

ADVENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH



Advent Christian
Church - Circa 1927



The King's Daughters Chapel
A. D. 1915
Stonewall Jackson Training
School

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This report was written November 2, 1987.

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Old Advent Christian Church is located at 101 North McDowell St. in Charlotte, North Carolina.

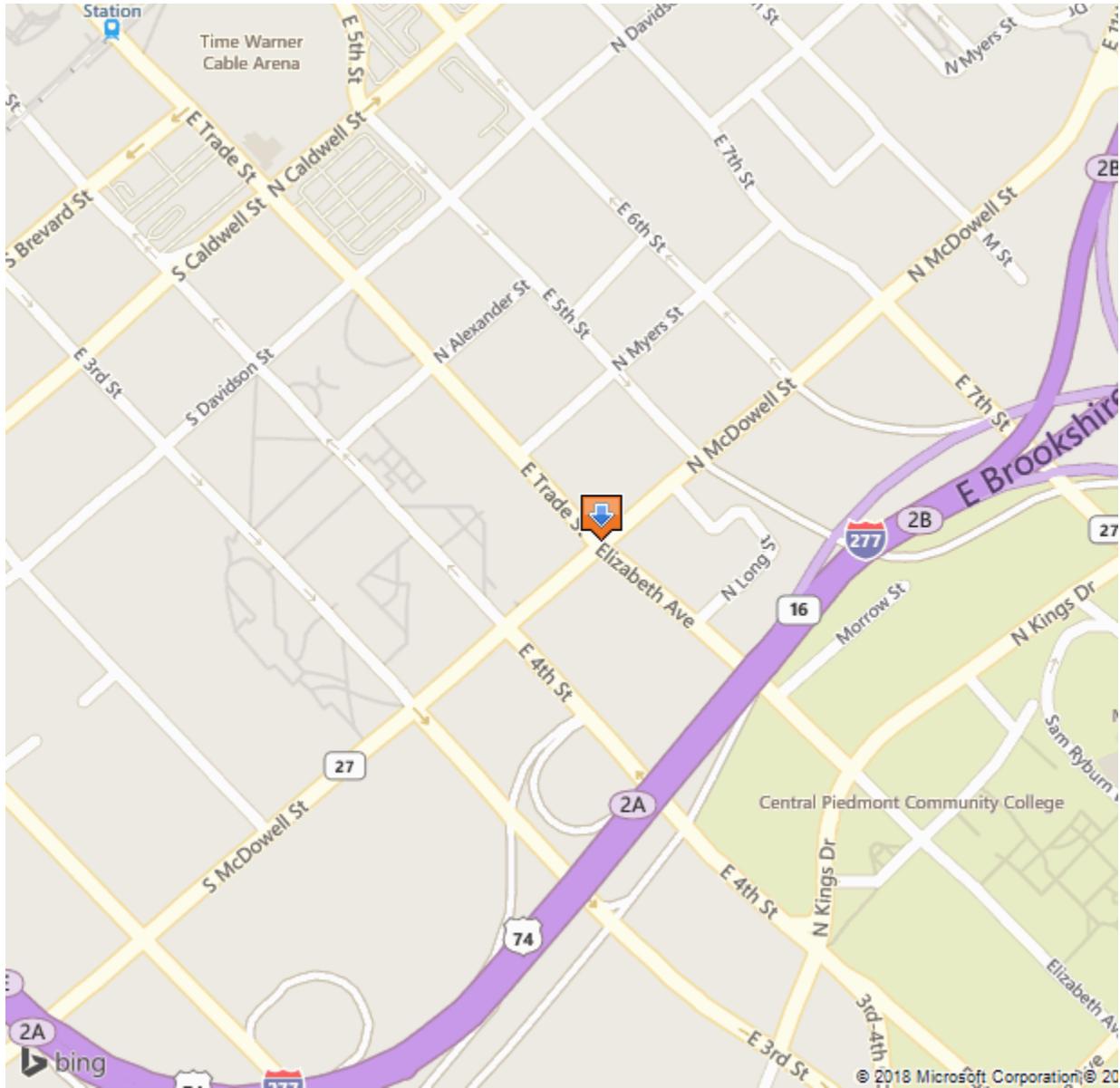
2. Name, address and telephone number of the present owner of the property: The owner of the property is:

W. Thomas Ray
P. O. Box 23487
Charlotte, N.C., 28212

Telephone: 704/545-1206

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 a map which depicts the location of the property.



