

Slavery at the John Dinkins House and Lodge

Designation Report Addendum

Olivia Dobbs

July 31, 2023

The John Dinkins House and Lodge has a deep and entrenched history of slavery. John Rufus Dinkins (c. 1745-1811) became one of the most wealthy plantation owners in Mecklenburg County, evident in both the large house built for his family as well as his status as one of the largest enslavers in the county in the early nineteenth century. . He listed 12 enslaved persons in the 1790 census, 17 in the 1800 census, and 21 in 1810.¹

When John died in 1811, his estate included 34 people he enslaved. His will distributed them between his widow, three sons, four daughters, and four grandsons. His widow Polly Dinkins received “old” George, “big” David, Molly, Virginia, and Jenny. His eldest son Joshua (1762-1834) was granted “little” Billy and “little” George, while his other son James (1766-1829) was granted James, Phillis and her three children: Hercules, Cesary (sp.), and Airy. Nelson, “old” Billy, his wife Milly, and their daughter Josie were given to John’s son Frederick (1773-1824), who also inherited the house and lodge from his father. John’s son Joshua Dinkins (1781-1820) was granted the two boys Billy and George. His daughters Mary Smith (1771-1813) and Margaret “Peggy” Henderson received Nathan and the young Henry, respectively. His granddaughter Elizabeth Bowdon was granted Jasper, Kate, and Edish (sp.) and her three children. Grandson Robert Dinkins received the enslaved boy David. Finally, grandsons William H. Dinkins and John D. Dinkins received David, son of Sylvia, Jenny, and Judith and her child. John Dinkins’ estate inventory further lists two enslaved men who were sold outside of the will. Julius was sold to his son Frederick Dinkins, while Ned was sold to Joseph Darnale.²

When John wrote the will in 1809, he expected to leave his daughter Martha Kendrick (1766-?) two enslaved persons, Joe and his wife Sylvia; however, an added note instructs that the enslaved individuals David Neel and Rachel be given to her instead, as John sold Joe and Sylvia.³ Likewise, his grandson John Dinkins received Bob rather than David Henry, who was later sold to Joshua Dinkins for \$475. Granddaughter Elizabeth Bowdon did not inherit Jasper, instead receiving Sarah.⁴

Frederick Dinkins inherited the property from his late father and would continue to operate the plantation with enslaved labor. In 1810 he listed 16 enslaved individuals, and by the next census in 1820, that number increased to 24, of which eight were children under the age of 14.⁵ Frederick would die at the age

¹ United States Census, 1790", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHK1-1R6>), entry for John Dinkins, 1790; "United States Census, 1800", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHRW-9HK>), entry for John Dinkins Sr, 1800; "United States Census, 1810", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHL9-D8L>), entry for John Dinkins, 1810.

² Mecklenburg County Will Book C, pg. 37.

³ Ibid. John Dinkins uses the phrase “disposed of” when talking about the fate of Jo, Sylvia, and Jasper. It is extremely probable that he sold the three individuals.

⁴ This grandson could either refer to John Dinkins III (1807-?), the son of Captain John Dinkins, Jr. (1775-1805), and Mary Polly Irwin (1775-1826), or John Dinkins (1802-1824), the son of Frederick Dinkins and Cynthia Nicey Springs (1784-1817).

⁵ "United States Census, 1810", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHL9-DHN>), entry for Frederick Dinkins, 1810; "United States Census, 1820", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XHGH-ZQ4>), Entry for Fredrick Dinkins, 1820.

of fifty in 1824 without a will. John Springs would then become executor of his estate and manage the labor of the individuals enslaved by the Dinkins family. Springs would hire out the enslaved on a yearly basis, and he would advertise the sales in the *Charlotte Journal*.⁶ According to the estate records, 12 enslaved individuals were given to Frederick's minor heirs; hiring bills from 1826 to 1834 list their names as Jack, Henry, John, Sam, Peggy, Betty, Rhody, Esther, Hetty, Ben, Sally, and Milly.⁷

The hiring receipts also offer an interesting glimpse into the lives of Rhody, Peggy, Esther, and Betty. Fees for midwife services indicate that the four women gave birth between the years 1826 and 1829. The receipts do not make clear who performed the services, but they do provide the names of two doctors: Dr. John M. Harris (1797-1848) and Dr. Pinkney Caldwell (1802-1865). It was not uncommon for white doctors to attend to the enslaved, as many saw it as an opportunity to conduct medical research on enslaved women's reproductive capabilities, though we cannot say for certain what their motives were.⁸ In instances where no doctor was listed with the midwifery fee, it is highly likely that other enslaved women acted as midwives. They attained their medical knowledge from observing white midwives, doctors, and, most importantly, other enslaved women.⁹

