

# **Survey and Research Report On The Central Avenue Pure Oil Station and the Monroe Road Pure Oil Station In Charlotte, N.C.**

## **Central Avenue Pure Oil Station**



**Central Avenue Pure Oil Station (1935)**

- 1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the **Central Avenue Pure Oil Station** is located at 1501 Central Avenue in Charlotte, N.C.
- 2. Name, address, and telephone number of the current owner of the property:**

David E. & Shirley B. Garmon

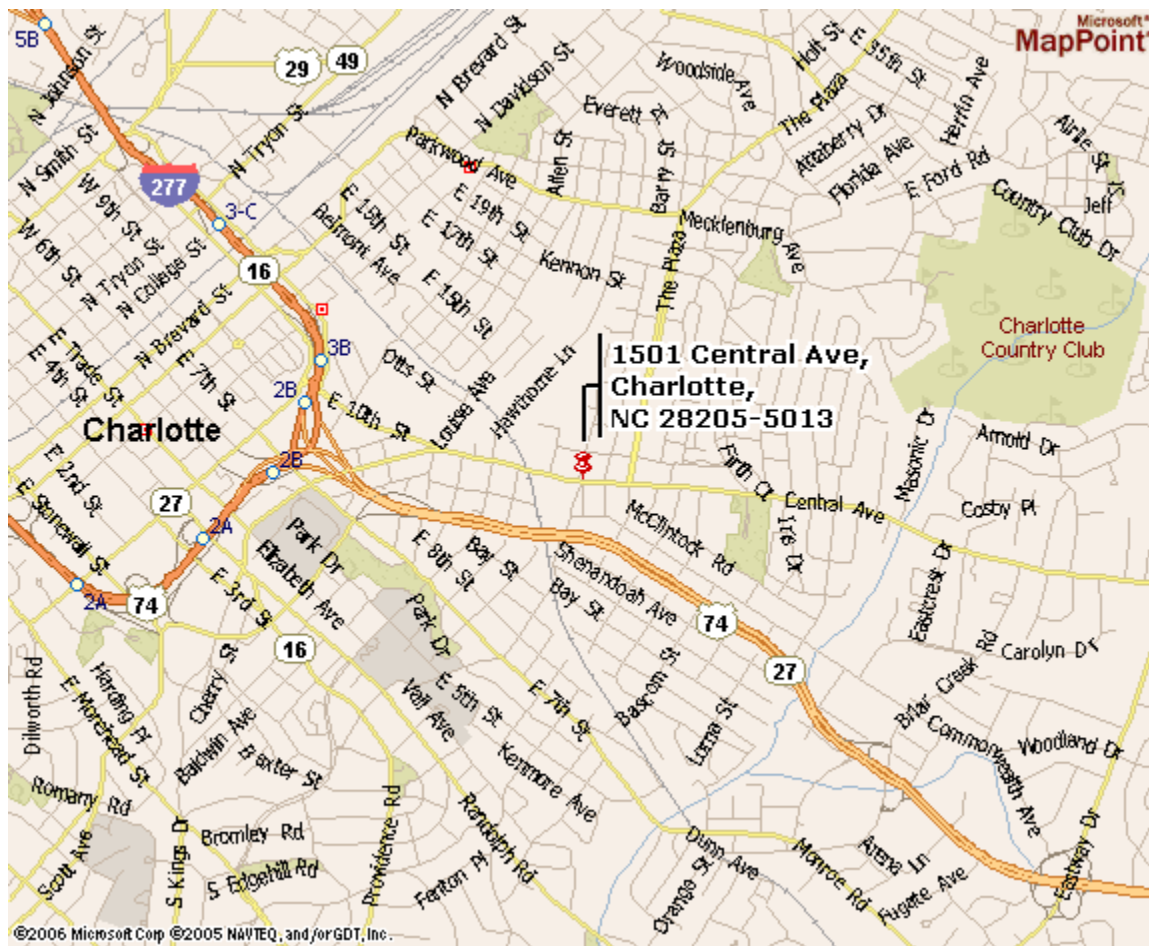
213 13th Avenue South

Surfside Beach, SC 29575

Telephone: Not listed.

**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 maps depicting the location of the property. The U.T.M. of the property is 17 520334E 3897529N



**5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property:** The most recent deed to the property is located in Mecklenburg County Deed Book #451, page 842. The tax parcel number of the property is 081-174-08.

**6. A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

**7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description prepared by Stewart Gray.

**8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the 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 Central Avenue Pure Oil Station possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

1) The Central Avenue Pure Oil Station is one of only two extant English Cottage style Pure Oil stations in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

2) The Central Avenue Pure Oil Station documents the evolution of gasoline station design in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and the efforts of petroleum companies to market gasoline effectively in emerging suburbs and along major highways in the 1920s and 1930s.

**b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or**

**association:** The Commission contends that the architectural description prepared by Stewart Gray demonstrates that the Central Avenue Pure Oil Station 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 "historic landmark." The current appraised value of the property is \$155,000. The property is zoned B-2.

