

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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| LISTED ON: | |
| VLR | 09/20/2012 |
| NRHP | 11/28/2012 |

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Dr. Richard Thornton House
other names/site number Old Marshall Farm, VDHR # 041-5343

2. Location

street & number Golden Leaf Road (State Route 649) & Tobacco Road (State Route 647) not for publication
city or town Nathalie vicinity
state Virginia code VA county Halifax code 083 zip code 24577

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official

Title

10/27/12
Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Title

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the 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

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 2 | 3 | buildings |
| 2 | 0 | sites |
| 0 | 0 | structures |
| 0 | 0 | objects |
| 4 | 3 | 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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- DOMESTIC / single dwelling = house
- DOMESTIC / secondary structure = kitchen
- DOMESTIC / secondary structure = storage shed
- AGRICULTURE / processing = tobacco barn
- FUNERARY / cemetery

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- DOMESTIC / single dwelling = house
- DOMESTIC / secondary structure = storage shed
- FUNERARY / cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: BRICK, STONE
walls: WOOD: weatherboard
roof: METAL: tin panels
other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

MEDICINE

Period of Significance

1818 - 1860

Significant Dates

1818, 1833, 1860

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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

Virginia Department of Historic Resources,
Richmond, VA

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____ VDHR# 041-5343

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 30
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | <u>17S</u> Zone | <u>0675107</u> Easting | <u>4094222</u> Northing | 3 | <u>17S</u> Zone | <u>0674792</u> Easting | <u>4093840</u> Northing |
| 2 | <u>17S</u> Zone | <u>0675122</u> Easting | <u>4093840</u> Northing | 4 | <u>17S</u> Zone | <u>0674766</u> Easting | <u>4094092</u> Northing |

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)
SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)
SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

11. Form Prepared By

name/title W. Scott Breckinridge Smith, Principal
organization HistoryTech, LLC date 15 March 2012
street & number Post Office Box 75 telephone 434-401-3995
city or town Lynchburg state VA zip code 24505
e-mail scott@historytech.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.
SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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

name Stewart Smith, representative of Buffalo Creek Land Company, LLC
street & number Green Hill, 378 Pannills Road telephone 804-382-1884
city or town Gladys state VA zip code 24554

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Dr. Richard Thornton House (041-5343)

Halifax County, Virginia

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Summary Narrative Description

The thirty-acre property lies between the communities of Stovall and Republican Grove in Halifax County at the intersection of State Routes 647 and 649. The tract's northern boundary is formed by Cow Creek (a tributary of Childrey Creek), and it is bounded on the east and south by Tobacco Road (State Route 647) and Golden Leaf Road (State Route 649), respectively.

While the northern portion of the tract is occupied by the floodplain of Cow Creek, the southern three-quarters of the property is part of a low ridge (545 feet above sea level) that separates Cow Creek (to the north) and Childrey Creek (to the south). The majority of the property is forested, with planted pine trees on the ridge and mixed hardwoods in the Cow Creek valley. The extant resources on the tract are surrounded by dense trees and underbrush; some are remnants of the historic home's domestic and specimen landscaping, while most are the resumption of forest succession following the abandonment of the house. The dwelling faces Tobacco Road, which is approximately 200 feet to the east, and the Thornton Family cemetery lies approximately 250 feet northeast of the house. Several outbuildings remain on the property, and all are within a 450-foot radius of the house.

Narrative Description

Inventory of Resources

The following is a list of resources located within the boundaries of the property. All resources have been evaluated as either contributing or non-contributing based upon the areas of significance identified under Criterion C for Architecture and Criterion A for Medicine with the period of significance spanning 1818 to 1860. All non-contributing resources have been so noted for having been constructed outside of the period of significance.

| Name/Description of Resource | Date of Construction | C/NC Status |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dr. Richard Thornton House | bet. 1818-1833 | Contributing Building |
| Tobacco Barn No. 1 | ca. 1850 | Contributing Building |
| Tobacco Barn No. 2 | ca. 1900 | Non-Contributing Building |
| Shed No. 1 | ca. 1890 | Non-Contributing Building |
| Shed No. 2 | ca. 1900 | Non-Contributing Building |
| Kitchen Site | bet. 1818-1833 | Contributing Site |
| Thornton Family Cemetery | ca. 1846 | Contributing Site |

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Dr. Richard Thornton House

The Richard Thornton House is a two-and-a-half story, single pile, frame, Federal style dwelling, and its overall form and massing is typical of Piedmont Virginia houses of the early 19th century. The side-gable roof is covered in standing seam metal and is trimmed by a box cornice with scalloping and other decorative millwork. The house is flanked by a pair of brick (five-course common bond), single-shouldered, exterior end chimneys with corbeled tops and reverse-corbeled bases. Clad in beaded weatherboard, the house presents an asymmetrical four-bay façade that is fenestrated by nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows on the first level and nine-over-six double-hung sash windows on the second level (some sashes are missing). Many windows retain their original louvered shutters and wrought iron shutter hooks. The building, which measures twenty feet deep and forty-four feet long, rests on a crawl space which is vented by wooden openings with square vertical wooden bars centered under each bay. Each outer end of the foundation consists of brick, but an off-centered section (between the second bay from the left and the fourth bay from the left) is mortared fieldstone.

The dwelling's east elevation serves as its façade, and is organized in an asymmetrical four-bay configuration. The entry door is in the center of the façade, and two additional bays occupy the space to the left (south) of the central door. The space to the right (north) of the door is occupied by a single bay, which is not centered, nor does it mimic the location of either of the bays to the right of the door. The single-leaf entry consists of a typical six-panel door (obscured by a plywood panel on the exterior) flanked by narrow fluted pilasters. Above the door was a glazed fanlight (pane currently missing) surrounded by an arch trimmed with a saw tooth motif. The interior cheeks of this arch are reeded. Currently, the front door is accessed via a makeshift stoop of stacked concrete masonry units. The appearance of the original porch is unknown; ghost marks suggest that it may have been a gable-roofed portico approximately ten feet in width.

The south gable end is fenestrated only by a pair of unglazed windows in the garret level which are secured by loosely-constructed board-and-batten shutters. The garret windows in the north gable end are treated in a similar fashion. A single-leaf entry consisting of a six-panel door (currently obscured by a sheet of plywood) appears to be original and is located to the right of the chimney on the first level of the north gable end. The rear (west) elevation of the house is configured in a reverse version of the façade, although the central doorway that provides access to the interior's central hall does not have a reeded surround and lacks a fanlight. The southern bay (to the left of the central door) consists of a first floor window that was later converted to a doorway. Ghost marks show this doorway once led to a small, one-story, gable-roofed addition that was attached to this section of the house.

