Addendum to the Survey and Research Report for William and Nell Freeman House

The ca. 1927 William and Nell Freeman House, originally located at 201 South Ames Street in Matthews, North Carolina, was designated as a local historic landmark in 2019. The designation included the house, barn, and the 0.582 acre of land associated with Tax Parcel Number 22702445. The house later faced the threat of demolition. A Certificate of Appropriateness to move the house and barn to the neighboring 0.513 acre lot at 145 South Ames Street, Matthews, Tax Parcel Number 22702446, was issued by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission in 2022. The house and barn were moved and renovated at their current location. The comparably sized 0.513 acre lot now containing the Freeman House and barn is an appropriate location for the relocated structures. The new lot was part of the original one-acre house site purchased by William Freeman in 1923,[1] and the house and barn are oriented to South Ames Street in a similar manner to the original. Accordingly, the relocation of the Freeman House and barn to the adjacent 0.513 acre lot has had minimal impact as to the integrity of the setting or feeling of the Freeman House and barn.

Staff recommends that the existing designation ordinance for the William and Nell Freeman House be amended to retain the original landmark designation for the Freeman House and barn, to include in the landmark designation only the current location of the house and barn (namely, the 0.513 acres of land in Tax Parcel Number 22702446), and to remove the prior historic designation for Tax Parcel Number 22702445.

Prepared by Stewart Gray
October 2025

[1] William Freeman purchased the 1 acre parcel from "W. C. Billingsley and Wife" Deed 5180-362 was recorded with the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds on October 5, 1923.

William & Nell Freeman House, 145 S. Ames Street, Matthews (December 16, 2025)

Freeman House
Front/North elevation (above) and East elevation (below).

William & Nell Freeman House, 145 S. Ames Street, Matthews (December 16, 2025)

Freeman House.
West elevation (above) and Rear/South elevation (below).

William & Nell Freeman House, 145 S. Ames Street, Matthews (December 16, 2025)

Barn at rear of Freeman House parcel.
Front/North and East elevations (above) and Front/North and West elevations (below).

Survey and Research Report
On The
The William and Nell Freeman House
December 11, 2017

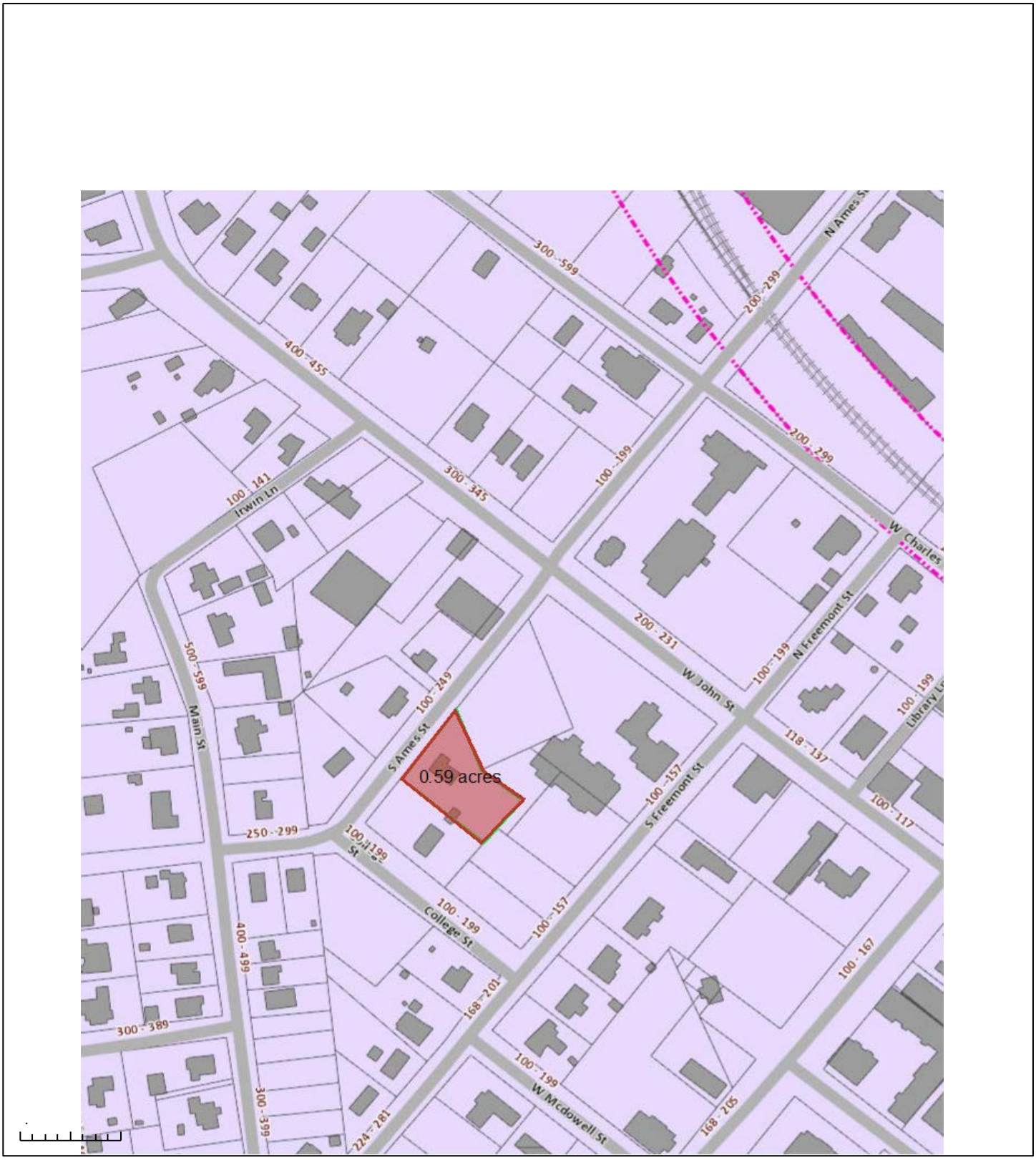
1. **<u>Name And Location Of The Property</u>. The William and Nell Freeman House is located at 201 South Ames Street in Matthews, N.C.**

