



## QUERY-SPIVEY-McGEE BUILDING



*This report was written on April 5, 1983*

**1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the Query-Spivey-McGee Building is located at the corner of College and Stonewall Streets in Charlotte, North Carolina.

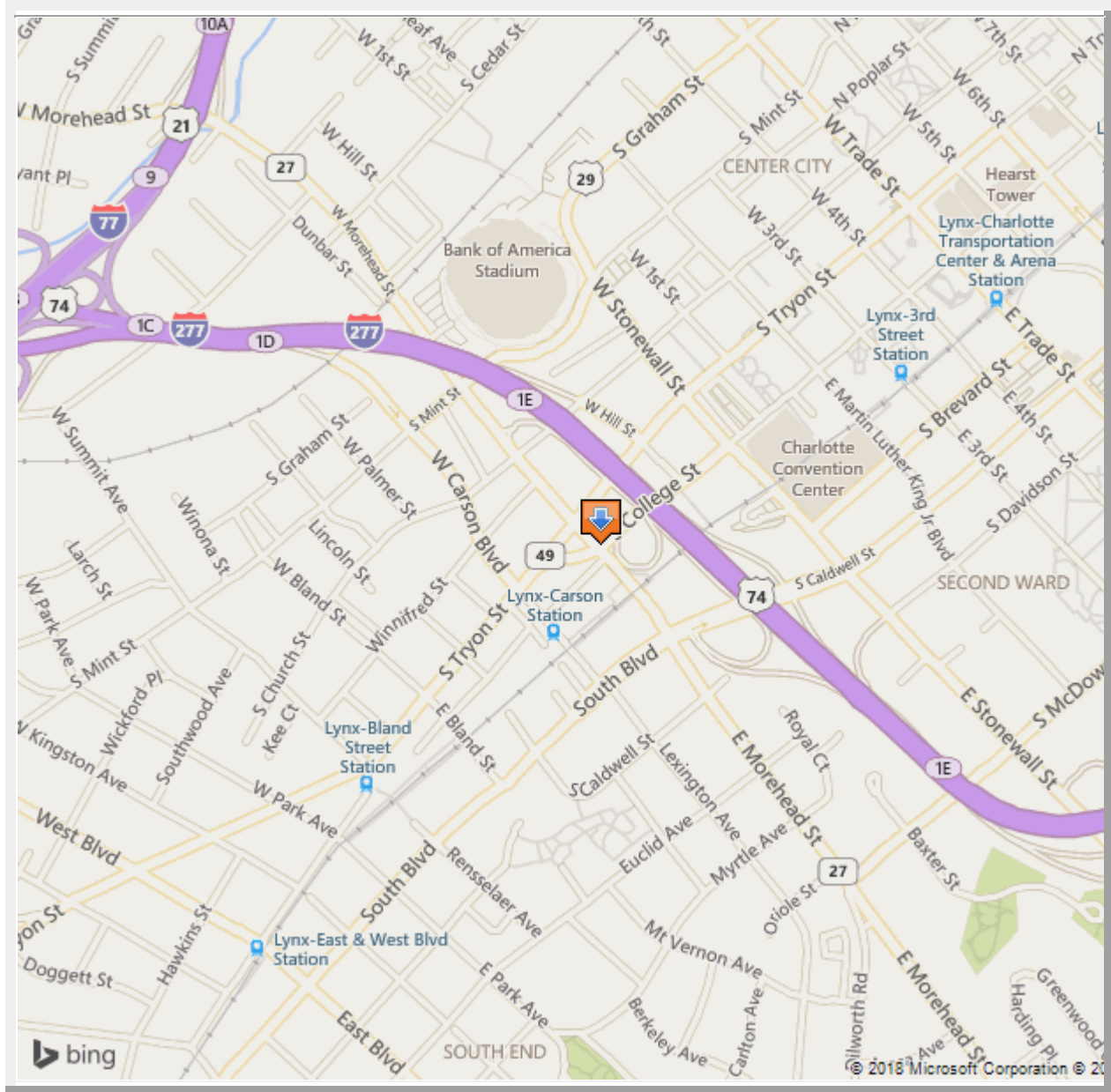
**2. Name, address, and telephone number of the present owner and occupant of the property:** The present owner of the property is:

Mr. and Mrs. Maurice H. Wilson, Jr.  
3929 Kitley Place  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28210

Telephone: (704) 552-1268

**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 which depicts 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 4037 at page 115. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is: 125-121-01.

