

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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

1. Name of property

historic name Midgett, Mattie, Store and House

other names/site number Nellie Myrtle Pridgen's Beachcomber Museum

2. Location

street & number 4008 South Virginia Dare Trail not for publication N/A

city or town Nags Head vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Dare code 055 zip code 27959

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally      statewide X locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey A. Crow SHPO 10/27/04  
Signature of certifying official Date

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

In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register criteria. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<u>    </u> entered in the National Register <u>    </u> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<u>    </u> determined eligible for the National Register <u>    </u> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<u>    </u> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<u>    </u> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<u>    </u> other (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Midgett, Mattie, Store and House  
Name of Property

Dare County, NC  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: COMMERCE Sub: department store  
DOMESTIC single dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: CULTURE Sub: museum  
VACANT/NOT IN USE

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Commercial Building: Gas Station/Store

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Wood  
 roof Asbestos  
 walls Shingle

other Brick  
Concrete

**Narrative Description**

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

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

**Period of Significance**

c. 1914-1954

**Significant Dates**

c. 1914

1932

1944

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_





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second level is supported at the corners by wood posts on brick piers. A central door, flanked by two-over-two sash windows, opens onto the second-level porch.

A one-story, hipped-roof, one-room addition is attached to the south elevation of the store. The 1944 addition includes a separate front entrance with a one-over-one sash window positioned south of the door. The south elevation of the addition has two, widely-spaced, one-over-one sash windows, while the west side includes a rear door opening onto a deck. A former rear (west side) engaged porch on the main block of the building, similar to that on the front, was enclosed in the 1970s. A second door opening onto the deck from the enclosed porch provides access to a small stair passage in the back of the store. A small fixed-sash, single-pane window is positioned east of the door. The second level of the main block's south elevation includes five windows -- the middle three are two-over-two sash, while the one to the east is a smaller one-over-one sash and the one to the west is a rectangular awning window. An exterior brick chimney rises along the south wall of the store behind the one-over-one sash window.

The west elevation of the Mattie Midgett Store includes two one-over-one sash windows: one at the first level and one directly above it at the second level. A small half-moon shaped window is situated north of the second-level window. A boarded-up window on the first level of the north elevation of the store is located near the front of the building, while a small one-over-one window provides light for the kitchen in the rear, enclosed section. Fenestration on the second level of the north elevation includes four two-over-two sash windows.

The interior of the original 1914 section of the store incorporates one large room with pine floors and exposed floor joists in the ten-foot-high ceiling. The walls are clad with tongue-and-groove beaded board paneling, while rows of shelves line the walls. An enclosed phone booth is located in the northeast corner of the room. A gas stove with a stovepipe connected to the chimney sits near the south wall in the middle of the room. A small kitchen and bathroom, in addition to the staircase, are located in the back of the building in the enclosed porch section. The 1944 one-story addition can be accessed from the store by an open entryway in the store's south wall. The floors and ceiling of the one-room addition are lined with knotty-pine paneling.

The second story of the building was utilized as living quarters for the Midgett family. The stairs in the back of the building ascend to a narrow hallway along the north wall of the second story. The passage leads to a front living room that spans the width of the building. A central door opens from the living room onto the upper level porch, providing outdoor living space. A room on the south side of the hall has recently had a wall removed transforming two small bedrooms into one master-size bedroom. A bathroom is also located on the south side of the hall, while a home office is positioned in the rear enclosed porch. Doors with five recessed horizontal panels provide access to the second-story rooms, while horizontal knotty-pine

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paneling covers the walls and the ceiling, with the exception of the bedroom ceiling which consists of acoustical tiles.

2. Midgett House 1933 Contributing Building

The Midgett House is a frame, two-story, T-shaped, single-pile dwelling with steeply-pitched gable roofs. The house, which sits approximately seventy feet behind (west) the Mattie Midgett Store, is clad with weathered cedar shake shingles with the exception of the first level of the rear wing. A first level porch, which wrapped around both sides of the house, has been removed. A door with sidelights on the three-bay façade is positioned slightly off center and is flanked by windows covered with shutters. Three shuttered windows at the second level are aligned over the first-level bays. The windows, most of which are missing, were originally two-over-two double-hung sash. The north and south elevations of the front section of the house each include two shuttered windows at the first and second levels and a small square window at the attic level.

