

Survey and Research Report On The Wing Haven Gardens and Bird Sanctuary

September 15, 2007

1. Name and Location of Property:

The property known as Wing Haven Gardens and Bird Sanctuary is located at 248 Ridgewood Avenue, Charlotte, N.C. 28209. .

2. Name, address, telephone number of current owner: The owner of the property is the:

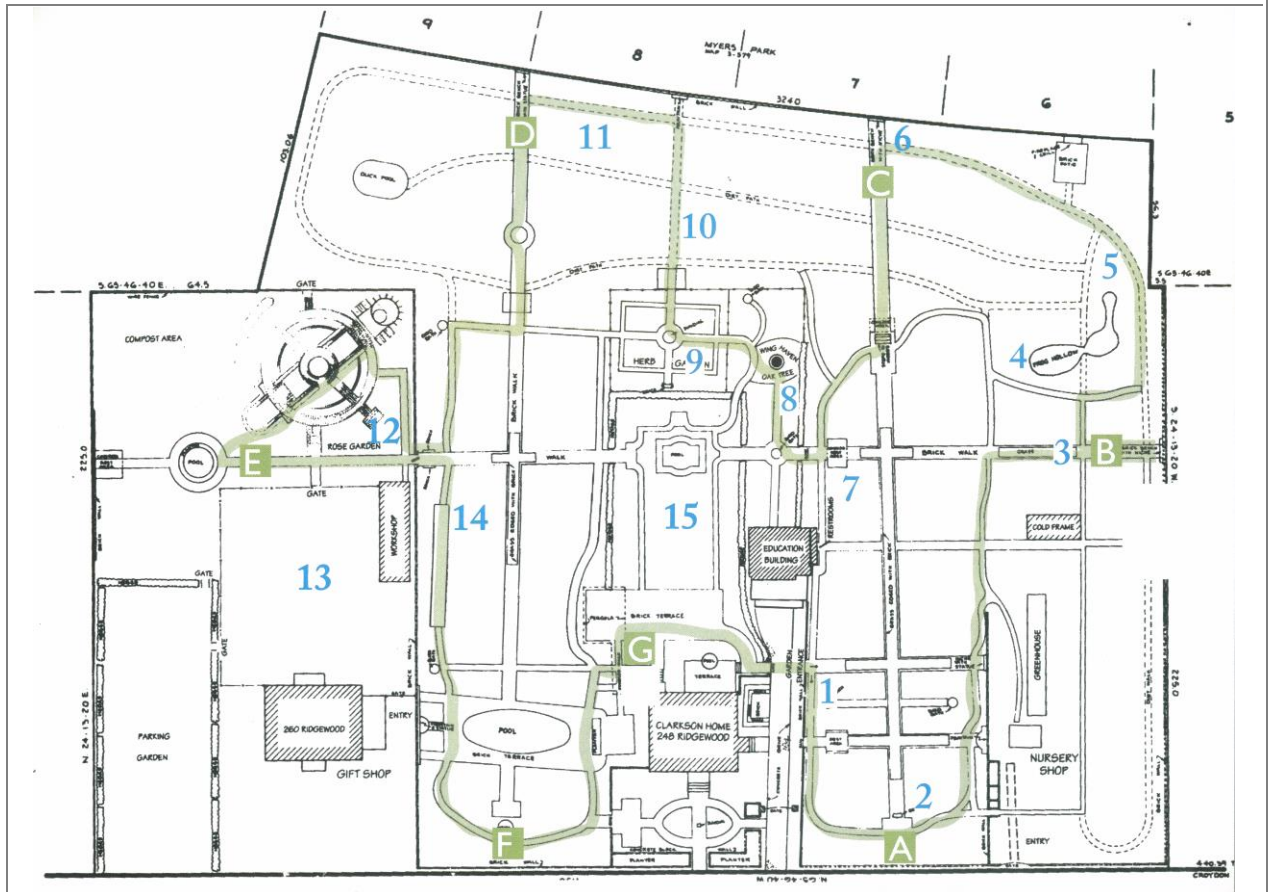
Wing Haven Foundation, Inc.
248 Ridgewood Avenue
Charlotte, NC 28209
704 – 331-0664
www.winghavengardens.com

3. Representative photographs of the property:

This report contains representative photographs of the property.

4. A Map depicting the location of the property:

This report contains two maps depicting the location and layout of the property. The UTM coordinates for the property are: 17 514561E 3892665N.



5. Current Deed Book of Reference:

The most recent deed to this property is listed in the Mecklenburg County Deed Books #05383 p 169. The Tax Parcel Number of the Property: 151-142-19, 151-142-40 and 151-142-41.

6. Brief Historical Sketch of property:

This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Diane C. Althouse, edited by Stewart Gray and Dan L. Morrill.

7. Brief Architectural description:

This report contains an architectural description of the property prepared by Diane C. Althouse, edited by Stewart Gray and Dan L. Morrill.

8. Documentation of how and in what ways this property meets historical preservation criteria set forth in N.C. G. S 160A-400-5:

a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and/or cultural importance: The Commission judges that the property known as the Wing Haven Gardens and Bird Sanctuary does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

1. Wing Haven is exceptional in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, containing a well preserved upper-middle class home and, more especially, surrounded by over two acres

of early-twentieth-century formal gardens that are predominately unchanged from the original design as conceived by the owners Edwin and Elizabeth Clarkson. The historic integrity of the plantings and design of the double cross pattern gardens have been exquisitely maintained.