**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 an architectural description of the property prepared 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 Query-Spivey-McGee Building does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) the building, constructed in three stages between 1902 and 1914, is the only remnant of a substantial commercial district which existed on South College Street at the turn of the century; 2) the building represents a type of brick and beam commercial architecture which was once common in Charlotte but is now rare; 3) the building has served as a hardware and feed store for many years; 4) the building is substantially unchanged from its early appearance.

**b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association:** The Commission contends that the attached architectural description by Mr. Thomas W. Hanchett demonstrates that the Query-Spivey-McGee Building 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 "historic property." The current appraised value of the .506 acres of land is \$154,350. The current appraised value of the building is \$51,430. The total current appraised value is \$205,780. The property is zoned B3.

**Date of Preparation of this Report:** April 5, 1983

**Prepared by:** Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Director  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission  
218 North Tryon Street  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28202

Telephone: (704) 376-9115

## *Historical Overview*

*Dr. William H. Huffman*

The Query, Spivey and McGee Company building at the corner of College and Stonewall Streets in Charlotte has played an interesting, and changing, role in the industrial and commercial life of Charlotte. Since its origins in the early twentieth-century, it has seen some great changes in its surroundings while retaining much of its own early character. At the turn of the century, South College Street ended at Stonewall, and East Stonewall only extended one block from South Tryon Street to College, ending at the large rock quarry. Tryon and its immediate side streets, including Stonewall, were mostly residences, some quite large. At the corners of Tryon and Stonewall were St. Mary's Seminary on the northeast and a fine house on the southeast, owned by Christian Valaer. Just behind Mr. Valaer's home was the Porter Brewing Company, and next along Stonewall at the end of the block was the Allen and Hunter Planing Mill.<sup>1</sup> William H. Allen (1870-1964) had bought the property, which measured about 145 feet on Stonewall and went back to the old A.T.& O.R.R. (Atlantic, Tennessee and Ohio, later Southern) tracks, from Cornelius McNelis (1847-1930), a native of Ireland who was in the real estate business in the city. Mr. Allen's partner, Joseph Nick Hunter (1859-1945) was involved in a number of businesses in the city, including groceries and a onetime partnership in the Tidal Wave Saloon at 16 North Tryon. Hunter, who had bought the land from Allen in 1900, sold the property to Charles A. Black (1860-1950) in 1902.

It was during Mr. Black's ownership that the location was changed to a different use to meet another need of the early twentieth-century community: he built a wood-frame livery stable which encompassed the area of the present Faison Building at 122 E. Stonewall and about one-fourth of the Query, Spivey and McGee building.<sup>4</sup> Apparently drayage was a profitable business in the growing community, since less than three years after starting with livery at the location, Charles Black sold off sixty-five feet of his Stonewall property (the present Faison location)<sup>5</sup> and built a new brick livery stable running the entire length and width of the remaining land.<sup>6</sup> It is not clear whether the original building was one or two stories, but on August 22, 1905, the *Charlotte News* announced that "Mr. C. A. Black has moved his stable into his handsome new brick building on Stonewall Street. The new stable was erected at a cost of about \$3,500."<sup>7</sup> That year, Black ran this advertisement in the papers every day: "WANT A DRAY? I have all kinds of wagons for doing all kinds of light or heavy drayage and give careful personal attention to all orders. I make a specialty of moving and packing household goods. Phone 105, C. A. Black, Corner Stonewall and College<sup>8</sup>, Streets and Southern Railway."

