

## Slavery at the Blythe Homestead

Designation Report Addendum

Olivia Dobbs

July 22, 2023

The Blythe Homestead has a long history of farming, spanning over two hundreds from the 1770s to the present day. The family's history is also intertwined with that of slavery. According to census records, the family did not rely heavily on slavery in the early years. Samuel Blythe (ca. 1727-1795) listed one enslaved person in 1790, while his heir Richard Blythe (d. 1800) listed none.<sup>1</sup>

It was not until Richard's son, Samuel Blythe (ca. 179-1866), took over the homestead that enslaved labor was used more on the farm. The 1830 census lists a Samuel Blythe with six enslaved individuals: two girls under the age of 10, one boy between the ages of 10 and 24, one woman between the ages of 24 and 36, and one man and one woman between the ages of 36 and 55.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly enough, the 1840 census indicates that Samuel Blythe did not enslave any individuals, though wills indicate differently.<sup>3</sup> However, by the 1850 slave schedule, he enslaved 11 persons, and by 1860, it increased to 12.<sup>4</sup>

Samuel's son, Richard Franklin Blythe (1824-1885), also lived on the Blythe Homestead and relied on slave labor. The 1850 slave schedule shows that he enslaved one 13-year-old boy, and the 1860 slave schedule lists three individuals: a 54-year-old woman, a 22-year-old man, and a 19-year-old girl.<sup>5</sup>

There is little evidence of the names of the enslaved. Cross-referencing from the Hopewell Presbyterian church session minutes, we know that Mary, enslaved by Samuel Blythe, baptized her daughter Julia Ann at the church on May 14, 1861.<sup>6</sup> When Samuel's brother-in-law John Nance (1793-1837) died in 1837, he willed an enslaved girl named Melvina to Samuel's wife, Isabella Nance Blythe (1794-1876).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "United States Census, 1790", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHK1-1PH>), entry for Samuel Blythe, 1790; "United States Census, 1790", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHK1-1P4>), entry for Richard Blythe, 1790.

<sup>2</sup> "United States Census, 1830", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHGR-7FL>), entry for Samuel Blythe, 1830. Two Samuel Blythes show up on the 1830 census for Mecklenburg County: one on page 369, and another on page 387. The first enslaved six individuals, while the second enslaved none. Given the near identical number and ages of family members, it is difficult to ascertain which one is the Samuel Blythe of the Blythe Homestead.

<sup>3</sup> "United States Census, 1840", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHYZ-RLK>), entry for Saml Blythe, 1840. Given wills indicating that the Blythes enslaved individuals, this census data is most likely incorrect.

<sup>4</sup> "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1850," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MVC5-47C>), entry for Saml Blythe, 1850; "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1860," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:WK5L-ZKMM>), entry for Saml Blythe, 1860.

<sup>5</sup> "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1850," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MVC5-47C>), entry for R F Blythe, 1850; "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1860", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:WK5L-ZVT2>), entry for R F Blythe, 1860.

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of the Session, May 14, 1861, Hopewell Presbyterian Church (Huntersville, N.C.) Records, J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

<sup>7</sup> Mecklenburg County Will Book E, pg. 158.

Furthermore, a man named Buck Blythe (who later changed his name to William B. Harvell after the Civil War), as well as his parents Charles and Hannah were enslaved by the Blythe family.<sup>8</sup> Harvell was originally willed to Samuel's son, John Nantz Blythe (1830-1896), by the boy's uncle, John Nance. As John Nantz Blythe was still a minor, Harvell was enslaved under his mother's name until the young John came of age.<sup>9</sup> John married Dovey Winslow McCoy (1839-1880) in 1858, and he purchased 203 acres of land in Long Creek Township from A. C. Williamson in 1860.<sup>10</sup> There is no clear record of John taking Harvell to the new tract of land, as John does not show up on the 1860 census or slave schedule. However, there is no individual matching Harvell's age on the 1860 slave schedule for Samuel Blythe, so it is highly likely that John continued to enslave Harvell until the end of the Civil War.<sup>11</sup> In addition to being one of the founding members of Miranda Presbyterian Church, Harvell became a prominent leader in the Black Republican party, and in one notable instance, led a walk out of rural Black farmers during the 1884 Republican convention in Mecklenburg County.<sup>12</sup>

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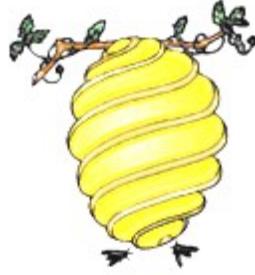
<sup>8</sup> Andre Kearns, "W. B. Harvell: From Slavery to Political Leader," Medium, <https://andrekearns.medium.com/w-b-harvell-from-slavery-to-political-leader-bc977cd156ce>.

