



BLYTHE HOUSE
LOCAL LANDMARK REPORT

121 Gilead Road
Huntersville, North Carolina 28078

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission
Local Landmark Designation Report
Prepared by Gate City Preservation L.L.C.

February 2022

Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Historic Landmarks Commission

REPORT REVISED BY TOMMY WARLICK, JULY 2022

HISTORIC NAME(S) OF PROPERTY

- Blythe House

ADDRESS OF PROPERTY

- 121 Gilead Road, Huntersville, North Carolina 28078

PARCEL ID #: 01711623

DEED BOOK & PAGE: 35495, 40-41

ZONING R100

Amount of land/acreage to be designated

0.40 acres

Interior to be designated

☒ Yes (partial) ☐ No

Property Owner's Address:

HFH Investments LLC

121 Gilead Road

Huntersville, NC 28078

Applicant's Address:

Gate City Preservation L.L.C.

211 Tate Street

Greensboro, North Carolina 27403

I. Abstract

Statement of Significance

The Blythe House is a monumental, early 20th century residence located at 121 Gilead Road in Huntersville, North Carolina. Originally designed and constructed in a transitional Queen Anne-Colonial Revival style with a wraparound first level porch. Despite the c. 1955 removal of that porch, the house maintained its impressive massing, volume, form, and stature, exhibiting a full-height entry porch and iconic facade that has since gained its own historical and architectural significance. The prominent two-story residence, now utilized as a commercial office space, is a touchstone to the late-19th to early-20th century architecture along Gilead Road, a major Huntersville thoroughfare, and provides a memorable landmark to introduce the downtown corridor. Along with its stately architectural presence, the century-old house is locally historically significant as the family homestead of the William Brevard (W. B.) Blythe family for sixty years. Blythe (1872-1942) (Appendix 3) and his wife Hattye Bradley Jackson Blythe (1872-1929) (Appendix 2) built the home from 1910 to 1911, and there raised three children, including son William LeGette Blythe (1900-1993) (Appendix 1), a prolific novelist and esteemed journalist. Among other influential North Carolinians like novelist Thomas Wolfe and playwright Paul Greene, LeGette Blythe was part of a group of illustrious writers who inspired the Southern literary renaissance of the early 20th century. His impressive body of work, which includes a coauthored history of Mecklenburg County that remains a standard among regional historical narratives, earned him induction into the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame in 2002.¹ His continued local significance is aptly represented by his status as the namesake of Huntersville's Legette Blythe Elementary School. The Blythe House retained personal significance for Legette Blythe throughout his life, both as his childhood home and as the central location for ongoing family gatherings, even after Legette started his own family in a house (since demolished) on the same block of Gilead Road as the Blythe House. Indeed, the Blythe House is the last known extant structure to factor so prominently in his life. Given that lifelong significance of the house to Legette Blythe, the resulting associative historical and cultural significance of the Blythe House for Huntersville, Mecklenburg County, and North Carolina far outweighs the exterior modifications made by family members during their sixty-year residency in the house. The period of significance for the house is 1911-1971, from its construction through the Blythe family's multigenerational occupancy of the property.

Archaeological Comments

No known archaeological features are present at this time.

Integrity Statement

- **Location:** The Blythe House remains in its original location on Gilead Road, a prominent fixture of downtown Huntersville for more than 100 years.
- **Design:** The building retains much of its original form and some historical materials, but it has been covered in vinyl siding and wood windows have been replaced with vinyl. The front porches of the

¹ "William LeGette Blythe," North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame, North Carolina Writers Network, accessed July 14, 2022, <http://www.nclhof.org/inductees/2002-2/william-legette-blythe/>; LeGette Blythe and Charles Raven Brockmann, *Hornets' Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte: Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, 1961).

home were significantly altered c. 1955 by Legette Blythe's sister Frances Blythe Dudley. Despite the resulting design integrity challenges to the exterior appearance, those porch alterations did not materially affect such other original design elements of the house as its form, space, structure, massing, proportion, scale, color scheme, pattern of fenestration, and minimalist ornamentation. The reconfigured facade, with its full-height entry porch and two-story columns, continues to complement the longstanding monumental nature of the house, albeit in a different manner. These 1955 alterations – which have now been in place even longer than the original porch design – have acquired their own architectural significance and historic association with the house and its inhabitants in the subsequent nearly 70 years (Appendix 4).

