

Survey and Research Report

Bishop John C. Kilgo House

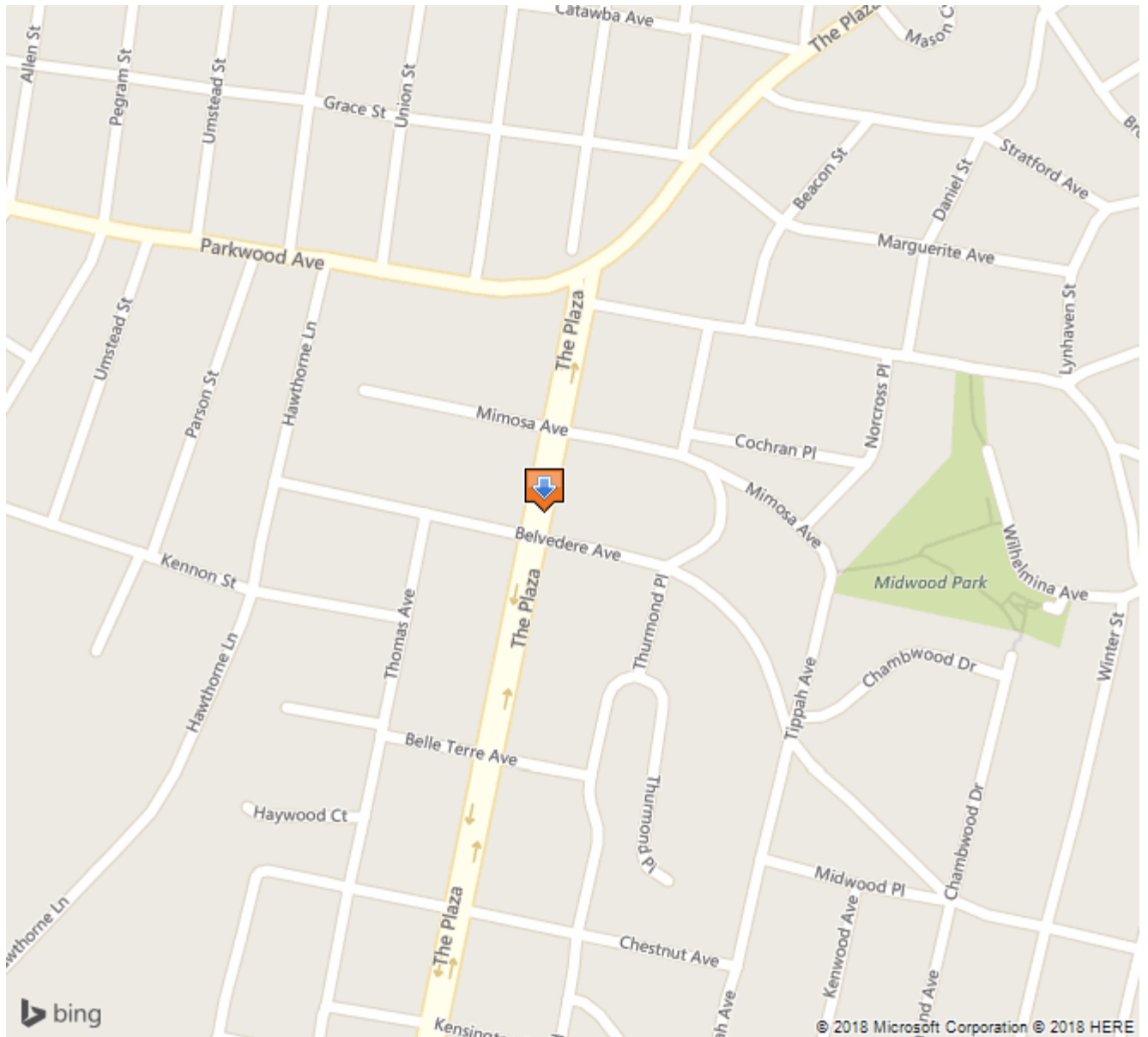


**2100 The Plaza
Charlotte, North Carolina
28205**

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission
2008**

1. Name and location of the property. The property known as the **Bishop John C. Kilgo House** is located 2100 The Plaza, in Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.
2. Name, address, and telephone number of the present owner of the properties.
The owners of the property are:

