

PHOTO 711

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Maine
COUNTY:	Knox
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	MAY 2 1974

1. NAME

COMMON:
Thomaston Historic District

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Runs through Blue Star Memorial Highway
Various bet. Wadsworth Street and Me. 131

CITY OR TOWN: Thomaston

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 1st: Hon. Peter N. Kyros

STATE: Maine CODE: 23 COUNTY: Knox CODE: 013

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Various

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Thomaston

STATE: Maine CODE: 23

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Knox County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Rockland

STATE: Maine CODE: 23

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: HABS - 3 Buildings

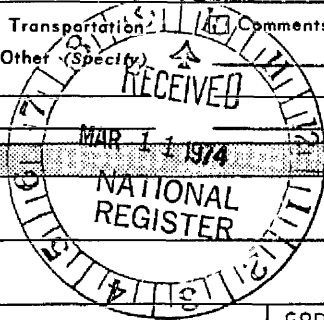
DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Washington

STATE: D. C. CODE:



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

HB DEPOSITED
2/19
PLU 8/1930
2/19/74
PLU 8/1930

STATE: COUNTY: ENTRY NUMBER: DATE: FOR NPS USE ONLY

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

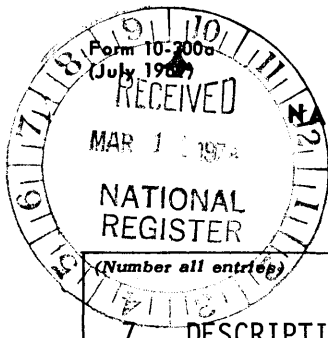
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The District contains the following buildings worthy of special mention (numbers refer to those on reverse of photographs):

1. The Edward E. O'Brien House. This Gothic Revival house was built in 1845-50 for Edward Ellis O'Brien, at one time a leading shipping magnate on the East Coast. He was reportedly worth several million dollars at the time of his death.
2. The Captain Dunbar Henderson House was built by Captain Dunbar Henderson, a local sea captain who died off the Tortugas on July 20, 1829. The house was probably built in the 1820's. It is an unusual example of a Federal style cape which has a highly finished facade of matched boarding and a fan doorway.
3. The Rita Smith House was built for her by her father, Sidney Smith, a banker, circa 1875. It is an imposing example of High Victorian Italianate style.
4. The William Henderson House was built about 1848 in the Greek Revival style by Captain William Henderson, a nephew of Captain Dunbar Henderson, who married Susan Amelia Jordan.
5. The Captain Charles Ranlett House was built and probably designed by Captain Charles Ranlett in 1848, according to his grandson who still lives in Bangor, Maine. Captain Ranlett married Anna Maria Jordan, sister of Susan Amelia (Jordan) Henderson, who lived next door. The two houses are strikingly similar Greek Revival style homes.
6. The Second Baptist Church was built in 1828 and remodelled circa 1875 in a Victorian manner.
7. St. John Baptist Episcopal Church (HABS). This board and batten Gothic Revival church was built in 1868-69. While similar to Richard Upjohn's designs, it is not exactly copied, although his influence is clearly felt. The bell tower was added circa 1872 by Francis H. Fassett, architect from Portland, Maine.
8. Commercial Buildings. These were built at various times in the mid to late nineteenth century. Portions were built as early as 1869 and as late as 1891. With the exception of the Mansard roofed block at one end, most of the structures are late examples of the straight forwarded Greek Revival style popular in nineteenth century Maine commercial buildings.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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7. DESCRIPTION

