

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCERS use only
received
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Shaw House

and/or common Cupola House

2. Location

street & number NE corner NC 34 (formerly NC 168) and SR1203 not for publication

city, town Shawboro vicinity of congressional district First

state North Carolina code 037 county Currituck code 053

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mrs. Evelyn L. Griffin

street & number

city, town Shawboro vicinity of state North Carolina

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Currituck County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Currituck state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Shaw House, built in the second half of the 1880s and more commonly called the "Cupola House" for its square, third-story tower, is a large, basically boxy house in the Italianate style with an Italian Villa type tower. As the domestic architecture of Currituck County is generally quite modest and vernacular in character, the substantial scale and ambitions if retardataire mid-nineteenth century stylishness of this house make it a prominent landmark of the county. This distinctive structure, located in Shawboro on one of the two principal roads whose intersection marks the small farming community, is situated near a corner boundary of its flat property of 60 acres. Close to the house there is a great deal of mature shrubbery that covers much of the first story. A white picket fence, composed of narrow stiles square in cross section, wraps around the front yard and the house close to the rear facade. In the back yard which is outside the fence and is enclosed by many trees, there is a circular brick well with poles and two small, one-story, gable-roofed outbuildings--one covered in plain vertical boards and one covered in horizontal beaded boards. There also is a small, cinder block, gable-roofed building close to the house. From the north and east sides of the yard extend the 60 acres of the farm. Behind the trees that form the east boundary of the yard there is a double-crib barn with board and batten siding.

The house is two stories tall on a brick foundation punctuated by brick ventilators. Two interior brick chimneys with molded caps rise at the crest of the shallow, tin-covered hip roof. Despite a rather curious asymmetrical configuration, the formality of the house reflects a very ordered sense of geometry on the part of its anonymous designer. The house is three bays across and the sides are two bays deep on the north and three bays deep on the south. The asymmetrical quality is due to the fact that the right bay of the main facade is recessed, so that the tower projects from the right bay of the main facade but is flush with the left bay. The one-story front porch, supported by brick footing, covers the middle and right recessed bay so that its projection from the facade is in opposition to the middle and left bays of the house; its hip roof is supported by chamfered posts decorated with elaborate sawnwork spandrels.

The fenestration of the main block of the Cupola House is evenly spaced. All of the windows have two-over-two double-hung sashes and are framed by wooden louvered shutters. The windows of the second story and the cupola are of a uniform size, except for the middle second-story window on the south side, originally a door opening onto the top of the three-window bay on the south facade.¹ The first-story windows of the main, west facade are longer than those of the second story and cupola, reaching almost to the floor. The northern three-window bay on the west elevation contributes to the asymmetrical quality of this main facade.

The cupola, which really is a modified tower characteristic of the Italian Villa style, and the heavier trim of the house (other than the ornate, curved spandrels) lend the house its Italianate character and prevent it from being merely a grand vernacular-style house. The box cornices supported by curved brackets are continuous above the second story of the main block, the cupola, and the wing are decorated by a scalloped wooden course. Gutters are recessed into the crown molding. The cornices of the porches are identical to those of the body of the house except that the porches do not have the curved brackets. The door and window lintels are topped by enriched heads consisting of elements identical to the box cornices of the rooflines. In the center of the cupola roof there is a pointed wooden turned finial.

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All of the doors to the main block have simple transoms. The double doors with round-headed panels of the main entrance are more elaborate as they are flanked by narrow, round-headed, pebble-glassed sidelights. The transom also is flanked by corner lights; the left corner light is the same sort of pebble glass as the sidelights, but the transom and right corner light are frosted and incised with a clear floral pattern.²

A two-story wing stands at the rear. It is attached to the rear of the house off-center over the middle bay, and its flat roof is several inches lower than that of the rest of the house. According to local tradition, the wing is original to the house, but it is possible that the Shaws, for whom the house was built, modified their chosen designs for a house that consisted only of the main block of the Cupola House to include a kitchen.³ It also is possible that the wing was once freestanding and was drawn up to the house later. The wing is two bays wide and two bays deep and the windows have four-over-four double-hung sashes with no enriched heads. Over the southern exterior "ell" formed by the wing there is a porch very similar in shape and design to the front porch. The four doors off the rear porch open to the rear wing, enclosed back stairs to the second story, the main hall, and the living room.

