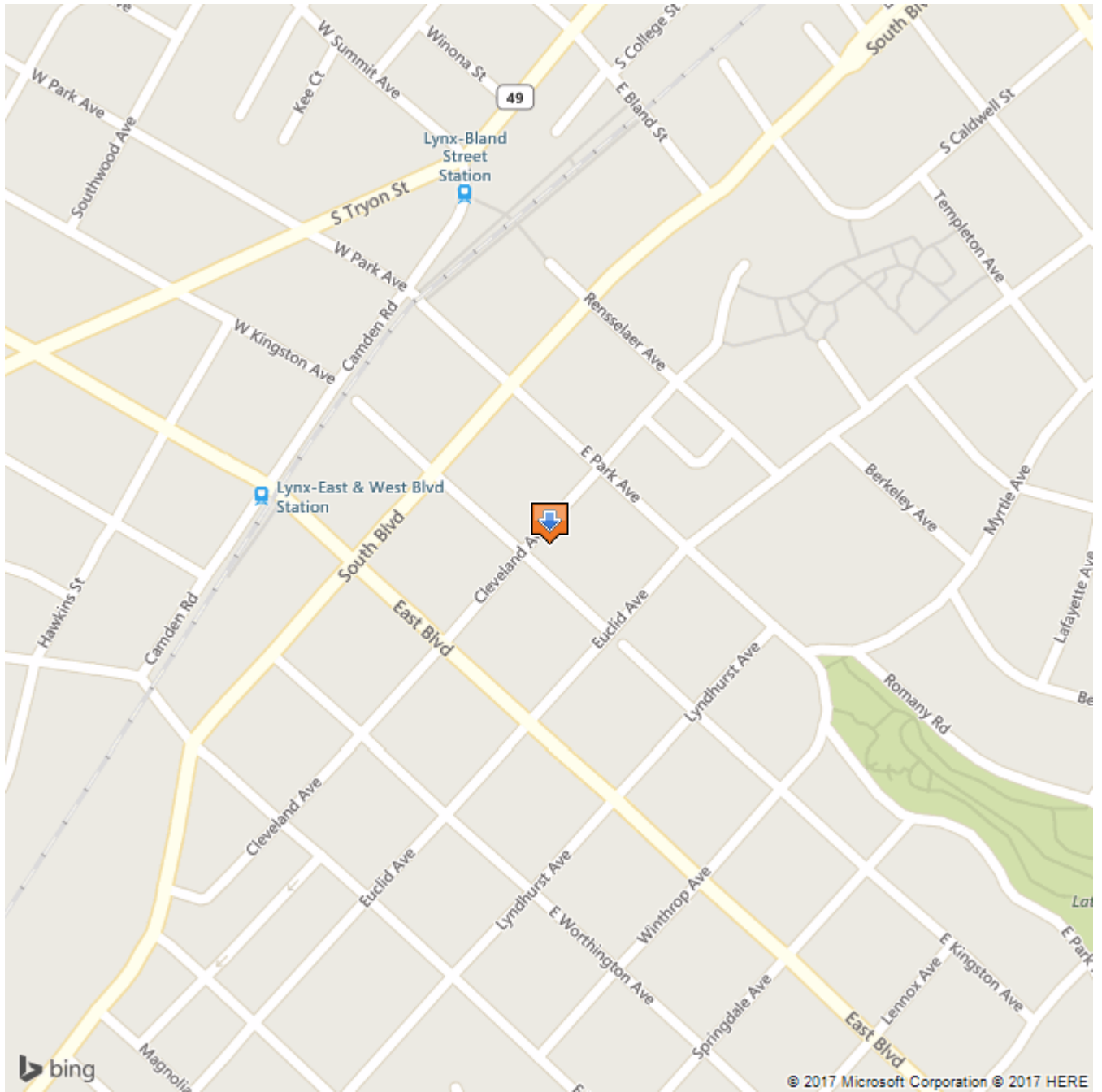


Survey and Research Report On The Fennell House 301 East Kingston Avenue



- 1. Name and location of the property:** The Fennell House 301 East Kingston Avenue
Charlotte NC
- 2. Name and address of the present owner of the property:** Jeff Douglas 1122
Montford Drive Charlotte, NC 28209
- 3. Representative photographs of the property:** This report contains representative
photos of the property
- 4. Maps depicting the location of the property:** This report contains a map depicting
the location of the property:



