

Slavery at the Holt-Henderson-Copeland House

Designation Report Addendum
Susan V. Mayer, SVM Historical Consulting
September 2024

Dr. William A. Holt, the first doctor in Davidson and the property's initial namesake, moved to the town after the Civil War, thus there are no ties to enslavement through him.

The first resident of the house was tailor Jacob Coldiron. He and his family lived in his native Rowan County in 1830 where he enslaved a boy between the ages of 10 and 23.¹ By 1842 he and his wife Nancy had moved to Davidson, as a deed in trust filed that year provided as collateral "my interest in a house and lott (sic) that I now live on at Davidson College."² The Coldirons had no enslaved people listed in their Davidson household in the 1850 U. S. Census nor in Charlotte in 1860.³

¹ 1830 U. S. Census, Rowan County, North Carolina, 341.

² Mecklenburg County Old Deed Book 1, Page 114.

³ 1850 U. S. Census, Davidson College, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 70; 1860 U. S. Census, Charlotte, Western District, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 188.

Survey and Research Report on the Holt-Henderson-Copeland House



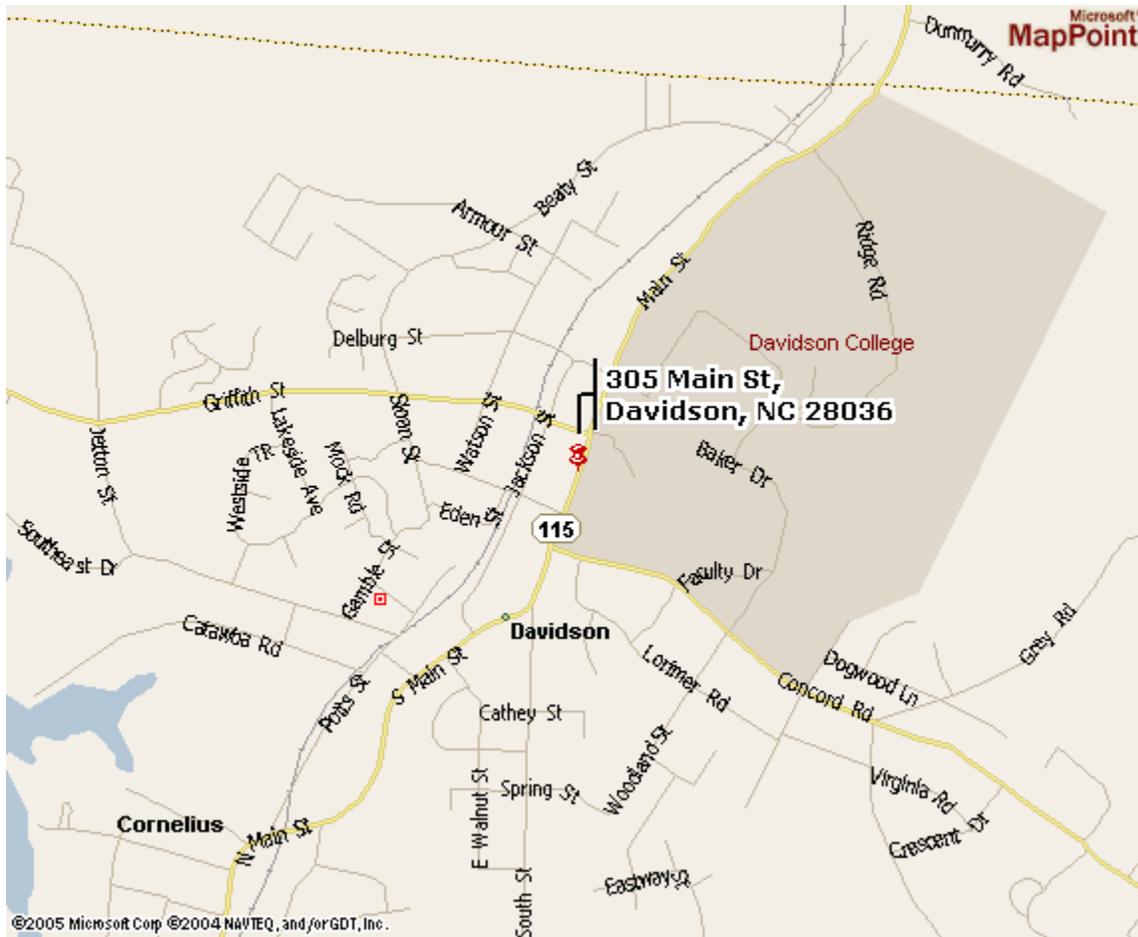
1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Holt-Henderson-Copeland House is located at 305 North Main Street in Davidson, North Carolina.

