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OWNER OF PROPERTY			
NAME Estate of Charles Peete, c/o	o Nancy Blankenshi	ρ	
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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The W. J. Hawkins House is located in a grove of large trees, and it faces (on the west) the Seaboard Coastline Railroad (formerly the Raleigh and Gaston) that runs through the village of Ridgeway. A wooded border frames the house of the shaded area around it; beyond the trees is farmland to the north, south, and east. The large two-story frame house is characteristic of the distinctive and eclectic Greco-Italianate mode with Gothic accents of Warrenton builder Jacob Holt, but the basic formula is expressed here with an ornateness seldom rivaled in Holt's work. The consistent use of the pointed and ogee arch, and the unusually dense application of ornamental brackets on the porch give the Hawkins House a full-blown Victorian flavor. The Hawkins House is another facet of the virtuosity of Holt and his school in developing variations on a single basic theme.

In many respects the Hawkins House is a typical example of the Holt school. The two-story frame house has the four-square proportions, sturdy construction, and highly rectilinear emphasis found in Holt-attributed houses since the Greek Revival. The two-story frame house is three bays wide and two deep. It stands on a low foundation of large blocks of coursed ashlar, over a basement, and is topped by a shallow hip roof pierced by two interior chimneys. The blockiness of the house is emphasized by detail: The wide exterior baseboard is well over a foot high and projects as a water table with a slanting top roughly four inches deep; the heavy fluted cornerposts rise from bases that project markedly from the baseboard and stand in turn on piers that break out from the foundation; a very wide frieze runs beneath the heavy overhang of the roof. Windows are framed by simple, broad molded and mitered surrounds, with plain board sills. They contain the paired round-arched tracery typical of Holt's Italianate houses. They are fitted with louvered blinds.

Encrusting this cubical composition is ornament which, while clearly related to other Holt school finish, features extensive use of the ogee and pointed arch motif instead of the more usual round arch, which here occurs only in the window tracery.

Especially rich is the treatment of the porch, which extends nearly the width of the main (west) facade. Like the main block, it rests on a foundation of large stone blocks. Pairs of posts define each of the bays and a single post recurs at the ends of the porch at the facade. Standing on common bases, the posts are flat-paneled with a long, narrow lancet arch motif. Each pair of posts is topped by a common cap ornamented with small, closely placed brackets, each with turned pendants and lower termini. Beneath the molded cornice of the roofline runs a frieze articulated by larger paired brackets, placed above each pair of posts, and midway each bay. Beneath the frieze are sawn work ogee arches springing from sawn curvilinear brackets at the sides of the posts. Between the pairs of posts runs a balustrade composed of slender balusters chamfered with lambs tongues; they form a lancet arcade, topped by a molded handrail. At the top of the porch, enclosing the gallery, is an ornate sawn balustrade—a feature apparently found in many of the Holt school houses but seldom surviving.

Sheltered by the porch is the large central entrance which exhibits the most emphatic use of the ogee-arched motif, the only known departure within the Holt school from the rectangular outer door frame. Here a massive, shouldered ogee-arched surround rises from the typical molded "foot" that extends to the porch floor, while the remainder of the doorway composition rises from a step up. Within the frame are the normal elements

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reshaped to accomodate the ogee form: a double door, with lancet panels (two long upper oanels and two shorter lower ones on each leaf); sidelights; and above them, small pointed-arched corner lights giving the sidelights a lancet effect; in the center is a transom of a curious triangular shape. The designer seems to have been hard pressed to accomodate the usual double door-sidelight-transom-cornerlight formula into the novel ogee shape. Despite the awkwardness of the result, there is a vigor about it that expresses the inventiveness of the designer willing to expand upon his standard formula.

The remaining detail of the exterior is standard Holt school Italianate: tiny brackets top the fluted cornerposts, and larger brackets articulate the wide frieze; the latter are rather more closely placed than in some other examples. The lancet motif carries to the chimneys, which are stuccoed with lancet panels on each face and molded caps carried by brackets.

The rear elevation of the house is plainer than the others—there is only a single token bracket at each corner of the cornice, and windows have plain six—over—six sash, without the round—arched tracery. Across the first story stretches an extension, also resting on the stone foundation and apparently original. It repeats the cornerposts and frieze of the main block. The middle portion is open as a porch. From the north part of this extension is a one—story addition, apparently early, that rests on a brick foundation and has a basement opening with a louvered door.

