Survey and Research Report on the

Funderburk-Plaxco House

1. **Name and location of the property:**

The property known as the Funderburk-Plaxco House is located at 316 East Matthews Street in Matthews, N.C.

2. **Name and address of the current owner of the property:**

R. Frank Plaxco
36 Harvest Ln
Greenville, S.C.

3. **Representative photographs of the property:** This report contains representative photographs of the property.
4. A map depicting the location of the property:

5. Current Tax Parcel Reference and Deed to the property: The tax parcel number of the property is 21501224. The most recent deed to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 19602, Page 502-505. UTM 525665.9 E 3886079.0 N
6. **A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Brandon Lunsford.

7. **A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description prepared by Stewart Gray.

8. **Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S 160A-400.5.**

   a. **Special significance in terms of its history, architecture and/or cultural importance:** The Commission judges that the property known as the Funderburk-Plaxco House possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

   1. Constructed c. 1880, the Funderburk-Plaxco House is important as one of the best examples of late 19th century architecture in Matthews.

   2. In its grand scale and fashionable style this house clearly asserted the Funderburk family’s rank among the leading early citizens of Matthews.

   3. The Funderburk-Plaxco House represents the prosperity and development of the Town of Matthews at the end of the 19th century.

   b. **Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association:** The Commission contends that the architectural description prepared by Stewart Gray demonstrates that the property known as the Funderburk-Plaxco House meets this criterion.

9. **Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal:** The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the property which becomes a "historic landmark." The current appraised value of the house and land is $298,400.

10. **Portion of the Property Recommended for Designation.** The interior and exterior of the house, the outbuildings, and the land associated with tax parcel number 21501224.

**Statement of Significance**

Ellison James Funderburk was the patriarch of one of the most important families to settle in the Town of Matthews in the late 19th century. One of the first four town commissioners elected after the town’s incorporation in 1879, Funderburk was a cotton farmer, landowner, and businessman who also had a hand in starting one of the first schools and the first bank in Matthews. Three of his sons also became local prominent citizens, and present-day Matthews still bears many
signs of the Funderburk family legacy. One of the oldest homes still standing in
the town, the Funderburk-Plaxco House at 316 East Matthews Street is a symbol
of Funderburk's local prominence and has been in the Funderburk family since its
construction. By the turn of the twentieth century, domestic designs in
Mecklenburg County's small railroad towns began to reflect the newfound wealth
associated with the booming textile industry and a rural prosperity based on
commercial cotton cultivation. Small town merchants and professionals like
Ellison James Funderburk and his sons began to favor newer house designs
popularized in widely circulating architectural publications and builders’
guides. Often mirroring contemporary Charlotte city dwellings in their
sophistication, these houses introduced urbanity into the small towns and
countryside of Mecklenburg County.
Historical Background

The historic significance of the Funderburk-Plaxco House is most readily appreciated within the context of the evolution of the Town of Matthews and the roles various members of the Funderburk-Plaxco family played in that evolution. Architecturally, the house has evolved in response to the desires of a
prominent local family to employ the most fashionable architectural styles of different eras.

The Town of Matthews emerged as one of many satellite communities that were established on the outskirts of Charlotte after the city developed as an important cotton distribution center and railroad hub in the 1850’s. What would become Matthews began to take shape on July 12, 1825, when postal department records show that John Miles Fullwood was appointed postmaster in an area known as Stumptown. The area was named Stumptown because so many stumps were left after the land was initially cleared. The new post office was established outside Fullwood’s home and general store on present-day South Trade Street, and it served as a stagecoach depot and resting spot for travelers journeying between Charlotte and Monroe. Stumptown soon became known by the locals as Fullwood.[1]

