



a history of

Turnipseed Nature Preserve



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PRESERVATION CONSULTING

A History of the Turnipseed Nature Preserve

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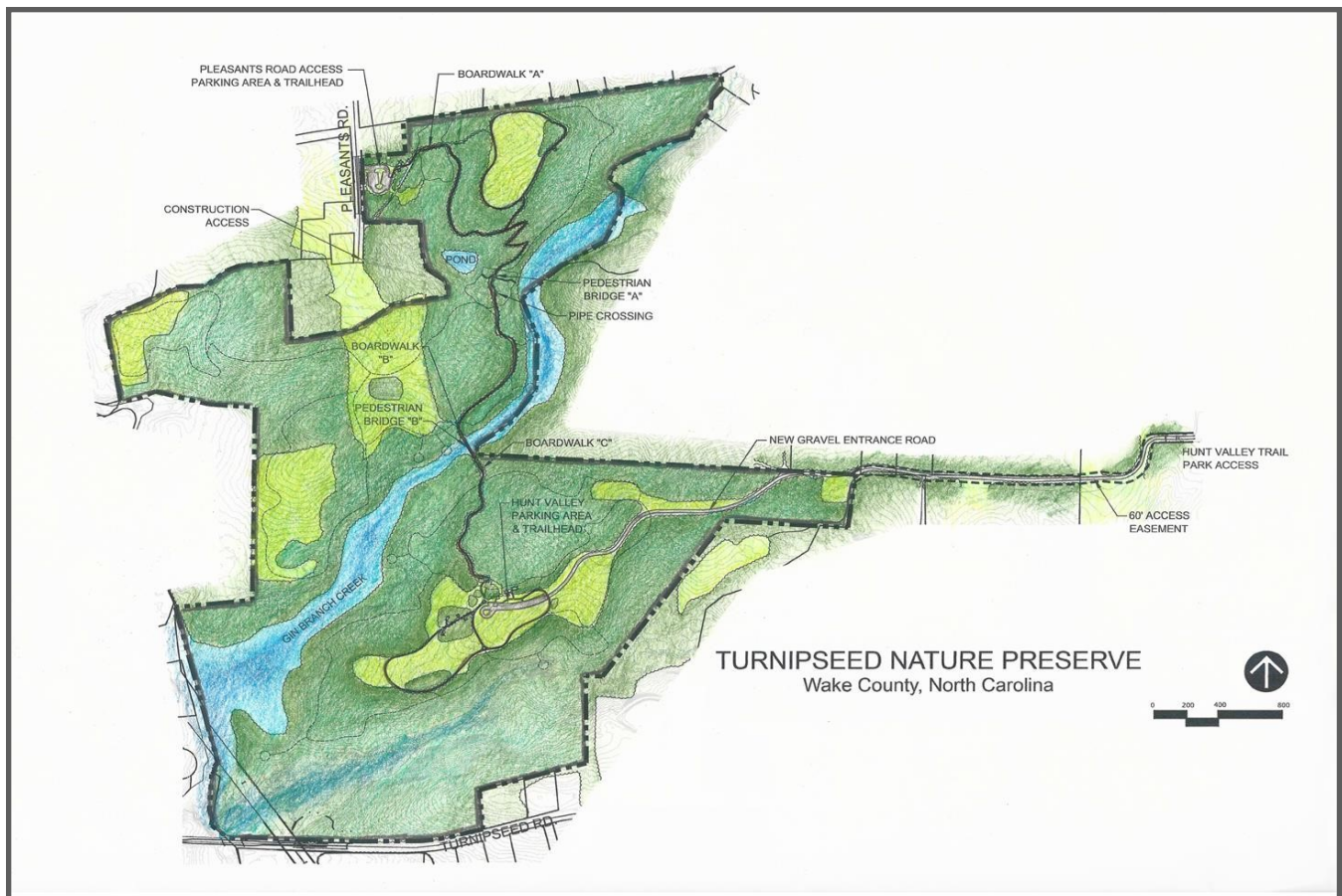


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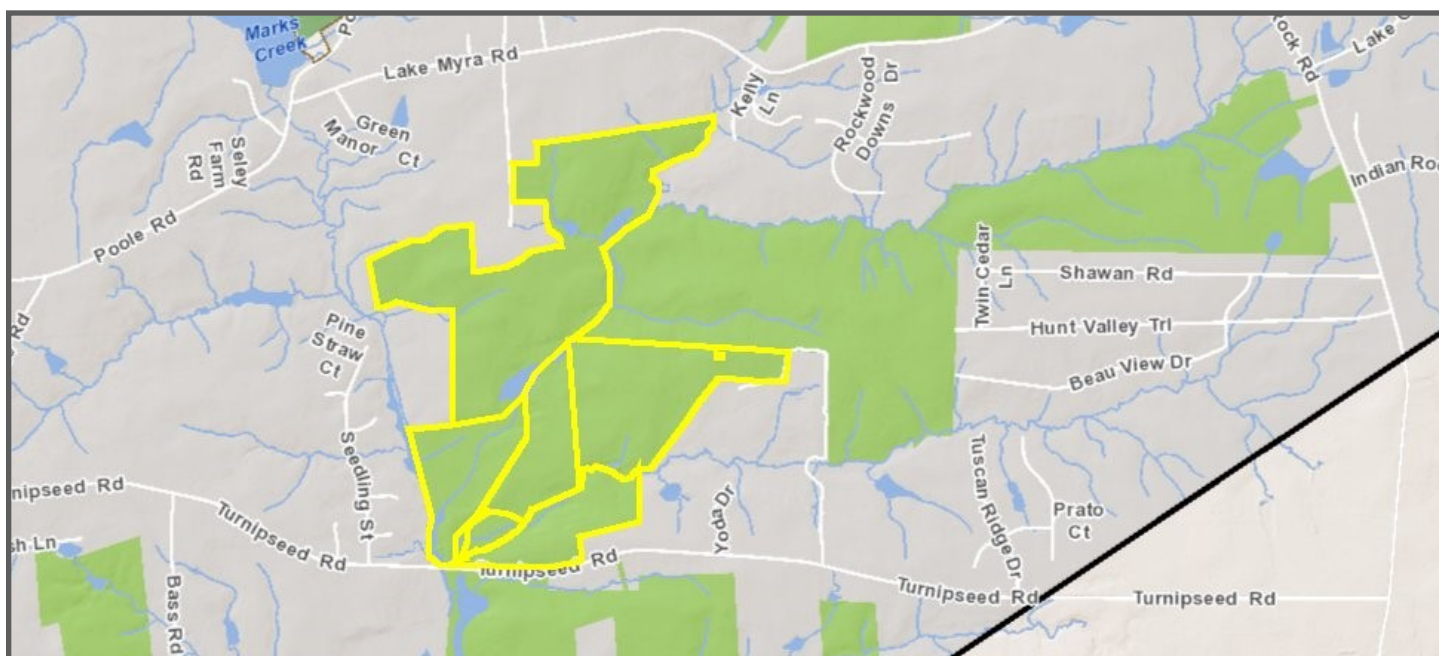
Project Description

The Turnipseed Nature Preserve is a 265-acre property off Hunt Valley Trail in Wendell managed by Wake County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS). The preserve is classified as an open space property, which Wake County PROS manages as low-impact, limited access public areas that offer a single recreational use and are open limited hours. Turnipseed Nature Preserve will become the second such property to open to the public, with an anticipated opening date the fall of 2017. The preserve will offer several miles of hiking trails and boardwalks through feral farm fields, secondary growth forest, wetlands, and granite outcroppings.



Rendering of Turnipseed Nature Preserve (image courtesy of Wake County PROS)

In preparation for opening the preserve, this report has been prepared to provide historical background to supplement environmental education and recreational opportunities. The report provides information about the Turnipseed family for whom the preserve is named, histories of the families who farmed each of the six individual parcels that make up the preserve, and a brief history of the surrounding community.



