

Haughton - McIver Home History, written and submitted by Robert Griffin, John M McIver, Jr's grandson



John M. McIver, Sr. and family – Christmas, c. 1910.

The Haughton-McIver House in the Chatham County community of Gulf is listed on the National Registry of Historic Homes. The house was built around 1850 by Lawrence Haughton, probably as a family residence. Haughton sold the house to John W. Hooker, but after Hooker's bankruptcy in 1853 Haughton re-acquired a half-interest in the house, along with R.W. Palmer. For a time, the house was operated as a hotel. Gulf was the northern terminus of the Cameron-to-Gulf Plank Road, and another road ran northeast toward Pittsboro. By 1870, Palmer had died and Haughton wanted to sell, and the house was sold at auction. The buyer was John M. McIver. The house remained in the McIver family until 1994.

Gulf thrived after the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad reached the town in about 1879. Gulf had a bank, a number of stores, manufacturing facilities, cotton gins and a large grain mill on the Deep River. McIver prospered as a businessman during this period. He helped establish the Gulf Presbyterian Church in 1882.

John M. McIver's first wife was Permelia Harris, daughter of Brooks Harris, of nearby Belmont Farm. Permelia died without surviving children. McIver's second wife also died young, leaving him with three young children. In 1890, McIver married his third wife, Lois Anderson, and they had three more children.

Just after this third marriage, McIver made some alterations to the house, which included adding the two-story porch to the front of the house and the bay window to the front parlor on the left. This photograph was taken shortly after those additions were completed. The house looks much the same today.



McIver's son, Monroe A. McIver, wrote for his family some recollections of his Christmases at Gulf. He remembered walks in the woods to select the family's Christmas tree – a holly tree, if a suitable one could be found, or if not, a red cedar. "The expedition to cut the tree and the holly to decorate the house was another activity of the days immediately before Christmas. The tree was set up in front of the bay window in the parlor, and armsful of holly were used to decorate the house. Of course real candles were used on the tree – nothing else had ever been heard of. That custom ... made the fact that we survived without a fire something of a miracle."

The family's tree in 1910 was a cedar, and it had electric lights.



On Christmas morning, the opening of the stockings was followed by setting off firecrackers (which Santa had provided in the stockings) in the back yard. When the McIver boys were older, Christmas afternoon usually included quail hunting. Here are Monroe McIver (right) with younger brother John M., Jr. (left) and older brother Evan (center).



After John M. McIver's death in 1923, the house was occupied by his youngest son John M. Jr. and wife, Lilian Dunlap McIver. They raised three daughters and a son, and the house remained a focus of family Christmases. Here are the grandchildren, in 1959.





The family sold the house in 1994. It has had several owners since, and most recently has been operated as the “Belle Havre” bed-and-breakfast.