The spacious interior of the house is fairly typical of the Holt mode, distinguished by the use of lancet panels in the doors--following the scheme established at the front The house follows a center-hall plan two rooms deep. The hall is divided midway by a partition wall with a large opening containing a four-fold louvered door, a feature often found in Holt's work. A stair rises front to back in the front hall, and a second stair back to front in the rear hall. The front stair is the more ornate, with a newel hexagonal in section, each face paneled with a lancet arch. A bell-cast cap is topped by a simple finial. The open string features simple moldings on each tread. Balusters are slim turned ones, and carry a rounded handrail that ramps at the turned por of the short second flight. The stair well opening curves gently. The rear stair is simpler, with a plain turned newel rising from the first step, slender plain balusters, and a handrail of similar form to the front stair.

Walls throughout the house are plastered above a very wide, molded baseboard, and doors and windows have massive mitered molded frames rising from molded feet. Much of the woodwork including doors is wood-grained to resemble oak. The mantels in the first-floor rooms have been replaced by turn-of-the century colonial revival models. The second-floor mantels, however, survive, and are rather simple Greek Revival ones, with wide friezes carried by pilasters. That in the north rear room features lancet arches in the pilasters—presumably an element found in the original mantels of the first floor as well.

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To the rear of the house are several outbuildings, all one-story frame structures, arranged in a line defining the rear of the yard. To the south is the largest and most elaborately finished. The one-story house has a hip roof and a central chimney; it has cornerposts and a simple front porch, with Greek Revival corner block surrounds and simple Greek mantels, as well as a relatively well-finished interior. Two other outbuildings are windowless, with pyramidal roofs, and appear to be smokehouses. A covered well stands between them.

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SPECIFIC DATES

1850s

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

probably Jacob Holt

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The William J. Hawkins House at Ridgeway was the home of the physician who prospered as businessman and planter, banker, and for nearly twenty years president of the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad that ran in front of the house. In association with J. M. Heck and others, he organized the Ridgeway Company which sought after the Civil War to develop the village into a city with settlers from the North and Europe. His house at Ridgeway, probably built in the 1850s, is among the most ornately treated of the many impressive Greco-Italianate houses in the mode built in the late 1850s by Warrenton builder Jacob Holt. Of particular interest is its large scale and the use of ogee-arched motifs including the doorway. The house and several outbuildings remain little altered.

Assessment:

- (A) Associated with the prosperous antebellum plantation society of Warren. County and the development of the small railroad town of Ridgeway.
- (B) Associated with the life of Dr. William J. Hawkins, leading businessman, and president of the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad.
- (C) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Greco-Italianate antebellum houses of Warrenton builder Jacob W. Holt and his workshop.

A short distance from Ridgeway, Warren County, in a grove near the Seaboard Coastline Railroad, stands a two-story frame house known for many years as Oakley Hall. The Greco-Italianate structure was built for Dr. William J. Hawkins and for nearly seventyfive years served as the residence of Dr. Hawkins and his son Marmaduke J. Hawkins.

William J. Hawkins was born on May 27, 1819, third son of Colonel John Davis Hawkins and nephew of Governor William Hawkins. His father was an affluent Franklin County planter and William studied under excellent tutorage. At age eighteen he entered the University of North Carolina but after two years transferred to William and Mary where he completed his undergraduate education. William was encouraged to enter the bar but decided to embark upon a medical career. He was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in 1842.

Dr. Hawkins established his medical practice at Ridgeway which was just across the Warren-Franklin county line from his father's plantation. On January 4, 1844, William J. Hawkins married Mary Aletha Clark of Halifax County. A year later he purchased 128 acres "near the Ridgeway Depot" from John Daly and sometime thereafter constructed the house, later known as Oakley Hall. Local tradition maintains that the cottage behind the house served as Hawkins' medical office and may well have been his residence until the plantation house was completed.

The house in form and detail is typical of those documented and attributed to be

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the work of Warrenton builder Jacob Holt (1811-1880). Holt, a native of Prince Edward County, Virginia, moved to Warrenton in the early 1840s and by 1850 had a labor force of eighteen free employees or apprentices and forty-two slaves, one of the largest in the state. None of his work before 1853 is documented, but several buildings of the period 1853-1860 are documented as his work; all of these exhibit a distinctive combination of Greek Revival cubical quality with an overlay of ornate Italianate brackets, arches, and occasional hints of Gothic. The Hawkins house, so characteristic of Holt's work, is probably his, but it is possible that it was the work of an associate or former employee. No documents have been discovered concerning Holt's work on the house. After the Civil War Jacob Holt moved to Mecklenburg County, Virginia, and continued to build in the 1870s, changing his style slightly as fashions changed but retaining much of his distinctive idiom.