The plan of the Cupola House, as suggested by the exterior form, follows a central passage plan two rooms deep on the north and one long room deep on the south. Each floor of the wing is a long room; downstairs, the kitchen is entered from the dining room, while upstairs the bathroom is entered down two steps from the rear of the center hall. The house does not have a basement.

The graceful main staircase has 19 steps that are deeper than they are high so that the stairs are long and rise very gradually. The railing and the polygonal, panelled newel post are of solid walnut; the turned polygonal balusters have been painted. The stairwell is open on the second floor and surrounded by a continuation of the walnut railing and balusters. The three original closets are located under each of the three staircases. The closet under the main staircase has been converted to a lavatory. Other closets have been added in the master bedroom, the upstairs bathroom and the two smaller bedrooms on either side of the fireplaces.⁴

The cupola is reached by an enclosed staircase in the southwest corner of the upstairs hall. The walls are covered in vertical beaded boards and the baseboards are plain. Originally there were built-in seats around three of the walls.⁵

As the fireplaces in the living room and the master bedroom are plastered over, it is possible that they were intended originally for stoves, for which the living room fireplace presently is used. The living room mantelpiece is of the Eastlake variety, wooden with chamfered Doric pilasters and raised curved decoration applied to the frieze. The front parlor fireplace originally was framed in iron and had a

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marbleized slate mantlepice; after the slate broke, the fireplace was enlarged with a brick frame and a simple wooden mantlepice was installed. On either side of the fireplace there are built-in bookcases that were constructed about 25 to 30 years ago by the present owners.⁶

All of the doors have four rectangular panels, the ratio of each of the two top panels to the bottom panels being approximately three to one. As is the case with the exterior doors, all of the interior doors are topped by transoms except for those to the two rooms of the rear wing.

On the interior, the rear wing has undergone more changes than any other portion of the house. On the first floor, the kitchen has been modernized and the original wainscoting has been replaced with new wainscoting. The second-story room originally may have been living quarters for servants.

None of the interior alterations has changed the original character of the Cupola House. On the exterior, however, one major transformation has altered the fabric of the house. Several years ago the current owners resorted to applying aluminum siding to the house in an effort to stop an extensive problem with leakage of rain water. Although the trim, except for the cornerboards, remains intact, all of the horizontal boards of the house now are the same width whereas the original boards of the cupola were narrower than those of the rest of the house.⁸ These narrower boards would have emphasized the separate configuration of the cupola from the rest of the house. In spite of this newer siding, the house retains its distinctive Italianate style. The somewhat naive application of an academic revival style to a basically vernacular structure lends the Cupola House its special character.

The structure of course is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archeological record. Therefore, archeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. 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.

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¹The roof of this bay originally had a railing around it. The door is supposed to have been removed to alleviate a problem with leakage. Mrs. Evelyn Griffin, interview held at Shaw House, Shawboro, N.C., March, 1979.

²Each corner light originally was fronted and incised with a clear star motif.
Ibid.

³The theory that the wing was a later addition is supported by the difference in roofline from the rest of the house and the fact that the rear facade of the main block of the house, if the wing did not exist, is a mirror image of the main facade as the left bay, according to the roofline, is recessed the same depth as the front right bay.

