

# The James C. Dowd House



*This report was written on May 1, 1978.*

**1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the James C. Dowd House is located at 2216 Monument Ave. in Charlotte, N.C.

**2. Names address and telephone number of the present owner and occupant of the property:**

The property is unoccupied.

The present owner of the property is:

Mrs. Louise C. Lawing

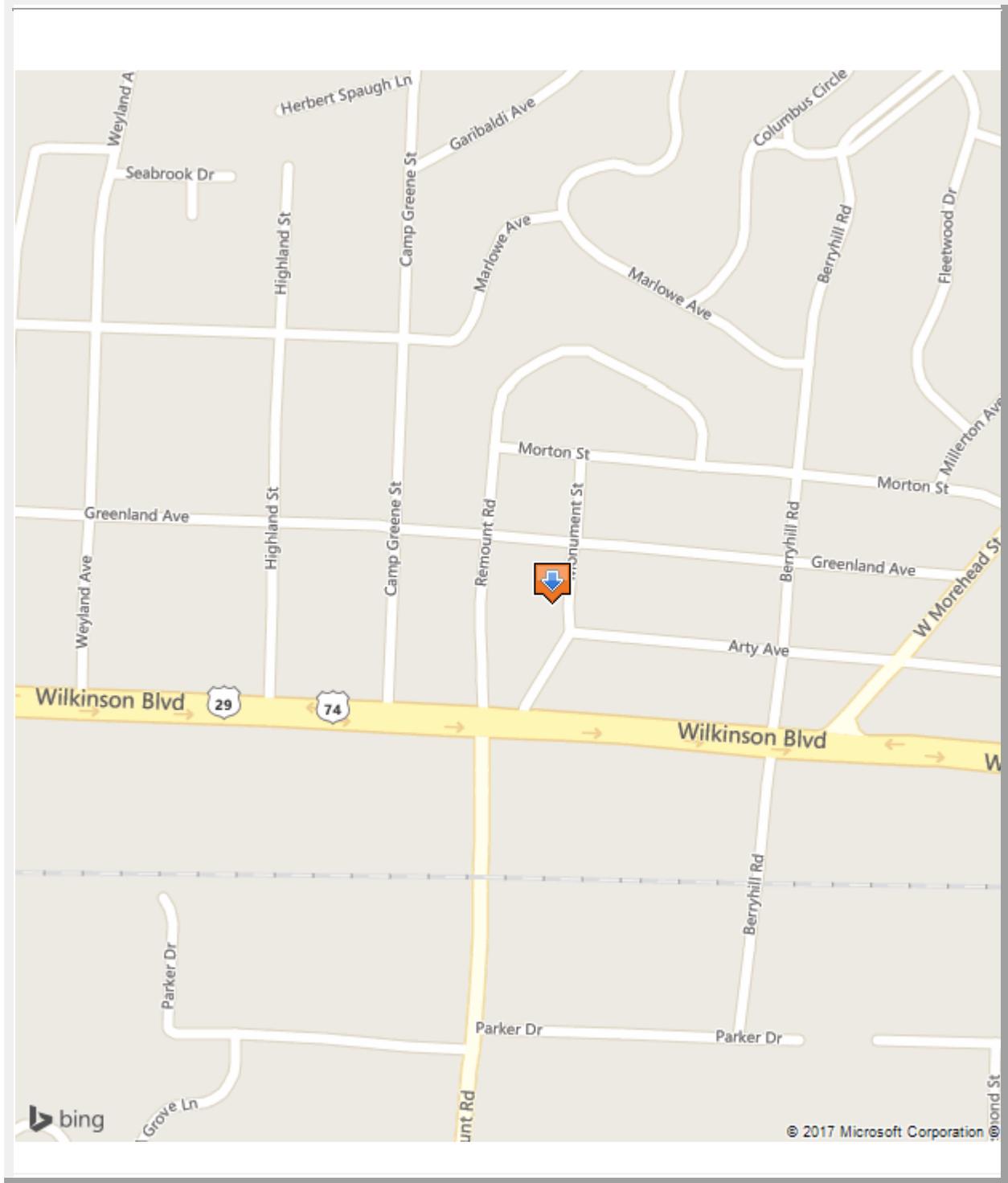
725 Templeton Ave.

Charlotte, N.C. 28203

Telephone: 333-7624

**3. Representative photographs of the property:** This report contains representative photographs of the property.

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



Click on the map to browse

**5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property:** The most recent reference to this property is recorded in a Will, File # 73-E-558. The Tax Parcel Number for the property is 06706105.

