HISTORICAL RESEARCH REPORT

THE EDWARDS-FRANKLIN HOUSE OF SURRY COUNTY

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INTRODUCTION

The Edwards-Franklin House is a two-story frame plantation house of a basic Quaker or Continental three-room plan. Built in the late 1790s, the house was extensively remodeled in the early 1820s and is a blend of Georgian and Federal architectural styles. Located on a slight knoll and standing on a massive stone foundation, the house faces south overlooking the fertile Fisher River floodplains. The selection of this homesite was undoubtedly prompted by these rich bottom lands. The exterior of the five-bay structure features asymetrical fenestration at both levels, large double shoulder chimneys with free standing stacks which dominate the east and west ends of the house; and a well-executed shed porch, supported by six heavy chamfered posts, which runs across the main facade. The interior exhibits several forms of wood graining and marbleizing in various color combinations, and all the rooms retain their decorative woodwork from the period of remodeling (various elements of the original 1790s craftsmanship also remain). This work includes the floors, door and window trim, doors and window sash, chair rails, mantels, the wainscot and Federal stair, and the walls and ceilings. The walls are plastered on the interior above the grained, panelled wainscot. The ceilings are tongue and groove board panelled. The house was once the hub of what was for the region a large plantation, and it clearly reflected the social and economic standing of its early owners. It was undoubtedly one of the most pretentious structures of early nineteenth century Surry County.[1]

Traditionally the house has been known as the "Franklin House," deriving its appellation from its most prominent occupant, Congressman Meshack Franklin. Since it was known that Meshack Franklin did not build the house, it was presumed that he had inherited the dwelling from his father, Bernard Franklin. Various local traditions about the Franklin family seemed to support this and leant an air of credibility to the supposition; thus Bernard Franklin was portrayed as the builder of the house, and the structure received the more specific name of the "Bernard Franklin House."[2] A historical report published in 1974 also depicted Bernard Franklin as the builder, and the house was nominated and accepted on the National Register of Historic Places as his home.[3] However, as the restoration project for the structure was further developed by the Surry County Historical Society and the State Division of Archives and History, additional research revealed that Bernard Franklin never owned the land upon which the house stands, raising serious questions concerning his relationship with the house. Subsequent research by Jerry L. Cross of the Division of Archives and History surprisingly revealed that Bernard Franklin was an insignificant figure in the history of the house, having little or nothing to do with the structure; and that Meshack Franklin had acquired the house through his marriage to Mildred Edwards, whose father, Gideon Edwards, built the house in the late 1790s.[4] Thus the purpose of this report is to re-examine in-depth the history of this property and dwelling which, in view of the recent documentary research, should bear the corrected appellation of the "Edwards-Franklin House."

The report is arranged in four chronological chapters, beginning with the first owner of the land upon which the house stands, Colonel Martin Armstrong. On November 3, 1784, the state of North Carolina issued a grant for 640 acres on both sides of Fisher River to Armstrong, who paid fifty shillings per hundred acres for the tract (known as "Skull Camp").[5] Using the river as a guide, a comparsion of the 1784 survey plat with a geological survey map of the area made by the U. S. Department of Interior in 1971 clearly establishes this tract as the land upon which the house was later built.[6] Martin Armstrong, who was a very prominent and controversial figure in North Carolina during the revolutionary and federal periods, owned the "Skull Camp" tract for over ten years before selling it to Gideon Edwards on June 6, 1795 for a recited consideration of one hundred pounds.[7] As shall later be examined, however, the records indicate that Armstrong was leasing the property to Edwards prior to the final sale. Martin Armstrong apparently did not have any personal involvement in developing the "Skull Camp" tract other than it being a part of his vast speculations in the lands of western North Carolina and Tennessee.

The second chapter examines the history of the property and dwelling in the years of the Edwards and Franklin families. During this period (1795-1847), the house was constructed as the hub of a growing plantation and reached its zenith as a fashionable plantation mansion after extensive remodeling in the early 1820s. When Gideon Edwards purchased the 640 acre "Skull Camp" tract in 1795, he was in the process of systematically expanding and legalizing his large landholdings along the Fisher River. As shall later

be examined, the homesite of the Edwards-Franklin House was carefully chosen, and Edwards probably began construction of his new plantation house shortly after the purchase. The "1799" marked on both sides of the west chimney and on the south side of the east chimney probably indicates the completion date. Influentially involved in local and state politics, Gideon Edwards served sixteen years in the state legislature and was one of the largest land and slaveholders in Surry County until his death in 1810.[8] His ambitious 1799 plantation house openly reflected his economic and social standing.

Upon the complex settlement of Edwards' large estate, the property and dwelling passed into the possession of the prominent Meshack Franklin family.[9] During this period of Franklin ownership (1820-1847), the estate along the Fisher River expanded to over 2,500 acres and as many as sixty-four slaves as Meshack Franklin built upon the plantation established by his father-in-law.[10] Franklin, who served in the House of Representatives from 1807 to 1815, was a well-educated and well-traveled man, one of the most respected and influential political leaders of western North Carolina. When he acquired the Late Georgian style Edwards plantation house in 1820, it would have certainly been considered "old fashioned" among his social and economic peers; early nineteenth century North Carolina was a rural culture increasingly conscious of current fashion. Franklin was apparently no exception. He extensively remodeled the house soon after acquiring it, adding "modish" Federal style elements and reusing many Georgian-derived elements. Although the newly renovated Franklin plantation house would have still been considered <u>retardataire</u> according to eastern North Carolina or Washington, D.C., standards, it must have been quite an imposing mansion for isolated, rural Surry County.

Chapter three examines the longest historical period of the property and dwelling, the years of the McMickle and Blevins families (1847-1973). These 126 years represent a period of surprisingly gradual decline, as the large plantation was first rented out for tenant farming and then eventually cut up into smaller tracts and sold. As the last of Meshack Franklin's sons left Surry County to move west, they sold the plantation in two tracts for $8,000. The first tract, which included the house, contained 1,300 acres and was sold to Sinclair McMickle in 1847 for $3,000; the other tract contained 850 acres and was sold to McMickle's second son John J. in 1850 for $5,000.[11] Sinclair McMickle lived only nine years in what he called his "mansion house," dying in the summer of 1856. He left the house to his youngest son, Christopher Columbus McMickle, who lived in the house until his death in 1914.[12] Under C. C. McMickle, various persons rented portions of the old plantation to tenant farm, and McMickle farmed and operated a corn mill which still stands. He also kept a U. S. Post Office in the house for the surrounding area, appropriately addressed as "Edwardsville." In later years he began selling off small tracts of the old plantation, and when his daughter Laura E. McMickle purchased the homestead in 1901, it had been reduced to approximately 285 acres.[13]

Laura E. McMickle married James Blevins in 1914, and they resided in the old house until her death in 1955. She was the last person buried in the old family graveyard located just south of the house, which also includes the unmarked graves of Gideon Edwards, Meshack Franklin, Sinclair McMickle, C. C. McMickle, and

other members of their respective families. Full title of the property and dwelling now passed to James Blevins, ending the McMickle family's eighty-eight year association with the house, the longest in the dwelling's history. James Blevins remarried in 1937, taking Elsie Lou McCann of Allegheny County as his second wife. Farming and running a small general store, they raised their family in the old structure, which began to show the wear and tear of the passing years. After the death of her husband in 1962, Mrs. Blevins continued to live in the house for seven more years before finally moving a few miles south of the old homestead in 1969. The Blevins family sold the structure to the Surry County Historical Society in 1973, which marks the beginning of the restoration project discussed in chapter four.[14]

Upkeep of the old plantation house was exceedingly difficult in the twentieth century, and the house rapidly deteriorated after being vacated in 1969. As mentioned, the final chapter examines the restoration project now underway, along with various questions relating to the house that were raised as a product of the research. As the reader will notice, very little detailed information about the house itself was found; in spite of this, it is the hope of the author that the following report will enable the reader to place the house in a more accurate historical perspective, and that it will provide with the architectural and archaeological reports a sound knowledgeable background to aid in an authentic restoration of the Edwards-Franklin House.

MARTIN ARMSTRONG AND "SKULL CAMP"

Established in 1770, Surry County is located in the northwestern part of North Carolina on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It is an area characterized by gently rolling to undulating hills, with narrow, elongated ridges and low, rounded knobs. The scant acreage of valuable, rich farmland lies in narrow strips along small rivers and creeks. Located in the central portion of the county, the Edwards-Franklin House lies 650 feet from Fisher River (its east-northeastern boundary) and stands at the foot of Skull Camp Mountain.[15] The location of the house near such permanent landmarks as a river and a mountain pinpoints an opportune starting place for its history.

Long before Surry County had been established there were scattered settlements along the fertile river valleys. Like most of backcountry North Carolina, the region was settled principally by large numbers of Scotch-Irish and Germans, who migrated chiefly from Pennsylvania, but also from New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia in the mid-eighteenth century.[16] These early pioneers apparently followed two general directions of settlement: one along the banks of the Yadkin River, and the other along the Indian trail which followed the Dan River for some distance then crossed the ridges to the head streams of the Ararat River and its tributaries.[17] Later settlers followed the Indian trails further west to the fertile valleys of the Elkin, Mitchell and Fisher Rivers. It was

during this early period of settlement that, according to local tradition, two human skeletons were found at the foot of one of the Fisher River spurs of the Blue Ridge, where there were signs of an old hunters camp; hence the spur and the area surrounding it became known as "Skull Camp."[18]

On May 13, 1779, Colonel Martin Armstrong entered a claim for 640 acres on both sides of Fisher River, south of Skull Camp Mountain.[19] As the survey plat shows, the claim was thoughtfully staked out, encompassing the rich bottom lands along both sides of the river (notice the central location of the river in the claim).[20] Since this was the land that later became the heart of the Edwards-Franklin plantation and includes the site upon which the house stands, its first owner warrants careful examination.

