

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR THEMATIC NOMINATION

1 NAME

HISTORIC ~~Davidson County~~ Anglo-German Cemeteries TR

AND/OR COMMON

Abbott's Creek Primitive Baptist Church Cemetery, Beck's Reformed Church Cemetery, etc.

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

See individual nomination forms

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

CODE
037

COUNTY
Davidson

CODE
057

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME See individual nomination forms

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Davidson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

STATE
North Carolina

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Ruth Little, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Survey and Planning Branch

DATE

July 2, 1983

STREET & NUMBER

Division of Archives and History

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, consultant Ruth Little conducted a photographic survey of all graveyards in Davidson County during the summer of 1981. This thematic nomination includes the twelve cemeteries containing the most significant collections of gravestones cut by local stonecutters. These highly sculptural gravestones, carved from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries out of the soft local soapstone by descendants of German settlers, are the most important group of decorative gravestones in North Carolina, and form a nationally significant collection of folk sculpture. The two most distinctive groups are the pierced gravestones attributed to the Swisegood school of cabinetmakers and the delicately incised fraktur style gravestones of David Sowers. Because the German cultural heritage has not survived in Davidson County's present architectural fabric, the German folk art in these cemeteries is an integral component in the Davidson County Multiple Resource Nomination.

The 323 most significant gravestones in these cemeteries are categorized individually on separate nomination forms by stylistic "schools," and will be discussed in order of their chronological development. The first, so-called "Early Phase," 1771-1828, is not a school at all, but includes the earliest German style gravestones in the county, cut by a variety of unskilled to semiskilled stonecutters. Between 1800 and 1850, three "schools" operated: the "Pierced Style" attributed to the Swisegood school of cabinetmakers; the "Pierced Tradition" created by less skilled imitators of the Swisegood school; and the "Fraktur Style" attributed to David Sowers. In addition, at least three individual stonecutters worked in the mid-nineteenth century: the "Master of the Upper and Lower Case," John Rikard, and the "Modern Master" (Nathan Parks?).

Early Phase: 1771-1828

The first group, known as the "Early Phase," constitutes the local idiom from the earliest dated headstone in the county, the 1771 gravestone of Jacop Beier (Beck's, DV-502), into the second quarter of the nineteenth century. A large number of these are inscribed in German: the Caderina Lang headstone, dated 1828 (Bethany, DV-146) is the last. All follow a standard design model: a small headstone, averaging ten inches wide and eighteen inches high, with tapering sides, wider at the shoulders than at the base, squared shoulders and a semicircular tympanum. A monogram, date of birth or date of death is centered in the tympanum, often in a decorative bracket. The main body of the stone contains the inscription inside ruled lines, with crowded, awkwardly divided words. Except for occasional beaded borders, the rear is undecorated and uninscribed. A few of the "Early Phase" have folk ornament. The tiny headstone of Ludwig Stokinger, died 1806 (Beck's, DV-502) has a pointed arch tympanum filled with a carefully inscribed sunburst. Most, however, rely on the decorative treatment of the monogram or date, and have no artistic symbolism. The headstone of Johannes Bollenbach, died 1781 (Beck's, DV-502), containing the date "1781" centered in the tympanum and the name inside an inscribed bracket, is more typical. The tiny headstone of Eliza Sowers, died

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Davidson County

Anglo-German Cemeteries: overall
Continuation sheet

7

Item number

1

Page

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1831 (Beulah, DV-343), is an especially successful example of the traditional idiom. The inscription is carved in concentric circles around a large central monogram in the tympanum. Even the earliest gravestones at Jersey Baptist Church, settled by Scotch-Irish immigrants, share the German idiom. A typical example is the headstone of Nancey Smith, died 1785 (Jersey, DV-9), which has a semicircular monogrammed tympanum, tapering sides, and a crowded epitaph inside ruled lines. The inconsistency of lettering style, proportions, and quality of execution proves that these early gravestones were cut by a large number of amateur stonecutters. In each cemetery, two or three are by the same craftsman, but in few cases can a style found at one church be correlated to that found at another. Even after specialized stonecutting workshops developed in the nineteenth century, amateur stonecutters continued to produce traditional gravestones, although the distinct features of the traditional design became more and more diluted. The headstone of Conroad Grubb, died 1842 (St. Luke's, DV-294), a crudely shaped fieldstone inscribed in careful, amateurish lettering, with no added decoration, is typical of the later phase of the traditional idiom.

