

VLR-12/12/89 NRHP-12/19/90

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name NEWSOME, J. THOMAS, HOUSE
other names/site number DHR 121-52

2. Location

street & number 2803 Oak Avenue not for publication
city, town Newport News vicinity
state Virginia code VA county City of Newport News code 700 zip code 23607

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Walter C. Miller 1 Nov 1990
Signature of certifying official Date
DIRECTOR, VA Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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 the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Family Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant: Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian: Queen Anne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls composition shingles over wood
weatherboards

roof composition shingles

other rear roof, tin

wood trim

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The J. Thomas Newsome House is a seven-bay, two-and-one-half-story Queen Anne-style residence constructed in 1898 in the southeastern section of the city of Newport News, Virginia. From 1906 until 1942, this large frame dwelling was the residence of J. Thomas Newsome, a black attorney and journalist, his wife Mary, and their children. Newsome's residence is located at the intersection of 28th Street and Oak Avenue in a neighborhood of houses constructed just prior to and immediately following the turn of the century, a period of economic prosperity for the city of Newport News. Narrow lots fill the blocks in this neighborhood, and narrow, linear houses whose gable ends face the streets are typical. Italianate, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman-style houses dominate the streetscape, which changed but little during ensuing decades although architectural preferences have become less eclectic than those at the turn-of-the-century. This neighborhood still retains its original flavor from the years when Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company began its rise toward becoming one of the world's great naval works and trains of the Chesapeake and Ohio line carrying Appalachian coal helped make Hampton Roads one of the world's busiest ports.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The J. Thomas Newsome House is distinguished by a steeply pitched, irregularly composed roof and by the asymmetrical massing and placement of its windows, doors, and principle ornamental features. Like its neighbors, the Newsome House is a relatively plain example of the Queen Anne Style. Its roof, now covered with composition shingles, consists of a hipped central section from which low, pedimented cross gables, dormers, and a tower extend and break the lines of the hip. A three-sided bay set under a cross gable anchors one corner of the dwelling's main block, and a polygonal tower, which is cantilevered over the porch and is capped with a tent roof, anchors the eastern corner of the house. A Palladian window is set in the center front pedimented cross gable, and a single six-over-six sash window lights the attic space behind the corresponding rear cross gable. A one-story wing extends from the western gable end of the house, and its architectural detailing, and that of the exterior of the main block of the house, is classical in

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character. The northern facade, which faces a driveway and a now-vacant lot, is largely devoid of external ornament.

The Newsome house is currently clad with asbestos shingles laid in a staggered pattern over its original wood weatherboards. A deep five-bay porch wraps around the front, or southern, facade and the eastern end of the house. Stuccoed brick piers whose rough recessed panels are surrounded by smooth frames, support a broad, classically-inspired cornice. A relatively plain railing with square balusters runs from pier to pier. Piers similar to those on the porch flank the entrance walk.

The Newsome house is a wood-frame structure that sits on a low brick foundation and has a single pile, central-passage plan with a one-story wing on the western gable end. A double front door, now boarded up, is surrounded by a transom and side lights. The interior of the house has very few modifications. A large center passage, which contains stairs that lead to the second floor, is flanked by a living room on the east and a dining room on the west. The most interesting interior architectural feature is ornamental spindle latticework supported by slender, fluted columns with Corinthian capitals, that frames the openings between the center passage and the living and dining rooms. Decorative wood beams that reflect the influence of the Craftsman style are incorporated into the ceilings of the first floor rooms. A stained glass window lights the landing of the stair.

At the rear of the dining room there is a narrow butler's pantry. Beyond, there is the one-story wing that contains a kitchen and a sun porch. Large, multipaned windows framed by quarter columns and recessed panels light this porch. The narrow urban lot on which this residence was constructed was too shallow for a detached kitchen or for a kitchen placed in a rear rank of rooms. It is perhaps for this reason that the builders positioned the kitchen in this one-story wing. Functionally, this lateral wing took the place of a rear ell or rear rank of rooms. A bath has been added to the end of this wing, and a small porch has been enclosed and converted to storage space. A small garage which once faced Oak Avenue has been destroyed.

The second floor of the house contains three bedrooms, one of which has an alcove in the polygonal tower, and the residence's original bath. The attic, reached by a continuation of the stair, contains, in addition to storage space, a finished room which was used by Newsome as a study.

Both the exterior and interior of the Newsome house have suffered during approximately six years of vacancy. Birds roost in the second floor and the attic, and the windows and doors on the first floor are boarded up to discourage further vandalism. Even so, the neighborhood in which the Newsome house is situated is, while economically stressed, essentially the way it has been since the end of World War I, and the house itself, like its neighborhood, retains integrity of both setting and design.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black

Period of Significance

1906-1939

Significant Dates

1898

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

J. Thomas Newsome

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

From 1906 until 1942, 2803 Oak Avenue in Newport News, Virginia, was the residence of J. Thomas Newsome, a black attorney and journalist. During the period that Newsome resided on Oak Avenue, he became the first black attorney to be certified to practice before the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia. He emerged, particularly in the period between the two world wars, as an influential and respected leader of the black community not only in Newport News but in Virginia and beyond. A stalwart and effective leader, Newsome shaped public opinion and guided public action through the practice of law, through his participation in a variety of important community endeavors, and as editor of the newspaper, the Newport News Star.

