



# Davidson Historical Society

Winter 2007

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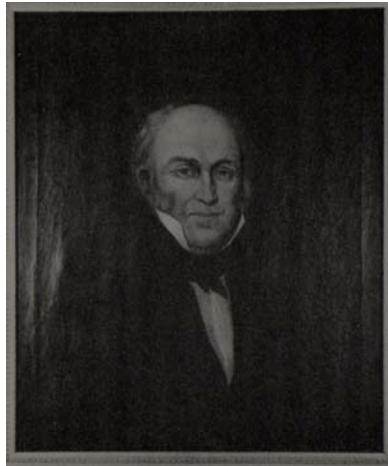
Christy Shi

## Our Purpose

*The Davidson Historical Society promotes an understanding and appreciation of the history of Davidson, North Carolina and its surrounding area.*

## *On the Road with DHS...*

### *Holly Bend Plantation*



*Robert Davidson*

You may be familiar with Rural Hill, the site of the plantation home of Major John Davidson, early settler, Revolutionary War figure and signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. However, just down the road from Rural Hill, quietly sitting in a grove of trees, is a large plantation house you may not be familiar with: "Holly Bend."

"Holly Bend" was built between 1795 and 1800 by Robert Davidson, oldest son of Major John Davidson. The house was built on a bend of the Catawba River on 420 acres given to Robert by his father, and is reputed to have been named for the holly trees which grow in great abundance in the area. It is said that "Holly Bend" was

originally designed to face the river rather than the road as it does now. This configuration was common among southern river plantations in a day when boat travel was far easier than overland.

The Federal house is two-story, with two end chimneys laid in Flemish-bond. The first floor features a large parlor on either side of the central hall. The walls throughout the house are accented by delicate molded cornices, chair rails, and baseboards. The Federal ornament of the main (west) parlor is unusually lavish, with the overmantle dominating the room. There are a number of homes built in North Carolina during the Federal period that have equally elaborate interiors, but the use of such lavish interior trim in an outwardly unexceptional house makes "Holly Bend" unique.



*Holly Bend - ca. 1800*

Robert Davidson married Margaret Osborne, daughter of Colonel Adlai Osborne of the

*...see On the Road on page 2*

## Events Calendar 2007

Sunday, April 22, 2007

**The History of Ada Jenkins**

4:00 p.m., *Ada Jenkins Center*

Come learn about Ada Jenkins—the school, the community center and the woman herself. DHS will host a panel discussion about the many lives touched by this unique fixture in Davidson.



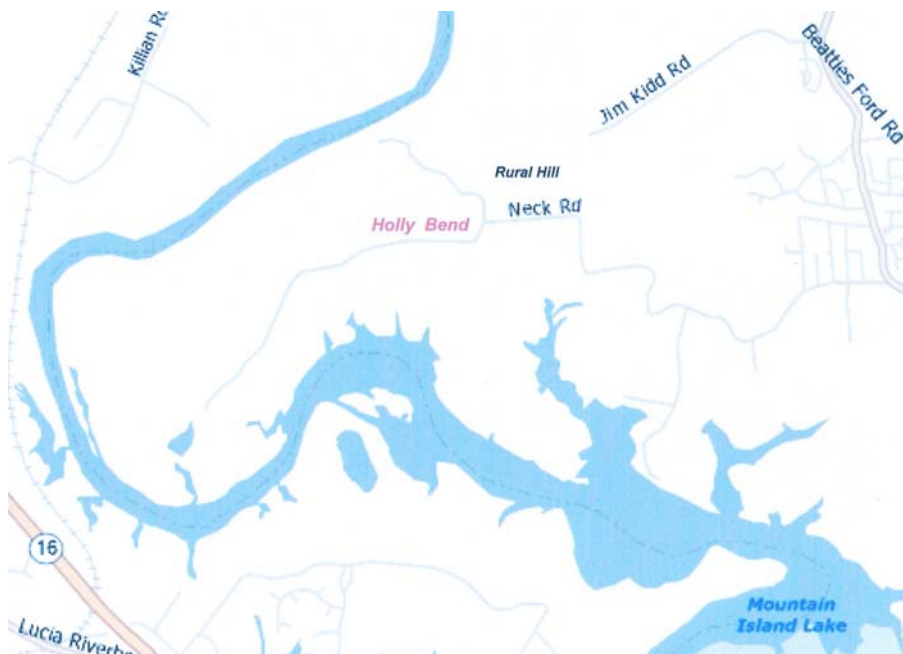
*Come talk to us  
at the DHS booth  
on Town Day!*

**Davidson Town Day  
Saturday, May 5, 2007**

### On the Road . . .continued from page 1

Centre Church community, on January 1, 1801 just after “Holly Bend” was built. “Uncle Robin” and “Aunt Peggy”, as they were called by their many nieces and nephews, had no children, but took care of many of their family members on both sides. They were well known for their hospitality. The diary of Juliana Margaret Conner of Charleston, SC enters for July 7, 1827: “Dined at Mr. Robert Davidson’s. They are excellent old folks- very rich, no children and live in the greatest abundance.” Robert, who is said to have been the wealthiest planter in Mecklenburg County, was listed in the 1850 census as having 2,803 acres and 109 slaves.

...see *On the Road* on page 3



#### Sources:

Bishir, Catherine W. and Michael T Southern. *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Piedmont North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Davidson, Chalmers Gaston. *The Plantation World Around Davidson, NC*: Davidson Printing Company, 1969.

