

**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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

**1. Name of Property**

Historic name:     Oak Grove    

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing:  
    N/A    

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

**2. Location**

Street & number:     4026 US 401 HWY N    

City or town:     Louisburg     State:     NC     County:     Franklin    

Not For Publication:  N/A      Vicinity:  X

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this     x     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     x     meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

     national           statewide          X     local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

     A           B          X     C           D

<p>_____  <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p>
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In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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**Signature of commenting official:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Title :** \_\_\_\_\_ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:  
\_\_\_ entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**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
-

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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
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

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

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD, BRICK, & STONE

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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#### Summary Paragraph

The nominated 2.98-acre property known as Oak Grove, the home of Dr. Peter S. Foster and his wife Matilda, includes a ca. 1859 dwelling set within a mature grove of oaks that together convey the architectural significance required for Criterion C for local significance. Although no longer the seat of a plantation, the dwelling's site dominated by a mature grove of oaks and its original location along the old stagecoach road combine to underscore the significance of the architectural period. The house stands as a unique period design for domestic architecture in Franklin County and reflects the picturesque movement promoted by the nationally renowned architect A. J. Downing in *Cottage Residences*. Downing's "Design V" illustrates a dwelling very similar in form to the frame one constructed for Foster.

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## **Narrative Description**

Main House, ca. 1859

Contributing Building

Once the seat of a 200-acre antebellum plantation located on the stagecoach road between the courthouse towns of Warrenton and Louisburg, Oak Grove today stands on 2.98 acres comprised of the house site. This site is situated in a less developed rural landscape on the east side of present-day US 401 and 0.7 miles northeast of the intersection with NC 39 at Ingleside. A grove of mature white and pin oaks lends its name to Oak Grove and buffers the front facade from the highway to the northwest as well as each side elevation to the northeast and southwest. These oaks are interspersed by volunteer pines of various sizes. The trace of a former road gently curves through the front grove from and back to the highway. A drive of approximately one hundred and fifteen feet leads directly from this two-lane main thoroughfare to the dwelling. Its front yard is a traditional open swept one. Woods wrap around the house site to the north and east.

Built ca. 1859, the main house or “cottage” in massing externally reflects the growing trend and popularity during the mid-nineteenth century of the picturesque movement in architecture, here combined with a continued adherence to classical details. Standing virtually intact, the three-bay single-pile frame house features an unusual form that rises less than two-stories in height, with a side-gable roof and a smaller one-story, hip-roof rear addition. Both roofs have deep projecting eaves. Although the overall second-story height of the dwelling is diminished, the front façade’s central bay features a one-story portico that is mirrored in breadth by the roof’s distinctive broad central front gable. Within this gable as well as the ones at each side elevation stand full size double-sash windows in contrast to the façade’s much reduced in size flanking double sash windows.

The classically detailed flat-roof portico protects and frames the main entrance. It is supported by four square-in-section and slightly tapered columns and two identical in detail pilasters, each distinguished by four rows of fluting. These columns rest on square bases and their capitals have a plain square abacus and molded echinus. The fluting terminates at the base, but below the capital, a grooved fillet encircles the shaft, cutting through the fluting. The fluting ends above in a coved half round terminus. The entablature is composed of a deep projecting cornice with cyma recta and simple fascia, a plain frieze, a dividing fillet, and plain architrave. Each corner is mitred. Originally, a balustrade with rounded rails enclosed the two sides of the porch.

Sidelights and a transom define the front entrance with its double-leaf doorway. A wide heavily molded architrave with mitred corners and concave bands frames this entrance and replicates that of the windows. Its post and lintel dividers feature a pronounced concave band with a distinctive crossing at each juncture. The sidelights and transom follow a linear mutin pattern, with each having small square corner panes. The areas beneath the sidelights contain a flat panel with a single raised rectangular one with all edges defined by a sharp right angle. This sharp angle is repeated in each four-panel door of the double-leaf entry. Here two pairs of raised panels range in height to highly attenuated ones.

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Both the original north and south side elevations are identical in form and detail. Here on each floor of the main structure and the rear shed, a central bay contains a single full-size double-sash window. The second floor one rises within the projecting gable. Boxed cornices with mitred corners accent the extended eaves of the gable and hip roofs. At each gable end, distinctive corner boards simulate pilasters with four wide rows of fluting and simple capitals that follow the slope of the gable, forming a unique pattern.

Classical details further define and outline most major elements of the exterior, which is sheathed in plain weatherboards with a five-and-a-half-inch drop. A twelve-inch plain baseboard with beveled edge wraps around the original house and becomes the base for each corner board.

All windows have six-over-six double-hung sash, except for the front façade's two unusual nearly-square ones containing three-over-six lights on the second floor. Their sills are simple and plain. Most panes or lights are oversized and measure eleven and one-half inches by eighteen inches. Molded surrounds with mitered corners incorporate two coved bands that correlate to the fluting found elsewhere.

A pair of stuccoed, brick, interior chimneys typically rises from the ridgeline above the front gable. Each has a corbelled cap and all sides of the chimney shaft display a decorative, tall, recessed, flat panel. Originally, stone piers supported an open foundation; however, in the early twentieth century, it was enclosed using brick and then applied with stucco.

Today the original southeast rear elevation is obscured by a 1930s rear addition of approximately the same size. This modern one-story frame addition with shed-roof was appended to the rear of the dwelling, obscuring the original rear elevation. Plain weatherboards sheathe its exterior, and the roof features exposed rafter ends. All windows are six-over-six double sash, except in the bathroom. At the rear, a ribbon of five windows lights the utility room. This ribbon abuts a central rear exit door, which contains six lights. A small deck stretches from this door and connects with an above ground circular swimming pool. Near the door to the north, an open stair extends to the ground.

The interior plan survives intact and revolves around a central stair hall that is flanked by two rooms on the first floor, a parlor and bedroom, and two bedrooms on the second. At the rear, however, this hall opens into the single-story two-room addition that features a large dining room, which shares an interior fireplace chimney with a smaller room to the south. Each shed room originally had a rear exit secured by iron bolts and a cross bar. Beneath the rising stair in the back hall are the doors to the primary bedroom and a small stair closet. An interior chimney serves each principal room and is flanked by a recessed area and doorway. In the parlor this area is open; however, in the three bedrooms and smaller rear room it is enclosed for wardrobes. These closets reflect a practical trend becoming increasingly common during the early to mid-nineteenth century. All rooms have original finishes with plaster walls and ceilings except the upstairs south bedroom, which was unfinished. According to owner Bill Harris, until 1996, when drywall was applied, these walls were lined with plain vertical boards.

The center entrance hall with stair exhibits a formal style, but awkward in execution. Both its ceiling height and stair location are compromised by the severing of the top design

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elements of each door surround, except in the case of the parlor door. A dog-leg stair rises along the south wall from front to back and accents include distinctive turned newels with a large oval cap, a rounded handrail, and delicate rectangular in-section balusters. At each transition in the stair, these newels also have a simple turned drop pendant accent. A plain stringboard with cyma reversa brackets forming a wave pattern highlights the stair's two flights. Each door surround has an architrave with a broad double row convex molding and dimpled bull's eye corner blocks. The washboard is capped with an ogee molding.

Most interior woodwork is classically inspired. However, in style, it varies from high style to simple, and in interpretation, it ranges in execution from more formal to simple. Exceptionally realistic and intact examples of trompe l'oeil painting, graining and marbling, survive in the parlor. Both sides of the two-panel parlor door are beautifully grained to simulate tiger and bird's eye maple. The washboard and mantel replicate delicately veined marble, gray in the former and black in the latter.<sup>1</sup> This trompe l'oeil painting is of exceptional quality. Given the quality of this work, in all probability, Benjamin A. Richardson, a decorative painter with a workshop in Warrenton and connections with Jacob Holt, completed it. In the June 23, 1858, issue of *The Weekly Standard* (Raleigh), he is documented as having recently completed work nearby at Shocco Spring, an area frequented by affluent local families, like the Fosters, Williamses, and Kearneys.<sup>2</sup> It was, in all probability, present elsewhere in the house but painted over through the years. Several less robust examples remain upstairs, including one mantel simulating black marble and similar maple graining on the hall and south bedroom doors as well as a small attic door along the stair landing at the rear.

The north parlor embodies the formal living environment cultivated by prominent and well-educated families in rural Franklin County. Here trompe l'oeil painting, gilded picture molding, and curtains hung from bold turned rods, all once complementing the classic bold designs of the woodwork. The mantel, with its plain shelf and frieze, is distinguished by flanking pilasters with a bold convex molding band that tapers and then forms a single crossette that frames each end of the frieze. This single crossette is mimicked by another convex molding on the outer surrounds of the parlor door and windows, which also feature three rows of bold fluting. These crossettes feature plain unusually shaped corner boards. Each window also has a paneled apron flanked by a simple pedestal in which its plinth and the washboard merge and replicate one another. The door surround, though similar in design, has only two rows of fluting and a plain marbled plinth merging with the washboard. A double convex molding tops the washboard. All woodwork has mitered corners. An open nook stands just to one side of the fireplace, and the original Grovesteen & Company square grand piano remains in the parlor.

All floors throughout the original six rooms and stair halls are original. The floorboards in the entrance hall are continuous tongue-and-groove boards running from front to back. Most

<sup>1</sup> Washboard was a commonly used term throughout the nineteenth century until later, when baseboard became its replacement. Carl Lounsbury, ed., *An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape* (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 398.

<sup>2</sup> Laura A. W. Phillips, *Grand Illusions: Historic Interior Painting in North Carolina* (Raleigh, N.C.: N.C. Office of Archives and History, 2018), 35-37-38.

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are seventeen feet and three inches long. Floors in all other rooms run from side to side (perpendicular to the hall).

Elsewhere throughout the house, the various woodwork elements are oftentimes repeated. All principal doors have two vertical Greek Revival-style panels that are hung on butt hinges. The more formal entry side has a simple splayed molding framing each recessed panel featuring a raised central panel with right angle edges. The egress side has two plain vertical recessed panels. The downstairs doors have mortise locks with porcelain knobs and escutcheons, and the ones upstairs rim locks with mineral knobs. The rear doors also have lift latches and bolts for a security crossbar. The window surrounds and door surrounds throughout the house are uniform in each room and most feature bull's eye corner blocks, except in the former dining room and upstairs bedrooms where corner joints are mitered. Fluting highlights most surrounds except in the halls and in the small rear room, which features a broad plain convex molding and plain convex corner blocks. Each window has a simple flat-panel apron beneath it that includes a plain washboard. The two small upstairs windows, however, have just plain boards beneath them. All surrounds have a plinth terminus. Each closet door is lower in height. The mantels have plain shelves and friezes; however, the flanking pilasters are fluted downstairs and plain upstairs. Each hearth is brick, with a smooth rectangular overlay of what appears to be concrete extending into the room. Nearly all washboards stand thirteen inches tall and have cyma recta molded cap. In the early twentieth century, a built-in corner cupboard was constructed in the dining room that feature upper paned double doors, a middle drawer, and plain lower double doors. These doors were hung with surface butterfly hinges.

