

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Melton-Davis House

Bostic vicinity, Rutherford County, RF0323, Listed 8/29/2008
Nomination by Davyd Foard Hood
Photographs by E. U. Richey, August 2006



Overall view



Gable decorative work – detail view

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Melton-Davis House
other names/site number Melton, Cannie, House

2. Location

street & number 477 DePriest Road not for publication N/A
city or town Bostic Vicinity
state North Carolina code NC county Rutherford code 161 zip code 28018

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
 entered in the National Register. _____ Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____
 See continuation sheet
 determined eligible for the National Register. _____
 See continuation sheet
 determined not eligible for the National Register. _____
 removed from the National Register. _____
 other, (explain:) _____

Melton-Davis House
Name of Property

Rutherford County, NC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	3	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	3	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories and subcategories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuildings

Current Functions

(Enter categories and subcategories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

OTHER/storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Queen Anne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete block

walls Wood

roof Tin

other Brick

Wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet.

Melton-Davis House
Name of Property

Rutherford County, NC
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

ca. 1904-ca.1915

Significant Dates

ca. 1904

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State Agency
 - Federal Agency
 - Local Government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository:
North Carolina Division of Archives and History
Raleigh, North Carolina

Record # _____

Melton-Davis House
Name of Property

Rutherford County, NC
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 2.14 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>426060</u>	<u>3921020</u>	3	Zone	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing					
2	_____	_____	_____	4	Zone	_____	_____	_____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Davyd Foard Hood

organization _____ date 21 September 2007

street & number Isinglass, 6907 Old Shelby Road telephone 704/462-1847

city or town Vale state NC zip code 28168

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Cherry Mountain Farms, LLC

street & number Post Office Box 51382 telephone 919/489-1417

city or town Durham state NC zip code 27717

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Melton-Davis House
Rutherford County, North Carolina

7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Melton-Davis House, a ca. 1904 one-story frame Queen Anne-style house, and its two surviving frame agricultural outbuildings stand on a tract of about 2.14 acres on the west side of DePriest Road (SR 1713), about 1.25 miles south of Sunshine, a small village, and about 2.75 miles north of the Washburn Historic District (NR, 2002) in largely rural northeast Rutherford County. The buildings are near the road, with the house facing northeast to DePriest Road. The house was built ca. 1904 on a small, fifty-acre farm, bound on the east by DePriest Road, with fields and woodlands extending to the north, west, and south. The fields, which have been planted with trees and placed on a timber management program, and the adjoining woodlands are not included in this nomination. The nominated acreage, comprising the site and setting of the house and its outbuildings, is an open grass-covered tract of about 2.14 acres on a rise above DePriest Road and at the extreme east corner of the 1903 farm tract. It is bound by DePriest Road on the east, and on the other sides by the boundary drawn at the edge of the woodlands which enframe the house, its outbuildings, and grounds.

The Melton-Davis House stands at an elevation of about 1,000 feet in the rolling topography of the foothills of the South Mountains that, in turn, comprise the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Cherry Mountain rises to the east and to the northeast is the South Mountains State Park, a 14,132-acre state park located in Burke County and at the point where Burke, Rutherford, and Cleveland counties border each other. This part of Rutherford County was principally an area of smaller farms from the period of settlement through the early-twentieth century, which co-existed with much larger holdings occupying the fertile bottomlands along Cane Creek (to the northwest), and other major tributaries of the Second Broad River. Agriculture was the livelihood of the area's rural society well into the first half of the twentieth century; however, the promise of steady wages offered by Rutherford County's rapidly expanding textile industry lured both men and women from the farm to factories in nearby Forest City, Spindale, Cliffside, and Henrietta. The importance of agriculture in the local economy steadily declined in the period from World War I to the mid-twentieth century, and particularly after World War II. Agriculture's role in defining the appearance of the countryside likewise diminished. A seamless agrarian landscape created by adjoining farmsteads consisting of fields, pastures, and woodlands, and anchored by farmhouses such as the Melton-Davis House, and its domestic and agricultural buildings began to disappear. Fields that had long been planted with corn and small grains were allowed to grow up, uncultivated and eventually returned to a woodland state, or planted with trees, as happened here at the Melton-Davis farm, where they are now under forest management. Others were planted with grass and used as pastures for beef cattle or as hay meadows, which reflected a less intensive type of farming. The countryside around the Melton-Davis House has changed even more during recent decades as commuters and retirees have built new houses which occupy lots on

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subdivided rural holdings but enjoy no historical relationship to the land. Today the Melton-Davis House and its outbuildings reflect an important stage in the history of the agrarian society in an evolving landscape of transitional character.

The tree-shaded grounds of the Melton-Davis House are grass-covered and simply treated. A semi-circular gravel drive carries from points north and south of the house, in an arc-like fashion behind and west of the dwelling. Plantings of white pines flank both ends of the driveway where they meet DePriest Road and frame the roadside view of the house. Clumps of spirea and forsythia are at the edge of the lawn at the south end of the driveway. Simply-laid stone steps, on axis with the front door, are set in the roadside bank in front of the house where the grade was cut for DePriest Road. An aged pear tree, dating to the Melton ownership of the property, stands on the north side of the house. The grounds west and north of the house, leading to the woodland edge and the boundary of the nominated acreage are mostly open. The remains of a once cultivated vegetable garden can be seen west of the house while the granary (#3) and barn (#2) stand in the clearing north of the Melton-Davis House.

