

Survey And Research Report

On The

Barnum and Sarah Sustare House



1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Barnum and Sarah Sustare House is located at 13700 Idlewild Road in Matthews, N.C.

2. Name, address, and telephone number of contact for the current owners of the property:

Stuart Phelps and Charity Hope Brown Phelps

13700 Idlewild Road

Matthews, N.C. 28105

Telephone: (704) 201-9020

3. Representative photographs of the property: This report contains representative photographs of the property.

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5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The most recent deed to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 23078 at Page 538.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property: This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

7. A brief architectural and physical description of the property: This report contains a brief architectural and physical description of the property 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 Barnum and Sarah Sustare House possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

- 1) The Barnum and Sarah Sustare House is a rare remnant of the rural built environment which once characterized this section of Idlewild Road.
- 2) The Barnum and Sarah Sustare House shows the hand of a professional builder, especially in the extensive use of store-bought millwork.
- 3) Barnum Sustare, the original owner of the Barnum and Sarah Sustare House, was a prominent citizens of eastern Mecklenburg County, including the town of Matthews, N.C.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association: The Commission contends that the architectural and physical description prepared by Stewart Gray demonstrates that the Barnum and Sarah Sustare House meets this criterion.

9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal: The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owners 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 appraised value of the property is \$258,900. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is 21526105. The most recent annual property tax bill on the property was \$3,667.98.

10. Amount of Property Proposed for historic landmark designation. The interior of the house, the exterior of the house, and the entire 5.22 tax parcel.

Date of Preparation of this Report: September 16, 2010

A Brief History Of The Barnum and Sarah Sustare House

Dr. Dan L. Morrill



The Barnum and Sarah Sustare House, a Queen Anne style domicile located on the south side of Idlewild Road in Matthews, N.C., was originally the centerpiece of an approximately 40-acre farm. The house is a remnant of the once-rural built environment of eastern Mecklenburg County that has become predominantly suburbanized since the house was erected, most likely at the turn of the last century.¹ The special significance of the Barnum and Sarah Sustare House can only be understood within the context of Mecklenburg County. There are no other extant farm era houses on this section of Idlewild Road, which has been a major thoroughfare at least from the late 1800s. Additionally, the house shows the hand of a professional builder, especially in the extensive use of store-bought millwork -- a testimonial to the economic standing of the first owners of the house.



Barnum and Sarah Sustare taken in Norfolk, VA. in June of 1940, which would have made Barnum 78 and Sarah 73. They were married on April 15, 1889. Source: Carol Lorraine Sutton

The initial owners were Barnum A. Sustare (1862-1951) and his wife, Sarah Ferguson Sustare (1867-1962).² Born in Lancaster County, S.C., Barnum Sustare migrated at the age of 12 with his widowed mother to Mecklenburg County in 1874 -- a move most likely induced by the completion of the Carolina Central Railway just two years before.³ It is reasonable to assume that the family sought to benefit from the more robust economic infrastructure provided by Matthews and the railroad running through it.



Holly Elizabeth Hemby Sustare (1837-1902), mother of Barnum A. Sustare, moved with her children to Mecklenburg County in 1872. Her husband had been killed in 1862 in the Civil War.⁴ Source: Carol Lorraine Sutton

Eastern Mecklenburg County was profoundly impacted by the opening of the Carolina Central Railway between Charlotte and Wilmington in 1872. A depot was constructed near a former stagecoach stop called Fullwood Station; and an agricultural support community, named Matthews, grew up nearby and was incorporated in 1879.⁵ Matthews and its attendant amenities, which included a bank, mercantile stores, a cotton mill, and a grist mill, facilitated the cultivation of cash crops, especially cotton, in the surrounding countryside. ⁶

Barnum Sustare was an innovative entrepreneur. In addition to farming, Sustare actively participated in the business and civic affairs of Matthews, eventually relocating there. He was a trustee and stockholder in the Bank of Matthews and served for many years as a town alderman and member of the school board. Having helped organize Mount Harmony Baptist Church before moving to town, Sustare became a deacon of Matthews Baptist Church.⁷ Most interestingly, Sustare developed a recreational and entertainment center just north of the central business district of Matthews, appropriately known as "Sustare's."⁸ It consisted of a swimming pool, a refreshment stand, a faux beach, and a place to dance and listen to music.⁹ Beginning in the 1940s, Sustare's became one of a number of inland venues where Carolina Beach Music was played.¹⁰ Barnum Sustare, called a "prominent businessman and farmer" by the *Charlotte Observer*, died on March 13, 1951.¹¹ His wife, Sarah, expired in June 1962.¹² Both are buried in the cemetery at Mount Harmany Baptist Church.

