

History – 500 Clement Avenue

Heriot Clarkson was a distinguished lawyer, serving as Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court from 1923 to 1942 and was one of Charlotte's most active civic leaders, beginning in the 1880s. His Charlotte estate, *Kilmichael*, was originally constructed on three and a half acres of land now occupied by much of what is now the 400 and 500 blocks on the southeastern side of Clement Avenue in the Elizabeth neighborhood. To allow for the extension of East 8th Street across Clement Avenue to Pecan Avenue, in April 1924 *Kilmichael* was moved to a new location at 2401 E. 8th Street at the corner of Pecan Avenue (current site of the Elizabeth water tower) and subsequently converted to an apartment house.

Heriot Clarkson's son, Francis Clarkson, who was a leading lawyer and judge in Charlotte, and served as a North Carolina state senator in 1931, erected a bungalow in 1924 on part of the land previously occupied by *Kilmichael*, and a remaining portion of the land was sold by Heriot Clarkson to John Baxter Alexander and William C. Wilkinson on July 20, 1927. John Baxter Alexander, whose large home was across the street at 509 Clement Avenue, arranged in May 1929 to have a house constructed at 500 Clement Avenue on part of the *Kilmichael* land and according to the City Directory, rented it to a series of four families throughout the 1930s.

Ernest L. Hicks, and his wife Susan B. Hicks, rented the home starting in 1940 and later purchased it from John Baxter Alexander on July 7, 1943. The Hicks made 500 Clement Avenue their home for nearly fifty years. Ernest L. Hicks was an 8-term legislator as a representative for Mecklenburg County in the North Carolina House of Representatives, starting in 1952. One of his major projects was putting a University of North Carolina branch in Charlotte (UNCC). His wife, Susan B. Hicks, came to Charlotte in 1919 and was instrumental in establishing the Charlotte Chapter of the American Red Cross, remaining with the Red Cross until 1933. Mrs. Hicks was active in the Charlotte community her whole life, serving on the board of the YWCA and as its president from 1957-1961. Additionally, she was instrumental in founding the Charlotte chapters of the League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women.

According to a newspaper article in the September 14, 1973 edition of the *Charlotte News*, written by Susan Hicks, the house at 500 Clement Avenue was constructed of brick salvaged from the fourth Mecklenburg County Courthouse, which was erected in 1897 and demolished in April 1929, following a fire in February 1929. An advertisement for "Building Materials of Old Courthouse Now for Sale," shown in the April 10, 1929 *Charlotte Observer*, appears to support the statement made by Mrs. Hicks. Additionally, colorized period photographs of the Courthouse show the same distinctive cream yellow-colored bricks used at 500 Clement Avenue, further supporting Mrs. Hicks's statement in the newspaper article.

Susan Hicks lived at 500 Clement Avenue until 1987 when it was sold to Richard Gaskins, who lived there until 2000. The house was then sold to David and Abby Blackman, who later sold it to Stephen and Elizabeth Thomisser in 2009. The house received a few updates over the years but has retained much of its original interior and exterior.