

Landmark Designation Report for the



John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House 7040 Pleasant Grove Road Charlotte, North Carolina

Prepared by:
Susan V. Mayer, Principal
April 2023

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CONSULTING**

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General Information

Historic Names of Property:	John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House
Address of Property:	7040 Pleasant Grove Road, Charlotte, North Carolina 28216
PIN:	3309401
Deed Book & Page:	Mecklenburg County Deed Book 36852, Page 82
Amount of Land/Acreage to be Designated:	4.539 acres
Ad Valorem Tax Value:	The 2023 assessed real estate value of parcel 3309401 which includes the John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House is \$389,800.
Recommendation for Designation:	Exterior designation of the house and all the property within Mecklenburg County parcel 15504405.
Name/Address of Current Property Owner:	Sanders Partnership LLC 19203 Peninsula Shores Drive Cornelius, North Carolina 28031

Chain of Title

Grantor	Grantee	Date	Deed Book/Page	Notes
Hazel M. Sanders	Sanders Partnership LLC	December 9, 2021	36852/82	3309401 (4.539 acres)
Dearzee Puckett also known as Edith Dearzee Puckett also known as Dearzee L. Puckett (widow – unmarried)	Floyd D. Sanders and wife, Hazel M. Sanders	October 13, 1999	10830/874	3309401 (4.539 acres)
Floyd McClure and wife, Minnie V. McClure and C. H. McClure and wife, Jessie C. McClure	H. W. Puckett and wife, Dearzee L. Puckett	March 2, 1945	1141/250	3309401 (5.1 acres)
S. O. Lawing and wife, Essie O. Lawing	Floyd McClure and wife, Minnie V. McClure and C. H. McClure and wife, Jessie C. McClure	February 17, 1945	1141/24	3309401 (31 acres)
R. C. McCord and wife, Mary A. McCord	S. O. Lawing and wife, Essie O. Lawing	November 7, 1944	1136/99	3309401 (31 acres)
R. B. Abernethy and wife, et. al.	R. C. McCord and wife, Mary A. McCord	May 15, 1943	1107/368	3309401 (31 acres)
R. B. Abernathy and wife, et. al.	R. B. Abernathy and wife, et. al.	March 13, 1915	337/475	Partition of J. C. Abernethy estate per his instructions in his will.
C. N. Blythe, et. al.	John C. Abernathy	March 29, 1867	47/229	Portion of the Samuel Blythe estate, deed not filed until December 28, 1885

Abstract

Statement of Significance

The John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House is historically relevant as one of the oldest extant farmhouses in Paw Creek Township of western Mecklenburg County. Built ca. 1867, the two-story frame I-house represents the typical house form of rural nineteenth century Piedmont. The Abernethy family were prominent members of the Paw Creek and Long Creek Township communities, with John and several of his sons serving in various leadership positions. The John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House served as the Lovelady post office starting in the 1890s preceding the implementation of Rural Free Delivery service, indicating the home's importance to the surrounding community.

Integrity Statement

Location	The John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House is located at its original site of construction.
Design	The John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House retains some integrity of design, as the primary mass of the house is unchanged from its original design. The front porch was replaced and a one-story shed addition to the back was constructed in the 1940s. In the intervening 70+ years, those changes have acquired their own architectural significance and historic association with the house.
Setting	The size of the parcel and location of John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House within provides some indication of the pastoral rural setting which once characterized this area of Mecklenburg County, though integrity of setting is low. The John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House is located at the corner of Pleasant Grove Road and Kelly Road on 4.5 acres. The house is surrounded by a yard with large shade trees. The rear and right portions of the parcel are wooded. The right portion of the parcel is also fenced. Development of the properties around the house started in the 1950s, with a new denser residential development across Pleasant Grove Road.
Materials	The exterior of the John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House has been altered, with vinyl siding applied over the wood plank siding and a new metal roof.
Workmanship	The John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House does retain elements of the ca. 1860s method and style of building common to rural areas of Piedmont North Carolina. Structural beams visible at

the crawlspace show evidence of being hand sawn.

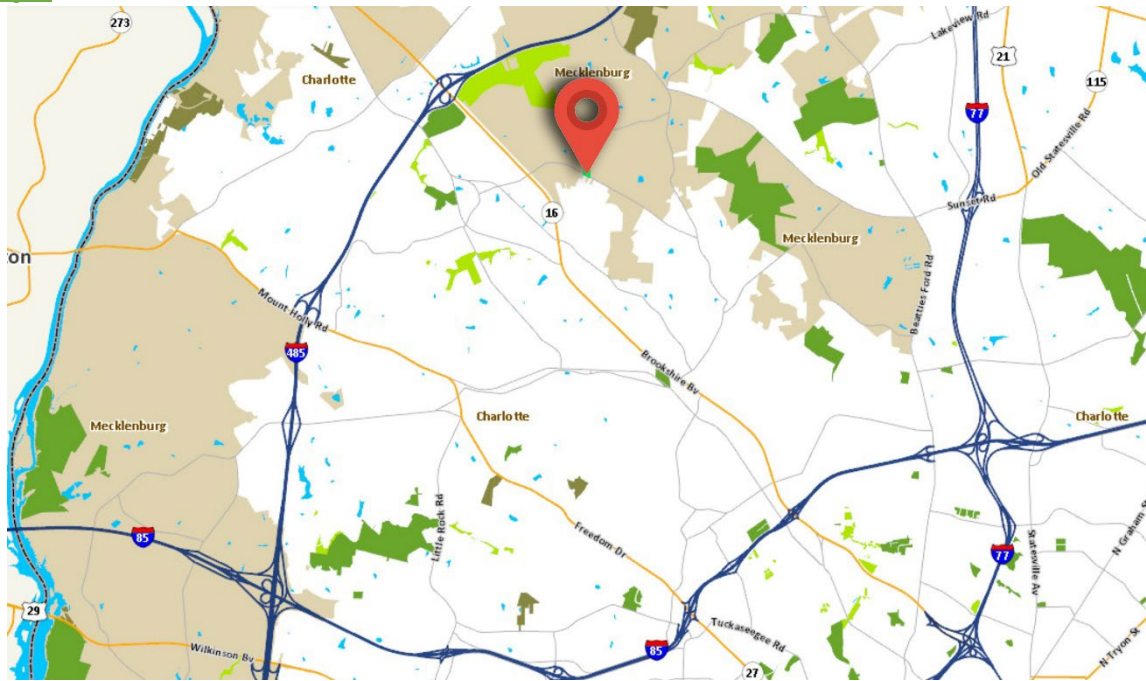
Feeling

The John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House conveys a high quality of integrity of feeling of a nineteenth century farmhouse in Mecklenburg County.

