



**Survey and Research Report
On
Fire Station Number Eight**

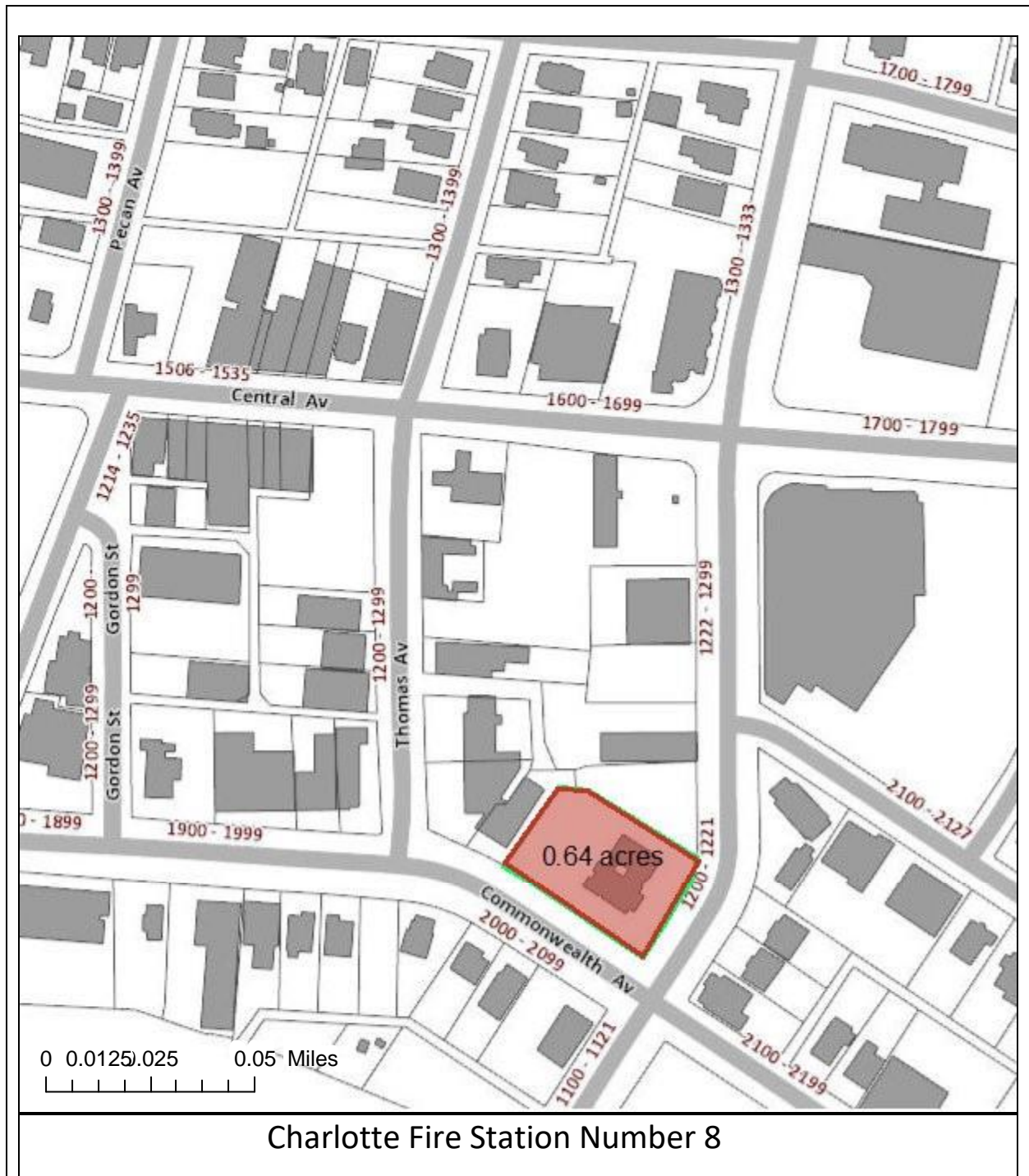


1. **Name And Location Of The Property.** The Former Charlotte Fire Station Number Eight is located at 1201 The Plaza in Charlotte, N.C.
2. **Name And Address Of The Present Owner Of The Property.**

City of Charlotte
c/o Real Estate Division
600 East Fourth Street
Charlotte, N.C. 28202

3. Representative Photographs Of The Property. The report contains representative photographs of the property.

4. Map Depicting The Location Of The Property.



5. Current Deed Book Reference To The Property. The current deed to the property is not listed. The tax parcel number of the property is 08117627.

