

MAJOR ALEXANDER L. JAMES HOUSE

Note: On September 21, 2009 the Charlotte City Council voted to revoke local historic landmark designation of the Major Alexander L. James House. [Click here to view an article on the repeal of local historic landmark designation for this property.](#)



This report was written on May 15, 1994

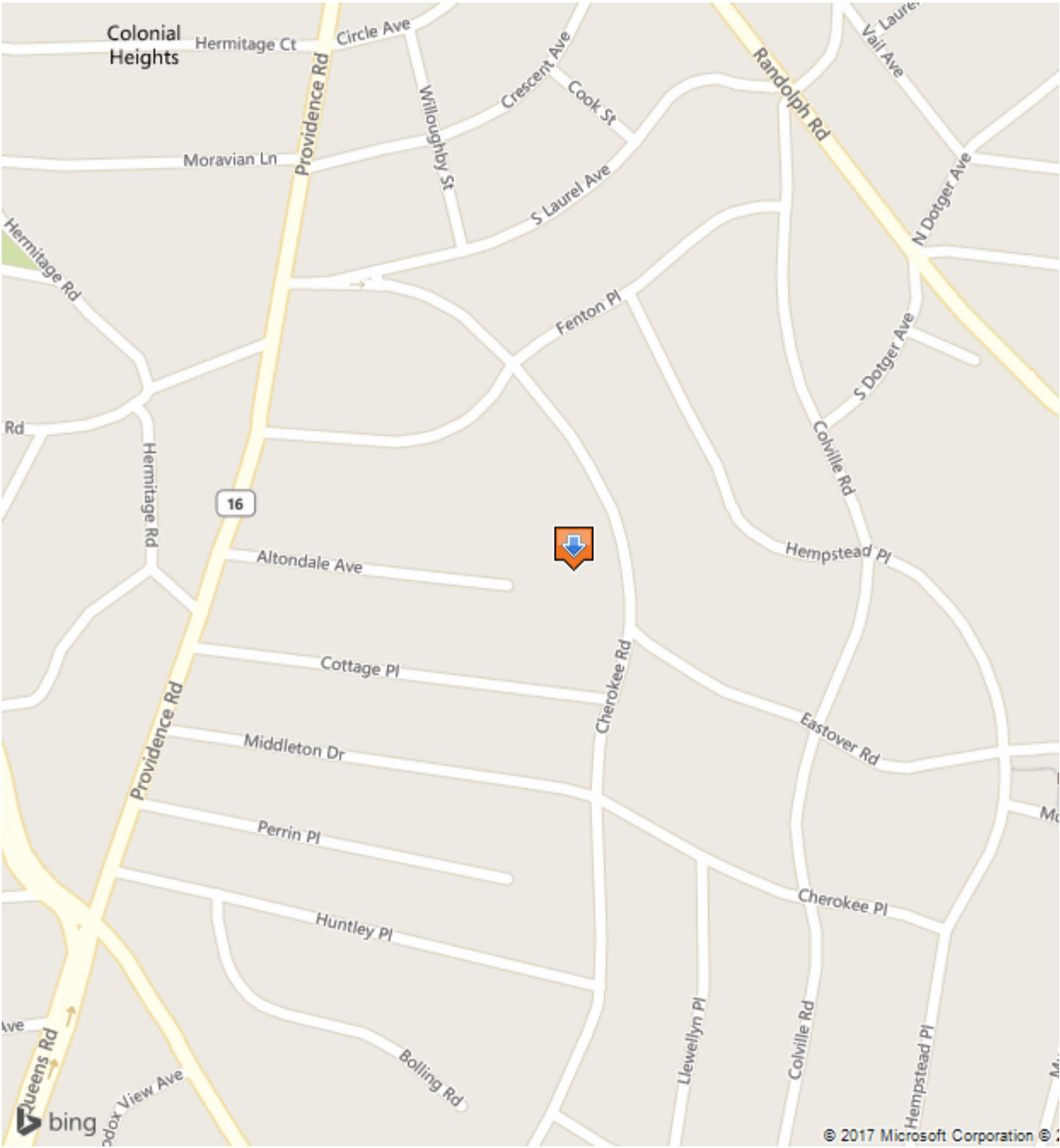
1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Major Alexander L. James House is located at 260 Cherokee Road, in Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

