

# The Addison Apartments



*Dr. William H. Huffman, Dr. Dan L. Morrill, and Sherry J. Joines  
June 1, 1994  
Updated September 8, 1997*

**1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the Addison Apartments is located at 831 East Morehead Street, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

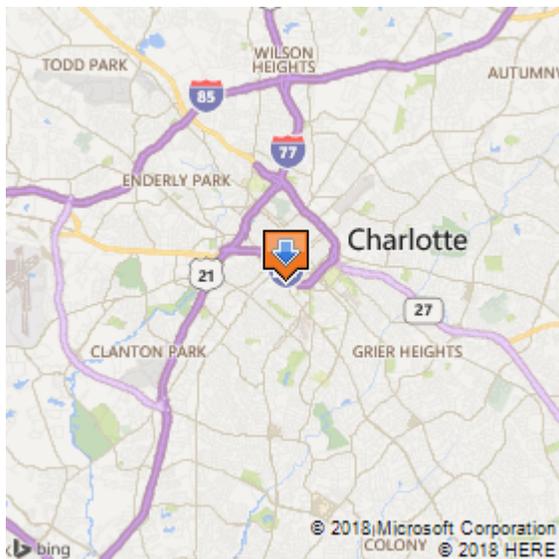
**2. Name, address and telephone number of the present owner of the property:** The owner of the property is:

Morehead Properties, Incorporated  
1043 East Morehead Street  
Charlotte, NC 28204

Tax Parcel Number: 125-173-22

**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 which depict the location of the property.



**5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property:** The most recent deed to Tax Parcel Number 125-173-22 is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 8359 Page 0843.

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

**7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description of the property prepared by Dr. William H. Huffman.

**8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets criteria for designation as 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 Addison Apartments does possess special significance for Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) The Addison Apartments building was built and owned by prominent local builder J. A. Jones in 1926. 2) It is one of the few elegant high-rise apartment buildings built in Charlotte in the early twentieth century. 3) It was designed by local architect Willard G. Rogers, who designed a number of important buildings in the city.

**b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association:** The Commission contends that the architectural descriptions included in this report demonstrate that the Addison Apartments building 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." The current appraised value of the land and buildings is \$5,721,710.00. The size of Tax Parcel 125173-22 is 1.360 acres.

**Date of Preparation of this Report:** 1 June 1994, updated August 27, 1997.

**Prepared by:** Dr. William H. Huffman

**Updated by:** Dr. Dan L. Morrill and Sherry J. Joines  
Charlotte - Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission  
2100 Randolph Road  
Charlotte, NC 28207

## *Historical Overview*

*Dr. William H. Huffman  
May, 1994*

The Addison Apartments building represent distinct cultural and architectural styles of pre-World-War II twentieth-century Charlotte that have largely passed from the scene. Built in 1926 on fashionable East Morehead Street in Dilworth, it is also important because of its association with the original builder and owner, J. A. Jones, and local Charlotte architect Willard G. Rogers. The Addison Apartments building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in August, 1990.<sup>1</sup>

From humble beginnings on a farm near Asheboro, James Addison Jones (1869-1950) came to Charlotte in 1889 as a 19-year-old brick mason and eventually formed a construction company bearing his name that has built many local and state landmarks and is now known worldwide. In 1890, the hard-working and ambitious young man married a local girl of eighteen, Mary Jane (Minnie) Hopper, with whom he had twelve children. Thrice-widowed, Jones married a fourth time in 1942, prior to which he had two more children with his second wife and another with his third. By 1894, Jones had formed his own construction company and began to win increasingly important contracts for commercial, governmental and residential buildings in and around Charlotte. Some of his major contracts prior to the 1920s include the Cole Manufacturing Plant, Charlotte, 1905; Hoskins Mill, Charlotte, 1905; library of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1907; Efird's Department Store, Charlotte, 1907 (demolished). Charlotte YMCA, 1908 (demolished); Independence Building, Charlotte, 1908-1909 (North Carolina's first steel frame skyscraper, demolished); Belk's Department Store, Charlotte, 1910 (demolished); Bishop Kilgo House, Charlotte, 1914-1915; Masonic Temple, Charlotte, 1914 (demolished); and the Ivey's Department Store, Charlotte, 1914.<sup>2</sup>

