

Slavery at Oak Lawn

Designation Report Addendum
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The property on which Oak Lawn was built ca. 1818-1821 was the site of enslavement of many Black people through Emancipation. Most of the names found to be associated with Oak Lawn are listed in the estate records for Benjamin Wilson Davidson. As the records organize the enslaved under the name of the enslaver, this addendum shall follow the same methodology for clarity.

Benjamin W. Davidson listed seventeen enslaved persons in the 1820 U. S. Census.

5 males under 14 2 males over 45 4 females under 14 3 females 26-44
3 males 26-44

Benjamin died intestate in September 1829, leaving Betsy and six minor sons. The estate files provide a thorough record of the enslaved at Oak Lawn through 1843. An inventory of the estate made on January 5, 1830, listed thirty-three enslaved persons:

Nelson	Tom	Will	Aaron
Ephraim	Stephen	Peter	Dick
Little Tom	Philip	Lurence (difficult to read)	Amos
Andrew	Biddy	Lucy	Sophy
Charlotte	Kitty	Emmy (likely Amy)	Fanny
Caty	Marcella	Little Amy	Polly
Elonza	Sally	Susan	Jane
Adaline	Elvy	Mariah	

Slave Names		Valuation	Valuation
Wilson	4.50	Sophy	3.00
John	4.00	Charlotte	2.50
Will	4.00	Kitty	2.50
Aaron	4.50	Emmy	2.00
Ephraim	4.50	Fanny	2.50
Stephen	4.00	Calix	3.00
Peter	2.75	Marcella	2.50
Dick	1.50	Little Amy	1.50
Little Tom	3.50	Polly	1.25
Phillip	3.00	Eloisa	1.00
Lumina	3.00	Sally	.75
Amos	1.75	Susan	.75
Andrew	1.25	Sam	.50
Biddy	3.00	Adaline	.50
Lucy	1.25	Elvy	.60
	\$ 46.50	Mariah	
			\$ 72.85

Figure 1 Excerpt from 1830 inventory of the Benjamin W. Davidson estate. Benjamin Wilson Davidson (1829), North Carolina, Estate Files, 1663-1979, Family Search, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-997J-M9DW?view=index&cc=1911121&lang=en&groupId=>, accessed March 27, 2026

Guardians of Benjamin's estate recorded the names of the enslaved, who they were hired to, and the rate through 1842. Starting in 1843, Rufus Reid took over records but only listed the totals for each year.

In December 1840 when eldest son Robert turned twenty-one, the Davidson estate was divided among his six heirs. The following enslaved persons were granted to each son:

Robert F. Aron*	John R. Ephraim*	James L. Stephen*	William L. Will*	Joseph M. Tom Jr.*	Benjamin H. Ned
Phillip*	Zeno	Amos*	Andy*	Peter Sr.*	Tom Sr.*
Sophia* and child	Biddy* and child	Susy*	Harriet and child	Amy Jr.*	Eliza
Polly*	Mariah*	Jinny	Elvy*	Marcella*	Sally*
Susy Jr.	Ephraim Jr.	Ned Jr.	Fanny*	Patsy	Peter Jr.
Charlotte*	Franklin	Kitty*	Martha	Amy Sr.*	Lucy Sr.*
Alfred	Adaline*	Peggy	Lucy	Alfred	Rebecca

*In 1830 estate inventory

State of North Carolina }
 Mecklenburg County } In pursuance of an order
 Court issued from the
 County aforesaid at the October term 1840
 we the undersigned being duly summoned and sworn
 by the Sheriff of said County to divide the personal
 Estate of B. W. Davidson deceased proceeded
 to value and lot as follows

Robert F. Davidson lot of Negroes Aron, Philip, Sophia & Child, Polly, Susy, Charlotte, Alfred, valued at	\$ 2875. 00
due him from the undivided Estate	225. 00
John B. Davidson Share,	\$ 3100. 00
Ephraim, Jeno, Biddy & Child, Mariah, Ephraim, Franklin & Adaline. valued at	\$ 3100. 00
James L. Davidson. Share	---
Stephen, Amos, Susy, Liney Ned 2 nd Kitty, & Peggy valued at	\$ 3050. 00
due him from the undivided estate	50. 00
William L. Davidson's Share	\$ 3100. 00
Will, Andy, Harriet & Child, Elvy, Fanny ^{Martha}	\$ 3050. 00
Lucy valued at	50. 00
due from undivided estate	\$ 3100. 00
Joseph M. Davidson Share	---
Tom 2 nd Peter 1 st Amy, 2 nd Marcella, Patsy, Amy & Biddys Alfred. value at	\$ 2950. 00
due from the undivided estate	150. 00
Benjamin H. Davidson Share	\$ 3100. 00
Ned, 1 st Tom, 1 st Eliza, Sally, Peter 2 nd Lucy 1 st & Rebecca valued at	\$ 3025. 00
due from the undivided estate	75. 00
Given under our hands and	\$ 3100. 00

Seals this 29th of December 1840

The Commissioners was }
 two days at the above }
 Business }

David Harry
 Hugh Maulay
 Tho. M. Stern

Figure 2 Division of the estate of Benjamin W. Davidson among his six sons in December 1840. Benjamin Wilson Davidson (1829), North Carolina, Estate Files, 1663-1979, Family Search, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-L97J-M9D4?view=index&cc=1911121&lang=en&groupId=>, accessed March 27, 2026

Several of the enslaved listed in the January 1830 inventory were not granted to Davidson heirs in December 1840. It is likely that they passed away or were sold.

Dick was likely an older man when Benjamin Wilson Davidson died in 1829, as his rates of hire generally decrease over time.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Dr. William MacLean	\$32.01
1832	Hugh L. Wilson	\$12
1833	H.L. Wilson	\$11
1834	D.M. Forney for H. L. Wilson's wife	\$35
1835	Joseph Ewart	\$16
1836	John Capps	\$30
1837	James M. Kerr	\$10
1838	Dr. Isaac Wilson	\$15
1839	Rufus Reid	\$16
1840	Rufus Reid	\$5

Dick does not appear in estate accounts after 1840.

No record for **Elonza** is found beyond the January 1830 inventory. As she received a low valuation, it is likely that Elonza was either a child or older woman.

Jane was likely a small child when the January 1830 inventory was recorded. Her name could have been recorded incorrectly, as a Jenny was kept by Betsy in 1833. Further discussion about **Jenny/Jinny** may be found under James Latta Davidson.

Elizabeth “Betsy” Latta Davidson Reid

Betsy was the head of household for Oak Lawn in the 1830 U. S. Census. She listed eighteen enslaved persons:

3 males under 10	1 male 10-23	7 females under 10	3 females 24-35
2 males 24-35	2 males 36-54		

Likely included in this number were **Nelson, Lurence,** and **Caty,** who were granted to Betsy in the January 1830 estate inventory of her late husband. Betsy also hired enslaved people from her husband’s estate who account for the other fifteen people enumerated in the 1830 Census. These may include Polly (Robert), Biddy Davidson and an unknown number of children including Mariah Davidson (John), Jinny (James), Susy (James), and Andy (William).

Betsy lived at Oak Lawn through 1835, when she married Rufus Reid and moved to his Iredell County plantation. She died there two years later following the birth of a daughter.

Nelson may be Nelson Reid, who had children with Bidy Davidson. These children are discussed in the section under John Ramsey Davidson, the enslaver of Bidy and her children. Nelson was living in September 1872, when son Alfred Davidson married Lucy T. Hargrave.¹

No further records for **Lurence** or **Caty** were found.