2. Name, address, and telephone number of the present owner of the properties. The owners of the property are:

Dr. and Mrs. Martin J. Kreshon
260 Cherokee Road
Charlotte, North Carolina 28207
Telephone: (704) 377-1550

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

4. Maps depicting the location of the property: This report contains maps which depict the location of the property.



Click on the map to browse

5. Current deed book references to the property: The most recent reference to Tax Parcel Number 155-062-60 is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3199 at page 330.

6. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains brief architectural description of the property prepared by Frances P. Alexander and Richard L. Mattson.

7. A brief historical sketch of the property: This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Richard L. Mattson and Frances P. Alexander .

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the properties meet criteria for designation set forth in NCGS 160A-400.5:

a. Special significance in terms of history, architecture, and cultural importance: The Commission judges that the property known as the Major Alexander L. James House does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) the James House, erected in 1929, is exemplary of the Georgian Revival style built in the Eastover neighborhood and other well-to-do neighborhoods in Charlotte between the 1920's and World War II; 2) the James House is one of the earliest houses in Eastover, the first exclusive automobile-oriented subdivision in Charlotte; and 3) the James House is an impressive example of the work of important Charlotte architect Martin E. Boyer, Jr., who designed some of the city's finest Georgian Revival and Tudor Revival residences during this period.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association: The Commission contends that the architectural description by Frances P. Alexander and Richard L. Mattson included in this report demonstrates that the Major Alexander L. James 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 properties which become designated historic landmarks. The current appraised value of the improvements to Tax Parcel Number 155-062-60 is \$413,410. The current appraised value of the land associated with Tax Parcel 155-062-60 is \$750,000. The total appraised value of Tax Parcel 155-062-60 is \$1,163,410.

Date of Preparation of this Report: May 15, 1994

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Architectural Description

Location Description

The Major Alexander L. James House is situated in the Eastover neighborhood of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. Eastover is located on the east side of Providence Road, a major artery leading southeast from the center city. The James House occupies a 1.96 acre site on the west side of Cherokee Road, a curvilinear street which has access to Providence Road at either end. Altondale Avenue, a short street opening from Providence Road, ends at the James parcel, and the James property has rear access to this street.

The James House is sited in the center of the large parcel, which slopes down to Cherokee Road. The main driveway is located on the north side of the property and extends from Cherokee Road, past a garage, to the rear at Altondale Avenue. A brick wall and archway link the house and garage. A portion of the driveway extends south to end in a circular drive in front of the house. The house faces onto a lawn bisected by a brick walkway. Both the front and rear yards contain mature plantings, including oak and magnolia trees and formal rows of tall holly bushes in the rear. In addition to the house, there is a five car garage and a greenhouse on the site.

The proposed designation includes the house and the 1.96 acre parcel, but excludes the garage at owner request.

House--Exterior

The Major Alexander L. James House is an excellent example of formal Georgian Revival domestic architecture, and was designed by prominent, early twentieth century Charlotte architect, Martin E. Boyer, Jr. The house is 2-1/2 stories tall with a truncated T-shaped plan, a 1-1/2 story, weatherboarded wing on the north side, and a covered flagstone terrace on the south side. The house has a brick veneer laid in **Flemish bond**, and there is a side **gable**, slate roof with a broad front gable. In the center of the gable is an oval, multiple light window, framed in concrete. Two weatherboarded front gable dormers are found in the front, while the rear has three front gable **dormers** and a lunette window. There are three brick exterior end chimneys broken by second story **windows**.

The five bay facade has a slightly projecting central pavilion dominated by a broad elliptical arch entrance. The entrance recess has delicate pilasters and chair railing, and the double panelled doors are framed by an elaborate **fanlight** and half **sidelights**. The entrance has low rise, curved, double side stairs. The first floor windows are nine-over-nine light, double hung, wooden **sash** with brick jack arches. The second floor windows are six-over-nine light, double hung, wooden sash, also with jack arches. The dormers have round arch windows.