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

Donald Copeland
16710 Lake Shore Drive
Cornelius, NC 28031-8686
704-892-8340

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

4. Maps depicting the location of the property: This report contains a map depicting the location of the property.



5. Current deed book reference to the property: The most recent deed to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 4518 page 553. The tax parcel number of the property is 003-256-06.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property: This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property.

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains a brief architectural sketch of the property.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S. 106A-400.5. The Commission judges that the property known as the Holt- Henderson-Copeland House does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

a. The Holt-Henderson-Copeland House, first built according to historian Mary Beaty as a humble dwelling in the 1850s but substantially expanded sometime

after 1870, is among the oldest residences in Davidson and is an essential component of the North Main St. streetscape..

b. The Holt-Henderson-Copeland House became the residence of Davidson's first town doctor, Dr. William A. Holt.

c. The Holt-Henderson-Copeland House is a well-preserved example of a gable-front-and-wing, Italianate-style dwelling in Davidson.

d. The Holt-Henderson-Copeland House served the community as a student boarding house for over one hundred years and thus demonstrates the symbiotic relationship that existed between the college and the community.

9. Ad Valorem tax appraisal: The assessed value of the Holt-Henderson-Copeland property is \$60,800 for the building and \$260,800 for the land. The combined value is \$321,600.

Date of preparation of this report: December 16, 2005.

Prepared by: Neil Cottrell and edited and revised by Dr. Dan L. Morrill and Jennifer Payne.

Historical Overview



Summary Statement of Significance

The Holt-Henderson-Copeland House is an Italianate-style dwelling, the original core

of which according to historian Mary Beaty was built in the 1850s. It possesses special historic significance as one of the oldest extant structures in Davidson and as an essential component of the historic streetscape of North Main Street. Moreover, in its role as a boarding house for over 100 years for Davidson College students, the Holt-Henderson- Copeland House documents the symbiotic relationship that has existed between the college and the town.

Context Statement

Davidson College, which was established in 1835 to educate young men according to the values of the school's Presbyterian founders, has provided the impetus for the evolution and development of the Town of Davidson. From 1835 to 1874, the town was a relatively isolated college community; and its growth was almost exclusively linked to the increasing number of students and faculty who attended or taught at Davidson College. Not only was the built environment of Davidson in this period characterized by faculty and student housing, but also by dwellings and commercial structures built for the fledgling merchant class that provided goods and services to the students and faculty.

Profound change came to Davidson in 1874, when the reactivation of the railroad linking Charlotte and Statesville removed Davidson from its relative isolation and introduced forces that made the town a commercial and industrial center for the rural environs of northern Mecklenburg County and southern Iredell County. The late 1800s and early 1900s witnessed the rise of textile manufacturing in Davidson through the construction of such notable structures as the Linden Mill and the Delburg Mill. The mills had a significant impact on the nature of the built environment of Davidson through the introduction of industrial buildings and mill housing. The College continued to be important to the growth of the town in the late 1800s and throughout the early and mid-twentieth century and also occasioned significant changes in the built environment primarily through the introduction of faculty housing constructed in a variety of styles, but also through the creation of campus buildings such as the literary society halls and Jackson Court.

