

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Davenport House

Creswell vicinity, Washington County, WH0465, Listed 9/5/2007
Nomination by Nancy Van Dolsen
Photographs by Nancy Van Dolsen, April 2006



Front and side view



Rear and side view

NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018
(Rev. 10-90)
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name **Davenport House**
other names/site number **N/A**

2. Location

street & number **Northeast corner of SR 1143 (Mount Tabor Road) and SR 1146 (Mount Tabor Road-Backwoods)** not for publication **N/A** city or town **Creswell** vicinity **X** state **North Carolina** code **NC** county **Washington** code **187** zip code **27928**

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
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

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	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	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**

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: **Recreation and Culture** Sub: **Museum**

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: One-room coastal cottage

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation **WOOD**
roof **WOOD/shingle**
walls **WOOD/weatherboard**
other

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- 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. 1815**
Significant Dates **ca. 1815**
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. 0.5 acres**

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

Zone 18 Northing	Easting
1 39700340	2 369080
3	4

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title **Nancy Van Dolsen** date **27 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 **Washington County Historical Society, c/o Ms. Virginia C. Haire, Board Member**

phone **252.797.4793** street & number **2276 Mount Tabor Road** city or town **Creswell** state **NC**

zip code **27928**
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Narrative Description

The Davenport House, owned and operated as a house museum by the Historical Society of Washington County, sits at the northeast intersection of SR 1143 (Mount Tabor Road) and SR 1145 (Mount Tabor Road-Backwoods), facing south. The house sits in the rural, unincorporated, community of Mount Tabor, about one-half mile west of the small town of Creswell.

The house is surrounded by lawn, with agricultural fields bordering the property to the north, and wooded areas to the east and to the south (on the south side of Mount Tabor Road-Backwoods). An open field is found on the west side of SR 1143. The house sits on a 1.02-acre tract, which includes three moved historic outbuildings (a smoke house, corn crib, and loom house); three cement slab grave markers designating the graves of three of the building's occupants (Harriet Ann Davenport, and her parents, Susan Ann and Armistead Davenport); and five other outbuildings, of a later date but original to the site: a chicken coop, well house, privy, and two sheds. The outbuildings are located to the north and east of the house. The only building located within the approximately one-half acre tract designated by the historic boundary is the Davenport House; the agricultural outbuildings are not included since they do not reflect the property's period of significance and the largest outbuildings are not original to the site.

The Davenport House, constructed ca. 1815, is a one-and-a-half story, heavy timber frame house with a rear shed room incorporated under the main side-gable-roof. A broken-pitch roof on the façade shelters the engaged porch. This house form is often called a coastal cottage in North Carolina. The heavy timber frame has hewn studs and down corner braces which are mortised, tenoned, and pinned into the corner posts. The west end bay of the porch has been enclosed, most likely during the late nineteenth century. It has simple vertical stud construction.

The three-bay house sits on trapezoidal wood cypress blocks, which are narrower where they come in contact with the sill. The floor joists are hewn on all four sides, and are lapped over the sills. The house is sheathed in weatherboards, with the exception of the area under the porch which is flush-sheathed. Due to advanced weathering, the weatherboards on the east and west elevations were replaced during the late 1990s restoration of the building by the Historical Society of Washington County for its use as a museum. The exterior end chimney on the east elevation was also constructed at that time; it replaced a concrete block chimney which had been constructed in the mid-1950s after a hurricane had destroyed the original chimney. The wood shingle roof also dates to the late 1990s.

The engaged porch roof rests on simple tapered posts with chamfered corners. A simple beaded handrail runs between the posts. The enclosed room at the end of the porch (called the piazza room) has a small opening with a wood shutter on the south elevation, and a board door with three battens leading from the porch into the room. A four-over-four sash window is located east of the front door, which is a three board door with three battens nailed and clinched to the side facing the interior and a wood box lock.

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The flush sheathing under the porch had been white washed. Traces of the whitewash remain. The attic floor joists are left exposed under the porch and on the rear elevation. A board false plate rests on top of the joists, and carries the knee wall created by the broken pitch roof on the south elevation.

The west elevation has one four-over-four sash window on the first floor and a shuttered window in the attic level. The rear elevation features a central door flanked by a window with only a battened shutter on the west side and a four-over-four sash window on the east side. A modern door protects the original board door on the rear elevation that has only a latch string for security.

The east elevation has the reconstructed brick chimney with a shuttered opening in the attic and two four-over-four light sash windows flanking the chimney. The reconstructed chimney features an all-stretcher bond and a single shoulder.

