

# Charlotte-Mecklenburg

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## Historic Landmarks Commission



**John Eli Brattain House**  
305 South Main Street  
Davidson, North Carolina 28036

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission**  
**Local Landmark Designation Report**  
Prepared by Tommy Warlick

May 2024, Revised September 2024

**ADDRESS OF PROPERTY**

305 South Main Street  
Davidson, North Carolina 28036

**PARCEL ID NUMBER**

00701884

**DEED BOOK & PAGE**

Book 38385, Page 30

**ZONING**

VI

**AMOUNT OF LAND/ACREAGE TO BE DESIGNATED**

Approximately 0.322 acre.

**AD VALOREM TAX APPRAISAL**

The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of up to 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes depending upon the portion(s) of the property designated as the “historic landmark.” As of May 2024, the total appraised value of the parcel is \$663,400.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR DESIGNATION**

The Commission recommends the interior and exterior of the Brattain House and the tax parcel associated with the house for historic designation.

**NAME/ADDRESS OF CURRENT PROPERTY OWNER**

305 Main Holdings LLC  
305 South Main Street  
Davidson, North Carolina 28036

**DESIGNATION REPORT CONTENTS**

This report includes maps and representative photographs of the property, a brief historical sketch and architectural description of the property, an explanatory narrative as to the property’s chain of title, a list of the parameters of the interior designation, and documentation as to why and how the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S. § 160D-945.

## I. Abstract

### Statement of Significance

Despite the many handsome residences and stately structures that comprise Davidson's well-preserved historic district, it is difficult to imagine the passerby who is not immediately smitten with the John Eli Brattain House. Perched for more than 140 years at the corner of South Main and Walnut Streets along the primary corridor into Davidson's downtown, the whimsically adorned Folk Victorian Brattain House remains, according to town historian Mary D. Beaty, "one of the loveliest and best preserved Victorian houses in this entire region," thanks in part to an exterior festooned with lavish icicle-like bargeboard and three-dimensional pendills, decorative brackets, and porches with turned spindles and ornate spandrels. The town's built environment includes other examples of Folk Victorian architecture, but none combine so strikingly the exuberant embellishments characteristic of the late 1800s Carpenter Gothic and Italianate styles as this fanciful Folk Victorian cottage. The uniqueness of its appearance and its longevity of its presence on that well-traveled roadway invests the Brattain House with a familiarity that has made the structure a recognizable and cherished landmark of the local community for generations. The house is the handiwork of its original resident: noted carpenter, woodworker, mechanic, entrepreneur, and civic leader John Eli Brattain. Both the architectural significance and remarkable integrity of the well-preserved Brattain House render the structure an excellent candidate for historic landmark designation.

### Integrity Assessment and Statement

- **Location – HIGH:** The John Eli Brattain House is located at 305 South Main Street in Davidson, North Carolina, its original circa 1883 site of construction. It is prominently situated at the corner of South Main and Walnut Streets along the town's downtown corridor.
- **Design – MODERATE/HIGH:** The Brattain House was designed and constructed by its original occupant, John Eli Brattain, a noted carpenter and woodworker in the Davidson community in the late nineteenth century. Minimal exterior alterations made over fifty years ago – namely, the circa 1960s enclosure of an existing back porch to create a laundry room and the infilled brick pier foundation (completed at least as early as the 1940s) – have since acquired their own architectural significance and historic association with the house and its residents. However, none materially affected such original design elements of the house as its form, space, structure, massing, proportion, scale, color scheme, and elaborate ornamentation. Despite interior alterations made during the latter half of the twentieth century to suit the needs of its residents, the house retains numerous interior elements original to the house's construction. Most significantly, the Brattain House remains remarkably true to its original Folk Victorian architecture style, including its distinctive late nineteenth century Carpenter Gothic and Italianate influences.
- **Setting – HIGH:** The circa 1883 John Eli Brattain House is a contributing structure to the Davidson Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 2008.

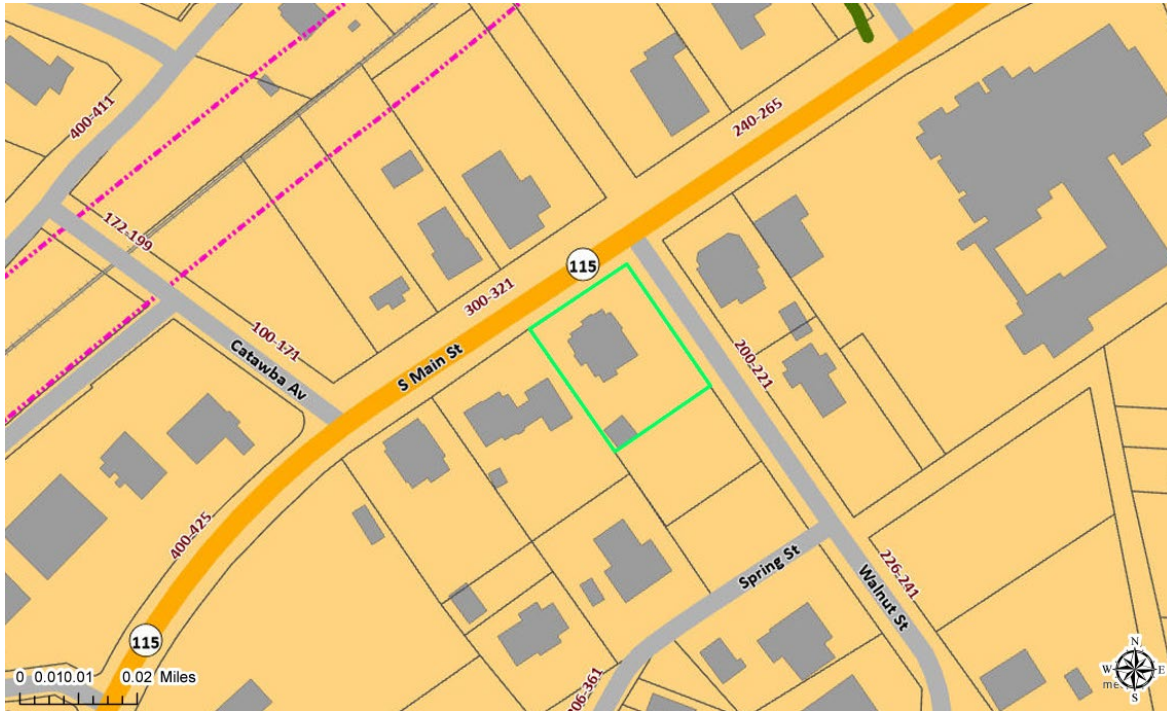
The house stands among several other historically significant late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century residences and structures including within its immediate vicinity the original Davidson Methodist Church (circa 1908), the Archie Brown House (circa 1905; constructed by John Brattain's son William), the Knox-Sloan-Cathey House (circa 1870), and the Reverend Campbell House (circa 1885). Distinguished by its uniquely exuberant ornamentation and its corner lot on South Main and Walnut Streets, the house has been a prominent focal point of Davidson's downtown corridor for more than 140 years.

- **Materials – MODERATE/HIGH:** Despite some interior alterations during the latter half of the twentieth century to suit the needs of its residents, the exterior and interior of the Brattain House maintain high levels of integrity of materials due to the breadth of extant original high-quality materials, including without limitation molded siding, German (or drop) siding, bargeboard ornamentation, wooden floors, plaster walls, crown and baseboard moldings, crystal and brass doorknobs and other door hardware, double-hung windows, window and door surrounds, and two to six paneled solid wood interior doors.
- **Workmanship – HIGH:** John Eli Brattain was a highly regarded carpenter and woodworker in the Davidson community in the late nineteenth century. His skills and high level of workmanship are readily evidenced throughout the Brattain House thanks to such extant elements as the twin entry porches with detailed chamfered posts, turned spindles and ornate spandrels, the jigsaw cut trim work, the decorative cornice-line brackets, the bargeboard icicle cutouts, the curvilinear incised designs in the tympanum of each dormer's pediment, the interior acorn-shaped pendills, and the late Victorian stairway with turned balustrade and heavily turned newel.
- **Feeling – HIGH:** The Brattain House – with its prominent downtown corridor location set among Davidson's other late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century residences and structures and its distinctive decorative elements, the use of high quality materials, and notable skilled workmanship – evokes a feeling of historic significance in terms of Davidson's postbellum development and prominence as a north Mecklenburg County community, the accompanying evolution of its residents' architectural sensibilities and entrepreneurial spirit, and the role of John Eli Brattain as both a carpenter who paid great attention to the detail of the buildings he constructed and an influential member of the local community. The Brattain House maintains a high level of integrity of feeling as an important and recognizable century-old Davidson landmark.
- **Association – HIGH:** The Brattain House maintains a high level of integrity as to its associative history. The house remains primarily associated with its builder and original occupant John Eli Brattain and his family, who lived in the home for nearly sixty years. However, the house is also associated with subsequent residents Connie Emma Williamson Gamble, a 40-year-old widow who singlehandedly raised six children aged 4 to 13 years old while also managing the family farm, and Robert and Isabel Hoyle who, as partners in the Cathey-Hoyle Company with Robert's sister Ruth Cathey and her husband William, mirrored the entrepreneurial spirit of the house's first resident by operating the company's adjacent funeral home, ambulance service, and insurance agency for thirty years.



## II. Maps and Chain of Title

### Mecklenburg County Tax Maps



*Source: Mecklenburg County Land Use and Environmental Services Agency, Polaris 3G database.*

**Chain of Title**

Transaction Date	Grantor	Grantee	Book	Page
9/21/2023	Estate of Isabel S. Hoyle	305 Main Holdings, LLC Identified as Lot No. 8, approx. ¾ acre	38385	30
5/27/1963	William A. & Ruth H. Cathey & Robert T. & Isabel S. Hoyle, all d/b/a Cathey-Hoyle Co.	Robert T. & Isabel S. Hoyle Identified as Lot No. 8, approx. ¾ acre	2436	389
8/29/1958	Anne Williamson	Isabel S. Hoyle (for PIN 00701815)	2011	415
4/20/1956	Connie W., Laura Mae, Mary Emma, Wallace M., & Wayne W. Gamble, Joseph G. & wife Sara C. Gamble, & Hilda L. Gamble Grosse & husband William M. Grosse Jr.	William A. & Ruth H. Cathey & Robert T. Hoyle, all d/b/a Cathey- Hoyle Co. (purchase price \$7,400 for PIN 00701884)	1858	283
2/26/1946	Otto H. & Elsie C. Eargle	Anne Williamson (for PIN 00701815)	1178	132
5/27/1944	Otto H. & Elsie C. Eargle	Connie W., Laura Mae, Joseph G., Mary Emma, Wallace M., Wayne W., & Hilda L. Gamble (purchase price \$4,000 for PIN 00701884)	1125	49
11/2/1943	John James, commissioner	Otto H. Eargle (purchase price \$2,700)	1107	191
9/15/1927	L.C. & Elizabeth Brattain	Janie Manara Brattain Henry, Minnie R. Brattain, & John North Brattain A 1/10 interest in Lot No. 8	685	141
7/26/1880	S.C. & wife Mary Jane Scofield	J.E. Bratain [ <i>sic</i> ] Identified as Lot No. 8, approx. ¾ acre (purchase price \$95)	25	170
5/20/1878	S.J. Johnston & W.P. Williams	S.C. Scofield Identified as Lot Nos. 7 & 8, approx. 1½ acres (purchase price \$175)	19	169

**Chain of Title Explanatory Narrative**

The following narrative is offered in an attempt to clarify the convoluted nature of the chain of title for the subject property.