## Monroe Road Pure Oil Station

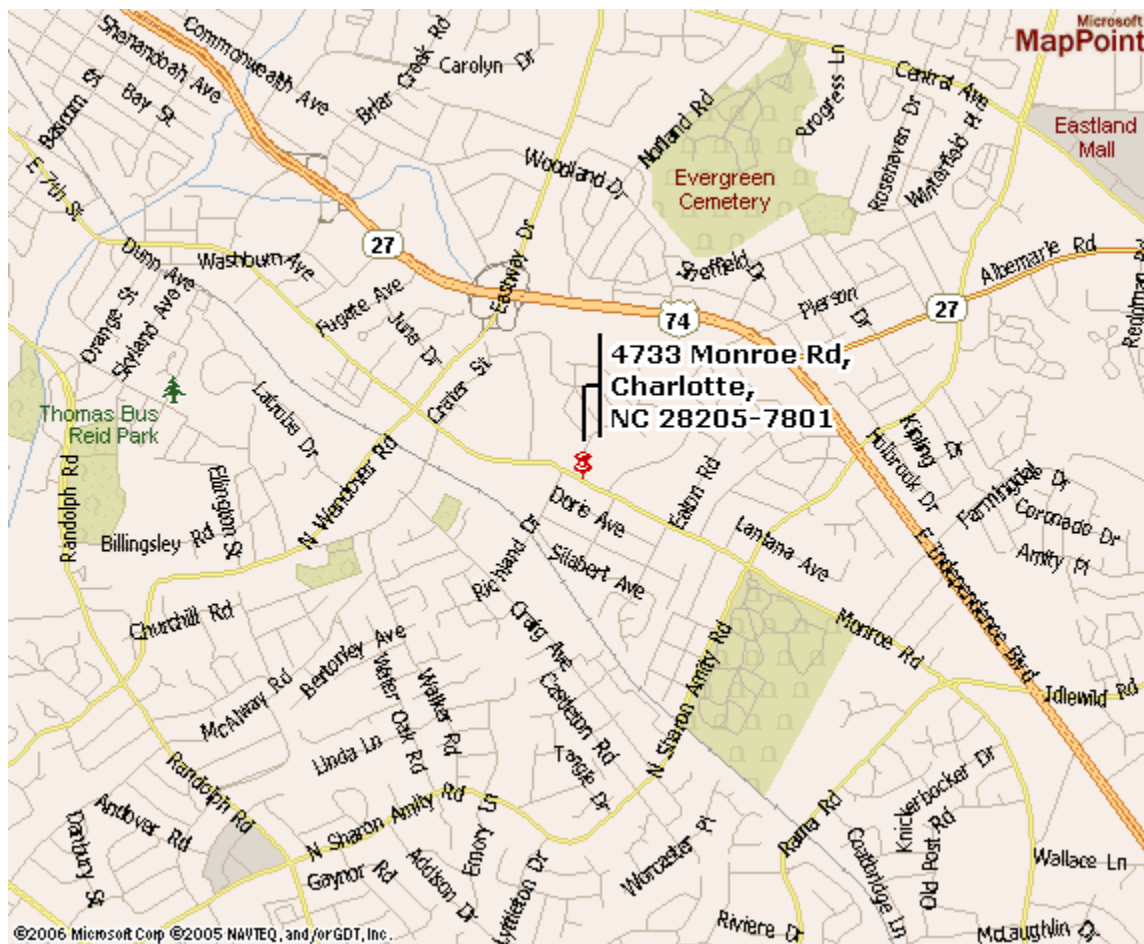


**Monroe Road Pure Oil Station (1937)**

- 1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the **Monroe Road Pure Oil Station** is located at 4733 Monroe Road in Charlotte, N.C.
- 2. Name, address, and telephone number of the current owner of the property:**  
  
Richard P. Hanner  
  
6116 Long Pine Drive  
  
Charlotte, NC 28227  
  
(704)-568-2835
- 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 maps depicting the location of the property. The U.T.M. of the property is 17 520059E 384439N



**5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property:** The most recent deed to the property is located in Mecklenburg County Deed Book #5082, page 100. The tax parcel number of the property is 161-052-22.

**6. A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

**7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description prepared by Stewart Gray.

**8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the 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 Monroe Road

Pure Oil Station possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

- 1) The Monroe Road Pure Oil Station is one of only two extant English Cottage style Pure Oil stations in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
- 2) The Monroe Road Pure Oil Station documents the evolution of gasoline station design in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and the efforts of petroleum companies to market gasoline effectively in emerging suburbs and along major highways in the 1920s and 1930s.

**b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association:** The Commission contends that the architectural description prepared by Stewart Gray demonstrates that the Monroe Road Pure Oil Station 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 "historic landmark." The current appraised value of the property is \$124,900. The property is zoned I-2.

Date of the Preparation of this report: November 15, 2006

Prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill and Stewart Gray

**Summary Statement Of Special Significance.** This report contends that the only two extant Cottage style Pure Oil Stations in Charlotte-Mecklenburg have special local historic significance. As a city which expanded mightily during the first half of the twentieth century, Charlotte was profoundly affected by the impact of the automobile. Consequently, gasoline stations are important and instructive artifacts in the local built environment. The cultural value of the subject Pure Oil stations does not arise from their specific associative history. The particular individuals and events surrounding their history are commonplace. It is rather how they fit within the evolution of the marketing of gasoline and within the derivative design of gasoline stations that gives them special local significance.

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### **Contextual Statement.**

#### **The Evolution Of Gasoline Station Design (1900-1920).**

Gasoline stations are byproducts of the automobile age and have become "one of the most important building types of our drive-in culture," writes historian Daniel Viera in his book, *"Fill 'er Up."*<sup>1</sup> Too often ignored by scholars and the general public because they do not conform to the elitist, "high style" prejudices traditionally associated with historic preservation, gasoline stations are nonetheless icons of preeminent significance in the roadside landscape, including that of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. "So taken for granted have gasoline stations become in the American era of automobile dependence," assert historians John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, "that they are easily accepted as part of the mundane world of the unimportant."<sup>2</sup> Happily, increasing numbers of architectural historians and historic preservationists are becoming "enthusiasts for the ordinary" and are coming to understand that elements of the built or man-made environment, however elegant or tasteless, should be evaluated in terms of their "social implication and cultural value."<sup>3</sup> The most comprehensive study of the building arts in North Carolina explains that a "building is not merely a reflection of society, It is an integral part of society."<sup>4</sup>



