



**Survey And Research Report  
On The E. L. Baxter Davidson  
Historic Markers**



**Cowan's Ford – Davidson College Directional Monument**



**General Davidson Marker**



**Rural Hill Direction Marker**





**Rural Hill Cemetery Walls**



**Hopewell Presbyterian Church Walls**



**Hopewell Presbyterian Ch. Sign Marker**



**Plaque On General Davidson Marker**



**Williams Presbyterian Ch. Walls**



**Williams Presbyterian Church Marker**

**1. Name And Location Of The Properties. The E. L. Baxter Davidson Historic Markers Are Located At Various Sites In North Mecklenburg County. The UTM Coordinates Are:**

- a. Rural Hill Walled Cemetery: 17S 504679E 3915584N**
- b. Hopewell Presbyterian Church Walls And Marker: 17S 509168E 3913615N**
- c. Williams Presbyterian Church Walls And Marker: 17S 513132E 3906225N**
- d. Cowan's Ford Monument: 17S 507553E 3920242N**
- e. General Davidson Marker: 17S 50592E 3920425N**
- f. Rural Hill Directional Marker: 17S 504679E 5915584N**

**2. Name and Address Of Parties To Be Notified.**

**a. Rural Hill Walled Cemetery**

**North Carolina Department of Transportation  
Division 11 Field Office  
107 West Main Street  
Albemarle, N.C. 28001-4620**

**Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department  
5841 Brookshire Boulevard  
Charlotte, N.C. 28216**

**May Davidson  
1300 Queens Road  
Unit 207  
Charlotte, N.C. 28207**

**b. Hopewell Presbyterian Church Walls and Marker**

**North Carolina Department of Transportation  
Division 11 Field Office  
107 West Main Street  
Albemarle, N.C. 28001-4620**

**Hopewell Presbyterian Church  
10500 Beatties Ford Road  
Huntersville, N.C. 28078**

**c. Williams Presbyterian Church and Marker**

**North Carolina Department of Transportation  
Division 11 Field Office  
107 West Main Street  
Albemarle, N.C. 28001-4620**

**Williams Memorial Presbyterian Church  
4700 Beatties Ford Road  
Charlotte, N.C. 28216**

**d. Cowan's Ford Monument**

**North Carolina Department of Transportation  
Division 11 Field Office  
107 West Main Street  
Albemarle, N.C. 28001-4620**

**MDHB Properties LLC  
P.O. Box 795  
Lincolnton, N.C. 28093**

**e. General Davidson Marker**

**North Carolina Department of Transportation  
Division 11 Field Office  
107 West Main Street  
Albemarle, N.C. 28001-4620**

**Duke Power Company  
Attn. Tax Department  
422 South Church Street  
Charlotte, N.C. 28242**

**f. Rural Hill Directional Marker**

**North Carolina Department of Transportation  
Division 11 Field Office  
107 West Main Street  
Albemarle, N.C. 28001-4620**



Herseng Yang  
6645 Neck Road  
Huntersville, N.C. 28078

5. A Brief Historic Sketch Of The Property. The report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

6. A Brief Physical Description Of The Property. The report contains a brief physical description of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

7. 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 E. L. Baxter Davidson Historic Markers possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

1) The E. L. Baxter Davidson Historic Markers depict locations, institutions, and individuals of importance in the early history of Mecklenburg County, including the Battle of Cowan's Ford, the death of General William Lee Davidson, the Major John Davidson Homestead or Rural Hill, Hopewell Presbyterian Church, and Williams Memorial Presbyterian Church.

2) Aggregately, the E. L. Baxter Davidson Historic Markers is a uniquely sophisticated collection of Mecklenburg County public art in terms of material and execution.

3) The E. L. Baxter Davidson Historic Markers bear lasting witness to the commitment of Edward Lee Baxter Davidson to the importance of making the general public more aware of historically important locations, institutions, and individuals in the early history of Mecklenburg County.

b. Integrity Of Design, Setting, Workmanship, Materials, Feeling, And/Or Association. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission judges that the physical description included in this report demonstrates that the E. L. Baxter Davidson Markers meet this criterion of special significance.

8. 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 that becomes a designated "historic landmark." The markers are exempt from the payment of property taxes.

Date Of The Preparation Of This Report: April 16, 2018

Prepared By: Dr. Dan L. Morrill

# Polaris 3G Map – Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

## Rural Hill Walled Cemetery

1.06 acres(46115.64 sq ft)

