



THE HAYES-BYRUM STORE AND HOUSE



This report was written on January 2, 1990

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Hayes-Byrum Store and House is located at 8600 Steele Creek Road in Charlotte, North Carolina 28210.

2. Name, address and telephone number of the present owner of the property: The owner of the property is:
Mrs. Agnes S. Byrum
8600 Steele Creek Road
Charlotte, North Carolina 28210

Telephone: (704) 588-0434

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.



5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property:. The most recent deed to this property is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3753 at page 974. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is 199-241-12.

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

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

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 Commission judges that the property known as the Hayes-Byrum Store and House does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following, considerations: 1) the Hayes-Byrum Store is a rare survivor of the "old country store" which once served farmers both as a shopping center and meeting place; 2) the Hayes-Byrum Store, erected ca. 1890, is rural Mecklenburg's oldest surviving, commercial building; 3) the Hayes-Byrum House, ca. 1900, is a excellent example of a simplified, popular interpretation of the Queen Anne style of architecture, and 4) the Hayes-Byrum Store and House are key historic and architectural landmarks in the crossroads community of Shopton in southwest Mecklenburg County.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association: The Commission contends that the architectural description by Dr. Richard Mattson which is included in this report demonstrates that the Hayes-Byrum Store and 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 landmark." The current appraised value of the improvements is \$63,250. The current appraised value of the 15.190 acres is \$124,060. The total appraised value of the property is \$187,310. The property is zoned B1.

Date of Preparation of this Report: January 2, 1990

Prepared by: Dr. Dan L. Morrill *in conjunction with*

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Historical Overview

Erected ca. 1890, the Hayes-Byrum Store is rural Mecklenburg County's oldest surviving commercial building. With many of its key original elements intact, the store stands one-story high and is constructed of load-bearing brick walls laid in a common bond. The store remains in operation, selling an array of foodstuffs and general merchandise. North of the store is the ca. 1900 Hayes-Byrum House, a simplified, popular interpretation of the Queen Anne style. It is two story, frame, and has an asymmetrical form. Behind the house is a contributing auto garage, as well as a noncontributing barn and shed/dog kennel, and a small swimming pool, which is a noncontributing structure. North and west of the house is cultivated farmland constituting about eight acres and currently farmed in hay. Both the store and the house face southeast towards Steele Creek Road (NC 160). Although Steele Creek Road has witnessed residential and commercial development in recent years, it is also the site of Steele Creek Presbyterian Church and cemetery, which stand less

than one mile north of the Hayes-Byrum Store and House and are important historic and architectural landmarks in this area. Furthermore, the store and house are key elements of the small crossroads community of Shopton. This rural assemblage of residential, commercial, civic, and industrial architecture boasts a collection of bungalows, 19th- and early 20th-century farmhouses reflecting vernacular I-house and hip-roofed, double-pile domestic forms, and a ca. 1945 brick industrial building that is a former dairy. Directly south of the Hayes-Byrum Store is a ca. 1960 volunteer fire station. Shopton, therefore, continues to reflect the many roles performed by the traditional crossroads settlement.

Hayes-Byrum Store

Measuring about 35 feet by 60 feet, and capped by a standing-seam metal gablefront roof, the Hayes-Byrum Store includes a host of original exterior and interior elements. The original three-bay front facade has a wide, arched entrance with wooden double doors. This recessed entry flanked by large sash windows with two panes in each sash and original wooden shutters, which, like the doors, consist of two recessed panels in each leaf. The front facade was partially remodelled in the 1950s, when the original flat-topped parapet was increased in height by several feet, and the original shed-roofed frame porch was replaced by a flat-roofed metal canopy suspended over the windows and entrance. The remodelled facade, like the original, has a simple flat-topped parapet. Along the south elevation is a one-bay addition erected in the early 20th century where cotton was stored. The rear (west) facade has a one-step parapet roof which appears to be original (Henry Freeman Interview 1989; Agnes Byrum Interview 1989; Gatzka 1987). The interior of the store retains original wooden floors, tongue-and-groove ceiling, and shelves along the north and south walls. These shelves include wide moulded cornices treated with decorative brackets. These wooden brackets feature pendants and give the utilitarian interior a Victorian flair. Typical of general stores, the interior originally included a large wood-burning stove placed in the middle of the store. It was removed in the 1950s, along with display tables, when the store was updated with new counters and refrigerators.