6. A Brief Historic Sketch Of The Property. The report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

7. A Brief Physical Description Of The Property. The report contains a brief physical description of the property 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 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission judges that Charlotte Fire Station Number Eight possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

1) The architect of Charlotte Fire Station Number Eight was Marion Rossiter “Steve” Marsh (1893-1977), who practiced architecture in Charlotte from 1922 until his retirement in 1964. Marsh was an architect of local and regional importance. He is especially remembered for his design of institutional and commercial buildings, including schools, public housing, movie theaters, retail stores, and warehouses. Fire Station Number Eight is one of two firehouses Marsh designed in Charlotte and the only one that remains in active service, the other being the mid-century modern style Former Charlotte Fire Station Number Two. There is no record that Marsh designed firehouses elsewhere.

2) The house-like design of Charlotte Fire Station Number Eight is unique among the firehouses that were built in Charlotte in the decades immediately following World War Two. All the other firehouses of this era are modernist style architecture.

3) William Hendrix Palmer, who served as Charlotte Fire Chief from 1927 until 1948, was a persistent advocate for assuring that Fire Station Number Eight would be sympathetic to the built environment of the surrounding neighborhood. Fire Station Number Eight therefore stands as a physical reminder of Chief Palmer’s illustrious career.

b. Integrity Of Design, Setting, Workmanship, Materials, Feeling, And/Or Association. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission judges that the physical description included in this report demonstrates that the exterior and grounds of Charlotte Fire Station Number Eight meet this criterion of special significance.

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 that becomes a designated “historic landmark.” The current appraised value of the Charlotte Fire Station Number Eight property is \$804,000. The property is currently exempt from the payment of property taxes.

Date Of The Preparation Of This Report: January 29, 2018

Prepared By: Dan L. Morrill and Stewart Gray

**A Brief History Of The Charlotte
Fire Station Number Eight.**

**Dr. Dan L. Morrill
January 29, 2018**



Charlotte Fire Station Number Eight (1949)

The special significance of Charlotte Fire Station Number Eight, which opened in April 1949 at 1201 The Plaza, can be understood within the context of the evolutionary nature of fire stations erected by the Charlotte Fire Department since its establishment in 1887.¹ Fire Station Number Eight also has special significance because its house-like design is unique among the firehouses erected in Charlotte during the first two decades following World War Two. Fire Station Number Eight was designed by Marion Rossiter "Steve" Marsh (1893-1977), an architect of local and regional significance. Finally, Fire Chief William Hendrix Palmer (1884-1955) led the effort to assure that Fire Station Number Eight would be

sympathetic to the surrounding built environment of Plaza Midwood. It therefore stands as a testimonial to Chief Palmer's place in the history of the Charlotte Fire Department.

Fire stations occupy a place of special importance in the built environment. Their essential purpose is to house the equipment and the personnel needed to fight fires in the neighborhoods which they serve. According to former Charlotte Fire Chief Jon Hannan, a "primary concern" in the design of fire stations "is to get the truck out the door as quickly as possible." Hannan also believes that fire stations have symbolic meaning. "Fire stations need to convey permanence and reliability," Hannan contends. They "need to look solid, substantial."² Historian Rebecca Zurier speaks to this point in her book *The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History*. "Because fire stations have been linked with the popular image of firemen and fire engines," she contends, "they often have had an extra element of humor or fantasy."³ The Charlotte Fire Department has demonstrated its commitment to both the utilitarian and the symbolic components of fire station design throughout the Department's history.

Fire stations are more than a workplace. Firefighters give nicknames to the fire stations where they work. A nickname, says Hannan, "is an identifier of the attachment they have for the station they are assigned to." Fire stations become a "first home" for many firefighters. "We're going to lock them in a building for one-third of their life," Hannan explains. "You have no secrets in the fire service." "If you have trouble at home," says Hannan, "or your kids are in trouble, the guys or gals in the station are going to know it."⁴ Firefighters sleep in the fire station, eat in the fire station, take baths in the fire station, cut the grass, clip the hedges, and maintain the equipment. Charlotte Fire Station Number Eight is nicknamed the "White House" -- an obvious reference to its residential appearance.⁵

Fire engines in Charlotte were initially hand-pulled, later horse-pulled, until 1911, when the City ordered its first gasoline-powered fire truck.⁶ No Charlotte fire stations survive from the hand-pulled era, and only one, the original Fire Station Number Two in the Dilworth neighborhood, is extant from the horse-pulled era.⁷ Opening on South Boulevard in 1909, Charlotte Fire Station Number Two, like its counterparts in other communities, was essentially a red brick horse barn with large arched wooden doors and sleeping space for the firefighters on the second floor. It lacked the extravagant embellishment of fire stations built in the late 1800's. "As if to present a no-nonsense exterior to the public," writes Rebecca Zurier, "the stations designed for the new, professional fire departments followed the austere forms of factory and commercial architecture."⁸