5. Current deed book and tax parcel information for the property: The current deed reference is 15598-370. The Tax Parcel Identification Number is 12307601. **UTM coordinate:** UTM 17 513153E 3896536N

6. A brief historical sketch of the property: This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property.

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains a brief architectural description of the property.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets 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 property known as the Fennell House does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

- The Fennell House was built c. 1903 and is one of the extant structures of Phase One [1891-1905] of development in Dilworth
- The Fennell House retains its original integrity as an early twentieth century middle class home in a streetcar suburb
- It was built by the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company, or the 4C's, the construction company that built Dilworth
- It was most probably designed by architect C.C. Hook, who was commissioned by the 4C's to design the homes built during the first phase
- The Fennell House has been identified by architectural historian Dr. Ruth Little as an example of C.C. Hook's "Modern American" style
- The Fennell House is one of the few surviving examples of the Queen Anne Victorian Styles in Charlotte

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association: The Commission contends that the physical and architectural description that is included in this report, demonstrates that the Fennell House meets 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 designated "historic landmark." The current appraised value of the building is \$176,700. The current appraised value of the lot is \$275,000. The current total value is \$451,700.

Date of preparation of this report: November 2004

Prepared by: Paula M. Stathakis, Ph. D. and Allen L. Brooks, AIA

Historical Sketch Dilworth

The Fennell House was built as part of the initial phase of the development of Dilworth, Charlotte's first streetcar suburb. Dilworth was promoted as a

“suburban paradise” and was planned by Edward Dilworth Latta and the construction firm he owned with several other prominent Charlotte businessmen, the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company, familiarly known as the 4C’s. Dilworth was carved from what had been described as 442 flat and treeless acres and would ultimately become a fashionable enclave for the city’s growing middle class. Latta enticed potential homeowners with beautifully landscaped boulevards, a streetcar system connecting the suburb to town, and recreational facilities, such as Latta Park. In 1891, *The Charlotte Democrat* praised the neighborhood as “the city of Avenues” and noted that the 4C’s would offer the first round of lots for sale on May 20, 21, and 22.^[1]

In spite of the onslaught of favorable advertising in the Charlotte papers, Dilworth got off to a rocky start, and the 4C’s consequently spiraled into financial difficulties. Determined to make Dilworth a financial success, Latta continued to invest in more elaborate amenities for the neighborhood to attract suburban homeowners. Latta built a pavilion, a lake with boathouses, a bowling alley, and a baseball grandstand to attract people from the city. Dilworth received a boost in 1892 when D.A. Tompkins announced plans to build the Atherton Cotton Mills on Dilworth’s southern boundary. Other manufacturing plants soon followed suit. By 1895, six major manufacturing concerns were located in Dilworth, and the 4C’s survived by building houses for industrial workers near and around these new factories.^[2]

Between 1894 and 1900, the 4C’s provided Dilworth with all the modern amenities: a trolley line, electricity, gas, water and sewer services. Perhaps most importantly, Latta continued to offer long- term mortgage financing, a program that facilitated home ownership for the middle class. By encouraging financing, Latta declared that Dilworth was not merely intended for the wealthy, stating: "So while we have property for everybody, for those in affluence, able to construct edifices after their heart's desire, our special work and calling is to aid those whose moderate income suggests a pause when the subject of a real home is talked of."^[3]

C.C. Hook

The architecture of the new neighborhood was touted as the most up-to-date as could be found anywhere. *The Charlotte Daily Observer* announced in 1893: “Mr. E.D. Latta arranged to introduce new styles of architecture at Dilworth and Mr. Hook will prepare plans for five new residences. They will include the 'Queen Anne,' 'Colonial,' and 'Modern American' styles of architecture. All of the buildings will be built in the best manner with slate roofs, fine interior finish, and ornamental stairways.”^[4]



The Mr. Hook referred to in the above article was Charles Christian Hook, a Wheeling, West Virginia native who moved to Charlotte in 1891 to teach mechanical drawing. His architectural career began when he was hired by the 4C's to design houses in Dilworth during the initial phase of construction. Hook later partnered with Frank Sawyer [1902-1907] in the firm of Hook and Sawyer, and later with Willard Rogers [1912-1916] in the firm of Hook and Rogers, and later with his son W.W. Hook. During his forty-five year career, C.C. Hook designed several buildings that would ultimately become architectural landmarks in Charlotte: the Charlotte Women's Club, the J.B. Duke House, and the William Henry Belk mansion are but a few examples of his work.^[5] Like many of Charlotte's prominent citizens of the day, most notably D.A. Tompkins and E.D. Latta, Hook was not a Charlotte native but was nevertheless able to play a significant role in the city's development at a time when the local economy was vigorous and expanding. Hook's stamp is still visible in many areas of the city.



