

THE GARIBALDI & BRUNS BUILDING

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This report was written on June 5, 1985

Name and location of the property: The property known as the Old Garibaldi & Bruns Building is located at 104-106 South Tryon Street, Charlotte, North Carolina.

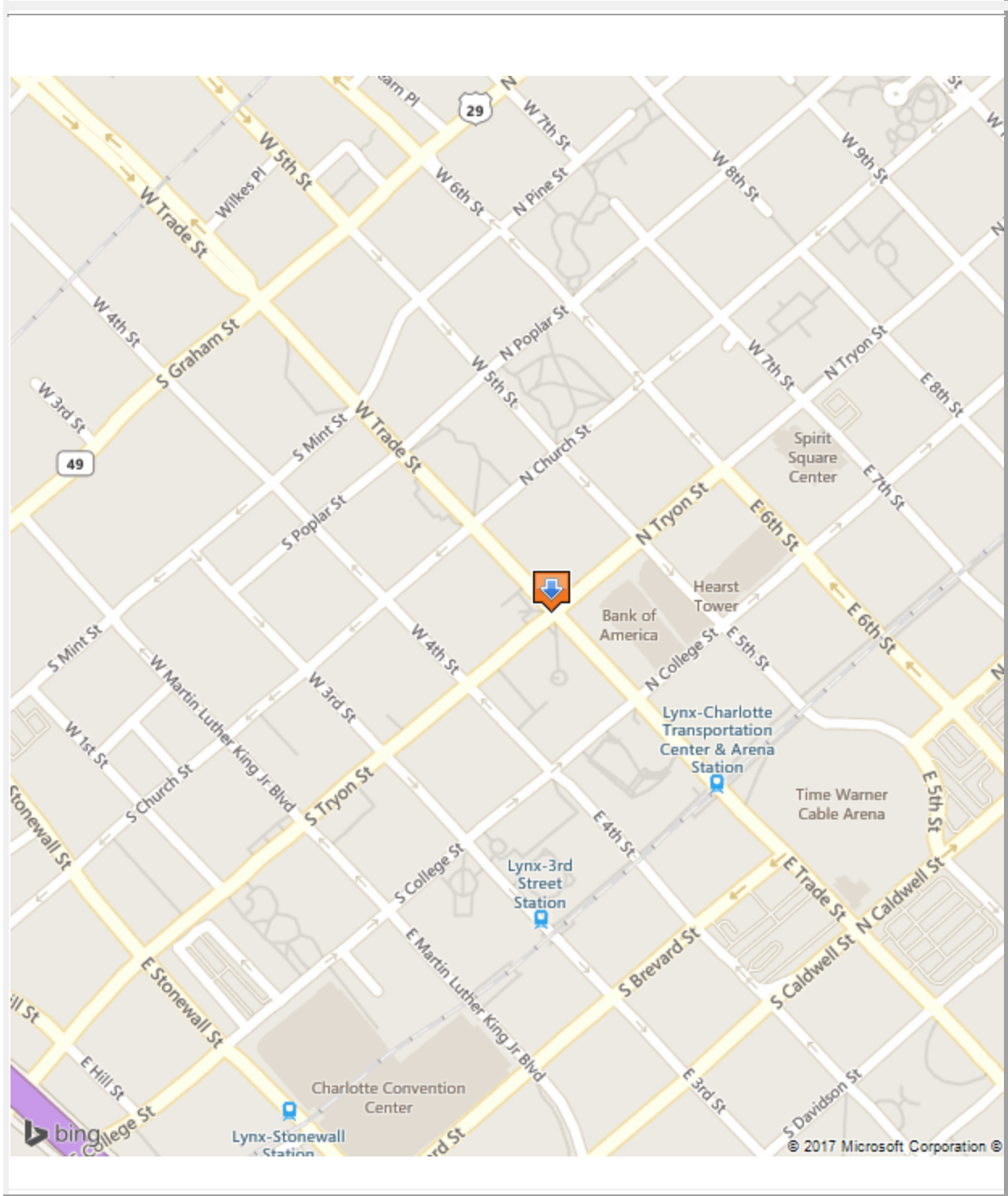
2. Name, address and telephone number of the present owner of the property:

City of Charlotte
600 East Trade Street
Charlotte, N.C., 28202

Telephone: 704/336-2241

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 which depicts the location of the property.



