

#### North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

#### **State Historic Preservation Office**

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper Secretary Susi H. Hamilton Office of Archives and History Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

December 16, 2019

Bill Green Terracon 521 Clemson Road Columbia, SC 29229

bill.green@terracon.com

Dear Mr. Green:

Re: Construct Commercial Building, 18322 & 18324 West Catawba Avenue, 8315 Westmoreland Road, and 18500 Caleb Jordan Drive, Cornelius, Mecklenburg County, ER 19-1985

Thank you for your letter of November 13, 2019, transmitting the historic structure survey report, "Architectural Evaluation of the J. Wilson Alexander Farm Tenant House, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina", and its associated deliverables. We have reviewed the report and offer the following comments.

We concur with the report's findings that the J. Wilson Alexander Farm Tenant House (MK2293), which was placed on the Stated Study List in 2002, is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A and Criterion C for the reasons cited in the report.

Demolition of eligible properties or the development of the surrounding landscape that has a negative impact on the resource's integrity of feeling, setting, and association is considered an adverse effect. We reiterate that work known to have an adverse effect on historic properties, and performed in preparation of a project, could be considered "anticipatory" and poses a risk to Section 106 compliance, which could jeopardize permitting or cause a delay in the process.

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration. If you have questions concerning the above comment, contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-814-6579 or <a href="mailto:environmental.review@ncdcr.gov">environmental.review@ncdcr.gov</a>. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

Sincerely,

Ramona M. Bartos

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Rence Gledhill-Earley

cc: Steven Alafazanos, WIN Development LLC, steven@windevelopment.net

Received: 11/18/2019



November 13, 2019

ER 19-1985

Ms. Renee Gledhill-Earley
Environmental Review Coordinator
North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office
4617 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4617

Due -- 12/12/19

s. letter

Re:

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION Architectural Evaluation of the J. Wilson Alexander Farm Tenant House Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

Terracon Project No. 73197165 SHPO Review No. ER 19-1985

Dear Ms. Gledhill-Earley:

Per an e-mail I received from Renee Shearin on November 12, 2019, in response to an e-mail inquiry I made about the review status of the above-referenced report we submitted on September 30, 2019, I am attaching a CD with the following information.

- PDF copy of the report
- GIS shapefile
- Survey database
- A new PDF copy of the updated survey form

An expedited review of this information would be greatly appreciated.

We appreciate your assistance with this project, If you have any questions or need additional information, please don't hesitate to call me at 803-403-1256 or you can reach me via e-mail at bill.green@terracon.com. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Terracon Consultants, Inc.

William Green, M.A., RPA # 10387

Principal / Department Manager

Natural and Cultural Resource Services

cc: Steven Alafazanos, Alexander Farms MU, LLC.

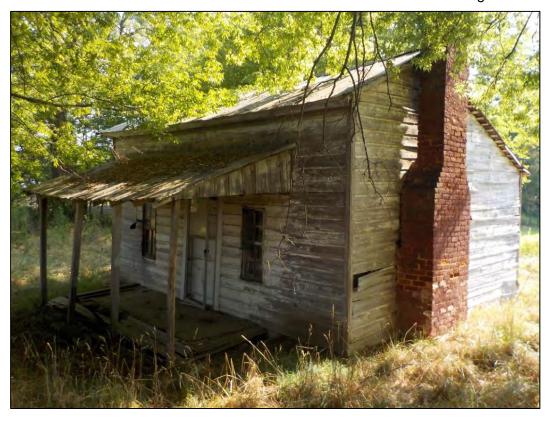
Terracon Consultants, Inc. 521 Clemson Road Columbia, South Carolina 29229 P [803] 741 9000 F [803] 741-9900 terracon.com

## ARCHITECTURAL EVALUATION OF THE J. WILSON ALEXANDER FARM TENANT HOUSE

#### **Mecklenburg County, North Carolina**

Terracon Project No. 73197165

August 2019



#### **Prepared For:**

Alexander Farms MU, LLC 2165 Louisa Drive Belleair Beach, Florida 33786-3445

#### **Prepared By:**

Terracon Consultants, Inc. 521 Clemson Road Columbia, South Carolina 29229

terracon.com



Environmental Facilities Geotechnical Materials

# ARCHITECTURAL EVALUATION OF THE J. WILSON ALEXANDER FARM TENANT HOUSE MECKLENBURG COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

DRAFT REPORT SHPO Review No.: ER 19-1985

Prepared For:

Alexander Farms MU, LLC 2165 Louisa Drive Belleair Beach, Florida 33786-3445

Prepared By:



521 Clemson Road Columbia, South Carolina

Project No. 73197165

Author:

Mills Dorn, M.H.P. and William Green, M.A.

