

THE HOWARD MADISON WADE HOUSE



This report was written on May 1, 1983

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Howard Madison Wade House is located at 530 Hermitage Road, in Charlotte, North Carolina.

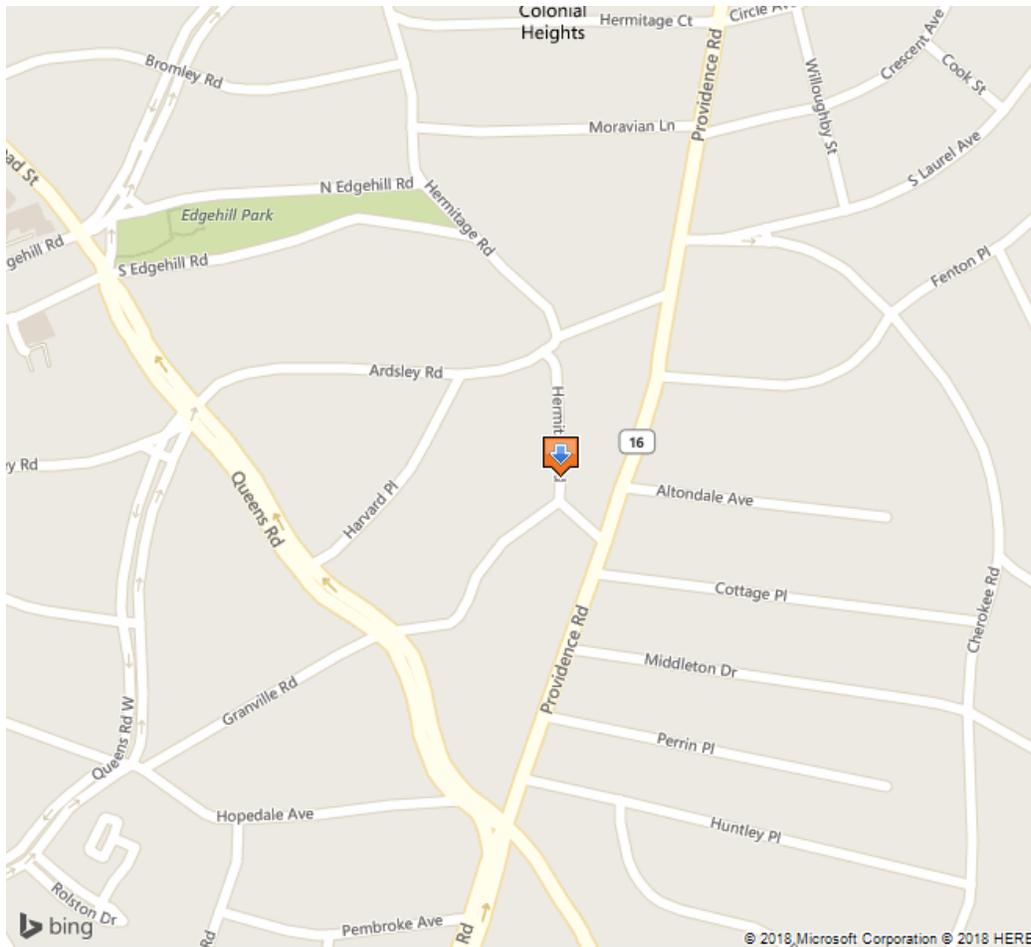
2. Name, address and telephone number of the present owner and occupant of the property: The present owner and occupant of the property is:

John H. Cutter and wife Rita F. Cutter
1500 E. Fourth Street
Charlotte, NC 28204

Telephone: (704) 334-2489

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 4056 at Page 981. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is: 155-053-07.

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, architecture historian.

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 Howard

Madison Wade House does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: 1) the Howard Madison Wade House, erected in 1928-30, was designed by Charles Barton Keen, an architect of national significance; 2) the grounds of the Howard Madison Wade House, were designed by Earle S. Draper, the most important landscape architect and planner in the southeastern United States in the first half of the twentieth century; 3) the Howard Madison Wade House is one of the finer, local examples of the Colonial Revival style; 4) the Howard Madison Wade House is situated at the intersection of Hermitage Road and Granville Road directly across from a park making the site extremely important to the overall integrity of Myers Park; 5) Howard Madison Wade (1876-1961), the original owner was a businessman of regional importance, specializing in custom interior woodworking.

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 Howard Madison Wade 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 "historic property." The current appraised value of the 1.857 acres of land is \$96,000. The current appraised value of the improvements is \$325,840. The total current appraised value is \$421,840. The property is zoned R12.