2. **<u>Name And Address Of The Present Owner Of The Property</u>.**

   Matthews Presbyterian Church
   P. O. Box 97
   Matthews, N.C. 28106

3. **<u>Representative Photographs Of The Property. The report contains representative photographs of the property</u>.**

4. **<u>Map Depicting The Location Of The Property</u>. <u>This report contains a map depicting the location of the property.</u>**


0.59 acres
Irwin Ln
Main St
S Ames St
College St
W John St
N Freemont St
S Freemont St
W Mcdowell St
W Charles
N Ames St
Library Ln
300 - 599
200 - 299
400 - 455
300 - 345
100 - 199
100 - 141
200 - 231
500 - 599
100 - 249
118 - 137
100 - 117
250 - 299
100 - 157
400 - 499
168 - 201
100 - 167
300 - 389
300 - 399
224 - 281
168 - 205

5. Current Deed Book Reference To The Property. The current deed to the property is recorded in Deed Book 31007 at Page 744. The tax parcel number of the property is 23702445.

6. A Brief Historic Sketch Of The Property. The report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

7. A Brief Physical Description Of The Property. The report contains a brief physical description of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

8. Documentation Of Why And In What Ways The Property Meets The 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 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission judges that the William and Nell Freeman House possesses special significance in terms of the Town of Matthews. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

1) The William and Nell Freeman House is a superior example of Craftsman style architecture in Matthews, North Carolina.

2) The William and Nell Freeman House was constructed by a builder of homes and therefore illusratrates William Henry Freeman's talents as a contractor.

3) The William and Nell Freeman House retains a high degree of physical integrity.

4) The ample size of the lot is suggestive of a farmyard, not a small urban lot. William and Nell Freeman did have farm animals on the property. It therefore demonstrates how rural habits and lifestyles comingled with urban culture in small towns in Mecklenburg County.

5) The William and Nell Freeman House contributes to public understanding of the evolution of the built environment of small Mecklenburg towns in the late nineteenth and early twentied centuries.

6) The barn on the William and Nell Freeman House property is the only surviving barn in Matthews that was constructed contemporaneously with the house.

b. Integrity Of Design, Setting, Workmanship, Materials, Feeling, And/Or Association. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission judges that the physical description included in this report demonstrates that the William and Nell Freeman House 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 that becomes a designated "historic landmark." The current appraised value of the William and Nell Freeman House is $105,200. It is exempt from the payment of property taxes.

10. Portion of the Property Recommended for Designation. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission recomends that the interior and exterior of the house, the barn, and all of the land and landscape features associated with the tax parcel be designated as an historic landmark. would be included. The configuration of the three bedrooms, the hallway, the living room and the dining rooms would be included in the designation, as would the millwork throughout the house, the original floors, the hearths and fireboxes, and the original hardward.