Soon after the Civil War, a collection of general stores and other businesses emerged around the Fullwood post office. According to the Rev. S.J. Hood, “Wylie Noles chose this spot for a sawmill, and with Arthur and Watson Reid at the headblocks and a slave negro driving the ox log cart, he sawed enough lumber to build a half dozen crude houses that formed the nucleus of the town.”[2] Many stores sold whisky and spirits along with agricultural supplies to support the growing village and surrounding farms, and several operated cotton gins. Cotton was the main crop of antebellum Mecklenburg County and was initially transported by wagon to markets located at the fall line of major rivers
until several railroad lines linked Charlotte with the coast and dramatically increased the city's importance.[3] By 1870 the stagecoach stop of Fullwood had started to take shape as a town. Building lots were surveyed, and streets were mapped out as cotton and timber fueled more growth and an increasing number of farmers settled in the area.[4]

One of these early settlers was Ellison James Funderburk, who had traveled through Fullwood with his new bride and liked the settlement so much that he decided to stay.[5] Born on July 1, 1836, in Chesterfield County S.C. near the town of Pageland, Ellison was the son of James Funderburk and Elizabeth Threatt. It was rumored that he was named Ellison after a local surveyor who labored in the area at the time of his birth. In 1857, at the age of 21, Ellison married Selia Anne Williams, age 19; and the couple eventually produced 11 children. Ellison and his older brother William, as well as their two younger brothers Jerry and Tom, volunteered for the Confederate Army at the outbreak of the Civil War. Ellison is listed on the Confederate Roster in Washington, D.C. as “Funderburk, EJ, pvt. Co. A, Cav. Bat'l; Co.-Inf.Reg., Holcombe’s Legion- S.C.”[6] According to the 1860 census, Ellison, his wife, and two young children were living at that time in the Union County community of Walkersville.[7]

After the Civil War, Ellison, accompanied by his family, left Union County and eventually settled in Fullwood as a cotton farmer. It is not certain when he arrived; but the 1870 census, conducted on October 11, 1870, listed Ellison as a resident of the Morning Star Township near Fullwood, so
named because the Morning Star Lutheran Church was established in 1798 in that section of Mecklenburg County as one of the first Lutheran houses of worship in North Carolina. By this time, Ellison and his wife are listed as having nine children, the youngest 8 months old. The Funderburk family history describes Ellison James Funderburk as “a man of dignity, rugged independence, strong will, and self confidence. He was a good farmer, able businessman, and owner of valuable real estate.” Funderburk was indeed able to become a prosperous cultivator of cotton and an adroit entrepreneur in Fullwood, which entered a period of rapid growth soon after 1874. In that year a section of the Central Carolina Railroad was completed through the town, connecting Fullwood with the Wilmington-Tennessee line. The first train rolled into town on December 15, 1874. The railway officials named the Fullwood stop "Matthews Station" in honor of Watson Matthews, a director of the Central Carolina Railroad Company; from 1875 onwards, incoming mail arriving by train to the town was addressed to Matthews. By the 1920’s, five passenger trains and eight freight lines passed through Matthews daily, and the cotton gins in town used the railroad to ship bales of cotton to textile mills in Charlotte and the surrounding areas.

The citizens of the prospering community felt that Matthews should officially become a town, and prominent local farmer Jeremiah Solomon Reid headed a committee to secure a town charter from the North Carolina State Legislature. The charter was granted on March 8, 1879, and Matthews was officially awarded legal power to operate as a municipal corporation. The 1880 census listed 191 town residents. Ellison is mistakenly recorded as “Ellison
“Tunderburk,” along with his wife and eleven children, six boys, and five girls. A mayor, a marshal, and four town commissioners were elected for the new town, and one of the commissioners was Ellison J. Funderburk. Ellison took office in 1879 and was reelected in 1886, having become one of the most prosperous and important citizens in Matthews. By 1909, Matthews had four general stores (three of which operated one or more cotton gins), a drug store, a bank, a grist mill, a blacksmith shop, a livery stable, a hotel, and one of the first high schools built in North Carolina; Ellison Funderburk or his sons had a stake in almost all of these ventures.