- **Setting:** The Blythe House stands among other historically significant late-19th to early-20th century residences and structures along the Gilead Road corridor. Distinguished by its monumental massing, two-story columns, second level porch, and proximity to downtown Huntersville, the house is a century-old focal point among the predominantly single-story properties along the corridor.
- **Workmanship:** The high level of workmanship associated with the Blythe House is evidenced by such interior features as the heart pine floors, extensive moldings and trims, and decorative mantles throughout, all of which have been preserved over the last century. Likewise, the first level entrance door – featuring decorative dentil molding, circular rosettes with intricate carvings, and a symmetrical transom and sidelights – embodies an attention to workmanship that is echoed by the second-level porch and its identical entrance configuration.
- **Materials:** The interior and exterior features that evidence the workmanship embodied by the Blythe House are predominantly comprised of original materials. A 1988 survey with photographs of the house prior to the exterior installation of vinyl siding reveals that weatherboard siding was still present and in good condition.
- **Feeling:** In addition to its location and setting, situated on the corner of a substantially intact period streetscape adjacent to downtown and surrounded by other historic buildings and features from its period of significance, the Blythe House maintains its historic feeling as a prominent and recognizable century-old Huntersville landmark.
- **Association:** For nearly seven decades, the Blythe House was the homestead of a prominent local family headed by a successful entrepreneurial father and active civic leader mother, as well as the childhood home of Legette Blythe, an author of national and statewide acclaim and a beloved Huntersville resident commemorated by an elementary school named in his memory. Legette Blythe was a constant presence at the Blythe House throughout his lifetime, as evidenced by a photograph of him in his later years at the front door of the home (Appendix 5). Although no longer a residence, the building is the last known extant structure to factor so prominently in his life.

Proposed Boundary Justification

The proposed boundary for local landmark designation is the building's .40 acre parcel.

