

The Clubhouse Of The Charlotte Woman's Club



This report was written on April 1, 1978

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Clubhouse of the Charlotte Woman's Club is located at 1001 E. Morehead St. in Charlotte, N.C.

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

The present owner and occupant of the property is:

The Charlotte Woman's Club

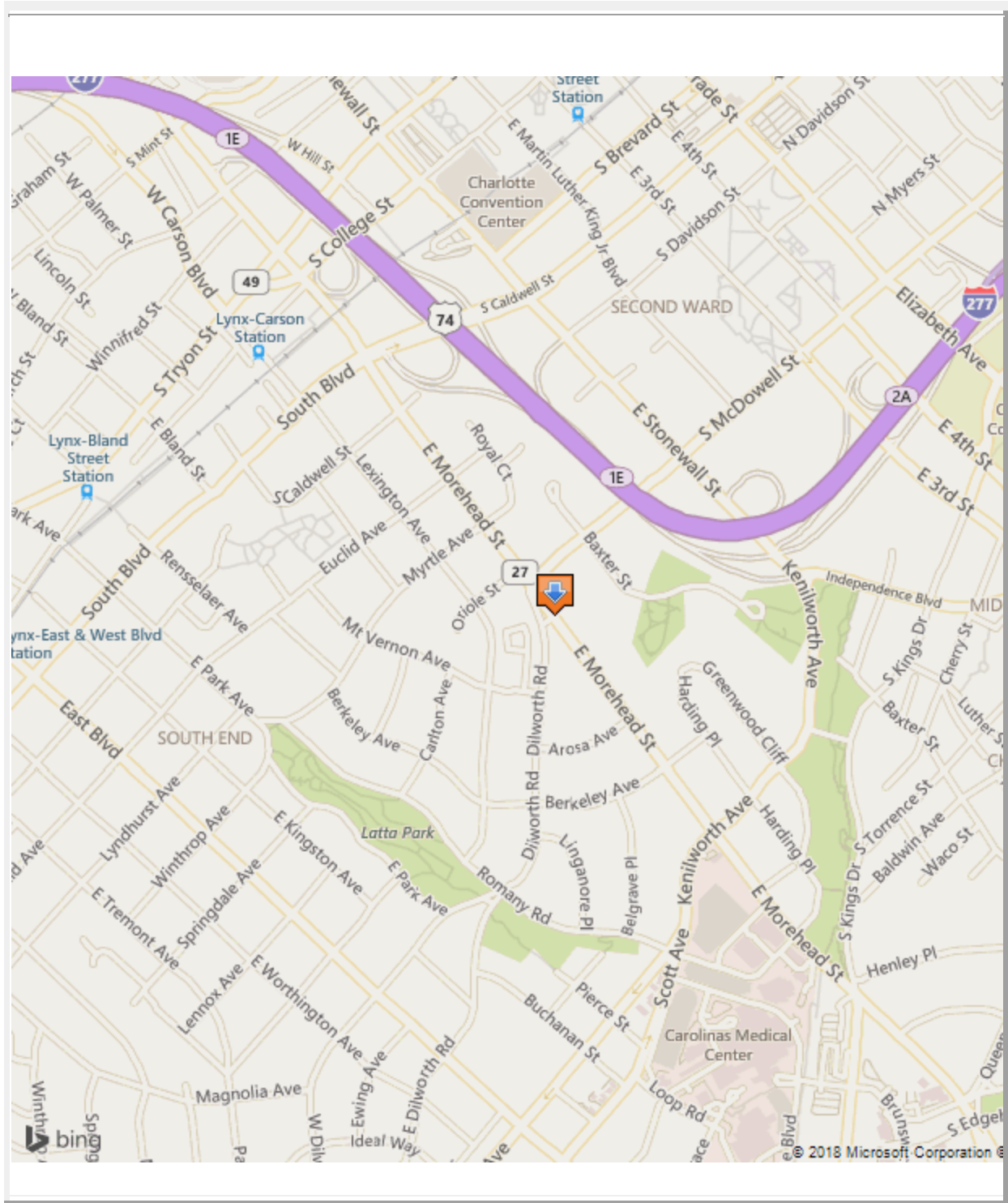
1001 E. Morehead St.

Charlotte, N.C. 28204

Telephone, 333-1980

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 depicting the location of the property.



