

State of North Carolina  
Division of Archives and History

Chatham COUNTY

Pittsboro QUAD

# INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

Chatham County

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR  THEMATIC NOMINATION

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

McClenahan House

AND/OR COMMON

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Pittsboro

VICINITY OF

4th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Chatham

37

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

### CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

### OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED
- N/A

### STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

### PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mrs. Emily T. Brower

STREET & NUMBER

203 South Street

CITY, TOWN

Pittsboro

STATE

VICINITY OF North Carolina 27312

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Chatham County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Pittsboro

STATE

North Carolina

## 6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Ruth Selden-Sturgill

ORGANIZATION

Consultant for Survey and Planning Branch

DATE

March 1, 1982

STREET & NUMBER

Archives and History

TELEPHONE

(919) 733-6545

CITY OR TOWN

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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The McClenahan House is located at 201 South Street, Pittsboro, N. C.  
This address is not to be published.

## 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		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Facing west from what was designated lot no. 110 in the original town plan, the McClenahan House is a fine example of the modest one-story frame house, with a vernacular Federal interior, which constituted the principle building type in Pittsboro before 1830.

Hugging the ground with the benefit of only a shallow modern brick foundation, the house is three-bays wide with a central entrance and double-pile plan. It may well have started out as a one-room structure which gradually acquired additional rooms, a broader roof and a finished attic. The facade is marked by nine-over-six sash windows surrounded by a simple molded architrave. Although the gable roof entrance porch with lattice-work sides is a twentieth century addition, the flush weatherboards against the facade indicate that an early porch existed. The gable roof of the house is finished with a narrow box cornice and rakeboards.

The north side of the McClenahan House probably holds the clue to the building's development. Here two exterior end chimneys are each flanked by two windows and the gable is pierced by two six-over-six sash windows. The larger chimney to the front has a square stack and stepped shoulders. It is flanked by six-over-six sash windows which hang at the level of the windows on the front. The smaller chimney to the rear is bound by nine-over-nine sash windows which hang at a lower level from their neighbors. There is a corresponding drop in the floor level on the interior. The south side of the house has sustained more changes in recent years. Here three exterior end straight-stack stove chimneys flank a modern shed-roof porch which took the place of an earlier addition. On this side of the house two six-over-six sash windows again mark the gable but the window closest to the front corner has a nine-over-six sash window, and hangs lower than those windows on the front. There is a corresponding decline towards the south in the floor of the southwest parlor. The window towards the rear corner occupies the position of an early chimney. Two modern dormers and a shed-roof porch have been added to the rear of the house.

The interior of the McClenahan House is characterized by a number of different levels which suggest four periods of construction. An early unit is formed by the front hall and the northwest parlor. The southwest parlor with its boxed corners and sloping floor dates from the next construction. The lower level of the northeast parlor and the rear hall points to a third period of building and the southeast with its Greek Revival detailing a fourth. Once cutting straight through to a back door the entrance hall has a sheathed wainscot and ceiling. The molded chair rail and baseboard date from a later period. The principle feature of the hall is the open stringer stair which ascends on the right and is surmounted by a quarter-turn and winders. A simple rounded hand rail descends on square-cut balusters to a square newel post with a roughly-shaped cap. Also sheathed are the stair enclosure and the response.

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The northwest parlor retains much of its early woodwork. The room possesses a sheathed wainscot and evidence of an early molded chair rail. On the west wall the chair rail supports a three-part molded architrave around the window. Another early surround encases the six-panel door to the rear parlor. The simple Federal mantel with its three-part frieze and molded cornice has more recently been topped with a shelf. The floor is wide board pine.

The southwest parlor, which slopes off from the hall, retains little original fabric. Old wide board floors and boxed corner posts suggest an early date. A later partition separates the front room from the rear which is at a slightly higher floor level. The rear room which retains a two-panel door once boasted the Greek Revival mantel which is now located in the living room of 105 East Chatham Street.