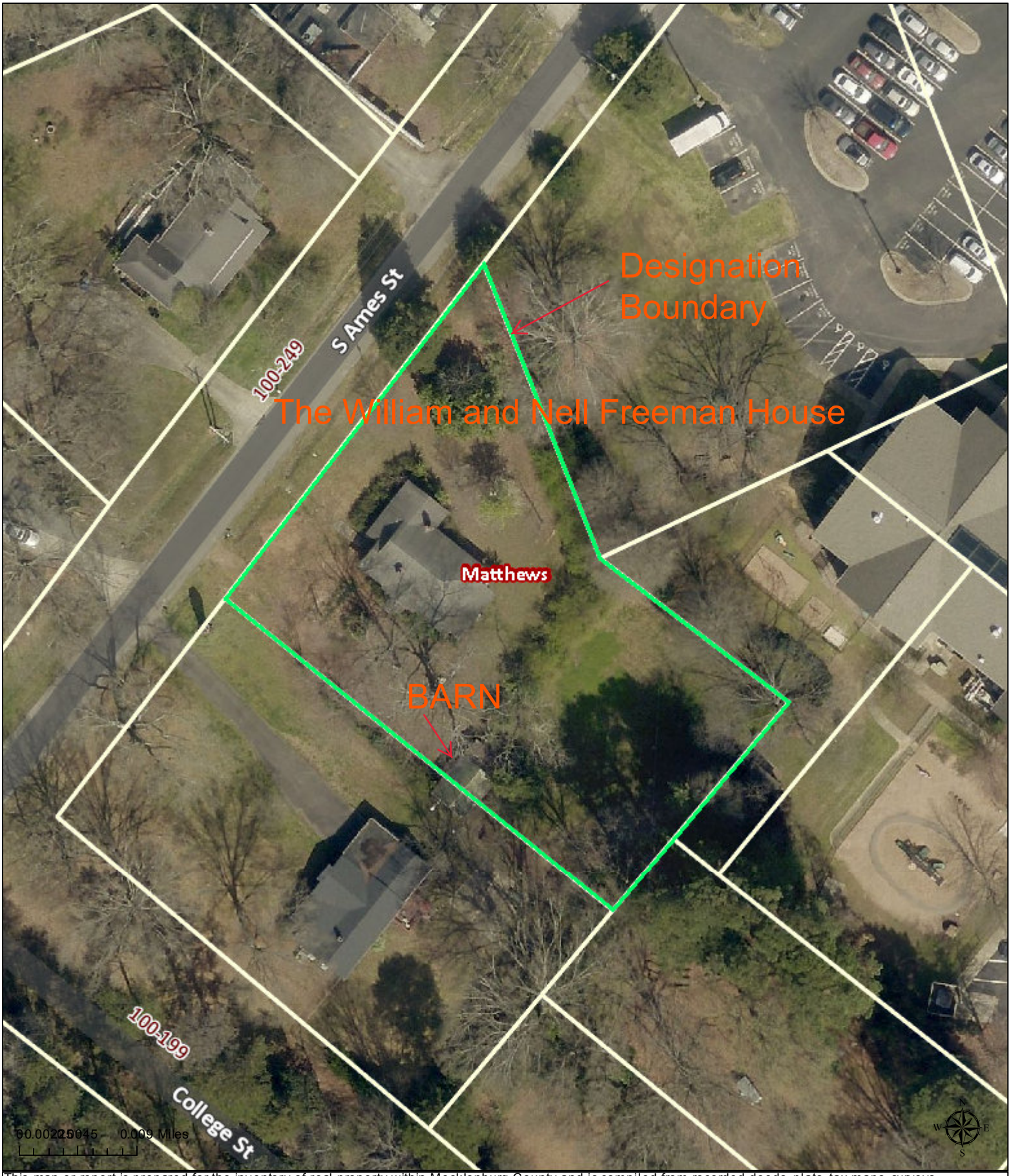
11. Statement of Integrity. The William and Nell Freeman House has retained a high degree of integrity in terms of the house design and the house's materials. The house has been minimally altered, with both the interior and exterior retaining much of their original architectural features. The intact porch features both original wood and masonry elements, the original windows and exterior doors, original siding, and original interior floors and millwork are notable. Changes that have been made have not significantly impacted the historic character of the bungalow and have not caused a significant loss of original material.

Date Of The Preparation Of This Report: December 11, 2017

Prepared By: Dr. Dan L. Morrill

Polaris 3G Map – Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

Date Printed: 7/12/2019 12:06:46 PM



This map or report is prepared for the inventory of real property within Mecklenburg County and is compiled from recorded deeds, plats, tax maps, surveys, planimetric maps, and other public records and data. Users of this map or report are hereby notified that the aforementioned public primary information sources should be consulted for verification. Mecklenburg County and its mapping contractors assume no legal responsibility for the information contained herein.

A Brief History Of The
The William and Nell Freeman House

Dr. Dan L. Morrill
December 11, 2017

William Henry Freeman (1869-1947) and his son, William Reid Freeman (1895-1974), built the distinctive Craftsman style William and Nell Freeman House in 1927.[1] The *Charlotte Observer* described William Henry Freeman as a "retired architect and contractor" at the time of his death in 1947.[2] That Freeman and his son chose to construct the latter's residence on South Ames Street is not surprising. A native of Union County and longtime resident of Matthews, the elder Freeman was a member of Matthews Presbyterian Church, located next door.[3] There is no evidence that William Henry Freeman received a degree or was licensed as an architect. Most likely, as a home builder, he was familiar with house designs and employed that knowledge in the construction of the home on South Ames Street. Architectural magazines and mail-order catalogues that featured Craftsman style house plans were readily available in the 1920s. Freeman surely would have read them. According to one of his descendants, William Henry Freeman was a "gentleman farmer." He owned land in Union County and acquired crops from his tenants for resale. According to his great grandson, Freeman was a "larger than life" person and "the life of the party." He was also a skilled carpenter, as is evidenced by the results of his work at the Freeman House.[4]

