

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR _____ THEMATIC NOMINATION

1 NAME

HISTORIC

George Houston House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER E. side NC 115, 0.1 mile S of jct. with SR 1223,

____ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Mount Mourne

VICINITY OF

9th

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

037

COUNTY

Iredell

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Miss Plato Kelly

STREET & NUMBER

Post Office Box 254

CITY, TOWN

Mount Mourne,

____ VICINITY OF

STATE

NC 28123

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

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 Houston House is located at the end of a lane entered from the east side of NC 115 about halfway between Mt. Mourne and the Mecklenburg County line. Surrounded on three sides by woodlands and on the fourth by fairly open land and the highway, the house retains its strongly rural character.

The Houston House, said to have been built in 1818, is an example of a substantial early Federal vernacular style farmhouse. The main body of this two-story house, said to be of log construction, has a modified hall and parlor plan which now includes a central passage. Additions are found on the east side and rear of this house.

The exterior of the 3 x 2 bay Houston House is covered with weatherboards. The windows and doors have narrow surrounds with moulded backbands. Although most of the windows now have replacement 2/2 sash, the size of the opening implies a 9/6 arrangement. One 6/6 sash window remains on the east end of the second story, while two four-light casements flank the west chimney stack. Original first story paneled shutters on strap hinges remain. The main chimneys of the house of Flemish bond brickwork and rest on granite foundations, as does the house itself. The east chimney has paved double shoulders while the west chimney has but stepped single shoulders. Both have free-standing stacks above the highest smoke chamber. The eaves of the gable roof were apparently extended outward to engage these stacks with the last reroofing. The front porch of the Houston House is a replacement of the original. The central front doorway retains its four-light transom, although the door itself is a replacement. The door at the rear of the passage is an original six-panel door in strap hinges, also with transom.

The interior of the Houston House is flush sheathed and is well detailed. The finest mantel has a heavily molded frieze with the molding blocked outward in a tripartite manner. The center stairway has square balusters, a molded handrail which terminates above a square newel, and simple curvilinear brackets decorating the open string. Door surrounds have a two-step ground with molded background, the chair rail consists of a plain nosing upon a molded backboard, and the baseboard features a prominent bead at the top of the face.

Additions to the Houston House include a mid-nineteenth century ell and an early twentieth century east end addition. Both are one-story frame with an end chimney. A twentieth century porch runs across the back of the house and down the ell.

Behind the house are two outbuildings and a granite curbed well. Closest to the house is a one-story frame structure with two single doors side-by-side, a garage opening and an end chimney. It may at one time have been used as servants quarters. Of particular note is the half-dovetail log barn, slightly farther removed from the house. It is unusual - not for its two-pen-with-passage plan, but rather because the passage runs the length of the building from gable to gable rather than the width from side to side as in most log barns.

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. 1818

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Houston House and its outbuildings compose an early 19th century farm complex characteristic of Iredell County's agrarian economy. The substantial two-story dwelling possesses at its core a log house. The modified hall-parlor plan, gable roof form, and exterior end chimneys, along with the log construction, typify vernacular patterns of the piedmont. The impact and local interpretation of the Federal style are seen in the mantels, moldings, six-panel doors, and stair treatment. The most significant outbuilding is the big log barn with half-dovetail notches and an unusual plan: its passage runs the length rather than the depth of the structure. Log barns are a significant component of Iredell's agrarian architectural heritage, and this is one of the finest.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. Associated with the early 19th century agricultural economy of rural Iredell County.
- B. Exemplifies in representative and little-altered forms typical components of Iredell and the Piedmont's architectural development. The house, with its gable roof form, exterior end chimney, and modified hall-parlor plan--at core a log structure--represents that form which is characteristic of the county and region. The Flemish bond chimneys and fine interior Federal detail exemplify the good craftsmanship of the period. The log barn with its half-dovetail notching and unusual plan recalls importance in the methods used in constructing outbuildings.

