

## **OLD ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL**

*This report was written on November 1, 1977*



*Recent photo*



*Hospital, ca. 1907*

**1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the Old St. Peter's Hospital (Kenmore Hotel) is located at 225-231 N. Poplar St. in Charlotte, NC.

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

The occupants of the property are the various guests who occupy the property on a temporary basis. The telephone number of the Kenmore Hotel is (704) 375-1587.

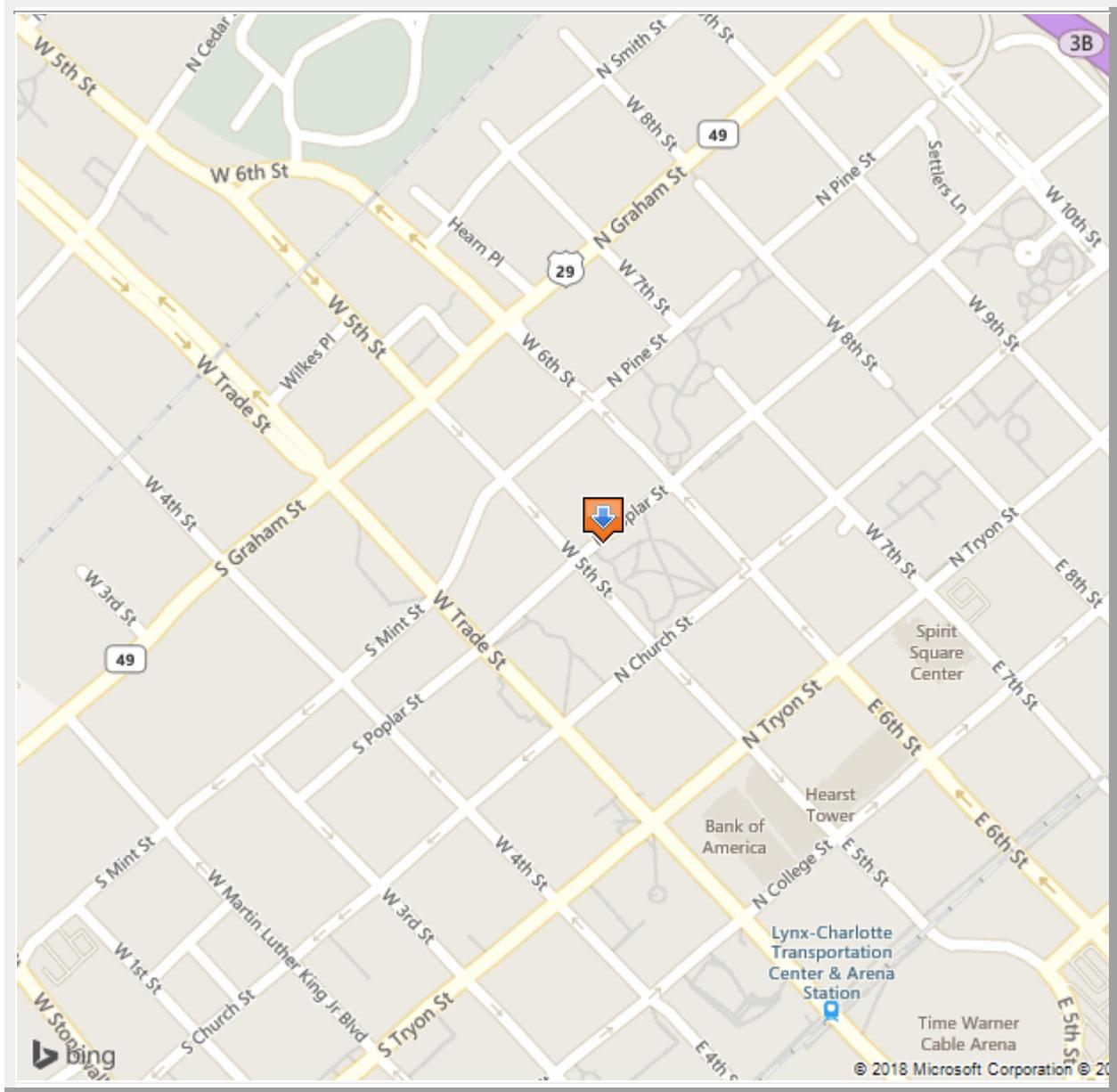
The owner of the property is:

Realty Fund, Inc.  
3801 Larkston Dr.  
Charlotte, N.C. 28211

Telephone: (704) 364-4567

**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 a map depicting the location of the property.



**5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property:** The most recent reference to this property is found in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 3547 at page 206. The Parcel Number of the property is 07801104.