<sup>9</sup> Will Book E, pg. 158.

<sup>10</sup> Mecklenburg County Old Deed Book 4, pg. 385.

<sup>11</sup> "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1860," entry for Samuel Blythe.

<sup>12</sup> Kearns, "W. B. Harvell: From Slavery to Political Leader."



## The Blythe Homestead



*This report was written on April 29, 1991*

**1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the Blythe Homestead is located at 16001 Beatties Ford Road, Huntersville, North Carolina.

**2. Name, address and telephone number of the present owners of the property:** The owners of the property are:

Mr. John C. Blythe and Mrs. Helen Blythe (wife)  
16001 Beatties Ford Road  
Huntersville, N. C. 28078

Telephone: (704) 875-6568

*Tax Parcel Numbers: 001-022-19 and 001-021-03*

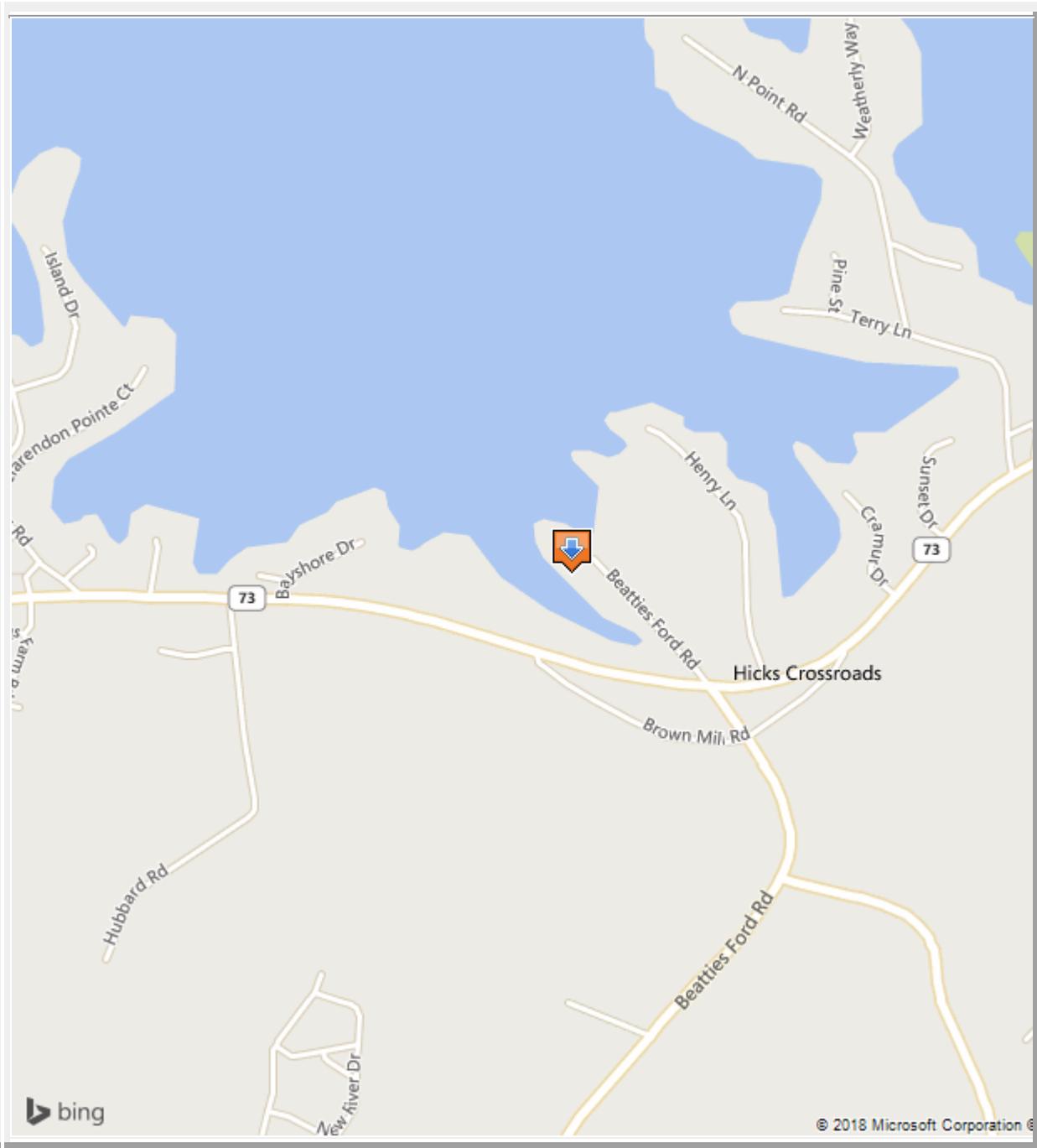
Miss Christine Blythe  
18110 Hwy. 73 West  
Huntersville, N. C. 28078

