LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK
DESIGNATION REPORT







Stafford-Holcombe Farm

Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

Prepared for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission
by Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc.
3334 Nottingham Road
Winston-Salem, NC 27104

February 2021

1. **Name and location of property:** The Stafford-Holcombe Farm is located along Plaza Road Extension, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

2. **The current owner of the property:**

   Leslie Mursch Freeman

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: tax parcel 10521107; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 29061, p. 623**

6. **A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a history of the property written by Heather Fearnbach.

7. **A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains an architectural description of the property written by Heather Fearnbach.

8. **Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in N. C. Gen. Stat. 160A-400.5:**

   a. **Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and/or cultural importance:** The Stafford-Holcombe Farm possesses special historical significance in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County based upon the following consideration:

   1. The Stafford-Holcombe Farm, which had an agricultural function from the late eighteenth through the mid-twentieth century, retains a complement of buildings ranging from a timber-frame dwelling, log slave quarter-tenant house, and log outbuilding erected during the early nineteenth century to 1960s outbuildings.

   b. **Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association:** The architectural description in this report illustrates that the property 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 designated "historic landmark." The current appraised value of the property is $554,700.

10. **Portion of the property recommended for designation:** The exterior and interior of the Stafford-Holcombe House, the exterior and interior of the log slave quarter-tenant house and log outbuilding, and the associated site as shown on the boundary map.

11. **Report submittal date:** February 2021 (revised for web presentation - HLC Staff - May 2021)

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Statement of Significance

The Stafford-Holcombe Farm possesses special historical and architectural significance in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County due to its agricultural function from the late eighteenth through the mid-twentieth century and retention of a complement of buildings ranging from a timber-frame dwelling, log slave quarter-tenant house, and log outbuilding erected during the early nineteenth century to 1960s outbuildings. Although the Stafford-Holcombe House was brick-veneered in the late 1960s, the two-story, side-gable-roofed, three-bay-wide, timber-frame structure retains its original form and fenestration. Significant original interior elements including door and window surrounds with molded edges, molded chair rails and baseboards, plaster and vertical-board walls, wide wood ceiling boards, single-leaf raised-six-panel doors, carved mantels, and enclosed wood stairs remain. The original second-story beaded clapboards and boxed cornice are encapsulated in the attic above the dining room addition. Two early-nineteenth-century outbuildings—the rectangular log building west of the house and the log slave quarter-tenant house in the wooded area northwest of the house—are important survivals. The one-story, side-gable-roofed, hewn-log slave quarter-tenant house with half dovetail joints is one of only a few identified extant slave quarters in Mecklenburg County. In the 1960s, the Holcombes erected two equipment sheds, the garage, and the barn, and moved a milk house to the property to serve as a storage building. They acquired a small frame circa 1930s outbuilding in the early 1980s to house Bill's pottery studio. All of the aforementioned buildings contribute to the farm landscape.



Setting

The once-rural property at Mecklenburg County's eastern edge is now encompassed within Charlotte's municipal limits. The sizable tract provides an appropriate setting for a house once surrounded by agricultural fields, but now encroached upon by residential subdivisions. Development is pervasive due to housing demand and the area's proximity to the U. S. Highway 485 corridor.



Northeast oblique and east lawn
(photographs throughout the report taken by Heather Fearnbach on November 9, 2020 unless otherwise noted)

The Stafford-Holcombe House has an approximately sixty-eight-foot setback from the road, allowing for an open lawn separated by a wood picket fence from the public right-of-way. The fence was erected in early 2014 for the current owner, Leslie Mursch Freeman. Deciduous and evergreen shrubs and mature ash, cedar, dogwood, oak, pear, pecan, poplar, persimmon trees punctuate the lawn and the lot's perimeter. The oldest vegetation near the house is an ash tree. Pete Holcombe planted the magnolia tree near the front porch's southeast corner in the 1940s. The Holcombes gradually added dogwoods throughout the lawn. The two pear trees adjacent to the east fence were part of the Stafford orchard, which once spanned the area now occupied by Plaza Road Extension.[1] Two apple trees remained on the property east of the road, which is in Cabarrus County, until the late twentieth century. The family cemetery, located southeast of the Stafford-Holcombe House on Plaza Road Extension's east side, contains approximately twenty-one marked mid-nineteenth-century graves as well as unmarked burials. The cemetery is on property owned by Harry James Stafford.[2]

Much of the residual acreage associated with the farm, once pastures and cultivated fields, is now wooded. Remnants of grape vines remain in the northwest woods. Two early-nineteenth-century outbuildings are extant: a rectangular log building west of the house and a log slave quarter-tenant

[1] Leslie Mursch Freeman and William Clifford Mursch, conversations with Heather Fearnbach, November 9, 2020, and January 15, 2021.

[2] Cornelia Wearn Henderson, *The Descendants of James Stafford* (self published, no date), 41; "Stafford Cemetery," Known Cemeteries of Mecklenburg County database, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library; Harry James Stafford, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, January 28, 2021.

house west of the other buildings at the end of an unpaved farm road. During the 1960s, the Holcombes erected two equipment sheds, a garage, and the barn, and moved a milk house to the property to serve as a storage building. They acquired a small frame circa 1930s outbuilding in the early 1980s to house Bill's pottery studio.

The Holcombes' cousin Donald Cline, whose grandmother was Ida Holcombe's sister, visited the farm beginning in the early 1940s and later spent holidays and summers there. He remembers outbuildings including an early-twentieth-century gable-roofed weatherboarded garage that stood northwest of the house, a well sheltered by a gabled canopy north of the house, a small gable-roofed weatherboarded storage building north of the well, and a weatherboarded privy that was moved to various locations north of the storage building. The frame garage was replaced with the brick garage built in 1963 and 1965. The brick garage's 1965 east bay occupies the well site. The well was the Holcombes' only source of drinking, cooking, cleaning, and bathing water until the house was plumbed and electrified in the early 1950s. The family bathed in a portable tub on the west porch. Before the late 1940s, electric service was unavailable north of Arthur and Rachel Stafford's house on Plaza Road Extension's east side. Thus, oil lamps provided light and fireplaces generated heat in the Holcombe residence. Improvements in the 1950s and 1960s included the installation of electric lighting, baseboard heaters, and a bathroom, as well as kitchen remodeling.[3]

The Holcombes planted strawberries and vegetables in a small garden north of the house. Ida and her daughter Patricia preserved much of the harvest and stored it on basement shelves that are still loaded with glass jars. Their cattle, hogs, and chickens supplied meat, eggs, and milk. The hog pen, cattle pasture, a frame barn, and a chicken coop were northwest of the house. The large dilapidated log livestock barn and frame corn crib that stood on the Holcombe's property east of Plaza Road Extension were demolished in the 1960s.[4]



Looking southeast toward the 1966 barn and Stafford-Holcombe House

[3] Donald Cline, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, January 30, 2021.
[4] Ibid.



Stafford-Holcombe House, circa 1940 photograph in the possession of Leslie Mursch Freeman (above) and south elevation (below)





East elevation (above) and northwest oblique (below)





West elevation

Description

Stafford-Holcombe House, early nineteenth century, early twentieth century, 1950s, 1969

Exterior

The two-story, side-gable-roofed, three-bay-wide, timber-frame dwelling originally sheathed with beaded clapboards is thought to have been erected for the Stafford family during the early nineteenth century. The first iteration of the porch that wraps around the façade (south elevation) and the main block's east elevation was likely added in the late-nineteenth or early-twentieth century. The one-bay-deep west shed addition and the flat-roofed basement entrance vestibule at its south end had been built by 1939, when the Holcombes purchased the property. The Holcombes commissioned the construction of the shed-roofed sunporch that extends from the shed addition's west elevation as well as the shed-roofed dining room and bedroom addition that spans the dwelling's north elevation in the 1960s. They also engaged a mason named Mr. Edwards to use variegated brick salvaged during the demolition of the Woolworth Department Store on Tryon Street in downtown Charlotte to veneer the house. He began that process in 1965 and completed it in 1969.[5] In conjunction with the same project,

[5] Leslie Mursch Freeman and William Clifford Mursch, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, November 9, 2020.

the wood porch floor system on brick piers was replaced with a broken-terra-cotta-tile floor on a concrete pad with a continuous brick foundation. Decorative metal porch posts were installed in place of turned wood porch posts. The vinyl porch ceiling emulates beaded boards. Brick steps rise from the front yard to the central south bay. A small engaged porch supported by a "turned" vinyl post on a brick pier shelters the entrance at the north end of the sunporch. All cornices, soffits, and the west elevation's second story north of the chimney were sheathed with vinyl in the late twentieth century.

Brick exterior end chimneys with stepped shoulders and penciled mortar joints serve the main block. The corbelled stacks were rebuilt in the late 1960s. The square brick stovepipe chimney near the north end of the west shed addition's west elevation had been constructed by 1939.

Six-over-six double-hung wood sash illuminate most of the interior. Two small square four-pane attic windows flank each end chimney. Aluminum-frame storm windows were installed in the mid-twentieth century. Bands of aluminum-frame jalousie sash with three horizontal panes light the sunporch. The mid-twentieth-century single-leaf wood door at the primary entrance has a paneled base and nine-pane upper section. A short single-leaf board-and-batten door secures the basement entrance on the vestibule's west elevation and a steel-frame sash with eight wire-glass panes fills most of its south elevation.