2. Wing Haven has evolved into a private urban bird sanctuary, with the founding of the Mecklenburg Audubon Club occurring on the property in 1940. Public tours of the garden and bird sanctuary began in the 1950s. Wing Haven Gardens and Bird Sanctuary officially opened to the public in 1975, and is now run by The Wing Haven Foundation, Inc.

3. Wing Haven is significant for its association with Elizabeth Clarkson who wrote Birds of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, NC, as well as local and national articles on birds.

4. The Clarkson home is an excellent example of a 1927 Colonial Revival style house in what was initially called the Poplar Gables neighborhood, now considered a part of Myers Park.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, filings, and or associations: The Commission contends that the physical and architectural description by Diane C. Althouse, edited by Stewart Gray and Dan L. Morrill, which is included in this report demonstrates that the Wing Haven Gardens and Bird Sanctuary meets this criterion.

9. **Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal:** This property is owned by a not-for-profit entity and therefore does not pay taxes. The current appraised value of the 2.97 acres of land is \$350,000. The total current appraised value of the entire property is \$456,400.

10. **Portion of the Property Recommend for Designation:** This report recommends that the house at 248 Ridgewood Avenue, and 2.97 acres of land around the house, including all features of the landscape, be designated as a local historic landmark.

This map shows the area of Wing Haven recommended for local landmark designation. Hatch-marked areas are not included in the recommendation.

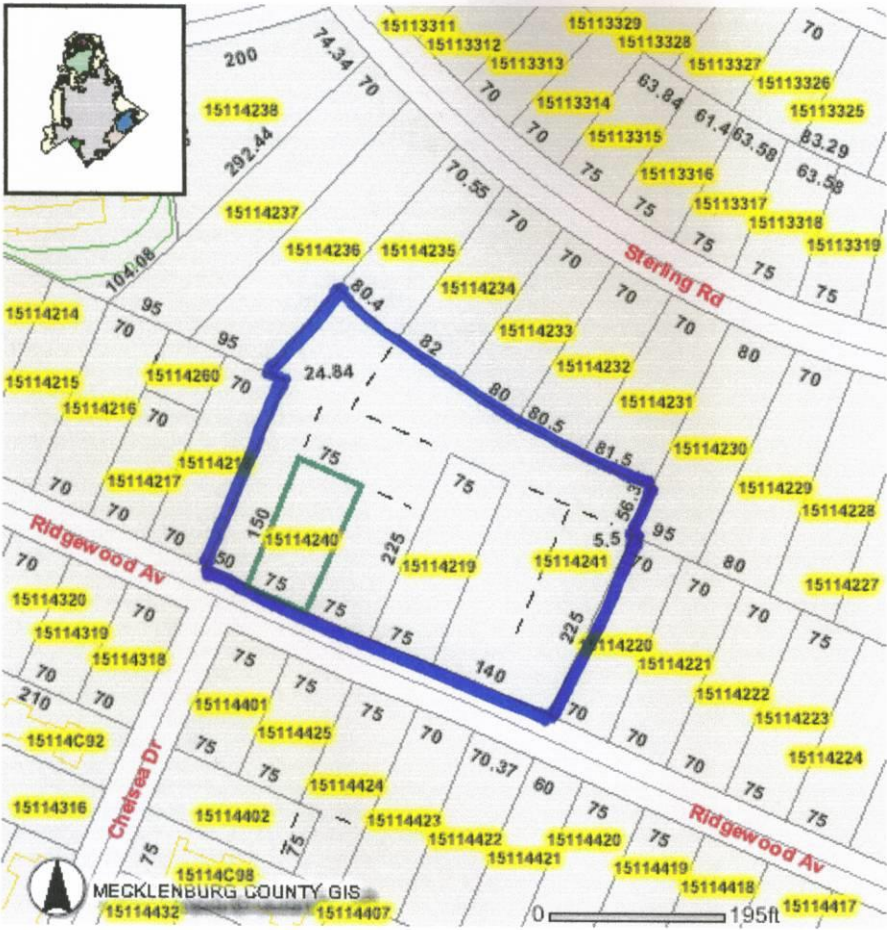


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Summary Statement of Significance

Wing Haven Gardens and Bird Sanctuary has been a cultural resource and source of inspiration for Charlotteans as well as visitors from elsewhere for over 80 years. Eddie and Elizabeth Clarkson created a distinct and beautiful garden and bird sanctuary on the edges of upper-class suburban Myers Park. There is nothing else that closely resembles Wing Haven in Charlotte or in any of the surrounding towns. Wing Haven was conceived and built as a privately supported endeavor. The house also has special significance, because it has a very high degree of interior and exterior integrity and also serves as the centerpiece of the garden. Wing Haven, the house and gardens, convey how the Clarksons lived, how they entertained, and what their priorities were – namely the garden and the birds.