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The configuration of the first floor interior is similar to most single-pile center-hall dwellings of the period. The front and rear entry doors open into this hallway, which measures nine-and-a-half feet wide and runs the full depth of the house. The hall is trimmed with simple paneled wainscoting, and a dog-leg staircase (trimmed with the same paneled wainscoting) runs from the rear (west end) of the hall upwards to the front of the house's second floor. A small storage closet is located under the staircase. The central hall provides access to the two chambers on the first floor. The southern (left-hand) room measures approximately seventeen by nineteen feet, and is trimmed by paneled wainscoting with a reeded chair rail. A fireplace is located in the southern end of the room, but the mantel is missing. The northern (right-hand) room measures approximately fifteen by nineteen feet and contains two exterior doorways; one, which appears to be original, is in the northern gable end wall (to the left of the fireplace), and the other occupies the location of the original northern window in the room. The chamber is trimmed with paneled wainscoting (without reeding), and a fireplace is located in the northern wall. The mantel is simple in design, featuring a horizontal panel between a pair of tall, thin Tuscan pilasters. A steep dog-leg staircase rises from the southeast corner of the room, and is enclosed by a six-panel door along with plastered walls. A small storage closet is located under the staircase. Ceilings on the first floor are ten feet in height. Door surrounds in the central hall and southern parlor consist of architrave moulding with a Greek ovolo profile and smooth blocks on the upper corners, while the door surrounds in the northern chamber are made of architrave moulding without corner blocks.

While the first floor's configuration is typical of houses of the period and region, the same cannot be said for the second and third levels, which are each divided into a pair of separate and distinct sections, one which includes the central hall and the space to the south, and the other which includes only the areas on the north side of the central hall.

The main staircase in the first floor central hall leads upwards to a slightly narrower (seven-and-a-half feet) hallway on the second floor. This hallway contains window openings on its east (front) and west (rear) elevations, and leads to a narrow hall that runs southward to several chambers. A dog-leg staircase (enclosed with plaster and beaded diagonal board paneling, but with no doorway) leads to the garret from the hall's northwestern corner. The narrow hallway that runs southward provides access to two small unheated chambers that each measure just over seven feet square (one is on the east side of the hallway and the other is on the west). Each of these chambers is trimmed with a mopboard and chair rail, and is enclosed by a six-panel door with decorative painting. The hallway ends at a larger chamber, which measures eleven feet by nineteen feet, and occupies the southern end of the house. This chamber has a fireplace in its southern wall (the mantel is missing), and is trimmed by paneled wainscoting around the perimeter. A six-panel door with decorative painting provides privacy from the hallway. Ceilings on the second floor are eight feet in height.

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The dog-leg staircase in the second floor central hall leads upwards to a single large room in the south end of the garret. A six-panel door at the top of the staircase secures this room. This unheated garret room is trimmed by chair rail around its entire perimeter (even on the knee walls) and measures approximately twenty-seven-and-a-half feet by thirteen-and-a-half feet. The chamber is illuminated by a pair of unglazed window openings in the southern gable end wall.

The southerly sections of the second and third (garret) levels described above are a distinct unit of the house, and can only be accessed via the main staircase in the first floor stair hall. The northern sections of the second and third (garret) levels that are described following this paragraph form a second distinct and separate unit of the house that can only be accessed via the smaller enclosed staircase in the northern room on the first floor. A smooth plaster wall separates these two sections on the second and third floors, and there is no physical evidence that the two sections were ever joined. Examination of the interior framing of this partition wall indicates that the entire house was built at the same time, meaning that this unique vertical separation of spaces was planned from the beginning.

The northern portion of the second floor is accessed via the enclosed staircase located in the northern room on the first floor, measures approximately fifteen feet by nineteen feet (the same as the room below), and is trimmed by paneled wainscoting. A fireplace is located in the northern end wall of the room, but the mantel is missing. An enclosed dog-leg staircase leads from the southeastern corner of the room upwards to the northern garret section, which contains a single room measuring fifteen by nineteen feet. The room is lit by a pair of unglazed window openings on the northern gable end wall, and is trimmed by a beaded chair rail around the entire perimeter.

The Richard Thornton House exhibits integrity of location, association, design, setting, and workmanship. The interior of the dwelling is remarkably intact, and displays few changes from its original decoration and configuration. No plumbing was ever installed in the historic section of the building (a gable-roofed addition on the rear elevation [demolished] likely served as a modern kitchen after the original outkitchen was demolished), and the house contains electrical wiring for lighting only. All plaster in the house is in very good condition and appears to be original, and much of the wall and trim paint (including decorative painting) dates to the early-to-mid nineteenth century. Most doors and trimwork are painted with dark green milk paint which has been waxed, and the walls of the southern bedchamber on the second floor retains their original coral-hued wash. All of this interior trim, the paneling, wainscoting and chair rails, remain intact. At some point in the recent past, the house was vandalized and some of the most valuable and transportable architectural details were stolen, including three of four mantels, some (but not all) window sash, and the glass pane in the fanlight over the front entrance. While some interior doors were damaged by the vandals, most remain on site, and are repairable, and many of the original shutters with iron hooks remain. While the theft of certain architectural elements is unfortunate, the core of the house has existed in a virtually unaltered state since its construction, and the building's primary character defining feature, its unusual floorplan, remains providing clear evidence of its use both as a house and local business.

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Tobacco Barn No. 1

Located approximately 430 feet southwest of the main house, this ca. 1850 tobacco barn is constructed of v-notched hewn logs. The gaps between the logs are chinked with scantling wood, rocks, and clay. The gable roof has collapsed, and a small, low doorway is located on the north side of the building. Round horizontal logs for hanging tobacco leaves are installed throughout the interior, and the building rests on a mortared stone foundation.

Tobacco Barn No. 2

Located approximately 340 feet south of the main house and on the north side of Golden Leaf Road, this ca. 1900 tobacco barn is of frame construction and is clad in vertical sawn siding. The side gable roof is covered by five-v metal roofing.

Shed No. 1

This ca. 1890 small frame shed is located to the northwest of the main house, and is clad by vertical sawn boards and has a front gable roof covered in standing seam metal. A pair of doors provides access to the building from the south gable end, and the floor structure consists of round log joists elevated on stone piers.

Shed No. 2

This ca. 1900 small frame shed is located 240 feet west of the main house and is clad in smooth weatherboard siding. The side gable roof is covered with standing seam metal, and the interior is lined with corrugated cardboard (probably from the 1950s) that is nailed to the framing members. The building has a stove pipe hole and may have been used for curing tobacco, but it was probably not built for that purpose.

