1. **Name and location of the property:** The property known as the Phillips House and Morris Barn is located at 131 West Charles Street, Matthews, North Carolina.

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

   Margaret E. Phillips
   PO Box 265
   Matthews NC 28106-0265
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 Deed Book Reference To The Property.** The tax parcel number for the property is 19326210.

6. **A Brief Historical Essay On The Property.** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Stewart Gray.

7. **A Brief Physical Description Of The Property.** This report contains a brief 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 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission judges that the Phillips House and Morris Barn possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:
1) The property known as the “Phillips House and Morris Barn” is a significant cultural artifact for the town of Matthews, well representing the historic landscape of the town in the early 20th century. The intact lot, house and outbuildings physically demonstrate how daily life was conducted in Matthews when agriculture and working animals were prominent in the town, and when modern conveniences such as public water and electricity were not yet available.

2) The Phillips House and Morris Barn are important for their association with the Phillips family. Oscar Luther “Pete” Phillips who served as Matthews’s postmaster from 1933 to 1953, served on the Town Board and Mecklenburg County School Board, and was a prominent citizen who worked to bring public electricity and new businesses to Matthews. As the longtime director of the Carolina Room, Mary Louise Phillips was prominent in the area of local history in Mecklenburg County. Mary Louise and her sister Margaret Phillips became “town institutions,” living in their childhood home in the center of town, and remaining physically and socially active into their late-nineties.

3) The Phillips House is a substantial Craftsman-style bungalow that contributes significantly to the built historic environment of Matthews.

4) While all surviving historic barns in Mecklenburg County are important artifacts of the agricultural history of the area, the Morris Barn is extremely significant as the only identified surviving “in-town” barn in the county. The barn is in good condition and has retained a good degree of integrity.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association: The Commission judges that the physical description included in this report demonstrates that the property known as the Phillips House and Morris Barn 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 of the Phillips House and Morris Barn is $193,400.

10. This report finds that the interior and exterior of the house and barn, all outbuildings, and the land associated with the Phillips House and Morris Barn should be included in landmark designation of the property.

Date of preparation of this report: March 2014

Prepared by: Stewart Gray
The Phillips House and Morris Barn

The Phillips House was built in 1925 for O. L. “Pete” Phillips, his wife Beulah Paxton Phillips, and their two daughters Margaret and Mary Louise, in the heart of the town of Matthews, North Carolina. The family moved into the house in February of 1925. The house was built by professional builders, Beulah’s brother Tom Paxton, and Bill Freeman. The builders also built the nearby Pleasant Plains Baptist Church. The Phillips House was built on the site of the Morris House, a three-room house that was moved to the southeast corner of the one acre property and used to house servants and farm hands. The Morris House was demolished around 1965. The Morris’s gabled barn was left in place and served as barn and a cotton house for the Phillips family.1

Matthews in the First Half of the 20th Century

The Phillips House was built in a physical and social landscape that was very different from the Matthews of today. In 1925 Matthews did not have public electrical power. Nor were public water and sewer available. Water for the Phillips house was drawn from a hand-dug well that was lined with stone. Water was brought up with a bucket and a hand crank, while their neighbor Nancy Reid drew her well water with a pump. The Town of Matthews did not have a municipal water system until 1948.2

The Phillips’s relied on their hand-dug well until around 1935 when their neighbor, Lee Edward Funderburk, brought water to his house from a well on the Funderburk family’s commercial property on Trade Street. The pipe had to run through the Phillips property to reach Funderburk’s house, and Pete Phillips was able to tap on the waterline in exchange for granting Funderburk a right-of-way. As was typical, an outhouse was located on the Phillips lot.3

In Matthews in 1925, animal husbandry was prevalent, and animal power was still commonly used to transport goods. Until the end of World War II, the Phillips family kept a milk cow in the barn, and used the back third of the house lot as a pasture. Margaret Phillips recalls that not everyone in town owned a milk cow, but that many people did. According to Margaret, “Everyone” kept chickens, and some folks in town even kept pigs. In addition to a milk cow, the Phillips sometimes kept sheep and a horse in the pasture behind their house. The Phillips kept chickens through the 1950s. The property is bordered to the east by an alley (now Library Lane) that served a grist mill, a blacksmith shop, and a large livery stable. Mule and horses frequently traveled the alley before the War.4
Cotton was a dominant presence in Matthews. Cotton farms surrounded the town, and there was even a cotton field in the town adjacent to the train depot, where the current Town Hall is located. Pete sometimes hauled cotton from his tenant farms to his home and stored the cotton in the barn. Their neighbor, Lee Edward Funderburk, a cotton dealer, routinely hauled bailed cotton to North Fremont Street by mule drawn wagons when there was nowhere else to keep it.\textsuperscript{5} Despite being “in town,” the landscape of Matthews in 1925 was inexorable linked to agriculture, livestock, and rural practices.

