

BISHOP EDWIN D. MOUZON HOUSE

This report was written on 28 December 1992



1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House is located at 800 Mt. Vernon Avenue, Charlotte, in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

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

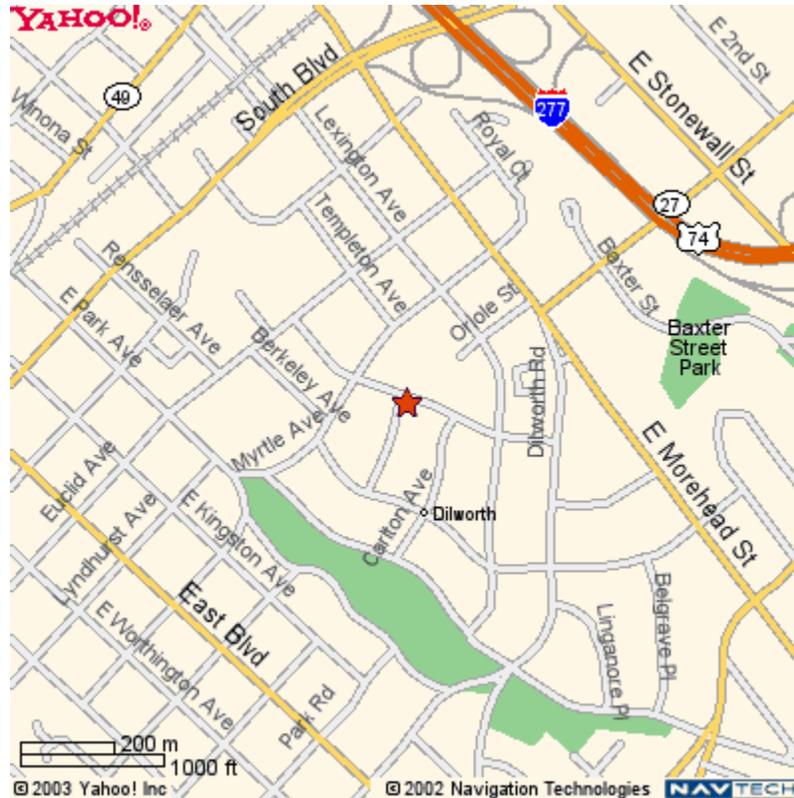
Charles Thomas and Nancy E. Humphries
800 Mt. Vernon Avenue
Charlotte, North Carolina 28203