Association

The John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House has historic significance based on its association with the Abernethy family, who were prominent members of the Paw Creek and Long Creek township communities. The John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House is also one of the few remaining mid-nineteenth century farmhouses in Paw Creek Township. Lastly, the John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House is one of the few known extant homes which served as a post office in rural Mecklenburg County. The other few remaining nineteenth century vernacular I-houses in and around the historic communities of Paw Creek and Long Creek lack the high degree of significant associative history embodied within the Abernethy House.

Maps



Source: POLARIS



Source: POLARIS

Historical Background

The John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House is historically relevant as one of the oldest extant farmhouses in Paw Creek Township of western Mecklenburg County. Built ca. 1867, the two-story frame I-house represents the typical house form of rural nineteenth century Piedmont. The Abernethy family were prominent members of the Paw Creek and Long Creek Township communities, with John and several of his sons serving in various leadership positions. The John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House also served as the Lovelady post office starting in the 1890s preceding the implementation of Rural Free Delivery service, indicating the home's importance to the surrounding community.

John Connelly Abernethy

John Connelly Abernethy¹ was born September 15, 1821, near Connelly Springs in Lovelady Township, Burke County, to John “Big John” Abernethy (1774-1826) and his second wife Susannah Connelly Abernethy (1785-1864) of Lincoln County. The Abernethy family, like many of their contemporaries, were farmers of Scots Irish descent. In the eighteenth century, his uncle James Abernethy operated a ferry on the west bank of the Catawba River at what later became known as Rozzelles Ferry.² “Big John” Abernethy died in 1826, leaving Susannah and their four children under the age of ten³—Jane Caroline (1818), John Connelly, Sarah Ann (1823), and Joseph Harvey (1825). Miles B. Abernethy, the eldest of the seven children of John and his first wife Caroline Nance Abernethy, became guardian of John and his siblings. He and John would remain close throughout their lives. When John applied for a marriage license to wed Sarah Hutson in May 1843, Miles was a bondsman. Unfortunately, the marriage was short-lived as Sarah died, perhaps in childbirth, in March 1844.⁴

John remarried on February 7, 1850, to Nancy Johnson Blythe of Mecklenburg County. Nancy was a daughter of Samuel Blythe and Isabella Nantz Blythe. Nancy's great-grandfather Samuel Blythe acquired land near the Catawba River in Mecklenburg County in 1772, and the Blythe family farmed land along Beatties Ford Road for generations.⁵ In the 1850 U. S. Census the newlyweds were recorded on September 9 in Gaston County near

¹ The family surname Abernethy has been used interchangeably with the alternate spelling Abernathy. The former is present on gravestones and other markers and is the preferred usage.

² “Big John” Abernethy and Robert Abernethy, Jr., whose son James operated the Catawba River ferry, were the sons of Robert Abernethy, Sr. James's daughter Polly Abernethy married Richard Rozzelle, who later operated the ferry site which now bears his name. Jeffrey T. Kiser-Paradis, email correspondence with Susan V. Mayer, May 3, 2023.

³ William Abernethy was born in 1824 but died the following year.

⁴ *Western Carolinian*, December 12, 1826. Sarah was buried in Paw Creek cemetery.

⁵ “Hymeneal,” *Charlotte Journal*, February 12, 1850; John C. Blythe, Jr., “Historical Overview,” in Dan L. Morrill and Nora M. Black, *Blythe Homestead*, Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, <http://landmarkscommission.org/2016/10/14/blythe-homestead/>, accessed April 5, 2023. The extant house at the Blythe Homestead was constructed by Nancy's brother Richard Franklin Blythe ca. 1848.

John's sister Jane Abernethy Fite. By December, the Abernethys had moved back to Mecklenburg County where their first child, Susan Isabella "Belle" Abernethy was born. Following Belle were James Samuel (1852), Mary Alice (1853), John Francis (1856), Richard Blythe (1858), Andrew Irvin (1860), Clement Lee (1862), and William Sidney (1863).⁶

In the 1850s John and Nancy moved to western Mecklenburg County near the Catawba River. According to research by Rev. Charles Sommerville in his history of Hopewell Presbyterian Church, Nancy's home church which the Abernethys would attend, "Realizing that boys have more temptations in the city than they do in the country, they sold their property in Charlotte and moved to Paw Creek township".⁷ In the 1860 U. S. Census taken on July 31, John was recorded as head of their household in the Western Division of Mecklenburg County, Charlotte post office. He was a farmer with real estate valued at \$1,400 and personal estate valued at \$2,350. In the household were John and Nancy; daughters Belle and Alice; and sons Samuel, Francis, Richard, and Andrew. A few houses away was his half-brother Miles.⁸ John was recorded as enslaving three Black persons—a 55-year-old man, a 50-year-old woman, and a 60-year-old man—who lived in a slave house on the property.⁹

In May 1866 Nancy's father Samuel Blythe died at his home near Gilead Church. John and Nancy purchased from her siblings 126 acres "on the waters of Paw Creek" farther south near the old plank road twelve miles west of Charlotte.¹⁰ They built a two-story I-house and began farming. The 1870 U. S. Census was the first which recorded the Abernethys living in the house. The household consisted of John and Nancy; daughters Belle and Alice; and sons Samuel, Francis, Blythe, Irwin, Clem, and Sidney. John was a farmer, and Samuel worked on the farm. Their real estate was valued at \$2380 and personal estate at \$700.¹¹ John was apparently a successful farmer, as he afforded to send his eldest son Samuel to medical school in Baltimore. Dr. Sam, as he became known, graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons on March 6, 1878. He immediately returned to Mecklenburg

⁶ Charles William Sommerville, *The History of Hopewell Presbyterian Church* (Charlotte: Observer Printing House, 1939), 90; 1850 U. S. Census.

