

**Survey and Research Report on the
Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566**

1. **Name and location of property:** The property known as the Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 is located at 124 Morris Road, Matthews NC 28105.

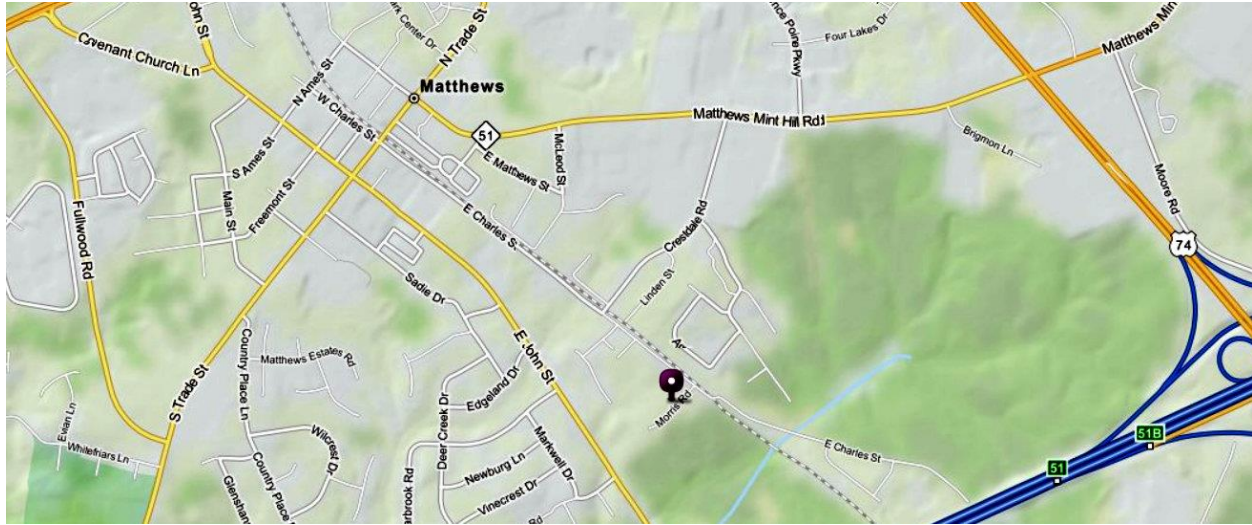
2. **Name, address, and telephone number of the current owner of the property:**

Masonic Lodge #566
124 Morris Road
Matthews, NC 28105

3. **Representative photographs of the property:** This report contains representative photographs of the property.



4. A map depicting the location of the property:



- 5. Current Tax Parcel Reference and Deed to the property:** The tax parcel number is 21504201. The most recent deed to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 713, Page 272, October 20, 1928. UTM coordinates are 526431.6 E and 3885235.5 N.
- 6. A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Susan V. Mayer.
- 7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description prepared by Stewart Gray.
- 8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S 160A-400.5.**
- a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture and/or cultural importance: The Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 is an important artifact in understanding Prince Hall freemasonry in Mecklenburg County, and is an important element of the historic built environment of the African-American community in Matthews during the Jim Crow Era.
 - b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association: The Commission contends that the physical and architectural description which is included in this report demonstrates that the Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 meets this criterion.
- 9. Portion of the Property Recommended for Designation:** The exterior of the building, and the land associated with tax parcel number 21504201.

Historical Essay

The history of Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 in the Crestdale (formerly Tanktown) area of Matthews is one of a little-explored facet of rural black communities in Mecklenburg County. While the formation and activities of schools and churches in these areas have been researched, the importance of fraternal organizations within black civic activity has received little attention. Growth of these organizations, specifically Prince Hall freemasonry, follows the history of the black community following Emancipation. Former slaves and free blacks sought to establish their own schools, churches, and civic organizations in their own rural communities and urban neighborhoods. Through Prince Hall lodges, black men in rural Mecklenburg County communities such as Tanktown found a sense of tradition, leadership, and comradery which they used to serve their families and community.

