

Liddell-McNinch House



This report was written on October 20, 1975

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Liddell-McNinch House is located at 551 North Church Street, Charlotte, North Carolina 28202.

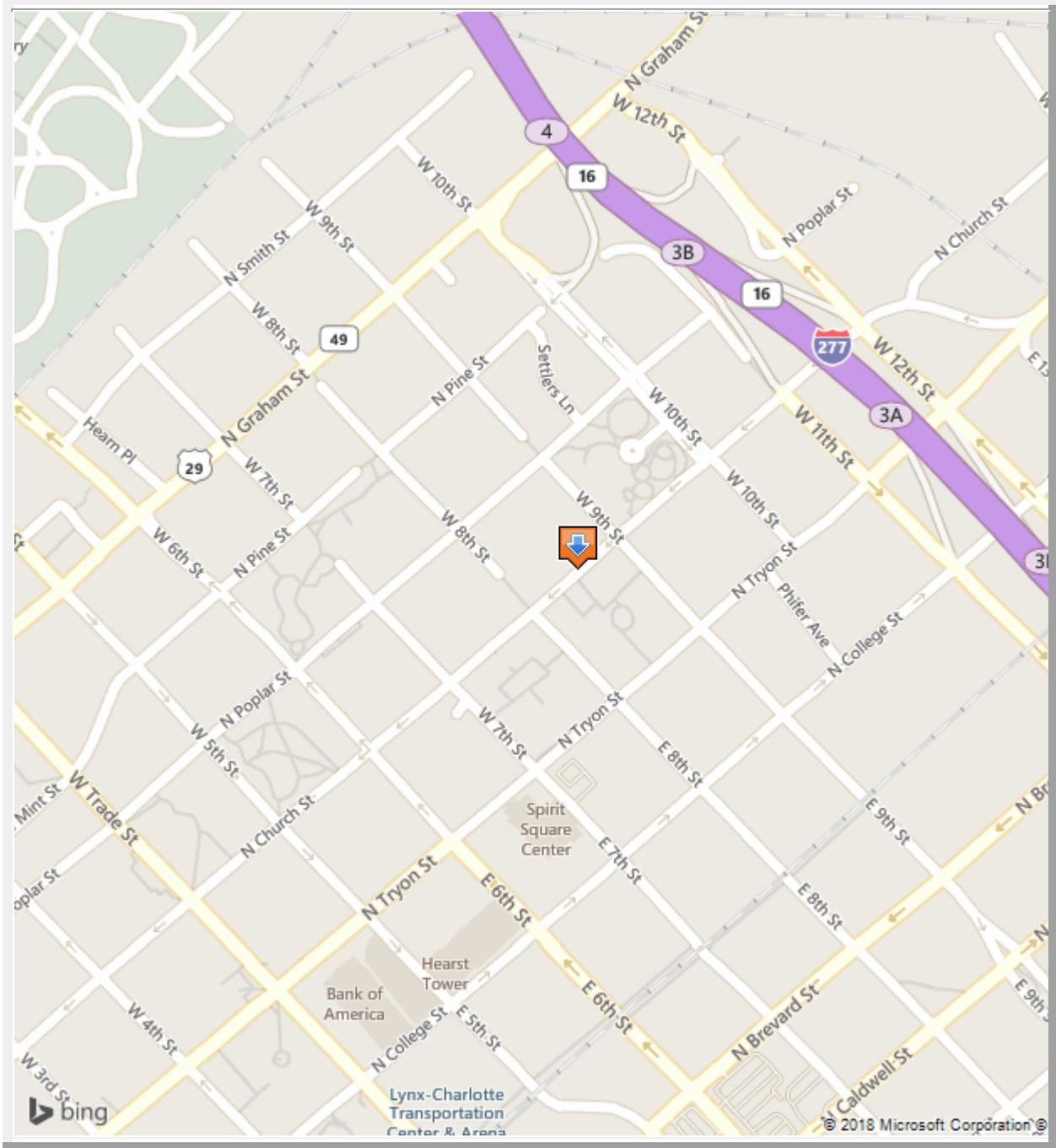
2. Name, addresses, and telephone numbers of the present owners and occupants of the property: The present owner of the property is: the S. S. McNinch Heirs.

The present occupants of the property are: Kiss Mattie McNinch and Mr. John K. Slear, widower of Julia McNinch Slear

Telephone: 332-4391

3. Representative photographs of the property: Two photographs of the structure are included in this report.

4 A map depicting the location of the property: This report contains a map depicting the location of the Liddell- McNinch House.



