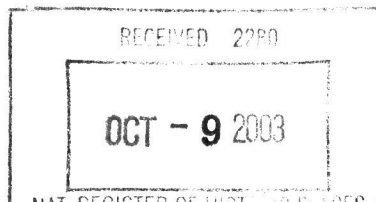


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE

other names/site number Tiger Tail Hill; Mount Airy; Snow Hill; FMSF# HE00496

2. Location

street & number 22495 Chinsegut Hill Road N/A ☐ not for publication

city or town Brooksville ☒ vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Hernando code 053 zip code 34601

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☒ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara C. Mattick, DSHPO for Survey & Registration, 10-1-03
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Florida Division of Historical Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☒ entered in the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ removed from the National
Register.

☐ other, (explain) _____

for
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Daniel J. Vivian

11/21/03

5. Classification**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private
☐ public-local
☒ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ buildings
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

3	0	buildings
5	0	sites
0	0	structures
7	0	objects
15	0	total

Name of related multiple property listings

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC/Secondary Dwelling

DOMESTIC/Secondary Structure/Wash House

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/Conference Center

VACANT/Not in Use

VACANT/Not in Use

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE/Frame Vernacular

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Wood

roof Fiberglass Shingle

other Wood: Veranda

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
BROOKSVILLE, HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

Chinsegut Hill Manor House is a 2 ½-story Frame Vernacular former residence that was constructed in several phases from c.1847 to c.1925. The building has an irregular plan and a side gable main roof. A widow's walk that once occupied the center of the roof was removed in 1963. The dwelling features a two-story veranda that extends around three sides of the house and has a balustrade on the second story. The main facade of the house is oriented to the southeast and stands in a clearing surrounded by massive oaks and well-established shrubs. The building rests partly on a brick pier foundation and partly on a brick foundation wall. The two-story kitchen wing at the northern corner of the main house probably comprises what remains of the original c.1847 structure. The grounds feature a historic pioneer family cemetery, the graves of Raymond Robins and his wife, and two outbuildings that contribute to the significance of the property. A number of historic landscape features enhance the setting of the manor house, including three large live oak trees named the Ascension Oak, Altar Oak, and Lenin Oak that had memorial and ceremonial significance for Raymond Robins, who occupied the property from 1904-1954. The historic resources for the property, therefore, consist of three contributing buildings, seven objects (grave markers), and five sites (two cemetery sites and three ceremonial and memorial oak trees). Today the house and grounds form the heart of the Chinsegut Hill Conference and Retreat Center owned and managed by the University of South Florida in Tampa.

SETTING

Chinsegut Hill is located approximately five miles northeast of the city of Brooksville, Florida, a city with a population of approximately 7,000 found about forty-five miles north of Tampa. Brooksville is the seat of Hernando County, which is located on the central-west coast of Florida north of Tampa Bay. It is bounded by the Gulf of Mexico on the west, Citrus County to the north, Sumter County to the east, and Pasco County to the south. Hernando County stretches 37 miles east to west, and 18 miles north to south. Chinsegut Hill is situated on one of the highest points in Florida, with an elevation of 274 feet above sea level. There is a spectacular view to the west, with the farming buildings of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) experimental station on view in the distance. Also, the conference center is adjacent to the 408 acre Chinsegut Hill Nature Center which hosts educational programs throughout the year. The manor house is immediately surrounded by mature live oaks. The crest of the knoll of Chinsegut Hill was leveled off over a century ago to accommodate the manor house and gardens.

Thick forest land that contains a wide variety of subtropical flora and fauna borders the site on the northwest and the south. Some of the farm and USDA buildings were constructed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the 1930s and are historically and architecturally significant. Modern cabins—located outside the historic property boundaries—have been built among the surrounding trees to support the present use of Chinsegut Hill Manor as a Conference Center for the University of South Florida. They are barely visible from the house and do not affect its setting. The farm

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Section number 7 Page 2

CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
BROOKSVILLE, HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
DESCRIPTION

outbuildings and experimental agricultural station office are also remote from the house. The towering oaks and tall palmettos that surround the house frame it, adding to its ambience of a plantation house of the Old South, rather than being merely a typical, large farmhouse of Central Florida.

Exterior Description, Main House

Chinsegut Hill Manor is a prominently sited two-and-a-half-story wood frame house surrounded by wide verandas opening off the rooms of both floors. The main facade is oriented southeast and stands in a clearing surrounded by massive oaks and well-established shrubs, although its garden today is only a faint reflection of how it appeared when Raymond Robins lived at Chinsegut. The wide verandas, central through hallways on both floors, and tall windows and doors ensure good air circulation in hot and humid or rainy weather. Two chimney systems, one in the center of the house, the other on the exterior of the west wall, provide fireplaces for six of the principal rooms. The present kitchen is housed in an adjoining two-story extension located at the northeast corner of the main structure. The main frame of the house is constructed of heart of pine cut at the site, and the chimneys were constructed from bricks made from yellow clay fired at the base of the hill. The bricks were painted red to give them the appearance of traditional brick.¹

The main facade of the house (Photos 1-3) faces southeast, responding to its physical environment by orienting the narrow elevation to the west, thus minimizing heat gain from the sun's summer path. The deep verandas which surround the house shelter the drop siding wall surface from both sun and rain and allow the through passage of air via the tall windows and screened doors on even the stormiest of days. The house was originally crowned by a 15-foot x 17-foot roof deck, or widow's walk, with an arched wooden louvered vent in its base (See attachment 1). Because it had become deteriorated and allowed the intrusion of rainwater into the attic, the widow's walk was removed during a re-roofing done in 1963.

The house and its attached porte-cochere and kitchen wing (Photos 2-3) comprise an irregular massing. The main house is a rectangular two-story frame structure embraced on three sides by wide verandas supported by wood "Tuscan" columns. The columns of the first story veranda and those of the porte-cochere rest on brick bases, while the second story columns rest directly on the wooden deck of the veranda (Photos 4-5). A gable roof covers the main section of the house, which is oriented on a southwest-northeast axis. An approximately 20-foot wide shed dormer (Photo 6) on the northern slope of the roof marks the location of an attic bedroom and bath.

Three-sided bay windows are found in both gable ends of the attic story (Photos 7-8). The western bay window encloses the western chimney. The floors or decks of the verandas are approximately 14 feet wide on the long elevations of the house and 12 feet wide at the narrow end. The verandas were reportedly added to the

¹ Wingard interview.

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CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
BROOKSVILLE, HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
DESCRIPTION

house around 1878 and once encircled the main section of the house. The veranda at the northern end of the house was enclosed on both levels during modifications made to the Manor House by the Robinses. The frieze decoration between the eight unevenly spaced Tuscan columns of the second floor veranda on the main facade (Photo 2) is the most fanciful element of the house and stylistically recalls Chinoiserie.² The second floor columns are of a smaller diameter than the first floor but the slender verticality of the columns and balustrade spindles balances the horizontal lines of the roof and first floor fascia.

The fenestration is regular on both stories of the five bay main facade wall of the main structure of the house, and the double hung sash windows with 4/4 lights extend to the ceiling height. A noticeable oddity of the facade, however, is that the columns on either side of the main entrance to the house are spaced unevenly. This irregularity of spacing is not readily apparent without closer inspection because the kitchen wing on the east and the porte-cochere on the west create an even more visually dominant asymmetry, although the house is not symmetrical with regard to the hallway axis.

The porte-cochere (Photo 8) extends from the western elevation and is crowned by a non-accessible deck surrounded by a balustrade similar to that found on the second story veranda. The porte-cochere distracts the observer's attention from the most unusual feature of this elevation—that of the attic level bay window which encloses the western chimney. At some point after the house was occupied by Raymond Robins, the verandas on the eastern elevation of the house were enclosed by a knee wall and windows (Photo 7) and the space created opened to the house proper by partial removal of the original exterior walls. The attic has a bay window similar to the one on the western elevation, but this one does not include a chimney. The chimney for the main fireplace on the interior of the house penetrates the roof on the northern side of the gable ridge (Photos 2-3).

The northern elevation of the house (Photos 4 and 9) is similar to the south but has a single entry door to the central hallway on both floors. The shed-roofed attic dormer has three double hung wood sash windows and is centrally located in the roof. A bathroom enclosure addition protrudes onto the northern side of the second floor veranda. The windows to the bedrooms of the first and second stories of the western end are paired double hung wood sash and the windows to the dining room are paired, close together and balance the double doors from the room to the screened porch.

The two-story wing which contains the kitchen facilities (Photo 3, 6-7, and 9) joins the main part of the house at its northern corner. Access to the "kitchen ell" is gained by way of stairs and a walkway (Photos 10-11) connected to the verandas of the main house from both floors of this building. There is a sizable basement underneath the east wing (Photo 12), said to be the first basement in Hernando County.³

² A style in art reflecting Chinese influence through use of elaborate decoration and intricate patterns.

³ Wingard interview.

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CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
BROOKSVILLE, HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
DESCRIPTION

Interior Description, Main House

The interior is that of a house which has seen several 'modernizations.' The first floor hallway (Photos 13-14) which extends through the building from front to rear on both main floors contains the single flight of stairs from the first to second floor as well as a long narrow glass fronted cabinet that is part of a piece of furniture from Margaret Robin's childhood home. The piece has been "built in" along the west wall. Probably the finest antique now in the house, it was made in Brooklyn, New York.

To the east of the hall is the parlor (Photos 15-16) and to the dining room (Photos 17). The moldings in the parlor are simple with convex central panels but in keeping with the fireplace surround of this room which has a turned pilaster at each side of the fireplace opening. A single, raised panel door opens to the dining room behind this room. The dining room also has a fireplace across the interior corner similar to the parlor and both share the same central chimney along with the study and small room above.

The molding and wood trim of both floors of the house indicate a hierarchy of decoration. In the parlor and two western rooms and hallway, the corners of the architraves are decorated with a pressed wood square in a bunch of grapes motif. The trim of the dining room is classical but much simpler and together with the fireplace mantel indicates modifications may have been made to this room prior to when it was opened to the enclosed porch. Upstairs the hallway and study have concentric circle designed trim. The grape motif is used in the bedrooms.

An unusual feature of the stairway is the small square window which admits light from the stairwell to the storage room at the head of the stairs. Its corners are decorated with the grape motif pressed wood squares. The storage room was used as a linen closet which was quite flammable, so the window was installed to avoid the use of candles. All ceilings and floors of the house proper are butt edged wooden planks.⁴

The architrave of the French doors to the porch from the first floor southwest room (Photos 18-19) is plain butted wood planking. This is a singularly unsophisticated trim considering the modest detailing elsewhere in the house. The off-center brick fireplace and simple fireplace surround add emphasis to the supposition that the fireplace on the west elevation was added at a later date. It is likely that at the same time the door to the porch beside the fireplace in the sitting room was substituted for an existing window by an amateur carpenter, perhaps to accommodate Raymond Robins' wheelchair after his paralyzing accident in 1935.

