

HISTORICAL SKETCH * FREDERICK HOFFMANN HOUSE (Formerly the McConnell home on Rankin Street-Mt. Holly)

The Frederick Hoffman House was built and occupied by Frederick(1) Hoffman before 1842. At that time, Daniel Hoffman, Frederick's father, owned the land on which the house was built as a part of a 265 acre tract what he purchased from Evaline Chittam on August 27, 1833. It was not until July, 1850 that Daniel conveyed 240 acres of the original tract to Frederick.

The Hoffman family played an important part in the history of Gaston County and North Carolina. John Hoffman I immigrated with his family from the Upper Rhine Country of Germany, settled briefly in Pennsylvania, but soon came Southward to what is now Gaston County. Although he was only 16 years old when the Revolutionary War broke out, John served as an American soldier under Col. Hambright at the battle of Kings Mountain(2).

Daniel Hoffman, born June 27, 1797 to John Hoffman I and Margaret Hovis Hoffman was an "intelligent, enterprising, genial man of high principles of moral and Christian life."(3) He was instrumental in the establishment of Gaston County and the founding of Dallas in 1847, and in 1851, built a large 44 room brick hotel, known as the Hoffman Hotel. The Hoffman Hotel still stands today and houses the Gaston County Historical Museum. Daniel Hoffman died in 1866 and is buried in the church yard of the Lutheran church in Dallas along with three of his daughters and two sons, to wit: Mrs. Quinn, Mrs. McKeown, Mrs. Rhyne Davis, Frederick Hoffman, and Rufus Hoffman.(4)

Frederick Hoffman, born September 28, 1820 married Margaret Smith and resided at the Hoffman House until his death, around 1857. During this time he and Margaret had seven children: Eliza (B. 1842), Sarah (B. 1844), Laura (B. 1846), Selena (B. 1848), Frederick (B. 1850), Julia (B. 1853), and Marcus (B. 1857).(5) Frederick managed a crossroad store, located across the road from the present house, which he owned with his brother-in-law, Moses Rhyne. This store served as the headquarters for the committee that fought so well and successfully for the establishment of Gaston County. On June 4, 1842, a group of the Lower Regiment's foremost residents (Lincoln County was divided from east to west into the upper and lower regiments for census taking purposes) met at the store owned by Fred D. Hoffman and Moses H. Rhyne and voted not to support any candidate for the legislature who was not outspokenly in favor of dividing Lincoln County.(7) The earliest reference to this important meeting is made in Rev. W. L. Sherrill's Annals of Lincoln County. Frederick Hoffman is also thought to have served as postmaster in the Woodlawn Community.(8)

After Frederick Hoffman's death, his widow sold the residence to R. C. G. Love for the sum of six hundred seventy-four dollars (\$674.00). Love and his family occupied the house until 1881, at which time he sold it and moved to Kings Mountain. During the ten years that he lived in the Hoffman House, Love supervised his farm, operated a cotton gin, and worked as a merchant in the crossroads store which he had purchased from A. P. Rhyne, Moses Rhyne's son.(9) He also served as postmaster of Woodlawn for a period.(10)

Grier Love and his wife Susan stayed busy-- he with his business matters and she with her household duties. Their home served as an inn for all travellers. Students of Eli W. Scott's "Woodlawn Business School" boarded in their home while learning, penmanship, arithmetic, and bookkeeping.(11)

R. C. G. Love was determined that his children should have an education. In 1869 he rent them ten miles away to his grandfather Rhyne's home to attend a school. Later, in 1873, he built, at his own expense and on his own land one-half mile from home, a 18' X 30' frame schoolhouse. This structure is believed to be the first frame schoolhouse in Gaston County fit for winter as well as summer use.(12)

In the years after Love's ownership of the Hoffman House, he became a financial and industrial leader in the new town of Gastonia. He organized the Gastonia Cotton Manufacturing Company, Gastonia's first textile mill, in 1887, and was involved in other business ventures as well.(13)

In April of 1880, R. C. G. Love and his wife, Susan sold the house to B. F. Wells for the sum of five thousand dollars (\$5000.00). Wells' son, Rev. Abram Wells, who later became owner of the house by his father's will, was the first young man in the Woodlawn-Mount Holly community to attend college. He was a student at the University before the civil war.(14)

Subsequent to the death of Abram N. Wells in 1895, a 139 acre tract on which the Hoffman House is located was allocated to Emily Wells. She remained in possession of the home until her death in 1917. At that time, her heirs at law, Sarah Rankin, Graham Rankin, and Cecil Rankin became owners of said property. For a brief period in 1929, ownership of the Hoffman House left the Wells-Rankin family and was vested in C. P. Howard and his wife Zoe Hovard. In April, 1929, however, Sarah Rankin (now Sarah Rankin McConnell) gained sole possession of the property and is the present owner of the Frederick Hoffman House.