Robert Franklin Davidson (1819-1899)

Robert, the eldest son of Benjamin and Betsy, moved to Charlotte to enter the mercantile business. He served as mayor of the town from 1861 to 1865.² Robert rented Oak Lawn from 1840 to 1842, and the people he enslaved may have worked at the plantation during this time. The division of his father’s estate in December 1840 lists the following enslaved people granted to Robert: **Aron, Philip, Sophia and child, Polly, Susy, Charlotte, and Alfred.**

Aron (Aaron) was likely a young man when Benjamin W. Davidson died in 1829. Within a few years, however, his yearly rate for hire was among the highest of the enslaved at Oak Lawn. Aron may be one of the sixty-six enslaved persons listed by Robert “Robin” Davidson in the 1840 U. S. Census.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Pinckney Caldwell	\$33
1832	Dr. William MacLean (married to his aunt Mary “Polly” Davidson MacLean)	\$67
1833	Dr. William MacLean	\$65
1834	A.B. Davidson (with Stephen)	\$145.05 for both men
1835	A.B. Davidson	\$92
1836	A.B. Davidson	\$98
1837	William Lee Davidson	\$131
1838	John D. Graham	\$130
1839	John Davidson (perhaps his uncle Jacky)	\$98
1840	Robert Davidson (perhaps his uncle Robin)	\$90

No records for Aaron could be found after Emancipation.

Little information beyond what is listed in the estate inventory is available for **Philip**.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Ira Orr	\$46
1832	Albert Nelson	\$40.01
1833	Patrick J. Wilson	\$45
1834	James C. Montgomery	\$58

¹ Alfred Davidson and Lucy T. Hargrave, Mecklenburg Marriage Licenses, 1852-1872, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C91Z-VLVZ?view=index>, accessed March 27, 2026.

² J. B. Alexander, *Biographical Sketches of the Early Settlers of the Hopewell Section* (Charlotte: Observer Printing and Publishing House, 1897), 40.

1835	Marcus S. Alexander	\$65.50
1836	Joseph Hill	\$71
1837	Ephraim Brevard	\$84
1838	Rufus Shelby	\$71
1839	John Capps	\$50
1840	Ephraim Brevard	\$56

A Philip Davidson, born ca. 1826, is listed in the 1880 U. S. Census in Charlotte. He worked as a blacksmith alongside his son William Davidson. In the household were wife Laura (60), daughter Sarah A. (24), son William (19), grandson James Brown (19), and granddaughter Annie L. Sparkling (11). While it is unknown if this is the same Philip, the information is noted here in case a connection is made.³

Sophia (also Sophie or Sophey) and her child **Elvy**, who was likely a toddler, were kept by Jacob Brem in 1831. They were hired out together between 1832 to 1836, except 1835 when Betsy was reimbursed for keeping them. Starting in 1837, they were hired separately, making Elvy likely eight to ten years old.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Jacob Brem (Sophey and child)	\$0
1832	Dr. Isaac Wilson (Sophey and child)	\$11.45
1833	Thomas Dearmon (Sophey and one child)	\$22.05
1834	Sophia and child kept by Betsy along with Bidy and two children	
1835	Joseph McDonald (Sophia and child Elvy)	\$29.50
1836	Joseph McDonald (Sophia and Elvy)	\$42
1837	E. B. D. Sloan (Sophia)	\$40
	Andrew Cawthey (Elvy)	\$8.50
1838	E. B. Sloan (Sophia)	\$21.25
	Andrew Cawthey (Elvy)	\$12
1839	William L. Henderson (Sophia)	\$40
	Andrew Cawthey (Elvy)	\$13
1840	E. B. D. Sloan (Sophia)	\$20
	Thomas Robinson (Elvy)	\$16

No information for Sophia or her unnamed child listed in the inventory was found after 1840. Elvy was granted to William Lee Davidson in December 1840.

³ 1880 U. S. Census, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 28.

Polly was a young girl when Benjamin W. Davidson died. She may have been seven to nine years old, as she was first hired out in 1832 at a low rate associated with children. Polly was not hired out in 1839 due to bad health at the advice of Dr. Wilson, who was treating her.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Not hired out	
1832	Benjamin W. Alexander	\$1.60
1833	Benjamin W. Alexander	\$6.55
1834	Benjamin W. Alexander	\$11.50
1835	Benjamin W. Alexander	\$10.25
1836	Benjamin W. Alexander	\$15.75
1837	Benjamin W. Alexander (noted as girl)	\$20
1838	David R. Henderson	\$24.25
1839	Not hired out	
1840	James Doherty	\$29.75

No information about Polly was found after 1840.

The name **Susy** is listed twice in the December 1840 division of the estate of Benjamin W. Davidson, but this Susy has “2nd” penciled in the margin next to her name. It is unknown if the Susy granted to Robert may have been the same person recorded before 1840. Any information about Susy will be listed under James, who was granted the elder Susy.

Charlotte was the mother of **Peggy** and an unknown child.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	John Gibson	\$5
1832	John Gibson (Charlotte and child)	\$14.14
1833	Christopher Hager (Charlotte and child)	\$17
1834	John Gibson (Charlotte and two children)	47.50
1835	John Gibson	\$20
1836	John Gibson (Charlotte and Peggy)	\$45
1837	John Gibson (Charlotte and child Peggy)	\$30
1838	John Gibson (Charlotte and Peggy)	\$25
1839	John Gibson (Charlotte)	\$25
	John Gibson (Peggy)	\$10.05
1840	John Gibson (Charlotte)	\$19
	B. B. Smith (Peggy)	\$7

No information about Charlotte is available after 1840. **Peggy** was granted to James Latta Davidson in December 1840, and her enslavement from 1841 onward is discussed in that section.

Alfred Davidson was born ca. 1837, the son and youngest child of **Biddy Davidson** and **Nelson Reid**. He married Lucy T. Hargrave in 1872.⁴

John Ramsey Davidson (1821-1901)

Upon reaching adulthood, John took over operation at Oak Lawn. He lived at the plantation until sometime before 1870, when his family is listed as residing in the Fourth Ward neighborhood of Charlotte. The division of his father's estate in December 1840 lists the following enslaved people granted to John: **Ephraim, Zeno, Biddy and child, Mariah, Ephraim Jr., Franklin, and Adaline**.

Ephraim Davidson may have been born ca. 1820-1824. He was hired out from 1831 through 1840 to members of the Brevard family.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	James Brevard	\$55.01
1832	James Brevard	\$60.25
1833	Alex. J. Brevard	\$63.625
1834	Brevard (with Will)	\$144.50 for both men
1835	Alexander J. Brevard	\$80
1836	A. J. Brevard	\$102
1837	Ephraim Brevard (nephew of Benjamin W. Davidson)	\$127
1838	Joseph Brevard	\$103
1839	Ephraim Brevard	\$100
1840	Ephraim Brevard	\$100

An Ephraim Davidson, age 50, is listed in the 1870 U. S. Census in the Martindale area of Long Creek Township. He and wife Maria, age 40, had six children—Leonidas (18), Sarah (13), Margaret (10), Mary (8), Lucy M. (4), and Ephraim (2). Ephraim lived in Cabarrus County in the 1880 U. S. Census. In his household were wife Maria, age 52, and children Margaret (20), Mary (18), and Ephraim (12).⁵

Zeno Davidson was likely born around 1830 to Harriet Davidson and Peter Elliot. He may have been between the ages of 8 and 10 when he was hired out in 1840 to Thomas Robinson for \$3. In the 1870 U. S. Census, Zeno resided in the household of Dick Hutchinson, a blind hostler, in Charlotte. Four children in the household bore the Davidson surname: Mary Ann (15), William (12), Adolphus (7), and Kizia (2). They may have been his children with Martha Wilson, age 30, who was also listed in the household.⁶ He married Emaline Montgomery in September 1870. Zeno, age 58, married Cora Henry, age 19, in 1891.⁷

⁴ Alfred Davidson and Lucy T. Hargrave, Mecklenburg Marriage Licenses, 1852-1872, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C91Z-VLVZ?view=index>, accessed March 27, 2026.