The Phillips House and Morris Barn are important artifacts for understanding the early 20\textsuperscript{th}-century history of Matthews. The intact lot, house and outbuildings physically demonstrate how
daily life was conducted in Matthews when agriculture and working animals were prominent in the town, and when modern conveniences such as public water and electricity were not yet available.

**The Phillips Family**

![Pete and Margaret Phillips, ca. 1918](image)

Pete Phillips was both a townsperson and a farmer. He was born one of nine children, on a nearby farm where his father raised cotton for seed, selling “Phillips Big Bowl” brand seeds. Even after going to work as a clerk for cotton merchant Thomas Jefferson Renfroe, Pete continued to work on the family farm and to manage tenants who sharecropped the Phillips’ land. Pete married Beulah in 1913 and moved to a house on Trade Street. The Phillips had two daughters. Margaret was born in 1914, and Mary Louise was born in 1917. In 1925 Matthews did not have public electrical power, but Pete Phillips had his home wired for electricity in anticipation of electrical service becoming available. After the family moved into the Charles Street house, Pete began to work with Edward Funderburk to have electricity brought to the town from Monroe. Margaret remembers her father and Funderburk traveling in the evenings between Matthews and Monroe, working to secure the right-of-way for the power lines. It is possible that Pete’s civic involvement was rewarded in 1933 when he was named the town’s Postmaster. Pete was a Democrat, and was appointed as the town’s Post Master by the Roosevelt administration. ⁶
In 1939 a new federally funded post office was completed at the corner of Trade Street and West Charles Street, on land donated by local businessman Lester Hunt Yandle. This new location was ideal for Pete Phillips, as the post office lot backed up to the Phillips House lot. Pete led the official dedication of the new post office on May 3, 1939. The celebration was quite an event with the U.S. Army 105th Engineer Band playing to a crowd of approximately 3,500 people. Among the speakers at the ceremony was the area’s congressman, A. L. Bullwinkle. During Pete’s tenure as Postmaster (1933-1955), the post office was central to the lives of Matthews residents. Mail was the primary means of communication and information for most people in the town. It was essential to commerce, and with the development of the New Deal, it was the source of government welfare and assistance checks. The Matthews Post Office was the most prominent and most utilized public building in the town, and Pete Phillips was most public and most accessible public official in Matthews.

While working as the postmaster, Pete Phillips also served on the town board and the Mecklenburg County Board of Education. He continued to manage his family’s farm and tenant farms, and bought additional productive farmland. He also constructed a tennis court beside the Phillips House, adjacent to Charles Street. The family played a tremendous amount of tennis, and the court (packed clay) was available to the other town residents. The fence that surrounded the court had a gate that opened directly onto the public sidewalk.

After his retirement from the post office, Pete Phillips kept busy as a farmer and worked as a volunteer recruiter to bring businesses to Matthews. Pete was given credit for bringing a branch plant of the Consolidated Brass Company to Matthews. The company, today known as Apollo
Valves, is now headquartered in Matthews. He was voted “Matthews Man of the Year” in 1957.
9 Pete died in 1965.

Beulah worked as a homemaker. She shared her house with her daughters until she died in 1978. Margaret attended the North Carolina College for Women (now UNCG), and then began a career as a teacher. She worked in the Mecklenburg County school system, and then in the unified school system. She spent the last nineteen years of her career as a school administrator and retired in 1976. Mary Louise attended Queens College and then Emory University where she studied library science. After teaching and working as a librarian in Virginia and Raleigh, N.C., Mary Louise returned to Matthews in the late 1940s and worked with her father at the Post Office. In 1955 she became the director of the public library’s Carolina Room, an archive and reference center for the local history of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Mary Louise was critical in the development and long lasting success of the Carolina Room, and she retired as director in 1985.10

After their retirement, the sisters continued to reside in the Phillips House and were prominent in the social life of Matthews. Mary Louise died in 2013. With the exception of her time in college, the one-hundred-year-old Margaret has resided in the Phillips House from its completion in 1925 until today. 11

The Phillips House

Tom Paxton, and Bill Freeman built Pete and Beulah Phillips a substantial Craftsman style bungalow. Although the popularity of the Craftsman style and the bungalow form had peaked years earlier, the style and form proved to be tenacious in the rural parts of Mecklenburg County. Based on a survey of the Matthews’s historic buildings conducted in 200712, it is clear that the Phillips house is significant as a substantial side-gable one-and-one-half-story Craftsman-style
bungalow in the historic core of the town. The Phillips House well demonstrates the progression of popular architectural styles in Matthews’s historic core when viewed with the neighboring Queen Anne/Colonial Revival-style Benjamin DeWitt Funderburk House, and the Queen Anne-style Reid House.