Prince Hall and Black Freemasonry in the United States

The history of modern Freemasonry dates back to the master stone masons and European guild system in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During the 1700s, National Grand Lodges were established in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. Freemasonry spread from the British Isles to the American colonies, with the first duly constituted lodge in North America chartered in Boston in 1733. Following the Revolutionary War, states began forming their own independent Grand Lodges. These lodges were entirely comprised of white men, with no effort to include free black men in their ranks.¹

In March 1775 Prince Hall, a Barbadian-born former slave, and fourteen other black men were initiated into a Lodge #444 of an Irish regimental station in Boston. Hall and the men attempted to join area lodges but were disregarded by white Masons. Finally, in 1787, the Grand

¹ Peter P. Hinks and Stephen Kantrowitz, eds., *All Men Free and Brethren: Essays on the History of African American Freemasonry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), xi.

Lodge of England chartered Hall's group of Masons as African Lodge #459, granting the black Masons the ability to recruit and expand their brotherhood.² Prince Hall died in 1807 and was buried at Copp's Hill Cemetery in Boston. Black Freemasonry continued to grow as African Lodge #459 chartered lodges in Boston, Philadelphia, Providence, Rhode Island, and New York City. Prince Hall lodges spread throughout the northern states during the antebellum period and even into southern cities with large free black populations. A lodge in New Orleans, Louisiana was chartered through the Pennsylvania Grand Lodge in 1849, and the following year the Ohio Grand Lodge chartered a Prince Hall lodge in Louisville, Kentucky.³

Black Freemasonry in North Carolina

Following the Civil War, northern Prince Hall Masons moved to establish lodges in the former Confederacy. Bishop James Walker Hood, a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church in Connecticut, was sent to be a missionary to establish churches in North Carolina in 1864. Hood also was a Mason. Under the authority of the Grand Lodge of New York, he and former Grand Master of the New York lodge Paul Drayton established the first Prince Hall lodge in the state at New Bern, King Solomon Lodge #23, in 1866. A second lodge was chartered that year at Wilmington, named Giblem Lodge #28.⁴

On March 1, 1870, representatives from the four North Carolina lodges—King Solomon, Giblem, Eureka #30 in Fayetteville, and Widow's Son #31 in Raleigh—met in Wilmington to form the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of the State of North Carolina. Bishop Hood was

² African Lodge #459 is today known as African Lodge #1 to signify its status as the first lodge established in Prince Hall Freemasonry. "A Brief History of Prince Hall Freemasonry in Massachusetts," The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of Massachusetts, <http://www.princehall.org/history.html>, accessed October 4, 2015.

³ Hinks and Kantrowitz, 7-10, xii.

⁴ David Hackett, "The Prince Hall Masons and the African American Church: The Labors of Grand Master and Bishop James Walker Hood, 1831-1918," in Hinks and Kantrowitz, 134-136.

named the Grand Master, or head of the state lodge.⁵ Black Freemasonry in North Carolina grew quickly. In December 1873, eleven lodges sent representatives to Charlotte to the annual meeting of the state Grand Lodge, and four years later Prince Hall lodges in North Carolina numbered twenty-six.⁶

The first Prince Hall lodge in Mecklenburg County was the Paul Drayton Lodge #7, established September 10, 1872, named in honor of the former Grand Master in New York. The lodge's first Worshipful Master was A. Burt Schenck (c1830-c1896), a founding member of Simpson Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church⁷. Lodges in North Carolina cities typically pulled its membership from the middle-class and elite black communities, many of whom were either free blacks before the Civil War or freed slaves who became prominent in business and Republican politics following emancipation. Other Worshipful Masters of Paul Drayton Lodge #7 in its initial years included John Thomas Schenck (1824-1894), brother to A. Burt Schenck and a carpenter who was a delegate to the state Freedman's Convention in 1866 and a Charlotte city alderman for Second Ward,⁸ and Gray J. Toole (c1845-1925), an owner of two barber shops in Charlotte who served as President Grove Cleveland's personal barber.⁹ The Schenck brothers were in the top three of the wealthiest black residents of Charlotte in 1870.¹⁰

⁵ After the establishment of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, the four North Carolina lodges were renumbered 1 through 4 in order of their founding. "Lodge History," Widow's Son Lodge #4, <http://widowsson4.weebly.com/history.html>, accessed September 2, 2015.