**6. A brief historical sketch of the property:**

The impetus for the establishment of St. Peter's Hospital was provided by Benjamin S. Bronson, Rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church on N. Tryon St. Having preached a sermon in which he urged his congregation to establish a facility that would provide medical services for the underprivileged of this community, he witnessed the creation of the St. Peter's Church Aid Society on January 25, 1875. Mrs. Jane Renwick Smedburg Wilkes, a native of New York City, directed the efforts of this organization in raising the money necessary to open Charlotte's first

civilian hospital. The facility opened on January 20, 1876, in two rented rooms in a house on E. Seventh St. "between College and Railroad." The evidence suggests that this was the first non-military hospital in North Carolina. Initially known as the Charlotte Home and Hospital, the facility moved to new temporary quarters on N. Tryon St. in mid-1876, where the Old First Baptist Church (Spirit Square) is now located. Mrs. Hamilton C. Jones, the Vice President of the St. Peter's Church Aid Society during these early years, described the difficulty with which patients were initially brought to the hospital:

"It is strange to recall the tremendous struggle which the pioneers were called upon to make against prejudice; first of the patient, who had to be almost kidnapped from his relatives, and brought against his own will as well, and secondly, against the opposition of these who lived in the neighborhood, who resented the diseases brought into their midst. The first few patients were brought in under resistance so fierce that one of the two or three policemen which the town boasted had always to walk beside the patient, and at times hang around the premises, to intimidate the rioters who threatened to shoot into the building."

In 1877 a lot at the corner of Sixth St. and Cemetery Ave. (now Poplar St.) was purchased as the permanent site for the Charlotte Home and Hospital. Elaborate ceremonial commemorating the laying of the corner stone of the initial structure took place on the afternoon of June 4, 1877. The bricks for this building, a one-story edifice with four rooms, were made at the present site of the Thompson Orphanage Chapel. The hospital opened at its permanent location on May 30, 1878. Deserving much of the credit for this achievement was an organization known as the Busy Bee Society. Its members were students at a local female academy run by a Miss Hattie Moore. They had raised the money to purchase the lot (\$273.42) and had supplied considerable funds toward the construction of the building itself, which was located in the rear portion of the lot. The original structure measured 30x30 feet. The first addition to the hospital was completed in March 1882. It was a two-story brick structure which contained six rooms and measured 34x30 feet. This ten-room complex was the only hospital which existed in Charlotte at this time. Good Samaritan Hospital, a facility serving the brick residents of this community, did not open until 1888 and did not move to its permanent location until September 1891. Presbyterian Hospital initiated its activities in a converted hotel on W. Trade St. in January 1903, and Mercy General Hospital opened in a frame structure on East First St. on February 25, 1906. By the late 1890's the Charlotte Home and Hospital was becoming a major medical center, where many of the advanced surgical techniques of that day were first employed in this community. It is important to note that the hospital served patients from throughout this region of North Carolina. For example, of the 51 individuals who received care there in 1887, only ten came from Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Twenty-seven came from other parts of the state, six from outside of North Carolina, and two from Ireland. Indicative of the increasing importance of the hospital was the decision to erect a major addition in 1898. The *Charlotte Daily Observer* of June 19, 1898, provided a lengthy description of the new building:

"The new building was built in front of the old one. It faces Poplar Street, running back and joining the old building in the rear. The building is three stories high. It has 30 rooms, and broad porches on three sides on each floor. Wide halls extend through the center of the building on the first and second floors, and a smaller one on the third floor. On the main floor are the doctor's room and drug store, parlor, sick rooms, linen room, the community room which is endowed-dining room, kitchen and bath room and matron's room. On the second floor: operating room, well-arranged as to light and cleanliness, and patient's room preparatory to operation; the Busy Bees' room, which is furnished in white and is exceedingly neat; the Odd Fellows' room, furnished in attractive style by the different lodges of the city; and six sick rooms. The rooms on the third floor have not been completed, but will be as needed. The building is finished in the interior in hard pine, the fireplaces are tiled, and there is a grate in each; it is heated by steam and is supplied with hot and cold water, electric bells, and elevator. The heating apparatus and laundry are in the basement and like the arrangements above, are complete in every particular."