Date of Preparation of this Report: May 1, 1983

Prepared by: Dr. Dan L. Morrill, Director
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Special Note: Please note that Charles Barton Keen sometimes spelled his name with a final "e." Dr. Huffman uses the latter spelling in his essay, and Mr. Hanchett uses the former spelling in his essay.

Historical Overview

WILLIAM H. HUFFMAN
March, 1983

When Howard Madison Wade (1876 - 1961) came to Charlotte in 1906, he wanted to apply his seemingly unlimited energy to business pursuits that could grow with the town which seemed "an up and coming place," and the climate would possibly be better for his wife, the former Rosalie Tarver (1878 - 1956), to whom he was married in 1900. ¹ Born on a farm outside Columbus, Georgia, on August 21, 1876 Mr. Wade earned a B. A. degree from Emory University, at that time located in Oxford, Georgia, following which he became the principal at Columbus High School, where he taught Latin and Greek as well as modern and medieval history. In 1901, he decided to leave the teaching profession and apply his talents to the business world, and so he traveled north to enroll in the Eastman Business College, Poughkeepsie, New York, where he studied commerce and banking. After graduation, Wade returned to Columbus, where he became vice president of the Georgia Manufacturing Co., and from 1903 to 1906, was the secretary - treasurer of the Massey - Perkins Yarn and Hosiery Manufacturing Company. ²

After his arrival in Charlotte, the thirty-year-old entrepreneur started the Wade Manufacturing Company, located off South Graham Street between Stonewall and Hill Streets near the railroad tracks. For over seventy years, Wade Manufacturing produced custom interiors, primarily of fine polished wood, including fixtures, furnishings and paneling, for stores, banks, churches and other similar establishments. Expert craftsmen were brought over from Europe to make the furnishings, examples of which may still be seen at 630 South Graham Street, now the office of Southern Shows, Inc. H. M. Wade had chosen his new home well, for not only did he and his company participate fully in Charlotte's steady, at times rapid growth of the next few decades, but they also supplied customers throughout North and South Carolina, Georgia and other Southern states. ³

Following the birth of their daughter, Isabelle Tarver, in 1911, the Wades decided to move from their residence at 610 North Church Street in the city to a place in the country, and so they purchased a lot about two miles south of the Square in September of that year. ⁴ The one-and-a-half-acre site they chose on Hermitage Road facing a small park was located in the newly-opened Myers Park, a suburban development by businessman George Stephens of the 1200 acre farm owned by his father-in-law, John Springs Myers. At the time, the Wades were one of the first property owners in the newly-designed area which was originally laid out by John Nolen, a professional

landscape architect and town planner from Cambridge, Massachusetts. Providence Road was yet to be paved for a few years, and the first streetcar leaving the Square and passing through the gates on Queens Road on its way to Queens College did not make the journey until a year after they purchased their new home site.⁵ The enterprising Mr. Wade designed their first Hermitage Road residence himself, and had it built by workers from his manufacturing company. His daughter, Isabelle Wade Bacon, described it thus:

It was a white shingle house, and he drew the plans himself. Downstairs it had a living room, library, dining room, breakfast room, kitchen, bedroom and bath. Then on the second floor it had four bedrooms and two baths. The feature we all loved was an old-fashioned porch, all open, and we all sat around on it.

The house was elevated. You had to go up a round driveway, and it was one of the old houses with the porte-cochere that the driveway goes up underneath.⁶

In the years following the Wade's move to the "country," Myers Park began to grow and change as more and more business and professional families came out to build homes along the suburb's curved, tree-lined streets. In 1915, John Nolen brought to Charlotte another young landscape architect and town planner, Earle S. Draper, to prepare landscape plans for each purchaser of a lot in the development. Two years later, Draper went into business for himself, and helped continue the planning and landscape designs for Myers Park, and other developments. The prosperity of the Teens and Twenties in Charlotte was accompanied by many fine homes being constructed around the Wades. In 1919, a nearby mansion, White Oaks, was purchased and greatly enlarged by James B. Duke, and is now on the National Register of Historic Places. Another neighbor at 611 Hermitage Road, across from the Duke house, was John H. Cutter, a real estate investor-developer and cotton broker, the grandfather of the present owner of the Wade house, who after having lived at the then fashionable North Tryon Street purchased the residence in 1921. One block away, on Providence Road, John M. Jamison, the Stonewall Hotel owner, had put up his stone house (1912 - 13), and next to it Charles P. Moody built his red brick residence (c. 1913) at number 830.⁷

