

The John Douglas House



This report was written on December 5, 1979.

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the John Douglas House is located on Christie Lane in the Steele Creek Community or southwestern portion of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

2. Name, address and telephone number of the present owner and occupant of the Property:

The present owners of the property are:

James Marshall Stallings & wife, Nancy B. Stallings

RFD 4

Christie Lane

Charlotte, N.C. 28208

Telephone: 588-0136

The present occupants of the property are:

James Marshall Stallings, Nancy B. Stallings, Amy Elizabeth Stallings (daughter)

RFD 4

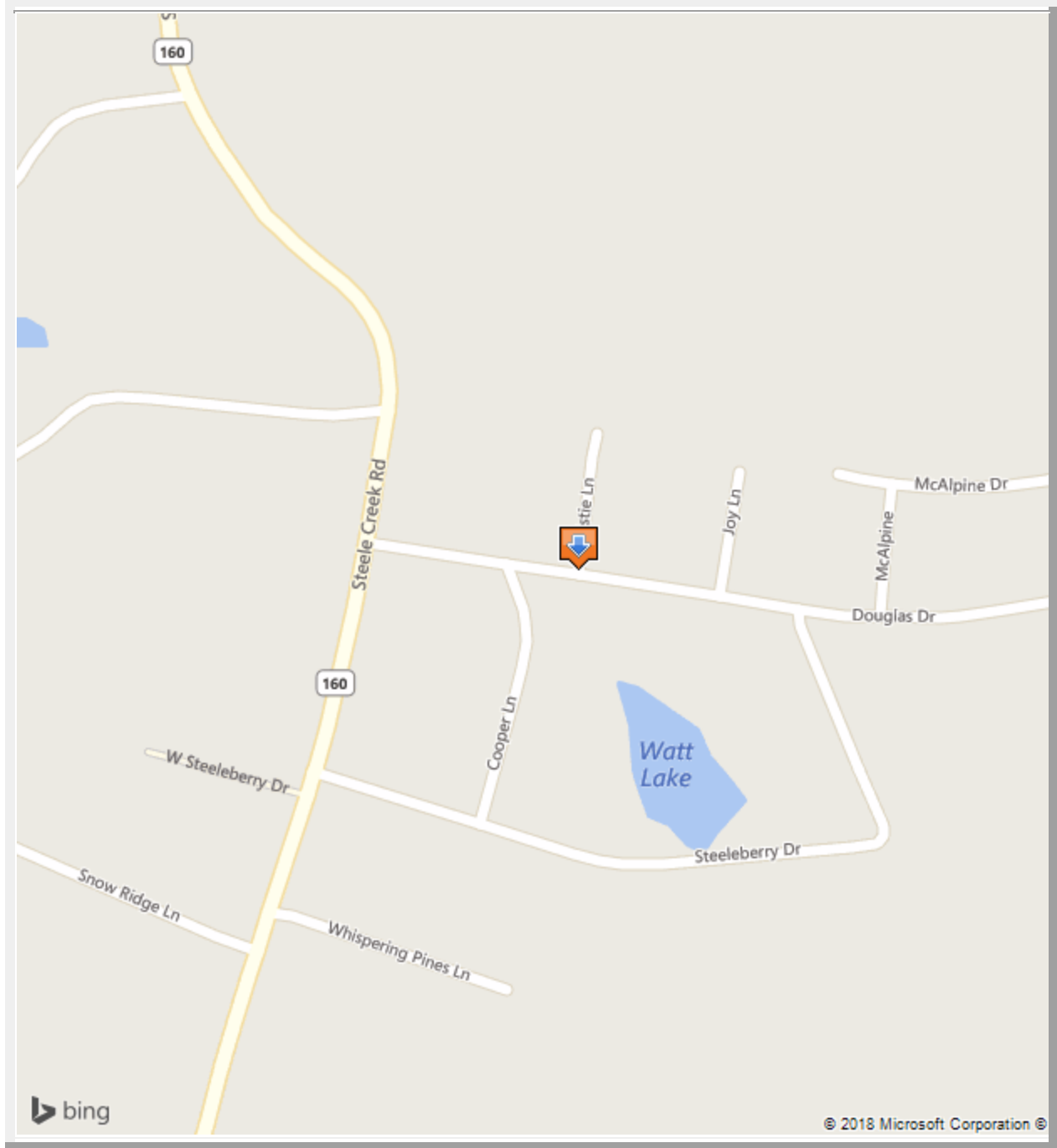
Christie Lane

Charlotte, N.C. 28208

Telephone: 588-0316

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 which depicts the location of the property.



