

DR. WALTER PHARR CRAVEN HOUSE



This report was written on 18 December 1990

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Dr. Walter Pharr Craven House is located at 7648 Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road, Charlotte, in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

2. Name, address and telephone number of the present owner of the property. The owners of the property are:

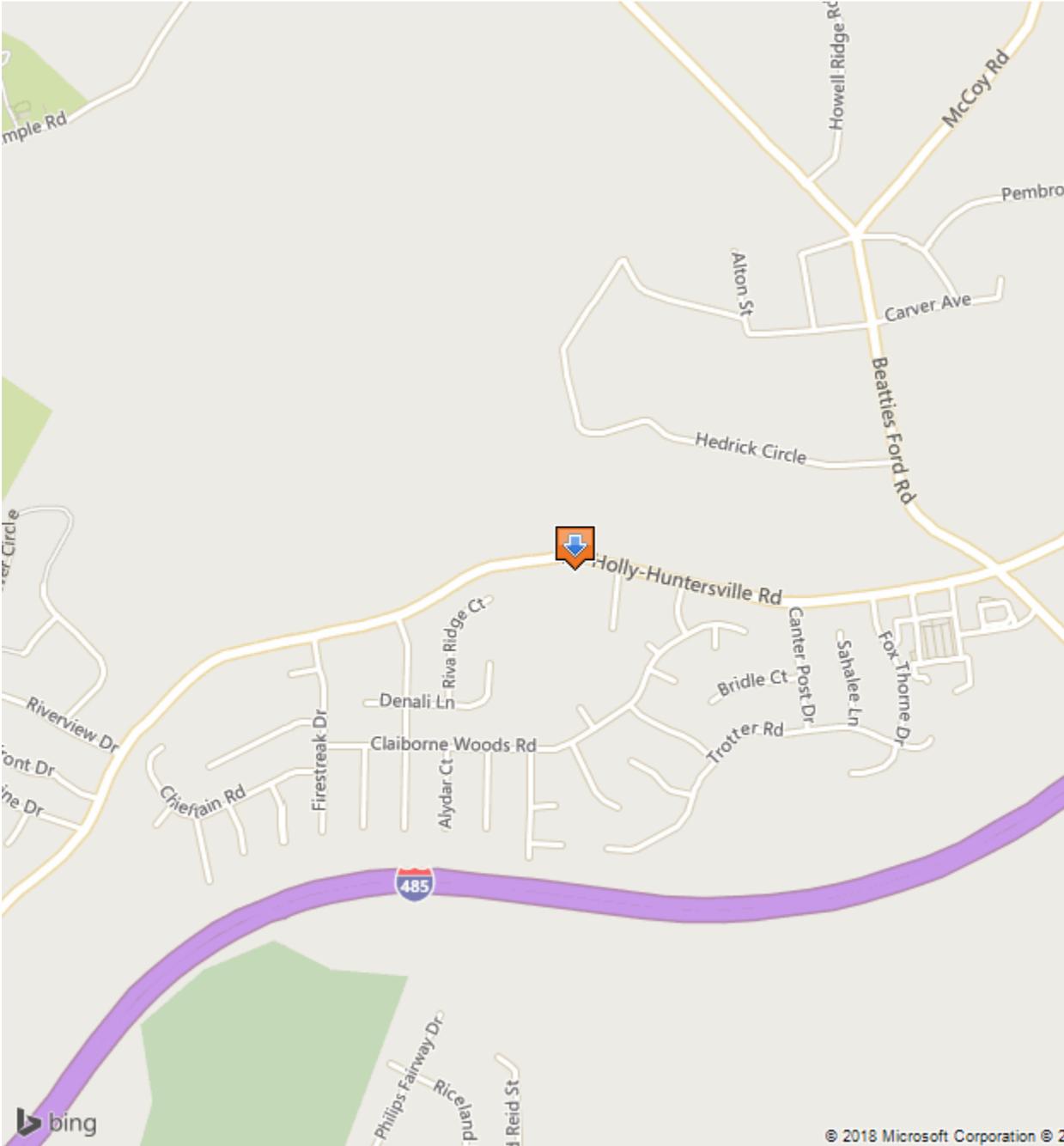
Bobby Don and Margie Davis Lawing
7648 Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road
Charlotte, North Carolina 23208

Telephone- (704) 399-3058

Tax Parcel Numbers: 033-141-02 and 033-141-03

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 maps which depict the location of the property.