Dedication ceremonies for the expanded facility were held at 6:00 p.m. on July 15, 1898. The *Charlotte Daily Observer* reported that several hundred people had assembled to take part in or witness the services" which were conducted by Bishop Joseph Blount Chesire. The name of the complex was now changed to "St. Peter's Hospital." The activities of July 15, 1898, included a tour of the new building. The guests discovered that the typical room contained a "white iron bedstead, oak bureau, white iron washstand, two chairs, grate and pretty tile." Of particular interest to the visitors were the endowed rooms, especial the Busy Bees' Room. It was painted "white and blue" and was furnished "with a view to a child's pleasure and comfort." Another addition to the hospital was completed in March, 1907. Erected in front of the building which had been dedicated in 1898, the new structure was three and one-half stories tall and possessed porches along the front or Poplar St. side of the first three floors. The dedication services for this twenty-room addition were conducted by Bishop Chesire on April 22, 1907. An early postcard of the St. Peter's Hospital features a view of the front of this addition. The *Charlotte Observer* of March 27, 1922, announced that contracts would be awarded for some \$75,000 worth of work at St. Peter's hospital. Mr. Louis Asbury, a prominent architect in Charlotte, had prepared the plans for a project which would transform the complex by erecting a "nurses' home in the rear of the present structure," constructing a maternity ward, children's ward, baby's ward, and "doubling the capacity of the charity wards." The contract for this 56x85 feet, three story and basement addition to St. Peter's Hospital was awarded to T. C. Thompson & Bros. on July 10, 1922. The *Charlotte Observer* of July 11, 1922, contains a description of the proposed building:

"Included in the building will be space for the nurses' home, occupying parts of all the floors, with kitchen and dining room in the basement and reception rooms on the first floor. In addition, the basement will contain the kitchen and space for preparing food for the patients. The first floor will be occupied by children's and babies' wards, both private and charity; private rooms will occupy the second floor space and operating rooms and the x-ray department will be on the third floor."

Besides the new addition, these portions of the complex which had been erected in 1898 and 1907 were substantially renovated in 1922. The exteriors of these earlier edifices assumed their

present appearance, and the interiors of same were altered to a significant degree. Indeed, the cost of these renovations along was approximately \$20,000. The final alterations to the St. Peter's Hospital occurred in 1935. Approximately \$17,000 was spent on improvements and repairs to the medical complex and to the equipment contained therein. By this time, however, the Board of Trustees of the facility began to investigate the possibility of moving the hospital to a new site. The size of the lot at sixth and Poplar Sts. did not allow for further expansion. Moreover, the business section of the community was rapidly spreading into the neighborhood. "To build higher," reported an article in *Southern Hospital* of September 1936, "is not practical because that would necessitate tearing down the present plant, parts of which are thirty or forty years old." In April 1938 Dr. William Henry Walsh, a hospital consultant from Chicago, IL, presented a report which surveyed the medical facilities of this community. His findings caused the citizens of Charlotte to launch a drive to establish a new hospital. The Board of Trustees voted to contribute \$100,000 to this effort and to close St. Peter's Hospital upon completion of the new complex. Memorial Hospital opened on October 8, 1940. The patients in St. Peter's Hospital were transferred to the new facility, thereby bringing the history of St. Peter's Hospital to an end. The complex was transformed into a hotel and continues to serve in that capacity today.

**7 A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains an architectural description prepared by Ruth Little-Stokes, formerly of the Division of Archives and History.

**8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria set forth in N.C.G.S. 16A-399.4:**

**a. Historical and cultural significance:** The Old St. Peter's Hospital is historically and culturally significant because of its association with the medical history of this community from 1878 until 1940. The evidence suggests that this was the first non-military hospital to operate continuously for general medical purposes in the state of North Carolina and in the city of Charlotte. The structures which were completed in 1878 and 1882 were demolished in 1922. The oldest surviving elements of the present building are located in the middle portion and date from 1898. The front section of the building was erected in 1907. In 1922 the rear portion of the building was constructed, and the interiors and exteriors of the earlier edifices were substantially altered. In short, the buildings evolved in response to the changing medical needs of this community and region.

**b. Suitability for reservation and restoration:** It is reasonable to assume that extensive research could uncover a substantial amount of information regarding each of the three components of the complex. In other words, the structure could be restored to its appearance as of 1922. Indeed, the exterior of the complex has not been fundamentally altered since that time. However, the restoration and preservation of the interior of the edifice should not be a primary objective.

