



## PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

*Note: PIFs are prepared by applicants and evaluated by DHR staff and the State Review Board based on information known at the time of preparation. Recommendations concerning PIFs are subject to change if new information becomes available.*

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 186-5173

### 1. General Property Information

Property name: Boswell Mansion

Property address: 679 Main Street

City or Town: Chase City

Zip code: 23924

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Mecklenburg

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building X Site \_\_\_\_\_ Structure \_\_\_\_\_ Object \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 1.4

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban \_\_\_\_\_ Suburban \_\_\_\_\_ Town X Village \_\_\_\_\_ Hamlet \_\_\_\_\_ Rural \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe the property's overall location and setting, including any notable landscape features:

The property fronts the northeasterly side of North Main Street, State Route 49, and is set back approximately one hundred feet on a gentle slope rising away from the street. There is a retaining wall facing North Main Street that is original to the site. Stairs are built into the retaining wall leading to a concrete walk leading to the front and side door. Another walk with stairs leads from the front door to the driveway.

The property is improved by one residential building, construction of which began in 1912 and is believed to have been completed by 1915.

The mansion is the only remaining building still standing. In 1964, there was a garage with an oil pit and a small building that may have been a living space for a servant. Though the building no longer survives, a foundation still remains. Oral history suggests the garage was one of the first – if not the first – built in Chase City to house an automobile.

### 3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Georgian Revival or Colonial Revival

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: Original unknown – recent advice from Lamplight Design Studios of Charlottesville, Virginia

If the builder is known, please list here: Unknown

Date of construction (can be approximate): 1912 to 1915

#### **Narrative Description (Please do not exceed one page in describing the property):**

Undergoing restoration to be operated as a bed and breakfast with a café and speakeasy, the house has been improved from a state of neglect to an insurable property.

The house is commonly described as containing (approximate areas) of a total of 5,400 square feet on the two main floors, plus 3,200 square feet on the ground level (below the main floor), 890 square feet of attic space, a 630 square foot front porch, and off each of the two main floors a rear porch containing 250 square feet. Modifications and current plans have resulted or will result in ten bedrooms, ten full baths and five half-baths.

Among its unique architectural features:

- The front porch has more than twenty tapered wood columns with Corinthian caps, and a floor mosaic made up of individually laid, one-inch marble pieces.
- The solid mahogany front entry door is forty-eight inches wide and seven feet tall and is hung on solid -brass, ball-bearing hinges.
- The roof is covered in Buckingham slate as are the sides of each of the six large dormers.
- Ceilings in the house on the two main floors are greater than ten feet in height and interior doors are seven feet tall and thirty-six inches wide, and there are three sets of four-foot-wide pocket doors of the same material, each creating an eight-foot wide opening greater than nine feet in height.
- Mahogany raised panel woodwork is found in the large foyer containing 400 square feet, and also lines the main front staircase and the dining room, the paneling in the dining room topped by double plate display grooves.
- There are nine fireplaces, each with a custom mantel.
- The main staircase is four feet wide with a single with a single-piece, steam-bent, curved wood rail.
- Hardware throughout the house was produced by P&F Corbin.
- The majority of the windows in the house are original. The Higgins Manufacturing company was the vendor for all the windows, window screens, screen doors and custom shades for the mansion. Windows and shutters are all numbered - brass tacks in the windowsill note the number for the window and corresponding shutter.
- Exterior walls are sprayed Gunitite.

Other features include:

- Picture moldings; tapered and fluted interior columns, a spider window and a large picture window, each with hang-blown, beveled glass; five custom-shaped chimneys; rear staircases from basement to attic; a steel hoist on the upper rear porch for luggage; sconce lighting throughout; original radius curved walls; transom windows on exterior doors and on many interior doors; quarter-sawn clear oak flooring and seasonal fireplace covers and a coal chute door of cast iron.

In a bullet list, include any outbuildings or secondary resources or major landscape features (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

- Original retaining wall and sidewalk leading to front porch Existing Foundation
- Garage - 1912 - 1915
- Sealed concrete slab well -1912 – 1915

#### **4. Property's History and Significance (Please do not exceed one page)**

Construction began on the house in 1912, only a few years after the fire of 1903 which drastically affected the commercial and industrial area of Chase City.