Both the bedrooms on the first (now an office) and second floors (Photos 20-21) in the northwest corners of the house had bathrooms inserted into their northeast corners. These opened, as did the bedrooms, to the central hall and both also opened via shorter than normal six-foot openings to the neighboring bedrooms.

⁴ Wingard interview.

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CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
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DESCRIPTION

These openings were trimmed in the same grape motif architrave as the other doorways in the bedrooms, but on the bathroom side the architrave corner moldings are concentric squares.

Little is known of the appearance of the basic house before the Robinses occupied it as their winter—and later permanent—home between 1904 and 1924. The enclosing of the eastern ends of the first and second story verandas with single light double hung wood windows and the removal of the eastern wall of the second floor main room (Photos 22-25) were done by Margaret Robins to create a larger study for Raymond during one of her husband's trips abroad. She also had the dining room's (Photo 17) exterior wall removed, the porch floor leveled and the dining room flooring extended so the porch became an extension of that room. Some time after 1923 the kitchen wing was enlarged. Chinsegut Hill Manor House did not have electrical service until 1932. Until then all artificial illumination was provided by kerosene lamps and candles.

The interior finishes are of good quality. The moldings are wood of simple design and reflect a hierarchy of room use by the consistency of molding designs in various rooms. They range from pressed wood architrave comers having a bunch of grapes motif in the principal spaces to turned concentric circles in the upstairs hallway. The walls are plastered, and the ceilings and floors are planked wood that is beaded in some locations—for example, the ceiling of the study in the enclosed veranda area. The windows of the main house have four over four lights and the French doors eight lights. The transoms above the double entry doors on the south, on both first and second floors have multiple mullions. The fireplace surrounds reflect an interesting variety of styles and hierarchy of room use (as well as wood combinations) and suggest that what was the dining room was originally a room of less importance. The moldings of this room are the simplest in the house and so corroborate this suspicion suggesting further research is especially indicated in this area.

The second floor of the main part of the Manor House contains two bedrooms (Photos 21 and 26) that are found in the northwest and southwest corners. The bedroom at the northwest corner has an adjoining bathroom, while the southwest bedroom does not, but it does have a fireplace. Both bedrooms abut a narrow hallway that is oriented like the one on the first floor and provides access to the front and rear verandas. The hall takes a turn northward at the stair landing and provides access to a guest bathroom (Photo 29) and Raymond Robins' second floor study, now used as a large conference room (Photos 24-25). A narrow stairway across the hall from the bedrooms (Photo 30) leads to the attic floor, where one finds a large, unfinished storage area (Photo 31) beneath the rafters on the east side of the house. A bedroom (Photos 32-33) and bathroom are found in the shed dormer area on the west side of the house. Another bedroom (Photos 34-35), with a fireplace, is found at the south gable end of the attic, and another bedroom (Photo 36) is found immediately to the north, on the other side of the hallway. The room at the north gable end of the attic (Photo 37) was an upstairs study.

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CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
BROOKSVILLE, HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
DESCRIPTION

Interior Description, Kitchen Wing

The first floor (Photos 38-40) of the kitchen wing consists of three main spaces, a stair hall and storage area, an office, and a screened porch. The second floor (Photos 41-43) features a stair landing and corridor that connects the kitchen addition to the second story veranda of the main house and to a modern kitchen area and a restroom. An ell on the second floor that extends to the west is presently unused. Changes to the kitchen wing are largely undocumented, so its appearance prior to the construction of the main block of the house in the 1850s is uncertain. The wing appears to contain too much interior space to have been used solely as a kitchen during the 19th century, but whether it was also used as servants' quarters or for some other purpose is unknown at this time.

Graves, Memorials, and Landscape Features

Southwest of the Manor House is a pioneer cemetery (Photos 44-46), with seven graves holding the remains of some members of the Ederington and Snow families. Each of the graves is marked with a marble gravestone. The graves of Raymond Robins and his wife (Photos 47-48), which are located near the foot of the Altar Oak northeast of the Manor House, are marked by a single metal plaque and surrounded by benches. The nearby Ascension Oak features a reconstruction of the stairs and platform rising up the trunk of the tree from which Raymond Robins greeted the rising sun and meditated. The Lenin Oak (Photo 49) is found southwest of the Manor House. There are also two wood frame shotgun houses (Photos 50-51) found south of the main house that contribute to the significance of the property. These are the Overseer's House and the Wash House, both of which were constructed c.1933 by the CCC.

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.

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 36) 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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

OTHER: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

c. 1847-1954

Significant Dates

c. 1847

c. 1852-1854

c. 1878

Significant Person

Robins, Raymond

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Arch: Unknown

Blder: Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of Repository

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Section number 8 Page 1

CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
BROOKSVILLE, HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

Chinsegut Hill Manor House is locally significant under Criteria A and C in the areas of Early Settlement and Architecture for its association with the early plantation economy of Hernando County, Florida, and as a large and elaborate example of a Central Florida plantation house. The manor house was originally the centerpiece of a vast plantation enterprise before the outbreak of the Civil War and was tied to the early settlement and development of Hernando County. Under Criterion C, the dwelling is a large and unusual example of a Frame Vernacular plantation house, having a distinctive exterior and interior plan and exhibiting elaborate verandas on both major stories of the building. The house was enlarged several times between c.1847 and 1904, when it became the residence of Raymond Robins and his wife, Margaret, who also made some changes to the property during their life there. Chinsegut Hill Manor House is also nationally significant under Criterion B as the principal residence of Raymond Robins, who played an important role in national and international political, social, and economic affairs during the early decades of the twentieth century. The business man and social and political activist lived there from 1904 until his death in 1954. No other residence or place of occupation associated with the activities of Raymond Robins is extant.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Development of Hernando County and Brooksville

The first section of Chinsegut Hill Manor House was erected c. 1847, two years after Florida became a state. Central Florida had only recently been wrested from the Seminole Indians, and the grip of the federal government on the region was still tenuous. The Florida frontier was still a violent place, with the few remaining unconquered Seminole Indians adding to the natural dangers of wild animals and disease.⁵ The settlement of the Brooksville area of Hernando County began at the end of the Second Seminole War (1835-1842). The official close of hostilities prompted the U.S. Congress on August 4, 1842 to pass the Armed Occupation Act of 1842, which provided land grants to new settlers and implemented the removal to the western Indian territories of most of the Seminoles that remained in the Florida peninsula. In response to the immediate influx of new settlers, the Florida Territorial Legislature created Hernando County from a portion of Alachua County on February 24, 1843, naming the county for Spanish explorer Hernando De Soto. The name of the county was changed in 1844 to "Benton" County in honor of Senator Thomas Hart Benton who sponsored the Armed Occupation Act of 1842. The name changed back in 1850 after Senator Benton of Missouri, took an unpopular stand on the Slavery Compromise of 1850.⁶

⁵ Stanaback, *A History of Hernando County: 1840-1976*. (Brooksville, Florida: Richard J. Stanaback, 1976), pp. 12-13.

⁶ Allen Morris, *The Florida Handbook*. (Tallahassee: The Peninsular Publishing Company, 1979), p. 334; "The History of Spring Hill, Florida, <http://www.springhillonline.com/history.htm>.

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Section number 8 Page 2

CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
BROOKSVILLE, HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
SIGNIFICANCE

The passage of the Armed Occupation Act transformed the character of the of much of Florida. Sections of the interior of Florida that largely had been untouched by white settlement a decade earlier now blossomed with plantations using predominantly slave labor to produce cotton, tobacco, and sugar cane. The yeoman farmer and the single family farm existed side by side with these huge estates. Cotton and sugar cane production dominated the economy of Middle Florida before the Civil War. By the early 1840s, sugarcane was growing on a dozen plantations, and sugar was being sent to the New Orleans market. Planters accounted for the fact that nearly half of the population and wealth was centered in Middle Florida on the eve of statehood in 1845.⁷

The original governmental seat of the new county was located at the settlement of Fort DeSoto, located about one mile southeast of the present county seat, but was later moved to Brooksville because of its more central location. Brooksville was founded in 1856 and named for Congressman Preston Brooks of South Carolina, made famous for his assault on Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts for his anti-slavery views. After the Civil War, Brooksville developed as a commercial and rail shipping point for surrounding Hernando County. The town was officially incorporated on October 13, 1880.⁸ During the late nineteenth century, citrus cultivation and hard rock phosphate mining became major industries in the area. Brooksville was the junction of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad which served both of these industries and the other agricultural enterprises of Hernando County.⁹ Other economic activities in the area were turpentine production, timbering, lime rock mining, and cattle ranching.¹⁰

Brooksville and Hernando County, like the rest of the state of Florida, experienced dramatic fluctuations in economic and population growth during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the late nineteenth century Hernando County experienced the rapid growth of the citrus industry until it was devastated by the "Great Freeze" during the winter of 1894-1895. Many citrus growers abandoned their property, and the only bank in Brooksville went bankrupt.¹¹

During the Florida real estate boom of the 1920s, Brooksville experienced a period of rapid growth. The settlement had grown from a frontier hamlet to a town of 1,600 people, accounting for roughly one-third of the county's population. The community was large enough to support two newspapers and was an important packing and rail shipping center for a wide variety of agricultural products. The collapse of the state-wide real estate boom in 1926 and the onset of the Great Depression in 1929 ended further significant population growth and economic development in Brooksville until after the end of World War II. The effects of the depression locally were alleviated somewhat in 1932 when Raymond Robins donated almost 2,100 acres of his Chinsegut

⁷ Charlton W. Tebeau, *A History of Florida*. (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971), pp. 182-184.

⁸ Harry Cutler, *A History of Florida, Past and Present*. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1923), Vol. I:595.

⁹ Alfred A. McKethan, *Hernando County, Our Story*. (Brooksville: Alfred A. McKethan, n.d.), pp. 21,40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 91.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section number 8 Page 3 CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
BROOKSVILLE, HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
SIGNIFICANCE

Hill estate to the federal government for the establishment the Subtropical Agricultural Research Station, which is still in existence today, where experiments were initially conducted in the raising of citrus, cattle, and poultry.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Among the first settlers drawn to Central Florida by the opportunity presented by the Armed Occupation Act of 1842 to claim vast tracts of land for cultivation was Colonel Byrd Pearson. Pearson immigrated from South Carolina and staked a claim to 5,000 acres in the soon to be created Hernando County. He named his plantation Tiger Tail Hill, and using the labor of his slaves, cleared the land, planted sugar cane and built a sugar mill.¹² When his attempt to commercially produce sugar proved unprofitable, Pearson turned to raising cattle and cultivating cedar trees, citrus, and cotton. Around 1847, Pearson erected what is now the east wing of what would become Chinsegut Hill Manor House. Much of the material was milled locally or brought overland from the coastal community of Bayport, located at the mouth of the WeekiWachee River at the northern tip of Tampa Bay. By 1850, Hernando County's population consisted of 602 white settlers and 322 black slaves.¹³ Pearson sold the property to fellow South Carolinian Francis Higgins Ederington in 1851, who renamed the plantation Mount Airy.

