

Survey and Research Report
on the
Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building



1. Name and location of the property. The property known as the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building is located at 421 Penman Street in Charlotte, North Carolina.

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

The owner is:

McCoy Holdings LLC

C/o Edwin R. McCoy III

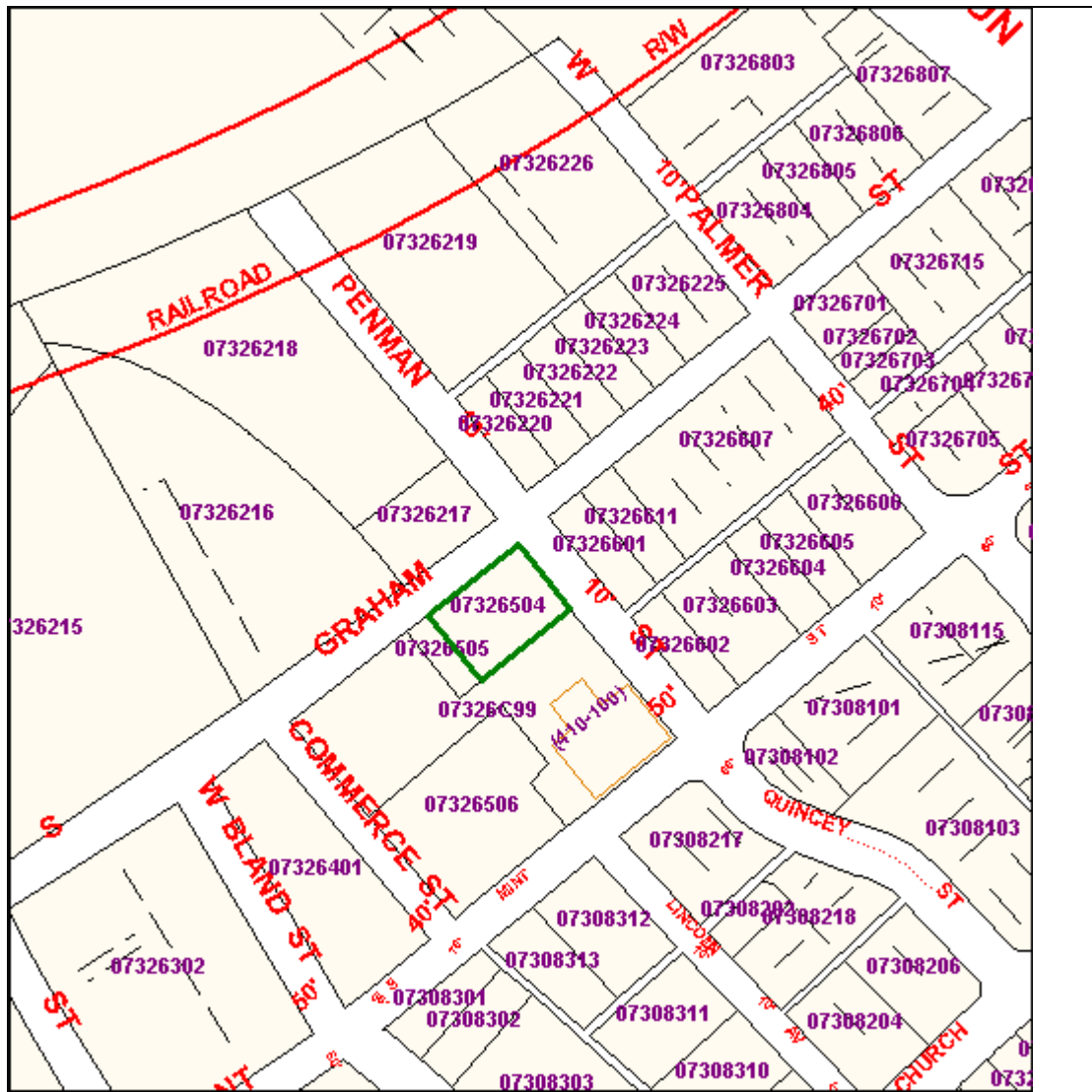
521 Clanton Road, Suite C

Charlotte, N.C. 28217-1360

Telephone Number: (704) 527-7603

3. Representative Photographs of the property. This report contains interior and exterior photographs of the property.

4. Maps depicting the location of the property. This report contains a map depicting the location of the property.



5. Current deed book references to the property. The most recent deed to the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 10032 at Page 920. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is 073-265-04.