1. Melton-Davis House
ca. 1904
Contributing building

The Melton-Davis House is a remarkably intact one-story weatherboarded frame Queen Anne-style dwelling, whose simple, yet prepossessing appearance dates to its original construction about 1904. Its survival, essentially unaltered, as a rental property in the Davis family since 1922 is exceptional in a county where many contemporary houses of its size and simple character have been substantially remodeled or abandoned as dwellings. The house stands as built except for the installation of a bathroom in 1976, the coincident underpinning of the house with a concrete block perimeter foundation for insulation, and the addition of a concrete block flue stack on the north side of the house about the same time. Although the house faces east/northeast to DePriest Road, for ease of description it will be described as facing east with its roadfront façade as its east elevation, its sides as the north and south elevations, and the back of the house as the west elevation.

The Melton-Davis House has a picturesque, asymmetrical appearance that derives from the offset positioning of the two main gable-front, double-pile blocks that flank the center hall, and its ornamental finish. It stands on a concrete block foundation which is more visible on the façade and the east ends of its side elevations because of the lawn's slope in grade toward DePriest Road. The house is sheathed in white painted weatherboards with plain cornerboards. The elevations rise to flush board eaves with simple molded woodwork along their length. The house is covered with paired gable-front

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roofs of a 5-V sheet metal that are joined by a hip roof over the center of the dwelling. Paired, offset brick chimneys with corbelled tops rise through the roof and provide back-to-back fireplaces in the four rooms of the main block. The slightly inset two-room rear ell is covered by a lower gable roof which is positioned below the eaves of the south block's roof. The original four-over-four sash are framed in plain board surrounds with projecting drip caps and thick sills.

The three-bay east façade of the Melton-Davis House is the most developed elevation of the residence. Here the south block, of the two uniform blocks that flank the center hall, projects toward DePriest Road by about six feet in front of the east wall of the hall and the north block. A one-story hip-roof porch extends across the central entrance bay and north block, stopping just short of the northeast corner of the house. It is supported by bracketed turned posts linked by a turned railing. The bracketed posts are original; however, the turned balusters in the railing are recent replacements that duplicate an original surviving half-baluster affixed to one of the posts. The deteriorated wood porch flooring was replaced as close as possible to in-kind. At the same time utilitarian wood steps were installed in front of the porch, on axis with the front door. The finish of the porch is typical of the period; however, it is the decorative treatment of the pedimented gable ends of the two parallel blocks that enhance the status of the house. Each triangular gable end is fitted with a centered, louvered wood vent whose pointed top echoes the pitch of the gable roof. The louver-boards have a decorative, scrolling front edge. The face of each gable is sheathed with flush boards placed on a diagonal and parallel with the rake of the roof. This simple example of complementing geometric harmony lends the house a particular distinction. A window is centered below each of these gables and they, in turn, flank the recessed center entrance. The front doorway retains its original glazed wood door with two long panes of glass in the upper half above the four-panel lower half.

The three-bay north elevation of the Melton-Davis House reflects both its original double-pile plan and the installation of the bathroom in 1976. The original, conventional, symmetrical window openings centered in the walls of the two rooms are joined by a small window near the center of the elevation to illuminate and vent the bathroom. It is positioned immediately beside (west) the concrete block flue stack.

The four-bay south elevation of the house is the longest of its four sides and has a two-part division reflecting the two-room plan of the south block of the main body of the house and the slightly inset two-room rear ell. Two symmetrical window openings illuminate the living room, in the house's front southeast corner, and the bedroom behind it. The ell, which contains the kitchen and dining room, is also two bays wide. A large window opening in its eastern bay, adjoining the main body, illuminates the dining room, while a conventional window opening in the west half illuminates the kitchen in the

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west end of the ell. The dining room window is fitted with paired four-over-four sash. A ceiling mounted brick flue rises through the ell's roof near its west end.

The rear elevation of the Melton-Davis House features paired weatherboarded gable ends centered with window openings. The larger opening in the north gable is fitted with reused nine-over-six sash whose installation here appears to date to ca. 1904. The roof of the south gable block extends to the north to cover a shed-roof porch positioned between the blocks and in the space pendant to the house's center hall. In plan this porch appears as an extension of the center hall, and it was, no doubt, a pleasant domestic work space. The wood-floored porch is supported by chamfered wood posts that are original as are the shaped rafter ends along the exposed eave on the porch's north side.

The interior of the Melton-Davis House reflects a like degree of integrity of materials and finish, together with its original mantels and doors. The walls and ceilings of the six-room house are flush sheathed with painted boards. The pine flooring is also painted. The doors and windows are enframed with plain board surrounds incorporating simple aprons below each window. The doors, all original except when otherwise noted, have either a seven-panel arrangement or a five-panel arrangement, as on the doors to the house's four closets. The doors retain their original hardware and several retain their original porcelain knobs.

The front door opens into the center hall and a pendant door at the west end of the hall opens onto the rear porch. This back porch door is a replacement and features six panes above two panels. The four doorways into the four rooms opening off the hall retain their seven-panel doors. The living room, in the house's front southeast corner, communicates only with the hall. The fireplace here is fitted with a highly ornamented mantel. Each of the pilasters has a trio of inset, diamond-shaped panels rising with the pilaster to the frieze. The deep frieze is fitted with three symmetrical pairs of cutwork brackets that support the mantel shelf. This mantel is carpenter-made as are the other mantels. The bedroom in the house's southwest corner, apparently Mr. and Mrs. Melton's bedroom, has a simpler version of the living room mantel that is also fitted with a trio of brackets. This bedroom mantel is flanked by closets in the spaces on either side of the interior chimney. A door in the room's west wall opens into the dining room.