Click on the map to browse

5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The current deed to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3125, Page 265. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is 14104219.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property:

The house was built ca. 1867 for John Douglas (1809-1879) , minister of Steele Creek Presbyterian Church and Pleasant Hill Presbyterian Church from July 6, 1867 until his death on October 8, 1879. ¹ A native of Chester, SC, Douglas was a graduate of South Carolina College and the Theological Seminary in Columbia, SC. Ordained on April 30, 1836, by the Bethel Presbytery he served initially as minister of a congregation in Chester for approximately twelve years. In the late 1840's, he transferred to the Charleston Presbytery, where he headed the James Island Presbyterian Church. ²

The evidence suggests that John Douglas was a refined and erudite individual. He and his wife, Frances G. Douglas (1800-1884), traveled extensively in Europe before the Civil War. ³ He possessed a library of approximately 1300 volumes, which he bequeathed to the Theological Seminary in Columbia, SC. ⁴ He was the author of the first history of Steele Creek Presbyterian Church, published in 1872. ⁵ Douglas was a Trustee of Davidson College and, even more significantly, served as the moderator of the Synod of North Carolina when it met in Second Presbyterian Church in Charlotte in 1877. ⁶ John Douglas preached his first sermon at Steele Creek Presbyterian Church on November 19, 1865, more than a year and a half before he was officially installed as pastor. ⁷ During the Civil War he had been a missionary among Confederate troops who had been stationed along the coast from Charleston to Savannah. ⁸ When he came to Mecklenburg County, the congregations at Steele Creek and Pleasant Hill were plagued with factionalism and internal bickering. Local tradition holds that Douglas was mindful of this fact when he decided to purchase land and erect his home immediately behind Steele Creek Presbyterian. ⁹ Undoubtedly, he was successful in bringing the people back together. One writer contends that his ministry "well nigh attained unto perfection." ¹⁰ The *Charlotte Observer* described Douglas as a "greatly beloved pastor." The *Charlotte Democrat* echoed these sentiments, stating that he was "much beloved by his Church people and by all who knew him." ¹² Every Sunday Douglas conducted two services, the first at Steele Creek and the second at Pleasant Hill some eight miles away by horseback. ¹³

John Douglas had no children. Susannah Baker, an orphan whom Rev. and Mrs. Douglas had taken in as a child, lived in the house as a servant. She died shortly after the death of John Douglas. ¹⁴ Mrs. Douglas expired on April 2, 1884, and was buried beside her husband in the cemetery at Steele Creek Presbyterian Church. ¹⁵ Thereafter, the property was inherited by James P. Walker and Fannie Walker , children of John Douglas's nephew, William A. Walker. The new owners resided in Chester SC, and, consequently, rented the John Douglas House to tenants. ¹⁶They sold the property in December 1921. ¹⁷ The house passed through several hands until September 27, 1950, when Sterling J. Foster, Jr., and his wife, Alma K. Foster purchased the property and established their residence there. ¹⁸ After the death of her husband, the former Mrs.

Foster married William Staiger. Again the John Douglas House became rental property. In the mid-1960's James Marshall Stallings and his wife, Nancy Brigmon Stallings, lived there.¹⁹ On September 3, 1969, Mr. and Mrs. Stallings purchased the John Douglas House, where they continue to maintain their residence.²⁰

Notes

¹ Rev. John Douglas. *The History Of Steele Creek Church* (Presbyterian Publishing House, 1872). p. 73. Mrs. Robert McDowell, *A List of those Buried in Historic Steele Creek Burying Grounds*, p. 30. Hereafter cited as McDowell.