Although he continued his business in the brick building for eight years, in 1908 Black sold the property to some investors, presumably to raise money for his operation.<sup>9</sup> One of the investors who bought the land the following year was Dr. Robert L. Gibbon (1866-1953), whose practice was located at 7 West Trade Street, just off the square.<sup>10</sup> It appears that about this time there was a fire which destroyed the southern one-third of the building, and, in 1909, Black bought the property back for 40% less than he sold it for just a year before.<sup>11</sup> He continued to operate a transfer company and stables there until 1913, when the land and building were sold to the Charlotte Builders Supply Company.<sup>12</sup> Charlotte Builders Supply, headed by J. P. Hackney and managed by Willis Brown, operated at 228-230 South College, four blocks to the north. It is not known whether the company intended to use the building for its own business, but it appears that in 1913-14 it rebuilt the southern part of the structure and probably added a third story at that time.<sup>13</sup> In September, 1914, the enlarged building was sold to the Fidelity Bonded Warehouse Company, which was an investment concern of local businessmen, including Judge J. A. Russell (1859-1949) and Walter Davidson (1872-1945).<sup>14</sup> When the changeover to a warehouse took place, Charles Black moved his transfer company to 500 South Cedar Street, and also operated the Black Coal Company.<sup>15</sup> From 1924 to 1936, he moved to Waynesville to operate an apple orchard, following which he retired and returned to Charlotte. Black spent the remainder of his years and died at another historic property in Charlotte: the home of his daughter, Frances Moody Black (Mrs. Jake) Newell (1884-1966) at 819 Sunnyside Avenue.<sup>16</sup>

In 1918, ownership of the Query, Spivey and McGee building passed by deed to Walter L. Nicholson, who, doing business as the Southern Bonded Storage Company, operated a warehouse in the building for sixteen years.<sup>17</sup> During that time, a variety of users shared the premises with Southern, including People's Loan and Realty (1920), B. T. Crump Company Truck Bodies (1924), Piggly Wiggly Markets (1926-28), White Transfer (1928-31), and Wilson Motor Company (1923-25).<sup>18</sup> The large elevator in the center of the building was particularly suited for storing automobiles on any level, as it probably had been for drays.

The economic calamities which accompanied the Great Depression of the Thirties unfortunately caught Mr. Nicholson in their grim net, and he lost the site by foreclosure in 1934.<sup>19</sup> About the same time Southern Bonded Storage went out of business, a new tenant took up residence in the middle section of the building: Scott Feed Company, a business recently bought out by Luke W. Query (1882-1951), who had previously operated Carolina Hardware. The following year, Charlotte Feed and Gin Company opened in the northernmost College and Stonewall section of the building (600 S. College), headed by Everett B. Solomon. For a time (1936-8), an

auto repair shop, the Stonewall Service Company, operated at the southernmost end of the site.<sup>21</sup>

In 1940, after a series of owner/investors, the building was taken over by Arthur W. Pearson (1890-1976) and his brother Nathan A. Pearson (1910-1980), who established the Queen City Mattress and Upholstery Company there. Query, whose business now went under the name of the Query Feed Company, moved to a building one block to the south at 700 S. College.<sup>22</sup> In order to accommodate their manufacturing enterprise, the Pearsons did some renovation work to their new location.<sup>23</sup>

Four years later, in October, 1944, when victory in the European theater of World War II seemed assured, Luke Query and a new partner, James L. Spivey, purchased the building from Arthur Pearson.<sup>24</sup> A new concern, the Query, Spivey and McGee Company was formed to deal in seed and hardware, with Luke Query, president, James Spivey, vice-president and John McGee, who also had hardware experience, secretary-treasurer.<sup>25</sup> In 1946, Query and Spivey transferred ownership from themselves as individuals to their own corporation, the Stonewall Company, where it remained until 1978, when the present owners, Maurice H. Wilson, Jr., and Marilyn C. Wilson bought the concern.<sup>26</sup> After Luke Query's death in 1951, James Spivey became head of the company, and he was in turn bought out by John McGee about 1956.<sup>27</sup>

