

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

Elm City & Tarboro SW QUAD

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR THEMATIC NOMINATION
Wilson County

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Upper Town Creek Rural Historic District
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Bounded roughly by SR1003 on the north
SR 1411 on the east, SR 1414 on the south and Town Creek on the west.

CITY, TOWN Wilson CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 2nd Congressional District
STATE North Carolina CODE 037 COUNTY Wilson/Edgecombe CODE 195/065

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input 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 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 N/A	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Multiple ownership-see enclosed list.
STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN _____ STATE _____
VICINITY OF _____

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ET Wilson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
Nash Street

CITY, TOWN Wilson STATE North Carolina

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Kate Ohno, Preservation Consultant, October 25, 1982

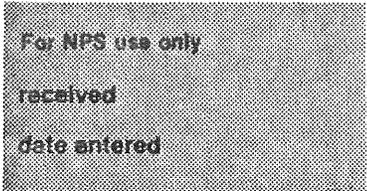
ORGANIZATION Survey & Planning Branch, Division of Archives & History (919) 733-6545 DATE

STREET & NUMBER 109 E. Jones St. TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN Raleigh STATE North Carolina

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Owners List Item number 4 Page 1

1. William Davis Petway House

Six Bar Corporation
Box 718
Elm City, NC 27822

2. Colonel David Williams House

George E. Rose
3100 Zebulon Rd.
Rocky Mount, NC 27801

3. Hawthorne

E. V. Braswell
P.O. Box 397
Elm City, NC 27822

4. Jesse Norris House

Mrs. J. W. Cox Heirs
C/O Mrs. Alice L. Norris Cox
505 South Clyde Ave.
Wilson, NC 27893

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Upper Town Creek Rural Historic District, located at the eastern edge of Wilson County, comprises an undisturbed agricultural landscape that epitomizes the rural development of this overwhelmingly rural county. It is composed of four farms, each under separate ownership, which are contiguous and which contain farm dwellings and farm buildings from over a century and a half. The plantation houses and their outbuildings from antebellum years and the modest tenant dwellings and tobacco barns, packhouses, and related buildings of late nineteenth century agricultural change are here clearly represented, as well as an unusually rich variety of architectural types and styles characteristic of the county--the Federal-style I-house, the boxy Greek Revival, and the picturesque Gothic cottage.

Although the farmhouses and outbuildings are of types seen elsewhere in the county on isolated and scattered sites, seldom in the county is there such a concentration of farmsteads that retain such a full complement of early residential and farm buildings. The county's rural landscape is today a mixture of older farm complexes and recent construction, particularly small brick ranch houses near the road. Thus this district provides one of the few opportunities to see vestiges of two distinct periods of architectural and agricultural culture: the antebellum plantation culture and the tenant system of the post-Civil War era.

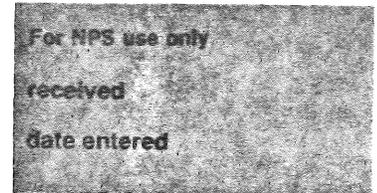
The proposed district contains a total of 1,755.7 acres including four major farms, each under separate ownership. Each farm boasts a nineteenth century plantation house of different size and style. These houses range from the simple but elegant Federal-style W. D. Petway House built circa 1820 to the square two-story double pile Greek Revival house built for Colonel David Williams between 1845 and 1860 to the unusual two-story gable-roof double-pile house built for Cally S. Braswell circa 1855 ("Hawthorne") to the board and batten Gothic Revival Jesse Norris House, probably built between 1845 and 1860. A variety of nineteenth and early twentieth century out-buildings are also found in the district associated with the four major farms, and these buildings, some of them rare survivals, and many of them types of buildings that are quickly vanishing from the modern farm yard, add much to the historical and architectural significance of the district.

The character of the landscape also lends a monumental quality to the major farmhouses in the district. Much of the flat land is cleared and cultivated giving way to large vistas of the extensive farmland and the large plantation houses. All of the major houses are set some distance off the road and all are surrounded by groves of large trees. These green oases shelter and enhance the plantation houses and their associated farm buildings. Scattered early twentieth century tenant houses are located off the farm paths between the farms.

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The oldest house in the district is the William Davis Petway House which was constructed in the Federal style circa 1820. The Petway House has been altered very little since its construction; it is a two-and-a-half story three-bay single-pile structure with a shed running the length of the rear of the building. Paved, single shoulder Flemish bond chimneys are located on the gable ends of the building and a shed porch shelters the main facade. The fenestration of the front elevation follows a six-over-nine pattern whereas the windows in the gable end, except those in the attic, are of the four-over-four variety. Small square four-light windows illuminate the attic. Although the house has been aluminum-sided, the section of the facade under the porch has remained untouched and is sheathed with beaded boards. The simple entrance has a three-part molded surround and a raised six-panel door. A section on the right-hand side of the porch has been enclosed to make a shed room, but the original chamfered square posts with lambs' tongue motifs are still in place. A turn-of-the-century frame kitchen wing, attached to the house by a breeze way, was added most recently.

The interior follows a hall-and-parlor plan with an enclosed stair rising from the hall. The finish throughout the first floor is of conservative well-crafted late Georgian character. All the rooms except the shed room under the porch and the detached kitchen have plain flat panel wainscot and windows and doors have three-part molded surrounds. Raised six-panel are used throughout the house. The mantels on the first and second floors are quite different; on the first floor the mantels are taller and more robust while those on the second floor are more delicate. The mantel in the east room on the first floor has a molded mantel shelf with robust punchwork below. The mantel frieze is enhanced by two large rectangular raised panels which flank a smaller raised rectangular panel containing a diamond motif and by diagonal strips of applied molding. The sides of the mantel are ornamented by vertical strips of this same applied molding. On the other hand, the parlor mantel is similar, but lacks the diamond motif and has strips of molding running from the floor to the mantel shelf. In contrast the mantel in the east rear shed room has a simple flush surround and a molded shelf. The second floor consists of a central passage with rooms corresponding to the hall and parlor on either side of the stair hall. A second enclosed stair rises to the attic from the passage. This is only the second documented enclosed attic stair in the county. The appearance of the second floor woodwork is quite different from that of the first floor because it combines painted wood graining with marbledizing. The second floor mantels have thin molded mantel shelves and a single rectangular flat marbledized frieze panel. In the east room delicate punchwork is used above and below the frieze panel and reeded colonettes surmounted by a molded three-dimensional diamond motif support the shelf. The mantel in the west room also features reeded colonettes but with Doric-type caps. The doors, wainscot, and baseboard also have wood graining with some marbledizing. The attic is plastered and divided into two rooms.

