

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR THEMATIC NOMINATION

1 NAME

HISTORIC Tyro Tavern

AND/OR COMMON

Thompson House, Davis House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER W side NC 150 0.2 mi. N of jct. with SR 1215

CITY, TOWN

Tyro

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

037

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

COUNTY
Davidson

CODE

057

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME James Archie and Annie Lee Davis

STREET & NUMBER

Route 5 Box 196A

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Davidson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

STATE
North Carolina

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Ruth Little, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Survey and Planning Branch

DATE

February 28, 1983

STREET & NUMBER

Division of Archives and History

TELEPHONE

919/733-6545

CITY OR TOWN

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

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

Tyro Tavern is an imposing two-story gable-roof brick structure, five bays wide and three bays deep, built about 1840. This Greek Revival style structure has survived with almost no alterations except the removal of the two-story front porch in the mid-twentieth century. As illustrated in a c. 1920 documentary photograph, it had slender Doric columns, an upper level balustrade, and a heavy wooden cornice which echoed the corbeled brick cornice of the main block. A wide area of ground around the former porch is paved with flat stones, inscribed with several names and symbols, including a Masonic emblem, a heart bisected by a straight line, and the names "R. F. Thompson" and "M. O. Thompson." The main entrance is an unusually wide door with eight raised panels, set within an ovolo-molded surround, with a five-pane transom and plain wooden lintel. Today a modern flat-roofed single bay porch with iron supports shelters this entrance. The rear bay of the east elevation and the center bay of the rear elevation also contain identical doors.

The structure rests on a basement laid in one-to-four common bond, with wooden ventilators with vertical stiles set on the diagonal. A load-bearing brick partition wall divides the basement into two equal sections. Each section is reached by a gable end brick bulkhead. The basement foundation continues above ground level as a four-course water table, and the main (south) and side elevations are laid in beautiful Flemish bond. A deeply corbeled brick cornice stretches across the rear elevation and the gable ends, which defines gable pediments. The brick inside the pediments and on the rear elevation is laid in one-to-four bond. Each pediment is outlined also by a wooden raking cornice. A pair of interior end chimney stacks rise from each gable end. Sheet tin covers the gable roof. All of the first story windows have six-over-nine sash with ovolo-molded surrounds, and all of the second story and pediment windows have six-over-six sash with identical surrounds. All windows originally had louvered wooden shutters, a few of which are preserved in the attic.

An original one-story shed porch stretches across the rear elevation. It is supported by fieldstone piers and plain wooden posts, square in section, and formerly had a wooden railing. A small gabled frame wing extends from the eastern bay of the rear elevation. This is said by the present owners to have been an outbuilding which was attached to the house as the kitchen. It probably replaced an original free-standing kitchen reached through the rear or east side door.

Interesting deviations in the standard center-hall double-pile floor plan give physical proof that this building was constructed as a tavern. The partition wall between the two east first floor rooms is actually five doors, hinged to one another so that the entire wall could be folded open to create one large room. On the second floor, a transverse hall separates the west rooms, which consist of two exterior rooms with fireplaces and two smaller interior rooms. On the east side of the upstairs hall are two standard bedrooms.

Throughout the interior most of the original floor boards and all of the plaster walls and sheathed wooden ceilings are intact. The woodwork consists of high molded baseboards, symmetrically molded surrounds, doors with six flat panels, and Greek Revival style mantels. The windows of the front east and west rooms of the first

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floor have paneled window aprons. The rear east room may have had aprons but the present kitchen cabinets conceal the area below the windows. All of the surrounds have corner block treatment, but those of the front east room are more ornate than those elsewhere. All of the original mantels are in place except the front two rooms of the first floor, which have been replaced. The mantels are all quite similar, with pilasters supporting a frieze, cornice and shelf. The center hall contains an open-string stair which rises in three flights, with two landings, to the upstairs. The railing consists of a plain, tapering newel, a simple rounded handrail, and slender balusters. The hardware is quite unusual, and some of it may have been manufactured by the Tyro Iron Works, the owner's own company.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

