



EUGENE WILSON HODGES FARM HOUSE



This report was written on January 27 1990

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Eugene Wilson Hodges Farm House is located at 3900 Rocky River Church Road in Charlotte, North Carolina 28215.

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

Mr. and Mrs. J. Franklin Hodges
3900 Rocky River Church Road
Charlotte, North Carolina 28215

Telephone: (704) 596-0772

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: This property is divided into several parcels. They are:

Tax Parcel Number 105-051-03

Deed Book 5931, Page 864 Zoning:

Farm

Appraised Value:

Land (37.26 acres) = \$12,360

Improvement = 0

Total: = \$12,360

Tax Parcel Number 105-061-12

Deed Book 4781, page 457 Zoning:

Farm

Appraised Value:

Land (41.66 acres) = \$14,830

Improvements = \$33.620 Total:

= \$48,450

Tax Parcel Number 105-061-13

Deed Book 5931, Page 864 Zoning:

R12

Appraised Value:

Land (1.5 acres) = \$14,000

Improvements = \$46,820 Total
= \$60, 820

Tax Parcel Number 105-061-14
Deed Book 5931, page 864 Zoning:
Farm
Appraised Value:
Land (23.2 acres) = \$10,790
Improvements = -0-
Total = \$10, 790

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 cultural importance: The Commission judges that the property known as the Eugene Wilson Hodges Farm does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) the Eugene Wilson Hodges Farm, comprising a handsome triple-A roofed I-house and a 187 acre tract of pasturage, cultivated fields, and wooded fencelines is an unusually pristine example of the early 20th Century agricultural environment which once was predominant in Mecklenburg County; 2) the ca. 1908 Hodges House is architecturally significant as representing an early 20th Century interpretation of the traditional Ihouse type adapted and embellished with an array of vernacular Colonial Revival elements by the owner-builder; 3) outbuildings, such as the hip-roofed wellhouse, possess architectural significance as representatives of both traditional and popular building types of their era; and 4) the gambrel-roofed outbuildings, when constructed, represented a new, innovative building type in 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 Eugene Wilson Hodges Farm meets this criterion.

9. Ad Valorem 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 \$80,440. The current appraised value of the 103.62 acres is \$51,980. The total appraised value of the property is \$132,420.

Date of Preparation of this Report: January 27 1990

Prepared by: Dr. Dan L. Morrill in conjunction with Nora M. Black
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission
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Charlotte, North Carolina 28203

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Architectural Description

The Eugene Wilson Hodges Farm comprises approximately 187 acres of farmland, farmhouse, and related outbuildings northeast of Charlotte in Mecklenburg County. The property constitutes one of the county's largest farmsteads today, and thus contributes significantly to the persistent rural character of its setting in the area east of the Newell community. Here, the farm is located on both the north and south sides of the winding Rocky River Church Road. Nearby, to the northeast and southeast, stand the 19th-century farmhouses of the Caldwell and Hood families, respectively, who, like the Hodges family, have shaped the physical and cultural landscape of this part of the

county for more than a century (Gatza 1987). The Hodges House, built about 1908, is the centerpiece of a large complex of agricultural buildings and structures, including four contributing buildings, five contributing structures, seven noncontributing buildings and three noncontributing structures. A number of the contributing properties have replacement siding, such as metal and asphalt veneers. However, their original forms are essentially intact, and original sidings survive beneath the later coverings. The great majority of noncontributing buildings and structures, among them a dilapidated tenant house and two large gambrel roofed dairy barns, have forms and methods of construction consistent with the contributing outbuildings. Many of the noncontributing structures furthermore, are buffered from the original core of the farmyard by mature oak trees. Among the contributing resources is the farmland. This land includes about 120 acres of pasture, bordered by woods, to the east and south of the farmyard. Cropland stands to the west, southwest, and north, across the road, and constitutes about 65 acres. This surrounding farmland has survived in unusually pristine condition.