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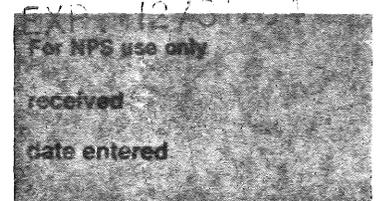
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2



The Petway Farm has several interesting early outbuildings. Directly behind the main house on the east side of the back yard is a tiny one-story gable-roof frame building of unidentified purpose and origin. Judging from its construction it may be contemporary with the house. It has two board-and-batten doors leading to unconnected rooms, one room being larger than the other. A window is cut in one side elevation and on the other side there is a small four-light window in the gable. Also behind the house, but on the west side, is a curious smokehouse with broad gable overhangs to each side. A small board-and-batten door in the gable surmounts a smaller door located below on ground level. The smokehouse has been stuccoed, but may have originally been brick. The gable is made of flush horizontal boards. In addition a long narrow one-story outbuilding is set on the west side of the house. It has been metal-sided, but appears to be an early building. Also on the property are some later twentieth century buildings including two shed-roof implement sheds, and a one-story cinder block shed.

Also on the farm are three tenant house/farm buildings groupings. (See map) These buildings are all late nineteenth-early-twentieth century in origin. They are representative of tenant characteristic of Wilson County and North Carolina farming practices during this period. The first grouping consists of two one-story gable-roof frame tenant houses, two one-story frame packhouses, a log tobacco barn and eight frame tobacco barns, a frame equipment shelter, a one-story frame barn and a one-story frame storage shed. The second, a smaller grouping, includes a one-story frame gable-roof tenant house, a one-story frame shed, three frame tobacco barns, and a frame equipment shelter. The last group consists of a one-story frame gable-roof tenant house, a two-story frame packhouse, two one-story frame storage sheds, two frame tobacco barns and two long grain bins.

The David Williams House was built between 1845 and 1860 just east of the Petway House. This square two-story double-pile Green Revival house is typical of the kind of plantation house popular with the prosperous planters of this area during the fifteen years before the Civil War. The main three-bay facade faces south and has been somewhat altered by the enclosure of part of the porch to make a bathroom. The door and window surrounds are simply plain boards and both the front and rear doors are trabeated. Large six-over-six windows are used throughout, and the second floor window in the central bay also has a transom and sidelights. A hipped roof porch shelters the entire front facade which is sheathed with flush horizontal boards. A stoop porch appears at the rear. The interior has been little altered except to accommodate the bathroom and one room has been panelled. A central-hall plan is followed with the stair rising from the rear of the hall. A robust turned newel post and round balusters carry a plain rail. The wide, handsomely molded Greek Revival door and window surrounds survive throughout--each door with three long narrow

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vertical raised panels on the top and three shorter raised panels on the bottom. The mantels are of the simple post-and-lintel type, sometimes with flat-panel pilasters. The dining room has a built-in cupboard with raised-panel doors next to the fireplace. Upstairs, double-leaf single vertical raised panel doors conceal closets flanking the fireplaces. The most outstanding feature of the interior is, however, the elaborate plaster ceiling medallions and cornices. The hall boasts the most elaborate round medallion, while the parlor has a simpler round one and an elaborate plaster cornice. The second floor follows the same plan as the first floor.

Nearly contemporary with the Williams House, but quite different in style and plan is Hawthorne, located northwest of the Petway and Williams houses. Hawthorne faces north toward SR 1003, but it is located 0.4 of a mile down a dirt road and is barely visible from SR 1003. At one time the dirt road was lined with hawthorn bushes, giving the plantation its name. Hawthorne is the only major plantation house in the district which faces north. Built circa 1855, Hawthorne follows an unusual plan not found in surviving houses elsewhere in the county. It is a two-story double-pile three-bay frame house sheltered by a gable roof. Two early twentieth century one-story frame wings were added to the house; one three-bay wing with a porch along the rear projects from the eastern elevation and a one-room kitchen wing with a stepped single-shoulder chimney is located at the rear. Large stepped single-shoulder common bond exterior end chimneys are located on the side elevations near the front of the house, serving the front rooms. The hipped-roof front porch is supported by chamfered posts. The fenestration throughout the house includes six-over-six light sash windows except in the gables. These small square windows lack their original glass, so the pattern of the lights is impossible to determine. The front door is plain with a three-light transom and a four-raised-panel door. On the first floor a central hall plan is followed with stairs rising from the rear. The interior finish is extremely simple with plain, crude mantels and single-part door and window surrounds. On the second floor the room arrangement is somewhat unusual with the stair landing being treated as a room.

Hawthorne has two interesting outbuildings associated with the main house. To the rear on the east side is a large two-story late-nineteenth century balloon-frame packhouse and to the rear on the west is a large one-story log corncrib with saddlenotched joints. Also located on the farm are a one-story frame early twentieth century tenant house of simple construction, six log tobacco barns with saddlenotch joints, a one-story frame equipment shelter and a one-story frame shed.

Perhaps the most unusual house in the district is the Jesse Norris House. The Norris House stands west of the Petway House and faces south like the Petway and Williams houses. The Norris House appears to date between 1845 and 1860, and it was built in the Gothic Revival style.