Joseph Thomas Newsome was the sixteenth of the seventeen children of Joseph and Martha Newsome, of Sussex County, Virginia. J. Thomas Newsome graduated from Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute in 1894 and was valedictorian of his Howard University Law School class of 1899.

Newsome's practice of the law in Virginia was long, distinguished, and path-breaking. In 1913 he became the first black approved to argue cases before the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia. Newsome was an effective advocate for the rights of others in the court room, but it is for his actions on behalf of his community that he is best remembered. He was instrumental in founding Trinity Baptist Church and served as the Sunday School Superintendent of that congregation for nineteen years. He was a leading advocate of the construction of Huntington High School, now known as Huntington Intermediate School, a public institution of learning that has served the citizens of southeastern Newport News for more than six decades. Newsome was also active in politics. During a period that historians have recognized as one of the low points of black experience in America, Newsome was busy unifying the black community in Newport News by organizing the Colored Voters League of Warwick County, an activity that gained him appointment as Assistant Sargeant-at-Arms for the Republican National Convention of 1920. The high regard that the

See continuation sheet

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citizens of Newport News and Virginia held for J. Thomas Newsome is reflected in the offices he held at the time of his death just as American activity in World War II began in earnest. Newsome was appointed a Commissioner of Chancery in 1940, was a member of the Citizens Defense Policy Committee of Newport News and was appointed by Governor James H. Price to serve on the Hampton Roads Regional Defense Council in 1941. Newsome died in 1942.

The J. Thomas Newsome house, which was constructed in 1898, is typical of the larger residences that line the numbered streets and avenues of southeastern Newport News. This neighborhood, now predominantly black, has an interesting mix of architectural styles including Queen Anne, Italianate, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman. The commercial and community needs of the residents of these were met by nearby businesses in a small commercial district that lines Chestnut Avenue, one block west of Oak. These businesses, like the houses that sprang up around them, were a reflection of the dramatic industrial growth that accompanied the rise to world eminence of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company and the Port of Hampton Roads. As a result of this growth and the arrival in Newport News of laborers and skilled workmen for the shipyards and docks, there emerged a black professional community. Newsome acquired 2803 Oak Avenue from one of the first members of the Newport News black professional community, Dr. William R. Granger. He was a black physician who had purchased the residence in 1901, probably soon after it was completed. Granger was, at that time, one of only two black physicians in the city, one of the thirteen who served the entire community. By 1907, when Granger closed his practice in Newport News, there were thirty-nine physicians practicing in the city, eight of whom were black.

At his death in 1942, J. Thomas Newsome willed his house to his daughter, Mrs. Maurice Newsome Derbigny. His granddaughter, Mary Carolyn Derbigny Ross, eventually inherited the house and, more recently, a group of citizens, recognizing Newsome's contributions to their community, banded together to form Newsome House, Inc. The organization will acquire the house and develop with the city of Newport News plans for its renovation for use as a community center and history museum that will focus on the black history of Newport News and the life of J. Thomas Newsome.

9. Major Bibliographical References

ORIGINAL SOURCES

Directory, City of Newport News, Virginia, 1896/97 and for 1897/98, 1898/99, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1906, and 1907 (Newport News Public Library, Newport News, Virginia).

Deed Book 30, City of Newport News, Virginia.

Deed Book 31, City of Newport News, Virginia.

Deed Book 32, City of Newport News, Virginia.

Plat Book 1, City of Newport News, Virginia.

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

Specify repository:

VA Dept. of Historic Resources, Richmond.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 1/4 acre

UTM References

A 18 374960 4094465
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 6, 7, and 8 in Block #10D as shown on a map entitled "Map of the Central Land Company's East Newport News Property," Plat Book 1, page 1, Circuit Court, City of Newport News, Virginia.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

These lots and the residence constructed on them were acquired by J. Thomas Newsome from Mary T and William R. Granger in 1906, willed by Newsome to his daughter, and are now owned by Newsome House, Inc. The nominated area includes the property historically associated with Newsome House.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ashley Neville and Carter L. Hudgins, Center for Historic Preservation
 organization Mary Washington College date 20 December 1988
 street & number N/A telephone 703/899-4037
 city or town Fredericksburg state VA zip code 22401

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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PHOTOGRAPH LABELS FOR THE J. THOMAS NEWSOME HOUSE

