LOCATING THE ENSLAVED BURIAL GROUND AT RURAL HILL PLANTATION,
HUNTERSVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

by

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in
Anthropology

Charlotte

2021

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ABSTRACT

MARTHA GIMSON. Locating the Enslaved Burial Ground at Rural Hill Plantation, Huntersville, North Carolina. (Under the direction of DR. SARA JUENGST)

This project addresses the structural violence inherent in the lack of preservation of the unmarked enslaved burial ground at the Rural Hill Plantation in Huntersville, North Carolina. When burial grounds of the enslaved are unmarked the legacy of those interred is forgotten with time. This can be addressed by carrying out the archaeological work necessary to locate and mark these sites. The work in the project utilized archaeological and geophysical techniques to locate the unmarked enslaved burial ground at Rural Hill Plantation in Huntersville, North Carolina. Stemming from the Updated Master Plan of the Historic Rural Hill Board of Directors and its desire to find and mark the enslaved burial ground, this research focused on using aerial photography and topographic maps to remotely isolate areas of interest that meet certain criteria of historic unmarked burial areas on the Rural Hill property. Once a specific area that met the physical criteria was isolated, several site visits and investigative techniques were employed to assess the physical characteristics present. After a final site visit with a geophysical geologist and metal detectorist, it was determined that the isolated site was, in fact, not a burial site. Personal communication with a neighboring landowner has provided the project team with additional information that has led to a new direction for future research for the Rural Hill enslaved burial ground.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to a few special people:

To my husband, Russell, who has always believed in me and my passion for archaeology. Thank you for your love, support, patience, and many meals delivered when I was in Zoom classes. Thank you just seems inadequate for all the balls you had to juggle as I studied, wrote papers, and attended classes.

To my kids, who have seen me at my lowest and my highest and love me all the same. If your mom can do this at age 45, you can achieve your goals, too.

To my mother and my aunt, who has been with me since day one, and have endured my tears and triumphs. Thank you for always being interested in my research and reading everything I write. It all started with my seventh-grade science project about mending broken bones. Your love and input have always been invaluable.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Rural Hill is a historic property (site 31MK768) located in the vicinity of Huntersville, in northwestern Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. The Catawba River runs two miles to the west of the property and is bounded by the McDowell Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant on the east (Figure 1 and 2). It is owned by Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation and is managed by Historic Rural Hill, Inc. in a formalized land lease and management agreement, Parcel ID 01323103 (Rural Hill Master Plan Update 2011). Rural Hill is now used for various entertainment and cultural activities throughout the year including concerts, races, corn maize, festivals, weddings, and other gatherings.

The property contains several extant historical structures including the ruins of the mansion house, smokehouse, ash house, crib, well house, granary, three schoolhouses, kitchen house turned into a modern residence, family cemetery, and log cabin reproduction of the 1760's original, Rural Retreat. There are also modern structures that have been added in recent years including a barn and a cultural center. This landscape is considered a rarity in Mecklenburg County because the views are assumed to be like what existed during the historic occupation period. These views are preserved because the City of Charlotte purchased 117 acres to the south, 194 acres to the north, 111 acres to the east, and 58 acres to the west. The majority of these make up the Cowan's Ford Nature Preserve, while the remainder is owned by the City of Charlotte Water for the eminent domain (Charlotte Water n.d.). While several nearby properties are of historical significance and contemporary to Rural Hill (Table 1), the majority do not boast the landscape and historical context that has been retained at Rural Hill due to commercial and residential development on the former agricultural landscape (Morrill 1987).

Table 1 Hopewell Area Plantations (Davidson 1969)

Hopewell Farm/Plantations	Owner	Date Established
Alexandriana	John McKnitt Alexander	~1760's
Rural Hill	Major John Davidson	1788
Latta Place	James Latta	1795
Rosedale (Alexander Site)	Joseph McKnitt Alexander	1797
Holly Bend	Robert Davidson	1800
Oak Lawn	Benjamin Wilson Davidson	1818
Cedar Grove (Wilson Site)	Robin Wilson	1819
Cedar Grove (Torrance Site)	James Gilbraith Torrance	1831
Edgewood Farm	Robert Davidson Alexander	1855
Ingleside	William Jack Wilson	1860

Historic preservation and educational programming remain top priorities for the Historic Rural Hill, Inc, and the Board of Directors. In the 2012 Master Plan Update (2012:4), the Board listed several historic preservation efforts that they prioritized including "archaeological digs to locate former slave cemetery, old house(s) and other structures". The author of this report volunteered to conduct the archaeological work to locate the enslaved burial ground on behalf of the property and Board to satisfy the partial requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. The goals of the project were to 1) use archaeological and remote sensing methods to ascertain the location of the enslaved burial ground and, 2) provide the historical and genealogical context of the enslaved individuals who lived and died at Rural Hill.

Figure 1 USGS Lake Norman South Quadrangle (USGS)

Figure 2 Aerial photograph outlining Rural Hill Parcel (Polaris 3G)

Chapter Two: Historical Overview

2.1 The Catawba Nation

 The Piedmont region of the Carolinas, the area between the Appalachian Mountains and coastal plain, was first settled around 6,000 years BP by Native American peoples self-named as yeh is-WAH h'reh, which translates to People of the River. They later became known as the Catawba Nation, named by Europeans in the 18th century who began settling in the region of the Catawba River valley (Merrell 1989). Ferguson (1989) suggests the name Catawba comes from the village named Kadapau, noted by English explorer John Lawson during his travels through the Catawba River region in 1701. This First Nations tribe will be referred to as Catawba in this document henceforth for clarity.

 When the Catawba settled in the Carolinas their population numbered approximately 15,000-20,000. After contact with Europeans and their diseases, first contact in 1540, the Catawba population dropped significantly. A smallpox outbreak in 1759 wiped out all but approximately 1,000 Catawba. Despite this epidemiological assault caused by the Europeans, the Catawba maintained a friendship with them by providing protection from other tribes in exchange for survival supplies (Merrell 1989).

 As Europeans continued to settle more Native American land and subsequently displace the tribes, many surviving members of these tribes merged with the Catawba. These include the Congaree, Santee, Saponi, Cussoe, Yamasees, Enos, Chowan, and Nachee (Anthony 2002). In 1763, the English King George III granted the Catawba 144,000 acres of land, which the tribe eventually leased out to colonists. Rising tensions surrounding the colonists' desire to own the land, re the concept of Manifest Destiny, led South Carolina to negotiate with the tribe during the Removal period in 1830. South Carolina did not contribute monetarily to the Federal effort to

have the Catawba forcefully removed because the Catawba population was low, and the government anticipated extinction (Merrell 1989). The negation led to the Treaty at Nations Ford, where the Catawba relinquished their 144,000 acres to South Carolina in exchange for a less populated tract of land and a sum of money (Merrell 1989). Today, this land is in Fort Mill, South Carolina, just south of the border with North Carolina, with over 3,000 tribal citizens (Catawba Indian Nation n.d.).