II. Maps and Floor Plans

Mecklenburg County Tax Map



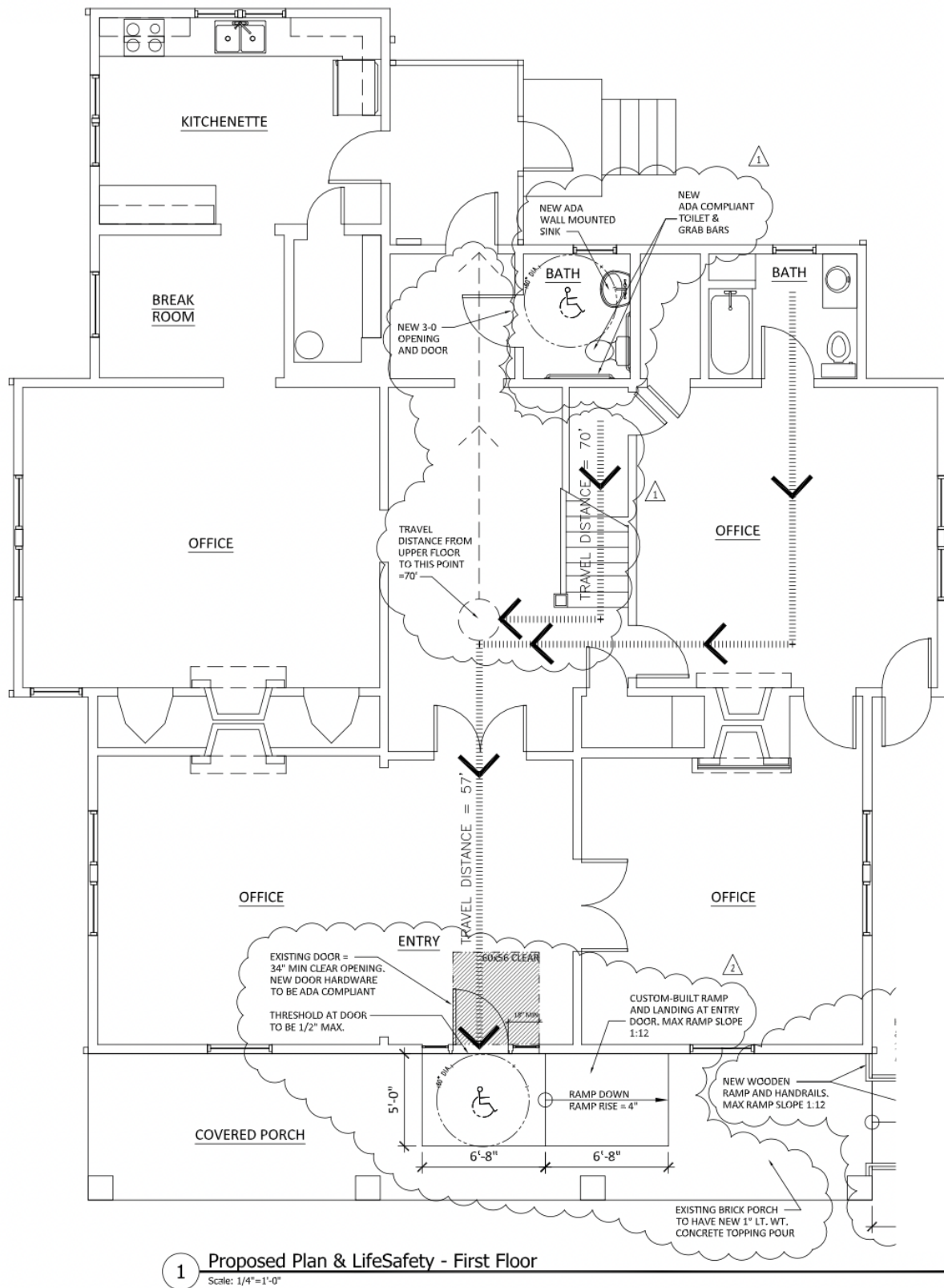
HPOWeb Map

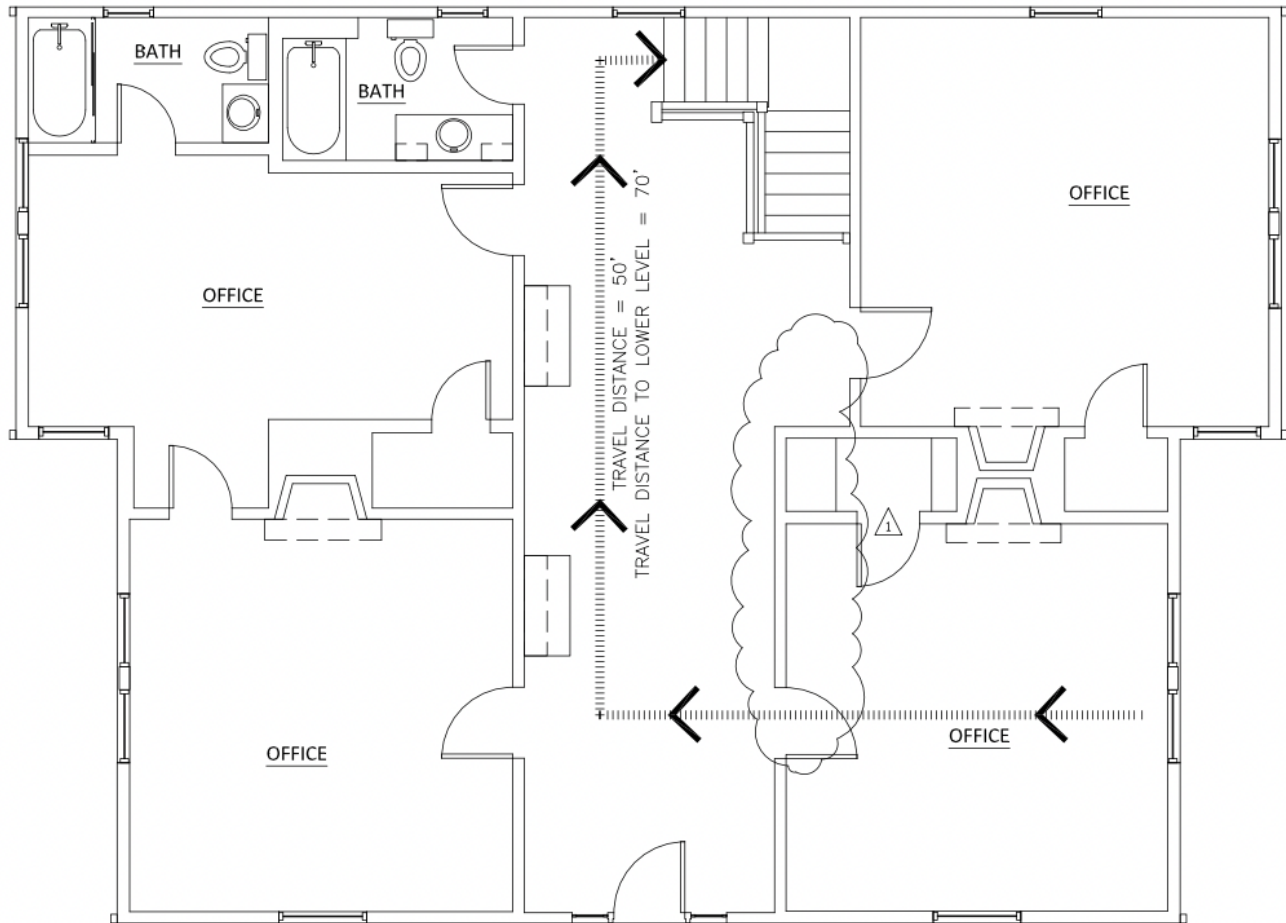


Aerial Map



Architectural Drawings





2 Proposed Plan & LifeSafety - Second Floor

Scale: 1/4"=1'-0"

III. Architectural Assessment

Architectural Importance

The Blythe House is a monumental residence from the early 20th century. The house was originally designed and constructed in a transitional Queen Anne-Colonial Revival style and included a full-width wraparound porch on the first level and partial second-level porch, both supported by square columns constructed of simple, slender rectangular blocks (Appendix 6). In or about 1955, in an apparent effort to update the house, second-generation occupant Frances Blythe Dudley removed the first-level porch to accommodate a full-height entry porch, creating a style reminiscent of the then more current Neoclassical Revival style (Appendix 4). Although Neoclassical Revival homes usually incorporate classical columns, typically with Ionic or Corinthian capitals, later examples of that style also include slender, simplistic columns that were often squared rather than rounded.² In a stylistic nod to the columns that once had supported the original partial second-level porch, slender squared columns were utilized for the full-height entry porch. The Neoclassical Revival Style evoked by the 1950s creation of a full-height entry porch has now fronted the bustling Gilead Road corridor decades longer than the transitional Queen Anne-Colonial Revival style associated with the original first-level porch (Appendices 11, 12, & 13). The resulting iconic facade has thereby acquired its own architectural and historical significance. The entry porch has a slight hip roof with an overhanging eave. The house remains otherwise vernacular in detail and monumental in massing.

