

W. T. McCOY HOUSE



This report was written on January 6, 1982

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the W. T. McCoy House is located at 429 East Kingston Avenue in Charlotte, North Carolina.

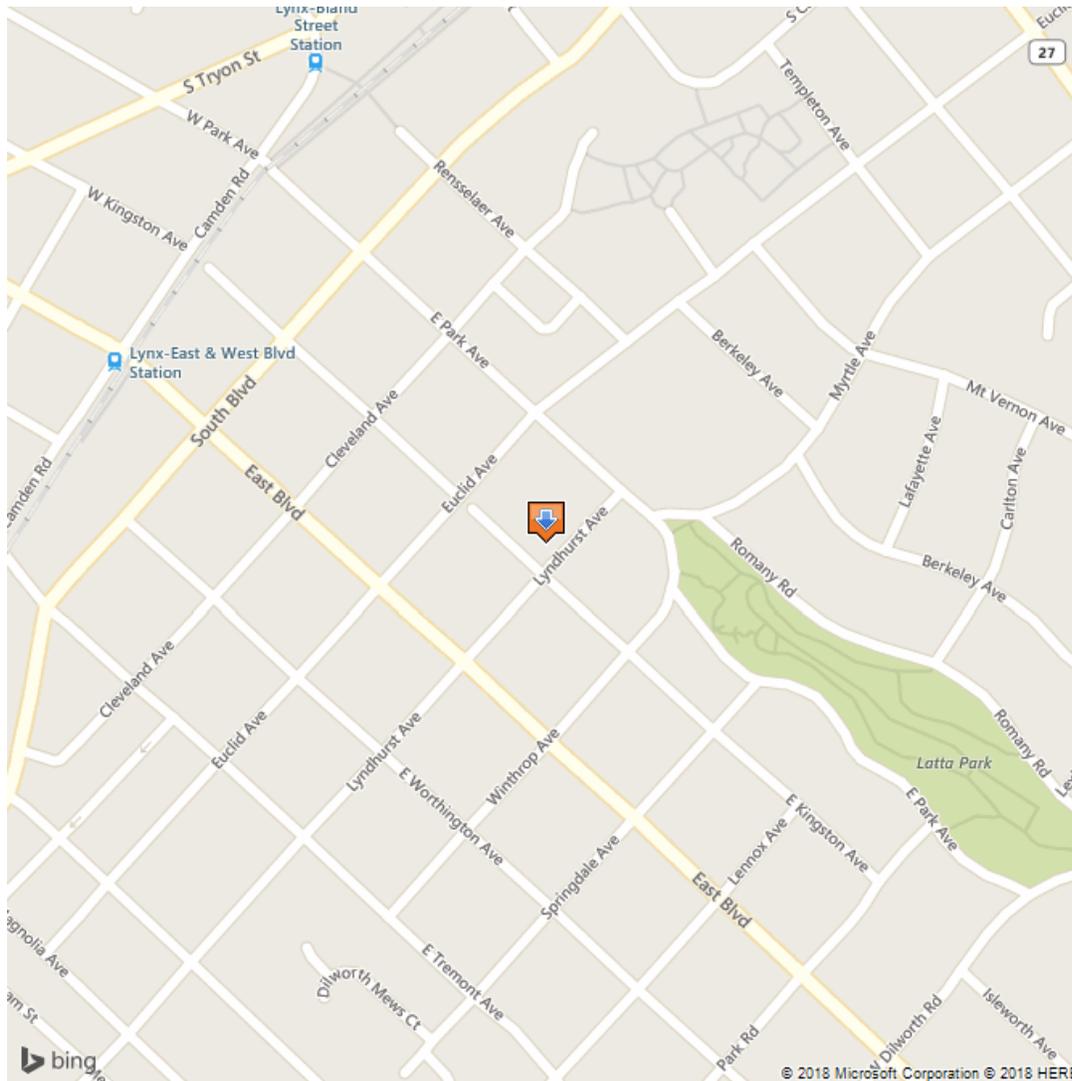
2. Name, address, and telephone number of the present owners and occupants of the property: The present owners and occupants of the property are:

John B. Geer and Gary Benner
429 East Kingston Avenue
Charlotte, NC 28203

Telephone: (704) 372-4449

3. Representative photographs of the property: This report contains representative photographs of the property.

4. A map depicting the location of the property:



5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The most recent deed to this property is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3948 at page 706. The current tax parcel number of the property is 123-082-09.

