

PROVIDENCE WOMEN'S CLUB, COMMUNITY HOUSE



This report was written on 19 December 1994

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Providence Women's Club, Community House is located on Community House Road in the Lower Providence township of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

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

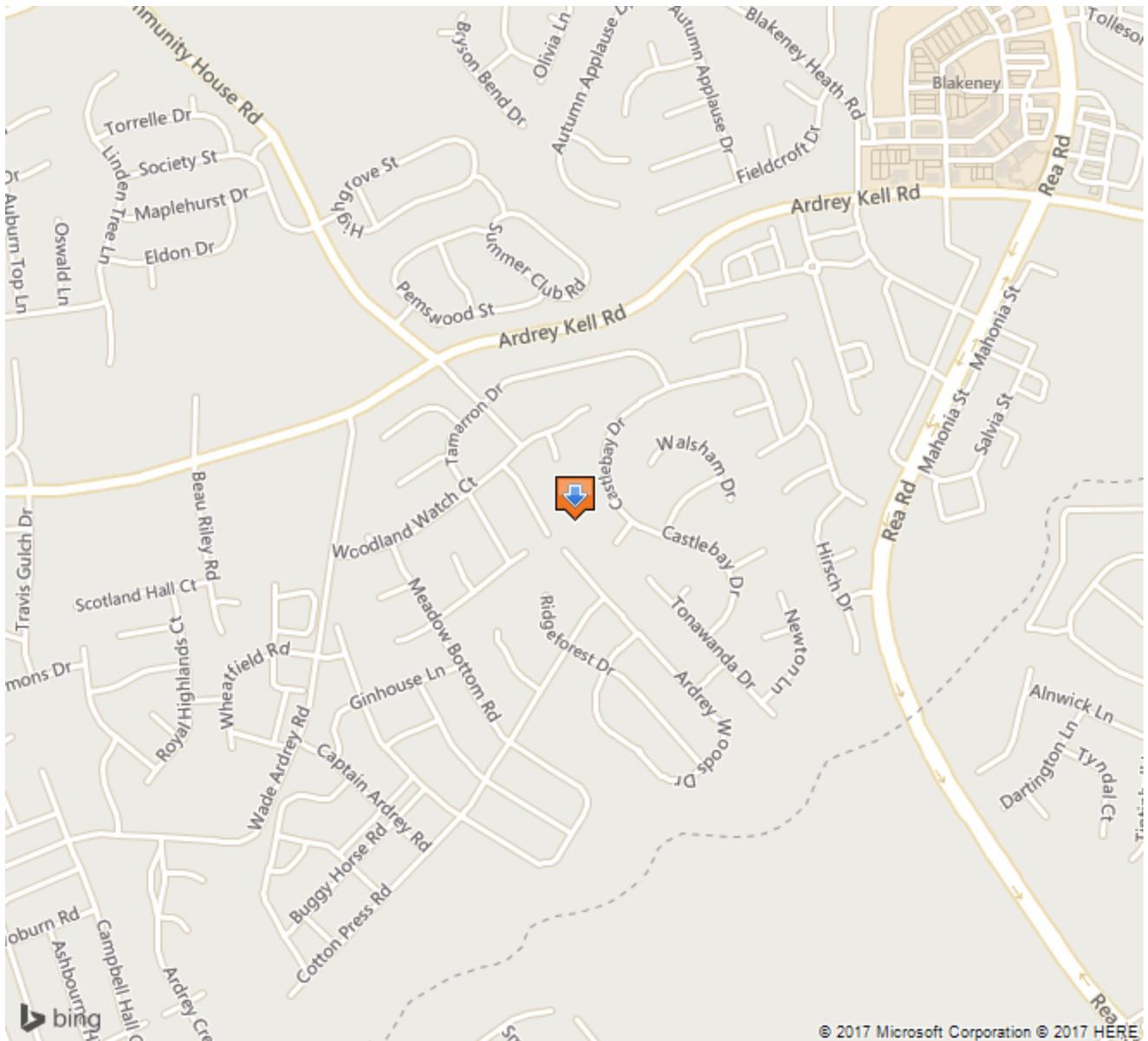
Providence Women's Club
10025 Dickie Ross Road
Charlotte, North Carolina 28277-2106

704-542-3287

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.



5. Current deed book references to the property: The Providence Women's Club, Community House is sited on Tax Parcels 229-021-09 and 229-021-10 and is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 5674 at page 254.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property: This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Frances P. Alexander.

