

THE CHERRY NEIGHBORHOOD

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The Cherry neighborhood is among the oldest surviving black residential areas of Charlotte, North Carolina. ¹ According to local tradition, it was built as a servants' community for the adjoining streetcar suburb of [Myers Park](#), which began to develop in 1912. ² Cherry is much older than that, however. It was platted in 1891 by wealthy landowners John and Mary Myers. ³ Though Cherry has changed as the city has grown up around it and its administration has passed through successive generations of the Myers family, its early history appears to be unusual among Charlotte's black neighborhoods. During John and Mary Myers' lifetime, Cherry provided black unskilled and semi-skilled laborers with rental housing, opportunities for homeownership, and a number of urban amenities including a city park, school, churches, and tree-lined streets.

The land on which Cherry was developed was part of a thousand acre cotton farm that John Springs Myers had assembled since the 1870s along Providence Road outside the bustling cotton town of Charlotte. ⁴ Myers' country cottage was on Providence Road at a high point near where Ardsley Road crosses Hermitage Road today. ⁵ A farm lane wound its way out from town through the family's cotton fields to the back of the house. The lane started from East Trade Street near McDowell Street, crossed Sugar Creek, then threaded its way through a secluded hollow and up the hill past a row of old, whitewashed slave cabins left by the land's pre-Civil War owner. ⁶

In 1891 Myers filed a plat map at the county Register of Deeds Office to lay out house lots in the hollow near the farm road. ⁷ The map indicated two streets off the curving lane, which was to eventually become Main Street in Cherry. Angling off it to the east was a more-or-less straight street which is now Luther Street (originally Davidson Street). Most of the new house lots were along this street, which in its earliest years ran all the way up to Providence Road, coming out near Dartmouth Place. From the intersection of Main and Luther streets, a short straight street ran north to what is now Fourth Street. This last street was Cherry Avenue or Cherry Street and may have been in existence as early as 1886. ⁸

The name of both the street and the neighborhood was evidently inspired by the cherry trees that grew on the hillsides of the hollow. Eighty-seven year old Laura Foster Kirkpatrick remembers that they were "not wild cherries. Real cherries. They made the best pies." ⁹ Not everyone referred to the area as Cherry (or Cherryton or Cherrytown). The city directory listed the settlement as Myers Quarter well into the

1910s, despite the fact that deed records indicate that the Myers themselves never called it by that name. ¹⁰

When they were laid out in 1891, the early streets of Cherry were beyond Charlotte's city limits, though probably no more than a twenty-minute walk to the center of town. The nearest section of the city was the predominantly black Second Ward, also known as Brooklyn, half a mile away across Sugar Creek. The white streetcar suburb of [Elizabeth](#), to the north of Cherry, was also platted in the 1890s but did not see much house building until after streetcar tracks were laid up Elizabeth Avenue in 1903. ¹¹ It was fully twenty years before work would begin on the transformation of the remainder of the Myers' cotton farm into the Myers Park neighborhood. For most of its first two decades, Cherry was a village distinct from Charlotte, following the earlier pattern of such black settlements as [Biddleville](#) and Greenville elsewhere around Charlotte's border.

The Myers family had a reputation in Charlotte by the 1890s of being concerned with the welfare of area blacks. John Myers' father, W.R. Myers, had donated the land for the nucleus of what is now Johnson C. Smith University and had been one of the most prominent white Charlotteans to be involved in the Republican Party, an organization known for its emphasis on black participation. ¹² Both W.R. and John Myers were vestrymen of long standing at St. Peter's Episcopal Church. ¹³ That organization took the lead in Charlotte after the Civil War in ministering to blacks, including construction of St. Michael and All Angels Church, St. Michael's Training School, and [Good Samaritan Hospital](#), which is believed to be the first privately-funded hospital exclusively for blacks in North Carolina. ¹⁴

Only two direct clues have come to light concerning John Myers' motives in establishing Cherry. One was planner Earle Sumner Draper's recollection in a 1971 interview that Cherry was a "so-called model Negro housing development" when Draper arrived in Charlotte in 1915. ¹⁵ The second indication of Myers' motives, and the only contemporary reference to Cherry yet discovered, is to be found in a laudatory biographical newspaper article published in the mid 1920s near the end of his life. After discussing Myers' creation of Myers Park, the writer noted that there was:

a rather expansive area near the creek premises which Mr. Myers had already undertook to develop for the negro race, giving them such modern conveniences as would make for their contentment and comfort, laying out streets, helping them build schools and churches and assisting also, by a financial arrangement, in the building of homes for themselves.

Later in the article the author expanded on the point:

Mr. Myers is held in special regard and reverence by hundreds of negroes for his aids to them. The settlement known as Cherrytown, just east of Town Creek [an early name for Sugar Creek], and numbering thousands of negro inhabitants, is the product of his thought and helpfulness. He laid aside a spacious area of his estate for the sole purpose of giving the negroes of Charlotte a residential section with such improvements as would make them better citizens, and sold them lots on easy terms so that they would be encouraged into owning their own homes. As a result of this assistance, hundreds of families out there own their own premises and are thrifty, industrious, well-behaved and constructive forces in their race. ¹⁶

The claim of "hundreds" of Cherry homeowners may be exaggerated, but the Myers family did indeed offer a goodly number of house lots for sale to blacks, as well as providing rental housing. One of the earliest listings of Cherry residents may be found in the "colored department" of the 1898 Charlotte city directory. It shows some thirty heads of household in Cherry, a number which corresponds to that indicated in the 1900 federal census. ¹⁷ By 1900, deed records indicate that six Cherry lots had been sold to five different black buyers, putting home ownership somewhere around twenty percent. ¹⁸ For 1905, a different sort of measurement is possible, because the United States Geological Survey map drawn that year allows a rough count of actual houses in place. ¹⁹ The map shows some fifty structures, compared with thirteen property transfers through early 1905, putting the percentage of owner-occupied dwellings as high as twenty-six percent.

The pace of lot sales picked up in the mid 1900s and continued at a high level into the mid 1920s, when John and Mary Myers turned over control of Cherry to their children. ²⁰ The family sold some thirty-five lots between 1900 and 1909, and over 125 in the decade 1910-1919. ²¹ Most lots cost forty or fifty dollars, but could go as high as \$100. This was no small sum, but it was well below the \$300 to \$600 being charged in the early 1910s in the middle-class black streetcar suburb of [Washington Heights](#) across town. ²² By the beginning of 1925, grantor records show that some 198 lots in Cherry had been sold to individual blacks. ²³ By comparison, a count of residents listed on Cherry streets in the city directory that year produces a total of 305 heads of household, all black, meaning that as many as sixty-five percent of the residents could have been homeowners. ²⁴

Information on Cherry residents is sketchy, but from city directory, census, and chain-of-title records, it is possible to create a picture of the early inhabitants of the Myers' development. In its first two decades, almost all Cherry citizens were unskilled or

semi-skilled urban laborers. There were virtually no household servants, despite the area's present-day reputation as having been developed as a servants' quarter. There were also virtually no representatives of the black middle class -- ministers, teachers, store owners, doctors, lawyers -- that was much in evidence in other Charlotte black neighborhoods in the period, including Brooklyn, First Ward, and Biddleville. This absence is particularly noticeable among Cherry homeowners. The Myers appear to have created in Cherry a place where urban laborers could own their own modest dwellings, rather than being forced to rent in the crowded back alleys of center city neighborhoods. ²⁵