William Green, M.A., RPA #10387 Principal Investigator

August 2019

Alexander Farm Tenant House • Mecklenburg Co., NC August 2019 • Terracon Project No. 73197165



#### MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Terracon Consultants, Inc. (Terracon), on behalf of Alexander Farms MU, LLC, has completed an architectural evaluation of the J. Wilson Alexander Tenant House located at 18324 West Catawba Avenue in Cornelius, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina (Figures 1 and 2). The tenant house is located within a proposed multi-family residential development that will require compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (54 U.S.C. § 300101 et seq.). The lead federal agency for the project is expected to be the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

Based on a letter from Renee Gledhill-Earley of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to Ashley Keesling of Terracon dated July 18, 2019, the SHPO requested that an architectural and historical evaluation of the J. Wilson Alexander Farm Tenant House (MK2293) (ER No. 19-1985) be conducted. The property is currently listed as a "non-designated property" with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission (CMHLC) and requires additional study to determine whether it is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and whether it should be designated as a local historic landmark.

The results of the investigation indicate that the J. Wilson Alexander Tenant House (MK2293), an early twentieth century tenant house, is eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A for its association with agriculture and tenant farming in Mecklenburg County, and under Criterion C for being one of the few surviving examples of an early twentieth century tenant house located in the county. Based on this, Alexander Farms MU, LLC, should begin consultation with the SHPO and CMHLC on ways to resolve potential adverse effects to this historic property.

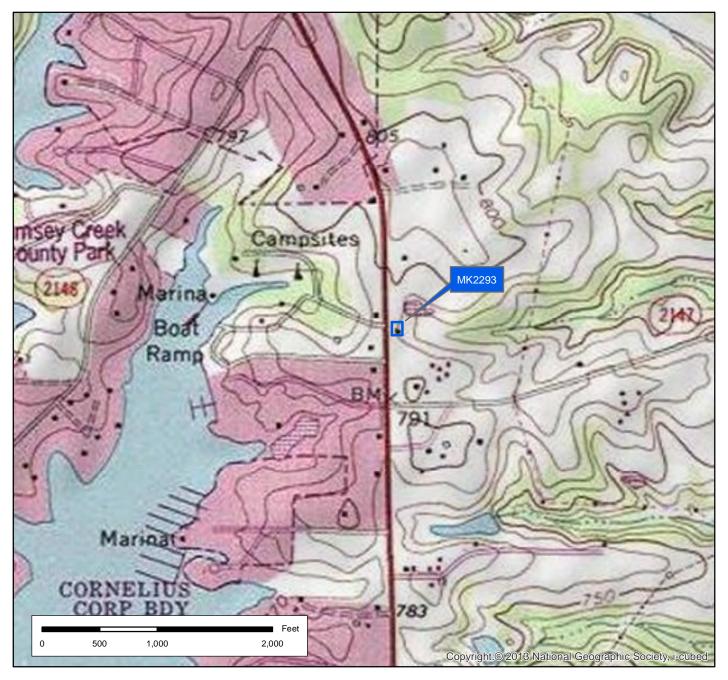
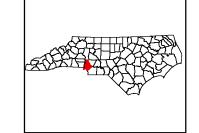


Figure 1. Location of the J. Wilson Alexander Farm Tenant House. Base Map: Lake Norman South (1979) 7.5' USGS topographic quadrangle.







