

C. C. CODDINGTON HOUSE



This report was written on March 6, 1985

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the C. C. Coddington House is located at 1122 E. Morehead Street in Charlotte, North Carolina.

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

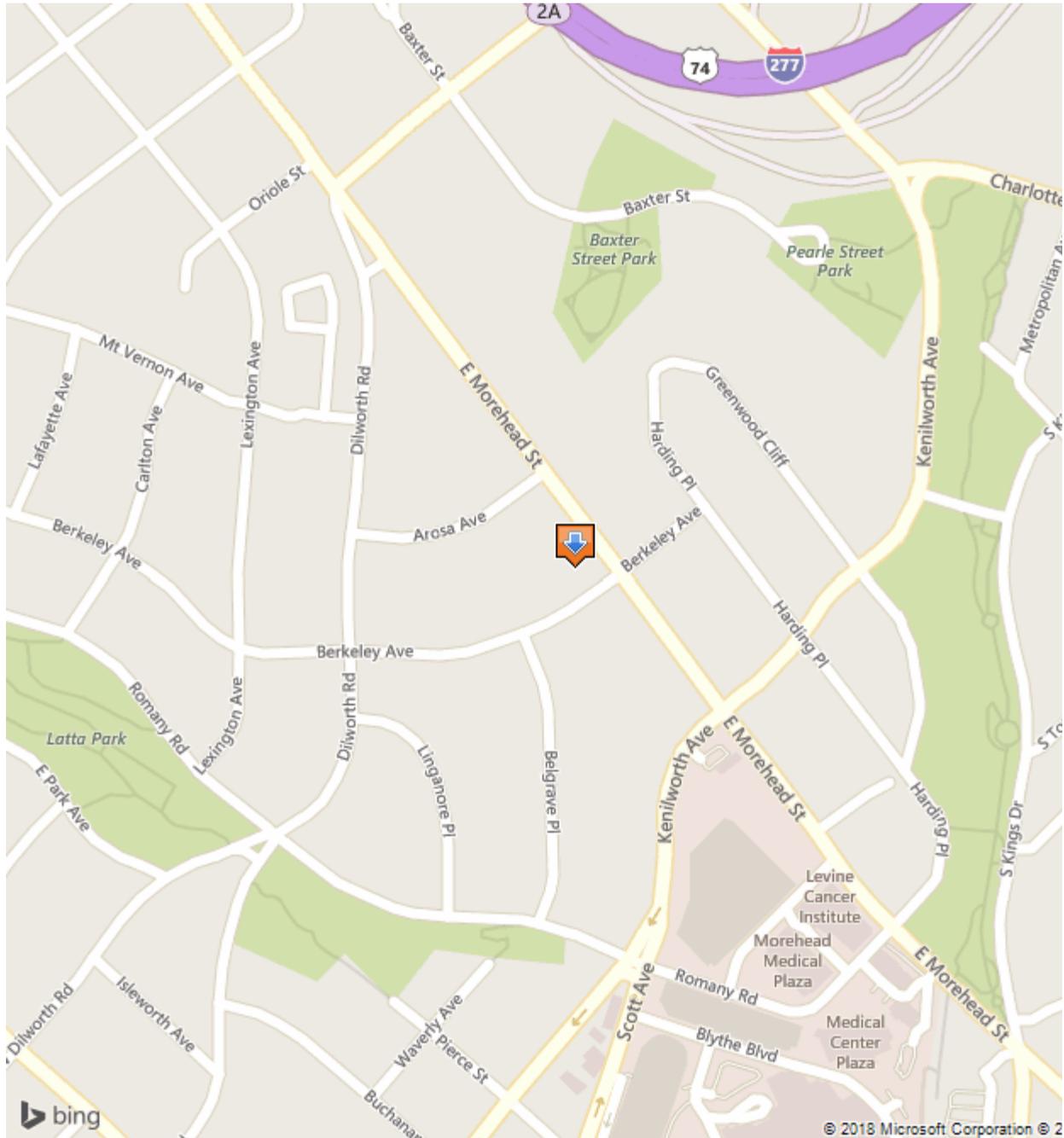
The Morehead Ltd.
1122 E. Morehead St.
Charlotte, N.C., 28204

Telephone: 704/376-3357

3. Representative photographs of the property: This report contains representative photographs of the property.

4. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The most recent deed to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 4826, Page 446. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is 123-102-08.