Kitchen Site

Just to the west (rear) of the main house is the site of what was likely the outkitchen for the dwelling. An 1892 plat indicates that a rectangular building was positioned parallel to the main house on this site.¹ Visible remnants of the building include a collapsed brick chimney stack and several large hewn foundation stones.

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Cemetery

The cemetery is located approximately 250 feet west-northwest of the main house, and is surrounded by an iron fence with cast iron corner posts featuring Doric column capped with acanthus leaves and elongated pyramids along with wrought iron arrow point balusters. The graveyard is covered by periwinkle (*vinca minor*), which has spread to an area encompassing an acre or more. Six marked graves (five with labeled stones) are located within the fenced enclosure and a number of graves (at least four, but likely more) marked with field stones are outside of the fence. Three of the graves (those of Rebecca Peters, Mary Peters, and Patrick Peters) within the fence are marked by marble box tombs, and the graves of Elvira and Charles Williams are marked by a single obelisk (made by Alexander Gaddess of Baltimore). At least one of the box tombs was made by John B. Gaddess of Lynchburg. All four of these markers have been damaged by fallen trees, which have recently been removed from the cemetery.

The five legible marked graves read as follows:

| | | |
|------------------|---|------------------------|
| Rebecca W. | Wife of Don T. C. Peters, daughter of Dr. Richard Thornton Born November 7, 1816 | Died April 30, 1846 |
| Mary L. | Wife of Dr. A. L. Peters, daughter of Richard Thornton Born May 18, 1820 | Died Sept. 20, 1848 |
| Patrick Matthews | Son of Don T. C. Peters and Rebecca W. Peters Born June 5, 1841 | Died July 31, 1853 |
| Elvira Sterling | Wife of David T. Williams, daughter of Dr. Richard Thornton of Halifax Co., Va. Born June 30, 1830 | Died February 18, 1854 |
| Charles S. T. | Son of D. T. & E. S. Williams Born January 27, 1854 | Died June [?] 30, 1854 |

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Summary Statement of Significance

Built in the first quarter of the 19th century for physician Richard Thornton, the Federal style house has a unique floorplan that reflects its use as both a residence and office for a country doctor. Additionally this layout was useful in providing lodging for individuals traveling from Lynchburg to Halifax Court House via Republican Grove. The dwelling is a rare extant example of a home and principal place of business of a Halifax County physician. Richard Thornton (1786-1860), who owned the property from 1818 until his death in 1860, was practicing medicine in the area as early as 1822, and by 1850 was one of the most senior and wealthy doctors in Halifax County. He mentored, supported, or was closely associated with at least half a dozen younger physicians, including his son Robert B. Thornton (1811-1875), nephew John L. Thornton (1829-1885), grandson Felix F. Thornton (1841-?), and grand nephew Richard P. Thornton (1863-1931).

The house, along with its associated outbuildings and cemetery, has a period of significance spanning the period 1818-1860, beginning with the initial purchase of the property by Dr. Thornton and ending with his death. It is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of medicine as the home and workplace of a successful early-to-mid 19th century Halifax County physician. The Federal style property is also locally significant under Criterion C for its unusual floor plan with segregated vertical cells on the second and third floor displaying significant integrity of location, association, design, setting, and workmanship.

Historical Context

In January of 1818, Richard Thornton of Charlotte County purchased a 165-acre tract on the waters of Cow and Childrey Creeks in Halifax County from James and Louisa Old. Thornton, a physician by profession, was born in 1786 as the seventh child of Col. and Mrs. Francis Thornton of "Rolling Hill" in Charlotte County.²

Richard Thornton and his wife Sally Sterling Smith immediately moved to Halifax and (presumably) settled on their newly-acquired Childrey Creek property. Sally, a daughter of Robert Smith and Rebecca Booker, married Richard in Charlotte County in 1810, and the couple had two sons (Francis F. and Robert B.) and one daughter (Rebecca W.), by the time of their move to Halifax.

The next year, in 1819, Thornton applied for and received a license to operate a house of private entertainment "at his house," an operation that he maintained intermittently for over twenty-five years. A later statute defined a "house of private entertainment" as a private residence that offered lodging to guests, for not more than one week at a time, but did not serve alcohol. Those facilities that did serve alcohol were known as houses of *public* entertainment, or ordinaries.³

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In 1820, the Thornton household contained twenty-one individuals, including Richard and Sally's newborn daughter, Mary L. Thornton, as well as thirteen slaves. He was becoming well-established in the community, having been recommended for the office of Justice of the Peace and Commissioner of the Revenue in 1819 and 1820, respectively.⁴ Naturally, it took time for a new doctor in a rural community to gain the trust and patronage of its citizenry. Other physicians operating within the county during this period included James Singleton, Richard Dabbs, Edward P. Williams, and Thomas White.⁵ The first known documentation of Thornton serving in the capacity of a physician is in March of 1822, when he was paid \$179.75 (the equivalent of approximately \$3,000.00 in 2010 money) by the estate of Samuel Hubbard for medical services. During this time, the ideal of the "country gentleman" was still in vogue in Southside Virginia, and while individuals who "worked" for a living were typically looked down upon by the upper class, physicians were considered peers. In theory, doctors did not perform manual labor, and while the apprenticeship system was becoming more popular in the medical field, country physicians, as a whole, were not yet recognized as being a part of this structure. Doctors often supped with their patients' families during house calls, while other skilled professionals might be required to dine with the servants.⁶

Land Tax records for this period in the early 1820s do not suggest that Thornton had yet constructed a dwelling on his Childrey Creek tract which was the only land in the county that he owned until 1825. However government records, including those issuing licenses to operate a house of private entertainment "at his house," suggest that Thornton had improved his property by 1819. The present house may have been constructed as late as 1833, when tax records for the following year indicated that "improvements" valued at \$1,500.00 had been added to the property. Additional construction had taken place by 1850, raising the value of buildings on the 165-acre tract to \$2,000.00.⁷

On its surface, the house that Richard Thornton constructed appears to be a typical Piedmont Virginia dwelling of the first quarter of the 19th century. The two-and-a-half story, single-pile frame house is clad with beaded weatherboard siding and has a standing seam metal side-gable roof. It rests on a foundation of brick and stone, and is flanked by a pair of corbeled single-shouldered exterior end chimneys. The asymmetrical four-bay façade hints at the building's unusual interior floor plan. While the first floor of the dwelling is laid out in a typical manner with the central hall being flanked by a pair of rooms, the second and garret (third) levels of the house are completely separate from each other. They can only be accessed from the first floor; the main staircase in the central hall provides access to the southern two-thirds of the upper floors, while a small enclosed staircase in the northern room on the first floor provides access to the northern third of the upper floors. It is thought that this interior configuration reflects the house's dual role as a doctor's office and travelers lodging, but this has not been confirmed. The interior of the house is appointed with typical Federal style woodwork adorned by decorative painting.