Date Printed: 1/30/2018 4:36:55 PM

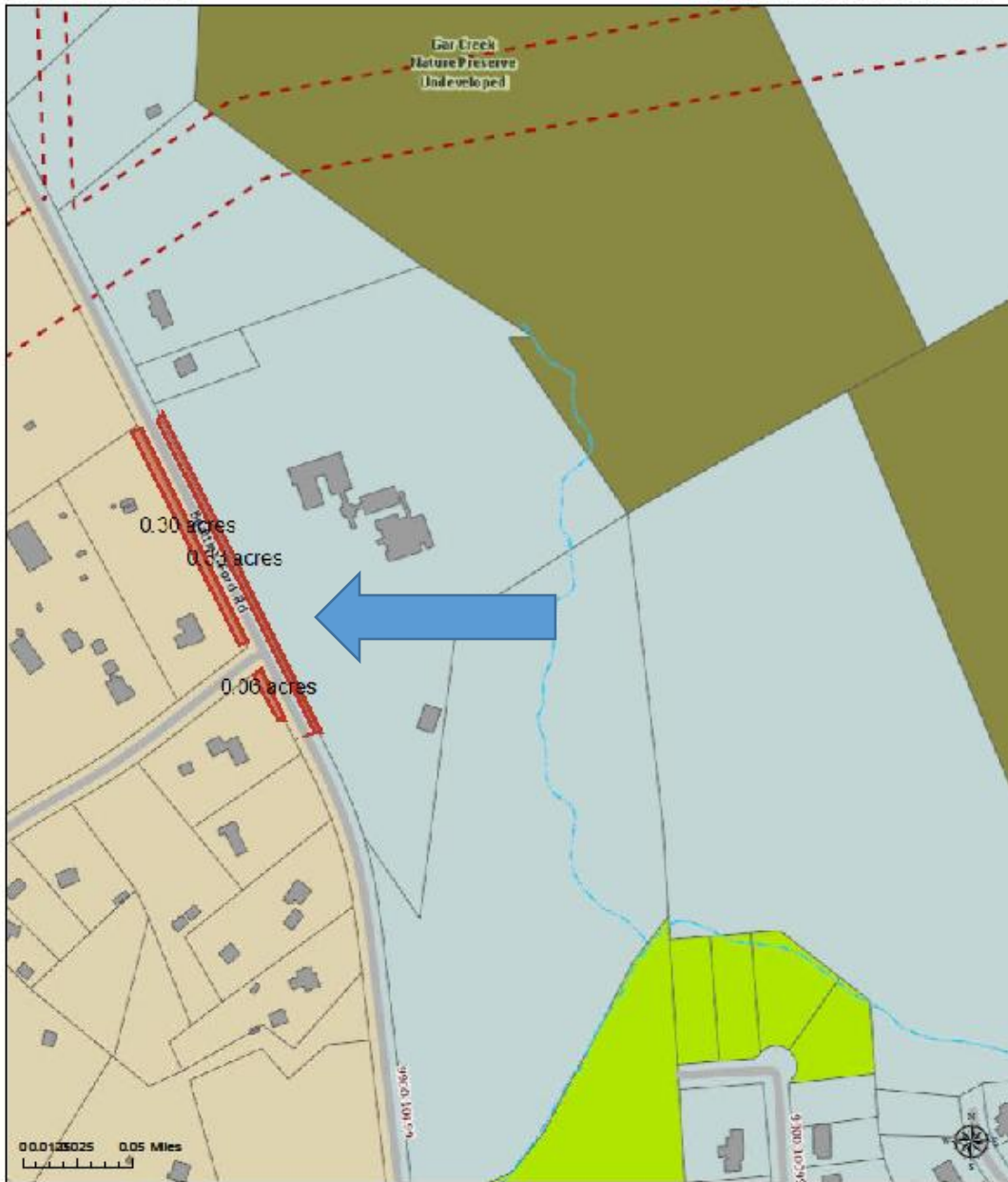


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# Polaris 3G Map – Mecklenburg County, North Carolina Hopewell Rock Walls

0.00 acres(0.00 sq ft)

Date Printed: 1/30/2018 4:44:55 PM



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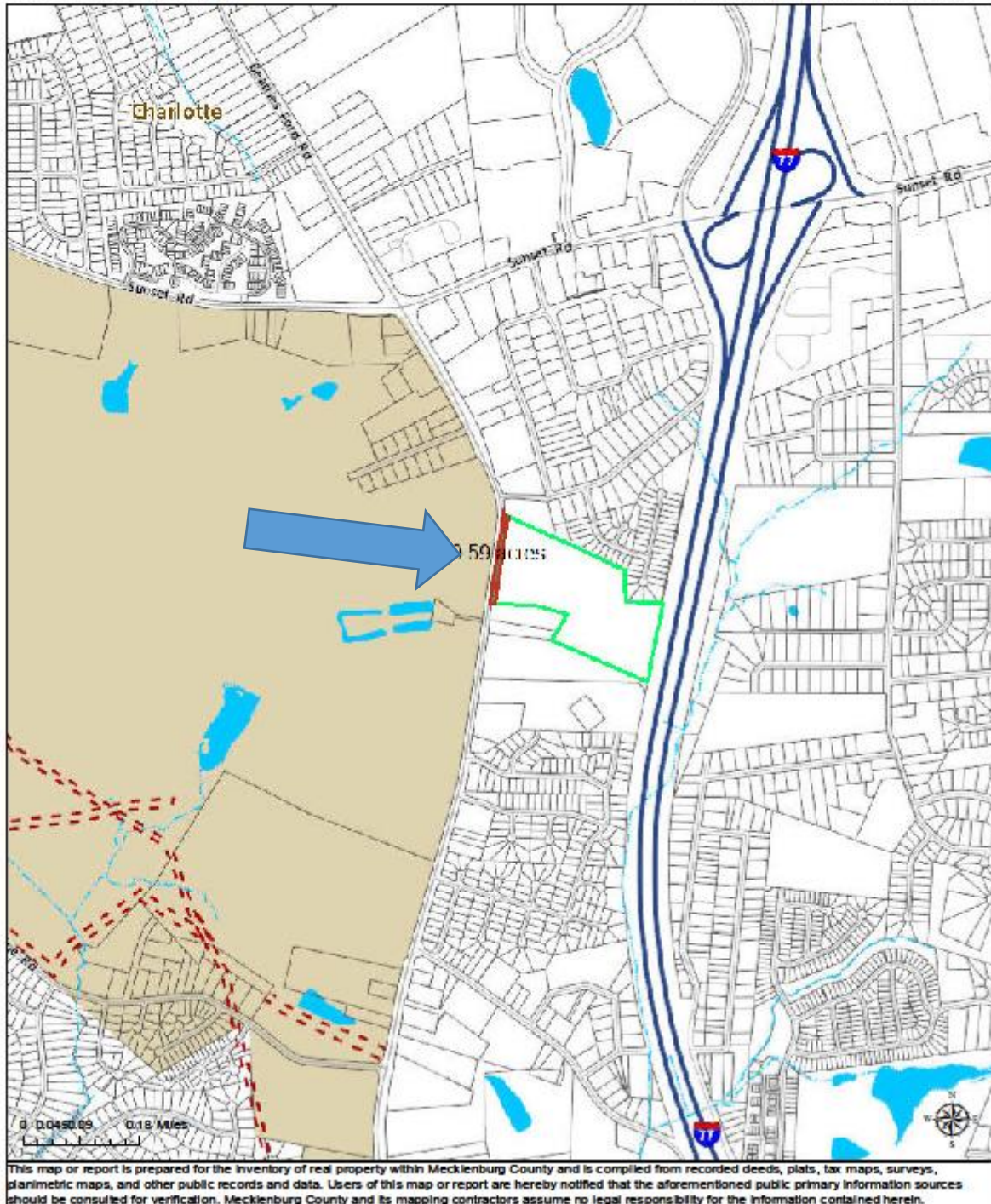


# Polaris 3G Map – Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

## Williams Presbyterian Church

0.59 acres(25664.17 sq ft)