Pierced Style: Circa 1800-1850

The most important group of gravestones are the so-called "Pierced Style," attributed to the Swisegood school of cabinetmakers, active from about 1800 to the mid-nineteenth century. These exuberant Baroque gravestones are without precedent in America, nor is a similar tradition apparently known in Europe. All have one or more of the following elements: decorative piercing in such symbolic shapes as the fylfot cross (the pinwheel or swastika motif which symbolizes eternity), the tulip or other flower, the heart, or abstract; decorative molding forming a radiating sunburst, chevron, or quadroan (herringbone) pattern on the front, rear or sides; and a tympanum shaped like an ornate Baroque pediment. These gravestones have death dates from 1797 to 1857, but ninety-five percent fall between 1822 and 1849. The seminal appearance of the style is in three small headstones at Bethany Church (DV-146) with Baroque tympana. The headstone of Grab Schrietiwadie, died 1799, has a fylfot cross incised on the rear; the headstones of Sarah Glatfeltern, died 1813, and Felix Glatfelder, died 1814, have fylfots pierced completely through the tympana. On the headstone of Catharine O. Chnard, died 1822, at Bethany, the stonecutter took the step of extending the finials and lobes of the tympanum out into space.

By the mid-to-late 1820s, the mature "Pierced Style" emerged, with elaborate sunburst pediments, pierced symbols and front, rear and side moldings. Along with the gravestones being cut simultaneously by David Sowers, these are the earliest in the county which are truly sculpture in the round, in contrast to the frontally-oriented slabs of the English gravestone tradition. The finest collection of mature Swisegood school gravestones is at Abbotts Creek (DV-76). Here, on the rear of the headstone of Josiah Spurgin, died 1802, is the only local stonecutter's

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Davidson County
Anglo-German Cemeteries: overall 11
Continuation sheet 7

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Item number 2 Page

signature in the county: "MAID BY THE HAND OF JOSEPH CLODFELTER." The most commonly used pierced symbol is the fylfot, ancient symbol of eternity, sometimes in the negative, as on the Spurgin headstone, sometimes inscribed in a pierced circle and left as a positive element, as in the headstone of Kezia Jones, died 1828. The mature design of the Spurgin marker indicates that it is back-dated, a common occurrence in gravestone manufacture. On the Jones headstone, the circle is set in a border of pierced cyma recta (a wavy molding profile) which accentuates the impression of movement produced by the lobes of the fylfot. The headstone of David Smith, died 1825 (Beck's, DV-502) has a fylfot inscribed in a negative circle yet the center of each lobe is also pierced, leaving a delicate fylfot outline. A number of interesting deviations from the fylfot also occur at Abbott's Creek. The headstone of Joseph S. Williams, died 1825, has the only example of an asymmetrical tympanum--a center finial pierced by a large half-moon shape which takes the shape of a bird perched atop the stone (a touching memorial for a three-year-old boy). Instead of a fylfot, the headstone of Sarah Davis, died 1829, has a pierced lover's knot symbol, and the headstone of Elizabeth Bodenhamer, died 1824, has a pierced tulip.

On almost all of the mature "Pierced Style" gravestones, rich moldings radiate out from the fylfot to the tips of the pediment, turning the upper half of the stones into sunbursts and further enhancing the illusion of movement. Some of the most highly developed gravestones (such as the Sarah Davis gravestone) have a second set of diagonal moldings across the top of the pediments, setting up a cross-current. A trademark of the Swisegood school is the use of molding or fluting on the sides of the slab, and a third location for moldings is the lower half of the rear surface. On the Kezia Jones, Sarah Davis, and the Elizabeth Garner, died 1835, (Beck's, DV-502) headstones, rear moldings appear in a narrow arched band, with sawtoothed edges, echoing the shape of the headstone or taking the shape of tree-of-life designs in the center of the shaft. Sometimes, as on the Garner stone, the moldings are sinuously curved to resemble plant tendrils. On the headstone of Henry Grimes, died 1844 (Beulah, DV-343), the moldings resemble corner pilasters, with bull's eye corner blocks reminiscent of furniture decoration. Only rarely does the combined effect of the moldings result in fussiness. The headstone of John Zimmerman, died 1843 (Good Hope, DV-626), combines a molded arch, molded spandrels, and a large lobed tympanum, creating an awkward, ungainly design. This may be the work of an imitator rather than a master member of the school.

Engraved decoration plays a minor element in the "Pierced Style," but a few of the later examples, such as the headstone of Henry Grimes, have delicate incising. The Grimes stone has an elaborate etched tree-of-life on the rear and a lovely abstract floral border with "Momento Mori" in cursive script on the front. All of the imagery found on the pierced stones is drawn from the stock repertoire of folk German art with one exception--on the headstone of Lucinda Waggner, died 1842 aged two years old (Waggoner Family Graveyard, DV-169). The center finial is circular, and has a very distinct, tiny face carved in relief. Although American gravestones have contained death's heads, angels, or portraits from the beginnings of tomb

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Davidson County
Anglo-German Cemeteries: overall
Continuation sheet 7

Item number

3

Page

For NPS use only

received

date entered

sculpture in the colonies, German folk gravestones avoided the use of anthropomorphic decoration, and this little face is an unprecedented anomaly. Perhaps other examples of human features on pierced gravestones have been removed from Davidson graveyards for superstitious reasons, and Lucinda Waggner's headstone survived because of its private, secluded location.