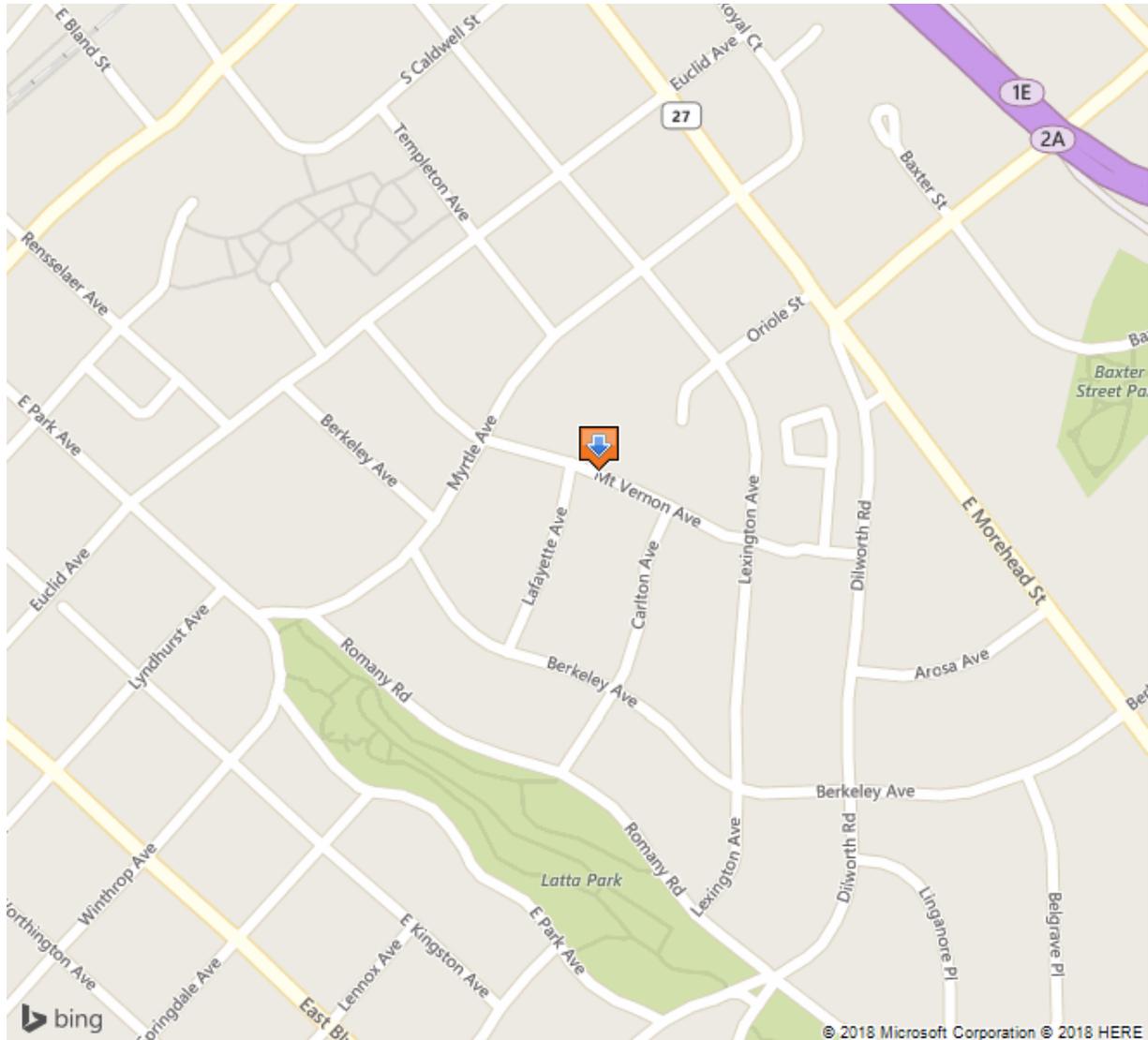
Telephone: (704) 372-8010

Tax Parcel Number: 123-093-01

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.





5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property: The most recent deed to Tax Parcel Number 123-093-01 is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 5491 on page 0077.

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

7. A brief architectural description of the property: This report contains a brief architectural description of the property prepared by Nora M. Black.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S. 160A-400.5:

a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and /or cultural

importance: The Commission judges that the property known as the Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations

- 1) Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, born in Spartanburg, South Carolina in 1869, began his service as a Methodist minister in 1889 in the Texas conference;
- 2) Bishop Mouzon was elected to the office of bishop in May, 1910;
- 3) Bishop Mouzon presided over most of the conferences of the church in the United States, as well as those of Mexico and South America;
- 4) Bishop Mouzon served as a delegate to the ecumenical conferences of the world in Toronto (1911), London (1921), and Atlanta (1931);
- 5) Bishop Mouzon set up the Methodist church of Brazil in 1930;
- 6) Bishop Mouzon was a widely known and respected preacher and author;
- 7) Bishop Mouzon and his second wife, Mary Pearl Langdon Mouzon, moved to Charlotte in 1927;
- 8) Bishop Mouzon was one of the country's most prominent churchmen and the senior bishop of the Southern Methodist Church at the time of his death in 1937;
- 9) the Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House was designed by the Charlotte architect, Marvin W. Helms;
- 10) Helms, a Mecklenburg County native who was associated with C. C. Hook, learned architecture by apprenticeship;
- 11) Helms designed hundreds of Methodist rural churches funded by the Duke Foundation;
- 12) Helms was particularly adept at Gothic detail and designed the 1926 sanctuary for the Dilworth Methodist Church;
- 13) the Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House, completed in 1927, is architecturally significant as an Eclectic House built in the Tudor style;
- 14) the Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House has many exterior features, such as the Tudor false half-timbering with stucco infill, that are intact and in good condition;
- 15) the Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House has many interior appointments, such as the fireplaces and the woodwork, that are intact and in very good condition; and
- 16) the Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House can provide valuable insight into "life in the streetcar suburb" of Dilworth.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association: The Commission contends that the architectural description by Nora M. Black included in this report demonstrates that the Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon 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 property which becomes a designated "historic landmark." The current appraised value of the improvement is \$207,860. The current appraised value of the auxiliary improvement is \$2,890. The current appraised value of the 0.347 acres of Tax Parcel 123-093-01 is \$100,000. The total appraised value of the property is \$310,750. The property is zoned R4.

