

Survey and Research Report

On The Charles H. and Bess Smith House (1923-24)



Note: The Charles H. and Bess Smith House was demolished in April/2012

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Charles H. and Bess Smith House is located at 220 West Tenth St. in Charlotte, N.C.

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

Malachi J. Greene & Vera M. Harrison

1000 Greenleaf Avenue

Charlotte, N.C. 28202

Telephone: Not listed

4. A map depicting the location of the property: This report contains a map depicting the location of the property. The UTM coordinates of the property are 17 514745E 3898714N.



7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains a brief architectural description of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria for designation 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 Charles H. and Bess Smith House possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

- 1) The Charles H and Bess Smith House is one to two Spanish Colonial Revival style houses in Charlotte definitively attributable to Martin E. Boyer, Jr., an architect of local and regional importance in the early and mid-twentieth century.
- 2) The Charles H. and Bess House is the only extant early twentieth century Spanish Colonial Revival style house in Charlotte's center city and participates in the introduction of a suburban design motif into Charlotte's urban housing stock.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association: The Commission contends that the architectural description prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill demonstrates that that substantial portions of the Charles H and Bess Smith House meet this criterion.

9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal: The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the property which becomes a "historic landmark." The 2003 appraised value of the property, including the 9750 square feet of land, is \$226,100. The property is zoned UR2. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is 07804602.

10. Amount of Property Proposed for historic landmark designation. The exterior of the house, the interior and the exterior of the garage, and the entire tax parcel.

Date of Preparation of this Report: March 15, 2007

A Brief History Of The Charles H. and Bess Smith House

Dr. Dan L. Morrill

Statement Of Special Significance.



Martin E. Boyer, Jr.

The original of the photograph is in the Special Collections Department of the Atkins Library at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

The special significance of the Charles H and Bess Smith House rests primarily upon its architectural importance and upon its role in documenting the evolution of the residential built environment of Center City Charlotte. Martin E. Boyer, Jr. (1893-1970), who prepared plans for this Spanish Colonial Revival style house in 1923, was a nephew of well-known architect James McMichael.¹ The initial owners were Charles H. Smith and his wife Bess, who moved into their new home in 1924 from elsewhere in Center City Charlotte. Charles Smith was president and manager of Blake Drugstore at nearby Trade and Tryon Sts, locally known as the Square.² Boyer was born in Glen Wilton, Virginia and reared in Charlotte.³ Like his uncle, for whom he worked during his early professional career, Boyer was steeped in the vocabulary of derivative design that increasingly dominated American architectural theory in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Boyer attended Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie-Mellon University) in Pittsburgh, where he was trained in the Beaux Arts tradition. During World War I he served as a naval architect and in World War II was a lieutenant colonel with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. Boyer practiced architecture in Charlotte for more than 50 years and

mostly designed homes for wealthy patrons.⁴ Illustrative of Boyer's commitment to traditional Revivalism are two imposing extant homes he designed in Charlotte's exclusive Eastover neighborhood.



Boyer's drawing of the extant Tudor Revival Style Hamilton C. Jones House. Special Collections Department UNCC Atkins Library



Boyer's drawing of an extant Colonial Revival Style house on Cherokee Rd. in Eastover Special Collections Department UNCC Atkins Library

Historian Carter Wiseman calls the 1910s and the 1920s the "most diversely creative of American architectural eras."⁵ During these years the majority of Americans sought stability in their lives, a propensity that became even more pronounced after the horrific turbulences produced by World War I. Not surprisingly, most clients wanted designers to take their inspiration from idealized visions of the past, whether it be in Gothic Revival style churches like the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. or Pennsylvania Station in New York City or in such notable Charlotte examples of derivative design as the Gothic Revival style Myers Park Methodist Church and the Classical Revival former Mecklenburg County Courthouse, both fashioned by architect Louis H. Asbury.⁶ Martin E. Boyer, Jr. also thrived in this environment.⁷