“Holly Bend”, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission. < <http://www.cmhpf.org/essays/HollyBend.html> >

“Historical Summaries of Significant Mecklenburg County Resources”, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission. < <http://www.cmhpf.org/ruralresourcesp5.htm> >

Wright, Christina and Dan Morrill. *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Tours: Driving and Walking*. Charlotte: The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Preservation Fund, 1994.

### On the Road . . . .*continued from page 2*

Margaret and Robert lived in the house until they died, he in 1853 and she in 1864. They are buried in the Rural Hill Burying Ground.

After Robert's death, Margaret remained in the home on 430 acres of property. The remainder of the property was willed to other heirs, including five namesakes. After Margaret's death, the home was owned by James N. Osborne, who then sold it to John L. Parks in 1871. It remained in the Parks family until 1930. The home has had several owners since then, and remains a private residence. Since the twentieth century, the home has been referred to as "Hollywood."

"Holly Bend" is on the National Register of Historic Places and is a locally designated historic landmark.

*If you're on the road,*

*don't miss these nearby sites!*

#### Rural Hill

*4431 Neck Road*

Site of the plantation home of Major John Davidson, built in 1788. The home burned in 1886. The Catawba Valley Scottish Society is

the steward of the 256 acres of Rural Hill and the eleven historic and reconstructed buildings on the site.

#### Rural Hill Burying Ground

*Neck Road, across the road from Rural Hill*

Violet Wilson Davidson, wife of Major John Davidson, passed away in 1818 and was the first family member to be buried at Rural Hill in what would be named the Rural Hill Burying Ground. E.L. Baxter Davidson, great-grandson of Major John Davidson, built the stone wall around the cemetery in 1923 using stones from the Rural Hill ruin and the Catawba River.\*

#### Ingleside

*7225 Bud Henderson Road, Huntersville*

Dr. William Davidson, grandson of Major John Davidson, built this elegant house at the time of the Civil War. Dr. Davidson was in the first class to graduate from Davidson College in 1840. The house is one of the county's finest examples of Italianate architecture.

#### Gilead Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church

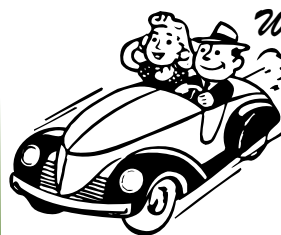
*15303 Beatties Ford Road, Huntersville*

This is the oldest ARP congregation in the county, organized in 1787. The present building dates from 1880-82.

#### General William Davidson Monument\*

*At Hicks Cross Roads, behind gas station at intersection on Hwy 73 and Beatties Ford Road*

This stone monument was erected by E.L. Baxter Davidson in the 1920's. The monument has hands pointing to Cowan's Ford, where General Davidson was killed in 1781, and to Davidson College, named in his honor.



*Want to see it for yourself?*

*Driving directions to  
Holly Bend:*

- From I-77, Exit #25, go west on Hwy 73 (Sam Furr Road) approximately 3 miles passing the Birkdale Village area.
- Turn **left** on **Beatties Ford Road**. (Exxon gas station is on your left as you turn).
- Follow Beatties Ford Road approximately 3 miles passing Bradley Middle School on your right.
- Continue approximately 1 mile and turn **right** onto **Neck Road**. Note the Historical Rock Column and the sign "Rural Hill Farm-Center of Scottish Heritage."
- Follow Neck Road for approximately 2 miles, passing Rural Hill Farm on your right, and the Rural Hill Burying Ground on your left.
- Turn **left** onto the **unpaved extension of Neck Road**. After .4 miles, you will see Holly Bend on your right. Holly Bend is a private home.

\*E.L. Baxter Davidson had similar stone walls built along Beatties Ford Road in front of Hopewell Presbyterian and Williams Memorial Presbyterian churches. He also built historical markers along Beatties Ford Road: at the McIntyre Battle site, at Neck Road (for Rural Hill), at the old Mecklenburg-Iredell County line which is now in Iredell county on Brawley School Road, and the General Davidson monument mentioned above.

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## *A Note from the President...*

The Davidson Historical Society looks forward to an exciting 2007. We are planning to continue installing the popular historical plaques like the ones on Main Street homes. We hope to install some on Concord Road in the coming months. DHS paid a sizeable portion for plaques on college homes as well as private residences to designate the year the home was built as well as the early residents. We hope you have noticed them on Main Street.

Are you interested in becoming more involved with the DHS? We are always looking for volunteers! We can find something that suits your interest: serving as a board member, planning future programs, working on publicity, planning activities for special events, leading walking tours as needed. Contact me or any board member if you want to get involved!

Our appreciation goes out to Brenda Barger for serving as DHS president for the last two years. And my personal thanks for continuing in the role during my absence last fall. Brenda has been a dedicated DHS board member and we have accomplished a great deal under her leadership.

We thank each of you who are currently members of the Davidson Historical Society. If you have not yet become a member, we encourage you to join today.

Elizabeth Martin



## **Davidson Historical Society**

Post Office Box 144  
Davidson, NC 28036  
[www.davidsonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.davidsonhistoricalsociety.org)

*We don't just talk about Davidson's past...  
We are working to preserve it.*

**The Davidson Historical Society** was founded in the late 1980's by a group of concerned citizens led by Taylor and Irene Blackwell. Over the years DHS has presented programs by outstanding local and regional personalities on varying topics, toured historically significant sites in the area, and financed projects which promote the history of the area.