

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Rasmus Midgett House

Waves, Dare County, DR0606, Listed 10/21/2009
Nomination by Nancy Van Dolsen
Photographs by Nancy Van Dolsen, April 2008



Façade view



Rear view

NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018
(Rev. 10-90)
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 **Midgett, Rasmus, House**
other names/site number **N/A**

2. Location

street & number **25438 N.C. Highway 12** not for publication **N/A** city or town **Waves** vicinity **N/A**
state **North Carolina** code **NC** county **Dare** code **055** zip code **27968**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Signature of certifying official Date
North Carolina Department of Cultural 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 commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this 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

removed from the National Register _____

other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	Total

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register **N/A**

Name of related multiple property listing **N/A**

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: **Domestic** Sub: **Single Dwelling**
Funerary **Cemetery**

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: **Commerce** Sub: **Business**
Funerary **Cemetery**

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Vernacular Two-story, Single-pile House

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation **BRICK**
roof **WOOD-Shingle**
walls **WOOD-Weatherboard, Shingle**
other

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

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.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
MARITIME

Period of Significance **ca. 1890; 1899**
Significant Dates **ca. 1890; 1899**
Significant Person **Midgett, Rasmus**
Cultural Affiliation **N/A**
Architect/Builder **Unknown**

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **4.51 acre**

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	18 457220	3933400	3	
2			4	

___ 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 By

name/title **Nancy Van Dolsen** date **1 May 2009**
street & number **1601 Highland Drive**
city or town **Wilson** state **NC** zip code **27893**

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name **Raymond Stewart Couch**
street & number **41156 Hwy 12, P.O. Box 249** city or town **Avon** state **NC** zip code **27915**

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7

Page 1

Midgett, Rasmus, House
Dare County, N.C.

Narrative Description

The Rasmus Midgett House stands on Hatteras Island, on the Outer Banks in Dare County, North Carolina, facing east on N.C. Highway 12, in the small community of Waves. The property consists of two lots, which each span the distance from the road west to the Pamlico Sound and together contain approximately four-and-a-half acres. The house was moved here after a storm in 1937 knocked the house off of its foundation. The house once stood closer to the sound. The front of the lot is cleared with a lawn and scattered live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) trees, while the back two-thirds of the property is left untended, with native growth and small trees, including live oaks and yaupon hollies (*Ilex vomitoria*). The remains of a boat house that faced the sound can still be seen.

Behind the house, approximately one hundred yards, is the family cemetery which contains graves dating from the 1860s into the mid-twentieth century. The graveyard is fenced, with a wood fence that replicates portions of an historic fence that once encircled the yard. There are twelve graves with large markers, including that of Rasmus Midgett, his wife, his parents, and some of his children. There are noticeable depressions that suggest the locations of other burials.

The house was constructed in four building phases. The house was constructed ca. 1850-1860 as a one-and-a-half or two-story, hall-parlor plan house measuring approximately twenty-four feet by eighteen feet with an exterior chimney on the north elevation. An addition to the south end of the house and the completion of a full second story (if there wasn't one previously) created a central-passage plan two-story house during the late 1880s or early 1890s. About the same time, or shortly thereafter, a two-story, one-room ell was built onto the center of the rear of the building to serve as a kitchen. Around 1910-1920, a small, one-story shed-roof addition was built to infill the area between the ell and the rear of the house at the north end of the rear elevation.

In 1937, a storm knocked the house off of its foundation. It is believed that the house had stood approximately halfway between the sound and the road, but after the storm, it was moved about 200 feet to the east to face the road. About 1940, a small, one-story, gable-front addition was constructed onto the west side of the shed room.

The side-gable frame house features weatherboard siding on the first floor of the main block, ell, and shed room, and wood shingles on the upper story of the main block and ell, except for the rear (west) elevation of the ell. The one-story gable addition has vertical board siding. The house stands on concrete block piers and has a wood shingle roof. The main block and the ell of the house have a wide overhang to the roof which features exposed decorative rafter tails.

