Survey and Research Report on the Paul and Wilkie Beatty House



1. Name and location of the property: the property known as the Paul and Wilkie Beatty House is located at 215 South Irwin Avenue, Charlotte, North Carolina.

2. Name and address of the current owner of the property:

VSW Properties, Irwin Avenue LLC 638 Hempstead Pl Charlotte, N.C.

3. Representative photographs of the property. This report contains representative photographs of the property

4. A map depicting the location of the property.



5. Current Deed Book Reference to The Property. The most recent deed to this property is found in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 25062, page 897. The tax parcel number for the property is 07321815.

6. A Brief Historical Essay On The Property. This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by William Jeffers.

7. A Brief Physical Description Of The Property. This report contains a brief physical description of the property prepared by Stewart Gray.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S. 160A-400.5.

a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and/or cultural importance. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission judges that the Paul and Wilkie Beatty House possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

1) The Paul and Wilkie Beatty House is a well-preserved example of a vernacular interpretation of the Prairie Style four square plan house. Never common, this house type is now rare in all of Charlotte's historic neighborhoods, especially in the city's historic urban core.

2) The Paul and Wilkie Beatty House is a reminder of the early 20th century residential nature of Charlotte's urban core.

3) The Paul and Wilkie Beatty House helps demonstrate the social economic diversity that once existed within the city neighborhoods like Woodlawn, unlike much of the residential development in Charlotte after World War II.

4) The Paul and Wilkie Beatty House is an important surviving element of the Woodlawn neighborhood, an early streetcar suburb.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association: The Commission judges that the physical description included in this report demonstrates that the property known as the Paul and Wilkie Beatty House meets this criterion.

9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal: The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the property which becomes a designated "historic landmark". The current appraised value of the Paul and Wilkie Beatty House is \$85,500. The property is zoned UR-1.

10. This report finds that the interior, exterior, and land associated with the Paul and Wilkie Beatty House should be included in any landmark designation of the property.

Date of preparation of this report: June 1, 2011 Prepared by: William Jeffers and Stewart Gray

Third Ward Contextual History

Until the twentieth century, Charlotte's urban core was a mix of residential and commercial structures. The most influential of the city's population clustered along the two main thoroughfares of Trade and Tryon Streets while businesses and commercial structures were interspersed between them. This pattern had been the norm, more or less, since the town's founding. However, as the twentieth century dawned, Charlotte began to undergo a transformation from a quiet courthouse town to a burgeoning metropolitan city. As a result, the residential patterns of the urban core began to change in ways that would redefine the built landscape of the center city.

Charlotte was organized along a ward system. Initially divided into four numerically named wards, each had a sizable collection of residential housing. As the twentieth century progressed this collection of residential dwellings began to take a backseat to the industrial and commercial development that overtook the core. This phenomenon is typified in the development of streetcar suburbs like Dilworth, and in the creation of the mill village of North Charlotte. These new neighborhoods began to draw both the affluent and working class residents out of the center of town to points that then were clustered around the periphery of the city. This transformation, however, did not occur overnight and each ward was affected differently by it. Fourth Ward retained a strong residential pattern still evident today. First Ward and Second Ward also had large housing components. However, both of these wards have lost much of their historical integrity. This is painfully evident in Second Ward, where Urban Renewal destroyed the African American community of "Brooklyn," eliminating all the residential structures of the neighborhood.

Third Ward, like the other wards around it, also contained a combination of residential and commercial structures. However, "What is now considered Third Ward is made up of two very separate areas."[1] The original section of Third Ward was an area that was bordered by, Morehead Street, Graham Street West, and Trade and Tryon Streets.[2] This section of Third Ward followed residential patterns similar to First Ward with a mixture of residential and commercial uses with fewer black residences.[3]

The arrival of the Piedmont and Northern Railroad in the second decade of the twentieth century, precipitated a shift in land use in this ward; so much so that "The area became the least

residential of the four wards, with warehousing and commercial uses as its heart and industry on Graham Street along the Southern Railway tracks."^[4]

Following the patterns of other city wards, the edges of Trade and Tryon Streets contained commercial development. This section of Third Ward, while lacking in residential structures, had several significant industrial and commercial structures such as the now demolished Good Samaritan Hospital (Bank of America Stadium currently resides on the property) and the demolished Piedmont and Northern Railroad depot. This large railroad terminal, which precipitated the transformation of the ward towards industry, has also succumbed to the wrecking ball. James B. Duke, president of both the utility company and the railroad, first utilized the site for the headquarters of the Piedmont and Northern. Eventually, he expanded the structure, building the "headquarters for Duke Power at the front of the lot in 1928."[5] Another example is the no longer extant Charlotte Supply Building. Built in1924-1925, the Charlotte Supply Building was a supplier of textile machinery and served as "a well preserved warehouse building of the type that the railroads attracted to Third Ward."[6] Extant examples exist in the United States Post Office Building on West Trade Street. The massive structure, with its signature limestone columns, was built in 1915.[7] Another is seen in The Virginia Paper Company building on West Third Street. Constructed in 1937, the building serves as a largely unaltered example of industrial architecture from the 1930s and also underlines the wards transition from residential/commercial to an industrial area.[8]