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Although the Gothic Revival style was nationally popular during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, few houses of this style survive in Wilson County, and the Norris House is the best example of this style outside the city limits of Wilson, the county seat. It, like others of the style in Wilson, is attributed to Oswald Lipscomb, a Wilson builder. The Norris House is a small but ambitiously stylish house; it is one-and-a-half stories tall and three bays wide. A shed wing runs the length of the rear and an early twentieth century kitchen and dining room ell is joined to the main block by an enclosed breezeway. The house is sheathed in board and batten siding, an unusual treatment in Wilson County. Two steeply pitched symmetrically placed gables interrupt the facade's gable roof. Paved double-shoulder commonbond chimneys are located in the gable ends. A newer single-shoulder chimney on the western elevation near the rear has a date brick which reads "1867". The fenestration includes six-over-six sash windows with unusual Gothic pointed-arch windows in the cross gables. The front door is trabeated, and the front elevation and the east elevation of the rear section are sheltered by hip-roof porches. The original porch had delicate sawwork trim and a latticed balustrade which, unfortunately, have been replaced in recent years. On the interior a central-hall plan is followed with a steep closed-string stair rising from the front of the hall. The interior finish includes plain, simply-molded door and window surrounds with square corner blocks and post-and-lintel mantels. Fireplaces are also located in the two tiny rooms on the second floor. Three small frame sheds of early twentieth century origin stand behind the house and a rare survival, a one-and-a-half story frame stable, is located across the road on the east side of SR 1412.

The plantation on which the Norris House stands contains 587 acres, the largest amount of land in the district. It also has the largest number of tenant farm centers from the early twentieth century. Each of these features a small, plain, frame tenant house, one-story tall and three-bays wide. Three tenant houses (A,B,C) stand alone, and six more are clusters with outbuildings (D-I). Complex D contains two tenant houses, a one-story frame packhouse, two two-story frame barns, and two frame tobacco barns. Complex E contains only a tenant house and a one-story frame packhouse. Complex F contains two tenant houses, a one-story frame implement shed, a two-story metal-sided packhouse and five frame tobacco barns. Complex G contains a tenant house and a one-story metal-sided crib. Complex H contains a tenant house, a one-story frame barn, three metal-sided tobacco barns, one metal-sided one-story barn and a one-story frame shelter and two bulk barns. The last cluster contains a one-story frame packhouse, a one-story frame grading room, a frame implement shed, five frame tobacco barns and a one-story metal-sided tobacco barn.

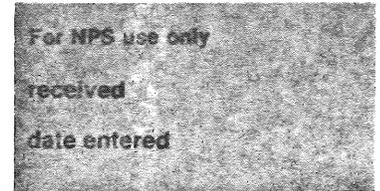
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These complexes show how important the cultivation of tobacco was in Wilson County. Tobacco is a crop that requires a great deal of labor during the cultivating season, thus the need for many tenant farmers. The large number of tobacco barns, packhouses and equipment shelters and the presence of a grading room were all necessary to the tobacco farmer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The presence of two bulk barns, the most modern way to store tobacco, shows that this farm still relies on the cultivation of tobacco for a major part of its income.

The Upper Town Creek Rural Historic District provides an unusual and interesting group of pre-Civil War plantations and shows their evolution through the early twentieth century with changes in farming methods and crops. The presence of so many early houses and their accompanying out-buildings is a rare survival in the county.

The structures in the district, of course, are closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the properties in the district. Information concerning use patterns, social standing, and mobility, as well as structural details, is often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the district. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist; and this should be considered in any development of the property within the district boundaries.

Inventory

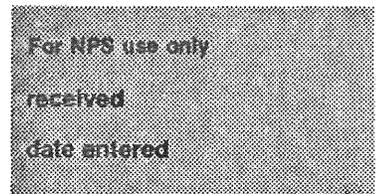
1. William Davis Petway House and Farm (c. 1820)

Two-and-a-half-story, single-pile Federal style frame house.

- a. 5 one-story frame packhouses . c
- b. 1 two-story frame packhouse c
- c. 7 one-story frame storage sheds c
- d. 1 one-story concrete block storage shed nc
- e. 4 one-story frame tenant houses c
- f. 13 frame tobacco barns c
- g. 1 log tobacco barn c
- h. 2 grain bins c
- i. 1 one-story frame stall c
- j. 1 one-story frame barn c
- k. 1 one-story frame shelter c
- l. 1 one-story smokehouse c

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2. Colonel David Williams House and Farm (Between 1845 and 1860)

Two-story, double-pile Greek Revival frame house.

- a. 1 one-story frame smokehouse c
- b. 1 one-story frame packhouse c
- c. 4 one-story frame tenant houses c
- d. 7 one-story frame tobacco barns c
- e. 1 one-story frame storage house c
- f. 1 one-story frame stall c
- g. 1 one-story metal shed nc

3. Hawthorne and Farm (c. 1855)

Two-story, double-pile frame Greek Revival house.

- a. 1 one-story frame tenant house c
- b. 2 one-story frame storage sheds c
- c. 6 log tobacco barns c
- d. 1 two-story frame packhouse c
- e. 1 one-story frame stall c
- f. 1 one-story log corncrib c

4. Jesse Norris House and Farm (Between 1845 and 1860)

One-and-a-half story Gothic Revival frame house.

