

THE RICHARD WEARN HOUSE



This report was written on March 6, 1979

1. Name and Location of the property: The property known as the Richard Wearn House is located at 4928 Tuckaseegee Rd. in Charlotte, N.C.

2. Name, address, and telephone number of the present owner and occupant of the property: The present owner of the property is:

Trust Division
North Carolina National Bank
Charlotte, N.C. 28255

Telephone: 374-5000

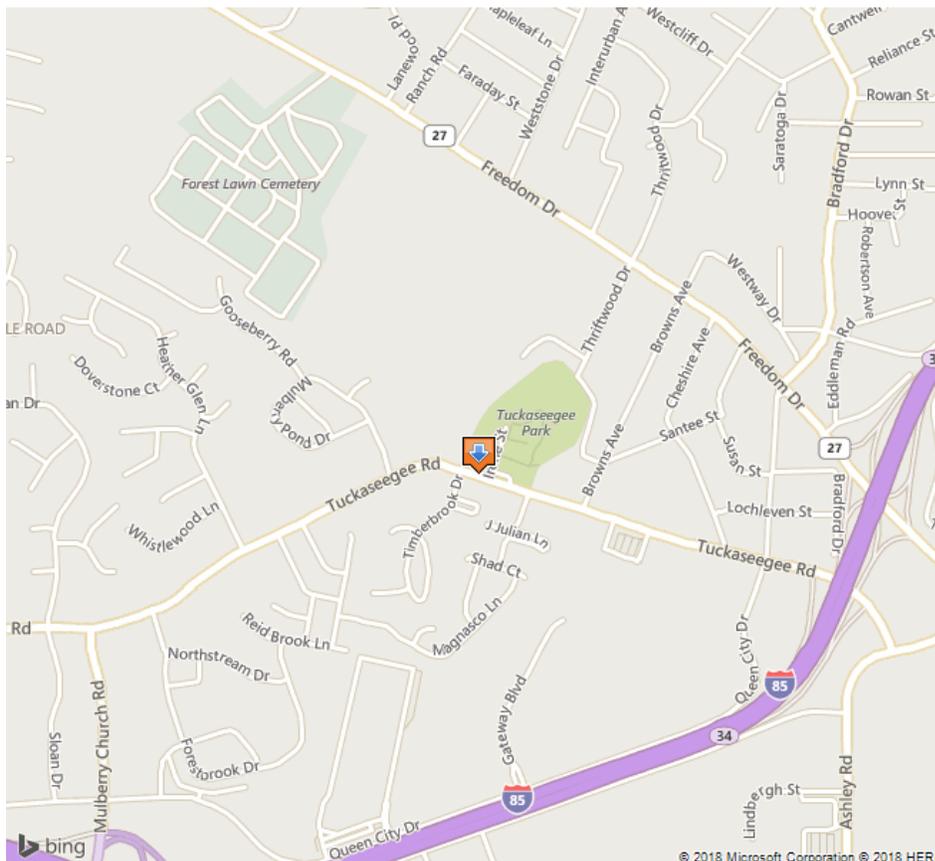
The present occupant of the property is:

William Preston Hayes & Edward Lawrence Hayes
4928 Tuckaseegee Rd.
Charlotte, N.C. 28208

Telephone: Unlisted

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 depicting the location of the property.



5. Current deed book reference to the property: The most recent reference to this property is recorded in the Estate Records of Mecklenburg County, Will #69-E-836. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is 05303111.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property:

Richard Wearn (1798-1851) settled in Mecklenburg County in 1831. ¹ He was a native of Cornwall, the southwesternmost county of England. ² Traditionally, Cornishmen secured their livelihood from one of two sources, from the sea and from mining. Illustrative of this truth are the words of a favorite Cornish toast, "fish, tin, and copper." Indeed, tin mines had abounded in Cornwall since earliest recorded times. In the nineteenth century, however, the mining industry in the region began to languish. An intelligent, independent, and resourceful people, the Cornish miners were compelled to search for new areas in which to practice their customary craft. ³ Richard Wearn belonged to this aggregate of immigrant miners who left Cornwall in the early 1800's.