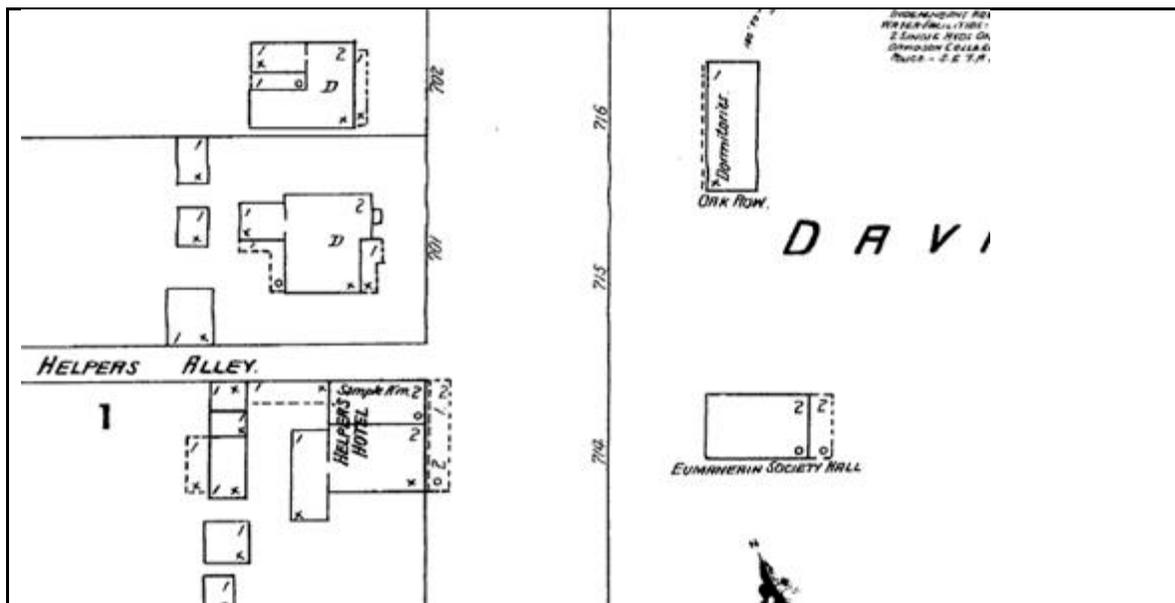
The Holt-Henderson-Copeland House is an excellent example of a residence that has served the community and the college since the mid-nineteenth century. Constructed adjacent to the Carolina Inn and across the street from the Davidson College campus, the Holt-Henderson-Copeland House has provided its occupants easy access to the school and the town's business district for over a century.

The Holt-Henderson-Copeland House

The historical significance of the Holt-Henderson-Copeland House rests primarily on its existence as one of the oldest extant homes in Davidson, its being the home of Davidson's first physician, and its use as a boarding house. According to historian

Mary Beaty, the central core of the dwelling was constructed in the 1850s by Jacob Coldiron, a local tailor. Coldiron and other early residents of Davidson took advantage of the recently-founded College to offer goods and services along what was then known as the Great Road, known today as North Main Street. The original portion of the home included what is presently the southern wing of the front façade.^[1]

In addition, the Holt-Henderson-Copeland House is a remnant of the early period of development in Davidson, from its anomalous beginnings as a college town through its evolution as a small community with connections to both education and industry. In 1862, the home was sold to Dr. William A. Holt and his wife, Julia, who enlarged it and sometime before 1909 (see photograph below) remodeled the dwelling that they had purchased from Coldiron, giving the home the appearance that it retains to this day.^[2]



1902 Sanborn map. The Holt-Henderson-Copeland House address is 701.

Dr. and Mrs. Holt quickly became integral parts of the history of the town. Dr. Holt came to Davidson following his service in the Confederate Army as the town's first medical doctor. He served in this capacity for over twenty years, attending to patients in an extension on the rear of the Holt- Henderson-Copeland House that served as his office.



Dr. William A. Holt's sign that was posted on his office door. Davidson College Archives.

Mrs. Holt, like her husband, was involved in the growth of the central institutions of the town. While Davidson came into existence as a result of the establishment of Davidson College, there were no formalized primary institutions of education in the town. Children in Davidson who received primary education were taught out of the home of town residents, a tradition which continued into the 1880s. Mrs. Holt conducted one of the earliest schools for girls in the town on the Davidson College campus in Tammany Hall.^[3]

The prevalence of boarding houses in Davidson in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been a force that has molded the distinctive symbiosis between the town and Davidson College. There was no dining hall on campus until 1946, so these boarding houses in which Davidson College students took all of their meals were a necessity.^[4] The boarding house culture gave town residents a way to earn a good living while educating their sons; and as town historian Mary D. Beaty has noted, also occasioned the construction of some of the grander houses in Davidson. The Holts took advantage of the central location of the house and also began taking in Davidson College students as boarders. Local tradition holds that Mrs. Holt made her boarding house one of the most popular in Davidson by the 1880's.^[5] Her efforts in easing the students' homesickness continued even after she stopped taking in boarders. She would welcome them into her home with southern hospitality and shared stories of her fifty years in Davidson.^[6]



Above: Photograph taken at wedding of Julia Holt and D. W. McIver. The wedding party is in front of the Holt-Henderson-Copeland House- December 1909. (Photograph courtesy of the Davidson College Archives)

