



THE DORR-McMANUS HOUSE

This report was written on February 1, 1978

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Dorr McManus House is located at 317 East Boulevard in Charlotte, N.C.

2. Name, address, and telephone number of the present owner and occupant of the property: The present owner of the property is:

Mr. Jack P. Apple
2034 Lombardy Circle
Charlotte, N.C. 28203

Telephone: 377-1357

The property is presently unoccupied

3. Representative photographs of the property: Representative photographs of the property are included in this report.

4. A map depicting the location of the property: This report contains a map depicting the location of the property.

5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The most recent reference to this property is found in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 4012 at Page 123. The Parcel Number of the property is 12307503. This report contains a chain of title for the property.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property:

On June 3, 1903, Walter S. Dorr, a salesman who had recently come to Charlotte and who traveled throughout the Piedmont section of the two Carolinas, borrowed \$1500

from Mechanics Perpetual Building and Loan Association for purposes of erecting a dwelling on the lot which he had purchased the same day from the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company, the developers of [Dilworth](#).¹ It is reasonable to assume that Mr. Dorr and his wife, Hattie C. Dorr, occupied the house later that year. They resided in the dwelling until April 16, 1906, when they sold the property to the [Southern Real Estate and Trust Co.](#) for \$3250 and moved to 909 W. Fourth St.² John T. Compton, a salesman for C. H. Robinson & Co., purchased the house on November 22, 1906, but died soon thereafter.³

The house changed hands several times in the decade and a half following Mr. Compton's death.⁴ This circumstance ended, however, on October 18, 1922, when the property was purchased by Nannie Crenshaw McManus, a native of Lancaster County, South Carolina.⁵ Mrs. McManus, a widow, subsequently married Mr. Oliver Duke Wheeler, a prominent architect who had come to Charlotte in 1902 "to direct the building of the old Trinity Methodist Church" at S. Tryon and 2nd Sts., had competed unsuccessfully to be the architect of the [Independence Building](#), and had overseen the construction of "numerous churches, hospitals, and public buildings throughout Georgia and the Carolinas."⁶ Mr. Wheeler died on October 29, 1942.⁷ His wife survived until January 19, 1971, when she died at the age of eighty five.⁸

Miss Helen McManus, a daughter of Mrs. Wheeler and her first husband, was a noteworthy resident of the structure at 317 East Boulevard for over fifty years. For 43 of these years she served as an English teacher in the public schools of Charlotte. She is best remembered for the almost three decades of devoted service which she provided at old Central High School. She also helped establish audiovisual departments and the academic Hall of Fame at both Central High School and Garringer High School.⁹ In addition to her civic responsibilities, Miss McManus cared for her mother and her mother's sister, Margaret Crenshaw, in their later years.¹⁰

Helen McManus died on January 17, 1975, at the age of seventy-two.¹¹ She had provided that the house would be inherited by the Dilworth United Methodist Church, in which both she and her mother had been active members for many years.¹² On November 20, 1975, Dilworth United Methodist Church sold the property to Mr. and Mrs. Gam C. Jung, who operated the structure as a rooming house.¹³ Mr. Jack F. Apple purchased the house on December 6, 1977, and is currently intending to demolish the structure to make way for a parking lot.¹⁴

Footnotes:

¹ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 87, p. 223; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 175, p. 512; *The Charlotte Observer* (June 2, 1901) p. 2.

² Mecklenburg County Deed Book 212, p. 13; Charlotte City Directory 1908, p. 203.

³ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 216, p. 537; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 283, p. 99; Charlotte City Directory 1208, p. 20?.

⁴ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 291, p.38; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 334, p. 234; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 364, p. 84; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 429, p. 110, 626.

⁵ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 485, p. 106.

⁶ *The Charlotte Observer* (October 29, 1942) p. 16.

⁷ Mecklenburg County Death Book 61, page 93.

⁸ Mecklenburg County Estate Records (Roll 71 139, Frame 160); *The Charlotte Observer* (January 20, 1971),p. 7A.

⁹ *The Charlotte Observer* (January 18, 1975) p. 2B.

¹⁰ *The Charlotte Observer* (October 10, 1975) p. 121.

¹¹ *The Charlotte Observer* (January 18, 1975) p. 28.

¹² Mecklenburg County Estate Records (Roll 75-488, Frame 1349).

¹³ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3805, p. 339.

¹⁴ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 4012, p. 123.