6. A brief historical description of the property. This report contains a historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

7. A brief architectural description of the property. This report contains an architectural description of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

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 history, architecture, and cultural importance.** The Commission judges that the property known as the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building, designed by Lockwood Green & Co. of Greenville, South Carolina, and erected by Charlotte contractor Blythe & Isenhour, illustrates the essentially conservative values which underlay Charlotte's industrial and commercial architecture in the 1920's; 2) the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building was an important component of the industrial and commercial infrastructure which allowed Charlotte to become a major industrial warehouse and distribution center of the two Carolinas in the early twentieth century; and 3) the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building is an important remnant of an industrial district which arose in the early 1900's between the Wilmore streetcar line and the tracks of the Southern, now Norfolk Southern Railroad.

b. **Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association.** The Commission contends that the architectural description by Dr. Dan L. Morrill demonstrates that the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building meets this criterion.

9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal. The current Ad Valorem tax appraisal for the improvements is \$657,930. The current Ad Vorem tax appraisal for the 0.388 acres of land is \$50,700. The total Ad Valorem tax appraisal for the parcel is \$708,630. The property is zoned I-2.

Date of Preparation of this Report.

March 12, 2001

Prepared by:

Dr. Dan L. Morrill

Charlotte – Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission

2100 Randolph Road

Charlotte, N.C. 28207

Section 6 – Historical Description

**Statement of Historical Significance Of The
The Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building**

421 Penman Street

Charlotte, N.C.

Summary Paragraph

The Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building, erected in 1925-26, is a structure that possesses local historic importance because it housed enterprises that made significant contributions to Charlotte's emergence as a major industrial warehouse and distribution center in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Electric Supply and Equipment Company sold and distributed electrical supplies and components essential to the operations of industrial plants, especially textile mills, in the piedmont sections of the two Carolinas. The Charlotte Manufacturing Company, which occupied the building in 1957, also participated in Charlotte's development as a textile center. It produced and shipped card clothing and loom reeds, which were indispensable supplies for the textile industry. Without the support of firms like the Electric Supply and Equipment Company and the Charlotte Manufacturing Company, cotton mills could not have proliferated in the piedmont sections of the two Carolinas in the early twentieth century.



Front in 1998



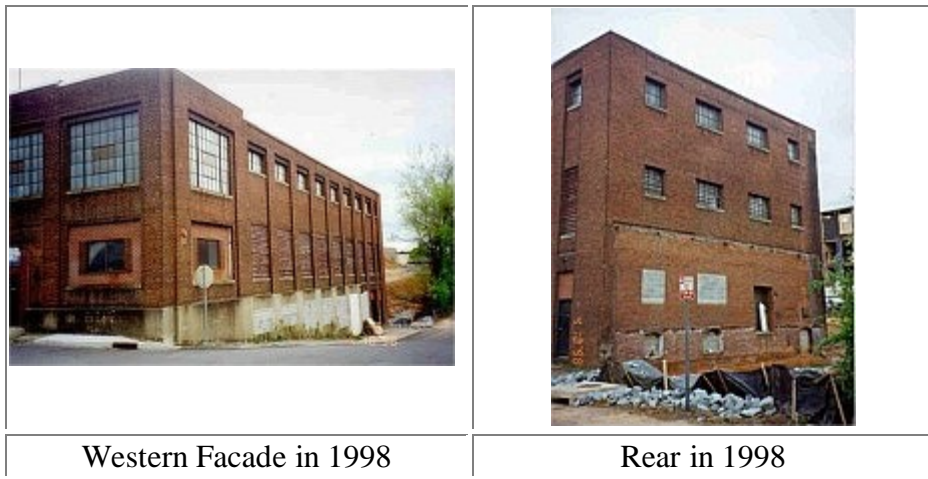
East Facade in 1998

Brief History Of The Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building.

The location of the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building is intimately bound up with the laying of an electric streetcar track along South Mint Street to connect the Wilmore

neighborhood. with Charlotte's central business district. The rapid increase of Charlotte's population in the early 1900's heightened the demand for housing. "With the booming economic growth came tremendous physical expansion," says Thomas W. Hanchett.¹ In 1914, real estate developer F. C. Abbott responded to the vigorous local housing market by laying out lots in a new streetcar suburb named Wilmore, and the trolley line was built down Mint Street from uptown Charlotte to serve the neighborhood. The Wilmore streetcar line paralleled and was only about a block and a half east of the Southern Railroad tracks that connected Charlotte and Gastonia.²

