United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic General William Kerr House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number North side SR 1353 (Deal Road), 0.25 mi. west of junction with SR 1355 (Unity Church Road)

city, town Enochville

district vicinity of congressional district 8th congressional

state North Carolina code 037 county Rowan code 159

3. Classification

Category __ district

X building(s) public

structure

site

object

Ownership public

X private

both

Public Acquisition

X in process

being considered

N/A

Status X occupied

unoccupied

work in progress

Accessible yes: restricted

yes: unrestricted

Present Use X agriculture

commercial

educational

entertainment

government

industrial

military

X museum

park

private residence

religious

scientific

transportation

other:

4. Owner of Property

The Heirs of Cora Goodnight Overcash
c/o Mr. W. O. Overcash

street & number Route Three

city, town Mooresville

district vicinity of state N. C. 28115

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Register of Deeds

Rowan County Office Building

street & number 402 North Main Street

city, town Salisbury

state N. C. 28144

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

An Inventory of Architectural and Historical Resources in Rowan County

title has this property been determined eligible? X yes

date 1977 federal

state

county

local

depository for survey records Survey and Planning Branch

Division of Archives and History

city, town Raleigh state N. C.
Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The present appearance of the General William Kerr House owes to two periods of construction, the first being the raising of the two-story frame house between 1817 and 1820 for Kerr and the second the rebuilding of the front porch and the construction of the rear one-story ell and shed occurring in the late 1930s. The only substantial alteration to the original fabric of the house was the rebuilding of the porch during which the floor was replaced and the porch supports were changed to the present Bungalow style arrangement featuring brick piers and tapering wood posts.

The Kerr House, now sheltered and standing in a small grove of trees, was built on the north side of a road which the nineteenth century county historian, the Rev. Jethro Rumple, called the "Old Wilmington Road" and is now known as Deal Road. During its heyday, during the occupancy by Gen. Kerr, the house was the seat of his plantation and survives as one of a small number of substantial 1820s Federal style plantation seats including Mt. Vernon (NR), Wood Grove and Oakland. (Wood Grove and Oakland will also be nominated to the National Register.)

The two story frame house and its exterior end chimneys rest on a mortared stone foundation. The chimneys are laid up in Flemish bond and feature pencilled joints. The west chimney is intact; however, the stack of the east chimney has been lost above its shoulders. The gabled roof of the house features molded rakeboards on the gable ends and a dentil cornice across its front (south) and rear (north) elevations. This is the only known example of that architectural device surviving from the Federal period in the county.

The front (south) elevation of the house has a symmetrical three bay division on both stories and is preceded by a full-façade one-story shed porch. The porch has flush sheathed molded ends. The central entrance is set in a flush sheathed bay. The original six-panel door is surmounted by a three-pane transom. The door and all window openings in the two-story block are enframed by molded three-part Federal surrounds. Although the blinds have been lost, their hardware remains in place.

The window openings on the first story contain nine-over-nine sash windows and those on the second story hold six-over-nine sash.

The window openings have projecting unmolded sills. Chimneys flanked by fenestration at each level stand in the center of the house's east and west gable ends.

In the late 1930s the one-story ell and shed were added to the rear elevation. They rest on a cinder block foundation and are covered with German siding. The gabled roof ell occupies the western end of the elevation and contains the kitchen and dining room. The two-bay west elevation of the ell has a pair of four-over-four sash windows in the southernmost (dining room) bay and a smaller eight-over-eight sash window in the north (kitchen) bay. There is a second window for the kitchen near the center of the ell's north gable end. A porch along its east elevation terminated at the breakfast room accessible from both the porch and kitchen. The breakfast nook is naturally lighted by a pair of windows on its east elevation. To the east of the porch and behind the eastern end of the rear elevation is a one story shed which contains a bathroom, also accessible from the now enclosed porch. A window is centered in its east wall.
The interior of the house is built on a Quaker plan on the first story and a two-room plan on the second. The three rooms of the first story have molded baseboards and a chair rail enframing a flat paneled wainscot. The door and window openings have a three part surround resting on a shaped plinth at the baseboard level. The window surrounds thus enframe a molded panel below each window. The walls above the chair rail are plastered. The baseboard and plinths in the main room are painted black; all other woodwork (including the outside of the front door) is stained and grained to resemble mahogany. The closed string stair rises along the living room's north elevation in an open well to the east and after the mid-point in its ascent continues to the south. It has a turned newel surrounded by rectangular-in-plan balusters which continue along its flight below a round handrail. Curvilinear brackets decorate the ends of the stair. While the turn of the stairs is angular in plan, the handrail continues in an unbroken curve to the second floor landing.

