

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAY 25 1977
DATE ENTERED DEC 2 1977

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME **

HISTORIC Mansfield Thornton House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
W side SR 1600 (Baltimore Road), 0.8 mi. N of SR 1602 NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CITY, TOWN CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Warrenton VICINITY OF
STATE CODE COUNTY CODE
North Carolina 37 Warren 185

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Mrs. Isaac Alston
STREET & NUMBER
Route 2, Baltimore Road
CITY, TOWN STATE
Warrenton VICINITY OF North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Warren County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN STATE
Warrenton North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
DATE
____ FEDERAL ____ STATE ____ COUNTY ____ LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
CITY, TOWN STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Mansfield Thornton House, is a simple, essentially unaltered farmhouse of the post-Greek Revival type popular across the country in the decades after the Civil War. The form and trim reflect in diluted fashion the vigorous Greek Revival style typical of the county before the war. The frame dwelling, covered with plain weatherboards, is two stories high, three bays wide and one bay deep. It stands on a low rubble foundation and is covered with a hip roof. From the rear of the roof rise two interior end chimneys of brick. To the rear of the house is a plain one-story extension. The Greek Revival carryovers, in additions to the overall form, include the simple--but very narrow--cornerboards with molded caps, the frieze beneath the overhang of the hip roof, and the symmetrically placed six-over-six windows. The entrance consists of a double door, each with two ranges of long vertical flat panels, beneath a three-light transom--lacking the cornerlights and sidelights of antebellum entrances. Extending nearly across the full width of the main (east) facade is a simple one-story flat or hip roof porch, its three bays defined by chamfered posts with molded caps beneath nearly solid sawn brackets, with small sawn cut-outs.

The interior follows a center-hall plan one room deep. The stair rises in the hall, in two flights with a transverse landing, again reflecting something of the county's earlier years. A plain rounded handrail is carried on a turned newel and posts and slim rectangular balusters. The open string is simply finished, and the railing ramps at the landings. Walls are plastered above a simple baseboard, and mantels consist of chamfered pilasters with molded caps carrying a broad frieze articulated by simple moldings beneath a heavy shelf. Doors are similar to the front door, but single leaf, and many of them retain their woodgraining--with panels and rails and stiles in contrasting dark and light brown. The house is furnished with many of the late nineteenth century furnishings, books, and family portraits owned by Mansfield Thornton.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Black History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mansfield F. Thornton, born in 1850, was a slave owned by William Eaton until freed by Emancipation. Thornton was elected register of deeds of Warren County and served in this position from 1879 to 1900, gaining the respect of both black and white communities in a period of racial tensions. The house built for Thornton in the 1880s, which remains in his family, is an important reminder of Thornton's significant role in the history of the county.

Mansfield Thornton, the son of Alonzo and Martha (Carter) Thornton, was born in 1850.¹ When he was a boy he was owned by William Eaton, Sr., and lived on the premises of the Eaton Place on North Main Street in Warrenton. Eaton is said to have been "probably the wealthiest planter on Roanoke River in slaves and land." The 1850 census showed him with a plantation of 6,000 acres, an estate worth \$75,000, and 153 slaves. According to Mansfield Thornton's daughter, one of Eaton's daughters recognized the keen mind of young Thornton and taught him to read and write,² though it was illegal under the slave code.

After the Civil War, when the large slave population of Warren County was freed, many remained in the county, and others left to seek success elsewhere. Mansfield Thornton, aged fifteen,³ is said to have attended public schools "when they were opened for colored patronage." Within a few years he went to Raleigh, where he was employed by the Internal Revenue Service in a clerk's office for four years. In 1873 he was given a letter of reference from S. T. Carrow, recommending Thornton, who had been "in my employ as a janitor," as a "valued and trusted young man."^{3A}

Mansfield Thornton returned to Warrenton, where he began to establish himself as a respected and settled citizen. At the age of twenty-three, Thornton married Mary A. Christmas, daughter of Seth Christmas and Mary (Sally) Watson Christmas,^{4,5} on December 24, 1873, at the Baptist Church in Warrenton. He became a member of the board of trustees of the school for blacks, Shiloh Institute. He was a devoted member of the First Baptist Church, serving for several years as clerk.⁶ He was elected on the Republican ticket as Register of Deeds of Warren County and served in this office from February, 1879, until December, 1900. Most of the white leaders of the county were Democrats, and despite opposition in each election, Thornton was repeatedly re-elected. He gained respect from all segments of the population in the county. He retired in 1900, following political changes which shifted the balance of power to the Democrats.

On November 4, 1884, Thornton purchased from John R. Johnson and his wife Lucy, 12 acres of land on the Warrenton-Shady Grove Road, registered in January Court, 1885, in the name of his wife Mary A. Thornton.⁸ The couple had a house built soon after.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Caldwell, A. B., ed. History of the American Negro. North Carolina Edition. Volume IV. Atlanta, Georgia. 1921.

Information from Mrs. Isaac Alston. Warrenton, North Carolina.

Roll and Record Book of the First Baptist Church. Warrenton, North Carolina.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2 acres (left to daughter by Thornton as homeplace.)

