



Bobby Grier House (Robert Grier House),

Matthews-Weddington Rd., Matthews, N.C.

One of Mecklenburg County's oldest antebellum mansions was built by Robert Grier c. 1830-35. The structure was lost to fire in 1976. The roof was supported by four towering brick columns that extended 18 inches from the porch and rested on large blocks of sandstone. Most of the nine rooms were handsomely paneled in virgin pine and five of them had fireplaces. Owned by Mrs. L.H. Parham (Mary Elizabeth Chambers Parham), 1440 Scotland Ave., Charlotte, N. C., the house was occupied by the family of S.C. Forbis, 85-year-old retired farmer. Mrs. Parham's son is Lewis H. Parham, Jr. Mrs. Parham stated in a letter to the HLC office dated Aug. 30, 1976, "that the property was purchased by my father in the early twenties, or shortly before for the purposed of agronomics and it is, therefore, not my family ancestral estate."

Charlotte Observer article by Dot Jackson, 9/6/1976

"Unpainted, Unplumbed- Still It Was A Regal Sentinel"

Sometimes a thing can wait only 150 years. One day longer and you're too late.

Last week Bill McCallister and I were out on a story, and we came around a bend in the Matthews-Weddington Road, and there it was.

Talk about the Ideal Home, this one all but jumped out and hollered. It was the most Ideal, the most regal in its unplumbedness and unpaintedness, the most touching and entreating.

It was kept, but nobody lived there. The porches up and down had been built for sitting and rocking and shelling peas and tatting, and watching who went by.

The great rounded pillars in the front were layered for strength, curved handmade brick outside of heart of pine, and a little bit maybe for show. Hefty pine poles hid behind them.

We needed to stop and take its picture. But we did not have time. Some day very soon, we said.

It was like saying we would write poor old Aunt Neechie tomorrow, and then getting word the funeral was today. Because when I went back in less than week, there was nothing but the chimneys, and the bricks from the columns and a little tin that had been the roof.

That was the old Robert Grier house, built about 1835. It was not Robert Grier's only house. His other was on East Trade, where the law building stands now. Other ravages than fire have robbed downtown Charlotte of homes of that era.

But this was his country estate. It was where he fled to, with his daughters, when the Yankees came and camped on Trade Street and used his trees to barbecue neighbor's pigs and chickens. The wretches.

But the country house escaped invasion. When Robert was gone his sons farmed it. And then his grandson William who was no farmer sold it.

It passed to the George Chambers family, who rented it out to J.C. Forbis for over 40 years, and then Mrs. Mary Hudson rented it and lived there until a few weeks ago. The place is still owned by Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Chambers Parham, of Charlotte, who had kept it very nearly as it had been built.

What happened? Clyde Baucom, Matthews police chief, says he doesn't know how it started, but sometime in the night Monday the house caught fire. "It wasn't occupied. If a house is occupied and something like this happens it's usually an accident. When one is empty, it's less likely..."

Out in the country sometimes you can follow the arsonists by the smoking ashes and bereft chimneys. "Some people get a kick out of that," Baucom says. "I really hated this."

