

## The James A. Blakeney House



*This report was written on February 5, 1986*

**1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the James A. Blakeney House is located on the Blakeney Heath Road in the Providence Community of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

**2. Name, address, and telephone number of the present owner of the property:** The owner of the property is:

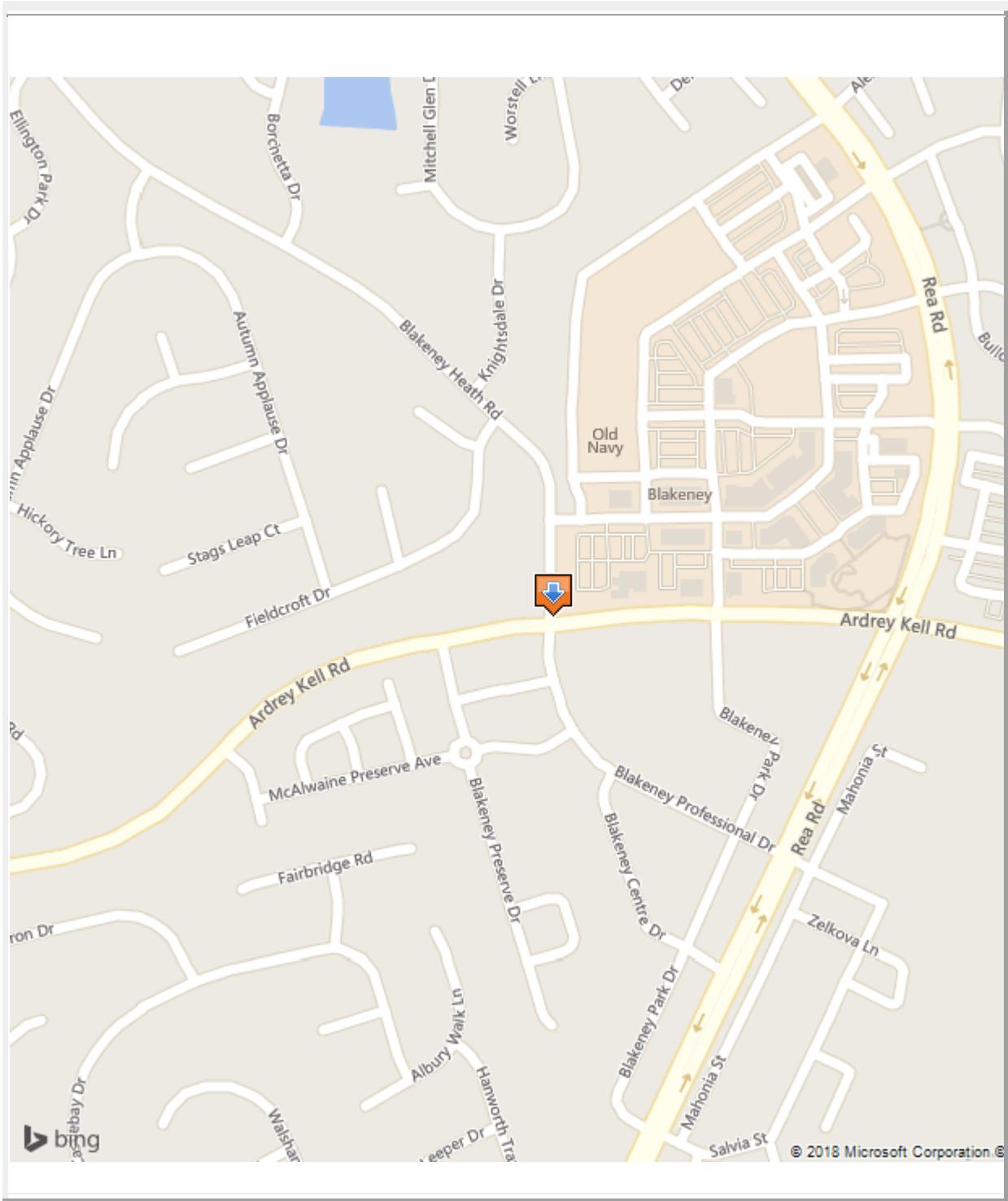
Willie Blakeney Life Estate et al.  
2025 East Eight St.  
Charlotte, NC 28204

The present occupant of the property is:

Margaret Blakeney Bullock  
Telephone: 704/542-3705

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

**4. A map depicting the location of the property:** This report contains a map which depicts the location of the property.