**6. A brief historical sketch of the property:**

On December 30, 1878, James C. Dowd (1835-1898) purchased approximately 250 acres of land from his brother, Clement Dowd, just to the west of the City of Charlotte. <sup>1</sup> A native of Moore County, North Carolina and a son of Confederate General Willis D. Dowd, James C. Dowd had served as a captain in the North Carolina 45th Regiment during the Civil War and had been wounded at the Battle of Fredericksburg. During the decade following that conflict, he had migrated to Mecklenburg County with his first wife, Henrietta Rives. He erected the James C. Dowd House c. 1879. By the time of his death on November 26, 1898, Mr. Dowd had become "One of the most prominent farmers in the county." It was fitting that his funeral was held at Tryon St. Baptist Church (later First Baptist Church), because he had served as a deacon in that religious organization for many years. <sup>2</sup>

Henrietta Rives Dowd, a native of Chatham County, North Carolina, predeceased her husband, having expired on June 20, 1895, at the age of fifty-two. <sup>3</sup> She had given birth to ten children who attained adulthood, four girls and six boys. <sup>4</sup> Among them were William Carey Dowd, who bought *The Charlotte News* in 1895, and Willis Frank Dowd, who established the Charlotte Pipe and Foundry Co. in 1900. <sup>5</sup> Mr. Dowd's second wife, Alice Livingston of Huntersville, North Carolina, died in January 1900. <sup>6</sup>

The farm was sold at public auction to Clarence Gresham on March 11, 1899. <sup>7</sup> Samuel Wittkowsky, a prominent Jewish merchant and entrepreneur, purchased the property soon thereafter, on May 16, 1899. <sup>8</sup> Having acquired the land for investment purposes, Wittkowsky leased the farm on September 23, 1899. The lease stipulated that the property could be used "for agricultural purposes only," that the lessee was required to "keep all buildings on said premises repaired" and that he could not "cut any of the standing timber." It also stated that Wittkowsky would have the "use of the iron and other mineral springs upon said premises, and the uncultivated grounds and woods surrounding and adjacent thereto." <sup>9</sup>

On July 7, 1900, Robert M. Miller, Jr., a local realtor and industrialist, bought the property and subsequently divided it into several parcels. <sup>10</sup> Born on April 20, 1856, near Lancaster, SC, Mr. Miller settled in Charlotte following his graduation from Davidson College in the mid-1870's. An associate of D. A. Tompkins for several years, R. M. Miller, Jr., acquired considerable expertise in the textile business. Indeed, he used a portion of the Dowd farm as the location for Elizabeth Mills, one of the larger factories in the community. <sup>11</sup> Mr. Miller converted the Dowd House into rental

property. Among its tenants was L. W. Cooper, who participated in the construction of Elizabeth Mills, a structure now occupied by Radiator Specialty Co. <sup>12</sup>

E. C. Griffith, another local realtor of note, purchased the Dowd House on March 26, 1917. <sup>13</sup> Soon thereafter, the United States entered World War I. The Charlotte Chamber of Commerce appointed a committee, headed by Mr. Z. V. Taylor (builder of what would later become a portion of the James B. Duke House), to promote Charlotte as the location of a training camp for the U.S. Army. <sup>14</sup> Major General Leonard Wood visited Charlotte on July 5, 1917, and toured "the site offered on the southwest of the city." "Over and over this site," *The Charlotte Observer* reported, "went the party, inspecting the topography of the land, the streams, wooded sections, roads, and all else." <sup>15</sup> Members of General Wood's staff were "charmed with several particularly high knolls, which afforded excellent places for the location of headquarters." <sup>16</sup> *The Charlotte Observer* of July 10, 1917, was more explicit in describing the site which the officers preferred.

The old Dowd place, which is the corner of the site nearest Charlotte, is located on a high knoll. This knoll overlooks the city on one side and the camp site on the other. It was favorably commented upon by the officers as an ideal place for camp headquarters. <sup>17</sup>

*The Charlotte Observer* of July 25, 1917, presented a photograph of the "old Dowd home" as it was being converted into administrative headquarters for the camp, which would be named Camp Greene in honor of General Nathaniel Greene of Revolutionary War fame. <sup>18</sup>

Mr. I. M. Cook, owner of Cook's Body Co., purchased the Dowd house on August 28, 1924, and lived there until his death on December 28, 1951. <sup>19</sup> His widow, Ella E. Cook, lived in the home until she died on November 29, 1972. <sup>20</sup> Mrs. Louise Cook Lawing inherited the property from her mother's estate. She continues to be the owner. <sup>21</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 20, Page 121. David T. Ritch, "Short History Of The James C. Dowd House" (unpublished manuscript). Hereafter cited as Ritch.