Telephone: (704) 892-0286

*Tax Parcel Number: 001-022-01*

**3. Representative photographs of the property:** This report contains representative photographs of the property.

**4. A map depicting the location of the property:** This report contains maps which depict the location of the property.



**5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property:** The most recent deed to this property is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 5042 at page 984.

**6. A historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by John C. Blythe, Jr.

**7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description of the property prepared by John C. Blythe, Jr., and Nora M. Black.

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

**a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and /or cultural**

**importance:** The Commission judges that the property known as the Blythe Homestead does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following consideration: 1) the Blythe Homestead is an intact homestead dating back to the land acquisition by Samuel Blythe in 1772; 2) the house located on the Blythe Homestead is architecturally significant as an intact and finely preserved example of rural, vernacular architecture constructed in the mid-19th century; 3) the setting of the Blythe Homestead with its pastoral vista is a reminder of Mecklenburg County's farm past; 4) the outbuildings of the Blythe Homestead represent traditional forms and a variety of construction techniques including a log outbuilding; and 5) the Blythe Homestead, still owned by descendants of Samuel Blythe and including the house, outbuildings, and fields, provides valuable insights into life for early settlers and yeomen farmers of Mecklenburg County.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association: The Commission contends that the architectural description by John C. Blythe, Jr., and Nora M. Black included in this report demonstrates that the Blythe Homestead meets this criterion.

**9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal:** The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owners to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the property which becomes a designated "historic landmark." The current appraised value of the improvements is \$48,340. The current appraised value of the 21.69 acres is \$619,340. The total appraised value of the property is \$667,680. The property is zoned RR and R15.

**Date of Preparation of this report:** 29 April 1991

**Prepared by:** Dr. Dan L. Morrill, in conjunction with Ms. Nora M. Black  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission  
1225 South Caldwell Street, Box D  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28203

Telephone: 704/376-9115

**Note:** *The following historical report was prepared by Mr. John C. Blythe, Jr., under the auspices of members of the Blythe family. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission is not responsible for errors.*

## *Historical Overview*

*Prepared by:  
John C. Blythe, Jr.*

Samuel Blythe (1727?- 1795?) is reported to have immigrated to America from the northern part of Ireland about 1740.<sup>1</sup> In 1772, he acquired from John Wilson four hundred acres of land in Mecklenburg County on the north side of the Catawba River.<sup>2</sup> This is the only listing for Samuel Blythe in the "Grantee Index to Real Estate Conveyances -- Mecklenburg County." Samuel Blythe is believed to have lived in a house that was located on the east side of Beatties Ford Road, less than a mile south of the extant Blythe House.<sup>3</sup>

Of his four hundred acres, Samuel Blythe deeded one hundred acres to his son-in-law Thomas Martin in 1789, one hundred and twenty-five acres to his son Richard Blythe in 1790, and two and one-half acres to the Trustees of Gilead Church in 1791.<sup>4</sup> His will provides for the "dwelling house and plantation whereon I now live" to go to his grandson William Conner at his wife's decease. Samuel Blythe died between 1793 and 1796.<sup>5</sup> Of the property he inherited, William Conner deeded nineteen and three-quarter acres to William Henderson in 1798 and one acre to the Trustees of Gilead Church in 1804.<sup>6</sup>

