

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic      Francis Marion Smith House

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number      204 Railroad Avenue       not for publication

city, town      Gibsonville       vicinity of

state North Carolina      code 037      county Guilford      code 081

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name      Mr. Jerry S. Nix

street & number      204 Railroad Avenue

city, town      Gibsonville       vicinity of      state      N. C.      27249

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.      Guilford County Courthouse

street & number

city, town      state

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Architectural Resources: An Inventory of Historic Architecture, High Point, Jaemstown,  
title      Gibsonville, Guilford County      has this property been determined eligible?      yes      no

date       federal       state       county       local

depository for survey records      Survey and Planning Branch, N. C. Department of Archives and History

city, town      Raleigh      state      N. C.

## 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

Set in a broad, deep lot facing the main line of the Southern Railroad just east of Gibsonville's commercial district, the Francis Marion Smith House features a well-developed program of turned ornament and classical trim reflecting influences of the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles. The frame residence consists of a two-and-a-half-story, double-pile main block and a one-story rear ell containing the kitchen. The entire house rests on a brick foundation about two feet high and laid up in common bond. The roof is covered with square-cut and hexagonal slate shingles and has an asymmetrical configuration typical of the Queen Anne style; gables project in all four directions from the roof's high-hipped main section. Two unusually tall chimneys with boldly corbeled caps pierce the roof's main section and furnish fireplaces for seven of the eight rooms in the main block.

A broad, one-story porch with a shed roof carries across the full facade and shelters one bay on each side elevation. The porch has Tuscan columns set on wood plinths linked by a turned balustrade. Distinctive square-in-section blocks trimmed with simple brackets cap the columns. The porch frieze epitomizes the house's blend of the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles--a course of thin, turned spindles typical of Queen Anne design runs below a classically-inspired dentil molding. The projecting central entrance bay of the porch is defined by clustered columns on brick pedestals. Atop this bay the roof is flat to form the base of a balcony with a turned balustrade and trios of stout, urn-like posts at the corners.

The entrance features a door with a molded panel under a window and latticed sidelights. The entrance also retains an early twentieth century screen door adorned with spindles. Directly above the entrance a two-leaf door with a handsome fanlight serves the balcony.

The two flanking bays of the facade differ strikingly from each other, thus giving the facade an asymmetrical character. The east (left) bay features a second story bay window, rectangular in section, and a gable-roofed dormer above. The west (right) bay features an unusually narrow two-story bay set in a projecting gable with a two-pane attic window.

The treatment of the side elevations further contributes to the picturesque asymmetry of the Smith residence. The west (right) elevation has a projecting, two-story, slanted bay near the rear. The front portion of the east (left) is sheltered by a gable set perpendicular to the house's main facade; the rear portion of the east elevation has a shed roof with a small, gable-roofed dormer.

A porch originally sheltered the west side of the ell and the rear of the main block. A portion of this area was enclosed at an undetermined date for use as a bathroom. Most of the porch was enclosed to serve as a dining alcove by the present owner during the late 1970s.

The Smith House follows a center-hall, double-pile plan on both floors. The first-floor hall is the most elaborately detailed space in the house. It is finished in plaster over a vertically beaded wainscot, a broad beaded chair rail, and a simple baseboard. A sliding door with two five-panel leaves opens

**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 Architectural Description      Item number 7

Page 1

to the front room on the west (right) side of the hall. Like the single-leaf, five-panel doors opening from the hall into the other first floor rooms, it has a symmetrically molded surround with square bullseye blocks not only at the corners but one each side at chair rail height. The closed string stair rises in a single run from front to back. It has a chamfered newel and a turned balustrade. The dominant feature of the first floor hall is a screen adorned with semicircles and radiating spindles that spans the hall's full width directly above the newel.

The front room on the west (right) side of the hall, a large parlor, has been considerably embellished by the present owner. The original mantel has been replaced with a facing of Greek Revival design said to have come from Richmond, Virginia. Three beveled panels were inserted by the owner to form the mantel's second level, which reaches to the ceiling. The present owner has also applied a dentil crown molding.<sup>1</sup>

The dining room is the most elaborate room retaining its original trim. It has the same plaster-over-wainscot finish seen in the hall, and its three doors and two windows have the same symmetrically molded surrounds with bullseye blocks. An especially notable feature of this room is the built-in china cabinet. Next to the cabinet is a fireplace with a typical late nineteenth century mantel composed of fluted pilasters, a paneled frieze, and a shelf supported by sawn brackets. An identical mantel adorns the east front room on the first floor, a sitting room, which is finished in plaster above a baseboard. The door and window trim in this room is similar to that previously described.

Beyond these formal spaces, the house is typical of most substantial North Carolina houses erected at the turn of the century. The west rear room on the first floor and the four rooms on the second floor have trim that is similar to but less elaborate than that of the house's principal spaces. The rear west room on the first floor, and the front east room on the second floor, retain their original plaster walls; the house's other rooms were originally finished with tongue-and-groove boards, which may still be seen in two rooms on the second story. Curiously, the entry and closet doors of the east front room on the second floor display handsome wood graining seen nowhere else in the house.

