

PROPOSAL OF  
THE 1852 HOFFMAN HOTEL, DALLAS, N.C.  
TO THE GASTON COUNTY HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
REGISTER  
OCTOBER 22, 1979



GASTON COUNTY HISTORIC PROPERTIES COMMISSION

Mrs. Richard Penegar, Chrmn.  
Mrs. H.O. Williams  
Mrs. W.N. Craig  
Mrs. Bill Stinnett  
Mr. Robert Carpenter  
Mr. Robert Whitt

1. Name and location of the property. The property known as the Hoffman Hotel is located on the southwest corner of the courthouse square, at Holland and Main Streets, in Dallas, Gaston County, North Carolina.

2. Name, address, and telephone of the present owner of the property.

Mrs. Katherine S. McKeithan  
131 W. Main St.  
Dallas, N.C. 28034  
phone 704/ 922-7943

3. Representative photographs of the property. Photographs are included with this report.

4. A map depicting the location of the property. This report contains a tax office map and an historic district map locating the property.

5. Current deed reference of the property. This report contains a chain of title of the property.

6. Historical sketch of the property. This report contains a brief historical sketch prepared by Mrs. Barbara Voorhees.

7. Architectural description of the property. This report contains a brief architectural description of the property prepared by Mr. Alan Waufle, Director of the Gaston County Art and History Museum.

8. Documentation of why and in what way the property meets the criteria set forth in N.C.G.S. 160A-399.4.

a. historical and cultural significance.

The historical and cultural significance of the Hoffman Hotel rests upon two factors: The Hoffman Hotel served as the center of activity for Dallas, seat of Gaston County government from 1851-1911; and secondly, the Hotel serves as an excellent example of 19th century architecture for the state of North Carolina.

b. suitibility for preservation and restoration.

- b. suitibility for preservation and restoration.  
This report contains a letter addressing the suitability for preservation and restoration from the architectural historian of the division of Archives and History, N.C. Dept. of Cultural Resources.
- c. educational value.  
This structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Dallas Historic District. All eight structures listed in this district are highlighted in a walking tour provided by the Gaston County Art and History Museum. This tour provides an overview of how Gaston County began and what life was like in the original village county seat of government. The Hotel is also featured on the Historic Sites Map of Gaston County.
- d. cost of acquisition, restoration, maintenance, or repair.  
The Historic Properties Commission has no intention of purchasing the property. However, the property has been offered to the Gaston County Art and History Museum Board of Trustees for \$52,000. The cost of complete restoration has been estimated at \$300,000. and was included in the Sept. 11, 1979 bond referendum for \$350,000. With the failure of passage of the bond, the museum Trustees have consulted with the contractor for minimum repairs needed to open the doors of the hotel as a museum. This figure is \$50,000.
- e. possibilities of adaptive or alternative use of the property.  
As noted in item d., the structure would serve well as a museum, being such an excellent architectural example and located on the historic square. Further, it could again serve as a boarding house or a plantation restaurant.
- f. appraised value.  
The 1972 tax appraisal value of the hotel itself is \$17,190. It was also appraised by Mr. George Mason, Realtor, for \$90,000. because of its historic significance. The Commission is aware that designation of the property would allow the owner to apply for a special property tax classification.
- g. the administrative and financial responsibility of any person or organization willing to underwrite all or a portion of such costs.  
As indicated earlier, the Commission has no intention of purchasing this property.

9. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria established for inclusion on the National Register.

The Commission recognizes that the National Register of Historic Places was established to single out and to provide protection for properties of local and state historic

significance. Since the Hoffman Hotel is already listed, its merit is established.

10. Documentation of why and in what ways the property is of historical importance to Gaston County.

The Commission believes that the Hoffman Hotel is significant to the history of Gaston County because of its architectural merit, and because of its location on the historic square as one of a group of buildings teaching what life was like in the 1850's when Gaston County was established. Detailed documentation in support of both contentions is contained in the architectural description prepared by Mr. Alan Waufle, and in the historical sketch prepared by Mrs. Barbara Voorhees.

CHAIN OF TITLE FOR THE HOFFMAN HOTEL, DALLAS, N.C.