The house was the residence of Charles Meigs (C.M.) Boswell and his family, including his wife, Etta Lee Elam Boswell, his two children, Robert Iverson Boswell and Charles Meigs Boswell, Jr., his sister-in-law, Alma May Elam, and until her death in 1921, his mother, Mary Lucinda Robertson Boswell. Following Charles' death in 1927, it was the residence of his wife, Etta, until her death in 1964.

C.M. Boswell was the great-grandson of Private John Iverson Boswell (1761 to 1823), the grandson of John Iverson Boswell, Jr. (1796 to 1846), and the son of Dr. John Iverson Boswell, III (1821 to 1895), the latter of whom practiced medicine in Chase City and whose home and office were located in a house on the adjacent property.

C.M. Boswell was prominent in the post-fire development of Chase City as president of the local bank and as an entrepreneur who began the Southern Roller Mill for grain milling, also in 1912, who was able to spur line a line which connected to the railroad and enabled the establishment of an ice company near the grain mill to supply ice over an area which at one time extended from Richmond, Virginia, to the Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina. The spur line was also useful in his establishment of a coal distribution business.

Among several notable relatives was an uncle of C.M. Boswell, Dr. Lewis Archer Boswell (1834 to 1909), who was a medical doctor educated at Johns Hopkins University and who served as a Confederate surgeon in Richmond before moving in the later 1860s to Alabama where he gained renown for his interest and experiments in aeronautics, receiving a patent in 1874 for "an improvement in Aerial Propeller-Wheels." He was said to have flown a heavier-than-air craft before the 1903 flight of the Wright Brothers, and in 2002, the airfield at Talladega, Alabama was renamed Boswell Field in his honor.

Dr. John Iverson Boswell settled in Chase City after his graduation from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, PA in 1851 at the age of 22. In 1855, Dr. Boswell married Mary Linton Robertson, age 22, from Suffolk, VA and the couple had 7 children. Dr. Boswell owned a large tract of land in Chase City along what is now North Main Street where the home still stands at 655 North Main.

In 1892, the Times in Richmond reported "Dr. John I. Boswell, formerly of Richmond, was stricken with paralysis Sunday night." Dr. Boswell sons, Charles Meigs (known as C.M.), John Iverson, Jr, Henson and Ballard were all working in Richmond at the time. C.M. was a founding member in 1887 of Albemarle Paper Company and his younger brother Henry L. was the Northern representative of the paper company. C.M. served as the Secretary-Treasurer from 1892 until 1907, when he was elected to the presidency for a short time. Dr. Boswell died in May of 1895 and in December of that year, C.M. married Etta Elam. Etta was from Suffolk, VA where the Boswell and Robertson family had many family ties. C.M. appeared to be very close to his

mother and sister, Margaret Ann (called Nannie by the family). Both were noted living with the family in the 1910 census. In 1920, his mother is still listed as a resident. She died in 1921 at the age of 88. C.M. and Etta, had 3 children (their daughter Mary Elizabeth only lived 2 years). Robert Iverson was born in 1898, and Charles M. Jr was born in 1909.

The 1910's were a period of growth in Chase City and C.M from Richmond and established South Side Supply Company in 1912. C.M served as President - with his brother Thomas, his uncle J.A. Robertson and his cousin Arthur F Robertson serving as investors and members of the board. The company expanded quickly, adding an ice factory, cold storage plant, a cotton gin and a coal yard. In June 1912, C.M convinced the Southern Railroad to contract an industrial railroad spur along the west property line of the Roller Mills. The cost was \$1,841. The spur was one block from the Chase City Power Plant and the town of Chase City agreed to pay \$500 toward the spur's construction, since the Power Plant would use the spur as well.

In 1916, C.M. founded the Peoples Bank and Trust, 319 N. Main Street: Constructed ca. 1916, this one-story former bank features Neo-Classical Revival elements such as a monumental triangular pediment, acanthus ornament, and a dentilled stone entablature. The Bank building is part of the Chase City Warehouse and Commercial Historic District. The bank was the only bank in Chase City that survived the Depression.