Among the thirty Cherry heads of household gleaned from the 1898 city directory, one listed his occupation as drayman, and four were "farmers," but the remainder said they were laborers. The 1900 census provides a similar picture. At least a dozen of the blacks in the Cherry area had distinctly urban occupations, particularly cotton oil mill worker, drayman, and laundress. There were a like number of "day laborers," an occupation distinct from "farm laborer" in the census records. ²⁶

Information on lot buyers in Cherry indicates that most were laborers. either working for one particular concern, or hiring themselves out on a day-by-day basis. ²⁷ Such was James Crawford (who purchased 624 Cherry Street in 1911), listed variously as a general laborer, a porter with J.I. Blakely, and finally a laborer at the Southern Cotton Oil in the years before he bought his property. So too were Matt Ross (1615 Luther Street, 1899), listed as a general laborer and a laborer for the Southern Railway; Edward Holmes (1805 and 1809 Luther Street, 1904), consistently listed as a general laborer; and John P. Alexander, Jr. (1926 Luther Street, 1909), also a laborer.

A handful of others worked as their own bosses in semi-skilled occupations. The small number of single women listed as heads of households worked as laundresses, including Mary McHenry (1505 and 1509 Luther Street, 1893, demolished), Annie Griffin (1816 Luther Street, 1905), and Lizzie Harris (1922 Luther Street, 1909). Richard Torrence (1701 Luther Street, 1900), and Andrew Byers (1812 Luther Street, 1904) listed their occupation as drayman, meaning they had a cart and a horse, mule, or ox and made deliveries around town.

After Myers Park opened in the 1910s, maid and gardener would become commonplace occupations in Cherry, but in the neighborhood's first two decades, only one household servant has been identified among lot buyers. He was Jones Ross, who purchased a piece of property on Luther Street with his wife Janie in 1901. Ross worked as butler to the family of Hamilton C. Jones, who had a large house on East Trade Street near Caldwell Street and was a relative by marriage of John Springs Myers. Though Ross made his purchase in 1901, he evidently did not build until 1907, for the city directory lists him as living elsewhere.

Among the preponderance of unskilled and semi-skilled homeowners in Cherry were a small number of heads of household who held skilled positions. Andrew Wallace worked as a laborer before he and his wife Dorrina bought their lot at 1704 Luther Street in 1909, but afterwards was listed as a blacksmith. John Lewis ran a shoe-making and cleaning shop in the heart of the black Brooklyn neighborhood for some twenty years before he and his wife Carrie purchased property at 628 Cherry Street in 1918. Perhaps the most highly skilled craftsman was Robert S. Jackson. City directories indicate that he was accomplished at cabinetmaking, furniture construction and upholstery, and that he passed his skills to black youths as an instructor at St. Michaels Training School. He lived in Cherry for many years, evidently as a renter, before buying property on Baxter Street near the corner of Cherry Street in 1906.²⁸

The earliest dwellings in Cherry today are found along Luther, Cherry, and Baxter Streets and date from the first decade of the twentieth century. The earliest single-family housetype is one found often on tenant farms and in mill villages throughout the Carolinas in the late nineteenth century. The main part of the house is a one-story, gable-roofed block that is two rooms wide and one room deep.²⁹ To the rear are one or more wings that add extra space to the basic two-room plan. Numbers 1515 Luther Street, 1816 Luther Street, and 1820 Luther Street, evidently erected between 1900 and 1910, all follow this plan, as do numbers 1800 and 1804 Baxter Street. These dwellings were all owner-occupied by 1910, though similarities between 1816 and 1820 Luther indicate that they may have been built at the same time for rental and later sold to tenants.³⁰ Each house has a broad front porch.

Harder to date, but likely of the same era, are a series of identical rental duplexes scattered throughout the neighborhood, all of which remained in the Myers family until recent years. Each duplex is square in plan and is topped by a high hip roof with shallow eaves. Each apartment within has two rooms. The floor plan is laid out so that the four fireplaces -- one for each room -- are back-to-back at the center of the structure and feed into a single central chimney. The arrangement appears to be extremely efficient in giving heat, providing sound insulation between units, and minimizing construction expense. According to black architectural historian Richard K. Dozier of Tuskegee, Alabama, this housetype is uncommon in early-twentieth century black neighborhoods in the South.³¹ Recent demolition has claimed several examples along Luther Street, but two survive in good condition at 404-406 Cherry Street and 412-414 Cherry Street.

Along with the simple gable-roofed single-family cottages and hip-roofed duplexes, a few other houses appear to date from before World War I. These include 708 Waco Street, the last remaining shotgun type house in the neighborhood. This distinctive housetype with its long, narrow arrangement of rooms was common in Southern black neighborhoods into the 1910s, and scholars have recently traced its roots to African

architecture.³² In a more Victorian mode are 1700 and 1701 Baxter Street. Both use high hip roofs with a profusion of smaller gables to achieve the sort of complex roofscape beloved by Victorian builders. Also with Victorian touches is 1915 Baxter Street, a substantial edition of the gable-roofed cottage found elsewhere in the neighborhood but here enlivened by an ornate porch with turned balusters and scroll-sawn "gingerbread" trim around the attic vent in the front gable.

After World War I, the pace of building apparently picked up in Cherry. Numerous dwellings survive today that show influence of the Bungalow style popular in middle- and upper-income white neighborhoods of the 1920s. Cherry cottages of this era have low gable or hip roofs with rafters left exposed in the eaves. Often gable ends are extended and supported by brackets. Siding is either weatherboard or horizontal tongue-and-groove "novelty" siding.³³ Duplexes with these characteristics include: 1616, 1618, 1704, 1900, 1904, and 1906 Luther Street; and 1902-1904, 1906-1908, and 1910-1912 Baxter Street. Among the single-family examples are: 1400, 1433, 1509, and 1912 Luther Street; 1819, 1823, and 1829 Main Street; 417, 501, and 624 Cherry Street; and 1801, 1805, 1819, 1900, 1901, and 1907 Baxter Street. All continued the tradition of front porches seen elsewhere in the neighborhood.

Also in the 1920s, the Myers family began experimenting with other building materials in addition to wooden weatherboard siding. Among the earliest structures to use brick is the pair of dwellings at 1717 and 1735 Baxter Street. Each has a jerkin-head gable roof with brackets and wooden novelty siding in the gables. The brick walls are laid in a variation on the common bonding pattern with one course of alternating headers and stretchers followed by seven stretcher courses. The durability, natural insulating qualities, and freedom from repainting made brick a natural material for rental structures.