² *The History of of Steele Creek Presbyterian Church* (Craftsman Printing and Publishing House, Charlotte, N.C., 1978), pp. 65-70. Hereafter cited as *Steele Creek History*.

³ McDowell, p. 30. *Charlotte Observer* (October 9, 1879), p. 3 *Steele Creek History*, p. 70. Mecklenburg County Will Book K, p. 387. Mecklenburg County Will Book L. p. 72. Mecklenburg County Orders and Decrees Book 19, p. 517.

⁴ Mecklenburg County Will Book K, P. 387. Mecklenburg County Orders and Decrees Book 19, p. 517.

⁵ see Rev. John Douglas, *The History of Steele Creek Church* (Presbyterian Publishing House, 1872). A second edition was published in 1901, see *The History Of Steele Creek Church, Mecklenburg County, N.C.* (Observer Printing and Publishing House Charlotte, N.C., 1901).

⁶ *Steele Creek History*, pp. 65-70.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ James Island Presbyterian Church was destroyed at the outset of the Civil War.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁰ Rufus A. Grier., "Historical Sketch: Steele Creek Presbyterian Church" p. 4.

¹¹ *Charlotte Observer* (October 9, 1879), p. 3.

¹² *Charlotte Democrat* (October 10, 1879), p. 3.

¹³ *Steele Creek History* . p. 70. Steele Creek Presbyterian Church is one of the oldest Presbyterian congregations in Mecklenburg County. It called its first pastor in 1766. Pleasant Hill Presbyterian Church was established on June 4, 1837.

¹⁴ Mecklenburg County Will Book K, p. 387. Mecklenburg County Orders and Decrees Book 199 p. 517. Susannah Baker died on October 6, 1880, at the age of fifty (McDowell, p. 32.).

¹⁵McDowell, p. 30.

¹⁶ Mecklenburg County Will Book L p. 72. Mecklenburg County Orders and Decrees Book 19, p. 517.

¹⁷ Mecklenburg County Orders and Decrees Book 19, p. 517. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 458, p. 553.

¹⁸ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 462, p. 53. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 838, p. 540. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 888, p. 41. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 886, p. 148. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1129, p. 152. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1190, p. 459. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1322, p. 187. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1464, p. 87.

¹⁹ Interview of Nancy Brigmon Stallings by Dr. Dan L. Morrill (Nov. 8, 1979).

²⁰ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3125 p. 265.

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains an architectural description of the property prepared by Laura A. W. Phillips, architectural historian.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the Property meets the criteria set forth in N.C.G. S. 160A-399.4:

a. Special significance in terms of its hi history, architecture and/or cultural importance: The Commission judges that the property known as the John Douglas House does possess special historic significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) it is one of the few elements of the mid-nineteenth century historic built environment which

survives in the Steele Creek or southwestern portion of Mecklenburg County, 2) the house possesses architectural significance as one of the finer examples of a vernacular Greek Revival style farmhouse which survives in Mecklenburg County, and 3) the initial owner Rev. John Douglas was an individual of local and regional importance in the Presbyterian Church.

b. Integrity of design, setting workmanship, materials, feeling and/or

association: The Commission judges that the architectural description included herein demonstrates that the property known as the John Douglas House meets this criterion. It is important to note that the house exhibits characteristics frequently found in mid-nineteenth dwellings in tidewater South Carolina a region with which Rev. Douglas was intimately acquainted.

9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal: The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply annually 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 tax appraisal on the 5.03 acres of land is \$9,050. The current tax appraisal on the improvements is \$14,750. The most recent tax bill on the property was \$211.57. The property is zoned R12.

Bibliography

The Charlotte Democrat.

The Charlotte News.

The Charlotte Observer.

Rev. John Douglas. *The History of Steele Creek Church* (Presbyterian Publishing House 1872).

Rev. John Douglas, *The History Of Steele Creek Church, Mecklenburg County, N.C.* (Observer Print and Publishing House, Charlotte , N.C., 1901).

Rufus A. Grier, "Historical Sketch Steele Creek Presbyterian Church." (a brochure in the vertical files of the Carolina Room of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library).