Peggy had at least four children: she had two children by 1826, and a burial fee in 1829 indicates that one passed away that year. The 1831 bill states that Peggy had a son. Midwife fees for Peggy appear on the 1830 and 1831 receipts, and the hiring bill in 1832 shows that she has two children, though the next year she is only listed as having one. Due to no other burial fees being present, it is probable that her two other children were either not rented for the year or sold entirely.¹⁰

Betty had at least four children in total. By 1829 she was listed as having three children. A midwife fee appears on a receipt for 1830, indicating the birth of another child. Curiously, the 1831 bill lists only her and her two children, which then increases to four in the 1832 bill. There are no midwife fees to corroborate the increase in children. A burial fee in 1833 indicates that unfortunately one of Betty's children died that year.¹¹

Rhody had at least two children. There are no midwife fees connected to her, but the 1826 bill says she was hired out with her two children. The bills in 1830 and 1832 both list her as having one child; similar to Peggy's case, her other child may have been sold. In 1833, Rhody is listed with Amanda, who may be her child.¹²

Esther had at least one child. There was a midwife fee for January 1833, and the later hiring bills show that she was hired out with her child.¹³

⁶ John Springs, "Hiring," *Charlotte Journal*, November 15, 1832; John Springs, "Negro Hiring," *Charlotte Journal*, December 10, 1833.

⁷ "North Carolina Estate Files, 1663-1979," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-897J-YWWK>), Frederick Dinkins, 1824, citing Mecklenburg, North Carolina, United States, State Archives, Raleigh, FHL microfilm 1,993,981.

⁸ Deirdre Cooper Owens, "Black Women's Experiences in Slavery and Medicine," in *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 46-47.

⁹ Sara Collini, "The Labors of Enslaved Midwives in Revolutionary Virginia," in *Women in the American Revolution: Gender, Politics, and the Domestic World*, edited by Barbara B. Oberg (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019): 22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvfc56hw.6>.

¹⁰ "North Carolina Estate Files, 1663-1979," Frederick Dinkins, 1824.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

The ownership of the Dinkins House and Lodge remains unclear between the years 1834 and 1855. After Frederick Dinkins' death in 1824, the property was granted to his widow Sarah Dinkins (1788-1850). An advertisement in the *Charlotte Journal* on November 11, 1833 lists the property for sale, and if there were no prospective buyers, it would be leased for at least five years.¹⁴ There are no records of someone purchasing the land, thus it is safe to assume that it continued to be leased for the next two decades.

In 1855, John Milton Williamson (born 1813) bought the land from David R. Dunlap.¹⁵ Before he bought the property, Williamson listed four enslaved individuals on the 1850 slave schedule: a 25-year-old man, a 22-year-old woman, a 1-year-old girl, and a 1-month-old girl.¹⁶ However, his name does not appear on the 1860 slave schedule, so it is unclear whether the property continued to see the use of enslaved labor under Williamson's ownership.

¹⁴ "Land for Sale or Lease," *Charlotte Journal*, November 11, 1833.

¹⁵ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 6, p. 588.

¹⁶ "United States Census (Slave Schedule), 1850," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MVC5-71B>), entry for Jno Williamson, 1850.