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The history of this house is quite uncertain. Local tradition surrounding the Houston House does not appear to be supported by documents, raising the possibility that the histories of several Houston houses have been blended into one. Its chief significance is architectural (see above), so that the lack of certain information about its ownership does not detract from its importance but merely leaves questions about its construction date and family context. According to local tradition the house was built in 1818 by a Dr. Walls who married the widow of James Hiram Houston. The house was supposed to have been constructed on the site where Houston had operated a store.¹ Yet James H. Houston did not die until 1826; consequently, Dr. Walls could not have married the widow and built the house eight years earlier.² There is no record of Houston's selling the property before his death, and more importantly, there is no record of any Walls owning property in Iredell County before the Civil War. James H. Houston, however, did receive the land from his father in 1817, and if the alleged construction date (based on chimney inscription now covered by addition) is correct, then it would appear the James Hiram Houston built the house.³ Several years later, Houston moved to Mecklenburg County, but that he had lived in the house, which was named Mount Mourne, possibly for the 1806 post office by the same name, there is little doubt. A newspaper advertisement announced that the property would "be sold at Mount Mourne, the late residence of James H. Houston deceased, in the lower end of Iredell County."⁴

The history of the house after the removal of James H. Houston is uncertain. According to tradition the house became the property of George Johnston Houston before the Civil War. George J. Houston, born in 1837, could not legally have owned property until 1858.⁵ There is no record of how the house passed from James Hiram Houston to his nephew George Johnston Houston, but it was not by will or deed.⁶ Not until 1901 can G. J. Houston be documented as owner of the property.⁷ Thus, only one person, James Hiram Houston, can be proved a resident of the house before 1900, and he moved to Mecklenburg County about 1820. For the rest of the nineteenth century, the history of the house is a blank.

Chalmers Davidson, in his book The Plantation World Around Davidson, states that George J. Houston's son, Rufus J., lived in the house with his two sisters Jennie and Emma. None of the three ever married and the house was their home until well into the twentieth century. Presumably they occupied the house in the last years of the nineteenth century after Rufus graduated from Davidson College in 1883.⁸ Wills indicated that such was the case; however, a 1917 map of Iredell County showing residences places Rufus J. Houston's home west of the present house and on the opposite side of the Southern Railroad, raising the possibility that while Rufus may have owned the old Houston House, it may not have been the homeplace he willed to his sisters in 1934.⁹ The 1917 map names a B. J. Houston or J. B. Houston (there are two houses) as the resident, who could be John Brevard Houston, one of Rufus's brothers.¹⁰

According to file records, the house is now owned by Plato A. Kelly, niece of Rufus, Emma, and Jennie Houston. The Rufus J. Houston homeplace did eventually become the property of Miss Kelly, but she also received hundreds of acres and several houses in the vicinity from other members of the family.¹¹ Miss Kelly never lived in the house under consideration, and efforts to contact her for further information have been unsuccessful.

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Page Two

¹Virginia Fraser Evans (comp.), Iredell County Landmarks: A Pictorial History of Iredell County (Statesville: The Iredell County American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, 1976). "Davidson Township" by Pat Crooks, p. 148, hereinafter cited as Evans, Iredell County Landmarks with appropriate page; Chalmers Gaston Davidson, The Plantation World Around Davidson (Davidson: The Mecklenburg Historical Association, 1969), 39, hereinafter cited as Davidson, The Plantation World Around Davidson; and Pat Crooks, Interview with William R. Pope, 1976, notes supplied by Laura A. W. Phillips to Research Branch, 1980, on file in Walls-Houston File, Survey and Planning Branch, Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Pope interview.

²Davidson, The Plantation World Around Davidson, 39.

³Iredell County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Iredell County Courthouse, Statesville, Deed Book J, 877, hereinafter cited as Iredell County Deed Book; and Pope interview.

⁴See quotation in Davidson, The Plantation World Around Davidson, 39.

⁵One had to be 21 years old to own land in fee simple. For age see Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, North Carolina: Iredell County, Enumeration District 92, Sheet 4, Line 88.

⁶A check was made in Iredell County Deed Books, Grantor and Grantee Indexes, and in Iredell County Will Books, Office of the Clerk of Superior Court, Iredell County Courthouse, Statesville, Devisor and Devisee Indexes, hereinafter cited as Iredell County Will Book.

⁷See Iredell County Will Book 6, p. 337, will of George J. Houston. The house was on the 90 acre tract bequeathed to Rufus J. Houston.

⁸See pps. 39-40.

⁹Map of Iredell County, 1917, M. C. 87-D, State Archives, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as 1917 Iredell County Map; and Iredell County Will Book 11, p. 163.

¹⁰1917 Iredell County Map. For relationship, see will of Rufus J. Houston, Iredell County Will Book 11, p. 163.