A one-story, shed roof porch with simple square posts runs the length of the façade. Three wood steps lead up to the wood porch floor. The three-bay façade of the house has three four-over-four windows on the second floor, and two flanking the central front door. Exterior brick chimneys, approximately one-foot deep on the exterior, run up the gable ends. Four-over-four

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7

Page 2

Midgett, Rasmus, House
Dare County, N.C.

windows flank the chimneys on each gable end. Paired two-over-two, double-hung sash windows are located on the north wall of the shed room. A door opening (without door) leads into the one-story gable-roof entry on the rear of the shed room. Two one-over-one sash windows are located on both stories of the south elevation of the ell, and most likely are replacement windows dating to the late twentieth century. The east elevation of the ell has a door and one, small one-over-one sash window on the first floor and one one-over-one window on the second floor. A square open deck with a two-board railing and a wood floor fills the space between the rear ell and main block on the south elevation.

Within, the first floor of the main block has a central passage with a staircase on the south elevation with twelve steps to the second floor. The staircase has simple risers; during a recent restoration, the missing balustrade was replaced with one that replicates the style found in houses of the period on the Outer Banks on North Carolina: turned newel with turned balusters. Also during the restoration (2007-2009), it was found that the staircase needed additional support, so a simple, square post was added to support the upper floor. The post is approximately one-half foot north of the staircase wall. The passage features a chair rail with vertical narrow board sheathing below and horizontal board sheathing above the chair rail; the ceiling is sheathed with narrow boards. The door surrounds in the passage feature rosette corner blocks. The doors into the first-floor room to the north of the passage and the east room south of the passage are glazed. The door between the front and back room on the south side of the passage has a four-panel door.

In the room to the north of the passage, a stove pipe hole is located on the chimney (north) wall. A wide heavy board with molding above tops the windows and doors in this room. The south side of the house is two-rooms deep, with the front room featuring trim and wall treatments identical to that found in the passage. A stove pipe hole is located on the chimney (south) wall. The rear room is a small bathroom. An opening at the rear of the passage leads to the kitchen which has late twentieth-century kitchen cabinets on the south, north, and east wall. The walls are sheathed with vertical beaded boards, as is the ceiling, and the openings have plain board trim. A door to the south leads to a modern deck. A small narrow, door leads into the shed room on the north side of the house. The shed room is sheathed with vertical beaded boards. The interior of the gable-entry at the rear of the house is sheathed in plywood. All floors throughout the first floor are wood, but the rooms in the main block of the house have carpet laid over them, and the rooms in the ell are covered with vinyl.

During the mid-twentieth century (ca. 1960), the west room on the south side of the passage was divided into a bath and a closet, with access to the bath from the passage, and to the closet from the east room. The bathroom was updated during a restoration of the building ca. 2007-2009.

Upstairs, the central passage has narrow horizontal board sheathing on the walls and ceiling, and simple trim around the window and door openings. A small, narrow closet is located in the northwest corner of the passage. A patch in the wide-board floor, near the northeast corner of the passage and measuring approximately two feet by five-and-a-half feet, indicates where the

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7

Page 3

Midgett, Rasmus, House
Dare County, N.C.

original stair rose from the first floor to the second. The room to the north has a patch in the floor, approximately three feet across and a little over one foot in depth that indicates the hearth for the fireplace, or the previous extension of a chimney, into this room. The walls and ceiling are sheathed in narrow boards.

As on the first floor, the area to the south side of the passage is two-rooms deep. The east room is sheathed in narrow boards and has a board ceiling. Approximately two-feet south of the north wall of these rooms, the wide-board floor of the original section of the house meets the narrow board floor that was laid as part of the addition. A narrow closet is located in the southwest corner of the east room. The west room is also sheathed in narrow boards and has board ceiling, and has been divided (ca. 1960) into a closet on the south side, accessed from the east room, and a bath on the north side, accessed from the passage. The bath was added during a restoration ca. 2007-2009.

At the rear of the passage, a door, one step up, leads into a room above the kitchen. This room has a narrow board floor, and narrow boards sheathing the walls and ceiling. A closet is located in the northeast corner.

All floors on the second floor are random pine boards, except for the bath which has a ceramic tile floor.

