

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Dr. Roscius P. and Mary Mitchell Thomas House and Outbuildings

Bethlehem vicinity, Hertford County, HF0597, Listed 8/28/2007

Nomination by Nancy Van Dolsen

Photographs by Nancy Van Dolsen, October 2005



Façade view



Side view of house and doctor's office

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 **Thomas, Dr. Roscius P. and Mary Mitchell, House and Outbuildings**
other names/site number **Thomas, Ruth, Home Farm**

2. Location

street & number **734 Thomas Bridge Road** not for publication **N/A** city or town **Bethlehem** vicinity **X**
state **North Carolina** code **NC** county **Hertford** code **091** zip code **27922**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this **X** 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 **X** meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide **X** 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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	3	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
4	3	Total

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**
 Domestic **Secondary Structure**
 Agriculture **Agricultural Outbuilding**

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: **Domestic** Sub: **Single Dwelling**
 Domestic **Secondary Structure**
 Agriculture **Agricultural Outbuilding**

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian
 Mid 19th Century: Greek Revival
 Other: Vernacular mid-19th century domestic outbuildings

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation **BRICK**
roof **ASPHALT**
walls **WOOD/weatherboard**
other **METAL**

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.
- X** 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance **ca. 1855, 1887**
Significant Dates **ca. 1855, 1887**
Significant Person **N/A**
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

Acreeage of Property **approx. 25 acres**

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
1	18	330450	4019620	3	18	330040	4019860
2	18	330080	4019580	4	18	330380	4019920
<input type="checkbox"/> 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 **5 April 2007**
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 **Franklin L. and Maxine Britt** phone **252.209.9188**

street & number **734 Thomas Bridge Road** city or town **Cofield** state **NC** zip code **27922**

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Thomas, Dr. Roscius P. and Mary Mitchell, House and Outbuilding
Hertford County, N.C.

Narrative Description

The Dr. Roscius P. and Mary Mitchell Thomas House and Outbuildings is comprised of an 1887 house, three antebellum outbuildings—a doctor's office, smoke house, and root cellar—and three early twentieth-century outbuildings that stand on a 213-acre tract of land in eastern Hertford County, north of the crossroads village of Bethlehem, and approximately halfway between the towns of Ahoskie and Harrellsville. The historic boundary includes an appropriate setting of approximately twenty-five acres for the house and outbuildings which are nominated only for their architectural significance. The property is located on the northwest side of the intersection of Thomas Road (SR 1429) and Thomas Bridge Road (SR 1427). The house, surrounded by its outbuildings, sits on a cleared section of land on the west side of Thomas Bridge Road, down a dirt lane. The land (the majority of which is wooded, and most likely was historically) is flat, punctuated by swampy areas. The farm reaches back to the Wiccacon (also known as the Ahoskie) Creek to the west. The dirt lane is centered on the house, passes through a four-board fence, and then swings to the south side of the house. A picket fence with undulating pickets set between posts and on top of a horizontal skirt board, a reconstruction of one that appears in an early twentieth century photograph of the farm, surrounds the house. A small, ornamental garden with brick paths that date to the late nineteenth century (and possibly earlier) occupies the area between the front of the house and the fence.

House, 1887, contributing

The house is a two-story, three-bay, single-pile, side-gable roof, frame building with a two-story, gable-roof ell attached to the rear of the main block. Built onto the gable-end of the ell is a ca. 1850 one-story kitchen building. A ca. 2000, one-story, frame addition that includes a laundry, utility room, bath, and two-car garage was built onto the rear of the attached kitchen. The roof of the one-story porch on the south elevation has been retained, but a sun room with a brick knee wall and lower roof line extends approximately five feet from the end of the porch roof. Although additions have been made to the building since 1887, the frame addition is on the rear of the building, is only one-story tall, and uses compatible materials. The sun-room on the south elevation has a lower roof line, is on a secondary elevation, and is not visible from the building's façade.

The weatherboarded house stands on a brick foundation and is covered with an asphalt shingle roof. Red asphalt shingles, arranged in small six-petaled flower and band ornamental motifs, add a decorative element to the grey asphalt shingles. A gable is centered on the façade and features a round window with a six-light fixed sash. Ornate brackets encircle the roof, and applied trim highlights the frieze and molding of the front gable. Sash throughout the house is two-over-two, and the windows are flanked with louvred shutters. The shutters are functional and match those that appear in historic photographs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Paneled cornerboards with a jigsaw-cut five-pointed star are found on the façade and rear elevation of the main block. Two brick chimneys run up the rear wall of the main block (one within the ell), and an interior end chimney is located at the rear of the ell.

