

The Jamison House



This report was written on June 3, 1981

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Jamison House is located at 302 Providence Road, Charlotte, North Carolina, in the block between Queens Road and Granville Road.

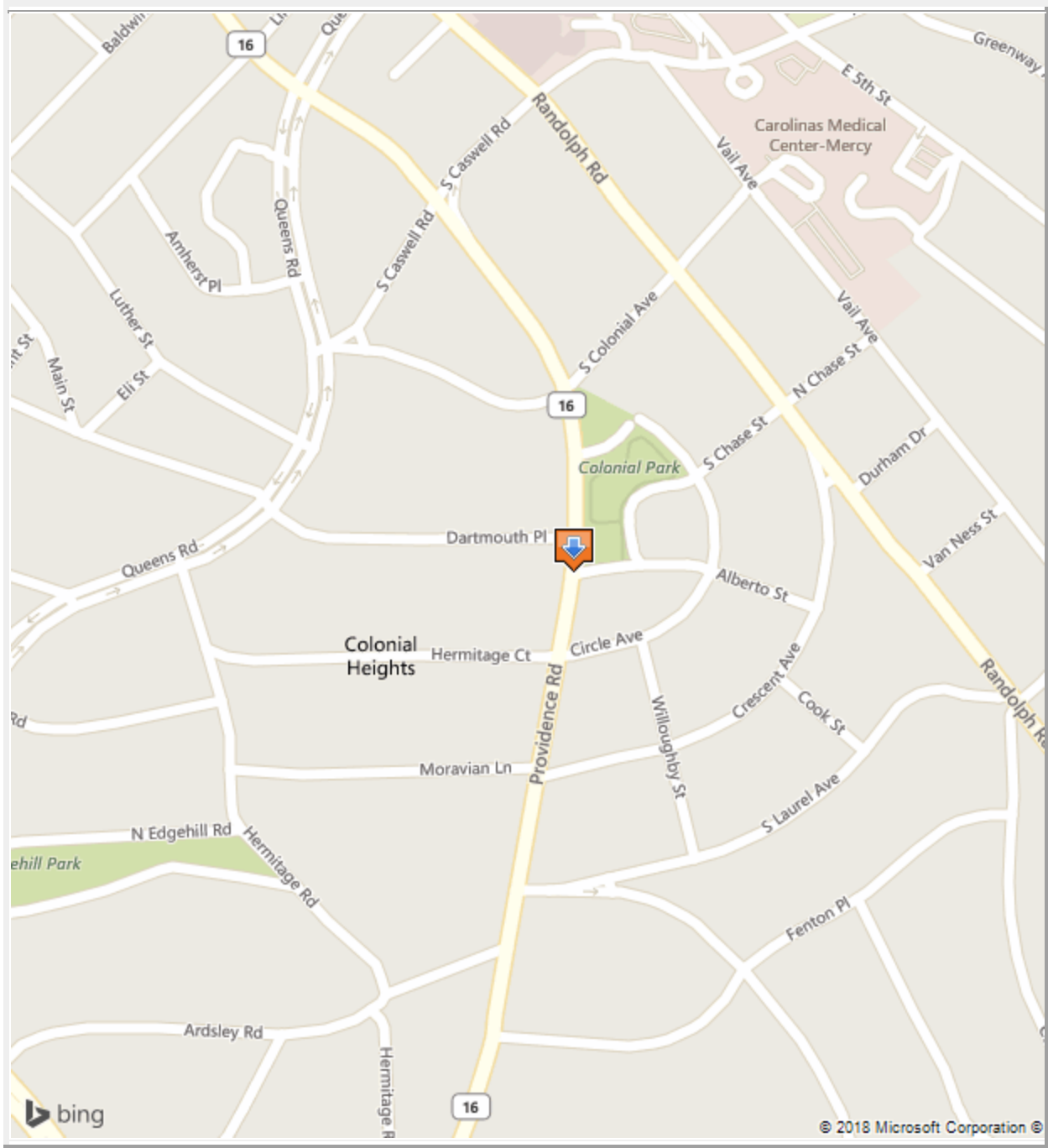
2. Name, address, and telephone number of the present owner and occupant of the property: The present owner of the property is:

Mutual Savings and Loan Association
330 South Tryon Street
Charlotte, North Carolina 28202

Telephone: (704) 373-0330

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 maps which depict 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 3811 at page 801. The current tax parcel number of the property is 155-051-06.

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

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains a brief architectural description of the property by Mary Alice Dixon Hinson.

