



**Survey And Research Report
On The Albert Wallace Log House**



Albert Wallace Log House After Initial Restoration c. 1950



Western Façade Of The Albert Wallace Log House Before Restoration c. 1948



Albert Wallace Log House From Robinson Church Road c. 1948



Albert Wallace Log House With Additions April 2018

1. Name and Address of the Property. The property known as the Albert Wallace Log House is located at 9425 Robinson Church Road, Charlotte, N.C.

2. Name and Address of the Current Owner of the Property.

William Kelly
Dixie Kelly
9425 Robinson Church Road
Charlotte, North Carolina 28215

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. The UTM Coordinates of the Property are: 17S 528872.98E 3900010.35N



Albert Wallace Log House March 2018



Albert Wallace Log House March 2018



Albert Wallace Log House March 2018

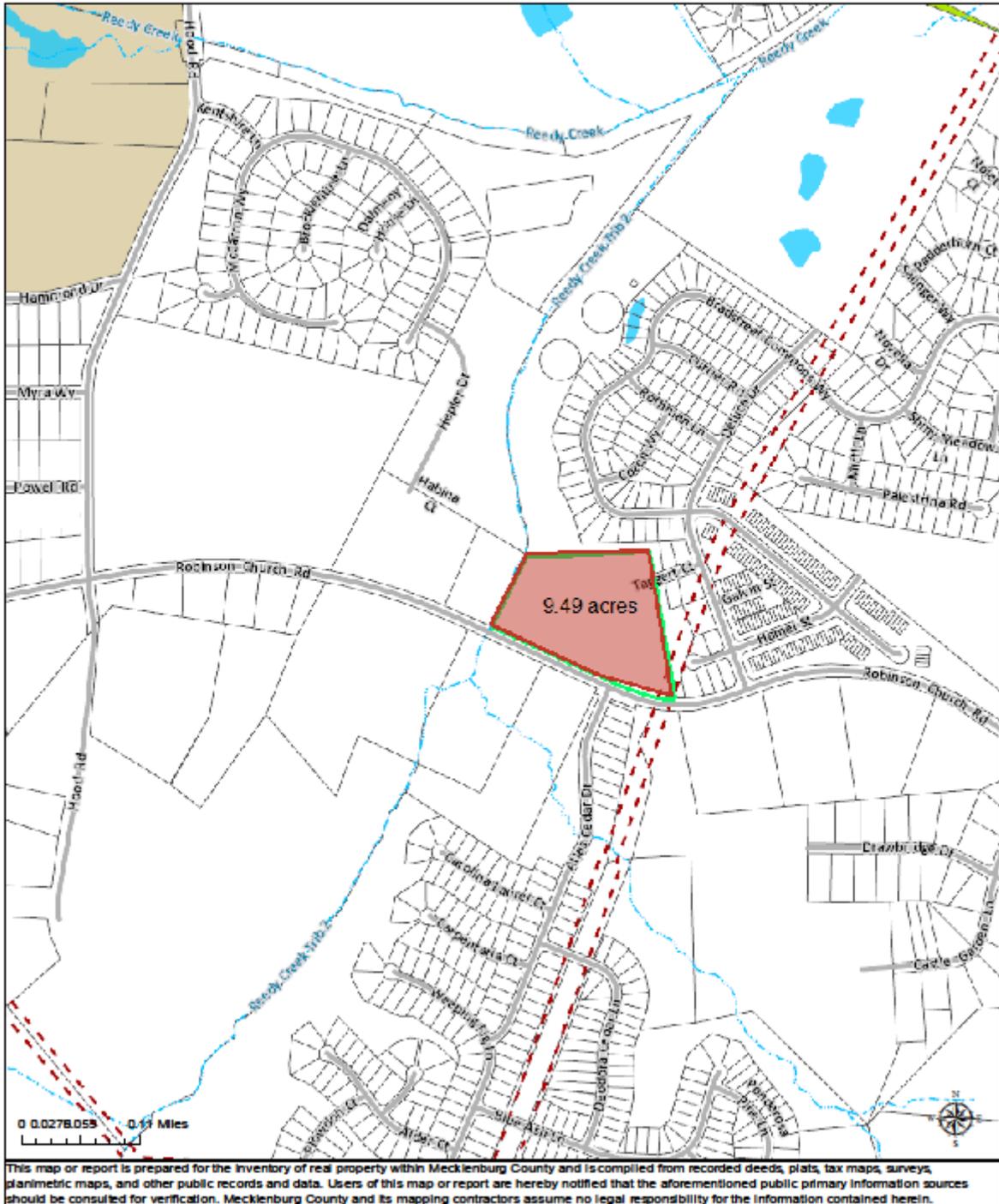


Albert Wallace Log House March 2018

Polaris 3G Map – Mecklenburg County, North Carolina Wallace House

9.49 acres(413478.22 sq ft)

Date Printed: 4/15/2018 1:00:40 PM



5. **A Brief Historic Sketch Of The Property.** The report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

6. **A Brief Physical Description Of The Property.** The report contains a brief physical description of the property prepared by Mr. Stewart Gray.