Construction of the house was noted several times in local newspapers. On Wednesday, June 29, 1910, *The Charlotte News* stated, “Mr. W. B. Blythe, Mr. Neal Beard and Mr. George Steal all have new residences going up in the village.”³ That same date, *The Charlotte Daily Observer* reported, “Mr. W. B. Blythe has begun to lay the foundation for his house.”⁴ In “Huntersville Is Forging Ahead,” published on December 18, 1910: “Huntersville’s enterprise and progressiveness is rapidly making Huntersville one of the most attractive towns...the public spirit of the citizens is marked and the beautifying and expansion of the town is going rapidly.” The article goes on to list W. B. Blythe as one of the citizens who is building a “beautiful residence,” which is among other homes that will make up “a residence district of unusual attractiveness, [which] will mark the expansion of the town in an eloquent manner.”⁵ The Blythe House was among the prominent homes that represented this significant time of residential development in Huntersville history.

Architectural Context

No comparable homes could be located in Huntersville.

Architectural Description

Setting

Facing north on Gilead Road in Huntersville, a main thoroughfare in the town, the Blythe House stands tall as a monumental example of the early 20th century residential boom in Huntersville (Fig. 1). Across the street is Huntersville Elementary School and the 1938 Agriculture Education Building, which was designated as a landmark in 1992. Down the street are the Professor Hugh Grey House, a two-story frame house constructed in the late 19th century, and the Hunter-Mayberry House (c. 1910), a two-story hip roof frame house. Next door to the Blythe House is the Rogers-McConnell House, also built in the early 1900s. The

² Virginia McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (1984; New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2020), 442-43.

³ “Huntersville Items,” *The Charlotte News*, Wednesday, June 29, 1910.

⁴ “Huntersville,” *The Charlotte Daily Observer*, Wednesday, June 29, 1910.

⁵ “Huntersville Is Forging Ahead,” *The Charlotte News*, Sunday, December 18, 1910.

Blythe House is located on a corner lot, bounded by Gilead Road and Hillcrest Drive. Two substantial trees, one in the front yard and one in the backyard, shade the house with massive canopies. Otherwise, the grassy lot has sparse vegetation. The tree in the front yard is seen in the very early photograph of the Blythe House (Appendix 6). A brick walkway leads from the sidewalk to the front porch steps. Today, the house is being utilized for commercial offices and there is a sign in the front yard listing the businesses within.

Front (North) Elevation

The Blythe House is a three-bay-wide frame building with two levels and a painted brick foundation (Fig. 2). In the mid-1950s, W. B. and Hattye's daughter, Frances Blythe Dudley, removed a lower-level porch to accommodate a full-height entry porch (Appendix 4). Overall, the style is simple. Although the house is vernacular, the massing, form, and revised full-height entry porch configuration is reminiscent of Neoclassical themes. The layout, said to have been designed by Hattye Blythe, has an irregular plan comprised of two main blocks and a rear wing. Part of the rear wing included an apartment for their maid, which had its own separate entrance, living area, dining area, kitchenette, and bedroom.

The front (north) elevation's prominent, full-height porch has four slender rectangular columns and a slight hipped roof with a deep overhanging eave. Above the roof, two corbelled brick chimneys rise from the center of the house's main block and are visible from the facade, contributing to its symmetry. The house was covered in vinyl siding by the previous owner, but weatherboard siding remains beneath. One-over-one vinyl replacement windows are installed throughout. Historic photographs show that the original window configuration was also one-over-one single light. The first level entrance door is paneled with a large, single-light window. Below the window is a decorative dentil molding. The door surround includes four circular rosettes with intricate carvings. The two sidelights that surround the door have large, vertical, single-pane lights with two panels on the bottom. A transom with three window openings spans the entire entrance, including the sidelights. This symmetry is enhanced by a second-level porch with identical entrance configuration, which significantly contributes to the symmetrical aesthetic of the facade. The second level porch is comprised of a simple, low, rectangular balustrade and is supported by two iron brackets. The front porch floor is painted brick, laid in a basketweave pattern.

Side (West) Elevation

The side (west) elevation is three bays wide. On the first level, from north to south, there is a set of two one-over-one windows. The central block, slightly wider than the main block, is wide enough to accommodate a side door on the northern elevation. The paneled side door with glass screen is surrounded by a small porch with slender rectangular columns that match the front porch, a hipped roof, and a painted brick porch floor with two steps. On the west elevation of this block is another set of one-over-one windows. The second level, from north to south, consists of a set of windows symmetrically installed directly above the identical set on the first level. Above the side door on the north elevation of the central block is a single one-over-one window. The second level of the west elevation of this block is identical to the first level. The western corbeled chimney is visible from this elevation.

Rear (South) Elevation

A ramp and parking lot were installed on this elevation for accessibility. On the first level of the rear (south) elevation from west to east is a rectangular bump out with a very slight hip roof. The bump out, constructed to accommodate bathrooms, has two small one-over-one windows. A hip roofed porch with new wooden columns, identical to the columns on the front and west porches, connects to the central block and a one-

story gabled addition. The porch covers a single-light rear door on the central block and a six-light, paneled wood door on the one-story addition. The porch floor is wood. On the south elevation of the one-story addition is a set of two small one-over-one windows.

