

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR  THEMATIC NOMINATION

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

James A. Thomas Farm  
AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER South side SR 1941, .9 mi southwest  
of junction with SR 1700

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Pittsboro

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Fourth

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

037

COUNTY

Chatham

CODE

037

**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"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Alma Parrott

STREET & NUMBER

Rt. 4, Box 203

CITY, TOWN

Pittsboro, NC 27312

VICINITY OF

STATE

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Chatham County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Pittsboro

STATE

N. C.

**6 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Ray Manieri

July 1, 1983

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Urban Research Associates

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1301 Cornwallis Drive

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Greensboro, NC 27408

## 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		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The James Thomas Farm, consisting of a main house, built in several sections during the late nineteenth century, surrounded by several log, weatherboard, and board and batten outbuildings, presents an interesting example of the physical evolution of a small piedmont North Carolina farm.

The main house appears to consist of a one-story frame cabin, perhaps constructed during the late 1860s or early 1870s, to which a rear shed and a two-story, late nineteenth century wing have been added. The oldest section (section A on map) of the main house is characterized by such vernacular elements as a steeply pitched gable-end roof, which extends over the front porch, double-hung windows with six-over-six sash and plain surrounds, extended rafter ends, and a large exterior stone and brick chimney. The cabin's three-bay facade, now sheathed with flush-mounted boards, and its original porch, were altered during an 1890s remodeling. This remodeling moved the kitchen from its original location at the enclosed end of the front porch, to a newly constructed rear shed addition (section C on map). This alteration destroyed the original configuration of the front porch which was characterized by unusual tapered porch posts, two of which still remain. A light sawn ballustrade, some of which still survives, was also added during this 1890s alteration.

The vernacular quality of this section is continued on its interior. Although the walls have been covered in plaster, a large simple mantel with wide shelf, and rustic doors composed of vertical boards backed by horizontal bracing still survive.

Constructed, according to family tradition, during the early 1880s by members of a local Masonic Lodge, the two-story wing (section B on map) combines subtle Greek Revival influences with a more pronounced vernacular motif. Late nineteenth century vernacular elements such as double-hung windows with six-over-six sash and plain surrounds, large exterior stone and brick chimneys, and an appended shed roof porch with slender square posts and unusual sawn brackets, are accentuated by such Greek Revival characteristics as pilastered corner boards, a wide frieze, and a steeply pitched gable-end roof with extended eaves and scalloped cornice returns. Although the Greek Revival style had ceased to be the most popular building idiom for rural farm houses in Chatham County by the early 1880s, it was not unusual for craftsmen to combine subtle influences of this earlier style with later nineteenth century vernacular construction. This section's four bay facade, distinguished by a double entry which, although not rare in rural North Carolina, is an unusual surviving feature in Chatham County, is defined by a shed roof porch which repeats the interesting scalloped cornice returns of the roof gable.

The interior of this late nineteenth century section maintains much of its original finish. Greek Revival doors with long, narrow panels

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are contrasted by simple vernacular door and window surrounds, and interesting vernacular mantels survive in each first floor room. The northern most room contains a particularly exciting mantel featuring wedge-shaped pilasters and a molded diamond-shaped motif, perhaps the work of a specific Masonic craftsman. A simple open-string stairway, rising from rear to front provides access to the upper floor bedrooms which are sheathed in the original flush mounted boards accentuated with a heavy wooden shelf.

Several interesting log, weatherboard and board-and-batten outbuildings are located just behind and on each side of the main house. Included in these buildings are a log smokehouse with gable roof and square corner notching, a log and weatherboard shed featuring V-shaped notching and iron strap hinges, a large weatherboard and log barn constructed with V-shaped notching and iron hinges, and a weatherboard shed now altered for use as a garage. The most significant of these outbuildings is a two-room board-and-batten cabin built c. 1903 to house the growing Thomas family. A shed porch, enclosed at one end, is appended to this structure, which, although it is rapidly deteriorating, still features papered walls, a simple vernacular mantel and an unusual stone and brick chimney with corbelled shoulders.