**A 1917 Advertisement For Car Dealership In Charlotte**

Gasoline stations bear testimony to the fact that corporations are the principal purveyors of roadside change in the era of the automobile. Because they function mainly as corporate advertisements or what one scholar calls a "three-dimensional billboard," gasoline stations have evolved in response to shifts in American culture.<sup>5</sup> Their designs reflect the dynamics of what Jakle and Sculle term "place-product-packaging -- the networking of look-alike places defining trade territories, all supported through coordinated advertising."<sup>6</sup> Gasoline stations sell products that are essentially the same as those offered by their competitors. Gasoline is gasoline. Consequently, every aspect of enterprises that sell fuel for automobiles, from the signage, to the arrangement of the pumps, to the uniforms worn by attendants, to the placement and configuration of the buildings, contribute to the race for a competitive edge. Gasoline stations also have significance as cultural symbols that embody many of the assumptions that unite American society, including the linking of change with the idea of progress and the association of mobility with freedom. A fundamental purpose of gasoline stations is corporate advertising, and advertising is a "mirror that merely reflects society back on itself."<sup>7</sup>





**In 1900 buggies and carriages were still the only alternatives in Charlotte to walking or riding a trolley.**

This report identifies and evaluates the two surviving examples in Charlotte-Mecklenburg of the distinctive Pure Oil Cottage style gasoline station design and suggests how they participate in the fundamental forces, including cultural norms, that have shaped what Vieyra calls the “carscape” or “motorscape” of cities and regions that have experienced substantial growth in the automobile era.<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly, the automobile and its ancillary infrastructures have profoundly impacted the built or man-made environment of Charlotte and its environs. Charlotte became a city in the age of the motorcar, having a population of 18,091 in 1900, 82,675 in 1930, and 201,564 in 1960.<sup>9</sup> This writer states in his history of Charlotte-Mecklenburg that two themes run throughout the history of this community. The first is tension between the races, and the second is an unremitting desire for economic growth and expansion. Certainly, gasoline stations are physical expressions of the latter impulse.<sup>10</sup>

**A curbside gas station in Wisconsin. Town unidentified. No outlets of this type survive in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.**

Gasoline stations first appeared in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and in the American landscape as a whole in the early twentieth century as locally owned and operated curbside pumps outside existing retail outlets, such as hardware stores, stables, bicycle shops, and feed stores. Theretofore gasoline had been a relatively unimportant byproduct of the production of kerosene for lighting and lubricants for machinery. No stations of this type survive locally.

The arrival of the motorcar gradually transformed the petroleum industry, and the breakup of the Standard Oil trust in 1911 allowed a greater number of companies to compete for the expanding automobile service market. By the late 1910's and early 1920s, as automobile registration began to soar and as a nationwide highway network began to come into existence, petroleum companies increasingly forced local distributors to adopt a single brand and to operate out of gasoline stations that were "especially designed to promote corporate identities."<sup>11</sup> That is still their principal role. Unlike most forms of folk architecture, which gradually spread out from a common source, gasoline stations of virtually identical design appeared and continue to appear almost simultaneously in multiple locations. Indeed, petroleum companies have played a large role in

homogenizing the roadside built environment in America over the last 100 years. "With the rise of corporate America has come a pervasive standardization of roadsides, a kind of commonplaceness," declare Jakle and Sculle.<sup>12</sup>



**Prefabricated Gasoline Station (Picture from *Pump and Circumstance*)**

Prefabricated metal-and-glass buildings were the most common early corporate gas stations to appear. Easily transportable to strategic street corners and manufactured by several iron-works companies, these edifices were among the first to provide off-street parking for automobiles and trucks. Catalogs depicting a variety of configurations were available, some with a canopy that extended from the front of the building to columns near the pumps. These simple shed-like buildings, usually with multipaned industrial sash and a standing seam metal or an imitation tile roof, could be erected in a matter of days at relatively low cost. Unfortunately, no stations of this type survive in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. There are also no local extant examples of the monumental gasoline stations that arose in the 1920s in many cities in response to the City Beautiful Movement. Chester H. Liebs in his book, *Main Street To Miracle Mile*, describes stations of this genre. "Made out of brick, cut stone, and concrete, they looked like diminutive versions of banks, libraries and city halls. . . ."<sup>13</sup>



**Monumental Station in Massachusetts (Picture from *The Gas Station In America*)**

Petroleum companies did seek to gain respectability by constructing retail outlets in popular architectural styles of the day. A striking illustration of this type of gasoline station once stood on East Trade Street in Charlotte. Designed by Louis Asbury, an architect of regional importance, this elegant brick structure with elements of the Tudor Revival style attempted to fit in with the architecture of what was then a fashionable uptown residential, institutional, and commercial thoroughfare.<sup>14</sup>



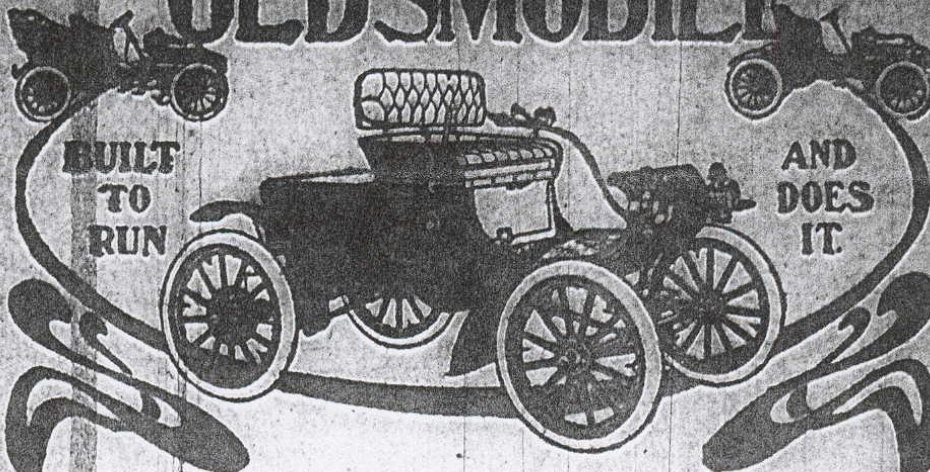
**Louis Asbury's E. Trade Street Gasoline Station**