⁴Mrs. Evelyn Griffin.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

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The Shaw House, also called the Cupola House, was built near Shawboro, in the mid 1880s. The Currituck County home was built for W. B. Shaw, an area attorney. Shaw inherited the property from his father, Henry Marchmore Shaw, the namesake of Shawboro and one of Currituck County's most distinguished personages.¹

Henry Marchmore Shaw was born November 20, 1819, at Newport, Rhode Island. He graduated from the medical department of the University of Pennsylvania in 1838 and began medical practice in Camden County, North Carolina, shortly thereafter.² Shaw moved to Currituck County sometime near 1853 and was elected to the United States Congress in 1852 as a Democrat. He was defeated for reelection in 1854, but was successful in 1856. In 1858 he was again defeated in a bid for reelection.³

At the onset of the Civil War Shaw became a Colonel in the Confederate force commanding the 8th Regiment of North Carolina Infantry in the eastern North Carolina theatre. Shaw was commander of the defending North Carolina troops at the Battle of Roanoke Island, which ended with the capture of Shaw and his troops on February 7, 1862. The Confederate defeat was attributed to the numerical superiority of the Union forces.⁴ Shaw and his men were paroled later that month, and were exchanged from August through November of 1862. The 8th North Carolina, under Shaw, fought at Goldsboro Bridge in December of 1862, in the defense of Charleston in the spring of 1863, near Wilmington in July of 1863, and back at Charleston in August of 1863. Charleston the commanding officer was quoted as saying "the hardest service was performed by the Eighth North Carolina Regiment, commanded by Colonel Shaw."⁵ Shaw was killed in a skirmish at Batchelder's Creek, near New Bern, on February 1, 1864. Nearly forty years after Shaw's death his regimental historian wrote, "The death of Colonel Shaw was a great loss to the regiment. His coolness under fire, and his calmness at all times in the presence of danger had an inspiring effect on the regiment. The writer also commented on the "consideration Colonel Shaw had for his men."⁶

Colonel Shaw's death elevated his status to that of a genuine war hero. The Currituck County town of Bayley was renamed Shaw's Corner in his honor, and was later changed to Shawboro. Shaw's will, probated in May of 1866, loaned his estate to his widow, with the provision that his two sons, William B. Shaw and Henry M. Shaw should receive the estate when they attained the age of twenty-one. In 1888 the brothers divided the estate. William B. Shaw sold to his brother his interest in part of the estate on which the latter lived, while Henry Shaw reciprocated. William part of the estate, including the Cupola House, encompassed 160 acres, while his brother obtained clear title to 200 acres, including his late father's house.

Neither of Colonel Shaw's sons met with financial success. Henry M. Shaw became a doctor, like his father, and practiced in Shawboro until 1905.¹⁰ "He suffered financial reverses and was forced to sell his home. He died under questionable circumstances on a boat off Knotts Island while enroute from Portsmouth, Virginia,

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February 9, 1911.¹¹ William B. Shaw also met with setbacks and was forced to mortgage his house the same day that he obtained clear title to it from his brother. At this time he was over \$2,000 in debt.¹² In 1896 the house and land were sold to the highest bidder, who was John D. Parker. Parker paid \$3,335 for the property, which he sold the next year for \$3,750 to George Stevenson.¹³

Stevenson, described in the 1900 census as a "steam miller" and in an 1896 business directory as the operator of a gristmill and cotton gin, was born in Pennsylvania in 1858 and had five children.¹⁴ He lived in the Cupola House until 1910, when he was forced to sell the property to pay a \$1,272 debt.¹⁵ The property changed hands again in 1915, 1916, twice in 1918, and again in 1923. In this last transaction A. W. Stanton obtained the property for \$5,100.¹⁶ By this time it had been reduced to 60 acres. Stanton kept the property until 1933 when he sold it to T. M. Roberts for \$4,500.¹⁷ Roberts sold the house and land to E. L. and Evelyn Griffin in 1936 for \$6,000.¹⁸ E. L. Griffin died in 1963 and left the property to his wife, who is the current owner.¹⁹ The property has been renovated and after many years of neglect and frequent change of ownership its future looks positive.