- a. 10 one-story frame tenant houses c
- b. 5 one-story frame packhouses c
- c. 1 two-story metal packhouse, 1 two-story frame packhouse nc/c
- d. 1 one-story frame barn c
- e. 2 two-story frame barns c
- f. 1 one-story metal and frame barn c
- g. 8 one-story frame stalls c
- h. 9 one-story frame smokehouses c
- i. 12 frame tobacco barns c
- j. 3 metal tobacco barns nc
- k. 2 bulk barns nc
- l. 3 one-story frame sheds c
- m. 1 one-story metal crib nc
- n. 1 one-story frame shelter c
- o. 1 one-story frame grading room c

There are a total of 119 contributing elements - dwellings, tenant houses and associated outbuildings,- within the boundaries of this district.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

____ NATIONAL

____ STATE

 X

____ LOCAL

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
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<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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Various: ca.1820-1920s BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Upper Town Creek Rural Historic District, located at the eastern edge of what is now Wilson County, is composed of four contiguous farms under separate ownership. Each farm contains a primary dwelling and associated outbuildings which epitomize the rural development of this predominantly agricultural region. The residences in the 1,755.7 acre district, three of which originally functioned as plantations, are the William Davis Petway House, a traditional Federal style I-house built around 1820; the Colonel David Williams and Cally S. Braswell Houses, Greek Revival homes constructed in the mid-nineteenth century; and the Jesse Norris House, a mid-nineteenth century Gothic Revival residence which is the best surviving example of a dwelling outside the city limits of Wilson executed in this rarely seen style. The owners of all these houses and surrounding farmsteads amassed large landholdings during their lifetimes, and all were prominent in local political and civic affairs. The historic district, with its excellent variety of nineteenth century structures, is particularly notable for its high concentration of farmsteads which retain a full complement of early residential and farm buildings.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- (A) Associated with the agricultural prosperity in the fertile area comprising the eastern part of Wilson County, the Upper Town Creek Rural Historic District of antebellum plantation culture and the tenant farming system of the post-Civil War era.
- (B) The individual properties in the district were originally associated with a number of locally prominent individuals, including William Davis Petway, a farmer with extensive landholdings who was involved in business and civic matters in Edgecombe County; Colonel David Williams, a state legislator who was instrumental in the formation of Wilson County in 1855; Cally S. Braswell, a prosperous farmer who was active in civic affairs; and Jesse Norris, a prominent farmer who served on the Wilson County Board of Commissioners.
- (C) The Upper Town Creek Rural Historic District is comprised of four contiguous farmsteads, each of which is centered around a nineteenth century dwelling

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executed in the Federal, Greek Revival, or Gothic Revival style. These residences, along with their associated outbuildings, represent a highly concentrated and unusually rich variety of the architectural types and styles characteristic of Wilson County.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Upper Town Creek Rural Historic District comes from lands originally located in Edgecombe County. Prior to the Civil War the landholding system, in what is now eastern Wilson County, was often that of large plantations as is the case in the Upper Town Creek area. The proposed district consists of four large, contiguous plantations which were originally owned by some of the most influential citizens of the county. It is unusual in Wilson County to find four large intact nineteenth century plantation houses on adjoining property, but this is the case in Upper Town Creek.

The name Upper Town Creek comes from the stream which forms the boundary for a number of these properties. A primitive baptist church of the same name was established at a crossroads about three miles west of the district circa 1802 and the unincorporated Upper Town Creek Community flourished, particularly during the antebellum period.¹ The rich well-watered lands are nearly flat and are well-suited to cultivation and at least three major plantations grew up here in the antebellum period. The early inhabitants were citizens of Edgecombe County and in 1855 when Wilson County was formed from parts of Edgecombe, Nash, Wayne and Johnston counties most of the proposed district still remained in Edgecombe County. It was not until further alteration of the boundaries in the early 1880s that this area became part of Wilson County despite the fact that one of its most prominent inhabitants, Colonel David Williams, was a leading spokesman for the formation of the county.

Edgecombe County during the antebellum period was one of the five counties in North Carolina where slaves constituted more than half the population. This population composition was typical of the counties with the most numerous large plantations.

The oldest house in the district is the William Davis Petway house. Petway was born on October 1, 1799, and was the son of Major Micajah Pettaway, a veteran of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, and Mary Sugg.² Major Pettaway was a prominent planter and in July, 1819, he deeded 435 acres on the north side of Popular Branch to his son.³ It seems likely that this tract formed the core of Petway's holdings and was most likely the tract upon which he built his home. He married

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Edgecombe County Deeds, Edgecombe County Courthouse.

Ninth Census of the United States: 1870. Edgecombe County, North Carolina, agricultural schedule.

Seventh and Eighth Census of the United States: 1850 and 1860. Edgecombe County,

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1,755.7 acres.

UTM REFERENCES See continuation sheet also.

A	1,8	24,87,9,0	3,96,546,0	B	1,8	24,97,5,0	3,96,67,0,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
c	1,8	25,06,0,0	3,96,67,7,0	D	1,8	25,31,7,0	3,96,43,0,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The proposed Upper Town Creek Rural Historic District, outlined in red on the enclosed map, is comprised of four contiguous farmsteads which display an unusually rich variety of nineteenth century architectural types and styles. The individual properties in the district form a visually cohesive whole and are linked by their historic use as seats of farming operations belonging to prominent landholders in the area.

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Cinderella Crumwell, daughter of Elisha Crumwell, prior to 1823.⁴ Petway continued to add to his landholdings in the 1820s, receiving 112 acres from the division of his father-in-law's estate and other tracts adjacent to his property.⁵ By the time of his death on October 18, 1858, he owned in excess of 2,270 acres.