According to the 1880 deed received by John Eli Brattain (erroneously spelled Bratain on the deed), the ¾ acre Lot No. 8 purchased from S.C. and Mary Jane Scofield had 105 feet of frontage

on South Main Street and measured 300 feet deep. *Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 25, Page 170 (1880)*.

Brattain died in 1911, predeceasing his wife Mary Polly Honeycutt Brattain by approximately fifteen years and leaving her the house and property in his will. “*North Carolina, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1665-1998 for John E. Bratton*,” *Ancestry.com*, accessed May 2, 2024, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9061/images/007641087\\_01142?pId=1524427](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9061/images/007641087_01142?pId=1524427). It appears that after Polly’s 1926 death, Lot No. 8 was subdivided among the couple’s ten surviving children, as evidenced by one of John and Polly’s surviving children and his wife (Lewis Cleveland and Elizabeth Brattain) selling “their one-tenth undivided interest” in Lot No. 8 to three of the other Brattain children (Janie Manara Brattain Henry, Minnie Rosetta Brattain, and John North Brattain) in 1927 for \$450. *Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 685, Page 141 (1927)*. The Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds has no further record of subsequent transfers of interests in Lot No. 8 by or between the Brattain children.

Pursuant to a judgment entered in an early 1940s lawsuit captioned “W. A. Bratton et al. v. Elizabeth Nichols Bratton et al.,” pitting one or more of the Brattain siblings against the then-widowed Elizabeth Brattain on as-yet undiscovered legal claims, local commissioner John James was authorized to sell all interests in Lot No. 8 at a 1943 judicially ordered private sale. Otto H. Eargle purchased the property – still measuring 105 feet by 300 feet and “containing about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre” as surveyed in the original 1880 Scofield/Brattain deed – for \$2,700. *Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 1107, Page 191 (1943)*. On the same day of that purchase, Eargle and his wife Elsie borrowed \$2,500 from the Bank of Davidson. The note and deed of trust granted to the bank to secure that loan introduced further confusion into the chain of title. The document identified the mortgaged property as the same Lot No. 8 purchased at the judicial sale “except the rear 150 feet thereof.” That express exclusion is reflected in the metes and bounds description, giving the measurements of the mortgaged property as 105 feet by 150 feet, rather than the full 300 foot depth of the property that Eargle purchased in the judicial sale. However, the metes and bounds description did not make a corresponding reduction in the estimated acreage of the mortgaged parcel, maintaining the full “about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre” measurement of Lot No. 8 rather than reducing it to the approximate 0.36 acre that 15,750 square feet (105 ft. x 150 ft.) would yield. *Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 1098, Page 239 (1943)*.

The front portion of Lot No. 8 mortgaged by the Eargles included the Brattain House and maintained the property’s original 105 feet of South Main Street frontage. It is currently identified by Parcel ID Number 00701884. The rear portion of Lot No. 8 expressly retained by the Eargles also measured 105 feet by 150 feet, and until recently was identified by Parcel ID Number 00701815. That effective subdivision created two sublots, each containing approximately 0.36 acre.

In 1944, the Eargles sold the encumbered front subplot, including the Brattain House (Parcel ID Number 00701884), to Connie W. Gamble and her six children for \$4,000. Like the mortgage document, the 1944 deed gave the measurements of the transferred front subplot as 105 feet by 150 feet and repeated the same erroneous “about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre” measurement for that smaller subplot. The deed then compounded the error by describing the transferred front subplot as the same lot that Eargle purchased at the 1943 judicial sale “except 155 feet thereof,” thereby increasing the size of the rear subplot by five feet. *Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 1125, Page 49 (1944)*. The Bank of Davidson relinquished the deed of trust on that front lot in February 1946 upon repayment of the



Eargles' loan. *Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 1098, Page 239 (1943) (loan satisfaction notation recorded February 19, 1946).*

Also in February 1946, following their move to Forsyth County, the Eargles sold the rear subplot (Parcel ID Number 00701815) to Anne Williamson, a sister of Connie W. Gamble who lived with Connie in the Brattain House at the time. That 1946 deed to Williamson contained no estimate of the rear subplot's acreage but gave its measurements as 105 feet by 135 feet. The deed then compounded that erroneous measurement by describing Williamson's purchased property as the same lot that Eargle purchased at the 1943 judicial sale less "a tract fronting 105' on Main Street and running back to a depth of 135' which was sold by the grantors herein [Otto and Elsie Eargle] to Connie N. [sic] Gamble and others in 1944." The combination of that reference to the property Eargle purchased at the 1943 judicial sale with the erroneous depth measurement of the front subplot sold to the Gambles (listed in the 1944 Gamble deed as 150 feet) effectively granted Williamson an additional fifteen feet that the Eargles had sold to the Gambles two years prior. *Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 1178, Page 132 (1946) (emphasis added); U.S. Census Bureau, 1950 United States Federal Census, Form P1 – 1950 Census Population and Housing, Town of Davidson, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, E.D. number 60-42, sheet number 4, April 18, 1950, Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/149269402:62308?tid=&pid=&queryId=12c7e8ea-9e5f-4992-9ded-1df47e61e0e5&phsrc=JpO282&phstart=successSource> ("1950 U.S. Census, Dewese Population Schedule").*

The Gamble family sold the front subplot (including the Brattain House) to the Davidson-based Cathey-Hoyle Company in April 1956 for \$7,400. The deed identified the three principals of that company as William A. Cathey, Ruth H. Cathey, and Robert T. Hoyle, and repeated the measurement and acreage errors from the deed that the Gambles received from the Eargles. *Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 1858, Page 283 (1956).* In August 1958, Hoyle's wife Isabel S. Hoyle purchased the rear subplot from Williamson in a deed that included the same measurement and acreage errors stated in the deed Williamson received from the Eargles. That deed also erroneously identified the bounding side street of the sold property as Elm Street, rather than Walnut Street. *Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 2011, Page 415 (1958).* In May 1963, Robert and Isabel Hoyle purchased the front subplot from the Cathey-Hoyle Company (which, by that time, included Isabel as one of the principals of the company) in a deed that continued the measurement and acreage errors from the 1944 Eargle/Gamble deed. *Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 2436, Page 389 (1963).* By deed of 1964, the Hoyles became joint and several owners of the rear subplot, thereby effectively consolidating ownership of what was once the entire  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre Lot No. 8 that John Eli Brattain originally purchased from S.C. and Mary Jane Scofield in 1880. *Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 2543, Page 238 (1964).*

Isabel Hoyle survived Robert and following her death, the present owner (305 Main Holdings, LLC) acquired both the front and rear sublots from her estate. *Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 38385, Page 30 (2023) (front subplot); Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 38404, Page 754 (2023) (1964) (rear subplot).* The 2023 deed for the rear subplot also corrected the "Elm Street" error from the 1958 Williamson/Hoyle deed. On June 25, 2024, the present owner filed a revised plat of the two sublots, showing a slightly reduced front subplot. That front subplot, measuring approximately 0.322 acre and still bearing the Parcel ID Number 00701884, is the sole parcel of land recommended herein for landmark designation.

In mid-2024, the rear subplot was subdivided into two parcels (Parcel ID Numbers 00701888 and 00701889) – each measuring approximately 0.196 acre – and assigned separate street addresses (216 and 222 Walnut Street, respectively). Those two parcels were transferred to Waterside Development HH LLC effective August 14, 2024. *Mecklenburg County Map Book 74, Page 49 (2023)*; *Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 39007, Page 127 (2024)*.

### III. Historical Sketch

The nineteenth century founding and development of the Town of Davidson may be attributed primarily to the 1835 establishment and subsequent growth of Davidson College as an institution of higher learning predicated upon the values of the school’s Presbyterian founders. Prior to 1874, the town remained a small and somewhat isolated college community that began to grow as increasing numbers of students and faculty became associated with the college, requiring both housing and the various goods and services available from the community’s fledging merchant class. Indeed, the school and surrounding community were so inextricably bound that the town itself was known as Davidson College until 1891.<sup>1</sup>

The town’s development centered primarily along Plank Road (later known alternatively as Main Street and Davidson College Highway) – a wood-planked north/south oriented thoroughfare that skirted the west boundary of the evolving college campus – and Concord Road, an east/west oriented street that intersects Main Street, dividing it into North and South Main Street. With its campus situated within the area lying east of Main Street and north of Concord Road, the college acquired and developed much of the property bisected by North Main Street as academic buildings and faculty housing. The town’s business district also developed along North Main Street.<sup>2</sup>

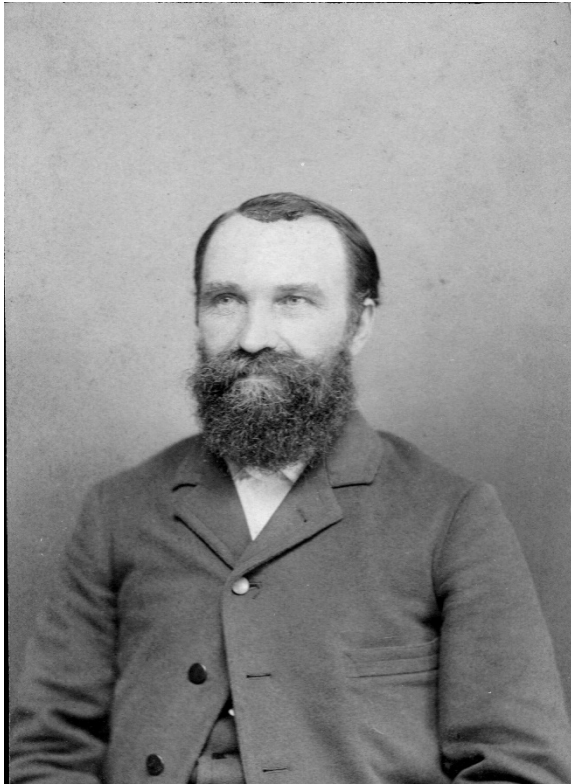
Conversely, South Main Street – which remained farmland owned by the Patrick Johnston family throughout much of the 1860s – developed as a residential area for local families engaged primarily in farming and local business ventures. It was on South Main Street that John Eli Brattain decided to raise his family. Other residents along that same corridor during the latter decades of the nineteenth century included the families of Methodist minister and Davidson’s first mayor William P. Williams, Linden Cotton Mill co-founder and former town mayor James Lee Sloan Jr., prominent commercial building contractor and former town mayor Frank Knox, Stough-Cornelius Mill co-founder and namesake of the town of Cornelius J. B. Cornelius, and Munroe H. Goodrum, the longtime proprietor of Davidson’s most prominent general store M. H. Goodrum and Company. In the 1890s, the North Carolina Medical College (the state’s only medical school for White students during the last decade of the nineteenth century) and its infirmary were also located on South Main Street, less than one block north of the Brattain House.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Payne, “The Evolution of the Built Environment of Davidson, North Carolina” (April 2006), 2, accessed May 2, 2024, <http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Davidson-Contextual-Statement.pdf>; Mary D. Beaty, *Davidson: A History of the Town from 1835 until 1937* (Davidson, NC: Warren Publishing, 1979), 66-67.

<sup>2</sup> Beaty, *Davidson*, 20, 24, 97, 155-56.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 98, 43, 69, 101-02, 103, 100; Stewart Gray and Tommy Warlick, “Local Landmark Designation Report for Stough-Cornelius/Potts Barber Shop Building” (February 2021), 6, accessed May 2, 2024, <http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Stough-Cornelius-Potts-Barber-Shop-Designation-Report.pdf>.