Six tax parcels make up Turnipseed Nature Preserve (map courtesy of Wake County iMaps)

This report focuses on the Turnipseed, Medlin, Horton, and Pleasants families, primarily from the late nineteenth through the early twenty-first centuries. The land was inherited, divided, recombined, and sold over and over again in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and in combination with vague property descriptions in the deeds themselves, it was not possible to trace the ownership of the land beyond the last century within the scope of this project. The surrounding communities of Eagle Rock, Shotwell, and Wendell were settled in the early 1800s, so it is possible that additional future research might yield additional information about the earliest inhabitants of the land that now makes up the preserve.

The Turnipseed Family

1920s

Frank Robert Turnipseed and Mary Elizabeth Weathers were married

Photo at right courtesy of the Turnipseed family



1929

Frank and Mary bought 44 acres in Marks Creek Township

1931

Frank and Mary's first son, Frank Marion Turnipseed, was born

1934

Frank and Mary's farm is foreclosed

1935

Frank and Mary bought an 54 acres on Marks Creek and lived in a modest two-room house

1937

Frank and Mary's second son, Willard Milo Turnipseed, was born

1945

Frank and Mary bought 47 acres additional acres on Marks Creek

1950

A new farmhouse was built for Frank and Mary

1953

Frank Marion Turnipseed and Bonnie June Cooper were married and moved to Cary

1954 → Frank and June's son, Phillip Marion Turnipseed, was born.

1961 → Frank Robert Turnipseed passed away

1961 → Willard Milo Turnipseed and Betty Jean Perry got married and moved with Mary to the new farmhouse

1985 → Phil and Brenda's daughter, Kelly, is born

1980 → Phillip Marion Turnipseed and Brenda Fore get married

1996 → Mary Elizabeth Weathers Turnipseed passed away

1999 → Willard Milo Turnipseed passed away


2002 → Frank Marion Turnipseed passed away

2007 → Kelly Turnipseed and Alan Alcock were married

2007 → Kelly and Alan's daughter Claire Elizabeth was born

2008 → Phillip Marion Turnipseed passed away

2016 → Bonnie June Cooper Turnipseed passed away
Kelly Turnipseed Alcock inherited the old homeplace



The Turnipseed family owns the farmstead adjacent to Turnipseed Nature Preserve on the south side of Turnipseed Road. The family farm was established in the 1920s, and in the 1960s the road was named for them. Although the preserve will be publicly accessed from Hunt Valley Trail on the east and from Pleasants Road on the north, the preserve still bears the name of this main thoroughfare in the Marks Creek community.

First Generation: Mary and Frank Turnipseed

Frank Robert Turnipseed was born in South Carolina in 1899, one of ten children to Nannie and Holly Turnipseed. He came to Wake County in the 1920s and married Mary Elizabeth Weathers. She was born in Wake County in 1904, one of seven children to Augusta and Charles Weathers.¹

In 1929, they purchased 44 acres of farmland originally owned by W.V. Ferrell, but they defaulted on their payments and sold it again in 1934.² The next year they purchased 54 acres that was part of the foreclosed Badger Terrell Farm. Terrell had defaulted on financing provided through the Federal Farm Loan Act after purchasing the farm in 1922. In 1945, they added a 47 acre parcel adjacent to their existing property, and these two parcels remain the current farmstead.³

¹ “Turnipseed Family Tree” and public family trees, www.ancestry.com.

² “F.R. Turnipseed to J.W. Bunn, Trustee,” Book 558, Page 387, October 28, 1929, Wake County Register of Deeds, Raleigh, North Carolina (hereafter WCRD); “J.W. Bunn, Trustee to J.F. Keith,” Book 663, Page 252, February 8, 1934, WCRD.

³ “M.P. Massey & Wife to F.R. Turnipseed & Wife,” Book 581, Page 445, October 28, 1929, WCRD; “The Federal Land Bank of Columbia to F.R. Turnipseed, et. al.,” Book 695, Page 359, April 25, 1935, WCRD; “Acrel Ruffin to F.R. Turnipseed,” Book 932, Page 178, December 13, 1945, WCRD.

The Turnipseeds lived in a modest two-room house with a central chimney. They had two sons to help them operate their farm. Frank Marion was born in 1931 followed by Willard Milo in 1937. They grew tobacco and raised black angus cows and hogs, as well as tending a vegetable patch for their own use and selling timber rights to portions of the property.⁴

The Turnipseed farm is located on the south side of Turnipseed Road, east of Marks Creek. The approach to the bridge over Marks Creek to the west was originally a steeply sloped s-curve, so in the 1960s the road was straightened for safety reasons. Mary and Frank Turnipseed sold a small parcel of their land for the new road. The road, which was previously known as Route 1, was named Turnipseed Road.⁵

Second Generation: Frank Turnipseed and Milo Turnipseed

In 1948, Mary and Frank's oldest son, Frank, joined the Navy and was deployed overseas for the Korean Conflict. Two years later, Mary and Frank built a new home on the west end of the family farm. Their son returned from Korea in 1952, and he were married Bonnie June Cooper the following year.⁶ Their son, Phil-

⁴ Personal Interview with Kelly Turnipseed Alcock by Cheri LaFlamme Szcodronski, April 12, 2017 (hereafter Turnipseed Family Interview); Frank R. Turnipseed to Joe Medlin," Book 988, Page 183, December 19, 1947, WCRD; "F.R. Turnipseed to J.C. Ransdell, Trustee," Book 1434, Page 104, November 15, 1960, WCRD.

⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, "USDA Historical Aerial Photos, Wake County," 1959 and 1971, University of North Carolina Geographic Information Systems Services, <http://library.unc.edu/services/data/gis-usda/wake> (accessed April 2017); "Mary E. Turnipseed to Frank M. Turnipseed," Book 3476, Page 725, May 8, 1985, WCRD; Turnipseed Family Interview. Note: Turnipseed Road was also historically referred to as the Wendell-Raleigh Road and the Burned Mill Road.

⁶ Turnipseed Family Interview; "Turnipseed Family Tree," www.ancestry.com.

lip Marion Turnipseed, was born in 1954.⁷

A few years later, in 1953, Frank and June Turnipseed moved to Cary, and in 1959 they built a new home in Greenwood Acres using customized pattern book plans.⁸ When Frank Robert Turnipseed died suddenly in 1961, his son Milo remained on the family farm with his mother, Mary, and his new bride, Betty Jean Perry. They lived in the new farmhouse while the older house was offered for lease. They also rented the surrounding farmland to local farmers who grew tobacco, raised cows, cut timber. They retained a small portion of farmland near the house where they tended a small hobby garden for themselves and kept chickens.⁹

Third Generation: Brenda and Phillip Turnipseed

Phillip Marion Turnipseed inherited a partial interest in his parents home in Greenwood Acres in 1973. A few years later, he married Brenda Fore and they moved to a new home in Cary. Their daughter, Kelly, was born in 1985. Meanwhile, on the family farm, the Turnipseeds continued to rent the old homeplace, which had no indoor plumbing and only three rooms, until the 1980s, after which it became vacant. In 1985, Mary Weathers Turnipseed transferred the 47 acres on the west side of the farm, including the 1950 farmhouse, to her son Milo, and the 54 acres on the east side of the farm, including the old home place, to her son Frank.¹⁰

⁷ "Turnipseed Family Tree," www.ancestry.com.

⁸ Turnipseed Family Interview; "C.L. Medlin & Wife to Frank M. Turnipseed & Wife," Book 1369, Page 645, July 9, 1959, WCRD.

⁹ Turnipseed Family Interview.