Mrs. Robert McDowell. *A List of those Buried in Historic Steele Creek Burying Grounds.*

Dr. Dan L. Morrill Interview of Nancy Brignon Stallings (November 8, 1979).

Records of the Mecklenburg County Clerk of Superior Court's Office.

Records of the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office.

Records of the Mecklenburg County Tax Office.

Date of preparation of this Report: December 5, 1979.

Prepared by: Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Director
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Architectural Description

The John Douglas House is located on Christie Lane in the Steele Creek Community of Mecklenburg County. Although at one end of the long lane leading to the house there is a large subdivision of houses, the Douglas House itself is set on a rise in the land in the center of fields and wooded areas so that it retains its rural atmosphere.

The Douglas House is a simple, one and a half story frame cottage in the late Greek Revival style. It is three bays wide and two bays deep and has a one-story ell on the left rear. There is a one-bay wide entrance porch on the front (south side) and screened porches across the rear of the house and along the inside (east side) of the ell. The house is covered with weatherboarding, except for the small area of the front porch, which is covered with flush boarding. The corners of the house are accented by plain vertical stiles. The gable roof is of medium pitch and the cornice is boxed. Two interior brick chimneys with corbelled caps are symmetrically placed within the main body of the house, while an exterior, single stepped shoulder brick chimney is positioned at the rear of the ell. Most windows, including those in the gable ends, are

9/9 sash, while others are 6/6. The batten shutters appear to be replacements. The house is set on a brick pier foundation, the interstices of which have now been in-filled with brick.

Five steps with ironwork balustrade of recent vintage lead to the front entrance porch, which covers only slightly more area than the doorway itself. The porch is covered by a hipped roof which is supported by plain wood Doric posts at each corner. Plain balustrades connect these posts to the front wall of the house. Resting directly on the posts is a rather crude, though vaguely classical, tripartite architrave formed by weatherboarding. The double leaf front door has octagonal panels in the upper halves and is surrounded by sidelights and transom.

The screened porches on the rear of the house appear to have been built at two different times. The porch along the east side of the ell has a hipped roof, while the one along the rear of the main body of the house has a shed roof and may date from a later period. Both porches have a plain Doric post at each corner and both have a solid wood balustrade. However, the two are joined in a rather awkward manner.

The interior of the Douglas House displays a center hall plan with two rooms on either side and auxiliary rooms in the rear ell. The upstairs half story contains one room on either side of the stair landing.

The stairway to the second floor is located at the rear of the wide center hall. In order to fit the available space, it runs seven risers from the front, then turns on a straight landing and returns on a fourteen-riser run to the center of the story above. The balustrade is somewhat unusual, in that it combines rather Victorian bulbous (though not especially heavy) newel posts with a delicate rounded handrail reminiscent of the Federal period. The balusters are plain and square in section.

Four-panel doors open from the center hall to the rooms on either side. On the right side are the dining room and kitchen with back-to-back fireplaces. On the left side are the parlor and sitting room, again with back-to-back fireplaces. The mantels in the downstairs rooms, except for in the kitchen, are transitional between the Greek Revival and Italianate styles. The molding on door and window surrounds and baseboards is all very simple. Paneled aprons below the 9/9 windows add a decorative element. The walls in the four major rooms of the house are plastered, and picture molding is positioned about one foot down from the ceiling. The floors are composed of floor boards approximately five inches in width.

The ell on the left rear of the house is made up of a short hall with bathroom and closet on either side and a rear bedroom. The walls of this bedroom are covered with flush boarding rather than plaster.

In the upstairs half story, the walls and ceilings of the two bedrooms are also covered with flush boarding. To accommodate the available space, the upper front and back walls of these rooms slant inward to meet the ceiling. The large 9/9 sash windows in the gable ends run almost floor to ceiling in the loft rooms, providing an unexpected amount of light. As in the downstairs rooms, the doors leading to each room have four flat panels. The interior chimneys pass through the center of these rooms, breaking up the space. Here there are no fireplaces, and instead, the chimneys are covered with plaster.