7. **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 Albert Wallace Log House possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

1) The Albert Wallace Log House is one of the few identified well-executed ante-bellum extant log houses in Mecklenburg County that is at its original location and which also exhibits the physical integrity required for historic landmark designation.

2) There is sufficient circumstantial evidence to infer that enslaved people lived in the Albert Wallace House before Emancipation.

3) The Albert Wallace Log House is important because of its place in the emergence of sharecropping as the principal agricultural labor system in rural Mecklenburg County in the post-bellum years.

b. **Integrity Of Design, Setting, Workmanship, Materials, Feeling, And/Or Association.** The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission judges that the physical description included in this report demonstrates that the Albert Wallace Log House meets this criterion of special significance.

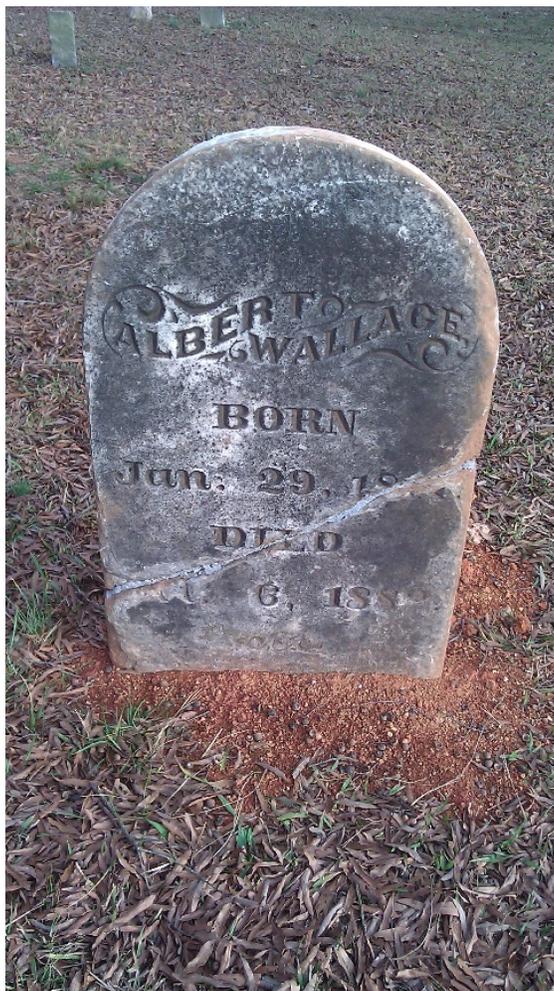
8. **Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal.** The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the property that becomes a designated "historic landmark." The current Ad Valorem tax value of the property is \$321,600. The property contains 10.39 acres and is zoned R3.