Figure 1 – Tax Map of Wing Haven Gardens and Bird Sanctuary, 2006. The original house



Historical Sketch

Mary Norton Kratt tells the story of Elizabeth and Edwin O. Clarkson and their garden in her book, A Bird in the House: The Story of Wing Haven Gardens. The Wing Haven story begins as follows:

Elizabeth Barnhill told Eddie Clarkson on their first date in Boston, where he was working and where she was attending the New England Conservatory of Music, how she and her mother had raised white-winged doves. After five years of courtship in seven states and one foreign country, Eddie and Elizabeth became engaged. Eddie's father urged, "Don't let that pretty, little auburn-haired girl get away." Eddie proposed and drove his Essex auto to Uvalde, Texas in 1925 to give her an engagement ring.

The Clarksons, even before they married, decided to move to Charlotte and build a home. “She said she needed two weeks to draw up the plans.” Eddie Clarkson was a salesman in Charlotte, North Carolina, working for the Wesley T. Heath Corporation, which sold land and built homes.

In the fall of 1926 Eddie bought a 75' by 225' deep lot from Wesley Heath in the Poplar Gables neighborhood, with the idea that he would pay for the house over 10 years.

Elizabeth mailed Eddie her own design for the home she envisioned. During the fall before their marriage, Eddie received many letters from Elizabeth which contained sketches and building instructions. It would be a simple two-story frame house with large windowed rooms which drew the outdoors in. It would have a linear, wide-windowed kitchen where a servant could efficiently prepare meals and carry them to serve in the garden. Elizabeth planned a raised brick terrace off the double glass-doored living room to which her piano could be moved for entertaining at candlelit garden parties. And when they had children, they would add rooms in flanking wings which would balance the vertical house.

The Clarksons exchanged letters almost daily prior to their marriage.^[1] In a letter dated Wednesday, December 1926, she wrote:

Wednesday

Dearest Precious Boy,

...And Oh, I'm so happy that we'll be able to finish both bath rooms. You are perfectly wonderful, Eddie. I had no idea you could manage it right now. I thought perhaps we'd put it in in a few years but Darling, I'm just thrilled to death that we can though, Eddie.

I've thought of a way to place our fountain that I like even better than our original plan. If you don't like it though, Dearest, you just say where you want it placed. My idea is to place it in the center like this with half of it on the porch and half off of it. Do you see what I mean? (See Fig 7).

The bottom of the fountain could be below the porch level and the sides could rise above the porch level about a foot. Then we'd plant evergreens etc as a background for the fountain. Don't you think this is a lovely idea? This would give us so much porch room. If the fountain is four feet in diameter, 2 ft. of it would be on the porch or terrace and 2 ft. in the yard. Is my plan clear enough Dearest? And what do you think of it? ...

Good night, my own Beloved and all my love to you,

Elizabeth^[2]

Eddie executed her wishes exactly.

Figure 4 - Letter Dec 1926 from Elizabeth to Eddie about the terrace fountain. Source The Wing Haven Foundation archives.

like it though, Dearest, you just say
 where you want it placed. My
 idea is to place it
 in the center like
 this with half of it
 on the porch and half off of it. Do
 you see what I mean. The bottom
 of the fountain could be below the

Figure 5 - Terrace Fountain 2006. Photograph by Diane Althouse.



Mrs. Clarkson's kitchen design was based on her visit to the Pullman Car Company. The kitchen walls and cabinets were a dark bottle green (the same high-gloss dark green used in Eddie's bedroom, his bathroom and the guestroom on the second floor). As her letters indicate, Elizabeth was highly interested in the design and functionality of the kitchen; yet she was not planning to spend much time cooking.

In a letter dated March 6th from Valdese, TX, Elizabeth wrote to Eddie:

My Own Precious Boy,

*Your sweet letter came this afternoon and made me so happy....Today, Dearest, I tried to make another pie and succeeded this time. My crust was really very nice. **I'm really learning to cook, Eddie, Dear. I don't expect to use it all the time but it is alright for me to know how on occasion.** All my love to the most wonderful Boy in the world.*

Elizabeth^[3]

The Clarksons always had household help.

**Figure 2 - 218 Ridgewood Avenue, circa 1927.
Charlotte, NC. Courtesy of The Wing Haven Foundation, Inc.**



**Figure 3 – The Wing Haven House, May 2006.
Photograph by Diane Althouse.**



The house has many features specified by Elizabeth. These include the picture windows, the terrace fountain, the sewing room, the numerous built-ins for storage, the use of wall mirrors in every room but the kitchen and the bird feeders attached to the second floor windows and the dining room windows. She also envisioned formal gardens surrounding the house. Her designs brought the outside in, even including some of her pet birds, like Tommy the Bluebird who lived completely inside the house for about one year.^[4]

In terms of design, the most striking thing about the North East side of the house is the built-in bird feeder on the second floor just outside of Elizabeth's bedroom window. (Elizabeth was often ill in the early years of her marriage due to contracting undulant fever from unpasturized milk. She would spend days in bed, but because of her custom configuration of the windows she was able to see her garden and interact with the birds.) As previously mentioned, Elizabeth sent plans to Eddie prior to the construction of the house. Her goal was to bring as much light into the house as possible. She was also focused on having an almost 360 degree view of the garden from within the house.