It was virtually inevitable that the area between Mint St. and the railroad would become a major industrial district. With excellent railroad and improving highway connections to communities in the piedmont sections of the two Carolinas, Charlotte became the logical place in the early 1900's from which to ship supplies to the ever increasing number of textile mills and other industrial plants in the region. "Many new demands have come upon Charlotte Realtors during the past year for locations for building of warehouses, because Charlotte has come to be known in the sales organizations of national manufacturers throughout America as the best point in the Southeast for the distribution of products and for the location of branch plants," proclaimed the Charlotte Observer. "Some realtors here have become specialists in finding such locations to suit varying requirements, and almost every available foot of railroad frontage has been analyzed and compared in price." The newspaper noted that "proximity to street cars, freight stations, express offices and retail districts commands the higher prices."³



Originally located at 220 West First Street in center city Charlotte, the Electric Supply and Equipment Company had its own building erected on Penman Street in 1925-26.⁴ Designed by the South Carolina architectural and engineering firm Lockwood, Green & Company and erected by Charlotte contractor Blythe and Isenhour, the building is situated just south of the center city and just north and west of Charlotte's Wilmore neighborhood.⁵ With W. Harbert Martin as president, Rogers W. Davis as secretary, and Thomas G. Lane as treasurer, the Electric Supply and Equipment Company received electrical supplies and components by rail and distributed these items primarily by truck to industrial customers throughout the piedmont sections of the two Carolinas.⁶ The Charlotte City Directory of 1928 described the company as "jobbers, electrical supplies and apparatus."⁷ A 1935 advertisement stated that the Electric

Supply and Equipment Company sold "motors, transformers, fans, lamps, meters, wiring devices, copper wire, pole and line material."⁸ "Among all of North Carolina's cities, Charlotte enjoyed the most sustained growth and by 1910 had surpassed Wilmington as the largest in the state," writes historian Brent D. Glass. "The significance of Charlotte's development," says Glass, "lay not only in the thirteen textile mills built between 1889 and 1908 but also in the creation of a true urban infrastructure that included engineering firms, financial institutions, and department stores."⁹

By 1937, the General Electric Supply Company had moved into the building and continued in the same line of business as its predecessor.¹⁰ Tommy Bigham, who worked in the Textile Mill Supply Company Building next door, remembers that only three people worked in the building, including a man in the basement who handled shipping.¹¹

In 1957, the Charlotte Manufacturing Company, makers of card clothing and loom reeds, moved into the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building and continued its operations there into the 1970s.¹² Before its recent renovation into offices, the building served as a warehouse for a the Charlotte Hotel Supply Company.

Section 7 – Architectural Description.

**Statement of Architectural Significance Of The
The Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building
421 Penman Street
Charlotte, N.C.**



Summary Paragraph

The Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building, designed by Lockwood Green & Company, possesses local historic importance because it is a representative example of a type of commercial and industrial structure constructed in Charlotte in the 1920's. Like the Charlotte Supply Company Building and the Textile Mill Supply Company Building (1922), both fashioned by Lockwood Green & Company, the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building (1925-26) is essentially revivalistic. Such elements as the regularly punctuated fenestration, the stepped-parapet roofline with metal coping, corbeled lintels and concrete sills at the windows, and the symmetrical massing of the building's front façade, hearken back, however obliquely, to Classical concepts of beauty. These revivalistic structures are reflective of the conservative philosophy that characterized the political, social and economic thinking of Charlotte's business elite in the 1920's.

A Brief Architectural Description of the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building.



Lockwood, Green & Company, headquartered in Greenville, S. C., was one of the principal contractors that specialized in the construction of textile mills and other industrial type buildings in the Charlotte area in the first half of the twentieth century, including the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building.¹³ Among the Charlotte structures the firm designed was the Charlotte Supply Company Building (1923) at 500 South Mint Street (torn down in the early 1990's to make way for Ericsson Stadium), and the Textile Mill Supply

Company (1922), which is located at 1300 South Mint Street or less than one block east of the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building.¹⁴

Architecturally, the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building, like the Charlotte Supply Company Building and the Textile Mill Supply Company Building, is essentially revivalistic. Such elements as the regularly punctuated fenestration, the stepped-parapet roofline with metal coping, concrete lintels and corbeled sills at the windows, and the symmetrical massing of the building's front façade, hearken back, however obliquely, to Classical concepts of beauty. These revivalistic structures are reflective of the conservative philosophy that characterized the political, social and economic thinking of Charlotte's business elite in the 1920's. During this decade of unprecedented growth, when Charlotte's population increased by 78 percent to 82,675, there was little interest in experimentation or boldness. This hesitancy to be daring stood in sharp contrast to the attitudes of Charlotte's business community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "The generation of New South leaders, including D. A. Tompkins, Edward Dilworth Latta, and George Stephens, who had taken enormous risks to turn the Piedmont into a major industrial region, were passing their power to a new generation," explains Hanchett. "The new leaders," Hanchett continues, "seemed much less adventuresome, willing to follow in the directions set by their predecessors. Their homes and offices reflected this increased interest in tradition over innovation, in social correctness than risk-taking."¹⁵

The Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building is a two story, three bay wide by ten bay deep (the two rear bays were added at some date after the initial construction), red brick structure with a full basement. Corbeled pilasters separate the bays. The building is situated on a sloping, rectangular lot on the southeastern quadrant of the intersection of South Graham and Penman Streets, just south of center city Charlotte and just north and west of the Wilmore neighborhood. The Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building borders the sidewalk on the northern edge of the property and faces Penman Street. An abandoned railroad spur parallels the property on the south. The western façade contains an original painted sign which reads: "POSITIVELY NO ADMITTANCE. APPLY AT OFFICE."

As expected in a building designed by Lockwood, Green & Company, the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building exhibits characteristics typical of early twentieth century "mill construction." It has a slightly sloping, essentially flat roof of tar and gravel, red, rough-textured brick exterior walls laid in Common Bond; large rectangular windows (mostly original on the western façade of the building) with metal muntins, hopper inserts, and concrete sills; post-and-beam framing (both steel and wooden) throughout the interior; and wooden floors (original wooden floors have been replaced), except for a cement floor in the full basement. A splatter wall is at the base of the building, and the stepped parapet walls have metal coping.

Significant changes were made to the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building during its recent conversion to office use. The replacement front entrance was eliminated, and the entrance to the building was placed on the eastern façade. Original metal fixtures flank the original front entrance, which is suggested by the design of the window at that location, as well as by a slight indentation of the splatter wall and the retention of the granite doorway sill. Brick in-fill was removed from the front windows flanking the original entrance. The front facade does

contain original connections for fire hoses. The rear or southern façade of the building has new windows and a replacement door. The façade does contain a small door to a coal chute that served a heating plant that no longer exists. None of the other doors in the building is original.

The most significant change to the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building resulted from the construction of a new entrance lobby with steps, a brick colonnade, and vaulted ceiling on the eastern façade. A portion of the original exterior wall was removed to allow the entrance lobby to penetrate the building. The entrance lobby contains a new stairway, new bathrooms, and an elevator.

The post-and-beam construction of the interior of the Electric Supply and Equipment Company Building is largely intact. Round metal posts support trusses that allow the interior spaces to be mostly open. The duct work is suspended from the original wooden ceilings, and the partition walls do not extend to the ceiling. Part of the original concrete floor in the basement is exposed.

1. Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Growth Of Charlotte: A History." (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1985), p. 27.
2. For a map of Charlotte's streetcar system, see Ibid.
3. Charlotte Observer (June 29, 1925), p. 2.
4. Charlotte City Directory (1923-24), p. 299. Charlotte City Directory (1925), p. 445. Charlotte City Directory (1926), p. 1039. Charlotte Building Permit No. 6204 (issued on June 30, 1925). Lockwood, Green & Company was extremely active in the Charlotte building industry in the 1920's and had a local office. Other Charlotte projects included the Charlotte Central High School and the Poplar Apartments.
5. Ibid.
6. Charlotte City Directory (1926), p. 284.
7. Charlotte City Directory (1928), p. 305.
8. Charlotte City Directory (1935), p. 477.
9. Brent D. Glass, *The Textile Industry In North Carolina. A History* (Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department Of Cultural Resources, 1992), p. 44.
10. Charlotte City Directory (1937), p. 244.
11. Interview of Thomas Schroder Bigham by Dr. Dan L. Morrill (December 14, 1997).
12. Charlotte City Directory (1957), p. 118. Charlotte City Directory (1976), p. 191.

13. Catherine W. Bisher, Charlotte V. Brown, Carl R. Lounsbury, Ernest H. Wood III, Architects and Builders in North Carolina: A History of the Practice of Building (The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p. 267. Charlotte Building Permit No. 6204.

14. Dan L. Morrill, "Survey and Research Report On The Charlotte Supply Company Building". Dan L. Morrill, "Survey and Research Report On The Textile Mill Supply Company Building."

15. Thomas W. Hanchett, "Charlotte Architecture. Design Through Time." (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1985), p. 34.

