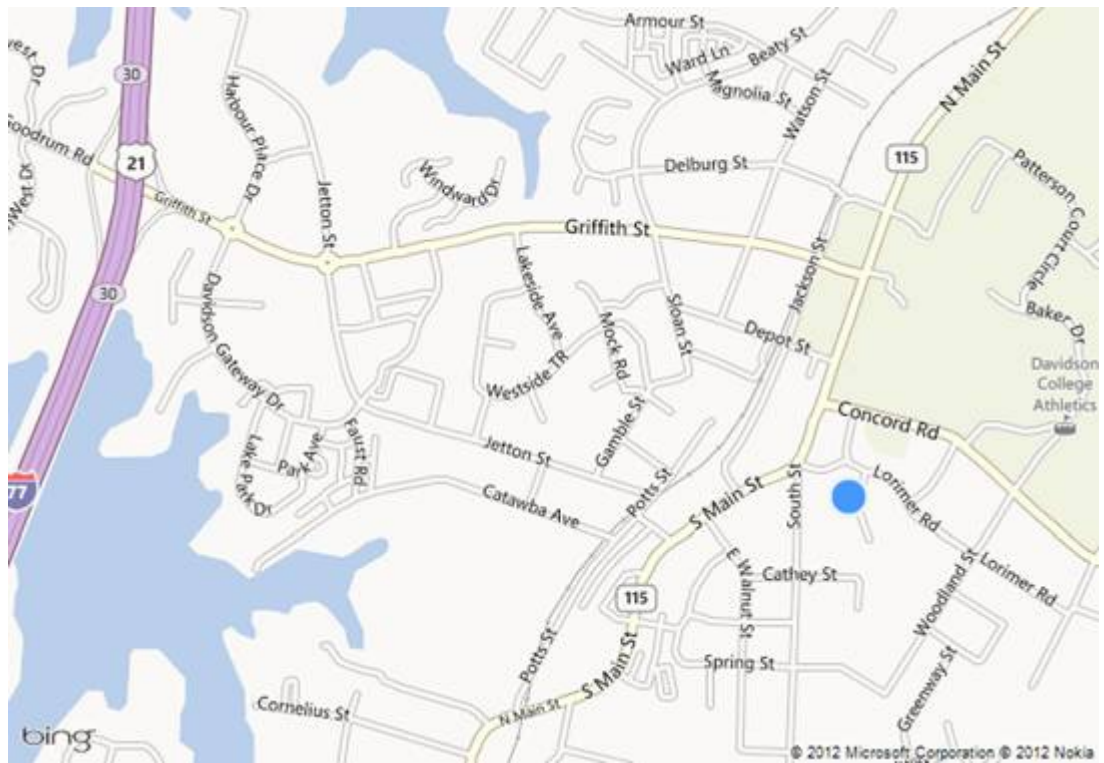


# **Survey and Research Report On The Tom and Mary Lu Daggy House**



- 1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the Tom and Mary Lu Daggy House is located at 102 Hillside Drive, Davidson, North Carolina.
- 2. Name and address of the present owner of the property:** The present owners of the property are: Suzy McKeever and Joan Singer, 3980 S. Jasmine St., Denver, CO 80237
- 3. Representative photographs of the property:** This report contains representative photographs of the property.
- 4. Maps depicting the location of the property:**





**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.:**

**Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and/or cultural importance: The Commission judges that the property known as the Tom and Mary Lu Daggy House possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:**

**1) The Tom and Mary Lu Daggy House is a significant artifact of the residential development of Davidson.**

**2) The Tom and Mary Lu Daggy House was among the first to be built under a housing plan that addressed a chronic faculty housing shortage and is credited with fundamentally enhancing the college through better faculty retainment and recruiting.**

**3) The Tom and Mary Lu Daggy House is also significant as a locally rare and remarkably well preserved example of the Modernist Style in Davidson designed by Charlotte architect Harold Cooler.**

**9. Ad Valorem tax appraisal: The current assessed value of the property is \$393,800.**

**10. Portion of property recommended for designation: The interior and exterior of the house and the approximately .5 acres of land associated with the tax parcel.**

**11. Date of Preparation of this Report: October 15, 2012**

**Prepared by: Stewart Gray**

### **Statement of Significance**

The Tom and Mary Lu Daggy House is a significant artifact of the residential development of Davidson. The house was among the first to be built under a housing plan that addressed a chronic faculty housing shortage and is credited with fundamentally enhancing the college through better faculty retainment and recruiting. The Tom and Mary Lu Daggy House is also significant as a locally rare and remarkably well preserved example of the Modernist Style in Davidson designed by Charlotte architect Harold Cooler.