Date Printed: 2/2/2018 7:50:07 AM

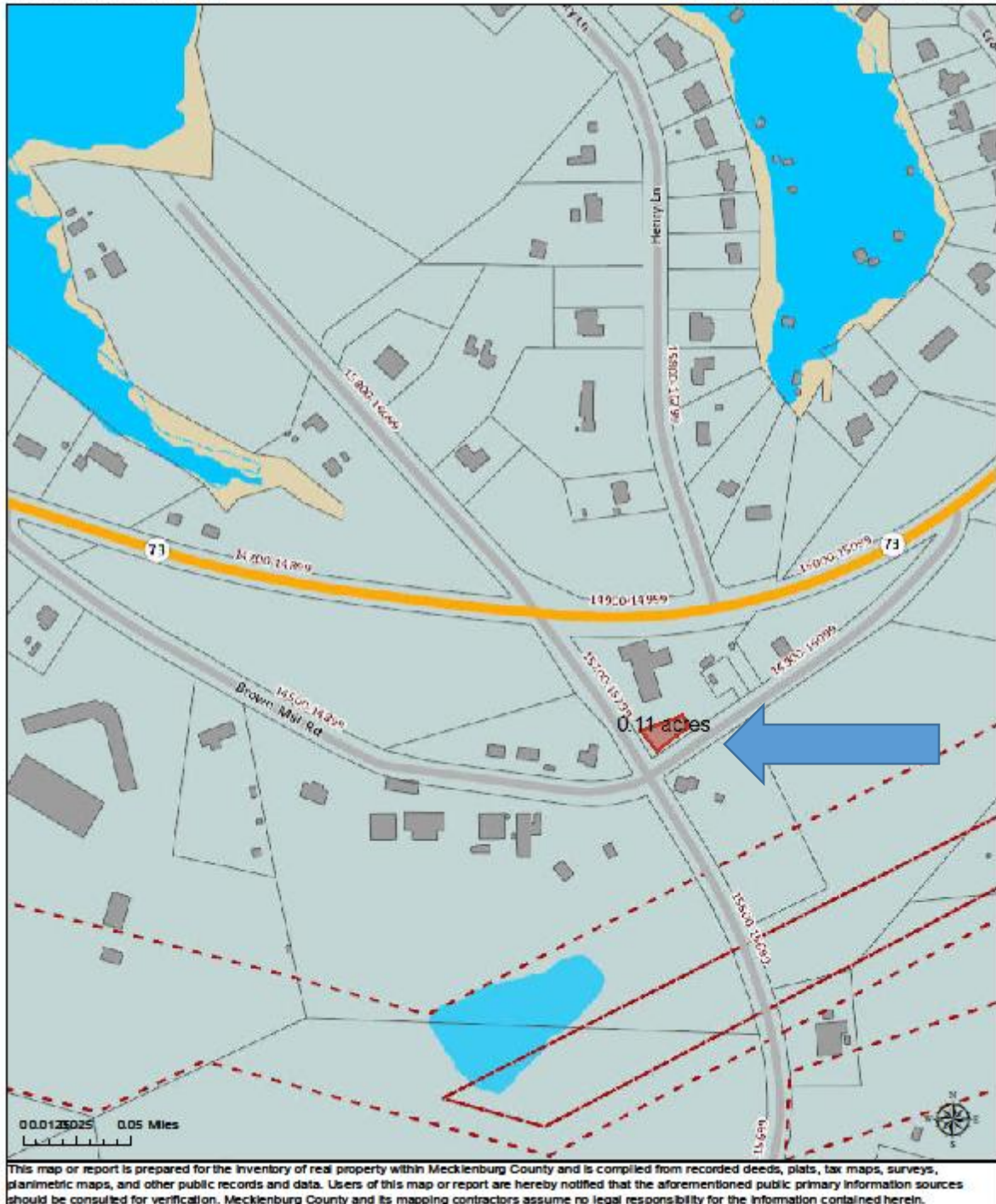


# Polaris 3G Map – Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

## Cowan's Ford Marker

0.11 acres(4902.36 sq ft)

Date Printed: 2/10/2018 7:11:52 PM





## Polaris 3G Map – Mecklenburg County, North Carolina General Davidson Marker

0.07 acres(2988.29 sq ft)

Date Printed: 2/10/2018 7:03:50 PM



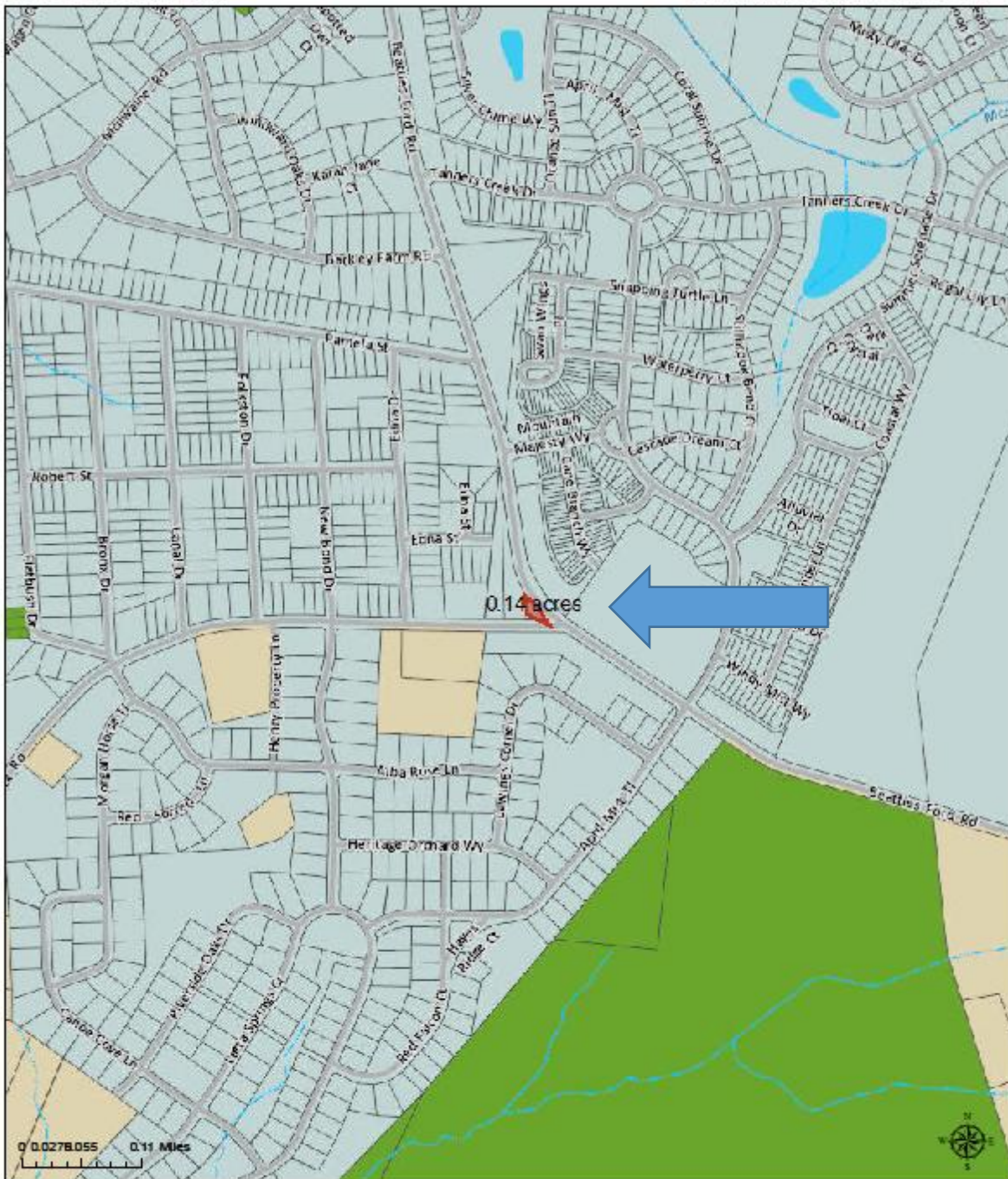
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# **Polaris 3G Map – Mecklenburg County, North Carolina** **Rural Hill Direction Marker**