Charlotte Fire Station Number Two



Fire Chief William Hendrix Palmer Atop A Horse-Drawn Charlotte Steamer

The 1920's and 1930's witnessed a major increase in the number of fire stations in fast-growing Charlotte. No longer required to accommodate horses, these stations were smaller than those erected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Still built of brick and two stories tall, they were configured to blend into the streetscapes in which they were located. They occupied small lots. Four are extant: Fire Station Number Four (1926) on West Fifth Street, Fire Station Number Five (1929) on Wesley Heights Way, Fire Station Number Six (1929) on Laurel Avenue, and Fire Station Number Seven (1935) on North Davidson Street. Designed by architect Charles Christian Hook (1870-1938), all are revivalist in configuration. Fire Station Number Five has a tiled roof overhang at the parapet. It has corner columns with embellished capitals at both ends of the front façade. Fire Station Number Six, located on the edge of Charlotte's upscale Eastover neighborhood, is especially lavish in its architectural detail. The front façade is faced with random fieldstones, thereby allowing it to merge architecturally with the bungalows that dominate the adjoining streetscape. Stone arches highlight both the two engine bays and a bank of five windows that are sheltered by a tiled roof overhang with modillions. These and other decorative details make Charlotte Fire Station Number Six "a perfect companion to the surrounding residential fabric."⁹



Charlotte Fire Station Number Four (1926)



Charlotte Fire Station Number Five (1929)



Charlotte Fire Station Number Six (1929)



Charlotte Fire Station Number Seven (1935)

The post-World War Two years saw a major change in the design of many public buildings in Charlotte, including fire stations. Rebecca Zurier calls this time a period of “architectural experiment.”¹⁰ Historian Ernest H. Wood III agrees. He says that a “widespread spirit of experimentation” took hold in North Carolina architecture after 1945.¹¹



Fire Station Number Eight at 1201 The Plaza was the first fire station to open in Charlotte after World War Two. The architect was Marion Rossiter “Steve” Marsh (1893-1977).¹² A native of Jacksonville, Florida, Marsh acquired his training as an architect and engineer by taking correspondence courses from Columbia University and working in his brother’s architectural firm in Jacksonville. He came to Charlotte in 1916 to become chief draftsman in James M. McMichael’s (1870-1944) architectural office and later was chief architect for a chemical engineering firm before forming his own practice in 1922. M. R. Marsh retired in 1964 after having gained the reputation of being one of the most influential and successful architects and engineers in Charlotte and its environs.¹³

In August 1938, the *Charlotte Observer* described Marsh as a “prominent Charlotte architect, who has drawn plans for some of the main buildings in the Carolinas.”¹⁴

Marsh’s lifestyle reflected his status as a member of Charlotte’s social elite. He and his wife, Catherine Lavonne Maxwell Marsh (1897-1948), resided in the affluent Myers Park suburb of Charlotte, first on Dartmouth Place and after 1928 on Hertford Road.¹⁵ Marsh was a member of the Charlotte Country Club, where he spent many hours playing golf, a game at which he excelled.¹⁶ He was a charter member of Christ Episcopal Church.¹⁷ Marsh and his wife, whom he married in 1917, routinely entertained



Marion Rossiter "Steve" Marsh (1893-1977)



Lavonne Maxwell Marsh (1897-1948)

guests at stylish social gatherings in their home. Mrs. Marsh was a housewife and mother. She and her lady friends gathered often at the Charlotte Country Club to play bridge.¹⁸ M. R. Marsh and his wife lived well.¹⁹