**c. Cost of acquisition, restoration, maintenance or repair:** At present the Commission has no intention of purchasing this property. It assumes that all costs associated with renovating and maintaining the structure will be paid by the owner or subsequent owners of the property.

**d. Educational value:** The property has educational value because of its historic and cultural significance.

**e. Possibilities for adaptive or alternative use of the property:** The property is currently being adaptively used as a hotel. It is highly suited for a variety of adaptive uses.

**f. Appraised value:** The current tax appraisal value of the structure itself is \$45,230. The current tax appraisal value of the .427 acres of land is \$46,550, The cost recent annual tax bill on the building and land was \$1,541.90. The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply annually for an automatic deferral of 50% of the rate upon which the Ad Valorem taxes are calculated.

**g. The administrative and financial responsibility of any person or organization willing to underwrite all or a portion of such costs:** As indicated earlier, at present the Commission has no intention of purchasing the fee simple or any lesser included interest in this property. Furthermore, the Commission agrees that all costs associated with the structure will be met by whatever party now owns or will own the property.

**9. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria established for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:** The Commission believes that the property known as the Old St. Peter's Hospital (Kenmore Hotel) does meet the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. Basic to the Commission's position is its understanding of the purpose of the National Register. Established in 1966, the National Register represents the decision of the Federal Government to expand its listing of historic properties to include properties of local, regional, and state significance. The Commission believes that the Old St. Peter's Hospital is of local, regional, and state historic significance and therefore meets the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

**10. Documentation of why and in what ways the property is of historic importance to Charlotte and/or Mecklenburg County:** The Old St. Peter's Hospital is historically important to Charlotte and Mecklenburg County because of its association with the history of medicine in this community. The evidence suggests that it was the first non-military hospital to operate continuously for general medical purposes in Charlotte and in the state of North Carolina. It is true that the oldest portion of the structure dates from 1898 and that the complex has experienced periodic alteration. However, these alterations have reflected the changing medical needs of this community and are therefore contributors to, not detractors from, the historic significance of the complex.

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## Bibliography

*An Inventory of Older Buildings in Mecklenburg County and Charlotte for the Historic Properties Commission*

Beers Map of Charlotte, 1877.

*Charlotte Daily Observer* (June 19, 1898, p. 6); (July 16, 1898, p.6); (April 23, 1907, p.5); (April 18, 1909, Sec. 2, p. 4).

"Church Hospital. Kidnapped Patients," *Southern Hospital* (September 1936) pp. 8-13.

*Daily Charlotte Observer* (June 3, 1877, p.4); (June 5, 1877, p.4).

Records of the Mecklenburg County Tax Office. Parcel Number 07801104.

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Charlotte (1900, p.4); (1905, p.7); (1911, p.58); (1929, Vol. 1, p.1, 6); (October 8, 1940, Sec. 2., p. 1)

**Date of Preparation of this Report:** November 1, 1977

**Prepared by:** Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Director  
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### ***Architectural Description***

The Kenmore Hotel (former St. Peter's Hospital), located on the southwest corner of Poplar and Sixth Streets, Charlotte, is a large Georgian Revival style building with warm red brick walls, picturesque stepped gable ends of Flemish derivation, and simple wooden classical details. The U-shaped three-story brick building on a partially-raised basement, eight bays wide and fifteen bays deep, was constructed in three stages 1898, 1907 and 1922. The oldest portion, located in the center, is the first two stories of the rear wing, extending seven bays behind the main front block. The three-story front block, eight bays wide and two bays deep, was added in front of the 1898 structure in 1907, and forms the main facade. The three story front portico, the third story of the 1898 section, and the L-shaped extension of the rear wing were added in 1922. The well-maintained building forms a visual link between the historic landmarks clustered around the "Square" to the southeast, the heart of Charlotte "inner city", and the Victorian residential fabric of the Fourth Ward, Charlotte's oldest remaining neighborhood and now a local historic district, to the north.