Petway was involved in business and civic matters as well as in farming. He served as sheriff of Edgecombe County from 1835 until 1851.⁷ He was also associated in the mid 1850s with W. M. G. Sharp and John T. Sharp in a mercantile business which also sold liquor at Joyner's Depot.⁸ By 1850 Petway was in the turpentine business.⁹ He employed four male laborers and produced \$800 worth of turpentine and other pine products annually. Petway was an extensive farmer as well. In 1836 he purchased the real property in his father's estate amounting to 1.364 acres.¹⁰ By 1850 he owned 2,400 acres of which 500 acres were cultivated.¹¹ Although his real property was only valued at \$7,381 he owned forty-eight slaves in 1850.¹²

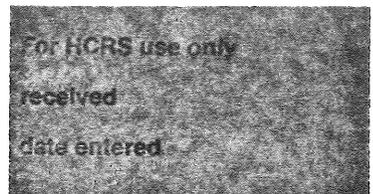
Like most farmers in what later became Wilson County, he owned little livestock with the exception of pigs, of which he had two hundred. He raised mainly grains: wheat, rye, oats and barley; but his largest crop was Indian corn totalling 2,000 bushels in 1850. Unlike most local farmers he also raised a little tobacco, but this was almost certainly not of the bright leaf variety now commonly grown in Wilson County.¹³

Petway died intestate in 1858 leaving his widow and seven children as his heirs. His four sons were Redding S., Pheasanton Sugg, Oliver Cromwell and William L. Petway. His three daughters Anna, Margaret, and Caroline married Wesley Swift, David Bell, and A. J. M. Whitehead respectively. The widow Petway received a dower of 566 acres and Redding S. Petway was named administrator of his father's estate. In 1859 W. D. Petway's real estate was sold at auction with the widow being the largest purchaser at \$20,000 for "the home tract...being the tract on which the said William D. Petway resided at the time of his death lying on the north side of Town Creek adjoining David Williams, Cally Braswell, John Norris, and others containing 1,070 acres."

The home tract thus came under the management of Cinderella Petway for nearly thirteen years. At first the plantation prospered; in 1860 Mrs. Petway is listed as a sixty-year old farmer owning real property valued at \$25,000 and personal property valued at \$16,000. She owned only fifteen slaves due to the division of her husband's slaves among his heirs. Six slave houses (no longer extant) were on the property. Her son Oliver, age twenty, lived with his mother as well as Ezra Bullock, a farm overseer, and a white female domestic servant. Oliver's personal property, including slaves, was valued at \$18,000 and his slaves were probably used to cultivate and maintain the home tract occupied by him and his mother. Cinderella cultivated only 400 acres in 1860 and her livestock was also reduced as compared to her husband's holdings in 1850.

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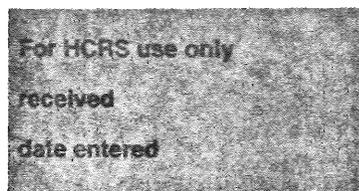
She planted less grain but more tobacco, peas and beans and potatoes. Her farm also produced eight tons of hay, whereas under her husband's management none was recorded as being produced in 1850. The farming operation run by Cinderella Petway in 1860 was considerably different than that run by her husband in 1850.¹⁵

The plantation which had grown under the skillful hand of William Davis Petway, and which had prospered after his death under the ownership of his widow, was subjected in the decade of the 1860s to many stresses. Part of the trouble lay simply in the circumstances; few large landowners like the Petways benefited from the Civil War. Economic pressures, loss of markets and invading armies wreaked havoc during the war and Reconstruction was scarcely any better. At the end of the hostilities the Petways found their land and livestock worth far less than in 1860; furthermore they lacked the manpower to farm their large holdings and the cash to pay a labor force. Family troubles complicated the situation. In 1862 Oliver Cromwell Petway died, leaving his aging mother to manage the farm alone during the following difficult years, and squabbles over his share of his father's estate hurt family relations.¹⁶ A suit had been brought against William D. Petway's estate as early as March 1860, by Wesley Swift and his wife, Anna Petway Swift, to insure equitable distribution of Petway's estate among his heirs.¹⁷ The legal squabbles did not cease until the late 1870s and the situation was worsened by Cinderella Petway's inability to remit the balance of the \$20,000 which she had agreed to pay for the "home tract" in 1859.¹⁸ This money was to be distributed among the heirs of William Petway and when his widow defaulted some of the other heirs were forced, due to the economic difficulties of the period, to assign their interest in the "home tract" (which served as collateral for the money owed) to persons outside the family.¹⁹ Under these desperate circumstances Cinderella Petway sold half of the property to her son, Redding S. Petway, but her action did not help the family retain the property.²⁰ By 1870 Cinderella only owned 550 acres and the value of her farm had decreased from \$20,000 in 1860 to \$5,000 in 1870.²¹ Her farm implements were old and valued at only \$250 versus the \$1,500 value placed on them in 1870.²² Grains, peas, and beans and sweet potatoes were her major crops, but all of these were grown in small quantities than ever before, probably because only 250 acres were cultivated.²³

In 1872 she received a notice stating that if she did not pay her debt on the property by September 1st. of the same year that the tract would be sold at public auction.²⁴ On October 29th the tract was sold to her son, Dr. Pheasanton Sugg Petway, but he fared no better than she had, defaulting in 1874.²⁵ At this point William M. Pippen, a leading citizen of Tarboro who held the interests of A. J. M. Whitehead offered to purchase the land, but the family decided that

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a better price would be realized by selling the land in two parcels.²⁶ This was done, but Pheasanton Sugg Petway was dissatisfied with the sale and it was annulled.²⁷ Eventually the land was sold as a single parcel in May, 1876.²⁸ "The Old Place" (probably the home tract), consisting of 540 acres was sold to William D. and Mary C. Petway, (their relationship to the builder of the house has not been determined).²⁹ By 1880 the property had passed into the hands of William M. Pippen who sold it in that year to J. W. Cherry.³⁰

For some years the property was known as "the Cherry Farm", but little is known of J. W. Cherry. In 1891 the property was sold according to a decree of the Wilson County Superior Court to Jesse Norris, a neighbor. In 1892 the property was described as "the old William D. Pettaway home tract".³² Norris lived just west of the Petway property and by 1891 was a prosperous farmer. (See Jesse Norris House below for further information) Norris' heirs own the Petway farm at present and although they have never lived on the property it is operated as a family farm.³³ Norris and his descendants apparently allowed tenants to occupy the house, and this practice is followed today. In the history of the ownership of the property the Norris family has owned the farm for the longest amount of time.