⁵ 1870 U. S. Census, Martindale, Long Creek Township, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 22.

⁶ 1870 U. S. Census, Ward 3, Charlotte, Mecklenburg, North Carolina, 11.

⁷ Zeno Davidson and Emaline Montgomery, Mecklenburg Marriage Licenses, 1851-1872, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C91Z-VG24?view=index>, accessed March 27, 2026; Zeno Davidson and Cora Henry, Mecklenburg Marriage Licenses, 1889-1892, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C91Z-ZNYL?view=index>, accessed March 27, 2026.

Biddy Davidson is listed as having a number of children. She had daughter **Mariah Davidson** by **Phillip Davidson**. Children with **Nelson Reid** included **Franklin Davidson** (1833) and **Alfred Davidson** (ca. 1837). Biddy had son **Alfonzo (Alphonso) Davidson** (ca. 1841) with **Stephen Davidson**. The father of daughter **Lucy**, enslaved by William Lee Davidson, is unknown. As Biddy was likely pregnant and had several small children, the Davidsons typically paid for her board. The child listed with Biddy in the December 1840 inventory may have been Alfonzo, as Alfred was granted to Robert Franklin Davidson. Biddy and her four children are likely among the sixty-six enslaved persons listed by Robert “Robin” Davidson in the 1840 U. S. Census.

Year	Kept by	Rate Reimbursed
1831	Betsy (Biddy and family)	\$29
1832	Betsy (Biddy and four children)	\$15
1833	Betsy (Biddy and two children)	\$20
1834	Betsy (Biddy and two children along with Sophia and child)	\$15.20
1835	Betsy (Biddy and children)	\$29
1836	H. L. Wilson (woman and four children—Biddy, Mariah, Lucy, Ephraim, and Franklin)	\$12
1837	Thomas Dearmond (Biddy and her four children Mariah, Lucy, Ephraim, and Franklin)	\$35
1838	George Monteith (Biddy and four children Lucy, Ephraim, Franklin, and Alfred)	\$40.50
1839	E. B. Sloan (Biddy and four children)	\$14.75
1840	Robert Davidson (Biddy and four children)	\$24

As John’s brother Robert rented Oak Lawn from 1840 until at least 1843, it’s possible that he kept Biddy and her family during this time. Biddy died by 1885, the year son Alfonzo married Emma Wallace.⁸

Mariah Davidson was born by January 1830, when she was listed in the estate of Benjamin Wilson Davidson. She and Jacob Davidson received a marriage license in 1868, but no record of marriage was recorded.⁹ Regardless, she and Jacob are recorded together in the 1870 U. S. Census in Cabarrus County. In the household were son Mingo (20), daughter Laura (18), daughter Agusta (14), son Robert (7), daughter Alice (2), and Minerva Davidson (18).¹⁰ Mingo married in December 1871. The

⁸ Alfonso Davidson and Emma Wallace, Mecklenburg Marriage Licenses, 1889-1892, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C91Z-VSWB-2?view=index>, accessed March 27, 2026.

⁹ Marriage Register, Mecklenburg Marriage Licenses, 1850-1888, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GGYH-PK9?view=index>, accessed March 27, 2026.

¹⁰ 1870 U. S. Census, Concord, Cabarrus County, North Carolina, 4.

marriage license lists his mother as Carolina Davidson, so Mariah was likely the stepmother of Mingo, Laura, and Agusta. In the 1880 U. S. Census, Jacob and Mariah lived in Deweese Township with daughters Minerva (19) and Alice (13), son Benjamin (6), and granddaughter Caroline J. Moore (8).¹¹

Ephraim Davidson (referred to as Ephraim Jr. in estate records) was not hired out individually before 1840. He was first listed by name in 1836. No Ephraim Davidson with a birthdate ca. 1832 was found.

Franklin Davidson (also known as Frank) was born in 1833, the son of **Biddy Davidson** and **Nelson Reid**. He is listed in the Benjamin W. Davidson estate records by name in 1836 along with his mother Biddy and older siblings **Mariah, Lucy, and Ephraim Jr.** He is likely the 23 year old Black male listed in the 1860 U. S. Census Slave Schedule for J.R. Davidson. He moved to Charlotte with John’s family, as he appears in their household in the 1870 U. S. Census. Frank married Isabella “Bella” Davidson Johnson, daughter of Richard “Dick” Davidson, in 1901. He died on April 26, 1915, in Charlotte, and was buried in Pinewood Cemetery.¹²

Adaline was likely the daughter of **Fanny** and possibly **Will**, both enslaved by William Lee Davidson. She and her mother were hired out together in 1836 and 1837, after which Adaline was hired out separately. She may have been 8 to 10 at this time, placing her year of birth ca. 1828-1830.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1836	Jacob Brem (with Fanny)	\$31.05
1837	C. C. Henderson through R. Kerr (with Fanny)	\$47
1838	Samuel Johnston	\$11.50
1839	Samuel Johnston	\$11
1840	Samuel Johnston	\$16

No further information could be found about Adaline.

James Latta Davidson (1823-1852)

The division of his father’s estate in December 1840 lists the following enslaved people granted to James: **Stephen, Amos, Susy, Jinny, Ned Jr., Kitty, and Peggy.** He married Sarah Springs, and they are listed in the 1850 U. S. Census as living in Sharon Township. James died on November 2, 1852.

Stephen Davidson was born in 1818 according to Freedmen Bureau records. He was the father of Alfonzo Davidson with Biddy Davidson. Stephen is likely one of the sixty-six enslaved persons listed by Robert “Robin” Davidson in the 1840 U. S. Census.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Pinckney Caldwell	\$30.01

¹¹ 1880 U. S. Census, Deweese Township, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 27.

¹² Frank Davidson and Bella Johnson, Mecklenburg Marriage Licenses, 1901-1903, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C91Z-V9XX-V?view=index&lang=en&groupId=>, accessed March 27, 2026; “Frank Davidson,” Find A Grave, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/197766963/frank-davidson>, accessed March 12, 2026.

1832	Betsy	\$50
1833	James McKnitt Alexander	\$53
1834	A. B. Davidson (with Aaron)	\$145.05 for both men
1835	A. B. Davidson	\$74
1836	John D. Graham	\$80
1837	Andrew Moore	\$105
1838	Edward Bissell	\$111
1839	E. D. Bissell	\$75
1840	Robert Davidson (likely his uncle Robin)	\$112
1841	James L. Davidson (likely his uncle Jacky)	\$91
1842	Robert F. Davidson	\$50
1843	Unknown	

Stephen was likely the man treated at home on May 25, 1867, by Freedmen Bureau doctors for rheumatism.¹³

Amos may have been born ca. 1820 according to hiring rates and his designation as “a boy” in the 1836 and 1837 financial records.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	John Monteith	\$12.91
1832	John Monteith	\$7.50
1833	R. D. Alexander for Mrs. Caldwell	\$17.0625
1834	Winfield Shelby	\$31
1835	Joseph S. Goodwin	\$30
1836	James Goodrum (listed as a boy)	\$45.26
1837	James Goodrum (listed as a boy)	\$55.25
1838	David R. Henderson	\$66.50
1839	E. D. Bissell	\$80
1840	Edward Bissell	\$71
1841	E. D. Bissell	\$105
1842	Ephraim A. Brevard	\$45
1843	Unknown	

No information about Amos was available after 1843.

¹³ Register of Patients, Volume 76, Sept. 1866-July 1868, p. 132, North Carolina, Freedmen’s Bureau Records, 1865-1872, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-L9ZP-R898?view=index&lang=en&groupId=>, accessed March 27, 2026.