<sup>2</sup> *The Charlotte Daily Observer* (November 27, 1898) p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *The Charlotte Daily Observer* (June 21, 1895) p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *The Charlotte Daily Observer* (November 27, 1898) p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Ritch.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. *The Charlotte Daily Observer* (November 27, 1898) p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 134, Page 68.

<sup>8</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 134, Page 572.

<sup>9</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 140, Page 23.

<sup>10</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 146, Page 433.

<sup>11</sup> *The Charlotte Observer* (October 12, 1925) p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ritch.

<sup>13</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 377, Page 3.

<sup>14</sup> *The Charlotte Observer* (June 19, 1917) p. 11. *The Charlotte Observer* (July 4, 1917) p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> *The Charlotte Observer* (July 6, 1917) p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *The Charlotte Observer* (July 8, 1917) p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> *The Charlotte Observer* (July 10, 1917) p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> *The Charlotte Observer* (July 25, 1917) p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> *The Charlotte Observer* (December 29, 1951) sec. B, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> *The Charlotte Observer* (November 30, 1972) p. 2B.

<sup>21</sup> Mecklenburg County Estate Records, Will # 73-E-558.

**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 N. C. G. S. 160A-399.4:**

**a. Historical and cultural significance:** The historical and cultural significance of the property known as the James C. Dowd House rests upon two factors. First, the structure is the most important artifact of Camp Greene, a World War I military installation, which survives. Second, the structure has strong associative ties with a family of local and regional importance, the Dowd family.

**b. Suitability for preservation and restoration:** Although alterations have been made over the years, the structure retains a considerable degree of integrity. Certainly, the structure could easily be restored to its exterior appearance as administrative headquarters for Camp Greene.

**c. Educational value:** The James C. Dowd House has educational value because of the historical and cultural significance of the property.

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

**e. Possibilities for adaptive or alternative use of the property:** The James C. Dowd House is currently zoned for office use. The Commission believes that the structure has no future as a private residence and should be adapted to a new use. The structure is well-suited for a variety of adaptive uses.

**f. Appraised value:** The current tax appraisal of the improvements on the property is \$3,160. The current tax appraisal of the .689 acres of land is \$22,520. The most recent annual tax bill on the property was \$431.42. 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 in the National Register of Historic Places:** The Commission judges that the property known as the James C. Dowd 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 its investigation of the property known as the James C. Dowd House demonstrates that the property is of local and regional importance. Consequently, the Commission judges that the property known as the James C. Dowd 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-Mecklenburg :** The property known as the James C. Dowd House is historically important to Charlotte and Mecklenburg County for two reasons. First, the structure is the most important artifact of Camp Greene, a World War I military installation, which survives. Second, the structure has strong associative ties with a family of local and regional importance, the Dowd family.

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## **Chain of Title**

1. Mecklenburg County Will # 73-E-558 (June 7, 1974).  
Devisors: Ella E. Cook  
Devisee: Louise C. Lawing, I. M. Cook, Jr.

2. Mecklenburg County Will Book 9, Page 336 (March 12, 1952).  
Devisor: I. M. Cook  
Devisee: Ella E. Cook

3. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 549, Page 711 (August 21, 1924).  
Grantor: Charlotte Investment Co.  
Grantee: I. M. Cook
4. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 377, Page 3 (March 26, 1917).  
Grantor: Millerton Homes Co.  
Grantee: Charlotte Investment Co.
5. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 161, Page 436 (October 23, 1901).  
Grantors: R. M. Miller, Jr. & wife, Estelle Ross Miller  
Grantee: Millerton Homes Co.
6. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 146, Page 433 (July 7, 1900).  
Grantor: Samuel Wittkowsky, Carrie Wittkowsky  
Grantee: Robert M. Miller, Jr.
7. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 134, Page 572 (May 16, 1899).  
Grantors: Clarence Gresham & wife, Alice S. Gresham, S. S. McNinch & wife, Julia I. McNinch, C. H. Duls  
Grantee: S. Wittkowsky
8. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 134, Page 68 (March 11, 1899).  
Grantor: Willis B. Dowd  
Grantee: Clarence Gresham
9. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 77, Page 381 (April 6, 1891).  
Grantor: James C. Dowd  
Grantee: Willis B. Dowd (Deed of Trust)
10. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 20, Page 121 (December 30, 1878).  
Grantors: C. Dowd & wife, Lydia J. Dowd  
Grantee: James C. Dowd

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## **Bibliography**

*An Inventory of Buildings in Mecklenburg County and Charlotte For The Historic Properties Commission.*

Estate Records of Mecklenburg County.

Records of the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office.

Records of the Mecklenburg County Tax Office.