Pierced Tradition: Circa 1816-1850

The second group of locally-made gravestones are about forty monuments which fit into the Pierced Tradition but lack the high quality of design and execution of the Swisegood school. These were presumably cut by lesser craftsmen without allied craft backgrounds who cut a few stones for family members. These gravestones, with death dates from 1816 to about 1850, are found throughout north Davidson County, and demonstrate the wide influence of the Swisegood school gravestone designs. Typical of these derivative designs is the headstone of Nancy Bodenhamer, died 1843 (Abbott's Creek, DV-76) which has a repetitive, scalloped tympanum and is pierced in a random abstract pattern. The headstone of Katharine Tise, died 1846 (Spring Hill Church, DV-629) has two small pierced lobes and moldings which are merely vestigial remnants of the fylfot and sunburst symbolism of the Swisegood school, and compass star flowers cut in deep relief but not pierced. The headstone of Henry Byerly, died 1850 (Beulah, DV-343) has an awkwardly shaped tympanum separated from the inscription by two horizontal moldings.

Fraktur Style: 1812-1834

After the "Pierced Style," the next most significant group of folk gravestones in Davidson County were being produced simultaneously by another craftsman of German descent who lived fifteen miles to the south. Sixteen gravestones with death dates from 1812 to 1834, cut of a dark gray soapstone resembling slate, have survived at Pilgrim, Emanuel and Bethany churchyards and are attributed to one David Sowers, who was paid for one of them in an 1830 estate record. These so-called "Fraktur Style" gravestones are tall headstones with a circular or ogive-shaped tympanum, squared shoulders with circular foils, and delicately incised symbols such as the tree-of-life, the star-flower, the heart and the bracket. Occasionally a pierced fylfot or heart are included, the only stylistic link with the Swisegood school.

The estate file of Peter Lapp preserved in the North Carolina Archives includes the notation "Voucher No. 4 David Sower's recp. for Tombstones 5.00."¹ His headstone, at Pilgrim Church (DV-351) has a semicircular tympanum with foils, a pierced fylfot, and is inscribed in high quality German Gothic lettering of the type often seen on fraktur work. The footstone is a narrow slab with a decorative Baroque shape and a pierced heart in the center and is inscribed "P L 1760 1827." The estate of Philip Sink, probated in 1831, paid Sowers \$20 plus \$2.40 interest for an unspecified item.² However the head and footstone of one Phelip Cink (sic), 1755-1829, at Pilgrim, is stylistically quite similar to the Lapp stone and was probably also cut

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Davidson County
Anglo-German Cemeteries: overall
Continuation sheet 7

Item number 4

Page

For NPS use only

received

date entered

by Sowers. This stone is inscribed in English, and on the rear is a delicately incised, tall evergreen tree. Although Sowers never signed his work, his fraktur style, drawn from the highly decorative birth, marriage and other commemorative certificates which were popular in German-American communities during the first half of the nineteenth century, is so distinctive that fourteen other gravestones can be attributed to him. These gravestones show a clear development of style from the earliest, dated 1812 and 1813, typical of the traditional German idiom characteristic of the "Early Phase," to the mature designs cut around 1830. By 1816 his two trademark shapes, the semicircular tympanum and the ogive tympanum, and the fraktur symbolism appear.

The headstone of Caderina Sauer (died 1816 aged one month), at Pilgrim Church, contains the finest fraktur decoration of the entire group. Caderina may have been David's child. The entire rear of the ogive-shaped headstone contains a tree-of-life with upside down blossoms flanking a center blossom which has sprouted into an evergreen tree. Two smaller evergreens flank the base of the large tree. The reverse of the footstone repeats the design, with two five-pointed compass stars at the bottom. Typical of Sowers' gravestones, the sides of the stone have beaded edges, thus like the "Pierced Style" the "Fraktur Style" markers are sculpture in the round.

"Master of the Upper and Lower Case": 1842-1862

The fifth distinct group of gravestones in Davidson County are twenty-two headstones cut by an unknown stonecutter known as the "Master of the Upper and Lower Case," because of his unique lettering style, a whimsical mixture of upper and lower case letters. This minor folk master, who began work at the height of the "Pierced Style," was influenced but not stifled by the more popular pierced designs. His gravestones have death dates from 1842 to 1862, and are found at Good Hope, Beulah, Beck's and St. Luke's cemeteries; thus he apparently lived in west central Davidson County. Most of the gravestones follow the traditional early form of a semicircular tympanum atop square shoulders; however the last two headstones closely resemble the upper half of corner cupboards made by the Swisegood School. The most refined of the two, the headstone of Katharine Yonts, 1801-1857 (Beulah DV-343), consists of an eccentric Baroque pediment supported on colonnettes with "turned" ornament. The pediment has molded sunbursts flanking a center finial.

