

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 an 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 Roberts H. Jernigan House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 209 South Catherine Creek Road N/A not for publication

city or town Ahoskie N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Hertford code 091 zip code 27910

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.)

Jeffrey Brown SHPO 1/2/01
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of 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:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain): _____	_____	_____

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Name of Property

Hertford County, North Carolina
County and State

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)

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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	_____ buildings
		_____ sites
		_____ structures
		_____ objects
1	1	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/SINGLE DWELLING

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/HOTEL

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/SOUTHERN COLONIAL

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls WOOD

roof TIN

other ROOF-ASPHALT

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.)

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 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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- ARCHITECTURE
- SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1918 to 1942

Significant Dates

1918
ca. 1928
ca. 1934

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

DEANES, W. D.
GARRETT, JESSE R.

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Name of Property

Hertford County, North Carolina
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.01 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	322200	4016700
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2			

3			
Zone	Easting	Northing	
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 Thomas R. Butchko, Consulting Architectural Historian

organization _____ date September 1, 2000

street & number 200 Cross Keys Road, #56 telephone 410-435-0435

city or town Baltimore state MD zip code 21210-1524

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. and Mrs. John D. Fritz

street & number 209 South Catherine Creek Road telephone 252-209-5455

city or town Ahoskie state NC zip code 27910

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 to amend existing 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 Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 7 Page 1

7. Description

The Roberts H. Jernigan House in Ahoskie, North Carolina, constructed in 1917-1918, is an ambitious, two-story, frame Colonial Revival dwelling sheathed with weatherboards. It is located at 209 South Catherine Creek Road, at the northeast corner of Garrett Street and South Catherine Creek Road, a major thoroughfare in the southeastern part of Ahoskie, a town of 4,391 persons (1990 Census) and the largest town and leading trading center in Hertford County. It is situated just south of the intersection of South Catherine Creek Road with South Church Street, one of the main streets of central Ahoskie. On the northern corner of this intersection is the Ahoskie Presbyterian Church, a building originally built for the local Baptist Church in 1846 and remodeled by the Baptists in 1909 and the Presbyterians in 1930. Across the street to the west from the Jernigan House at 210 South Catherine Creek Road is the ca. 1912 Jesse R. Garrett House, the town's finest Queen Anne style house with Colonial Revival finish. It was the home of the father of Mrs. Jernigan and is currently occupied by the Ahoskie Area Chamber of Commerce. The small, immediate residential neighborhood consists of a mixture of frame, one- and two-story dwellings erected during the early twentieth century in the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles, and a variety of houses erected after 1950. On the south side of Garrett Street and directly facing north into the side of the Jernigan property are three nondescript one-story brick ranch houses erected in the 1960s or 1970s. Immediately north of the Jernigan property and facing onto Parker Street, the next street perpendicular to Catherine Creek Road going north, is a one-story brick ranch duplex built in the 1980s.

The Jernigan lot is sheltered by a fairly extensive cover of mature pecan trees, the remnants of an orchard that originally covered much of the rear of a lot one hundred fifty feet wide and three hundred feet deep. Other trees include several large Southern Magnolia in the front and south (Garrett Street) yards and a variety of mature deciduous shade trees. A clipped hedge of deciduous privet extends across the front of the lot, broken in the center for a six-foot-wide walkway of poured concrete leading from the curb to the front steps; there is no sidewalk along the street. An unclipped hedge along Garrett Street provides a measure of privacy to an unpaved parking area behind the house. The rear of the lot is defined by loosely maintained plantings of hedges and small trees. Historically, the rear of the lot contained, in addition to the pecan trees, a small orchard of apple and peach trees and individual pear and crabapple trees. There was also an arbor of Scuppernong grapes, several fig bushes, and a fenced vegetable garden. The rear of the lot was enclosed by a six-foot-tall picket fence, with picket fences four feet in height extending along both sides of the lot. The hedge functioned as a front fence. None of these landscape elements other than the pecans and the hedge remain.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 7 Page 2

1. **Roberts H. Jernigan House** 1917-1918

Contributing building

The form and style displayed by the Jernigan House--a central, two-story, pedimented portico of monumental columns that is complemented by one-story porches extending to the sides and, usually, beneath the portico--was commonly known in North Carolina during the first two decades of the twentieth century as "Southern Colonial." On the Jernigan House, the defining portico and porches are supported by fluted Ionic columns bearing terra cotta capitals. The central pediment enframes a tripartite window composition consisting of three small, flat-headed windows containing diamond-shaped panes in the upper sash, with the central windows being taller and wider than the others in a Palladianesque configuration that mimics the tripartite arrangement of the portico with flanking porches. According to Jernigan family tradition, the columns, along with the major finish woodwork for the house, were acquired from a manufacturer in Baltimore, Maryland and shipped to Ahoskie by railroad. The columns originally sat upon round, wooden, molded Ionic bases. These were replaced in the mid 1990s by utilitarian wooden ones and are stored for future restoration in a small basement. The one-story porch is enclosed by a balustrade of turned balusters, with the portion of the porch's hip roof that is sheltered beneath the portico being treated as a balcony. This balcony is enclosed by a balustrade of identical turned balusters that is anchored at each front corner by a paneled, square-in-section newel. Boxed cornices with dentil molding provide an understated and sophisticated flourish to the portico and porches.

