

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 the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
1	2	buildings
		district
		site
2		structures
		object
3	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

Domestic/Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

foundation: Brick

walls: Brick

roof: Metal

other: Wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Nathaniel Gist House, in the Union vicinity of Union County, South Carolina, was built on the Broad River near a small settlement called Simstown. A two-story brick house with a white columned Doric order portico, it is more classical in form and design than many of the framed upcountry farmhouses typical of the mid-nineteenth century South. This 1855 house has had no significant structural alterations. Although occupied intermittently, with periods of neglect, it has retained its grand exterior, and exemplifies a taste and style in architecture of affluent planters of the time and place.

Narrative Description

The Nathaniel Gist House is located about nine miles southeast of Union, at the intersection of River Road and what is now called Neal Shoals Road, formerly the "Old Woods Ferry" road. It sits on a twenty-one-acre parcel on a rise above the river, and was once visible to river traffic before the growth of the Sumter National Forest. The property is now entered by a private drive called Fant Acres Road, accessed from Neal Shoals Road.

The antebellum mansion was built circa 1855. Greek Revival in architectural style, especially noticeable are the massive stucco-covered brick columns of the classical portico, as well as the elongated nine-over-six double-hung windows of the first floor.

It is a solid masonry building inside and out, built of handmade plantation bricks. The bricks are laid in a variation of American or common bond six rows of stretchers to every one row of headers acting as bonding units. They are set in lime and sand mortar with joints flush cut and painted white as was the custom in that era. All exterior doorways have hand-pecked granite thresholds.

There was an eighteen-inch wide drainage ditch across the front and down the sides of the house with a gravel bottom and a retaining wall. These have since been backfilled and as a result the basement windows have been enclosed with brick.

The front of the house is dominated by a two-tiered balustraded portico at both levels supported by four stucco covered brick columns. The columns are ninety-six inches in circumference at the base and are a variant of the Doric order. There are two twenty-inch wide pilasters, one at each end of the porch. The support beams for the second level porch are let into the columns and pilasters for bearing. Trabeated double-leaf door entrances at both levels of the portico have transoms, corner lights, and sidelights with criss-cross tracery, patterned after examples found in Asher Benjamin's *The Architect, or Practical House Carpenter* (1830). The tympanum of the portico contains a Palladian window with operable sidelights.

The porch's first level tongue and groove pine flooring has been covered in concrete. The original floor system is visible from the basement.

The hipped roof of the house, as well as the gabled roof of the portico, are covered in decorative pressed metal shingles. There are remnants of scuppers but no evidence of built in gutters. Markings on the fascia suggest original bracket hung half round gutters. Green glass insulators along the east wall indicate earlier lightning rods.

Evident on the west wall of the house are ghost markings and joist pockets in the brick indicating an earlier, now missing hip roofed structure of some description, possibly a carriage port or porch. There are doors leading into the two lower level east side rooms of the house from this once roofed area. The rear of the house has similar areas of ghost markings and joist pockets which indicate the presence of a former one-story covered porch or portico with stairs to the main level.

The original louvered window shutters with handmade wrought iron hinges are stored within the house. They are pintle-hung and there is no evidence of there ever being shutter dogs.

The basic floor plan of the house is that of a central hall house. All interior walls are masonry and plaster covered, a refined feature that only Union County's most affluent landowners could afford. The house is entered through the first floor double-leaf doors into a 9'8" x 41' central hall with 12' ceilings, a feature carried throughout the first floor. Second floor ceilings are ten feet in height.

The original lath and plaster ceilings are missing. It is likely that the upstairs ceilings were destroyed when the heart pine floors on the third floor or attic were removed. Sometime in the early twentieth century, all ceilings were replaced with a product sold and known as beaverboard. Most of this later treatment material has since been removed.

At the rear of the center hall is a fine balustraded, elliptical stairway leading to the second and third floors. The rounded, steam-bent railing originates in the first floor volute or turnout easement and terminates into a wall on the third floor. There is an enclosed stair under the main stair leading from the first floor to the basement.