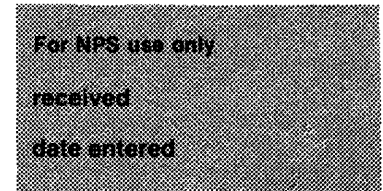
John Rikard: 1842-1866

The sixth distinctive group of local monuments are twelve gravestones at Emanuel and Pilgrim churches, with death dates from 1842 to 1866, attributed to one John Rikard on the basis of two receipts found in the Davidson County estate records. The John Reichard, 1790-1863, who is buried at Emanuel Church may be the stonecutter whose name is spelled "Rikard" and "Rickard" in the estate records. In 1856 Rikard was paid \$6 for "TombStones" from the estate of Jacob Beck. This gravestone could not be located, but the headstone of John Fritts, died 1854, stands at Pilgrim Church,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Davidson County
Anglo-German Cemeteries: overall
Continuation sheet 7



Item number

5

Page

and Rikard was paid \$7 from the John Fritts estate in 1856 for an unspecified item, probably this stone.³ Rikard, a less talented stonecutter than his contemporary, the "Master of the Upper and Lower Case," favored Baroque shapes and molded sunbursts which are less crisply defined than the best Davidson designs. The Fritts headstone has an ornate Baroque tympanum with a six-point compass star, an abstract linear band suggesting a sunburst, and a large sunburst finial. Birth and death dates are inscribed in decorative brackets on the rear. On the headstone of Eve Conrad, 1792-1849 (Pilgrim), a molded sunburst fills the entire tympanum. The most decorative gravestone of the group is the headstone of Jane Adams, 1792-1847 (Emanuel), which has a sunburst tympanum, a rope molding along the sides, and, lightly etched below the inscription, a tree-of-life which grows out of an Ur-bogen (German symbol for the arc of the waning winter sun). Rikard's designs exhibit independence from the "Pierced Style," but little technical ability or sense of design. Almost all of the inscriptions are in upper case Roman lettering, but "S" and "Z" are often backward, and words often misspelled and crowded.

"Modern Master" (Nathan Parks?): 1829-1848

The last significant group of gravestones by a local stonecutter in Davidson County are the work of the "Modern Master," and mark the end of the folk gravestone tradition. This anonymous stonecutter had professional training, and his Roman alphabet is inscribed on shapes which sometimes recall the Pierced Style, and sometimes use stylish popular classical and urn-and-willow imagery. Eighteen headstones cut of local stone with death dates from 1829 to 1848, found at Pilgrim, Bethany, Beulah, Emanuel, Abbott's Creek and Jersey churches, are attributed to him. The basic form of these gravestones is a headstone with a Baroque tympanum articulated by moldings, chamfered borders, and bull's-eye motifs, but the forms are more closed and simple than those of the Pierced Tradition. Typical are the headstone of Mathias Kenoy, died 1842 (Emanuel), with a crisply molded sunburst tympanum closer to a classical fan or shell motif than to the German sunburst, and the headstone of Daniel Leonard, died 1848 (Pilgrim), with an urn centered in a Neo-Classical pediment. The headstone of Jane Park, died 1848 (Jersey) is a graphic illustration of the transitional position of the "Modern Master." Typical of an artifact which is partially folk and partially stylish, a horizontal line imagined through the top of the headstone would separate it into its folk upper half and popular lower half. At the top of the narrow, rectangular headstone is an urn-and-willow tableau, and perched above this is a vestigial pediment with five-point German compass stars. The decorated rear surface, for which no Neo-Classical precedent existed, is completely folk, with a stylized tree-of-life surmounted by a molded sunburst.

The "Modern Master" may be Nathan Parks, a Davidson County orphan who was apprenticed in 1825 to Joseph Conrad, a Philadelphia cabinetmaker who moved to Lexington in 1821.⁴ Parks practiced the cabinetmaking trade in Lexington until his death in 1865,⁵ and had a larger share of the coffin business than any other cabinetmaker in the county. By the time he died, local stonecutters had lost their market, since stylish, inexpensive marble headstones could be ordered through local undertakers from marblyards in such nearby cities as Salisbury, Winston, and Charlotte, and shipped to Lexington on the North Carolina Railroad.

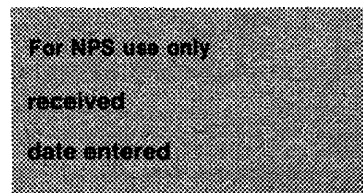
**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Davidson County
Anglo-German Cemeteries: overall
Continuation sheet 7

Item number 6

Page



Davidson County Anglo-German Cemetery Thematic Nomination: cemeteries included

- DV-626 Good Hope Methodist Church Cemetery
NW jct. of NC 150 and SR 1445, Welcome vic. Welcome Quad.

