

Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House Landmark Designation Report

801 E. Eighth Street, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County

*Prepared by Cynthia de Miranda, MdM Historical Consultants, Durham, NC
April 27, 2023, updated by HLC staff June 26, 2023*

General Information

<i>Property Name:</i>	Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House
<i>Street Address:</i>	801 E. Eighth Street, Charlotte, NC 28202
<i>PIN:</i>	08010208
<i>Current Owner:</i>	Joyce Zimmerman
<i>Current owner mailing address:</i>	801 E. Eighth Street, Charlotte, NC 28202
<i>Appraised Value of the property:</i>	\$611,100.00 (2023 Real Estate Assessed Value)
<i>Date of original construction:</i>	ca. 1910
<i>Dates of additions/alterations/move:</i>	ca. 1929; ca. 1950; ca. 1960; moved, rehabilitated 1979

Summary of Significance

The Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House is a rare surviving dwelling from the twentieth-century Black First Ward neighborhood, which was destroyed by a 1970s urban renewal project. In the middle decades of the twentieth century, Black homeowners and renters lived in First Ward, also home to Black businesses, schools, and churches. Residents were professionals, blue-collar workers, and business owners. The urban renewal project resulted in displacement of residents and demolition of most of the houses. After protests and legal action from members of the First Ward community, this house was moved and rehabilitated rather than razed. The house is also notable for its association with Dr. Rudolph Wyche, a second-generation physician who saw patients in Charlotte and was active in the Civil Rights movement locally and statewide. He and his family owned and lived in the house from 1934 through 1960.

Reason for proposing Landmark designation

The property is being proposed for Landmark Designation because there are so few remaining resources that reflect the history and built environment of the twentieth-century First Ward neighborhood, a vibrant African American neighborhood that was destroyed by urban renewal redevelopment.

Boundary Description and Elements Proposed for Designation

The boundary for the proposed designation is the entire parcel associated with 801 E. Eighth Street, identified by PIN 08010208. The only element included for designation is the exterior of the house. The interior is not being proposed for designation, nor is the 2018 metal outbuilding also on the parcel.

Digital photographs



*Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House, façade and east elevation, looking NW
801 E. Eighth Street, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, April 2023*



*Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House, west elevation, looking E
801 E. Eighth Street, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, April 2023*



*Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House, oblique view of rear and east elevations, looking SE
801 E. Eighth Street, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, April 2023*



*Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House, east side of rear elevation, looking S
801 E. Eighth Street, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, April 2023*



*Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House and north side of E. Eighth Street, looking NW along the 700 block
801 E. Eighth Street, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, April 2023*



*Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House, eave detail at west side, looking NE
801 E. Eighth Street, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, April 2023*

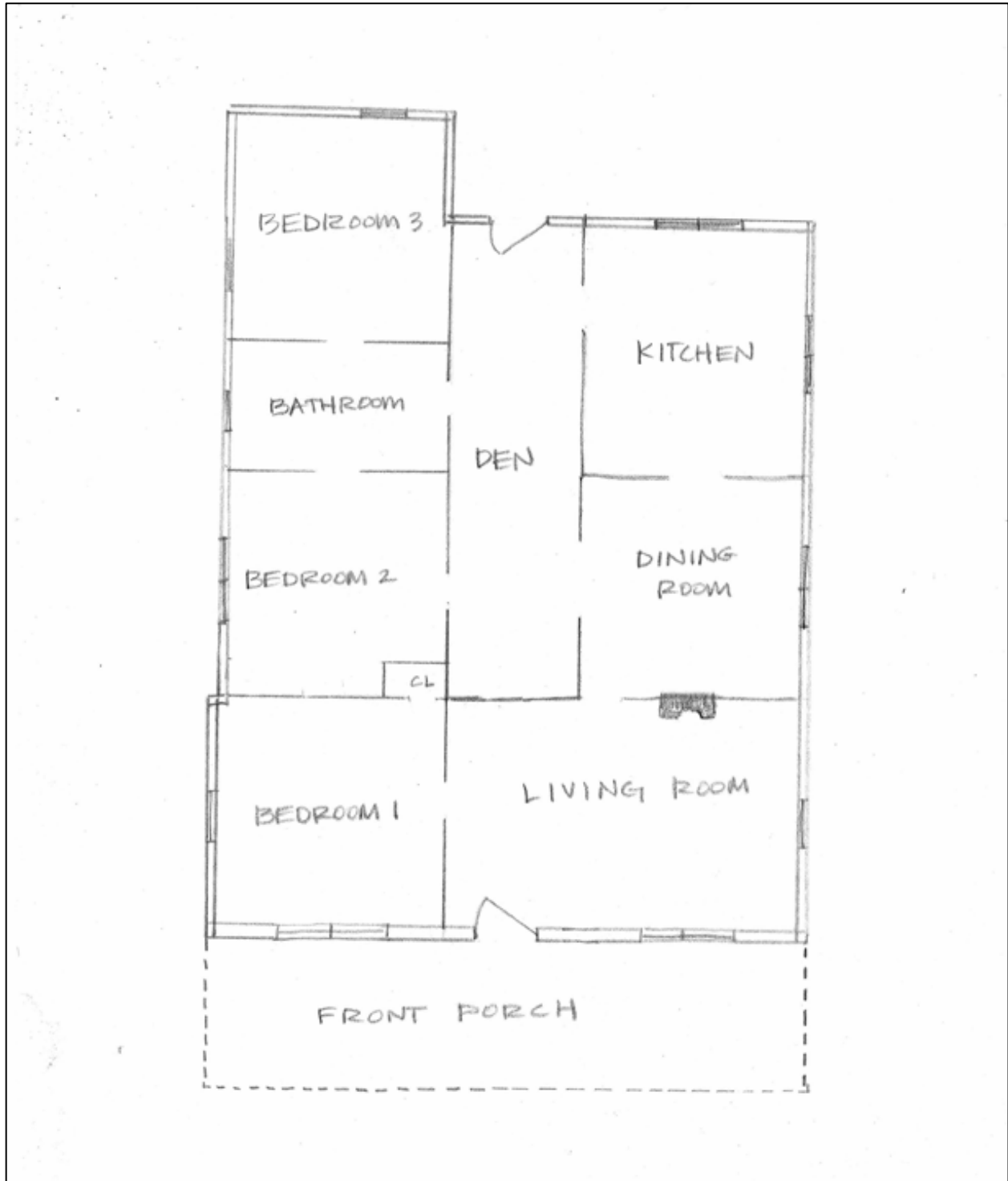


*Outbuilding behind the Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House, looking NE
801 E. Eighth Street, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, April 2023*