Of the design styles described by the *Charlotte Daily Observer*, Hook's "Modern American" has proved the most difficult to define. According to architectural historian Ruth Little, it refers to "a more formal version of colonial design" influenced by the Georgian Revival style and featuring pediments, dormer windows, modillions and dentil cornices, and Doric porches.^[6]

The Fennell House was built during the period that C.C. Hook was the dominant architect in Dilworth and is, according to Little, an example of what Hook called the "Modern American" style, showing "the hesitant incorporation of Georgian elements into a basic Queen Anne block." Little describes the house as

...two and one half story frame house [with] symmetrical massing...a two story splayed east side bay, a deep one story splayed west side bay, and three classical pediments, one over the east bay, a pedimented dormer window, and a pedimented porch roof. The porch is supported by Doric columns. The picture window with leaded glass transom is used here, one of the earliest instances of its appearance in Dilworth. This window type, a large pane of glass which is fixed and does not open, developed along with the Queen Anne style in New England in the 1880s, and is a popular feature in Dilworth homes from the beginning.^[7]

The Fennell Family's Acquisition of 301 East Kingston Avenue:

The first residents of the house at 301 East Kingston Avenue were Benjamin F. and Helen A. Fennell. B.F. Fennell was a foreman, and later master mechanic at the General Fire Extinguisher Company.^[8] The Fennells appear to have been an ordinary and quiet middle class family, the type that Latta hoped to attract to the neighborhood with his long-term mortgage financing programs. The Fennell family owned the property until 1965.



The earliest deed reference to the property is on April 30, 1903 and is between Helen A. Fennell and the 4C's. Through this instrument, Helen Fennell acquired lot 20 and half of lot 19 in square 25 for \$4727.42.^[9] Two years later, Mrs. Helen A. Fennell acquired the remainder of lot 19 from the 4C's for \$472.10.^[10] What is notable about these acquisitions is the purchase price of the initial parcel. Citing data from the *Charlotte Daily Observer* Little shows that by 1904, the average lot in Dilworth cost \$900-\$1200.00. Average lot size was 50'x100', as were the original parcels purchased by Helen Fennell. The same newspaper article references the price of houses in Dilworth in 1904: "Dilworth has had a majority of the finer homes, running from \$3000 to \$5000 as a rule, in cost of construction..."^[11] Taking the above facts into consideration, it is likely that the house at 301 East Kingston was already built when Helen Fennell bought the lots, and may have been a tract house designed by Hook for Dilworth, but not a house designed specially for the Fennell family.

Although direct references linking Hook to the Fennell house have not been found, it seems that the idiosyncratic hand of the architect is apparent in its

style and design. Ruth Little asserts that the Fennell House, built during the early phase of Dilworth development, is an example of what Hook identified as his “Modern American” style. Other Dilworth homes that have been designated as local Historic Landmarks have been done so on the basis or partly on the basis that their design was attributable to C.C. Hook. These homes include the Jones-Garibaldi House, the Helms-Bell House, and the Lucian Walker House. The architect of the Crutchfield-Bomar-Brem House, also built in 1903, was previously unknown but is now confirmed to be C.C. Hook, as referenced in *The Charlotte Daily Observer*, May 16, 1903 stating: “Mr. Charles D. McKnight let the contract for his residence on Kingston Avenue and Mr. W.G. Crutchfield to let the contract for his new residence on East Boulevard yesterday. Both will be large and handsome. The plans were prepared by Hook and Sawyer.”^[12]

^[1] *The Charlotte Democrat*, May 15, 1891.

^[2] Dan Morrill, *Dilworth’s Early History, 1890-1911*, www.cmhpf.org/educationneighhistdilworth1.htm

^[3] Ibid. For more information about the history of Dilworth, consult the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks website.