The west elevation shows even more of Elizabeth's design ideas. There are three large picture windows on the first and second floors of the West (back) of the house. These were not original to the house, but added at a later date. The Picture windows replaced the original double six over one window on the second floor looking out of Elizabeth bedroom, and out of the Guest Bedroom on the right side of the second floor. The original double French doors off the living room were replaced with one large door with a single pane of glass. On the first floor, just off the living room, a small patio is accessed through a large glass (picture window like) door. This door was designed so that the Clarksons could roll the grand piano onto the terrace for outdoor concerts. On the second floor, there is a bird feeder attached to the center hall window that allows for the birds to enter and exit the house via a small opening built into the window frame. By April 1927 the house was finished. It was located in Poplar Gables, a new neighborhood

adjoining the well established Myers Park neighborhood. In contrast to Myers Park's curvilinear roads, Poplar Gables featured a standard grid pattern of streets. The Clarksons' lot in Poplar Gables at 218 Ridgewood Avenue was a flat rectangle featuring a simple box-like house set close to the street. There was hardly another house in sight when Elizabeth and Eddie arrived at the Charlotte train depot after their honeymoon in the spring of 1927. Elizabeth insisted on going immediately to the house and lot she had seen only in her imagination. Eddie slowed the car and stopped in front. Elizabeth gasped. The house stood stark and solitary in a field of hard, red mud with nothing green except a few waist-high pine seedlings. Eddie led her around back to the single tree, a spindly willow oak. Since Eddie did not have the door key to the house, they climbed in a window. He led her into the living room where his wedding present waited, a mahogany Steinway baby grand piano. *The next day Elizabeth started her garden.*"^[5]

Assembling the Property

In a 1988 taped interview between Wanny Hogewood, (a former Curator of Wing Haven) and Eddie Clarkson, Eddie describes how he bought and traded for the land that is now Wing Haven. Even before the purchase of the original lot Elizabeth Clarkson envisioned a multiple acre formal garden to surround their first house. Because they were one of the first residents of this part of Charlotte, Eddie Clarkson was able to procure the surrounding, undeveloped, lots in their first years of residency on Ridgewood Avenue. In the taped interview, Eddie chronicles for us the purchase price and creative barter sequence of his nine (9) extra lots. (Eddie's comments have been summarized or paraphrased, except where noted, for simplicity and clarity by Diane Althouse).

Lot 1 – The Original Lot and House

Fall 1926 – Eddie bought the house from Wesley Heath – his business partner. The lot was 75' by 225' deep. He said he would pay for the house over 10 years. (We do not know the purchase price). By **April 1927**, the house was complete.

Lot 2 – The Oval Pool Lot

The first additional lot was purchased from Home Realty Management Company. It is where the Oval Pool now sits. The asking price was \$3,000 – but he (Eddie) made them an offer that included the following: he would assume the \$1,000 mortgage that Home Realty Management had on the lot, and he would "swap" them five 50 foot lots in Belmont, N.C. He also took out a note for \$400.

