

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
Office of Archives and History  
Department of Cultural Resources

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House**

Salisbury, Rowan County, RW0998, Listed 05/23/2014  
Nomination by Laura A. W. Phillips  
Photographs by Laura A. W. Phillips, January 2013



Overall view



Rear view with kitchen

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of property**

historic name McCanless, Napoleon Bonaparte, House

other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 619 South Main Street not for publication N/A

city or town Salisbury vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Rowan code 159 zip code 28144

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official /Title Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

McCanless, Napoleon Bonaparte, House  
Name of Property

Rowan County, NC  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling  
DOMESTIC secondary structure

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Second Empire  
Colonial Revival

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK  
roof Slate  
walls Granite  
other Granite  
WOOD

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

McCanless, Napoleon Bonaparte, House  
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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Industry

**Period of Significance**

1897-1920

**Significant Dates**

1897

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

McCanless, Napoleon Bonaparte

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

McCanless, Napoleon Bonaparte, House  
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County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** Less than 1 (0.378 acre)

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>17</u>	<u>547430</u>	<u>3946430</u>
2	__	__	__

	Zone	Easting	Northing
3	__	__	__
4	__	__	__
	__ See continuation sheet.		

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Laura A. W. Phillips, Architectural Historian

organization N/A date November 25, 2013

street & number 637 North Spring Street telephone (336) 727-1968

city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27101

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## 12. Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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### Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Livingstone College (Dr. Jimmy J. Jenkins, Sr., President)

street & number 701 West Monroe Street telephone (704) 216-6153

city or town Salisbury state NC zip code 28144

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Rowan County, North Carolina

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### DESCRIPTION

#### Summary and Setting

Located at 619 South Main Street south of Salisbury's historic commercial center, the 1897 Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House stands with its accompanying kitchen building on a narrow but deep lot of less than half an acre. Both the three-story Second Empire-style house and the one-story-with-unfinished-attic kitchen are faced with rusticated granite. The house faces northwest, but for ease of description, the façade will be considered to face west, and the secondary elevations will be the north, east, and south sides. (The photographs are labeled in the same manner.)

The Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House is set back from the street on a grassy, but treeless, lot. A sidewalk separates the lot from the street right-of-way. North of the house, the lot is bordered by a tree- and shrub-planted green space lining Military Avenue. Beyond the rear of the house lot to the east, railroad tracks raised on an earth berm separate the National Cemetery from the properties along South Main Street. A two-story frame house stands immediately south of the McCanless House, and a two-story, stuccoed, Craftsman-style dwelling – originally the home of the McCanlesses' son, Walter, – stands to the southwest across South Main Street. Both houses now have commercial uses. Otherwise, to the north, west, and south of the McCanless House, South Main Street – once lined with one and two-story dwellings – is now populated by commercial buildings and large parking lots.

#### Exterior

The Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House is a rectangular dwelling – three bays wide and four bays deep – with a rounded tower at the southwest corner. It has a brick foundation, and the first two stories have load-bearing brick walls faced entirely with rusticated ashlar granite blocks. Laid in parallel courses, the large rectangular blocks vary in length. Adding visual interest to the regularity of the walls, narrow bands of granite blocks form string courses at window sill and lintel height on the first story and, on the second story, at window sill height and immediately beneath the cornice. Refined, beaded, mortar joints hold the granite blocks together. Above the granite walls, a steep, concave, mansard roof sheathed in decorative slate shingles holds the third story. In line with the windows of the first two stories, dormers with steep gable roofs project from the mansard roof. The sides and roof slopes of the dormers are sheathed with slate shingles, but the gables themselves are weatherboarded. Like the eaves beneath the mansard roof, the gable eaves are boxed and molded wood. Two chimneys rise from the mansard roof. One is an interior end chimney on the north side, and the other is an interior

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chimney on the south side. Both chimneys are granite, but the blocks are of one size and are smaller than those used on the body of the house.

For the most part, the house has replacement, vinyl-framed windows. However, the windows match the one-over-one sash configuration of the original windows. Three façade windows provide exceptions. These original windows are located in the north bay adjacent to the entrance and as the central windows on the tower's first and second stories. Each consists of a single, large, fixed pane surmounted by a narrow, rectangular pane. The two parts of each window are separated by a granite lintel/sill. Another exception to the one-over-one sash is a rectangular opening in the north, first-story bay at the rear of the house. Now covered on both exterior and interior with plywood, it contained a sliding-glass window that provided a pass-through from the kitchen in the outbuilding to the dining room in the house.

The main entrance to the house, in the façade's center bay, is a wood door with two wood panels in the bottom half and an oval glass in the top half. At the rear of the house, the center-bay entrance has been replaced with an institutional metal door with a glass pane in the upper half. Above the rear entrance, the center-bay windows of the second and third stories have been replaced with the same type of institutional doors. A fixed, metal, fire escape leads downward and to the north from the third-floor entrance, then turns south, connecting with the second-floor landing, continues south from there nearly to the south end of the house, and then turns eastward and continues to the ground. The fire escape dates from the last quarter of the twentieth century. There are no entrances on the north and south sides of the house, whose four bays are characterized by three stories of vertically-aligned windows.

One of the most distinctive exterior features of the house is the wraparound porch, which runs from the west bay on the south side of the house, around the tower, across the rest of the façade, and down three bays of the north side. Sanborn maps and physical evidence on the stonework reveal that originally the porch continued along the north half of the rear of the house, providing a sheltered connection between the house and the kitchen, and then turned east and ran along the south side of the outbuilding. However, whether the rear section of the porch was constructed of the granite features of the rest of the porch or was a simpler frame structure, and whether or not it actually connected with the kitchen building are unanswered questions. The surviving porch has slender, tapered, rusticated granite posts that rest on two-block granite bases. Between the posts is a rusticated granite balustrade, which is repeated around the flat roof of the tower, but with the addition of widely spaced dentils beneath the balustrade. The bottom rail of the porch balustrade rests on the ground, except on the south side of the house, where the land slopes slightly downward to the east. There, the balustrade rests on uncoursed granite blocks, and two granite steps access the east end of the porch.

Currently, the porch floor is composed of concrete panels of unknown date. Although the appearance and material of the original floor is not certain, it is likely that it was poured concrete

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over a brick base. At two places where there is a vent opening to the crawl space beneath the house, red brick or brick rubble can be seen beneath the concrete of the porch floor. Although usually porch floors were constructed of wood, in this case, where the porch rests immediately on the ground, a wood floor would have rotted in a short period of time.

The porch can be accessed from its east ends on the north and south sides of the house, but the primary, front, entrance to the porch is at the northwest corner. Without the more common placement of a porch entrance directly in front of the house entrance, the corner entrance to the porch at the McCanless House requires one to cross half of the façade before arriving at the front door. Nevertheless, a photograph taken several years after the construction of the house shows a fence gate at the end of a diagonal walk leading to the corner entrance to the porch. The fence, composed of granite posts and pipe rails, does not survive.

The porch roof appears to have been in the process of being repaired at some point in recent years, but the repairs were not completed. The form of the porch roof is original, and much of the structural framework remains intact, although supplemented by replacement or sister boards. The boards creating the boxed cornice have been removed, as has the porch ceiling. The roof decking consists of replacement plywood and is covered by asbestos shingles.