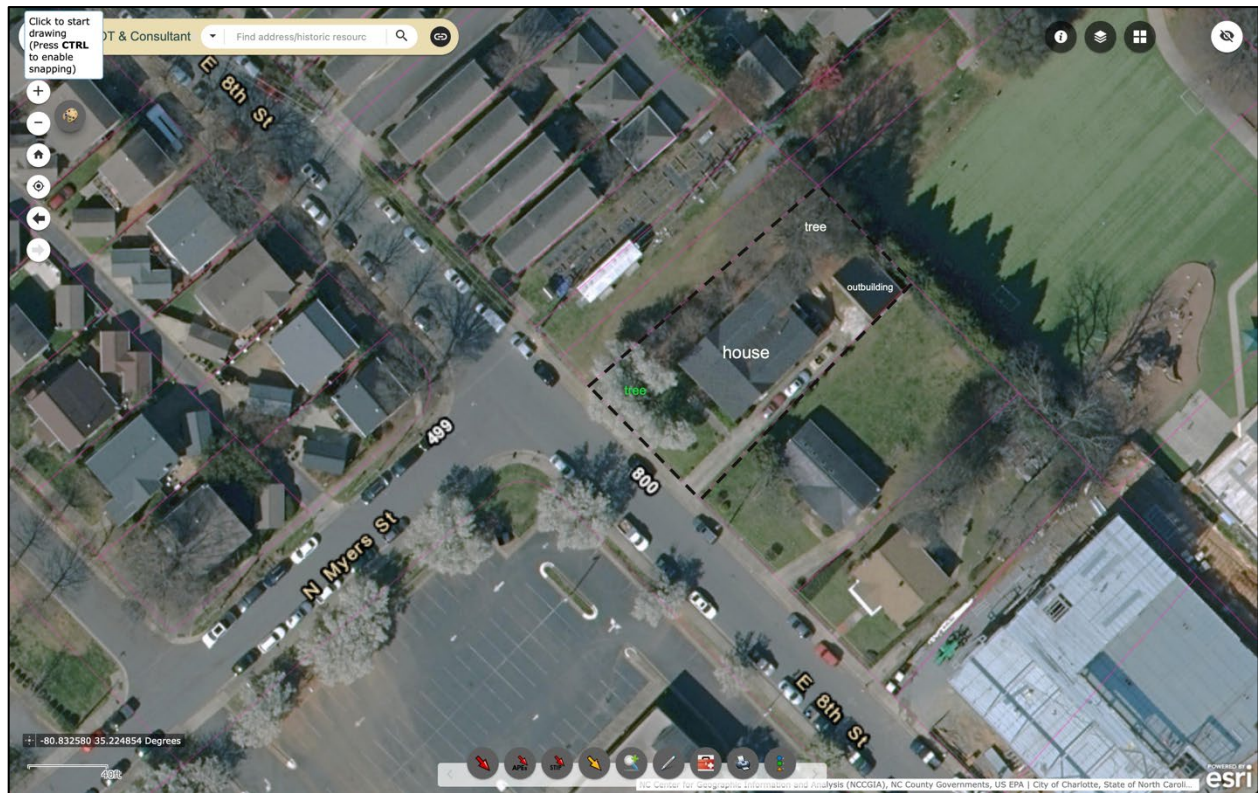
*Previous location of the Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House, looking SW
600 block E. Ninth Street, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, April 2023*

Floor Plan



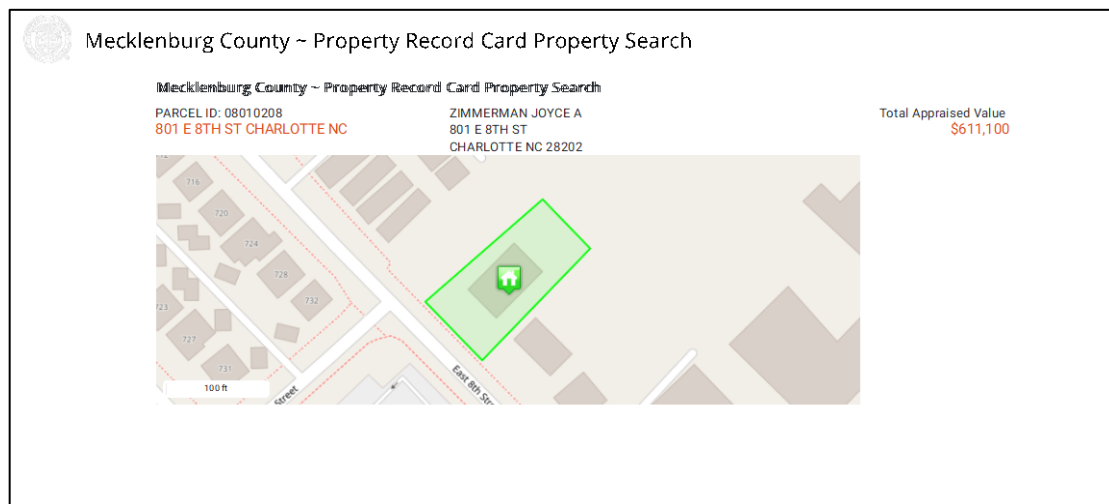
*Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House Floor Plan (not to scale)
Adapted from a sketch drawn by memory by former resident Dianne Wyche*

Site plan



*Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House Site Plan and Proposed Landmark Boundary
Proposed boundary marked with dashed black line. Created from HPO Web by the author, April 2023*

Tax map, including assessment



Printed from the Mecklenburg County Property Information System, April 27, 2023

Chain of Title for both locations

620 E. Ninth Street

1910: City directories indicate the house was built in 1910; Initial deeds not located.

1934: Mutual Building & Loan Association to Helen and Harold B. Johnston, DB 844, page 173, November 8, 1934.

1934: Helen and Harold B. Johnston to Kellene Lewis Wyche, DB860, page 192, December 15, 1934.

1943: Kellene L. Wyche wills house to her husband Rudolph M. Wyche.

1960: Carolyn W. and Rudolph M. Wyche to Fannie P. and Sidney S. Dobson, DB2124, page 89, January 6, 1960. The Wyches then moved to the house they had built for themselves at 1713 Oaklawn Avenue in McCrorey Heights.

1976: City of Charlotte condemns the property and compensates Fannie P. Dobson \$24,000, DB 3903 page 890, December 20, 1976.

801 E. Eighth Street

1980 February 21: City of Charlotte and Housing Authority of City of Charlotte purchased the parcel for \$31,000.

1980: Housing Authority of City of Charlotte to James Edward McCoy and Joyce A. McCoy, DB 4319 page 814, July 16, 1980.

Narrative History

The long history of the Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House reflects a number of trends in the evolution of First Ward, including the shifting racial make-up of residential blocks in the early twentieth century; the evolution of the area into a vibrant Black neighborhood in the middle decades of the twentieth century; redlining and rezoning that led to real estate disinvestment in the same period; urban renewal projects in the 1960s and 1970s that led to massive demolition; and neighborhood advocacy in the same period resulting in early historic preservation efforts.

The first owner has not been identified. The house is known to have stood originally on the 600 block of E. Ninth Street. The dwelling's initial address of 610 E. Ninth Street first appears in city directories in 1910. The house was listed as vacant that year, and deeds from that period have not been found for the original parcel to determine the owner at the time. The 1911 city directory lists Mamie and Charles C. Teague as residents; Charles worked as a manager at Charlotte Steam Laundry. The white couple had been living with their four young children in a rented house on the 400 block of E. Ninth Street in 1910, when Charles was employed as a driver, according to the federal census. They likely rented their new home at 610 E. Ninth Street as well, as the Teagues do not appear in the grantee index to Mecklenburg County Deeds in the period. All residents of the block were white in 1911.¹

¹ *Walsh's Charlotte, North Carolina, City Directories for 1909-1910* (Charleston: Walker, Evans, and Cogswell Company, 1909, 1910) viewed online at DigitalNC.org on January 9, 2023; *Charlotte, North Carolina, City Directory*

The 1911 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Charlotte shows the footprint of the house as being roughly rectangular with a short wing extending from the west third of the rear elevation. This is consistent with the current roof plan of the house, which consists of a single-pile, side-gabled section at the front and parallel end-gabled wings extending to the rear. A flat-roofed section connects the two parallel wings. According to the 1911 map, then, the west end-gabled wing was longer than the east wing and the flat-roofed center rear section. The latter two were the same length. The 1911 map also shows full-width front and back porches that extended the living space with covered outdoor areas. By the time of the 1929 Sanborn, the footprint had changed: the east two thirds of the rear porch appears to be enclosed, while the west end of the back porch has been removed, resulting in a flush rear elevation with no porch. A photograph that likely dates to the late 1940s or very early 1950s shows this condition. The end-gabled east wing is shown for the first time on the 1929 Sanborn as slightly inset from the east side of the front of the house, but that seems likely to be a correction of the 1911 map rather than an addition to the house.²

The first identified mention of the house and lot in deeds was in 1934, when the Mutual Building and Loan Association sold it to Helen and Harold B. Johnston, a white couple. Harold was at the time a clerk at Rosich's Grocery, and the couple was living on Nation's Ford Road, according to the 1934 city directory. That directory also listed Harry L. Kerr, a salesman, and Alfred M. Patterson, a carpenter, as living at 620 E Ninth Street. All residents of the block were still white.³

On December 15, 1934, a month after their purchase, the Johnstons sold to Kellene Lewis Wyche (1903-1943). Mrs. Wyche assumed the loan of the Johnstons in the amount of \$2,462.50. Unfortunately, neither of these deeds mentioned earlier records relating to the house or lot. Both deeds describe the parcel as "the eastern half of Lot 5 Block 101 according to Butler's map of the City of Charlotte," and list the address as 610 and 620, respectively. Kellene's husband, Dr. Rudolph M. Wyche (1900-1973) is not included on the deed.⁴

The couple had married in 1930 in Kellene's hometown of Washington, D.C., where Rudolph had attended Howard University. In the early 1930s, they lived at 705 E. Ninth Street (not extant), a block of all Black residents. The 800 and 900 blocks were also populated with Black residents, but the flanking blocks on the street were white. In the 1934 and 1935 city

1911 (Asheville: Piedmont Directory Company, 1911) viewed online at DigitalNC.org on January 9, 2023; Ancestry.com, *1910 United States Federal Census* [database on-line] (Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006), viewed online at Ancestry.com on January 9, 2023.