5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The most recent reference to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg Deed Book 5428, Page 48. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is: 080-098-14.

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

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains a brief architectural description of the property prepared by Ms. Ruth Little.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S. 160A-399.4:

a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and/or cultural

importance: The Commission judges that the property known as the Old Advent Christian Church does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) the Old Advent Christian Church, erected in 1919-1920, was built according to plans which had been prepared by Louis H. Asbury (1877-1975), an architect of local and regional significance, for the King's Daughters Chapel at the Stonewall Jackson Training School near Concord; consequently, the Old Advent Christian Church affords a unique opportunity to examine the corpus of Asbury's work; 2) the Old Advent Christian Church is the only church building which survives on McDowell Street, which once had many churches, some white and some black, along its route in First Ward and Second Ward; and 3) the Old Advent Christian Church contributes significantly to the retention of some historical feeling to the North McDowell St. streetscape.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association: The Commission contends that the architectural description by Ms. Ruth Little which is included in this report demonstrates that the Old Advent Christian Church 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 "historic property." The current appraised value of the improvement is \$163,930. The current appraised value of the .119 acres of land is \$54,500. The total appraised value of the property is \$218,430. The property is zoned B2.

Date of Preparation of this Report: November 2, 1987

Prepared by: Dr. Dan L. Morrill

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission
1225 S. Caldwell St. Box D
Charlotte, N.C., 28203

Telephone: 704/376-9115

Special Note

The historical essay and the architectural description included in this report were prepared in September, 1978, when the Old Advent Christian Church was first considered for prospective historic property designation. Since then, the building has experienced considerable change. First, it no longer stands alone. It has now been incorporated into an office condominium

project. Also, the frame addition to the rear of the building has been demolished; the floor in the sanctuary has had a new level floor placed over it; the tracery has been removed from the windows; the stained glass infill paper has been removed; new windows have been placed in the building; the cupola at the front has been removed; the rear wall of the sanctuary now has a large opening which leads to a major new building behind; and new offices have been placed within the sanctuary. It is important to note, however, that these new offices have been done in a manner which allows the most distinctive interior features to remain -- the high wainscoting and the truss system.

Historical Overview

Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Ph.D.

Construction of the sanctuary of the Advent Christian Church commenced in August 1919 and terminated in October 1920.¹ The building was the first permanent home in Charlotte, N.C. of a congregation of this religious sect.² The Advent Christians are one of several denominations which emphasize the millennial and eschatological aspects of Christianity and which have their roots in the teachings of William Miller, a nineteenth-century resident of Dresden, NY. In 1831, Miller predicted that the Second Coming of Christ would occur in 1843-1844. He attracted converts from several Christian groups, who held pre-millennium conferences and sold their property in anticipation of the termination of the present world order and their entry into a resurrected life in heaven. Despite the inaccuracy of Miller's forecast, the group persisted, later dividing into two major sects, the Seventh Day Adventists and the Advent Christians. The latter sect was established in 1861.³

The initial congregation of Advent Christians in Charlotte began somewhat inauspiciously c. 1914, when six individuals inaugurated the holding of worship services.⁴ The group subsequently purchased a structure on Parkwood Avenue in Villa Heights, a local suburb, as a temporary church.⁵ On August 19, 1919, *The Charlotte News* reported that construction had begun "on the auditorium of a building that is to be erected for the congregation of the Advent Christian Church, at McDowell and East Trade streets. The auditorium is to be of granite," the newspaper continued, "with dimensions of 30 feet by 50 feet, and to cost from \$10,000 to \$20,000."⁶ Dedicatory services were held in the newly-completed edifice on October 3, 1920, at 3 PM, "to which friends of city and county" were invited.⁷ The sermon was delivered by a guest preacher, Rev. R. L. Isbell of Lenoir, NC, who took his text from Hagai 8:9, "And in this house will I give peace."⁸ The pastor of the church was Rev. J. A. Downs, who conducted a two-week series of evangelistic meetings which also began on October 3, 1920.⁹

A building permit issued on August 18, 1919, by the City of Charlotte reveals that the architect of the Advent Christian Church was Louis H. Asbury.¹⁰ Louis H. Asbury (1877-1975) was the son of S. J. and Martha Moody Asbury of Charlotte. In addition to being one of the first carriers of the *Charlotte Observer*, the young Asbury assisted his father, who was a builder of houses in