Architectural significance

Beyond its local association with a prominent family, the house is most significant architecturally. The architectural character of rural, long isolated Currituck County is largely vernacular and modest. Most houses are simple and functional, and there are few dwellings from the post-Civil War era of any pretension. Thus the Shaw House is quite a local landmark. The presence of such ambitious efforts at stylishness as the tower and even the bracketed eaves sets it off from most of its contemporaries. Although the towered Italianate villa mode appeared in more urban areas of North Carolina in the 1850s--and occurred in A.J. Davis's sophisticated Tuscan composition Blandwood at Greensboro in 1840s--it never achieved common use in the state. The adaptation of the form at the Shaw House represents a notable anomaly in the architectural character of Currituck County and illustrates the long use and local renditions of this nationally popular type in rural communities.

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¹Roy Sawyer, Jr., "A Tour of Historic Sites in Currituck County," The Journal of the Currituck County Historical Society, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 38.

²Lawrence F. Kennedy (Chief Compiler), Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1941 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 1684, hereinafter cited as Kennedy, Biographical Directory.

³Kennedy, Biographical Directory, 1684; Charles N. Wright, "The History of Medicine in Currituck County," The Journal of the Currituck County Historical Society, Vol. 1, No. 1, 20, hereinafter cited as Wright, "The History of Medicine." See also Currituck County Deed Book 27, p. 55.

⁴John G. Barrett, The Civil War in North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 52-84, hereinafter cited as Barrett, The Civil War in North Carolina; Louis A. Manarin and Weymouth T. Jordan, Jr. (Compilers), North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, 1973), IV, 515-517, hereinafter cited as Manarin and Jordan, North Carolina Troops. Shaw also commanded the 31st North Carolina and parts of the 46th and 59th Virginia Volunteers at the Battle of Roanoke.

⁵Manarin and Jordan, North Carolina Troops, IV, 515-521; Barrett, The Civil War in North Carolina, 83-84.

⁶Walter Clark (ed.), Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-'65 (Raleigh and Goldsboro: State of North Carolina), XXI, 396-397. Another observer, however, maintained that "Colonel Shaw was disliked by his men, some even cursing him to his face." Caroline Pettigrew, quoted in Barrett, Civil War in North Carolina, 90.

⁷William S. Powell, The North Carolina Gazetteer (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 448. According to Powell the change from Shaw's Corner to Shawboro came at the behest of the Norfolk and Southern Railroad.

⁸Currituck County Will Book 4, p. 258.

⁹Currituck County Deed Book 39, p. 45.

¹⁰Wright, "The History of Medicine," 20; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Population Schedule, Currituck County, North Carolina. Dr. Shaw graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1871. Alumni Directory of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill: Alumni Office of the General Alumni Association, 1954), 805.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1880s Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Shaw House, near Shawboro is one of Currituck County's few "high-style" vernacular houses and the only Italianate Victorian house in the area. Its distinctive features of boxed cornices around the roofline and above the windows and doors, splayed bay windows, and the square, third-story tower at the front of the house that lends it the popular name "Cupola House" give the house an ambitious character that sets it apart from the surrounding farming community. Except for the application of aluminum siding, the house is basically in the same condition as when it was erected in the 1880s. Its builder, William B. Shaw, was a prominent area attorney and the son of Henry Shaw, the Civil War hero for whom Shawboro was named. For much of the twentieth century the ownership of the house changed frequently. However, it has been in the present family since 1936 and its current owner Mrs. Evelyn Griffin has renovated the house.

Criteria Assessment:

- B. Associated with the locally prominent Shaw family.
- C. Embodies in one of the very few "stylish" houses in rural Currituck County, the broad and long-lived popularity of the Italian villa style, here in a very late (1880s), wooden, vernacular version.
- D. Is likely to yield information about late nineteenth century farm life.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Alumni Directory of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Chapel Hill: Alumni Office of the General Alumni Association, 1954.

