

# THE CRAIG HOUSE



*This report was written on 30 July 1996.*

**1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the Craig House is located at 900 Ardsley Road in Charlotte, North Carolina.

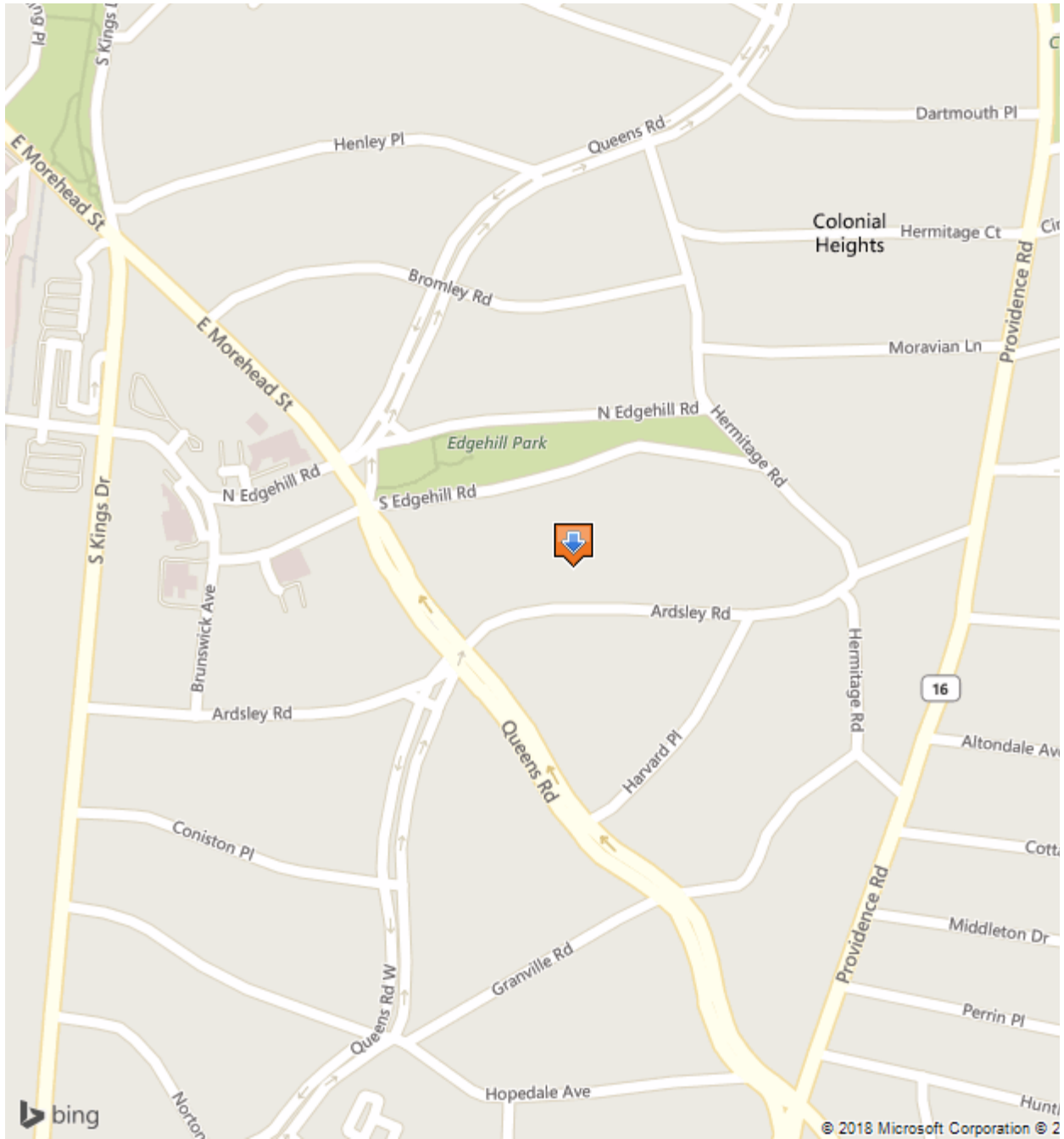
**2. Name, address and telephone number of the present owner of the property:** The owners of the property are:

William R. and Virginia B. Story  
900 Ardsley Road  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28207

(704) 333-9131

**3. Representative photographs of the property:** This report contains representative black and white photographs of the property. Color slides are available at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission office.