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A one-story half-hip roof porch runs across the façade of the building. Four wood steps, centered on the porch, lead up to the wood porch floor. The porch posts feature a central wood board with pierced designs reminiscent of the Eastlake style of decoration. Pierced brackets link the posts to the porch roof. First floor windows on the façade feature a divided panel apron below the sash, which open to allow people to walk from the interior first floor parlors directly onto the porch. The divided, four-panel door on the façade features arched upper panels. Decorative leaded glass is found in the three-light transom and two-light sidelights that surround the front door.

Centered on the gable ends of the main block are two-story, five-part bay windows with three two-over-two sash windows on each floor. The area below the first floor windows features a single horizontal panel, and the space between the first and second floor windows has two such panels on each plane. The roof of each bay also features a bracketed cornice and decorative blocks between the brackets. A circular louvred window is found at each gable end peak.

The two-story ell has a flat, wide frieze board but no decorative corner boards or brackets. The one-story earlier kitchen is also simple with no elaborate decoration on the exterior.

The new addition features weatherboard and details similar to those found on the main block and ell. The addition has a cross-gable on the south elevation with two overhead garage doors. A small entry porch is located between the garage and the west end of the sun porch. The sun porch has a low brick wall, with square glass panels (lights) above. The square lights are found on the south elevation, as well as the south slope of the shed roof. A glass door is centered on the sun porch south elevation.

The floor plan of the main block has a central passage with an ornate stair to the second floor; the ell contained the dining room and behind it, the ca. 1855 kitchen. All of the plaster walls on the first floor are original. Sections of the plaster walls on the second floor had been damaged; those areas were replaced with plasterboard and given a plaster skim coat. All of the floors in the house are original and are wood measuring between five and eight inches. Doors throughout the house are four panel with applied moldings. Window and door surrounds are relatively simple, with only a thin band of molding around the perimeter.

Throughout the main block and ell of the house are strategically placed, early twentieth-century fire extinguishers manufactured by the Red Comet, Inc. of Littleton, Colorado. The fire extinguishers were mounted by doorways and window openings on both the first and second floors. The decorative metal brackets hold glass globes filled with carbon tetrachloride; the globes would explode when the fire reached a specific temperature. The spring would release a metal bar that shattered the glass and released the liquid which would hopefully extinguish the

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Hertford County, N.C.

fire. The Red Comet advertised their extinguishers in periodicals such as the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, and *Country Gentleman*.¹

The stair in the central passage of the main block features a large, heavy turned newel and two turned balusters per step, and a molded handrail. The stair has a straight run to the second floor, but the top of the stairs is in the ell, not the main block. Divided-light glass doors, dating to the early-to-mid twentieth century, lead from the rear of the center passage on the first floor into a small rear passage.

The northern parlor features a wood mantel with an Eastlake-influenced design, included stylized pilasters with an arched panel, and a peaked design on the frieze. The mantel in the southern parlor is a replacement, and is an early twentieth-century mantel with mirrored overmantel supported by Ionic-style columns. The easternmost room in the ell now serves as a dining room, but for many years in the twentieth century it served as a bedroom. It retains its original, simple mantel with peaked arch on the frieze and flat pilasters. The westernmost room in the ell also retains its original, simple mantel with an original adjacent cupboard with paneled doors below. Some of this woodwork may date to the ca. 1850 house that pre-dated this building. The wainscot in this room was added ca. 2000.

The original kitchen measures approximately sixteen feet by eleven feet and was remodeled when added to the rear of the ca. 1887 building; most likely in ca. 1887. It retains a small pantry added to the southwest corner during the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

The second floor has an L-shaped passage and three rooms. The north end of the passage has a room that now is used as a bath but once housed the wiring from a Delco plant that once provided electricity to the house; the room also had wood pegs for hanging clothes. All three rooms retain their original Eastlake-influenced mantels, which are on the interior walls. All of the mantels are slightly different.