In 1852, Ederington moved his family, livestock, slaves, furnishings, and equipment to the property. Francis Ederington raised a large family, consisting of seven daughters and two sons. One son, Mallory, died while away attending college; the other, Francis, Jr., spent his life in Hernando County, dying childless at age ninety-one. All of the daughters, except one who died in infancy, married.¹⁴ Between 1852 and 1854, Francis Ederington, Sr., constructed the main portion of the manor house. He and his family are buried in a small cemetery plot located about 150 feet east of the manor house.¹⁵

Colonel Russell Snow, another South Carolinian, settled in Hernando County in 1861. That same year, he enlisted in the Third Florida Infantry to fight in the Civil War. After returning home in 1866, Snow married Charlotte Ederington, Francis Ederington's youngest daughter. Snow soon gained control of the 5,000 acre plantation and renamed it Snow Hill. Having learned dentistry, surgery, and veterinary medicine during his service with the Florida volunteers, Snow practiced these professions at the plantation. In the 1870s, Snow added the spacious verandas and a dining room to the house. In the late 1800s, he began raising sugar cane on the shores of nearby Lake Lindsey. He expanded the house further in 1889. In 1890, Mallory and Earnest Snow ran the property for their father, who had become an invalid. At the turn of the century, the Snow family

¹² The location of this mill is not recorded.

¹³ Stanaback, *Hernando*, p. 14, 18.

¹⁴ Alfred A. McKethan, *Hernando County, Our Story*. (Brooksville: Alfred A. McKethan, n.d.), p. 26.

¹⁵ Stanaback, *Hernando*, p. 295.

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completed the third floor of the house. Some members of the Snow family are buried in the small cemetery beside the Ederingtons.¹⁶

By far, the most significant historical figure to own Chinsegut was Raymond Robins, who owned the house and land from 1904 to 1954. Raymond Robins was born in Staten Island, New York, in 1873, the son of Charles Robins and Hannah Crow. His mother, a professional opera singer, was committed to an insane asylum when he was a child. He spent his childhood in Ohio, Kentucky and Florida, living with his grandparents and a variety of uncles and cousins. While still a child, Raymond was sent to live for a time with relatives in Brooksville. At the age of nine, Robins became acquainted with Snow Hill and vowed to own it some day. With the help and encouragement of family and friends, he became interested in self-education and nature. Robins was determined to succeed both financially and in the realm of education. Beginning at age seventeen, he worked at a variety of jobs, from being a local postmaster to laboring in the mines of Tennessee and Colorado.¹⁷ After being cheated in a business deal, Robins determined to study law. He entered Columbian University Law School (now George Washington University) in Washington, D.C., in 1893 and received his law degree in 1894, after completing the three-year program in one year. Robins soon gained a reputation as a good lawyer in San Francisco and participated in political campaigns for the Democratic Party.¹⁸

Raymond's elder sister Elizabeth often served as his surrogate mother. Elizabeth Robins (1862-1952) was born in Louisville, Kentucky. Her father held progressive political views on the education of women and sent Elizabeth to Vassar to study medicine, but at eighteen she decided to become an actress. She became one of the foremost actresses of the American stage in the latter part of the nineteenth century and a notable author of both fiction and non-fiction writings. In 1888 Elizabeth traveled to London where she introduced British audiences to the work of Henrik Ibsen and other "modern" playwrights.¹⁹

A restless Raymond Robins found practicing law unfulfilling, and in 1897 sailed to Alaska to prospect for gold. While there, he experienced a religious rebirth through a series of visions and a near-death experience. He considered becoming a Jesuit priest, and although he never took this step, he did spend most of his time in Alaska from 1897-1900 working as a Christian missionary and lecturing on the saving power of Christianity.²⁰ In 1900, Raymond Robins was reported missing while on an expedition into the vast Alaskan wilderness, and Elizabeth traveled to Alaska to find her brother. She was successful but found him in poor health and

¹⁶ Stanaback, Hernando, p. 295; Money, "Chinsegut Chronology," (University of South Florida Tampa Library Special Collections), n.p.

¹⁷ Stanaback, Hernando, p. 295; Salzman, Reform and Revolution: The Life and Times of Raymond Robins, (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991), p. 9, 17, 22, 25.

¹⁸ Salzman, Reform and Revolution, p. 26-31.

¹⁹ "Elizabeth Robins," <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Wrobins.htm>.

²⁰ Salzman, Reform and Revolution, p. 33-34, 39-40.

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convinced him to leave the frontier territory. Later she wrote about her experiences in Alaska in the novels, Magnetic North (1904) and Come and Find Me (1908).

Raymond Robins moved to Chicago where he initially ran the Municipal Lodging House, a settlement house for the unemployed and homeless. He became heavily involved with reform movements in the city, including efforts to eliminate political corruption in the municipal government and efforts to provide increased assistance to low-income workers. In 1904, he married Margaret Dreier, a fellow political and social activist from New York. Born in 1868 to wealthy German parents, Drier was a major activist in her own right, having a long history of social activism in New York City, becoming a leading advocate of the welfare of women trade union workers and stood at the forefront of the struggle for women's suffrage.²¹

With funds from Raymond's sister Elizabeth, the newlyweds purchased Snow Hill from Ernest and Mallory Snow in 1904, fulfilling Robins' childhood dream of owning the estate. Robins renamed it "Chinsegut Hill," an Inuit word which he learned in Alaska, meaning "The spirit of lost things," or "a place where things of true value that have been lost may be found again." The couple invested much energy into improving the grounds and forming a spiritual bond with the land. Raymond named a nearby tree "The Altar Oak," where he held religious services every Sunday. He greeted each new day by climbing a staircase he built onto a tree he called "The Ascension Oak." From his platform, he prayed, meditated and watched the sun rise.

The couple made many improvements to the house, including the addition in 1910 of a kitchen in the east wing, a widow's walk and ventilator, the west chimney, an expanded study, and a music room. They later added four bathrooms (1914), acquired additional land (1917), added the porte-cochere (1925), and added a fifth bathroom, electricity, and a well (1933).²²

By 1910, the couple became more heavily involved in politics, particularly in the Illinois Progressive Party, for which Robins later served as chairman. He also supported Theodore Roosevelt's presidential election attempt on the Bull Moose Party ticket. Robins ran for office and supported political allies, but fell victim to a nervous breakdown from overwork in 1916. The eruption of World War I was especially difficult for the Robinses. Margaret was still devoted to her German homeland, while Raymond and his sister (who was then living in London) sided with the Allies.²³

Having failed in domestic politics by 1916, Robins unexpectedly set foot on the international stage. In 1917, former president Theodore Roosevelt arranged to have Raymond appointed Commissioner of the American Red Cross Mission to Russia. He acted as an unofficial ambassador and observer for the U.S.

²¹ Salzman, Reform and Revolution, p. 68-69, 80-81.

²² Salzman, Reform and Revolution, p. 79, 81.

²³ Salzman, Reform and Revolution, p. 149, 159, 174.

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Although Robins supported some of the economic and social goals advocated by leading socialists, it should be pointed out that he was never a communist. Before embarking for Russia, Robins took part in a Chicago movement to prevent anti-Czarist Russians from being deported. Upon arrival in Petrograd, Robins took charge of the Red Cross food distribution network in the midst of revolutionary upheaval.²⁴

In 1917 and 1918, Robins met a variety of Russian dignitaries, including Czarist princes, apparatchiks, and Bolsheviks such as Kerensky, Trotsky, and Lenin. Robins gave numerous public speeches on the streets, educating the populace about American democracy and speaking out against Bolshevism. When it became apparent that the Bolsheviks would seize power, Robins put aside his differences and met with their leaders. Other American officials could not bring themselves to meet with the enemies of capitalism, a fact Robins attributed to a condition he called "The Indoor Mind." He explained, "The Indoor Mind ... gives itself to the seven percent [the ruling class] ... to drawing-rooms, dinner-parties, tea-tables, palaces, boulevard restaurants."²⁵

Robins spent much of his time on the streets, in factories, touring farms, and talking with workers and soldiers to acquaint himself with their views. Robins conferred with Trotsky and Lenin regularly—at one point meeting with Lenin three times a week. He was the only American official who attended personal conferences with Lenin, discussing politics and the aims of the ascendant Bolshevik revolution. Lenin and Robins looked past their respective ideologies to form a strong respect for one another, and even a friendship. By all accounts, the two men liked one another; Lenin himself said so on several occasions. When Robins heard from his wife that she had just planted an acorn on Chinsegut Hill, Robins suggested they name the tree "The Lenin Oak," after his brilliant friend and in honor of the founding of the Soviet Union. The tree still stands today.²⁶

When the November revolution of 1917 ended, Robins took a larger diplomatic role in his mission. The official American ambassador to Russia quietly sent Robins on trips to talk to the Bolsheviks. The ambassador could not have made these trips on his own, especially as the U.S. plotted against the budding Soviet state. Robins became the chief U.S. liaison to Russia and was heavily involved in peace negotiations between Imperial Germany and Bolshevik Russia. He aimed to prevent Russia from signing a separate peace, and by pledging U.S. aid, he opened up a small chance of cooperation that never came to fruition. Instead, the U.S and its allies plotted military intervention against Bolshevik Russia—contrary to Robins' ardent wishes.²⁷

Nothing seemed to go the way Robins had hoped. The Bolsheviks seized power and sued for peace with Germany. His work with the Bolsheviks—both public and secret—aroused the anger and suspicion of

²⁴ Salzman, Reform and Revolution, p. 175-76, 181-82.

²⁵ Salzman, Reform and Revolution, p. 191-92.

²⁶ Clendinen, "An Oak Tree for Lenin", *Floridian Magazine* (June 20, 1971), p. 21; Salzman, Reform and Revolution, p. 234.

²⁷ Page, Lenin and World Revolution. (New York: New York University Press, 1959) pp. 103-104; Davis and Trani, The First Cold War. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002) pp. 112-113; Salzman, Reform and Revolution, p. 264-65, 273, 283.