Hayes-Byrum House

Erected about 1900, the Hayes-Byrum House is a handsome, largely intact version of the Queen Anne style. The two-story weatherboarded dwelling has an irregular form that is essentially T-shaped. Topped by a cross-gable roof with asphalt shingles, the house has decorative vents in the gables and sash windows with two panes in each sash and simply moulded surrounds. While the standard lapped weatherboarding covers most of the exterior, that portion of the first-floor facade shielded by the veranda is covered by thinner German siding. The hip-roofed wraparound veranda extends around one bay of the north elevation and has a small front-facing roof gable that marks the main entrance. The original heavy Tuscan porch columns are intact, though the balustrade was removed in the 1960s. The front facade also features a

cutaway bay on the north side, and a main entry with fluted surround and bull 's-eye corner blocks. The rear elevation includes a gable-roofed, one-story kitchen on the north side, an original hip-roofed, two-story wing on the south side, and a porch that was enclosed in the 1960s.

The interior of the house contains a broad central hall with two first-floor rooms on each side. The open-string stairway in the hall rises in two runs to bedrooms arranged around a hallway on the second floor. The stairway has turned balusters and a heavy square newel. Original mantels and other woodwork survives in most of the rooms. Notable is the mantel in the living room (north front room) which features free-standing colonettes and a mirrored overmantel. It is the dwelling's only classical mantel. The other mantels are less pretentious, with reeded pilasters and friezes and brackets supporting shelves. Doors have five panels and heavily moulded surrounds; walls are plaster; and ceilings are tongue-and-groove. The center hall and flanking rooms have tongue-and-groove wainscot. Although the majority of rooms are basically intact, both the kitchen and bedroom in the south, front upper-story room have been extensively remodelled. Both, for example, have dropped ceilings

covering the original wood ceilings, and panelling over the plaster walls. The mantel in the remodelled bedroom has been removed.

Contributing Outbuildings

- **Auto Garage**

Built about 1930, this garage reflects a popular garage type of this period. It has a metal gable-front roof with exposed rafters. Measuring about 20 feet on a side, it is covered with wood shingles and boasts a simple, decorative truss in the front-facing gable. Standing intact, this garage accomodates two autos.

Noncontributing Outbuildings

- **Storage Building**

Built in the 1950s, this simple gable-front building is frame constructed and sheathed in metal. It has a shed addition on the north side. Measuring about 10 feet by 15 feet, the building is used for all-purpose storage and has been adapted to house dogs as well.

- Barn

Built about 1910, this barn is a four-unit, central-passage building with a gable-front roof. The barn is weatherboarded and the roof is sheathed in metal. Reflecting a traditional barn form and plan, this barn is basically intact and is currently used for all-purpose storage.

- Noncontributing Structure

This small swimming pool with surrounding concrete patio measures about 20 feet by 30 feet.

Standing in the small crossroads settlement of Shopton, the Hayes-Byrum Store and House are excellent vernacular renditions of turn-of-the-century commercial and Queen Anne architecture in rural Mecklenburg County. The ca. 1890 Hayes-Byrum Store is not only the oldest surviving commercial building in rural Mecklenburg, but retains significant original elements of design. Key exterior features include the front facade's windows, shutters, doors, and shallow entryway. The major post-World War II changes on the exterior have been the replacement of the original porch by a flat metal canopy, and the heightening, by several feet, of the simple parapet roof. Despite these changes, the basic utilitarian rectangular shape and flat-topped parapet roof which characterized the original building remain. The interior of the store retains much of its original finish, notably the bracketed wooden shelves lining the north and south walls. Consequently, the Hayes-Byrum Store is architecturally significant under Criterion C (see Associated Property Type V--Commercial Buildings--Crossroads Stores). The ca. 1900 Hayes-Byrum House also qualifies for the National Register under Criterion C (see Associated Property Type I--Houses--Queen Anne Style Dwellings). The house exhibits such hallmarks of the Queen Anne as a consciously irregular shape, including a cutaway bay, a variety of wall textures, and a wraparound porch. It is among rural Mecklenburg County's few relatively intact examples of this style, reflecting in its classical porch columns and classical mantel in the parlor the "Free Classic" subtype of the Queen Anne (Gatza 1987; McAlester and McAlester 1984). The interior of the dwelling remains essentially intact, with original woodwork surviving throughout the house. Finally, the contributing outbuilding, the ca. 1930 gable-front auto garage, is a typical vernacular expression of this building type as it appeared in the early 20th century in rural Mecklenburg County. The garage thus contributes to the architectural significance of the property (see Associated Property Type II--Outbuildings).