The house clearly shows an evolutionary pattern of development, and retains its integrity from ca. 1890. The house has its original floor plan, walls, window and door surrounds, windows in the main block, most of its wall sheathing and ceilings, and original exterior appearance.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Summary

The Rasmus Midgett House, a ca. 1890 frame house on Hatteras Island, on the Outer Banks, Dare County, North Carolina, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B for the life of Rasmus Midgett (1851-1926), an outstanding and noteworthy member of the U. S. Life-Saving Service, and under Criterion C as a well-preserved, and increasingly rare example of a significant vernacular house form found on Hatteras Island: a two-story, single-pile frame house with a rear kitchen ell with simple architectural trim. The period of significance under Criterion B is 1899, the date Rasmus Midgett received a Gold Life-Saving Medal for his single-handed rescue of ten sailors from a shipwreck. The Rasmus Midgett House exemplifies the type of house built by many fishing and life-saving families of Hatteras during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and has a period of significance of ca. 1890, the date of the house's construction, under Criterion C.

The Midgett family settled on Hatteras Island during the eighteenth century. Jethro A. Midgett (1820-1861) constructed a timber-frame house which his son, Erasmus Midgett, known simply as Rasmus, (1851-1926), inherited and expanded in the late nineteenth century and in the twentieth century. One historian of the U. S. Coast Guard stated that "Probably no one better epitomizes what the U. S. Life-Saving Service stood for than Rasmus Midgett of the Gulf [*sic*] Shoal Station."¹ On August 18, 1899 during Hurricane *San Ciriaco*, Rasmus Midgett single-handedly rescued ten men from the wreck of the ship *Priscilla*. For this rescue, Rasmus Midgett received a Gold Life-Saving Medal from the U. S. Secretary of the Treasury. Rasmus Midgett served as a surf man at the Gull Shoal station from the 1880s through the 1910s. During his entire life, Rasmus lived in the house his father built and which he remodeled into the appearance it has today. The Gull Shoal Life-Saving station where he served was torn down in the 1940s.

Like many of the houses on the Outer Banks, the Rasmus Midgett House has been moved at least once during its history. In 1937, a hurricane knocked the Midgett House off of its foundation, and it was moved approximately two-hundred feet closer to the road to the east (on the same lot) at that time. Although a moved building, the house retains its architectural character, as well as its feeling, design, workmanship, materials, association, and setting, and therefore meets Criteria Consideration B for moved buildings.

¹ Dennis L. Noble, "Excerpt: U. S. Life-Saving Service: Storm Warriors and Soldiers of the Surf," http://www.uscg.mil/hg/g-cp/history/h_seacoast.html, accessed April 2008.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Historical Background and Maritime Context: The Life and Work of Rasmus Midgett, 1851-1926

The Rasmus Midgett House stands on Hatteras Island, on the Outer Banks, facing N.C. Highway 12, north of Salvo, in the small community of Waves. This northern section of Hatteras Island is known as Chicamacomico or Chicamacomico Banks. In the late nineteenth century, the area became known as Rodanthe, with three small settlements being delineated: North Rodanthe (later Rodanthe), Clark (now known as Salvo), and between the two, South Rodanthe, which became known as Waves in 1939 when a post office was established.

The Outer Banks are a group of barrier islands off the coast of North Carolina. The shape and form of the islands, and the inlets between them, change in response to the violent storms and hurricanes that pound the region, and the more gradual process of erosion and silting of the sand banks. The ocean side of the islands is sandy, and free of vegetation; the more sheltered sound side has wooded areas with small live oak trees (*Quercus virginiana*) and yaupon hollies (*Ilex vomitoria*), and open marsh lands. By 1780, small clusters of houses were located on Hatteras Island where villages exist today. These settlement sites were in wooded tracts on the sound side of the island.² Families that settled the island in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, such as the Midgetts, Neals (or O'Neals), Fosters, Grays, and Ballances, stayed on the island, and many of their descendents occupy the Outer Banks today.

