

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name John Steele House

other names/site number Lombardy

2. Location

street & number 1010 Richard Street n/a not for publication

city or town Salisbury n/a vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Rowan code 159 zip code 28144

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William S. King Jr.
Signature of certifying official/Title

7-26-94
Date

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

John Steele House
Name of Property

Rowan County, North Carolina
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
		sites
	<u>1</u>	structures
		objects
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Federal

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Wood/weatherboard

roof Wood/shingle

other Brick

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheet.

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.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/government

Period of Significance

1799-1815

Significant Dates

1799

1801

1815

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Steele, John

Cultural Affiliation

N/.A

Architect/Builder

Sharpe, Flam--carpenter/builder

Langdon, John--carpenter

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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:

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approx. 1.0 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

UTM grid 1: Zone 117, Easting 54901010, Northing 394771610

UTM grid 3: Zone, Easting, Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Davyd Foard Hood

organization date 17 May 1994

street & number Isinglass, 6907 Old Shelby Road telephone 704/462-4331

city or town Vale state NC zip code 28168

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Edward H. Clement

street & number 310 South Ellis Street telephone 704/636-3452

city or town Salisbury state North Carolina zip code 28144

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 3 Page 1 John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

John Steele House
Rowan County, North Carolina

National Significance

Criterion:

Theme: Political and Military Affairs--1783-1860

Subthemes: Early Federal Period (1789-1800)
The Jeffersonian Period (1800-1811)

Period of National Significance: 1799-1815

The case for the national significance of the John Steele House is developed in Part Eight of the National Register nomination, "The Life and Political Significance of John Steele."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

Section number 7 Page 1

Architectural Description

General Physical Description:

The John Steele House is a two-story with attic weatherboarded frame Federal house standing on a remaining tract of about one acre. It was erected in 1799-1801 as the seat of Steele's plantation near the town of Salisbury where he intended to reside with his family upon retirement from government service in Washington. Its present environment is a neighborhood of modest bungalows and small Colonial Revival houses built in the 1920s and 1930s following the 1923-1924 subdivision of the former estate grounds into a residential park known as Steelworth. The house occupies the southwest end of a block bounded on the southeast (front) by Richard Street, on the southwest by Miller Street, and on the northwest (rear) by Scales Street. The entire property is covered by a grassed lawn. The plantings along the northeast property line include dogwood and magnolia trees, winter honeysuckle, boxwood, acubia, nandina, iris, and other plants. These plants have been allowed to assume natural, unclipped forms for the most part and form an effective border. In 1985, Edward H. Clement, the owner of the house since 1977, had Lester Brown, a nurseryman, plant Lombardy poplars along the Miller and Scales Street property lines to give the house a sense of private enclosure within the larger, later neighborhood. These trees are now achieving a handsome appearance and presence in the landscape. About 1986, a four-board fence, based on the description of the one built by carpenter John Langdon for Steele, was erected across the southeast, Richard Street front of the property. It begins on the east, at the edge of the driveway which enters the property at the east corner, and continues to the junction of Richard and Miller Streets. There is a short break in it directly in front of the house and here a pair of terminal posts frame the view from the street.

The quartet of holly trees standing to the southwest of the house is by far the most impressive part of the landscape of the John Steele House. The two oldest of these--the two closest to the house--are part of an avenue of holly trees planted in Steele's lifetime which stretched from the house to the public road; its path was in the vicinity of the tracks of the Southern Railway line. By appearance, the two other holly trees date from at least the first half of the nineteenth century, and could well have been standing here in Mrs. Steele's lifetime. To the southeast of the house and standing nearly directly on axis with the front door, is an aged dogwood tree that also probably dates from the mid-nineteenth century. Also of mid-nineteenth century origins is a large crape myrtle whose oldest trunks were damaged recently in a hard freeze; later shoots are sprouting from the center of the clump and continuing the life of the tree. It stands a short distance from the east front corner of the house. Near the Richard Street front of the lawn there are two specimen shrub plantings which enframe the view of the front elevation and stand just inside the board fence. A large clump of forsythia grows to the east of the fence

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

opening while a like-sized clump of winter honeysuckle stands to the south of the opening. In the side lawn to the southwest and west of the house, there are four significant trees: a volunteer walnut tree, an American elm, a willow oak, and a maple planted by Mr. Clement. Two outbuildings stand at the rear of the house.

The Steele House

The following description of the John Steele House describes the dwelling as it exists at present, following upon the academic restoration completed largely between 1977 and 1983 by the current owner. All surviving original fabric is noted; restored woodwork and finishes are likewise identified. An account of the restoration of the house, including an integrity assessment, appears at the end of the physical description of the property.

The impression of the John Steele House is deceptively simple in its appearance as is the exterior finish which enframes the elevations and door and window openings. Although the side-hall plan of the house was highly unusual for a rural dwelling of its time, there is no real indication on the exterior of the character and high quality of the interior decoration. The house's exterior finish is one of good craftsmanship but it is not unusually elaborate.

The house stands on a restored stone perimeter foundation that was originally dry laid; in the restoration and repair of the foundation, Banks Bost, the restoration mason, added mortar which he deeply recessed to maintain the visual appearance of free-stacked stone. The dry laid foundation on the front, southeast elevation, concealed by the porch, is entirely original; the other three sides of the house's foundation includes portions of the original stonework supplemented by like stone gathered in the neighborhood. The front porch stands on like stone piers and has three steps of Balfour pink granite. These piers were rebuilt on their original site from fragments that had survived at and below grade. Brick piers, based on a surviving original pier, support the rear shed which was added to the house about 1820. Here the restoration mason built a cement block perimeter foundation--recessed and free-standing behind the piers--which was stuccoed and painted black so that it disappears from view.

The elevations of the John Steele House are sheathed with beaded weatherboards and enframed by narrow corner boards that are beaded and rise to the molded cornices which carry across the front and rear elevations. The gable ends of the house are fitted with molded three-part rakeboards. The percentages of original and restoration siding and molded woodwork varies on each of the four elevations. The northeast gable end is the most intact of the house's four elevations: here about ninety-five percent of the weatherboards are original. The replacement siding on this elevation and the other three walls exactly duplicates original siding. The molded, flush rakeboards here and on the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 3

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

opposite southwest gable end date from the restoration. They were copied from a fragment that survived in the attic. On the rear elevation, the ca. 1820 shed retains about ninety percent of its original weatherboards and the main block retains virtually all of its original siding on the second story. The cornice here and on the front elevation is a partial restoration, incorporating original fabric and reproduction fabric based on ghostmarks and fragmentary woodwork. It is a simple, typical Federal cornice consisting of molded crown and soffit and bed molding. In the contract between Chambers and builder Elam Sharpe it is described as "a plane cheap cornish." On the southwest gable end, the weatherboards at the attic level are original; those on the first and second stories are replacement. On the front, southeast elevation, the siding above the porch roof is original.

The house is covered with a wood shingle roof that was installed during the restoration. The visible portion of the brick chimney, which rises in the partition wall between the paired rooms on the north side of the hall, dates from the restoration. It features an unusual inward stepping of its upper stack that was reproduced from a 1930s photograph by Frances Benjamin Johnston.

The southeast, front elevation of the John Steele House has a three-bay arrangement and is fitted with a full-facade shed porch. The porch is a reconstruction based on surviving ghostmarks which established its proportions and dimensions. There were surviving mortise marks for the porch rafters carrying across the facade; these established its height. Its depth was established from fragments of the original stone piers. The level of the porch was made compatible with the original interior flooring. Ghost mortise marks survived to indicate the height of the railing and profile of the porch's shed end. The proportions and finish of the porch give it an unusually tall and airy appearance. It has a wood floor and is supported by conjectural chamfered posts of the Federal period. The beaded lower edge of the plate atop the columns forms the lower part of a three-part cornice carrying across the face of the porch. The posts, in turn, are connected by a simple, handsome, and tall railing of rectangular members carried by a pointed-top lower rail and a molded handrail. While the shed ends of the porch are sheathed with weatherboards, there is no flat ceiling here or secondary supports carrying level from the plate atop the posts to the face of the elevation. Instead there are only the rafters which rest on the beaded-edge plate and rise to a point just below the sills of the second story windows. The shingles are nailed onto shingle lath which, in turn, are nailed to the rafters. Both the floor of the porch and the underside of the porch roof are unpainted; the floor is bleaching out whereas the rafters, etc., are now achieving a rich mellow appearance.

At the time of the restoration, the doors, windows, and their surrounds on the front elevation dated from at least three different periods in the house's history. The window openings and their surrounds in the right, easternmost

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 4 John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

bay, on both stories of the three-bay elevation, were original to the house's construction. Together with other surviving window openings, they established the pattern for the fenestration and surrounds that had to be replicated. The surrounds consisted of plain boards with mitred corner joints and beaded inner edges framing the opening.

During the ca. 1905 renovation of the house by Richard Henderson, doors enframed by sidelights and transoms were installed in the house's (then) center bay on both stories, and opened onto porches under the portico. The first-story door occupied the position of the house's original entrance at the left, south end of the elevation. The restored front door in that location has four raised, molded panels and is surmounted by a four-pane transom. Its surround replicates the form of the original window surrounds. On the second story the former door opening was replaced by a window, as originally built. The center bay on both stories of the original facade was enlarged in the 1940s; these windows illuminated the apartment living rooms on the north side of the hall. One original surviving jamb, per window, survived and the openings were reduced to their original size. In the restoration, the windows were fitted with nine-over-nine sash and raised panel blinds whose panel divisions generally replicate those of the front door. The original window openings have flat projecting sills; the sills on the three rebuilt windows replicate that original feature.

The northeast gable end elevation of the John Steele House has a symmetrical arrangement of two windows on each story and a window centered in the attic gable end. Here, as noted earlier, nearly all of the original weatherboards remain in place except for the two lower courses covering the sill and some miscellaneous replacements. The sills and surrounds of all the windows here are original except the right window on the first story--illuminating the rear parlor. The first and second story windows are fitted with replacement nine-over-nine sash and raised panel blinds as on the front. The attic opening is fitted with a nine-over-six sash window. Near the north end of the elevation, there is a dug-out entrance into the cellar that replicates an earlier such arrangement. The shallow enclosure protecting the entrance is made of brick. Its slanted top is fitted with side-hinged board and batten doors which rise from the center. The northeast end of the rear shed is weatherboarded and blind. The air-conditioning unit is installed here and shielded by a low picket fence enclosure.

The opposite southwest gable end of the house has a single replacement window in the center of each story. The window openings on the first and second stories--illuminating the house's side hall--are larger than any others in the house and, consequently, hold twelve-over-twelve sash windows in surrounds which replicate the original ones on the northeast gable end. They also are fitted with blinds. The surround of the attic window is original; however, the sill dates to the restoration. It is fitted with a nine-over-six sash window.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 5

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

On the rear, northwest elevation the pitch of the roof on the ca. 1820 shed is lower than on the front porch. There is a two-part molding on the box cornice carrying across the edge of the roof. The north end of the shed--slightly less than half the width of the house--is enclosed with weatherboards and now serves as the kitchen; its original finish is virtually intact. It is fitted with a pair of symmetrically placed openings holding six-over-six sash windows; these are enframed by two-part stepped surrounds and have flat projecting sill. At one time in the past, perhaps not originally, they were fitted with blinds, but they are not extant. The design and appearance of the rear porch which occupies the remainder of the elevation is the same as the front porch. Recessed immediately behind the columns and railing are a series of fully glazed bronze glass panels and a door set in a bronze-tone metal framework. This easily removable glazing affords the use of the porch as an extra, more informal "interior" living space. The wood columns are square in plan and chamfered above the top rail of the railing. The simple, rectangular member railing carries between a molded handrail and a pointed-top lower rail. The columns and railing are necessarily conjectural and typical of the period in piedmont North Carolina. The exposed perimeter floor of the porch is sheathed with copper as a maintenance measure; the copper has nicely weathered. As noted earlier, the porch rests on brick piers. During the restoration, a simple free-standing stoop was built at the door. It has a brick base and four quarried granite steps. The second story elevation has a three-bay division, as on the front; the openings are fitted with nine-over-nine sash windows.

While travelers and passersby on the public road running in front of the John Steele House could look at will on the well-finished but nevertheless somewhat plain exterior of the house, it was only the family and their circle of friends who saw the handsomely detailed and finished interior of Steele's "Mansion House." Immediately inside the front door was one of the most visually interesting and elegant spaces in the house. The side hall, carrying the full depth of the house, was divided into halves by a three-part arcaded screen. The front half served as a spacious entrance hall of good proportions. The rear half contained the stair rising to the second story and attic. There was a pair of parlors on the north side of the hall of equal size. In 1947-1948, the John Steele House, having been nearly doubled in size by the addition of a two-story tier of rooms on the south side of the hall in 1856 by Steele's granddaughter, was remodeled and converted to use as four separate apartments, two per story. The interior plan of the house was altered and partitions were mostly removed; its large spaces were largely partitioned to form smaller rooms. Perhaps because of its sheer mass, the interior chimney with its breast which projected into both front and rear parlors was retained, as were the partition walls between the chimney and the northeast wall, on both stories.

The architectural fabric and finish surviving from the original construction and through the above-cited remodeling were remarkable for the clues provided

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 6 John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

for the restoration of lost fabric. The original heart pine floors (covered with later flooring) remained in place and in good condition on both stories. The flush boards which sheathed the ceilings on both stories remained intact as well in all rooms on both stories. The principal architectural woodwork which survived consists of the two first-story parlor mantels (then located in other houses); the complete length of chair rail from the northeast side of the chimney breast in the rear parlor; an original six-panel door and its three-part molded surround, in situ on the second story; and one newel pilaster that stands at the entrance into the attic. Also surviving here, on the flight of steps leading from the second story to the attic, were stretches of the original plaster on wood lath on both the walls and ceiling of the stair case. In the plaster wall at the head of the attic stair, adjoining the aforementioned newel pilaster, the profile of the shadow rail survived as a ghostmark to guide the restoration of the handrail. The flush board sheathing at the attic head of the stairs, partitioning the top of the staircase from the attic, together with its board and batten door remain in place as do all the original features of the attic. On both the first and second stories it was the surviving pattern of nail holes in the flooring and the original framing of the house and other architectural ghostmarks--read in conjunction with visual and documentary evidence--which answered the majority of questions about the house and the nature and character of its original, and now restored, finish. All interior woodwork, except that cited above as original, dates from the 1977-1983 restoration.

The walls of the hall of John Steele's side-hall plan house, as well as the other rooms on both stories, are finished with plaster on some original wood and later metal lath. The walls here, as remains true throughout the first story, rise from a low, squat restoration baseboard, painted brown, that is fitted with a molded top. Where the baseboard abuts the door surrounds, its molded top retires backward. The three-part door surrounds are set on shaped bases that are independent of the baseboard and not engaged with it.

Carrying around the perimeter of the hall and the first story parlors is a handsome chair rail featuring a swag design created by drilled holes which have the appearance of punch-work. It was reproduced from the length of original chair rail in the dining room that has survived. The plastered walls rise to join the ceiling where a molded wood cornice edge caps the elevation and masks the junction. The inside faces of the exterior front and rear doors are sheathed with flush horizontal boards. The flat, six-panel doors opening, respectively, from the front and rear halls into the front and rear (dining room) parlors are richly painted and stained to replicate flame-grained mahogany. These doors are reproduced on the model of the original door which survives on the second story.

The rebuilt screen dividing the two halves of the hall has a symmetrical three-part arrangement with an arch-headed opening in the center. The side

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 7 John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

bays of the screen have raised paneled aprons which visually suggest an extension of the halls's flat plaster wainscot. The chair rail continues across the tops of these aprons and forms the base of the rectangular-framed voids beside the center passage. The pilasters and piers rise to a molded cornice from which the rope-molded arch rises to nearly abut the ceiling cornice; the arch is fitted with a keystone.

The staircase which rises to the second story and attic was surely the most sophisticated of its period in Salisbury. It was modeled on Plate XXII, "A Finer Open Newel Stairway" which was published in ARTICLES OF THE CARPENTERS COMPANY OF PHILADELPHIA AND THEIR RULES FOR MEASURING AND VALUING HOUSE CARPENTERS WORK. It includes an elegant baluster newel, C-scroll stair brackets, and a molded and ramped handrail carrying a rectangular-in-plan railing. The stair rises along the southwest wall, just inside the screen, to a landing in the west corner of the house. It then continues up, along the northwest, rear wall to a second landing from whence it turns back to the southeast for its ascent to the second story. On the outer wall of the hall, and rising with the stair, is a shadow railing, inset in the wall, whose appearance replicates the handrail; it is fitted with vertical fluted members which mirror the newel posts. The staircase is fitted with a "triangular wainscot under stairs to fill in the wall space running down to the floor." There is a closet, enclosed with a four-panel door, under the landing in the house's west corner. The chair rail in the stair hall is plain and not finished with the swag ornament.

The front parlor was the principal reception room in the house. The door connecting with the hall in its southwest wall was positioned slightly to the north of center and directly opposite the single window in the room's northeast wall. The aforementioned pair of windows are symmetrically disposed on the front southeast elevation. The principal ornament of the room is the composition mantel which fronts the projecting chimney breast. It is entirely original and intact, and decorated with about one-half of the composition ornaments purchased from Zane, Chapman & Wellford in 1800. Elegant, with somewhat attenuated proportions, it follows the traditional pier and lintel arrangement with pairs of small round, fluted columns rising from a molded base to a rectangular capital faced with composition acanthus leaves. Directly above it and carrying across the face of the fire-box opening is a shallow frieze band decorated with round roses and lozenge-shaped elements.