*John Eli and Mary Polly Honeycutt Brattain*  
*Source: John Sparrow, great-grandson of John and Polly Brattain.*

John Eli Brattain (1846-1911) was born in Davidson County, North Carolina, on or about April 12, 1846, the eldest child of Absalom W. (1824-1865) and Elizabeth “Betsy” Craven (1822-1881) Brattain. It should be noted at the outset that the spelling of the “Brattain” surname evolved over time. Following their marriage, John and his wife Mary Polly Honeycutt Brattain (1846-1926) would be alternatively referenced as Brattain, Bratain, and Bratton. Their children ultimately adopted the “Bratton” spelling. However, the “Brattain” spelling is used herein to reference John and Polly as that spelling was used in their respective obituaries and on their headstones in the Davidson College cemetery.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “Life Story of John Eli Bratton,” Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/116029262/person/220150936472/story>; “Life Story of Mary Polly Honeycutt,” Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/116029262/person/220150928486/story>; “Death of Mr. J. E. Brattian [sic] of Davidson,” *Charlotte Observer*, April 26, 1911, 11; “Mrs. John E. Bratton is Buried at Davidson,” *Charlotte Observer*, June 21, 1926, 9; “John Eli Brattain,” Find A Grave, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/25024498/john-eli-brattain>; “Mary Honeycutt Brattain,” Find A Grave, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/25024541/mary-brattain>. John’s actual date of birth is somewhat tenuous. His headstone in the Davidson College Cemetery gives the April 12, 1846, date. “John Eli Brattain,” Find A Grave. But the 1860 U.S. Census listing for the Absalom Bratton family that was recorded on July 31, 1860 (*i.e.*, after what would have been his fourteenth birthday), lists John as thirteen years old. “1860 U.S. Federal Census for John Bratton,” Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7667/images/4237520\\_00141?pId=41500613](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7667/images/4237520_00141?pId=41500613). John’s enlistment



As of the 1850 U.S. Census, John and his parents still lived in Davidson County, where Absalom worked as a blacksmith. By 1860, John had three younger siblings under the age of 5, and the family had relocated to Stanly County, North Carolina. On October 30, 1864, at the age of forty, Absalom enlisted as a private in Company C of the 42nd North Carolina Regiment of the Confederate States Army. Absalom was captured by Union forces on March 10, 1865, during the March 6-10, 1865, Battle of Wyse Fork (also known as the Battle of Kinston) and imprisoned one week later in the 40-acre Point Lookout prison camp in St. Mary's County, Maryland. Point Lookout (officially known as Camp Hoffman) was the largest and considered one of the worst Union prisoner-of-war camps. By the time Absalom arrived, the Point Lookout prisoner population exceeded 15,000 Confederate soldiers, well beyond its original capacity of 1,700 in August 1863. That overcrowding – combined with inadequate shelter, exposure to the elements, scant rations, contaminated water, malaria, and typhoid – resulted in the deaths of approximately 4,000 of the total 50,000 prisoners incarcerated at Point Lookout during its nearly two years of operation, including Absalom on May 4, 1865.<sup>5</sup>

John was not old enough to serve in the Confederate States Army until the Confederate Congress passed the third Conscription Act on February 17, 1864. Pursuant to that Act, the age range for military service – previously ranging between eighteen to forty-five years old – was extended to include all White males aged seventeen to fifty years old. John, aged seventeen as of the passage of that Act, was still two months away from his eighteenth birthday. Like other conscripted seventeen-year-olds, John was assigned to the North Carolina Junior Reserves, first to Company E of the 6th Battalion and then to the 1st Regiment, Company G comprised of boys from Stanly and Caswell Counties. Curiously, however, John had already turned eighteen when he reported for enlistment as a private at Camp Holmes near Raleigh on June 2, 1864. His enlistment records indicate that he was working as a blacksmith prior to reporting for duty. John's company participated in the Stony Creek Raid in Sussex County, Virginia (December 7-12, 1864) and – like his father's company – the Battle of Wyse Fork, during which John was wounded. Aside from his hospitalization in Greensboro on March 11, 1865, no other records concerning his military service are currently available.<sup>6</sup>

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records with the Confederate States Army states his date of birth as on or about April 21, 1847. Matthew M. Brown and Michael W. Coffey eds., *North Carolina Troops 1861-1865: A Roster*, 22 vols. (Raleigh: Office of Archives & History, 2009), 17:202.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Northern Division, Davidson County, North Carolina, August 27, 1850 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1850), 267, Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/12688092:8054>; U.S. Census Bureau, 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Stanly County, North Carolina, July 31, 1860 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1860), 141, Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/41500613:7667>; “Life Story of John Eli Bratton,” Ancestry.com; Weymouth T. Jordan, Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops 1861-1865: A Roster*, 22 vols. (Raleigh: Office of Archives & History, 1985), 10:219; “Life Story of Absalom W. Brattain Bratton,” Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/116029262/person/220150936492/story>; National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, “Point Lookout Confederate Cemetery,” accessed May 2, 2024, [https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/national\\_cemeteries/maryland/point\\_lookout\\_confederate\\_cemetery.html](https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/national_cemeteries/maryland/point_lookout_confederate_cemetery.html).

<sup>6</sup> Brown and Coffey, *North Carolina Troops 1861-1865: A Roster*, 17:201-02, 16-17; Michael W. Coffey, “North Carolina's Youngest Soldiers: The Junior Reserves,” NCPedia, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.ncpedia.org/north-carolina%E2%80%99s-youngest-soldiers>; J. D. Lewis, “1st NC Regiment Junior Reserves,” Carolana, accessed May 2, 2024, [https://www.carolana.com/NC/Civil\\_War/1st\\_nc\\_regiment\\_junior\\_reserves.html](https://www.carolana.com/NC/Civil_War/1st_nc_regiment_junior_reserves.html).

However, in July 1924, John's widow Polly filed a pension application with the State of North Carolina based on John's veteran status. Although her application was approved, some of the information provided by the then-seventy-six-year-old Polly Brattain was likely erroneous. The application states that John enlisted on or about January 1, 1863 (when he would have been sixteen years old) and that he served in Company C of the 42nd North Carolina Regiment (his father's unit). According to the application, the assessed value of the Brattain House and property at that time was less than two thousand dollars.<sup>7</sup>

John and Polly, a native of Stanly County, married in 1868, and the couple took up residence in the Big Lick township of Albemarle. By 1870, John worked in a grist mill while Polly took care of their first child, one-year-old daughter Laura. Laura would not survive to the next federal census.<sup>8</sup>

The family moved to the village of Davidson College in the 1870s. The move may have been precipitated by the 1874 reactivation of the railroad line linking Charlotte with Statesville. The railroad quickly transformed the isolated college town into a commercial and industrial center for rural north Mecklenburg County and south Iredell County. Although the exact date of the Brattain family's move to Davidson College is uncertain, a U.S. patent application filed on December 22, 1875, identifies John as a resident of Davidson College. The application, filed by Urias Crayton of Davidson College, sought legal protection for a "new and Improved Portable Fence." John is listed on the application as a witness to Crayton's sworn statement. Established as Davidson College residents by 1880, that year's U.S. Census identifies four Brattain daughters and one son, all aged twelve or younger: Janie Manara also known as Nora Jane (1869-1940), William Absalom (1870-1960), Mary Elizabeth (1872-1970), Ruth Louise (1875-1962), and Minnie R. (1877-1931). John was working as a mechanic at that time – likely making him an appropriate witness for Crayton's patent application – while Polly was "keeping house."<sup>9</sup>

Within eight weeks of that census report, John and Polly purchased an approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre parcel of land on South Main Street from Stephen C. "Skit" Scofield and his wife Mary Jane for \$95, on which John constructed the Brattain House. The Scofields had acquired that property just two years earlier directly from the Johnston family whose farmlands comprised much of what became Davidson's South Main Street corridor. Skit Scofield was the son of John N. Scofield, the New York-born builder whom the college trustees brought to town from Columbia, South Carolina, in 1858 to serve as general contractor overseeing construction of the college's then-largest campus

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<sup>7</sup> Widow's Application for Pension of Mrs. J. E. Brattain, July 2, 1924, 1901 Confederate Pension Applications, North Carolina Digital Collections, State Archives of North Carolina, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://digital.ncder.gov/Documents/Detail/brattain-j.-e.-mecklenburg-county/1582920?item=1582921>.

<sup>8</sup> "Life Story of John Eli Bratton"; U.S. Census Bureau, 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Big Lick township, Stanly County, North Carolina, June 17, 1870 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1870), 31, Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/20072603:7163>.

<sup>9</sup> Payne, "The Evolution of the Built Environment of Davidson," 2; Urias Crayton, U.S. Patent Application no. 173,592, December 22, 1875, in U.S. Patent Office, *Specifications and Drawings of Patents Issued from the U.S. Patent Office for February, 1876* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876), 776; "Life Story of John Eli Bratton," Ancestry.com; U.S. Census Bureau, 1880 U.S. Federal Census, "Schedule 1 – Inhabitants in Deweese township, in the County of Mecklenburg, State of North Carolina," June 1, 1880 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1880), 1, Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6742/images/4243284-00241?pid=14704214>.

building, the 300-foot long Chambers Building. Skit returned to Davidson College in 1867 with his then-widowed mother Sarah and his siblings to settle down. In addition to operating a highly popular general store on North Main Street from 1870 to 1916, Scofield is also credited for building Davidson’s linen mill and Y.M.C.A. building, working as the local railway station manager, operating a Main Street livery stable, and serving as a town commissioner.<sup>10</sup>

Already recognized as a skilled mechanic, John soon demonstrated his talents for carpentry and woodworking by building the family’s new home himself. Davidson historian Mary D. Beaty describes the Brattain House as “one of the loveliest and best preserved Victorian houses in this entire region.” Often referenced today as the “Icicle Cottage,” the exterior of the house (discussed in greater detail in the Architectural Assessment section below) features handcrafted “gingerbread” pieces. According to Beaty, no two of those pieces are alike.<sup>11</sup>



*Detail of decorative sawnwork and pendills on front elevation of Brattain House.*

Completed in 1883, the design aesthetics and intricate detailing of the Brattain House likely served as a highly visible advertisement within the local community for John’s carpentry services. Within one year of completion of his home, John and fellow Davidson College resident J. D. Irvin were hired to rebuild the Coddle Creek Presbyterian Church in Mooresville that had been destroyed by fire on February 24, 1884. Construction began in early April and the new structure was dedicated on June 29, 1884. To pay Brattain and Irvin for their services, Coddle Creek pastor Reverend John

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<sup>10</sup> Jan Blodgett and Ralph B. Levering, *One Town, Many Voices: A History of Davidson, North Carolina* (Davidson, NC: Davidson Historical Society, 2012), 15-16, 97; J. Marshall Bullock and Catherine W. Bishir, “Scofield, John Nichols (1816-1867),” *North Carolina Architects & Builders: A Biographical Dictionary*, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000109>; Beaty, *Davidson*, 41-42, 150 n14, 178; “Colonel Scofield Passes to His Reward,” *The Davidsonian*, May 9, 1917, 1; Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 25, Page 170 (1880); Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 19, Page 169 (1878).

<sup>11</sup> Beaty, *Davidson*, 193; “Thursday Doors: In My Hometown,” *That Travel Lady In Her Shoes*, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://thecadyluckleedy.com/2021/03/25/thursday-doors-in-my-hometown-25/>.



E. Pressly launched a building fund campaign that began with donations of \$143 from Davidson College and \$100 from the town of Mooresville. Despite the church building’s simplified Italianate design, the decorative flair of its four finial-topped cross-gables and bracketed eaves call to mind the Carpenter Gothic-inspired intricacies of the Brattain House’s detail work. The extant building – added to the National Register of Historic Places in November 1980 – is now the home of the Coddle Creek Associate Reformed Presbyterian congregation.<sup>12</sup>



*Front elevation of Coddle Creek Presbyterian Church, Mooresville*

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<sup>12</sup> “Coddle Creek Church,” *Charlotte Observer*, March 27, 1884, 3; L. M. Allison, Jr., “Coddle Creek History: A Historical Sketch of Coddle Creek Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church,” <https://coddlecreekarp.org/coddle-creek-history>, accessed May 2, 2024; Laura A. W. Phillips, National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form for Coddle Creek Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Session House and Cemetery, property no. 80002864 (February 4, 1980), accessed May 2, 2024, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/47718092>.