Donald R. and Kiley F. Rawlins
2100 The Plaza
Charlotte, North Carolina 28205
Telephone: (704) 996-0188
3. Representative photographs of the property. This report contains representative photographs of the property.
4. Maps depicting the location of the property. This report contains maps which depict the location of the property.



5. Current deed book references to the properties. The most recent reference to Tax Parcel Number 095-03-505 is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 22913 at page 915.
6. A brief architectural description of the property. This report contains brief architectural description of the property prepared by Richard L. Mattson and Frances P. Alexander.
7. A brief historical sketch of the property. This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Richard L. Mattson and Frances P. Alexander.
8. Documentation of why and in what ways the properties meet 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 Bishop John C. Kilgo House does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) the Kilgo House, erected in 1914, stands among the first and finest residences in the Chatham Estates suburb (now known as Plaza-Midwood) in Charlotte; 2) the house is associated with Bishop Kilgo, the original owner, a distinguished Methodist minister and bishop, and president of Trinity College, later Duke University; and 3) the designer of the house was Louis H. Asbury, one of Charlotte's foremost architects in the early twentieth century

b. integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. The Commission contends that the architectural description by Richard L. Mattson and Frances P. Alexander included in this report demonstrates that the Bishop John C. Kilgo House 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 properties which become designated historic landmarks. The current appraised value of the improvements to Tax Parcel Number 095-03-505 is----- . The current appraised value of the land associated with Tax Parcel 095-03-505 is----- . The total appraised value of Tax Parcel 095-03-505 is ----- . The property is zoned -- ---.

Date of Preparation of this Report.: 10 January 2008

Prepared by: Richard L. Mattson, Ph.D. and Frances P. Alexander, M.A.

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Statement of Significance

Constructed on The Plaza in 1915, the Bishop John C. Kilgo House stands among the first and finest residences in the Chatham Estates suburb (now known as Plaza-Midwood) in Charlotte. In its setting along the landscaped boulevard, and sophisticated architecture, the Bishop Kilgo House exemplifies the houses erected for this subdivision's earliest, elite residents. The house remains well-preserved—a handsome blend of Colonial Revival and Craftsman-style elements. Bishop Kilgo, the original owner, was a distinguished Methodist minister and president of Trinity College, later Duke University. The Kilgo House is primarily associated with his years as a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The designer of the house was Louis H. Asbury, one of Charlotte's foremost architects in the early twentieth century.

Physical Description

The Bishop John C. Kilgo House is situated in the Plaza-Midwood neighborhood of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. The house faces west towards The Plaza, a landscaped, residential boulevard that runs through the heart of the neighborhood. In addition to the house, there is modern one-story garage in the backyard. The corner lot has modern landscaping and a new iron fence on the south side. A gable-front garage and side-gable servant's quarters that originally stood behind the house are no longer extant. The expansive VanLandingham Estate, consisting of the 1914, Craftsman-style VanLandingham residence, and its landscaped grounds, stands south of the Kilgo House, across Belvedere Avenue.

In its form and elements of style, the Kilgo House combines Colonial Revival and Craftsman themes. The balanced, hip-roofed, main block and the columned and bracketed entry porch, which originally included a roof balustrade, are popular Colonial Revival features. The interior also expresses a classical formality, with classical mantels and a reception area and rear stairhall flanked by the principal rooms. However, the house also reveals the Craftsman style in its conscious, straightforward simplicity and horizontality, with a low hip roof and deep, open eaves with exposed rafters. The Tuscan columns on the front porch share this space with sturdy brick piers.