The frieze of the mantel is the principal focus of the ornamentation and is divided into five areas. The center tablet is fitted with "1 woman figure tablet & fruit & canopy, centre & fixing." This description, taken from the surviving bill of sale, is of a pair of female figures that each stand near the outer edge of the tablet and hold in their right and left hands, respectively, the ends of a swag which is fixed in the center with a vase of fruit. The side panels, flanking this center tablet, hold "1 pair of oak friezes & large wheat

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 8 John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

sheaf center & fixing." The trusses, framing these panels, and set above the paired columns, are decorated with "1 pr. large drapery vases." There is a three-part band of ornament carrying across the top of this frieze. The center element is a "plain & tongue ovolo" molding whose "plain" spaces are fitted with "pine applies" and "acorns." A "raffled ogee and bead" molding is positioned as the base of this three-part composition, while a similar molding carries at the top. The projecting shelf with its concave lip is trimmed with a "ribbon drapery fascia."

The flooring and flush sheathing of the ceiling both are original in the front parlor and are laid parallel with the front elevation of the house. The bricks in the hearth are replacements and were salvaged from the site of the long-ago demolished tavern in the first block of South Main Street in which Andrew Jackson is said to have stayed (while in Salisbury studying law). The cornice in the front parlor is slightly less robust in its profile than the hall cornice.

A door to the north of the fireplace connects the front and rear parlors. Like the doors opening from these rooms into the hall, it is stained and painted as is the later door which opens from the rear parlor into the shed room. The elevations of the rear parlor are a mirror image of those in the front parlor except for the addition of the ca. 1820 door which connects the rear parlor with the shed room. The original flooring and flush sheathed ceiling run parallel with the front elevation. The composition mantel originally installed in this room remains in place in the Edward Tennet Taylor House, 632 Hobson Road, Salisbury. The chimney breast is left vacant awaiting its hoped-for return. The outer corners of the chimney breast are marked by vertical boards which define the form of its projection into the room. There is a horizontal board carrying between these verticals at the original shelf height of the mantel. As in the parlor the same drill-work swag chair rail is installed in this room. The original length of chair rail, found in the dust in the crawl space below the house, has been returned to its original position on the northeast side of the chimney breast. (This room is finished with the mahogany side board, banqueting table, and chairs which were purchased by John Steele in Philadelphia and used in this room in his lifetime and thereafter.)

In the restoration of the house, the shed room was fitted up as a kitchen. It retains its original pine flooring, which is laid perpendicular to the front elevation, flush sheathed walls and ceiling, and original five-panel transitional Federal/Greek Revival door onto the rear porch. The original door and window surrounds have a flat two-part Greek Revival profile. Raised panel wood cabinets have been installed in an L-shaped configuration on the southeast and northeast walls. A lavatory is enclosed in the west corner of the room. The porch retains its original floor and, in the east half, its original flush board ceiling. The weatherboards on the southeast and northeast walls are replacement as is the (hall) door surround on the southeast wall. The original window opening illuminating the rear parlor retains its original surround.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 9

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

The finish of the second story rooms of the John Steele House is somewhat plainer than that of the first story. They all retain their original pine flooring and flush sheathing on their ceilings. The walls are plastered. The same baseboard as below is used here and a molded but plain-faced chair rail is used in all the rooms. The doors and windows are enframed with three-part molded surrounds replicating that found on the surviving surround in the partition wall to the north of the chimney. The second story plan includes the stair hall, a small hall chamber partitioned off the southeast front end of the hall (that now contains a bathroom); the front bedroom which occupies the space above the front parlor, and two smaller bedrooms which occupy the space above the rear parlor (dining room). Doors from the hall open into the hall chamber, the front bedroom, and the rear center bedroom; these have a six-panel division and are painted and grained to simulate the appearance of light creamy honey-colored oak. This color treatment is based on a surviving paint sample taken from a surviving door, evaluated by Frank S. Welsh, the historic paint color consultant.

The hall chamber is enclosed from the hall by a partition made up of vertical boards which appears to be a later, post-1801 addition to the house's plan. To preserve the Federal period appearance, the restoration architect designed recessed niches along the southwest wall which form compartments for the sink, commode, and tub shower situated in that order from the front of the house to the partition wall. None of these modern fixtures is visible from the hall.

The most elaborate treatment of any room on this story is reserved for the front chamber which was John and Mary Steele's bedroom. All of the woodwork in this room, including the cornice and chair rail, is stained and grained to simulate a light creamy honey-colored oak; the original graining was discovered on the face of the door opening into the rear corner bedroom and on a surviving fragmentary part of the cornice to the east of the fireplace. The mantel in this room is of a late-Georgian design--reflecting the then common practice of using woodwork of a slightly earlier period on the second story. The five-part arrangement of tablet, panels, and trusses making up the frieze below the projecting shelf would have been a contemporary design in most better houses of the period in Salisbury. The principal feature of this room is the large closet which was enclosed on the southwest side of the projecting chimney breast. The ghostmark of the center standard for the two-leaf door arrangement was found on the original flooring here. It is fitted with doors having six panels each. John Steele's bed stands against the northeast wall in this room. The room has a concealed door, comprising an undifferentiated part of the hall, which connects with the bathroom.

The finish of the two small rear bedrooms is similar in appearance. The six-panel door connecting the front bedroom with the small rear corner bedroom is original to this position. Under layers of paint, the restoration architect

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 10 John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

and Frank S. Welsh found the original rich dark green paint which was replicated to paint the woodwork of this room. It has a chair rail on all but the partition wall with the rear west bedroom. This third bed chamber, opening onto the hall, has a closet fitted into the southwest side of the chimney breast. The chimney and fireplace are plastered over in this room. The woodwork is painted a putty color.

The main staircase continues from the second story in like manner to the attic with the same pattern of ascent. It was at the top of this ascent, at the door to the attic, that one of the fluted pilasters on the walls--forming a pendant to free-standing newels--survived in situ. It remains in place as does the original flush vertical board partition that encloses the top of the stairwell from the attic and the board door that opens into the attic. The attic is simply floored but otherwise unfinished. Surviving in place here is the step/stair to the hatch opening onto the roof; it is positioned to the west of the chimney. The original rafters remain in place and are marked by Roman numerals.

OutbuildingsThe Dependency , early Twentieth Century
non-contributing building

There are two outbuildings standing to the rear of the house. The largest one, called the dependency, appears to have been built for use as an early-twentieth century kitchen. It retains most of its original weatherboards and finish. It had been moved a few feet at least once prior to 1977 when Clement acquired the property. He relocated it to its present position to the north of the house; here the ridgeline of its gable front roof and its side elevations are parallel with those of the Steele House. It stands on granite piers and has two granite steps at the four-panel wood door in the center of its southwest gable end. There are single windows in the center of its side elevations which hold four-over-four sash in two-part molded late-Victorian surrounds. The rear of the building is blind. The interior is sheathed with turn-of-the-century tongue and groove ceiling. The exterior of the building has been restored and painted; however, the interior remains as it was when acquired in 1977.

Well , 1984
non-contributing structure

A square-in-plan shed supported by simply chamfered posts and covered by a hipped wood shingle roof shelters a well to the southwest of the dependency. It was built for Clement ca. 1984. When Clement acquired the property in 1977 the dependency stood in this position, over the well.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 11

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

Integrity Assessment: The Restoration of the John Steele House

The restoration of the John Steele House occurred, for the most part, during a six-year period from 1977, when Edward H. Clement acquired the house, through 1983. An account of this work appeared in HISTORIC PRESERVATION in its March/April 1987 issue. Initially the services of Tom Oakley, an architect practicing in Concord, North Carolina, were engaged in the preliminary work. Within a few months, Clement hired Charles Phillips, the former director of restoration at Old Salem in Winston-Salem, who was opening his own independent architectural office. The skills acquired and used while at Old Salem were brought into play in this project. The restoration of the John Steele House was the first major private restoration of a landmark house supervised by Phillips, who has since been engaged in the restoration of both Gunston Hall and Stratford Hall, as well as other nationally significant houses. In those early projects he worked in conjunction with Paul Buchanan, the former head of restoration at Colonial Williamsburg. Phillips's remarkable expertise and the high quality of his work have achieved national recognition and gained for him a high reputation enjoyed by few other restoration architects in the United States. The remarkable quality of this restoration was the result of an important partnership which included a knowledgeable and patient client--Edward H. Clement, a gifted architect--Charles Phillips, and the consistent craftsmanship of carpenter Matt Flint who was engaged on the project for about two-and-a-half years.

Steelworth became a popular middle-class residential suburb in the 1920s and 1930s and was rapidly built up with bungalows and modest Colonial Revival houses by homeowners. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the neighborhood had entered a period of decline as original homeowners were in advancing age and some houses had become rental properties. The former John Steele House, which had been an apartment house for about thirty years, was likewise acquiring something of a run-down look. Its fate was in an uneasy balance. In 1977, with a prescience shared by no other Salisbury resident at the time, Edward H. Clement purchased the house and its lot and shortly thereafter set about the restoration of the house. The significance of Steele's political career had been long appreciated by Clement who saw the restoration as an opportunity to renew Salisbury's association with its most important Federal period citizen.

The house acquired by Clement, known sequentially as Lombardy and Steelworth, consisted of the handsome Federal style house erected by John Steele which had undergone a series of expansions and renovations ca. 1820, in 1856, ca. 1905, and in 1947-1948. The first of these efforts, occurring ca. 1820, was the construction of a one-story shed room on the rear, northwest elevation of the two-story-with-attic side-hall plan house. It appears that the house remained little altered until 1856 when John Steele's granddaughter Mary Steele Ferrand Henderson and her husband Archibald Henderson substantially enlarged the house. They added a two-story-with-attic tier of rooms on the southwest side

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 12 John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

of the hall, thereby essentially doubling the number of rooms in the house and converting it to a center-hall plan. That work was completed in a conventional Greek Revival fashion. The house was the residence of Mrs. Henderson until her death in 1899 and remained unchanged for a half-century until about 1905. In 1905, her son Richard Henderson retired and returned to Salisbury to occupy his birthplace and ancestral seat. He had the house remodeled in the then fashionable Colonial Revival style. His renovation of the family seat consisted of two major efforts. One was the addition of the then-popular pebble-dash covering over the Federal and Greek Revival period weatherboards. The second significant change was the erection of a two-story entrance-bay portico and one-story porch which encircled the front and sides of the house.

In 1923, Richard Henderson's widow sold the house and its acreage out of the family. From 1923 until 1947, it was occupied by a single family, either by its owner or as a rental dwelling. In 1947-1948, the single family dwelling was converted to a four-unit rental apartment house by Philip N. Peacock. On the exterior the principal alteration was the removal of the one-story Colonial revival porch. Inside the house, the four pairs of rooms on either side of the hall were repartitioned to form four individual two-bedroom apartments. The function of the center hall remained in the center of the house; however, its walls were rebuilt and the original stair was replaced by a single flight of wider steps that rose to the two rental units on the second story. During this remodeling, most interior partitions were removed, the stair was lost, the mantels were removed, and portions of the other woodwork including the doors were removed. Even then, the special character and quality of the mantels were recognized and they were acquired by Salisbury residents for reuse in other dwellings.

During the thirty-year period from 1947 to 1977, when Clement acquired the house, it remained a rental apartment building. As the fortunes of the neighborhood changed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, so, too, did the character of the apartment building. Gradually, it became less desirable as a rental residence and maintenance was neglected over time.

During the course of the preliminary yet thorough examination of the house in 1977 by the new owner, it became apparent that the critical structural body and a substantial part of the fabric of the house built in 1799-1801 for John Steele survived under the cover of the sequential building programs. The first phase of the restoration consisted of the removal of the fixtures, partitions, and other features of the apartment conversion. The greatly deteriorated turn-of-the-century porch was taken down and the pebble-dash was likewise removed from the walls of the house. There was no surviving documentation for the appearance or finish of the antebellum tier of rooms on the southwest side of the original house. Given that fact and that their finish had been altered during the apartment conversion, that block of the house was dismantled.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 13 John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C

Gradually, the character and presence of the John Steele House emerged from its nineteenth- and twentieth-century cocoon. Suddenly the great body of John Steele's house again stood visible in largely its original form for the first time since the addition of 1856. Any public doubts as to the wisdom of Clement's undertaking were immediately swept away and the mystery of his interest solved. The house erected in 1799-1801 for John Steele, the Comptroller of the Treasury, was again a part of the Salisbury landscape from which it had been hidden entirely from view since ca. 1905 by the pebble-dash cover.

From the outset it was Clement and Phillips's decision to retain absolutely all original fabric and to use it as the model for whatever replacement weatherboards and woodwork was necessary. The survival of so much original fabric, particularly on the northeast elevation, together with the ghostmarks for the front porch elements and the documentary materials in the John Steele Papers in the North Carolina Collection, enabled the necessary replication of original features, their installation in original positions, and the restoration of the exterior. The restoration of the exterior appearance of the house was a relatively easy project. The configuration of the house was known from the surviving plan and it was that house with substantial sections of its beaded weatherboards in place that emerged from concealment early in the project. Most of the exterior window openings survived, in place, although some windows on the front had been enlarged and most of the sash had been replaced. The original window glass was retained and replacement sash made to fit. When the house was expanded by a tier of rooms to the south in 1856, the weatherboards sheathing the south attic gable end were left in place; the weatherboards and frame below the attic window here were cut away to create a passage into the attic over the addition. These attic-end weatherboards were retained as were most of those which had survived elsewhere; their profile was used as a model to replicate the necessary new weatherboards used to sheathe the house.

The architectural investigation undertaken by Phillips answered his and the client's questions concerning the size and height of the front porch and the retention of the rear end. The front porch was rebuilt as was the west end of the rear porch which was engaged together with a shed room under a shed roof. Here the decision was made to install a dark glass wall immediately behind the railing and posts of the rear porch. This was done to provide additional living space on the first story. The stone foundation of the house, which survived intact on the southeast side and appeared to be mostly field stone from the place, was repaired on the remaining three elevations. The front porch was set on stone piers rebuilt above surviving parts of the piers. The rear shed--a ca. 1820 addition to the side-hall plan house--appears to have been erected on brick piers. One original pier had survived and others were rebuilt. For convenience and safety, a recessed foundation of stuccoed cement blocks was installed behind the brick piers; it was painted black so that it

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 14

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

visually disappears from view. Cypress shingles were cut for the house and installed on the roof. The chimney, above the attic floor level, was rebuilt with Old Carolina brick of appropriate size and appearance.

Whereas the restoration of the exterior of the house would have determined the abilities of a competent restoration architect, the restoration of the interior of the house demanded those of the finest in the field. The principal documentary evidence used in the restoration was of two types. The first was the existing material in the John Steele Papers in the Southern Historical Collection which included a handwritten floor plan, an extended series of family letters, and notes covering the period of construction of the house; the two separate contracts for the construction and finishing of the house; and an important collection of receipts for materials used for the house. The second important group of documents were photographs of the house taken in the 1930s by Frances Benjamin Johnston. These record the two important composition mantels in the front and back (dining room) parlors. Another photograph discovered in the Henderson Family Papers, also in the Southern Historical Collection, showed the entrance hall, screen arcade, and staircase.

As important as the surviving documentary and photographic records proved to be, the most significant resource used in the restoration of the interior of the John Steele House was the actual building itself. If, the surviving original materials and finishes, and the numerous ghostmarks which remained clearly visible in the flooring, ceiling, and other woodwork enabled the interior of the house to be restored to its original appearance and condition. In addition to the original flooring and flush board sheathed ceilings which survived intact throughout the house, critical elements of its interior finish likewise survived to guide the restoration. On the first story these included the two original composition mantels, then standing at the fireplaces of mid-twentieth century houses. The front parlor mantel has been returned to its original position in the house. Even before the actual length of chair rail from the rear parlor was found, the character, profile, and decoration of the first-story chair rail had been determined from a length of board from a saw horse used in 1800-1801 on which the pattern of the drilled swag was marked where the drill had passed through the chair rail during construction. When the sixteen-inch length of original chair rail was recovered in the crawl space, it fitted exactly into its original position on the left, northeast, side of the chimney breast in the rear parlor.

In the rebuilding of the stair in the John Steele House, the survival of a newel pilaster at the top of the stair to the attic, and the impression of the chair rail matching the hand rail for the stair were critical evidence. Given the known dimensions of the hall, the levels of the floor, and the pattern of the stair from a published plate, the reconstruction of the stair was easily resolved.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 15

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

On the second story, the survival of the original door connecting the front bedroom with the small chamber to its rear and the complete three-part molded surround in the chamber provided the restoration architect with a model for the rebuilt doors as well as the door and window surrounds. Short surviving lengths of cornice boards and ghostmarks thereon likewise enabled him to replicate the simple cornices on the second floor. The discovery of the ghost imprint of the center stile of the paired doors for a closet (on the southwest side of the chimney) opening into the front bedroom, enabled the restoration architect to design this original and very early feature for a piedmont North Carolina house. Like ghostmarks enabled the building of a like closet in the larger of the two west bedrooms.

The white finish of the plaster walls of the house was known; however, the colors used for the woodwork in the final decoration of the house in 1801 were initially unknown. A total of twenty-two samples were taken from various parts of the original fabric of the main block and eight samples were taken from original features of the shed room addition of ca. 1820. These, together with a sample from the exterior siding and three additional samples, were analyzed by Frank S. Welsh of Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, the historic paint color consultant, in the summer of 1983. The findings guided the painting of the architectural woodwork making up the interior decoration of the house. Linda Croxson and Philip Ward of Locustville, Virginia, executed the stained and grained finish on the flame-grained mahogany doors on the first story and the rich oak graining on the woodwork in the front bedroom and doors on the second story.

In an instance of unconscious irony, there was but one major craftsman, Matt Flint, engaged on the restoration of the John Steele House. His counterpart in the original finish of the house, in 1800-1801, was John Langdon of Philadelphia who contracted to ". . . do the inside work according to such directions as may be given to him." That work was done ". . . according to Philadelphia rates."