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 Thomas W. Hanchett.

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 W. T. McCoy House does possess special historic significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: (1) the house was designed by the architectural firm of Hook and Rogers, designers of seminal influence in this community; (2) the house exhibits a rare combination of Queen Anne and Bungalow styles for Charlotte-Mecklenburg; and (3) the house occupies a pivotal position in terms of the townscape of the oldest portion of Dilworth, Charlotte's first streetcar suburb.

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 W. T. McCoy House meets this criterion.

c. 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 .241 acre tract is \$3,750.00. The Ad Valorem tax appraisal on the improvements is \$11,190.00. The total Ad Valorem tax appraisal is \$14,940.00. The land is zoned R6MF.

Date of preparation of this report: January 6, 1982

Prepared by: Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Director
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3500 Shamrock Drive
Charlotte, NC 28215

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Historical Overview

Dr. William H. Huffman

On the twelfth of April, 1910, William T. McCoy bought the house presently located at 429 E. Kingston Avenue in Dilworth from the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company for the total price of \$7,089.20.¹ The Four C's had been organized by Edward Dilworth Latta in 1890 to develop that streetcar suburb from 250 acres of farmland just to the southeast of the city.² According to the usual practice, the house was contracted for in 1909, then purchased upon acceptance on the above date. The actual construction contractors for the Kingston Avenue residence were the R. N. Hunter Co., and the architect was the firm of Hook and Rogers.³ Charles Christian Hook (1870-1938), the first resident architect of Charlotte, designed a number of houses in Dilworth in addition to many important structures throughout Charlotte; the latter included the old Charlotte City Hall and the James B. Duke mansion on Hermitage Road.⁴

William T. McCoy, who was born December 24, 1876 in Camden, SC, came to Charlotte in 1895. Four years later, in 1899, he started his own furniture business, W. T. McCoy and Company, located at 209-211 S. Tryon Street.⁵ The furniture business flourished, becoming one of the best known in the area, and in 1923, Mr. McCoy built a new building at 423-425 S. Tryon to accommodate the expanding trade.⁶ Because of failing health, William McCoy retired in 1931 and liquidated the business. Despite his "quiet nature," he was quite active in business, civic and church affairs. He was a founding member of the Greater Charlotte Club, which was the predecessor of the Chamber of Commerce; was president of the Charlotte Merchant's Association; and served as president of the Southern Furniture Dealers Association and as a director of the National Furniture Dealers Association. He was also affiliated with the Charlotte Country Club, the Myers Park Club, and the Myers Park Presbyterian Church. In addition, Mr. McCoy was well known as a generous contributor to charitable and philanthropic causes. He died in Richmond, Virginia, following surgery, on February 17, 1933, and was buried in Elmwood Cemetery, Charlotte.⁷

Mrs. McCoy, the former Willie Beckton, was born in Charlotte and became the mother of five children, three of whom died as infants. The two surviving daughters, Edna and Helen (later Mrs. Richard A. Cannon and Mrs. Jack Prause, respectively), and the family were able to enjoy the commodiousness of the house with its large-windowed, high-ceilinged rooms and second-floor ballroom for many years.⁸ In 1928, the McCoys moved from Kingston to a house at 1125 Queens Road, but Mrs. McCoy reportedly spent the happiest times of her life at the Dilworth home.⁹ The following year, likely due to ill health, William McCoy deeded his real estate holdings to his wife.¹⁰ Some fifteen years before, he had suffered an extreme illness and had never fully recovered his strength. The house on Kingston was rented to various tenants by the McCoys until 1936, when management of it and six other holdings were placed in the hands of the American Trust

Company, from which Mrs. McCoy received the income.¹¹ Upon her death September 4 1953, she was also buried in Elmwood cemetery in Charlotte.¹²