The Hayes-Byrum General Store and House are an integral part of the history of the Steele Creek community, and the focal point of the small Shopton settlement. The

general store, once so important a part of the post-bellum economy, has been disappearing from the rural landscape. The relationship between the storekeeper and the farmers were essential for the maintenance of the rural way of life. The Hayes-Byrum store is the oldest surviving example of its kind in the county. In January, 1881, Joseph Rufus Hayes (1849-1914) bought a one-acre lot fronting on what became the Shopton Road (now Steele Creek Road), but did not record the deed until 1888.¹ It was his intention to build a general store to serve the rural Steele Creek community and also build a house next door. On January 10, 1882, the 32-year-old Hayes married Emma Spratt, age 21, and they set up housekeeping in the community.² It wasn't until about 1890 or so that he built his store, however, and somewhat later, about 1900, that the house was constructed.³ The crossroads community of Shopton (a shortening of Shoptown) came into being because a blacksmith's shop, wood shop, saw mill, and flour mill were all built in the vicinity of the store. There was also a cotton gin nearby, and, by the end of the century, the Shopton Post Office was located in Hayes' store. A schoolhouse completed the services available in the small community. If a farmer did need anything that wasn't located there, such as fertilizer, a day-long trip to Charlotte was necessary. He would get his horses shod, then start out the next day at 4:00 a.m. and get back after dark, if there were no delays.⁴ J. R. Hayes ran his store until his death in 1914, and was survived by his wife and two daughters, Maud and Ruth Hayes. At the time, a newspaper article described him as follows:

"Mr. Hayes was one of the best known men of the county. For the past 35 years he has been engaged in the mercantile business at Shopton and during that long period he built up a fine trade abiding always in the respect and confidence of his neighbors and those with whom he had to do in a business way."⁵

Some years before his death, he hired a local young man, William Lester Byrum (1879-1952), to work in the store.⁶ In 1919, W. L. Byrum bought the one-acre lot that contained the house and store, as well as eleven other tracts belonging to Mrs. Hayes, and became the long-time owner and operator of the store.⁷ The store remains today in the ownership and operation of the Byrum family. When W. L. Byrum, who was a bachelor, died in 1952, ownership of the house and store passed to his nephew, Robert Franklin Byrum (1925-1973), and his farmland went to another nephew, Erskine Byrum (1920).⁸ The store and house are currently owned by Robert Franklin's widow, Agnes Byrum, who lives in the house.⁹ Two of her children, Robert Franklin, Jr. (Robby) and Linda Ann (Bunny) Slye, continue the family tradition by operating the store.¹⁰ Although the character of rural Mecklenburg County is rapidly changing, the Hayes-Byrum store remains as a rare surviving country general store that has been in continuous operation for nearly one hundred years. The house associated with the store is also still occupied by the owner of the latter.

NOTES

- ¹ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 60, p.499.
- ² Mecklenburg County Marriage Register, 1872-1888.
- ³ Interview with Erskine Byrum (1920-), nephew of W.L Byrum, by William Huffman, 1989. Erskine Byrum has tape recorded interviews with two of his uncles, one of whom was Samuel Knox. The latter was born about 1890 and remembers seeing the store built as a child. The date of the house is from family interviews and the style of the house.
- ⁴ Ibid., *The History of Steele Creek Presbyterian Church*. 3rd edition (Charlotte: Craftsman Printing and Publishing, 1978), pp. 171-172.
- ⁵ *Charlotte Observer*, August 22, 1914, p.6.
- ⁶ Interview with Erskine Byrum, cited above.
- ⁷ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 409, p.193.
- ⁸ Ibid., Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1555, p. 309.
- ⁹ Interview with Robert Franklin (Robby) Byrum by William H. Huffman, 1989; interview with Erskine Byrum, cited above; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3753, p. 974.
- ¹⁰ Interview with Robert Franklin (Robby Byrum), cited above.

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