*Details of design features of Coddle Creek Presbyterian Church, Mooresville*

Meanwhile, John became more involved in the local community. In the early 1880s, both he and Skit Scofield, along with Robert M. Armour and James Lee Sloan Sr., served as trustees for the Davidson College Academy, a privately-operated school for local children. On September 15, 1881, Armour and his wife Lenora sold Lingle Manor on Glasgow Street (formerly located at the site now occupied by Davidson College’s West Hall) to the four Davidson College Academy trustees for fifty dollars. The building had previously housed the “School for Girls and Boys” operated by Lucy Journey. In an apparent effort to distance herself and her school from the new occupants of Lingle Manor, Ms. Journey ran her first and only local newspaper advertisement for her “School for Girls and Boys” on September 16, 1881, the day after the Davidson College Academy trustees acquired Lingle Manor. That same day, the Davidson College Academy trustees borrowed \$300 on behalf of the school from Sloan and Hanson P. Helper, granting the lenders a mortgage deed for Lingle Manor. Payable on or before September 16, 1883, the school apparently defaulted on the loan, as the four Davidson College Academy trustees appeared before a local justice of the peace on September 14, 1885, to acknowledge their execution of the mortgage deed. On September 1, 1886, almost one year after their foreclosure on Lingle Manor, Sloan and Helper sold the property to Reverend Leonidas Glasgow so that he might relocate his school to the town of Davidson College.<sup>13</sup>

In her history of the town, Beaty references a copy of an 1882 document in Davidson College’s archival collection identifying Davidson College residents pledging financial support for the

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<sup>13</sup> Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 28, Page 24 (1881); Beaty, *Davidson*, 63; “School Notice,” *Charlotte Democrat*, September 16, 1881, 3; Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 44, Page 514 (1881); Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 52, Page 396 (1886); Beaty, *Davidson*, 63-64.

construction of a school. Dated June 7, 1882, the document states, “We the undersigned promise to pay the sums annexed to our names to build an Academy at D. College, N.C.,” followed by a list of seventy individual and business promising a total of \$458 toward that project, in pledges ranging from \$1 to \$100. Beaty surmises that the financial campaign may have been prompted by “the hope of encouraging Mr. Glasgow to move his school to Davidson.” However, the list of pledgees included three of the four trustees of the Davidson College Academy already in operation at Lingle Manor: John (pledging \$2), Scofield (\$1), and Armour (\$5). It seems unlikely that three trustees of that going concern – including Armour, who sold Lingle Manor specifically for the purpose of operating the Academy – would commit financially to the support of a competing school. Perhaps the money was being raised instead for the Davidson College Academy, making all the more curious the school’s subsequent default on the loan provided by Sloan and Helper.<sup>14</sup>



*Lingle Manor, former home of Davidson College Academy.*

*Source: “Lingle Manor,” Davidson College Archives & Special Collections, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://davidsonarchivesandspecialcollections.org/archives/encyclopedia/lingle-manor>.*

In 1890, John was elected to the Town of Davidson College’s Board of Commissioners on which he served until 1899. By then, the town had been through a few name changes before settling on the current Davidson name. In January 1891, John and the five other members of the town council voted to change the town’s name from “Davidson College” to “Hempstead.” The new name remained in place for ten days, until the board met to reconsider their choice. The six men abandoned the Hempstead name and discussed several alternatives, including Canton, Brandon, and even a return to Davidson College. It is unclear when the final decision was made but by April 1891, the body’s minutes routinely referred to the town simply as Davidson. During the 1890s, John also served on the local Board of Alderman and the executive committee for the Deweese township. He also became a member of the Freemasons.<sup>15</sup>

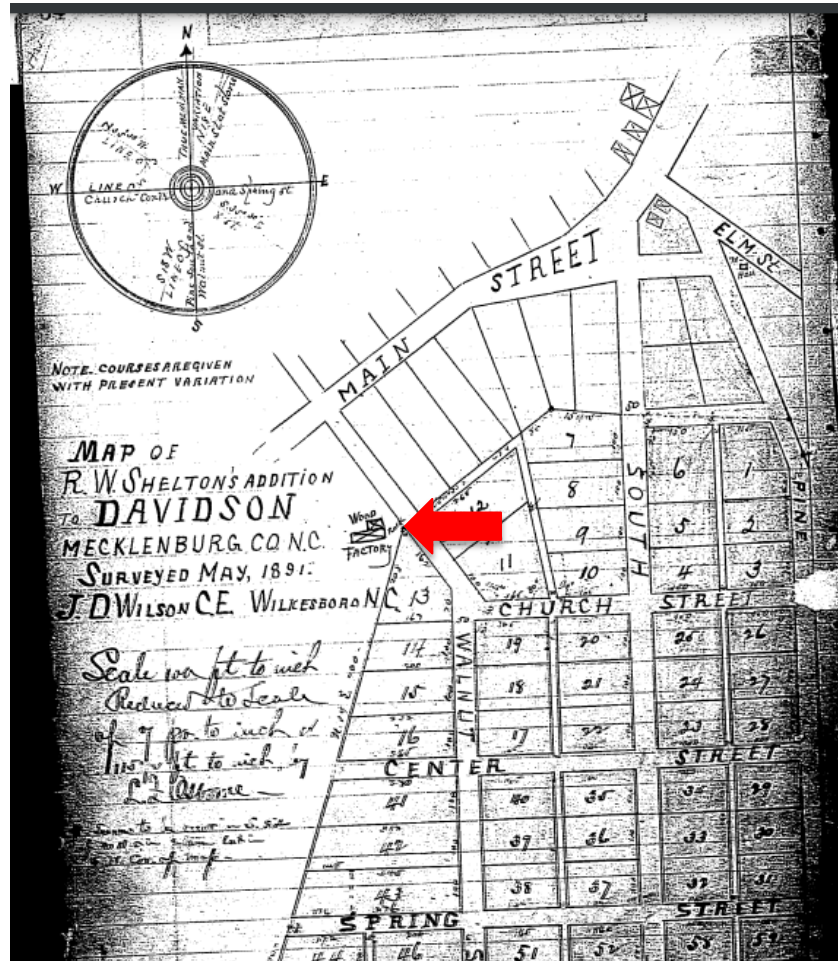
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<sup>14</sup> Beaty, *Davidson*, 63; “Subscribers List, 1882,” Davidson, N.C. Schools Papers collection, collection no. DC0219s, box 9s, folder 30, Archives and Special Collections, Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina.

<sup>15</sup> Beaty, *Davidson*, 178, 66-67; “Municipal Elections,” *Charlotte Democrat*, May 9, 1890, 3; “Municipal Elections,” *Charlotte Democrat*, May 6, 1892, 3; “Municipal Elections,” *Charlotte Democrat*, May 5, 1893, 3; “Official Returns Changes Results,” *Charlotte News*, July 9, 1902, 2; “Davidson Democratic,” *Charlotte Observer*, May 6, 1896, 1. Originally a member of the Freemason’s Mecklenburg Lodge no. 176 in Davidson, John later transferred his



By 1890, the Brattain family had nearly doubled in size with the addition of five more children: Annie Lee (1881-1945), Lewis Cleveland (1884-1933), John North (1887-1965), Joyce (1891-1951), and Sue Henry (1893-1991). The 1900 U.S. Census also noted that John had changed occupations, from mechanic to carpenter. His new profession likely precipitated the construction of a “wood factory” in the rear portion of the Brattain property, as noted in an 1891 survey map of the neighborhood.<sup>16</sup>



Source: Mecklenburg County, North Carolina Map Book 90, Page 34 (1891).

membership to the Williams Lodge (no. 538) of Masons in nearby Cornelius. *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons of North Carolina, One Hundred and Tenth Annual Communication at Raleigh, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, January 12th, 13th and 14th, 1897* (Oxford, NC: Oxford Orphan Asylum Printing Department, 1897), 183, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://archive.org/details/proceedingsofgra1897free>; *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons of North Carolina, One Hundred and Twenty-First Annual Communication at Raleigh, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, January 14, 15 and 16, 1908* (Oxford, NC: Oxford Orphan Asylum Printing Department, 1908), 358, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://archive.org/details/proceedingsofgra1908free/mode/2up>.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 1900 U.S. Federal Census, “Schedule No. 1 – Population,” Deweese Township, Davidson town, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina,” June 4, 1900 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1880), 1, Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7602/images/4117834\\_00302?pId=57467715](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7602/images/4117834_00302?pId=57467715) (“1900 U.S. Census, Deweese Population Schedule”).

There are few additional references to John in available post-1900 primary sources. In 1901, he assisted local law enforcement in the investigation of a Huntersville robbery. John managed to open Postmaster S. L. Mullen's safe after it had been irreparably damaged by burglars during an attempted break-in. With John's help, investigators were able to determine that the would-be criminals had failed to remove any of the postage stamps or \$500 in cash from the safe. In 1907, John became one of the seven founding shareholders of the Davidson Building and Loan Association, formed in 1907 with \$20,000 in capitalization. The entity helped finance mortgage loans for its shareholders until at least February 1942, when notice of a special meeting of its shareholders at Davidson's Civic League Hall was published in local newspapers. That special meeting may have initiated the demise of the Building and Loan, which voluntarily liquidated between March and April of 1942. According to the 1910 U.S. Census, John was no longer working.<sup>17</sup>

John passed away at his home on April 24, 1911, after a two-year battle with Bright's disease, a condition now known as nephritis. An inflammation of the kidneys caused by infection, toxins, or autoimmune conditions, nephritis is the same condition that led to the demise of President Chester Arthur in 1886. Reported as "about 66 years of age" at his death, John's obituary described him as "a prominent character in the industrial and mechanical life of this section of ter-territory [*sic*]" and "a master mechanis [*sic*] of unusual skill and capacity" who owned and operated his own machine shop for several years. The article also noted that John was a "faithful member" of the Methodist Church, presumably the Davidson United Methodist Church built in 1908 directly across South Main Street from the Brattain House. In his will, John bequeathed the Brattain House to Polly.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "That Huntersville Robbery," *Charlotte News*, September 30, 1901, 7; "New Corporations," *Daily Bulletin of the Manufacturers' Record* (Baltimore) 17, no. 71, March 25, 1907, 4, <https://books.google.com/books?id=C-hQAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA25-IA2&lpg=PA25-IA2&dq=%22j.+e.+brattain%22+davidson+nc&source=bl&ots=gpTN0NnuDD&sig=ACfU3U0jE5uRR1FXx3EOjH7Fh-FbhSZ0Cw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewish4GMrL6CAxUBFVkfHdIQD3MQ6AF6BAgbEAM#v=onepage&q=%22j.%20e.%20brattain%22%20davidson%20nc&f=false>; "Statement of Condition – Davidson Building and Loan Association," *Charlotte News*, January 18, 1936, 2; "Personals," *Charlotte News*, February 17, 1942, 4B; "Withdrawals from the Federal Home Loan Bank System Between March 16 and April 15, 1942," *Federal Home Loan Bank Review* 8, no. 3 (May 1942), 263; U.S. Census Bureau, Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 - Population, Deweese Township, Davidson town, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina," April 13, 1910 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1910), Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7884/images/4449185\\_00595?pId=20666842](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7884/images/4449185_00595?pId=20666842) ("1910 U.S. Census, Deweese Population Schedule").