During the Depression, a modern one-story three-room frame addition was appended to what was the original three-bay one-story rear elevation by utilizing its two rear doorways and, in all probability, enlarging an original window. This new addition contains a kitchen with pantry entered from the dining room through an enlarged doorway once a window, an L-plan utility room extending from the original central rear exit from the dining room, and a full bathroom entered from the former exit in the smaller room.

Tenant House, ca. 1900

Non-contributing Building

This simple one-story frame dwelling with a low-pitched gable-roof and a rear one-room ell addition was once the home of Jeames Terrell, a Black farm hand, and his sister Cornelia. This basically three-room house is sheathed in a combination of wooden shingles, plain weatherboards, and tar paper. It stands in very poor condition.

### *Integrity Statement*

The seven aspects of integrity are embodied by Oak Grove and its principal dwelling. Here location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling and association all play a part in making the property clearly eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for architecture.

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A prominent local physician and advocate for education and public health, Dr. Peter S. Foster deliberately chose to build ca. 1859 the seat of what was to become his plantation, Oak Grove, on land that was then a part of his family's plantation known as Locust Grove. At this time, Foster was the principal caretaker of his widowed mother Elizabeth, so the choice for the location of his plantation was planned to be nearby and along the main road connecting the two plantation seats. In 1863, following the death of his mother and in acknowledgement of a previous familial agreement, Dr. Foster inherited his apportionment of Locust Grove, 200 acres, thereby officially creating and defining Oak Grove plantation. By this time, Foster had not only constructed his home here but also various ancillary support buildings.

Currently, two of Dr. Foster's direct descendants continue to own the remaining approximately fifty-five acres that fully encompass Oak Grove's former plantation seat on the east side of highway US 401. Although all buildings except for the main house are now gone, the setting of this remaining land still conveys the agricultural roots of the plantation, the woodland needed to support domestic life, and the mature oak grove signifying on the landscape the site of this former plantation seat. This nomination, however, includes only the 2.98 acres associated today with the main house and its commanding oak grove.

Conveying the growing popularity of the picturesque movement during the late antebellum period, the architectural design of this virtually intact two-story frame dwelling also reflects the employment of traditional local building materials, timber and stone, typically used in residential construction during the period of significance in Franklin County. Despite their wealth, education, and familial associations, Dr. and Mrs. Foster chose to build a more modest in size and style six-room home that adhered to an overall architectural design espoused by A. J. Downing and combined it with typical classical features and skilled trompe l'oeil interior decorative painting. Most of the original decorative features remain intact.

Another transition evident also involves workmanship during a period marked by a shift from traditional skilled manual labor to that of utilizing steam power for the mass production of all types of building materials. The replication of woodwork features from one building project to another can indicate a design preference by either a builder or owner plus depend on cost and availability. At Oak Grove, the dwelling exhibits the use of easily replicated, simple design elements throughout the house; the hall and parlor, however reflect more formal designs. Workmanship varied in quality and impact, from a miscalculation in the stair placement to the expertise of the trompe l'oeil painting. These aspects associated with its construction, defined by transition and choice, convey a distinct period of significance in Franklin County through feeling and association. Today, a high premium is placed on the value of its overall integrity.

### *Statement of Archaeological Potential*

The Foster family was noted to have several enslaved individuals at the time the house was constructed just prior to the Civil War, though it sounds like most of these were likely assigned to agricultural duties outside of the current parcel boundaries and not likely to have a significant archaeological footprint at Oak Grove. There is no direct mention of ancillary

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structures or a detached kitchen, there is always a chance that remains of such structures could be present, though Office of State Archaeology staff suspect that there is a relatively low potential for intact archaeological features in this case beyond the house footprint. There also seems to be a relatively low change of an unrecorded cemetery within the NR boundary given the close proximity of the Locust Grove Peter Foster Cemetery a mile down the road. In summary, although there may be some archaeological material present within the proposed NR boundary associated with the Oak Grove house and Foster Family, it likely would not contribute significantly to our understanding of the property.

DRAFT

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

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

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**  
ca. 1859  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**  
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Built ca. 1859 for Dr. Peter S. Foster in rural Franklin County, North Carolina, Oak Grove reflects, by design on a reserved scale, the assimilation by a wealthy plantation owner and his wife, of the picturesque cottage movement prescribed by Andrew Jackson Downing in his pattern book *Cottage Residences*. A well-educated physician, Dr. Foster lived a life of service dedicated to the wellbeing of his family, patients, neighbors, and community within an antebellum agrarian society dependent on enslaved labor. He assumed a prominent role in his profession and, like many country doctors, supplemented his income as a planter and later as a small farmer. Foster was a leader in local agricultural, educational, fraternal, political, and religious organizations. He helped to establish Louisburg Female College in 1854 and represented Franklin County in the North Carolina House of Commons immediately after the Civil War. For building a home ca. 1859, the Foster family was influenced by Downing's architectural ideals, which were promoted in agricultural journals, popular magazines, and local newspapers. Oak Grove models this trend by combining classical details with Downing's design of a "cottage villa." This picturesque design combined reducing the height of the second story and two of its façade windows with introducing a commanding gable-front accent to the roof and a complementary one-story entrance portico. Other distinctive features included a pair of interior chimneys and extended eave overhangs. In Franklin County it stands as the only known extant example of this cottage form. The approximately 2.98-acre setting features the house site set among a mature grove of oaks, all of which enhances Oak Grove's National Register of Historic Places eligibility under Criterion C for architecture. The period of significance is the date of construction ca. 1859.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

*Historic Context*

Dr. Peter Stapleton Foster (September 18, 1823-October 20, 1898), the builder of Oak Grove, came of age in the 1840s, at the beginning of a period of prosperity and progressivism in North Carolina and in the Warren and Franklin County area, where his extended family members owned large plantations, enslaved numerous people of African descent, and purchased or built impressive homes. While working as a country doctor and engaging in land speculation and agricultural pursuits in the vicinity of Ingleside in Franklin County, Foster devoted considerable time to his family and to his community, supporting a variety of educational, fraternal, medical, political, and religious organizations in leadership roles. He likely built Oak Grove just before the Civil War, and the house clearly reflects, in a restrained manner, the influence of his family and community associations. The war greatly diminished the wealth of many landowners in North Carolina, and Foster was no exception. The postwar period was characterized also by

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political upheaval. Foster remained active in political and civic affairs, but the scope of his farming operations declined after the war. Although he continued to pursue his medical practice until shortly before his death, Foster appears to have lived a modest life devoted to helping his family and the people of Franklin County. Foster's direct descendants have continued to live at Oak Grove, farming the diminished acreage and making only minor additions and alterations to the house.

North Carolina experienced a dramatic transformation during the first half of the nineteenth century. Led by eastern planters such as Warren County's Nathaniel Macon, the state was so backward economically and culturally during the first decades of the century that outsiders often referred to it as the "Rip Van Winkle State." Parochial thinking, the lack of public schools or many private ones, inadequate roads and rivers that did not link the east with the backcountry, a dearth of banks and capital, and the Jeffersonian belief among leaders that government should be strictly limited contributed to this situation. Especially in the east, the system of slavery tied up capital that could have been used for more productive purposes and fostered opposition to education.<sup>3</sup> The exhaustion of farmland because of unsound farming practices led many planters to leave North Carolina for better opportunities in Tennessee, Alabama, Ohio, and elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

State Senator Archibald DeBow Murphey of Orange County began a campaign in the 1810s for a program of internal improvements, including investments in transportation facilities and public schools, that eventually improved the state's economy. In 1817 the legislature appointed a Board of Internal Improvements, chaired by Murphey, to hire an engineer to direct many of the transportation improvements.<sup>5</sup> Between 1835 and 1850, North Carolina, under the leadership of the Whig Party and such progressive politicians as Governors David Lowry Swain, Edward B. Dudley, John Motley Morehead, and William Alexander Graham, supported a system of common schools, invested in railroads, including the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad, and facilitated the development of canals.<sup>6</sup> The Democratic Party continued such progressive policies during the 1850s. Aided by better transportation and the adoption by farmers of improved farming practices promoted by agricultural societies, cotton and tobacco production soared, bringing relative prosperity to a largely rural state.<sup>7</sup> A growing reliance on enslaved people also underpinned North Carolina's agricultural economy. By 1860, the enslaved population represented a third of the state's total, and in sixteen counties, including Franklin and Warren, enslaved persons comprised more than fifty percent of the population.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> William S. Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 245-249; Milton Ready, *The Tar Heel State: A History of North Carolina* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 157, 163-166.

<sup>4</sup> Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 249.

<sup>5</sup> Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 253-263.

<sup>6</sup> Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 282-291; Ready, *The Tar Heel State*, 180-186.

<sup>7</sup> Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 300-311; Ready, *The Tar Heel State*, 183.

<sup>8</sup> Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State*, Third ed. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 423-424.

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The growing prosperity during the antebellum period stimulated improvements in cultural life and social conditions. In addition to private academies and a system of common schools headed by a state superintendent, North Carolina benefitted from the establishment of private colleges, including ones for women. Many of these were supported by religious denominations, which flourished during this period. The number of newspapers published in North Carolina increased dramatically.<sup>9</sup> Interest in singing and piano playing, especially among young women, grew. In plantation houses, the piano usually was located in the parlor.<sup>10</sup> Although the medical profession in North Carolina was still in its infancy, the Medical Society of the State of North Carolina was established in 1849, and a number of counties organized medical societies. Not all doctors were graduates of medical schools, and many of them supplemented their meager income from their medical practices by farming. Most doctors who had attended medical school during the antebellum period studied at the University of Pennsylvania.<sup>11</sup> In 1830, the General Assembly authorized counties to levy taxes for the construction and maintenance of poorhouses for the accommodation of unfortunate citizens. These facilities included land for livestock and crop production.<sup>12</sup>

Located in the northeastern corner of the Piedmont, Franklin County epitomized many of these trends. An account written probably in 1810 in response to a questionnaire circulated by the publisher of *The Star*, a newspaper in Raleigh, noted that the county was more prized for its numerous creeks and springs, as well as its high and healthy situation, than for its soil, which was thin and rocky. Farmers and planters raised cotton, tobacco, wheat, cattle, and hogs, and the principal markets for these commodities were Petersburg and Richmond.<sup>13</sup> Although the main post road from Richmond ran through Warrenton and Louisburg, the seat of Franklin County, to points south, transportation was a problem for farmers until the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad was completed through Franklin County in 1839. The establishment on this railroad of Franklin Depot (later Franklinton) and one in Henderson made it much easier for farmers to get their crops to markets in Virginia and elsewhere. It also fostered the distribution of newspapers and enabled personal travel, thus exposing the people of Franklin County to news and ideas.<sup>14</sup>

The most prosperous farmers in Franklin County increasingly depended on enslaved labor as the nineteenth century progressed. The 1850 census recorded 5,507 enslaved persons slaves out of a total population of 11,713; in 1860, 605 owners enslaved 7,076 persons—an

<sup>9</sup> Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 305-307, 317-321.

<sup>10</sup> Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 93-94, 226, 302-303.

<sup>11</sup> Dorothy Long, ed., *Medicine in North Carolina: Essays in the History of Medical Science and Medical Service, 1524-1960* (Raleigh, N.C.: The North Carolina Medical Society, 1972), 58-59, 74-81.

<sup>12</sup> Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 294.