5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The most recent deed to Tax Parcel Number 033-141-02 is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 5789 at page 834. The most

recent deed to Tax Parcel Number 033-141-03 is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3007 at page 333.

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

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

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets 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 property known as the Dr. Walter Pharr Craven House does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following consideration:

- 1) the ca. 1888 Dr. Walter Pharr Craven House is one of the most intact dwellings of the post-Civil War period;
- 2) the Dr. Walter Pharr Craven House is architecturally significant for exemplifying the vernacular Victorian, T-shaped, two-story farmhouse of Mecklenburg County;
- 3) the array of intact farm outbuildings represent traditional forms and a variety of construction techniques including a log outbuilding;
- 4) the farm setting is enhanced by the preservation of pastoral vistas; and
- 5) the Dr. Walter Pharr Craven House and its associated outbuildings provide valuable insight to rural life in Mecklenburg County.

b. Integrity of design, settings, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association: The Commission contends that the architectural description by Richard L. Mattson, Ph.D., included in this report demonstrates that the Dr. Walter Pharr Craven 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 a designated "historic landmark." The current appraised value of the improvements is \$130,170. The current appraised value of the 10.45 acres is \$39,600. The total appraised value of the property is \$169,770. The property is zoned R-15.

Date of Preparation of this Report: 18 December 1990

Prepared by: Dr. Dan L. Morrill

in conjunction with

Ms. Nora M. Black

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission

1225 South Caldwell Street, Box D
Charlotte, North Carolina 28203

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Historical Overview

Note: The following architectural and historical reports, combined on the form entitled "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," were prepared under the auspices of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission is not responsible for errors.

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Section number 7**

Shaded by mature oak and magnolia trees in a rural setting northwest of Charlotte, the ca. 1888 Dr. Walter Pharr Craven House is among rural Mecklenburg County's most intact dwellings of the post-Civil War period. Its T-shaped two-story form and vernacular Victorian decoration exemplify a popular local expression of farmhouse architecture that appeared between the late 1870s and the turn of the century. Associated with the Craven House is an assortment of farm outbuildings dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The tract, which is approximately five acres, includes a small fenced pasture where horses now graze.

The weatherboarded frame Craven House represents a divergence from the I-house tradition that dominated middle and upperclass rural domestic architecture during the 19th century. Facing north, the main three-bay facade includes a one-story, hip-roofed porch that spans the front. Slightly altered by latticework and a wooden frieze composed of a series of arches that were added in the 1960s, the porch retains its original configuration as well as original chamfered posts. Although the majority of the facade is covered by original lapped weatherboards, a portion of the facade around the main entry features original German siding. The entrance is framed by sidelights and transom as well as a cossetted surround. Windows around the main body of the house and rear ell are primarily six-over-six sash windows, although the main facade in the gable-end wing has paired windows with four panes in each sash. The window surrounds are simply moulded. A two-room, one-story dining room/kitchen wing extends to the rear of the house's east side. Additions to the original house include a rear shed-roofed, one-story room (den) west of the kitchen ell, and an enclosed porch on the east side of the ell which serves as a reading area and place for storage. These exterior modifications, as well as an open wooden deck attached to the rear of the present den, were added by the current owners in about 1968.