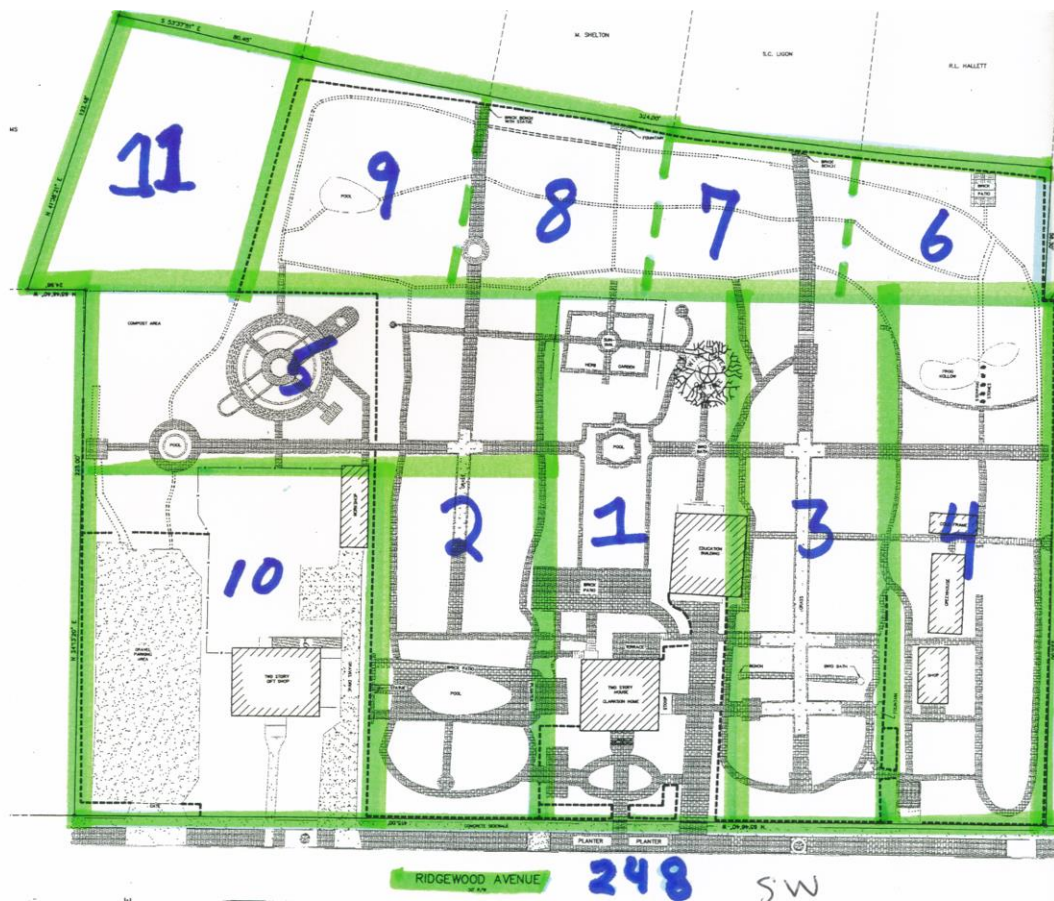
Lot 3 – The Upper Lot

James H. Carson of Carson Realty owned the lot. Eddie built houses for him. He wanted a \$1000 for the lot. Eddie gave him \$550 in cash and a note for \$1,000, plus a credit of \$800 on the next house Eddie built for Carson Realty.

Lot 4 – Greenhouse (Nursery) Lot

Eddie bought this lot from Lewis Radcliff. Eddie said, "Lewis really wanted to sell the lot. At first he asked for \$2950, but since he wanted to sell quickly he sold it to me (Eddie) for \$2200, which I paid him in \$100 increments for 22 months".

Figure 7 - Wing Haven Lots, Order of purchase between 1926 and 1937, with the exception of Lot 10 which was purchased in 1956 and now houses The Wing Haven Foundation Offices and Lot 11 which was purchased in the early 1990's by The Wing Haven Foundation. Source: 1988 Eddie Clarkson tape recorded interview and The Wing Haven Foundation.



Lot 5 – Woods Property

Stevens Company owned this lot. It was one acre – 100 feet by 400 feet. At first the Stevens Company Manger, D.C. Griffith said he would not sell Eddie the lots; nor would he name a price. But Eddie knew Bill Williams's father who owned 90% of the stock in the Stevens Company. He invited Bill Williams over – they walked the woods. Mr. Williams said – “Eddie this would make a great addition to your property.” Mr. Williams

liked the idea of “the Clarksons planning a bird sanctuary.” Eddie agreed. Mr. Williams called D. C. Griffith and told him to have the property surveyed and to transfer title to Eddie. He even paid the surveyor fee of \$250. He “gave” Eddie the property for only \$500. Eddie said, “Mr. Williams wanted me (Eddie) to have it and practically gave it to me. Mr. Williams was a wealthy man of fine character.”

The 1929 Sanborn Map shows that The Clarksons owned Lots 1 through 5 by 1929.^[6] At this point all of these lots were combined and renumbered, along with the rest of Ridgewood Avenue. The house number changed from 218 Ridgewood Avenue to 248 Ridgewood Avenue.

Lot 6 to 9 - Sterling Road Partial Lots

Lots 6 to 9 are made up of the back of four (4) lots on Sterling Road. The rear portion of the four lots was a total of 225 x 50 feet. Eddie bought them all for \$1,500 a lot.

Eddie said that, “Today it (Wing Haven) is a total of 3.5 acres. By 1937 I had bought all of the lots”. (According to a recent survey, the entire property is actually 2.97 acres, but Eddie always said it was between 3.5 to 4.0 acres). It is difficult to say exactly how much Eddie Clarkson spent on the extra lots due to some barter arrangements of other properties he owned, but at the very least he spent an additional \$12,250 for the extra 8 lots.

Lot 10 – 260 Ridgewood Lot

Wesley Heath originally owned the lot. Eddie, who worked for Heath, built the house in 1926. The house was then sold to the Gintners, who then occupied the house for 30 years. The Gintners wanted The Clarksons to have the property and in 1956 Eddie arranged to swap a 10 room brick duplex with the Gintners in exchange for the house and lot. The Clarksons used the house as a rental property for many years. The house now serves as offices for the Wing Haven Foundation.

Lot 11 – Behind the Compost Area

In the early 1990’s, The Wing Haven Foundation, Inc., purchased additional land behind the compost area for use as a buffer from the neighborhood.

The Gardens and Bird Sanctuary

The majority of the garden and plantings are based on the original designs of Elizabeth Clarkson. Hardscape and statuary have been repaired or replicated when necessary. The nearly 80 year old garden is remarkably intact, despite its age, urban setting, and the devastating impact of Hurricane Hugo in 1989. The Wing Haven garden design is a cross of Lorraine laid on its side (++) with the house settled into the lower middle space formed by the cross. Because of the layout of the paths there are multiple vantage points where one can see the entire expanse of the many garden rooms. These cross paths offer new views and surprising glimpses of colorful flowers and trees as well as an interesting walking tour of the garden.^[7]

Figure 6 – Garden Layout. Numbers refer to the Clarkson’s preferred walking tour of the