Among the lesser recognized derivative designs that gained public favor in the years following World War I is the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Spanish culture predominated in the early decades of the European colonization of Florida and what is now the Southwestern United States. The Spanish, not the English, French, or Dutch, were the first Europeans to establish permanent communities in the New World. Explorer Ponce De Leon landed on the Florida Peninsula in 1513. St. Augustine, the oldest European settlement in the United States, was founded in 1565. Spanish explorers also reached California, initially landing in 1542. That the built environment of the United States is partly a reflection of this enduring Spanish legacy is understandable.⁸

Unlike the heavily-wooded Atlantic seaboard, most of the terrain of California and the Southwest was dry and virtually treeless. These arid conditions gave rise to a distinctive regional building type in the Southwest, especially before transcontinental railroads were available to transport wood and other Eastern construction materials beyond the Mississippi. Drawing their inspiration from missions in Mexico and from

Native American construction techniques, Franciscan priests used blocks of sun-dried earth or adobe for the walls of their missions. Most were surmounted by substantial red-tiled roofs to protect the earthen walls of the buildings from the devastating impact of water, which did fall during infrequent rainstorms. By the 1780s a series of Franciscan missions of this type had been built in California and the American Southwest. Perhaps the best known of these Spanish colonial churches is the mission of San Antonio de Valero (c.1755), better known as the Alamo, in San Antonio, Texas.⁹



The Alamo (the Spanish word for Cottonwood) was purchased by the State of Texas as a historic site in 1883.

The Spanish Colonial Revival style, which harkened back to the missions of the 18th century Spanish Southwest, arose in the second decade of the twentieth century and competed for public favor with the Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Gothic Revival and other design genres that employed European vernacular elements to evoke a romanticized sense of the past. Two factors contributed to the emergence of Spanish Revivalism. Aspiring architects were prohibited during World War I from touring war-torn countries like Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany. Many young designers traveled to Spain instead and looked with favor upon the geometric massing and simplistic forms of the buildings they visited on the Iberian Peninsula. These edifices exhibited the handcraftsmanship and restrained aesthetic associated with the then-popular Arts and Crafts movement.¹⁰ Even more important in giving rise to the Spanish Colonial Revival style was the Panama-California Exposition, which opened in San Diego, California in 1915 to celebrate the completion of the Panama Canal. The City of San Diego hired prominent East Coast architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue (1869-1924) to design the exposition's buildings.¹¹ Architectural historian Arrol Gellner writes: "Goodhue's romantically sited complex of Spanish Baroque buildings were literally a world away from the native styles the public had grown used to."¹² Hundreds of thousands flocked to the Panama-California Exposition, and many were reportedly dazzled by Goodhue's creation.



Bertram Goodhue had been best known for his devotion of Gothic Revivalism. **Bertram Goodhue's Spanish Colonial Revival style creation in San Diego.**

During the late 1910's and throughout the 1920s a wide range of buildings appeared in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, especially in California and the Southwest. These included retail stores, office buildings, gasoline stations, courthouses, and movie theaters. But residences constituted the most widespread use of the style, both in single family and in multi-family domiciles. Spanish Colonial Revivalism debut in Florida in 1919 with the completion of architect Addison Mizner's Everglades Club in Palm Beach. Mizner would go on to design palatial estates for East Coast millionaires who wintered in Florida. During the 1920s, Spanish Colonial Revivalism began to spread from Florida into other Southeastern states, including North Carolina.¹³



**Made In The Carolinas Exhibition Building
(1923)**



Ratcliffe Florist Shop (1929)



Carolina Theater (1927)

Reynolds-Gourmajenko House (1926)

Charlotte experienced the introduction of Spanish Colonial Revivalism, Moorish Revivalism, and other Mediterranean-inspired designs into its built environment in the 1920s. These included such locally imposing structures as the Carolina Theater, the Ratcliffe Flower Shop, the Made In The Carolinas Exposition Building, and noted architect William Bottomley's Reynolds-Gourmajenko House.¹⁴ Martin Boyer, Jr., who demonstrated throughout his career an ability to respond effectively to the wishes of his clients, also fashioned houses in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Two Charlotte abodes of this design are definitively attributable to him, the suburban house at 2322 Westfield Avenue and the Charles H. and Bess Smith House at 220 West Tenth St. in the Fourth Ward neighborhood of Center City Charlotte. Interestingly, the Special Collections Department of the UNCC Atkins Library contains a drawing of a Cottage style design that Boyer prepared for the Smiths. Presumably, this was the initial plan suggested by Boyer, which, if built, would have been more in keeping with the style of the other houses in the neighborhood than was the Smith House design.¹⁵ One can assume that the Smiths opted for the Spanish Colonial Revival style house instead and that Boyer simply complied with their wishes.



