

Historic Rosedale
3427 N. Tryon St., Charlotte, NC 28206
Designation Report Addendum
Prepared by the Staff of Historic Rosedale
October 27, 2025

Completed in 1815 by hired contractors and enslaved labor, under the direction of Charlotte postmaster and tax collector Archibald Frew (1772-1823), the Federal-style, tripartite home now known as Rosedale once stood on 911 acres about five miles outside of Charlotte. Of that acreage, 250 were cash crops where oat, wheat and corn were harvested and sold locally. Timber also garnered income as well. From research, we know that there were forty-nine identified enslaved persons prior to the abolition of slavery, however, we have yet to discover how many were enslaved on the property at any given time.

Frew's neighbors referred to the house as "Frew's Folly" because many of them believed such an elaborate home in that mostly rural area would likely bankrupt Frew. Their speculation proved prophetic, as economic difficulties nearly caused the Frew family to lose their home. A loan from Frew's brother-in-law, North Carolina State Senator William C. Davidson (1778-1857), saved Archibald, his wife Ann Cowan (1782-1857), and their son Archibald Jr. (1811-1885), from foreclosure and eviction.

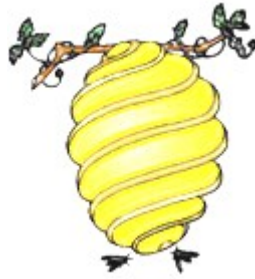
Following the elder Archibald's death on April 15, 1823, the house and property remained under Senator Davidson's ownership. In 1827, Dr. David Thomas Caldwell (1799-1861), and his wife Harriet Elizabeth (1806-1845), the Senator's daughter, rented the property until 1832 and then Dr. Caldwell purchased it in 1833 which was now 486 acres. We know from Dr. Caldwell's account books that they owned approximately nine enslaved individuals at that time. Alfred, Ephraim, Mark, Nancy, Nat, Agnes, Little Nat (6), Manda (4), Randall or Renolds (1).

Dr. Caldwell was the great-grandson of Reverend Alexander Craighead (1705-1766), the first pastor of Mecklenburg County's first church, Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Church. Since then, descendants of the Frew, Caldwell, and Davidson families have called Rosedale home for over 150 years. Through the years, these families relied heavily upon the labor of both enslaved and free African Americans to maintain their home, blacksmithing, gardens and agricultural operations for the majority of that time.

In 1926, Claire Louise Heagy Davidson (1891-1958) – wife of Baxter Craighead Davidson, (1875-1947), who lived most of his life in Rosedale with his uncle Robert Baxter Caldwell (1838-1919) and aunt Mary Alice Rachel Caldwell (1844-1904) – initiated the development of a formal garden adjacent to the location of the property's original garden. In 1948 she added a rose garden within the boundaries of earlier gardens, and then began work on the original garden site in 1956.

In 1986, the last members of the Davidson family to live at Rosedale, Mary Louise Davidson, (1916-1996), and her sister Alice Caldwell Davidson Abel, (1926-2008), were offered two million dollars for the remaining nine acres of family land, however, developers wanted to tear down the property and the sisters declined the offer. Because they were unable to finance the upkeep of the property, they accepted \$250,000 from the Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina.

That organization along with the Colonial Dames of America raised enough funds to restore the house to its original grandeur. Restoration work began on the house that same year, and in 1993, Historic Rosedale opened its doors to the public as a museum. It is now the oldest Federal frame home still standing in Charlotte.



ROSEDALE



This report was written on November 24, 1976

I. Statement of Purpose: On January 13, 1975, the City Council of the City of Charlotte approved an ordinance (Ordinance 501-X filed in Real Estate Book 3734 at Page 115) which designated the structure known as Rosedale at 3427 North Tryon St. within the City of Charlotte as "historic property." At its meeting of November 10, 1976, the Commission voted to recommend that the City Council of the City of Charlotte, acting under authority provided by N.C.G.S. 160A-399.4, amend Ordinance 501-X to include 7.78 acres of land (see attached map) within the historic property known as Rosedale. It is the purpose of this report to set forth the factors which caused the Commission to make this recommendation.

II. Justification for the Recommendation:

A. Historical and Cultural Significance of the Property:

The 7.78 acres contain or did contain a number of outbuildings, especially in the barn lot. A smoke house and a wash house, both dating from the 1890s, remain. The old cotton house now serves as the garage. The other outbuildings (two barns, a corn crib, a carriage house, an ice house, a smithy, a garden house, a piggery) are not extant. However, they were located within the boundaries of this property - a factor which suggests that the 7.78 acres might qualify as a significant archeological site. For example, recent investigations of the barn lot with a metal

detector uncovered some old harness. Moreover, shards of old ceramics wash up from time to time around the roots of trees in the yard. In addition to the outbuildings, the property contains a line of English boxwoods running parallel to and 61 feet from the south or town side of the main plantation house. These formed the centerpiece of the original formal garden of Rosedale. In 1926 Mrs. Craighead Davidson, who had come to Rosedale in 1914, initiated the development of a formal garden adjacent to the location of the original garden. In 1956 she began work on the original garden site. In 1948 she added a rose garden within the boundaries of earlier gardens. The 7.78 acres contain the results of Mrs. Davidson's efforts - a magnificent formal garden which is 227 feet long and 80 feet deep. There are more than 3000 boxwoods in the garden. The property also contains several significant trees. For example, a yellow poplar in front of the wash house is 22'1" in circumference at a height of four feet from the ground and is therefore over two hundred years old. A little to the right of the front door of the plantation house is a Chinese elm which was full grown at the time it was photographed about 1886. Finally, the property contained many of the early walkways, driveways, gates and fences of the plantation. On balance, the evidence demonstrates that the 7.78 acres are culturally and historically significant. Therefore, the Commission believes that the 7.78 acres do meet the criteria set forth in N.C.G.S. 160A-399.4, including the criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

B. Suitability of the Property for the Tax Deferral:

The legislation providing the opportunity for a deferral of 50% of the rate upon which the Ad Valorem taxation on "historic property" is calculated is intended to provide a means by which historically significant property can escape the rigors imposed by appraising property according to the "highest and best use." The current tax appraisal value of the 7.78 acres, including the outbuildings, is \$119,440. The current tax bill is \$2006.59. The Commission believes that designation of the property, especially since it constitutes a portion of a plantation which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, is in accordance with the purpose a of the tax legislation.

Date of this Report: November 24, 1976