Susy may have been a young girl when Benjamin W. Davidson died. She was first mentioned in 1834, when she was kept by Jacob Brem at a reimbursement of \$2.75. Susy may have been born ca. 1825-1827.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Not hired out	
1832	Not hired out	
1833	Not hired out	
1834	Kept by Jacob Brem	
1835	Dr. William MacLean	\$4.125
1836	Dr. William MacLean	\$8.75
1837	Dr. William MacLean (noted as a girl)	\$12.50
1838	Dr. William MacLean	\$20
1839	Thomas Robinson	\$23.50
1840	A. P. Cathey	\$19.75
1841	Robert Davidson (could be his brother or uncle Robin)	\$30
1842	Thomas J. Barnett	\$25
1843	Unknown	

Further information about Susy could not be found.

Jinny (also spelled Jenny or Jeny) is listed by the name Jane in the January 1830 inventory of Benjamin W. Davidson's estate. She was not listed in financial records until 1833, indicating that she was likely under the age of five when Benjamin died.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Not listed	
1832	Not listed	
1833	Kept by Betsy	\$0
1834	Kept by John Heff	\$3.75
1835	John Cappts	\$4.25
1836	A. B. Davidson	\$14
1837	H. Sloan (listed as a girl)	\$6.50
1838	Kept by Henry Sloan	
1839	Henry Sloan	\$11
1840	Henry Sloan	\$15.125
1841	Alfred Alexander	\$25.125
1842t	Benjamin Smith	\$25.50
1843	Unknown	

Further information about Jinny could not be found.

Ned Davidson is first listed as Ned (2nd) in the December 1840 division of Benjamin W. Davidson's estate. Ned is likely the son of Harriet Davidson and Peter Elliott born ca. 1839. He was listed in the financial records for James in 1843.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1841	Loaned to J. S. Davidson	
1842	Boarded and clothed by R. F. Davidson	\$9.75
1843	Unknown	

After James's death in November 1853, his estate was auctioned in February 1853. Included in the advertisement were "12 Negroes," which likely included Ned.

A Ned Davidson is listed in the 1880 U. S. Census in Charlotte Township. In the household are Ned (age 50), wife Rebecca (age 48), son Sterling (age 18), son Eddie (age 10), daughter Julia (age 37, but likely incorrect), servant Adolphus Reid (age 21), and servant June Robertson (age 26).¹⁴

Ned married Hanna Fullings in Charlotte on August 5, 1890. Both his parents are listed as deceased on the marriage license.¹⁵

Kitty is listed in the January 1830 and December 1840 inventories. She appeared to be an adult woman.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Pinckney Cathey	\$17.50
1832	Jacob Bremm	\$24.50
1833	Edw. Caldwell	\$28.125
1834	John Knox	\$39
1835	Edward Caldwell	\$32
1836	Edward Weir	\$47
1837	Zeb. Goodrum	\$53.50
1838	Dr. Isaac Wilson	\$45.50
1839	Edward Caldwell	\$30.25
1840	Henry Cathey	\$14.25
1841	D. Gibbon	\$22.50
1842	Dr. Gibbon	\$15.50
1843	Unknown	

She may have been the wife of Will. It is mentioned in the June 1841 advertisement for his escape that Will's wife was at Dr. J. H. Gibbon's plantation. Kitty and Fanny, enslaved by William Lee Davidson, were hired to Dr. Gibbon that year.¹⁶ No information about Kitty was found after 1843.

Peggy was the daughter of Charlotte. She was hired out with her mother until 1839, when Peggy was listed with a separate rate for hire. Peggy may have been eight or ten years old, making her year of birth between 1829 and 1831.

Year	Hired to	Rate
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¹⁴ 1880 U. S. Census, Charlotte Township, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 18.

¹⁵ Ned Davidson and Hanna Fullings, Mecklenburg Marriage Licenses, 1889-1892, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C91Z-ZNRZ?view=index>, accessed March 27, 2026.

¹⁶ Advertisement, *Charlotte Journal*, June 10, 1841.

1831	John Gibson	\$5
1832	John Gibson (Charlotte and child)	\$14.14
1833	Christopher Hager (Charlotte and child)	\$17
1834	John Gibson (Charlotte and two children)	47.50
1835	John Gibson	\$20
1836	John Gibson (Charlotte and Peggy)	\$45
1837	John Gibson (Charlotte and child Peggy)	\$30
1838	John Gibson (Charlotte and Peggy)	\$25
1839	John Gibson (Charlotte)	\$25
	John Gibson (Peggy)	\$10.05
1840	John Gibson (Charlotte)	\$19
	B. B. Smith (Peggy)	\$7
1841	Osborn Hinkle	\$10
1842	Hugh S. Wilson	\$13.40
1843	Unknown	

William Lee Davidson (1825-1899)

The division of his father's estate in December 1840 lists the following enslaved people granted to William: **Will, Andy, Harriet and child, Elvy, Fanny, Martha, and Lucy.**

Will was one of the most skilled enslaved men at Oak Lawn, as his hire rate was among the highest each year.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Joseph Brevard	
1832	Thomas Jameson	\$60.25
1833	Alex. J. Brevard	\$63.625
1834	Brevard (with Ephraim)	\$144.50 for both men
1835	Alexander J. Brevard	\$81.25
1836	John D. Graham	\$99
1837	John D. Graham	\$121
1838	Ephraim Brevard	\$115
1839	Ephraim Brevard	\$96
1840	Thomas Robinson	\$100
1841	A. B. Davidson	\$100
1842	James M. Alexander	\$76
1843	Unknown	

Will escaped enslavement for a period in June 1841. A. Brevard Davidson offered a reward of \$10 for the return of "a negro man named WILL," described as "about 40 years of age, and about 6 feet tall."¹⁷

¹⁷ Advertisement, *Charlotte Journal*, June 10, 1841.

Will's wife was hired out to Dr. J. H. Gibbon—this could possibly be **Fanny**. Brevard speculated that Will could be found near the Gibbon plantation or near the home of Ephraim Brevard in Lincoln County. As he is listed in the 1842 accounts, Will was apprehended. His lower rate of hire in 1842 likely reflects his escape the previous year.

No information about Will was found after 1843.



Figure 3 *Charlotte Journal*, June 10, 1841.

Andy (also Andrew) was a young boy when Benjamin W. Davidson died in late 1829. He may have been born ca. 1825.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Not listed	
1832	Not listed	
1833	Betsy	\$2.0625
1834	Not listed	
1835	Betsy	\$8
1836	Samuel Johnson (listed as a boy)	\$14
1837	Samuel Johnston (listed as a boy)	\$15.26
1838	Marcus D. Edwards	\$27
1839	Samuel Johnston	\$45
1840	James M. Alexander	\$50
1841	James L. Davidson	\$57
1842	Robert F. Davidson	\$41
1843	Unknown	

No information about Andy was found after 1843.

Harriet Davidson and an unnamed child were listed in the December 1840 estate inventory. She does not appear in financial records until 1839. She is likely the Harriet, who along with Beckey and Luis, were gifted from the estate of James Latta to his grandchildren in March 1838.¹⁸ Harriet was the mother of **Zeno Davidson** (ca. 1830), **Peter Davidson** (ca. 1832), and **Ned Davidson** (ca. 1839) with Peter Elliott. Ned was granted to James Latta Davidson, so the unnamed child is likely a younger sibling born in 1840. Harriet and her four children are likely among the sixty-six enslaved persons listed by Robert “Robin” Davidson in the 1840 U. S. Census.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1839	Harriet and family kept by Rufus Reid	\$50
1840	Harriet and four children kept by Robert Davidson (likely Robin Davidson)	\$9.75
1841	Robert Z. Henderson (Harriet and child)	\$24.50
1842	James Clark (Harriet and child)	\$18
1843	Unknown (Harriet and child)	

Harriet was deceased by August 1890 according to son Ned’s marriage license.