² Digital Sanborn Maps (1867-1970) for North Carolina, viewed online March 16, 2023 at ncline.org; Photographs in the personal collection of Dianne Wyche.

³ Mutual Building & Loan Association to Harold B. and Helen Johnston, November 8, 1934, Mecklenburg County Deeds Book 844, page 173; *Hill's Charlotte (Mecklenburg County, NC) City Directory* (Richmond: Hill Directory Co., 1934). All deeds in this report were viewed online at www.meckrohistorical.com.

⁴ Johnstons to Rudolph and Kellene Wyche, December 15, 1934, Mecklenburg County Deed Book 860, page 192; Ancestry.com, *North Carolina, U.S., Death Certificates, 1909-1976* [database on-line], Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2007.

directories, Dr. and Mrs. Wyche are listed at 417-1/2 E. Second Street, the same address as his medical office (not extant). City directories do not list the Wyches living in the house on E. Ninth Street until 1936. In 1935, the block was still populated only with white residents. In 1936, however, five of the nineteen addresses on the 600 block had Black residents listed as head of household, including the Wyches' house at 620 E. Ninth Street. One of the nineteen houses was vacant. The block remained racially mixed through the 1940s, and most Black residents in the 600 block were owners, unlike the white residents of the block. Blocks west of the 600 block were all-white.⁵

Kellene Wyche was a school teacher and a ballet dancer; she had a dance studio in a building that stood in the back yard at 620 E. Ninth Street. Kellene and Rudolph had a daughter, Alice Lewis Wyche, later Hurley (1934-2021). Dr. Rudolph Wyche was a second-generation physician, a son of Ethel J. Wyche and Dr. Allen A. Wyche (1865-1914). Dr. Allen Wyche practiced in Charlotte from the 1890s; he started the Queen City Medical and Pharmaceutical Society (later the Charlotte Medical Society) and lived and worked in Second Ward, another early twentieth-century Black neighborhood. (See context below for more on Dr. Rudolph Wyche.)⁶

Kellene died in October 1943 of a heart-valve defect for which surgical repair did not yet exist. She left the house to Rudolph in her will, who continued living there. In November 1944, Dr. Wyche married Carolyne Welborne Wyche (1924-2010), a Salisbury native and a nurse trained at Good Samaritan Hospital in Charlotte. They had a daughter, Fannye Dianne Wyche, the following year, and made an addition to the house soon after 1950 to extend the east rear wing to the south to enlarge the bedroom there. The couple sold the house in 1960 to Fannie P. and Sidney S. Dobson and the family moved to a house they built in McCrorey Heights at 1713 Oaklawn Avenue. Dianne Wyche now owns that house.⁷

The Wyches knew the Dobsons, as Kellene Wyche and Fannie Dobson were both elementary school teachers in Charlotte's Black schools. In 1941, Kellene Wyche taught second grade at Isabelle Wyche School and Fannie Partee (not yet married) taught third grade at Fairview School. There were a number of teachers among the women in Rudolph Wyche's family as well. Fannie Partee Dobson (1890-1978) was a daughter of Rev. Dr. William Eugene Partee Sr. (1860-1948), a Presbyterian minister and theology professor at Johnson C. Smith University from 1912-1932. He was also an alumnus of the university when it was still known as Biddle

⁵ Ancestry.com, *U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line] (Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011); Ancestry.com, *Washington, D.C., U.S., Marriage Records, 1810-1953* [database on-line] (Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016).

⁶ Ancestry.com, *North Carolina, U.S., Deaths, 1906-1930* [database on-line] (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014); Dianne Wyche, interview with the author, March 17, 2023.

⁷ Cohn, Lawrence H et al, "Evolution of the concept and practice of mitral valve repair," *Annals of cardiothoracic surgery* vol. 4, 4 (2015): 315-21; Ancestry.com, *North Carolina, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1665-1998* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015; Ancestry.com, *Web: Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, U.S., Marriage Index, 1829-2015* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015; Dianne Wyche, interview with the author; Carolyne W. and Rudolph M. Wyche to Fannie P. and Sidney S. Dobson, Mecklenburg County Deed Book 2124, page 89, January 6, 1960, viewed online March 3, 2023; <https://mccrorey.historysouth.org/1713-oaklawn-avenue/>, viewed online March 3, 2023.

University. Fannie lived on the campus of the university for a time. After years teaching at Fairview, she also taught at Alexander Street School, another local elementary school. Her husband Sidney Sebastian Dobson (1881-1972), whom she married in 1955, was a carpenter. Dianne Wyche recalls that Fannie Dobson was a well-respected teacher in the community.⁸

Beginning in 1971, an urban renewal project in First Ward resulted in the destruction of much of the housing that had been built early in the century and had been home to Black Charlotteans for decades (see separate urban renewal context below). Some residents sued and eventual settlements required the city to save some of the buildings and rehabilitate them as part of the housing redevelopment. This was one of the houses that the city condemned in 1976 in order to move and rehabilitate. The city purchased it from Fannie Dobson, widowed since 1972. At some point after selling, Fannie Dobson moved to Greensboro, where a niece lived. She died there in 1978, but she was buried in York Memorial Park in Charlotte with her parents.⁹

In 1979, the city moved the house to a parcel at 801 E. Eighth Street and rehabilitated it before selling to Joyce Zimmerman McCoy and her husband James McCoy. The rehabilitation included removing all the original wood windows and replacing those in the living spaces with smaller, simulated-divided light versions in the same openings, adjusted for the new size. The windows in the dormer were removed and replaced with vents. Vinyl siding was added over the original weatherboards, and some of the decorative detail from the ends of the side-gabled front section of the house were removed. The house was moved with the porch roof but not with the posts, railing, or floor. The original porch posts, however, were re-installed on new brick piers that replicated the appearance of the original. The original wood porch railing had been replaced with wrought iron before the move, around 1960, and the city installed a basic wood porch rail with pickets during the rehabilitation. Joyce Zimmerman still lives in the house today. She reports that the only exterior alteration she has made has been the ca. 1990 installation of a turned balustrade at the porch, between the brick porch piers. The other houses moved along with this house have since been demolished.¹⁰

⁸ Dianne Wyche, interview with the author; Ancestry.com, *North Carolina, U.S., Death Indexes, 1908-2004* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2007; "Rev. William Eugene Partee", *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 4, 1948; Ancestry.com, *U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line], Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; Ancestry.com, *U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line], Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

⁹ "Mrs. Fannie Dobson," *Charlotte News*, January 31, 1978; "Dr. Harold Smith Partee," *Charlotte Observer*, March 19, 1964.

¹⁰ Housing Authority of City of Charlotte to James Edward McCoy and Joyce A. McCoy, Mecklenburg County Deed Book 4319 page 814, July 16, 1980, viewed online March 3, 2023; Joyce Zimmerman, interview with the author April 26, 2023.