The John Dinkins House and Lodge



This report was written on July 26, 1993

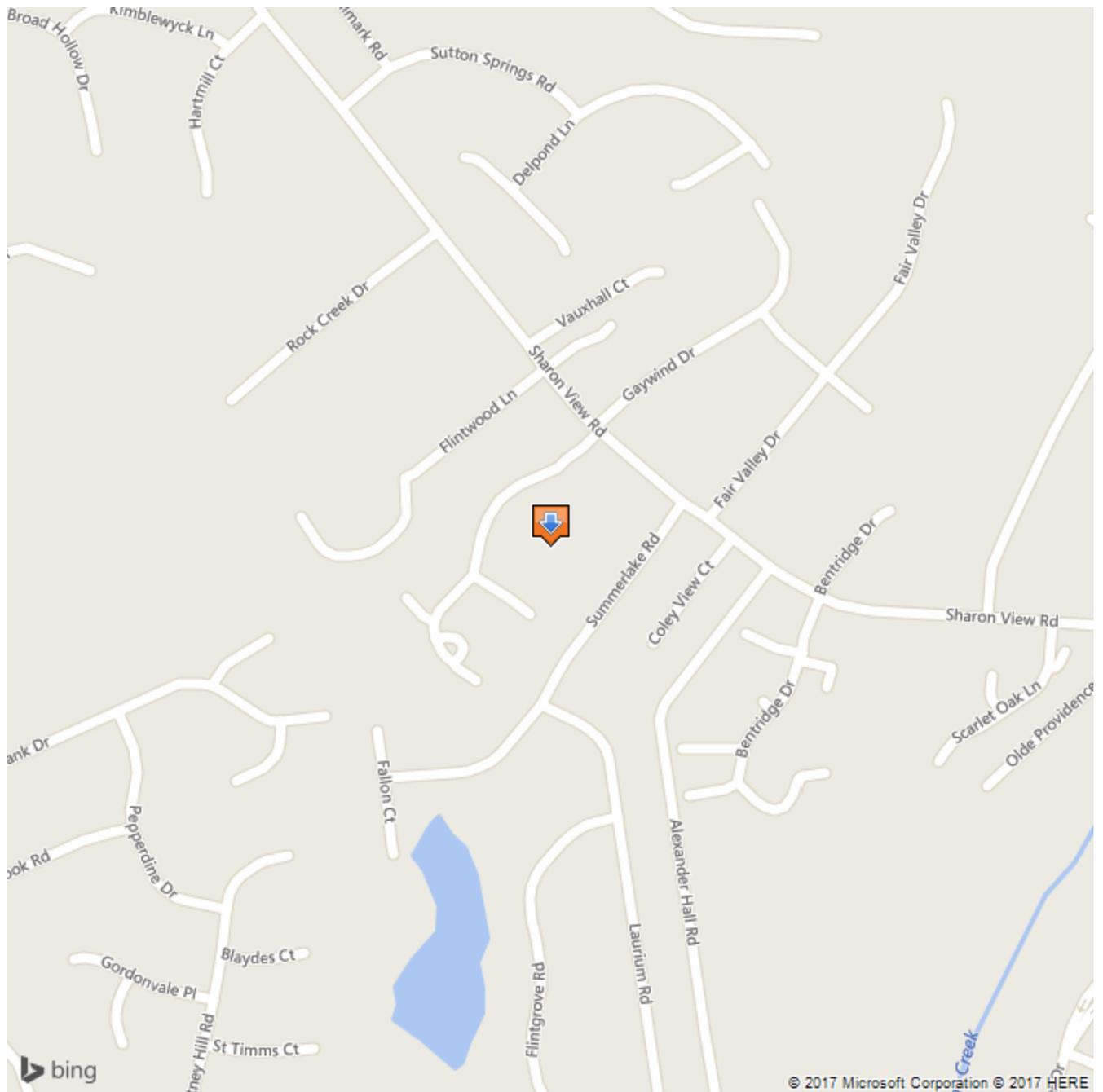
1. Name and location of the property: The property is known as the John Dinkins House and Lodge. 2400 Summerlake Road, Charlotte, NC

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

The name of the owner has been removed at the owner's request.

3. Representative photographs of the property: Anyone wishing to photograph the property should contact the Landmarks Commission who will contact the owner to obtain permission.

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 Tax Parcel Number 211-551-44 is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 6542 on page 541.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property: This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. William H. Huffman.

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains a brief architectural description of the property prepared by Ms. 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 John Dinkins House and Lodge does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

- 1) members of the Dinkins family were prominent early settlers and plantation owners settling in Mecklenburg County by 1723;
- 2) John Dinkins bought a 241-acre tract in 1795 and built his house ca. 1800;
- 3) the Dinkins family established a still extant cemetery which was restored in 1992;
- 4) the John Dinkins House, Lodge and Cemetery were designated local historic properties and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973;
- 5) both the John Dinkins House and Lodge retain their historic association with the Dinkins family;
- 6) the John Dinkins House and Lodge have survived through the years with original historic exterior appointments, such as the door and window surrounds and leaded glass windows, intact and in very good condition;
- 7) the John Dinkins House and Lodge have survived with most original historic interior appointments, such as wood paneling, unusual decorative finishes and wooden paneled doors, intact and in very good condition; and
- 8) the John Dinkins House is architecturally significant as one of the finest examples of the two-story, three-room plan houses to be found in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County;

- 9) the new site of the John Dinkins House and Lodge is part of the land designated with the William Lee House and includes part of the stagecoach road between Charlotte and Charleston; and
- 10) preservation of the John Dinkins House and Lodge gives honor and recognition to early settlers in Mecklenburg County.

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

9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal: The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the property which becomes a designated "historic landmark." The current appraised value of the improvements is not listed in the Mecklenburg County Tax Office (as of 25 June 1993). The current appraised value of the tract is \$147,600. The size of Tax Parcel 211-551-44 is 1.658 acres in the current tax records. The total appraised value of the Tax Parcel is \$147,600. The property is zoned R3.

Date of Preparation of this Report: 26 July 1993

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Historical Overview

by
Dr. William H. Huffman
July, 1993

The John Dinkins House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, and the Dinkins farm, including the house, lodge and cemetery, was designated a local historic property in 1974. Although the John Dinkins House and Lodge have been moved to a new location, they still retain their historical significance for three main reasons: 1) they are still associated with the Dinkins family, who were prominent early settlers in Mecklenburg County; 2) they have been moved to a setting which preserves their rural character; their relationship to a wagon road leading to South Carolina; and the same relative site placement between the house and lodge; and 3) they retain almost all their original architectural fabric, including walls, ceilings, floors, beams, rafters, shake roofing and the restoration of original paint colors, and landscape plantings as close to the original as possible.