Barrett, John G. The Civil War in North Carolina. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 60 acres

Quadrangle name Elizabeth City

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

Lat. $36^{\circ}24'38''$ Long. $76^{\circ}05'13''$

A

1	8																					
Zone		Easting						Northing														

Lat. $36^{\circ}24'23''$ Long. $76^{\circ}05'13''$

B

1	8																					
Zone		Easting						Northing														

C

1	8																					
Zone		Easting						Northing														

D

1	8																					
Zone		Easting						Northing														

E

Zone		Easting						Northing														

F

Zone		Easting						Northing														

G

Zone		Easting						Northing														

H

Zone		Easting						Northing														

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Shaw House is bounded on the North and East by open farmlands, on the South by SR1203, and on the West by NC 34. The sixty acres thus defined are all of the original farm that remains associated with the house.

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 Architectural Description by Claudia Roberts, Consultant
Historical Statement by Jim Sumner, Researcher--Research Branch

organization Survey and Planning Branch

organization Archeology and Historic Preservation date November, 1979

N.C. Division of Archives and History

street & number 109 E. Jones Street telephone (919) 733-6545

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

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer date January 10, 1980

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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- Branson, Levi (ed.). North Carolina Business Directory for 1896. Raleigh: Levi Branson, 1896.
- Clark, Walter (ed.). Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-'65. Raleigh and Goldsboro: State of North Carolina, 5 volumes, 1901.
- Currituck County Records. Deed Books, Trust Books, Will Books. Microfilm copy. Raleigh: N. C. Division of Archives and History.
- Kennedy, Lawrence (Chief Compiler). Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971.
- Manarin, Louis A. and Jordan, Jr., Weymouth T. North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster. Raleigh: N. C. Division of Archives and History, 7 volumes, 1966-1979.
- Powell, William S. The North Carolina Gazetteer. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968.
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- United States Census Office. Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Currituck County, North Carolina: Population Schedule; Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Currituck County, North Carolina: Population Schedule.
- Wright, Charles N. "The History of Medicine in Currituck County." The Journal of the Currituck County Historical Society. Vol. 1, No. 1.