Interior

First Floor

The main block has a center-hall plan. On the first floor, two parlors flank the corridor that provides access to the enclosed stair and intersects the mid-twentieth century dining room and bedroom addition at its north end. The early-twentieth-century west shed addition was remodeled in the mid-twentieth century, creating a bathroom at its south end and updating the kitchen to the north. The sunporch west of the kitchen was also constructed in the mid-twentieth century.

Original elements in the parlors and center hall include door and window surrounds with molded edges and molded chair rails and baseboards. Full-height vertical-board walls flank the corridor. However, painted gypsum-board covers the walls above the chair rails, creating the appearance of vertical-board wainscoting. The west parlor's east wall is treated in the same manner, with the remaining walls and the parlor and center hall ceilings are fully sheathed with painted gypsum board. In the intact east parlor, the upper portion of the west wall and the remaining walls retain original plaster. The east parlor also features a molded cornice, wide wood ceiling boards, and a single-leaf raised-six-panel door with a brass box lock that replaced a rim lock. The tall mantel at the east wall's center is embellished with a molded firebox surround, fluted pilasters, zig-zag-pattern central frieze panel, stepped cornice, and molded shelf. Mid-twentieth-century modifications in the east parlor include the installation of carpeting, a dropped-crystal chandelier, and square terra-cotta tile on the hearth and around the firebox, as well as the insertion of shallow shelves in the former window opening on the north wall.[6]

A vertical-board-sheathed stair enclosure rises in the west parlor's northeast corner. A four-panel door provides access to the closet beneath the stair. The west parlor mantel has fluted pilasters, a plain

[6] Pete Holcomb, an avid antiques collector, purchased the chandelier and many other items for the house. Donald Cline, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, January 30, 2021.

frieze, and a molded cornice and shelf that emulate the east parlor mantel. The carpeting, gypsum-board wall and ceiling sheathing, denticulated crown molding, and brick firebox and raised hearth were added during the mid-twentieth-century remodeling.

The dining room and bedroom addition is characterized by painted gypsum-board walls and ceilings and simple wood door and window surrounds with molded edges. The carpeted dining room has denticulated crown molding. Leslie Freeman replaced the carpeting in the bedroom and the kitchen with faux-wood sheet vinyl in early 2014. The kitchen retains mid-twentieth-century flat-panel pine cabinets with gold-marbled laminate counters and backsplashes.

The 1950s bathroom is embellished with turquoise-glazed square-ceramic-tile wainscoting and a matching wide vanity counter and backsplash. A shallow shelf and upper cabinet with a louvered door were installed above the vanity in the former window opening on the west wall. Small turquoise-glazed shaped mosaic tiles cover the floor.

The sunporch has a concrete floor, knotty-pine wall sheathing, and a painted plywood ceiling. The early-twentieth-century wood base cabinet on the east wall, topped with a wide porcelain sink flanked by integral drain boards, was probably moved to its current location during the mid-twentieth-century kitchen remodeling.





Center hall, looking south (left), and looking north (right)



East parlor, east wall (above) and looking north (below)





West parlor, west wall (above) and looking south (below)





West parlor, west wall (above) and looking south (below)

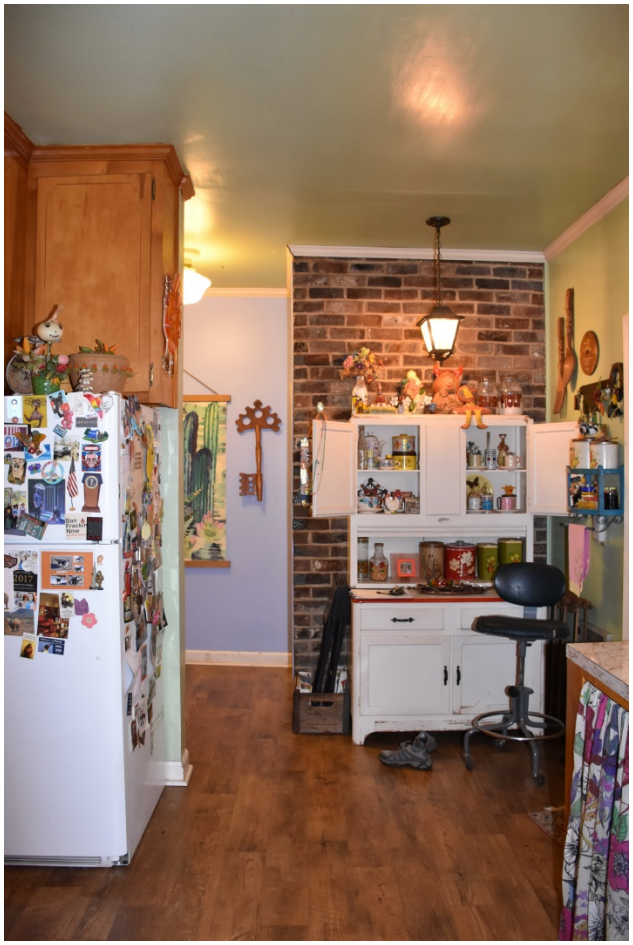




Dining room, looking east (above) and looking west (below)







Kitchen, looking north (left) and looking south (right), and sunporch, looking north





Bathroom, looking south (left) and southwest (right)

Second Floor

Wood steps turn and rise to the second floor within the stair enclosure accessed from the center hall. A simple wood railing with slender rectangular balusters, a molded handrail, and a chamfered newel post with a unique stepped finial secures the landing in the narrow central corridor. The second floor contains a large east bedroom and two small west bedrooms. The southwest bedroom's east wall was erected in the mid-twentieth-century to enclose what was originally an open area.

The bedrooms retain door and window surrounds with molded edges and horizontal-board wainscoting trimmed with molded chair rails and baseboards. The northwest bedroom has a full-height vertical-board south wall. Beams with chamfered edges support the wide attic floor boards, which are exposed in the east bedroom but covered with gypsum board elsewhere. Carpeting covers the second-story floors.

A single-leaf raised-six-panel door with brass box lock and hinges secures the east bedroom entrance. The tall mantel at the east wall's center comprises a molded firebox surround, narrow fluted pilasters, plain frieze, molded cornice with a scalloped upper edge, and molded shelf. Shallow shelves have been inserted in the former window opening on the north wall. Mid-twentieth-century knotty-pine paneling and louvered-wood doors enclose the long closet north of the entrance on the west wall.

Within the closet, the former window opening at the north wall's center provides the only access to the attic above the dining room addition, which encapsulated the original second-story beaded clapboards and boxed cornice. A board-and-batten door fills the opening.



East bedroom, looking south (above) and looking north (below)



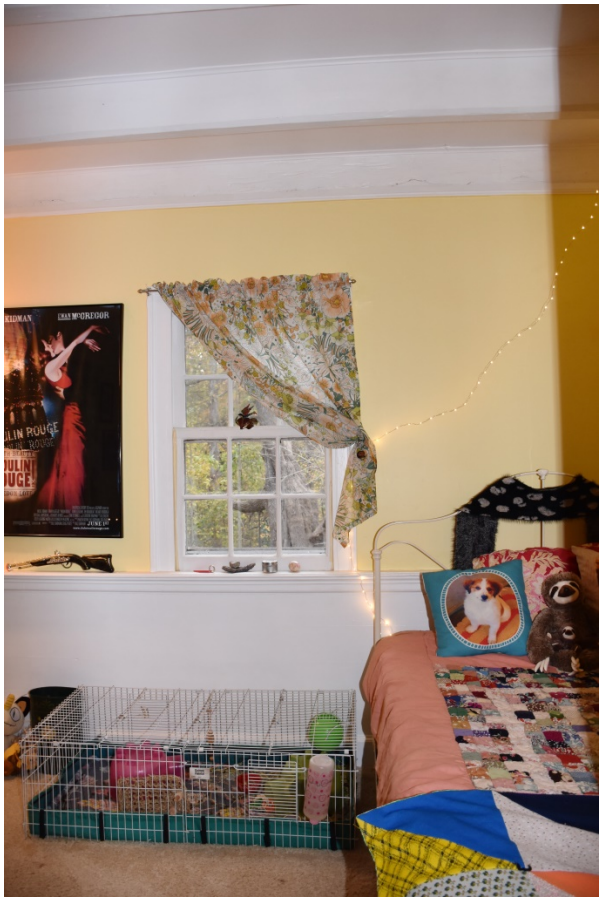




North elevation, second story, encapsulated in attic above dining room addition, looking southeast (left), former window opening (right), looking west



The single-leaf raised-six-panel door at the southwest bedroom's canted northeast corner was cut in half in 2017 to create a Dutch door. The mid-twentieth-century closet with a louvered-wood door that spans the east wall is sheathed with knotty-pine paneling. The enclosed wood stair at the northwest bedroom's northeast corner leads to the attic.





Southwest bedroom, looking west (above left) and northwest bedroom looking north (above right) and west (below)



Attic

A single-leaf board-and-batten door remains at the attic stair entrance. Vertical board-sheathed walls flank narrow wood steps that turn to a straight run. Simple wood railings secure the stair opening. The roof's exposed structural system comprises stripped-log rafters marked with Roman numerals, wood nailing strips, and wide-board and plywood decking. Some of the westernmost rafters' peak ends were charred in a fire. Dimensional lumber bracing has been added throughout the attic. Carpeting covers wide floor boards. The room has an open plan.