Richard Wearn initially settled in Gatehouse of the Fleet, Scotland, a center of tin mining. There he met and married his wife, Henrietta Thomson Wearn (1803-1847) on November 25, 1822. ⁴ Soon thereafter, Richard, his wife, and their first child came to the United States. ⁵ It is reasonable to infer that the decision to move to Mecklenburg County in 1831, nine years after his arrival in this country, was occasioned by the fact that Charlotte was becoming a major center of gold mining. In 1830, Victor Rivafanoli, and agent of a London mining company, had come to Charlotte to purchase and lease property on which to introduce the most up-to-date mining techniques. ⁶ Rivafanoli brought experienced miners to Mecklenburg County. The mines which these men upgraded or established included the Capps Mine, the Dunn Mine, St. Catherine's, the Yellow Dog, and the Rudisil Mine. ⁷ The excitement engendered by these activities intensified in 1831, when a veritable "nest of gold" (one hundred and twenty pounds) was discovered near Charlotte. According to one scholar, this find produced a "frenzy of excitement." ⁸ Also indicative of the growing importance of gold mining in Mecklenburg County in the 1830's was the decision to locate a branch of the United States Mint in Charlotte. ⁹

The cornerstones of the facility was laid January 8, 1836. ¹⁰ Richard Wearn prospered as a gold miner in Mecklenburg County. On August 8, 1837, he purchased a tract of land from William Polk on what is now Tuckaseegee Rd. Here he erected a log house to accommodate his wife and their children. About ten years later, c. 1846, he built a larger home on the same tract. This edifice comprises a portion of the property known as the Richard Wearn House today. ¹¹

Henrietta Thomson Wearn died on January 23, 1847. Richard Wearn expired on November 20, 1851. Both are buried in the Old Settlers Cemetery in Charlotte.¹² The house was sold to W.W. Elms to settle the Wearn Estate. Soon thereafter, however, J.B. McDonald purchased the structure and gave it to his daughter, who was the wife of George Henry Wearn (1834-1898). Following George Henry's death, the house was sold to Rufus Holland Reid, again to settle an estate. The transaction marked the end of the Wearn's occupancy of the structure.¹³ The contribution of the Wearn family to the development of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County has persisted, however. Indeed, the descendants of the Cornish miner who settled on Tuckaseegee Rd. in the 1830's have excelled in a broad array of pursuits, including medicine, engineering, architecture, and politics.¹⁴

Footnotes:

¹ Cornelia Wearn Henderson, *The Descendants of Richard and Henrietta Wearn*, p. 48. Hereafter cited as Wearn.

² Wearn, p. 5.

³ *The Encyclopedia Britannica Eleventh Edition* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge & New York, 1910), Vol. VII, p. 180.

⁴ Wearn, p. 5.

⁵ Wearn, p. 6.

⁶ Bruce Roberts, *The Carolina Gold Rush* (McNally and Loftin, Charlotte, N.C., 1971), p. 16.

⁷ Henrietta H. Wilkinson, *The Mint Museum of Art at Charlotte, A Brief History* (Heritage Printers, Inc., Charlotte, N.C., 1973), p. 5. Hereafter cited as Mint.

⁸ Fletcher M. Green, "Gold Mining: A Forgotten Industry of Ante-Bellum North Carolina." *The North Carolina Historical Review* (January 1937), Number I., p.11.

⁹ Mint., p. 10.

¹⁰ Mint., p. 19.

¹¹ Wearn, p. 50.

¹² Wearn, p. 5.

¹³ Wearn, p. 50.

¹⁴ For description of the contributions of the descendants of Richard Wearn, see Wearn.

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains a brief architectural description of the Richard Wearn House. The Commission was unable to gain access to the interior of the structure.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria set forth in N.C.G.S. 160-A-399. 4:

a. Historical and cultural significance: The historical and cultural significance of the property known as the Richard Wearn House rests upon three factors. First, it is one of the relatively few ante-bellum structures which survives in Charlotte, N.C. Worth noting in this regard is the fact that the structure is a two-story log house in which horizontal board siding and a rear wing have been added. (James A. Stenhouse, "Exploring Old Mecklenburg" Charlotte, N.C., 1952, p. 27). Second, the structure is intimately associated with the history of gold mining in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Third, the structure served as the abode of a family which has made a significant and lasting impact upon the development of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

b. Suitability for preservation and restoration: The overall condition of the structure is fair to good. The structure could be easily preserved. It is noteworthy that the structure is located immediately adjacent to a municipal park.

c. Educational value: The Richard Wearn House has educational value because of the historical and cultural significance of the property.