The symmetrical, two-story, rectangular, main block of the Jernigan House is covered by a truncated hip roof laid with standing-seam tin. The roof deck was originally enclosed by a stylish balustrade that echoed those on the porch and balcony, and anchored with paneled newels like those on the balcony. It was removed in the early 1960s due to problems with leakage. The roof is pierced by three interior and interior-end brick chimneys, each finished by a modestly-scaled corbeled brick capital. The main pediment is echoed on each side elevation by a small, pedimented gable enclosing a single, small, square light. Completing the roof is a plain boxed cornice that continues until terminating with cornice returns at the rear of a two-story ell. The three-bay facade (west) is outfitted with triple windows that repeat the tripartite theme by having a central eight-over-one sash window flanked by six-over-one sashes. The main entrance is composed of full-length sidelights surmounted by a trabeated transom, with the upper balcony entrance lacking a transom. The facade's predominant symmetry varies only by the inclusion of a three-sided, polygonal, two-story window into the northern (left) bay. The side and rear elevations and the two-story ell contain a mix of eight- and six-over-one sash windows, with small six-over-one sash windows marking bathroom locations. Upstairs, a three-sided polygonal bay window accents the south wall of the southwest (front right) bedroom, providing balance to the front bay window. All doors and windows are framed by wide, flat surrounds and topped by simplified lintels

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 7 Page 3

to continue the style's characteristically dignified, if not austere, ornamentation.

On the rear is a two-story, two-room-deep ell that continues in the finish of the main block. It is distinguished by a double-tier, wrap-around porch that extends across the rear of the southeastern rooms and continues the full depth of the ell. That portion along the house has been enclosed with eight-over-one sash windows for a sleeping porch on the second story, and for a bathroom in the middle of the first story. The outer bay of the first story had its deck removed to accommodate air conditioner fans. (The 1923 and 1930 Sanborn maps show the porch unenclosed.) The porch extending along the ell remains an open porch, carried by simple chamfered posts embellished by modest, sawn scrolls. While half of the lower story has been screened, the upper tier is enclosed by a balustrade of slender, square-in-section balusters. The rear porch is distinguished by an exterior stair that rises from the rear and makes a quarter turn before continuing upward with open stringer and square-in-section balusters. Perhaps the most notable feature on the rear porch is the ceiling finish, with three-inch-wide beaded ceiling boards spaced approximately one-half-inch apart to permit ventilation. These boards are laid perpendicularly from the walls of the house and ell, with the mitered juncture providing a visual focus.

In addition to enclosing a portion of the rear ell, there have been three other exterior changes to the house. In ca. 1928 the southern elevation was modified in two ways. The first, and most visible, was enclosing the wrap-around portion of the one-story porch that extended the depth of the southwest (front right) parlor into a sun porch accessible from that parlor; the corner between the front and side porches was eliminated. At the same time, a shallow, rectangular, glass-enclosed alcove was added to the south wall of the northeast (rear) parlor. Interior changes united the southwest and southeast parlors into one large room, awash with an abundance of natural light. The fact that both additions utilized eight-over-one Colonial Revival sash windows makes them in harmony with the house's original features. Also ca. 1928, a small basement was dug for the installation of the house's first furnace (fuel oil), the previous heat being supplied by coal grates in the fireplaces. The third modification was the construction in the 1960s of a one-story wing off the north (left) elevation that includes a two-car garage accessible from the rear. The wing's two-bay facade has six-over-six sash windows and a false central gable with a single, square window in a successful attempt to replicate features from the original house. This wing replaced a porte cochere original to the house, with the northern portion of the wrap-around porch being enclosed for a laundry/mud room.

The double-pile interior of the Roberts H. Jernigan House focuses on a impressive central entrance hall extending from the front entrance to the rear porch. The Colonial Revival staircase rises ceremoniously in the center of the front hall in a straight flight toward the rear, stopping three-quarters of the distance to the rear at an intermediate landing, from where individual short flights make a quarter turn to the right or left and continue up three steps to the upper hall. Heightening the dramatic

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 7 Page 4

location of the stairs is the upward sweep of twin handrails carried by slender turned balusters. The balustrades ramp to paneled, square-in-section newels at both the top of the main flight and at the top of the short later flights. Another section of balustrade extends across the rear (upper) face of the staircase, while additional balustrades enclose the entire stair cavity in the upper hall. The entire staircase except for the natural wood threads--handrails, balusters, newels, and risers--is painted white.

The interior is plastered throughout and stylishly finished with modestly-scaled woodwork that reflects conservative Colonial Revival taste. Doors and windows are enframed by symmetrical moldings that rise like diminutive pilasters to support a plain architrave/entablature simply embellished with a molded top band. A handsome, two-part, molded wooden cornice provides a dignified crown to the public rooms downstairs. Doors typically contain one or two panels, with those to the front bedrooms upstairs having transoms for ventilation.

The front parlors are accessed through wide, double entrances that allow the rooms to flow together. On the south (right) of the hall, the remodeled ca. 1928 double parlor is entered through pocket doors. This spacious room extends the full depth of the house and originally consisted of two rooms separated by an interior chimney. During renovation, that chimney was removed and relocated to interior end, combining the rooms into a single space of generous size. Its mantel is a large and exuberantly-detailed Neo-Classical Revival mantel, the larger of three acquired in Norfolk and installed in the house ca. 1934. The replacement of the original mantels with more ornamental ones was made possible, in large part, by the installation ca. 1928 of the oil-fired furnace and the removal of coal grates from the fireplaces. The mantel in the double-parlor is composed of a broad entablature shelf supported by fluted Ionic columns, the frieze of the entablature being enriched by a fleuron medallion flanked by stylized fronds in the center and geometric, fret-like bands extending to the ends. To the right of the fireplace is a glass French door leading to the sun room that was created ca. 1928 by enclosing a portion of the wrap-around porch. It has a handsome tile floor and massive brick fireplace featuring a soldier-course segmental arch above the firebox. On the opposite side (left) of the fireplace is the glass-enclosed alcove also added in ca. 1928. Its opening is framed by two of the fluted Ionic columns that were removed by the creation of the sun porch. The alcove not only provides abundant natural light into the rear of this spacious parlor, but its columns add an unexpected flourish to the stately room.

