Amis-Bragg House
Northampton County, North Carolina

1. Name of Property

historic name Amis-Bragg House
other names/site number Bragg, Thomas, House

2. Location

street & number 203 Thomas Bragg Drive
not for publication N/A
city or town Jackson
city or town vicinity N/A
state North Carolina code NC
county Northampton code 131
zip code 27845

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ 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 ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide ___ locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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:

- entered in the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): ____________

Signature of Keeper ___________________________ Date of Action _______________

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

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<th>Contributing</th>
<th>Noncontributing</th>
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Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A
Name of related multiple property listing N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: single dwelling

Present Functions

Cat: Domestic Sub: single dwelling
7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
Mid-19th Century: Greek Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation: Brick
- roof: Asphalt Shingles
- walls: Wood: weatherboard

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

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.

X 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

Period of Significance ca. 1840
Significant Dates ca. 1840
Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A
Cultural Affiliation N/A
Architect/Builder Bragg, Thomas Sr., builder-architect

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
9. Major Bibliographical References

(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

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. 0.75 acre

UTM References

Zone: 18 Easting: 282890 Northing: 4029890

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Nancy Van Dolsen
date April 14, 2003

city or town Wilson state NC

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Mr. and Mrs. J. William Gossip
city or town Jackson state NC zip code 27845
Narrative Description

The Amis-Bragg House stands facing east toward Thomas Bragg Drive, one block north of Main Street in the town of Jackson, the county seat of Northampton County, North Carolina. Calhoun Street to the south, Thomas Bragg Drive to the east and north, and two post-1920 houses to the west border the house. The flat lot features a row of mature crepe myrtles along Thomas Bragg Drive, a large magnolia southeast of the house, and oak trees to the west. The house stood on a 1.5-acre lot until 1920 when the property was subdivided, and the current lot roughly measuring 205 feet on each side was created. The mid-nineteenth-century Greek Revival style house sits at the center of the lot, with a small ca. 1930 outbuilding to the north, and a small post 1950 outbuilding to the southwest.

House, ca. 1840, contributing

Traditionally known as the work of builder-architect Thomas Bragg Sr., the Amis-Bragg House is an outstanding example of the Greek Revival style used for a residence of a wealthy town dweller. The two-story, single-pile frame house with a two-story ell and one-story kitchen wing retains integrity. The five-bay house has a central passage plan, hip roof, interior end chimneys, and stands on a continuous brick foundation. A one-story shed-roof portico with paired paneled Doric-style paneled square columns covers the façade entrance and was added sometime before 1976. The area beneath the portico has vertical panels, and the door is flanked by pilasters and scrolled consoles. The door is topped with a multi-light transom.

Sheathed with weatherboard, the house features fluted corner pilasters with molded caps and slightly molded bases topped by a full entablature consisting of a stepped, three-part architrave, plain frieze, and molded cornice. Corner blocks with rosettes adorn the molded window surrounds. The original double-hung sash windows were replaced with four-over-four double-hung sash during the early twentieth century.

According to local tradition, one-story wings on the north and south elevations once flanked the main block of the building and burned during the late nineteenth century. A photograph dating to 1980 shows a one-story, false-front wing on the north elevation that appears to date to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. A one-story, shed-roof, glazed porch with neo-classical details and a central entrance covers the south elevation and was built sometime between ca.

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2 The wing appears on a 1920 plat of the property. Map Book 1:98, Northampton County Court House, Jackson, North Carolina.
1910 and ca.1930. When the porch was constructed, the windows on the first-floor south elevation were made smaller and fixed four-light sash inserted.

The one-story gable-roof kitchen retains its six-over-six sash windows. A one-story shed-roof addition with engaged porch fills the recess created when the kitchen was joined to the corner of the ell; a portion of the porch is now a pantry. A one-story late-nineteenth century porch with turned posts supporting the shallow hip roof runs across the rear (west elevation) of the ell and across the south elevation of the kitchen.