**4. Maps depicting the location of the property:**



**5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property:** The most recent deed to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3288 on page 499. The tax parcel number of the property is #155-043-05.

**6. A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property.

**7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a physical and architectural description of the property.

**8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets 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 Commission judges that the property known as the Craig House does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgement on the following considerations:

- 1) The Craig House was designed by William H. Peeps, an important local architect. It represents a fine example of early-twentieth century Tudor Revival architecture in one of Charlotte's earliest and most desirable suburbs. The house exhibits many characteristic components of the style.
- 2) David J. Craig, Sr. could afford to build his house in a manner not readily available to the average middle class American. The well-developed design, fine details, quality materials and accomplished workmanship all bear testament to the high caliber of this building.
- 3) The Craig House was built for a prominent businessman, and was his home for the last nineteen years of his life. It makes a statement about his image and standing in the community, and reveals the standard of living available to a well-to-do businessman in early-twentieth century Charlotte.
- 4) Mr. Craig's decision to relocate his family and settle in Charlotte is representative of a period of economic prosperity and population growth during the 1920s in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Craig's selection of a local architect and his choice to erect such a large and well-made home reflects both a financial and personal investment in the community.

**b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association:** The Commission contends that the physical and architectural description which is included in this report demonstrates that the Craig House meets this criteria.

**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 total appraised value of the improvements is \$487,060. The current total appraised value of the lot is \$235,000. The current total value is \$722,060. The property is zoned R-3.

**Date of Preparation of this Report:** 30 July 1996.

**Prepared by:** Mary Beth Gatza  
428 North Laurel Avenue, #7  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28204

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## *Historical Overview*

### **The Craig Family**

David Jenkins Craig, Sr. (1877-1948) was born and raised in Gastonia. He graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1897 and was an active member of the Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (Oasis Temple) from 1901 to the time of his death. In 1904, at the age of 27, he moved to Statesville, where he established himself in business. He went into partnership with L. P. Henkel and C. V. Henkel, serving as secretary and treasurer of the Henkel-Craig Live Stock Company. In addition to dealing in horses, mules and cattle (and later automobiles), they ran a hack line (horse-drawn taxi) between Lenoir and Blowing Rock, catering to the tourist trade. During the 1910s, they formed the Blowing Rock Development Company and acquired the landmark Green Park Hotel (built in 1891). In 1915, the Blowing Rock Development Company constructed a nine-hole golf course on surrounding acreage. This was no small feat, as the land they chose was entirely forested. In 1922, an additional nine holes was cleared. At some point, the Green Park Hotel was expanded and modernized by Craig and his partners. Craig and his family, however, may not have been regular guests of the hotel, as they had a cottage of their own in town. <sup>1</sup>

Craig wed Vera Copeland (1882-1974), who was originally from Clinton, S.C. and later from Statesville, N.C. Presumably, it was in Statesville where they met and married. Together they had three sons: David Jenkins, Jr. (1907-1985), John Thomas (1910-1987), James Copeland (1914-1988) and a daughter, Frances. In addition, they took in and raised Frankie Craig, who was the daughter of Mrs. Craig's sister and brother-in-law, who had died. <sup>2</sup>

By 1929, when the Craigs chose to build here, Myers Park was well established as a fashionable and exclusive neighborhood. The neighborhood was carved out of farmland once owned by John Springs ("Jack") Myers. Myers's son-in-law, George Stephens, had a vision and the business acumen to carry it out. He formed the Stephens Company, purchased the land from his father-in-law and set about creating Myers Park. The end result was the product of a unique collaboration between the Stephens Company, city planner John Nolen and landscape architect Earle Sumner Draper. The neighborhood began to take physical shape in 1912. Myers Park soon became the favored suburb for Charlotte's most successful and wealthy businessmen, and growth continued at a strong and steady pace throughout the next several decades.

The Craigs moved to Charlotte with their children in 1929. No doubt they waited until after completion of their new house before relocating. Correspondence dating from November between the architect and Mr. Craig was addressed to Statesville. After relocating, the Craigs became active in Myers Park Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Craig served as president of the women's Bible class.<sup>3</sup> David J., Jr. served on the session and on the board of deacons. Funeral services for Mrs. Craig, David J. Jr. and James were held at the church. Services for David J., Sr. were conducted at he home, with the pastor of Myers Park Presbyterian Church officiating.