5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The Charlotte Woman's Club acquired its property on E. Morehead St. in two stages. The deed for the initial portion is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 509 at Page 586. The deed for the remainder of the tract is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 541 at Page 468. The Tax Parcel Number for the property is 12520105.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property:

The contract for erecting the Clubhouse of the Charlotte Woman's Club on E. Morehead St. was awarded on August 21, 1923, to Blythe & Isenhour Construction Co. ¹ Designed by an architect of local and regional prominence, Mr. Charles C. Hook, ² the structure was officially opened for public inspection on May 22, 1924. ³ The officers of the Woman's Club, led by Mrs. V. T. Shore, President, ⁴ greeted "hundreds of guests not only from Charlotte but from many cities and towns in this section of the state" who attended a formal reception which lasted from 3 PM until 10 PM. ⁵ Adding to the festiveness of this occasion was the fact that the Presidents of several Woman's Clubs were present. Included therein were the clubs of Kings Mountain, Waxhaw, Hickory, Belmont, Lenoir, Winston-Salem, Lexington, Concord, Salisbury, Rockingham and Gaston County. ⁹

"During the evening hours," *The Charlotte Observer* reported, "the husbands of the club members and members of the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, and Civitan clubs called." ⁷ No doubt they were impressed with the new facility. The room were beautifully decorated with roses and other garden flowers," and "delicious frozen punch" was served in the dining room. ⁸ The building was "the subject of the most favorable comment." ⁹ Indeed, *The Charlotte Observer* insisted that it was "one of the most striking buildings of its kind in the South." The newspaper went on to describe the clubhouse in detail.

Two stories in height, it will have a basement entirely above ground in which will be located a dining hall, private dining room, kitchen and storage room. On the front of the upper floor there will be a large entrance hall back of which will be an auditorium capable of seating 400 people. To the left of the hall there will be a large reception room, and to the right, the library and the office. Three large arches will form the front of the building, and the exterior work will be in Italian style with ivory stucco. Floors will be of polished oak and the interior will be finished in ivory enamel. ¹⁰

The structure on E. Morehead St. was not the first clubhouse of the Charlotte Woman's Club. The organization initially met in the homes of its members. The series of developments which led to the establishment of the Charlotte Woman's Club began in the home of Mrs. Brevard Springs on South Blvd. In April 1899, six women gathered there to create the Charlotte Mother's Club. Mrs. Agnes Wilkes Rankin, having moved from Charlotte to Hartford, Conn., had recently joined such a club and had advised her friends in Charlotte to organize such a body. Mrs. Walter S. Liddell, the first President of the club, later explained that she had agreed to serve only because "they told me I would not have anything to do." ¹¹

The Charlotte Mother's Club continued to meet until 1901, when it changed its name to the Charlotte Woman's Club and invited twenty-five additional women to join. This event also occurring at the home of Mrs. Brevard Springs, was of momentous importance in the social history of Charlotte, N.C. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, social mores and customs had dictated that wealthier more educated females should restrict their activities to the home. To participate in public affairs had been viewed as unfeminine. The emergence of the woman's club movement on the national scene in the late 1800's signaled the beginning of the end for that way of thinking. While retaining the refinement and grace associated with womanhood, the members of such organizations committed themselves to a posture of public advocacy. These sentiments were forcefully expressed by Mrs. F. C. Abbot, the initial President of the Charlotte Woman's Club and the individual who had inspired its creation. "You should broaden your club," she had written, "to include civic activities for the sake of your children. There are health laws, school matters and social influences which you should investigate and discuss." ¹²

The Charlotte Woman's Club more than fulfilled the expectations of its founders. By 1905 it had eighty-six members and was holding its twice-monthly meetings at the Carnegie Library on N. Tryon St. ¹³ Its membership had expanded to more than 500 by the early 1920's, a situation which prompted the club to secure its first clubhouse. ¹⁴ Mrs. I. W. Faison was appointed to the chairmanship of a Clubhouse Committee. In December 1920 the Woman's Club purchased the residence of A. J. Draper on Elizabeth Ave., northwestward from its intersection with Hawthorne Lane. ¹⁶ In October 1922 and March 1923 the Club sold its property on Elizabeth Ave., ¹⁷ using the money derived therefrom to build the new clubhouse on E. Morehead St. During the interim, the Woman's Club held its general meetings in the ballroom of the Selwyn Hotel on W. Trade St. ¹⁸