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains an architectural description prepared by Ms. Ruth Little Stokes, architectural historian.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria set forth in the N.C.G.S. 160A-399.4:

a. Historical and cultural significance: The historical and cultural significance of the property known as the Dorr McManus House rests upon four factors. First, it is one of the older structures which survives in Charlotte's initial streetcar suburb. Second, Ms. Ruth Little-Stokes architectural historian, has determined that the structure "is one of the most architecturally significant late Victorian residences on East Boulevard." Third, Ms. Little Stokes has determined that the property contains a late Victorian playhouse, a rare survival. Fourth, two individuals of local historic importance, Oliver Duke Wheeler and Helen McManus, have lived in the structure.

b. Suitability for preservation and restoration: The Dorr McManus House retains its essential exterior integrity. Moreover, the interior features of the structure, although recently removed, have not been destroyed. In short, the structure is suitable for preservation and restoration.

c. Educational value: The Dorr-McManus House has educational value because of the historical and cultural significance of the property.

d. Cost of acquisition, maintenance or repair: At present, the Commission has no intention of purchasing the fee simple or any lesser included interest in this property. The Commission presently assumes that all costs associated with renovating and maintaining the structure will be paid by the owner or subsequent owner of the property.

e. Possibilities for adaptive or alternative use of the property: The property, currently zoned B1, is highly suited for an adaptive use. Indeed, the Commission believes that such usage affords the best opportunity for the structure to survive at its present location.

f. Appraised value: The current tax appraisal value of the improvements on the property is \$4,630. The current tax appraisal value of the land is \$19,150. The 1977 tax bill on the land and improvements was \$399.50. The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for a deferral of 50 % of the rate upon which Ad Valorem taxes are calculated.

g. The administrative and financial responsibility of any person or organization willing to underwrite all or a portion of such costs: As stated earlier, the Commission presently has no intention of purchasing the fee simple or any lesser included interest in this property. Furthermore, the Commission presently assumes that all costs associated with the property will be paid by the present or subsequent owners of the property.

9. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria established for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places: The Commission judges that the property known as the Dorr McManus House does meet the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. Basic to the Commission's judgment is its knowledge that the National Register of Historic Places, established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, represents the decision of the Federal Government to expand its recognition of historic properties to include those of local, regional and State significance. The Commission believes that the investigation of the Dorr McManus House contained herein demonstrates that the property is of local historic importance. Consequently, the Commission Judges that the property known as the Dorr McManus House does meet the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places.

10. Documentation of why and in what ways the property is of historical importance to Charlotte and/or Mecklenburg County: The property known as the Dorr McManus House is historically important to Charlotte for four reasons. First, the dwelling is one of the older structures which survives in Charlotte 's initial streetcar suburb, Dilworth. Second, the structure is one of the most architecturally significant late Victorian residences on East Boulevard. Third, the property contains late Victorian playhouse, a rare survival. Fourth, two individuals of local historic importance lived in the structure.

Chain of Title

1. Deed Book 4012, page 123 (December 6, 1977).
Grantor: Gam C. Jung & wife, Lee Lei Ming Jung
Grantee: Jack F. Apple

2. Deed Book 3805, page 339 (November 20, 1975).
Grantor: First Union National Bank of North Carolina, Executor of the Last Will and Testament of Helen McManus, John H. Wolfe, Grady Sparrow, Vivian P. Rhodes, K. O. Hobbs, Victor Caldwell, C. M. Reeves, J. R. Harris, Zeb C. Strawn & W. M. Boyst.
Grantee: Gam C. Jung & wife, Leo Lei Ming Jung

3. Estate Records (Roll 75-488, Frame 1349) October 1975.
Devisor: Helen McManus.
Devisee: Dilworth United Methodist Church.

4. Estate Records (Roll 71-139, Frame 160) January 1971.
Devisor: Mrs. O. D. Wheeler (Nannie Crenshaw McManus)
Devisee: Helen McManus

5. Deed Book 485, page 106 (October 18, 1922).
Grantor: A.G. Martin & wife Ida Martin
Grantee: Nannie C. McManus

6. Deed Book 429, page 626 (September 23, 1920).
Grantor: J. N. McCall & wife, Flossie L. McCall
Grantee: A.G. Martin

Deed Book 429, page 110 (May 10, 1920)
Grantor: W.F. McCanless & wife, Katherine McCanless, R.D. Craver & wife Bessie Craver
Grantor: J.N. McCall

Deed Book 364, page 84 (May 15, 1916)
Grantor: The Stephens Co.
Grantee: W.F. McCanless & wife

Deed Book 334, page 234 (October 12, 1914)
Grantor: Walter Brem & wife, Hannie C. Brem
Grantee: John P. Little

Deed Book 291, page 38 (February 3, 1912)
Grantor: F.J. Robinson & wife, Addie Lee Robinson
Grantee: W.J. Crowell

Deed Book 283, page 99 (September 25, 1911)
Grantor: Thaddeus A. Adams, C.H. Duls, Commissioners
Grantees: F.J. Robinson

12. Deed Book 216, page 537(November 22, 1906)
Grantor: The Southern Real Estate Loan & Trust
Grantee: John T. Compton

Deed Book 212, page 13 (April 16 , 1906)
Grantor: W.S. Dorr & wife Hattie C. Dorr
Grantee: The Southern Real Estate Loan & Trust

Deed Book 87, page 223 (June 3, 1903)

Grantor: A. Burwell, Trustee (The Charlotte Consolidated Construction Co.)

Grantee: W.S. Dorr & wife Hattie C. Dorr

Bibliography

An Inventory of Buildings In Mecklenburg County And Charlotte For The Historic Properties Commission.

Charlotte City Directories.

Estate Records of Mecklenburg County.

Records of Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office.

Records of Mecklenburg County Tax Office.