⁷ Sommerville, *Hopewell*, 90.

⁸ 1860 U. S. Census. Miles was married to Charlotte Capps, whose uncle James Capps found gold on his land on Beatties Ford Road in the 1820s.

⁹ 1860 U. S. Census Slave Schedule.

¹⁰ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 47, Page 229.

¹¹ 1870 U. S. Census.

County to begin his practice in the Paw Creek and Long Creek communities. Daughter Belle taught school in Paw Creek.¹²

In May 1877 Nancy tragically died. As written in the Hopewell Presbyterian Church history, “As long as her husband was able to attend church, he carried a flower and placed it on her grave every Sunday.”¹³ He never remarried. Daughters Belle, who was widowed in 1880 with an infant son, and Mary Alice, who never married, resided with him thereafter. After Nancy’s death, however, John became more active in political circles in Paw Creek Township. He was a delegate to the meeting of county Democrats in 1878. For several years beginning in 1881, John served on the school committee for School District No. 56 in Paw Creek.¹⁴

Lovelady Post Office

The post office is an important American institution preceding the founding of the United States. Benjamin Franklin, who had served as a colonial postmaster in Philadelphia, was appointed by the Continental Congress in 1775 to postmaster general. The U. S. Constitution empowered Congress “to Establish post offices and post road,” and in February 1792 with the signing of the Postal Service Act by President George Washington, the Post Office Department was established.¹⁵ In Mecklenburg County, the first post office was established at Charlotte Courthouse, with Edward Wayne was appointed its first postmaster on October 1, 1794. Ten years later, a post office was established north of town at Alexandriana.¹⁶

¹² “Died; The Beloved Physician,” *Presbyterian Standard* 16, No. 40 (October 7, 1925), 16; “Public Schools in Mecklenburg County,” *Charlotte Democrat*, July 20, 1874. John’s half-brother James Abernethy (1807-1880) was a practicing physician in Lincoln and Gaston Counties.

¹³ Sommerville, *Hopewell*, 90.

¹⁴ “Mecklenburg School Committeemen,” *Charlotte Democrat*, December 9, 1881; “The County Schools,” *Charlotte Observer*, January 10, 1883; “List of School Committee-men,” *Charlotte Democrat*, July 17, 1885.

¹⁵ “The United States Postal Service: An American History 1775-2002,” Publication 100, United States Postal Service (September 2003), <https://web.archive.org/web/20041030125608/https://www.usps.com/cpim/ftp/pubs/pub100/pub100.htm>, accessed April 6, 2023.

¹⁶ R. F. Winter, “Charlotte,” North Carolina Postal History Society, http://www.ncpostalhistory.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/PostmarkCatalog_charlotte-Mecklenburg-County-20230208.pdf, accessed April 6, 2023; “N. C. Post Offices – 1785 to 1882,” Carolana, https://www.carolana.com/NC/Towns/NC_POs_1785_to_1882_Sorted.htm, accessed April 6, 2023.