The north (left) side of the central hall is occupied by a sitting room/parlor in the front and the dining room in the rear. The cozy sitting room is accessed by another pair of fluted Ionic columns recycled from the former wrap-around porch in ca. 1928. It also contains a Neo-Classical Revival mantel added ca. 1934, a smaller piece featuring robust corbels atop pilasters, a shelf with dentil and egg-and-dart molding, and urn, garland, and foliate embellishments applied to the frieze and pilasters. As this room was originally accessible from the porte cochere on the north, its side

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 7 Page 5

wall contains a French door with transom between six-over-one sash windows. The French door now leads to a wood paneled passage (currently utilized as a laundry) that connects to the garage. To the rear of the sitting room is the dining room, occupying the northeast corner of the house. Its focus is the third of the ca. 1934 mantels, a particularly handsome composition featuring dramatically scrolled pilasters supporting a classical entablature enriched with applied urns and garlands. The house's only chair rail is found here in the dining room and consists of a miniature entablature with molded cornice. In the ell to the rear of the dining room is a butler's pantry/break fast room and kitchen. Both rooms have been updated for modern use in a manner that respects their historic character, retaining original walls and windows. Particularly notable are entrances from each onto the rear service porch.

The second story, like the first, revolves around the broad central hall that extends from the front balcony to the rear sleeping porch. The hall appears especially spacious because the turned balustrade that handsomely encloses the open stairwell allows the open stair to become an integral part of the upper hall. The second story contains five bedrooms, one in each corner of the house and a fifth in the ell. Doors to the four front bedrooms are aligned across from each other to enhance cross ventilation. The bedroom mantels have been removed to permit the introduction of a bathroom and large closet in the center of each pair of rooms on each side of the hall. A third bathroom was installed in the first room of the ell, where it is situated between the rear northeast bedroom and the bedroom at the end of the ell, these rooms comprising a suite. The window-enclosed sleeping porch is accessible from the rear of the hall, the rear northeast bedroom, and the open porch is accessible from the sleeping porch, the bedroom in the rear of the ell, and the stairs from the lower porch. Because of the size and height of the roof, the attic is remarkably large. Accessed through a whole in the ceiling at the rear of the ell, the attic not only provides considerable storage, but encloses a loft from which a ladder rises to the deck of the truncated hipped roof.

The Roberts H. Jernigan House retains a remarkable degree of architectural integrity in spite of several minor modifications. The most recent changes--the replacement of the original molded bases beneath the monumental portico columns with rectangular ones and alterations to the deck of the rear porch to accommodate an air conditioner unit--are each minor. The most visible modification is the garage wing added in the 1960s. It, however, is as inobtrusive as possible, with the garage doors not visible from the street and the building having a scale, material, and finish

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 7 Page 6

~~wholly compatible with Ahoskie building traditions during the 1910s and 1920s.~~

2. **Storage Building**

1998

Noncontributing building

This small, gable-front, frame building is sheathed with vertical-board paneling. It has wide, single-door entrances on two sides with ramps for lawn mowers and other equipment. Small, double-hung windows provide minimal natural light inside. A large crossbuck "X" on each door is the only decorative element.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 7

8. Statement of Significance

Summary

The Roberts H. Jernigan House is an ambitiously large example of the Colonial Revival style colloquially known as "Southern Colonial." Constructed in 1917-1918 for a successful young farmer and merchant in the bustling small town of Ahoskie, North Carolina, it is a superlative example of stylish houses erected throughout eastern North Carolina during the 1910s for prosperous businessmen to showcase their success and social standing. The two-story, frame Jernigan House, built by contractor W. D. Deanes of nearby Murfreesboro from plans of unknown source, exhibits the style's definitive form and classical ornamentation, especially the imposing portico of monumental Ionic columns. The house is arguably the most impressive residence in a town of 4,391 that developed in agriculturally-rich southern Hertford County after the introduction of commercial railroad service in 1890. It was the home of Roberts H. Jernigan (1889-1966), who in addition to mercantile and farming interests, was actively involved in the civic and community affairs of the town and served a ten-year term as the local postmaster. His wife, Jessie (Garrett) Jernigan (1895-1989), was the daughter of merchant, contractor, and entrepreneur Jesse R. Garrett, and the house was a wedding present from Garrett to the Jernigans. Garrett's own residence, a large, ca. 1912 Queen Anne style house, stands across the street from the Jernigan House. The Jernigans were among the small group of economically-successful, socially-ambitious, and culturally-minded citizens in every small, newly-prosperous town in eastern North Carolina who immersed themselves in the economic, social, educational, religious, political, and civic concerns of their communities. The Jernigan House embodies a prosperity derived from cotton, tobacco, peanuts, and forest products that transformed the towns of eastern North Carolina during the early twentieth century into thriving, if small, places that sought to provide their residents with the advantages of the new century. The house was handsomely enlarged and remodeled ca. 1928 by enclosing a wrap-around porch into a spacious sun room and combining two rooms into a spacious double parlor. Later, ca. 1934, stylish Neo-Classical mantels salvaged from an unknown house in Norfolk, Virginia, further updated the interior. The Roberts H. Jernigan House is eligible for nomination to the National Register under Criterion A in the area of social history as a center of Ahoskie's social life that reflected the town's flush economy and characterized the homes of leading businessmen in prosperous small southern towns throughout much of the early twentieth century. It is also eligible under Criterion C as a superb example of the Colonial Revival style and for its attribution to contractors Jesse H. Garrett and W. D. Deanes. The period of significance for the Roberts H. Jernigan House begins with its completion in 1918 and ends in 1942, the year Jernigan began reducing his social and civic activities with his retirement as Ahoskie postmaster. The house remained in family ownership until 1994 and is currently occupied by the Jernigan House Bed and Breakfast.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 8