Charlotte in the 1890s.¹¹ He subsequently matriculated at Trinity College, now Duke University, and graduated from that institution in 1900. Having acquired his professional training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Asbury returned to Charlotte and established his architectural practice in 1908.¹² In the succeeding decades, Louis H. Asbury assumed a position of prominence and leadership in the architectural profession. He was the first North Carolina member of the American Institute of Architects and played a leading role in organizing the North Carolina Chapter of the A.I.A.¹³ But his greatest contribution to the built environment of Charlotte were the many buildings which he fashioned over the years, beginning with the residence of R. M. Miller, Jr. on N. Tryon St. (1908).¹⁴ Among his more noteworthy designs were the Mecklenburg County Courthouse, the First National Bank Building, the Montaldo's Building, the Law Building and several of the imposing edifices in Myers Park:¹⁵

Although Asbury recognized the predilection of affluent Charlotteans for Neoclassical and Neo Colonial motifs, he personally preferred the Gothic style.¹⁶ Consequently, it is not surprising that he selected this form for his 1928 design of Myers Park Methodist Church, of which he was a member and in which his funeral was held in March 1975.¹⁷ A similar propensity existed in his 1915 design of the Hawthorne Lane Methodist Church. An even earlier manifestation of his preference for the Gothic style, however, was the chapel which he designed in 1913 for the Stonewall Jackson Training School near Concord, N.C.¹⁸ An inspection of the structure and especially of its setting explains why Asbury selected a rock rubble format for the composition of the chapel. Large stone outcroppings surround the building and form the edge of a deep gorge which borders the chapel on the rear or eastern side. The stone walls serve to reinforce the drama and power of these natural phenomena.

Louis H. Asbury frequently donated designs to Christian congregations¹⁹. On June 6, 1919, the Advent Christians in Charlotte received from Asbury the plans for the chapel which he had fashioned for the Stonewall Jackson Training School six years before, and these plans were followed in erecting the Advent Christian Church on N. McDowell St.²⁰ Although the design was less suited for an urban setting, it provided the fledgling congregation with a building of essential integrity and architectural purity. Unfortunately, the Advent Christians erected a somewhat insensitive addition to the rear of the structure sometime during the 1920s. It is important to remember, however, that this was not a wealthy congregation.²² Indeed, the members lost their physical plant during the Depression of the 1930s. On February 10, 1930, the Advent Christian Church was acquired by the First National Bank of Charlotte, which in turn went bankrupt in August 1935.²³

The Advent Christians vacated the building in 1932.²⁴ The Church of God, another fundamentalist sect, occupied the structure in 1933, to be followed by the Central Church of Nazarene in 1934 and the First Pentecostal Church in 1935-6.²⁵ The building was vacant from 1937 through 1939.²⁶ On October 9, 1941, the Gospel Baptist Church purchased the church from the Loraine Corporation, the owner of the property since July 12, 1937.²⁷ The Gospel Baptist Church occupied the structure from 1940 until October 1947.²⁸ Among the religious leaders who conducted services there during the early and mid-1940's was Billy Graham, who later would become a world-famous evangelist.²⁹ Although Billy Graham appeared in other Charlotte churches during these years,³⁰ his presence in the Gospel Baptist Church occurred

when he was less than thirty years of age and therefore, constitutes a compelling illustration of the extent of his ministry at that time.³¹

On October 30, 1947, the Gospel Baptist Church sold the church on N. McDowell St. to the Redemptorist Fathers, a Roman Catholic order which had been established by St. Alphonsus Maria di Liguori at Scala, Italy, in 1732 to conduct mission work among the poor.³² The *Charlotte Observer* reported that this transaction represented a "very material expansion of the work of the Catholic church among Negroes in Charlotte." The article went on to relate that new equipment would be installed in the building and that a "minor remodeling program" would be executed.³³ The Redemptorist Fathers fashioned an atmosphere which was more in keeping with the forms and rituals of Roman Catholicism. A cupola was placed on the roof of the building, and the windows in the sanctuary were given the appearance of stained glass. A second entrance was provided into the basement, and a one story building was erected to the right of the addition which had been constructed during the 1920s.³⁴ Rev. Timothy Sullivan and Rev. James Murphy, pastor and assistant pastor respectively of the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help on Oaklawn Ave., assumed the responsibility of directing the activities of the now Catholic chapel on N. McDowell St. as well.³⁵

By the early 1970's, Second Ward or Brooklyn had lost its residential component, thereby depriving the chapel of a substantial number of its parishioners. Moreover, First Ward had also been selected as a major urban renewal project. On April 1, 1973, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Charlotte, N.C., rented the structure to the proprietors of the McDonald Art Gallery, who operated their business therein until May 1, 1978.³⁶ The City of Charlotte acquired the chapel on December 14, 1974.³⁷ The structure is currently unoccupied.