The kitchen contained in the one-story ell originally had a semi-enclosed stair which provided access to the rear east room of the second story, which may have been servants' quarters. The stair had collapsed in recent years but was rebuilt by the present owner using a turned newel from another house.

Two of the house's original outbuildings, a well house and a smokehouse, still stand in the spacious rear yard. They are both square brick structures laid in one-to-five common bond and sheltered by hipped roofs. Both have five-panel doors set in segmental-arched openings. The well house is connected to the main residence by a latticed breezeway. Standing a short distance to the rear of the well house is the smokehouse; a brick flower house, identical in form and construction but built with large window openings to provide sunlight, once stood alongside this structure. The present owner has erected two other outbuildings: a gazebo constructed from salvaged materials dating from the turn-of-the-century; and a second well house.

**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 Architectural Description Item number 7 Page 2

---

Relatively little remains of the lot's original landscaping. One notable early feature is the handsome row of maple trees set in the broad strip of land between the sidewalk and the street. A number of maple trees<sup>2</sup> were planted at an early date to form a series of squares in the front and side yards.<sup>1</sup> Many of these trees have survived, but the original pattern of planting is no longer visible. A semi-circular walk, long since disused, was laid out in the front yard not long after the house was built. The present owner has installed a brick walk running in a straight line from the entrance to the sidewalk.

<sup>1</sup> Jerry S. Nix, "Application for Historic Designation to the Guilford County Joint Historic Properties Commission," item 7.

<sup>2</sup> Nix, "Application," item 5.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below							
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation				
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)				

Specific dates ca. 1898

Builder/Architect

Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Francis Marion Smith House, erected in 1898, is the most stylish and impressive residence in Gibsonville surviving from the 1890–1910 period that witnessed the town's major growth. The two-and-a-half-story frame house combines elements of the Colonial Revival and Queen Anne styles, including an elaborate program of classical trim and turned ornament. It is one of three notable late nineteenth and early twentieth residences associated with the Whitsett Institute, a boarding secondary school and junior college in the Whitsett community near Gibsonville. The three houses (one of which has already been listed in the National Register) are among the finest houses combining Colonial Revival and Queen Anne style elements in eastern Guilford County. Francis Marion Smith was a farmer, businessman, and civic official in and around Gibsonville. His wife, Lizzie E. Whitsett, taught at the Whitsett Institute both before and after her marriage.

### Criteria Assessment:

- A. Associated with the growth and increasing prosperity of Gibsonville during the 1880–1910 period. Associated with the development of private secondary education in the North Carolina piedmont during the same period.
- B. Associated with Francis Marion Smith (1864–1910), a prominent farmer, businessman, and civic official in the Gibsonville community. Associated with Lizzie E. Whitsett (1869–1922), a teacher at the private Whitsett Institute.
- C. The Francis Marion Smith House embodies distinctive characteristics of the Colonial Revival and Queen Anne styles; particularly notable is the combination of a basically symmetrical form and plan with picturesque dormers and projecting bays giving an overlay of asymmetry and a similar blend of classical and Eastlake exterior detail.

**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      Historical Significance      Item number      8

Page 1

The Francis Marion Smith House is the most elaborate residence surviving from Gibsonville's major period of commercial and industrial development. The principal impetus for this development was the establishment of the Minneola Cotton Mill in the late 1880s and its subsequent enlargement by the giant Cone Mills firm of Greensboro which purchased the plant in 1893.<sup>1</sup> The Smith House is one of three surviving residences combining elements of the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles associated with the development of the Whitsett Institute in the nearby rural community bearing that name; the other two residences are the William Thornton Whitsett House ("The Oaks"), erected about 1895, and the J. Henry Joyner House ("Holly Gate"), built about 1910, both of which are located in Whitsett. All three residences exhibit interesting combinations of Victorian and classical elements, and they are the three finest houses of the period in eastern Guilford County.

The Francis Marion Smith House was built by Francis Marion Smith in 1898. Both Smith and his wife Lizzie E. Whitsett Smith were Gibsonville natives. Francis Marion Smith was born in January of 1864 the son of Eli Lafayette and Nancy Cummings Smith. His father owned a livery stable in Gibsonville and Smith went into partnership in the business, one of the earliest enterprises in the town. Smith was primarily occupied as a farmer, however, owning farmland in both Guilford and adjacent Alamance County. He also owned rental property in the Gibsonville area. Smith was active in civic affairs, serving on Gibsonville's Board of Aldermen and as a director of the Bank of Gibsonville.<sup>3</sup>