2.2 European Settlers

The European settlers coming into North America during the colonial period filtered through two regions, primarily: in the north, Pennsylvania, and in the south, Charleston, South Carolina. European immigrants coming from the north traveled along the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road leading from Pennsylvania, through Virginia, into North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia colonies (figure 3). These settlers were seeking agricultural opportunities in burgeoning areas that also had great potential for religious and political control (Hartley 2002). This migration south began in the 1720s with Virginia settlements in the Chesapeake region, the Shenandoah Valley region in the 1730s and 1740s, and into North Carolina by the 1750s. There were pioneer yeoman farmers in Georgia by the mid-1750s (Mitchell 1998).
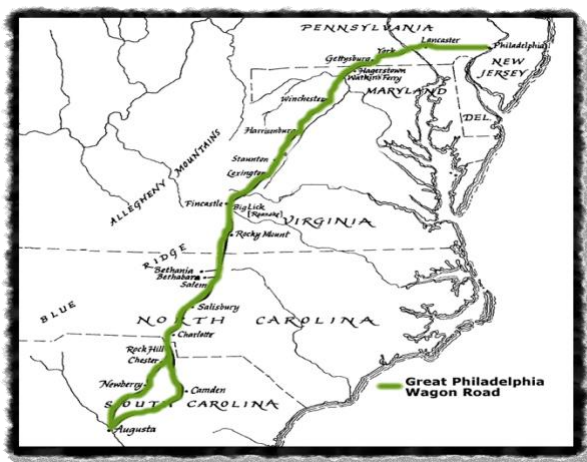
Figure 3 The Great Philadelphia Wagon Road (https://movingnorthcarolina.net/the-great-wagon-road/)

These settlements were considered as frontier land or backcountry at the time because they were considerable distances from well-established cities like Charleston, Philadelphia, and Boston (Beck 1998). During the late 1700s, most settlers carried out subsistence farming, where they were producing enough food for their families and perhaps some to sell (Beck 1998). Settlers cleared land, built log cabin homes, and began cultivating the land to raise livestock and subsistence crops. Settlement areas developed into more urban centers with the advent of industrialization with the cotton gin and iron furnaces. In the Piedmont of North Carolina, cotton became a lucrative crop. The iron industry spawned from the discovery of iron ore along the Catawba River added to the wealth of the region (Williams and Williams 2020).

Smaller settlement areas created communities by centering around churches or parishes as opposed to villages (Davidson 1969). This was for safety against potential perceived hostility from local Native American tribes, but also because the majority of those arriving at the south from Pennsylvania were Scots-Irish, whose religion was Protestant and most often, Presbyterian (Plumer 2014). The Mecklenburg County area was primarily settled by Scots-Irish immigrants who were Presbyterian.

The Reverend Alexander Craighead arrived in the present-day Mecklenburg County area in 1758. Craighead was a Presbyterian minister who was considered radical at the time, convincing parishioners that by acknowledging and owning sin, believers could take control of their religious education without having to rely on church authorities for guidance for salvation (Plumer 2014). Craighead exerted much influence over the parishioners of the county and used this influence to push his other agenda: independence from England (Plumer 2014).

During the early to mid-1700s, the area of present-day Mecklenburg County was called Anson County. It was not until 1762 that Mecklenburg splintered off from Anson to become its

own county (Plumer 2014). Craighead traveled to preach to outlying congregations that he formed into churches across the area: Rocky River, Sugaw Creek, Steele Creek, Hopewell, Poplar Tent, Centre, and Providence. These became the religious and political centers of the region, and as the Revolution approached, politics and religion became more tightly interwoven (Plumer 2014).

Chapter Three: The Davidson Family of Rural Hill

The story of the Davidson family of Rural Hill began with the birth of John Davidson in 1735 to Scottish immigrant parents in the colony of Pennsylvania. When John was 16, he moved to Anson County, North Carolina with his sister and widowed mother. John trained as a blacksmith and began buying small tracts of land in the North Carolina Piedmont. In 1761, he married Violet Wilson and purchased 250 acres of land from his father-in-law. Over the years, he purchased larger tracts of land, eventually amassing approximately 1,000 acres. In 1765, the Davidsons built a two-room cabin and called it Rural Retreat. In the period leading up to and during the Revolutionary War, John Davidson was a Patriot and was commissioned as a Major in the North Carolina Militia. As an elder at Hopewell Church, he was part of a united group of Patriots feeding off the zealous preaching of Alexander Craighead regarding independence from the Crown (Plumer 2014). In 1775, John Davidson joined 26 other men in signing the Mecklenburg Resolves, better known as the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.

Following the Revolutionary War and riding on the rising economic tide that followed, John Davidson built his brick mansion in 1788 and named it Rural Hill. Due to his large, enslaved population, Davidson's farming endeavors flourished with the cultivation of cotton, but his real wealth came from the iron ore industry. In 1792, Davidson began a business venture with two of his sons-in-law called Brevard, Davidson & Co. Together, they built the Vesuvius and Mt. Tirzah Furnaces in Lincoln County on Leapers Creek, now known as Dutchmans Creek, a tributary of the Catawba River, taking advantage of the iron ore found there (Williams and Williams 2020). By 1804, he had sold his interests in the business to focus on farming. According to Morrill (1987), in 1810, Davidson had approximately 30 enslaved people at Rural Hill. Thirteen years later in 1823, John Davidson retired, sold most of his possessions, and

moved to Beaver Dam Plantation to live with his daughter and son-in-law. Rural Hill was taken over by John's son, John Jr, called Jacky, and Jacky's son Adam Brevard Davidson, who went by A.B. or Brevard. They were 44 and 21 years old, respectively (Williams and Williams 2020).

The slave schedule from the 1830 Census (William and Williams 2020) indicates that the Davidsons owned 25 enslaved people. The advent and patenting of the cotton gin at the end of the 18th century drastically changed farming in the south. Farmers were able to process their cotton prior to transport and sale, whereas prior to the gin, cotton had to be transported to distant centers for processing prior to sale. This convenience meant that farmers could produce much greater quantities of cotton, increasing profits in a shorter period. This also meant they needed additional hands for cultivation and processing. This was accomplished through enslavement (Deck 1998). When A.B. Davidson married Mary Laura Springs in 1836, he received Dickson Plantation in Lincoln County as well as 18 enslaved men, women, and children as part of the dowry (Davidson Family Papers, UNC-Chapel Hill) (Table 2).

Table 2 Enslaved individuals from Springs Dowry 1836

Year	Month	Individual	Event
1836	December	Burow	Dickson
1836	December	Ann	Dickson, plus 7 children
1836	December	Tom	Dickson
1836	December	Julia	plus 3 children
1836	December	Peggy	plus 2 children

In 1838, Jacky Davidson retired, leaving Rural Hill in the hands of A.B. Davidson. A.B. added a large grist mill, sawmill, and cotton gin to the plantation increasing the revenue and output (Williams and Williams 2020). The 1840 census listed the Davidsons as owning 30

enslaved individuals, while the 1850 census listed 26 enslaved people owned by A.B. Davidson and 22 owned by Jacky Davidson (Williams and Williams 2020). There were approximately 19 births over the next decade (Table 3). Balanced with approximately 5 deaths, the 1860 census listed 36 slaves as part of the Davidson estate (Williams and Williams 2020). Table 3 lists the births that were noted in A.B. Davidson's journal. From the Davidson Family Papers, A.B. indicates that there were five deaths from 1851 to 1856 (Table 4), however, there may have been more that were not recorded in A.B. Davidson's journal. A.B. Davidson also acquired seven enslaved individuals from slave sales and auctions (Table 5) (Davidson Family Papers, UNC Charlotte).