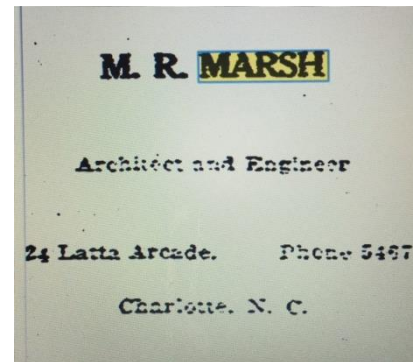


The Myers Park Home Of Marion and Catherine Marsh At 1642 Hertford Road



Marion and Catherine Marsh's Home On Dartmouth Place

M. R. Marsh advertised himself as an “architect and engineer.”²⁰ He was licensed in both professions. Marsh was considered an expert who understood the impact of technological innovations on building design. As early as 1921, he was a member of the Executive Committee of the Charlotte Chapter of the American Association of Engineers.²¹ In 1938, he was appointed to a committee to upgrade the electrical code of the City of Charlotte.²² Marsh had won second prize for designing the “best wired and lighted retail” store in the Southeast.²³ In March 1923, Marsh explained the advantages of “reinforced concrete” in a speech to the Charlotte Engineers Club.²⁴ That same year he prepared plans for the first apartment building in Charlotte that contained an electric elevator.²⁵ In an address to the Charlotte Rotary Club on March 17, 1931, Marsh enumerated what he considered the major trends in the practice of architecture. “Application of modern methods and materials,” Marsh said, “and the trend of American business has brought elevators, plumbing, electrical apparatus, and acoustical materials into the modern architectural picture.” He went on to stress the need “to advise a client in the matter of financing, borrowing money, etc.”²⁶ Marsh insisted that his approach to developing and implementing architectural plans was practical, up-to-date, and cost effective.



Steve Marsh was an astute businessman who consistently emphasized budgetary issues when overseeing projects. James Stenhouse (1910-1996), who worked for Marsh in the 1930s, commented



on Marsh's business acumen. “Marsh was paid 6% of the construction cost” for projects, said Stenhouse. “It must have been the all-time profit margin. That’s how he managed to play golf all day and drive two Cadillacs during the Depression.”²⁷ Like many other architects in Charlotte, Marsh depended mostly upon governmental contracts for his survival economically in the 1930s. “He did talk about how in the 1930s during the Depression getting those public work jobs really saved him,” says his granddaughter,

Marion Bruner. “He got contracts to prepare plans for schools,” including Eastover School. According to Bruner, Marsh “designed Fairview Homes and some other public housing projects.”²⁸ He was also named the North Carolina administrator of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), a Federal

New Deal program to document historic buildings and sites.²⁹ During World War Two Marsh served in the Construction Division of the Federal War Production Board, headquartered in New York City.³⁰

M. R. Marsh designed an impressive and diverse list of buildings in Charlotte and its environs during his 42-year career. He would take his grandchildren on tours of Charlotte to see the structures he had fashioned. While houses were consistently part of his portfolio, Marsh is best known for the commercial and institutional buildings he designed.³¹ The Coca Cola Bottling Company



Building on West Morehead Street “was his baby,” says Bruner.³² Marsh was the architect of the Builders Building, the



Charlotte Cadillac Building, the Myers Park Branch Public Library, and the Liggetts Drug Building on the Square, plus many more.³³ His training as an engineer allowed him to design buildings that required technical expertise, such as movie theaters. He was the architect for the Imperial Theater on South Tryon Street, the Plaza Theater on Central Avenue, and the Astor Theater on 36th Street in North Charlotte.³⁴

M. R. Marsh was the architect of two fire stations in Charlotte, both of which opened in 1949. His design for Fire Station Number Two on South Boulevard, which is no longer an active firehouse, was in keeping with the contemporary modern look of the great majority of post-World War Two fire stations. It is a two-story poured-in-place concrete structure that contains no embellishments that harken to the past. Marsh took a very different approach in his design of Fire Station Number Eight.