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Oak Grove (041-0022) near Cluster Springs was built by Thomas Easley, Sr. circa 1820, and presents an asymmetrical four-bay façade configuration that is a mirror image of the Thornton House. Like the Thornton House, Oak Grove is fenestrated by nine-over-nine double-hung sash on the first floor and six-over-nine double-hung sash on the second, has a side-gable roof, and is flanked by two single-shouldered exterior end chimneys. Unlike the Thornton House, however, Oak Grove is thought to have acquired its unique fenestration pattern via a series of building campaigns, rather than all at once.⁸

In the mid-1820s, Richard Thornton commenced a land acquisition campaign that would last for over a decade. Between 1825 and 1838, Thornton added to his home tract on Childrey Creek by purchasing eight tracts totaling over 1,300 acres in the general area. By 1830, Thornton's household had grown considerably, and included nine whites and twenty-two slaves. Since 1820, Richard and Sally added two additional children to the family: Richard Thornton, Jr. in 1826 and Elvira Sterling Thornton in June of 1830.⁹

Sally Smith Thornton, mother of six children, died in October of 1832 at the age of forty-two, and is presumed to be buried in the family cemetery on the property. In 1836, Dr. Thornton married his second wife, Sarah T. Lassiter, widow of John Puryear, in Granville County, North Carolina. Thornton's two oldest sons, Francis and Robert, both married in nearby Caswell County, North Carolina, in 1833 and 1834. The nature of Thornton's connection to North Carolina is unknown, but the seats of these two counties are only about thirty-five miles from Halifax Court House, so it is not surprising that the family crossed the state line on occasion.¹⁰

Richard Thornton was active in business and community affairs, and was involved in the formation of the Meadesville [sic] Manufacturing Company in 1837. The company, which was founded to manufacture cotton, wool, hemp, flax, and silk, was to be located at the community of Meadville on the falls of the Banister River in Halifax County.¹¹ Joseph Martin's 1835 "Gazetteer of Virginia" listed a total of five physicians and one apothecary in the county; three doctors in Banister, one in Brooklyn, one in Meadville, and an apothecary at Barkdales. The gazetteer was somewhat of a village-focused publication, and Richard Thornton, who did not live directly within a population center, may not have been included in this listing.¹²

In 1840, Richard Thornton owned thirty-nine slaves, and his household contained five whites. Nineteen individuals worked in agriculture, and one, likely Dr. Thornton, was a "learned professional engineer." Also in 1840, Richard's daughter Rebecca married noted merchant and banker Don T. C. Peters (1811-1880). Two years prior to this wedding, Rebecca's sister Mary had married Don Peters' brother, Dr. Alexander Lemuel Peters (1814-1885).¹³ The Thornton daughters did not fare well in the 1840s. Rebecca died in 1846 and Mary died in 1848, and both are buried in the family cemetery. In 1847, Richard Thornton, Jr., an attorney, married Elizabeth Priscilla Grammer.¹⁴

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In 1850, Richard and Sarah Thornton's household included Richard's seventeen-year-old daughter, Elvira Sterling Thornton. Alexander Peters, infant son of the deceased Rebecca Thornton and Dr. Alexander Peters, who was living on his own in the southern part of the county at the time, also resided in the Thornton household. Thornton owned thirty-five slaves between the ages of nine months and fifty-one years. His real estate holdings were valued at \$10,000.00, and consisted of 600 improved and 462 unimproved acres. During the previous year, his farm produced 12,000 pounds of tobacco, making him one of the largest growers in the area. Thornton's neighbors included merchant John A. Collins (son of William Collins of nearby Collins Ferry), blacksmith George Rowby, cabinet workmen Henry Winston and Henry Peak, and millwright James Moon.¹⁵

Thornton's house is noted on an 1856 map of Halifax County as the "Res. of Dr. Thornton," and is one of the few dwellings identified in the northwestern quadrant of the county, which is a testament to the elevated status that physicians held in the community. The 1850 Census lists a surprising fifty-three individuals in Halifax County who referred to themselves as "physicians." By using the Census data, we find that the physician-to-population ratio in Halifax was 1 to 490, which was better than the ratio in Southern states of 1 to 614, or 1 to 550 nationwide. Perhaps a better indicator of active, or practicing, doctors in the county during this period is Thomson's Mercantile Directory of 1851, which listed fourteen of the most prominent or renowned physicians in Halifax. Among this smaller group were Richard Thornton in Republican Grove and his son-in-law Alexander L. Peters in Meadville. Six of the doctors in Thomson's Directory were located in Halifax Court House, and the remaining six were dispersed amongst the communities of Mount Laurel, Scottsburg, Coles Ferry, Brooklyn, and Church Hill.

Richard Thornton, who was still practicing medicine in his sixties, was considerably older than most of his colleagues, whose average age was thirty-seven. Thornton was the oldest physician listed in Thomson's Directory, although others in his age group also appeared in the 1850 Census, including James Singleton (60), Edward P. Williams (57), and Thomas White (56). All of these men were practicing medicine at the time of Thornton's arrival in Halifax thirty years earlier). Thornton was part of the 50% of Halifax physicians who owned real estate in 1850, and while the average value of real estate owned by doctors was just over \$6,000.00, only Thornton and one other doctor listed in Thompson's Directory owned real estate valued at \$10,000.00 or above.¹⁶

It is not known how, when, or where Richard Thornton received his medical training. While the first known mention of him as a doctor in Halifax is in 1822, it is likely that he was practicing in Charlotte County as early as 1810 or so, the period in which he became an adult. During this time, the College of William & Mary was one of the few sources for formal education in medical arts in Virginia, but matriculation records for this time are incomplete. Thornton may have studied

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under an established physician in Charlotte County who would have been empowered to declare him a medical doctor upon the completion of an informal mentoring period.¹⁷

While little information has been discovered on those physicians, professors, or others who helped develop Richard Thornton's medical expertise, his impact on subsequent generations was significant. Robert B. Thornton (1811-1875), Richard's oldest son, moved to Caswell County, North Carolina, where he married Susan Frances Smith (1817-1858) in 1833. Robert used a small house at 327 West Main Street in Yanceyville as a residence and medical office for most of the mid-19th century. In 1850, twenty-seven-year-old Lafayette Bennett, a "medical student," resided in Robert Thornton's household, which confirms that the family was familiar with the mentor system of training new physicians.¹⁸

