

Slavery at Hennigan Place

Designation Report Addendum
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March 2024

Records show that James Hennigan was one of Mecklenburg County's larger enslavers in the decade before the Civil War. However, information is unclear about his wealth before building Hennigan Place ca. 1845. The 1840 U. S. Census recorded a James Hennigan who enslaved three persons—a boy under the age of 10, a young adult male between 10-24, and a young adult female between 10-24. His household included perhaps an older brother and a daughter.¹ However, the lack of a female adult in the household casts doubt on whether this is the same James Hennigan, as he married Sarah A. Stewart in January 1834. However, daughter Nancy was born ca. 1836, which would align with the female under 5 in the Hennigan household in 1840.

James Hennigan married Margaret Harriet Orr in January 1848. She was the daughter of Nathan Orr, who had purchased the birthplace of President James K. Polk when the family moved to Tennessee. Orr died in 1852, and Hennigan was made executor of his father-in-law's estate. He was willed Orr's home at "the McCulloch tract on little Sugar Creek," which included a gin and mining works.² But by this date, Hennigan had grown his plantation to be quite successful. In the 1850 U. S. Census, Hennigan valued his real estate at \$3,500, and he enslaved 23 persons:³

Male, age 30	Male, age 29	Male, age 19	Male, age 20
Male, age 25	Male, age 11	Male, age 9	Male, age 5
Male, age 4	Male, age 3	Male, age 5	Male, age 2
Male, age 5 months	Male, age 3 months	Female, age 60	Female, age 25
Female, age 24	Female, age 22	Female, age 17	Female, age 11
Female, age 8	Female, age 7	Female, age 6	

On the eve of the Civil War, Hennigan was among the wealthiest planters in southern Mecklenburg County. His plantation was valued at \$4,150, and his personal estate listed at \$30,000—most of that value was likely calculated from the 30 persons he enslaved at Hennigan Place:⁴

Male, age 42	Male, age 38	Male, age 33*	Male, age 32
Male, age 20	Male, age 30	Male, age 18	Male, age 22
Male, age 35, blacksmith*	Male, age 15*	Male, age 15	Male, age 13
Male, age 11	Male, age 9	Male, age 14	Male, age 14
Male, age 12	Male, age 8	Male, age 6	Male, age 8
Male, age 6	Female, age 75	Female, age 35	Female, age 33

¹ 1840 U. S. Census, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 295.

² Mecklenburg County Will Book J, Page 59.

³ 1850 U. S. Census, Mallard Creek District, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, n. p.; 1850 U. S. Census Slave Schedule, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, n. p.

⁴ 1860 U. S. Census, Eastern Division, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 4; 1860 U. S. Census Slave Schedule, Eastern Division, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 3.

Female, age 33
Female, age 14

Female, age 20*

Female, age 17

Female, age 16

*Listed as Mulatto

Having an enslaved blacksmith at a plantation brought in additional income, as Hennigan would likely have hired out the man to other planters.

There are few mentions of Hennigan in newspapers of the period, though one advertisement for escaped men in the June 24, 1856, edition of the *Charlotte Democrat* mentioned him:



Jack Gill was formerly enslaved by Hennigan and then sold at Thomas Massey's auction in Lancaster District, South Carolina in December 1854. The purchaser, A. J. Orr, was likely in business with D. W. Orr at Liberty County, Georgia, building railroads. The work was likely rife with abuse and poor living conditions. Jack Gill could possibly be the man aged 25 who is listed in the 1850 U. S. Census Slave Schedule.

Hennigan could not be found in the 1870 U. S. Census, though a James Hennigan appeared in the industrial census in Sharon Township, owner of a horse-driven gin and thrasher.⁵ Additionally, no names other than Jack Gill have been found for people enslaved by James Hennigan. There are numerous Black persons bearing some variation of the surname Hennigan in Providence and Sharon Townships in the 1870 U. S. Census, lending credence to the idea that they may have been connected with Hennigan Place.⁶

⁵ 1870 U. S. Census Products of Industry, Sharon Township, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 2-3.

