the professional relationship continued after the completion of the house, as evidenced by Salter's work on Vann's philanthropic projects. No correspondence between the architect and client is known to survive. However, heirs and the current property owners possess Salter's original elevation and plan drawings as well as documentary photographs, which are useful in fleshing out the history of the house. Vann and Salter worked through a series of preliminary alternatives before settling on the final design. A series of beautiful, undated pencil sketches on tracing paper depict three façade designs. For each alternative the basic massing of the house is similar: a large rectangular, two-story central block with porches on the front and sides. The differences are in the details and fenestration, and show Salter's facility in working with architectural styles in vogue at the time. The first alternative displays Craftsman elements such as porches supported by square posts on brick piers, a shed dormer, banded windows, and exposed rafter tails. Alternative number two is reminiscent of a true Italian Villa with a columned arched entry porch topped with a balustrade. The balustrade continues along the front terraces and to the south side porch. A carport, instead of a porch, is on the north side elevation. The first floor windows are two-door casements surmounted by arched fanlights; the windows of the second story are six-over-one sashes. The final alternative is the only one rendered with weatherboard siding. It is a three-bay Classical Revival house divided by full-height fluted pilasters supporting a classical-motif frieze. This frieze treatment is continued on the front and side porches. A dormer with a Palladian window is centered on the roof. The six-over-six window sashes are flanked by novelty shutters with diamond cut-outs. In addition to this array of choices for the exterior, Salter also provided two alternative floor plans.

The final set of blue prints, entitled "Vann Residence, Commission Number 588," is dated February 1917. The drawings depict the house as built: a two-story brick Classical Revival house with columned porches, deep, bracketed overhanging eaves, and six-over-one double hung sash with a tile roof. Family tradition holds that the house was completed sometime in 1918. An inscription on the attic framing is marked, "WH 1917." At the southeast corner, a second inscription is marked in cement where a copper downspout connects to the drainage system, "February 12, 1918." As the downspouts were most likely installed near the end of construction, the house was probably nearly finished by this time.

Ald Vann had an interest in horticulture and landscaping. This interest was passed down from his mother, an avid gardener who had a large greenhouse on the adjacent property (now the location of First Citizens Bank). Ald Vann had constructed a concrete pathway from the south end of his lot to his parents' greenhouse. This path is still present although it dead-ends at the edge of the yard. Many of the original bulbs and flowers at the Vann House are reputed to have been transplanted from his mother's property (Whitmore 1/16/2007). Family photo albums show the house's south porch enclosed with divided-light window sash. This room was used as a solarium.

Ald Vann retained the noted Philadelphia firm of Thomas Meehan and Sons to lay out a plan for the grounds. Born in England, Thomas Meehan immigrated to the Philadelphia area in 1848 where he established Meehan's Nurseries, which later became Thomas Meehan & Sons. The nursery supplied plants to gardens, orchards, and estates from California to Europe. Meehan was editor of *The Gardener's Monthly* and *Meehans' Monthly*, the most widely read horticultural magazines of the late-nineteenth century (*Wikipedia*).

Plan number 3679, entitled "Preliminary Plan of Development of Property," is dated January 3, 1918. The plan depicts the residence, garage, driveway, walkways, and the locations of 194 varieties of trees, shrubs, plants, arbors, and beds on the original T-shaped double lot. At the rear of the double-width area, the plans place a small dwelling labeled "servant's quarters," a vegetable garden, chicken runs, children's playground and a formal garden with a sundial in the center. The "servant's quarters," a one-story, hipped-roof dwelling, is extant. The house fronts Hillsborough Street and is no longer associated with the nominated parcel. Thomas Meehan and Sons sent Mr. Vann a second, smaller plan in April 1926. The letter conveying the plan to Mr. Vann depicts the "change of planting in the front of your residence." The accompanying key lists thirty-two species of pines, yews, and azaleas.

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The precise extent of Vann's adherence to the Meehan plan is not known. Meehan's firm recognized the scope of the project when they wrote to Vann, "Should it not be convenient to carry out this plan in its entirety at one time, we earnestly advise no change in arrangement that would destroy the general harmony. Select sections most desirable and plant from time to time at your pleasure." Ald Vann's granddaughter, Sarah Vann Whitmore (daughter of Sarah Vann), conjectures that the Depression may have prevented its full realization. However, Ms. Whitmore lived in the house as a young child in the early 1950s and recalls playing in a heavily landscaped yard. She also recalls a tennis court in the north yard and a pecan grove (Whitmore 11/14/2006). Three pecan trees survive in the rear yard. Black-and-white family photos from the 1920s and 1930s also depict extensive landscaping. Many of the plantings specified in the Meehan plan can be identified, such as the "existing" large oaks at the eastern edge of the yard, the weeping cherry trees flanking the entry walk, a ginkgo tree on the north lawn, and the abundant shrubberies planted along the front terraces and side and rear foundations. A variety of Asian specimens, as would have been in fashion at the time, can be identified in the photographs such as makino, spiraea, juniper, forsythia and azaleas. A vigorous vine of wisteria shown growing atop the front porch, was tacked up between the first and second story windows, and continued around to the south solarium.