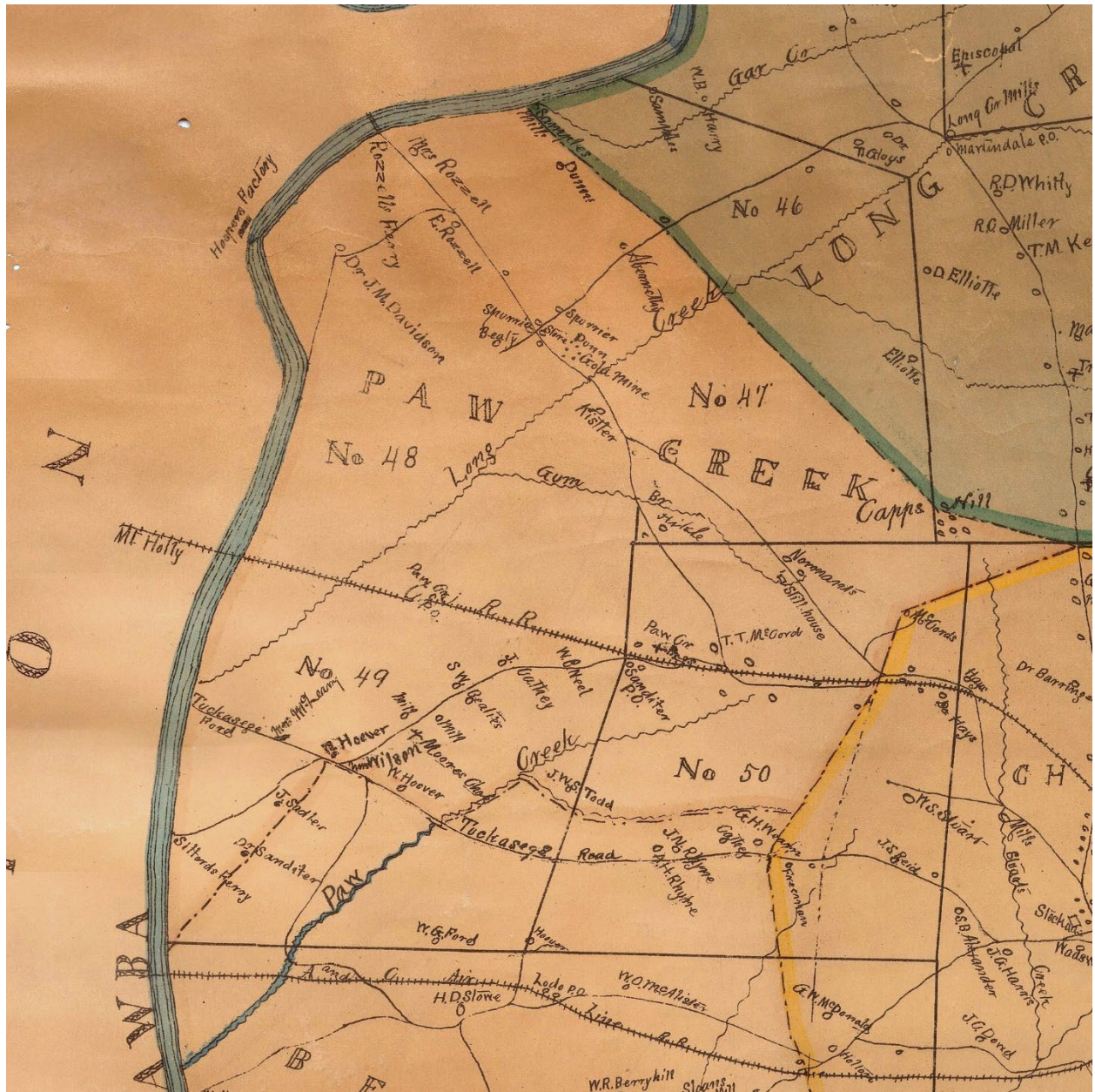


Figure 1 Paw Creek in 1888. From J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

In early 1875, the Carolina Central Railway began service west from Charlotte to Lincolnton. A station was established at McCord's Store which became known as Paw Creek. Proprietor Thomas T. McCord was appointed the first postmaster of the Paw Creek post office. Located just over three miles from the Abernethy farm, the post office would have revolutionized the small country locale. As railroads expanded throughout the country following the Civil War, businesses began selling their goods to consumers via catalogs received in the mail. The growth of parcel business resulted in a post office boom

in rural areas in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. By the 1890s, small fourth-class post offices were popping up in stores and houses across Mecklenburg County.¹⁷

Post Office Department,
OFFICE OF THE FOURTH ASSISTANT POSTMASTER GENERAL,
APPOINTMENT DIVISION,
WASHINGTON, D. C. MAY 23 1894

Sir: Before the Postmaster General decides upon the application for the establishment of a post office at Lovelady, County of Mecklenburg, State of N.C., it will be necessary for you to carefully answer the subjoined questions, get a neighboring postmaster to certify to the correctness of the answers, and return the location paper to the Department, addressed to me. If the site selected for the proposed office should not be on any mail route now under contract, only a "Special Office" can be established there, to be supplied with mail from some convenient point on the nearest mail route by a special carrier (see section 733, Postal Laws and Regulations of 1887), for which service a sum equal to two-thirds of the amount of the salary of the postmaster at such office will be paid by the Department.

You should inform the contractor, or person performing service for him, of this application, and require him to execute the inclosed certificate as to the practicability of supplying the proposed office with mail, and return the same to the Department.

Very respectfully,
N. C. Merditt
Fourth Assistant Postmaster General.

To Mr. S. J. Abernethy
care of the Postmaster of Ham S. B. Flynter who will please forward to him.

STATEMENT.

The proposed office to be called Lovelady

Select a short name for the proposed office, which, when written, will not resemble the name of any other post office in the State.

It will be situated in the West quarter of Section 12, Township 12, Range 12, (East or West) in the County of Mecklenburg, State of N.C.

It will be on or near route No. 12, being the route from Lander to Lander, on which the mail is now carried once per week.

Will it be directly on this route?—No

If not, how far from it?—1/2 mile. To be supplied from Lander

If not on any route, is a "Special Office" wanted?—No

The name of the nearest office to the proposed one, on any route, is Lander, its distance is 1/2 miles in South direction from the proposed office.

The name of the nearest office, on the other side, is Lander, its distance is 1/2 miles in North direction from the proposed office.

The name of the other nearest office to the proposed one is Lander, its distance by the most direct road is 1/2 miles in South direction from the proposed office.

The name of the most prominent river near it is Lander

The name of the nearest creek is Lander, miles from said river, on the South side of it, and will be 1/2 miles from said nearest creek, on the South side of it.

The name of the nearest railroad is The Western Railroad, If on the line of or near a railroad, on which side will the office be located; how far from the track; and what is, or will be, the name of the station?—No

If it be a village, state the number of inhabitants.—No

Also, the population to be supplied by the proposed office, with neighboring river or creek, roads, and other a diagram, or sketch from a map, showing the position of the proposed new office, with neighboring river or creek, roads, and other post offices, towns, or villages near it, will be useful, and is therefore desired.

A correct map of the locality might be furnished by the county surveyor, but this must be without expense to the Post Office Department.

ALL WHICH I CERTIFY to be correct and true, according to the best of my knowledge and belief, this 23 day of May, 1894.

I CERTIFY that I have examined the foregoing statement, and that it is correct and true, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

S. J. Abernethy
Postmaster of Lander

(OVER)

Figure 2 Front side of the site location form filled out for the Lovelady Post Office by Sidney Abernethy in 1894. From the National Archives.

The Abernethys must have recognized the need for a post office in their immediate vicinity, and they undertook the process to have one established. If a community desired a post office in their area, they would collect signatures and send the petition to the Postmaster

¹⁷ "N. C. Post Offices – 1785 to 1882."

General. A site location form would also be filled out by the potential postmaster appointee. This form detailed the surrounding post offices and nearby waterways and railroads (to determine the location of extant postal routes). Sidney Abernethy filled out the form for what would be called the Lovelady post office. A postmaster from a nearby office would certify the information, in this case E. R. Spurrier of the Spurrier¹⁸ post office, and the form would be sent to Washington, D. C. for approval. While most site location forms were sent via a postmaster, the form for the Lovelady post office came from the office of Congressman S. B. Alexander, a farmer in western Mecklenburg County. While the fourth-class post office system had been identified as a potential conduit for political corruption, there is no evidence that this was the case for the Abernethys.¹⁹



Figure 3 This model of a counter-top postal unit may have been used in the Lovelady post office. From the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, <https://collections.si.edu/search/record/ark:/65665/hm8d456ebfd600142e28c7e793bf230d35b>, accessed April 11, 2023.

