



The Crowell-Berryhill Store



This report was written on July 7, 1982

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Crowell- Berryhill Store is located at 401 West 9th Street, Charlotte, North Carolina.

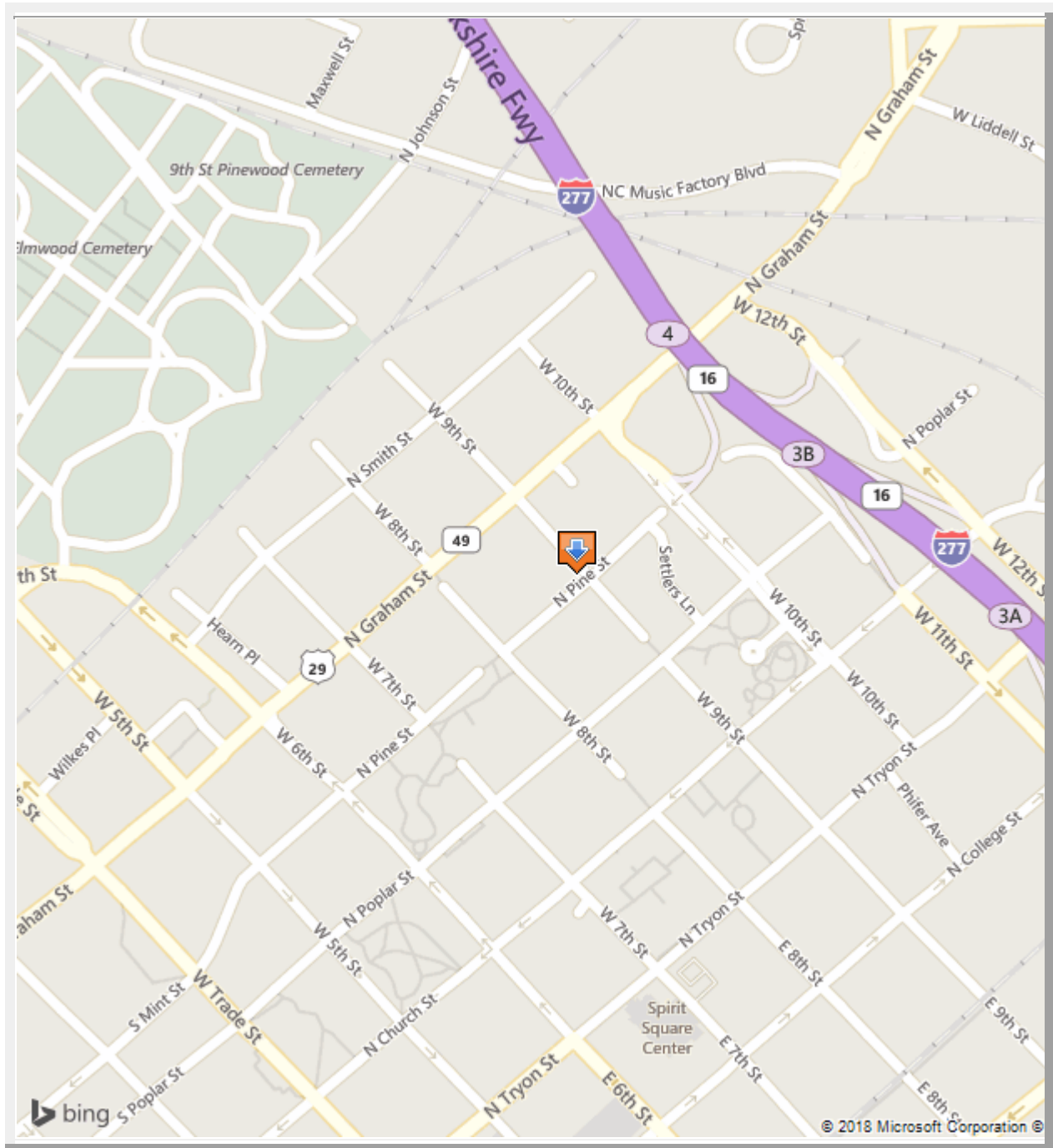
2. Name, address, and telephone number of the present owner of the property:
The present owners of the property are:

Mr. Cullie M. Tarleton and his wife, Sylvia D. Tarleton
312 West 9th Street
Charlotte, NC 28202

Telephone: 704/376-9439

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.



Click on the map to browse

5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The most recent deed to this property is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 4386 at page 627. The Tax Parcel Number of this property is: 078-074-15.

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

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains an architectural description of the property prepared by Thomas W. Hanchett, architectural historian.