The Craigs' oldest son, David Jenkins Craig, Jr. graduated from the University of North Carolina Law School in 1932, and had an illustrious career in Charlotte. He practiced law until 1966, served as a city recorder's court judge from 1941 to 1944, and was president of the Mecklenburg County Bar Association from 1960 to 1961. From 1967 to 1974, he ran the regional office of the American Arbitration Association. He had a home in Myers Park (1112 Granville Road) and was an elder, deacon and Sunday School teacher at Myers Park Presbyterian Church. He also served<sup>4</sup> as President of the Charlotte City Club and the Charlotte Country Club.

Mrs. Craig continued to live in the house alone after her husband died and her children moved away. She remained there until 1971 when she moved to Sharon Towers, where she died in 1974 at the age of 91.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Story Family**

Dr. William R. (Bob) and Virginia Brame (Ginnie) Story, natives of Wilkes County, N.C., arrived in Charlotte in 1965. They moved here so that Dr. Story could complete his residency, and thus begin his career as a urologist. In 1968 he joined the urology practice of McKay, Baird and Justis (established 1929). After three years in Charlotte, they purchased the Craig House from the children of David J. Craig Sr. in 1971. Mrs. Story is the past president of the Delhome Service League of the Mint Museum and is past chairman and current co-chairman of the Mint Museum Antiques Show. The Storys have lived in the house for twenty five years and have raised two children there. They especially enjoy entertaining, which they find the house particularly well suited for. They have hosted visiting guest speakers to the Mint Museum, and have celebrated their daughter's wedding and son's engagement party in the house. Grandchildren are frequent visitors. The house is beautifully decorated (by Mrs. Story) and is being well cared for. The Storys would like to see the house designated as a historic landmark.

## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> *The Charlotte News*, 4 October 1948, p. 1B.

*The Charlotte Observer*, 4 October 1948, p. 1B.

*The Charlotte News*, 5 October 1948, p. 14A.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Health Department, Death Certificate #1315.

Barry M. Buxton, *A Village Tapestry: The History of Blowing Rock*. (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, c. 1989), pp. 6, 7, 9, 40, 97.

<sup>2</sup> *The Charlotte News*, 9 September 1974, p. 8A.  
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, Will Book 6, p. 493.  
Elmwood Cemetery, Charlotte, North Carolina, section Y, lot 51.  
Interview with Mrs. David J. Craig Jr., Charlotte, NC, 22 May 1996

<sup>3</sup> *The Charlotte News*, 4 October 1948, p. 1B.  
*The Charlotte News*, 9 September 1974, p. 8A.  
*The Charlotte Observer*, 7 July 1985, p. 16A.  
*The Charlotte Observer*, 6 December 1988, p. 4B.  
Thomas F. Clark, *Myers Park Presbyterian Church: 1926-1966*. (n.p.: Kingsport Press, 1966), pp. 224, 225, 230.

<sup>4</sup> *The Charlotte Observer*, 7 July 1985, p. 16A.

<sup>5</sup> *The Charlotte News*, 9 September 1974, p. 8A.  
Interview with Mrs. William R. Story, 1 May 1996.

## ***PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION***

### **Introduction**

Fashionable and exclusive, Charlotte's Myers Park neighborhood created an exposition for some of the finest residential architecture in the region during the first decades of the twentieth century. Professional architects were retained by wealthy individuals to design impressive homes in the latest styles. Louis Asbury, C. C. Hook, Martin Boyer, Franklin Gordon and William H. Peeps all had commissions in Myers Park. Colonial Revival, Rectilinear, and Bungalow/Craftsman styles all were represented here, as they were elsewhere throughout the city. But it was the Tudor Revival style that flowered in Myers Park.

The earliest Tudor Revival-style residence in Myers Park, and in Charlotte, was designed by L. L. Hunter and Franklin Gordon in 1915 for E. C. Marshall (500 Hermitage Road). The style flourished in the years following World War I, and was well-represented in the neighborhood during the 1920s. Most of the locally-prominent architects were conversant in the design idiom, and designed houses in the Tudor Revival style.