The one hundred and twenty-five acres deeded to Richard Blythe is believed to be the property on which the Blythe Homestead is located. The 1790 Census shows Richard Blythe as head of a household composed of one male over the age of sixteen and two females.<sup>7</sup> Richard Blythe (1750s?-1800) married Margaret (Peggy) Patton, probably in the 1780s. They had two children, Rebecca (1780s?-1809/18) and Samuel (1790/93?-1866).<sup>8</sup> Richard Blythe died on 31 March 1800,<sup>9</sup> and neither he nor his widow is listed as head of a household in the federal census for that year.

One could surmise that Peggy Blythe moved with her two children to the home of her father, Charles Patton, on Gar Creek in the Hopewell community, by the year 1800, and continued to make her home there. When Rebecca Blythe married Anderson Sadler in 1809, Charles Patton was bondsman.<sup>10</sup> Peggy Blythe was still living and had not remarried in 1818, when she was deeded land from her father's estate.<sup>11</sup>

In May of 1818, Anderson Sadler gave his brother-in-law Samuel Blythe a quitclaim deed for property "*on the East side of Catabaw [sic] river near to Gillead [sic] Meeting house & East of sd. House being about 162 acres owned & possessed by Richard Blyt*"<sup>12</sup> In August of that same year, Joseph McKnitt Alexander sold Samuel Blythe forty acres "*on the Waters of the East side of the Catawba river near "Gillead [sic] Meeting House."* This property was part of a two hundred and fourteen acre tract "subdivided from Samuel Blythe's tract of 400 acres" Alexander had purchased at a sheriff's sale in 1813.<sup>13</sup>

Samuel Blythe (1790/93?- 1866), son of Richard and Peggy Blythe, married Isabella Nantz (1794/5?- 1876) in 1822.<sup>14</sup> The 1830 census lists Samuel Blythe as head of a household; at that time he appears to be living at the Blythe Homestead tract in the Gilead community.<sup>15</sup> It is probable that he either was living in the house occupied by his parents in 1790 or had built a house of his own.<sup>16</sup> Samuel Blythe is reported to have served as postmaster of the Cowan's Ford post office from 10 June 1847 to 8 December 1866.<sup>17</sup> Samuel and Isabella Blythe had seven children. The eldest, Richard Franklin Blythe (1824-1885), married Violet Jane McCoy (1829-1899) in 1848.<sup>18</sup> It is probable that Franklin Blythe built the extant house ca. 1848.<sup>19</sup> Both Samuel and Franklin Blythe were farmers, although the 1850 Census lists Franklin Blythe's occupation as Constable.<sup>20</sup> During their lifetimes, both men acquired and disposed of tracts of land in the area. Undoubtedly, some of this property included parts of the original four hundred acre tract as well as adjacent parcels.<sup>21</sup>

In 1850, Samuel Blythe owned six hundred acres of land, valued at \$1800, about a third of which was improved for farming. He had seven horses, six milch cows, eight other cattle, seven sheep, and forty swine. He produced one hundred bushels of wheat, one thousand bushels of Indian corn, two hundred bushels of oats, and smaller quantities of other products. Ten years later, Samuel Blythe had one hundred and seventy acres of improved land and three hundred and thirty acres of unimproved land with a total cash value of \$3000. R. F. Blythe had one hundred acres valued at \$1200, half of which was improved. Together, they had eleven horses, nine milch cows, three other cattle, fifteen sheep, and thirty swine. The farms produced wheat, corn, oats, cotton, wool, peas and beans, Irish and sweet potatoes, butter, hay, beeswax, and honey.<sup>22</sup>

By 1870, Samuel Blythe had died, and his widow and youngest child, Jim (b. 1839), a Confederate War veteran, were the only persons living in their household.<sup>23</sup> Isabella Blythe died in 1876. Jim Blythe never married and lived with different relatives for periods of time throughout his life. The fate of Samuel and Isabella Blythe's house is not known, although it had disappeared by the early twentieth century.<sup>24</sup>

Franklin and Violet Blythe were the parents of eleven children, ten of whom grew up in the ca. 1848 Blythe House and lived to adulthood. The youngest child, John Clifford Blythe (1878-1936), acquired forty-eight acres of the "old homestead of R. F. Blythe" (including the residence) from his siblings and their spouses in 1902. In 1908 he purchased an adjacent twenty-four acres from the W. C. Hastings estate and married Mary Bailes (1883-1976).<sup>25</sup> Cliff and Mary Blythe reared their five children in the Blythe House. Cliff Blythe, like his father and grandfather, made his living as a farmer, and Mary Blythe continued to operate the farm after her husband's death.