⁶ 1870 U. S. Census, Providence Township, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 14. Pineville Township, where Hennigan Place was originally located, was not created until after the 1870 U. S. Census.

HENNIGAN PLACE



This photograph is circa November 2006.

This report was written on November 7, 1979

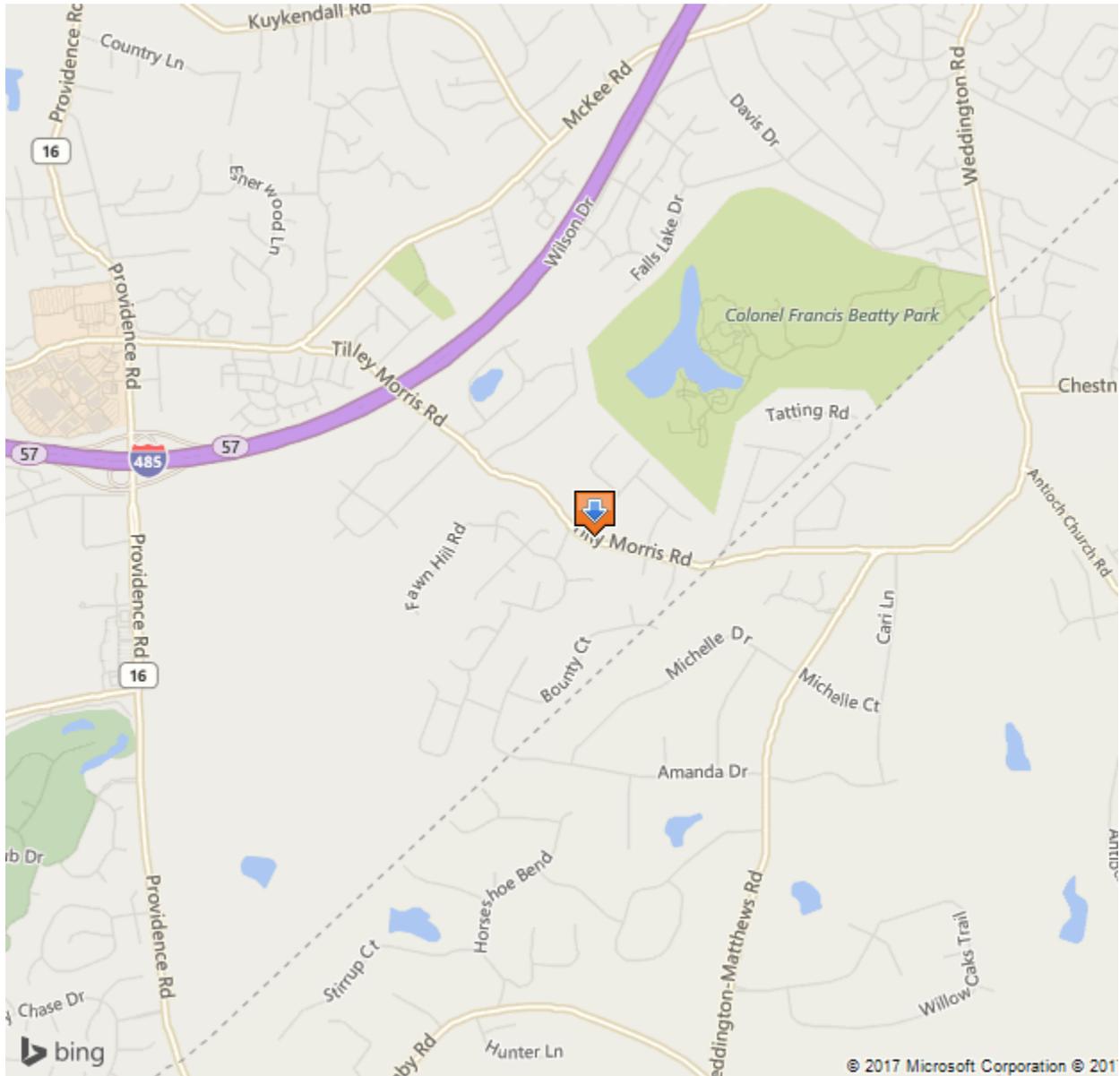
1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Hennigan Place is located at 3503 Tilley Morris Road in the Providence Community or southwestern portion of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

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

The present owners of the property are:
Peter D. Snow & wife, Betty B. Snow
3503 Tilley Morris Rd.
Matthews, NC 28105

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 a map which depicts the location of the property.