Context: Association with Dr. Rudolph M. Wyche

Dr. Rudolph Melville Wyche (1900-1973) lived in this house with his family from 1936 through 1960. During that time, he was married to Kellene Lewis Wyche (1903-1943) and, after her death, to Carolyn Welborne Wyche (1924-2010). Kellene Wyche had purchased the house in 1934 and left it to her husband in her will. Rudolph and Carolyn were married in 1944. The 1950 federal census lists the couple living in the house with Rudolph Wyche's daughters Alice Lewis Wyche, age 15, Fannye Dianne Wyche, age 4, his sister-in-law Fannye Welborne Kelsey, age 28, and his cousin Bernice E. Hirdgill, age 22.¹¹

Wyche attended Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte and then Howard University School of Medicine in Washington, D.C. He was a second-generation doctor, following his father Dr. Allen A. Wyche (1865-1914), who began practicing medicine in Charlotte in the 1890s, into the field. Additionally, both were active in Civil Rights activities. Where the elder Dr. Wyche and his generation focused on creating health care infrastructure for Blacks shut out of white facilities, the younger Dr. Wyche and his generation pursued integration.¹²

Rudolph Wyche was active in the Old North State Medical Society (ONSMS), established by his father's generation because Black doctors were denied membership in the then all-white North Carolina Medical Society (NCMS). The ONSMS gave Black doctors an outlet for continuing education, networking, and socializing with other Black doctors across the state, since they did not have access to those activities through NCMS. The inability to join the NCMS also excluded Black doctors from membership in the American Medical Association (AMA), often a requirement for getting credentialed to work in de-facto white hospitals in that period. This limited professional opportunities for Black doctors as well as blocked their ability to admit their patients to those hospitals. Good Samaritan Hospital served Charlotte's Black community in this period, but the facility was chronically underfunded. Thus, the NCMS policy limited access to certain levels of care for Black patients. In 1951, the ONSMS petitioned the NCMS to change their bylaws to allow non-white members; the NCMS did not. In 1952, the ONSMS requested that the AMA accept the ONSMS as a constituent association, which would allow membership in ONSMS to qualify doctors for membership in the AMA; the AMA did not grant the status. Rudolph Wyche was president of the ONSMS in 1954, when the NCMS agreed to allow limited, called "scientific," membership to Black doctors, enabling them to attain membership in the AMA but still barring them from then all-white NCMS social events. Wyche accepted the limited membership, wanting full membership for Black doctors but knowing that limited membership would improve health outcomes for Black patients. An editorial critical of the decision not to hold out for full membership ran in the *Carolina Times*, the Black-owned

¹¹ Ancestry.com, 1950 United States Federal Census [database on-line], Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2022.

¹² Biographical information on Dr. Rudolph Wyche is at the entry for his McCrorey Heights house at Tom Hanchett's HistorySouth website viewed March 10, 2023, at <https://mccrorey.historysouth.org/1713-oaklawn-avenue/>.

weekly newspaper published in Durham, but Wyche stood by his choice to do what he could for patients.¹³

Wyche's desire for full equality is reflected in his participation in efforts at integrating recreational facilities in Charlotte. He was among the group of Black city residents who fought for the integration of Bonnie Brae, the municipal golf course at Revolution Park. The group initially tried to play a round at the course in December 1951. They were denied access, as expected, but the action initiated what would be six years of legal challenges to the whites-only policy of park use there. Finally, in January 1957, as a direct result of the men trying to play in 1951, the city integrated the course for good. In the first six months of 1957, following integration, the number of players and the income from greens fees increased over the same period in the previous year.¹⁴

Wyche acted as the university physician for his undergraduate alma mater Johnson C. Smith University from 1952 until he resigned in 1968. His resignation came amid student protests calling for his dismissal following a student's loss of sight in one eye at a football game. Students claimed the student should have been seen at a hospital and blamed Wyche for the loss of sight. Wyche maintained that the student's game injury resulted in damage to the eye that impacted his sight.¹⁵

Wyche's participation in medicine in Charlotte, both as a practitioner and in professional organizations, improved health care for Blacks in the city in the middle decades of the twentieth century. His involvement in local civil rights efforts resulted in the integration of the public golf course and reflected an expansion of outdoor recreational opportunities for Black residents at the mid-twentieth century. While a second family home associated with Dr. Wyche also exists, the significant events described above all occurred while the Wyche family lived in the Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House.

¹³ Cobb, W. M., "The Hospital Integration Story in Charlotte, North Carolina," *Journal of the National Medical Association* vol. 56, 3 (1964): 226-9; "Diversity in the Medical Society," Sidebar in the 2004 NCMS brochure "150 Years of Leadership: The History of the North Carolina Medical Society's Pioneering Physician Leaders," viewed online on March 10, 2023, at https://ncmedsoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/NCMS_history_brochure1.pdf; Harriet A. Washington, et al, "Segregation, Civil Rights, and Health Disparities: The Legacy of African American Physicians and Organized Medicine, 1910-1968," *Journal of the National Medical Association* vol.101,6 (2009): 514; Phoebe Ann Pollitt, *African American Hospitals in North Carolina: 39 Institutional Histories, 1880-1967* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2017), 60-65; "NC Medical Society's Racial Bars are Down," *Charlotte Observer*, June 13, 1956; "A Salute to Negro Labor," *Carolina Times*, July 28, 1956; "Negro Doctors Oppose Bias Society: Editorial in Times Raises Ire of Medics," *Carolina Times*, August 4, 1956.

¹⁴ "Golf Course Case Starts," *Charlotte News*, Jan 17, 1955; "Charlotte Negroes Lose Court Battle, Tribunal not to Rule on Reverter," *Charlotte News*, March 6, 1956; "Golf Links are Opened to Negroes," *Charlotte Observer*, January 9, 1957; "Bonnie Brae Has Increase In Play," *Charlotte News*, July 19, 1957.

¹⁵ "Smith U. Action Called Ill-Advised," *Charlotte News*, October 7, 1968.

Context: First Ward Urban Renewal and Community Reaction

Thomas W. Hanchett's excellent history of a century of development in Charlotte, *Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) provides historical narrative for the initial residential development of First Ward, its shift to a Black neighborhood, and the various federally-backed development projects that contributed both to disinvestment in the area and ultimately to the removal of housing. This context augments that history with additional primary source material.

Initial Development and Change in First Ward

From the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the City of Charlotte centered on the intersection of Tryon and Trade streets, which followed the paths of Native American trading routes. Streets were arranged in a grid pattern laid parallel to each of these two main roadways, neatly dividing the city into four quarters, or wards. Using the 1875 Beers map of Charlotte and early city directories, Hanchett found that the residential development in Charlotte was not organized to separate people by race or class at that time. The northeast quadrant of the Charlotte grid, the First Ward, was sparsely populated beyond the 400 block of E. Ninth Street in 1875, but would become the first location of a rental house that would later be home to the Wyche family in the 600 block of E. Ninth Street in 1910.¹⁶

As Charlotte grew, housing patterns grew more segregated. Maps produced in the first half of the twentieth century by the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Company show the physical growth of the city. The 1911 Sanborn map is the first year to show more than the first two blocks of E. Ninth Street. The 600 block was fully developed on both the north and south sides of the street in that year with one- and two-story houses sporting front and sometimes rear porches. The street was built out as far east as N. McDowell Street, or the 800 block, before being interrupted by a creek running through the area between McDowell and Stevens streets. E. Ninth Street picked up again east of Stevens Street, and was residential but more sparsely developed there. Houses in the 700 and 800 blocks were generally smaller than those on the 600 block, more often with a single story and smaller footprints.¹⁷

By comparing the Sanborn maps with city directories, as Hanchett did, we can get a picture of shifting housing patterns. The 1910 City Directory indicates just a single Black household in eight full blocks of residential development on E. Ninth Street. At that time, Rudolph Wyche was nine years old and lived with his parents at 411 S. Caldwell Street (not extant) in Second Ward. Most of S. Caldwell Street then was lined with Black households, with the exception of the 100 block and the 1000 through 1300 blocks. Hanchett observes that "By the 1920s Charlotte had clearly sorted out into a city of separate neighborhoods sharply defined by race

¹⁶ Thomas W. Hanchett, *Sorting out the New South City: Race Class and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 30, 38-42.