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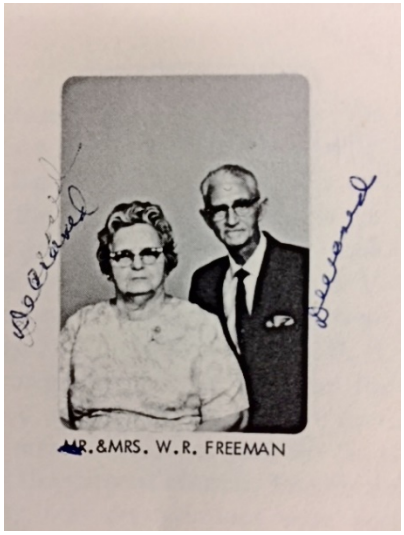
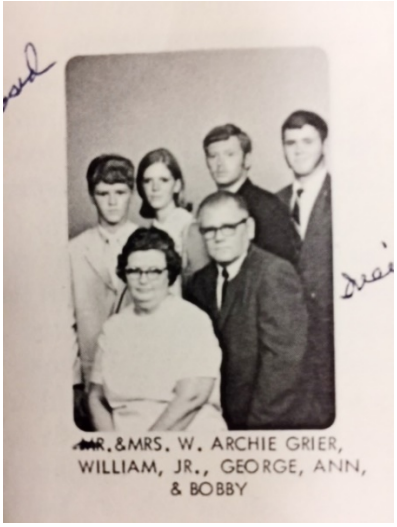
[1] *Charlotte Observer*, June 11, 1974; Ancestry.com; interview of Mr. Mac Cisco by Dr. Dan L. Morrill, October 31, 2017.
[2] *Charlotte Observer*, January 21, 1947.
[3] *Charlotte Observer*, December 11, 13, 1934, William Henry Freeman served on the building committee of the older sanctuary of Matthews Presbyterian Church.
[4] Interview of Mr. Mac Crisco by Dr. Dan L. Morrill, November 9, 2017. Hereinafter cited as *Crisco*.

The house on South Ames Street was the home of William Reid Freeman and his wife, Nell Stroupe Freeman (1902-1981). Mac Crisco (1958-Present) grew up next door to the Freeman House and remembers his grandparents well. Like his father, William Reid Freeman was a devoted member of Matthews Presbyterian Church, where he served as a Deacon and Church Treasurer. Freeman was also a member of the Matthews Town Council. A veteran of World War One, W. R. Freeman was a long-time employee of the U. S. Postal Service.[5] "He drove a postal truck around Matthews and Charlotte," says his grandson.

At home Freeman devoted a lot of time and energy to gardening. Mac Crisco says that his grandfather "always had a garden in the flat area beside the barn." Freeman had "books on gardening" and "always grew a lot of vegetables." He was also "into carpentry and was always fixing things." Cisco's grandmother, Nell Freeman, was a homemaker. She "would can vegetables and things" and "bake and sell cakes" for extra income. "They had chickens and a cow," Mac Crisco says. Nell grew up in the Plaza Midwood neighborhood of Charlotte, but in Matthews Nell adapted to a more rural-like lifestyle. She would "milk the cow" and "ring the chickens' necks."[6] After Nell Freeman's death in June 1981, her daughter, Katherine Freeman Grier, and her family moved into the house. Katherine continued to maintain a large garden beside the barn. She lived in the house until her death at age 91 in January 2014. Like her father and her grandfather, Katherine was a member of Matthews Presbyterian Church, where her funeral was conducted.[7] Matthews Presbyterian Church purchased the William and Nell Freeman House in July 2016.[8] According to Mac Crisco, the family believed that Matthews Presbyterian Church would restore the house.[9] The Church has decided instead to demolish the house unless it is moved off site.[10] Efforts are underway to determine if the house can be preserved.



Nell and William Reid Freeman



Katherine Freeman Grier and Family

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[5] *Charlotte Observer*, June 11, 1974.
[6] *Cisco*. *Charlotte Observer*, June 12, 1981.
[7] *Charlotte Observer*, January 23, 2014. *Cisco*. Interview of Fey Grayson by Dr. Dan L. Morrill, November 6, 2017. Hereinafter cited as *Grayson*.
[8] Mecklenburg County Deed Book 31007, Page 744.
[9] *Cisco.*
[10] *Grayson*.