The history of the Barnum and Sarah Sustare House is rather straightforward. The house and a portion of the original farm remained in the hands of members of the family until June 1981, when it was sold to Jim and Pamela Humphrey.¹² By then agricultural use of the land had ended. The Humphreys in turn conveyed the house and 5.22 acres of land to the present owners, Stuart Phelps (1973-) and Charity Hope Brown Phelps (1975-) in November 2007.¹³ Stuart Phelps, a native of Sulphur, Louisiana, is a G.I.S. analyst. Charity Phelps was born in Cumberland, Kentucky and is the daughter Dr. Joe B. Brown, minister of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte. Stuart and Charity Phelps, who were married on August 28, 1999, maintain the house as their residence and have completed a major addition to the house.¹⁴



Endnotes

1. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 132, Page 316. Barnum Sustare acquired his first parcel in Morning Star Township, and which the Barnum and Sarah Sustare House is located, on January 6, 1899. It is reasonable to assume that the house was erected soon thereafter. The deed records of Mecklenburg County reveal that Sustare was actively engaged in the buying and selling of land in eastern Mecklenburg County. There are variations in the spelling of his surname, including Sistare, Sustair, and Sistaire.
2. *Charlotte Observer* (March 14, 1951; June 15, 1962). Interview of Stuart Phelps by Dr. Dan L. Morrill (2010), hereinafter cited as *Interview*.
3. *Charlotte Observer* (March 14, 1951). For a comprehensive essay on the small towns of Mecklenburg County, including Matthews, see <http://landmarkscommission.org/smtownsurvey64.htm>. For historic

photographs of the Sustare family see the website of Carol Lorraine Sutton at http://www.carolsutton.net/sustare/sistare_ferguson_photo.html.

4. See http://www.carolsutton.net/sustare/holly_elizabeth_hemby.html



Barnum Sustare had an identical twin brother, James Sustare. James is on the left and Barnum on the right. Source: Carol Lorraine Sutton

5. Dan L. Morrill, "Survey and Research Report on the Funderburk Buildings" (1991) for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission. See <http://landmarkscommission.org/surveys&rfunderburk.htm>

6. See <http://landmarkscommission.org/smtownsurvey64.htm>.

7. *Charlotte Observer* (March 14, 1951).

8. *Charlotte Observer* (June 15, 1962).

9. Interview of William Caldwell by Dr. Dan L. Morrill (2010)

10. See <http://www.lakewylieshagclub.com/Beach%20Music%20History.htm>

11. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 4444, Page 308.

12. *Charlotte Observer* (June 15, 1962).

13. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 23078, Page 538.

14. *Interview.*

Barnum and Sarah Sustare House

13700 Idlewild Road, Matthews, N.C.



Photo taken Spring 2010



House as it appeared in 2007



The Sustare House is a large massed-plan wood-framed one-story Queen Anne Style farmhouse. The house faces east and is set back approximately 60' from Idlewild Road. The house sits on a relatively level five acre lot. To the south of the house is an open field. A neighboring house sits close to the Sustare House to the north. The

neighborhood primarily consist of mid to late Twentieth Century ranch houses sitting on one acre lots.



Typical neighboring houses along Idlewild Road

The facade features a nearly full width hipped-roof porch that wraps around the south elevation. The porch is highlighted by a single gable over wide steps with simple handrails that lead to the porch in front of the front door. The gable contains vertical narrow moulded boards with a convex profile. The porch rests on brick piers that have been infilled with brick curtain walls. The porch roof is supported by turned post topped with sawn brackets. Posts are connected by chamfered and beaded handrails with simple picket balustrades. Porch floor is tongue-and-groove boards. The original porch ceiling is covered by plywood.

The facade features two moderately steep gables of roughly equal size. The southernmost of the gables projects forward over a wide cut-away bay that is also completely protected by the front porch. This gable contains vertical beaded board and a louvered vent with a sawn trim featuring a three leaf design. The gable features an overhanging closed rake, highlighted by moulded trim. The second gable extends to the north side elevation and is set back from the other gable, and contains the same woodwork features.