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Russians, Americans, and allies alike. Although the U.S. government had used Robins as an “unofficial” diplomat, it simultaneously resented him for overstepping the bounds of his Red Cross humanitarian mission. At the heart of the backlash against Robins lay his suggestions of cooperation between the two countries. He advocated U.S. military and economic aid to Russia, assistance in building a rail network, and an advisory role in forming a Red Army. Furthermore, Robins’ unofficial duties often enraged official ambassadors prohibited from having contact with the Bolsheviks. In any case, Robins knew that he had ultimately failed in fostering cooperation between the two nations, and returned to the United States²⁸

Upon his return, Robins became heavily involved in domestic politics, but excessive stress caught up with him in 1921, and he had another nervous breakdown. Beginning in 1923, Margaret Dreier Robins became more deeply involved with national politics. President Harding invited her participation in a labor conference, and she attended the second International Congress of Working Women in Geneva. The Harding administration considered Robins for a cabinet position, and after Harding’s death in 1923, Margaret Robins dined with Harding’s successor, President Calvin Coolidge in the White House. In 1924, the Robinses chose Chinsegut as their year-round residence.²⁹

Robins campaigned tirelessly for several international issues: opposition to the “imperialistic” Treaty of Versailles; support for economic cooperation between the U.S. and U.S.S.R; opposition to the League of Nations, which did not recognize the Soviet Union; and support to outlaw war through international law. These campaigns occupied most of his time in the 1920s, and he spoke tirelessly to promote them. He argued that by supporting Versailles (which encouraged imperial Japan and engendered German resentment) and Soviet isolation (which ruled out cooperation with one of the most powerful nations on earth), the U.S. and its allies encouraged another world war.

He lost on almost every issue he espoused, but history vindicated many of his political views. Even his support for the Volstead Act of 1919 and the 18th Amendment to the Constitution prohibiting the manufacture and sales of alcoholic beverages, a domestic issue that he strongly supported, ultimately failed. In 1928, Robins saw the Pact of Paris signed, a treaty for the renunciation of war. However, the treaty was only a moral declaration and did not provide for enforcement. That same year, Herbert Hoover called on Robins to help plan his presidential campaign.³⁰

The stock market crash in 1929 wiped out the savings of Robins and his wife. After a few failed attempts at selling the Chinsegut Hill estate, Robins used his connections with the Hoover administration to donate the by then 2,080 acre property to the Federal government as a wildlife refuge and experimental

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Money, “Chinsegut Chronology,” n.p.

³⁰ Salzman, Reform and Revolution, p. 304, 330, 331.

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agricultural station. According to the agreement, the couple could live there, free of property taxes, until their deaths. Raymond augmented their small savings by going on speaking tours, such as one in 1931 supporting Prohibition. He also floated his name as a replacement for presidential candidate Herbert Hoover in 1932.³¹

The formerly wealthy couple eked out a slim existence for the rest of their lives, and depended partly on the economic support of friends. The federal government appointed a caretaker to manage the Chinsegut property, and Robins oversaw the establishment of horses, cattle, pasture grasses, trees, avocados, and other fruits on the grounds. Government funds also supplied the deep well and electricity installed at the site in 1933. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) constructed bridges in the area, a lodge, and two cabins that still stand today. The R.T. Long cabin is named after the overseer of the property, and the Wash House allowed government employees (like those of the CCC) to clean up after work. In about 1940, the government installed the Central Florida Experiment Station to research cattle and grass breeding.³²

The Robinses entertained many prominent guests on the grounds over the years, including Soviet ambassadors; Jane Addams, the founder of Hull House; William Jennings Bryan; Thomas Edison; James Cash Penney of department store fame; author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings; Senator Claude Pepper; U.S. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes; and many other notable persons.³³

Robins recovered from another mental breakdown in 1932 and fulfilled his dream of returning to Russia, this time a three-month visit to campaign for U.S. recognition of the USSR. After hearing so much bad press about the USSR, Robins was not prepared to believe that any of it was true—he wanted Soviet recognition at all costs. As a result, he naively projected the image that Stalin wished to portray of the troubled communist state. Robins interviewed Stalin and attended various celebrations before returning to the U.S. to mount his new campaign for recognition. Franklin Roosevelt finally chose to recognize the USSR on November 16, 1933—but not without personal prodding from Robins behind the scenes.³⁴

Robins returned to the lecture circuit to try to make some money to augment his meager income. Then, disaster struck. In 1935, he fell thirty feet while pruning a tree at Chinsegut Hill and broke his back, paralyzing him from the pelvis down. He fought against terrible pain and worked through constant treatment and surgery to restore some mobility to his life. He installed ramps and handles all over the manor house to enable him to move around and climb the stairs. He designed a standing wheelchair to enable him to move about his property.³⁵ Margaret Robins died in 1945 after years of ill health. Raymond Robins continued to promote U.S.-

³¹ Salzman, *Reform and Revolution*, p. 344-46.

³² Money, "Chinsegut Chronology," n.p.; Robins to W.F. Ward, May 10, 1932, "Robins Correspondence."

³³ Money, n.p.; Salzman, *Reform and Revolution*, p. 344-45.

³⁴ Salzman, *Reform and Revolution*, p. 354, 360-61; Robins, "An American Prophet Speaks," (New York: *The National Guardian*, 1952.

³⁵ Salzman, *Reform and Revolution*, p. 363-64.

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U.S.S.R. friendship as the Cold War escalated. He died in 1954. Both he and his wife are buried beside the Altar Oak under a single grave marker.³⁶

In 1954, the University of Florida signed a four-year lease for the property. It used the site for a branch library (using Robins' 8,000 volumes) and botanical field trips. With the expiration of the lease in 1958, the university removed most of the books and furniture to Gainesville and effectively abandoned the property.³⁷ The University of South Florida took over the site in 1958 by signing a four-year lease just as the University of Florida had done.

In 1959, a Cold War controversy brought Chinsegut Hill to the nation's attention. In 1959, family friend and caretaker Lisa von Borowsky commissioned a plaque for the Lenin Oak that bore the inscription Robins had always wanted.³⁸ She placed it in the ground beside the oak. In 1961, a group of Boy Scouts on a hiking trip led by John Brengle discovered the plaque. Brengle contacted the Tampa Tribune on the matter, and journalist Paul Wilder wrote a front-page article with amazed indignation, touching off a statewide furor among Red-baiting politicians. U.S. Senator Spessard Holland and Governor Farris Bryant expressed shock and demanded an explanation. University of South Florida President John Allen disassociated his institution from the plaque, saying he knew nothing about it.³⁹

The U.S. Department of Agriculture ordered Cal Burns, the superintendent of Chinsegut's agricultural reservation, to demand that Borowsky remove the plaque within twenty-four hours. If she did not comply, it ordered Burns to remove it. Borowsky asked Burns to destroy the plaque. Burns dug up the surrounding concrete, tore the plaque loose and melted it down. He then threw the memorial into the deepest part of Lake Lindsey.⁴⁰ Local American Legion commander John Tracy received a steady stream of angry calls from his membership, and he requested a grand jury investigation. Newspaper writers added their own demands to the swelling chorus. On May 4, 1961, forty-three years and three days after Margaret Robins planted the oak, Borowsky testified in front of the grand jury on the activities of the Robins family and herself. A week later, the jury returned with a report that read, in part, "We especially commend those who spend their tireless efforts in ways of combating communism and influx of communism in our way of life in reporting any unusual occurrence to those in authority." The official inquiry was over, but unofficial resentment lingered for years.⁴¹

³⁶ Salzman, Reform and Revolution, p. 371.

³⁷ Money, "Chinsegut Chronology," n.p.

³⁸ The inscription read, "Planted by Margaret Drier Robins 1st of May 1918 in memory of the leader of the Russian Revolution, Nikolai Lenin. 'The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force.'"

³⁹ Clendinen, "An Oak Tree for Lenin," p. 22.

⁴⁰ Clendinen, "An Oak Tree for Lenin," p. 22-23.

⁴¹ Clendinen, "An Oak Tree for Lenin," p. 23

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The University of South Florida signed a 20-year lease for the property in 1962. Since then, it has expended enormous time, money and effort to preserve and restore the property. Because of rainwater leakage, the university removed the widow's walk and ventilator in 1963—the only major and permanent change made to the property. The federal government transferred the title of Chinsegut Hill from the United States Department of Agriculture to University of South Florida in 1982, when the lease expired and USF fulfilled its obligations. USF removed the outside dining room in 1995. Various people and agencies ran the property, including USF President John Allen (1962), Continuing Education (1965), and the Division of Housing and Food Service (1975), later Auxiliary Services. USF installed seven cabins nearby (1975), a dining room (1982), a classroom (1986), a maintenance shop (1986), and a storage shed (1990). In the mid-1990s, newly-constructed cabins gradually replaced the old ones. In the late 1990s, seven new cabins replaced those previously on the site.⁴²

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Chinsegut Hill Manor House is a distinctive and unusual example of frame vernacular construction, reflecting simplified versions of styles current during the periods when the house was altered. It also reflects the changing attitudes of its various owners—developing from a rather small utilitarian shelter into a large plantation house that was subsequently modified to suit the needs and tastes of the later residents. Improvements and additions reflect technologies and domestic standards of living from the mid-nineteenth century to the first decades of the twentieth, including such improvements as the installation of indoor plumbing and electric lighting in the 1930s. Owner Raymond Robins (1904-1954) admired the simple, vernacular character of the house and nurtured it rather than attempting to modernize it or beautify it with a later applied architectural style.

The original house, constructed c. 1847, is reputed to have been built from milled lumber brought to the site by oxen drawn wagons. Later sections were probably constructed of locally milled lumber. The main frame of the house is of mortise and tennon construction, using techniques that date prior to the development of balloon framing in the later nineteenth century. There are no records mentioning the names of any architects or builders involved in the several phases of the construction of the house. The quirks and irregularities of construction revealed by a visual examination of the house, while adding to its charm, indicate the house was constructed by a variety of semi-skilled carpenters who took scant notice of the work that had been done previously; therefore, the house appears to be a superb example of a large vernacular residence that grew organically without reference to an overall plan. Each owner added to the residence to accommodate the growing number of family residents and to suit the needs and tastes of the period. The partitioning of the

⁴² Money, "Chinsegut Chronology," n.p.

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interior of the house appears somewhat haphazard, further reflecting the organic growth and lack of formal planning in its construction.