Ellison was heavily involved in real estate transactions in the early years of the town’s history, the first appearing in the Mecklenburg County Book of Deeds as a grantee on May 22, 1872. He is listed as the grantee in 46 separate land transactions from 1872 to 1911. He appears as a grantor of property in 41 transactions in Matthews from 1882 to 1914, first appearing as a grantor on February 11, 1882, by transferring ¼ acre of land to the “School Commission of Morningstar Township.” A fervent Baptist, Ellison and fellow Matthews pioneer T.J. Renfrow were instrumental in organizing one of the first schools in town on the grounds of the old Baptist Church. He is also recorded as one of two Matthews delegates to the 62nd annual Baptist State Convention in Raleigh on December 8-12, 1892.

On January 12, 1878, Ellison Funderburk acquired land on which he eventually operated the E.J. Funderburk General Merchandise Store, presently at
165 North Trade Street. On November 22, 1898, he deeded the property to his son Benjamin DeWitt (B.D.) Funderburk (born May 22, 1868), on which B.D. erected in 1901 along with his brothers Thomas Lee Funderburk (born June 2, 1870) and Ellison Albertus Morgan Funderburk (born December 25, 1863), a one-story brick building that served as a general store, presently at 159 N. Trade Street. The Funderburk Bros. General Store sold dry goods, coal, fertilizer, and other farm supplies to the community and its environs. The Funderburk family also operated a cotton gin and a cotton-buying business in town, as well as a grist mill, a blacksmith shop, and a livery stable.

On May 15, 1909, Ellison deeded more property near the stores to the Funderburk Bros., and the stores were enlarged. The brothers constructed a two-story brick structure on the site of the original building and offered groceries and banking services in addition to the items they had previously sold. The first bank in town, the Bank of Matthews, opened for business on November 4, 1909; the articles of incorporation show that Ellison and his son, B.D. Funderburk, were principal stockholders in the bank along with other prominent Matthews citizens. In 1926 Lee Edward Funderburk, Ellison’s grandson and B.D’s son, became president of the bank and remained in that position until 1976, when the Bank of Matthews merged with BB&T after operating independently for 50 years.

B.D. Funderburk eventually became the sole owner of the Funderburk Bros. Store, and it became known as B.D. Funderburk’s. After a long career as one of
the most distinguished and important citizens in Matthews and a longtime
member of the Mecklenburg County Board of Education, B.D. Funderburk died on
October 5, 1954. B.D. and his wife Sallie had three children, all of whom were
involved in some way in the operation of Funderburk family enterprises in
Matthews. His son Louie operated the Funderburk Store until his death in 1945,
and afterwards his daughter Louise Funderburk Plaxco and her husband Boyce
Plaxco returned to Matthews from Glen Alpine, N.C. to assume responsibility of
overseeing the family businesses. They ran the store until their deaths in
1973. The Funderburk Store was liquidated and closed after 75 years, although
the buildings still remain as an important part of Matthews’s historical landscape.

The history of the Funderburk-Plaxco house at 316 East Matthews Street
closely parallels that of the Funderburk Brothers stores. Ellison J. Funderburk
reared all 11 of his children in the house and lived there with his wife until he died
of tuberculosis on March 14, 1916. Called in the obituary “one of the oldest and
best known citizens of this place,” Ellison died at age 79 and was survived by his
wife Selia and 8 of his children. Sometime after Ellilson's death, the house was
rolled to its current location from across the street on pine logs stripped of their
bark, pulled by a team of mules. According to Rev. Donald Funderburk,
Ellison’s grandson who was reared in the house in the 1920's, the house was
moved by his father, Thomas L. Funderburk Sr. Thomas wanted to build on his
father’s property and relocated the family home across the street so he could do
so. Architectural elements suggest that when the house was moved, the
wraparound porch on the second story was removed, leaving a porch only on the
front side of the house. [35] Ellison’s widow, Selia Williams Funderburk, resided in the house until her death on May 17, 1927. [36] After Selia’s death, Thomas L. Funderburk lived in the home with his wife and children. The 1920 census shows Thomas, his wife Rena, and three sons: Thomas Funderburk Jr, Charles, and Ellison living together. [37] Donald was born the next year, in 1921. Thomas Funderburk Sr. died on Dec. 12, 1940, [38] and his sons Charles, Ellison, and Donald continued to reside in the house until they all went overseas in 1940 to fight in World War II. During the war the house was rented to the principal of the Matthews School, a Dr. Pierce. [39]