The next two major residences to be constructed in the proposed district were built during the two prosperous decades before the Civil War. The owner of the more ambitious house, Colonel David Williams, achieved his greatest prominence before the Civil War while Cally Braswell, the owner of the other house, achieved greater visibility in the community after the war.

Williams was the older of the two and he probably built his house first. David Williams was born on August 5, 1799, and was the son of Drewery and Elizabeth Williams.³⁴ When Williams' father died in 1831 he inherited the family farm.³⁵ and Williams continued to acquire land in the vicinity of Upper Town Creek in the 1830s.³⁶ However, the core of Williams' holdings, and probably his house site, was purchased in 1825 from William D. Petway (see above).³⁷ The property deeded to Williams by Petway included 435½ acres on the north side of Town Creek. Williams married Frances Sugg Routh (the widow of Robert William Routh) in early 1831.³⁸ The site of the young couple's first home is unknown, but they may have lived in the Drewery Williams House which David Williams inherited from his father in the year of his marriage. The 1840s was a decade of great prosperity for Williams; he purchased over 200 acres of his brother, William Williams', lands on the north side of Town Creek and, upon the death of Frances Williams' father, the couple inherited a large amount of land.³⁹

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According to the 1850 census Williams owned 4,300 acres of land of which 700 acres were cultivated. Williams owned only fifteen slaves, a small number for such a large land owner. Williams had 450 swine and, like his neighbor Petway, he raised a lot of corn and some grains, peas, beans, and potatoes. Unlike Petway, Williams also produced twenty-eight 400-pound bales of cotton. By 1850 Williams' real property was valued at \$17,000.⁴⁰

Williams' two daughters were born in the late 1830s and early 1840s: Henrietta in 1836 and Louisa in 1843.⁴¹ It seems likely that with Williams' growing family and his increased prosperity that his house was built between 1845 and 1860. This type of house became very popular in this area of eastern North Carolina between these dates among the landed planters, and this house would have been considered a fitting expression of Williams' position in the community.

Williams achieved the rank of colonel through his work with the local militia,⁴² but he is best known for the part he played in the formation of Wilson County in 1855.⁴³ Williams and his friend General Joshua Barnes were elected to the state legislature largely on the issue of the formation of a new county. Once elected they successfully presented their plans to the legislature and the bill was passed to form a new county called Wilson in 1855. (See General Joshua Barnes House nomination). Ironically Williams' property remained part of Edgecombe County until 1883, but Williams did not live to see the county boundaries change. He died on September 18, 1881, and was buried in Tarboro.⁴⁴ Under his will Williams' grandchildren inherited his plantation which had dwindled to 900 acres by 1870 and 400 acres by the time of his death.⁴⁵ At the height of Williams' prominence he owned more than 4,000 acres valued at \$43,000 with personal property amounting to \$140,000 including one hundred and twenty-eight slaves and twenty slave houses (no longer extant),⁴⁶ He also had owned a grist mill which was in operation by 1850.⁴⁷

Since Williams' death the plantation has passed through many hands. The Williams' House has been occupied by tenants for nearly one hundred years and the present farm includes just over 392 acres.

Probably the next house to be constructed in the proposed district was Hawthorne, so called because the farm path approaching the house was lined with hawthorns. The owner of this house was Cally S. Braswell. He was the son of Benjamin Braswell and Rhoda Hill Braswell and he was born circa 1828.⁴⁸ The Braswells were an old landed family who have always been prominent in local affairs in this part of the county. Braswell began to acquire land in the late 1840s⁴⁹ but family tradition maintains that he did not purchase his home site until 1853.⁵⁰ In that

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year he purchased just over 353 acres from Birt Bailey.⁵¹ Later, one of Cally's daughters married John L. Bailey, one of the most prominent men in Wilson County, who was one of Birt Bailey's sons.

In the 1850 census Braswell is listed as a twenty-two year old farmer owning real property valued at \$1,500. His mother, Rhoda, and a sister, Milly, lived with him. He owned 230 acres of land of which 100 acres were cultivated and he also owned nine slaves. His main crop was Indian corn, but he also grew small quantities of wheat, rye, oats, barley, potatoes and peas and beans.⁵²

Braswell married Martha Ann Trevathan on June 5, 1855,⁵³ and probably the young couple built "Hawthorne" shortly after they were married.

According to the 1860 Census Braswell owned a modest holding with his real property valued at \$9,000 and his personal property at \$1,800. He owned 615 acres (of which 240 were cultivated) and twelve slaves who lived in three slave houses (no longer extant). The greatest variation in farm products from those reported ten years earlier was the production of nine, 400 pound bales of ginned cotton, 400 bushels of potatoes and six tons of hay.⁵⁴

Apparently Braswell was wiser or luckier than many farmers in the area during the troubled decade of the 1860s. Since he owned less than \$20,000 worth of property in 1860 he was not subject to the property laws of the Reconstruction which stripped many large land owners of their prosperity. Although he purchased no property during the 1860s he began to buy large quantities of real estate beginning in 1870 and this practice continued until his death.⁵⁵ In contrast to the reported real estate values of his contemporaries, Braswell's real property worth had increased to \$5,000 by 1870.⁵⁶ Braswell exercised some power in the area as well as some influence for in 1869 he was appointed constable.⁵⁷

By 1870 his main crops were Indian corn, cotton and hay, all of which he produced in large quantities.⁵⁸ Braswell and his wife had five children who survived infancy; Henry C., Zebulon Vance, Mollie, Emma and Nannie.⁵⁹ When Braswell died in 1893 he left a large estate which briefly fell under the control of his widow. Martha A. Braswell's dower lands included "the dwelling house, offices, outhouses, buildings and improvements" on the 457 3/4 acres which constituted the home tract.⁶⁰ Once Braswell's lands were divided among his heirs, his daughter Mollie, wife of John D. Daws, received the house tract.⁶¹

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Daws and his wife probably did not occupy the house, but sold it to Mollie's brother Z. V. Braswell in 1895.⁶² Z. V. Braswell's son, Elmer Vance Braswell, is the present owner of the house property, but the family has not occupied Hawthorne since Z. V. Braswell's untimely death at age forty-two.⁶³ Tenants occupied the house beginning in 1915, but in recent years the house has stood vacant. This is the only major house in the proposed district which is vacant.