Like most American cities, Charlotte had its early automobile-related businesses clustered in the center center. The first local automobile dealership, the Osmond L. Barringer Company, which had opened by 1904-05, was situated on West Trade Street.<sup>15</sup> By 1907 the Charlotte Auto and Cycle Co. was operating at 212 North College Street.<sup>16</sup> In addition to automobiles, it sold tires, gasoline, oils, and greases.<sup>17</sup> The number of automobile-related businesses in Charlotte had increased to ten by 1911-- all located within a few blocks of the intersection of Trade and Tryon Streets in the heart of town.<sup>18</sup> The number had grown exponentially by 1926. It included 64 gasoline stations, many located on major highways leading out of Charlotte.<sup>19</sup> The 1920s also witnessed the construction of imposing buildings for automobile dealerships in the center city. Among them were the Oscar J. Thies Automotive Building on North Tryon Street and the Carolina Cadillac Building on South Tryon Street.<sup>20</sup> Happily, both survive. The largest automobile-related complex in Charlotte was the Ford Motor Company Plant that was built on Statesville Avenue in 1924-25 and designed by Albert Kahn, a renowned industrial architect of that era. It also still stands, although Ford sold the property decades ago. At the height of its production the Statesville Avenue Plant was turning out as many



as 300 Model T's and Model A's daily. Ford had begun operations in Charlotte in 1914, when it opened an automotive distribution warehouse at 222 North Tryon St.<sup>21</sup>

# OLDSMOBILE



## Selecting an Automobile

You want the greatest road efficiency. This is measured by the actual horse-power transmitted to the wheels, divided by the weight of the machine.

The Oldsmobile Runabout has the greatest road efficiency of any runabout made. 5x6 cylinder 7 actual horse-power, weighs 1100 lbs.—making the horse-power per 100 lbs. weight .636.

You want a reliable machine. The Oldsmobile has proven itself superior to all others in this respect. It is the only Runabout that has been driven across the American continent. Also took every prize in the famous English Reliability Run in September, 1903.

You want simplicity in mechanism. The Oldsmobile has fewest parts—it is the result of 20 years' experience in gas engine building. The chances of its getting out of order are reduced to a minimum. There's "nothing to watch but the road ahead."

You want your money's worth. The Oldsmobile costs \$650.00, —and it's worth it.

Send for our catalog telling about increased power, speed etc. Shows our new pattern Touring Runabout, \$750.00; Light Tonneau, \$950.00; Oldsmobile Delivery Wagon, \$850.00.

*Free demonstration by our nearest agent.* 16

**OLDS MOTOR WORKS, Detroit, Mich.**

## Osmond L. Barringer Co.

STATE AGENTS

CHARLOTTE, N. C.