The exact dimensions and design of this main elliptical stair may be found in plate LXII of Asher Benjamin's *The Architect, or Practical House Carpenter* (1830). Benjamin's influence is found throughout the house and is evident in fireplace dimensions, trim to room size ratios, many framing details such as methods of making the tenons to the common joists and trimmer joists, specifications for floor joist crowning, etc.

The center halls on both the first and second floors are flanked on both sides by two rooms approximately eighteen feet square in size. The basement has the center hall walls only and the third floor or attic is open.

The first floor center hall, as well as the front two flanking rooms, are floored with three-and-one-half-inch tongue and groove heart pine boards. This more costly and labor intensive flooring was often used in "company rooms" as a means to indicate status and wealth. The remainder of the house has five-to-six inch tongue and groove heart pine floors.

The center hall and dining room show evidence and have some remnants of picture molding and a two piece, beaded and capped chair-rail. There is no evidence of there ever having been crown molding in the house. Baseboards throughout the house are beaded.

Two large interior chimneys rise between each of the rooms and on both floors. There are flanking closets, a very rare feature for that time period. There are a total of ten fireplaces serving the two

chimneys, inclusive of two in the basement level. Eight have original heart pine Greek Revival style mantels.

Each room has four large windows with the exception of the two downstairs rooms on the west side. Of these the front room has three windows with an exterior side door with hand-pecked granite threshold that once accessed a porch, the rear room has two windows and an exterior side door with hand-pecked granite threshold that once accessed the same porch.

Due to the thickness of the exterior walls, the window penetrations are deep, resulting in substantial window trim details inside. Downstairs window boxes are canted to afford more light and have detailed panel insets. Sash lights are fourteen by twenty inches and are mostly original. Sash pocket weights are rectangular.

Because the Nathaniel Gist House is a solid masonry building with interior partition walls constructed of brick as well, wood framing is limited to floor and roof systems. The floor system takes bearing on brick ledges created by decreasing the thickness of the walls by one course of bricks on each side of the walls for each floor. One of these brick ledges is visible in the stairway. The attic floor system bears directly on top of the brick walls' termination at the ceiling level of the second floor. At this point, the thickness of the walls has been reduced to one foot.

All beams and hip rafters of the massive hip roof are oversized and hand-hewn. Joints are mortised-and-tenoned showing a high degree of craftsmanship with attention to detail. This is evident in the chamfering of the ends of all protruding tenons and in the precision joinery of the house's structural beams. True scarf joinery is evident in much of the visible heavy framing.

This antebellum plantation house is currently undergoing an accurate restoration by its owner, Marion Brown Fant [Sr.], and his friend Robert M. Schmitt of Schmitt Consultants in Historic Restoration of Stanfield, North Carolina.

A yard kitchen common to most plantation houses is no longer extant. Gone too, is a small building on the east side of the front yard, used both as an office and a school room for the Gist children. None of the original outbuildings remain.

Approximately 200 feet southwest of the house is a stone-lined circular well constructed with stones from the Broad River and capped with pecked granite slabs similar to the thresholds of the house. It is believed to be the earliest and main water supply for the house. On last measurement, the water table was approximately sixty four feet below grade. The well contributes to the character and significance of the property.

A segment of Old Woods Ferry Road traverses the property, is labeled on plats of the property, and is discernable on the aerial Union County tax map [attached]. This landscape feature contributes to the character and significance of the property.

Two modern ca. 1960 buildings --- a frame horse barn to the north of the main house and a frame horse shed to the south of the main house --- do not contribute to the character and significance of the property.