Woodlawn Neighborhood

The second section of Third Ward is the residential area between the Southern Railway tracks and Interstate 77. This area remained undeveloped during much of the city's early history.[9] The first structure built in this section was the Victor Cotton Mill (no longer extant). Constructed in 1884, the mill was located near the intersection of Clarkson Street and Westbrook Drive. Around 1907 the owners of the mill, by then known as the Continental Manufacturing Company, began to develop the surplus land it owned in Third Ward into the neighborhood of Woodlawn through a subsidiary known as the Woodlawn Realty Company.

"The Development of the Woodlawn Neighborhood was part of the phenomenal growth that Charlotte experienced in the early years of the twentieth century. Between 1900 and 1910, the city's population grew 82%, from 18,091 to 34,014."[10] As a result, the physical boundaries of the city began to expand out from the original four wards. In order to accommodate these new citizens, real estate developers such as F.C. Abbott, George Stephens, and B.D. Heath built neighborhoods that were linked to the city by the expanding streetcar systems.[11]

The Woodlawn Neighborhood was one of these new streetcar suburbs. While located inside one of the city's original four wards, the neighborhood was advertised as a suburb, perhaps due to the developing success of Charlotte's first true streetcar suburb, Dilworth.[12] With streetcar lines radiating outward from the center of town, new neighborhoods began to develop along the lines. Woodlawn was one such neighborhood, and it was served by the West Trade Street streetcar line.[13] The fact that the neighborhood was situated so close to downtown may have been a marketing tool for local developers. An advertisement in the October, 10, 1911 *Charlotte Observer* proclaimed that "Woodlawn is the nearest suburb to the business part of the city, yet NONE is prettier."[14] Many of the original parcels of land in Woodlawn were bought by J.W. McClung, a realtor whose office was located at 25 South Tryon Street. [15] McClung also lived in the Woodlawn Neighborhood.[16]

The Paul and Wilkie Beatty House

The Paul and Wilkie Beatty House was constructed in 1911 on Woodlawn Avenue in the Woodlawn Neighborhood by Robert M. Usher, a local contractor whose office was located at 701 North Brevard Street.[17] This rare Prairie style structure was the home of Paul B. Beatty and his wife, Wilkie.[18] Paul Beatty was an Assistant Wire Chief for the Western Union Telegraph Company.[19] This middle class, turn of the century, Charlotte family had four children; three girls and one boy. As Virginia Woolard, a childhood resident of Woodlawn recalled, her mother and Wilkie Beatty were good friends. As a result, Virginia spent many days with the Beatty family. In particular, she recalled that "the Beatty children were very musical."[20] She also remembered that the Beatty's large, two-story house only "had one little bathroom upstairs and one on the back porch."[21] Eventually, the Beatty family moved to East

Boulevard and the Dallas and Mary Sawyer family moved into the residence. In keeping with the middle class character of the neighborhood, Dallas Sawyer was a salesman for American Bakeries.[22] His wife Mary was the office secretary of nearby Harding High School (known today as Irwin Avenue Elementary School).[23] After the Sawyer family left, the residence became a boarding house, portending an eventual shift from its original middle class conception to a working class neighborhood.

City directories generally list the occupations of a municipality's residents in the directory. Along with the Beatty and Sawyer families, Woodlawn also had salesmen, painters, secretaries, entrepreneurs, and county policemen (to name a few) as residents further highlighting the transition from a solidly middle class neighborhood into one that was a combination of middle and working class families.[24] As Virginia Woolard would confirm, "We were working families. We just worked and worked. Our lives were not dramatic; it was just the everydayness of things. We went to church, went to school, and sort of minded your own business."[25]