9. The Richard Elliott House, on Elliott Street, just off Knox Street, was built circa 1855. The Elliott family were local sail and block-makers in the shipbuilding industry. The house is an unusual example of transitional Greek Revival-Italianate architecture with highly ornamental ironwork and bracketing.
10. Thomaston Railroad Station. This unpretentious structure is the only surviving building from the estate of General Henry Knox, which was originally located on this site at the foot of Knox Street. Built in 1795, it was originally the cookhouse.
11. The Walsh House was built for a member of the Walsh family, successful merchants in 1848 by Albert Morton, a shipbuilder in company with C. Lermond and L.B. Gilchrist. The house is a dignified example of the Italian style executed in wood.
12. Brick commercial building, Main Street was probably built in the 1850's or 1860's. This block has arched windows on the first and third stories which reflect the Italian style.
13. The Hezekiah Prince Jr. House. Prince, who was customs inspector and insurance agent, kept a detailed journal from 1822 to 1828. He contracted with William R. Keith in August of 1828 "for building a house for me another year." The agreed price was \$1,150, but Prince confided to his journal that he would pay \$1,200 "if the work shall be done faithfully." The house was probably built in 1829 and is a handsome example of the Federal style which Keith used in Thomaston.
14. The Howard Seymour House (HABS) was also built by William R. Keith in the 1830's or 1840's. The Greek Revival design may be based upon Edward Shaw's "Doric Cottage" in the Rural Architecture, which was published in 1843.
15. The Robinson House (no photo), home of Hon. Edward Robinson, a prosperous shipmaster, merchant, State Senator, and candidate for Governor. The house was built in the Federal style by William R. Keith, probably in the 1820's.
16. The Williams House. F.L.S. Morse, in his Thomaston scrapbook says: "Sometime before 1875, Captain Williams acquired the place (a house had been built on the site in 1819) and much later replaced the house with the Victorian structure now known as the Lucette. Andrew McFarland did the work and the cost was \$9,000." The house was probably built around 1880 and is an

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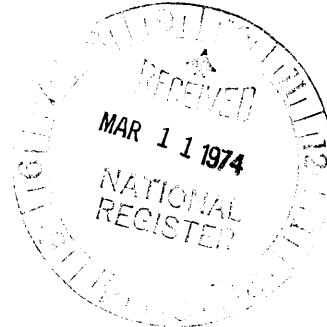
(Number all entries)

3

7. DESCRIPTION

- 16. Cont.
imposing Mansard roofed dwelling with an Italianate tower.
- 17. The John Ruggles House (HABS), was designed in the Federal style by John Ruggles for himself and built in 1827. Ruggles was a State Senator, served in both Houses of Congress, and was a Judge on the Maine Supreme Court. Ruggles was one of the town's leading citizens, and one of the few who were invited to play whist with the Widow Knox.
- 18. Montpelier, the home of General Henry Knox and his family from 1796 to the mid 19th century. It was originally standing on the banks of the Georges River until it was razed in 1871. The reproduction on the present site was built in 1929. At the time it was built by Ebebezer Dunton, from plans probably supplied by Charles Bulfinch, it was said to be more splendid than Mt. Vernon. Construction reportedly cost \$50,000.
- 19. The Cole House. Prince notes in his journal on June 21, 1824 that "Mr. Cole raised his house to the south of Healy's this day." The house is a large two and a half story structure with a handsome Federal style doorway.
- 20. The Leonard Fales House. Fales was a local man, born in 1768, married in 1790, and died in 1826. His modest Federal style house probably dates from the early part of the nineteenth century.

The remaining photographs show various scenes within the District, on Main and Knox Streets. Several of the houses listed above can be identified in them.



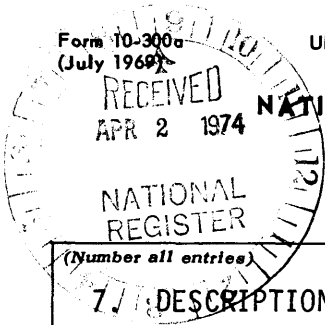
Form 10-300
(July 1969)

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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7. DESCRIPTION