Date Of The Preparation Of This Report: May 14, 2018

Prepared By: Dr. Dan L. Morrill and Mr. Stewart Gray

**Brief History Of The
Albert Wallace Log House**

**Dr. Dan L. Morrill
May 14, 2018**



Albert Wallace's Tombstone In Philadelphia Presbyterian Church Cemetery

The special historic significance of the Albert Wallace Log House rests upon three considerations. First, it is one of the few identified well-executed ante-bellum extant log houses in Mecklenburg County that is at its original location and which also exhibits the physical integrity required for historic landmark designation. Second, there is sufficient circumstantial evidence to infer that enslaved people lived in the Albert Wallace House before Emancipation. Third, the Albert Wallace House is important because of its place in the emergence of sharecropping as the principal agricultural labor system in rural Mecklenburg County in the post-bellum years.

Special Architectural Significance Of The Albert Wallace Log House As Example Of Early Log Construction

The first half of the eighteenth century witnessed a substantial influx of settlers into the Piedmont and mountain regions of North Carolina.¹ In 1730 there were probably no more than 30,000 whites and 6000 blacks in the state. By 1775, the non-native population exceeded 265,000. A major reason for this significant upsurge was the stable government and aggressive promotional programs instituted by the Royal Government, which had taken control of North Carolina from the Lord Proprietors in 1729.² Although the number of settlers rose in the Coastal Plain, the greatest increase occurred in the backcountry, especially in the Piedmont. The King was generous in granting land to settlers who would populate the Carolina frontier, improve the land, and pay their taxes. Mostly Scots-Irish or Germans, these pioneers, who had migrated primarily from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware, established farms, erected mills, created settlements, and generally went about the business of securing their livelihood. Unlike settlers in many other regions of the colonies, however, the North Carolina pioneers did not have easy access to water navigation. The two principal rivers of the Piedmont, the Catawba-



Wateree-Santee and the Yadkin-Pee Dee, have their origins at the eastern edge of the North Carolina mountains and descend entirely above the fall line within the Tar Heel State and then flow uninterruptedly through South Carolina to the Atlantic.³ The resulting inability to travel readily to markets and back meant that most settlers in the North Carolina backcountry eked out a bare existence as self-sufficient farmers or as agricultural laborers. Tradition holds that the first Scots-Irish pioneer to bring his family to Mecklenburg County was Thomas Spratt. A marker in the 1900 block of Randolph Road in Charlotte marks the spot where Spratt constructed his home.



Stafford Slave Log House



McIntyre Log House (Destroyed)

In keeping with their limited economic resources, many of the early white settlers in Mecklenburg County, like their counterparts throughout North Carolina, erected “unpretentious, practical, and conservative homes.” Log buildings were especially popular. At a time when labor was scarce and wood and clay were plentiful and when the “transportation of imported materials was difficult and expensive,” homeowners and artisans naturally turned to familiar forms and techniques of construction. Some early abodes were crude structures made of “unhewn logs and without windows.” Local examples of early log buildings in Mecklenburg County are the Stafford Slave Log House and the McIntyre Log House. Others, such as the one-story, gable-roofed Albert Wallace Log House, were “better-finished buildings.”⁴ Log houses were widespread in the North Carolina Piedmont in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Most are gone, especially in highly urbanized places like Mecklenburg County. The Albert Wallace Log House has special significance because it is one of the few

significantly in-tact examples of this building type extant in Mecklenburg County that is at its original site.

Special Significance Of The Albert Wallace Log House As A Dwelling For Enslaved People

In the 1850s, Albert Wallace (1817-1882), a member of an influential Mecklenburg County family, owned and resided on an approximately 750-acre plantation on the “head waters of Reedy Creek.” It contained several structures, including a frame plantation house, “gin houses, saw mill, and farming houses generally.”⁵ Tradition holds that among the structures Albert Wallace constructed on his plantation was the house now at 9425 Robinson Church Road.⁶ Wallace “was a man of wealth,” reported the *Charlotte Observer*, “owning a great number of slaves and a large amount of real estate.”⁷ The Slave Schedules in the U.S. Census for 1860 reveal that Albert Wallace owned 19 slaves. Among them was a 27-year-old female.⁸ Her age corresponds with that listed in the 1880 U.S. Census for “Tena Wallace,” who definitely occupied the house after Emancipation.⁹