The second level of this elevation, from west to east, is comprised of a single one-over-one window. The symmetry is lost here as the new windows on the first floor in the bathroom addition no longer line up with the window on the second level. Similarly, the next one-over-one window is located slightly west of the door below, followed by two smaller one-over-one windows. The tops of both corbeled chimneys are visible from this elevation.

Side (East) Elevation

The first level of the side (east) elevation from south to north starts with the east elevation of the one-level addition, which is comprised of two sets of two one-over-one windows. The central block east elevation is comprised of a set of two one-over-one windows as is the east elevation of the main block. The second level of the central block and main block are identical to the first level.

Interior Features to be Designated

The owners of the Blythe House do not wish to include the entire interior of the building in this designation, but do wish to include the stairs and the first and second-story halls.

IV. Historical

The Blythe Family

Hattye Jackson was born in Lilesville, North Carolina in 1872. In 1881, her father, Dr. Anderson LeGette Jackson, died in a cotton-gin accident.⁶ Hattye's widowed mother and widowed grandmother moved to Statesville in 1882 with all their children.⁷ William Brevard Blythe was born and raised in nearby Mecklenburg County, where members of his family had resided since 1740. The two met when Hattye moved to Huntersville after graduating from Statesville Female College to teach at Huntersville Academy.⁸ They were married in Iredell County on October 12, 1898, both at the age of 26. Their first known residence in Huntersville was a one-story house located on the east side of South Old Statesville Road (Highway 115) and south of present-day Mullen Street.⁹ A year after the birth of their first son, William LeGette Blythe, named after Hattye's father, the family rented a home on the southwest corner of what is now Gilead Road and Old Statesville Road. During their early days of married life, Hattye and the children often traveled back and forth to Statesville to visit her relatives.¹⁰

⁶ *The Anson Times*, Wadesboro, North Carolina, Thursday, September 22, 1881.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, United States Census (1880), retrieved from www.ancestry.com.

Interview with John Blythe on Monday, February 14, 2022.

⁸ "Old Blythe House Attracts Newcomers," *The Mecklenburg Gazette*, February 14, 1980; Ramona Landberg, "Naming school after Blythe just seems right, family says," *Charlotte Observer*, August 19, 1998, 4M.

⁹ John Blythe research based on a 1975 interview with LeGette Blythe.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, United States Census (1910), retrieved from www.ancestry.com. Travel documented significantly in the papers. Some examples include *Statesville Record and Landmark* (Statesville, North Carolina) on Tue, Oct 3, 1899 and *The Charlotte News* on Tuesday, Sep 13, 1904.

Hattye and W. B. had four children: William LeGette Blythe (April 24, 1900-October 31, 1993), Charles Edgar Blythe (April 24, 1904-June 1, 1963), Frances Lee Blythe (June 22, 1907-January 2, 1971), and Rachel Jackson Blythe (August 21, 1911-October 19, 1981). The headstones of LeGette and Charles confirm that they were indeed born on the same day, four years apart (Appendix 7).

W. B. Blythe was a mover and shaker in the early days of Huntersville, an entrepreneur who also worked as a registrar and judge of elections for the growing town. W.B.'s sister, Harriet Blythe, married Lee Choate, co-owner of J. L. Choate and Company, a firm that ran one of the first stores in Huntersville (Appendix 8). W. B. and his brother Richard (Dick) Blythe often helped their brother-in-law with store operations. Located on the railroad tracks, the store, later known as Ranson Store, burned in 1971.¹¹ At W. B.'s funeral, a friend told the family that they would not have made it through the Great Depression without W. B.'s generosity and the long line of credit he accommodated at the store.¹²

An active civic leader, Hattye Blythe was the first woman appointed to serve on the Mecklenburg County School Board in 1913 and was elected as the founding president of the Huntersville Civic Club in 1917.¹³ The Blythes were an influential family in early 20th century Huntersville society, often referenced in the paper attending parties and other important events.

W. B. and Hattye Blythe Construct a Family Home

On October 7, 1909, the Blythes registered a deed to purchase a plot from H. J. Walker on Academy Street, later known as College Road and now known as Gilead Road.¹⁴ After renting homes in Huntersville for several years with school-aged children, the Blythes were finally building a home of their own, directly across the street from Huntersville Elementary School. Construction began on the home in June of 1910. In December, the house was still under construction and was likely completed in 1911.¹⁵ The home was among several others built along Academy Street in the early 20th century. The house cost \$3,700 and was designed by Hattye Blythe.¹⁶ The new house doubled as the birthplace of the first Boy Scout troop in north Mecklenburg County, organized c. 1912 under Hattye's guidance. The troop held its meetings in the Blythe House's large upstairs southwestern corner room.¹⁷

The Blythe House was a significant place for famous author LeGette Blythe as his childhood home and the place where he spent his formative years. LeGette was living here when he won his first essay contest at Huntersville Elementary School. When his essay on the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence won first prize, he was awarded a new pair of shoes, which his grandson, William Blythe, recalled, "I always thought it was his first pair of shoes, but I'm not told that it wasn't; it wouldn't have been unlike my grandfather, honest though he was, to embellish a story ever so slightly."¹⁸ Years later, in 1983, the Arts Department at Huntersville Elementary School sponsored The LeGette Blythe Essay Award in honor of his 83rd birthday,

¹¹ "Store Once Fronted Railroad," *The Mecklenburg Gazette*, November 1971.

