

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

White Oak Plantation (William Johnston House)

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATIONSTREET & NUMBER On SR 2826 (Robinson Church Road), 0.3 mi. North from junction with
SR 2822 (Hood Road) — NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Charlotte

VICINITY OF

9th

STATE

North Carolina

CODE
37

COUNTY

Mecklenburg

CODE

119

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

— DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

— STRUCTURE

— SITE

— OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

— PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

— BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

— IN PROCESS

— BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED

— UNOCCUPIED

— WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

— YES: RESTRICTED

— YES: UNRESTRICTED

— NO

PRESENT USE

— AGRICULTURE

— MUSEUM

— COMMERCIAL

— PARK

— EDUCATIONAL

☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

— ENTERTAINMENT

— RELIGIOUS

— GOVERNMENT

— SCIENTIFIC

— INDUSTRIAL

— TRANSPORTATION

— MILITARY

— OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Judge and Mrs. John Porterfield

STREET & NUMBER

White Oak Plantation, 7729 Hood Road

CITY, TOWN

Charlotte

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina 28215

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Mecklenburg County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Charlotte

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
☐ EXCELLENT	☐ DETERIORATED	☐ UNALTERED	☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☒ GOOD	☐ RUINS	☒ ALTERED	☐ MOVED DATE _____
☐ FAIR	☐ UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The immediate surroundings of White Oak reflect its rural heritage but subdivision housing is encroaching into the rolling fields of this one-time lower Piedmont plantation. White Oak Plantation is a two-story brick house of the "Catawba River Valley School." This school consists of a group of well constructed, Quaker plan houses of brick handsomely laid in Flemish bond. In this case the original Quaker plan has been converted to a center hall plan and the stair, which rose across the rear wall of the great hall has been turned to rise in the center hall. These changes occurred early; the other major changes are exterior and took place more recently. The most visible of these is an extension of the gable roof overhang and a very large, two-story gabled porch which covers the three bay main facade. These are reversible changes.

The house has nine-over-six sash set in molded frames surmounted by well-executed flat arches at both levels. The center entrance bay is surmounted by a three-light transom. The door, its surround and pediment, have been remodeled to their present appearance. Single shoulder exterior chimneys at either gable end, are flanked by windows, previously described, at the first and second levels and by windows with four-over-four sash in the attic. The rear facade is similar to the front except for a one-story, brick kitchen wing of recent vintage.

The interior finish features primarily well detailed early Federal style trim. The open string stair lost its original balustrade to vandals when the house was unoccupied. A simple, undulating wave pattern ornaments the stair brackets, above a large triangular spandrel panel with bolection molding decorated with fluted fan shapes in each angle. When in its original position, this stair must have been a wonderful complement to the parlor mantel, both of which were originally visible from the front door. The parlor mantel consists of a square fire opening with a molded surround flanked by engaged, reeded colonnettes. These rise to support a molded shelf that breaks at each end and over the center tablet which features reeding in a chevron pattern. Above the mantel is a large flat panel overmantel with molded surrounds which break into crossetts at each corner.

The mantels of the two smaller rooms of the first and second floor are similar to the main parlor mantel but simpler. Their unique feature lies in their placement, which is against the interior wall but their chimney is located at the exterior of the gable end. The main room, second floor, contains a slightly different mantel which is somewhat related in character to other nearby plantation houses of the area. It has a square fire opening with molded surround surmounted by a wide, unadorned frieze. Fluted pilasters rise to the top of the fire opening at which point fluted consoles form end blocks the height of the frieze and support a small, molded shelf with fret work, which breaks over the consoles. The consoles are related to Holly Bend and Oakwood plantations both in Mecklenburg County.

Simple wooden, molded cornices and chairrails prevail throughout the house. Door and window surrounds have three molded parts and the first floor windows have deep, splayed reveals. The chairrail forms the outer edge of the window sills. There are some raised panel doors, but most have six flat panels with applied Federal style molding on one side, raised panels on the rear. The later doors (mid nineteenth century) have four large panels.