The Amis-Bragg House has an unusual plan that incorporates two formal staircases, one in the central passage that divides the two parlors in the main block and one in a passage in the ell; the two formal entrances (on the south and east elevations) opened into these passages with stairs. Both stairs feature square balusters; the stair in the central passage has a turned, urn-shaped newel, while the stair in the ell has a square newel. The carved handrails are sinuous and have sweeping curves.

Original eight-panel doors open into the rooms on the first-floor of the house. All window and door surrounds on the first-floor main block and ell are adorned with rosette corner blocks; paneled aprons decorate the space below the windows. Door and window surrounds in the kitchen are plain boards. All rooms retain their original wood floors and plaster walls and ceilings. The fireplaces in the parlors were altered sometime in the 1920s or 1930s. A large unpainted brick fireplace with a raised hearth is located in the north parlor and a small, painted brick fireplace now stands in the south parlor. The dining room retains its original mantel with pilasters and pulvinated frieze.

When the kitchen was moved up to the house, a passage was built between the main block and kitchen, along the north wall of the ell. A bath was made in the east end of this passage during the second quarter of the twentieth century.

The second-floor plan of the house comprises two parlor chambers, a room at the east end of the central passage, the dining-room chamber, and a small room (now a bath) carved from the passage in the ell. The fireplace in the north parlor chamber has been plastered over but the fireplace mantel remains (with the mantel shelf enlarged) in the south parlor chamber. It is a simple Greek Revival mantel with fluted pilasters. The mantel in the dining room chamber is intact and has plain pilasters and a wide frieze. Door and window surrounds on the second-floor feature square corner blocks, and the doors are two panel.

**Outbuilding, ca. 1930, non-contributing**

A one-story, light timber frame, gable-roof building stands on a low rubble foundation north of the house. Sheathed with weatherboards and covered with asphalt shingles, the building has
plain wood corner boards. An entry is centered on the west elevation, and a wider opening was added to the south elevation. A window with six-over-six sash is located on the north elevation.

Outbuilding, post 1950, non-contributing

A one-story, light timber frame, square pyramidal roof building covered with synthetic siding stands to the southwest of the house. The building has a wood shingle roof, and a metal door on the east elevation. A one-story shed-roof portico with paired paneled Doric-style square columns covers the façade entrance.
The Amis-Bragg House in Jackson, Northampton County, North Carolina is an excellent example of the Greek Revival style adapted for a town lot and has added significance as the work of the well-known builder-architect, Thomas Bragg. Bragg substantially rebuilt or constructed the house ca. 1840 for Junius Amis, a member of the local elite and State Representative in 1838 and 1839. In 1843 Bragg's son, Thomas Bragg Jr., later North Carolina governor and member of the United States Senate, purchased the house and lived here until 1855. An early fully-developed example of the Greek Revival style, the Amis-Bragg House retains its Greek Revival exterior details, interior moldings, doors, and finishes, and floor plan. Most notably, the house features two formal staircases, possibly to accommodate both the family of Thomas Bragg Jr. and his father, Thomas Bragg Sr. who all lived there ca. 1850. The property is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for architecture.

Historical Background

Thomas Bragg was born in 1778 in Craven County, near New Bern, to a family of sailors and navigators. After learning his trade as a carpenter, he moved to Raleigh and by 1802 had settled in Warrenton, Warren County. In 1803 he married Margaret Crossland; together they raised six sons. According to architectural historian Catherine Bishir:

> Thomas Bragg was an artisan who worked hard and took risks to attain the status of master builder. . . . Often relying on credit, he began to invest in land and slaves . . . . Like many artisans, Bragg employed both black and white workmen. His shop built a number of elaborately finished houses and most of the local public buildings, and his growing reputation brought him jobs from as far away as Raleigh and Jackson, North Carolina. When a building committee called him in for consultation, they referred to him as “Major” Bragg, an “eminent architect and undertaker.” The reference to carpenter Bragg as “architect” was not unusual; it was commonly applied to master builders.1

Bragg worked in Jackson and Warrenton throughout his career. In 1825 he placed an advertisement in the Warrenton Reporter for journeymen who were “steady, sober men who are good carpenters.”2 In 1827, Bragg advertised that he had window sash, Venetian blinds, panel doors, and other kinds of woodwork at his shop for sale to clients, firms, and other craftsmen.3