Richard Thornton's grandson, Felix, son of Francis F. Thornton, began his adult life as a "public officer" (likely a deputy sheriff or equivalent), but by 1880 at the age of forty, was a practicing physician in northern Halifax County.¹⁹

John Lemuel Thornton (1829-1885) was a nephew of Richard by his deceased brother, John Wyatt Thornton. In 1860, John L. Thornton was listed as a physician living in the home of Dr. Richard Thornton, and was likely receiving training from his uncle. He served as a lieutenant and surgeon in Company F, 38th Virginia Infantry Regiment, during the Civil War. John's son Richard Presley Thornton (1863-1931) also served Halifax County as a medical doctor from at least 1900 through 1930.²⁰

In 1838, Dr. Richard Thornton's daughter Mary L. Thornton married a physician, Dr. Alexander Lemuel Peters (1814-1885). Peters' brother was merchant and banker Don T. C. Peters (1811-1880), who married Rebecca, Richard Thornton's oldest daughter. Alexander Peters studied Chemistry, Medicine, and Anatomy at the University of Virginia from 1834-1836 and practiced medicine in the Meadville community of Halifax County.²¹

By 1860, Richard Thornton, then in his early seventies, had retired from active medical practice, and was simply listed as a farmer in the census. In addition to his wife Sarah, his household included overseer William McHaney and Dr. John L. Thornton. Richard Thornton owned thirty-eight slaves in 1860, ranging in age from one to sixty years. Five of these slaves were hired or employed by others, including manufacturers White & Lovelace of Meadville. The value of Thornton's real estate holdings, which included more than 2,000 acres, was \$16,800.00. His personal estate, largely slaves, was worth \$49,581.00, and his farm produced 9,000 pounds of tobacco in 1859.²²

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In 1860, the Thornton Family was part of the twenty-six percent of free Virginia families that owned slaves. While most slave-owners possessed but one or two slaves, Richard Thornton owned thirty-eight enslaved African-Americans valued at over \$20,000.00 at the time of his death. Most were farm laborers or household servants, but some were skilled craftsmen, including Henry, a blacksmith. While it is assumed that, as valuable personal property, Thornton's slaves received decent medical attention from their physician-owner, a number of Thornton's slaves died while under his care. These included eleven-year-old Robert (son of Cilla), who died of congestion of the brain in September of 1854; an unnamed individual (hired from Mary A. Pinchback), who died in November of 1856; twenty-three-year-old Sally, daughter of Priscilla, who burned to death in January of 1858; twelve-year-old Susan, daughter of Mary, who died of erasipelus in February of 1858; and Ann, daughter of Malinda, who died of a cold in October of 1858.²³

Thornton suffered from rheumatism (and perhaps other maladies), and traveled to Alleghany Springs in Montgomery County, Virginia, in the summer of 1860. The springs, which were located approximately three miles from the Shawsville Depot on the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad, had been refurbished by new owners Booth, Calhoun & Company, and re-opened on June 15, 1860. The waters of the spring were known to aid in the treatment of dyspepsia (upset stomach), skin diseases, and nervous disorders. Dr. Richard Thornton died on August 17, 1860, at Alleghany Springs (his wife later reported the cause of death to be rheumatism). Thornton's body was likely carried by train from Shawsville east to Lynchburg (approximately seventy miles) and then sent another thirty miles south to Halifax County by wagon. Thornton's widow, Sarah, paid well-known Lynchburg undertakers David P. & George A. Diuguid the substantial amount of \$115.00 for "burial services," which probably involved transportation, embalming, and a quality coffin. His funeral sermon was given by the Rev. John A. Scott, a Presbyterian minister from Halifax Court House. Richard Thornton is said to be buried in the graveyard on his property, but his grave has not been located.²⁴

Following Thornton's death, his estate was divided amongst various relatives. Sarah received a life estate in the dower tract, which included the "mansion house and improvements" along with 595 acres. The surviving children of his deceased daughter Mary Thornton and Dr. Alexander L. Peters received the 293-acre "Cherry Hill" tract. Richard T. Williams, surviving son of his deceased daughter Elvira S. Thornton and David T. Williams, received the 320-acre "Long Branch Tract." The children of his deceased son Richard Thornton, Jr. and Elizabeth Grammer received three tracts totaling 261 acres. His sons Francis and Robert each received 230 and 265 acres, respectively.²⁵

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Thornton's second wife, Sarah, did not bear any children with him. By the time of Dr. Thornton's death, four of six of her step-children had died, and the remaining two step-sons, Francis F. and Robert B. Thornton, were middle-aged with families of their own. She had no substantial reason to stay in Halifax County, and by March of 1863, she moved to Granville County, North Carolina, and likely resided with her brother, attorney Robert W. Lassiter (1816-1891). Sarah had received fourteen slaves from her husband's estate, and wished to re-locate them to North Carolina, but had to obtain special permission before doing so, as was required by law. She petitioned the Virginia General Assembly for this permission, which was granted in January of 1863, and Sarah moved the slaves to Granville County that spring, and, of course, they were soon after freed due to the end of the Civil War.²⁶

Following Sarah's departure from Halifax County, the house may have been occupied, at least for a brief time, by her step-nephew, Dr. John L. Thornton, who resided in the house in 1860 and married Saluda Garner in 1862. In 1870, John Thornton was listed as a physician living in the Staunton Township of Halifax County, the general vicinity of the Richard Thornton house, with his wife Saluda and four children.²⁷

Sarah T. Thornton died in Oxford, North Carolina, in September of 1887. Prior to that time, the heirs of her step-son Richard Thornton, Jr. had begun to jockey for control of the 595-acre dower tract left to her by Dr. Richard Thornton, Jr. In 1883, Richard Thornton, Jr.'s widow, Elizabeth P. Grammer, asserted that she was entitled to the share of the tract that was left to her daughter Sarah Ann, who had died in 1863. Their interest in the land was transferred to Nathaniel T. Green, who was serving as a commissioner in the matter. In October of 1888, the "former residence of Dr. Richard Thornton, deceased, with about 595 acres" was sold at auction. The land was described as being adjacent to the public road from Halifax Court House to Pannills Bridge (across the Staunton River) with a "good portion" of the land "believed to be suitable for the cultivation of fine tobacco." Plats of the land were to be made available at the home of R.F. Thornton in Republican Grove. The land was purchased by T.R. Jordan and the portion surrounding the Thornton House was conveyed to William H. Burton in 1889. Burton then conveyed the house along with sixty acres to R.G. Marshall for \$800.00.²⁸

Richard Glass Marshall was born in 1858 to Thomas H. Marshall and Mary Jennings of Pittsylvania County. In 1880, he married Nannie Abigail DeJarnette in Halifax County. Upon purchasing the Thornton property, Richard and Nannie relocated to the farm along with their five children. Nannie died in 1902, leaving Richard a widower at the age of forty-three. By 1910, Richard and Nannie's children had left the home, and interestingly, Richard was listed in the census as a "boarder" in his own home, and the household was shared with renters Stephen Seamster and his wife Carrie. Neighboring households were occupied by Stephen's parents, Sydnor and Betty, and John A. Seamster (probably a brother), all renters.²⁹ Ten years later, in 1920, the large house built by Dr. Thornton was only occupied by Richard and his sixty-nine-year-old sister, Martha Marshall DeJarnette, a widow.

