

William H. Gist House
U. S. Route 176
Rose Hill State Park
Union Vicinity
Union County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-390

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION
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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WILLIAM H. GIST HOUSE

HABS No. SC-390

LOCATION: Rose Hill State Park, Union County, S. C., 9 miles southwest of Union off U.S. 176.

PRESENT OWNER: S. C. Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism

PRESENT OCCUPANT: Open to visitation

STATEMENT OF

SIGNIFICANCE: This is the home of South Carolina's "Secession Governor" and is a fine example of an upcountry plantation home in a Federal Style distinguished by narrow sidelights flanking the front doorway and a fanlight above the entrance.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: The house was built for William Henry Gist (1807-1874) on land that he inherited from his father's estate. The Gist holdings in Union began with William Gist (1743-1802), the grandfather of William H., who settled in Union with his wife Sarah. William, who was Deputy Surveyor for George III, accumulated land from the Crown in the area of Union. However, William, a British Loyalist, lost his land after the revolution and was deported to England for seven years under the Act of Confiscation and Banishment. In 1789, William and his wife Sarah returned to Charleston, S. C. and later moved to Union when Sarah received a grant of 500 acres from the State Legislature for reasons unknown. William and Sarah purchased additional land and increased their holdings to more than a thousand acres by 1800. One of William's four sons, Francis Fincher Gist (c. 1779 - 1819), the father of the future Governor, had amassed over 1,700 acres in Union before his death in 1819. William H. Gist increased the Gist holdings to over 9,000 acres in the last recorded William H. Gist transaction of 1867. William H. Gist died in 1874 and split his property among his children, but he left the "homesite and its surrounding premises", some 700 acres, to his wife, Mary. Mary died in 1889 and left the estate to her three grandchildren, Mary Duncan, Carolina Duncan, and William Duncan. Mary Duncan later obtained all the property and

was married (Mary D. Harry). In 1932, she traded the land to the National Forest Service, In 1943, the Forest Service sold the property to Clyde T. Franks. In 1960, the property was again purchased by the Forest Service and later transferred to the S. C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

2. Additions and Alterations: In 1862, Gist remodeled his home. The red brick was covered with stucco and two story porches were added to the front and back. A kitchen building connected to the dining room by a breezeway burned in the late 19th century. The kitchen building was moved directly behind the house. Clyde Franks remodeled the house in c. 1945 and put up new porches and railings, removed the stepped gables on the roof and partially stabilized the structure and surrounding gardens. The South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, in 1970, stabilized the building with extensive exterior and interior work at a total cost of approximately \$42,000. The house now appears as it may have when William H. Gist finished his last renovation.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

William H. Gist was born in Charleston on August 22, 1807. He attended South Carolina College, read law, and was admitted to the South Carolina Bar. He represented the Union District in the South Carolina Legislature in 1840-44, and in the South Carolina Senate 1844-56. Between 1848-50 he served both as Senator and Lieutenant Governor. He was elected Governor in 1858. One of his last acts as Governor was to issue the call for the Secession Convention which was held immediately after his term of office expired. He represented the Union District at the Secession Convention and signed the Ordinance of Secession.

C. Sources of Information

1. Old views: One photograph (c. 1942) showing the rear of the structure prior to Clyde Frank's renovation.
2. Bibliography: From research compiled by the History Section of the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: This building is rather large and elegant considering its era and location in the up-country. The building is often referred to as Rose Hill stemming from the belief that William and Mary Gist had over one hundred

types of roses in their gardens. The house is located on a gently rising knoll and is almost completely shaded in the front by Magnolia trees. The gardens and house are surrounded in the front by brick retaining walls with cast iron fencing.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. This Federal style, plantation home is about 50 feet long, 36 feet wide. It is three stories high including the attic.
2. Foundations: Brick and stone.
3. Wall construction: Six to seven layers of brick covered with stucco.
4. Porches: Double tier porticos, front and back.
5. Chimneys: Two chimneys on each side with a fireplace in each room of the first and second floor.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrances are recessed with a semielliptical arch characterized by a fanlight and pilasters. The doors are seven panel. Other entrances are of plain transom design with Cross and Bible doors.
 - b. Windows: Double sash, six-over-six recessed window openings with shutters.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans

- a. First Floor: The main entrance opens into a large vestibule and leads directly to the staircase. To the left is the parlor which leads back to a bedroom. To the right is the dining room which leads back to a bedroom.
- b. Second Floor: To the left are two bedrooms and to the right is the ballroom. The ballroom has a semipermanent partition, which closes off a bedroom, and was removed for special occasions. Adjacent to the ballroom is a trunk room.
- c. Attic: Extends over the main part only.

2. Staircase: Spiral staircase leading to the second floor, but it is angular leading to the attic.
3. Walls: Painted plaster.
4. Trim and Color: Chair rail, baseboard and cornices throughout, originally stained, now painted white.
5. Flooring: Narrow hardwood floors.