

Survey and Research Report

on the

Edward M. Rozzell House



1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Edward M. Rozzell House is located at 11647 Rozzelles Ferry Road, Charlotte, NC.

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

The present owner of the property is:

Jerry Lee Sifford

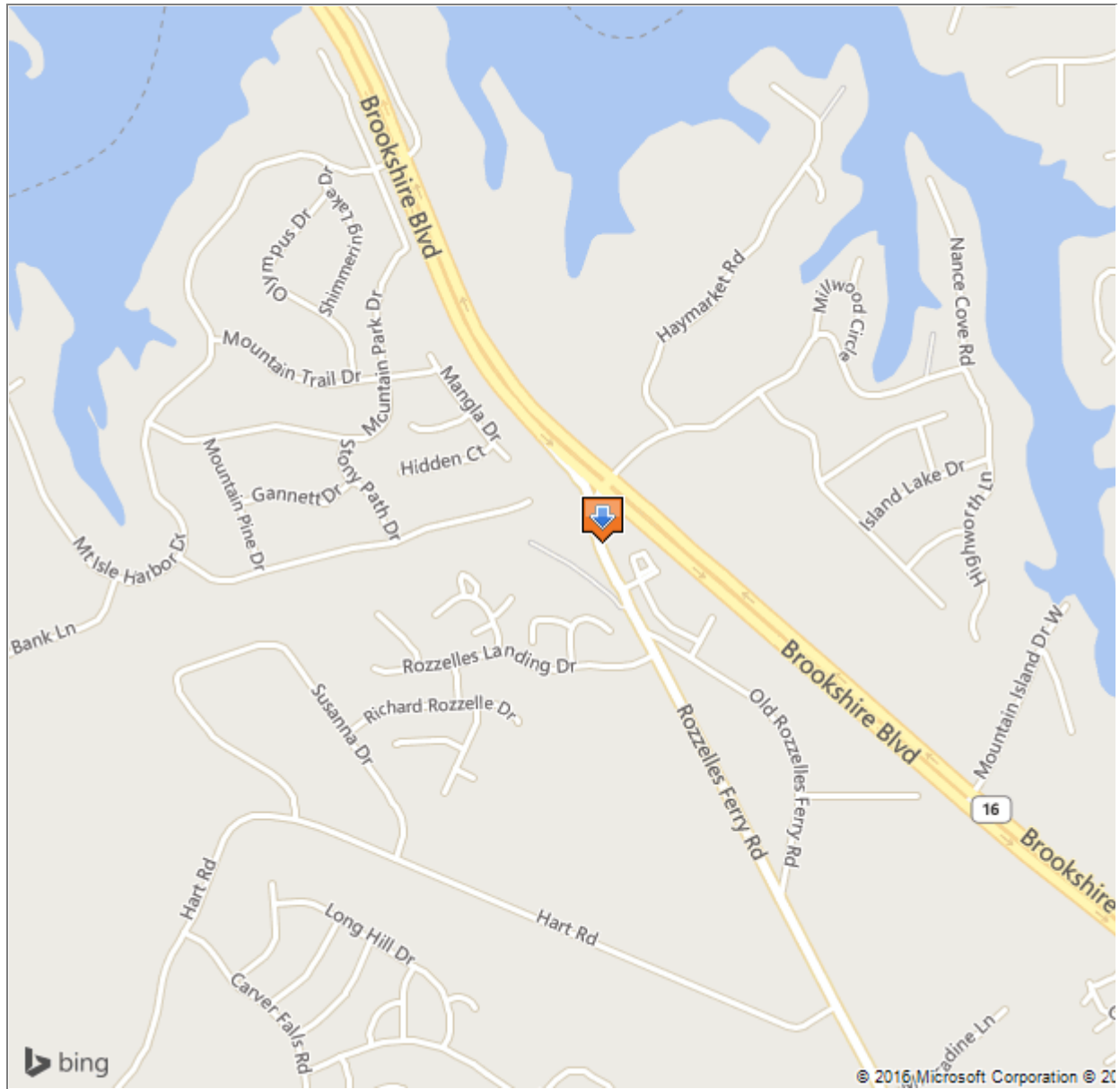
11647 Rozzelles Ferry Road

Charlotte, NC 28214

Telephone: 704-392-6606

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

4. A map depicting the location of the property: This report contains a map depicting the location of the property.



5. Current deed book reference to the property: The most recent deed to the property is found in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1026, page 587. The tax parcel number for the property is 031-22-254.
6. A brief historical sketch of the property: This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Emily D. Ramsey.
7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains a brief architectural description of the property prepared by Emily D. Ramsey.
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 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission judges that the Edward M. Rozzell House possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

- 1) The Edward M. Rozzell House is a reflection of the booming cotton economy of the post-bellum period in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and a well-preserved piece of the rapidly disappearing rural landscape in Mecklenburg County.
- 2) Edward Rozzell and his family were an integral part of the Paw Creek community along the Catawba River – Edward and his father ran the only ferry line on the Catawba connecting Gaston and Mecklenburg County, in addition to operating their own large cotton farms along the river.
- 3) Architecturally, the Rozzell House is an excellently preserved example of the single-pile, two-story I-house –the most popular house type in rural Mecklenburg County and across most of the South. The house, surrounded by fields, mature trees and several outbuildings (including a large intact well house and log barn with half-dovetail notching) retains its original rural setting.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or

association: The Commission judges that the architectural description completed by Emily D. Ramsey indicates that the Edward Rozzell House meets this criterion.

