

**SURVEY AND RESEARCH REPORT  
ON THE  
JOHN F. EWART FARM**



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

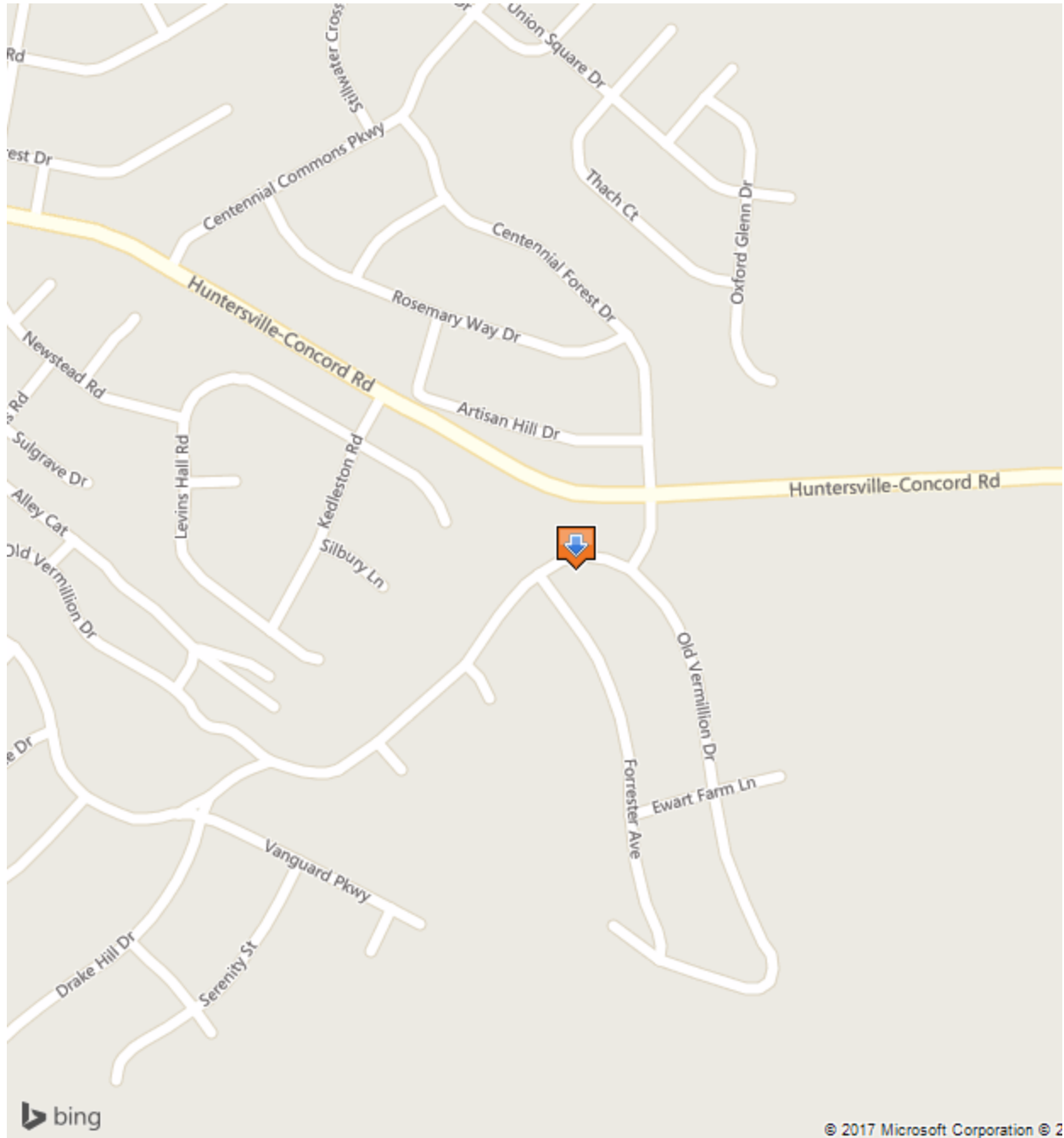
**The property known as the John F. Ewart Farm is located at 12920  
Huntersville-Concord Road, Huntersville, NC 28078-6251**