0.14 acres(5898.46 sq ft)

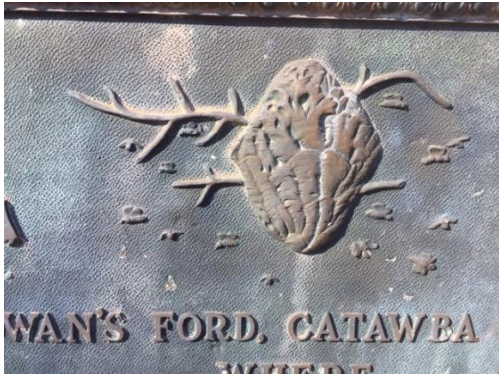
Date Printed: 2/10/2018 7:18:59 PM



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**Brief History Of The E. L. Baxter Davidson  
Historic Markers**

**Dr. Dan L. Morrill  
March 15, 2018**



**Hornet's Nest On The Cowan's Ford – Davidson College Marker. The Hornet's Nest Was The Historic Revolutionary War Symbol Of Mecklenburg County.**



**Hornet's Nest Symbol On The Sons Of The American Revolution Medal Worn By E. L. Baxter Davidson At The National S.A.R. Covention In Charlotte In May 1931.**



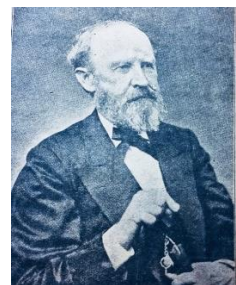
**Edward Lee Baxter Davidson (1858-1944)**

The E. L. Baxter Davidson Historic Markers are the direct result of a concerted effort in the 1920s by a resident of Mecklenburg County to memorialize his family's burial ground, to honor his family's Scots-Irish heritage, and to celebrate American Revolutionary War happenings that occurred in North Mecklenburg County in 1780-1781. Edward Lee Baxter Davidson (1858-1944) spent his boyhood and young adulthood in an area full of reminders of the American Revolutionary War. He was born at Rural Hill, the 1300-acre North Mecklenburg plantation established by Major John Davidson (1735-1832), his



great grandfather. Rural Hill, or the Major John Davidson Homestead, was located on Neck Road near the Catawba River.<sup>1</sup> His family worshipped at nearby Hopewell Presbyterian Church, which owed its early success largely to Alexander Craighead (1707-1766), a fiery Presbyterian preacher known for his intense anti-British proclivities.<sup>2</sup> Among the stories the young Davidson heard was how a band of patriot militia had fired on British troops on October 3, 1780, at the so-called “Battle of the Bees” at McIntyre’s Farm on Beatties Ford Road, a few miles south of Rural Hill.<sup>3</sup> A Revolutionary War event of special meaning for Edward Lee Baxter Davidson and his family was the Battle of Cowan’s Ford, an engagement at the Catawba River between patriot troops and the British and Tories on February 1, 1781. The American commander was General William Lee Davidson (1746-1781), a cousin of E. L. Baxter Davidson’s great grandfather. General Davidson was killed at the Battle of Cowan’s Ford, and his corpse was interred at Hopewell Presbyterian Church.<sup>4</sup> Davidson was told that his great grandfather was a signer of the alleged Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence ( May 20, 1775), a document which purportedly was the first outright rejection of Royal authority in Colonial America.<sup>5</sup> Not surprisingly, Baxter Davidson was a staunch and persistent defender of the authenticity of the so-called “Meck Deck.”

E. L. Baxter Davidson believed that educating the local citizenry about Mecklenburg County’s role in the American Revolutionary War was serious business. “The work we are accomplishing in preserving the history of our country cannot be estimated,” declared Davidson in a speech to the Sons of the American Revolution (S.A.R.). “The erection of monuments and markers,” he continued, “not only does honor to those patriots who established the republic, . . . it also impresses the youth of the land and inspires them to emulate the achievements of their illustrious ancestors.”<sup>6</sup> Davidson understood that markers and monuments can be evocative elements in the man-made or built environment. Scholars agree. “In general we cannot remember something if we are not aware of it in the first place,” writes Rupert Sheldrake in his monograph, *The Presence of the Past*.<sup>7</sup> The underlying purpose of the six rock walls, monuments, and markers that Baxter Davidson paid for and caused to be erected in North Mecklenburg in the 1920’s was to keep the past alive. “Monuments are history made visible,” says historian Judith Dupre. “The best of them are redemptive, allowing us to understand the past that is meaningful to the present.”<sup>8</sup> A reporter wrote the following about Baxter Davidson in 1941: “He has had more to do with the marking of historic spots in the county than any other individual and wherever he thought one should be, he had it erected and quietly paid for it himself.”<sup>9</sup>



A. B. Davidson

E. L. Baxter Davidson, a graduate of Davidson College in 1880 and its largest individual benefactor, amassed considerable wealth from the acquisition, management, and selling of real estate and eventually became a wealthy man.<sup>10</sup> His father, Alexander Brevard Davidson (1808-1896), moved his family from Rural Hill to Charlotte in 1871, where he established a residence on South Tryon Street. The elder Davidson, like his son, was an astute businessman. He was a leading advocate for the building of railroads and factories in the post-bellum years.<sup>11</sup> When his father died in 1896, Baxter Davidson inherited considerable property in the heart of Charlotte.<sup>12</sup> E. L. Baxter Davidson remained a bachelor until April 1935. He had no children and devoted most of his professional time to his real estate interests.<sup>13</sup>