What can be seen as significant about the building at Stonewall and College is not only its continuous use since just after the turn of the century, but the variety of businesses there which reflected the growing community and the changes of neighborhood in which business was conducted. In the beginning, Charles Black operated a livery stable at the very edge of the business part of town; directly to the east of him was a residence with a cow barn and a shed for farm implements behind it. Just beyond that was the city rock quarry, and College Street dead-ended at Stonewall. In the Twenties, when mass-production of automobiles, pioneered by Henry Ford, made them accessible to a wider public, cars were parked where buggies used to be. About the same time, the rock quarry was transformed to a large rail yard for the Southern Railway. Also, as Charlotte grew with its corresponding need for business space, the residential character of the area gave way to an increasing number of manufacturing and service industries. For a time the Piggly-Wiggly Markets used part of the building to accommodate its store at 500 S. Tryon, for example. But since the mid-1930s, the corner location has been (except for four years when Queen City Mattress and Upholstery was there) used primarily as a feed, seed and hardware store, and it is with that business and Query, Spivey and McGee that it is most closely identified. Even though times and indeed the neighborhood have changed considerably (the Southern rail yard is now office buildings, for example), to step into the Query, Spivey and McGee building is to travel back at least fifty years to an old-

fashioned store, and without much effort; it almost seems there is a smell of hay, horses and leather in the air.

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Sanborn Insurance map of Charlotte, 1900, p.18.

<sup>2</sup> Deed Book 127, p.57, 8 June 1898; Charlotte City Directory, 1902, p.361; Certificate of Death, Book 37, p.642.

<sup>3</sup> Charlotte City Directory, 1902, p.429; *Charlotte News*, March 28, 1945, p.7A; Deed Book 140, p.542, 4 January 1900; Deed Book 170, p.434, 29 September 1902.

<sup>4</sup> Sanborn Insurance Map of Charlotte, 1905, p.23.

<sup>5</sup> Deed Book 200, p.271, 14 June 1905.

<sup>6</sup> Sanborn Insurance Map of Charlotte, 1911, p.15.

<sup>7</sup> *Charlotte News*, August 22, 1905, p.5.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Deed Book 228, p.690, 23 March 1908.

<sup>10</sup> Charlotte City Directory, 1910, p.230.

<sup>11</sup> Sanborn Map of 1911, p.15; Deed Book 246, p.413, 22 May 1909.

<sup>12</sup> Deed Book 314, p.336, 30 May 1913.

<sup>13</sup> Deed Book 325, p.625, 23 September 1914.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.; Record of Corporations, Book 4, p.209; Register of Death No. 61, January, 1949; Register of Death No. 771, August, 1945.

<sup>15</sup> Charlotte City Directory, 1914, p.584.

<sup>16</sup> *Charlotte News*, November 30, 1950, p.10B.

<sup>17</sup> Deed Book 383, p.507, 1 February 1918; Charlotte City Directories, 1918-1934.

<sup>18</sup> Charlotte City Directories, 1918-1934.

<sup>19</sup> Deed Book 802, p.116, 9 May 1931; Foreclosure 15 January 1934.

<sup>20</sup> Charlotte City Directory, 1934, p.445; *Charlotte News*, June 6, 1951, p.1B.

<sup>21</sup> Charlotte City Directories, 1934-1940.

<sup>22</sup> Deed Book 1022, p.69, 30 August 1940; Charlotte City Directory, 1941, p.829.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with J. P. Probst, Charlotte, N.C., 7 February 1983.

<sup>24</sup> Deed Book 1131, p.227, 30 October 1944.

<sup>25</sup> Charlotte City Directory, 1948-49, pp. 487 and 595.

<sup>26</sup> Deed Book 1212, p.218, 21 September 1946; Deed Book 4037, p.115, 1 March 1978.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with John McGee, Charlotte, N.C. 7 February 1983.



Feb. 25, 1985



StreetScene photo by ART GENTILE

*The old Query-Spivey-McGee building, now called 600 South College Street, will have a distinctly modern look when construction is complete, as the architectural model above illustrates.*

## ***Stately Uptown building steps into '80s with new look, owner***

Sometime this year, the old Query-Spivey-McGee Building at 600 S. College St. is going to jump into the 1980s, courtesy of Ray Killian, Jr. and his associates.