When the brothers returned from the war, they deeded the house to their uncle B.D. Funderburk and his wife Sallie, on May 15th, 1945. [40] B.D. and Sallie owned the house until May 4, 1950, when they passed it on to their daughter Louise Funderburk Plaxco and her husband Boyce so they would have a place to live in town while managing the Funderburk Bros. Store. [41] Boyce Plaxco died in January 1973, and when Louise Funderburk Plaxco died a few months later, on May 27, 1973, she left the house to her two children, Charles William Plaxco and Sarah Louise Plaxco. [43] Lee Edward Funderburk, B.D.’s son, was also an heir, but gave up his share of the house to the Plaxco relatives on April 19, 1974. [43] Neither Charles nor Sarah Plaxco ever married or had any children and remained in the house until their deaths. On August 25, 1982, they secured the services of relative and attorney R. Frank Plaxco of Greenville S.C. as a trustee of their property; [44] on November 2, 2005, R. Frank Plaxco as trustee granted a portion of their property, along with a temporary easement of 1,970 feet granted earlier on
ELLISON JAMES FUNDERBURK*
b. 7/1/1836
d. 3/14/1916
m. SELIA ANNE WILIAMS*

Eleven children including:

ELLISON
ALBERTUS
MORGAN FUNDERBURK*
b.12/25/1863
d.5/31/1937

BENJAMIN
DEWITT
FUNDERBURK*
b.5/22/1868
d.10/5/1954

THOMAS
LEE
FUNDERBURK*
b.6/2/1870
d.12/12/1940

LOUIE
FUNDERBURK

JANIE
LOUISE
FUNDERBURK*
m.BOYCE PLAAXCO*

LEE
EDWARD
FUNDERBURK

SARAH L. PLAAXCO*
CHARLES
PLAXCO*

ELLISON FUNDERBURK III*
THOMAS FUNDERBURK, JR.*
DONALD FUNDERBURK*
CHARLES FUNDERBURK*

*INDICATES THAT PERSON LIVED IN THE FUNDERBURK-PLAXCO HOUSE

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Tom Hanchett, Sorting out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 20

Lester, Discover Matthews, 7

Lester, Discover Matthews, 6

Guy B. Funderburk, Funderburk History and Heritage (Salem, WV: Salem Press, 1967), 330

United States Federal Census, 1860, Roll 915 Page 404


United States Federal Census, 1870, Roll 1148 Page 210

Funderburk, Funderburk History and Heritage, 331

Lester, Discover Matthews, 55

Lester, Discover Matthews, 7

Lester, Discover Matthews, 55

Lester, Discover Matthews, 7

United States Federal Census, 1880, Roll 1972 Page 493

Southeast News, Nov. 10, 1975, 6

Lester, Discover Matthews, 8

Mecklenburg County Book of Deeds, Book 7, Page 877

Mecklenburg County Book of Deeds Grantee Index, 1840-1918, Page 84-86

Mecklenburg County Book of Deeds Grantor Index, 1840-1918, Page 117-118
The ca. 1880 Plaxco-Funderburk House faces roughly north and is set back approximately fifty-five feet from East Matthews Street in Matthews. The house sits in the northwest corner of a square, one-acre lot on the edge of a residential section of town clustered around East Matthews Street, McLeod Street, and Matthew-Mint Hill Road. To the west and south of the house the nature of the neighborhood changes from residential to commercial. The frame, two-story house may date from the time of the incorporation of the Town of Matthews in 1879. The house was built by Ellison James Funderburk, a prominent town leader and businessman. A two-story wrap-around porch, most likely added to the house around 1900, was removed before the house was relocated to its present location about 1920 from a nearby site.