_____ NATIONAL

_____ STATE

XX

_____ LOCAL

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	<u>X</u> ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
___1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
<u>X</u> 1800-1899	___COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION
___1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	<u>X</u> INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Unknown

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Tyro Tavern, probably constructed in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, is the finest example of Greek Revival domestic architecture in Davidson County. It was apparently built as the residence and tavern of Joseph H. Thompson, son of early nineteenth century innkeeper Frederick Thompson. J. H. amassed a fortune from his Tyro Iron Works, the largest agricultural foundry in the county throughout most of the second half of the nineteenth century. The imposing brick dwelling which still dominates the crossroads village of Tyro is the only structure remaining of Thompson's mercantile and industrial empire.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- B. Historically significant as the only remaining structure associated with J. H. Thompson, founder in the early nineteenth century of the Tyro Iron Works, the first known manufactory of agricultural equipment in Davidson County.
- C. Architecturally significant as one of the largest and finest antebellum houses built in Davidson County, and because of the distinctive characteristics which enabled it to function as a tavern: folding partition wall between the two east first floor rooms, and the four small bedrooms on the west side of the second floor hall.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

According to local tradition, "Tyro Tavern," as it is popularly known, was built in 1814 by Dr. Frederick Thompson; however, physical and documentary evidence contradict most of this tradition. The structural and decorative features of the large brick structure confirm its designation as a tavern, but indicate a construction date in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when the Greek Revival style was in vogue. Although no documentary evidence has been found to prove that the Thompson House ever functioned as a tavern, two unusual features--the five-door hinged partition wall creating a large east room (similar to the late eighteenth century St. Lawrence Tavern, Pittsboro, North Carolina, and the early nineteenth century Yellow Tavern, Milton, North Carolina), and the four small rooms along the upstairs transverse hall--offer convincing physical proof that the building was built as a tavern. The earliest documentary reference to the building, in the deed partitioning Joseph H. Thompson's land at his death in 1872, calls it the "Homeplace,"¹ and it probably always functioned primarily as a residence.

The original deed for the site of "Tyro Tavern" has not been found. Frederick Thompson, born sometime before 1775, purchased about 500 acres of land in southwest Davidson County between 1804 and 1817. In 1814 and 1817 he bought acreage on Potts Creek, located several miles from the Yadkin River near the present village of Tyro, where the "Tavern" is located, and in 1817 he purchased land on the Yadkin River.² Thompson may have operated an inn on the road leading to the Yadkin River ferry, because he was involved in a dispute in the 1820s with the owners of a toll bridge over the Yadkin to Salisbury. A circular, printed in 1821, charged that Frederick Thompson, "living at the forks of the road, on the northeast side of the river," was the principal agent circulating rumors that the bridge was in poor repair and that travellers should take the ferry road instead. In 1828 the bridge owners took the case to court, and a witness testified that he had been frequently "at the house of plaintiff" and that Thompson never tried to influence which river road to use.³ Both Frederick and his wife Sarah were dead by 1841 when their only son Joseph H. Thompson, born in 1810, became the administrator and sole heir of their estate.⁴ By 1850, Joseph was the larger of the two manufacturers of agricultural implements in Davidson County. His annual produce, listed in the Industrial Schedule of the census, was 150 plows, 3 cotton gins, and miscellaneous implements.⁵ It is possible that Frederick Thompson had begun the iron foundry and Joseph continued and enlarged the business. In the Salisbury newspaper in the 1840s were advertisements for "Thompson's Store" in Tyro, thus it is obvious that Joseph was operating a business in the village at this time. This is the earliest known

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 10 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 7	5 5 6 3 0 0	3 9 6 2 4 5 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

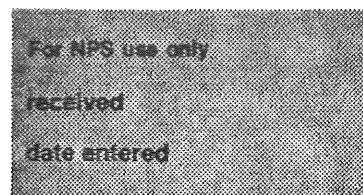
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 13, Map 23-D, Davidson County Tax Office, bounded on the east by Lot 12, on the north by Lot 27, on the west by Lot 14, and on the south by NC 150, as outlined in red on map.