**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		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" 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/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1870

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The James A. Thomas Farm composed of a main house built in several sections during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, and several outbuildings of log, weatherboard, and board-and-batten construction provides a picture of the physical evolution of a small piedmont North Carolina farm during the final years of the nineteenth century. The main house consists of a one-story cabin perhaps constructed in the late 1860s or early 1870s and a two-story wing built by local masons in the early 1880s which combines subtle Greek Revival influences with a more pronounced late nineteenth century vernacular motif.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. Associated with the decline of larger farms and the increased establishment of smaller farms in North Carolina during the last several decades of the nineteenth century.
- C. Embodies the form and characteristics of vernacular residential architecture that developed in central North Carolina during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

The Thomas Farm was established on the banks of the Haw River during the decade after the Civil War by small Chatham County farmer James Andrew Thomas. Following Thomas's death in the early twentieth century, the farm was occupied by his widow and later by his children and grandchildren.

James Andrew Thomas was born on Christmas Day 1843<sup>1</sup> and reached adulthood during the last years of the Civil War. Although he would have been old enough to serve in the Civil War, no evidence of his involvement in the conflict has yet been found. Thomas established himself as a small Chatham County farmer during the years following the Civil War. His first land purchase took place in 1869 and gave Thomas title to 100 acres of land<sup>2</sup> in the area which became New Hope Township when Chatham County was divided into townships in 1870. In the following year he married Sarah Elizabeth Moore,<sup>3</sup> who bore him sixteen children, eleven of whom reached adulthood. During the late 1860s or early 1870s Thomas built a home near an eastern Chatham County trading center known as Trade's Hill.<sup>5</sup>

Local deed and tax records reveal that Thomas was a small but successful Chatham County farmer. He purchased seventy additional acres along the Haw River in 1875<sup>6</sup> and by 1880 when the average farm in North Carolina contained 142 acres,<sup>7</sup> Thomas owned 170 acres valued at \$680 and possessed a total estate valued at \$866.<sup>8</sup>

According to family tradition, which is vague and unclear, the original Thomas house, which sheltered a family of five in 1880,<sup>9</sup> burned about 1882 and was rebuilt with the help of a local Masonic lodge, of which Thomas was a member.<sup>10</sup> It is most likely that only a portion of the house burned leaving the one-story cabin to which a two-story newly built wing was added.

Following the rebuilding of part of his home in 1882, Thomas continued to operate his small farmstead. Like most of his Chatham County neighbors during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Thomas grew cotton as a large cash crop and harvested corn, wheat and other grains in smaller quantities. During the decade 1880-1890, ..continued on additional sheet

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Cathey, C. O. Agricultural Development in North Carolina, 1783-1860. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956.

Chatham County Records (subgroups: Deeds, Tax Lists, Marriage Books, Wills, Estate Records), Chatham County Courthouse, Pittsboro, N. C. and North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, N. C. ...continued

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY app. 43 acres  
 UTM REFERENCES

A	1 1 7	6 7 3 4 6 0	3 9 5 3 0 3 0	B	1 7	6 7 4 1 6 0	3 9 5 3 0 8 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1 1 7	6 7 4 1 6 0	3 9 5 2 5 7 0	D	1 7	6 7 3 4 9 0	3 9 5 2 5 5 0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property consists of approximately forty-three acres on the eastern side of the Haw River in New Hope township bounded as shown on Chatham County Tax Map #9771-62-5067.