The interior of the piazza room is unsheathed, as is the interior of the house. The main block of the house has one-room, with a shed room behind. The main room of the house had been divided into two rooms during the late nineteenth or early twentieth century using mass-produced beaded board. This beaded board also sheathed the east and west interior walls and was removed ca. 1995. The attic joists are exposed in both the main room and the rear shed room. The wood floors are original.

A vertical board wall separates the main room from the shed room, and it has a simple chair rail with horizontal boards below on the wall facing the main house. The wall on the shed room side has a narrow board nailed approximately three feet from the attic joists to add stability.

In the northeast corner of the shed room is a simple stair that was constructed later during the early twentieth century to provide access to the attic. Originally, a ladder would have been the only way to reach the attic.

The roof rafters are pinned, and have collars that are mortised with half dovetails. The attic has framed end walls with vertical studs and a collar to provide stability.

The Davenport House retains sufficient integrity. Although the roof and weatherboards needed to be replaced during the 1990s restoration by the Historical Society of Washington County, they were made to match the existing materials. The original chimney had been replaced during the mid-twentieth century; the replacement chimney was recreated to match the profile left on the building's historic fabric. The Davenport House retains the majority of its original historic fabric, including foundation, floors, frame, the majority of its siding, interior finishes, windows, and plan.

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Summary

As an early nineteenth-century, one-room house with a rear shed room and an engaged porch under a broken-slope roof, the Davenport House in Washington County represents a common, vernacular regional house type found in eastern North Carolina. The one-room house, often with a rear shed room, is one of the earliest house forms in the state, and the Davenport House represents the continuation of this form into the nineteenth century. The engaged porch under its broken slope roof and the building's one-and-a-half story height make it a house type known in North Carolina as a coastal cottage. The one-room coastal cottage with rear shed room was once common in Washington County, especially in the Mount Tabor community where the Davenport House is located. Three others once stood within one mile of the Davenport House; all but the Davenport House have been demolished within the past twenty years. These small vernacular houses are now rare survivors, especially in an unaltered form, such as found in the Davenport House, with its intact floor plan, roof form, interior dividing wall, front and rear doors, and wood block foundation. The Davenport House meets National Register Criterion C for Architecture as a distinct house form. Its period of significance is its date of construction, ca. 1815, and it is of local significance.

Historical Background

The Davenport family arrived in North Carolina sometime in the early eighteenth century, and by 1755 Richard Davenport, possibly the grandfather of Daniel Davenport, was paying taxes in Tyrrell County.¹ In 1783, William Davenport, the father of Daniel Davenport died, and in his will named James as his oldest son, David and Daniel as his other sons, and Mary Hassell (wife of Zebedee Hassell) as his daughter; his will was probated in Tyrrell County.

Daniel Davenport (1760-1807) fought for six months in the Revolutionary War, and was honorably discharged. By 1784, he was listed as the owner of 184 acres in Tyrrell County. In 1786, Daniel Davenport married Sarah Nichols, and within four years they had two daughters.² By 1790, he was listed in the federal population census with himself as head of household living with three free white females (his wife and two daughters), and five slaves. Other Davenports listed as the heads of households in the 1790 census in Tyrrell County (from which Washington County would be carved in 1799) included his brothers James and David, his cousins Moses and Joseph Jr., and other possible relatives including Frederick, Dr. John, Ephraim, John, Isaac, and Joanne Davenport.³

¹ C. E. Ratcliff, *North Carolina Taxpayers, 1701-1786*. (Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1984). Washington County was carved from Tyrrell County in 1799.

² *North Carolina County Marriage Indexes*. North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, N.C. Database on-line at <http://ancestry.com>. Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1790, Tyrrell County, North Carolina. <http://ancestry.com>.

³ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1790, Tyrrell County, North Carolina. <http://ancestry.com>.

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In 1800, Daniel Davenport's family consisted of himself, his wife and their three children: three daughters less than fifteen years old. They also had eight slaves working for them.⁴ It is not known if the wife listed in the 1800 census is Daniel's first wife Sarah Nichols, or second wife, Lucretia Comstock. In 1799, he was elected Senator from Washington County to the North Carolina General Assembly. He remained an elected official until his death in 1807.