**5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property:** The most recent deed to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 4641, Page 948, The Tax Parcel Number of the property is 229-051-06.

**6. A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. William H. Huffman.

**7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description of the Property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

**8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in NCGS 160A-399.4:**

**a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and/or cultural importance:** The Commission judges that the property known as the James A. Blakeney House does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. the Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) the James A. Blakeney House it a well-preserved example of a type of farmhouse erected by prosperous farmers in Mecklenburg County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; 2) the James A. Blakeney House and outbuildings constitute a rare combination of agriculturally-related edifices in a section of Mecklenburg County which is experiencing rapid suburbanization and 3) the James A. Blakeney farm might contain important historic and pre-historic archaeological artifacts.

**b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association:** The Commission contends that the architectural description included in this report demonstrates that the property known as the James A. Blakeney 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 "historic property." The current appraised value of the house is \$11,740. The current appraised value of the 109.75 acres of land is \$26,610. The total appraised value of the property is \$38,350.

**Date of Preparation of this Report:** February 5, 1986

**Prepared by:** Dr. Dan L. Morrill  
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Charlotte , NC 28203

Telephone: 704/376-9115

## *Historical Overview*

*by Dr. William H. Huffman*

*January, 1986*

The James A. Blakeney House in southern Mecklenburg County is an endangered species. This once model farm that was toured by schoolchildren is now in danger of disappearing along with many others in rural Mecklenburg County, victims of ever-spreading suburban development. Built about 1905-06, the house still retains a fundamental soundness in addition to its rural charm that evokes the sense of the pace of turn-of-the century farm life.

About 1890, a precedent-setting occasion took place at Providence Presbyterian Church: the minister, Roger Martin, officiated at the wedding of his daughter, Margaret Tomlin Martin (1864-1917) and James Albert Blakeney (1856-1928). It was the first wedding ceremony performed in the church; previously, couples were married at home. The preacher, a Richmond, Va. native, served Providence from 1888 to 1892, when he took the pastorate at Mallard Creek, a post he held until his death in 1900.<sup>1</sup>

James A. Blakeney's father, Reese Blakeney, a South Carolina native, had gone into the Confederate service during the Civil War, and had not returned at war's end, his fate unknown. His mother, born Caroline Kirkley, subsequently married J. P. Doster, and about 1883 they settled near the present Blakeney House to farm in southern Mecklenburg County.<sup>2</sup> James Blakeney and his stepfather farmed together on the latter's land for several years, and in 1887 Blakeney bought just over 39 acres of his own, and built a log cabin to live in.<sup>3</sup> It was here that the newlyweds set up housekeeping about 1890.

About 1897, the Dosters moved to Hickory N.C., and James bought about half of their holdings, a 60-acre tract (he bought their remaining 76 acres in 1911) near his own.<sup>4</sup> On this larger property, he built a one-story residence for his growing family on the site of the present house which sat next to the road that bisected his farm. The farm prospered and the family continued to grow. but it was a fire a few years after the turn of the century that made a new house necessary, and so the one we see today was put up about 1905 or 1906.<sup>5</sup>

By 1910, the Blakeneys were farming about 232 acres and had brought eight children into the world (seven daughters and one son), six of whom survived to adulthood.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, about 1913 James Blakeney suffered a stroke, and management of the farm was undertaken by Dr. Alexander Martin, Margaret's brother, who came up once a week from Rock Hill, S. C., where he was pastor of the Oakland Avenue Presbyterian Church for many years.<sup>7</sup>

When he came of age, James A. Blakeney, Jr. (1901-1973) took over management of the farm, and about 1930 married Wilma Alma Blount (1906-) of Roper, N.C., a descendant of Capt. James Blount, who died in North Carolina in 1686.<sup>8</sup> During their long tenure on the farm, James A. Jr. and Willie Blakeney raised three children, Margaret, Frances and James III. And it was

also during this time that schoolchildren used to tour the farm to see, among many other wonders, old wagons and farm implements now found only in museums.<sup>9</sup>

Following the death of James A. Jr. and Willie Blakeney's move to a nursing home, the house suffered some neglect, but since 1983 it has been reoccupied by Margaret Blakeney Bullock, who has undertaken careful interior restoration of the fine farmhouse, and intends to continue the efforts to completion.