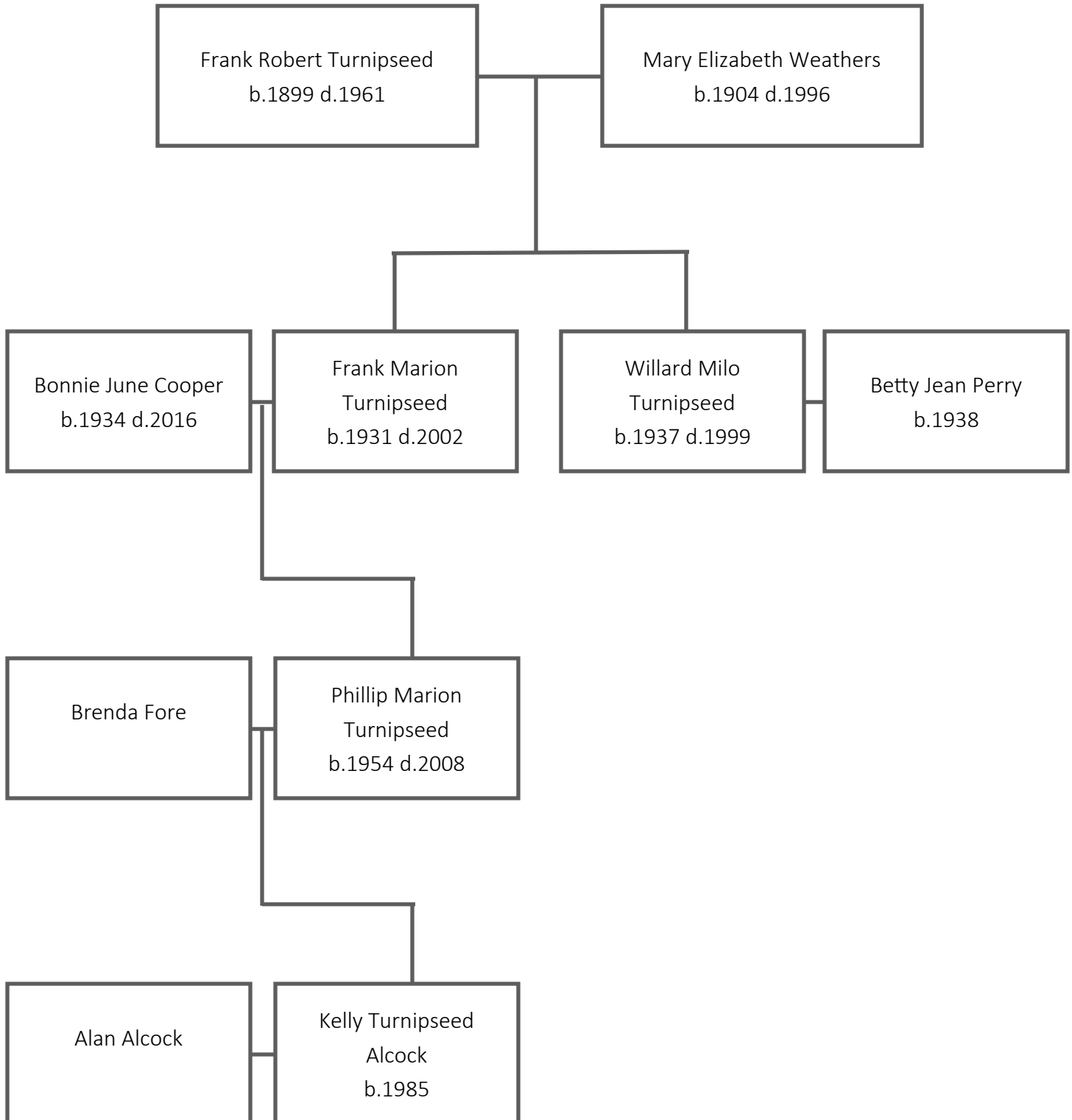
¹⁰ "Mary E. Turnipseed to Willard M. Turnipseed," Book 3476, Page 723, May 8, 1985, WCRD; "Mary E. Turnipseed to Frank M. Turnipseed," Book 3476, Page 725, May 8, 1985, WCRD.

Fourth Generation: Kelly Turnipseed Alcock

In 1996, Mary Elizabeth Weathers Turnipseed passed away, and June Cooper Turnipseed inherited the old homeplace. In 2009, she gave a five-acre parcel of the homeplace to Kelly Turnipseed Alcock, who inherited the remaining 49 acres, as well as the home in Greenwood Acres, upon June's death in 2016. Betty Jean Perry Turnipseed still owns the 1950 farmhouse and surrounding 47 acres, and the farmland is rented to local farmers.¹¹

¹¹ Turnipseed Family Interview; "Bonnie June Cooper Turnipseed to Kelly Turnipseed Alcock," Book 13624, Page 754, July 14, 2009, WCRD; "Phillip M. Turnipseed Estate to Kelly Turnipseed Alcock," Book 13708, Page 1448, September 28, 2009, WCRD; "June C. Turnipseed to Kelly Turnipseed Alcock," Book 14859, Page 652, July 27, 2012, WCRD.

Turnipseed Family Tree



The Medlin Family

1853

Archibald Robert Medlin purchased 125 acres in Marks Creek Township

1855

Archibald Robert Medlin and Sarah "Sallie" Mae Gregory were married

1857

A.R. and Sallie's first child, Presley P., was born

1863

A.R. and Sallie's fourth child, Joseph S., was born

1884

Presley P. Medlin and Helen L. Honeycutt were married

Photo at right courtesy of Medlin family

1886

Joseph S. Medlin and Mary Faison were married

1896

Presley and Helen's fifth child, Onnie Coe Medlin, was born



1898

Archibald Robert Medlin transferred the family homestead to Mary and Joseph Medlin

1904

Mary and Joseph Medlin sold the farm to Helen and Presley Medlin

1892

Presley and Helen's son, Ivan, was born

1896

Presley and Helen's son, Onnie Coe, was born

1915

Onnie Coe Medlin and Ellen Agnes Phipps were married

Photo at right courtesy of Medlin family

1917

Onnie and Ellen's son, Leonard, was born

1921

Onnie and Ellen's son, Haywood, was born

1922

Ivan Medlin and Beulah Pulley were married

c.1934

Leonard Medlin and Gladys Boykin were married



1936

Presley P. Medlin passed away

1938

Helen Honeycutt Medlin passed away

1939

Onnie and Ellen Medlin inherit the family farm

1941

Leonard and Gladys's son, Leonard Coe Jr., was born

1942

Haywood Lanier Medlin and Della Catherine Pleasants were married

Photo at right courtesy of Medlin family



1948

Onnie Coe Medlin passed away

1954

Leonard Medlin and Haywood Medlin opened a general store serving the Marks Creek community

1959

Leonard Coe Medlin passed away

1960

Leonard Coe "Pete" Medlin, Jr., and Doris Jean Adams were married



1964

Ellen Phipps Medlin passed away

1965

Pete Medlin inherited a portion of the family farm

1967

Medlins' general store was sold

1995

Haywood Medlin passed away


2008

Pete and Doris Medlin sold a portion of the family farm to Wake County

2012

Haywood and Della Medlin's children sold a portion of the family farm to Wake County





Approximately 114 acres of the Turnipseed Nature Preserve is the historic Medlin Farm, which had been in the Medlin family since before the Civil War. The Medlin family tree is extensive, and they were related by marriage to the Bunch, Honeycutt, Pleasants, and other families who lived near them in the Marks Creek community. However, the family of Archibald Robert Medlin appears to be the primary branch living on land that now makes up the preserve.