The age of the house can be approximated by examining its history and architectural features. The deep trim, known as hoods, over the front door and
front first-story windows are elements particular to the Italianate Style. The house's eave brackets, and especially the arrangement of the brackets, are also consistent with that style. The Italianate Style was popular until around 1885, when it was largely replaced by the Queen Anne Style. The nearby Reid House clearly demonstrates that the Queen Anne Style was being used in Matthews by 1890. If Ellison Funderburk did indeed rear all of his 11 children in the house (son Ellison Albertus Morgan Funderburk was born in 1863), then 1880 would be around the latest reasonable date for construction of the house. An earlier date than 1880 does not seem likely because of the apparently original five-horizontal-panel doors found throughout the house. The original interior woodwork appears to have been produced at a shop or factory as opposed to on-site. This manufactured millwork would have been readily available in 1880 in a railroad town such as Matthews. Even so, the 1880 date for the five-horizontal-panel doors is quite early, with the doors not becoming widely popular in Mecklenburg County until around 1890.
The house is three bays wide with a symmetrical façade and sits on a low continuous brick foundation. The façade is dominated by a nearly full-width flat-roof porch that is not original to the house and was likely constructed at the time the house was moved. The porch roof is supported by four substantial square brick columns, each topped with a simple concrete cap. The porch is topped with a decorative iron handrail. Similar iron-work posts and brackets were added to the existing brick posts. Two brick steps that lead to the porch are bordered by low brick cheek walls topped with thick concrete caps. Iron handrails border the steps. The porch floor is narrow tongue-and-groove boards, with a simple wood band. The porch ceiling is plywood panels with battens covering the joints.

The exterior of the Plaxco-Funderburk house is covered with simple weatherboard, terminating in simple corner boards with prominent capitals with ovolo trim. Siding protected by the porch transitions at vertical members located
near the corners and is laid in a slightly narrower reveal. It was typical for siding to transition at the porch from weatherboard to flat siding. The curious use of weatherboard under the shelter of the porch may indicate that the siding was replaced over time.

The façade’s center bay contains an original doorway with a four-light transom. The transom lights are notably short. The doorway also features two three-light
sidelights, each with a single vertical panel. The doorway contains a replacement nine-light door. The doorway is topped with a pointed segmented hood with a torus (rounded) detail on the tails. The other bays sheltered by the porch contain single four-over-one windows. The windows feature simple sills, wide jam trim and pointed segmented hoods like that over the front doorway. The heavy hoods are a defining characteristic of the Italianate Style. The window trim is original, but the windows would have originally contained one- or two-light sash. The existing four-over-one sash, typical of the Craftsman Style, were likely added when the house was moved around 1920. The massive brick columns are also consistent with the Craftsman Style.

On the second story the fenestration aligns with the fenestration below. The bays contain three four-light windows. The windows are bordered by decorative
shutters and terminate in a deep band that tops the wall. The cornice features sawn brackets with a scotia pattern. The brackets support a relatively deep eave and are paired at the corners of the house and over the windows, with single brackets set between the windows. This particular arrangement of brackets is peculiar to the Italianate Style. The fascia is composed of two plain stepped boards. The hipped roof is covered with asphalt shingles and is pierced by two large internal chimneys with corbelled tops. The topmost section of the east chimney may have been removed.

