

# Landmark Designation Report for the



## **Lambeth-Sullivan House 435 Hermitage Road Charlotte, North Carolina**

Prepared by:  
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December 2022

**SVM**  
**HISTORICAL  
CONSULTING**

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## **General Information**

|                                                 |                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Historic Names of Property:</b>              | Lambeth-Sullivan House                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Address of Property:</b>                     | 435 Hermitage Road, Charlotte, NC 28207                                                                                                       |
| <b>PIN:</b>                                     | 15504405                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Deed Book &amp; Page:</b>                    | Mecklenburg County Deed Book 31012, Page 679                                                                                                  |
| <b>Amount of Land/Acreage to be Designated:</b> | 1.237 acres                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Ad Valorem Tax Value:</b>                    | The 2022 assessed real estate value of the parcel encompassing the Lambeth-Sullivan House, including land and building value, is \$4,816,400. |
| <b>Recommendation for Designation:</b>          | The property owner is pursuing only exterior designation of the house and all the property within Mecklenburg County parcel 15504405.         |
| <b>Name/Address of Current Property Owner:</b>  | ELKHANAH PROPERTIES LLC<br>PO BOX 2545<br>CARROLLTON, GA 30112                                                                                |

## Chain of Title

| Grantor                                                                                                | Grantee                                                                  | Date       | Deed Book/Page | Notes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Elizabeth A. Weisiger (n/k/a Elizabeth Amanda Bell Dargan), joined by her spouse, Perrin Q. Dargan III | Elkhanah Properties, LLC, a North Carolina limited liability corporation | 7/22/2016  | 31012/679      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Edward I. Weisiger, Jr.                                                                                | Elizabeth A. Weisiger                                                    | 4/29/2014  | 29142/322      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| William E. Ray and wife, Delores K. Ray                                                                | Edward I. Weisiger, Jr. and wife, Elizabeth A. Weisiger                  | 12/13/2004 | 18113/287      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Buford H. Ortale and wife, Cynthia C. Ortale                                                           | William E. Ray and wife, Delores K. Ray                                  | 6/3/1996   | 8671/72        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Ella Hargrove Sayre Lineberger, divorced (formerly Sayre Lineberger Hovis)                             | Buford H. Ortale and wife, Cynthia C. Ortale                             | 9/30/1994  | 7928/296       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| William Michael Hovis                                                                                  | Sayre Lineberger Hovis                                                   | 9/16/1975  | 3787/720       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Wachovia Bank and Trust, N. A.                                                                         | Sayre Lineberger Hovis and husband, William Michael Hovis                | 4/29/1974  | 3673/147       | Ella Hargrave Sullivan Robinson died 9/22/1971, leaving a will (Mecklenburg County microfilm roll 71-191 frame 994). The two tracts described below were devised to Clayton Sullivan Lineberger, daughter of Ella. Clayton died in 1973, and daughter Sayre received the house from her estate, which was administered |

|                                                         |                                                 |            |                  |              |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------|------------------|--------------|
|                                                         |                                                 |            |                  | by Wachovia. |
| Laura Cannon Mattes and husband, Edward C. Mattes       | Ella Hargrave Sullivan                          | 11/22/1935 | 881/522, 881/524 |              |
| Laura Cannon Lambeth and others                         | Mrs. W. T. Wohlford                             | 6/8/1927   | 878/567          |              |
| Laura Cannon Lambeth and husband, Chas. E. Lambeth      | Mrs. W. T. Wohlford                             | 8/27/1926  | 633/376          |              |
| Mrs. Laura Cannon Lambeth                               | O. J. Thies and wife, Blanche Austin Thies      | 10/25/1925 | 601/404          |              |
| Laura Cannon Lambeth                                    | E. T. Cansler, Jr., and wife, Nell Cave Cansler | 10/12/1925 | 601/240          |              |
| Mrs. Laura Cannon Lambeth and husband, Chas. E. Lambeth | O. J. Thies                                     | 5/23/1923  | 497/550          |              |
| O. J. Thies and wife, Blanche Austin Thies              | Mrs. Laura Cannon Lambeth                       | 1/20/1923  | 482/668          |              |

## Abstract

### Statement of Significance

The Lambeth-Sullivan House at 435 Hermitage Road in the Myers Park neighborhood of Charlotte, possesses several aspects of historic significance. The Lambeth-Sullivan House is associated with Charles E. Lambeth, mayor of Charlotte from 1931-1933 and a notable member of the business and civic community; Laura Cannon Lambeth Mattes, youngest daughter of textile industrialist James William Cannon of Kannapolis and a leading socialite and philanthropist in the city; and Ella Sayre Sullivan Robinson, widow of *Charlotte Observer* co-owner Walter B. Sullivan and an active philanthropist who served two terms as president of the YWCA of Charlotte and was the first woman president of the Community Chest, a forerunner to the United Way of Greater Charlotte.

The Lambeth-Sullivan House is also historically significant for its architectural design. The Lambeth-Sullivan House was designed by Charles Barton Keen, a Philadelphia architect who was noted for his opulent revivalist mansions, including Reynolda House in Winston-Salem for tobacco magnate R. J. Reynolds and the Charles A. and Ruth Coltrane Cannon House in Concord for Laura's brother and Cannon Mills president Charles A. Cannon. The Lambeth-Sullivan House was completed in May 1927. Architecturally, the Lambeth-Sullivan House is an outstanding example of the eclectic French Revival style.

Although another Myers Park property, the Lambeth-Gossett House at 923 Granville Road, was designated a local landmark in 1988 for its connection to Charles and Laura Cannon Lambeth, their short ownership (1916-1921) of and even shorter residence (due to Charles's service in World War I, they only lived there from 1916-1917 and 1919-1921) in the house preceded the period in which the Lambeths were most influential in Charlotte.

### Integrity Statement

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Location</b>  | The Lambeth-Sullivan House retains a high degree of integrity of location, as it has not been moved from its original site of construction.                                                                      |
| <b>Design</b>    | The Lambeth-Sullivan House retains a high degree of integrity of design, as the house has had little to no changes to its original design by noted architect Charles Barton Keen.                                |
| <b>Setting</b>   | The Lambeth-Sullivan House retains a high degree of integrity of setting, as the Myers Park neighborhood along Hermitage Road maintains its park-like setting with large homes along a winding residential road. |
| <b>Materials</b> | The Lambeth-Sullivan House retains a high degree of integrity of materials. Except for maintenance, original materials including the                                                                             |

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                    | green slate roof have been retained.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Workmanship</b> | The Lambeth-Sullivan House retains a high degree of integrity of workmanship. Its high level of design and materials required skilled craftsmen to complete the work.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Feeling</b>     | The Lambeth-Sullivan House retains a high degree of integrity of feeling, evoking both the aesthetic and historic sense of the home's time of construction in the late 1920s.                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Association</b> | The Lambeth-Sullivan House is associated with Charles Lambeth, mayor of Charlotte from 1931 to 1933. While another property in Mecklenburg County is designated as a landmark for its association with Lambeth, the Lambeth-Sullivan House has a higher degree of integrity of association as Lambeth lived in the house during his tenure as mayor. |



## Maps



Source: POLARIS



Source: POLARIS



## Historical Background

The Lambeth-Sullivan House is named for its original owners, Charles Edward and Laura McGill Cannon Lambeth, and Ella Hargrove Sayre Sullivan, whose family owned the home for nearly 60 years. Charles was a notable Charlotte businessman who operated an insurance business, owned various car dealerships, and engaged in real estate. He was instrumental in the development of the Builders Building, which became a hub of the construction industry in Charlotte. Laura was the youngest child of J. W. Cannon, who established Cannon Mills and founded the town of Kannapolis. A native of Alabama, Ella came to Charlotte with her husband Walter Bernard Sullivan, co-owner of the *Charlotte Observer*, in 1916. Though he died only five years later, Ella remained in Charlotte where she was an indispensable member of the city's philanthropic community.

The Lambeth-Sullivan House was designed by noted Philadelphia architect Charles Barton Keen, who attracted clientele among the business elite in North Carolina after designing the impressive estate of tobacco magnate R. J. Reynolds, Reynolda House completed in 1917 near Winston-Salem. Completed in 1927, the Lambeth-Sullivan House was Keen's first commission in Charlotte.