First Generation: Archibald Robert Medlin and Sallie Gregory

In 1853, Archibald Robert Medlin purchased 125 acres from William Lee.¹ In 1855, he married Sarah “Sallie” Mae Gregory and they had nine children. By 1860, his parents, Kinchen and Delia Medlin, as well as Timothy Medlin’s family were listed as neighbors on the census. He listed his occupation as farmer, and probably operated a subsistence farm with a variety of livestock including cows and hogs, vegetables for the family’s consumption, corn, potatoes, and maybe tobacco or cotton. After the Civil War, Wake County agriculture shifted from subsistence farming to cash crops, and the Medlins likely followed suit and shifted to either cotton or tobacco during that time.²

Archibald Robert Medlin transferred the farm to his son, Joseph S. Medlin and his wife, Mary Faison, in 1898. He continued to live on the family farm though,

¹ “William Lee to A.R. Medling,” Book 90, Page 446, February 10, 1886, Wake County Register of Deeds, Raleigh, North Carolina. (Hereafter WCRD.) (Note: The deed is dated December 2, 1853, but was not filed for registration until February 10, 1886.)

² U.S. Census Bureau, “1860 United States Federal Census,” ancestry.com (accessed July 2017); Kelly Lally and Todd Johnson, “Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County, North Carolina, ca.1770-1941,” Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Section E, 7-8, 10-11, 30-31. (Hereafter MPDF)



as the deed required Joseph to provide for his father either at the family homestead or at his own house.³

Second Generation: Presley P. Medlin and Helen Honeycutt

In 1904, Joseph sold the farm to his brother, Presley P. Medlin, with the same stipulation that he must care for their father.⁴ Presley Medlin had married Helen Honeycutt in 1884, and they had seven children.⁵ Prior to purchasing part of the family farm, Presley and Helen had been renting their farm, probably from Archibald Medlin who is listed as a neighbor in the 1900 census.⁶ Helen and Presley Medlin purchased an additional fourteen acres in 1912 from the Bunch family, who were relations of the Medlins.⁷ Cotton prices bottomed out at the end of the 19th century in Wake County, so it is likely that Presley and Helen's farm produced primarily tobacco.⁸

Third Generation: Onnie Coe Medlin and Ivan Medlin

Presley and Helen's sons Onnie and Ivan operated the farm with them through the early decades of the twentieth century. In 1915, Onnie Coe Medlin

³ "A.R. Medlin to J.S. Medlin," Book 149, Page 14, March 9, 1898, WCRD.

⁴ "J.S. Medlin to Presley P. Medlin," Book 195, Page 97, November 7, 1904, WCRD.

⁵ Firefly Preservation Consulting, "Medlin Family Tree," www.ancestry.com. (Hereafter Medlin Family Tree.)
Note: Spelling varies and is commonly Helen as well as Hellon in deed and census records. As the commonly accepted spelling, Helen is used throughout this report.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, "1900 United States Federal Census," www.ancestry.com (accessed July 2017).

⁷ "L.V. Bunch & C.D. Bunch & Wife," Book 259, Page 578, February 8, 1912, WCRD.

⁸ Lally, MPDF, Section E, 46-47.

married Ellen Agnes Phipps, and they had two sons, Leonard and Haywood.⁹ At first they rented a farm, probably from Presley and Helen, who were listed as neighbors in the 1920 census. Ivan Medlin was living at his parents' farm in the 1920s, and in 1922 married Beulah Pulley.¹⁰ Soon after, Onnie and Ellen Medlin started to buy land from the nearby Martin and Bunch families, and by the 1930 census, Ivan and Beulah Medlin had taken their place renting the farmland next to Presley and Helen Medlin.¹¹ After Presley and Helen Medlin's deaths in the late 1930s, Ivan and Beulah Medlin left the farm, possibly to move to Raleigh, while Onnie and Ellen Medlin returned to the family homestead.¹²

Fourth Generation: Leonard Medlin and Haywood Medlin

For a time, Haywood lived at home with his parents, Onnie and Ellen. Meanwhile, around 1934, Leonard Coe Medlin married Gladys Boykin, and they rented the farm next door with their three children.¹³

Haywood Medlin married Della Pleasants in 1942, just days after being draft-

⁹ Medlin Family Tree. Note: Spelling varies and is commonly Ivan as well as Ivon in deed and census records. As the commonly accepted spelling, Ivan has been used throughout this report.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, "1920 United States Federal Census," www.ancestry.com (accessed July 2017); Ancestry.com, "North Carolina Marriage Records, 1741-2011," www.ancestry.com (accessed July 2017).

¹¹ "L.V. Bunch to O.C. Medlin," Book 484, Page 119, January 13, 1926, WCRD; "Herman Earp to O.C. Medlin," Book 581, Page 551, November 27, 1929, WCRD; "Coy L. Martin to O.C. Medlin," Book 592, Page 602, March 24, 1931, WCRD; U.S. Census Bureau, "1930 United States Federal Census," www.ancestry.com (accessed July 2017).

¹² Medlin Family Tree; U.S. Census Bureau, "1940 United States Federal Census," www.ancestry.com (accessed July 2017).

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau, "1940 United States Federal Census," www.ancestry.com (accessed July 2017).

ed into the army to serve in World War II. He completed his basic training at Fort McCoy in Wisconsin. He deployed to Europe in 1943 where he served as a Technician Fifth Grade driving supply trucks during World War II. After returning from war, he was stationed at Fort Custer, Michigan. He and Della had four children.¹⁴

The farm's primary cash crop was tobacco, although they also grew corn, soybeans, wheat, and raised hogs. The tobacco growing season began in January or February each year with preparing the plant beds, and the selling period lasted from October until well into November. The Medlins took their crop to market in Durham in the 1940s and 1950s, where Leonard Medlin worked at the Roycroft Warehouse during the harvest season. In 1950, the Medlins participated in a crop diversification program in which they were encouraged to try their skill with crops other than tobacco. That year, Leonard and Haywood grew five acres of cotton and one acre of sweet potatoes. However, when it came time to pick the cotton, they were unable to hire farmhands to bring in the harvest and had to pick it themselves. The same was true for the sweet potatoes, and after harvesting their potato crop, they decided to remain tobacco farmers. In addition to operating the family farm together, Leonard and Haywood Medlin also opened a general store in 1954.¹⁵

¹⁴ 1930 and 1940 United States Federal Census, Ancestry.com (accessed November 2015); North Carolina Marriage Records, 1741-2011, Ancestry.com (accessed November 2015); U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, Ancestry.com (accessed November 2015); *World War II Young American Patriots, 1941-1945*, (Richmond, VA: National Publishing Company, 1946), Ancestry.com (accessed November 2015); U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010, Ancestry.com (accessed November 2015); Person interview with Medlin family by Cheri LaFlamme Szcodronski, January 16, 2016 (hereafter Medlin Family Interview).

¹⁵ Medlin Family Interview.

Fifth Generation: Leonard “Pete” Medlin, Jr.

Leonard Coe “Pete” Medlin, Jr., married Doris Jean Adams in 1960.¹⁶ By 1965, Onnie Coe Medlin, Ellen Phipps Medlin, and Leonard Coe Medlin had passed away. Pete Medlin inherited a large portion of the family farm, along with his uncle, Haywood Medlin. Haywood Medlin continued to operate the general store until he sold it in 1967, and he and Pete Medlin grew tobacco together until Haywood Medlin’s death in 1995.¹⁷

After Della Medlin’s death in 2011, a portion of Haywood and Della’s farm was sold by their heirs to Wake County.¹⁸ Pete and Doris Medlin sold most of their portion of the family farm to Wake County through the Trust for Public Land in 2008.¹⁹ Additional portions of the Medlins’ farm have been sold to Wake County since then, although those areas are outside the current boundaries of the preserve. While much of the historic Medlin Farm is now owned by Wake County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space, Medlin family members still own property throughout the Marks Creek community.²⁰

¹⁶ “North Carolina Marriage Records, 1941-2011,” www.ancestry.com (accessed July 2017).

¹⁷ Medlin Family Interview.