The two-story, frame, weatherboarded dwelling rests on a brick foundation, and has a cubic main block with a low hip roof pierced by tall, brick chimney stacks. Hip-roofed, attic dormers with exposed rafters mark the front and side elevations. The principal dormer in the front elevation has a rectangular vent flanked by casement windows. The smaller, side dormers have rectangular vents. A two-story, hip-roofed wing on the south elevation contains the original sleeping porch (now used for an office/sitting room) on the upper level, and sunroom and engaged porch on the lower level. The original, hip-roofed sections of the house remain substantially intact. Unless otherwise noted, there are symmetrically arranged, eight-over-one windows on the second story and one-over-one windows on the first. A bank of six-over-one windows allows natural light and cool breezes into the sleeping porch. All the windows have simple, molded surrounds. The roofs have deep eaves with exposed rafters. The later, 1950s rear, gable-roofed addition has six-over-one windows on the second story. Its roof has deep eaves and exposed rafters echo those on the main body of the house.

The balanced, three-bay façade (west elevation) has a center-bay entry porch with an original concrete floor, brick steps, and a frieze with heavy brackets, supported by both Tuscan columns and corbelled brick piers. Probably in the 1950s, the porch's original roof deck and balustrade were replaced by the present hip roof. The original second-floor doorway that opened onto the roof deck has been converted to a window, which is flanked by original casement windows. In recent years, the concrete porch floor has also been extended to create a deck across the façade, and now joins with the engaged porch on the south side of the house. The original, wood porch railing on the south side remains, and connects to a new, matching railing along the front decks flanking the entry porch. The front entrance has a glazed, oak door enframed by leaded-glass, paneled sidelights and three-part transom, and fluted pilasters capped by a simple entablature.

On the south elevation, French doors in the parlor open onto an engaged, hip-roofed side porch with Tuscan columns. This subsidiary hip roof wraps around the southeast corner of the house to shield the sunroom windows. The north elevation has a modern wooden deck and doorway, which opens into the rear kitchen wing.

The rear of the house includes an original full-height, hip-roofed wing. When constructed, this wing included a one-story kitchen ell with an engaged corner porch. During the 1950s, a gable-roofed, second-story was added above the kitchen and the small porch enclosed. The original hip-roofed rear porch remains on the south side of this wing, as does the rear stairway, which ascends to an engaged second-story landing. The 1950s addition contains an exterior brick chimney on the gable end and a hip-roofed side porch with square, wooden posts and railing. A modern deck with a matching railing is attached to the south side of the rear porch.

The well-preserved interior retains the original plan and much of the original finish. There are hardwood floors, plaster walls and ceilings, and unpainted oak woodwork, including two-panel doors, throughout. Except for the parlor, the original mantels are intact. They display restrained, classically-inspired, post-and-lintel designs, with pilasters and paneled or plain friezes. The doors and windows have simple, molded surrounds. Baseboards and crown molding mark the principal rooms and halls. The front door opens into the broad, front reception hall, where large, paneled, pocket doors lead into the parlor

(south) and the living room (north). Heavy crown moldings distinguish both the hall and the parlor. The parlor includes French doors leading onto the side (south) porch, and a replacement brick mantel. The rear stairhall features an open-string stairway with simple, square balusters and newels, and a striking, curvilinear opening on the second floor. The rear kitchen has been modernized in recent years, though the original paneled door to the butler's pantry (now the laundry/pantry) remains. The bathrooms on the both first and second floors have been recently modernized, though the paneled doors appear to be original.

Upstairs, the four bedrooms are arranged around the center stairhall. The southeast bedroom has the dwelling's only painted mantel, and includes French doors leading onto the sleeping porch. The major change on the second floor occurred during the 1950s, when the northeast bedroom (now the master bedroom) was expanded above the kitchen wing.