**Osmond Barringer Co. Advertisement (City Directory 1904/05)**



**In 1910 the Osmond L. Barringer Co. occupied a new building on West 8th Street.<sup>22</sup>**



**Thies Automotive Building**



**Carolina Cadillac Building**



**Former Ford Motor Plant**

## Roadway Improvements In Charlotte Mecklenburg.

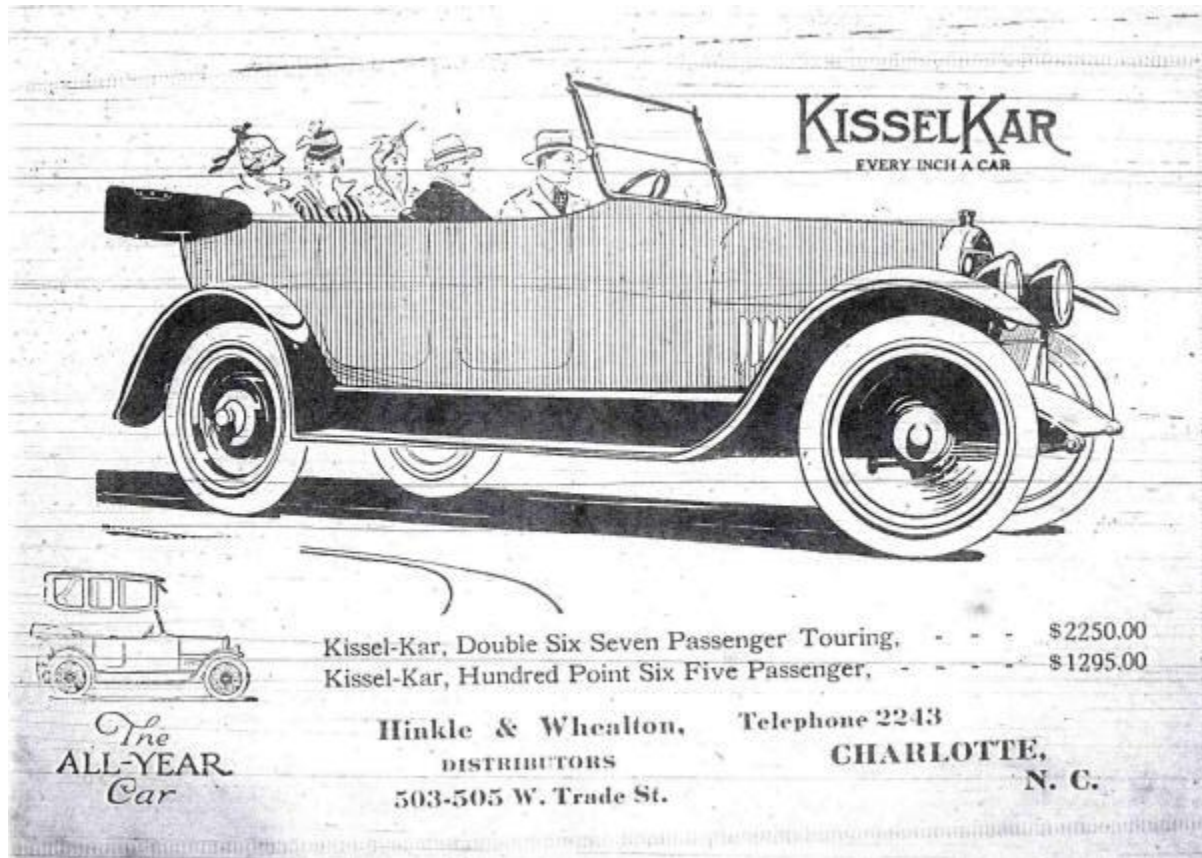
Charlotte's growing dependence upon the motorcar as the twentieth century progressed led to major roadway construction projects that forever altered the cityscape and provided more places at which to erect gasoline stations. Cameron Morrison, a flamboyant lawyer and resident of Charlotte, was elected Governor in 1920 and promised to build a modern highway system throughout North Carolina. In keeping with his commitment to connect every County seat, Morrison provided the impetus for constructing a four-lane highway, North Carolina's first, between Charlotte and Gastonia. Named for William Cook Wilkinson, a member of the State Highway Commission and president of the Merchants and Farmers Bank of Charlotte, Wilkinson Boulevard opened to traffic in 1928.<sup>23</sup> North Tryon Street became a major connector to Concord and beyond a decade later. On October 4, 1939, an improved underpass beneath the tracks of the Seaboard Airline Railroad brought the recently-widened U.S. 29 into the central business district via North Tryon Street.<sup>24</sup>



**Texaco Tank Truck in Charlotte (1918)**

The most ambitious highway project of the mid-twentieth century to ease traffic congestion in Charlotte was the construction of what was initially known as the "Crosstown Boulevard." Independence Boulevard, as it was ultimately named, cut a broad, east-west swath across the city, connecting Wilkinson Boulevard with a recently-opened alternative highway to Monroe. The Charlotte City Council approved the Independence Boulevard contract with the Federal Government on March 11,

1947. "You only look back for reasons to move ahead, and by golly nobody can say that we lacked ideas," former Mayor Herbert Baxter told a newspaperman in 1964.<sup>25</sup> Additional bridges and underpasses to aid automobile access were constructed over and under railroad tracks on East 11<sup>th</sup> Street, West 5<sup>th</sup> Street, and East Stonewall Street after voters approved \$1,500,000 of "Crossing Elimination Bonds" on July 29, 1950.<sup>26</sup>



**Automobiles were becoming prevalent by the 1920s.**

### **Home-like Gasoline Stations (1920-1940)**

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's earliest extant gasoline stations date from the 1920s and 1930s. Not surprisingly, especially when one considers the overwhelmingly conservative proclivities of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's New South elite in the early twentieth century, commercial buildings, including those that sold fuel for automobiles, were predominantly revivalistic or domestic in terms of design. ". . . urban growth and even architecture followed increasingly conservative patterns," says Thomas Hanchett about Charlotte's developmental patterns in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>27</sup> Petroleum companies in the 1920s most often wanted their gasoline stations to resemble small homes. "The sight of a little house selling gas along the roadside could also trigger a host of positive associations -- friendliness, comfort, and security -- in the minds of motorists whizzing by," observes Chester Liebs.<sup>28</sup>





**This 1924 Photograph Shows A Gasoline Station That Once Stood On Monroe Road.**

The most common domestic form for gasoline stations was a square building with a hipped roof projecting from the front to form a canopy over a driveway next to the pumps. Charlotte-Mecklenburg once had many stations of this type. Almost all of Charlotte's gasoline stations of this sort and era were initially situated somewhat distant from the center city on roadways that served as Mecklenburg County's principal highways in the early and mid-twentieth century. The exception is the Standard Oil Service Station at 1010 North Tryon Street, which is already a local historic landmark. There are two extant stations of this type on Wilkinson Boulevard -- one at 5315 Wilkinson Boulevard and another at 9309 Wilkinson Boulevard just east of the Catawba River. A cottage style station survives at 5401 Wilkinson Boulevard.<sup>29</sup>



**5315 Wilkinson Boulevard**



**9309 Wilkinson Boulevard**



**5401 Wilkinson Boulevard**

### **Pure Oil Stations.**

Pure Oil Company erected especially memorable examples of a home-like gasoline station throughout the United States. In 1925, Ohio-based Pure Oil hired self-trained architect Carl A. Petersen to oversee its marketing construction department and to select a new standard design for its retail outlets. Petersen selected the English Cottage style for Pure partly because he believed it would be readily accepted by residents of America's growing suburban neighborhoods. Bay windows, home-like entry doors, steep gable roofs, half timbering, and end chimneys were just some of the architectural elements that Petersen employed to create an aura of domesticity in Pure Oil's new gasoline stations.<sup>30</sup> Pure Oil Stations of this genre are widely recognized for their cultural



value. Indeed, many elsewhere in the United States have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>31</sup>



**This Craftsman style station was a common design used by Pure Oil before Carl Petersen introduced the Cottage style. City unidentified.**

Charlotte has only two extant examples of Petersen's handiwork, one at 1501 Central Avenue and another at 4733 Monroe Road. The Central Avenue Pure Oil Station optimizes Petersen's English Cottage style. The Monroe Road Pure Oil Station was built by a franchisee and is significant as a not altogether successful attempt to capture the spirit of Petersen's design philosophy.