## Charlie and Mack

Charles Edward "Charlie" Lambeth, wrote the *Charlotte Observer* in 1922, "stepped forth into the world of business finely advantaged due to place of birth and environment."<sup>1</sup> Born on January 29, 1893, he was the youngest of six children of Fayetteville livery stable owner John Aurelius Lambeth and first wife Ellen Whitworth Lambeth. The Lambeths enjoyed a comfortable life, able to afford a live-in cook and spend summers at Kanuga near Hendersonville. Charlie attended Donaldson Military Academy in Fayetteville and the University of North Carolina before moving to Charlotte in 1913. He was engaged with the insurance department of the American Trust Company along with his older brothers Harvey Allen Lambeth (1878-1915) and Walter Moore Lambeth (1887-1953). The Lambeths were drawn to Charlotte by their first cousin George Stephens, a founder of American Trust Company and developer of Charlotte's newest exclusive suburb Myers Park.<sup>2</sup>

Charlie quickly immersed himself in the social scene in Charlotte, attending dances at the Manufacturers Club and dinners hosted by the city's elite. Also present at events in Charlotte was Laura McGill Cannon, the vivacious youngest daughter of Concord mill owner James William Cannon. Known by her friends as Mack, the Salem Academy alumna was described as "one of the state's most charming girls, prominent socially, and held in affectionate and admiring esteem by all Concord and friends in Charlotte, Durham, Raleigh

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<sup>1</sup> "Charlotte Builders: Chas. E. Lambeth," *Charlotte Observer*, November 15, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> George's mother Lydia Lambeth Stephens (1847-1917) was a sister to John Aurelius Lambeth.

and other cities in the state.”<sup>3</sup> Both Charlie and Laura were guests at the Charlotte Cotillion Club dance held on February 13, 1914, described as an event which “will long be remembered as one of the most charming and enjoyable in the history of the organization.”<sup>4</sup> Subsequent social events in Charlotte had both as guests, so there were certainly more opportunities for them to get acquainted; if anything, they could bond over being the youngest child of a large family, as Laura had ten older siblings. A whirlwind romance seemed to have followed, for in August 1915 Charlie was among the guests of the Cannons at the Rock, their new mountain home in Blowing Rock. The following month at a luncheon in Concord came the surprise announcement of their engagement. Charlie and Laura were married in a lavish event at her parents’ home in Concord on November 25, 1915. Among the esteemed guests from Charlotte were Charlie’s cousin George Stephens, F. C. Abbott, E. C. Griffith, Osmond Barringer, and Ralph Van Landingham.<sup>5</sup>

Returning from their New York honeymoon, the young newlyweds lived with Charlie’s brother Walter before moving into a sublet unit in the Blandwood Apartments on South Tryon Street. Charlie and Laura immersed themselves into Charlotte’s social and economic scenes, the latter attending a flurry of events hosted by society women in her honor.<sup>6</sup> Charlie considered opening his own insurance business for a short period. After brother Harvey’s unfortunate death from tuberculosis a year earlier, Charlie and Walter were elected managers of the American Trust Company insurance department.<sup>7</sup> Charlie purchased a lot at the corner of South Tryon Street and Jackson Terrace, the last vacant lot on that street. It was assumed that the Lambeths would build a house there. But instead, they chose the new fashionable suburb of Myers Park.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “Miss Cannon and Mr. Lambeth,” *Charlotte News*, September 25, 1915.

<sup>4</sup> “Society,” *Charlotte Observer*, February 14, 1914.

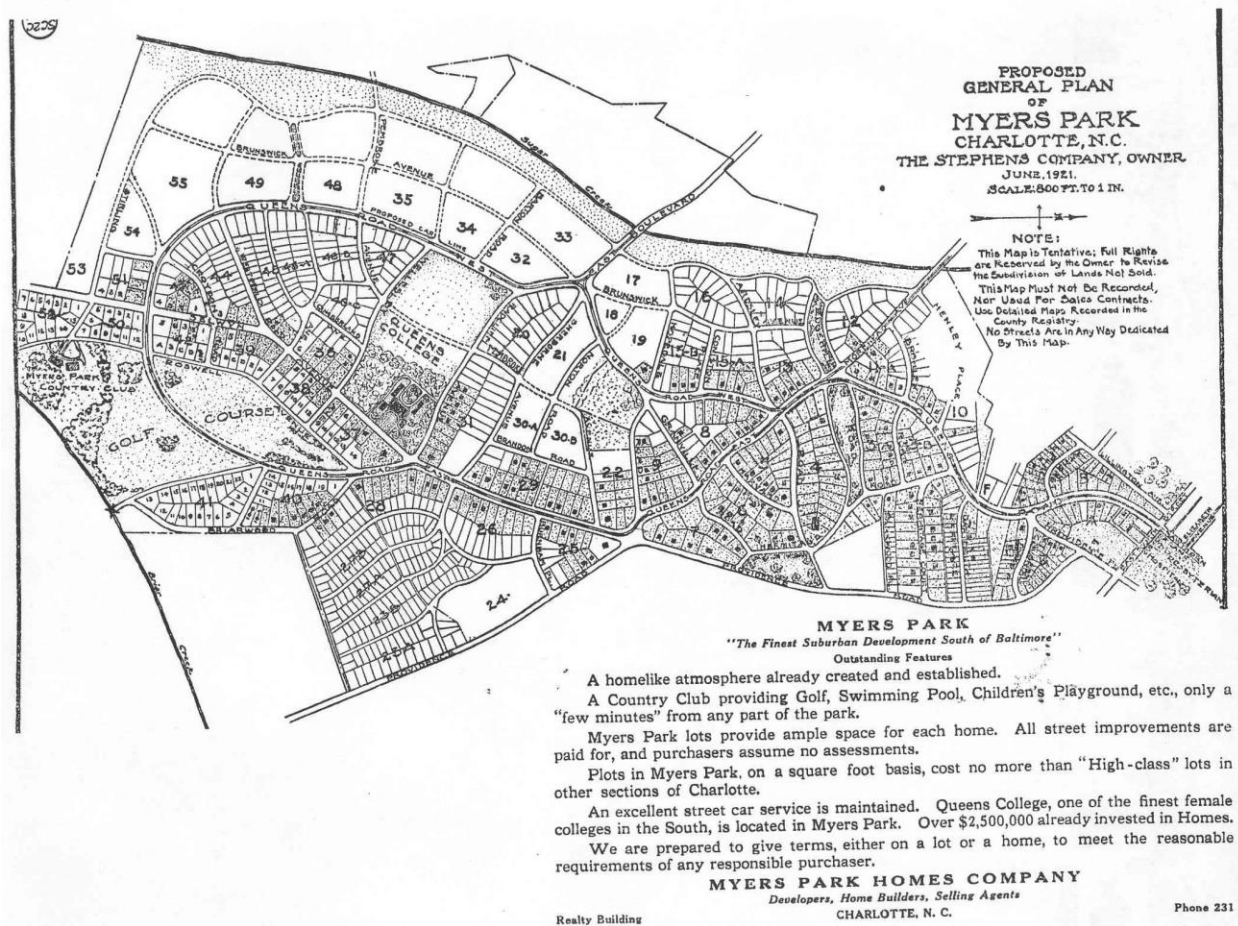
<sup>5</sup> “From Mountains,” *Charlotte Daily Observer*, June 16, 1915; “Miss Cannon and Mr. Lambeth,” *Charlotte News*, September 25, 1915; “Notable Wedding in Concord,” *Charlotte News*, November 25, 1915.

<sup>6</sup> “Mrs. Wadsworth Hostess for Two Charming Women,” *Charlotte News*, March 1, 1916; “Mrs. M’Aden Charming Hostess for Mrs. Lambeth,” *Charlotte News*, February 17, 1916; *Charlotte Daily Observer*, January 1, 1916.

<sup>7</sup> “Notable Changes in Insurance Circles,” *Charlotte Daily Observer*, February 3, 1916; *Charlotte Daily Observer*, January 25, 1916; *Charlotte Daily Observer*, February 1, 1916.

<sup>8</sup> “Mr. Lambeth Buys Howell Lot on South Tryon,” *Charlotte News*, April 9, 1916.

## Myers Park



**Figure 1** From Myers Park Homeowners Association, <https://www.mpha.com/community/maps/1921-planning-map-of-community/>.