## **A Brief History of the Daggy House**

The need for faculty housing in Davidson greatly shaped the town's built environment during the twentieth century. With only seven faculty members in the late nineteenth century, the college could easily accommodate the professors and their families in houses owned by the college.<sup>[1]</sup> The situation changed in the early years of the twentieth century. New faculty, hired to meet the demands of a growing curriculum and student body, strained the supply of housing. Some faculty members built houses along North Main Street.<sup>[2]</sup> But this free-market solution was apparently not sufficient to meet the housing demand. In a pattern that would be repeated several times during the twentieth century, the college began to develop housing for faculty along Concord Road. Davidson College built a house for Professor Thomas W. Lingle at 400 Concord Road in 1912, and a house for English professor M. G. Fulton at 326 Concord Road in 1914. The professors did not own the homes; the college did. Fulton only stayed four years. The Lingles lived in their "college house" eighteen years. Next to the Lingle House, the college built a home for professor Howard Arbuckle to the professor's personal specifications, including a stucco finish on the first story, and shingle siding on the second story.<sup>[3]</sup>

After World War II, Davidson College experienced another growth surge with enrollment peaking at 980 students in 1946. The student population settled into the 800s during the 1950s and then rose to 920 in 1960.<sup>[4]</sup> The college endeavored to accommodate this growth. Returning GIs and their families were housed in prefabricated surplus military barracks. A more permanent response to this growth was an ambitious building program on the campus that included a new gym, science building, dormitory, fraternity buildings, a new church building, and a fine arts building.

However, housing for faculty was again in short supply. The growing school attracted new young faculty, and several factors conspired to limit their housing options. As an isolated small town, Davidson afforded limited opportunities for residential development after World War II. The nature of the tenure process, which discouraged professors from making real estate commitments until they received tenure, required that the college endeavor to maintain a large stock of apartments, duplexes, and rental houses for much of the faculty. Even if houses were available, the new young professors often did not have the means to buy a home. Documents from the 1950s, from the files of college treasurer Dr. Grier Martin, demonstrate the "shuffling act" that took place each year as the Housing Committee worked to assign faculty to available housing. A later report from April 1961 well illustrates the problem. Assignments were categorized as either: Routine family assignments, Involved family assignments, or Bachelor assignments. Under "Involved family assignments" the report states:

Jackson – Temporary housing until Lester moves from College Apt.  
Frey – Stay at Dupler's until Kelton house is available (could use Oetzel apt. temporarily). Kelton house will be offered first to Stevens — if he desires it, then Freys would get Stevens house.

Martin wrote that in the 1950s “there were not enough houses (owned by the college) and many of them were antiquated. All of them were rented at the same low price, and this caused serious competition among members of the faculty for the few ‘better houses.’”<sup>[5]</sup> Yet, the low rents charged by the college discouraged faculty from buying. In addition, suitable houses and lots were not available in the town, and financing was a problem. Additionally, the faculty who did own their own homes opposed the college subsidizing additional faculty housing.<sup>[6]</sup> This situation was not just an inconvenience. Martin wrote, “Acquiring new faculty and staff was seriously hindered by the inadequate housing.”<sup>[7]</sup>

To address the housing shortage and the associated problems the shortage caused for Davidson College, the board of trustees voted in 1955 to embark on an ambitious housing development plan. The college owned land to the south of Concord Road and to the west of the intersection of Lorimer and Woodlawn roads, rolling land that was not suitable for campus expansion. Sisters Joan Singer and Suzy McKeever remember that the land had been a pasture where kids took horseback riding lessons.<sup>[8]</sup> Martin later described the property as a “gully.” The college divided the land into a twenty-lot subdivision. Lorimer Road was extended to the west, and Hillside Drive was constructed. These lots were offered to faculty at a below-market price with the college offering financing at 4½ percent. The same financing was offered to the faculty even if they wished to build elsewhere. And many of the college-owned homes were offered to faculty with the same generous financing. But it was the twenty-lot development along Lorimer Road and Hillside Drive that was the most prominent symbol of the college’s housing program.