Although a prominent and controversial figure in his lifetime, Martin Armstrong (?-1809) has remained an enigma in North Carolina history. Virtually nothing is known about his parentage or early and personal life. He apparently was the son of James Armstrong of Anson County, who migrated to North Carolina from Pennsylvania in the early 1750s.[21] James Armstrong settled on the "south fork of the Catawba River" (in what is today Gaston County), and he acquired large tracts of land, receiving close to 1,700 acres in land grants.[22] In 1759, according to Robert W. Ramsey's Carolina Cradle, he journeyed back to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to settle an uncle's estate. The trip apparently weakened Armstrong, for he passed away the following year (1760) back in North Carolina.[23]

James Armstrong's will mentions seven sons: William, John, Martin, James, Joseph, Benjamin, and Matthew.[24] While the four youngest sons inherited their father's plantation, the two eldest sons were left out and Martin received only a mare and a colt. In the early 1760s, Martin Armstrong moved northward into then Rowan County, acquiring large tracts of land along the "Tarrart (sic) River."[25] He also invested in land adjoining the new town of Salisbury, and his brother John soon followed him into Rowan County.[26] In many of these early deeds, Martin Armstrong is referred to as a "planter" and a "gentleman," indicating his economic and social standing. His initial homestead appears to have been a 550 acre tract he purchased from Andrew Ferguson in 1764, and it is located on an early Moravian map.[27]

Martin and John Armstrong soon became part of the upper political clique in western North Carolina, associating with Alexander Martin, Joseph Winston, Joseph Williams and other leading figures of the time. As the reader shall see their political careers were filled with schemes to advance their own interests. Although both served brilliantly during the Revolutionary War, their veritable hunger for land involved them in numerous cases of land frauds; and they dubiously achieved what one contemporary newspaper proclaimed as "one of the most comprehensive records of fraud and land thievery in the history of public lands."[28]

The citizens of northern Rowan County began organizing efforts to create their own county in the late 1760s. Due to the greatly disturbed conditions of colonial North Carolina at this time, their

efforts did not meet with immediate success. The initial bill to create Surry County was lost in the General Assembly of 1769 when the legislature suddenly dissolved after passing a resolution against the right of Britain's Parliament to tax the province. The bill was revived the following year, however, but did not pass both houses of the Assembly and receive the assent of Governor Tryon until January 26, 1771. The act became effective April 1, 1771, and newly created Surry County included what is today Forsyth, Stokes, Yadkin, Wilkes, Ashe, Alleghany, Watauga, Avery, and parts of Caldwell, Burke, Mitchell, and Alexander counties.[29]

During the process of establishing Surry County, Martin Armstrong was appointed one of the commissioners to survey the division of Rowan County and to select a site for the new county's first courthouse. Allied with his brother, he quickly became involved in a bitter feud with Gideon Wright, another prominent landholder and local politican, over where the new courthouse should be located. Both families wanted the courthouse on their land. An entry in the "Bethabara Diary" of the Records of the Moravians, dated March 11, 1771, recorded that:

> Mr. Gideon Wright was here today, wishing to borrow £ 20 in order to secure from the Governor a charter for the new Court House to be errected for Surry County. Mr. Martin Armstrong will also soon go thither to try to get a charter...It is evident that certain people are very active in looking out for their own interests in the impending county changes.[30]

Two weeks later, on March 26, the diarist noted that "Mr. John Armstrong rode through here on his way to get a charter for the Court House for the new County."[31] The Armstrongs lost the

charter to Wright, however, as the Act of Assembly which created Surry County in April, 1771, ordered the first courts to be held at Gideon Wrights (who quickly built a courthouse near his own dwelling).[32]

Martin Armstrong was also at this time the commander of the Surry County Militia, holding the rank of Colonel. During the Regulator trouble, Armstrong and his Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Williams remained quiet, as if they were waiting to cast their lots on the winning side. They eventually sided with Governor Tryon and reinforced the Governor after his victory over the Regulators at the Battle of Alamance. Gideon Wright, however, was present at the battle and obtained further favors from the Governor for taking part in the skirmish. This, according to further entries in the "Bethabara Diary," enhanced the rivalry between Wright and the Armstrongs, who were apparently jealous because Wright made a better record than they did in the Regulator struggle.[33] Over the next three years (1771-1774), the Armstrongs schemed to relocate the courthouse on their land. They finally succeeded, out-maneuvering Wright by very knavish methods.

While sheriff of Surry County in 1771, Martin Armstrong arranged the sale of 700 acres of land owned by Andrew Bailie for supposedly unpaid debts. At the following "public" sale, his brother John Armstrong was the only "bidder," acquiring the land for a ridiculously low price. For the next three years, the Armstrongs and their adherents advocated a bill in the General Assembly to allow them to lay out a town by the name of Richmond on this property to serve as a permanent county seat for Surry.

Simultaneously they agitated for the removal of Gideon Wright's courthouse, claiming that it was not centrally located "for the people" of Surry County. In 1774 they finally succeeded, after Alexander Martin, Joseph Williams, and other Surry County Justices of the Peace swore they would never attend another court held at Wright's. Thus the county seat was established in the new town of Richmond, which was located near the present day village of Donnaha in Stokes County. This more "central location" was just two miles north of Gideon Wright's.[34]

The political hostility between the Armstrong family and the Wright's fully asserted itself during the Revolution. Although sparsely settled, Surry County became the scene of violent strife, with the number of loyalists and patriots about evenly balanced.[35] Ever the staunch patriot, Martin Armstrong represented Surry County at the Hillsboro Provincial Congress in 1775, was a leading member of the local Committee of Safety, and he was re-appointed Colonel of the Surry County Militia upon its reorganization in 1776.[36] Throughout the ensuing conflict, Armstrong admirably led the Surry County Militia in the patriot cause, taking part in the battle of Moore's Creek Bridge, General Rutherford's expedition against the Cherokees, and the battles at Camden (S.C.), Kings Mountain, and Guilford Courthouse.[37] Gideon Wright, however, was a staunch loyalist and leader of the local tories, who tried to disrupt the patriot forces and provide the British troops with local supplies.[38] As mentioned, a virtual civil war existed in Surry County between these factions for the duration of the Revolution.

Following the Revolution, the Armstrongs were in a sense the political "kingpins" of Surry County. Martin Armstrong was appointed Brigadier General of the Eighth Brigade of the North Carolina Militia and represented Surry County in the state senate in 1783 and 1784; he was succeeded by his brother John, who served as state senator from Surry in 1785, 1786, and 1788.[39] More importantly, however, the 1783 Land Act named Martin Armstrong Surveyor General of the land in middle Tennessee set aside by the state for payment of revolutionary military service, and John Armstrong was named Entry Taker for the east Tennessee lands.[40] Thus strategically placed, the Armstrong brothers became heavily involved in the infamous land speculations of the Blounts and others. In fact, one historian has contemptuously called the Armstrongs "puppets and creatures of (William) Blount and the other speculators who gave them office. . . ."[41]

Martin Armstrong himself apparently developed an insatiable hunger for the lands he had observed during his numerous military excursions throughout western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee. Forty-eight land grants for 17,090 acres were issued to him for lands in Surry County alone.[42] These figures are diminutive, however, when compared to his land dealings in Tennessee. After establishing his surveyors office in Nashville in 1784, Armstrong began laying off large tracts of land (supposedly "reserved" for Revolutionary War veterans) for himself and others.[43] B. G. C. Cartwright and Lillian J. Gardiner's North Carolina Land Grants in Tennessee 1778-1791 lists over eighty-five land grants issued to Armstrong for over 115,000 acres prior to 1791![44] One can

only guess at the true amount of acreage Armstrong managed to gain "title" to before he was suspended from his office by the General Assembly in 1799.

It was John Armstrong, however, who first got into trouble with the state of North Carolina. Soon after his office as Entry Taker for the east Tennessee lands opened in Hillsboro in 1783, he began, contrary to law, to allow his "friends" and others to purchase land on credit. His office was immediately mobbed by large speculators, including William Blount and other prominent North Carolinians. The state quickly became alarmed and closed Armstrong's office the following year (1784) amid rumors of widespread fraud. Since John Armstrong could not pay the state comptroller the certificates due on his land sales--most of the land had been sold on Armstrong's illegal credit--he quickly became obligated for all the money due to the state by the purchasers. Although his office was officially closed, Armstrong was allowed to keep open books and receive payments for the land he sold on credit. It was all but impossible, however, for Armstrong to collect these payments and most of his debts to the state remained unpaid. On the threshold of facing an official state legislative investigation, Armstrong wrote directly to William Blount pleading for help, promising that:

> . . .if you will be kin (sic) enough to stand my friend at this time nothing but death shall stop me from doing every good office that lys (sic) in my power toward you. . . .[45]

There is no record of Blount's reply, or if one was even made, but Blount probably did all he could to avoid getting involved in the

pending scandal.

As a result of its investigation in 1791, the state legislature placed the majority of the blame for the fraudulent mishandling of the east Tennessee lands directly on John Armstrong. Armstrong requested that he at least be released of all obligations for money due by purchasers who had since become bankrupt, but the legislature refused even to grant this request, stating that Armstrong had violated the law by crediting these people to start with. John Armstrong died in 1795 without having made a settlement, and the state secured a judgement against his estate for £ 19,050. Under this execution, Armstrong's North Carolina estate, which included about 1,600 acres in Stokes County and fifteen or sixteen slaves, was sold. Strangly enough, however, all of Armstrong's heirs moved to Tennessee, where he had carefully concealed his titles to a considerable amount of property. Although the state of North Carolina tried for sometime to attach this property in Tennessee, it eventually failed, and the matter was dropped with just a fraction of the £ 19,050 judgement collected.[46]

Martin Armstrong, however, managed to escape the scandalous investigations surrounding his brother, although he was warned by the state in 1785 to keep more careful records and surveys in his Nashville office.[47] In 1796, however, a young Tennessee congressman named Andrew Jackson happened by chance to come across information which revealed some wholesale frauds in the land office, involving not only Martin Armstrong, but James Glasgow, Secretary of State of North Carolina, and Governor John Sevier of Tennessee

as well. Jackson, undeterred, communicated this information to Governor Samuel Ashe of North Carolina, who immediately started an investigation into the matter.[48] Armstrong, who apparently was in North Carolina putting together an ironworks with Andrew Kincannon at the time he learned of the pending investigation, rushed back to his Nashville office in the fall of 1796.[49] Late that year, Armstrong reported to Glasgow that "great abuses have been made and laid on my shoulders in my absence, but none have yet faced me since my arrival."[50]

The General Assembly of North Carolina continued to investigate the matter, establishing a Board of Commissioners in 1797 to "investigate all frauds suggested to have been committed in the secretary's office."[51] Governor Ashe of North Carolina now called on Governor Sevier of Tennessee for the papers of Martin Armstrong's office in Nashville to be returned to Raleigh for proper investigation. Governor Sevier, deeply implicated in the irregular proceedings, refused, whereupon Governor Ashe appealed to Federal Judges John McNairy and Howell Tatum for assistance.[52] The two federal judges reviewed Armstrong's papers and the investigation continued. While working on the investigation, the judges discovered a bizzare plot by some of the swindlers to either break into the North Carolina State Capital or burn it to the ground in an effort to destroy Glasgow's records, which had been compounded in the capital for further investigation. The plot was reported to Governor Ashe in time to save the papers.[53] To whatever little credit Armstrong had left, he was not involved in the plot.