Baxter Davidson exhibited powerful patriotic feelings throughout his adulthood and spent a lot of time and money giving expression to them as an avocation. He was a prominent leader of the Sons Of The American Revolution. He was a charter member of the Mecklenburg Monument Association, which was organized on May 19, 1890. This organization raised the funds to erect a monument honoring the signers of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. Dedicated on May 20, 1898, the marker was originally located at the Mecklenburg County Courthouse on South Tryon Street. It now stands in front of the former Courthouse on East Trade Street.<sup>14</sup>

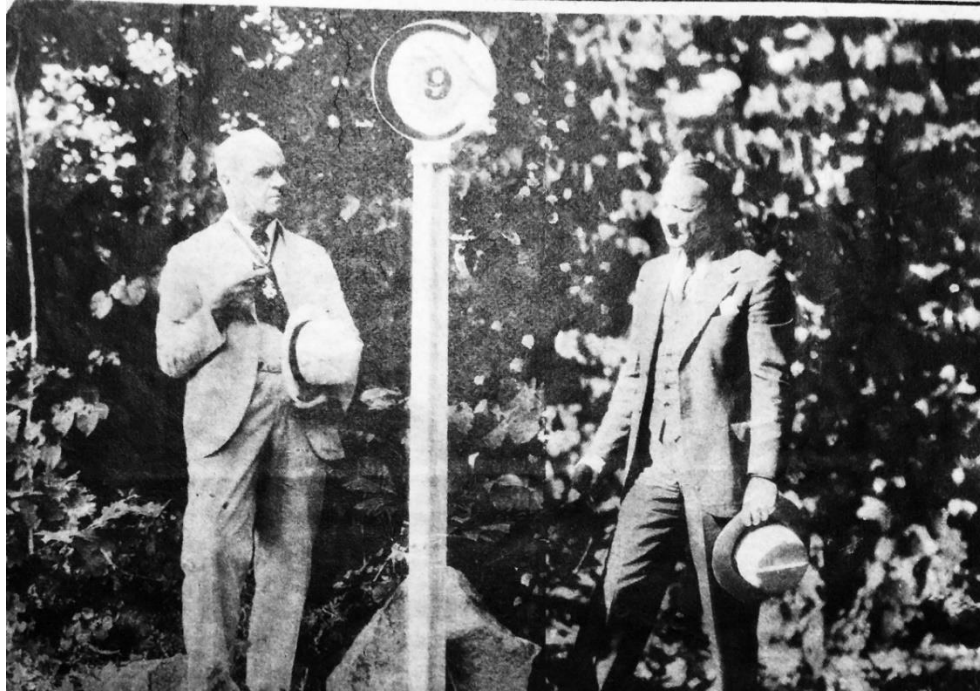


Original Location Of Signers' Monument



E. Trade St. Location Of Signers' Monument

On May 20, 1909, when President William Howard Taft visited Charlotte on the anniversary of the signing of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, Baxter Davidson joined 13 other descendants of "Meck Deck" signers atop the "float of floats from the historical standpoint" in a reportedly four-mile-long celebratory parade.<sup>15</sup> In March 1925, he appeared before the Board of County Commissioners and requested that the "old Mecklenburg method of marking roads with iron signs in the form of a hornet's nest" be revived as an emblem of "historical significance."<sup>16</sup> Always devoted to his family's legacy, Davidson had a portrait of his father hung in the Charlotte Public Library in May 1921.<sup>17</sup>



E. L. Baxter Davidson On Left At Historic Highway Marker At Hopewell Presbyterian Church

In May 1925, Baxter Davidson was a cast member in a historical pageant honoring



Mecklenburg's heritage that was held in a "mammoth open-air theater" in Charlotte, "out under the stars."<sup>18</sup> The *Charlotte Observer* described Baxter Davidson as a man "known for his philanthropies and for his interest in historic research."<sup>19</sup> In May 1931, the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.)



unveiled a monument (left) at the site of the McIntyre Skirmish. It was a gift from Baxter Davidson.<sup>20</sup> Davidson also gave part of the money for the erection of a marker (right) at the General William Lee Davidson's burial site at Hopewell Presbyterian Church.<sup>21</sup>



**E. L. Baxter Davidson's Metal Featuring His Father's Picture**

The most imposing historic monument E. L. Baxter Davidson erected and paid for was the embellished stone wall that still encircles the Davidson family burial ground at Rural Hill.<sup>22</sup> In a letter of January 15, 1927, Davidson wrote: "I am proud of my progenitor – Major John Davidson, signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, who is buried at Rural Hill . . . and the wall 150 x 300 that I had built at great expense is in honor of him and his numerous descendants."<sup>23</sup> Baxter Davidson hired Lee Collier, an English architect, to superintend the job. It took two months to complete the cemetery wall at Rural Hill, and the effort required the participation of a "white foreman, 16 negro hands and 15 wagons." The cost of this impressive stone structure was reportedly \$20,000.<sup>24</sup> "To hear Mr. Davidson talk about designs and markers," said a local journalist, "one rightly concludes that he is a connoisseur of stones, and knows the artistic arrangement of them."<sup>25</sup>

The five additional historical stone markers and monuments that Davidson had built in the mid-1920s in North Mecklenburg were almost certainly designed by Lee Collier, because the designs are so similar.<sup>26</sup> Like the Rural Hill Cemetery Wall, they are composed of three types of native stone – white rock, brown rock, and flint rock. They include: 1) a marker which was originally located at the spot where General William Lee Davidson was killed at the Battle of Cowan's Ford (it was relocated to a park on N.C. Highway 73 when Duke Power Company erected the dam at Cowan's Ford in the early 1960s); 2) a monument at the intersection of Beatties Ford Road and Brown Mill Road, which has a plaque that depicts a hand pointing eastward toward Davidson College and one pointing westward toward Cowan's Ford; 3) a directional marker at the intersection of Beatties Ford Road and Neck Road that has a hand pointing toward the Major John Davidson Homestead -- Rural Hill; 4) rock walls and a rock pier at Hopewell Presbyterian Church; and 5) rock walls and a rock pier at Williams Memorial Presbyterian Church.<sup>27</sup>