Attic looking east (above) and looking west (below)



Looking west toward basement entrance



Looking east along south foundation

Basement

There is no interior access to the unfinished basement. Stone steps lead from the entrance vestibule south of the sunporch to a low-ceilinged room with an earth floor and exposed structural system. The stone foundation, square brick piers, and hewn- and half-round log joists have been supplemented with brick retaining walls and dimensional lumber joists. The undersides of wide first-floor boards are visible. HVAC equipment and ductwork was installed in early 2014.

Outbuildings

The following inventory begins with the buildings southwest of the house and moves north and then west.



Milk House/Shed, north elevation

Milk House/Shed, 1940s

The Holcombes moved this milk house from the Quay family's dairy farm on Robinson Church Road in the late 1960s or early 1970s to serve as a shed.[7] The small, very-low-gable-metal-roofed, painted-plywood-panel-sheathed building rests on a concrete block foundation. Exposed rafter ends support deep eaves. The single-leaf steel door on the north elevation retains original hardware. A three-section aluminum-frame window on the south elevation and a four-section aluminum-frame window on the west elevation light the interior, which has a concrete floor and painted-gypsum-board walls and ceiling.

Log Outbuilding, early nineteenth century

Portions of the walls of a rectangular hewn-log outbuilding with half dovetail joints stand west of the house. Remnants of wood and clay chinking used to fill the space between logs remain. A short board-and-batten door pierces the east elevation. The roof system is missing with the exception of a small section adjacent to the east elevation where the Holcombes extended the east roof slope to create a full-width porch with a brick floor. The building's original function is unknown.

[7] William Clifford Mursch and Leslie Mursch Freeman, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, November 9, 2020.



Log Outbuilding, east elevation (above) and northwest oblique (below)





Garage, southeast oblique

Garage, 1963, 1965

The Holcombes erected the wide, rectangular, low-front-gable-roofed garage with variegated taupe-and-brown-brick walls and board-and-batten-sheathed gables that stands northwest of the house in two phases. The west two garage bays were constructed in September 1963 and the east workshop bay in October 1965. The building has a poured-concrete foundation and floor and a corrugated-metal roof. Sliding corrugated-metal doors secure the garage entrances. A single-leaf six-panel wood door provides workshop access. The steel-frame sash east of the door and at the east elevation's center comprise a square pane surmounted by a rectangular hopper. Structural elements—wood joists, wide-board decking, brick walls, and concrete floor—are exposed throughout the interior. The asphalt-paved driveway leads to a small parking area south of the garage.

Outbuilding, 1930s, moved early 1980s

The Holcombes moved this small side-gable-roofed, German-sided building to its current location north of the garage in the early 1980s to serve as Bill's pottery studio. The building rests on a brick foundation and has an asphalt-shingled roof with deep eaves. Two double-hung six-over-six wood sash flank the single-leaf five-horizontal-panel wood door on the east elevation. A matching sash remains in the north elevation's west bay, but the east sash has been removed and the window opening filled with plywood. The west elevation fenestration encompasses a six-over-six wood sash in the north bay and smaller, high, six-over-one sash in the south bay. German siding fills the central door opening. A straight-slope aluminum awning covers the six-over-six wood sash in the south elevation's east bay. Louvered rectangular vents pierce the north and south gables. Concrete-block steps lead to the front door. The Holcombes finished the interior with knotty-pine wall sheathing, a painted gypsum-board ceiling, and sheet vinyl flooring, and added the small storage room in the southeast corner.

County Line Marker, 1905

During the 1905 Mecklenburg County survey, a tall square granite marker was placed on the corner of the Mecklenburg/Cabarrus county line that bisected Stafford property. After a heavy rain, Pete Holcombe found the marker near one of his barns and moved it to its current location to serve as a flower pot pedestal for his mother Ida.[8] The monument inscription reads "July 28th, 1905" on its east face, "M" for Mecklenburg on its north face, and "C" for Cabarrus on its south face.



Outbuilding and County Line Marker, looking west

Barn, 1966

The Holcombes erected the front-gable-roofed frame barn that faces Plaza Road Extension north of the relocated frame outbuilding in September 1966. The north shed addition was erected soon after the original portion. Corrugated-metal panels sheath the walls and roof. The windowless barn rests on a concrete-block foundation and has an earth floor. On the east elevation, sliding corrugated-metal doors secure two wide ground-floor entrances and two openings that provide loft access. Long, shallow, metal canopies shelter each opening. The wide opening on the addition's west elevation does not have a door. The site grade slopes down west of the barn. The wood structural system is exposed on the interior, which comprises open north and south bays and three central stalls with board-and-batten doors accessed from the south bay. A wall-mounted wood ladder leads to the loft.

[8] Roger Barnes (Mecklenburg County boundary surveyor), email correspondence with William Clifford Mursch and Steve Smith on August 10, 2001, regarding a conversation with Pete and Bill Holcomb.



Barn, east elevation (above) and north equipment shed, west elevation (below)



Equipment Shed, 1960s

Metal panels sheathe the walls and roof of the one-story, shed-roofed, frame, single-bay equipment shed northwest of the barn. Stripped-log posts support dimensional-lumber rafters. A double-leaf board-and-batten door initially filled the west end, but only the south leaf remains. The opening is currently secured with a metal gate. A shed canopy spans the north elevation.

Equipment Shed, 1960s

The shed-roofed, frame, two-bay equipment shed in the clearing west of the barn has vertical-board siding and a metal roof. The structure is leaning and on the verge of collapse.



Equipment Shed, southeast oblique (above) and Slave Quarter-Tenant House Site (below)



Slave Quarter-Tenant House Site

In the woods northwest of the extant slave quarter-tenant house, small piles of foundation and chimney stones and brick mark the site of the early-nineteenth-century log slave quarter-tenant house that was moved to Stafford property on Plaza Road Extension's east side near the Reedy Creek Road intersection around 1890, where it served as tenant house from about 1910 through the mid-twentieth

century and then served as a storage building. The one-room dwelling, which had a loft, was given to a family friend who relocated it in the 1970s.[9]

Slave Quarter-Tenant House, early nineteenth century

West of the barn and a wide clearing, an unpaved farm road leads through the woods to the one-story, side-gable-roofed, log slave quarter that served as a tenant house from Reconstruction until around 1948.[10] The one-room dwelling was enlarged to the north with a late-nineteenth or early-twentieth-century frame shed addition and a mid-twentieth-century frame equipment shed. Weatherboards sheathe the gable ends. The building rests on stone piers.

The almost square (approximately sixteen by fourteen feet) log dwelling faces south. Recent stabilization efforts include the installation of a roof system comprising dimensional lumber rafters and nailing strips sheathed with corrugated-metal panels, as well as lumber braces to support the partially collapsed hewn-log walls with half-dovetail joints. Remnants of clay, wood, and cement chinking used to fill the space between logs remain. The central board-and-batten doors on the north and south elevations have flat-board surrounds. The nine-pane wood sash south of the fireplace opening on the west elevation is the sole extant window. Logs fill the window opening north of the collapsed stone and brick chimney. Most of the floor system has also collapsed, but rectangular hewn joists and some wide floor boards remain. The attic, probably used for sleeping and storage, likely had similar floor boards, but all have been removed. The hewn joists that supported the attic floor survive, however, and nail-pattern evidence indicates that the primary room received a beadboard ceiling in the late-nineteenth or early-twentieth-century, probably in conjunction with the rear shed room's construction. The painted mid-nineteenth-century post-and-lintel mantel, which is much more elaborate than mantels typically found in rural slave quarters, was a later addition. The mantel features chamfered pilasters on tall plinths and a shaped frieze base with a central pointed arch and scalloped edges.

According to James Stafford, the late-nineteenth or early-twentieth-century frame shed addition served as a kitchen.[11] Wide boards cover the north wall and portions of the east and west wall. A six-pane wood sash pierces the east elevation's center. The floor joists have collapsed and the floor boards have been removed. Some narrow beaded ceiling boards remain where they have fallen at the room's east end. Matching boards cover portions of the east and north walls. The board-and-batten door at the north elevation's center provides access to the mid-twentieth-century frame equipment shed. The shed's east and west ends are open and the floor is earth. Metal panels sheathe the north elevation.

[9] Harry James Stafford conversation with Stewart Gray, April 17, 2002; James Perry Holcomb, conversation with Stewart Gray, May 28, 2002; Harry James Stafford, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, January 28, 2021.

[10] William Clifford Mursch and Leslie Mursch Freeman, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, November 9, 2020.

[11] Harry James Stafford conversation with Stewart Gray, April 17, 2002.



Slave Quarter-Tenant House, south elevation (above), and southwest oblique (below)





Slave Quarter-Tenant House, northwest oblique (above), and east elevation (below)





Mid-twentieth-century shed addition, looking east (above) and
Late-nineteenth or early-twentieth-century frame shed addition, looking west (below)







Slave Quarter-Tenant House, north wall (above) and west wall (below)





Slave Quarter-Tenant House, south wall (above) and east wall (below)



Integrity Statement

The Stafford-Holcombe Farm possesses the seven qualities of historic integrity—location, setting, feeling, association, design, materials, and workmanship—required for Local Historic Landmark designation. The farm maintains high integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association, as it occupies a 27.78-acre parcel that, albeit not currently cultivated, conveys its historically agricultural context.