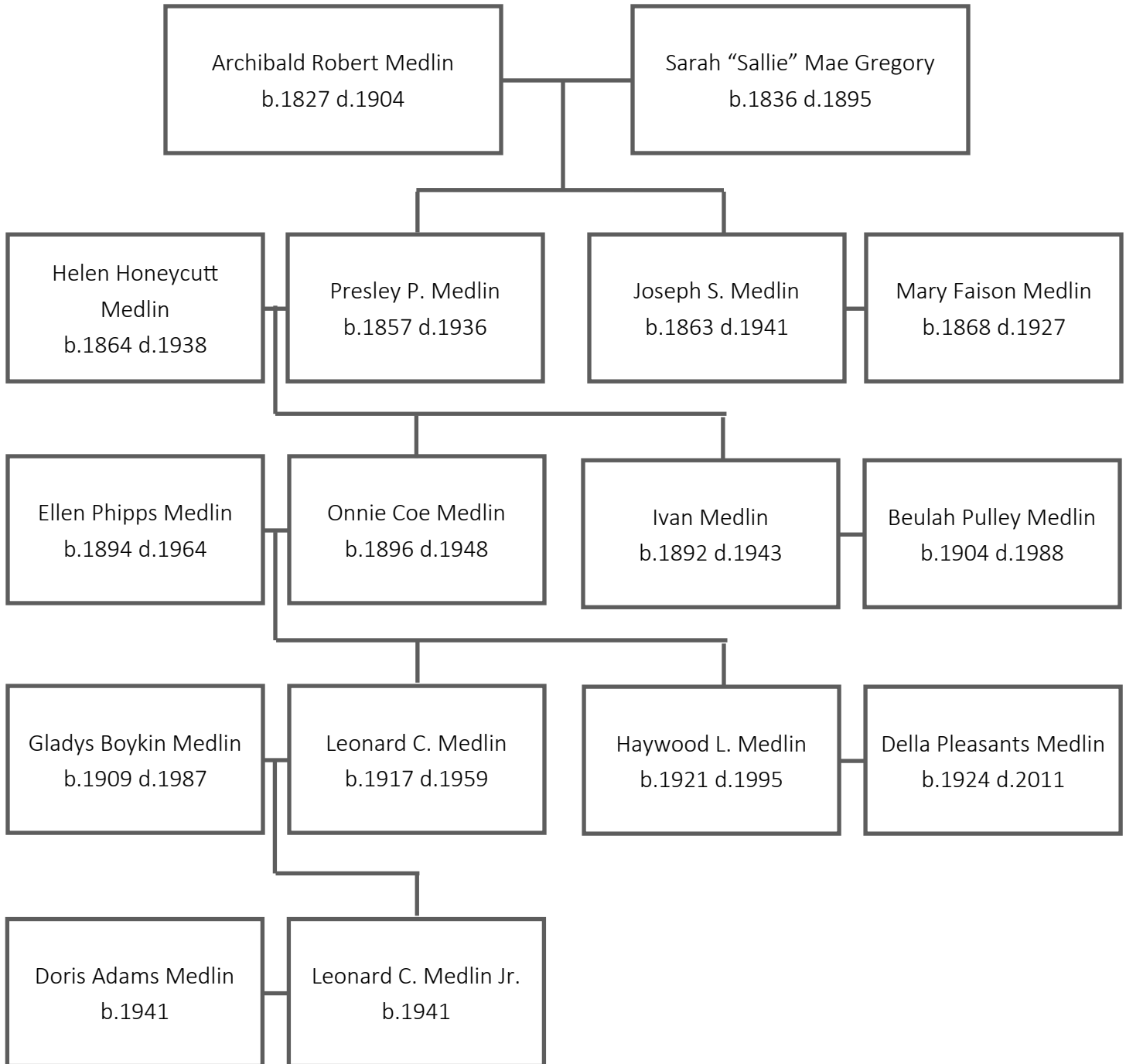
¹⁸ North Carolina Death Indexes, 1908-2004, Ancestry.com (Accessed October 2015); “Stephen L. Medlin et al to H.L. Medlin Farms, LLC,” Deed Book 15074, Page 1386, December 5, 2012, Wake County Register of Deeds, Raleigh, North Carolina; “H.L. Medlin Farms, LLC to Wake County,” Deed Book 15682, Page 958, June 6, 2014, Wake County Register of Deeds, Raleigh, North Carolina; Medlin Family Interview.

¹⁹ “L.C. Medlin, Jr., and Doris Medlin to Trust for Public Land,” Book 12942, Page 1144, February 6, 2008, WCRD; “Trust for Public Land to Wake County,” Book 12945, Page 1382, February 8, 2008, WCRD. See also “L.C. Medlin, Jr., to Bud Wegnery,” Book 7651, Page 33, September 12, 1997, WCRD.

²⁰ Personal communication with Steve Medlin by Cheri Szcodronski, via email, July 2017.



Medlin Family Tree



The Medlin-Horton Family

1899 → John Robert Medlin and Annie Rebecca Horton were married

1902 → John and Annie Medlin's daughter, Wilma, was born

Photo at right courtesy of Ancestry.com

1903 → William C. Horton and Mattie May Honeycutt were married

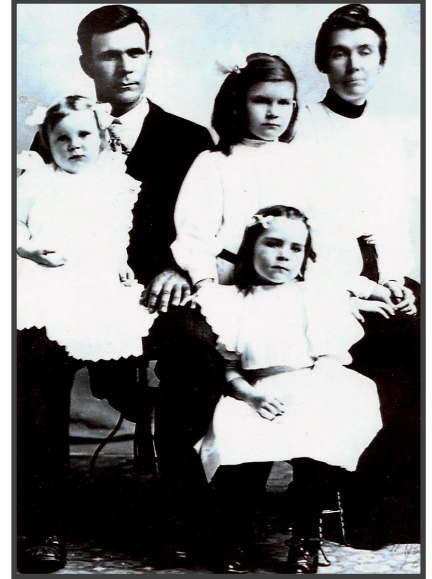
1903 → John & Annie Medlin and W.C. and Mattie Horton buy 200 acres from J.S. and Mary Medlin

1907 → John & Annie Medlin and W.C. and Mattie Horton divide their land into two farmsteads

1919 → Mattie Hunnicutt Horton passed away

1922 → Wilma Arden Medlin and Milton Monroe Pleasant were married

1930 → Annie Horton Medlin passed away



1934

John Robert Medlin passed away

1935

Wilma and Milton Pleasant inherited the Medlin farmstead

1940

Wilma and Milton Pleasant's son, George, was born

1944

William C. Horton passed away

1946

Wilma and Milton Pleasant purchased the Horton farmstead

1971

Milton Pleasant passed away

1983

George Pleasants inherited the Medlin-Horton farmstead

1985

George Pleasants purchased the Horton Farm home place

1991

Wilma Medlin Pleasant passed away

2006

Wake County purchased the southern portion of the farm



The northern portion of the Turnipseed Nature Preserve was also owned by the Medlins until the early 1900s when ownership transferred to the Horton and Pleasants families, who had both married into the Medlin family. This branch of the Medlin family tree begins with Archibald Robert Medlin's son, John Robert Medlin.

First Generation: John Robert Medlin and William C. Horton

This area of the preserve appears to have been part of a 200-acre parcel owned by Joseph S. Medlin and Mary Faison Medlin in the late 1800s, although it is unclear where they acquired the land.²¹ Joseph and Mary Medlin sold the property to John Robert Medlin (Joseph's brother), Annie Horton Medlin (John's wife), William C. Horton (Annie's brother), and Mattie Honeycutt Horton (William's wife) in 1903.²² The Medlins and Hortons then divided the property into two farmsteads.²³

John Robert Medlin was born in 1869, one of Archibald and Sallie Medlin's nine children. John Medlin married Annie Rebecca Horton in 1899, and they had four children, three of whom survived to adulthood.²⁴ Like his brothers, John Medlin grew tobacco. Annie Medlin passed away in 1930, followed by John Medlin in

²¹ Note: Deed records could not be found. It is possible that the deeds were never actually filed, that the names are spelled wrong, or that the property was bequeathed rather than sold.

