



Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission

204 East Academy St. ♦ P.O. Box 771 ♦ Asheboro, North Carolina 27204

April 27, 2011

The Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission (HLPC) met in the Meeting Room of the 1909 Historic Courthouse at 145 Worth Street, Asheboro, NC, and the meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m.

Members present were Hal Johnson, Mac Whatley, Bill Johnson, Warren Dixon, Lynne Qualls, and Fran Andrews. Newly-appointed HLPC member Nan Kemp, who was also present, was awaiting the administration of her oath of office, which occurred later in the meeting and so noted in these minutes. Bill Ivey, Robyn Hankins, and Robby Davis were absent. Chairman Johnson stated that Robby Davis has resigned from the Commission effective with the end of his term. Note: Ms. Hankins entered the meeting where so noted in these minutes.

Chairman Johnson stated that this meeting was the first official meeting held in what was once Courtroom A of the 1909 Historic Courthouse. It has been renovated to be the official meeting place of the Randolph County Board of Commissioners, beginning on Monday, May 2, 2011. He recognized County Manager Richard Wells and Director of Building Inspections Paxton Arthurs, who was the project manager for the renovations.

Chairman Johnson also welcomed Nan Kemp, retired teacher, to the Commission. She was appointed by the Randolph County Board of Commissioners in February to fill the unexpired term of Donna Hall.

Approval of Minutes from January 26, 2011

On a motion of Qualls, seconded by Whatley, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 26, 2011, as presented.

Oath of Office

Amanda Varner, Clerk to the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission, administered the oath of office to Nan Kemp, newly-appointed HLPC member.

Remarks from County Manager

County Manager Richard Wells welcomed everyone to the first meeting and stated that it was Mr. Whatley's suggestion that the HLPC should be the first group to have a meeting in the renovated 1909 Historic Courthouse. Mr. Wells added that the building is 99% complete, but the County had already received its occupancy certificate.

Mr. Whatley congratulated Mr. Wells and Mr. Arthurs in seeing the two-year project through until the end. He stated that he hopes that everyone realizes how much value the County got with the building.

(At 2:08 p.m., Ms. Hankins entered the meeting.)

Public Hearing - Landmark Designation – Austin Lawrence House

Chairman Johnson stated that Tommy and Linda Routh were not in attendance at this meeting but had presented an application for landmark designation of the Austin Lawrence House (a.k.a. Wrenn House). Chairman Johnson gave a PowerPoint presentation and shared the history of the house that is part of the application for designation. Much of the information was taken from Randolph Community College's *Austin Lawrence House Historic Structure Report, Spring 2001* and *Architectural History of Randolph County, 1985* by Lowell McKay Whatley, Jr.



The house was built ca. 1848 by Austin Lawrence on a rock outcropping on a steep hillside overlooking the Deep River. It occupies a prominent location on a bluff above the northeast bank of the Deep River, providing a spectacular, unobstructed view of the water from its long front porch. This house has had very few owners, which has contributed to the relative lack of modifications. Mr. Lawrence is believed to have come to Cedar Falls, Randolph County, from New Hampshire to work for the Cedar Falls Manufacturing Company. In 1868, Austin Lawrence sold the property to the Cedar Falls Manufacturing Company: It is presumed that the property was used as rental property for its employees. Cedar Falls Manufacturing Company transferred the house to Sapona Mills who owned a row of houses that they rented to mill employees. The houses were numbered and were generally referred to by number. The number "11," which can still be seen over the front door of the Austin Lawrence House, is believed to be from the days when the house was the "Number 11" mill house. Members of the Cedar Falls Historical Society have recalled that different areas of the Austin Lawrence House were rented to different families. The upstairs was apparently a favorite with newlyweds; sometimes one couple would live in the two rooms on the left and another in the room on the right. Another family might have lived downstairs. Water had to be hauled from a spigot outside. The entrance to the bathroom was from the porch. Until that time, an outhouse, located near the barn, was used. This was the only bathroom until the interior bathroom was added for tenant, Dr. Wrenn. In recent times, the house has been known locally as the Wrenn house because a Dr. Wrenn lived in the house as a tenant.