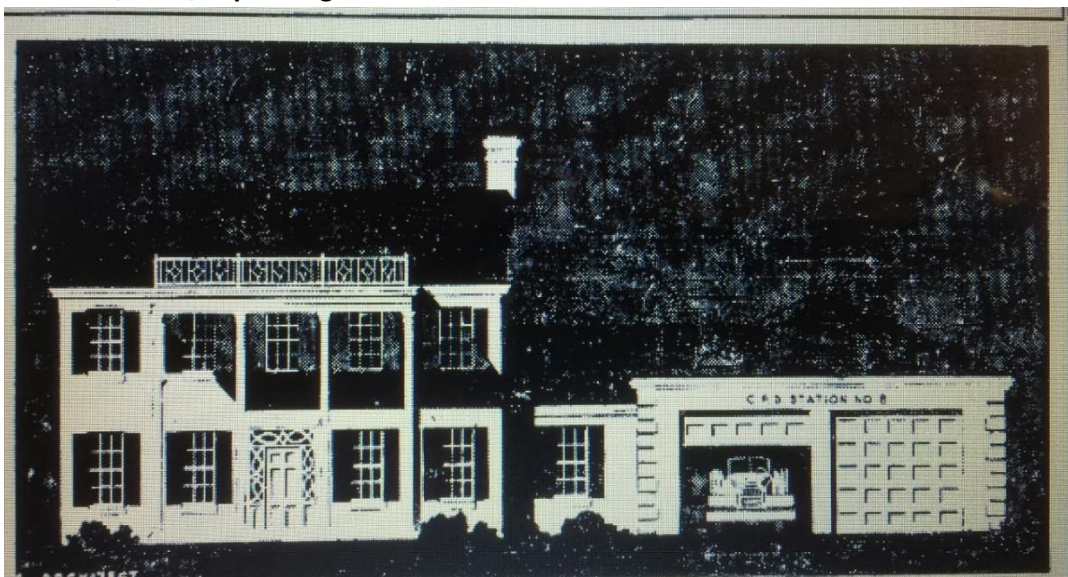


On March 11, 1946, the Charlotte City Council passed an ordinance to seek voter approval to spend \$112,500 “for the erection of new fire stations.”³⁵ The citizens of Charlotte backed this expenditure in a bond referendum on April 23rd.³⁶ On the recommendation of Fire Chief William Hendrix Palmer (1884-1955), City Council selected M. R. Marsh in August 1946 to be the architect “to draw up plans for two new fire stations to be erected when materials are available.”³⁷ The terms of the contract were approved on September 10th. Marsh, in keeping with his standard practice, received 6 percent of the total project costs as his compensation. One fire station was to be constructed at The Plaza and Commonwealth Avenue, and a second on South Boulevard.³⁸

William Hendrix Palmer played a pivotal role in the design of Charlotte Fire Station Number Eight. He wanted it to look like a house.³⁹ Commonly known as Hendrix Palmer, he was a notable person in the history of the Charlotte Fire Department. A native of York, S.C., Palmer was a Charlotte firefighter for 44 years and served as Fire Chief from 1927 until 1948. Palmer was recognized internationally as an innovator in firefighting. He was twice elected president of the North Carolina Firemen’s Association.

In 1940, Palmer became president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs. Understanding the importance of training for firefighters, Palmer was instrumental in obtaining Federal funding for the establishment of a training school, the Palmer Fire School, on East Seventh Street, built in 1938-1940.⁴⁰ It was his leadership that no doubt induced Palmer to push for a sensitively-designed fire station in what was then the Chantilly neighborhood. The “Chantilly unit is planned to resemble a private residence,” declared the *Charlotte Observer*.⁴¹

A calamitous fire that destroyed the Winecoff Hotel in Atlanta on December 7, 1946, prompted many municipalities to expedite improvements in fire protection.⁴² Charlotte was no exception. On December 9th, Charlotte City Manager Henry A. Yancey met with Fire Chief Palmer and M. R. Marsh to discuss the prospect of accelerating the preparation of construction drawings for the two approved fire stations.⁴³ The Charlotte City Council, insisting that the fire stations were “urgently needed,” approved a motion on December 17, 1946, stipulating that the fire houses be “built without further extended delay.”⁴⁴



M. R. Marsh Released This Rendering Of Fire Station Number Eight In January 1947

Marsh delivered the final construction drawings for the two fire stations to City Manager Yancey on October 6, 1947.⁴⁵ The *Charlotte Observer* contended that the firehouse at The Plaza and Commonwealth “may be the first unit in America designed to harmonize completely with its residential surroundings.”⁴⁶ Fire Station Number Eight looked nothing like all the other firehouses built in Charlotte in the 1940s and 1950s. In addition to Marsh’s Fire Station Number Two on South Boulevard (1949), these decades witnessed the completion of Fire Stations Number Nine, Number Ten, and Number Eleven. All were one-story brick boxes.⁴⁷



Fire Station Nine (1954)



Fire Station Ten (1957)



Fire Station Eleven (1958)

R. C. Hicks Construction Company received the contract in March 1948 to build Fire Station Number Eight.⁴⁸ On February 21, 1949, M. R. Marsh reported that the firehouse was ready for occupancy.⁴⁹ Fire Station Number Eight went into active service on April 25, 1949. The *Charlotte Observer* commented expansively on the new firehouse. "STATELY AND BEAUTIFUL is this ultra- modern residential-type suburban fire station located at the corner of The Plaza and Commonwealth Avenue," the newspaper proclaimed. "It is one of the first residential-type structures to be built in this part of the country for use as a fire station." "Outwardly it appears to be a residence," the article stated. "However, the interior is perfectly arranged as a fire station."⁵⁰

Charlotte Fire Station Number Eight has been modified over the years, but its essential exterior appearance, form, and setting remain intact. A maintenance shop was added to the rear of the firehouse in 1954.⁵¹ In 1999, the interior of the building was essentially gutted, and a second-floor exit was installed.⁵² Charlotte Fire Station Number Eight continues to command an imposing presence in the Plaza Midwood Neighborhood, largely due to the talents of Marion Rossiter "Steve" Marsh and the leadership of Fire Chief William Hendrix Palmer.