Well before her death, however, the Kingston Avenue property was sold by the American Trust Company in 1944. In that year William S. and Bruce Gates Berryhill acquired the residence at an estate sale.¹³ Mr. Berryhill was an accountant for the firm of Allison Erwin and subsequently became the accountant and controller for the Wrenn Brothers, who were the forerunners of Industrial Finance Co. When they moved to Kingston Avenue, the McCoy's enjoyed the area as an established and pleasant residential neighborhood, but by 1960, deterioration had set in to the extent that they decided to move, and thus relocated on Park Road. For the ensuing nine years, the house was rented to various tenants.¹⁴

In 1969, the Kingston Avenue residence was sold to John and Sally Howie.¹⁵ Mr. Howie worked at that time for the Charlotte Pipe and Foundry Company and also did house painting and repairs, and Mrs. Howie was a cook for County Social Services. It was through his work for the Berryhills that later resulted in Mr. Howie's purchase of the house. About 1971, Mr. Howie separated two sections of the house by building a dividing wall in the downstairs hallway, thus converting the house to a duplex. For the first two years of their ownership, the Howies lived in the house themselves, and afterward rented the duplexes to various tenants.¹⁶

Ruth Little-Stokes, an architectural historian, purchased the house from the Howies in 1977.¹⁷ While pursuing her advanced degree in that discipline in Chapel Hill, Ms. Little-Stokes leased both apartments of the house and had a very strong interest in preserving its architectural integrity.¹⁸ In March, 1981, she sold the house to the present owners, John Geer and Gary Benner, who have exerted considerable effort to restore the house to as close to its original condition as possible.

NOTES

¹ Deed Book 257, p. 603.

² "The New South Neighborhoods: Dilworth," CMHPC, May, 1981.

³ *Charlotte Evening Chronicle*, June 19, 1909, p. 6.

⁴ Survey and Research Report on the Seaboard Air Line Terminal, CMHPC, undated.

⁵ *Charlotte Observer*, Feb. 19, 1933, p. 6; Charlotte City Directory, 1911, p. 285.

⁶ *Charlotte News*, Feb. 19, 1933, p. 9; Charlotte City Directory, 1925, p. 629.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Interview with Bruce Cates (Mrs. W. S.) Berryhill, Charlotte, NC, 24 August 1981.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Deed Book 735, p. 188, 13 Feb. 1929.

¹¹ Deed Book 884, p. 23, 22 Jan. 1936.

¹² Monument in Elmwood Cemetery, Charlotte.

¹³ Deed Book 1137, p. 49, 12 Dec. 1944

¹⁴ See Note 8.

¹⁵ Deed Book 3115, p. 265, 25 September 1969.

¹⁶ Interview with Sally Howie by Ruth Little-Stokes, 2 April 1979.

¹⁷ Deed Book 3948, p. 706, 1 June 1977.

¹⁸ Interview with Ruth Little Stokes by & Sally McMillen, 21 March 1979.

¹⁹ Deed Book 4407, p. 331, 9 March 1981; interview with John Geer and Gary Benner, 23 August 1981.

Architectural Description

Thomas W. Hanchett

The W.T. McCoy House is an elegant one-and-one-half story Bungalow designed by the firm of Hook and Rogers, leading Charlotte architects. Built 1909-1910 by well-to-do

furniture store owner William T. McCoy, its plan and decorative details illustrate the transition then occurring from the Queen Anne style to the new Bungalow style. Its prominent location at the corner of East Kingston and Lyndhurst Avenues, combined with its original design qualities and good state of preservation, make it an architecturally-important part of the proposed Dilworth historic district and of Charlotte as a whole.

The home is basically a low rectangular block under a spreading hip roof. Porches wrap around the sides that face Kingston and Lyndhurst Avenues. In these characteristics it is distinctively a Bungalow. Architectural Historian Clay Lancaster has traced the origin of the term Bungalow back to the East Indian word "bangle", which meant "a low house with porches all around".¹ Americans first borrowed the idea from the British in the late nineteenth century and around 1900 it caught on with a bang in sunny California, then spread across the U.S., becoming the most popular style of the 1910's and 1920's.

Before the Bungalow became popular, the major style in the United States was the Queen Anne, the climax of the Victorian era. It was characterized by complex roof shapes, complex wall treatment, and details chosen eclectically from all eras of the past. Hook and Rogers' design for the W.T. McCoy House was strongly influenced by this style.