9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal: The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the property which becomes a designated “historic landmark.” The current appraised value of the house is \$35,620.00. The current appraised value of the 1.67 acres of land is \$17,730.00.

Date of Preparation of this Report:

March 12, 2001

Prepared By:

Emily D. Ramsey

745 Georgia Trail

Lincolnton, NC 28092

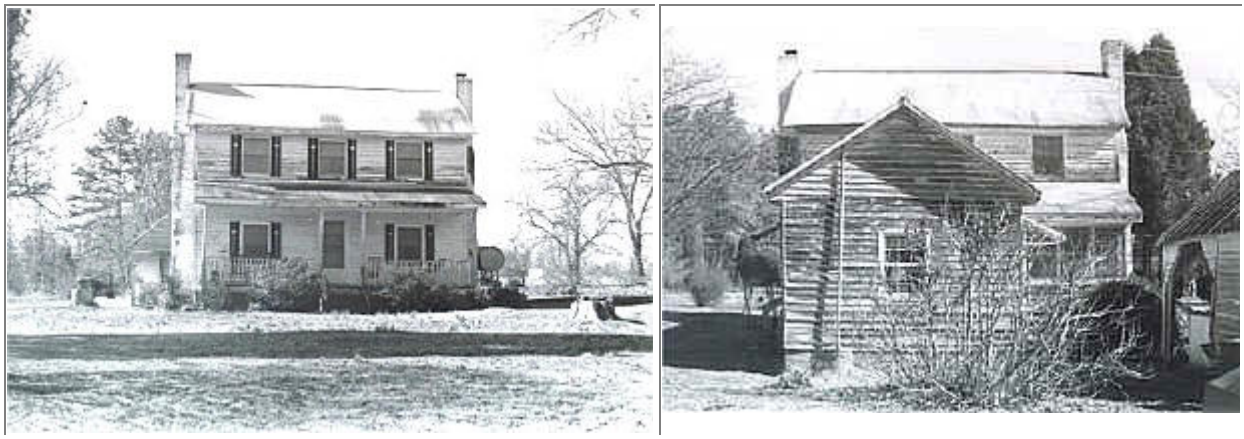
Statement of Significance

Edward M. Rozzell House

11647 Rozzelles Ferry Road

Charlotte, NC

Summary Paragraph



The Edward M. Rozzell House, constructed ca. 1881, is a structure that possesses local historic significance as a product of the thriving cotton economy in Mecklenburg County and for its association with the Rozzell family, one of the most important families in the Paw Creek community and known throughout the region for the Rozzell Ferry – the only ferry operating on the Catawba River in Mecklenburg County before the Civil War and a popular means of transportation between Mecklenburg and neighboring Gaston County.¹

The last half of the nineteenth century saw tremendous opportunity for industrious farmers in Mecklenburg County and surrounding regions. Charlotte had escaped relatively unscathed from the effects of the Civil War and the continually high demand for cotton as a cash crop, strengthened by the development of the fertilizer Peruvian guano in 1860 and the laying of several railroad lines through the county in the 1850s made the post-bellum period a prosperous time for farming in Mecklenburg County. Edward Rozzell, born into the Paw Creek community in 1850, was able to take advantage of these developments as he began plans for his own farm in the 1870s. The farmhouse he completed in ca. 1881 was one of many constructed in the county during the last half of the nineteenth century, and reflects the prosperity of the booming post-war agrarian economy.



The Edward Rozzell House is also architecturally significant as an excellently preserved example of the single-pile, two-story I-house – the most popular house type in rural Mecklenburg County and across most of the South. The Rozzell House exhibits all of the characteristics of a typical I-house, and has experienced little alteration in its 120 years. Equally important to the significance of the property are three surviving outbuildings - a substantial well house set close to the house, a small granary, and a log barn - and the complex's relatively undisturbed surroundings. Although located in an area that has recently experienced rapid suburban development, the Rozzell House (set off of the main road on a dirt side road and set among open fields) retains a sense of its original rural setting.