Marker Pointing Toward Rural Hill



Williams Presbyterian Church Marker

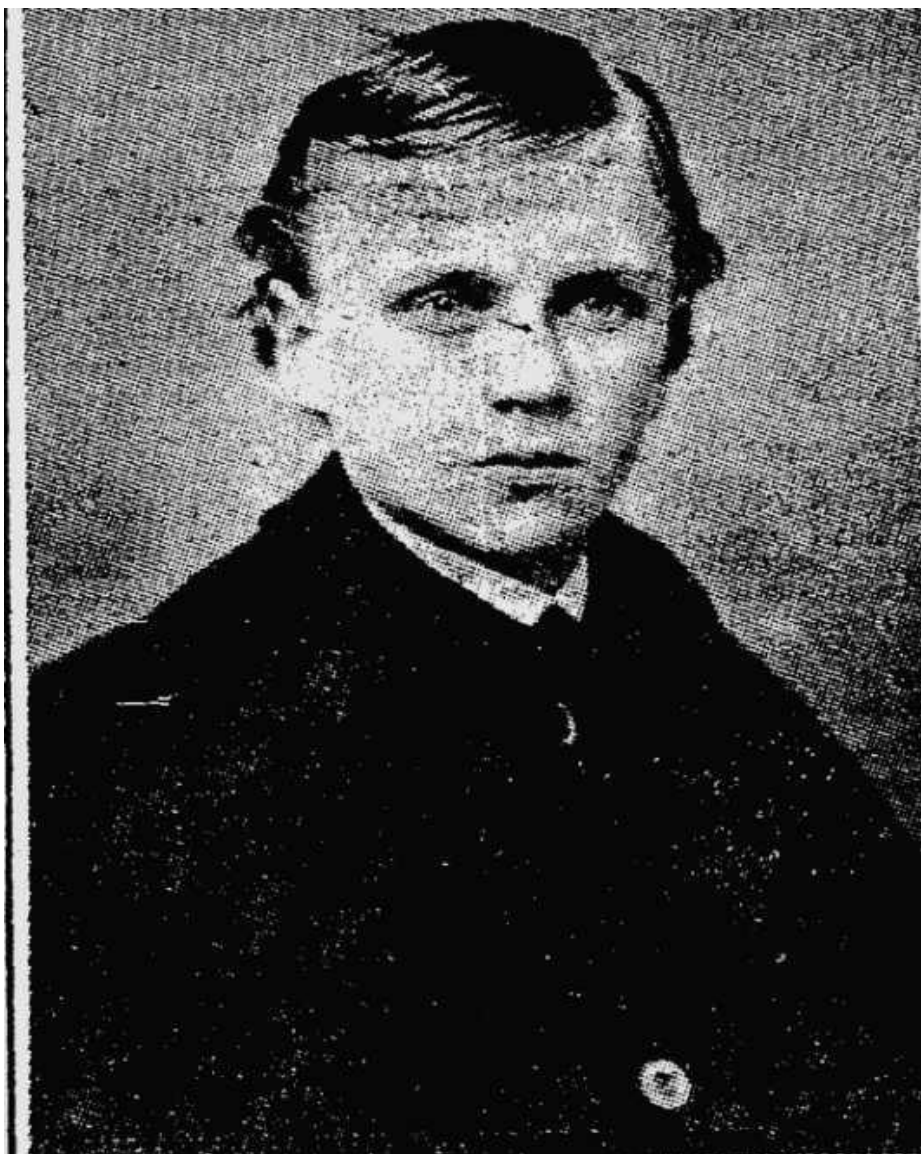
Davidson took an active role in the construction and design of the six monuments, markers, and walls he caused to be placed in North Mecklenburg. He was not a passive observer. “Mr. Davidson is not content to merely plan, design and designate where the walls and markers are to be erected, but he personally supervises them,” reported the *Charlotte Observer*.

“If they do not suite his fancy, he instructs the workers to tear them down and reconstruct them.” There were times when he ordered the walls and monuments destroyed and for the whole process to begin again.<sup>28</sup> Davidson ordered the plaques for the monuments and markers from the Newman Manufacturing Company in Cincinnati, Ohio.<sup>29</sup> The entire project, including the Rural Hill Cemetery wall, cost approximately \$30,000.<sup>30</sup>



Invoice For Plaque At Neck Road

E. L. Baxter Davidson’s bachelorhood ended on April 20, 1935, when at age 76 he married a 48-year-old widow, Sarah Williams Vosburg (1886-1973), who was a descendant of William A. Williams, a signer of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The newlyweds purchased a home at 1401 Providence Road in July 1935. Baxter Davidson continued to be active in Davidson College alumni affairs and in patriotic organizations until his demise. He died in his sleep at home on October 10, 1944. His funeral was held at Hopewell Presbyterian Church, and his body was interred in the Rural Hill Cemetery.<sup>31</sup> The six extant stone monuments, walls, and markers he caused to be built are Baxter Davidson’s greatest legacy in terms of the built environment of Mecklenburg County. In this writer’s opinion, considered aggregately, these rock features constitute the most architecturally significant collection of historic public art in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.



Edward Lee Baxter Davidson At Age 12





Left: Baxter Davidson, Middle: Sarah Vosburg, Right: Dr. Chalmers G. Davidson  
At Holly Bend At Rural Hill.



Edward Lee Baxter Davidson & Sarah Vosburg  
Davidson's Home On Providence Road Where Baxter Davidson Died On October 10, 1944.

376 Harvard Street  
Cambridge, Mass.  
April 21, 1931

Col. E.L. Baxter Davidson  
#7 East Trade Street  
Charlotte

Dear Colonel Baxter,

I am finishing up my Life of General William Lee Davidson for my thesis here at Harvard but find that I have not all the material on hand which I need. If you have time would you please write me the date of the erection and the words of the inscription of your monument to General Davidson near Cowan's Ford? Can you tell me who set the stone to General Davidson at Hopewell church and when it was put in place? I would also like to include an account of the ceremonies at the unveiling of both if you recall them.

Uncle Jim Davidson wrote me that you had put in a good word for me at Davidson College for a position on the faculty, and I am very much obliged. But I guess they have all the men in the history department they can afford as I have not heard from President Lingle. I think they should take on some younger men, because Dr. McConnell omits the Mecklenburg Declaration and the Battle of Cowan's Ford from his lectures.

I hope to come south sometime this September, but I cannot be sure as I have a very remunerative job with a wealthy Boston family for the summer and do not know how long they will want to keep me. Positions in the north seem to pay better than those in the south, but I would not want to live here unless I was lucky enough to marry an heiress.

If you have time to send me the above information I will certainly be grateful. I would like to send you a copy of the thesis when I finish it for any suggestions or corrections. May I have your permission to dedicate it to you if it wins an "A" grade at Harvard?

Respectfully yours,

Chalmers Davidson

376 Harvard St.  
Cambridge, Mass.

Letter From Davidson College Archives

#7 East Trade Street,  
Charlotte, N. C.,  
January 15th, 1927.

Mr. Chalmers G. Davidson,  
Davidson, N. C.