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By 1841, Bragg was in Jackson, completing work on the county’s Clerks and Registers Office, re-laying the zinc and making “it tight so there would be no leakage.”4 His son, Thomas Bragg Jr., co-signed the bond insuring Bragg Sr.’s work. Thomas Bragg Jr., born in 1810 in Warrenton, was living in Jackson practicing as a lawyer. He had been admitted to the North Carolina bar in 1832, and entered politics as a Democrat. In 1840 he lived in Jackson with his young wife, Isabelle Cuthbert, their one son, four slaves, and one free black man.

Thomas Bragg Sr. fathered six sons, three of whom became very successful and prominent: Thomas Bragg Jr. (1810-1872), who went on to become the United States Senator from North Carolina, the Attorney General of the Confederate Army, and the Governor of North Carolina; Braxton Bragg (1817-1876), an officer in the United States Army and General in the Confederate Army, and John Bragg (1806-1878), a distinguished judge in Alabama and United States Congressman, 1841 to 1853.5

In 1842, Bragg Jr. was elected to a single term in the North Carolina House of Representatives for Northampton County. In 1843, he purchased two lots in Jackson for $1800; the first lot included a residence, and the second was used as a stable lot. The subject structure stands on the first lot.6 Local history has traditionally dated the Thomas Bragg House to ca. 1835 when the lot was owned by John White and has stated that Thomas Bragg Sr. constructed the house.7 White sold the lot with a residence for $750 to Junius Amis in 1840.8 The more-than-doubled value of the house between the sale in 1840 and Bragg Jr.’s purchase in 1843 indicates that the house was either built between 1840 and 1843 or substantially altered at that time. Since it is known that Thomas Bragg Sr. was working in Jackson in 1841 and the house has finishes and features common to other houses known to have been built by Bragg, it would certainly seem likely that Bragg did build the house for Junius Amis between 1840 and 1843.

Junius Amis was the grandson of William Amis, the owner of Mowfields (NR, 1975), a plantation three miles west of Jackson. Between 1781 and 1802 William Amis had purchased over 8,000 acres in Northampton County. The plantation house, a large residence with a high hip roof incorporating a full two-story porch across the façade, has a combination of Georgian and vernacular Federal finishes and was constructed during the first decade of the nineteenth century. In 1816 William Amis purchased Sir Archie, one of the greatest thoroughbred sires of the nineteenth century and the sire of all American thoroughbreds. Sir Archie died in 1833 and

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4 Cockshutt, Catherine W. and John B. Flowers III. National Register of Historic Places Historic District Nomination for the Northampton County Courthouse Square, Jackson, North Carolina, nd.
5 Introduction to the Thomas Bragg Diary, Microfilm. East Carolina University, Greenville, N.C.
6 Northampton County Deed Book 30:408. Deed from Junius Amis to Thomas Bragg, Jr.
7 Footprints in Northampton: 60-61.
8 Northampton County Deed Book 29:154. Deed from John White to Junius Amis.
is probably buried at Mowfields. William Amis died in 1824, and bequeathed Sir Archie to his son, John Dillard Amis, and his land holdings to John's sons.  

John Dillard Amis, an avid gambler and a successful businessman, lived at White House, a plantation a mile west of Mowfields. He married Elizabeth Bynum, and they had four children, Mary, William, Junius, and Thomas. 

Junius Amis received Mowfields at the death of his grandfather in 1824. Junius was known “as the most troublesome of the three sons, who were wild and turbulent boys with hot and quick tempers. He was willful, fond of fine clothes, extravagant, and where he went, trouble followed.” He frequently ran up debts, much to his father’s consternation. The hot tempers of Junius and his brother William were so well known, that a saying developed locally: “A drop of Amis blood would poison the Atlantic ocean.”