⁶ *Daily Charlotte Observer*, December 12, 1873; *Wilmington Morning Star*, December 16, 1877.

⁷ Simpson Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church merged with Gillespie Methodist Church in 1969 to form Simpson-Gillespie Methodist Church on Beatties Ford Road in Charlotte.

⁸ Chuck McShane, "The Story of Charlotte, Part 6: Power Shifts," *Charlotte Magazine*, September 23, 2014, <http://www.charlottemagazine.com/Charlotte-Magazine/October-2014/The-Story-of-Charlotte-Part-6-Power-Shifts/>, accessed October 4, 2015; Minutes of the Freedman's Convention, (Raleigh, NC: Standard Book and Job Office, 1866), 3.

⁹ Louise Pettus, "Black Man Was A Rock Hill Leader Before Integration," *Charlotte Observer*, February 15, 2004.

¹⁰ "The History of the Paul Drayton Lodge #7," <http://www.pauldraytonlodge.com/history.htm>, accessed September 4, 2015; Janette Thomas Greenwood, *Bittersweet Legacy: The Black and White "Better Classes" in Charlotte, 1850-1910* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 248.

Prince Hall Masonry spread through North Carolina in the latter part of the nineteenth century and into the following century. In 1890, the state boasted 59 lodges and over 1,200 members. Twenty year later, there were 10,000 members in 358 lodges in the state. Important to the growth of Prince Hall Masonry in North Carolina was the chartering of lodges in rural communities. Most Mecklenburg County lodges outside of Charlotte were chartered following this period. Silver Set Lodge #327 was chartered in Newell in about 1910, and Davidson Lodge #511 received its charter from the Grand Lodge of North Carolina in 1920.¹¹

Mecklenburg County Black Community Organizations

Masonic lodges were not the only fraternal organizations with chapters established by blacks in Mecklenburg County. In 1876, a chapter of the Independent Order of Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria was founded in Charlotte. Chapters of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in America and Knights of Pythias also formed in the city.¹² Members of these organizations performed community service and fundraising for churches, schools, hospitals, and other needed functions. When the cornerstone of the Good Samaritan Hospital was laid in December 1888, representatives from the Prince Hall Masons, Odd Fellows, and other societies participated in the ceremony.¹³

In addition to the Charlotte neighborhoods Brooklyn and Cherry and adjacent Biddleville, nearly all of Mecklenburg County's small towns also had black communities located nearby. In the northern part of the county, Smithville was adjacent to Cornelius, while Pottstown was home to the black community in Huntersville. At Matthews in southeastern Mecklenburg County,

¹¹ Robert L. Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners: Black Economic Success in North Carolina, 1865-1915* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1997): 69; "Bost Night" program, Silver Set Lodge #327, December 20, 2014; "About Us," Davidson Masonic Lodge #511, <http://davidson511.webs.com/about-us>, accessed September 4, 2015.

¹² Greenwood, 71; *Daily Charlotte Observer*, January 13, 1877; *Charlotte News*, June 16, 1910.

¹³ *Charlotte News*, December 18, 1888.

black residents lived in Tanktown, which flanked the railroad tracks at the water tank. The community was settled by former slaves following the Civil War.

Churches and schools formed the core of most black rural communities. The earliest black church in the Matthews area was Roseville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, which was actually located on Ames Street in Matthews. Later churches were located within Tanktown. Mount Moriah Baptist Church was founded in 1879 by Calvin Henry Boyd, who served as its first pastor. A Presbyterian church was located in the community but closed. Members of the Roseville church left to join the United House of Prayer for All People in the 1920s.¹⁴

But while the lodges in cities such as Charlotte pulled their membership from the middle- and upper-class black elite of those areas, rural lodges served a different demographic. As noted in *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*, “outside of the farm, blacks found few opportunities for employment except in traditional ‘Negro jobs,’” which largely tended toward manual labor.¹⁵ Most residents of the Mecklenburg County black communities were poor and worked as laborers for hire. Tanktown blacks sharecropped or rented farmland, though many worked at jobs within or outside the community. Robert Kirkpatrick was the janitor at the Matthews School, Calvin Boyd worked at a nearby brickyard, and Jesse Johnson Bell was a cook for Dr. Thomas Neely Reid.¹⁶

Despite economic hardship, rural blacks readily came together to improve their communities. A prime example of this civic activity concerns education. Despite Republican

¹⁴ Stewart Gray, “African American Community”; Survey of African American Buildings and Sites in Mecklenburg County, Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, <http://www.cmhpf.org/Surveys/surveyafricancontext.htm>, accessed September 5, 2015.