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	7,5,6	0,0,0	4,0	3,0	4,2,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			
C						

B						
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			
D						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Description prepared by Catherine W. Bishir,
Significance prepared by Panthea M. Twitty, consultant

ORGANIZATION Division of Archives and History DATE _____

STREET & NUMBER 109 East Jones Street TELEPHONE 733-4763

CITY OR TOWN Raleigh STATE North Carolina 27611

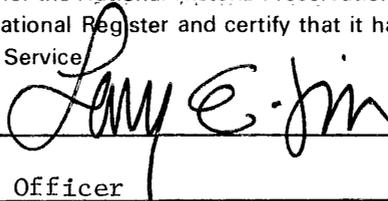
12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL _____ STATE _____ LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

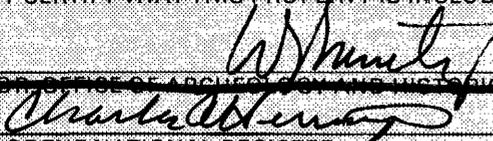


TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE May 12, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER


 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 12/2/77
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
 DATE 11.30.77

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Mansfield and Mary A. Thornton had twelve children of whom nine reached adulthood; the large family and their many children established an admirable record for gaining education and notable employment. The five daughters were school teachers. Of the grandchildren, many are school teachers, and among the others are a judge, doctor, school principals and a contractor.

When Mansfield Thornton retired in 1900 as register of deeds, the prominent citizens of Warren County presented him with a testimonial, dated April 12, 1901:

We the undersigned citizens of Warren County, North Carolina, take very great pleasure in certifying to the character of Mr. M. F. Thornton, the bearer of this paper. He is a colored man of more than ordinary intelligence and for years has been a wise and conservative leader of the colored people. He filled the office of Register of Deeds of Warren County, and made a good officer, universally polite and exceedingly accommodating, he has won the affection of the colored people and the respect of the white.

The 26 signatures included M. F. Hawkins, chairman of the board of county commissioners; Tasker Polk, prominent attorney; R. E. Davis, sheriff; J. A. Downton, new register of deeds; W. A. Burwell, mayor, and others. William A. White, longtime clerk of superior court, certified that "I am personally well acquainted with the persons who signed the above certificate and any statement made by them is entitled to full faith and credit."¹⁰

After his retirement, Thornton lived over thirty years, dying on July 30, 1935. His wife had died in 1928.¹¹ The Warren Record of August 2, 1935, reported that "'Uncle Mansfield', as he was known to the people of Warrenton, is believed to have held the place of Register of Deeds longer than any other man who ever filled the office in Warren County. He was elected on May 20, 1878, . . . and served until 1900 when the State Constitution was amended and J. A. Downtin went into office." After retirement, the newspaper continued, "As a citizen in private life since 1900, he has set a good example to his Race. He retired to the farm, and did not eat the bread of idleness. He was faithful to his Church and his Sunday School, and until his last illness walked a mile each Sabbath morning to attend to his religious duties."

Mansfield Thornton's will (August 4, 1934)¹² left the homeplace and two acres of land to his daughter E. B. T. Alston, "At my wife's request." Mrs. Isaac Alston (Estelle Beatrice Thornton Alston) still lives at her father's home.

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ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE two

¹Warren County Records, Warren County Courthouse, Warrenton, North Carolina, Death Certificates.

²Information from Mrs. Isaac Alston (daughter of M. Thornton); Warren County Records, Warren County Courthouse, Warrenton, North Carolina, Deed Book 33, p. 514.

³A. B. Caldwell, ed. History of the American Negro, (North Carolina Edition), Volume IV, (Atlanta, 1921), p. 613.

^{3A}Ibid.

⁴Warren County Records, Warren County Courthouse, Warrenton, North Carolina, Marriage Licenses.

⁵Warren County Records, Warren County Courthouse, Warrenton, North Carolina, Death Certificates.

⁶Roll and Record Book of the First Baptist Church, Warrenton, North Carolina.

⁷Warren County Records, Warren County Courthouse, Warrenton, North Carolina, Deed Book 43, p. 580; Deed Book 64, p. 628.

⁸Warren County Records, Warren County Courthouse, Warrenton, North Carolina, Deed Book 50, p. 383.

⁹Warren County Records, Warren County Courthouse, Warrenton, North Carolina, Mansfield Thornton Bible records, and information from his daughter, Mrs. Isaac Alston.

¹⁰Manley Wade Wellman, The County of Warren, North Carolina: 1586-1917, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), pp. 206-207.

¹¹Warren County Records, Warren County Courthouse, Warrenton, North Carolina, Death Certificates.

¹²Warren County Records, Warren County Courthouse, Warrenton, North Carolina, Will Book 55, p. 103, August 6, 1934.

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ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE one

Warren County Records. Warren County Courthouse. Warrenton, North Carolina.
(Subgroups: Death Certificates, Marriage Licenses, Wills, Deeds, Bible Records
of Mansfield Thornton).

Warren County Records. Division of Archives and History. Raleigh, North Carolina.
(Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).

Wellman, Manley Wade. The County of Warren, North Carolina: 1586-1917. Chapel Hill,
North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1959.