Although the Stafford-Holcombe House was brick-veneered in the late 1960s, significant original interior elements survive. The parlors and center hall are characterized by door and window surrounds with molded edges and molded chair rails and baseboards. Full-height vertical-board walls flank the corridor. However, painted gypsum-board covers the walls above the chair rails, creating the appearance of vertical-board wainscoting. The west parlor's east wall is treated in the same manner, with the remaining walls and the parlor and center hall ceilings are fully sheathed with painted gypsum board. In the intact east parlor, the upper portion of the west wall and the remaining walls retain original plaster. The east parlor also features a molded cornice, wide wood ceiling boards, and a single-leaf raised-six-panel door with a brass box lock that replaced a rim lock. The tall mantel at the east wall's center comprises a molded firebox surround, fluted pilasters, a zig-zag-pattern central frieze panel, a stepped cornice, and a molded shelf.

Wood steps turn and rise to the second floor within the vertical-board-sheathed stair enclosure accessed from the center hall. A simple wood railing with slender rectangular balusters, a molded handrail, and a chamfered newel post with a unique stepped finial secures the landing in the narrow central corridor. The second floor bedrooms retain door and window surrounds with molded edges and horizontal-board wainscoting trimmed with molded chair rails and baseboards. The northwest bedroom has a full-height vertical-board south wall. Beams with chamfered edges support the wide attic floor boards, which are exposed in the east bedroom but covered with gypsum board elsewhere. A single-leaf raised-six-panel door with brass box lock and hinges secures the east bedroom entrance. The tall mantel at the east wall's center encompassed a molded firebox surround, narrow fluted pilasters, a plain frieze, a molded cornice with a scalloped upper edge, and a molded shelf. The original second-story beaded clapboards and boxed cornice are encapsulated in the attic above the dining room addition. The enclosed wood stair at the northwest bedroom's northeast corner that leads to the attic retains a single-leaf board-and-batten door, vertical-board-sheathed walls, and narrow wood steps that turn to a straight run. Early elements in the attic include the exposed roof structural system—stripped-log rafters marked with Roman numerals, wood nailing strips, and wide-board decking—and wide floor boards.

Two early-nineteenth-century outbuildings remain: the rectangular log building west of the house and the log slave quarter-tenant house in the wooded area northwest of the house. The rectangular hewn-log outbuilding with half dovetail joints is in fragile condition as the roof has collapsed, but portions of the walls remain. The one-story, side-gable-roofed, hewn-log slave quarter-tenant house with half dovetail joints is one of only a few identified extant slave quarters in Mecklenburg County. A late-nineteenth-century frame shed addition and mid-twentieth-century frame equipment shed extend from the one-room dwelling's north elevation. Weatherboards sheathe the gable ends. The building rests on stone piers. Although the dwelling is in deteriorated condition, three board-and-batten doors, one nine-pane and one six-pane wood sash, and some log joists and wide floor boards remain. The painted mid-nineteenth-century post-and-lintel mantel, which is much more elaborate than mantels typically found

in rural slave quarters and tenant houses, was a later addition, but is an important survival. The mantel features chamfered pilasters on tall plinths and a shaped frieze base with a central pointed arch and scalloped edges.

In the 1960s, the Holcombes erected two equipment sheds, the garage, and the barn, and moved a milk house to the property to serve as a storage building. They acquired a small frame circa 1930s outbuilding in the early 1980s to house Bill's pottery studio. All of the aforementioned buildings contribute to the farm landscape.

Archaeological Potential Statement

The Stafford-Holcombe Farm is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash middens, remains of garden planting beds and fence lines, former outbuildings, and other structural remains which may be present can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the property. Information concerning the character of daily life at the farm, as well as structural details and landscape use, can be obtained from the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the property. No investigation has yet been done to document these remains, but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in any ground disturbance on the property.

Historical Background

Fertile land along the banks of rivers and streams drew English, Scots-Irish, and German settlers to what is now Mecklenburg County in the southwest Piedmont's Catawba River basin during the early eighteenth century. The area's plantation culture burgeoned after a 1763 treaty ended the French and Indian War. Most colonists initially built log dwellings, replacing them with more finely-crafted timber-frame and masonry structures as circumstances allowed. Almost all were self-sufficient farmers who depended upon the efforts of family members, day laborers, and slaves to facilitate the relentless cycle of tasks related to planting and harvesting fields, tending livestock, and erecting and maintaining farm buildings and structures. Given that many land grants and property acquisitions encompassed sizable tracts, residents typically lived at great distances from each other, meeting at churches and in crossroads communities and small towns to socialize, trade, and address business matters.

The Stafford plantation epitomized this settlement pattern. James Stafford amassed extensive holdings in eastern Mecklenburg County during the late eighteenth century. He purchased 150 acres on the Cedar Branch of Twelve-Mile Creek on April 6, 1765, and 2,008 acres flanking Cozier's Branch on May 3 of that year. Stafford's later land acquisitions included fifty-eight acres in 1787, fifty acres in 1795, and forty-three acres in 1798. He established a prosperous agricultural operation and served as Mecklenburg County's constable from 1775 until 1785. The two-story, side-gable-roofed, timber-frame house originally sheathed with beaded clapboards that remains along Plaza Road Extension was likely erected in the early nineteenth century to replace an earlier dwelling. The finely crafted residence was an indicator of the family's wealth and prominent social status.[12]

James (1730-1812) and his wife Mary (birth date unknown-1788) had three children: George (1769-1824), James (circa 1770-death date unknown), and Jane (birth and death dates unknown). In 1790, James Sr.'s household comprised two adult white men and one slave. James Jr., his wife Mary McKee, and their four children—Mary McKee, Eli, James Biggers, and Samuel—born between 1783 and 1800, lived in a neighboring dwelling. George and his wife Tirza (1774-1825) had seven children—Franklin, James, John, Jean, Tirza, Mary, and Dorcus—between 1798 and 1821. George had acquired two enslaved people to facilitate the operation of his farm near Salisbury by 1800. He owned three slaves in 1810 and five slaves by 1820.[13] Upon James Sr.'s 1812 death, James Jr. inherited the tract of land he then resided upon, which James Sr. had purchased from Morris Moor, as well as fifty acres on the west side of "Dobbs line." George received all of his father's real and personal property, while Jane was bequeathed an enslaved girl named Kate.[14]

Little is known about the Stafford's daily life. However, George and Tirza's wills and records of the two public auctions of their estates held after they died within a year of each other in 1824 and 1825 illustrate the family's prosperity. George bequeathed all of his land, an enslaved woman named Violet, a mare called Venus, and one-fourth of the household and kitchen furniture to Tirza. He had previously conveyed his plantation, with estimated value of five thousand dollars, to Franklin, and subsidized James' education at a cost of fifteen hundred dollars. He stated that Franklin should receive

[12] North Carolina Land Grants, Book 17, p. 161 and Book 68, p. 21, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina; Henderson, *The Descendants of James Stafford*, 3-7, 32-37.

[13]. U. S. Census, Population and Slave Schedules, 1790-1820; Henderson, *The Descendants of James Stafford*, 4-5.

[14] "James Stafford Sr.," will recorded in November 1813, Mecklenburg County Wills and Estate Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina.

three hundred dollars in cash, James a bed and furniture, and that the remainder of the estate should be divided between his six children. Tirza bequeathed Violet and Venus to James, a walnut cupboard to Tirza, her clothing to all four daughters, and the remainder of her property to Franklin and her daughters. Relatives and area residents bought books, farm equipment, tools, guns, and livestock (one cow and four horses) at the December 7, 1824, auction of George's estate. At the January 7, 1830, auction, Franklin, who with Lard H. Harris was an executor of Tirza's estate, purchased the most property: household and kitchen furnishings, farm equipment, tools, a wagon and harnesses, and livestock (horses, cattle, and hogs). His sister Tirza acquired a loom, a chest, a hackle, and a spice mortar. Auction proceeds totaled $284.29 in 1824 and $227.68 in 1830.[15]

Franklin Stafford (1798-1871) and his family resided in the house erected for his grandparents during much of the nineteenth century. On January 8, 1824, Franklin married Cynthia Moore (born 1801), who died three weeks after her namesake daughter's birth on March 27, 1825. Franklin and his second wife Mary Pharr (born 1808), who wed on March 5, 1829, had two boys and a girl before Mary's 1835 death, but all of the children died young. In 1840, Franklin's household comprised his daughters Cynthia and Mary, as well as two male and three female slaves including a boy and girl under ten. By 1850, his real estate was valued at $3,700. Seven enslaved people, including a thirty-year-old blind woman, resided in two gable-roofed log dwellings located west of the Stafford home in what is now a wooded area. One of the small houses remains. The enslaved community numbered ten individuals (six male and four female) in 1860, when Franklin's personal property, including his slaves, was valued at $12,000 and his real estate (seventy-five improved and two hundred unimproved acres) at $3,500. Farm laborers tended 5 horses, 1 mule, 7 milk cows, 17 other cattle, 20 sheep, and 20 hogs worth $1,000 and produced 300 bushels of wheat, 600 bushels of corn, 25 bushels each of sweet and Irish potatoes, 15 tons of hay, 10 400-pound bales of cotton, and 40 pounds of wool. By 1860, Franklin's household comprised his wife Mary Caldwell (married on July 31, 1855) and daughter Cynthia.[16]

James Jr. and Mary Stafford's children also resided in the area. Eli Stafford (1797-1846) and Eliza McComb (1811-1842) married on January 5, 1832 and had four children by 1840: Samuel McKee, William M., Elizabeth Caroline, and James Lafayette. After Eliza's death, Eli married Jane (surname unknown; 1818-1845) in 1844. The couple had no surviving offspring.[17]

The Civil War significantly impacted the lives of farmers in Mecklenburg County and throughout the divided nation who suffered great economic challenges including substantial losses of material goods and livestock during and after the war. The absence of a young male labor force due to military service and the emancipation of the enslaved population made farming difficult, and the cost of basic staples rose dramatically, leaving many households unable to afford basic necessities. These stressors generally resulted in declining wealth. Although Mecklenburg County residents faced myriad challenges during Reconstruction, the close-knit community came together to operate farms, erect buildings, and hold social activities and worship services. African American freedmen purchased or leased land and provided critically needed labor, sometimes for their former owners.