¹⁷ Digital Sanborn Maps (1867-1970) for North Carolina, viewed online March 16, 2023 at ncline.org.

and by class” and that “...as late as the mid-1930s downtown’s First Ward and Second Ward (Brooklyn) remained the center of black residence.”¹⁸

These lines could shift over time, as was the case along E. Ninth Street. City directories show that, while the street was built out through the 800 block and nearly all-white in 1910, by the mid-1930s the 700, 800, and 900 blocks were populated with Black households. A decade later, the line between Black and white had shifted another block west. Kellene and Rudolph Wyche had moved from the 700 block of E. Ninth to the house she purchased at 620 E. Ninth Street in this period, apparently moving in where white renters vacated. Because the 1946 city directory also indicates which houses are owner-occupied, it is evident that home ownership was higher among the Black households than the white households on the mixed E. Ninth Street blocks in that year.¹⁹

At this point, federal and local programs and policy began to create disinvestment in these wards. The 1937 “Residential Security Map” created by the federal Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) rated residential sections of First and Second Wards as “Fourth Grade” housing, making the new Federal Housing Administration (FHA) home loans difficult to get for existing and new housing in those areas. Hanchett notes that “in practice only well-to-do suburbs won the coveted A rating....Districts with black residents received nothing higher than D.” In 1947, the Black and the working-class white residential sections of First Ward were zoned for industrial redevelopment, meaning any type of property could be built there, creating uncertainty about future development patterns. Hanchett reports that First and Second Wards were losing Black population by midcentury. FHA policies of reinforcing the HOLC’s prioritization of homogenous suburbs put the property-owning Black middle-class together in new suburbs, while public housing put low-income Black renters together, but all segregated from whites of any income level. First Ward did not empty completely, however. By 1955, city directories had stopped identifying residents by race, but E. Ninth Street still appeared to be fully populated.²⁰

Urban Renewal and Community Reaction in First Ward

Hanchett’s study traces the history of urban renewal efforts in Charlotte. While the decentralized federal program’s “original stated goal was to improve housing for low-income Americans,” Hanchett chronicles how changes to the program enabled Charlotte officials to employ it as “a powerful tool to clear land and convert it to whatever local politicians deemed ‘a better use.’” Charlotte’s first project in the late 1960s in the historically Black Brooklyn neighborhood of Second Ward “made no pretense at creating better quarters for residents.” Rather, the project destroyed the residential neighborhood and replaced it with Government Plaza, a city park, and roadway improvements that connected downtown with wealthier white

¹⁸ Charlotte City Directories viewed online at DigitalNC at www.lib.digitalnc.org on March 16, 2023; Ancestry.com, 1910 United States Federal Census [database on-line], Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006; 1910 City Directory); Hanchett 203, 235.

¹⁹ Charlotte City Directories, viewed online.

²⁰ Hanchett, *Sorting out the New South City*, 230, 235-236, 247.

neighborhoods on the east side of town. The project demolished hundreds of residential structures and built none.²¹

First Ward had already seen demolition in the mid-1960s when the city's Housing Authority cleared several blocks around Sixth, Myers, Eighth, and Caldwell streets to build the Earle Village public housing project using funding that was not part of the urban renewal program. As that work was getting underway, the city began planning a redevelopment project using federal urban renewal funds in the rest of First Ward, deemed by the local press to be the most blighted part of town. Conditions cited in the paper included overcrowding, substandard housing, and insufficient infrastructure. The *Charlotte Observer* noted that the anticipated project, pending final approval in 1973 by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), would include "buying and clearing the 141.7 acres and relocating the 222 families, 145 other individuals and 57 businesses now occupying the area" north of E. Trade and east of N. College Street that surrounded Earle Village. The plans had the effect of reducing incentive for landlords to maintain the housing in the project area.²²

In 1970, a couple of residents and a business owner from First Ward and the Greenville neighborhood, along with the Charlotte Fair Housing Association, filed a lawsuit against HUD and the city on the grounds that the urban renewal projects' failure to relocate appropriately residents and businesses violated the federal Housing Act and the U.S. Constitution. By acquiring existing housing without providing equivalent replacement, the lawsuit charged, the defendants were depriving people in the target areas, who were low-income and non-white, of equal protection under the law in violation of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. A similar 1973 lawsuit would later be combined with this complaint. The lawsuits resulted in years of stop-and-start action on the project: a 1972 injunction against demolition, a 1973 settlement allowing work to proceed but requiring the city to provide "adequate housing" for those displaced, allegations that the settlement was not being followed, and another injunction in 1975. U.S. District Judge James. B. McMillan noted in the 1975 injunction order that ten thousand housing units had been demolished in Charlotte since 1963 with few replacements that were affordable to low- and moderate-income people. He determined that the city did not have a good plan for displaced residents.²³

Fannie Dobson, like many of her neighbors, was caught in the middle in her well-kept sixty-year-old house at 620 E. Ninth Street. As a homeowner, she could make the choice to maintain her house; renters did not have that option. But she and over four hundred other people faced displacement on an unknown timeline. The stress and fear felt by the residents and business

²¹ Hanchett, *Sorting out the New South City*, 249-250.

²² "Housing Authority Names Apartments for Edwin Jones," *Charlotte News*, June 18, 1964; "Housing Start Due Next Year," *Charlotte Observer*, October 7, 1964; "Housing Project to Honor Gluck," *Charlotte News*, November 3, 1965; "First Ward Slum Renewal Slated to Begin in '73," *Charlotte Observer*, 12 April 1973; "First Ward Residents OK Trimming of Renewal Area," *Charlotte Observer*, December 4, 1970.

²³ "2nd suit Seeks Halt to Renewal," *Charlotte Observer*, November 21, 1970; "Ban on Demolition Asked, First Ward Ruling Delayed," *Charlotte News*, May 20, 1975; "First Ward Razing Stopped," *Charlotte Observer*, December 10, 1975.

owners was intense. “Meanwhile the waiting and uncertainty are painful and confusing to people like Mr. Fanny [sic] Dobson, an 84-year old widow, who lives at 620 E 9th St., in a sturdy, well-kept house that she and her husband bought and remodeled in 1959. ‘I told them I don’t want to give up my home,’ she said last week. ‘It’s a comfortable place, and it’s mine. I’m not sure when they are planning to take it.’” Mitchell Kannon, owner of a dry cleaning business who was a plaintiff in the lawsuit, blamed a heart attack on the displacement aspect of redevelopment, and Fannie Dobson’s friend Flora Franklin died suddenly in Mrs. Dobson’s house during the turmoil. Mrs. Franklin’s lawyer attributed the stress of the process as a contributing factor in her death.²⁴

In March, 1975, before the second injunction, Charlotte City Council had voted to purchase ten houses in First Ward for rehabilitation rather than demolition, moving the houses into a “landscaped neighborhood...created for First Ward residents.” The *Charlotte Observer* quoted city officials as calling the vote a “significant first” in deciding to improve the houses rather than demolish them. While the initiative did not appear to involve urban renewal funds, keeping it separate from the contentious project even though it was in the same geographic area, it did acknowledge a break from the usual mode. The paper stated that “the city’s approach to housing in urban renewal communities has been to buy and demolish substandard houses and to relocate the residents outside the communities.” The paper also reported that the current residents would be given priority to retain the houses. In December 1975, Judge McMillan’s injunction order would also cite the trend of purchasing housing and removing it from the rental market as a contributor to a significant housing shortage for low-income people in Charlotte.²⁵

The city’s plan to rehabilitate ten houses in First Ward was clearly a reaction to the criticism over past urban renewal operation and perhaps an effort to stave off additional demolition bans. In 1976, the city condemned Fannie Dobson’s house in order to purchase it as one of the ten houses to be rehabilitated. The 1975 injunction was lifted in 1977 after a settlement in which the city agreed, among other things, to build housing for people who could not afford public housing and to rehabilitate 20 housing units in 1978. The city lagged behind on the schedule, and in early 1979 relocated Dobson’s house and four others to E. Eighth Street.²⁶

Newspaper editorials decried the program, citing the high cost of rehabilitation compared to the cost of new construction. One article profiled the five houses being moved, referring to them as “the Gilded Houses of Eighth Street.” The paper calculated that the cost of purchasing, moving, and rehabilitating the dwellings was greater than it could recoup given rules governing eligibility for the housing. Nowhere in the editorial was an assessment of the diminished value

²⁴ “First Ward Residents Bitter over Redevelopment Upset,” *Charlotte Observer*, December 23, 1974.