Historical records reveal that Austin Lawrence purchased a parcel of Randolph County land in 1841 (Deed Book 24, Page 1). He bought the property on which the house is located in two tracts. A deed recorded in Deed Book 28, Page 47, indicates that Austin Lawrence bought approximately 8.5 acres along the Deep River from J.M. Steed on September 6, 1848. Austin Lawrence came to Cedar Falls to work in some capacity for the Cedar Falls Manufacturing Company. The 1850 Census lists his occupation as

“manufacturer,” and the cotton mill is the most likely, if not the only, manufacturing establishment in Cedar Falls at the time. This is supported by the fact that in the 1852 advertisement for the sale of the house, Austin Lawrence offered to sell his share in the Cedar Falls Manufacturing Company. The fact that he owned shares with a cost of \$500 indicates that he was a man of some wealth and most likely had a supervisory position with the company.

Austin Lawrence advertised the house for sale in October, 1852. The advertisement appeared for three months in the Greensborough Patriot. In the ad, Mr. Lawrence describes the house as “a large dwelling, two stories in front and one in the rear, with a Piazza in front and a covered passage from the house to the kitchen.” The house currently consists of a main section that is a center-hall-single-pile form on the first floor, and a center-hall-double-pile form on the second floor, with the two floors in the front of the house facing Deep River. There are also three rooms to the left of this structure (facing the house from the river) with the kitchen located in the far left room. It is interesting to note that Austin Lawrence described his house as being “finished in the latest style.” At the least, this indicates that he was aware of, and appreciative of, the Asher Benjamin moldings that are unique and distinguish this house from others in the region.

This historically valued house consists basically of two separately dated sections. One section is a two-story structure constructed in 1848, and a second section, a one-story wing added to its west side, circa mid-to-late 1850’s. Dating of the wing was done through methods of examining saw markings, nails, materials, and their applications. Another dating note is from an advertisement in a newspaper for the home’s sale in the mid 1850’s. Although the ad describes a covered passageway to the kitchen, it has not been determined whether it refers to the current kitchen located in the wing portion or to some other outbuilding that would be typical of the era. Within the interior spaces of both sections other remodeling work has taken place. These remodels during other time periods were probably done to accommodate the introduction of electricity and indoor plumbing for use as a boarding house, and as rental property.

The Austin Lawrence House, ca. 1848, is one of the landmarks of the Greek Revival style in Randolph County. The builder of the two-story, center-hall plan house drew inspiration for the decorative trim work from a well-known, widely used builder’s guide, “The Practical House Carpenter,” by Asher Benjamin (1773-1845), who was a New England builder-architect whose published manuals helped popularize the Greek Revival style all across the United States. A mantel in the house is directly adapted from Benjamin’s book, specifically from Plate 51, “Design for a Chimney Piece.” The mantel is a traditional “post and lintel” form with a Greek key design decorating the frieze; this is carried on turned colonnettes. The firebox is framed by a molded architrave with bull’s-eye corner blocks. The local artisan’s rendition of the mantel is somewhat crude and two-dimensional when compared to the Asher Benjamin design, but it is important to find that Randolph County craftsmen tried to imitate published examples of his work.

The house has a great deal of additional high-quality work. The molded cornice is carried across the gable to form a classical pediment; the gable is covered with sheathed siding as is the area sheltered by the Doric gallery across the façade. The double-leaf entrance is framed by sidelights in a symmetrically molded architrave with beveled corner blocks. The house is built into the hillside so that the rear façade displays only a single

story; the central door on the rear façade is set in a crosssetted architrave with transom. Nine-over-nine double-hung sash are used on the ground floor, with 9/6 sash on the upper story. The house also features interior chimneys, molded two-panel doors and an open staircase with turned newel post and square balusters.