Click on the map to browse

5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The most recent deed to this property is recorded in Deed Book 4578, Page 001. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is 073-011-12.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property: This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. William H. Huffman, Ph.D.

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains a brief architectural description of the property by Mr. Thomas W. Hanchett.

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

a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and/or cultural importance: The Commission judges that the property known as the Old Garibaldi & Bruns Building does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) the Old Garibaldi & Bruns Building, incorporating elements of Granite Row, an 1850-51 commercial complex in Charlotte and probably the only antebellum commercial structure which survives in Charlotte, draws its principal physical significance from its association with Louis Asbury, an architect of local and regional importance; 2) the 1909 Garibaldi and Bruns facade is the earliest known example of a commercial store front in Charlotte designed by Louis Asbury, who began his practice in 1908; 3) the founders of the company, Joseph Garibaldi, William L. Bruns, and Harry W. Dixon, were important businessmen in Charlotte, and their firm survives in Charlotte as a leading jewelry store; and 4) the Old Garibaldi & Bruns Building is one of the two remaining small-scale business structures on the first block of South Tryon Street and, therefore, is an important link with Charlotte's commercial history.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association: The Commission contends that the attached architectural description by Mr. Thomas W. Hanchett demonstrates that the property known as the Old Garibaldi & Bruns Building 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 "historic property." It should be noted that the Old Garibaldi & Bruns Building comprises only a portion of the overall parcel. The current appraised value of the .204 acres of land is \$1,064,760. The current appraised value of the improvements is \$105,020. The current appraised value is \$1,169,780. The property is presently exempted from the payment of Ad Valorem taxes. The property is zoned I3IUD.

Date of Preparation of this Report: June 5, 1985

Prepared by: Dr. Dan L. Morrill
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission
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Historical Overview

*Dr. William H. Huffman
May, 1985*

The Garibaldi and Bruns building, located just off the Square on South Tryon Street, is a critically important historical asset of the city of Charlotte. Its significance goes beyond the local community to both the state and national levels. The handsome, three-story facade of the building, designed by Charlotte architect Louis Asbury in 1909, covers two storefronts of a five-store row built in 1850-51 known as "Granite Row." Along with its companion one door to the south, the Thomas Trotter Building (which was recently placed on the National Register of Historic Places), these surviving buildings of Granite Row are the only antebellum commercial structures remaining in the city, and some of the few left in the State of North Carolina. They are also the only small-scale retail buildings still standing on the first block of South Tryon Street in the heart of the city.

The original development of Granite Row was done in anticipation of the coming of the railroad to Charlotte (service started in 1852), which gave it vital links to the sea through Columbia and Charleston, and direct access to the markets of the Northeast.¹ The rail connections started the city on the path to grow from a village of just over one thousand in 1850 to the largest city in the Carolinas by 1930.²

At the beginning of that period, in 1850, a group of Charlotte merchants bought what was known as the "Davidson Corner," (it had been owned by the family of Thomas Davidson from 1794 to 1842), and divided it into five separate store lots.³ In place of the wood buildings which were there, they built five storefronts of brick, each having three stories and a common facade of granite or granite-like stone. Thus they identified themselves in their advertisements as being located in numbers 1 through 5 Granite Row, respectively, and retained that name for the next fifty years.⁴ In addition to its other unique features, Granite Row, or, as they first called it, Granite Range, may have been the first brick commercial buildings built in the city. Construction of the stores began in July, 1850, and they were first occupied in September, 1851, when several merchants advertised in the papers that they had "removed to the Granite Range."⁵