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

**Mary Ewart Cato**  
**13110 Huntersville-Concord Road, Huntersville, NC 28078-6251**  
**Telephone Number: 704-875-6888**

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

**4. A map depicting the location of the property: This report contains a map depicting the location of the property. UTM Coordinates: 17 515820E 3918720N**



**5. Current deed book reference to the property:** The most recent deeds to the property are found in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 03314 Page 271. The tax parcel numbers for the property are 01939104.

**6. A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch prepared by Richard L. Mattson.

**7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description prepared by Richard L. Mattson.

**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.**

**Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and/or cultural importance. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission judges that the John F. Ewart Farm possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:**

**John F. Ewart Farm is a tangible reminder of the county's agricultural development during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The property stands as a rare surviving farmstead from this period in the county.**

**John F. Ewart Farm is an integral part of the rural Ramah community near Huntersville in northeast Mecklenburg County.**

**John F. Ewart Farm is architecturally significant, including a handsome I-house with picturesque decorative elements, and outbuildings that represent traditional outbuilding types. The 1898 house ranks among the finest remaining late-nineteenth-century farmhouses in Mecklenburg County.**

**Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association: The Commission contends that the architectural description prepared by Richard L. Mattson demonstrates that the John F. Ewart Farm meets this criterion.**

**9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal: The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the property which becomes a designated "historic landmark." The current appraised value on the farmhouse is \$91,100. The current appraised value of the 8.55 acre parcel of land on which the house and outbuildings stand is \$123,000. The current appraised value of the 8.55 acre tract owned by Mary Ewart Cato is \$232,100.**

**Date of preparation of this report:**

**May 10, 2004**

**Prepared by:**

**Richard L. Mattson  
2228 Winter Street  
Charlotte, NC 28205**

## Statement of Significance

### John F. Ewart Farm

The John F. Ewart Farm is a remarkably intact late nineteenth- and early-twentieth farmstead in Mecklenburg County. The property features the well-preserved 1898 farmhouse, a traditional two-story, one-room-deep, frame dwelling embellished with stylish, picturesque elements. This handsome residence reflected John F. Ewart's status as a successful landowner in north Mecklenburg County. Its blend of conservative and up-to-date features is characteristic of the finer rural domestic architecture in the county during this period. The substantially intact farm complex contains a dairy, smokehouse, shed, and barn that are contemporary with the house. The complex also holds a ca. 1939 equipment shelter and a ca. 1960 equipment shelter. Bordered by mature trees and fencerows, this tract continues to portray the agricultural way of life that once predominated throughout Mecklenburg County. The Ewart tract consists of approximately eleven acres today, with the house as its architectural centerpiece. Mature pecan and oak trees shade the dwelling and yard.

### Architectural Context and Description Ewart House



The two-story, frame 1898 Ewart farmhouse clearly illustrates the enduring popularity of the traditional I-house type in Mecklenburg County. This two-story, one-room-deep, rectangular house form was a favorite choice among successful middling and large

landowners throughout the Upland South between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries. As the county gradually recovered from the Civil War, farmers opted for new dwellings that often combined nationally popular elements of style with conservative, regional building patterns. Mecklenburg County farmers favored the I-house, a common, traditional form that was typically three bays wide, with a side-gable roof, brick end chimneys, center-hall plan, and rear kitchen/dining room ell. By the late nineteenth century, the more stylish examples often featured a decorative center roof gable. Other popular decorative motifs included picturesque front porches with turned posts and sawnwork, and bracketed eaves. Inside, mantels displayed such traits as gently arched surrounds, bracketed shelves, and reeded or chamfered supports. Doorways on the finest houses included fluted surrounds and bull's-eye corner blocks. In the center hallways, turned or beveled newels anchored staircases with turned balusters.