The basically intact interior reflects the methods of construction, the craftsmanship, and the standards of design of middle-class farmhouses of this era in the county. Although the kitchen has been modernized, the remainder of the original rooms retain original woodwork and

hardware. All of the original rooms, with the exception of the kitchen, have intact board-and-batten ceilings; and the majority of rooms retain original flush-board walls. Dr. Craven's former office, located behind the parlor in the gabled front section, has plaster walls. The rooms and hallway, which separates the two main sections of the house, have simply finished baseboards and four-panel doors with simple, moulded surrounds. Box locks and porcelain door knobs survive throughout the interior. In all of the rooms except the kitchen, mantels are intact. Composed of a basic post-and-lintel shape, each is a slightly different and inventive variation of a common vernacular Greek Revival mantel type in North Carolina. For example, the mantel in the north upstairs bedroom features pilasters with unusual v-shaped applied moulding. The mantels in the principal first-floor rooms have curvilinear lintels with carpenter-built scalloped decoration.

Outbuildings (keyed to map) **C**-contributing; **NC**-noncontributing

Symbol Name	C/NC	Date	Description
B - Well Canopy	C	1929	Hip-roofed, frame well canopy with concrete floor and latticework posts. Date inscribed on concrete floor.
C - Chapel	C	ca. 1910	Utilitarian, gable-front, frame, one-story building erected as a family Catholic chapel. Present owners call it the "chapel," and use it as an informal playhouse and storage building.
D - Barn	C	ca. 1920	Gable-front, frame four-unit barn with central passage. Still in use as horse barn, and all four pens are used for stables.
E - Corncrib	C	ca. 1888	Side-gable, log corncrib with half-dovetail notching and frame shed addition.
F - Tool shed	C	ca. 1920	Frame, one-story tool shed with shed room
G - Auto Garage	C	ca. 1920	Frame, one-story gable-front auto garage with storage area; door located on the side- gable (north) facade as well as on the gable-front facade.
H - Carport	NC	ca. 1960	Gable-roofed, metal carport, measuring about 18 feet on a side; located behind house on southeast side.

The remainder of the five-acre tract is composed of pasture used by the current owners to graze horses. Surrounded by new post and board fences, this area represents an adaptation of a traditional rural land use.

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The Dr. Walter Pharr Craven House is architecturally significant under National Register Criterion C for exemplifying the vernacular Victorian, T-shaped, two-story farmhouses that appeared in Mecklenburg County during the post-Civil War period. (see Associated Property Type 1--Houses--Postbellum Farmhouses) The relatively intact exterior and interior display first-rate craftsmanship representing a variety of carpenter-built Victorian elements. In its decorative and apparently locally crafted mantels, chamfered porch posts, cross-topped entrance surround with sidelights and transom, and German siding focused around the main entry, the ca. 1888 Craven House includes essentially the full spectrum of post-Civil War Victorian architecture as applied to farmhouses in Mecklenburg County. The board-and-batten ceilings and board walls bear witness to the construction and restrained interior finish of even the more stylish middle-class farm dwellings of this period in the county. The array of intact farm outbuildings represent traditional forms and construction techniques, including side-gable corncrib and central-passage barn, and both log and frame building techniques. (see Associated Property Type 2--Outbuildings)

The Craven House and surrounding buildings afford us a glimpse into the life of a country doctor and farmer. In addition to providing medical care to the Hopewell community, Dr. Craven also farmed, although not on as large a scale as most of his neighbors. A corncrib, barn, toolshed and well canopy occupy the site, as well as a small chapel that was built as a place of worship for the Catholic wife of one of Dr. Craven's sons.

The house, located at 7648 Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road, was built by Dr. Walter Pharr Craven (1845-1929) probably shortly after his purchase of the property in 1888¹. That year, Dr. Craven bought 18 acres from Robert Blair McGee and his wife Mary W. McGee². Dr. Craven appears in the 1880 Agricultural Schedules of the Census as a renter of 18 acres of land, which is likely the same land he bought from the McGees. According to the current owner, Marge Lawing, Dr. Craven practiced medicine from one of the rear rooms on the west side, which was complete with special cabinets for stored medicine³.