Cliff and Mary Blythe's youngest son, John Charles Blythe (b. 1921) remained at the homestead and carried on the family tradition of operating a farm, in addition to working full time in Charlotte. He discontinued active farming when much of the property was inundated by Lake Norman in the early 1960s. In 1951, J. C. Blythe married Helen Johnson (b. 1922). They reared their son, John C. Blythe, Jr., (b. 1958) at the homestead and continue to live there. Christine Blythe, daughter of Cliff and Mary Blythe, has maintained a residence at the homestead while living elsewhere.

The construction of Lake Norman in the early 1960's claimed 27.1 acres of the farmland associated with the Blythe Homestead. The Blythe House was built on high ground and was spared, but many of the pastures and fields were flooded. At the time of the settlement of the Cliff Blythe estate in 1985, an updated survey revealed that 51.75 acres remained.<sup>26</sup> Three contiguous tracts, comprising 21.69 acres, owned and occupied by J.C., Helen, and Christine Blythe, are proposed for designation as an historic landmark. These three tracts include the house built by R. F. Blythe ca. 1848, the site of the Samuel and Isabella Blythe residence, and associated outbuildings and landscapes. Collectively, this property represents that part of the Blythe property that has neither been developed nor separated from the homesite by the waters of Lake Norman.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> John Brevard Alexander, M.D., *Biographical Sketches of the Early Settlers of the Hopewell Section...* (Charlotte, N.C.; Observer Printing and Publishing House, 1897), p. 62; Annie Blythe Ingram, *Notes on the Pedigree of the Family of Blyth or Blythe of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina: Authentic Facts 1752-1959*(Wadesboro, N.C.: unpublished typescript, 1959), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 8, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Family tradition holds that the original Blythe home was located across the road from Gilead Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, in the same vicinity as the present-day Gilead Church manse.

<sup>4</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 13, pp. 618, 758, and 930; Ingram, pp. 3 and 18.

<sup>5</sup> Mecklenburg County Will Book A, p. 99, transcribed in Ingram, pp. 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 16, p. 123; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 18, p. 118; Ingram, pp. 3, 19. No other deeds of William Connor pertaining to this property have been located.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Ingram, p. 4. This suggests that Richard Blythe was living in a home of his own, most probably on the 125-acre tract he acquired that year from his father. Family tradition and physical evidence indicate that there was an earlier residence a few hundred feet south of the extant (ca. 1848) house. This undoubtedly was the house occupied by Samuel and Isabella Blythe in 1850 and may have been the place where the Richard Blythe family was residing in 1790.

<sup>8</sup> Ingram, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Estate Papers of Richard Blythe. The estate inventory lists 125 acres of land, assorted clothing, and one bedstead, suggesting that the household had been broken up prior to his death. These papers reveal that the estate administrator, William Conner (Richard Blythe's nephew), had also been serving as Richard Blythe's guardian for several years prior to his death.

<sup>10</sup> 1800 Census of Mecklenburg County, p. 552; 1810 Census of Mecklenburg County; 1820 Census of Mecklenburg County, p. 166; Ingram, p. 9. Patton's household in 1800 includes members that could have been Peggy, Rebecca, and Samuel Blythe. Neither Peggy nor Samuel are listed as head of a household in 1810, although they again can be accounted for in the household of Charles Patton. By 1820 Charles Patton had died, and Samuel Blythe was listed as head of a household that appears to be in the same location as the earlier Patton household.

<sup>11</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 19, p. 32.

<sup>12</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 19, p. 32. The difference in acreage between the 125 acres cited in the inventory of Richard Blythe's estate and the 162 acres included in the quitclaim deed has not been accounted for.

