

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Grier-Rea House

Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, MK2698, Listed 8/30/2010
Nomination by Mattson, Alexander and Associates
Photographs by Mattson, Alexander and Associates, December 2008



Overall view



Rear view

Grier-Rea House
Name of Property

Mecklenburg County, N.C.
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	buildings
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
Historic and Architectural Resources of Rural Mecklenburg
County, North Carolina

**Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register**
 N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

 DOMESTIC

Sub: single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: WORK IN PROGRESS

Sub: _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

 Federal

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
roof Asphalt
walls Weatherboard

other Brick
 Stone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheet, Section 7, Page 1.

Grier-Rea House
Name of Property

Mecklenburg County, N.C.
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

ca. 1815

ca. 1830

Significant Dates

ca. 1815

ca. 1830

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Charlotte

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7. Narrative Description

Relocation of the House

In 2002, the Grier-Rea House (ca. 1815) was moved to its present location at the southeast corner of Providence and Alexander roads on the south side of Charlotte in Mecklenburg County. The house was relocated approximately one mile east of its original location to prevent demolition. The original site was developed into a residential and commercial subdivision amidst widespread suburban expansion approximately ten miles south of center city Charlotte. At the original site, the Grier-Rea House occupied a slight rise of land and faced south towards Rea Road. Reflecting the original topography, the relocated house sits on a rise of land and faces west towards Providence Road at the intersection with Alexander Road. (Alexander Road is a continuation of Rea Road on the east side of Providence Road.) The present setback of approximately 100 feet is also similar to the original. Although the new setting is surrounded by suburban residential subdivisions, the house occupies a spacious, 1.55-acre lot with mature shade trees on the west side to buffer the dwelling from four-lane Providence Road.

The L-shaped, two-story house with a full-height rear ell was moved in one piece. An 1890s, one-story, rear kitchen addition with a side porch was demolished before the move. The roof, already in deteriorated condition, was removed and subsequently replaced at the new site using original rafters. The original, brick end chimneys (later stuccoed) and rear chimney were demolished in preparation for the move. They have been reconstructed during the extensive rehabilitation of the house at its present location. The rehabilitation, which is in progress, is discussed below.

Physical Description-Summary

Of heavy timber construction, the Grier-Rea House consists of a two-story, side-gable main block (ca. 1815) with an original, one-story, rear shed appendage and a ca. 1830, two-story, rear ell. Supported by granite piers, the dwelling's hip-roofed front porch extends across the façade and features latticework. There is a rear, shed-roofed porch along the north elevation of the ell that also has granite piers. The main block is one room deep and three bays wide, and the side-gable ell is two rooms long. Inside, the main block has a center hall (added ca. 1830) with a stairway that ascends to the second floor from the rear of the hallway.

Main Block-Exterior

Facing west, the house consists of a two-story, single-pile, side-gable main block and a full height rear wing that is flush with the south wall of the main block. The side-gable roof replicates the original roof in its pitch and simple, boxed cornices across the façade and rear elevation. The new, boxed eaves at the gable ends are slightly deeper than the original, flush eaves. The roof is covered in asphalt shingles. The house rests on a modern concrete foundation faced with original fieldstone at the corners to suggest the original fieldstone foundation piers. The façade includes original flushboard siding on the first floor under the shelter of the front porch and original

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weatherboards on the second. However, the rest of the exterior has modern weatherboarding that replicates the original siding which had rotted.

Unless otherwise noted, all of the original, single-hung, wooden sash windows have been replaced with windows that match the original while the molded window surrounds and plain sills survive intact or have been replaced with surrounds and sills that replicate the originals. The original, wooden sash, casement attic windows were rotted and have been replaced with modern, six-light windows to replicate the original. The first and second floor windows have true divided lights. Nine-over-nine light windows are found on the first floor, and nine-over-six appear on the second floor. The six-over-six light windows in the shed appendage replace an original nine-over-nine window. The brick, end chimneys on the main block are modern replacements that match the originals in their single-shoulder configuration, simple caps, and common bond brick.

The façade of the house has four bays on the first story (including two off-center entrances) and is three bays wide on the second story. One entrance opens into the original hall (the north front room) while the other leads to the original parlor (south front room). Although houses with two entrances were not unusual in North Carolina in the early nineteenth century, the door leading into the parlor was probably added when the original hall-parlor interior plan was modified with a central passageway around 1830. The main entrance into the central passageway has double leaf, five-panel doors capped by a transom that was probably enlarged from a single doorway into the original hall when the central passage was installed. The smaller, adjacent entry into the south front room (parlor) has a matching five-panel door.