Dr. Craven was born in Randolph County and was raised in Iredell County. At the age of eighteen, he enlisted in the Confederate Army. His service in the field ended when he was captured at the Battle of Five Forks, Virginia, eight days before the war's end, and spent several months as a prisoner at Staten Island, New York⁴. After the war, Dr. Craven returned to North Carolina and studied at Davidson College in northern Mecklenburg County and at Trinity College (now Duke University). After completion of his undergraduate studies, he spent two years in Texas where he taught school and farmed. In 1872, he entered the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Baltimore to study medicine. When his training was complete (about 1876), he returned to North Carolina, and established his practice in the Hopewell community of Mecklenburg County. In that year, he also married Martha Addie May Gluyas (1859-1903), daughter of Captain and Mrs. Thomas Gluyas of Hopewell, with whom he had eleven children who survived to adulthood. In 1907, Dr. Craven married Ossie Lawing of Spurrier who died

after a few years, and he was subsequently married for the third time to Mary Andrews of Charlotte in 1917⁵.

Considering that Dr. Craven had a large family and a country doctor's practice was not highly lucrative, it was not unusual that he also ran a small farm on his 18 acres. The census records show that he hired black farm laborers for thirty-two weeks in 1879 for a total expenditure of \$100.00, which was proportionally consistent with the hiring practices of the other farmers in his community. Apparently, he did not keep much livestock: the 1880 records show that he had one milk cow, some swine, and poultry (fifteen hens produced seventy-five eggs in 1879). He also raised corn (10 acres yielding 100 bushels), wheat (4 acres yielding 45 bushels) and cotton, (4 acres yielding 3 bales).⁶

Dr. Craven was a highly visible member of the Hopewell community; he served the Hopewell Presbyterian Church as a ruling elder for several years, and his professional services were a valuable asset to the local population. The other doctor in the area, Dr. Sam Abernathy, was considered by many to have been Dr. Craven's competitor. They were nicknamed by the locals "Dr. PW and Dr. Powder," but it is not clear who was who. Two of Dr. Craven's sons, William and Thomas, became doctors.⁷ Dr. Thomas Craven (d. 1952) is reported to have lived and practiced medicine in the house for a time after Dr. Walter Craven's death, but later he moved to Huntersville where he lived and maintained his practice. After Dr. Thomas left the house, another son, Harry Craven (d. 1957), lived in the house for an indeterminate time, then moved to Mooresville. For a number of years, the house was not continuously occupied, but was used as a summer retreat for members of the family and also as a gathering place for holidays. About the early Fifties, another son of Dr. Walter Craven, John, retired and lived in the house until his death in 1962. John Craven added a bath and modernized the kitchen.⁸

The year following John Craven's death, 1963, a granddaughter of Dr. Walter Craven, Ruth Craven Roddey and her husband, Sidney H. Roddey, Jr., bought the house from the heirs and lived in it until 1968, when they sold it to the present owners, Bobby Don and Margie Davis Lawing.⁹ Thus after eighty years, the house passed out of the possession of the Craven family.

Notes

¹ Mary Beth Gatza, "Architectural Inventory of Rural Mecklenburg County", 1988. On file at Archives and History, Raleigh.

² Mecklenburg County Deed Book 62, p. 411.

³ Interview with Marge Lawing by Mary Beth Gatza, 1988.

⁴ Charles W. Sommerville. *The History of Hopewell Presbyterian Church* (Charlotte: Hopewell Presbyterian Church, 1939), p. 123.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 123-4.

⁶ Agricultural Schedules, 1880 U.S. Census.

⁷ Sommerville, p. 123; Gatza, "Survey." ⁸ Interview with Margie Lawing and Ruth Craven Roddey by William H. Huffman, 1989.

⁹ Mecklenburg County Deed Books 2435, p. 237; 3007, p. 333.

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Gatza, Mary Beth. "Architectural Inventory of Rural Mecklenburg County." 1987. On file at North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Interviews with Marge Lawing by Mary Beth Gatza, 1988, and with Ruth Craven Roddey by William Huffman, 1989.

Mecklenburg County. Deed Books.

Sommerville, Charles W. *The History of Hopewell Presbyterian Church* (Charlotte: Hopewell Presbyterian Church, 1939).

United States. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: Agricultural Schedules, Mecklenburg County, N.C.