Unfortunately, almost all of these early plantings have been removed. This occurred some time after 1976 when the house passed out of the family. The ginkgo tree survives in the north yard, as do a few mature oaks and some mature sliver lindens planted by Ald Vann but not shown on the Meehan plan (Allers interview). One particularly large linden fell on the corner of the house in June 2006. This event precipitated the replacement of roof tile and repair of soffits and copper gutters at the southwest corner of the house. Some of the original tile was reused and broken ones were replaced with salvaged tile to match the original. (Allers interview).

The house passed from the family in 1976 when Betsy Vann passed away (Whitmore 11/14/2006). Jimmy and Georgia Brown purchased the property from Betsy Vann's estate. Subsequent owners were Ernest T. Dement and then Paul and Carolyn Mills. The current owners are John and Sheila Allers. They bought the house in 2001.

Architecture Context

Primarily agrarian, the industrial revolution came late to Franklin County. Louisburg, the county seat located approximately ten miles east of Franklinton, was the center of government, commerce and agricultural trade (Pearce 190). As such, Louisburg possesses a number of architecturally outstanding buildings. Franklinton's economy was smaller than Louisburg's and to a large extent based on the Sterling Cotton Mill, the county's only industry until the opening of the Franklinton Hosiery Mill just after World War One (Little Section 8.7). As a result of its history, a significant portion of Franklinton's housing stock is modest mill housing. The Vann family erected a village of worker houses around the mill in the early-twentieth century (Little Section 8.4-5). These simple one-story, gable-and-wing dwellings are concentrated on East Green Street and Railroad Street. Larger, more stylized houses are concentrated on North Main Street and the areas east and west of this main travel artery. Several pre-1900 folk Victorian dwellings line North Main Street. These dwellings are one-story and two-story, side-gable or gable-and-wing in form and feature Italianate or Queen Anne sawn work.

The Aldridge H. Vann House is one of Franklinton's finest dwellings, and one of only two known to be designed by a professional architect. Ald Vann commissioned James A. Salter to fashion an eclectic blend of the Classical Revival and Italian villa styles. The house is distinguished by its green Spanish tile roof. The Morris House, 207 North Main Street, utilizes a similar roof material, but is a modest, three-bay house with Craftsman and Prairie elements.

In terms of integrity and quality--but not style--the C. L. and Bessie G. McGhee House (NR, 2006), is most comparable with the Vann House. Built in 1911 at 103 West Mason Street, the McGhee house also integrates two nationally popular architectural modes, in this case the Arts and Crafts and Classical Revival styles. Designed by Raleigh architect H. P. S. Keller, the dwelling was built for C.L. and Bessie G. McGhee, owners of a local general merchandise store (Van Dolsen Section 8.6). The two-story, frame, pyramidal-roofed house has twin front-facing gables and hipped dormers on the side elevations. A one-story porch supported by round posts spans the front elevation and wraps around to the east side. The

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interior displays many exceptional features of the Arts and Crafts movement such as coffered ceilings with exposed beams, tiled fireplace surrounds and metal inserts, original light fixtures and wallpapers by the M. H. Birge Company of Buffalo, New York. The second floor has woodwork more in keeping with Classical Revival motifs.

The Vann House compares favorably to the McGhee House in terms of quality of materials, excellence of design and integrity. However, the Vann House is not directly comparable in style to the McGee House or any other house in Franklin County. Its Classical Revival form and details and Italian villa motifs make it truly a unique building within the boundaries of the county, and an excellent example of Salter's talent.

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**Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of the Aldridge H. Vann House is marked in a heavy, black line on the accompanying Franklin County GIS map drawn to a scale of 1" = 274'. Parcel # 7783 is 1.3-acres.

**Boundary Justification**

The National Register boundary includes the 1.3 acre legal parcel on which the dwelling and garage sit. The original lot was somewhat larger and included two servants' quarters, but these buildings have been altered and are now on separate parcels.