Firemen Preparing Meal In Fire Station 8



Firemen Planting Garden At Fire Station 8



Exterior of Charlotte Fire Station No. 8 in April 1949



M. R. Marsh At Social Event



M. R. Marsh With Daughter Mary

¹ *Charlotte Observer*, April 25, 1949.

² *Interview of Jon Hannan by Dr. Dan. L. Morrill, August 10, 2017.* Hereinafter cited as *Interview*. Thanks to Jon Hannan for supplying photographs of Former Charlotte Fire Station Number Nine and Former Charlotte Fire Station Number Ten.

³ Rebecca Zurier, *The American Firehouse An Architectural and Social History* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1982), 229.

⁴ *Interview*.

⁵ *Charlotte Observer*, April 4, 1999.

⁶ *Charlotte Evening Chronical*, November 23, 1911.

⁷ For a history of Fire Station Number 2, see <http://cmhpf.org/CharlotteFireStationNo2.htm>

⁸ Zurier, *The American Firehouse*, 81.

⁹ See "Survey and Research Report on Charlotte Fire Station Number Six" (<http://cmhpf.org/S&Rs%20Alphabetical%20Order/surveys&rfirestation6.htm>)

¹⁰ Zurier, *The American Firehouse*, 237.

¹¹ Ernest H. Wood, III, "The Opportunities Are Unlimited: Architects and Builders since 1945," in *Architects and Builders in North Carolina. A History of the Practice of Building*, Catherine W. Bisher, Charlotte V. Brown, Carl R. Lounsbury, Ernest H. Wood III (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 353.

¹² *Charlotte Observer*, October 7, 1947.

¹³ Thomas W. Hanchett, updated by Catherine W. Bisher, "Marsh, Marion R. (1893-1977)," in *North Carolina Architects & Builders A Biographical Dictionary*, <http://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/>, 2015.

¹⁴ *Charlotte Observer*, August 5, 1938.

¹⁵ 1929 Sanborn Insurance Charlotte, Vol 1., Plate 506. *Charlotte City Directory, 1926*, p.518. *Charlotte Observer*, November 1, 1931. *Charlotte Observer*, October 28, 1948. *Interview of Marion Bruner by Dr. Dan L. Morrill* (November 10, 2018). Hereinafter cited as *Bruner Interview*.

¹⁶ *Charlotte Observer*, May 9, 1931.

¹⁷ *Charlotte Observer*, May 15, 1944.

¹⁸ *Charlotte Observer*, September 21, 1924. *Mecklenburg County Marriage License*, August 11, 1917. Catherine Lavonne Marsh died at home of a heart attack on October 28, 1948, at age 51 (*Mecklenburg County Certificate of Death 22868*).

¹⁹ This writer interviewed Marion Bruner (1951-Present), M. R. Marsh's granddaughter. She remembers her grandfather as a consummate "Southern Gentleman." "He always wore a dress shirt and a tie. I never saw him in anything else," says Ms. Bruner. Her grandfather was "very formal" but had a "great sense of humor." He was a skillful storyteller. For example, one evening when pineapple was served at dinner, Marsh convinced his guests that he owned a pineapple plantation in Hawaii. Bruner remembers that her grandparents "used to have quite a number of parties and go out quite a bit." "They both liked to go out and to entertain and to have people to their home." Marsh was an avid golfer. Every January he and a friend traveled to Cuba and spent the entire month on the links. He would also purchase Cuban cigars. "He loved his cigars," Ms. Bruner recalls. During Prohibition, when the production and sale of whiskey was illegal, Marsh found a way to enjoy a cocktail or mixed drink. "When my grandfather built the house on Hertford Road, in the den behind the bookcase," says Bruner, "he had a secret compartment built, and that's where he kept his booze. It was delivered to him by the lady who did the laundry." M. R. Marsh typically introduced himself as "Steve Marsh." Bruner explains why. When Catherine Marsh met her future husband on a blind date, he was introduced to her as "Marion Marsh." She told him that she did not like the name and stated that she would call him "Steve Marsh." The name stuck. Catherine Marsh died of a heart attack in the Marsh home on Hertford Road. She and M. R. Marsh were having dinner, and she told her husband that she was not feeling well. She went to her bedroom on the second floor. M. R. Marsh checked on her a few minutes later and found her dead. M. R. Marsh never regularly attended Christ Episcopal Church thereafter. (*Bruner Interview*). This writer is indebted to Marion Bruner for supplying photographs of her grandparents and her mother.

²⁰ *Charlotte Observer*, March 11, 1923.

²¹ *Charlotte Observer*, February 24, 1921.