The special significance of the William and Nell Freeman House is best understood within the context of the developmental history of Matthews, N.C., and its place in the emergence of other small towns along railroad lines in Mecklenburg County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Historian Richard Mattson describes how between the 1880s and the Great Depression of the 1930s a group of "sleepy stagecoach stops or crossroad hamlets" in Mecklenburg County morphed into "centers of local trade with bustling main streets." Pineville, Huntersville, Cornelius, and Matthews, says Mattson, followed "common patterns of development that engendered a distinctive small-town landscape." One and two-story corbeled brick commercial buildings formed the main streets of these communities, which invariably intersected or were located next to the town's principal railroad tracks. Radiating out from the central business district of each of Mecklenburg's small towns was a collection of fashionable residences, commonly on the major thoroughfares, that illustrated the desire of prominent townspeople to fulfill their "urban ambitions."[11]

The largest concentration of stylish older homes in Matthews was located to the immediate west of the town's commercial core, south of the railroad, and along West John Street. Such extant fashionable residences as the Nancy Reid House (1890) at 134 West John Street, the B. D. Funderburk House (1904) at 201 West Charles Street, and the McLaughlin Bost House (c. 1891) at 415 West John Street, attest to the range of designs made possible by sawn lumber and manufactured nails brought to Matthews by rail at the turn of the last century. Balloon framing made the construction of elaborately embellished Victorian and early Colonial Revival style homes easier and faster. Houses bedecked with manufactured filigree were commonly found in small towns like Matthews in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Nancy Reid House

B. D. Funderburk House

McLaughlin Bost House

[11] http://www.cmhpf.org/kids/neighborhoods/small-intro.html. Hereinafter cited as *Mattson*. For a general history of Matthews, see Lester, Paula Hartill. 1999. *Discover Matthews From Cotton to Corporate*, Charlotte: Herff Jones Publishing Company for The Town of Matthews Tourism Council. Hereinafter cited as *Lester*. The Town of Matthews emerged as one of many satellite communities that were established in the vicinity of Charlotte after the city developed as an important cotton distribution center and railroad hub in the 1850s. What would become Matthews began to take shape on July 12, 1825, when postal department records show that John Miles Fullwood was appointed postmaster in an area known as Stumptown. The new post office was established outside Fullwood's home. Stumptown soon became known by the locals as Fullwood. After the Civil War, a collection of general stores and other businesses emerged around the Fullwood post office. By 1870 the stagecoach stop of Fullwood had started to take shape as a town. Building lots were surveyed and streets were mapped out. In 1874 a section of the Central Carolina Railroad was completed through the town. The first train rolled into the town on December 15, 1874. The railway officials named the Fullwood stop "Matthews Station" in honor of Watson Matthews, a director of the Central Carolina Railway Company. A charter was granted on March 8, 1879, for Matthews to operate as a municipal corporation. The 1880 census listed 191 town residents. In 1909 Matthews had four general stores, a drug store, a bank, a grist mill, a blacksmith shop, a livery stable, and a hotel. By the 1920s, five passenger trains and eight freight trains passed through Matthews daily. (see *Lester*).

The predilections regarding home styles of many of the people who settled in Matthews in the late nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century tended in a different direction. They were demonstrably rural. These folks, says Mattson, preferred "traditional farmhouses" and lots large enough for "flourishing kitchen gardens, smokehouses, and other assorted outbuildings."[12] It was not unusual for these town dwellers to have cows, kitchens, and pigs. The Grier Furr House (c. 1878) at 500 West John Street exhibits the same form and massing as that found on many late nineteenth century and early twentieth century farmhouses in Mecklenburg County. Residences of this type were less pretentious and were devoid of elaborate ornamentation. "Uptown houses," Mattson writes, "blended the traditional with the up-to-date."[13]

In the early 1900s, aspiring residents of Matthews increasingly came to prefer the Craftsman style over the ornate Victorian themes of the late nineteenth century. Craftsman style architecture was part of a larger Arts and Crafts movement that sought to resurrect craftmanship from what many regarded as the toxic impact of the industrial age. According to one art historian, It arose from an "emotional unwillingness to accept and face the reality of our industrial world."[14] The emphasis in Craftsman style bungalows was upon "humble materials," and there was "an overwhelming sense of the handmade." Ornamentation was restrained, and "construction joints were proudly displayed."[15] Well suited for warm climates, bungalows had large front porches, usually supported by wooden posts resting on brick or stone piers, broad eaves, and clusters of windows to facilitate cross ventilation. Many designers looked upon the Craftsman bungalow as a cost-effective means to provide adequate housing for the working class. Matthews has several Craftsman bungalows of typical proportions and appointments. Examples include the houses at 509 West John Street and 500 Matthews Mint Hill Road.

509 West John Street

500 Matthews Mint Hill Road

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[12] *Mattson*.
[13] *Mattson.*
[14] Herwin Schaefer, "The Metamorphosis of the Craftsman," *College Art Journal* 17, no. 3 (Spring 1958): 266.
[15] William Morgan, *The Abrams Guide to American Styles* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, Inc., 2004), 258-259.