[15] Mecklenburg County Wills and Estate Papers; Henderson, *The Descendants of James Stafford*, 30-31.

[16] Henderson, *The Descendants of James Stafford*, 4-5; U. S. Census, population, slave, and agriculture schedules, 1840-1860.

[17] "Married," *Charlotte Journal*, February 8, 1832, p. 3.

Eli and Eliza Stafford's son James Lafayette (1840-1926) and Cenie E. McKinley (1841-1911), who married on February 23, 1863, successfully navigated the transition. James, a lieutenant in the N. C. Seventh Regiment during the Civil War, was wounded in a May 1864 battle in Virginia. James and Cenie's family grew as eleven children were born between 1865 and 1883. In 1870, their household comprised three young children as well as Cenie's twenty-four-year-old brother Robert McKinley and A. C. Phillips, both of whom provided farm labor. James and Cenie's real estate was valued at $846 and personal property at $800. James became involved in local politics, serving as Cabarrus County's tax collector in 1877 and a county commissioner beginning in 1888. In 1880, James and Cenie's household encompassed six of their children and Cenie's sister Alice L. McKinley and her husband Louis L. McKinley, who worked on the farm. Their African American neighbors, all also farmers, included Daniel Spears, his wife Matilda, their seven children, and Daniel's mother Matilda; Elam and Elizabeth Caldwell and their three children; and Vinie Gill and her infant son.[18] As James regularly leased acreage to tenant farmers, some of these African American families may have lived and worked on his property, compensating him with agreed-upon shares of crop sales proceeds. In November 1889, two of his white male tenants sold their cotton and departed without payment, resulting in an approximately $200 loss. James's fall 1897 harvest included fifty bushels of sweet potatoes.[19]

During the late 1860s, Franklin Stafford's agricultural production depended upon day laborers and tenant farmers including some of his former slaves. He paid these workers $425 in 1869-1870. The farm, valued at $3,700, encompassed 150 cultivated, 500 wooded, and 100 unimproved acres. Laborers tended 3 horses, 2 mules, 4 milk and 10 other cows, 7 sheep, and 30 hog worth $500 and utilized equipment worth $200 to plant and harvest 100 bushels of wheat, 400 bushels of corn, 75 bushels of oats, 30 bushels of Irish and 10 bushels of sweet potatoes, 2 tons of hay, 5 150-pound bales of cotton, 10 pounds of wool, and fruit sold for approximately $20. Neighboring African American households included George and Mattie Stafford; Anthony and Violet Morris and their son Stanhope; and Lafayette and Adaline Stafford Pharr, who resided with their daughters Margaret and Lyla Pharr, Caroline Pharr, Hannah Scott (a cook), Lou Deeter, and Frank Porter. Franklin Stafford had co-signed Lafayette and Adaline's March 1, 1866 marriage bond.[20]

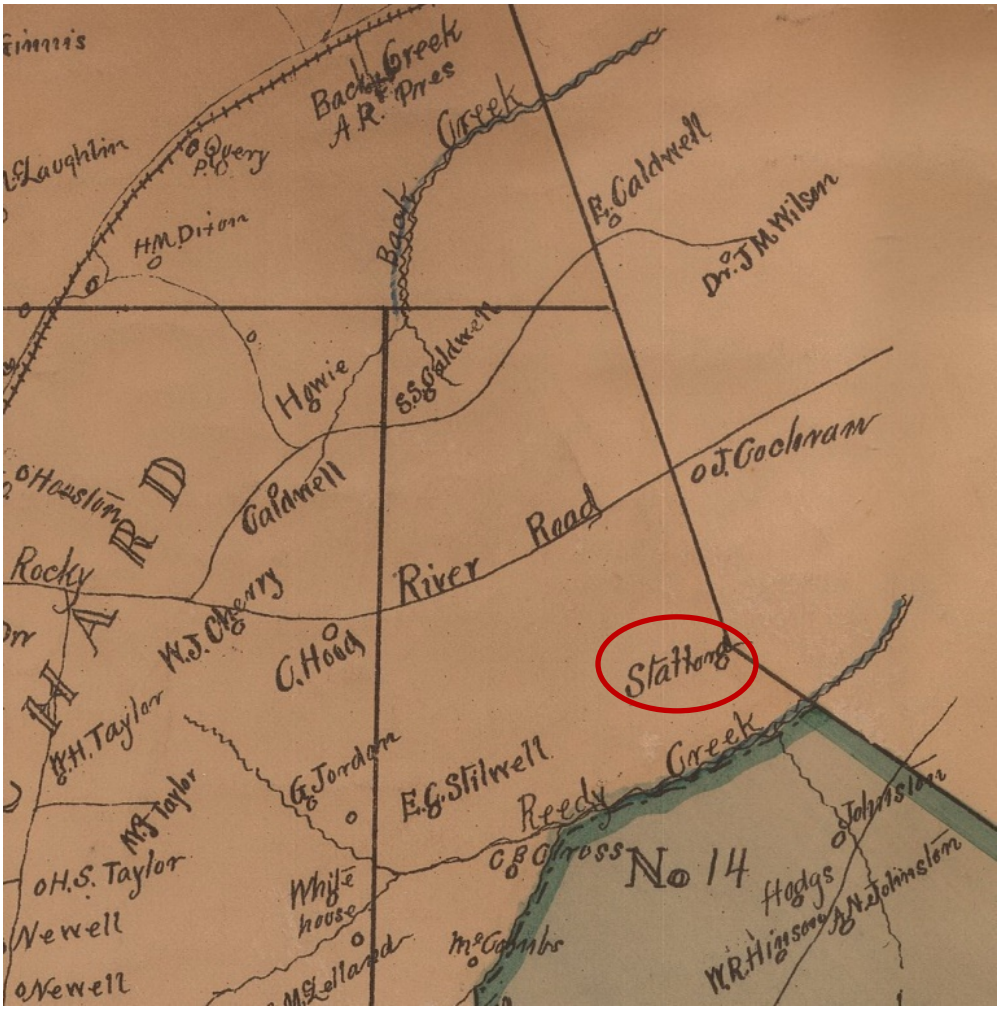
Franklin Stafford died in 1871, leaving all of his real estate and personal property including household and kitchen furnishings, farm equipment, tools, a buggy, a wagon, harnesses, and livestock (horses, cattle, and hogs) to his wife Mary and unmarried daughter Cynthia. After Cynthia's 1881 death, two of James and Cenie Stafford's sons—John Franklin and Arthur Moore—inherited three hundred acres of her land south of Crozier's Branch. Cynthia also conveyed two hundred acres north of Crozier's Branch to Margaret Gallant's sons Lafayette and Miller Gallant. She deeded her Mooresville home to Alice E. McKinley, and distributed her furnishings and other personal property among other relatives as well as six former "servants"—Margaret, Adaline, George, Nat, Jane, and Hope—with the surname Stafford, likely all once the family's slaves.[21]

[18] "Killed and Wounded," *Charlotte Democrat*, May 24, 1864, p. 3; "J. L. Stafford," *Charlotte Democrat*, November 2, 1877, p. 2; "County Commissioners Meeting," *Concord Times*, June 8, 1888, p. 3; U. S. Census, population schedules, 1870-1880.

[19] *The Rocket* (Rockingham County), November 7, 1889, p. 4; "The Town Crier," *Charlotte Daily Observer*, November 25, 1897, p. 5.

[20] U. S. Census, population and agricultural schedules, 1870; marriage records.

[21] Attempts to trace Nat, Jane, and Hope Stafford via sources such as census records were unsuccessful. Henderson, *The Descendants of James Stafford*, 4-5, 37-39.