5. A map depicting the location of the property:



6. A brief historical 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 by Lisa A. Stamper.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria 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 C. C. Coddington House does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) the C. C. Coddington House, completed in 1917-18, was designed by William H. Peeps (1868-1950), an architect of regional significance; 2) C. C. Coddington (1878-1928), the original owner, was a leading businessman in Charlotte, both as a distributor for Buick automobiles and owner of Radio Station WBT; and 3) the C. C. Coddington House is one of the few early twentieth-century homes to survive on E. Morehead St., one of the grand boulevards of Dilworth.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association: The Commission contends that the attached architectural description by Lisa A. Stamper demonstrates that the property known as the C. C. Coddington House 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 .889 acres of land is \$154,840. The current appraised value of the improvements is \$326,510. The total appraised value of the property is \$481,350. The property is zoned O6.

Date of Preparation of this Report: March 6, 1985

Prepared by: Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Director
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Historical Overview

*Dr. William H. Huffman
January, 1985*

The Coddington House, one of the few stately homes remaining on the Dilworth section of Morehead Street, has more the appearance of a New England summer home than that of a formal residence one would expect to find on a major boulevard of a fashionable neighborhood. Nonetheless, the house, built by Charles Campbell and Marjorie Lyon Coddington in 1917 from the plans of Charlotte architect William Peeps, was well suited for a style of life that centered around frequent entertaining of guests.

Charles Campbell Coddington (1878-1928) was the epitome of an energetic, enterprising young man out to make his fortune in turn-of-the-century America. He had worked as a reporter for the *New York Evening Journal* in his early twenties, but the New Jersey native restlessly sought a commercial venture suitable for his energy and talents, and settled on the fledgling automobile industry as having the most potential. In 1907, the three-year-old Buick Motor Company granted him exclusive rights to be its distributor for the Carolinas, and the confident young man set out for Charlotte. While driving the first Buick south of the Mason- Dixon line, Coddington stopped in Greensboro at a drug store, where by chance he saw a young woman who had recently been voted the most beautiful in North Carolina. He was so taken with her that he decided on the spot to stay in Greensboro until he could meet this charming beauty, and plans to open his business were laid aside. It took a month for him to manage an introduction, and his persistent courtship resulted in marriage a year later to Marjorie Lyon.¹

Although she was a native of Thomasville, N.C., Marjorie Lyon Coddington (1884-1925) had grown up in Greensboro in the home of her parents, Edward West and Minnie Rinehurt Lyon. Six months after her marriage to C.C. Coddington in 1908, the couple moved to Charlotte in January, 1909² and first took up residence on East Boulevard in Dilworth. By 1911, they had moved to a house at 603 South Tryon Street, just beyond Stonewall, and C.C. had set up a Buick distributorship, garage and automobile supply company at 209 S. Church Street. About 1913, they moved again, this time back out of town to the first block of West Morehead Street, and started their family.³

C. C. Coddington's business instincts had served him brilliantly; not only had he chosen to enter a business that experienced explosive growth in the teens and twenties, he did so in a city whose growth matched that of the automobile industry. As a banking and distribution center which served the Piedmont Carolinas, Charlotte experienced a sustained boom from the 1880s to the end of the 1920s in playing a key role in the New South industrialization centering around the proliferation of cotton mills in the region. The combination of his business skills and being in the right place at the right time proved to be fruitful indeed. Sometime about early 1917, the Coddingtons decided to build a new home on the extension of East Morehead Street in Dilworth, the city's first streetcar suburb, at the corner of what was first known as Coddington Avenue (now Berkeley Avenue). To design the new suburban residence, they hired one of Charlotte's most skilled architects, William Peeps. The basic H-pattern and general appearance were patterned after an old family home of Marjorie Coddington's forebearers in Carlisle, Pa., the Eliot Farm house.⁴

William Peeps (1868-1950) was a native of London, England, who came to Charlotte in 1905 to begin a career in the Queen City which spanned forty-five years. During that time a number of the most impressive structures of the city were produced in his office. Among his admirable

commercial designs were the Latta Arcade (1914, for Edward Dilworth Latta, the developer of Dilworth), the Court Arcade (1927-8), Ivey's Department Store (1920s), and Ratcliffe Flowers (1929). For many of the leading citizens of Charlotte and surrounding communities he created Colonial Revival, English Tudor and other styles which provided the area with a rich architectural heritage. The latter include the Lethco house on Roswell, the Wilson house at Providence and Queens Roads, and the residences of John Bass Brown (East Boulevard), William Porcher (Queens Road West), J.B. Ivey, Osmond Barringer (Sherwood) and Lee A. Folger (Coddington's business manager and next door neighbor on Morehead).⁵

The suburb they chose for their new residence, Dilworth, was being developed by the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company (known as the 4C's), which was formed by Edward Dilworth Latta in 1890. It was made possible by its lifeline to the center city, a new electric streetcar system that ran from the Square to Latta Park at the heart of the city's first suburb. In its heyday, the park which surrounded a large lake, was the site of sporting events and traveling shows in its pavillion, and it also served as an outdoor social center. From the beginning, Dilworth had a wide range of houses, from the large homes of the well-to-do on the main boulevards (East and South Boulevards, and Morehead Street), to the modest homes on the side streets, and even some mill houses on the south side which belonged to the Atherton Cotton Mill off South Boulevard. Latta himself built his own mansion on East Boulevard where the Greek Orthodox Church now stands.⁶

