

The Maples

740 Woodlawn Avenue
Mount Holly, North Carolina, 28120

- *Known historically as the Johnston-Nims house*
- *Known locally as the Spratt House (after the Spratt sisters who were generally well liked and respected, but died in the 1990s)*
- *We were also told the name of the home was “The Maples” when we purchased it from the last family. The name was rarely used, because it was disliked by the Spratt Family.*

1810-1858

The main portion of the house dates from between 1810-1820; with 1820 the most commonly listed date. The home was built for William and Mary Forney Johnston and began as a 2-story Federal style house in the community of Woodlawn, which used to be part of Lincoln County. The house plan at this time can be described as a center passage, one room deep. The chimneys and fireplaces were located at the sides of the home.

During this period the front of the house faced Dutchman’s creek. A large 9 panel door with a glass transom window, which was once the front door, is now part of the interior of the house. Because of the remodel completed in 1859, we have heard from local residents that the entire home was lifted off the foundation and turned 180 degrees.

1858-2000

Frederick Nims, a civil engineer with the WC&R Rail Road purchased the home in 1859 and enlarged the front section more than doubling the size of the house. The enlargement changed the home style from Federal to Italianate. The enlargement changed the floor plan from a center passage one room deep to a center passage, two room deep plan. At this time, the fireplaces and chimneys were moved from the exterior side walls to the inside of the house. The chimneys remain in that location today, but in the original part of the house, patch work to the floors reveals the location of the old chimneys.

During an interview with the Belmont Banner – Mount Holly News from June 8, 1988, Frances Spratt states “We do know that during the Civil War, Union soldiers were in the house because we have a sword left here by one of the Unions officers.” Locals have told me that the soldiers slept out in the front yard and did not invade the home, but did eat all the livestock. I have not seen anything yet in my research indicating when the soldiers arrived in Mount Holly, or their activities on the property.

At some point a kitchen and other room was also added to the rear of the house. Although not thought to be old, the addition may be the most recent version of an older room(s). When we purchased the home we were told that during a wake held at the home, a tree fell and crushed an earlier version of this part of the home, which was rebuilt.

2001 - Present

In July of 2001, Jon and Meg Barnard purchased the house, which had been vacant for three years, and still reside at 740 Woodlawn Avenue.

I believe my husband and I are the third family to own the home in 185 years.

The house is roughly 4200 square feet and is located on 4 acres of property. We have heard that the home originally began with over 400 acres, which were sold or given away over the years. The last 30 acres were recently sold by the Spratt family for the development of Creekside Estates subdivision.

Other:

Many of the floorboards are nailed directly to the floor joists of the home, which can be seen by a straight line of nails.

Some of the interior walls contain vertical wooden supports with bark still remaining on the wood. The trees appear to be quartered and used for construction without squaring off the other sides.

Wooden pegs can be seen in the attic, which were used to join beams together.

The style of the front porch has changed many times over the years. There has been a double porch, a wooden porch and now a brick porch with columns. The wood shutters, painted light green, are no longer on the house, but some remain in the outbuildings. We hope to one day add them back to the home.

We also believe that some of the Italianate moldings were painted green and the recessed brick was painted, looking at some older photographs.

One of the oldest beech trees in North Carolina is located in the front yard, thought to be planted around 1857.

The "Milk House" or brick outbuilding that is believed to have a well hidden under a concrete slab, is thought to be as old as the house. It can be seen in some of the older photographs.

Some sources that have been helpful in researching our home:

A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Piedmont North Carolina
Catherine W. Bishir & Michael T. Southern

Nims, Rankin and Spratt Family Papers
Manuscript Department, Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
<http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/htm/04255.html>

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