The Ewart House stands as one of the finer surviving I-houses of the post-bellum era in the county. Although the house's original weatherboard exterior was covered with aluminum siding in the early 1960s, the original decorative trim and other key elements survive intact. Facing north, the house has a three-bay façade, common-bond brick end chimneys, and a rear dining room/kitchen ell. The dwelling features a decorative center roof gable treated with board-and-batten sheathing, a louvered vent, and fancy sawnwork and spindlework. The porch's pedimented entry bay has similar treatment. The porch also retains its original turned posts, spindlework frieze, and spindlework brackets. The windows have original two-over-two sash, and the first-floor fenestration has segmental arches. A one-story, ca. 1950 bedroom wing extends from the west side of the rear kitchen ell.

The well-preserved interior follows a central-hall layout with one first-floor room on either side of the stairhall. Two bedrooms are located in the upstairs of the main two-story block, arranged around a center hall. The kitchen/dining room ell is located on the west side of the rear elevation, and extending from the west side of this ell is the later, ca. 1950 bedroom wing. The first-floor stairhall contains a closed-string stairway with an ornate, chamfered newel and applied decorative step-end blocks. Throughout the main body of the house, mantels, door surrounds, and five-panel doors remain intact. The mantels in the principal rooms display an array of picturesque elements, including reeded and slender, lathe-turned supports, applied floral motifs, shelves with delicate moldings, including rope molding on the living room mantel. Mantels in the kitchen and upstairs rooms have simpler chamfered and reeded pilasters. In 1952, the original flooring was replaced with new wood floorboards and original wainscoting removed in the first-floor rooms. However, the wainscoting remains in the center hall, and beaded-board ceilings survive throughout the main body of the residence.

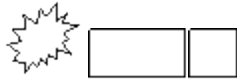
**Site Plan** (not to scale)

Barn (ca. 1898)

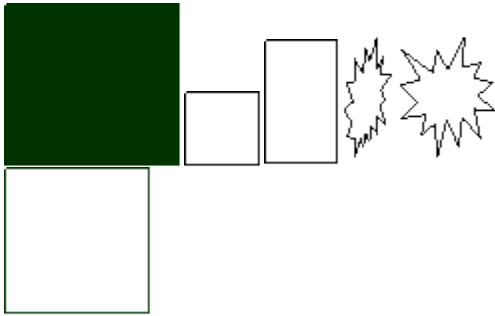


Equipment Shelter (ca. 1960)





Smokehouse (ca. 1898)  
Dairy/Well



Ewart House (ca. 1898)

Shed



(ca. 1898)

Equipment Shelter

(ca. 1939)



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SR 2448

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## **Outbuildings**

The assortment of farm outbuildings on the tract includes traditional forms that builders constructed on county farms into the middle decades of the twentieth century. Located next to the kitchen, the ca. 1898 dairy is a frame, gable-front building with a projecting well canopy. It was used for keeping dairy products and foodstuffs cool. A trough for running water leads from the well to the dairy. Situated adjacent to the dairy, the smokehouse is a frame, board-and-batten building with a gable-front roof and doors on both the north and west ends. A gable-roofed board-and-batten shed stands east of the house. Now ruinous, the ca. 1898 barn stands at the south end of the farm complex. In traditional fashion, this farm barn has a gable-front form, with a central passage and shed extension on the side elevations. A ca. 1960, metal and frame equipment shelter, built for modern farm machinery, is sited at the south end of the tract, and a smaller equipment shelter stands just east of the residence.