Elvy, the daughter of Sophey, was an infant or toddler when Benjamin W. Davidson died. She may have been born ca. 1827-1829. Elvy was first hired out individually in 1837.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1837	E. B. D. Sloan (Sophia)	\$40
	Andrew Cawthey (Elvy)	\$8.50
1838	E. B. Sloan (Sophia)	\$21.25
	Andrew Cawthey (Elvy)	\$12
1839	William L. Henderson (Sophia)	\$40
	Andrew Cawthey (Elvy)	\$13
1840	E. B. D. Sloan (Sophia)	\$20
	Thomas Robinson (Elvy)	\$16
1841	George Monteith	\$16.50
1842	Stephen Morris	\$19.75
1843	Unknown	

No information about Elvy is found after 1843.

Fanny was the mother of Adaline, who was enslaved by John Ramsey Davidson after December 1840. Fanny may have been the wife of Will.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Kept by Dr. MacLean (Fany and family)	\$13.50

¹⁸ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 24, Page 531.

1832	James M. Alexander (Fanny and two children)	\$10
1833	Kept by Jacob Brem (Fanny and two children)	\$11.75
1834	Jacob Brem (Fanny and child)	\$9.75
1835	Jacob Brem	\$15
1836	Jacob Brem (Fanny and Addaline)	\$31.05
1837	C. C. Henderson by R. Kerr (Fanny and child Addaline)	\$47
1838	Ephraim Brevard	\$21.50
1839	Thomas Robinson	\$40
1840	Thomas Robinson	\$40
1841	Dr. J. Gibbon	\$21.25
1842	Robert F. Davidson	\$18
1843	Unknown	

She may have been the wife of **Will**. It is mentioned in the June 1841 advertisement for his escape that Will's wife was at Dr. J. H. Gibbon's plantation. Fanny and Kitty, enslaved by James Latta Davidson, were hired to Dr. Gibbon that year.¹⁹

A Fanny Davidson, age 49, was treated by the Freeman's Bureau at home in June 1867 for dyspepsia. Her condition was listed as relieved on June 26.²⁰

Martha was first named in the December 1840 estate inventory. She must have been very young, as William paid for her board with James Clark in 1841 and 1842. She may have been one of the four children of Harriet boarded by Robert Davidson in 1840. However, further information about Martha is unknown.

Lucy was the daughter of **Biddy Davidson** and an unknown father, possibly Philip Davidson or Nelson Reid. She was born after January 1830 as she is not mentioned by name in the estate inventory and before 1833, as brother Ephraim Davidson is listed after her in later inventory records. Lucy was first hired out individually in 1841.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Betsy (Biddy and family)	\$29
1832	Betsy (Biddy and four children)	\$15
1833	Betsy (Biddy and two children)	\$20
1834	Betsy (Biddy and two children along with Sophia and child)	\$15.20
1835	Betsy (Biddy and children)	\$29

¹⁹ Advertisement, *Charlotte Journal*, June 10, 1841.

²⁰ Register of Patients, Volume 76, Sept. 1866-July 1868, p. 134, North Carolina, Freedmen's Bureau Records, 1865-1872, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-L9ZP-R898?view=index&lang=en&groupId=>, accessed March 27, 2026.

1836	H. L. Wilson (woman and four children—Bidly, Mariah, Lucy, Ephraim, and Franklin)	\$12
1837	Thomas Dearmond (Bidly and her four children Mariah, Lucy, Ephraim, and Franklin)	\$35
1838	George Monteith (Bidly and four children Lucy, Ephraim, Franklin, and Alfred)	\$40.50
1839	E. B. Sloan (Bidly and four children)	\$14.75
1840	Robert Davidson (Bidly and four children)	\$24
1841	Thomas Robinson	\$6.75
1842	John Hayes (listed as a child)	\$8.50
1843	Unknown	

Further information about Lucy after 1843 is unknown.

Dr. Joseph Malcom Davidson (1827-1897)

Joseph attended Davidson College. After studying medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, he settled in Charlotte to practice. Joseph married his second cousin, Mary Martha Caldwell.²¹ The division of his father's estate in December 1840 lists the following enslaved people granted to Joseph: **Tom Jr., Peter Sr., Amy Jr., Marcella, Patsy, Amy Sr., and Alfred.**

Tom Jr. (also referred to as Little Tom or Young Tom), was hired by Betsy from 1831 to 1835.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1836	A. J. Brevard	\$106
1837	Ephraim Brevard	\$110
1838	Edward Bissell	\$93
1839	Thomas Robinson	\$79
1840	E. Brevard	\$56
1841	E. A. Brevard	\$94
1842	E. A. Brevard	\$75

Peter, Sr. is likely **Peter Elliott**, father of **Zeno Davidson** (ca. 1830) and **Ned Davidson** (ca. 1839) with Harriet Davidson.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1836	A. J. Brevard	\$106
1837	Ephraim Brevard	\$110
1838	Edward Bissell	\$93
1839	Thomas Robinson	\$79
1840	E. Brevard	\$56
1841	E. A. Brevard	\$94

²¹ J. B. Alexander, *Biographical Sketches of the Early Settlers of the Hopewell Section* (Charlotte: Observer Printing and Publishing House, 1897), 42.

1842 E. A. Brevard \$75

Peter was deceased by August 1890 when son Ned married Hanna Fullings.

Amy Jr. (Little Amy) was a young girl when Benjamin W. Davidson died in 1829. It is unknown whether she was related to Amy Sr. She may have been around 18 by 1840, as her rate for hire increased sharply.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Betsy, "Little Amy for her bord (sic)"	
1832	Betsy	\$2
1833	Betsy	\$6
1834	Betsy (along with Tom Jr. and Andrew)	\$56.625
1835	Betsy	\$10
1836	Vincy Hodge	\$22.50
1837	James Monteith (listed as a girl)	\$21.50
1838	David R. Henderson	\$26.50
1839	Samuel Goodrum	\$14.25
1840	Ulysses Alexander	\$44
1841	James Reid	\$50.50
1842	William L. Henderson	\$30
1843	Unknown	

No information about Amy is available after 1843.

Marcella was likely an adult when Benjamin W. Davidson died in 1829.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Jonathan Griffith	\$20
1832	Jonathan Griffith	\$30.10
1833	Jonathan Griffith	\$30.375
1834	Samuel Johnston	\$42
1835	Samuel Johnston	\$40
1836	William B. Alexander	\$45
1837	Marshal Douglas	\$58.0625
1838	A. J. Caldwell	\$46
1839	Thomas Robinson	\$40
1840	Thomas Robinson	\$37
1841	A. D. Kerr	\$48
1842	Alfred Kerr	\$30
1843	Unknown	

No information about Marcella is available after 1843.

Patsy (Patsey) was granted, along with Ned, to the Davidson heirs from the estate of James Latta in November 1837. A valuation of \$450 was assigned to Patsy.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1838	John A. Deweese	\$21
1839	Allison Deweese	\$40
1840	John A. Deweese	\$25.75
1841	James Alexander	\$40.75
1842	John A. Deweese	\$26.50
1843	Unknown	

No information about Patsy is available after 1843.

Amy Sr. was likely an adult in 1829.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Will Traitor	\$16.05
1832	Philip Polard	\$16
1833	Andrew Springs	\$25.35
1834	Alfred Alexander	\$35.01
1835	Thomas Dearmond	\$22.25
1836	Samuel Johnston	\$29.75
1837	Samuel Johnston	\$11.50
1838	Zebulon Goodrum	\$25
1839	E.D. Bissell	\$36
1840	Edward Templeton	\$25
1841	Edward Templeton	\$21
1842	Edward Templeton	\$16.75
1843	Unknown	

No information about Amy is known after 1843.

