

**SURVEY AND RESEARCH REPORT**

**ON**

**The Oakley House**



**1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the Oakley House is located at 129 Main Street, Pineville, North Carolina.

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

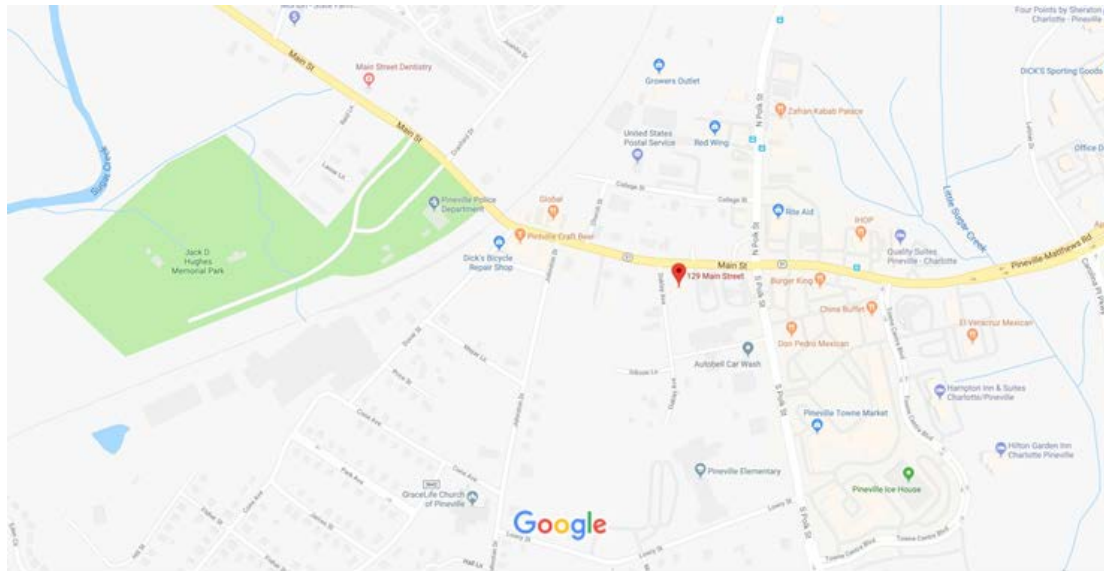
Charles R. and Frances Eubanks Yandell

PO Box 69

Pineville, NC 28134

**3. Representative photographs of the property:** This report contains representative photographs of the property. Color slides are available at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission office.

**4. Maps depicting the location of the property:** This report contains a map depicting the location of the property. The UTM coordinates are 17510195E 3882238N.



**5. Current deed book reference to the property:** The most recent deed to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 03453 on page 210. The tax parcel number of the property is #22106410

**6. A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property.

**7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description of the property.

**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 Oakley House does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

- 1) The house was built by C.S. Oakley, a prominent man of commerce in Pineville, who owned the Pineville Lumber Company and was the President of the Pineville Loan and Savings Bank.
- 2) The Oakley House is Pineville's only example of an early twentieth century grand town home with meticulous attention to architectural detail and scale.
- 3) The house is one of the few remaining historic homes on Main Street and one of the last vestiges of the former residential streetscape of Main Street.
- 4) For over eighty years the Oakley House was home to some of Pineville's leading citizens. Richard Eubanks, who occupied the house from 1930 to 1971, was a community leader and served on the Mecklenburg County School Board for ten years. His son-in-law Charles R. Yandell, who lived in the house from 1972 to 2002, has been active in Pineville local government for nearly fifty years, serving as mayor, mayor pro-tem, and several consecutive terms on the town council.
- 5) The Oakley House features elements of the Prairie Style, which is extremely rare in Mecklenburg County.

**b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association:** The Commission contends that the physical and architectural description which is included in this report demonstrates that the Oakley 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 total appraised value of the improvements is \$3,600. The current appraised value of the lot is \$561,200. The current total tax value is \$564,800.