Chain of Title

1. On August 27, 1833, Evaline Chittam conveyed 265 acres in Lincoln County lying on the waters of the Catawba River, Southwest side, to Daniel Hoffman for the sum of seven hundred (\$700.00) dollars. This deed is recorded in the Register of Deeds for Lincoln County in Book 37 at page 192.
2. Daniel Hoffman conveyed 240 acres of the original 265 acre tract to his son, Frederick "L." Hoffman on July 4, 1850, for the sum of two thousand, five hundred dollars (\$2500.00). This deed is recorded in the Gaston County Public Registry in Deed Book 1 at page 45.
3. On February 11, 1857, a dower tract of 88 acres was laid out for Mary I. Hoffman by a jury of twelve men. This document was never placed of record, but was located, with the assistance of James F. Love, III, in the personal records of Mrs Pauline Jones' mother, Mary Hoffman Jenkins. Mrs. Jenkins is a descendant of Frederick Hoffman.
4. On February 2, 1871, Mary I. Hoffman conveyed 88 acres, referred to as the "Woodlawn Place", to R. G. C. Love for six hundred seventy-four dollars (\$674.00). This deed is recorded in the Gaston County Public Registry in Deed Book 5, at page 33.

5. On April 29, 1880, R.G.C. Love and his wife, Susan E. Love conveyed 290 acres to B. F. Wells for the amount of five thousand dollars (\$5000.00). As it says in Architectural Heritage of Gaston County, North Carolina, Mr. Love operated a cotton gin, and in this deed he reserved "the privilege to raise the said R. G. C. Love's Gin Forbay one foot higher than it now is, and to overflow the pond each year hereafter forever, from the 1st day of October in each year to the last day of January in the next year." This deed is recorded in the Gaston County Public Registry in Deed Book 10 at page 3.
6. In Item 4 of his Last Will and Testament, Bunnel F. Wells devises "the remainder of my property, both real and personal, I will and bequeath to my son, Abram N. Wells." As B. F. Wells died in possession of the subject property and as said property is not specifically set out in any other provision of the will, it would be covered by Item 4, and thus would pass to Abram N. Wells. This Will was probated on June 6, 1887 and is presently recorded in Will Book 2 at page 283.
7. Abram N. Wells continued to own the subject property until his death in 1895. As Abram N. Wells died intestate and his heirs, Jane Dorcas Wells and Emily Wells, were left, each owning an undivided interest in his real property, it became necessary to divide his land equally between them. For that reason, R. A. Smith, G. W. Bowman, and L. J. Rhyne were appointed as commissioners for the purpose of deciding how the land should be divided. Their report, dated September 4, 1895, is recorded in the Gaston County Public Registry in Deed Book 29 at page 444. A tract of 139 acres, containing the subject property, was allotted to Emily Wells. (Note: A very helpful map is attached to this document.)
8. Emily Wells remained in possession of our subject property until her death on September 11, 1917. As she died intestate, her property was passed by intestate succession to her heirs at law. In Administration Docket Book 4 at page 60 in the Gaston County Clerk of Court her sole heirs at law are listed as Sarah Rankin, Graham Rankin, and Cecil Rankin.
9. In deed recorded in book 230 at page 42 in the Gaston County Public Registry G. F. (Graham) Rankin and his wife, Margaret Dunn Rankin quit claim any interest that they may have in the subject property to Cecil Rankin for the sum of fifteen hundred (\$1500.00) dollars. Sarah R. McConnell (formerly Sarah Rankin) and her husband, R. O. McConnell, convey lots 7, 17, 18, and 19 of the R. F. Rankin Property *as* shown on a map recorded in plat book 3 at page 73 in the Gaston County Register of Deeds to Cecil Rankin by deed recorded in book 228 at page 249. (The Hoffman House is located on lot 7.) These conveyances vest sole ownership in Cecil Rankin.
10. On February 14, 1929, Cecil Rankin conveyed lots 3 through 7 as shown on plat recorded in book 3 at page 73 in the Gaston County Register of Deeds to C. P. Howard and his wife, Zoe D. Howard. This deed is recorded in book 242 at page 479 in the Gaston County Public Registry.
11. C. P. Howard and his wife Zoe D. Howard conveyed the subject property, along with other lots back to Sarah R. McConnell by deed dated April 12, 1929 and recorded in Deed Book 248 at page 51 in the Gaston County Public Registry. Sarah McConnell is the present owner of the Hoffman House.