Harvey, Walter, and Charlie Lambeth came to a city entering its first great boom. Charlotte was a hub of the textile industry, with over half the loom and spindles in the South within a 100-mile radius. From 1890 to 1930, Charlotte grew from the Carolinas fifth-largest city to its top urban center. During this period, beginning with the opening of the Dilworth streetcar suburb in 1891, a ring of residential developments popped up on the city's periphery. A group of investors led by cousin George Stephens acquired the Myers farm southeast of town. Stephens hired John Nolen, a Harvard-educated landscape architect, to design a neighborhood on the 1200-acre tract. As historian Thomas Hanchett noted, Nolan's pastoral design included parks and the planting of hundreds of trees along its curving streets. Charlotte's business elite flocked to the posh new suburb—along with Stephens, other residents included store fixture manufacturer H. M. Wade and Duke Power Company executives Norman Cocke and Z. V. Taylor.<sup>9</sup> The Lambeths also moved to Myers

<sup>9</sup> Mary Norton Kratt and Thomas Hanchett, *Legacy: The Myers Park Story* (Charlotte: Myers Park Foundation, 1986), 46-49.

Park. In October 1916 Charlie and Laura began construction on a new house on Granville Road designed by local architect Willard G. Rogers. The following year, Walter moved to Hermitage Road.<sup>10</sup>

However, the Lambeths were only in the house for a short time before the United States entered the Great War. Charlie applied to the naval aviation service at the advice of mill owner and neighbor Stuart W. Cramer. He was accepted and ordered to report to duty for training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in naval aeronautics. After completing coursework, Charlie was stationed at Naval Air Station Rockaway in Queens, New York as a pilot of naval observation balloons.

Laura was with him throughout in Boston and New York, although she stayed with her parents in Concord when he was deployed to Panama for a short period. Charlie was mustered out of service in January 1919, and the Lambeths returned to Charlotte. While their Myers Park home was rented out, they lived in the Guthrey Apartments. Two years later, the house on Granville Road was sold to Ben B. Gossett, an executive of the Chadwick-Hoskins Mill. Hanchett posited that the Lambeths sold the Granville Road residence to fund Charlie's business interests. They moved nearby to Hermitage Court, where Walter had just built a house.<sup>11</sup>

Charlie launched himself into business interests, specifically the burgeoning automotive industry. He partnered with Oscar J. Thies, a Myers Park resident trained as a mining engineer who transitioned to real estate development and construction, to erect an automobile storage warehouses in Charlotte and Asheville. In 1921 Charlie purchased full

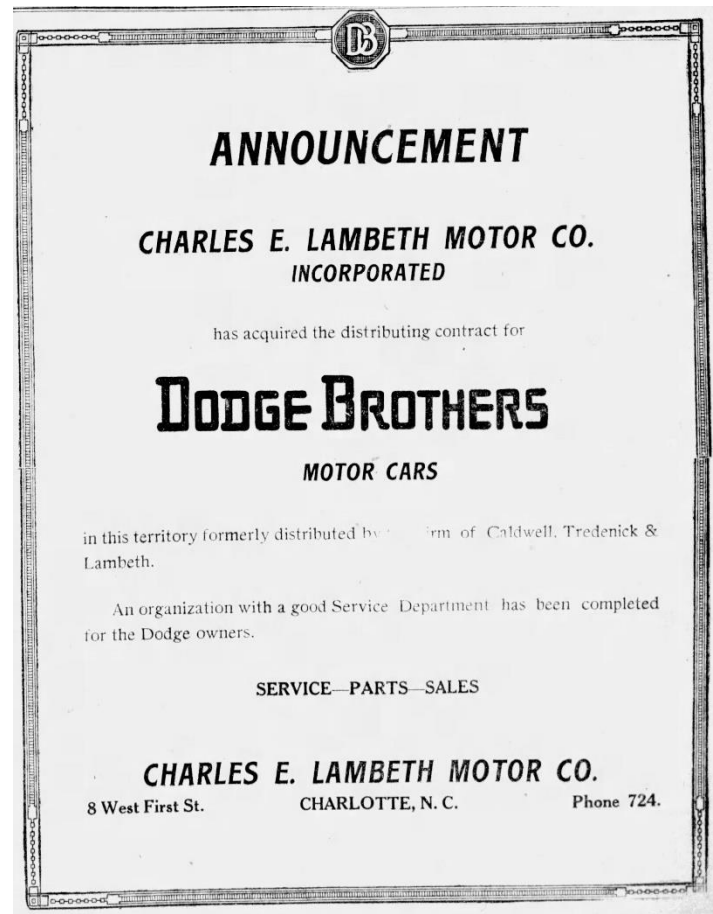


Figure 2 This announcement of Charlie taking over the Dodge dealership was published in the Charlotte Observer on December 4, 1921.

<sup>10</sup> Brother Harvey Allen Lambeth died from tuberculosis in 1915. "Dwellings," *Manufacturers Record* 70, No. 16 (October 19, 1916), 71; Thomas W. Hanchett, "Lambeth-Gossett House," Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, May 4, 1987.

<sup>11</sup> "C. E. Lambeth in Training," *Charlotte News*, August 27, 1917; "Ensign and Mrs. Lambeth Return," *Concord Times*, January 27, 1919; *Concord Daily Tribune*, December 11, 1919; "Chadwick-Hoskins Officers to Dine," *Charlotte News*, December 25, 1921.



interest in the local Dodge Brothers dealership. Formerly known as Caldwell, Trednick & Lambeth, the Charles E. Lambeth Motor Company opened for business at 8 West First Street, selling Dodge Brothers automobiles and Graham Brothers trucks. By the following year, when the *Observer* profiled him in their “Charlotte Builders” series, Charlie had expanded his operations next door and employed 37 men. In addition to being the Dodge dealer for Charlotte, Charlie was also president of Brison-Lambeth, Inc., in Gastonia and of Lambeth-Armfield, Inc. in Rockingham, with territory covering seven counties.<sup>12</sup>

### 435 Hermitage Road

In 1923 Laura purchased property at the corner of Hermitage Road and Ardsley Road from Oscar J. Thies for \$20,500. The lot was located across the street from Lynnwood, the mansion of industrialist James Buchanan Duke. Newspapers reported that the Lambeths planned to erect “a handsome home on the property, the plans for the structure not yet having been drawn, or the type of building decided upon.”<sup>13</sup>

The design and construction of their Hermitage Road home would be an ordeal. In March 1923, *Manufacturers Record* reported that architect C. C. Hook would design the Lambeth home.<sup>14</sup> However, it is unknown how far along plans came, for in March 1924 a new architect was announced:

The most conspicuous out of town development of the week among Columbia builders was the announcement Friday of the selection of Harold Tatum, Columbia architect, to design the handsome residence to be erected in the Myers Park suburb of Charlotte by Charles E. Lambeth, president of the Charles E. Lambeth Motor company of the North Carolina city.<sup>15</sup>

The Cannon family had recently become clients of Tatum, who designed the residence of J. Ross Cannon in York, South Carolina, the mountain home of James William Cannon, Jr. at Mayview Manor in Blowing Rock, and a remodel of the residence of the latter in Concord. Though primarily an institutional architect, Tatum had designed houses in the Wales Garden and Heathwood neighborhoods of Columbia. By July it was reported that Tatum would call for bids from contractors; however, these requests never materialized, and news on the project went conspicuously silent for nearly three years. In April 1926 Tatum filed suit in Mecklenburg County Superior Court against the Lambeths for breach of contract. After completing the drawings, Tatum claimed, he was fired by Laura, who said she wanted

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<sup>12</sup> “Charlotte Builders: Chas. E. Lambeth,” *Charlotte Observer*, November 15, 1922; *Concord Daily Tribune*, November 29, 1921; *Asheville Citizen Times*, July 31, 1919; *Manufacturers Record* 75, no. 18 (May 1, 1919), 167; “News of the Transfer and Storage Industry,” *Transfer and Storage* (August 1919), 3; “Charlotte Builders: Chas. E. Lambeth,” *Charlotte Observer*, November 15, 1922.

<sup>13</sup> “Lambeths Purchase Lots from O. G. Thies,” *Charlotte Observer*, February 18, 1923.

<sup>14</sup> *Manufacturer’s Record* 83, no. 9 (March 1, 1923), 117.

<sup>15</sup> “Building People Look for Good Year,” *Columbia State*, February 4, 1924.