The two bedrooms on the north side of the hall have mantels of a simpler and essentially identical finish. Each has molded pilasters rising from molded bases to paired brackets which have something of the appearance of capitals in the classical sense. These paired brackets support shallow mantel shelves. The bedrooms on this side of the house had one closet per room. The 1976 bathroom installation utilized the existing closet door in the front, northeast room. The new bathroom occupies the space of

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the closet on the north side of the chimney and an enclosed expansion which projects into the northeast corner of the rear, northwest bedroom. This bedroom, possibly finished sometime after the ca. 1904 original construction, is sheathed with beaded tongue-and-groove ceiling. The bathroom finishes and fixtures are of their period.

The two-room kitchen/dining room ell has experienced some finish changes. At some point the partition wall between the rooms was altered to the present arrangement with counter-level cabinetry and full-height posts replacing it as a divider between the two rooms. Sheet paneling has been applied over the flush sheathing on the walls of both spaces. The dining room retains its visible pine floor while sheet vinyl has been laid over the pine floor in the kitchen. Counters and wall-hung cabinets, probably dating to the mid-twentieth century, are on the kitchen's north and south walls. A replacement door, with nine panes above two panels, opens from the kitchen onto the rear porch.

2. Barn
Ca. 1904-ca. 1915
Contributing building

The eleven-year period allowed for the construction of this building reflects some degree of uncertainty as to whether the barn was built contemporary with the house in about 1904 or in the years soon after its completion and occupation by the Melton family. A documentary photograph, dating to ca. 1928-1929, including Kenneth Melton, his daughter Ruby and his son Norris, and a litter of beagle puppies, includes its east-side shed in the background. In the photograph the shed is covered with a wood shingle roof, and spaced horizontal boards are nailed to the shed uprights to create a pen for cattle. The fabric of the barn does not appear new. Its appearance indicates both age and use, and it is believed to be some fifteen to twenty years old in the photograph. Its traditional character is certainly in keeping with a construction date roughly approximate to that of the house and contributes to the significance of the Melton-Davis House as a part of the farmstead. The center-passage barn, which faces southeast to the Melton-Davis House, will be described as if it stood on a true south/north axis for ease of description with its gable front as the south elevation and so forth.

The unpainted weatherboarded center-passage barn consists of the square-in-plan main block, measuring approximately twenty-eight feet on each side, with full-depth sheds of unequal width on its east and west sides. The long rectangular pens of the barn, flanking the center passage, rest on poured-in-form concrete foundations. Through decades of little use and like maintenance, the condition of the barn has deteriorated and some sheathing is lost on the south front. The main block and the sheds are covered with a 5-V sheet metal. The use of the enclosed areas on either side of the dirt-floor center

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passage for stabling is reflected on the building's elevations where the lower level is sheathed with spaced horizontal boards that ventilate the stalls. The elevations above, on the front and rear (north) gable ends, have conventional weatherboards. On the south front a small rectangular opening providing access to the loft is positioned in the center of the barn gable, directly above the passage opening. A larger rectangular opening is asymmetrically positioned on the north gable end. The roof of the shallow west shed is an angular extension of the barn's main roof, while the separate roof of the larger east shed is set below and along the eave of the barn's roof. Both sheds are supported by uprights and are open-sided. The east and west elevations of the main block, under the sheds, have spaced sheathing and so, too, do the stall elevations along the center passage. The west side of the passage is finished as one large stall with a board-and-rail door opening into the passage near its center. The east side of the passage is finished as three spaces with stalls flanking a centered cutting room that also has a wall-mounted ladder for access to the loft. Three board-and-rail doors open into these spaces. The stall in the barn's northeast corner was fitted with a wood floor at some point. The loft has floors on two levels with the floor above the passage elevated above those over the stalls on either side.

3. Granary
ca. 1920-1940
Noncontributing building

The date of the unpainted granary is also open to question; however, the finish and appearance of the building, and the pitch of its gable-front roof indicate its being of later date than the barn. The granary stands on concrete-block piers. The rectangular, gable-front frame building comprises two parts of equal size. The dirt-floored east half of the granary is finished with full-width openings on its north and south ends and could be used as either a sheltered work area or for implement/wagon storage. It has a blind east wall sheathed with vertical boards. The west half of the granary is enclosed with flush horizontal boards that also continue across the elevations above the open east passage. A board-and-rail door in the north gable end provides access to the floored storage area. The granary has seen little use or maintenance in recent decades and is in deteriorated but restorable condition.

4. Shed
ca. 1985
Noncontributing building

This poorly-constructed rectangular storage building, with a crude shed on its west side, is said by the owner to have been partially built by a renter of materials and boards salvaged from the deteriorated

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meat-house. The walls of the shed are sheathed with horizontal boards and a board-and-rail door is located on its south end. The roof of the shed and its adjoining shed are covered with sheet metal.

5. Pump house
1976
Noncontributing building

This small, low concrete-block building was erected in 1976 coincident with the installation of a bathroom in the Melton-Davis House and its underpinning. Rectangular in plan, it is covered with a gable-front roof of asphalt singles. The upper gable ends of the building are sheathed with plywood which is also used for the off-center door on the south front.

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Melton-Davis House
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8. NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Melton-Davis House, a small frame Queen Anne-style house erected ca. 1904 as a family residence on a fifty-acre farm for Opecannough "Cannie" Melton, holds local significance in the area of architecture and satisfies National Register Criterion C. The period of significance is ca. 1904 to ca. 1915, including the ca. 1904 construction of the house as well as the probably contemporary but possibly later construction of the adjoining frame barn. The house and its outbuildings stand on a tract of about 2.14 acres, its historic site and setting in the extreme east edge of the fifty-acre farmstead, whose former fields have either returned to native woodlands or been planted with trees in a forest management program.