<sup>13</sup> A. R. Newsome, "Twelve North Carolina Counties in 1810-1811," *North Carolina Historical Review* 6 (April 1929): 172.

<sup>14</sup> Newsome, "Twelve North Carolina Counties in 1810-1811," 173-174; Eric Medlin, *A History of Franklin County, North Carolina* (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2020), 42-43; T. H. Pearce, *Franklin County, 1779-1979* (Freeman, S.D.: Pine Hill Press, 1979), 47. It is interesting to note that planter Nicholas Massenburg, who lived just north of Louisburg, in the fall of 1839 transported his cotton to Henderson. See George-Anne Willard, ed., *The Franklin County Sketchbook* (Louisburg, N.C.: Franklin County-Louisburg Bicentenary Committee, 1982), 43.

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average of between 11 and 12. They helped to produce 300,268 pounds of tobacco, 880 bales of cotton, 398,031 bushels of corn, and 21,898 bushels of wheat in 1850. Ten years later, they contributed to the county's harvest of 1,732,883 pounds of tobacco, 2,673 bales of cotton, 45,225 bushels of wheat, and 416,538 bushels of corn.<sup>15</sup>

This dramatic increase in agricultural productivity supported a variety of religious and cultural institutions. Methodists and Baptists were the dominant denominations in Franklin County. The 1850 census recorded nine Methodist churches with room for 3,100 congregants and seven Baptist Churches that could accommodate 3,500. Twenty-eight public schools, each with one teacher, served 800 students. More than 250 pupils were enrolled in the county's twelve private academies. Among these were the county seat's Louisburg Male Academy, which had opened in 1805 as Franklin Male Academy, and Louisburg Female Academy, established ten years later. In 1857, Louisburg Female College, housed in a four-story brick edifice across Main Street from Louisburg Male Academy, opened its doors to students.<sup>16</sup> Newspapers, including *Louisburg Union*, *North Carolina Times*, *American Eagle*, and *Louisburg Weekly News* operated briefly in the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>17</sup>

Neighboring Warren County, to the north of Franklin, experienced even greater prosperity during the antebellum period. Its robust plantation economy, based on one of the highest ratios of enslaved persons to overall population among the state's counties, flourished in the 1840s and 1850s, and in 1860 exceeded all other North Carolina counties in tobacco production. Members of the Alston, Williams, and Kearney families, among others, accumulated plantations of vast size in southern Warren and northern Franklin Counties. They hired such builders as Warren County's Jacob Holt, Albert G. Jones, and John Waddell to build elaborate homes in the Greek Revival or Italianate styles. Here they socialized regularly with their extended families and friends.<sup>18</sup>

The Foster family became a part of this remote agricultural community in the early nineteenth century. In 1815 Peter Foster of Matthews County, Virginia, purchased from Eppes Moody 276 acres of land on the "Granville Road" in Franklin County that included a two-story Georgian-style house on the southeast side the post road running between Louisburg and Warrenton. The Fosters are thought to have named the property Locust Grove. Peter Foster was born in Gloucester County, Virginia, on May 11, 1787. His wife, Elizabeth Hardin Keeble, of Gwyns Island, Virginia, was born on November 7, 1792. The property, in what later came to be known as the Ingleside community, once belonged to John Haywood, who left the area and

<sup>15</sup> J. D. B. DeBow, *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Washington: Robert Armstrong, Public Printer, 1853), 307, 320-321; Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 105, 235.

<sup>16</sup> DeBow, *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850*, 313-314, 326-327; George-Anne Willard, *Louisburg College Echoes: Voices from the Formative Years, 1787-1917* (Louisburg, N.C.: Louisburg College, 1988), 13-16, 20-22, 27, 45-46.

<sup>17</sup> Medlin, *A History of Franklin County, North Carolina*, 45.

<sup>18</sup> Catherine W. Bishir, *The House Marina Built: Cherry Hill: A Plantation House and Its Family* (Warrenton, N.C.: Cherry Hill Historical Foundation, 2004), 3-6, 25-36; Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 329.

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became North Carolina's solicitor general and attorney general before moving to Tennessee.<sup>19</sup> A survey of the post road prepared by State Engineer Hamilton Fulton in 1822 shows the strategic location of Peter Foster's property at the junction of roads leading to Louisburg, Halifax, Granville Court House, and "Simms' Bridge." The map depicts not only the Fosters' house on the post road, which Fulton considered to be the "greatest thoroughfare from South to North" in North Carolina, but also two structures directly behind it.<sup>20</sup>

Peter Foster engaged in extensive agricultural and business pursuits, and he and Elizabeth raised a large family. He acquired considerably more land in the area and in Granville County. In 1830 Peter owned 60 enslaved persons, placing him solidly in the planter class, a distinct minority in a state of small farmers. In addition, he owned the former Bell store at Ingleside. In early 1840 he was in the process of building a mill on his property. At the time of his death in 1844, he owned more than 2,500 acres of land and 100 enslaved persons.<sup>21</sup> The Fosters' children living at that time were Augustus John Foster, valedictorian of the class of 1835 at the University of North Carolina who lived at the thousand-acre Wakefield plantation in Wake County, which his father had already given him; Peter Stapleton Foster; William B. Foster; Louisa J. Foster; Lucy Elizabeth Foster; Mary Ann Fowlkes; Virginia A. Cook; and Omega Foster, the youngest.<sup>22</sup>

Like his brother Augustus, Peter S. Foster received an exceptional education. Franklin County historian Thilbert H. Pearce quoted portions of a letter of Peter's written to his father on March 26, 1840, while he was a student in Raleigh. He and his teacher, who may have been John Y. Hicks of the Raleigh Academy, were excited witnesses of the coming of the first locomotive of the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad to reach the capital city.<sup>23</sup> According to existing records at William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, Foster began studies at William and Mary College in 1839. He received diplomas in National Law (1841) and Chemistry (1842). Subsequently, he

<sup>19</sup> National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for Locust Grove, Ingleside, N.C., August 22, 1975; Locust Grove Plantation Cemetery Memorials, [www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2472719](http://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2472719), accessed May 16, 2025.

<sup>20</sup> Robert H. B. Brazier and Hamilton Fulton, "Plan of the Stage Road from Fayetteville by Raleigh, Louisburg, Warrenton and Robinson's Ferry to the Virginia Line," Sheet 2, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, N.C. (digital copy made available by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources through the North Carolina Maps website, <https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/ncmaps/id/1237/rec/17>), accessed August 1, 2025; *Annual Report of the Board of Public Improvements of North-Carolina, to the General Assembly, December 10, 1822; Together With Mr. Fulton's Reports to the Board* (Raleigh: Printed by J. Gales & Son, 1822), 69.

<sup>21</sup> National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for Locust Grove; Stephen E. Bradley, Jr., *The 1830 Federal Census, Franklin County, North Carolina (Population Schedule)* (South Boston, Va.: The author, 1987), entry 454; Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 328; Will of Peter Foster, May 14, 1840, Will Book L, p. 230, Office of the Clerk of Court, Franklin County Courthouse, Louisburg, N.C.

<sup>22</sup> Will of Peter Foster; Elizabeth Reid Murray, *Wake: Capital County of North Carolina, Volume I: Prehistory through Centennial* (Raleigh, N.C.: Capital County Publishing Company, 1983), 419-422; Kemp P. Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina, Volume I* (Raleigh, N.C.: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1907), 421-422.

<sup>23</sup> Pearce, *Franklin County, 1779-1979*, 47-48; Murray, *Wake: Capital County*, 248, 308. Pearce did not cite the source of Peter Foster's letter.

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enrolled in the medical school of the University of Pennsylvania, where he completed his medical degree in 1845.<sup>24</sup>

On September 31 of that year, Peter Foster married Matilda Kearney Williams (July 23, 1824-March 5, 1868), a daughter of Joseph John Williams (1796-1856) and Martha James Alston (1800-1852) of Warren and Franklin Counties. Joseph John Williams was a son of William Williams and Elizabeth A. Kearney, who owned more than 4,000 acres of land in the two counties, including, at one time, Vine Hill Plantation in northern Franklin County. Archibald Davis Williams, a grandson of William Williams and first cousin of Matilda K. Foster, hired Warrenton builder Jacob W. Holt in 1856 to expand and remodel Vine Hill. Martha Alston was a sister of George Alston of Warren County, whose widow, Marina, the sister of Joseph John Williams, contracted with Warren County builder John A. Waddell to build a large, two-story home at the Cherry Hill Plantation in southern Warren County in 1858 and 1859, at a cost of more than \$7,000. One of Marina's cousins, John Buxton Williams, hired Waddell to build a similar house near Cherry Hill, Buxton Place, which was completed in 1858.<sup>25</sup> Peter and Matilda appear to have lived at Locust Grove, but in 1850 maintained a separate house and household adjacent to the home of his mother.<sup>26</sup>

Here Peter practiced medicine and, according to Charles M. Cooke, "no physician who ever lived in this [Franklin] county gave more of his services to charity." According to the 1850 census, he was one of six physicians working in the Davis District and twenty-one in the entire county. Family tradition holds that Dr. Foster eventually maintained his office in what is today a

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<sup>24</sup> Email from Swem Special Collections to Maurice C. York, August 8, 2025, in possession of the author; *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of William and Mary College, Session 1841-42* (Petersburg, Va.: Printed by Emund & Julian C. Ruffin, 1842), 6, <https://digital.libraries.wm.edu/catalogue-officers-students-william-mary-college-18411842>, accessed August 11, 2025. The framed diplomas of Peter S. Foster from William and Mary College hang in the hall at Oak Grove. See also obituary of Peter S. Foster by Charles M. Cooke, *The Franklin Times* (Louisburg, N.C.), March 17, 1899, available through North Carolina Newspapers, North Carolina Digital Heritage Center, <https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn84020791/1899-03-17/ed-1/seq-3/>. All newspaper articles cited hereafter were accessed using the North Carolina Newspapers database.

<sup>25</sup> Daniel J. Pezzoni, ed., *The Architectural History of Franklin County, North Carolina* (Louisburg, N.C.: Franklin County Historic Preservation Commission, 2023), 187; Bishir, *The House Marina Built*, 1, 7, 9, 26-50, 80; Joseph A. Groves, *The Alstons and Allstons of North and South Carolina* (Atlanta, Ga.: The Franklin Printing and Publishing Company, 1901), 464; Kearney Family Bible Record, RFNC 929.2 Kearn, Warren County Memorial Library, Warrenton, N.C.; Obituary of Peter S. Foster; *Raleigh Register, and North Carolina Gazette* (Raleigh, N.C.), September 30, 1845, p. 3; Will of William Williams, April 23, 1838, Warren County Wills, no date, 1780-1931, C.R. 100.801.23, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, N.C.; John Buxton Williams/Dr. Peter Stapleton Foster Bible, North Carolina GenWeb Project, [https://www.ncgenweb.us/ncwarren/bibles/bible-e\\_f\\_g.htm#williams/foster](https://www.ncgenweb.us/ncwarren/bibles/bible-e_f_g.htm#williams/foster), accessed August 13, 2025; "Vine Hill Plantation," [https://www.ncgenweb.us/ncstate/plantations/vine\\_hill\\_plantation.htm](https://www.ncgenweb.us/ncstate/plantations/vine_hill_plantation.htm), accessed September 4, 2025.