Dixie Wynn Kelly (1945-Present) and her husband, William Thomas Kelly, III (1945-Present), purchased the Wallace House property in 1982 and continue to live there. They have been told several anecdotal stories about Tena Wallace. Dixie Kelly recalls conversing with an elderly woman named “Granny Knotts” who told her how she and other children would see Tena when they walked by the house in the very early 1900s. Ruth Clisson, another resident of the neighborhood, said that she had heard that Tena enjoyed working in the yard, gathering plants and herbs. William Kelly said that he was told that farmers who drove their cattle to Allen, a stop on the railroad in eastern Mecklenburg County, would water their herds at a spring on the Wallace House property, known as “Tena’s Spring.” The property was also called “Tena’s Hill.” That Tena Wallace and her husband, Jerry Wallace, and their children resided in the house from at least 1880 until after 1910 is irrefutable. The U. S. Censuses from 1880 through 1910 have listings for them. The anecdotal evidence from “Granny Knotts” and Ruth Clisson also supports this claim.¹⁰

Ruth Glisson told Dixie Wynn that she had heard that the Wallace family had built the house before the Civil War and that Tena had lived there as a slave. After Emancipation, claimed Clisson, Tena was permitted to continue to reside in the house because she had been a favored bondswoman.¹¹ This writer has found no documentary evidence to support this claim that Tena was a favored servant. One can, however, reasonably infer from the evidence set forth in this report that Tena Wallace and her husband lived in the Albert Wallace Log House as slaves.

Matthew Albert Wallace (1855-1896), Albert Wallace’s son, sold this portion of his father’s former plantation in October 1879.¹² It passed through several hands until November 9, 1950, when Gladys Davenport and her husband moved here from Baltimore and purchased the property and expanded and restored the Albert Wallace Log House.¹³ William and Dixie Kelly purchased the property in December 1982, made additions, and continue to make the Albert Wallace Log House their home.¹⁴ The present owners are deeply committed to the preservation of the property and are working with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission to assure that that objective is achieved.

Special Significance As An African American Dwelling In The Era Of Sharecropping In Mecklenburg County

Largely because of its substantial output of cotton, Mecklenburg County was among the highest ranked counties in North Carolina in terms of the number of sharecropped farms. There is, however, a dearth

of African American sharecropper farming sites that survive in Mecklenburg County. The Albert Wallace Log House is one of the very few extant dwellings in which Mecklenburg sharecroppers resided. Deprived of their chattel labor after losing the Civil War, Southern landowners used various devices to attract the workers they needed to plant and harvest cash crops such as tobacco and cotton in the post-bellum years. Some farmers signed contracts, usually yearly, to pay their former slaves or impoverished whites and former freedmen to toil in the fields.¹⁵ Efforts were also made to encourage immigration from Europe, albeit with little success. But the labor system that enjoyed the greatest success in the South was sharecropping. Under this arrangement, farmers would make housing, land, and supplies available to laborers in return for their obtaining a portion of the harvested crops.

African Americans regarded the pre-war plantation system of compelling blacks to work in groups or gangs under the control of authoritarian overseers as abhorrent. Their deepest desire was to become landowners and to have complete control over their own labor. Partly because of their limited supply of money and partly due to the opposition of the majority of Southern whites to African American land ownership, the great majority of Southern blacks had to settle for less. "The large plantations, previously run as single production units," explains historian Edward Royce, "were divided into small plots of land." Freedpeople moved out of the old slave housing and "took up residence in separate family cabins" located on the thirty to fifty acres of land they leased from the owner.¹⁶ Blacks had to feed and clothe themselves, but the landowner provided the farming provisions. Sharecroppers worked independently in the fields as families. As compensation, at the end of each season, the sharecroppers kept a portion of the crop, usually one-third to one-half, for their own benefit. For blacks sharecropping was a "standoff." "Freedpeople remained dependent on planters, because of the latter's virtual monopoly of land," writes Royce, "and planters remained dependent on their former slaves, because of the latter's virtual control of labor."¹⁷ This arrangement of interdependency notwithstanding, there was no doubt who held the upper hand. Historian Dwight B. Billings, Jr. asserts that the "plantation system was reorganized" after the Civil War "through sharecropping and tenant farming." "Social and economic reforms promised during Radical Reconstruction," he writes, "were aborted and the civil and political rights of freemen were limited, first by physical force and terror, and at the end of the century by law."¹⁸

