



Sunset near the outbuildings

Outbuildings

- The *museum* is located in a c.1803 cotton barn. Gov. Benjamin Williams used the land surrounding the house to become one of the first large cotton farmers in North Carolina.
- The *store house* is a reconstructed building that sits on top of an 1803 root cellar from the Gov. Williams time period. The building would have been used to store provisions.
- The *corn crib* dates to the eighteenth century and was used to store corn for later use.

About Us

The House in the Horseshoe, Alston House, was built in 1772 by Philp Alston. During the American Revolution Alston proved a fiery leader for the Whig cause. In 1781 the house was the site of militia skirmish between the owner, Whig Col. Philip Alston, and Loyalist Col. David Fanning. The house still bears some the scars from this engagement. From 1798 to 1814 the House in the Horseshoe, under the name Retreat, was home to another Patriot leader and four time North Carolina governor, Benjamin Williams.

Contact Us

Phone: (910) 947-2051

Email: horseshoe@ncdcr.gov

Web: <https://historicsites.nc.gov/all-sites/house-horseshoe>



HOUSE IN THE HORSESHOE

Self-guided tour



HOUSE IN THE HORSESHOE

288 Alston House Rd
Sanford, NC 27330



Alston's front door still scarred with bullet holes from the 1781 attack

Alston House

Philip Alston & the Deep River Area

Philip Alston (originally from Halifax North Carolina), his wife Temperance, their children, and twenty enslaved individuals arrived in this area around 1772 after acquiring four thousand acres of land here on the Deep River. Alston decided to build his house within a horseshoe bend of the river, thus the name House in the Horseshoe.

The Attack

Tory Col. David Fanning attacked Whig Col. Alston at dawn July 29, 1781. The fight lasted almost four hours before Mrs. Alston surrendered the house. Alston and his militia were all paroled.

"We fired upon the house, as I was determined to make examples of them..." -David Fanning

Bedroom

The furnishings in this room, as well as almost all other pieces in the house, are simply furnishings of the period that would have been typical of Alston's social class.

One account of the skirmish states that Mrs. Alston took cover "in or under her bed" while comforting her six-month-old daughter. She also had a bench or table put in the fireplace so that some of her youngest children could stand on it and be protected from the bullets up in the stone chimney.

Even here, you can see where musket balls went through the house (three holes evident over the bed.)



Williams made many improvements to the home

Parlor

The portrait hanging above the mantel is that of Gov. Benjamin Williams. Whereas most of the other rooms in the house are furnished to depict the period when Philip Alston lived here, the parlor is more representative of the early nineteenth century when Gov. Williams occupied the house.

The House in the Horseshoe, or "Retreat" as he called it, served more as a home away from home during his first three terms as governor. Williams became one of North Carolina's first progressive farmers, always searching for new methods of planting and growing his crops.