The Melton-Davis House is one of a small number of surviving Queen Anne-style houses erected as farmhouses in rural northeast Rutherford County. Of this group it is arguably the most intact and least altered, and this status owes in large measure to its history of ownership and occupation. Cannie Melton (1861-1931) and his wife, Mary Emily (Grayson) Melton (1866-1917) lived here with their five children until Mrs. Melton's death in 1917. In 1921, Mr. Melton remarried and relocated to Spindale and in 1922, when a suit to settle Mary Emily Melton's estate was concluded, the Melton farmhouse and its fifty acres were sold to Sunshine merchant Charles Daniel Davis (1870-1936). Since 1922 the house has remained a rental property in the Davis family.

During a period of three-quarters of a century the house has stood virtually unchanged except for the addition of a bathroom and underpinning. For the first thirty years of that period, from 1922 to 1952, the house remained the residence of the builder's son, Kenneth Jackson Melton (1896-1973). While other contemporary, earlier, and later houses of similar Queen Anne-style character remained family-owned and family-occupied and were the subject of usually substantial improvements through time, the Melton-Davis House has survived essentially unchanged. Its modest, yet picturesque appearance, with offset blocks flanking a center hall, decoratively-sheathed gable ends, balustraded turned-post porch, original weatherboard sheathing, and architectural finish, all reflect Queen Anne-styling adapted to the construction of a farm residence. The integrity of the exterior extends to the interior where original sheathing, mantels, doors, and architectural finish all remain intact. The styling, finish, and integrity of the Melton-Davis House embody the distinctive characteristics of the Queen Anne-style applied to a rural Rutherford County farmhouse by an as yet unidentified house builder.

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Melton-Davis House
Rutherford County, North Carolina

Historical Background

The construction and occupation of the Melton-Davis House and farmstead in northeastern Rutherford County by members of the Melton family, from ca. 1904 to 1952, had its origin in the acquisition of the property in 1881 by Micajah McCurry Grayson. Mr. Grayson, known during his adult life as “K.J. Mack” Grayson (1838-1903), married Mary Letitia Melton (1841-1911) in 1860 in Rutherford County. Between 1861 and 1877 the couple became the parents of seven children. On 21 December 1881 K.J. Mack Grayson purchased five tracts of contiguous land on Roberson’s Creek from members of the Biggerstaff family (Rutherford Deeds, 56/222-24). The purchase price of \$2,000 for the 146 acres indicates that improvements probably stood on the acreage. The proximity of the property to the Grayson homeplace is unconfirmed.¹

On 17 October 1898 Mr. Grayson and his wife executed four deeds by which they conveyed their real estate holdings to their seven children. Retaining a life estate in the homeplace, they divided it into three tracts of unspecified acreage for conveyance, respectively, to the couple’s three eldest sons: John Marion Grayson (1864-1940), William Jackson Grayson (1870-1967), and Joseph Wilson Grayson (1872-1954) (Rutherford Deeds, 73/12-14). The Biggerstaff land was conveyed without division to Eliza Ann Grayson Yelton (1861-1949), Mary Emily “Emeline” Grayson Melton (1866-1917), Alberta Narcissus Christine Grayson Yelton (1877-1966), and the couple’s youngest son George Washington Grayson (1875-1917) (Rutherford Deeds 73/11). The Biggerstaff land remained in their joint ownership until 28 November 1903 when the siblings set apart two fifty-acre tracts. Lot #1, including a house and situated to the south and southwest of this property, was conveyed to George Washington Grayson and would remain his home until death in 1917 (Rutherford Deeds, 80/195-96). Lot #2 was conveyed by the siblings to Mary Emily Melton (Rutherford Deeds, 80/359-60). (The disposition of the remaining forty-six acres of the holdings remains unconfirmed.)

At the time of this conveyance, Mary Emily (Grayson) Melton was thirty-seven years of age, married, and the mother of five children who lived to adulthood. On 23 December 1884 she married Opecannough “Cannie” Melton (1861-1931), the only son of Daniel Tate Melton (1834-1863), who died during the Battle of Chancellorsville (Virginia), and his wife Eliza (Houser) Melton (ca. 1841-ca. 1875). In the 1900 Rutherford County Census the couple is living with their five children, born between 1886 and 1896, in a household next to that of George W. Grayson. Mr. Grayson and Mr. Melton both listed their occupation as farmer.

According to family tradition this house was built about 1904 for Cannie and Mary Emily Melton.² The couple lived in the house with their family from about 1904 until the death of Mrs. Melton on 7

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April 1917. During this period two of the Couple's five children, Joseph Edgar Melton (1893-1970) and Maude Mae Melton (1890-1986), were married in 1914 and 1915, respectively, and left home. Their two oldest children, Tate Mack Otho Melton (1886-1981) and Ossie Lee Melton (1888-1972), had remained unmarried and at home, together with the youngest son Kenneth Jackson Melton (1896-1973). During this period Cannie Melton earned his livelihood as a farmer cultivating this modest holding. Crops of corn, small grains, and hay were raised for subsistence and to feed the family's livestock including milch cows, chickens, and hogs. A small cotton crop, ginned and sold to the local mills, was the family's only cash crop. A vegetable garden provided food for the Melton family. The 1917 tax list for Rutherford County shows the aggregate value of his real and personal property for taxation was \$1,406.