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains a brief architectural description of the property prepared by Frances P. Alexander.

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 history, architecture, and cultural

importance: The Commission judges that the property known as the Providence Women's Club, Community House does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The Commission bases its judgement on the following considerations: 1) the Providence Women's Club, Community House was built in 1939 as a clubhouse for the Lower Providence Home Demonstration Club; 2) Community House is one of the few home demonstration club meeting places remaining in the county; 3) the Providence Women's Club, Community House is one of the few historic institutional buildings extant in Lower Providence, an area which in the past 20 years has become largely suburban; and 4) Community House is one of the only buildings associated with the once rural composition of the Lower Providence community.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and

association: The Commission contends that the architectural description by Frances P. Alexander included in this report demonstrates that the Providence Women's Club, Community House property 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. However, the Providence Women's Club, Community House property is already tax-exempt. The current appraised value of the improvements to the Providence Women's Club, Community House is \$14,380.00. The current appraised value of the Providence Women's Club, Community House, Tax Parcel Number 229-021-09, is \$750.00. The current appraised value of the Providence Women's Club, Community House, Tax Parcel Number 229-021-10, is \$15,000.00. The total appraised value of the Providence Women's Club, Community House is \$30,130.00. Tax Parcels 229-021-09 and 229-021-10 are zoned R-3.

Date of preparation of this report: 19 December 1994

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Architectural Description

Introduction

The Providence Women's Club, Community House is located in the Lower Providence community of southern Mecklenburg County. The clubhouse is sited on a triangular lot formed by the junction of Dickie Ross and Community House roads. Just to the north is Providence Road West, a connector between Providence Road and U.S. 521, the Charlotte to Lancaster highway. The Providence Women's Club, Community House occupies two tax parcels which have a combined area of .968 acres. Facing north towards the junction of the two roads, the log clubhouse is set among a stand of oak trees. A wide, gravel drive with parking links the two roads in front of the clubhouse. The two lots contain only the clubhouse and a modern, concrete block pumphouse.

Physical Description

The Providence Women's Club, Community House is a one story, log structure with a stone foundation and a front **gable roof**. The clubhouse has a rectangular plan although there is a rear ell and one small addition at the rear. The gable-end facade contains three bays with a central entrance. The doorway is covered by a single-bay front gable porch supported by log poles. The over-sized door is constructed of vertical boards and has its original hardware. Two six-over-six light, double hung, wooden **sash windows** flank the entrance and are found on the side elevations. The **log walls** are **saddle-notched**, and the roof is covered in replacement asphalt shingles. A massive stone chimney is located on the west elevation.

The rear ell appears to be contemporary with the main block of the building. The log ell also has a stone foundation and gable-end roof. A single door is found on the east elevation of the rear ell, and there are two windows. The rear door is also constructed of vertical boards with interior cross bracing to give a rustic appearance. The south elevation has a long, horizontal, divided light window, and the west has a six-over-six light, double hung, wooden sash window. At the juncture of the ell and main block is an addition. The addition has a flat roof and is covered in shake shingles. There are no windows in this modern addition.

The interior of the main block is comprised of an open meeting room. The room has exposed log walls and exposed rafters with cross beams. The floors are hardwood.

Along the west wall is a massive stone fireplace mantel. On the south side of the meeting room are two doors leading to the kitchen in the rear ell and to a bathroom in the later addition. The kitchen also has the exposed log walls, hardwood floors, and exposed rafters. The kitchen has an exterior doorway on the east side. There are kitchen fixtures along the south walk above which is a brick chimney flue. The bathroom has a six panelled door, linoleum floors, and sheet rock walls.

Conclusion

Designed in the rustic style, made popular by federal relief projects during the 1930s, the Providence Women's Club, Community House retains its architectural integrity. The log walls, heavy, simple doors, and massive stone chimney all illustrate the influence that the W.P.A. construction projects had on community construction during this period. The building is essentially unchanged since its construction. The small bathroom addition to the rear does not represent a significant alteration to the original design and floor plan.

Historical Overview

Frances P. Alexander

Community House was built in 1939 by the Providence Women's Club as the meeting place for their home demonstration club. These clubs emerged by the turn of the century as associations of farm women who met to share practical knowledge as well as to socialize. Home demonstration clubs were formed throughout Mecklenburg County during the early twentieth century, and by 1919, there were a sufficient number to form a county-wide federation of home demonstration clubs. The Mecklenburg Federation of Home Demonstration Clubs was organized with 13 members and was in operation at least until the 1950s (Blythe and Brockmann 1961, 361-362).