In 1920, the J. A. Jones Construction Company became a corporation, with J. A. Jones, president and sons Raymond A. and Edwin L. vice-president and secretary-treasurer, respectively. This team continued to build some of Charlotte's and the state's most impressive buildings during the boom times of the Twenties. They include: some fifteen

buildings at what is now the University of North Carolina at Greensboro; the Forsyth County Courthouse; the Professional Building, Charlotte, 1922-1923; the N. C. Baptist Hospital, Winston-Salem, 1922; Hotel Charlotte, 1924 (demolished); Charlotte City Hall, 1925; Carolina Theater, Charlotte, 1927 (partially demolished); Charlotte Observer Building, 1927 (demolished); Nebel Mill, Charlotte, 1928; The Power Building, Charlotte, 1928; and the Wilder Building, 1926, Charlotte (demolished).<sup>3</sup> During World War II, the company built the atomic bomb plant in Oak Ridge, Tennessee and many other military and government camps. It also constructed a shipyard and began to build ships as well, managing to launch 212 freighters in just two years. After the war, the company sought contracts in many different countries overseas and became one of the nation's largest construction companies. James Addison Jones died in 1950, but the legacy of his buildings and construction company will long outlive him.<sup>4</sup>

In 1922, the J. A. Jones Construction Company bought two 100'x 300' lots at the corner of East Morehead and McDowell Streets from the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company in Dilworth with the clear intention of developing them.<sup>5</sup> Dilworth was Charlotte's first suburb and was the creation of New South entrepreneur Edward Dilworth Latta (1851-1925). Latta was a Princeton educated native of South Carolina who, after achieving success in Charlotte with a clothing store (1876) and the Charlotte Trouser Company (1883), formed the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company (often referred to as the 4 Cs) to develop the city's first suburb in 1890. Originally laid out in grid fashion, the main boulevards such as East Boulevard and East Morehead Street as well as some side streets boasted grand homes, while the remainder were more modest middle-class houses, and, at the southern edge, mill houses for the Atherton Mill (1892-1893) on South Boulevard. Special inducements were devised to lure people to the new suburb: a new electric trolley line from the Square (opened 1891); a first-rate park, complete with a concert and dance hall, racetracks, a pavilion, greenhouses and a large boating lake; and installment buying for lots. With the Atherton Mill and seven other factories that were put up along the western side of South Boulevard in 1894 and 1895, Dilworth's success was assured. The first phase of development ended about 1912, when Latta Park was reduced to its present size, and work began on the new section designed by the Olmsted Brothers, "the most prestigious landscape architecture and city planning firm in the United States."

Development in the second phase, with its curved streets that followed the contours of the landscape, continued apace through the boom times of the 1920s. It was in part of this new section that J. A. Jones chose to build the Addison Apartments.<sup>6</sup> When Jones completed his plans for the lots, he formed the Addison Realty Company with his two sons Edwin and Raymond, and transferred title to the new company to develop it for an apartment building.<sup>7</sup> For the design, they chose local architect Willard G. Rogers (1863-1947).<sup>8</sup> Rogers, a native of Cincinnati, Ohio, came to Charlotte with his wife Eva Troy Rogers about 1900, and worked for Stuart W. Cramer, who had an engineering and contracting firm in Charlotte that built and supplied cotton mill machinery for textile plants in the Piedmont region. In 1906, Rogers left Cramer to go into private practice in partnership with C. C. Hook (1869-1938), one of Charlotte's leading architects. The two practiced together until about 1916, when each went out on his own. Rogers continued his solo practice until 1942, when, at the age of 79, he moved to Atlanta. Although there is little information about his background and career in Charlotte, it is known that he designed the Wilder Building (referred to above) the Masonic Temple (with Hook) and a number of residences in the city.<sup>9</sup>