The parlor in the northeast corner of the house rests at a lower level than the early front room. A long break in the floorboards and a corresponding boxed beam serves as evidence of the later addition. Except for the vernacular Federal mantel which straddles the break, none of the woodwork corresponds to the early detailing in the front of the house. The mantel, which was, no doubt, moved to its present location in the mid-nineteenth century, features a tall two-panel frieze enclosed by a molded architrave. Symmetrically channelled pilasters with corner blocks and a dentil molding were probably worked into the scheme when the mantel was moved. The entire design is surmounted by a lobed shelf.

Apart from the addition of the dormers and some fiberboard sheathing, the second floor dates from one of the mid-nineteenth century renovations. When the roof was raised, space was made for two large rooms with a tray ceiling on either side of the narrow hall. These rooms are fully sheathed: horizontal boards mark the exterior walls and vertical boards pattern the interior. The south room exists in its entirety and it includes a board and batten door with a sloping head. The north room has been altered with fiberboard panelling but it retains an early walk-in closet with a board and batten door. The door from the hall is six-panel with H & L hinges.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

\_\_\_\_\_ NATIONAL

\_\_\_\_\_ STATE

X

\_\_\_\_\_ LOCAL

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	XARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
___1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
X1800-1899	___COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION
___1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	___INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

Unknown

BUILDER/ARCHITECT - Unknown

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

A rare survivor from Pittsboro's earliest years before the development of the 1830s, the McClenahan House is one of only four buildings in the present town which date from the settlement era. Because of the lack of documentary evidence during this period, the house serves as an important historical record of the town's early character and affords a valuable insight into the lifestyle of the common townspeople who resided here. Begun as a one-room dwelling typical of the vernacular architecture which was built along the North Carolina frontier, the McClenahan House retains a Federal/Greek Revival interior which includes vernacular mantels on the first floor and a fully-sheathed bedroom on the second floor.

## CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. The McClenahan House is one of only four buildings in the present town of Pittsboro which date from the settlement era before the development of the 1830s. Begun as a one-room dwelling, the house reflects the frontier character of the early community.
- C. Begun as a one-room dwelling typical of the vernacular architecture which was built along the North Carolina frontier, the McClenahan House is the product of four periods of construction and demonstrates the town's continued satisfaction with the Federal/Greek Revival style well into the mid-nineteenth century. As the modest home of common townspeople, the McClenahan House, also, provides an invaluable perspective from which to view Pittsboro's remaining cross-section of nineteenth-century architecture.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Originally built as a one-room dwelling, the small one-and-a-half story house now known as the McClenahan House is one of three surviving homes owned by common townspeople during Pittsboro's first period of settlement. Very little is known of the life and people of the town of Pittsboro in the early years before the area's growth in the 1830s. The McClenahan House serves as a rare historical record of the town's early character and provides an invaluable perspective from which to view the remaining cross-section of nineteenth-century architecture. In addition the building's fine state of preservation affords an excellent opportunity to visually follow the gradual growth and transformation of this early frontier-oriented home into the more urban central-hall plan house of the mid-nineteenth century.

The absence of tax records, town commissioners minutes, church records, newspapers and maps has done much to hinder the study of Pittsboro during the period of initial settlement. Records have traced the arrival of several wealthy families from the coast who established summer homes and even permanent residences in the outlying countryside but little is known of the people who inhabited the town. A few prominent town leaders such as Patrick St. Lawrence, who established an inn on the courthouse square, have maintained a level of recognition but most have not. There was, however, life and a considerable amount of building activity in Pittsboro at this time. The only surviving county tax list which includes the town revealed that of the 125 lots in the original town plan, twenty-one were improved in 1815.<sup>1</sup>

The wide range of these "improvements" becomes apparent in view of the four buildings in the present town which date from the settlement era. At one end of the spectrum stands the home and inn of the well-to-do town commissioner Patrick St. Lawrence (1); a handsome two-story Georgian/Federal style house complete with an expanding ballroom and commanding stairhall. The McClenahan House, on the other hand, was probably built by an ordinary citizen who was primarily concerned with sheltering his family and with meeting the town's requirements for a structure at least "twenty feet long, sixteen feet wide and ten feet pitch."<sup>2</sup> While in some areas of North Carolina, which were especially influenced by the English tradition of construction, a sixteen foot square building qualified as an improvement, the records show that Pittsboro deviated from that pattern.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps influenced by the area's significant numbers of Scotch-Irish and German settlers, the founders of Pittsboro required a slightly larger structure. Heated by one exterior end chimney the one-room

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Chatham County Records. Chatham County Courthouse.  
Pittsboro, North Carolina. Subgroup: Deeds, Wills.

