

## Survey and Research Report on the Helper-Walley House



1. **Name and location of property:** The property known as the Helper-Walley House is located at 603 North Main Street in Davidson, North Carolina.
2. **Name, address, and telephone number of the current owner of the property:**  
  
Betty C. Walley and Richard D. Walley  
P. O. Box 825  
Davidson, NC 28036
3. **Representative photographs of the property:** This report contains representative photographs of the property.
4. **A map depicting the location of the property:**





5. **Current Tax Parcel Reference and Deed to the property:** The tax parcel number is 00326313. The most recent deed to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 22339, Page 743. UTM coordinates are 514021.82 E and 3929126.18 N.
6. **A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Susan V. Mayer.
7. **A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description prepared by Susan V. Mayer.
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:**
    - 1) The Helper-Walley House is one of only two remaining hall-and-parlor houses in the town of Davidson.
    - 2) The Helper-Walley House is one of the best extant early examples in Mecklenburg County of the transitional nature of architecture. The original ca. 1896 hall-and-parlor form of the Helper-Walley House was retained while the Craftsman features were applied to the house during a remodel in the 1920s, making clear the two styles of architecture. The Helper-Walley House is an important example of the fact that architectural style is not static.
    - 3) The Helper-Walley House is an important part of the North Main Street corridor of Davidson, which may be viewed as a timeline of Davidson's architectural development from the antebellum period through the mid-twentieth century.
  - b. **Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association:** The architectural description in this report demonstrates that the property known as the Helper-Walley House meets this criterion.
9. **Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal:** 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 "historic landmark."
10. **Portion of the Property Recommended for Designation:** The exterior of the house, and the land associated with tax parcel.
11. **Prepared By:** Susan V. Mayer/September 13, 2019  
**Revised:** November 18, 2019

## **Historical Essay**

Located along the historic North Main Street corridor of Davidson, the Helper-Walley House remains one of the few pre-1900 residential structures along the tree-lined road and one of two extant hall-and-parlor houses in the town. Built around 1896-1897 by Harlan Helper, son of Helper Hotel proprietor Hanson Helper, and his wife Emma Potts Helper, the Helper-Walley House reflects the changes in tastes for architectural styles, having been remodeled by Helper in the 1920s to incorporate the popular Craftsman style while retaining its original character. It is for this reason that the Helper-Walley House stands out among its neighbors on North Main Street and in Davidson.

### **Architectural Context: Changing Architectural Tastes in Davidson**

The hall-and-parlor house is a traditional folk British form that became the dominant housing type in the antebellum southeastern United States. Many of the earliest houses built in North Carolina were hall-and-parlor plans, with the 1730 Newbold-White House in Hertford, Perquimans County the oldest extant example. In Davidson, the hall-and-parlor and its two-story version the I-house were common post-Civil War residential building forms, though only a few of these structures remain today. One of the few extant properties from this period is the hall-and-parlor house of Isaac Johnston, a local cabinetmaker, built on North Main Street across from what would become Davidson College Cemetery around 1860.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 140; Mary D. Beaty, *Davidson: A History of the Town from 1835 to 1937* (Davidson, NC: Warren Publishing, 1979), 79. The Johnston House is located at 532 North Main Street.





**Figure 1** The Isaac Johnston House, just down the street from the Helper-Walley House at 532 North Main Street, is the oldest extant (and only other known) hall-and-parlor house in Davidson.

Pre-1900s houses in Davidson fall under two categories—either they have remained relatively unchanged from their original style of construction, or the houses have been so altered from their original state that they no longer retain architectural integrity. The antebellum Isaac Johnston House, as seen above, appears from the street much like it did a century ago. The same may be said for the ca. 1898 Currie-Adams House, an I-house at 525 North Main Street. In comparison, the ca. 1890 Cranford-Kneedler House next door to the Helper-Walley House at 609 North Main Street was bricked with a new full-height front porch added to the original frame house ca. 1950.