During the course of a century and three-quarters, numerous changes were wrought upon the house John Steele built in 1799-1801 and occupied until his death in 1815. Within a few years, ca. 1820, the family added a small rear shed room. A quarter century later, in 1856, Steele's granddaughter nearly doubled the size of the house for an increasing family of descendants who occupied the seat. A half century later, ca. 1905, John Steele's great-grandson, sought to renew the house and the presence of the family in the community by adding the fashionable pebble-dash covering the likewise stylish two-story portico and companion one-story porch. These accumulative additions to the house, in the larger context of family history, demonstrated as perhaps no other actions might, both the family's ties to the oldest ancestral seat and its changing fortunes from the late eighteenth century into the early twentieth century. The sale of the house in 1923 and its substantial remodeling into

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 16 John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

apartments nearly cast the house into oblivion. Likewise, the Steele-Henderson family's physical ties to a place--begun in the colonial period when William Steel acquired the property whereon his son John would build--were broken. Hereafter, members of the family would live from the profits of the land but never again upon it.

Through the course of these actions, the integrity of the John Steele House was admittedly compromised; however, it was never wrenched free of its association with the man for whom the house was built in 1799-1801. The house remained on its original foundation and preserved in its location. There, covered by the appendages and coatings of succeeding generations, it had survived. When the pebble-dash was removed, the form, fenestration patterns, roofline, beaded weatherboards, and chimney of the house were found intact. These materials and critical features of the house's design affirmed the association of John Steele with the building which survived. Likewise, they carried the signature marks of workmanship left by Elam Sharpe who raised the house and completed its exterior. Inside, the door, surround, newel, and length of chair rail recalled, in a lesser fashion, the workmanship of the Philadelphia carpenter John Langdon who finished the house for Steele. Even more importantly, the composition work on the front parlor mantel reflects the workmanship of Zane, Chapman, and Wellford, the premiere firm of their day. Even in the subdivision of the property in the 1920s, the engineer/surveyor, curiously prescient, chose to preserve the house on the largest parcel in Steelworth as the centerpiece of the subdivision. The immediate house grounds forming the setting of the house were retained together with the aged holly trees, dogwoods, and crepe myrtles which ornamented its grounds. The setting of the house was further maintained and protected by the manner in which the house tract was surrounded on three sides by paved streets which kept it apart from the soon-to-be-built houses in the Steelworth neighborhood. A shrub border would serve a similar purpose on the fourth side.

Thus in 1977-1983, when the nineteenth and twentieth-century additions to the house were removed, its original fabric repaired, and the house restored to its original appearance, the historic feeling of the property was expressed anew and preserved in the relationship of the house to its historic setting. The factors of integrity, the links connecting house, landscape, and man, had survived here, making possible and made visible by the restoration which reaffirmed the associations between this house and the life and career of John Steele for whom it was built.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

Lombardy

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

Lombardy, the restored John Steele House, is important in the history of Salisbury, the state of North Carolina, and the nation as the home of John Steele (1764-1815), a many-term member of the North Carolina legislature, a member of the Hillsborough and Fayetteville Constitution ratification conventions, a member of the First and Second Federal Congresses, and the Comptroller of the Treasury under Presidents Washington, Adams, and Jefferson. Erected in 1799-1801 under the supervision of Steele's friend and agent, Maxwell Chambers, while John Steele was resident with the federal government in Philadelphia and Washington, the house was occupied by his family in 1801. John Steele returned to Salisbury in 1802, wrote his letter of resignation as Comptroller to Thomas Jefferson from the house, and lived here until his death in 1815. Thereafter it was home to his widow and descendants for 100 years. Enlarged by his granddaughter in 1856, and remodeled by his great-grandson about 1905, the house was sold out of the family in 1923 and converted to apartments in 1947-1948. In 1977 the house was acquired by Edward Henry Clement, who, in 1983, completed a handsome and skillful restoration documented by a wealth of surviving contemporary contracts, letters, invoices, and receipts in the John Steele Papers and the photographs of Frances Benjamin Johnston and guided by restoration architect Charles Phillips.

John Steele is surely the most important political figure to come from Salisbury. Born there in 1764, he developed ideas of national and public service influenced by his mother, the Revolutionary patriot Elizabeth Maxwell Steel (1733-1790), and his brother-in-law the Rev. Dr. Samuel Eusebius McCorkle (1756-1811), a Presbyterian minister, classical educator, and a founder of the University of North Carolina. A Federalist, Steele was elected to the North Carolina House of Commons in 1787 and reelected the following year. He was a Federalist delegate from Salisbury to the Constitutional ratification conventions in Hillsborough in 1788 and in Fayetteville in 1789 where North Carolina became the twelfth state to ratify the Constitution. In the short period from 1787 until 1789, he gained the respect and voice of citizens in western North Carolina and earned the esteem of North Carolina's Federalist leaders. In February 1790, he was elected one of the state's five representatives to the United States Congress and took his seat in the First Federal Congress as the youngest member of that body. He was elected to the Second Congress and served until March 1793. Steele decided to seek a seat as Senator from North Carolina but he was defeated in that bid; he returned to Salisbury and again served in the House of Commons for three successive terms.

Having gained the support of Alexander Hamilton and the respect of George Washington, John Steele was appointed by Washington as Comptroller of the Treasury on 12 May 1796; he assumed office on 1 July. At that time the Treasury Department was one of only three departments in the administrative branch supervised by a secretary, and through the genius of Alexander Hamilton the Treasury Department

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2 John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

became the largest and most influential. The position of Comptroller was the second most important in the service and as John Steele wrote his wife ". . . not one dollar can go in or out of the Treasury of the United States without my name and that of the Secretary of the Treasury." That was a fact of the office and the nature of his role in the formative early national period when the offices and rules of government were being established, when credit was being established for the new country, and when the critical matter of defining and collecting revenues was settled. John Steele remained as Comptroller through the presidency of John Adams and for a year and a half into the presidency of Thomas Jefferson, resigning on 30 September 1802. John Steele and Joseph Habersham, Postmaster General from 1795 until November 1801, were the two highest ranking appointed administrative officials to serve in the same office under the first three presidents of the United States.

In February 1790, George Washington had appointed James Iredell, Sr. (1750-1799) to the United States Supreme Court. Iredell and John Steele were the only two North Carolinians appointed to high governmental office by the nation's first president. Today, Lombardy--the John Steele House--survives as a building of national significance, recalling and reflecting the role of John Steele as Comptroller of the Treasury and the contributions of North Carolina in that defining period of national government.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

I. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, CONSTRUCTION, AND OCCUPATION
OF THE JOHN STEELE HOUSE

The two-story-with-attic weatherboarded frame house, known successively as Lombardy, Steelworth, and the John Steele House, was erected in 1799-1801 for John Steele (1764-1815), a many-term legislator in North Carolina, member of both the Hillsborough and Fayetteville Constitution ratification conventions, a member of the First and Second Federal Congresses, and Comptroller of the United States Treasury from 1796 until 1802. (An account of John Steele's life and political career follows.) The house was built as the seat of Steele's home plantation, also known as Lombardy, which lay immediately northeast of Salisbury, the seat of Rowan County. The core of the Lombardy plantation is believed to be the 275-acre tract which Steele inherited in 1773, at the age of nine, upon the death of his father William Steel. Through purchase of adjoining tracts he increased its acreage to 873 acres.¹

The John Steele House, described by William R. Davie in a letter to Steele dated 3 August 1801, as ". . . the most decent chateau in the neighborhood, ornamented too with no little taste, enough I am afraid to mark you soon as an Aristocrat. . . ," is, in architectural terms, one of the most important houses of its generation in North Carolina.² This distinction derives from an extraordinary combination of factors and circumstances. Foremost among these is the survival of both the contract for the erection of the house by Elam Sharpe and the later contract, with a different carpenter, John Langdon, for the finishing of the dwelling's interior. One or both of these contracts might survive for other dwellings; however, the survival of the house itself in combination with both contracts is probably a unique instance in the state for that time. Added to that record of the house, there is an important series of family letters written to and from Steele, his wife Mary, and their daughter Ann which record the progress on the building and finishing of the house, the construction of dependencies, outbuildings, and fences, and, finally, the ornamentation of the grounds.³

As impressive as those groups of contracts and letters are, there is yet additional documentation of the construction of the house, its finishing, and its furnishings. Since John Steele was serving as Comptroller of the Treasury in 1799, the contract for the erection of the house was between John Steele's friend and agent in Salisbury, Maxwell Chambers (1742-1809), and carpenter/builder Elam Sharpe of Iredell County. The letters which passed between Steele and Chambers record Chambers's stewardship of the responsibilities entrusted to him in this regard as well as a number of decisions which influenced the building of the house. Also surviving in the John Steele Papers is a group of receipts and invoices for the purchase of building materials and furniture which were used at Lombardy. For American decorative arts history perhaps the most critical document among this group is the listing of composition ornaments which Andrew Caldcleugh, Steele's agent in Philadelphia, purchased on his behalf from Zane, Chapman & Wellford in 1800. This group of composition ornaments was destined to

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

decorate the mantels in the front and back parlors of the John Steele House. The mantel in the front parlor stands in its original position.⁴

It is unclear, at present, what prompted John Steele in 1798--then himself resident in Philadelphia--to consider the construction of a new seat on his plantation on the waters of Grant's Creek near Salisbury. Whether, in fact, a family house stood on the acreage prior to the construction of Lombardy is unknown. Presumably, his family had been living in his mother's former residence in Salisbury since her death in November 1790. One possible explanation for the building of the house was the apparent need to have Mrs. Steele living on the near-town plantation and in a position to better supervise the management of the plantation while John Steele was in Philadelphia serving as Comptroller of the Treasury.

Whatever the circumstances, he clearly was of sure mind on the subject and must have reached his decision on the plan and appearance of the house in the winter of 1798-1799. A two-page handwritten sketch of the floor plan of the first and second stories, encircled with various notes, survives among the John Steele Papers. It is unclear at present what merits recommended Elam Sharpe to Maxwell Chambers as the best qualified carpenter and joiner to undertake the project. Whether he might have done other construction work for either Steele or Chambers is unknown. The arrangements for the construction of the house were resolved by 28 March 1799 when Sharpe and Chambers entered into a contract for the building of the house (see appendix for this contract).⁵

Despite the thoroughness of the contract and the care given to the undertaking, the construction of the house did not move smoothly at first. Elam Sharpe must have begun work on the dwelling in the late spring or early summer of 1799; however, he left Salisbury before completing the house and honoring his contract with Maxwell Chambers. The uncertain situation as to the completion of the house was outlined by Chambers in a letter to Steele bearing the date of 5 November 1799. Maxwell Chambers was not a man without significant resources and status in Salisbury and it appears he was able to move forward with the work. Within the space of four months, on 13 March 1800, John Steele entered into a contract with John Langdon, a Philadelphia house carpenter, ". . . to do the inside work according to such directions as may be given to him" (see appendix for contract).⁶

It appears from subsequent correspondence between John Steele, his wife Mary, their daughter Ann, and Maxwell Chambers that John Langdon quickly set about the completion of the house. In addition to finishing the interior of the dwelling, he worked on other projects to complete the necessary complement of outbuildings at the family seat and he erected a board fence around the house grounds. Steele's slaves and other workmen were engaged on these projects when necessary. In the correspondence which extends through 1801 and into the spring of 1802, John Steele showed the utmost interest in the progress of the work and the care given to its undertaking. In a letter of 27 February 1801 to his wife Mary he wrote,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 5

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

appropos of the board fence which Langdon was then erecting along the east road front of his new house, "I am not so much concerned for the price of the work as that it sh'd be properly done. This observation applies to all my improvements." In late March 1801 the house was sufficiently advanced so that Mrs. Steele could receive her sister Ann Nessfield and Robert Cochran for a visit.⁷ The final significant letter in this series relating to the house was the one which John Steele wrote to his wife on 1 April 1802. In it he notes the name which has been given to the plantation. "I have had the pleasure to receive your favor of the 15th ulto. and perceive by it, and others, that you mean to call our place 'Lombardy.' It is I suppose because it is surrounded by so many young trees of that name."⁸

On 6 August 1802, having received permission from President Thomas Jefferson, John Steele departed Washington for Salisbury and Lombardy for a visit with his family which would prove fateful. During the six-year period from 1796 to 1802, while he served as Comptroller of the Treasury in Philadelphia and then Washington, he often cited his regret that his family could not be with him. After the election of the Republican Thomas Jefferson in 1800, he had become increasingly concerned about his status and effectiveness as a hold-over Federalist appointee and the second-ranking officer of the Treasury Department. Despite Jefferson's assurances of his confidence in him and pledges of friendship, John Steele recognized the ultimate untenableness of his position and the fact that any possible advancement in national government service was effectively closed to him. Those concerns became coupled with illness in his family during the summer and forced John Steele to a decision. At Lombardy on 30 September 1802 John Steele wrote to President Thomas Jefferson and resigned his position as Comptroller of the Treasury.⁹

For the next thirteen years, until his death in the summer of 1815 at the age of fifty, John Steele resided at Lombardy with his wife and their family. On 13 February 1804, Steele saw the eldest of his three daughters, Ann Nessfield, married to Jesse A. Pearson (1776?-1823), the son of Richmond Pearson. The pleasure that Steele took in this union was short-lived. Eight months later, on 4 October 1804, Ann Nessfield Steele Pearson died. The relationship between John Steele and his eldest child and daughter was a very special one and on her he appears to have lavished many of the hopes that had been foreclosed by the early deaths of his two sons. The body of his beloved Ann was laid to rest in a grave at the edge of the garden at Lombardy whose planting had been a great interest to her. The family circle at Lombardy, comprising Steele, his wife Mary, and their daughters Margaret Gillespie (1790-1824) and Eliza Ann (1795-1834) remained unbroken for the next ten years. On 27 June 1814 Eliza Ann Steele was married to Robert Macnamara (1788?-1843). Just over a year later, on Monday 14 August 1815, John Steele died and was buried beside his daughter in the cemetery at Lombardy.¹⁰

In his will John Steele directed that his estate should be divided into three parts equally among his wife and two daughters, and that his widow was to have a life right to the Lombardy estate. Following her husband's death Mary Nessfield

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 6

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

Steele lived on at Lombardy for another twenty-eight years, a period marked by the birth of grandchildren and the death of her two daughters who were also buried at Lombardy. On 3 March 1819 Margaret Gillespie Steele was married to Dr. Stephen Lee Ferrand (1787-1830) of Swansboro (Onslow County). It is believed that they lived at Lombardy with Mrs. Steele who, ca. 1820, added a shed room behind the back parlor of the house. A daughter, Mary Steele Ferrand, was born to the couple on 31 December 1819. A second daughter, Anne Nessfield Steele Ferrand, was born on 6 November 1821. Less than three years later, on 13 May 1824, Margaret Gillespie Steele Ferrand died and was buried in the family cemetery at Lombardy. Six years later her husband Dr. Ferrand was buried beside her, having died on 15 November 1830. Thereafter, the two Ferrand granddaughters--one the namesake of the family matriarch--continued to live with their grandmother at Lombardy. For a period Eliza Ann Steele and her husband, Col. Robert Macnamara, lived at Lethe, which had been apportioned to her in the settlement of John Steele's estate; however, after her death on 28 November 1834, her body was also interred at Lombardy. Mary Nessfield Steele's last earthly task was to see the burial of her son-in-law Col. Macnamara in the garden-side cemetery at Lombardy following his death on 23 April 1843. Four months later, at the age of eighty, she died on 19 August 1843 and was buried beside her husband.¹¹

In this series of births, marriages, and deaths which marked the final years of Mary Nessfield Steele's life, the events which boded most well for the family fortunes were the marriages of her two Ferrand granddaughters. On 7 February 1838 Anne Nessfield Steele Ferrand (1821-1869) was married to John Bradley Lord (1817-1851). On 14 December 1840 Mary Steele Ferrand (1819-1899) was married to Archibald Henderson (1811-1880). Within the extended Steele-Henderson family, Mary Steele Ferrand Henderson occupied Lombardy longer than anyone else. Whether she was born at Lombardy is not known; however, given the fact that her mother died in 1824 when she was four years old, it appears likely that she called Lombardy home from that time through the next three-quarters of a century until her death in 1899. She and her husband were the parents of nine children, all of whom were presumably born at Lombardy. Four of these children lived to adulthood: Leonard Alexander Henderson (1841-1864) who was killed at the Battle of Cold Harbor, Virginia; John Steele Henderson (1846-1916) who was a member of both the North Carolina General Assembly and the United States Congress like his great-grandfather and namesake; Richard Henderson (1855-1914), a captain in the United States Navy; and Mary Ferrand Henderson (1858-1886). To accommodate this large family, Mary Steele Henderson substantially enlarged Lombardy in the summer-fall of 1856 by the addition of a tier of rooms on the south side of the original house by which the side-hall plan dwelling was converted to a center-hall plan house. During this expansion, the Federal period finish of the original house remained intact, save the replacement of the front door. The newly-constructed block was finished in the then popular Greek Revival style. Except for repairs there was no known alteration in the fabric of Lombardy after 1856 until 1905 when Richard Henderson returned to occupy the house in retirement from the Navy.¹²

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 7

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

The acreage of John Steele's Lombardy estate was gradually decreased during the second half of the nineteenth century and radically so in the early twentieth century. The first significant step in the process was a division of the Lombardy lands, comprising grounds, fields, and woodlands, between the daughters and heirs of Margaret Gillespie Steele Ferrand (1790-1824). On 6 January 1851 Anne Nessfield Steele Ferrand Lord deeded 505 1/2 acres on the waters of Grant's Creek to Mary Steele Ferrand Henderson. The deed also conveyed to Mrs. Henderson many town lots in Salisbury which the two sisters had jointly inherited.¹³ About 1878, Mary Steele Henderson's eldest surviving son, John Steele Henderson, erected a house for himself and his family immediately south of the Lombardy seat. It is believed that this house and its grounds, known as Blythewood, were created on the Lombardy property; Blythewood stood on the east side of the Southern Railway line. John Steele Henderson was also a major player in the decision of the Southern Railroad Company to locate its company repair shop to the north of Lombardy. That facility was known as Spencer Shops and was erected in 1896-1897. The subsequent growth of the town of Spencer, the development of East Spencer on the east side of the railroad tracks, and the companion northward growth of Salisbury soon encircled Lombardy and Blythewood on three sides. Over a period of years, the sale of lots and larger tracts gradually reduced the house tract of Lombardy to less than fifty acres.¹⁴