The Charlotte Woman's Club possesses a record of substantial accomplishment. The contributions which it has made to the betterment of Charlotte are lengthy and impressive. The YWCA, the PTA, the Traveler's Aid Society and the North Carolina Federation of Music Clubs were organized by the Charlotte Woman's Club. It established the first kindergarten in Charlotte, participated in the creation of the Domestic Relations Court and brought the first public health nurses to Charlotte. It provided vital support for the public library. The Charlotte Woman's Club was instrumental in the creation of the Mint Museum of Art. The League of Women Voters was its creation, as was the home economics program in the public schools. Since 1944 the club has placed the control of cancer at the head of its list of projects. ¹⁹ This is not a complete summary. But it proves that that Charlotte Woman's Club achieved its purpose.

The business leaders of Charlotte were forthright in their support of the Charlotte Woman's Club. D. A. Tompkins, Southern industrialist and publisher of *The Charlotte Observer*, made several monetary donations to the organization. James B. Duke followed in the same practice. ²⁰ Edward Dilworth Latta donated the land on which the clubhouse was erected in 1923-24. ²¹ The existence of this support is not surprising, especially if one is familiar with the view of the future held by the members of the Charlotte Woman's Club. They shared in the general optimistic belief of that era. They endorsed the notions consistently proclaimed by the business leadership of the community, that science and technology would create a better life for the citizens of Charlotte. *The Charlotte Observer* of April 22, 1928, described the underlying philosophy of the organization. "Always it is and been the principle of the Woman's club," the

newspaper asserted, "to pull with the current for Charlotte's progress and development and to be a good yoke fellow for all those who do like service." ²²

Notes

¹ *The Charlotte Observer* (August 22, 1923) p. 2.

² *The Charlotte Observer* (August 21, 1923) p. 4.

³ *The Charlotte Observer* (May 23, 1924) p. 16.

⁴ *Charlotte Sunday Observer* (May 18, 1924) sec. 2. p. 2.

⁵ *The Charlotte Observer* (May 23, 1924) p. 16.

⁶ *The Charlotte Observer* (May 22, 1924)

⁷ *The Charlotte Observer* (May 23, 1924) p. 16.

⁸ *Charlotte Sunday Observer* (May 18, 1924) sec. 2. p. 2.

⁹ *The Charlotte Observer* (May 23, 1924) p. 16.

¹⁰ *The Charlotte Observer* (August 21, 1923) p. 4.

¹¹ "Charlotte - Associations: Woman's Club," a folder in the files of the Carolina Room of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *The Woman's Club of Charlotte North Carolina, 1905-06.*

¹⁴ *The Woman's Club of Charlotte North Carolina, 1921-1922.*

¹⁵ *The Charlotte Observer* (October 30, 1920) p. 8.

¹⁶ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 436, Page 148.

¹⁷ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 481, Page 520. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 497, Page 23.

¹⁸ *The Charlotte Observer* (April 7, 1923) p. 8.

¹⁹ *Annual Program of Charlotte Woman's Club, 1966-1967*. pp. 1-3.

²⁰ "Charlotte - Associations: Woman's Club," a folder in the files of the Carolina Room of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library.

²¹ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 509, Page 586. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 541, Page 468.

²² "Charlotte - Associations: 'Woman's Club,'" a folder in the files of the Carolina Room of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library.

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains an architectural description prepared by Ms. Ruth Little-Stokes, architectural historian.

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

a. Historical and cultural significance: The historical and cultural significance of the property known as the Clubhouse of the Charlotte Woman's Club rests upon three factors. First, the building possesses architectural significance as one of the finer examples of the design capabilities of Mr. Charles C. Hook, an architect of local and regional prominence. Second, the building is the only structure which was erected for the purpose of serving as the clubhouse of the Charlotte Woman's Club, an organization of great importance in the civic affairs of this community for over seventy-five years. Third, the structure documents the determination of women to participate more actively in public affairs. Consequently, the building occupies an important place in the social history of this community.

b. Suitability for preservation and restoration: The structure retains its fundamental character inside and out. Moreover, the Charlotte Woman's Club is currently repairing the structure and hopes to restore it to its original appearance in the near future. The building is highly suited for preservation and restoration.

c. Educational value: The Clubhouse of the Charlotte Woman's Club has educational value because of the historical and cultural significance of the property.