Matthews has a pair of 2-story brick bungalows. The Renfrow Lemmond House at 344 West John Street is a locally designated historic landmark. The second, at 110 West Matthews Street, houses an adaptive reuse.[16] These are the most imposing and largest Craftsman style residences in Matthews.

Renfrow Lemmond House 344 W. John Street

110 West Matthews Street

The "Pete" Phillips House, a local historic landmark at 301 West Charles Street, also has special historic significance. In addition to containing a well-crafted Craftsman style bungalow, the property contains a barn that belonged to the Morris family, who were earlier residents of the site. There is also a dilapidated agricultural outbuilding behind the Bost McLaughlin House at 415 West John Street. These structures are noteworthy cultural artifacts, because they illustrate that some townspeople in Matthews at the turn of the last century, like William and Nell Freeman, incorporated their rural habits and lifestyles into their daily urban routines. The dividing line between town life and farm life was supple and malleable at the turn of the last century.

[16] A reconnaissance survey of the built environment of Matthews conducted by this writer identified 16 Craftsman style bungalows in Matthews. Main Street has three – at 201 Main Street, 341 Main Street, and 525 Main Street. Three are extant on South Trade Street – at 224 South Trade Street, 300 South Trade Street, and 308 South Trade Street. Five Craftsman style residences are on West John Street – 226 West John Street , 344 West John Street, 408 West John Street, 509 West John Street, and 510 West John Street. There is a Craftsman style residence at 500 Matthews-Mint Hill Road and another at 110 West Matthews Street. A Craftsman style bungalow survives at 301 West Charles Street and at 304 Covenant Church Lane. The William Henry Freeman House is at 201 South Ames Street.

Morris Barn Behind Phillips House

Agricultural Outbuilding at Bost McLaughlin

Contributing to the special significance of the William Reid and Nell Stroupe Freeman House is the fact that it too has an extant agricultural outbuilding. The Freeman Barn is the only surviving barn in Matthews that was constructed contemporaneously with the house on the property. In this writer's judgment, that fact alone makes the Freeman site an important element in the built environment of Matthews. The destruction of the William and Nell Freeman House, its outbuilding, and its setting would eliminate an iconic connection between Matthews and its historic rural environs.

Freeman Barn West Facade

Freeman Barn Frame Interior

Barn Rear On South

Barn Door

Physical Description
Of The
William and Nell Freeman House
December 11, 2017

The William and Nell Freeman House is located on a partially-treed, grassed lot on the eastern side of South Ames Street, a paved roadway that has no sidewalks or curbs. The lot is essentially level. South Ames Street extends southward from West John Street, the principal east-west thoroughfare in Matthews, N.C. The neighborhood has a diverse built environment, which is exclusively residential except for the campus of Matthews Presbyterian Church, which sits at the southeastern quadrant of the intersection of Ames Street and West John Street, and a small commercial strip on the southwestern quadrant of the intersection. The Matthews Presbyterian Church is contiguous to the William and Nell Freeman House on the north.

The setbacks of the dwellings on South Ames Street vary. The neighborhood has a mature tree cover. The overall character of South Ames Street demonstrates that the neighborhood has evolved. It has never been a planned development. The streetscape is illustrative of the fact that many residents of Matthews, like those in other historically small towns in Mecklenburg County, lived in areas that transitioned from rural to urban. A wooden barn clad in wide siding and surmounted by a standing seam metal roof with a one-story shed-roof extension on the north is located at the southern edge of the lot.

Behind the barn a grass embankment slopes to a treeless area that was historically used for gardening and, most likely, a pasture. A gravel driveway with two narrow lanes extends along the southern edge of the lot and terminates at the barn, and a mostly-obscured brick and concrete sidewalk runs from the street perpendicularly to the front steps of the house.

South Ames Street Streetscape

Freeman House Front

South Elevation Of House

North Elevation Of House

The William and Nell Freeman House is a west-facing, three-bay wide and four-bay deep, one and one-half-story, front-gabled, wooden Craftsman style dwelling with a prominent one-bay wide front projecting bay that is topped by a gable. The gable of the projecting bay contains a louvered wooden vent. The house has a two-bay wide wraparound asphalt-shingled shed-roofed porch on the front with exposed rafter tails. The porch roof transitions into an asphalt-shingled gable roof on the north. The ceiling of the porch is tongue-and-groove beaded board. A rectangular metal light fixture is attached

Porch Ceiling

Front Door

to the ceiling. A six-light front door with three horizontal panels and a screen door with metal lattice in the lower half provides access to the interior.

The house rests upon a brick wall-and-pier foundation. There is a rear porch of the house which has been enclosed with clapboard siding and jalousie windows with metal surrounds. The rear portion of the asphalt-shingled roof of the house is hipped. An interior brick chimney with a corbeled cap penetrates the southwestern quadrant of the main roof. A partially exterior single-shouldered brick chimney is located near the rear of the wraparound porch, and a brick flue is near the northeastern corner of the house. Both have corbeled caps and metal covers. The principal cladding material of the house is drop siding. The predominant window type is 4/1 double sash. Wooden brackets support the front eaves.