Facade detail

The cut-away bay contains three double-hung two-over-two windows. The window sash are modern based on the design of the original sash. Interior and exterior sills and trim are original. Nearly all sash in the house have been replaced. The facade is three bay wide. The front door is located to the north of the cut-away bay. The door is a six-light replacement door. A single window is centered below the north gable. Walls sheltered by the porch feature the same narrow moulded convex boards found in the porch gable set horizontally. The porch walls are topped with moulded trim. To the north of the porch, a small unsheltered section of the wall is sheathed with weather board, separated from the moulded siding by a single vertical board. The workmanship of the finish carpentry and the quality of the millwork, especially the millwork lavished on the facade, are notable.



Detail of south elevation and south projecting wing

The south elevation of the principal section of the house is completely sheltered by the porch and contains a single tall two-over-two window. A small portion of the rear of the porch was enclosed with weatherboard early in the twentieth century forming a small vestibule. A tall two-over-two window and replacement door pierce the vestibule walls. Originally the porch wrapped around and sheltered the front of the wing that projects to the south. This portion of the porch was enclosed early in the twentieth century with weatherboard siding and is pierced by three short two-over-two windows. The gable features beaded board and the same woodwork found in the other forward-facing gables. The wing was originally cross-gabled, but with a recent addition to the rear of the house, the original south facing gable was replaced with a hip.



A new one-bay-wide hipped wing projects from the south elevation.



View of north elevation and rear (rear elevation features screened porch)

The north elevation is two bays wide. A gable is located adjacent to the facade. Unlike the front gables, this gable contains weatherboard siding and features a simple diamond-shaped louvered vent. A band that serves as a freeze board under the soffit adjacent to the rear elevation, runs across the base of the gable.

The northern section of the rear elevation is largely original and features a gable adjacent to the north elevation. Cornice/band and vent details are like those on the north elevation. A single two-over-two window is centered beneath the gable. A new hipped-roof porch shelters much of the center section of the rear elevation. It appears that the rear elevation once featured a recessed porch that was infilled to form bathrooms. A multi-hipped wing was added to the rear elevation in 2007, and it obscures the south portion of the original rear elevation. The new construction features a small gable above a cut-away bay.



Portion of rear elevation



Bedroom wing added to rear of the house



Chimney detail

The Sustare House features three decoratively corbelled internal chimneys. Each chimney is centered over one of the forward facing gables.

Interior

Significant portions of the interior of the Sustare House have retained a high degree of integrity. The workmanship exhibited by the interior woodwork is exemplary. The five rooms that compose the principal section of the house have retained an impressive amount of the original woodwork. The principal section of the house is bisected by a hallway that runs the depth of the house. The hallway's ceiling and walls are covered with beaded boards. Boards on the wall are set vertically below a moulded chair rail, and horizontal above the rail. The six doorways that open onto the hallway are trimmed with moulded boards butted into rosette blocks at the upper corners, and into starter blocks also decorated with rosette at the floor. The walls are topped with simple moulded crown and the original pine floors are topped with wide quarter-round where they meet the walls. Interior doors have retained the original cast iron box locks and pressed steel knobs.



Hallway looking to the rear

To the north of the hallway are two bedrooms. The front bedroom features a beaded-board ceiling and vertical beaded boards below a moulded chair rail. Above the chair rail, the wall is sheathed with plain tongue-and-groove boards. The mantle features rosette starter blocks supporting a shelf. The rear bedroom has no chair rail and no beaded boards on the walls. The mantle in the back bedroom features sawn trim and rosette blocks and starter block, suggesting the the mantles were made by the builder using off-the-shelf millwork items. Both rooms feature moulded wood and rosette block trim around the doors and windows.



Front bedroom



North rear bedroom



North rear bedroom



Parlor

The front room to the south of the hallway contains the cut-away bay, and originally served as a parlor. The tall mantle features ripped turned spindles, scroll saw trim, rosettes and moulded trim. In this room narrow moulded boards with a convex profile, like the siding used on the front porch, covers the walls below a moulded chair rail, with beaded boards above. The original floor has been replaced with similar pine flooring.



South rear bedroom

The back room to the south of the hallway, like all of the bedrooms, features two closets, one set on either side of the internal chimney. All of the bedrooms feature five panel doors. The mantle in this room features pendant-design sawn trim. A wall between this bedroom and the original dining room has been largely removed, replaced by a cased opening.



Detail showing cased openings

The dining room features a built-in china cabinet. The cabinet is either original to the house or an early addition. The room features a relatively simple mantle with moulded trim and rosettes. The brick hearth was recently rebuilt. A second cased opening was added to the rear of the room and open onto what originally was a rear porch. The walls are covered with tongue and groove boards. The floor is original. Portions of trim from an original window opening is still extant in the rear wall.