**Figure 3** Charles Barton Keen in 1928. *Philadelphia Architects and Buildings*, [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/25028](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/25028)

his work ended for reasons “not detrimental to him.” He sued for \$4,980, the unpaid remainder of the fee he charged to complete the work. The case went to trial in February 1927. The Lambeths argued that they had asked Tatum to design a house that would cost between \$50,000 and \$75,000, but his completed plans were for a \$100,000 house. Tatum denied a cap had been set by his clients. After three days in court, the parties compromised and the Lambeths agreed to pay \$2,500 to Tatum.<sup>16</sup>

While the tumult with Tatum was ongoing, the Lambeths had retained noted Philadelphia architect Charles Barton Keen (1882-1931) to design their Hermitage Court home. A graduate of

the University of Pennsylvania, Keen had designed several country estates in Philadelphia’s Main Line neighborhoods. He was hired in 1909 to design a Tudor Revival home

along Winston-Salem’s Millionaires Row for tobacco executive Robert E. Lasater and wife Nancy Lybrook Lasater, niece of R. J. Reynolds. Soon, other officers of the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company commissioned Keen-designed residence, including the 1,067-acre country estate of Reynolds himself. The business magnates of Charlotte soon engaged Keen for homes in Myers Park—Daisy Hanes Lassater of the Hanes textile family hired the architect, who had designed homes for her siblings in Winston-Salem. In 1924 Laura’s brother Charles A. Cannon, who became president of Cannon Mills after their father’s death, hired Keen to design his home in Concord. Unsurprisingly, Laura chose another architect who had worked with her family.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> “Columbia Architect Lands N. C. Contract,” *Columbia Sunday Record*, November 25, 1923; “Opening and Awards Feature Building Week,” *Columbia State*, July 7, 1924; “Architect Sues Charlotte Man,” *Charlotte Observer*, April 21, 1926; “Tatum Suit Against Lambeths Compromised,” *Charlotte News*, February 10, 1927.

<sup>17</sup> Margaret Supplee Smith, “Charles Barton Keen,” *North Carolina Architects & Builders* (2013), <https://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000380>, accessed October 26, 2022. The Lassater House is no longer extant, making the Lambeth-Sullivan House the oldest Keen design remaining in Charlotte. The Wade House was designated as a Mecklenburg County historic landmark in 1983. See Dan L. Morrill, Thomas W. Hanchett, and William H. Huffman, Howard Madison Wade House, Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission (May 1, 1983), <http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Wade-House-H.M.-SR.pdf>, accessed October 26, 2022.



**Figure 4** Architect's drawing for the library of the Lambeth-Sullivan House. From the William Wallace Roy Collection, North Carolina State University Library.



The Lambeths moved into their new home at 435 Hermitage Road on May 29, 1927. The grandiose mansion on Hermitage Road was reflective of the social and economic standing of the Lambeths. Although the Lambeths had



*Figure 5 This photo of the Lambeth-Sullivan House appeared in Gardening in the South, published in 1931.*

claimed the Tatum home design was too expensive,

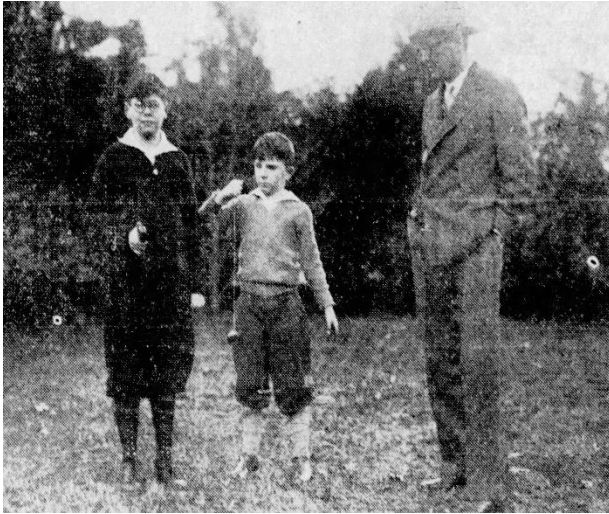
they spared no expense in finishes and décor. Laura had engaged an interior decorator in New York to furnish the home. Terrazzo floors were installed by McDaniel-Federal Company, which also put in the floors at Morrocroft, former governor Cameron Morrison's residence, and the Cannon house. "Stone tile" manufactured by Southern Brick and Tile was used on the exterior of the Lambeth-Sullivan House, though it was stuccoed over; the material had also been used in the Builders Building.<sup>18</sup> The "Rosalind to Celia" society column in the *Observer* described the residence:

The Lambeth home which is one of the most charming in the state was filled with roses, snapdragons, calla lilies, tulips and calendulas, artistically arranged. As I went from room to room there was a distinctive charm about each that made me want to linger overlong. I believe the dining room is my favorite. The walls are hung with an exquisite papering that represents slender cypress trees on a background of palest green. Crystal wall brackets holding soft lights, and pale yellow draperies add to the enchantment of this room.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> At the time, the house was numbered 613 Hermitage Road. "Weekly Social Gossip," *Charlotte Observer*, May 29, 1927; "Rosalind to Celia," *Charlotte Observer*, November 28, 1926; "M'Daniel-Federal Co., Does Terrazo Work in New Church; And Supplied Cork for Aisles," *Charlotte Observer*, March 11, 1928; "'Stone Tile', Made Locally Is Finding Wide Use," *Charlotte Observer*, September 23, 1928.

<sup>19</sup> "Rosalind to Celia," *Charlotte Observer*, March 8, 1931.

The landscaping of the Lambeth House, which was planned by local garden expert Cora Annette Harris, was featured in *Gardening in the South* by South Carolina horticulturalist George R. Briggs.<sup>20</sup>



**Figure 6** Charlie with sons Harvey and Jimmy in 1931. "Mayor Lambeth Gets Big Kick from Yo-Yo," *Charlotte News*, December 11, 1931.

Moving into the new house was also a celebration of their growing family. While it is unknown if Charlie and Laura struggled with infertility, the couple did not have biological children together. They adopted two boys from New York—Harvey Edward Lambeth, born in 1920, and James Cannon Lambeth, born in 1924.

Laura made the Lambeth home a social center of the Charlotte elite. She regularly hosted bridge parties, luncheons, and other

events favored by monied white women like herself. Her social circle was a "who's who" of Charlotte's business community. The

Wednesday Bridge Club included among its members Julia Scott Cramer (wife of Stuart W. Cramer, Jr., whose family founded the Gaston County mill town of Cramerton), Aileen Butt Clark (wife of David Clark, publisher of the *Southern Textile Bulletin*), and Gladys Avery Tillett (political organizer and activist). The Lambeth home was also a regular location for meetings of the Junior League, Daughters of the American Revolution, and women's groups of Myers Park Presbyterian Church. Famous guests also visited; in October 1932 the Lambeths hosted professional golfer Bobby Jones, who was in town for a Junior League fundraiser at the Charlotte Country Club, and his wife Mary.<sup>21</sup>

Simultaneously, Charlie expanded his varied business interests both within Charlotte and outside the Carolinas. He was the lead investor in the Builders Building, which would serve as a hub of Charlotte's construction industry, on West Trade Street. Architect Marion R. "Steve" Marsh was contracted to design the seven-story structure, which was completed in

<sup>20</sup> Harris was the daughter of *Charlotte Observer* editor-in-chief Wade Harris and, like Laura, an alumna of Salem Academy. Hanchett and Kratt, 112; George R. Briggs, *Gardening in the South* (New York: A. T. DeLaMare Company, 1931), 20.

<sup>21</sup> "Wednesday Bridge Club Is Feted by Mrs. Lambeth," *Charlotte News and Evening Chronicle*, May 3, 1928; "Mayor and Mrs. Lambeth Will Give Buffet Supper," *Charlotte News*, October 16, 1932, "Dinner Dance for Notables," *Charlotte News*, October 23, 1932; "Rosalind to Celia," *Charlotte Observer*, October 9, 1932. Jones had retired from competitive golf in 1930, and in 1931 he had purchased the property which would become Augusta National Golf Club. Laura likely used connections with her brother-in-law, *Atlanta Constitution* publisher Clark Howell, Sr., to bring Jones to Charlotte.