The hall-and-parlor house, and by extension the I-house, were well-suited to adapt changing architectural tastes. The simple two-room layout combined with a symmetrical façade—two windows flanking a front door under a front porch structure separate from the main roof—meant its features could easily include the center gable and pointed arch windows of Gothic Revival, the elaborate columns and railings of the Italianate or Folk

Victorian styles, or the simple pediments of Colonial Revival architecture. In his survey of I-houses in northeastern counties in North Carolina, Michael Southern documented a variety of architectural styles applied to these houses over its heyday in the nineteenth century. Likewise, the Helper-Walley House demonstrates the versatility of the hall-and-parlor house years after the housing form went out of vogue. The Helper-Walley House was modified to the Craftsman style though the addition of an engaged porch, paired columns, and a gabled dormer.

The Craftsman bungalow emerged as a popular residential style by the early twentieth century. Originating with the English Arts and Crafts movement that swept into the United States in the 1890s, the Craftsman style of art and architecture focused on simplified details in contrast to the excessive ornamentation of the Victorian Era. The Pasadena, California architecture firm of Greene and Greene was best known for honing and popularizing the style. By the mid-1900s, plan books offered numerous iterations of the one- to two-story bungalows, and national catalog retailers such as Sears, Roebuck and Company made available entire house kits, enabling the Craftsman style to quickly spread across the country to both urban areas and small towns like Davidson.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> McAlester, 568-578.



**Figure 2** The Jesse and Martha K. Washam Farmhouse was originally built as a hall-and-parlor tenant house. In the 1920s, the Washams remodeled it to the Craftsman style. The original portion of the house is visible in the bay behind the chimney.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 3** The Ralph Johnson House as it appeared in 2006. Today, the Craftsman-style duplex appears even more like the Helper-Walley House, as the middle columns are now paired, and the railing is wood rather than wrought iron.<sup>4</sup>

The Helper-Walley House was not the only residence around Davidson remodeled in the Craftsman style. The Jesse and Mary K. Washam Farmhouse on rural Davidson-Concord Road also serves as an example of this transition in architectural style. Built as a hall-and-parlor tenant house, the Washam Farmhouse was renovated and expanded in 1922 to a Craftsman bungalow that practically obscured the original house. The Helper-Walley House is a much less extreme renovation, as the hall-and-parlor form was retained while architectural detailing reflective of the Craftsman style was applied. When Harlan remodeled the house sometime in the early 1920s, he made many changes to the original house as evidenced by the extant details and compared to hall-and-parlor houses contemporary to the Helper-Walley House. The roofline was altered—hall-and-parlor houses have a front porch independent from the roof structure over the house, whereas the Helper-Walley House features an engaged porch. While the paired porch columns are not

<sup>3</sup> Emily Ramsey and Lara Ramsey, “Survey and Research Report on the Jesse and Marsha K. Washam Farm,” January 30, 2002, <http://landmarkscommission.org/2016/10/14/washam-jesse-and-mary-k-farm/>, accessed July 16, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Jennifer Payne and Dan Morrill, “The Evolution of the Built Environment of Davidson, North Carolina,” April 2006, <http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Davidson-Contextual-Statement.pdf>, accessed July 16, 2019.

common in the Craftsman style, this detail may also be seen in houses of this period, such as the Ralph Johnson House at 115 Mock Circle in Davidson.

### **Ownership of the Helper-Walley House**

The Helper-Walley House is named for two long-time owners—Harlan and Emma Helper, builders of the house who owned the property for 40 years, and Joseph and Betty Walley, who purchased the house in 1960 and have maintained the historical integrity of the property. Both these owners, along with Charles and Blanche Parker, who owned the house from 1946 to 1957 and added onto the back rooms and built the current kitchen, have made their indelible marks on the house.

The second of eight children, Harlan Page Helper (1867-1937) was born in Davidson to Hanson Pinkney Helper (1825-1902) and his second wife Martha Jane “Mattie” McGaw Helper (1839-1903). The Helper name at the time was notorious in North Carolina, as Hanson’s younger brother Hinton Rowan Helper was infamous as author of the anti-slavery book *The Impending Crisis of the South* (1857). Hanson Helper moved to Davidson from Rowan County around 1855, and he went into business with James Henderson. Hanson purchased a store on Main Street from Lewis Dinkins in 1855, expanding it into a thirteen-room inn known as the Helper Hotel. Harlan Helper left Davidson in 1886, heading to Austin, Texas, and returning a decade later. Not long after his return, on May 7, 1896, Harlan married Emma J. Potts, the daughter of Lawson Alexander and Emma Johnston Potts of Davidson. The couple had worked together at Hugh Sloan’s store in Davidson.