The Midgett (or Midyett) family had settled in northeastern North Carolina, and perhaps on the Outer Bank islands, by the 1790s, or even earlier.³ The earliest known owner of this property is Joseph F. Midgett, who sold the property to Jethro (Jethrow) A. Midyett for \$250 on August 3, 1847.⁴ In 1847, the property was the width of the island, from the sound to the sea, and was bounded on the north and the south by land owned by other members of the Midyett (Midgett) family: Richard, Francis, as well as other land owned by Joseph F. Midyett; in the deeds no total acreage was given for the property.

Three years later, in 1850, Jethro A. Midgett (as noted in the census) was living on his property, valued at \$150 in the federal census, with his wife Bethany (1826- __) and their four-year-old daughter Ann (also listed as Mariah or Maria), as well as a young woman, Louisa Neal, age sixteen. Jethro A. Midgett, age twenty-nine, was a seaman, but it is not known for whom he

² Gary S. Dunbar, *Historical Geography of the Carolina Banks* (Baton Rouge, LA.: Louisiana State University Press, 1958) 24.

³ Midgetts are found on the 1790 census living in Currituck County (part of which later became Hyde County), including Joseph Midgett, Joseph Midgett Jr., William Midgett (two), Samuel Midgett (two), Thomas Midgett Esq., Thomas Midgett, Timothy Midgett, Jesse Midgett, Daniel Midgett, John Midgett, Christian Midgett (two), and Matthew Midgett. One of these Midgetts, Joseph Midgett Jr. (b. post 1774-?), could perhaps be the first owner of the subject property or the father of the Joseph Midgett who owned the property, but a direct connection cannot be made at this time. Or, of course, any of the other Midgetts could be the father of the Joseph who owned the property in 1847. Some Midyett family trees have members of the Midyett family living at Chicamacomico Banks by the mid-eighteenth century. See <http://trees.ancestry.com/owt/person.aspx?pid=17665345>, accessed May 2008.

⁴ Hyde County Deed Book 2:204.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8

Page 6

Midgett, Rasmus, House
Dare County, NC

worked (the U. S. Lifesaving Service was not yet active on the North Carolina sea coast). In 1851, Jethro Midgett was “duly elected a Commissioner of Wrecks for the Fifth Wreck district of the Banks,” by the Clerk of Court for Hyde County. It is not known how long Midgett served as a Commissioner of Wrecks.⁵

Erasmus (or Rasmus) Midgett (or Midyette) was born on December 23, 1851, the second child of Jethro and Bethany Midgett. In July of 1860, Erasmus and his sister Maria were living with relatives, Anderson and Mary Midgett, and David Gray and Mary Gray; it is not known where his parents, Bethany and Jethro Midgett were living.

Jethro Midgett died in 1861; the land descended to the two children, Maria and Rasmus, as tenants-in-common. In 1870, eighteen-year old Rasmus lived with his mother, his sister, and Mary Gray (age thirty) and her daughter Elvirah Gray, in the house on the sound. Rasmus was working in the fishing trade. He had attended school through grade seven.

In the early 1870s, Rasmus married a woman named Matilda, and by 1880 they had four children: Cora, Arthur, Marietta, and Lorenzo. In 1880, Rasmus, his wife and children, lived with his mother, Bethany, and Elvirah Jannett (the daughter of Mary Gray) and Mary Gray. Rasmus supported the household by fishing, and possibly, working part-time for the U. S. Lifesaving Service. Hazel Foster, Rasmus’s grand-daughter remembered her grandfather as a man of medium height and build with a plump face and a moustache.⁶

In 1878-1879, the U. S. Lifesaving Service built and manned the Cedar Hummock Lifesaving Station (later the Gull Shoal Coast Guard Station) a few miles south of the Rasmus Midgett House.⁷ The Lifesaving Station was operated by a Keeper who was employed full-time, all year round, and six surfmen, who worked three months per year.⁸ Although Rasmus Midgett is not listed as a surfman in the 1880 census, it is possible that he was working as a surfman for three months and fishing the rest of the year.