Alfred Davidson was born around 1837, the son of Bidy Davidson and Nelson Reid. He is listed in the Benjamin W. Davidson estate records by name in 1838 along with his mother Bidy and older siblings Lucy, Ephraim Jr., and Franklin. He was separated from his mother and siblings in 1841. Alfred was boarded at other nearby plantations in 1841 and 1842. He was either boarded or hired out in 1843.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1838	George Monteith (Biddy and four children Lucy, Ephraim, Franklin, and Alfred)	\$40.50
1839	E. B. Sloan (Biddy and four children)	\$14.75
1840	Robert Davidson (Biddy and four children)	\$24
1841	Paid to E.B.D. Sloan for board	\$10.95
1842	Paid to Robert F. Davidson for board, listed as a child	\$6
1843	Unknown	

Alfred likely lived in Fourth Ward in Charlotte in 1870. He was listed in the U. S. Census along with wife or partner Mary, age 29, and worked as a farm laborer. Alfred married Lucy T. Hargrove in the Rudisill Mine area in Charlotte on September 30, 1872. The marriage license lists his age as 30, though estate records show he was older. He and Lucy appear in the 1880 U. S. Census, living on Church Street in Charlotte. Alfred worked as an engineer at a mine, possibly the Rudisill Mine. Lucy worked as a seamstress. Lucy’s adult children are listed in the household—Samuel Hargrove (24), a drayman; Rilla Hargrove McLaughlin (21), a washerwoman; and Marshall Hargrove (20), a brick mason. Lucy had died by 1900, as Alfred was listed as a widower. He lived in the boarding house of Emma Able at 610 S. Mint Street in Third Ward. Alfred may have died before 1904, as he last appears in the 1903 Charlotte city directory.

Benjamin Howard Davidson (1829-1862)

Benjamin Howard Davidson was seven months old when his father died. He lived at Oak Lawn until his mother’s marriage to Rufus Reid, when his uncle Robert “Robin” Davidson assumed his guardianship. Benjamin went into business with his eldest brother Robert in Charlotte. He enlisted to serve in the Civil War on May 16, 1861, assigned as second lieutenant to Company D of the 7th North Carolina Infantry Regiment. He fought at Antietam and was wounded in battle at Sharpsburg, Maryland, on September 17, 1862. He died five days later at Winchester, Virginia, and was later interred in Settlers Cemetery.²² The division of his father’s estate in December 1840 lists the following enslaved people granted to Benjamin: **Ned, Tom Sr., Eliza, Sally, Peter Jr., Lucy Sr., and Rebecca.**

Ned was one of the two enslaved people, along with Patsy, the Davidson heirs received from the estate of their grandfather James Latta in November 1837. A value of \$850 was assigned to Ned. He and Patsy were hired out for December 1837.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1838	Edward Bissell	\$105
1839	Edward Bissell	\$86
1840	Thomas Robinson	\$102
1841	E. P. Bissell	\$100
1842	John D. Graham	\$78

In fall 1856, Robert S. Huntley of Walkersville, Union County, offered a \$50 reward for the return of “my boy NED...purchased from the estate of James L. Davidson, deceased, of Providence, Mecklenburg county.” He was described as “about 35 or 40 years of age 5 feet, 10 or 11 inches in height, has had an arm broken, and disfigured slightly, do not remember which, he is intelligent, and black.”²³ A Ned (2nd) was granted to James Latta Davidson in December 1840, and he was likely an infant and not the same Ned noted in the advertisement. It is unknown if the Ned granted to Benjamin Howard Davidson was transferred or sold to his brother James.

²² Alexander, *Hopewell*, 42-43.

²³ Advertisement, *Charlotte Democrat*, October 7, 1856.

\$50 Reward.

RAN AWAY from the subscriber, on the 3d instant, my boy NED; said boy was purchased from the estate of James I. Davidson, deceased, of Providence, Mecklenburg county, and is extensively known in that vicinity; he is about 35 or 40 years of age, 5 feet, 10 or 11 inches in height, has had an arm broken, and disfigured slightly, do not remember which, he is intelligent, and black. The above reward will be paid for his delivery to me, or \$35 for his lodgment in jail, so I can get him within fifteen days from date of this, or \$25 for his delivery or lodgment, so that I can get him in any length of time, and \$2 extra for every shot put into him will be paid with pleasure. Any information concerning said boy will be thankfully received, and liberally rewarded.

ROBT. S. HUNTLY,
Walkersville, Union Co., N. C.

N. B.—There are reasons to believe that he has been enticed away by a white man.

Sept. 30, 1856—17

Figure 4 *Charlotte Democrat*, October 7, 1856. The advertisement ran at least through the end of November 1856.

Tom was one of the most skilled enslaved men at Oak Lawn, as his hire rate was among the highest each year.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	A. F. Caldwell	\$79
1832	A. F. Caldwell	\$75
1833	Jane Bryson	\$62
1834	unknown	
1835	Lewis Harvey	\$81.25
1836	Dan Alexander	\$100
1837	John Capps	\$111
1838	Ephraim Brevard	\$110
1839	Ephraim Brevard	\$104
1840	Thomas Robinson	\$89
1841	E. P. Bissell	\$67
1842	John D. Graham	\$40

Eliza was apparently a young girl when she “kept” by Dr. McLean in 1831. The following year, she was hired out, and her rate increased as she aged.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Dr. W. McLean	\$0
1832	Daniel Toal	\$5
1833	Pinckney Cathey	\$4
1834	Pinckney Cathey	\$12
1835	Pinckney Cathey	\$8.50
1836	A. P. Cathey	\$16
1837	Pickney Cathey	\$21.50
1838	A. P. Cathey	\$21

1839	Henry Cathey	\$25.25
1840	Thomas Robinson	\$40.05
1841	Thomas Robinson	\$50.75
1842	E. D. B. Sloan	\$27.50

Sally was a young child when Benjamin W. Davidson died in 1829. She was first hired out in 1833, likely around age 8 making her year of birth ca. 1821.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Kept by Betsy	\$5
1832	Kept by Betsy (listed as a child)	\$3
1833	Kirby Pope	\$2
1834	Harrison Gilliland	\$0.50
1835	Harrison Gilliland	\$3.25
1836	E.H. Gilliland	\$5
1837	Pinckney Deaton	\$5
1838	Rufus Reid	\$15.25
1839	Charles B. Wilson	\$17.75
1840	Charles B. Wilson	\$22
1841	Charles B. Wilson	\$42.25
1842	Charles B. Wilson	\$25.50
1843	Unknown	

No definitive information about Sally is found after 1843. A Sallie Davidson, age 42, was treated at home by the Freedmen's Bureau for scrofula, a type of tuberculosis, in May, June, and July 1867.²⁴

Peter Davidson (also Peter Jr.) was born ca. 1832, likely a son of Peter Elliott and Harriet Davidson.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1840	Robert Davidson	\$0.375
1841	Robert H. Stinson	\$2.90
1842	James M. Alexander for C. Weir	\$4.25
1843	Unknown	

No information about Peter was found after 1843.

Lucy Sr. was likely an older woman when Benjamin W. Davidson died in 1829.

Year	Hired to	Rate
1831	Jacob Brem	\$16.55
1832	John R. Abernathy	\$15.55
1833	James C. Sloan	\$25
1834	Thomas Dearmond	\$8.30
1835	John Hiff	\$8.60

²⁴ Register of Patients, Volume 76, Sept. 1866-July 1868, p. 130, 134, 140, North Carolina, Freedmen's Bureau Records, 1865-1872, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-L9ZP-R898?view=index&lang=en&groupId=>, accessed March 27, 2026.

1836	William Abernathy	\$15.125
1837	William Lawing	\$20.50
1838	M. Dow	\$5
1839	Rufus Reid	\$8.125
1840	M. Dow	\$8.50
1841	Rufus Reid	\$10.25
1842	Mrs. Dow	\$4
1843	Unknown	

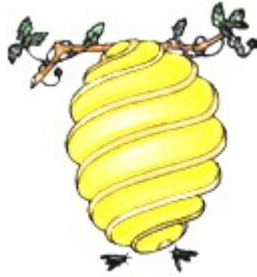
No information about Lucy is available after 1843.