Doctor's Office, ca. 1855, contributing

The Dr. Roscius P. Thomas Doctor's Office stands to the south of the house and is a one-story, two-room, gable-front frame building with a full return cornice that forms a pediment. The building retains its beaded siding, some of it repaired and replaced ca. 2000. The building has nine-over-six sash windows, and two doors, the one on the gable end facing the road and the other on the eave wall facing the house. One window is on the south wall and two flank the fireplace on the west wall. The doors are grained and five-panel. The door on the gable end opens into a small room, which has a transom above the door but no windows. This small room is lined with shelves and has a closet on the north wall; this room most likely served as an apothecary. The other room, which could be accessed from the apothecary or the outside, has a

¹ "Red Comet Manufacturing Company," Littleton, Colorado Website; accessed 20 November 2006; <http://www.littletongov.org/history/othertopics/redcomet.asp>.

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fireplace on the gable end with a simple Greek Revival-style mantel. The interior of the building is plastered and has a simple baseboard and a rail around the room about a foot below the top of the windows. The wood railings flanking the steps on the eave and gable end into the building were added ca. 2000.

Smokehouse, ca. 1855, contributing

The smokehouse is a one-story, gable-front, heavy timber frame building that stands northwest of the house. The building was resheathed ca. 2000 with weatherboards that matched the original siding. All of the timbers are original. The building stands on a continuous brick foundation. Since the replaced weatherboards match those found originally on the building and no other changes have been made, the smokehouse retains good integrity.

Root House, ca. 1855, contributing

The one-story, gable-front, root house is a heavy timber frame building that has beaded exterior siding and a sheathed board interior that stands north of the house. Between the two sheathings is sand used as insulation to keep the interior of the building at a constant temperature—not freezing in the winter and not too hot in the summer. The upper level was once filled with pine straw as insulation. The only openings are on the south elevation; a door into the lower level and a small horizontal wood board shutter into the upper level. The exterior door on the lower level, like the building itself, has a space between the exterior and interior board sheathings—this space is filled with cotton seed for insulation. A second door—an original lattice divided door—remains intact and provided air circulation in the summer. The building stands on a continuous brick foundation.

Barn, ca. 1910, non-contributing

Also standing to the north of the house is a large frame barn that was both a pack house and mule barn. The central, gable-front, two-story, three-bay section with a central door flanked by windows on both levels served as the pack house. The shed roof section on the north side housed the stables for mules. The open shed on the south side served as machinery storage. The building stands on a brick foundation and is sheathed in weatherboards.

Chicken House, ca. 1940, non-contributing

One-story, shed-roof, weatherboarded building standing on a concrete block foundation. Exposed rafter ends. Metal roof. Composed of two sections. The building has wood doors on the east and south elevation and three fixed four-light sash on the south elevation.

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Biddy House, ca. 1940, non-contributing

One-story, shed-roof, weatherboarded building standing on a concrete block foundation. Exposed rafter ends. Metal roof. The building has two windows on the south elevation and a door on the west elevation.

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Thomas, Dr. Roscius P. and Mary Mitchell, House and Outbuildings
Hertford County, NC

Summary

The Dr. Roscius P. and Mary Mitchell Thomas House and Outbuildings in Hertford County, North Carolina, are a remarkable collection of buildings dating from ca. 1855 and 1887. Three rare antebellum outbuildings—a doctor’s office, root building, and smokehouse—remain intact. The doctor’s office is a two-room building complete with original apothecary shelves, as well as interior mantel and other trim, and features a full gable return cornice which forms a pediment, making it a fine vernacular example of the Greek Revival style. The two domestic outbuildings—a well-preserved smokehouse and a very rare root building—are intact and represent once-common building types that rarely survive. The root building retains its interior lattice door, insulated outer door, and interior and exterior sheathing.

The Dr. Roscius P. and Mary Mitchell Thomas House, an Italianate-style house with eclectic stylistic influences, was constructed in 1887. This fine house has a plethora of trim and decoration, including ornate brackets, a circular window in the front gable, an elaborate front porch with jigsaw work, two-story bay windows on the gable ends with decorative panels, and ornate cornerboards on the main block. The nearby towns of Union and Murfreesboro, also in Hertford County, are known for the elaborate millwork found on their late nineteenth century houses; the Thomas House, an especially fine and well-preserved example, fits into this tradition. Dr. Roscius, as a doctor and the owner of more than 200 acres, had the wealth and means to build such a fine home and chose to use the idiom found elsewhere in the county.