Table 3 Recorded enslaved births 1837-1864

Year	Month	Individual	Event	Child's Name
1837	February	Julia	4th son born	Jack
1839	March	Julia	5th son born	Unknown
1839	April	Fanny	1st child at Dickson born, daughter	Unknown
1840	August	Fanny	2nd child, daughter born	Unknown
1841	April	Julia	6th son born	Jerry
1841	April	Polly	child born, sex unknown	Unknown
1842	March	Fanny	3rd child born, daughter	Unknown
1842	June	Sina	1st child born, daughter	Hannah
1843	September	Sina	2nd child born, son	Unknown
1844	September	Julia	7th son born	Unknown
1844	October	Sina	2nd son/3rd child born	Harrison
1844	October	Body	1st child born, son	Unknown
1846	May	Sina	4th child born, 3rd son	Dave
1847	January	Julia	1st daughter born, 8th child	Unknown
1847	May	Hannah	1st child born, son	Unknown
1847	May	Fanny	6th child born, 3rd son	Unknown
1847	October	Sina	5th child born, 4th son	Unknown

1847	November	Body	2nd child born, daughter	Unknown
1848	March	Julia	2nd daughter born, 9th child	Unknown
1848	October	Sina	6th child born, 5th son	Unknown
1849	unknown	Evelina	4th daughter born, 4th child	Unknown
1849	June	Hannah	2nd child born, 1st daughter	Unknown
1849	June	Mary	2 daughters born; 9 children total	Unknown
1852	January	Sina	8th child born, daughter	Dilce
1852	April	Hannah	3rd child, 2nd son	Henry
1852	May	Nancy	1st child, son	Rufus
1852	May	Evelina	7th child, 6th daughter	Unknown
1853	April	Sina	9th child, 7th son	Andy
1853	November	Body	4th child born, 2nd boy	Unknown
1854	May	Hannah	4th child born, 3 sons	Unknown
1854	September	Nancy	3rd child born, 2nd son	Unknown
1856	March	Sina	10th child, 8th son	Steven
1856	March	Evelina	twins, 8th, and 9th child	Tom and Lizzie
1856	March	Nancy	4th child, daughter	Lidia
1856	June	Polly	son born	Green
1857	February	Hannah	5th child born, daughter	Ann
1864	unknown	Nancy	son born	William
1864	unknown	Marisa?	son born	Unknown
1864	unknown	Hannah	unknown	Unknown

Table 4 Recorded enslaved deaths 1851-1856

Year	Month	Individual	Event	Age	Cause
1851	November	Peter	death	unknown	unknown
1853	May	Charles	death	unknown	unknown
1856	August	Nancy	death	26 years	Typhoid fever
1856	October	Lidia -daughter of Nancy	death	6 months	bowels
1856	October	Steven	death	6 months	bowels

Table 5 Recorded purchases of enslaved individuals by A.B. Davidson

Year	Month	Individual	Event	Notes
1839	October	Evelina	Purchased, likely lived at Dickson Plantation	Aged 15
1842	January	Phill	purchased at Charlotte courthouse sale from Major Smith	aged 16-17
1842	January	Hampton	purchased from William Davidson's trust sale	aged 13
1847		Dick	purchased from A.F. Derr, might have lived at Dickson Plantation	aged 27
1854		Sarah	purchased from R.B. Harry, cook, missing 1 finger	aged 30
1856		Bill	purchased from Leroy Springs	unknown
1856		Dick/Mick/Mack	purchased from Miss Jane Barry	unknown

After the end of the Civil War and Emancipation, Rural Hill could not sustain the same economic success without their enslaved workers. Jacky Davidson died in 1870 at the age of 90, and A.B. handed the farm to his sons and moved to his property in Charlotte proper. Sons John Springs Davidson and E.L. Baxter Davidson split the property into smaller parcels and sold them to individuals (Williams and Williams 2020). The mansion burned in 1886, leaving only the separate kitchen house (Davidson 1969). The expanded original log cabin, Rural Retreat, burned in 1898 (Davidson 1969). The kitchen house was renovated and modified into a private residence in the early 20th century and remained as a home in the Davidson family until they sold the property to the City of Charlotte in 1992.

Chapter Four: Enslaved African-Americans at Rural Hill and Dickson Plantations

In 1850, cotton had a major impact on the U.S. economy, and its production required an adequate workforce. The most economical way to increase revenue was through slave labor, versus hired labor. The population of enslaved African Americans in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina compared to the white population was 5,400 enslaved to 8,200 white or 39% enslaved. Of the approximate 1,640 households in Mecklenburg, one-third, or 659 households, were slave owners. Most slave owners owned very few enslaved individuals, while only three enslavers owned more than 50: 317 owned five or fewer, 252 owned between six-15 people, 76 owned 16-31 people, 11 owned 31-50 people, and three owned 50 or more enslaved persons. These three were Robin Davidson, brother of Jacky Davidson, who owned 109 enslaved people, Margaret Torrance who owned 65 enslaved people, and her Torrance Plantation, Cedar Grove, where 115 enslaved people were kept. Jacky and A.B. Davidson owned 48 enslaved people between them at Rural Hill. There is not a slave schedule, which enumerated populations of enslaved individuals listed by enslaver, listed for Gaston County to verify the number of enslaved at Dickson Plantation, however, assuming there were more than two, the Davidson holdings would be in the top 0.6% of enslavers of Mecklenburg County. In comparison to neighboring counties, Mecklenburg County's 1860 enslaved population was like those near the coast where plantations cultivating rice required even larger enslaved populations. Gaston, Lincoln, Union, Iredell, Cabarrus, and Union Counties had enslaved populations below 29%, whereas Mecklenburg had 38% as enslaved of the total population (Williams 2017).

There are no records regarding the treatment of the enslaved individuals at Dickson or Rural Hill. The lack of evidence led Williams and Williams (2020) to assert that the lack of mention of punishment or displeasure with work products listed in A.B. Davidson's journal may

indicate that extreme corporal punishment was not exercised at Rural Hill. Dickson Plantation was run by an overseer, unlike Rural Hill which was directly administered by Davidsons (Williams and Williams 2020). There are no fugitive records in the area broadsheets, at least none remaining. Also, there are no records of either Jacky or A.B. Davidson having sold any enslaved individuals, only bequeathed to relatives in wills. It appears that family units were kept intact, except for those who went back and forth between Rural Hill and Dickson Plantation (Williams 2017).

One item of note is in the 1850 slave census (Figure 4). Both Jacky and A.B. Davidson list owning a "Mulatto" enslaved person, of unknown sex. A.B. lists a 20-year-old "Mulatto", and Jacky lists a 24-year-old. There is no archival record of if these individuals were brought to Rural Hill via purchase or were born there. Mulatto was a term used to describe individuals who were biracial or had light skin tones. With very few exceptions, biracial children were the product of rape (White 1999).

Figure 4 1850 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedule

A.B. Davidson's journal records the seasonal activities of the enslaved workers at Rural Hill in some detail. The enslaved workers worked year-round with the different cultivation seasons. In the early 1800s, Rural Hill primarily grew corn, cotton, wheat, as well as subsistence crops like oats and potatoes. Towards the mid-1800s, more emphasis was placed on corn and cotton production. The 1856 journal indicates which of the enslaved farmworkers were picking cotton and how much they were able to harvest per day in pounds.