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 Historic Properties Commission judges that the property known as the Crowell-Berryhill Store does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: (1) The Crowell-Berryhill Store, which opened in 1897 as a branch of the Star Mills Grocery Company, is the only turn-of-the-century grocery store which survives in uptown Charlotte; (2) The grocery store served as the social, political, and economic centerpiece of neighborhoods in Charlotte at the turn of the century; (3) the Crowell-Berryhill Store is an excellent example of sensitive adaptive reuse; (4) the Crowell-Berryhill Store is an important component of Fourth Ward, a local historic district.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association: The Commission contends that the attached architectural description by Mr. Thomas W. Hanchett demonstrates that the Crowell-Berryhill Store 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 .50 acres of land is \$1,090.00. The current appraised value of the store building is \$9,720.00. The property is zoned URC.

Date of preparation of this report: July 7, 1982

Prepared : Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Director
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission
3500 Shamrock Drive
Charlotte, NC 28215

Telephone: 704/563-2307

Historical Overview

*Dr. William H. Huffman
December, 1981*

With the recent renovation of the Berryhill Store at the corner of 9th and Pine, it will once again take its place as a vital part of the restored neighborhood that it had when it was built at the end of the nineteenth century.

Up until the mid-1890's, the property where the store is located changed hands a number of times as increasingly divided parcels of undeveloped land. ¹ In December, 1896, a corner parcel measuring thirty-eight feet on Ninth Street and ninety-nine feet on Pine was sold for \$300.00 to Star Mills, a local company which produced grits and mill feed at 306 E. Trade Street. ² From the records, it appears that in 1897 Star Mills built a store with an apartment occupying the second floor on the site, possibly as a retail feed store, and in April of that year sold it on a lot diminished to the size of thirty-three feet by sixty-six feet to M. L. Alexander for \$1250.00. ³ After a brief ownership of a little over a year, Mr. Alexander, through choice or necessity, conveyed the ownership of the store to William M. Crowell in July, 1898, and remained as a clerk for the new owner. ⁵

Mr. Crowell, who previously had a grocery at 701 N. Pine one block to the north of his new location, operated the store as a retail grocery for about a year and a half when he in turn sold out to another competitor, Andrew Monroe Beattie (1854-1911) in December, 1899. ⁶ A. M. Beattie continued to operate his longtime grocery business at 416 E. Seventh Street, ⁷ while a newcomer to the trade, Ernest W. Berryhill took over the operation of the store at 9th and Pine. ⁸ In 1907, Mr. Berryhill bought the property outright from Mr. Beattie, ⁹ who, four years later, died, according to the attending physician, of "congestion of the brain" brought on by "work and worry." ¹⁰ He had been a grocer in the city for twenty-seven years. ¹¹

Ernest Wiley Berryhill (1865-1931), whose name is associated with another landmark in Charlotte's Fourth Ward, the beautifully preserved Berryhill House located diagonally across the intersection of 9th and Pine from the store, was a Charlotte native. On January 4, 1893, the twenty-six-year-old Ernest Berryhill was married to Gussie A. Newcomb (1872-1956) in Charlotte with the bride's brother, George H. Newcomb (1869-1925) acting as a witness. ¹² Gussie and George were born in White Plains, NY, and were the children of John H. (1845-1892) and Anna Augusta ("Gussie") Newcomb (1850-1933). The Newcomb family had come to Charlotte in 1879, where John and a brother, George, established a bellows factory in the city. In 1884, the brothers and their wives (who joined together in the millinery business from 1881-1891) constructed houses next door to each other on the 300 block of West Ninth Street; the fine Victorian house on the corner lot at 9th and Pine was built by John Newcomb and his wife, the elder Gussie.

In 1891, the brothers dissolved their partnership, and John built a bellows factory behind his house on West Ninth where he was assisted by his son George. The following year, on July 27,

Mr. Newcomb unexpectedly died at the age of 47, and was widely mourned in the community.¹³ Just under six months later, Ernest Berryhill and daughter Gussie were married. At the time, he was a store clerk, but shortly thereafter joined with his brother-in-law to form the Berryhill and Newcomb Bellows Factory, and the newlyweds made their home in the stately house on the northeast corner of 9th and Pine, which thereafter came to be known as the Berryhill house.¹⁴