When the new stores opened in 1851, Granite Row was occupied as follows: # 1, Brem & Alexander, dry goods; #2, Elias & Cohen, dry goods; #3, John F. Irwin, dry goods; #4, J. Sloan & Co., dry goods; #5, Thomas Trotter, jewelry.⁶ During the remainder of the century, #3 and #4 Granite Row, the present Garibaldi and Bruns building, was occupied by a succession of

different businesses, which included the Southern Express Co., a telegraph office; business offices; a bookstore; and a tailor.⁷

In 1896, a new jewelry firm, Garibaldi and Bruns, was started by Joseph Garibaldi (1864-1939), William L. Bruns (1876-1937), and Harry W. Dixon (1872-1916). The oldest member of the three, Joseph ("Uncle Joe") Garibaldi, was widely known as a business and civic leader of the community. Born in Mecklenburg County,⁰ the son of natives of Italy, John and Louise Garibaldi, he was also a descendent of Giuseppe Garibaldi, the Italian patriot known as the liberator of Italy. The Belmont area was developed by his grandfather, and the rail stop there was originally known as Garibaldi Station. Beginning his career as an apprentice in the jewelry store of P. Lasne on West Trade Street opposite the First Presbyterian Church at the age of twelve, he worked for several different jewelry concerns until 1896, when he formed his partnership with Bruns. His civic service included being mayor pro tem of the city council, and being twice elected to the State Legislature.⁸

William L. Bruns was a Columbia, S.C. native who came to Charlotte as a young man and trained in the jewelry business before going in partnership with Garibaldi in 1896. When the new business was formed, the two founders took on a young man of twenty-four, Harry W. Dixon, as bookkeeper. Born in the Hopewell area of Mecklenburg County, Dixon was educated at the old Alexandriana School there, following which he trained in the jewelry business with several Charlotte firms. In 1901, he was made a full partner, and, until his untimely death in 1916, the name of the company was changed to Garibaldi, Bruns and Dixon.⁹

When Garibaldi and Bruns was formed in 1896, they leased #5 Granite Row, where Thomas Trotter, a noted North Carolina silversmith and jeweler, had his business from 1851 to 1865.¹⁰ Good fortune was on the side of any well-run business started during those years, for Charlotte experienced sustained rapid growth from the 1880s to the end of the 1920s based on its being a hub of New South industrialization in the Piedmont Carolinas. Thus in 1904, the prospering Garibaldi and Bruns, as individuals, bought the building at #3 Granite Row. Five years later, in 1909, they also bought #4 Granite Row, and planned for a new facade to cover both buildings.¹¹ To design their new stores, they hired Louis Asbury (1877- 1975), the city's first professionally-trained architect, in December, 1909.¹² Asbury was a Charlotte native who used to help his father build houses in the city as a youth in the 1890s. The son of S.J. and Martha Moody Asbury, he attended Trinity College (now Duke University), and completed his architecture studies at MIT. After gaining practical experience with some architectural firms in New York City, Asbury returned to Charlotte in 1908 to begin his nearly fifty-year career in the city. Among the outstanding designs of the over one thousand in the area from his studio are the old County Courthouse (1926), the C.P. Moody house on Providence Road (1913), Myers Park Methodist Church (1928), the Law Building (1926), and the [Hawthorne Lane Methodist Church](#) (1915).¹³