Louis H. Asbury, Architect

The Bishop Kilgo House was designed by Louis Humbert Asbury (1877-1975), one of the state's first professionally trained architects and one of the region's foremost building designers of the early twentieth century. Built in 1914, the house dates from the height of Asbury's practice in Charlotte, and clearly illustrates his role as one of the city's premier architects earning commissions from a wealthy clientele. While Asbury designed a host of fine houses in the Colonial Revival style, the Kilgo House is the only known example that blends both Colonial and Craftsman elements. As Charlotte boomed as textile manufacturing center, Asbury was one of a coterie of architects that gained prominence designing buildings that were hallmarks of the prosperity. Among the other architects widely recognized for their important work in and around Charlotte are: Charles Christian Hook, William Peeps, Oliver Wheeler, James McMichael, and Martin Boyer (Asbury Papers 1906-1975; Bishir and Southern 2003: 504; Hanchett 1998: 159-160, 192-193, 305, 317; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Landmarks Commission, Files).

A Charlotte native, Louis H. Asbury graduated Trinity College (later Duke University) in Durham, North Carolina, in 1900. He subsequently enrolled in a specialized, two-year architecture program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, graduating in 1903. He opened his firm in Charlotte in 1908, and became the first North Carolina member of the American Institute of Architects (Asbury Papers 1906-1975; Morrill 1978).

During the ensuing decades, Asbury earned hundreds of commissions in Charlotte and the surrounding counties. His body of work encompassed a full range of buildings types—houses, commercial structures, hotels, banks, churches, and civic institutions—executed primarily in popular Colonial Revival and Gothic Revival themes. During the early twentieth century, his principal clients were well-to-do homebuyers in the finest neighborhoods of Charlotte. But Asbury also drew up plans for the city's big churches and prominent retail stores and banks, as well as for local and state government. His achievements in Charlotte included stately Georgian Revival and Colonial Revival dwellings in prestigious Myers Park., such as the 1913 Charles P. Moody House (Local Landmark 1981), a red-brick Georgian on Providence Road. In downtown Charlotte, he designed the 1926 Mecklenburg County Courthouse (Local Landmark 1983; National Register 2001), which is a grand, stone, Beaux Arts edifice with a towering Corinthian portico (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Files; Bishir and Southern 2003: 504, 511, 523; Asbury Papers 1906-1975).

Asbury's commercial work in the center city included the 1929, Neoclassical, Mayfair Manor (renamed Dunhill Hotel) (Local Landmark 1989); and the 1930 Montaldo's, a prestigious women's clothing store that features a French Renaissance façade. In 1926, Asbury teamed with Lockwood, Greene Engineers of Boston to design the First National Bank (Local Landmark pending), a twenty-story, classically detailed skyscraper on South Tryon Street. However, his personal preference was the Gothic Revival, and Asbury's local churches, including the 1915 Hawthorne Lane Methodist (Local Landmark 1983); the 1918 Old Mount Carmel Baptist (Local Landmark 1983); the 1920 Advent Christian Church (Local Landmark 1987);

and the 1928 Myers Park Methodist, were all fashioned in the Gothic mode (Bishir and Southern 2003: 507-508, 509, 514-515; Asbury Papers 1906-1975).

Outside Charlotte, Asbury's prominent projects included the 1907, Colonial Revival, Stonewall Jackson Training School complex (National Register 1984) near Concord, North Carolina; several of Concord's finest Colonial Revival houses, including the 1912 J. Archibald Cannon House; the 1923, Gothic Revival, Lutheran Chapel Church in Gastonia; and the 1928 Bethel Bear Creek Church, an unusually large, Gothic Revival edifice in rural Stanly County (Bishir 1990: Bishir and Southern 2003: 285,493, 496-497; Asbury Papers).