<sup>26</sup> Author's telephone interview with William Lee Harris, Ingleside, N.C., May 31, 2025, notes on interview in possession of the author; 1850 United States Federal Census, Population Schedule, Franklin County, N.C., AncestryHeritageQuest.com, accessed June 30, 2025.

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home just north of Oak Grove.<sup>27</sup> According to Franklin County tax lists, Foster collected \$1,000 in salaries or fees in 1857 and \$1,250 in 1858 and 1859.<sup>28</sup>

Like many country doctors of the period, Foster supplemented his income with agricultural pursuits. In December 1844, he purchased for \$6,010 at a courthouse sale the 1470-acre Cooke tract that had belonged to his father. This land, which adjoined the property of Joseph B. Littlejohn and others, was located north of Locust Grove on the northwest side of the post road to Warrenton. According to family tradition, Foster farmed this land.<sup>29</sup> However, in 1850 the agricultural schedule of the federal census recorded that Foster owned 500 acres of land, all in cultivation; the cash value of the farm was \$6,000. The population schedule valued his real estate at \$4,000. Among his 25 enslaved persons were perhaps six males who likely were old enough to engage in agricultural pursuits. They produced (probably in 1849) 115 bushels of wheat, 1,650 bushels of corn, 200 bushels of oats, 3,000 pounds of tobacco, and 4 bales of cotton.<sup>30</sup>

Interestingly, in 1852 Foster placed an ad in several issues of the *Semi-Weekly Standard* (Raleigh) offering “A Splendid Farm & Residence for Sale.” He claimed to want to “remove and devote his time to his profession” and thus offered 1,500 acres of land, a nine-room mansion house, and farm buildings for sale. The well-watered property was located on the post road approximately three miles north of Louisburg (and thus two miles south of Ingleside). He stated that the plantation was situated in a “high, healthful region of country” and that the neighborhood was “proverbial for intelligence, refinement, and morality” and convenient to the “famous” male and female academies in Louisburg. It is not known if Foster and his family ever lived on this property. It is likely that this plantation was the 1490 acres on Bear Swamp listed as belonging to Peter Foster in the 1855 tax list of Franklin County.<sup>31</sup>

Foster’s plantation increased in productivity during the 1850s. This was partly attributable to his involvement in Franklin County’s agricultural society. In 1855 he was appointed to a committee of farmers in the county to work with their counterparts in Granville and Warren Counties in planning a union agricultural fair in Henderson. According to the 1860 census, Foster owned 42 enslaved persons. In addition, in 1852, 1854, and 1855 he hired an enslaved man named Jeffrey from the estate of George Alston in Warren County. A man named W. B. Huff, who lived nearby, likely served as Foster’s overseer. Consisting of 200 unimproved acres and 150 improved acres, the farm produced, in addition to relatively small quantities of

<sup>27</sup> Obituary of Peter S. Foster (quotation); 1850 United States Federal Census, Population Schedule, Franklin County, N.C., AncestryHeritageQuest.com, accessed June 30, 2025; Harris interview.

<sup>28</sup> Franklin County List of Taxables, 1855-1866, Foster’s District entries, C.R. 039.701.3, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, N.C.

<sup>29</sup> Harris interview; [Estate of Peter Foster] to Peter S. Foster, January 15, 1848, Book 30, p. 14, Franklin County Deeds, Office of the Register of Deeds, Louisburg, N.C. This deed refers to the courthouse sale held at the order of the court of equity for Franklin County on December 9, 1844.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen E. Bradley, Jr., *The 1850 Federal Census, Franklin County, North Carolina: Schedules: Population, Slave, Mortality, Agriculture, Industry, Social Statistics* (Keysville, Va.: Stephen E. Bradley, Jr., 1990), 62, 84.

<sup>31</sup> *Semi-Weekly Standard* (Raleigh, N.C.), October 6, 1852, p. 4; Franklin County List of Taxables, 1855-1866, Foster’s District entries for 1855, C.R. 039.701.3, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, N.C.

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livestock, corn, and wheat, 6,000 pounds of tobacco—double the amount harvested ten years earlier. Farm animals included three horses, two mules, four milk cows, four working oxen, ten other cattle, twenty sheep, and sixty-five swine. The cash value of the farm was \$5,500. Remarkably, Foster's personal estate, which included his enslaved persons, was valued at \$48,555.<sup>32</sup>

Although he was busy with his medical practice and farming operations, Foster assumed important leadership roles in his immediate community and in Franklin County. He was a founder of and served with other prominent men, including Dr. William R. King, J. B. Littlejohn, and Daniel S. Hill, as a director of Louisburg Female College.<sup>33</sup> A member of the Whig Party, he was chosen in 1847 as one of the delegates from Franklin County to the Whig National Convention. In 1854 he served as a delegate from Franklin County at the state Whig convention in Raleigh.<sup>34</sup> Foster's interest in the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad led him to serve as one of twelve managers of a "Rail Road Festival" at the Rail Road Hotel in Franklinton on the evenings of February 22 and 23, 1849, where participants were to gather for conversation and dancing.<sup>35</sup> He was a member of the Franklin Lodge, No. 13 of the International Order of Odd Fellows.<sup>36</sup> A Methodist, Foster in 1858 served on a building committee with J. B. Littlejohn, R. Rodwell, S. Macon, and L. Edwards that solicited bids from builders or contractors for the erection of a "church in the County of Franklin, 26 feet by 48, and 16 feet pitch."<sup>37</sup>

Peter and Matilda Foster undoubtedly spent considerable time raising their children, seven of whom outlived their mother, who died in 1868.<sup>38</sup> Peter also assumed some of the responsibility for the care of his elderly mother at Locust Grove and other family members as well as members of the Wright family.<sup>39</sup> By 1850 the household included two boys, Ernest (four)

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<sup>32</sup> *Semi-Weekly Standard* (Raleigh, N.C.), February 14, 1855, p. 3; 1860 United States Federal Census, Population and Slave Schedules, Franklin County, N.C., AncestryHeritageQuest.com, accessed June 30, 2025; 1860 United States Federal Census, Agriculture Schedule, Franklin County, N.C., microfilm, North Carolina Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, N.C.; Bishir, *The House Marina Built*, 23.

<sup>33</sup> Articles of incorporation for Louisburg Female College, September 9, 1854, State Archives of North Carolina, North Carolina Digital Collections, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/louisburg-female-college/768009>, accessed July 1, 2025; *Weekly North Carolina Standard* (Raleigh, N.C.), July 29, 1857, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> "Whig Meeting in Franklin," *Raleigh Star, and North Carolina Gazette* (Raleigh, N.C.), December 29, 1847, p. 2; *The Weekly Raleigh Register*, March 1, 1854, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> *The North Carolina Standard* (Raleigh, N.C.), February 21, 1849, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> *The North Carolina Times* (Louisburg, N.C.), May 13, 1848, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> *North Carolina Christian Advocate* (Raleigh, N.C.), August 19, 1858, p. 3. This newspaper was published by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The location of the proposed church is unknown, but Foster lived just south of the present site of Trinity Methodist Church, on U.S. Highway 401.

<sup>38</sup> Obituary of Peter S. Foster.

<sup>39</sup> Tax lists for the 1850s and 1860s reveal that Dr. P. S. Foster served as the "agent" for his mother and for his younger brother Omega, as well as for Richard H. and Pattie Julia Wright. Pattie was graduated from Louisburg Female College in 1868. Her brother Richard went on to become a wealthy philanthropist who in the 1920s funded the construction of a dormitory at Louisburg College named for his sister. Franklin County List of Taxables, 1855-1866, Foster's District entries, C.R. 039.701.3, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, N.C.; Willard, *Louisburg College Echoes*, 65, 149

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and Peter (one). Ten years later, in addition to Ernest and Peter, the children were Martha (nine), Mary (seven), Matilda (four), and Frank (one). Also living with the Fosters in 1860 were Jane Creighton, a nineteen-year-old teacher, and Cornelia Huff, also nineteen, the housekeeper. Living nearby was W. B. Huff, an overseer. The Fosters clearly valued education. In 1863 Peter Foster placed an ad in a Raleigh newspaper for a female teacher to take charge of a school for his family. He stipulated that she must be qualified to teach “the various English branches and music on the Piano, both vocal and instrumental.”<sup>40</sup> That fall, their sons Ernest and Peter were attending the Louisburg Male Academy.<sup>41</sup>

The growing family likely precipitated the decision by Peter and Matilda to build a new home on the post road, approximately a mile north of Locust Grove. In December 1863, following the death of Elizabeth Foster, her surviving children petitioned the Franklin County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions for a division of most of the land that had belonged to Peter Foster. All but Peter S. Foster wished to hold their shares in common, but, according to the petition,

“Inasmuch ... as the said Peter S. Foster erected several years since a dwelling house, as well outhouses and other improvements upon a portion of said lands with an agreement between the parties aforesaid, that in the division of the lands he should receive the land on which said buildings and improvements stand as a part of his share without accounting in the division for the value of any of said buildings and improvements thus erected at his entire and exclusive expense a leading object of the arrangement being to enduce the said Peter S. Foster, who is a physician by profession, to reside at a place very near to the home of Elizabeth H. Foster the widow of Peter Foster deceased and the mother of his children, who was advanced in years and infirm in health, your petitioners pray your Worships that said Commissioners may be ordered to make partition accordingly....”

The commissioners were instructed to divide the land in this manner and allocated to Peter S. Foster 200 acres valued at \$3,957.70, not taking into account the value of the buildings Foster had erected.<sup>42</sup>

The wording of the petition for partition implies that the house, which was named Oak Grove, was built ca. 1859. Several pieces of evidence, although not conclusive, support this conjecture. In May 1856 Foster agreed to sell to Dr. Ellis Malone of Louisburg 605.5 acres of land on the Louisburg Road for \$4,069.48. In all likelihood, this property was part of the 1,490 acres on Bear Swamp that Foster owned in 1855 and probably as early as 1852. In October 1857 he agreed to sell to Strickland Pearce 119.5 acres on Lyons Creek for \$800. It is possible that

<sup>40</sup> “A Teacher Wanted,” *The Daily Progress* (Raleigh, N.C.), July 29, 1863, p.1.

<sup>41</sup> Record of students at Louisburg Male Academy, Fall 1863, Louisburg Female and Male Academies Records, 1815-1870, Rubenstein Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, N.C. Foster children attended other sessions as well.

<sup>42</sup> P. S. Foster & Others Exparte Petition for Partition, December 1863; Order for the Appointment of Commissioners, December, 1863; and plat and description of the divided land of Peter Foster, February 14, 1866, Book 33, pp. 116-120, Franklin County Deeds.

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some of the funds from these sales were used for construction of the house and outbuildings.<sup>43</sup> Tax records indicate that Foster did not own a piano in 1858, but did have one in 1859. The square grand piano currently located in the parlor at Oak Grove was manufactured by Grovesteen & Company in New York City. The firm used this name between 1857 and 1861.<sup>44</sup> Peter and Matilda were no doubt aware of the nearby home building projects of Matilda's cousin, John Buxton Williams (Buxton Place), her aunt, Marina Alston (Cherry Hill), and first cousin, Archibald D. Williams (Vine Hill). In addition, Peter's association with fellow physician Ellis Malone likely made him aware of the construction of Malone's home in Louisburg, begun by Albert G. Jones and completed by Thomas H. Raney in 1855.