On March 24, 1798 the Board of Commissioners submitted their preliminary report to Governor Ashe.[54] It revealed that fraudulent grants had been issued and forgeries practiced on a grand scale and implicated James Glasgow and Martin Armstrong as the major culprits. Governor Ashe once again called on Governor Sevier, this time for the extradition of some of the culprits, and again Governor Sevier refused.[55] The official report of the Board of Commissioners was presented to the General Assembly on November 21, 1798, and it again implicated Glasgow and Armstrong as the major culprits.[56] Two weeks later, on December 5, 1798, Martin Armstrong resigned as Brigadier General of the Eighth Brigade of North Carolina Militia, but remained Surveyor General, asserting his innocence of all intentional frauds and declaring he would "guard the interest of the state if it cost him his life."[57]

William R. Davie became Governor of North Carolina in 1799, and he entered into the land fraud investigations with renewed vigor.[58] He appointed John Willis of Robeson County and Francis Locke of Salisbury to go to Tennessee in person and obtain from Governor Sevier the books and papers of Armstrong's office; and in the event Governor Sevier refused again to relinquish them, Willis and Locke were instructed to make exact copies of all the records to bring back to Raleigh. Governor Davie then requested Armstrong to make a full report on the state and condition of his office. Reacting to the Governor's leadership, the General Assembly suspended Martin Armstrong from his office as Surveyor General in March of 1799, directing Armstrong to hand over all his records to his

named successor, Colonel William Christmas.[59]

John Willis and Francis Locke reached Knoxville on April 20, 1799, and as they expected Governor Sevier refused to allow them to take Armstrong's records back to Raleigh. Governor Sevier, however, did consent to Locke and Willis transcribing the records. What they found shocked them, and they wrote to Governor Davie in May that there were "the most atrocious frauds."[60] The Governor, who could no longer wait for Armstrong's report, which had yet to be sent, wrote a stinging letter to Armstrong in August, stating:

> I cannot help expressing my surprise that no answer has been received; you must be sensible how important it is to the public interest and your own reputation that you should comply fully. . .and redress as far as it is in your power the abuses which you have permitted in your office.[61]

On November 18, 1799, Armstrong sent the Governor two lengthy remonstrants, vigorously proclaiming his innocence:

> I shall further observe that I was not present in the office when the frauds, which I am accused of, suffered to take place, by my clerks, and impossible for me to foresee into business of that kind, it being entirely kept from my knowledge; and it is plain to a demonstration that I am a principal loser. Warrants to a large amount belonging to myself and others (committed to my care) were taken out of the office, and by forged transfers passed into grants. . .it was impossible for me to discover the practice before it was to late for I do and ever shall deny and positively assert that I never had the least idea of defrauding the public of one acre of land by virtue of my appointment to the office. I also deny, ever having any connection with any person in my office under the denomination of a speculator. . . .[62]

When Colonel William Christmas arrived in Nashville in early 1800 to reopen the North Carolina land office, Armstrong refused to turn over his records to him, claiming that the records were now the property of the state of Tennessee.[63] Since it was

possible that thousands of early Tennessee settlers might have had their land titles challenged in the courts if Armstrong's fraudulent records returned to North Carolina, these one-time North Carolinians, now citizens of Tennessee, staunchly supported Armstrong, as did the state of Tennessee.[64] Indeed, Armstrong reopened his land office under the authority of the state of Tennessee on May 24, 1800.[65]

Although North Carolina called a special Court of Oyer and Terminer in June of 1800 to try James Glasgow, who was convicted for his role in the frauds and fined £ 2,000, all others implicated in the frauds managed to escape punishment.[66] One North Carolina historian has lamented:

> The relatively mild judgement against Glasgow, with the failure to mete out just punishments to the other fraudulent offenders, remains perhaps the blackest spot on the escutcheon of the Old North State.[67]

As for Martin Armstrong, he lived in Tennessee until his death in 1809. According to Albert L. Bramlett's North Carolina's Western Lands, the state of North Carolina declared void all the land grants it ever issued to Armstrong, but Armstrong had skillfully transferred his property so that the state was never able to prevent Armstrong from enjoying the benefits of his large landholdings while he was alive.[68] His estate, however, was destroyed, for after his death numerous lawsuits seeking to claim Armstrong's voided land titles were launched against his heirs. Finally his beleaguered heirs sold their estate rights to two Tennessee attorneys for $10,000; as one of the attorneys explained to

Thomas T. Armstrong, the youngest son:

> After viewing the whole subject in every light in which it could be considered, it was believed, that no other course remained by which to save to the heirs of your father, a small part out of the wreck of that immense fortune he once possessed.[69]

Little is known about the personal life of Martin Armstrong. His wife was named Mary, and they had at least four sons (Martin Jr., John B., Joseph W., and Thomas T.) and one daughter (Elizabeth).[70] As mentioned, Armstrong's first homestead was a 550 acre tract on "Lovings Creek and Renfrows Creek" in Surry County.[71] Armstrong later sold this tract and moved to Richmond, where he owned 700 acres adjoining the town on "Crooked Run and the Little Yadkin River."[72] The division of Surry County in 1789 made Armstrong a resident of newly created Stokes County, and the removal of the Surry County courthouse to Rockford and the building of the new courthouse for Stokes County at Germanton ruined his speculative chances in the town of Richmond. After his appointment as Surveyor General in 1783, Armstrong apparently spent the majority of his time in Tennessee.[73] The actual date Armstrong and his family moved to Tennessee could not be found, but census records and other documents indicate that Armstrong probably moved in 1801.[74]

Martin Armstrong owned the Skull Camp tract for almost eleven years (1784-1795). He probably first came across the land on one of his military patrols across Surry County during the Revolution. During the period he owned the land, Armstrong was busily involved in his duties as Surveyor General and with his own speculative adventures in Tennessee. In all probability, the Skull Camp tract was just another of Armstrong's land

speculations, and he probably had little or no involvement at all in developing the tract. As the next chapter shall reveal, Armstrong apparently leased the tract out before finally selling it to Gideon Edwards on June 6, 1795 for £ 100.[75]

THE EDWARDS AND FRANKLIN FAMILIES

Gideon Edwards was born in the early 1750s in Cumberland County, Virginia, the son of William and Grisel Coleman Edwards.[76] A bonafide "FFV," the Edwards' were apparently quite wealthy, and young Gideon was probably raised in the aristocratic atmosphere of "Virginia gentlemen."[77] As was traditional in eighteenth century Virginia, Gideon Edwards married into a family of equal social standing, taking Miss Nancy ("Anna") E. Perkins of neighboring Buckingham County as his wife in the early 1770s. The new Mrs. Edwards was the daughter of Hardin and Sarah Price Perkins, and a sixth generation descendant of the immigrant ancestor, Nicholas Perkins, who came to Virginia in 1641.[78] According to family letters, Hardin and Sarah Perkins had an "excellent farm" on the James River in Buckingham County and raised their family "well to do."[79]

Like many of the citizens of eighteenth century Virginia, Gideon Edwards sought new land and opportunity in the wilderness-frontier of western North Carolina.[80] Although an exact date could not be determined, circumstantial evidence indicates Edwards moved to Surry County in the late 1770s, settling along Fisher River on a 550 acre tract directly north of Martin Armstrong's Skull Camp tract.[81] He probably built his "first house" on this land, and until the mid 1780s records indicate that he was engaged in small agriculture and cattle raising. A 1782 tax list shows

that Edwards' property was valued at Ł 360, and that he owned one horse, one mule, fourteen head of cattle, and two slaves: Bob, age twenty, and Jacob, age thirty.[82]

As Appendix B-1 reveals, the logical direction for Gideon Edwards to clear new fields and expand his farm acreage was south, across Martin Armstrong's land along the rich bottom lands of the Fisher River. Such expansion would have required Armstrong leasing the property to Edwards in some form, and an increase in Edwards' slaveholdings, since an expansion of this magnitude would have certainly required more field hands. No record of agreement between Armstrong and Edwards was found; Edwards' tax and slave records, however, indicate such an expansion did occur during the late 1780s and early 1790s. On April 7, 1787, Edwards purchased seventeen slaves from Thomas Handlin of Craven County, South Carolina, for Ł 680.[83] Since Edwards' slaveholdings did not fluctuate after the purchase, it is unlikely that he was buying and selling slaves for a profit. Such a large investment then almost certainly indicates plans to cultivate new acreage, and Edwards' 1790 tax records show an increase in taxable acreage from 550 to 1,190, an increase of exactly 640 acres, the size of Armstrong's Skull Camp tract.[84] From this it seems safe to surmise that Armstrong leased the property to Edwards sometime between 1787 and 1790, and that Edwards began clearing and cultivating the land during this period.

As Edwards' land and slaveholdings increased, so did his stature among the political community of Surry County. True to his "aristocratic, Virginia gentlemen" heritage, he did not shirk

his political duties. He was commissioned a Justice of the Peace in 1788, and the following year he represented Surry County at the state convention to ratify the Federal Constitution in Fayetteville. Gideon Edwards was a staunch Anti-Federalist, typical at that time of the small western North Carolina farmer who felt the state's planter-lawyer-merchant delegation at Philadelphia did not represent faithfully the views and wishes of the majority of North Carolina's population.[85] He voted against the ratification of the Federal Constitution, the only member of Surry's delegation to do so.[86] Edwards must have faithfully represented the views of his constituents at Fayetteville, however, because the people of Surry County afterwards elected him to fifteen consecutive terms in the state legislature, fourteen of them as state senator (1790-1803). Edwards also served a term as state senator from Surry in 1809, one year prior to his death.[87]

During the early 1790s, Gideon Edwards legalized his Fisher River landholdings. Although he was paying the taxes on the 1,190 acres of tracts A and B (Appendix B-1), Edwards did not yet own either tract. Martin Armstrong of course owned tract A, and tract B was initially claimed by and surveyed for Richard Gywen, a prominent Wilkes County land owner, in 1781. Fortunately for Edwards, title to tract B had never been issued to Gywen, and Edwards acquired the tract by purchasing Gywen's survey warrent and having the tract resurveyed for himself. The state of North Carolina issued Edwards title to the land on July 9, 1794.[88] Edwards then proceeded to buy the Skull Camp tract from Armstrong the following year.