They had three children Harvey Pinkney (ca. 1898-1936) and Lillie Monroe (1906-1997); a middle daughter, Catherine, died twelve days after birth in 1902.<sup>5</sup>

In December 1896, Emma purchased from Mrs. Ann E. Foster a lot on North Main Street. The Helpers built a hall-and-parlor house on the property, which lay at the northern bounds of Davidson with only a few houses between them and the countryside along the dirt road. Manly Cranford had constructed a two-story frame house on this end of North Main Street beyond the cemetery before 1892, and the DeMarcus House was built farther down the road in the next few years. Only the antebellum Johnston house was older. As local historian Mary Beaty wrote, “it must have seemed that anything beyond the cemetery was far out in the country.”<sup>6</sup> The Sanborn Fire Company agreed, since their 1915 map stopped at the Hobbs House just next door, relegating the Helper-Walley House to out-of-town status. North Main Street beyond the Helper house was macadamed in late 1899, bringing the area more into the town sphere.<sup>7</sup>

Harlan made several attempts at entrepreneurship over the next twenty years, but each venture was short-lived. In 1920 Harlan was hired to manage the new Davidson College laundry, a position he held through at least 1927. During this time, he expanded the original hall-and-parlor house, adding a wing to the back-left side, a new roof with an engaged front porch, and added Craftsman-style detailing. A few years later, Harlan retired to northern Virginia to live with his daughter Lillie Helper Thomas. He died in East Falls

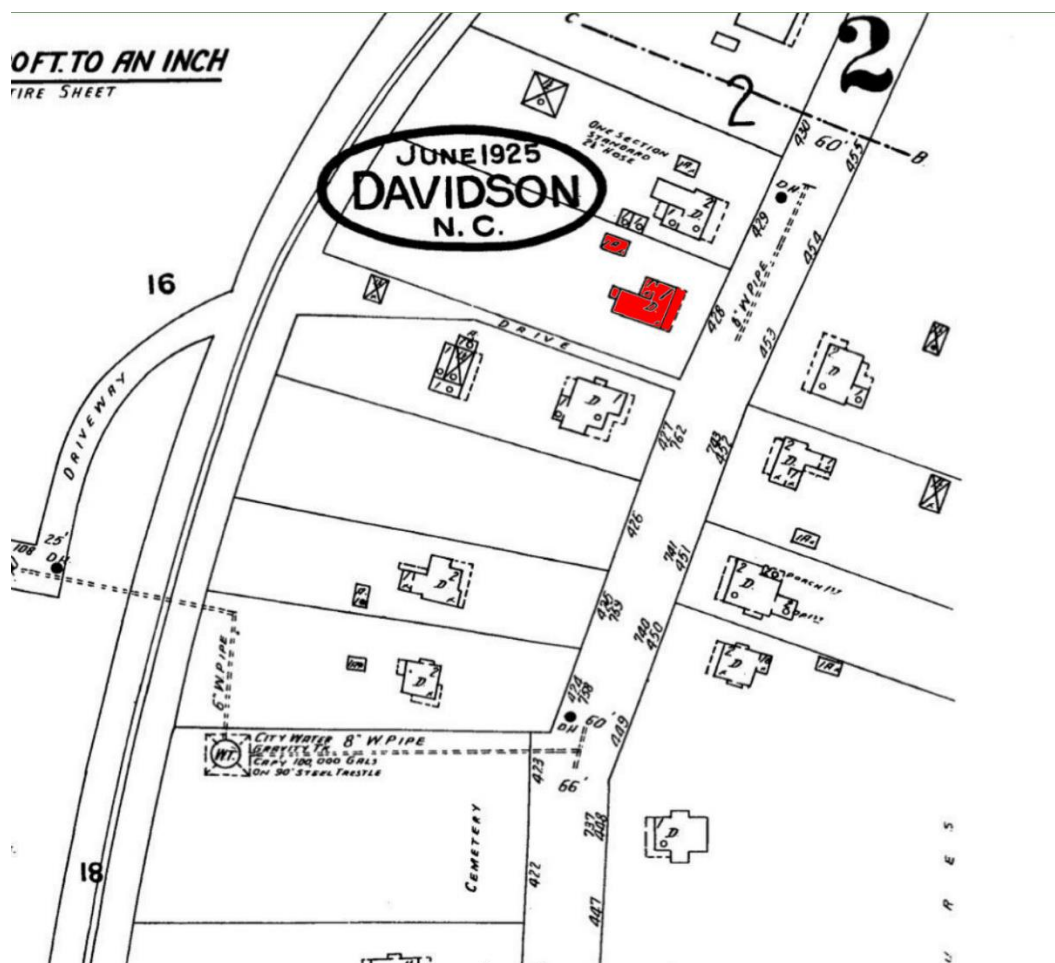
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<sup>5</sup> Beaty, 27, 178, 184; Dan L. Morrill, “Survey and Research Report for the Helper Hotel,” Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, October 5, 1976; “To Wed,” *Daily Charlotte Observer*, May 6, 1896.