²⁵ “City Votes to Fix Up 1st Ward,” *Charlotte Observer*, March 11, 1975; “First Ward Razing Stopped,” *Charlotte Observer*, December 10, 1975.

²⁶ “Agreement on 1st Ward is Reached,” *Charlotte Observer*, November 23, 1977; “Eighth Street Update: There’s more to these houses than meets the eye,” *Charlotte News*, February 23, 1979; “6 houses moved, 1 OK’d, 1 to go on East Eighth Street,” *Charlotte News*, May 11, 1979.

resulting from years of disinvestment following housing and planning policy that did not place value on the homes of the less well-off or the non-white population of the city.²⁷

In 1980, Joyce Zimmerman McCoy and her husband James McCoy bought the house from the city. Joyce admired the style of the house, and James recalled that it had been the home of Dr. Rudolph Wyche. Joyce Zimmerman recalled recently that at least two other houses moved and rehabilitated by the city were also homes of Black doctors. The city's system for determining which houses to move and rehabilitate has not been determined for this report, but the logical choices would have been well maintained owner-occupied dwellings. Whether the homes of prominent residents were favored over others has not been determined.²⁸

With the sole exception of the Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House, the dwellings moved and rehabilitated by the city due to community reaction to urban renewal no longer survive. They were demolished before 1996, after Earle Village was redeveloped in the early 1990s. Once again, First Ward residents were promised housing in the new mixed-income development, known as First Ward Place, but only 44 of 400 Earl Village families moved into First Ward Place. Joyce Zimmerman has steadfastly refused to sell her home.²⁹

Architectural Description and Integrity Evaluation

Architectural Description

In its second location, at 801 E. Eighth Street, the Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House stands high above the street, set back behind a lawn dotted with mature trees and modest landscaping. A concrete walk leads from the paved driveway on the right to the centered red-brick steps rising to the front porch. A mature tree shades the rear yard as well, but the rear yard is much smaller than at the E. Ninth Street location. The front yard, in contrast, is larger. Although the house faces southwest, descriptions here are written as if the façade faced south for clarity.

The single-story, vernacular, frame dwelling dates to the earliest years of the twentieth-century. It has much in common with the simple mill houses built in Charlotte in the period, including its single-story height, full-width front porch, and gabled roof forms. The house is three bays wide and three rooms deep, including two rooms enlarged by enclosure of the rear porch. One of those two was later enlarged again with a small addition. There are two rooms across the front of the house, as the centered front door opens directly to the living room.

The house has a side-gabled roof over the front rooms and parallel gabled wings for the back rooms. Those are joined at their interior parallel sides under a flat roof. A shed-roofed dormer is at the front roof slope, and a full-width front porch spans the façade. The porch roof was moved with the house in 1979 and the porch superstructure was built on site at that time. The

²⁷ "Community Development: Providing Housing on the Gold Standard," *Charlotte News*, December 12, 1978.

²⁸ Joyce Zimmerman, interview with the author, April 26, 2023.

²⁹ Aerial photographs viewed online at <https://timemachine.mcmap.org/> on March 15, 2023; "FAQ City: What Happened to Charlotte's Earle Village?," *wfae.org*, viewed online April 25, 2023 at <https://www.wfae.org/local-news/2018-10-09/faq-city-what-happened-to-charlottes-earle-village>; Zimmerman interview.

battered posts on brick piers that support the porch roof are said by the owner to be the originals, removed for the relocation and reinstalled. The owner installed the turned-baluster porch rail around 1990, replacing an unremarkable wood version installed by the city during the rehabilitation in 1979. The west end-gabled section is slightly longer than the center hall and east end-gabled block, reflecting the addition made around 1950, and is inset slightly from the west side of the front section. (Note that the house faces south but faced north prior to the move; the west rear wing in this location was the east rear wing on Ninth Street). The east side of the east rear wing is continuous with the east side of the front section of the house. The continuous brick foundation under the house, like that of the porch, dates to 1979.

The dwelling's three-bay façade is symmetrical and features paired windows flanking the centered, single-leaf, front door. Windows are replacement vinyl sash with six-over-six simulated divided lights, set generally in pairs as at the façade. Windows are set singly in the gable ends of the front section of the house and in the added bedroom at the back of the west wing. The original weatherboard siding is covered with vinyl siding. The four four-light casement or hopper windows that were once in the dormer, as documented in older photos, have been removed. The dormer now has two vents in its front face and replacement siding. An original eave detail remains in the gabled ends of the front section of the house: a raking board with chamfered edges and carved ends.

The interior, which is not being designated for landmark status, was not made available for survey. However, undated family photographs provided by Dianne Wyche, who lived in the house from 1945 through 1960, reveal original details. Those photos show five-paneled doors with raised panels that are set into fluted frames with bulls-eye corner blocks. Some interior doors were French doors. The walls, likely of plaster, were wallpapered. The smooth surface of the ceilings indicate that they were likely plastered as well.³⁰

Other photos show some exterior details, including weatherboard siding and six-over-six wood sash windows. One photo appears to show additional carved decoration in the peaks of the gable ends at the front portion of the house. The earlier battered posts at the front porch appear to be more slender than the current versions. The porch balustrade appears to have consisted of wide, flat pickets between plain top and bottom rails, but an image of the house from 1974, which appeared in the newspaper, shows that the rail had been replaced by then with wrought iron, perhaps after the Dobsons bought the house in 1960. Originally, on E. Ninth Street, two concrete steps rose from the sidewalk to a wide paved front walk, which led to the half-dozen steps up to the front porch. The back door around 1950 was a fifteen-light door framed by side-lights that fill a space that was once part of the back porch. The smaller, paired kitchen windows that exist now toward the north end of the east elevation (in the new location) replaced two full-sized windows set singly to light that room. A pair of corbelled brick chimneys once rose through the rear roof slope of the side-gabled section at the front of the house. Dianne Wyche recalls a working fireplace in the wall between the living room and dining

³⁰ Photographs in the personal collection of Dianne Wyche; "First Ward Residents Bitter over Redevelopment Upset," *Charlotte Observer*, December 23, 1974. Copy shots are included here in an appendix.

room but that the fireplace in the front bedroom was not in use during her childhood. A passage existed at the west end of the wall between the front and middle bedrooms; it was later replaced with a closet.

Integrity Evaluation Under Both Contexts

The house is significant both for its association with Dr. Rudolph Wyche as well as for its connection to the changes in First Ward that resulted from urban renewal and community reaction to it. This integrity assessment, therefore, addresses each context separately.

While the house is still easily recognizable as the dwelling in the Wyche family photographs, the move and alterations have affected the seven aspects of integrity to various degrees. Integrity of *location* for association with Dr. Wyche was lost when the house was moved. Integrity of *setting* was adversely affected by the siting of the house on the north side of E. Eighth Street and with a deeper front yard. Additionally, the siting is more of a late-twentieth-century configuration: the front walk extends from the driveway, across the front of the house to the center of the porch, rather than extending directly to the sidewalk as on E. Ninth Street. The post-move rehabilitation, which included a new foundation, new windows, and removal of the chimneys and some architectural detail from gable ends reduced integrity of *materials* and *workmanship*. The preservation of the dwelling's massing and fenestration pattern contributes to the integrity of *design*, the elements that combine to create the form, structure, and style of the house. Additionally, the surviving portions of early or original decorative trim at the raking eaves of the gable ends preserves some integrity of *materials* and *workmanship* from the building's early period. Because the house is the actual dwelling that the Wyche family owned and lived in, and because it still substantially resembles the house as it appears in family photographs, there remains some integrity of *association*. The integrity of *feeling*, however, is reduced by the move and the rehabilitation because the changes do not convey the character the house exhibited as a dwelling in an early twentieth-century neighborhood. The house now better reflects the latter part of the twentieth century, with its replacement materials and more suburban-style siting.