House From Rear

Brick Foundation

At some point in the house's history the wooden front porch floor on the north side of the house was removed to create a covered patio with a masonry floor. Another major alteration has occurred on the southern façade. A shallow projecting bay entrance topped by a gable roof and flanked by sidelights was constructed on the south elevation, most likely in the mid-1900s. The gable is composed of vertical

Side Patio

Side Entrance

boards spaced apart approximately two inches. Four masonry steps bordered by wrought iron corner posts and railings lead to an entry porch into what was originally a bedroom, now a den.

The William and Nell Freeman House has features that separate it from a typical Craftsman bungalow. These include the exposed tongue-and-groove roof decking beneath the eaves, arches in the bases of the front porch posts to facilitate ventilation, wooden shingles with various reveals in the gable ends at the front and north side, and concrete caps on the brick foundation walls beneath the front wraparound porch. The gable ends of the barn also have openings for ventilation. Finally, the front porch posts have a decorative moulded band near the top.

Exposed Tongue-and-Groove Roof Decking

Ventilation Arches In Moulded Post Base

Shingles In Gable End

Post With Moulded Decorative Band

The interior arrangement of rooms in the William and Nell Freeman House is customary for a Craftsman style residence. The house is essentially divided into a public section on the north and a private section on the south. The northern half has three rooms. First is the living room, followed by the dining room, and finally the kitchen in the rear. In the southern half are three bedrooms and the only bathroom. A hallway connects the middle bedroom with the back bedroom. The bathroom is off the hallway. The kitchen and the bathroom retain no original features. The middle bedroom has been converted into a den or sitting room with a doorway to the outside.

One goes directly into the living room when entering the house. There is no entry hall. The room has a Craftsman style mantel. The mantel has prominent bases that match the height of the baseboard. The bases are topped with beveled trim. Rising from the bases are posts that support a shallow but thick shelf.

Living Room

Living Room Mantel

The mantel continues above the shelf to a cap composed of simple trim. The baseboard in the living room is broad with a moulded cap. The crown moulding is narrow. An original stamped metal light fixture is in the ceiling. The living room has narrow pine flooring, as do the dining room and the bedrooms. A pair of fifteen-light doors lead from the living room into the dining room, which has the same trim and floor features as the living room except for a narrow chair rail with moulded trim. A solid door with six horizontal panels leads from the dining room into the hallway connecting the middle bedroom and the rear bedroom. The bathroom is opposite.

Solid Door Leading To Hallway And Bathroom

Dining Room With Hallway To Right And Kitchen To Rear

The millwork and the trim in the bedrooms are the same that in the living room. The middle bedroom originally had a narrow staircase leading up to a fourth bedroom, which is now used for storage. The upper room is now accessible by a pulldown stairway. The middle bedroom contains a simple Craftsman style mantel. It has a brick hearth, starter blocks, and two sawn brackets supporting a shelf.

Craftsman Mantel In Middle Bedroom

Craftsman Mantel In Middle Bedroom

The property contains a side-gabled, wide-sided rectangular barn with a shed extension on the north. The barn is two bays wide and one bay deep. The northern bay on the western façade has a single wide opening. The southern bay contains a solid wooden door, as does the shed extension. There is a single wooden door in the middle of the eastern façade. Barn framing is exposed in the interior. The roof is standing seam metal. The gables have no overhang.