### Interior

While the exterior of the Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House remains largely intact, the interior has suffered numerous unfortunate, and unfinished, remodeling efforts. The survival of the original features varies widely from room to room and from floor to floor. Although some of the original fabric has been lost, the most distinctive, high-style, character-defining features in the Colonial Revival style remain intact. Some general comments on the interior will be followed by more floor- and room-specific descriptions.

Except where altered, the interior plan consists of a center hall with two rooms on the north side and two or three rooms on the south side. Other than the brick south wall of the center hall on the first two floors, the other interior walls are composed of wood studs. Originally, the house had narrow-board flooring, and the walls and ceilings were plastered over wood lath or brick. Baseboards were simple with a toe mold at the bottom and molding at the top. Door and window surrounds had classical bull's-eye corner blocks. The location of any bathrooms is not known; none remain.

### First Floor

The two front rooms – the reception room on the north and the parlor on the south – are largely intact and demonstrate the Colonial Revival sophistication of the interior of the house. The most elaborate room is the reception room, designed to make the strongest impression on



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visitors. This large space has narrow-board flooring, plastered walls with a vertically paneled wood wainscot, and a plastered ceiling with decorative Colonial Revival-style boxed and paneled joists. Door and window surrounds are intact. The space between the upper and lower panes of the large front window is paneled. At the center of the north wall is a projecting fireplace with a Colonial Revival-style mantel. It features a bracketed mantel shelf, an overmantel with missing mirror, a dentiled cornice above the overmantel, and a pair of tall, fluted columns with composite capitals flanking the fireplace.

At the northeast corner of the room, two rounded steps rise to a landing at the bottom of the front, primary, stair. Physical evidence suggests that a doorway from the landing once opened to the dining room at the northeast corner of the house. Presumably, steps from the landing led down to the floor level of the dining room. From the landing, the primary stair rises along the east wall of the reception room to a midway landing, from which it makes a right angle to the west and continues to the second floor. A paneled wainscot rises along the wall with the stair, but the wall plaster above the wainscot has been removed, leaving the wood lath exposed. The stair has an open string, a balustrade with block-and-spool balusters, and a molded handrail. The paneled primary newel has a shaft that continues to the ceiling.

A similar, but larger, free-standing post with a paneled bottom third, a plain upper two thirds, and a molded cap rises from the floor of the reception room to the ceiling within the corner formed by the changing direction of the stair. Possibly an early addition, it serves, or gives the appearance of serving, as an added support to the floor above.

A large doorway once filled with French doors opens from the reception room to the parlor at the southwest corner of the house. All but a small section of the narrow-board wood flooring in the parlor remains intact. The walls are plastered, except for the short span between the mantel and the wall to the reception room, where the plaster has been replaced with sheetrock. The ceiling has also been sheetrocked. A reeded picture molding surrounds the room at window-lintel height. The door and window surrounds are intact. The parlor is a remarkable room, not only because of its detailing, but also because of its shape. Incorporating the base of the tower, the west end of the room is semi-circular. The juncture of that curve with the straight wall on the north side of the room forms a sharp angle, as it does on the exterior façade, but the juncture of the tower wall with the south wall of the room forms a graceful, almost undulating, curve. This is emphasized by the low, horizontal-paneled wainscot and the reeded picture molding. During its early years, the room featured Rococo-style scenes on canvas attached to the walls of the parlor. These were painted by the oldest McCanless daughter, Carrie, who was a

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Paris-trained artist. The paintings do not survive, but a photograph from the 1960s shows the painting between the mantel and north wall.<sup>1</sup>

The focal point of the room is the elaborate Colonial Revival-style mantel on the east wall, which advances the parlor's Rococo feeling with its lush, vegetative ornamentation. Like the mantel in the entrance room, the parlor mantel has flanking columns and an overmantel that originally held a mirror. The frieze above the fireplace has an applied palmette at the center, from which foliate tendrils and flowers emanate. A molding with a dentil-and-bead course carries across the top of the frieze beneath the shelf. At the top of the overmantel are bands of several classical moldings and a frieze with a small, central palmette and bellflower-and-ribbon garlands. The slender columns on either side of the mantel are decorated with spiraled leaves at the base, hanging bellflowers near the top, and a multi-part capital with both bulging foliate and classical features.

The rear rooms on the first floor have been heavily, but only partially, remodeled, in that the work was never completed. A sheetrocked wall has made the entrance to the center hall smaller. Largely to install an HVAC system, joists have been installed overhead to lower the hall ceiling. Heavy particle-board panels cover the floors in the hall and rear rooms. Doors, door and window trim, and some ceilings in the rear section of the house have been removed. On the north side of the hall, several stud walls have been built and some partially sheetrocked to create several small spaces in the west half of what had been the dining room. The east end of the former dining room remains a larger, open space. On the south side of the hall, the plastered walls remain largely intact, though the baseboards are gone and the brick beneath the plaster is exposed in many places. The walls have been furred out on both the hall side and within the room to receive sheetrock. The fireplace at the west end of the southeast room has been removed.

### Second Floor

The second floor has a center hall, two rooms on the north side, and three rooms on the south side. The narrow-board wood flooring remains intact, except in the northwest front room, where the flooring has been removed for the replacement or sistering of the floor joists, and in the southeast rear room, where there is particle-board sub-flooring. The plastered walls and ceilings remain largely intact, although the plaster on the north wall of the hall's mid-section and on the west wall of the northeast room has been removed, exposing the wood lath. The hall ceiling has been lowered several inches with sheetrock, cutting off part of the top portion of the window trim. Most original baseboards survive, as do the door and window surrounds with

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Hammer Jr. (son of Carrie McCanless) in "McCanless Home on South Main," *The Salisbury Sunday Post*, March 3, 1974.

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molded casing and bull's-eye corner blocks. All three Colonial Revival-style mantels remain in place.

The northwest room at the head of the stair was the sitting room. The newel at the top of the stair and the balustrade at the second-floor level that doubled back along the stairwell have been removed but currently are stored in the southwest room. A sheetrocked partition of unknown date projects northward to the center of the room from the south (hall) wall. A feature of this room not seen in the rest of the house is a deeply molded plate rail located just above the vertical midpoint of the walls. The sitting room mantel is the fanciest of those on the second floor. Like the first-floor mantels, this one has an overmantel, but its mirror remains intact. Slender Tuscan columns rise along either side of the mantel from plinths at the base to a shelf near the top of the overmantel. Two curved brackets support the mantel shelf, below which is a frieze with a scrolled rinceau motif. On either side of the mirror is a bracketed shelf for holding a candle, a vase, or some other decorative object. Above each shelf is an applied vertical sunburst.

On the south side of the hall opposite the sitting room is the largest bedroom, doubtless that of Mr. and Mrs. McCanless. The room displays the same curving wall as the one in the parlor below it. The unpainted, post-and-lintel mantel is simple but refined. It has a chamfered pilaster set on a plinth on either side of the fireplace, each with a vertical band of incised lines and a crowning cap. Above the firebox is a frieze with two horizontal bands of incised lines. An applied bull's-eye decorates the space on either side of the frieze. Above the frieze is a shelf with a small bracket at each end. The ceramic-tile hearth consists of narrow, rectangular tiles with a mottled green-and-brown glaze bordered by larger, dark green rectangular tiles with a square brown tile at each corner. South of the mantel is a closet with shelves.