Date of Preparation of this Report: 28 December 1992

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Historical Overview

Dr. William H. Huffman

The Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House is historically significant because of its association with the Methodist bishop, and its design by Charlotte architect Marvin Helms, who executed plans for hundreds of churches during his long career.

Bishop Mouzon (1869-1937) was born in Spartanburg, SC, the son of Samuel Cogswell and Harriet Peurifoy Mouzon just four years after the close of the Civil War. Following service in the Confederate army, the elder Mouzon ran a photography and artist studio, in which the young Edwin began work at the age of eleven. Years later, the Bishop recalled that at the age of fifteen he "got religion" and was called to preach. In 1889, he graduated from Wofford College in Spartanburg, and in 1905 received an honorary doctor of divinity degree from Southwestern University in Texas. He also received honorary doctor of laws degrees from Southwestern University in 1911, Duke University in 1930 and Southern Methodist University in 1935.¹

After graduation in 1889, his first ministerial assignment was in the Texas conference, and he subsequently pastored churches in Bryan, Austin, Caldwell, Galveston, Flatonia, Abilene, Fort Worth and San Antonio, as well as in Kansas City, MO. In 1908 he was appointed a professor of theology at Southwestern University, and two years later, in May, 1910, he was elected to the office of bishop, and was consecrated in Asheville, NC. In the succeeding years, Bishop Mouzon presided over most of the conferences of the church in the United States, as well as that of Mexico and South America. He was a delegate to the ecumenical conference of the world in Toronto, 1911; London, 1921; and Atlanta, 1931; and set up the Methodist church of Brazil in 1930. From his position of chairman of the Southern commission to unite American Methodism, he aggressively, but unsuccessfully, campaigned for that goal. A widely known and respected preacher and author, Bishop Mouzon was continually in demand as a speaker. Indeed, a newspaper article from the early Thirties reports that, "In a referendum among its

readers by a widely read non-sectarian religious journal to find the 25 greatest preachers in America, the name of Mouzon was high up in the brackets."²

He became nationally known for his "strongly pronounced" opposition to the election of the Democratic Governor of New York, Alfred E. Smith, for president in 1928 because of Smith's opposition to Prohibition and his religion (Catholic). At the time, the bishop was given much of the credit for the defeat of Smith in several of the Southern states, including North Carolina. Bishop Mouzon in fact had strong views about Prohibition; he was a "consistent and vigorous opponent" of the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment and any changes to the prohibition laws.³

While serving in his first ministerial assignment, Bishop Mouzon met Mary Elizabeth Mike of Bryan, Texas; they were married on his birthday, May 19, 1890. Mary Mike Mouzon died November 19, 1917 and was survived by two sons and three daughters. On August 21, 1919, the bishop married Mrs. Mary Pearl Langdon of Dallas, Texas. The Mouzons moved to Charlotte in 1927, when the bishop was assigned the episcopacy of the Carolinas, and in 1935, he was assigned the territory that included Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia. At the time of his death on February 10, 1937, he was one of the country's most prominent churchmen and the senior bishop of the Southern Methodist Church.⁴