A contemporaneous grouping of four brick structures on Cherry Street has notably unorthodox brickwork. Rawlinson Myers owned an interest in a brickworks in Monroe, North Carolina and these houses are said to have been built as experiments in the material.³⁴ Numbers 500, 502, 504, and 506 feature oversize bricks with unusual, rough, reddish-orange finish similar to terra cotta. They are laid in Flemish bond, alternating stretchers and headers in each course, an unusual practice in Charlotte in the period. Three of the structures are single-family bungalows while the fourth is a two-story quadraplex. Adjacent to the brick bungalows are a pair of concrete block bungalows that share the same plan and window arrangement as the brick dwellings. It is likely that these structures at 508 and 510 are part of the same Myers family experiment with new building materials; all of the houses in the 500 block of Cherry Street have been renter-occupied since their construction.

By working-class standards of the day, the Cherry houses of the 1900s were desirable living quarters, on the level of what might be found in an average white mill village.³⁵ Each unit had enough land for its own kitchen-garden, something seldom found in the crowded alleys of Second Ward. The design of the hip-roofed and later Bungalow-style duplexes likely made them easier to heat than the standard urban shotgun with its strung-out room arrangement. But by contemporary white middle-class standards, the Cherry houses were less than ideal. All had outdoor privies. Few had more than two to four small rooms, and lots were smaller than found in better white middle-class suburbs. Few had enclosed foundations, but rather perched atop brick stilts, and all were heated by fireplace rather than furnace.

Along with providing rental housing and lots for sale to blacks, John and Mary Myers ensured that Cherry would have such amenities as churches, a school, and even tree-lined streets and a neighborhood park. Before more than a dozen residents had arrived, the Myers were able to sell two lots for church sites. The family's third property transfer of any kind in their new development was to the Pleasant Hill Baptist Church Association on November 2, 1892. The site was on Luther Street near its outlet onto Providence Road. Blacks had worshipped under a brush arbor on the spot since at least the 1870s.³⁶ Since the 1890s, Pleasant Hill Church has moved twice and now occupies a large modernistic 1959 structure by architects Wilbur, Kendrick, and Workman at Baldwin and Baxter streets in the heart of the neighborhood.³⁷

In 1896 a second denomination purchased a Cherry site. The Lutheran Church's Missionary Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America for Mission Among Heathens and Negroes paid fifty dollars for a large lot near the center of the fledgling neighborhood. The street the property overlooked, originally Davidson Street, became Luther Street (or Lutheran Street in some city directories). It is something of a mystery how the Lutherans became involved in Cherry, considering the Myers' Episcopalian background and the exceedingly small Lutheran presence in Charlotte as a whole. The Missionary Board soon erected a New England picture-book [chapel](#) of white weatherboard, complete with a Gothic-influenced steeple. It remains a neighborhood landmark today, known as the Mount Zion Church of God Holiness after the Lutherans' departure in 1946.



The former Lutheran Church

The third major Cherry church site dates from near the end of John and Mary Myers' direct involvement in the community and was a donation by the family. In 1919 the couple deeded a large parcel on Cherry Street near the corner of Baxter Street to the trustees of the Myers Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church with the condition that:

It is to be used for a new church which shall be completed within ten years from this date otherwise this lot shall revert to the legal heirs of John S. and Mary Myers ... and if said lot shall ever cease to be used for church purposes it shall revert. ³⁸

The congregation was one that had grown out of the new community, organized in 1901 and worshipping in a wooden chapel for several years. ³⁹ In 1919 its trustees included Kelly O. Alexander and Stephen Alexander, two Cherry landowners, as well as Major White, Albert Shropshire, Daek Peron, Rawson Hall, and D.D. Watkins. The final trustee was George Wiley Clinton, a First Ward resident who was one of the city's most prestigious black citizens. Charlotte was known in the period as a national center for the African Methodist Episcopal Zion religion, second only to its New York City headquarters. Clinton, former director of the prolific A.M.E. Zion publishing

facility in Charlotte, was a long-time bishop of the denomination. His participation in the Myers Chapel building project was one of his last acts before his death in 1921.⁴⁰

Today Myers Chapel is a commanding presence in the Cherry neighborhood. Its facade features a gabled central block flanked by two towers, one flat-topped, the other surmounted by a crenelated parapet. The structure's stucco finish and chunky buttresses give it a Spanish-flavored solidity and massiveness that contrasts strongly with the surrounding sea of small cottages. The congregation evidently had no trouble meeting the Myers' ten-year deadline; the cornerstone reads:

MYERS CHAPEL A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

Organized 1901

Erected 1902-3

Remodeled 1910-11

By Rev. B.B. Moore

Rebuilt 1920-25

At about the same time, the Myers family provided land for a school near the center of the neighborhood. According to a 1950 story in the *Charlotte Observer*:

Like his father, John Myers was interested in improving the education facilities and methods of the state, particularly those in Charlotte. He deeded to the city a valuable tract of land in the Cherrytown district for a graded school, later giving another tract nearby for a park and playground.⁴¹

In 1925 the school lot became the site of the Morgan School, named after a member of the Myers family.⁴² The red brick, two-story building was one of half a dozen schools erected throughout the city in 1925 and 1926.⁴³ According to school superintendent Harry P. Harding:

[Morgan School](#) in Cherrytown on a lot 180' x 120' ... the building cost \$36,309.00. There were ten class rooms, Principal's office and Nurse's office Dr. Strayer and Dr. Englehardt of Columbia University ... were consulting Architects in the planning of these buildings.⁴⁴

Throughout its history, Morgan was one of the city's smallest elementary schools.⁴⁵ It finally closed in 1968, and the building is now used for a city program to aid pregnant teenagers.⁴⁶



Morgan School

Across Torrence Street from the school building is Morgan Park, occupying an entire grassy block. It is not known when the Myers created the park, but at the time that the City Parks and Recreation Commission was initiated in 1927, Morgan was one of five parcels of parkland it administered.⁴⁷ The Cherry facility was the first city park in a black neighborhood and seems to have been the first intended primarily to serve a working-class area. The park is near the center of Cherry and strongly recalls a small-town New England green, with the school on one side, the Pleasant Hill Church on another, and a 1920s community store near one corner. A section of adjoining Main Street was closed to traffic in 1977 to provide additional play area for small children.⁴⁸ Today Morgan Park continues to be a heavily-used neighborhood gathering spot, a unique feature in Charlotte.

Along with providing a park, the Myers also had trees planted along Cherry's streets. Floretta Gunn, a teacher at Morgan School beginning in the 1920s, remembers the trees as one of the area's most striking attributes even then.⁴⁹ Today's Cherry's tree-cover ranks among the finest in Charlotte, and a comparison of size with those in Myers Park or Elizabeth indicates that the Cherry specimens were planted early, probably when streets were platted.

In 1925 John Springs Myers passed away.⁵⁰ By that time Cherry's street system had grown to nearly its full extent. Fox and Cecil (originally Bronson) streets had been the first added to the original Luther, Main and Cherry streets, finished in time to appear on the 1905 United States Geological Survey Map. In 1906 the Myers had sold the

first lot on Baxter Street, a major new avenue parallel to Luther Street on the south side of Main Street.⁵¹ In 1909 local engineers had laid out the angled grid of straight streets south of Baxter Street.⁵² Today these are known as Avant Street (originally Woodward), Welker Street, Waco Street (originally Wallace), and the last blocks of Baldwin Avenue (originally Morgan), Torrence Street (originally Converse), and Cherry Street. Many of the Cherry street names commemorated Myers and Springs family members and relatives, including Baxter, Woodward, Eli, Davidson, and Morgan.⁵³

In 1912 Luther, Baxter, and Main streets, which originally had run up the hill to Providence Road, had been cut short by the new boulevard of Queens Road, part of the Myers Park development for whites. The few houses occupied by blacks in the Myers Park section were moved down the hill into the central part of Cherry, primarily along Avant Street.⁵⁴ There were to be no more changes in the neighborhood's boundaries until the 1950s.