¹¹See Iredell County Will Book 12, pp. 119, 419; Will Book 15, p. 522; and Iredell County Deed Book 65, p. 446. See also Will Book Index, Devisee, and Deed Book Index, Grantee, for other acquisitions.

See Continuation Sheet Item #8.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet Item #9.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 31 1/2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

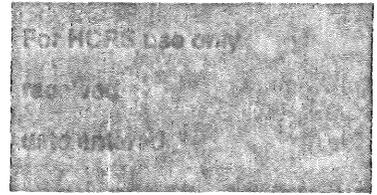
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	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,7	5,1,4,1,2,0	3,9,3,0,9,7,5	D	1,7	5,1,4,5,0,0	3,9,3,0,5,8,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

That part of Tract 2, Block C, Map 2A, Davidson Township lying on the east side of NC 115 and south of a curved dirt road next to the drive-in theatre, as outlined in red on the map.

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Significance-Bibliography Item number 9

Page Three

Crooks, Pat. Interviews with Plato Kelly and William R. Pope, 1976. Notes supplied by Laura A. W. Phillips, 1980. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Davidson, Chalmers Gaston. The Plantation World Around Davidson. Davidson: The Mecklenburg Historical Association, 1969.

Evans, Virginia Fraser, Comiler. Iredell County Landmarks: A Pictorial History of Iredell County. Statesville: The Iredell County American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, 1976.

Iredell County Records

Deeds

Estates Papers

Special Proceedings (Superior Court)

Wills

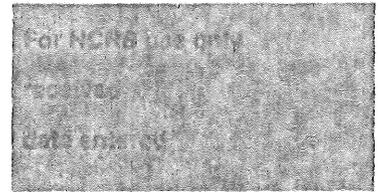
Keever, Homer M. Iredell: Piedmont County. Statesville: The Iredell County Bicentennial Commission, 1976.

Map of Iredell County, 1917. State Archives, Raleigh.

United States Census Records, Twelfth Census, 1900.

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

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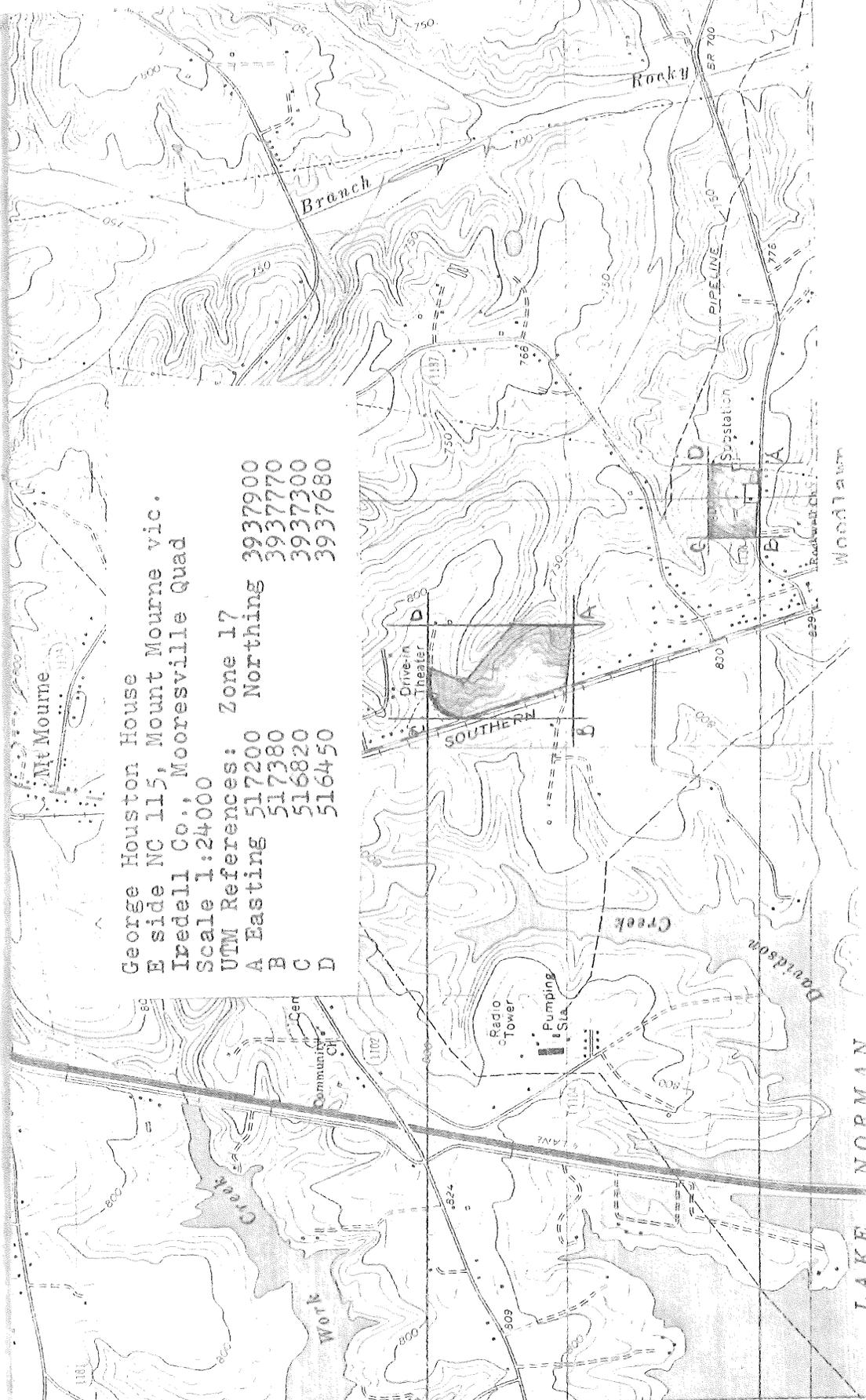
Continuation sheet Boundary Justification