On the north elevation there is a one and 1/2 story, side gable wing, sheathed in weatherboard. A flat roofed porch extends to the front. The porch has been enclosed since 1970, but retains the original classical box piers with stucco infill. On the front elevation, the enclosed porch has nine-over-nine light, double hung windows to match the original. On the north elevation, there is a single wood and glass entrance, and the enclosed porch has a large multiple light window. A porch with flagstone terrace projects from the southeast corner of the house. The porch is

supported by classical box piers and has a gable roof with full returns of the eaves. The flagstone terrace extends around to the rear of the house and is bordered by a raised, brick-edged planting bed.

The rear elevation is broken by the projecting center section. The rear has a variety of double hung window types reflecting the formal and private functions of the house. On the south side, the first floor has a three-sided bay overlooking the flagstone terrace. The second floor repeats the six-over-nine light windows found on the facade. The center section has nine-over-nine light on the first floor and six-over-nine light on the second floor. These windows flank the centrally placed chimney. The north end, where the kitchen and service areas of the house are located, has a combination of double hung windows, including three-over-six light on the second floor. French doors on the second floor of the north wing lead to a small wrought iron balcony. There is an exterior staircase leading to the basement.

House-interior

The entrance leads into a roughly square foyer. The foyer has hardwood floors, plaster walls, molded baseboards and surrounds, and dentil cornice molding. A staircase rises along the south and west walls of the foyer. The [staircase](#) has scrolled [risers](#) and a delicate balustrade with deeply scrolled [newel](#). Two narrow closets with panelled doors flank the fanlighted entrance. The door has the original box lock.

The south end of the house is occupied by the living room which extends the full depth of the house. The living room also has hardwood floors, molded surrounds, and a molded cornice. The fireplace has a broad, fully articulated Classical Revival mantel. The south wall has one multiple light door, with transom, opening to the porch. The west wall is dominated by the three-sided bay window. Double panelled doors separate the living room from the foyer.

The north end of the house is occupied by the dining room which also has panelled doors to the foyer as well as a panelled door in the northwest corner, leading to the back service hall. In the southwest corner is a built-in cupboard with a wood and glass door. The dining room replicates the molded baseboards, cornices, and surrounds found throughout the first floor. In addition, there is a molded chair railing. Originally, the north wall of the dining room had a fireplace, but this feature was reversed at the time the porch was enclosed.

The rear of the foyer opens into a service hall which runs to the north end of the house. Directly behind the foyer is the library, separated by double panelled doors. The library also has a door leading to the living room as well as a wood and glass door, with transom, leading to the rear terrace. The west wall of the library has a fireplace with a simple molded mantel above which is a molded and scrolled frame. Windows flank the fireplace, and floor-to-ceiling bookcases surround the fireplace and windows. In addition to molded surrounds, cornice, and baseboards, the library has a chair railing.

The rear service hall is narrow and L-shaped in plan. A small bathroom and closets open from the hall, and at the turn is a narrow service staircase. The kitchen opens from the hall across from the staircase. The kitchen service area was originally comprised of a butler's pantry, kitchen, and small breakfast room. Some alterations have occurred in this area of the house. The small

breakfast room is now used as a laundry although this conversion required little modification of the plan. The butler's pantry has been opened and is now a hallway. The kitchen, located in the north wing, has had little alteration of plan or fixture location. New cabinets have been installed, and the east wall was opened into the enclosed porch, used as a dining area. The original dining room fireplace was reoriented so that it now faces into the enclosed porch. There is an original wood and glass door leading from the north end of the kitchen to the outside.

The second floor contains five bedrooms, a nursery, and three bathrooms. The second floor hall extends the width of the house. At each end of the hall are archways leading to bedrooms. The hall has a dentil cornice and molded baseboards and surrounds. The hardwood floors are now carpeted. The south end has two bedrooms with a connecting bathroom. Two bedrooms, with a connecting bathroom, open from the main hall on the east side. The master bedroom is located at the head of the staircase on the west side of the house. The archway on the north end opens into the nursery, and a bathroom connects the master bedroom and the nursery. All bedrooms have carpeted floors, molded baseboards and surrounds, and panelled doors. The master bedroom has a fireplace on the west wall with a classical mantel. The northeast bedroom also has a fireplace with a simple molded mantel. The bathrooms have all been altered somewhat with new fixtures, but retain moldings, closets, and original configuration.