**House at 2322 Westfield Ave. also
designed by Boyer**



**Initial Proposal For The House At 220
West 10th St. Special Collections Department
UNCC Atkins Library**

There are other Spanish Colonial Revival style houses in Charlotte but only a handful. All but the Smith House are located in what would have been Charlotte's outlying neighborhoods in the 1920s. Four are in Myers Park; two are in Dilworth; one is

in Wesley Heights; one is on Camp Greene Street in southwest Charlotte; three are in Elizabeth, and the C. H. Smith House stands in the Fourth Ward neighborhood. The construction of an essentially suburban house



2215-17 E. 5th Street



255 Ridgewood Avenue



212 Ridgewood Avenue



2019 Beverley Drive



2100 Camp Greene St.



1408 Dilworth Road



1820 Dilworth Road E.

207 Grandin Road

and garage design into the built environment of Center City Charlotte in 1923 bears testimony to the fact that middle class white residents of Charlotte in the 1920s were still selecting parts of uptown, especially the fringes of Fourth Ward, as a place they where wanted to live. This circumstance would end as the twentieth century progressed.¹⁶



Liddell McNinch House

Architecturally, the houses in Center City Charlotte reflected, although belatedly, the dominant styles of the day. The designs of the finer older houses erected in the late 1800s in Fourth Ward and in other white neighborhoods in the Center City were therefore overwhelmingly Victorian. They included such notable extant structures as the Queen Anne style Liddell-McNinch House, the Italianate style Newcombe-Berryhill House, and the Queen Anne style Elias Overcarsh House. The homes and apartment buildings of Center City Charlotte became more varied, however, as Charlotte continued to experience sustained population growth in the early 1900s. Examples of the Craftsman style appeared in Irwin Park, Woodlawn, and McNinchville, all turn-of-the-century suburbs off West Trade St. just west of the Center City. A residential duplex suggestive of Spanish Colonial Revivalism was constructed on Woodlawn Avenue.¹⁷



Woodlawn Ave. Duplex

West Tenth Street, extending westward from Tryon Street to Graham Street, has a distinctive suburban feel, a characteristic it possessed even before the beginnings of the revitalization of Fourth Ward in the 1970s. The multi-story Poplar Apartments and a median create an ambiance not unlike that found on the major thoroughfares of Charlotte's Myers Park neighborhood. It is reasonable to assume that public officials and developers were attempting to attract middle class and upper class white residents to this portion of Center City Charlotte. If so, the effort ultimately failed, as increasing numbers of whites began to abandon the Center City and move to the suburbs, especially after World War Two. By the 1970s, even Fourth Ward had become bedraggled. But the Charles H. and Bess Smith House survives as a remnant of Charlotte's revivalist domestic architecture of the early 1900s. Most recently the building has been used for offices, but it is currently vacant and becoming dilapidated.