John Rufus Dinkins (c.1745-1811), who built the house and lodge, became a wealthy early planter in Mecklenburg County. It is possible that he built the lodge house as his first dwelling on the 241 acre tract he bought from John Smart in 1795; he may have lived on the land as early as 1788. ¹ As he prospered, eventually he built a grand house befitting his great increase in affluence over the years. A clear indicator of the economic status he achieved can be seen by the fact that in his will of 1809 he left his children thirty-two slaves, which would make him one of the most prosperous plantation owners in Mecklenburg County. ²

Although the Dinkins family history may never be fully reconstructed because of the lack of records and confusing data, a sufficient amount is known for a general outline. The Dinkinses were originally Welsh, but migrated to Scotland in the sixteenth century and later to Londonderry in Northern Ireland, from which they left for America. On the 19th of October, 1717, three Dinkins brothers, John, James and Thomas, arrived in Charleston with four members of the Armstrong family, brothers John William, Robert, Henry and cousin Rufus George. By 1723, they were settled in Mecklenburg County. ³

John Dinkins, a descendant of original settler James Dinkins, bought a 241 -acre tract from Francis Smart in 1795, as noted above, but there is some indication that he may have lived on the land in 1788. ⁴It is possible that John Dinkins built the older, two-story lodge as his first residence on the land, and it is reasonable to assume that he built the large plantation house between 1795 and 1809 , the year he prepared his will in which the house is mentioned. ⁵ The Dinkins family cemetery must have been established on the land just after the earlier date, since the oldest known burial was in 1798. According to local tradition, the house was an inn or way station on the stagecoach road that went between Charlotte and Camden, S.C., through the Catawba Indian Nation land, which was an old Indian trading path that became known by its present name, Nations Ford Road. ⁶

John Dinkins was said to be the first Baptist in Mecklenburg County, and he was one of the founding members and one of two original deacons of the Flint Hill Baptist Church, located just south of his plantation in Fort Mill, S. C. ⁷ According to the history of the church, Dr. T. J. Pritchard, a grandson of John Dinkins, wrote that the latter wanted to establish a church between Fort Mill and Sugar Creek and sent off for a suitable preacher in 1790:

John Dinkins was an Irishman, and a man of means, and resided on the Nations Ford Road, half a mile beyond the Mineral Spring on Sugar Creek. He sent his overseer to Richmond, Virginia, with a covered wagon drawn by four horses, and brought to his plantation, on which he had built a parsonage, the Rev. John Rooker, whose family was supported almost entirely by him for some time. ⁸

The records related to John Dinkins' marriages remain a puzzle at present. A number of sources cite his marriage to Fannie Henderson in 1751, and the Flint Hill Baptist Church records show his wife as being Margaret Dinkins in 1792. ⁹ In his will he names his wife as Polly Dinkins, ¹⁰ and other sources cite a marriage to a Mary Glover. ¹¹ Another mystery relates to the burial place of John Dinkins and his wives: to the best of present knowledge, they are neither in the family cemetery nor at the Flint Hill Baptist Church, although the church records note the date of his death.

Six Dinkins children were living 1809 when John made his will: Martha (1766-?), married John Kendrick, 1785; Joshua (1770-1820), married Obedience Kendrick (1773-1838) in 1803; James (1772-1829), married Lucy Kendrick in 1793; Frederick (1774-1824), married Cynthia Springs in 1802; Mary (? - ?), married John Smith; and Margaret ["Peggy"] (? - ?) married (1) James Roberts (d. 1804, age 27) and (2) Dr. Samuel Henderson. Another son who died earlier is Captain John Dinkins (1775-1805), who was married to Mary Irwin. ¹² Many of John Dinkins' children, spouses and offspring are buried in the family cemetery. Some of the earlier tombstones were likely to have been carved by members of the Bigham family, who operated a stone carving shop about two miles northeast of the Dinkins plantation from about 1765 to about 1820. The Bighams carved gravestones throughout the Carolina Piedmont, and the most examples of their work in one place are found at the nearby Steele Creek Presbyterian Church. ¹³

In 1811, the plantation passed to Frederick Dinkins in accordance with John Sr.'s will. ¹⁴ When Frederick died in 1824 at the age of fifty without a will, John Springs was appointed to administrate the estate for his minor children; in 1826 the estate was listed as having 480 acres, which included about 233 acres of a widow's dower. ¹⁵ Ownership is not clear thereafter until it was deeded as a 414-acre tract to

John Williamson by D. R. Dunlap, C.M.E., in 1855.¹⁶ Williamson's daughters, Martha E. Grier and Elizabeth C. Bell, inherited the property about 1883, and in 1890 Elizabeth C. Bell became the sole owner, which was then 285 acres.¹⁷ In 1947, John H. Bell, Elizabeth's son, became sole proprietor when he obtained the interests of the other six heirs to the land.¹⁸ John H. Bell, Jr. inherited the land from his father in 1990.¹⁹