Dr. Hawkins became a highly successful businessman and planter with real and persona property valued at \$138,000 in 1860. Three years earlier he had been elected president of the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad (one of the two first lines in the state), a position he held until ill health forced his retirement in 1875. His pioneering efforts to consolidate several roads into an air line system were realized after his death. Dr. Hawkins was a large stockholder and a director of the Raleigh National Bank, the first bank in North Carolina organized under the United States Banking Law. In 1870 he founded the Citizens' National Bank of Raleigh, devoting the last four years of his life as president of the institution. A well educated man, Hawkins worked to instill the value of education in young people and from 1881 until his death in 1894 he served as a trustee of the University of North Carolina constantly voting in favor of plans for improvement.

Dr. Hawkins' success as a businessman was due largely to his willingness to embark on risky ventures in hope of turning a fast profit. One such scheme was the Ridgeway Company, one of a number of land companies to emerge in the post-Civil War years. The Ridgeway Company was chartered by the legislature on August 22, 1868, and the incgrporators were William J. Hawkins, Col. J. M. Heck, Peter R. Davis, and A. F. Johnson. Hawkins was elected president of the firm.

Promoters of the Ridgeway Company planned to sell lots in the town to settlers, thereby developing the small town of Ridgeway into a major city on the railroad. Appeals for settlers extended to Europe where the only real interest was generated. Central Europeans, however, were predominantly farmers and skeptical of town life. Few settled in Ridgeway but a significant number did purchase surrounding farm property. Unable to sell the town lots, the stockholders in the Ridgeway Company failed to make the anticipated profit. The company simply fizzled out and disappeared after a decade.

Little else is known about the Ridgeway Company. It was among the largest and more ambitious efforts to settle areas of North Carolina. Since William J. Hawkins was president, it is possible that his house served as the local headquarters.

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Hawkins' physical appearance reflected the distinction he enjoyed as a successful physician, businessman, and planter. He stood five feet, ten inches in height with a light complexion, blue eyes, and prematurely gray hair. By age fifty he had a full beard that was immaculately trimmed and matched his whitish hair. His clothes were tailored, and though a little portly in middle age, he made a striking appearance. Dr. Hawkins was both handsome and rich, a combination which led him easily into marriage.

William's first wife Mary died in 1850 after two sons were born of the union; Colin M. and Marmaduke J. Hawkins. Dr. Hawkins then married Lucy N. Clark by whom he had two daughters before her death in 1867. Mary A. White became the third wife of Dr. William J. Hawkins in 1869 and comforted the old gentleman as the effects of severe rheumatism brought increased suffering. Dr. Hawkins died on October 28, 1894, while on a visit to Philadelphia.

William J. Hawkins had transferred his house and 178 acres to his son Marmaduke on February 23, 1877 for \$13,000. For several years after his marriage to Rebecca Davis, aunt of Governor Thomas W. Bickett, Marmaduke lived with his father. Upon assuming the presidency of Citizens' National Bank, Dr. W. J. Hawkins moved to Raleigh (1890) leaving Marmaduke and his family as residents of the homestead. Among those in Marmaduke's household was a cousin, Miss Lucy Edwards, niece of Weldon Edwards, who is supposed to have named the house Oakley Hall because of the grove of oaks surrounding it.

Marmaduke J. Hawkins was born in 1850 just a few days before his mother died. Laucated at the University of North Carolina and the University of Virginia, he was admitted to the bar in 1874 but was never a regularly practicing attorney even though he was nominally associated with a law firm. Marmaduke was intelligent and well read, and having inherited a fortune, he took easily to the luxuries afforded to a country squire. Unlike his father who had no taste or time for the scrambled world of politics Marmaduke loved to dabble in the art. His support of, and friendship with, Furnifold M. Simmons, longtime U. S. Senator from North Carolina, brought him political recognition He was elected to the State Senate in 1910, serving in the 1911 session. Elected again in 1918, he served in the 1919 General Assembly and in the special session in 1920. His greatest political activity, however, was at the local level where his influence often swayed elections. For a number of years he served as chairman of the Board of County Commissioners.

Marmaduke J. Hawkins died on December 12, 1920. His will probated December 18, conveyed one-fourth undivided interest in his estate to his wife Rebecca and the remainder to the Raleigh Savings Bank and Trust Company. The bank was named executor of the will and trustee of the estate. On October 5, 17923 the bank sold Oakley Hall and 174 acres to Dr. Charles Henry Peete for \$20,000.

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Dr. Charles H. Peete accumulated a vast estate in Warren County. He never occupied Oakley Hall but allowed his brother-in-law, Joseph Jones, to live in the house in exchange for watching over the grounds. Jones did not farm the land but merely acted as an overseer, meaning also that he made few improvements or repairs to the house during his occupancy. Jones diedabout 1957 and the house and farm was rented to Rodger Holtzman for a few years.

Dr. Charles Peete died in 1959 bequeathing his property to his wife Lucy Pettway Jones Peete. Upon her death, it was to go th their children. The house is now owned jointly by Nancy Blankenship, Jane Matthews, Charles Peete, and Dr. William Peete.