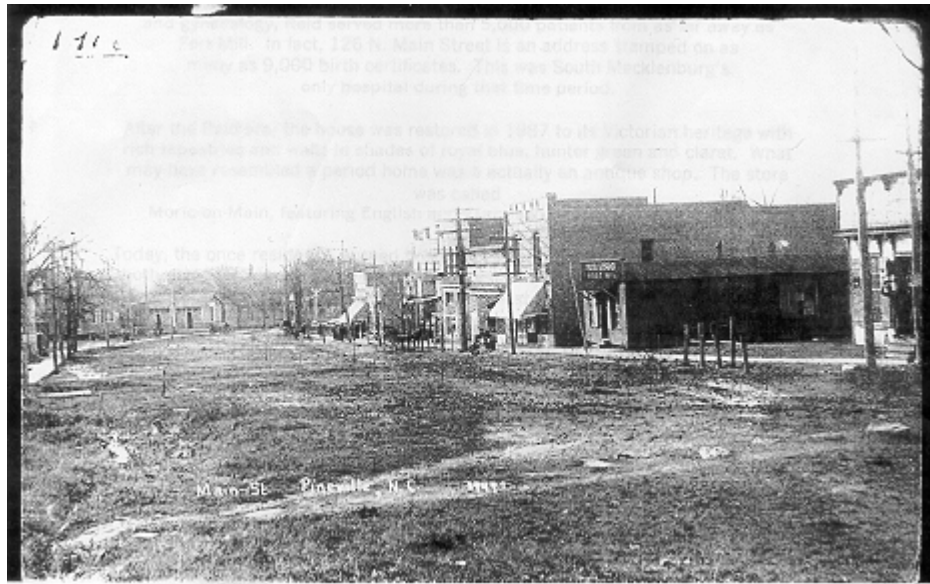
**10. Portion of property recommended for designation:** The exterior and interior of the House, and the property associated with the tax parcel are recommended for historic designation.

**Date of preparation of this report:** May 2003

**Prepared by:** Stewart Gray and Dr. Paula M. Stathakis

## Historical Overview

Businessman and banker C.S. Oakley built the house that bears his name on Pineville's Main Street in the early 1920s. Pineville, a rural hamlet eleven miles south of Charlotte, was historically a cotton center. Originally named "Morrow's Turnout," the town changed its name to "Pineville" when the Charlotte, Columbia, and Augusta Railroad built a depot there in 1852. The name Pineville derived from the large stands of pine trees common in the area.<sup>[1]</sup> The town was incorporated in 1872, and its charter was locally famous for its provision that prohibited the sale of "spirituous liquors" within the town limits or within one mile from town.<sup>[2]</sup> By 1903, the population was nearly 700, and the majority of these inhabitants were involved in some way with the production or processing of cotton. According to D.A. Tompkins, by 1900 the town had ten stores, [located in a commercial district of approximately two blocks] and three to six thousand bales of cotton were sold there annually. In 1890, businessmen from Charlotte established the Dover Yarn Mill. A weaving department was added to the mill in 1902 that by then employed over two hundred operatives on 9400 spindles and 400 looms.<sup>[3]</sup> The mill was purchased in 1902 by Chadwick-Hoskins Mills and acquired in 1946 by Cone Mills.<sup>[4]</sup> The cotton gin built by the Miller brothers in 1915 remained in continuous operation, in various incarnations, until the 1970s.<sup>[5]</sup> In the autumn, farmers loaded their cotton onto mule-drawn wagons and lined up for blocks outside of the gin, some spending the night in line, anxious to gin and sell their cotton since this was the only income most of them had to show for the year.<sup>[6]</sup> Local cotton farmers plowed with mules and flocked to town on Saturdays to sell their crops, shop, pay debts, extend their credit, trade mules, and take corn to the mill.<sup>[7]</sup> The Miller family owned most of the stores on the north side of Main Street, and William Yandell owned most of the stores on the south side of Main Street. There was substantial commercial diversity crammed into this two block business district: four grocery stores, a dime store, a drug store, a doctor's office, a hardware store, two barbershops, a pool room, a beauty shop, a radio repair shop, a livery stable and blacksmith, hotel rooms, the Post Office, and ice house, movie theatre, a gas station and a funeral home.<sup>[8]</sup>