²² "J.S. Medlin and Wife to W.C. Horton and J.R. Medlin," Book 177, Page 21, March 21, 1903, Wake County Register of Deeds, Raleigh, North Carolina. (Hereafter WCRD.)

²³ ("J.R. Medlin & Wife to W.C. Horton," Book 214, Page 638, November 23, 1907, WCRD; "W.C. Horton & Wife to J.R. Medlin," Book 214, Page 649, November 30, 1907, WCRD; "W.C. Horton & Wife, Mattie M., to J.R. Medlin," Book 249, Page 435, May 19, 1910, WCRD.)

²⁴ Firefly Preservation Consulting, "Medlin Family Tree," www.ancestry.com (hereafter Medlin Family Tree.); Ancestry.com, "North Carolina Marriage Records, 1941-2011," www.ancestry.com (accessed July 2017).

1934. Their farm passed to their daughter, Wilma Medlin Pleasant.²⁵

Annie Horton was born in 1878, followed by her brother, William two years later. They were the children of Julius Caesar Horton and Rebecca Rhodes. William Horton married Mattie May Honeycutt in 1903, and they had four children. Annie Horton passed away in 1919, followed by William Horton in 1944. Their farm passed to their surviving children, Ruby Horton Roberts, Cassie Hunnicutt, and Julius Horton.²⁶

Second Generation: Wilma Medlin Pleasants

Wilma Medlin Pleasants was born in 1902, one of four children of Annie and John Medlin. She married Milton Monroe Pleasant in 1926 and they had three children, George, Marvin, and Florence.²⁷ In 1935, Wilma Pleasants acquired her family farm from the estate of her father, John Robert Medlin, as well as the Horton farm from William Horton's heirs in 1946, although they retained the 2.5-acre home place.²⁸ The Pleasants continued to farm tobacco and raise livestock, as the Medlins and Hortons had done before them. Milton Pleasant died in 1971, and Wilma Pleasant sold the farm to their son, George Pleasants, in 1983.²⁹

²⁵ Early twentieth century tobacco-related outbuildings remain extant on the historic farmstead.

²⁶ Medlin Family Tree; Ancestry.com, "North Carolina Marriage Records, 1941-2011," www.ancestry.com (accessed July 2017).

²⁷ Medlin Family Tree; Ancestry.com, "North Carolina Marriage Records, 1941-2011," www.ancestry.com (accessed July 2017).

²⁸ "Joe Medlin, et als, to M.M. Pleasant & Wife," Book 705, Page 460, December 10, 1935, WCRD; Robert A. Hunnicutt and Wife, Cassie Horton to Milton M. Pleasant and Wife, Wilma," Book 951, Page 162, October 12, 1946, WCRD.



Third Generation: George S. Pleasants

George Stancil Pleasants was born in 1940, and he never married. He acquired the family farm in 1983 from his widowed mother.³⁰ He may have continued to farm tobacco until the buyouts in the 1990s, and he also kept horses.³¹ In 1985, he purchased the 2.5-acre Horton Farm home place from Mattie and William Horton's heirs.³² In 2006, Pleasants sold approximately 115 acres to Wake County through the Trust for Public Land, which is now the northern portion of the Turnipseed Nature Preserve. He retained about eleven acre for his home place.³³

²⁹ Note: Spelling varies between "Pleasant" and "Pleasants" throughout deeds and census records. The spellings used here are those captured on gravestones.

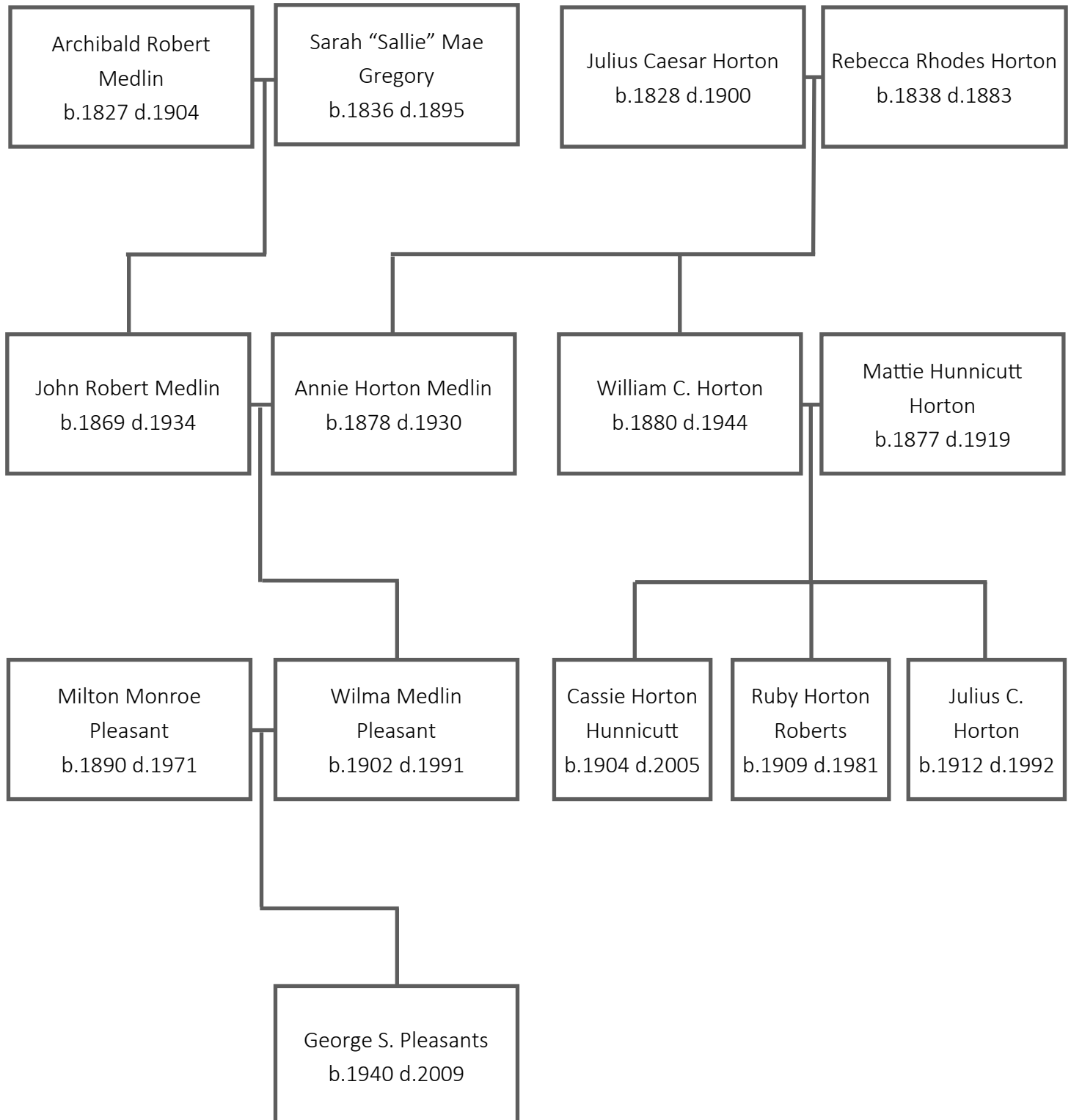
³⁰ Medlin Family Tree; "Wilma Medlin Pleasant to George S. Pleasant," Book 3151, Page 985, July 29, 1983, WCRD.)

³¹ Late-twentieth-century horse barns remain extant on the historic farmstead.

³² "J.C. Horton, et als to George S. Pleasants," Book 3520, Page 497, July 21, 1985, WCRD.