Garibaldi and Bruns opened their newly remodeled building about 1910, and were soon flanked by two other new Louis Asbury facades: the Southern Real Estate, Loan and Trust Co. to the north (1913), and the Thomas Trotter building to the south (1911).¹⁴ Over the next seven decades, many businesses came and went around them, but the familiar jewelry store remained in the same location until 1977. About 1934, Joe Garibaldi retired from the business, and was

succeeded by his son, Joe, Jr. A year later, the partners sold their interest in the real estate to James Parks Grey (1860-1942), a wealthy hosiery manufacturer and benefactor of Davidson College, from whose heirs the City of Charlotte acquired the property in 1981 for a park site.¹⁵ Not only is the Garibaldi and Bruns building important because of its uniqueness as one of the last remaining antebellum commercial buildings in the state, it is also distinguished by being one of the two remaining small-scale business structures on the first block of South Tryon Street; by its association with a longtime Charlotte business; and by its facade, which was designed by one of Charlotte's best pioneer architects. This building is a significant link with Charlotte's past, and it would serve it well if it were carried into the future.

NOTES

¹ Le Gette Blythe and Charles Brockman, *Hornet's Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County*(Charlotte: Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, 1961), pp. 259-261.

² William H. Huffman, "Charlotte, N.C.; From Cotton to Commerce," Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1984.

³ Unrecorded deed dated 6 July 1850; Deed Book 3, pp. 243-245, 11 Dec. 1850.

⁴ Cf. note 11.

⁵ *The Charlotte Journal*. July 31, 1850, p.2; *Ibid.*, Oct 8, 1851, p. 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1885, p. 5, and 1900, p. 10; Beer's Map of Charlotte, 1877.

⁸ *Charlotte Observer*. Dec. 29, 1939, p. 1; *Ibid.*, Feb. 13, 1916, p. 4.

⁹ *Charlotte News*. Sept. 29, 1916, p. 1.

¹⁰ William H. Huffman, "A Historical Sketch of the Thomas Trotter Building," 1984.

¹¹ Deed Book 190, p. 307, 22 Sept. 1904; *Ibid.*, Book 248, p. 128, 21 June 1909.

¹² Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Louis Asbury Papers. Architectural Job List, #37, 10 Dec. 1909.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ See note 8; Deed Book 871, pp. 191 and 192, 20 Sept. 1935.

Architectural Description

Thomas W. Hanchett

The Garibaldi & Bruns Building is a handsome three-story commercial building adjacent to the Square at the heart of downtown Charlotte. The side and rear walls of the structure contain portions of an 1850-51 building known as Granite Row. These remnants are of minor importance, for they consist only of brick wall segments: all original window openings, cornice trim, and parapets are gone. The appearance of the building in 1985 dates largely from a 1909 remodeling by Louis Asbury, the city's first professionally-trained architect and a designer of regional significance in the Carolinas. Above the first-story level, both the interior and front facade of the building remain very much as Asbury designed them.

The opening of Granite Row about 1851 marked the beginning of Charlotte's transformation from a back-country farm town to a railroad center. The Row looked down the hill toward the East Trade Street station of the Charlotte and South Carolina Railroad, western North Carolina's first rail line when it began operation a few months later. The Row was actually five matching three-story brick loft structures. Between each unit was a shared brick wall that extended above the roof-line to form a stepped parapet. [Gable roofs](#), molded brick cornices, and granite shop fronts gave the Row a [Greek Revival](#) architectural flavor calculated to impress visitors as they walked up to the Square from the train.

By the end of the century Charlotte was in the midst of another transformation, from railroad town to textile manufacturing center. Owners of the five buildings in the Row gave their structures elaborate new Victorian facades to keep up with the times. Around 1909 several of the buildings were remodeled again, this time in the [Neoclassical](#) style. Prosperity continued, and by 1985 units one and two had been demolished for a planned park, and unit five was hidden by a smooth stucco covering. Numbers three and four Granite Row still retained their handsome 1909 Neoclassical facades, created by Louis Asbury for the posh Garibaldi & Bruns jewelry firm.