The middle bedroom on the south side of the hall has a mantel identical to the one in the southwest bedroom. The hearth, however, is simpler, with only square ceramic tiles in varying shades of tan. North of the mantel is a closet with shelves. The door to the middle bedroom remains intact and has five horizontal panels. Two extra doors of the same type, doubtless from other second-floor doorways, are currently stored in the middle bedroom.

The east half of the rear, southeast, room is an open space. The west half consists of a wall of three large closets with shelves, probably an early addition. The closet wall is sheathed with beaded boarding with a narrow, horizontal molding running across it above the doors. Unlike the interior doors in the rest of the house, which have five horizontal panels, these five-panel doors have the more common two tall vertical panels above a horizontal panel above two shorter vertical panels. The horizontal panels have inserted metal ventilation grills. The hall wall outside the north closet has two square openings cut into it. The lower opening has a bull's-eye cornerblock surround. The intended purpose of these openings is not known.

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The northeast room retains its original trim, but the plaster on the west wall has been removed, exposing the wood lath, and a door to the hall has been added at the west end of the south wall.

At the rear of the second-floor hall, three steps rise to a metal-and-glass institutional door to the fire escape outside. Opposite the rear door, a stair to the third floor rises from east to west along the north side of the hall. The open-string stair has a square-in-section newel with a rounded knob at the top and a balustrade with turned balusters and a molded hand rail. The balustrade and top newel remain exposed to view from the second floor, but a wall around the stair opening on the third floor and a five-horizontal-panel door at the top of the stair hide it from view on the third floor.

### Third Floor

The third floor has two rooms on the north side of the hall and three on the south side. The room sizes and arrangement, the narrow-board wood floors, and the classical window surrounds, like those on the other two floors, remain intact. The three fireplace openings – in the northwest, southwest, and south middle rooms – survive, but not the mantels. The fireplace in the southwest room retains its ceramic-tile hearth, similar to the hearth in the bedroom below it, with mottled green and brown tiles surrounded by dark brown tiles. The fireplace in the northwest room retains the ghost of its mantel on the surviving plaster. Other than this plaster, all plaster and lath have been removed from the third floor walls and ceilings, leaving a skeleton of studs and joists that reveals the structure of the mansard roof and its dormers. Original doors, door surrounds, and baseboards do not survive on the third floor. Several walls have been sheetrocked, with modern, single-panel doors and surrounds added.

### **Kitchen**

Approximately a walkway's width behind the house, but offset to the north, is a one-story, granite-veneered brick outbuilding believed to have been the kitchen. Sanborn maps show that the space between it and the house was sheltered by the extended house porch. That porch is gone, and a frame porch that appears to have been added in recent years lines the east side and south end of the building, continuing westward to the rear entrance of the house. The porch has plain posts, a plain balustrade, and a shed roof covered with standing-seam metal. The walls of the kitchen building are faced with coursed granite blocks, but these are smaller and less precisely cut than are those on the house. Likewise, the mortar joints, although beaded like those on the house, are much less refined, with mortar spread outward beyond the bead to fill spaces resulting from the uneven stones. The differences between the masonry of the house and the outbuilding suggest that the two structures may have been built at different times. However,

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while this may be the case, it seems more likely that they were built at the same time. The kitchen building can be seen clearly in a ca. 1900 photograph of the house, so it certainly had been built by that time. Then, too, the fact that the stones of the house chimneys are much smaller than are those on the walls of the house, suggests that the size and grade of granite used related to its placement. With an outbuilding, the level of refinement used for the house may not have been considered necessary.

The kitchen building has two openings on either side and one at each end. At the north end of the building is a window and at the south end is a door. The east side has a window in the south half and a window converted from a door in the north half. The west side has a door with a three-light transom in the north half. Originally, this door was probably a window. The south half of the west side has a five-horizontal-panel wood door. The one-over-one sash of the windows at the north end and on the south end of the east side may be original. It is not known if either the five-panel door on the west side or the glass-and-wood-paneled door on the south end is original.

The kitchen building has a standing-seam metal side-gable roof with boxed and molded eaves with returns at both ends. The gables are weatherboarded, and each has a four-over-four sash window. A granite chimney rises from the center of the roof.

The interior of the building has two rooms. They have been remodeled with sheetrocked walls, concrete floors, the addition of a bathroom adjacent to the chimney in the north room, a pull-down ladder to the attic, and two modern six-panel doors. The north room has a fireplace with a simple turn-of-the-twentieth-century mantel with a bracketed shelf and a backboard. The attic is unfinished.

### Integrity

The physical integrity of the Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House differs on the exterior from the interior. Judging from a ca. 1900 overall photograph of the house taken several years after its construction, the exterior remains remarkably intact. It retains its original three-story, three-bay-wide and four-bay-deep form with its round corner tower and wraparound porch. It retains its Second Empire styling with its third-story concave mansard roof with gabled dormers. The exterior retains most of its original materials, including its strong, rusticated-granite facing, its granite chimneys, its granite porch, and the decorative slate tiles that sheathe the roof and dormers. The house retains its unusual wraparound porch with tapered granite posts set on granite blocks and robust granite balustrade that is repeated around the flat roof of the tower. The structure of the porch roof remains intact, but the wood ceiling, boxed cornice, and fascia board are missing, and the replacement plywood decking is covered with asphalt shingles. The condition of the porch roof appears to be the result of unfinished repairs in recent years.

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Physical evidence indicates that the porch once wrapped around the northeast corner of the house to the rear, but that portion of the porch was removed at some unknown date. The fenestration pattern of the house remains the same as it was originally, and the front door and three large façade windows survive intact. Although the other windows have been replaced with vinyl-framed sash, they are the same size and one-over-one sash configuration as the originals. Thus, the fact that these windows are replacements is not immediately apparent. At the rear of the house, the first-story door and the windows directly above it have been replaced with institutional doors, and a fire escape has been added. These changes to the rear wall have little impact on the overall appearance of the house.

The kitchen still stands behind the house. Its form and granite-faced brick walls are original, as are the locations of its fenestration openings, although one window has been converted to a door, and one door has been changed to a window. The porch is not original. The exterior changes to the kitchen building do not affect the overall appearance of the historic property.

Several young trees in the front yard and the granite-post-and-metal-pipe fence shown in the ca. 1900 photograph do not survive. Despite the changes described above, the most essential features that define the exterior of the house survive in good condition, so that if Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless were riding down South Main Street today, he would have no problem recognizing the house that was his home from its construction in 1897 until his death in 1920.

The integrity of the interior of the Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House ranges from good to compromised, varying from the survival of many of the most character-defining features to areas that were largely gutted during an aborted remodeling effort during the last twenty years. The Colonial Revival-style interior follows a formula typical of stylish houses: certain features, such as door and window surrounds – in this case, molded surrounds with bull's-eye cornerblocks – are seen throughout the house, although they are missing in some places, and the first floor with its more public, formal rooms is more elaborate than are the upper floors.