The two-story, rear T-section is attached to the front of the house by an enclosed breezeway, while an expansive, hipped-roof porch supported by wood posts wraps around the south and west elevations. Weatherboard siding clads the first level of the wing. A door opens into the enclosed breezeway from the south-side porch. The kitchen and dining room are located in the first story of the rear wing. There is a second entrance from the porch that opens into the dining room. Two south elevation, two-over-two sash windows provide light for the rooms. Second-level, south-side fenestration includes three two-over-two sash windows.

The west gable end of the wing includes two windows with two-over-two sash at both the first and second levels. An interior-end chimney is positioned between the windows. The north elevation of the wing includes an enclosed porch at the first level. There is also a door and one two-over-two sash window at the first level and three shuttered windows at the second level. A shed room containing a bathroom is attached to the west elevation of the main block of the house. There is one window in the shed room and one shuttered window at the second level.

The front door opens into a central passage with a straight flight of stairs positioned along the south wall. A turned newel post anchors turned balusters lining the staircase. The entire interior, including walls and ceiling, is clad with tongue-and-groove beaded-board paneling. Wood floors and four-panel doors are found throughout the house. The north-side room is accessed by a door near the front of the hall, while the entrance to the south-side room is behind the staircase. The rear wing with the kitchen and dining room is accessed from the back of the hall through the enclosed breezeway, a typical arrangement for the Outer Banks. The second story is comprised of a bedroom on either side of the central hall and one large dormitory-style room in the rear wing.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The c. 1914 Mattie Midgett Store is eligible for National Register listing under Criterion A for commerce. The central commercial establishment for Nags Head's cottage families for over half a century, the two-story frame store was built in Nags Head's original soundside resort development and moved to its present location in 1932. Mattie Twiford Midgett, wife of local fisherman Jethro Midgett, operated the store for locals and vacationers alike. The store also acted as a local gathering place, where people came to collect their mail, make a telephone call, or sit on the porch enjoying an ice-cold soda, while they caught up on the daily news. Today the store acts as a repository for the vast collection of objects collected by Nell Pridgen, Mattie Midgett's daughter, on her daily beachcombing forays. The nomination includes the Midgett House as a contributing building. Built in 1933, the two-story frame dwelling sits west of the store and was the principal residence for the Midgett family until 1944, at which time Mattie and Jethro moved into the apartment over the store. Nell Midgett continued to live in the house until 1974 during which time she supplemented her income by turning the house into a boarding house.

Also eligible under Criterion C for architecture, the Midgett Store, a commercial building with Shingle Style details, became a prototype for future commercial establishments on the island. The unpretentious frame building with covered porches and shingled siding is an integral extension of the seaside resort's early twentieth-century summer cottages. Although the store was moved from the sound side of the island to the ocean side in 1932, it meets Criterion Consideration B due to the retention of the building's architectural and environmental integrity, and the store's significance is also associated with its current location. The period of significance extends from its construction date, c. 1914, to 1954, during which time the store served as the principal commercial establishment for Nags Head residents and visitors. The store's operation after 1954 is not of exceptional significance, therefore its significance ends at the fifty-year mark.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND and COMMERCE CONTEXT**

The Midgett and Twiford families were among the first permanent white settlers in the 1700s to inhabit the Outer Banks. They initially settled on the Roanoke Sound side of the island halfway between Hatteras and Corolla. Known as "Bankers," the early families built one-room shacks over the sound's waters and in the woods near the large dunes that loomed over the Nags Head landscape. They led a subsistence lifestyle with their survival dependent on their fishing, hunting, and farming abilities (Rountree, p. 4).