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1855

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The Nathaniel Gist House, in the Union vicinity of Union County, South Carolina, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C for Architecture, as an outstanding example of Greek Revival plantation architecture in upcountry South Carolina, built in the decade just before the Civil War. With its brick load-bearing exterior and interior walls and stuccoed white, brick-columned portico, the Gist House is atypical in construction from and more classical in design than the frame farmhouses typical of the mid-nineteenth century upland South. This 1855 house has had no significant structural alterations for the past century and a half. Although occupied intermittently, with periods of neglect, it has retained its exterior and interior character-defining elements, and exemplifies a taste and style of affluent planters of its time and place.¹

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

Nathaniel Gist, Jr. (1820-1864), the planter who built and owned this house, was a member of a historic and prominent Union County family. His grandfather William Gist (1743-1802), migrated from Baltimore County, Maryland and settled on land grants near the Fairforest Creek in what is now northern Union County ca.1765.² Notable relatives of Nathaniel's generation included his brother, States Rights Gist (1831-1864), a Confederate brigadier general killed at the Battle of Franklin, Tennessee, in 1864, and his first cousin, William Henry Gist (1807-1874), owner of nearby Rose Hill Plantation (now Rose Hill Plantation State Historic Site, individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places June 5, 1970). William H. Gist was governor of South Carolina 1858-1860, ending his term the week before the state became the first to secede from the Union.³

Nathaniel Gist, Jr. was born in 1820 at Wyoming, his father's plantation near Jonesville.⁴ He married his first cousin, Mary McDaniel, and with his brother, Joseph Fincher Gist, they built the Gist house on a 1,030-acre plantation acquired by a deed from J.K.B. Sims in 1844.⁵ In January 1857, Nathaniel bought his brother's half interest, thus becoming sole owner.⁶

During the Civil War, Nathaniel Gist, Jr. was ineligible for active service in the Confederate army because he suffered from partial deafness, but enlisted in the 7th South Carolina Reserves.⁷ He died

¹ Jennifer Revels, *Historical and Architectural Survey of Union County, South Carolina* (Columbia: Palmetto Conservation Foundation, 2005), p. 40.

² Wilson Gee, *The Gist Family of South Carolina and its Maryland Antecedents* (Charlottesville: Privately Printed by Jarman's for the Author, 1934), p. 21.

³ Gee, *passim.*, Richard W. Hatcher III, "States Rights Gist," in Walter B. Edgar, ed., *The South Carolina Encyclopedia* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), pp. 377-78; Walter Brian Cisco, *States Rights Gist: A South Carolina General of the Civil War* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Publishing Company, 1991); Allan D. Charles, "William Henry Gist," in Edgar, ed., p. 378; Rose Hill Plantation, Union County, National Register of Historic Places Files, South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

⁴ Jean Muir Dorsey and Maxwell Jay Dorsey, *Christopher Gist of Maryland and Some of His Descendants, 1679-1957* (Chicago: John S. Swift Company, 1969), p. 113.

⁵ Union County Deed Book T13, Page 102, Union County Courthouse, Union, S.C.

⁶ Union County SC Deed Book Y42, Page 102.

⁷ National Archives Microcopy #267, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of South Carolina, 7th Reserves, on file at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

of typhoid fever December 9, 1864.⁸ Family tradition claims that he contracted the fever while visiting a battlefield to retrieve the body of a fallen relative.⁹ He died intestate and the court divided his estate between his widow and his six children.¹⁰ His widow remarried, and two deeds recorded in 1895 and 1928 show that two of his children deeded their interest in the plantation to their unmarried brother, Joseph Fincher Gist, who owned and lived in the house until his death in 1933.¹¹

Because the South was so impoverished after the war, the plantation languished. Joseph Fincher Gist died intestate in 1933.¹² His estate was meager, and the house was abandoned, with acreage of only 517 acres. In January 1936, the house and remaining land was sold to the U.S. Forest Reserve through condemnation actions, and later incorporated within the boundaries of the Sumter National Forest.¹³

The house was repaired and made livable, and probably saved from vandalism by Mrs. Annie Ruth Meador Fant, who lived there from 1945 until her death on February 12, 1984. In March 1986 her son, Marion Brown Fant, Sr. and his wife, Bessie Wishert Fant purchased the Nathaniel Gist House and twenty one surrounding acres from the Sumter National Forest, which acted on behalf of the United States government, in two separate deeds in March 1986.¹⁴ Marion and Bessie Fant, the current owners, are undertaking a multi-years long restoration of the house.

⁸ Gee, p. 43.