Under the context of urban renewal and community reaction to it, the house retains much more integrity. Because it remains on the parcel it was moved to and continues to reflect a residential use, with mature trees at the front and back, grassy yards, a paved driveway to the east, the property retains integrity of *location* and *setting*. The wider setting of the "neighborhood" created when the city relocated several dwellings to the 700 block of E. Eighth Street and to this parcel at 801 E. Eighth Street does not remain, as those other houses are no longer extant, thereby reducing somewhat the integrity of *feeling*. The integrity of *design* is also intact under the urban renewal context. The house retains its overall massing from the time of the move, including the roof configuration and the front porch. It also retains the fenestration pattern and the overall appearance as a frame dwelling. Integrity of *materials* and *workmanship* are intact, as the alterations made in the rehabilitation remain today, including windows, vinyl siding, and the new foundation and porch piers. It is one of the houses moved in reaction to urban renewal's destruction of First Ward and so retains integrity of *association*. The house also retains integrity of *feeling*, the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period. The siting of the

house on the parcel, the reduction in the size of the windows, and the elimination of the chimneys all reflect the period of the 1970s, when energy efficiency yet auto-centric planning affected the look and siting of buildings. Similarly, the preservation movement was still rather new and the attention to detail for a simple building like this was not a project priority.

According to the National Council on Public History, when dealing with historic structures from underrepresented communities, undue emphasis should not be placed on architectural integrity in light of the circumstances of their construction and the economic circumstances in which these populations typically existed: "Too often . . . when considering a place with ties to an under-represented community, compromised elements of design, materials, and workmanship are cited as evidence that it lacks sufficient integrity for [recognition]. Yet design, materials, and workmanship may not be the most important aspects of integrity for resources associated with historically marginalized communities. Stories related to location, setting, feeling, and association are usually more relevant."³¹ Given the removal of Black neighborhoods from Charlotte's central core and the ensuing scarcity of historical assets representing the Black community that once thrived in First Ward, the integrity of location, feeling, and association embodied by the Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House outweighs any compromise of materials, workmanship, setting, or design associated with the house's relocation, rendering the Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House historically relevant and uniquely qualified for landmark designation.

Archaeological Comment

No known archaeological features are known to be present on the site at this time.

Boundary Justification

The boundary coincides with the entire parcel associated with the PIN 08010208 and the street address 801 E. Eighth Street in the City of Charlotte. This is the same parcel purchased by the City of Charlotte in 1980 for the purpose of relocating the house in order to preserve it from demolition during the dramatic redevelopment process that completely changed the early twentieth-century built environment of area known as First Ward.

³¹ Sarah Kautz, Rachel Leibowitz, & Joanna Doherty, "Repairing National Register nominations: underrepresented communities and integrity," National Council of Public History, July 21, 2020, <https://ncph.org/history-at-work/repairing-national-register-nominations-underrepresented-communities-and-integrity/>, accessed June 26, 2023.