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In the early 1920s, local historian Wirt Johnson Carrington led a party of researchers to the old Thornton home place in order to view the cemetery. Oddly, she wrote that "it [the Thornton house] had been destroyed, and on the site was a small modern house, owned by a Mr. Marshall and rented to a tenant, who very kindly showed us the family burying ground of the Thorntons." The research party was in the correct place, as Carrington properly described the cemetery as being enclosed by an "iron picket fence four feet high," and subsequently transcribed most of the grave markers. It is probable that this tenant lived in one of three tenant houses on the west side of Route 647 (Tobacco Road), and simply led the party to the cemetery via a route that avoided the old home. Certainly, the tenant was aware of the house of his or her landlord, Richard G. Marshall, but for one reason or another, did not divulge its location to the group.³⁰

In 1930, the house was again full, occupied by Richard G. Marshall along with his daughter Sophia, her husband Jessie DeJarnette, and their eight children. Marshall died by August of 1934, and his real estate, which included over 300 acres of the former Thornton estate, was divided amongst several family members. The main house along with its sixty acres transferred to his daughter Sophia, who died in 1947. The property remained under the control of sisters Georgia and Mary until Mary's death in 1983, when it was sold to R.M. Harris and then to Karen Gorham-Smith and Charles Stewart Smith the following year. In 2002, the Smiths transferred the property to Buffalo Creek Land Company, LLC, which is owned by C. Stewart Smith. While physical evidence at the Richard Thornton house suggests that it was used as a residence through the 1950s, the house has been vacant for several decades.³¹

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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The thirty-acre property consists of Halifax County parcel number 22954. The resource is bounded on the north by Cow Creek, on the east by Tobacco Road, and on the south by Golden Leaf Road.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundaries encompass the remaining acreage surrounding the Richard Thornton House, and includes all known resources associated with the Thornton Family's ownership of the property.

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Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Dr. Richard Thornton House
City or Vicinity: Nathalie
County: Halifax State: Virginia
Photographer: W. Scott Breckinridge Smith
Date Photographed: August, December 2009

View: East (front) elevation

VA_Halifax County_RichardThorntonHouse_0001.tif

View: Tobacco Barn No. 2

VA_Halifax County_RichardThorntonHouse_0008.tif

View: West (rear) elevation

VA_Halifax County_RichardThorntonHouse_0002.tif

View: Staircase from north 2nd fl. room to north garret

VA_Halifax County_RichardThorntonHouse_0009.tif

View: South elevation

VA_Halifax County_RichardThorntonHouse_0003.tif

View: Staircase from 2nd fl. hall to south garret

VA_Halifax County_RichardThorntonHouse_0010.tif

View: Staircase detail, north room, 1st floor

VA_Halifax County_RichardThorntonHouse_0004.tif

View: Doorway to north garret from staircase

VA_Halifax County_RichardThorntonHouse_0011.tif

View: Reeded wainscoting, south room, 1st floor

VA_Halifax County_RichardThorntonHouse_0005.tif

View: Picture hanging strips, south room, 1st floor

VA_Halifax County_RichardThorntonHouse_0012.tif

View: Cemetery

VA_Halifax County_RichardThorntonHouse_0006.tif

View: Staircase detail, central hall, 1st floor

VA_Halifax County_RichardThorntonHouse_0013.tif

View: Shed No. 1

VA_Halifax County_RichardThorntonHouse_0007.tif

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ENDNOTES (Sections 7 and 8)

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³ Halifax County Order Book Index (entries for 1819, 1820, 1837, 1838, 1845, 1846); Code of Virginia, 1860, Title 28, Chapter XCVI, pages 489-490.

⁴ 1820 United States Federal Census, Population Schedule, Meadsville, Halifax County, Virginia; Halifax County Will Book 14, page 47; Halifax County Order Book Index.

⁵ These names were derived from a survey of estate accounts in Halifax County Will Books 11 (1817-1820) and 14 (1826-1829) that mentioned payments to doctors, physicians, or individuals who performed "medical services." Applicable accounts included services rendered in 1813, 1814, 1815, 1816, 1818, and 1820.

⁶ "The Physician in the Nineteenth Century." Web site: <http://janeaustensworld.wordpress.com/2008/05/17/the-physician-in-the-19th-century/>

⁷ Halifax County Land Tax Records, 1820-1860.

⁸ Williams, Kimberly Prothro. "Oak Grove (041-0020) Preliminary Information Form." 1999. On file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia; Web Site: www.oakgroveplantation.com

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¹⁵ 1850 United States Census, Population Schedule, Northern District, Halifax County, Virginia; 1850 United States Census, Slave Schedule, Northern District, Halifax County, Virginia; 1850 United States Census, Agriculture Schedule, Northern District, Halifax County, Virginia

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¹⁹ 1870 United States Census, Population Schedule, Staunton District, Halifax County, Virginia; 1880 United States Census, Population Schedule, Staunton District, Halifax County, Virginia

²⁰ 1860, United States Census, Population Schedule, Northern District, Halifax County, Virginia; 1870, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, United States Census, Population Schedule, Staunton District, Halifax County, Virginia

²¹ Carrington, Wirt Johnson. "A History of Halifax County (Virginia)." Richmond, Virginia: Appeals Press, 1924. Page 250; "Catalogue of the officers and students of the University of Virginia, Session of 1834-35." Charlottesville, Virginia: Moseley & Tompkins. 1835; "Catalogue of the officers and students of the University of Virginia, Session of 1835-36." Charlottesville, Virginia: Moseley & Tompkins. 1836;

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²² 1860 United States Census, Population Schedule, Northern District, Halifax County, Virginia; 1860 United States Census, Slave Schedule, Northern District, Halifax County, Virginia; 1860 United States Census, Agriculture Schedule, Northern District, Halifax County, Virginia

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²⁴ *Lynchburg Daily Virginian*, 18 August 1860 ("Dr. Richard Thornton, a prominent citizen of Halifax County, died at the Alleghany Springs yesterday."); *Charleston Mercury*, 14 July 1860; Halifax County Death Index page 63, line 36 (note: the death record does not provide a date or month of death, and lists the death location as Halifax County. The informant is Sally Thornton, his wife); Halifax County Will Book 28, page 48; Diuguid Burial Records Book 4, page 361, Old City Cemetery, Lynchburg, Virginia; Smith, W. Scott, oral interview with Ted Delaney, Archivist, Old City Cemetery, 11 April, 2012.