The Thomaston Historic District is bounded and described as follows: Beginning at a point at the intersection of the center line of U.S. Route 1 and the center line of Kossuth Street; thence northerly along the center line of Kossuth Street to a point in the center line of said street; thence easterly crossing George and Booker Street in a straight line which corresponds to the rear property lines of the buildings along U.S. Route 1, to a point at the intersection of the center line of Starr Street with the center line of Park Avenue; thence easterly again to a point at the intersection of the center line of Starr street with the center line of Beechwood Street; thence northerly along the center line of said Beechwood Street 80' + to a point in the center line of said Beechwood Street; thence easterly crossing Erin Street in a straight line which corresponds to the rear property lines of the buildings along U.S. Route 1 to a point at the center line of Dwight Street; thence northerly along the center line of Dwight Street 110' + to a point in the center line of Dwight Street; thence easterly crossing Elm, Pleasant, and Riverside Streets in a straight line which corresponds to the rear property lines of the buildings along U.S. Route 1 to a point at the center of Mill River; thence northeasterly 430' + to a point west of the Old County Road; thence easterly 540' crossing the intersection of the Old Country Road and U.S. Route 1 to a point just south of U.S. Route 1; thence southeasterly 1000' + to a point east of Route 131; thence westerly crossing Route 131, the Mill River, Pine, Roxbury, Robinson and Gilcrest Streets to a point east of Knox Street and South of U.S. Route 1; thence southerly and roughly parallel to Knox Street in a straight line which corresponds to the rear property lines of the buildings along Knox Street to a point in the center line of Thatcher Street; thence easterly along Thatcher Street 250' + to a point in said Thatcher Street; thence southerly crossing the Maine Central Railroad tracks to a point in the St. George River; thence Westerly at a 90 angle to another point in the St. George River; thence northerly partially along Knox Street to a point at the intersection of the center line of Knox Street and the Maine Central Railroad tracks; thence north-westerly along the Maine Central Railroad tracks to a point at the intersection of the Maine Central Railroad tracks with the center line of Elliot Street; thence easterly along the center line of Elliot Street to a point at the intersection of the center line of Elliot Street with the center line of Dunn Street; thence northerly along the center line of Dunn Street crossing Hyler Street to a point west of Knox Streets; thence westerly 340' + crossing Green Street to a point just west of Green Street; thence westerly again crossing School Street in a straight line which corresponds to the rear property lines of the buildings along U.S. Route 1 to a point at the center line of Wadsworth Street; thence northerly along Wadsworth Street to a point at the intersection of the center line of U.S. Route 1 and the center line of Kossuth Street, said point being the point of beginning.

There are now approximately 125 acres contained within these boundaries.

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The town of Thomaston, on the banks of the Georges and Mill Rivers, is a showpiece of nineteenth century architectural styles, from the Adam to the Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, and French Second Empire. Its growth and conformity to these styles, each in its turn, has been unmarred by the coming of the twentieth century with its own special emphasis. The town today is much as it was a century ago, and each of the buildings listed has its own special history, usually connected in some way to the sea.

The site of modern Thomaston was first seen by white men in June of 1605, when Captain George Weymouth sailed up the river which now bears his name. He declared the river to have no rival in the world, with its deep coves and stands of timber suitable for masts.

The area was not settled until 1630, when a truckhouse was erected at what is now the foot of Wadsworth Street. This was used for trading between Plymouth Plantation and the Indians until the Indian Wars of 1675.

In 1719-1720, two blockhouses were built, and the old trading house was remodelled into a fort, complete with palisades. Also erected were a double sawmill on Mill Creek, thus naming it, and thirty frames for houses. The tiny settlement was protected by a garrison of twenty men under the leadership of Captain Thomas Westbrook.

A series of Indian attacks in 1722-1723 was successfully repelled. These stemmed from the disputed ownership of the land. The English claimed that the area had been sold in May, 1694 by Madockawado to Sir William Phipps of Pemiquid, who passed it to President John Leverett of Harvard, and later to Samuel Waldo. The Indians, however, claimed that Madockawado had sold property which never belonged to him in the first place. The dispute was settled forcibly, and the Indians relinquished their claim.