<sup>13</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 19, pp. 345, 800. The 1818 deed further states that "Sd. land does not include any claim of sd. Meeting House land & is to be understood as fairly run within the bounds of the land conveyed by sd. Sheriff...." *The 1813 deed describes the property as "Containing 214 acres, exclusive of Gillead [sic] meeting house land."*

<sup>14</sup> Ingram, p. 9. A notation in the records of Hopewell Presbyterian Church states that Isabella Blythe died in August 1876.

<sup>15</sup> 1830 Census of Mecklenburg County, p. 369. Samuel Blythe is listed next to Joseph Walker in the 1830 Census; Joseph was the son of Thomas and Mary Blythe Walker (sister of Richard Blythe), whose property adjoined the original Blythe tract. Other names listed near Samuel Blythe's in the Census are closely associated with the Gilead community.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander states that "Samuel Blythe ... occupied the homestead" (p. 62). Ingram writes that the house [referring to the one standing in 1959 and still extant] was built in the early 1830's by Samuel Blythe." (p. 10) Alexander's use of the word "homestead" may not have referred to a house, but it indicates that Samuel lived on the property he inherited from his father. Ingram likely was mistaken regarding the construction of the extant house by Samuel Blythe in the early 1830s (see footnote 19), but may have been correct in the fact that Samuel Blythe built a house - the one that stood to the south of the extant house and in which he was living in 1850 and 1860.

<sup>17</sup> Ingram, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Ingram, pp. 9-10.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander, p. 62; 1850 Census of Mecklenburg County, pp. 32-33. Alexander writes, "Franklin married Violet McCoy, and built a house in the northern part of the homestead." Because Alexander was a neighbor and about 14 years of age in 1848, he likely had firsthand knowledge of the house's construction. The 1850 census shows R. F. and Violet Blythe living adjacent to (and apparently north of) Samuel and Isabella Blythe. This census information also lends credibility to the supposition that the earlier house on the property was the homestead of Samuel (and possibly Richard) Blythe. Moreover, the form and profile of the R. F. Blythe House bear a striking similarity to the Rozzelle House (about seven miles away), reported to have been built in 1849 (burned and demolished in 1990).

<sup>20</sup> 1850 Census of Mecklenburg County, pp. 32-33; 1860 Census of Mecklenburg County, p. 159.

<sup>21</sup> Grantee and Grantor Indexes to Real Estate Conveyances -Mecklenburg County. Among the parcels sold were two (237.5 ac. & 54.5 ac.) to James and William C. Hastings.

<sup>22</sup> 1850 Agricultural Census of Mecklenburg County, p. 889; 1860 Agricultural Census of Mecklenburg County, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> 1870 Census of Mecklenburg County, p. 166; Ingram, pp. 9, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Records of Hopewell Presbyterian Church; Personal communication of various members of the Blythe family. Mary Bailes Blythe (1883-1976) moved to the Blythe homes as a bride in 1908; the earlier house was gone by that time. Jim Blythe lived with Cliff and Mary Blythe for a period early in their married life; he died and was buried in Raleigh, N.C.

<sup>25</sup> Ingram, pp. 10, 23-31; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 241, p. 573; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 232, p. 570.

<sup>26</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 2267, p. 251; Spratt & Brooks Land Surveying, "Boundary Survey of John C. Blythe Est. Divided" (12 September 1984).

### *Architectural Description*

*Prepared by:*

*Mr. John C. Blythe, Jr. and Ms. Nora M. Black*

The Blythe Homestead is located at the termination of Beatties Ford Road and the south shore of Lake Norman in northern Mecklenburg County. The property is approximately one-tenth of a mile northwest of the intersection of Beatties Ford Road with N.C. Highway 73. The house is

situated on the tax parcel on the southwest side of Beatties Ford Road. The two additional tax parcels that comprise the homestead are located on the northeast side of Beatties Ford Road.

The Blythe House is believed to have been constructed ca. 1848; a large addition was constructed in 1928. Other modifications were made as early as the late 1800s and as recently as 1989. These alterations reflect the size, needs, and financial condition of the family at various times.

As originally built, the facade of the house was oriented to the South, rather than to the East and Beatties Ford Road. This peculiar orientation may be explained by taking into account the earlier Blythe house, located several hundred feet to the South. Family members recall "the old road" which ran from the general vicinity of the earlier house toward the south facade of the ca. 1848 house before curving back toward Beatties Ford Road.