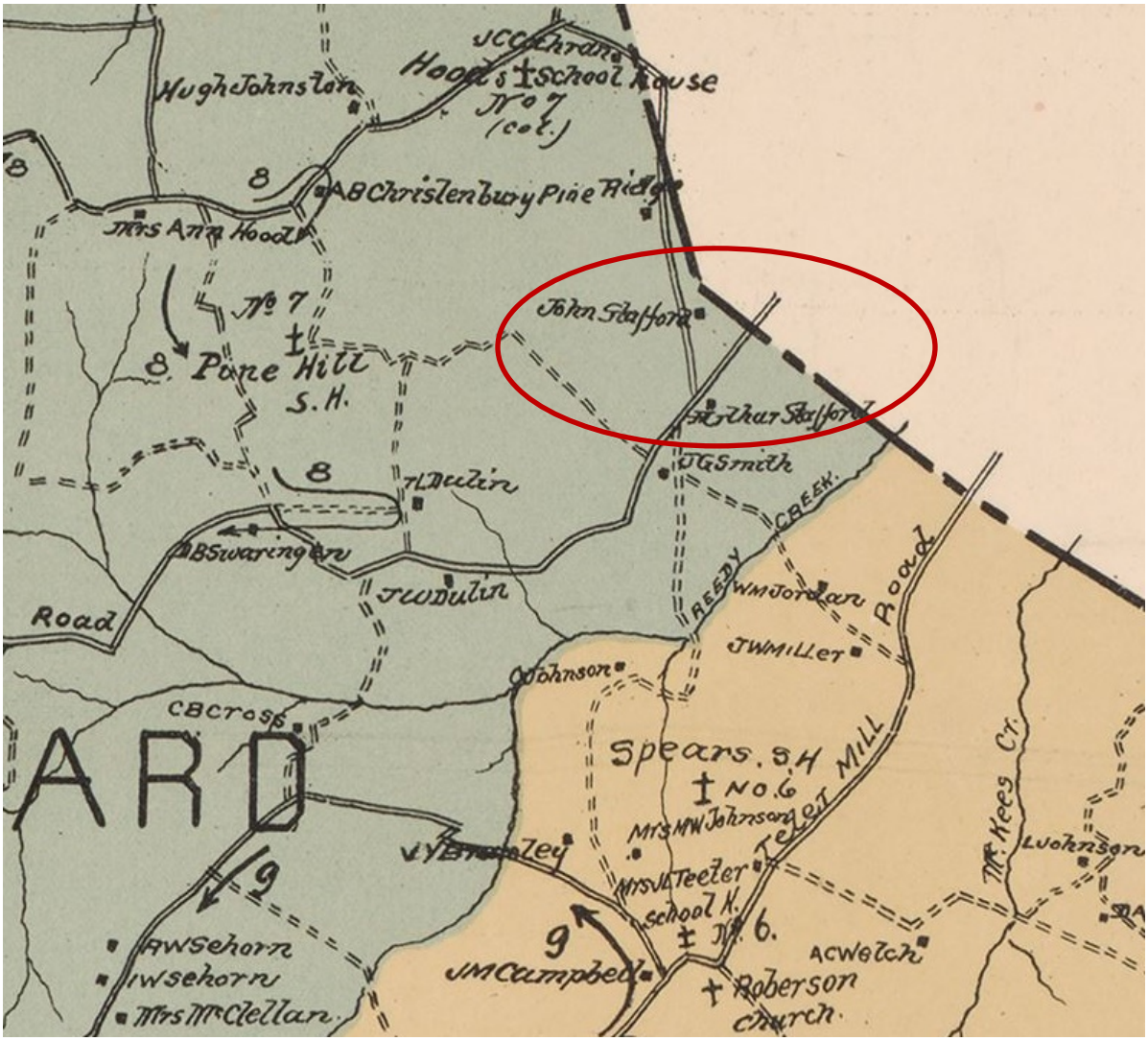
T. J. Orr, "Map of Mecklenburg County, N. C.," 1888
Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Public Library

John Franklin and Arthur Moore Stafford and their families operated farms on the property they inherited from Cynthia Stafford. John Franklin (1868-1931) and Ada Lillian Curlee (1872-1916), who married in 1888, had thirteen children, eleven of whom survived to adulthood. In 1916, following Ada's death, the family moved to Mooresville in Iredell County, where John was a grocery salesman.[22]

Arthur Moore Stafford (1879-1961) and his wife Rachel Caldwell (1884-1975), who wed on November 25, 1903, had a much longer tenure on their farm. The couple and their six children between 1904 and 1925 attended Robinson Presbyterian Church. The 1924 North Carolina Department of Agriculture farm census, which reported returns for 339 (approximately 97 percent) of Crab Orchard Township's farms, indicated that A. M. Stafford and his family cultivated 25 acres of their 325-acre farm and two tenant farmers planted and harvested 100 acres. Cash crops included cotton (75 acres), corn (25 acres), hay, Irish and sweet potatoes, berries, melons, and other truck crops. The farm's occupants also tended home gardens, an orchard containing 50 mature pecan trees, and 7

[22] U. S. Census, population schedules, 1900-1930; "Death Claims J. F. Stafford," *Charlotte News*, March 6, 1931, p. 24.

hogs, 100 hens, and 5 milk cows.[23] The hog lot was located on the property upon which A. M. and Rachel Stafford's grandson Harry James Caldwell now resides. The outbuilding complex included a frame milking parlor destroyed by Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and a large frame barn that collapsed in the early twentieth century.[24]



C. A. Spratt and J. B. Spratt, "Map of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 1911," Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill

Arthur and Rachel Stafford conveyed 99 ¾ acres of his inherited property on Plaza Road Extension's west side to farmer Thaddeus Clontz Stegall, known as T. C., on November 14, 1925.[25] However, Arthur, Rachel, and three of their children—Jennie, Polly, and Harry Caldwell—continued to reside at their farm to the along Plaza Road Extension. Their neighbors in 1940 included African American tenant farmers Frank and Louise Little and Burdett and Phyllis Pharr and white tenant

[23] U. S. Census, population schedules, 1900-1930; "Arthur Moore Stafford," *Charlotte Observer*, March 11, 1961, p. 7B; North Carolina Department of Agriculture, Statistics Division, *Farm Census Reports*, 1925, Box 21 (Mecklenburg-Mitchell Counties), North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

[24] Harry James Stafford, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, January 28, 2021.

[25] Mecklenburg County Deed Book 605, p. 249.

farmers Excell and Ethel Connell.[26] The Littles, enumerated immediately after the Staffords, occupied the log dwelling that remains west of the Stafford-Holcombe House along Plaza Road Extension.[27]

T. C. Stegall, his wife Virginia, and three of their children—Ada Lee; Zeb and his wife Edna; and Mary, her husband Robert, and their daughter Mary—lived at the Stafford-Holcombe House in 1930. T. C. and Virginia's daughter Lonnie and her husband Oscar Hooks, who had married in 1928, occupied a neighboring dwelling. Ada Stegall married Oscar's brother Walter E. Hooks on September 2, 1933. In 1935, tenant farmers cultivated six acres of corn, cotton, and hay on T. C. Stegall's 66-acre farm, leaving the remaining acreage fallow or wooded. T. C. Stegall died on March 1, 1937.[28]

The Holcombe family's ownership began on April 27, 1939, when Commodore Perry Holcombe purchased 99 ¾ acres including the house and several outbuildings from the Stegall, Hooks, and Ray families.[29] Commodore (1891-1973), who was from Greenville, South Carolina, and his wife Leesburg, Florida native Ida Richards (1894-1990), had married in Charlotte on June 16, 1920. The couple initially lived in Greenville, where Commodore had been a locomotive fireman for Southern Railway Company's Charlotte Division since the mid-1910s. Their first two children—Etta Patricia (1923-2013) and James Perry, called Pete (1926-2012)—were born in Greenville. By 1930, they owned a dwelling valued at $4,500 in Mecklenburg County's Mallard Creek Township. The household included Ida's widowed mother Martha P. Richards. The family soon grew with the birth of Commodore and Ida's son William Edgar, known as Bill (1931-2013).[30] Patricia contracted polio in 1932 and suffered complications including permanent paralysis of one leg. After being hospitalized in Gastonia, she returned home to her family's care.[31]

When the federal census was taken in April 1940, the Holcombes still lived in Crab Orchard Township. Their household included Commodore's father William H. Holcombe, formerly a lumber yard foreman in Greenville, who managed the farm.[32] The Holcombes moved to their property on Plaza Road Extension later in 1940 and gradually added to their holdings, eventually owning 230 acres flanking Plaza Road Extension. They leased some of the land to neighboring farmers for hay production and the tenant farmers who resided on the property also cultivated acreage. An African American couple, likely Frank and Louise Little, resided in the log house and assisted the Holcombes with farming and household tasks during the 1940s.[33]

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[26] U. S. Census, population schedules, 1930 and 1940.

[27] Harry James Stafford, conversation with Stewart Gray, April 17, 2002.

[28] North Carolina Department of Agriculture, Statistics Division, *Farm Census Reports*, 1935, Box 65 (Mecklenburg-Mitchell Counties), North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh; U. S. Census, population schedule, 1930; marriage records; death certificates; T. C. Stegall, *Charlotte News*, March 2, 1937, p. 30.

[29] Mecklenburg County Deed Book 976, p. 263.

[30] In official records, Commodore, Ida, and Patricia's surname is spelled "Holcombe," while Pete and Bill's surname is spelled "Holcomb." Commodore Perry Holcombe, World War I Draft Registration Card, June 4, 1917; marriage records; U. S. Census, population schedules, 1900-1930; grave markers; death certificates; "Ida Richards Holcomb," *Charlotte Observer*, May 26, 1990, p. 5B.