In summary, the Austin Lawrence House, Ca. 1848, meets Local Landmark criteria as it is significant in Randolph County for its distinctive Greek Revival architectural construction. The Austin Lawrence House maintains an outstanding degree of original integrity with regard to location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Its unique location and distinctive architecture represents an established and familiar visual feature of Franklinville and Randolph County, N.C. The 160 years of history represented by the Austin Lawrence House starts with the expanding growth of North Carolina in the early 1800's, the development of Randolph County, the founding of Cedar Falls, and the spreading of industrialization from New England to and through the South. It includes the process of people leaving their subsistence farms and becoming laborers in southern cotton mills. Significance also lies within Austin Lawrence, a young man from Marlboro, New Hampshire, with New England ways and styles of construction and interest in investing in southern cotton mills.

The Austin Lawrence House was owned by the mill and used as rental property until it was deeded to the Randolph County Heritage Society in the 1990's. Mr. Whatley said that in 2000, the Heritage Society sold the house to Tommy and Linda Routh subject to a preservation easement and have maintained historical preservation and have interest in obtaining National Historic Register designation.

Mr. B. Johnson asked if public access is a possibility. Mr. Whatley responded that they are proud of the house, and anyone interested could contact them for a tour.

At 2:20 p.m., the Commission adjourned to a duly advertised public hearing to consider a historic landmark designation request of Tommy and Lorraine Routh for the Austin Lawrence House, located at 2383 Cedar Falls Road, Franklinville. Chairman Johnson opened the public hearing and hearing no comments, Chairman Johnson closed the public hearing.

On a motion of Andrews, seconded by Dixon, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the resolution of support for Randolph County Board of Commissioner's designation of the Austin Lawrence House, ca 1848 as a historic landmark, as follows:

***Resolution Recommending Local Historic Landmark Designation
Austin Lawrence House, ca. 1848***

WHEREAS, Chapter 160A, Article 19, Part 3C of the North Carolina General Statutes provides for the designation of local historic landmarks; and

WHEREAS, the Randolph County Board of Commissioners has appointed the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission, having the authority to exercise, all powers and duties given it by the Randolph County Historic Preservation Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission has taken into consideration all information contained in the Historic Landmark Designation Application for the for the Austin Lawrence House, ca. 1848; and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, State Historic Preservation Office, has reviewed the Local Landmark Application and noted that the report provides the Historic Landmark Commission and the Board of County Commissioners with adequate information to determine whether the Austin Lawrence House, ca. 1848 has the required special significance and integrity required for local landmark designation; and

WHEREAS, the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission conducted the required public hearing, having published legal notices with mailings to adjoining property owners; and

WHEREAS, the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission finds that the Austin Lawrence House, ca. 1848, meets the following specific criteria outlined in the adopting Ordinance establishing the Commission: (1) Critical Part of the County's heritage by having value as an example of the cultural, historic, and social heritage of Randolph County; (2) The location of the Austin Lawrence House, ca. 1848 represents a unique and distinctive site representing an established and familiar visual presence in Randolph County; and

WHEREAS, the property is more specifically described as follows:

The Austin Lawrence House is located on a 5.57 acre tract owned by Tommy and Lorraine Routh, 2383 Cedar Falls Road, Franklinville Township, Franklinville, N.C., PIN# 7782386802, Randolph County, N.C. Archaeological resources associated with the house are present on the property and labeled on a map excerpted from the 2001 RCC Historic Structure Report. Care should be taken to avoid ground disturbing activities in the vicinity of these identified features.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, this 27th day of April, 2011, that the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission approves the application for local landmark designation, and recommends to the Randolph County Board of Commissioners that the Austin Lawrence House, ca. 1848 be designated as a Local Historic Landmark.