Davenport's estate was not settled until 1815; his estate comprised 1,211 acres and was distributed among his five daughters. Just under one-thousand acres were located in the Mount Tabor community, the location of the subject property. Unice, who married Benjamin Arnold, received the portion of her father's estate still known as "Arnold's Hill." Elizabeth, who married Joseph Warrington, died in 1829 and her portion of their father's estate was divided among her four sisters. Priscilla married Thomas Long, and her tract was sold out of the family. Nancy married Andrew Batemen, and she lived on his property, giving life rights to her tract to her mother, Lucretia Davenport, and her stepfather, Abraham Davenport.⁵ Given that Nancy gave life rights to her mother, Lucretia, for her portion of the Daniel Davenport estate, it seems likely that this was the home tract, where Daniel Davenport had lived with his family.

Asenath Davenport (1788-ca. 1832) received the tract of land that includes the subject property. She married her second cousin, Alexander Davenport (1790-1877), and lived in the Davenport House on 202 acres.⁶ It seems most likely that Asenath and Alexander Davenport built the present house on the property.

Unlike her father, Daniel Davenport, Asenath and Alexander Davenport owned no slaves, and in 1820 had no children.⁷ By 1830, they had five children: two boys age ten and under, and three girls age ten and under.⁸ During the 1830s, Asenath died and in 1840 Alexander lived with six children, sixteen and under, including a boy less than five years old.⁹

By 1850, Alexander was remarried to a slightly younger woman named Susan. There were three children still at home with them: Jestin, age twenty-three, Loring, age fifteen, and Redding age twelve. A woman named Polly Bateman (age thirty-two, no occupation given) also lived with them.¹⁰ By 1860, Alexander and Susan moved to the nearby town of Creswell (then known as Cool Spring), and Jestin (1827-1888) and his wife, Sarah Ann Hare Davenport (1825-18??), now lived in the Davenport House with their family: son Jacob, daughter Susan, son Alexander, and

⁴ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1800, Washington County, North Carolina. [Http://ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com).

⁵ Loretta Phelps. *Early Settlers of Washington County: Along the Scuppernon River Trails* (Plymouth, N.C.: The Historical Society of Washington County, N.C., 2003) 2.

⁶ Original land division map in the collection of the Historical Society of Washington County, North Carolina. Also, a copy of the map was filed in the Clerk of Court's Office, Map Book 2:21; Washington County Courthouse, Plymouth, North Carolina.

⁷ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1820, Washington County, North Carolina. [Http://ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com).

⁸ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1830, Washington County, North Carolina. [Http://ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com).

⁹ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1840, Washington County, North Carolina. [Http://ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com).

¹⁰ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1850, Washington County, North Carolina. [Http://ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com).

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son Silas. The farm was still owned by Alexander Davenport, so Jestin was listed in the federal census as a day laborer with no real estate. Neither Jestin nor his wife could read or write.¹¹

By the late 1870s, Alexander Davenport had died and his son Jestin inherited the property. In 1880, Jestin was listed as a farmer, and he and his wife were living in the Davenport House with their daughter, Susan Ann Silfy (age twenty-six), and son, Silas (age twenty-three). No one in the house could read or write, and Silas was working as a laborer. Jestin and Sarah Ann's son, Alexander, lived on the adjoining property with his wife and their two young children, age two and age five months.¹²

At Jestin's death in 1888, his daughter, Susan Ann Silfy (1854-1927), who had married Armistead Davenport (1853-1928), moved into the Davenport House. Their daughter, Harriet Ann Davenport, was born in 1890 and was their only child. Susan Ann's brother, Silas, lived on the adjacent farm with his family.¹³

By 1920, Susan Ann had become blind and Armistead was crippled with severe arthritis. Their daughter, Harriet, took care of them and the farm. She never married.¹⁴ In 1928, Armistead died. In 1930, Harriet was considered the farmer on the property, and she lived with her mother. The farm was valued at \$300 and was used for general farming. After her mother's death in 1937, Harriet lived on the farm by herself until her cousin, Jordan Wilson Davenport (1882-1971), moved in with her when his parents' house (Silas Davenport's) collapsed. He took over the kitchen garden for Harriet while she did the general farming, housework, and cooking. Jordan Davenport died in 1971 and Harriet died on July 9, 1975.¹⁵ She is buried on the Davenport House property, along with her parents, for whom she made concrete grave markers. The Davenport House never had electricity, central heat, or running water.

Harriet Davenport was the last person to live in the house. In 1995, Charlie Davenport gave the house to the Historical Society of Washington County, with the condition that the house be restored. The Historical Society of Washington County restored the house between 1995 and 1999. The house is opened to the public as a museum.

The Davenport House, isolated in its rural agricultural community of Mount Tabor, without modern roads or railroads nearby, remained virtually unaltered into the late twentieth century. The Davenport family remained on the land, and continued to farm in the manner of their ancestors who had settled the land in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. By the

¹¹ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1860, Washington County, North Carolina. [Http://ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com).