1. In 1847, Jessie Holland donated seventy-five acres of land to the Gaston County Commissioners for the new county seat. Land for the court house square was laid out and the remainder was divided into half-acre lots for sale as homesites. Proceeds from these sales were applied to a building fund for a court house, jail and stocks. *Deed book 1, Pages 19 + 20.*
2. In 1851, Daniel Hoffman purchased a lot from the Gaston County Commissioners located on the southwest corner of the court house square. In 1851-52 he constructed a forty-four room, three story brick hotel.
3. On December 28, 1866, Daniel Hoffman died intestate, and his son, W.H. Hoffman, was named administrator of his estate. Final Record, Book 1, Page 5. File #3723.
4. In 1868, Jonas Hoffman Jr., nephew of Daniel Hoffman, succeeded in the ownership and management of the hotel.
5. On September 6, 1901, Jonas Hoffman died testate, leaving the hotel property to his wife Frances Lineberger Hoffman and his son John Puett Hoffman jointly, with right of survivorship, by will dated January 27, 1899 and probated on September 14, 1901. Will Book 3, Page 96 in the Office of the Gaston County Clerk of Superior Court.
6. On June 18, 1934, Gaston County commenced foreclosure proceedings against John Puett Hoffman and wife Mabel Niven Hoffman for non-payment of ad valorem taxes. At the conclusion of this proceeding, Gaston County became the owner of the hotel property.
7. On February 8, 1940, Gaston County conveyed the hotel property to Robert B. Hoffman by deed, and recorded in Deed Book 378, Page 267 on March 22, 1940.
8. On December 5, 1946, Robert B. Hoffman died intestate and the hotel property passed to his heirs at law, including some twenty-four persons. B.J. Hoffman and G.T. Hoffman were named administrators. Estate Index, Page 63.
9. By special proceedings entitled "Laban Bollinger, Jr. et ux, et al, petitioners, vs. Billy Harwell et ux, et al, Minors, Respondants", B.J. Hoffman and G.T. Hoffman were vested with authority to sell the subject property at auction. This was a partitioning proceeding among the heirs of Robert B. Hoffman. James Martin Shuford became the last and highest bidder. Special Proceedings Docket, Book 4, Page 102. Case #2070. Orders and Decrees, Book 17, Page 415.
10. On June 20, 1947, James Martin Shuford took possession of the hotel property from B.J. Hoffman and G.T. Hoffman, by Commissioner's Deed, and recorded on June 25, 1947, in Deed Book 492, Page 612.
11. On March 30, 1960, James Martin Shuford died intestate, and the property passed to his heir, daughter Katherine Shuford McKeithan, with a dower interest to his wife, Catherina Elizabeth who died on April 14, 1962.

6. THE HOFFMAN FAMILY OF GASTON COUNTY WITH  
REFERENCE TO THE HOFFMAN HOTEL

Jacob Hoffman, Sr. Immigrant Ancestor (1716 - ?)

Jacob Hoffman, Sr., was born in Germany in 1716 and married Catherina Best in 1745. He came to America in 1768 aboard the Pennsylvania Packet, settling first in Berks County, Pennsylvania and later to Shenandoah County, Virginia. In 1776, he moved to Tryon County (later Lincoln, then Gaston) and settled on Big Long Creek near what is now Dallas, North Carolina.

John Hoffman, Sr. (1760 - 1832)

Among the sons of Jacob Hoffman, Sr., was John Hoffman, born in Germany in 1760 and emigrating with his parents to America. At age sixteen, both John and his brother Jacob Jr. fought under Colonel Hambright in the Battle of Kings Mountain, where John was wounded. He carried the scar to his death in 1832.

In 1785, John Hoffman married Margaret Hovis and moved near the shoals at Spencer Mountain near his older brother Jacob.

John Hoffman was a man of fine character and ability. He helped organize the Philadelphia Lutheran Church in Dallas sometime before 1800, and was an elder there until his death. He was an excellent mechanic, and fashioned his own farm equipment and other implements from looms to surveying equipment. He was diligent in business, and operated a saw mill, grist mill and also a cotton gining machine. He eventually became known as "Rich John" to distinguish him from other John Hoffmans in the area. By the time of his death on September 24, 1832, he owned considerable land, possessed a large amount of money and owned a few negroes. He and his wife had nine children, including sons Daniel and Jonas.

Daniel Hoffman (1797 - 1866)

Daniel Hoffman was born June 21, 1797. Described as an "intelligent, enterprising, genial man of high principles of moral and Christian life," Daniel lived for a long time on the old Yorkville Road, two miles south of Dallas, with his wife Susan Lineberger Hoffman. With the establishment of Gaston County in 1846 and the founding of the Town of Dallas in 1847, Daniel assumed an influential position in the early years of the village. In 1851-52, he built a forty-four room brick hotel on the southwest corner of the public square.