Daily work listed in the journal consisted of preparing fields for planting by hoeing and plowing, building fences, ginning cotton, running the grist mill, daily hoeing, and harrowing the fields until the plants were well established. After this point, the fields were regularly weeded until harvest. After the harvest season, the tasks turned to hog killing, butchering, curing, and lard rendering, hay threshing and baling, splitting and hauling wood, raking and hauling manure, and fence building and repair. The only downtimes listed in the journal were on inclement days. Those days listed inside tasks like spinning, weaving, tending to the stock animals, making corn

collars, ginning, and milling. The 1853 enslaved inventory (figure 6) created by A.B. Davidson shows individuals listed with their age and occupation. The updated list created in 1856 (figure 7) shows a discrepancy in age progression between the lists. Some of the names are different, as well.

Table 6 1853 Enslaved Inventory (Davidson Family Papers - UNC-Charlotte)

1853 Inventory						
Name	**Age**	**Occupation**		**Name**	**Age**	**Occupation**
Thomas	50	Miller		Ann	61	House Hand
Adam	42	Wagoner		Julia	49	Weaver
Logan	30	Farm hand		Sina	33	House Hand
Alexander	34	Blacksmith		Sarah	30	Cook
Phill	27	Wagoner		Hannah	29	Farm hand
Hampton	24	Blacksmith		Nancy	26	Farm hand
Umphrey	24	Farm hand		Celia	22	Farm hand
George	24	Farm hand		Poly	17	Farm hand
Alfred	20	Farm hand		Jincy	15	House Hand
Harrison	11	Farm hand		Susan	12	House Hand
Moses	8	Farm hand		Amy	6	Child
David	9	Farm hand		Dilsie	3	Child
John	6	Farm hand				
Bill	7	Farm hand				
Rufus	3	Farm hand				
Jim	1	Farm hand				

Table 7 1856 Enslaved Inventory (Davidson Family Papers- UNC-Charlotte)

1856 Inventory				
Name	**Age**		**Name**	**Age**
Alexander	42		Sina	41
Phill	35		Sarah	40

Hampton	34		Hannah	35
Umphrey	34		Celia	30
Alfred	28		Susan	20
Jery	22		Giny	17
Joe	19		Amy	14
Harrison	19		Dilsie	11
Mose	16		Iby	-
Dave	17		Adam	-
Jack	14		Adaline	-
Bill	15		Eveline	-
Rufus	11		Liza	8
Jim	9		Bob	6
Jef	-		Moby	4
Monrow	-		Alice	2
Dick	44			
Green	8			
Tom	8			

Aside from the tasks, births, deaths, and inventory of the enslaved men, women, and children at Rural Hill, very little else is known about their lives. A.B. Davidson mentions raising an enslaved dwelling in 1840, measuring 15 x 30 feet, but there is no mention of where it was built. There are no surviving maps of the farm to indicate where dependencies were located. Figure 5 shows the 1917 map of the Davidson property after it was divided and sold (Davidson Family Papers, UNC-Charlotte). The map indicates the property was owned by Jo G. Davidson, grandson of A.B. Davidson. There are several structures noted on the map: 1) Residence, on the 44-acre Dower Tract (likely Davidson family home still extant), 2) the Bost House (there was an African-American man named Bost who farmed in this area during that period) (Daniel Austin, personal communication, October 22, 2021), 3) Lodge and 4) two tenant houses. One of the

tenant houses was located where the current McDowell Wastewater Treatment Plant stands. It is unknown what the lodge building was or was used for. Anecdotal evidence suggests that formerly enslaved individuals after Emancipation, moved the slave dwellings away from the main house and farm by hooking them up to mules and dragging them away, and set up as tenant farmers (Eric Ferguson, personal communication October 22, 2021). Since none of these enslaved dwellings or tenant homes still exist, it is currently impossible to corroborate this.
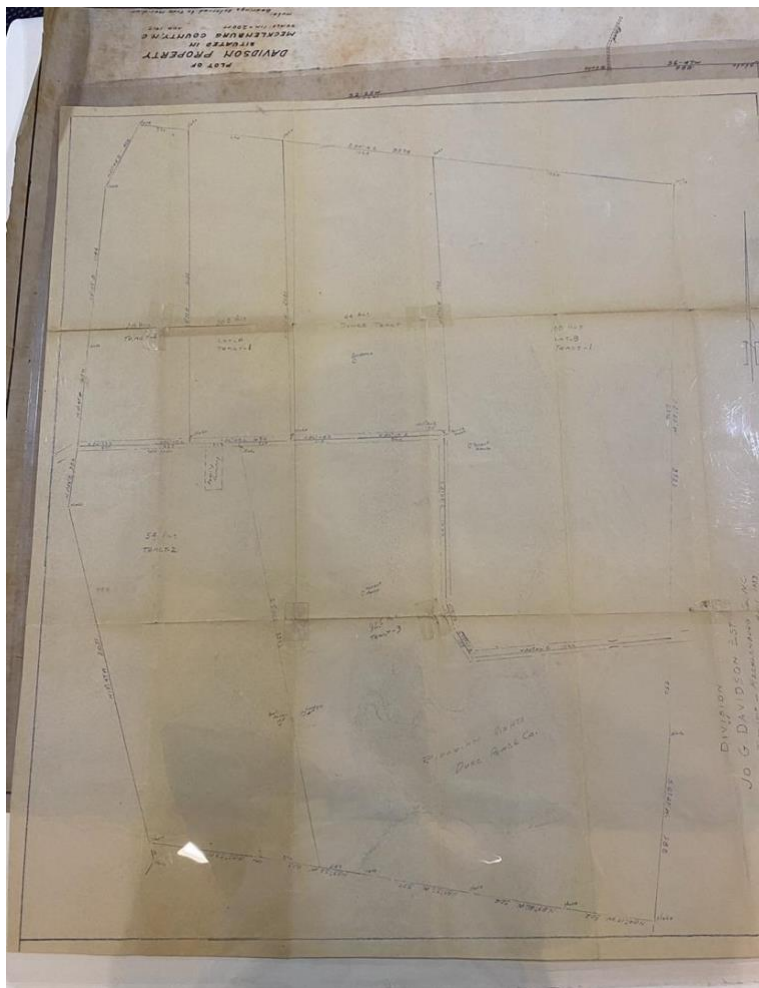
Figure 5 1917 Map of Davidson Property (Davidson Family Papers, UNC-Charlotte)

Daniel Austin, a local neighbor of the modern Rural Hill, indicated there was a woman who lived in a tenant farmer house on former Davidson property named Puella Morrison (1921-

2012) (personal communication, October 22, 2021). According to online genealogy (Mary Anderson Pharr 2009), Puella Morrison was the great-granddaughter of Alexander Anderson. Mr. Anderson (1833-1889) was a formerly enslaved man who is buried at Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church on the same road as Rural Hill. He is credited with establishing this church. His daughter, Puella's mother, Mary Anderson Pharr, was also born into slavery in current Gaston County, passed away in Huntersville, North Carolina, and is buried at Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church. The enslaved man Alexander listed in the Davidson inventories does not match the age of Alexander Anderson by his listed birth year of 1833. The birth location for Mr. Alexander indicates Gaston County, which could mean he was born and lived at Dickson Plantation, however, there is no archival evidence.

What became of the formerly enslaved individuals at Rural Hill after Emancipation is unknown. The two African American churches, Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church and Hopewell A.M.E. Zion Church, were established in the area soon after Emancipation by formerly enslaved men and women, and unfortunately, due to the dearth of archival evidence, it is difficult to impossible to tie these individuals and their descendants to Rural Hill or other local plantations.

