

Burned April 19, 1972 - Richard B. Johnston

Form 10-130  
(Rev. 1-67)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	North Carolina
COUNTY:	Wilkes
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Montfort Stokes House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
On SR 1104, 0.7 miles from junction with 1143

CITY OR TOWN:  
Wilkesboro vicinity (Ninth Congressional District, The Hon. Charles E. Jonas)

STATE: North Carolina      CODE: 37      COUNTY: Wilkes      CODE: 193

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Richard B. Johnston, Sr.

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Finley Park

CITY OR TOWN:  
North Wilkesboro

STATE:  
North Carolina

CODE:  
37

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
Wilkes County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Wilkesboro

STATE:  
North Carolina

CODE:  
37

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:       Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:      STATE:      CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: North Carolina

COUNTY: Wilkes

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruined	<input type="checkbox"/> Unrepaired
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Montfort Stokes House is a strikingly massive two-story frame dwelling resting on a brick basement laid in English bond. It is partially covered with replacement lapped siding, but large sections of the original beaded weatherboards are still intact. The size of the house is emphasized by the steep-sloped jerkin-head roof that replaced an earlier gable roof. Vestiges of the original molded cornice can be seen under the heavy overhang. Two large interior chimneys rise through the rear slope of the roof near the apex. Their stacks have been rebuilt, probably when the new roof was added. These chimney stacks are unusual in that they are long, narrow rectangles in section, with the longer sides parallel to the facades. Each features a stuccoed band around the cap and an applied diamond-shaped plaster ornament below. Early in this century, a one-story shed porch resting on an uncoursed stone foundation that extends upward to form a balustrade was constructed around all but the east end of the house.

Each side of the house is four bays wide with large windows containing nine-over-nine sash at the first level and smaller six-over-six sash at the second. In the clipped gables on the east and west sides are three attic windows, the central one containing large six-over-six sash while the flanking ones have four-over-four. The architraves around the second story and attic windows on the west side, which faces the access road, are quite different from the molded surrounds around the remaining windows. Each of these bays is framed by a plain architrave with cornerblocks and surmounted by a low flat pediment. The first story windows retain their original moldings.

The main entrance, located in the second bay from the left on the south facade, features a fine transom containing splayed diamond-shaped panes and a wide raised-paneled door hung on rising hinges. The rear entrance, in the west bay on the rear (north) facade, is not quite as wide, but otherwise identical.

The interior is divided into four rooms. The two west rooms are essentially square while the others are much larger and rectangular in shape. The main entrance leads into the smaller southwest room that serves as a stair hall. It is finished with vertically sheathed walls and has a chair rail consisting of a flat beaded-edged board with a horizontal molded band applied along the center. The main stair rises in two flights from the southwest corner of the room. The open-string first run features a wave design along the stringer and a well-turned balustrade. The second run, entered by a raised-paneled door, is enclosed. The stair-case has raised-paneled sides above the stringer which repeats the wave design. The soffit has raised panels as well. The hall is heated by a small fireplace in the north wall. The mantel is quite narrow and is of late Georgian design with two large vertical raised panels above the arched opening, framed by vernacular pilasters, the upper portions of which are fluted. The pilasters support a heavy molded shelf adorned with a row of shallow molded dentils. The northwest room is finished in the same fashion but is dominated by the large chimney breast on the south wall which is covered with vertical sheathing and contains a mantel similar to that in the southwest hall.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL MONUMENTS SYSTEM  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE	
COUNTY	
TOWNSHIP	
SECTION	
RANGE	
TOWNSHIP	
SECTION	
DATE	
ENTRY NUMBER	
DATE	

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

7.

The larger room, probably the main parlor, has a larger fireplace and an impressive mantel featuring two ranges of four flat panels above the arched opening. The molded shelf, much heavier than those on the other mantels, breaks over the pilasters. The northeast room, now serving as a kitchen, is dominated by the chimney breast on the south wall. The mantel is again similar to those in the other first floor rooms, but has unadorned pilasters, three flat panels above the arched opening, and a coved cornice shelf. A stair similar to the main stair rises from the northeast corner of the kitchen to the second floor. The enclosed portion is quite plain, however, without the raised panels that appear on the main stair.

The second story presents essentially the same plan as the first with a few notable exceptions. The west portion of the southwest room has been partitioned off to form a stair hall for the stair from the first floor and the attic stair which rises above the main stair. Another enclosed attic stair ascends from the northeast room. Also the partition between the southeast and southwest rooms appears to be a replacement for an earlier wall, said to have been without a door. If this was indeed the original arrangement, the second floor was divided into two equal and completely separate sections with access provided only by the front stair to the west rooms and the rear stair to the east ones.