In 1926, Bishop Mouzon commissioned a Charlotte architect, Marvin Helms, to design his new home.⁵ Marvin W. Helms (1883-1960) was a Mecklenburg County native, the son of Henry Jackson and Matilda Marze Helms. Starting as an office boy, Helms learned architecture by apprenticeship, and was licensed about 1916. For a number of years, he was associated with the well-known Charlotte architect C. C. Hook. After Hook's death in 1938, he practiced on his own until 1958, when he joined with his grandson, Marvin H. Saline, to form Helms and Saline. Bishop Mouzon's choice of Helms as the architect for his Charlotte residence is not surprising: he designed the new sanctuary for the Dilworth Methodist Church (where he was a lifelong member), which had just been completed in 1926; and for many years he designed hundreds of Methodist rural churches in the area that were funded by the Duke Foundation. He was particularly adept at Gothic detail, and helped work on the Baltimore Cathedral with Father McMichael, an architect and monk at Belmont Abbey.⁶

The Bishop Mouzon House was completed in early 1927.⁷ In March of that year, the bishop purchased the lot from the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company (locally known as the 4 C's) for \$1,000. Deed restrictions required a house costing at least \$7,500 to be built on the property.⁸ The 4 C's was the company formed by Edward Dilworth Latta and others to develop the city's first streetcar suburb, Dilworth, starting in 1890. The first phase of the development of Dilworth started in 1891, with a grid of streets off South and East Boulevards and centered around Latta Park, originally a large amusement park with a lake, pavilion and ball fields. The main boulevards had grand homes, and the side streets more modest homes for the middle-class and factory workers (including those of the Atherton Mill, built 1892-1893 by New South entrepreneur D. A. Tompkins). The first phase ended about 1912, when Latta Park was reduced to its present size, and work began on the new section designed by the Olmsted Brothers, "the most prestigious landscape architecture and city planning firm in the United States."⁹ It was in this new section that Bishop Mouzon chose to build his house. The Mouzons

enjoyed their Dilworth house for ten years before the bishop's death in 1937. Mrs. Mouzon sold the house in 1939 to Evylyn Wrenn, who owned it until 1950, when she sold it to M. Sydney Alverson and his wife Mabel T. Alverson.¹⁰ The Alverson heirs conveyed the Mount Vernon property to William E. Eastridge in 1985, who sold it two years later to the present owners, Dr. Charles Thomas Humphries and his wife, Nancy E. Humphries.¹¹

NOTES

¹ *Charlotte Observer*. February 11, 1937. p.1; undated newspaper article (cM933). "Portrait of a Tar Heel Bishop," vertical files. Carolina Room. Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Thomas W. Hanchett. "Charlotte and Its Neighborhoods," Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1986, "Dilworth," p.18.

⁶ *Charlotte Observer*. December 4, 1960, p. 9F; interview with Marvin H. Saline, grandson of Marvin Helms, 2 November 1992.

⁷ Records of Charlotte Mecklenburg Utility Department.

⁸ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 660, p.23, 11 March 1927.

⁹ Dan L. Morrill, "Edward Dilworth Latta and the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company (1890-1925): Builders of a New South City," *The North Carolina Historical Review*. LXII (July, 1985), 293-316.

¹⁰ Mecklenburg County Deed Books 972, p. 9; 1426, p.603.

¹¹ Ibid., Books 5123, p. 190; 5491, p.77.

Architectural Description

Nora M. Black

The Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House is located at 800 Mt. Vernon Avenue in the Dilworth neighborhood of Charlotte. The house occupies a corner lot on the south side of Mt. Vernon Avenue at its intersection with Lafayette Avenue. The front or north facade of the house is parallel with Mt. Vernon Avenue. The west facade is parallel with Lafayette Avenue. The rear or south facade overlooks the back yard; the frame garage is located on the southeast corner of the lot. The land on the south side of Mt. Vernon Avenue has a much higher elevation than that of the north side of the street. Consequently, the Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House is set high above street level and commands an excellent view of the skyline of Charlotte. The Mecklenburg County Tax Office lists the house as having 4,539 square feet of heated area. The house is located on a rectangular-shaped lot of 0.347 acres and is owned by Charles Thomas Humphries and Nancy E. Humphries.

The Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House is an Eclectic House built in the Tudor style. The Eclectic movement ran from approximately 1880 to 1940. After World War I, American housing was dominated by period revivals such as Italian Renaissance, Chateausque, Beaux Arts, Tudor, or Colonial Revival during the 1920's and 1930's. "The resulting burst of period fashions drew on the complete historical spectrum of European and Colonial American housing styles..."²The expression "Tudor style" is misleading since most houses grouped under this type do not resemble early 16th century, Tudor English houses. The style more closely mimics late Medieval English prototypes. In the American Eclectic expression, the Tudor style is characterized by steeply pitched, front-facing gables and ornamental false half-timbering. In fact, ornamental false half-timbering occurs on approximately half of all Tudor style houses.

Masonry veneering techniques were not perfected until the early 1920s. The new masonry veneer allowed American Tudor style houses to imitate Medieval English brick and stone prototypes. The Tudor style became very popular and spread throughout the United States. In the late 1930s, the Tudor style became unfashionable and was not revived until the Neoeclectic movement started in the 1970s.³

The Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House has a simple rectangular massed plan with irregular (less than room-sized) projections from the principal mass. The house presents an asymmetrical front elevation with a cross-gabled roof. The front view is dominated by the front-facing gabled section of the large house. A one-story, projecting entry with a round-arched doorway draws attention to the front of the house. Painted brick clads the exterior to the second floor level. The second floor walls are clad with Tudor false half-timbering.

Exterior

The Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House has two types of exterior wall cladding: Tudor false half-timbering above painted brick laid in running bond. Brick wall cladding distinguishes the most

common subtype of Tudor houses. Tudor false half-timbering was a common secondary influence; the treatment of stucco infill between non-structural timbers arranged in decorative patterns mimics Medieval infilled timber framing.⁴ The bricks and false half-timbering are painted steel gray; the stucco infill is white. The colors of the stone trim are mostly warm tans and light browns with contrasting dark grays. The cast concrete lintels and sills have not been painted.

The slate roof lacks the steep pitch of most Tudor style houses. It does, however, have the prominent cross gables associated with the style. Additionally, the points of the gables are clipped to form a hip-gable roof. This treatment is also called a jerkinhead. At the gable ends, the attic story projects beyond the second story to form a jetty. Small curved brackets support each jetty. Larger carved brackets are located at each corner of each jetty. The three-dimensional brackets add weight and interest to the cross gable ends. The roof of the front facade is interrupted by a gabled dormer. The dormer has curved vergeboards supported by extended decorative roof beams. Metal ridge and hip caps add a finishing touch to the roof. Copper gutters have been installed at the eaves; the downspouts are also copper. Although the open eaves are not visible since they are concealed by the gutters, closer inspection of the eaves reveals that the rafter ends are exposed.

The single massive chimney, a favorite Tudor detail, is located on the west side of the house. The base of the chimney is enclosed by the side porch. The balance of the exterior chimney, with its single shoulder, reaches high above the roof. The top of the chimney has three round, fluted chimney pots.

Most of the windows in the Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House consist of double hung wooden sash. The windows have a variety of glazing patterns ranging from 3/1 to 12/1. The majority of the first floor windows are glazed in a 9/1 pattern while the majority of the second floor windows are glazed in a 6/1 pattern. All elevations have asymmetrical window arrangements. Windows occur singularly, in pairs, and in groups of three or four. The first floor windows on the front and sides of the house have decorative cast stone lintels and sills. The first floor windows on the back of the house have lintels constructed of a soldier course of brick and sills of a header course of brick.

The asymmetrical front elevation is three units wide. The elaborate front entry is set slightly off-center. The front entry is flanked by window groups of three 9/1 double hung wooden sash. All but one of the windows of the second floor front elevation have window boxes.

Projecting toward Mt. Vernon Avenue, the front entry is one-story high with a hip-gable roof. Curved vergeboards, supported by extended rafter ends, frame the round arched doorway. Cantilevered cast concrete pieces support the arch above the door. The arch encloses an elliptical fanlight. The walls of the front entry are made of stone, in predominantly warm tans and browns. Six steps, faced with brick, lead to the terrace in front of the entry. The terrace continues on the east side of the front entry. The terrace floor is made of quarry tiles with white mortar joints. Black wrought iron rails have been installed on either side of the steps.