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reference to the village of Tyro, which apparently takes both its name and its establishment from Thompson's store and foundry.⁶

An 1857 advertisement in the Salisbury newspaper, the Carolina Watchman, announced that Thompson's Eagle Machine Shop made a new Drury Threshing machine, Lambreth vertical water mills, straw cutters, and machine cultivators.⁷ By 1860 Thompson had amassed a fortune, with real estate valued at \$20,000 and personal property at \$63,880. His occupations were listed as "merchant, mechanic, and planter."⁸ The Tyro iron works, also known as "Tyro Shops," continued to prosper after the Civil War. In 1870 Thompson's foundry, blacksmith and machine shop was making plows, corn shellers, cutters, and repair work valued at \$3,560 annually, the largest volume of all the manufacturers of agricultural equipment in the county.⁹

At Thompson's death in 1872, he left over 1,000 acres, including the "homeplace," foundry, and foundry machinery, to his widow Ellen and ten or more children. His wife received a life estate in the homeplace tract of 523 acres which was inherited at her death by her sons George and Robert F. Thompson. His oldest sons Charles M., Francis M., and Patrick H., inherited the foundry and machinery, and operated the iron works under the name J. H. Thompson Sons for some years.¹⁰ The 1880 Census shows that the business produced \$8,500 worth of cultivators, harrows, plows, cutters, and miscellaneous tools and fifty wagons and six buggies annually.¹¹ Soon after, the business moved to Lexington, gradually diversified into lumber, and continued under the name C. M. Thompson Sons well into the twentieth century.¹²

By 1908, "Tyro Tavern" was no longer owned by the Thompson family. George and Robert disposed of several large tracts of land in the 1880s and 1890s, which probably included the "Tyro Tavern," although the deed descriptions are too vague to pinpoint which of the tracts contained the homeplace.¹³ In 1908 Boone A. Wilson bought the homeplace and 200 acres from the Williams, Carr, and Lamb families for \$4,000, and in 1948 the present owners, the Davises, purchased the homeplace and five acres, and continue to reside there.¹⁴

Footnotes

¹Davidson County Deed Book 21, page 312 and page 345.

²Rowan County Deed Book 19, page 66; Rowan County Deed Book 24, page 295; Rowan County Deed Book 25, page 10; Rowan County Deed Bopk 26, page 525.

³Davidson County Miscellaneous Papers, "Thompson Vs. Fisher, Locke and others, Controversy over Bridge--1828," State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

⁴Davidson County Estate Records, Estate File of Sarah Thompson, 1841, State Archives.

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⁵United States Census, 1850, Davidson County, Industrial Schedule. Microfilm in State Archives.

⁶Western Carolinian, February 11, 1842. Microfilm copy in State Archives.

⁷Carolina Watchman, July 14, 1857. Microfilm copy in State Archives.

⁸United States Census, 1860, Davidson County, Population Schedule. Microfilm copy in State Archives.

⁹United States Census, 1870, Davidson County, Industrial Schedule. Microfilm copy in State Archives.

¹⁰Jewell M. Sink and Mary Green Matthews, Pathfinders Past and Present: A History of Davidson County, North Carolina (High Point, N.C.: Hall Printing Company, 1972), p. 300.

¹¹United States Census, 1880, Davidson County, Schedule of Manufacturers. Microfilm copy at State Archives.

¹²Sink and Matthews, p. 300.

¹³Davidson County Deed Book, page 122; 13, page 594; 35, page 460; 45, page 105.

¹⁴Davidson County Deed Book 63, page 74; Interview with Archie and Annie Lee Davis, January 25, 1983, Notes in File.

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Carolina Watchman, July 14, 1857. Microfilm copy, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