[31] Leslie Mursch Freeman and William Clifford Mursch, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, November 9, 2020.

[32] U. S. Census, population schedule, 1940.

[33] The Holcombes did not report farm returns for the North Carolina Department of Agriculture farm census. North Carolina Department of Agriculture, Statistics Division, *Farm Census Reports*, 1945, Box 108 (McDowell-Mecklenburg Counties), North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh. Donald Cline does not remember the names of the African American couple who resided in the log house or any other tenant farmers. Donald Cline, conversation with Heather Fearnbach, January 30, 2021.

Commodore was Southern Railway Company engineer based at Spencer Shops near Salisbury until the end of his almost sixty-year career. Ida worked at Ivey's Department Store in downtown Charlotte for many years. The family attended Robinson Presbyterian Church. Patricia, an accomplished seamstress, was skilled in dressmaking and embroidery and cooked most of the family's meals. Pete was a film booker for Monogram Pictures, a California-based production studio, during the early 1950s, and managed the farm. Bill found employment at Singer Sewing Machine Company following U. S. Air Force service that included a posting in Japan. The Holcombes were known for their hospitality, allowing neighborhood children to play on hale bales in the barn and offering homemade butter pecan cookies.[34]

The Holcombes resided in the family home until their deaths. William Clifford and Caryl Mursch, their daughter Leslie Mursch Freeman, and her daughter Zoe were close friends and neighbors of the Holcombes and spent a significant amount of time on the farm. Cliff and Pete initially connected through their affinity for vintage cars. Leslie explored the farm with Pete, while Patricia taught her myriad skills including crocheting, cross-stitching, needlepointing, and making Christmas ornaments. The Murschs and Freemans assisted the Holcombes as they aged. Commodore died in 1973, followed by Ida in 1990, Pete in 2012, and Patricia and Bill in 2013. At the time of Bill's death, the property encompassed two parcels (27.78 and 25.33 acres). Leslie Freeman inherited the 27.78-acre tract from Bill's estate, and, after undertaking repairs and updates, occupied the house in March 2014. Much of the furniture and art that remains belonged to the Holcombes.[35]

[34] Leslie Mursch Freeman and William Clifford Mursch, conversations with Heather Fearnbach, November 9, 2020, and January 15, 2021; Leslie Mursch Freeman, email correspondence with Heather Fearnbach, November 2020-February 2021; "James Perry Holcomb," *Charlotte Observer*, April 27, 2012.

[35] Ibid.; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 28,595, p. 960, and Deed Book 29061, p. 623; "William Edgar Holcomb," *Charlotte Observer*, November 14, 2013.

Building Technology

In age, plan, and method of construction, the early-nineteenth-century timber-frame Stafford House, hewn-log slave quarter, and hewn-log outbuilding manifest the perpetuation of traditional building practices and the utilization of available resources as early settlers established farms in the North Carolina Piedmont. The rarity of intact similar early-nineteenth-century Mecklenburg County resources makes their preservation particularly significant.

Most early log dwellings were one room sheltered by a side-gable wood-shingled roof and elevated above grade on wood or stone piers to allow for air circulation beneath the structure. Additional rooms without interior connections might be added to expand these modest one-story dwellings, creating plans such as the "saddlebag," featuring two contiguous rooms often heated by a central chimney, or the "dogtrot," two structures separated by an open central breezeway under a common roof. Stick-and-daub, parged-log, and stone chimneys most commonly served the first generation of log buildings, followed by brick as backcountry residents undertook its manufacture. Braced-frame timber construction became more prevalent as settlers prospered. Most early houses of this type were one-story, single-pile, one-and two-room buildings with exterior end chimneys. A steeply pitched roof allowed for additional space at the second-floor level, while porches and shed rooms on the front and rear elevations further maximized living space. Larger rectangular one- and two-story dwellings employed frame interior partition walls to form hall-parlor or three-room plans. By the late nineteenth century, builders replaced timber-frame and wood-shingle roof systems with circular-sawn rafters and nailing strips topped with standing-seam metal roofs comprised of panels folded, crimped, and soldered together. Log and frame dwellings typically rested on brick or stone piers.[36]

Freestanding outbuildings were standard components of most domestic complexes from the seventeenth through much of the nineteenth centuries in rural and urban North Carolina. Kitchens were often one or two-room log or frame structures with large cooking fireplaces, typically located near the primary residence among a cluster of outbuildings such as dairies, meat curing houses, wash houses, and well houses. As cooking stoves became widely available and affordable in the late nineteenth century, their use significantly reduced the heat generated by food preparation as well as the associated fire risk. Home owners thus frequently attached freestanding kitchens to residences with open breezeways or hyphens or renovated a room within a dwelling's main block to serve as a kitchen.[37]

It is currently impossible to determine exactly when the Stafford House, slave quarter-tenant house, and log outbuilding were built due to the perpetuation of traditional building practices. Dendrochronology, the science of dating logs based on tree growth rings, could be employed to establish a date range during which the trees were most likely felled, but has not yet been undertaken due to its cost. Analysis of the hewn logs does not delineate a narrow construction window as the building technology remained unchanged over time and was frequently used to execute residences and dependencies through the nineteenth century's third quarter and outbuildings, particularly tobacco barns, through the mid-twentieth century.

[36] Bruce D. Bomberger, "The Preservation and Repair of Historic Log Buildings," Preservation Brief 26, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service Cultural Resources Preservation Assistance, September 1991, p. 4.

[37] Catherine W. Bishir and Michael T. Southern, *Guide to the Architecture of Eastern North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 447.

Log construction's enduring popularity stemmed from its relative simplicity and affordability. Builders required only established stands of straight and tall white oak, chestnut, cedar, fir, yellow poplar, or pine trees and a felling axe, a broad axe, and a saw to complete a rot- and insect-resistant log structure. The process of shaping logs to create one or more flat sides was considerably more labor-intensive than leaving them round, but facilitated coverage of the log exterior with wood siding and the interior with flush sheathing boards, both of which provided valuable insulation. In this approach, wood furring strips nailed to the logs allowed for secure and level sheathing attachment. Log interiors often display signs of several generations of finishes, ranging from whitewash to plaster, paper, fabric, or flush board sheathing.[38]

Creating tightly-fitted corner notches in a variety of configurations was a time-consuming but important component of log building technology. Mecklenburg County settlers, many generations of whom were of English, Scots-Irish, and German heritage, tended to employ V-notching and half-dovetailing to secure log ends. Builders inserted chinking, typically comprising wood slabs or stone held in place by soft materials such as clay and straw, in the horizontal gaps between logs. Daubing—a smooth, thin coat of clay, lime, and a binder such as animal hair—finished the joints. Whitewash applied to both interior and exterior walls sealed the daubing. As daubing cracks and deteriorates rapidly due to temperature and moisture changes and whitewash dissipates with water exposure, frequent reapplication is necessary.[39]

Careful investigation of plane and saw marks on frame building components provides important clues to their dates. Straight rather than radial saw marks indicate the use of pit or sash saws. Pit sawn lumber is distinguished by irregular saw marks, while water-powered sash sawn boards are characterized by more regular, albeit still jagged, saw marks. Circular saws were not in general use in North Carolina until the 1840s. Builders hand-planed boards to create more finished surfaces, as often seen on doors, wall, and ceiling boards. Craftsmen utilized molding planes with a variety of profiles to ornament exposed framing beams, baseboards, window and door surrounds, door and shutter panels, and window sashes.

Double-hung wood-sash windows typically illuminated interiors. Corner pegs and robust muntins hold eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sash together, while twentieth-century sash display thinner muntin profiles. Board-and-batten doors constructed with wide boards and tapered battens and raised-panel doors employ multiple generations of hardware ranging from eighteenth-century wrought-iron strap hinges to nineteenth-century cast-iron butt hinges, thumb latches, and rim locks. Although cast-iron fixed-pin butt hinges manufactured in England were available in the United States by the end of the eighteenth century, wrought-iron strap hinges remained prevalent in rural buildings through the end of the nineteenth century.

Nail type analysis is another useful dating mechanism. Carpenters utilized nails wrought by blacksmiths until the late eighteenth century, when nails with machine-made shafts and hand-applied heads became available. Machine-headed cut nails were common by the 1840s and machine-made wire nails by the 1890s.

[38] Bomberger, "The Preservation and Repair of Historic Log Buildings," p. 6.
[39] Ibid., p. 5.

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Designation Parameters

Property owner Leslie Mursch Freeman is seeking local historic landmark designation for the entire exterior and interior of the Stafford-Holcombe House, the entire exterior and interior of the log slave quarter-tenant house, as well as the other log outbuilding on the parcel and landscape features associated with Stafford-Holcombe Farm in order to recognize the property's historical significance. Character-defining features are enumerated below.