The symmetry found on the front of the house continues on the east side. The principal section of the house is two bays deep, and the fenestration found on the east side is limited to four single window openings, each containing a four-over-one window like those found on the second story of the front elevation. In the cornice the detail is carried over from the front. The west elevation fenestration is similar with the exception of paired four-over-one windows in the rear bay on the first story.
The rear elevation is partially obscured by a remodeled rear wing. The three-bay-wide second-story fenestration is largely intact with the east and west bays containing single four-over-one windows. The center bay contains a short four-light window set high in the wall to allow for the ridge of the rear wing. The center bay may have at one time contained a full sized window opening, but it appears that the present configuration dates at least to the time of the house being moved.
The rear wing and the exposed second story rear elevation of the principal section of the house are covered with artificial siding. The rear wing is gabled with a low-sloped roof and a deep overhang. A portion of the rear wing may have originally been a porch. The rear elevation of the wing features a four-light panel door bordered by banks of three ganged nine-over-nine windows. The only historic element apparent on the rear wing is a pair of the small three-over-one windows at the kitchen. A pair of modern eight-light sash are set high in the gable. The east elevation of the rear wing is set back slightly from the principal section of the house, but the deep eave juts past the older section. The east elevation contains a row of six windows ganged together. A small gabled wing with artificial siding extends from the west elevation of the rear wing and is one bay wide and one bay deep, with paired nine-over-nine windows piercing each elevation. A simple chimney pierces the roof.
The massed-plan house features four rooms on the first and second stories, bisected by center halls. The house has been renovated over the years, but many original interior features remain, and the original interior layout has largely survived. On the first story the center hall contains a staircase with a substantial turned newel and a wide moulded handrail. Turned balusters rest on original pine treads, now partially covered with carpeting. Sawn brackets decorate the stringer trim.
The west front room likely served as the parlor. It contains a Craftsman-Style fireplace mantle that may have been updated when the house was moved and Craftsman elements were added to the exterior of the house. The fireplace features a rectilinear shelf supported by simple pilasters. A concrete hearth may have been added at the time of the move. The walls feature a tall baseboard with a moulded cap, and the walls are topped with Cavetto trim at the ceiling. The ceiling has been replaced or covered with fiberboard panels. The door and windows features moulded trim mitered at the corners. It is likely that wallboard was applied over an earlier wall finish, leaving the original trim flush with the
newer wall covering. Trim was then added to give greater relief. Narrow pine flooring is not original but may date to the early twentieth century. The original door leading to the hall has been replaced with a fifteen-light door with a glass knob.
Above: Parlor

Below: East front room
Across the hall from the parlor, the east front room contains an older mantle consistent with the Italianate Style. The mantle features trim that mirrors the segmented pointed hoods of the front door and windows. The fireplace is bordered by two five-horizontal-panel closet doors with glass knobs. Trim around the doors and windows is simple boards. The ceiling in this room is also covered with fiberboard panels.
The dining room is the only room in the principal section of the house that has retained an original beaded-board tongue-and-groove ceiling. The ceiling and wall juncture features cyma recta trim. Window and door trim is simple. The room features the same mantel found in the parlor. It is possible that when the house was moved some of the fireboxes were rebuilt to burn coal, and the replacement mantles better fit the smaller opening. The dining room features a built-in china cabinet, with two three-horizontal-panel doors at the base, four-light glazed doors in the middle, and two short single-panel doors set above the glass doors. The original door leading to the hall was also replaced with a fifteen-light door.

The floor plan of the second story generally mirrors the layout on the first story. The staircase leads to a center hall where the stair rail turns into a handrail around the floor opening. Whereas many of the first story interior doors have been replace, the second story hallway is lined with original five-panel doors. A
partial-height window illuminates the south end of the hallway and sits over a short panel door that gives access to the attic over the rear wing. The hallway has been altered with the addition of a ca. 1920 bathroom that occupies the north end of the hallway, and a closet has been added to the north of the staircase.

The upstairs rooms are all similar. Each contains a single closet with a narrow five panel door and an elegant but simple mantle with pilasters and a replacement tile hearth.
Typical second story room detail

The interior of the wing was significantly remodeled late in the twentieth century, with the ceiling and floor covered with new materials. The only notable historic feature is a six-light two-panel door that probably dates from the time of the house being moved.
The property contains two outbuildings. The larger is a frame gabled barn/workshop, with distinct shed wings. A panel door is set in the center of the front elevation and is topped with a simple loft door. The second building is a front-gabled block garage that may date from the 1960s.