Chinsegut Hill Manor House is among the largest and best-preserved Antebellum plantation houses in Florida. Other notable examples contemporary with Chinsegut Hill, such as the Robert Gamble House (built c. 1845-1850, NR 1970); the Willoughby Gregory House (built c. 1843, NR 1983); and Lyndhurst Plantation House (built c. 1850, NR 1973), may be more distinctive in the use of formal architectural styles, but Chinsegut Hill has its own distinctive visual character.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES

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10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property 14 approximately**UTM References**

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	3	6	6	4	0	0	3	1	6	6	4	4	0
Zone			Easting			Northing									
2	1	7	3	6	6	7	0	0	3	1	6	6	4	4	0

3	1	7	3	6	6	7	0	0	3	1	6	6	2	0	0
Zone			Easting			Northing									
4	1	7	3	6	6	4	0	0	3	1	6	6	2	0	0

☐ See continuation sheet**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Andy Huse, Program Assistant USF/Carl Shiver, Historic Sites Specialistorganization Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation date October 2003street & number R.A. Gray Building, 500 South Bronough Street telephone (850) 245-6333city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**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.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Mr. Jeff Mack, Director USF Auxiliary Services, University of South Floridastreet & number 4202 E. Fowler Avenue, AXA 0094 telephone (813) 974-2539city or town Tampa state Florida zip code 33620-5400

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 amend 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. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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GEOGRAPICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary line enclosing the historic resources of Chinsegut Hill Manor House property are those shown on the map accompanying the National Register Proposal, being an approximately 14 acre section of the approximately 114 tract of land found in the NW ¼ of Section 36, Township 21 South, Range 19 East in Hernando County, found at the end of an access drive connecting the Manor House with Chinsegut Hill Road which connects to State Road 481 and U.S. Highway 41 approximately five miles from the city of Brooksville.

Boundary Justification

The above boundaries contain all of the historic resources associated with Chinsegut Hill that were constructed between c. 1847 and 1954. It excludes non-historic resources added by the University of South Florida to enhance its use of the property as a conference center.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Chinsegut Hill Manor House
2. 22495 Chinsegut Hill Road, Brooksville (Hernando County), Florida
3. Mark I. Greenberg on 1/10/03
4. January 2003
5. University of South Florida Special Collections
6. Manor House, Main (Southeast) Facade and Southwest Elevation, Looking North.
7. Photo 1 of 51

Numbers 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs.

6. Manor House, Main (Southeast) Facade and Southwest Elevation, Looking North.
7. Photo 2 of 51
6. Manor House and Kitchen Addition, Main (Southeast) Facade, Looking Northwest
7. Photo 3 of 51
6. Manor House, Southeast Veranda, First Story, Looking Northeast
7. Photo 4 of 51
6. Manor House, Southeast Veranda, Second Story, Looking Northeast
7. Photo 5 of 51
6. Manor House and Kitchen Addition, Northwest Elevation, Looking Southeast
7. Photo 6 of 51
6. Manor House and Kitchen Addition, Northeast Elevation, Looking Southwest
7. Photo 7 of 51
6. Manor House, Southwest Elevation, Looking Northeast
7. Photo 8 of 51
6. Kitchen Addition and Manor House, Northwest Elevation, Looking South
7. Photo 9 of 51
6. Manor House, Northwest Veranda, Second Story, Looking Southwest
7. Photo 10 of 51

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number _____ Page 2 CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
BROOKSVILLE, HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHOTOGRAPHS

- 6. Manor House, Northwest Veranda, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 11 of 51

- 6. Kitchen Addition, Basement, Looking Northwest toward Entrance Door
- 7. Photo 12 of 51

- 6. Manor House, First Floor Interior, Central Hallway, Looking Southeast
- 7. Photo 13 of 51

- 6. Manor House, First Floor Interior, Central Hallway, Looking Northwest
- 7. Photo 14 of 51

- 6. Manor House, First Floor Interior, Parlor (Small Conference Room), Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 15 of 51

- 6. Manor House, First Floor Interior, Parlor (Small Conference Room), Looking Northeast
- 7. Photo 16 of 51

- 6. Manor House, First Floor Interior, Dining (Music) Room, Looking Northeast
- 7. Photo 17 of 51

- 6. Manor House, First Floor Interior, Sitting Room, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 18 of 51

- 6. Manor House, First Floor Interior, Sitting Room, Looking South
- 7. Photo 19 of 51

- 6. Manor House, First Floor Interior, Bedroom (Office), Looking East
- 7. Photo 20 of 51

- 6. Manor House, Second Floor Interior, Northwest Bedroom, Looking West
- 7. Photo 21 of 51

- 6. Manor House, First Floor Interior, Music Room, Looking South
- 7. Photo 22 of 51

- 6. Manor House, First Floor Interior, Music room, Looking North
- 7. Photo 23 of 51

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number _____ Page 3 CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
BROOKSVILLE, HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHOTOGRAPHS

- 6. Manor House, Second Floor Interior, Large Conference Room, Looking West
- 7. Photo 24 of 51

- 6. Manor House, Second Floor Interior, Large Conference Room, Looking East
- 7. Photo 25 of 51

- 6. Manor House, Second Floor Interior, Master ("Kentucky") Bedroom, Looking East
- 7. Photo 26 of 51

- 6. Manor House, Second Floor Interior, Central Hallway, Looking Southeast
- 7. Photo 27 of 51

- 6. Manor House, Second Floor Interior, Central Hallway, Looking Northwest
- 7. Photo 28 of 51

- 6. Manor House, Second Floor Interior, Bathroom, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 29 of 51

- 6. Manor House, Second Floor Interior, Third Floor Staircase, Looking Northeast
- 7. Photo 30 of 51

- 6. Manor House, Third Floor Interior, Storage Area, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 31 of 51

- 6. Manor House, Third Floor Interior, Guest Bedroom, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 32 of 51

- 6. Manor House, Third Floor Interior, Guest Bedroom, Looking North
- 7. Photo 33 of 51

- 6. Manor House, Third Floor Interior, Guest Bedroom, Looking East
- 7. Photo 34 of 51

- 6. Manor House, Third Floor Interior, Guest Bedroom, Looking West
- 7. Photo 35 of 51

- 6. Manor House, Third Floor Interior, Guest Bedroom/Hallway, Looking Northeast
- 7. Photo 36 of 51

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number _____ Page 4 CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
BROOKSVILLE, HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHOTOGRAPHS

- 6. Manor House, Third Floor Interior, Study, Looking Northwest
- 7. Photo 37 of 51

- 6. Kitchen Wing, First Floor Interior, Staircase, Looking North
- 7. Photo 38 of 51

- 6. Kitchen Wing, First Floor Interior, Looking Northeast
- 7. Photo 39 of 51

- 6. Kitchen Wing, First Floor Interior, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 40 of 51

- 6. Kitchen Wing, Second Floor Interior, Staircase, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 41 of 51

- 6. Kitchen Wing, Second Floor Interior, Corridor to Manor House, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 42 of 51

- 6. Kitchen Wing, Second Floor Interior, Kitchen (Employee Break Room), Looking West
- 7. Photo 43 of 51

- 6. Ederington/Snow Family Cemetery, Looking West
- 7. Photo 44 of 51

- 6. Ederington/Snow Family Cemetery, Francis Higgins McKeown Grave, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 45 of 51

- 6. Ederington/Snow Family Cemetery, Precious Ann Ederington Grave, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 46 of 51

- 6. Altar Oak, Raymond and Margaret Robins Grave Site, Looking east
- 7. Photo 47 of 51

- 6. Metal Marker, Raymond and Margaret Robins Grave Site, Looking North
- 7. Photo 48 of 51

- 6. Lenin Oak, Looking Southwest
- 7. Photo 49 of 51

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number _____ Page 5

CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
BROOKSVILLE, HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHOTOGRAPHS

6. R.T. Long Cabin, Main (South) Facade, Looking North

7. Photo 50 of 51

6. Wash House, Main (South) Facade and East Elevation, Looking Northwest

7. Photo 51 of 51

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Chinsegut Hill Manor House

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: FLORIDA, Hernando

DATE RECEIVED: 10/09/03 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/05/03
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/21/03 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/23/03
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03001171

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

✓ ACCEPT RETURN REJECT DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Chinsegut Hill Manor House is locally significant under Criterion A for its association with the early plantation economy of Hernando County and under Criterion C as a large and elaborate example of a Central Florida plantation house. The property is also nationally significant under Criterion B as the principal residence of Raymond Robins, the social and political activist who played an important role in domestic politics and international affairs in the early twentieth century. The core of the house dates to ca. 1847 and was built soon after white settlement began in the area. Robins, a lawyer and businessman who first became involved in domestic politics in Illinois, purchased the property in 1904. In 1916, he became Commissioner of the American Red Cross Mission to Russia and acted as an unofficial ambassador and observer for the U.S. during the Bolshevik revolution and its aftermath. After his return to the U.S., he remained an authority on international issues and active in politics. The property reflects the early settlement and vernacular architecture of Central Florida and Robins's role in international affairs. It retains integrity from its period of significance.

RECOM./CRITERIA ABC

REVIEWER Daniel Vivian DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE (202) 354-2252 DATE 11/21/03