According to Coast Guard historian, Dennis L. Noble, “the story of the Life-Saving Service on the Outer Banks dominates the history of the Service” and the

Most notable among the Outer Banks life-savers is the renowned Midgett family, who has patrolled the beaches of the Outer Banks since at least the 1790s. Even among other heroic families of Hatteras, the Midgetts are considered mighty men . . . over the years ten men of the mighty Midgetts have been awarded Life-Saving Medals of Honor, a record that remains unsurpassed

⁵ An image of the appointment appears in Dale Midgett, ed. “The J.A. Midgett Receipts,” *Sea Chest*, Fall 1978. No. 1, vol. 5, 56.

⁶ Belle Stowe and Helen Midgett, “Truly One of the Mighty Midgettes,” *Sea Chest*, July 1976, vol. 3, no. 3, 22.

⁷ David Stick, *Outer Banks of North Carolina 1584-1958* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1958) 286. The Cedar Hummock /Gull Shoal station (Station #180) was damaged in a hurricane in 1944, and torn down after it was decommissioned following World War II.

⁸ History of the Chicamacomico Lifesaving Station, <http://www.chicamacomico.net/>, accessed April 2008.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

in the history of the Life-Saving Service and the current day Coast Guard. . . .
From 1876 to 1972, seven Midgetts have won the Gold Life-Saving Medal.
Probably no one better epitomizes what the U. S. Life-Saving Service stood for
than Rasmus Midgett of the Gulf [*sic*] Shoal Station.⁹

The Life-Saving Service was formed as a federal agency in 1871; a life-saving service had existed previously but it had not been regulated or well-organized. Regulations were established that required that life-saving stations would be no more than five miles apart and that the crews had to train and practice with their equipment on a regular basis. In 1874, the life-saving network was expanded to ten locations south of Cape Henry, Virginia, including the Outer Banks of North Carolina.¹⁰ By the end of 1905, there were twenty-nine life-saving stations along the North Carolina coast.

Rasmus served as a surfman from the 1880s through the 1910s. He received his medal for his outstanding efforts to rescue the crew of the *Priscilla* which had run aground on August 18, 1899 during Hurricane *San Ciriaco*.¹¹ According to a record of the rescue written for the Coast Guard, Rasmus Midgett was making a regular patrol on horseback south from the station that night. At 3:00 AM he heard the sound of voices and “caught the outcries of the shipwrecked men.” He saw a part of the wreck, with several people crouching on it, in the surf approximately one-hundred yards offshore. When the surf retreated, he ran down and shouted for the men to jump overboard one at a time, and as the surf went back, he would take care of them. He stood up on the bank overlooking the ocean, and waited for a chance to approach the wreck; he shouted for one man to let himself down into the water. Midgett entered the ocean, grabbed the sailor, and brought him ashore. He did this seven times. There were still three sailors who were aboard the wreck but too exhausted to enter the water on their own without drowning. Midgett went out to the wreck three times, and rescued each of the sailors. He sent the seven men who could walk back to the lifesaving station, and took the other three men to a safe place. He then rode his horse back to the lifesaving station to get some help carrying the disabled men back to the station. For his valiant efforts, Rasmus Midgett was awarded the Gold Life-Saving Medal on October 18, 1899. Although the mandatory age for retirement for surfmen was fifty-five, Rasmus served into his sixties.¹²

In 1900, Rasmus and his wife Matilda, lived in this house with their son Lorenzo, a fisherman, their daughters Martha and Christianne, their ten-year-old son, Christopher, Rasmus’s mother Bethany, and Mary Gray who is listed as a servant. Rasmus’s eldest son, Arthur, who was also a surfman, lived next door with his wife, Dorothy, and daughter Odessa.

⁹ Dennis L. Noble, “Excerpt: U. S. Life-Saving Service: Storm Warriors and Soldiers of the Surf,” http://www.uscg.mil/hg/g-cp/history/h_seacoast.html, accessed April 2008.

¹⁰ Dennis R. Means, *A Heavy Sea Running: The Formation of the U.S. Life-Saving Service, 1846–1878* (1987), http://www.lifesavingsservice.org/article_2.html, accessed April 2009.

¹¹ This hurricane is listed as a Category 3 with maximum wind gusts of 130 mph. “Hurricanes,” <http://www.nc-climate.ncsu.edu/climate/hurricane.php>, accessed May 2008.