NOTES

¹ *Charlotte News* (August 19, 1919) p. 16. *Charlotte Observer* (October 3, 1920), Sec. A., p. 5.

² *Charlotte Observer* (October 4, 1920) p. 15.

³ F. L. Cross & E. A. Livingston, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford University Press, London, New York, Toronto, 1974), p. 20, 1034, 1165. James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (Charles Scribner's & Sons, New York, n.d.), vol. 2., p. 286.

⁴ *Charlotte News* (August 19, 1919), p. 16.

⁵ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 390, p. 524.

⁶ *Charlotte News* (August 19, 1919) p. 16.

⁷ *Charlotte Observer* (October 3, 1920), Sec. A., p. 5.

- ⁸ *Charlotte Observer* (October 4, 1920), p. 15.
- ⁹ *Charlotte Observer* (October 3, 1920), Sec. A., p. 5.
- ¹⁰ Records of the Charlotte Building Inspection Departments.
- ¹¹ *Charlotte Observer* (July 18, 1896), p. 4. *Charlotte Observer* (June 16, 1893), p.4.
- ¹² Interview of Louis H. Asbury, Jr., by Dr. Dan L. Morrill (August 24, 1978). Hereafter cited as Interview.
- ¹³ *Charlotte Observer* (March 20, 1975) p. 8A.
- ¹⁴ Interview.
- ¹⁵ *Charlotte Observer* (March 20, 1975), p. 8A.
- ¹⁶ Interview.
- ¹⁷ *Charlotte Observer* (March 20, 1975), p. 8A.
- ¹⁸ Records of Louis H. Asbury in the Office of Louis H. Asbury Jr.
- ¹⁹ Interview.
- ²⁰ Records of Louis H. Asbury in the Office of Louis H. Asbury, Jr.
- ²¹ For a photograph of the Advent Christian Church c. 1927 see *Charlotte North Carolina: Diversified Industrial And Commercial Center* (The Observer Printing House, Inc., July 1927). A copy of this photograph is included in this report.
- ²² The 1929 Sanborn Insurance Map of Charlotte, N.C. reveals that the addition was in place at this time.
- ²³ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 761, p. 268. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 869, p. 334.
- ²⁴ Charlotte City Directory (1932), p. 654.
- ²⁵ Charlotte City Directory (1933) p. 665. Charlotte City Directory (1933-1934) p. 672. Charlotte City Directory (1935) p. 721. Charlotte City Directory (1936) p. 812.
- ²⁶ Charlotte City Directory (1937) p. 860. Charlotte City Directory (1938) p. 831. Charlotte City Directory (1939) p. 805.
- ²⁷ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 925, p. 22. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1061, p. 7.

- ²⁸ Charlotte City Directory (1940), p. 843. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 1281, p. 29.
- ²⁹ Letter from T. W. Wilson, associate of Billy Graham, to Dr. Dan L. Morrill (August 3, 1978).
- ³⁰ *Charlotte Observer* (March 2, 1946), Sec. 1, p. 8.
- ³¹ The earliest articles in the vertical files on Dr. Graham in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library date from 1950. Also worth noting is the fact that Dr. Graham did not conduct a major crusade until 1949.
- ³² Cross & Livingston, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 1165.
- ³³ *Charlotte Observer* (October 31, 1947), p. 10B.
- ³⁴ It is possible that the second entrance to the basement and the addition were erected by the Gospel Baptist Church. An aerial survey reveals that both were in place in 1949.
- ³⁵ *Charlotte News* (October 31, 1947), p. 10A.
- ³⁶ Interview of Mr. McDonald by Dr. Dan L. Morrill (August 25, 1978).
- ³⁷ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3729, p. 146.