The coming of the Civil War and Reconstruction dramatically altered the lives of people in North Carolina and Franklin County, ending the prosperity that families like the Fosters had experienced while granting new rights to the formerly enslaved and other Blacks. The people of North Carolina were conflicted about seceding from the Union, but once that step was taken on May 20, 1861, the state supported the Confederacy with manpower and financial resources. North Carolina and Franklin County contributed large numbers of troops to the war effort, and Franklin County men, many of them in the Forty-Seventh Regiment, participated in major battles in Virginia and at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The Raleigh and Gaston Railroad played a key role in carrying men and supplies to Virginia.<sup>45</sup> As the war progressed, citizens suffered because of the scarcity and inflated costs of food and clothing. Anna Fuller of Louisburg lamented in April 1864 that corn cost \$230 per bushel and bacon was selling for \$7 to \$8 per pound. In March of 1865 the material for a dress cost \$350.<sup>46</sup>

The war had a significant impact on the Foster family. Peter S. Foster probably attended a meeting at the Franklin County Courthouse on April 9, 1861, which recommended the formation of a Southern Rights Party and advocated for secession. He was elected to serve as a delegate to an upcoming Southern Rights Convention in Charlotte on May 20. In actuality, the state's secession convention was held that day in Raleigh, and the delegates voted to secede from the Union.<sup>47</sup> Either to support the Confederacy or out of a need for funds, Foster in 1862 and 1863 hired out his slave Anthony to the Confederate government to serve as a teamster in

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<sup>43</sup> Peter S. Foster to Ellis Malone, May 23, 1856, Book 31, p. 730, Franklin County Deeds; Peter S. Foster to Strickland Pearce, October 14, 1857, Book 32, p. 32, Franklin County Deeds. The two deeds were recorded on August 10, 1857, and January 5, 1858, respectively.

<sup>44</sup> Franklin County List of Taxables, 1855-1866, Foster's District entries for 1858 and 1859, C.R. 039.701.3, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, N.C. A brief history of Grovesteen pianos can be found on the website of the Antique Piano Shop, <https://antiquepianoshop.com/online-museum/grovesteen-company/>.

<sup>45</sup> Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 349-362; Medlin, *A History of Franklin County, North Carolina*, 53-54.

<sup>46</sup> Lefler and Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State*, 477-478; Myrtle C. King, comp., *Anna Long Thomas Fuller's Journal, 1856-1890: A Civil War Diary* (Alpharetta, Ga.: Priority Publishing, Inc., 1999), 31, 40.

<sup>47</sup> "Southern Rights Meeting in Franklin," *The State Journal* (Raleigh, N.C.), April 24, 1861, p. 2; William S. Powell, ed., *Encyclopedia of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), sv Secession Movement.

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Wilmington.<sup>48</sup> In early 1864 Foster clearly needed cash when he placed an ad in a Raleigh newspaper offering 100 hogsheads of tobacco and six barrels of Nash brandy for Confederate money.<sup>49</sup> After the surrender of the armies of Generals Robert E. Lee and Joseph E. Johnston in April 1865, thousands of troops of General William T. Sherman's Army of the Tennessee, which had entered the state in March, left Raleigh on a march to Washington, D.C. The largest portion of these troops, the 15<sup>th</sup> Corps, passed through central Franklin County, arriving in Louisburg on May 1 and 2. Many of them camped in the groves of Louisburg Female College and Louisburg Male Academy before continuing along the post road to Warrenton and points north.<sup>50</sup> These troops marched past Locust Grove and Oak Grove. One of them, William M. Davis of Minnesota, on May 3 described the landscape: "The country along the line of today's march [is] much the same as yesterday—rolling, with rich plantations, fine residences and good timber."<sup>51</sup>

The end of the Civil War brought freedom to enslaved persons in North Carolina and with it the loss of a large portion of the wealth of Peter S. Foster and other planters. He quickly assumed leadership roles, perhaps in an effort to mitigate the impact of this new reality. In 1865 he won an election to represent Franklin County in the North Carolina House of Commons. The term began in November 1865 and continued in 1866, when the legislature, like those of other southern states, enacted Black Codes to regulate the rights of freedmen. In June 1866 Foster attended a meeting at the courthouse in Louisburg at which a resolution was drafted in support of restoring Confederate states to the Union on the basis of President Andrew Johnson's plan, which was more favorable to former southern leaders than that proposed by Radical Republicans.<sup>52</sup>

Ultimately, however, Republicans in Congress orchestrated the process of Reconstruction. They established military rule in the states that had seceded from the Union and passed the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which provided for equality of all citizens under the law. Congress also required the former Confederate states to adopt new constitutions that were compatible with the United States Constitution. North Carolina's new constitution, adopted in 1868, instituted universal manhood suffrage, a system of public schools, and a Board of Charities and Public Welfare, among other progressive reforms. Many wealthy citizens feared that they would lose control of state and local government.<sup>53</sup> This interlude in state government ended in 1875, when conservatives narrowly enacted a number of constitutional amendments that gave the Democratic Party control of the state for many years.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Confederate States vouchers to P.S. Foster, January 1, April 30, July 1, December 31, 1863, in the possession of William Lee Harris, Ingleside, N.C.

<sup>49</sup> "Notice—Confederate Money Wanted," *The Daily Progress* (Raleigh, N.C.), January 9, 1864, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 373-378; King, *Anna Long Thomas Fuller's Journal*, 46-47; Michael R. Hill, "Full of Bluecoats: Sherman's Army in Franklin County," paper presented May 1, 2014, at Louisburg College, copy in the possession of the author.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Hill, "Full of Bluecoats," 10.

<sup>52</sup> Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 380-385; "The Legislature," *The Union Banner* (Salisbury, N.C.), December 1, 1865, p. 3; "Public Meeting in Franklin," *The Sentinel* (Raleigh, N.C.), June 19, 1866, p. 2. Foster served only one term in the House of Commons. Foster obituary.

<sup>53</sup> Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 380-394.

<sup>54</sup> Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 404-406.

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Political changes were accompanied by a significant restructuring of the agricultural economy, particularly in the Piedmont and in eastern part of the state. Former slaves now had to be paid wages, and many entered into tenancy or sharecropping agreements. Production of crops in North Carolina declined significantly after the war, but gradually recovered as the century progressed. In Franklin County, the value of an acre of land dropped from eight dollars in 1860 to four dollars ten years later. The number of farms in the state increased and the size of the average farm decreased from 316 acres in 1860 to 212 in 1870. By 1900, the typical farm in North Carolina consisted of 101 acres.<sup>55</sup>

Dr. Foster continued his medical practice after the war, but his farming operations were greatly diminished. According to the agricultural schedule of the 1870 census, Foster's farm consisted of only 47 improved acres with a cash value of \$240. He paid \$300 in wages the previous year. Livestock included five horses, one mule, four milk cows, four working oxen, nine other cattle, two sheep, and twenty-one swine. The farm produced 300 bushels of corn, 100 bushels of oats, and seven bales of cotton. The estimated value of all farm products was \$2,170, and the value of animals slaughtered was \$250. Foster's son, Dr. Ernest S. Foster, owned a much larger farm nearby that consisted of 460 acres of woodland and 75 improved acres.<sup>56</sup> Local media took note of Dr. Peter S. Foster's farming operation as late as the early 1890s. The *Franklin Times* noted in March 1891 that he had some "fine" Essex pigs for sale. In November 1893 he sold tobacco at the Hughes and Hart Warehouse in Louisburg.<sup>57</sup>

The citizens of Franklin County continued to benefit from Dr. Foster's medical practice. According to the first annual report of the North Carolina State Board of Charities and Public Welfare, published in 1870, he served as the physician of Franklin County's poorhouse, which was located behind Trinity Church. He received regular fees for his services.<sup>58</sup> When, in 1877 and 1879, the General Assembly created a State Board of Health and authorized counties to appoint local boards of health, Foster and his son Ernest met with other physicians in Louisburg to form the county board of health. Peter S. Foster was elected to the Committee on Credentials and Ernest S. Foster became the superintendent.<sup>59</sup>

Dr. Foster continued his leadership roles in the community. At a quarterly meeting of the Tar River Circuit of the Methodist Church held at Trinity Church in 1888, he was elected as an alternate to the next district meeting to be held in Selma.<sup>60</sup> He remained active in the Democratic Party. Democrats held a convention at the Franklin County Courthouse in May 1876 to select

<sup>55</sup> Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 416-417; Medlin, *A History of Franklin County, North Carolina*, 57.

<sup>56</sup> 1870 Federal Census of Agriculture, Franklin County, North Carolina, Sandy Creek Township, microfilm, North Carolina Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University.

<sup>57</sup> *The Franklin Times* (Louisburg, N.C.), March 20, 1891, p. 3; November 24, 1893, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> North Carolina State Board of Charities and Public Welfare, *First Annual Report of the Board of Public Charities, Document No. 26, Session 1869-1870*, pp. 52-53, North Carolina Digital Collections, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/annual-report-of-the-board-of-public-charities-1870/4720624?Item=4721003>, accessed July 1, 2025; Harris interview.

<sup>59</sup> *The Franklin Times*, July 24, 1879, p. 3; *Laws of North Carolina, 1876-1877*, ch. 96; *Laws of North Carolina, 1879*, ch. 117.

<sup>60</sup> *The Dispatch* (Franklinton, N.C.), May 3, 1888, p. 2.

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delegates to nominating conventions in Raleigh and Nashville. Foster was elected to serve as a delegate from Sandy Creek Township. Charles M. Cooke's obituary for Foster noted that the doctor had fervently hoped to vote in the election of 1898, but died on October 20.<sup>61</sup>

Estate records for Dr. Foster in the North Carolina State Archives reveal that he died intestate and that the personal property sold by the administrator of the estate had relatively little value. Debts Dr. Foster had incurred in recent years had to be satisfied. It appears that economic conditions and his focus on service to his family and community had a serious impact on Dr. Foster's financial affairs.<sup>62</sup>

By the early twentieth century, the Dr. Peter S. Foster homeplace amounted to fifty-five acres. Inasmuch as he had died intestate, family members gave or sold their rights to their interest in the property, and it has remained in the hands of Dr. Foster's direct descendants. The farm was operated by Dr. Foster's son, Peter William Foster (1849-1920) and then by his son, Peter Stapleton Foster (1892-1950), who lived at Oak Grove with his sister, Mary Louise. Peter Stapleton Foster served as a Franklin County commissioner for a number of years. Peter S. Foster's wife Ethel and his sister willed the property to the daughters of Peter and Ethel, Mary Kathryn Foster Joyner and Lutie Foster Harris. Lutie's son William Lee Harris currently owns five acres of the property, including Oak Grove, and the widow of Mary Kathryn's son Peter owns fifty acres, which will revert to William Lee Harris or his children at her death.<sup>63</sup>

### *Architectural Context*

Out of a growing prosperity in the United States during the antebellum period, architectural trends began a shift mid-century from previous classically inspired preferences of the new Republic to ones that favored a more picturesque rural lifestyle. Through the use of steam power, the mass production of building materials and their increasing availability would allow builders and contractors over time to focus more on the building process itself. As the publication of new architectural pattern books rapidly multiplied during the 1850s, builders' old favorites such as Asher Benjamin's *Practical House Carpenter* (1830) were overshadowed by the cottages and villas prescribed in new publications. Books like Andrew J. Downing's *Cottage Residences* (1842) and William H. Ranlett's *The Architect* (1849) were increasingly referenced by builders and patrons alike in North Carolina. Designs for cottages and villas ran the gamut in names and styles, from suburban, bracketed Italian style, to old English cottages, Elizabethan style Anglo Norman, Venetian, and many more. Even progressive periodicals in North Carolina

<sup>61</sup> "County Convention," *Franklin Courier* (Louisburg, N.C.), June 2, 1876, p. 2; Obituary of Peter S. Foster.

