

## **T. T. GILMER HOUSE**



*This report was written on April 2, 1986*

**1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the T. T. Gilmer House is located at 512-514 Fenton Place, Charlotte, North Carolina.

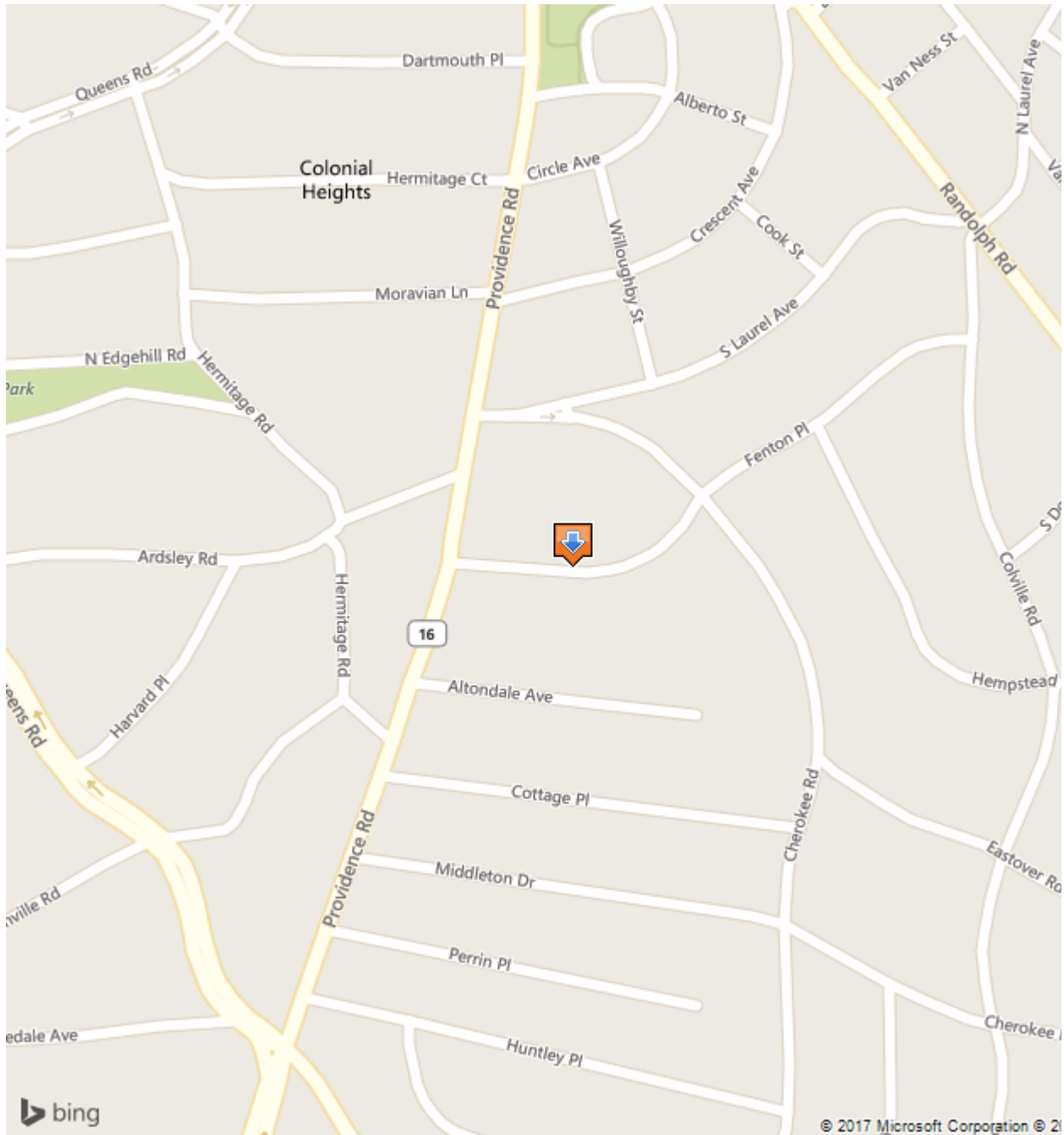
**2. Name, address and telephone number of the present owner of the property:** The owner of the property is:

Eastern Federal Corporation  
513 South Tryon Street  
Charlotte, N.C. 28202

Telephone: 704/377-3495

**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.



**5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property:** The most recent deed to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3705, Page 713. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is: 155-061-05.