The housing plan and the subdivision were successful. By 1960, eighteen of the twenty lots had been sold, and sixteen houses had been constructed. Seven houses were built under the housing plan in other locations, and nine former college rental homes were purchased by faculty. In 1955 only around 40% of the faculty were homeowners. By 1960 80% of faculty either owned a home or owned a lot upon which they planned to build.<sup>[9]</sup> Benefits to the college included better faculty moral and a more appealing prospect to prospective staff and faculty. The program also freed up rental housing for new non-tenured faculty.

In the 1963 Davidson College publication “Report of the President” an article gives much credit to the housing program in the development and retention of a strong faculty, sighting “little or no” turnover in faculty that built homes under the program. In a 1969 *Charlotte Observer* article, Louise Martin (wife of Grier Martin) stated that only one or two faculty had left the college since the housing program had started in 1955. In the same article, Grier Martin attributes his becoming president of Davidson College in 1958 to the success of the housing program and the good will it generated in the faculty.<sup>[10]</sup>

On October 12, 1956, Tom and Mary Lu Daggy bought a lot in the new college subdivision at 102 Hillside Drive. Tom was a biology professor, and Mary Lu was a high school math teacher. They were both from Indiana, and Tom received his Ph.D from NorthWestern University. The Daggys moved from Michigan to Davidson in 1947 with their two young daughters Joan and Suzy and resided in a college owned home on North Main Street. In Davidson the family became Presbyterians and settled into the life of a small college town. According to Joan, growing up in Davidson was wonderful with the exception of their living situation. Their college house, which had been turned into a duplex and was shared with another college family, was old, dark, and small. The entire Daggy family shared one bathroom.

The Daggys were among the first faculty families to purchase a lot under Davidson College’s new housing plan. The Daggys contacted Charlotte architect Harold Cooler after Cooler had designed a traditional home for Dr. Richard Bernard on Lorimer Road, and asked him to design for them a modern house.<sup>[11]</sup> Cooler developed a long and fruitful relationship with the Davidson faculty, designing around fifteen of their homes over the next two decades.<sup>[12]</sup>





**1957 Bernard House, Designed by Cooler**

Mary Lu Daggy grew up on a farm in Indiana. But according to her daughters, she was not sentimental about country life. Mary Lu wanted to live in town, “in the action.”<sup>[13]</sup> And she did not want her daughters to grow up isolated out in the country. She “loved everything modern, loved the future, and wanted that in her house.”<sup>[14]</sup> Mary Lu was well matched with Cooler. Cooler studied architecture at Clemson; and, while not trained in modernism, he was exposed to the works of the Bauhaus, Gropius, Van der Rohe, and the “Organic Architecture of Wright.”<sup>[15]</sup> As a young architect, Cooler produced final plans and supervised construction of a Modernist house in Gaston County, sometime before leaving Charley Connelly’s Charlotte firm in 1951.<sup>[16]</sup> Cooler and fellow architect Marshall McDowell established their own firm in 1951, and in 1955 Cooler designed the Modernist style Bruce and Meg Laing House in Charlotte. Cooler embraced the idea of building a modernist house for the Daggys. While he designed many traditional houses, he found designing a “modern home more challenging,” and a “more enjoyable experience.”<sup>[17]</sup>



Cooler recalls that he designed the Daggy House for “the girls,” (Mary Lu and her daughters) and that Tom Daggy had virtually no input into the design.<sup>[18]</sup> Joan and Suzy recall that their father wanted a “quality house,” but otherwise had no interest in the design. The split-level layout of the house was the first such design in Davidson.<sup>[19]</sup> The house was also the first in Davidson to be heated by a heat pump. This early heat pump application required that three-phase power be fed into the house, which was virtually unheard of in residential construction. Other modern features included a vacuum tube intercom system, a built-in hi-fi cabinet, a high sloping ceiling in the living room, and a white composite roof. Joan remembers that the kitchen was strikingly different from anything else in town, with a refrigerator set into the cabinetry, a stainless steel sink, and built-in oven. Suzy recalls that the neighbors had never seen anything like the direct-glazed glass foyer wall. <sup>[20]</sup>