1927 and originally called the Lambeth Building.<sup>22</sup> Charlie and B. L. Eskridge organized and incorporated the Lambeth-Eskridge Motor Co. in Georgia to sell Dodge automobiles in Atlanta. *Automotive Daily News* reported in May that Charlie sold the dealership rights to Norfleet-Enfield Company of Roanoke, Virginia, though he retained stock in the company. In August 1928 Charlie reentered the automobile industry with the organization of the Stonewall Motor Company, which sold DeSoto cars from its showroom on South Tryon Street. The following year, he was a founder of the Parcell Clayton Neckwear Company, chartered to deal in neckwear, hosiery, and notions. However, the stock market crash in October 1929 and resultant economic downturn eroded the interests many Charlotte businessmen. Charlie returned his focus primarily to the more stable confines of his insurance company, though he began to explore areas outside of business.<sup>23</sup>



**Figure 7** Charlie and Laura attended the reception for the formal opening of the new Charlotte Country Club clubhouse on December 11, 1931. *Charlotte Observer*, December 13, 1931.

### Mayor Charlie

Charlie had dabbled in politics in the 1920s. He was put forth as a potential candidate when rumors swirled that Mayor Harvey Moore would resign in 1926. Three years later, Charlie had run for city council, but he withdrew after finishing ninth in the field of fourteen primary candidates. In early April 1931 rumors swirled that Charlie would enter the city council race, perhaps on the ticket of the Good Government League which had successfully lobbied to change the city government from the board of aldermen to a council-manager structure. His interest in the office was viewed favorably, with the *News* calling him “one of this City’s well-known and wealthy young business men.”<sup>24</sup> The *Observer* invited all candidates to make a brief statement on their platform, to which Charlie responded, “My ambition is not only to merit and win the support of voters of our city, but also it is my earnest desire, if elected, to be a true and diligent representative of our entire citizenship.”<sup>25</sup> In the

municipal election held on May 5, Charlie was the top vote-getter with 5,211 votes, followed by John F. Boyd, Claude L. Albea, Thomas T. Allison, and V. J. Guthery. Three of the council members, Charlie, Guthery, and Allison, were in real estate, while Boyd was a general contractor. Albea was an outlier among the businessmen; he worked as a linotype

<sup>22</sup> Dan L. Morrill “Survey and Research Report for the Builders Building,” Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, August 9, 2004.

<sup>23</sup> “New Dodge Firm Buys Dealership,” *Automotive Daily News*, May 5, 1927; “To Distribute New Automobile,” *Charlotte Observer*, August 22, 1928; “Knitting Mill News,” *Textile World* 75, No. 7 (February 16, 1929), 71.

<sup>24</sup> “May Get Two Candidates in Race by Night,” *Charlotte News*, April 7, 1931.

<sup>25</sup> “City Candidates State Platforms,” *Charlotte Observer*, April 26, 1931.

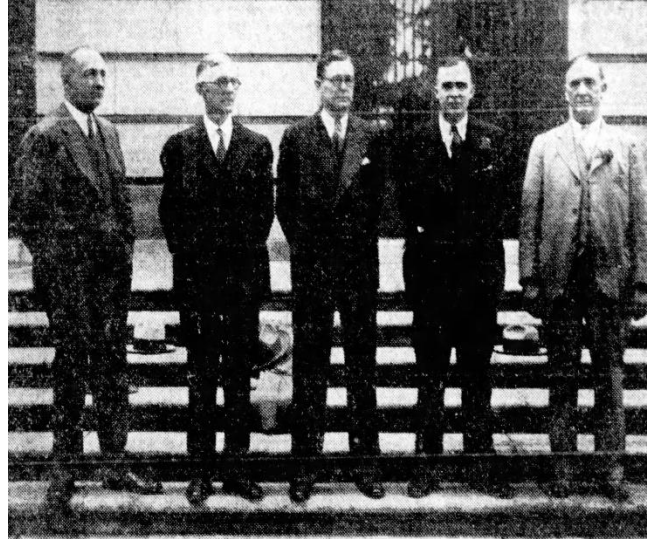


operator and served as president of the Charlotte Central Labor Union and on the executive committee of the North Carolina Federation of Labor. At the council's first meeting on May 6, they elected Charlie mayor, Allison mayor pro-tem, and Boyd acting city manager.<sup>26</sup>

Charlie entered office during a difficult period in Charlotte. The Great Depression was in full effect—bread lines formed across the city, and many homeowners

struggled to pay their property taxes. The new mayor supported the deferral of advertising and sale of these properties as allowed by state law. The city board of education was heavily in debt and unable to pay teachers. A red scare, heightened by the 1929 Loray Mill strike in Gastonia, led to Charlotte police targeting Communist activists.<sup>27</sup>

While the unstable economy was an undeniable issue during Charlie's tenure in office, the development of a municipal airport was a major policy for which he endlessly lobbied. Dating back to the early 1920s, Charlotte's business leaders had debated the need for a government-owned airport, one which could provide more services than the small private airfields. Charlie had been an enthusiastic booster for bringing expanded aviation opportunities to the city, which advocates argued help the city grow in economic stature. He had been elected the first president of the Charlotte Aero Club in 1920, which counted among its members E. C. Griffith, Francis O. Clarkson, Eli Springs, and B. D. Heath. While the organization was short-lived, Charlie continued to support these efforts as a member of the Chamber of Commerce, which operated the former Camp Greene airfield when he was voted into office.<sup>28</sup>



**Figure 8** The 1931-1933 Charlotte City Council consisted of V. J. Guthery, T. T. Allison, Mayor Charles E. Lambeth, Claude L. Albea, and J. F. Boyd. *Charlotte News*, May 6, 1931.

<sup>26</sup> "Lambeth New Mayor; Boyd Acting Manager," *Charlotte News*, May 6, 1931; "Four Independents Swept into Office," *Charlotte Observer*, May 6, 1931.

<sup>27</sup> "Red-Fighter Littlejohn Recalls Days of Party Activity Here," *Charlotte News*, October 3, 1953.

<sup>28</sup> "Former Aviators for an Aero Club," *Charlotte News*, February 25, 1920.



**Figure 9** Aviator Amelia Earhart visited Charlotte on November 10, 1931. She landed the Beech-Nut Aerogyro No. 1 at Cannon Airport, where she demonstrated the craft.

By October 1931, the Charlotte Airport, Inc., the entity which operated the airfield, faced foreclosure and asked the city to purchase or lease the property. So began an ongoing debate in city council—put forward a public vote to consider this offer, or purchase another site on which to develop a new municipal airport. Property in Steele Creek and along Statesville Road were inspected, with the latter chosen as the potential site. The issue dragged for months, and finally in fall 1932 city council called for an election to be held

on December 13. Voters were to cast ballots for or against the sale of up to \$75,000 in bonds to fund the airport development. However, the council could not agree on a course of action—lease the extant facilities or build a new airport—and their indecisiveness contributed to the seemingly decreasing chances of approval. And on election day, it was clear that the plan put forward had little public confidence. “City Airport Bond Issue Apparently Badly Defeated, Few Vote on Bond Plans,” reported the headline in the *Charlotte News*. Only 705 of the over 5,100 registered voters were cast in support.<sup>29</sup> Said Charlie of the results,

The city council has done everything it could do to represent the interests of the citizens of Charlotte in the airport matter. There is nothing else we can do, as I see it. The council has received its instructions from the people yesterday in the airport bond issue election.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> “Asks City to Run Airport,” *Charlotte Observer*, October 15, 1931; “City Council Orders Airport Election,” *Charlotte Observer*, September 8, 1932; “Airport Leasing Scheme Hits Snag in Council,” *Charlotte News*, November 27, 1932; “City Airport Bond Issue Apparently Badly Defeated,” *Charlotte News*, December 13, 1932.

<sup>30</sup> “City Keeping Its Hands Off Air Field Issue,” *Charlotte News*, December 14, 1932.

The strain of the airport issue wore on Charlie. Before the vote, Grady Cole had asked in a radio interview if he would seek re-election, with Charlie responding, "Grady, I do not intend to run."<sup>31</sup> The part-time job of mayor only paid \$700 per year and was seen as a more ceremonial position than an administrative one; however, Charlie had thrown himself into his work. A few weeks into his tenure, the *Charlotte News* reported that he was often working in City Hall until late afternoon or early evening, "staying on the job as if he were 'pulling down' \$10,000 or \$12,000."<sup>32</sup> Though it was clear the 1933 mayoral race was wide open, two months before the election no one had filed to run. The *Charlotte Observer* offered a reason for the reticence:

The present economic stress will doubtless cause many civic leaders to refuse to offer themselves for positions on the city's governing body. Many will be too busy with their own affairs, while others who may be

able to spare the time will hesitate to undertake a race for office that will undoubtedly offer many arduous duties during the next two years, it was freely predicted yesterday.