¹² Interview with William Jackson, son of Rachel Blythe Jackson, Friday, February 18, 2022.

¹³ "Woman Appointed to Serve on Board: School Board Takes Advanced Step In County By Unique Appointment," *The Evening Chronicle* (Charlotte, North Carolina), Monday, June 2, 1913; "Huntersville," *The Charlotte Observer*, Sunday, February 11, 1917.

¹⁴ "Real Estate Deals: Three Deeds Are Recorded With the Clerk of Court," *The Charlotte News*, Thursday, October 7, 1909.

¹⁵ "Huntersville," *The Charlotte News*, Wednesday, June 29, 1910; "Huntersville Is Forging Ahead," *The Charlotte News*, Sunday, December 18, 1910.

¹⁶ "Old Blythe House Attracts Newcomers," *The Mecklenburg Gazette*, February 14, 1980. Also referenced in Eudora Garrison, "Frances Dudley Begins Christmas Baking Early," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 27, 1960.

¹⁷ "Blythe-Dudley Home Gift To North Carolina Boys Home," *Mecklenburg Gazette*, Thursday, March 11, 1971.

¹⁸ "William Blythe," The Charlotte Mecklenburg Story, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Virtual Exhibit, accessed January 5, 2022.

which they celebrated as a school. LeGette attended the celebration and presented the award to the winning student (Appendix 9).

Mecklenburg County was an inspirational and significant part of LeGette Blythe's personal life and writing, specifically Huntersville where he grew up and then later built his own family home (demolished in 2021). In his obituary, LeGette is remembered as "the Squire of Huntersville," known for his passion for Mecklenburg history.¹⁹ His passion for his hometown reverberates in the opening line of *Hornets' Nest*, a history of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County he coauthored with Charles Raven Brockmann: "And now the rolling gentle hills of northeastern Mecklenburg, the warm red clay of his native county. Home again, and good to be home."²⁰ It was during his time at the Blythe House that LeGette developed a love for Mecklenburg and a love of writing. His novel, *Alexandriana: The Revolution in the South 1768-1781*, published in 1940, was based on his fourth grade award-winning essay on the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. After writing for the *Charlotte Observer*, LeGette transitioned full time to writing novels, biographies, and dramas. By the end of his life in 1993, he had produced over 30 novels and twice won the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association's Mayflower Award for the best nonfiction by a North Carolinian, making him one of only nine authors to receive that award multiple times. In 2002, LeGette was posthumously named to the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame, joining such Tar Heel literary luminaries as Thomas Wolfe, Paul Green, O. Henry, George Moses Horton, John Hope Franklin, and Reynolds Price.²¹

The Next Generation

Hattye Blythe died of influenza in 1929. In 1936, towards the end of W. B.'s life, his daughter Frances and her husband Charles Dudley became primary owners of the Blythe House.²² It is unclear if W. B. was living with the Dudleys at the end of his life or with his son LeGette and his family down the street.²³ Frances Dudley, like her mother, was prominent in community life. She worked as a case worker for the Mecklenburg County Welfare Department and her appeals to the community to help those in need are well documented in period newspapers. As a welfare worker, Frances Dudley helped people of all ages, backgrounds, races, and ethnicities, to ensure safe and secure environments and opportunities to flourish.²⁴ Charles Dudley was head of the Charlotte Merchants Association and worked for the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce. After his death, a Merchants Association and College of Business scholarship at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte was established in honor of Dudley's steadfast dedication to education and retailing.²⁵

Married in May of 1929, Frances and Charles were highly active in Huntersville social circles and civic organizations. They had two children, Margaret Blythe Dudley, who tragically died in an accident at a young

¹⁹ Tom Bradbury, "Keeper of the flame: LeGette Blythe—author and journalist—lived and chronicled Mecklenburg's history," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 6, 1993.

²⁰ LeGette Blythe and Charles Raven Brockmann, *Hornets' Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte: Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, 1961), 5.

²¹ "William LeGette Blythe," North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame, North Carolina Writers Network, accessed July 14, 2022, <http://www.ncnhof.org/inductees/2002-2/william-legette-blythe/>; Michael Hill, "Mayflower Cup, R.I.P.," Awards, North Carolina Literary & Historical Association, North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, accessed July 14, 2022, <https://www.ncdcr.gov/media/73/download>.

²² Deed Book 887 Page 260, Recorded on May 13, 1936.

²³ Interview with John Blythe on Monday, February 14, 2022.

²⁴ "Seeks Bed, Linen for Very Ill Child," *The Charlotte News*, Thursday, August 25, 1938; "Boys Are Better Protected In Fresh Air Camp Than At Home," *The Charlotte News*, Tuesday, July 4, 1944; "County Enumerators For Census Begin Week's Classes In How To Count Noses," *The Charlotte News*, March 27, 1950; and Dorothy Knox, "I Believe Everything," *Charlotte News*, Wednesday, October 31, 1934.