The front entry has a single batten door with six lights of glazing in the top half and a recessed panel of narrow battens in the bottom half. The hardware consists of black wrought iron strap hinges and entrance handle. The door casing consists of a simple arrangement of boards with a curved and molded top. The top of the casing supports an unusual fanlight divided into 6 vertical panels of glass. A doorbell, decorated with black wrought iron trim, is located on the door casing.

A side porch, another characteristic feature of the Tudor style, forms a one-story extension on the west side of the Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House. The porch is almost completely concealed by shrubbery. The two west corner piers of the porch are constructed of tan and brown stone; they are continuous from the ground level to the height of the eaves. The cast concrete trim on the west side of the porch is similar to that of the front entry. The opening on the south side of the porch has been infilled with a 12-light glass and wood door set in a heavy door surround. The other porch openings have been infilled with narrow vertical windows. The once open porch now serves as an enclosed sun room. Additionally, the house has a hip-roofed, one-story porch on the south facade. It has a steel gray and white wall treatment that matches the second floor wall treatment.

Both the east and west sides of the house have cross gables forming hip-gable roofs and attic-story jetties as described for the front elevation. Both sides have the same brick, stucco and false half-timbering wall cladding described previously. The south or back side of the house is more utilitarian in appearance. Although the same materials are used, the false half-timbering lacks the diagonal half-timbers found on the other facades. The south side also has a semi-hexagonal, one-story bay with three windows. A soldier course of brick encircles the house at the second floor level.

Interior

The interior of the Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House has been changed and modernized some over the life of the house. The current owners made repairs and did some remodeling in 1988. Much of the work was necessary to restore the house from damage it received while being used as a rooming house. The current owners returned the house to its original function, that of a single family residence. Most of the historic fabric, however, is not only intact but visible. The space provided by the large rooms has not been altered by creating smaller rooms. The house features 11-1/2" ceilings on the first floor level and 9-1/2" ceilings on the second. Most of the rooms have original wooden moldings and original hardware on the wooden interior doors. The original hardware includes glass door knobs and brass keyholes. Lighting fixtures, including sconces, were installed in original locations. Some rooms contain original plaster moldings. The current owners have added wooden crown moldings in some rooms. Most walls and ceilings throughout the house are of plaster. The current owners carefully restored and repaired damaged plaster themselves. Sheetrock was used only when the plaster was beyond repair. Hardwood flooring is used throughout the house with the exception of the bathrooms, the kitchen and the breakfast area. Original hardwood flooring was replaced only if it had been damaged beyond repair. The kitchen and the breakfast area have new black and white tile flooring.

The front door opens to an arched foyer. The small foyer has an arched window on the east wall. The foyer opens to a central hall that separates the living room (located to the west side) and a sitting room (on the east). At the back or south end of the central hall, an arched opening leads to the stair hall. The arched opening is flanked by Corinthian columns set on built-in cabinets. Each cabinet has a patterned glass door.

The stair hall contains a U-shaped stairway leading to the second floor. Beneath that stairway, a steep, narrow stairway leads to the basement. There is a closet and a half-bath at the east end of the stair hall. The half-bath contains new fixtures. It does, however, retain one original and unusual feature. The door to the half-bath is a narrow door constructed of six clear glass lights over a wooden panel; a curtain provides privacy. The deeply carved newel in the stair hall is topped with a realistic human figure of metal that is wired to be a lamp. The stair rail is curved and molded to fit the hand while the balusters are simple rectangular pieces of wood. Some balusters do not extend from step to handrail and form a repeating pattern of voids.

There is a small sitting room located on the east side of the central hall. French doors, each composed of ten lights over a single wooden panel, can be closed to provide privacy. Located on the west side of the central hall, the large living room (approximately 24' by 16') fills the northwest corner of the first floor. The living room has a fireplace on the west wall. The classically-inspired fire surround features a raised and carved oval ornament set on a raised center block. The bottom of the fire shelf is trimmed with a large dentil molding. Fluted columns, raised on plinth blocks, flank the fire opening. Most of the original fire tiles were broken or missing; the current owners covered the remaining tiles with marble. A door on the west wall leads to the enclosed side porch. French doors on the south wall of the living room open to the dining room.