In the nineteen-twenties, Mr. Wade had been in Winston-Salem and seen some of the fine large houses there designed by Philadelphia architect Charles Barton Keene (1868 - 1931).⁸ Keene, who received his architectural training at the University of Pennsylvania, was first brought in to North Carolina to design the Reynolda House for R. J. Reynolds in 1917, a sixty-room "bungalow" outside Winston-Salem. After this commission, Keene, a nationally known architect, was in much demand to design

other houses there, which he executed over the next fourteen years. In Charlotte, a neighbor of H. M. Wade, Charles E. Lambeth, one-time mayor of the city and prominent realtor, had Keene draw the plans for a house at 435 Hermitage Road, which was constructed about 1927. ⁹

A year later, Howard Wade hired the Philadelphia architect to draw the plans for a house to replace the one of his own design. While many owners are quite happy to leave the design and construction of a house to the architect and builder, just the opposite was the case with Mr. Wade who meticulously involved himself in the most minute details of both the planning and building of his new home. Once he and Keene had agreed on a design the manufacturer personally dealt with the contractors in negotiating construction bids from whom he required various options on using different materials and features. The successful bidder, B. Lowndes Jackson, agreed to construct the house for \$63,865.00, but before he was accepted, H. M. Wade required him to submit the names and reputations of all the subcontractors he planned to use. In a letter of September 20, 1928, Jackson complied: Carpenter, H. Wright, who was foreman on Mr. Ivey's house; bricklaying foreman, P. A. Jackson; millwork, J. H. Wearne Co.; structural steel, Southern Engineering Company; slate roof and metal work. G. G. Ray Co.; and plastering, M. P. Braswell. ¹⁰

After about three more months of negotiations, Wade was finally satisfied, and on the date after Christmas of 1928 he took out a building permit from the city so that construction could begin. ¹¹ It took nearly three years to complete the steel-girdered, Georgian Colonial mansion, which was finished with fine moldings plastering, metalwork, marble floors, antique fire places as well as numerous other fine features. One of the many personal touches put in the plans at Wade's insistence was that of the dining room: its design is a replica of the Baltimore Room in the Metropolitan Museum, which the Wades had seen on a trip to New York. Another is an unusual chimney flue on the third floor, which goes at a sharp angle from above the fireplace on the outer wall of the drawing room, where Wade required it to be placed, to the chimney on the inner wall, where Keene said it had to be. ¹² A year after construction began on the sixteen-room home, Earle Draper was hired to design the landscaping for the site, and many of the plantings and other features of his original design remain, including the restored pool in the garden behind the house. ¹³ Draper, who built a house not too far away at 1621 Queens Road in 1923 and built his planning business into one of the largest in the country with offices in Atlanta, Washington and New York, became Director of Town Planning and Housing for the Tennessee Valley Authority from 1932 to 1940, and head of wartime housing for the FHA from 1940 to the end of World War II in 1945. ¹⁴

When the construction of the stately house was completed and the decorating finished, the Wades could look forward to many years of enjoying their commodious, yet

surprisingly intimate residence. Rosalie Wade, who was an avid gardener and kept the small park across the street well planted in addition to her own grounds, was very active in the DAR, Colonial Dames and Alexander House activities, and many meetings of these groups were held at the home. ¹⁵The family life was characteristic of people of means of that time and of that particular area. To maintain the household, the service staff included a chauffeur-butler, a cook, a maid and a gardener. For thirty-seven years, the chauffeur-butler was O'Dell Roberts, who was known to everyone by his courteous and gentlemanly manner. The house was also witness to two gala events: the wedding receptions for daughter Isabelle, and, when it was the turn of another generation, that of granddaughter Rosalie. ¹⁶

When H. M. Wade, who was president of the Charlotte Country Club for twenty five years, retired from the manufacturing business in 1954, he went into the real estate business with an office in the Latta Arcade. It was said of the indefatigable industrialist that "when he 'retired,' he had one secretary, and afterward had two." Over the years he had acquired a good deal of real estate, much of it in the area around his manufacturing plant. ¹⁷ In 1956, Rosalie Wade passed away, and a year later H. M. Wade married her first cousin, Mrs. Louise Watkins Powe, who became the new mistress of the Wade mansion. ¹⁸ After Mr. Wade died in 1961, she lived in the house for another sixteen years, but decided she could no longer maintain the estate when some of the longtime servants retired because of age and health. ¹⁹

Thus in 1978, ownership of the Wade house passed to John H. Cutter, III, the grandson of H. M. Wade's former neighbor and good friend, and his wife, Rita. ²⁰ The Cutters, who have taken a keen interest in the history of the house, have undertaken extensive renewal and restoration of the fine home to bring it back to nearly as new condition. Their efforts are of clear historical significance, because the Wade mansion will be one of the few, if not the only, house of its size (fourteen thousand square feet or above) in Charlotte that is essentially intact as originally built. ²¹ The city will therefore be fortunate in having one of its fine larger houses in the early Myers Park area preserved indefinitely. The area is a fragile one, under constant threat from commercial encroachment, and thus to have such an excellent reflection of a particular way of life from another era, designed by an architect of national prominence, and which reflects in its details the personal desires and close interest of the owner, preserved in its original state, will be a significant step in maintaining Charlotte's historical heritage.