- DV-343 Beulah Church of Christ Cemetery
E. side SR 1457 0.1 mi. N of jct. with SR 1460, Welcome Quad.

- DV-146 Bethany Lutheran & German Reformed Church Cemetery
E side SR 1716 0.2 mi. S. of jct. with SR 1800, Midway Quad.

- DV-169 Waggoner Graveyard. Owner C. L. Wagner, Jr., Estate, Route 12, Box 327,
Lexington, N.C. 27292
S side of SR 1814, on a dirt lane 1 mile from road, on top of hill, Midway
Quad.

- DV-76 Abbott's Creek Primitive Baptist Church Cemetery
E side SR 1743 at jct. with SR 1733, Thomasville vic., Kernersville Quad.

- DV-294 Old St. Luke's Lutheran Church Cemetery
S side SR 1176 0.6 mi. W. of jct. with NC 150, Tyro vic., Churchland Quad.

- DV-351 Pilgrim Lutheran & Reformed Church Cemetery
In jct. of SR 1841 and 1843, Lexington vic., Lexington East Quad.

- DV-502 Beck's Reformed Church Cemetery
E side SR 2250 0.2 mi. S. of jct. with SR 2249, Lexington East Quad.

- DV-627 Fair Grove Methodist Church Cemetery
In jct. of SR 2072 and 2070 and old NC 109, south Thomasville, Fair Grove Quad.

- DV-628 Emanuel Church of Christ Cemetery
W. side SR 2060 0.3 mi. S. of jct. with SR 2734, Thomasville vic. Fair Grove
Quad.

- DV-9 Jersey Baptist Church Cemetery
NE jct. of SR 1104 and 1272, Linwood vic., Southmont Quad.

- DV-629 Spring Hill Methodist Protestant Church Cemetery
NW side SR 1755 0.2 mi. S. of jct. with SR 1741, High Point vic.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Davidson County
Anglo-German Cemeteries: overall
Continuation sheet 7

Item number 7

Page

Footnotes

¹Davidson County Inventories, Sales, Accounts, Vol. 1, 1830-1832, p. 102.

²Ibid., p. 454, voucher no. 10.

³Ibid., Vol. 6, 1852-1857 (estate of Jacob Beck), p. 452, voucher no. 2; (estate of John Fritts), p. 481.

⁴J. W. McCrary, "The Early Years of County History as Seen by J. W. McCrary," reprinted in Rev. Jacob Leonard, Centennial History of Davidson County, North Carolina (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1927), 177; Davidson County Court Minutes, 1823-1831, Sept. session, 1825. North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina.

⁵U.S. Census, Davidson County, 1860. Industrial Schedule; Davidson County Inventories, Sales, Accounts, 1830-1863, North Carolina State Archives.

8 SIGNIFICANCE**X**

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1771-ca. 1850 STONECUTTERS David Sowers, Swisegood School, John Rikard, Nathan Parks (?), Joseph Clodfelter

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The twelve cemeteries included in the Davidson County Anglo-German Cemeteries thematic nomination contain gravestones carved by local stonecutters between 1771 and about 1850. These imaginative folk monuments, the most significant belonging to a "Pierced Style" which is unique to Davidson County, are the most visible artifacts produced by the German and Swiss settlers. The finest gravestones were cut by the Swisegood School, a group of part-time cabinetmakers, and by David Sowers, local craftsman, between about 1815 and about 1850. These folk designs combine elements of the eighteenth century Baroque style, German fraktur art symbols such as the fylfot cross, the sunburst, and the tree-of-life, and techniques and motifs from cabinetmaking to produce a body of gravestone art which has no parallel in the United States or, apparently, in Europe. These Davidson County cemeteries, concentrated in the northern half of the county, form the decorative arts complement to the architectural resources of Davidson County, recognized in the Multiple Resource Nomination.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

A, C These twelve cemeteries derive their primary significance from the artistic distinction of the locally-carved gravestones erected there in the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, representing the height of folk art accomplishments within the craft community of the Anglo-German farmers of north Davidson County.

The North Carolina Piedmont was settled in the mid-eighteenth century by Germans, Scotch-Irish and Quakers from Pennsylvania. The wide variety of local stone deposits, soft enough to be worked with crude tools, combined with the decorative craft traditions of these settlers, cross-fertilized while in Pennsylvania, resulted in a flowering of folk art in stone which had no parallel in eastern North Carolina, which was ethnically homogenous and lacked native stone. Although there are distinct decorative schools of gravestone carving throughout the Piedmont, the most significant in the first half of the nineteenth century are found inside the boundaries of Davidson County.