Francis Nixon, a Perquimans County planter, was the first to bring his family to Nags Head on vacation in the early 1800s; and by the 1830s, other wealthy planters from nearby counties began traveling to the barrier island during the summer months to escape the threat of



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malaria. They caught steamers at river docks, transporting their children, household slaves, cows, and chickens to the island. Most guests arrived via the *Neuse*, a steam packet that sailed regularly between Elizabeth City and New Bern with stops at Roanoke Island. Visitors disembarked on the west side of Roanoke Island, traveled overland to Manteo from where they would board a sailing vessel for the short trip to Nags Head. In addition to the planters' unplastered shingled cottages with their wide piazzas and sheltering live oaks, small hotels catered to the more transient vacationers. The Ocean Retreat, a sound-side hotel built in the 1830s, provided accommodations for 200 guests. An 800-foot railway carried guests from the hotel to and from the beach. A small tourist trade soon sprang up on the banks of the sound with the natives providing horses and carts, fish and fresh vegetables for the tourists (Rountree, p. 5).

Over a period of years, the Midgett family acquired large tracts of land on the island between Roanoke Sound and the Atlantic Ocean. In 1855, W. G. Pool, an Elizabeth City doctor, built an oceanfront cottage at Nags Head. He did not like the isolation of beachfront living however, so in 1866 he gave the Midgett family thirty dollars for fifty acres, then sold the land for a dollar per lot to his neighbors back home. The families soon built cottages on the lots adjoining the beach and by 1885, thirteen small cabins dotted the sand at the ocean's edge (Rountree, p. 5).

Nags Head developed into a family resort, informal and easygoing. With the construction of the Old Nags Head Pier in the 1890s, passengers could disembark directly onto the North Dare Outer Banks island. It became traditional for women and children to spend the summer at the beach with the husband joining the family for the weekends. Jethro Midgett (1893-1977) and his wife Mattie Twiford Midgett (1897-1972) decided to capitalize on the growing popularity of their native island.

In 1914, they built a two-story frame store in Nags Head's original soundside resort development. Mattie Midgett ran the store, while Jethro fished the surrounding waters. The store provided the vacationers with fresh vegetables, fish, and blue crabs as well as basic provisions such as coffee, bread, flour, eggs, and sugar, and treats including candy and ice-cold Coca-Colas. Mattie kept meticulous ledgers – every family had their own page in the book for the summer. She would itemize every item purchased by the family and most people would pay up at the end of the month. Mattie also served as the postmistress, following in the footsteps of her mother, Nellie E. Twiford, who was appointed the first postmistress on the island (Carmen Gray interview, November 18, 2003).

Jethro and Mattie Midgett had two children: Nell Midgett, born on May 17, 1918, and Jethro Midgett Jr., born on September 29, 1919. The children were born at home in the Midgett cottage, located deep in the Nags Head Woods. As the children got older, they helped their parents in the store and with the fishing. Jethro Sr. had developed a fish compound made up of a

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square of nets in the shallow waters of the sound near the wharf and the hotel. One of the children's more abhorrent tasks involved climbing over the net into the pen and catching the fish with their bare hands as the summer tourists pointed out which one they wanted (Eaton, p. 38).

By the late 1920s, Nags Head's oceanfront community was growing. S. J. Twine, a local builder, had added a dozen new cottages to the beachfront row and remodeled and enlarged many of the original structures. In 1928, a bridge over the Roanoke Sound opened, connecting Nags Head with Manteo on Roanoke Island. A year later, the first pilings were laid for a new bridge over the Currituck Sound to the north. Opening in 1930, this bridge connected the north beach at Kitty Hawk with the mainland. In 1931, workers completed a new paved road connecting Kitty Hawk to Nags Head, allowing cottage owners to drive directly to their summer homes for the first time. The bridges on either end of the barrier island gave anyone with an automobile access to the previously exclusive Nags Head resort (Rountree, p. 30).