<sup>18</sup> "Death of Mr. J. E. Brattian [*sic*] of Davidson," *Charlotte Daily Observer*, April 26, 1911, 11; James P. O'Hara, "The Treatment of Chronic Bright's Disease," *JAMA* 103, no. 18 (November 1934): 1373; Theodore N. Pappas, "Bright's Disease, Malaria, and Machine Politics: The Story of the Illness of President Chester A. Arthur," *Surgery Journal* 3 (October 2017): 181; "North Carolina, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1665-1998 for John E. Bratton," Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9061/images/007641087\\_01142?pId=1524427](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/9061/images/007641087_01142?pId=1524427).



*The children of John and Polly Brattain, circa 1926.*

*Front row, left to right: Anne, Lewis, John North, Joyce, Sue.*

*Back row, left to right: Janie, William, Mary, Ruth Louise ("Lou"), Minnie.*

*The house in the background appears to be the Archie Brown House, located at 265 South Main Street, constructed by William A. Brattain directly across Walnut Street from the Brattain House.*

*Source: John Sparrow.*

John's three sons apparently inherited their father's mechanical and woodworking aptitude. Eldest son William is credited with building the circa 1905 two-story Queen Anne style house located at 265 South Main Street, directly across Walnut Street from the Brattain House for dry goods merchant Archie Brown. William operated his own woodworking shop in Davidson, but worked primarily as an engineer, starting in 1893 at the age of 23 working at the Cornelius Mill where he ran the steam plant and maintained its equipment. That began William's sixty-five-year career working for prominent Mecklenburg County textile industrialist Charles Worth Johnston (Highland Park Mills, Anchor Mill, Johnson Mill) and at 17-story Johnston Building on Charlotte's South Tryon Street named for his former employer. Middle son Lewis was responsible for the instillation of the engines and machinery during the initial construction of Davidson's Delburg Cotton Mill. And in an apparent hope to continue the family trade, John bequeathed an iron lathe and drill press to his youngest son John North, the only one of John's ten children to receive a specific bequest in John's will.<sup>19</sup>

Following John's death, Polly remained in the Brattain House, sharing it until her own death on June 18, 1926, with her widowed daughter Janie (who had moved back into the family home following the 1893 death of her husband Thomas D. Henry) and Polly's other single daughters Minnie and Sue. After Sue's 1913 marriage to Cyrus Colvin, he and later their son Cyrus Jr. also lived in the Bratton House. Following Polly's death, the three sisters and Cyrus Jr. continued to live in the Brattain House, with Janie identified by the U.S. Census as the head of the household, until Minnie's death in 1931 and Janie's death in 1940.<sup>20</sup>

Those living arrangements and Janie's death in late November 1940 may have contributed to the early 1940s lawsuit "W. A. Bratton et al. v. Elizabeth Nichols Bratton et al." referenced in the "Chain of Title Explanatory Narrative" above that pitted William A. Brattain and others against his widowed sister-in-law Elizabeth Brattain. Research efforts to locate court records associated

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<sup>19</sup> Richard L. Mattson and Frances P. Alexander, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Davidson Historic District, property no. 09000381 (December 1, 2008), accessed May 2, 2024, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/47721292>; Beaty, *Davidson*, 102; "William A. Bratton," *Charlotte Observer*, February 18, 1960, 9A; Jim Scotton, "William Bratton Still Works For Johnstons After 63 Years," *Charlotte News*, April 6, 1956, 15; "Windstorm at Davidson," *Charlotte Observer*, March 20, 1908, 1; "North Carolina, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1665-1998 for John E. Bratton," Ancestry.com.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920 - Population, Deweese Township, Davidson town, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina," January 6 and 7, 1920 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1920), Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6061/images/4384957\\_00848?pId=32626142](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6061/images/4384957_00848?pId=32626142); "Life Story of Janie Manara Bratton," Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/103156989/person/130049073364/story>; 1900 U.S. Census, Deweese Population Schedule; 1910 U.S. Census, Deweese Population Schedule; U.S. Census Bureau, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 - Population, Deweese Township, Davidson town, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina," April 3, 1930 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930), Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6224/images/4608302\\_00444?pId=76173859](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6224/images/4608302_00444?pId=76173859); U.S. Census Bureau, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 - Population, Deweese Township, Davidson town, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina," April 6, 1940 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1940), Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2442/images/m-t0627-02945-00126?pId=152396303>. Neither the 1930 nor 1940 U.S. Census records list Cyrus Sr. as a resident of the Brattain House.



with that lawsuit have been unsuccessful, but the case did result in a 1943 judicially ordered private sale of the Brattain House by local commissioner John James. Otto H. Eargle purchased the property with the highest bid of \$2,700 and promptly subdivided the property into two sublots, each approximately 0.36 acre. He and his wife Elsie sold the front subplot, which included the Brattain House, to Connie Williamson Gamble and her six children (Laura Mae, Joseph Gillespie Jr., Mary Emma, Wallace Melvin, Wayne Williamson, and Hilda Louise) in 1944, and later sold the rear subplot in 1946 to Connie's sister Anne Williamson, who lived with Connie's family in the Brattain House.<sup>21</sup>



*Connie W. Gamble, circa 1940*



*Connie (right) and sister Anne Williamson, circa 1940.*

*Source: "Family Photo Album 1900-2000, Part One: Joseph G. Gamble and Connie Williamson Gamble and Their Descendants," 130-31, Gamble-Goodrum-Cooke Albums, DC0284s, Manuscript Collections, Davidson College Archives and Special Collections ("Gamble Family Album").*

Connie Emma Williamson Gamble (1889-1969) was born in the Iredell County portion of the town of Davidson College. A graduate of Mitchell College, she held various teaching posts in Virginia and North Carolina before her 1915 marriage to Joseph "Joe" Gillespie Gamble Sr. (1870-1930), a farmer in Mecklenburg County's Lemley township. By 1920, the couple had moved to Elm Street in Davidson with their two children. Joe continued to farm, but also served as a mail carrier. He was appointed postmaster for Davidson on June 4, 1924, serving less than one year. The couple had four more children before Joe passed away in February 1930, leaving the 40-year-old Connie to manage the family farm while also raising six children aged 4 to 13 years old on her own in a small house on Jetton Street. With the help of her children, Connie was able to save \$4,000 to

<sup>21</sup> Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 1107, Page 191 (1943); Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 1125, Page 49 (1944); Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 1178, Page 132 (1946); 1950 U.S. Census, Deweese Population Schedule.

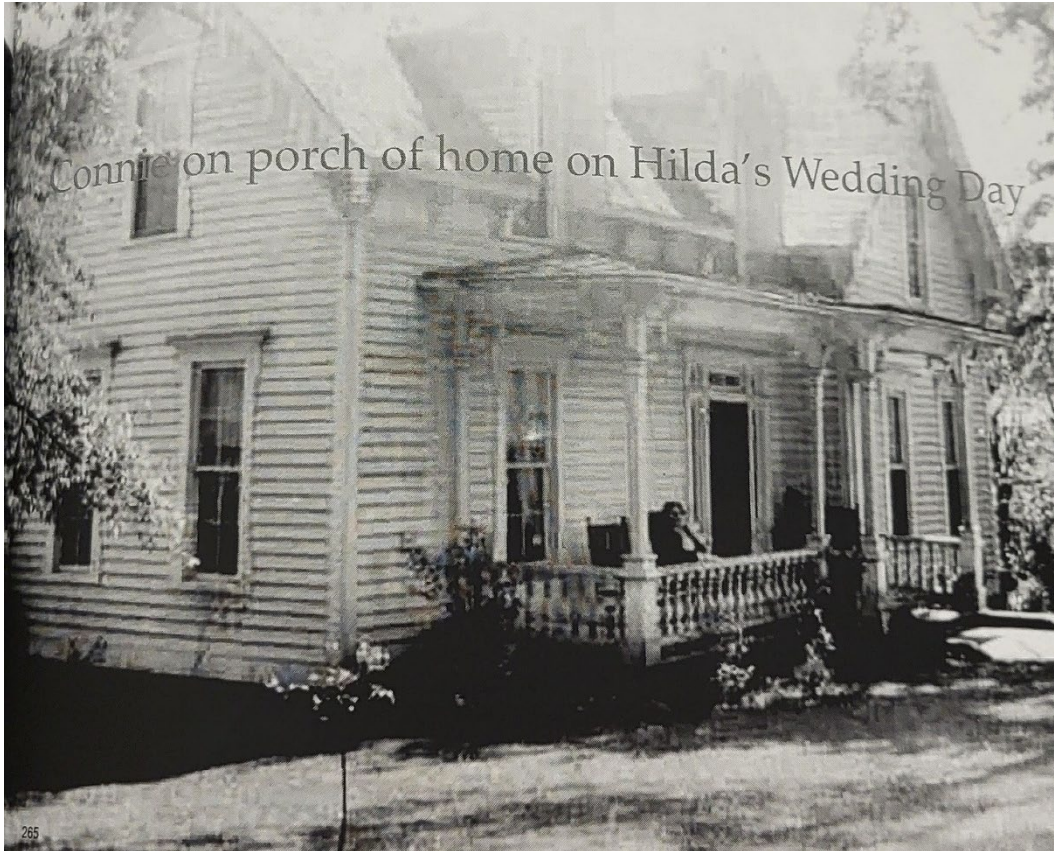
purchase the Brattain House in 1944, where her youngest daughter Hilda was married in June 1946. By 1950, Connie was sharing the Brattain House with sons Wallace (an accountant with a peanut butter factory) and Wayne (a clerical worker in a paper factory), her sister Anne (a payroll clerk at the Carolina Asbestos Company plant, formerly the Linden Cotton Mill), and two male boarders. Connie also rented out rooms to Davidson College students during the 1950s.<sup>22</sup>



*The children of Joseph and Connie Gamble, circa 1940.  
Left to right: Mary, Wallace, Laura, Hilda, Wayne, Joe.  
Source: Gamble Family Album, 122.*

<sup>22</sup> “Life Story of Connie E. Williamson,” Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/9113357/person/6086952134/story>; “Mrs. Connie Williamson Gamble,” *Charlotte Observer*, July 3, 1969, 6D; U.S. Census Bureau, Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 - Population, Lemley Township, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina,” April 13, 1910 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1910), Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7884/images/4449185\\_00673?pId=152852915](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7884/images/4449185_00673?pId=152852915); U.S. Census Bureau, Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920 - Population, Deweese Township, Davidson town, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina,” January 6, 1920 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1920), Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6061/images/4384957\\_00846?pId=32626053](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6061/images/4384957_00846?pId=32626053); Beatty, *Davidson*, 184; *U.S. Appointments of U.S. Postmasters, 1832-1971, Mecklenburg County, NC*, vol. 69 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1973), 377-78, Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/1063388:1932?ssrc=pt&tid=9113357&pid=6086951760>; U.S. Census Bureau, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 - Population, Deweese Township, Davidson town, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina,” April 12, 1930 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930), Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6224/images/4608302\\_00459?pId=76173142](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6224/images/4608302_00459?pId=76173142); Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 1125, Page 49 (1944); “Women’s Activities,” *Charlotte Observer*, June 20, 1946, 5B; U.S. Census Bureau, Seventeenth Census of the United States: 1950 Census of Population and Housing, Town of Davidson, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina,” April 18, 1950 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1950), Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/149269405:62308?tid=&pid=&queryId=e02a63b5-78a0-428b-94da-b661c6e0cf25&phsrc=JpO328&phstart=successSource>; Roberta Hoyle, telephone interview by the author, February 6, 2024 (“Hoyle interview”).