So by the time of Myers' death, Cherry's western boundary was Cecil Street, with the bed of Sugar Creek a further barrier between it and adjacent [Dilworth](#) and Brooklyn. The streets of the 1909 plat formed the southern extent of the neighborhood, separated by a branch of Sugar Creek from the large houses of Myers Park. The steep hill to Queens Road clearly marked Cherry's eastern edge. On the north side, the least clearly defined boundary, the back property lines along Luther and Cherry streets served to separate the black neighborhood from the bungalows of the adjacent white Torrence subdivision.

Shortly before John Springs Myers' death, he and his wife had deeded the balance of their holdings in Cherry to their children.⁵⁵ Rawlinson Myers assumed title to some lands in 1918. A bachelor, there is some evidence that he had overseen early development of Cherry for his parents. Earle Draper remembers, "Mr. Myers' son ... managed it and I think laid it out. He collected rents and maintained it."⁵⁶ Family members recall that by the 1920s a Mr. T.C. Wilson handled the actual rent collection, but that Rawlinson was quite active in arranging lot sales and also setting up construction financing for buyers through Mutual Building and Loan, of which he was an officer.⁵⁷ By 1922 John and Mary Myers had given each of their children a portion of Cherry's rental housing and undeveloped land.⁵⁸ The beneficiaries were Mary Myers Dwelle and her husband Harold, Richard Myers and his wife Marguerite, and Rawlinson.

The children made no more additions to Cherry's street pattern or urban amenities, but they did continue to administer Cherry as their father had. This may have been due to the watchful presence of mother Mary Morgan Rawlinson Myers, who lived until 1939.⁵⁹ Between 1925 and the end of the 1930s, grantor records show that some

thirty additional Cherry lots were transferred to individuals.⁶⁰ This was a somewhat smaller number than in previous periods, but significant in the face of the national economic depression.

In the late 1920s, each part of the family developed and managed its own holdings individually.⁶¹ During the course of the 1930s and 1940s, grandsons John Dwelle and Brevard Myers took control of rentals and new development.⁶² The men slowly added indoor bathrooms to the existing houses and gave them enclosed foundations, supplementing the brick piers that supported many of the rental dwellings.

They also constructed a number of new rental units in the oldest section of the neighborhood, filling up vacant land and occasionally replacing early wooden structures. Brevard Myers remembers that one of his first post-World War II buildings in Cherry was the duplex that stands at 505-507 Waco Street. It contains no wood inside the units; walls are of concrete block, windows are steel framed, and the floors are of poured concrete "so that we could just hose it out after a family left," according to Myers.⁶³

Most of the new rental units were brick. Their long, low forms recall the suburban Ranch style houses that were becoming popular throughout the nation in the 1950s. Today much of Main Street, which had only a handful of frame dwellings before the Second World War, is lined with these structures. Scattered other examples are found throughout Cherry. Also from this period are the two-story brick quadraplex apartments on Baldwin Street that face Morgan Park. They were built for John Dwelle by contractor C.T. Brown, a prolific Charlotte apartment builder.

The 1950s saw an expansion of Cherry's boundaries as well, though this was not the work of the Myers family. For decades Cherry's small houses had backed up to the middle-class bungalows of the white Torrence subdivision to the north. The Torrence property had once been part of a farm owned by S.J. Torrence in the late nineteenth century, which straddled the eventual path of Elizabeth Avenue. After trolleys began running up Elizabeth Avenue in 1903, the Torrence lands had been gradually subdivided into house lots.⁶⁴ Streets created included much of Torrence Street, Baldwin Avenue, Lillington Avenue, and Ranlo Avenue. The four square blocks between Luther Street and present-day Third Street were evidently laid out around 1910, and by the 1920s they were lined with comfortable, one- and one-and-a-half-story wood-frame bungalows.

The line between the white Torrence subdivision and black Cherry remained inviolate until the late 1950s when, in the words of Brevard Myers, "the color line broke all over town."⁶⁵ Soon blacks occupied most of the properties up to Third Street. Adjoining Amherst Place, developed in the early teens as a bungalow block of Myers

Park, also became predominantly black. Today both Amherst and the Torrence property are considered part of the Cherry neighborhood. ⁶⁶

Even as Myers and Dwelle built new rental units in Cherry, they recognized that Cherry's place in the urban structure of Charlotte was changing. By now the city's growth meant that Cherry was no longer isolated on the edge of the city, but was among its central neighborhoods. Cherry's land was becoming too well located for its "highest and best use" to continue to be low-income housing.

This fact was accentuated by post-war developments. In the late 1940s the city's first expressway, Independence Boulevard, cut through Cherry's northern edge. ⁶⁷ Soon a second new thoroughfare was built to connect affluent Myers Park directly to the highway. Kings Drive followed the path of Sugar Creek along Cherry's western boundary. In 1958, Charlottetown Mall was completed at the Kings-Independence intersection. ⁶⁸ The showy shopping complex was one of the first enclosed shopping centers in the South, and it was literally a stone's throw from the humble frame houses of Cherry.

Even before construction began on the mall, John Dwelle and Brevard Myers, who were real estate developers by profession, began increasing their holdings in Cherry. By the 1950s many early residents were reaching old age, and sometimes their heirs had left Charlotte as part of the vast out-migration of Southern blacks to the industrial cities of the North. Nevertheless, Brevard Myers remembers it often took numerous visits and "a lot of porch rocking" before he could convince some owners to sell. ⁶⁹ By the 1970s, "resident property owners constituted only about 17% of the nearly 1800 persons living in Cherry." ⁷⁰

Cherry was also one of the few black neighborhoods near Charlotte's center to escape federally-funded Urban Renewal in the 1960s. During the decade, thousands of houses and hundreds of businesses were bulldozed in the Brooklyn, Greenville, First Ward, and Third Ward sections. ⁷¹ According to Vernon Sawyer, who directed the city's Urban Renewal program, Cherry was spared because Planning Commission studies showed it to be one of Charlotte's least substandard neighborhoods for blacks. ⁷² It may not have hurt, as well, that Brevard Myers served a term on City Council in the period and strongly opposed the city's wholesale clearance policies in general, arguing that property owners in Brooklyn and elsewhere should be pushed to improve their own holdings. ⁷³

What Dwelle and Myers planned to do in Cherry, as market conditions permitted, was to clear the oldest portion of the neighborhood, including Luther Street and Cherry Street, and redevelop the land for stores and offices along the highways, with upper-income apartments near Myers Park. ⁷⁴ Said Myers:

In the lower end of Cherry, from about Baxter Street to Queens Road, most of the people there own that property and should be respected as homeowners.... But the property around Independence Boulevard in the upper end of Cherry should be allowed to go commercial because the houses there are too old to rehabilitate. ⁷⁵

Though redevelopment of this major Kings-Independence intersection seemed to make good sense as a real estate development, it did not sit well with Cherry residents. Despite the fact that Cherry had few homeowners, an active residents' organization known as the Cherry Community Development Association grew up in the late 1960s under the leadership of Phyllis Lynch, Torrence Powell, and others. ⁷⁶ Because of its activities, city fathers felt pressure to direct some of the federal urban redevelopment dollars flowing into the city to Cherry. The city's Neighborhood Improvement Program proposed installation of sidewalks, curbs, gutters, and storm drains for Cherry in the mid-1970s. ⁷⁷ Like most older black neighborhoods in the city, Cherry had no such facilities.