A pair of six, flat panel doors are centered on the east wall of the living room—opposite the fireplace—and provide access into the equally sized rooms occupying the east end of the first story. They each have corner fireplaces with mantels of exact size, form, and detail. While a narrow molded member surrounds the fire opening, wide board pilasters rise from the base at either side of the opening to the side of the wide board frieze, above the opening, to the projecting mantel shelf. The baseboard in the front (south) chamber retains its original black paint; however, the wainscoting chair rail and door and window surrounds have been painted over. The six-panel door retains its stained and grained finish and box lock. The rear (north) chamber retains its original swirl stippled wainscot; the panel below the window has mahogany graining. A door in the center of this room's north wall was installed in the 1930s providing direct access to the bathroom. It has a five, horizontal panel arrangement with a plain board surround.

The stair rises to a board and batten door installed in the 1930s in a vertically sheathed wall which enclosed the large second room from the stair well. Apparently the stair originally rose to a large second floor hall above the living room and occupied the space on the second floor plan behind the center and westernmost bays on the front elevation. The railing guarding the once open stair well remains in place. The second floor originally had and retains a two-room plan with the exterior and partition walls sheathed in flush unpainted vertical pine boards. A flat, six panel door in the center of the partition wall connected the two rooms. The molded baseboard, chair rail, and three-part door and window surrounds, the door and cornice were likewise never painted and now enjoy a rich mellow natural finish.

Returning to the first floor, a five, flat panel door was installed in the north wall of the living room at the foot of the stairs to provide access into the dining room, the southernmost and larger of the two rooms in the ell. The walls here were originally covered with sheetrock; sheet paneling has been installed in recent years. The kitchen, reached through a door in the center of the partition wall separating the two rooms, has painted sheetrock walls as does the breakfast nook.
While this ell and the shed room containing the bathroom have provided for modern conveniences in a less sophisticated fashion than the design of the main house, they do not compromise its significance nor have they altered its appearance or fabric. The house, built by William Kerr and owned by only two other families in its 160 year existence, remains today an impressive house and a landmark in the Enochville area.
8. Significance

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Specific dates: N/A  Builder/Architect: Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The General William Kerr House, a two-story frame Federal plantation house, possesses architectural and historical significance in Rowan County. The house was erected on the north side of the Beatties Ford Road (now Deal Road) between 1817 and 1820 for William H. Kerr as the seat of his plantation of some 459 acres assembled in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Kerr was a member of the Rowan County Militia and in December 1817 he became colonel of the 7th Brigade of the North Carolina Militia. In 1827 Kerr was promoted to brigadier general of the 7th Brigade. General Kerr died in 1844 and in 1852 the house and its lands were sold to John L. Hedrick (1804-1899) who lived here for an undetermined period and who, by his death, was one of the largest land owners in Rowan County. The house remained in the Hedrick family until 1937; however, in the later years of their ownership it was occupied by tenants. Architecturally the house is one of the most important members of a small group of surviving Federal houses in rural Rowan County and enjoys the distinction of being one of the better crafted and least altered of the lot. The only significant change in the house's appearance has been the replacement of the front porch by the present arrangement in the late 1930s. The dentil cornice across the top of the front and rear elevations is original and is the single surviving Federal period example in the county of that device. The inside of the house was built on the Quaker Plan and retains its simple but well crafted Federal finish—sheathing, wainscoting, doors, mantels, stair, etc.—with most in their original stained and grained decoration.

Criteria Assessment:

B. The Kerr House is associated with the lives of two prominent citizens of Rowan County, that of the builder William H. Kerr who lived in the house until his death in 1844, and John L. Hedrick who occupied the house for an undetermined period of time after he acquired it in 1852. Kerr served in both the Rowan County Militia and the North Carolina Militia and was in 1827 promoted to brigadier general of the 7th brigade, North Carolina Militia. While Hedrick continued the operation of the farm here his real wealth accrued through wise investments in lands and other property. At his death he was one of the largest landowners in Rowan County with extensive holdings also in Davidson and Iredell counties.