Main Street, Pineville - 1915

The Pineville of C.S. Oakley's day was a small cotton town on a railroad line the quiet weekdays of which were punctuated by bustling Saturdays in the mercantile and commercial shops along Main Street's modest business corridor. The mill whistle signaled the start of the day at 5:30 am. Whistles from steam engines and trains, the sound of tractors, A and T model Fords, and the distant sounds of cows mooing formed part of the ordinary daily experience of the Pineville resident. Of all of the town's inhabitants, Oakley was perhaps the most prominent of his day. He was a leading man of business in the small town and was the owner of the Pineville Lumber Company and the President of the Pineville Loan and Savings Bank. Oakley acquired the property on which the house sits, then approximately four acres, in 1919 from W.E. Younts for \$1500.00.<sup>[9]</sup> Little else is know about Oakley, but this large and stylish house amply demonstrates his community status and preeminence. Of the grand houses that once lined Pineville's Main Street, this house was certainly the most finely appointed and designed. The scale and fine millwork evident in the structure are silent testimony to a man who was, for a brief time, influential, upwardly mobile, and anxious to display this facility through the grandeur of his home. Unfortunately, according to the scant references available for Oakley in the public record, his fortunes appear to have dissipated as quickly as they were amassed. By 1922, Oakley had declared bankruptcy and had to sell the house at auction. J.M. Niven purchased the house, with the high bid of \$7500.00. Oakley's wife Gertrude received \$350.00 to satisfy her claim of dower, and the house was formally transferred to Niven on January 30, 1923.<sup>[10]</sup> According to local tradition, Oakley quickly left town after this unpleasant change of fate.

The Niven family retained the house until 1935, when they sold it to Richard Gatling Eubanks.<sup>[11]</sup> Eubanks, a native of Como, North Carolina, was educated at Major Baird's School in Charlotte and at Harvard University. During the First World War, Eubanks served in the United States Navy and after the war worked as the plant manager for the Southern Cotton Oil Company, located in Charlotte near the intersection of Tremont and South Boulevard. He also served on the Mecklenburg County School Board for ten years. He married Lila Hall, whose family was established in Pineville, and whose family home was formerly located across Main

Street on the other side of the Main Street and Polk Street intersection. William Lee Hall ran a general store next door to his house and also owned a corn mill located behind the store. [\[12\]](#)



Tom Eubanks ca. 1950



Eubanks Grandchildren 1962

Although the Oakley House was formally located “in town,” the Eubanks family raised chickens, cows and a garden on their four-acre tract. They also rented one acre to the Miller family who used it to grow cotton. Tom Eubanks recalled several entertaining anecdotes about growing up in the house. His father always wondered if Oakley hid any money in the house, so he often looked in newel posts and other discrete locations just in case. One afternoon Tom and his older brother Dick were playing with a .22 rifle in the east-facing bedroom and shot out the window because they did not realize the gun was loaded. The windowsill is still chipped from this escapade. Tom Eubanks often hid from his music teacher, Anna Lee Younts Hoffman, [who lived to be 103], in the music room closet. [The Eubanks family designated the small room off the foyer as the music room.] Invariably Anna Hoffman thought Tom was hiding outside which gave him some reasonable opportunities to avoid or at least curtail his music lesson. [\[13\]](#)

Perhaps the most intriguing stories were related to Tom by their neighbor across the street, Mrs. Beulah Younts. Tom Eubanks remembered that as a boy, the ladies of Pineville put on their formal attire in the afternoons and sat on their front porches to watch the social activity and to engage their neighbors and friends in conversation. Beulah Younts sat on her porch finely dressed down to her white gloves, and would often tell young Tom interesting stories about the old days in Pineville. She related, for example, that several months after the Civil War ended, a

straggler came to their home; and as they tried to chase him away, the family realized the bedraggled man was their father, who was so threadbare and disheveled as to be unrecognizable. However her most memorable and most mysterious story concerned the refugees that staggered through Pineville after the Civil War. In those days, Main Street was narrower and unpaved. The Oakley house was not yet built, and most of that lot was covered by a stand of tall pine trees, and this became a place where the refugees camped on their way through town. One evening, a little girl belonging to one of these families died and was buried in the camp. Beulah Younts told Tom that the child was buried in what is now a section of the Oakley House front yard. Tom Eubanks says that no human remains have ever been found on the property, but the family never disturbed the area where this burial was alleged to have taken place. <sup>[14]</sup>