The rectangular dining room occupies the southwest corner of the first floor. It has a single door on the east wall leading to the breakfast area; this area is brightened by the windows surrounding its semi-hexagonal bay. Original pantry cabinets and drawers occupy most of the North wall of the breakfast area. Two original, narrow swinging doors, leading to the stair hall, complete the north wall. A door on the east side of the breakfast area leads to the kitchen. The kitchen cabinets were installed by the current owner. The design for the cabinets is copied from an original cabinet now stored in the basement. The old-style, glass-paneled doors of the cabinets provide a reminder of early kitchens. Fixtures in the kitchen are new. A door on the south wall of the kitchen leads to the enclosed back porch. This area has been converted to a laundry area and mud room. The beveled board ceiling is original although the beaded board used on the walls is new.

The enclosed side porch, located on the west or Lafayette Avenue side of the house, is floored with quarry tiles like those found on the front terrace. The ceiling is covered with beveled boards. Thresholds to the porch are made of copper. Modern double glazing, with simulated divided lights, has been added to convert the room for year-round use and to make the house more secure.

The Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House has only one stairway to the second floor. That open staircase climbs in a U-shape from the previously-described stair hall to the second floor. A

large window has been installed on the level of the stair landing to replace an earlier exit. The stairway ends in a center hall on the second floor. Doors to the four bedrooms, the bathroom, the linen closet, and the attic open from the center hall.

The largest bedroom is located in the northwest corner of the second floor. It has a fireplace with a classical fire surround similar to the one in the living room. The fire surround lends an air of formality to the room. It lacks the carved oval ornament and columns of the one in the living room. This fire surround does have fine molding, engaged pilasters and a fire shelf with dentils. As in the living room, the current owners covered the broken and missing fire tiles with marble. This bedroom has an unusual storage area. A horizontal cedar storage unit, shaped like a rectangle, slides through the wall into an open space under the stairs to the attic. This bedroom ceiling was damaged so badly that sheetrock had to be used to replace the plaster. The current owners added wooden crown molding as well. A door on the east wall leads to a full bath; it has been remodeled and has new plumbing fixtures.

A door on the south wall of the largest bedroom opens to a bedroom that occupies the southwest corner of the second floor. This smaller bedroom is filled with light from the groups of windows that line the south and west walls of the room. It has a cedar lined closet. This room also has a door on the east wall leading to the center hall.

The southeast corner of the house has the smallest bedroom. This small room has the original plaster walls; however, the ceiling is covered with sheetrock. Like the other bedrooms, it has original flooring, hardware and windows.

The northeast corner of the second floor has a large bedroom. The entry to the bedroom has an arched opening to the door swing area. A window seat that opens to reveal a storage area is located beneath the corner window on the south wall. The painted wood is curved and decorated with recessed panels.

The center room on the south side of the second floor is a bathroom. It has a single window on the south wall. The fixtures, including the rolled-top bathtub, are period pieces installed when the room was remodeled. A door on the north wall of the center hall opens directly to a steep flight of stairs to the attic. The bottom of the door has been shaped to receive the bottom step. The attic retains its original shape; however, it has been converted to a bedroom and a bathroom. Walls of sheetrock cover the rafters. The columns in the attic replace the original wooden support posts.

The basement of the house is divided into several small rooms. Walls of the basement are constructed of smoothfaced brick. The windows that provided light have been bricked up for security. The stair to the basement is a steep rough wooden affair. In the southeast corner of the basement, there is a small half-bath. Although the door is missing, the basic plumbing is still in place. Apparently, it was the servant's facility. A gas-fired unit has replaced the coal-fired furnace. The original doorbell system is still in place in the basement.

Conclusion

The Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House is an intact example of an Eclectic House built in the Tudor style. The interior finishes and decorative details of the Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon House are well-conceived and constructed of good materials. The exterior has survived with original materials and few changes other than the application of paint. The house can provide valuable insight into one style of house that became popular in Charlotte's first streetcar suburb, Dilworth.

NOTES

¹ Virginia & Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York, 1986), 355.

² *Ibid.*, 319.

³ *Ibid.*, 354-371.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 356.