Following several speculative real estate investments that failed during the Depression, Asbury declared bankruptcy in 1935. He closed his Charlotte practice and briefly found employment as an architect for the Federal Housing Authority in Asheville and Greensboro, North Carolina. In 1937, Asbury reopened his office, which by 1939, included his architect son, Louis Asbury Jr. Asbury retired in 1956, after nearly a half century of architectural work in North Carolina, designing many of Charlotte's landmark buildings of the early twentieth century (Asbury Papers; Bishir and Southern 2003: 504; Morrill 1978).

Historical Background

This spacious, two-story residence on The Plaza was completed in 1915 for Bishop John Carlisle Kilgo (1861-1922). It was designed by the noteworthy Charlotte architect Louis H. Asbury. The house was one of the first dwellings constructed in the newly platted Chatham Estates suburb near the Charlotte Country Club northeast of downtown Charlotte. Consisting of approximately twenty blocks, this small suburb later became part of the Plaza-Midwood neighborhood, created in 1973 from ten separate subdivisions in this area. Chatham Estates was established by Paul Chatham, an Elkin, North Carolina, textile manufacturer who moved to Charlotte in 1907. In 1910, Chatham joined forces with members of the newly formed country club to develop Chatham Estates as an upscale suburb. The developers commissioned Charlotte-based landscape designer, Leigh Colyer, to lay out Chatham Estates incorporating a blend of straight and curvilinear avenues oriented to a grand, landscaped boulevard—The Plaza (Hanchett 1984: “Plaza-Midwood”; Hanchett 1998: 164-165).

Benefiting from the adjacent country club and a well-drained, elevated site, the development began auspiciously, attracting a small group of well-off homebuyers. Each built a large residence on a broad parcel facing The Plaza. Bishop Kilgo purchased his lot across Belvedere Avenue from the VanLandingham Estate, which was finished 1914. Ralph VanLandingham was a successful cotton broker, and his wife, Suzie, a civic leader. The grand, Craftsman-style VanLandingham residence was designed by important local architects, Charles Christian Hook and Willard G. Rogers. Leigh Colyer designed the estate's lush gardens. Nearby, in 1914, Union National Bank president H. M. Victor built a sizable dwelling (now gone) in the Colonial Revival style. In 1915, cotton and grain merchant R. M. Miller, Jr., relocated his 1891 Queen Anne residence from the center city to 1600 The Plaza, where it was purchased by stockbroker John L. Scott. A year later, businessman Joseph D. Woodside constructed a large, Colonial Revival house at 1801 The Plaza (Hanchett 1984: “Plaza-Midwood”; Morrill and Boyte 1977, updated 1997; Bishir and Southern 2003: 522-523).

However, the appeal of Chatham Estates to elites was short-lived, spoiled mainly by its inconvenient location. Although linked to downtown Charlotte by Central Avenue, in the era of streetcar travel, Chatham Estates was a time-consuming trolley ride from the center city, made even longer by the interference of the Seaboard Air Line Railroad line. This busy rail line ran at grade across Central Avenue, causing frequent delays. Moreover, the battery-powered trolley service to Chatham Estates was owned and operated separately from the main, electric trolley line run by Southern Public Utilities Company, requiring

passengers to transfer between the two lines. This created even more disruptions to the downtown commute. Thus the city's early northeast suburbs did not fully take shape until the era of the automobile in the 1920s, when well-to-do Charlotteans erected large Colonial Revival houses beside the country club, and middle-class homeowners favored bungalows and other Craftsman-style houses on smaller, subdivided lots along The Plaza and adjacent streets in Chatham Estates (Hanchett 1984: "Plaza-Midwood").

Bishop John C. Kilgo

Bishop John Carlisle Kilgo (1861-1922) was clearly one of the elites of Chatham Estates. A noted Methodist Episcopal minister and educator, he began his professional career in South Carolina, his native state. The son of a Methodist preacher, Kilgo was born in Laurens, South Carolina, and attended nearby Gaffney Seminary and Wofford College, in Spartanburg. After a period as a Methodist minister in the South Carolina Conference, he taught philosophy and served as an administrator at Wofford College until 1894. It during this time at Wofford that Kilgo developed his progressive views on academic freedom and coeducation that shape would the next phase of his professional life (Powell 1988: 359-361; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Files).