5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The current deeds to this property are recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3620, page 169 and in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3714, page 944. The Tax Parcel Numbers of the property are 23111109 and 23111110.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property:

Local tradition holds that the Hennigan Place, originally located adjacent to the James K. Polk birthplace southeast of Pineville, NC, was erected c. 1845.¹ Its initial owner and occupant was James Hennigan (1811-1876), son of Samuel and Nancy Hennigan.² On January 6, 1834, Hennigan married Sarah A. Stewart.³ They had at least three children, two daughters and a son

(James E. Hennigan), before her death sometime in the mid-1840s.⁴ On January 5, 1848, Hennigan married Margaret H. Orr.⁵ This union produced at least four children, three sons and a daughter. The daughter, Margaret Eugenia Hennigan, died on October 13, 1851, when less than two months old, however.⁶ She is buried beside her parents in the cemetery at Sharon Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC.

Margaret H. Orr Hennigan died on March 27, 1860, at the age of forty-two.⁸ The next year witnessed the outbreak of the Civil War, the event which was to destroy the social structure of the antebellum South. James Hennigan owned no slaves and was, therefore, not directly affected by the emancipation process.⁹ However, his oldest son, James E. Hennigan, enlisted on May 5, 1862, as a private in Company F of the North Carolina 49th Regiment.¹⁰