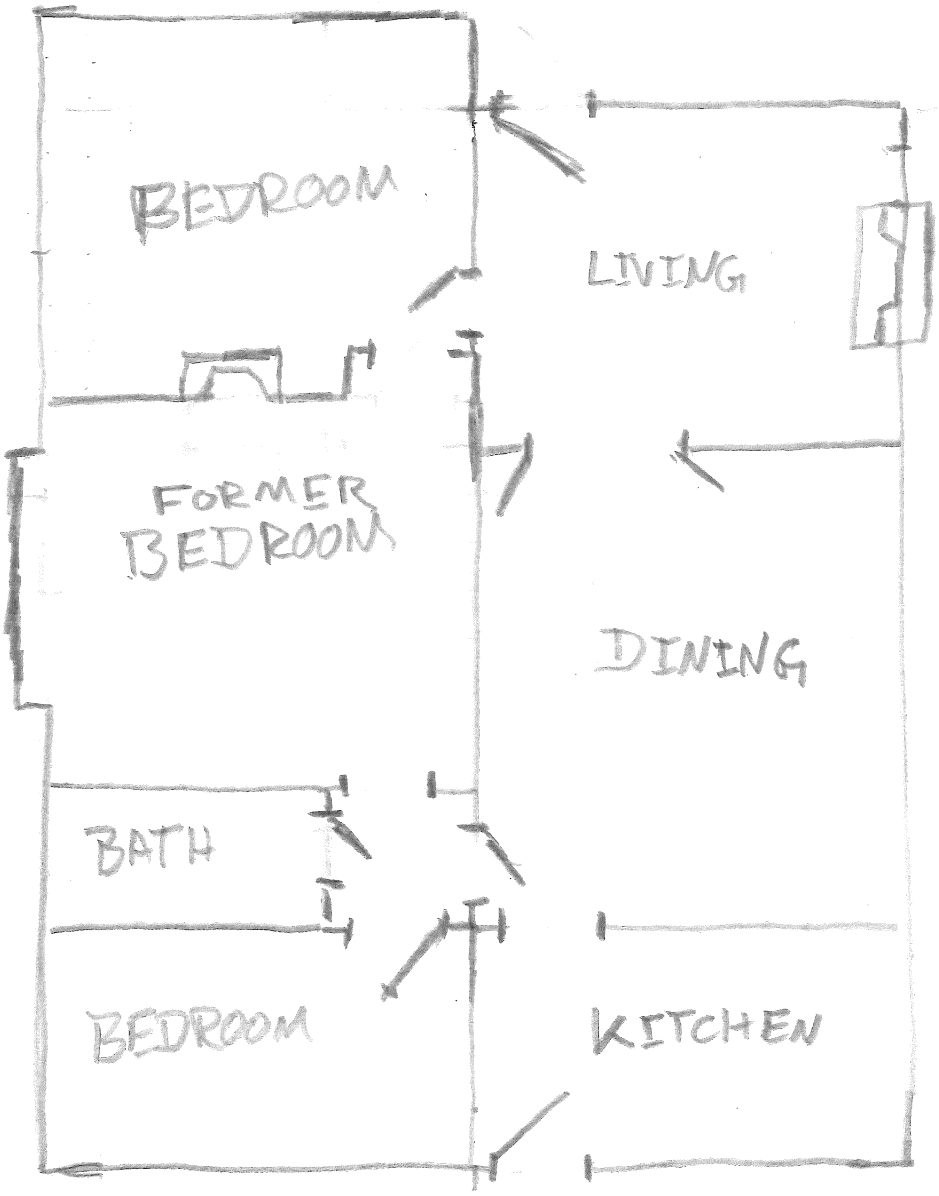
Exposed Inside Framing

Barn Eastern Facade

The William and Nell Freeman House (1927) 201 South Ames Street, Matthews, N.C.

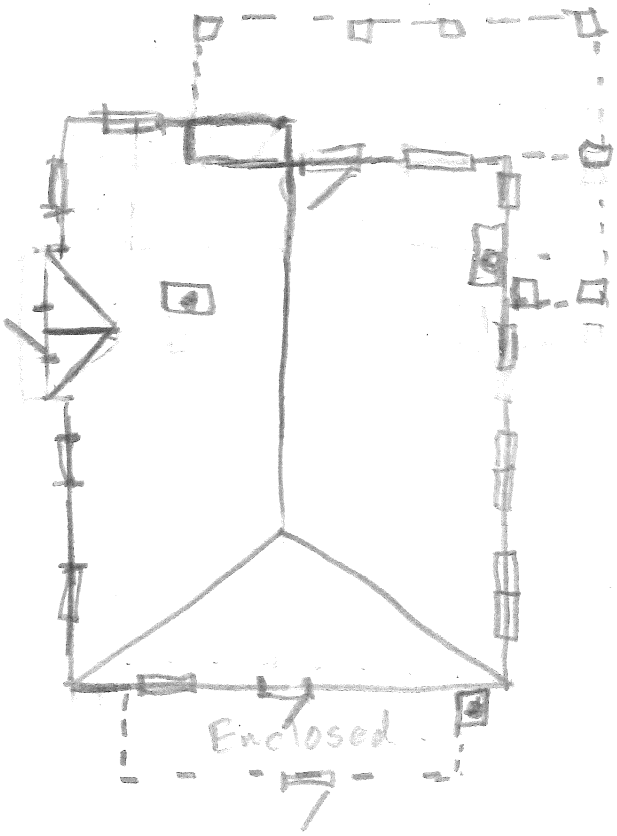
- **This writer acknowledges and appreciates Stewart Gray's assistance in composing the physical description.**

FRONT



FLOOR PLAN

FRONT



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Paula Hartill Lester, *Discover Matthews From Cotton to Corporate* (Charlotte: Herff Jones Publishing Company, 1999)

Mecklenburg County Deed Book

William Morgan, *The Abrams Guide to American Styles* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, Inc., 2004)

Herwin Schaefer, "The Metamorphosis of the Craftsman," College Art Journal 17, no. 3 (Spring 1958): 266.

http://www.cmhpf.org/kids/neighborhoods/small-intro.html