Although "houses and buildings" are mentioned in the deed from Martin Armstrong to Gideon Edwards, there is no mention of a "dwelling house" or "mansion house." The houses and buildings mentioned were probably farm outbuildings and slave cabins. The relatively low price Edwards paid for the 640 acre tract, £ 100, also indicates that the Edwards-Franklin House had not yet been built. It is unlikely Edwards began construction of the house prior to his receiving title to the land. Furthermore, if Edwards did begin clearing and cultivating the Skull Camp tract around 1790 as records indicate, profits from this investment probably would not have begun to return until the third or fourth season (1793-1794), and it is also unlikely Edwards could have spared any field hands for construction work during this period. Almost certainly then, Edwards did not begin construction of his new plantation house until after he purchased the Skull Camp tract in 1795.[89]

Gideon Edwards had good reason to build a new house in the late 1790s. After all, he had been quite successful in the previous years. He had expanded his farm into a small plantation, now worked by over twenty slaves. In politics, he had been elected to every state legislature since 1789. The times were good for Edwards, and building a new two-story house was one of the few ways a person could give expression to his success in late eighteenth century America. This Edwards did, and he apparently began by carefully choosing the site of his home.

The site Edwards chose for his new plantation house was centrally located among his lands, establishing the house as the

hub of his growing plantation. The house was built upon a large stone foundation on a small knoll of almost sheer bedrock, preventing any accumulation of water by the ground during heavy rains and thus insuring stability. The elevation of the large foundation helped prevent entry by varmints. The house was built facing almost directly south, taking full advantage of the protection of Skull Camp Mountain against northern winter winds. The southern aspect also served as a means of warming the structure during the winter. Most importantly, however, a spring was located above the site of the house, providing potable water. Hollowed out oak logs found near the house during archaeological investigations of the site indicate that either Edwards or perhaps later owners "tapped" this spring, allowing the water to flow by gravity to a springhouse or cooling house adjacent to the main house. The Fisher River, just 650 feet to the northeast, also provided water, and to top things off, the house had a magnificent view, overlooking the lower crop fields which surrounded the house.[90]

The exact construction dates for the house could not be determined, but as mentioned, the "1799" marked on the west chimney probably indicates the completion date. The house was built by local craftsman and with slave labor. The two double shoulder chimneys of brick laid in Flemish bond were apparently built at different intervals and by different masons; for the masonry work of the west chimney is more sophisticated than that of the east chimney.[91] A local tradition maintains that upon completion of the imposing chimneys, a slave daringly celebrated by doing a headstand on a board placed across the top of one of the chimney

stacks.

Due to the extensive remodeling of the house in the early 1820s, little is known about the original appearance of the structure. The house was apparently of hall-and-parlor plan, with the stair rising along the west wall of the parlor to a full second story and attic. The original position of the stair suggests the possibility that the house initially faced north (what is now the back of the house would then have been the front), but this remains uncertain. Each room of the first floor had a separate entrance. The east door led outside to a large log kitchen (no longer standing) which was located just east of the main house. This doorway apparently had a short roofless porch. Local tradition maintains that a covered walkway connected the log kitchen and the house, but archaeological investigations have failed to substantiate this. The north doorway also apparently had a short roofless porch with steps descending westward toward the cellar. The large shed porch across the south facade was a later addition, and the original porch and step structure is unknown. Paint research by Mr. David Black, Restoration Specialist with the State Division of Archives and History, has revealed that the exterior of the house was originally painted a yellowish-orange color, with grayish-yellow window sashes and green shutters. The heavy-framed walls with nogging were plastered on the interior above a grained, panelled wainscot; the ceilings were tongue and groove boarded. The two remaining Georgian-front doors probably date to the original construction, while the east and north exterior doors date from the period of remodeling.[92]

Throughout the following years, Gideon Edwards continued the expansion of his plantation. In 1798 he acquired 320 acres adjoining his land on the east side of Fisher River; the following year he obtained title to 300 adjoining acres on the west side of the river.[93] He completed his land acquisitions in 1805 by purchasing 520 acres south along the river.[94] Census records reveal that Edwards' slaveholdings increased proportionally with his landholdings. In 1790 he owned nineteen slaves; in 1800 he owned thirty-one slaves, and the 1810 census listed him as the owner of thirty-eight slaves.[95] At the time of his death in late September of 1810, Edwards' plantation included 2,330 acres stretched along both sides of Fisher River and fifty slaves.[96]

During its time, the Edwards plantation was one of the largest and wealthiest in Surry County. Tobacco was the commercial crop and was probably sold in Virginia markets. The grandeur of the plantation was increased by the fact that Surry County was essentially a poor county, characterized by small farms and a subsistence economy.[97] According to one historian, "the lack of wealth was equally distributed."[98] Edwards' broad acres and numerous slaves, however, allowed him and his family to live a comfortable life of an upper middle-class planter.

Gideon Edwards was apparently a well-read and intelligent man. He was often referred to in many of his business transactions as a "trusted friend."[99] In the years following the ratification of the Federal Constitution, his staunch Anti-Federalist views quickly aligned him with Jefferson's Republican party. He was apparently a quiet, conscientious state legislator who took his

duties seriously. His voting record indicates that he was a strict-constitutionalist.[100] His marriage to Nancy ("Anna") Perkins was apparently a happy one and was blessed by the birth of three children. Both sons, Hardin and Daniel, predeceased their parents and little is known about them. Hardin Edwards died a bachelor in 1805. Daniel Edwards married Patsey Jones of Wake County in April of 1806, and this marriage produced a daughter, Grizzeal A. D. C. Edwards, before Daniel Edwards' death in February of 1807. Daughter Mildred ("Milly") Edwards married Meshack Franklin in 1802, and their lives shall later be closely examined.[101]

On October 4, 1810, the Raleigh Register reported the death of Gideon Edwards: "Lately, in Surry County, Major Gideon Edwards, for many years a representative of that county in the General Assembly of this state."[102] The "Major" indicates that Edwards either served in the state militia or Continental Army but this researcher found no records to substantiate Edwards' military service. The inventory of Gideon Edwards' estate reveals that his home was comfortably furnished, highlighted by an excellent library of thirty-nine volumes. Among other items listed were: "six feather beds with bedsteads; one desk and bookcase; one looking glass; one bureau; one cupboard; three folding tables, one dressing table and one ironing table; two smothering irons; one cotton wheel; one flax wheel; one iron pot; three silver teaspoons; one handsaw; one copper still; two pair brand irons; one shotgun; one pistol; one reading chair; one pair steely and one brass candlesticks; and two trunks." Among the thirty-nine volumes of Edwards' library were: Jefferson's Notes on Virginia; four volumes of Blackstone's

Commentaries on the Laws of England; Simson's Euclid; two volumes of Nicholson's Philosophy; two volumes of Ramsey's Poems; and numerous volumes on legal and governmental procedure (Runnington's Ejectment; Peak's Evidence; Powel On Powers, etc.).[103]

Under the terms of Gideon Edwards' will, his "beloved wife Anna" received a life estate to his property. After her death, the plantation was to be equally divided between two of Gideon Edwards' grandchildren: Grizzeal A. D. C. Edwards, daughter of Daniel and Patsey Jones Edwards; and Gideon Edwards Franklin, eldest son of Meshack and Mildred Edwards (the tract left to him included the house). In item three, however, Gideon Edwards specified that "if the said Grizzeal A. D. C. Edwards should die without heirs lawfully begotten of her body then (her share of the estate) to return to my daughter Milley Franklin and her heirs forever." What this specific item did was to exclude Patsey Jones Edwards from receiving her daughter's share of the estate if her daughter died without lawful heirs. After the death of Daniel Edwards in 1807, Patsey Jones Edwards moved back to Wake County with her infant daughter. Gideon Edwards apparently did not want his daughter-in-law or her family to receive any part of his estate other than what he specified (two slaves); thus he included the above item. As it happened, Grizzeal A. D. C. Edwards died in 1815 at the age of eight, and the Jones family challenged the will of Gideon Edwards. They claimed that her share of the estate (roughly one-half of Edwards' property) should go to her mother, Patsey Jones Edwards, not to Gideon Edwards' daughter Mildred Franklin. The court, however, upheld the will of Gideon Edwards,

and Mildred Franklin received her niece's inheritance. Thus now Mildred and Meshack Franklin would inherit Gideon Edwards' entire estate upon the death of Anna Edwards, with their son Gideon Edwards Franklin to receive his share when he reached majority age.[104]

The wedding of Meshack Franklin and Mildred Edwards on February 2, 1802, must have been a gala event.[105] The Franklin family was one of the most prominent families in western North Carolina; and connections with the Edwards family went back to the mid-1790s, when Meshack Franklin's older brother Jesse (a two-term United States Senator and North Carolina's twentieth Governor) married Maria "Meeky" Perkins, a younger sister of Mrs. Gideon Edwards.[106] Meshack Franklin was born on September 17, 1773, in Orange County, Virginia, the ninth child of Bernard and Mary Cleveland Franklin.[107] He was six years old when the family moved to Wilkes County, North Carolina and settled along Mitchell's River in 1779 (this section was later annexed to Surry County in 1792). Meshack Franklin grew up in an atmosphere of staunch revolutionary patriotism and Jeffersonian politics. His uncle, Colonel Benjamin Cleveland, and his older brother Jesse were both staunch patriots during the Revolution, playing large roles in the patriot victory at the Battle of Kings Mountain. In the years following the war, Jesse Franklin became one of the leading political figures in western North Carolina, and Meshack Franklin quickly followed his older brothers footsteps into the political arena.[108]

Meshack Franklin became involved in local politics in the late 1790s, and he represented Surry County in the General Assembly

in 1800 and 1801.[109] Although relatively inexperienced in state-wide politics, Franklin nevertheless ran for the United States Congress in North Carolina's Twelfth Congressional District (Stokes, Surry, Iredell, Wilkes, Ashe Counties) in 1803. He faced four well-known opponents: Mussendine Mathews, an avowed Federalist and former Speaker of the House of Commons; William Lenoir, a Revolutionary War leader long influential in western North Carolina politics; Joseph Winston, another Revolutionary War figure and former Congressman; and George Houser, a local Republican candidate like Franklin with political aspirations. In this four-way congressional campaign, Meshack Franklin was rudely awakened to the rough-and-ready politics of early nineteenth century America. Like his brother Jesse, Meshack Franklin was not a great orator, and the Minervia took him to task for the sin of plagiarism throughout the campaign:

> We omitted sometime past to mention among the candidates of this district, one "Shackey" Franklin, who is no half-blooded, but full brother to our wise Senator. We should not at this time have deemed it worthy of mentioning, had he not imposed on The Sovereign People as his own electioneering speeches, memorized verbatim from an oration delivered by Pierpont Edwards at New Haven, Connecticut, on the fourth day of March last.[110]

Franklin, however, ran a strong second to Joseph Winston, losing by only fifty votes, and he succeeded in establishing himself as an emerging political figure in his section of the state.[111]

Although Franklin lost again to Joseph Winston in the 1804 congressional election, he was by now becoming well-heeled in the art of "electioneering."[112] In 1806 Franklin ran again for congress, this time facing his old adversary William Lenoir and Peter Eaton.