Visiting the site frequently to see personally that the job went well, J. A. Jones began construction of the Addison Apartments in March, 1926, and completed the building in the fall in time to allow tenants to occupy their new apartments in October and November. The fine new building boasted hot and cold running water, steam heat, a radio attachment for each room, a dining room, room service and a beauty parlor. Behind the building, where the present parking lot is located, Jones built a row of garages for each tenant's car as well as a gas station and car wash. This latest version of fine urban living was promoted as "The South's Finest" in a newspaper ad taken out by Jones' construction company.<sup>10</sup> Sometime in the late 1940s, controlling interest in Addison Realty was sold to Gen. Paul R. Younts, who held it until his death in 1971.<sup>11</sup> The following year, the apartments were purchased by Management Enterprises, Inc, who, a month later, passed title to a development partnership, Addison Plaza Associates; they wanted to turn the building into a retirement hotel.<sup>12</sup>

In March, 1973, it was again sold, this time to International Investors, Inc., headed by insurance executive Ernest L. Harris. Harris' group attempted to turn the apartments into condominiums.<sup>13</sup> Finally, in July, 1974, the Housing Authority of the City of Charlotte bought the building for low-income housing for the

elderly. <sup>14</sup> When the Housing Authority moved the last tenants out and put it up for sale in 1990, the search was on once again for a suitable owner who might renovate the building, and some were concerned that it might be lost. It is presently under contract to Historic Preservation Partners, LLC of Williamsburg, Virginia, which is under the direction of developer Paul L. Wilson. Historic Preservation Partners intends to restore the building for use as a fine hotel and restaurant. Once again the Addison Apartments building will take its place as a proud beacon of good living on East Morehead Street.

**Special Note:**

Happily, the Addison Apartments building was purchased by Morehead Properties, Inc., and was upfitted for office use in 1996 - 1997.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Certificate of entry in the National Register of Historic Places dated 23 August 1990.

<sup>2</sup>Beth Laney Smith and Karen Trogdon Kluever, *Jones Construction Centennial: Looking Back-Moving Forward* (Charlotte: Laney-Smith, Inc., 1989), passim.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Mecklenburg County Deed Book 485, page 397, 2 October 1922.

<sup>6</sup>Dan L. Morrill, "Edward Dilworth Latta and the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company (1890-1925): Builders of a New South City," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, 62 (July, 1985), 293-316.

<sup>7</sup>Mecklenburg County Record of Corporations, Book 9, p. 381, Certificate of Incorporation 27425, 9 February 1926.

<sup>8</sup>City of Charlotte Building Permit No. 6748, 19 March 1926.

<sup>9</sup>Information compiled by William H. Huffman.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Mattson and Suzanne Pickens, National Register of Historic Places Nomination of the Addison Apartments, 9 March 1990; *Charlotte Observer*, July 14, 1990, editorial by Jack Claiborne, "This Time and Place;" Sanborn Insurance Company Map of Charlotte, 1929, p. 26.

<sup>11</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, March 15, 1973, p. 4B.

<sup>12</sup>Mecklenburg County Deed Books 3483, p. 549 and Book 3512, p. 21; *Charlotte News*, October 13, 1972, p. ?

<sup>13</sup>Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3545. p. 61; *Charlotte Observer*, March 15, 1973, p. 1B.

<sup>14</sup>Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3 690, p. 3 13; *Charlotte Observer*, June 12, 1973.