During his lifetime, Daniel served on the committee appointed by the County Court to allot church lots free to the principal church bodies in the area, including property for the Lutheran Church of Dallas. Daniel died "honored and esteemed" on December 28, 1866, and is buried at the Lutheran Church of Dallas.

Jonas Hoffman, Jr. succeeded his uncle, Daniel Hoffman, in the ownership and management of the hotel in 1868. The chain of title has not been established, since Daniel died intestate and the early records of Gaston County have been removed to Raleigh.

*Handwritten notes:*  
March 1871  
2 11 1871

Jonas Hoffman, Jr.

Jonas Hoffman, Jr. was born on June 20, 1820. During the course of his life, he married three times, his first two wives predeceasing him. By his first wife, Sarah Rhyne Hoffman (b. August 30, 1823; d. July 8, 1862), he had six children, five sons and one daughter. Three of the children died at an early age. Sarah is buried in the graveyard of the Lutheran Chapel Church.

By his second wife, Mary Jane Suggs Hoffman (b. August 2, 1839; d. February 23, 1874), he had six children, three sons and three daughters. One daughter died at an early age.

By his third wife, Frances Linberger Hoffman (b. ?; d. June 4, 1923), he had one son, John Puett Hoffman, born June 16, 1878, when his father was fifty-eight.

With his first wife, Sarah, Jonas Hoffman settled on a farm containing 140 acres "without cultivated lands or improvements," located two miles west of Lowell near Duhart Creek. He began his married life with his mare "Dandy", an axe, mattock and a few farm implements, all accumulated prior to his marriage in all likelihood. A young, energetic man of good health, he opened his farm gradually and prospered in a small way as a farmer. Although he had little formal education, he read, thought and observed and developed into a practical, intelligent "well-posted" man. He was highly regarded by his friends and neighbors as a man of fine sense and sound judgement.

His first home was a log cabin of one room which he built in 1842 after his marriage to Sarah. In 1848, he built a larger five room two story dwelling and the log cabin was moved and became a residence for the Negro cook his father-in-law had given his wife.

Before the Civil War, Jonal Hoffman was a Democrat, but was opposed to secession and thus subject to the abuse of his neighbors. Once the war began, he was loyal to the Confederacy. While he was not an abolitionist, he did not advocate slavery, yet owned several slaves, and often took them to plow the fields of a neighbor whose husband or sons were away in the army.

When the War began, Jonas exceeded the age limit for soldiers and was ineligible for military service until the last year of the war when the age limit was raised. He enlisted in the Confederate Navy and was stationed first on the Cape Fear River near Wilmington and later on the James River, Virginia. He was surrendered with Lee's army at Appomattox.

After the peace, Jonas aligned himself with the Republican Party, although he deplored the mismanagement and lawlessness of the Reconstruction Era. It was early in the Reconstruction period that Jonas succeeded his uncle Daniel Hoffman in the ownership and management of the Hoffman Hotel, which became the Republican's hotel during court sessions. As a Republican, Jonas Hoffman was elected two or three times to the State Legislature from Gaston County beginning in 1867. He also served as delegate to the 1875 Constitutional Convention and was later nominated for State

*March 1912*  
*1875*

Treasurer by the Prohibitionists although he had little hope of winning.

Jonas Hoffman became a leader in the town of Dallas after moving to town. He helped grade a railroad bed from Gastonia to Dallas in order to link up the railroad from Chester, S.C. to Dallas. He was a stockholder and helped raise money to build one of the earliest cotton mills in Gaston County, Woodlawn. (The year was 1850 and he assisted in raising part of the necessary \$6000.

Jonas Hoffman helped establish the Gaston High School in Dallas, and with other stockholders oversaw the construction of a three-story brick building 100' long by 40' wide, which became Gaston Female College. "While strictly not of high enough grade to be called a college, it was a first class high school, and subjects taught included French, German, music and art. Graduates enrolled in the Freshman and Sophomore College classes of many four-year institutions, although Gaston Female College was not a degree-granting institution. The College closed about 1910 because of competition with the public high schools in the county, and the stockholders turned over the property to the Dallas Graded High School for about a third its value.

Jonas Hoffman left several of his children stock in the Gaston Female College as well as the Dallas Cotton Mill.

When Jonas Hoffman died in 1901, all his children were married with the exception of John Puett, to whom the hotel was left. Jonas Hoffman is buried in the cemetery of the Lutheran Church of Dallas.