²⁵ "Scholarship Honors Dudley," *The Charlotte Observer*, February 26, 1971.

age, and Charles Council Dudley, Jr., who was born and raised in the house until he graduated from medical school and started his own practice in Elkin, North Carolina. A home renovation initiated by Frances Dudley in the mid-1950s removed the first level porch to accommodate the now-iconic full-height porch of the house's prominent facade. The renovation also converted a set of side doors on each side of the lower porch into windows.²⁶ After Frances and Charles died in their early 60s, Council Dudley, Jr., gifted the house in honor of his parents and his grandparents to the North Carolina Boys Home.²⁷

Frances and Charles welcomed Rachel Blythe (the youngest of Hattye and W. B. Blythe's four children), along with her husband McIver Jackson (a medical examiner for Veterans Affairs) and their young son William, to join them in the Blythe House for a year or two during the construction of their own house in the backyard of the big house. In an interview about his remembrances, William Jackson fondly recalled his family's time living with the Dudleys in the Blythe House. When the Jacksons moved in, the backyard lot where they were to build their new home was a wheat field. After the house was built, the short street that went from Gilead Road to the house was called Jackson Street, as the Jackson home was the street's sole residence. Mr. Jackson recalls that the big house originally had a detached garage, which caught fire while they were living there. He remembers his father McIver running out to the car and driving to the town crossroads where he called the volunteer firemen who came and saved the big house. William also recalls the house's original wrap-around first-story porch, which places the porch renovation after 1955.²⁸ John Blythe, a cousin of the Blythes who was also interviewed, recalls the house with the full-height entry porch as early as 1960 when he attended school across the street at Huntersville Elementary.²⁹

From the 1950s to the 1960s, all four grown Blythe siblings lived within a block of each other: Frances in the big house, Rachel in the house right behind it, LeGette a few houses down the street, and Charles living next door.³⁰ A newspaper article from November 1960, highlighting Frances Dudley's Christmas baking, shares the closeness of the Blythe family and how they would all return to the Blythe House for Christmas. The article reports, "'We all grew up here,' says Frances Dudley as we walked through high-ceiling, huge rooms in the white clapboard house... 'my mother drew the plans,' says Mrs. Dudley, 'and *when Charles and I moved back here in 1935, we didn't change a thing, except to take out hall walls to make one big room out of two. Even the plastering is the original.*' The Blythes are a close-knit family. Each Christmas brothers, sisters, children, and grandchildren get together to celebrate the holiday... It has been traditional for years to have breakfast at the LeGette Blythes' table and Christmas dinner in the Charles Dudleys' big dining room."³¹ William Jackson corroborated this family practice of breakfast at LeGette Blythe's house and dinner at the Dudleys', a tradition they maintained for decades (Appendix 10).

In 1971, the Blythe Home was gifted to the North Carolina Boys Home, who utilized the building for their administrative offices. Even after the home left Blythe ownership, the family continued to get together. A newspaper clipping from January 3, 1980 in the *Mecklenburg Gazette*, "Blythe Family Has Christmas Gathering," records "The Blythe Family has a remarkable record of its members being together in the Blythe home in Huntersville during the Christmas season." It goes on to share that LeGette and his brother Charles never missed a Christmas breakfast together before Charles' death in 1963 and that Frances and Rachel had

²⁶ "Old Blythe House Attracts Newcomers," *Mecklenburg Gazette*. February 14, 1980.

²⁷ "Blythe-Dudley Home Gift To North Carolina Boys Home," *Mecklenburg Gazette*, Thursday, March 11, 1971.

²⁸ Interview with William Jackson, son of Rachel Blythe Jackson, Friday, February 18, 2022.

²⁹ Interview with John Blythe on Monday, February 14, 2022.

³⁰ Interview with John Blythe on Monday, February 14, 2022 and Interview with William Jackson, son of Rachel Blythe Jackson, Friday, February 18, 2022.

³¹ Eudora Garrison, "Frances Dudley Begins Christmas Baking Early," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 27, 1960 (italics added).

only missed one or two.³² Although the home is now utilized as commercial office space, it still holds a special place for many Blythe descendants today as the original family homestead, the central gathering place for the Blythe family for nearly seven decades.

In 1998, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education voted to name Huntersville's newest elementary school for the town's "favorite son" Legette Blythe. According to one school board member, "It gives a sense of history to the school. This area likes its heritage." Appropriately, as if to substantiate those sentiments, the Legette Blythe Elementary School is located on Hambright Road across the street from John McKnitt Alexander Middle School, named for a signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. Alexander was also Legette Blythe's great-great-great grandfather.³³

V. Chain of Title

1. Book 35495 Page 40

- a. Recorded on December 29, 2020
- b. Grantor: Ann P. Berrier
- c. Grantee: HFH Investments, LLC

2. Book 11475 Page 254

- a. Recorded on July 27, 2000
- b. Grantor: Floyd L. and Ann P. Berrier
- c. Grantee: Ann P. Berrier

3. Book 3266 Page 66

- a. Recorded on January 23, 1971
- b. Grantor: Dr. Charles Council Dudley, Jr. and Margaret Y. Dudley
- c. Grantee: Boys Home of North Carolina, Inc.