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 does possess special historic significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: (1) the house, erected in 1912-13, is the oldest house which survives in Myers Park, the elegant streetcar suburb designed by John Nolen; (2) the rusticated granite construction of the house is unique in Myers Park; and (3) John M. Jamison, the original owner, was a hotelier of regional importance.

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 Jamison 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 of the entire 1.265 acre tract is \$107,490.00. The Ad Valorem tax appraisal on the improvements is \$34,270.00. The total Ad Valorem tax appraisal is \$141,760.00.

Date of preparation of this report: June 3, 1981

Prepared by: Nancy B. Thomas, Assistant Director
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3500 Shamrock Drive
Charlotte, NC 28215

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Architectural Description



Louis Asbury

Mary Alice Dixon Hinson

The John M. Jamison House is a handsome two-and-a-half story structure built of rusticated uncoursed granite. It fronts a heavily developed commercial segment of Providence Road within suburban Myers Park. Built in 1912-13, the Jamison House is important because it was one of the first houses built in this early Charlotte suburb which was picturesquely laid out by landscape architects John Nolen and Earl Draper in 1910. The house remained in the Jamison family until the mid-1970s when it was acquired by Mutual Savings and Loan Association. In 1978, Charlotte architect Richard Gillespie directed the conversion of the ground floor into savings and

loan offices. Alterations were minor: the remodeling of the rear butler's pantry and kitchen and the removal and storage of a few of the first floor doors.

The Jamison House stands today as a model of the kind of responsible adaptive reuse of a historic structure that can be achieved by private investors who appreciate the environmental and economic wisdom of preservation. The structure significantly contributes to the community's distinguished architectural fabric. The house's massing is simple -- it is essentially a rustic cottage expanded to the scale of a Neoclassical block. Its rough granite surface presents a textural richness and surface life that modestly animate the street. The house is two-and-a-half stories high, three bays wide and three deep. The symmetrical main (south) facade faces Providence Road and the asymmetrical rear elevation faces the residential neighborhood behind the building. These differing elevational organizations reflect the builder's sophisticated response to the site: a distinction is made between the formality of the main approach and the Queen Anne whimsicality permissible in the more private rear.

The house is built of rusticated granite laid like rubble in an uncoursed cobweb pattern. The gang-sawed pieces of granite are set within a lively network of protruding beaded mortar joints. A tripped roof sheathed with shake shingles covers the house. Two semi-exterior end chimneys and one interior chimney rise through the roof. A chamfered wooden modillion cornice underlines the main roof as well as the roofs of a central entrance porch and two smaller side porches. The main facade and side elevations are skirted by an elevated piazza. Terracotta-colored tiles laid flush in cream-colored mortar cover the piazza floor.

The main entrance is sheltered by a tripped-roofed porch. The approach is by two granite steps. Large square-in-section granite pillars give further spatial definition to the porch. The entrance consists of a single-leaf plate glass door flanked by sidelights. A flat-paneled wooden soffit carried on flat-paneled jambs ties together this tripartite entrance group.

Fenestration throughout the house is set within simply molded wooden architraves. The ground story of the main facade has two large twelve-over-one sash windows. The second story of the main facade has six-over-one sash in the outer bays with a nine-over-one sash in the center bay. The facade attic level has three center bay dormers: two multi-paned hood dormers flank a quasi-Palladian dormer containing multi-paned glass between two wooden louvered vents.

The eastern elevation is dominated by a one-story side porch protecting two plate glass doors. Glass transoms surmount each door. Between the doors stands the large chimney base, protecting from the body of the wall. Six-over-one sash windows pierce the outer bays of the second story.

The western elevation is dominated by a one-story wing which balances the eastern side porch. A shallowly overhanging hip roof shelters the three entrances to this wing. These three entrances open up the western elevation. Each is a glazed French door beneath a three-light transom. Three double casements, each with triple panes, line the front and back of the small western wing. The main western elevation of the house, from which this wing projects, is pierced by nine-over-one, six-over-six, and six-over-one sash windows.

In distinction to the general regularity of the facade and side elevations, the rear elevation is organized with picturesque asymmetry. It is treated as eleven bays of varying widths, with the western six bays handled as a single unit stepped out from the main body of the house. Fenestration along the rear is irregularly positioned, reflecting in part the programmatic requirements of lighting the interior and in part the decreased formality deemed appropriate to the back of the house. Varying arrangements of three-over-one, six-over-one, nine-over-one, and twelve-over-one sash windows articulate the rear elevation.