<sup>62</sup> Estate Records of Dr. Peter S. Foster, 1898, C.R. 039.508.23, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, N.C.; Obituary of Peter S. Foster.

<sup>63</sup> Harris interview; Peter W. Foster to Lutie Cooke Foster, June 12, 1903, Book 128, p. 91, Franklin County Deeds; P. J. Brown to Peter S. Foster, September 13, 1916, Book 202, p. 593, Franklin County Deeds; George W. Brown and others to Mary Louise Foster, March 23, 1917, Book 216, p. 139, Franklin County Deeds; Will of Ethel C. Foster, July 15, 1958, Will Book X, pp. 445-446, Office of the Clerk of Court, Franklin County Courthouse, Louisburg, N.C.; Will of Mary Louise Foster, May 17, 1967, File 76E, p. 102, Office of the Clerk of Court, Franklin County Courthouse, Louisburg, N.C.

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such as the *Farmers Journal*, *Carolina Cultivator*, *Southern Weekly Post* (Raleigh) carried articles, texts, and columns. As Catherine W. Bishir states, “promoting Downing’s ‘rural architecture’ and ‘cottage style’” as a way for improving life in the state. All advocated comfortable, healthy, moral living.<sup>64</sup> People were now encouraged to move forward by adhering to distant advice from others rather than follow familiar building traditions.

During the 1850s, antebellum life in rural Franklin County and its county seat, Louisburg, mirrored that of many counties in North Carolina as it embraced and benefitted from significant investments, both private and public, in transportation, scientific farming practices, and industrial mechanization. Underpinned primarily by an agricultural economy based on slavery, progress and prosperity were the goals. Education also continued to be an important building block toward maintaining and improving one’s place in society. The railroad gave rise to increasing land values and building.<sup>65</sup> The completion in 1839 of the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad through Franklin County brought markets closer and more accessible by reducing travel times and making the hauling of goods and crops easier. Students attending local academies and travelers also benefited from the passenger service as Franklin Depot quickly evolved by 1842 into the town of Franklinton. Farmers, businessmen, and merchants alike also profited from the increasing industrial production of marketable materials and tools.<sup>66</sup>

The slow conversion of rural water-powered saw mills and the adoption of mechanization in builders’ workshops to ones driven by steam power hastened industrialization in cities and outlying communities. Sash, door, and blind factories were established in major cities and smaller ones, including Wilmington, New Bern, Salisbury, and Greensboro. Building materials became more readily available, thereby saving time for contractors. As Bishir notes, building was becoming an act of assembling components.<sup>67</sup> In Franklinton, H. T. Clawson established a large-scale manufacturing concern, Franklinton Steam Sash and Hub Factory, on eight acres that included tenements and a large three-story building that combined a dwelling, machine shop, and lumber house. By November 1855, however, Clawson signed a deed of trust to John H. Whitfield for all of his property to be sold and debts paid with the proceeds. His equipment included a twenty-five-horsepower steam engine, one boiler, one planing machine, two mortising machines, one molding machine, one sash machine, one turning lathe, two circular saws, one upright saw, one matching machine, and one corn mill. The equipment was described as “all nearly new, in good order, and of the most approved patterns.” The sale also included sash, logs and lumber, finished and unfinished.<sup>68</sup> This well-equipped, modern facility, apparently, became a financially risky venture at this place and at this time.

<sup>64</sup> Catherine W. Bishir, ed., *Architects and Builders in North Carolina: A History of the Practice of Building* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 142.

<sup>65</sup> Bishir, *Architects and Builders in North Carolina*, 130-133.

<sup>66</sup> “Cheapest, Shortest, and Most Expeditious Route to Petersburg and the North,” *Semi-weekly Standard* (Raleigh, N.C.), October, 14, 1854, p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Bishir, *Architects and Builders in North Carolina*, 142-143.

<sup>68</sup> Kenneth McFarland, *The Architecture of Warren County*, North Carolina, 1770s to 1860s (Warrenton, N.C.: Warren County Historical Association, 2001), 241-242n; Henry T. Clawson to John H. Whitfield, November 22, 1854, Book 31, p. 393, Franklin County Deeds; *Spirit of the Age* (Raleigh, N.C.), November 21, 1855, p. 3.

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In Franklin County from 1850 to the beginning of the Civil War, these years of prosperity and growth exhibited a significant increase in building projects, both public and private, as well as an increase in the number of skilled craftsmen in the building trades residing in the county or regional ones frequenting it. As in neighboring Warren County, most were identified as mechanics and carpenters, but none as architects.<sup>69</sup> This was a period of opportunity, when some highly skilled and capable craftsmen evolved into contractors who expanded their workshops and provided turn-key completed building projects.<sup>70</sup> Warren County's two well-known regional builders who worked in Franklin County during this period, Jacob W. Holt and Albert G. Jones, clearly identified themselves in the 1860 U.S. Census as master mechanic and carpenter, respectively; however, extant contracts with their clients and other documentation place sole responsibility for the overall success of the project on their being a contractor.<sup>71</sup> Throughout this period, most of the craftsmen in the two counties were listed simply as mechanics and carpenters.<sup>72</sup>

After moving from Virginia to Warrenton in the early 1840s, Jacob W. Holt established what would become by 1850 a thriving workshop of craftsmen, apprentices, and skilled enslaved persons, many hired and some owned. In 1849, Holt's younger brother Thomas, also a carpenter, joined Holt's enterprise in Warrenton, which had become the "largest workforce of any builder in North Carolina."<sup>73</sup> Following a different path, Albert G. Jones, a Warren County native, worked in the early part of his career with two established and well-known regional North Carolina builders, James Burgess and Thomas Bragg. These important connections later allowed Jones to work independently with clients, using enslaved labor and collaborating with skilled craftsmen in various trades, including Holt. Both Jones and Holt were respected throughout the region and on occasion they assisted one another on a project. Their projects were primarily residential, but also included academies, colleges, churches, commercial buildings, courthouses and outbuildings. Fortunately, some of their work is documented, but most still relies on stylistic attributions.<sup>74</sup>

Many skilled craftsmen were associated with Holt and Jones through the years. Some migrated like Holt from Virginia, namely carpenters David Parrish and Thomas S. Neal; bricklayer Edward T. Rice; and painter John W. Rodgers. Others, like carpenters John Davis, Thomas Raney, Kindred Gupton, and James R. Thrower, and Paschal W. Motley, a bricklayer, were local. Some served out apprenticeship years and either moved on or remained working independently in the region. For instance, in 1850 twenty-nine-year-old carpenter Kindred Gupton was working in Jacob Holt's workshop. The 1860 U. S. Census documents Gupton's return to Franklin County, where he was listed simply as a farmer, with five mechanics living within his household. In addition, John Brummitt, a twenty-eight-year-old mechanic living in

<sup>69</sup> Lounsbury, *An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape*, 9-10, 61, 90-91, 229.

<sup>70</sup> Bishir, *Architects and Builders in North Carolina*, 146-148.

<sup>71</sup> McFarland, *The Architecture of Warren County*, 239n, 266; contract between Jacob W. Holt and Archibald D. Williams for the renovation and construction of Vine Hill, Franklin County, September 5, 1856, Archibald D. Williams Ledger, in the possession of Mr. and Mrs. Roger Melvin, Wake Forest, North Carolina.

<sup>72</sup> 1850 and 1860 U. S. Federal Censuses, Population Schedules, Franklin and Warren Counties, N.C.

<sup>73</sup> McFarland, *The Architecture of Warren County*, 35-37.

<sup>74</sup> McFarland, *The Architecture of Warren County*, 28-37.

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Louisburg on Church Street, had a separate shop and three mechanics living in his household. One of these mechanics, George Williamson, had become a co-partner with Thomas H. Raney in a general carpentry business by September 1, 1860. By 1870, Brummitt referred to himself as an architect.<sup>75</sup>

Even though building construction continued to follow traditional mortise-and-tenon framing methods through the mid-nineteenth century, mass production, mechanization, and use of steam power slowly infused a new timesaving energy into the milling of lumber and building components, both decorative and utilitarian, in the construction of mantels, windows, doors, and blinds. Manufacturing companies in North Carolina began to incorporate or specialize in producing sash, doors, and blinds. Early in the nineteenth century, the advance production of building elements for sale began to have a positive impact in overall project completion times for builders in the state. As McFarland discusses, Thomas Bragg implemented this time-saving plan probably during the winter months, a down time for his workmen. As a result, Bragg advertised having a well-stocked shop with a wide range of “Shopwork,” including heart pine lumber, window sash, doors, and blinds.<sup>76</sup> In the 1850s, the shop of Jacob Holt in Warrenton contained eighteen carpenters and apprentices; by 1860, the number had reduced to fourteen, possibly a reflection of a shift from less handwork to more of a reliance on machine-produced building materials and components.<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, Albert Jones seemed less rooted and more flexible in his approach to his business, traveling from his home and shop in Warren County to various construction sites, except in the case of Murfreesboro, a locale with a major concentration of projects undertaken by Jones in the early 1850s. Here he purchased a home, moved his family, and sent his children to school for several years.<sup>78</sup> Both Holt and Jones embraced time-saving aspects of their business. Holt also benefited from the project oversight assistance of his brother, Thomas J. Holt, also a carpenter. Throughout 1855, Thomas Holt spent significant portions of his time in Louisburg from February through April and August through October. As a Mason, Holt began attending meetings of the Louisburg Chapter No. 26 of Royal Arch Masons, as did Albert G. Jones and Thomas H. Raney. Holt and Raney may even have rented Lodge rooms for their use.<sup>79</sup>

As prosperity grew, all types of construction projects were on the rise in Franklin County. Brick was increasingly used for public and commercial buildings, but rarely for residential properties. With time, the threat of fire overcame cost concerns, leading to the eventual use of brick for public, educational, and commercial buildings. The prevalence of local stone through the region, usually granite, promoted its use in the building of chimneys and foundations. In 1850, county commissioners undertook the construction of a Greek Revival-style brick

<sup>75</sup> McFarland, *The Architecture of Warren County*, 263-265; “Co-Partnership,” *American Eagle* (Louisburg, N.C.), September 15, 1860, photocopy in Malone-Holden House file, Survey and Planning Branch, N.C. Office of Archives and History; 1860 and 1870 U.S. Federal Censuses, Population Schedules, Franklin County, N.C.

<sup>76</sup> McFarland, *The Architecture of Warren County*, 44-45.