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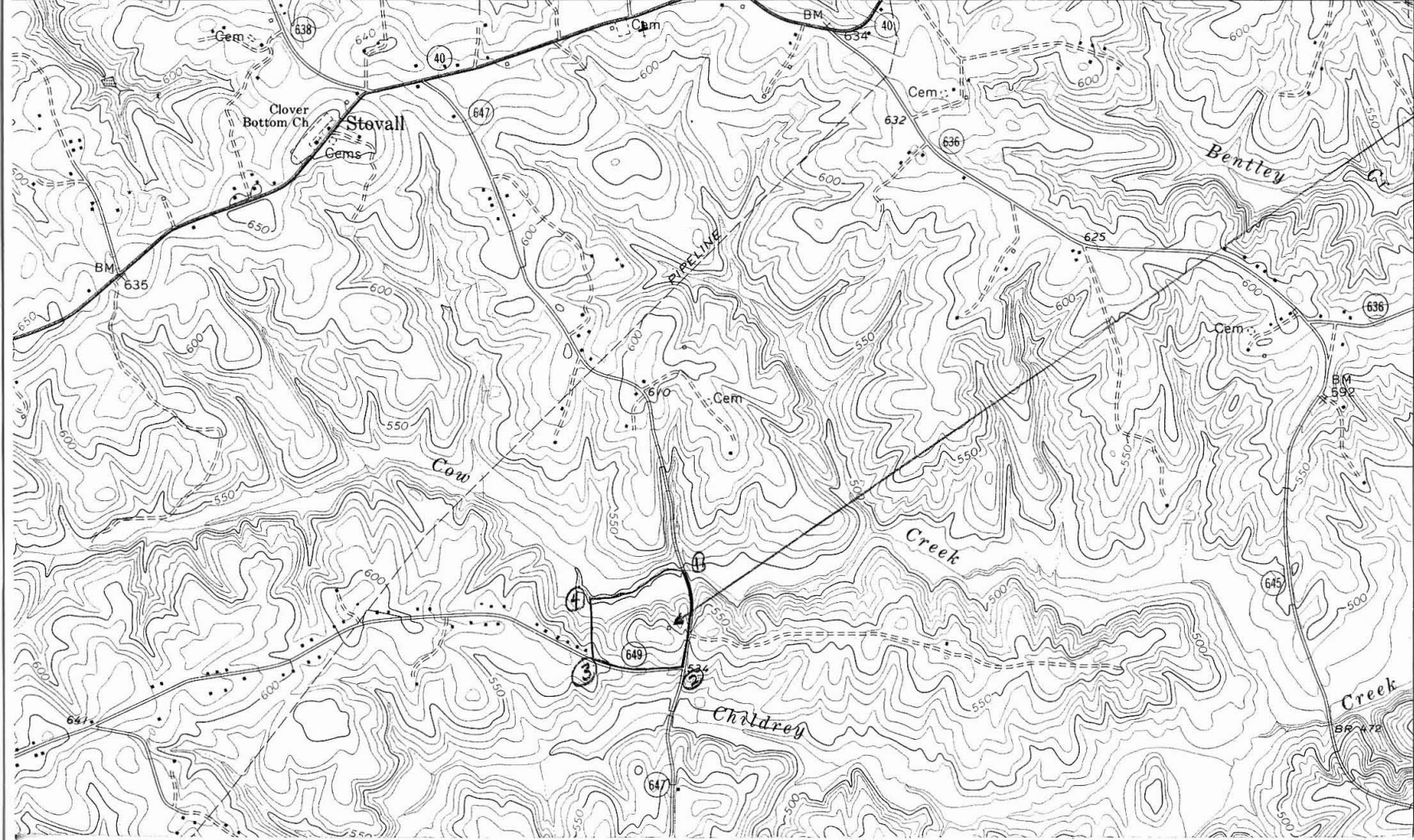
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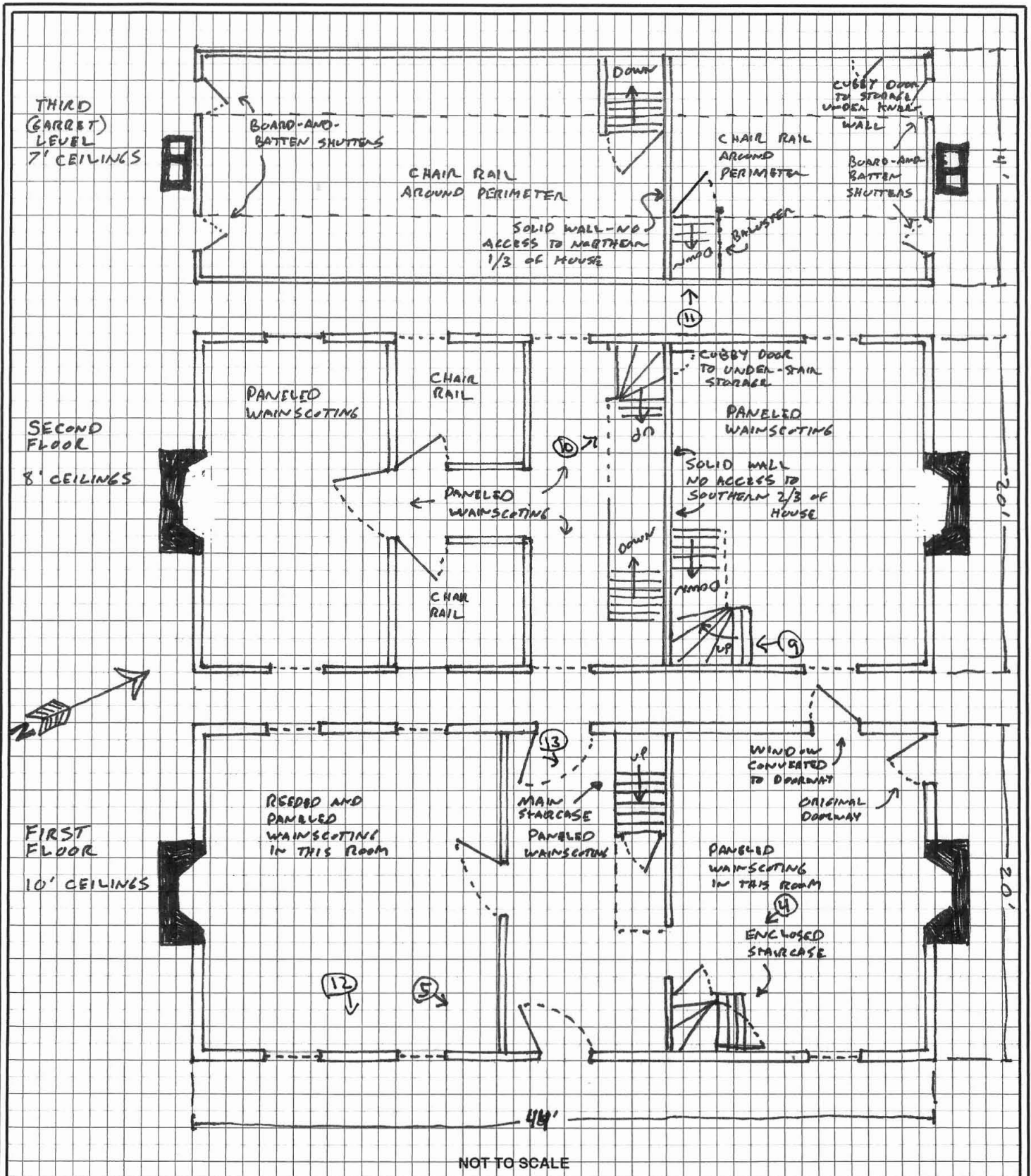
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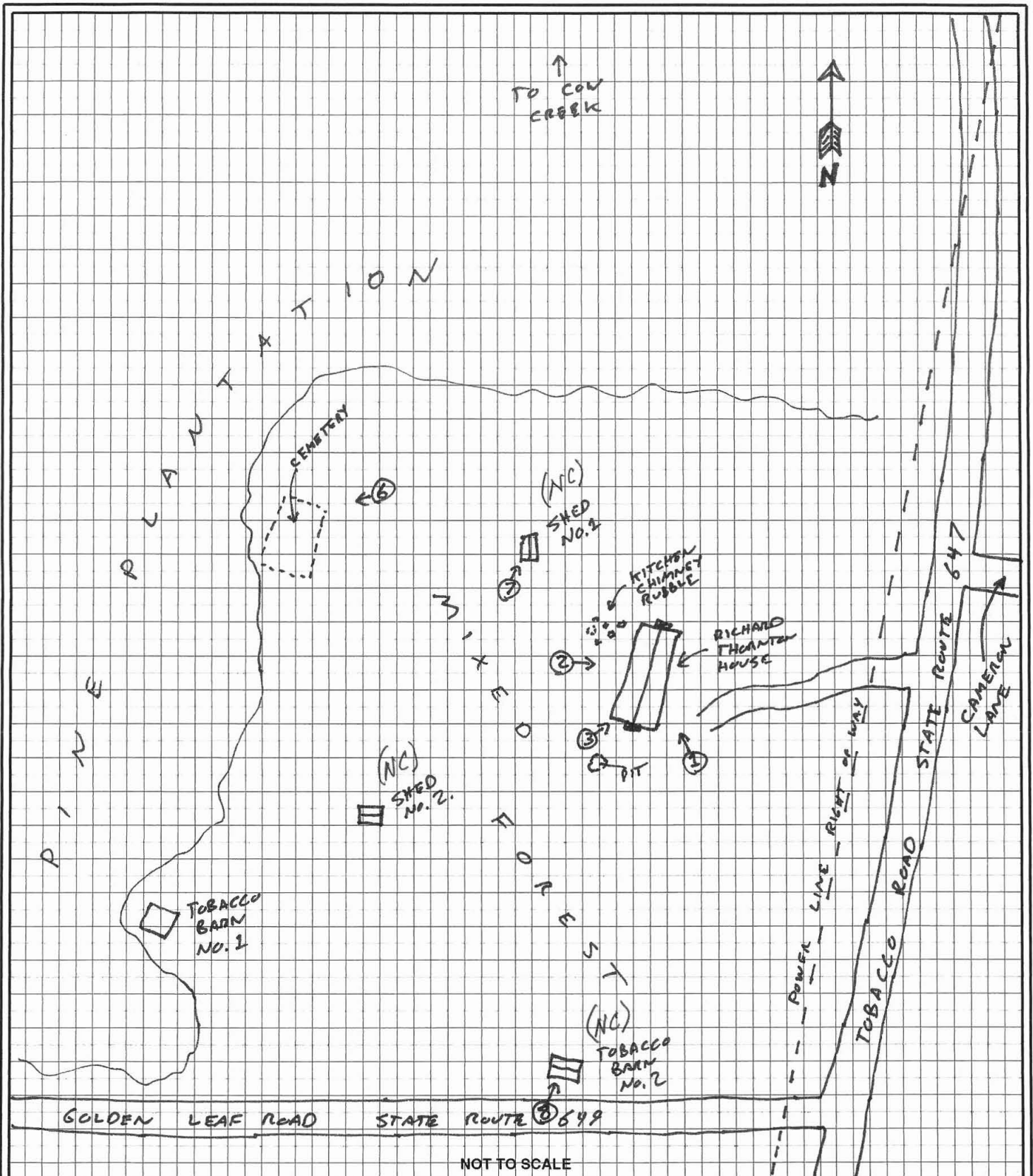
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DR. RICHARD THORNTON
HOUSE
4096 VDHIC # 041-5343
HALIFAX COUNTY, VA
REPUBLICAN GROVE QUADRANGLE
240 000 NAD 1927
FEET
1 - 175 0675107
4094222
2 - 175 0675122
4093040
3 - 175 0674792
4095 4093840
4 - 175 0674766
4094072
-W.S. SMITH

4094





Dr. Richard Thornton House
 Golden Leaf & Tobacco Roads, Halifax County, VA
 Republican Grove Quadrangle

FIGURE NUMBER:

1 of 2

④ →
 PHOTO
 LOCATIONS

DRAWN BY:

W.S. Smith

DATE:

April 2012

DHR FILE NUMBER:

041-5343