When the house was finished in late 1917 or early 1918, the Coddingtons moved in and began to turn it into one of the city's best known centers of hospitality.⁷ As the years progressed, C.C. Coddington's business prospered to the point where he became one of the area's wealthiest men. During World War I, he bought his own train of about 60 cars to ensure delivery of autos from Flint, Michigan, and was, as a consequence, the only distributor with a large stock of cars on hand to meet the demand at war's end.⁸ In 1925, C. C. Coddington experienced both tragedy and triumph. In February, Marjorie Coddington died suddenly of heart failure at the age of forty, leaving three young sons, C. C. Jr., 11, Dabney Minor, 9, and William, 7. The *Observer* described her as "a leader in social and civic activities, having had a reputation as being an exceptionally fine hostess."⁹

That same year he completed the Coddington Building on West Trade Street (now the site of the newly renovated State Office Building), and bought radio station WBT (the first to go on the air in the Carolinas, 1920). The station was moved from the Independence Building to Coddington's, the power boosted to 500 watts from 100 and an advertising slogan was invented for the call letters: "Watch Buick Travel." In addition to being one of the organizers of the Charlotte Motor Speedway, he also raised thoroughbred horses on his 5000-acre estate in Jacksonville, N.C. (where he hosted meetings of his Carolinas dealers), was a state boxing commissioner, and in 1928 was elected president of the National Association of Automobile Dealers. When C. C. Coddington died unexpectedly on his yacht in Pamlico Sound, the city and state lost one of its most colorful citizens.¹⁰

Following the death of Marjorie Coddington in 1925, C. C. swapped the Morehead Street house for the Duke mansion in Myers Park the following year, and the Dukes sold it in turn to Nash dealer Armistead Burwell.¹¹ After Burwell lost the house during the Depression, it had a series

of owners who continued to use it as a well-designed place for entertaining. (Roy and Ethel Goode, 1939-1944; Jerry and Billie Huber, 1944-48; Lee and Loraine Kinney, 1948-76; ¹² (the Kinney's annual April lawn party drew nearly 300 guests in its later years.) ¹³The tradition of hospitality remains today, with the present owners, headed by Nancy Bergmann, who have turned it into a comfortable place which once again accommodates guests, but this time as a country inn, The Morehead.

NOTES

¹ *Charlotte Observer*, Dec. 4, 1928, p. 7.

² *Ibid.*, Feb. 17, 1925, p. 5.

³ Charlotte City Directories, 1909-1913.

⁴ Charlotte Symphony Women's Association Designer House brochure, 1976, p. 6.

⁵ *Charlotte Observer*, Sept. 11, 1950, p. 1B; Georae W. Hamilton, ed, *William H. Peeps, AIA* (Charlotte: News Publishing House, 1928).

⁶ "The New South Neighborhoods: Dilworth," Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1981.

⁷ Inscriptions on walls in Coddington house; see note 2; Deed Book 391, p. 486, 1 Sept. 1917.

⁸ See note 1.

⁹ See note 2.

¹⁰ See note 1; LeGette Blythe and Charles Brockmann, *Hornet's Nest* (Charlotte: Public Library, 1961), p. 386; information on file at Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission.

¹¹ Deed Book 628, p. 229, 13 July 1926.

¹² Deed Book 849, p. 404, 31 March 1934; *Ibid.*, 995, p. 128; *Ibid.*, 1129, p. 138, 21 July 1944; *ibid.*, 1333, p. 1, 24 Aug. 1948; *ibid.*, 3849, p. 687, 3 June 1976.

¹³ See note 4.

Architectural Description

*by Lisa A. Stamper
February 25, 1985*

The extremely successful Charlotte entrepreneur Charles Campbell Coddington hired local architect William Peeps to design a home patterned after Mrs. Coddington's family residence in Western Pennsylvania. The resulting two story clapboard home with green tiled roof has graced the northwest corner of East Morehead Street and Berkeley Avenue since 1917. Built with colonial revival detailing and a symmetrical H-shaped plan, the Coddington House still stands as an excellent example of early twentieth-century residential architecture. The house and its outbuildings have recently been renovated and are being used as a bed and breakfast establishment named "The Morehead Country Inn".

The original front facade faced East Morehead Street and today looks very much as it probably did in the early twentieth-century. The design's strongest feature is its symmetry, emphasized by the two gabled wings flanking a spacious terrace. The roof of each wing is contained within the second story, and a large chimney is centered within the end of each wing. Located between the first and second stories, and connecting the wings, is a short sloping roof which shelters the entrance door and the two large flanking windows, and with a slight extension, designates the doorway. The windows of this facade, as well as the original ones vary in size, but are characterized by many small rectangular panes, wooden frames, and delicate decorative shutters.