The death of Mary Emily (Grayson) Melton on 7 April 1917 occurred less than three months after that of her youngest brother and neighbor, George Washington Grayson, on 21 January 1917. Her body was buried at Cedar Grove Methodist Church Cemetery, Sunshine; Mr. Grayson was buried at Sunshine Methodist Church on DePriest Road. He died leaving a widow, Alice E. (Gurley) Grayson (1876-1945) and seven children. On 27 June 1921 Cannie Melton married Alice Grayson. As of that date, the surviving children of both families had married and left home except for Mr. Melton's two oldest children, who never married, his youngest son who was living here with his wife and their first-born child, and Mrs. Grayson's two youngest daughters, Georgia Lucinda (b. 1907) and Virgie E. (1911-2000) Grayson, who married later.

The marriage of Cannie Melton and Alice Grayson and the decision of the newly-wed middle-aged couple to move to Spindale prompted the settlement of their respective spouse's estates and the sale of both fifty-acre farms. Mr. Melton's five children filed suit in autumn 1921 in Rutherford County Superior Court seeking settlement of their mother's estate. Item four of the petition noted "that owing to the small number of acres of said land and its shape and topography it is not susceptible of actual partition, and that a sale thereof is necessary in order that equal partition and division may be made" (Rutherford County Superior Court Minute Docket, Special Proceedings, K/271-73).

The Melton farm was offered at auction on 10 December 1921 and bid in at \$3,525.00 by J. C. Biggerstaff. The Melton siblings concluded that the figure was not "a fair and reasonable price for said land," and declined to confirm the sale. The sale was set aside and annulled by the Superior Court on 30 December 1921. Immediately upon this decision, the Melton heirs received an offer of \$3,600 for the property from Charles Daniel Davis, which they accepted, and the sale was confirmed by the clerk of court on 2 January 1922. The deed was prepared that same day and registered on 3 January 1922 (Rutherford Deeds, 120/244. ³

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Charles Daniel Davis (1870-1936), a merchant in Sunshine, was married to Daisy Tabitha Washburn (1882-1961), a daughter of the Reverend Reuben Washburn (1829-1904) and a younger sister of Edgar Nollie Washburn (1874-1935), who built the imposing Colonial Revival-style house at Washburn (see Washburn Historic District, NR, 2002). The Sunshine store, which Mr. Davis managed, was a joint enterprise with Mr. Washburn, who operated the family's principal mercantile store at Washburn. Mr. Davis was successful as a merchant and through his investments in area real estate. The Melton farm remained essentially unchanged during his ownership. Charles Daniel Davis died in 1936 and bequeathed his real property, including five named farms, to his daughter Merle Holland Davis Umstead (1901-1988), subject to the life estate of his widow (Rutherford Wills, I/587). Mrs. Umstead, the widow of North Carolina governor William Bradley Umstead (1895-1954) and a resident of Durham, died on 14 April 1988 and bequeathed her entire estate, including this property, to her only child Merle Bradley Umstead Richey (b. 1942) (Rutherford Estates, 88E200 and 90-07-288). On 26 December 1997 Mrs. Richey and her husband, Russell E. Richey, conveyed the Melton-Davis farm and other Rutherford County holdings to the family-owned Cherry Mountain Farms, LLC, the current owner of the property (Rutherford Deeds, 703/411-16). For eighty-six years the Melton-Davis farmstead has been a rental property in the ownership of Mr. Davis and his descendants.

During the first thirty years of this period the property remained the residence of members of the Melton family. In the 1920 Rutherford County Census Cannie Melton was the head of a household here that included his two eldest, unmarried children, Tate Mack Otho (1886-1981) and Ossie Lee (1888-1972) Melton, his youngest son Kenneth Jackson Melton (1896-1973), and Kenneth Melton's wife Nannie Mae Susanna Freeman (1898-1949). The couple was married on 6 December 1919 in Rutherford County, and on 26 September 1920 they became the parents of Ruby Frances Melton, the first of their four children who were born in the Melton-Davis House. Cannie Melton left the family home about the time he married Alice Grayson.⁴

During the three decades Kenneth Jackson Melton resided at the Melton-Davis farmstead with his wife and children he continued the same farming operations that had been carried on here by his father. He raised cotton as a cash crop, and had it ginned at Bostic. Corn was raised for family use and to feed the farm's livestock. A vegetable garden supplied the family table. The cultivated fields were located west and northwest of the house and included at least one "new ground" which was probably cleared by Kenneth Melton for cultivation. Ruby Frances (Melton) Philbeck (b. 1920) remembers her father having two mules with which he cultivated both his fields and the family's vegetable garden. Mr. Melton also kept two milch cows that provided milk and cream for churning into butter. The mules and the cows were pastured and brought into stalls in the barn (#2) for feeding and shelter. The swine,

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raised for family consumption, were kept in a pen(s) north of the barn during the Melton occupation. Mrs. Philbeck remembers the chickens were unpenned and ran loose but laid their eggs in nests in the barn. During the time of her memory in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, the barn was the farmstead's principal outbuilding with the granary (#3) used to store corn and small crops of oats for the mules. The third important outbuilding on the Melton-Davis farmstead was the meat-house, where salt/sugar-cured pork was kept. It stood behind, upgrade and west of the house, until it was pulled down in the 1980s. The one pear tree, still thriving on the north side of the house, is the farmstead's only surviving fruit tree.

Kenneth and Nannie Mae Melton lived here, with their family until her death on 4 December 1949. Three of the couple's four children were married by 1947, and after the marriage of his youngest, fourth child in October 1952, Kenneth Jackson Melton married Nora (Harrison) Brackett (1911-1997), the widow of Chancey Brackett, on 26 November 1952. With this second marriage, Mr. Melton left the house that had been his home for almost a half century and relocated to Sunshine where he lived until his death.