The basic hip roof of the home is complicated by two smaller hip roofs that extend out over the front (south) and east side porches. There are also several dormered windows poking through the roof planes. Four complex bay windows with their own complicated roofs pop out of the front, sides, and rear of the building. The walls of the house are given additional interest through the use of a wide variety of window types, transomed, double-hung sash, casement, and fixed pane."

Exterior details were chosen to add to the Victorian feeling of varied textures. The three chimneys are asymmetrically placed. Rafter ends are left exposed for decorative effect in the eaves. Walls are sheathed in grooved "German" novelty-siding with corner boards. The main entry vestibule with its leaded glass sidelights and transom has a Colonial Revival feel. "The oriel window bracketed out from the west side, the diamond-paned dormer window casements, and the composite Ionic porch columns set on weatherboard pedestals are drawn from English architecture built during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries", according to architectural historian Ruth Little-Stokes in her architectural analysis of the proposed Dilworth historic district.²

The interior of the McCoy House also shows the transition from Victorian to Bungalow, especially in light of earlier homes in the neighborhood. In her essay, Little-Stokes compares it to the more Victorian 1908 Davidson House at 321 East Park Avenue. The McCoy House has lower, more "modern" ceilings and a much more open, flowing plan, typical of twentieth century design. Its details, however, are strongly Victorian and show a craftsmanship that reflects owner McCoy's familiarity with fine furniture design.

The front half of the main floor of the residence is given over to the "semi-public" spaces. From the vestibule the guest moves through double doors into a large reception hall. From it one can look into the wide central hallway that runs back to the bedrooms. To the

left of the reception hall, through a wide archway with no doors, one can see the main parlor. Moving into the central hallway, the first room to the right is a "back parlor" with its own door onto the porch, located behind the reception hall. The first room to the left is an elegant dining room with chest-high dark stained wainscoting. Dentil molding atop the wainscoting has been replicated by the present owners and a fine stained glass window by owner John Geer is the focal point of the bay at the end of the room. Each of these four main rooms has a different mantle: oak in the reception hall, painted pine in the main parlor, Birdseye maple in the back parlor, and oak in the dining room (oak columns and an overmantel were taken by the Berryhills when they sold the home). Each mantle has an ornate cast-iron fire door surrounded by ceramic tile. Most of the original brass hinges, doorknobs, and other hardware remain in these rooms.

The rear half of the main floor contains the more private spaces of the house, which were arranged on the assumption that the family would have a full-time servant. A butler's pantry behind the dining room separates that room from the kitchen, which has an unusual gently coved ceiling. Behind the kitchen was a small rear porch, enclosed probably in the 1940's.

In the northeast corner of the residence are three bedrooms, all interconnected, and two bathrooms. These are grouped around a closet-lined hall that must have been the province of the maid. The bathrooms were quite modern for their day, with ceramic tile and legless tubs. Some of the original fixtures remain.

Nestled next to the butler's pantry and opening off the central hallway is the enclosed stairwell. Up the stairs is the "ballroom", a large finished room under the roof that is nearly as large as the entire first floor. Downstairs is the brick-wall basement. The foundation appears to have been continuous wall from the start, rather than brick piers as in many homes in this region. One area of the basement is a plastered room, with its own outside entrance, that was originally the maid's quarters. The electric bell system used to signal the maid still extends throughout the house, though it is no longer working.

Surprisingly few major changes have been made in the home over the last seventy-one years. Gas sconces were removed from the dining room and ballroom, the rear porch enclosed, and some changes made to the butler's pantry in the years before World War II. In 1971 the residence was converted to a duplex with great care, the only change being the addition of two walls in the central hallway, done in such a way as to leave the original molding intact. The present owners have installed a new kitchen and furnace, and replaced lost bathroom fixtures. They have done a fine job of highlighting the McCoy Home's intrinsic elegance. With the minor exception of some light fixtures and heating registers they have not, as is so often the case in Charlotte, succumbed to the temptation to add new "old" features from other homes or renovation catalogs.

NOTES

¹ Clay Lancaster, "The American Bungalow", *The Art Bulletin* 40, no.3 (1958): 241.

² Ruth Little-Stokes and Dan Morrill, *Architectural Analysis: Dilworth: Charlotte's Initial Streetcar Suburb* (Charlotte, NC: Dilworth Community Association, 1978), pp.41-43.