Historical Background and Social History Context

The Roberts H. Jernigan House is located in Ahoskie, a small town of 4,391 persons (1990 Census) and the largest town and leading trading center in Hertford County. Settlement in the county, situated in northeastern North Carolina along the border with Virginia, began about 1700 as people from the Albemarle district to the east moved west of the Chowan River and others came southward from the relatively well-settled Virginia colony. Hertford County was created by the North Carolina Colonial Assembly in 1760 from the northern half of Bertie County, which in 1722 had been formed from Chowan County to include all the land west of the Chowan River, which remains Hertford County's eastern boundary (Cross 1979, 71; Parker 1939, 131). The location of the new county's seat on the Chowan River at Winton and the growth and prosperity of Murfreesboro, a social and economic center along the Meherrin River in northern Hertford County, in large part precluded, for some years to come, the need for a town in the southern third of Hertford County (Letsinger 1984, 2-3).

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a thriving agrarian economy of small plantations developed in the northern part of the county centered at Murfreesboro. There, a rolling terrain provided fertile and well-drained soils that enabled the successful culture of tobacco, and later cotton, as cash crops with toil provided by an increasing slave population. In the southern third of the county, however, the low, flat lands of the northern Coastal Plain were poorly drained with numerous swamps. The resultant soils discouraged tobacco and cotton culture, so residents depended primarily on subsistence farming and the manufacture of naval stores. Trading in both sections was predominately with Virginia merchants, as was the case throughout the northeastern counties bordering Virginia. Products and goods were imported and exported through Norfolk, although some residents of southern Hertford County also traded through the port at Edenton (Cross 1979, 72-73).

A settlement at Ahoskie--after "Ahotskey," a former Weyanoke Indian town about three miles west of its namesake--did not exist prior to the early nineteenth century (Parker 1939, 489-490). In 1804 neighboring Baptist congregations organized the Ahoskie Baptist Church near the juncture of Catherine Creek Road, leading northeast to the Chowan River; the St. John's Road, now Church Street and NC 561, leading northwest into the county; and the Powellsville Road, now South Catherine Creek Road and Memorial Drive (US 13), leading south to Bertie County. The chosen location for the church is directly across Catherine Creek Road to the northwest from the Jernigan House (209 South Catherine Creek Road), the property being sold in 1934 to the current owners, the Ahoskie Presbyterian Church (Letsinger 1984, 3-5; Parker 1939, 470-472). The crossroads at the Ahoskie Baptist Church saw little growth until after the Civil War, when the yeoman subsistence farmers in southern Hertford County began to exert greater

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 9

influence in the county's development, in large part because of the poorer circumstances of the newly slaveless planters in the northern county. Concurrent improvements in agriculture and the introduction of peanuts as a cash crop during the late nineteenth century provided additional impetus for increasing mercantile and industrial development in southern Hertford County.

As was the case throughout eastern North Carolina after the Civil War, the introduction of steam lumber mills provided the first spurt of industrial development in Hertford County. These mills, usually financed by northern capitalists, took advantage of vast stands of marketable timber and often built logging railroads to penetrate the forests (for case in point, see Butchko 1999, 16-18, 216-217). The first such mill in the Ahoskie area was that of Joseph T. Tunis of Maryland, who in 1883 built along Catherine Creek at the Chowan River near the crossroads that now bears his name (Parker 1939, 179).

The completion in 1885 of a logging road from Tunis southwestwardly to Aulander in Bertie County brought the first train through present Ahoskie, and in 1887 this line was organized as the Chowan and Southern Railroad (Parker 1939, 179, 492). The next year the firm of Cocked and Powell began operation of a large sawmill, cotton gin, and commissary at the corner of Church Street and Catherine Creek Road across from the Baptist Church. Also in 1888, the Ahoskie post office was opened nearby by James A. Copeland, an area farmer (Parker 1939, 513-514). The next year, Norfolk interests organized the Norfolk and Carolina Railroad to extend from that Virginia port to Tarboro, about forty miles southwest of Ahoskie. With the refusal of a large landowner to sell a right-of-way through property near Winton, the railroad investors acquired the Chowan and Southern Railroad, and straightened and rebuilt it for the new railroad. Norfolk and Carolina Railroad was sold to the much larger, Atlantic Coast Line Railroad on April 1, 1890, the same date that the first passenger train rolled into Ahoskie amid great fanfare. Thus, the emerging community at Ahoskie attained a lasting economic advantage over its older rivals of Winton and Murfreesboro (Parker 1939, 145-146, 492-493, Letsinger 1984, 3, 7).

Ahoskie in 1890 probably counted less than fifty residents within the 1939 municipal limits, even though the community included two saw mills, the railroad with its depot in a boxcar parked on a siding, a post office, and perhaps several stores (Parker 1939, 499; Letsinger 1984, 8-9). The 1890s was a decade of considerable growth, with many new residents coming from farms in Hertford and Bertie counties. Development activities were sufficient for the town to be incorporated by the state General Assembly in early 1893 (Letsinger 1984, 9-11,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 10

Parker 1939, 543, 628). A spirit of progressiveness existed within the town, and one oldtimer recalled many years later that:

these people came here with an idea of making money. They were not bound by tradition or awed by aristocracy. The place had no vested interests to defend the status quo because there was not status quo to defend (Sharpe 1973, 868).