According to Lib Puckett Primm, a later resident of the house, the post office was located at the Abernethy house in the living room. Sidney was appointed its first postmaster, though John was the de facto postmaster. It was named Lovelady, likely after the Burke County township where John was born. Sidney was appointed its first postmaster. The local correspondent to the *Mecklenburg Times*, however, reported that John was the postmaster.

¹⁸ Spurrier was located at the modern intersection of Bellhaven Boulevard and Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road.

¹⁹ Alexander served two terms representing North Carolina's 6th Congressional District from 1891 to 1895. Stuart Noblin, "Alexander, Sydenham Benoni," NCPedia (1979), <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/alexander-sydenham-benoni>, accessed April 11, 2023.

While this was not the case, it was likely that John was the de facto postmaster as law encouraged the appointment of assistants to help carry out the duties.²⁰

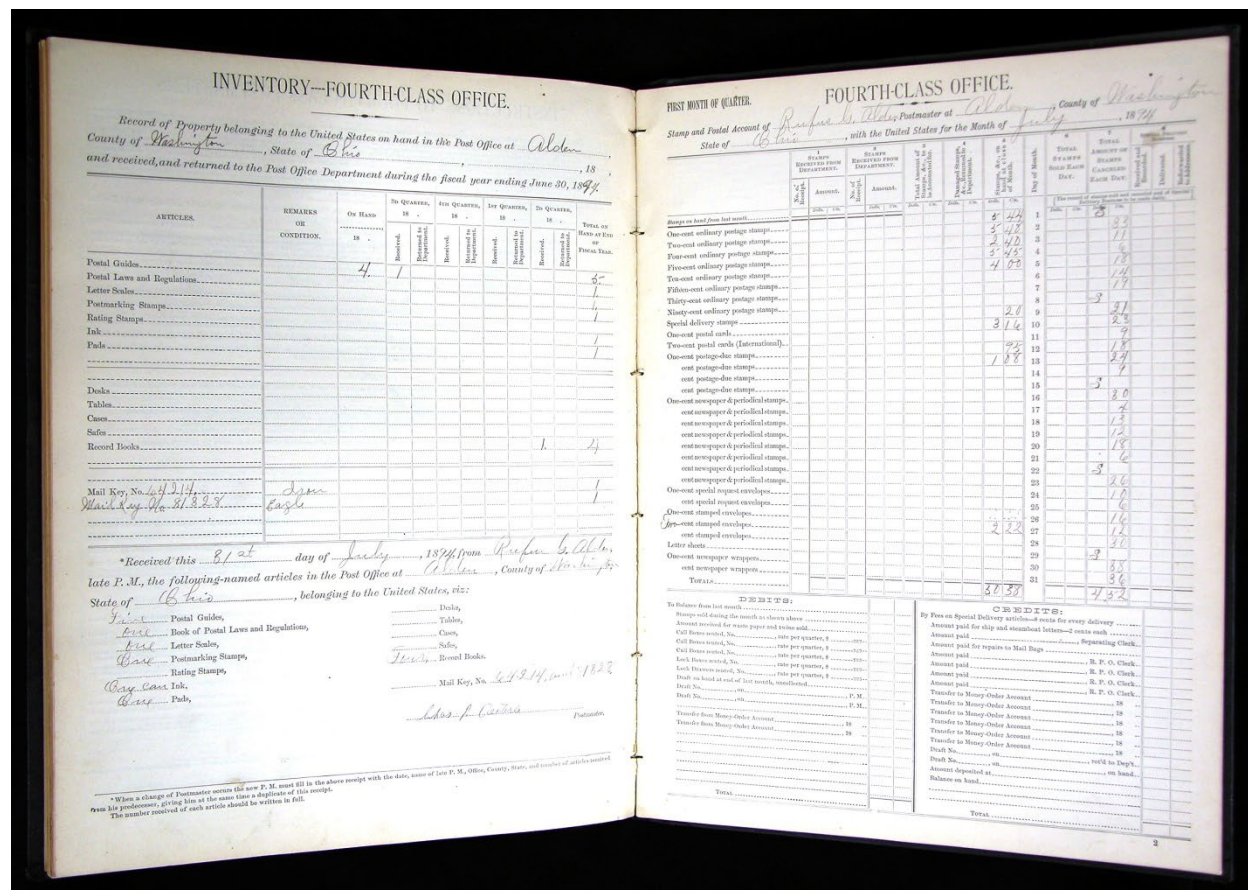


Figure 4 The Abernethys would have kept records in an account book like this one. From the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, https://collections.si.edu/search/detail/edanmdm:npm_2002.2014.1, accessed April 20, 2023.

According to the National Postal Museum, fourth class post offices were the lowest tier of post offices typically located on private property. Postmasters were not salaried. The Abernethys would have received commissions on “on the annual sums for box rentals and cancelled stamps as well as amounts received from waste paper, old newspapers, printed matter, and twine sold,” capped at \$1,000 excluding postal money orders.²¹ Needless to say, a fourth-class post office was not an entirely lucrative operation and may have brought more headache than opportunity. A 1901 article in the Chester, South Carolina *Lantern* described what some postmasters dealt with when it came to customers:

The fourth-class postmaster is brought into closer relationship with his patrons than the postmaster of a salaried office, and trials and tribulations are about the extent of his pay for this. He is expected to be ready for a social chat with them; to answer all questions; to write many letters for those who cannot write or have left

²⁰ “Moonlight Picnic at Hopewell,” *Mecklenburg Times*, September 6, 1894.