Both cultural and geographic conditions contributed to this efflorescence of folk art. Of all the Piedmont immigrants, the Germans proportionately produced the most visually recognizable decorative art. German Protestants were the dominant ethnic group in north Davidson County during the eighteenth century,¹ and many of them were from Palatine Germany. Among the earliest settlers were Philip Sauer, who came from the Palatine to Pennsylvania in 1749 and moved to Davidson County in 1753; Adam Conrath, first generation American who moved to Davidson County about 1763; and Peter Hedrich, who came from the Palatine to America in 1738 and moved to Davidson between 1755 and 1760.² These farmers established loosely knit communities focused around their churches in north Davidson County. Although the earliest graveyards were on the family farms, it became customary to use the church cemetery by the end of the eighteenth century.

Davidson remained a rural, thinly settled area, with no urban center until 1856 when the North Carolina Railroad was constructed through the county seat of Lexington. Until then, the county had little access to mass-produced products exported from major metropolitan centers, and the self-sufficient farmers were accustomed to making nearly everything they needed. Nearly every farmer apparently had a sideline craft, and the best-known local craft community is known as the "Swisegood School of cabinetmakers" after its most productive member, John Swisegood. This flourished from about 1810 to the mid-century. The unique body of folk gravestones produced in Davidson County represent the fortuitous conjunction of talented craftsmen, a captive local market, and an abundant supply of soapstone which could be worked with woodworking tools.

Ten of the twelve cemeteries included in this nomination are located in north Davidson County where the German population was concentrated. These include the five

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY See individual nominations

UTM REFERENCES See individual nominations

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See individual cemetery nominations.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Davidson County

Anglo-German Cemeteries: overall

Continuation sheet

8

Item number

1

Page

oldest Lutheran and Reformed congregations: Pilgrim (DV-351), established about 1757; Beck's (DV-502), established in 1787; Beulah (DV-343), established about 1788; St. Luke's (DV-294), established about 1788; Bethany (DV-146), established in 1789; and Emanuel (DV-628), established about 1813. Also included are two Primitive Baptist congregations, Abbott's Creek (DV-76), established about 1755 and Jersey Church (DV-9), established about 1756; three Methodist churches, Fair Grove (DV-627), established in 1829, Spring Hill (DV-629), established in 1830, Good Hope (DV-626), established ca. 1831, and one family cemetery, the Waggoner Graveyard.³ Of this group, Beck's and Jersey churches are the only churches located in the southern half of the county. The gravestones of the Swisegood School are concentrated at Bethany and Abbott's Creek, the gravestones of David Sowers primarily at Pilgrim Church, those of the "Master of the Upper and Lower Case" primarily at Beulah and Good Hope churches, John Rikard's stones at Emanuel and Pilgrim, and the "Modern Master's" stones at Emanuel, Pilgrim and Jersey churches. Derivative examples of the "Pierced Style" are found throughout north Davidson. Isolated instances of imported professional gravestones, notably by George Lauder of Fayetteville, Traugott Leinback of Salem, Davidson of Petersburg, Virginia, and Samuel Watson and James Caveny of York County, South Carolina, occur in the twelve cemeteries, but not until the railroad era do imported gravestones become common. By about 1860, local stonecutters were virtually out-of-business due to the import trade. Not until the 1880s did the county⁴ have its first fulltime stonecutter, H. J. Hege, who opened a marbleyard in Lexington.

Only one of the locally-made gravestones is signed, by one Joseph Clodfelter. The earliest extant estate records begin in 1830, therefore it is not possible to identify any of the first generation of stonecutters. However, seven volumes of estate records covering the period from 1830-1863 are preserved in the North Carolina Archives, and contain receipts and voucher records which identify two stonecutters: David Sowers and John Rikard. Some forty individuals are paid for coffins in these estate records, including Jesse Clodfelter, Jonathan Long, and John Swisegood, the three most prominent craftsmen in the Swisegood School of cabinetmakers. The connection between coffins and gravestones is quite direct, and it is likely that some of these coffin makers also cut tombstones. A close connection between these two crafts also existed in other areas of North Carolina throughout the nineteenth century.

Pierced Style: Circa 1800-1850

The Swisegood school of cabinetmakers began as early as 1809 with Mordica Collins, who, in 1810, took John Swisegood as apprentice to the cabinetmaker and joiner trade. In 1816 or 1817 Collins moved to Indiana and Swisegood subsequently took Jesse Clodfelter and Jonathan Long as apprentices. Long continued the school for thirteen years after Swisegood moved to Illinois in 1845. The exact location of Swisegood's shop is unknown, but land transactions point to the Reedy Branch, a prong of the Brushy Fork of Abbotts Creek.⁵ The speciality of the school was the corner cupboard, whose elaborate Baroque pediments, rosette sunbursts, diagonal moldings, pilasters, and inlay work and piercing are closely related in both time period and style to the "Pierced Style" gravestones.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Davidson County
Anglo-German Cemeteries: overall 8
Continuation sheet