C. The General William Kerr House, built between 1817 and 1820, is a distinguished example of Federal domestic architecture and embodies the primary characteristics of that style in its construction and finish. Excepting for the replacement of the front porch the fabric of the house is intact and perhaps more remarkable is the survival of a considerable amount of its stained and grained decoration. The dentil cornice across the house's main elevations is the single surviving example of that architectural form from the Federal period in Rowan County.
The Kerr House in Rowan County stands on a portion of the 459 acre tract put together by William H. Kerr in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The largest section, 393 acres, was purchased jointly by Kerr and Reuben Emerson in 1808, but the partnership dissolved and by March 31, 1817, Kerr held full title. A second tract of thirty five acres was sold to Kerr in 1816 by William McLean, and a smaller adjoining tract was purchased shortly thereafter. Sometime between 1817 and 1820, William H. Kerr built the house now standing on Deal Road.

Exactly when the house was built could not be determined from the available records; however, a series of events in 1817 may be related to the construction. He had purchased the bulk of the estate in his own name on March 31. On April 2 he was promoted to lieutenant colonel of the First Regiment of the Rowan County Militia after four years service as a major. On December 18, Kerr became colonel of the 7th Brigade of the North Carolina Militia. The last promotion was a definite elevation in social status since the 7th Brigade included the military units of both Rowan and Davidson counties. Since Salisbury was the headquarters for the 7th Brigade, the house may have been built for convenience as well as a reflection of his elevated social status. By 1820, he was living in his new house on what was then Beatties Ford Road (now Deal Road). Seven years later, December 29, 1827, Kerr was promoted to brigadier general of the 7th Brigade, a position held until he retired from military life.

General William H. Kerr also enjoyed success as a small planter. By 1844 he had acquired twelve slaves and a considerable stock of cows, hogs, and sheep. His income was sizable enough to send his son, James E., to Rocky River Academy in Cabarrus County and to the University in Chapel Hill. Kerr himself must have been reasonably well educated since he bequeathed a personal library to his wife Mildred. General Kerr died in 1844 leaving the homeplace and the plantation to his wife. To his son James, then a successful lawyer in Salisbury, he left $500 in cash.

Just how long Mildred Kerr remained in the house after the general's death is uncertain. On November 18, 1852, she and James, executor of William's estate, sold the 459 acre tract to John L. Hedrick of Davidson County. Mildred apparently moved to Salisbury to live with or near her son where she died in the late 1860s.

John L. Hedrick was born on June 8, 1804, in the part of Rowan County that became Davidson in 1822. He married Elizabeth Sherwood in 1826 and at least five children were born of the union. By 1860 Hedrick had moved to his Rowan County home from which he administered to an increasing number of properties. His real estate in 1860 was valued at $10,420 and his personal property at $8,479, placing him among the moderately wealthy. His home tract (the old Kerr place), however, was not the principal source of his income. Valued at $4,860, the farm consisted of 150 improved and 336 unimproved acres with the largest production being 800 bushels of corn. Hedrick owned only four slaves which appears to have been one family. Apparently, much of his income stemmed from investments and the leasing of his other properties.
Perhaps because he had little money tied up in slaves and was not dependent upon a cash crop, Hedrick, unlike many others, suffered little financial loss as a result of the Civil War. He was too old for service (he was 57 when the war began), and while two sons, Adam and Benjamin entered the Confederate army, John L. and his youngest son, John A., stayed home and took care of the farm. As a result, Hedrick had money available for additional purchases in the years after the war when land values dropped so drastically. Before his death, John L. Hedrick had become one of the largest landowners in Rowan County with over a thousand acres in Rowan, Davidson, and Iredell counties and at least five lots in Salisbury. His total estate in 1885 exceeded $100,000 in value, including fifteen shares in the North Carolina Railroad. John L. Hedrick lived to be ninety-five years of age. His last years were spent with one of his children (either John A. or Adam) rather than in the old homeplace. He died on October 24, 1899, and was buried in the Pilgrim Reform Church cemetery in Lexington.

Hedrick's will bequeathed the homeplace and approximately 300 acres to his daughter Sarah S. Siegle, wife of Thomas Siegle of Charlotte, as a life estate to be held in trust by John A. and Adam Hedrick. No mention was made as to who was to receive the property after Sarah's death, and the matter was complicated when both John A. and Adam died before Sarah. The result was a lengthy court litigation involving the grandchildren of John L. Hedrick. The issue was not settled until May 3, 1927, when the court appointed administrator, T. G. Furr, sold the old Carr /Kerr/ place to F. A. Brown of Caldwell County for $10,000. The house seems to have been rented out by the heirs but the records did not reveal the names of any tenants.