4. Book 887 Page 260

- a. Recorded on May 13, 1936
- b. Grantor: W. B. Blythe
- c. Grantee: Frances Blythe Dudley

5. Book 256 Page 292

- a. Recorded on April 9, 1910
- b. Grantor: J. Mc. Holbrook and Pennie G. Holbrook
- c. Grantee: W. B. Blythe

6. Book 256 Page 76

- a. Recorded on September 23, 1909
- b. Grantor: H. J. Walker and Catherine G. Walker
- c. Grantee: W. B. Blythe

V1. Finding Aid for Photographs

- Fig. 1: Setting
- Fig. 2: Front (North) Elevation

³² "Blythe Family Has Christmas Gathering," *The Mecklenburg Gazette*, January 3, 1980.

³³ Ramona Landberg, "Naming school after Blythe just seems right, family says," *Charlotte Observer*, August 19, 1998, 4M.

- Fig. 3: Side (West) Elevation
- Fig. 4: Rear (South) Elevation
- Fig. 5: Side (East) Elevation
- Fig. 6: Windows
- Fig. 7: Doors
- Fig. 8: Siding
- Fig. 9: Columns
- Fig. 10: Second Level Porch
- Fig. 11: First Level Interior Hall
- Fig. 12: Newel Post
- Fig. 13: Mantles
- Fig. 14: Second Level Interior Hall

Figures

Fig. 1: Setting



Fig. 2: Front (North) Elevation



Fig. 3: Side (West) Elevation



Fig. 4: Rear (South) Elevation



Fig. 5: Side (East) Elevation



Fig. 6: Windows



Fig. 7: Door



Fig. 8: Siding



Fig. 9: Columns



Fig. 10: Second Level Porch



Fig. 11: First Level Interior Hall



Fig. 12: Newel Post



Fig. 13: Mantles



Fig. 14: Second Level Interior Hall



Appendix

Appendix 1: William LeGette Blythe



Appendix 2: Hattye Jackson Blythe (Courtesy of John Blythe)



Appendix 3: William Brevard Blythe



Appendix 4: Frances and Charles Dudley, The Blythe House Renovation c. 1955







Appendix 5: LeGette Blythe outside the front door of 121 Gilead Road.



Appendix 6: Historic photograph of the Blythe House reveals the original porch configuration.



Appendix 7: Headstones for William LeGette Blythe and Charles Edgar Blythe



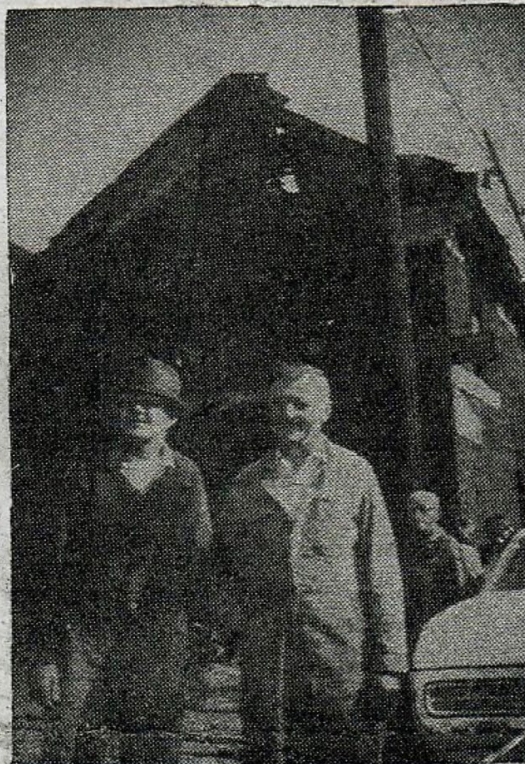
Appendix 8: Choate Store



STORE ONCE FRONTED RAILROAD

Here is an old picture of Ranson's Store that burned Monday night. Mecklenburg County author Legette Blythe identifies in the picture as follows: L. R.—unidentified Negro man, perhaps the handy man around the store; J. M. Holbrook whose home was immediately behind the store, large farmer and landholder; J. L. Choate; T. Neal Kerns, clerk and bookkeeper; Miss Mattie C. Hunter, the store's milliner; W. B. Blythe, with Mr. Choate co-owner of the firm of J. L. Choate and Company; Will Alexander, clerk. The small boy on the sidewalk at the steps is the late Charles E. Blythe, son of W. B. Blythe. All those on the porch are deceased. The picture was made about 1917-1918. The large boxes at right end of porch were coffin boxes. The firm did a large general merchandise business in northern Mecklenburg and adjoining counties of Iredell, Lincoln, Cabarrus, and Gaston.

In the picture at right—Don Ranson, store owner (R) and Frank Henderson (L), a man who recalls names and dates in history, stand before the burned out old store.



Appendix 9: LeGette Blythe presents The LeGette Blythe Essay Award at Huntersville Elementary School



LeGette Blythe presents essay award created in his honor to Chad Entrekin. (News photo/Don Hunter)

Appendix 10: Interior of Blythe House, Date Unknown



Appendix 11: Blythe House c. 1970



Appendix 12: Blythe House c. 1980



Appendix 13: Blythe House, c. 1990



Appendix 14: Blythe House in 2020, before the restoration work. Photos courtesy of Ken Bumgarner Photography.















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