Agricultural Background and Historical Context Statement

Life changed dramatically for Charlotte-Mecklenburg farmers during the last half of the nineteenth century. The coming of the county's first railroad line in 1852 and the rapid expansion of lines before and after the Civil War helped Charlotte to emerge as a regionally important commercial and trading center. Cotton proved to be an integral part of the region's newfound prosperity.² Although an important crop before the Civil War, cotton was difficult to grow in the region's unforgiving clay soil, and many farmers could not afford to grow cotton as their sole cash crop. In 1860, Mecklenburg County produced only about 6,000 bales of ginned cotton. However, with the introduction and widespread use of the fertilizer Peruvian guano during the 1860s, farmers in Charlotte-Mecklenburg could successfully grow cotton for market with relative ease.³ This development, coupled with skyrocketing cotton prices and a vital railroad network left virtually unscathed by the ravages of war, gave Charlotte and Mecklenburg County farmers distinct advantages as they prepared to replant and recover in the post-bellum period.



Around the county, newly prosperous farmers began to build houses befitting their elevated status. A building boom of sorts began in Charlotte-Mecklenburg's rural landscape – a substantial portion of the farmsteads scattered across the county date from this period of intensive vernacular building. Modest one-story log dwellings of already established farmers were replaced with more stately two-story structures (many complete with ornate Victorian details), while younger farmers took advantage of the prosperous times to build first homes for new wives and young children.

Edward M. Rozzell, born only a decade before the beginning of the Civil War, was reared in the small farming community of Paw Creek along the Catawba River. There, he farmed beside his father, Richard Rozzell, on the family's large farmstead and helped bring travelers across the river on Richard Rozzell's ferry. The Rozzell family not only ran the ferry between Mecklenburg and Gaston County, a very profitable business unto itself, but also boarded weary travelers in their home and ran a restaurant to feed hungry ferry riders.⁴ Edward Rozzell moved out of this bustling environment in the early 1870s, when he married Mary Ann Dunn, also from Paw Creek. The newlyweds did not move far from the Rozzell family homestead. They built a small temporary structure on a plot of land off of Rozzelles Ferry Road (now Old Rozzelles Ferry Road) and immediately began work on a larger house. According to Edward and Mary Ann's oldest daughter, Sara, Edward Rozzell (with the help of his neighbors and family members) completed the two-story, one-pile I-house in 1881.⁵

Edward Rozzell and his family flourished on the Paw Creek farmstead – Mary Ann Rozzell bore eleven children and reared eight in the house, while Edward farmed the land. Like most farmers in the post-bellum period, he grew cotton and corn as primary cash crops, as well as a smaller kitchen garden with a variety of fruits, vegetables, and grains for his large family. According to descendent Jerry Sifford (Edward Rozzell's great-grandson and present owner of the house), the Rozzell's also began raising "improved cattle and sheep" in addition to more common livestock such as swine, chickens, and dairy cattle, for sale during the late 1900s.⁶ Edward Rozzell, his wife Mary Ann, and their children were all active members of Paw Creek community life, which, like many other small farming communities in the area, revolved around the Presbyterian Church. Edward Rozzell, despite the views of his father, Richard, supported the disagreeing faction of Paw Creek Presbyterian which would later become Cook Presbyterian Church. Both Edward and Mary Ann Rozzell, along with most of their children, are buried in the Cook Presbyterian cemetery.⁷

Upon Edward Rozzell's death in 1921, the property passed into the hands of the Rozzell's youngest son, Earl Tracy Rozzell. He continued to farm the land, with diminishing success, until his death in 1967. Earl Tracy Rozzell's widow passed the farmstead on to her daughter, Margaret Cynthia Rozzell, who in turn passed it to her nephew, Jerry Sifford, when she moved out of the house to nearby Mt. Holly, in Gaston County. Sifford currently owns the house and the remaining 1.67-acre plot of land on which the house stands.

Architectural Description and Context Statement

Architecturally, the Edward Rozzell House reflects the tenacity of the simple, conservative I-house within the rural environment of Mecklenburg County during a period marked by rapid change within the region. Although Mecklenburg farmers jumped at the chance to take advantage of post-war innovations in cotton growing and distribution, they were wary of new architectural forms that developments in building technology allowed. Labor saving steam-powered machinery and mass-produced building materials that produced modern forms like the wildly popular Queen Ann Victorian style could be easily carried by train to even the most remote rural areas; still, many farmers in Mecklenburg County, including Edward Rozzell, chose the simple two-story, one-pile I-house when they began to build their own dwellings. Although considered an antebellum house type, the I-house remained one of the most popular forms for farmhouses in the county well into the twentieth century.⁸

The Edward Rozzell House is also significant as a representative example of a nineteenth century farm complex. The typical farm in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Mecklenburg County supported not only cash crops like cotton and corn, but also an array of livestock (mainly hogs, cows, and chickens), kitchen gardens for family consumption, and fruit trees. Three of the Rozzell farmstead's original outbuildings -- a large well house close to the house, a small frame granary, and a log barn, possibly pre-dating the house itself -- have survived to the present day. These buildings, in conjunction with the house, help to give a more complete sense of daily life in rural Mecklenburg County.