Growth was apparently rapid, for by 1896, the first year Ahoskie is included in statewide business directories, the town had an estimated one hundred residents. They had their choice of eight general mercantile establishments, and one coach maker served the town and surrounding farms. While the population total was far behind the 1,200 people in Murfreesboro and the 800 residents of Winton, Ahoskie's growth was just beginning. More reliable statistics come from the 1900 census, when the population of the three towns was Ahoskie 302, Murfreesboro 657, and Winton 688 (Bransons 1896, 341-422; Parker 1939, xvii-xviii).

The figures of the 1900 census were just beginning to reflect the impact of construction the year before of a large, band sawmill by the Branning Manufacturing Company near the railroad and Main Street, about one-fifth mile north of the Jernigan House. Several months earlier the Pennsylvania-based company had completed a five-mile extension of the Wellington and Powellsville Railroad from Powellsville, in Bertie County, to Ahoskie. This railroad not only brought immense quantities of timber to the modern Branning plant, but provided freight and limited passenger service from Ahoskie to sections of Hertford and Bertie counties previously unreached by the railroad. Ahoskie merchants benefited greatly not only from this extension of their market but by serving the families of more than one hundred workers at the mill. The railroad connections in Ahoskie were so superior that the 1899 extension of the Wellington and Powellsville Railroad into Ahoskie was completed in large part to move saw mill equipment from an older plant in Edenton to Ahoskie. By 1910 the company had shifted all operations from Edenton and another mill in Columbia to the Ahoskie facility. The Branning Company operated in Ahoskie for twenty-five years, during which time the economic life of the town depended on the mill. When it closed its Ahoskie plant 1925, the town would not see a larger manufacturing operation until after World War II. After the closing of the Branning factory, the Wellington and Powellsville Railroad was purchased by residents in Windsor, the Bertie County seat. It operated as the Carolina Southern Railroad until the 1940s, and continues in a limited capacity today (Letsinger 1984, 12-13; Parker 1939, 555-567; Butchko 1992, 44-45).

Fueled by timber and railroads, Ahoskie rose during the next thirty years to be the largest town in the county by 1930. From 302 residents in 1900, Ahoskie more than tripled in size to 924 people in 1910, and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 11

rose another fifty-five percent to 1,429 inhabitants in 1920. Since the county experienced only fourteen-percent growth during these years--14,294 people in 1900, 15,436 in 1910, and 16,294 in 1920--it is not surprising that Murfreesboro and Winton each declined in population between 1900 and 1920. The former declined from 657 residents in 1900 to 602 in 1920, while Winton decreased from 688 to 489 residents during the same period. The next ten years saw Ahoskie's population rise thirty-six percent to 1,940 residents in 1930. During the same period, both Murfreesboro and Winton reversed their population declines, and the county increased eight percent to 17,542 citizens. Still, one in nine Hertford County residents resided in Ahoskie in 1930. Ahoskie has continued as Hertford County's largest and leading municipality, and by 1990, 4,391, or one-in five, of Hertford County's 22,523 inhabitants resided in Ahoskie (Parker 1939, xvii-xviii).

It was the prospect of such explosive growth that attracted ambitious newcomers to Ahoskie between 1885 and 1910. One of the most ambitious was Jesse Richard Garrett (1862-1938), a carpenter from Bertie County. Garrett not only had the Roberts H. Jernigan House built in 1916 as a wedding present to his daughter, Jessie, but, in all likelihood was in charge of the construction as well, although family tradition relates that the contractor was W. D. Deanes of nearby Murfreesboro. Coming to Ahoskie in the late 1880s as a young carpenter to build the first frame house erected in the future town, Garrett became the first important builder and contractor in Ahoskie and was involved in the construction of most of the early houses and business structures in town. While a complete list of these buildings will likely never be compiled, among the notable structures are: a three-story house for postmaster James A. Copeland in 1906 on East Main Street; two residences for himself, the latter in 1912 at 210 South Catherine Creek Road; the 1917-1918 Roberts H. Jernigan House at 209 South Catherine Creek Road; the ca. 1920 home of his sister, Ann Garrett Pierce, at 327 South Catherine Creek Road; the 1925-1926 Garrett Hotel, the finest commercial hotel; and the Richard Theatre in 1927. His moniker of "The Builder" was achieved both in practice and in theory. Having come from a modest background, with limited formal education, and without Hertford County familial connections, he prospered in Ahoskie, becoming one of the town's wealthiest and most influential men. His rivalry with Dr. Jesse H. Mitchell (b. 1869), an early land owner and real estate promoter, for leadership in directing the town's growth is a colorful chapter of Ahoskie's early history (Letsinger 1984, 10-11, 48, 50; Letsinger 1983-1984; Parker 1939, 664, 529-535).

In addition to being the town's leading contractor, Jesse G. Garrett by 1900 had started his own saw mill near the railroad on North Maple Street, then the eastern outskirts of town (Parker 1939, 531-533; Letsinger 1984, 12). He was also a merchant in Ahoskie as early as 1905, being cited as an "original founder and pioneer

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 12

merchant" in a special promotional edition of the local newspaper in 1917 (News and Observer 1905, 332; The Hertford County Herald, May 2, 1917). Family tradition maintains that, like other general merchants in the area, Garrett made regular buying trips to northern suppliers, particularly Baltimore because of the relative ease of transportation between that city and northeastern North Carolina (Newbern Interview 1999). In a May 1917 article on the two-month-old mercantile partnership of Garrett, son Eric L., and son-in-law Roberts H. Jernigan as Garrett and Jernigan, the editor noted that J. R. Garrett is:

one of our foremost citizens and business men; though practically retired from the present business, he is actively interested in Banks, Farming and industrial pursuits. He is a self made man, and did a good job in the making, and there is no more public-spirited or influential citizen in our midst. Mr. R. H. Jernigan, son-in-law of Mr. Garrett, is a young man, and an active member of the firm since the first of the year. He comes from a very prominent family of this section, and is a graduate of Randolph Macon College, who with splendid business talents and progressive ideas will auger well for this institution (The Hertford County Herald, May 2, 1917).