“When Mrs. Clarkson came to Charlotte in 1927 a garden with hedges and borders and trees was her all-consuming desire—the birds were just a lovely part of the garden’s background. During a lengthy illness that forced her to spend many days in bed or, weather permitting, on a cot in the garden, she became passionate about the birds. In an article published in *Audubon* in 1945 she wrote, “Up to that time all plants and shrubs and trees had been selected for their contribution to the garden picture, but from that moment when I suddenly became interested in birds, each addition was weighed also from the ‘bird’s point of view,’ and bird baths, feeding stations, suet baskets, and hummingbird feeders became garden necessities.”^[9]

and Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. (Reprinted in 1965, 1977, and 1986). The book chronicled birds seen in the area and also gave basic information for learning about birds and specifically how to attract and protect them. Not surprisingly, the Clarksons hosted the founding meeting of the Mecklenburg Audubon Club in 1940.^[10] In addition, Wing Haven has been part of the Mint Museum House and Garden Tour (with a few exceptions) since the Garden Tour's inception in 1952. School children in Charlotte have been able to visit Wing Haven since the 1950's. By 1955, so many people were dropping in on the Clarksons to see the gardens and the birds that the Clarksons "reluctantly posted public hours on the gate. Open Monday through Wednesday afternoons 3-5. Yet, the Clarksons rarely refused anyone who wanted to see the garden."^[11] With the formation of The Wing Haven Foundation, Inc., Wing Haven has been officially open to the public since 1975.^[12]

Elizabeth Clarkson was a noted public figure in Charlotte. She taught scores of Charlotte's school children and amateur gardeners about her twin passions of ornithology and gardening for many decades. She sponsored ornithology contests, wrote articles for the *Charlotte Observer* and designed other gardens and houses in the Charlotte area, including the garden at St. Peter's Church in downtown Charlotte. Her expertise and civic mindedness resulted in many state and local awards including recognition from the North Carolina Audubon Society and an Honorary Doctorate from Queens College, now known as Queens University. Queens University classes have used the garden plants and wildlife as an extended observatory for many years.

Many writers visited Wing Haven to write articles about the Clarksons and the gardens. Elizabeth Lawrence, who was Clarksons' long time Ridgewood Avenue neighbor and visitor, became a widely acclaimed Southern garden writer and designer of her own garden on Ridgewood Avenue. The [Lawrence house and garden](#) at 348 Ridgewood Avenue has recently been listed in the National Register of Historic Places and declared a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmark. In 1961, author Lawrence described Wing Haven's familiar terrain: "By night, the water-mirror reflects the stars, by day the clouds, in winter the green branches of pine trees – in spring the pale flower of the weeping cheery. All through the garden there are shallow basins for birds, always with cool, fresh water dripping in and overflowing. In the main garden a formal pool reflects in the winter the ivory trunk and branches of a large crepe myrtle, in the summer masses of pink flowers."^[13] (Elizabeth's favorite color was pink).

The Wing Haven Foundation

In 1970, the Clarksons donated their garden to the Wing Haven Foundation, Inc. (The Foundation), which was formed to preserve the gardens as a bird sanctuary and to provide education and inspiration to what now includes more than 11,000 annual visitors from Charlotte and beyond. The house was donated to the Foundation after the Clarksons' deaths in the early 1990's. Wing Haven has evolved from one couple's passion and vision into a unique local house and gardens with outdoor classroom for groups of Charlotte school children, bird watchers, gardeners and horticulturists.^[14] By 1985, over 150 different species of birds had been identified at Wing Haven.

Architectural Description

House and Garden Location Description

The house was built in a new suburb then known as Poplar Gables. Today this area is known as Myers Park. Yet there was obviously some confusion over what the area was called during the 1920s and 1930s. In 1927, 1930 and 1931 Charlotte City Directories, the Clarkson residence is listed as part of Poplar Gables.^[15] But in 1928 and 1929 it was listed as being part of Myers Park.^[16] Today the area is known as Myers Park. The original house number was 218 Ridgewood Avenue, but according to the 1929 Sanborn Map the entire enlarged parcel was renumbered and became 248 Ridgewood Avenue.^[17]

House – Exterior

Wing Haven is a 1927, two story, three-bay house with white wood clapboard siding in the Colonial Revival Style. This style of house was particularly popular in the 1920's after World War I according to William Morgan, in The Abrams Guide to American House Styles.^[18]

The house is a simple Colonial style house. It is a center-stair, six-over-four-room house with some features based on Elizabeth Clarkson's vision. It has a side-gable roof with a chimney on the east elevation of the house. The facade faces south.

The façade, in keeping with the Colonial revival style, is symmetrical and has a central doorway. The door has five pane sidelights and is topped with a semi-elliptical transom featuring a sunburst fashioned in clear glass and lead. Four decorative pilasters surround the doorway and make it the focal point of the front façade. The front door is reached via a small four-step brick porch which appears to be original.

The front façade's windows are laid out in a balanced, symmetrical pattern. The windows are double hung, six panes over one. On the second floor of the front facade, there are four windows. The two outer windows are identical in size and placement to their first floor counterparts. There is a double window above the front door that is smaller in overall size. Like the other windows, it has shutters and is six panes over one pane of glass. Based on the original photograph of the Clarkson's home, the only change to the facade is the color of the shutters; the shutters were originally black, but are now painted white.