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



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HERNAUDO Co., FL

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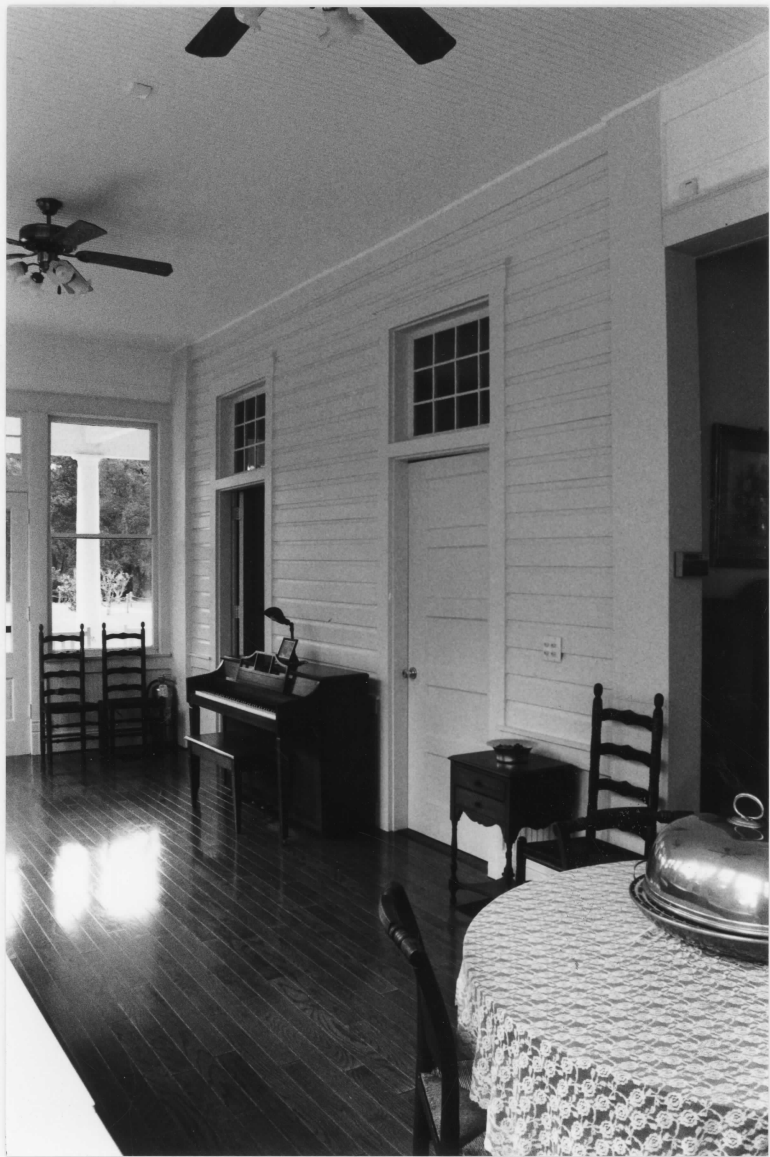
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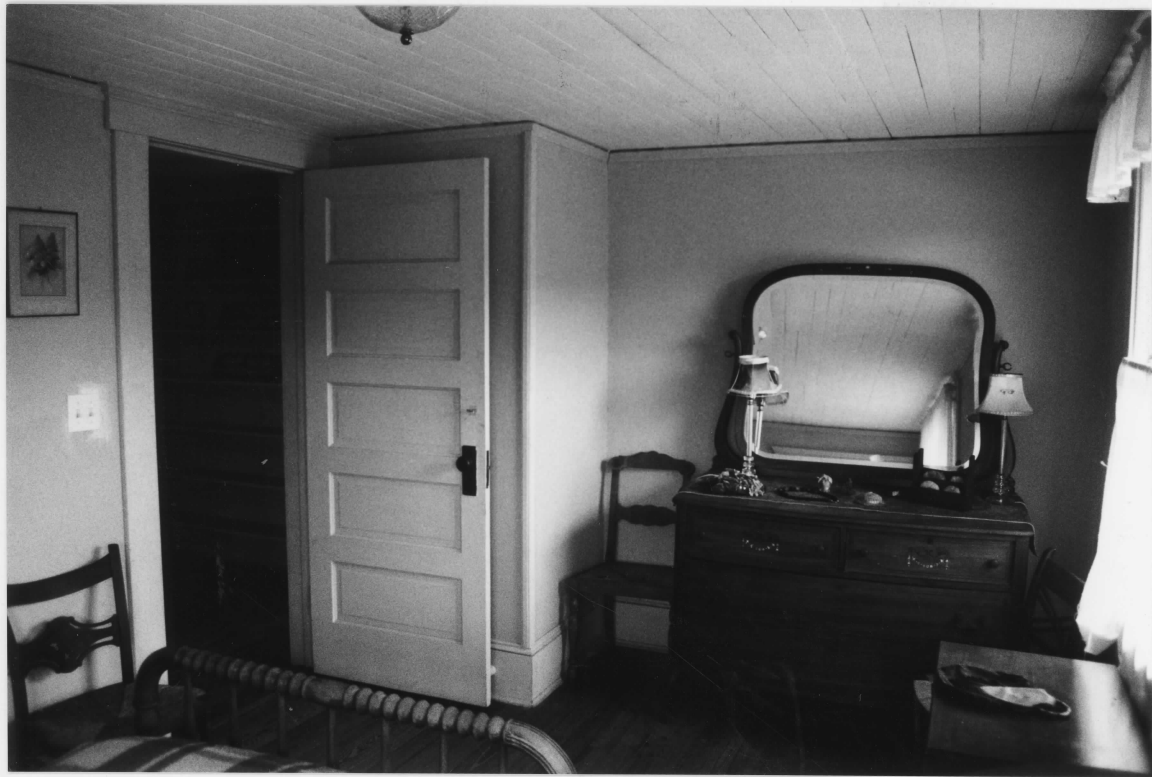
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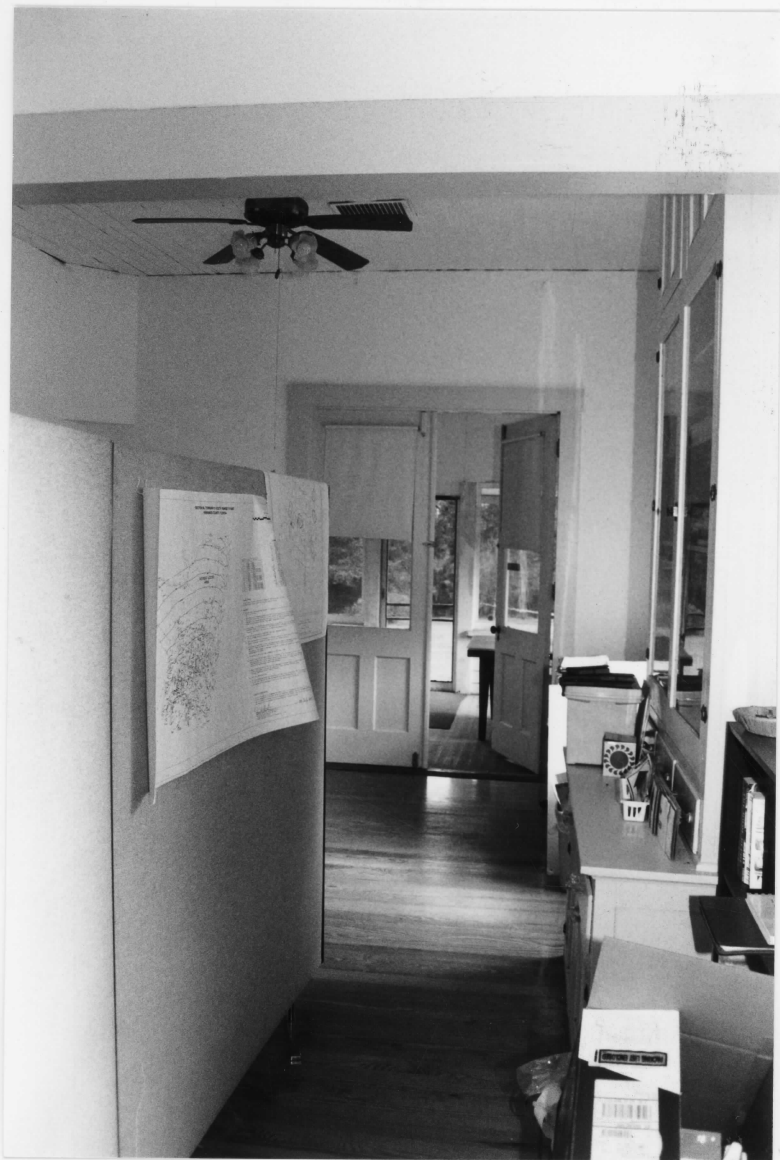


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SACRED
TO THE MEMORY OF
PRECIOUSANN E. DERINGTON

BORN OCT. 30. 1823.

DIED JAN. 27. 1869.

*Dear as thou wert and justly dear
He will not weep for thee
One thought shall check the starting tear
It is that thou art free
And thus shall faith's consoling power
The tears of love restrain:
O who that saw thy parting hour
Could wish thee here again.*

CHWSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE //

HERNAUDO CO, FL

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CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
HERNANDO CO, FL

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INTO THIS ALIVE DUST, WHICH SHALL
HAVE BEEN ASSURED TO LIVE THE GOOD EARTH
THE MOUNTAIN REMAINS OF

RAYMOND ROBINS - MARGARET DEIER ROBINS

WE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH AND THE ANSWER SHALL MAKE
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

CHINSE GUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
HERNANDO CO., FL

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CHINSEGUT HILL MAJOR HOUSE
HERNANDO CO, FL

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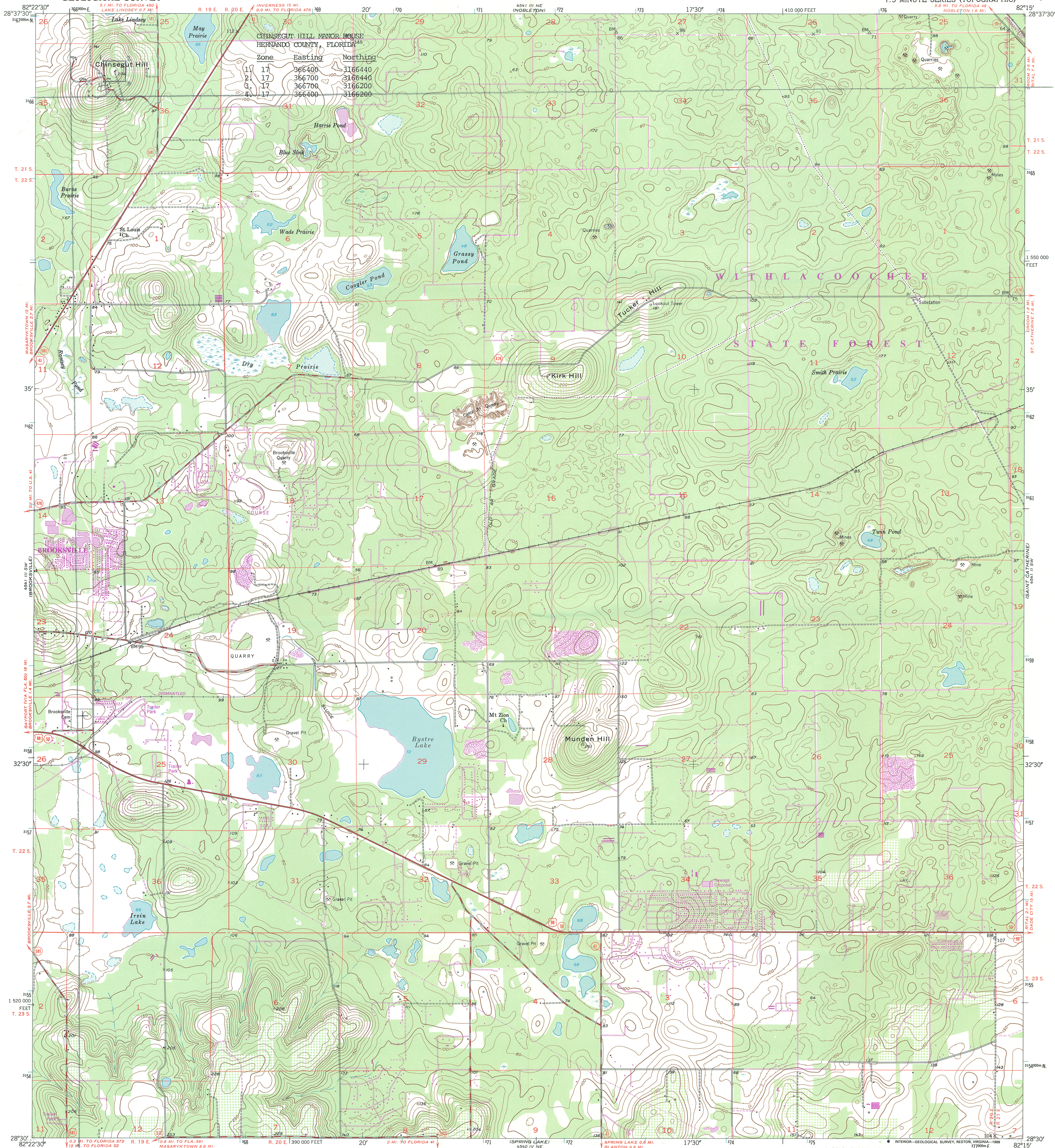