Officials were surprised at the Cherry residents' reaction. Instead of welcoming the belated improvements, neighborhood residents stood up in meeting after meeting to say that the great need of their area was improvement of housing that was substandard by modern measurements. and an end to the absentee landlordship that had been growing since the 1950s. After a battle that stretched over several years, the residents won much of their proposal. A 1980 *Charlotte Observer* article summarized the effort:

Three years ago residents in the neighborhood of 370 homes ... decided it made no sense to get new sidewalks while their homes were falling down. So they formed a corporation and persuaded the city to spend \$1 million to buy out the major Cherry landowners, Brevard Myers and John Dwelle. The new corporation, the Cherry Community Organization periodically buys some of that property from the city and hires contractors to rehabilitate the houses with city-sponsored low-interest loans. CCO maintains, and collects rent from, the remaining city-owned property It has been heralded by the federal government as one of the most innovative community projects in the country. ⁷⁸

The effort began slowly, with the first Cherry Community Organization director being replaced after an initial year in which only nine of twenty-six promised units were renovated. ⁷⁹ The new director, Charlotte native James Ross, has been largely successful in getting the organization to meet its goals. Numerous houses have been

renovated, and many of the most deteriorated have been bulldozed. Construction is underway on a thirty-two unit low-rise public housing project at Cherry and Luther streets, and five smaller projects are scattered throughout the neighborhood, the first major new construction in Cherry since Brevard Myers and John Dwelle stopped building rental units about 1960.⁸⁰

The recent developments in Cherry have not been without effects to the area's historic character. Myers and Dwelle's projects in the 1950s produced a scattering of new structures throughout the neighborhood and replaced the last of the owner-occupied houses of the 1890s. Since 1980 more than seventy additional dwellings have been destroyed by the City of Charlotte. Myers and Dwelle continue to control large tracts of land along Kings Drive and Independence Boulevard, and nibble away at the neighborhood's housing stock as they succeed in petitions for commercial zoning.

Yet, in the heart of the neighborhood, hints remain of Cherry's early flavor. Architecture encompasses a diversity of construction periods ranging from the 1900s to the 1950s, but the structures possess a unity of appearance. They are predominantly duplexes and single-family cottages. The compact structures all have gable or hip roofs, and almost all are one-story. Every house has a front porch.

Homeownership is much lower than the figure achieved in the 1950s, but Cherry's residents continue to be low-income blacks, just they were in John and Mary Myers' time. The amenities that the Myers helped to provide, including the land for the Morgan School building, Myers Chapel church, and especially Morgan Park at the center of the neighborhood are still important features of the area. Most striking to the visitor are the street trees which the Myers planted in the neighborhood's earliest years. Today they are near full maturity, sheltering Cherry in a soaring summer canopy of green.

Notes

¹ John Nolen mapped some eight or nine black neighborhoods in the city and its surroundings in 1917. Only two of these, Cherry and Biddleville, survived the urban renewal area of the 1960s and 1970s. The third early black neighborhood in the city today is Grier Heights-Billingsville, begun as a farm village, and outside Nolen's survey area in 1917. John Nolen, "Civic Survey, Charlotte, North Carolina: Report to the Chamber of Commerce" (Cambridge, Mass.: typescript, 1917). The only known

surviving copy of this document is in John Nolen's papers at the Cornell University Department of Manuscripts and Archives, Ithaca, New York.

² Nolen planned Myers Park in 1911, and construction began early in 1912. By the 1920s it had become the most desirable neighborhood for wealthy Charlotteans. For more on the neighborhood see the [Myers Park chapter of this manuscript](#).

³ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: map book 230, p. 202. See also Butler and Spratt, "Map of Charlotte Township, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, From Recent Surveys... 1892." Copies are in the collections of the History Department of the Mint Museum, Charlotte, and the City of Charlotte Historic Districts Commission.

⁴ The first tract of the farm was purchased by John Myers' parents and given to him in 1869. Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: deed book 11, p. 13. Brevard Myers, interview with Thomas W. Hanchett in Charlotte, March 1984. See also "Myers Park" vertical file in the Carolina Room of the Charlotte Public Library.

⁵ Butler and Spratt map, 1892. "Myers Park" vertical file. According to Brevard Myers, John and Mary Myers lived primarily in their large downtown residence on East Trade Street. The small country dwelling no longer stands.

⁶ Butler and Spratt map, 1892. A 1911 article in the "Myers Park" vertical file includes the information that the "plantation became the property of Mr. J.S. Myers. In 1870 he built the old house.... Many of the old landmarks of "Befo' De War" are still standing. The rows of whitewashed cabins remain as silent witnesses of bygone days." According to Brevard Myers, city crews found sections of old log "corduroy" road beneath Main Street when they rebuilt the street in the 1950s. Brevard Myers interviews with Hanchett, March and September 1984.

⁷ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: map book 230, p. 202. Butler and Spratt map, 1892, shows Cherry Street and Luther Street lot lines.

⁸ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: deed book 51, p. 422; deed book 69, p. 314, transfer Myers property on "Cherry Avenue" in 1886 and 1890, respectively.

⁹ Quoted in Mary Kratt and Thomas W. Hanchett, "Myers Park History," 1984, Chapter 2, page 1. Manuscript in the possession of Kratt. There was eventually a family with the surname of Cherry in the neighborhood, but records indicate that they did not arrive until many years after the area had been named. See Minnie Cherry's 1918 purchase of a lot on Cherry Street, Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: Deed Book 392, p. 504.

¹⁰ No Cherry deeds from the Myers family ever use the term "Myers Quarter." Early deeds merely refer to street names, while by the 1910s the area is consistently referred to as "Cherrytown."

¹¹ Dan L. Morrill and Nancy Thomas, "Elizabeth" in the New South Neighborhoods Brochure series (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1981). For more on the neighborhood, see the [Elizabeth chapter of this manuscript](#).

¹² Inez Moore Parker, *The Biddle-Johnson C. Smith Story* (Charlotte: Charlotte Publishing, 1975), p. 5.

¹³ J.S. Myers' contribution to the church is mentioned in Joseph Blount Cheshire, "St. Peter's Church, Charlotte: Thirty Years of Its Life and Work," 1921, p. 28. Photocopy in the "Episcopal Church" vertical file at the Carolina Room of the Charlotte Public Library. Information that W.R. Myers was "one of the founders of St. Peter's Episcopal Church and at 23 years of age was secretary of the first vestry of the church" comes from the *Charlotte Observer*, February 18, 1950. Bishop Cheshire remarked on the vestry's sensitivity to black concerns in his 1921 memoir: "In entering upon the work of the parish [in 1881], I could not fail to observe the large negro population of Charlotte It is gratifying to me to know that the vestry of the parish were deeply interested in this matter," pp. 30-31.