The fact that public office in the city and county seems invariably to penalize persons who undertake to serve the citizenship is held responsible in some degree, too, for the lack of candidates for the council, it was also agreed.<sup>33</sup>

Charlie left office on May 3, 1933. Newly elected Mayor Arthur Wearn, who had served on city council with Charlie, offered these words for his predecessor,

I wish to pay tribute to our retiring mayor. No man has given more of his time for less money in the service of the city than Honorable Charles E. Lambeth. I regret he is not to be with us, in person but I know that he will be with us in heart. And, Mr. Mayor, if you can change the direction of your automobile and head toward the city hall, you will also find a parking place in the rear of the city hall.<sup>34</sup>



**Figure 10** Charlie stands with a basket of flowers presented to him by city hall employees on his final day as mayor. "Pay Lambeth Tribute as He Quits Office," *Charlotte Observer*, May 4, 1931.

<sup>31</sup> "Mayor Is Not to Run Again," *Charlotte News*, December 3, 1932.

<sup>32</sup> "Long Hours for Lambeth," *Charlotte News*, May 19, 1931.

<sup>33</sup> "No Candidacies Filed for City Council Race," *Charlotte Observer*, February 11, 1933.

<sup>34</sup> "Council Takes Office; Wearn Elected Mayor," *Charlotte News*, May 3, 1933.

City Hall employees presented the outgoing mayor with a basket of flowers, a token of their appreciation for his hard work. The *Observer* reported workers choked back tears as they bid Charlie farewell. An interview the following day, however, alluded to a downside of his time in office: “I’ve got to dig down into my personal affairs. In my effort to devote the time necessary to the work in the mayor’s office I have sadly neglected my own affairs. I have a big job in catching up.”<sup>35</sup>

## The Lambeths Divorce

As Charlie was handing over the mayoral gavel to Arthur Wearn, Laura was away from Charlotte in New York City, a favorite getaway locale. She returned to Charlotte to attend a wedding, but a few weeks later she headed back to the city where she was establishing a permanent home. Charlie immersed himself in reestablishing his commercial and civic activities much as he had as mayor. The issues in their marriage likely went back to the beginning, a whirlwind romance between an eighteen year old heiress and an ambitious, outgoing young businessman. In addition, it appeared that the Lambeths had differing opinions on their social exposure—Laura valued her privacy, with curated mentions of bridge luncheons and hosted social events in the society gossip pages. By contrast, Charlie did not mind the attention. Few photographs of the couple were published in newspapers. There was unhappiness in the union, and it came to a head in the summer of 1933.<sup>36</sup>

In late July, Charlie headed to New York “to spend a few days with Mrs. Lambeth and then will go to Denmark, Maine, to visit their two sons, Jimmy and Harvey, who are spending the summer at Camp Winona.”<sup>37</sup> He, Laura, and Harvey headed to Blowing Rock on August 1 to spend a week or so at Mayfair Manor, perhaps a last-gasp effort to preserve the marriage.<sup>38</sup> But soon afterwards, Charlie and Laura officially separated. The separation agreement made on August 29 outlined the conditions. They would continue to live separately wherever they chose without being compelled to move back in together. Laura would have custody of Harvey and Jimmy and “shall provide for the maintenance, support and education of the said children throughout their minority.” Charlie’s access to the boys would not be restricted, and they could live with him for at least one month each year. They relinquished any rights to property or assets gained by the other while married. The agreement would not impact the ability to file for divorce.<sup>39</sup>

On September 9, the Associated Press broke the news that Charlie traveled to Reno, Nevada, to establish the necessary six weeks of residence to file for divorce. He had left

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<sup>35</sup> “Pay Lambeth Tribute As He Quits Office,” *Charlotte Observer*, May 4, 1933.

<sup>36</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, May 6, 1933; *Charlotte News*, May 23, 1933.

<sup>37</sup> “Former Mayor Lambeth Will Go to New York,” *Charlotte Observer*, July 30, 1933.

<sup>38</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, August 2, 1933.

<sup>39</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 881, Page 401.



Charlotte on September 2, not long after the separation agreement.<sup>40</sup> In October it was reported that he “has been living a leisurely life at an exclusive hotel and is occasionally seen at sporting events and in night clubs.”<sup>41</sup> On October 27, after a cross-complaint by Laura had been received by the court, the district court judge passed down his ruling. He concluded that allegations by Charlie of extreme cruelty by Laura were not true, writing in the opinion,

That during said marriage the plaintiff has treated the defendant with extreme cruelty as alleged in defendant’s answer and cross-complaint. That because of plaintiff’s said extreme cruelty, defendant has been caused grievous physical and mental suffering, her health was impaired, and she had cause to fear serious physical injury at the hands of plaintiff, and also permanent impairment of her health.<sup>42</sup>

The divorce was granted to Laura. Five days later, she married banker Edward Charles Mattes in New York, where she had lived at 1148 Fifth Avenue since her separation from Charlie. The wedding took place at the Waldorf Astoria in the apartment of her mother Ella Bost Cannon. Though she would return to Charlotte occasionally to visit family and friends, Laura lived in New York until her death in 1952.<sup>43</sup>

Charlie remained in Charlotte, where he organized the Charles E. Lambeth Insurance Company in December 1933.<sup>44</sup> He was elected to two terms as president of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, in which he continued to work for the establishment of a municipal airport. After seemingly recovering from the stress of serving in office, Charlie made another run for mayor in 1935. The mayoral race had been separated out from city council, but he came in third behind incumbent Arthur Wearn and city councilman Ben Douglas. The latter candidate would win the general election, and during his time in office the dream of a municipal airport for Charlotte was finally achieved. In July 1937 Charlie remarried to Sally McAden Cothran, with whom he had two children. Elected to city school board in 1941, he resigned after a year to serve as a lieutenant commander in the Navy Air Corps during World War II. It is possible that Charlie may have become mayor again, as he was

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<sup>40</sup> “Lambeth Will Make Up Mind about Divorce,” *Charlotte News*, September 10, 1933; “Mrs. Laura Lambeth to Wed N. Y. Banker,” *Charlotte Observer*, November 1, 1933.

<sup>41</sup> “Lambeth Soon to Ask for Divorce,” *Charlotte Observer*, October 11, 1933.

<sup>42</sup> Charles E. Lambeth v. Laura Cannon Lambeth, 44578 2d. Nev. (1933).

<sup>43</sup> “Mrs. Laura Lambeth to Wed N. Y. Banker”; “Mrs. Mates (sic) Services Held,” *Charlotte News*, July 3, 1952.

<sup>44</sup> The company was initially considered the insurance arm of Lambeth Realty Company, of which Laura also held stock. She staged a hostile takeover of the business right after their divorce, diluting Charlie’s shares and installing a board of directors drawn from her family’s Concord business associates. Ties between the two entities were severed in January 1934. “C. E. Lambeth Will Leave for New York,” *Charlotte Observer*, January 10, 1934; “New President of Local Co.,” *Charlotte News*, April 28, 1934.

elected to city council in 1947 and selected as mayor pro tem. However, he unexpectedly died in New York following throat surgery in September 1948.<sup>45</sup>

### The Sullivan Family

Though Laura had moved to New York City, she retained ownership of the house on Hermitage Road. She rented the property until selling it to Ella Sayre Sullivan in October 1935 for a paltry \$33,500.<sup>46</sup> A member of a notable Montgomery, Alabama, family, Ella Hargrove Sayre (1888-1971) was a cousin to author Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald, wife of *The Great Gatsby* author F. Scott Fitzgerald; diplomat Francis Bowes Sayre, Sr.,



**Figure 11** Ella Sayre Sullivan pictured with her son, Walter Bernard Sullivan, Jr., in 1917. Sayre Sullivan Papers, J. Murray Atkins Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

High Commissioner to the Philippines from 1939 to 1942 and son-in-law of Woodrow Wilson; and J. Lister Hill, U. S. Senator representing Alabama from 1938 to 1969. She met newspaper executive Walter Bernard Sullivan, a native of Savannah, Georgia, who worked with the *Montgomery Advertiser*, and they announced their engagement in June 1911. However, a few months later Walter became gravely sick on a business trip to Toledo, Ohio. Ella traveled there to care for him, and they were married at his bedside. Walter purchased an interest in the *Columbia Record* in 1913, and the couple moved to South Carolina. Three years later, he partnered with Curtis Johnson, owner of the *Knoxville Sentinel*, to purchase the *Observer*. The Sullivans moved from Columbia to Charlotte, where they bought a home on Harvard Place in Myers Park. Walter served as president and general manager of the newspaper until 1919, when his lingering health issues forced him to retire. He died in New York on October 5, 1921, leaving Ella and one surviving child, daughter Clayton Sayre Sullivan (1918-1973).<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> "Charles Lambeth Dies in New York," *Charlotte News*, September 13, 1948.