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#### **TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**

J. WILSON ALEXANDER TENANT FARM HOUSE MECKLENBURG CO., NC

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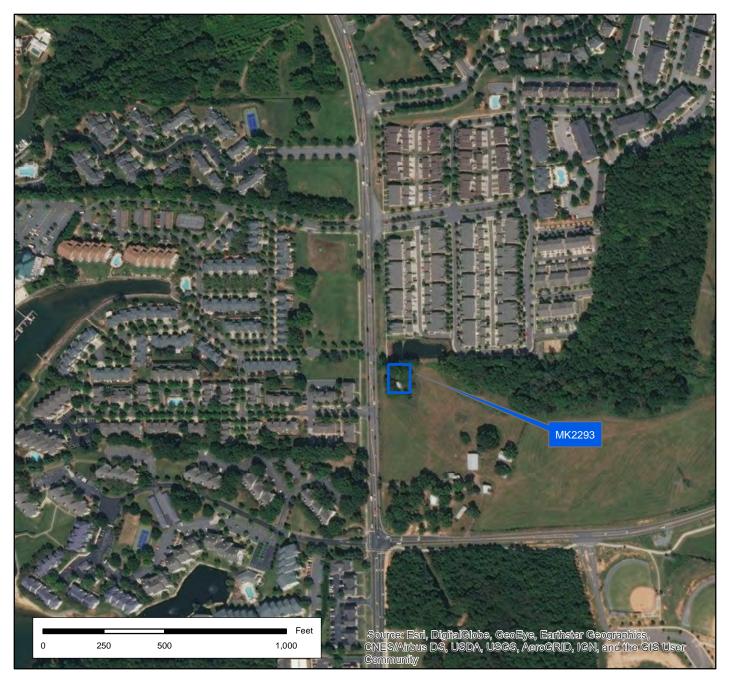
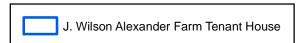
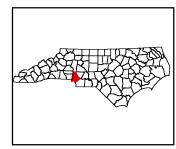


Figure 2. Aerial photograph showing the location of the J. Wilson Alexander Farm Tenant House.

Base Map: ESRI World Imagery.







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#### TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

J. WILSON ALEXANDER TENANT FARM HOUSE MECKLENBURG CO., NC

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#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Terracon Consultants, Inc. (Terracon), on behalf of Alexander Farms MU, LLC, has completed an architectural evaluation of the J. Wilson Alexander Tenant House located at 18324 West Catawba Avenue in Cornelius, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina (Figures 1 and 2). The tenant house is located within a proposed multi-family residential development that will require compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (54 U.S.C. § 300101 et seq.). The lead federal agency for the project is expected to be the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

Based on a letter from Renee Gledhill-Earley of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to Ashley Keesling of Terracon dated July 18, 2019, the SHPO requested that an architectural and historical evaluation of the J. Wilson Alexander Farm Tenant House (MK2293) (ER No. 19-1985) be conducted. The property is currently listed as a "non-designated property" with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission (CMHLC) and requires additional study to determine whether it is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and whether it should be designated as a local historic landmark.

The architecture evaluation was conducted on August 7, 2019, by Architectural Historian Mills Dorn, M.H.P. This report has been prepared in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.); the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.); procedures for the Protection of Historic Properties (36 CFR Part 800); and 36 CFR Parts 60 through 79, as appropriate. The Principal Investigator and Architectural Historian for the project meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (36 CFR Part 61).

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#### 2.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT

Mecklenburg County, located in the southern Piedmont of the North Carolina, is the most populous county in the state with more than one million residents. It covers an area of approximately 546 square miles and is bordered by Iredell County to the north, Cabarrus County to the northeast, Union County to the southeast, Gaston County to the west, Catawba and Lincoln counties to the northwest, and Lancaster and York counties, South Carolina, to the south and southwest.

Mecklenburg County was created in 1762 from parts of Anson County, North Carolina. Within the county is the largest city in North Carolina, Charlotte. Charlotte was named for Charlotte Sophia, the wife of King George III. The county name Mecklenburg was named for Queen Charlotte's home, Mecklenburg-Strelitz in Germany. Within the county are several other communities such as Cornelius, Mint Hill, Davidson, Huntersville, Mathews, Allen, Paw Creek, Pineville, Newell, and Caldwell (Martin 2016).

#### 2.1 EARLY SETTLEMENT

The first area to be settled in North Carolina was known as the Albemarle, which extended from Virginia to the north shore of Albemarle Sound in North Carolina. In 1663, King Charles II granted the land that is now North and South Carolina to eight men that became the Lords Proprietors of Carolina. Proprietor John Colleton first communicated with the other Lords Proprietors concerning the settlement of the Carolinas by Barbadians. English planters from Barbados were restricted by the amount of land available in Barbados and wanted to acquire more land for farming. While waiting for acceptance of their settlement proposal, an expedition of 200 Barbadians under Captain William Hilton on the ship *Adventure* set out in August 1663, to explore the Carolina coast. Hilton's expedition was organized to explore from the Cape Fear River southward. As a result of this expedition, a petition was sent to the Lords Proprietors requesting that the Barbadians from the expedition be allowed to purchase a tract of one thousand square miles in Carolina to be called the Corporation of the Barbadian Adventurers. The Proprietors rejected the proposal, but the account of Hilton's voyage drew great interest in settling Carolina (Thomas 1930: 75–80).