¹⁴ *Charlotte News*, June 25, 1936. William H. Huffman, "[Good Samaritan Hospital: Survey and Research Report](#)," (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1984). Dr. Mary V. Glenton, *Story of a Hospital* (Hartford, Conn.: Church Missions Publishing Company, 1937), p.18. Most Charlotte sources claim that Good Samaritan was the first in the entire South, but data assembled in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* Vol. 93:13, March 30, 1929, lists the Georgia Infirmary (1832) in Savannah, Georgia, the Freedman's Hospital (1865) in the District of Columbia, and the North Carolina State Hospital at Goldsboro (1880) as being earlier. Additional research may confirm that it was indeed the first privately-funded hospital exclusively for blacks in the South.

¹⁵ In 1971 the Myers Park Homeowners Association asked Draper's son Earle Sumner Draper, Jr., to interview the retired planner, who was living in Vero Beach, Florida. In response to his son's query, "Was this property [Myers Park] originally a cotton plantation?" Draper, Sr., responded, "This property was originally the plantation of Mr. John Myers, the father of Mrs. George Stephens. I think there was about 1500 acres, as I remember, in the property and was arranged so that the payments were made under a release clause provision by Mr. Myers whenever a lot was sold. Adjacent to this property on the west side was so-called model Negro housing development, developed by Mr. Myers' son" Transcript of the tape-recorded

interview is in the collection of the archives of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

In the period when the Myers began their work, a number of noted American philanthropists were beginning to take an interest in improving the housing conditions of the country's urban working poor. Low-income people were not able to make use of the county-funded poorhouse that aimed at helping the most destitute, and neither were they served by federally-supported public housing, which would not become a reality until the 1930s. Philanthropists worked to create housing projects that, while far from luxurious, were better than the standard speculative tenements and still modestly profitable. They hoped to demonstrate

"that the providing of good homes for Negroes is a profitable business undertaking in cities, and thus inspire building operations on a scale to aid materially in relieving the present bad conditions in many places, when the fact comes generally to the attention of investors."

T.J. Woofter, *Negro Problems in Cities* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1928), p. 169.

If Cherry was indeed a model project for blacks, literature on the subject indicates that it may have been one of the first in the United States. See Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: a Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), pp. 120-123, 129-130. James Ford, *Slums and Housing. With Special Reference to New York City: History, Conditions, Policy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936), volume 2, pp. 740-748, 868-870. Lawrence M. Friedman, *Government and Slum Housing, a Century of Frustration* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968), pp. 75-79, 82, 101. Devereaux Bowley, Jr., *The Poorhouse: Subsidized Housing in Chicago, 1895-1976* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978) pp. 7-13. Thomas Lee Philpott, *The Slum and the Ghetto: Neighborhood-Deterioration and Middle-Class Reform, Chicago, 1880-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) pp. 203-208. Only one source has come to light detailing such attempts in the South, all early twentieth century, primarily industrial housing, including projects at Baden and Winston-Salem in *North Carolina: Better Houses for Negro Homes* (New York: The Commission on the Church and Race Relation, Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 1925). This informative work is on microfilm at the Schomburg Center of the New York Public Library.

Recent scholarship on urban history and black neighborhoods in the South makes no mention of any project similar to Cherry. See David R. Goldfield, *Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers : Southern City and Region, 1607-1980* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982). John Kellog, "Negro Urban Clusters in the Post-Bellum South" *Geographical Review* 47 (July 1977):310-321. John Kellog, "The Formation of Black Residential Areas in Lexington, Kentucky, 1865-1887" *The Journal of Southern History* 48 (February 1982):21-25. Paul Groves and Edward Muller, "The Evolution of Black Residential Areas in Late 19th Century Cities," *Journal of Historical Geography* (April 1975):169-191. The South did have a history of rural black new towns, mostly established immediately after the Civil War. See Rodney Carlisle, *The Roots of Black Nationalism* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1975), pp. 90-92. Joe Mobley, *James City: a Black Community in North Carolina, 1863-1900* (Raleigh, North Carolina: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1981). Cherry, of course, evidently received no publicity outside the immediate area. Future research in other Southern cities may point up other philanthropic black housing projects aimed at showing local investors that one could provide more humane quarters while still turning a profit.

¹⁶ Article dated August 13, 19??, in the "Myers Park" vertical file at the Carolina Room of the Charlotte Public Library.

¹⁷ Due to laxity in record keeping in the period, it is impossible to arrive at precise figures for anything concerning Cherry, particularly before it became part of the city in 1907. It is possible to trace a number of Cherry residents through successive editions of the city directory, despite annoying gaps. The 1898 directory is the most complete of the pre-World War I editions in its coverage of Cherry. The 1900 manuscript census is probably more accurate, but it gives no indication where Cherry's boundaries were. Data were compiled for this essay by researcher Janette Greenwood for Enumeration District #41, sheets 29 through 36. These sheets include a number of whites, plus a number of black farm owners and farm laborers who likely lived along Providence Road, in addition to families known to have resided in Cherry.

¹⁸ Data on Cherry property transfers and individuals were assembled by Joseph Schuchman and Thomas Hanchett through a combination of methods. All grantor records for Myers' transfers of Cherry properties were listed chronologically through the 1910s. Title searches were conducted for selected properties, particularly those along Cherry, Luther, and Main streets. Names of all original owners gleaned from the title searches -- no matter when they purchased land -- were tracked through city directories from 1890 to 1916 to get an understanding of occupation and residence patterns. Most Cherry citizens held a variety of jobs and moved frequently.

¹⁹ United States Geological Survey, "Charlotte Quadrangle, 1:62500," surveyed 1905, printed 1907, reprinted 1927.

²⁰ Some property was transferred to son Rawlinson Myers in 1918, but most of the transfers took place in 1922.

²¹ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: grantor books.

²² For instance, see Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: deed book 312, pp. 264, 272, 296, 297, 299, 309, 310, 311, 324. All of these transfers took place in 1913. For more on [Washington Heights, see the chapter devoted to it](#) in the present manuscript. Both Cherry and Washington Heights lots were usually 50' x 100', small but adequate by white suburban standards, and spacious compared with the 25' x 100' sites in downtown alleys.

²³ A random check of these names against city directory records indicates all were black. In addition, a handful of lots went to white real estate man Charles Lambeth, and a dozen or so were transferred to Mutual Building and Loan, which likely was helping black borrowers to build.

²⁴ The number was undoubtedly somewhat lower than sixty-five percent in reality. A small number of blacks bought more than one lot, for speculative purposes, and others seem to have waited several years between purchase and construction. Future researchers into Cherry's history will want to complete the time-consuming task of title-searching each piece of property in order to arrive at precise information on homeownership patterns over time.