William Amis ran for a seat in the North Carolina Senate in 1834. During the election, he tried to club to death a supporter of his opponent. Public outrage at the beating and to William’s other exploits, caused his father to resettle in Mississippi, followed by his brother Thomas and his family, and then William himself. 

Junius Amis stayed in Northampton County, successfully running for State Representative and holding the seat in 1838-1839. Amis sold off all of his rural properties in 1840, the same year he purchased the lot in Jackson. It seems quite likely that as an extravagant man, fond of fine living, Amis would have the best-known architect-builder in the region build his house in town for him in the very latest fashion. When Amis sold his house to Thomas Bragg Jr. in 1843, the deed noted that the lots "are now occupied as a residence by the said Amis." Junius Adams followed the rest of his family to Mississippi, where he died shortly after the Civil War.

During the years 1843 and 1844, Bragg Sr. worked in Warren County on the Dr. Charles and Susan Skinner House and Little Manor. During the 1840s, Bragg Jr. became a Democratic party leader, serving as a delegate to the Democratic conventions of 1844, 1848, and 1852.

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9 Survey and Planning Unit, National Register Nomination for Mowfields, Northampton County, North Carolina, 1974.
10 National Register Nomination for Mowfields.
11 National Register Nomination for Mowfields.
12 National Register Nomination for Mowfields.
13 National Register Nomination for Mowfields.
14 Footprints, 28.
15 Deed Book 29:154.
16 National Register Nomination for Mowfields.
17 Little-Mordecai Records, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina. Correspondence between George Little and Charles Skinner, November 10, 1843, November 7, 1843 and between George Little and William Little, January 23, 1845. The first two letters discuss Bragg’s work at Linden Hall and Little Manor, and in the last
By 1850, Bragg Sr. resided with Bragg Jr. and his family in the Amis-Bragg House. The household including Thomas Jr., his wife Isabella, and their four children; Thomas Bragg Sr. (occupation listed as a House Carpenter); a white woman named Sarah Rattican, age 17; and a free mulatto man named Richard Pope, age 25. Thomas Bragg Jr. also owned ten slaves, four black men between the ages of 26 and 43 (one who was listed as insane), one black woman age 42, and five black children between the ages of one and fourteen. Thomas Bragg Sr. owned six black men, between the age of eighteen and sixty, two black adolescent males age fourteen, one black woman age 28, and two black children, age one and four; most likely the men and older boys worked in Bragg’s carpentry shop and business. It is not known if any of the slaves lived in the house or in any buildings that may have stood on the lot; it is not unlikely that a number resided on another property that Thomas Bragg Jr. had “two miles from Jackson.”

Thomas Bragg Jr. and his family lived in the Amis-Bragg House until 1855, when Bragg moved to Raleigh after being elected governor of North Carolina the previous year. Bragg served two terms as governor, a booster of internal improvements, wider franchise, and an improved banking system. Bragg sold the house and the tract outside of town for $4,357 and moved his family to Raleigh.

During the twentieth century, the house was owned by the Taylor and Grant families, and was purchased by the present owner during the 1990s.

Architecture Context

The Amis-Bragg House is an outstanding example of the Greek Revival style used for a residence of a wealthy town dweller. The Greek Revival style first appeared in North Carolina domestic architecture in the construction of large plantation houses such as Creekside (1837), Burke County and Lands End (1830s), Perquimans County. During the 1840s, builders throughout the plantation regions and in small towns began constructing blocky, symmetrical houses with classical porches that exhibited the proportions and design elements of the Greek Revival style, including flat, linear moldings, classical columns, and massive, squat houses with...

letter George Little asks William Little to defend “old Mr. Bragg” in a court case since Bragg Jr. cannot. Unfortunately no details are given regarding the case or why Bragg Jr. cannot defend his father.