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as the size of the average North Carolina farm was decreasing from 142 acres to 101 acres,<sup>12</sup> the Thomas farm also decreased in size from 170 acres to 141 acres of land valued at \$700 in 1892.<sup>13</sup> Although he had sold a portion of his farm, Thomas purchased a one-quarter interest in Moore's Mill, located nearby on the Haw River. After maintaining the size of his 141 acre farm throughout the last decade of the nineteenth century,<sup>14</sup> Thomas made a number of land purchases during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup>

Thomas occupied the farm complex until his death in 1917 after which his widow and oldest son Newton occupied the farm. Thomas's widow remained on the complex until her death in 1930, when Thomas's younger son Benjamin established his residence there.<sup>16</sup> Ben Thomas raised his family on the farm which was transferred to his daughter in 1964,<sup>17</sup> who still resides there. During the creation of the B. Everett Jordan lake in the 1970s, the federal government purchased ninety-eight acres of the Thomas farm which was eventually covered by the lake. This reduced the current size of the Thomas farm, but had no effect on the location or condition of the farm's main house and surrounding outbuildings.

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NOTES

1. Mrs. Alma Parrott, interviewed March 31, 1983. She is the granddaughter of James A. Thomas, Thomas' birth year is confirmed by census records.
2. Chatham County Deeds, Book A0, p. 411.
3. Mrs. Alma Parrott and Chatham County Marriage Book 1869-1870.
4. Mrs. Alma Parrott, March 31, 1983.
5. Trade's Hill, which is remembered by local residents is shown on Ramsey's 1870 Map of Chatham County. Mrs. Parrot claims the original house later burned.
6. Chatham County Deeds, Book, BN, p. 483.
7. Hugh T. Lefler and Albert R. Newsome, The History of a Southern State, North Carolina, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973), p. 522.
8. Chatham County Tax List, 1880.
9. The Tenth Census of the United States, 1880. Population Schedule.
10. Mrs. Alma Parrott, March 31, 1983.
11. Ibid.
12. Lefler and Newsome, The History of a Southern State, North Carolina, p. 522.
13. Chatham County Tax List, 1892.
14. Chatham County Tax List, 1898.
15. Chatham County Deeds, Book DP, p. 111; Book DT, p. 20, Book DY, p. 54; Book EW, p. 61, Book EX, p. 581; Book FB, p. 438.
16. Mrs. Alma Parrott, March 31, 1983.
17. Chatham County Deeds, Book 302, p. 84.
18. Chatham County Tax Cards.

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1973.

Manarin, L. H. and W. T. Jordan, comps. North Carolina Troops 1861-1865:  
A Roster, vol 1-8. Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives  
and History, 1966-1981.