¹⁵ Jeffrey J. Crow, Paul D. Escott, and Flora J. Hatley Wadlington, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Office of Archives and History, 2011): 122.

¹⁶ “African American Community,” Small Towns of Mecklenburg County, Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, <http://www.cmhpf.org/kids/neighborhoods/small-aac.html>, accessed September 5, 2015.

efforts during Reconstruction to institute public schools for all children, many black communities had little access to formal schooling. The nearest school for Tanktown children was at Hood's Crossroads several miles away. Students typically attended for only three months out of the year, since they were expected to help on the family farm. After 1900, residents of Tanktown converted a shotgun house into a school serving grades 1-7. Outside help came in the early 1920s with the philanthropic efforts of Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck, and Company, who had created the Rosenwald Fund to provide grants for the establishment and construction of schools for Southern rural black communities. The Matthews Colored School received a grant for 50% of the construction costs. To fund the remainder, residents hosted events such as fish fries. Parents were either assessed a \$25 fee or were required to help in the construction of the building. For the 1923-1924 school year, a new school house with four teachers greeted the residents of Tanktown.¹⁷

Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566

According to current Star of St. Matthews lodge member and past Worshipful Master Henry Massey, men in a community interested in having a Masonic lodge would request a charter from the Grand Lodge. In 1925, the Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 received its charter from the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, Prince Hall Affiliation. Christopher Columbus "Budd" Potts (1894-1963), a local farmer who also owned a fish market, was the first Worshipful Master, or president of the lodge.¹⁸

Like most lodges in communities, Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 is a blue lodge, meaning that it is a local Masonic lodge. Freemasonry consists of thirty-three degrees, or

¹⁷ "African American Community"; Survey of African American Buildings.

¹⁸ Mary Dominick and Susan Mayer, Interview with Henry Massey, September 11, 2015; Souvenir Booklet to honor Star of St. Matthew #566 F. & A.M. P.H.A., March 9, 1992.

ceremonies of membership initiation. The first three degrees are universal in Blue Lodges; from the fourth degree on, a Mason affiliates either with the York Rite or Scottish Rite. Prince Hall Masons are typically of the York Rite, though there are also Prince Hall Affiliated Scottish Rite lodges.¹⁹

On October 20, 1928, trustees of the lodge—Potts, Crawford Neptune Patterson (1877-1943), William M. B. Reid (1877-1940), Daniel Marshall Maxwell (1878-1948), and Ranson Lake (1850-1930)—purchased an acre of land and a two-story concrete-masonry building on what is now Morris Road in Tanktown from the county Board of Education for \$500.00. Dedicated space for lodges was important to facilitate activities as well as recruitment of new members.²⁰ Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 is unusual in Mecklenburg County for having its own property for such a long period of time. The oldest lodge in the county, Paul Drayton Lodge #7, moved into its property on Seventh Street in Elizabeth in 1973. Unique Lodge #85, founded around 1900, acquired a former Jehovah's Witness Hall in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood in 1975.²¹

¹⁹ Charlotte Consistory #35 is a Prince Hall Affiliated Scottish Rite lodge. Hinks and Kantrowitz, 182-183.

²⁰ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 713, Page 272.

²¹ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3633, Page 133; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3759, Page 87.



Figure 1 Rev. A.D. Ezell served as Worshipful Master of Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 from 1966 to 1977.