The most significant outbuilding on the property is the early-twentieth-century frame well house, a simple front-gable structure with a deep integrated covered shed protecting the well. The well itself has been covered with a large cement block covering, but many of the building's original details -- including a tin roof and metal pulley for pulling up water -- remain.

The farmstead also includes a frame granary (also early-twentieth-century) - a small, unpainted front-gable frame structure with a 1950s garage shed attached to the side - on the southeast side of the property, and a log barn (most likely dating from the mid-nineteenth century but in a deteriorated state) to the rear of the granary and well house.

A 1997 survey of historic rural resources in Mecklenburg County, compiled by Sherry J. Joines and Dr. Dan Morrill, lists only twenty-two pre-twentieth century farmhouses left in the county that retain their original rural setting and outbuildings - an extremely small number given the fact that Mecklenburg County was, until the mid-twentieth century, largely a region of small farming communities supporting an agrarian economy.⁹ Moreover, these rural farm complexes are among the most endangered historic resources in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, since their integrity

can be altered not merely through changes in the buildings themselves, but also to the rural settings (fields, woodlands, creeks, and streams) that surround them. The Edward Rozzell House is a well preserved example of a common rural house type, and the farm complex as a whole retains several original outbuildings and a sense of its original rural setting in an area where rural resources, and intact farm complexes in particular, are rapidly disappearing.

The Edward Rozzell House is an excellently preserved example of the classic I-house form. The house is a two-story, one-pile, side-gabled structure of wood frame construction covered in wooden clapboards, with a rear kitchen ell attached by an enclosed shed porch. A simple shed roof porch runs the length of the façade, covering the original wooden front door in the center of the façade. Brick end exterior chimneys flank the house - both are original, although the northwest chimney has been partially replaced and both chimneys have been plastered. The house originally sat on a foundation of large fieldstones – many of the stones are still intact, and can be seen at intervals among the brick infill now present at the base of the house. The rear of the house has remained relatively unchanged. Many I-houses were built with a detached kitchen behind the house, to keep the heat away from the main house and to reduce the risk of a disastrous fire. The Edward Rozzell House's kitchen and dining area was originally detached from the main house – a shed porch provided shelter for those passing from the main house to the kitchen. At some point, the porch was enclosed, and now forms a small narrow room between the two downstairs parlors and the dining room and kitchen area. In 1989, Hurricane Hugo caused extensive damage to the roof of the house. The roof was replaced and the façade windows on the second floor were replaced with new windows with a similar six-over-six configuration.

The interior of the Edward Rozzell House has also been spared any major alterations. The original plaster and board walls, board and batten ceilings, hardwood floors and thin wooden doors remain intact, along with the two original mantels and the simple, narrow staircase. The stairwell, originally completely closed to the downstairs and accessed by a separate door, has been opened to the southeast parlor, and the kitchen ell has been modernized to some extent, probably in the mid-twentieth century.¹⁰ Although the Edward Rozzell House retains a sense of its original rural setting, suburban development is rapidly encroaching this well-preserved farmstead. Despite the nearby developments, the Edward Rozzell House remains an excellent example of the common I-house form and a tangible reminder of Mecklenburg County's rural past.

11. Although the popular spelling of Rozzell includes an "e" on the end of the name ("Rozzelle"), both Edward and Mary Ann Rozzell's tombstones show the name without an additional "e" – this report will use the latter spelling of the name.

2. Thomas W. Hanchett. "The Growth of Charlotte: A History" (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1985) p.4-5.

i3. Sherry J. Joines and Dr. Dan L. Morrill, "[Historic Rural Resources in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina](#)" (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1997).

ii4. Miscellaneous undated Charlotte News clippings, provided by Jerry Sifford. Hereafter cited as "Charlotte News Clippings." The clippings include Edward Rozzell's obituary; the obituary of Addie C., Nancy C., and David A. Rozzell, three of the Rozzell's children who died as infants of diphtheria; articles on the Richard Rozzell House, known as the Rozzell Ferry Inn and, during the mid-twentieth century, as the Laura Rozzell Restaurant.

iii5. Interview with Jerry Sifford on February 26, 2001. Hereafter cited as "Interview."

6. Ibid.

7. Charlotte News Clippings and Interview.

iv8. Catherine W. Bisher, Charlotte V. Brown, Carl R. Lounsbury and Ernest H. Wood III, *Architects and Builders in North Carolina: A History of the Practice of Building* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1990) p.193. Joines and Morrill, "[Historic Rural Resources in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina](#)."

v9. Joines and Morrill, "Historic Rural Resources in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina."

vi10. Interview.