There are three outbuildings near the house, two of log and a small, stone, storage house.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
— PREHISTORIC	— ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	— COMMUNITY PLANNING	— LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	— RELIGION	
— 1400-1499	— ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	— CONSERVATION	— LAW	— SCIENCE	
— 1500-1599	— AGRICULTURE	— ECONOMICS	— LITERATURE	— SCULPTURE	
— 1600-1699	☒ ARCHITECTURE	— EDUCATION	— MILITARY	— SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
— 1700-1799	— ART	— ENGINEERING	— MUSIC	— THEATER	
☒ 1800-1899	— COMMERCE	— EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	— PHILOSOPHY	— TRANSPORTATION	
— 1900-	— COMMUNICATIONS	— INDUSTRY	— POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	— OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		— INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES ca. 1800

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

White Oak Plantation was the home of William Johnston, a veteran of the Battle of King's Mountain and a substantial planter whose daughters married well into the Mecklenburg County gentry. The house, now not far from the edge of expanding Charlotte, is a handsome, well-finished brick dwelling akin to other substantial plantation houses of its period and region. Its Flemish bond brickwork, original Quaker plan (now altered), and simple dignity are characteristic of traditional Piedmont architecture. The woodwork of the interior, related stylistically to Holly Bend and Oakwood plantations in the county, is unusually lavish and handsomely detailed, combining late Georgian and early Federal modes.

White Oak was built, according to local tradition, by William Johnston in 1792, and served for many years as the center of an antebellum plantation in northeastern Mecklenburg County. Johnston and his brother James Johnston served in the militia in the early days of the Revolution, and William Johnston was a captain in the North Carolina militia at the Battle of King's Mountain in 1780.

Following the war William Johnston engaged in a number of land transactions in Mecklenburg County. White Oak was built on land obtained from John Wiley on March 19, 1784. The 414-acre tract cost Johnston 450 English pounds.² William Johnston and his wife Mary Ann had nine children. Several of his daughters married prominent Mecklenburg citizens, including Elizabeth Johnston who wed Hezekiah Alexander, Jr., the son of a signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence; several Johnston sons were active in the local militia.³ The 1790 census credits Johnston with the ownership of two slaves.⁴

The White Oak property stayed in the Johnston family until the 1840s. William Johnston's 1806 will left the property to his son Robert Johnston. From Robert it passed to his brother Samuel Johnston, and from Samuel to his brother, William Johnston, Jr.⁵ William Johnston, Jr., was a prosperous farmer, as indicated by the fact that he was able to pay \$1410 for the purchase of almost 300 acres of land in 1807.⁶ His 1846 will left this land to his son Ezekial, while leaving the White Oak property to his daughter Malissa,⁷ who in 1843 had married William C. Morris, the son of Zebulon Morris, a prosperous Mecklenburg County farmer listed as the owner of 30 slaves in 1850.⁸ The size of the plantation left to Malissa and William Morris was 110½ acres.⁹

Ante-bellum census records indicate that the Morris plantation was typical of pre-Civil War Mecklenburg farms. During this period Mecklenburg was predominantly rural. Its 1860 population was 17,374, only 2,265 of whom lived in Charlotte.¹⁰ William Morris owned 12 slaves in 1850.¹¹ This was not enough to enable him to compete with the few

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large-scale cotton plantations in the county, and census returns do not indicate his producing any of the staple crop. He grew large amounts of corn, an area staple, with some production of wheat, butter, and livestock. His farm was valued at \$5,000 in 1860.¹² By 1870 Morris had 900 acres, 300 of which were being farmed. That year he produced 100 bushels of corn, 120 bushels of wheat, 50 bushels of oats, and 275 pounds of butter.¹³

Morris died intestate around 1873 or 1874. A court appointed commissioner divided the land among his three children. Mary Jane Morris Cross, the eldest of the three, received the plot containing White Oak.¹⁴ She and her husband, Charles B. Cross, continued to farm the land as before, tilling 120 acres in 1880.¹⁵

The will of C. B.¹⁶ and Mary Jane Cross, dated March 3, 1937, left the property to their four daughters.¹⁶ In 1938 three of these daughters deeded their interest in the property to the fourth daughter, Lucille Cross Grier.¹⁷ On November 2, 1947 she deeded the property to her son William P. Grier, and his wife, Margaret Grier.¹⁸ On December 1, 1948, the land was sold to George A. White.¹⁹ After passing through the hands of several speculators and a period of neglect, the property was purchased by John Porterfield, the present owner, on September 15, 1966.²⁰ It has been carefully renovated by the Porterfields, who take great interest in the historical significance of White Oak.