Item number 10

Page 1

The property being nominated includes the house, outbuildings and the surrounding open space and woodlands not interrupted by roads or intrusions (the theatre) which are necessary to preserve the integrity of the site.

IP 20



George Houston House
 E side NC 115, Mount Mourne vic.
 Iredell Co., Mooresville Quad
 Scale 1:24000
 UTM References: Zone 17
 A Easting 517200 Northing 3937900
 B 517380 3937770
 C 516820 3937300
 D 516450 3937680

3933
32°30"

3932

#33

HOUSTON HOUSE

3931
650 000
FEET

34
WOOD LAWN

3930

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

George Houston House
Iredell County
(Request for Approval of Relocation)

Section number 1-11 Page 1

In order save the George Houston House from demolition, its relocation is necessary. The house is to be moved within the parcel that was nominated to the National Register in 1980. The house is sited near the center of the thirty-one-and-one-half-acre parcel listed in the National Register in 1980. Recently, a 4,000-square-foot house and two large multi-car garages were built to the east and north of the Houston House, within the listed boundaries. Also, the adjacent historic rural setting has changed with the construction of a housing development immediately to the east.

Recently, a developer acquired all but one acre of the listed parcel, including the site of the house and the half-dovetail log barn, with the intention of constructing additional houses on the property in the future. The remaining one acre, at the southwest corner of the listed property, has been purchased by an individual with the express purpose of moving the Houston House to this site in order to restore it; if the house remains on its current, original site, it will be demolished by the owner of the larger tract. The one-acre parcel occupies the southwest corner of the original acreage and is shown on the enclosed map drawn to a scale of 1"=200.'

7. Description

The proposal is to move the Houston House from its original location where its front facade is oriented toward the southwest and two hundred and fifteen feet from NC 115 to a site on the one-acre parcel approximately four hundred feet to the south, where its main facade will face west toward open land. The house will stand approximately two hundred and thirty feet from NC 115. While the move means a slight change in orientation, the house will be placed on a site that is surrounded on three sides by thick trees and fronted by NC 115, similar to the original location described in the nomination as "surrounded on three sides by woodlands and on the fourth by fairly open land and the highway."

To prepare for the move, the following will occur: A granite foundation will be laid at the new site. The original foundation was constructed of granite and most of the original material will be reused at the new site. The two interior brick chimneys will be disassembled from the roof upward and rebuilt using the original material after the house is moved. The exterior end brick chimneys will be dismantled. Because of the poor condition of these bricks and a concern for safety, it will be necessary to rebuild the chimneys with new handmade, hard-baked bricks which have been custom produced and which perfectly match the color and size of the original. The bricks will be laid in their original bond pattern. All other material of the house will be retained during and after the move.