Chapter 5: Mecklenburg County Known Enslaved Burial Grounds

The now-defunct Comprehensive Genealogical Services compiled a list of known enslaved burial grounds in Mecklenburg County and published it on their website for public use. This information is included in Table 8.

Table 8 Enslaved Burial Ground compiled by Comprehensive Genealogical Services

source: https://www.cgsweb.org/cemeteries-of-the-enslaved				
NAME OF SITE	**LOCATION**	**PROPERTY OWNER**	**EST #**	**PUBLIC ACCESS**
Herron-McKnight-Brown	Steele Creek-Byrum Dr.	City of Charlotte Airport	200	Yes
Kerns	Huntersville-Kerns Road	Heirs of John Kerns, Sr.	75	Pvt. Property
Dinkins	10600 Nation Ford Road	Earthmove Development Co.	55	Restricted
Providence Presbyterian Church	Providence Lane	Providence Presby. Church	139	Unrestricted
Emmanuel Presbyterian Church	5315 S. Tryon Street	United Mem. Pres. Church	175	Unrestricted
Beazor Cemetery	Shopton Rd. Beazor Dev.	Beazor Homes Development	140	Unrestricted
Shumen Cemetery	Youngblood & Remount	McDuiett Construction Co.	120	Unrestricted
Neely Cemetery	S. Ridge Dr. Park	Lord Baltimore Properties	42	Unrestricted
AMEZ Church Track	2230 Cindy Lane	AMEZ Church-Jim Long, Jr.	75	Restricted
Zion Primitive Baptist Church	827 E. Sugar Creek Rd.	Zion Primitive Baptist Church	75	Unrestricted
Smithfield Baptist Garden	Smithfield Church Road	Smithfield WR Mem Church	50	Restricted
Sardis Presby. Cemetery	6100 Sardis Rd.	Sardis Presby Church	180	Unrestricted
William Ing. Mem. Garden	Little Hope Road	Walls Memorial Bapt. Church	50	Restricted
Sharon Presby.Ch. Cem.	5201 Sharon Rd.	Sharon Presby. Church	150	Unrestricted
Hart-Rice Cemetery	NC Hwy 51	Philadelphia Presby. Church	195	Unrestricted
Ava Parks	7302 Sample Rd Huntersville	Dave & Carrie Moss	50	Restricted
Asbury Chapel Road	Hus McGinnis Rd Huntersville	The Thompsons	60	Private
Center Grove HL	3201 Clemson Avenue	Cedar Grove AME Zion Church	50	Restricted

JM KIDD	Neck Road, Huntersville	JM Kidd	50	Restricted
Hopewell AME Zion	Huntersville, North Carolina	Hopewell AME Zion Church	50	Restricted
Rocky River Presbyterian Church	11525 Rocky River, Concord	Rocky River Pres. Church	150	Restricted
Poplar Tent Presbyterian Church	Poplar Tent Rd. Concord	Poplar Tent Presbyterian Ch.	100	Unrestricted
Raeburn Community	11601 Charnwood Court	Raeburn Homeowner Assoc.	50	Unrestricted
McClintock Presbyterian Church	12008 Erwin Road	McClintock Presbyterian Ch.	50	Unrestricted
Miranda Presbyterian Church	Miranda Rd. off Beatties Ford Rd.	Catawba Presbyterian Church	10	Unrestricted
Caldwell Presbyterian Church	Brown Mill Road	Catawba Presbyterian Church	50	Unrestricted
Centre Presbyterian Church	Centre Church Road	Centre Presbyterian Church	50	Unrestricted
Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Church	101 Sugar Creek Rd. W	Sugaw Creek Presbyterian	150	Restricted
Beaver Dam	19600 Davidson-Concord Road	Trustees of Davidson College	10	Unrestricted
Settler's Cemetery	Church and Fifth Streets	City of Charlotte	50	Unrestricted
Alexander's Slave Cemetery	Thornberry Apts. Mallard Creek		100	Restricted
McCoy Slave Cemetery	McCoy Rd. .25 mi from Beatties Ford	McCoy Family	75	Unrestricted
Trinity Methodist Church	6230 Beatties Fd. Road	Trinity Methodist Church	50	Unrestricted
Taylor Nance Home Area	5706 Cashion Rd.	Duke Power Co.	15	Restricted
Ramah Presbyterian Church	Ramah Church Road	Ramah Presbyterian Church	50	Unrestricted
Robert Potts, Jr plantation slave cemetery	Smith Rd./Cornelius, NC	Miriam Smith Whisnant, Lilyan Smith Hunter	30	Restricted
Mallard Creek Presbyterian Church	Mallard Creek Presbyterian Church	Mallard Creek Presbyterian Church	50	Restricted
Elliott Slave Cemetery	6602 & 6530 Riverview Drive	John Locklear and Benita Ayers	50	Restricted
Kinnamon Cemetery	12998 McCoy Road Huntersville	Wes Kinnamon	50	Restricted
Bethesda Methodist Church	11026 Asbury Chapel/ Huntersville	Archers, Patty and Glen	30	Restricted
Matthews Murkland Presbyterian Church Cemetery	Olde Providence Road	Matthews Murkland Presbyterian Church	100	Unrestricted

Prosperity Presbyterian Church	5533 Prosperity Church Road	Prosperity Presbyterian Church	50	Unrestricted
McKendree Chapel	291 McKendree Road/ Mooresville	United Methodist	50	Unrestricted
China Grove A.M.E. Zion Church	9401 China Grove Church Road	Charlotte Area Transit System	30	Unrestricted
Roseland or Roseville-Matthews	off Monroe Rd. near Family Dollar			Restricted
Myers Quarters/Cherry	501 Queens Road	The Little Theatre of Charlotte, Inc.	25	Unrestricted
Independence Park Enslaved Cemetery	E. 7th & Hawthorne Lane	City Of Charlotte	30	Unrestricted
Mowing Glade AME Zion Church Cemetery	8951 Albemarle Road	Mowing Glade AME Zion Church	20	Unrestricted
Big Pineville AME Zion Church Cemetery	Ballantyne Crossing Ave.	Ballantyne Properties	25	Unrestricted
Blackstock ARP Church and Cemetery	York Co.		100	Unrestricted
Mt. Olive Presbyterian Church / Cemetery	5125 Mt. Olive Church Rd.	Trustees/Mt. Olive Presbyterian		

The CGS site lists 51 known enslaved burial grounds, 30 of which are on church land or associated with a church. Seventeen of the churches are historically African American churches, while 13 are historically white churches. Six of the seven original churches in the county are listed as having enslaved burials: Sardis, Hopewell, Rocky River, Centre, Sugaw Creek, and Poplar Tent. There is a plaque at Hopewell Presbyterian indicating that archaeologists could not locate enslaved graves outside of the churchyard wall, and these archaeologists suggest that the enslaved were likely interred on the plantation grounds where they lived and died (Figure 8). Potts, Beaver Dam, and Alexander burial grounds are on former plantations where those interred lived and died. The highlighted row is a suspected burial ground and is unmarked on what was part of Rural Hill. JM KIDD is known anecdotally through information handed down orally from landowners who lived and worked on the land purchased from the Davidson Family in at the

beginning of the 20th century (Daniel Austin, personal communication, October 22, 2021).

