

## House in the Horseshoe <sup>[1]</sup>

### House in the Horseshoe



Back door of the Alston House. Note the bullet holes around the door. Courtesy of North Carolina Office of Archives and

by William H. Thompson Jr., 2006History, Raleigh.

The House in the Horseshoe (the Alston House) <sup>[2]</sup> is located in a "horseshoe" bend of the Deep River in Moore County <sup>[3]</sup>. Phillip Alston <sup>[4]</sup> (1745-91) built the house in 1772, and it was one of the first "big" houses in the North Carolina backcountry. Alston was a colonel in the Whig <sup>[5]</sup> militia during the American Revolution <sup>[6]</sup>. On 29 July or 5 Aug. 1781 (the evidence is unclear) a skirmish took place at the house involving Alston's militia and the Tory militia commanded by David Fanning <sup>[7]</sup>. Numerous bullet holes from this encounter are still visible in the exterior of the house. In 1798 the house and surrounding plantation were acquired by Benjamin Williams <sup>[8]</sup>, who had served as a colonel under George Washington <sup>[9]</sup>. A year after buying the plantation he became governor. In addition to serving four one-year terms in that office, Williams was a member of the first Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina <sup>[10]</sup> and served in the U.S. Congress in Philadelphia.

In 1954 the Moore County Historical Association <sup>[11]</sup> purchased the house, outbuildings, and 4.2 acres of land. The next year the state assumed jurisdiction over the property. With local cooperation, the house was restored and more of the surrounding land was purchased. In 1971 the House in the Horseshoe was designated a North Carolina State Historic Site <sup>[12]</sup>, which by 2005 featured, in addition to the Alston House, a visitors center, outdoor exhibits and monuments, picnic facilities, and a gift shop. Craft demonstrations and reenactments of the famous skirmish are also held at the site.

#### References:

Richard F. Knapp, ed., *North Carolina's State Historic Sites: A Brief History and Status Report* (1995).

Stephen E. Massengill, "The House in the Horseshoe," *Research Reports*, Ser. 1, No. 31 (1973).

Blackwell P. Robinson, *History of Moore County, North Carolina, 1747-1847* (1956).

#### Additional Resources:

NC Historic Sites, Phillip Alston: <https://historicsites.nc.gov/all-sites/house-horseshoe/history/philip-alston> <sup>[4]</sup>

NC Historic Site, House in the Horseshoe overview: <https://historicsites.nc.gov/all-sites/house-horseshoe> <sup>[2]</sup>

NC Historic Site, Benjamin Williams: <https://historicsites.nc.gov/all-sites/house-horseshoe/history/gov-benjamin-williams> <sup>[8]</sup>

NC ECHO: <http://www.inst.ncecho.org/InstHitList.aspx?qry=County&ID=68> <sup>[13]</sup>

NC Historical Marker: <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?ct=ddl&sp=search&k=Markers&sv=K-9%20-%20ALSTON%20HOUSE> <sup>[14]</sup>

#### Subjects:

American Revolution (1763-1789) <sup>[15]</sup>

Places <sup>[16]</sup>

#### Authors:

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#### Origin - location:

Moore County <sup>[18]</sup>

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Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.<sup>[19]</sup>

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