Rebecca (also Beckey) was likely one the three enslaved persons, along with Harriet and Luis, who were gifted from the estate of James Latta to his grandchildren in March 1838.²⁵

Year	Hired to	Rate
1839	Rufus Reid	\$8
1840	J.M. Shelby	\$10
1841	Alfred Alexander	\$6.625
1842	Winfield Shelby	\$21.25
1843	Unknown	

No information for Rebecca is available after 1843.

²⁵ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 24, Page 531.



OAK LAWN



This report was written on December 26, 1975

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as Oak Lawn is located on the northern side of McCoy Rd. to the southwest of the intersection of McCoy Rd. and Gilead Rd. in the northern portion of Mecklenburg County.

2. Name, address, and telephone numbers of the present owners and occupants of the property:

The present owner of the property is:

Mrs. Wilson L Stratton

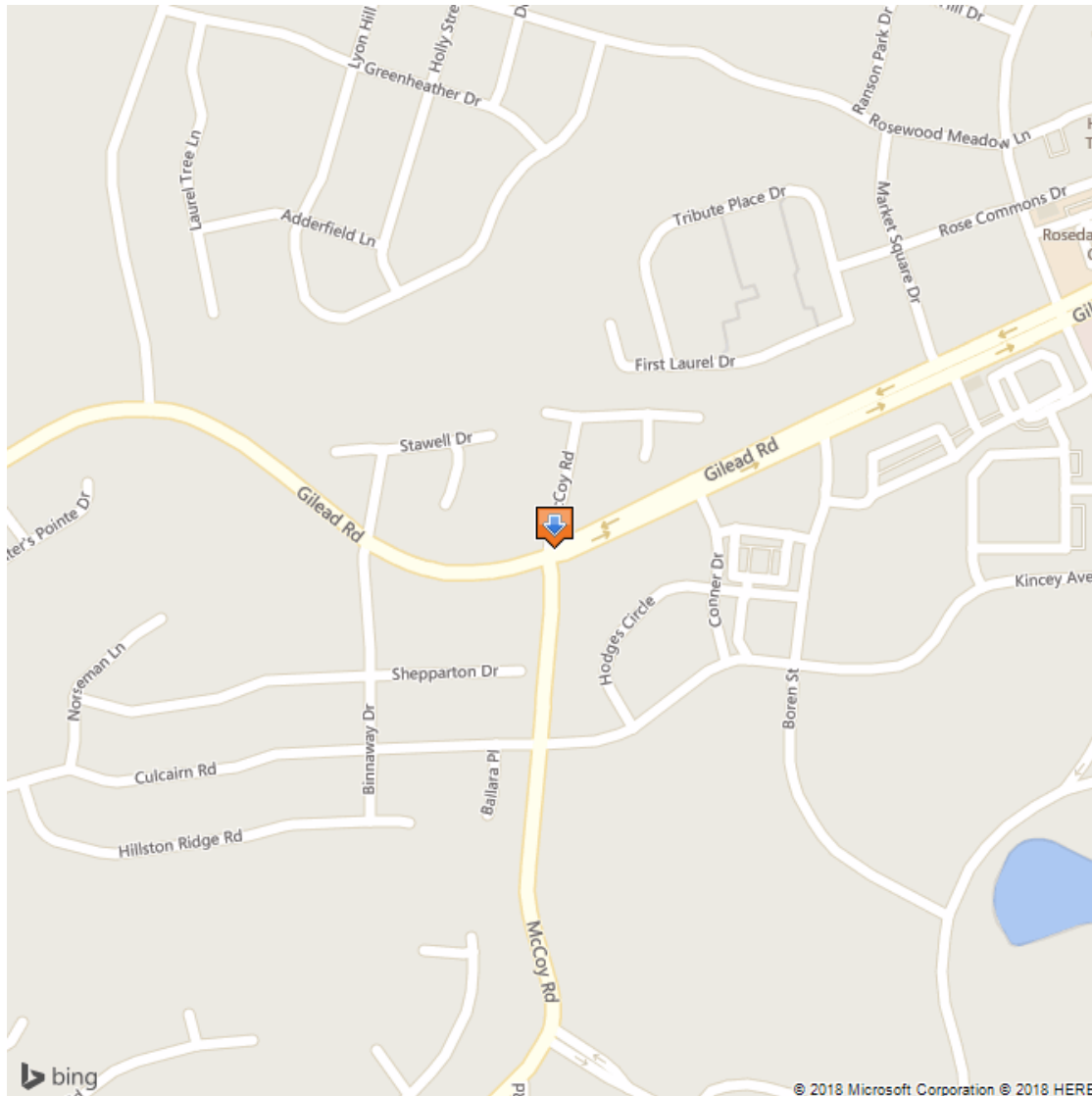
930 Berkley Ave.

Charlotte, NC 28202

Telephone: (704) 333-6018

3. Representative photographs of the property: Representative photographs of the property are included in this report.

4. A map depicting the location of the property: A map depicting the location of the property is included in this report.



5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The most recent reference to the property is found in the Deed Book 1367, page 410, as filed in the Mecklenburg County Registry.

6. A brief historical sketch of this property:

The traditional building date for Benjamin Wilson Davidson's house, later called Oak Lawn, is 1818, the year Davidson married Elizabeth (Betsy) Latta. The property on which the house was built, however, was not acquired from his father, (Astor John Davidson, a participant in the American Revolution) until April 14, 1819. Furthermore, purchases from Charleston in Davidson's account with his father-in-law, James Latta, in 1821, are of the type and quantity to indicate the building of his house at that time. Tradition holds that Davidson was called "Independence Ben" by his father because he was born on May 20, 1787, the twelfth anniversary of the controversial Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. Davidson lived the life of a prosperous cotton planter as a member of the numerous and locally prominent Davidson family. Davidson died relatively young in 1829, leaving his widow with six sons. Betsy Latta, Benjamin's wife, had been educated at Salem Academy where, it is said the Moravians placed much stress on gardening.

One of her granddaughters, Mrs. J.W. Bradfield, wrote of the house as it appeared just after the Civil War. She described an avenue of once a quarter of a mile long, leading from the house to the road. Where the oaks ended, cedars were planted to lengthen the avenue almost a mile. She further described the gardens with their neat beds bordered with trimmed box bushes. There were beds of old fashioned flowers and herbs which were planted to blend the aromas of the garden. There were long seats under the grapevine arbors. She tells of a high brick wall, with four gates, surrounding the house. Only a few large oaks remain of the above description. Mrs. Bradfield continues her recollection with the house interior: "but the glory of the house was the Indian room. It was above the parlor and quite 30 by 20 feet. The paper was from England, decorated with Indian scenes. Red men carrying strings of fish and bananas and leading them in primitive ships and canoes." This has been authenticated as "Captain Cook" wallpaper, issued by Dufour in Macon, France, 1804.

She continued with her recollection that this was the guest room and that there were three or four beds in this room. The kitchen at this time was described as being forty feet from the rear door. Following her husband's death, Betsy Davidson remained at Oak Lawn until 1835. It is said that because of her strong religious convictions (Presbyterian) she would never permit a fire in the kitchen on Sunday; meals were prepared on Saturday and the servants were given a day of rest. To her religious convictions was also attributed her calm among the panic and shouts of "Judgment Day" that ensued at midnight on November 13, 1833, when "stars fell on North

Carolina, "as they did that same night on Alabama. On January 24, 1835, Betsy Davidson married Rufus Reid, widower of one of her deceased sisters who had left three small daughters. They lived at his plantation home, "Mount Mourne," until her death following the birth of their first child, a daughter. Following Betsy's death, Reid married the step-daughter of the third Latta sister, who was a widow with a daughter, and this marriage produced four more children. Following the Civil War, the plantation passed from the Davidson family to John W. Moore who bought the property at the courthouse door on December 13, 1886. In 1904 the place was sold to John R. Cross and his wife; in 1933 the farm was once again sold at public auction, this time to the town of Huntersville. It passed through three more owners and was purchased in October, 1941 by Mr. and Mrs. Wilson L. Stratton who began architecture rescue work on the long-neglected house. Mrs. Stratton continues as owner of Oak Lawn.