Click on the map to browse

5. Current Deed Book reference of the Property: Mecklenburg County Deed Book 222, page 591; Tax Book 78, page 35, lot 13.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property:

The property at 511 North Church Street was bought by Vinton Liddell in 1891 for \$3,000 from G. F. Jason who was commissioned to sell the land according to the case of Laura B. Davidson vs. Montrose Davidson. (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 77, page 585) The Beers Map of 1877 shows a structure on the lot. It is not known whether this structure was burned, moved, or torn down, but, according to Mr. J. W. McClung, Jr., whose family lived across Church Street, the house that stands on that lot now was built by Mr. Liddell. Mr. McClung notes that Mr. Liddell, officer of a machine company was teased about the construction price of his house which was reported to be \$35,000. In 1904 Mr. and Mrs. Liddell sold the property to Charles M. Patterson, a bachelor, who paid \$18,000 for it. The deed (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 198, page 124) states that the property was "known as the Home Place of Vinton Liddell". Mr. Patterson sold the property to S. S. McNinch in 1907 (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 222, page 591)



HON. S. S. McNINCH, MAYOR OF CHARLOTTE

Mr. McNinch served as Mayor of Charlotte from 1905 to 1907. In 1909 he traveled to Washington, D. C , to personally invite President William Howard Taft to speak at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg May 20th celebration. President Taft accepted the invitation, came to Charlotte and visited in the McNinch home on North Church Street.

The Liddell-McNinch house is of the Queen Anne/Shingle style. Participants of the Fourth Ward Preliminary Survey sponsored by the Commission in March 1975 felt that it was possibly the finest representative of that style in North Carolina. It has been nominated to the National Register. The exterior of the house is covered with shingles on the upper portion, clapboards on the lower portion, and the roof is of patterned slate. Tower, wings, gables, and porches are massed together and topped with an eye-brow window. The interior has fine, richly molded

woodwork, upstairs and down. The fireplaces are all tiled and there is a three-way fireplace opening into the foyer, library, and dining room.

7. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria set forth in NCGS 160A-399.4:

a. Historical and cultural significance: As has been stated, the property was purchased and occupied by a former Mayor of Charlotte. His descendants still live there. In 1909 the President of the United States visited in the house. It was built, apparently at great expense, in a popular style of the period, And, it is thought to be one of the finest examples of that style, Queen Anne/Shingle, in North Carolina.

b. Suitability for preservation and restoration: The house is in its original state, with very few changes, and has been maintained well through the years. It could be preserved easily. It is located in an area that is being studied for an intown residential neighborhood with a turn-of-the-century atmosphere; therefore, it would fit into the plan either as a residence or house museum.

c. Educational value: This house is a fine example of the Queen Anne/Shingle style architecture of the late 1800's. The interior, too, shows the richness and craftsmanship of that period.

d. Cost of acquisition: The property is not for sale at this time.

e. Possibilities for adaptive or alternative use of the property: The structure is quite large and has many possibilities. However, the interior is so fine, that, in my opinion, it would be most desirable that it be maintained as a residence and used alternatively as a second choice for preserving it. If it is intended for adaptive usage, I would urge the Commission to use its influence to the extent it can, to discourage efforts to destroy the interior.

f. Value: 1974 assessed value is \$26,510.

g. The administrative and financial responsibility of any person or organization willing to underwrite all or a portion of such costs: Since the house is not for sale this cannot be determined. The occupants plan to maintain the structure as their residence indefinitely.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria established for inclusion on the National Register:

a. Events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history: President William Howard Taft visited in the house at 511 North Church Street when he came to Charlotte to participate in the celebration of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, May 20, 1909.

b. Associated with lives of persons: In addition to its association with a President of the United States, the house was occupied by S. S. McNinch who was Mayor of Charlotte from 1905 to 1907. Also, the house was built by Vinton Liddell, a wealthy Charlotte businessman and owner of the Liddell Company in the late 1800's.

c. Type, period, method of construction: This house is thought to be one of the finest examples of Queen Anne shingle style architecture in North Carolina. It has been nominated to the National Register.

d. Information important in history: The house is significant in American history because of the Presidential visit in 1909 to celebrate the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence signed May 20, 1775, over a year before the national document was signed.

9. Documentation of why and in what ways the property is of importance to Charlotte and/or Mecklenburg County: As has been mentioned over and over, the house was visited by a President of the United States on a date which is significant to City-County history, Its architectural style is perhaps the finest example of its kind in the state, It was owned and occupied by a Mayor of Charlotte and is occupied by that Mayor's family now. Descendants of Mayor Sam McNinch are still active in the business, educational, and political communities of our city.