¹² Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1880, Washington County, North Carolina. [Http://ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com).

¹³ Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1910, Washington County, North Carolina. [Http://ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com).

¹⁴ Phelps, 60.

¹⁵ North Carolina Death Collection, 1908-1996 (database on-line), Ancestry.com; compiled from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, *North Carolina Death Records, 1968-1996* and North Carolina Archives and Records Section, *North Carolina County Records, 1908-1967*; North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina.

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second quarter of the nineteenth century, the land was farmed using solely family labor, and this continued into the mid-twentieth century. The Davenports used no tractors and relied solely upon the labor of mules and humans.

Architecture Context: Early Nineteenth-Century One-Room Houses in the Coastal Plain of Eastern North Carolina

As an early nineteenth-century one-room house with a rear shed room and an engaged porch under a broken-slope roof, the Davenport House represents a common, vernacular regional house type found in eastern North Carolina. The one-room house, often with a rear shed room, is one of the earliest house forms in the state, and the Davenport House represents the continuation of this form into the nineteenth century; the form would continue to be built into the twentieth century. This house type can be found throughout the coastal plain and into the piedmont region, and was built in rural areas and in towns for middling farmers and artisans.¹⁶ The Davenport House represents a particular subtype, known among architectural historians in North Carolina as a coastal cottage. Coastal cottages feature an engaged porch on the façade, and may or may not have rear shed rooms also under the broken slope of the main gable roof.

Comparable houses were once found throughout eastern and central North Carolina, but extant one-room houses, especially those not incorporated into larger buildings, are very rare. The lack of interior sheathing, with the house exhibiting both exposed joists and studs, also makes the Davenport a rare survivor. Although the lack of sheathing was not unknown, the survival of a house that had this lack of finish is unusual.

The later enclosing of a section of the porch to form a piazza room was not uncommon in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. The King-Bazemore (1763), on the grounds of Hope Plantation in Bertie County, also has a piazza room that was enclosed during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. The enclosing of a room on the porch provided an easy way to gain more space, either to house visitors, or to use for storage.

Two known North Carolina houses that contain a one-room core that dates to the first half of the nineteenth century are the Cullen and Elizabeth Jones House (NR 2006) in Chowan County and the Purefoy-Chappell House in Wake County. The Cullen and Elizabeth Jones House, built ca. 1815, was a log house with a one-room core that was expanded in the mid-nineteenth century to a two-room house with rear shed rooms. The Purefoy-Chappell House, built ca. 1838, represents the upper end of the form, with the main room, loft room and shed room all being fully finished spaces each with a fireplace fitted with a stylish mantel. The Davenport House represents the mid-to-lower end of the range, with a fireplace located only in the main room, and not in the shed room or loft room. The Davenport House also had no stair until later in the nineteenth

¹⁶ Bishir, 115.

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century, while the Purefoy-Chappell House was constructed with a stair. The Purefoy-Chappell House was expanded in the late nineteenth century with a two-story wing.

The one-room or two-room house with an engaged front porch and rear shed room was a very common house form in Washington County, especially in the Mount Tabor community. Three others stood within one-mile of the Davenport House; all but the Davenport House have been demolished within the past twenty years.¹⁷ The Joseph and Maggie Haire Ambrose House, one of the small, early nineteenth-century coastal cottages that were demolished in the area, had a form quite similar to that of the Davenport House except that it had more windows on the gable end walls. The William Haire House (ca. 1800), now demolished, was also similar to the Davenport House. The Haire House, however, stood on brick piers and not on cypress blocks, perhaps since two of the later occupants, Malachi and Mountville Haire, were brickmakers; Mountville Haire was also a brickmason.¹⁸

These small vernacular houses, once a quite common house type, are now rare survivors, especially in an unaltered form, such as found in the Davenport House, with its floor plan, roof form, interior dividing wall, front and rear doors, and wood block foundation.

¹⁷ Phelps, 33-41.

¹⁸ Photographs and historic information on both the Ambrose and Haire houses can be found in Phelps, 33-34, 36-41.

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Verbal Boundary Description

The historic boundary is shown on the accompanying tax parcel map, at the scale of 1" = 200', for Washington County, tax parcel 9041.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the house and the yard immediately surrounding the building, and excludes the moved outbuildings and other outbuildings that postdate the period of significance, ca. 1815. The boundary includes approximately 0.5 acre of land historically associated with the Davenport House, and is part of a larger 1.02-acre tract.