The Daggys hired local builder Floyd Ballard, who built most of the houses in the new development. The Daggys were happy with the design and the construction. Suzy recalls her mother saying “this is costing us more than we expected, but we love it.”<sup>[21]</sup>

When the Daggys moved into their house at 102 Hillside Drive, Suzy Daggy McKeever felt that they had “died and gone to heaven.” Each daughter had her own bedroom with a large closet, and they shared a pink tiled bath. The lowest level of the house contained a family room with a ping pong table and a piano. There was no clutter in the new well planned and designed house. As a teenager, Joan Daggy Singer found the house’s modern design “almost embarrassing,” and believed the community thought the house design was bizarre, but quickly adjusted to the comforts and conveniences of the house.

The house featured a second kitchen in the lower level, where Mary Lu canned vegetables, and prepared for large dinner parties. Tom and Mary Lu lived in the house for the rest of their lives. Mary Lu died in 1987, and Tom died in 1996. The house was rented after Tom death and suffered some neglect. However, nearly all of the house’s significant original architectural elements survived.

### **Architectural Description of the Daggy House**

The Daggy House is located in a residential section of Davidson near the center of the town. While not far from the commercial and institutional buildings of the town’s

core, the Daggy House is surrounded exclusively by other single-family houses. The topography of the neighborhood is rolling, which is in stark contrast to the relatively flat topography of the town's prominent older residential development along Concord Road and North Main Street.



**Daggy House as it appeared ca. 1960**

The Daggy House faces east on a .5 acre lot, and is set back approximately 50' from the street (there is no street-side sidewalk.) The front yard is treeless and lot slopes up steeply from the road, giving the Daggy House a distinct prominence in the streetscape. The front-gabled house is five bays wide. The house's split-level layout is evident in the two-story fenestration of the northern section of the façade. This section of the façade is three bays wide and is symmetrical. The upper story is clad with vertical Philippine mahogany boards. A narrow replacement double-hung window is centered in this section of the façade and is flanked by wider windows of the same height. These replacement windows replaced the original three-light aluminum sash windows. The roof peak is centered over the center window. This upper story projects approximately one foot over the running bond brick of the lower level. The three original two-light, aluminum, awning-style windows of the lower story

are in alignment with those of the upper story, and are shorter. The windows of the lower level sit on simple brick sills.



The front door is south of and adjacent to the two story section of the house. The original slab door is topped by a large direct-glazed transom that extends to the soffit and follows the slope of the roof. The door is bordered to the north by a large direct-glazed sidelight. The door is setback from the exterior walls, allowing for a small protected stoop. The masonry stoop is topped with random-shaped blue stones, and the stone extends under the door and is used as interior flooring in the foyer. The exterior brick of the lower level wall and the wood siding of the upper level turn the corner at the recessed entrance and also continue into the interior space.



The southern portion of the façade features a single large four-light aluminum window set close to the south side elevation. Between the large window and the recessed front door is a blank brick wall set in running bond. The blank section of brick wall is topped with vertical Philippine mahogany siding that runs to the soffit and follows the slope of the roof. Above the large window, the siding is replaced by a single painted wooden panel. Boxed beams, now wrapped in metal, extend from the interior and support the soffit. The original wooden soffit is covered with vinyl. A wide barge board is topped with moulded trim.



The south elevation features a large simple chimney laid in running bond. The chimney is capped with a 4" concrete slab resting on four rows of brick, flush with the north and south sides of the chimney and set back from the front and rear of the chimney, giving the impression of shoulders. The elevation is pierced by a single replacement window near the rear elevation. The brick veneer is topped with a short course of the vertical wood siding found on the front of the house. The siding runs from the level of the top of the window to the soffit. An original screened porch extends to the west, and the roof and soffit of the south elevation run uninterrupted to cover it.



The rear elevation is dominated by the screen porch, which features concrete slab floor and a shed roof extension of the principal roof. The porch room is framed by widely spaced vertical studs, connected with a chair-rail-height vertical member. Above the screened framing, Philippine mahogany runs vertically to the soffit. The porch shelters a ten-light replacement door, a short two-light replacement window, and a pair of original wooden five-light double doors. The three-bay-wide gabled section of the front elevation is nearly mirrored on the rear, with the only variance being a single replacement window adjacent to the screened porch.