### **Detailed Description**

At the northeast corner of the main block is a stone cornerstone with the inscription "1877, 1898, 1907, St. Peter's Hospital." The original one-story four room brick hospital, constructed in 1877, sat on the rear of the 100 by 200 foot lot. This structure was enlarged in 1882, and in 1898 an L-shaped 2 story brick addition was built in front (east) of the structure. A photo of this addition, located in the 1902 annual report of St. Peter's Hospital, shows a simple Neoclassical Revival style building with a pedimented main facade, three bays wide, and a two-story classical porch extending across the front and down the south flank. The 1877 and 1882 structure was demolished in order to construct the 1922 addition. The only visible exterior remains of the 1898 addition are the brick walls and possibly the window sash. The 1907 addition, a three-story brick block eight bays wide and two bays deep, concealed the front of the 1898 building. It is covered with dark red brick, laid in one-to-five common bond, and has a lively roofline resulting from the wide, pedimented cross-gable with a glazed lunette which surmounts the center three bays of the main facade, the three pedimented dormer windows south of the cross-gable, and the crow-stepped gable ends, coped with concrete, which conceal the gable ends of the slate roof. The cross-gable has a boxed molded cornice with modillion, and the remainder of the main block has identical cornice treatment but lacks modillions. Matching dormer windows accent the rear of the main block. One interior end chimney projects from the north gable end. An interior brick chimney with a corbeled brick cap, located behind the cross-gable, may have originally belonged to the 1898 structure.

The main entrance, located slightly off-center in the third bay from the northeast corner, is a handsome trabeated design of stained oak. The double glazed door has sidelights and a transom flanked by fluted Doric pilasters, and a molded surround eight-over-eight sash windows predominate, with a few four-over-four sash and casements. All have granite sills, but flat brick arches and granite lintels are interspersed. The south bay of the main facade is set apart by a passageway connecting the front yard with the interior enclosed courtyard on the south side of the rear wing. The passageway has a round-arched front entrance with a cast-iron gate, and an identical rear arch. At the second story of this bay is a triple six-over-six sash window within a segmentally arched opening. Along the south property line is a random stone rail, approximately 5 feet high. The wall forms the base of the south wall of the 1907 addition, and perhaps predates the 1907 addition. It may be the remains of a wall which enclosed the front yard of the 1898 building. In 1922, the three-story porch which stretched across the main facade was replaced by a classical entrance porch, one bay wide, surmounted by a second and third story sunporch. At the first level, heavy brick posts support a paneled frieze and molded dentil cornice. The upper sunporches are enclosed with Queen Anne style casement windows with transoms, accented with corner Doric pilasters with strapwork capitals. At the corners of the third story sunporch are large eave brackets. The 1922 porch, of transitional late Medieval-early English Renaissance design, blends compatibly with the earlier Georgian Revival building. The third story added to the rear wing and the wing extension also fit inconspicuously with the existing building. This construction consists of red brick veneer, one-over-one sash windows, a modillion cornice and a hip roof with composition shingles. Like the exterior, the interior finish reflects continual efforts to provide the most up-to-date hospital facilities possible. The basic interior plan consists of a T-shaped hall with flanking rooms. The main stair, apparently a 1907 replacement, is located in the southeast corner of the rear wing, just opposite the front portico. It consists of a wide wooden open-string stair rising in two flights through each story from the basement to the third floor, with a railing with plain balusters and a molded hand rail. In 1922 the stairwell was enclosed at

the second and third levels with plaster partitions with vertically sheathed wainscots and mesh glass windows.

The elevator west of the stair was probably added at this time. The corridors of the 1898 and 1907 sections have plastered walls and ceilings, vertically sheathed wainscots, and door transoms. Most of the doors are recent replacement, of hollow-core construction. The only differentiation in visible interior finish between the 1898 and 1907 sections are the door surrounds, with roundel corner block treatment, and some paneled doors, in the 1898 section. On the third floor, leading from the hall of the 1907 main block into the hall of the rear wing is a wide round arch. At the third story of the rear wing is a 1922 addition, this arched opening may have led into a sunporch on the roof of the 1898 section. The only interior decorative finish which remains is the corner fireplace with mantel in the waiting room located in the north first floor room of the 1907 main block. The late Victorian design consists of fluted, chamfered pilasters and frieze and an ornate cast-iron fireplace cover. The 1922 addition is finished similarly to the older section, but lacks wainscots. The beginning of the extension is visible on each floor by a gentle drop in floor level of approximately two feet. On the first floor, the juncture is further indicated by a wooden classical arch with Doric columns and a paneled frieze. In the center of the rear extension is a second stair with a metal railing. On the third floor, two deep skylight wells illuminate the corridor. The third floor, which housed the operation rooms and auxiliary spaces, received further modernization in several stages between 1922 and 1940, when it became a hotel.