



## ALABAMA REGISTER OF LANDMARKS & HERITAGE NOMINATION FORM

### 1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Oak Lawn Farm

and/or Common Name: Oak Lawn Farm

### 2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 1203 Pineapple Highway

City: Greenville

State: Alabama County: ~~Pike~~ Butler Zip: 36037

Is the property located within the city limits?  Yes  No

Township: 10N Range: 14E Section: 22 USGS Quad Map: Greenville West

### 3. CLASSIFICATION

**Category:**  Building(s)  District  Structure  Site  Object  
**Ownership:**  Public  Private  Both  
**Status:**  Occupied  Unoccupied  Work in progress  
**Public Acquisition:**  In process  Being considered  
**Accessible:**  No  Yes: restricted  Yes: unrestricted

### 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

Name: James Richard Branum (Individually & Trustee)

Address: 206 East Commerce Street

City: Greenville State: AL Zip: 36037

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. FLOOR PLAN & SITE PLAN

**Attach sketched floor plan. If the property includes more than one building, submit a site plan showing the locations, dates of construction, and uses of the buildings.**

Please note that access to the interior of the house was not possible. A site plan is attached.



## 6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION See Instructions for more information.

|  |   |   |                         |
|--|---|---|-------------------------|
| Construction date:   | Circa 1870  | Source:   | Butler County Assessor  |
| Alteration date:   | unknown   | Source:   | unknown                 |
| Architect/Builder:   | unknown   | Contractor:                                       | unknown                 |
| Physical condition:<br>(Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Ruinous)  | Poor  | Remaining historic fabric:<br>(High, Medium, Low) | High                    |
| No. of stories:  | 1   |   |                         |
| Historic use of property:  | residence – farm  |   |                         |
| Current use of property:   | vacant/ not in use  |   |                         |
| Architectural style category:  | Mid-19th Century  | Architectural style sub-category:                 | Italianate              |
| Basic typology:  | Center block with wings/<br>Tidewater Cottage   | Basic shape:                                      | Center block with wings |
| Basic floor plan:  | center-hall   | Historic Construction material(s):                | wood-frame              |
| Current exterior wall material(s):   | wood-frame  | Roof finish material(s):                          | asphalt                 |
| Main roof configuration:   | side gable  | Foundation material:                              | brick piers             |
| Porch type:  | pedimented entry porch; porte cochere along west elevation; screened porch along east elevation |   |                         |
| Window type and materials:   | 2/2, double-hung wooden sash; 6/6, double-hung wooden sash                                      |   |                         |
| Describe alterations:  | Addition of porte cochere to west facade  |   |                         |
| <p>Number and type of all outbuildings: A 3-bay wide, monitor-roofed barn with a hayloft is located to the south of the house. The barn is clad in a mix of clapboard and vertical wooden boards and is capped by a corrugated metal roof. Aerial maps indicate that an additional structure is located approximately 100 feet southeast of the barn. However, due to the overgrown vegetation on the property, access to this structure was not possible. The remnant of what appears to have been a former fire pit is located to the immediate northeast of the house.</p> <p>(if significant, fill out separate survey form)</p>   |   |   |                         |
| <p>Exterior Architectural Description: Oak lawn farm is a one-story, side-gable center block with wings constructed in a vernacular Italianate/ Folk Victorian/ Tidewater cottage style. The house is clad in clapboard with a brick pier foundation and asphalt shingle roof. A two-bay by one-bay cross gable wing extends from the rear elevation. A centrally- situated entry porch with a large pediment is supported by two groups of three squared columns. The primary entry features double doors with glass panels and Italianate-style decorative molding flanked by two transoms with same decorative molding, all united under a flat pediment supported by pilasters. A side-gable porte cochere extends from the west elevation and is supported by two sets of paired columns; it shelters a secondary entrance. A side-gable extension sheltering a screened porch is located along the east elevation. Fenestration is regular and consists of tripartite and paired, 2/2, double-hung wooden sash windows flanked by shutters on the primary façade and 2/2, double-hung wooden sash windows on secondary facades. The west wing features smaller, 6/6, double-hung wooden sash windows. Two interior chimneys are symmetrically located on the ridge of the central block.</p> |   |   |                         |
| <p>Description of Setting: Oak Lawn Farm is located almost immediately west of the Greenville city limits in an area primarily characterized by low-density residential development situated amid open fields and mature vegetation. The house is situated on a slight hill approximately 350 feet south of Pineapple Highway in the northern portion of a 46-acre property. The house is accessed via a long, asphalt-paved driveway (partially overgrown) which circles near the front entry of the house. The area surrounding the house and driveway is primarily grass lawn that appears to be occasionally maintained and is scattered with a number of mature trees, including oak trees. The barn is located approximately 120 feet south of the house and is surrounded by some grass lawn to the north but is overgrown with brush to the east, south and west. The house is also partially overgrown with vegetation. The property appears to have once been mostly cleared (probably as farmland), but is currently overgrown with brush and scattered with mature trees. Mature trees line the eastern, southern, western, and a portion of the northern perimeter of the property.</p>   |   |   |                         |