The significance of the Phillips House is enhanced by its high degree of integrity, its setting in the center of the town’s historic core, and its outbuildings. Another good example of a side-gable one-and-one-half-story bungalow is located at 308 Trade Street, which is on the edge of the town’s historic core. The house is more eclectic than the Phillips House and features clipped gables and a gabled porch supported by classical columns. Another side-gable one-and-one-half-story Craftsman-style bungalow that may have shared plans with the Phillips House is located on the edge of town at 500 Matthews-Mint Hill Road. The house has been covered with vinyl siding, no roof overhang supports are extant, and it appears that the original porch posts have been replaced.

500 Matthews-Mint Hill Road. This house shares a basic floor plan with the Phillips House, but has lost a good degree of integrity.
In the early years of the 20th Century Mecklenburg was one of the leading North Carolina counties in terms of agricultural production, and in 1900 the county was leading the state in cotton production. Thus farmhouses and barns dotted the landscape. Frame barns began to replace log barns late in the 19th century. At that time most Mecklenburg County barns primarily housed the mules and horses used to grow and transport cotton. The work animals were also used to cultivate corn and mow the hay that was needed to feed the livestock. Hay and other fodder were stored in the barn with the animals. A secondary purpose for the barn was to house dairy cows that provided dairy products for the family and for the market.

In the Mecklenburg countryside the frame barns that dotted the landscape were consistently tall front-gabled buildings with a central-hall plan. The barns were typically 32’ wide (excluding shed additions), with a depth that ranged from 30’ to 60’. The Morris Barn is a “town barn.” It is 32’ wide, but only 26’dip. A barn located in town functioned like those in the countryside, but housed less livestock. The Phillips used the barn to house a milk cow. The cow was milked by a hired-hand who lived in the tenant house on the property. Hay for the cow was stored in the loft. Corn and other feed grains were also stored in the barn. The barn does not adhere to the typical central-hall plan. It appears that the side bays served as stalls. The central section of the Morris barn has a wooden floor, and it likely held tack and feed. Any available space in the barn was used at times by Pete Phillips to store cotton.
Many representative examples of barns built in Mecklenburg County’s countryside have survived, but barns in Mecklenburg’s small town have largely disappeared. A “town barn” was identified in Cornelius at 20509 North Main Street, but was demolished after 1999. The Morris Barn is the only surviving barn historically associated with a small town or urban setting that has been identified by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission.

Architectural Description

The Phillips House and Morris Barn are situated on a relatively level one-acre lot, located near the historical center of the town of Matthews. The lot is bounded by North Freemont Street and East Charles Street and is located in a block that contains both single-family residential property and commercial properties that face North Trade Street. The Phillips House shares the block with the 1890 Queen Anne-Style Nancy Reid House. Across North Fremont Street is the substantial Queen Anne/Colonial Revival-style 1904 Benjamin DeWitt Funderburk House. To the north of the Phillips House, across East Charles Street runs the rail line of the former Carolina Central Railroad, now CSX. The nearly square, one-acre lot associated with the Phillips House is of the same size and dimensions as the lot for the Funderburk House, and for the original lot for the Reid House, which was subdivided in the 1950s.

The grid-pattern of streets and property lots in the historic core of Matthews is oriented to the rail line of the former Carolina Central Railroad, which runs from the southeast to the northwest through the center of the town. For the purposes of this description, the house, barn and site will be described as if the lot was aligned with the compass.
The Phillips House

The Phillips House faces north, and is located in the northwest corner of its lot, set approximately 35 feet from East James Street and 30 feet from Freemont Street. It is a bungalow-form, Craftsman-style, side-gabled, one-and-one-half-story house. The façade is dominated by a full-width engaged porch.

The porch is supported by four half-height tapered posts that rest on brick piers topped with simple concrete caps. The brick for the piers, cheek walls, two front steps, and the porch’s
continuous foundation are wire-cut, unlike the plain brick used for the rest of the house. The cheek walls are topped with concrete caps. The posts feature bases with a decorative and functional sawn ogee detail. The porch floor is narrow tongue-and-groove boards. The ceiling is beaded boards, with deep beaded crown moulding.