Stafford-Holcombe House

Exterior

Two-story, side-gable-roofed, three-bay-wide form
Timber frame
Fenestration

Interior

Parlors and center hall
- door and window surrounds with molded edges
- vertical-board wainscoting trimmed with molded chair rails and baseboards

East parlor
- molded cornice
- wide ceiling boards
- single-leaf raised-six-panel door with a brass box lock
- tall mantel with a molded firebox surround, fluted pilasters, carved zig-zag-pattern central frieze panel, stepped cornice, and molded shelf

Stair
- wood treads and risers
- simple wood railing with slender rectangular balusters, molded handrail, and chamfered newel post with a unique stepped finial at the second-floor landing

Bedrooms
- door and window surrounds with molded edges
- horizontal-board wainscoting trimmed with molded chair rails and baseboards
- beams with chamfered edges that support the wide attic floor boards, which are exposed in the east bedroom but covered with gypsum board elsewhere

East bedroom
- single-leaf raised-six-panel door with brass box lock and hinges
- tall mantel at the east wall's center with a molded firebox surround, narrow fluted pilasters, plain frieze, molded cornice with a scalloped upper edge, and molded shelf

Attic above the dining room addition
- encapsulated original second-story beaded clapboards and boxed cornice

Enclosed wood stair at the northwest bedroom's northeast corner
- single-leaf board-and-batten door, vertical board-sheathed walls, and narrow wood steps

Attic above the main block
- exposed roof structural system comprising stripped pole rafters marked with Roman numerals, wood nailing strips, and wide-board decking
- wide floor boards

Slave quarter-tenant house

Exterior

hewn-log walls with half-dovetail joints
weatherboarded gables
three board-and-batten doors
one nine-pane and one six-pane wood sash
stone piers
late-nineteenth or early-twentieth-century frame shed addition

Interior

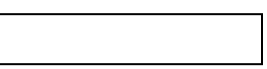
hewn floor joists
wide floor boards
painted mid-nineteenth-century post-and-lintel mantel

Outbuildings and Landscape Features

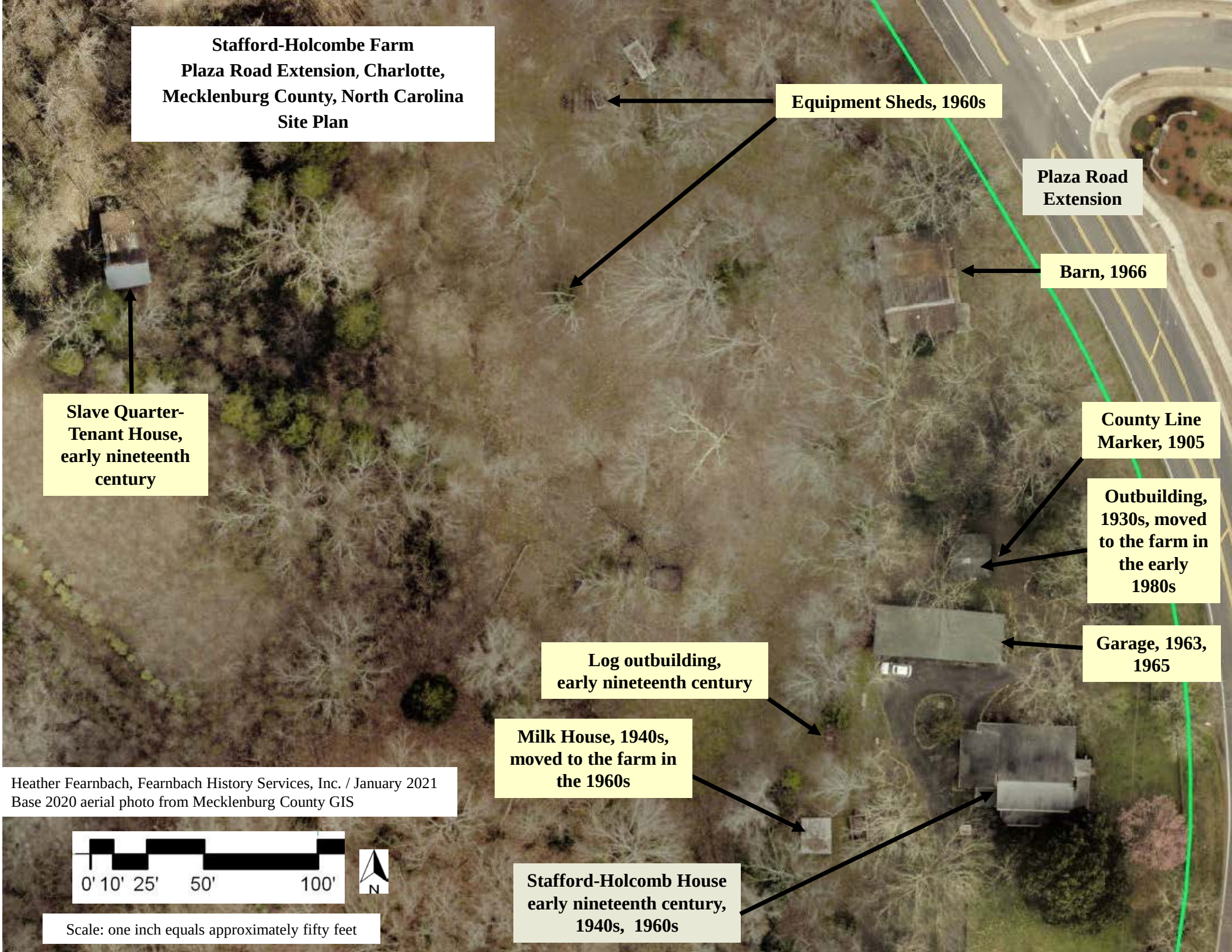
hewn-log rectangular outbuilding west of house
slave quarter-tenant house site
1905 county line marker

Local Historic Landmark Boundary Description and Justification

The Stafford-Holcombe Farm local historic landmark boundary encompasses 27.78-acre Mecklenburg County tax parcel number 1052110. The acreage is sufficient to convey the farm's rural character, thus allowing for integrity of setting, feeling, and association.






Stafford-Holcombe Farm
Plaza Road Extension, Charlotte,
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina
Site Plan
Equipment Sheds, 1960s
Plaza Road Extension
Barn, 1966
Slave Quarter-Tenant House, early nineteenth century
County Line Marker, 1905
Outbuilding, 1930s, moved to the farm in the early 1980s
Garage, 1963, 1965
Log outbuilding, early nineteenth century
Milk House, 1940s, moved to the farm in the 1960s
Stafford-Holcomb House early nineteenth century, 1940s, 1960s
Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc. / January 2021
Base 2020 aerial photo from Mecklenburg County GIS
0' 10' 25' 50' 100'
N
Scale: one inch equals approximately fifty feet

Recommendations for Future Work

Although the information provided in this report allows for a general understanding of the Stafford-Holcombe Farm's evolution, much work remains to be done in order to comprehensively document each resource and provide a broader context for the farm's history. Some of the following suggested undertakings would further illuminate this important story, while others would stabilize and interpret the built environment.

Oral History

Interviews with family members and current and former residents are essential as the process of documenting the farm's history continues. Oral history allows for the understanding of local people, events, communities, and places in a manner that is not possible from any other source.

Research

The historical backgrounds of the families associated with the farm have been explored, but additional research is necessary. In conjunction with ongoing oral history compilation, identification and digitization of historical documents and photographs in private collections to facilitate their preservation should be undertaken.

Documentation

Measured drawings should be created for the three early-nineteenth-century buildings. Dendrochronology could be employed to provide more definitive building construction dates. Furnishings plans could also be generated based upon estate inventories, wills, and the recollections of current and former residents. A landscape inventory is needed in order to more thoroughly document the farm's setting.

Maintenance and Rehabilitation Plans

An outline of the most pressing repair needs should be created immediately, followed by detailed scopes of work and a cyclical maintenance plan as soon as possible.

Archaeology

Based upon the oral histories of family members and current and former residents familiar with the farm, archaeological investigation could be undertaken to verify the location of no-longer-extant resources such as dwellings, outbuildings, wells, fences, and gardens. Buried or infilled features such as trash pits and root cellars, which may provide important socio-economic and ethnographic data, are also likely present.

Future surveyors would have several possible alternatives for the detection of these landscape features. Soil probes can be an effective method to detect ground anomalies, but as vernacular buildings typically rest on brick or stone piers, which leave ephemeral footprints, the results of such investigations are often inconclusive.

Another option would be mechanical soil removal, which could be done in five by five meter swaths to minimize the impact to the area. Any disturbance, in particular recent historic disturbances, will leave an anomalistic signature. Early planting beds and fence post holes will appear different from the surrounding soil matrix when exposed horizontally. Once elements of these historic features are detected, additional areas could be stripped in order to fully expose and map the historic landscape. Mechanical excavation, although effective in detecting subsurface features, is very invasive and expensive and is not a practical solution if the intention is to keep an area intact.

Ground penetrating radar (GPR), although more costly, is a much less invasive remote sensing tool used to detect subsurface archaeological features. Areas that have experienced frequent earth disturbance are not good candidates for GPR, as interpreting the data becomes difficult.

A final option would be to map landscape features based on historic photographs and oral history. This method would not allow for definitive site plan creation, but would provide a low-cost, non-invasive alternative. Regardless of the approach, archaeological efforts would be an effective means of further illuminating the history of this very significant farm.

Interpretation

The farm presents a unique interpretative opportunity given its evolution from the late eighteenth through the mid- twentieth century and the rarity of extant early-nineteenth-century timber-frame and log buildings in Mecklenburg County.