#### John Puett Hoffman ( 1878 - 1943)

John Puett Hoffman, known as Puett or Puette, was the last child born to Jonas Hoffman Jr. and the only child by his third wife, Frances. Wife Frances and son Puett were named heirs to the hotel property with right of survivorship. When Frances died June 4, 1923, the hotel passed to Puett outright. He kept the property until 1934, when during the Depression, foreclosure proceedings were begun because of non-payment of taxes. The property passed to Robert B. Hoffman of Lincoln County, who bought it from Gaston County for \$100, on February 8, 1940. As of this writing, I do not know the relationship between Puett and Robert Hoffman. At any rate, it is believed that the Puett Hoffman's remained in the hotel.

Puett married Mabel or Mabelle Niven Hoffman, who was sixty-two at the time of his death. He died September 11, 1943 when, according to the death certificate, he "fell on the street-instantly died due to heart's action or inaction."

#### Robert B. Hoffman

I do not know the connection between Puett and Robert, although I assume they were related. Robert had large property holdings in Lincoln, Gaston and Richmond Counties, but neglected to leave a will designating which land would pass to which relatives. As a result, he caused a special proceeding to be instituted by which all his property was sold and the proceeds divided among his heirs.

This Indenture made this the 10<sup>th</sup> day of March, in the year  
 eighteen hundred and sixty ~~seven~~ Between Daniel Hoffman, of  
 the State of North Carolina, and the County of Gaston, of the first part,  
 and John Bell, of the State and County aforesaid, of the second part,  
 Witnesseth, that the said party of the first part, for and in consideration  
 of the sum of Seventy Two Hundred Dollars, the receipt of which is  
 hereby acknowledged, has given granted bargained sold and conveyed  
 and doth by these presents give grant bargain sell and convey to the said  
 party of the second part, his heirs and assigns, all that tract or parcel of  
 land, lying in the County of Gaston, bounded as follows, Beginning  
 at a small pine & stone, on the side of the public road, near Thence S 4  
 East, 53 poles to a post on the side of said road, Thence S 10 W 62 1/2  
 to a stake in the road, Thence S 20 W 31 poles to a stone near the same road  
 Thence South 84 E 18 poles to a stone, Bradley's Corner, Thence S 35 W 44 1/2 to  
 a stone on the side of the said road, Thence due west 75 poles to a stone, said  
 Bell's Corner, Thence N 55 W 31 poles to a stone, between two stones Thence N 89 W  
 66 poles to a sapling, Thence N 32 W 74 1/2 to a white oak, Thence N 70 E 356 poles to  
 the Beginning, containing by estimation one hundred and forty  
three acres, being a part of the plantation known as the same Hoffman  
 formerly resided, including his mansion house.

The said with the Appointments, Thenceforth to be held to the said party, his  
 second part, his heirs executors administrators and assigns, against  
 the claim and entry of all persons whatsoever, and he doth further cov-  
 enant, that he is seized of the premises in fee simple, and has power  
 to make and convey such an estate, by this Indenture and has done  
 the same by these presents. In witness whereof the said party of the first  
 part hath hereunto set his hand and seal, this the day and year above  
 written, Daniel Hoffman

Signed sealed and delivered in the presence of  
 Anzi Ford & E. M. Smith,

State of North Carolina /  
 Gaston County } Aug 31<sup>st</sup> 1867.  
 personally appeared before me Anzi Ford, a subscribing witness to  
 the foregoing deed, and the due execution thereof was duly proven.  
 Therefore at said deed with this certificate be recorded,  
 E. M. Smith, no judge.

Recorded Aug the 31<sup>st</sup> 1867. E. M. Smith, Reg of Deeds.

# Administrators Sale!

As Administrator of Daniel Hoffman  
Decd. I will sell in the town of Dallas  
on Friday the 12<sup>th</sup> day of July next,  
the property known as Hoffmans Hotel,  
also one other House and Lot located  
in front & east of the Court House here,  
Also 4 acres adjoining said town, on which  
is located a good Paw Yard. Also 3 1/2  
acre lots adjoining the Paw Yard.

Also 288 Acres of Land situated 1 1/2  
miles South of Dallas known as Hoffmans  
Mills - Consisting of Planing Mills, Saw  
Mills, Cotton Gin & Serraw. (Subject to  
the widows dower)

I will sell on Saturday the 13<sup>th</sup> day  
of July next. at Wood Lawn Easton County  
a valuable tract of Land containing  
270 acres, on which D. Q. Hoffmans  
widow now resides (subject to said widows  
dower)

Terms - A credit of Twelve months  
will be given with approved Security

D. Q. Hoffmans.  
Admin<sup>r</sup>

## 7. Architectural description of the property

The Hoffman Hotel is a three story brick building set on a raised basement covered with coursed stucco. The brick work is laid in American Bond with five rows of stretchers between rows of headers. The building is I-shaped with a seven bay main facade and a six bay ell. The gable ends are pedimented and a wide frieze band accentuates the boxed molded eaves which carry into the gable ends.