Ritch, David T., "Short History Of The James C. Dowd House" (an unpublished manuscript).

*The Charlotte Daily Observer.*

*The Charlotte Observer.*

**Date of Preparation of this Report:** May 1, 1978

**Prepared by:** Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Director  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission  
39 Middleton Dr.  
Charlotte, N.C. 28207

Telephone: (704) 332-2726

### ***Architectural Description***

*by Ruth Little-Stokes*  
*April 5, 1978*

The Dowd House, 2216 Monument Avenue, Charlotte, sited on one of the highest knolls in western Charlotte, is set in a grove of large old oak trees, with remnants of beautiful bushes and floral landscaping. Built in 1879, the structure is a typical late Victorian North Carolina farmhouse, constructed in sturdy, plain form without any distinctive architectural features that constitute a "style." Since the original porch has been replaced, the only overtly stylistic element now present is the main entrance, with **Italianate** Revival details. The frame house consists of a two-story main block,

three bays wide and two bays deep, and a one-story rear window. The structure rests on a brick pier foundation, infilled with brick at a later date, and has one exterior end single stepped shoulder brick chimney, laid in random [common bond](#), and two interior brick chimneys. The north bay of the main (east) facade projects out about eight feet, and within the resulting angle is a one-story, two-bay wide porch. The shed porch which extends along the inside flank of the rear window is now enclosed.

The Italianate entrance, located in the center bay of the main (east) facade, has Doric capitals flanking the door, and is surrounded by [sidelights](#) and a [transom](#), with deep, flat-paneled soffit and reveals and a crossetted molded surround. The original door has been replaced by an early 20th century paneled and glazed door, and the pilasters and sidelights which originally flanked the door have been removed. The house has plain weatherboard, accented with corner boards with [Doric](#) capitals. The wide, overhanging eaves shelter a broad frieze and a slender molded cornice. Wood shingles are still in place beneath the 20th century composition roofing. Large paned four-over-four pane sash [windows](#) are set within wide plain frames with narrow fillet borders. The present porch, a 20th century replacement, has boxed Doric posts and lacks a railing.

The interior first floor plan, consisting of a wide center hall flanked by two small rooms on the north side and three rooms on the south side: the front parlor, central dining room, and the rear kitchen is original. The enclosed rear porch functions as an extension of the center hall, and is linked by doors to the kitchen and the front hall. At the rear of the hall, an open-string stair rises in two flights with a landing to the second floor. The floor plan of the second floor, also original, is identical to the first floor of the main block, with two north rooms and one south room. The only alteration to this plan is the addition of a bathroom in the front upstairs hall.

The interior does not contain the heavy late Victorian mantels, stair railing, and moldings which are common in houses of this period, but has light, neoclassical style woodwork. Apparently the entire interior was remodeled in the early 20th century, most likely when the house was converted into administrative headquarters for Camp Greene. With the exception of the rear north room on the second floor, all of the mantels, doors and trim throughout the house are of early 20th century vintage. The mantels have tripartite friezes and slender, freestanding Doric colonnettes supporting the shelves. The main parlor (southeast room) has the only mantel graced by an overmantel. The doors have six raised panels, arranged one above the other. Around the doors and windows are wide plain surrounds with simple mitred edges. Almost all rooms on both floors have high molded baseboards. The [stair](#) railing, consisting of a large, boxed [newel](#) with a molded cap, a molded stair [rail](#) with plain [balusters](#), and a plain open string, matches the other woodwork and appears to be contemporary with it. Walls and ceilings are plastered, and the original wide soft pine floors remain

everywhere except the first floor hall, parlor and dining room, where narrow hardwood floors were laid over the original floors in the early 20th century.

Apparently the northwest second floor room is the only area of the house which survived the sweeping early 20th century remodeling. Here the walls and ceiling are covered with narrow beaded wood sheathing. The mantel has a thick, slightly clumsy late Victorian character which is completely in keeping with the period and location of the house. The mantel is constructed of thick boards, with a design of flanking, nominally Doric pilasters supporting, a sawn frieze which resembles the headboard of a bed, a molded cornice and shelf.

The Dowd House has both a basement and attic. The basement was excavated in the 20th century to house the heating system. The attic, entered through a small scuttle hole in the hall, is unfinished, and here the circular sawn framework of the ceiling and roof is visible.

### **CLARIFICATIONS OF THE SURVEY AND RESEARCH REPORT ON THE JAMES C. DOWD HOUSE**

The James C. Dowd House served as Administrative Headquarters of Camp Greene for approximately six months. Its essential function was to house the personnel who directed and supervised the construction of the Camp.

The large paned four over four sash windows are not original and were probably added sometime after World War I.