In 1928, Cliff Blythe reoriented the facade to the East. The rear wing of the house was removed, and a new, larger wing was built. A driveway was constructed, leading straight from Beatties Ford Road to the new front entrance. The original facade remains, but is not readily noticeable from Beatties Ford Road. Family members still refer to the south elevation as the "old front" and the east elevation as the "new front."

## **EXTERIOR**

The entire house has siding of lapped horizontal boards painted gray. Window and door surrounds, porch supports, roofline trim, and cornerboards are painted white. The window surrounds are very simple and undecorated; they consist of wide boards with no moldings. Windows vary in each wing, but they are generally composed of 4/4, 6/9, and 6/6 double hung sash.

Neither the roof nor the wall surface is the dominant feature of the house; the view upon approach is dominated by the one-story porch that wraps the house. The gray fiberglass shingle roof has a low pitch over the ca. 1848 wing; the roof pitch is steeper over the ca. 1928 wing. The gable ends have a moderate overhang; the cave overhangs are boxed and have shingle moldings.

The ca. 1848 wing of the Blythe House is a two-story, rectangular, gable-roof building of mortise-and-tenon construction, sheathed in painted weatherboarding. The three-bay facade has a central, single-door entrance on the first story. All windows in this wing are single. Each gable end features a centrally-placed, exterior, brick chimney on a fieldstone foundation. Two windows were located on each story, and the lower end of each bargeboard has sawn ornamentation. The house rested on piers of fieldstone. A dug cellar is located beneath the southwest room. The house as originally constructed was a typical 'I-House.'

The earliest change to this section of the house apparently was the reconstruction of the roof structure. Family members do not recall having heard anything about this alteration, and physical evidence suggests that it occurred quite early. Tell-tale signs of the change are the pole

rafters (rather mortise-and-tenon framing) and the extension of the roof to intersect with the chimneys.

It is presumed that the first-story windows originally held nine-over-nine sash and the upper-story windows held nine-over-six sash. By 1923, the lower sash had been replaced by four-over-four sash. The upper-story sashes had deteriorated by 1966 and were replaced. As many of the original panes as could be salvaged were reused in an attempt to replicate the original windows; however, the contractor installed the sash incorrectly resulting in the present six-over-nine configuration.

The east chimney was coated in plaster about 1928, and the west chimney was painted in an attempt to arrest deterioration of the soft brick. In 1965 the fieldstone piers were replaced with a solid brick foundation. Two of the windows in the west elevation have been removed in order to add a bathroom on each story.

The earliest documented porch, as shown in ca. 1923 photographs, had a hip roof supported by four chamfered posts. Sometime during the 1920s, these posts were replaced by boxed pillars. In 1989, the chamfered posts were replicated and installed at the original locations.

The ca. 1928 wing is probably at least the third structure in this location. It replaced a much smaller wing built by Cliff Blythe about the turn of the century. What preceded that wing is not known, but it is likely that there was a shed wing, gabled ell, or breezeway/kitchen. Older family members recall vague references to a rear porch on the east side of the rear wing, but no one now living remembers such a configuration.

The wing built by Cliff Blythe about the turn of the century was a gable-roof ell containing a dining room and kitchen. It was attached to the east side of the rear, and a porch was located along its west elevation. In 1928, the wing was detached from the house and moved to a site adjacent to the old garage, where it served an outbuilding until it collapsed and was torn down in 1986.

The 1928 addition not only provided much more room for the family, but also acknowledged the owner's desire to have his home face the main road. By this time the old house had been long gone, and there was no need for the long driveway that led to the old (ca. 1848) front of the Blythe House. Cliff and Mary Blythe determined to create a "new" house, facing Beatties Ford Road for the first time. The new wing contained a living room, dining room, kitchen, and back porch on the first story, and a large bedroom upstairs. An interior brick chimney served fireplaces in the living and dining rooms.

To reinforce the creation of the new facade, the old front porch was extended along the entire east elevation, and a driveway, leading in a straight line toward the new front door, was built. The horizontal lines of the new porch served to tie the old and new wings together visually and softened the verticality of the original gable end and chimney that otherwise would have been much more prominent. The strategic placement of trees and other plantings further helped to define this new orientation.