The one-story, hip-roofed front porch was largely reconstructed after the relocation. Original elements include the balustrade's slender hewn posts and top rail and the large, stone foundation piers. The new metal standing-seam roof, with a heavily molded eave, matches the deteriorated roof that covered the porch prior to the relocation. The porch features distinctive latticework, including a lattice balustrade and frieze which arches broadly between square, lattice posts. This modern woodwork replicates the picturesque lattice that was probably added to the porch in the late nineteenth century. The porch posts are set forward of the porch floor so that the roof extends over the wood-plank flooring to provide added protection from water damage. The front porch has replacement wood steps and railings with square posts topped by molded caps.

The side (north and south) elevations of the main block are two bays deep with windows arranged symmetrically on both sides of the brick, end chimneys. The one-story, one-bay, rear shed appendage is flush with the north elevation, has a replacement flat eave, and is windowless on the north side. The appendage's rear elevation has a nine-over-six window. The exposed rear elevation of the main block (north of the two-story rear wing) includes a modern, one-bay, frame appendage on the second story at the junction of the main block and the rear ell to accommodate a small hall between a modern bathroom and the upstairs hall.

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Rear Ell-Exterior

The two-story, double-pile rear wing has replacement weatherboard siding and a modern, common-bond, brick end chimney that replicates the original. The single-hung windows are modern replacements with true divided lights that generally match the original windows as well as those added to the house in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first floor of the south elevation has a smaller, one-over-one window that replaced a 1920s, four-over-one window serving the west room and two nine-over-nine windows flanking a door into the larger east room (dining room). This door dates to the 1890s when a documentary photograph of the house shows a porch on this elevation connecting the rear bays of the wing to a rear kitchen addition. This entry has a modern, five-panel door capped by a single-light transom. On the south elevation, the second story has one six-over-six window serving the west bedroom and three nine-over-nine windows along the east (rear) bedroom.

The wing's rear elevation has a brick chimney flanked by six-over-six windows on each story. The north elevation of the wing has replacement, nine-over-nine windows with replacement surrounds on both the first and second stories. Probably during the mid-twentieth century, the four second-story windows on this elevation were removed and covered with weatherboarding. The original window frames survived underneath. The shed-roofed porch replicates the original, and the original, square, wooden porch posts with simple caps and stone piers remain. As with the front porch, the porch roof on the ell extends beyond the porch floor. Modern porch steps lead to the modern rear entrance that replaced the original doorway and two-light transom. This entry now consists of a glazed door with sidelights and a three-part transom. The entrance is flanked by modern, enclosed end bays with one-over-one windows.

Main Block-Interior

Originally a hall-parlor plan, the well-preserved interior features Federal-style woodwork. Probably ca. 1830, when the rear ell was constructed, the interior partition wall was constructed to create the central passageway. Containing the principal staircase, this passage extended from the front door to a matching entrance with double-leaf doors at the rear. The rear doors opened into the shed appendage. Denticulated cornices cap both sets of doorways. Horizontal, flushboard walls, beaded-board ceilings, and wooden flooring exist throughout the interior. During the current renovation, most of the woodwork—including all walls and ceilings--were chemically stripped of paint to expose the bare wood. The principal rooms in the main block have original, six-panel doors. The windows have simple molded surrounds and flat-panel wainscoting with molded rails and stiles in the original hall (north room) and parlor (south room). These first-floor rooms as well as the shed appendage and central passage also have cornice molding. The rear shed appendage contains a window in the east wall that matches those in the main body of the house, flushboard walls, beaded-board ceiling, and wooden flooring.

The original hall (north front room) includes an elaborate, Federal mantel supported by convex, fluted pilasters and topped by an overmantel with fluted pilasters framing two wide panels and

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trimmed at the ceiling with dentil molding. The original parlor has a simpler mantel with a narrow, molded shelf and slender pilasters. A four-panel door to the closet under the staircase is located on the north wall of the parlor while a later, five-panel door on the south wall opens into the rear ell. The staircase, now situated in the passageway, abuts the parlor wall and ascends from the rear of the main block. The stairway turns in three treads and then rises straight to the second floor. The staircase consists of a molded handrail, slender, square newel and balusters, and distinctive, sawn, bud-and-spiral brackets at the tread ends. The later partition wall that separates the hall from the central passage has wainscoting similar to that in the hall and parlor although with slightly heavier molding.

Two bedrooms are located on the second floor of the main block. The south bedroom has flat-paneled wainscoting that matches the wainscoting in the hall and the parlor and a mantel with dentil molding in the frieze. The north bedroom has wainscoting on the north wall, molded chair rails on the other walls, and a simple, delicately molded mantel. Each bedroom has a six-panel door that opens into the center stair hall which was probably added when the first-floor central passage was constructed. The upstairs stair hall includes a closet at the top of the stairs on the west wall with double-leaf, vertical-panel doors. An open-string staircase leads to the unfinished attic.