It was, then, right about the turn of the century when Mr. Berryhill went into the grocery business on the southwest corner of 9th and Pine, and thus the Berryhill Store came to be a fixture in the mostly residential area in Charlotte's Fourth Ward for many years. The Sanborn Map of 1905 shows the store neatly tucked in a corner among tight, neat rows of Victorian houses, all with large porches along their fronts or sides, and running for blocks in all four directions from the business. Mr. Berryhill himself was well known as a gracious and considerate man, who ran a charge and delivery store, and from whom those who could not pay received, on some occasions, a free basket of groceries. Working with him in the store for many years was his longtime black employee, Amzie Roseman, who was a familiar figure to those who traded at the store and lived in the area, and Mrs. Berryhill as well was found in the store every day. Also helping out by occasionally looking after the store summers when Mr. Berryhill went on vacation was Benjamin S. Gray (b. 1898), who was born and raised at West Ninth and Graham, one block from the grocery. according to Mr. Gray, Ernest Berryhill had a carefully tended community business which served well the residents of his area, from the two dozen or so well-to-do customers to the plainer folk. Though the store proprietor at first seemed reserved, once you got to know him, "he was one of the finest men you ever knew."¹⁵ When he died in 1931, the Queen City lost one of its most respected citizens. Besides being known as the grocer to Charlotte's 4th Ward, Mr. Berryhill also maintained rental property in the area and was a founder and director of the Citizens Savings Bank, which established its reputation by making loans to ordinary citizens, not just to the wealthy.¹⁶

Thirty-seven years earlier in 1894, the Berryhills had become the proud parents of their only child, who was born at the 9th and Pine home, John Newcomb Berryhill (1894-1979). In his youth Newcomb Berryhill attended Baird's school for boys in Charlotte, and, after graduation, took a job with Standard Oil Co. after a year or so with that firm, he had the opportunity to go with the Dupont Company, for which he worked 18 years in various places in the country. In 1919, while helping set up a plant for the fledgling General Motors Company in Pontiac, Michigan, the younger Berryhill met Leonora Lanier, a Nashville native who was also employed by Dupont. The following January 20, 1920, they were married and continued their careers with Dupont for the next 12 years.¹⁷

When Ernest Berryhill died in 1931, his wife attempted to continue the operation of the grocery with hired help, but within a relatively short time sold the business to Benjamin Gray, the same fellow who used to help the owners some summers. Despite the depression, Mr. Gray said that the business was profitable, but after about a year's ownership, he had to relinquish the store because of illness.¹⁸ It was then in 1932 that Gussie Newcomb Berryhill asked her son if he would return to Charlotte to look after the family's real estate interests and the grocery, which he agreed to do. For the next eight or nine years, despite the lingering depression, Newcomb Berryhill successfully ran the grocery store and the other family interests. In 1940, his mother,

who for some time had been living alone in the Berryhill house, suffered a stroke and had to be put in a nursing home. Within a year, Mr. Berryhill sold the grocery business (but the family retained ownership of the property), divided the old family house into four apartments, and devoted himself to his rental properties. With the outbreak of the war, he entered government service and served in several capacities, including heading Draft Board Number 1 in Charlotte and supervising slaughter control in the Carolinas.¹⁹

From 1941 to 1944, the 9th and Pine store was operated as Turk's Quality Food Grocery, then from 1944 to 1956 as the Charles R. West Cash Grocery. In the latter year, Mr. West gave up the business because of ill health, and thereafter, the changing character of the neighborhood could be seen by the building's history for the next twenty years: In 1957 it was vacant, and the following year became the Charlotte Paint and Body Supply Company, then came another vacancy again the next year. In 1960, Mr. Berryhill converted the location to the self-service Ninth Street and Pine Laundry Center, which operated until 1973, when the building once again became vacant, as did the two second-floor apartments into which it had been divided years before.²⁰

The Berryhill Store has fortunately benefited from the splendid revival of the 4th Ward community. In 1975, Mr. Berryhill and his wife sold the family house, which was in danger of destruction, to the Charlotte Junior League, which in turn conveyed it to the Berryhill Preservation organization, thus ensuring its restoration.²¹ The store itself was sold in 1977 to two Charlotte men who undertook some restoration work, and the following year passed to the ownership of two members of Charlotte's Junior League.²² The present owners, Cullie M. Tarleton, an executive with Jefferson-Pilot Broadcasting, and his wife, Sylvia, are completing an extensive and comprehensive renovation of the store, including the two second-floor apartments.²³ In the spring of 1982, the store will have much of its original appearance and use, and thus once again it will be an integral part of the revived city neighborhood it served so well for so many years.

NOTES

¹ Deed Book 28, p. 309, 21 Oct. 1881; Deed Book 78, p. 457, 9 April 1891.

² Deed book 116, p. 236, 17 Dec. 1896; Charlotte City Directory, 1899, p. 37.

³ Deed Book 117, p. 208, 17 April 1897.

⁴ Deed Book 127, p. 152, 20 July 1898.