Whites were sharecroppers too. In his book *Sharecroppers: the way we really were*, Roy G. Taylor describes the patterns of everyday life that he and his family experienced as white sharecroppers in eastern North Carolina. It was mostly a life of self-sufficiency. His family had "home-grown food, home-grown wood and homemade clothes." They had "homemade lye soap, home-canned vegetables, fruits, and preserves, home-grown peas and beans."¹⁹ Taylor also remembers the many challenges his mother faced. They were no doubt similar to those that Tena Wallace encountered in Mecklenburg County. "Looking backward," says Taylor, "I don't know how those old-fashioned mothers bore the brunt of all the things they were exposed to." They looked "wrinkled and haggard" in their flannel nightgowns and caps as they made their rounds in the middle of the night to see that all the children were safe. Their hands were coarse and rough from the many hours they spent in dishwater or in washtubs scrubbing the family's nasty clothes. "Our mamas nourished us from their own bodies," Taylor remembers, "and rocked the cradles that soothed us; cooked, washed, ironed, sewed, cleaned up for us."²⁰ James Agree and Walker Evans discuss the plight of black sharecropper women in Alabama. In their book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, the authors describe a twenty-seven-year-old mother as "wrung and drained and

old, a scrawny, infinitely tired, delicate animal.”²¹ The women sharecroppers, they said, wore “dresses wet in front with the dishwashing” and “hands softened and seamed as if withered with water.”²²



African American Sharecropper Mother With Her Children

Mishaps were common on sharecropper farms, and professional medical help was almost always unavailable. Children seldom wore shoes during the summer. Farm implements, like pitch forks, plows, and rakes, were strewn throughout the farmyard. Rusty nails were seemingly everywhere, so cuts and bruises were almost inevitable. Usually, it fell to the mothers to administer medical aid. Home remedies included placing tree leaves on a cut, dousing it with kerosene, exposing the cut to smoke coming from rags soaked with turpentine, and putting raw meat on a cut to draw out foreign objects like splinters. “Irish potato poultices were also used on some sores,” says Roy Taylor. “They scraped the potato and put it directly on the sore and I think they sometimes wrapped a collard leaf around the wound on top of the potato and then put on the rag bandage.”²³ An especially troubling threat to good health was vitamin deficiency. Many sharecropper families, especially in the winter, ate mostly fatback, cornbread and molasses. This limited diet would give rise to maladies like pellagra, a disease caused by insufficient Vitamin B. Symptoms include confusion or mental delusion, diarrhea, nausea, inflamed mucous membranes, and scaly skin sores.



Mules And A Plow Break The Brittle Soil



Pickers With A Tow Sack For Gathering Cotton

In 1880, Tena Wallace and her husband, Jerry Wallace, and seven children, ranging in age from 19 to 6, were living in the house on Robinson Church Road. Tena was “Keeping House.” Three of her sons, including a ten-year-old, were listed as “Farm Laborers.”²⁴ The harvesting of the cotton crop lasted almost until Christmas. In March it was time to hitch mules to the plow and begin breaking up the brittle soil in preparation for planting. In summer, with a scorching sun seemingly always overhead, “mule hooves and plow blades and bare black feet . . . would march between the furrows, without rest, for nearly every hour of every day.”²⁵ Fall was the season for harvesting. Pickers would work from sunup to sundown, cramming cotton into tow sacks that had straps fashioned from fertilizer bags. The fully-laden sacks of cotton were emptied onto cloth sheets, which were bound up and taken to the “weigh horse,” a scale hanging from a wooden support; and the number of pounds of cotton were recorded. Next, the sheets filled with cotton were emptied into a two-horse wagon that traveled to the nearest gin. “Ginning began early,” remembers Roy Taylor, “and the chug, chug, chug of the gin’s motors could be heard for a mile or more and with each chug round puffs of smoke rose from the exhaust.”²⁶ A long, large suction pipe took the cotton into the gin; the seeds were removed; and ginned bales of cotton were deposited on the loading platform. The bales were sold and hauled by rail to cotton mills. This was the big payday of the year. Such was the pattern of life for the majority of Mecklenburg sharecroppers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including Tena Wallace and her family who lived in the Albert Wallace Log House on Robinson Church Road.



