

Hayes Plantation ^[1]

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Hayes Plantation house as seen from the waterfront. Photograph by Tim Buchman. Courtesy

by Eileen McGrath, 2006; Revised December 2021 of Preservation North Carolina.

Hayes Plantation is a farm in [Chowan County](#) ^[2], across Queen Anne's Creek from [Edenton](#) ^[3]. The plantation is known chiefly as the seat of the Johnston family. [Samuel Johnston](#) ^[4] (1733-1816) purchased Hayes in 1765 from David Rieusett (Variants: Rieusset, Rieuset, Rieussetts) and made it his family's home until 1793, when he moved to the Hermitage, a plantation in [Martin County](#) ^[5]. In 1814 Samuel Johnston gave Hayes to his son [James Cathcart Johnston](#) ^[6] (1782-1865). With the help of the English architect-builder [William Nichols](#) ^[7], James Cathcart Johnston built a new plantation house at Hayes, and he and his three sisters returned there to live in 1817. The plantation remained in the Johnston family until James Cathcart Johnston's death. In his will, Johnston left all his Chowan County property, including Hayes, to a business associate, [Edward Wood](#) ^[8]. The Wood family continues to operate Hayes as a working farm.

The plantation that Samuel Johnston purchased contained 543 acres. It grew modestly during his lifetime to 665 acres, but dramatic growth occurred under the ownership of his son James Cathcart Johnston. The younger Johnston was an energetic manager of his estates, keenly interested in agricultural innovations. He acquired and cleared additional land, so that by 1860 the plantation encompassed 1,374 acres. Corn was the principal crop grown in the antebellum era, but Johnston planted other grains as well and raised livestock.

James Cathcart Johnston also inherited a substantial collection of books from his father. To house those books, he built a special wing for the library in the new plantation house at Hayes. The octagonal, Gothic library is one of many distinctive features of the stately structure. The house, still in use as a private residence, is considered one of the finest antebellum houses in North Carolina. A reproduction of the library, which includes many of the original books and furnishings from the Hayes house, is on display in [Wilson Library](#) ^[9] at the [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#) ^[10].

Reference:

Catherine W. Bishir, "Severe Survitute to House Building: The Construction of Hayes Plantation House, 1814-1817," *NCHR* 68 (October 1991).

Additional Resources:

Hayes Collection, UNC Libraries: http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/h/Hayes_Collection.html ^[11]

Subjects:

[Early Statehood \(1789-1820\)](#) ^[12]

[Places](#) ^[13]

Authors:

[McGrath, Eileen](#) ^[14]

Origin - location:

[Edenton](#) ^[15]

From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[16]

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