*Connie W. Gamble on the porch of the Brattain House on youngest daughter Hilda's wedding day,  
June 14, 1946.*

*Source: Gamble Family Album, 265.*

In 1956, Connie W. Gamble and her children sold the Brattain House for \$7,400 to William Andrew “Toad” Cathey (1905-1982), his wife Ruth Hoyle Cathey (1905-2000), and Ruth’s brother Robert Turner Hoyle (1914-2000), the three partners of the Cathey-Hoyle Company. Nine years earlier, in 1947, William and Robert founded the company to operate the Cathey-Hoyle funeral home and an insurance agency, initially for the Farm Bureau Insurance Company and later for Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company. That same year, the two men purchased a house at 260 South Main Street, located diagonally across the South Main and Walnut Streets intersection from the Brattain House. The men converted the house (now known as the Knox-Sloan-Cathey House) into the headquarters for the Cathey-Hoyle Company. The renovations substantially altered the façade of the Knox-Sloan-Cathey House, eliminating the gable and replacing the partial porch and balcony with a full-length porch and balcony. The business operations of the funeral home and insurance agency occupied the first floor of the Knox-Sloan-Cathey House and the Cathey family lived on the second floor.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 1858, Page 283 (1956); Cornelius Historic Preservation Commission, “Historic Landmark Designation Staff Report for the Hoyle House,” August 24, 2009, 2, accessed May 2, 2024, <http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Hoyle-House-SR.pdf>; “Agents Appointed,” *Charlotte News*, June 13, 1949, 1B; Randolph Norton, “13 Seeking Seats on County Board,” *Charlotte Observer*, April 30, 1952, 1B, 12B; “Names in Business,” *Charlotte News*, April 29, 1959, 9A; Khalid Hijazi, “The Sloan House,” April



*Robert Hoyle (on right) and William Cathey (on left) in front of the Knox-Sloan-Cathey House prior to renovations, circa late 1940s. The original façade of the house was highly reminiscent of the Folk Victorian style of the nearby Brattain House.*

*Source: Roberta Hoyle, daughter of Robert and Isabel Hoyle.*

A Cornelius, North Carolina, native and 1936 graduate of Duke University in Business Administration, Robert Hoyle worked as an accountant, including on behalf of the Federal Public Housing Administration and as a civilian auditor with the U.S. War Department. In 1948, Robert was sent to Korea as an economist with the U.S. Department of Commerce where he served as a United Nations observer at Korea's first public elections while also maintaining the books for the funeral home business long distance. Upon his return to Davidson in 1949, Robert obtained his insurance license, which he supplemented with a real estate license in 1957. In 1952, he was appointed to a four-year term as a justice of the peace for the Deweese township by North Carolina Governor W. Kerr Scott.<sup>24</sup>

The Cathey-Hoyle Company primarily used the Brattain House as rental property. It is believed that the tenants of the Brattain House during this period included pre-med Davidson College students who worked for the funeral home, including as drivers and attendants for the funeral home's 24-hour-a-day ambulance service. The company operated three ambulances for both emergency and non-emergency calls. Rentals of the Brattain House ended in June 1958 when Robert Hoyle married Isabel Scronce Beam (1924-2023) of Lincolnton, North Carolina, a graduate of King's Business College in Charlotte who was also a young widow raising two children – Edgar

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19, 2012, 7-8, accessed May 2, 2024, <http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Knox-Sloan-Cathey-House-Designation-Report.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Unattributed newspaper clipping, August 24, 1988, "Hoyle, Robert," box 6, folder 28, Davidson Senior Center Records Collection, DC078, Manuscript Collections, Davidson College Archives and Special Collections; "Push Plans For Housing Project at Mount Airy," *Charlotte Observer*, May 13, 1946, 9; "Profiles of the Candidates," *Charlotte News*, May 28, 1952, 9B; "Hoyle Appointed Justice of Peace," *Charlotte Observer*, August 31, 1952, 9B.

and Carlette Beam – from her prior marriage. The newly constituted Hoyle family moved into the Brattain House in the summer of 1958. Two months after the marriage, Isabel purchased the rear subplot from Connie Williamson’s sister Anne. Robert and Isabel welcomed daughter Roberta into the family in 1960. Three years later, the Hoyles formally acquired the Brattain House from the Cathey-Hoyle Company, reuniting the original land holdings of John Eli Brattain.<sup>25</sup>



*The June 18, 1958, wedding of Robert and Isabel, accompanied by Edgar and Carlette Beam.  
Source: Roberta Hoyle.*

The funeral home closed in 1975, but Robert continued to sell insurance until his retirement in 1984. Both Robert and Isabel were active in the Davidson community and the Davidson United Methodist Church. Robert was a charter member and past president of the local Lions Club with forty-four years of perfect attendance, as well as a fifty-year member of the Freemasons. The Hoyle family owned the Brattain House until September 2023. After Robert’s death in 2000, Isabel continued to live in the house until approximately three years before she passed away in February 2023.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Hijazi, “The Sloan House,” 8; Hoyle interview; “Ambulance Plans Open To County,” *Charlotte Observer*, June 29, 1960, 5A; “Brother Officiates,” *Charlotte Observer*, June 22, 1958, 6E; Marriage License of Robert Turner Hoyle and Isabel Scronce Beam, Lincoln County, North Carolina Office of Register of Deeds, June 18, 1958, Ancestry.com, accessed May 2, 2024, [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/60548/images/42091\\_334965-01160?pid=2380196](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/60548/images/42091_334965-01160?pid=2380196); Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 2011, Page 415 (1958); Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 2436, Page 389 (1963).

<sup>26</sup> Unattributed newspaper clipping, August 24, 1988, “Hoyle, Robert,” box 6, folder 28, Davidson Senior Center Records Collection, DC078, Manuscript Collections, Davidson College Archives and Special Collections, Davidson, North Carolina; “Mr. Robert Turner Hoyle,” *Charlotte Observer*, April 14, 2000, 6B; “Isabel S. Hoyle,” Legacy.com, February 9, 2023, accessed May 2, 2024, <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/isabel-hoyle-obituary?id=43053157>; Hoyle interview.



#### IV. Architectural Description

*Written by Laura A. W. Phillips (April 3, 1980) with additions and photos by Tommy Warlick (2024)*

The house at 305 South Main Street, Davidson, North Carolina, was built circa 1883 by John Eli Brattain. Although Davidson's built environment includes other examples of Folk Victorian architecture – such as the Armour-Adams House at 626 North Main Street and the Martin-Worth-Henderson House at 310 Concord Road – none combine so strikingly the exuberant embellishments characteristic of both the Carpenter Gothic and Italianate styles popular during the latter half of the nineteenth century as this fanciful Folk Victorian cottage. In its 2023 Historic Preservation Plan, the town of Davidson singled out the Brattain House as the town's most notable example of the Carpenter Gothic style. Brattain's detailed handiwork also earned the house recognition as a contributing building within the National Register of Historic Places listing for the Davidson Historic District.<sup>27</sup>

The rapid growth of the national railroad system is credited for the spread of the Folk Victorian architectural style from approximately 1870 to 1910. Improved transportation made pre-cut architectural detailing from distant lumber mills, as well as heavy-duty woodworking machinery capable of producing inexpensive Victorian features and detailing, more readily available in local communities. Thanks to other technological advances – including manufactured nails (in lieu of the typical hewn joints that required skilled labor) as well as the mechanical jigsaw and lathe that eased the production of turned porch supports and Queen Anne-like scrollwork and brackets – architectural detailing once available only to elite homeowners became less expensive and more accessible to the general public. The Carpenter Gothic variant developed in the United States due to the need for quickly built houses and the desire for decorative elements. A predominately wood frame form of the masonry and wooden Gothic Revival style, Carpenter Gothic was popularized as a rural residential design primarily by the writings of Alexander Jackson Davis and Andrew Jackson Downing circa 1837 to 1880. Innovations such as the balloon framing technique and the steam powered scroll-saw (making possible the mass production of intricate moldings) prompted numerous pattern books promoting such “country cottages.” Perhaps the most famous example of a Carpenter Gothic style residence is the farmhouse that provides the notable backdrop of Grant Wood's iconic “American Gothic” painting (1930), reportedly based on a similar residence Wood once saw in Eldon, Iowa.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Town of Davidson, “Historic Preservation Plan for the Town of Davidson, North Carolina” (January 2023), 24, accessed May 2, 2024, [https://www.townofdavidsong.org/DocumentCenter/View/12769/Davidson-HP-Plan\\_1-24-23\\_final](https://www.townofdavidsong.org/DocumentCenter/View/12769/Davidson-HP-Plan_1-24-23_final); Mattson and Alexander, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Davidson Historic District, 65.

<sup>28</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Homes*, 2nd ed. (1984; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2020), 398, 270, 280; Payne, “The Evolution of the Built Environment of Davidson, North Carolina,” 10; Norman Tyler, Ilene R. Tyler, and Ted J. Ligibel, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to its History, Principles, and Practice*, 3rd ed. (1994; New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018), 175-76; Old House Web, “Carpenter Gothic, 1840-1870,” accessed May 2, 2014, <https://www.oldhouseweb.com/architecture-and-design/carpenter-gothic-1840-1870.shtml>; Art Institute of Chicago, “American Gothic,” accessed May 2, 2014, <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/6565/american-gothic>.



*“American Gothic” by Grant Wood (1930).*  
*Source: Art Institute of Chicago.*

The Brattain House is representative of the gable front and wing subtype of the Folk Victorian style. Its relatively simple form is embellished with strikingly similar single-story hip-roofed porches on the front and south elevations (each situated to the left of the gabled bay) with turned spindles and ornate spandrels, jigsaw cut trim work, and cornice-line brackets. The elaborate “gingerbread” bargeboard cutouts adorning its steeply pitched gables and detailed window and door surrounds are evocative of the Carpenter Gothic variant of the Gothic Revival style. The Italianate influence is evidenced in the Brattain House’s tall narrow windows, intricately incised window tops crowning the upper half-story windows, decorative brackets beneath the overhanging eaves of the primary and porch roofs, and twin entry porches with detailed chamfered posts.<sup>29</sup>

The Brattain House is situated on the south side of South Main Street, just below the junction of that street with Walnut Street and approximately three blocks from downtown Davidson. Although relatively close to the street, the wood frame and weatherboard house is situated on a well-kept, comfortably landscaped corner lot. A deteriorating freestanding mid-twentieth century two-bay wood frame garage was recently removed from the property.

Directly across South Main Street from the Brattain House lies the original Davidson Methodist Church. The Victorian Gothic Revival style building was built in 1908 to accommodate the ninety-nine former members of Mount Zion United Methodist Church in Cornelius (including the Brattain family) who left to form a new congregation closer to their Davidson homes. Across Walnut Street from the Brattain House at 265 South Main Street is the Archie Brown House, a circa 1905 Queen Anne style house built for Brown by John and Polly’s son William. The Knox-Sloan-Cathey House (circa 1870) at 260 South Main Street, situated diagonally across the South Main and Walnut Street intersection from the Brattain House, served as the headquarters for the Cathey-Hoyle Company.

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<sup>29</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Homes*, 397-98, 267-70, 282-85.

It was there that former Brattain House owner Robert Hoyle worked at the Cathey-Hoyle funeral home and related insurance agency. Immediately adjacent to the south of the Brattain House is the Reverend Campbell House (circa 1885), the former manse of the Davidson Methodist Church.<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps the most unusual, and at the same time intriguing, aspect of the exterior of the Brattain House is the fact that all four elevations are nearly identical, even as to the extensive use of 4-over-4 double-hung sash windows with heavy cornices. Because of the asymmetry and relative intricacy of the design, one does not immediately notice the repetitive nature of the four sides. Only after close observation and several walks around the house does one realize the clever, almost pinwheel-type, continuity of the overall design.