Rear Ell-Interior

The rear ell contains two principal rooms on each floor. As with the main block, there are flushboard walls, beaded-board ceilings, and wooden floors throughout, and the painted surfaces have been chemically stripped. Each floor consists of smaller rooms adjacent to the main block and larger rooms to the rear (east) that are served by the end chimney. The larger rooms on both floors have Federal-style, tripartite mantels with pilasters and molded capitals. There are paneled aprons below the windows in these rooms. On the first floor, a staircase at the northwest corner of the larger rear room ascends to the second floor. This room probably served as the dining room. In typical fashion, the kitchen was located in a separate, free-standing building until the construction of the rear kitchen wing (now gone) in the 1890s. The staircase in the northwest corner begins as five open-string treads, then turns to rise straight to the second floor as an enclosed stairway. The staircase has a molded handrail and slender, square balusters and newels with molded caps. On the second floor, the staircase culminates with an exposed railing and a paired newel. During the current renovation, modern bathrooms have been added to the smaller (west) rooms on both floors of the rear ell.

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8. Statement of Significance

Constructed ca. 1815 and expanded with a ca. 1830 rear ell, the Grier-Rea House is one of the finer early nineteenth century farmhouses from the small collection that survive in Mecklenburg County. The dwelling has been moved from its original location and meets National Register Criteria Consideration B for moved properties as well as National Register Criterion C for architecture. The property is of local significance. As defined in the 1990 Multiple Property Documentation Form (M.P.D.F.), the Grier-Rea House is associated with the Historic Context—The Plantation Era (1800s-1865) and Property Type I.B.—Houses—Plantation Era Farmhouses (Section F, pages 6-9) (see *Historic and Architectural Resources of Rural Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1990.*) As the M.P.D.F. notes in the registration requirements, plantation-era farmhouses are so rare in Mecklenburg County that all are eligible for the National Register if they retain their architectural integrity (Section F, page 20).

Only twenty-seven houses that predate the Civil War were identified in the 1990 M.P.D.F. for Mecklenburg County. The few remaining houses of the plantation era, notably Latta Plantation, Holly Bend, Cedar Grove, Rosedale, and the W.T. Alexander House, are generally located in the northern reaches of the county away from the most intensive redevelopment of the past twenty years. The Grier-Rea House stands out both for its location in rapidly growing southern Mecklenburg County as well as for its intact, Federal-style interior elements. The traditional two-story, single-pile main block embellished with Federal woodwork reflects a major building pattern in Mecklenburg County and the region in the early nineteenth century. During this period, wealthier landowners often favored houses that conservatively blended Federal-inspired ornamentation with the traditional, side-gable, single-pile house type. Such houses were commonly expanded with rear wings.

The Grier-Rea House is an imposing example of the traditional two-story, single-pile house type popular during the period, but the house is particularly noteworthy for its sophisticated and well-preserved interior finishes. Flushboard walls, beaded board ceilings, and wooden floors remain throughout the interior. The principal rooms on the first floor contain flat-panel wainscoting with molded rails and stiles, six-panel doors, and cornice moldings. Well-articulated Federal mantels serve as focal points in both rooms. The mantel in the original hall (north front room) is particularly elegant with convex, fluted pilasters capped by capitals and an elaborate, paneled overmantel with fluted pilasters supporting a denticulated cornice. The original parlor (south front room) contains a restrained, Federal mantel with slender pilasters capped by a molded shelf. The staircase features square newels and balusters with decorative bud-and-spiral brackets at the tread ends. Federal mantels also remain in the rear ell and the upstairs bedrooms.

Several architecturally significant changes were made to the house ca. 1830. The hip-roofed front porch and two-story rear ell were constructed; a center passage plan replaced the original hall-

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parlor layout; and a second doorway leading to the original parlor was added to the façade. The unusual porch form, with the posts set forward of the porch floor, is seen in a few other antebellum houses along the South Carolina border although the Grier-Rea House has the only recorded Mecklenburg County example. This porch design appears to have been developed to protect the porch floor from water damage. Comparative North Carolina examples include the William Houston House (early nineteenth century) and the Richard House (1860s) in Union County, immediately southeast of Mecklenburg County; the Humphrey-Williams House (1846) and Kenneth McKinnon House (St. Pauls, ca. 1840) in Robeson County; and the Solomon James House (ca. 1860) in Anson County.

While eligible for the National Register for its architectural significance, the Grier-Rea House also satisfies Criterion Consideration B as a moved property. In 2002, the house was relocated roughly one mile east to its present location to prevent demolition. The house remains in Providence Township, where it was originally constructed, and is located on a tree-shaded rise of land consistent with the original site. At its new location approximately ten miles south of downtown Charlotte, the house occupies a one and one-half-acre, corner lot. While originally facing south towards Rea Road, house is now oriented west towards Providence Road. Although generally surrounded by modern residential subdivisions, the new setting of the house is less densely developed than the highly altered area around the original location. The Grier-Rea House is currently undergoing renovations.