The best we can establish concerning when C.M. began building Boswell Mansion is around 1912. The Tradesman, noted as "The South's Authoritative Industrial Trade Journal" in their September 26, 1912, issue announced "C.M. Boswell has begun work on a stucco residence to cost \$15,000" in Chase City. There is a note written on a beam in the basement of the mansion stating "This house was fin. May" but the year is illegible, (it could be 1912 or 1915). The "Social and Personal" column in the Richmond Times Dispatch, August 8, 1912, reported that the Boswell's were staying at Ginter Park at the home of his cousin Arthur Robertson, "making final purchases before opening their handsome new home at Chase City, which has just been completed.

Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property, such as deeds, census and tax records, and/or published articles and books. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

- The Old Free State: A Contribution to the History of Lunenburg County and Southside Virginia – Landon C. Bell, 1927
- Albemarle: From Pines to Packaging - 75 Years of Papermaking Progress 1887 – 1962 – Floyd Dewey Gottwald
- Richmond Times Dispatch May 12, 1912 – "Hustling Towns in Old Virginia: Bird's -Eye Views of Two Crackerjack Minor Cities in the Southside: Chase City and South Boston
- Images of America: Chase City -- John Caknipe, Jr., 2008
- Internet searches
- Physical examination and restoration work

**5. Property Ownership** (Check as many categories as apply):

Private:  X  Public\Local \_\_\_\_\_ Public\State \_\_\_\_\_ Public\Federal \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property** (If the property has more than one owner, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title: Boswell Mansion LLC

organization: \_\_\_\_\_

street & number: 679 North Main Street

city or town: Chase City state: VA zip code: 23924

e-mail: boswellmansion@gmail.com telephone: 540-223-00573

Legal Owner's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**• • Signature required for processing all applications. • •**

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: Timothy Patrick Flinn, Manager (Boswell Mansion LLC)

Daytime Telephone: 540-223-0573

**Applicant Information** (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)

name/title: Sue Tetterton and Timothy Flinn (combined PIF data, as determined by Ari Calos and Joanna McKnight, DHR's ERPO architectural historians)

organization: \_\_\_\_\_

street & number: \_\_\_\_\_

city or town: \_\_\_\_\_ state: \_\_\_\_\_ zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 7/7/2025

PLEASE DO NOT ATTACH CONTINUATION SHEETS TO THIS FORM. THANK YOU!

**186-5173 Boswell Mansion**  
**2025 PIF additional information**

Alterations

1970's

- in the basement, a vault was dug out under the front porch and a side entry on the basement level was added
- dropped ceilings and paneling were installed on the first floor in the "ladies parlor" to create an office space
- added a bathroom next to the back stairs outside the kitchen

1980's – 1990's

- used the hallway bathroom on 2nd floor and reframed it to create a bathroom for the back bedroom – late 1980's – 1990's
- used closet space in the other bedrooms to frame in bathrooms for 5 bathrooms - late 1980's - 1990's
- added staircases to the back porches from 2<sup>nd</sup> floor to 1<sup>st</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> to the basement level -
- added a staircase from the second floor to the attic - late 1980's - 1990's

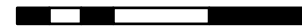
2023 - current

- reinforced the staircase from the entryway to the second floor
- roof was patched to prevent further water damage on the second floor
- fascia was repaired around the entire mansion
- removed drop ceiling and paneling on the first floor
- uncovered fireplace in the "ladies' parlor"
- installed tin ceiling in living room
- patched plaster ceiling in dining room and along the hallway on the first floor

## PIF BOUNDARY MAP

Boswell Mansion  
Chase City, Mecklenburg County, VA  
DHR ID# 186-5173

 Proposed Boundary

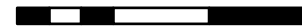
0 50 100 150  
 Feet



# PIF AERIAL-VICINITY MAP

Boswell Mansion  
Chase City, Mecklenburg County, VA  
DHR ID# 186-5173

 Proposed Boundary

0 150 300 450  
 Feet









































