### **Exterior**



*Front (or west) and north elevation.*

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<sup>30</sup> Beaty, *Davidson*, 99-103; Mattson and Alexander, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Davidson Historic District, 64-66.





*Front and south elevation.  
The Archie Brown House built by William Brattain is visible to the left.*

The primary façade of the one-and-one-half-story Brattain House faces west and Main Street. Like the other elevations, it features a gable roof with cross gable on the right-hand bay and twin gabled dormers above the other two bays. All gables are lavishly decorated with stylized icicle sawnwork bargeboards and three-dimensional pendills of the same design at each corner. The bargeboard of the gabled bay enframes a 4-over-4 double-hung sash pedimented window with a crosssetted surround. The curvilinear design in the tympanum of the pediment is repeated above the sash window of each dormer. The overhanging eaves of the roof are accented by decorative sawnwork brackets. Even the plain wall surfaces of this fanciful house are decorative, with the major walls being sheathed in molded siding and wall spaces under the porches being covered with German (or drop) siding.

The hip-roofed porch on the west façade shades both the window of the left bay and the main entrance and projects forward in front of the entrance. In the Italianate manner, the porch is supported by chamfered posts set on square plinths and with sawnwork brackets and turned pendills above the post caps. The placement of the posts is further accented by a cluster of sawnwork brackets under the porch eaves above each post. A heavily turned balustrade connects the posts. While the original front door with arched panels has been replaced with a more simple six-panel door, the original Italianate style entrance surround with its narrow sidelights and transom remains. To the left of the main entrance is a tall, 4-over-4 sash window with crosssetted surround and projecting cornice. To the right of the doorway, as part of the projecting gabled bay, two windows of identical design to the porch window complete the composition of the main façade of the house.





*Right-hand bay of front elevation.*



*Detail of front elevation gabled dormer with illustrative ornamental sawnwork, pendills, and brackets that appear on all four elevations.*





*Front porch and main entrance.*



*Main entrance.*

Moving in a clockwise manner, the other three elevations differ little in their basic design from the west façade. In fact, the upper half-story – with bargeboarded gable and dormers – of each of the other three elevations is identical to that of the west façade. The north elevation has no porch. Instead, the wall surface of the north elevation is punctuated by four identical sash windows of Italianate influence like those on the west façade. The window on the northeast corner (the kitchen window) has been altered so that it is now only about half the length of the others. It is unclear when that window alteration may have taken place; however, given the placement of a kitchen countertop and cabinetry beneath the interior side of that window, it is possible that the alteration was made during the 1970s kitchen renovation.





*North elevation.*



*Brattain House, north and rear elevations, circa 1940s.  
The suited man at the front car is Robert Hoyle's brother-in-law and business partner William Cathey.  
Source: Roberta Hoyle.*





*Right-hand bay (above) and rear dormers (below) of north elevation.*







*Rear elevation.*

The first story of the east, or rear, elevation has been somewhat altered, with the circa 1960s enclosure of a back porch to convert it to a laundry/utility room that provides a rear entrance to the house. That rear entrance is accessed by a slate walkway that splits to lead to a brick stairway (that replaced an earlier set of wooden stairs) comprised of two symmetrical flights ascending to a common intermediate landing before converging into a larger single flight, both added in the late 1960s. The rear entrance utilizes what appears to have been the house's original front door. That door is identical to the side entry door on the house's south elevation. Several of the first-floor 6-over-6 windows were also altered circa 1960s, but the upper half-story gabled 4-over-4 windows remain intact.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Hoyle interview.





*Brick stair and rear entrance into laundry room and back door (above),  
and detail of upper half-story dormer (below).*





The south elevation is only slightly less elaborate than the west façade. It, too, boasts a porch of similar design to that of the primary façade. Although this side porch gives the same overall impression as the west front porch, it is actually somewhat less elaborate. Its posts are turned rather than chamfered, its balustrade is slightly less heavy than that of the main porch, and while the brackets at the head of each post are almost identical to those on the front porch, the cluster of brackets above each post and under the eaves is not present. Like the front porch, the side porch features a window with cross-topped surround and an entrance like that on the front, only in this case the original door with its square, rectangular and round arched panels remains intact. Between the door and main window of the porch, two small windows have been cut into the porch wall. To the right of the porch, the first story of this elevation differs from the others. Here, the projecting bay exhibits a paired window with 4-over-4 sash, all of which is encompassed by a cross-topped surround and a triangular pediment with incised decoration matching that of the window above.



*Front and south elevations.*





*South elevation porch and detail of first floor window (above) and detail of siding and south elevation porch ceiling (below).*







*South elevation entrance.*

*Note the similarities between the doors on the south and rear elevations.*

Other features of the exterior include two interior brick chimneys and a brick pier foundation infilled at least as early as the 1940s with brick in a running bond pattern.<sup>32</sup>



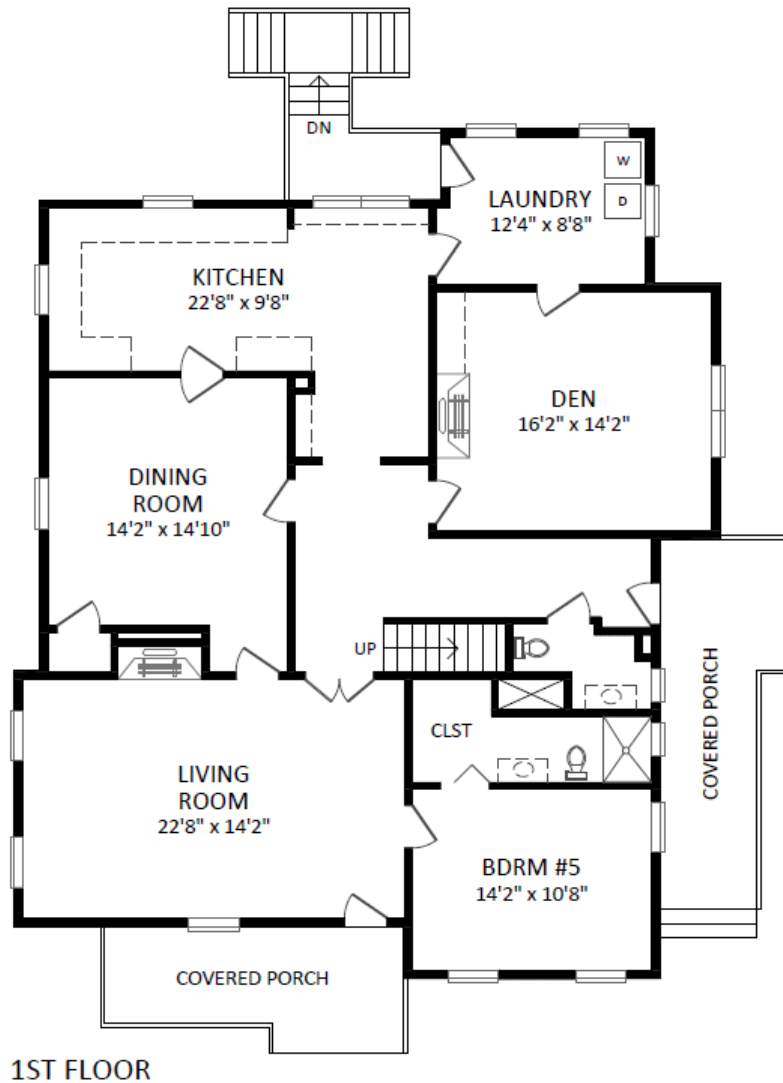
*South elevation foundation.*

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<sup>32</sup> Gamble Family Album, 218.



**Interior (first floor)**

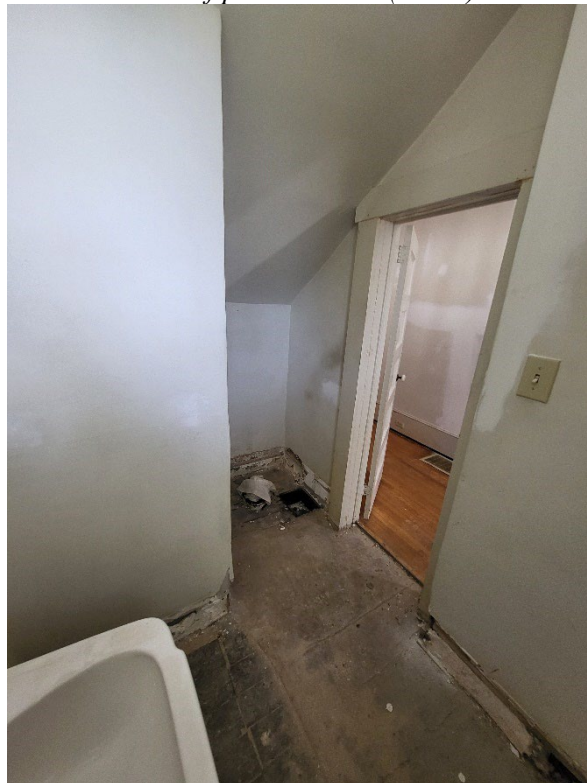


*Floor plan of first floor of Brattain House.*

Many common elements original to the house's construction remain extant throughout its interior, including wooden floors, plaster walls, crown and baseboard moldings, crystal and brass doorknobs and other door hardware, window and door surrounds, and two to six paneled solid wood interior doors. Although the interior underwent several alterations during the latter half of the twentieth century to suit the needs of its residents – most significantly, the kitchen, breakfast room, and laundry room, as well as the first floor's dropped ceiling – numerous original details of interest remain. The south side entrance of the house leads to a transverse stair hall that features a late Victorian stairway with turned balustrade and heavily turned newel. That is the house's sole interior stairway. Two acorn-shaped pendills decorate the corners of the second floor opening above the stairway.



*First floor stair hall from south elevation entrance (above, left) with entry to powder room (above, right); interior of powder room (below).<sup>33</sup>*



<sup>33</sup> The powder room was installed beneath the stairs before the Hoyle family moved into the house in 1958. Hoyle interview.



*First floor stair hall and stairway.  
The doorway in the left foreground leads to the den. The door in the rear center is the south elevation entrance; to its right is the powder room door.  
Picture also shows illustrative original wood floors and crown and baseboard moldings typical throughout the house, as well as the acorn-shaped pendills.*





*Detail of acorn-shaped pendill and molding in first floor stair hall (above) and detail of balustrade and newel (below). The glass paned door in the image below leads to the living room. The six panel wooden door in the background is the main entrance.*





*Living room from northwest corner (above). The center glass paned double doors lead to the stair hall. The doorway to its right leads to Bedroom #5. The glass paned door to the right of the fireplace leads to the dining room. The main entrance is visible from the northeast corner of the living room (below). Both pictures show illustrative molding and door and window surrounds typical throughout the house.*







*Detail of living room gas fireplace, mantel, and marble inset dating back to at least the mid-twentieth century. Roberta Hoyle and Carlette and Ed Beam (below; left to right) in front of living room fireplace, circa 1962.*





*Above: Bedroom #5 from southwest corner; the right door leads to a modern bathroom with no character-defining historical features. Below: Bedroom #5 from living room entrance.*







*Dining room, from kitchen entrance (above). Glass paned door on left leads to living room. The closet in the center background includes illustrative mid-twentieth century built-in organizational shelving (below) typical of several closets throughout the house.*





*Dining room, from living room entrance (above). The four-panel door in the center background leads to the kitchen. The doorway on the right leads into the stair hall. View from stairway (below) shows entrance to dining room (on left) and swinging galley doors to kitchen (on right).*







*Stair hall (above) into the den, with kitchen entry on left. Den (below), with doorway to stair hall in the background and doorway to laundry room on the right.*



The den features an elaborate late Victorian carved wooden mantel, perhaps moved from another room of the house. Each side of the mantel has paired, engaged, spindle-like colonettes, and the pointed-arch frieze is edged with a spool-like beading. Acorn-shaped pendills, echoing the two pendills in the hallway, decorate the center as well as either side of the frieze. Carved roundels and half-roundels complete the design of the mantel.