In 1735, eleven years after he took possession, Waldo engaged twenty-seven people to settle there. A grist mill was built in 1740.

In 1777, the town was incorporated under the name of Thomaston, so called for Major General John Thomas of Massachusetts, who distinguished

(See Continuation Sheet)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Eaton, Cyrus, History of Thomaston, Rockland and South Thomaston, Maine, Vol. I & II (Hallowell: Masters, Smith & Co.), 1865.
 Green, Samuel, "The Architecture of Thomaston, Maine", Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, X, 4 pp. 24-32.
 Kirker, Harold, The Architecture of Charles Bulfinch, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1969.
 Packard, Ankigne, A Town that Went to Sea (Portland: Falmouth Publishing House), 1950.
 Prince, Hezekiah, Jr., Journals of Hezekiah Prince, Jr. (New York: Crown Publishers), 1965.

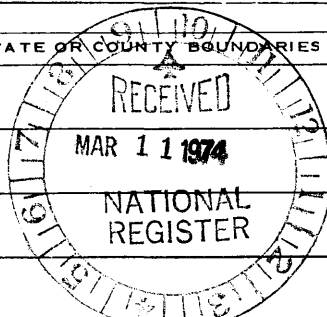
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	44° 04' 42"	69° 11' 33"		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	44° 05' 01"	69° 10' 05"				
SE	44° 04' 24"	69° 09' 56"				
SW	44° 04' 10"	69° 11' 23"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 125 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Charles H. Ashton

ORGANIZATION: Maine Historic Preservation Commission DATE: January, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER: 31 Western Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Augusta, STATE: Maine CODE: 23

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name: James H. Mundy
 Title: State Historic Preservation Officer
 Date: March 4, 1974

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

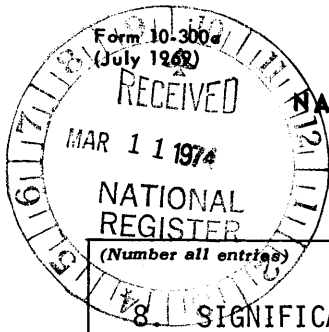
A. R. Montrose
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 5/2/74

ATTEST: Wm. Montrose
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: 5.1.74

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himself in the Revolution. It is believed by some, however, that the name is from Thomaston, Ireland, home of some of the early settlers. The population at the time of incorporation was fifty, in a seven mile circumference. In 1848, the town was divided into three parts: Thomaston, South Thomaston, and East Thomaston, presently Rockland.

The first major industry, and that which gave birth to those which followed, was lime burning. This process for making plaster from the limestone which was so abundant in the region, consists of keeping a fire burning for over a week with pieces of limestone amid the flames. The operation took place in large stone kilns, several of which are still standing in the town. This was begun in 1734.

Naturally, all the plaster produced could not be used in one small town, so the shipping and shipbuilding industries grew up, with their attendant rigging and sailmaking shops. The plaster was shipped in casks, which were made locally, giving birth to a flourishing cooorage trade.

Whether from its greater importance, or greater romantic appeal, it is for the seafaring days that Thomaston is best remembered. Practically every family in town of any importance was connected to the sea in some way; either a shipbuilder, a captain, a merchant, or a rigger. The families intermarried extensively, so that there were numerous cases of one's father, brother, and husband, for example, all being seagoing men. Boys were signed on for voyages as early as age ten, sometimes rising to be a captain at the salty old age of nineteen or twenty. Wives would frequently accompany their husbands on voyages, and it was not uncommon for neighbors or even blood relatives to ship together.