⁵ Charlotte City Directory, 1897/8, p. 125. M. L. Alexander cannot be further identified at the present time.

⁶ Ibid., 1896/7, p. 81; Deed Book 144, p. 16, 28 Dec. 1899.

⁷ Charlotte City Directory, 1899/1900, p. 157.

⁸ Ibid., p. 118.

⁹ Deed Book 228, p. 72, 17 Oct. 1907, price \$2800.00.

¹⁰ Mecklenburg County Certificate of Death, Book 1, p. 1070.

¹¹ *Charlotte Observer*, May 12, 1911, p. 6; *Charlotte Evening Chronicle*, May 11, 1911, p. 6.

¹² Mecklenburg County Marriage Register, 1889-1898.

¹³ "Survey and Research Report on the Berryhill House," Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, undated.

¹⁴ Charlotte City Directory, 1893/4, p. 39; Ibid., 1896/7, p. 60.

¹⁵ Interview with Benjamin S. Gray, 7 January, 1982.

¹⁶ See note 13.

¹⁷ Interview with Leonora Lanier Berryhill, 18 December 1981.

¹⁸ Interview with Benjamin Gray, note 15.

¹⁹ Interview with Leonora Berryhill, note 17.

²⁰ Charlotte City Directories, 1941-1977.

²¹ See note 13.

²² Deed Book 4016, p. 621, 13 December 1977; Deed Book 4075, p. 382, 27 June 1978.

²³ The Tarletons acquired the property on 2 January 1981: Deed Book 4386, p. 627.

Architectural Description

By Thomas W. Hanchett

The Berryhill Store is a two story frame commercial building on a prominent corner site in the heart of Charlotte's Fourth Ward neighborhood. Its design is simple and straightforward, reflecting its utilitarian function. The structure was extensively renovated for owner Cullie Tarleton in 1982 and now appears much as it did when it first opened at the end of the nineteenth century.

The structure is built right at the lot lines of North Pine and Ninth streets, facing northeast onto Ninth. It is a rectangular block under a gable roof, with the short end of the rectangle at the front and the long side of the rectangle stretching down Pine. The first story has always been a commercial space, the second story residential. Sometime in the twentieth century a one story flat-roofed addition of cement block was built at the rear to increase store space to its present 1800 square feet.

The building's siting marks it clearly as a commercial structure. Homes in Fourth Ward are built closer to the street than in newer parts of Charlotte, but all are set back at least enough for a porch. The store's location right at the sidewalk line serves as an advertisement to passersby over a block away. This is especially pronounced because Pine street is wider in front of the store than it is after it crosses Ninth to the person walking or driving down Pine toward the front of the store, the building appears to be in the middle of the street. In its own humble way the Berryhill Store provides a pleasing sense of closure in the Fourth Ward streetscape, bounding the view down the street much as churches often do in the small towns of Europe.

The building itself is very simple, with no stylistic flourishes beyond its Victorian balcony and shopfront. The gable roof is sheathed with new standing-seam sheet metal, duplicating what existed before renovation. The shallow eaves are boxed and have a single strip of molding at the wall line. Exterior walls were originally wooden clapboard with corner boards. During renovation masonite clapboards replaced the wood with care taken to match the original appearance.

Windows have flat, undecorated surrounds. The long sides of the structure each have three double-hung six-over-six pane sash windows on the second floor and none on the first. At the rear of the main block of the building each of the second story apartments has a window and door opening onto a new sun deck on the roof of the one story concrete block addition.

The front of the building is only slightly less utilitarian. Beneath a large louvered gable vent are four second story windows. These are six-over-six pane double hung sash like those on the sides of the building. Below them is a wooden balcony extending over the sidewalk. The balcony itself has been rebuilt, but its Victorian balustrade with turned balusters, its heavy chamfered supporting brackets, and even the chains that steady it from above are said to be original.

By the 1980s the original shopfront beneath the balcony had been completely replaced by newer designs. The shopfront was ripped out in 1982 and replaced with the present one, following a photograph of the store taken in 1905. This recreated shopfront is symmetrical, consisting of a central show window, then a pair of recessed entrances to the store, finally flanked by two doors to stairways to the upstairs apartments. There is a transom band running across this entire assemblage above the doorways, and there is a band of vertical tongue-and-groove panels across the bottom.

Inside, the first floor is a single large room which now houses a grocery store and delicatessen. Its wide wooden floor planks were salvaged from the walls and ceiling of the space, and refinished. The remainder of the space is new. The old wooden coolers, counters, and shelving now in use were salvaged by storekeeper Paul McBroom from three neighborhood stores elsewhere in the city. On the second story are two identical loft apartments created during the 1982 renovation.