^[4] *Charlotte Daily Observer*, June 4, 1893.

^[5] Dr. William H. Huffman, Survey and Research Report, The Jones-Garibaldi House.

^[6] Ruth Little-Stokes, *Dilworth Historic District: Charlotte, N.C. Architectural Analysis*, The Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, and the Dilworth Community Development Association, August 18, 1978, p. 14.

^[7] Ibid.

^[8] Charlotte City Directory, 1905-1906, 1907.

^[9] Mecklenburg County Court House, Register of Deeds, Deed Book 178 Page 128. A map of the neighborhood is in Map Book 230 Page 60.

[10] Deed 289-645, October 24, 1905.

[11] Ruth Little-Stokes, Dilworth Historic District, p. 2.

[12] Charlotte Daily Observer, May 16, 1903, p. 6 [Briefs

Architectural Description

The 1891 Map of the lots for Dilworth by the Charlotte Consolidated Company shows two 50 feet wide lots facing East Kingston Avenue, 150 feet deep at the corner of Cleveland and East Kingston Avenues. An imposing house was built on the corner before 1903 that remains today. In the late 1920's the two lots were probably reconfigured bifurcating the original two with a width of 89.15 feet along Cleveland for the corner lot fronting on East Kingston, and 60.85 feet along Cleveland for the construction of a wood frame quadraplex according to the current tax records.

The Fennell house, named after the original occupants, is an excellent example of Queen Anne style with combined Classical and Georgian elements that has been referred to as "Modern American" style by C. C. Hook, Charlotte's first trained architect employed by the Charlotte Consolidated Company for many of the early houses of Dilworth at the time of the construction of this house. This house contributes to the National Register of Historic Places of Dilworth as one of the recognized styles of architecture for the Historic District. The steeply pitched roof of irregular shape has the qualifying elements of a hip roof with multiple front and side-facing gables, balloon framing with asymmetrical plan with a wrap around one story porch exhibiting the restrained detailing of the free classic variety. In the rear is a one-story bay for the kitchen and utility porch.

Two interior brick corbelled chimneys rise beyond the natural slate roof of 12/12 pitch. The square shingles have intermediate rows of decorative fish-scale pattern. Metal coping caps the hips and ridges with the punctuation of square shaped finials. A concealed gutter is integrated within the eaves that run constant with the horizontal cornice at the gables outlined in a generous crown mould. Wood shingles are in the gable tympanum and German siding covers the exterior walls. Wide corner boards end at the deep plain frieze board under the eave and terminate at the capped sill band at the floor level only broken by a narrow band aligning with the upper floor window sills. The general appearance is not fanciful but dignified

with well-executed proportions of massing. The single element of departure occurs at the octagonal dining bay projecting on the northwest side at the eave. Double intersecting scroll brackets are engaged at the corners to support the square eave. This similar detail appears on at least two other historic houses (Thies House and J. J. Walker House) attributed to the design by C.C. Hook.

The front porch is one story with a low pitch roof in metal, an obvious replacement of the original tin. A shallow gable spans the front entry at East Kingston. The porch continues around the corner to display an octagonal side bay facing Cleveland. The wood columns are in the Tuscan order with the original railing with square pickets. The floors are plank flooring with beadboard ceilings. The windows are mostly double hung 1/1 singles. Decorative casement windows with wood diamond mullion are featured at the stairwell, dining room octagonal bay and the attic gable as a smaller double hung. The front parlor window is a huge single pane with a fixed transom above. The attic gables have elongated wood louver vents.

The floor plan features the entry as a grand stairhall. The stair ascends by the front door to the left with an open landing leading to the corner and a second landing in the opposite rear corner. The entire space up and downstairs has a vertical beadboard wainscot. The main newel post is paneled and has a starburst accent panel with an urn finial. The other newels are squared non-paneled with urn finials. The balustrade is open stringer with turned pickets and moulded handrail. A closet is directly under the stair. A door under the second stair landing leads to the left side porch. An adjacent door leads to the left side bedroom. The center door leads to the rear servants' hall and back utility porch. Adjacent to that door leads to the dining room, and the extreme right door leads to the front parlor. This door is a two leaf hinged five-panel door similar to all other single leaf doors of the house. The perimeter circulation flows from room to room. A small butler's pantry is between the dining and right rear kitchen that leads to the rear open porch that has been enclosed. A utility room is at the left rear. From the rear porch, it leads to a bathroom connecting to the left bedroom. The central rear hall has a tight and treacherous servants stair leading to the front to back upstairs hall with an extended ell leading to an upstairs bathroom to the right over the butler's pantry. The newels are square of solid one-piece wood with turned urn-shaped finials. Three bedrooms complete the upstairs. There are very small closets in the parlor and the bedrooms that flank one side of the chimney.