NOTES

¹ *Charlotte News*, April 25, 1961, p. 1 B; interview with Louise Watkins Powe Wade, Charlotte, N. C., 8 March 1983.

² *Charlotte Observer*, April 25, 1961, p. 1B.

³ Interview with Louise Wade.

⁴ *Charlotte City Directory*, 1910; Deed Book 283, p. 71, 12 September 1911.

⁵ Information on file at Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission.

⁶ Interview with Isabelle Tarver Wade Bacon, New York, 12 March 1983.

⁷ Interview with John H. Cutter, III, 15 February 1983; information on file at Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission.

⁸ Interview with Isabelle Wade Bacon.

⁹ Information on file at Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission.

¹⁰ Correspondence in the possession of John H. Cutter, III.

¹¹ Building Permit No. 9693, 26 December 1928.

¹² Interviews with Louise Wade, Isabelle Wade Bacon, and John H. Cutter, III.

¹³ Plans in possession of John H. Cutter, III.

¹⁴ Information on file at Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission.

¹⁵ *Charlotte News*, February 10, 1956, p. 10B; interview with Isabelle Wade Bacon.

¹⁶ Interview with Louise Wade.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Charlotte News*, April 25, 1961, p. 1 B.

¹⁹ Interview with Louise Wade.

²⁰ Deed Book 4056, p. 981, 10 May 1978.

²¹ Interview with John H. Cutter, III.

Architectural Description

*by Thomas W. Hanchett
March 19, 1983*

The 1930 H. M. Wade residence is an imposing red brick Colonial Revival style mansion in the heart of Charlotte's elite Myers Park neighborhood. The house is the work of Charles Barton Keen of Philadelphia, one of America's foremost designers of "country houses", as suburban estates were known in the early twentieth century. Today both the house and its grounds by landscape architect Earle Sumner Draper are in excellent original condition. Because of the caliber of its architect and landscape designer, and because of its prominent location at the corner of Hermitage and Granville roads facing one of the neighborhood's two small parks, the Wade mansion is of architectural significance to Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

Of special note is the fact that the present owner still has most of the plans and correspondence dealing with construction of the house. The collection has over fifty items, including detailed drawings of everything from floorplans to precise layout of flagstones in outside walkways, contracts with craftsmen, letters between Keen, Wade, and Draper, fixture brochures and wallpaper samples, and more. According to Dr. Margaret Smith, art historian at Wake Forest University who is studying Keen's work in the South, such a body of material is of great scholarly interest.

Viewed from the street, the Wade mansion consists of three gable-roofed, two-story wings arranged in a "C" around an inset front porch. The main wing is three bays wide, with the central front door topped by a delicate fanlight. A pair of end chimneys bracket the ridgeline and three clapboard-sided dormers pop through the front roof. The two flanking wings are set with their ridgelines at right angles to the main wing's roof. Each flanking wing has an end chimney facing the street.

Roofs are of thick gray slate and eaves are quite shallow. The red brick walls are laid in Flemish bond. The white exterior woodwork is simple in design. The porch has a modillion cornice and unusually slender two-story columns. Windows are six-over-

six-pane double-hung sash. The overall effect that Keen achieved with these touches was a simplicity and flattening of detail. Such an approach was a far cry from the elaborately textured exteriors of Colonial Revival dwellings built in the city in the early 1920s, for example Martin Boyer's 1920 design for the J. L. Snyder mansion at 1830 Queens Road, now known as Queens College's Carol Hall.

At the rear of the Wade house, the north flanking wing is extended back to provide garage space with servants' quarters above. Nestled in the resulting "L" between the servants' wing and the main block of the house is a formal garden designed for outdoor entertaining. A brick walk surrounds a lawn with a pool and fountain at its center. French doors from the grand dining room open onto one side of the space, and at the other a low carved stone wall of Neoclassical design provides seating niches under the trees. Hedges and shrubbery wall off this garden from the rest of the grounds, creating a spacious "outdoor room."

