



THE HARRILL-PORTER HOUSE



This report was written on January 6, 1982.

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Harrill-Porter House is located at 329 E. Kingston Ave. in Charlotte, NC.

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

Mrs. Stella M. Hooks
329 E. Kingston Avenue Charlotte,
NC 28203

Telephone: (704) 334-1592

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.



5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The most recent deed on this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 4489 at Page 553. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is 123-076-07.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property:

On September 15, 1894, the *Charlotte Observer* reported that Joseph H. Harrill was building a home in Dilworth, Charlotte's first streetcar suburb.¹ The series of events which led to the creation of Dilworth began on July 8, 1890, when Edward Dilworth Latta (1851-1925), native of Pendleton, S.C., son of a wealthy planter, graduate of Princeton University, and owner of a clothing manufacturing plant in Charlotte since 1883, joined with five associates to establish the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company, locally known as The Four Cs.² Dilworth officially opened with a gala land sale that began on May 20, 1891.³ The trolley network, which was installed for The Four Cs by the Edison Electric Company, cost forty thousand dollars.⁴ The first electric streetcar had departed from Independence Square, the intersection of Trade and Tryon Sts., on May 18, 1891.⁵ The Four Cs operated two lines, which intersected at the Square. One extended from the Richmond and Danville Railroad Depot on W. Trade St. to McDowell St. on the eastern edge of Charlotte, and the other or main line reached from the Carolina Central Railroad Depot on N. Tryon St. southward to Latta Park, the amusement park in Dilworth.⁶

The prospects for Dilworth appeared to be bright. The Four Cs sold 78 lots in May 1891. Despite these propitious beginnings Dilworth was not an immediate success. The Four C's did sell seventeen lots in its streetcar suburb from June 1891 until the end of the year,

but the situation deteriorated markedly in 1892. Except for conveying a parcel to the Charlotte Street Railway Company, its trolley subsidiary, The Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company did not exchange any lots in Dilworth during the first nine months of 1892.⁸ The first breakthrough for The Four Cs occurred on July 24, 1892, when the D. A. Tompkins Company, named for its founder and president, Daniel Augustus Tompkins (1851-1914), announced that it would build the Atherton Cotton Mill just south of Dilworth.⁹ Even more importantly in terms of Dilworth's success, the company purchased an entire block in the suburb on February 23, 1893, and erected twenty frame cottages thereon for its mill hands.¹⁰ Seven of the Atherton mill houses survive, six on S. Euclid Ave. and one on S. Cleveland Ave. They are the oldest homes in Dilworth.¹¹

The Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company endeavored to attract affluent and middle class residents to Dilworth in the early and mid-1890's. On March 13, 1893, the *Charlotte Observer* announced that The Four C's was contemplating the construction of about thirty-five houses in Dilworth, to be "purchased on the building and loan plan."¹² In June 1893, the newspaper stated that these new residences were keeping a "number of hands busy."¹³ A cluster of modest Victorian cottages in the Eastlake style did appear on the northern or "upper" end of South Boulevard and on Caldwell Street southward from Morehead Street.¹⁴ Only one of these structures survives, at 1032 South Caldwell Street.¹⁵ In 1894 The Four Cs succeeded in enticing more affluent families to Dilworth. No doubt the establishment of electric service for homes and the completion of a sewerage system were important factors in creating this phenomenon.¹⁶

The most pretentious abodes in the suburb were located on South Boulevard between Park Avenue and East Boulevard, on Park Avenue between South Boulevard and Lyndhurst Avenue, and on Kingston Avenue between South Boulevard and Lyndhurst Avenue. At least four of the earliest homes in the section are extant; they are the JonesGaribaldi House (1894) at 228 E. Park Ave., the Lucien Walker House (1894) at 328 E.

Park Ave., the Mallonee-Jones House (1895) at 400 E. Kingston Avenue, and the Harrill-Porter House at 329 E. Kingston Ave.¹⁷ The Harrill-Porter House exhibits features, such as gables decorated with simple scroll-sawn bargeboards, large vents with scroll-sawn trim, and diagonal boarding, which one finds in older center-city neighborhoods, such as the Fourth Ward. It is important to note that the Harrill-Porter House is unique among the older homes in Dilworth in this regard, at least in the finer residential section.