⁹ Gee, p. 44.

¹⁰ Union County Probate, 47-13, Union County Courthouse, Union, S.C.

¹¹ Union County Deed Book 58, Page 628, and Deed Book 57, Page 541.

¹² Union County Probate, 147-1.

¹³ Union County Deed Book 64, Page 430.

¹⁴ Union County Deed Book 185, Page 157, and Deed Book 199, Page 67.

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: **SC Dept. of Archives & History**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 0287

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 21 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>456052</u>	<u>3840355</u>	4	<u>17</u>	<u>455755</u>	<u>3840267</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>17</u>	<u>456235</u>	<u>3839919</u>	5	<u>17</u>	<u>455837</u>	<u>3840122</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
3	<u>17</u>	<u>456064</u>	<u>3839485</u>				
	Zone	Easting	Northing				

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary for the Nathaniel Gist House is defined as the heavy black line marked "Nathaniel Gist House" on the accompanying portion of a Union County, South Carolina Tax Map, drawn at a scale of 1" = 300'.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundary is restricted to the historic main house, historic well, historic road, and two noncontributing ca. 1960 horse barns, and the parcel historically associated with the plantation.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Janet Richter, Robert M. Schmitt, and Vivian Bradburn, with the assistance of the SHPO staff
organization _____ date 21 December 2010
street & number 201 Hart Street telephone 864-427-4524
city or town Union state SC zip code 29379

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Nathaniel Gist House
City or Vicinity: Union vicinity
County: Union
State: South Carolina
Photographer: Angela Fant / Andrew W. Chandler
Date Photographed: April 4, 2010 / November 18, 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and Number:

1. Facade, and Setting (NE Elevation)
2. Facade (NE Elevation)
3. NW Oblique of Facade
4. SW Oblique
5. South Oblique of Rear Elevation
6. Rear (SW) Elevation
7. Rear (SW) Elevation and Setting
8. NW Elevation showing Ghosting and Joist Pockets for Porch
9. Rear (SW) Elevation, Wooden Window Grille (Basement)
10. NE Column Pedestal/Base
11. NE Column and Base/Plinth with Balustrade
12. Upper Column and Re-worked Capital
13. Upper NW Column and Attempted Restoration of Capital
14. Detail of Original Shutters and Hardware
15. Original Rain Leader Box on Front NE Corner
16. Exterior Front Door with Glass Transoms, Doors Closed
17. Front Entrance
18. Pecked Granite Threshold at Front Entrance
19. Brick Detail, Showing Penciling of Mortar Joints
20. Main Floor, Central Hallway with Staircase
21. Main Stairway Detail
22. Scroll Molding Detail on Stairway Carriage
23. Spiral Staircase from Third Level
24. Second Floor Stairway Detail, Showing Cutout for Spiral Staircase
25. Second Floor, SE Parlor Door and Surround
26. Second Floor, NE Parlor Door, Showing Faux Graining
27. Second Floor, NE Parlor Mantel
28. Second Floor, NE Parlor Window Surrounds
29. Second Floor, SE Chamber Mantel

30. Second Floor, SW Chamber, Detail of Closet Pegs
31. First and Second Floor Doors with Transom Windows, from Stairway Landing
32. Second Floor, NE Chamber Mantel
33. Second Floor, SE Bedroom Chamber
34. Second Floor, NE Bedroom Chamber, Roof Plate Showing Cornice Joinery
35. Roof Structure, Looking Toward Palladian Window in Portico Gable
36. Roof Joists, Rafters, and Cornice Joinery, SW Corner
37. Roof Joists and Rafters, SW Corner
38. Basement Hallway
39. Basement, Left Side, Back
40. Rear Yard Behind House, Looking West, Well at Center Background
41. Original Dug Well, with Original River Rocks
42. View Toward NE from Front Porch of House
43. Old Woods Ferry Road (Old Road Cut Visible)
44. ca. 1960 Horse Barn, on North Side of House (Noncontributing)
45. ca. 1960 Horse Shed, on South Side of House (Noncontributing)

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 listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.