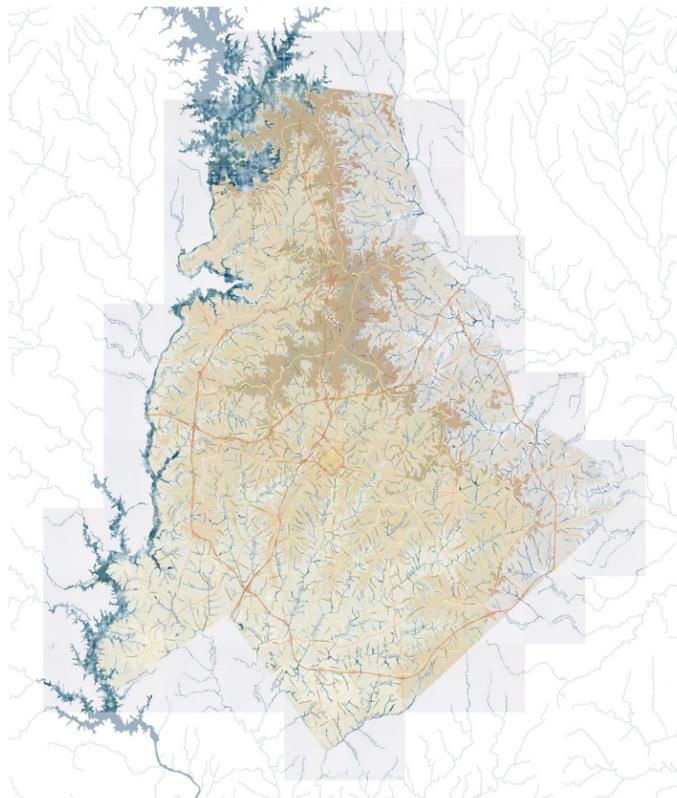


DID YOU KNOW?

- Who owns the water in the county's creeks? We all do, as citizens of North Carolina. State law says: "... the water and air resources of the State belong to the people."
- Wetlands (marshes, bogs, wet areas and streams that don't have water year-round) provide important flood and storm water control, as well as important habitat for birds, fish and amphibians.
- Mecklenburg County has 126 named creeks. This includes creeks whose name is "tributary of."
- Of those 126 named creeks, 81 have their own names (not "tributary of").
- A nationwide survey of the condition of small streams throughout the U.S. in 2004-05 found 42 percent of the stream miles were in poor biological condition and 28 percent in good condition. In the Eastern region that includes Charlotte, only 18 percent of the stream miles were in good biological condition, and 52 percent were in poor condition.
- The most widespread problems for streams across the U.S. are nitrogen and phosphorus (called "nutrients"), sediments in the streambed, and activities that disturb the stream's banks such as construction, farming or removing vegetation.
- Although they are "nutrients" – meaning they supply nutrition – high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus can hurt water quality. They can cause too much algae to grow, which uses so much oxygen that other aquatic life suffers. Algae blooms can also produce toxins that harm humans and animals.
- The excess nitrogen and phosphorus that pollute creeks can come from fertilizer on lawns and gardens, sewage treatment plants or leaking septic systems.



LEARN MORE

Visit KeepingWatch.org and click on "Explore Creeks" for stories, videos, maps and other information about Mecklenburg County's creeks.



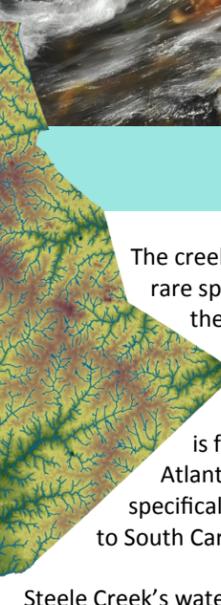
The Autobell® Creek Challenge is funded by Autobell® Car Wash.

STEELE CREEK



Steele Creek is in southwestern Mecklenburg County, mainly in a community of the same name. Most parts of the Steele Creek community are inside the Charlotte city limits, but some sections are considered a **township**. The Steele Creek neighborhood is named after the creek, which is thought to be named after a **Scots-Irish** family. The creek got its name sometime in the late 1700s or early 1800s.

Steele Creek flows into South Carolina to the Catawba River, making its way through Carowinds amusement park. None of the streams in the Mecklenburg County part of the Steele Creek watershed is considered impaired, which is unusual for a creekshed in Mecklenburg County.



Steele Creek's watershed is one of the fastest growing in Charlotte. In 1990 about 5,000 people lived there, compared to an estimated 26,872 in 2010. That means the area's population grew five times in just 20 years.

This is not the first time the Steele Creek area has experienced a large population change. After the Revolutionary War in the late 1700s, the population decreased greatly when soldiers were given large pieces of land in Tennessee as a reward for their service. Many older people stayed, but many of their grown children moved to Tennessee. The

The creek is home to several rare species of fish such as the coastal shiner, redbfin pickerel and Carolina darter. The Carolina darter is found only in the Atlantic Piedmont, specifically from Roanoke, Va., to South Carolina.

exception was usually the oldest child, who stayed behind to care for the parents and to **inherit** the land.

