State of North Carolina  
Division of Archives and History  
INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

Selma  MULTIPLE RESOURCE  OR  THEMATIC NOMINATION

1 NAME
HISTORIC
William E. Smith House
AND/OR COMMON
The French Country Inn

2 LOCATION
STREET & NUMBER
309 West Railroad Street
CITY, TOWN
Selma
STATE
North Carolina
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Third

3 CLASSIFICATION
CATEGORY
-X DISTRICT
-X BUILDING(S)
-X STRUCTURE
-X OBJECT
OWNERSHIP
PUBLIC
PRIVATE
BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION
ACCESSIBLE
PRESENT USE
Agriculture
Commercial
Educational
Entertainment
Religious
Government
Industrial
Military
Other

3 STATUS
X OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
WORK IN PROGRESS
YES: RESTRICTED
YES: UNRESTRICTED
NO

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY
NAME
Phillip Forman
STREET & NUMBER
309 West Railroad Street
CITY, TOWN
Selma,  
STATE
North Carolina
VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC
Johnston County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
Market Street
CITY, TOWN
Smithfield,  
STATE
North Carolina
VICINITY OF

6 FORM PREPARED BY
NAME / TITLE
Thomas A. Greco - Principal Investigator
ORGANIZATION
Town of Selma
DATE
August, 1980
TELEPHONE
(919) 965-3388
STREET & NUMBER
Box 357
CITY, TOWN
Selma,  
STATE
North Carolina
**DESCRIPTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDITION</th>
<th>CHECK ONE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>X</em> Excellent</td>
<td><em>X</em> Unaltered</td>
<td><em>X</em> Original Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>-</em> Good</td>
<td><em>-</em> Ruins</td>
<td><em>-</em> Moved</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>-</em> Fair</td>
<td><em>-</em> Unexposed</td>
<td><em>-</em> Date</td>
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance.

The William E. Smith House, located on a large town lot, fronting on the Southern Railroad right-of-way, was enlarged c.1912 from a modest one-story cottage. The present building is a grand Neoclassical, two-story residence. An imposing pedimented portico supported by giant order Ionic columns dominates the front elevation. Originally a one-story Doric-columned porch encircled the three principal facades; most of this porch, however, was removed in the mid 1960's, except for a small portion on the east elevation. Also removed in the 1960's was a porte cochere on the west side. The side entrance from the porte cochere was replaced by a bay window. The front elevation shows evidence of the 1912 enlargement in the window arrangements of the first and second floors. The first floor is divided into three bays, while the second floor has five bays, creating a pleasing contrapuntal rhythm. The central entrance bay has a main entrance with leaded glass sidelights and transom. The fine second story door, which originally led to a small wooden balcony over the porch and now has a mock wrought iron balcony, has graceful half-arched side lights.

The interior has a traditional center hall plan, two rooms deep with a rear service wing. An elongated Ionic column screen separates the entrance from the stair within the hall. The open-string stair has a finely carved newel post and turned wood balusters. The four principal rooms have handsome hand-carved wood mantels. The two front rooms have classical mantels, Doric and Ionic columns framing the opening and beveled glass mirror. The original dining room mantel, in its original natural oak finish, has two leaded glass cabinets, which were used as plate warmers. The cabinets are supported by volutes. The dining room also has an elegant arched opening leading to the bay window, which was originally an entrance from the porte cochere. The door and window surrounds consist of symmetrically molded architraves supporting simple wood cornices. Unfortunately the ceilings in all rooms, except the hall and the new rear kitchen, have been lowered. However, all of the cornice moldings seem to have been reused on the lowered ceilings. The rear wing houses a new kitchen and storage area for the French Country Inn, a fine restaurant which now occupies the first floor. The entire second floor which had suffered from conversion into a hotel during the 1930's and 40's, has been redone as one living unit.
The two story William E. Smith House is an imposing example of the Neo-Classical style. The overall symmetrical massing and the Ionic pedimented portico are hallmarks of this style which replaced the picturesque Queen Anne style. William E. Smith was owner of the W. E. Smith and Company Clothing and Millinery Store. Mr. Smith was also president of the Bank of Selma when the bank became The First National Bank of Selma #10739, 1915.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

B. The house is associated with William E. Smith, a successful Selma merchant and president of the Bank of Selma, c.1915.

C. The building was executed in the Neo-Classical style and is a unique example of this imposing style in Selma.
The William E. Smith House was remodeled from a one story cottage into a two story Neo-Classical structure, c.1912. 1 It is not known who built the original structure, however there was a house on the site in 1904 when Claude R. McCauley rented the property to C. W. Smith. 2 It is assumed that C. R. McCauley was the original owner of the cottage which dates from c.1900. On July 20, 1912, the property and cottage was sold by Mr. McCauley to William E. Smith for $2,250. 3 The next reference to the house is found in an article in the Smithfield Herald, dated December 3, 1915. At that time W. L. Talton was completing the interior decoration of the W. E. Smith House. 4 It seems that the house was expanded sometime between 1912 and 1915. The 1911 Sanborn Map Company's Map of Selma shows the house as a one story cottage. 5

During the time that William Smith was living in Selma, he started the W. E. Smith and Company Clothing & Millinery Store. 6 Also in 1915 he was the president of the Bank of Selma, when the bank became the First National Bank of Selma #10739. 7 In 1918, Smith sold the house to A. V. Driver for $7,500. 8 Mr. Driver lost the house during the Depression and the house passed through several hands. During the late 1940's, under the ownership of E. M. Gordy, the house was turned into a hotel. 9 During the 1950's and early 60's, the house fell into a state of disrepair. Mr. and Mrs. M. Paul Herring purchased the property in 1963 and proceeded to restore the house to its former glory. The Herrings removed the one story porch and added the bay window in the dining room. 10 Currently the house is owned by Phillip Forman. Mr. Forman adapted the house as a French restaurant called the French Country Inn.

FOOTNOTES

1. Date is based on deeds and Smithfield Herald article dated Dec. 3, 1915.

2. Register of Deeds, Johnston County Courthouse; Smithfield, N. C. Deed Book R-8, page 589. Cottage was at that time occupied by J. W. Robertson.


MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .5

UTM REFERENCES


VERBAL BORDER DESCRIPTION

Being Lot Number 72 in Block 16 in the plan of the Town of Selma, N.C. lying on the west side of Railroad Street and described as follows:

Continued. .
FOOTNOTES . . . Continued


5. Sanborn Map Company. 1911 Map of Selma.


10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA . . . Continued . . .

BEGINNING at the intersection of Railroad and Sumner Streets and runs as Sumner Street 150 feet to N.E. Edgerton's (formerly) now E.L. Womack's corner; thence 90 degree angle from Sumner Street and with the Edgerton and Womack line 150 feet to Womack's corner; thence 90 degrees angle with the Womack line 150 feet to the building line of Railroad Street; thence with the building line of Railroad Street 150 feet to the beginning, containing a fractional part of an acre.