The stock of Garrett and Jernigan included building supplies as well as traditional lines of general merchandise. In February 1917, the newly-formed company advertised having received "a Carload of Building Supplies of All Kinds. This is the place to get your Ceiling, Molding, Windows, Doors, and practically everything you will need in the construction of a first class building. Our Prices Will Suit You" (The Hertford County Herald, February 23, 1917). Thus, the enterprising Mr. Garrett could profit from building activity whether or not he was the contractor.

Roberts Harrell Jernigan was born February 5, 1889 in Kobe, Japan, where his father, Thomas Roberts Jernigan (1847-1920) was United States Consul General. Appointed to the post by President Cleveland in 1885, Thomas Jernigan returned to North Carolina soon after Roberts' birth (and the end of Cleveland's term) where he remained until Cleveland's second term as president brought an appointment as consul general to Shanghai. After 1897 he practiced law in China and later served as attorney for the Standard Oil Company in China (Newbern 1988, 280-281). The Jernigan family was from the Harrellsville vicinity of Hertford County, about twelve miles east of Ahoskie, and it was there on the family farm that Roberts H. Jernigan spent his childhood. He received his education through the local public schools, and later attended Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia, entering in the early 1910. After college, the young

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 13

Jernigan returned to Harrellsville to oversee the family's extensive farming activities (The Roanoke-Chowan News-Herald, April 12, 1966; Parker 1939, 160-166; Newbern interview, October 1999).

On February 2, 1915, twenty-six-year-old Roberts H. Jernigan married nineteen-year-old Jessie Elizabeth Garrett, the only daughter of Jesse R. Garrett and his wife, Nannie Mitchell Garrett (1869-1944). The wedding took place in the "spacious parlor" of the Garrett home. After a "bridal tour" to Washington, D. C. and other places, the couple settled in Harrellsville, and first entertained at their home, "The Oaks," in mid March (The Hertford County Herald, February 5, March 19, 1915). The Jernigans resided in Harrellsville for about two years, Roberts attending to farming concerns and Jessie, among other duties, bearing the couple's first child, son Roberts Harrell Jernigan, Jr., in late 1915. The Ahoskie newspaper reported numerous week-long visits by Jessie to her parents, some probably due to homesickness, other due to her pregnancy (such as an "illness of several weeks" in October 1915), and others, perhaps, for planning construction of the Jernigans's new home. Family tradition recalls that Mr. Garrett promised the Jernigans a house if his only daughter would come back to Ahoskie (The Hertford County Herald, July 2, October 8, 15, 1915; February 14, March 31, April 28, May 19, June 23, September 8, 1916; Newbern Interview 1999).

Family tradition also states that construction on the house began in 1917, with the family occupying it in August 1918. In support of this tradition, the deed by which the Garretts transferred the building lot to their daughter is dated May 18, 1918. The lot measured fifty yards by one hundred yards, with the present lot lacking only eleven feet of the original depth (Hertford County Deed Book 64, Page 287; 1998 Survey Map, Deed Book 543, Page 327). The Jernigans had moved to Ahoskie by January 1917 when, as noted earlier, Jernigan joined the mercantile company of his father-in-law. One month later the local newspaper, in reporting the monthly meeting of the Tongue and Needle Club, noted that Mrs. Roberts Jernigan was a new member, adding that the ladies spent the afternoon "chatting, tatting, and so on" (Newbern Interview 1999; The Hertford County Herald, February 23, 1919). The Jernigans apparently resided with her parents across the street from their new house until construction was complete. Unfortunately, the local newspaper did not report local residential building activity as many small-town North Carolina newspapers did during the early twentieth century. Thus, no mention of the construction process nor completion date are found in The Hertford County Herald, even though the owners/editors were neighbors of the Jernigans and Garretts.

Once settled into their house, Roberts and Jessie Jernigan involved themselves in many activities, the foremost being raising three children: Roberts Harrell, Jr., born 1915; Nancy Garrett, born 1918; and Jesse Garrett, born 1924. Outside of the home, Roberts busied himself with not only operation of the Garrett and Jernigan

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 14

mercantile store, but in a lumber mill partnership with Will Lawrence at the western corner of Railroad and First streets. As shown by the 1923 and 1930 Sanborn maps, the town's only editions of these maps, the Jernigan and Lawrence enterprise not only included saw and planing mills, but a finishing area for the manufacture of tobacco hogsheads, barrels, and pails and a cotton gin. This business, which began about 1920, fell victim to the Great Depression and closed in the early 1930s. Jernigan also maintained extensive family farming interests in about 200 acres in Harrellsville and in another approximately one hundred acres near Ahoskie. His primary crops--cotton, tobacco, and peanuts--were the chief cash crops in eastern North Carolina from the 1880s through the 1970s. With the exception of utilizing his cotton gin, Jernigan patronized the commercial markets in Ahoskie, as neither he nor his father-in-law, Jesse R. Garrett, had financial interests in local marketing facilities for tobacco or peanuts (Sanborn map 1923, 2; Sanborn map 1930, 2; Newbern Interview 1999; Parker 1939, 732, 166).