**Poplar Apartments & The Tenth Street
Median**



Smith House & Its Streetscape

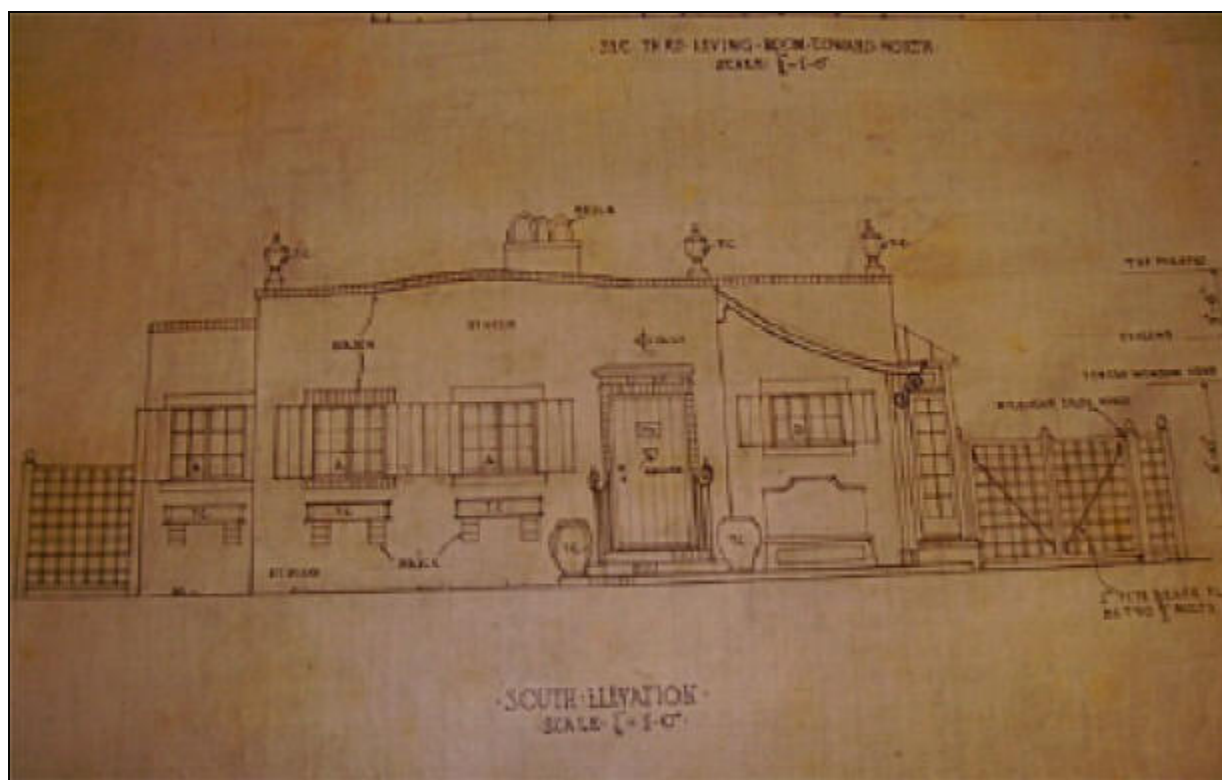
Architectural Description Of The Charles H. and Bess Smith House

Dr. Dan L. Morrill

Location Description

The Charles H. and Bess Smith House is situated in the Fourth Ward neighborhood of Charlotte, North Carolina. Fourth Ward constitutes the northwestern quadrant of the original grid of Charlotte, which became the County seat of Mecklenburg County in 1768. The Smith House occupies a 9750 square-foot rectangular lot that is totally devoid of trees. The lot, which slopes slightly to the north and fronts on the north side of West Tenth Street, contains two structures -- the house and garage, both original. The Smith House fronts on Tenth street and occupies the center of the lot approximately 50 feet from Tenth Street, and the garage is near the northeast corner of the rear yard. A concrete driveway and sidewalk (not original) extend from Tenth Street and terminate near the right front of the house. The proposed designation includes the 9750 square foot lot, the exterior of the house, and the interior and exterior of the garage. [Click here for site plan.](#)

House--Exterior



Original Drawings Of South Elevation. Special Collections UNCC Atkins Library

The exterior of the Charles H. and Bess Smith House is an excellent example of Spanish Colonial Revival domestic architecture. The house, which retains a high degree of integrity on the exterior, is a 1 storey tall T-shaped plan with the front entrance at the 3-bay base of the T and a covered brick patio, probably original, to the right of the front entrance. The patio is covered by a sloping, ribbed wooden roof on a metal frame supported by attenuated metal posts with decorative scrolls at the termini. The house is a solid masonry structure, having oversized brick sheathed with stucco to simulate adobe. A single centered interior chimney decorated with a circumferential brick course near the cap protrudes through the flat roof which is bordered by a parapet wall with metal coping, except for the front facade in brick coping which curves upward in the center perhaps to suggest an espadana. The fenestration is regular and consists of side double casement windows with metal muntins and metal surrounds, except for two elongated windows in the rear, which are rendered in wood. The windows have brackets for shutters, but the shutters have been removed. Smooth, dark red, decorative brick surrounds the windows and a replacement front door, painted red. Masonry flowerboxes supported by brick brackets are beneath the front windows and contribute to the picturesque qualities of the house. Above the front entrance is an entablature consisting of a string of soldier course brick, brick dentils, and a molded masonry cornice. Metal handrails with terminating scrolls flank the two brick steps leading to the front entrance. Light fixtures (not original) are above the front door and on the wall behind the patio. The eastern elevation of the house has a protrusion which has subsequently been covered with siding. The original plan for the