Between 1894 and 1910, Kilgo served with distinction as president of Trinity College (later Duke University) in Durham, North Carolina. During his tenure, Kilgo helped transform Trinity from a small, modestly funded college into one of the best known and most richly endowed institutions in the South. The size of the student body doubled, the number of faculty tripled, and new buildings distinguished the growing campus. He initiated the construction of the first women's dormitory at Trinity, which led to the creation of a coordinate college for women, and actively encouraged freedom of speech among faculty and guests. Upon President Kilgo's invitation, African American leader Booker T. Washington gave his first speech at a white college in the South (Powell 1988: 360).

In 1910, Kilgo was appointed a bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and in 1915, he and his wife, Fannie Turner, and their five children departed Durham for their new home in Charlotte. Bishop Kilgo selected Charlotte because it offered a more convenient location within the Methodist conference. Moreover, Kilgo served on the board of the Southern Railway, which required regular trips to New York City, the company's headquarters. Charlotte's location on the Southern Railway main line facilitated such journeys. As a Methodist bishop, Kilgo gained a reputation for gifted oratorical skills, and was recognized as one of the great preachers of his day. Kilgo was a member of the church's Education Commission, and was instrumental in the founding of Atlanta's Emory College, for which he served as a trustee and lecturer. Kilgo United Methodist Church, located east of the Kilgo House on Belvedere Avenue in Plaza-Midwood, was founded in 1943 and named in his honor (Powell 1988: 360; *Charlotte Observer* 11 August 1922).

Bishop Kilgo died at age sixty-one on August 11, 1922. His widow, Fannie, remained in the house until her death on February 22, 1948. Heirs sold the house in 1951 to Frank and Genevieve Causley. The residence exchanged hands numerous times between the 1950s and 2007, serving as a boarding house for several decades into the 1980s, and as cooperative housing in the late 1990s. In 2007, Donald R. and Kiley F. Rawlins purchased the house and are the current residents (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Files).

Architectural Context

Blending Colonial Revival and Craftsman features, the Bishop Kilgo House stands among the finest and earliest residences constructed in the original Chatham Estates subdivision on the east side of Charlotte. Between 1914 and 1916, this suburb attracted a coterie of wealthy residents who owned large houses on The Plaza, the neighborhood's grand boulevard. Four of these houses remain, The

VanLandingham House (National Register 1983), the Joseph D. Woodside House, Victoria (National Register 1973), and the Kilgo House. Victoria is the current name of the turreted, Queen Anne house at 1600 The Plaza. It was constructed in 1891 on North Tryon Street in downtown Charlotte. The original owner, merchant R. M. Miller, Jr., relocated the house to Chatham Estates in 1915, where it was purchased by John L. Scott, a stockbroker. Now surrounded by 1920s bungalows, reflecting the full-scale development of The Plaza after World War I, Victoria survives as one of the city's fullest expressions of the Queen Anne style (Hanchett 1984: "Plaza-Midwood"; Bishir and Southern 2003: 523).