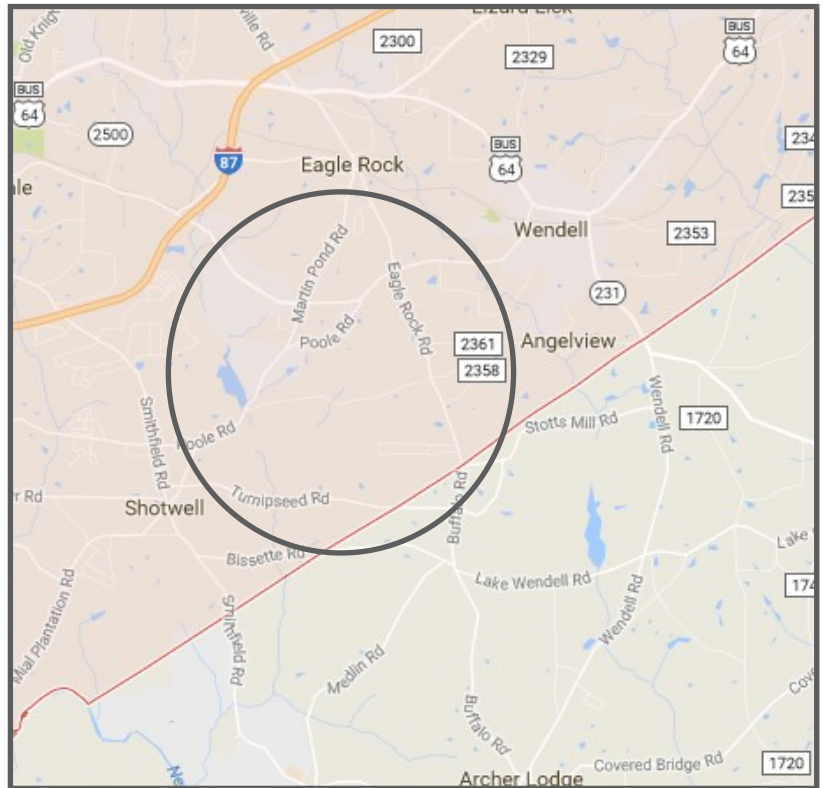
³³ "George S. Pleasant, unmarried, aka George S. Pleasants, to The Trust for Public Land," Book 11971, Page 108, May 24, 2006, WCRD; "Recombination for George S. Pleasants," Book of Maps 2006, Page 1032, May 23, 2006, WCRD; "The Trust for Public Land to Wake County," Book 11974, Page 2305, WCRD.

Medlin-Horton Family Tree



The Marks Creek Community


The Marks Creek Community, for the purposes of this report, is the area of southeastern Wake County near Wendell, Eagle Rock, and Shotwell near the Johnston County line, roughly bounded by Turnipseed, Poole, Buffalo, and Eagle Rock roads. Eagle Rock was established in 1837 and was the primary commercial center through most of the nineteenth century. It was followed by Shotwell in 1883, and finally Wendell was established in 1891 and grew quickly in importance due to its tobacco market.³⁴ The Medlin, Horton, Rhodes, Hunnicutt, Bunch, Doub, Price, Blake, Bunn, and Bunch families, as well as others, were important to the settlement and development of these communities. Many of these families intermarried, forming a strong familial network within the Marks Creek community.³⁵



*The Marks Creek Community
(map courtesy of Google Maps)*

³⁴ K. Todd Johnson and Elizabeth Reid Murray, *Wake: Capital County of North Carolina, Volume II: Reconstruction to 1920* (Wake County: Raleigh, North Carolina), 571-574, 642-648, 698; Note: All three towns were settled in the early 1800s, and their date of establishment here is based on when they received a post office.

³⁵ Fendol Bevers, "Map of Wake County," 1871, North Carolina Maps, University of North Carolina, <http://web.lib.unc.edu/nc-maps> (accessed July 2017).



During the twentieth century, the community was entirely agricultural and centered around tobacco, the primary cash crop. Most people, both men and women, used tobacco commonly until about the 1960s, and the Medlins recall their grandmother making them “snuff” from shaved chocolate and sugar. Tobacco is a labor intensive crop, so many farmers hired seasonal laborers or employed tenant farmers. The Medlins participated in a government program to bring seasonal workers from Mexico each fall to harvest and cure their crop. Pete Medlin remembers two workers in particular who came annually for over a decade. They were from the western coast of Mexico where they also grew tobacco, but the growing season was a different time of year there, allowing them to make extra money by farming in the United States during their off season. They lived in a trailer on Medlin’s farm while they were there, and they were responsible for as many as fifty acres of tobacco.³⁶

Each family had their own vegetable gardens, a few chickens, at least one dairy cow, and a few hogs. They also had mules for pulling plows, since mules were stronger, better tempered, and smarter than horses. Although each farm produced much of what they needed, some groceries and supplies had to be purchased. From 1954 until 1967, Haywood and Leonard Medlin operated a general store. Since the community relied on tobacco, which is a seasonal crop, the Medlins allowed purchases on credit through most of the year, and their neighbors paid their debts after taking the tobacco to market in the fall. There was also a dairy farm nearby, owned by the Todd family, whose children delivered milk in glass bottles throughout Wendell.³⁷

³⁶ Personal Interview with Medlin Family by Cheri LaFlamme Szcodronski, September 1, 2017 (hereafter Medlin Family Interview, 2017).

³⁷ Medlin Family Interview, 2017; Personal interview with the Medlin family by Cheri LaFlamme Szcodronski, January 16, 2016 (hereafter Medlin Family Interview, 2016.)





*The Medlins' general store on
Eagle Rock Road
(photo courtesy of the
Medlin family)*

The Medlin family recalls the community being very poor, so the neighbors helped each other. The Medlins participated in hog killings with the same four families each fall—the Cousin, Bunch, Dean, and Boyd families. They went from farm to farm over a period of days, killing eight to ten hogs each day and working together in an assembly line to process the meat. The Medlins also assisted with getting others' tobacco crops to the market in Durham. They purchased their first large farm truck in 1939 and a second, larger truck in the 1940s. Since most of their neighbors could not afford large farm trucks, the Medlins hauled their neighbors' crops to market along with their own.³⁸

The Medlins also recall families building their houses together, rather than hiring builders. In 1947, Ellen and Onnie Coe Medlin's home was completely destroyed by fire. Within days, the community had come together to build a two-

³⁸ Medlin Family Interview, 2016, 2017.



room house where they lived while the site was cleaned up and a new house constructed.³⁹

Since Marks Creek was a cash-poor community, Haywood and Leonard Medlin sometimes gave small loans to their neighbors. Paul Jones was an African American who owned a 300-acre farm in the area. When the bank threatened to foreclose his farm for \$269 he owed, Leonard Medlin offered him a loan to cover the debt. The following summer, Jones' four sons helped harvest Medlin's tobacco crop to repay the loan.⁴⁰


The Turnipseed family also remembers a strong sense of community among the families in Marks Creek. The community was more rural in the early 1900s when cars were just becoming popular, and the Turnipseeds recall that the neighbors looked after one another because they were so far from any towns. Since not everyone owned a vehicle, children often went to town in groups with the families who did. And not only did the children play together, they got into trouble together too. When Frank Turnipseed and his friends dared his little brother Milo to stand in the Doub Cemetery at night, they played a trick on him and abandoned him there alone. When Milo returned home, his mother got him to tell the whole story, and then made the boys go tell all other boys' mothers as well.⁴¹

Children in the community had few store-bought toys, although most had bicycles. The Medlins recall riding tobacco sticks as horses, and every Friday night, they went fishing for catfish in Marks Creek. They also spent a lot of time playing in

³⁹ Medlin Family Interview, 2016.

⁴⁰ Medlin Family Interview, 2017.