Across the main facade is a two story porch with bracketed posts and a sawnwork ballustrade at both levels. In the center of the facade is a double door of Greek Revival design at the first floor level. This double door has sidelights and transom which are framed by a symmetrically molded architrave with corner blocks and roundels. In the center of the facade at the second level is a single door with transom which leads onto the porch. Nine over nine sash windows with stuccoed lintels are present at each level and in the gable ends. A second porch, which is not original to the building, is found on the east side of the ell. Doors open from the building onto this porch from the entrance hall and from the room currently used as the dining room.

The front door leads into the stair hall with the staircase at the opposite end of the room. The door leading onto the porch at the side of the ell is also at the end of the hall and is beneath the staircase which rises in two flights with small landing to the second floor. The walls of the hall are support walls made of brick and covered with plaster and wall paper. Architectural detailing in this room as in the others of the first floor are fairly simple with corner blocks and roundels at each door frame. All floors in the hotel are made of pine. Baseboards on the first and part of the second floor are twelve inches deep. A moderate crown mold joins the walls to the ceiling in all rooms of the first floor.

The first floor currently has seven rooms and the stair hall. The eastern most room, now used as a bedroom, originally had been two smaller rooms, each with a fireplace. A window which had originally been at the end of the east hall, has been closed and now serves as a closet for the bedroom.

Two smaller rooms off this hall have original plank walls and now serve as bathrooms and storage closets. The main room of the first floor has a fireplace with original hearth and fairly simple narrow mantel. This room is separated by a plank wall with two doorways from a smaller room which also has a fireplace. This fireplace has a mantel which is also narrow but is somewhat more decorative with pilasters, supporting entablature consisting of a central panel and moldings which end in Greek fret designs over the pilasters. The other two rooms on the floor are reached through a door from the main parlor. In the first of these rooms there is a door which leads onto the side porch of the ell. A molded chair rail is applied to the walls of this room. Another doorway leads to a modern kitchen which has asphalt tile over the pine floor. The fireplace in the kitchen has been closed.

A narrow stair leads from the kitchen to the partial basement. This stair was added during the kitchen remodeling thirty years ago (c. 1950). Originally an open staircase went from the adjoining dining room to the basement. The basement consists of two rooms which are in the ell portion of the building. The room entered from the kitchen is floored with brick, has two fireplaces and doorway to the outside at ground level on the west side of the building. The other basement room has a dirt floor and an opening to the crawl space under the rest of the building. Ceilings of both rooms are plastered over lathing (hand split).

An open stair rises steeply in two runs from the main floor stair hall to the second floor. The stairs have a round rail and small square pickets. The stair rails terminate at round newel posts with ball caps at each level of the building and on all landings. The ends of the stairs are simply decorated with a double scroll motif. The risers of the stairs from the third floor to the attic show original marbelizing done in green, blue, and red.

The second floor is divided into seventeen rooms which were used as bedchambers for hotel guests. The second and third floors are not in use by the present owner. Walls on the west side hall are plaster over lathe as are all ceilings

in the building. The east hall terminates at a door which opens onto a staircase that was added c. 1900. Bedroom walls on the west hall and on the ell hall are plank wood and plaster over lathe. Doors are simple, four-paneled with original locks and hardware. There are six fireplaces on the second floor with original brick hearths and simple mantels. Some mantels are more decorative than others having fluted pilasters and plain frieze entablature.

The third floor is divided into ten rooms. The rooms on the east hall are remodeled in the 20th Century and have walls of sheet rock. Baseboards, doors, and door framing are compatible in design of original. The rooms on the west hall have plank walls which are original and pickled. Doors are original with original hardware and are painted with a simulated graining and room numbers. The rooms in the ell portion have the walls removed to make one large room with plaster over masonry walls. In the center of the room there is one square post used to support the floor of the attic above. There are no fireplaces on the third floor, however, there are openings for woodburning stoves.

The attic is fully floored with wide pine flooring. The east and south gables contain windows with nine over nine sash. The roof is wide panels of tin. Rising above the roof are two double chimneys and two single chimneys, making a total of six chimneys.