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

**7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description of the property prepared by Mr. Joseph Schuchman, edited 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-399.4:**

**a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and/or cultural importance:** The Commission judges that the property known as the T. T. Gilmer House does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) the T. T. Gilmer House (1911-12) is one of the few surviving turn-of-the-century mansions which were constructed along the eastern side of Providence Road, and it is certainly one of the better preserved, even though it has been moved from its original site; 2) the T. T. Gilmer House documents the residential character of the eastern half of Providence Road before this section gave way to commercialization; 3) the T. T. Gilmer House is a locally-significant example of the Colonial Revival style, which was becoming increasingly popular among Charlotte's elite in the early 1900's; and 4) the original owner and occupant of the house, Thornwell Tillotson Gilmer (1859-1928), was a prominent civic and business person in early twentieth-century Charlotte.

**b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association:** The Commission contends that the architectural description included in this report demonstrates that the exterior of the property known as the T. T. Gilmer House meets this criterion. Admittedly, the house has lost its context, and several alterations and additions have been made over the years. However, on balance, the Commission believes that the T. T. Gilmer House possesses individual architectural significance, especially when one takes into account how little remains of the what used to be an imposing residential corridor along the eastern side of Providence Road.

**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." The current appraised value of the improvements is \$19,240. The current appraised value of the .854 acres of land is \$102,300. The total appraised value of the property is \$121,540. The property is zoned B1.

**Date of Preparation of this Report:** April 2, 1986

**Prepared by:** Dr. Dan L. Morrill  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission  
1225 S. Caldwell St.  
Charlotte, N.C. 28203

Telephone: 704/376-9115

## *Historical Overview*

*Dr. William H. Huffman  
June, 1985*

Just off busy Providence Road on the much quieter Fenton Place in Myers Park one finds the T. T. Gilmer house, which clearly seems to be from another time than that of its neighbors, and so it is. The house was built about 1912, when that part of the county, some two miles south of town as the crow flies, was well out in the country. The attraction to build a place so far out of town was provided by two things: the development of one of Charlotte's finest new streetcar suburbs in that area, [Myers Park](#), and the availability of prime, inexpensive land.

In 1911, entrepreneur George Stephens put together a development package for the suburb of Myers Park on land purchased from his father-in-law, J. R. Myers, and dairy farmer McD. Watkins, and hired Boston designer [John Nolen](#) to lay it out. The original Myers Park was situated on the west side of Providence Road, and residents could commute to town on the trolley, which ran out of town along Queens Road to Queens College. On the east side of Providence road was some well-placed farmland that fell outside the boundaries of Myers Park, but was close enough to take advantage of its improvements. Here is where Gilmer chose to build a new house.

In 1912, Gilmer bought two parcels of property there: one from his widowed mother-in law, Ida Tatem King, which had one hundred feet of frontage on Providence Road and went back two hundred and fifty feet; and another from McD. Watkins of about two acres behind the Providence lot.<sup>2</sup> At the time, Thornwell Tillotson Gilmer (1859-1928) was the treasurer and manager of the Gilmer-Moore Company, a shoe store located at 16 S. Tryon Street, a site now occupied by One Tryon Center.<sup>3</sup> Born in Harrisburg in Cabarrus County, he was the son of Dr. Samuel and Jane Gilmer, and came to Charlotte as a young man to seek his fortune. After working in several stores as a clerk, he was able to take advantage of the city's fast-growing economy based on its being the focus of New South industrialization of the Piedmont Carolinas by going into business for himself. His active career in commercial, civic and church circles made him a well-known figure in the city, and he also held the vice-presidency of the Southern Industrial Bank.<sup>4</sup>

On October 12, 1897, Gilmer married a native Charlottean, Mary King ( 1873-1970). Mrs. Gilmer, who was the daughter of George H. and Ida Tatem King, was educated at the old Elizabeth College (located on the site of the present Presbyterian Hospital at the top of Elizabeth Avenue).<sup>5</sup> That was in fact the year that development first took place along Elizabeth Avenue based on extending the [streetcar](#) line up the hill to Elizabeth College, and the Gilmers began married life by building a house at 703 Elizabeth Avenue in the new suburb.<sup>6</sup>

By 1912, subsequent development put the Gilmers in the middle of the suburbs rather than at the edge, and they made plans to move farther out in conjunction with the new Myers Park community. The design for the new house on Providence Road was reportedly provided by George King, Mrs. Gilmer's brother, and it appears that it was first occupied in late 1913 or early