house shows windows at this spot. The plan also shows urns atop either end of the front elevation, but they are no longer present. The front elevation of the building has attached metal lettering spelling "Greene Bldg.," which denotes the surname of the current owners.



Martin Boyer, Jr. at work at his desk.

Special Collections Department UNCC Atkins Library

The rear elevation of the Charles H. and Bess Smith House is five bays wide and has two large and two small rectangular windows and a rear door (not original). The large windows have metal bar coverings, probably added to provide security. A shed roof rests upon a partial wall on the northern side of an original concrete rear stoop.



Smith House looking toward northwest.



Typical interior room treatment.

House--Interior

The principal investigator did not gain entry into the house. However, by looking through the windows, some of which are open or have broken glass, one could see that except for the arrangement of rooms the interior of the Charles H. and Bess Smith House has lost its historic integrity. The interior rooms have drop ceilings and paneled siding. In summary, no interior features of distinction were observed.

Garage

The garage for the Charles H. and Bess Smith House is a 1 story rectangular solid brick structure with exterior wall sheathing and coping atop a parapet wall identical to that on the main house. Access is provided by two large windowless doors with vertical tongue-and-groove boarding, painted red. A window with metal muntins and brick surrounds is situated near the rear of each side elevation.





1. Original plans for the house are located in Special Collections at the Atkins Library at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (see plans 1820-1, 1820-2, and 1820-3). James McMichael, an architect of regional significance, designed such notable early twentieth century Charlotte buildings as St. John's Baptist Church, Myers Park Presbyterian Church, East Avenue Tabernacle A.M.E. Zion Church, First A.M.E. Zion Church, First Baptist Church, and the North Carolina Medical College Building. Charles H. Smith had moved into the house by 1925. He was manager and president of the John S. Blake Drug Co., a retail outlet at the intersection of Trade and Tryon Sts. He moved from 309 W. Trade St.

2. Charlotte City Directory (1923-24), p. 730; Charlotte City Directory (1925), p. 878.

3. For an overview of American architecture in the twentieth century see Carter Wiseman, *Twentieth Century American Architecture. The Buildings And Their Makers* (New York & London: W. W. Norton, 2000).

4. For biographical information about Boyer, see <http://landmarkscommission.org/surveys&rjameshouse.htm> Glen Wilton is west of Lexington, Va.

5. Wiseman, p. 108.

6. Ibid. For information about the career of Louis H. Asbury, see <http://landmarkscommission.org/surveys&rjamisonhouse.htm>

7. The Special Collections Department of the Atkins Library at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte has a substantial collection of Martin E. Boyer, Jr. papers. It contains correspondence, biographical information, and plans and drawings. Hereinafter cited as Boyer Papers. Boyer was producing houses in a variety of derivative styles in the 1920s, including the Picturesque.



House at 522 Hermitage Court

8. Arrol Gellner & Douglas Keister, *Red Tile Style. America's Spanish Revival Architecture* (China: Penguin Group, 2002), pp. 1-5.

9. Wiseman, p. 82; Gellner & Keister, p. 5.

10. Gellner & Keister, p. 22.

11. Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780. A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge and London: The M.I.T. Press, 1974), p. 225.

12. Gellner & Keister, p. 16.

13. Ibid.

14. For reports on these structures see the various reports posted on <http://landmarkscommission.org.htm>

15. Boyer Papers.

16. The Spanish Colonial Revival Style buildings illustrated here were photographed by Dr. Dan L. Morrill on a tour of Charlotte. Additional structures might be extant.

17. For an overview of the evolution of the residential built environment of Center City Charlotte see <http://landmarkscommission.org/uptownsurveyhistoryhousing.htm>