F. A. Brown sold the tract one month later to George C. and Alice McKinley Brown of Cabarrus County. An agreement between the Browns and A. P. Widenhouse on the same day for the latter to have rights to "all the merchantable saw timber except hickory" suggests that the tract may have been used as a timber reserve for some time previously. Perhaps the old dwelling house served as a home and office for the manager of Widenhour's timber operation for a while.

Two months after purchase, on August 18, 1937, George and Alice Brown transferred eighty eight acres and the house to William Baxter Goodnight of Cabarrus County. The deed was subject to the continued timber rights previously granted to A. P. Widenhour. In recent years the house has been rented by tenants, though for a while the Goodnight family may have lived there. Cora Overcash, daughter of W. B. Goodnight, now owns the 58½ acres on which the General William Kerr House stands.
Footnotes

1 Rowan County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Rowan County Courthouse, Salisbury, Deed Book 24, pp. 312, 592, 594-595, hereinafter cited as Rowan County Deed Book.

2 See Rowan County Deed Book 24, p. 595.

3 Papers of the Adjutant General's Department, State Archives, Raleigh, Roster of the Major Generals and Field Officers in Command of the Militia of North Carolina 1813-1840, Books AG7 and AG 10, hereinafter cited as N. C. Militia Officers with appropriate book designation.

4 See Fourth Census of the United States, 1820: North Carolina—Rowan County, Population Schedule, 266. Census records hereinafter cited by number, year, and appropriate schedule. Compare neighbors with Population Schedules in the 1830 Census (393), and 1840 Census (25).

5 N. C. Militia Officers, AG 10, 1828-1829. See also James S. Brawley, "Old Kerr Home Impressive to Consultant," The Salisbury Sunday Post, June 12, 1977, hereinafter cited as Brawley, "Old Home Impressive."


7 Brawley, "Old Home Impressive."

8 Rowan County Will Book I, 232.

9 Rowan County Deed Book 39, p. 578.

10 See Rowan County Records, State Archives, Raleigh, Estates Papers, Mildred Kerr, hereinafter cited as Estates Papers.

11 WPA Pre-1914 Graves Index, State Archives, Raleigh, arranged alphabetically by surname, hereinafter cited as WPA Graves Index; David Leroy Corbitt, The Formation of the North Carolina Counties 1663-1943 (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1950), 87; Davidson County Marriage Bonds, State Archives, Raleigh; Eighth Census, 1860, Population Schedule, 138 (county north of North Carolina Railroad); and Rowan County Will Book 3, pp. 325-337.


15. Rowan County Will Book 3, pp. 325-337. See also Estates Papers, John L. Hedrick and John A. Hedrick (son).

16. WPA Graves Index. See also Hedrick's will, Rowan County Will Book 3, pp. 325-337. His place of burial and reference to "my old home place" indicates a residence other than the Old Kerr House.

17. Rowan County Will Book 3, pp. 325-337.

18. See Estates Papers of John A. Hedrick; and references in deed from F. A. Brown to George C. and Alice McKinley Brown, Rowan County Deed Book 237, p. 202; and in deed from T. G. Furr to F. A. Brown, Deed Book 234, p. 97.


20. Rowan County Deed Book 238, p. 158.
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 58.52 acres

Quadrangle name Enochville, N. C.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Rowan County tax map, Atwell Twp., map # 240. Property is outlined in red.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Statement of significance, criteria assessment and architectural description

by Davyd Foard Hood; Historical research by Jerry L. Cross

organization Division of Archives and History

date July 8, 1982

street & number 109 E. Jones St.

telephone 733-6545

city or town Raleigh

state N. C. 27611

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

- national
- state
- local

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 William S. Ruf

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date August 11, 1982

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:  
date

Chief of Registration


Moore, John W. Roster of North Carolina Troops in the War Between the States. Master index, State Archives, Raleigh.

Rowan County Records
  Deeds
  Estates Papers
  Settlements of Estates
  Wills


United States Census Records, 1820-1860.

WPA Pre-1914 Graves Index. State Archives, Raleigh.
Gen. William Kerr House  
Enochville, N. C., Quadrangle 
Zone 17 Scale 1:24 000

A 17 524800/3933940  
B 17 525090/3933980  
C 17 525110/3933160  
D 17 524800/3933130