Joseph H. Harrill worked for A. H. Porter & Son, a shoe store and men's clothing outlet on W. Trade St. in Charlotte.¹⁸ Mr. Harrill and his family lived in the house until October 1897, when they moved back into Charlotte and resided on W. Tenth Street in Fourth Ward.¹⁹ On September 10, 1898, A. H. Porter, Mr. Harrill's employer, bought the house, and soon thereafter his son and business associate, Augustus C. Porter (1873-1959) moved into the home.²⁰ A. C. Porter and his wife, Edna Davis Porter (1875-

1952) acquired the house on July 26, 1905, and lived there until the 1950's.²¹ A native of Farmville, Va., A. C. Porter worked in the shoe business until his retirement in 1946, first for his father, who came to Charlotte in 1897 but returned to Virginia by 1902, and thereafter for the International Shoe Company. He was a member of Pritchard Memorial Baptist Church on South Boulevard in Dilworth, where he served as a Deacon and as Superintendent of Sunday Schools.²² Edna Davis Porter was also a native of Farmville, Va. The daughter of William C. Davis and Flora Brightwell Davis, she married A. C. Porter in 1892 and came with him to Charlotte in 1897.²³ Mr. and Mrs. Porter had three daughters, the last of whom, Lorna, was born in the house in 1898.²⁴ Mrs. Porter died on April 7, 1952, in her home on E. Kingston Avenue.²⁵

Soon thereafter, Mr. Porter, who lived until August 5, 1959, sold the house and moved to his daughter's residence on Dilworth Rd. East in Dilworth.²⁶ The new owner was Robert D. Alexander, president of the Allright Charlotte Company, who lived in the house for approximately one year.²⁷ In July 1954 Mr. Richard Kaye, an employee of Ivey's Department Store bought the residence, and in 1957 he converted the house into two apartments, one upstairs and one downstairs.²⁸ In August 1960, Mr. Kaye sold the residence to John and Bessie Carabateas, who converted the house into four apartments. Mr. Carabateas died in 1965, but his widow continued to manage the structure until July 1966, when she sold the house to William Plemmons and his sister, Blanche P. Gudger.²⁹ They operated the structure as an apartment house until 1981, when the house was damaged by fire. Mrs. Stella M. Hooks has recently purchased the structure, and she intends to repair and restore it as her residence.

NOTES

¹ *Charlotte Observer* (September 15, 1894).

² *Charlotte News* (June 27, July 9, 1890). Latta's partners in creating The Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company were F. B. McDowell, E. B. Springs, Dr. M. A. Bland, E. K. P. Osborne, and J. L. Chambers, all Charlotteans.

³ *Charlotte News* (May 21, 1891).

⁴ *Charlotte News* (February 12, 1891).

⁵ *Charlotte News* (May 19, 1891); *Morning Star* (Wilmington, NC, May 22, 1891).

⁶ *Charlotte News* (March 19, April 23, May 23, 1891).

⁷ Records of the Mecklenburg County Registrar of Deeds Office.

- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ *Charlotte Observer* (July 24, 1892).
- ¹⁰ Mecklenburg Deeds, Book 90, Page 310.
- ¹¹ Ruth Little-Stokes, "Dilworth Historic District: Charlotte, N.C. Architectural Analysis," 1978. Hereafter cited as Little-Stokes.
- ¹² *Charlotte Observer* (March 13, 1893).
- ¹³ *Charlotte Observer* (June 17, 1893).
- ¹⁴ *Charlotte Observer* (April 6, 1894).
- ¹⁵ Little-Stokes.
- ¹⁶ *Charlotte Observer* (September 30, December 4, 1894).
- ¹⁷ *Charlotte Observer* (September 8, 1894); Little-Stokes.
- ¹⁸ Charlotte City Directory 1896-97, p. 177.
- ¹⁹ *Charlotte Observer* (October 12, 1897).
- ²⁰ Mecklenburg Deeds, Book 202, Page 67; United State Census 1900, Charlotte Township, p. 9A; Charlotte City Directory 1899, p. 116.
- ²¹ Mecklenburg Deeds, Book 200, Page 437; Kat Braswell, "A Structural Survey Form For the House at 329 E. Kingston Ave." (prepared for a Historic Preservation Course at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 1979), hereafter cited as Braswell.
- ²² *Charlotte Observer* (August 6, 1959); Charlotte City Directory 1902, p. 492.
- ²³ *Charlotte Observer* (April 8, 1952); United State Census 1900, Charlotte Township, p. 9A.
- ²⁴ Braswell.
- ²⁵ *Charlotte Observer* (April 8, 1952).
- ²⁶ Mecklenburg Deeds, Book 1551, Page 371; *Charlotte Observer* (August 6, 1959); Braswell.
- ²⁷ Braswell.