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Item number

2

Page

Joseph Clodfelter, the only identified carver of the "Pierced Style," was not linked with the Swisegood School in the only published study of their work. Unlike the other cabinetmakers he did not sign any known pieces of furniture. However, he lived near Swisegood and Long, and, like them, received payment for coffins.⁶ The scanty biographical information available indicates that he practiced cabinetmaking as a sideline. Joseph was born in 1801 to Jacob and Margaret Clodfelter. Jacob was the grandson of Felix Gladfelter who moved to the county from Pennsylvania in 1768, settling on the Brushy Fork of Abbotts Creek.⁷ Jacob was prosperous, and when he died in 1837 he left his son Joseph the 200-acre plantation where he lived and a slave named Joseph. His estate inventory includes cabinetmaking tools: bow saw, cross-cut saw, tenant saw, hand saw, mill saw, planes, augers, a turning lathe, turning chisels, drawing knives, a set of tongue and grooving planes, a gauging rod, iron wedges, 1 large "compas," a "compas saw," and 10,000 feet of plank and scantling.⁸ These tools are identical to those listed in the 1842 estate inventory of James Crawford, a stone-cutter who carved gravestones in York County, South Carolina. The 1813 and 1814 gravestones of Felix Gladfelter and his wife Sarah, the seminal monuments of the Pierced Style, may have been cut by Jacob.

In 1828 Joseph bought 200 acres on a tributary of Brushy Fork, adjacent to the Daniel Wagoner property, from his father for \$900.⁹ By 1830 he was married, and in the 1850 census he is listed as a prosperous farmer, worth \$2,500, living with his wife Charity and seven children. The three oldest sons, Adam, 21, Joseph, 18, and Jacob, 16, are shown as laborers.¹⁰ When he died in 1872 at the age of 71, he left his 200-acre plantation to his wife Charity and sizeable farms to almost all of his children. In his estate, valued at \$1,114, were the following tools which were not standard equipment for a farmer:

1 "lerrtting Box," wedges, joiners, adzes, augers, files,
drawing knives, saws, chisels, and planes.¹¹

Assuming that both Jacob and Joseph Clodfelter carved pierced gravestones, it is impossible to separate their work. However, Jacob's own tombstone is almost certainly Joseph's work, and it is one of the finest examples of the mature "Pierced Style." The pierced gravestones of Jacob Clodfelter, died 1837, and his wife Margaret, died 1857, are almost identical, and stand side by side in Bethany Churchyard. Although the two markers must have been carved at the same time, Jacob's inscription is crudely lettered, while Margaret's inscription is in a professional lettering style. Joseph apparently inscribed his father's stone and left his mother's marker blank. Twenty years later, when she died, a professional stonecutter must have been hired to inscribe her marker. Careful examination of Joseph's signature on the 1802 Josiah Spurgin headstone at Abbott's Creek Church reveals that while Joseph excelled in shaping, molding and piercing the soapstone slab, his lack of education and exposure to professional inscriptions handicapped his ability to inscribe words. His signature is carved in ungrammatical, awkward upper case lettering, and the main body of the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination FormDavidson County
Anglo-German Cemeteries: overall
Continuation sheet 8

Item number 3

Page

For NPS use only
received
date entered

inscription is carved in a different, professional lettering style. Based on the signed Spurgin gravestone and circumstantial evidence presented here, the thirty to forty finest examples of the "Pierced Style" are attributed to Joseph Clodfelter, but the diversity of lettering styles on these gravestones indicates considerable collaboration regarding the inscriptions. It is likely that other cabinetmakers in the Swisegood School carved occasional gravestones, accounting for the diversity of style of the Pierced Tradition, but the finest of the style seem to be by one hand-- Joseph Clodfelter.

Fraktur Style: 1812-1834

About 1815 when the seminal headstones of the Pierced style were being cut for the patriarchs of the Clodfelter family at Bethany Church, David Sowers was creating a related style of equally high quality at Pilgrim Churchyard near Lexington. David Sowers was born September 29, 1794 to Valentine and Ann Maria Eva Sowers, members of Pilgrim Church.¹² Valentine was a son of Philip Sauer, 1735-1784, who emigrated from Palatine Germany to Pennsylvania in 1749 and settled near Pilgrim Church in 1753.¹³ Valentine must have been a carpenter, for in 1831 the county court authorized him to rebuild a bridge on Rich Fork,¹⁴ and David may have followed his father's trade. In 1818 David married Sarah Long, and by 1830 the couple had four children.¹⁵ In 1835 the family joined a group of 25 relatives and neighbors and moved to Fountain County, Indiana, where they remained the rest of their lives.¹⁶ The dates when David would have been active as a craftsman, from the age of 21 in 1815 to his departure in 1835, dovetail exactly with the death dates on the gravestones attributed to him. By about 1820 Sowers incorporated pierced fylfots into his gravestones--probably resulting from the influence of the Pierced gravestones of the Swisegood School, but his general orientation was toward incised decoration, probably influenced from fraktur art rather than the relief ornament orientation of the cabinetmaking trade.