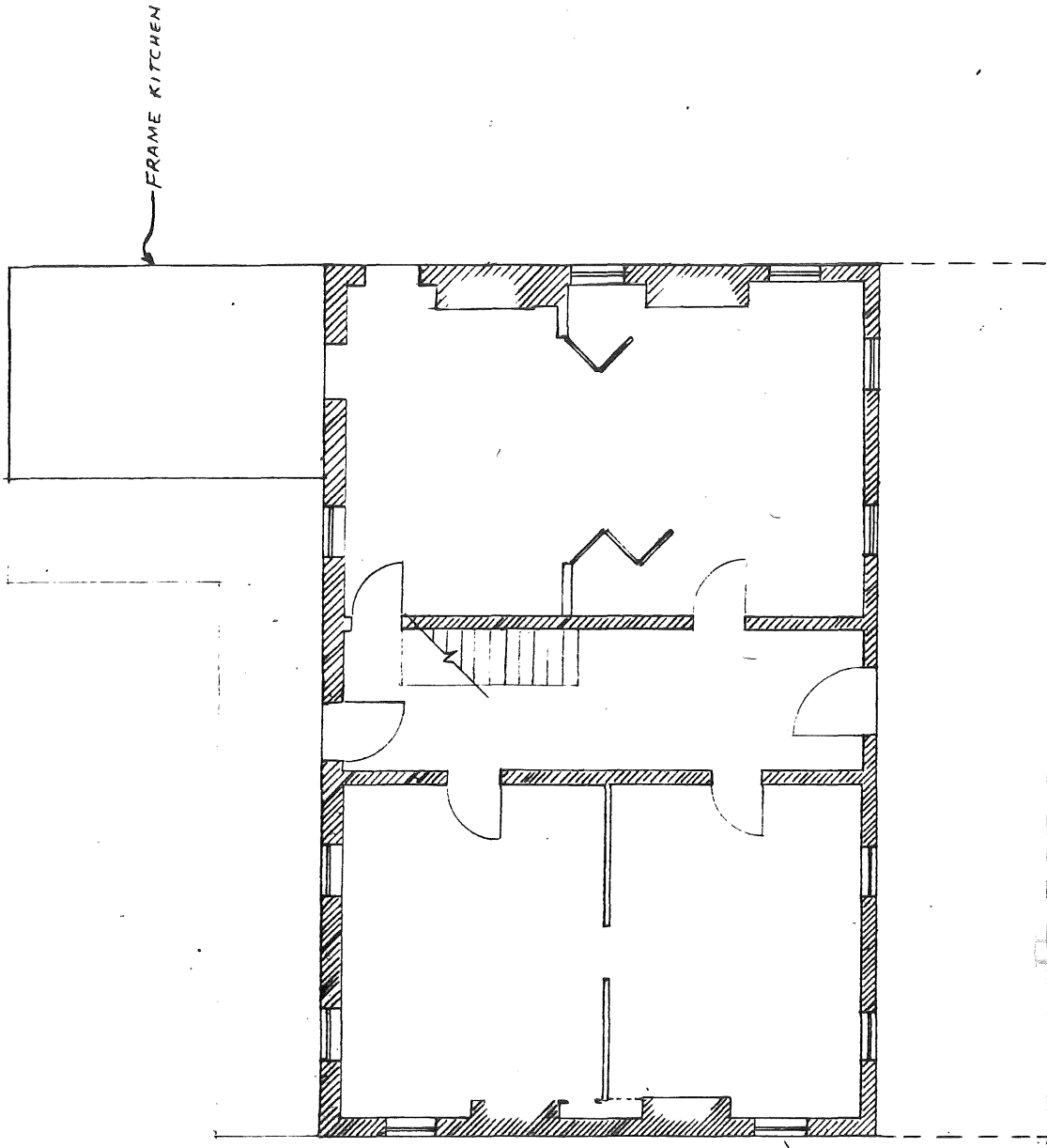
Davidson County Deed Books, Estate Records, and Miscellaneous Papers. Originals and microfilm copies, State Archives.

Davis, James Archie and Annie Lee, Interview with. January 25, 1983. Notes in file.

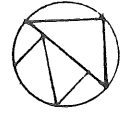
Rowan County Deed Books. Microfilm copy, State Archives.

Sink, Jewell M. and Matthews, Mary Green. Pathfinders Past and Present: A History of Davidson County, North Carolina. High Point, N.C.: Hall Printing Company, 1972.

United States Census Records. 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880. Davidson County. Population Schedules, Industrial Schedules. Microfilm copies, State Archives.



FRAME KITCHEN



THOMPSON HOUSE TYRO c. 1850
 DAVIDSON COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

SCALE 1/8" = 1'0" PBT