It is said that several tenant dwellings once stood north across the road from the Hodges House, and that a frame smokehouse originally stood behind the residence, beside the wellhouse. No evidence of these buildings survives above ground, and no archaeological study has been undertaken.

This frame, three-bay I-house with two parallel, one-story rear ells was built about 1908. It is said that the first owner, Eugene Wilson Hodges, built the dwelling primarily by himself, employing materials salvaged from other properties in the area (Frank Hodges Interview 1989). The house is distinguished by a triple-A roof covered by patterned slate shingles. Two exterior, stuccoed-brick chimneys are located at the rear of the house, accommodating fireplaces in the two main first and second-story rooms, as well as, originally, in the two rear wings. Windows have one-over-one sash with simply molded surrounds on the second story, and distinctive single-pane fixed windows with transoms in the front porch area. This front facade is dominated by a wraparound, hip-roofed porch with a raised seam tin roof and slender, wooden Doric columns, reflecting the influence of the Colonial Revival Style. The original turned-post balustrade has been removed. This porch extends around the east elevation and terminates with a bathroom, which originally had been a one-room flower house. The original windows in this bay have been remodelled and the original sash replaced. On the west gable end, the porch ends at a 1950s extension of the enclosed shed along the west side of the west ell. The rear ell and extension contain bedrooms. The east ell contains the dining room and kitchen and is attached to the bedroom wing by an original shed-roofed hallway. This hall originally led to an open shed-roofed porch along the west side of the kitchen wing which has been enclosed.

The interior's plan and finish reflect the taste and handiwork of Hodges. The first floor consists of two main rooms in the two-story block with no hallway separating the rooms. The stairway rises from a rear hall, which divides the two back ells. This

stairway is enclosed; and according to family members the enclosure is original. The stair has a heavy square newel and turned balusters shielded by a plaster wall. Original plaster walls and ceilings exist throughout the house, though new cropped acoustical ceilings, installed about 18 inches below the originals, are in place in all the rooms; and the rear ells and upstairs bedrooms plywood wall paneling over the original plaster. The house includes a variety of mantels said to have been salvaged by Hodges from other houses. However, these mantels have designs reflecting the house's period of construction. For example, the mantel in the east front room (originally the parlor) has free-standing colonettes. The other mantels, which are simpler, display square shelves supported by attached square posts on either side of the fire opening.

Landscape (Contributing Site)

The approximately 187-acre tract of farmland comprising the Hodges Farm continues to display the appearance, and some of the uses, which characterized it during the period of significance. Although cotton, dominant crop on the Hodges Farm in the early 20th century, is no longer raised, the landscape's rolling terrain of cropland, pasture, and woods, reveals the essential character of the Piedmont farmsteads which once dominated Mecklenburg County. The land remains part of a large working farm where crops and livestock are raised on its soil. The farmyard, the centerpiece of the tract, is shaded by mature oaks. Although this farm is situated in one of the more agrarian parts of the county, new residential developments now mark the former farmland to the northeast, physical reminders of the fragility of this rural landscape.

The Eugene Wilson Hodges Farm is composed of a handsome ca.1908, triple-A I-house, and a variety of frame hip-, gable-, shed-, and gambrel-roofed outbuildings. The Hodges House is architecturally significant under Criterion C as representing an early 20th-century interpretation of the traditional I-house. Built largely by the owner, this weatherboarded dwelling displays an array of vernacular Colonial Revival elements that were adapted to suit the needs and tastes of the Hodges family. The classical post porch wraps around the main facade, while the enclosed stairway rises from a rear hallway (closer to the kitchen and dining room than to the main entrance--see Associated Property Type I--Early 20th Century Small Town Dwellings and Farmhouses). The outbuildings are also architecturally significant under Criterion C, representing both traditional and popular building types (see Associated Property Type II--Outbuildings). Among the contributing outbuildings are a frame hip-roofed wellhouse, shed-roofed chicken coops, a gable-roofed barns, and gambrel-roofed granaries with wagon shelters. In particular, these gambrel-roofed buildings represented a relatively new, innovative building type in the county. As reflected by the noncontributing 1940s gambrel-roofed barns on the Hodges farmstead, this barn type with the spacious upper story grew in popularity among local farmers as the century progressed. The farm is also eligible under Criterion A as representing a middle-class farming operation in Mecklenburg County in the early decades of the 20th century (see Context Statement--Post-Bellum Agriculture). Eugene Wilson