In 1905 Richard Henderson retired after a long career in the Navy and returned to Salisbury and to Lombardy, which he occupied until his death on 24 February 1914. Whether the house had been occupied during the period after his mother's death in 1899 or was in the hands of caretakers is not known. During this period his brother John Steele Henderson was occupying Blythewood to the south and their cousin, Mary Steele Lord Scales (1840-1919), and her husband, N. E. Scales (1833-1921), were occupying a Victorian style house which had also been erected in 1893 about two blocks to the south of Lombardy. In the renewal of Lombardy which he came to call Steelworth, Richard Henderson remodeled the house in the then popular Colonial Revival style. The exterior was covered with pebble-dash as were many houses of the period. The existing porch was taken down and replaced by a one-story, wrap-around porch and a dominant two-story classical portico at the central entrance. From known accounts, it appears that little change was effected to the interior at that time except perhaps in the way of improvements to the kitchen and bathroom.¹⁵

Richard Henderson and his wife were the last members of the Steele-Henderson family to occupy the ancestral house. In retrospect, there is no little irony to that fact for not only was Henderson a descendant of John Steele, but so, too, was his wife. On 12 June 1888, Richard Henderson had married Minnie Lord Scales (1868-1948), the daughter of his first cousin Mary Steele Lord Scales. Following her husband's death, Minnie Lord Scales Henderson occupied Steelworth for a short time before removing to the house at 220 South Fulton Street, Salisbury. From 1914-1915 until 1923 the house was rented out by Mrs. Henderson. In 1922-1923,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 8

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

the graves and gravestones of the Steele-Henderson family were removed from the cemetery at the family seat and relocated as a group in Chestnut Hill Cemetery in Salisbury.¹⁶ In the deed of 3 May 1923, the house built by John Steele and altered by his descendants, together with its much-reduced attendant grounds, were sold by Minnie Lord Scales Henderson to the White-McCubbins Company. The property consisted of four tracts. The total acreage conveyed was not given.¹⁷ The real estate company quickly subdivided the property and a map of Steel Worth Park, prepared by N. A. Trexler and dated June 1923, was filed with the Rowan County Register of Deeds. The family seat was set apart on an irregularly sized lot (Lot #1, Block 5) at the intersection of Richard and Miller streets, which remains its lot to the present. That house tract was the largest lot in the new Steel Worth Park; the remaining acreage was subdivided in conventional fashion with rectangular lots.¹⁸ On 1 March 1924 the White-McCubbins Company sold Lot #1, Block 5 to Philip N. and Mary T. Peacock.¹⁹

Philip and Mary Peacock owned the house from March 1923 until 1951, when it was sold to J. F. Carrigan, and it was near the end of their ownership that they remodeled the house into four apartments. After purchasing the house, they occupied it for a period until building the house at 316 South Fulton Street, Salisbury. Thereafter and into 1947, the house was rented to single families. During 1947-1948, the house was greatly remodeled and the interior repartitioned and fitted up as four rental apartments. The principal visible change on the exterior was the removal of the one-story Colonial Revival-style wrap-around porch. The changes wrought to the interior of the house were more radical. Although the functions of the central entrance and the stair were retained in the area used for those purposes in the Steele-Henderson occupancy, the original stair was removed, the walls reconfigured, and a wider single-flight staircase was installed. In the repartitioning of the largish Federal and Greek Revival period rooms, most of their contemporary woodwork was lost.²⁰

The impressive composition work mantels installed by John Steele enjoyed an entirely different fate. In the 1930s, probably at the urging of Archibald Henderson (1877-1963), Frances Benjamin Johnston photographed them in situ, while she was in Rowan County recording its architectural landmarks. Her photograph of the mantel in the front parlor was published in *THE EARLY ARCHITECTURE OF NORTH CAROLINA* in 1941. In 1948 it was acquired by a neighborhood resident and installed in the house at 531 West Henderson Street. In 1985 it was acquired by the present owner and returned to its original position in the house. The back parlor mantel was obtained by Dr. Benjamin Whitehead McKenzie who, in 1955, gave it to Edward and Elizabeth (Hardin) Taylor; they installed it in the living room at their house, 632 Hobson Road, Salisbury, where it remains to the present.²¹

During the three decades from 1948 until 1977, the house remained a rental apartment building and descended in the ownership of various people. During the later years its condition deteriorated as did the status of its surrounding neighborhood. In 1977 the house and lot were acquired by Edward H. Clement, a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 9

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

Salisbury-born banker, preservationist, and a founder of the Historic Salisbury Foundation.²² During the next six years, he undertook the restoration of the house built for John Steele under the guidance of restoration architect Charles Phillips. (The account of their work appears in part seven of this report.) The house continues to be handsomely maintained and is occupied by a caretaker. Within recent years, Edward Clement has acquired ten items of furniture which John Steele purchased in Philadelphia on 27 April 1797 from cabinetmaker John Douglass. The receipt for this furniture and other pieces survive in the John Steele Papers. John Steele used these furnishings in Philadelphia and Washington, and in 1802 they were shipped to Salisbury and used at Lombardy during his lifetime and thereafter. This Steele furniture includes his dining table, six chairs, his side board, a tea table, and the bed in which it is believed John Steele died on Monday, 14 August 1815. Clement has also acquired a portrait of Ann Nessfield Steele Pearson which hangs over the mantel in the front parlor.

II. THE LIFE AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF JOHN STEELE

The Early Years

John Steele (1764-1815), the builder of the house which bears his name, was born in Salisbury, North Carolina, on 16 November 1764 to Elizabeth Maxwell Gillespie Steel and her (second) husband William Steel. His childhood and youth were spent in this western outpost of government in colonial North Carolina. Salisbury, a growing courthouse town, was made up of Englishmen and their families as well as German and Scotch-Irish immigrants whose kinsmen settled the eastern and western halves of the county, respectively. At his birth, Salisbury, established on 11 February 1755, had been in existence for a mere nine years, and permanent settlement in what was even then described as backcountry had only begun in significant numbers in the 1740s.²³

Elizabeth Maxwell, his mother, was born in 1733 and, in the late 1740s or early 1750s, she emigrated with members of the Maxwell family from Pennsylvania to western Rowan County. Another of the families which rose to prominence in that Scotch-Irish, Presbyterian community, centered on Cathey's meeting house (later Thyatira Church), was that of Thomas Gillespie. Gillespie (b. 1719) is acknowledged as one of the first settlers in the "Irish Settlement." It is believed that Robert Gillespie (d. 1760), the first husband of Elizabeth Maxwell, was a brother of Thomas Gillespie. About 1756, the year that a license to operate a tavern in Salisbury was granted to Robert Gillespie and his partner Thomas Bashford, Robert Gillespie purchased lots #3, #11, and #12 in the East Square of Salisbury. It was probably on lot #3 which fronted on Main Street that he established and operated his tavern.²⁴

Despite the steady influx of settlers into colonial Rowan County in the 1750s and early 1760s, the area retained much of its frontier character. There were

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 10

John Steele House, Rowan, NC

continued conflicts with bands of Cherokee Indians, and local residents took one of two options if they chose not to stay at home and defend their property. One choice was to seek refuge at Fort Dobbs which was erected in the area that is now eastern Iredell County; the other was to travel to Bethabara and join the Moravian colony there. Robert Gillespie was a casualty of an Indian conflict in 1760. He was scalped while returning from Fort Dobbs to Salisbury and died of those injuries on 12 March 1760. Prior to his death a daughter, Margaret Gillespie (1756-1823), and a son Richard "Robin" Gillespie (1758?-1785) were born to the couple. Three months after the death of her husband, Elizabeth Maxwell Gillespie purchased a part of Town Lot #2 in the North Square of the town of Salisbury. Here, she operated her tavern. In 1761, she acquired lot #11 in the North Square and in December 1761 she acquired from Earl Granville a tract of 275 acres on the south side of Grants Creek adjoining the town. In 1762, she bought the remaining portion of lot #2.²⁵

The following year, in 1763, Mrs. Gillespie was married to William Steel of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Their son, and only known child, John Steele, was born in Salisbury on 16 November 1764. William Steel has been described as "an active leader and merchant in Salisbury and judging from existing documents it appears that his modestly successful business activities included the sale of household goods, real estate speculation, horse trading, and private banking. In addition, he operated an 'ordinary' owned by his wife, was an overseer of roads in 1768, was assigned to lay off roads in 1770 and 1772 and was chosen a town commissioner in 1771."²⁶

William Steel died in 1772, sometime after making his will on 29 September of that year. He bequeathed to his wife Elizabeth:

"the third part of all my personal Estate and Furniture, together with the use and sole privilege of my dwelling Houses and Lott in the Town of Salisbury during her natural Life and at her decease to pass to my Son John Steel and his Heirs and Assigns forever. I likewise do give and bequeath her the use of one Negro wench named Bridget and her four children untile my son John comes to full Age, and then they are to be his. I likewise do Will & Order that She may have the use of the Childrens money in her own Hands free of paying and Interest untile each of them respectively comes to full age."

In his will he describes Margaret Gillespie as his "well beloved Daughter in Law" and bequeaths her 250 pounds proclamation money. He makes the same bequest to his "Son in Law Robert Gillespie." The second page of his will is partially lost but it appears that he bequeathed to his only son John Steele a tract of 275 acres and sixteen lots in Salisbury as well as one-half of lot #2 in the north square. John Steele was to come into a portion of his father's personal estate and another portion was to be divided between Margaret and Robert Gillespie; "the other remaining part to be equally divided between my Brother John Steels four Children. . . ." He named his wife Elizabeth and his friends Matthew Troy and Maxwell Chambers as his executors.²⁷

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 11

John Steele House, Rowan, NC

At the time of his father's death in the fall of 1773, presumably shortly after he made his will, John Steele was a lad of eight, approaching his ninth birthday on 16 November. In a somewhat worshipful biographical sketch by his great-great-grandson, published in the NORTH CAROLINA BOOKLET in 1919, Archibald Henderson (1877-1963) provides this account of Steele's formative years:

John Steele received his early education at the English School in Salisbury of which his mother thought so highly. An important influence was exerted upon young Steele during his earlier years by Dr. Samuel Eusebius McCorkle, the husband of his half-sister, Margaret Gillespie. As a youth, Steele attended the famous Latin School, Clio's Nursery, near present Statesville, North Carolina, opened by the Rev. James Hall about 1775.²⁸

Except for his education, little is known of John Steele's life in the 1780s, up to his marriage in 1783. Much more, however, is known of the activities of his mother, Elizabeth Maxwell Steel, who strongly influenced the life of her second son, and who achieved legendary status because of actions attributed to her. She appears to have had a particularly keen interest in the political events of the day, a not unlikely interest given her position as the owner of one of Salisbury's leading taverns. In letters to her brother-in-law, Ephraim Steel, of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, she often described events in the region. Her account of Lord Cornwallis's occupation of Salisbury, 3-5 February 1781, bears restatement here:

In February last the British were so kind as to pay us a visit, at a time when my little family were ill with the smallpox, in which my little youngest granddaughter died--the rest have all happily recovered.

I was plundered of all my horses, dry cattle, horse forage, liquors, and family provisions, and thought I escaped well with my house, furniture and milch cattle, when some in this county were stript of all these things.²⁹

This brief account of his parents and the time and place in which he grew to manhood describes the events of the first twenty years of his life. It appears he spent the early war years at home in Salisbury where in the early 1780s he established a mercantile business. While engaged on business matters in Fayetteville, he met Mary "Dolly" Nessfield, the stepdaughter of Robert Cochran with whom he was engaged in business. On 9 February 1783, John Steele was married to Mary Nessfield (1762-1843), the daughter of Ann and John Nessfield.³⁰ A year later, on 5 May 1784, he was chosen assessor for the Salisbury District. During the following three years he was appointed to and served in a number of local offices and commissions. The most important of these public offices was his service as a Justice of the County Court of Rowan for which he took the oath of office on 5 February 1787. Of this, William West writes:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 12

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

This last position, which Steele would hold intermittently until his death, was a primary vehicle of power in the structure of North Carolina local institutions of government. It provided Steele with his first real experience in political decision making as well as such assigned committee work as the settling of tax accounts. With a grass roots political base, recognition and contacts were now made possible to Steele and would prove to be of value throughout his career in politics.³¹

Formative Years of the Politician

In the fall of 1787, John Steele began the movement in his political career which carried him from the local government to state and national office. In November he was elected a representative from the borough of Salisbury to the North Carolina House of Commons. At Tarborough, on 19 November 1787, just three days past his twenty-third birthday, he took his first seat in the legislative body. A principal action of that legislative session was to call for the election of delegates to a convention to consider the newly adopted Constitution of the United States. Given the fever pitch of Federalist and Anti-Federalist sentiment in North Carolina, that election was one of the most hotly contested elections of its era in the state. John Steele, again representing the borough of Salisbury, was one of eighty-four Federalist delegates to the Hillsborough Convention which met in the Presbyterian Church on 21 July 1788. The Anti-Federalists had elected 184 delegates and when the vote was taken ratification of the Constitution was opposed by a vote of 184 against and 84 in favor. Although he was a relative newcomer to the statewide political scene, and stood in the shadow of the older, more experienced and better-known Federalists such as James Iredell (1751-1799), Archibald Maclaine (1728-1790), and William Richardson Davie (1756-1820), John Steele distinguished himself in his comments on finance and judicial review. A century and a half later, in 1937-1938, his speech on the judiciary was cited by the national press in the matter of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's position regarding the Supreme Court. James Iredell described Steele as "laborous, clearsighted, and serviceable by his knowledge of men."³²

In later 1788, circumstances precipitated a clear shift in opinion on the Constitution among North Carolinians. John Steele was elected again to the House of Commons in 1788 and joined the session which opened on 3 November 1788 in Fayetteville.³³ It was at this session that a call for a new constitutional convention was issued. Whatever the merits of their opposition to ratification, the Anti-Federalists as well as the Federalists came to see that they had reason to worry and to reconsider. They learned belatedly that New York became the eleventh state to ratify the Constitution in July 1788. The First Federal Congress was scheduled to meet on 4 March 1789 and North Carolinians saw George Washington elected and inaugurated President of the United States without their voice. They soon realized that Congress would be enacting legislation which could affect the state and its citizens, again without any voice in the matter. In short, the state found itself isolated and outside events which would determine its destiny.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 13

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

In August 1789, elections were held to chose delegates to the second constitutional convention to be held in Fayetteville on 16 November. The Federalists elected 195 of the 272 members of the convention. The Constitution was ratified on 21 November 1789 by a vote of 195 in favor and 77 votes against approval. Since members of the state legislature were already in Fayetteville they met in joint session and elected the state's two senators to the United States Congress. Governor Samuel Johnston (1733-1816) and Benjamin Hawkins (1754-1816), both Federalists and former members of the Continental Congress, were elected. The legislature created five districts (called divisions) for the election of members of the House of Representatives: Roanoke, Edenton-New Bern, Cape Fear, Yadkin, and the Western Division. Elections were set for 4 and 5 February 1790; elections for the Western Division--the area beyond the mountains--were scheduled for 8 and 9 March, presumably because news of the election would take longer to reach citizens in that area.³⁴

The elections sent to Congress a distinguished group of the state's citizens. Their political affiliations also represented the divided views still held in North Carolina. John Baptista Ashe (1748-1802), an Anti-Federalist who had also been a member of the Continental Congress, was elected in the Roanoke division. In the adjoining Edenton-New Bern division, Dr. Hugh Williamson (1735-1819), a Federalist, a physician, and scientist who had served in Congress from 1782 until 1784 and was reelected in 1787, was chosen over Stephen Cabarrus, the speaker of the North Carolina House of Commons. Timothy Bloodworth (1736-1814), an arch Anti-Federalist and also a member of the Continental Congress, was elected from the Cape Fear district. In the Yadkin division, John Steele won election over Joseph McDowell (1756-1801), who would challenge him for the same seat in the election of 1791 and succeed Steele in 1793. The Western District elected its political and folk hero John Sevier (1745-1815), a Democrat, who had been governor of the secessionist state of Franklin. He was a delegate to the Fayetteville convention and supported the ratification of the Constitution.³⁵

Within this group of seven North Carolina members of the First Federal Congress, John Steele was clearly the junior in age. Some of his six colleagues, including Samuel Johnston, had been political leaders in North Carolina in the years before Steele's birth in 1764. They and others, like Hugh Williamson, had important roles in the Revolutionary period and/or in the difficult years of the mid-1780s when the nation was in the process of defining itself. That Steele could stand as an equal among men of this stature was evidence, in part, of his precocious abilities as a politician and his poise as a citizen. John Steele took his seat in the second session of the First Federal Congress in New York on 1 April 1790 where he was the youngest member. Less than two months earlier, on 10 February 1790, President George Washington had appointed Steele's friend James Iredell as associate justice of the United States Supreme Court.³⁶

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 14

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

In the spring of 1791 George Washington completed a tour of the Southern states, having enjoyed a similar visit to the northern states in 1790. At the outset of the tour he selected the site of the future capital and proceeded through Virginia to North Carolina. He was first entertained in Halifax in the home district of John Baptista Ashe. From there he proceeded to Tarborough, Greenville, and to New Bern where he was entertained in Tryon Palace. In coastal North Carolina, his last stop was Wilmington from whence he traveled to South Carolina and then Georgia. On the return, inland leg of the tour, he departed Camden, South Carolina and arrived in Charlotte where he had dinner on 28 May at the home of Colonel Thomas Polk. The next morning he was greeted by John Steele who, as Washington wrote, ". . . was so polite as to come all the way to Charlotte to meet me." Steele escorted Washington on to Colonel John Smith's where the party had dinner. At the end of the day the President's entourage had supper at Red Hill, the home of Major Martin Phifer (1756-1837).