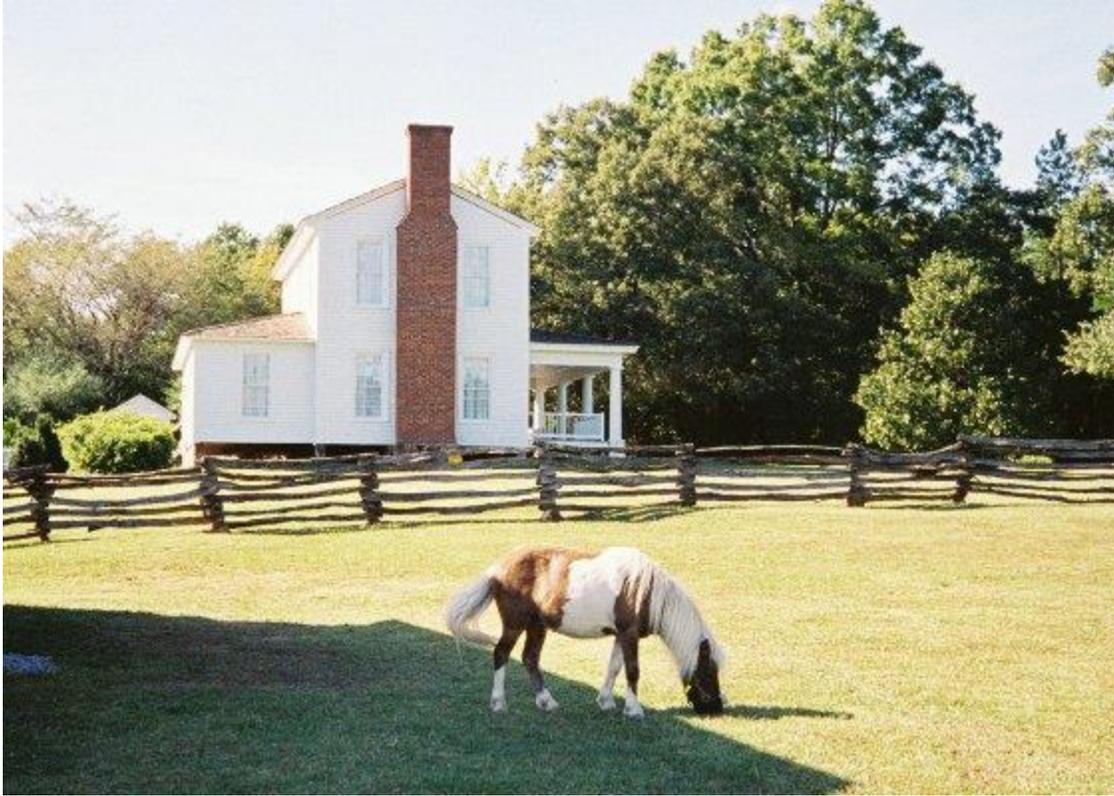
James Hennigan died of heart disease in his home early in the evening of August 13, 1876.¹¹ The *Daily Charlotte Observer* was expansive in its praise of this man. "The late James Hennigan," the obituary notice declared, "was a man well known, and no one knew him but to respect him as a gentlemen of the old school."¹² The *Charlotte Democrat* singled Hennigan out as a "good and useful citizen."¹³ A prominent farmer in southern Mecklenburg County, Hennigan also participated actively in public affairs.¹⁴ He served as an official of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions of Mecklenburg County, the major organ of county government before 1868.¹⁵ During his early life, the *Daily Charlotte Observer* reported, "he was entrusted with important offices, which he filled with dignity and to the satisfaction of his constituents."¹⁶ There is reason to believe that Hennigan was a leading local opponent of the accession of the South from the Union. Such a stance would have been consistent with his commitment to the Methodist Church.¹⁷ The descendants of James Hennigan occupied the home until March 12, 1914, when James L. Hennigan sold the property to Stephen L. Manson.¹⁸ The Mansons lost the property during the Great Depression of the 1930s.¹⁹ By the early 1970s, the Hennigan Place was vacant and in a dilapidated condition. It was then that Peter D. Snow (1937-) and Betty Shulenberger Snow (1936-), both natives of Charlotte, NC, purchased the house and began the process of restoration. In 1971, they moved the Hennigan Place from its original site to a location immediately across U.S. 521. In 1973, they moved the house again, this time to its present site on Tilley Morris Rd. Having recently completed the major portion of the restoration work, Mr. and Mrs. Snow and their daughter, Jean Marlen Snow (1962-), presently occupy the house as their residence.²⁰



This photograph is circa November 2006.



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Notes

¹ Interview of Peter D. Snow and Betty S. Snow by Dr. Dan L. Morrill (October 25, 1979). Hereafter cited as Interview.

² Mecklenburg County Will Book G, page 210. A.F. Long, Mecklenburg Cemeteries Sharon, compiled by the Historical Records Survey of North Carolina, 1936 (a manuscript in the files of the Carolina Room of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library). Hereafter cited as Survey.

³ Original Marriage Bonds Of Mecklenburg County, p. 104.

⁴ United States Census of Mecklenburg County in 1840, p. 292. The name listed is Jacob Hennigan. However, it is reasonable to assume that this was "James Hennigan." United States Census of Mecklenburg County in 1860. Eastern Division, p. 56.

⁵ Original Marriage Bonds of Mecklenburg County, p. 104.

⁶ Gravestone in Cemetery of Sharon Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC.

⁷ Ibid. Sharon Presbyterian Church is located at 5201 Sharon Rd. in Charlotte, NC.

⁸ Survey.

⁹ United States Census of Mecklenburg County in 1860, Eastern Division, p. 56.

¹⁰ John W. Moore, Roster of North Carolina Troops (State Printers and Binders, Raleigh, 1882) vol. 3, p. 410.

¹¹ *Daily Charlotte Observer* (August 17, 1876), p. 4.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *The Charlotte Democrat* (August 21, 1876), p. 1.