This formal area was evidentially the main contribution to the estate's design by landscape architect Earle Sumner Draper. It represents one of Draper's later residential works, executed in 1930 three years before Draper gave up private practice to become head of planning for the Tennessee Valley Authority. A hand-colored rendering of the garden drawn in Draper's office now hangs in the Wade house. Much of Draper's work on the sides and front of the residence consisted of adapting the planting done for Wade's earlier dwelling to the new house. The earlier design had been created in 1919 by J. Franklin Meehan, a Philadelphia landscape architect, and one of Meehan's planting plans survives in the present owner's collection.

The interior of the house shows the same restraint in decoration that characterizes the exterior. Keen's main emphasis seems to have been on creating an elegant flow of spaces, rather than on decoration for its own sake. Downstairs rooms feature delicate plasterwork and molding. The quality of the cabinetry and woodwork throughout the house shows evidence of store-fixture manufacturer Wade's care, and much of it is said to have been produced by craftsmen from his factory.

The main entrance of the mansion opens into a large oval foyer with black and white marble parquet floors. The ceiling has a cast plaster medallion in the center. A cast plaster cornice circles the room and four antique brass sconces highlight the walls. The sweeping cantilevered stair has handwrought bronze balusters, each numbered by its maker for its specific position.

At the right of the foyer is the library. This room is paneled in Norwegian pine and has built-in bookshelves. Several stacks of shelves were hidden under paneling, to be uncovered as the owner's book collection expanded. A carved wooden cornice runs along the ceiling and the floor is laid with random width boards. The highlight of the

room is the fireplace with a veined marble surround and a rustic carved mantel depicting goats at play, said to have come from a Spanish castle.

At the left of the foyer is the large drawing room. It features an elegant molded plaster cornice. Molds for this cornice and the one in the foyer are still in the house. A plaster medallion adorns the center of the ceiling. The room is lit by a Bohemian Crystal chandelier and six French gold and crystal wall sconces. Walls feature panel and chair rail molding. The focus of the room is the Adamesque mantel of white marble with sienna inserts.

Behind the drawing room is the sun parlor, which opens onto a side porch. The room has a molded plaster cornice similar to that in the drawing room. An ornamental fountain of stone dominates one wall.

Directly in front of the main entrance, behind the foyer and adjoining the sun parlor, is the formal dining room. It, too, has an antique marble inlaid fireplace, a large crystal chandelier, and crystal wall sconces. Tall french doors look out onto the formal garden at the rear of the house. There are two spacious storage closets flanking the short hall between the sun parlor and dining room which are equipped for hanging storage of the residence's draperies.

The last "public space" on the ground floor is a corridor next to the library that leads to the side entrance to the house. On the left of this corridor is a small bathroom with jade green ceramic tile on the floor and halfway up the walls. Also opening onto the corridor is the telephone room, a small closet-like space frequently found in the houses of Charlotte's wealthy built in this era when the telephone was still something of a novelty.

The right rear of the ground floor is the service area of the Wade mansion. Opening off the dining room is the butler's pantry. It has a built in electric plate warmer and it is lined with superbly crafted built in cabinets and shelves with glass doors for storage of china and crystal. Next to it is the kitchen, which features more cabinetry. A rustic fireplace has recently been added to this room to make it the everyday eating area for the Cutters and their two children.

Next to the kitchen is the small breakfast room. A servants' stair rises from this room, as does a compact electric elevator. The elevator, manufactured by the Ace Elevator company, was installed after the house was completed and services both the two main floors and the attic and basement.

The second floor of the house contains a small sitting area at the top of the grand stair, and four large bedrooms. Each has its own bath with tile floors and wainscoting, and

porcelain fixtures. The master bedroom has a sleeping porch with built-in brass screens which overlooks the rear garden. In addition to ample closet space in bedrooms there are two large linen closets with shelves and drawers built in, a broom closet, a general storage closet, and a sewing room.

A corridor from the second floor sitting area leads back to the servants' wing. This area comprises three small bedrooms and a pair of bathrooms. Beneath is a three-car garage.

At the top of the servants' stair is a full attic over the entire house. It includes a game room with built-in drawers, and a pair of huge walk-in closets, and three large unfinished storage areas. At the bottom of the servants' stair is the basement. It holds a laundry room fed by a chute from the upper floors, a furnace room, storage rooms, and a bathroom. The unfinished portion is an earthen floor which has been packed and smoothed until it resembles adobe. There is a series of open tunnel walkways leading to various heat ducts and junctions which provide ready access for maintenance.

Note: The description of Wade house interior is based in part on a 1970s description provided by Carson Realty Company of Charlotte and now in the collection of the Cutter family.