The next morning, Washington set out for Salisbury and he was met at the Mecklenburg/Rowan County border by the Rowan Light Horse Company under Captain John Beard. Some five miles outside Salisbury, he was met by a delegation of a ". . . large number of the most respectable gentlemen of the town and country" who welcomed him to the town. In town he was greeted with an address signed by Salisbury's six most important citizens of the day: Spruce Macay, Maxwell Chambers, John Steele, Montford Stokes, Charles Harris, and Lewis Beard. Washington, in turn, offered greetings to the crowd that had gathered in his honor. That evening he was entertained at a dinner at the Hughes House where he spent the night. The next morning, Captain John Beard and the Rowan Light Horse Company accompanied Washington's party to Long's Ferry where Washington crossed the Yadkin River and continued on to Salem.³⁷

John Steele was reelected to the Second Congress which opened its first session on 24 October 1791 and concluded the second session on 2 March 1793. Steele's actions and votes in the Second Congress reflected both local and national concerns. As a life-long resident of Salisbury, still in the "backcountry" in the early 1790s, he advocated the improvement of the federal postal system with a post road and post offices in the interior of his state and the country. Fiscally conservative, he advocated limits on federal spending and the creation of the United States Bank, but he opposed the assumption of the state's debt (which would put North Carolina to a disadvantage). Again by virtue of his backcountry experience he appreciated the value and effectiveness of the militia and opposed the creation of a large standing army and expensive War Department. Those views, his opposition to placing a large army at the direction of the President to use against the Indians on the Southwest frontier, and his statement that often white people were the aggressors against the Indians, all of which were both accurately and erroneously reported to his constituents, ultimately ended his Congressional career.³⁸

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 15

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

In the summer or fall of 1792, John Steele decided against seeking a third term in the House of Representatives and chose to seek the senate seat being vacated by Samuel Johnston. The discussion in the North Carolina General Assembly, which elected the senators from North Carolina, was both fierce and bitter. William Richardson Davie represented Steele's interests in the debate but he could not successfully carry the day for Steele against the challenges of retiring five-term governor Alexander Martin, John Leigh, and Thomas Blount who were also seeking the seat. Alexander Martin was elected to the Senate on 11 December 1792.³⁹

John Steele's return to North Carolina from the United States Congress brought him back to the active management of his property and to participation in the political life of the state. In 1793 he was elected to the first of three successive terms in the state house of representatives. On 8 January 1794 Governor Richard Dobbs Spaight appointed Steele Major General of the Fourth Division of the North Carolina Militia. For the remainder of his days he would be known as General John Steele. In 1795 John Steele was put forth as a candidate for the United States Senate; however, the General Assembly elected Timothy Bloodworth to the seat vacated by Benjamin Hawkins.⁴⁰

John Steele, Comptroller of the Treasury

In 1796, at the age of thirty-one, John Steele achieved the highest position in government to which he would ever be elected or appointed. By letter of 12 May 1796, Oliver Wolcott, Secretary of the Treasury, advised Steele that he had been appointed by President Washington to the position of Comptroller of the Treasury--the second highest position in the Treasury Department. Wolcott wrote:

I am directed by the President of the United States to inform you, that he has determined to offer you the appointment of Comptroller of the Treasury, which will soon become vacant in consequence of the proposed resignation of Mr. Davis the present possessor.

The Salary at present established by law is Two thousand six hundred & fifty dollars pr annum, to which a temporary addition will probably be made during the present Session of Congress.

The respect which I entertain for your character founded on personal acquaintance as well as the representations of your friends, inspires me with a sincere wish that the proffered appointment may be acceptable.

In case your decision shall be according to my wishes, it will be necessary for you to be in Philadelphia on or before the first day of July ensuring when Mr. Davis proposes to leave the Office, in any event I request you to acknowledge this letter by duplicates as soon as possible.⁴¹

John Steele's written acceptance of the position is apparently lost.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 16

John Steele, Rowan County, NC

In 1793 John Steele had considered the possibility of obtaining an appointed position in the Treasury Department of the federal government. It is unclear whether he had made overtures to Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, prior to leaving Philadelphia after the close of the Second Congress on 2 March. It appears that on 17 September John Steele wrote both to Hamilton and to Tenche Coxe, the United States Commissioner of Revenue. In his letter to Hamilton, Steele proceeded after the usual courtesies to put his request to Hamilton:

Without trespassing further upon your time give me leave to inform you, that I am extremely (sic) desirous to be employed in some respectable situation by the Executive of the United States, and to solicit your interference in my favor is the principal object of this letter.

Disclaiming any sort of vanity which might be supposed to spring upon a young man's mind from such a reflection, I am conscious that at the next election I could be placed in either house of Congress. But this would not suit my circumstances, still less my disposition. Some reasons on this head I have detailed in a letter to Mr. Coxe, which he is at liberty to show you if required.⁴²

On 19 November, Tenche Coxe answered the letter, apparently at the direction of Hamilton. He acknowledged having discussed the matter with Hamilton who opined ". . . that there must be occasions when your qualifications would redound to your own credit and advantage and that of the United States in the way you have in view." The question, of course, was what position Steele had in mind. Coxe ended his letter by urging Steele, "If you have any office at the seat of Government in view be pleased to mention it." For reasons now unknown, Steele did not pursue an appointment at that time or apparently until 1796.⁴³

The Treasury Department was one of three federal departments established by the First Congress in August-September 1789. The bill authorizing the department was passed on 2 September and it specifically outlined the organizational structure of the department and its offices. Opinions remain mixed on the extent to which Alexander Hamilton was involved in the drafting of the bill; however, his input was clearly considerable and marked in its effect. Hamilton became Secretary of the Treasury on 11 September 1789. The principal offices established were six in number: Secretary, Comptroller, Auditor, Treasurer, Register, and Assistant to the Secretary (who became Commissioner of Revenue). During the twelve years from 1789 until 1801 when the Federalist Party held leadership of the national government, the Treasury steadily expanded and in 1801 it was the largest administrative agency and ". . . included over one half of the total civilian government personnel."⁴⁴

The position and power of the Treasury Department during the first dozen years of the nation's governance following the inauguration of President Washington on 30 April 1789 in New York, reflects Alexander Hamilton's role as the principal

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 17

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

architect of the fiscal service for the national government and the importance of finance to the health and very existence of the United States. Hamilton served as Secretary until 31 January 1795 and he continued to wield influence in the department until the election of his long-time adversary, Thomas Jefferson, to the presidency. The critical importance of the Treasury Department in the early national period cannot be overstated given the debts which remained from the Revolutionary War, the need to establish international credit for the new nation, and the requirement for tax revenues from a citizenry which had recently won its independence from Great Britain in a war fought in large part on the issue of taxation.⁴⁵

The Treasury Department was one of only three departments in the first national government supervised by a secretary appointed by the President and confirmed by Congress. The Department of War was established on 7 August 1789. Henry Knox, who had served as secretary of war since 1785 became secretary of the newly devised Department of War on 12 September 1789--the day after Alexander Hamilton took office. The act creating the Department of State was passed on 27 July 1789; however, Thomas Jefferson did not take office until 22 March 1790. The office of Postmaster General was placed in the Treasury Department. However, the United States Mint was placed, ironically, under the Department of State which proved to be a significant part of the ongoing feud between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. An office, rather than a department, was created under the Attorney General; Edmund Randolph held the position from 26 September 1789 until 2 January 1794 at which time he succeeded Thomas Jefferson as Secretary of State.⁴⁶

The organic act creating the Treasury Department outlined the basic features of the disbursing system, making it the duty of the Secretary of the Treasury to grant all warrants for monies to be issued from the Treasury, of the Comptroller to countersign them, of the Register to record them, and of the Treasurer to receive and keep the monies of the United States and to disburse them in accordance with the Secretary's Warrants.

The duties of the Treasurer and of the Register were ministerial in nature; those of the Comptroller were discretionary as to the legality of warrants but not as to their expediency.⁴⁷

The act creating the Treasury Department specifically defined the Comptroller's role.

That it shall be the duty of the Comptroller to superintend the adjustment and preservation of the public accounts; to examine all accounts settled by the Auditor, and certify the balances arising thereon to the Register; to countersign all warrants drawn by the Secretary of the Treasury, which shall be warranted by law; to report to the Secretary the official forms of all papers to be issued in the different offices for collecting the public revenue, and the manner and form of keeping and stating the account of the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 18

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

several persons employed therein. He shall moreover provide for the regular and punctual payment of all monies which may be collected, and shall direct prosecutions for all delinquencies of officers of the revenue, and for debts that are, or shall be due to the United States.

That it shall be the duty of the Auditor to receive all public accounts, and after examination to certify the balance, and transmit the accounts with the vouchers and certificate to the Comptroller for his decision thereon: Provided, That if any person whose account shall be so audited, be dissatisfied therewith, he may within six months appeal to the Comptroller against such settlement.⁴⁸

The significance of the office of Comptroller of the Treasury was described by Leonard D. White in The Federalists, who concluded his assessment with Alexander Hamilton's own words:

The Comptroller was an officer of great importance, perhaps the most influential official per officiis in matters of administration. He was considered second in rank in the Treasury Department, and Oliver Wolcott went from the office of Comptroller to that of Secretary of the Treasury. It would be easy, said Hamilton, "for the department to run into disorder" if a mistake should be made in this post. He advised Washington that, "It is of the greatest importance to the proper conducting the business of the Treasury Department that the Comptroller should be a man of the following description: of strong sense, of clear discernment, sound judgment, indefatigable industry, firmness, and prompt decision of temper; possessing a comprehensive knowledge of accounts, and of course good principles."⁴⁹

The President appointed Steele to the position of Comptroller and Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Wolcott conveyed news of that appointment to John Steele. It is clear, however, that Alexander Hamilton, who knew Steele better than either the president or the secretary, probably had a strong influence in the choice of Steele for the position. As their surviving letters indicate, Steele and Hamilton had a friendship and high regard for each other that existed well above the matter of political expediency. It is also clear, given the heavily Democratic-party makeup of North Carolina's twelve-man delegation to the Fourth Congress (which included only two Federalists), Steele could have expected little support for elevation to this high office from that quarter. In short, it was Hamilton who could best recommend John Steele for the second most important position in the Treasury Department which he had essentially created and supervised for five years. Oliver Wolcott, who had served as the first Auditor at Treasury, who had been elevated from that position to Comptroller in 1792, and who advanced from Comptroller to Secretary of Treasury on the resignation of Hamilton in January 1795, would certainly have respected Hamilton's views.⁵⁰

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 19 John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

John Steele departed Salisbury in May or early June of 1796 and arrived in Philadelphia in June where he received his commission as Comptroller from the Secretary of State Timothy Pickering. John Steele was the fifth man to hold the position of Comptroller and he held the position longer than any other person in the early national period. More importantly, he and Postmaster General Joseph Habersham were the only highly-placed appointed officials (outside the United States Supreme Court) to hold one single office continuously under the first three presidents of the United States.⁵¹ The actual day-to-day activities of his position were outlined by Steele in a letter to his wife Mary.

It will no doubt be some satisfaction to you to know the nature of my office duties, and other minutiae relative to my situation. The papers are kept in a large house in Chestnut Street, about the center of the city. The Secretary of the Treasury and his clerks occupy the lower story, the comptroller and his clerks the rooms of the second story, and the Register of the Treasury and his clerks the third story Under my direction there are thirteen clerks and a bookkeeper, and indeed there is business enough for the whole. Writing, writing, writing in this department is the whole duty of man, and at this you know I can do a reasonable share. I go to the office every morning after an early breakfast, continue there until three o'clock, dine, and after dinner return to business again until sunset or dusk. The clerks are all at liberty after three o'clock, tho' some of them return and do business in the afternoon from choice. These are allowed an additional compensation.⁵²

The details of Steele's conduct of the office of the Comptroller of the Treasury lie outside the nature of this nomination; however, the length of his tenure in the position and the respect he earned from other national leaders are testament to his performance as comptroller. Steele had received his appointment in the eighth and final year of Washington's presidency. When John Adams took office on 4 March 1797, he retained Washington's appointees in their respective offices: Timothy Pickering was Secretary of State; Oliver Wolcott, Jr. was Secretary of Treasury; James McHenry was Secretary of War; Charles Lee was Attorney General; and Joseph Habersham was Postmaster General. John Steele was likewise retained in the position of Comptroller. On 21 May 1798 Benjamin Stoddert was commissioned Secretary of the Navy and he took up the position on 18 June 1798. Of these men, Charles Lee, Joseph Habersham, Benjamin Stoddert, and John Steele served through the end of Adams' administration to the inauguration of Thomas Jefferson on 4 March 1801. Charles Lee vacated the office of Attorney General on 3 March 1801 and in the course of that year Benjamin Stoddert and Joseph Habersham likewise departed office on 31 March and 2 November, respectively.⁵³ John Steele held the position of Comptroller until 30 September 1802. During that period he was the highest ranking Federalist in an otherwise Republican (Democratic) administration led by Thomas Jefferson.

Located at the seat of government, that was removed to Washington in 1800, John Steele saw the changes which had been occurring with the decline of the Federalist

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 20

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

Party and the rise of the Republicanism of Thomas Jefferson. He gained a useful insight into his own position and the possibility of his national political fortunes as early as December 1800. On 8 November 1800 Oliver Wolcott, Jr., resigned as Secretary of the Treasury. John Steele expected to be named to succeed Wolcott as Secretary. John Adams and John Steele were never particularly close and it appears that Adams never offered the post to Steele. Instead, Adams named Samuel Dexter, the sitting Secretary of War, to the post. Dexter held both the offices of Secretary of the Treasury and Secretary of War for the last two months of Adams' presidency. He remained Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury until May 1801 when he was replaced by Albert Gallatin. On 3 January 1801, John Steele wrote to his daughter Ann:

Mr. Wolcott is out of office and Mr. Dexter appointed in his place. Many of both parties think I ought to have had it. For my own part, considering the change in the Presidency, I am much better satisfied. My present office does not attract so much the envy of ambitious men. Its duties are so arduous and difficult that few would like to encounter them, and withal it is pretty generally conceded that I fill it with satisfaction to the public and credit to myself.⁵⁴

It is one of a number of ironies which marked John Steele's career that while Thomas Jefferson was president, he appears to have enjoyed a closer personal relationship with Jefferson than he had with either Washington or Adams who was away from Washington for long periods of time. Thomas Jefferson invited Steele to dinner and during the period in 1801 that Ann Nessfield Steele was with her father in the capital both father and daughter enjoyed the hospitality of Jefferson and his Secretary of State James Madison.⁵⁵ Steele also developed a good working relationship with Albert Gallatin (1761-1849), Jefferson's brilliant choice as Secretary of the Treasury (1801-1813).

Nevertheless, in 1802 Steele was considering resigning as Comptroller and he discussed the matter with a fellow North Carolinian, Nathaniel Macon, who had been elected with Steele to the Second Congress in 1791. Macon, a Democrat, served continuously as a member of the House of Representatives until 1815 and as Speaker of the House of Representatives from 1801 until 1807. Although of different political parties, Steele and Macon remained friends until Steele's death in 1815. On 7 June 1802, in reply to a recent letter from Steele, Macon wrote to him from his plantation, Buck Spring, in Warren County:

On the subject of our last conversation wick is mentioned by you, I feel much anxiety, because I am extremely desirous that you should not retire, on this head all the reasons and information formerly urged to you crowd on the mind, it would be useless to upset them, but I cannot refrain from saying, that I do not know any person that would be so generally acceptable as yourself, nor can a stronger proof be given in favor of any public character, than that in times when party runs rather high, he should by the faithful & upright

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 21

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

discharge of his official duty retain the confidence of all candid men:---But I must intreat you to call on me as you go home, & not to make any final determination until we can again see each other, . . .⁵⁶

It would appear that Steele's mind was close to being made up in the matter, and in the summer of 1802 personal events pressed him to a decision. In the summer of 1801 Steele had sought and received Jefferson's permission for a trip to North Carolina and an absence from the capital. On 28 June 1802, he again wrote the President seeking permission for another summer visit with his family. In the letter Steele freely acknowledged the uncertainty of his position in the administration.

After leaving the seat of Government with the permission which I now solicit, I am not certain that it will suit me to return:--but if I should conclude to do so my family will accompany me about the beginning of October and in deliberating with them in the course of the summer on a step which must be attended with trouble, and the sacrifice of many domestic comforts, it will be extremely gratifying to me to be certain that I understand your wishes. The politeness with which you have uniformly honored me since our first acquaintance, and a certain bias which is inseparable from the reflection that we are citizens of the same Geographical section of the United States cannot but increase my reluctance to withdraw my services if they are considered of any importance to your administration.⁵⁷

Two days later, on 30 June, Jefferson wrote in reply:

A press of business yesterday prevented my answering your letter received the evening before. I am happy in the occasion it presents of assuring you unequivocally that I have been entirely satisfied with your conduct in office; that I consider it for the public benefit that you should continue, & that I never for one moment entertained a wish to the contrary. . . . Your deliberations with your family therefore on their removal hither, may be safely bottomed on the sincerity of these dispositions on my part, & I shall be happy that they should have their just weight in determining their and your resolutions in favor of that measure. . . . I pray you to accept assurances of my esteem & high consideration.⁵⁸

The next day Jefferson invited Steele to dinner on the following Saturday, 3 July.⁵⁹ The press of office kept Steele in Washington for another month, until the 6th of August, and a week and a half later, on the 17th, he arrived in Salisbury.