A wooden Queen Anne porch projects from the center of the rear elevation, dramatizing the intersection of the six projecting western bays with the five recessed eastern bays. The porch is built of turned Eastlake columns which rest on chamfered plinths. The columns support a second story sunporch, three bays wide and two deep. The body of the porch is sheathed with shake shingles. The porch carries a bold gable roof. The gable ends in a full pediment trimmed by a wooden modillion cornice. A small attic window punctuates the pediment face.

East of the sunporch is a demi-hexagonal bay window. Tall narrow three-over-one sash flank a large central twelve-over-one sash, rhythmically breaking up the mass of the bay. A segment of a hip roof, sheathed with shakes and underlined by a modillion cornice, covers the bay.

The interior of the house is in excellent condition and is trimmed throughout with superb oak and cherry woodwork, fine mantels, and, on the second floor, milk glass bellflower light fixtures attached to metal bases. The ground floor contains a center stair hall with double door openings leading to flanking front parlors. The principal rooms feature wooden dentil cornices. Both front parlors contain exposed ceiling beams and massive masonry fireplace mantels topped by molded wooden shelves. The east parlor mantel is granite, the west, brick. A two-tiered flat-paneled cherry wainscot runs along the center stair hall and the small one-story western wing which adjoins the west parlor. The wainscot is framed by a molded chair-rail and a molded baseboard.

An open-course half-turn stair with two landings rises front-to-back along the eastern wall of the center stair hall. The two-tiered wainscot rises along the stair wall and runs throughout the second story stair hall above. The square and rectangular flat panels of the wainscot change to slanted rhombuses and parallelograms along the stair runs, suggesting motion up or down the stairs. Reinforcing this motif, the molded handrail is ramped and eased from landing to landing. Thin rectangular-in-section balusters support the handrail. Like the wainscot, the soffit and fascia of the exposed end of each tread receives flat-paneled trim. The newel post is square-in-section and carries a splayed pyramidal cap. Identical landing newels feature bulbous pendant drops.

The recess of the stair forms a ground story inglenook directly across from the main entrance. Built-in cherry seating contributes to the definition of this alcove which, in turn, acts to subdivide the volume of space in the central entrance hall. The stair, inglenook, and entrance hall form a sophisticated architectural unit; it is the volumetric and functional core of the house. Its rich wooden paneling and warm oak flooring effectively complement the textural wealth of the house's rusticated exterior.

The second story contains three main rooms, all facing south, one rear sun-porch, and several smaller rooms and a bath in the northwest. Unlike the rustic masonry mantels below, the second

story mantels are wooden Neoclassical compositions. In the eastern front room the mantel has flat-paneled pilasters and a flat-paneled frieze above a white tile surround. In the western front room the mantel is exceptionally bold. Two fluted Doric columns stand fully in-the-round in front of a white tile surround. The columns support an idiosyncratic vernacular version of a classical frieze: bas-relief medallions are juxtaposed between triglyphs above pronounced guttae.

Doors throughout the second story are intact. Each is ornamented by a single long flat-panel accented by a cut glass doorknob. Doors to the principal rooms carry plate glass transoms. Simply molded architraves harmonize with the molded handrail above the open stair well.

Not only is the Jamison House a most distinguished structure in its own right, but it is also an integral part of the architectural fabric of Myers Park. The continued preservation of the house is absolutely critical to the maintenance of human scale, which has already suffered severe erosion as a consequence of the heavy traffic carried by the portion of Providence Road on which the house fronts. The Mutual Savings and Loan Association is to be commended for setting high standards of preservation and for combining those standards with a successful business venture in adaptive reuse.

Historical Overview

Dr. William H. Huffman

The Jamison house, a handsome stone residence at 802 Providence Road in Myers Park was one of the earliest homes to be constructed in that streetcar suburb. The house was begun by John McKee Jamison in the spring of 1912 on two lots he had purchased from the Stephens Company on September 1, 1911 for \$8,352.00. The Stephens Company was the firm owned by George Stephens, who was the exclusive developer of the 1,400 acre plantation of his father-in-law, John Springs Myers.

John M. Jamison was in the hotel business, and at the time of the start of construction of his house, he owned and managed the Stonewall Hotel in downtown Charlotte, which he had built a few years earlier, and was a director of the Commercial National Bank. He also owned the Vance Hotel in Henderson, held an interest in the Huffine Hotel in Greensboro, was president of the Bagwell Real Estate Company in Hamlet, and was one of the South's most widely known and respected hotel owners.