In December of 1897 he married Lizzie E. Whitsett. Lizzie Whitsett was born in 1869 the daughter of Joseph and Mary Foust Whitsett. She was educated at Oakdale Academy and Fairview Institute and attended Salem Female Academy in the late 1880s, although she apparently did not graduate from the latter. She taught "for many years" at Whitsett Institute, a highly regarded private school in the community of Whitsett, near Gibsonville. The school was founded in 1884 as Fairview Institute and commercial College by Paisley White. In 1888 Lizzie Whitsett's brother Dr. William Thornton Whitsett became president of the school, which changed its name to Whitsett Institute and later Whitsett Academy. The school gained an enviable reputation and by 1900 Josephus Daniels was able to call the school "one of the first half dozen educational institutions in the state." Lizzie Whitsett taught at Whitsett prior to her marriage and at least for a brief period after her marriage. A sister, Effie May Whitsett also taught at the school.<sup>4</sup>

The Smith House was built shortly after the marriage of Francis Marion Smith and Lizzie Whitsett on land obtained by Mrs. Smith from her mother's estate. A new kitchen was built in 1910. The small plot was enlarged by a number of purchases through the years.<sup>5</sup> The Smiths' only child, Willie Whitsett Smith, was born in January of 1905. He died in March of 1908 at the age of three.<sup>6</sup> Marion Smith died of a sudden illness on September 30, 1910 at the age of 46. He was hailed by the Greensboro Patriot as "one of Guilford's best citizens."

Mrs. Smith moved to her mother's home in Whitsett around 1911 and the house stood vacant for several years until it was rented to a Mr. Varner, a depot agent for the Southern Railway. Lizzie Smith died in Whitsett in 1922. The house became the property of her sister Mrs. Effie Joyner. Mrs. Joyner was married to Professor James Henry Joyner

**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      Historical Significance      Item number 8

Page 2

who also taught at Whitsett. The Joyners lived in their spacious Whitsett home "Holly Gate." The Smith House was divided into an upstairs and downstairs half and was rented. One tenant, Iris Ruth an area schoolteacher, rented the upstairs portion for 40 years.

Following Mrs. Joyner's death in 1976 the house and property in excess of one acre were purchased from the estate by Jerry Nix. Mr. Nix, a member of the Guilford County Joint Historic Properties Commission, is in the process of restoring the house.<sup>8</sup>

FOOTNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> H. McKelden Smith (ed.) Architectural Resources: An Inventory of Historic Architecture (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1979), 23, 85, hereinafter cited as Smith, Architectural Resources.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, Architectural Resources, pp. 23, 85, and 107.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, Architectural Resources, 85; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Guilford County, North Carolina; Greensboro Patriot, October 6, 1910; Information supplied by Jerry Nix, copy in file.

<sup>4</sup> Greensboro Daily News, June 27, 1922; Greensboro Patriot, June 29, 1922; Burlington Times-News, September 26, 1968; Levi Branson (ed.), North Carolina Business Directories (Raleigh: Levi Branson) 1896, p. 315, 1897, p. 315. Information supplied by Jerry Nix, copy in file. Whitsett Institute burned in 1918 and was not reopened.

<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Smith obtained 1/8 acre from her mother's heirs for \$30 in April 1898. Guilford County Deed Book 115, p. 267. She acquired an adjacent 1/2 acre the same month from M. M. Albright for \$275. She and her husband acquired other land in Gibsonville throughout their marriage. Guilford County Deed Book 115, p. 259; Book 216, p. 549; Book 220, p. 579; Book 216, p. 547.

<sup>6</sup> Greensboro Patriot, March 25, 1908.

<sup>7</sup> Greensboro Patriot, October 6, 1910.

<sup>8</sup> Greensboro Daily News, June 27, 1922; Guilford County Will Book H, p. 276. Information supplied by Jerry Nix, copy in file; Telephone interview with Jerry Nix, July 27, 1982, notes in file. Both Marion and Lizzie Smith are buried at Friends Lutheran Church near Gibsonville.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1.349 acres

Quadrangle name Gibsonville

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	7	6	3	1	3	2	0
Zone	Easting	Northing					

B 

Zone	Easting	Northing					

C 


D 


E 


F 


G 


H 


### Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached plat map. The acreage comprises the urban lot on which the house and outbuildings stand.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A.	code	county	N/A	code
-------	------	------	--------	-----	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

## 11. Form Prepared By

Description and Criteria Assessment by Peter R. Kaplan, Preservation Planner  
name/title Significance by Jim Sumner, Researcher

organization N. C. Division of Archives and History date

street & number 109 E. Jones Street telephone(919)733-6545

city or town Raleigh state N. C. 27611

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date May 23, 1984

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**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

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Item number 9

Page 1

Branson, Levi (ed.). North Carolina Business Directories. Raleigh: Levi Branson, 1896, 1897.

Burlington Times-News. September 26, 1968.

Greensboro Daily News. June 27, 1922.

Greensboro Patriot. March 25, 1908; October 6, 1910; June 29, 1922.

Guilford County Records. Deed Books, Will Books. Microfilm copies. Raleigh: Division of Archives and History.

Nix, Jerry. Information supplied by. Copy in file.

Nix, Jerry. Telephone interview with. July 27, 1982. Notes in file.

Smith, H. McKelden (ed.). Architectural Resources: An Inventory of Historic Architecture. Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1979.

United States Census Office. Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Guilford County, North Carolina. Microfilm copy. Raleigh: Division of Archives and History.