As in every sea-oriented community, there was more than the average amount of excitement, and sometimes tragedy. Ships would go aground coming up the river. A new arrival would mean goods from all over the world, news of national events, mail, and sometimes word that a certain ship had gone down, all hands presumed drowned. Thomaston shipping, with its frequent cargoes of plaster, was more vulnerable than others, since if the plaster became wet, it would heat up tremendously and increase greatly in bulk and weight, causing serious damage to the hull of the ship. For example, in 1829, the schooner ANN, (built in Thomaston in 1819, 134 tons) loaded with lime and headed for New York, left Chatham early on March 22nd, was wrecked on the eastern shore of Nantucket during a violent storm. The crew attempted to make their way to some place of shelter from the fury of the storm. The first mate and the steward, sons of the captain, Reuben Mosman, became exhausted with fatigue and cold. Finding that they were unable to walk, the captain, with the energy and fortitude of an affectionate father, bore them

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alternately on his shoulders for about a mile. However, both boys died of exposure. Such stories occur frequently in the town's history.

With the Embargo in 1807, shipping fell off somewhat but was not destroyed, as in so many other sailing communities. The population continued to grow, but more slowly. It nearly doubled in the decade 1790-1800, from 799 to 1,407, then surged to a peak in 1840 of 6,227, then declined in ten years to 2,753. In 1970 it was 2,646.

In 1820, when Maine became a state, it was necessary to remove Maine's prisoners from the Massachusetts jails. The decision was made to locate the state prison at Thomaston, where it was completed in 1824. The cells, incredibly, were underground, where the prisoners were lowered each night after a day's work in the lime quarries or vegetable gardens. In 1843, above ground cells were constructed, and through improvements, the prison is still located there.

Perhaps the most famous of Thomaston's families was that of General Henry Knox. He was born in 1750 in Boston and married Lucy Flucker in 1774. Her families were Tories, her father being Secretary to the Governor of Massachusetts. Knox was a friend of George Washington, and distinguished himself at the battles of Trenton, Princeton, Monmouth, and Germantown. He is best remembered in the Revolution for bringing artillery from Ticonderoga nearly two hundred miles to Boston. For this feat, Washington appointed him chief of artillery. After the War, the Major General became Washington's Secretary of War, a position he held until 1795. At that time he moved, with his family, to Thomaston, which, it will be recalled, had been part of Samuel Waldo's holdings. Waldo happened to be the grandfather of Lucy Knox, so there was some family attachment to the region.

Beginning in 1794, Knox ordered construction of his magnificent baronial home, christened Montpelier, built by Ebenezer Dunton from plans probably supplied by Charles Bulfinch. Construction took until 1795, on a panoramic site on the banks of the Georges River. The cost was reported to be \$50,000. The family moved to the new house in June of 1796, and quickly became the social arbiters of the town. Besides the mansion, which was more imposing than Mt. Vernon, there were several outbuildings, the only remaining one of which became the town's railroad station.

While the General tried to fit into the fabric of the town, Mrs. Knox fancied herself far above the other residents socially. When on errands around town, she refused to enter the homes of any of her neighbors, sending a servant to make the call instead. Once, when her carriage broke down and

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was immobilized, she and her children stood in the mud rather than accept hospitality from neighbors until repairs were completed.

The General was not only prodigiously wealthy, but he was also a very large man physically. During the Revolution he weighed 280 pounds. His death came suddenly, when, on October 22, 1806, he swallowed a chicken bone which lodged in his stomach. The resulting infection proved fatal on October 25. He was buried with full military honors. His business affairs at that time were somewhat shaky, and his small empire went quickly downhill. Lucy remained in the decay of Montpelier until her death in 1824. The mansion continued in increasing disrepair until it was razed in 1871 to make way for the railroad. However, it was duplicated in 1929 on a site overlooking Mill River, where it stands today.

Thus, Thomaston is rich in heritage from three centuries. Its houses especially, are tangible reminders of what was once a smoky village of lime kilns, then a busy port town. Today it is a quiet, unhurried town, much like many others in many ways, but with the exception of the two mile long main street which is included in the boundaries of the District. It is on this street that many of the more prominent houses are located; and it is because of this street, which with Knox Street forms an impressive field museum of the past, that the Thomaston Historic District is nominated for inclusion in the National Register.