It was strictly a two-man race between Franklin and Lenoir; and as one of the surviving campaign broadsides of Lenoir's reveals, the candidates hurled a series of charges and slanders against each other.[113] Franklin was successful this time, however, defeating Lenoir by a comfortable margin of two-to-one, and he took his seat as a freshman representative in the Tenth Congress of the United States in 1807.[114]

In all, Meshack Franklin served four consecutive terms in the House of Representatives from 1807 to 1815. He was a staunch Jeffersonian and adherently followed the congressional leadership of North Carolina's senior representative, Nathaniel Macon.[115] Franklin was an efficient backer of the two administrations of James Madison and fully supported the War of 1812. His support of "Mr. Madison's War" apparently led to his defeat in 1815, when Lewis Williams won his congressional seat by over 600 votes.[116] Although Franklin tried many times to regain his congressional seat, he could not defeat Williams, who served a total of twenty-seven years in the House of Representatives. In fact, when Lewis Williams died in office in 1842, he was the "father of the house," having the longest seniority at that time of any Representative.[117]

Upon his return to North Carolina politics, Meshack Franklin became one of the most influential political leaders in western North Carolina. He was one of the founders and leaders of the Surry County Agricultural Society, concerned over what he called "the deplorable defalcation of our present farming system."[118] He became a leading advocate for internal improvements, more schools, and most importantly, state constitutional reform, which would end

the controlling influence of eastern North Carolina in state government. Although Franklin campaigned hard for William H. Crawford in the Presidential election of 1824, he joined the Jacksonian Democratic camp after the election.[119] In an 1825 political broadside, Franklin condemned the decision of Congress which gave the presidential election of 1824 to John Quincy Adams rather than Andrew Jackson, and he supported an amendment to the Constitution calling for the direct election of the President of the United States by the people.[120]

From 1824 to 1827, Meshack Franklin served on the Council of State (an advisory board to the governor). His stint as a Councilor was interrupted when Franklin represented Surry County in the state senate in 1828 and 1829, but continued afterwards as Franklin again served on the Council from 1831 to 1834.[121] In 1835 Franklin was chosen along with William P. Dobson to represent Surry County at the State Constitutional Convention. At the convention, Franklin and the other political leaders of western North Carolina advocated major "democratic" reforms in the state constitution, calling for the reorganization of the state legislature, massive internal improvements, the popular election of the governor, etc. On a whole, they were very successful, and one historian has called the convention "a study in Jacksonian Democracy."[122] The new state constitution was easily ratified; Surry County voted an amazing 1,751 to 4 in favor.[123] For Meshack Franklin, long an advocate of constitutional reform, it must have been a personal highlight in his long political career. Franklin served one more term in the state senate, representing newly created district forty-three in 1838, before his

death the following year. On his political career, the Raleigh Register commented that:

> He was a true friend and an efficient supporter of the administration of the illustrious Madison, a faithful disciple of the Jeffersonian school, a strict construer of the Constitution on all occasions supporting the Republican institutions of the country, and with manly firmness, opposing the extension of executive authority. In politics, as in the social walks of private life, he was liberal and generous, honest and sincere. Disdaining hypocrisy, discarding all the arts and devices of the demagogue, he did not desire promotion, if virtue had to be sacrificed to procure it.[124]

After their marriage in 1802, Meshack and Mildred Franklin apparently settled on a 630 acre tract on "Deep Creek," near the Yadkin River.[125] Since Franklin's political career forced him to travel back and forth to Raleigh and frequently to Washington, Mildred Franklin and her children probably spent a lot of time at "grandfather and grandmother Edwards'" house while Meshack was away. The exact date the Franklins moved to the Edwards plantation could not be determined, but circumstantial evidence indicates that it was soon after the death of Gideon Edwards in 1810. As executor of Gideon Edwards' estate, Meshack Franklin probably assumed the duties of running the plantation for his mother-in-law, and Mildred Franklin probably wanted to remain with her mother full time. Also the Rockford to Fishers Gap Road, which was described in 1810 as running across the top of the hill "above Mrs. Edwards," was described in February, 1811, as running across the top of the hill "above Meshack Franklins."[126] From this scant information, it seems safe to surmise that Meshack and Mildred Franklin moved with their family into the Edwards plantation house sometime between October,

1810, and February, 1811.

Anna Edwards died in 1820, and the Edwards plantation passed legally into the possession of her daughter's family. For reasons of courtesy, it is unlikely that Meshack Franklin would have remodeled the house while his mother-in-law was living. Tax records for the Edwards-Franklin estate support this and provide a clue as to when Franklin did remodel the house. From 1810 to 1822, the Edwards-Franklin plantation was consistently assessed at a value between $4,000 and $4,400. In 1823, the assessment shot up to $7,920 and remained in the $6,000 to $8,000 range over the next three years. In the late 1820s, the assessment returned to its normal $4,000 to $5,000 bracket.[127] Since Meshack Franklin did not acquire any additional acreage or slaves during this period, the sudden two-fold increase in 1823 suggests that major structural improvements were made to the house that year. It should also be noted that the higher assessments lasted three years before finally returning to their previous range; a period just long enough for the "newness" of the remodeled house to wear off. Almost certainly then, Franklin remodeled the Edwards plantation house in 1823.

Major changes were made to the house during the remodeling. The interior was changed from a hall-and-parlor plan to a Quaker or Continental style plan, with the stair now rising along the west side of the hall wall. The second floor was modified to a central-hall plan, two rooms deep. The interior was redecorated in a more muted palette, and new panelling was installed in the two east rooms of the first floor. The first floor mantels and Federal stair also date to this period. The rest of the panelling was probably rearranged, and the walls and ceilings were probably

touched-up and thoroughly whitewashed. The exterior was also modified. The large shed porch running across the south main facade was added, as was a second front door leading into the southeast room. The cornices were rebuilt and the siding was redone, and a new roof was probably put on at this time. The exterior was repainted in a more muted color scheme, with chalk-white siding and window sashes and green shutters.[128]

During the early nineteenth century, the majority of the inhabitants of Surry County were uneducated, small farmers who owned few slaves and existed on habits of hard labor and rigid economy.[124] The isolated region of the Edwards-Franklin plantation, however, differed somewhat from the rest of Surry County during this period. As shown, the region was settled chiefly from Virginia, and it remained socially and economically oriented toward Virginia. The neighborhood consisted of four or five plantations similar to the Edwards-Franklin plantation. They utilized slave labor to grow a cash crop, tobacco, which was usually sold in the Virginia markets. With the wealth attained by these families came political power, and the region produced political leadership not only for county and state, but the country as well. A United States Post Office was established in this isolated region as early as 1801, indictive of the political prominence of these few families.[130] A letter from Mrs. Isabel Graves, a great grandaughter of Governor Jesse Franklin (whose plantation was just five and a half miles north of the Edwards-Franklin plantation), to J. T. Alderman dated November 28, 1906, provides further insight into the make-up of this region:

> Governor Franklin lived in an isolated neighborhood; about four families made up the community--Jesse Franklin, Micajah Oglesby, Meshack Franklin, and Mr. Edwards, and they were all intelligent and well to do. They kept up the most cordial social relations; they visited and had parties and dances, to which their friends from a distance were invited. From all the concurrent traditions there was never anywhere a happier community during the lifetime of Governor Franklin.[131]

Besides renovating the mansion house, Meshack Franklin also expanded the plantation's farm acreage and productivity. As the "Journal of the Surry County Agricultural Society" reveals, Franklin was a well-educated farmer deeply interested in the problems of agricultural science.[132] He was greatly influenced by John Taylor's Arator and the Pennsylvania Farmer and apparently rotated his fields according to Taylor's recommendation: one year corn, the next year small grain, and then two years rest.[133] Tobacco was of course the commercial crop, and the Franklin plantation was worked by forty to sixty slaves.[134] It contained many farm outbuildings and slave cabins, and a slave graveyard remains just southeast of the house near the river bank. Deed descriptions of the land indicate that the plantation was heavily fenced, mentioning various crop and other fences.[135] Franklin also apparently built the corn mill that was used into the twentieth century and still stands today. Along with the farm's agricultural production, Franklin raised livestock in good numbers. The inventory of Franklin's estate and the yearly provision allowed his family gives a fair indication of the size and productivity of the Franklin plantation in the late 1830s. At the time of his death, Franklin had on hand: 130 barrels of corn; 9 stacks of oats; 23 fodder stacks; 11 stacks of rye; 5 stacks of

hay; 4,517 pounds of tobacco; 1,500 pounds of bacon; 70 pounds of lard; 20 bushels of wheat; 7 horses; 22 cattle; and 25 sheep. The yearly provision allowed the family included: 100 barrels of corn; 20 bushels of wheat; 60 bushels of oats; 42 bushels of rye; 1,500 pounds of bacon, 70 pounds of lard; 5 bushels of salt; 150 pounds of sugar; 70 pounds of coffee; and other provisions.[136]

Meshack Franklin died on December 18, 1839. He was buried in the family graveyard just south of the house.[137] Reporting his death, the Raleigh Register commented that "in him, the poor have lost a friend, and society one of its brightest ornaments."[138] The Franklins were Baptists, and Meshack Franklin was probably one of the founders of the Franklin Baptist Church (established in 1824) located a few miles from his house. He was described as "the best educated man in the county;" and as the "Agricultural Society Journal" reveals, he provided the county not only with political leadership, but educational leadership as well.[139] Although himself a large land and slaveholder, Franklin fought against his aristocratically inclined peers and the emerging Whig party in his later political years. For this he is generally credited with keeping Surry County in the Democratic camp until his death.[140] Along with Lewis Williams and his brother Jesse, Meshack Franklin contributed greatly to what has been called "the golden age for Surry County in the realm of politics."[141]

Meshack and Mildred Franklin had ten children, all of whom left Surry County or predeceased their parents. In order for the reader to better understand the settlement of Franklin's vast estate and its eventual sale, a brief biographical listing of each

child follows:

1) Gideon Edwards Franklin, born September 28,1803; married Ann Hughes in 1834; moved first to Tennessee, finally settled at Early Grove, Mississippi in the late 1830s; parents of eight children; died in 1867.
2) Ann Perkins Franklin, born December 25, 1804; married William W. Wellborn; moved to Early Grove, Mississippi in 1842; parents of eleven children; died in 1884.
3) Columbus Bernard Franklin, born June 23, 1806; married Ann Amelia Gwyn in 1842; moved to Fayette County, Tennessee in 1856; quite wealthy; parents of eight children; died in 1866.
4) Mary Cleveland Franklin, born April 1, 1809; married Gabriel T. Moore in 1829; moved first to Georgia, then to Sardis, Mississippi in 1848; parents of four children; died in 1885.
5) Sarah Hardin Franklin, born May 29, 1811; married Thomas J. Thurmond in 1834; moved to Saulsbury, Tennessee; parents of five children.
6) Martha Elizabeth Franklin, born June 10, 1813; married first cousin Hardin P. Franklin in 1837; moved to Early Grove, Mississippi in 1849; parents of five children; died in 1866.
7) Jesse Daniel Franklin, born March 8, 1815; married Amelia Thurmond; moved to Sardis, Mississippi in 1847; parent of one child.
8) Mildred Edwards Franklin, born December 15, 1819; married Enoch B. Hunt in 1834; remained in N.C., eventually settling in Salisbury; parents of three children.
9) Frances J. Franklin, born May 1, 1821; married David A. Abernathy; moved first to Mississippi in 1851; then to McKinney, Texas.
10) Meeky Caroline Franklin, born June 25, 1822; died at the Franklin homestead in Surry County in 1840; buried in the family graveyard.[142]

As previously examined, Gideon Edwards left his plantation house to his eldest grandson, Gideon Edwards Franklin, in 1810. At this time, Gideon E. Franklin was only seven years old; thus Meshack Franklin, as the heir's father, acquired nominal title to the house until his son came of age in 1824. The Franklin family had a tradition of giving each son a piece of property when he reached majority age.[143] When Gideon E. Franklin came of age in 1824, Meshack Franklin gave his son the 630 acre tract on "Deep Creek,"

but, in exchange for title to the Edwards plantation. Although there is no deed record for this transfer, tax and census records substantiate the transaction.[144] Gideon E. Franklin later sold the 630 acre "Deep Creek" tract in 1834 when he moved west, and Meshack Franklin passed on the title to the plantation house in his will.[145]

After dividing up his slaves and other personal property among his children, Meshack Franklin left his wife Mildred a life estate to the dwelling house and mill tract property. After her death, the property was to go to Franklin's youngest son, Jesse D. Franklin. The other tract of the plantation went to Columbus B. Franklin.[146] The household goods of Meshack Franklin clearly reflected his substantial wealth. His library consisted of well over 100 volumes, canvassing a subject range from the classics to history to literature to politics and agricultural science. Among other household items listed were: eighteen chairs; nine beds; one large glass mirror; one clock; one desk and bookcase; one cupboard; and vague references to other "furniture." On a more personal note, Franklin had two large stills on his plantation, with the smaller one holding sixty-five gallons.[147] Meshack Franklin was apparently a man who enjoyed a good drink of whiskey now and then.

As shown, the children of Meshack and Mildred Franklin did not remain in Surry County. Gideon Edwards Franklin (1803-1867) was the first to leave, moving to Tennessee soon after his marriage to Ann Hughes in 1834. He finally settled in Early Grove, Marshall County, Mississippi in the late 1830s. In ante-bellum Mississippi, Marshall County was known as the "empire county"; its soil was very

fertile, and its yield of cotton very large.[148] Gideon E. Franklin built a large plantation near the town of Early Grove, and he was soon joined by many of his brothers and sisters and cousins.[149]

After Meshack Franklin's death in 1839, the plantation was run on a smaller scale by his widow and two sons, Columbus B. Franklin and Jesse D. Franklin. In 1842 C. B. Franklin married Ann Amelia Gwyn and moved to Elkin, joining her prominent family in a number of business adventures.[150] Mildred Franklin died the following year, and title to the plantation passed solely on to Jesse D. Franklin. He occupied and farmed the plantation until 1847, when he apparently could no longer resist the fertile soils of Mississippi and the profits of "King Cotten." On May 6, 1847, Jesse D. Franklin sold his tract of the plantation, which included the house and mill and some 1,300 acres, to sixty-eight year old Sinclair McMickle for $3,000.[151] Three years later, Columbus B. Franklin sold the last part of the Franklin plantation, a 850 acre tract, to John J. McMickle for $5,000.[152] Thus the historical period of the Edwards-Franklin family came to an end.

It was also the end of an era for the Edwards-Franklin House and the surrounding region. The Yadkin Valley News commented in 1892 that "after these men (Edwards', Franklins, Oglesbys, Hughes, etc.) died and their decendants moved to other sections, this community rather retrograded."[153] Nearly sixty years of commercial tobacco farming had exhausted the soil of the Edwards-Franklin plantation. Although the land continued to be farmed extensively--corn became the major crop--it never again produced the wealth of the Edwards and Franklins. With this loss of wealth came the loss

of political power. The isolation of the region, which had benefited the plantation system in its early years, became now a detriment, dictating a depressed economic state of subsistance farming well into the twentieth century. As shall be shown in the following chapters, this depressed economic state preserved the Edwards-Franklin House from destructive modernization, but not from deterioration.

THE MCMICKLE AND BLEVINS FAMILIES

Sinclair McMickle was born in Surry County in 1779.[154] He was the son of John and Martha McMickle, who settled on a 300 acre tract on "the headwaters of Deep Creek" near the Yadkin River in the late 1770s.[155] John McMickle was a farmer of modest means, and the 1790 and 1800 census show that he did not own any slaves.[156] His 1806 will mentions six children: Dougel, John, Martha, Cloah, Sinclair, and Peter. Sinclair McMickle received half of his father's land.[157]

On October 26, 1809, Sinclair McMickle married Mary ("Polly") Woodruff, and they settled on the north bank of the Yadkin River between Turkey and Dutchman Creeks.[158] Sinclair McMickle became a successful middle-class farmer and many of his deed records mention orchards. He also traded some in land and acquired close to 1,000 acres along the north side of the Yadkin River.[159] Tax records reveal that he farmed 240 acres, and his land was valued over the years between $1,500 and $1,800.[160] When he could afford to, McMickle owned one or two slaves; but in most years, he worked his farm without slave labor.[161]

Sinclair McMickle bought the Edwards-Franklin House and mill tract property in 1847 for a recited consideration of $3,000.[162] He was sixty-eight years old at the time. For McMickle, an uneducated man who could not read or write and had worked hard his entire life, it was an opportunity to rise into the ranks of

the "gentry," a dream come true. Indeed, he called the structure his "mansion house."[163] It was probably for this reason that the McMickle family took such pride in and excellent care of the Edwards-Franklin House in their eighty-eight year association with the structure.

The 1850 census valued the McMickle farm at $3,500. Sinclair McMickle did not own any slaves, and he and his two youngest sons were farming 250 improved acres, producing: 9 bushels of wheat; 7 bushels of rye; 1,500 bushels of corn; 100 bushels of oats; 8 bushels of Irish potatoes; 30 bushels of sweet potatoes; and 100 pounds of butter. Livestock included: 1 horse; 5 milk cows; 2 working oxen; 14 cattle, and 40 swine. Value of the livestock was assessed at $284; in the proceeding year, livestock valued at $140 had been slaughtered.[164] No tobacco was grown, and the McMickles supplemented their farm livelihood by operating a corn mill for the region.

The marriage of Sinclair and Mary McMickle was blessed by the birth of four children: Gideon, John J., Christopher Columbus, and Permiley. Sinclair McMickle lived only nine years in his "mansion house," dying at the age of seventy-seven in 1856. Although not wealthy, he was financially sound, surprising at a time when many of North Carolina's farmers incurred heavy indebtedness. The settlement of his estate indicates that Sinclair McMickle had been leasing out tracts of the Franklin plantation to tenant farmers.[165] Under the terms of his will, his wife Mary received a life estate to his property; after her death, the property was to go to his youngest son, Christopher Columbus. Sinclair McMickle's

eldest son, Gideon, received $600; his second son John J. received $100 (both sons had received "sundry other advancements"), and his grandaughter (by his daughter Permiley) received $150. All the household and kitchen furnishings were left to his wife, along with two cows, two calves, and $50. The rest of his estate he ordered sold, with any surplus from the sale to be divided equally between his three sons.[166] As the final settlement of Sinclair McMickle's estate reveals, a surplus of $2,315.59 remained after the sale and payment of all debts, expenses and legacies; thus each son received an additional $771.86.[167]

Christopher Columbus McMickle was born in Surry County on October 25, 1830. He received a common school education and was sixteen when his family moved into the Edwards-Franklin House. Over the next nine years (1847-1856), C. C. McMickle lived with his parents and worked the farm and mill with his father. Shortly after his father's death, he married Roseltha P. Kapp daughter of John Kapp who ran a large flower and woolen mill. The 1860 census shows C. C. and R. P. McMickle, their two young daughters, A. E. (age 3) and S. A. (age 1), and the widow Mary McMickle living under the roof of the Edwards-Franklin House.[168]

According to the agricultural and slave schedules of the 1860 census, C. C. McMickle did not own any slaves and was farming 200 improved acres. Much of this and the farm's other 1,100 unimproved acres was leased out to tenant farmers. The farm was valued at $8,000 and was producing: 300 bushels of Indian corn; 75 bushels of oats; 15 bushels of Irish potatoes; 15 bushels of sweet potatoes; 4 tons of hay, 75 pounds of butter, and $5 worth of orchard products.

Livestock included: 1 horse; 5 milk cows; 9 cattle, and 32 swine. The value of the livestock was put at $260. Livestock valued at $104 had been slaughtered the previous year.[169]

Because he was a justice of the peace and a county tax assessor, C. C. McMickle escaped service during the Civil War.[170] The years were not without tragedy, however, as both of C. C. McMickle's young daughters, and his mother, died in the 1860s. A son, Eugene J., was born in 1867, bringing some joy to the decade. The 1870 census shows C. C. McMickle, his wife and three year old son, John and Fannie Kapp (McMickle's in-laws), and Tracy Spence (a twenty-one year old farm laborer) occupying the Edwards-Franklin House. McMickle's farm was valued at $4,000, his personal estate at $700, and annual farm production at $940.[171]

As indicated, C. C. McMickle was involved in county politics as a justice of the peace and tax assessor. He also served as county treasurer from 1869 to 1872.[172] On August 28, 1871, a U. S. Post Office was located at McMickle's home, and he was appointed postmaster. The post office was appropriately addressed "Edwardsville" and served a "community" of twenty persons.[173] C. C. McMickle also enlarged his milling operations, adding Kimbro Thompson as his partner.[174] A daughter, Laura E., was born on July 12, 1872, and a son, John H., was born two years later. The 1880 census shows C. C. McMickle and his family, his mother and father in-law, and a female house servant living in the house. McMickle's enlarged corn mill raised the value of his farm to $10,000. Farm production was equivalent to previous census' years, with the addition of twenty-five trees to his orchard.[175] C. C.