Dear Mr. Davidson:

Your letter of January 3rd received, and in reply would say that I am sorry not to be able to give any anecdotes or traits that may have been told of General William Lee Davidson. All of his generation have long since passed away and I know of no one that I could inquire of. One thing I know is that my long name - Edward Lee Baxter Davidson - part of it is for General William Lee Davidson. I am proud of my progenitor - Major John Davidson, signer of Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence who is buried at Rural Hill on the Catawba River and the wall 150 x 300 that I had built at great expense is in honor of him and his numerous descendants. I also, in memory of General William Lee Davidson, who was killed at Cowan's Ford and buried at Hopewell Church, erected two markers, one at Cowan's Ford, the other near the spot where he fell in Revolutionary times in defense of his country. I also was instrumental in starting the first contribution to the monument at Hopewell Presbyterian Church where he is buried. The North Carolina Historical Society \$100 and my \$100 being the two first contributions toward the monument. I am a member of the North Carolina Historical Society.

Yours very truly,

*Edward Lee Baxter Davidson*

*first cousin of my father (Baxter) according to Mrs. C.D.*

Letter From Davidson College Archives





Worn By Baxter Davidson At S.A.R. National Convention In Charlotte May 1931



Worn By Baxter Davidson At S.A.R. National Convention In Charlotte May 1931



Worn By Baxter Davidson At S.A.R. National Convention In Charlotte May 1931

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- <sup>1</sup> Chalmers Gaston Davidson, *The Plantation World Around Davidson*, (Davidson: Mecklenburg Historical Association, 1973), 59-60. Charlotte Observer, May 8, 1928.
- <sup>2</sup> <http://landmarkscommission.org/2016/11/09/hopewell-presbyterian-church/>
- <sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncpedia.org/mcintyres-farm-battle>
- <sup>4</sup> See Robert Henry, David Vance, David Schenck, *Narrative of the battle of Cowan's Ford*, (Greensboro: Reece & Elam printers, 1891).
- <sup>5</sup> See William Henry Hoyt, *The Mecklenburg Declaration Of Independence*, (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2006).
- <sup>6</sup> Manuscript in the Davidson College Archives.
- <sup>7</sup> Rupert Sheldrake, *Presence of the Past, Morphic Resonance And The Habits of Nature*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 197.
- <sup>8</sup> Judith Dupre, *Monuments, America's History In Art And Memory*, (New York: Random House, 2007), xii.
- <sup>9</sup> Observer, August 3, 1941.
- <sup>10</sup> Charlotte Observer, April 30, 1941.
- <sup>11</sup> The Charlotte Statesman, July 16, 1993. <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/davidson-adam-brevard>
- <sup>12</sup> Charlotte Observer, July 14, 1896.
- <sup>13</sup> Charlotte Observer, October 11, 1944.
- <sup>14</sup> Charlotte Observer, October 15, 1925.
- <sup>15</sup> Charlotte Observer, May 21, 1909.
- <sup>16</sup> Charlotte Observer, March 3, 1925.
- <sup>17</sup> Charlotte Observer, May 22, 1921.
- <sup>18</sup> Charlotte Observer, April 24, 1925.
- <sup>19</sup> Charlotte Observer, April 21, 1935.
- <sup>20</sup> Charlotte Observer, May 17, 1931.
- <sup>21</sup> Letter of E. L. Baxter Davidson to Chalmers G. Davidson (January 15, 1927) in the Davidson College Archives. Hereinafter cited as "Letter."
- <sup>22</sup> Charlotte Observer, October 11, 1944. As early as 1904, Baxter Davidson was advocating the building of a wall at the Rural Hill Cemetery (see Charlotte News, January 16, 1904).
- <sup>23</sup> Letter.
- <sup>24</sup> Charlotte Observer, May 8, 1928.
- <sup>25</sup> Charlotte Observer, December 9, 1928.
- <sup>26</sup> E. L. Baxter Davidson had a marker erected on Beatties Ford Road at the Mecklenburg County-Iredell County Line. That site is now part of Iredell County, and the marker has been destroyed. This writer remembers seeing it in the early 1980s. There is also mention of a marker having been erected on Highway 115 just north of Davidson. This writer has not been able to locate it if it was constructed or still exists.
- <sup>27</sup> Letter.
- <sup>28</sup> Charlotte Observer, December 9, 1928.
- <sup>29</sup> Invoice in Davidson College Archives.
- <sup>30</sup> Charlotte Observer, December 9, 1928.
- <sup>31</sup> <http://landmarkscommission.org/2016/11/01/e-l-baxter-davidson-house/>; Charlotte Observer, April 21, 1935; October 11, 1944.



**Physical Description  
Of The E. L. Baxter Davidson  
Historic Markers And Monuments**



**E. L. Baxter Davidson Laying Ceremonial Stone At Hopewell Presbyterian Church Wall (Oct. 1928)**

The E. L. Baxter Davidson Historic Markers and Monuments are built of stone, the most durable construction material provided by nature. That Baxter Davidson selected stone for his markers, monuments, and walls indicates that he wanted them to endure. His intent was to make these edifices instructive. Davidson hoped that generations of Mecklenburg residents would learn from them and be inspired by them. Alas, that desire has largely been unrealized. Most people are unaware that the markers, monuments, and walls exist and are certainly ignorant of what they try to teach.





Human beings have been erecting rock structures, such as castles, forts, and cathedrals, for thousands of years. They have also gathered stones and piled them into dry stone walls.

The original stone wall enclosing the Hopewell Presbyterian Church was a dry-stacked wall. The use of stone in that wall might have influenced Davidson's decision to use stone in his walls and monuments. Also, rocks are plentiful in the fields of North Mecklenburg. Builders have often embedded stones in mortar or plaster and constructed piers to

provide greater stability for their rock walls. Stone is a superb building material. The best rock is very resistant to weathering and to water penetration. Rock walls are held in place by gravity. An advantage of using stone is that it can tolerate a variety of soil types and therefore resists shifting. The foundation or footing is a critical component of a stone wall, as are provisions for drainage. The footing locks the entire system into place and supports the stem, which is the main visible portion of the wall. Many walls have a "toe," an extension at the base of the stem that keeps the wall upright, prevents overturning, and reduces bearing pressures. Masonry walls require proper capping, which can extend the life of the wall, reduce maintenance, and aid sustainability. To be effective, caps must deflect water. If water is allowed to penetrate the top of a rock wall, the entire system will eventually fail.