<sup>6</sup> Beaty, 92.

<sup>7</sup> Beaty, 79, 94; “Dr. Venable at Davidson,” *Charlotte Observer*, November 4, 1899.

Church, Virginia, on June 26, 1938, and was buried in Davidson College Cemetery next to Emma, who had died in 1912.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 4** The Helper-Walley House (red) on a 1925 Sanborn map of Davidson. By this point, the back wing addition was completed. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Company, Davidson, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, June 1925 (New York: Sanborn Map & Publishing Company, 1925), <http://sanborn1.proquest.com/map.php?m=330537>, accessed July 10, 2019.

The Helper-Walley House passed to several owners after 1937, when Harlan Helper sold the house, until being purchased in 1960 by Joseph and Betty Walley. These owners included

- Aaron and Elsie Deal, 1937-1942 (Aaron worked at Davidson College as a mechanic/electrician, and his father was noted local builder B. C. Deal.);

<sup>8</sup> "The Laundry," *Davidsonian*, August 16, 1920; "New Laundry Begins Operations," *Davidsonian*, September 24, 1920; *Charlotte Observer*, June 27, 1938.

- John and Clete Raymer, 1942-1946 (The Raymers had torn down the ca. 1892 DeMarcus House at 709 North Main Street around 1940 and built a large two-story house for their family of eight children.);
- W. B. Hambrick, 1946;
- Charles W. “Charlie” and Blanche Parker, 1946-1957 (Charlie was an alumnus of Davidson College and served as the college’s wrestling coach for over forty years.); and
- W. Harding and Christina Kneedler, 1957-1960 (The Kneedlers lived next door at 609 North Main Street, and they purchased this house for their daughter Alice. They later rented it to Davidson College ROTC faculty).

The Parkers remodeled the house and expanded it to the current layout during their ownership, adding the to back two rooms, enclosing the back porch into a kitchen, and building a utility/laundry room and new back porch. In the back bedroom, office, rear vestibule, and kitchen, Charlie used wood flooring that was taken from Johnston Gymnasium at the college.<sup>9</sup>



**Figure 5** The Helper-Walley House as it appeared around 1979. Beaty, 94.

Joseph Richard Walley (1933-1990) and Betty Cashion Walley (1934-), the latter namesakes of the Helper-Walley House, purchased the property from the Kneedlers on July 5, 1960. Joseph was an office manager for Dixie Bearings Company in Charlotte, and Betty

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<sup>9</sup> Susan V. Mayer interview with Betty Walley, March 12, 2019.