The third floor originally contained a ballroom which extended the full width and depth of the house. The ballroom had a dais at one end for musicians. However, the third floor has been partitioned into bedrooms, bathrooms, and offices. A panelled door at the head of the staircase from the second floor closed the ballroom off from the rest of the house. There is one original closet at the top of the stairs. The third floor retains the original sloping ceiling and alcoves at the dormer windows. Although the ballroom has lost its original open floor plan, the new partitions required little destruction of historic fabric.

Garage

Northwest of the house, but connected by a brick wall and archway, is the garage with overhead servants' quarters. The brick veneered garage originally had three car bays, but since 1970, two additional car bays have been added. The extension to the west replicates the original with Flemish bond brick walls, slate covered gable roof, and front gable dormers. The entrance to the living quarters is located on the east elevation. The garage is excluded from the designation at the request of the owners.

Conclusion

The Alexander L. James House is an excellent example of Georgian Revival residential architecture in Mecklenburg County. Its construction during an era in which houses for the wealthy were commonly designed to accommodate servants make such houses vulnerable to heavy alteration. However, the Alexander L. James House has undergone little modification. Alterations include the enclosure of a porch, new fixtures in the kitchen and bathrooms, and the partitioning of the ballroom. However, these modifications are limited and have not changed the configurations of these rooms. In addition, the setting of the house and outbuilding on a large, formally landscaped parcel continue to illustrate wealthy suburban development in the early twentieth century.

Historical Overview

This stately Georgian Revival residence at 260 Cherokee Road was completed in 1929 for Major Alexander L. James, United States Army, and his wife, Viola. Major James acquired the parcel from Edward C. Griffith in 1928, and commissioned influential Charlotte architect Martin E. Boyer, Jr., to design the house (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 696, p. 245). The James family lived here into the post-World War II years. In 1970, the current owners, Dr. and Mrs. Martin J. Kreshon acquired the property. The Major Alexander L. James House, sited on a spacious lot, is exemplary of the handsome Georgian Revival dwellings erected in the Eastover community and throughout Charlotte's exclusive neighborhoods between the 1920's and World War II.

Eastover

Eastover was established in 1927 by Charlotte developer Edward C. Griffith. Its residential development represented the culmination of the gradual shift among the city's wealthier residents from the center city to the southeast environs. With the coming of the electric [streetcar](#) to Charlotte in 1891, upper- and middle-class citizens began relocating from downtown addresses to the new suburbs of [Dilworth](#), [Elizabeth](#), [Myers Park](#), Chatham Estates along the Plaza, and Club Acres around the Charlotte Country Club. Providence Road, which forms the west side of Eastover, had been fashionable even before the development of posh Myers Park in 1912, though in the early twentieth century, the road was still considered too far from downtown for easy commuting (Hanchett 1984, 1986).

Griffith envisioned Eastover as a rival to Myers Park, both in social status and landscape design. In fact Eastover occupied a rolling hillside immediately across Providence Road from the earlier suburb. He contracted with the noted landscape architect and planner, Earle Sumner Draper, to create the Eastover plan. Draper had previously designed portions of Myers Parks, notably Queens Road West, distinguished by its long sweeping radius and lush landscaping. Thus the major streets of Eastover--Cherokee and Colville are winding, embowered avenues lined with grand houses sited well back on large parcels (Hanchett 1986; Bishir 1990).

Also like Myers Park, a key planning component was the creation of land-use covenants to ensure that the community would take shape as Griffith and Draper proposed. minimum house costs ranged from \$4,000 on side streets to \$15,000 for the largest main avenue lots. Thus the expansive lot purchased by Major James required a house costing at minimum \$15,000. The covenants also required that all property "shall be occupied and used only by members of the Caucasian race, domestic servants in the employ of occupants excepted." Garages, outbuildings, and servants' quarters had to match the style of the main house on each lot, and no "Spanish architecture" was permitted (E. C. Griffith Company 1938; Hanchett 1984, 1986).