Chairman Johnson stated that a public hearing would be set and held by the Randolph County Board of Commissioners to hear comments regarding the approval of an ordinance establishing this property as a historic landmark.

Adopt Resolution to Change Regular Meeting Location

Chairman Johnson stated that the HLPC has determined that it would like for their meetings to be held in the meeting room of the Historic Courthouse and needed to adopt a resolution making that change.

On a motion of Qualls, seconded by B. Johnson, the Commission voted unanimously to adopt a resolution to change the regular meeting location of the Historic Landmark Preservation Commission to the 1909 Historic Randolph County Courthouse meeting room, as follows:

**RESOLUTION CHANGING THE LOCATION OF THE
HISTORIC LANDMARK PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MONTHLY MEETINGS**

WHEREAS, the Historic Landmark Preservation Commission was established on June 2, 2008, by the Randolph County Board of Commissioners; and

WHEREAS, by being an appointed Board of the Randolph County Commissioners, the Historic Landmark Preservation Commission is subject to requirements of N.C.G.S. 143-318.10 and N.C.G.S.143-318.12; and

WHEREAS, the 1909 County Courthouse office spaces and courtroom have been renovated to protect its historical significance to Randolph County; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Landmark Preservation Commission has determined that the location for the regular monthly meetings shall be held at the 1909 Historic Courthouse meeting room located upstairs, 145-C Worth Street, Asheboro, NC, 27203, effective May 25, 2011.

***BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the regular monthly business meeting of the Historic Landmark Preservation Commission shall, unless otherwise duly changed due to holiday or other County business conflict, be held the fourth Wednesday of each month at 2 p.m., effective May 25, 2011.*

Heritage Tourism

Mr. Whatley stated that the (TDA) Tourism Development Authority Director Tammy O’Kelley had taken him on a trip to Johnston County, which has put great efforts into historic tourism. They have a number of museums including the Ava Gardner Museum, Benson Museum, Historical Society Museum and others. He said that Johnston County’s TDA, which has a similar budget and same number of staff (3) as Randolph’s TDA, also markets their county’s history. County Manager Richard Wells stated that the Randolph Room gets a lot of out of town visitors each summer that make it their vacation to come and research family genealogy and to see where their family lived.

Mr. Whatley stated that there are eight Randolph County museums and that the TDA has information about each, but that the HLPC could provide the TDA with more to use to be able to market all the historic sites and history of Randolph County. Ms. Qualls added that this would be the educational package that the Commission began talking about some time ago. Mr. Whatley said with that educational package, the TDA could market to the many conventions that are held within 100 miles of Randolph County. Ms. Andrews stated that the Trinity Museum has had groups come from Charlotte several times for programs presented which tell stories about quilts, often called “quilt turnings.”

Chairman Johnson stated that the HLPC and the TDA are currently working closely together to market history and appreciated the tour that Ms. O’Kelley and Mr. Whatley took to obtain information about what other counties are doing. He said that the HLPC should consider discussing some ideas at future meetings.

1909 Historic Courthouse Open House

Chairman Johnson announced that Randolph County has set July 19, 2011 from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm as an open house for the 1909 Historic Randolph County Courthouse. He asked if the HLPC members could be present to talk about the Courthouse, its history and

architecture. The general public can view the courthouse from 4:00-6:00 pm. The consensus was that the members would like to be involved, and further details could be worked out at a future meeting.

Announcement

Ms. Andrews announced that in 1943, Trinity erected a veteran's wall listing 146 names, but 46 names were inadvertently omitted. On May 29, at 2:00 p.m., the Trinity Historic Preservation Society will be dedicating a new veteran's memorial located at the Trinity Museum and all were invited to attend. The museum is located at 7524 NC Hwy 62 in Trinity.

Adjournment

At 2:55 p.m., on motion of Andrews, seconded by B. Johnson, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn.

Hal Johnson, Chairman

Amanda Varner, Clerk to the HLPC