Richard and Lila Eubanks lived in the house until the early 1970s. Richard Eubanks died on July 4, 1971, and after his death, the house was conveyed to his daughter Frances and her husband Charles R. Yandell. Charles Yandell is the son of William Yandell, both lifelong Pineville residents and civic leaders. Charles married his childhood friend Frances Eubanks in 1950, and the couple occupied the Oakley house from 1972 until 2002. The Yandells built the downstairs rear addition to the house. Charles Yandell was educated at the University of South Carolina and served in the United States Army Air Force during the Second World War. At 23 years of age he was a second lieutenant and a navigator in the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force. On his fifth bombing mission, he and his crew were shot down fifty miles from Dusseldorf, and he was subsequently taken prisoner, spending nine months in Stalag 1. <sup>[15]</sup> When he returned to civilian life, he had a career as a pharmacist and a pharmaceutical salesman for Eli Lilly. Although Yandell traveled for his job, he devoted a considerable part of his life to local government. He was elected to his first position on the Pineville Town Council in 1946 and served continuously on that board until the 1980s when he was elected mayor pro-tem. He was elected mayor in 1988, and he remains civically active by serving on various town boards. <sup>[16]</sup>

The Oakley House has seen many changes in Pineville, the most notable of which has been the result of increased suburban land use and development in the area. As land prices rose in the late 1970s and into the 1980s, farmers began to sell their cotton fields to developers. As commercial and retail development converged on the town along the U.S. 521 and N.C. 51 corridors, the once rural area became more congested with new residents and traffic, and less isolated from Charlotte. Antiques shops have replaced the general stores that once dominated the town's business district, and nearly all of the town's older stately homes have been removed to accommodate new businesses along Main Street. The Oakley House is one of the few remaining residential structures that provides a snapshot of early twentieth century Pineville.

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<sup>[1]</sup> *The Charlotte Observer*, February 28, 1950, "Pineville Has Been Important Area of Mecklenburg Since Its Founding;" *The Charlotte News*, December 27, 1975, "Depot May Become Museum," 8A.

<sup>[2]</sup> *The Charlotte News*, Clippings file, Spangler Room, Public Library of Mecklenburg County no date or title.

<sup>[3]</sup> D.A. Tompkins, *History Of Mecklenburg County and The City of Charlotte From 1740-1903*, Vol. 2, (Charlotte, N.C.: Charlotte Printing House, 1903), p. 198.

<sup>[4]</sup> LeGette Blythe and Charles Raven Brockman, *Hornets' Nest. The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County*, (Charlotte: McNally, 1961), p. 418.

<sup>[5]</sup> *The Charlotte News*, October 12, 1972, "Pineville Braces for Era of Rapid Growth," Tom Denton, 2C.

<sup>[6]</sup> Joe Howard Griffin, Sr., "My Hometown, Pineville. History, Hearsay, Memories, and Scrapbook of Pineville" Unpublished manuscript, property of Thomas H. Eubanks.

<sup>[7]</sup> Booklet, "Welcome to Pineville," Clippings file; *The Charlotte Observer*, October 18, 1989, "Where Cotton Wagons Once Rolled, Now Cars, Antiques rule Pineville's Main Street," Dianne Whitacre, p. 20, Mecklenburg Neighbors.

<sup>[8]</sup> Joe Howard Griffin, Sr. "My Hometown, Pineville."

<sup>[9]</sup> Mecklenburg County Court House, Register of Deeds, Deed 412-265, November 4, 1919. Younts acquired the property in 1885 from H. K. Reid, deed 47-1.

<sup>[10]</sup> Deed 491-127.

<sup>[11]</sup> Deed 869-316, June 25, 1935. Eubanks purchased the house for \$4000.00.

<sup>[12]</sup> Obituary, Richard Gatling Eubanks, *The Charlotte Observer*, July 5, 1971; Interview with Thomas H. Eubanks, May 8, 2003. Richard Eubanks was a distant relative of the inventor of the Gatling Gun.

<sup>[13]</sup> Interview, Tom Eubanks. May 8, 2003

<sup>[14]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[15]</sup> *The Charlotte Observer*, July 13. 1988, "44 Year Old Memories revived by Pineville Mayor's POW Medal," Pat Borden Gubbins, Mecklenburg Neighbors.

<sup>[16]</sup> Joe Howard Griffin, Sr., "My Hometown Pineville."