The James A. Blakeney House is a splendid representative of a vitally important part of our cultural heritage, and these days, an ever rarer one. Its preservation would insure that we would always retain a strong sense of our own development; what we are, and who we are.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Louise Barber Matthews, *A History of Providence Presbyterian Church* (Matthews, NC: Providence Presbyterian Church, 1967), pp. 176 -181; interview with Eudora Blakeney Garrison, Charlotte, N.C., 30 January, 1986.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Eudora Garrison: interview with Margaret Blakeney Bullock. 16 January, 1986. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 33, p. 137, 16 Feb. 1883.

<sup>3</sup> Deed Book 224, p. 662, 1 Feb. 1887; interviews with Eudora Garrison and Margaret Bullock.

<sup>4</sup> Deed Book 117, p. 116, 27 Jan. 1897; Deed Book 269, p. 708, 8 March 1911.

<sup>5</sup> Interviews with Eudora Garrison and Margaret Bullock.

<sup>6</sup> Bessie Blakeney McAlwaine (1891-1935), a longtime missionary to Japan; Lina B. Ardry (1893-); Harriet Caldwell Blakeney (c.1894-1900); Edmonia Martin Blakeney (1896-1950); Margaret Blakeney Richardson (1900-c.1980); J. A. Blakeney, Jr. (1901-1973); Grace Hoge Blakeney (1904-1906); Eudora Blakeney Garrison (1906-).

<sup>7</sup> Matthews, *History*, cited above; interview with Eudora Garrison.

<sup>8</sup> Family Bible of Wilma Alma Blount Blakeney; interviews with Eudora Garrison and Margaret Bullock.

<sup>9</sup> Interviews with Eudora Garrison and Margaret Bullock.

## *Architectural Description*

The James A. Blakeney House (ca. 1905-06) is a three-bay wide by four-bay deep, two story, frame farmhouse, with a tin-roofed, one-story projection on the rear that contains a kitchen, porch, larder room, and bathroom, the last having been added in recent years. It is located on Blakeney Heath Road in the Providence community of Mecklenburg County, NC and faces north. In addition to the main house, the property contains several outbuildings, including a barn, two tenant houses, a chicken house, cotton house, corn crib, shop building, pig pen, and a garage. Moreover, a substantial number of pre-historic archeological artifacts, principally arrowheads, have been found on the property, suggesting that it might possess archeological significance.

The James A. Blakeney House is a rather typical example of a type of dwelling which prosperous farmers erected in Mecklenburg County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Property which most resembles it is the N. S. Alexander House, erected in 1903, Although the James A. Blakeney House is not unique, it is one of the few surviving remnants of the built environment which was associated with the cotton economy of southern Mecklenburg County at the turn of the century. Indeed, this writer is aware of only four other farmhouses of similar or earlier vintage which survive in the general vicinity of the James A. Blakeney House, Also noteworthy is the fact that this section of Mecklenburg County is undergoing rapid suburbanization. Consequently, the house and land are clearly endangered.

Victorian motifs are evident on the exterior of the James A. Blakeney House -- the large bay on the left front, the decorative detail on the second floor windows of the bay, the slate-covered gable roof and two cross gables, the wood shingles in the gable ends, the large, tin-roofed wraparound porch, and the Wooden lattice at the right rear of the wraparound porch. The overall massing of the house, however, as well as its architectural appointments, are quite simple, even rustic. The house, for example, rests on brick piers with subsequent brick in-fill, and the dominant exterior wall covering is clapboard. The fascia of the cornice of the wraparound porch is composed of small vertical boards of unrefined design. The house contains an offset right chimney and an offset left chimney, plus a chimney at the rear of the kitchen, Seven lightning rods are atop the house. The fenestration is irregularly punctuated, and dominant window type is 2/2 double sash, with the windows on the right front of the first floor extending to the floor of the wraparound porch.

The house also contains suggestions of classical revivalism. Arched windows with keystones punctuate the front gable ends of the cross gables, and sixteen Doric columns support the roof of the wraparound porch. But the overall treatment of the house suggests to this writer that the edifice was the work of a local builder and should be labeled 'vernacular'.

The front door is pine with a single, large glass, no sidelights but a transom, and broadly-fluted pilasters with a bull's eye-decorative element in each base. The interior of the James A. Blakeney House is largely unchanged from the original. The hardware, the doors, the mantels in the eight fireplaces, the plaster walls, the magnificent pine wainscoting, and the newel posts, pickets, and handrail of the straight staircase which rises forward from the rear of the central hallway, are all original.