On the first floor, the reception room and the parlor – the two front rooms – by their very nature are the most impressive rooms in the house. Both retain their original form, including the parlor's curved walls, as well as their original hardwood floors, door and window surrounds, paneled wainscots, and fancy mantels with overmantels that originally held mirrors. The reception room also retains its paneled ceiling and stair. At the same time, it has lost the finished layer of brick in the fireplace, the stair wall has lost its plaster, and a one-and-a-half-foot-square hole, presumably for the HVAC system, has been cut in the south wall near the doorway to the parlor. The parlor has lost a small section of flooring, and on the east wall, sheetrock replaces a section of the plastered wall between the mantel and the doorway. Otherwise, the parlor is intact. The dining room and another room at the rear of the house have been largely gutted in the process of remodeling. Only some original plaster remains. There are new and old stud

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partitions (uncompleted walls), the fireplace in the southeast room has been removed, an HVAC system has been partially installed, and no decorative details survive.

In the second-floor hall, the ceiling has been lowered with sheetrock for the enclosure of HVAC equipment, hiding the upper cornerblocks on the window surround at the west end and the door surround on the east end. The wall plaster has been removed from the mid-section of the north wall but remains on the south wall. The narrow-board flooring is intact, as is the open stair from the second to the third floor. The most impressive rooms on the second floor are those at the front of the house. The primary house stair rises to the large sitting room at the northwest corner of the house. The top stair newel and the return railing have been temporarily removed. The wood flooring in the sitting room has been removed, and the floor joists are exposed. A sheetrocked partition has been built from the south wall halfway into the room. Despite these changes, the room retains its door and window surrounds, its baseboard, its deeply molded plate rail on the walls, and its Colonial Revival-style mantel and mirrored overmantel. Across the hall is the room that was the bedroom of Mr. and Mrs. McCanless. Except for three narrow floorboards that have been removed from the center of the room and the temporary removal of the entrance and closet doors, the room retains all its features, including its curved walls, baseboard, door and window surrounds, mantel with tile hearth, and closet with shelving. The fireplace opening has been enclosed with sheetrock. The middle bedroom on the south side retains all of its features – decorative and otherwise – including a mantel that matches the one in the McCanlesses' bedroom. The southeast room on the second floor reflects its early alteration from a bedroom to a room with a beaded-board wall of three closets stretching along the west side. In this room, the original door and window surrounds remain intact, and the beaded-board closet wall, closet shelving, and three closet doors with surrounds also survive. The original wood flooring in the closets survives, but the flooring in the rest of the room has been replaced with particle-board subflooring. In the northeast room, except for the removal of the plaster from the west wall and the insertion of a door at the west end of the south wall, all original features remain intact.

On the third floor, the opening where the stair ascends from the second floor has been enclosed with sheetrock. At first glance, this floor appears to have lost all integrity. This is because almost all of the original plaster has been removed, and with those walls gone, the original door surrounds have also been lost. In place of the plaster, several walls have been sheetrocked, and where there are door openings in those walls, modern doors and surrounds have been added. A second look, however, reveals that the third floor is surprisingly intact in several respects. All of the original framing remains intact, awaiting only new lath and plaster. The original layout and sizes of the rooms remain. All narrow-board wood flooring and all molded window surrounds with bull's-eye cornerblocks survive. One small stretch of baseboard, slanted inward to follow the shape of the mansard roof, remains. The three fireplaces survive and are

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open. The mantels have been lost, but the green-and-brown tile hearth in the southwest room is intact, and the ghost of the mantel in the northwest room is evident.

The interior of the kitchen building has been remodeled, but retains its two rooms and central chimney with one fireplace.

Based on this discussion of the physical integrity of the Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House, the following can be concluded. Except for the deteriorated condition of the wraparound porch roof, the exterior of the house is in excellent condition. The condition of the interior ranges from poor to good, depending on the location. Considering the seven aspects of integrity: The house remains at its original *location* on South Main Street in Salisbury. During McCanless's lifetime, the physical *setting* of the house included the same flat terrain on which it currently stands and several trees and other vegetation. The house stood in the midst of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century dwellings along both sides of the street. Although today most of those houses have been replaced by small commercial buildings and vacant lots as the commercial center of Salisbury has crept southward, the house retains its physical relationship with South Main Street to the west and the railroad to the east that separates the property from the National Cemetery. Except for the replacement windows and the deteriorated porch roof, the exterior of the house displays a high degree of integrity in terms of its *design, materials, and workmanship*. Because of the poor treatment the interior the house received in the last quarter century as the result of remodeling efforts, the interior as a whole does not possess strong integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. That said, the interior does retain a large percentage of its most significant and character-defining stylistic features that reflect the sophisticated tastes of the McCanlesses. Due to its Second Empire and Colonial Revival stylistic features and strong use of granite and slate, the house conveys the *feeling* of a late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century house in an urban setting with easy access to granite quarries in the area. In retaining, for the most part, its original exterior appearance and, to a lesser extent, many original interior features, the house retains a strong *association* with N. B. McCanless, who built it in 1897 as his family home and resided here until his death in 1920, years during which he was a mover and shaker in the development of Salisbury. Overall, despite the integrity issues associated with the interior, the Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House retains sufficient integrity for inclusion in the National Register under Criterion B.

The structure is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains such as trash pits, privies, wells, and other structural remains which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the contributing structures. Information concerning land-use patterns, social standing and social mobility, as well as structural details, is often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time no



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investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

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### SIGNIFICANCE

#### Summary

Salisbury, North Carolina, established in 1755 as the seat of the newly-formed Rowan County, developed as western North Carolina's first center of transportation, trade, and political activity. The town grew at a steady pace until the 1850s, when it experienced a notably prosperous decade. From 1850 to 1860, Salisbury's population more than doubled. The Civil War, however, brought growth largely to a halt and, like most places in the South, Salisbury spent the decades following the war recovering and shoring up its economic base for further growth. By the mid-1880s, increased rail traffic was largely responsible for the renewed blossoming of Salisbury's commerce and industry, and the decades between 1880 and 1930 were especially prosperous years for the town. It was during this period that Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless (1851-1920), often referred to as N. B. McCanless, settled in Salisbury around 1888 and exercised his considerable entrepreneurial skills to the betterment of the town and county until his death.

On August 13, 1888, N. B. McCanless purchased a tract of nearly five acres on South Main Street that became the McCanless homeplace. In 1897 he erected an impressive three-story, Second Empire-style, brick house faced with ashlar-cut, rusticated granite blocks. The house was the perfect expression of McCanless's growing status in the community and of his long-time, prominent association with the granite industry. It was and remains unique in Salisbury as the town's only house faced entirely with granite.

Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless was a prodigious entrepreneur during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries whose efforts at promoting the material prosperity of Salisbury and Rowan County helped shape the character of those places. Upon McCanless's death, his obituary labeled him "a great builder" and asserted that he was "doubtless identified with more enterprises than any other man of this county of any age." McCanless's interests were broad, but focused on commerce, industry, and transportation projects that supported these aspects of Salisbury's economy. Typical of entrepreneurship of the time, most of McCanless's ventures included other investors and/or partners, but mostly it was McCanless who had the vision and know-how to guide the projects to success. Between at least 1891 and 1917, McCanless had leading roles in the organization, funding, and/or building of an extraordinary number of ventures. In industry, these included the Vance Cotton Mill, the Kesler Cotton Mill, the North Side Roller Mill, the Doggin (or Coggin) Mines Company, the Yadkin Finishing Company, and the granite industry, particularly the Harris Granite Company. In commerce, his ventures included the Salisbury Savings Bank, the Peoples National Bank, a Morris Plan Company bank (later Security Bank and Trust Company), the Washington Building, the Central Hotel, and the

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Empire Block and Hotel. His efforts at residential development and construction centered on the south part of Salisbury, where he lived, and included buying and platting land, laying out Thomas Street, and building numerous houses. Transportation projects included macadamizing some of Salisbury's streets, the Salisbury Electric Light and Street Railway Company, the Spencer Street Railway, and the Salisbury-Monroe Railroad.