McMickle was apparently quite successful in the 1870s.

Beginning in 1879, C. C. McMickle began selling off tracts of the old plantation.[176] By 1901, the McMickle homestead had been reduced from 1,300 acres to approximately 285.[177] This researcher could not find any specific reasons why C. C. McMickle broke up the plantation, but the low prices McMickle received for the land indicates that the Edwardsville region was hard hit by the depressed agricultural conditions of late nineteenth century America. C. C. McMickle and his family, however, kept their home in excellent shape. A letter from C. C. McMickle's nephew Jack to Mrs. Mildred McNeely, a grandaughter of Meshack Franklin, dated April 5, 1886, reported that:

> . . .both your grandfathers and Uncle Hardin's houses are in good repair now. . .all transient things are very much changed since you were here. The Skull Camp Mountain, the brooklets, the springs and the river are looking as natural as ever. The graveyard is very much impaired. . .[178]

and according to Mrs. Stella McMickle Hatcher, a grandaughter of C. C. McMickle:

> that was the most beautiful home I ever saw. . .it was freshly painted white outside, green window blinds outside. People would stand and gaze at those beautiful doors.[179]

Further information provided by Mrs. Hatcher allows one to piece together a description of the house and grounds as they probably appeared around the turn of the century. Two roads passed by the McMickle homestead. The ancient Rockford to Fishers Gap road, established in the 1780s, still ran along the hills "above the house." It had been modified over the years and was now known as the Old Haystack Road, but it still passed along the back (north)

of the house. A road leading to Dobson (current route 1338) passed along the western grounds of the homestead. These western grounds were enclosed by split-log rail fences. The fence along the Dobson Road contained an outer gate opening to a path leading to the house. An inner gate was located on the fence near the house. The spring was located to the rear of the house and was enclosed by a rock wall about two feet high. The springhouse and wash house were located (naturally) just below the spring. The large log kitchen stood east of the house. It was a two-room, dirt floor structure with a large centrally located fireplace and a loft. It fronted the "Big House." Each kitchen room had a door and window in the front. A dry house stood northeast of the house, between the wash house and kitchen. A large smokehouse and spinning/loom house stood to the southeast of the main structure, along the path of present route 1331. The privies were also located in this area. Further southeast of the smokehouse near the river bank was the slave graveyard. Other outbuildings included a big "lower" barn south of the house below the family graveyard; and a "dogtrot" barn containing the corn crib and stables was located southwest of the house near the Dobson Road. A cattle barn was also in this area. The corn mill was located further south on the west side of the Dobson Road and stands today. The fields directly in front of the house above the family graveyard were tilled for vegetables and also contained the bee hives. The big lower fields south of the family graveyard and southeast along the river were primarily for corn. The apple orchard was located northwest of the house, across the intersection

of the two roads.

As mentioned, the exterior of the Edwards-Franklin House was painted white at this time, with green shutters. The southwest front door led into the great room which served as the library/ post office/living room. Its furnishings were highlighted by a large desk by the front windows and a corner cupboard. The larger east room, entered by the southeast front door and east door, and connected to the great room by an interior hall door, was used as an indoor kitchen. The smaller northeast room, connected to the larger southeast room by an interior hall door, served as the dining room. Upstairs of course were the bedrooms. Wind-up clocks decorated the mantels above the fireplaces and floor vases were located along the sides. The interior was whitewashed, and James Blevins, who moved into the house in 1914, recalled that "you could see yourself in the paneling, it was that shiny."[180]

Reserving for themselves a life estate to their property, C. C. McMickle and his wife sold the family homestead to their daughter, Laura E. McMickle, on February 7, 1901 for $300 and "the natural love and affection they have for their daughter."[181] Afterwards they continued to reside with their daughter in the oldhouse until their deaths in 1914. Both C. C. McMickle and his wife were buried in the family graveyard.[182] During his life, C. C. McMickle resided in the Edwards-Franklin House for sixty-seven years, longest of any of the dwelling's occupants.

Laura E. McMickle was born in the Edwards-Franklin House on July 12, 1872, the fourth child of C. C. and R. P. McMickle. She obtained a common school education and later served as postmistress

of the "Edwardsville" post office until its discontinuance. After the death of her parents, she married James Blevins, sixteen years her junior, on November 21, 1914.[183] They lived in the old Edwards-Franklin House until her death from bronchial pneumonia on March 7, 1935. She was the last person buried in the family graveyard.[184] She resided in the structure her entire life, the only occupant in the dwelling's history to do so. Neighbors still talk respectfully of "Miss Laura."

James Blevins (1887-1962) was the son of John and Rosa Mays Blevins, grandson of Hamilton and Phebe Blevins. His grandfather migrated to Surry County from Virginia in the early 1830s and moved to the Fisher River region in 1849. In that year, Hamilton Blevins purchased Hardin P. Franklin's 800 acre homestead, located a few miles west/southwest of the Edwards-Franklin House, for a recited consideration of $2,000.[185] The 1850 and 1860 censuses show that Hamilton Blevins was a small farmer, his estate valued between $1,200 and $2,000. At least nine children were born to Hamilton Blevins and his wife Phebe: Calloway, Margaret, Catherine, Lucy, Hamilton Jr., Julia, Matilda, Belsora, and John.[186] During the Civil War, Hamilton Blevins sold most of his Fisher River property, and he apparently either left Surry County or moved to another section of the county.[187] Many of his children, however, stayed in the "Edwardsville" region.[188]

John Blevins (1854-1934) was the ninth child of Hamilton and Phebe Blevins. He married Rosa Mays, daughter of Hardin and Frankie Richardson Mays, around 1880 and settled in the "Edwardsville" region. At this time, John Blevins might have been tenant farming

on some of C. C. McMickle's land, for he later purchased two tracts of land (containing 78 acres) from C. C. McMickle and Kimbro Thompson near the McMickle-Thompson Corn Mill.[189] John and Rosa Blevins had eight children: James, John, Samuel, Clarence, Ernest, David, and two daughters. John Blevins farmed his homestead until his death in 1934, and his and the family of C. C. McMickle were neighbors for over fifty years.[190]

As mentioned, James Blevins married Laura E. McMickle on November 21, 1914. One child was of this marriage, a son James Henry Blevins, who died as an infant.[191] Agricultural conditions, depressed since the late nineteenth century, forced James and Laura Blevins to sell off additional tracts of the old plantation, reducing the homestead to seventy-seven acres.[192] Around 1920, Laura Blevins sold off most of the antique furnishings of the house.[193] Like most of America, the "Edwardsville" region of Surry County suffered greatly during the Great Depression. In 1931 James and Laura Blevins were forced by indebtedness to place their property in trust.[194] On May 4, 1935, however, James Blevins repurchased the old homestead at a public sale for $625.[195]

After Laura Blevin's death in 1935, James Blevins remarried, taking Elsie Lou McCann of Allegheny County as his second wife in 1937. He also opened a small general store that year to supplement his farming livelihood. James and Elsie Blevins raised their family in the old homestead, which now showed the wear and tear of all the passing years. James Blevins did what he could to shore up the deteriorating structure. Over the years, he changed the roof to tin, replaced the porch floor, and rebuilt the porch

banisters. Inside he added the partition to the great room, creating two smaller rooms (for more heat efficiency), and he installed a wood heater. The house was electrified in the late 1940s, but plumbing was never added to the structure.[196]

After the death of James Blevins in 1962, Elsie Lou Blevins resided in the 163 year old structure until 1969. She described the house as being in "fair condition" during these years, plagued by problems of peeling and crumbling plaster and other signs of rapid deterioration. The house was extremely drafty and cold, and finally Mrs. Blevins moved to her son Samuel's, a few miles south of the old dilapidated house, in 1969.[197]

Thus the structure's 170 year history as a dwelling came to an end. The years of the McMickle and Blevins families represented a period of surprisingly gradual decline. The house was spared from destructive modernization by the depressed economic conditions of the isolated Edwardsville region. The architectural elements which make the house significant today, the paneled wainscoting, Georgian doors, Federal stairs,etc., were carefully preserved by respected tradition and necessity. From 1969 to 1973, however, the vacant house rapidly deteriorated, and it stood on the verge of collapse when the Surry County Historical Society purchased it.[198]

THE RESTORATION PROJECT

Interest in preserving and restoring the Edwards-Franklin House arose in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At first, the interested citizens of Mt. Airy and Surry County were primarily concerned with purchasing and restoring the home of Governor Jesse Franklin, which stood just five and a half miles north of the Edwards-Franklin House. Their efforts to raise purchase money for the house failed, however, and the owner of the structure indiscriminately burned it to the ground in February, 1968, because, in his words, "it was just an abandoned house."[199] After this debacle, concerned citizens formed the Surry County Historical Society in 1972, and the restoration of the Edwards-Franklin House became its first planned project.

On February 1, 1973, the Surry County Historical Society purchased the Edwards-Franklin House and four surrounding acres from the family of James Blevins for $8,000.[200] The house stood on the verge of collapse, and plans for stabilizing and restoring the structure were immediately begun. At first, however, the combined efforts of the Surry County Historical Society and State Division of Archives and History turned out to be a bureaucratic nightmare, and the restoration project ran into a host of problems. Plans developed by the project's first architect were rejected, delaying needed stabilization work to the house, and the first historical report on the structure proved to be erroneous.