²⁵ The desperate character of most black housing is illustrated in a paper read before the [Charlotte Women's Club](#) by V.S. Woodward, general secretary of the Charlotte Associated Charities in 1915: "Housing conditions among the Negroes in general are very bad; and in some places much worse than the worst of the white section. In one place six and a half blocks from the Square, there is one toilet for the use of nine Negro families. It has no inside hook, and being located on a public alley, is constantly used by the public According to the 1915 city directory, there are more than fifty alleys and rows along which dwelling houses for white and colored families are erected. Of course none of these is suitable for a residential highway. In Charlotte the size of the lots fronting on these alleys is generally not more than 25' x 100' feet, and often smaller. Many of these four-room, two-family houses have already been built on small lots and continue to be built. The cost of such a house, including the lot, is about \$700.00. Rentals at 50cts. per week per room bring an income of more than 14 1/2% on the investment. Counting out taxes, repairs -- which are rarely made -- and insurance, the net income on this class of property in Charlotte is about 10% in

normal times. This is a greater percentage of profit than is to be had from the rentals of medium and first class property." A copy of this paper, entitled "Housing and Its Relation to Health in Our City," is in the John Nolen Collection at Cornell University. It includes 1915 photographs. For much later photographs of the same sort of alleys, still unpaved in the 1960s, see Rev. DeGranval Burke, *The Brooklyn Story* (Charlotte: Afro-American Cultural and Service Center, 1978).

²⁶ As noted above, the 1900 manuscript census does not indicate directly whether residents were in any particular neighborhood, but comparison with city directory records indicates that Cherry and surrounding listings are included in sheets 29 through 36, Enumeration District #41.

²⁷ Throughout this chapter, except where noted, biographical information on individuals is taken from the city directories.

²⁸ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: death certificate book 378, p. 309. Jackson's house burned in 1918, killing its owner, who was by then seventy.

²⁹ Doug Swaim, "North Carolina Folk Housing," in Swaim, ed. *Carolina Dwelling* (Raleigh: North Carolina State University, 1978), p. 41.

³⁰ The Luther Street houses have symmetrical facades with central front doors, while the Baxter Street examples are slightly smaller and asymmetrically composed.

³¹ Richard K. Dozier, interview with Thomas W. Hanchett in Charlotte, North Carolina, February 1982. Dozier is creator of the traveling exhibit "Places and Spaces: the Contributions, Aspirations, and Aesthetic Values of Afro-Americans as Reflected in Architecture," under the auspices of the Montgomery Landmarks Foundation, Montgomery, Alabama, 1982.

³² John Michael Vlach, *The Afro-American Tradition* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1977), pp. 122-138. "The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts: Notes on the Exhibition" (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1977), p. 16.

³³ John Dwelle remembers that he personally designed many of the rental houses he had built, making use of mechanical drawing courses he had taken in his youth. In particular, the series of bungalows with false-shutters are his design. Construction was left to a black contractor, Milton Swift, a Georgia native who Dwelle recalls as being hard-working and efficient despite little formal education. A son, Henry Swift, is now a plasterer in Charlotte. John Dwelle, interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, September 1984.

³⁴ Brevard Myers, interview with Hanchett, September 1984.

³⁵ Perhaps the definitive sourcebook on mill housing in the period was Charlottean D.A. Tompkins' *Cotton Mill, Commercial Features* (Charlotte: D.A. Tompkins, 1899). For a present-day analysis of the era see Brent Glass, "Southern Mill Hills: Design in a 'Public' Place," in Swaim, ed., *Carolina Dwelling*. Glass indicates that trees, parks, indoor plumbing and other urban amenities were not generally part of white mill villages until the late 1920s, when Earle Sumner Draper and other city planners brought new ideas to the mill owners.

³⁶ Kratt and Hanchett manuscript, Chapter 2, pp. 1-3.

³⁷ *Charlotte News*, January 5, 1959. In 1981 the Church convinced the city to close the block of Waco Street behind the sanctuary. A new education wing and parking lot now occupy that area. *Charlotte News*, March 18, 1981.

³⁸ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: deed book 392, p. 604.

³⁹ Data from the cornerstone of the present church.

⁴⁰ William J. Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church: Reality of the Black Church*(Charlotte: A.M.E. Zion Publishing House, 1974), p. 584.

⁴¹ *Charlotte Observer*, February 18, 1950.

⁴² Harry P. Harding, "The Charlotte City Schools" (Charlotte: typescript by the Charlotte Mecklenburg School System, 1966), pp. 79-80.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Floretta Douglass Gunn, former teacher, interview with Janette Thomas Greenwood in Charlotte, July 1984. Gunn remembers that children who lived close to Myers Street school in Brooklyn were required in some years to walk over to Cherry in order to fill the classrooms. According to Gunn, Mary Myers Dwell took a personal interest in the school, leading classes on tours of the otherwise whites-only Mint Museum of Art, among other activities.

⁴⁶ *Charlotte News*, July 25, 1968.

⁴⁷ LeGette Blythe and Charles R. Brockman, *Hornets' Nest: the Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte: McNally of Charlotte, 1961), p. 378.

⁴⁸ *Charlotte Observer*, August 9, 1977.

⁴⁹ Gunn, interview with Greenwood, July 1984.

⁵⁰ Sophie Stephens Myers, "Ancestors and Descendants of William R. Myers," 1984 loose-leaf manuscript in the Carolina Room of the Charlotte Public Library.

⁵¹ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: Deed Book 212, p. 505. For Cecil (originally Bronson) Street see Deed Book 202, p.145. For Baxter Street see Map Book 332, p. 317.

⁵² Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: Map Book 230, p. 47.

⁵³ In addition Converse, the original name of Torrence Street in Cherry, may be a variation on the family name Convert. Only one street is known to have been named for a black. Lee Hood, who died about 1957 according to Brevard Myers, was a long-time family chauffeur. An undedicated street (abandoned in 1983 to allow new public housing construction) off Luther Street parallel to Cherry Street was named Lee's Court in his honor. Brevard Myers, interview with Hanchett, September, 1984.

⁵⁴ Kratt and Hanchett manuscript, 1984. Also Brevard Myers, interview with Hanchett, September 1984. Myers remembers that some of the old houses had haylofts above the living area, and had brick fireplaces with cast iron arms meant to hold cooking kettles. The Pleasant Hill Baptist cemetery remained along Queens Road for many years until the present Little Theatre building was constructed on its site. John Dwelle remembers that Charlotte lawyer John Small arranged the deconsecration of the burial ground. Dwelle, interview with Hanchett, September 1984.

⁵⁵ The Grantor Books at the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office indicate that Rawlinson Myers assumed title to some lands in 1918. For the majority of transfers, see such transactions as Deed Book 482, p. 425; Deed Book 831, p. 500; Deed Book 462, p. 98, all from the spring of 1922.

⁵⁶ Earle Sumner Draper, interview with Thomas W. Hanchett at Vero Beach, Florida, March, 1982. Transcript in the files of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission.

⁵⁷ Brevard Myers and John Dwelle interviews.

⁵⁸ See note #55.

⁵⁹ Sophie Myers, "Ancestors and Descendants".

⁶⁰ Half that number were sold by Dwelle family members and half by Myers family members.

⁶¹ Brevard Myers and John Dwelle interviews.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Brevard Myers, interview with Hanchett, March 1984.