²⁸ Mecklenburg Deeds, Book 1685, Page 105; Braswell.

²⁹ Mecklenburg Deeds, Book 2165, Page 405; Mecklenburg Deeds, Book 2770, Page 597; Braswell.

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 Commission judges that the property known as the Harrill-Porter House does possess special historic significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The

Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) the Harrill-Porter House is one of the few pre-1900 houses which survive in Dilworth, Charlotte's first streetcar suburb; 2) the house is a unique example among the more imposing homes of Old Dilworth in that it displays vernacular motifs and details which one finds in Fourth Ward; and 3) the house is strategically important in terms of townscape because it is situated on a corner lot and anchors an entire intact streetscape.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association: The Commission judges that the architectural description included herein demonstrates that the property known as the Harrill-Porter House meets this criterion.

9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal: The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply annually 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 Ad Valorem tax appraisal on the Harrill-Porter House is \$6,740. The current Ad Valorem tax appraisal on the .161 acres of land is \$2,500. The most recent Ad Valorem tax bill on the house and land was \$166.50. The house contains 3,382 square feet. The land is zoned R6MF.

Kat Braswell, "A Structural Survey Form For the House at 329 E. Kingston Ave." (prepared for a Historic Preservation Course at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 1979).

Charlotte City Directory, 1896-97; 1899; 1902.

Charlotte News.

Charlotte Observer.

Ruth Little-Stokes, "Dilworth Historic District: Charlotte, N.C. Architectural Analysis," 1978. Morning Star (Wilmington, NC).

Records, of the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office.

Records of the Mecklenburg County Tax Office.

United States Census 1900.

Date of Preparation of this Report: January 6, 1982.

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

Telephone: (704) 332-2726

Architectural Description

by Thomas W. Hanchett

The Harrill-Porter House is a substantial two story late Victorian home on a corner lot. It anchors a block of large, closely spaced homes from the late 1890s to the 1910s, a strong streetscape that survives intact except for one demolition at the opposite end of the block. The house in its prominent corner location serves to tie this block to similar homes in adjoining blocks of Kingston and Euclid Avenues. The massing of the house is

relatively complex, showing influence of the Queen Anne style which was at its peak when the home was built in 1894-95. The basic block of the building is a two story hiproofed rectangle three bays long and two bays deep. Two brick chimneys poke through the east and west sides of the roof. The top of the east chimney has been clumsily rebuilt, but the simple corbeled cap of the west one remains. Four gable-roofed two story wings, each one bay wide, jut out from the main block, one on each side of the house. Gables are decorated with simple scroll-sawn bargeboards, large vents with scroll-sawn trim, and diagonal boarding. Eaves are narrow and simply boxed with no decorative elements.

The walls of the house are clapboard with beaded corner boards. Windows are two-overtwo pane double-hung sash in plain surrounds. The front door is trimmed with wide fluted molding and bull's eye corner blocks, a common Victorian motif. The first story front windows extend from floor to ceiling under the porch. The one story porch wraps around the south (front) and east sides of the building. It is shed-roofed except for a small gable with scroll-sawn bargeboards that marks the entrance. The east side of the porch was walled in to create a sun porch, probably in the first decades of this century. On the remainder of the porch the original balustrade railing and turned porch columns are still visible, though the original balusters have been removed. Concrete steps and walk dating from the early twentieth century lead up from the sidewalk to the porch.

A low concrete wall from the same period contains the small front yard, raising it about two feet above the public sidewalk, once a common feature of better Charlotte homes. The foundation of the building is brick. There is evidence that the house originally rested up off the ground on brick piers, a common southern practice, and that the spaces between the piers were later bricked in. Under the home only enough area has been excavated for a furnace room. To the rear of the house are several additions. The two major ones are a one story gable-roofed kitchen wing, which may date back the original construction of the house, and a two story shed-roofed sleeping porch at the northeast corner that probably dates from the 1910s-1930s when such porches were popular. Entering the home through the front door one is in a long, relatively narrow hallway, a feature more typical of the mid nineteenth century than of this period. A straight run of stairs rises from the rear of this hall back toward the front of the house, giving access to the second floor. Its massive newel post remains in good condition. In the main block of the house there are two major rooms on each side of this central space on each floor. Victorian era mantels survive in several rooms, as do many of the original wood panel doors. Beyond this there is little decorative woodwork. The house was heavily damaged by fire in summer, 1981. Most damage was confined to the attic, the upper stairwell, and the rear rooms of the second floor.