At Lombardy on 30 September 1802, John Steele wrote his letter of resignation to Thomas Jefferson.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 22

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

Sir

After leaving the seat of Government on the 6th. of Aug. last with the permission which you did me the favor to grant me I arrived at this place on the 17th. where I found my family in the usual health; but I had been at home only a few days before nearly the whole of them (Mrs. Steele of the number) was taken down with a fever which prevails very generally among the inhabitants of this part of the country. Scarcely a single family in our neighborhood can be said to have escaped. Mine continues to be so much indisposed that I am under the necessity of relinquishing (for the present) the intention of removing them to the seat of Government, and consequently of requesting that you will be pleased to accept my resignation of the office of Comptr. of the Treasury. With my resignation you will I hope have the goodness to accept an assurance, that I am duly sensible of your polite treatment and that in future it cannot but be a source of pleasing and grateful reflections to me to have been invited by you to continue in the public service.

I have the honor to be, Sir

with perfect consideration
Your most obt. & huml. servt.⁶⁰

That same day he wrote letters carrying the news of his resignation and other events to Albert Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury, to Nathaniel Macon, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and to John Haywood, a friend who was also Treasurer of the State of North Carolina. Steele did not immediately cease his work for the Treasury Department. Through October, November, and December letters passed between him, Albert Gallatin, and David Rawn (Steele's principal clerk in the Comptroller's office), Nathaniel Macon, and others in regard to the conduct of official business.⁶¹

Although John Steele was aware of Thomas Jefferson's acceptance of his resignation, Jefferson did not write his formal letter until 10 December 1802.

Dear Sir

Your favor of Sep. 30 found me here on the 17th of October; since which the duplicate has been also received. I deferred answering until a new appointment should be made. This is at length done, and Mr. Duval's commission issues today, which is consequently the termination of yours, a substitute having been appointed to act till now. I am really sorry that circumstances different from what you expected when you left us, should have changed your determination, and disappointed us in the expected society of yourself & family here. I regret it the more as I had hoped your agency here might have contributed to reconcile the opponents of the present authorities, if anything could reconcile them short of retaining exclusive possession of

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 23

John Stgele House, Rowan County, NC

office. but instead of conciliation their bitterness is got to that excess which forbids further attention to them. although in a former letter I expressed to you without disguise the satisfaction which your conduct in office since my coming into the administration had given me, yet I repeat it here with pleasure and testify to you that setting just value on the able services you rendered the public in the discharge of your official duties, I should have seen your continuance in office with real pleasure & satisfaction: and I pray you to be assured that in the state of retirement you have preferred, you have my prayers for your happiness and prosperity and my esteem & high consideration.⁶²

The Later Years

Upon John Steele's return to North Carolina he found the Federalist Party in serious decline. That fact was underscored by the bitter defeat which his friend William R. Davie suffered in his senatorial bid against Willis Alston in 1803. Disillusioned, Davie would depart his adopted state in 1805 and remove to Tivoli, his plantation near Lancaster, South Carolina where he died 5 November 1820.⁶³ In the meantime, John Steele gave his time to the improvement and management of his plantations and in 1804 took the lead in the organization of the Salisbury Jockey Club. He carried on a wide correspondence with regional, state, and national figures including Dr. William Thornton, the first architect of the Capitol and head (1801-1827) of the United States Patent Office, who was also interested in horse racing. In 1804, he and Mrs. Steele were also host to friends and visitors including Parson Weems who was in North Carolina seeking subscribers for his LIFE OF WASHINGTON. Steele was also a subscriber to John Marshall's LIFE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON published in 1804.⁶⁴ Near the end of that year, on 4 October, his eldest daughter Ann died and was interred at Lombardy.

In 1805, at the age of forty years, John Steele returned to public life. In October he was appointed to replace William R. Davie as one of three North Carolinians on the commission to resolve the North Carolina/South Carolina boundary line. On 1 January 1807 he was appointed one of three commissioners to settle a separate boundary dispute with the state of Georgia.⁶⁵ In 1806 he was returned as a representative of Salisbury to the North Carolina House of Representatives and he was reelected for the sessions of 1811-1813 and for 1815. In 1808 the Bank of Cape Fear, based in Wilmington, opened a branch in Salisbury with John Steele as their agent.⁶⁶ About 1808 John Steele also set about to increase his production of cotton and to increase his slave holdings. In October of that year, he put the matter in clear terms to David Anderson, his cotton broker in Fayetteville and Wilmington:

Having an abundance of prime cotton land I can make 3 or 4 times as much annual income by capital in Negroes as I can by any stock annuities--add to this, the scarcity of money enables me to buy Negroes lower than usual.⁶⁷

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 24

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

In 1809, John Steele owned thirty-three slaves and by 1812, he owned fifty-four. Within the space of two years, by 1814, he had increased the number of his slaves to 115. A year later, at his death, he owned 126 slaves valued at \$34,500.⁶⁸

John Steele died on Monday, 14 August 1815, at Lombardy. The cause of death is not known. A notice was issued the following morning. "The Citizens of Salisbury and its vicinity are requested to attend the funeral of Genl. John Steele, this evening, at 5 o'clock, at his own residence." John Steele had written his will on 8 September 1810; it contained instructions for his burial:

My body after death, I consign to the care of my family, to be buried unless circumstances should render it inconvenient, in the garden near the grave of our dear Anne, my remembrance of whose goodness and affectionate regard for me I cannot better express than by this request to be buried near her.⁶⁹

Steele's request was carried out and his grave would later be marked by a handsome classical marble obelisk.

An Assessment

John Steele's widow and family lived on at Lombardy in the manner already described and his descendants zealously preserved his reputation during the course of the nineteenth century and afterward. His family occupied Lombardy for more than 100 years and after his death their lives were supported by his fortune and the gradual sale of lands comprising his estate. His public and private papers remained at Lombardy until after the death of Mary Nessfield Steele in 1843. In 1843/1844 they were obtained by David Lowry Swain, former governor of North Carolina (1832-1835) and since 1835 president of the University of North Carolina. Swain had been instrumental in the formation of the North Carolina Historical Society in 1833 and thereafter he had sought to obtain important collections of historical papers. In 1844 he guided the organization of the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina which became the depository of most of what he collected. The Historical Society of the University of North Carolina issued its first report in 1845. At the end of the description of the papers, a list of Steele's correspondents, and a brief account of the career of John Steele, Swain concluded "North Carolina has produced few individuals, whose public careers offer more interesting topics for history and biography; and it is hoped, that under the auspices of the Society, some attempt to do justice to his memory will be made at no distant day."⁷⁰

In the early twentieth century, John Steele's great-great-grandson, Archibald Henderson (1877-1963), took up the cause of his ancestor's reputation. Henderson acquired an international reputation as a mathematician. He likewise acquired renown and respect as a literary critic, and produced three biographies of George Bernard Shaw. His interest in history was highly influenced by his ancestry, and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 25

John Stegele House, Rowan County, NC

he produced biographical studies, herein cited, of both Elizabeth Maxwell Steel and John Steele as well as members of the Henderson family. He published on his church, the University of North Carolina, the state, Washington's Southern tour (herein cited), and numerous other topics in books, magazines, and newspapers. The decision of the North Carolina Historical Commission to publish the two-volume edition of THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE in 1924 surely owes to his influence.⁷¹

Mid- to late-twentieth century histories of North Carolina have made short or minor note of John Steele, usually identifying him as Washington's appointee as Comptroller of the Treasury. His role and career in political life, at least in North Carolina, was largely overshadowed by the reputation of Nathaniel Macon (1758-1837), a Democrat who has been described as "the foremost public man of North Carolina in the early nineteenth century." Indeed Nathaniel Macon's position was a large one and distinguished by continuous service in the United States Congress from 1791 until 1828.⁷²

The star of John Steele's political career and significance burned for a shorter time and was of a different character. His role as a North Carolina legislator representing his borough of Salisbury, his membership in the two conventions which considered and finally ratified the United States Constitution, and a range of service in local politics and on appointed commissions earned his respect as a leader in local and state political life. Nevertheless, his position as a Federalist at a time in which the state and the nation were turning to Jeffersonian Republicanism (that evolved into the Democratic Party) limited his climb in elective office. John Steele quickly came to understand that factor and turned instead and wisely to appointive office where he gained national recognition and the respect of important men.

The national significance of Lombardy, the John Steele House, ultimately rests on its association with the life and career of John Steele. Constructed for him while he was Comptroller, the place at which he wrote his letter to Thomas Jefferson resigning the position, and the place to which he retired and ended his days, the house is associated with his six-year career as the Comptroller of the Treasury, the second highest position in the largest, and most important administrative branch of the federal government. In that regard the house is associated with the life of one of two top-level appointed administrators, who served continuously in the same position under the first three presidents of the United States. Like Joseph Habersham who assumed the office of Postmaster General on 25 February 1795, John Steele was appointed Comptroller by Washington on 1 July 1796. Both men served through the presidency of John Adams and into the presidency of Thomas Jefferson; Habersham retired on 2 November 1801; John Steele resigned on 30 September 1802. Only the lower level Auditor of the Treasury, Richard Harrison (1750-1841), exceeded them in the length of service. He was auditor from 1791 until 1836. During the period that Steele served as Comptroller of the Treasury he distinguished himself as a public figure in the creation of the administrative fiscal arm of government. When Jefferson took office in 1801, the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 26

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

machinery of government was in place and established. That, indeed, was one of the premier accomplishments of the Federalists in the dozen years they predominated in national politics, an era which began with the inauguration of George Washington as President. In THE FEDERALISTS, Leonard D. White succinctly places John Steele in his context.

The call to public service in these formative years was sufficiently compelling to bring to office some of the ablest men of the generation--not merely Washington, Hamilton, and Jefferson, but John Adams and his son, Wolcott, Steele, Pickering, King, Benjamin Hawkins, Tench Coxe, Higginson and Stoddert, John Marshall and C. C. Pinckney. Seldom has the country been served by more gifted men in posts official and diplomatic. The first precedents of office-holding in high place were honorable ones.⁷³

This judgment on John Steele's exceptional abilities as an administrator and public official came 150 years after he left office in 1802; however, an even more critical judgment had been made in 1796. In that year George Washington, acting we must conclude on the advice of Alexander Hamilton, appointed John Steele to the position of Comptroller of the Treasury. When Washington sought to fill the position and could well have chosen a man from the nation's financial and political centers, he elevated instead a man from the backcountry of North Carolina. Steele himself was ever mindful of the meanings of this appointment. Some time later, when he was writing to recommend Colonel Orr for a contract, he stated in an undated letter, probably to Oliver Wolcott:

It is important I think to the character of our Govt that it should be supposed that men from different parts of the United States might enter the lists of competition for things of this kind with equal prospects of success. . . . The prejudices that exist agt southern men generally as men of business are . . . inapplicable to him, and his political opinions are like those of all honest men at the present juncture.⁷⁴

Proof of another kind that John Steele was an extraordinary and significant man of his time exists in the circumstances of his appointment. With the ratification of the Constitution in Fayetteville on 21 November 1789 North Carolina formally entered into the United States of America. A key advocate for the ratification was James Iredell, Sr. (1751-1799), an Englishman who came to Edenton ca. 1768 as comptroller of customs for the British government, married Hannah Johnston, the niece of the royal governor Samuel Johnston in 1774, and afterward practiced law in Edenton. Iredell's writings in support of the Constitution and its ratification immediately attracted national attention. On 10 February 1790, less than three months after North Carolina had ratified the Constitution, George Washington appointed James Iredell to the United States Supreme Court. Washington justified his choice on clear grounds:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 27

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

I determined, after contemplating every character which presented itself to my view, to name Mr. Iredell of North Carolina; because, in addition to the reputation he sustains for abilities, legal knowledge, and respectability of character, he is of a State of some importance in the Union that has given no character to a federal office.⁷⁵

Following Iredell's appointment another six years would pass before Washington determined to appoint another character ". . . of a state of some importance in the Union . . ." to a high federal office. As history proved, James Iredell, Sr., and John Steele were the only two North Carolinians appointed to high federal office by George Washington. After Iredell's death on 20 October 1799 John Steele was probably instrumental in securing the appointment of Judge Alfred Moore (1755-1810) of Brunswick County, North Carolina, to succeed him. Iredell and Moore were the only two North Carolinians who served on the United States Supreme Court.⁷⁶

Within the space of a dozen years between 1789 and 1801, when the government of the United States was being established, there were but three important citizens of North Carolina named to the highest administrative and judicial offices in the nation. Lombardy, built for Steele in 1799-1801 and his home until death in 1815, is associated with the life of one of these three men. There is no surviving dwelling or building associated with the productive life of either Judge Iredell or Alfred Moore.⁷⁷ Lombardy--the John Steele House--now handsomely and authoritatively restored to its original appearance and furnished with the table at which John Steele dined and the bed in which he slept and died, survives as the most important surviving building in North Carolina associated with the life of John Steele, Comptroller of the Treasury, and the role of North Carolinians in the establishment of the Federal government in the national period. It is indeed, as William Richardson Davie wrote, ". . . the most decent chateau in the neighborhood, ornamented too with no little taste, enough I am afraid to mark you soon as an Aristocrat. . . ."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 28

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

FOOTNOTES

1. West, William S. "John Steele: Portrait of a Moderate Southern Federalist." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1971. Hereinafter cited as West, "John Steele." A copy is located in the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Mr. West's dissertation is an expansion of his earlier (1967) master's thesis, "John Steele and North Carolina Federalism 1787-1803," a copy of which is also located in the North Carolina Collection. West's unpublished works remain the major secondary source of information on the life and career of John Steele. He prepared the sketch of John Steele which is to appear in a forthcoming volume of the DICTIONARY OF NORTH CAROLINA BIOGRAPHY. A copy was provided to this author by William S. Powell. It is hereinafter cited as West, "Sketch of John Steele for DNCB." Will of William Steel, Rowan County Will Book A, page 168, Office of the Clerk of Court, Rowan County Court House, Salisbury, North Carolina. Hereinafter cited as Rowan County Wills. During the course of his adult life John Steele spelled his name with an "e" at the end as have numerous other members of the family, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His father William Steel and his mother Elizabeth Maxwell Steel, both of whom died in the eighteenth century, did not use the final "e."
2. William Richardson Davie to John Steele, 3 August 1801, John Steele Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Hereinafter cited as John Steele Papers. This letter was published first in Hood, Davyd Foard THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY (Raleigh: Glover Printing Company, 1983), p. 365. Hereinafter cited as Hood, THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY.
3. The two contracts were published together for the first time in Hood, THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY, pp. 358, 360. The contract for the finishing of the house, between John Steele and John Langdon and dated 13 March 1800, was published first in Wagstaff, Henry M., THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, VOLUME II (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Company, 1924), pp. 785-786. THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, VOLUME I, was also published in 1924. Both volumes are hereinafter cited as Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE. The personal letters which passed between John Steele and members of his family are located in the John Steele Papers. Eight of them were published for the first time in their entirety in Hood, THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY, pp. 360-366.
4. Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, VOLUME I, pp. 181-182, 184-185, 208-210. Two of the three letters were republished in Hood, THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY, pp. 358-359, 362. The receipts and invoices are located in the John Steele Papers. The firm of Zane, Chapman & Wellford was a short-lived one. Zane and Chapman were primarily ironmongers in Philadelphia who, in 1795, bought out the composition ornament manufactory of William Poyntell. In 1797 Robert Wellford, an accomplished worker and designer in composition, departed England for

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 29

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

Philadelphia where he joined the existing firm which was renamed Zane, Chapman & Wellford. About 1800, Wellford withdrew from the firm and shortly established himself as the leading producer of composition ornament for the American market. By 1807 his company was known as Robert Wellford's Original American Manufactory of Composition Ornaments. His firm enjoyed its greatest success in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Consequently, the surviving mantel in the front parlor of the John Steele House, recorded in the surviving receipt and returned to its original location, occupies a critical place in the history of American decorative arts as the documented product of a short-lived composition company that served as the American training place for the country's best known supplier of composition ornament in the early Federal period. Information on the firm of Zane, Chapman & Wellford and Robert Wellford was provided to the author by Mark Reinberger. Mark Reinberger, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Davyd Foard Hood, 23 April 1992, in the author's possession. The front parlor mantel was published in Waterman, Thomas Tileston, *THE EARLY ARCHITECTURE OF NORTH CAROLINA* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), p. 226. Hereinafter cited as Waterman, *THE EARLY ARCHITECTURE OF NORTH CAROLINA*. The most elaborate interior decorative treatment utilizing composition work in North Carolina is believed to have been that of Little Manor, built ca. 1804, near Littleton in Halifax County. Photographs of the work appear in Waterman, *THE EARLY ARCHITECTURE OF NORTH CAROLINA*, pp. 106, 108-110. For Little Manor see also Lane, Mills, *ARCHITECTURE OF THE OLD SOUTH: NORTH CAROLINA* (Savannah, Georgia: Beehive Press, 1985), pp. 122-126. Little Manor is now a ruin. Composition work was also utilized in the interior decoration of Montmorenci in Warren County; see Waterman, *THE EARLY ARCHITECTURE OF NORTH CAROLINA*, pp. 39-40, 123-128. The house is lost; however, elements of the interior decoration were salvaged by Waterman and installed at Winterthur for Henry Francis DuPont; photographs of the Winterthur installations appear on pages 123-128 of *THE EARLY ARCHITECTURE OF NORTH CAROLINA*. Composition work is also known to have appeared as decorative elements in the Harvey Mansion in New Bern, North Carolina. Sandbeck, Peter B., *THE HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE OF NEW BERN AND CRAVEN COUNTY* (New Bern, North Carolina: Tryon Palace Commission, 1988), p. 57, p. 176.