## Architectural Description



The Oakley House is a substantial and impressive building. Built around 1920, the house incorporates architectural elements associated with the Prairie and Craftsman Styles, but it shares none of the cottage aesthetic associated with many of Mecklenburg County's early 20<sup>th</sup> Craftsman Style-influenced homes. Instead the house was a showplace, reflecting the status of one of Pineville's leading businessmen, and perhaps advertising the stylish millwork available through his lumber business. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Oakley House was considered the grandest house in the town of Pineville<sup>[1]</sup>, and a survey of existing homes near the town's historical center supports that contention. The only extant house identified with a similar degree of stature and architectural elaboration is the 1883 Italiniate-Style Younts House, which sits across Main Street from the Oakley House.



The Oakley House faces north and is situated on a large flat lot that is elevated above Main Street. The house sits 70 feet from the road. The massed plan two-story house features a crossed gable design, with a large gable over each elevation. Despite this, the house is notably asymmetrical, with a great deal of effort having been taken to avoid flat exterior walls. Among the house's many notable architectural features, perhaps the most prominent is the gabled front porch. Supported by massive Prairie-Style square masonry piers, the large porch features boxed beams, which curve down to form capitals. The piers were constructed with terra cotta blocks covered with stucco, and etched to resemble masonry block, and the concrete porch was covered with square tile. The westernmost end of the porch extends beyond the house forming a cross-gabled porte-cochere, also supported by massive Prairie Style square masonry piers. A curving drive, consisting of two narrow strips of poured concrete, begins at the northwest corner of the lot and runs through the carport. The house's fenestration is impressive, especially on the front elevation. The house is three bays wide, with the front entrance and easternmost bay recessed approximately five feet. The four-foot wide mahogany front door contains a single large beveled light, and is border by tall single-light mahogany sidelights. The easternmost bay contains a large picture window topped by a five-light transom. To the west of the front door an even larger picture window is topped by an eight-light transom. On the second-story the asymmetrical fenestration continues with a prominent three-sided bay with another transom-topped picture window set between double-hung four-over-one windows. The three-sided bay is protected by a projecting secondary gable. To the east of the three-sided bay, three more four-over-one double-hung windows are ganged together. All ten of the house's principal and secondary gables are decorated with green shingle siding, and are supported by Craftsman-Style brackets. The end of each bracket is beveled and protrudes through the house's substantial vergeboards. The vergeboards are topped with moulded trim. A shed-roofed oriel is centered in the principal front gable, and contains two four-vertical-light sash. The topmost section of the gable is a vent, covered with square lattice.



The west elevation is nearly as complex as the front, with the west gable of the porte-cochere, a square stuccoed stepped chimney, and a large bowed five-window bay. The Chimney, like the porch piers and the house's brick foundation, is etched to resemble masonry block, and is bordered on each side by pairs of three-lite casement windows. On the second-story two sections of the wall cantilever over the first-story bowed bay, with a secondary gable covering the most deeply projecting section. The extended eave of the primary gable runs down to the porch roof.



Bay on west elevation



East elevation

The east elevation is simpler, featuring one picture window with a five-light transom, and a ribbon of four three-vertical-lite casement windows. On the second-story, the wall section

directly under the east-facing gable is cantilevered out slightly and contains two pairs of four-over-one windows.



The rear of the house is covered by a single large gable. A ribbon of three casement windows abut a shallow hipped-roof kitchen wing and screened porch, which extend from the rear of the house perhaps six feet. Above this another hipped bump-out encloses closets for the upstairs bedroom. Original glazed panel doors remain in place. The second-story is pierced by more four-over-one double-hung windows.

The most notable change to the exterior of the house is the addition of vinyl siding, which obscures moulded corner boards, a wide water table band over the foundation, and the vergeboard, brackets, and rafter tails in the eaves. The small windows in the oriel have also been covered. A large two-car garage has been added to the southwest corner of the house, along with a one-story gabled rear bedroom addition. The ribbon of casements windows on the rear of the house have been incorporated into a new interior hallway.



The interior of the house is largely intact. Plaster walls are found throughout, along with tall baseboards and simple but pronounced door and window trim. Craftsman-Style interior features include tapered interior posts, a corbelled brick fireplace, and numerous built-in cabinets and window seats. It appears that all of the home's French and paneled interior doors remain in place with their original hardware. Narrow strip oak floors are covered by carpet. The upstairs bedrooms appear to be unaltered and feature original wall sconces. The upstairs bath features the original tub and fixtures.

The condition of the house appears to be good, and the integrity of the building is high due to the large amount of original material.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Interview with Tom Eubanks, 5-8-03