⁶⁴ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: deed book 190, p. 420; deed book 209, p. 459.

⁶⁵ Brevard Myers, interview with Hanchett, March 1984.

⁶⁶ "Neighborhood Definition Study" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission, 1979).

⁶⁷ For more on Independence Boulevard see Dan L. Morrill, "The Road That Split Charlotte" *Charlotte Observer*, May 2, 1982, "Parade" section, pp. 12, 15, 19.

⁶⁸ *Charlotte Observer*, April 23, 1961.

⁶⁹ Brevard Myers, interview with Hanchett, September 1984. For some of Dwelle's transactions see Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: deed book 1434, p. 106; deed book 1404, p. 70; deed book 3315, p. 15.

⁷⁰ *Charlotte Observer*, November 21, 1977.

⁷¹ The best single indication of the Urban Renewal program's impact on black Charlotte may be found in the one-page summary "Statistical Summary of Urban Renewal Program: October 1972" (Charlotte: Redevelopment Commission of the City of Charlotte, 1972). A study done in the early 1970s indicates that Charlotte lost 54.1% of its low-value rental housing between 1960 and 1970, more than any major Southeastern city. See Jack L. Bullard and Robert Stith, *Community Conditions in Charlotte, 1970: a Study of Ten Cities Using Urban Indicators with a Supplement on Racial Disparity*. (Charlotte: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relation Committee, 1974), p. 70. For more on the Urban Renewal era, see the chapter of the present manuscript dealing with the Center City.

⁷² Vernon Sawyer, telephone interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, September 1984.

⁷³ *Charlotte Observer*, January 19, 1960. Myers served 1959-1960.

⁷⁴ Brevard Myers mentioned the apartment plan in the interview with Hanchett, March 1984.

⁷⁵ *Charlotte Observer*, November 21, 1977.

⁷⁶ For instance, see *Charlotte News*, August 22, 1968.

⁷⁷ For instance, see *Charlotte News*, January 8, 1975.

⁷⁸ *Charlotte Observer*, July 19, 1980.

⁷⁹ *Charlotte Observer*, October 25, 1980.

⁸⁰ Ed Straight, City Housing Authority, interview with Joseph Schuchman, June 1984.

SIGNIFICANT SITES IN THE CHERRY NEIGHBORHOOD

404-406 Cherry Street	best preserved examples of turn-of-the-century rental duplexes
412-414 Cherry Street	best preserved examples of turn-of-the-century rental duplexes
509 Cherry Street	Myers Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church (1920-1925)
1605 Luther Street	(former) Mt. Zion Lutheran Church (1896)
1816 Luther Street	best-preserved examples of turn-of-the- century owner-occupied dwellings
1820 Luther Street	best-preserved examples of turn-of-the- century owner-occupied dwellings
500 S. Torrence Street	(former) Morgan School

MYERS CHAPEL A.M.E. ZION CHURCH
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1920-1925

509 Cherry Street

The Myers Chapel congregation was Cherry's first indigenous church. It was formed in 1901, some ten years after the neighborhood was founded, and by 1903 was worshipping in its own chapel. It was fitting that the church be of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denomination. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Charlotte was a A.M.E. Zion national center second in importance only to the Mother Church in New York City. Charlotte was the site of the religion's publishing house and newspaper. and the city's parishes were a favorite training ground for potential bishops.

In 1919 John and Mary Myers, founders of Cherry, donated a large parcel on Cherry Street for a new Myers Chapel sanctuary. The land was to revert to the grantees if the new building was not completed in ten years. The Chapel's trustees, which included Cherry property owners Kelly O. Alexander and Stephen Alexander as well as A.M.E. Zion bishop George Wiley Clinton, evidently had no trouble meeting the deadline. The structure was completed by 1925, a massive design with a gabled nave flanked by two towers, one flat-topped and the other boasting a crenelated parapet. A rose-window-like circular front window, other windows and doorways with pointed arches, plus buttresses on the towers recall Gothic precedents. Today however the structure is sheathed in thick, tan-colored stucco, which lends a Spanish air to the design. Whatever its stylistic antecedents, the Myers Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church is the most imposing piece of architecture in the Cherry neighborhood today.

(FORMER) MT. ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

1896?

1605 Luther Street



In 1896 the Missionary Board of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America for Mission Among Heathens and Negroes paid fifty dollars to the Myers family for this tract of land. It was near the heart of the Myers new "model Negro housing development," though there were as yet only a handful of residents nearby. It is something of a mystery how the Lutherans became involved in Cherry, because the Myers family were staunch Episcopalians, and Charlotte had few Lutherans among its citizens. Soon after their purchase, the board evidently erected the present church structure, and the street it faced -- originally Davidson Street -- became Luther Street. The mission maintained the church until 1946 when they sold the property back to Myers descendant Harriette C. Dwelle. Since 1979 the structure has been the property of the City of Charlotte, and continues to be used for religious purposes by the Mount Zion Church of God Holiness.

The chapel itself is today one of the last frame houses of worship extant in the City of Charlotte. It is a delightful adaptation of Gothic motifs, a white weatherboard tabernacle that reminds one of something out of a New England picture book. The church is simply detailed, as would befit a small mission church. Windows and doors feature lancet arches, a Gothic trademark. A hip-roofed belfry is centrally placed at the front of the ridge line, and an entrance gable is sheathed in rectangular-cut wood shingles.

EARLY OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSES

(1900s)

1816 Luther Street

1820 Luther Street

These two dwellings represent the best-preserved grouping of turn-of-the-century houses in Cherry which were originally owned by their residents. This pair of dwellings represents a housetype that was found often on tenant farms and in mill villages throughout the Carolinas in the late nineteenth century. The main part of the house is a one-story, gable-roofed block that is two rooms wide and one room deep. To the rear are wings that add more space to the basic two-room plan. Each house has a broad front porch.

1816 Luther Street was sold by the Myers family on December 18, 1905 to Annie Griffin. Early city directories list Griffin as a laundress. Neighboring 1820 Luther Street was transferred to Adelaide Alexander on January 7, 1910 by the Myers. No occupation is listed for her in the directories. Both of these women were black.

MORGAN SCHOOL

1925

500-522 South Torrence Street



The Morgan School is an architectural focal point on Morgan Park in the center of Cherry. John and Mary Myers planned their model housing development to have educational facilities as well as housing, churches, and a park. The Morgan School was erected by the city in 1925, one of several schools erected under the supervision of Columbia University scholars Dr. Strayer and Dr. Engelhardt in the decade around the city. The large brick structure may have replaced an earlier wooden building. The new building cost \$36,309 and had ten classrooms. It operated until 1968 when it was closed by the school system due to its number of rooms. Today it is used for a city program that aids pregnant teenagers.

The Morgan School Building is typical of the simply detailed, functional educational structures erected during the early twentieth century throughout the United States. Its parapet roof and carved stone central entrance provide a hint of Neoclassical detailing. A central two-story pavilion is recessed and flanked by two projecting wings of equal height. The brick walls are laid in stretcher bond. Nine-over-nine pane sash windows provide ample light to the classrooms, and are set in plain surrounds. The building is in good original condition.