Kenneth Melton's thirty-year rental of his childhood home and farmstead was unique in its rental history. Thereafter the property housed a succession of renters, who did less and less farming. In time the fields grew up with volunteer trees and plants, and the outbuildings were essentially unused except for occasional storage. The Melton-Davis House stood virtually unchanged from its construction in the early-twentieth century until 1976-1977 when it was underpinned with a concrete block foundation and a bathroom was installed on the north side of the house. The small concrete-block pump house off the northwest corner of the house dates to this effort.

Architectural Significance

The architectural significance of the Melton-Davis House is associated with its survival as an important intact representative of a group of sizable, simply-finished one-story, turn-of-the-century Queen Anne-style frame houses built in rural Rutherford County as farm seats. When set apart in November 1903, and through the period of significance, the farm was a modest holding of fifty acres, and it was typical of many such small farms whose number greatly increased in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in North Carolina as tenant farming spread and as larger family holdings were divided among siblings. Across North Carolina such farmsteads, of fifty to 150 (or more) acres generally included weatherboarded frame farm residences of one of two types: either the conventional two-story, three-bay, single-pile house with a one-story dining room and kitchen ell, or a one-story house, whose plan could be conventionally symmetrical, as above, or asymmetrical with projecting and

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recessed blocks on either side of the usual center hall. Two-story Queen Anne-style houses generally were built as the seats of larger farms. Both house forms on smaller farms could be embellished, as means allowed, with sawn and turned woodwork on their gables and porches whose size and shape, whether three-bay on the front, wrap-around, or every variant in-between, were another opportunity to enhance the farm dwelling. The gable ends of these houses were sometimes finished with wood shingles of varying decorative cuts and applications, and louvered ventilators for attics, whose function could also be raised to the ornamental. The Queen Anne-style Melton-Davis House reflects the use of such ornamental woodwork to give presence to a relatively modest farm dwelling.

The Queen Anne style, introduced into English architecture by Richard Norman Shaw in the 1870s and adopted by a small group of like-minded architects, quickly crossed the Atlantic Ocean and was embraced in the United States in the 1880s as a favored style. Its picturesque massing, varied roof lines and fenestration, highly decorated gable fronts, towers, dormers, and porches, mixed materials, and a wealth of sawn and turned ornament, appealed to a new generation of house builders in the late-nineteenth century. In North Carolina the style appeared first in the state's major cities. By about 1890 the style had spread throughout the state. Lavish Queen Anne-style houses were built for the state's industrial and social elite, and soon, by the turn of the century, virtually every strata of land-owning society could erect a fashionable house with picturesque appeal. While the size, finish, and costliness of Queen Anne-style houses varied widely in North Carolina, the signal features of the style, asymmetry, varied materials and rooflines, and decorated gables and porches, linked the most elaborate examples of the style, such as the Charles T. Holt House at Haw River, completed in 1897 to the design of Knoxville architect George F. Barber, with the simple expressions of the style, including the Melton-Davis House, that were erected throughout the state. In Rutherford County the Queen Anne style had its heyday in the 1890s and 1900s. In Rutherfordton, the county seat, imposing two-story Queen Anne houses were built for Garland Dickerson Carrier (1847-1904) and Marcus Overton Dickerson II (1860-1935), among others, while house-builder Guilford Nanney (1871-1952) erected the most prepossessing of the surviving rural examples of the style about 1907 for John Drury Logan (1872-1946) (Merkel, 38, 105, 107). In Rutherford County, as in many other counties in North Carolina, the predominant Queen Anne-style house was the one-story form, with a smaller, usually asymmetrical floor plan, that was finished with offset gable-front blocks, decoratively-sheathed gable ends, and turned-post porches with railings, combined to produce a picturesque appearance. The Melton-Davis House is a remarkably intact, well-preserved example of this major group.

Kimberly I. Merkel's state-supported survey of historic buildings in Rutherford County, begun in spring 1979 and published in 1983, included a large number of these later-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century houses and they appeared in the publication. Her inclusion of these buildings

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reflected two important facts of Rutherford County architectural history; the very low survival rate of eighteenth-, early-nineteenth century and antebellum buildings, and the physical prominence of later-nineteenth and early-twentieth century buildings in the county. The loss of many of the county's earliest buildings, erected from its organization in 1779 and through the mid-nineteenth century, is hard to credit.

The survival of so many buildings from the later-nineteenth and early-twentieth century can be easily explained. Their number and quality derive largely from the tremendous industrial and commercial boom that occurred in the county following the arrival in 1887 in Rutherfordton of the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford Railroad. It facilitated the development and expansion of large and important textile mills and associated villages, principally in Forest City and Spindale, and in Cliffside, Caroleen, Henrietta, and in Rutherfordton, the county seat. While the profits of the textile industry supported the immediate upbuilding of the fabric of Forest City and the other communities, the economic expansion spread throughout the county and adjoining Cleveland County. For farmers such as Cannie Melton and his son Kenneth Jackson Melton, cotton was an important cash crop, and it found a ready market among buyers for the nearby mills. Although there were apparently few of the grand "cotton boom houses" erected in Rutherford County, as in other cotton-growing areas of the state, the profits of the crop were seen in the embellishment of relative modest houses such as the Melton-Davis House and others in Logan Store and Golden Valley townships, and elsewhere in Rutherford County.

Within Logan Store Township, where the Melton-Davis House stands, and adjoining Golden Valley Township, comprising the northeast corner of Rutherford County, few of these turn-of-the-century one-story Queen Anne-style farmhouses survive. Ms. Merkel recorded a total of three in her survey: the Buss-Blankenship House and the Waters-Fortune House in Golden Valley Township, and the Beam-Thompson House in Logan Store Township (Merkel, 66, 68, and 91). Of the three only the Beam-Thompson House survives. The Waters-Fortune House was destroyed by fire on 26 December 1990, and the Buss-Blankenship House was torn down in the late 1990s.