Asbury did such a thorough remodeling of the two Granite Row-units that neither a passerby on Tryon Street nor even a visitor inside the building would guess it incorporated earlier work. The architect removed the entire front wall of the two units. He also seems to have removed most of the brick wall between them and replaced it with metal columns to support the floor joists. He gave the combined structure a unified three-bay front and a hidden sloping roof in place of its old gables. Only on the rear wall and in the basement could one see evidence of the original 1850s brickwork. Asbury set new metal window units inside the arched rear openings that had been created during the Victorian remodeling, and he added new brickwork in place of the old cornice above the window-line, but here and there one could still see patches of early age-darkened brick. More of the soft old brick remained visible in the basement.

Asbury's 1909 facade is a simple but elegant application of Neoclassical motifs then popular in commercial and institutional architecture. The front is constructed of beige brick with large window areas and trim of wood and stamped sheet metal. Along the top is a brick parapet, above a stamped-metal cornice with modillions and dentil work. Asbury carefully chose his cornice line to relate to the adjacent Southern Real Estate Building and Thomas Trotter Building, both Granite Row structures which he had remodeled. These remodelings have vanished, but the cornice continues to relate to the carved stone belt cornice of One Tryon Center, a Neoclassical bank skyscraper designed later by Asbury and erected in 1926.

Below the Garibaldi & Bruns cornice is a wide band of brick with metal letters reading "GARIBALDI - AND - BRUNS," set off by a band of molding. Beneath this are the three arched window openings. Each is a full two stories high and surrounded by a corbeled brick course. Stone-like trim blocks act as springers for each [segmental arch](#), and each has its own [keystone](#). Inside each arched opening, a tripartite stamped metal panel separates the second-story [windows](#) from the third-story ones. These window-units are again divided into threes: a central fixed pane flanked by a pair of double-hung sash.

Asbury's original first-floor shop front consisted of a small cornice above a wide prism-glass transom, with marble-and-metal-trimmed plate glass show windows below. By early 1985 all traces of this early design had been replaced by later remodelings that divided the shop-front into two separate stores.

Early photos show that Asbury's store interior for Garibaldi & Bruns was simply detailed. Plain round columns marched down the center of the space. There was little architectural trim beyond a stamped metal ceiling. Today the space is cut into two, and the columns are hidden. Part of the badly-damaged 1909 ceiling is visible above a later tile ceiling in no. 104.

Upper floors of the building are reached by a pair of narrow stairways located in a small two-story brick addition thrown up across the back of the structure. Originally, upper levels were reached by stairways that opened onto Tryon Street, and it is not clear whether the present arrangement is Asbury's or part of a later renovation. The second and third floors are finished with a thoroughness that reflects both Asbury's professionalism and Garibaldi & Bruns ability to pay. All spaces have molded mop boards, and [stairs](#) have square [balusters](#) with [newel posts](#) and heavy molded [handrails](#). Asbury and his clients did not succumb to the era's tendency to skimp on upper-floor trim.

The no. 104 half of the second story is divided into a corridor and three offices by means of wooden partitions. These date from early in this century, and are constructed of beaded tongue-and-groove boarding and rippled-glass windows. This area was used most recently as Garibaldi & Bruns jewelry repair area and there is a large free-standing jewelers' bench that appears to be many decades old. The no. 106 half of the second story is almost entirely open. A short section of plaster wall divides the main area from the rear stair corridor, and there is a small rear bathroom inside a beaded tongue-and-groove partition. A wide, open stair rises from near the front of the space along the south wall to the third floor. The third floor is not divided into two halves, but instead is a large open space punctuated only by a row of columns, and by a pair of plaster walled bathrooms at the south rear corner that almost certainly date from Asbury's 1909

remodeling. Except for the boarding-up of the huge front windows, these second and third floor spaces remain as handsome as when they were created early in this century.

The basement of the Garibaldi & Bruns Building still features the brick center, side, and rear walls of Granite Row. Coal chutes from Tryon Street have recently been filled with cinder block. Portions of the early dirt floor remain, but most of the basement has been excavated an additional foot or so and concreted. Wooden barrels and packing cases in which Garibaldi & Bruns received silver pieces from far- away suppliers may still be seen.