The Steele Creek community held one of the Carolinas' first mill villages. Rock Island Woolen Mill was built in the mid-1800s, powered by water. It made wool fabric. The wool would be sold for 25 cents a pound. The mill produced fabric used for Confederate Army uniforms in the Civil War. The mill and warehouses that sold the goods shut down after the war. Although the mill was referred to as in "Steele Creek," it was not in the watershed of the creek itself.

The Steele Creek Historical and Genealogical Society describes historic sites in the area. One is the old McClintock School building at McClintock Presbyterian Church, which is itself historic. The church was founded in 1865, right after the Civil War, by former slaves who wanted their own church. The school, built in 1922, is no longer used as a school, but the church

preserved the building. (Another school in Charlotte is named McClintock—McClintock Middle School—but it's in southeast Charlotte in the McMullen Creek watershed.)

The original McClintock School was a **Rosenwald School**. Rosenwald Schools were built in the early 1900s to help educate African-American children in the South. Under slavery before the Civil War, slaves were generally forbidden to learn to read. After about 1900, when strict segregation laws were enacted in the South, schools for black students were given far less money than schools for white students. The McClintock Rosenwald School is one of 813 such schools built in North Carolina and 5,300 across the South. The McClintock School in Steele Creek is one of just a few Rosenwald School buildings in Mecklenburg County that have survived.

Key vocabulary

Inherit – Receive money or property from someone who has died.

Scots-Irish – Scots-Irish Americans are descendants of people who moved from Scotland to Northern Ireland starting in the 1600s. But many did not stay long in Ireland. Starting in the 1700s many moved from Ireland to the British colonies in North America. Land along the coast was expensive so they settled the hillier, less expensive areas inland, including Mecklenburg County. They tended to be Presbyterian, which is why many of the oldest churches in the Charlotte area are Presbyterian. The 2000 census found that North Carolina has the highest percentage of residents of Scots-Irish ancestry of any state, with South Carolina and Tennessee tied for No. 2.

Rosenwald Schools – Schools built in the early 1900s for African-American children—at a time when Southern states spent far less to educate black children than white children. The money to build the schools came from Julius Rosenwald of Chicago, who ran the Sears retail company, and from contributions from the African-American communities where the schools were built.

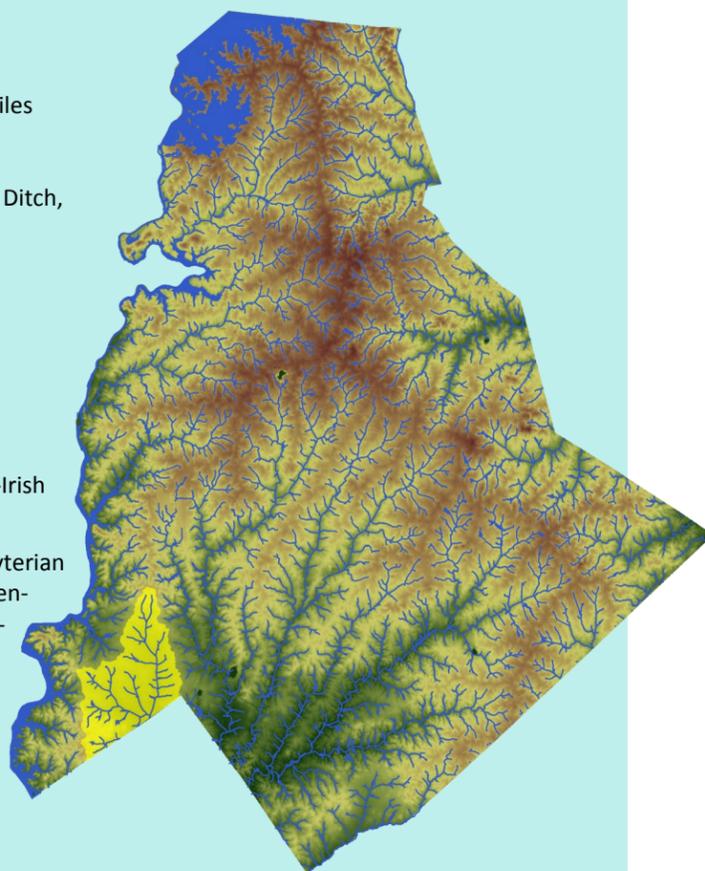
Township – Townships can be just a simple geographic reference or have their own local government. In the case of the Steele Creek area in Mecklenburg County, it is just a geographic reference.