A reconnaissance of the two townships conducted for this nomination, indicate some half-dozen others, however, within the group the Melton-Davis House is arguably the least-altered and best preserved. This status derives in part from the fact that it was a rental house on which relatively little money was expended between 1922 and 2008 for changes, other than underpinning and the addition of a bathroom. The two houses of this group of one-story Queen Anne-style houses that have remained owner-occupied, the ca. 1892 Beam-Thompson House (1120 Ed Thompson Road) and the ca. 1894-95 Crittenden Clifford Hollifield House (243 DePriest Road) have seen certain improvements through the generations. Both of those houses were built on farms of larger acreage. Mr. Hollifield owned some

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140 acres, and the Beam-Thompson farm comprised over 500 acres. Three of the houses, the Elijah Jones House (500 block of Jones Town Road) of ca. 1905, the Yelton-Hollifield House (310 DePriest Road) of ca. 1910, and an undocumented Brandle family house (1563 Luckadoo Mountain Road) are long unoccupied and deteriorated.

While all of these houses date to the decades around the turn of the twentieth century, a comparative evaluation is difficult because the level of accurate documentation is very uneven, the dates of virtually all of the houses are somewhat uncertain, the acreages on which they were built as farm residences varies or is unknown, and the plans and appearance of the houses are different. Some may also reflect the substantial remodeling of an earlier house. The Melton-Davis House, the Hollifield House, the Beam-Thompson House, and the Elijah Jones House all have projecting gable-front blocks with adjoining porches carried across the pendant recessed block of the house. Differences arise with their porch configurations; the Hollifield and Jones houses have expansive L-shaped wrap-around porches that also carry along each dwelling's side elevation.

Of this group only the Melton-Davis and Hollifield houses have pedimented, ornamentally sheathed gable ends above the weatherboard sided elevations. The Melton-Davis House has diagonally set boards that echo the pitch of the front gable roof and complement the pointed top of the louvered ventilator in each of the two gable fronts, while the two gable ends on the façade of the Hollifield House are sheathed with shaped-bottom shingles and fitted with arch-headed attic louvers. The porch of the Melton-Davis House is further enriched with bracketed turned posts and a baluster railing, while the Hollifield House porch is now simply supported by turned posts. The Hollifield House has been underpinned with brick, in recent years, while the Melton-Davis and Elijah Jones houses have added concrete block foundations.

The Beam-Thompson House, said to have been built to replace a house lost to fire in 1892, is nearly contemporary with the Hollifield House; however, its plan features the same offset two-room blocks on either side of a center hall, as seen at the Melton-Davis House, and with the same part-façade bracketed turned-post porch. It alone of all of these houses is fitted with highly decorative spandrels on its three most-visible gable ends; however, only one of the gables is finished with a (diamond-shaped) louver. The ca. 1905 Elijah Jones House has offset two-room blocks flanking its hall, but is plainly finished with weatherboard elevations, square posts on its L-shaped wrap-around porch, and louvered rectangular ventilators. The Yelton-Hollifield House, surely the last built of this group departs from the usual Queen Anne-style asymmetry and has a symmetrical façade with paired gables holding arch-headed louvered vents with scrolling edge louver-boards. The near-full-façade porch, later remodeled with Bungalow-style brick piers, is enhanced with an ornamental gable symmetrically positioned

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between the two main gables and above the house's center entrance.

While similarities exist among several of these houses, which stand in some proximity to each other, the identity of their builders remains to be confirmed. These men are perhaps destined to remain anonymous, unlike Guilford Nanney (1871-1952) who built the larger, richly-ornamented Queen Anne-style William Ledbetter, John Drury Logan, and C. E. Williams houses in Rutherford's Chimney Rock Township (Merkel, 37-38, 42). A clue to the possible builders of the Melton-Davis House is the attribution of the masons for its chimneys. Ruby Frances (Melton) Philbeck (b. 1920), a granddaughter of Cannie Melton who was born in the house, has a firm recall that Craven and Marvin Baber laid up the two interior brick chimneys of Mr. Melton's house. Although born long after the house was built, ca. 1904, this knowledge derives in part from the fact that the Babers remodeled the Joseph Marcus Philbeck (1865-1921) House about 1923 for his widow. Miss Melton lived in that house with Mrs. Philbeck for five years after her marriage to Miles Standish Philbeck Sr., in 1940. The possibility also exists that the Babers simply built the chimneys and the house was built by others.⁵ Crittenden Clifford Hollifield, a neighbor of the Meltons on DePriest Road who had a sawmill and is said by his grandson, James Hollifield, to have built houses in association with his brothers Bob and Tom Hollifield, has also been suggested as a possible builder of the house but there is no firm attribution.

Agricultural outbuildings in Rutherford County have enjoyed little documentation and study, and a relatively small number of those that stood in the opening years of the twentieth century survive. Their size and number on any farmstead usually reflect the acreage of a farm and the diversity of its crops and livestock. The double-pen/center passage barn (#2) standing north of the Melton-Davis House is a universal type of the early twentieth century and was built throughout the Piedmont and Western North Carolina. Here the main level pens contain stalls that were used to pen mules and milch cows. Doors open into the passage which could be used for work in inclement weather, while the loft level(s) above were used to store hay, straw, and fodder. The sheds on its long sides are also common features of the gable-front barn. A barn of larger size but similar form stands on the 500-plus acre Beam-Thompson Farm while a third center-passage/double-pen barn with but one shed stands with the Hollifield House under an asymmetrical roof.