7. A brief architectural description of the property:

Oak Lawn is a transitional Georgian-Federal style plantation house with distinctive features clearly related to Holly Bend, a nearby house also related by family ties. Oak Lawn, facing south, is a two-story, five-bay, frame house resting on a stone foundation with Flemish bond exterior end chimneys. The central entrance is slightly off center to the west (left), as is the corresponding window above. A three-bay, one-story replacement porch protects the handsome entrance, markedly similar to that at Holly Bend; the entrance has slender, fluted pilasters flanking a boldly molded, three-part door frame which contains a four-light transoms. Near the top edge of the transom, each of the pillars is a fluted scroll console surmounted by an applied circular molding; above, the pilaster continues, unadorned, to the porch ceiling cornice. The front door has six shallow flat panels. The three-bay wall area of the porch is flush sheathed and is separated from the lapped siding by pilasters similar to those flanking the door. The lapped siding is replacement but the flush siding appears to be original. The window sash is nine-over-nine at both levels but smaller at the second level. The windows at the first level have shutters with three flat panels in each leaf, supported by strap hinges. There are fixed louvered shutters at the second level. The shutters and blinds are replacements but are made to be patterned after the original. The windows also have three-part molded frames as well as molded sills. There are three granite front steps; the first step has a volute on each end.

The cornice of the house and the front and rear porches is ornamented with a series of blocks formed by incised lines suggestive of tiny triglyphs -- one block running vertically and the next horizontally. The pattern is said to have been original but the cornice was so badly decayed that it had to be replaced. The cornice has a small, neat return at each gable end. The gable ends are similar, with windows flanking the chimney at both the first and second floors, as well as eight-light windows flanking

the chimney in each gable. The basement entrance is in the east gable end, north of the chimney. The gable ends have no roof overhang. The rear of the house is similar to the front except for a door in place of a window in the second bay from the east and a one-story, hip roof porch that carries the length of the house. The extra door led into the one-story wing, since removed, that can be seen in a documentary photograph made in 1941. The interior is a modified "Quaker plan" with a center hall; that is, there is one large room to one side and two small rooms at the other. The hall has a molded chair rail and cornice. The open-string stair rises from the rear of the hall along the east wall in an unbroken run. A unique feature of the stair is the end of the first step which is defined by an extended baseboard in a crossette-like manner. The square newel and one baluster rest on the first step. The balustrade treatment is like that at Holly Bend. The newel has a molded cap flush with the molded handrail. The handrail is supported by very short, turned balusters, two per step. Both have an equally unturned long base section, but the urn-like turned section of the rear one of the pair is longer to accommodate the rise of the handrail. The stair brackets are ornamented with distinctive, fanciful, curvilinear forms.

The string is defined by a robust half-molding which is repeated on the wall above the stair treads. The horizontal wooden edge on the stair supporting platoon is chamfered and molded. There is a closet beneath the stair and the soffitt of the stair has a large, flat panel. Overall, the balustrade is Georgian in feeling and is such lower than might be normally expected. The interior doors have six shallow flat panels and are supported by long strap hinges. Much of the original hardware survives throughout the house. The parlor is to the west of the hall and occupies all of that end of the house. It has a chair rail, wainscot, and molded cornice annular to the hall but it is dominated by the vigorous, vernacular, highly ornamented chimney piece which is nearly identical to that at Holly Bend. Flanking a reeded, molded architrave are pilasters resting on unadorned plinths of baseboard height and rising to the height of the fire opening where a small scroll-shaped console with gouged stop molding which ends at the top with a curvilinear pattern located. The console has a reeded and molded lower portion. A doubled, square-link chain-like motif is deeply incised to about one-third of the way down the pilaster. The molded and reeded shelf breaks over the end consoles and center tablet; the tablet is unadorned except for quarter fans in each corner. The overmantel has two panels with a molded outer frame and a cable molding within. At the upper outside corners of each panel is a truncated pilaster and cap with pierced atop fluting and a reeded band. The molded reeded band carries into a broken pediment with circular bosses ornamented with uneven gougework in a rosette-like pattern. The pediments are joined to the central element above the panels by a cable molding swag. The central element -- an elaborate composition resembling a tall, complex keystone reaches almost to the ceiling and consists, from top to base, of a seeded and molded band, a wooden floral boss, a small molded band, a block

with two concentric applied rings, and a molded console resting on a gouged band with a gouged shell design suspended from the bottom. Near the bottom of the panels, separating them, is a reeded and molded block.

Across the hall in the front root are a chair rail, wainscot and molded cornice similar to the others with notable but less elaborate mantel. The other room of the first floor has become a kitchen. The upstairs rooms are well finished but less elaborate than the first floor. Remnants of "Captain Cook" wallpaper, issued by Defour in Macon, France, in 1804, remain in a corner of an upstairs room made into a closet. To the rear of the house is a well house made of brick which are laid in Flemish bond. There are iron ventilator grills in the well house walls. There is also a small square Greek Revival outbuilding with pyramidal roof.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria set forth in N.C.G.S. 160A-399.4:

a. Historical and cultural significance: The historical and cultural significance of the property known as the Oak Lawn is primarily due to its architectural merit. As one of Mecklenburg County's notable group of Federal era dwellings, Oak Lawn is especially significant for its elaborate vernacular woodwork of a vigorous and distinctive character, clearly the work of the same carpenter who worked at nearby Holly Bend, a house related by family as well as stylistic connections.

b. Suitability for preservation and restoration: The present owners of the property maintain it in a high state of preservation.

c. Educational value: The structure's architectural merit alone is sufficient proof of the educational value of Oak Lawn. Moreover, the fact that the builder and his wife came from families of local historical importance increases the educational value of the structure.

d. Cost of acquisition, restoration, maintenance, or repair: The Commission has no intention of purchasing this property. Neither is it aware of any intention of the owner to sell the property. Therefore, this criterion would not seem to be applicable.

e. Possibilities for adaptive or alternative use of the property: Because the structure is maintained in a high state of preservation and is of substantial architectural merit, it should not be adapted to an alternate use.

f. Appraised value: The 1975 appraised value of the structure itself is \$8,780.00. The appraised value of the land is \$82,600.00. The Commission is aware that designation of the property would allow the owner to apply for a special tax classification.

g. The administrative and financial responsibility of any person or organization willing to underwrite all or a portion of such costs: The Commission assumes that the present or subsequent owners will meet all financial obligations associated with the preservation of the property.

9. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria established for inclusion on the National Register: The Commission believes that the property known as Oak Lawn does meet the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places because of its architectural merit and because of its association with locally prominent families of distinguished lineage. Also worth noting is the fact that the North Carolina Division of Archives and History is presently processing Oak Lawn for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

10. Documentation of why and in what ways the property is of historical importance to Charlotte and/or Mecklenburg County: Oak Lawn, as one of the few surviving Federal era structures in Mecklenburg County, possesses considerable local historical significance, especially in view of its refined architectural merit and unspoiled setting. In addition, its association with the Latta and Davidson families places it among the structures which reflect the lifestyle of the gentry of Mecklenburg County of the early nineteenth century.

Bibliography

An Inventory of Older Buildings in Mecklenburg County and Charlotte for the Historic Properties Commission.

Letter from Charles Greer Suttlemyre, Jr. to Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

Materials Supplied by the Division of Archives and History.

Records of the Mecklenburg County Tax Office.

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