The north elevation features a full-width shed-roof carport that originally featured a flat roof. The roof is supported by square posts resting on a partial-height brick wall, topped with a soldier course. The rear of the carport is enclosed by full-height brick veneer to form a storage room. The carport shelters two original two-light doors. Each door features two tall vertical panels.

## **Interior**





The high degree of integrity found on the exterior of the Daggy House is also found in the interior. The concept of "bringing the outside inside" was incorporated into many Modernist house designs. In the Daggy House this concept is demonstrated in the design of the foyer. The bluestone pavers of the stoop and the random-width Philippine mahogany and brick of the exterior walls extend uninterrupted into the interior space of the foyer, with the interior and exterior minimally separated by glazing. The distinction between the interior and exterior spaces is also blurred by design elements. The foyer ceiling transitions into the exterior soffit at the foyer glazing, and the foyer is separated from the living room by a partial-height wall topped with a built-in copper planter. The living room is the most architecturally striking of all of the interior spaces. Walls are sheathed

with ash plywood panels that are set above a painted baseboard. On the east wall, a painted wood soffit projects from the wall and contains recessed lighting. The high ceiling follows the slope of the roof, and exposed boxed beams span the ceiling and extend to the exterior of the house to support the roof overhang.



The south wall is drywall, and features a simple fireplace with a long, shallow raised hearth. The firebox is surrounded by oak mantle trim that is mitered at the corners. The flooring is red oak.



Two short flights of stairs lead from the foyer to the upper and lower levels of the two-story section of the house. A simple wrought iron handrail with simple widely spaced iron balusters curves at the foyer and serves both flights. Treads are simple red oak boards set on painted risers and



stringer-boards. The upper level contains three bedrooms and an office. The office features a built-in stereo cabinet. The bedrooms all feature red oak floors, simple curved-profile moulded trim at the doors and base, and simple wrapped drywall corners at the windows. Two tiled bathrooms exhibit a high degree of integrity with original tile and fixtures. The lower level of the two-story section of the house features one large room adjacent to the front (east) wall and a series of smaller rooms along the back (west) wall. These rooms include a mechanical room, a secondary kitchen, a bathroom, and a small workroom that opens onto the carport.



Lower Level, ca. 1960



The kitchen features the original plywood cabinetry with the original hardware and the original stainless steel exhaust hood. The original Formica counters have been replaced by stone counter tops. The kitchen also features the master control for a house-wide intercom system.



<sup>[1]</sup> Mary D. Beaty, *Davidson: A History of the Town from 1835 to 1937*(Davidson, North Carolina: Briarpathc Press, 1979), 37.

[2] Dan Morrill and Jennifer Payne, "The Evolution of the Built Environment of Davidson, North Carolina."

[3] Beaty, *Davidson: A History of the Town from 1835 to 1937*, 114.

[4] Jan Blodgett and Ralph Levering, *One Town, Many Voices*, (Davidson, North Carolina: Davidson Historical Society, 2012), 151.

[5] Grier Martin, "These Are the Houses the Faculty Built: Davidson College Finds Staffing Problems Much Easier Since it Opened a Subdivision," *College and University Business* (January 1960).

[6] Ibid

[7] Ibid

[8] Interviews with Suzy McKeever, 9-30-2012 and Joan Singer, 9-26-2012

[9] Martin, "These Are the Houses." t

[10] Barbara Ingold, "Home in 'Grier's Gulch' Keeps College Contacts," *Charlotte Observer*, 1969.

[11] Harold Cooler, *Booster Kuester and Beyond*, (Charlotte: Okatie Press, 2009) 137.

[12] Article in Triangle Modernist Homes, <http://www.trianglemethodisthouses.com/cooler.htm>

[13] Interview Suzy McKeever.

[14] Interview Joan Singer.

[15] Cooler, *Booster*, 25.

[16] Cooler, *Booster*, 21.

[17] Interview with Harold Cooler, 9-13-2012.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Interviews with Suzy McKeever and Joan Singer.



<sup>[20]</sup> Ibid

<sup>[21]</sup> Interview Suzy McKeever.