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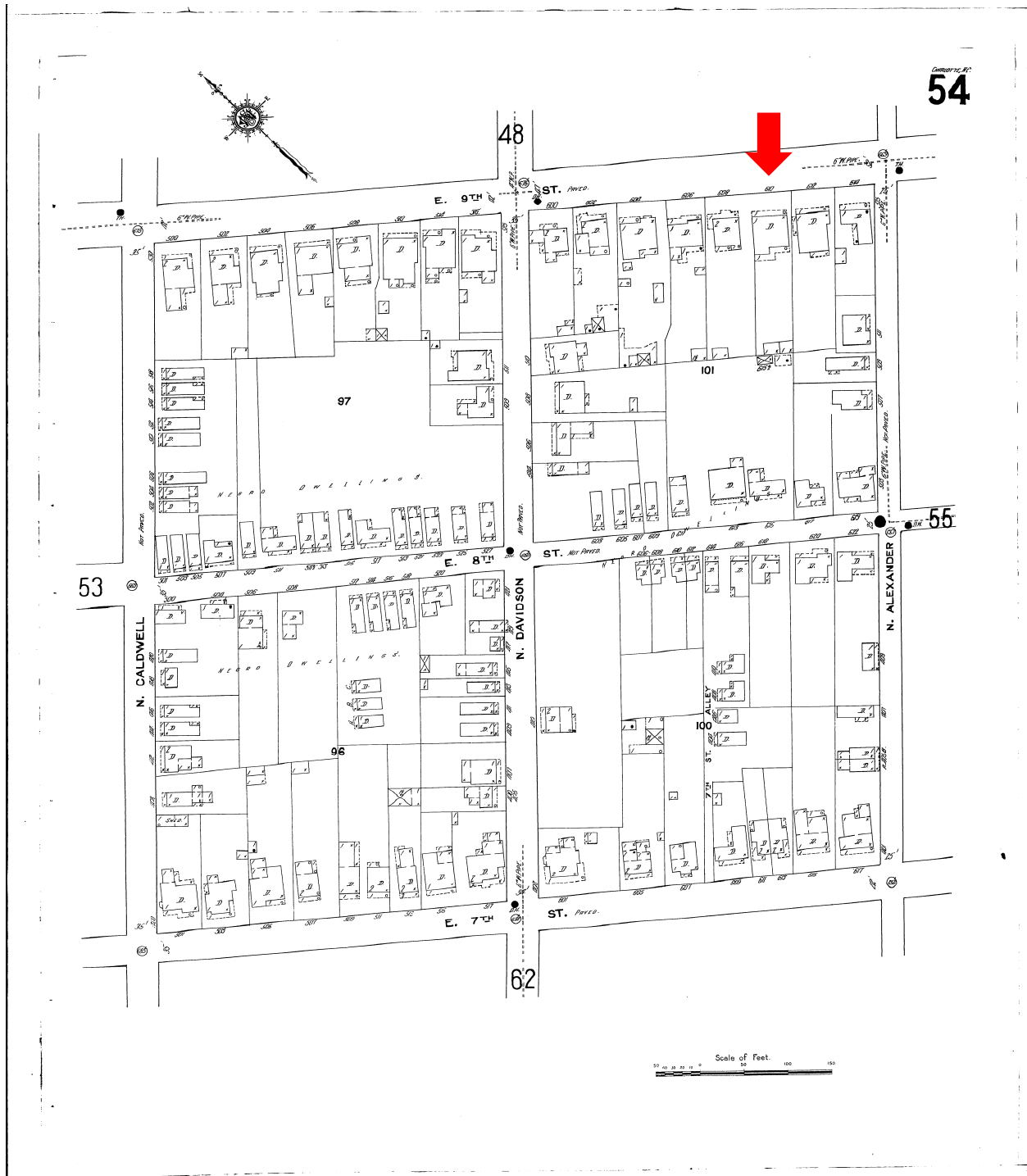
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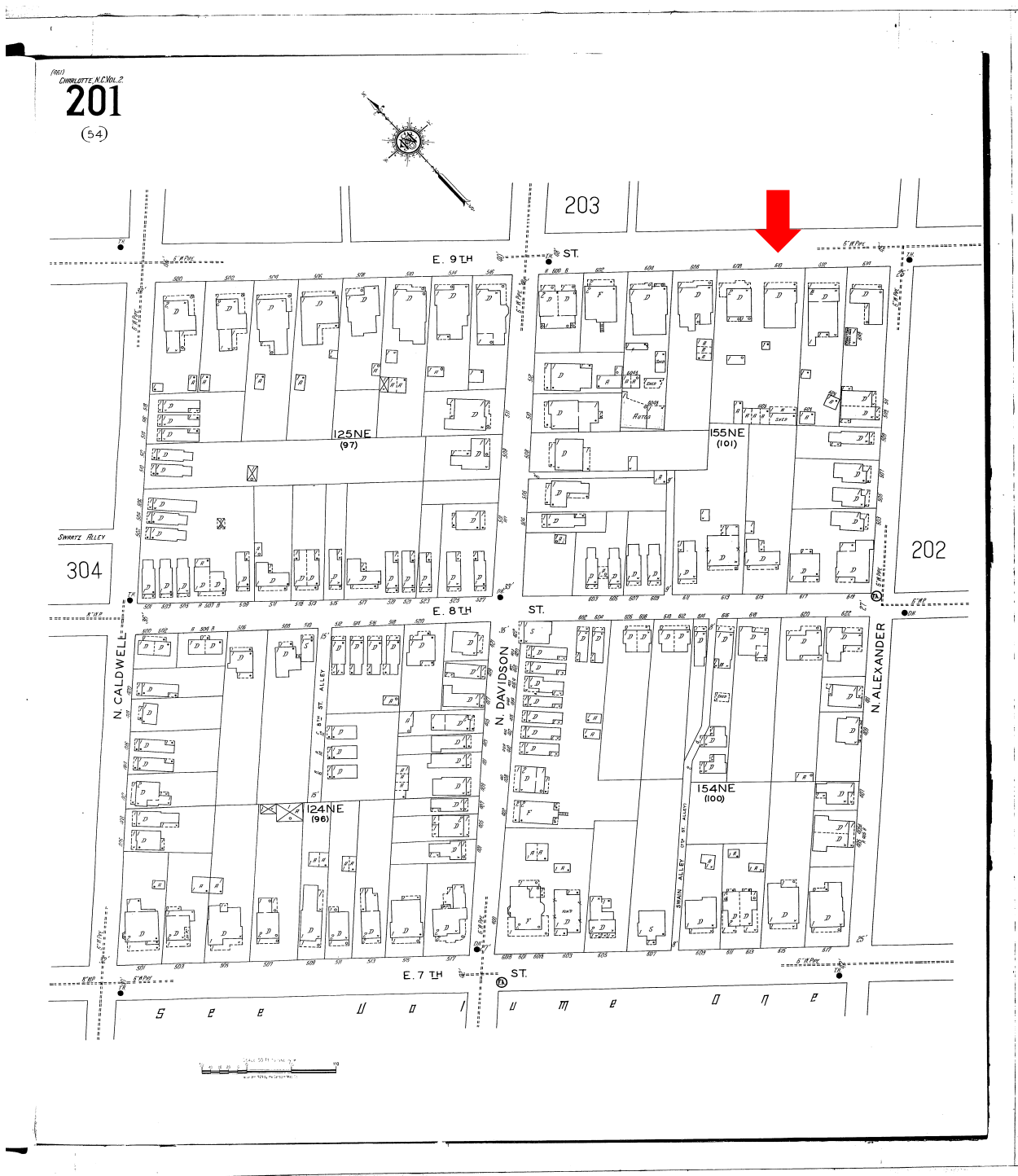
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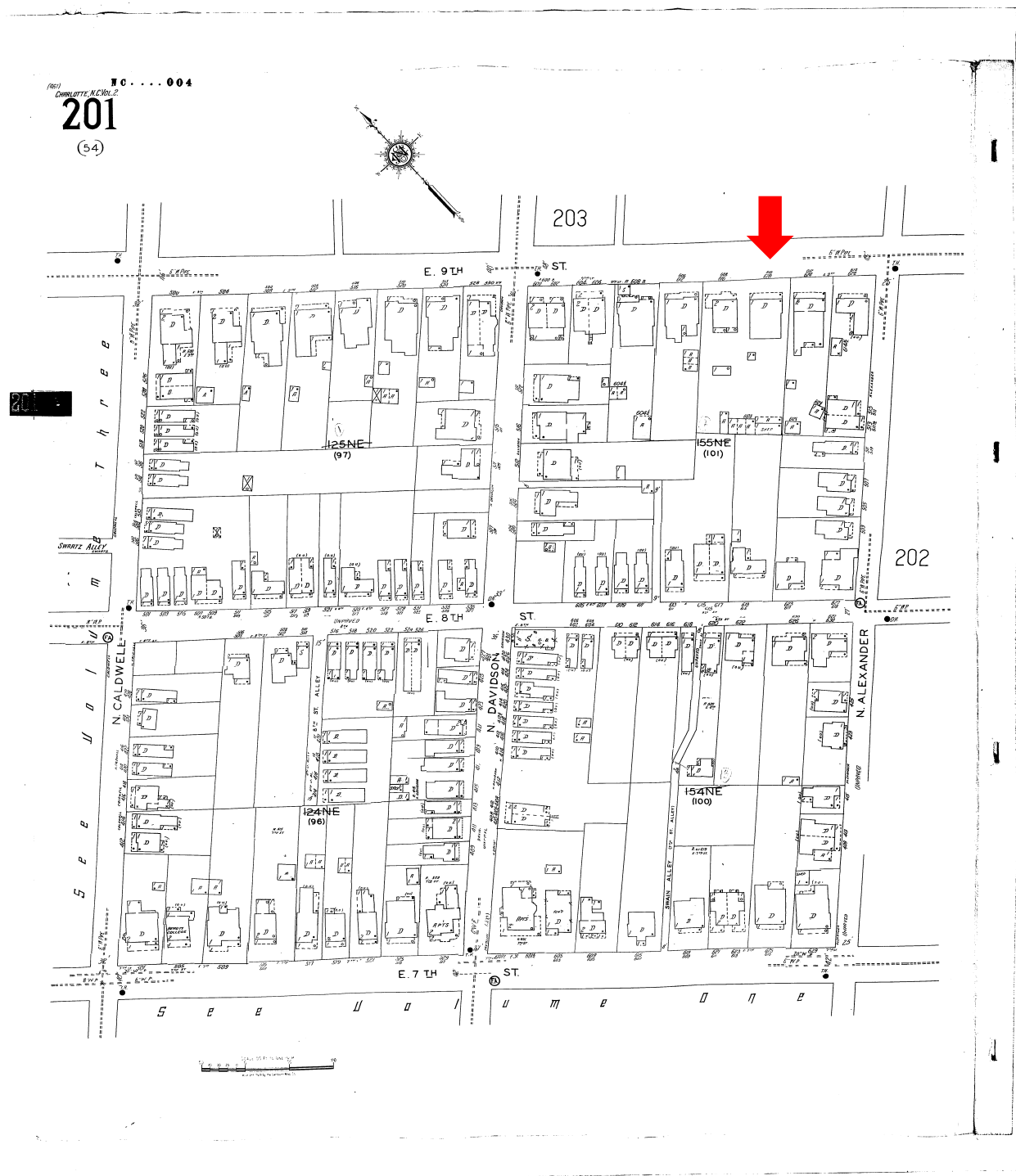
Appendix: Sanborn Maps and Wyche Family photographs



Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House as depicted at 610 E. Ninth Street, 1911 Sanborn Map, page 54.



Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House as depicted at 610 E. Ninth Street, 1929 Sanborn Map, page 201.



Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House as depicted at 620 E. Ninth Street,
1929 Sanborn Map updated through 1950, page 201.



*Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House during the Wyche family ownership and residence at 620 E. Ninth Street.
Undated photograph the façade. From the personal collection of Dianne Wyche.*



Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House during the Wyche family ownership and residence at 620 E. Ninth Street. Undated photograph side elevation, looking toward the street. From the personal collection of Dianne Wyche.



*Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House during the Wyche family ownership and residence at 620 E. Ninth Street.
Ca. 1950 photograph showing the rear elevation. From the personal collection of Dianne Wyche.*



Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House during the Wyche family ownership and residence at 620 E. Ninth Street. Undated interior photograph showing one of the bedrooms. From the personal collection of Dianne Wyche.



*Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House during the Wyche family ownership and residence at 620 E. Ninth Street.
Undated interior photograph showing the kitchen. From the personal collection of Dianne Wyche.*



Wyche-Dobson-McCoy House during the Wyche family ownership and residence at 620 E. Ninth Street. Undated photograph of the rear yard, showing the outbuilding (at center) that Kellene Wyche used as a dance Studio. From the personal collection of Dianne Wyche.