Pure Oil Company of the Carolinas, Inc., headquartered in Charlotte, purchased a lot at the corner of Central Avenue and Pecan Avenue on June 12, 1935, and erected the station that still stands at 1501 Central Avenue.<sup>32</sup> The Charlotte City Directory of 1968 reveals that the station was then operating as Ed Garmon's Service Station and Used Cars.<sup>33</sup> On July 29, 1937, Southern Oil Company of North Carolina, operating out of High Point, purchased a site on Monroe Road and soon thereafter signed an agreement to market Pure Oil products. Its English Cottage style station survives at 4733 Monroe Road and now, like the Central Avenue station, functions as an eatery.<sup>34</sup> In 1968, the Monroe Road station operated as Gulledge's Service Station.<sup>35</sup> Although both stations now are used adaptively, the Central Avenue station as a Pizza outlet and the Monroe Road Station as a working class night club, the buildings clearly possess special significance as manifestations of a distinctive type of gasoline station architecture.



The Central Avenue Pure Oil Station is a graphic illustration of the impact and success of Petersen's desire to dovetail his design with the aura of what he called the "Romantic Suburbs." Jakle and Sculle write: "Petersen not only articulated the often unspoken assumptions of Romantic Suburbs, but he also masterfully tapped the domestic urges beneath them."<sup>36</sup> Historian David Goldfield notes that early twentieth century suburbs represented an effort by elites to construct an orderly neighborhood in an otherwise threatening, fast-urbanizing environment. Rapid change, says Goldfield, "drove Americans to seek some refuge, some port before the waves of innovation drowned their sensibilities and senses completely."<sup>37</sup> Margaret Supplee Smith speaks to the same attraction the suburbs offered. "These nineteenth suburbs represented more than merely a place to live," she declares. "They offered a return to nature for the American family."<sup>38</sup> The same held true for suburbs of the early 1900s. Situated on the edge of the Chatham Estates neighborhood, the Central Avenue Pure Oil Station still incorporates aesthetic elements of quaintness, domesticity, and security.

The Monroe Road Pure Oil Station was built beside what was then the major highway between Charlotte and Monroe. The property was not owned outright by the Pure Oil Company but functioned as a franchise station.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, because of the iconic power of Petersen's design and because of the demands of "place-product-packaging," the station incorporated the fundamental elements of the English Cottage style and thereby became an effective "three dimensional billboard" for Pure Oil. Clearly, this marketing strategy was embraced by the Southern Oil Company to attract motorists who were traveling along the highway.



**Offered as a premium by Pure Oil Co. in 1939.**

### **Endnotes:**

1. Daniel I. Vieyra, *"Fill 'er Up" An Architectural History of America's Gas Stations*. (New York and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1979), p. xiii.
2. John A. Jakle & Keith A. Sculle, *The Gas Station In America* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 5.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
4. Catherine W. Bishir, Charlotte V. Brown, Carl R. Lounsbury, and Ernest H. Wood III, *Architects and Builders in North Carolina: A History of the Practice of Building* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p. 431.
5. Vieyra, p. 14.
6. Jakle & Sculle, p. 1
7. Stephen Fox, *The Mirror Makers. A History Of American Advertising And Its Creators* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), p. 329.



8. *Vieyra*, p. xiii.

9. Legette Blythe and Charles Raven Brockman, *Hornets' Nest. The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte: Heritage Printers, Inc., 1961), p. 449.

10. <http://danandmary.com/historyofcharlotteindex.htm>

11. *Jakle & Sculle*, p. 131.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

13. Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street To Miracle Mile. American Roadside Architecture* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 99.

14. Happily, the Standard Oil Company Gasoline Station at 1010 North Tryon Street, which has already been designated as a local historic landmark, is extant.



The 1920s also witnessed the construction of whimsical gasoline stations that sought to be especially eye-catching. This writer has heard anecdotal evidence that there was a station in Charlotte that resembled a golf ball. A nationally-recognized example of so-called "fantastic" stations is the series that Shell Oil distributor Quality Oil Company erected in Winston-Salem, N.C. The stations were designed to look like seashells.



15. *Charlotte City Directory*, 1904/05. The company sold steam-powered, electric-powered, and gasoline powered automobiles.

16. *Ibid.*, 1907

17. *Ibid.*, 1917

18. *Ibid.*, 1911. These included the W. S. Abernethy Co. at 29 W. 4th St.; the Osmond L. Barringer Co. at 7-9-11 W. 8th St.; Charlotte Auto & Cycle Co. at 222 N. College St.; Charlotte Motor Car Co. at 22 S. College St.; C.C. Coddington Co. at 209 S. Church St.; Mecklenburg Auto Co. at 211 S. Church St.; Relay Manufacturing Co. at 231 S. Tryon St.; Sherrill & Littlefield at 10 N. Church St.; Southern Auto Co. at 14 S. Church St.; and United Motor Charlotte Co. at 21-27 W. 4th St.

19. *Ibid.*, 1926

20. For additional information on the Thies Automotive Building and the Carolina Cadillac Building, see <http://landmarkscommission.org/surveys&rthiesbldg.htm> and <http://landmarkscommission.org/Surveys&rCadillac.htm> The Craftsman style became a favorite design for gasoline stations in the 1920s. At least two stations of this type once stood in the center city.