Several listed burial sites are on privately commercially owned land. Often, developers will leave these areas undisturbed because of the cost and complexity of exhuming and re-interring in another location. Legally, developers cannot disturb the remains or build over them without approved mitigation through the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, either Federal or State (ARPA).

The number of estimated enslaved burials in Table 8 totals 3,581. As previously stated, the estimated number of enslaved individuals in Mecklenburg County as recorded in the 1850 Federal Census was 5,400. A discrepancy exists between the enslaved who were counted as living in Mecklenburg County and those who were buried there during the enslavement period. This suggests that there are, problematically, many more unmarked enslaved burial grounds in the area.
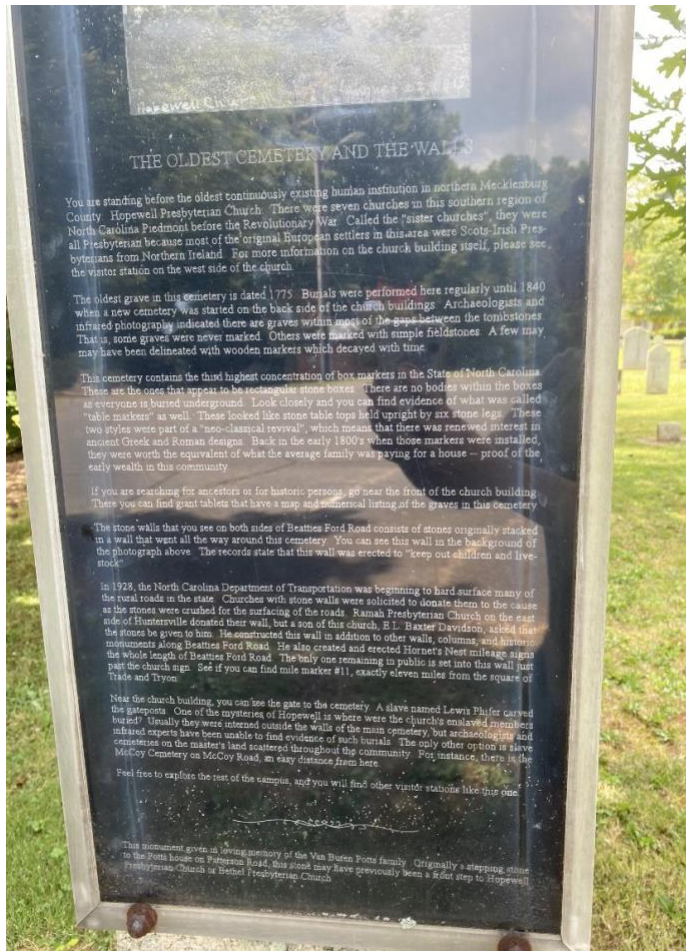
Figure 6 Plaque at Hopewell Presbyterian Church Cemetery (photo by author)

Chapter 6: Locating the Rural Hill Enslaved Burial Ground

6.1 Enslaved Burial Ground Characteristics

Rainville (2014) describes three primary types of interments for enslaved people in the southern United States: 1) burial within the plantation cemetery, 2) burial outside of the white cemetery on a plantation or churchyard, and 3) burial in a separate location-specific for enslaved persons. The third type is the most difficult to locate because there are no defined borders or markers indicating where the enslaved were buried; therefore, it is necessary to look for several physical characteristics common to most unmarked burial grounds. Several variables relate to the location of an enslaved burial area. First, burial grounds tended to be above the water table, but still be near water. Water was symbolic for Christian African Americans, representing the River Jordan and the washing of sins (Rainville 2014). Additionally, burial grounds were often at higher elevations, symbolizing a nearness to heaven. Also, steep slopes and rocky soil tended to be more agriculturally unproductive, and thus, more likely to be given or approved by enslavers to use for burials (Rainville 2014). Similarly, wooded areas were also considered agriculturally unproductive, and provided privacy for gathering for nighttime burials away from enslavers and their homes (Roediger 1981). Ground cover of periwinkle or vinca were commonly found in burial grounds (Rainville 2014). Finally, enslaved burial grounds were often within sight of the "Big House" of the property, or within a mile behind the main structure (Rainville 2014).

Depressions in the soil can indicate a burial, especially if in an east- west orientation. Burials were often oriented east-west for a few possible reasons. Vlach (1978) contends that there was an association between African concepts of the cosmos where the world follows the sun. Roediger (1981) indicates that there are West African traditions of east-west burial so that the corpse does not go against the orientation of the world, like Vlach's theory regarding the

cosmos. Rainville (2014) asserts that there is a common pattern of east-west orientation with the head to the west because Christianized African Americans believed that this would ensure that the deceased would not need to turn their head when Gabriel blows his trumpet in the east. Jamieson (1995) agrees that there seems to be a measure of syncretism between Christian and African associations with death and the sun.

Grave markers in enslaved burial grounds varied from plain fieldstones to carved stone markers. Fieldstones are common because they are readily available. Carvings are less commonly found but are mostly crude letters or symbols (Rainville 2014). Grave goods left by mourners are common and range from trinkets, ceramics/crockery (broken or intact), items of the deceased, and decorative items like shells, glass, tiles, mirrors, and beads (Rainville 2014; Roediger 1981; Jamieson 1995). The symbolism varies with the items left and are individual to those who died and those who placed them on the grave (Rainville 2014).

These physical characteristics of enslaved burial grounds are all that remain of a highly emotional and symbolic rite carried out by the family and peers of those who died while enslaved. It is important to attempt to view the landscape as it likely appeared during the pre-Emancipation period to be able to see these characteristics for more than coincidence. Enslaved burial grounds were not manicured and neatly ordered cemeteries like those of their enslavers. These sacred spaces melded with the natural environment and became part of the landscape.

Figure 7 View from the Mallard Creek Presbyterian Church Enslaved Burial Ground (photo by author)

6.2 Applying Enslaved Burial Ground Characteristics to Rural Hill

The search for the unmarked burial ground at Rural Hill began with examining aerial photographs and satellite imagery of the property for areas that could be potential locations. Applying the methods in the previous section, I began looking for areas that met the following characteristics: 1) high elevation, 2) wooded area or tree line, 3) depressions, 4) fieldstones or other lithic markers, 5) proximity to water, 6) presence of ground cover like vinca or periwinkle. Elevation, tree lines, and proximity to water can be determined via aerial photographs and topographic maps. Depressions, markers, and ground cover are determined with surface survey and/or ground truthing, by physically walking on-site.

Once a site of interest was identified, the next step was to conduct ground penetrating radar (GPR) reconnaissance and magnetometry to determine if there were subsurface disturbances present consistent with burials. Dr. Andy Bobyarchick with the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte agreed to conduct GPR and magnetometry once a potential site was identified. Historian Mike Baxter also agreed to conduct metal detection to help identify any metal artifact or coffin remnants that might be present.

6.3 Aerial Reconnaissance

The initial search began with aerial photographs and topographic maps accessed via the Charlotte Mecklenburg Land Records database, Polaris 3G (Charlotte Mecklenburg Land Records n.d.). Rural Hill is bound to the south by Catawba River, as well as, to the west by Holly Bend Plantation. The most likely location for the burial ground would be north or northeast to the rear of the Rural Hill mansion house ruins. The Polaris 3G aerials showed an area just to the north of the Rural Hill property line that appeared to be a square-shaped area and wooded. The shape was interesting, and I determined that it warranted a site visit to ground truth.