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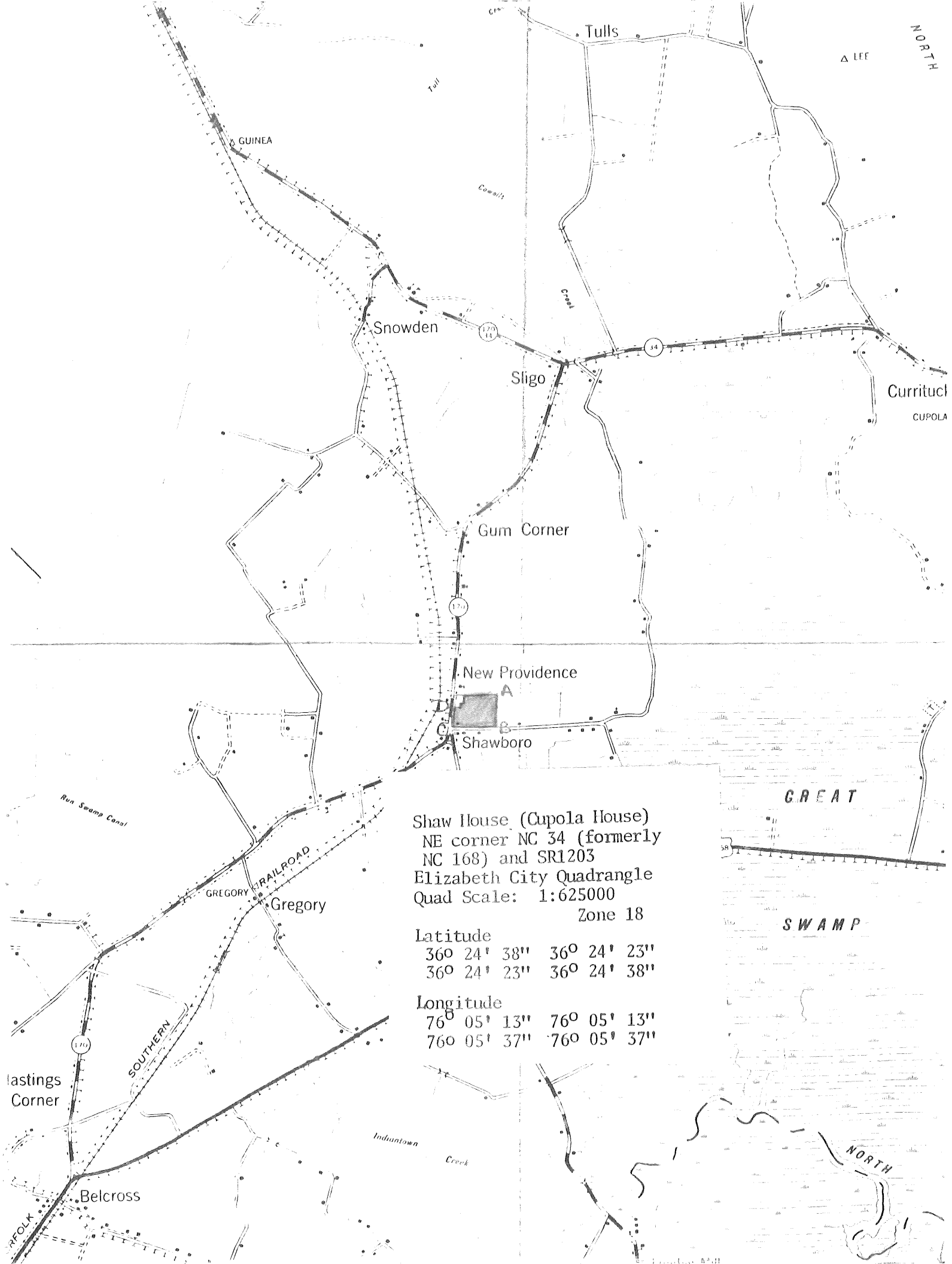
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- ¹¹Wright, "The History of Medicine," 20.
- ¹²Currituck County Trust Book 3, p. 491.
- ¹³Currituck County Deed Book 42, p. 326; Book 42, p. 366.
- ¹⁴Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Population Schedule, Currituck County, North Carolina. Levi Branson (ed.), North Carolina Business Directory for 1896 (Raleigh: Levi Branson, 1896), 233.
- ¹⁵Currituck County Trust Book 11, p. 229. The property was purchased by J. P. Barnard, with the obligation that he would sell it to the highest bidder should Stevenson be unable to pay his debt to the J. W. Perry Company of Norfolk.
- ¹⁶Barnard sold the property to the Perry Company in 1915. Currituck County Deed Book 55, p. 31. In 1916 the company sold it to W. R. Sawyer. Currituck County Deed Book 55, p. 563. Sawyer died and his 1918 will left the property to his widow Bessie D. Sawyer. Currituck County Will Book 5, p. 529. In December of that year she sold the property to C. A. Perkins for \$1,200. This transaction contained other tracts of land. Currituck County Deed Book 57, p. 262. Perkins sold the land to A. W. Stanton in August of 1923 for \$5,100. This transaction reduced the tract to 60 acres. Currituck County Deed Book 60, p. 324.
- ¹⁷Currituck County Deed Book 66, p. 601.
- ¹⁸Currituck County Deed Book 67, p. 632.
- ¹⁹Currituck County Will Book 8, p. 351.



Shaw House (Cupola House)
 NE corner NC 34 (formerly
 NC 168) and SR1203
 Elizabeth City Quadrangle
 Quad Scale: 1:625000
 Zone 18

Latitude
 36° 24' 38" 36° 24' 23"
 36° 24' 23" 36° 24' 38"

Longitude
 76° 05' 13" 76° 05' 13"
 76° 05' 37" 76° 05' 37"

GREAT

SWAMP

NORTH