5. John Steele Papers.

6. In a letter written by Maxwell Chambers from his plantation Spring Hill on 5 November 1799, he informed John Steele, "Mr. Sharpe is gone to South Carolina I am told; there is therefore no expectation of getting him to finish your House, I have been Casting about for a good workman ever since I heard he was gone, but have not yet heard of any that I should like to employ." Wagstaff, *THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, VOLUME I*, pp. 181-184. In this letter Chambers discussed the manner of obtaining brick and plank for the house and recommended that Steele consider having two exterior chimneys instead of one large interior chimney providing fireplaces for four rooms of the house.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 30 John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

7. Hood, THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY, pp. 361-362. Ann Nessfield (d. 1813?), was a sister of Mary Nessfield Steele; they were the daughters of Ann and John Nessfield. After the death of John Nessfield his widow married Robert Cochran (d. 1786) with whom Steele had business dealings in Fayetteville. Robert Cochran, Jr. of Fayetteville was Mrs. Steele's half-brother.
8. Hood, THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY, p. 366.
9. Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, VOLUME I, pp. 284-286, 316.
10. Mary Jane Fowler, Salisbury, North Carolina, to the author, 1 August 1992, in the author's possession. Hereinafter cited as Fowler to Hood. Mrs. Fowler provided a genealogical chart of the descendants of John Steele to the author. Also, Henderson, Archibald, "John Steele," THE NORTH CAROLINA BOOKLET, XVIII (January and April 1919), pp. 174-175. Hereinafter cited as Henderson, "John Steele." John Steele and his wife Mary were the parents of six known children. Ann Nessfield Steele, born 27 January 1784, was their eldest child. In 1786 an infant was born and died without being given a name. Margaret Gillespie Steele was born 31 January 1790. The couple's first born son William, named for his grandfather William Steel, was born on 18 March 1793 and died 18 August 1794. The third surviving daughter, Eliza Ann Steele, was born on 5 August 1795. The couple's sixth and last child, a son who was never named, was born in Philadelphia on 4 January 1798 and died there four months later on 4 May; his body was interred in the burying ground of the Pine Street Meeting House in Philadelphia. The circumstances of this child's death apparently disinclined Mrs. Steele toward Philadelphia and living there with her husband while he was Comptroller.
11. Rowan County Wills, Book G, p. 376. Fowler to Hood.
12. Fowler to Hood. The expansion of Lombardy in the summer and fall of 1856 is recorded in a series of notes, among longer entries, in a diary which Mary Steele Ferrand Henderson kept from December 1854 until December 1861. The manuscript diary survives in the John Steele Henderson Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Ms. Fowler made available to the author her own transcriptions of the entries concerning the expansion of the house.
13. Anne Nessfield Steele Ferrand Lord to Mary Steele Ferrand Henderson, 6 January 1851. Rowan County Deeds, Office of the Register of Deeds, Rowan County Office Building, Salisbury, North Carolina, Book 39, pp. 325-326. Hereinafter cited as Rowan County Deeds.
14. Hood, THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY, pp. 342-344. Blythewood was pulled down and the property redeveloped by the Henderson heirs. An account of the life of John Steele Henderson appears in Powell, William S., editor, DICTIONARY OF NORTH CAROLINA BIOGRAPHY, VOLUME 3 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 102-103. Hereinafter cited as Powell, DICTIONARY OF NORTH CAROLINA BIOGRAPHY, VOLUME 3.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 31

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

-
15. SALISBURY EVENING POST, 24-26 February 1914.
 16. Fowler to Hood. Undated telephone conversations between Mary Jane Fowler and the author.
 17. Minnie Lord Henderson to White-McCubbins Company, 3 May 1923. Rowan County Deeds, Book 174, p. 304. The White-McCubbins Company was incorporated in 1923. The incorporators were David White and David J. White of Greensboro and Frank McCubbins of Salisbury.
 18. Rowan County Deeds, Map Book 3, p. 163.
 19. Rowan County Deeds, Book 168, pp. 503-504.
 20. Undated conversations of the author with Mary Jane Fowler and Edward H. Clement. Philip N. and Mary T. Peacock to J. F. Carrigan, 5 February 1951. Rowan County Deeds, Book 344, p. 267. A floor plan of the remodeled building was prepared in April 1977 by Shirley Carter for Edward H. Clement. Mrs. Carter and her husband John A. Carter were among the first four occupants of the newly fitted-up apartment building. "John A. Carter" is one of four persons listed as residents of 1010 Richard Street in the 1949 edition of the SALISBURY, N. C. CITY DIRECTORY (Charleston, South Carolina: Baldwin Directory Co., 1949), p. 654.
 21. Waterman, THE EARLY ARCHITECTURE OF NORTH CAROLINA, pp. 179, 226.
 22. Lloyd W. Troxler to Edward Henry Clement, 9 September 1977, Rowan County Deeds, Book 578, p. 109.
 23. Ramsey, Robert W., CAROLINA CRADLE (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), pp. 154-160. Hereinafter cited as Ramsey, CAROLINA CRADLE. CAROLINA CRADLE, bearing the subtitle "Settlement of the Northwest Carolina Frontier, 1747-1762," remains the best secondary source of information on Salisbury and Rowan County in that formative period of its history. Rowan County was formed out of Anson County in 1753 and named for Matthew Rowan, acting governor of North Carolina in 1753.
 24. Ramsey, CAROLINA CRADLE, pp. 162-163, 166, 168-169.
 25. Ramsey, CAROLINA CRADLE, pp. 168-169. Rumple, Jethro, A HISTORY OF ROWAN COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1974), p. 152. Hereinafter cited as Rumple, A HISTORY OF ROWAN COUNTY. The Rev. Mr. Rumple, the long-time minister of the Presbyterian Church in Salisbury, published his book in 1881. It was reprinted in 1916 and 1929 by the Elizabeth Maxwell Steele Chapter, DAR, and reprinted a third time in 1974 with a new index. Rowan County Deeds,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 32 John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

Book IV, p. 241, p. 763, Book V, p. 307, 308. In 1762 Mrs. Steel expanded her holding on Grant's Creek by the purchase of an additional eighty acres from the State of North Carolina.

26. West, "John Steele," p. 7.

27. Rowan County Wills, Book A, pp. 168-169.

28. Archibald Henderson, "John Steele," THE NORTH CAROLINA BOOKLET, XVIII (January and April 1919), p. 123. The Rev. Samuel Eusebius McCorkle became the brother-in-law of eleven-year-old John Steele on 2 July 1776--two days prior to the proclamation of the Declaration of Independence--when he married Steele's half-sister Margaret Gillespie. McCorkle (1746-1811) was an exceptional man. He was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, to Alexander and Agnes McCorkle who, in 1756, removed to Rowan County and settled in the Thyatira community. McCorkle entered Princeton in 1768 where he was graduated in 1772 in the class with Aaron Burr. He studied theology, was licensed by the Presbytery of New York in 1774, and eventually returned to Rowan County, where he was ordained and installed as pastor of Thyatira Church until his death on 21 January 1811. Well-educated, he was at the forefront of efforts to educate North Carolinians in the eighteenth century and in 1794 established a classical school, Zion-Parnassus Academy, near Thyatira. McCorkle was also an important figure in the establishment of the University of North Carolina. On 12 October 1793 when the cornerstone of the first building at the university was laid the Rev. Dr. McCorkle delivered the address. William Richardson Davie, acknowledged as the founder of the university and the Grand Master of the Free and Accepted Order of Masons in North Carolina, officiated. McCorkle also drafted the bylaws of the university. Given McCorkle's learning, his role in the organization of the university, and his address at the laying of the cornerstone of Old East, it was expected that he would be named the first president of the university. As matters evolved, William R. Davie came to oppose naming McCorkle to the position and the honor went instead to Dr. David Kerr, a Presbyterian minister in Fayetteville. The decision against McCorkle greatly disappointed John Steele who, in turn, wrote a strong letter expressing his regret and anger to Davie, a fellow Federalist and friend. The resentment caused a four-year breach in their friendship which was not renewed until 1799. For an account of McCorkle's role in the establishment of the university, see Battle, Kemp P., HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, VOLUME I (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1907). Robinson, Blackwell P., WILLIAM R. DAVIE (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957), pp. 224, 237-244, 250-252. Hereinafter cited as Robinson, WILLIAM R. DAVIE.

29. THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, pp. 10-11. The facts represented herein concerning the life of Elizabeth Maxwell Steel are combined from CAROLINA CRADLE, A HISTORY OF ROWAN COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA, West's "John Steele," and other lesser sources. Archibald Henderson (1877-1963), the biographer of George Bernard Shaw, wrote a biography of his great-great-great-grandmother, "Elizabeth Maxwell Steele: Patriot," THE NORTH CAROLINA BOOKLET XXII (October, 1912)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 33

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

The oft-repeated legend associated with Mrs. Steel concerns an event that took place about the same time of Cornwallis's occupation of the town. It is said that General Nathaniel Greene stopped at Mrs. Steel's tavern, exhausted and without funds to continue. According to tradition she is said to have given him two small bags of specie with which he was able to renew his efforts. Her great-great-great-grandson, Archibald Henderson, wrote of this action saying she "endeared herself to her county by presenting to General Nathaniel Greene, in the darkest hour of his career, her savings of years for the public service." This incident takes on greater drama at its conclusion when General Greene is said to have turned a portrait of King George III, hanging in the tavern, to face the wall and inscribed on the back the admonition "O George, hide thy face and mourn." Apparently during the Revolutionary War Elizabeth Maxwell Steel had advanced considerable goods and services to the revolutionary forces. At war's end, she received a settlement of 2,013 pounds for her claim.

The engraved portrait of King George III and a companion portrait of Queen Charlotte engraved by Thomas Frye survive and are on display in the history room of Thyatira Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Steel's act of patriotism was the subject of a painting, "Female Patriotism--Mrs. Steele and General Green [sic]," by Alonzo Chappel (1828-1887). It was painted in 1858 and subsequently engraved by Henry Bryan Hall for Jesse Ames Spencer's HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES. It was included in "The Portraits and History Paintings of Alonzo Chappel," an exhibition which appeared in 1992 at the Brandywine River Museum, the Maryland Historical Society, and the Virginia Historical Society. An exhibition catalog of the same name, with essays by Barbara J. Mitnick and David Meschutt, was published in 1992 by the Brandywine River Museum. The painting is discussed on page eighty-two.

30. Henderson, "John Steele," p. 124. West, "John Steele," p. 22. Robert Cochran removed from Pennsylvania to Cumberland County, North Carolina, in 1764 and established a mill on Cross Creek that year. The settlement which grew up around the mill came to be known as Cross Creek and later as Fayetteville.

31. West, "John Steele," pp. 25-26.

32. The facts of John Steele's political life and career appear in the works herein cited and others. Considered, therefore, in the public domain, they will not be specifically cited in footnotes herein except where material in them is quoted or where an author develops a line of thought critical to this nomination. Cheney, John L., Jr., NORTH CAROLINA GOVERNMENT, 1585-1979 (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State, 1981), pp. 220, 222, 661, 1262. Robinson, WILLIAM R. DAVIE, pp. 199-206. West, "John Steele," pp. 66-69.

33. In the 1788 session John Steele successfully endorsed a bill which created a new county out of western Rowan County which was called Iredell in honor of James Iredell. Henderson, "John Steele," p. 125.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 34

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

-
34. Powell, William S. NORTH CAROLINA THROUGH FOUR CENTURIES (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 228-229. Robinson, WILLIAM R. DAVIE, pp. 210-218. Christman, Margaret C. S., THE FIRST FEDERAL CONGRESS, 1789-1791 (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), pp. 86-88. Hereinafter cited as Christman, THE FIRST FEDERAL CONGRESS.
35. Christman, THE FIRST FEDERAL CONGRESS, pp. 88-89, 323-325, 333-334, 349-351. Powell, William S. DICTIONARY OF NORTH CAROLINA BIOGRAPHY, VOLUME 1 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), pp. 52-53, 177.
36. Powell, DICTIONARY OF NORTH CAROLINA BIOGRAPHY, VOLUME 3, pp. 253-254.
37. Powell, NORTH CAROLINA THROUGH FOUR CENTURIES, pp. 232-233. Henderson, Archibald, WASHINGTON'S SOUTHERN TOUR (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923), pp. 292-308. Rumpel, A HISTORY OF ROWAN COUNTY, pp. 177-179. Brawley, James Shober, THE ROWAN STORY, 1753-1953 (Salisbury, North Carolina: Rowan Printing Company, 1953), 91-94. When George Washington first came to know of John Steele remains to be confirmed. In a letter of 22 August 1789, Washington mentions Steele's role, as a representative of North Carolina, in securing a peace agreement on 16 June 1788 with the Cherokee Indians. Quoted in West, "John Steele," p. 81. Steele had been appointed a special commissioner for that purpose in 1788.
38. West, "John Steele," p. 81. John Steele was not alone in understanding that much of the continued problems with the Cherokee and other Indians lay in the aggressions of "white men." In the above cited letter which Washington wrote to the United States Senate, he stated ". . . the treaty with the Cherokees has been entirely violated by the disorderly white people on the frontier of North Carolina. . . ." John Steele also knew that the interests of certain North Carolinians who were speculating in lands in western North Carolina were served by agitation which could bring military intervention.
39. West, "John Steele," pp. 140-153. A number of political leaders expressed regret that Steele did not return to the House of Representatives for a third term. Among them was Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, who wrote a long letter dealing with that and related political subjects on 15 October 1792. Quoted in West, "John Steele," pp. 141-143.
40. West, "John Steele," pp. 154-157. West, "Sketch of John Steele for DNCB."
41. Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, pp. 140-141.
42. Quoted in West, "John Steele," pp. 163-164.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 35

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

43. Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, pp. 101-102.

44. White, Leonard D. THE FEDERALISTS (New York: Macmillan Company, 1956), pp. 118-123. Hereinafter cited as White, THE FEDERALISTS.

45. White, THE FEDERALISTS, pp. 125-127, 237-242.

46. White, THE FEDERALISTS, pp. 116-155, 517-518.

47. White, THE FEDERALISTS, p. 337.

48. Smith, Darrell Hevener. THE GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE: ITS HISTORY, ACTIVITIES, AND ORGANIZATION (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1927), pp. 16-17. This is a direct quote from the act establishing the Treasury Department. The Treasury Department was reorganized in 1817 and the position of Comptroller was redefined as First Comptroller and some of the heavy responsibilities and duties of the office were reassigned. That reorganization generally held until the passage of the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921 put into effect a reorganization by which the office of the Comptroller became the General Accounting Office.

49. White, THE FEDERALISTS, p. 345.

50. The surviving correspondence which passed between Alexander Hamilton and John Steele clearly indicates that the men had a high regard for each other. These statements are not meant to discount John Steele's relationship with George Washington, which had developed over time. On 31 January 1793 John Steele wrote to his wife Mary that "The President today asked me to drink a glass of wine with him, this is considered here a great honor." John Steele Papers.

51. Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, pp. 141-143. John Steele was appointed Comptroller to succeed John Davis who had succeeded Oliver Wolcott, Jr. (1760-1833) in the post in 1795. Wolcott had held the post of Comptroller from 1791 until becoming Secretary of the Treasury in 1795.

Joseph Habersham was appointed Postmaster General by Washington and served from 25 February 1795 until 2 November 1801. Charles Lee, appointed by Washington as Attorney General, began service on 10 December 1795; he resigned on 3 March 1801 at the end of Adams' presidency. Consequently, he served only under Washington and Adams. He resigned to become president of the United States Branch Bank in Savannah in which post he died in 1815. It should be noted that Richard Harrison (1750-1841) served as Auditor of the Treasury Department from 1791 until 1836, surely one of the longest tenures in service by a civil servant in the early government.

52. This letter, without a date, was quoted in Henderson, "John Steele," p. 162.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 36

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

-
53. White, THE FEDERALISTS, pp. 517-518.
 54. West, "John Steele," pp. 206-208.
 55. Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, pp. 222, 238, 241. Henderson, "John Steele," pp. 164-165.
 56. Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, pp. 281-282.
 57. Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, pp. 222-223, 284-285.
 58. Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, pp. 285-286.
 59. Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, p. 291.
 60. Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, p. 316.
 61. Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, pp. 316-323, 325-337.
 62. Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, pp. 337-338. Thomas Jefferson appointed former Maryland Congressman Gabriel Duval to succeed John Steele. He held the position of Comptroller until 1811 when he was appointed to the United States Supreme Court.
 63. Powell, DICTIONARY OF NORTH CAROLINA BIOGRAPHY, VOLUME 2, pp. 28-29.
 64. Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, scattered pages to the end of volume 1. West, "John Steele," pp. 259-260.
 65. Henderson, "John Steele," pp. 172-173.
 66. West, "Sketch of John Steele for DNCB."
 67. Quoted in West, "John Steele," p. 284.
 68. West, "John Steele," pp. 284-286.
 69. Rowan County Wills, Book G, p. 376.
 70. Under normal circumstances and as the family probably believed, the deposition of the John Steele papers in the archives of the university would assure their protection. For the most part, their faith was rewarded; however, Swain's best intentions become compromised and the history of the John Steele Papers, like that of other collections he acquired, is a complicated story. An account of the history of the John Steele Papers after 1843 appears in Wagstaff, THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE, pp. v-vii. The collecting activities of David Lowry

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 37

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

Swain are described in Jones, H. G., FOR HISTORY'S SAKE (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), pp. 182-199, 209-210. As Jones points out, the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina was the foundation of the Southern Historical Collection of manuscript materials and the North Carolina Collection of printed materials. The materials collected by Swain were used by John H. Wheeler in his HISTORICAL SKETCHES OF NORTH CAROLINA FROM 1584 TO 1851 (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1851), which contained biographical sketches of both Elizabeth Maxwell Steel and her son John Steele including the inscription on his gravestone. Swain is quoted in Henderson, "John Steele," p. 123. FIRST REPORT OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA (Hillsborough, North Carolina: Dennis Heartt, 1845), p. 7. Given Swain's statement, there is real question as to the nature and importance of documents and letters which disappeared or were sold from the John Steele Papers.

71. Powell, DICTIONARY OF NORTH CAROLINA BIOGRAPHY, VOLUME 3, pp. 99-100.

72. Powell, DICTIONARY OF NORTH CAROLINA BIOGRAPHY, VOLUME 4, pp. 185-187. Nathaniel Macon's house is lost. The papers which Macon accumulated during his long career are said to have been destroyed by his own hand.