The Dr. Roscius P. and Mary Mitchell Thomas House and Outbuildings is locally significant under Criterion C for architecture for ca. 1855 and 1887, the dates of the buildings’ construction.

Historical Background

Hertford County, in northeastern North Carolina, is a rural, agricultural county that is sparsely populated and which is dominated by a landscape of flat farm fields, interspersed with creeks, drainage ditches, and woodland. The county has a few small towns, including the county seat of Winton (established 1766), the river port town of Murfreesboro (established 1787) on Meherrin River near its opening into the Chowan River, and the railroad town of Ahoskie (established ca. 1880). Smaller crossroads village are scattered throughout the county, including Harrellsville, Union, Bethlehem, and Como. The closest community to the Thomas House is the very small crossroads of Bethlehem, which is about one-and-a-half miles south of the house. The Thomas House is located seven-to-ten miles from the communities of Union and Murfreesboro.

Abraham Thomas (1799-1845), a native of Gates County, moved into the Harrellsville area of Hertford County, North Carolina, sometime before 1845. He married Nancy Mitchell Thomas (1807-1867), a native of Bertie County, North Carolina, sometime before 1844. According to family tradition, Abraham and Nancy Mitchell Thomas built a house on the farm during the late 1840s or 1850s which they later gave to their son, Dr. Roscius P. Thomas. Their house no longer

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stands, but the root building, smokehouse, and kitchen building (now attached to the 1887 house) are extant.

Dr. Roscius P. Thomas was born on September 2, 1845, and the names of any siblings, if they survived, are not known. In 1860, Roscius P. Thomas lived with his parents, as well as M.A. Britton, her daughter and son, Mary and William T., and their Thomas relatives (perhaps cousins?), Emily Thomas (age twenty-five) and H. S. Thomas (age eleven).¹ Also on the property were six slave houses, the residences of twenty-two slaves ranging in age from four months to ninety-five years. That same year, the farm of Abraham Thomas was valued at \$5,500; his personal estate at \$19,975.² He was a wealthy plantation owner.

In 1867, Nancy Mitchell Thomas, the mother of Roscius P. Thomas, died, and three years later, the family consisted of Abraham; Roscius, age twenty-three and studying to be a physician; Mary A. Britton (now recorded as a housekeeper); Joseph J. Mitchell, a laborer; Millie Barney, a domestic servant, and her daughter Catherine. As a result of the economic troubles following the Civil War, the value of the farm had dropped to \$1,600, and Abraham's personal estate (since he no longer had slaves) was only worth \$1,000.³

Abraham Thomas died in 1879. One year later, the federal census taker recorded that his son, Roscius P. Thomas, was a doctor, living with his wife, Mary Green Mitchell Thomas (age twenty-two), and their housekeeper, Mary A. Britton; Asariah Keen, their cook; and four other people listed as their servants: Abraham Lewis, George and Martha Foreman, and C. F. Peele.⁴ Later that year, his son William Abraham Thomas was born; his daughter Mary P. followed in 1883, his son Robert Green in 1887, and Ruth Mitchell in 1897.⁵

In 1887, Dr. Roscius and Mary Thomas had a new farmhouse built with Italianate and late Gothic Revival architectural details. According to their daughter Ruth, the original house built by Abraham Thomas was converted to a barn, and the kitchen for the first house was attached to the rear of the new house.

In 1900, Dr. Roscius P. Thomas, no longer listed as a doctor but as a farmer, his wife Mary, and the four children lived in the house. Martha A. Britton, the same woman who had been living with the Thomas family since 1850 but now listed as Martha not Mary, was still living with them, but was no longer listed as a housekeeper; Cora Reynolds was their cook; and there were three farm laborers in their household, Dennis Brown, Raleigh Freeman, and Jack Seasons.⁶

¹ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1860. Hertford County, North Carolina; <http://ancestry.com>. The census taker did not note how Mary A. Britton was related to the Thomas family, nor what her role was in the family. In 1870, she is noted as a housekeeper.

² Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1860. Hertford County, North Carolina; <http://ancestry.com>. Federal Manuscript Slave Census, 1860. Hertford County, North Carolina. <http://ancestry.com>.

³ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1870. Hertford County, North Carolina; <http://ancestry.com>.

⁴ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1880. Hertford County, North Carolina; <http://ancestry.com>

⁵ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1900. Hertford County, North Carolina; <http://ancestry.com>

⁶ 1900 census.

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In 1910, the four children were still living with their parents, Martha Britton, a new cook named Cellia Doughton, and two farm laborers, Charles Walton and Thomas Doughton.⁷ Six years later, Dr. Thomas died. His four children continued to live with their mother on the farm. No servants or laborers lived on the farm in 1920.⁸ Mary P. became a graded school teacher, Ruth lived at home, and the two sons became farmers. Robert G. Thomas died from pneumonia in 1926; he had contracted pneumonia on his honeymoon. Mary G., Dr. Thomas's wife, died in 1929.

In 1930, the three remaining children, William, Mary, and Ruth, lived on the farm. All three continued to live in the house until their deaths: William in 1975, Mary P. in 1979, and Ruth in 1996. Chowan College received the property at the death of Ruth P. Thomas. The College sold the property to the present owners, Franklin and Maxine Britt in 1999.

Architecture Context: Late Victorian Houses in Rural Hertford County, North Carolina

During the late nineteenth century, throughout North Carolina, the two-story, single-pile house with a rear "T" or "L" was a dominant form. Most of these houses had a one-story porch across the front, and some decorative trim. Others, such as the "L-form" Dr. Roscius P. and Mary Mitchell Thomas House had a plethora of trim and decoration, using a combination of popular late nineteenth-century styles, especially Italianate and some late Gothic Revival. As Catherine Bishir, an architectural historian, noted, in the late nineteenth century, "the most noticeable touch of modernity added to familiar house forms was the central front gable rising from the eaves to give an up-to-date and vertical demeanor to the façade. . . the peaked front gable entered the popular idiom by the 1870s and proved a hardy favorite throughout the rest of the century, appearing in large and small, plain and fancy houses."⁹

The Dr. Roscius P. and Mary Mitchell Thomas House would fall into the category of relatively fancy houses, with its ornate brackets, circular window in the front gable, elaborate front porch with jigsaw work, two-story bay windows with panels on the gable ends, and ornate cornerboards on the main block. Italianate features on the exterior of the house include the circular window in the central front gable, the bracketed cornice, the bay windows, and the ornate cornerboards. Late Gothic features include the elaborate jigsaw porch, and its verticality expressed with the large, and steeply-pitched central gable with elaborate jigsaw trim and drop finial.

The late nineteenth-century houses of Union and Murfreesboro in Hertford County, located about seven to ten miles from the Dr. Roscius P. and Mary Mitchell Thomas House, are known for their elaborate millwork. According to Catherine Bishir, these houses, very similar to the Thomas House, "combine conservative forms with exuberant millwork, including bracketed

⁷ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1910. Hertford County, North Carolina; <http://ancestry.com>.

⁸ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1920. Hertford County, North Carolina; <http://ancestry.com>.

⁹ Catherine Bishir, *North Carolina Architecture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990) 291-292.

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Hertford County, NC

corner posts, sawnwork porches, bracketed eaves, spiral curled bargeboards, and openwork gable decorations.”¹⁰ Houses in Union also feature the circular window in the front center gable, similar to the one found in the Thomas House.¹¹ Catherine Bishir has stated that these houses may be the work of protégés of Jacob Holt, a prolific builder in antebellum Warrenton, North Carolina.

The Barnes House, ca. 1875, on Main Street in Murfreesboro also has a circular window on the central front gable (which is much smaller than that on the Thomas House). The Barnes House, however, is much more Italianate than the Thomas House, with its arched windows and stylized Ionic porch columns. The Worrell House, ca. 1880, in Murfreesboro also has elaborate jigsaw trim, but is a much smaller, one-story house with a shallow side-gable roof.¹²

In addition to its exuberant exterior woodwork, the Dr. Roscius P. and Mary Mitchell Thomas House is also significant for its intact interior, including its unchanged interior floor plan, the retention of its mantelpieces, each slightly different, and its very fine late nineteenth-century staircase with turned balusters and stocky newel.