Members of Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 came from a variety of backgrounds and professions. Potts and Crawford Patterson are listed as being farm laborers in the 1940 U.S. Census, while William Reid was a blacksmith. Ransom Lake was a farmer and brick mason. In addition, Prince Hall Masonry historically had strong ties to churches with many members also being clergymen. Member D.M. Marshall as well as past Worshipful Masters A.D. Ezell and Ellison Lee Bowman were all ministers.²²

Not long after the chartering of Lodge #566, Prince Hall Masonry in North Carolina faced a dire situation. Because of the stock market crash in October 1929 and the resulting economic depression, the Grand Lodge of North Carolina suspended operations due to lack of funds. This heavily impacted Prince Hall lodges across the state, both urban and rural. While membership numbers are not available for North Carolina, we can see the effects of the

²² 1940 U.S. Census (Matthews, Morningstar Township, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina), 9B-11A; Death Certificate for Ransom Lake, April 3, 1930, File No. 234, North Carolina State Board of Health.

depression on Prince Hall Freemasonry in Texas. In 1926 Prince Hall Masons numbered over 26,000, but by 1939 membership had declined to 8,327. In Newell just northeast of Charlotte, Silver Set Lodge #327 suspended operations. Their lodge had to be reinstated through South Carolina in 1946 before being brought back under the umbrella of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina two years later.²³



Figure 2 Members of the Ezell Commandery #9, circa 1978-1979. Second from left in front row is past Worshipful Master Henry Massey. Second from right in the same row is Charles Sharpe, also a past Worshipful Master.
Photo courtesy of Henry Massey.

Any new members who join a Prince Hall lodge go through a period of Masonic education and testing. Once these tests have been passed, a raising is held to initiate the new members. Raisings are among the most important ceremonies for lodges. Brothers from area lodges are invited to attend, and a celebration is held afterwards.

According to the 1897 corporate charter of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Ancient Masons of North Carolina, the forerunner of the modern day state Prince Hall Grand

²³ “Bost Night” program, Silver Set Lodge #327, December 20, 2014; William A. Muraskin, *Middle-class Blacks in a White Society: Prince Hall Freemasonry in America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), 112-114.

Lodge, the object of the corporation was “for mutual association, for dispensing charity and benevolence and generally to propagate the principles of free masonry in said state.”²⁴ Charity and service work in the community is especially important in the function of Freemasonry. Brother David Moses and other members of Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 undertook such efforts as mentoring local youth from Piedmont Middle School in Charlotte. As he notes, the masonry mission is a “brotherhood that is low key, focused on self-improvement, enrichment of community through positivity-- setting an example to the youth.”²⁵

Prince Hall lodges such as Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 hold many events that are open to the community. Prince Hall Day, which recognizes the founder and namesake of this Masonic institution, is an open community event that is celebrated jointly by the Charlotte-area 32nd and 33rd Districts of North Carolina Prince Hall freemasonry. This event features a cookout, games for kids, and a ceremony at the site of the celebration, typically a church or the Double Oaks Masonic Center in Charlotte. Another open community event, the Lodge of Sorrow, mourns members who have passed; their families are invited to participate. St. John Day honors St. John the Baptist, who is revered by Prince Hall Masons, and is also a community event.²⁶

Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 is also home to adjunct Masonic organizations. On July 22, 1972, Ezell Chapter #67 was chartered by the Holy Royal Arch Grand Chapter of North Carolina, thus affiliating the lodge with the York Rite of Freemasonry. Later that year, on October 29, Ezell Commandery #9 was granted a charter by the Grand Commandery of North Carolina, which allowed member to be admitted to the Knights Templar, the highest order within the York Rite. The institution of these two orders of the York Rite meant that members of the

²⁴ North Carolina General Assembly, *Private Laws of the State of North Carolina Passed by the General Assembly at Its Session of 1897* (Winston, NC: M.I. & J.C. Stewart, Public Printers and Binders, 1897): 241-242.

²⁵ Mary Dominick Phone Interview with David Moses, March 15, 2016.

²⁶ Susan Mayer and Mary Dominick Interview with Nathan Parker, March 23, 2016.

Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 could rise to the highest order of the York Rite within the community rather than at other lodges. In the Matthews lodge building, the Blue Lodge (Star of St. Matthews #566) meets on the lower level, while the Red Lodge (Ezell Chapter #67) and Black Lodge (Ezell Commandery #9) meet on the second level. The attainment of these two charters was due to the efforts of Worshipful Master A.D. Ezell, for whom the two chapters were named.²⁷

In addition to the various orders of York Rite Freemasonry, the Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 is also home to Venus Chapter #143 of the Order of the Eastern Star (OES), an affiliate Masonic body for women. OES was founded in 1874, and the first North Carolina chapter was established in the town of Washington as Jephtha Chapter #1. In comparison to its white counterpart, Prince Hall-affiliated OES was more progressive in its male-female relationship. Bishop Hood, who helped spread Prince Hall Masonry in North Carolina in the 1860s, encouraged the founding of not only OES but also the ordination of women in the AME Zion church.²⁸

Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 was formed with brotherhood among black men and service to the community in mind. Historian Robert L. Kenzer best summarizes the impact of Prince Hall lodges on black communities:

Black Masonry in North Carolina clearly provided its members a form of fellowship that exceeded their immediate social needs. It permitted black professionals, businessmen, artisans, and farmers, many of whom had experienced an unusual degree of economic

²⁷ There are three orders within the York Rite: Royal Arch Masonry, Cryptic Masonry, and Knights of Templar. In many jurisdictions, Cryptic Masonry may be skipped. Souvenir Booklet to honor Star of St. Matthew #566 F. & A.M. P.H.A., March 9, 1992; "The Concordant Bodies of Freemasonry," Silver Square Lodge #791, <http://silversquaremasoniclodge7911.jimdo.com/more-light-in-masonry/>, accessed October 3, 2015.; Interview with Henry Massey, September 11, 2015.

²⁸ Margaret Dixon, "North Carolina OES History," Grand Chapter Order of the Eastern Star Rite of Adoption for the State of North Carolina Jurisdiction, <http://www.gcoesphanc.org/#!/north-carolina-oes-history/ceud>, accessed October 5, 2015; Hackett, in Hinks and Kantrowitz, 153.

success, to come together and collectively work to improve the condition of the membership and the black community as a whole.²⁹

Since 1925, Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 has fostered a sense of tradition, leadership, and comradery in not only the Tanktown community but also through its membership which draws from across Mecklenburg County.

²⁹ Robert L. Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners: Black Economic Success in North Carolina, 1865-1915* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1997): 75.

Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566

Architectural Description



Star of St. Matthews Lodge #566 is a two-story, front-gabled, masonry building constructed with concrete masonry units, commonly known as CMUs. The building faces, roughly, east and is set back approximately 270 feet from East Charles Street and a CSX rail bed. The setting is distinctly rural with no visible development to the south, and a few scattered houses set among trees and small fields to the north and west. The façade is symmetrical, with a replacement door centered on the elevation, flanked on either side by window openings, now filled with plywood. The window openings feature brick sills. The door is topped by a row of 4" masonry blocks that may be infilling the original larger opening. The second story is pierced by two window opening located directly above the first-story windows. The second-story windows are metal, one-over-one replacement units. The gable is covered with weatherboard. A wooden louvered vent is set high in the gable. A faded plywood sign is located below the vent. The front roof overhang is open, with exposed roof-sheathing boards and a plain, thick bargeboard.



View to the east.



The north elevation is three bays wide, and the fenestration is symmetrical. Three window openings, now covered with plywood, pierce the elevation on the first story. The second story is also pierced by three window openings, each filled with a metal replacement double-hung window. The plain rafter tails are exposed.



The south elevation is identical to the north elevation, with the exception of a simple exterior brick flue located to the east of the elevation's westmost windows.



The rear elevation is largely obscured by a two-story, shed-roofed, CMU addition. Each side elevation of the addition is pierced by one small window opening, infilled with a row of CMU and containing a small, metal replacement window. The half-gables are covered with plywood, and the overhang is exposed plywood roof sheathing with no bargeboard.

The rear elevation of the addition contains a replacement metal door, set to the south of the center of the elevation. Roughly above the door is a single, short, metal double-hung window. The shallow roof overhang is open, with exposed plywood sheathing and rafter tails. The rear gable of the principal section of the building is visible above the addition, and is identical to the front gable.



The interior of the Lodge features exposed CMU walls. In the first story the floor is concrete. A single row of three rough timbers runs down the center of the building, supporting a beam composed of dimensioned lumber. The ceiling is composed of fibrous ceiling tiles. The second story is inaccessible, but appear to be composed of a single room. The interior of the addition contained a staircase that has been disassembled. The first story of the addition contains a watercloset that is currently being renovated.