John Rikard: 1842-1866

The other stonecutter whose identity is known from the estate records, John Rikard (Rickard), is more mysterious than Sowers, because he has not been located in other county or genealogical records. The numerous spellings of his last name make it especially difficult to trace him. The John Reichard (1790-1863) buried at Emanuel Church where most of the gravestones attributed to him are located may be the same individual.

"Modern Master" (Nathan Parks?): 1829-1848

One more individual whose identity can be assembled through documents is Nathan Parks, perhaps the last folk stonecutter in Davidson County. Parks may be the "Modern Master" whose gravestones form the transition from the Pierced style to the nationally popular urn-and-willow style. In 1825 he apprenticed with Joseph Conrad, Lexington cabinetmaker who moved there from Philadelphia in 1821. Conrad may have been Lexington's first undertaker, and was paid frequently for making coffins in the estate

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Davidson County
Anglo-German Cemeteries: overall
Continuation sheet 8

Item number

4

Page

For NPS use only
received
date entered

records from the 1830s to the 1860s.¹⁷ In the 1860 Industrial Schedule of the United States census, Parks listed an annual product of "100 cupboards, coffins, bureaus & c." worth \$1,000.¹⁸ There are no references to Parks being paid specifically for gravestones, but he is the only known cabinetmaker in the county who had professional training (under Conrad) and could have produced these transitional gravestones. Circumstantially, the finest gravestone of his attributed oeuvre is for one Jane Park, perhaps a relative.

The continued existence of this nationally significant body of folk sculpture in Davidson County is in question. Not only are the inscriptions on the gravestones becoming illegible because of weathering, but the soft soapstone is being scarred along the base lines by lawnmowers used to maintain the cemeteries. In 1982 a large group of late nineteenth and twentieth century gravestones at Abbott's Creek Church Cemetery were vandalized by unknown persons, although, luckily, none of the locally-made monuments were damaged. Perhaps the most destructive threat to the folk gravestones is indifference. Their distinctive aesthetic quality is practically unrecognized by local citizens, and no conservation plans have yet been formulated. The photographic survey of these Davidson County monuments had a dual purpose: both to create an archival record, and to generate public awareness and support for an active conservation program. In addition to more careful protection of the cemeteries themselves, it is hoped that the most important gravestones can be relocated to a local museum of folk art, and replicas substituted in the cemeteries.

Footnotes

¹M. Jewell Sink and Mary Green Matthews, Pathfinders Past and Present: A History of Davidson County, North Carolina (High Point, N.C.: Hall Printing Company, 1972), 16-22.

²These references to the founding families of Davidson County were taken from historical plaques erected by their descendants in the churchyards of Beulah Church, Pilgrim Church, and Beck's Church.

³Leonard, 371-425; Sink and Matthews, 18-22, 145-146, 161, 393-394; monuments and plaques in various church cemeteries.

⁴Branson's North Carolina Business Directory.

⁵Bradford L. Rauschenberg, "A Study of Baroque- and Gothic-Style Gravestones in Davidson County, North Carolina," Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts, 3, 2 (Nov. 1977), 43.

⁶Jacob Clodfelter Estate File, Davidson County; Davidson County Inventories, Sales, Accounts, Vol. 5, 1847-1851 (estate of Sarah Snider), p. 413, voucher no. 10, North Carolina State Archives.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Davidson County

Anglo-German Cemeteries: overall 11
Continuation sheet 8

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Item number

5

Page

- ⁷ Cyril L. Johnson, The Family of Noah Clodfelter (Russellville, Indiana: 1954), 388-396.
- ⁸ Will and Estate Files of Jacob Clodfelter, North Carolina State Archives.
- ⁹ Davidson County Deed Book 5, page 186, North Carolina State Archives.
- ¹⁰ U.S. Census, Davidson County. Population Schedule. 1830, 1850. North Carolina State Archives.
- ¹¹ Will and Estate Files of Joseph Clodfelter, North Carolina State Archives.
- ¹² Record Book of Pilgrim Reformed Lutheran Church, Davidson County, N.C. Original is in the North Carolina Lutheran Synod Office, Salisbury, and an English translation is in the North Carolina State Archives.
- ¹³ Monument in Pilgrim Churchyard, erected by descendants in 1967.
- ¹⁴ Davidson County Court Minutes, 1823-1831, February session, North Carolina State Archives.
- ¹⁵ Davidson County Marriage Bonds; United States Census, Davidson County, 1820, 1830, Population Schedules, North Carolina State Archives.
- ¹⁶ Ruth Sowers Owen, "A Thousand Doors: The History of Philip Sauer (Sowers) and His 14 Children," typescript, 1970, Lexington Public Library, 56.
- ¹⁷ Davidson County Inventories, Sales, Accounty, 1830-1853, North Carolina State Archives.
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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Davidson County
Anglo-German Cemeteries: overall
Continuation sheet 9

Item number 1

Page

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