In recent years most of the Dinkins plantation land has been developed for light industrial use, and the Dinkins house and lodge were threatened with demolition. Consequently, in 1992, John H. Bell, Jr. sold the house and lodge to Dr. James F. and Judy Boyd.²⁰ The Dinkins family cemetery was restored in 1992 as an Eagle Scout project. It has been surveyed as a separate land parcel, and is to be preserved as a historic site.²¹

The Boyds moved the house to the new site on October 19-20, 1992.²² Reconstruction is presently under way with an attempt to preserve as much of the original architectural fabric as possible, and is expected to be completed about October, 1993. The new location is also an historic site, the grounds of the William Lee House (designated in 1963), and the house once again will face an extant stagecoach and wagon road that used to go to Camden, S. C.²³ The lodge was moved to the new site about February, 1993. After work on the house is completed, the lodge will be reconstructed with the same relationship it had to the house on the original site.

In recent years, the Dinkins House and Lodge were facing certain demolition by ever-growing development, and have been spared that fate by being moved and sensitively reconstructed on a new site. Because of the reasons cited in the first paragraph, they remain worthy of designation as historic landmarks.

Notes

¹ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 15, p. 125; Research paper by Mary Boyer, dated 10 March 1978, on file at the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission.

² In the 1790 U. S. Census, John Dinkins had 12 slaves on his land; in 1800, the number had increased to 17; and in 1810 he had 21. By comparison, William Davidson was the richest man in the county in 1819, and had 23 slaves; Major John

Davidson of Rural Hill had 30 slaves in 1810. D. A. Tompkins, *History of Mecklenburg County and Charlotte* (Charlotte: Observer Printing House, 1903), 2 vols.; Vol. 1, p. 93; LeGette Blythe and Charles Brockmann, *Hornet's Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte: Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, 1961), p. I 10. Census data provided by Mary Boyer.

³ Undated typescript, "The Dinkins Family," on file at the library of Davidson College.

⁴ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 13, p. 123, 27 October 1793; Boyer, note 1.

⁵ Mecklenburg County Will Book C. p. 37; Dinkins died July 10, 1811; Boyer, note 1.

⁶ Boyer, Note 1.

⁷ Frances Eppley, compiler. *Flint Hill Baptist Church: Its History, 1792-1985* (Fort Mill. S.C.: Flint Hill Baptist Church, 1985), p. 2.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., pp .3 & 8; "Dinkins Family," Note 3; Boyer, Note I (she cites the DAR Patriot Index, p. 194).

¹⁰ See note 5.

¹¹ Research notes of Katherine Phillips, Charlotte, NC.

¹² Boyer, Note 1; Phillips, Note 11; Dinkins family cemetery.

¹³ National Register of Historic Places Nomination, "Steele Creek Presbyterian Church," Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission.

¹⁴ Mecklenburg County Will Book C, p. 37, dated 18 Sept. 1809; Dinkins died July 10, 1811, and the will was probated 16 Dec. 1811.

¹⁵ Estate Papers of Frederick Dinkins, Mecklenburg County, NC; Boyer, note 1.

¹⁶ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 6, p. 588; Boyer, note 1.

¹⁷ Ibid., Book 76, p. 599.

¹⁸ Ibid., Book 1243, p. 203; see also Book 5552, p. 407.

¹⁹ Interview with John H. Bell, Jr. by William H. Huffman, Charlotte, NC, 11 July 1993.

²⁰ 22 September 1992.

²¹ Survey by F. Steve Widenhouse dated 11 June 1992 for the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission; "Survey and Research Report of the Cemetery at John Dinkins Farm," Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1993.

²² Information supplies by Judy Boyd.

²³ Survey and Research Report on the William Lee House, Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1963; William H. Huffman, "A Historical Sketch of the William Lee House," September, 1981, incorporated in above.

Architectural Overview

Prepared by: Ms. Nora M. Black

Late in the evening of 19 October 1992, the John Dinkins House began a momentous journey that would end the next morning at 12:15 a.m. The house was moved from its original location on Nations Ford Road. The John Dinkins Lodge would soon follow. The Nations Ford Road site is now surrounded by light industrial and warehousing facilities. Proximity to Interstate 77 made the value of the land for commercial development greater than the value of the structures to the owner. The new Outer Belt Highway (Interstate 485) borders the property on the northern edge. Even a segment of the original roadbed of Nations Ford Road has been moved for construction of the Outer Belt Highway. Both house and lodge were highly endangered. The site for relocation of both the house and lodge that is large enough to maintain the original relationship of the two structures. Additionally, the house is situated to face the portion of the stagecoach line from Charlotte to Charleston¹ that is contiguous to and part of the new site. (Originally, the house faced Nations Ford Road, an early Mecklenburg County road.)