21. <http://landmarkscommission.org/surveys&rfordplantl.htm>



**The main block of this station on West Trade St. was Craftsman style with Spanish-Revival elements. It was still standing in 1974.**



**This c.1952 photograph of 3rd and S. Tryon shows the Wilder Building on the left and the former Lawyers Building on the right. Note the railroad freight yard in the background that separated 2nd Ward or "Brooklyn" from the rest of Center City Charlotte. A Craftsman style house-and-canopy station is in the middle of the parking lot.**

22. *Charlotte City Directory*, 1910

23. <http://landmarkscommission.org/surveys&rwalteralexhouse.htm>

24. <http://landmarkscommission.org/uptownsurveyhistorybridges.htm>

25. <http://landmarkscommission.org/educatontransportationindependence.htm>

26. <http://landmarkscommission.org/uptownsurveyhistorybridges.htm>

27. <http://landmarkscommisson.org/educargrowth.htm>

28. *Liebs*, p. 101.

29. A striking local example of a house-and-shed gasoline station stood until recently at the intersection of Old Statesville Road and Alexanderana Road. Portions were saved to be incorporated into a nearby development.



30. *Jakle & Sculle*, pp. 167-171.

31. see <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/hp/register/viewSummary.asp?refnum=80000139>.

32. *Mecklenburg County Real Estate Book* 869, p. 345.

33. *Charlotte City Directory*, 1968, p. 94

34. *Mecklenburg County Deed Book* 994, p. 139; *Mecklenburg County Deed Book* 922, p. 287. There is a station at 402 South Main Street in Davidson, N.C. that some might think was a Cottage style Pure Oil Station. It was not. The front gable on the present building is not original (see 1937 Sanborn Insurance Map for Davidson, N.C., p. 4).



**The station at 402 South Main Street, Davidson was not a Pure Oil Cottage style station. The front gable is not original.**

35. *Charlotte City Directory*, 1968, p. 289.

36. *Jakle & Sculle*, p. 172.

37. David R. Goldfield, "North Carolina's Early Twentieth-Century Suburbs and the Urbanizing South." Catherine W. Bishir and Lawrence S. Earley, eds., *Early Twentieth Century Suburbs in North Carolina*.

*Essays on History, Architecture, and Planning* (Raleigh: Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section Division of Archives and History North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1985), p. 9.

38. Margaret Supplee Smith, "The American Idyll in North Carolina's First Suburbs: Landscape and Architecture." Catherine W. Bishir and Lawrence S. Earley, eds., *Early Twentieth Century Suburbs in North Carolina. Essays on History, Architecture, and Planning* (Raleigh: Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section Division of Archives and History North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1985), p. 21.

39. *Mecklenburg County Deed Book 994*, p. 139; *Mecklenburg County Deed Book 922*, p. 287.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTIONS

### Pure Oil Station, Central Avenue



The Pure Oil Station on Central Avenue is a well-preserved, one-story, side-gabled, frame, commercial building with a steeply pitched roof. The building faces south and sits on a relatively flat one-quarter acre corner lot. The lot is bordered on the front by Central Avenue, a busy four-lane street, and on the west by Pecan Avenue, a two-lane street that runs into the neighborhood behind the gas station. The Pure Oil Station is located in the Plaza-Midwood neighborhood in Charlotte and occupies a prominent position as the westernmost building of a historic streetscape of mostly attached masonry commercial buildings.





The façade of the Pure Oil Station is dominated by a gabled porch or canopy (canopy is the term used in gas station design.) The canopy features a steeply pitched roof nearly as tall as that on the principal section of the building. Two “L” shaped brick piers support the canopy’s front posts. The piers sit on a small oval concrete island. The base of the piers are slightly corbelled, and the cap is cast concrete. The principal posts are cast concrete with chamfered edges. All of the posts feature brackets, but only the brackets directly under the gable appear to be original. These original brackets were formed by laminating five pieces of 2-inch lumber, each piece having the curved shape of the brackets. The brackets sit in notches cast into the posts. The gable features five widely spaced vertical boards in-filled with stucco, which was meant to resemble half-timber framing. The sides of the canopy feature pent roofs that nearly span the length of the canopy and end at the principal roof with short valleys. The pent roofs are supported by wooden posts that adjoin the principal post at the front of the canopy, and pilasters on the building’s façade. The pilasters rest on shallow brick piers with concrete caps. The canopy ceiling is pressed metal tiles.



Facade Detail



Island

The principal section of the building is four bays wide, and rests on a concrete slab that sits about six inches above the grade and is integrated into a stoop that spans the front of the principal section of the building. This stoop, along with the aforementioned island, delineates where the cars can travel under the canopy. A round-arched doorway is roughly centered under the canopy, which is aligned with the building's western elevation. The round-topped door appears to be original. It is a board-door with cross braces and circular six-light glazing that matches the curve of the door. Above the door is a small bellcast, hipped roof supported with curved metal brackets. The doorway is bordered by two narrow windows, each with a single eight-light sash. To the east of the canopy is a semi-hexagonal projecting bay which is sheltered by a small bellcast, hipped metal roof. The broad front window in the bay features a large single light topped with a row of eight individual lights. The building is covered with wood siding with a large reveal.



Garage Wing



Chimney on West Elevation

One window opening like those bordering the front door pierces the west elevation of the principal section. The original window has been replaced with a single-light sash. The concrete stoop from the façade curves around the west elevation, becoming a narrow ledge that probably served to protect the building from rolling cars. The majority of this elevation is obscured by a gabled wing featuring a single garage door opening. The garage door is a rolling overhead door composed of five panels, all of

which are glazed except the one that rests on the grade when closed. The wing was constructed on a partial-height brick wall that matches the height and design of the canopy piers. Frame construction rises from the low wall. The steeply pitched roof of the wing transitions into a low pitched roof bordered by a parapet. The original siding of this garage wing may have also changed at this roof transition. Beyond this point to the rear the east elevation of the garage wing is covered with modern plywood siding. A single metal framed casement window with sixteen lights pierces the elevation.