John Vassall of Barbados kept the interest in settling the Lower Cape Fear region alive. Vassall expressed interest to the Lords Proprietors for settling in Carolina, but the Proprietors chose to negotiate with Colleton instead. In May of 1664, Vassall led close to 800 settlers from Barbados to the Lower Cape Fear. Six months later, the settlement was incorporated into Clarendon County (Lee 1965:41 and Moser and Jones 2010:18). This settlement was spread out along the banks of the Cape Fear River. The settlement was primarily an agricultural community that also had a lucrative trade market with Native Americans. This trading center was known as Charles Town, which was founded approximately 20 miles upstream on the west bank of the Cape Fear River and to the north of what would be known as Town Creek (Lee 1965:42). The settlement of Charles

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Towne was not successful due to lack of support from the Lords Proprietors, continued migration of settlers, and increased fighting between settlers and Native Americans. John Vassall convinced some settlers to stay their departure and held the colony together until 1667 when Clarendon County was deserted. Many of the settlers relocated to Virginia and Massachusetts Bay (Lee 1965:48–52).

Settlement in the Piedmont did not become widespread until shortly before the American Revolution. Before that time the main travel inland was done by the use of waterways. The fall line makes travel inland by water very difficult due to the rapids and waterfalls that are located past the fall line. Interest in migration to the Piedmont arose from the area's capacity for constructing mills as well as the abundance in materials such as timber. Travel into the area was done by the use of two major roads, The Great Indian Trading Path and the Great Wagon Road. These routes started in the Virginia and Pennsylvania and extended into the Piedmont of North Carolina (Stockard 1902:11).

#### 2.2 EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Before the settlement of Europeans, the area of Mecklenburg was home to the Catawba Indians. European settlement in the Piedmont did not become widespread until shortly before the American Revolution. Before that time the main travel inland was done by the use of waterways. The fall line made travel inland by water very difficult due to the rapids and waterfalls that are located past the fall line. Interest in migration to the Piedmont arose from the area's capacity for mills as well as the abundance in materials such as timber. Travel into the area was done by the use of two major roads, the Great Indian Trading Path and the Great Wagon Road. These routes started in the Virginia and Pennsylvania and extended into the Piedmont of North Carolina (Stockard 1902:11).

The first immigrants into the Piedmont were the Scots-Irish or Ulster Scots, German Lutherans, Moravians, and English. The Scots-Irish originated from Northern Ireland and settled in Pennsylvania. In the 1730s many of them started to spread further south into North Carolina. They settled on small farms growing wheat and tobacco as cash crops to be exported elsewhere in the colonies and to Europe. Others started gristmills, sawmills, and tanneries along the waterways in the Piedmont. German Lutherans traveling into the Piedmont travelled the same routes into North Carolina, starting settlements along the Catawba and Yadkin rivers. Moravians, also German immigrants, settled in the area that is present day Salem, North Carolina. The Moravians constructed planned congregational communities (Powell 1989). During the 1750s more Europeans started to arrive in the area. These settlers established a town on an Indian trading path between the Yadkin and Catawba rivers. The town was called "The Square," later to become the City of Charlotte (Martin 2016).

During the American Revolution, Mecklenburg County became a hot bed for resistance against the British monarchy. A two-week skirmish was fought near the area known as the battle of

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Charlotte. After the end of the battle British General Lord Cornwallis retreated from the area referring to it as a "hornet's nest" (Martin 2016) After the battle the county passed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence on May 20, 1775 (Martin 2016)

#### 2.3 NINETEENTH CENTURY

Like most in the North Carolina Piedmont many residents in Mecklenburg County participated in agriculture as an occupation. During 1860 only 1,065 residents lived in the City of Charlotte. Until the later half of the nineteenth century many operated small farming operations and were not considered planters or plantation owners. The dividing line between farmers and planters were the number of slaves they owned. The ownership of over 25 slaves meant that a farmer then became a planter. Before 1860 the number of planters in the county numbered approximately 17, after 1860 that number rose to 30. Planter families in the county included Alexander, Ardrey, Bell, Caldwell, Davidson, Davis, Grier, Johnston, Kirkpatrick, Lawing, Mills, Morris, Morrow, Patterson, Parks, Potts, Walker, Wallace, and White (Jaycees 1971:1).