#### *The Davidson Family Cemetery at Rural Hill.*

The Davidson Family Cemetery at Rural Hill is the historic site in North Mecklenburg that was most embellished by E. L. Baxter Davidson -- and most likely the first. It is located to the immediate south of Neck Road and is enclosed by a 150'-wide-by-300'-deep rock wall. Open fields extend in all directions. The cemetery faces north, is grassed, and is mostly treeless.

The stem or visible face of the cemetery wall is composed of strings of rough-faced dark brown stones and strings of rough-faced white stones, alternating. The stones are embedded in mortar, and the stem of the wall rises perpendicularly from a toeless foundation to a triangular cap decorated with small, smooth, white stones. Stone piers, each with a finial of flint rock, appear at the four corners of the wall and at the ends of curved portions of the wall that frame a black metal entry gate located at the center of the north side of the cemetery. The stem of the wall rises at the four corners of the wall and at the termini of the curved sections framing the cemetery entry gate. A cement sidewalk extends southward into the cemetery and encircles the burial plots. Two stacked boulders form a pier located outside the northwest stem of the wall. It has a plaque affixed, denoting that Major John Davidson, a signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, is buried in the cemetery.



**Cemetery Entrance From Inside Cemetery**



**Entry Gate And Sidewalk Into Cemetery**



**Pier With Plaque On Boulders**



**Northwestern Stem Leading To Entry Gate**

The Rural Hill Family Cemetery contains gravestones of various configurations and sizes. Edward Lee Baxter Davidson, his wife, and his wife's first husband are buried in a plot at the northern edge of the area containing gravestones. Farther on a rock cap similar to that on the wall enclosing the cemetery sits atop a low brick wall of earlier origin that surrounds the graves of Major John Davidson and his immediate family. Masonry pillars flank and support a black metal entry gate into this inner burial plot.





**Inner Wall With Entry Gate**



**Burial Stone For E. L. Baxter Davidson**

### ***Solitary Stone Piers***

E. L. Baxter Davidson had two solitary rock piers erected in North Mecklenburg. One stands to the northwest of the intersection of Neck Road and Beatties Ford Road. It was struck by an automobile some years ago, was damaged, reconstructed, and moved slightly to the west. It points the way to the Major John Davidson Homestead or Rural Hill. The other pier was relocated when Cowan's Ford Dam was built in the 1960s. Now located in a memorial park on the south side of North Carolina Highway 73 just east of the Catawba River, it once marked the place allegedly where General William Lee Davidson was killed at the Battle of Cowan's Ford.



**Rural Hill Directional Marker**



**General William Lee Davidson Marker**

The Rural Hill Directional Pier is built of the same materials used in the rock wall that encloses the Rural Hill Family Cemetery. Strings of dark brown stone and stings of white stone alternate to form the stem.



Small, smooth, white stones decorate the cap, which is pyramidal. The finial of the pier is a large, flint rock. The General Davidson Pier, which has no finial, also has alternating strings of white and darker rock and a pyramidal cap decorated with small stones. However, the texture, size, and color of the stones are unlike that used in the other monuments and markers erected by E. L. Baxter Davidson, which suggests that the pier was constructed with replacement materials when it was rebuilt. There is an informational plaque on the Rural Hill Directional Pier and on the General Davidson Pier.

#### *The Cowan's Ford – Davidson College Monument*

The Cowan's Ford – Davidson College Monument is located to the immediate northeast of the intersection of Brown Mill Road and Beatties Ford Road. Its purpose is to instruct people traveling northward by automobile on Beatties Ford Road to turn left if they wish to proceed to the site of the Battle of Cowan's Ford Road and to turn right if they wish to visit Davidson College.



**South Face Of The Cowan's Ford – Davidson College Monument**



**North Face Of Monument**



**Plaque On South Face**

A stone pier of dark brown rock topped by a pyramidal cap and finial of flint rock is at the two ends of the stem of the monument. An arch of dark brown rock connects the two piers, and the rest of the

stem of the monument is composed of white rock. A large plaque contains two hands, one pointing toward Davidson College and another pointing toward the site of the Battle of Cowan's Ford.

***Monuments, Markers and Walls at Williams Memorial Presbyterian Church and Hopewell Presbyterian Church.***

Historic monuments and markers erected by E. L. Baxter Davidson in the 1920s in North Mecklenburg are located at Williams Memorial Presbyterian Church and Hopewell Presbyterian Church, both on Beatties Ford Road and both churches having roots in the Scots-Irish heritage of North Mecklenburg. The two churches have rock piers in their churchyards similar in design and form to the Rural Hill Directional Marker. Alternating strings of white rock and dark brown rock form the stems. The Williams Identifying Marker has a cap decorated with white stones. The Hopewell Church Marker has an identical cap but with a flint-rock-finial. Both have plaques giving the names and founding dates of the churches.



**Williams Memorial Church Identifying Marker**



**Hopewell Church Identifying Marker**

Williams Memorial Presbyterian Church has a rock wall extending along its frontage on the eastern side of Beatties Ford Road. It is a low, rock rubble wall of white rock and dark brown rock with a triangular cap decorated with small white stones. In form and execution, it is the least refined of the walls, markers, and monuments erected by E. L. Baxter Davidson in North Mecklenburg. Two openings in the wall provide access to a semicircular driveway into the church grounds.



**Rock Rubble Stem Of Willams Church Wall**



**Looking Toward Southern Terminus Of Wall**

The stone walls at Hopewell Presbyterian Church are larger and more elaborate than the wall at Williams Memorial Presbyterian Church. They extend along both sides of Beatties Ford Road. The



stems are composed of dark brown stone and a broad triangular cap decorated with a variety of small stones, randomly laid. A row of small brown stones extends along the apex of the caps. The walls have piers, several with rock finials. The wall on the western side of Beatties Ford Road has an opening providing access to Sample Road, a stairway leading to the former location of a school, and a driveway entrance and stairway where the Hopewell Presbyterian Church Manse once stood. The stairway has flanking piers with finials.



**Stem And Cap Of Eastern Hopewell Wall**



**Stones At Apex Of Cap Of Eastern Hopewell Wall**



**Hopewell Manse (Destroyed)**



**Steps To Hopewell Manse**



**Hopewell School (Destroyed)**



**Steps Leading To Hopewell School**



The eastern wall at Hopewell Presbyterian Church has a stairway with sidewalls and finials leading from Beatties Ford Road to the churchyard. Also, two finials atop the eastern wall mark the boundaries of the church cemetery. The eastern wall also has two driveway openings. Finally, two dark brown stone piers in the churchyard with flint-rock finials identify the site as “Hopewell Presbyterian Church.”



**Hopewell Presbyterian Church Sign**



**Steps From Up To Hopewell Churchyard**