The west elevation features a tapered brick chimney centered in the steep gable. Random individual bricks project slightly from the surface of the chimney to give the masonry an uneven texture. Otherwise the west elevation is blank, covered with the same wide siding board found on the façade. The steeply pitched roof transitions into a low-pitched roof toward the rear of the building.



The rear elevation is composed of the rear walls of the garage wing and principal section. These walls run together without interruption. However, the roof of the garage wing is higher. A wooden fence enclosing garbage cans blocks much of the rear elevation. While the entire area of the lot in front of the gas station is paved with poured concrete, the rear of the lot is a gravel parking lot.

## **Tudor Style**

The Pure Oil Station on Central Avenue is a fine example of the Tudor style or what Petersen called the English Cottage style applied to a commercial building. The building's steeply pitched roof is perhaps its most dominant Tudor element, and it is an element that separates this building from almost all of the other surviving early-twentieth century commercial buildings in Charlotte. While domestic examples of the style often featured a prominent cross gable, this station's prominent cross-gabled canopy mimics



the form. To further relate the canopy to a traditional Tudor gable, the canopy features half-timbering infilled with stucco in its gable. The station's round-arched door and semi-hexagonal bay window are also typical features of the Tudor Style.

### **Pure Oil Station, Monroe Road**



The Pure Oil Station on Monroe Road is a brick one-and-one-half-story side-gabled building, with a strikingly steep roof. There is no physical evidence that the station had a canopy, and the Sanborn Insurance Maps do not include the section of Charlotte in which the building is located. The building sits very close to Monroe Road, which was historically one of the main highways in and out of the city. Originally gasoline pumps would have sat in front of the building. The building is located on a  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre lot that is level with the road but slopes down behind the building. The station has retained a good degree of integrity in terms of its original form with no significant alterations or additions to the front or side elevations, other than the assumption that the windows on the first floor originally were multi-paned. The building has a concrete floor poured on grade, but it appears that the masonry walls were erected first and then a slab was poured inside the once the walls were in place. A narrow stoop spanning the façade is roughly at the same level as the floor. The stoop functioned to protect the building from cars rolling into the station.

The façade is nearly symmetrical with a doorway and prominent cross gable centered on the front of the building. The facade's five bays are evenly spaced, however the easternmost bay contains secondary doorway that is slightly narrower than the window

opening located in the westernmost bay. The brick is laid in American bond and is the only visible wall material.

A replacement door in the central bay is topped with an original four-light transom. The door opening is highlighted by a flat lintel composed of angled brick. All of the wall openings on the first floor feature this decorative brickwork lintel design. All of the window openings have corbelled brick sills. All of the windows on the first story of the façade and side elevations contain large single panes of plate-glass. All of these windows have been partially infilled with plywood panels to make the window area smaller. This change appears to be completely reversible.



A single window opening is centered in the front gable, and is topped with an angled brick lintel. Above the window opening is a brick attic vent composed of six vertical bricks with narrow openings between them. Also in the gable is an original light fixture composed of iron pipe that functions both as support and conduit for two steel and porcelain fixtures that once illuminated the gas pumps. The light fixture is anchored by a chain attached to the brickwork. There is no overhanging eave on the building's gables, with a fascia boards bolted directly into the brickwork.





The side elevations appear to be identical and feature shouldered chimneys centered on the gables. The chimneys are topped with a corbelled rim, and feature simple flue pipes projecting from the top. Wide window openings similar to those on the façade flank the chimneys on the first story, and narrower six-over-six double-hung windows border the chimney on the upper story. These upper-story windows are topped with a simple soldier-row of brick and have the same brick sills found on the lower windows.

Shallow, frame, shed-roofed rear additions were added to the rear elevation in two stages. The additions have little fenestration, are covered with German siding, and are in poor condition.

### **Tudor Style**

The Monroe Road Pure Oil Station is an interesting contrast to the station found on Central Avenue. Where the Central Avenue building is a Commercial building in the Tudor style or English Cottage style, the Monroe Road station could be best described as a vernacular version of the Tudor style. The Central Avenue Station utilized specific architectural elements associated with the Tudor style such as a round-arched door, and bay and narrow windows. In contrast, the Monroe Road station used a vocabulary of architectural elements that could be found in the brick commercial and domestic architecture throughout Charlotte. There is nothing particularly Tudoresque about the building's wide window openings or four-light transoms. However, the builder of the Monroe Road station was able to capture some of the essence of the Tudor style

through the building's form. Most notable is the building's steeply pitched roof, which immediately associates the building with the city's Tudor style homes. Except for Gothic Revival churches, few other non-domestic building in the city feature such a dramatically steep roof. Other elements that could easily be replicated by the builder were incorporated into the design, such as the minimal roof overhangs, and the exposed chimney flues. The prominent centered gable also relates the Monroe Road station to the Tudor style, even though an off-centered cross-gable would have been more in keeping with the style. But perhaps to passing motorist this subtle distinction would have been meaningless. And this may be the point. This building was designed to be roadside architecture. The shape of the building is distinctive enough to be noticed even while driving by at highway speed. Thus, vestigial chimneys and Tudor roof shapes were incorporated into the design. The more subtle elements associated with the Tudor style were apparently of secondary importance.



This former gasoline station stands in Midland, N.C. in Cabarrus County. The original form of the station is essentially identical to that of the Monroe Road Pure Oil Station.