Architecture Context: Antebellum Rural Doctor’s Offices and Domestic Outbuildings in Eastern North Carolina

The Dr. Roscius P. Thomas Doctor’s Office is a two-room building complete with original apothecary shelves, interior mantel and other trim, and features a full gable return cornice that forms a pediment, making it a fine example of the vernacular Greek Revival style. The high mantel and cornerblock trim on the interior windows are good examples of antebellum interior woodwork.

Antebellum rural doctor’s office buildings are rare survivors. The two rural doctor’s office buildings that are museum buildings today in North Carolina—the Country Doctor’s Museum in Bailey (Nash County) and the Mint Hill Museum (Mecklenburg County)—are both late nineteenth century examples. The Nash County building is actually a composite of two doctor’s offices. The Mint Hill doctor’s office which belonged to Dr. Whitley, was moved to that site. Both of these buildings are not truly comparable to the Dr. Thomas’s office since they date to a later period.

Dr. Henry Vaughn Dustan’s office, 127 North King Street, a ca. 1870 building, in the Windsor Historic District (NR 1991) in Bertie County, was moved from across the street and the roof was

¹⁰ Catherine W. Bishir and Michael T. Southern. *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Eastern North Carolina*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996) 271.

¹¹ Bishir and Southern, *Eastern*. See illustration on page 171 of a house in Union with the central circular window in the front cross gable.

¹² E. Frank Stephenson, Jr. *Renaissance in Carolina II* (Murfreesboro, N.C.: The Murfreesboro Historical Association, Inc. and Historic Murfreesboro Commission, 1973) 146; Bishir, 292. Please note that Stephenson calls the Barnes House, the Vincent House (it is also known as the Vinson House).

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altered to accommodate gas pumps, thereby losing its integrity. The Dr. Joseph Bynum Office near Toddy in Pitt County dates to ca. 1865 and is a two-room building that formerly had an exterior chimney on the rear gable end. The building also has two doors, one on the gable end and the other on the eave wall. In form and size it resembles the Dr. Roscius P. Thomas office, but it does not have the full gable return.

The Dr. Charles and Susan Skinner House and Outbuildings in Warren County (NR 2000) comprises a ca. 1840 Greek Revival style main house with Greek Revival style outbuildings, one of which may have been Dr. Skinner's office. Unlike the Dr. Thomas office, none of the outbuildings on the Skinner property were two rooms with a space that would have been used as an apothecary.

Dr. Leroy Chappell's office in Forestville, Wake County, dates to ca. 1862 and has a form similar to the Dr. Thomas office: one-story, two-room with the first room entered on the end wall fitted up with shelves to serve as an apothecary. The Chappell office does not have an exterior end wall chimney but rather an internal chimney flue for a stove.

The other two antebellum outbuildings on the Thomas property, the smokehouse and root building, are remarkable survivors. Smokehouses were found on nearly every antebellum farm, but few survive as intact as the one on the Thomas property. The Thomas smokehouse has a very common form: gable roof, nearly square, with one entry on the gable (or short) end. These buildings had no chimney. Unlike meat houses, which were used to salt and store meat, smokehouses did not have closely spaced studs (approximately eight inches to one foot) to keep people from stealing the meat, but were framed with fairly standard spacing of studs (approximately one-and-a-half feet to two feet).

Smokehouses were sometimes converted to other uses, such as the one found on the James Newsome House (NR 1984) near Ahoskie in Hertford County. The small, gable-roof smokehouse on this farm has had shed roof wings added to both eave elevations. Other smokehouses survive on the William G. Liverman House, the Newsome-Hall House, and the William B. Weaver Farm in Hertford County.

The root building is an extremely rare survivor. Root buildings needed to stay a consistently cool temperature all year round to keep the crops from rotting in the summer and from freezing in the winter and were, therefore, insulated. Some farms had separate buildings to house their root vegetables, such as at the Thomas farm; others used a small space in the barn, or in areas where the water table is not as high as in the coastal plain, dug pits to keep their root crops. The Thomas root building remains virtually unchanged, and the survival of its insulated exterior door and lattice interior door is especially noteworthy.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The historic boundary is shown on the accompanying tax parcel map, at the scale of 1" = 10,000', for Hertford County, tax parcel 6923-17-1982.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the house, doctor's office, two antebellum outbuildings, the other agricultural buildings, and the yard immediately surrounding the residence and provides an historically intact setting for the resource. The boundary includes approximately twenty-five acres of land, and is part of a larger 213-acre tract.