Hadley, Wade. Chatham County 1771-1971. Durham: Moore Publishing, Co., 1976

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approx. 3.5 acres

UTM REFERENCES

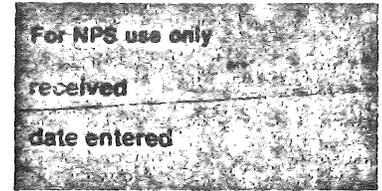
A	1 7	6 6 4 7 3 0	3 9 5 4 0 6 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All of Lot 1 Block 6 Map 10 Pittsboro Township, Chatham County Tax Map.

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house, with a small second-story loft reached by a ladder or boxed-in staircase, was the most common form of construction along the state's frontier.<sup>4</sup> Because the building tradition was slow to change this pioneer-oriented house-type continued to be built in the early towns. Here, after the initial period of settlement, the one-room house was often converted into an out building or, as in the case of the McClenahan House, was encased in additions.<sup>5</sup> As it stands today with its central-hall plan and vernacular Federal interior, the McClenahan House displays a series of mid-nineteenth century renovations which assured the survival of its early core.

The exact origin of what has come to be known as the McClenahan House is unknown but with its early one-room plan and Federal interior finish, the house clearly dates from the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The lack of documentary evidence has made the building's early history the matter of some speculation. It is known that in 1846 Nathan A. Stedman sold five town lots and presumably the so-called McClenahan House to Martha King for \$600.<sup>6</sup> Since unimproved town lots were being sold during this period for about forty dollars, the remaining \$400 would indicate the presence of a small house on one of the lots.<sup>7</sup> A resident of Raleigh for a period of time, Nathan Stedman seems to have been an early state employee who held a variety of posts: state controller from 1834-1836, clerk to the board of superintendents of common schools in 1840 and state's representative when the Cape Fear and Deep River Navigation Company opened its books in 1849.<sup>8</sup> More importantly Nathan Stedman was the son of Winship Stedman one of the town's early retailers and from 1815 the owner of the inn, now known as the Patrick St. Lawrence House. When Winship Stedman died in 1828, an inventory of his property revealed that he spent the last twenty years of his life investing quite heavily in Pittsboro real estate.<sup>9</sup> More specifically the 1815 tax list credited Winship Stedman with three improved lots in the town.<sup>10</sup> Under the provisions of Winship Stedman's will, his wife Margaret inherited "the house and lots in Pittsboro" and Nathan A. Stedman became his father's executor.<sup>11</sup> It must be noted that Winship Stedman did not live in the McClenahan House but it seems likely that he may have owned it. The Stedmans are known to have rented out the Patrick St. Lawrence House in the 1830s and the McClenahan House may have been rented out or lent to family members.

While Martha King acquired the house now known as the McClenahan House in 1846, she was listed in the 1850 census as an occupant of Ramsey's Hotel on the east side of Hillsboro Street.<sup>13</sup> It would seem likely that Martha King was also in the habit of renting out the small cottage. The same property was sold in 1855 to Oran S. Poe, the son of Hasten Poe, a hotel keeper, and Anne W. Poe.<sup>14</sup> Although he established a profitable general store following the Civil War, O. S. Poe went into bankruptcy two years after he sold the five lots "with the Dwelling House & all outhouses thereon" to Andrew J. Stedman in 1856.<sup>15</sup> When Stedman sold the house in 1857 to Oliver Newlin the deed described the property as the land "whereon the said Stedman now lives."<sup>16</sup> Stedman may have rented the house for several years before actually assuming the title. Descended from an early Quaker family, Newlin was a frequent investor in the town's property and in 1859 he sold the house to Thomas R. Emery who sold it five years later to M. J. Ramsey.<sup>17</sup> During Ramsey's ownership, S. L. Petty rented the house and financial difficulty finally forced

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EXP. 12/31/84

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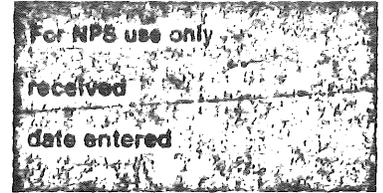
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Ramsey's property into receivership.