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(Request for Approval of Relocation)

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The half-dovetail log barn, the only remaining outbuilding associated with the house, will not be moved when the house is moved. The new owner of the parcel upon which the barn stands does not plan to demolish the barn in the near future. This new owner has told the owner of the Houston House that he will give the owner of the Houston House first option to buy and move the barn if the owner of the larger property no longer wants the barn.

8. Statement of Significance

The significance and integrity of the house will be only minimally diminished as it will remain within its historic acreage and the new setting in rural Iredell County will be very similar to the original. Its eligibility under Criterion C will not be threatened because its architectural character and significance will be retained.

Since the National Register nomination was prepared in 1980, new information about the Houston House has come to light which enhances the property's significance. The George Houston House is significant as one of a small number of surviving two-story, stylishly finished, nineteenth century log houses that represent an important and often misunderstood phase of domestic architecture in Iredell County and the western Piedmont of North Carolina. These houses reflect a second period of log construction in the county and region which followed the one- and two-room, often temporary log cabins built by Scotch Irish, German, and English immigrants alike during the early settlement period. By the late eighteenth century, log building technology had evolved to such sophistication that for two or three generations it competed with timber frame and brick construction as the favored structural system for even the largest and most elaborately finished houses erected for prosperous farmers and planters.¹ Solid walls of heavy horizontal logs, hewn mostly square with smooth surfaces on all four sides and tightly jointed with half-dovetail or V notches created a sturdy and well-insulated house. In most cases the logs were never exposed either inside or out, but covered on the exterior with weatherboards applied to vertical nailing strips and on the interior with flush board sheathing. Interiors could be embellished with late Georgian, Federal, or Greek Revival mantels, doors, and stairs that rival the finish in the finest frame and brick houses. In many cases, such as the George Houston House, it may not be immediately evident that the house is log unless weatherboards or sheathing are removed.

¹ See Davyd Foard Hood, *The Architecture of Rowan County, North Carolina: A Catalogue and History of Surviving 18th, 19th, and Early 20th Century Structures* (1983: Rowan County Historic Properties Commission: Salisbury) for an in-depth discussion of this phase of log construction in Rowan County.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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(Request of Approval of Relocation)

Section number 1-11 Page 3

This tradition of the well-finished log house flourished in the piedmont through the late antebellum period and endured to a lesser degree until the late nineteenth century.

The George Houston House is the best preserved of the few surviving log houses that represent this tradition in Iredell County. The only others identified in surveys of Iredell County include the Davidson House (NR, 1980) near Troutman, the Falls-Hobbs House (NR, 1980) near Doolie, the Waddell-Click House (NR, 1980) near Elmwood, the Allison House in Statesville, and an undocumented house near Olin.² Of these, only the Davidson House approaches the Houston House in sophistication and integrity, though its Federal style interiors may have been installed at the time the frame, Federal style rear addition was connected to the older log house and thus not contemporary with the log construction. Though long described as a two-story log house, the Falls-Hobbs House may be a late eighteenth century one-story log house that was expanded with a second story frame addition and given its Federal style interior woodwork about 1820. Both the Waddell-Click House and the Allison House have seen substantial mid-twentieth century exterior and interior alterations. The house near Olin was heavily deteriorated in 1983 and is believed to be no longer standing. The George Houston House survives with its full two-story log construction and original Federal finish almost completely intact. In its new location it will retain this architectural integrity as a key example of an important building tradition.

A walkover survey by an archaeologist from the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office found no additional historical or archeological resources in the area.

8. Major Bibliographic References

Hood, Davyd Foard. *The Architecture of Rowan County, North Carolina: A Catalogue and History of Surviving 18th, 19th, and Early 20th Century Structures*. Salisbury: Rowan County Historic Properties, 1983.

Little-Stokes, Ruth. *An Inventory of Historic Architecture, Iredell County, North Carolina*. Statesville: Iredell County Historic Properties Commission, 1978.

² Ruth Little-Stokes, *An Inventory of Historic Architecture, Iredell County, North Carolina*. (1978: Iredell County Historic Properties Commission, Statesville).

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22

George Houston House
NC 115
Mount Mourne vic.
Iredell County NC

George Houston House

1984 brick ranch house

carport

carport

barn

1309

proposed site

(835)

788

408
407

108

766

342

8992

96

289

924 (705)

560

115