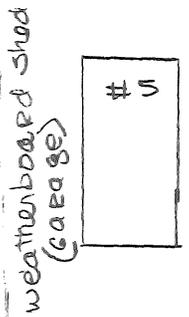
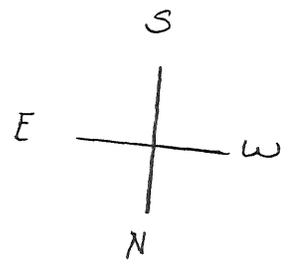
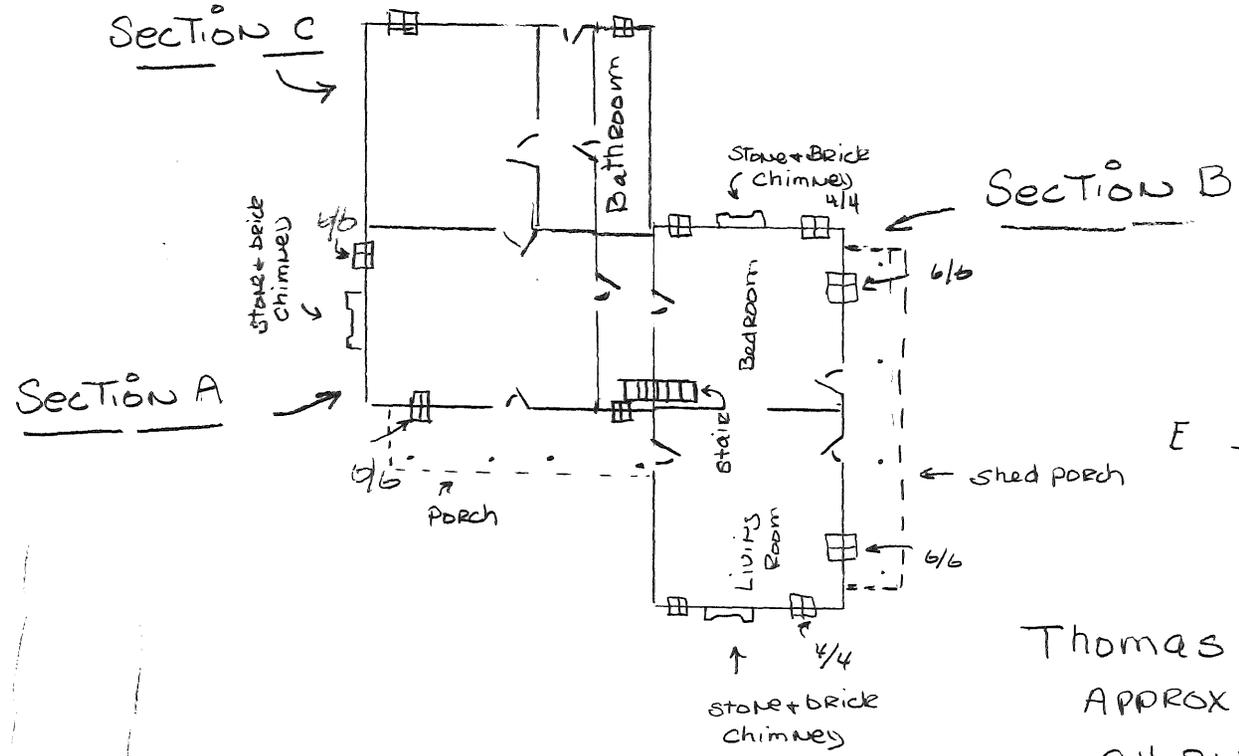
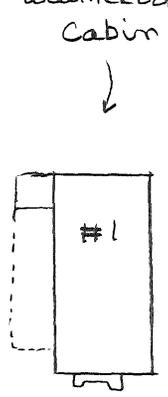
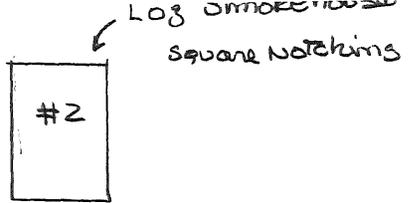
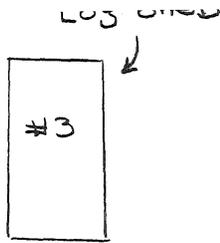
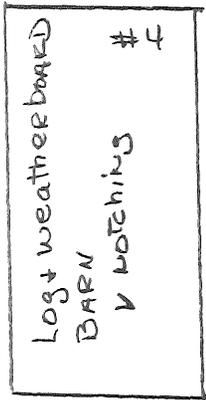
Moore's Roster. North Carolina State Archives.

Ninth Census of the United States, 1870. Population and Agricultural  
Schedules.

Parrott, Mrs. Alma. Interviewed March 31, 1983.

