

Alston House

1811 Gervais Street

Columbia

The Alston House is important for its association with early black businesses in Columbia. The one-story clapboard Greek Revival cottage set on a brick foundation was built around 1872. Possibly as early as 1875, but definitely by 1895, the building was used as a residence and dry goods store by Carolina Alston. Mrs. Alston was a prosperous black businesswoman and was one of only 25 black businesspeople operating in the Columbia area in the late 19th century. As such, she was an important leader of the black business community of her time. In 1906 Alston sold the building to L. M. Keitt, a black businessman who operated a grocery on the site. Following Keitt's ownership of the property, it passed through a series of owners until 1964, when it became the home of McDuffie's Antiques. [Columbia MRA, CA 3/2/79, 79003359]