The distinctive granite house at 619 South Main Street that Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless built in 1897 served as his residence throughout most of his productive years in Salisbury until his death. The architectural character of the house reflects McCanless's prominent role in the community as well as his ties to the local granite industry. During the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, after the house had left McCanless family ownership, it was alternately neglected and mistreated. Nevertheless, the bold granite exterior remains largely intact and the primary distinctive features of the interior survive to provide the house with sufficient historic integrity. The Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House meets Criterion B for listing in the National Register as the primary property associated with the productive life of entrepreneur Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless in Salisbury and Rowan County, North Carolina. His earlier frame house, also located on South Main Street, no longer stands. The nominated house is locally significant due to McCanless's leading roles in the areas of commerce and industry, and its period of significance spans the years from the construction of the house in 1897 to McCanless's death in 1920.

### Historical Background and Commerce and Industry Contexts

When its population grew from 1,086 in 1850 to 2,320 in 1860, Salisbury became the fifth largest town in North Carolina. The most important factor contributing to this growth was the 1855 completion of the Charlotte-to-Salisbury section of the North Carolina Railroad and the impetus it gave to local business and industry.<sup>2</sup>

Salisbury's location on the main east-west railroad line made it a strategic location during the Civil War for a gathering and transfer point for Confederate troops and for the imprisonment of thousands of Union troops at an old cotton factory. When Union troops under General Stoneman occupied Salisbury in April 1865, they burned the prison and other facilities strategic to the Confederacy, but private residences and other non-military buildings were spared. When the war came to a close, Salisbury spent the next few years getting back on its feet with the same businesses as before the war, but the difficult economic conditions of the period restricted new

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<sup>2</sup> Topkins, 291-292.

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construction and expansion. By the mid-1870s, however, the economic difficulties of the previous years had begun to ease.<sup>3</sup>

By 1870, the Western North Carolina Railroad had planted its shops in Salisbury and had become the town's largest single employer. Increased rail traffic was responsible, in large part, for the blossoming of Salisbury's commerce and industry during the 1880s. The main line between Greensboro and Charlotte passed through Salisbury, and another line extended westward from Salisbury to Asheville and the Tennessee line. By the mid-1880s, Salisbury had five tobacco factories, four machine shops, two foundries, a locomotive shop, and fifty business houses. Other industries included distilleries, cotton and knitting mills and, nearby, rock quarries and a partial revival of gold mining.<sup>4</sup>

Salisbury's population burgeoned from 2,723 in 1880 to 6,277 in 1900, and by 1910 it had expanded to 7,153. With minor exceptions, the period from the 1880s through the 1920s was a time of prosperity for the town.<sup>5</sup> It was during this time that N. B. McCanless exercised his considerable entrepreneurial skills in Salisbury, leaving a substantial mark on the economic and physical character of the place.

The son of Joseph and Catherine (Wasson) McCanless, Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless was born in 1851 around fifteen miles southeast of Salisbury in the Gold Hill community of Rowan County. His early adulthood reads like that of many young men searching for their place in life. When he was fourteen, he attempted to enlist in Wheeler's Cavalry of the Confederate army, but was unsuccessful. Soon after the end of the Civil War, he left Gold Hill to pursue opportunities elsewhere. First he moved to Salisbury, hoping to establish himself there. For nearly three years he worked as a clerk in the firm of McCubbins, Foster and Company and its successor. McCanless then left Salisbury for New York, where he worked for his brother, William L. McCanless, in the firm of McCanless and Burrell. After his brother's death (date unknown), McCanless traveled to the new settlement of Wichita, Kansas. There he worked in the construction department of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad. However, he remained in Wichita only one year, after which he returned to Gold Hill.<sup>6</sup>

In Gold Hill, McCanless worked for one year for Amos Howe, who had purchased a mine there. When the North Carolina Reduction Company purchased the mine, McCanless continued on with them for another year. Following that, he fulfilled a contract to haul granite for the Federal Building (NR, 1971) in Raleigh. Apparently, during his years in Gold Hill, McCanless was also a farmer, for he was listed as such in the 1880 U. S. Census. In 1872, McCanless married Georgia Frances Mauney, daughter of Ephraim and Rachel (McMackin)

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<sup>3</sup> Topkins, 292-293.

<sup>4</sup> Topkins, 294.

<sup>5</sup> Topkins, 294.

<sup>6</sup> *History of North Carolina*, 135; N. B. McCanless Death Certificate.

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Mauney of Gold Hill. They soon began their family of eleven children, nine of whom survived to adulthood.<sup>7</sup>

Exactly when the McCanlesses moved to Salisbury is not known. However, until at least 1885, the McCanless children were born in Gold Hill.<sup>8</sup> On August 13, 1888, Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless purchased 4.7 acres from William H. Horah on South Main Street, and the following year he transferred the same property to his wife, Georgia.<sup>9</sup> This tract became the McCanlesses' homeplace for the remainder of their lives. They first lived in a commodious two-story frame house that is shown in an early photograph of the first alignment of Military Avenue east from South Main Street. Apparently, however, McCanless was already having dreams of erecting a more prestigious dwelling, as reported in the June 5, 1890, issue of the *Carolina Watchman*. According to the paper, McCanless proposed building a "handsomer residence" for himself on Southwest Main Street "below his present home." The paper reported that the new house would be "a feature of that end of the street." Nevertheless, seven years passed before McCanless built his new house.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, N. B. McCanless, began a long career of entrepreneurial ventures in Salisbury and Rowan County. Many were undertaken with several other Salisbury investors. This was typical of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century entrepreneurship in piedmont North Carolina, where individuals invested in partnerships and concerns of diverse character.<sup>11</sup> For most of the projects, McCanless appears to have played a leading role. McCanless's primary areas of interest were industry and commerce, as well as transportation-related projects that supported those two.

In 1891, McCanless was the primary mover in the organization of the Vance Cotton Mill in Salisbury. Among others involved were D. R. Julian, Dr. C. M. Van Poole, E. B. Neave, Rev. F. J. Murdoch, Julius Lineberger, and Dave Atwell. In addition to organizing the mill, McCanless built and equipped it and operated it for a time. The mill used Egyptian long-staple cotton in the spinning of fine combed yarns. Under various names, it remained in operation until 2001. In December of the following year, the mill was destroyed by fire.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *History of North Carolina*, 135; 1880 U. S. Census; Fowler, Family Record. The following children were born to N. B. and Georgia McCanless: Joseph Epraim (1873-1874), Carrie May (1874-1957), Mary Napoleon (1876-?), Lena Rachel (1878-1943), William A. (1881-1948), Kate (1883-1968), John (1885-1942), Walter Franklin (1887-1958), Ralph (1890-1896), Charles (1893-1972), and Napoleon Bonaparte Jr. (1895-1955).