*Den fireplace and mantel.*

As shown in the image on the next page, the mantel was once covered with multiple layers of paint. In the 1960s, the Hoyle family hired local handyman James Donaldson to restore the den fireplace mantle to its original state and to construct the den's built-in bookshelves. Also shown on the next page is the glass paned door that was the original backdoor of the house. The door now provides entry into the circa 1960s laundry room. The den wall opposite that door once included a second entry into the stair hall that was closed over circa 1960s.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. The Hoyle family shares historian Laura Phillips' belief that the mantel is original to the house. Ibid.





*Photo of den mantel, circa 1952.*

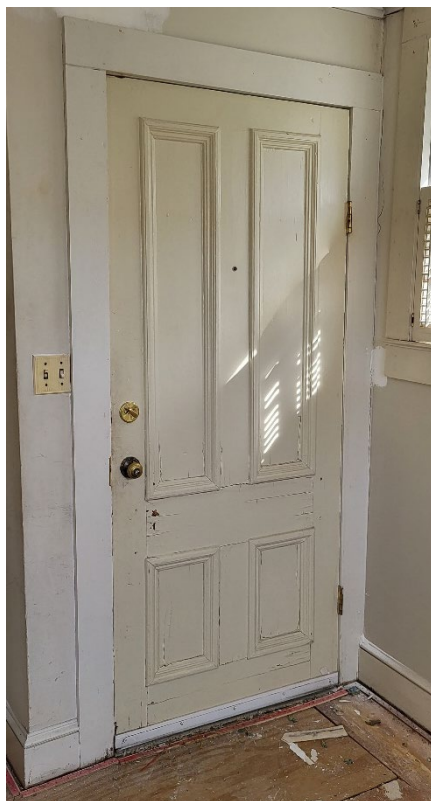
*Source: Gamble Family Album, 344.*

*The house's original backdoor (below) now provides passage from the den to the laundry room.*





*Laundry room (above), rear exterior exit from laundry room (below left),  
and entry from kitchen into laundry room (below right).*





In the 1970s, the Hoyle family modernized the kitchen and breakfast room and replaced the house's oil furnace with central air.<sup>35</sup>

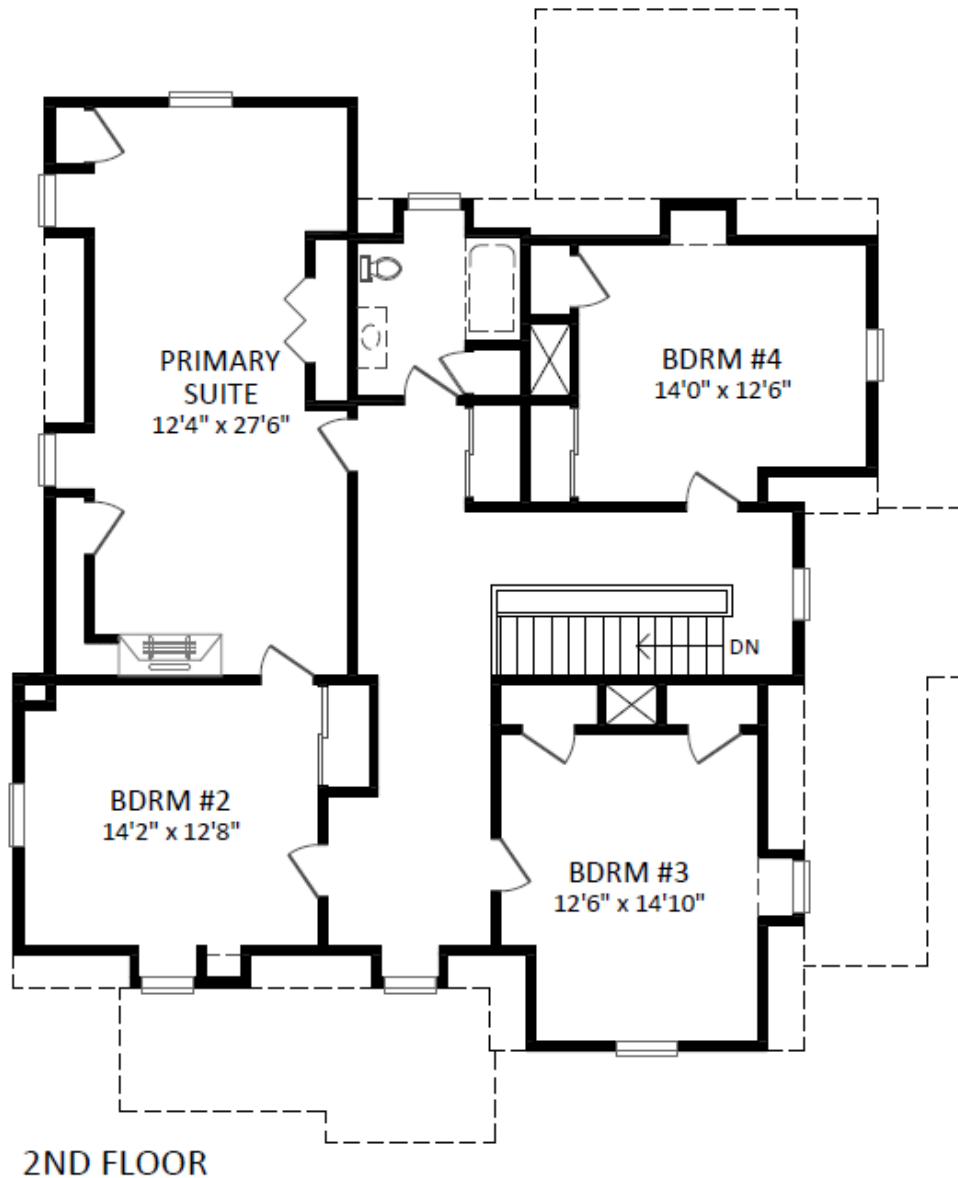


*Kitchen (left) and breakfast room, circa 1970s. The kitchen cabinetry has since been removed.*

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

**Interior (second floor)**



*Floor plan of upper half-story of Brattain House.*

The stairway ascends to a second floor transverse hall that provides access to Bedroom #4 and opens into a wider main hall that runs east to west and includes two unique features. A wooden horizontal ballet barre is mounted along the main hall's north wall. Hopeful that daughters Roberta and Carlette would pursue ballet through programs available at nearby Davidson College, Isabel Hoyle had the barre installed when the girls were still young to encourage practice. At the west end of the main hall is a built-in study desk and sewing table that Roberta Hoyle believes was installed in the late 1960s.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.





*Second floor transverse hall looking north (above, left) and south (above, right). North view shows horizontal ballet barre; detail of barre below. South view shows door to Bedroom #4 on the left.*





*Built-in study desk and sewing table at west end of second floor main hall.  
Entrance to Bedroom #2 on right and to Bedroom #3 on left.*





*Second floor main hall looking west (above, left) and east to bathroom (above, right). Doorway to Primary Suite (below) is on the north hallway wall to the left of the bathroom doorway.*



The Hoyle family occupied the upstairs bedrooms. Bedroom #2 – which is connected to the Primary Suite – was Ed’s bedroom, but he was allowed to move into Bedroom #5 downstairs when he became a teenager. As a comparable benefit, each of the two girls was permitted to redecorate her bedroom upon becoming a teenager, including the addition of the built-in window seats and drawers designed by Ben Wilson of Charlotte. Located at the top of the stairs, Roberta’s room (Bedroom #4) was redone in mid-1970s. Carlette’s room (Bedroom #3) was redecorated in the late 1960s.<sup>37</sup>

The upper walls of the second floor bedrooms slant inward to accommodate the shape of the roof. The interior doors of the second floor vary in design with between two and six panels. Most of the interior doors and windows featured molded surrounds. Bedroom #2 differs from the other bedrooms in two respects: it is the only bedroom with a built-in bookcase, and the door and window surrounds are more ornately detailed.



*Bedroom #4 from southwest corner. Note the built-in window seat and drawers.*

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.





*Bedroom #4, detail of built-in window seat/drawers and corner trim (above, left) and south-facing (above, right) window, and vintage light fixture illustrative of second floor light fixtures (below).*





*Bedroom #3 from northeast (above) and northwest corners (below).  
Note the built-in window seat and drawers and closet shelving.*







*Bedroom #3, view of door and doorway into main hall (above), and vintage light fixture (below).*





*Bedroom #2 from northwest corner (above). The doorway to the left of the closet connects to the Primary Suite; the doorway to the right of the closet leads to the main hall. Bedroom #2 from doorway to Primary Suite (below). Note the built-in bookcase.*







*Bedroom #2, detail of door and window surrounds (above) and built-in bookcase (below).*





*Bedroom #2, looking into Primary Suite (above, left), and glass paned door connecting Primary Suite and Bedroom #2 (above, right).*

The Primary Suite was originally three separate rooms, including a small room that contained the fireplace. The fireplace features an early twentieth century mantel of Colonial Revival influence. Prior to the Hoyle family's 1958 move into the Brattain House, the walls separating those three rooms were removed to make the single larger Primary Suite. The fireplace and chimney remained inoperable prior to and throughout the Hoyles' residency in the house. The tiles surrounding the fireplace were hand painted by Carlette Beam sometime during the 1970s.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.





*Primary Suite from southwest (above) and northeast (below) corners.*





*Primary Suite fireplace and mantle (above),  
and detail of hand painted tiles by Carlette Beam, circa 1970s (below).*







*Primary Suite, left closet on north wall (above). Note original five-panel door with original hardware.  
Interior of left closet (below).*





*Primary Suite, right closet on north wall (above). Note original five-panel door with original hardware.  
Second floor bathroom, entrance (below, left) and closet (below, right) doors.*







*Second floor bathroom, wood lath and plaster wall system (above).  
Illustrative examples of door hardware typical throughout the house (below).*



## **Interior Designation Parameters**

In order to recognize the historical and architectural significance of the John Eli Brattain House, it is recommended that the landmark designation include the entire interior of the house. In support of the request for landmark designation of the interior of the Brattain House, the property owner has provided written consent for interior review of the house pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 160D-947(b). Character-defining features of the interior of the house include the following:

### **John Eli Brattain House**

#### Features Located Throughout the House

Wooden floors

Plaster walls

Crown and baseboard moldings

Crystal and brass doorknobs and other door hardware

Window and door surrounds

Solid wood interior doors of various design with two to six panels

#### Interior: First Floor

##### *Stair Hall and Stairs*

Late Victorian stairway with turned balustrade and heavily turned newel

Two acorn-shaped pendills

##### *Living Room*

Fireplace and mantel

##### *Dining Room*

Closet organizational shelving

##### *Den*

Fireplace and mantel

Glass paned door to laundry room

#### Interior: Second Floor

##### *Main Hall*

Ballet barre

Built-in study desk and sewing table

##### *Bedroom #4*

Built-in window seat and drawers

Vertical wood corner trim

Light fixture

##### *Bedroom #3*

Built-in window seat and drawers

Closet organizational shelving



Light fixture

*Bedroom #2*

Built-in bookshelf

Light fixture

*Primary Suite*

Fireplace and mantel

Closet organizational shelving

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