The step is monumental in that since its construction at the turn of the century, the building has been locked in a time warp, virtually unchanged, except where the businesses that were located within its weathered brick walls are concerned. Go inside today and you'll see the exposed wooden beams and columns supporting its three stories; you'll see the immense elevator that once moved wagons

and surries and Model T Fords to each floor, and you'll detect the pungent aroma of fertilizer and seed, dust and leather. But enter this building when Killian's plans are complete and you'll see lawyers and businessmen and marble floors and carpeting and sculpture and skylights. You'll see a handsome new office building that flatters Charlotte's rejuvenated downtown, yet preserves the dignity due a building that has seen its 82nd birthday. Killian, his architects and the Historic Properties Commission have seen to that.

Built in or around 1902, the

building has housed a livery, a drayage, parking garage and, for the last 50 years, one of Uptown's busiest feed and hardware stores.

Until it closed at the end of last year, Query-Spivey-McGee looked like a Norman Rockwell daydream — musty wooden floors, open seed bins, antique scales and farm tools, and a chubby cat keeping the rodent population nervous. A bucolic island, in Uptown's sea of concrete, glass and chrome. But Killian saw something in that building; something precious and potentially valuable.

"Initially," said the 36-year-old president of Killian and Associates, "I was looking for loft condominium space somewhere in the downtown corridor. As we pursued buildings with good financing, we discovered this building." Liken it to finding buried treasure. Killian wouldn't mind. "The more we researched and the more we got into it, the more we realized the value of this property," he said.

Consider these points:

- The first downtown off-ramp from the I-277 expressway currently under construction spills onto College Street, virtually in the front yard of Killian's newly-acquired property.

- Killian considers College Street the newest target of Uptown's renaissance. It is the place to be.

## *Architectural Description*

*Thomas Hanchett*

The Query, Spivey and McGee Building is a very simple three-story warehouse building with brick walls and a wooden frame. Historical research shows that it was constructed in three stages between 1902 and 1914. It appears to have changed very little since it was finished. The oldest part of the structure was a two-story rectangular block at the corner of Stonewall and College streets. In 1913-14 this was increased to the present three stories. At the same time, a three-story trapezoidal wing was added next to the original unit on the College Street side. Its angled rear wall conformed to the railroad track, now taken up, that curved next to the structure. The additions were built to match the exterior of the main building, and today one cannot tell from the street that the Query, Spivey and McGee Building is made up of three different "builds."

Walls are of brick laid alternating five stretcher courses with a single header course. They extend up above the roof line to form a parapet capped by terracotta tile. Inside the building a brick wall divides the old and new wings. All exterior brick and most of the interior brick has been painted. Windows are twelve pane steel frame units, with a center panel that swings out for ventilation. These window units are decades old, but likely are not original. The framing system of the building is almost all wood. Wooden columns approximately one foot square are set at intervals of approximately fifteen feet. A few on the first floor have been replaced with pipe columns, the only metal in the framing. Each column is topped by a rude "capital," simply a chunk of 12" x 18" beam used to distribute the load of the main beam that rests on it. Main beams are 12" square wood and they carry 2" x 12" joists. The first floor is poured concrete while the upper floors are of heavy planking. The structural system is identical in the old and new wings, except that the beams run parallel to College Street in the old wing and parallel to Stonewall in the new one. The floors are largely open space, partitioned off into an office here or a bathroom there as needed. The ground floor is used as retail area and storage for the hardware store. The second story is workspace for Browder Displays and the third floor is their storage area. Each floor has bathroom facilities added after the building was completed.

The single stairway is on the College Street side of the original wing, with its own door on the street. There is also a massive freight elevator, still in use, with wooden slat gates at each floor. It is long and narrow, big enough for a pair of wagons end to end, or the largest 1920s car or truck.

The third floor structural system is slightly different in that the columns do not support horizontal beams, but rather pairs of sloping beams that form the gently pitched roof. There is no attic and all roof framing is exposed. There are three clerestories on the ridgeline which give this floor a great deal of natural light.