## ***Architectural Description***

*Dr. William H. Huffman*  
*May, 1994*

The Addison Apartments building is located on the north corner of the intersection of East Morehead and South McDowell Streets in Charlotte, N. C., about 0.8 miles due south of the Square at Trade and Tryon Streets, and faces southwest. East Morehead Street at that point slopes gently from northwest to southeast, and on both sides is completely developed with low-rise commercial and office buildings, many new and some conversions from a few old houses, and churches. Built in 1926 by the J. A. Jones Construction Company and designed by Charlotte architect Willard G. Rogers, the Addison is an outstanding and rare Neoclassical Revival landmark. Its rarity comes from its survival on East Morehead Street, which used to be lined with fine homes and a few neighborhood stores and restaurants, almost all of which, with just a few exceptions, are gone. It is also rare as a surviving 1920s high-rise apartment building for the affluent middle-

class (the only other in the city is the Poplar Apartments in 4th Ward, which has five stories and was built with 39 suites in 1929). Last of all, its claim to rarity comes as a surviving Neoclassical Revival steel frame skyscraper of pre-1930s Charlotte, all the rest of which were commercial buildings along Trade and Tryon Streets: Independence Building, 1909 (demolished); Professional Building, 1923; Hotel Charlotte, 1924 (demolished); Johnston Building, 1924; First National Bank, 1926 (demolished); and the Wilder Building, also designed by Rogers, 1926 (demolished).

The Addison Apartments building is a steel-frame structure nine stories tall, nine bays wide and three bays deep with a base that measures 155 feet by 51 feet, and sits on a double lot that measures 200 feet along East Morehead Street and 300 feet along South McDowell. A parking lot takes up about one-half of the rear of the property, which is paved with asphalt and is at a lower grade than the building portion of the lot. The bottom story of the building is partially below ground in the front of the building, but above ground on the sides and in the back. The front elevation presents the viewer with a symmetrical, but variegated facade. Resting on a concrete foundation, the first floor and basement levels are faced with a smooth cast stone veneer that is topped by an entablature and cornice, which is detailed with dentils along the side two bays and front side bay.

The second story and up is faced with brick curtain walls laid in running bond, and the two end and center bays project forward from the others to add variety. Originally buff color, the brick was painted in recent years and is now white. Variety is further enhanced by brick quoins along the center and two end bays and a front side bay, which is repeated in the rear elevation and rear side bay. The front elevation also features triple, double and single windows of different sizes, all having cast stone sills (except for the brick sills for the small bathroom windows) and one-over-one double-hung sash. Flanking the two sets of double windows in the center bay are smooth stone pilasters topped by engaged Corinthian capitals. Embellishments at the crown of the building include cornices topped by stepped parapets, ornamented cast stone paneled balconies, and cast stone trim with dentils.

Befitting the style, the main entry portico is the most elaborate part of the building. Six steps lead up to the two-story porch that spans the width of the center bay. At the four corners of the porch are square, tapered vernacular Doric columns with recessed panels

topped by Doric capitals. Flanking the front entry just inside the two front square columns are two round Tuscan columns on plain bases also capped by Doric capitals. The columns support an entablature with a frieze in which "Addison Apartments" is carved, above which is a cornice with dentils. Above the cornice is a balcony which has cast stone bases supporting three urns in the front corners, with a metal railing between them. Another urn is engaged in the center of the facade just above the porch balcony as part of a decorative pediment. The double front entry doors are flanked by four pilasters, two of which frame the doors and two frame the side lights. Both the transom and side lights have leaded glass with a pattern of intersecting ellipses. Square ceramic tiles cover the floor of the porch. The McDowell Street elevation has an entrance directly to the basement level which is protected by a small canopy suspended from two chains attached to the wall. The rear elevation facing the parking lot has no decoration, since it was only used as the service side of the building.