FOOTNOTES

Samuel A. Ashe and others (eds.), <u>Biographical History of North Carolina From Colonial Times to the Present</u> (Greensboro: Charles L. Van Noppen, 8 vols., 1905-1917), V, pp. 169-170, hereinafter cited as Ashe, <u>Biographical History</u>. See also Samuel Thomas Peace, "Zeb's Black Baby:" Vance County North Carolina (Henderson, 1955), pp. 387-391, hereinafter cited as Peace, "Zeb's Black Baby."

²Ashe, <u>Biographical History</u>, p. 170; Peace, "Zeb's <u>Black Baby</u>," p. 390; and Warren County Marriage Bonds, Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, hereinafter cited as Warren Marriage Bonds.

³Tax lists for the crucial years have been lost. It would seem nearly impossible to establish an exact construction date from the documentary records. Warren County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Warren County Courthouse, Warrenton, Deed Book 29, p. 295, hereinafter cited as Warren Deed Book.

⁴Telephone interview with Frank Banzet of Warrenton, June 22, 1977. Mr. Banzet was born and raised within sight of the Hawkins House and is now 68 years of age. Conversation hereinafter cited as Banzet interview.

⁵Catherine W. Bishir, "Jacob W. Holt," an unpublished biographical sketch, 1976, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Survey and Planning Branch.

⁶Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Warren County, North Carolina, Population Schedule, bound copy in State Archives, Raleigh, 102, hereinafter cited as Eighth Census, 1860. The evaluation broke down to \$20,000 real property and \$118,000 personal property.

Ashe, Biographical History, pp. 170-173; and Peace, "Zeb's Black Baby," pp. 390-391

 8 Hawkins was involved with Heck on at least one other land scheme which also include

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Kemp P. Battle. The Company was known as Battle, Heck and Company which quickly ended in dissolution. The activities of the two ventures have sometimes been confused because of the presence of both Hawkins and Heck. J. M. Heck Collection, P. C. 201, State Archives, Raleigh; Kemp Plummer Battle, Memories of an Old-Time Tar Heel, ed. by William James Battle (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1945), pp. 201-203; Kenneth Franke, "The Ridgeway Story" (Unpublished article in Hawkins House File, Survey Branch, Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh), pp. 2-5, hereinafter cited as Franke, "The Ridgeway Story." See also Private Laws of North Carolina, 1868, ch. 32.

- 9 Franke, "The Ridgeway Story," pp. 2-7, 13; Heck Collection; and Banzet interview.
- Military /Civil War/ Collection, State Archives, Raleigh, Applications for Pardon: William J. Hawkins to President Andrew Johnson; and Ashe, <u>Biographical History</u>, photograph.
 - 11 Warren Marriage Bonds; and Ashe, <u>Biographical History</u>, p. 173.
 - 12 Warren Deed Book 44, p. 17.
- ¹³Banzet interview; and telephone interview with Nancy P. Blankenship, co-owner of the Hawkins House, June 20, 1977. See also Ashe, <u>Biographical History</u>, p. 173.
 - 14 Eighth Census, 1850; and Ashe, Biographical History, p. 173.
- Marmaduke J. Hawkins Collection, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, hereinafter cited as Hawkins Collection; and Banzet interview. Banzet was personally acquainted with M. J. Hawkins until the latter's death in 1920.
- Hawkins Collection; Manly W. Wellman, <u>The County of Warren</u>, North Carolina, <u>1586-1917</u> (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), p. 198, 201; and <u>John L. Cheney</u>, Jr. (ed.), <u>North Carolina Government 1585-1974</u> (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State, 1975), p. 487, 495.
- Warren County Will Books, Office of the Clerk of Court, Warren County Courthouse, Warrenton, Will Book 53, p. 241, hereinafter cited as Warren Will Books. See also Warren Deed Book 120, p. 34, Raleigh, Savings Bank & Trust Company to Charles H. Peete.
- ¹⁸Banzet interview; and Blankenship interview. For Peete Holdings see Warren Deed Book 97, p. 4; Deed Book 102, pp. 21, 126, 232, 265, 306, and 572; Deed Book 103, p. 555; Deed Book 106, p. 197; and Deed Book 108, p. 177.
 - ¹⁹Warren Will Book 57, p. 490.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET W. J. Hawkins Hs. ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE addenda

Acreage of nominated property approx. 25 acres

(corrected map enclosed)

The nominated property is defined by topographic features, being the Seaboard Coastline Railroad right of way on the north, the elevation line (410 feet) immediately within the 400 foot line on the east and south and the next (420 foot on the south and west.) This includes the house, outbuildings, and the surrounding grove and bordering trees which separate the house from the adjoining agricultural land.