²¹ Lynn Heidelbaugh, “Account Book,” Smithsonian National Postal Museum, <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/collections/object-spotlight/account-book>, accessed April 5, 2023.

spectacles at home; to advise them as to the best papers or magazines for which to subscribe, and so on, and so on. Besides this, he is to blame for all the mail lost or delayed; there are always one or more women who accuse him of opening their letters; there is the pompous citizen, who is very certain that his is careless with his particular mail; and the old fellow whose family take just one paper, and that a monthly, but every day the old fellow would ask if that 'dod-rotted book of his'n had come yet?' and though it never missed showing up at the appointed time, and he took home every copy of it, he would declare that it was the beatenest thing to miss he ever seen, and he'd be blamed if he'd ever take it again.²²

However, these small rural post offices were being replaced with Rural Free Delivery (R. F. D.) routes. Starting in 1863, some cities received free home delivery of mail. However, 65 percent of Americans lived in rural areas in 1890, and Postmasters General sought to expand this service throughout the country. Starting with John Wanamaker in 1889, R. F. D. was pushed as a major policy within the Post Office. In October 1896, Postmaster General William L. Wilson successfully convinced Congress to fund an R. F. D. route in three communities in his home state of West Virginia. The service expanded quickly, and within a year 44 routes operated in 29 states. Countywide R. F. D. was tested in Carroll County, Maryland in December 1899—as a result, the service was made permanent and 63 small post offices in that county were closed.²³

In July 1901 Richard was appointed the Lovelady postmaster, succeeding his brother Sidney. However, he held the office for less than a year. In April 1902 it was announced that Loveland was among fifteen Mecklenburg County post offices that would be replaced with R. F. D. routes at the end of the month. On July 1, 1902, R. F. D. was made permanent across the country.²⁴

²² "Country Postmasters," *Chester (SC) Lantern*, April 19, 1901.

²³ "Rural Free Delivery," United States Postal Service, August 2013, <https://about.usps.com/who/profile/history/rural-free-delivery.htm>, accessed April 5, 2023.

²⁴ "Seven New Free Rural Routes," *Charlotte News*, January 27, 1902; "Post Offices Discontinued," *Daily Bulletin of Orders Affecting the Postal Service* 23, No. 6739 (April 11, 1902), 6739; "Rural Free Delivery."

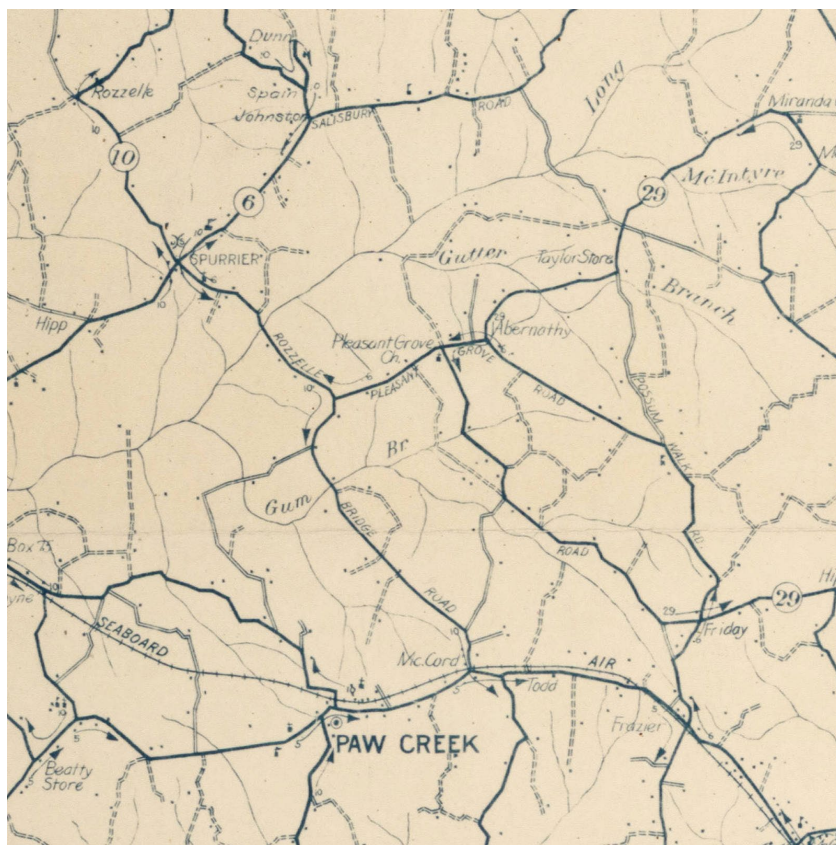


Figure 5 RFD routes in Mecklenburg County in 1912. The Abernethy House is noted as a landmark. 1912 Rural Delivery Routes, Mecklenburg County, NC, East Carolina University Digital Collections, <https://digital.lib.ecu.edu/10811>, accessed April 20, 2023.

The Puckett Family

John Connelly Abernethy died just past midnight on May 13, 1911, at his residence. He was interred in Hopewell Presbyterian Cemetery next to Nancy.²⁵ His will was probated on November 24, 1911, with Sidney and Blythe named executors. John left specific instructions on how his property was to be divided among his heirs. The house, improvements, and 60 acres of land (40 cleared and 20 with timber) went to Alice and Belle while they lived; after their deaths, the land would be equally divided between Francis, Blythe, and Sidney, and they would pay nephew Irvin Harry Abernethy, son of Andrew, \$150 and brothers Sam and Clem \$5 each. Belle and Alice also received all the household and kitchen furniture and sows and hogs. Sidney received all the horses, wagons, and farming tools. The division of land occurred in March 1915 and followed the map enclosed in John's will. Sidney, who lived across the road from his father's house, received 30.45 acres adjacent to his farm. Blythe, who also lived nearby, was deeded 33.5

²⁵ "One of Mecklenburg County's Oldest Citizens Passes," *Charlotte Daily Observer*, May 13, 1911; "Died This Morning in His 90th Year," *Charlotte Evening Chronicle*, May 13, 1911; "Death of Aged Citizen of Paw Creek," *Charlotte News*, May 13, 1911.

acres adjoining his homeplace. Francis received 33.5 acres. Belle had died in May 1914, so Alice received two lots containing the house and sixty acres.²⁶

Alice remained in the house until her death on December 21, 1941. Only one sibling, Sidney, survived her, and he had moved to a dairy farm on Concord Road north of Charlotte shortly after their father's death. The family of nephew J. W. S. McCord had lived with her since at least 1935. In the U. S. Census recorded on April 17, 1940, the household consisted of Alice, J. W. S. and his wife Mary, and their son Robert C. McCord and his family. The McCords had lived in the house since at least 1935. J. W. S. was a farmer earning \$1,000 in 1939, which included more than \$50 of income from wages or salary. Robert operated a gas filling station and had an income of \$2,400 in 1939.²⁷

²⁶ Mecklenburg County Will Book Q, Page 89; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 337, Page 475.