¹⁴ United States Census of Mecklenburg County in 1860. Eastern Division. n. 56.

¹⁵ Historic documents in the possession of Peter D. Snow.

¹⁶ *Daily Charlotte Observer* (August 17, 1876), p. 4.

¹⁷ Ibid. *The Charlotte Democrat* (August 21, 1876), p. 1.

¹⁸ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 322, page 424.

¹⁹ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 929, page 303.

²⁰ Interview.

7. A brief architectural description of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria set forth in N.C.G.S. 160A-399.4:

a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture and/or cultural importance: The Commission judges that the property known as the Hennigan Place does possess special historic significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) it is one of the few elements of the antebellum historic built environment which survives in the southern portion of Mecklenburg County, and 2) the house possesses architectural significance as one of the finer examples of a vernacular Greek Revival style farmhouse which survives in Mecklenburg County.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association: The Commission judges that the architectural description included herein demonstrates that the property known as the Hennigan Place meets this criterion. Worth noting in this regard is the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Snow have demonstrate the greatest care possible in restoring the structure, both in terms of the house itself and of its overall setting.

9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal: The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply annually for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any

portion of the property which becomes historic property. The current tax appraisal on the 5.308 acres of land is \$15,900. The current tax appraisal on the improvements is \$30,280. The most recent tax bill on the property was \$362.99.

Bibliography

The Charlotte Democrat.

Daily Charlotte Observer.

Interview of Peter D. Snow and Betty S. Snow by Dr. Dan L. Morrill (October 25, 1979).

A.F. Long, *Mecklenburg Cemeteries Sharon*, compiled by the Historical Records Survey of North Carolina, 1936.

John W. Moore, *Roster of North Carolina Troops* (State Printers and Binders, Raleigh, 1882).

Original Marriage Bonds of Mecklenburg County.

Records of the Mecklenburg County Clerk of Superior Courts Office.

Records of the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office.

Records of the Mecklenburg County Tax Office.

Sharon Presbyterian Church Cemetery.

United States Census of Mecklenburg County in 1840.

Date of Preparation of this report: November 7, 1979

Prepared by: Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Director
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Architectural Description

Laura A. W. Philips

The Hennigan House was originally located on U.S. Hwy. 521, adjacent to the James K. Polk birthplace, southeast of Pineville, Mecklenburg County. In 1973, to prevent destruction by local firefighters who wished to use it for firefighting practice, the house was moved approximately ten miles to its present location at 3503 Tilley Morris Road on the outskirts of Charlotte. Originally the house had a rural setting on top of a hill. The current owners attempted to duplicate as closely as possible the rural nature of the original setting in their selection of the present location for the house. The house does, in fact, now sit at the end of a dirt lane, surrounded by fields and woodlands, and appears very much at home in this setting. At the time of its relocation, the house had been altered very little, but was simply run down. This fact has simplified the restoration process, which is now nearing completion. During the restoration of the house, much attention has been paid to the physical evidence present.

The Hennigan House is a two-story [frame](#) house, three bays wide and two bays deep, with one-story hip-roofed porch across the front and one-story hip-roofed shed rooms across the rear. Stylistically, the house reflects primarily [Greek Revival](#) influence with forms which are simple, yet bold. It appears to date from the mid-nineteenth century, possibly from the 1840s.

The main body of the house has a low-pitched [gable roof](#) with boxed and molded cornice. The house is covered with weatherboarding, except for the area under the front porch, which is sheathed in flush boarding. The corners of the house are accented by plain corner stiles. All [windows](#) are 9/9 sash with molded surrounds, except for the second story center window on the rear which, because of the rise in the roof over the rear shed rooms, is only 9/6. There are two exterior end brick chimneys, each with stone base, 7 to 1 [common bond](#) brickwork, single stepped shoulder and corbelled cap. The house is set on a stone pier foundation with each pier consisting of one large stone--an unusual feature.