The porch shelters the original three-vertical-light and three-horizontal-panel, pine door. The door is centered on the façade and features an original louvered outer door. To the east of the door is a wide three-over-one window. All of the window sash in the house were replaced with vinyl windows installed into the original frames. The original sloped window sills and simple flat trim are intact. All the window and door openings are topped with an angled wooden cap. The porch and all of the elevations feature German siding. The siding terminates in corner boards that feature a moulded radius. The beam that supports the porch roof is boxed with dimensioned lumber. The same cap used above the window and door openings is applied to the top of the boxed beam on the gable-sides of the porch. The porch roof rafters are exposed. The roof pitch breaks where the porch meets the house, with the principal roof being steeper.
Centered over the front door is a substantial gabled dormer containing three replacement-sash windows. The barge boards are supported by three short beams that project from the gable. The lower portions of the ends of the beams are beveled. The gable is covered with German siding. The rafter tails are exposed. An internal chimney pierces the roof to the east of the dormer. The chimney features a corbelled crown and a corbelled band below the crown.

The west elevation is four bays wide. From the front, the first two bays contain single replacement-sash windows. Centered between the two windows is an exterior shouldered
chimney with a substantial corbelled crown. Like the internal chimney, a second corbelled band is located below the crown.

Set slightly off-center on the façade is a substantial, shed-roofed projecting bay that contains three tall replacement sash windows. The rafter tails are exposed. The last bay contains a single replacement-sash window. Centered in the large gable is a pair of replacement-sash windows. Small, square replacement-sash windows flank the center windows. A louvered vent is located in the top of the gable. The roof overhang is supported by short beveled beams. Below the lowest row of siding, the same angled trim used over the windows is used as a cap over a wide water table board.
The east elevation is dominated by an original gabled sun room. The sun room is two bays wide and features an original three-vertical-light and three-horizontal-panel, pine door adjacent to the principal section of the house, and a single replacement-sash window. The door opens onto a brick and concrete stoop that does not appear to be original. The east elevation of the sun room features a ribbon of four replacement-sash windows that nearly span width of the sun room. The south elevation of the sun room features two replacement-sash windows. Like the rest of the house, the sun room is covered with German siding, the rafter tails are exposed, and short beveled beams support the roof overhang.

To the rear of the sun room the east elevation is pierced by two replacement-sash windows. At the rearmost section of the east elevation a portion of a shallow rear porch has been infilled with German siding. The fenestration for the east elevation above the first story matches that on the west elevation.
Originally the rear of the house featured a shallow, partial-width, recessed porch that ran to the east corner. Much of the original rear elevation is now obscured by a wide, shed-roofed addition. Exposed features of the original rear elevation include a portion of the original infilled porch, and a single window adjacent to the west elevation. The addition was built ca. 1955, and is covered with German siding that matches the rest of the house. The rear of the addition features a center six-light-over-two-panel door. To each side of the door are triple one-over-one double-hung windows. The windows and door are topped with metal awnings. Double brick steps with a simple iron railing lead to the rear door. The rafter tails are exposed. The east elevation of the addition features a shoulders chimney. The west elevation is pierced by two short one-over-one double-hung windows topped with metal awnings.
Phillips House Interior

The interior of the Phillips House has retained a high degree of integrity. The house features plaster walls and ceilings. All of the principal rooms in the original section of the house have retained all of their original door and window trim, tall baseboards, and doors. The front two rooms in the first story serve as a parlor (east) and a larger living room (west).

The living room features a painted brick fireplace with corbelled brackets that support a simple shelf, and is fronted by an unpainted brick hearth that is flush with the floor. The floor in the living room is narrow-strip oak.
Detail of trim in parlor.

Trim in the living room features a tall baseboard with quarter-round cap and cyma-recta shoe-molding. Even though the original sash have been replaced, the original window trim is intact. The windows feature a bullnose stool with an apron, and the wide window jam and head trim is bordered with cavetto-molded trim. In the living room, parlor, and dining room the top of the walls features cavetto trim. The three-vertical-light, three-horizontal-panel, pine front door opens into the living room, and is unpainted.
The front door opens into the living room.
The living room and the parlor are separated by a pair of original fifteen-light pine doors, with original brass hardware and glass knobs. The parlor features a coal-burning fireplace with a simple but substantial wooden surround, featuring a thick but shallow shelf supported by brackets, and a flush brick hearth. Trim in the parlor is like that in the living room.
An additional set of fifteen-light doors in the living room opens into the dining room. The dining room features the same trim and flooring found in the living room. A two-panel pine door with large plywood panels connects the dining room to a central hallway. A second two-panel door hung on two-way hinges connects the dining room to a kitchen. The dining room contains an early five-light hanging light fixture.
Door leading from dining room to kitchen.
The central hallway contains a turning staircase. A tall pine newel post with molded trim and a flat cap connects to a molded handrail supported by closely-space simple pickets. The hall connects the living room with a bedroom on the east side of the house, and what had originally been a recessed rear porch at the rear of the hall. The flooring in the hallway is narrow pine boards. A two-panel door opens into a closet located under the stairs.