Like many aspiring merchants and citizens in small North Carolina towns during the early twentieth century, Roberts H. Jernigan took an active part in a number of civic endeavors. Perhaps because his father-in-law was a contractor and his retail business included building materials, he served on three building committees during a span of six years between December 1925 and January 1931. The first two--a lengthy process of securing support for and constructing a new Ahoskie Baptist Church between December 1925 and May 1929, and a concurrent term in 1927-1929 as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Ahoskie High School for construction of a new brick building--both brought forth controversy and rival factions. The lengthy church project was so disagreeable to Jernigan that in early 1930, less than a year after the first services were held in the new Baptist sanctuary, he became a founding member of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in February 1930, for which he was immediately named to the building committee. Every aspect of planning and building the Episcopal building went beautifully, and a charming Gothic Revival church was consecrated in January 1931. All three buildings are still standing (Parker 1939, 439-446, 359-361, 478-480).

Jessie G. Jernigan, like her husband, was involved with social and civic organizations. She was an avid bridge player, belonging to both a daytime ladies' club and, with her husband, an evening couples' group. In 1926 she was a charter member of the Ahoskie Womans Club, a group of civic-minded women seeking to promote civic and cultural endeavors in their town. In fact, the first regular meeting of the newly-organized club was held in the Jernigan House, and meetings were held periodically here during Jessie's active membership. She was also active in school functions for their three children and in Episcopal women's groups (Parker 1939, 319-320, 478; Newbern Interview 1999).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 15

In ca. 1928, the Jernigans undertook a remodeling of their ten-year-old residence. Their daughter relates her mother declaring that since her father, Jesse R. Garrett, had the house built in 1917-1918 the way he wanted, she remodeled it the way she wanted. These changes included enclosing the wrap-around porch on the south as a sun porch, adding an alcove to the southeast (rear right) parlor, and combining the southeast and southwest parlors into a spacious double parlor. With changes to the entrances from the hall into the double parlor and into the northeast sitting room, the public rooms on the first story achieved a generousness of scale and an ease of circulation that befitted the Jernigan's style of entertaining. The addition of a oil-fired furnace to replace coal grates in the fireplaces added further to the house's gracious social atmosphere. Later, in ca. 1934, Neo-Classical Revival mantels were installed in the main downstairs rooms. These mantels, found by Jessie G. Jernigan at Cofer's Furniture Company in Norfolk, Virginia, were supposedly from an early twentieth century house in Norfolk that had been demolished (Newbern Interview 1999). During the 1960s, a two-car garage was appended onto the north (left) replacing a porte cochere original to the house.

Roberts H. and Jessie G. Jernigan continued to be active in the town's affairs throughout their adult years. The house was often the scene for parties held in conjunction for other social or business events in Ahoskie, such as the grand opening in September 1928 of the New Richard Theatre, the crowning achievement of Jesse R. Garrett's career as builder and contractor, at a time when son-in-law Roberts H. Jernigan served on the town council (The Hertford County Herald, September 13, 1928). This theatre, along with the tobacco warehouses in town, provided venues for a succession of orchestras and dance bands, including those of Hal Kemp, Bob Crosby (Bing's brother), Duke Ellington, Guy Lombardo, and North Carolina-native Kay Kiser. The band members were usually entertained in the Jernigan House during their stay in Ahoskie, often relaxing here during intermissions. The Jernigan's oldest son, Roberts Harrell Jernigan, Jr., was the business manager for the Wake Forest College orchestra during his student days in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and the house was the band's headquarters during annual trips into eastern North Carolina (Newbern interview, May 18, 2000; The News and Observer, April 16, 1931, The News-Herald, January 26, 1986). The house was also a center of entertaining during the annual town festivals held by the Kiwanis Club during the late 1930s and early 1940s, with daughter Nancy serving as "Queen Chowan" during the festival (The News and Observer, June 2, 1940).

The business and social activities of the Jernigans gained them regional and statewide recognition. Roberts's induction on April 25, 1923 into the Masonic order provided him contacts with prominent men throughout eastern North Carolina, and he often motored to regular meetings held seventy miles away in New Bern (Newbern Interview 2000). Perhaps an indirect indication of the couple's many acquaintances in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 16

the state, in 1935 daughter Nancy, then a student at Duke University, was crowned the third Miss North Carolina during the annual pageant held in Winston-Salem. As it was not required that the winner attend the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City that September, she did not, and later stated that she only entered to please her grandfather, Jesse R. Garrett. A further recognition of the family's social standing was Nancy's presentation at the annual debutante ball held in Raleigh on September 11, 1936 by the Terpsichorean Club, the leading social club in eastern North Carolina (Winston-Salem Journal, March 30, 1935; debutante program in possession of Nancy Jernigan Newbern).

While Jernigan's appointment as local postmaster on September 26, 1933 was primarily a business endeavor, the position enabled him to keep abreast of activities in town. Jernigan's retirement from that position in 1942 signaled the beginning of a gradual withdrawal from the town's business, social, and cultural affairs. Thus, the year 1942 marks the end of the house's period of signifance (Parker 1939, 732, 166; Newbern Interview 1999). Roberts and Jessie Jernigan remained active a gradually reduced number of activities, and in 1948 became charter members of the Beechwood Country Club. Their joint and individual civic involvements were often recognized in their later years, including his receipt in 1958 of the the Fifth Annual Recognition Award from the Ahoskie Rotary chapter, and in 1979 when she was cited for over fifty years of membership in the Ahoskie Woman's Club (Newbern Interview 2000).