## 7. SIGNIFICANCE

Criteria (check all that apply and explain below). See Instructions for more information.

**Criterion A:** Associated with historical events and activities relating to the property that are important to the history of the community, state, or nation.

**Criterion B:** Person or group with whom the property is associated is important to the history of the community, state, or nation.

**Criterion C:** Type, period, or method of construction represents architectural features that are significant in the development of the community, state, or nation.

**Criterion D:** Property has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in Alabama's history or prehistory (archaeological component).

### AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (check all that apply and explain below)

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric  | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning     | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> religion       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic     | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation           | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture  | <input type="checkbox"/> education              | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> social history |
| <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input type="checkbox"/> theater        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> funerary art           | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian           | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    |   |

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

For each area of significance checked above, explain why this property is important. Use additional sheets as necessary.

Oak Lawn Farm is eligible for listing on the Alabama Register under Criteria A and C. Oak Lawn Farm is significant under Criterion A as it is among the earlier homesteads built near downtown Greenville. Situated in the northern portion of Butler County, which is located in the Red Hill region of south Alabama that has historically been known to contain moderately fertile soils, Oak Lawn Farm is a good example of the type of relatively successful farm located throughout this region. This prosperity is expressed in Asa Hunter Vann's account of his success with 170 fruit trees in a 1915 Du Pont publication ("Du Pont Farmer's Handbook: Instructions in the Use of High Explosives for Clearing Land, Planting, and Cultivating Trees, Drainage, Ditching and Subsoiling." E.I. du Pont de Nemours Powder Co., Wilmington, Del, 1915, via <http://books.google.com>, accessed August 11, 2011).

Under Criterion C, Oak Lawn Farm is significant for its retention of a high degree of historic integrity and its embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of vernacular house styles of the mid to late-nineteenth century. Although it is a relatively modest example of an Italianate or Folk Victorian house, few vernacular farmhouses in the area actually exhibit such attention to stylistic detail as seen, for example, in the building's front entry and its thoughtful symmetry and proportions. Its architectural style is also closely reminiscent of the Tidewater-type cottage that can be found throughout the state, although few if any examples are seen in the Greenville area. The house's strict symmetry, side-gable roof with a medium pitch, end chimneys and center-hall plan are characteristics commonly associated with the Tidewater-type cottages that were built in the earlier nineteenth century. This particular blend of a vernacular/ regional style such as the Tidewater-type cottage with elements of higher styles is distinctive and unique to regions of rural Alabama.

According to the Butler County Assessor, the house was constructed in 1870. Another historical account of the house, however,



claims that A.H. Vann built this house, which would mean that it would have to post-date 1870 because Vann was born in 1867 (Jewel Foster Stagner, "William Albert and Sophronia Demoville Rogers Foster," in *The Heritage of Butler County, Alabama*, Heritage Publishing Consultants, Inc., 2003). Assuming an 1870 construction date, however, the original inhabitant is unknown.