The front porch is also somewhat unusual. Four plain wooden [Doric](#) columns support a full entablature and roof above. Echoing these columns are plain Doric pilasters on each corner where the porch joins the front wall of the house. An unusual feature is the placement of the four columns in relationship to the porch floor. Instead of being set on the porch floor itself, the columns are positioned in front of the floor with the two being unconnected. The columns extend downward to the level of the floor, but are actually positioned on cut stone or concrete bases set in front of the floor. This gives the porch floor a somewhat free-standing, or floating, appearance, but it rests on single stone piers, like those used to support the main body of the house, only smaller. Like the porch floor, the balustrade is not connected to the columns, although it does connect with the pilasters set against the front wall. The balustrade has plain square balusters and corner posts and a rounded handrail.

Two steps at the center of the porch lead to the front entrance. The double leaf front door is paneled and is headed by a seven-light transom. The door and transom are enframed by a pair of

slender Doric pilasters on either side. Between the two pilasters on each side are sidelights composed of twelve lights each with a recessed paneled square below. Above the entrance is an abbreviated entablature. The composition of the entrance way is accentuated by its placement against the flush boarding of the porch wall and ceiling. The rear door of the house is located in the center of the one-story section and is reached by six steps. It is a five panel wooden door with simple molded surround matching those of the windows.

On the interior, the Hennigan House exhibits a center hall plan with one-story shed rooms across the rear. On the first story there is a single room on either side of the center hall. The hallway itself is broad and houses the stairway to the second floor on the right side. The [stairway](#) rises from the front of the hall. With its plain square [balusters](#), rounded [handrail](#) and slender square [newel post](#), it repeats the form of the front porch balustrade. Adding decorative relief is the curvilinear applied molding along the side of the open string. The triangle formed by the diagonal open string panel, the baseboard and the vertical board toward the rear of the stairs is covered with flush boarding. At the rear of the center hall is a double leaf paneled door with seven-light transom, which is a simplified version of the front entrance. It leads to the rear shed rooms. The hall has plastered walls, although the ceiling, like the other ceilings in the house, is covered with flush boarding. The baseboards in the hall are painted gray.

An interesting feature is the reverse molding used for the door and window surrounds in the hallway and left front room. In the hall, the molding is convex in shape with plain corner blocks. In the room to the left of the hall, a reversed, concave molding with plain corner blocks is used. Here, as other rooms, the window surrounds extend to the baseboard, creating a simple apron under each window. The walls of the left room are plastered and the baseboards are a contrasting dark brown. The Greek Revival mantel with simple pilasters, plain frieze, beaded inside edging and concave molding under the mantel shelf is painted black.

The room to the right of the hall is covered with flush boarding. In this room the baseboards are black and the window surrounds are brown. The molding of the surrounds differs from that found in the room to the left of the hall. Here the molding employs beading, both near the outer edge and along the inner edge of the surround and also on the inner edge of the apron below. The mantel in this room, as in the other main room, is Greek Revival in style and is painted black. However, here it is slightly more elaborate than in the other room, in that it has paneled pilasters. One five-panel door in the right front room gives evidence that at least some of the doors were originally grained, though they were later painted over.

The shed rooms across the rear of the house have been divided into two rooms. The right two-thirds of this area forms the present-day kitchen. The left one-third forms a small bedroom. Both rooms are covered with flush boarding. On the second story, both the hall and the individual rooms are plastered. All of the walls upstairs are painted white. In the hall, the baseboards are gray, as they are in the downstairs hall. To the left of the hall is a large bedroom with black baseboards and black Greek Revival mantel which matches that in the room below. On the right side of the hall there were originally two rooms. The rear bedroom remains intact, but the front room has been subdivided into two bathroom/closet areas. The small rear bedroom has a green ceiling and window surrounds and black baseboards.

The colors used for the trim throughout the house, as described herein, constitute one of the more unusual features of the house. Their use in the restoration is based on physical evidence of the original paint colors. The only outbuilding at the present site is a small weatherboarded well house to the right of the main house. It is of totally new construction, but is compatible with the house and setting.



This photograph is circa 1980.