Granaries varied in size and appearance more often than barns and sometimes incorporated ventilated cribs for ears of corn as well as sheathed bins for small grains. The granary (#3) here is smaller than its framed counterpart at the Hollifield House. The granary/crib on the Beam-Thompson House is a large well-preserved log building of sophisticated form, which appears to date to the mid-nineteenth century and precedes the house.

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The third standard building on a small farmstead like the Melton-Davis farm would be a meat-house for the storage of salt/sugar-cured pork or a smokehouse. The meat-house that stood west of and behind the Melton-Davis House deteriorated through the mid-twentieth century and was taken down by a renter in the 1980s and some of the lumber reused for a crudely-built shed (#4). Few meat-houses or smokehouses are known to stand in Rutherford County, largely because the home butchering of pork generally ceased by the mid-twentieth century. Thereafter many of these small, mostly frame buildings were used for household or yard storage, allowed to deteriorate, and subsequently pulled down.

Endnotes

1. This author gratefully acknowledges the generous assistance and cooperation of Miles Standish Philbeck Jr. (b. 1947) who provided valuable genealogical information on the Grayson and Melton families and others who figure in the history of the Melton-Davis House. Mr. Philbeck, a great-grandson of Opecannough Melton, is the son of Mr. Philbeck Sr. (1916-1983) and his wife Ruby Frances Melton (b. 1920), the eldest daughter of Kenneth Jackson Melton (1896-1973). Mrs. Philbeck was born in the Melton-Davis House and lived there with her parents until her marriage in 1940, when she relocated to the home of her husband's family at 771 Andrews Mill Road, Bostic. As noted in the bibliography Mr. Philbeck and his mother also provided much information during a series of telephone interviews. Mrs. Lucy Packard Fortune Ellis (b. 1925), a co-owner of the Melton-Fortune Farmstead, Rutherford County, when it was listed in the National Register in 1985, also supplied information on the Melton family and other subjects. Opecannough Melton was a great-grandson of Daniel Melton Sr. (1767-1814/1848), whose sister Sarah Melton (1749-1836) and her husband John Melton (1749-1813) established that historic farmstead. Cannie Melton's grandfather, Elijah Melton, is buried in the family cemetery on that property.
2. In seeming contradiction to the family tradition, the Melton-Davis House does not appear at this location on "Lynch's Complete Map of Rutherford County, N.C." prepared in 1905 by Lee W. Lynch, surveyor and engineer then resident in Forest City. On the 1905 map "C. Melton" appears next to the square designating a house northeast of George Grayson's residence rather than southeast where this house stands. At this distance it appears likely that the field work for Mr. Lynch's map occurred during the year preceding its creation, and this house was built during that period.
3. Subsequently, the heirs of George Washington Grayson filed suit for the settlement of his estate and on 20 October 1923 his fifty-acre farm was offered at auction on site. Charles Daniel Davis bid the property in at \$2,400 and received title to it in November 1923 (Rutherford Deeds, 123/391).

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4. According to family tradition the couple then relocated to Spindale, North Carolina, and occupied a rented dwelling in the mill village. Cannie Melton's two oldest children, who had helped him on the farm, also relocated about this time to Spindale. In the 1930 Rutherford County Census Cannie and Alice Melton, together with her two youngest daughters, her mother Lucinda (Fisher) Gurley, and a boarder are resident in a rental house while Mr. Melton's two oldest children are boarding with their aunt, Alberta (Grayson) Yelton (1877-1966), the widow of Spindale mayor Jasper Young Yelton (1872-1929). The fate of these members of the Melton family is a metaphor for that of many North Carolina families who gave up small farms in the interwar years and moved to textile communities.

5. Marvin Spurgeon Baber (1881-1958) and Braxton Crave Baber (1886-1965) were the sons of William Oliver Baber (1848-1897) and Nancy Freeman (1846-1931); their childhood home is published in Merkel's survey (Merkel, 91). In 1907 and 1912, respectively, they married sisters in the Biggerstaff family which had owned the land on which this house stands. The Babers are also identified as the builders of the parsonage for the Bostic Methodist charge in 1922. That two-story brick house stands at 149 Old Sunshine Road in Bostic. It was placed on the North Carolina Study List in 2006.

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Rutherford County Wills and Estates Records, and Special Proceedings, Office of the Clerk of
Superior Court, Rutherford County Court House, Rutherfordton, NC.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Melton-Davis House acreage is drawn on the enclosed 1 inch = 200 feet scale map of the property.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated acreage, carrying on the northeast with the tract's frontage on DePriest Road, is drawn to include the site and an appropriate setting of the Melton-Davis House and its agricultural outbuildings. It is a tract of about 2.14 acres and a portion of the fifty-acre Melton farm historically associated with the house and outbuildings. The remaining acreage has been excluded due to the change in its agricultural use to tree farming.

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11. PHOTOGRAPHS

The following information applies to the photographs included in this nomination.

1. Melton-Davis House
2. Bostic vicinity, Rutherford County
3. Davyd Foard Hood
4. 18 June 2007
5. North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh
- 6-7:
 - A. Overall view, looking southwest
 - B. Front gable, looking west
 - C. Rear elevation, looking northeast
 - D. Northwest bedroom, showing mantel, doors, and related finish, looking north
 - E. Southwest bedroom, showing mantel, closet doors, and flush sheathing, looking north
 - F. Outbuildings (#s 2-5), looking northwest
 - G. Barn (#2) and Granary (#3), looking northwest
 - H. Barn, center passage, looking west onto vented sheathing of stall on west side of passage