Weigh Horse



Cotton Gin

¹ The population of North Carolina doubled between 1730 and 1750 and almost tripled between 1750 and 1770. See Harry Roy Merrins, Colonial North Carolina In The Eighteenth Century. A Study In Historical Geography.

² In 1663, King Charles II rewarded eight of his allies who had helped him reestablish the English Monarchy. He parceled out the land in the colony of Carolina, named for Charles II, to the Lord Proprietors of Carolina. Each Proprietor was essentially a landlord who was to attract settlers to his land. Governance by the Proprietors was disjointed and largely ineffectual. In 1729, the Monarchy purchased all of the unsettled land from the Lord Proprietors, with one exception, and established two Royal Colonies. North Carolina and South Carolina became separate colonies in 1712.

³ The fall line is that point where rivers enter the coastal plain and are thereafter devoid of shoals or rapids.

⁴ Catherine W. Bishir, Charlotte V. Brown, Carl R. Lounsbury, Ernest H. Wood III, *Architects and Builders in North Carolina. A History of the Practice of Building* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 52-54.

⁵ *Charlotte Democrat*, August 23, 1856, January 3, 1860. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3, p. 706.

⁶ (Interview of Dixie Wynn Kelly and William Thomas Kelly, III by Dr. Dan L. Morrill, April 5, 2018) Hereinafter cited as *Kelly Interview*. Albert Wallace lived a troubled life, mostly of his own making. Wallace did experience calamities that were beyond his control. He was predeceased by his first two wives, including the mother of six of his nine children (see <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/73821042/albert-wallace>). A fire destroyed the gin house and grist mill on his plantation in October 1858 (see *Western Democrat*, October 12, 1858). In September 1858, Wallace witnessed the death of a man riding a horse down the road in front of Wallace's home. A dog ran in front of the horse, causing the beast to throw the rider. It was a fatal fall (see *Western Democrat*, September 14, 1858). It was the abuse of alcohol that produced the greatest misfortunes in Albert Wallace's life. He squandered much of his wealth and had to sell large portions of his land (see *Western Democrat*, September 23, 1856; *Charlotte Democrat*, January 3, 1860; *Daily Carolina Times*, October 15, 1869). Albert Wallace's life came to a tragic end on October 7, 1882. Wallace spent the day in Charlotte attending political rallies and participating in one of his favorite activities, drinking liquor. In the afternoon he headed for home in his wagon. Going at a "furious rate of speed" as he neared home, Wallace lost control, and his wagon 'ran into a deep rut.'" Wallace was jolted out of his wagon and "struck the ground on his head, and the force of the fall broke his neck." Wallace lived for about two minutes (see *Charlotte Observer*, October 8, 1902).

⁷ *Charlotte Observer*, October 8, 1882.

⁸ 1860 U.S. Census Slave Schedule.

⁹ 1880 U.S. Census.

¹⁰ *Kelly Interview*.

¹¹ *Kelly Interview*.

¹² Mecklenburg County Deed Book 22, Page 138.

¹³ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1434, Page 22.

¹⁴ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 4600, Page 970.

¹⁵ Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery By Another Name. The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans From The Civil War To World War II*, (New York: Anchor Books, nd.), 26.

¹⁶ Edward Royce, *The Origins of Southern Sharecropping*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 181.

¹⁷ Royce, 183.

¹⁸ Dwight B. Billings, Jr., *Planters and the Making of the "New South."* Class, Politics, and Development in North Carolina, 1865-1900, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 101.

¹⁹ Roy G. Taylor, *Sharecroppers: the way we were*, (Wilson, N.C.: J-Mark, 1984). 1.

²⁰ Taylor, 72-73.

²¹ James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939 & 1940), 71.

²² Agee and Walker, 70,

²³ Taylor, 83-84.

²⁴ 1880 U. S. Census.

²⁵ Blackmon, 37.

²⁶ Taylor, 10.