The John Dinkins House and Lodge are now sited on an irregularly shaped, 1.658 acre tract carved from land associated with the William Lee House, a designated historic

landmark. The front or northeast facade of the John Dinkins House looks across the old stagecoach road to the meadow that is part of the William Lee House front lawn. The rear or southwest facade is separated from the front facade of the Lodge by a small courtyard. On this historic site, the John Dinkins House and Lodge are being painstakingly preserved and restored for their historic purposes, that of a residence and a lodge for travelers.

The style of the John Dinkins House has been influenced more by plan and function than by fashion. Since John Dinkins is said to have arrived in America at Charleston, South Carolina, he would have seen Colonial houses built in the Georgian style (commonly constructed from 1700 to 1780 and locally to ca. 1830). One of the identifying features of Georgian houses, however, is the strict vertical and horizontal symmetry of the doors and windows. ² The John Dinkins House lacks symmetry in the front facade although it does have the five-ranked facade typical of the Georgian style. It appears that the arrangement of the rooms dictated the placement of doors and windows, not style.

Regarding the plan, the John Dinkins House is an excellent example of a two-story, three-room plan house with rear shed extension. According to Catherine Bishir, A pamphlet published ca. 1684, *Information and Direction to Such Persons as Are Inclined to America, More Especially Those Related to the Province of Pennsylvania*, described a three-room house of an established type and recommended it for beginners: 30 by 18 feet, with one partition near the middle and another that divided one end of the house into two rooms." ³ Some researchers attribute the pamphlet to William Penn. For that reason, the three-room plan is sometimes referred to as the "Quaker Plan." The basic plan of the John Dinkins House is the same for both first and second floors. On each floor, the north end contains a hall while the south end contains a parlor and a smaller chamber at the rear of the house. ⁴

The three-room plan, including the two-story version, was a common one in the coastal plain and the Piedmont of North Carolina. The John Dinkins House shares another feature found frequently in the three-room plan in the Piedmont. It has two front doors; one opens into the hall and the other opens into the parlor. ⁵ Having the entry on the long elevation facing the road made the house appear larger. It allowed wealthy landowners to "show off " the size of their homes.

The structure of the John Dinkins House consists of a [timber frame](#) set on a stone foundation. Many of the stones were part of the original foundation. The spaces within the timber frame of the house are filled in with brick "nogging" (sometimes spelled noggin) which the Boyd's have been careful to preserve. When covered with weatherboarding on the outside, the nogging provided insulation as well as stability.

Exterior

The John Dinkins Houses has a small amount of original horizontal board siding between the two front doors; most of the exterior was reclad in the 1940's. The 1940's siding has been replaced with new redwood siding milled to match the original. It incorporates the bead along the bottom edge. Rosehead nails, with placement to match the original, fasten the siding to the frame.

Layers of old shingles were removed from the roof; hand-split cedar shingles have been installed. The roof framing was disassembled at the Nations Ford Road site. When reconstructing the roof at the present site, the workman used the original Roman numerals marked on each timber to peg the roof frame back together. The side-gabled roof has only a narrow rake; the eaves are boxed with a slight overhang. The cornice molding lacks decorative detail.

Many of the [windows](#) in the John Dinkins House contain the original leaded glass; they are double hung wooden sash. Each original window consists of an upper portion containing nine panes of glass and a lower sash of nine panes. Panes broken over the years have been replaced with new glass. In each gable end, four pane over four double hung wooden sash allow light into the attic. All new windows for the wings are milled replicas of the originals. The back windows of the kitchen wing are nine panes of glass over six. The wide window casings are carved with mitered top corners. Many still retain their original hardware. New window casings for the wings were milled to match the originals.

The front facade is divided into five asymmetrical bays. Two ranks of windows at the north end of the facade are symmetrical vertically. The door to the hall is at the approximate center of the facade, but there is no opening above it. The door to the parlor is aligned vertically with the door to the second floor porch. The single rank of windows at the south end of the facade are symmetrical vertically. The front view is dominated by the two-story porch. Porches were not unusual in the hot climate of the South; the porch actually served as a shaded outdoor room. The John Dinkins House has an original door framed into the second floor above the south door. The door surround is consistent with that of other exterior doors in the house. That would indicate that the house originally had a two-story porch. (Deteriorated porches, long exposed to the elements, were often removed for safety reasons and as styles changed.) A line of nails across the front roof suggests the position the original porch converged with the roof above the eave. The new porch has been constructed to engage the roof along that line. By replacing the second floor porch, the owners made it possible to reopen the second floor door. The roof of the porch is supported by four square wooden columns with chamfered tops. Each column's base is fastened to an aluminum plinth set on a stone pier. The stone piers are the same height as the

foundation walls. Behind the two-story columns, brick piers support the structure of the porch floor. Four smaller one-story columns support the front of the second floor porch. A wooden balustrade surrounds the second-floor porch; the balustrade of the first floor has a six-foot opening in front of the door to the hall. The porch floor and ceiling are new tongue-and-groove boards milled to match the original. Wooden steps flanked by simple square newels and wood handrails lead to the porch.