For the above reasons the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission believes that the structure known as the Liddell-McNinch House meets the criteria for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

10. Report prepared by: Patsy Kinsey for the Historic Properties Commission

Bibliography

Charlotte City Directory, 1890-1907

The Charlotte Observer

McClung, J. W., Jr. interviewed by Patsy B. Kinsey, July 1975.

McNinch, Miss Mattie interviewed by Patsy B. Kinsey, October 13, 1975.

Slear, John K. interviewed by Patsy B. Kinsey, October 13, 1975.

Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission Preliminary Survey of Fourth Ward, March 1975.

Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission Inventory and Report of Older Buildings, September 1975.

Records, wills, and deeds on file at the Mecklenburg County Deeds Office and Court House.

Architectural Description

By Jack O. Boyte

The home of Mrs. S. S. McNinch is the only remaining example of Shingle Style architecture in Mecklenburg County, and is probably one of the outstanding examples in North Carolina. This house reflects the sensitive and graceful refinement of the widely popular Queen Anne style which developed out of the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. This style was influenced by Colonial Architecture as well as by the exquisite architectural woodwork in the Japanese section of the Exhibition, particularly in the interior trim and fret work.

The McNinch House is an expression of this uniquely American style of the 1880's and '90s, characterized by light frame construction, irregular outlines, verandahs and balconies, steep pitched roofs, and large open interior spaces - made possible by the development of the central heating systems.

The exterior of this two story, and sometimes three story house rises from a high brick foundation wall which is covered with cement stucco. Under much of the rear of the house is a service cellar which is well lighted with foundation wall windows. The entire perimeter foundation wall is, for that matter, pierced with window sash ventilators at regular intervals. From the foundation wall the first floor starts from a heavy molded wood water table with narrow, white painted, beaded lap siding (a Queen Anne detail). At the top of the first floor windows the siding flares out to a molded band from which rise green stained wood shingles laid in tight narrow courses, and all smooth sawn (no rustic effect was sought). The second floor exterior reflects the imaginative irregularity of the second floor plan. A turreted three story bay on the South side is topped with a glass enclosed octagonal 'sun room' where turned wood half columns form the mullions. A gabled window faces the front over a sweeping verandah which turns down the North side of the house and is covered with a wide sloping roof which flows gracefully up to the crest of the highest roof. In the upper front gable is a round garret window with small divided lights, trimmed with a wooden voussoir which forbids even the smallest plain wall surface. This bulls-eye window is repeated in the side wall of a side two story wing which extends to the North. This wing has angled corners with windows in the angles at each floor. The exuberant, many surfaced roof is covered with slate shingles laid in varying patterns, including round 'fish scale' and pointed 'diamond' courses in mid slope - details which were suggested as early as 1850 by A. J. Downing in "Architecture For Country Houses". At the roof ridge over the center, high portion of the house, and on prominent display is a row of crest tiles - also suggested by Downing. Rising here and there above the roof are brick chimneys with imaginative corbeled

caps. Facing the North from the front gable roof is an 'eyebrow' garret window. A detail emphasizing the rich variety of this architectural style. At the rear, South corner is a finely detailed second floor balcony opening off the master bed room. The delicate turned balusters, molded rail cap and turned wood columns and pilasters enclosing this covered balcony, reflect the same elements found at the first floor verandah. The interior of the house, which is directly reflected in the variety of the exterior, shows a remarkably free use of interconnecting spaces on several levels. From the reception foyer one enters the first of three large rooms along the South side connected with wide pocket doors which, when open, create an expansive single space of impressive proportions. The open stair starts in the reception foyer and rises in three runs along the side wall through a vaulted well two stories high. The interior walls are wainscoted with finely detailed oak paneling. Interior doors, windows, mantles, and architraves are of oak. The interior finishes are uniformly rich in design and contribute to the warmth of the house. The hardware and lighting fixtures are all original, even the gas chandeliers which have been electrified. On the second floor a long central hall runs the length of the house offering side doors to an astonishing variety of room sizes and shapes. No two alike, and all richly decorated with oak trim and delicate fret work arches. A number of hall doors include transom windows which provide natural light for the interior hall area. In the entrance hall is a tiled fireplace with a carved oak mantel. In all important rooms are carefully detailed fireplaces with varying mantel styles, reflecting colonial influences. This house assimilates, with its varied details, the originality and charm of the 'shingle style', a thoroughly American architecture, consequently it is of first importance in the developing plans for preserving Charlotte-Mecklenburg's architectural heritage.