¹² Mobley, Joe A., *Ship Ashore! The U.S. Lifesavers of Coastal North Carolina*. (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 1994) 125-127.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8

Page 8

Midgett, Rasmus, House
Dare County, NC

In 1913, Rasmus Midgett purchased the other half of the property from his sister Maria. The property was surveyed, and still bounded by the sea and the sound, comprised twenty-five acres. Five years later, Rasmus and Matilda Midgett sold a small portion of the land (forty-two yards by twenty-five yards) to their son Arthur; the remainder of the tract they deeded to their youngest son, Christopher.¹³

In 1920, Rasmus and Matilda Midgett, and their son Lorenzo, lived with Christopher and his family. Arthur Midgett (still a surfman) and his family, comprising his wife, his daughter and her husband, Nelson Midgett (a surfman), and his son-in-law's uncle, Bannister Midgett, lived next door. Matilda Midgett died in 1923 and Rasmus Midgett died in 1926, at the age of seventy-five. On his tombstone, his family remembered him with the following words: "A loved one from us has gone. A voice we loved is stilled. A place is vacant in our home which never can be filled."

In 1937, an unnamed hurricane, with winds up to 120 miles per hour, swept the Rasmus Midgett House off its foundation¹⁴. The Midgetts picked the house up and moved it to face the highway (known as Beach Road at that time).¹⁵

Christopher Midgett, and his wife, Matilda, lived in the house their entire lives, and in 1980, they deeded the property to their daughter, Hazel and her husband, Ernal W. Foster. Ernal W. Foster died in 1996 and Hazel Midgett Foster died in 1999; their son, Ernal W. Foster Jr. inherited the land and sold it to Raymond Stewart Couch in 2006. Arthur Midgett's small tract, which he received from his parents in 1918, is not a part of the current property; his house no longer stands.

Architecture Context: Vernacular Two-Story Frame Houses on the Outer Banks, Dare County, North Carolina, ca. 1850-1920

The Rasmus Midgett House was most likely built ca. 1850 by his father, Jethro A. Midgett (1820-1861), as a one-and-a-half or two-story, two-bay, single-pile house measuring approximately eighteen feet by twenty-four feet. The house most likely was a hall-parlor plan house with the stairs rising to the right as you entered the door. The room entered would have been the hall, or multi-purpose room, and the room with the interior entrance would have been the parlor. One similar house was documented in a survey of Hatteras village, the W. H. Gaskins House, which appears to date to the mid-nineteenth century. Another house of that era, that was substantially remodeled during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, like the Rasmus Midgett House, was the Henry and Christian Stowe House in Hatteras Village. The Stowe House is also a hall-parlor house that had been expanded into the common three-bay, two-story,

¹³ Dare County Deed Book T:117; X:237; X:238..

¹⁴ "Hurricanes," <http://www.nc-climate.ncsu.edu/climate/hurricane.php>, accessed May 2008. This hurricane was rated a Category 4; the strongest hurricanes are listed as a Category 5.

¹⁵ Oral Interview, Raymond Stewart Couch, April 21, 2007.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8

Page 9

Midgett, Rasmus, House
Dare County, NC

single-pile dwelling with a rear ell.

During the period 1890 to 1920, Hatteras Island experienced a building boom; new houses were constructed and old houses were remodeled. The area was prosperous: fishing was a lucrative business and the government provided well-paid jobs in the coast guard and lighthouse work. For much of the island, the period from 1890 to 1920 is the first era for which a number of houses survive. Earlier dwellings were replaced, remodeled, or destroyed by storms.