Asa Hunter Vann eventually acquired the property and operated a farm known as Oak Lawn Farm since at least 1915 ("Du Pont Farmer's Handbook: Instructions in the Use of High Explosives for Clearing Land, Planting, and Cultivating Trees, Drainage, Ditching and Subsoiling."). Asa Hunter Vann was raised by his grandparents Rev. Asa Skinner and Rachel Skinner in Reddock Springs, AL (just west of Greenville) after his mother Harriet Skinner died when he was two (Robert Skinner, "The Asa Skinner Family," in *The Heritage of Butler County, Alabama*, Heritage Publishing Consultants, Inc., 2003). A.H. Vann was a farmer by occupation and grew, in addition to other crops, fruit trees on the property. His testimony regarding the effectiveness of clearing land and planting and cultivating trees using explosive powder was featured in a 1915 Du Pont Powder Co. pamphlet: "Planted 170 trees in blasted holes. Only two died. Trees in blasted holes are twice as far advanced as those in spade dug holes. -A.H. Vann, Oak Lawn Farm" ("Du Pont Farmer's Handbook: Instructions in the Use of High Explosives for Clearing Land, Planting, and Cultivating Trees, Drainage, Ditching and Subsoiling."). The historic cultivation of trees on the property may account for the scattered vegetation that exists throughout the property today.

A.H. Vann's property was once larger; in 1929 he sold the eastern 15 acres of his land for \$1,500 to the National Guard Troop A, whose facility today is located directly east of the property (Willie Gene Autrey, "National Guard in Greenville, Alabama," in *The Heritage of Butler County, Alabama*, Heritage Publishing Consultants, Inc., 2003). After Asa Hunter Vann died in 1948 and his wife died in 1945, Oak Lawn Farm remained in the Vann family; Karissa Vann Lockhart, a descendent of A.H. Vann, still lived in the house in the 1990s with her husband Revis Lockhart (*U.S. Phone and Address Directories, 1993-2002* [database on-line], [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), accessed October 28, 2011) until she sold the estate to James Richard Branum in 2008 (Butler County Deed Records, Book 296, p.295). Today, the house is vacant and unmaintained.

Oak Lawn Farm still retains a high degree of historic integrity of location, setting, feeling and association, despite its close proximity to Greenville's downtown and the modern development that has occurred to the north, east and west. The farmhouse and barn also retain a high degree of historic integrity of design, materials and workmanship. Also significant is the fact that Oak Lawn Farm had been occupied by members of the same Vann family for at least 100 years until it was sold three years ago. Unfortunately, the integrity of the house is threatened today due to its vacancy and deferred maintenance.

## 8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

### *Use attached sheets as necessary*

Autrey, Willie Gene. "National Guard in Greenville, Alabama," in *The Heritage of Butler County, Alabama*. Heritage Publishing Consultants, Inc. 2003.

Butler County Deed Records, Book 296, p.295

"Du Pont Farmer's Handbook: Instructions in the Use of High Explosives for Clearing Land, Planting, and Cultivating Trees, Drainage, Ditching and Subsoiling." E.I. du Pont de Nemours Powder Co., Wilmington, Del, 1915; via <http://books.google.com> (accessed August 11, 2011).

Gamble, Robert S. "Alabama Architecture." Handbook for Owners of Alabama's Historic Houses, Alabama Historical Commission, 2001. [http://preserveala.org/pdfs/ESSAYS/ALABAMA%20ARCHITECTURE\\_Essay1.pdf](http://preserveala.org/pdfs/ESSAYS/ALABAMA%20ARCHITECTURE_Essay1.pdf) (accessed December 20, 2011).

Gamble, Robert. *Historic Architecture in Alabama: A Guide to Styles and Types, 1810-1930*. Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1990.

Owen, Thomas M., Compiler on behalf of the State of Alabama. "Alabama Agriculture and Industrial Statistics" in Alabama Official and Statistical Register, 1907. Montgomery: Brown Printing Co., State Printers and Binders, 1907; via <http://books.google.com>, accessed December 20, 2011.

Stanger, Jewel Foster. "William Albert and Sophronia Demoville Rogers Foster," in *The Heritage of Butler County, Alabama*. Heritage Publishing Consultants, Inc., 2003.

## 9. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of nominated property: **46**

*Attach a map showing the location of the property.*

## 10. Person Applying for Historic Register Designation

Name: Britta Fenniman, Architectural Historian of EBI Consulting

Address: 21 B Street

City: Burlington

State: Massachusetts

Zip: 01803

Telephone: (802) 522-8259

Email: bfenniman@ebiconsulting.com

## 11. PHOTOGRAPHS:

Images are essential to the review process. They can be 4x6 color prints or digital images on a CD/DVD. All photographs will become the property of the AHC and will not be returned.

## 12. REMINDER:

Along with this completed application, include attachments for Items 5, 9 and 11 and send them to:

Alabama Historical Commission  
Attn: Lee Anne  
468 S. Perry Street  
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0900