Profile

- **Location:** Southwestern Mecklenburg County (zip code: 28273)
- **Approximate land area in Mecklenburg County:** 15.51 square miles
- **Estimated population in 2010:** 26,872
- **Creeks and tributaries:** Steele Creek, Blankmanship Branch, Polk Ditch, Walker Branch, Walker Branch Tributary
- **Drains into:** Catawba River watershed in York County, S.C.
- **Miles of perennial streams:** 24.877
- **Impaired streams:** None

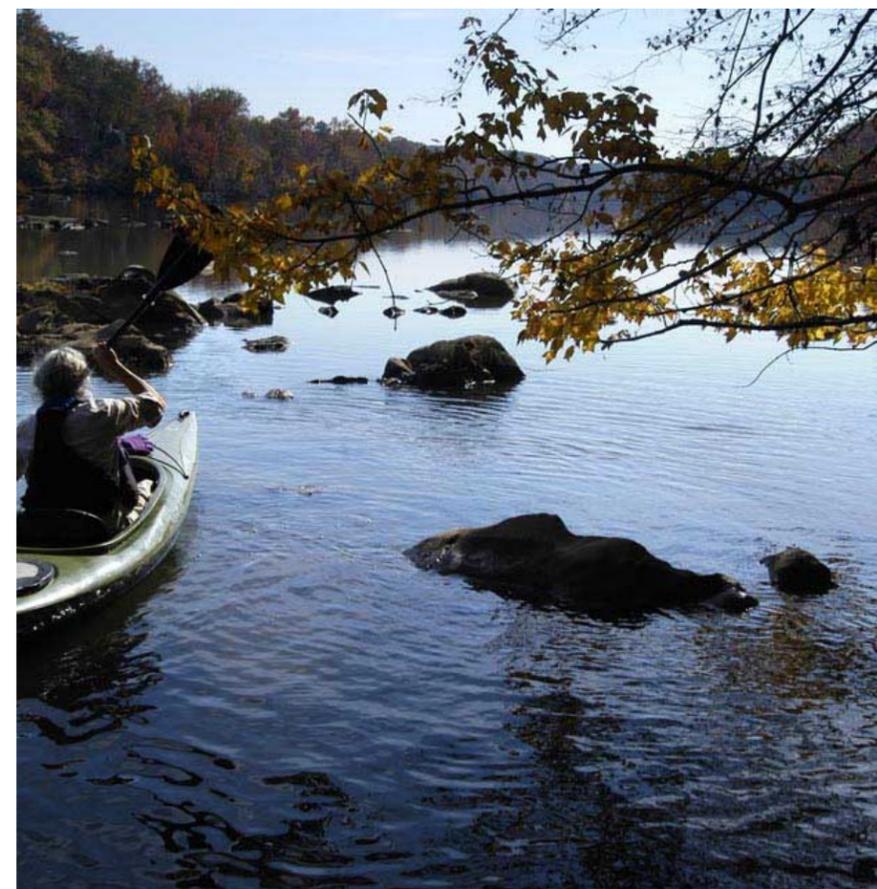
Fun facts

- It is believed that the name Steele came from the name of Scots-Irish families who settled in the area.
- Despite its name and its address, the historic Steele Creek Presbyterian Church on Steele Creek Road, the second oldest church in Mecklenburg County, is not in the Steele Creek watershed, but in the Sugar Creek watershed. But it is in the Steele Creek community.
- The Steele Creek watershed is home to several rare fish species, including the coastal shiner, redbfin pickerel, and Carolina darter.
- On some maps, Blankmanship Branch is listed as Blackmanship Branch. It flows into Steele Creek in South Carolina.



What's in the Steele Creek watershed?

- **Landmarks:** Carowinds
- **Schools:** Olympic High School, Kennedy Middle School, Southwest Middle School, Steele Creek Elementary School, Lake Wylie Elementary School, River Gate Elementary School



A kayaker on the Catawba River, the waterway Steele Creek flows into in South Carolina. Photo: Nancy Pierce



Redfin pickerel, one of the rare fish species found in the Steele Creek watershed. Photo: Rebecca Zeiber, N.H. Sea Grant Flickr CC BY-ND



Carowinds, in Steele Creek watershed. Photo: Martin Lewison - Flickr CC BY-SA



Rosenwald School building, owned by McClintock Presbyterian Church. Photo: Mecklenburg County tax records

What you can do to protect our creeks

Don't dump hazardous chemicals down drains. Take them to a recycling center.

Don't dump yard waste in drains or creeks. Bag, recycle or compost it.

Prevent soil erosion. Plant trees and bushes along creek banks and in bare areas of the yard.

Scoop the poop. Dog waste can pollute local creeks.

Use a car wash, not the driveway.

Use fewer fertilizers and chemicals in your yard. Don't apply chemicals 48 hours before a heavy rain.

Don't dump cooking grease and oil down the sink. Grease clogs are the most common cause of sewage spills into Mecklenburg County creeks.

Report pollution, including soil erosion. Call 311. To report online, or use the Water Watcher app visit <http://charmec.org/stormwater/ReportPollution>

Reduce how much runoff leaves your property. Plant trees, use rain barrels, limit the use of pavement and limit the use of pipes to send rainwater into storm drains.