<sup>8</sup> Fowler, Family Record; Certificate of Death for John McCanless.

<sup>9</sup> Deed Book 70, p. 300; Deed Book 71, p. 302.

<sup>10</sup> The photograph, a copy of which is in the N. B. McCanless House survey file at the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office, was provided by Mary Jane Fowler of Salisbury; *Carolina Watchman*, June 5, 1890.

<sup>11</sup> National Register nomination for Grimes Mill.

<sup>12</sup> *History of North Carolina*, 135; Brawley, 222; "Theodore Buerbaum's Salisbury," Vance Cotton Mill.

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When the Kesler Cotton Mill (within NRHD, 1985; demolished), named for largest stockholder Tobias Kesler, was organized in Salisbury in 1895, N. B. McCanless made the brick for the mill's construction and then built and equipped the mill. After Kesler, McCanless was at the head of the list of investors, which also included D. R. Julian, O. D. Davis, and the Rev. Francis Johnstone Murdoch. In 1899, J. W. Cannon took control of the Kesler Cotton Mill, and in 1928 it consolidated with other mills to become the Cannon Mills Company. Known then as Cannon Mill #7, it remained in operation until 2000.<sup>13</sup>

In 1896-1897, N. B. McCanless and D. R. Julian built and equipped the North Side Roller Mill (NR, 1984; burned 1/2013) and operated it successfully for two years.<sup>14</sup> It was one of the first roller mills in Rowan County. Other investors in the mill were N. B. McCanless's brother, James C. McCanless, and his brother-in-law, Adolphus C. Mauney. For most of its history, from 1906 until 1963, the mill was known as Grimes Mill for the Grimes family who operated it during those years.<sup>15</sup> This significant late-nineteenth-century mill was architecturally impressive as the only Second Empire-style industrial building in Salisbury, characterized by its substantial three-story, three-bay-wide and four-bay-deep brick form, granite corner quoins and other trim, and steep mansard roof with gabled dormers.

Around the same time that the North Side Roller Mill was built, Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless began "the erection of a handsome stone residence just below his old one on South Main street," according to the August 25, 1897, edition of the *Salisbury Truth*.<sup>16</sup> Like the North Side Roller Mill, McCanless's house was a substantial three-story building that was three bays wide and four bays deep. A fine representative of the Second Empire style, it was built with a steep mansard roof with gabled dormers like the mill. But whereas the mill was a brick structure with granite trim, the house was a brick structure fully clad in rusticated granite blocks – the only house in Salisbury that could claim that distinction. Reflecting McCanless's growing status in the community, the house instantly became a landmark in Salisbury and an anchor to the south end of Main Street. The interior of the house continued the stylishness of the exterior, but reflected the Colonial Revival style rather than the Second Empire style. When McCanless built the house that served as his and his wife, Georgia's, homeplace for the rest of their lives, it housed all of their children within its three floors. At the time, they ranged in age from two to twenty-three. Although the three oldest, who were nineteen, twenty-one, and twenty-three, could typically have left home by that time, they were daughters Lena, Mary, and Carrie, respectively, who did not marry until 1904, 1902, and 1906, again respectively. The U. S. Census for 1900 reported that all nine children were still living at home at the turn of the century. Carrie and

<sup>13</sup> *History of North Carolina*, 135; Hood, 320; Brawley, 222; "Theodore Buerbaum's Salisbury," Kesler Cotton Mill.

<sup>14</sup> *History of North Carolina*, 135; Hood, 317.

<sup>15</sup> Hood, 317; National Register nomination for Grimes Mill; U. S. Census, 1850 and 1870.

<sup>16</sup> *Salisbury Truth*, August 25, 1897.

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Lena were teachers and, interestingly, despite N. B. McCanless's numerous entrepreneurial ventures, he was listed as superintendent of a granite quarry.<sup>17</sup> So, McCanless's house reflected not only his status in the community, but also his association with the local granite industry. It served as an advertisement of sorts for granite, demonstrating how the material could be used to great effect in residential construction.

As the nineteenth century came to a close, McCanless expanded his entrepreneurial attentions to other aspects of Salisbury's economy. The following reflects his broad range of interests, especially in banking, commercial investment and construction, residential construction and development, and transportation-related projects that supported Salisbury's commerce and industry. During the 1910s, the last decade of his life, McCanless became more involved, again, in industry.

In 1899, N. B. McCanless and D. R. Julian organized the Salisbury Savings Bank and erected a building for it at the corner of North Main and West Council Streets (replaced in 1926 by the Salisbury City Hall).<sup>18</sup> In 1903 they organized the Peoples National Bank, and McCanless served as its president.<sup>19</sup> When, in 1915, a group of Salisbury businessmen started a Morris Plan Company bank to provide a much-needed installment loan service for the people of Salisbury, McCanless was one of the directors. In 1945, the institution's name changed to Security Bank and Trust Company.<sup>20</sup>

McCanless engaged in additional commercial investments and construction. Around 1890, he joined with Lee Overman, D. R. Julian, and C. L. Welch to construct the Washington Building, located at 118-120 North Main Street. The three-story brick building has a rusticated granite façade with expansive round-arched windows and rich detailing that is a notable example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style in Salisbury. The use of a stone façade was an exception to the more typical brick facades along Main Street and reflected the development of the granite quarries in Rowan County.<sup>21</sup>

In 1906, McCanless purchased three-eighths of the Central Hotel stock from a New Jersey investor. There were two other owners of the hotel: his brother, J. C. McCanless, and J. S. McCubbins.<sup>22</sup>

According to a biographical sketch, N. B. McCanless, along with his son-in-law J. D. Norwood, J. C. Welch, and J. S. McCubbins, erected the Empire Block, which included the Empire Hotel and several stores. The Empire Hotel had been built in the 1850s as the Boyden

<sup>17</sup> U. S. Census, 1900; Fowler, Family Record.

<sup>18</sup> *History of North Carolina*, 135; National Register nomination for Grimes Mill.

<sup>19</sup> *History of North Carolina*, 135.

<sup>20</sup> "Founded 60 Years Ago in Salisbury."

<sup>21</sup> National Register nomination for Salisbury Historic District; *History of North Carolina*, 135; Hood, 305-306.

<sup>22</sup> *Salisbury Evening Post*, April 25, 1906.