The partially finished attic is divided into three rooms with vertically sheathed walls. The small southwest room has no door and is reached only by the main attic stair. The other two rooms are served by the enclosed stair rising from the northeast room on the second floor.

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian
- 15th Century
- 16th Century
- 17th Century
- 18th Century
- 19th Century
- 20th Century
- 21st Century

SPECIFIC DATES (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                      |   |  |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry    | losophy                                       | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention   | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | Architecture                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature  | itarian                                       | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music       | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The large Georgian house named after its most noted resident, Montfort Stokes, is by far the most pretentious of its period in Wilkes County, but there is very little definite information as to who built it or precisely when. From an examination of the deeds and wills, as well as an assessment of the situations and activities of the people who at various times owned the property where the house stands, certain tentative judgements may be put forth.

It seems like that the house was built before 1779 by Hugh Montgomery, a wealthy Salisbury merchant, formerly of Philadelphia, who had owned extensive land holdings in Wilkes County since the 1750s. By a deed executed on December 13, 1779, Montgomery conveyed the house and surrounding lands, then called "the bent plantation" (named for its location in a bend of the Yadkin River), in trust to his twin daughters, Rachel and Rebecca.

In 1796, Rachel married Montfort Stokes and at this time became legal owner of "the bent." Although the newlyweds made their home on Rachel's plantation, Montfort's career as a public servant caused him to be away from Wilkes County most of the time. In an 1807 letter written to Stokes, then living in Salisbury, a Mr. O'Reilly, probably his overseer, states that "we are all well at the bent and I have four steers for you."

Stokes, the most illustrious resident of "the bent" devoted his entire life to public service. After serving in the Revolution, he became an assistant clerk of the North Carolina Senate in 1785 at the age of twenty-three. From 1790 to 1799, he was clerk of the Rowan County Superior Court in Salisbury, but returned to Raleigh in 1799 to become the Clerk of the Senate, a position he held until 1816 when he was elected to the United States Senate. After a ten-year term in the U. S. Senate, and two years in the North Carolina House of Representatives, he was appointed state governor (1830-1832). Immediately upon his retirement from the governorship, President Jackson selected Stokes as an Indian commissioner, a post he held until his death in 1842.

In Rachel Stokes's will, proved in 1864, she directed her property consisting of "665 acres including the Bent, being the land on which myself and my son, M. S. Stokes and J. W. Hackett, now reside," be sold by the executors. After the house was put up for public sale, several suits were filed by relatives and others. A decree from the State Supreme

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8.

Court was needed finally to award the "old Stokes Homestead" to W. L. White in 1885. From White, the property passed to an assignee of the "Gray estate" and then was bought by M. S. Steelman. In 1959, the house was purchased from the Steelman family by the present owner, Richard B. Johnston, a descendant of Montfort Stokes.

The Montfort Stokes House is not only the largest and most impressive example of late Georgian motifs in the North Carolina mountains, but is also significant as a monument to one of western North Carolina's most outstanding political figures of the early years of statehood.

Clark, Walter. The State Records of North Carolina. Eason Brothers, Colma, North Carolina, 1903.

Foster, William Omer. "The Career of Monfort Stokes in North Carolina," The North Carolina Historical Review, Vol. XVI, North Carolina Historical Society, Wilkesboro, North Carolina, 1962.

Fries, Adelaide L., ed. Records of the Moravians in North Carolina, Edwards and Broughton Company: Raleigh, North Carolina, 1926.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		36° 08' 19"	81° 12' 51"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Five Acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Survey and Planning Unit, John B. Wells, III, Supervisor

ORGANIZATION: State Department of Archives and History DATE: 16 September 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:  
109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: *J. B. Wells*

Title: Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date: 16 September 1971

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Keeper of The National Register

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE North Carolina	
COUNTY Wilkes	
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9.

Hays, Johnson, J. The Land of Wilkes, Wilkes County Historical Society, Wilkesboro, North Carolina, 1962.

Malone, Dumas, ed. Dictionary of American Biography, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1953.

Montfort Stokes Papers in the State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

Rowan County Records, Rowan County Courthouse, Salisbury, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).

Rowan County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).

Surry County Records, Surry County Courthouse, Mount Airy, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).

Surry County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).

Wilkes County Records, Wilkes County Courthouse, Wilkesboro, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).

Wilkes County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).