<sup>46</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 881, Page 524; "Deed Filed in \$33,000 Deal," *Charlotte News*, January 2, 1936. Discrepancies in the deed delayed the actual filing until January 1936.

<sup>47</sup> "Sullivan-Sayre Engagement Announced," *Montgomery Advertiser*, June 20, 1911; "Sullivan-Sayre," *Montgomery Times*, August 22, 1911; "Walter Bernard Sullivan," in Hugh T. Lefler, ed., *History of North Carolina*, Vol. IV Family and Personal History (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1956), 766-768; "Observer Changes Hands," *Charlotte News*, April 1, 1916. Two children were deceased, Eleanor Sayre Sullivan (1914-1915) and Walter Bernard Sullivan, Jr. (1917-1918).



**Figure 12** Ella, seated at the table, hosted a tea for the YWCA in February 1962 to raise funds for a new facility on Park Road. "Tea Honors YW Ladies," *Charlotte Observer*,

While Ella retained her husband's ownership stake in the *Observer*, she did not involve herself in its operation. Instead, Ella was an active member of Charlotte's social and philanthropic community. She was a member of Charlotte Country Club; it does not appear that she was friends with Laura, though Ella was close with

Cherry Cannon, the wife of Martin L. Cannon and her neighbor at the former Duke mansion. In 1946-1947 Ella was the only woman to serve as president of the Community Chest, a predecessor of the United Way of Greater Charlotte. But the organization closest to her heart was the YWCA of Charlotte. Ella was elected to two terms as its president, from 1930-1934 and again from 1940-1946.<sup>48</sup>

Ella and her daughter were very close, with Clayton receiving letters from her mother almost daily. When the Lambeth-Sullivan House was purchased in 1935, Clayton was attending boarding school in Washington, D. C. Ella wrote extensively about the process of purchasing and moving into the house. On October 4, she told her daughter, "Well, the house is bought, and the notice came out in the paper this a. m." and she hoped to have moved in a month's time.<sup>49</sup> However, moving into the house would become an ordeal. Laura had rented the house to Osmond L. Barringer earlier that year. On October 16, her realtor called to say the Barringers would move out in early November.<sup>50</sup> A few days later, Ella complained to Clayton that the Barringers were terrible tenants—"Mr. Barringer has disturbed so many things in the house, and I never saw so much trash and [detritus]. I was somewhat depressed when I left."<sup>51</sup> But she indicated the reason in a November 7 letter to Clayton—"I feel sorry for the Barringers, they are poor and pitiful—so sad to see people who once had money [lose] it all."<sup>52</sup> Finally, Ella took residence in her new home by mid-November.

<sup>48</sup> "Mrs. Sullivan Named by Community Chest," *Charlotte Observer*, February 7, 1946; "Mrs. Dalton Elected YWCA President," *Charlotte Observer*, January 26, 1946.

<sup>49</sup> Ella Sayre Sullivan to Clayton Sullivan, October 4, 1935.

<sup>50</sup> Ella Sayre Sullivan to Clayton Sullivan, October 16, 1935.

<sup>51</sup> Ella Sayre Sullivan to Clayton Sullivan, October 21, 1935.

<sup>52</sup> Ella Sayre Sullivan to Clayton Sullivan, November 7, 1935.



As during the Lambeths' tenure, the Sullivan house was a center of Myers Park social activity. Lansdale, as it was named by Ella, hosted meetings, luncheons, dinner parties, and other events for Charlotte's white elite as well as notable out-of-town guests. Laurence A. Steinhardt, who served as U. S. Ambassador to Sweden and to Russia, was a frequent guest along with his wife Dulcie.<sup>53</sup> But unlike Laura,

Ella was more open to public attention—she was co-owner of a newspaper, after all. The

Hermitage Road home became a frequent stop on public garden tour. The Lambeth-Sullivan House was featured on the Charlotte Garden Club tour in 1946, 1947, 1952, 1956, and 1966 and on the tour of homes sponsored by the Mint Museum Tour of Art in 1953. The highlight of the house was its rose gardens, which Ella retained after purchasing the property.<sup>54</sup>



**Figure 13** Ella in the rose garden of the Lambeth-Sullivan House, September 1961. Sayre Sullivan Papers, J. Murray Atkins Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Ella eventually remarried to Duke Power Company chairman W. S. O'B. Robinson, Jr. in 1958. They resided in the house until their deaths, Robinson in 1967 and Ella in 1971. Granddaughter Sayre Lineberger inherited the property. The daughter of Clayton and her second husband Henry A. Lineberger of the Belmont textile family, she had grown up across the street at the Duke mansion which her parents purchased in 1957.<sup>55</sup> After marrying local architect James E. Meyer in 1977, they embarked on interior renovations. No exterior changes, save for sandblasting and repainting the stucco to its original bisque luster, were made. James said, "As an architect, there really isn't anything I would change about the basic house...it's so beautifully designed and built."<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> "Mrs. Sullivan Has Guests for Week-End," *Charlotte News*, September 25, 1936; "Steinhardt Will Spend Christmas Visiting in City," *Charlotte Observer*, December 24, 1941.

<sup>54</sup> "Last Call to Garden Lovers!" *Charlotte News*, April 25, 1946; "Garden Tour Plans Are Completed," *Charlotte News*, April 22, 1947; "1952 Garden Tours Arranged for April," *Charlotte News*, March 18, 1952; "Home Tour Schedule Is Complete," *Charlotte News*, September 25, 1953; "Azaleas Come First in Mrs. Robinson's Garden," *Charlotte Observer*, March 20, 1966.

<sup>55</sup> After the death of Martin L. and Cherry Cannon, White Oaks, as they called the home, was donated to Myers Park Presbyterian Church, which sold it to the Linebergers. "Famed Mansion Goes to Charity," *Charlotte Observer*, June 23, 1976.

<sup>56</sup> Leslie Wright Haywood, "A Harmonious Blend," *Southern Accents* 8, No. 4 (July-August 1985), 94.



## Later Owners

Sayre put the Lambeth-Sullivan House on the market in 1994. It was purchased by Buford Ortale, a real estate and private equity investor from Nashville, and his wife Cynthia. After less than two years, the Ortale's sold the house to Rick and Dee Ray, founders of Raycom Sports. The Rays purchased White Oaks in 1989, which they restored and sold for \$4.3 million to the Lynnwood Foundation for conversion into the event center today known as the Duke Mansion. In late 2004, the Rays sold the house to Edward I. Weisiger, president of Carolina Tractor, and wife Elizabeth.<sup>57</sup> Said Dee of the sale, "We're sad to be leaving our beautiful home on Hermitage Road, but the Weisigers will lovingly take care of it."<sup>58</sup> The current owner, Elkhannah Properties, LLC, acquired the house in 2016.<sup>59</sup>

## Staff at the Lambeth-Sullivan House

There is little information about the staff who worked for the Lambeths and Sullivans in the upkeep of the large house. While the stories of the staff do not directly tie into the historical significance of the Lambeth-Sullivan House, any information is valuable in adding to the context of the race and class structures in Charlotte.

In December 1932 it was reported that Lee Reid, who had worked for Charlie for the previous decade, died at home after a short illness. Reid was the son of an enslaved father who had worked for many white families in the city. He was buried in the First Presbyterian Church cemetery "in a plot reserved for members of servants of the families connected with the church."<sup>60</sup> Reid was listed in the U. S. Census and the Charlotte city directory in 1930 as part of the Lambeth household, working as a gardener. It was not uncommon for monied white families to have live-in servants; Hermitage Road neighbors having this arrangement included Stuart and Julia Cramer (Black servant Lucinda Heart), Paul and Maude Efird (Black servant George Long), Martin and Ohla "Cherry" Cannon (white gardener Lawrence Orr and wife Emma B. Orr, a housekeeper, and white governess Ethel M. Cawley), John and Una Oates (Black servant Maggie Boykin), and James and Kitty Crowell (Black servant Nora Wilson).<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 8671, Page 72; "History of White Oaks Tied to Movers and Shakers," *Charlotte Observer*, May 3, 1998.