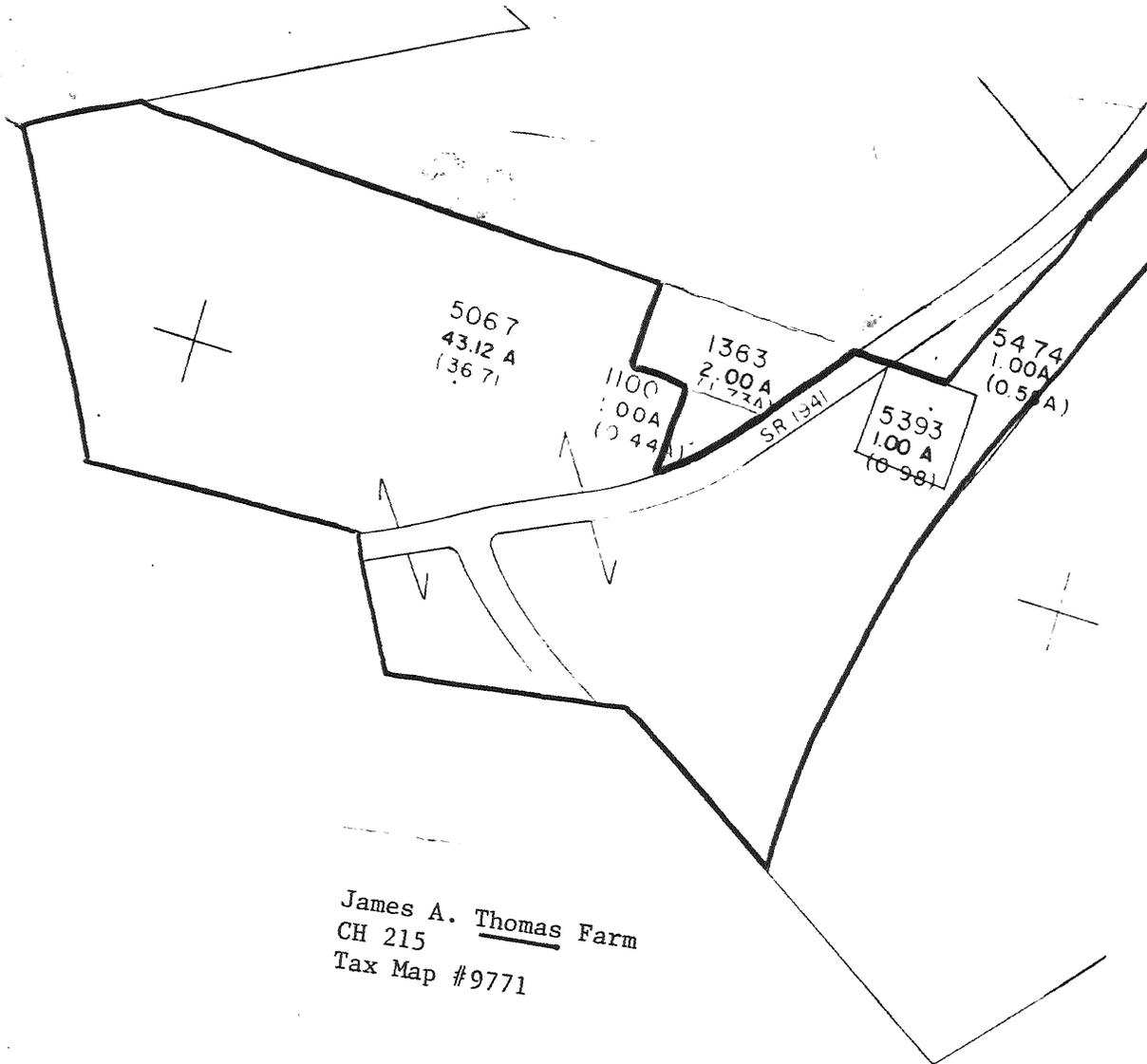
Ramsey, N. A. 1870 Map of Chatham County.

Tenth Census of the United States, 1880. Population and Agricultural  
Schedules.