During the Civil war there were no major battles in Mecklenburg. The largest effects of the war were the loss of infrastructure such as railroads that were destroyed to prevent their use by the Union and the freeing of African-American slaves. These led to a rise in tenant farming in many areas of Mecklenburg. Cotton continued to be a leading cash crop in the area and farming was still a much-needed occupation. Many African-Americans met this need and became tenant farmers in Mecklenburg and the towns within (Brotherton 1993:22)

#### 2.4 TWENTIETH CENTURY

One of the towns within Mecklenburg that became a focal point for tenant farming and cotton production was the town of Cornelius. In 1905, Cornelius was incorporated; it was the fifth incorporated town in Mecklenburg County. Before the town was created the area was the center of one of the largest rural churches in the area, Mount Zion Methodist Church. The church was constructed after the land was deeded by Alexander Washam in 1828 (Brotherton 1993:23).

Cornelius became home to a bustling cotton industry. In 1891, a cotton mill was constructed by R.J. Stough with the help of his brother-in-law Joseph Cornelius. The Stough-Cornelius Mill was constructed and employed 45 people and housed 1,000 spindles. After the creation of the town six more cotton mills were constructed. Cornelius boomed and became and large cotton manufacturing and trading town during the 1900s. the area went through many changes during the rest of the twentieth century. In 1916, a devastating flood impacted the area from a hurricane that struck North Carolina.

The most recent significant event to impact the area of Cornelius was the construction of Lake Norman. Construction took place on the dam from 1957–1962, which blocked water from the Catawba River to create the lake. Lake Norman covers an area of 32,000 acres, part of which

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was the town of Cornelius. The construction of this reservoir significantly changed the landscape surrounding the town and altered the economy, shifting it away from agriculture due to the loss of land (Brotherton. 1993: v).

#### 2.5 HISTORY OF THE J. WILSON ALEXANDER TENANT HOUSE

After the end of the Civil War many African-Americans that were former slaves were left with no money or place to live. Land was difficult to come by during this period and with very little if any money it was difficult for African-Americans to purchase it. A new system, known as tenant farming or sharecropping, was adopted by the former plantation owners in need of laborers to continue with farming. This system became dominant in Mecklenburg as well as other areas in the south. Tenant or sharecropping allowed African Americans to rent houses and land for farming from white land owners while in turn providing the profits to the land owner for the use of the land. Once committed to this form of agriculture it was very difficult to exit the practice. It was an inefficient means of farming single crops and the low pay created debts that tenant and sharecroppers could not escape (Gray and Stathakis 2002:9-10).

Although not much history has been recorded about the house in particular, the J. Wilson Alexander Tenant House is one of the last surviving examples of a tenant farming house in Mecklenburg County as many have been demolished due to the expansion of towns and cities such as Charlotte. Constructed in 1900, the J. Wilson Alexander Tenant house is simple and followed the hall-and-parlor plan with a single fire place. An addition was constructed on the rear of the house around 1910 giving the house a third room and second chimney (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission 2019).

#### 2.5.1 Records Review

Background research for the project was conducted on August 1, 2019, using HPOWeb, a database inventory of previously recorded historic resources in North Carolina. In addition, deed research was conducted at the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds and the 2002 comprehensive survey of historic sites, buildings, and districts of African-American Resources of Mecklenburg County (Gray and Stathakis 2002) was examined for more in-depth information regarding the J. Wilson Alexander Tenant House. In that survey the J. Wilson Alexander Tenant House was indicated as possibly being significant and was added to the SHPO's study list as Resource No. MK2293. The standing structures included a single residential dwelling and two historic outbuildings. Deed research conducted at the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds revealed that the property has been within the Alexander family for many years with the original property being divided by the Alexander Family. The current property on which the tenant house is located was acquired by J. Wilson Alexander in 1903, through the division of land owned by Eli Alexander.