was a secretary in the Davidson College athletic department. Through her job, the Walleys were able to take part in a home loan program offered by the college to purchase the house. When the Walleys moved in, they carpeted the living room, hallway, and bedrooms since the wood floors were uninsulated. No changes were made to the layout of the house, though some maintenance and age issues were addressed. The bathroom was updated around 2000. Floor joists were shored up with steel supports around 1991. The wood porch had deteriorated over time, and it was replaced with a new brick porch around 2009. The wood lattice between the columns was also removed due to concerns with durability. Betty also replaced the front door to a more energy-efficient version, matching it to the existing door. During their ownership, the Walleys have done an exceptional job of maintaining both the condition and integrity of the house.<sup>10</sup>

### **Architectural Description**

The Helper-Walley House is located on North Main Street just north of the Davidson College Cemetery. The house is situated at the front of the long, narrow half-acre lot and shares a driveway with its southern neighbor. The property slopes from the street down toward the Norfolk Southern Railway tracks at the back. A double carport and two storage sheds sit behind the house. The back of the property is shaded with trees. Built around 1896-1897 and remodeled around 1925, the Helper-Walley House is an interesting combination of the traditional hall-and-parlor plan and the Craftsman style of residential architecture. The one-story side-gabled wood frame house has been expanded twice—the first addition extending back from the left side with an adjacent porch around 1925; and the second expansion of the house around 1950, which added space to the back two rooms,

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<sup>10</sup> Susan V. Mayer interview with Betty Walley, March 12, 2019.

enclosed and expanded the porch into a kitchen and utility/laundry room, and added a new back porch. Throughout these changes, the Helper-Walley House retained the integrity of its original hall-and-parlor portion while adding the charm of Craftsman style. The ca. 1950 addition reflects both the existing aesthetics of the house and the utilitarian needs of the owners.



**Figure 6** Under the Helper-Walley House, the various phases of construction are visible. In the background, you can see the foundation of a chimney that was formerly in the current dining room. In the foreground are the brick piers and remaining walls from the ca. 1925 addition.

Many materials and architectural details are featured consistently throughout the house. The entirety of the house, excepting the wood shake gables of the original hall-and-parlor house, is covered in overlapping wood siding. All windows are 1-over-1 double-hung wood sash. The foundation of the Helper-Walley House consists of masonry piers with an exterior wall. The ca. 1896-1897 and ca. 1925 portions are brick, and the ca. 1950



addition utilizes concrete masonry units (CMU), all painted white on the exterior with regularly spaced grille vents. Gutters have been installed on the eaves.



The front elevation of the Helper-Walley House faces east toward North Main Street and is three bays wide, with an engaged full-width front porch with paired columns and simple vertical railing dominating the elevation. Brick steps lead up to a raised brick porch with regularly-spaced metal grille vents—the previous wood porch was replaced around 2010 due to age and deterioration. A gabled dormer, added in 1925, with exposed rafter tails, paired louvered panels, and wood shake shingle siding is centered on the elevation. The half-light wood front door and sidelights are flanked by 1-over-1 double-hung wood sash windows, which feature louvered wood shutters. Exposed rafter tails extend under the eaves, and the ceiling of the front porch is bead board.





The south elevation of the Helper-Walley House is five bays wide and reveals the various expansions made to the house over the years. The second bay is the original portion of the hall-and-parlor house, with the front bay being the engaged porch built around 1925. A rectangular wood louver is centered in the gable. Also added at this time was a gabled wing extending back from the left side of the house, which comprises the third and fourth bays. The fifth bay is the small shed addition made ca. 1950.





The rear elevation of the house is comprised of the additions made to the original hall-and-parlor portion of the house. This elevation is two bays wide and one bay deep. Since the property slopes downward from the street, this portion of the house sits higher from the ground than the front elevation. The first bay is a shed addition made ca. 1950 which includes a French door, an extant narrow brick chimney no longer in use, and a small 1-over-1 window. A shallow porch is ceilinged with bead board wood paneling. A wood deck with seating built into the railing fills the width and depth of this bay. The gabled ca. 1925 addition and a small shed addition from ca. 1950 comprise the second bay. Corner 1-over-1 windows are placed at the left side of the shed portion, with a single window on the side facing the porch and a pair of windows on the back elevation. The eave of the ca. 1950



shed addition continues the exposed rafter tail detailing of the older portion of the house.