Thomas Farm Complex  
APPROX: scale 1" = 25'  
CH 215

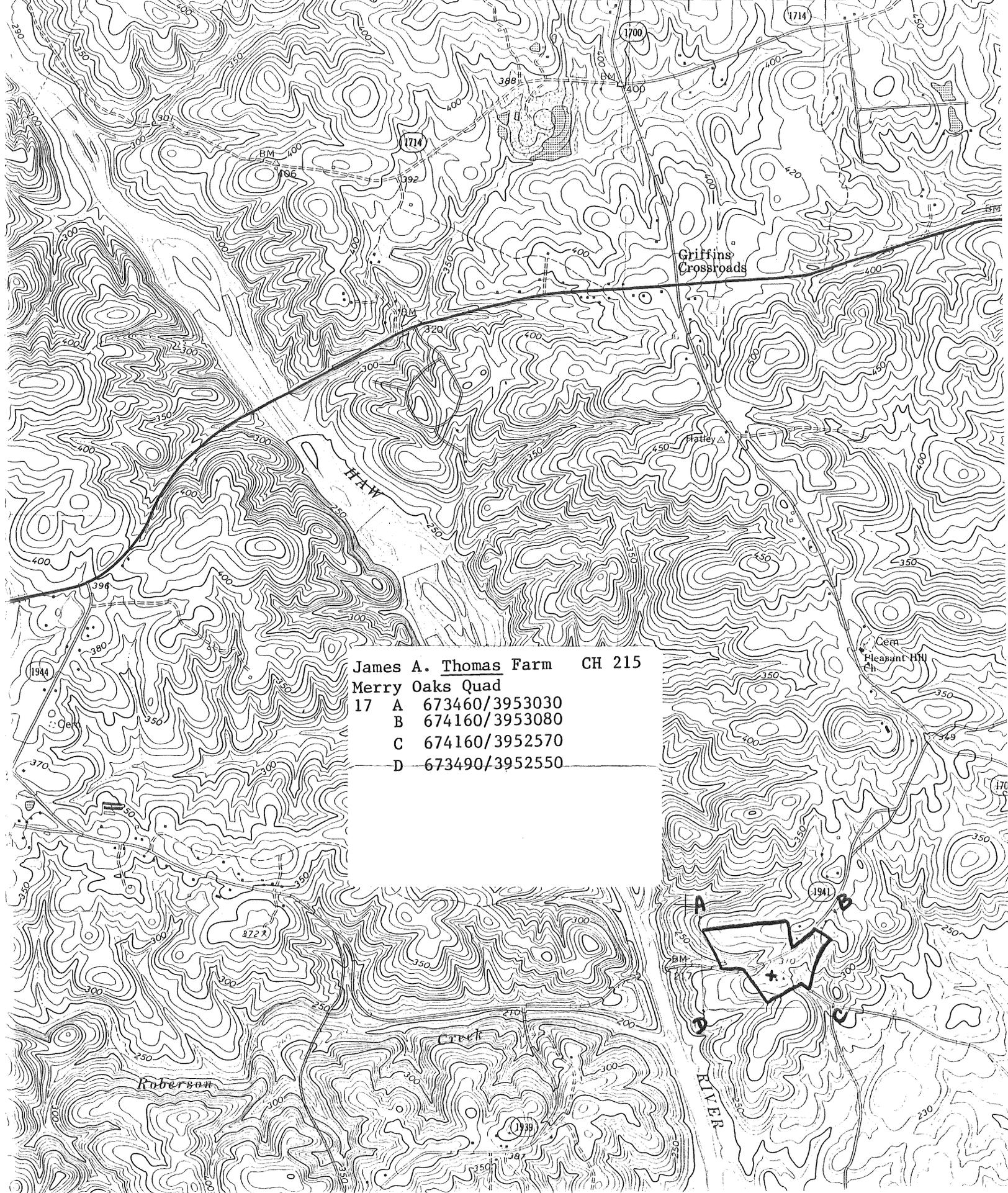
SR 1941



James A. Thomas Farm  
CH 215  
Tax Map #9771



670000m E. 671 672 673 5' 674



James A. Thomas Farm CH 215

Merry Oaks Quad

- 17 A 673460/3953030
- B 674160/3953080
- C 674160/3952570
- D 673490/3952550