In 1980, a two story addition was built onto the back of the original house to create more office space for an insurance company. This addition extends the length of the house, and fills in the rear of the H-shape. The addition is also of the Colonial Revival style, and easily blends in with the original design without directly copying it. According to a plan drawing filed in "William Peeps Papers" in the Special Collections of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's library, the addition replaced a first story terrace similar to the one in front of the house, a second story balcony, and a two story porch on the western corner of the home.

Although symmetry is an overall theme in Peep's design, the side facades are not identical. Both have gable within gable ends, and two first story windows in their front wings; however, the rest of the openings and architectural elements are varied to accommodate interior planning. The southeast facade, that faces Berkeley Avenue, has a side door flanked by two windows and covered by a sloping overhang supported by two simple, delicate round columns in the middle of its main section. Directly above this portico is a triple window. A small window is located higher and to the front of it. On the back wing of this facade, the first story contains two large casement windows. Above these windows is one typical window. All of these openings appear to be original. The last bay on this side is part of the addition. It contains a first story door and one second story window.

The main section of the northwest facade has a first story double window and two typical second story windows. The back wing has a simple, thin chimney near the main section plus a first and second story window near the rear. The last bay, which contains only one second story window, is part of the addition.

The original interior plan and architectural features reflect the exterior colonial revival design. However, while the first floor plan follows the concept of symmetry closely, the second floor deviates slightly from true symmetry. Many early architectural elements and finishes are still in good condition. Most of the original architectural elements appear to be intact, including the staircase and its ornamentation, flooring, woodwork, paneled doors, mantels, paneling, wainscoting, moldings, and stained glass windows now in bathrooms. Early chandeliers with very ornate collars hang in the living and dining rooms. The 1980 addition's interior does not detract from the 1917 design. It presently houses various suites, a first floor conference room, and a second floor sitting room.

The living room is located on the first floor in the center of the house, and is presently similar to the original room, with no apparent structural alterations over the years. It has direct access to all the original first floor living spaces, both interior and exterior, except the pantry. The southeast side entrance was probably the main entrance, and still is used as such. The entrance hall gives an impressive view of the large living room as one enters the home. The grand U-shaped stair is located in this area, so that it may present an elegant view to those in the living room. As one enters the house, a half-bath was once located underneath the stairs to the left, and a closet to the right. Today, the half-bath is located to the right, with the left door closed and that area used as a private bath.

The library, which is located on the first floor of the east wing, also has been altered only slightly if at all. It is still being used as a library. The north wing contained the dining room, and still does, again without major alterations. According to Peeps' plan, the chimney on this side of the house was fake, built only to complete symmetry in the exterior design. Also on the first floor the sun parlor, located in the south wing, is now being used as a bedroom suite. Only a few minor alterations have been made in this room.

The original kitchen was located in the west wing of the first floor. This area now contains a private bath and a laundry room. The servants stair, which is still in use, was located next to the kitchen. The original pantry, located between the dining room and the kitchen, has been converted into a small, modern kitchen. However, all openings seem to be original, and the original shelves seem to be intact.

The second floor, originally consisted of bedrooms, baths, and a single hallway. Only a few minor alterations allowing access to the back addition, placing a bath in a cedar closet in the south wing, and changing a few through closets and bath areas were required. At the end and to the right of the hallway an original cedar closet with sliding shelves is an interesting architectural detail still being used today.

Today, two outbuildings exist on the Morehead Country Inn property. A gazebo house was built near the back addition, away from Berkeley Avenue, in 1980. It is now being used for storage.

Next to the gazebo house is a garage, built in 1920. It was converted and expanded into a private residence in 1976. Today, the upstairs is used as a bedroom suite for rent and the first floor is used as residential quarters by the proprietor of the inn, Nancy Bergmann.

It is difficult to discern how much of the surrounding site has been changed since 1917. Many trees and shrubs, however, seem to be quite mature and most probably existed early in the twentieth century. The early driveway was probably entered from Berkeley Avenue, then called Coddington Avenue. This drive has been expanded to create several small parking areas scattered throughout the back and Berkeley Avenue side of the home. The majority of the inn's parking spaces, however, are located across Berkeley Avenue.

The Coddington House sits in the historic Dilworth area. Today, East Morehead's early architecture is threatened by modern commercial buildings with little if any architectural or aesthetic value. Along with many other fine residences, the home built next to the Coddington House, which was built by one of Mr. Coddington's friends and also designed by William H. Peeps, has already been destroyed. The Coddington House is an example of an older building being used successfully in our modern society without losing its historic ambience.