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House, but around 1907, it was remodeled and extensively expanded to include a row of stores according to plans prepared by prominent architect Frank P. Milburn. It was likely these plans that McCanless and his associates executed. The rather baroque façade of this immense and richly detailed building gains much of its visual power from its contrasting use of red and cream brick. McCanless was one of the largest stockholders and an officer of the Empire Block company. On December 18, 1909, fire damaged the building and threatened the whole block. However, except for a section of the roof on the second floor that collapsed, the building as a whole survived remarkably intact. In January 1910, McCanless disposed of his financial interest in the company and retired as its president.<sup>23</sup>

McCanless was also involved in residential development and construction. He purchased a large tract of land in the southern part of Salisbury, the part of town in which he lived, platted it, built Thomas Street, which runs just west of his home on South Main Street, and erected many private residences. McCanless's grandson, Carl Hammer Jr., wrote that at their house on South Main Street, his grandparents were surrounded by their sons and daughters and their families as well as by other relatives. Presumably McCanless was responsible for the construction of some, if not all, of their houses.<sup>24</sup>

McCanless's entrepreneurial activities extended to transportation-related ventures intended to improve the quality of life in Salisbury and also support the town's economy. Around 1895, McCanless and two of his frequent business partners, D. R. Julian and J. S. McCubbins, were awarded a \$50,000 contract to macadamize some of Salisbury's streets. Prior to that time, the streets had not been improved, and many were in deplorable condition.<sup>25</sup>

On January 9, 1905, an article in the *Salisbury Evening Post* reported on the progress of Salisbury's new streetcar line. According to N. B. McCanless, who was president of the Salisbury Electric Light and Street Railway Company, construction of the power house was nearly complete, a big engine was on its way from Providence, Rhode Island, and the cars would be running by no later than March 15 of that year. The track was to be extended a short distance from the Spencer terminal at the north end of Salisbury, and as soon as the line was in operation, the rail was to be extended to Chestnut Hill at the south end of Salisbury. In partnership with Thomas H. Vanderford, McCanless built and equipped the Spencer Street Railway, but it is possible that the two rail lines were part of a single entity.<sup>26</sup>

In 1911, a railroad was proposed between Salisbury and Monroe, a town approximately sixty miles south of Salisbury in Union County. N. B. McCanless was vice president of the Salisbury-Monroe Railroad, also called the Salisbury Railroad Company, and was called its

<sup>23</sup> *History of North Carolina*, 135; Hood, 307-308; *Salisbury Evening Post*, December 18, 1909 and January 18, 1910.

<sup>24</sup> *History of North Carolina*, 135; *The Salisbury Sunday Post*, March 3, 1974.

<sup>25</sup> *History of North Carolina*, 135.

<sup>26</sup> *Salisbury Evening Post*, January 9, 1905; *History of North Carolina*, 135.



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moving spirit. McCanless and another promoter, W. H. Ragland, traveled to Concord and Monroe to promote the railroad, but whether they succeeded in getting bonds passed to pay for the road's construction is not known.<sup>27</sup>

On a more personal note, but not surprising given McCanless's status and interest in transportation, he owned an automobile by at least 1912. Apparently it was newsworthy enough for the *Salisbury Evening Post* to report that McCanless went to Cabarrus County to retrieve his automobile, which was there awaiting repairs after a slight wreck.<sup>28</sup>

During the 1910s, McCanless's last decade of life, newspaper reports chronicled his continued involvement with area industries. In 1910, McCanless's name was the first in a list of several incorporators of the Doggin (or Coggin) Mines Company of Salisbury, when it was chartered with an authorized capital of \$100,000.<sup>29</sup>

Harkening back to McCanless's earlier interest in textile manufacturing, in 1916 he was one of a group of primary stockholders, among whom were his son, William A. McCanless, and his son-in-law, J. D. Norwood, who incorporated the Yadkin Finishing Company and erected a riverside mill. The purpose of the company was to prepare damask cloth from regional mills for market so that they would not have to be sent to finishing firms in the North.<sup>30</sup>

Among the multitude of industrial and commercial ventures and transportation-related projects with which N. B. McCanless was involved during his career, perhaps his greatest single association was with Rowan County's granite industry. McCanless likely began working with the industry in the 1890s, given that in 1897 he chose to build a granite-faced brick house unique in Salisbury. While the 1890 U.S. Census population schedule for Rowan County is not available to see what occupation was listed for McCanless, the 1900 Census lists him as "superintendent granite quarry." The Harris Granite Company was incorporated in 1910, and by 1912, N. B. McCanless was listed as president, a position he held until at least 1917. The company had quarries in three locations in North Carolina in addition to Salisbury – Wilson County, Henderson County, and Rockingham County. The production volume was substantial. In a single month in 1912, the company shipped 447 car loads of stone – more than 20,000 tons – valued at nearly \$50,000. This included gray and pink, or Balfour, granite in blocks, crushed, and ballast forms. According to the Industrial Edition of the *Salisbury Evening Post* in 1912, granite was one of the chief assets of Rowan County. The compressive strength of the granite was 50,000 pounds per square inch, as compared with 20,000 pounds per square inch for the granite produced at the North Carolina Granite Corporation Quarry (NR, 1980) outside Mount Airy. The granite had many uses, among which were crushed stone and paving blocks for road

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<sup>27</sup> *Salisbury Post*, February 21, April 28, and May 9, 1911.

<sup>28</sup> *Salisbury Evening Post*, August 9, 1912.

<sup>29</sup> *Salisbury Evening Post*, December 23, 1910. Nothing else is known about this company.

<sup>30</sup> Brawley, 223; *History of North Carolina*, 135.

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work, crushed stone for concrete building, and block stone for buildings and monuments. The Harris Granite Company also had a finishing plant in Salisbury, reported to be the largest in the South, for the manufacture of monuments and mausoleums. The building stone and monuments were shipped to all parts of the United States.<sup>31</sup>

Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless died on January 27, 1920, at the age of sixty-eight. McCanless's obituary and a tribute written by James F. Hurley Sr., editor of the *Salisbury Post*, summarize the considerable contributions he made to Salisbury and to Rowan County. His obituary labeled him "A Great Builder," "one who worked by day and dreamed and planned by night. . . ." The obituary continued, "He was always promoting the material prosperity of the county. He was no doubt identified with more enterprises than any other man of this county of any age. Much of Salisbury of today is due in very large measure to Mr. McCanless' activities and interest. Manufacture, mining, quarrying, banking, and other activities owe much to his guiding hand and wisdom."<sup>32</sup> Hurley's editorial tribute added that "In the city stand monuments to his genius, his faith, his vision and his fidelity. Spindles hum because of his energies. Streets and buildings which were the inspirations of his mind and tangible evidence of his wisdom and achievement remain to bless mankind. Covering many years he wrought heroically [sic] and left ample physical evidence of the practicability of his planning."<sup>33</sup>

N. B. McCanless's grandson, Carl Hammer Jr., wrote in 1974 that his grandfather acquired a considerable reputation for financial acumen, but that there was a general belief that he was far wealthier than he ever became in actuality. The reality of this played out after McCanless's death. His widow, Georgia Frances (Mauney) McCanless, continued to live in the family home on South Main Street until her death in 1940. However, in 1932, Mrs. McCanless did not have sufficient funds or personal property to satisfy a debt to creditor North Carolina Bank and Trust Company. As a result, the house and associated lot were sold by the Sheriff to the North Carolina Bank and Trust Company. Excepted from the deed was the homestead allotted to Mrs. McCanless. That "homestead" consisted of two rooms and a bath on the first floor of the south side of the stone residence, across the hall from the dining room. The rooms were additionally described as being the second and third rooms from the front of the house measuring approximately fifteen-feet square and nine-and-a-half-feet square, respectively, with an adjoining bathroom opening to the hall. At present, the two rooms described in the deed have been converted to one room behind the parlor. Mrs. McCanless was also allowed ingress and egress from the front of the house.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *History of North Carolina*, 135; *Salisbury Evening Post*, Industrial Edition, November 19, 1912; Balfour Pink "The Granite Eternal."