d. Cost of acquisition, restoration, maintenance or repair: At present, the Commission has no intention of purchasing the fee simple or any lesser included interest in this property. The

Commission presently assumes that all costs associated with renovating and maintaining the structure will be paid by the owner or subsequent owner of the property.

e. Possibilities for adaptive or alternative use of the property: The structure would lend itself to a variety of adaptive uses, including commercial enterprises. Indeed, the property is zoned B1. However, the Commission supports the intention of the Charlotte Woman's Club to restore and refurbish the structure.

f. Appraised value: The current tax appraisal of the improvements on the property is \$40,310. The current tax appraisal of the 0.689 acres of land is \$90,000. The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for a deferral of 50% of the rate upon which Ad Valorem taxes are calculated. The Commission is also aware that the property is currently exempted from the payment of Ad Valorem taxes.

g. The administrative and financial responsibility of any person or organization willing to underwrite all or a portion of such costs: As stated earlier, the Commission presently has no intention of purchasing the fee simple or any lesser included interest in this property. Furthermore, the Commission presently assumes that all costs associated with the property will be paid by the present or subsequent owners of the property. Finally, the Commission believes that the Charlotte Woman's Club will secure the resources which will be required to restore and refurbish the structure.

9. Documentation of why and in what wave the property meets the criteria established for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places: The Commission judges that the property known as the Clubhouse of the Charlotte Woman's Club does meet the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. Basic to the Commission's judgment is its knowledge that the National Register of Historic Places, established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, represents the decision of the Federal Government to expand its recognition of historic properties to include those of local, regional and State significance. The Commission believes that its investigation of the property known as the Clubhouse of the Charlotte Woman's Club demonstrates that the property is of local importance. Consequently, the Commission judges that the property known as the Clubhouse of the Charlotte Woman's Club does meet the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places.

10. Documentation of why and in what ways the property is of historical importance to Charlotte and/or Mecklenburg County: The property known as the Clubhouse of the Charlotte Woman's Club is historically important to Charlotte, N.C., for three reasons. The building possesses architectural significance as one of the finer examples of the design capabilities of Mr. Charles C. Hook. The building is the only structure which was erected for the purpose of serving as the clubhouse of the Charlotte Woman's Club. The structure documents the determination of women to participate more actively in public affairs.

Chain of Title

1. Deed Book 5419 Page 468 (May 26, 1924).
Grantor: The Charlotte Consolidated Construction Co.
Grantee: The Charlotte Woman's Club, Inc.
2. Deed Book 509, Page 586 (August 27, 1923).
Grantor: The Charlotte Consolidated Construction Co.
Grantee: The Charlotte Woman's Club, Inc.

Bibliography

An Inventory of Buildings in Mecklenburg County and Charlotte for the Historic Properties Commission.

Annual Program of the Charlotte Woman's Club, 1966-67.

"Charlotte - Associations: Woman's Club," a folder in the files of the Carolina Room of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library.

Charlotte Sunday Observer.

Records of the Mecklenburg County Tax Office.

Records of the Mecklenburg Register of Deeds Office.

The Charlotte Observer.

The Woman's Club of Charlotte, North Carolina, 1905-06.

The Woman's Club of Charlotte, North Carolina, 1921-22.

Date of Preparation of this report: April 1, 1978

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Architectural Description

Ruth Little-Stokes

April 5, 1978

The Charlotte Woman's Club, 1001 East Morehead Street, is a stuccoed building of Regency Revival design built for the club in 1923-24 after a design by Charles C. Hook, a local architect. The severe classical structure has been altered only slightly in the intervening years and still serves its original purpose. The one story, flat-roofed building, five bays wide and six bays deep, faces East Morehead Street, one of Charlotte's few avenues which retain an early twentieth century elegance, and has a narrow symmetrically landscaped front yard. The Regency Revival style is a twentieth century revival of the simplified classical style popular in the early nineteenth century in England under the Regency of the Prince of Wales, later George IV. The most prominent architects of this movement, in which classical forms were reduced to basic geometrics were Sir John Nash and Sir John Soane. Their work is a simplification of the Renaissance villas of such architects as Palladio and Sansovino, who in turn were influenced by the simplified arched construction of ancient Roman buildings. The elegant purity of this style had great appeal to early twentieth century European and American architects, who repudiated the picturesque confusion of forms, colors and textures characteristic of Victorian architecture. In Charlotte this restrained, rational style seems to have been reserved for residential and institutional buildings, for Charlotte commercial buildings of the era favored more opulent decorative trim. Myers Park, an exclusive early twentieth century suburb, contains several examples of the Regency Revival style.