The two front doors are elegant but unassuming. Each door is constructed of densely grained pine. The top and bottom rails of the doors are narrow; however, the lock rail is ten inches wide. The door casings are similar to the window casings previously described. Above each door, there are original four light transoms.

The back facade is divided into three asymmetrical bays. One rank of windows at the north end of the facade is symmetrical vertically. The door is not aligned vertically with the second-floor window above. The single rank of windows at the south end of the facade are symmetrical vertically.

A small porch on the back or southwest facade is approached by four wooden steps. The roof is tied into the roof of the shed extension. The porch has a sense of enclosure caused by the courtyard and the proximity of the John Dinkins Lodge. A single door with a four-light transom above opens into the house.

Wings at either end of the original house preserve the size and shape of the space between the John Dinkins House and Lodge. A rear-facing ell would have destroyed that relationship. The new wings have windows and siding to match the original. They are set on brick foundations to emphasize the old stone foundation of the main house. The end elevations of the main house have been changed by the wings; however, brick chimneys designed to match the original chimneys have been reconstructed at the ends of the main house with new chimneys for the wings. The bricks are laid in [Flemish bond](#) to the shoulder and [running bond](#) above. The exterior chimneys of the wings are set on stone bases to match the original chimney bases. Entrances to the wings complement the original entrances.

Interior

Remarkably, the interior of the John Dinkins House was never changed or modernized to any great degree over the years. The majority of the historic fabric is not only intact but visible. Original decorative finishes are found throughout the house. The owner commissioned an extensive paint analysis to guide restoration; all color references are taken from that analysis. Space constraints within this report prohibit a full listing of the coloring analysis; however, it includes a color palette of bright green, dark

Prussian blue, off white and Spanish brown as well as marbling and graining resembling chestnut and mahogany. ⁶

Original moldings, paneling, hardware and decorative elements are still in place throughout much of the house. Most of the original random width pine flooring is still in place. Any boards needed for replacements are milled to match the original. The interior side of the exterior walls is plaster. Any repairs necessary have been done with plaster rather than sheetrock. Board walls in the house are constructed of boards set vertically; partition walls are horizontally set boards. Most of the original "Cross-and Bible" doors were still in place. When additional doors were needed, they were matched to the original design including the wide lock rails. Ceilings of tongue and groove pine have survived over the years.

The front door nearly centered on the front facade opens into a wide hall that spans the width of the house. In houses of this era, the hall served as a gathering space combined with work area. In fact, the hall generally served much as the great room does today. The hall of the John Dinkins House is rectangular measuring 20'9" by 23'3". The room has elegant interior appointments. They include a gouged and reeded frieze with crown molding. The mantelpiece, located on the northwest wall, is a classically inspired surround with a paneled overmantel. The fireplace is flanked by pairs of engaged columns supporting engaged fluted pilasters. Between the pilasters, two recessed panels flank a raised center tablet. The tall overmantel has recessed panels. Window openings on either side of the fireplace have been extended to the floor to provide two doorways into the new northwest wing.

Color analysis revealed the highest level of decorative finishes in the great room. The mantelpiece was painted a dark Prussian blue. The stiles, rails and flat panels of the wainscoting ⁷ were grained with the panels receiving the darker, redder pattern over a tan/cream basecoat. "The panels were framed with a thin, incised pinstripe... The baseboard appears to have been painted dark gray ... possibly with a green glaze." ⁸ Door and window surrounds appeared to have been painted dark gray with a translucent bright green glaze. Flat-paneled faces of doors were painted dark Spanish brown. Raised paneled faces of doors were grained to match the stiles and rails of the [wainscot](#).

The open staircase to the second floor begins as a series of winder steps in the south corner of the room. The paneled face of the staircase has a graining pattern similar to that of the wainscot. Even the risers, strings, string brackets, newel and balusters have the same graining. The string brackets have a tulip design the was copied from a pattern book of the era.

A person entering the house through the secondary front door would enter the room called the parlor in the three-room plan. It is believed to have been used by the Dinkins family as a receiving room for visitors transacting business. An interior door on the northwest wall provides a passage between this room and the great room. A door on the southwest wall opens to the smaller chamber at the back of the house. The parlor fireplace, placed on the diagonal in the south corner, shares a chimney with the chamber fireplace. Corner fireplaces have a long history in North Carolina having been used by German immigrants as early as the 1770's in their Continental plan house.⁹ The mantelpiece has engaged, reeded columns flanking the fireplace opening. A strip of reeding continues at the base of the entablature. The three-panel entablature has a decorative feature of dentils and dots. The mantelpiece appears to be marbleized like the one in the second floor ballroom. Finishes used in the great room are repeated in the parlor both in color and technique.¹⁰

The chamber behind the parlor will have one of the most significant changes in the floor plan. Part of the original back wall will be removed between the chamber and the shed extension to provide space for a large dining room. This room has a closet under the stairs said to have been used for storage of valuables. The mantelpiece is a simple molded surround for the fireplace opening with a decorative motif of dentils and dots on the entablature. It was painted the same Prussian blue found in the great room.¹¹ The shed extension originally contained two rooms flanking a center porch. The flooring pattern reflects the original division of space. New material for this area has been milled to match the original.