Characteristics of the style include steeply-pitched roofs, cross gables, textured wall surfaces (especially brick and false half-timbering), narrow or grouped windows and prominent chimneys. Often, a mixture of materials or textures was central to the design of the structure (such as brick with stone trim or false half-timbering with stucco). Dark colors were ubiquitous, sometimes only for trim, but often throughout the entire structure.

Well versed in the Tudor Revival style of residential architecture, William H. Peeps designed the Craig House in 1929. Peeps was a native of England who had come to Charlotte in 1911 and established a notable career designing various buildings in the Queen City. During the 1910s, he drew plans for the Latta Arcade (S. Tryon St., 1914), the G. C. Galloway House (602 E. Morehead St., 1914-15), and the C. C. Coddington House (1122 E. Morehead St., 1917-18), all of which are designated Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties. In 1923, he designed the J. B. Ivey Department Store (N. Tryon St.), which is currently undergoing renovation and transformation to multi-family housing. Another designated Historic Property attributable to Peeps is the Ratcliffe Florist Shop (431 S. Tryon St., 1929). In Myers Park, Peeps drew plans for a premiere Tudor Revival style house at 2038 Roswell Avenue for Frank and Mary Lethco in 1928. Perhaps David J. Craig was inspired by this fine residence when he chose Peeps to design his own home.

### **Craig House**

The Craig House was designed by William H. Peeps for David J. Craig in 1929. It is a two and one-half story house with a cross-gabled slate roof and exterior walls of brick veneer and false half-timbering (wood and stucco). The house sits sideways on its lot--that is, one end of the house faces the street and the facade faces the driveway (which runs down the west side of the lot). Since the house is much broader than it is deep, it would not have fit on the lot if the facade was oriented toward the street. The awkwardness of having one end face the street is ameliorated by the presence of a full-width brick colonnade. This was a clever treatment in that it allows for a porch, which is normally omitted in the Tudor Revival style.

Structurally, the house is frame, but the exterior has a brick skin on all of the first story and most of the second story. False half-timbering decorates part of the second story, a dormer window, and four gable ends. The masonry cladding gives the home a feeling of solidity. The half-timbering is called "false" because it is not structural--it is merely applied for decorative effect. On the Craig House it consists of a pattern of horizontal and vertical dark wood "timbers" with light-colored stucco in between.

The main (west) facade is seven bays long, divided into three sections. The center section, which is under a cross-gabled roof, extends out a few feet from the rest of the facade. This section holds a tripartite stained glass window (second story) and the front entry. The front door is fully glazed and surrounded by multi-paned sidelights and overlights. It is shielded by a metal and glass marquee. Also in this section is set of four grouped windows looking into the dining room. The left (north) section of the facade has more grouped windows--one set of two and two sets of three. It also holds the only dormer window in the house. The right (south) section of the facade has two single windows. With the exception of one group of three fixed, multi-paned windows in the left (north) section of the facade, windows throughout the house are six-over-one or eight-over-one double-hung sash. The windows are framed by soldier arches above and cast stone sills below.

The predominant feature of the south elevation, which faces the street, is a full-width brick colonnade. It is composed of three arched openings separated by square brick piers. It shields the



base of an exterior brick chimney, and two sets of French doors. The second story here and gable end are clad with false half-timbering.

The rear (east) facade features a treatment similar to the colonnade on the south elevation, but only in the one southeast corner bay. Otherwise, this elevation is brick on the first and second stories and half-timbered in the ends of the two cross gables.

The north facade is the only side that is covered entirely with brick, even in the gable end. It features a semi-exterior chimney and a side door. Windows here are both single and grouped.

Entering the house through the front door, one stands in a small entry hall. A few steps up lead into a larger, more formal hall with an interesting hanging light fixture. The main stairway rises up behind you, and features iron balusters and a birch railing. Ten steps lead to a landing, which is dominated by a large stained glass window. The window was probably commissioned by the owner rather than by the architect (there is no mention of it in the documentation), and has a Latin inscription "fiat lux," meaning "let there be light."