73. White, THE FEDERALISTS, p. 320. Rufus King (1755-1827) was a distinguished orator and member of the Confederation Congress from Massachusetts and a senator in the First Federal Congress as a senator from his adopted state of New York. He became a principal spokesman for the administration. King served as minister to Great Britain and was the last presidential candidate of the Federalist Party. See Christman, THE FIRST FEDERAL CONGRESS, pp. 278-280. Benjamin Hawkins (1754-1816) served on Washington's staff during the Revolutionary War, and was a member of the North Carolina General Assembly, and the Continental Congress. He was elected a senator from North Carolina to the First Federal Congress and served in the Second and Third Congresses. His larger fame rests with his work as an Indian agent in the 1780s and again from 1796 until his death when he was agent to treat with the three great Indian tribes and all other Indians south of the Ohio River. See Powell, DICTIONARY OF NORTH CAROLINA BIOGRAPHY, VOLUME 3, pp. 72-73. Tench Coxe (b. 1755) was also a member of the Continental Congress. In 1790 Hamilton appointed him assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury and he continued in the position after 1792 when it was renamed Commissioner of the Revenue. He became a Republican and yet remained in office, against the wishes of Hamilton, until being dismissed by John Adams in 1797. From 1803 until 1812 he was Purveyor of Public Supplies in the Treasury Department. See White, THE FEDERALISTS, pp. 288-290.

Stephen Higginson, a Boston merchant, was described by Leonard D. White as ". . . a general advisor to the leading figures in the administration." His views on the Navy were sought and honored. See White, THE FEDERALISTS, pp. 160-161. Benjamin Stoddert (1751-1813) achieved unqualified admiration for his service as the first Secretary of the Navy from 18 June 1798 until 31 March

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 38

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

1801. See White, THE FEDERALISTS, pp. 162-163. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, a distinguished statesman to whom various positions in government were offered, served as minister plenipotentiary to France in 1796. See White, THE FEDERALISTS, pp. 242, 243, 264, 265.

74. Quoted in White, THE FEDERALISTS, pp. 270-271.

75. Powell, DICTIONARY OF NORTH CAROLINA BIOGRAPHY, VOLUME 3, pp. 253-254. In the mid-1850s, Griffith John McRee (1819-1872) prepared the manuscript for the LIFE AND CORRESPONDENCE OF JAMES IREDELL. The two-volume work was published at McRee's expense by D. Appleton and Company in New York in 1857-1858. In 1842 McRee was married to Penelope Johnston Iredell, the daughter of James Iredell (1788-1853), the son of the Supreme Court justice, who was governor of North Carolina in 1827-1828. See Powell, BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF NORTH CAROLINA, VOLUME 4, pp. 194-195.

76. West, "John Steele," pp. 191-192. Powell, BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF NORTH CAROLINA, VOLUME 4, pp. 293-294.

77. The two-story house standing at 105 East Church Street in Edenton, North Carolina, has been associated with James Iredell, Sr. (1751-1799) for more than a century. Because of continued concern as to the dates of the two wings of the house, the house was subjected to dendrochronological examination in 1993 and 1994. The inspection revealed that the older wing of the existing house was built in 1800-1801, after Justice Iredell's death. That wing was all or part of a residence occupied by his widow, Hannah Johnston Iredell (d. 1826). The newer wing of the house, fronted by a two-tier porch facing on Church Street, was found to have been erected in 1827. It was built under the auspices of James Iredell, Jr., executor of his mother's estate, to provide rental income for the care and support of his mentally-incapacitated sister. The house remained in the Iredell family until 1870. In 1949, it was acquired by the Edenton Tea Party Chapter, DAR, which deeded the house to the state of North Carolina in 1952. The house is now operated as a State Historic Site by the North Carolina Division of Archives and History. Consequently, there is no known house or building associated with the productive career of James Iredell, Sr., nor is there a surviving house which is known to have been his residence at any time in his life.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 39 John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

APPENDIX

CONTRACT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE JOHN STEELE HOUSE

An Agreement Between
Maxwell Chambers and Elam Sharpe

Be it remembered that on the Twenty-eight day of March in the year of our Lord 1799, it was agreed between Maxwell Chambers for and on behalf of John Steele Esquire and Elam Sharpe of Iredell County Carpenter and house joiner in manner and form following (to wit) The said Elam Sharpe for and in consideration of Fifty-five pounds hard money or the value thereof rating Dollars at eight shillings each Doth for himself his Heirs Executors and Administrators Covenant with the said Maxwell Chambers for and on behalf of the said John Steele aforesaid his Executors administrators and assigns, that he the said Elam Sharpe or his assigns shall and will within the space of five Months----near after the date hereof in a good substantial workmanlike manner according to the best of his skill, at the seat of a plantation of the aforesaid John Steele near Salisbury will and substantially erect build and finish the shell of a Dwelling house of the following materials and dimensions.

The ground Sills, Girder and Cornerposts to be of good sound post oak, and all the other part of the frame to be made of sound hewn and sawed pine timber. To be framed thirty two feet square from one side to one side, the first story to be ten feet eight inches between the floor and ceiling, the second story nine feet four inches the pitch of the roof to be rather flatter than the common run of the Buildings in or near Salisbury, in the East end of the house there is to be two windows in each story, and a square of four lights for the Garret, in the west end one window in each story of 24 lights 8 by 10 each and sash of four lights in the garret, in the lower story in the front of the house there will be two Eighteen light windows and a Door opening into an Entry of nine feet in the clear running parallel with the west end of the house the whole width thereof, over each door must be a sash for four lights of glass. In the back side of the house will be the same number of windows Doors etc. as in the front end and of the same dimensions, the partition to divide the Entry from the parlours both in the upper and lower stories, as also the Partitions that Divide the parlours is to be framed of sawed scantling. The windows in the east end of the house must range with the doors opening from the Entry to each parlour respectively. There must be a small space between the windows in the west end of the house & the stairs, and the windows must be placed in as near the center of the House as the stairs will admit, the second story will have three windows in front and three in the rear, one over each outside door and the others directly over those in the lower story. The front parlour on the lower floor is to be framed 21 feet by 16 in the clear, and the back parlour on the same floor is to be framed 21 feet by 14-1/2 in the clear, the parlours in the second story to be exactly of the same dimensions as those in the lower story. The frame of the walls to be five inches

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 40 John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

thick and the stack of Chimneys to run up in the center of the partition that divides the two parlours. The timbers that compose the frame are of the dimentions mentioned in a Bill of scantling all but the corner posts which are to be hewed. Nine Inches Square guttered [.]

And is to frame the said house agreeable to the plan and dimensions herein before mentioned, to weatherboard the same with three quarter inch plank, quartered planed and beaded, to Garnish the House with a plane cheap cornish, and lath and shingle the same with joint shingles hart of pine, make the window and Door frames, put them in, face the windows and Doors, to make all the window Shutters and the two outside doors, of panel work, and to line the outside doors with three quarter Inch plank, to make all the sash for the house and ledges for the same and to fit them into the windows, to fit and hang the outside Doors and Windows Shutters, to frame the trimmers about the Chimney and the Studds for the partition doors from the Entry to the parlours, above and below. And further to do and perform every thing in and about the said Building and every part thereof agreeable to the true intent and meaning of the said Contract in a Substantial good and Workmanlike manner.

The timber and every material to complete the said Building and every part thereof to be found by him the said Sharpe, but at the proper Cost and Charges of the said John Steele, who is likewise to pay for all the halling that may be wanted in or about the same.

In Consideration whereof the said Maxwell Chambers for the said John Steele doth covenant and oblige himself to pay to the said Elam Sharpe the aforesaid Sum of Fifty-five pounds hard money or the value thereof in the currency of this state when the said Work Shall be completely finished; and will moreover allow and pay to the said Elam Sharpe Twenty-five percent on the sum total of the price of the said Work for his boarding while he is employed about the same. And for the true and faithful performance of all and every of the articles, agreements, and covenants herein before mentioned, the said Maxwell Chambers and the said Elam Sharpe do hereby bind themselves their Executors Administrators and assigns each to the other in the sum of one Hundred and Ten pounds hard money as aforesaid. In Witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names and afixed our Seals the day and year above Written Signed Sealed and Delivered.

In presence of
Max. Chambers
Elam Sharpe

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN JOHN STEEL AND JOHN LANGDON OF PHILADELPHIA,
HOUSE CARPENTER

1st The said Langdon having heard favorable accounts of Salisbury in the State of North Carolina is desirous of going thither for the purpose of carrying on his

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 41 John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

business as a Mechanic; and the said Steele having lately erected near that Town a small frame house is willing in consideration of the good character when he has heard of the said Langdon to let him do the inside work according to such directions as may be given to him.

2nd It is further agreed, and explicitly understood that the said Langdon is to bear his traveling expenses, pay for his own boarding, and that of any Journeyman he may think fit to employ, and on account of the job, or anything connected with it is to have no demand of any nature or kind whatsoever against the said Steele except the usual prices of the work which he may do according to the Philadelphia rates as stated in the paper signed by himself and deposited herewith in the hands of Mr. Andrew Caldcleugh for safe keeping. Any work in that statement which may not be done is to be taken no account of and any work not included in it which may be done is to be compensated according to the Philadelphia book of rates. Any alterations in the work already done to the house which Maxwell Chambers Esqr. shall direct to be made, shall also be paid for at reasonable prices. The said Steele hereby binds himself, his heirs and assigns to pay for the whole work as soon as it may be completed in a workman like and proper manner.

3rd If by death, or loss of health, or other causes the said Langdon should be prevented from doing the work the said Langdon hereby sells, assigns and sets over a chest of carpenters tools shipped to Petersburg by Mr. Andrew Caldcleugh a list whereof is also deposited with him, to the said Steele as a security for any sum or sums of money which he may be in advance to the said Langdon with lawful interest from the date of each advance, and the said Langdon hereby obligates himself, his heirs and assigns to carry this part of the agreement into effect.

4th To the end also that the said Steele may be made secure that the work undertaken by the said Langdon shall be performed, and completed within a reasonable time the said Langdon hereby obligates himself, his heirs and assigns in the penal sum of Four hundred dollars to proceed with it, with as little delay as possible, and that he will not enter upon any other work without the consent and approbation of Maxwell Chambers Esqr. until it be finished according to the true intent and meaning of this agreement.

In witness whereof the parties have hereunto respectively affixed their names at Philadelphia the 13th day of March 1800.

John Steele
John Langdon

Agreed to and signed
in the presence of
Andw. Caldcleugh Witness.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Battle, Kemp P. HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, VOLUME I. Raleigh: North Carolina: Edwards & Broughton Printing Company, 1907.
- Brawley, James S. THE ROWAN STORY, 1753-1953. Salisbury, North Carolina: Rowan Printing Company, 1953.
- Butchko, Thomas R. EDENTON: AN ARCHITECTURAL PORTRAIT. Edenton, North Carolina: The Edenton Women's Club, 1992.
- "Captain Henderson Dead," SALISBURY EVENING POST (Salisbury), 24 February 1914.
- Cheney, John L., Jr., editor. NORTH CAROLINA GOVERNMENT, 1585-1979. Raleigh, North Carolina: North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State, 1981.
- Christman, Margaret C. S. THE FIRST FEDERAL CONGRESS, 1789-1791. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989.
- Christman, Margaret C. S. Letter to Davyd Foard Hood, 13 August 1992.
- Cote, Richard (Office of the Curator, Treasury Department), Letter to Davyd Foard Hood, 29 April 1992.
- FIRST REPORT OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA. Hillsborough, North Carolina: Dennis Heartt, 1845.
- Fowler, Mary Jane. Letter to Davyd Foard Hood, 1 August 1992.
- Henderson, Archibald. "Elizabeth Maxwell Steele: Patriot," THE NORTH CAROLINA BOOKLET, XII (October, 1912).
- Henderson, Archibald. "Gen. John Steele," CHARLOTTE OBSERVER (Charlotte), 30 January 1935, Section Three.
- Henderson, Archibald, "John Steele," THE NORTH CAROLINA BOOKLET, XVIII (January and April, 1919).
- Henderson, Archibald, WASHINGTON'S SOUTHERN TOUR. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923.
- Henderson, John Steele. Papers. Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.
- Hood, Davyd Foard. THE ARCHITECTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY. Raleigh, North Carolina: Glover Printing, Inc., 1983.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

Jones, H. G. FOR HISTORY'S SAKE. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1966.

Lane, Mills. ARCHITECTURE OF THE OLD SOUTH: NORTH CAROLINA. Savannah, Georgia: Beehive Press, 1985.

Mitnick, Barbara J. and Meschutt, David. THE PORTRAITS AND HISTORY PAINTINGS OF ALONZO CHAPPEL. Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania: Brandywine River Museum, 1992.

Powell, William S. DICTIONARY OF NORTH CAROLINA BIOGRAPHY. 4 volumes. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1979-1991.

Powell, William S. NORTH CAROLINA THROUGH FOUR CENTURIES. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

Ramsey, Robert W. CAROLINA CRADLE. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1964.

Reinberger, Mark. Letter to Davyd Foard Hood, 23 April 1992.

Robinson, Blackwell P. WILLIAM R. DAVIE. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1957.

Rowan County Deeds, Office of the Register of Deeds, Rowan County Office Building, Salisbury, North Carolina.

Rowan County Wills. Office of the Clerk of Court, Rowan County Court House, Salisbury, North Carolina.

Rumple, Jethro. A HISTORY OF ROWAN COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA. Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1974.

Smith, Darrell Hevenor. THE GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE: ITS HISTORY, ACTIVITIES, AND ORGANIZATION. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1927.

Steele, John. Papers, 1716, 1735-1846. Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Wagstaff, H. M. THE PAPERS OF JOHN STEELE. 2 volumes. Raleigh, North Carolina: Edwards & Broughton, 1924.

Waterman, Thomas T. THE EARLY ARCHITECTURE OF NORTH CAROLINA. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1947.

West, William S. "John Steele and North Carolina Federalism." Unpublished M.A.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 3

John Steele House, Rowan County, NC

thesis. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1967.

West, William S. "John Steele: Portrait of a Moderate Southern Federalist."
Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill,
1971.

West, William S. "John Steele," prepared for forthcoming volume of the DICTIONARY
OF NORTH CAROLINA BIOGRAPHY.

Wheeler, John H. HISTORICAL SKETCHES OF NORTH CAROLINA, FROM 1584 TO 1851.
Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1851.

White, Leonard D. THE FEDERALISTS. New York: Macmillan Company, 1956.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 1

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

JOHN STEELE HOUSE

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated acreage consists of tax parcels #275 and #290 on Tax Map #11, Salisbury Township, Rowan County, North Carolina. The acreage is outlined in pencil on the enclosed map.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The acreage included in the John Steele House nomination comprises the wedge-shaped tract on which the house was set apart in 1923 when the house grounds were subdivided as the Steelworth Park residential development by the White-McCubbins Company. On the plat of Steelworth Park, the narrow lot (present day tax parcel #275, Map #11, Salisbury Township, Rowan County) at the rear of the property was demarcated by a dotted line (all other lot lines are solid) which would suggest some indecision as to whether it was to be separated as an individual lot or remain a part of the house lot. Eventually, it was set apart and individually sold. The lot remained vacant from 1923 to the present. The present owner of the Steele House acquired the grass-covered lot and has incorporated it into the lawn and grounds of the John Steele House. Lombardy poplars have been planted at the edge of the lawn along Scales and Miller Streets. The adjoining lots comprise the house grounds and the essential setting of the John Steele House.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Additional Documentation

Section number _____ Page 1

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

SCHEDULE OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Name of Property: John Steele House
1010 Richard Street
Salisbury
Rowan County
North Carolina

The following numbered list of photographs is a schedule of those photographs included in this nomination. The photographs were made by two photographers: John Warner, a professional photographer; and Davyd Foard Hood, the author of the nomination. The photographs by John Warner, shot on 16 December 1986, are being used because of their high quality and their representation of the house. They were made after the restoration was completed. They have been field checked and they represent the house as it stands today. There are two photographs, made on 17 October 1980, which represent the John Steele House as it stood during restoration and after the additions had been removed. They are included for informational purposes. All other photographs were made in 1992. The name of the photographer and the date of each photograph is listed below with each image.

The negatives of the photographs made by John Warner are retained at this commercial studio: Warner Photography, Inc.
60-B Biltmore Avenue
Asheville, NC 28801

All other photographs were made by Davyd Foard Hood. The location of those original negatives is: Division of Archives and History
109 East Jones Street
Raleigh, NC 27601-2807

1. John Steele House: Overall exterior view, looking west (John Warner, 16 December 1986)
2. John Steele House: Overall exterior view, looking east (Davyd Foard Hood, 7 July 1992)
3. John Steele House: Overall view, looking west (Davyd Foard Hood, 17 October 1980)
4. John Steele House: Overall view, looking east (Davyd Foard Hood, 17 October 1980)
5. John Steele House: Stair Hall, looking northwest (John Warner, 16 December 1986).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Additional Documentation

Section number _____ Page 2

John Steele House, Rowan County, N.C.

6. John Steele House: Front Parlor, looking north (John Warner, 16 December 1986)
7. John Steele House: Front Parlor Mantel detail, looking northwest (Davyd Foard Hood, 7 July 1992)
8. John Steele House: Construction Detail in Front Parlor, looking southeast (Davyd Foard Hood, 15 October 1992)
9. John Steele House: Rear Parlor chimneybreast, looking south (Davyd Foard Hood, 7 July 1992)
10. John Steele House: Original communicating door between front and rear bedrooms on second story (Davyd Foard Hood, 15 October 1992)
11. John Steele House: Attic level stair landing showing original shadow newel (Davyd Foard Hood, 15 October 1992)

3952
42'30"
3951
STATESVILLE 24 MI.
BARBER 8 MI.
4855 II NE (ROWAN MILLS)
3949
3948
3947
40'
MOORESVILLE 21 MI.
MILLBRIDGE 9 MI.

John Steele House
Salisbury
Rowan County
UTM Reference

17549000/
3947760
Salisbury Quad