First-story bedroom
The single bedroom on the first story contains a coal-burning fireplace with a simple pine fireplace-surround featuring brackets and a shelf. The fireplace is bordered by two closets. The remainder of the trim in the bedroom is like that found in the front rooms. The closet doors and the rest of the house’s interior doors are original two-panel pine doors with large plywood panels. The floor in the bedroom is narrow pine strips. The bedroom opens into a sunroom that projects from the east elevation. The sunroom feature the same flooring and trim found in the first-story bedroom.

The stairway features a mid-point landing with partial-height single-panel doors opening to closets built into the attic. The doors feature the same trim applied to the windows. The stair treads are pine. The tall newels on the landings and in the second-story hallway are pine and feature molded trim and simple two-piece caps. The hall on the second story features pine flooring and the same trim found throughout the first story.

A small bathroom with a sloping ceiling is located in the northeast corner of the second story. Original tile covers most of the vertical wall surface, and the floor features linoleum tile. Original fixtures include the tub and sink. The tile and fixtures appear to date to the late 1940s.
Second-story bathroom

Second-story bedroom – west side
The two upstairs bedrooms have retained a high level of integrity. They feature narrow-strip pine floors, single-panel doors, and the same trim elements found in the principal first-story rooms. The west bedroom contains an early hanging light fixture.

The original rear porch was enclosed when a bathroom was added in the late 1940s. The bathroom has been remodeled and lacks integrity. The kitchen is located to the rear of the dining room. The kitchen has been remodeled and opens onto a den that was constructed on the rear of the house in the 1950s.

The Morris Barn

To the rear of the Phillips House is the three-bay-wide, front gabled Morris Barn. The barn sits close to North Freemont Street. The barn is covered with flat, un-lapped siding, composed of wide boards of various widths. The center bay contains a simple plank door with simple trim and strap hinges. The other two bays feature wide chamfered openings, with double wooden gate/doors held in place with strap hinges. Directly over the center door, a short door of the same design gives access to a loft.
The barn is covered with green 5-v metal roofing. The rafter ends are exposed, and roof’s skip-sheathing extends past the gables to form a modest overhang. The siding runs to the ground without any exposed foundation. The barn was constructed on a slope, with the south elevation being noticeably taller than the north elevation. The north and south elevations are blank. The south elevation presents wide siding of a uniform width. The north elevation is covered with siding of various widths, and shows evidence of siding repair.
The rear of the barn features the same rhythm of fenestration found on the front. The center bay contains a plank door. The northern bay features a plank door set lower in the wall. The southern bay contains a single gate/door composed of vertical boards with a diagonal brace. Above the center bay is a roughly square sash window set in the framing with simple trim.

North section of the interior of the barn.

The interior of the barn has retained a high degree of integrity. It is divided into three sections that run from the front of the building to the rear. The barn’s layout is similar in design to the popular center-passage plan barns found throughout Mecklenburg County, except that the center section of the Morris Barn was floored and severed as a tack room and for feed storage, and the northmost section of the barn originally served as a drive-through passage. Timber sills set on stone piers support the exterior walls and the partition walls and floor of the center section.
The loft is accessed by internal ladder. The loft is supported by peeled-log-pole joists with a simple plank floor. Behind the barn is a brick watering trough.
To the east of the barn is a ca. 1925 shed-roofed chicken house. The front of the chicken house is pierced by a three-vertical-light and three-horizontal-panel door, like those found on the house. The front, west side, and rear elevations are covered with German siding like that found on the
house. The west side and rear elevations are blank. The east elevation has been covered with T-111 siding and features two roughly square sash windows with simple trim.

**Garage**

To the east of the chicken house is a ca. 1955 gabled two-car garage that faces North Freemont Street. The garage is constructed of concrete masonry units. The front is pierced by two open bays separated by a masonry column. The gable is covered with lapped siding. The rear and side elevations each contain a fixed nine-light window with a brick sill centered in each elevation. The rafter tails are exposed.

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3 Phillips, interview.
4 Phillips, interview.
5 Phillips, interview.
6 Phillips, interview.
8 Phillips, interview.
11 Phillips, interview.
15 Lester, p. 40.
16 Phillips, interview.