The Providence Women's Club (also later known as the Extension Homemakers Club) began informally when the women of this once rural community entered the Mecklenburg County Fair in 1934. The booths they sponsored, one for the community and one for the club, both won first prizes. With the proceeds from their prizes, the clubwomen began a building fund, and in the following years sponsored booths in the county fair. Because club membership was growing quickly, and most homes were too small to accommodate all the participants, the club decided to build a central meeting house. The funds for building Community House were raised from these fair earnings (Hall 1977).

Local men supported the efforts of the club. Local residents, William Patterson, Zebulon Rea, and James Ardrey, served as trustees of the club and executed the deed. W.M. and Sarah Ross sold the Providence Women's Club a small portion of their farm for the building site. The deed, dated March 1937, set the price for the land at \$ 1.00. The land was bordered by Ross parcels and the S.E. Kerr and J.G. Earnhart farms. The conveyance stated that the tract was donated, "...for the purpose of authorizing and permitting Mrs. J.A. Blakeney, Mrs. Henry Niven, and Mrs. M.P. Hoover, Mrs. Kate Hawfield, and Miss Edna E. Ross and their associates, successors, and assigns, to build and construct upon the above-described lot of land a community club house and perpetually maintain therein a social, charitable, and/or benevolent association for the promotion and upbuilding of the welfare of the persons living in the said community..." (Deed 26 March 1937). The land donation came with certain restrictions. Construction of the clubhouse had to begin on or before January 1, 1938, and the building had to be completed within six months. Alcohol was prohibited as was profane language. Orderly conduct was required within a one mile radius of the clubhouse. If these conditions were violated, the land was to revert to the original owners.

Other farmers donated logs or actually worked on construction. One farmer, who was also a carpenter, oversaw construction and performed most of the more skilled carpentry tasks. By the time construction was complete in 1939, the building was debt-free. Since construction, all maintenance has been performed by local families. Electricity was available to Lower Providence by 1937, and the club house has always had electric lighting.

The club originally drew its membership from outside Lower Providence with a high proportion coming from Upper Providence. Although owned and used primarily by the Providence Women's Club, the community house has also served wider civic functions. Public meetings, speakers, films, wartime activities, and Boy Scouts meetings have been all held in the clubhouse. Maintenance funds for the building have been raised through craft and bakery sales.

Originally, the clubhouse faced Robinson Store Road, the main road through the Lower Providence community. The road was paved in 1940, after the clubwomen invited the county commissioners to a dinner at the newly opened community house. The secondary route which skirted along the clubhouse to the east was later paved and named Community House Road. With changes in store ownership, the main road was renamed Providence Road West because this east-west route spans the six miles from Providence Road to the Lancaster Highway (Hall 1977).

The Lower Providence community is located in the southernmost portion of the county, bordered by Union County to the east and Lancaster and York counties to the

south and west. The community is defined by major roads, Providence Road to the east, the Lancaster Highway to the west, and Route 51 to the north. Located just north of Community House, the east-west Providence Road West bisects Lower Providence. Lower Providence was settled early in the history of Mecklenburg County by Scotch-Irish farmers who migrated in the mid-eighteenth century from Pennsylvania. This community, like many of the other historic rural communities of the county, was centered around a Presbyterian church. [Providence Presbyterian Church](#), established in 1767, was one of the original seven Presbyterian churches established in the county (Blythe and Brockmann 1961, 194- 195). The stability of the community is reflected in the names of the clubwomen and the trustees. However, this once rural area of the county had undergone rapid suburbanization in the past 20 years, and Providence Presbyterian Church and the Community House are two of the few historic institutions to survive.

Bibliography

Blythe, LeGette and Charles Brockmann. *Hornet's Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County*. Charlotte: McNally of Charlotte, 1961.

Hall, Elizabeth S. "Log Cabin Serves As Community Clubhouse," *Fort Mill Times*, 17 November 1977.

Interview with Janie Ardrey. 15 May 1994.

W.M. and Sarah Ross to William Patterson, Zebulon Rea, and James Ardrey, Trustees for the Providence Woman's Club.

Mecklenburg County Deed. Book 920, page 103. 15 May 1937.