20 Northampton County Deed Book, 36:1. Deed from Thomas Bragg to John B. Bynum; this deed sold the subject property and the tract “two miles from Jackson.”
low broad hip roofs. Although examples of the style were built in the 1840s, Greek Revival-style buildings would not become common until the 1850s.\(^{23}\)

With only minor changes, the Amis-Bragg House retains its Greek Revival-era appearance, including its exterior weatherboarding and trim, especially its corner pilasters, full entablature, and window surrounds with rosette corner blocks. The interior moldings, proportions, and remaining original mantels all are simple, but exemplify the style. The more finely finished corner rosettes on the door and window surrounds and paneled window aprons of the first floor as compared with the square plain corner blocks on the second floor reveal the hierarchy of finishes found during the period, with the more finely finished trim being found in the public rooms.

The most unusual aspect of the house is its unusual floor plan featuring two formal staircases. It is possible that this was a later remodeling dating to the Thomas Bragg Jr. and Sr. occupation; the staircase in the dining ell may have been added to accommodate Bragg Sr. who may have occupied the ell, having his own entrance and his own access to the second floor. Thomas Bragg Jr. and his family may then have occupied the main block, with both families sharing the dining room and kitchen.

The Dr. Charles and Susan Skinner House, also built by Thomas Bragg Sr. during the early 1840s, is a plantation house in Warren County featuring details and finishes similar to those found in the Amis-Bragg House, including fluted corner pilasters with molded caps, one-story classical portico, low hip roof, corner rosettes above the windows and doors on the first floor, staircase with straight balusters, and paneled window aprons.\(^{24}\) The scale of the Skinner House, however, is much larger than that of the Amis-Bragg House, as befits the seat of one of the largest plantations in one of the wealthiest regions of North Carolina in the 1840s.

In the town of Jackson, two houses dating to the 1840s and 1850s remain that were not substantially remodeled during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a house at 105 East Calhoun Street and a house at 505 North Church Street.\(^{25}\) The house on Calhoun Street, a two story, single-pile building with exterior chimneys and an entry featuring sidelights and a transom, appears to date to ca. 1850. The building has been resided, the windows and portico replaced; it seems to have been a less formal, more vernacular residence than the Amis-Bragg House. The residence on North Church Street also appears to date to ca. 1850 and is a large, double-pile dwelling with two interior chimneys, a gable roof, and a two-story gable-front portico gracing the façade. The house retains its six-over-six sash windows and has excellent integrity. Unlike the Amis-Bragg House, which has the low broad hip roof most commonly


\(^{24}\) Nancy Van Dolsen, National Register Nomination for the Charles and Susan Skinner House and Outbuildings, Warren County, North Carolina, 1999.
found on Greek Revival houses in northeastern and central North Carolina, the North Church Street house has a side-gable roof which give the residence a very different appearance and feeling.

The Amis-Bragg House remains an excellent example of the Greek Revival style adapted for a town lot and has added significance as the work of the well-known builder-architect, Thomas Bragg. When constructed, the house was an early and fully developed example of the Greek Revival style, the height of architectural fashion in the early 1840s.
Bibliography


Cockshutt, Catherine W. and John B. Flowers, III. National Register of Historic Places Historic District Nomination for the Northampton County Courthouse Square, Jackson, North Carolina, nd.


Northampton County Deed Books, Northampton County Court House, Jackson, North Carolina.

Northampton County, Division of Land Records, Northampton County Court House, Jackson, North Carolina.

Northampton County, Will Books, Northampton County Court House, Jackson, North Carolina.


Verbal Boundary Description

The Amis-Bragg House property is located at the northwest corner of Calhoun Street and Thomas Bragg Drive in Jackson, North Carolina. The house lot measures 204 feet by 206 feet. When the larger one and one half acre house lot was subdivided in 1920, this square-shaped lot was set aside for the historic house and outbuildings.

Boundary Justification

The historic boundary includes the house and its associated outbuildings. The lot was created in 1920 from the original 1.5-acre parcel. The lots carved from the original parcel have post-1920s houses built upon them, and therefore are not included within the historic boundary.
First Floor Plan
Amis-Bragg House
Jackson, Northampton County, N.C.
Second Floor Plan
Amis-Bragg House
Jackson, Northampton County, N.C.
Subdivision of Property, 1920; Amis-Bragg House, Northampton County, N.C. (Map Book 1:98; Northampton County Court House, Jackson, North Carolina)