In contrast to Myers Park and the other early suburbs geared to streetcar travel, Eastover developed as the city's first automobile subdivision. Although trolleys were still quite active in 1927, the residents of the new suburb were expected to have automobiles. The nearest streetcar stops were on Queens Road, many blocks from the Eastover entrance gates (Hanchett 1984, 1985).

House construction began in 1928, and by 1932, 42 residences had been completed. The earliest section encompassed Cherokee Road, Colville Road, Eastover Road, and Hempstead Place, and the houses along these streets set the architectural standard for the entire community. The Georgian Revival style was, by far, the popular choice, interspersed with a mix of [Tudor Revival](#) examples and other revival styles (Hanchett 1984; Sanborn Map of Charlotte 1929).

The Major Alexander L. James House was one of the first dwellings constructed. It was featured in the earliest advertisements for Eastover, in which the house was described as a "Georgian type, this beautifier residence now under construction in Eastover has the charm and atmosphere of an ideal home." Numerous brick and weatherboarded versions of the Georgian style followed. Among them were the 1930 A. Lloyd Goode House (165 Cherokee Road) and the 1931 John Paul Lucas, Jr. House (265 Cherokee Road). In 1933, architect Martin Boyer designed his own residence (246 Fenton Place) in the fashionable red-brick Georgian Revival mode (E. C. Griffith Company 1927; Hanchett 1984).

Today, Eastover is among the city's most desirable neighborhoods and contains approximately 600 houses facing rolling, tree-shaded streets. The great majority of residences are substantial red-brick Georgian Revival designs.

Martin E. Boyer, Jr., Architect

Martin E. Boyer, Jr., (1893-1970) ranks among the most prominent architects in Charlotte during the first half of the twentieth century. Born in Glen Wilton, Virginia, Boyer was raised in Charlotte and attended Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie-Mellon University) in Pittsburgh, where he was trained in the Beaux Arts tradition. During World War I, he served as a naval architect, and in World War II was a lieutenant colonel with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. A nephew of noted Charlotte architect J. M. McMichael, Boyer practiced architecture in the city for more than 50 years (*Charlotte News*, February 18, 1970).

Boyer's work ranged from public housing, to S & W Cafeterias, to supervising the rebuilding of the Mint Museum of Art, which was relocated from downtown to Eastover in 1936. But primarily, Boyer gained his professional reputation by designing some of the finest domestic architecture in suburban Charlotte. Boyer is singled out in the National Register nomination for the Myers Park Historic District as "the city's finest revivalist architect." In 1977, a home tour in honor of Boyer, sponsored by the Charlotte Garden Club, identified 25 Boyer-designed houses in Myers Park and Eastover (Claiborne 1977; Hanchett 1984, 1986).

In Myers Park, Boyer's work included such handsome red-brick Georgian Revival designs as the 1920 J. Luther Snyder House (1901 Queens Road), and the 1928 Dr. J. Rush Shull House (1242 Queens Road West). In 1921, D. Heath Nesbit commissioned Boyer to design his Tudor Revival residence (522 Hermitage Court). The Nesbit House was featured in *Architecture* magazine. In Eastover, Boyer is known to have designed not only the James House and his own residence, but also the large Georgian Revival house at 424 Eastover Road. Also in Eastover, Boyer designed the massive stone Tudor Revival dwelling of [Hamilton C. Jones](#) (201 Cherokee Road). Jones was

an important lawyer and political leader, and his wife, Bessie Erwin Jones, was a member of Durham's prominent Erwin textile family (Claiborne 1977; Hanchett 1984, 1986).

Conclusion

The Major Alexander L. James House has significance as one of the first residences built in exclusive Eastover, the first automobile subdivision in Charlotte. The house is also a notable example of the work of architect Martin E. Boyer, Jr. It exemplifies the Georgian Revival residences designed by this important Charlotte architect in Eastover and Myers Park.

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