In 1872 following the death of her prominent father Dr. Spense McClenahan, the sale of the family home, Kelvin, and general financial problems, Margaret A. McClenahan at the age of twenty-one purchased the small house and three acres at a sheriff's sale for \$391.31.<sup>18</sup> Tradition holds that Spense McClenahan, once the president of the Cape Fear and Deep River Navigation Company, left each of his children one hundred dollars and that it was with the assistance of this money that Margaret purchased the small house for her aging mother, her brother Waddie and herself.<sup>19</sup> When Margaret McClenahan died in 1927 she left the cottage to her grand neice and namesake Margaret Calvert Duncan of Wake County.<sup>20</sup> From 1927 to 1940 Mrs. Duncan rented out the house, which at that time lacked electricity and running water, to a variety of tenants, including Mrs. Donna Seagroves whose husband was killed in the Coal Glen mine disaster in 1925.<sup>21</sup> In 1940 Margaret Duncan sold the house to her cousin Emily Dixon Brower who renovated the house and who lived there with her husband, a deisel engineer with the Seaboard Coastline Railroad.<sup>22</sup> When the Browsers purchased the Patrick St. Lawrence House in 1955 and moved it to the field south of the McClenahan House, they moved into the old inn and began renting out the McClenahan House. The Browsers continued committment to the preservation of two of Pittsboro's finest old homes should not go unnoticed.

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1. William Perry Johnson, 1815 Tax List of Chatham County, North Carolina (Raleigh: W. P. Johnson, 1975), pp. 8-13.
2. Wade H. Hadley, Doris G. Horton and Nell C. Strowd, Chatham County 1771-1971 (Durham: Moore Publishing Co., 1976), p. 201.
3. Doug Swaim, ed. Carolina Dwelling (Raleigh: The Student Publication of the School of Design: Volume 26, North Carolina State University, 1978), p. 30.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid. p. 32.
6. Chatham County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Chatham County Courthouse, Pittsboro, Deed Book AK: 208.
7. Chatham County Deed Book, AD: 303 (1835).
8. Hadley, Chatham County, p. 120; p. 274; Wade H. Hadley, Jr., The Story of the Cape Fear and Deep River Navigation Company 1849-1873. (Siler City: The Chatham County Historical Society, 1980), p. 10.
9. Winship Stedman Inventory, Chatham County Estate Records, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, N. C.
10. Johnson, p. 12.
11. Chatham County Will Books, Superior Court Clerk's Office, Chatham County Courthouse, Pittsboro, Will Book B: 147.
12. An exhaustive search of Winship and Nathan A. Stedman's land holdings in the town of Pittsboro did not reveal the origin of the so-called McClenahan House. In 1834 the title of an unspecified lot "which has a small house on it now occupied as a Doctor's shop by Doctor E. B. Stedman" was transferred from Margaret Stedman to Nathan Stedman. Chatham County Deed Book AD: 105. This is the only property which might fit the description.
13. Seventh census of the United States, 1850: Chatham County, Population Schedule.
14. Chatham County Deed Book AK: 205; 1850 Census.
15. Branson's North Carolina Business Directory 1872; 1884, 1890, 1896 (Raleigh: Levi Branson); "Chatham Reminiscences," Chatham Record, September 9, 1897; O. S. Poe of Pittsboro failed and could not pay his debts in 1858. See Nathan Alexander Ramsey Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, N. C.; Chatham County Deed Book AK: 203