The smooth wall surfaces of the main (south) elevation, enlivened by the contrasting open and closed round arches and the delicate iron accents of balconies and parapet railing, create a facade of harmonious balance and strength. The center three bays project forward as an entrance arcade, with three round-arched openings. A double French door with a fanlight, set within a round-arched opening, corresponds to each of the arcade arches. The center door is a recent louvered replacement. The ends of the arcade form semi-circular niches, formerly filled with statuary. Low, wide steps ascend to the entrance arcade, which is floored with terra cotta tile. The side bays of the main facade have identical arched openings with French doors like those of the entrances and cast-iron balconies, consisting of slender vertical balusters with upper and lower borders of small circular motifs. Curvilinear cast-iron brackets support the shallow balconies. The wall stucco has a rough finish, while the wide plain arch surrounds have a smooth finish. On the west side of the west arcade arch is a brass plaque with the inscription: "Charlotte Woman's Club." The eave is ornamented with a molded cornice above and below a

plain frieze and a roof parapet consisting of thick, raised-paneled piers with a cast-iron balustrade of identical design to the balconies. A molded railing crowns the parapet.

The side elevations have equally formal treatment. The center two bays project as a pavilion, with two large six-over-six wooden sash windows in each outer face. The face toward the front of the east elevation has a single door of the same small pane design as the French doors, surmounted by a fanlight and a stuccoed, crosssetted surround. A flight of concrete steps with a cast-iron railing like the balcony railings leads to this side entrance. The west elevation has a corresponding window in this location. Above each opening in the pavilion is a rectangular, raised panel of stucco. The two bays in front of the pavilion have balconied French doors identical to the main facade. The bays behind the pavilion have pairs of six-over-six wooden sash windows with a single large fanlight over each pair. One of these sash on the east elevation has been replaced by a fire door. Because the site slopes steeply to the rear, the rear half of the basement is completely above ground. It is finished with rough stucco like the upper walls, and demarcated by a smooth stuccoed string course. Sash identical to the first story surmounted by transoms illuminate the basement story. The roof parapet carries around both side elevations to the rear face of the pavilions.

The rear elevation continues only the most nominal features of the Regency Revival design: the stuccoed wall surface and window treatment. The center of the three rear bays has a double French door with a high transom, and the flanking bays have sash windows with matching transoms. Between each bay is a stuccoed pilaster which terminates above the molded eave in a short smokestack. A larger chimney with a stuccoed stack projects from the center of the roof.

The interior floor plan is almost unaltered. On the first floor a reception room or parlor stretches across the entire front of the structure. Classical screens divide the area at each end into smaller rooms, the east called the "tea room," the west called the "teak room" after the suite of antique Chinese furniture which furnishes it. These screens, each consisting of flat-paneled Doric posts supporting a paneled and molded lintel with circular motifs echoing the exterior iron work, are the most striking interior architectural feature. The windows and doors have simple molded surrounds.

Through three pairs of French doors with transoms which correspond to the triple entrances is a large auditorium occupying the rear two-thirds of the structure. Against the rear wall is a stage which bows out into the room, its vertical face sheathed with beaded paneling. The proscenium is decorated with a wide plain surround flanked by a pair of flat-paneled pilasters with playful latticework "capitals." Small dressing rooms flank the stage. The steel ceiling joists are boxed and paneled, and corresponding wall pilasters are treated identically to the proscenium pilasters. The east pavilion contains a small kitchen and office; the west pavilion contains the stair to the basement and a powder room. The stair rail, of classical design, consists of closely set square balusters with heavy, square newel posts with molded caps and a molded handrail. The suspended light fixtures throughout the first floor are believed to be original. They are of simple classical design.

The basement contains a furnace and storage rooms in the area beneath the parlor, a kitchen and pantry with dumbwaiter in the area beneath the east pavilion, a board room beneath the west

pavilion, and a dining room beneath the auditorium. A stair rises to the dressing room in the northeast corner of the dining room. This stair rail is slightly more ornate than the front stair, with a paneled closed string and paneled newel posts.