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#### 2.5.2 Historic Map Review

In addition to the records review, eighteenth through twentieth century maps were examined to determine whether any historic resources were present near the project. On Henry Mouzon's 1775 An Accurate Map of North and South Carolina with their Indian Frontiers the project is west of the Catawba River, with no settlements near the area. To the west is the location of the residence of a Colonel Alexander and a mill named Col. Alexander's Mill (Figure 3). On an 1865 map of North Carolina & South Carolina by the U.S. Coast Survey, the area of the structure is west of an unnamed road and south of the Alexandria Post Office (Figure 4). Spratt's 1911 map of Mecklenburg County shows a structure south of the J. Wilson Alexander Tenant house labeled Mrs. Alexander (Figure 5). The 1949 Hicks Crossroads USGS topographic quadrangle shows the J. Wilson Alexander Tenant House located adjacent to West Catawba Avenue (Figure 6).



Figure 3. Mouzon's (1775) map showing the approximate location of the tenant house.



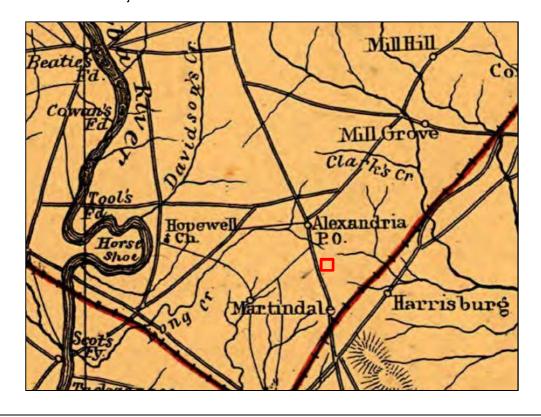


Figure 4. 1865 map of North Carolina and South Carolina showing the approximate location of the tenant house.

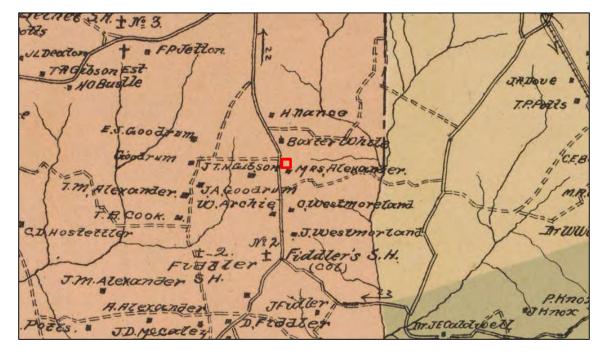


Figure 5. 1911 map of Mecklenburg County showing the location of the tenant house.



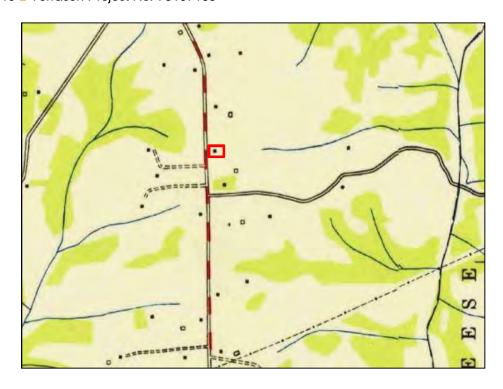


Figure 6. Hicks Crossroads (1949) USGS topographic map showing the location of the tenant house.

#### 2.5.3 History of the Property and Tenant House

The J. Wilson Alexander Tenant House is located on the same property as the J. Wilson Alexander Farm. The Alexanders are of Scots-Irish decent and immigrated to the American Colonies around 1740, traveling to Chester County, Pennsylvania. Shortly before the American Revolution the family settled in Mecklenburg County, fighting for the patriot cause during the war. The family was prominent in the county during this time, having six Alexanders sign the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence in 1775 (Partridge 2019).

The property was originally owned by Eli Alexander as part of a larger parcel of land. According to deed research the property was divided into smaller parcels, one of which is the property distributed to J. Wilson Alexander in 1903. James Wilson Alexander was born in Mecklenburg County in 1887 and attended Rutherford College. He became a prominent farmer in Mecklenburg County and served as chairmen on the Board of Directors of Farmers Company. James Wilson Alexander was also important for taking part in the improvement of rural roads and providing electricity and phone service to the rural areas of Mecklenburg County (Wyatt 2019). Very little information is known about the residents of the tenant house associated with the J. Wilson Alexander Farm. According to an interview with nearby resident Edith Henderson conducted during the 2002 African-American Resources survey, the house was occupied by an African-American farmer named John Norman (Gray and Stathakis 2002).