The living room is to the right as you enter the hall. It is the largest and most formal room in the house. Taking center stage is the ornate Classical Revival mantelpiece. It is one piece--cast out of masonry from a mold. It has a full entablature whose frieze has a center medallion with a human face peering out, bracketed by floral swags. Acanthus leaf brackets, and floral and foliate patterns adorn the sides, and egg-and-dart molding delineates the firebox opening. Like the stained glass window, there is no specific mention of this item in the documentation, and was probably acquired by Mr. Craig independently of Mr. Peeps. The large mirror above the mantel was acquired from the Craig estate and could have been part of the original decorating scheme. On either side of the mantelpiece, two sets of French doors lead out onto the colonnade which shields the south end of the house (the street-facing elevation). Completing the detailing in the room are a continuous cove molding and an original light fixture which has a single bulb surrounded by many hanging crystals.

Walking back out through the hall, a set of French doors leads into the dining room, which is to the left, toward the front of the house. It is also a formal room, dominated by a group of four sunny windows and by an elegant crystal chandelier. A cove molding similar to that in the living room delineates the ceiling-wall juncture.

Beyond the dining room, moving toward the north end of the house, are three rooms in linear succession. First is the breakfast room, which features built-in corner cabinets and a chair rail. Next in line is the butler's pantry with a U-shaped arrangement of original cabinets. Finally, one enters the kitchen. It is the only room in the house that has undergone remodeling. Though the elements are younger than the house, they probably represent an arrangement similar to the original configuration.

Leaving through the rear of the kitchen, a small enclosed porch leads to the side door. Turning to the right, one enters the hallway and walks alongside the rear staircase. It is a closed-string stair with square wood balusters and a newel and railing made of birch. Passing the stairway, the hallway continues on through to the main hall. Along the way, three rooms open

off to the left. First is the den, which features a tiled fireplace with a classically-inspired mantelpiece and a chandelier with five marbled glass shades. Next to the den, accessed through the hall, is the only bathroom on the first floor. Back in the hallway, this is a good place to notice the solid mahogany doors which are found throughout the house. The last room to visit on the first floor is the library. This room is completely panelled with chestnut, finished in a rich brown tone. Three walls are covered with a board-and-batten style panelling, and the fourth wall features recessed shelves in three groups with arched openings above. This room also has an interesting original light fixture. It has six bulbs surrounded by a polychromatic painted metal fixture.

Having come full circle on the tour, one is back in the main hall. From here, climb the stairs to the second floor. To the right is the master bedroom. Like the living room below, it is a large and formal room. The tone is set by a classical mantelpiece which has Adamesque detailing. The master bathroom is off to the left and has separate stalls for the bathtub and shower. All of the fixtures in this and every second floor bathroom are original, including the colorful tiles.

There are four other bedrooms on the second floor. All feature mahogany doors, original light fixtures and picture molding at the ceiling-wall juncture. The two bedrooms on the back (east) side of the house have individual bathrooms, while those on the front (west) side share a bathroom between them.

The arrangement of rooms upstairs is similar to that on the first floor. On the front (west) side, there is a bedroom over the dining room, and one corresponding to the breakfast room and butler's pantry. Walking through this second bedroom, one reaches a full-length enclosed sleeping porch (which is over the kitchen and back porch). Passing through the porch leads to the hallway which extends from the back stair to the main hall. Two bedrooms open off of this hallway, each with a private bathroom.

The attic is worth taking a peek at. It is accessed from the rear of the stair hall. In it, the walls and sloping ceilings are fully sheathed with wooden panelling. Legend suggests that the Craigs used this room for entertaining and ballroom dancing. Area residents remember attending a debutante party in this room.

The basement extends beneath the kitchen, butler's pantry and breakfast room. It is divided into three sections having separate rooms for laundry facilities and coal storage. The steam heating plant has been replaced, but the original door to the incinerator can still be seen along the outside wall.

### **Garage/Servants' Quarters**

An outbuilding on the rear (northeast) corner of the lot holds a two-car garage and servant's quarters above it. It was designed in tandem with the house and shares similar design features. The first story garage section is constructed from the same brick as the house. The second story, the servants' quarters, is clad with false half-timbering and stucco, again matching the main

house. It has a steeply-pitched roof and an oversized dormer on the south side. It is entered from the back, the east side.