A 1932 survey of nineteen acres solicited by R. Bruce Etheridge defined 42 lots on either side of N.C. State Highway 12 (Beach Road), including the property of thirteen existing cottages. On March 28, 1932, R. Bruce Etheridge sold Lots 3 and 4 to Mattie Midgett for \$300.00 (Deed Book 13, p. 602). Each lot measured 50 feet fronting the west side of Beach Road and ran 300 feet deep. Counting on an increasing tourist trade, in 1932 the Midgetts moved their store from the sound side to Lot 4 on the beach road across from Cottage Row, making it more accessible to the growing community on the beach. Mattie Midgett also signed a lease with the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey to sell gasoline and other petroleum products from the premises of her store (Deed Book 16, p. 25).

After relocating the store, the Midgetts proceeded to build a two-story frame house behind the store, moving into the house in 1933. Jethro Midgett supplemented his fishing income by working on the construction of the monument at Kill Devil Hill commemorating the 1903 first flight by the Wright brothers (Carmen Gray interview, November 18, 2003).

Steps taken in the 1930s by both the state and federal government to protect the barrier island from erosion included the building of 115 miles of oceanfront dunes and 600 miles of sand fences and the planting of 141 million square feet of American beachgrass by the Civilian Conservation Corp. These measures were backed up the State Livestock Act of 1935, banning the practice of open grazing on the island. These new bridges and roads, the fences, the dunes, and the monument to man's first flight resulted in an era of unprecedented growth. Increasing numbers of summer cottages and small motels were constructed on the beach side of the island during the 1940s and 50s (Eaton, p. 39).

The Midgett Store continued to provision the vacationing families in Nags Head. Located in a corner booth, the store's telephone was the only one on the island. It was common for a line

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to form on Saturday nights as people waited their turn to make a call. Nell and Jethro Jr., young teenagers at the time the store was moved to the beach side of the island, continued to help their mother with the business. Every day at dawn, Nell would rise and comb the beach for treasures, a lifetime habit that resulted in an extensive collection of diverse objects washed up from the sea (Carmen Gray interview, November 18, 2003).

Nell Midgett married Elwood Earl Pridgen Sr. in 1935. The marriage, which did not last long, resulted in the birth of her two children, Elwood Pridgen Jr. in 1936 and Carmen Pridgen in 1937. During World War II, Jethro Sr., Jethro Jr., and Nell all left the island for Norfolk for employment supporting the war effort. Jethro Sr. worked at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Jethro Jr. at Smithfield Packing, and Nell at the Naval Air Station in Norfolk, becoming the only woman in a crew of hydraulic mechanics. The trio would spend the weekends in Nags Head then board a bus for Norfolk every Sunday night. Nell's children would remain with their grandmother, Mattie, during the week while Nell worked (Eaton, p. 57). Carmen recalls that most of the items sold in the Midgett Store had to be rationed during the war, including sugar, shoes, and gasoline. Mattie was very strict and insisted that each family receive an equal share of whatever provisions she had on hand. At the time, there were only about twenty-five families that lived year-round in Nags Head (Carmen Gray interview, 18 November 2003).

On September 14, 1944, the roof of the store was blown off in what became known as *The Great Atlantic Hurricane*. Mattie was concerned because the store had been buffeted relentlessly by winds in excess of 110 miles per hour. The tall, broad profile of the southern exposure was no match for the fury of such storms. After the storm, a one-story, south-side addition was constructed to help stabilize the original structure. At the same time, the rear porches were enclosed, providing space for a small kitchen and bathroom on the first floor, an enclosed staircase to the second story, and an additional upstairs room. The additional space enabled Mattie and Jethro Sr. to move into the building, while Nell and her children remained in the house.

After the war, the Midgetts constructed a commercial building on the adjacent parcel (Lot 3) to the north where Jethro Midgett Jr. operated an icehouse and fresh seafood establishment. Although Nell continued to assist her mother in the store, she needed to supplement her income. She turned the house into a boarding house for tourists and named it "The Last Resort." She would only rent to men and charged them \$2.00 for a night's stay and a home-cooked breakfast. If the dormitory room was full, she would let her boarders sleep on hammocks on the porch (Carmen Gray interview, November 18, 2003).