Figure 8 - Wing Haven Front Facade. Photograph by Diane Althouse.



Figure 9 - Front Façade Door. Photo Diane Althouse.



The second most notable feature of the front façade is the dentil pattern running along the cornice. The cornice molding is composed of triglyphs separated with shorter dentils. This dentil pattern is used on both the front and rear cornices of the house. It is also used on the small external hall passageway on the east facade of the house, which was built after 1927.

Figure 10 - Dentil molding – used on the front façade, rear elevation and side porch cornices. Photograph by Diane Althouse.



The east elevation, which faces the driveway, has two sets of double windows on the second floor. A chimney divides this elevation. To the left of the chimney is a small entry hall porch that sticks out from the house. This small entry porch is not original to the house, but the side entrance to the house is original. There is a small pair of bathroom windows on either side of the chimney on the second floor of the house. These louvered crank windows are also original. The most striking thing about the east elevation is the large built-in bird feeder on the second floor just outside of the picture window in Elizabeth's bedroom.

Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 11 – Left side of East Elevation. Photograph by Diane Althouse.



Figure 12 – Right side of East Elevation. Bird Feeder off Elizabeth's second floor bedroom window.

Photograph by Diane Althouse.



The rear elevation shows even more of Elizabeth's design ideas. There are three large picture windows on this elevation. Two are on the second floor and one is on the first floor. These windows were not original to the house, but added at a later date. These picture windows replaced the original double six-over-one windows on the second floor looking out of Elizabeth's bedroom and the guest room. There is also a bird feeder attached to the second floor center hall window that allows for the birds to enter and exit the house via a small opening built into the window sill. The original double French doors off the living room were replaced with one large door with a single pane of glass. This door/window allows access from the living room to the small patio originally designed by Elizabeth in a letter to Eddie.

Figure 13 - North Elevation. Photograph by Diane Althouse.



The west elevation overlooks the Oval Pool. On the second floor of this elevation there are two six-over-one windows in each of the bedrooms (Eddie's and the Guest Room). There is also one square louvered window in Eddie's bathroom, similar, but larger than the louvered windows in Elizabeth's bathroom on the opposite side of the house. On the first floor there are three side-by-side, six-over-one windows in the dining room and one long rectangular window over the kitchen sink. All of the windows on the west elevation, with the exception of the window in the kitchen, are original to the house.

Figure 14. West Elevation. Photograph by Diane Althouse.



The Main House - Interior

First Floor:

The first floor of the house has four large rooms, plus a very small powder room. The front door entrance leads into the living room, which is the full length of the house, front to back. The staircase to the second floor is directly across from the front door. There is no center hallway. The space to the left of the living room is the dining room. Behind the dining room is the kitchen. The only other room on the first floor is the powder room, tucked behind the stairs. The bathroom appears to have its original sink and toilet. The room is only three feet by two and a half feet. The sink is tiny, only 12 inches by 8 inches.

The living and dining room have their original, identical, dentil crown moldings, window trim, doors, and hardware. The staircase banister is walnut and said to have come from Eddie Clarkson's family home located on Clarkson Street near downtown Charlotte.^[19] Unlike the banister, the white painted balusters are simple in design being 1" square, with no decorative ornamentation. The living room and dining room can be separated by a pair of folding wood panel doors. In addition, all of the doors in the house have their original hardware. The living room features a white-grey marble fireplace mantel.

Both the dining room and the living room's plaster walls are painted white, and they have their original oak hardwood floors. The windows have no curtains, but instead have interior wood canopies over the windows, which are also painted white. These wood canopies can be found in lieu of curtains in every room of the house except the kitchen and bathrooms. The living room and dining room are virtually intact; the couple's family donated most of the furniture in the house to The Wing Haven Foundation.

Mrs. Clarkson's kitchen design ideas were based on her visit to the Pullman Car Company. The kitchen walls and cabinets are a dark bottle green (the same high-gloss dark green used in Eddie's bedroom, his bathroom and the guestroom on the second floor). The kitchen floor was originally made of linoleum and had "Wing Haven" imprinted on it. For practical reasons, The Foundation replaced the floor with linoleum during a minor, but necessary 1994, remodeling. The kitchen has a number of features which by today's standards are common such as pull out wastebaskets and long flat drawers for linens. Special cabinets were built thought-out the house on the inside of doors; the special cabinets have shelves and are kept closed with a simple hook and eye catch. In a house of collectors like the Clarksons, every possible inch was used for storage. The kitchen is divided by an island. (Today this division has adapted nicely to the two occupants of the house and grounds. The island separates the "people" side of the kitchen from the "bird" side of the kitchen. Grub worms, mealy worms, convalescing birds and animals have on many occasions occupied the "bird" side of the kitchen). A large collection of original plates and glassware are neatly organized in the special cabinets Elizabeth had built and/or modified by a local carpenter. As her letters indicate, Elizabeth was highly interested in the design and functionality of the kitchen, even though she was personally not planning to spend much time in the kitchen cooking.

Second Floor

The second floor of the house has four bedrooms, two bathrooms and a center hall. It is accessed from the living room via the only staircase, located in the center of the house. The second floor center hall has a window overlooking the main garden and built in bookcases on two walls. It also has a bird feeder attached to the window and a hole in the window molding that allows for birds to gain access to the house and in particular Elizabeth's bedroom.