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- ²² *Charlotte Observer*, April 8, 1938.
- ²³ *Charlotte Observer*, August 1, 1931.
- ²⁴ *Charlotte Observer*, March 12, 1923.
- ²⁵ *Charlotte Observer*, January 27, 1923,
- ²⁶ *Charlotte Observer*, March 18, 1931.
- ²⁷ *Charlotte Observer*, November 19, 1982. James A. Stenhouse was a charter member of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission. He was an early and forceful advocate of historic preservation in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.
- ²⁸ *Bruner Interview*. <http://landmarkscommission.org/2016/11/01/davidson-school/>; *Charlotte Observer*, August 27, 1939.
- ²⁹ *Charlotte Observer*, January 3, 1934.
- ³⁰ *Charlotte Observer*, March 13, 1943.
- ³¹ For examples of Marsh's early house designs, see *Charlotte Observer* September 29, October 3, 1923.
- ³² <http://landmarkscommission.org/2016/11/01/charlotte-coca-cola-bottling-company-plant/>. Marion Bruner says that her grandfather designed several houses on Hertford Road which he sold to "people he liked." (*Bruner Interview*). For other houses Marsh designed, see *Charlotte Observer* September 29, October 3, 1923; September 6, 1925; November 6, 1936; April 2, 1937.
- ³³ <http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Builders-Building-Survey-and-Research-Report.pdf>; *Charlotte Observer*, March 6, 1927, August 5, 1945; *Bruner Interview*.
- ³⁴ *Charlotte Observer*, February 17, 1935, May 9, 1941, April 30, 1947,
- ³⁵ *Charlotte City Council Minute Book 31*, page 328.
- ³⁶ *Charlotte; Observer*, April 24, 1946. The vote was 4028 in favor and 1373 against (see *Charlotte City Council Minute Book 31*, page 379).
- ³⁷ *Charlotte Observer*, August 13, 1946. *Charlotte City Council Minute Book 31*, page 455.
- ³⁸ *Charlotte City Council Minute Book 31*, page 475.
- ³⁹ *Charlotte Observer*, January 1, 1947.
- ⁴⁰ <http://www.cmhpf.org/Properties%20Foundation%20Reports/palmer.html>
- ⁴¹ *Charlotte Observer*, February 10, 1948.
- ⁴² <http://www.firehouse.com/news/10568390/the-winecoff-fire-our-nations-deadliest-hotel-fire>. I was nine years old in 1946. I remember my mother weeping when she learned from a radio broadcast that James Little, a young man from Charlotte, had been killed in this tragic blaze. 119 people died in the Winecoff Hotel fire.
- ⁴³ *Charlotte Observer*, December 10, 1946.
- ⁴⁴ *Charlotte Observer*, December 18, 1946.
- ⁴⁵ *Charlotte Observer*, October 7, 1947.
- ⁴⁶ *Charlotte Observer*, January 1, 1947.
- ⁴⁷ Several factors induced architects to give fire stations a "modern look" after World War Two. Largely because of the innovative building techniques resulting from World War Two, new construction materials became readily available after 1945, such as pre-hung aluminum windows, pre-engineered walls, and large expanses of glass. Air conditioning and thermostat controlled heating systems transformed fenestration patterns. Automatic roll-up doors manufactured of aluminum and glass eliminated the need for large arched front doorways. Drying cabinets allowed architects to eliminate hose towers, an identifying component of pre-World War Two fire stations. Another stimulus for changing the design of fire stations in the late 1940's and 1950's was that strategic planners, not architects, increasingly held sway over the design process. More and more fire departments hired firefighting experts to fashion and implement master plans. Before World War Two, cities were organized along railroad corridors and streetcar lines. Planners understood that the automobile would be the driving force behind city growth in the post-war years. Accordingly, they selected sites on streets with easy access to major thoroughfares for suburban fire stations. Planners also analyzed the arrangement of rooms in a fire station and concluded that one-story layouts were the most efficient. Corridors and hallways were reduced to a minimum. As for the exterior appearance of fire stations, planners wanted buildings that broke with the past and embraced a bright, optimistic vision of the future.
- ⁴⁸ *Charlotte Observer*, March 4, 1948.
- ⁴⁹ *Charlotte Observer*, February 22, 1949.

⁵⁰ *Charlotte Observer*, April 25, 1949.

⁵¹ *Charlotte Observer*, January 27, 1954.

⁵² *Charlotte Observer*, April 4, 1999.

Charlotte Fire Station No. 8 Architectural Description



Charlotte Fire Station No. 8 sits on a .7-acre lot at the corner of The Plaza and Commonwealth Ave., in the Plaza-Midwood section of Charlotte. The station faces roughly east on the relatively flat lot. The station is composed of two buildings attached by a short hyphen.