Woodlawn, as a neighborhood, never grew past its original layout. It was built as a white middle class community. Early deeds confirm as much stipulating that all lots "shall be used for resident purposes and by people of the white race only (a common stipulation in the Jim Crow South); and that no dwelling shall be erected thereon which shall cost less than \$1000.00."[26] Plotted initially along four streets, "It appears that soon after the small neighborhood was built it began to lose its original identity."[27] Sanborn Maps show the neighborhood listed by the name Woodlawn. However, by the 1940s, it would seem that trend was reversed. Virginia Woolard, who grew up in the neighborhood, recalled that she never knew of the area specifically as "Woodlawn." Generally, people would refer to the street on which they lived as a geographic reference rather than using a neighborhood moniker.[28] As she stated, "When I was growing up I was not aware of the word 'Woodlawn.' I didn't have any concept about any name where we lived."[29]

Still, there was a sense of community among the residents of the area. One of the reasons for this was the fact that the neighborhood was pedestrian friendly. Trade Street was only main thoroughfare in the neighborhood. Many of the other streets ended at Irwin Creek and were devoid of heavy traffic. As a result people moved around the neighborhood freely. As Virginia Woolard related, "I enjoyed visiting. We would go back and forth between each other's houses."[30] The neighborhood had an abundant tree canopy and considering its proximity to downtown Charlotte one "had the sense that you were somewhat isolated" from the rest of the city because of it.[31]

While Woodlawn Avenue continued to serve as a reminder of the neighborhoods origin, development south of downtown along the new Woodlawn Road eventually necessitated a change from Woodlawn Avenue to South Irwin Avenue so as "to avoid confusion with the robust roadway to the south."[32] The lack of neighborhood identity, coupled with an explosion in suburban construction in the postwar decades of the 1950s and 1960s began to force a steady decline in the area. Furthermore, office and commercial zoning that was arbitrarily put in place along the thoroughfares rendered many existing residences obsolete. By the 1970s, with the construction of new roads, the neighborhood was opened up to heavy vehicular traffic, destroying the "walkable" feel of Woodlawn's original design. As middle class families began to leave the neighborhood, it gradually became dominated by working class families, some of whom had left the Brooklyn and First Ward neighborhoods as a result of Urban Renewal programs.[33]

After Urban Renewal parts of Third Ward, including Woodlawn, were considered some of the city's worst neighborhoods, "populated with liquor houses and 'fancy houses' for prostitutes."[34] The ward, however, would experience a renaissance. The catalyst for this change began in 1975, when Third Ward was designated as a community Development Target Area. Under that program Third Ward benefitted from housing rehabilitation, as well as street, sidewalk, landscaping and park improvements.[35] Another key to the revival was the removal of a metal scrapyard between South Cedar Street and the railroad tracks.[36] New residential development along Cedar and Clarkson Streets, as well as other small scale projects served as further inducements for this transformation.

Even with all this new development, the Woodlawn neighborhood of Third Ward still retains much of its original historic integrity; that of a early twentieth century, middle class Charlotte neighborhood. Woodlawn represents the apex of center city, middle class, residential construction in the early twentieth century. By the 1920s, residential building trends had shifted away from the center city to suburbs like Colonial Heights and Middleton Homes. And with the near complete loss of historic residential buildings in the center city, it becomes difficult for the public to understand the pre-World War II history of center city Charlotte based on the current built environment.[37] Therefore, this dearth of historic residential resources in Charlotte's urban core gives the surviving neighborhoods -- and individual structures within them -- historic significance if they have retained their original integrity. Considering the fact that Charlotte has excellent preserved examples of the upper class experience in Fourth Ward, Eastover, and Myers Park; coupled with the white, working class experience of the North Davidson community and the African American experience in communities like Cherry, the importance of highlighting Charlotte's middle class experience becomes even more paramount. Local landmark designation of the Paul and Wilkie Beatty House can serve as a means to rectify this imbalance because it is a residential structure with high historical integrity that highlights the middle class experience of center city Charlotte in the early twentieth century.

[9] See Hanchett, *The Center City*.

[14] Charlotte Observer, October 10, 1911.

- [17] Miller, *Charlotte City Directory 1911*, p. 408.
- [18] Mecklenburg County Deed Book 277, p. 82.
- [19] Hill's Charlotte City Directory, Volume 1942, (Richmond, VA: Hill Directory Co., Inc., Publishers 1942).
- [20] Bill Jeffers, Interview with Virginia Woolard, May 2011.
- [21] Ibid.

[23] Hill's Charlotte City Directory, Volume 1950, (Richmond, VA: Hill Directory Co., Inc., Publishers 1950).

^[1] Dr. Thomas W. Hanchett, *The Center City: The Business District and the Original Four Wards*, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, http://cmhpf.org/educationneighhistcentercity.htm (Accessed April 10, 2011).

^[2] See Hanchett, *The Center City*.

^[3] Ibid.

^[4] Hanchett, *The Center City*.

⁵ Ibid.

^[6] Ibid.

^[7] See Hanchett, *The Center City*.