Nell continued her beachcombing forays along the ocean and sound side beaches and her collection continued to grow. She became known as a local activist for preserving the beach, never hesitating to inform the local or state officials of what was on her mind. Nell was

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particularly critical about the construction of the NC 158 Bypass road in the early 1960s that ran behind the store. She also kept a file of “clippings”, a collection of newspaper or magazine articles written about the Outer Banks and its environment since the 1940s. Nell’s mother, Mattie Midgett, passed away in 1972 at the age of 75 and her father, Jethro Sr., died five years later on July 15, 1977, at the age of 84. After her father’s death, Nell moved into the apartment over the grocery store. By then the store was located in one of the busiest stretches of Nags Head, flanked by shopping centers and restaurants. Nell closed the store and posted a “Keep Out” sign in the front yard. In her later years, Nell became a recluse, disenchanted and discouraged with the toll that tourism took on the environment of the Outer Banks. Nell died on July 12, 1992, at the age of 74 (Eaton, p. 58).

Nell had transferred the deed to the house and store property to her daughter, Carmen, on December 5, 1990 (Deed Book 737, p. 65). Carmen had married William Gray on December 24, 1959. After Nell died, Carmen inherited her mother’s massive collection of objects gleaned from the sea – everything ranging from shells, feathers, toys, sea glass, and bottles to valuable artifacts from the Civil War, World War I and World War II. Carmen sold the property to Dorothy Hope on September 4, 2002 (Deed Book 1448, p. 150). She is currently working with Dorothy to convert the store into a small museum. A resolution was passed by the Nags Head Town Council on June 4, 2003, supporting the efforts of the current owners to create “The Old Nags Head Cultural Preservation Center” as a non-profit organization promoting the goal of preserving the historic and cultural resources in the Historic District of Nags Head. They also recognized the store, the site, and Nell’s artifacts as an irreplaceable part of Nags Head history.

#### ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The Old Nags Head style of architecture is principally derived from the Shingle Style, a uniquely American building style, one that achieved its height of popularity on the mainland between 1860 and 1900. The Shingle Style reflected the renewed interest in American Colonial architecture which expressed a fondness for natural wood materials – siding, shingles, and trim. The style was characterized by truthfulness of purpose, perceived sense of simple organization, and extensive use of unpainted wood. It developed primarily in the New England states, where it was especially popular in fashionable resorts such as Newport, Rhode Island, Cape Cod, Long Island and coastal Maine (McAlester, p. 290).

The development of industrialized building technologies and mass-produced components made the Shingle Style adaptable to suburban and vernacular resort style architecture. The buildings could easily be made ample in size and substantial in appearance. As a resort style, it served equally well for pretentious and utilitarian structures. Proponents of the Shingle Style emphasized an architecture that was in harmony with its surroundings – buildings that fit into the landscape through the use of natural colors and have forms and spatial arrangements dictated by

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site and climate (Scully, p. xxxiii). Differing from their Queen Anne counterparts, Shingle Style buildings typically did not display decorative details or combinations of contrasting materials. The overall effect was simpler in massing and detail, although roofs and dormer configurations often continued to be dominant. The porches, verandahs, and asymmetrical shapes that remained popular were integrated into the overall form of the building with the continuous sheathing of wood shingles. The emphasis of the Shingle Style, as the name suggests, was the complete shingle covering – walls and roofs – that blended all the exterior features of the building. Irregular arrangements of doors, windows, and other openings were unified with an unbroken covering of wood shingles beneath a simple, continuous roofline (Lawrence, Section 8, p. 7).

The characteristic natural materials and simple massing of the Shingle Style well suited the physical environment and social informality of the Outer Banks as it emerged in the early twentieth century. True to Outer Banks tradition, the form and style of both residential and commercial structures was influenced by the severity of the environment and the limited type and availability of building materials. These factors demanded efficient, sturdy structures without ornamental features. Up until the 1940s much of the developing cottage architecture of the ocean side was of a form popularized by carpenter/builder, S. J. Twine of Elizabeth City. Twine combined the then popular Shingle and bungalow styles of the mainland with the functional designs that had traditionally existed on the Outer Banks to create a distinctive vernacular character (McNaughton, p. 69). The Midgett Store and House exhibit common characteristics of both styles. The two-story store is almost completely sheathed with cedar shake shingles while the hipped roof exhibits exposed rafter tails, an identifying feature of the bungalow style. Likewise, the two-story frame Midgett House is similar to the Nags Head cottages built by S. J. Twine with its sturdy construction, steep gable roofs with exposed rafter tails, shingle cladding, and wide wraparound porches.