The largest farm in the proposed district boasts one of the most unusual houses in the county. The Jesse Norris House was built in the Gothic Revival style, a style which achieved national popularity but of which surviving examples in Wilson County are rare. The origins of the Norris House are obscure. Jesse Norris was born September 15, 1826,⁶⁴ and he was living in Edgecombe County by 1860 for in that year he was listed as a farmer owning personal property valued at \$3,000, but no real property.⁶⁵ On February 10, 1870 he married Anselana Braswell.⁶⁶ Anselana Braswell was Cally S. Braswell's niece (see above) and the daughter of Robert Russell Braswell and Anselana Stringer.⁶⁷ She was born in January, 1842,⁶⁸ and her father died in 1848 when she was still a minor.⁶⁹

Available information on the origin of the Norris House is conflicting. Family tradition maintains that the Norris House was the house built and occupied by Robert Russell Braswell and his wife Anselana,⁷⁰ who married in 1823.⁷¹ This house is said to have descended to Anselana Norris by inheritance, but her father's will, proved in 1848, left her only one slave and the home plantation was devised to her brother, John D. Braswell.⁷² There is no evidence that her brother died or that other provisions were made at the division of her father's estate.⁷³

On the other hand, no apparent deed for this property registered in Norris' name or in his wife's name was found, although Norris did begin to acquire much other property after his marriage.⁷⁴ The only other lead on the origin of the property is found in the 1859 description of the boundaries of William D. Petway's home tract which adjoins the Norris property. A certain "John Norris" was among those listed owning property running with Petway's boundary.⁷⁵ The name Norris is relatively rare in the county and it is possible that John Norris had purchased the property before 1859 and that Jesse Norris inherited or purchased the property between 1860 and 1870 but the deed was not registered. A dated brick in the chimney on the western elevation near the rear of the house is inscribed "1867". This chimney appears to be of a later date than the two double shoulder chimneys closer to the front of the house, lending credence to a date of circa 1845-1860 for the construction of the house. Whether it was built by a Norris or Braswell remains unclear at this time.

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Local tradition further maintains that Oswald Lipscomb, a Wilson architect who moved into the area circa 1849, was the architect of the house.⁷⁶ This may indeed be the case for Lipscomb built several similar Gothic Revival cottages in Wilson. The possibility also exists that Lipscomb, whose Gothic Revival cottage for Moses Rountree dates from circa 1869 (see individual nomination prepared for the Moses Rountree House, Rountree Street, Wilson), remodeled an existing house for Norris after the Civil War.

In any case Jesse Norris became a prominent landed farmer in the late nineteenth century and participated in both the government and economic prosperity of the area during that period. He served on the Wilson County Board of Commissioners from 1884 until 1890⁷⁷ and by the time he died in 1904 he owned in excess of 1,400 acres of land.⁷⁸ Norris devised his home tract, consisting of 572 acres to his daughter Alice L. Cox, who lived in Elm City.⁷⁹ His widow, Anselana Norris, had the right to half the house and twenty-five acres of land from the home tract for her life or widowhood.⁸⁰ She died in 1918,⁸¹ but it is not known whether or not she continued to occupy the Norris House or whether she moved to Elm City to live with one of her daughters. Jesse Norris' granddaughter is the present owner of the farm and the house has been occupied by tenants for many years. This movement of prosperous landed farmers to the cities and small towns in Wilson County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is a common pattern in the rural sections of the county and one that is well-illustrated in this district.

Footnotes

¹Kate Ohno, The Architectural Heritage of Wilson County, North Carolina, Wilson: 1981, hereinafter cited as Ohno, Wilson County. See also "History of Upper Town Creek Baptist Church" by Hugh B. Johnston, unpublished manuscript in collection of Wilson County Public Library.

²Author's interview with Wilson County historian, Hugh B. Johnston, hereinafter cited as Johnston interview. According to Johnston, Micajah Pettaway spelled his name one way while his son adopted the spelling "Petway". No explanation for this change in spelling is known.

³Micajah Pettaway to William D. Petway, July 12, 1819, Book 16, 367, Edgecombe County deeds, Edgecombe County Courthouse, Tarboro.

⁴Johnston interview.

⁵See Elisha Cromwell land division Book 18, 62, Hardy Flowers to William D. Petway, Book 18, 285 and Book 19, 359, all Edgecombe County deeds, Edgecombe County Courthouse, Tarboro.

⁶William D. Petway estate papers, Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as W. D. Petway estate papers.

⁷Johnston interview.

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⁸Wilson County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions 4/23/1855, Wilson County Courthouse, Wilson.

⁹Seventh Census of the United States: 1850, Edgecombe County.

¹⁰Micajah Pettaway estate to William D. Petway, 1836, Book 21, 399, Edgecombe County deeds, Edgecombe County Courthouse, Tarboro.

¹¹1850 census, Agricultural schedule.

¹²1850 census, population and slave schedules.

¹³1850 census, agricultural schedule.

¹⁴W. D. Petway estate papers.

¹⁵Eighth Census of the United States: 1860, Edgecombe County, population, agricultural and slave schedules.

¹⁶W. D. Petway estate papers.

¹⁷W. D. Petway estate papers.

¹⁸W. D. Petway estate papers.

¹⁹W. D. Petway estate papers.

²⁰W. D. Petway estate papers.

²¹Ninth Census of the United States: 1870, Edgecombe County, agricultural schedule, hereinafter cited as 1870 census.

²²1870 census, agricultural schedule.