d. Cost of acquisition, restoration, maintenance, or repair: At present, the Commission has no intention of securing the fee simple or any lesser included interest on this property. The Commission presently assumes that all costs associated with restoring and maintaining the property will be paid by the owner or subsequent owner of the property.

e. Possibilities for adaptive or alternative use of the property: The Richard Wearn House is zoned R9. Moreover, it currently serves as a viable residence. The fact that the structure is immediately adjacent to a municipal park suggests that it could be adapted to purposes associated therewith.

f. Appraised value: The current tax appraisal of the improvements on the property is \$5,990. The current tax appraisal of the 25.38 acres of land is \$62,180. The most recent annual tax bill on the property was \$1,141.85. 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 property."

g. The administrative and financial responsibility of any person or organization willing to underwrite all or a portion of such costs: As stated earlier, the Commission presently has no intention of purchasing the fee simple or any lesser included interest in this property. Furthermore, the Commission presently assumes that all costs associated with the property will be paid by the present or subsequent owner of the property.

9. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria established for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places: The Commission judges that the property known as the Richard Wearn House does meet the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. Basic to the Commission's judgment is its knowledge that the National Register of Historic Places, established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, represents the decision of the Federal Government to expand its recognition of historic properties to include those of local, regional, and state significance. The Commission believes that the investigation of the property known as the Richard Wearn House demonstrates that the property possesses local historical and cultural importance. Consequently, the Commission judges that the property known as the Richard Wearn House does meet the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places.

10. Documentation of why and in what ways the property is of historical importance to Charlotte and/or Mecklenburg County: The property known as the Richard Wearn House is historically important to Charlotte and Mecklenburg County for three reasons.

First, the structure is one of the relatively few ante-bellum houses which survives in Charlotte, N.C. Second, the structure is intimately associated with the history of gold mining in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Third, the structure served as the abode of a family which has made a significant and lasting impact upon the development of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

Bibliography

An Inventory of Buildings In Mecklenburg County and Charlotte for the Historic Properties Commission.

Fletcher M. Green, "Gold Mining: A Forgotten Industry of Ante-Bellum North Carolina." *The North Carolina Historical Review* (January 1937), Number I.

Cornelia Wearn Henderson, *The Descendants of Richard and Henrietta Wearn*.

Records of the Mecklenburg County Clerk of Superior Court Office.

Records of the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office.

Records of the Mecklenburg County County Tax Office.

Bruce Roberts, *The Carolina Gold Rush*.

The Encyclopedia Britannica Eleventh Edition, Vol. VII.

Henrietta H. Wilkinson, *The Mint Museum of Art at Charlotte, A Brief History*.

Date of Preparation of this Report: March 6, 1979

Prepared by: Dr. Dan Morrill, Director
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission
139 Middleton Dr.
Charlotte, N.C. 28207

Telephone: (704) 332-2726

Architectural Description

The main block of the Richard Wearn House is two stories high, three bays wide and two bays deep, It has a gable roof of asbestos shingles and projecting eaves. The gable and chimneys are brick and dissimilar. The chimney on the left is older. White

horizontal board siding covers the exterior walls. There are no blinds or shutters. The windows on the first floor are nine-over-six. Two small windows are in each gable end. A single center door with full-height side lights comprises the front entrance. The doorway and window surrounds are not distinctive in keeping with the motifs found in vernacular farmhouses of this region.

The most imposing feature is a wrap-around porch. The design suggests that the porch was added in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. The roof is supported by a series of turned and tapered columns. The bases of the columns are newel posts for a balustrade which has a slender or attenuated balusters and a molded handrail. A lattice-like pattern occurs at the porch frieze.

Local authorities report that the original part of the house is a two story log structure. It would appear that the house has been modified and enlarged on several occasions. Most probably , the first change involved an extension of the main block to permit the installation of a center hall. Later, the Victorian porch was built. A one-story ell with a gable roof extends from the rear of the main block. This was probably added to house a kitchen. Additions or enclosures also occur on the left rear of the main block.

Two outbuildings are visible from Tuckaseegee Rd. An open-sided wall house with lattice-like columns and brackets and a gable roof is in the back yard.

On balance, the Richard Wearn House exhibits a mixture of architectural styles and designs. Originally a log structure, the house somewhat later assumed the scale and proportions reminiscent of the Federal style. Finally, the house was "Victorianized."