

Ownership History of the  
**B.C. Meadows (Heirs) Property**  
(Meadows Barn)  
Spring Creek Township  
Madison County, NC

The Burgin Cemore Meadows heirs' property, shown in Figure 1 and hereafter referred to as the 'barn tract', is located in the Spring Creek Township in western Madison County, along State Highway 209, near the intersection with Caldwell Mountain Road. The barn-of-interest on this property, the Meadows Barn, is dated back to the early 1920s and is unique as the barn and barn tract have remained in the Meadows family since that time. That uniqueness also provided a challenge as the lack of a sales history over the last century has made it difficult to trace the ownership of the property prior to the construction of the barn. However, using publically available records at the Madison County Deed Office along with some key records provided by the Meadows family, the ownership history of the property and the construction timing of the barn itself can be documented.

Typically, a 'starting point' deed-of-record is associated with a property and recorded by the Madison County Tax Assessor. Using that deed, it's often possible to trace the ownership history of a tract back to at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, if not earlier. Unfortunately, there was no such deed recorded by the Tax Assessor's office for the barn tract. Given that fact, there were initially two lines of investigation that were used in an attempt to unravel the ownership history. First was to examine the land records for all properties with B.C. Meadows listed as a grantee (purchaser) prior to circa 1930. If the description in one of these deeds could be matched to the barn tract, uniquely located near the intersection of a major road, now NC 209, and Spring Creek, then a definitive acquisition date could be determined. The second approach, and a much more arduous task, is to examine the offset land parcels and attempt to recognize in the older deed descriptions references to the subject property and/or recognize a description that may include the barn tract, again given its unique location.

In the Madison County land records, B.C. Meadows, born September 1872, was listed as a grantee for 8 transactions between 1894 (still single at age 22) and 1925 (age 53, married with 12 children), though several of these were sold shortly after acquisition. Of all the tracts, only about half could be pinpointed on modern

maps, most located near Gap-of-the-Mountain, about a mile north of the barn tract. And only one of these, a one-acre tract acquired in September 1925, was definitively part of the barn tract itself (the barn tract, as shown on Figure 1, is listed at 2.89 acres). Figure 2 shows the tax parcel outlines in the area, focusing on the barn tract, colored light blue in the main map and outlined in yellow on the inset map. The 1925 tract is shown in both maps, though the inset satellite image shows that the barn is actually located north of this tract, leaving the history of the actual barn site still a mystery. In the description in the 1925 deed, the northern tract boundary referred to “B.C. Meadows corner” and “B.C. Meadows home lot”, so clearly Meadows purchased, and built or owned, a house upon this northern section of the current barn tract, prior to 1925. It wasn’t until a series of land deeds, provided by the heirs of B.C. Meadows, most of which were never recorded with the County, were examined that the history of the barn site could be determined. This history is diagrammed in Figure 3. The most crucial deed, one of those not recorded, was dated July 17, 1917 and was for a 2/3 acre tract purchased by B.C. Meadows from C.A. Ferguson. This same tract was described in a total of 9 documents from 1909 to 1917, including two recorded deeds and seven deeds provided by the Meadows family. Interestingly, though this tract is small, the compass bearings for several of the boundary calls change, presumably due to recognizable survey errors from sale to sale or simply illegible handwriting resulting in transcription mistakes. Regardless, because of the inconsistencies, some of the descriptions are wrong, many resulting in tracts that far exceed 2/3 of an acre, and others that simply do not fit the geometry of Spring Creek (the eastern boundary and starting point of the tract), even if the course changed slightly over the last 100 years. The most reasonable outline of the tract is shown in Figure 4, and is shown as a good compliment with the later 1925 tract, especially considering the surveying uncertainties that existed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

To determine the pre-Meadows ownership history of the barn tract, the offset tracts were examined, focusing on those tracts that appear, according to the current tax parcel outlines, that they could have once included the barn tract. Figure 5 is the same base map as Figure 2, but indicates many of the deeds examined during this investigation. Though all of these deeds, and several more, were examined, the focus was on the deeds to the west of Spring Creek, often used as a property boundary. Meadows acquired both his 1917 ‘home’ tract and the recorded 1925 tract from the Ferguson family and it quickly became apparent that Thomas H. Ferguson, and his descendants, were important land owners in

the area (C.A. Ferguson and Pearl Payne (nee Ferguson), listed in many of the deeds on Figure 3, were two of Thomas Ferguson's children.) According to the records, Thomas Ferguson acquired at least 5 parcels in the area, totaling almost 600 acres, from 1871 to 1893. Most of these parcels have vague descriptions but almost all are west of Spring Creek and lie near or on the Indian Camp Branch (labeled Charlotte Branch on modern maps), which intersects Spring Creek less than 200 feet from the southern tip of the barn tract, and so one most assuredly contained the 'future' barn tract.

Given all the data examined, it can be concluded that the barn tract was once owned by Thomas Ferguson, most likely acquired in the 1870s or 1880s. In 1917 the parcel on which the 1920's-era barn now sits was sold by C.A. Ferguson to B.C. Meadows, which supports the assumption that B.C. Meadows did, indeed, build the barn which bears his name. A complimentary parcel acquired from Ferguson in 1925 defines that property that is currently owned by the heirs of B.C. Meadows and recognized by the Madison County Tax Department (Figure 4).