The 1928 wing is of frame construction, sheathed in painted weatherboarding. The gable roofs have boxed cornices, as does the original wing. The windows have four-over-four sash to match that installed earlier in the ca. 1848 wing. All windows are single, with the exception of those in the living and dining room, which are paired. The porch roof is supported by half-pillars on brick piers. In 1989, the porch was extended to wrap around the northeast corner of the house, connecting the roofs of the front and back porches.

## **INTERIOR**

The interior of the house has been modified numerous times and retains little of its original fabric. The placement of the stair along the rear wall of the ca. 1848 wing suggests that the house originally had a hall-and-parlor plan, rather than a central hall with flanking rooms. Physical evidence reveals that the bottom four steps originally opened into the downstairs room; planed board paneling in the stairwell above this level appears to be original. The stair has been enclosed throughout the twentieth century. By 1908, when Mary B. Blythe moved to the house, there was a central hall. This was removed ca. 1950. The original first story floor has been replaced or covered with hardwood. The upper floor of the ca. 1848 wing has original, pine floors. In 1908, the upper story was a single room. Partitions were added soon thereafter. These were removed and new partitions installed in 1966.

The interior of the 1928 wing retains the original brick mantel in the living room. The hardwood floors and beaded ceilings on the first story are intact but obscured. Plaster walls in the living and dining rooms were replaced with sheetrock in 1965, but the picture and crown moldings were replicated. French doors connect these two rooms.

## **SETTING AND OUTBUILDINGS**

Although the Blythe House is the central focus of the Blythe Homestead, it is only one component of the property's significance. Other components include a smokehouse, well house, garage, terraced field, orchard site, fence rows, and sites of several farm buildings.

The smokehouse is a two-story, square-cut log structure located to the West of the house. The logs are joined with half-dovetail notching. The end gables are covered with planks since the logs extend only as high as the ceiling joists. The roof is covered with metal sheets; the open eaves have exposed rafters. Some chinking is still evident between the logs. The first story is probably contemporary with the earliest part of the residence; the second story was added by Cliff Blythe, probably ca. 1900. A frame garage was attached to the north side of the smokehouse in the early twentieth century.

The structure closest to the Blythe House is the well house, a frame building located to the North of the residence. The metal-roofed structure has board siding. Approximately one-half of

the structure is enclosed; the other half is open although roofed. It was probably built by Cliff Blythe in the early twentieth century.

The chicken house was converted into a garage in the early 1960s. This building is located northwest of the well house. It is a frame building with horizontal weatherboarding. Metal roofing covers the gable roof.

Other buildings that once stood on the nominated property include the earlier Blythe House, the ca. 1900 kitchen/dining room wing, baths (at least three), gear room, crib, privy, woodshed, blacksmith shop, and another kitchen. The approximate sites of these are known, but no excavations have been undertaken to evaluate their archaeological potential.

A prominent landscape feature directly across Beatties Ford Road from the Blythe House is a terraced field. The original terracing was accomplished in the early 1930s with assistance from the Civilian Conservation Corps; it was redesigned in the 1950s. This is the last remaining field contiguous to the homesite.

The old orchard was planted to the South of the Blythe House by Cliff Blythe in the early twentieth century. This area includes the site of the earlier Blythe House. Many of the fruit trees were diseased and dying by the 1960s, and J. C. Blythe planted a new orchard of dwarf fruit trees in the corner of the old orchard nearest the Blythe House. The far end of the orchard has been allowed to grow up in pine, dogwood, and cherry laurel trees to screen noise generated by traffic on NC Highway 73.

When Lake Norman flooded the original pastures and fields, the farm buildings became obsolete, as did the fences that separated different areas of the farm. Gradually many of the fences were removed, but their locations are marked in some areas by shrubbery and trees that grew up along them.

Lake Norman forever altered the landscape of the Blythe homestead, but just as the lake has become a part of Mecklenburg County's history, it has become a part of the Blythe Homestead's history. Unlike their nearest neighbors, the Blythes were fortunate that their home was spared from the lake's floodwaters. The family is challenged now with determining the role of the homestead in its changing environment, particularly in the face of mounting development pressures. Just as Cliff and Mary Blythe sought to reorient their home to the Beatties Ford Road in 1928, the present and future generations will seek to adapt the homestead for its new situation, taking care to preserve that which has been left by previous owners.