### **Site and Landscaping**

The lot that the Craig House stands on has about 100 feet of frontage on Ardsley Road and extends back roughly 200 feet deep. The house is set back from the road, so there is a substantial front lawn. A driveway runs along the west side of the property, extending beyond the house and culminates in a circular drive. The house is oriented to the west, toward the driveway, rather than facing Ardsley Road. The garage/servants' quarters is in the rear (northeast) corner of the property.

A brick wall delineates the back yard. This yard is landscaped with trees and shade loving shrubs, including azalea and rhododendron. No doubt the landscaping plan and some of the plants are original to the house. Bills exist from Harkey Brothers Nursery dated February and May 1930. They list various trees and landscape plants, including eleven lombardy poplars, one silver maple, four English laurels, one pink dogwood, arborvitae, ligustrum, photinia, pyracantha and unspecified flowering shrubs. Although the landscape architect, if any, is unknown, Harkey Brothers must have enacted the plan, because their bills include figures for stone, flagstone, topsoil, turf, fertilizer and labor. The sunny spot is along the west side of the house where the greenhouse once stood. It is planted in colorful flowering annuals and perennials.

### **Integrity**

The Craig House is in virtually intact condition. Except for a kitchen remodeling and the removal of the greenhouse, little or no material has been added or removed since the day the house was completed.

### **Documentation**

The owners of the Craig House are unusually fortunate to possess some original documents pertaining to the construction of the house. These include specifications, contracts, correspondence, bills for materials, and bills for the architect's services. Even the application for water service and receipts for utility deposits are in the file.

Records go back to April 1929, when the lot was staked by an engineer, and then purchased by Mr. Craig from the estate of C. C. Coddington. In June, contracts were signed with the general contractor, J. A. Gardner, and with the plumbing contractor, Henry Hackney. Both gentlemen were from Charlotte. An estimate of \$3845.00 was given by the Statesville Manufacturing Company for the millwork. Also in June, a proposal for a heating system was solicited from the A. Z. Price Company of Charlotte. Their bid was \$2875.65, including a load of coal. July 8, an application for water service was made to the Charlotte Water Works. Interestingly, this took place before the building permit was granted on July 12, 1929. Correspondence from the architect dated July 13 mentions that "We will start to pore [sic] concrete today and will be

laying brick in a few days." Another letter from Peeps on July 18 says "Concrete footings have been poured and will start laying brick tomorrow."

Various bills trickled in and were paid during August, September, October and November. A six dollar deposit was paid to the Southern Public Utilities Company on December 9 for electric service. The Craig's likely settled into their new home before Christmas. A final accounting made by Peeps of the costs of the Craig House, including the lot, is dated March 15, 1930 and totals \$59,638.97. A handwritten note from the architect says "The above includes all work that was contracted for and passed through my office, but does not include such items as was added after the house was completed." He is probably referring to the stained glass window and the living room mantel, since there is no mention of these items elsewhere in the file.

The architects specifications is a detailed document outlining both general terms and exact composition of materials. It lists, for instance, the recipe for the mortar mix and the brand of stucco to be used. It directs that the floors be white oak, the interior doors be mahogany, the gutters be copper, and the switchplates be Bakelite. It even includes instructions for finishing the interior woodwork. This is an especially valuable document because it verifies that the materials present in the house today are original.

Some landscaping was included in Peeps accounting of the price tag for the Craig House. There are two bills from Harkey Brothers Nursery, dated February 20 and May 17, 1930. They list various trees shrubs, plants, landscape materials and labor.

## **Summary**

The Craig House stands as a fine example of a large Tudor Revival home designed by one of Charlotte's premiere architects of the early twentieth century. Original documentation dating from the period of construction proves that virtually all of the fabric present in the house today is original material as specified by the architect.

The Craig House contains many characteristic components of the Tudor Revival style, especially dark, textured wall surfaces stone trim, grouped windows, and a steeply-pitched, cross-gabled roof. On the interior, the fine workmanship and high quality materials are evidenced throughout the house, including a large stained glass window, classical mantelpieces, chestnut panelling and mahogany doors. Although the kitchen has been remodeled, virtually all of the bathroom fixtures and tile are original. Additionally, all of the light fixtures are original and all but two are each different from the next.

David Craig was in a high income bracket and could afford to hire an important architect and build his house in a manner not accessible to the average middle class American. The house even today reveals a standard of living available to a well-to-do businessman during the 1920s.