FOOTNOTES

¹Worth S. Ray, The Mecklenburg Signers and Their Neighbors (Baltimore, Genealogy Publishing Company, 1966), p. 354; Roster of Soldiers From North Carolina in the American Revolution (Durham, N.C.: North Carolina Daughters of the American Revolution, 1932), p. 39, p. 482, p. 603.

²Mecklenburg County Records, Mecklenburg County Courthouse, Charlotte, North Carolina, Subgroup: Wills, Book 12-619.

³Genealogical Information supplied by current owners; Mecklenburg County Wills, Book D-97.

⁴First Census of the United States, 1790, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

⁵Mecklenburg County Wills, Book D-97, Book D-106. William Johnston, Sr.'s will left the land to his son Robert with the provision that it be under the care of Samuel Johnston, who was identified in the will as Robert's guardian, and with the further provision that the property would go to Samuel upon Robert's death. No explanation is offered in the will for this strange provision.

⁶Mecklenburg County Deeds, Book 18-321.

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⁷Mecklenburg County Wills, Book I-86.

⁸Mecklenburg County Marriage Abstracts, 170; Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Slave Schedule, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

⁹Mecklenburg County Wills, Book I-86.

¹⁰LeGette Blythe and Charles Raven Brockmann, Hornet's Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (Charlotte: McNally, 1961), p. 449, hereinafter cited as Blythe and Brockmann, Hornet's Nest.

¹¹Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, Slave Schedule.

¹²Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule; Blythe and Brockmann, Hornet's Nest, p. 116.

¹³Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule. Levi Branson's Branson's North Carolina Business Directory For 1869 (Raleigh: J. A. Jones, 1869), p. 101, lists Morris as the owner of 1003 acres.

¹⁴Mecklenburg County Deeds, Book 11-523.

¹⁵Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, Agricultural Schedule.

¹⁶Mecklenburg County Wills, Book Y-212. This transaction involved 100 acres.

¹⁷Mecklenburg County Deeds, Book 827-210. This transaction involved 218 acres.

¹⁸Mecklenburg County Deeds, Book 1261-177. This transaction involved 100 acres.

¹⁹Mecklenburg County Deeds, Book 1334-113. This transaction involved 99.11 acres.

²⁰Mecklenburg County Deeds, Book 2790-5810. This transaction involved 14.14 acres.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Blythe, LeGette and Brockmann, Charles Raven. Hornet's Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Charlotte: McNally, 1961.

Branson, Levi (ed.). Branson's North Carolina Business Directory For 1869. Raleigh: J. A. Jones, 1869.

Mecklenburg County Deed Books. Microfilm copy. Raleigh: Division of Archives and History.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 14.14 (see continuation sheet)

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	17	528300	3900420
B	17	528300	3900320
C	17	528000	3900320
D	17	528000	3900560

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Description prepared by C. Greer Suttlemyre, Survey Specialist
Significance prepared by Jim Sumner, Researcher

ORGANIZATION DATE

Division of Archives and History

STREET & NUMBER TELEPHONE

109 East Jones St. 733-4763

CITY OR TOWN STATE

Raleigh North Carolina 27611

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL _____ STATE _____ LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE November 17, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Roster of Soldiers From North Carolina in the American Revolution. Durham, N.C.: North Carolina Daughters of the American Revolution, 1932.

United States Census Office. Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. First Census of the United States. Seventh Census of the United States, Slave Schedule. Eighth Census of the United States, Agricultural Schedule. Ninth Census of the United States, Agricultural Schedule. Tenth Census of the United States, Agricultural Schedule. Raleigh: Microfilm copy, Division of Archives and History.