Mr. Jamison was born on December 25, 1865, the son of John M. Jamison and Sarah Alexander in the Steele Creek township, and was raised in Long Creek in the county.³ In 1894, he and a partner, Thomas Gresham, opened a restaurant in Monroe. Following the success of this venture, they moved to Hamlet and opened the Seaboard Airline Hotel, which they operated until about

1906. After selling his Hamlet interests Mr. Jamison moved to Greensboro, where he acquired his interest in the Huffine Hotel. In 1908, Mr. Jamison came to Charlotte and established the Stonewall Hotel near the Southern Railway Station on Trade Street, and moved his family into the house at 500 W. Trade, now the Folger Building.⁴

While living in Hamlet, the Jamisons had a local architect draw up plans for a large stone house, but they did not get the opportunity to build it until moving to Charlotte and purchasing nearly two acres in Myers Park as a homesite. In the spring of 1912, Mr. J. A. Wilson, a contractor friend of Mr. Jamison's from Hamlet, was commissioned to construct the house of North Carolina granite for the price of \$30,000.00.⁵

On June 27, 1912, Mr. Jamison took out an insurance policy of \$50,000.00 for the benefit of the Stonewall Hotel Company. The following day, he took his wife, sons John and Paul, and Mrs. Bagwell, wife of a business associate in Hamlet, and her son, out for a ride in one of Charlotte's first automobiles. The party rode out in the morning to visit the site of the home construction in Myers Park which by then had progressed to a completed foundation. Since it was a fine day, they decided to take a spin out in the country, and proceeded out the Newell Road, where tragedy struck the group. The auto stalled on the Southern Railway crossing at Newell in the path of an oncoming train, and the car was struck while Mr. Jamison was attempting to open the door for Mrs. Bagwell; the others had gotten out in time. In the collision, Mr. Jamison was killed and the Bagwells critically injured; Charlotte has lost one of its leading citizens at the age of forty-seven.⁶

Lucille Price Whitley Jamison, wife of the hotelier and a descendent of the Price and Davidson families, carried on the construction of the house. The following year, 1913, she and her five children moved into the newly completed structure, which was only the third house to be built in Myers Park. The first house in the suburb was built by H. M. Wade, which was subsequently torn down during the 1920s and replaced by the brick structure presently at 530 Hermitage Road. The Glasscocks built the second house in Myers Park, but this residence was later destroyed by fire. Thus the Jamison house is the oldest original house in Myers Park.⁷ At the time of its construction, Providence Road was unpaved, and the opposite side of the road from the house contained some old country houses. The street car line came only to the corner of Providence and Queens Road.

During their sixty-three-year ownership, the Jamisons enjoyed living in their comfortable and spacious home, which was kept cool by the shade of the trees and the thick stone walls. Mrs. Jamison lived in the house until shortly before her death in 1967 at the age of 95. Of the children, the oldest girl, Lucille, continued to live in the Providence residence until she died in 1963; the eldest son, John, left about 1922 to go into the cotton business in Philadelphia; the next oldest, Paul, became an attorney in Charlotte and stayed in the stone house until he passed away in 1975; Martha, the next to youngest, married Mr. Hugh W. Causey in 1935 and took up residence in their own home; and the youngest, Sarah Lois (Sally) Jamison, lived in the house until it was sold to its present owner, Mutual Savings and Loan Association.⁹

In December, 1975, Mutual bought the property with the view toward converting the house into a branch office of the company.¹⁰ Their conversion efforts, begun in 1977, were undertaken with

great care to maintain as much of the original architecture of the house as possible. The result is an excellent example of responsible adaptive use of a historical building which preserves the major architectural heritage of the structure.

NOTES

¹ Mecklenburg County, NC, Deed Book 283, p. 66.

² *Charlotte News*, June 28, 1912, p. 1.

³ *Ibid.*; Mecklenburg County Vital Records: Deaths, Book 2, p. 411.

⁴ *Charlotte Observer*, June 29, 1912, p. 6.

⁵ Interview with Martha Jamison Causey, Charlotte, NC, May 11, 1981; *Charlotte Observer*, June 29, 1912, p. 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Memorandum dated May 11, 1981 by Jane Saunders, Legal Assistant, Fleming, Robinson, Bradshaw and Hinson, Charlotte, NC.

⁹ Interview with Martha Jamison Causey, Charlotte, N.C. May 11, 1981.

¹⁰ Mecklenburg County, NC, Deed Book 3811. p. 801.

¹¹ Interview with Elizabeth South, Branch Manager, Mutual Savings and Loan