1914.<sup>7</sup> The Great Depression of the 1930s followed not too long after T. T. Gilmer's death in 1928, and the house was converted into a duplex during that period.<sup>8</sup> In 1936, Mrs. Gilmer bought two lots on the newly developed Fenton Place, just around the corner, and moved the house there in 1938, which allowed commercial development of the Providence Road homesite.<sup>9</sup> At her death in 1970 at the age of ninety-seven, Mrs. Gilmer lived with a granddaughter, and in 1974 ownership of the Fenton Place property passed from the Gilmer family to the present owner, Eastern Federal Corporation, operators of the Manor Theater.<sup>10</sup>

The Gilmer house is distinctively representative of early suburban development in Charlotte. The time and place of its construction, the style, and its association with a leading merchant family of the city combine to make it historically noteworthy.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hanchett, "Charlotte Neighborhood Survey," Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1983.

<sup>2</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 290, p.151,26 March 1912; *Ibid.*, Book 291, p.262, 15 April 1912.

<sup>3</sup> Charlotte City Directory.1911, p.205,1912, p.212.

<sup>4</sup> *Charlotte Observer*. February 29,1928, p.1; *Charlotte News*. February 29,1928, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> *Charlotte Observer*. January 11,1970, p.22A; see also note 4.

<sup>6</sup> See note 1; Charlotte City Directories.1897- 1914.

<sup>7</sup> Information supplied by Thomas Hanchett, Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission; Charlotte City Directory.1913, p. 190 and 1914, p.237.

<sup>8</sup> Hanchett, note 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> See note 5; Mecklenburg County Will, File 70-E-52; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3658, p. 307,6 February 1974; *Ibid.*, Book 3705, p. 713, 29 August 1974.

## *Architectural Description*

*Joseph Schuchman*  
*Edited by Dr. Dan L. Morrill*  
*April 2, 1986*

Constructed in 1911-12 for Thomas T. Gilmer, the house, now situated at 512-514 Fenton Place but until 1938 fronting on Providence Road, is rendered in the **Colonial Revival** style. It is of frame construction, two and one-half stories high, five bays wide, and is sheathed in weatherboards. **Six over Six sash** is the primary glazing format, although a number of eight/eight sash are also evident. Openings are set in plain surrounds; a molding surmounts each lintel. The foundation is constructed of manufactured brick arranged in a stretcher bond; rectangular shaped eight-pane **casements** are randomly placed along its elevations.

The two and one-half story main block is symmetrically composed and rises to a gable roof. Plain cornerboards rise from a weatherboarded water table to an entablature composed of a molded architrave and cornice and a plain frieze. On the front elevation, a large, one-story, screened porch runs across the house and shelters the randomly-arranged fenestration. **Doric columns** support an entablature highlighted by a denticulated cornice. The main entrance is centrally placed; a fanlight is centered above a six panel door. Sidelights, set above a recessed molded panel, border the front entrance. A tripartite grouping of double hung sash, covered by louvered shutters, is placed to the west (left) of the entrance. To the immediate east (right) of the front entrance, paired French doors with louvered shutters frame a brick fireplace, which fronts onto the porch. An interior chimney with an exposed face rises above the roofline and terminates in a corbeled cap. Three eyebrow windows also project from the roofline.

A Palladian window, centrally placed in each end gable, highlights the side elevations. The six/six sash is framed by six-pane **transoms** and surmounted by **fanlights** which rise to **keystones**. The four-bay west elevation is symmetrically composed. Fenestration on the three-bay east side is rhythmically placed. An enclosed porch, two bays wide and one bay deep, is located near the rear of the east side.

Fenestration on the rear elevation is randomly arranged. Centered on the rear is a one-story enclosed entrance porch. Wooden piers which rise to molded capitals frame the structure. It is believed that this entrance and a two-story shed porch, which runs across the western one-fourth of the elevation, are original. Both appear on the 1929 Sanborn Insurance Atlas Map. The first story of the two-story porch is screened; the upper floor may have originally been screened, but is presently weatherboarded and punctuated by a series of jalousy windows. A screened porch connecting the one and the two-story porch is a later addition and serves to form a continuous enclosure along the west half of the elevation. A tripartite grouping of six/six sash is located above the entrance porch; remaining openings display single six/six lights.

In addition to the front elevation chimney, the house contains two other interior chimneys. Near the west elevation, an interior chimney rises along the ridge line. The chimney is constructed of brick arranged in stretcher bond; the corbeled cap has partially deteriorated. A chimney placed

along the east side of the rear elevation is similarly constructed; its stack rises sharply above the roofline to a corbeled cap.

An architectural description of the interior of the T. T. Gilmer House was impossible, because the owner would not permit access to the interior.