The early-twentieth-century commercial buildings, like the cottages, were constructed of inexpensive materials, sheathed in unpainted wood shingles, and set upon pile foundations embedded in the sand to allow for ocean overwash during times of unusually high tides and storm surges (McNaughton, p. 65). The c. 1914 Mattie Midgett Store was a prototype for future commercial buildings on the Outer Banks. The commercial role of these buildings was downplayed and every effort was made to make them fit aesthetically within the overall resort expression. A unifying element of the older commercial buildings in Nags Head was the use of a capacious hip roof that dominated their form and style. The use of covered porches and shingled construction was prominent on both the sound and beach sides of the island and was utilized by many historic commercial buildings, including the Hollowell and Arlington hotels. The success of this approach to commercial architecture is also evident in the design of Harris's Grocery, which was built north of Midgett's Store on the beach road following World War II. It is almost identical in form and style to the Midgett Store, down to the narrow main building with two floors and a single story living area to the south. It also uses a hip roof to blend with the style of

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the preceding commercial structures. The Midgetts also used the same style when constructing the post-war commercial icehouse and seafood company building adjacent to their grocery store.

**The Relocation of the Mattie Midgett Store**

The American tradition of moving buildings has been going on since the Revolutionary War when the British expressed their surprise at the colonists' propensity for moving their houses around. The notion of building relocation grew largely out of the fact that early American buildings were built of simple wood framing, were lightweight, and had an integral structural system. In many instances, the only way to save or protect a building is to physically move it out of harm's way (Lawrence, Section 8, p. 11).

This approach is particularly commonplace on the Outer Banks where buildings have often led a transitory existence. Although the first resort development at Nags Head took place on the sound side of the island, families began building ocean-side cottages around 1855. Other families put their old sound-side cottages on rollers and moved them from the sound across the flats to the beach. Moving these houses built on sand was a common feature of Nags Head life, sometimes to accommodate the whim of an owner, more often as the only means of saving a cottage threatened by sand or sea. The simple wood frame structures, typically built on wood pilings above the destructive waves and sand, were easily disconnected from their sites, picked up, and moved farther away. With this history, fewer historically significant structures exist on their original sites than those, which have been moved. (Bishir, p. 10).

By the early 1930s, the Midgetts decided to join the migration to the beach side of the island. They purchased a lot across the street from the beach cottages and proceeded to move their store onto the lot. Shortly thereafter, they built a two-story frame house behind the store. The store has achieved significance in its new location with the reorientation of development on the island shifting from the sound side to the beach side beginning in 1928 and 1930 with the building of bridges over the Roanoke and Currituck sounds. The overall environment of the current location is also compatible with the early twentieth-century architecture surrounding it.

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Section 9 – Bibliography

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**Section 10: Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The boundaries of the nominated property coincide with the boundaries delineated for parcel 008569000 on the accompanying Dare County tax map. The lot measures 50 by 300 feet.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundary encompasses all of the property currently associated with the Mattie Midgett Store, moved to this site in 1932. It includes the 1933 Midgett House located behind on the store on the same lot.



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Section Photos

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The following information applies to all photographs:

Name of Property: Midgett, Mattie, Store and House  
County and State where Property is Located: Dare County, North Carolina  
Address: 4008 South Virginia Dare Trail  
Name of Photographer: Beth Keane  
Date of Photographs: **May, 2003**  
Location of Original Negatives: North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh

Photographs

Photograph 1: Store: East (façade) and South Elevations (camera looking northwest)

Photograph 2: Store: West and South Elevations (camera looking northeast)

Photograph 3: Store: Interior – First Floor

Photograph 4: House: East (façade) and North Elevations (camera looking southwest)

Photograph 5: House: South Elevation (camera looking north)