Hodges (1878-1943) was a prosperous farmer in the Crab Orchard Township of Mecklenburg County. He raised crops and livestock typical of county farms in the early 20th century. He built and resided in a substantial farmhouse that was functional for his large family, as well as stylistically appropriate for his social class. In this regard, his dwelling was similar to other farmhouses of his peers; and like his peers, Hodges had granaries, a wellhouse, several chicken coops, dairy barns, and tenant houses among the significant support buildings and structures on his farmstead.

References

Gatza, Mary Beth. 1987. *Architectural Inventory of Rural Mecklenburg County, North Carolina*. Unpublished inventory available at the N.C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Hodges, Frank. Present owner of the Hodges Farm and son of Eugene Wilson Hodges. Interview, July 18, 1989. Mr. Hodges provided information concerning the dates of house and related outbuildings.

Historical Overview

E. W. Hodges grew up on his parents' farm, which was also in Crab Orchard Township. The son of Calvin W. and Jane Hood Hodges, E. W. began acquiring land of his own in 1905, and continued to buy additional acreage through fifteen more purchases of Crab Orchard farmland, the last of which was bought in 1941, just two years before his death.¹ According to the 1880 census, his parents farmed rented land, but by the time he died, E. W. Hodges had accumulated 486.38 acres.²

According to family members, E. W. Hodges built his house in 1908. He designed it himself, and used lumber from his land to build it.³ There are no agricultural records available for the Hodges farm from the census figures (the last of which that are available is 1880), but a picture of the agricultural production may be gathered from the settlement of Hodges' estate in 1944. The inventory shows that his farm produced 600 bushels of corn, 1000 bushels of oats, 1000 bushels of barley, 30 tons of hay, and 62 bales of cotton. He owned 22 milk cows, five heifers, and five mules. The farm implements were valued at \$610.00, and he had an undetermined number of tenant

farmers who were entitled to partial interest in 14 bales of cotton.⁴ From these figures, it would appear that Hodges farm was atypical in that it raised more oats and barley than corn, and that it continued to produce that amount of cotton into the 1940s. (See Context Statement- Table and Graphs).

After B. W. Hodges' death in 1943, his intestate estate was divided between his two sons, E. W. Hodges, Jr. and James Franklin Hodges, with Eunice Cochran Hodges (1880-1959), the widow of B. W. Hodges, Sr., receiving a life estate in the house plus the use of 100 surrounding acres.⁵ In 1969, a final partition of the land was made between the two sons, and J. Frank Hodges received title to the home place tract and other parcels.⁶ The latter currently lives in the house, and has converted the land to a dairy farm, which is called Hodges Dairy, Inc.

Notes

¹ Mecklenburg County, Certificate of Death, Book 65, p.271; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 190, p. 389; 218, p.691; 280, p.588; 365, p.241; 365, p.412; 391, p. 390; 497, p. 55; 492, p.124; 526, p.491; 573, p.268; 573, p.283; 578, p.132; 776, p.41; 837, p. 72; 876, p.459; 1052, p. 383.

² Mecklenburg County, Record of Accounts, Book 35, p.88; U. S. Census, 1880, Mecklenburg County, Agricultural Schedules.

³ Interview with J. Frank Hodges by Mary Beth Gatza, 1988, and Richard Mattson, 1989.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1121, p. 36, 27 May 1944.

⁶ Ibid., Book 3100, p.286, 9 June 1969; Map Book 14, p. 495.