The Charlotte Observer.

The Sanborn Insurance Map of Charlotte , NC (1911).

Vital Statistics of Mecklenburg County.

Date of Preparation of this Report: February 1, 1978

Prepared by: Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Director
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139 Middleton Dr.
Charlotte, NC 28207

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Architectural Description

Ruth Little Stokes

Summary of Significance.

The Dorr-McManus House, 317 East Boulevard, Charlotte N.C., built in the [Queen Anne style](#), is one of the most architecturally significant late Victorian residences on East Boulevard, the main artery of Dilworth, Charlotte's first suburb. East Boulevard is the only one of Charlotte's original suburban boulevards which retains its original residential character. The quaint house has picturesque massing, with an irregularly shaped main block with corner tower terminating in a crenelated parapet, unique to Charlotte, and an eccentric roofline. The combination of weatherboard and wood shingle wall covering, the thick turned porch posts, and the incised geometric and floral designs on the doors and interior trim are characteristic of the interest in a variety of materials and in medieval crafts which accompanied the Queen Anne Revival style. Behind the house is a late Victorian playhouse, a rare survival.

Detailed Description

The two story [frame](#) house is three bays wide and three bays deep, has a one story wraparound gingerbread porch and stands on a narrow city lot with a small front yard. The house rests on a brick pier foundation with later brick infill. The walls are covered with plain weatherboard, the tower and cross gables with wooden shingles, and the unusually shaped gable-on-hip [roof](#) with gray, [fishscale slate shingles](#). The roof has boxed, molded eaves and three interior brick chimneys. The focal point of the design is the corner tower, on the southwest corner, with a weatherboarded first story with a trio of stopped windows which illuminate the stair and a wood shingled second story. The bottom eaves of this story are splayed and molded, and the upper eaves have a single crenelation (indentation) in each face. Each is accented by a latticework style balustrade infilling the indentation and by a wood-shingled pent roof below each indentation. The west side of the tower and the adjacent bay of the main block have narrow vertical flush sheathed wooden panels above the first story windows, typical of the Stick Style which was also popular at this time taken manner, yet used here in a token matter. Over the east half of the main facade and the side elevations are cross-gables, each with a casement window. Five tall curvilinear brackets dramatize the deep overhang of the front cross gable. The main entrance, in the center bay of the main (south) facade, has a replacement door, and the original transom and entrance surround, consisting of fluted pilasters with quaint capital treatment with Queen Anne detailing. The original door was probably similar to the rear door, of vernacular

Eastlake design. The upper half is glazed, the lower paneled, with an elaborate frame of molding, scalloping and finials surrounding each half. The lower panel has incised floral designs like the front entrance surround. A similar entrance is located in the east bay of the main facade, reached from the porch. The [window sash](#), one over one on the front half of the main block and two over two elsewhere, exists both singly and in pairs, and has wide plain surrounds. The windows were formerly fitted with louvered shutters.

The house is substantially unaltered, but underwent minor remodeling in two stages. About 1940 a classical face-lifting occurred, resulting in the replacement of the front door and mantels in the two front first floor rooms and the first floor flooring. A wide classical arch was added between the stair hall and dining room, and the shed porch of the rear kitchen wing was enclosed and the second story of the wing was remodeled. The second stage, a 1976 attempt to add closets and cut new doors between rooms in order to create several apartments, was stopped in mid stream, and these changes were never completed.

The interior features a medieval hall and parlor floor plan on the first floor, with four main rooms: entry hall and three rooms, opening directly into one another. The second floor contains a stair hall and three bedrooms, separated by a narrow center hall. Decorative trim is consistent throughout the house. Doors have five raised, chamfered panels. Door and window surrounds in the front first floor rooms and the hall doors on the second floor have symmetrically molded surrounds with rondel corner blocks. Above the corner blocks are ornaments which appear to be very vernacular echoes of Greek acroteria motifs. Beneath the windows in these areas are paneled aprons. The remaining doors and windows have simple molded surrounds. Several areas in the house, including the stairwell have "railroad car siding", as vertically sheathed, beaded waistcoat are popularly referred to. The first floor floors have been replaced or covered with newer, narrow flooring, but the original wide pine floors remain on the second floor. The mantels in the two front rooms of the first floor are replacement classical designs, and the mantel with Adamesque ornament in the rear east side room may also be a replacement. Each upstairs bedroom has an original, nearly identical late Victorian mantel with chamfered pilasters and heavy, curvilinear brackets supporting a shelf.

As on the exterior, the focus of the interior is the stair hall, located in the tower, which is fortunately unaltered. The corner, open string [stairwinds](#) with two landings to the second floor. The first floor [newel](#) is a massive, chamfered post with incised Queen Anne ornament and a turned finial. The balustrade has a molded [handrail](#) and turned [balusters](#).

At the northeast corner of the backyard, adjacent to the service alley, is a diminutive outbuilding of late Victorian design which was probably built as a playhouse. The frame structure rests on brick piers, has German siding, a paneled and glazed door, window sash of various types, and a shallow gable tin roof which engages a narrow front porch with heavy, turned porch posts.