The gable, which is sheathed in wood siding, has a centered rectangular wood louver.



The north elevation of the Helper-Walley House is four bays wide and one bay deep. The front two bays are identical to that of the south elevation, with the first bay being the porch and the second a single 1-over-1 window flanked by wood shutters; the gable also is sheathed in wood shake shingles with a centered rectangular wood louver. The third bay is the former porch which was enclosed ca. 1950 to make the kitchen. It features three grouped windows which fill the space. These three front bays are built atop brick piers filled in between with brick, whereas the fourth bay rests upon CMU walls. This bay, which steps back from main mass of the house, has a pair of windows centered in the elevation.



The interior of the Helper-Walley House has ten rooms—a living room, dining room, kitchen, utility/laundry room, full bathroom, two bedrooms, an office (no closet), and two vestibule/hall spaces between the public and private spaces of the house. The two front rooms, the living and dining rooms, comprise the original portion of the hall-and-parlor house. A fireplace with the original wood mantle is centered on the rear wall of the living room. Wood floors are featured throughout the house, though they are covered with carpet in the living room, vestibules, and bedrooms/office. The wood floors are visible in the dining room as are painted sandblasted plywood-paneled walls. This is the only room without plaster or gypsum-board walls. The ceilings are also plaster or gypsum board save the kitchen, which has surface-mount acoustic ceiling tiles. Since being purchased by the Walleys in 1960, the house has been maintained with few changes. Only the bathroom has been remodeled ca. 2000.

### Chain of Title

|                                          |                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| December 10, 1896<br>Book 116, Page 409  | Mrs. Ann E. Foster to Mrs. H. P. Helper                                                                         |
| February 27, 1937<br>Book 912, Page 117  | (Mrs.) Lilly Helper Thomas and husband A. R. Thomas and H. P. Helper to A. T. Deal and wife Elsie Troutman Deal |
| August 1, 1942<br>Book 1077, Page 198    | A. T. Deal and wife Elsie Troutman Deal to John R. Raymer and wife Cleet McLain Raymer                          |
| January 22, 1946<br>Book 1176, Page 16   | John R. Raymer and wife Cleet McLain Raymer to W. B. Hamrick                                                    |
| December 12, 1946<br>Book 1221, Page 468 | W. B. Hamrick and wife Ivory Moore Hamrick to Charles W. Parker and wife Blanche K. Parker                      |
| April 20, 1957<br>Book 1909, Page 206    | Charles W. Parker and wife Blanche K. Parker to W. Harding Kneedler and wife Christina H. Kneedler              |
| July 5, 1960<br>Book 2169, Page 303      | W. Harding Kneedler and wife Christina H. Kneedler to Joseph Richard Walley and wife Betty Cashion Walley       |
| April 9, 2002<br>Book 13472, Page 1      | Betty Cashion Walley to Betty C. Walley, trustee of Betty C. Walley Revocable Living Trust                      |
| October 31, 2002<br>Book 14316, Page 449 | Betty C. Walley, trustee of Betty C. Walley Revocable Living Trust to RICSCO, LLC                               |
| May 30, 2007<br>Book 22287, Page 480     | RICSCO, LLC to Betty C. Walley and Richard D. Walley                                                            |
| May 30, 2007<br>Book 22287, Page 484     | Richard D. Walley and John S. Walley and wife Angela Walley to Betty Walley                                     |
| June 7, 2007<br>Book 22339, Page 743     | (correction deed) RICSCO, LLC to Betty C. Walley and Richard D. Walley                                          |

### Bibliography

Beaty, Mary D. *Davidson: A History of the Town from 1835 to 1937*. Davidson, NC: Warren Publishing, 1979.

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Morrill, Dan L. "Survey and Research Report for the Helper Hotel." Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission. October 5, 1976.

Ramsey, Emily and Lara Ramsey. "Survey and Research Report on the Jesse and Marsha K. Washam Farm." January 30, 2002.  
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