Charlotte Fire Station No. 8 ca. 1980



The principal building is a two-story side-gabled solid masonry building that resembles a Colonial Revival-style house. The building's façade is five bays wide and is symmetrical. The façade is dominated by a two-story, flat-roofed, partial-width porch that shelters the three center bays. The porch roof is bordered by an iron handrail supported by four iron posts, each topped with a round finial. The porch roof is supported by a boxed beam that rests on four tall square posts with simple bases, and two pilasters. The posts and the beam are covered with metal. The concrete porch floor is at grade and is covered with blue stone set in mortar. The ceiling is covered with metal panels.

The porch shelters a doorway centered on the façade. The doorway contains a six-panel replacement door with two single-light sidelights and a short, direct-glazed transom. Other than the doorway, the symmetrical fenestration on the first story consists of four metal six-over-six windows which have replaced the original six-over-six windows on the façade. All of the original windows on the building appear to have been replaced during a 1999 renovation. All of the windows on the principal section of the building feature sloped brick sills and are bordered by non-functional shutters. The second story is pierced by five windows that align directly above the first story fenestration. While all of the windows on the façade are six-over-six sash windows, the second story windows are shorter than those on the first story. The second-story windows extend directly to a simple metal-clad freeze with a simple cornice moulding. The soffit is composed of perforated panels supported by a metal-clad fascia. The side-gabled roof is moderately pitched.



The south elevation of the principal section of the building features symmetrical fenestration. The running-bond brick of the elevation runs uninterrupted from below grade. Two six-over-six windows pierce the first story, with two shorter six-over-six windows piercing the second story set directly above the first-story windows. The elevation features cornice returns. The metal cladding on the rakes may hide original moulding. The gable is topped by a louvered vent that rests on a sloped brick sill.



The north elevation of the principal section is largely obscured by a one-story hyphen that attaches the principal section to a garage. Above the hyphen the gabled elevation is blank. An original short window that once pierced the second story and a louvered vent that was set high in the gable have been removed, including the sills, and the openings have been infilled with brick.



The brick hyphen is one bay wide and is pierced by a six-over-six window. The hyphen's roof ridge runs parallel to the front elevation.



The hyphen connects the principal section of the building to a hipped-roof, two-bay garage. Like the principal section, the garage features brick laid in running bond. The garage's corners feature corbelled brick quoins. The two large, roughly square bays contain replacement overhead doors. The bay openings feature conical, cast iron corner protectors. The garage is topped by a hipped roof. The garage opens onto a wide concrete driveway. A fuel pump is located adjacent to the northeast corner of the garage.



The north elevation of the garage is four bays wide. Unlike the front elevation, the brick in the north elevation is laid in a 1-to-5 common bond. Each bay contains a six-over-one window. Unlike the front corner, the rear corner does not feature a quoin.



The rear of the garage features a single doorway center on the elevation, and is otherwise blank. The brick is laid in common bond. At the rear of the garage the ridge of the hipped roof ends in a louvered roof dormer. The south elevation is largely obscured by hyphens and a large addition to the rear of the principal portion of the building.



A two-story, hipped-roofed wing projects from the rear of the principal section of the building. The south elevation of the wing is two bays wide and is setback slightly from the south elevation of the principal section of the building. On the first story a four-over-four sash window is adjacent to the principal section, and to the rear of that window the south elevation of the wing is pierced by a six-over-six window. The second story fenestration is aligned with the windows on the first story and is composed of shorter four-over-four and six-over-six windows. The wing's rear and north elevations are obscured.



In 1999 a brick, three-bay-wide, two-story, Postmodern-style addition with a low-pitched hipped roof was attached to the rear of the rear wing of the principal section of the building. The addition's entrance is located on the rear elevation in a recessed two-story center bay. A metal door with a large single light is bordered on each side by large sidelights, each composed of eight square lights. The doorway opening is topped by a soldier course. Above the doorway, the second story is pierced by a large round window, divided into quarters and bordered by a circle of rowlock brick. To the north of the recessed entrance, the first story is pierced by a twelve-light (three high by four wide) window featuring thick bars and muntins, sitting on a flat rowlock sill. A second twelve-light window pierces the second story of the bay. The frame for the second-story window extends to the top of the wall. The south bay contains a tall twelve-light window (six high by two wide) that extends from the first story to the top of the wall. The 1999 addition features a recess at the top of the wall. This negative space references the freeze that tops the walls of the original sections of the building.



The south elevation of the 1999 addition is two bays wide and features a tall twelve-light window (six high by two wide) in the west bay that extends from the first story to the top of the wall. The east bay contains a small six-light window piercing each story. The rear addition is connected to the original building by a short, recessed hyphen. The north elevation of the addition is obscured by the garage.