The west side of the house has Eddie's bedroom and a guest bedroom. Eddie's bedroom has three six-over-one windows, two overlooking the Oval Pool and one overlooking the front yard. The guest bedroom has two six-over-one windows overlooking the Oval Pool and a large picture window overlooking the main garden. These rooms share a bathroom. The original bathroom window is a large rectangular louvered crank window. The rooms and original furniture are

finished and painted in a simple and similar manner. All of the rooms on Eddie's side of the house are painted with dark green enamel walls, trim and furniture and the floors are painted white. His bathroom tile is the same dark bottle green.

On the east side of the house, Elizabeth's rooms - the sewing room, bathroom and bedroom – have white walls and trim with the exception of parts of the rooms and ceilings that are wallpapered with the original pink, grey and white wallpaper. All of the furniture in the bedroom and sewing room are painted white. The bathroom and sewing room have the same wallpaper on the ceilings and upper walls. Like the guest bedroom, Elizabeth's room has a large picture window overlooking the main garden and two six-over-one windows that look out over the driveway and the garden entrance gate leading to St. Theresa's Path. There is a large built in bird feeders outside of the east facing window, next to her bed, in her room.

Figure 15 - This feeder is built-in outside of Elizabeth's curtainless second floor bedroom window.

Feeding Tray or hopper offered sunflower seeds on one end and mixed bird seeds on the other.

Note mirror between windows. Photograph by Diane Althouse.



Like the first floor, these rooms are virtually untouched since the Clarksons' last lived in them. All of the furniture is original to the house. The drawers and closets are full of interesting personal items, clothes, letters, books, and even a bird's egg collection in a bureau in Eddie's room. The hardwood floors are painted white in the sewing room, and bedrooms, but are natural in the hallway. Space was maximized in every room, hallway and closet via custom built in shelves, drawers and hooks.

Mirrors and Storage

Bringing in the outside in was an obvious goal of the Clarksons. To enhance the natural light and reflective lighting in the house, there are multiple wall-mounted mirrors in every single room. The Living Room has two large mirrors, the dining room has four, Eddie's bedroom has

two large mirrors and Elizabeth's bedroom and sewing room has a number of large mirrors, plus mirrors on the window valances. Even the upstairs hallway has wall mounted mirrors. There is no overhead lighting in the house – so perhaps this was just a practical way of making things brighter in the day while providing views of the gardens and birds, and, of maximizing the eclectic light at night. But the sheer number and location of these mirrors is practical, economical and unique.

In addition, all of the closets and drawers are full of items owned and collected over the years by the Clarksons. It is a virtual museum of their lives, from letters, photographs, newspaper clippings, and clothing (a collection of her homemade dresses can be found in her second floor sewing room). Lastly, the ingenious way they stored everyday items was ahead of its time. Her ideas for maximizing storage were thrifty, practical and inventive. (See Figures 16-18).

**Figure 16 - Upstairs Hall Closet built-in storage.
Small drawers are painted cigar boxes.
Photograph by Diane Althouse.**



Figure 17 – Note built-in storage shelves on the back of Elizabeth's bathroom door. (The built in shelves to the left of the bathroom door were added by the Wing Haven Foundation). Photograph by Diane Althouse.



Figure 18 - Elizabeth's Sewing Room built-in desk. Note multiple built-in drawers for cloth, thread, and sewing implements. Photograph by Diane Althouse.



The original house is surrounded by the formal gardens and pathways created and planned by Elizabeth and Eddie Clarkson. Figure 15 shows the current layout of Wing Haven, which, with only a few exceptions, is how the Clarkson's originally planned and built the site. The main design change is with the Rose Garden. The formal Rose Garden was constructed and planted after the Clarksons death. It is the only portion of the garden not designed by Elizabeth Clarkson. However, prior to the construction of the formal Rose Garden, Mrs. Clarkson did have a cutting garden with roses on this site.

In addition to the house there is an Education Building, which stands on the site of the original garage, a garden shop, a greenhouse, a cold frame (original), and a brick patio. There are two pools and one fountain on the back terrace of the house. Just outside of the kitchen back door there is a covered wood Pergola, which was used by the Clarksons for outside entertaining and dining.

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Endnotes:

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- [2] Letter from Elizabeth Clarkson to Eddie Clarkson. Wing Haven Foundation Archives. December 1926, 10:30 AM post.
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- [4] Kratt. Page 23.
- [5] Kratt, Mary Norton. A Bird in the House: The Story of Wing Haven Garden. The Wing Haven Foundation, Inc., Charlotte, NC. (1991). Page 64.
- [6] **Sanborn Map Charlotte, NC. 1929. Vol 1. Sheet 420.**
- [7] Kratt. Page 67.
- [8] Kratt. Page 12.
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- [13] Kratt. Page 59.
- [14] Paraphrase of Wing Haven Landmarks Commissions Application. December 12, 2005.
- [15] **Charlotte, N. C., City Directory. 1930 - Page 231. 1931 - Page 281.**
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- [19] Dia Stiger, Executive Director, Wing Haven Garden and Bird Sanctuary. January 22, 2007.