Two major rear projections house the service elevators and stairways, and a smaller one is for the furnace flue. Through the front entrance on East Morehead, one passes into the lobby and looks ahead to a small waiting room. The lobby area is the fanciest and best decorated in the building. Polished marble covers the walls, and a highly decorative cornice with egg and dart molding circles the area. Large openings with windows are found to the left and right. The waiting room is also covered with marble veneer, and has a cornice of molded plaster, as does the hallway on this floor. A small office is found to the southeast off the waiting room. The main hall in each of the floors runs with the width of the building (northeast-southwest), and a short hall runs perpendicular to it in the third bay from each end that leads to the elevators and rear stairs. The original elevator doors, rear stairs and wrought-iron floor indicators are still intact.

From the first floor hall a broad, open stairway of polished marble veneer leads down to the basement level, which contains what was the dining room (and most recently was a recreation room); a laundry room; office space; unfinished storage areas; and a sub-basement containing the furnace. Originally, the apartments appear to have been laid out in either a two- or three-room plan. The two-room plan had a combined living room-bedroom with a small bath, and the larger had an additional room but the same basic layout. Most of the apartments retain their original plain and simple construction. The floors are hardwood and appear to be intact (although many are

carpeted), and the rooms have simple baseboards and crown moldings.

All the original wood doors appear to be one panel with simple surrounds and glass doorknobs. The original bathrooms have checkerboard-pattern small black-and-white floor tiles, and the walls are mostly covered with large white tiles. Each bathroom had a sink, bathtub and shower, toilet with a small window over it, and white ceramic water knobs. In the ensuing years, a number of the apartments have been altered by the addition of kitchen facilities and/or changes in room sizes.

### ***Addendum: Architectural Description***

*August 1997*

*Dr. Dan L. Morrill and Sherry J. Joines*

Recent renovations have made significant changes to the Addison Apartments building. Some of these have been quite positive as they enhance the historic features of the building. The new paint scheme, for instance, uses two tones of cream to set off the cast stone base and trim from the brick veneer walls. Gilding highlights the Neoclassical decorative elements such as the garlands, medallions, and urns.

Other changes are less desirable since they change the historic character of the building. The new rear elevation is an example of this sort of change. An addition to the rear of the building projects beyond the original elevator towers. It has ornament inspired by that of the historic building, but of a more abstract nature. Thin molding turns and curves into a triangular pediment design at the top of the new addition. Gilded swags are found under each floor's triple windows in the center bay of the new addition and a gilded medallion graces the "pediment". The new addition serves as a rear entry from the new parking deck. The deck is only two levels and is not really visible from the front of the building although it alters the original rear service area. Personal carports for the residents occupied the building's rear lot historically. The addition's entry mimics the front entry portico in form, but is glassed in. The decorative elements are more abstract as

well. The addition creates a stepped rear elevation that has a far more finished appearance than the original rear facade's two elevator towers and small furnace shaft.

The surfaces of the rear elevation were historically left unadorned because of the utilitarian nature of this area. The new addition alters this character, but the original portions are distinguishable since they did not receive newly applied ornament. On the front facade of the building, the inscribed "Addison Apartments" in the cornice of the entry portico is no longer visible. The new entry doors and sidelights have mirrored glass. The taller doors did not allow space for the original transom. And the upper story windows in the central bay of the facade are no longer paired, but are wide, single light over single light. In fact, the windows of the entire building have been replaced with one over one units divided by wide, flat muntins. The muntins are rather Post-Modern in their styling, giving the building a more contemporary feel.

The side of the building facing McDowell Street evidences changes in the street grade, perhaps due to the addition of the rear parking deck. Also, the side door entering the basement level had a small canopy (with cornice and dentils matching the main portico) supported by chains from the building. This canopy has now disappeared, making the door quite unnoticeable. Finally, the entire interior of the building was renovated leaving almost nothing of its historic appearance. While some of the changes to the Addison Apartments altered its historic character, the basic form, setback, and front facade were retained and even enhanced. Judging from the circa 1938 photograph featured on the title page of this report and the more recent photograph included below, the Addison Apartments building continues to dominate the landscape at the intersection of East Morehead and McDowell.



*A recent photo of the Addison Apartments*