<sup>32</sup> *Salisbury Evening Post*, January 27, 1920.

<sup>33</sup> *Salisbury Post*, January 28, 1920.

<sup>34</sup> Deed Book 71, p. 302; Deed Book 219, pp. 339-340.

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At some point – a deed could not be found – the house was transferred to Ralph L. Lewis and his wife, Laura L. W. Lewis, and Huger S. King and his wife, Mary Lynn C. King, all of Guilford County. In 1939, they conveyed the property to R. E. Gambill, but the excepted homestead for Mrs. McCanless remained in effect until her death on April 10, 1940.<sup>35</sup>

On April 28, 1950, R. E. Gambill conveyed the property to his former wife, Esther Gambill McKown of York County, South Carolina. During the McKown ownership, the house was leased to a Mrs. Patterson, who operated a nursing home in it. In 1984, W. W. McKown of Chester County, South Carolina, along with his two daughters and their husbands, sold the property to Charles Kim Major of Kannapolis, North Carolina. The following year, Major conveyed one-half interest in the property to Donald R. Bennett, also of Kannapolis. During their ownership, the house was used as a restaurant. In 1988, Major and Bennett sold the property to James T. and Barbara M. Rusher, who also used the house as a restaurant. In 1990, the property was foreclosed and sold at auction to Home Federal Savings Bank. The following year, Rowan Homes, Inc., a non-profit organization providing services for developmentally disabled people in Rowan County, purchased the property to use for their offices and a learning center. In 2004, Rowan Homes, Inc. sold the property to William Peeler Raykes of Davidson County, North Carolina, and on November 29, 2011, Raykes sold the property to Livingstone College, the present owner.<sup>36</sup>

During the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, the frequent changes in ownership of the property and the various uses to which the house was put were, overall, not kind to it. Still, the exterior of the house remains remarkably intact, and many distinctive features of the interior survive. Today, Livingstone College is developing plans to adaptively reuse the Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House while respecting its historic character.

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<sup>35</sup> Deed Book 251, p. 15.

<sup>36</sup> Deed Book 331, p. 299; Deed Book 612, p. 962; Deed Book 618, p. 558; Deed Book 639, p. 140; Deed Book 664, p. 188; Deed Book 673, p. 940; Deed Book 1000, p. 960; Deed Book 1189, p. 37; Rowan Homes, Inc.

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### GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

#### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is identified as Rowan County tax PIN 015 397.

#### Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property includes the 0.378 acre that survives intact from the original 4.7 acres historically associated with the Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House.

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### PHOTOGRAPHS

- 1) Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House
- 2) Salisbury, Rowan County, North Carolina
- 3) Laura A. W. Phillips
- 4) Photos 2 and 4 were shot in October 2012. All other photos (except the documentary photo) were shot in January 2013.
- 5) CD: NCHPO, Raleigh, NC
- 6-7) 1: House, view to southeast.  
2: House, view to northeast.  
3: House, view to northwest.  
4: Kitchen, view to southwest.  
5: 1<sup>st</sup> floor: reception room, view to northeast  
6: 1<sup>st</sup> floor: parlor, view to northeast  
7: 1<sup>st</sup> floor: parlor, view to southwest  
8: 1<sup>st</sup> floor: southeast room, view to southwest  
9: 2<sup>nd</sup> floor: sitting room mantel, view to northeast  
10: 2<sup>nd</sup> floor: closet room, view to northwest  
11: 2<sup>nd</sup> floor: closet room to rear stair hall to northeast room, view to north  
12: 3<sup>rd</sup> floor: southwest room, view to southwest

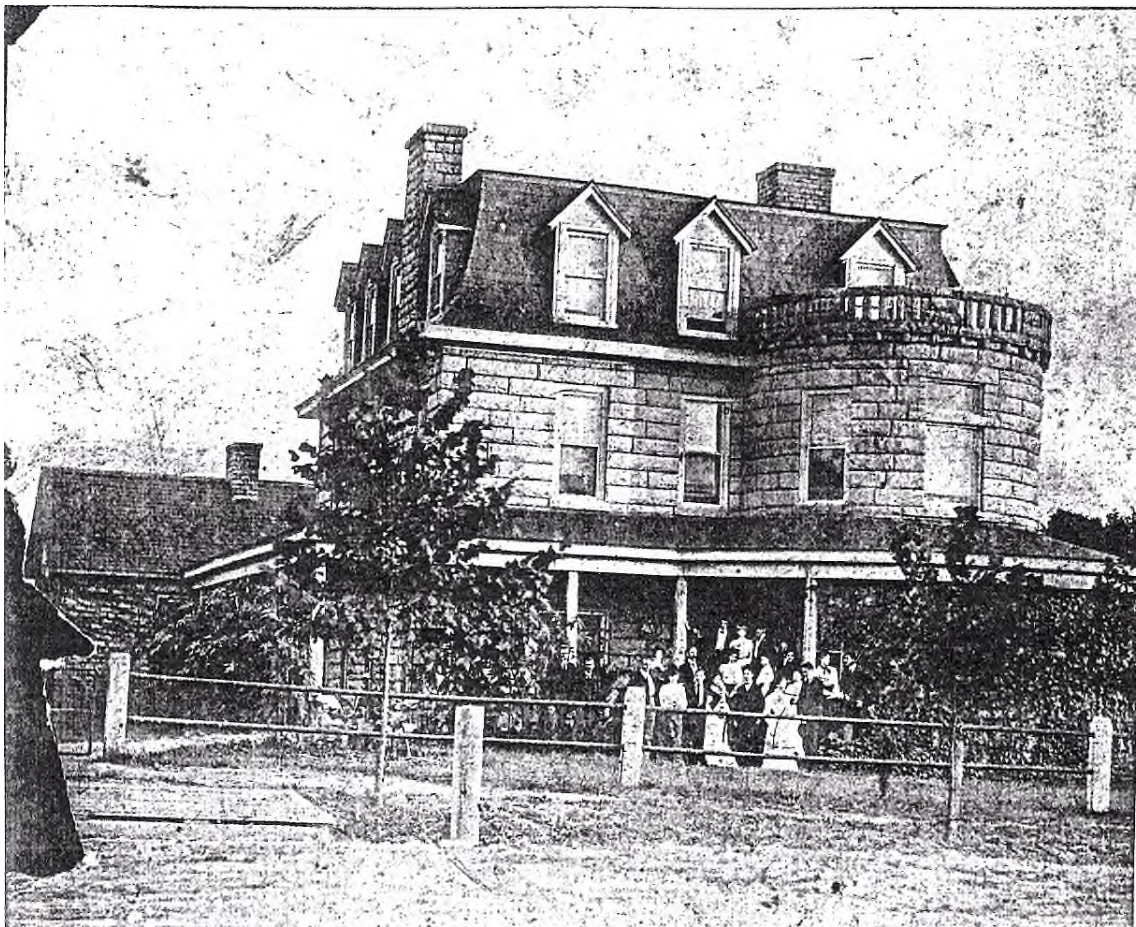


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Ca. 1900 documentary of house with family. Photo courtesy of Mary Jane Fowler, great-granddaughter of N. B. and Georgia McCanless.