Figure 8 Aerial view of Rural Hill with an area of interest noted north of Rural Hill property boundary (Polaris 3G)

6.4 Ground Truthing at Rural Hill

The initial ground truthing was conducted on August 26, 2021, however, when examining this area, there were no burial ground characteristics present to suggest it needed further investigation. I walked approximately 220 feet to the north along a trail and noticed a small animal path to the left through thick brush. Through the animal path, I could see a tree stand of cedars and fieldstones. This area was very dense with briars and other vegetation, making it very difficult to walk through. I observed a very large old-growth oak tree to the north

of this location, with a clearing between the cedar and old-growth oak that was edged by old-growth forest. This location was marked as 35.39115 N, 80.94689 W. (See Figures 8 and 9).

This new site was now the primary site of interest. According to the topographic map, this site was located on a slope and near a stream (Figure 10). It was also near a wooded area, had field stones present, and was in an area that is presumed to be agriculturally unproductive. After reviewing the parcel records, I determined that this new site was not located on Rural Hill property, rather it was on City of Charlotte property occupied by Charlotte Water and the McDowell Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. I emailed the Operations Chief, Joseph Lockler, for permission to continue my research on the site after explaining my research proposal and preliminary findings.

Figure 9 Drone photo of secondary site (photo courtesy of Dr. Sara Juengst)
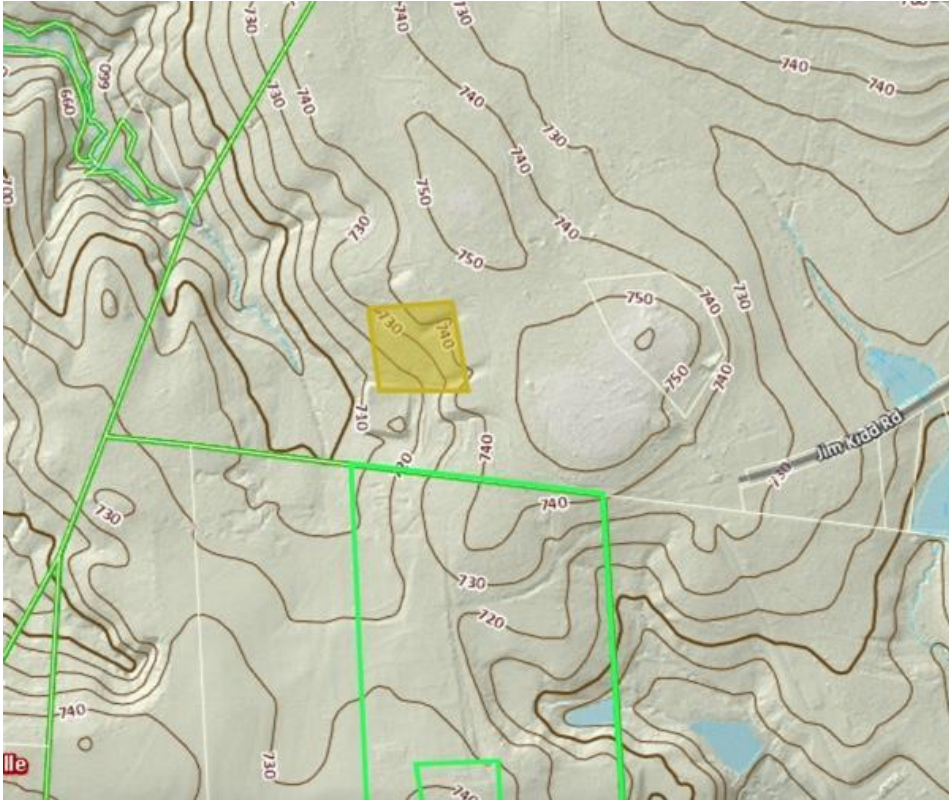
Figure 10 Topographic Map of the suspected burial ground (Polaris 3G)

The second site visit, on September 22, 2021, included the author, Dr. Sara Juengst, and UNC Charlotte undergraduate student Kathleen Skellenger. We were able to traverse the thick brush and enter the clearing. We immediately observed the presence of fieldstones in the clearing. We investigated the cedar tree stand and observed that the original location with the small animal path that I had seen on August 26th, went into an animal den under the cedars, however, there was a stump of a much older tree under the cedars, as well. We observed several flat stones and stones in tangles of shallow roots. To the south of the cedars, we observed a four-foot-long depression that was ringed with stones.

Figure 11 Depression with stones under Cedars (photo by author)

The clearing to the west of the cedars contained many fieldstones that seemed placed versus naturally occurring. Animal trails were evident through the vegetation and were visible in drone photos taken by Dr. Sara Juengst during this visit. We could not see the ground for the thick vegetation; however, we could feel depressions and undulations from walking through the clearing. From these observations in combination with the aerial photography, Dr. Juengst concurred that our observations did not rule out this site as a potential burial ground. Dr. Juengst suggested that the ground cover vegetation would need to be removed before Dr. Bobyarchick could conduct GPR. The sled on which the radar sits needs to maintain consistent contact with the ground as closely as possible to the surface. The state of the vegetation in September was approximately three feet high making GPR work unproductive.

In maintaining communication with Charlotte Water, I emailed Joseph Lockler with our latest findings and asked for a meeting at the site to discuss the next steps. On September 30, 2021, I met with Darrell DeWitt and Joseph Lockler of Charlotte Water, along with Drs. Sara Juengst and J. Alan May of UNC Charlotte at the site. After discussing the rationale behind why

this particular location was selected, Charlotte Water agreed to mow the ground cover within the week.

On October 14, 2021, Dr. Sara Juengst and I made our last site visit together. Charlotte Water had mowed the clearing adequately for our purposes. Fieldstones were now visible and thus were marked with survey pin flags to ascertain a spatial pattern. We observed several groupings of fieldstones and 2 depressions marked with multiple fieldstones.

Figure 12 Pin flags marking fieldstones (photo by author)

We did not observe any spatial patterning with the fieldstone layout, however, there was an adequate grouping of stones in the center of the clearing, in addition to the compelling evidence of stone-ringed depressions. Dr. Juengst and I concluded that this site was worthy of further geophysical investigation.

6.5 Applying Remote Sensing Techniques

The final site visit occurred on October 22, 2021. Dr. Andy Bobyarchick, Mike Baxter, and I met at Rural Hill for Dr. Bobyarchick to determine if the ground was cleared adequately for

GPR. Mike Baxter was present to conduct metal detection, particularly, to detect metal around the depressions. Coffin nails and metallic grave goods would register with the metal detector, and while we would not remove these items, any metal registering on the site would provide further potential evidence.

Mike Baxter used a White's XLT metal detector and scanned the entirety of the site. He found a single metal object near the entrance trail of the site. When we scanned under the cedars, we found a singular nail, and a piece of metal rebar near the stone-ringed depression. All other returns on the metal detector were "Hot Rocks", or metal-containing lithics, not metal objects. Dr. Bobyarchick dug into the soil and walked the site to observe lithic distribution, soil compaction, topography, and vegetation.