Newport News, VA

CREDIT: Ashley Neville

DATE: 1988

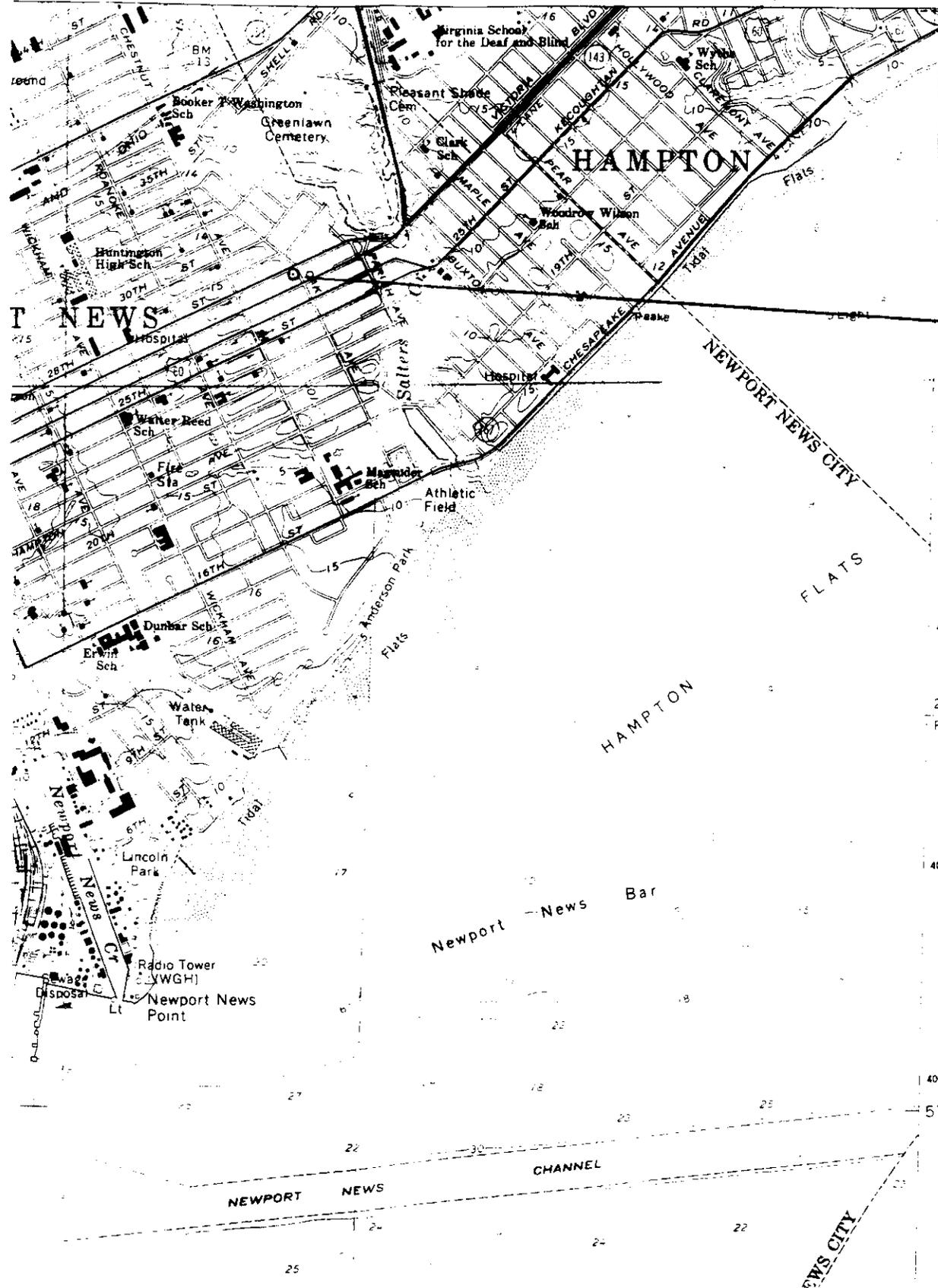
NEGATIVE FILED: Center for Historic Preservation
Mary Washington College
Fredericksburg, VA

1. View of Oak Avenue Facade, J. Thomas Newsome House; View facing East
NEG. NO.
FILE NO.
PHOTO 1 of 6
2. VIEW of Oak Avenue Facade and southern exterior, J. Thomas Hewsome House;
view facing East.
NEG. NO.
FILE NO.
PHOTO 2 of 6
3. VIEW of 28th Street facade, J. Thomas Newsome House; view facing southeast
NEG. NO.
FILE NO.
PHOTO 3 of 6
4. VIEW of 28th Street facade, J. Thomas Newsome House; view facing southeast
NEG. NO.
FILE NO.
PHOTO 4 of 6
5. VIEW of detail of sun porch, J. Thomas Newsome House; view facing south
NEG. NO.
FILE NO.
PHOTO 5 of 6
6. VIEW of rear service wing, J. Thomas Newsome House; view facing southwest
NEG. NO.
FILE NO.
PHOTO 6 of 6

NEWPORT NEWS SOUTH QUADRANGLE
VIRGINIA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

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