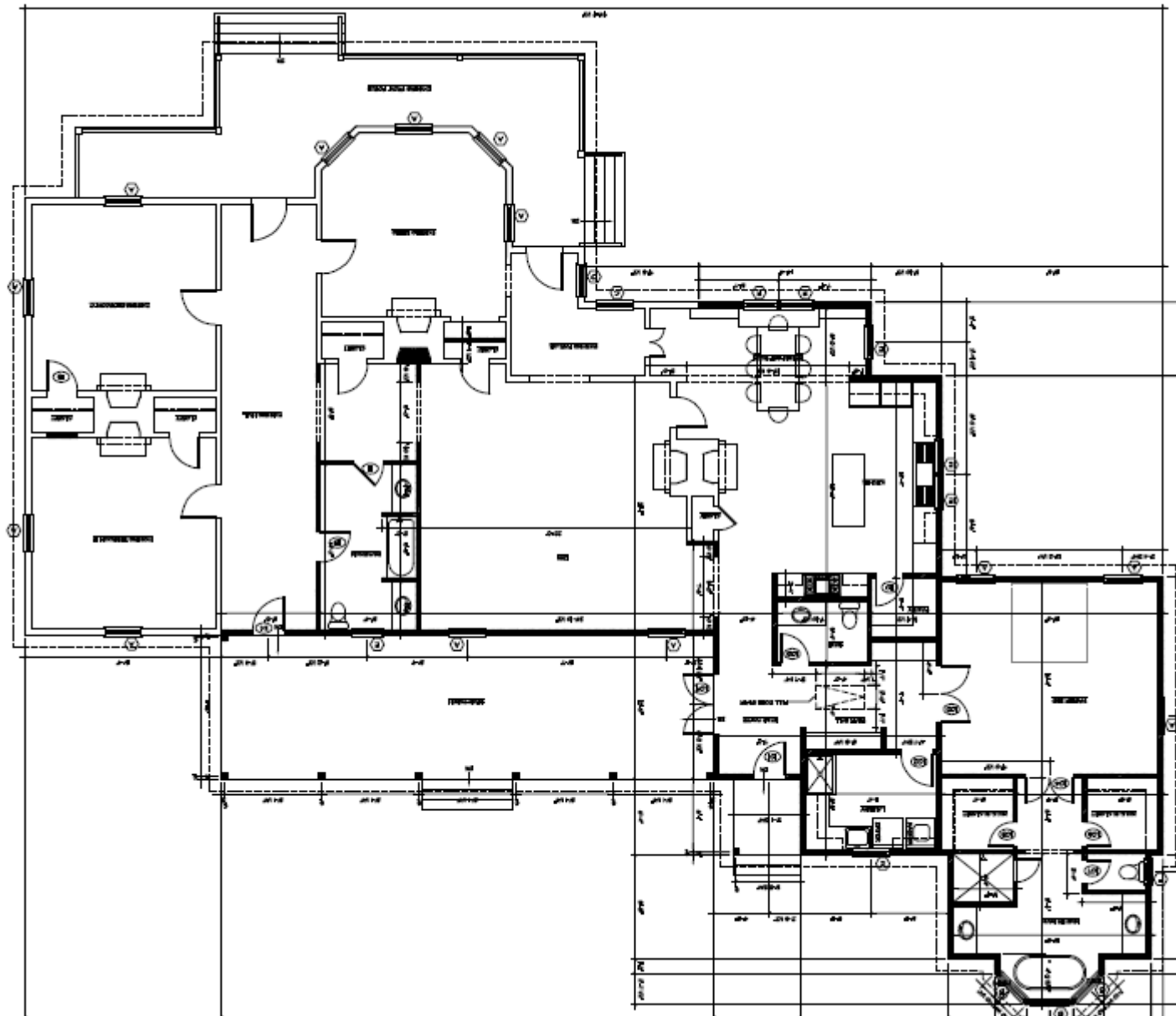
Dinning room

The kitchen was expanded in the middle part of the Twentieth Century and again in 2007, but many of the historic architectural elements remained in place, including a short six-panel closet door, and a mantle with moulded trim and rosettes similar to the mantle in the dining room. The room has a new pine floor, and boxed beams in the ceiling indicate the locations of the original exterior walls. A large bedroom wing was added to the house to the rear of the kitchen.



Kitchen

Despite the additions and changes made to the house, most of the interior woodwork has survived and well conveys the historic character and design of the house.



Sustare House

Photo Gallery





