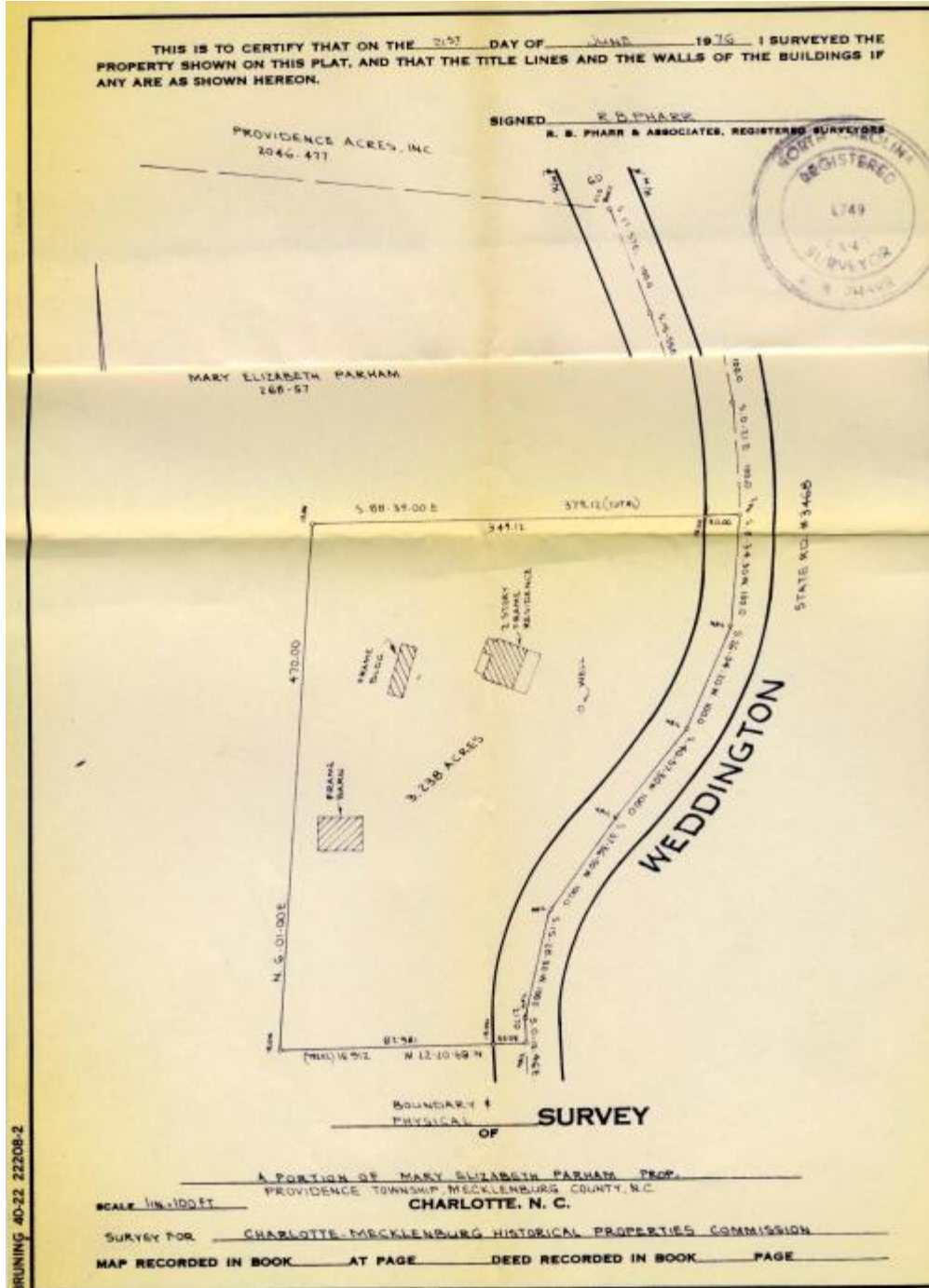
The W.O. Dukes, nearby neighbors, hated it too. "My wife and I were at home when it happened but we didn't hear a thing. The next morning when I drove by there on my way to work there was nothing but the chimneys." The Dukes have a painting of the house done by Elizabeth Higgings, one of several artists who- thank goodness- at least have its memory on canvas.

Carolina being as it is, the Grier descendants are in sorrow.

"I always thought how it would be, if I could buy it," says Marcia Grier Spencer, 28, great-great-granddaughter of the builder.

It would have been nice.

The Historic Landmarks Commission considered the property to be an important historic landmark. September 7, 1976, it was to be considered for designation as a historic landmark at a scheduled public hearing with Mecklenburg County Commissioners.





**Rear of Robert Grier Home, Matthews-Weddington Rd., Charlotte, N. C.
(burned 1976)**