

State of North Carolina
Division of Archives and History

Davidson COUNTY

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

Lexington West, N.C. QUAD

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR THEMATIC NOMINATION

1 NAME

HISTORIC John Henry Welborn House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

511 South Main Street

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

North Carolina

— VICINITY OF

CODE
037

COUNTY

Davidson

CODE

057

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Welborn heirs: John Henry Welborn, William Fowle Welborn, Dr. James Todd
Welborn, Dr. Samuel Welborn c/o F. W. Welborn

STREET & NUMBER

209 W. Second Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

— VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina 27292

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC Davidson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

STATE
North Carolina

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Ruth Little, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Survey and Planning Branch

DATE

July 18, 1983

STREET & NUMBER

Division of Archives and History

TELEPHONE

919/733-6545

CITY OR TOWN

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina 27611

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The John Henry Welborn House, one of the few remaining residences dating from Lexington's postbellum era, is a well-preserved, two-story frame Italianate Revival style house on South Main Street five blocks west of Courthouse Square. Although its architectural details are modest, the Palladian massing of the two-story center pavilion projecting from the main block creates an imposing appearance. Built about 1870, the house is basically unchanged except for several rear additions and replacement of the original porch with a Neo-Classical one around the turn of the century. Interior finish is likewise modest except for an ornate east parlor with an inlaid marble mantel and plaster ceiling ornament. Of the five outbuildings shown on the 1913 Sanborn map, only the smokehouse still stands.

The basic structure is an I-house with a two-story rear wing creating an L-configuration. It rests on a solid brick foundation, and the plain weatherboard is punctuated by Doric corner pilasters, wide cornice boards with curvilinear sawnwork brackets with drop finials, and pedimented gable ends covered with flush sheathing. The focus of the main (north) facade is the pavilion pediment, featuring sprightly sawnwork applique of Italianate design. The end gables are plain and enclose the exterior end, single stepped-shoulder brick chimneys covered with rusticated stucco. The wing chimney has an interior end placement and all three chimneys terminate in molded caps. Pressed tin simulating wood shingles, apparently original, covers the roof.

Each of the three faces of the pavilion has an entrance. The main front entrance is a replacement six-flat panel door set in an original Italianate surround of flat-paneled pilasters with paneled corner blocks enclosing an elliptical fanlight and sidelights. The fanlight is apparently unaltered, but the beveled sidelights may date from the Neo-Classical facelift. The side entrances are single doors in molded surrounds; the east door an original four-flat panel design, the west door a six-panel replacement. Throughout the house are original six-over-six sash in molded surrounds with louvered shutters. The 1913 Sanborn map of Lexington shows the front porch in its present Neo-Classical configuration, but an early twentieth century documentary photograph reveals the original porch: a three-bay one-story design with a center bay with a pyramidal roof projecting from the pavilion and flanking hipped bays abutting the main block. Thick posts, square-in-section, with rectangular panels articulating each face, supported the bracketted porch eaves. The Neo-Classical style replacement porch wraps around the portico, and has rounded corners. The hipped tin roof is supported by slender Doric columns, and a shallow pedimented gable sets off the entrance bay.

In addition to the porch, the only other change to the main block during the Neo-Classical facelift was the addition of a "piano bay" in the east elevation, in the dining room wall. The rectangular bay has a center single-pane transom, flanking one-over-one sash, and is finished like the original wall surfaces. Added before 1913, and possibly soon after initial construction, was a one-story west rear wing with an interior brick chimney and windows and bracketted eaves nearly identical to the main block. This wing may have originally functioned as an attached law office. The kitchen is located in a one-story block behind the rear wing, probably in the

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same location as the original kitchen, but remodelled in the twentieth century. The one-story porch connecting the rear wing and added west wing has been enclosed as interior space, and a bathroom and closet addition has been added to the rear of the main block above the west wing.

The smokehouse, located approximately fifty feet southwest of the house, is nearly unaltered. It is a square structure covered with plain weatherboard, with a hip roof with pressed tin shingles and an interior brick chimney.

The original interior floor plan is unaltered, and consists of an elegant portico entrance hall which opens into a slightly narrower central stair hall and flanking parlors. Located in the rear wing directly behind the main stair is an enclosed service stair, dining room, and kitchen. On the second floor, the space above the entrance hall is a sitting room, with bedrooms flanking the stair hall and a servant's quarters behind the service stair. The original simple Italianate finish is largely intact. Throughout the main block and original wing are high molded baseboards, plaster walls and ceilings, and wide molded door and window surrounds. Some original four flat-panel doors remain; the others date from the Neo-Classical renovation. Although the mantel in the west parlor is a Neo-Classical replacement with a mirrored overmantel, original marble mantels remain in the east parlor and dining room. The ornate black and white marble mantel in the parlor, of Renaissance design with inlaid floral ornament, and the plaster cornice and ceiling medallion hint at the former opulence of the furnishings in this room. The white marble dining room mantel is a simple, handsome Greco-Italianate design with Doric pilasters and a plain, arched frieze. The unaltered second floor contains wooden mantels of nearly identical design to the dining room mantel. The main stair rises in three open-string flights, with two landings, with a railing with a slender turned newel, delicate turned balusters, and a thick molded rail. The interior of the one-story west wing dates largely from the early twentieth century, although the doors, of similar design to the main block, indicate an earlier construction date.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