Fortunately, the Edwards-Franklin House did not collapse during this interim, and many of the technical problems which had plagued the project were worked out. Plans by the project's new architect, Jack Boyte, were approved, and exterior restoration began in the spring of 1978.[201]

Plans are to restore the house to the period of the Franklin ownership, accurately depicting the cultural lifestyle of a wealthy plantation in ante-bellum Surry County. Restoration of the exterior is expected to be completed soon, and the Surry County Historical Society is busily engaged in fund raising drives for the second phase of the project, restoration of the interior. Among other sources, the society has received matching grants from the North Carolina State legislature, along with grants from the National Park Service and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation.[202]

As the reader probably noticed, little detailed information about the house itself was found. This researcher was frustrated by many hints of personal source materials that apparently have been lost over the years. For example, a letter from Sarah Moore to her cousin Mary E. Hunt (grandaughters of Meshack Franklin) dated May 10, 1880, stated that "Uncle Jesse left a trunk of papers in the garret at grandpa's when he moved west."[203] Fate also ruined a chance of a description of the house in 1828 when Dr. Elisha Mitchell passed through the region on a geological study-tour; in a letter to his wife (in which Mitchell described the seventeen room "Round About" plantation of Colonel Meredith Thurmond in Wilkes County where he had spent the previous night),

Dr. Mitchell stated that:

> I intended to pass from Col. Thurmond's to Mr. Franklin's in Surry but learn that that gentleman is gone from home to attend the meeting of the Council of State. I determined to direct my course immediately to Rockford, the metropolis of Surry.[204]

Thus very little is known about the appearance of the house prior to its remodeling, and the east and north porch structures remain a mystery. Nothing descriptive about the interior during the Edwards-Franklin period is known, but the inventories of their respective estates are excellent guides to the furnishings of the house. Exact room useage during the period is also not known. Fortunately, the approximate locations of the numerous outbuildings are still remembered and have been recorded, and Mrs. Hatcher's map of the grounds gives an excellent "sense" of the size and scope of the Edwards-Franklin plantation. The author's hope is that this report will likewise provide an excellent "sense" of the historical perspective of the dwelling and property.

REMINISCENCES OF MRS. STELLA MCMICKLE HATCHER

COPY

4302 Kennedy Street
Hyattsville, Maryland

Dear Miss Minick:

I received the mail you sent me yesterday. You seem to be getting a start on the Franklin House. I am glad you could see a little on the paper I sent you. No doubt the house and log kitchen were built by the Franklins. It was about 100 years before my time, and about 50 years after the McMickle purchase. About 30 years before it went to my grandfather received the deed to Christopher C. McMickle. He had many cattle, hogs, horses and tools. I don't know the Franklins. I can't say who built the outside building(s) and fences.

I will try again to see if I can help.

/s/ Stella M. Hatcher

Attachment

Some things I can remember about my grandfather's home.

My mother died in March, 1896. My grandfather Christopher Columbus and his wife Philence (Capps) McMickle took my brother Carl Archie McMickle and me to live with them 'till my father Eugene J. McMickle could find us another mother. That was the most beautiful home I ever saw. At that time (late 1890s) it was freshly painted white outside, green window blinds outside. People would stand and gaze at those beautiful doors. The inside was unusual. Nice mantel at every fireplace with wind-up clocks in the center, beautiful vases on either side (no long floor clocks). The large room had an extra large book desk left of the front door. Mail was kept in the desk. The mail was carried by a boy riding a mule from Low Gap to Dobson. The post office was at that house, called Edwardsville. Aunt Laura was the postmistress. The furnature was nice, very nearly like George Washington's house at Mt. Vernon. My father's brother John went to Philadelphia. He could not make use of the land. After grandpa and grandma died in 1914, Aunt Laura sold much of the nice furnature and sent the money to him. The house was well kept when I was married in 1918. My father Eugene was on the jury and grand jury. He was a miller and on the school committee to select teachers.

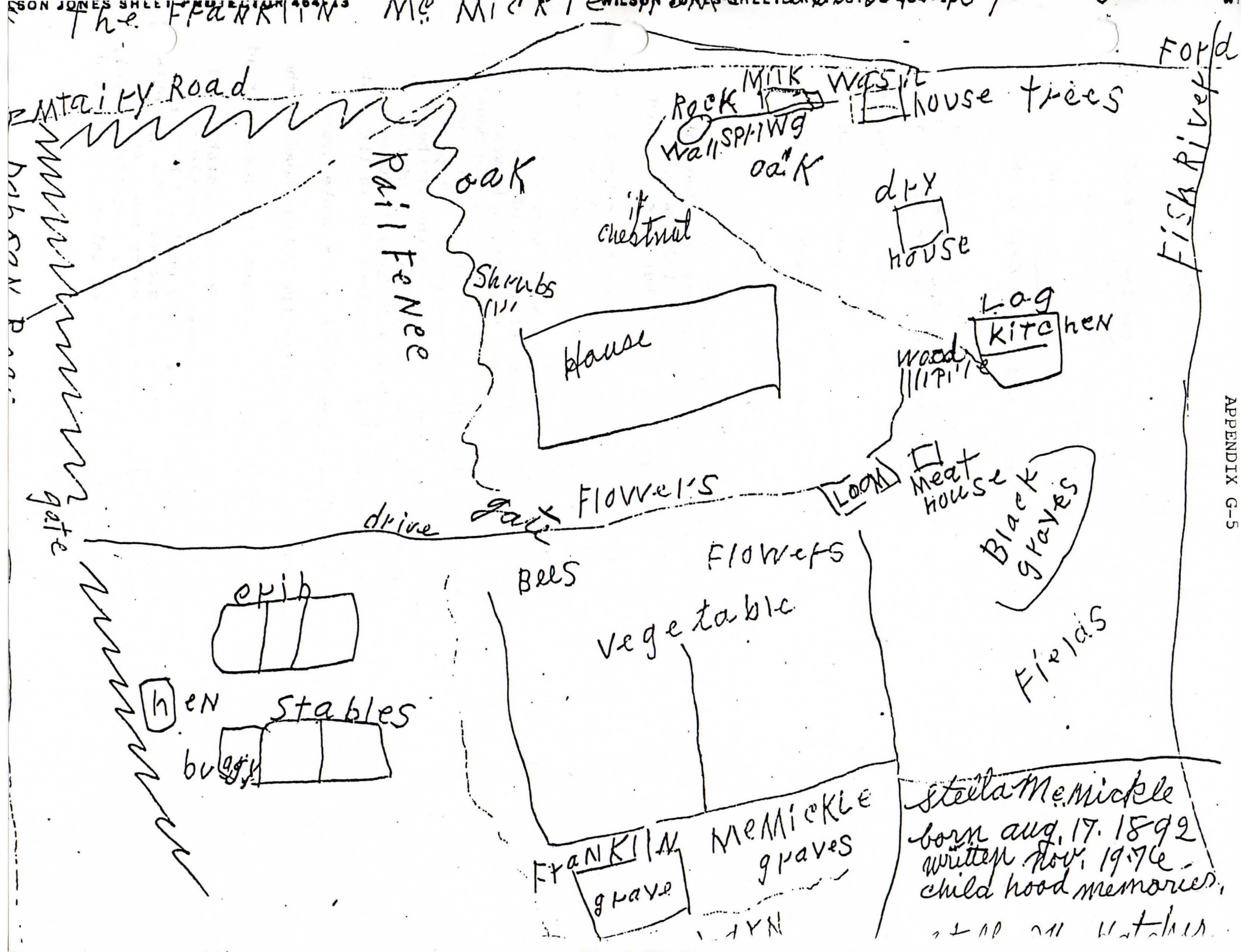
The House

1. The House was white with green shutters.
2. The chimney date was 1799 instead of 1792.
3. There was no porch at the back, just steps.
4. The front porch had steps at each side. (?)
5. Mrs. Hatcher immediately spotted the partition (in the great room) as being recent.

6. The big east room was used as a kitchen in the last days of grandpa (C. C. McMickle) whose bed was in the southeast corner by the door. Mrs. Hatcher doesn't remember the door. (?)
7. The little room was the dining room.
8. Mrs. Hatcher doesn't remember anything particular about the fireplaces.
9. In big room, grandpa (C. C. McMickle) had a huge desk by the front window.
10. There was a corner cupboard.
11. Aunt Laura (Laura E. McMickle Blevins) sold the furnature to a hotel at Fancy Gap around 1920 to help her brother in Washington (Philadelphia?). There was much old furnature in the house which she thought had belonged to the Franklins.
12. Mrs. Hatcher observed that an upstairs addition had been added at one time. (?)
13. The library was downstairs in the big room. The doors were an attraction, especially upstairs.
14. Mrs. Hatcher thought that there had been a railing at the top of the attic stairs.

Roads and Grounds

1. The main road went along the back, north of the stream which is not Scary Branch. Scary Branch is further up the road (north). The present Haystack Road was not there. Route 1338 was the Dobson Road. Old road led to a ford on the Fisher River. There was also a footlog there.
2. The spring was enclosed by a rock wall about two feet above ground. Below it was the springhouse; below that was the wash house.
3. In the back were two huge oak trees--bigger than the one there now. One on east side of the house, one on west.
4. Mrs. Hatcher does not remember slave cabins on the west side.
5. There was a row of cedars in front. James Blevins sold some.
6. The present boxwood was not there; the moss rose probably was. Bulbs were in the yard. (The present ones are old fashioned double.)
7. The kitchen was log, two rooms with dirt floors and a loft. One window, one door in each room fronting the big house. Steps led to the loft. No covered walkway from the house to the kitchen.
8. Kitchen fireplace was huge. It was of brick, about 8 feet high. Brick was taken out and used later in Eugene McMickle's house. One brick had "1756" marked on it. (??) Fireplace was in the center of the kitchen.
9. Near the present apple trees was a loom house and a smoke house below that.
10. An apple orchard was on the west side across the Dobson Road on the north side of the house.
11. In the front were some gooseberry bushes and across the present road was the vegetable garden.
12. Near the Dobson Road next to the vegetable garden was a stable and corn crib--two sections with a dogtrot between and a cattle barn.
13. The Franklins' were buried inside the graveyard enclosed by a rock wall. The graves were marked with unlettered stones. The McMickles were buried outside the rock wall, graves marked by rough stones. Mrs. Hatcher recalls that grandma & grandpa (C. C. McMickle & wife), Aunt Laura (Laura E. McMickle Blevins) and three babies were buried here.
14. The slave graveyard was near the river bank.
15. The privy was where the road is now.


The FRANKLIN
Mc MICKLE
Ford
Fish River
Mitchell Road
Rail Fence
oak
Rock
Milk
Well
House trees
Wall spring
oak
dry
House
chestnut
Shrubs
House
Log
Kitchen
wood pile
gate
drive
gate
Flowers
Lock
Meat House
Black graves
Flowers
Bees
vegetable
Fields
Corn
hen
Stables
buggy
FRANKLIN
grave
McMICKLE
graves
Stella McMickle
born aug. 17. 1892
written Nov. 1976
child hood memories.

APPENDIX G-5

Apple orchard
Old
HAYSTACK ROAD
New road built in 1975
Dobson Road
Building
Huge oak
Spring house
Lilacs
Cedar trees
Smoke house
Vegetable garden
Garden
Cemetery
Frankins inside rough stone
Big lawn farm
Fields
Slave graveyard
Rough stones no trees
Swamp
Foot log