²⁷ 1940 U. S. Census.

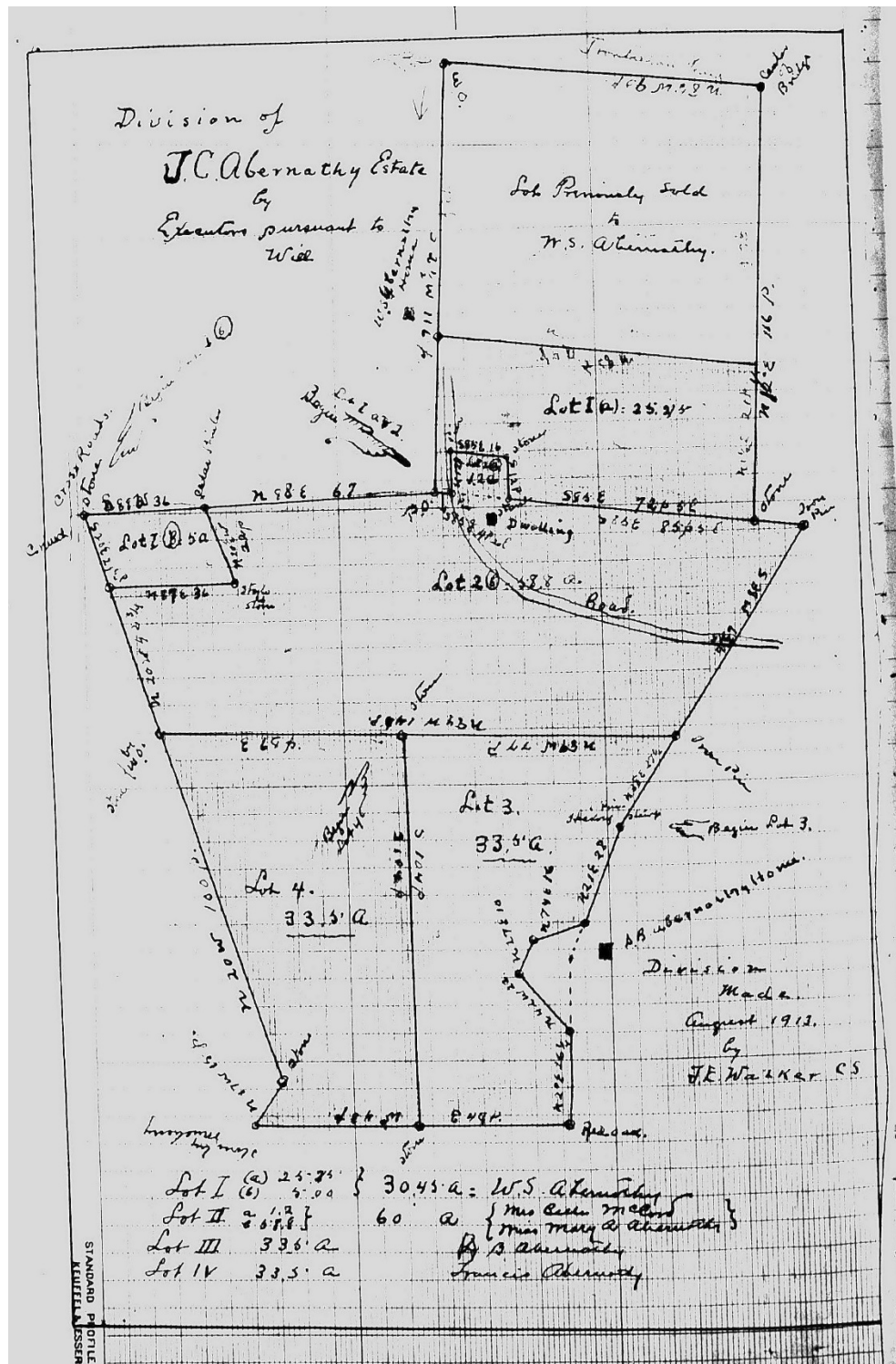


Figure 6 Division of J. C. Abernathy Estate, Mecklenburg County Will Book Q, Page 89.

Following Alice's death, the house changed hands several times over the next few years. In May 1943 the living heirs of John sold 31 acres of land including the house to Robert and

Mary McCord.²⁸ The following year, the McCords sold the property to S. O. and Essie O. Lawing.²⁹ The Lawings then sold it in February 1945 to Floyd and Minnie McClure and C. H. and Jessie McClure, who the following month sold 5.1 acres of land including the house to Hubert and Deazree Puckett.³⁰



Figure 7 The Puckett family, late 1940s. From Robert Joel Puckett, *Dignity Memorial*, <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/charlotte-nc/robert-puckett-10958506>, accessed April 14, 2023.

The Puckett family may have rented the house before purchasing it, as eldest daughter Lib Puckett Primm remembered living in the house in 1942 when she was in sixth grade. The old house had no running water and was in poor condition. Hubert set about to fixing up the home for his large family, which would grow to eleven children—Martha Elizabeth “Lib” (1932), Mary Ann (1933), Rebecca Joan (1935), Susan Joyce (1938), James Wallace (1941), Robert Joel (1942), Alice Jane (1944), twins Betty Linda and William Leonard (1946), Richard L. (1947), and Patricia Gail (1950). A one-story ell at the back of the house was demolished and replaced with a new shed addition. The one-story square front porch, which Lib described as “Colonial,” was also updated, made wider with a concrete pad sheathed in fieldstone and the columns extended to make it two stories. By the time the Pucketts moved

in, any evidence of the former Lovelady post office were gone. However, Lib was very familiar with the house’s history, as descendants of John’s son Richard still lived across Pleasant Grove Road.³¹

²⁸ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1107, Page 368.