On the second floor, the largest room is said to have been the ballroom. The entry contains the widest interior door in the house. The most original decorative details in the house are found in the ballroom. The wainscot and mantel have a marbleizing treatment with an off-white basecoat, a medium gray tamped-on mottling, and a meandering black veining.¹² The mantelpiece has engaged columns flanking the fireplace opening. Engaged pilasters flank the three-paneled entablature. The top shelf is actually a heavily molded cornice. Raw cotton found layered between the floor joists is to be removed.

An original door opening at the head of the staircase leads to the second floor front porch. The original arrangement of walls in the remaining two rooms on the southeast end of the second floor will be retained. The small chamber at the rear will become a dressing area and closet. The larger of the two rooms will be used for the master bathroom. The fireplace on the southeast wall will be retained. Both of these rooms appear to have been grained with a basecoat of cream/tan and a yellow/red glaze.¹³

The new wings will contain the kitchen, two additional bedrooms and bathrooms. This arrangement puts most of the new functions into the additions allowing the interior of

the original house to be preserved. Fireplaces on the southeast and northwest ends of the wings will complement the original end fireplaces. Finishes, although modern, will complement the original John Dinkins House.

John Dinkins Lodge

The John Dinkins Lodge is typical of the Pre-Railroad Folk Houses built in the Tidewater South style. It is a hall-and-parlor plan with sleeping chambers in the garret. The linear plan, [timber frame](#) construction and exterior brick end chimneys are typical of the era. Early surviving examples like the lodge are rare. ¹⁴

The John Dinkins Lodge is being reconstructed with the same orientation to the John Dinkins House as existed at the Nations Ford Road site. The distance between the two buildings is being maintained as well. The lodge will be restored to the original plan of two garret rooms over the first floor hall-and-parlor. The exterior brick end chimneys will be restored. Due to a change in grade of the land, the lodge will be restored on a foundation of concrete masonry units with a covering of dry laid foundation stone. Then backfill will be added to make the ground level the same as the ground level at the Nations Ford Road site.

The exterior walls of horizontal lapped siding will be fastened to the frame with rosehead nails and L-headed nails to match the original. The northeast elevation will be asymmetrical with four bays. First floor windows will be six panes over six to match the original. The garret will have three gable-end window with four panes each. The roof ledge plate will be raised eighteen inches to allow the head room required by building codes for the second floor.

Beaded beams were found in the interior. Any beams needed to replace deteriorated beams will be milled to match. A small service cellar under the west corner of the lodge will display the remaining original floor joists. The new functions (a small kitchen unit and a bathroom) will be installed along the back (southwest) wall.

Conclusion

The John Dinkins House and Lodge provides a carefully restored example of typical settlement building patterns for wealthy landowners. The fact that so many decorative

elements and superior architectural details are found in the original historic fabric make the John Dinkins House one of the most important early houses left standing in Mecklenburg County. The quality and artistic value of the graining and marbleizing speak to the success and status of the Dinkins family. The lodge is a rare surviving example of the early period of Mecklenburg County settlement. Both the John Dinkins House and Lodge cried out for an adaptive use that would respect the uniqueness and style of the structures while allowing both to return to a place of importance in the lives of caring owners.

Notes

¹ Dr. William H. Huffman, Historical Sketch of the William Lee House, September, 1981.

² Virginia & Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York, 1986), 139.

³ Catherine W. Bishir with photography by Tim Buchman, *North Carolina Architecture* (Chapel Hill, 1990), 467.

⁴ Ibid., "Common room names used in the eighteenth century were hall for a large room, passage for what is now usually considered a hall or hallway, parlor for a private principal room, and chamber- for a variety of rooms, including bedchambers.

⁵ Ibid., 104.

⁶ Black & Black Preservation Consultants, *Interior Finishes Analysis: The Dinkins House, Charlotte, N. C.* (Raleigh, N. C., 1993), 2.

⁷ A wainscot, or wainscoting, usually refers to a wooden lining of the lower three or four feet of an interior wall when finished differently from the rest of the wall.

⁸ Black & Black Preservation Consultants.

⁹ Doug Swaim, "North Carolina Folk Housing," *Carolina Dwelling*, ed. Doug Swaim (Raleigh, N. C., 1978), 35.

¹⁰ Black & Black Preservation Consultants, 4.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴ Virginia & Lee McAlester, 75-82.