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#### 3.0 ARCHITECTURAL EVALUATION

An architectural evaluation was conducted to evaluate the J. Wilson Alexander Tennant House for inclusion in the NRHP and as a local historic landmark with the CMHLC. The J. Wilson Alexander Tenant House (Resource No. MK2293) is a ca. 1900 one-story vernacular house located at 18324 W. Catawba Avenue. The property is associated with the J. Wilson Alexander Farm, which is located south of the tenant house. This parcel has been in the Alexander family since the 1830s. The tenant house is currently vacant but was once the home of a tenant farmer named John Norman.

The tenant house is a symmetrical two room house with clapboard siding (Figures 7 through 12). Roofing materials on the house consist of pressed sheet metal roofing. A partial veranda is located on the east facade, facing W. Catawba Avenue. An exterior brick chimney is located on the south elevation of the structure. The windows on the house consist of four over four double hung sash windows flanking the front entry door and along the sides and rear elevation. A historic ca. 1910 rear addition is located on the west elevation of the house with a chimney located within the roof surface. Located north of the house are two historic outbuildings consisting of a wellhouse and garage. Landscape features consist of large trees.

This structure has remained on its original site of construction and retains its original materials. it has retained integrity in location, materials, and feeling. However, there is no particular workmanship style and the historic setting of the house has been disrupted due to the close proximity of W. Catawba Avenue (Figures 13 and 14).

In regard to the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (National Register Bulletin 15):

**Criterion A** – Resource No. MK2293 is associated with African-American history and tenant farming in Mecklenburg County during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

**Criterion B** – Resource No. MK2293 has no known association with the lives of significant persons in our past.

**Criterion C** – Resource No. MK2293 represents the characteristics of a ca. 1900 tenant house in Mecklenburg County and is a small hall-and-parlor form dwelling constructed from timber framing.

**Criterion D** – Resource No. MK2293 is unlikely to yield significant information about the history of Mecklenburg County.

This property displays distinctive architectural features and characteristics of a rural tenant house in Mecklenburg County and conveys significance through its association with tenant farming in the county. Based on this evaluation, the J. Wilson Alexander Tenant House (MK2293) is

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recommended eligible for inclusion in the NRHP under Criterion A for its association with agriculture and tenant farming in Mecklenburg County, and under Criterion C for being one of the few surviving examples of an early twentieth century tenant house located in the county.



Figure 7. Resource No. MK2293, facing east.



Figure 8. Resource No. MK2293, facing northeast.



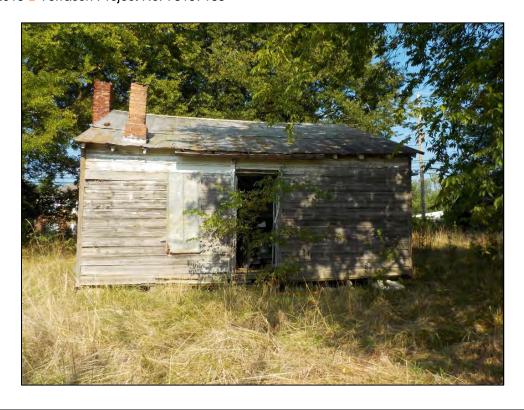


Figure 9. Resource No. MK2293, facing west.



Figure 10. Resource No. MK2293, facing southeast.





Figure 11. Wellhouse, facing southeast.



Figure 12. Garage, facing northwest.





Figure 13. View from the tenant house to the road, facing northwest.



Figure 14. View from the tenant house to the road, facing southwest.

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#### 4.0 CONCLUSIONS

The results of the investigation indicate that the J. Wilson Alexander Tenant House (MK2293), an early twentieth century tenant house, is eligible for inclusion in the NRHP under Criterion A for its association with agriculture and tenant farming in Mecklenburg County, and under Criterion C for being one of the few surviving examples of an early twentieth century tenant house located in the county. Based on this, Terracon recommends that Alexander Farms MU, LLC, and the USACE begin consultation with the SHPO and CMHLC on ways to resolve potential adverse effects to this historic property.

Alexander Farm Tenant House Mecklenburg Co., NC August 2019 Terracon Project No. 73197165



#### 5.0 REFERENCES

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