<sup>77</sup> McFarland, *The Architecture of Warren County*, 263-266.

<sup>78</sup> “Desirable Residence for Sale,” *Spirit of the Age* (Raleigh, N.C.), August 16, 1854, p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> Minute Book 1, Proceedings of the Louisburg Chapter No. 26 of the Royal Arch Masons, February 6-October 24, 1855; September 18, 1856, <https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/252706?ln=en&v=uv#?xywh=-2779%2C-244%2C8383%2C4863>, accessed September 13, 2025.

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courthouse by contractors Richard O'Brien and Henry A. Taylor at a cost of \$4,058.73. It was enlarged in 1858 by the addition of a tower and belfry.<sup>80</sup> An advertisement in May 1851 requested proposals for constructing a two-story county jail in Louisburg described as rock or brick on the lower floor and brick on the second.<sup>81</sup> To the north on Main Street, the Methodists in Louisburg completed in 1859 a stylish Greek Revival brick church with bell tower that cost \$1,284.67.<sup>82</sup> Further up the street on land historically reserved for the female academy, a group of prominent citizens of Franklin County made plans in 1854 for the construction of an impressive Greek Revival-style four-story brick building for a new women's college, Louisburg Female College, to be located on the grounds of the Louisburg Female Academy. John Skinner was contracted to burn the brick and Royster and Jones of Wake County to erect the building.<sup>83</sup> Cost of construction was reported as \$20,000.<sup>84</sup>

Main Street just north of town quickly became a vibrant residential area in which several impressive Greek Revival and Italianate suburban villas were constructed in formal spacious settings replete with domestic outbuildings and either circular drives or lanes. Most were constructed by such prominent families as the Fullers, Williamsons, Browns, Yarboroughs, Kings, Williamses, and Malones.<sup>85</sup> Several are attributed to either Jacob Holt or A. G. Jones. Documents corroborate Jones's involvement with the construction of a suburban villa for Dr. Ellis Malone (NR) in 1854-55. A letter dated August 19, 1854, to Dr. Malone in Mississippi from Daniel S. Hill in Louisburg updated him on Albert G. Jones's progress on his house: [He] speaks certainly of getting your house done the part he was to finish, by the 10<sup>th</sup> Novr his head workman is here now supervising the sawing he says Jno Brodie has got more of it done than he expected & has got nearly all the stocks cut. His hands would have commenced on Monday but he has some work to do at home which will put off his entering for good with all hands till the Monday following, in a few weeks all his doors sash flooring moulding cornice & [illeg.]asters will be finished, he has contracted for the making them, with all his flooring &c already tongue & grooved of Clawson at Franklinton by steam & will be better by considerable than if done by hand, & besides he will select & throw out all that does not pass inspection if there be any defection which is considerable advantage in your favor, & will expedite the work greatly as he will have nothing to do but to go right off to framing & as soon as the house is

<sup>80</sup> Willard, *Franklin County Sketchbook*, 35; "To Contractors and Builders," *The Weekly Raleigh Register*, June 30, 1858, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> "Notice To Contractors," *Raleigh Times*, May 23, 1851, edition 1, p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> "Chronological Dates, Architects, and Builders of LUMC and Parsonages," n.d., in Louisburg United Methodist Church exhibit on the history of the church, Louisburg, N.C.

<sup>83</sup> Willard, *Franklin County Sketchbook*, 82; "Dissolution Royster & Jones," *The North Carolina Standard (Raleigh, N.C.)*, June 17, 1857, p. 3. L. H. Royster and J. R. Jones were the principals in the business.

<sup>84</sup> "Valuable Land for Sale," *The Semi-weekly Raleigh Register*, December 16, 1854, p. 1; Willard, *Louisburg College Echoes*, 45. Local tradition maintains that Albert G. Jones built the Main Building (NR 1978) at Louisburg College; however, to date no documentation supports this attribution.

<sup>85</sup> Perhaps four directors of the Louisburg Female College constructed dwellings during this period: Dr. William R. King and Peyton J. Brown, of Louisburg; Thomas Turner Clifton, who lived near Clifton's Pond; and Dr. Peter S. Foster, living near Ingleside. See Willard, *Louisburg College Echoes*, 47; Pezzoni, *The Architectural History of Franklin County*, 196, 274, 334.

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raised he will have nothing to do but to go to putting up work & finishing off instead of spending so much time in getting out & dressing timber sticking mouldings ....<sup>86</sup>

Unfortunately, during construction of Dr. Malone's house, Jones began to suffer financial problems that required asking Malone for payment of a bill and a loan. While asking for a two-hundred-dollar loan on March 22, 1855, in a postscript he referred to a bill recently sent to Dr. Malone and stated that if he disagreed with it, "I am perfectly willen to leave the matter to Mr. Harper & Holt as tha ar both good judges and masons."<sup>87</sup> He then asks that the matter be kept private. Mounting problems led Jones to leave the project unfinished on May 3, 1855. Dr. Malone, however, quickly contracted on May 11, 1855, with Thomas H. Raney to complete his house by August 18, 1855, for \$1,800.<sup>88</sup> This typical contract for a turn-key project more fully described what materials were already on hand that would be available to Raney: "all the timbers of every description both dressed & undressed the dressed weatherboards alone excepted & all the other materials on the premises for building purposes together with a [bin?] of tin now at Franklinton free of any further cost from him the said Raney."<sup>89</sup> He also constructed for \$300 a paling fence around Malone's yard and garden.<sup>90</sup> Months after the completion of the house, Raney was corresponding on July 24, 1856, with Malone, asking for assistance in a small financial matter unrelated to Malone but noted that payment should be directed to Mr. Brummitt, a mechanic then living in Louisburg.<sup>91</sup>

A wealthy planter in the Shocco Springs area of Warren County, Whitmel H. A. Kearney, played a prominent role in aspects of Jones's financial troubles, at one point purchasing on May 4, 1855, in Louisburg the entire brick-making business owned by Paschal W. Motley and Albert G. Jones for \$567.<sup>92</sup> In spite of these circumstances, A. G. Jones may have continued working in Louisburg. Jones Fuller, a cotton broker and merchant, undertook the renovation of an older two-story home beginning in the spring of 1856. Albert G. Jones may have transformed it into a stylish Greek Revival-style suburban villa completed in 1857, and the next year may have built a one-story hip-roof variation of it for widow Temperance Perry Williamson. Stylistic links in form and detail exist between the Edwin Wiley Fuller House (NR 1978) and Williamson House (NR 1975) to link both with the work of Albert G. Jones. In recent years at the Williamson house, one brick inscribed with "P. W. Motley 1858" was discovered that underscores this

<sup>86</sup> Daniel S. Hill to Dr. Ellis Malone, August 19, 1854, Ellis Malone Papers, 1778-1927, Rubenstein Special Collections Library, Duke University.

<sup>87</sup> A. G. Jones to Dr. Ellis Malone, March 22, 1855, Ellis Malone Papers.

<sup>88</sup> "Agreement between Dr. Ellis Malone and Thos. H. Raney May 11, 1855," Daniel S. Hill Papers, Rubenstein Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, N.C.

<sup>89</sup> "Agreement between Dr. Ellis Malone and Thos. H. Raney May 11, 1855," Daniel S. Hill Papers.

<sup>90</sup> Several of Raney's payment receipts from Malone dating from June, July, September, November, and December, 1855 are in the Ellis Malone Papers.

<sup>91</sup> Thos. H. Raney to Dr. Ellis Malone, July 24, 1856, Ellis Malone Papers.

<sup>92</sup> Agreement selling Motley and Jones brickmaking business of Albert G. Jones and Paskel W. Motley to Whitmell H. A. Kearney, May 4, 1855, Book 31, p. 460, Franklin County Deeds. See also McFarland, *The Architecture of Warren County*, 241n for more about the complex relationship between Kearney and Jones.

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possibility.<sup>93</sup> Brick mason Paschal W. Motley and Jones at times were business partners and also good friends.

The growing movement toward the picturesque and away from the classical as seen through the publication and availability of a range of new pattern books and the reprinting of earlier ones, especially those of Andrew Jackson Downing, is clearly evident in rural Franklin County. Here and in neighboring Warren County, the popularity of this picturesque movement was first embraced by the very wealthy, who were eager to build impressive, sophisticated, comfortable homes. These families, in most cases, were well educated, had intermarried, and socialized together. Some owned multiple plantations, but their home plantation usually included a thousand or more acres and numerous slaves. During the latter part of the 1850s, owners of three very prosperous plantations in the northeast section of Franklin County, Archibald D. Williams (Vine Hill, NR listed 1975), Dr. Samuel Perry (NR listed 1975), and Archibald Taylor (NR listed 1975), plus one in the southern part of the county, Dr. Algernon S. Perry (Cascine, NR listed 1973, updated 1985), constructed stylish Italianate frame dwellings for their plantation seats. Of these four plantations, the three in the northeast are clearly associated with the work of Jacob W. Holt, but only one, Vine Hill, is documented as having been built by him. All three are two-story, three-bay, double-pile houses, with symmetrical facades, hip roofs, and paired interior chimneys, in which a vocabulary of robust turned and milled woodwork decorated exterior cornices, surrounds, and entrances. Porches repeated and enhanced this decorative detailing through the use of brackets, posts, spandrels, and railings. The interior plans had gracious proportions and evolved around a center hall with stair, bisected by folding blinds. Faux decorative trompe l'oeil painting highlighted the baseboards and mantels using a marbleizing technique as opposed to the graining technique on the doors. The Dr. Samuel Perry House fully embodies all of these characteristics. At the Archibald Taylor House, the plaster walls in the center hall once exhibited a rare example of trompe l'oeil painting delineating rectangular blocks of exotic colored marble. Also, the ceiling depicted an ornate faux cornice and plaster medallion. The artist remains unknown.<sup>94</sup>

At Vine Hill, three financial documents associated with the remodeling and updating of an older dwelling record the work relationship between Archibald D. Williams and builder, Jacob W. Holt. A cost estimate signed on September 5, 1856, by Holt and Williams outlined the work agreed upon and its cost of \$3,000. This agreement included building two chimneys and a stone foundation as well as plastering and painting. The chimneys were to be reconstructed using the old chimney and underpinning bricks. Heart pine was to be used for all elements exposed to weather, including sills and shingles. Holt was also responsible for the purchase and supply of "all materials of best quality" and "every article necessary for the completion of the work." Nails, screws, locks, hinges, and glass were listed in this description. Bookkeeping accounts that run through June 2, 1857, added more details such as the construction of front and rear porches, two presses by a chimney with sash, five wardrobes, and a four-panel blind bisecting the stair hall. Of the eight chimney pieces, four were of best quality and four were plain.<sup>95</sup> Also recorded

<sup>93</sup> Dean Reudrich, while restoring the Williamson House around 2000, discovered on site the Motley inscribed brick.

<sup>94</sup> Pezzoni, *The Architectural History of Franklin County*, Plate 1, 23-24, 95-96, 187-188, 371-372.

<sup>95</sup> See Archibald D. Williams Ledger.