Mrs. Miles Henderson purchased the house following Julia Holt's death in December 1912, and a boarding house operated continuously therein until the property was sold by her son to the Reverend William Creecy Copeland and his wife Henrietta Copeland in 1944. William Copeland, a 1916 graduate of Davidson College and a Presbyterian minister, returned to Davidson to manage the Henderson boarding house in 1935.^[7] Copeland preached at several churches in the area and also gardened and helped his wife run the boarding house. During World War II he trained Air Force pilots stationed in Bennettsville, S. C., which provided enough money to enable him to open a general store on Main Street (only a few blocks from the Holt-Henderson-Copeland House).^[8] In the mid 1970's the Copelands moved to Montreat, North Carolina. The Holt-Henderson-Copeland House has since been used as a framing store and for housing students at Davidson College. The Copeland's son, Dr. Donald Copeland, a 1956 graduate of Davidson College, is the current owner of the property and is considering refurbishing the home and converting it into a bed and breakfast.^[9]

Architectural Description



According to historian Mary Beaty built in the 1870s around an older structure, the Holt-Henderson-Copeland House is a important local example of the Italianate Style. The house's exterior is well preserved, with a high degree of integrity. The interior of the house experienced some changes during the twentieth century; however, the interior of the principal section of the house has retained most of its nineteenth-century features. The importance of this house to understanding the historical residential patterns in Davidson, especially the use of the house as a boarding house and its association with a locally prominent physician, is obvious. The house possesses architectural significance as one of the oldest surviving houses in Davidson, and also as one of the very few surviving examples of the Italianate Style in Mecklenburg County's small towns.



The Holt-Henderson-Copeland House faces east and is located close to the sidewalk on a long relatively narrow lot which slopes gently to the west. The yard has decorative plantings in the front but is otherwise mainly treeless. There are no extant outbuildings, including Dr. Holt's original office.

The Holt-Henderson-Copeland House has a cross-gabled form. The two-story frame house originally rested on stone piers, which are now in-filled with brick. The house is sheltered with a standing seam metal roof, and features drop siding. Typical for the Italianate Style, the Holt-Henderson-Copeland House features eave brackets, a one-story bay window, paired front doors, and segmental-arched two-over-two windows surrounded with decoratively sawn surrounds that emphasize the crown of the windows.

The front-projecting two-story gable features a centered one-story bay window which is composed of paired segmental-arched windows on the front, and single two-over-two windows on the sides, with recessed panels below the windows. The bay window is protected by a low-pitched hip roof supported with the scroll brackets. Above the window bay are paired segmental-arched windows. The gable features substantial returns supported with brackets, and a vent surrounded with curved trim.



To the south of the front-gabled section is a two-bay wide gabled wing that project to the south. The wing features a hipped-roof porch supported by chamfered posts decorated with applied mouldings, sawn brackets, and turned pendants. The porch roof shelters the front door. The doorway is composed of simple chamfered pilasters supporting a crown with large dentil trim. Typical of the Italianate Style, narrow, glazed double doors were used. Glazing in the doors consists of tall round-arched lights, topped with square lights set high in the tall doors. The doors also feature flat panels surrounded with moulded trim.



South Elevation



North Elevation

The south elevation of the principal section of the house is two bays wide. The bays on the first and second stories are filled with single two-over-two windows with curved, sawn trim that accentuates the windows' moulded crowns. The gable features pronounced returns supported with brackets like those found on the front of the house. Centered in the gable is a small window with segmental-arched head trim. The two sash in the small window do not match each other and are not original.



Door - North Elevation



Window found on the north and south elevations.

The north elevation of principal section of the house is two bays wide. The rearmost bay on the first story contains a four-panel door topped with a two-light transom. Like the windows, the doorway is surrounded with curved, sawn trim that accentuates a moulded crown. The three remaining bays are filled with double-hung windows like those found on the south elevation.

Most of the rear elevation of the principal section is obscured by a one-story rear ell and a small two-story addition. The rear gable contains an attic vent with louvered shutters. The rear ell is set back slightly from the north elevation of the principal section. The north elevation of the ell features some of the same elements found on the principal section, including brackets under the eaves. The ell was originally pierced by two window openings with curved, sawn trim and moulded crowns. One of the original window openings has been covered over with siding. The other opening was enlarged to hold a second set of sash. A gabled addition extends from the rear of the ell. The rear addition lacks the decorative trim found on the rest of the house. The south elevations of the rear ell and rear addition have been altered and are now covered with simple siding. A small porch on the south elevation of the addition has been enclosed.

^[1] Mary D. Beaty, *Davidson: A History of the Town from 1835 until 1937* (Davidson, NC: Briarpatch Press, 1979), 28.

^[2] Ibid.

^[3] Ibid., 40.

^[4] Beaty, 162.

^[5] Ibid.

^[6] Lucy Phillips Russell, *A Rare Pattern* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957), 89-90.

^[7] Neil Cottrell, Interview with Dr. Donald Copeland.

^[8] Ibid.

^[9] Ibid.