<sup>58</sup> "SouthPark Jeweler: Forget the Hype, Come As You Are," *Charlotte Observer*, January 16, 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Mecklenburg County Deed Book 31012, Page 679.

<sup>60</sup> "Well Known Negro Dies," *Charlotte News*, December 2, 1932.

<sup>61</sup> 1930 U. S. Census; 1930 Charlotte City Directory, 712.

## Architectural Description



The Lambeth-Sullivan House is a Myers Park architectural landmark. Prominently located at the corner of Hermitage Road and Ardsley Road, the grand structure is a blend of Colonial Revival, Georgian Revival, and French Eclectic elements unusual to the neighborhood, which possesses a heavy concentration of architect-designed Colonial Revival, Bungalow, Tudor Revival, and Georgian Revival mansions dating to before World War II. The Lambeth-Sullivan House was designed by Philadelphia architect Charles Barton Keen and completed in 1927. Keen gained notice of North Carolina's business elite when he was commissioned to design Reynolda House in Winston-Salem, the Bungalow mansion and estate of R. J. and Katharine Reynolds completed in 1917.

The Lambeth-Sullivan House is indicative of the blending of eclectic and traditional architecture produced by Keen. Starting practice as the popularity of Beaux Arts design surged due to the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Keen drew from a variety of European vernacular styles to craft his aesthetic of country estates for the business elite of the Mid-Atlantic region. As architectural historian Margaret Supplee Smith noted, "His work represents a core aesthetic—sensitivity to site, integration of house and garden,

appreciation for local building materials, and restrained intermingling of colonial vernacular, Arts and Crafts, and academic tradition.”<sup>62</sup> Keen’s work in North Carolina generally embraced the more conservative nature of his Southern clients, with Colonial Revival, Georgian Revival, and (among earlier works) Bungalow styles preferred. In Charlotte, Keen also designed two other residences in addition to the Lambeth-Sullivan House—the 1920-1922 Colonial Revival renovation of a farmhouse for Robert and Daisy Hanes Lassiter (no longer extant) at 1600 West Fourth Street, and a Colonial Revival home for Howard Madison and Rosalie Tarver Wade at 530 Hermitage Road, constructed between 1928 and 1930. These two works displayed the less adventurous stylistic choices of Charlotte’s business elite for their homes, in comparison to the Lambeth-Sullivan House which historian Thomas W. Hanchett described as the best example of Keen’s “inventiveness” and willingness to work “beyond the strictures of the Georgian.”<sup>63</sup> For this reason, the Lambeth-Sullivan House stands out as an exceptional example of the range of Keen’s design ethos.

The Lambeth-Sullivan House is located on a large corner lot of 1.237 acres, with the house facing west toward Hermitage Road. A circle drive provides access to the frontage street and Ardsley Road, leading to a parking area at the front entrance of the home. The lot is shaded along its edges, with the mature trees that characteristically line the streets of Myers Park and various willow oaks and coniferous evergreens along the property lines. A large magnolia tree is located adjacent to the house at its south elevation. The backyard is enclosed with black aluminum fencing with gates flanking the front elevation of the house and tall brick walls at the side and rear property edges.

The Lambeth-Sullivan House is constructed with a steel frame, a common structural choice of Keen. The exterior sheathing is comprised of stucco applied over stone tile, a manufactured product by local producer Southern Tile and Brick. The house has an imposing primary mass two-and-a-half stories in height, five bays wide, and three bays deep. The side-gabled roof has green tile and pairs of chimneys separated by a parapet on either side. Wings extend from the side elevations—the north wing is two stories in height, three bays wide, and has a green tile gambrel roof; while the south wing is a one-story square solarium with a balustrade along the edge of its flat roof. The rear of the house features a cross-gabled wing with a centered chimney and unusual curvilinear parapet. A flat-roofed porch topped with wrought-iron railing is located to the right of the wing, while a flagstone patio is placed at its left. Second floor windows in the primary mass are wall dormers topped with segmented parapets.

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<sup>62</sup> Margaret Supplee Smith, “Charles Barton Keen,” *North Carolina Architects & Builders: A Biographical Dictionary* (2013), <https://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000380>, accessed February 13, 2023.

<sup>63</sup> *Legacy*, 182.





The front elevation of the Lambeth-Sullivan House projects the juxtaposition of high society formality and Southern casualness of 1920s Myers Park homes. It is rigidly symmetrical and intricately detailed, especially at the entrance bay, yet the French-style influences lend an air of country retreat. The front is five bays wide and symmetrical in its layout. The centered entrance bay features two-panel double doors with two-lite storm doors topped with a solid panel. The flanking recessed six-lite sidelights and solid panels at the base and head are separated from the door with fluted pilasters. The bullnosed stone front stoop has a segmented arch and wrought iron railing at either side. Large brackets with curved profiles support the flat segmented balcony overhead, which has a wrought-iron railing. Above is a 12-over-12 window, larger in size to emphasize the entrance bay, with plaster garland motif in the segmented parapet. Pairs of identical bays flank the entrance. They feature 8-over-12 windows with wood shutters at the first level and 8-over-8 windows with flower boxes at the second level. Basement fenestration is also present, hidden behind the hedges along the elevation, and features metal grate-topped lightwells with horizontal windows. The shutters are louvered with a topiary design cut out in the top panel. Metal gutters along the fascia drain into downspouts centered between each bay.





The south elevation of the Lambeth-Sullivan House continues the symmetry of the home's design. It is four bays wide and 2.5 stories in height. At its center are the paired chimney stacks, the front chimney functional, with connecting parapet, which protrudes from the elevation face. A one-story flat-roofed porch, square in plan, extends from the primary mass of the house. The porch is three bays wide on either side with evenly-spaced screened openings with T-shaped muntins and a balustrade along its roof edge. Flanking the porch are a pair of 8-light wood French doors at the left and similar doors with flanking sidelights at the right. The second level has four evenly-spaced windows—three 8-over-8 windows and one paired 6-over-6 window. The upper level has a centered single 6-over-6 window with a wide fan-shaped vent with decorative grille above, and flanking the chimney stack protrusion are quarter round windows.



The north elevation, while similarly symmetrical to its counterpart, is dominated by a two-story gambrel wing. The primary mass of the house has the same protruding chimney stacks with parapet and fenestration pattern at its top level. However, the protrusion is slightly wider with a perpendicular shoulder with slate tile. At the front are an 8-over-12 window at the first level and 8-over-8 window at the second level. The gambrel wing viewed from the front of the Lambeth-Sullivan House is three bays long and three bays wide. Its front is symmetrical with 6-over-6 windows on the first level lined up with arched recessed dormers with 6-over-6 windows. The side elevation of the gambrel wing has a centered chimney with slate-tiled shoulders. On either side, 6-over-6 windows are located on the second level while the first level has a 6-over-6 window at the right and a triple-front window with transom at the left.





The rear elevation of the Lambeth-Sullivan House deviates from the rigid symmetry of the front and side elevations, though not dramatically. A cross-gabled wing with centered chimney and curvilinear parapet projects from the center of the primary mass. The wing is three bays wide with fenestration flanking the chimney on each level—6-over-9 windows on the first level, 6-over-6 windows on the second level, and small 4-light casement windows at the top level. These window placements repeat on the left elevation of this wing, while on the right elevation only the second level window is the same. The left and right portions of the rear elevation are symmetrical in their upper fenestration—pairs of 6-over-6 windows in segmented-parapet wall dormers at the second level, and two shed dormers, the outer dormers recessed with 6-over-6 windows and the inner dormers having small 4-light casement windows, at the top level. The left portion has a trio of French doors, the center pair operable, leading to an uncovered flagstone patio. The right portion features a flat-roofed porch with wrought iron balustrade and square-section posts. At right is a half-light door flanked by 6-light casement windows, while to the left is a 6-over-6 window adjacent to a 12-light door in the right elevation of the cross-gable wing.

The rear elevation of the gambrel wing is flush with the primary mass. The first level has three bays with paired 6-over-9 windows, a small 6-light casement window, and an arched French door with sidelights under a segmented hood. The second level has two recessed dormers matching those on the front of the gambrel wing.





There are two non-contributing buildings or structures on the property of the Lambeth-Sullivan House. The first is an in-ground swimming pool, installed in 2017. The second is a hip-roofed garden shed, constructed in 2018.





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