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were on site labor work days used for placing the sills, raising the house, and hauling. One notation identifies sixteen days for the board of O'Day. In all likelihood, this was Francis O'Day, a skilled rock mason from Ireland, working in Warrenton and listed in the 1850 U. S. Census.<sup>96</sup>

Only four more modest examples of picturesque dwellings appear to have survived in Franklin County, but little is known about their history. Similar to the Williamson House in Louisburg with its Greek Revival-style details, the Jordan F. Jones House at Laurel Mill is a simpler one-story example of the more sophisticated two-story double-pile Italianate design built prior to the Civil War and popular among wealthy planters.<sup>97</sup> The Dr. Cooley House near Bunn also exhibits this form with Greek Revival-style details; however, its gable-front portico dominates the three-bay façade. The eaves, cornices, and returns are decorated with fanciful Gothic Revival sawn work with pierced designs as illustrated in Downing's *Cottage Residences*, especially the use of sawn work bargeboards. The Gothic Revival board-and-batten cottage behind the McGee House in Franklinton, however, more fully embraces the design elements for cottages as illustrated in Downing's *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1851).<sup>98</sup> It features a steeply pitched roof with multiple gables, all outlined with scalloped bargeboards, and a bold brick chimney with decorative cap.

, the construction of Oak Grove, ca. 1859, reflects the Foster family's familiarity with contemporary building projects of relatives in Franklin and Warren Counties and blends it with their own stylistic preferences within the picturesque movement featured in architectural pattern books and popular magazines. This movement introduced owners, like the Fosters, to the selection of design options. These choices embraced Elizabethan, Italian, Gothic, Tuscan, and more to simple cottage styles, some with rustic board and batten exteriors. Ultimately, the success of these new design choices was governed by the skillfulness of the craftsmen working on a project. The Foster family with its five or six children chose to build a six-room dwelling rather than one with eight or more, as many wealthy planters and their relatives did. Their preference followed the lines of a simple cottage with a distinctive yet uncommon central gable and without elaborate turned or sawn work decorative elements. Unadorned classicism marked the cornices, posts, and surrounds. The entrance was meant to convey a bold welcoming statement, one familiar in the work of Holt and Jones.

The overall form of this picturesque dwelling, however, emulates in detail two offerings in Andrew J. Downing's *Cottage Residences* (1847), Design IV for "An Ornamental Farmhouse" (Exhibit 1) and Design V for "A Cottage Villa in the Bracketed Mode" (Exhibit 2 and 3).<sup>99</sup> Each features a gable roof with a distinctive central front gable and stands nearly two-stories in height, with shortened second-story windows, seen especially in Design V. Also, paired interior

<sup>96</sup> McFarland, *The Architecture of Warren County*, 46, 264.

<sup>97</sup> Pezzoni, *The Architectural History of Franklin County*, 27, 367-368, 203-204, 133; T. H. Pearce, *Early Architecture of Franklin County* (Freeman, S.D., Pine Hill Press, 1977), 73-74, 90-91, 110-111.

<sup>98</sup> A. J. Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses; Including Designs for Cottages, Farm Houses, and Villas* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1851) Design 11, Small Bracketed Cottage, 78, <https://archive.org/details/architectureofco00down/page/78/mode/2up>, accessed September 18, 2025.

<sup>99</sup> A. J. Downing, *Cottage Residences; or, a Series of Designs for Rural Cottages and Their Gardens and Grounds*, Third ed. (New York and London: Wiley and Putnam, 1847), fig. 31-32, 81-91, fig. 36-37 and fig. 40-41, 92-102.

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chimneys pierce the ridge of the gable roof above the central gable. Although both of Downing's illustrations have ornamental woodwork along the eaves, only Design V has extended eaves and a one-story entrance portico. Also, its center-hall floor plan is single pile with a rear one-room T-addition and wraparound porch. At Oak Grove, the choice of this floor plan differs in use. Upon entering the hall, the formal parlor stands to the left with a bedroom to the right, entered from beneath the stairs. The T addition contains a dining room and a smaller room that share an interior chimney. This small room with closet is accessed from both the dining room and bedroom. Both bedrooms upstairs as well as the one downstairs also have closets. The unfinished board walls of one upstairs bedroom, now sheet rocked, maybe a harbinger of the Civil War.

The quality of workmanship and the origin of specific design details at Oak Grove, especially on the interior, give rise to questions about the craftsmen involved in its construction. To date, family records do not shed light on any aspect of its construction; however, family tradition attributes it to Jacob Holt. Ill-fitting interior entrance and exit doors in the hall and the irregular use of uniform elements in the assembly of surrounds provide evidence of craftsmen working with an unfamiliar building design or a lack of attention to overall detail. The reduction in the scale of the stair hall and the availability of stock elements may have contributed to this truncated installation and inconsistency in use. The possible involvement of two craftsmen arises, however, from the presence of certain woodwork details and the trompe l'oeil painting. At the house in Louisburg built for Ellis Malone, the simple cyma reversa stair brackets, turned newel posts, and fluted porch columns follow the same configurations found at Oak Grove and are likely associated with the work of carpenter Thomas H. Raney. Also, by 1858, Benjamin A. Richardson, an experienced and talented ornamental painter, had moved to Warrenton from Tarboro. Shortly thereafter, he was commissioned to complete a fresco at Shocco Springs, a popular social gathering spot frequented by wealthy planters and their families in the region.<sup>100</sup> Richardson also specialized in marbleizing and graining techniques. Oak Grove was located just ten miles south of Shocco Springs. Also of note, the Fosters lived within five miles of Kindred Gupton, who resided, in all likelihood, midway between them and their Taylor, Perry, and Williams relatives.

Oak Grove stands today as a reflection of deliberate choices being made at a time when economy and tradition were being supplanted by progress and prosperity and the newly prescribed aesthetic was picturesque living in cultivated pastoral settings. A very well-connected and prosperous family that valued education, the Fosters chose a simple but au courant design for their new home on a scale that worked for their needs and their own aesthetic. By valuing the economy of mass-produced building materials and utilizing personal contacts, the Fosters sought to build a gracious family home relying in the end on high-quality decorative finishing touches to carry it off. Little did the Fosters know that their choice of this simple gable roof dwelling with its central gable would be a precursor of the most popular one- and two-story house form built in North Carolina during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, commonly referred to in one-story form as a triple-A.

<sup>100</sup> Phillips, *Grand Illusions: Historic Interior Painting in North Carolina*, 37-38.

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** FK0337

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 2.98 acres

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Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 36.181326 | Longitude: -78.284688 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The 2.98 acres associated with the Oak Grove nomination is comprised of one parcel in the ownership of William Lee Harris that include the primary Oak Grove house site (see Franklin County Tax Map). This parcel #017291 includes the main dwelling, its mature oak grove, and a small ruinous non-contributing tenant house.

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**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The 2.98 acres associated with this National Register nomination represents the house site of the former 200-acre plantation. Owned by Dr. Perter S. Foster and known as Oak Grove. This parcel is bounded on the northwest by US 401, and two additional parcels, # 039843 to the north and #024480 to the east and south also owned by Foster descendants.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Drucilla H. York, architectural historian and Maurice C. York, historian  
organization: Local History Associates  
street & number: 2001 E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
city or town: Greenville state: NC zip code: 27858  
e-mail druyork85@gmail.com  
telephone: 919-339-8557  
date: September 20, 2025

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Oak Grove

City or Vicinity: Louisburg vicinity

County: Franklin County

State: North Carolina

Photographer: Drucilla H. York

Date Photographed: July 14, 2025 (exception noted below)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 17. W. view of front façade from drive.
- 2 of 17. Overview front façade from NW
- 3 of 17. Distance oblique side elevation view from S.
- 4 of 17. Distance oblique rear elevation view from E.
- 5 of 17. Detail of corner pilaster at SE corner.
- 6 of 17. Front entrance.
- 7 of 17. Porch detail.
- 8 of 17. Detail fluted porch column and cornice at N corner.
- 9 of 17. Hall entrance.
- 10 of 17. Hall stair newel and brackets.
- 11 of 17. Parlor mantel. (September 10, 2025)
- 12 of 17. Parlor door.
- 13 of 17. Parlor baseboard with window pedestal and apron detail.
- 14 of 17. Dining room mantel.
- 15 of 17. First floor SW bedroom closet and mantel.
- 16 of 17. Second floor N bedroom double-sash front window.
- 17 of 17. Tenant House, view west elevation.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations 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.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

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- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service,

DRAFT

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
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Fig. 31.

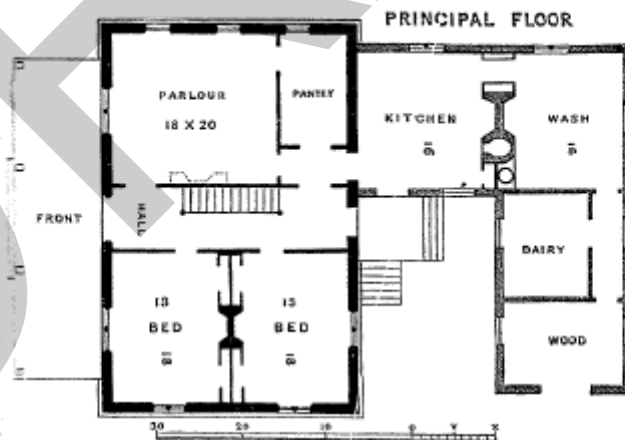


Fig. 32.

Exhibit 1: Design IV, An Ornamental Farm House, Fig. 31-32  
*A. J. Downing's Cottage Residences, Rural Architecture & Landscape Gardening.*  
[Watkins Glen, N. Y.]: Library of Victorian Culture, 1967.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
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DESIGN V.  
A COTTAGE VILLA IN THE BRACKETED MODE.



Fig. 36



Fig. 37.

Exhibit 2: Design V, A Cottage Villa of the Bracketed Mode, Fig. 36-37  
*A. J. Downing's Cottage Residences, Rural Architecture & Landscape Gardening.*  
[Watkins Glen, N. Y.]: Library of Victorian Culture, 1967, 88.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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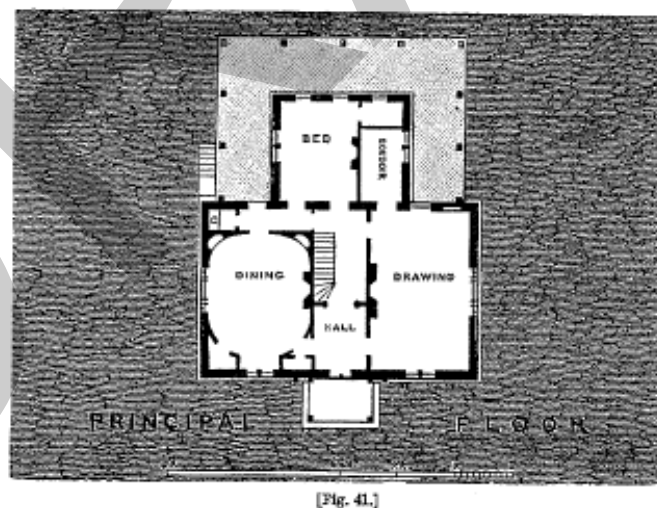


Exhibit 3: Design V, As Constructed in Wood, Fig. 40-41  
*A. J. Downing's Cottage Residences, Rural Architecture & Landscape Gardening.*  
[Watkins Glen, N. Y.]: Library of Victorian Culture, 1967.