²³1870 census, agricultural schedule.

²⁴W. D. Petway estate papers.

²⁵W. D. Petway estate papers.

²⁶W. D. Petway estate papers.

²⁷W. D. Petway estate papers.

²⁸W. D. Petway estate papers.

²⁹W. D. Petway estate papers.

³⁰No deed is extant for the sale of the property to Pippen, but Pippen's deed to J. W. Cherry dated September 30, 1880, Book 49, 488, Edgecombe County deeds, Edgecombe County Courthouse, Tarboro, clearly indicates that was indeed the same tract that William Davis Petway occupied.

³¹S. A. Woodard, Comr., to Jesse Norris, April 7, 1892, Book 31, 175, Wilson County deeds, Wilson County Courthouse, Wilson hereinafter cited as S. A. Woodard to Jesse Norris, April 7, 1892.

³²S.A. Woodard to Jesse Norris, April 7, 1892.

³³Jesse Norris will. Also author's interview with R. T. Barnes, great-grandson of Jesse Norris and the present farm manager for the property.

³⁴Johnston interview.

³⁵Drewery Williams will, Book F, 125 Edgecombe County wills, Edgecombe County Courthouse, Tarboro.

³⁶See Robert Draughn's attorney to David Williams, April 30, 1836, Book 21, 485, and Theophilus Atkinson to David Williams, March 21, 1838, Book 22, 333, Edgecombe County deeds, Edgecombe County Courthouse, Tarboro.

³⁷William D. Petway to David Williams, July 9, 1825, Book 18, 525, Edgecombe County deeds, Edgecombe County Courthouse, Tarboro.

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38 Johnston interview.

39 See William Williams to David Williams, April 18, 1840, Book 22, 528, John Mercer to David Williams, March 22, 1841, Book 23, 270, Pheasanton Sugg to David Williams, September 10, 1849, Book 25, 179, Pheasanton Sugg to David Williams, 1851, Book 25, 454, Edgecombe County Courthouse, Tarboro.

40 1850 census, agricultural schedule.

41 1850 census, population schedule.

42 Johnston interview.

43 Daisy Hendley Gold, "A Town Named Wilson," unpublished ms. available in Wilson County Public Library, 20, 21.

44 Johnston interview.

45 David Williams will, Book G, 612 Edgecombe County wills, Edgecombe County Courthouse, Tarboro, hereinafter cited as David Williams will.

46 1860 census, agricultural, slave and population schedules.

47 1850 census, industrial schedule.

48 Johnston interview.

49 See W. E. Spicer to C. S. Braswell, 1847, Book 47, 364, Benjamin Braswell Estate to Milly E., Robert and Calvin Braswell, 1848, Book 24, 394, and Robert Lancaster and wife to Calvin Braswell, 1848, Book 24, 395, Edgecombe County deeds, Edgecombe County Courthouse, Tarboro.

50 Author's interview with Anne Goodwin, the great-granddaughter of Cally S. Braswell.

51 Birt Bailey to Cally S. Braswell, December 13, 1853, Book 28, 681, Edgecombe County deeds, Edgecombe County Courthouse, Tarboro.

52 1850 census, population, agricultural and slave schedules.

53 Johnston interview.

54 1860 census, population, agricultural and slave schedules.

55 During this period Braswell purchased thirty-six separate parcels of land in Edgecombe and Wilson Counties; see the grantee index for each of these counties.

56 1870 census, population schedule.

57 J. Kelly Turner and John L. Bridgers, History of Edgecombe County Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1920, 250.

58 1870 census, agricultural schedule.

59 Cally S. Braswell land division, December 4, 1894, Book 36, 479, Wilson County deeds, Wilson County Courthouse, Wilson, hereinafter cited as C. S. Braswell land division.

60 Martha A. Braswell dower, December 28, 1893, Special Proceedings Book 3, 229. Wilson County Courthouse, Wilson.

61 C. S. Braswell land division.

62 John D. Daws and wife Mollie B. Davis to Z. V. Braswell, February 15, 1895, Book 38, 272, Wilson County Deeds, Wilson County Courthouse, Wilson.

63 Author's interview with Anne Goodwin great-granddaughter of C. S. Braswell. See also Zebulon Vance Braswell death certificate, 1915 #328, Wilson County Vital Statistics records, Wilson County Courthouse, Wilson.

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64 Author's interview with J. Robert Boykin, III, author of an unpublished paper on the Norris/Barnes family, hereinafter cited as Boykin interview.

65 1860 census, population schedule.

66 Boykin interview.

67 Boykin interview.

68 Boykin interview.

69 Robert R. Braswell will, Book F, 402, Edgecombe County wills, Edgecombe County Courthouse, Tarboro, hereinafter cited as R. R. Braswell will.

70 Elizabeth Braswell Pearsall, Mrs. Charles E. Davis and Mr. Charles O'Connor "Braswell Family: 10 generations" n.p. January, 1949.

71 Boykin interview.

72 R. R. Braswell will.

73 Robert R. Braswell estate papers, Archives and History, Raleigh.

74 A thorough check of the grantee indexes of both Edgecombe and Wilson counties under both Norris' and his wife's names discovered no transfer of property resembling the property on which the Norris House is built.

75 W. D. Petway estate papers.

76 Gold "A Town Named Wilson".

77 Boykin interview.

78 Jesse Norris will.

79 Jesse Norris will.

80 Jesse Norris will

81 Boykin interview.

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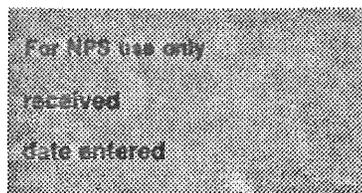
North Carolina, agricultural, population, and slave schedules.

William D. Petway Estate Papers. Raleigh, NC: Division of Archives and History.

Wilson County Deeds, Special Proceedings and Vital Statistics, Wilson County Courthouse.

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