CHINSE GUT HILL MANOR HOUSE
HERNANDO CO, FL

51/51

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

BROOKSVILLE SE QUADRANGLE
FLORIDA-HERNANDO CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography from aerial photographs by Kelsh plotter

Aerial photographs taken 1951. Field check 1954

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum

10,000-foot grid based on Florida coordinate system,

west zone

1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,

zone 17, shown in blue

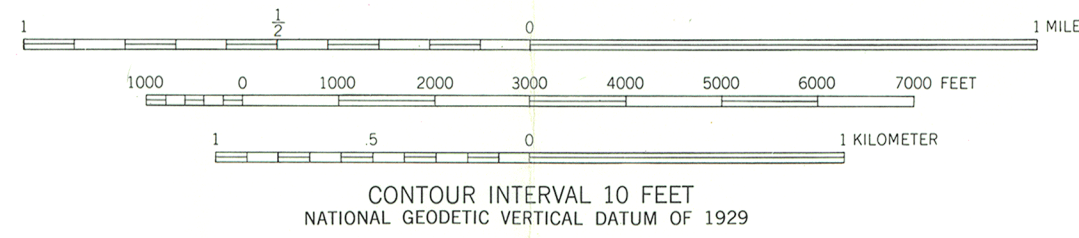
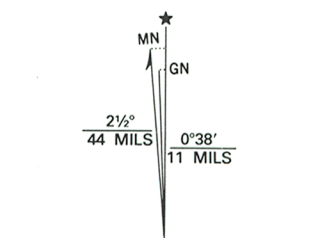
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983,

move the projection lines 27 meters south and

16 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of

the National or State reservations shown on this map



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



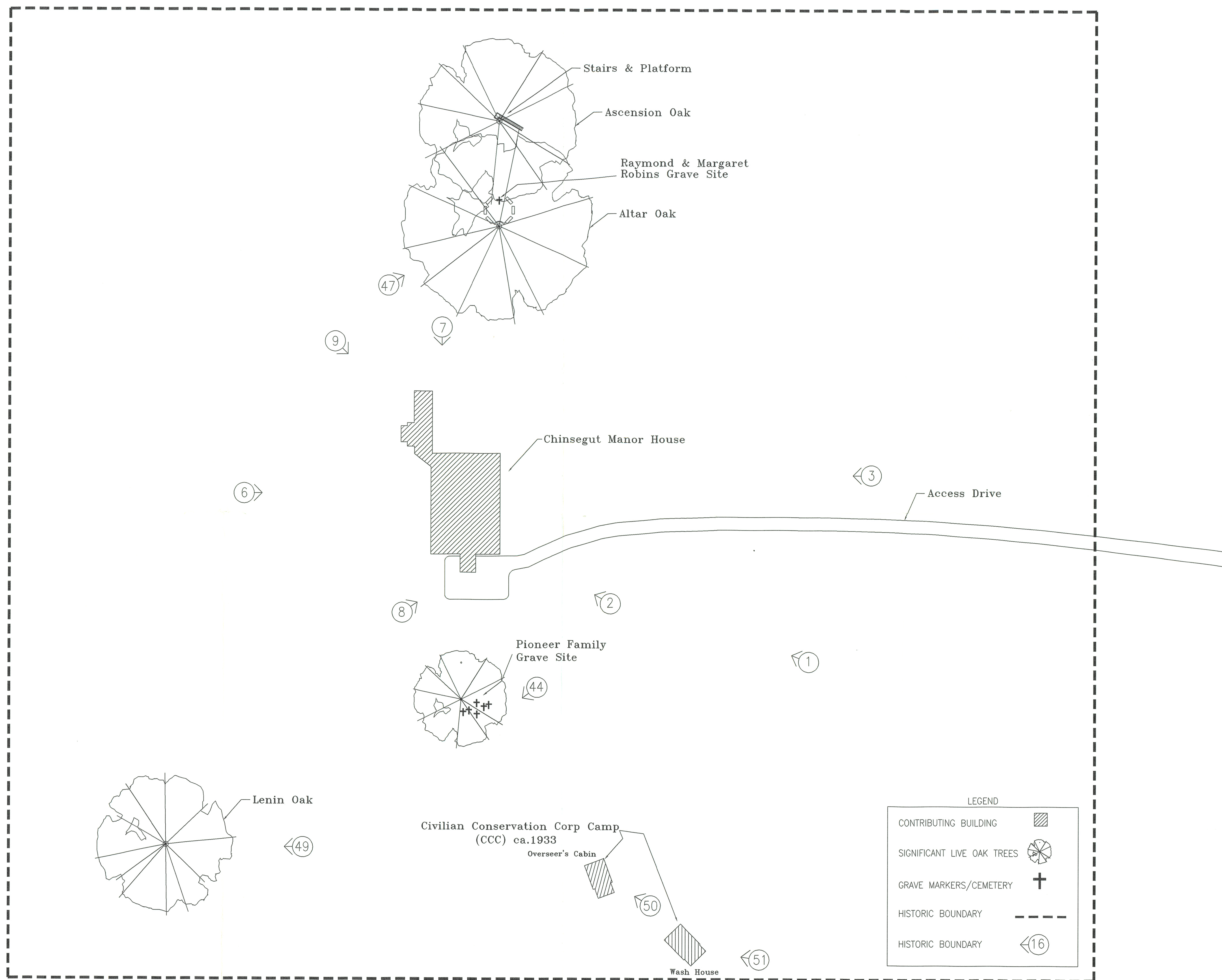
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty 4 LANE 6 LANE Light-duty
Medium-duty 4 LANE 6 LANE Unimproved dirt
U. S. Route State Route

BROOKSVILLE SE, FLA.
28082-E3-TF-024

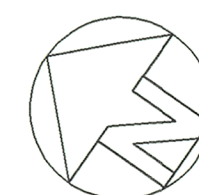
1954
PHOTOREVISED 1988
DMA 4541 III SE-SERIES V847

Revision shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1984 and other sources. This information not
field checked. Map edited 1988



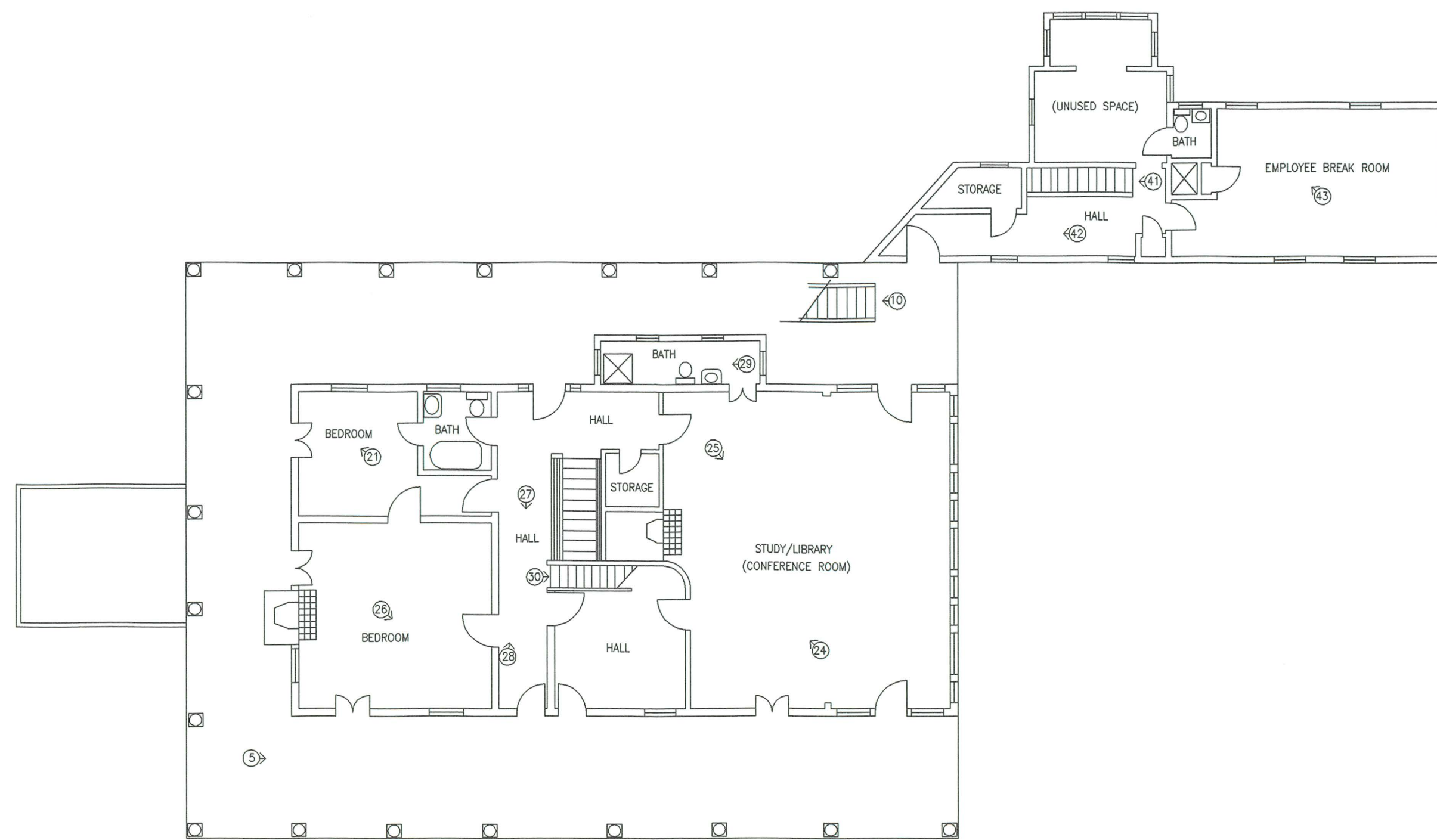
LEGEND	
CONTRIBUTING BUILDING	
SIGNIFICANT LIVE OAK TREES	
GRAVE MARKERS/CEMETERY	
HISTORIC BOUNDARY	
HISTORIC BOUNDARY	

CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE BROOKSVILLE (HERNANDO COUNTY), FLORIDA

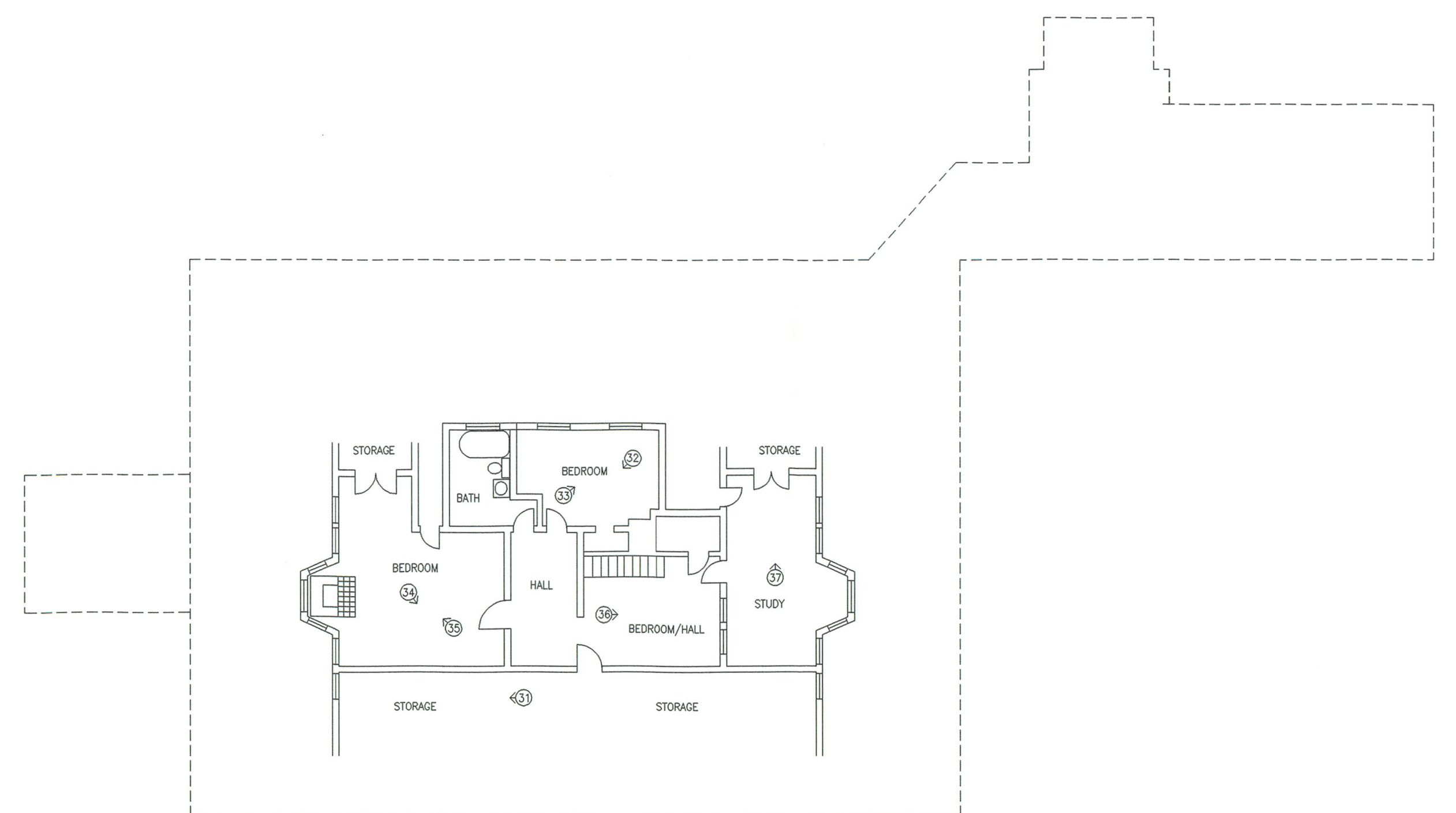


SITE PLAN

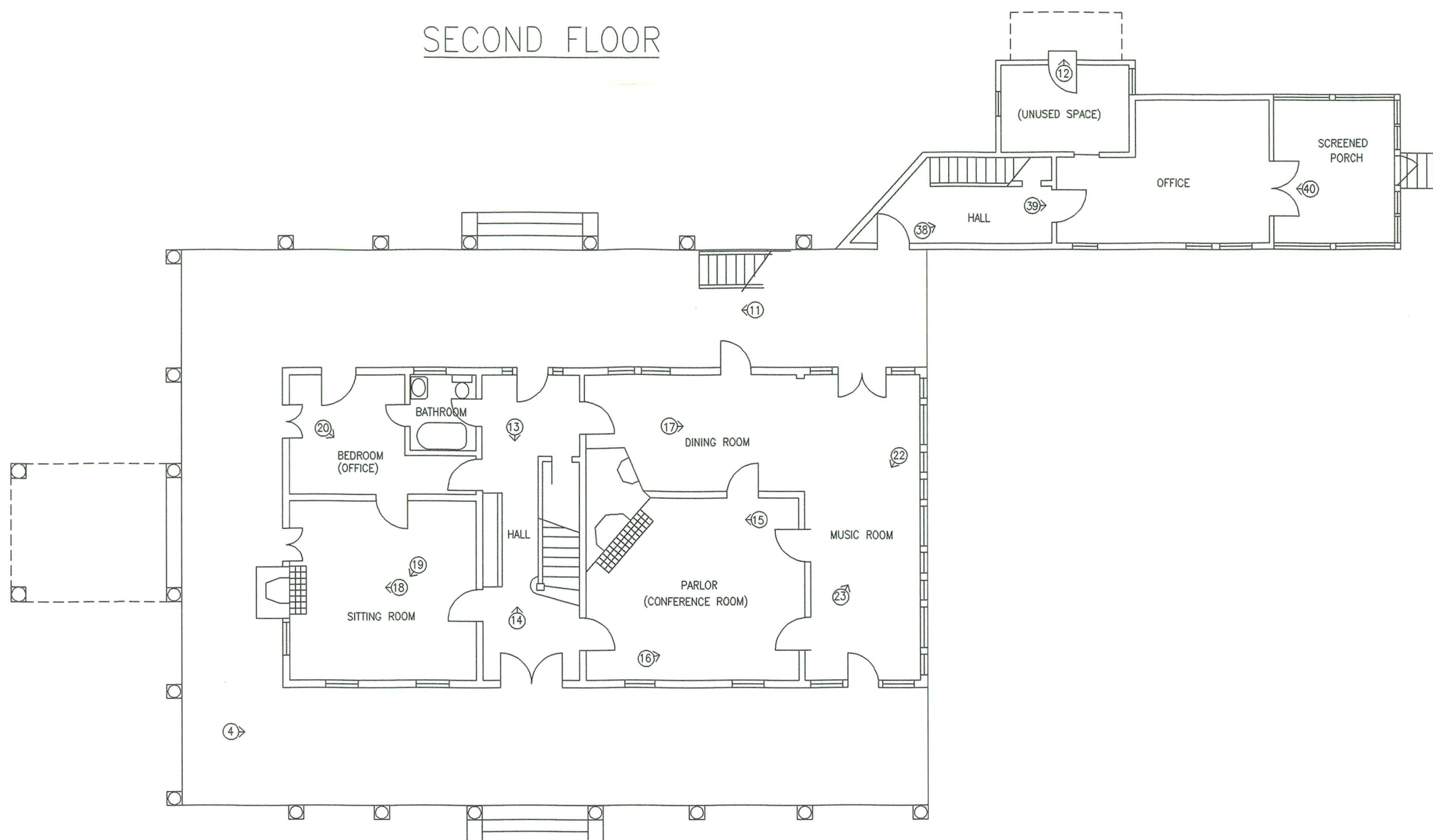
Drawn By: Leif Eric Widholm
Date: October 2002
Revised By: W. Carl Shiver
Date: September 2003



SECOND FLOOR

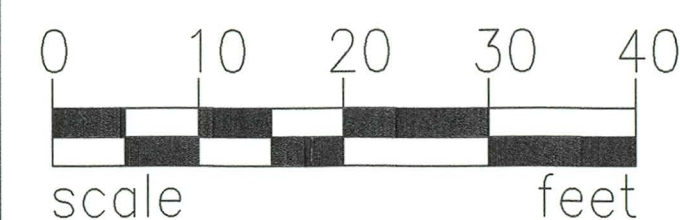


THIRD FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

CHINSEGUT HILL MANOR HOUSE BROOKSVILLE (HERNANDO COUNTY) FLORIDA



FLOOR PLANS

NOTE:
MEASUREMENTS ARE APPROXIMATE
DUE TO RELIABILITY ON SOURCE
DRAWINGS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN
VERIFIED.

DRAWN BY: W. CARL SHIVER
HISTORIC SITES SPECIALIST
FLORIDA BUREAU OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
R.A. GRAY BUILDING
500 SOUTH BRONOUGH STREET
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-0250
(850) 245-6333
FAX (850) 245-6437

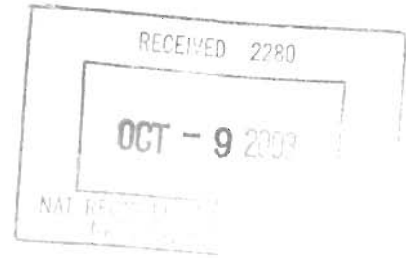
DATE:
SEPTEMBER 2003

SHEET:
2 OF 2

○ = PHOTOS



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Glenda E. Hood
Secretary of State
DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES



October 7, 2003

Ms. Carol Shull, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places
Department of Interior
1201 Eye Street, N.W. 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed is a nomination for listing Chinsegut Hill Manor House, located in Hernando County, Florida, in the National Register of Historic Places.

Please do not hesitate to contact Barbara E. Mattick at (850) 245-6364 if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

Janet Snyder Matthews, Ph.D.
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosures

bem

500 S. Bronough Street • Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250 • <http://www.flheritage.com>

☐ Director's Office
(850) 245-6300 • FAX: 245-6435

☐ Archaeological Research
(850) 245-6444 • FAX: 245-6436

☐ Historic Preservation
(850) 245-6333 • FAX: 245-6437

☐ Historical Museums
(850) 245-6400 • FAX: 245-6433

☐ Palm Beach Regional Office
(561) 279-1475 • FAX: 279-1476

☐ St. Augustine Regional Office
(904) 825-5045 • FAX: 825-5044

☐ Tampa Regional Office
(813) 272-3843 • FAX: 272-2340