The other three remaining houses were constructed on site, and represent national architectural trends of the 1910s. The 1914 VanLandingham House is exemplary of the Craftsman style, the 1916 Woodside House illustrates the Colonial Revival, while the 1914 Bishop Kilgo residence displays both Colonial Revival and Craftsman elements. By the 1910s, in burgeoning streetcar suburbs across the country, upper- and middle-class residents often favored Colonial Revival and Craftsman designs. In Charlotte, homeowners commissioned architects and builders to erect houses reflecting these styles in the growing, fashionable neighborhoods that fringed the center city. By the 1910s, Dilworth, Myers Park, Elizabeth, and Chatham Estates contained fine examples that remain substantially intact. In the early twentieth century, the Colonial Revival's comfortable patriotic associations and familiar classical themes appealed to homebuyers. The rise of the Colonial also coincided with the housing reform movement of the Progressive Era. Reformers, while promoting domestic welfare, encouraged simpler, more efficient dwellings that stood in contrast to preceding, ornate, picturesque styles. The early Colonial Revival was inspired by a variety of architectural influences associated with the American colonial period, and later eras, including Federal elements. The style was freely interpreted, and variations appeared in widely circulating magazines and books. An especially popular version constructed in Charlotte and nationwide was a neatly composed, white-frame model with a straightforward, boxy form capped by a hip roof with dormers. The façade was symmetrical and often featured a broad front porch with columns and pedimented entry bay. Classical sidelights and transoms enframed the center entrance. Ornamentation on this basic model varied according to the owner's taste and budget. By World War I, more historically correct, red-brick or frame, Georgian and Federal models gained widespread popularity. In Charlotte, blocks of grand Georgian Revival houses distinguished the city's finest neighborhoods between the 1920s and early 1950s, notably Myers Park and Eastover (Bishir 1990: 488-497, 516-518; Bishir and Southern 2003: 74, 518-522).

The Craftsman style emerged nationally in the early twentieth century, and culminated in the proliferation of bungalows in the late 1910s and especially the 1920s. As with the Colonial Revival, Craftsman houses were often essentially simple, foursquare shapes, although jutting wings, bays, and gables could evoke an informality that was also emblematic of the style. The Craftsman was distinguished by its use of natural-like materials (e.g., wood shingles, fieldstone, rough-faced brick), and the free and frank expression of structure. It featured such elements as low-slung roofs with deep eaves that emphasized horizontality and a close relationship with the landscape, exposed rafters or decorative knee braces, large porches with sturdy, square or tapered posts, and abundant fenestration. Interiors were marked by space-saving, open plans and built-in cabinetry (Bishir 1990: 498-507; Bishir and Southern 2003: 73-74).

While Charlotte boasts houses that exemplify these styles, architects and builders frequently combined elements of both, as well as features from the other popular revival modes. The availability of mass-produced millwork and the free exchange of design ideas in builders' guides and magazines encouraged such mixing of motifs. Thus, for example, in the Elizabeth suburb just south of Chatham Estates, upscale Clement Avenue boasts rambling frame residences that combine Craftsman-inspired wall shingles, granite block stonework, and wide eaves with exposed braces and rafters, with Colonial Revival porch posts and roof balustrades (Bishir and Southern 2003: 521-522).

Located just south of the Bishop Kilgo House, the grand, two-story, frame, VanLandingham House at 2010 The Plaza is an outstanding example of the Craftsman style. Wealthy cotton broker, Ralph

VanLandingham, commissioned noted local architects Charles Christian Hook and Willard G. Rogers to design the house. It remains intact, and epitomizes Craftsman architecture in its informal, wood-shingled exterior, rough stonework, and low, horizontal hip roof with wide eaves and exposed rafters. Situated west across The Plaza, the hip-roofed Joseph D. Woodside House (1600 The Plaza) neatly represents the restrained, two-story, white-frame, cubic, Colonial Revival houses of the period. The wraparound porch terminates in a porte-cochere on the south side.

The well-preserved Bishop Kilgo House exhibits key elements of both styles. The balanced façade, center entry porch with brackets and Tuscan columns, and the formal interior plan with classical mantels are all Colonial Revival traits. However, the dwelling's deep eaves with exposed rafters, heavy brick porch piers, and banks of windows along the projecting sunroom and sleeping porch bays are Craftsman-style features. The Kilgo House thus clearly illustrates the blending of such popular design elements, as accomplished by Louis H. Asbury, one Charlotte's important architects of the early twentieth century.

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