_____ NATIONAL _____ STATE X LOCAL

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

SPECIFIC DATES ca. 1870 BUILDER/ARCHITECT unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The John Henry Welborn House, built about 1870 by John Henry Welborn, an attorney prominent in Lexington civic affairs during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, is one of the last remaining nineteenth century residences which lined Main Street on each side of Courthouse Square. The two-story frame Italianate Revival style house with its projecting entrance pavilion is a reminder of Lexington's post-bellum expansion as a furniture and textile manufacturing center in the wake of construction of the North Carolina Railroad.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. Primarily significant as one of the last representative examples of the Victorian residences which lined Main Street in Lexington from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries.

- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of an Italianate style dwelling with central pavilion, a rarity in Davidson County.

The chain of title for the John Henry Welborn House is straightforward, having passed from the original owners, John Henry and Anna F. Welborn to their son, William Fowle Welborn and his wife Bessie Todd Welborn, and then to the present owners, their four grandsons.¹ J. H. Welborn came to Lexington as a young Civil War veteran in the late 1860s, began practice as an attorney, and soon became prominent in civic affairs. In the 1870 census he is listed as a twenty-seven year old lawyer with a young wife, Mary, and two servants. His personal estate was worth \$6,000, and his real estate \$3,200.² In 1872 he served as mayor of Lexington, and until his death in 1887 he was deeply involved in church and public activities in the bustling county seat.³ Welborn's first wife, Mary, apparently died, for in 1874 Welborn married Anna Fowle (1848-1920), and in the 1880 census they had two sons and one servant.⁴

Between 1866 and 1887, J. H. Welborn acquired thousands of acres of land both in the Lexington city limits and in rural Davidson County.⁵ Because of the complexity of these real estate holdings, it is difficult to pinpoint the purchase of the South Main Street lot on which he built his residence. It is likely that he was living in the new house at the time of the 1870 census. Family tradition places the date of construction about 1870, and the construction details and Italianate Revival style of the house confirm this.

J. H. and Anna raised six children in the house on Main Street, but only William Fowle (1878-1961) married and had a family. William and his wife Bessie lived in the house with his widowed mother until her death in 1920, and it was probably at their instigation that the Neo-Classical remodeling was done in the early twentieth century.⁶ William ran the Lexington Drug Store on Courthouse Square until his death in 1961. At Bessie's death in 1976 their four sons John Henry, William Fowle, James Todd, and Samuel Welborn inherited the house and still own it.⁷ A great-grandson, Jay Welborn, is the current resident.

Although the Welborn family has been prominent in Lexington history for the past century, the landmark status of the Welborn House is derived from its architectural and socio-cultural significance rather than its association with the Welborns. The Italianate T-plan of the house was perhaps well-represented in Lexington prior to the demolition of most of the nineteenth century housing fabric, but the house is now the sole surviving example in town. The only other examples of the style are

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.47 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 7	5 6 70 2 0	3 9 6 3 9 6 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

That part of Map 113, Block K, Lot 1B, Davidson County Tax Office, founded on the north by Lots 1A, 7, 8 and 9, on the east by S. Salisbury St., on the south by Lots 2, 6 and 10, and on the west by S. Main St., as outlined in red on map.

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two houses built by Gaither Walser in the Yadkin College settlement on the west edge of the county. The first was built between 1870 and 1875 by an unknown builder. The second, built between 1880 and 1890, is attributed to local builder H. Bentley Owen. Beyond its architectural design, however, the Welborn House is one of the last evocations of gentrified life in Victorian Lexington. Its expansive plan and Main Street location represent the Lexington middle-class residential pattern which had disappeared by the mid-twentieth century.

Footnotes

¹Janice M. Welborn, "John Henry and Anna Marsh Fowle Welborn," The Heritage of Davidson County 1982 (Lexington, N.C.: The Genealogical Society of Davidson County, 1982), no. 1214.

²United States Census, 1870. Davidson County.

³Welborn, "John Henry and Anna Marsh Fowle Welborn."

⁴Welborn, and United States Census, 1880, Davidson County.