Historical Background

The original owner of the Grier-Rea House was the Reverend Isaac Grier (1776-1843), a Presbyterian minister in the Providence Township of southern Mecklenburg County. A Georgia native, Grier attended Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and graduated in 1800. He moved to Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, where he was one of the original seven ordained Presbyterian ministers in the Synod of the Carolinas. Reverend Grier served as minister at Providence, Sardis, and Waxhaw Presbyterian churches, and operated the Union Academy in Providence Township. In 1810, Reverend Grier purchased 104 acres of land from Robert Glass along McAlpine Creek in the township and acquired additional adjacent tracts in the ensuing years. Grier probably constructed the house around 1815, and he and his wife, Isabella Harris, raised two children in the house, Martha and Robert Calvin. About 1830, the Grier household expanded to include several orphaned relatives and the elderly Reverend William Blackstock, a pioneering Presbyterian minister. Grier probably constructed the two-story rear wing to accommodate these additional residents (Mecklenburg County "Old" Deed Books 17: 222; 19: 532; Morrill and Huffman 1989; Gray 2004).

In 1843, son Robert Calvin Grier (1817-1871) inherited the house and farm, including five slaves. He had married Barbara Brown Moffatt in 1840 and was residing permanently in York County, South Carolina, at the time of the inheritance. As with his father, Robert Grier was an ordained

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member of the Presbyterian clergy. In 1848, he was appointed president of Erskine College in Due West, South Carolina, and between 1847 and the early 1850s sold the house and land in Mecklenburg County. The farm had grown in size since the 1810s, approaching 400 acres by the 1840s. The county deed books record Robert Grier selling a series of farm tracts along McAlpine Creek to D.R. Dunlap (1847), J.M. Ormand (1847), and James Miller (1851). An inspection of the deed books do not reveal who acquired the house tract from Grier or if the property was subsequently sold before its acquisition by the Rea family in 1872. In that year, Green Lea Rea, a successful landowner in Providence Township, purchased the house and land totaling 320 acres from the estate of G.L.R. McAuley of Salisbury, North Carolina, for \$1,400 (Mecklenburg County Deed Books 3: 23; 3: 93, 260; 4: 242, 440; Morrill and Huffman 1989: 1-2).

According to family tradition, Green Lee Rea's son, John Laney Rea, took possession of the property in 1872. The 1880 agricultural census records for Mecklenburg County show John Laney Rea operating one of the largest and most productive farms in the township. The farm contained 442 acres and was valued at over \$7,000. Rea employed white and black farm laborers, paying \$1,402 in wages in 1880. He owned four horses, eight mules, twelve cows, and the farm produced \$5,300 worth of cotton and other crops. John Laney Rea and wife, Sarah, raised ten children in the house, and in the 1890s, constructed a rear kitchen wing (now gone) (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 8: 206; U. S. Agricultural Census 1880; Morrill and Huffman 1889: 1-2; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Files).

In 1905, Rea gave the property to his son John Laney Rea, Jr., who, with his wife, Margaret, raised six children in the house. The property remained in the family until 2002 when it was sold to a commercial developer. In that year, the Reas donated the house to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission. The commission relocated the Grier-Rea House approximately one mile east to the present site where it is currently undergoing renovations (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 8: 206; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Files).

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9. Bibliography

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Blackwelder is a local historian.

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Morrill, Dan L. and William H. Huffman. "Survey and Research Report on the Grier-Rea House." Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1989.

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10. Geographical Data

Photographs

The following information pertains to each of the photographs:

<u>Name of Property:</u>	Grier-Rea House
<u>Location:</u>	Charlotte, North Carolina
<u>County:</u>	Mecklenburg County
<u>Name of Photographer:</u>	Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc.
<u>Location of Photographs:</u>	North Carolina Historic Preservation Office 109 East Jones Street Raleigh, North Carolina 27601
<u>Date of Photographs:</u>	March and October 2009

1. Front (West) Elevation, Looking East
2. Front (West) Elevation and Side (North) Elevation, Looking Southeast
3. Front Porch and Entrances, Looking East
4. Front (West) Elevation and Side (South) Elevation, Looking Northeast
5. Rear (East) Elevation and Rear Wing, Looking Southwest
6. Interior, Staircase and Central Hallway
7. Interior, North Front Room (Hall), Mantel and Wainscoting
8. Interior, South Front Room (Parlor), Mantel and Wainscoting
9. Interior, Dining Room in Rear Wing, Mantel
10. Interior, Second Floor East Bedroom in Rear Wing
11. House and Setting, Looking Northeast