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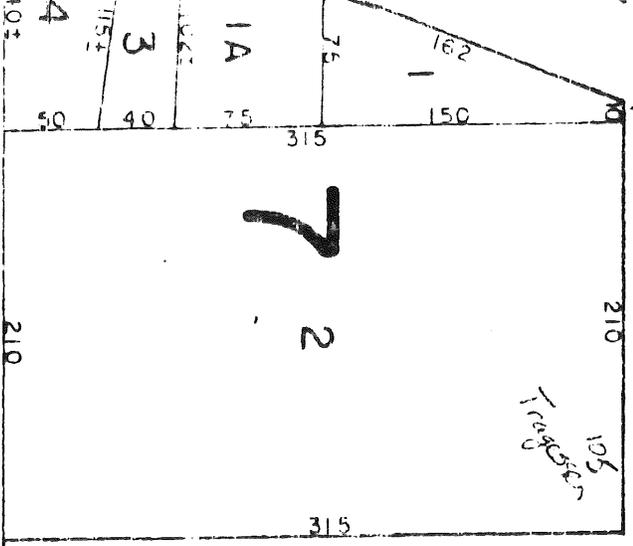
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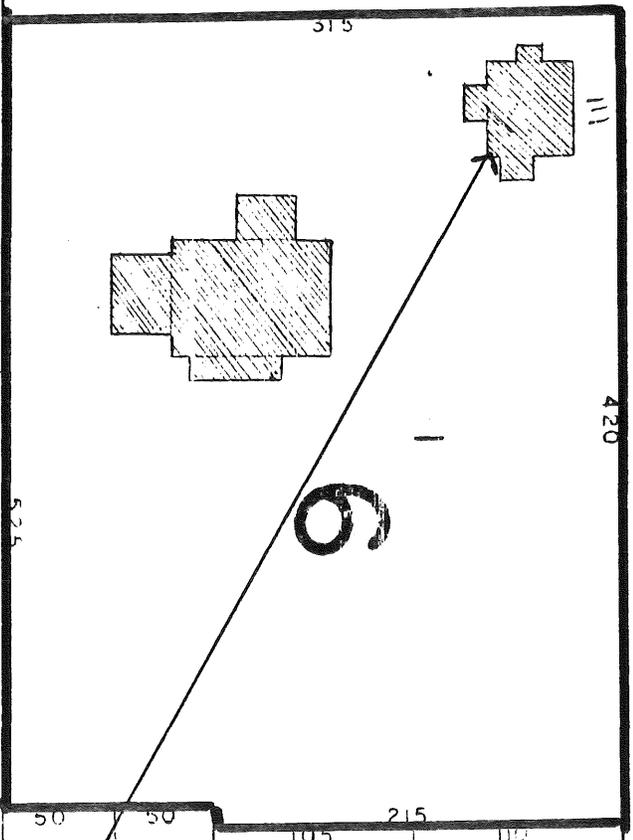
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16. Chatham County Deed Book AK: 313.

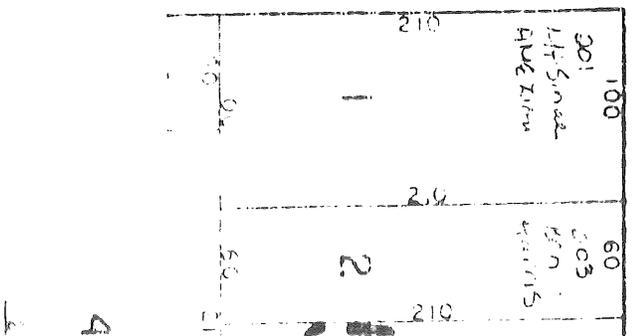
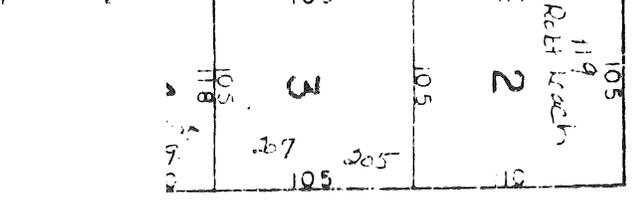


ST

SOUTH ST



CHATHAM



McClenahan House  
 201 South St.  
 Pittsboro Township  
 Chatham County Tax Map  
 Map 10 Block 6 Lot 1

102

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