In the kitchen pantry is a wood trap door that leads to the excavated basement where the modern HVAC system is now located. The door may not be original but exhibits early craftsmanship. A wood pull down stair accesses the attic that exhibits the rough sawn wood timber framed structure that supports the slate roof. The downstairs ceiling height is eleven feet and the upstairs is ten feet. The kitchen and porch ceilings are lower at nine and one half feet.

All major rooms have fireplaces totaling six and flues for entry hall and kitchen. The front parlor fireplace is of stained cherry with mirrored over-mantel and full height ionic flanking columns with a bowed mantle shelf. The umber glazed decorative fireplace surround tiles have a relief emblem pattern with a coordinating hearth tile. The Caustic Tile Company of the Midwest United States probably produced them. The coal bin cover plate is a decorative pattern of torches and garden mural scene. The dining room mantle also has an over mantle but with a leaded glass cabinet supported by small fluted columns at the bracketed mantle shelf with tall based slender full height flanking ionic columns. It is now painted and with mottled glazed 2" x 6" tiles and matching hearth tiles. It has been bricked probably for the use of the basement furnace. The left downstairs bedroom has a Victorian turned column supported mantle with a matching mirrored over-mantle. The wood mantle is also painted with a coal bin cover and plaster fireplace surround and concrete hearth. The other bedroom mantles are carpentry made in varying designs without overmantles with plastered fireplace surrounds and concrete hearths.

The foundation walls are brick, the floors are heart pine, the walls are wood lath plaster, the wood trim has capped base and picture moulding at the ceilings. The halls, bathrooms, butler's pantry and kitchen have beadboard wainscot. The rear storage room and closets have plank siding; the casing is moulded with mitered corners. The house exhibits the evolution of modernization in utilities and devices. Architecturally it remains virtually all of its original design. To date there are several door hardware types; however, the original type appears to be a decorative relief patterned brass plate with a matching round knob. The door hinges have ball final pins. There are original gas wall sconces in the hallways and two bedrooms. They are small brass decorative pipefittings with swivel joints for adjusting the position. A small bowl is at the end to simulate a candlestick. There are brass plate pushbutton electric switches with mother-of-pearl buttons. The house has one decorative radiator that remains in the entry hall retained as a decorative piece. All the piping has been

removed. There are early glass globe brass chandeliers with chain and canopy. The two bathrooms have porcelain glazed claw foot tubs with wall-mounted basins.

The house has few alterations since its construction other than the modernization of utilities. The Cleveland Avenue side octagonal bay porch was enclosed by previous owners. It will now be restored to its original appearance by the renovations of the current owner. The rear center porch was enclosed by previous owners. It will now be renovated into a breakfast room by the current owner. The kitchen has been modernized by previous owners.

The addition is placed to the right rear farthest from the street corner. The rear one story bay will be increased to two stories with a contrasting 6/12-pitch hip roof in natural slate to match the existing. This addition will provide necessary bathrooms that will allow the original bedrooms to remain unchanged. The addition will continue past the original house at the West corner as a porte-cochere with a master bedroom above. The rear servant's stair will continue up to the attic with a small study open to the stairhall that will serve as the entry into the master suite. Two bathrooms will be added. One will be from the left upper bedroom, and one from the end of the main upper stairhall. All details of the new construction will match the materials and configurations of the existing house but with modern technical innovations such as wood simulated true divided lite insulated glass windows. The master bedroom and bathtub bay will feature diamond glass windows and beadboard wainscot for the entire room, and the porte-cochere will be detailed similar to the front porch design with Tuscan columns with brick bases. A carriage track driveway will lead from East Kingston to the porte-cochere. The original square footage of the house will be increased from 2745 to 3670 with about 925 additional and enclosed square feet. The original footprint will only be increased by 90 square feet not including the porte-cochere.