Architectural Description

by Ruth Little-Stokes
July 22, 1978

Advent Church, located at the northwest corner of East Trade and McDowell Streets in uptown Charlotte is a small, simple Gothic Revival church built in 1919-1920. The rough granite walls, steep slate roof, tiny gabled entrance porch and the rustic humility of the architectural design create a distinctive accent in the predominant commercial fabric of the area.

The east gable end of the rectangular three bay wide, four bay deep structure forms the main facade, facing McDowell Street. Along the facade frontage is a low retaining wall constructed of the same random laid granite as the church itself. In the center, low concrete steps with curved granite side walls lead up to the entrance porch. The center entrance porch echoes the shape of the main facade, and is constructed of the same stone, with a gable slate roof with overhanging eaves with exposed rafter and joist ends. The front wall terminates on either side as a single shouldered buttress. In the center is a wide rectangular opening with a stone flat arch and high in each side wall is a rectangular flat-arched opening. The floor is concrete, the ceiling narrow tongue and groove wood sheathing. An early electric light fixture, perhaps original is suspended

from the soffit of the apex of the porch roof, just above the entrance. The design, consisting of four brass spindles hanging from a circular brass canopy, is apparently a reproduction of an oil burning lamp which would have been used during the medieval period which inspired the design of the building. The lamp has lost its globe. A double door, each leaf constructed of narrow tongue and groove sheathing, with a brass thumb latch and a simple molded wooden surround, leads into the church.

In the front gable end above the entrance porch is a circular wooden window with radiating muntins. The window has lost its glazing. Above it is a narrow rectangular wooden louvered ventilator. Flanking the porch are narrow rectangular windows with molded wooden surrounds and flat stone arches. Wooden tracery creates a Gothic pointed arch effect on the single pane of frosted glass in each window. On the roof ridge just behind the main facade is a small belfry, a later addition covered with asbestos shingles, with a wood louvered ventilator. In each face, a hipped composition shingle roof and a cross.

The side elevations are articulated by a wide stone water table and double shouldered buttresses which separate the bays. The gable end walls extend above the roofline as low parapets. The fine gray slate roof with exposed rafter ends is a strong visual element. Each bay has a set of three windows, each window identical to those in the main facade. Each side elevation also has a rectangular basement window below ground level, surrounded by a brick well. Several smaller ventilation openings also service the basement. The original basement entrance, a paneled wooden door in the south elevation beneath the rear bay, is reached by a flight of concrete steps. Beneath the window in the eastern bay of the north elevation is an added gabled basement entrance constructed of concrete block. A tall granite interior end chimney projects from the northwest corner of the building.

A hipped frame section, almost as wide as the main blocks abuts the rear elevation. The section has walls covered with asbestos shingles, (probably covering the original weatherboard), one-over-one wooden sash with plain surrounds and molded caps, and a gray slate roof with exposed rafter ends. This is either original or an early addition, as it is present on the 1929 Sanborn Insurance Map of Charlotte which shows the building in outline. Abutting this frame section on the north is a gabled addition, probably constructed in the late 1940s, with concrete block walls, six-over-six wooden sash, and a composition shingled roof.

The interior of the main block consists of a small vestibule and a sanctuary. Both areas are finished with narrow tongue-and-groove wooden floors (now overlaid with linoleum in some areas), a high wainscot of narrow tongue-and-groove sheathing, molded chair rails, plaster walls, and molded wooden door and window surrounds. All windows have a simulated stained glass effect created by thick patterned paper sandwiched between the exterior frosted glass and interior clear glass panes. The paper is probably not original. The vestibule has a double raised panel door leading into the sanctuary. The floor slopes gently to a platform which covers the rear bay of the church. Three steps, semicircular in plan, lead to the recessed apse, finished like the other spaces, with a segmentally arched open with a flat-paneled soffit and jambs. A small door leads from the north apse wall into the rear section. The only early light fixture remaining on the interior is an electric wall fixture on the south jamb of the apse arch. In the rear wall of the

sanctuary, flanking the apse, are two doors, each with horizontal panels like the other interior doors.

The most architecturally significant feature of the interior is the truss roof. The ceiling has sloping sides and a flat top, and each of the three roof trusses follows this shape. At the angles between the sides and top are wooden spandrels, giving each truss a smoothly arched soffit. Each truss has additional frame cross bracing and is supported by heavy molded wood corbels. Narrow tongue and-groove wooden sheathing covers the roof.

The rear frame section is divided into two rooms, and has apparently been altered over the years.