⁵Davidson County Deed Books, grantee index, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

⁶Telephone interview with Geraldine Hobbs Welborn, June 26, 1983, Lexington, N.C., notes in file.

⁷Davidson County Deed Book 393, page 149. Davidson County Register of Deeds, Lexington, N.C.

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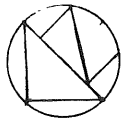
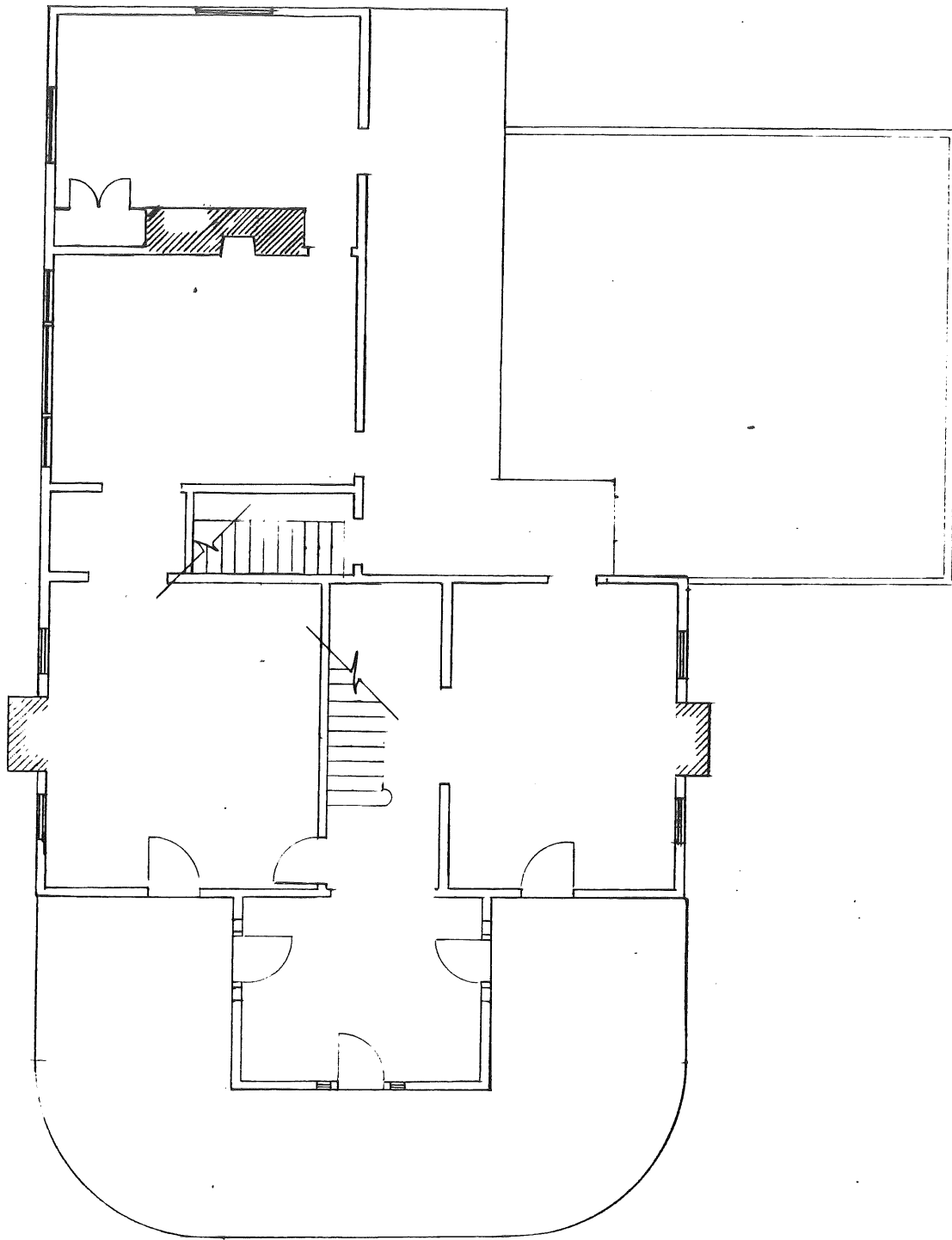
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Davidson County Deed Books. North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina.

United States Census, Population Schedule. 1870, 1880. Davidson County. North Carolina State Archives.

Welborn, Janice M. "John Henry and Anna Marsh Fowle Welborn." The Heritage of Davidson County 1982 (Lexington, N.C.: The Genealogical Society of Davidson County, 1982), no. 1214.

Welborn, Geraldine Hobbs. Telephone interview with. June 26, 1983, Lexington, North Carolina. Notes in file.



WELBORN HOUSE LEXINGTON. c. 1870 1/8" = 1' 0" PBT
10-30-83