The Jernigans resided here until their respective deaths, he on April 8, 1966 and she on October 23, 1989. The house remained in family ownership until April 10, 1994 when it was sold to Gary D. and Phyllis G. Frymier (Hertford County Deed Book 502, Page 440). The Frymiers sold the house on April 18, 1995 to John W. and Donna White (Hertford County Deed Book 510, Page 387), who undertook modest renovations to the house. On April 24, 1998 the Whites sold the house to John D. and Darlene "Dee" P. Fritz, the current owners (Hertford County Dee Book 543, Page 325). In October 1999 they opened the Jernigan House Bed and Breakfast in the house, maintaining upstairs living quarters for themselves.

Architecture Context

The Roberts H. Jernigan House, erected 1917-1918 at 209 Catherine Creek Road in Ahoskie, North Carolina, is a notable example of a form of the Colonial Revival style known during the early twentieth century as "Southern Colonial." Its defining feature is a central two-story, pedimented portico supported by monumental columns with one-story porches extending out to each side. While this colossal portico was adapted from the related Neo-Classical Revival style, it lacks the robust and exuberant classical ornamentation associated with the Neo-Classical Revival. The stately-finished Southern Colonial Revival

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 17

house was often chosen by the state's merchants and businessmen during the 1900s and 1910s as an appropriately eloquent--sophisticated without being ostentatious--display of one's financial success and social achievements. The rendition of the monumental columns here with Ionic capitals provides the Jernigan House with a greater elegance than examples having austere Doric columns, but still less flamboyant than Corinthian columns (Bishir 1990, 420-423). Notable examples of Southern Colonial style houses can be found in nearly every county of the state, with the Jernigan House being Hertford County's finest example and the only original Southern Colonial Revival style dwelling in Ahoskie. In 1911, the 1907 Baker-Browne House at 309 West Church Street underwent a stylistic updating by insurance and real estate promoter Raleigh J. Baker that transformed a double-tier porch supported by Colonial Revival pillars into a Southern Colonial one with central portico of paired pillars sheltering a one-story porch and second-story balcony (Letsinger 1984, 43-44; Letsinger 1983-1984). The Jernigan House compares favorably with regional examples such as the 1907 Dr. Henry M. S. Cason House and 1910s Charles N. Griffin House in Edenton (Edenton Historic District, 1973) (Butchko 1992, 186-187, 93); the 1913 James H. Roberson House and William J. Little House (NR 1985) in Robersonville (Butchko 1999, 321-323); and the 1912-1913 Mary Blades Foreman House and 1914 Charles O. Robinson House in Elizabeth City (Elizabeth City Historic District, 1977) Bishir 1990, 420-422; Butchko 1989, 256, 249-250).

The source of the Jernigan House design is unknown. Family tradition relates that the architect was from Franklin, Virginia, a small, agricultural trading center and county seat about thirty miles north of Ahoskie. However, no architect is known to have practiced in that town during the early twentieth century. Family tradition also tells that the house was identical, or nearly so, to the principal's house at Oak Ridge Academy in Oak Ridge, Guilford County. The architect of that 1905 house, which has Ionic columns and a modillion cornice, also is unknown. "Maple Glade," the Oak Ridge house, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982 as part of the Oak Ridge Military Academy Historic District (Newbern Interview, October 1999; Fomberg 1982, 7-3, 8-8).

While W. D. Deanes of nearby Murfreesboro is attributed to be the contractor for the Roberts H. Jernigan House, it seems unlikely that Jesse R. Garrett (1862-1938), the leading contractor in Ahoskie, would have not been directly involved with its construction. He was, after all, not only having the house built as a gift for his daughter, Jessie G. Jernigan, but resided across the street from the building site. Furthermore, he remained active in construction until the late 1920s, erecting several of his most noted local buildings--the Garrett Hotel in 1925-1926 and the Richard Theater in 1928--well after the completion of the Jernigan House in 1918. There is no family recollection or record as to who acted as contractor for the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 8 Page 18

renovations in ca. 1928 or the installation of the new mantels ca. 1934 (Letsinger 1983-1984; Letsinger 1984, 48, 50; Newbern Interview, October 1999).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 8, 9 Page 19

8. Statement of Significance

Significant Dates

1942

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 9 Page 20

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number 10 Page 21

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The property to be nominated is the Roberts H. Jernigan house lot as shown on the attached survey map, labeled Exhibit A, "Property Being Conveyed to John D. Fritz and wife Darlene P. Fritz by John W. White and Bruce White," dated April 27, 1998. It is registered in Deed Book 543, Page 327 in the Hertford County Register of Deeds Office, Hertford County Courthouse, Winton, North Carolina.

Boundary Justification

The property nominated is all of the house lot historically associated with the Roberts H. Jernigan House, the property remaining intact and undivided as devised to the present owners.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Roberts H. Jernigan House
Hertford County, North Carolina

Section number photo Page 22

Photograph Identification

Information applies to all photographs.

Photographer: Thomas R. Butchko, September 1999

Original negatives at: State Historic Preservation Office
Survey and Planning Branch

1. Facade, facing east.
2. Portico, facing northeast.
3. Rear porch, facing north.
4. North side of house and ell, looking southwest, showing garage wing on right.
5. Base of stair, looking northeast, showing column at entrance to northwest sitting room at far left.
6. Intermediate stair landing and upper balustrade, looking southeast.
7. Double parlor on south, looking southeast, showing alcove, mantel, and, at far right, door to enclosed sun porch.
8. Detail of mantel in dining room, looking west.
9. Storage Building along northern property line, looking north from behind rear ell.