⁴¹ Personal interview with Kelly Turnipseed Alcock by Cheri LaFlamme Szcodronski, April 12, 2017 (hereafter Turnipseed Family Interview).




the woods and were allowed to go wherever they wanted - as long as they were close enough to hear their mother calling or the dinner bell ringing.⁴²

The families in the Marks Creek community also attended church together. There were two primary churches in the area. Clyde's Chapel Baptist Church is located where Turnipseed Road meets Buffalo Road in Johnston County, closest to the Marks Creek community, and is where the Medlins attended church. The original church building was located across Buffalo Road adjacent to the cemetery until the 1950s when Maggie Way Road was realigned to meet Buffalo Road directly across from Turnipseed Road. The church moved to its current site on the west side of Buffalo Road and opened the new building in 1954. In the early 1960s, they added the steeple, and for many years the Medlin family's old dinner bell served as the church bell, which rang for the start of Sunday School each week. The church was a center of community activities and hosted an annual harvest festival, for which local farmers and residents brought chickens, quilts, canning, and other farm-related goods. They also held tobacco fundraisers for which farmers donated several hands of tobacco that were sold to benefit the church. The Medlins often invited the community to their home for meals, a tradition that began with Helen and Presley Medlin offering Sunday dinner and continues today with Doris and Pete Medlin hosting Thursday dinners each month.⁴³

The nearby Central Baptist Church, on Poole Road north of Lake Myra Road, also served this community, and was attended by the Hortons, Hunnicutts, and Nowells. It was founded in 1925, and Annie Horton Medlin was a charter member there. In 1926, they started to meet in the Marshburn Hill School Building. Since

⁴² Medlin Family Interview, 2017.

⁴³ Medlin Family Interview, 2017.



then, the church has been rebuilt three times, in 1969, 1984, and 1994, and the cemetery is located on the site of the original building.⁴⁴

Most of the community members are buried at these two church cemeteries, although some are buried at churches in Raleigh, Wendell, Knightdale, and other nearby communities. There are also a few family cemeteries in the community, including the Doub-Price-Blake cemetery on Turnipseed Road and an unmarked cemetery of unknown origin near the Ellen and Onnie Coe Medlin home place.⁴⁵


Children in the Marks Creek community attended school in Wendell. There was an elementary school and a high school until the 1960s, when a new high school was built and the old high school became a middle school. There was only one teacher per grade until that time, with about 20-30 students in each grade. Some years, depending on the number of students in each grade level, there were combination classes. Families worked tirelessly to cure their tobacco crop before Labor Day when the school year started. The Medlins recall spending weeks getting up before 4:00 am each day to pull the tobacco from the curing barns, and then spending the remainder of day filling the barns again. If the crop was late, they might miss the first part of the school year while they finished the harvest. Sometimes the whole community had late crops, and school would start a week or two later than usual.⁴⁶

The community started to change toward the end of the twentieth-century.

⁴⁴ "The History of Central Baptist Church," www.ancestry.com (accessed July 2017).

⁴⁵ Turnipseed Family Interview; "Clyde's Chapel Baptist Church Cemetery," <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&GRid=21077931&CRid=2228643> (accessed July 2017); "Central Baptist Church Cemetery," <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&GRid=20926654&CRid=2140546> (accessed July 2017).

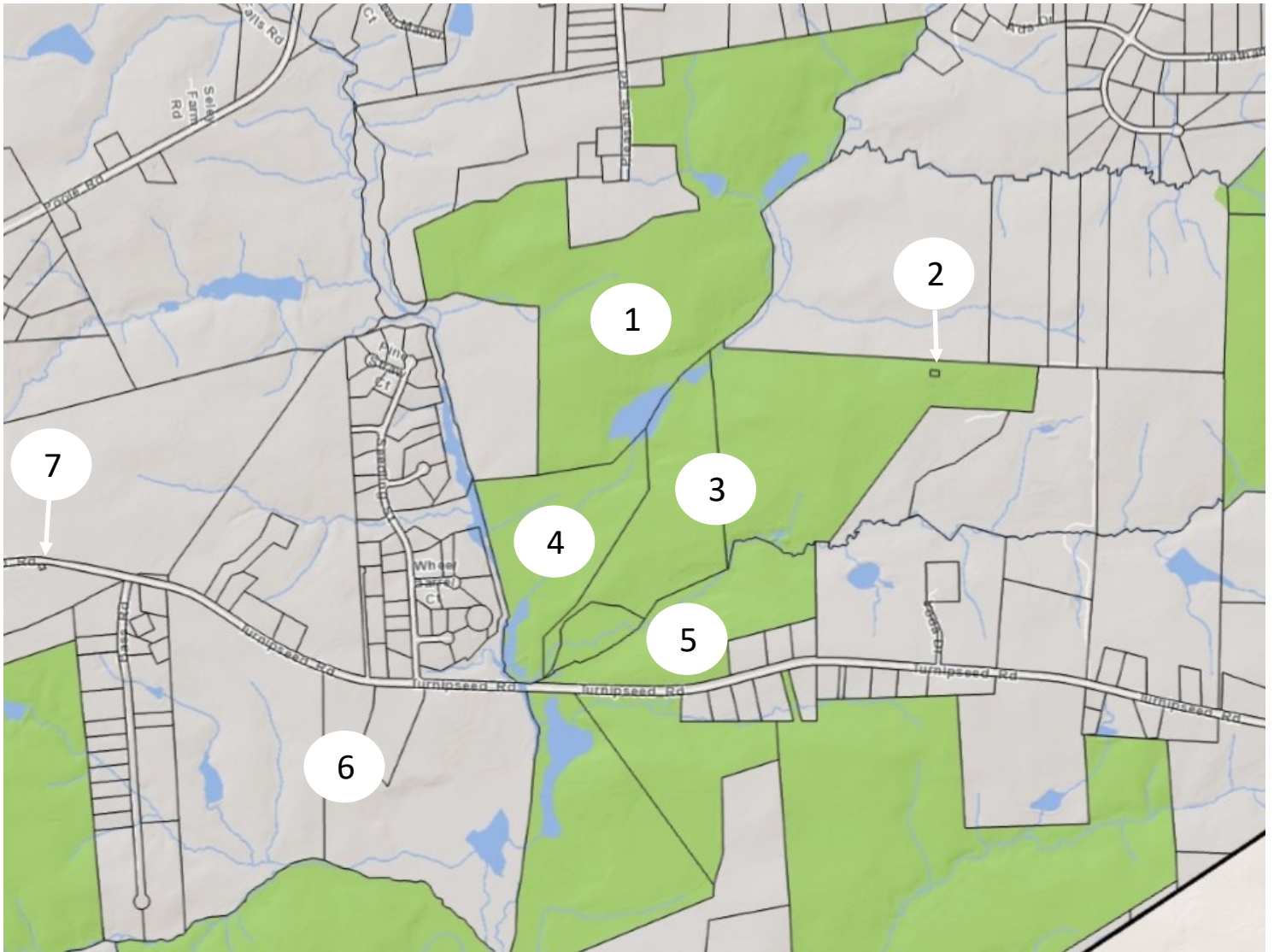
⁴⁶ Medlin Family Interview, 2017.



Some people started selling timber rights to their land, especially to help clear the damage from Hurricane Fran in 1996. The methods for growing tobacco have changed with the advancement of technology. The Medlins recall how careful farmers were with each individual leaf of tobacco during the process of harvesting, curing, and grading the crop until the late 1900s, but have observed that the machinery now used to farm tobacco is much more abusive to the plants. The size of the farms has also changed. For most of the twentieth century, the farms were small family farms of only a couple hundred acres. However, tobacco buyouts began in this area in 2004, and most families stopped farming. Now, only three families, the Pace, Edwards, and Todd families, grow tobacco in the community, renting farmland from many of their neighbors and operating farms as large as 800 acres.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Medlin Family Interview, 2017.

20th Century Community Map



1. Pleasants Farm (continued north of Turnipseed Nature Preserve)
2. Unmarked Cemetery (possibly a 19th-century Medlin cemetery)
3. Medlin Farm (continued east of Turnipseed Nature Preserve)
4. Unused wooded land, owned by May and Nowell families (continued northwest of Turnipseed Nature Preserve)
5. Bunn Farm (continued south of Turnipseed Nature Preserve)
6. Turnipseed Farm
7. Doub-Price-Blake Family Cemetery