6.6 Results

From the dearth of metal signatures, "hot rock" signatures, soil compaction, rocky soil composition, and the shallowness of the bedrock, it was concluded amongst those present that this was likely not the site of the enslaved burial ground belonging to Rural Hill. The rocky soil composition would have made it very difficult to dig adequate grave shafts with tools available during the 19th century. Dr. Bobyarchick also concluded that the field stones were likely naturally occurring metagabbro, a common coarse-grained, mafic (containing ferromagnesian minerals) intrusive igneous rock in this region, and not intentionally placed in this field (USGS n.d.). We removed the pin flags and ended the investigation at this location.

6.7 Conclusions

The methods used in this project to attempt to locate the unmarked enslaved burial ground at Rural Hill followed the methodology described by Rainville (2014). While it was disappointing that this site was not the actual burial site, the project provided valuable

experience, ruled out one area, and ultimately did produce a new lead for the potential location. During the last site visit with Dr. Bobyarchick and Mike Baxter, the Rural Hill farm manager, Eric Ferguson, spoke with us regarding our work at Rural Hill. He introduced us to Daniel Austin who owned the small parcel of land within the Charlotte Water parcel in which we were working. Mr. Austin shared information regarding the history of the hayfield in the eastern portion of the Charlotte Water parcel #01305102 and indicated that his family had formerly owned the land and had purchased it at the beginning of the 20th century from the Davidson family. His family was forced to sell most of the land to the City of Charlotte because of the eminent domain due to the construction of the McDowell Wastewater Treatment Plant. Mr. Austin had been told stories from his grandfather and great grandfather that a human skull had been tilled up in the hayfield nearly a century ago. The family was aware that this was the site of a burial ground, but unaware of who was buried there and when. Ultimately, they would like to have the burial ground located and preserved (Daniel Austin, personal communication October 22, 2021).

Chapter Seven: Recommendations for Further Research

The Board of Directors of Historic Rural Hill continues to emphasize the importance of historic preservation and include locating the unmarked enslaved burial ground as a priority. It will be in accordance with the wishes of the Board to continue the search for the burial ground, and the methods detailed in this report in conjunction with the information obtained from Daniel Austin suggest a solid new direction in which to search. Mr. Austin took me to the back of the field where he believes his ancestors unearthed the skull in the early 20th century and welcomes further research on the property. The field is located on the same parcel of land owned by Charlotte Water though the city allows Mr. Austin to farm the hay on the large field, and thus, he controls access to the field.

Figure 13 Aerial view of Rural Hill, suspected site, and Austin site (Polaris 3G)

A.B. Davidson mentions growing cotton in the "graveyard field" in the farm journal in 1851 (Davidson Family Papers UNC-Charlotte). It is unknown where this particular field is located. Perhaps it is the field in which the Davidson Family Cemetery is located across from the mansion house. Perhaps it is the field identified by Mr. Austin as the hayfield. This may be a completely other location. Also, Sommerville (1939) mentions that Mr. Jim Kidd had two slave cemeteries near his home. Mr. Kidd is the same individual named by Daniel Austin who was purported to have unearthed a skull in the early 20th century. Additional conversations with the Austin family and other families who trace back to these parcels from the early 20th century could lead to further anecdotal evidence.

Figure 14 Austin site (photo by author)

It would be beneficial to have conversations with the two African American churches in the area, Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church and Hopewell A.M.E. Zion Church. Elderly parishioners could provide oral histories which may provide valuable directions for future searches. More importantly, establishing a relationship with these churches and their members could start to bridge the distance between those living today and those that lived and died enslaved at Rural Hill thus allowing descendants to reclaim family and community history that has been hidden for generations.

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Addendum: Research Theory

Drawing from archaeological context, historical context, and ethnography, anthropological archaeology uses multiple lines of inquiry to better understand the lived experience of past peoples. Integrating social theory with archaeological inquiry makes the lived experience picture more complex and multidimensional (Stone 2020). While many archaeologists employ top-down Foucauldian power theories of institutional dominance and subjugation; Spencer-Wood (2010) offers a heterarchical model of power dynamics that goes beyond hierarchical power structure and oppositional dichotomy. Spencer-Wood's model allows for power dynamics that can coexist: powers over others (dominating); powers under other (subordinate resistance); powers with others (cooperative); and powers to (affecting change) (Spencer-Wood 2020:503). This polychotomy of power broadens the schema to be more inclusive of power dynamics at play when examining marginalized societies or segments of society.

In conjunction with theories of power, structural violence is important to understand when investigating marginalized individuals. Structural violence reveals how cultural stressors act as agents to create disparities in lived experiences across societies. At its core, structural violence involves the subjugation of an individual or group of people by an oppressive agent/group who keeps the oppressed from reaching their biological, economic, and or social potential (Klaus 2012). The concept of structural violence was developed in the 1960s by Johan Galtung (1969). Galtung's theory, as applied to archaeology by Klaus, describes "social structures that suppress agency and prevent individuals, groups, and societies from reaching their social, economic, and biological potential. Promotes the avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs or the impairment of human life, which lowers the actual degree to

which someone is able to meet their needs below that which would otherwise be possible" (Klaus 2012:31). Systems of structural violence remove the autonomy of a group of people and subject them to various hardships to control the balance of power, ensuring the oppressed are subject to the oppressor (Klaus 2012).

The enslavement of African men and women in the United States during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries is a clear example of structural violence. The United States' economy and infrastructure were built upon the backs of the enslaved people brought here from across the Atlantic Ocean from Africa beginning in 1619. The institution of slavery in the United States from the 17th to the 19th centuries is most notably associated with physical violence through accounts of beatings, whippings, and hard labor, and structural violence through poor living conditions, and overt dehumanization. Structural violence subjected to enslaved people came from all aspects of their daily lives including nutritional deficiencies in adulthood and childhood, disease exposure, hard and manual labor, forced reproduction, interpersonal violence, and harsh and unclean living conditions.

Franklin (2001:114) calls out the importance of Black feminist research in the archaeology of enslaved people because of the enormous roles that enslaved African American women played in the shaping of cultural practices and survival strategies in their "gendered and racialized identities". Keeping these people at the center of research highlights the socio-cultural structural hierarchies that existed, while demystifying race/ethnicity and gender. As Franklin (2001:114) states, "by not doing so we essentially normalize these differences and unwittingly provide the fuel needed to further reproduce them in the present".

Structural violence does not end with death; rather, it continues when the lives and memory of those who perished while living in structural violence are erased from the historical

record. When burial grounds of the enslaved are unmarked the legacy of those interred is forgotten with time. There is a dearth of information and official records of the individuals who survived the enslavement period in the United States and lived to experience Emancipation and the Reconstruction Era. These missing records create an even greater gap between living African Americans and their ancestors. Other examples of structural violence in death involve the rewriting or editing of history in favor of the oppressor, editing out marginalized groups, and cultural denial of structural violent history. While some of these examples may not be intentional aggressions, it is the lack of emphasis or acceptance of responsibility of acknowledgment that is the aggression. Wrongs can be addressed, and responsibility accepted.

The research presented in this report is a step in the right ethical direction of giving names and agency to those who lived, toiled, and died at Rural Hill Plantation. They are no longer tick marks in 150+-year-old Federal Census sheets. These were people - our ancestors, and our neighbors' ancestors. Their identities deserve to be known, and their significance to the history of this region deserves to exist alongside those who enslaved them. Archaeology of Enslaved African Americans is essential to the growth of the field of Archaeological Anthropology in the United States. Without it, we are ignoring a significant era of time and a vital segment of American society. This intentional ignorance is tantamount to complicity.