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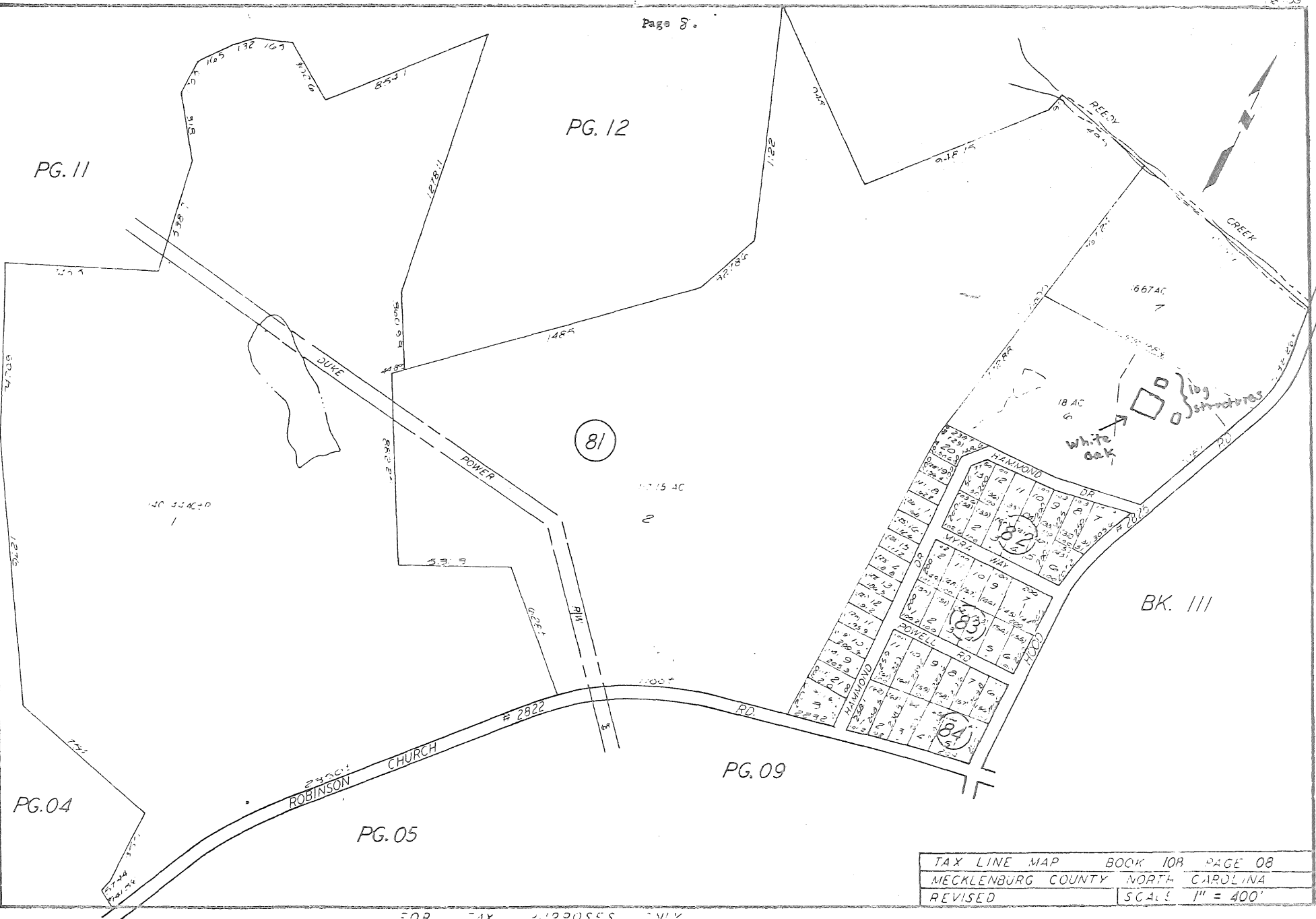
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14.14 acres includes house site and small amount of undeveloped rural land (owned by present owners). This acreage, as outlined on February 17, 1977, map, is that designated by local historic properties commission and seems a reasonable one.

PG.07



TAX LINE MAP	BOOK 108	PAGE 08
MECKLENBURG COUNTY	NORTH	CAROLINA
REVISED	SCALE	1" = 400'

FOR THE PURPOSES ONLY