Between 1890 and 1920, a distinct form of house was constructed: a two-story, single-pile, central-passage, side-gable dwelling with a one-story porch across the façade and either a kitchen ell or wing with dining room, or a separate kitchen/dining building. Most of these houses had wood-shingled roofs, brick piers, and decorative wood trim at the cornice. The houses are small, with passages about seven to nine feet wide, and rooms twelve feet wide; elsewhere the rooms and passage would be larger. These houses are also lower to the ground, most likely so they can withstand the high winds that pound them. A form commonly found on the Outer Banks and throughout eastern North Carolina, on Hatteras Island, this type of house was the most common type of house built by successful fishermen, surf men, and their families during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Five of these houses remain on the lower end of the island. Two of the houses, the L.N. Stowe House (DR 323) and the D.W. Ballance House (DR 331) were designated as potentially eligible for the National Register after a survey of Hatteras Village. The Ellsworth and Lovie Ballance House (NR 2001), the Styron House (DR 314) and the Austin House (DR 328) have a two-room ell, while the L.N. Stowe House features a four-room ell and the D.W. Ballance House has no ell. All of these houses date to ca. 1890 to 1915, and are two-story, three-bay, single-pile, frame houses with partially exterior end brick chimneys, and most have a rear ell commonly with two rooms. The Rasmus Midgett House fits into the pattern, but has a one-room ell.

The two-story, single-pile, central-passage house with separate kitchen/dining ell or building represents a continuation of the traditional house form found in the village and on the island which featured a separate kitchen building with an attached dining room. Most likely, prior to the addition of the ell, the Rasmus Midgett House had a separate kitchen building that may have had an attached dining room. The two-story single-pile house with ell or wing continued the pattern of separation of food preparation and consumption from sleeping and living areas. These houses were built by families (Stowe, Ballance, Peele, Austin, and Midgett) who had lived on the Outer Banks since the mid-nineteenth century. This form, which allowed the residents to continue to live in their houses as they had for generations, prevailed over the bungalow form, which few families in Hatteras chose to build. The bungalow form represented a shift in living patterns, with all aspects of family life within one main block. The prosperous fishing families who had resided on the island for at least three generations chose to build a house that continued their traditional way of life. The Rasmus Midgett House, a well-preserved and increasingly rare example of this significant vernacular form, exemplifies this choice made by many of the families of Hatteras from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9

Page 10

Midgett, Rasmus, House
Dare County, NC

Bibliography

- Bishir, Catherine. *North Carolina Architecture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.
- Bishir, Catherine W. and Michael T. Southern. *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Eastern North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Butler, Betsy. Chain of Title, Dare County Parcel Number: 014278001.
- Couch, Raymond Stewart, Interview with Nancy Van Dolsen, April 17, 2007.
- Dare County Deed Books, Dare County Courthouse, Manteo, N.C.
- Dunbar, Gary S. *Historical Geography of the Carolina Banks*. Baton Rouge, LA.: Louisiana State University Press, 1958.
- Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1840, 1850 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1920, 1930. Dare County, North Carolina. <http://ancestry.com>. Accessed March 2008.
- Graham, Willie. "Preindustrial Framing in the Chesapeake," in Alison K. Hoagland and Kenneth A. Breisch, *Constructing Image, Identity, and Place: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture IX*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2003.
- Midgett, Dale, ed. "The J.A. Midgett Receipts," *Sea Chest*, Fall 1978. No. 1, vol. 5, 54-57.
- Mobley, Joe A., *Ship Ashore! The U.S. Lifesavers of Coastal North Carolina*. Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 1994.
- Noble, Dennis L. "Excerpt: U. S. Life-Saving Service: Storm Warriors and Soldiers of the Surf." http://www.uscg.mil/hg/g-cp/history/h_seacoast.html. Accessed April 2008.
- Smith, Penne. "The Etheridge Homeplace: A History" Manteo, N.C.: Outer Banks Conservationists, October 2001.
- Stick, David. *Outer Banks of North Carolina 1584-1958*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1958.
- Stowe, Belle and Helen Midgett, "Truly One of the Mighty Midgettes," *Sea Chest*, July 1976, vol. 3, no. 3.
- Van Dolsen, Nancy. "The Historic Architecture of Hatteras Village, Dare County, North Carolina." Hatteras, N.C.: Hatteras Village Civic Association, March 1999.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10

Page 11

Midgett, Rasmus, House
Dare County, N.C.

Verbal Boundary Description

The historic boundary comprise two tax parcels labeled Dare County, NC, PIN 19064820916096 and PIN 19064820907968, on the accompanying map at a scale of 1" = 60'.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes 4.51 acres of the property historically associated with the house and provides an appropriate setting for the house.