## **Historical Background and Agricultural Significance**

Of German descent, the Ewarts settled in Mecklenburg County between 1764 and 1817. The John F. Ewart Farm can be traced back to a deed from William D[ixon?] Ewart to Hugh Dixon Ewart dated 20 January 1849 for fifty-three acres on the waters of Clarks Creek. Hugh Dixon Ewart (1816 to 1877) married Mary M. Carrigan Ewart (1827 to 1911), and by 1871, the year John Frank Ewart (1871 to 1952) was born, the household included three sons and one daughter. In 1898, the Ewart farm, by then eighty-nine acres, was divided among his heirs, including John F. Ewart. In August, 1898, Ewart hired a local builder, Neil Barnette, to build the present two-

story house his portion of the tract. A nearby farmer, Neil Barnette (1861 to 1940) erected houses after the autumn harvest each year, and constructed numerous farmhouses around northern Mecklenburg County. Over the years, Ewart bought out the interests of the other heirs, so that by 1916 he was the sole owner of the eighty-nine acre Ewart family tract (Mecklenburg County Deed Books 2: 329, 407-408; 6: 25; 12: 472; 13: 322, 385; 14: 251; 17: 280; Mattson and Huffman 1990: 8: 2-3).



On June 6, 1912, Ewart was married to Ella Elliot (1880 to 1962) and they had two children Joe Elliot (1914 to 1959) and Mary (Mrs. William H. Cato). The Ewart farm produced crops typical of farms in Mecklenburg County in the early twentieth century. According to Ewart's daughter, Mary Ewart Cato, the family raised cotton, corn, and wheat, and had a small fruit orchard for family consumption (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 127: 446; Mattson and Huffman 1990: 8: 2-3).



The Ewart farm in the early decades of the twentieth century reflected middling farmsteads throughout the county and the region. Cotton was the principal cash staple. The use of fertilizers, especially guano, increased production, and the proximity of farms to Charlotte and other textile manufacturing centers boosted cotton prices and provided a ready market for the crop. Until the devastation of the boll weevil in the 1920s, and plummeting cotton prices by the Great Depression, cotton farming was the foundation of the region's commercial agriculture. Cotton production on county farms soared from 6,112 bales in 1860 to 19,129 bales in 1880, and then rose to 27,466 bales by 1910. In addition to cotton, local farmers like the Ewarts also raised small grains and livestock for the market as well as use on the farm. Farmers combined cash-crop agriculture with self-sufficiency, raising corn in quantity to feed mules, sheep, hogs, and cattle, storing foodstuffs in small dairies, and curing meat in smokehouses. Farmyards were an assemblage of barns, corncribs, granaries, storage and equipment sheds, dairies, well houses, and smokehouses (Mattson and Huffman 1990; Joines and Morrill 1997).

In addition to farming, John Ewart was a long-time member of Huntersville school board and the tax lister for Huntersville Township. After his death in 1952 and that of his son in 1959, much of the farmland, including the 1898 farmhouse, came to the ownership of his daughter, Mary Ewart Cato. In 1971, an 8.55-acre lot that contains the farmhouse, outbuildings, and some adjoining fields, was made into a separate parcel (Mecklenburg County Deed Books 3314: 271, 283; 3315: 551; Mecklenburg County Will Book 17: 470; *Charlotte Observer* 8 January 1952; Mattson and Huffman 1990: 8: 2-3).

## Bibliography

Blythe, Mrs. William N. Daughter of Neil Barnette. Interview with William H. Huffman, 1989.

Cato, Mary Ewart. Daughter of John F. Ewart. Interview with William H. Huffman, 1989.

*Charlotte Observer*. 8 January 1952.

Joines, Sherry J. and Dan Morrill. "Historic Rural Resources in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina." On file at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmark Commission, Charlotte. 1997.

Mattson, Richard L., and William H. Huffman. "Historic and Architectural Resources of Rural Mecklenburg County, North Carolina." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination. On file at the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. 1990.

----- "National Register Nomination for the John F. Ewart Farm. On file at the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. 1990.

Mecklenburg County. *Deed Books*.

----- *Will Books*.

United States Census Records. Mecklenburg County, N.C. Population Schedules, 1860, 1880, 1920.