²⁹ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1136, Page 99. The Lawings retained property east of the Abernethy House, which they developed into the Pleasant Oaks subdivision in the 1950s.

³⁰ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1141, Page 24; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1141, Page 250.

³¹ Susan V. Mayer telephone interview with Elizabeth “Lib” Puckett Primm, April 18, 2023.



Figure 8 Robert Puckett in front of the Abernethy House, ca. 1962. From Robert Joel Puckett, Dignity Memorial, <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/charlotte-nc/robert-puckett-10958506>, accessed April 14, 2023.

Hubert Puckett died in 1990 at the age of 80. Deazree continued to reside in the house until suffering a major stroke. Though the family tried to keep her home, eventually she moved into a nursing home where she passed in 2000. The family sold the house in October 1999 to Floyd D. and Hazel M. Sanders, who lived nearby. However, no one has resided in the Abernethy House since this time.³²

³² Lib Primm interview.

Architectural Description



Figure 9 From Birdseye View maintained by Mecklenburg County, January 2023.

The John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House is located in the Oakdale community of Paw Creek Township northwest of Charlotte. The Abernethy House is located at the intersection of Pleasant Grove Road and Kelly Road, approximately 0.6 miles east of NC-16 (Brookshire Freeway) and just under two miles from Interstate 485. The Abernethy House is sited at the southwestern corner of its 4.539-acre parcel nearer Kelly Road and facing Pleasant Grove Road. Large shade trees grow in the front yard and smaller trees in the back and side yards. The site is flat with a ditch along Pleasant Grove Road.

The Abernethy House is one of a few remaining vernacular I-houses built in the latter half of the nineteenth century remaining in the present-day Oakdale community. Many of these former family farms have been sold for new-construction single-family homes. The nearby home of John and Nancy's son Richard Blythe Abernethy (MK1488), located across Pleasant Grove Road, is no longer extant. Just down Pleasant Grove Road near the intersection of Oakdale Road was the Hipp House (MK1677), also gone. As the Abernethy House was

located between the communities of Paw Creek and Long Creek, there are some resources which are extant. Along the Mt. Holly-Huntersville Road corridor, approximately two miles north of the Abernethy House, are two homes associated with sons of John and Nancy—the J. Francis Abernethy House (MK1485), an I-house with full-width shed porch built ca. 1850, and the Dr. James Samuel Abernethy House (MK1486), a two-story Folk Victorian house. In the Long Creek community, which the Abernethys would have passed through on their way to Hopewell Presbyterian Church, are two local landmarks: the Thomas and Latitia Gluyas House (MK1496), an I-house built ca. 1865, and the Dr. Walter Pharr Craven House (MK1494), a T-shaped Folk Victorian house built ca. 1888. Likewise, the Paw Creek community located along the Piedmont and Northern Railway retained several contemporary resources. The ca. 1875 George Williamson House (MK1525) on Moores Chapel Road west of Interstate 485 is extant as is the ca. 1880 Moore-Sadler House (MK1526), an I-house with Folk Victorian influence. While some of these resources may hold higher degrees of architectural integrity, they do not have the high degree of associative history embodied within the John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House.



The John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House is a gabled two-story frame I-house supported by stone piers. Its primary mass, which dates to ca. 1867, is three bays wide and one bay deep with brick single-shouldered chimneys approximately centered on either side elevation. It is sheathed in vinyl siding over wood plank siding with a new metal roof. The crawlspace is filled with stacked fieldstone. The flat-roofed front porch, constructed in the 1940s, is two stories and has four square-section wood posts with wood trim at the base and midway covering the joint of the stacked posts. It has a concrete foundation sheathed with fieldstone. The windows of the house are wood sash with multiple panes. The interior of the house was not accessible as all entrances are nailed shut.

The front elevation of the John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House features the two-story porch, centered in its three-bay elevation. The entrance is simple, with an interior wood panel door and exterior louvered wood door with metal screen applied. There are four-light sidelights over inset panels on either side and a five-light transom above. Above the entrance is a 9-over-6 light window, which also comprise each flanking bay on both levels. All windows on this elevation have decorative plank shutters.



The east elevation of the John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House features a brick chimney with single shoulder and stepped base slightly off-center in the elevation. The chimney above the roof appears to have been rebuilt in recent years. There is a single 4-over-4 light window to the left of the chimney on the first level. The gabled end has eave returns and a metal fan at the top in the attic. A heating oil tank is extant to the right of the chimney.



The west elevation of the John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House faces west toward Kelly Road. Accordingly, this elevation is more detailed, with a brick chimney matching its east counterpart and more fenestration—flanking the chimney on the first level are 6-over-6 windows and plank wood shutters imitating windows above. A louvered vent is located in the gable to the right of the chimney. The chimney is in poor condition, with its cap missing and metal straps holding the top together.



The rear elevation of the John Connelly and Nancy Blythe Abernethy House features the one-story shed addition made by the Puckett family in the 1940s and the second story of the primary mass. The second story is three bays wide, with 9-over-6 windows at the right and center bay and a shorter 6-over-6 window at left.



The east elevation of the shed addition has a metal screen door covering the plywood-filled entrance in its center. Two preformed concrete steps with metal railing form its stoop. A metal louvered vent is located at the top left corner of the elevation.

The back elevation of the shed addition is four bays wide. The left bay has a pair of short 6-over-6 windows. The two center bays flank a square CMU chimney with brick base. They consist of a single short 6-over-6 window at left and a pair of larger 6-over-6 windows (with a lower window head) at right. The right bay is a corner porch with an entrance to its left. A wood plank louvered screen forms its west elevation, shielding the entrance from Kelly Road. Preformed concrete steps lead up the porch.



The west elevation of the shed addition has a 6-over-6 window with a window-mount air-conditioning unit. As with the east elevation, a metal louvered vent is located at the top corner adjacent to the primary mass. An entry to the crawlspace, door no longer extant, is located in this elevation. Underneath the shed addition is ductwork and an HVAC unit.



The only additional structure on the property is a brick well with a wood lid. A wood gabled shed with unfinished log posts and asphalt shingles over OSB decking covers the well.

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