^[8] See CMHLC, Survey and Research Report on The Virginia Paper Company Building, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, <u>http://cmhpf.org/SurveyS&RVirginia.htm</u>, (Accessed June 8, 2011).

^[10] Stewart Gray, *Survey and Research Report on the Woodlawn Avenue Duplex*, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, http://cmhpf.org/SurveyS&RWoodlawn.htm, (Accessed April 10, 2011).

^[11] See Gray Woodlawn Avenue Duplex.

^[12] Ibid.

^[13] Ibid.

^[15] See Ernest H. Miller, *Charlotte City Directory*, 1911, (Asheville, N.C.: Piedmont Directory Company, Inc., Publishers, 1911) p. 283.

^[16] See Ernest H. Miller, *Charlotte City Directory*, 1912, (Asheville, N.C.: Piedmont Directory Company, Inc., Publishers, 1912) p. 294.

^[22] Hill's Charlotte City Directory, Volume 1947, (Richmond, VA: Hill Directory Co., Inc., Publishers 1947).

^[24] See the 1933, 1943, 1945, 1948, and 1950 volumes of *Hill's Charlotte City Directory*, (Richmond, VA: Hill Directory Co., Inc., Publishers).

^[25] Bill Jeffers, Interview with Virginia Woolard.

- [26] Mecklenburg County Deed Book 241, p. 486.
- [27] Gray, Woodlawn Avenue Duplex.

[28] See Stewart Gray, Conversation with Virginia Woolard, October 2006. (Notes on file with the Charlotte-

- Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission).
- [29] Bill Jeffers, Interview with Virginia Woolard, May 2011.

[30] Ibid.

[<u>31]</u> Ibid.

- [32] Gray, Woodlawn Avenue Duplex.
- [33] See Third Ward Neighborhood Association, A Third Ward Future, p.7.
- [34] Gail Smith, "3rd Ward, Voices of Vision," *Mecklenburg Neighbors*, July 22, 1989, p. 12.
- [35] See Third Ward Neighborhood Association, A Third Ward Future, p.7.
- [36] See Gail Smith, *Mecklenburg Neighbors*, p.13.
- [37] See Gray, Woodlawn Avenue Duplex.

Architectural Description



The Paul and Wilkie Beatty House is a ca. 1911 two-story hipped-roof house that faces west and is set back approximately 30' from the granite curbed street. The four square plan house is a vernacular interpretation of the Prairie Style. The four square is a house type that developed late in the nineteenth century as a reaction against the ornate and asymmetrical designs of the Queen Anne Style. Four square houses are generally cube like, and are usually topped with a hipped roof. The houses are two stories tall, two bays wide, and usually consist of four rooms on each story. With the wide adoption of indoor plumbing and central heating, the plan was widely adopted across the county. In the South, the four square largely replaced the one-room-deep I-house. The four square plan greatly influenced the development of the Prairie Style. And while high style examples of the Prairie Style (limited to the Mid-West) frequently employed other less cubic house forms, the four square form was almost universally employed in the vernacular examples of the Prairie Style that were built in great numbers across the country. Elements typically found on the vernacular Prairie Style include, deep overhanging hipped roofs,

substantial half and full height masonry porch piers, and significant second-story window configurations, and hipped dormers. The four square's success can be partially attributed to the phenomenal proliferation of the Craftsman Style bungalow. The bungalow form is a one-story or one-and-one-half-story house form. Where a two-story house was desired in a bungalow neighborhood, a four square plan was often employed. By the 1920s, the four square plan was largely abandoned in favor of the popular two-story massed Colonial Revival style. The neighborhood is a mix of single family houses and small multi-family residential buildings. Like the Paul and Wilkie Beatty House, most of the buildings in the neighborhood date from the first half of the 20th century. Now called "South Irwin Avenue," the street was originally named "Woodlawn Avenue" and was the center and namesake of the small Woodlawn Neighborhood. Several lots along Woodlawn are now vacant. Located to the northwest of the Paul and Wilkie Beatty House is the Woodlawn Avenue Duplex and a very similar brick quadruplex. Other than these multi-family buildings, the neighborhoods historic inventory is limited to single-family houses. Along Woodlawn and in much of the neighborhood all of the houses and apartments are set close to the street, and sidewalks line both sides of the street. The neighborhood is dominated by mature oak trees.



The front elevation is two bays wide and is dominated by a full-width porch with a low-pitch hipped roof. The porch is supported by continuous brick foundation with three integrated brick half-height piers topped with simple concrete caps. The pier placement is not symmetrical. The southmost piers adjoin brick cheekwalls that step down and border replacement wooden steps. The foundation is pierced by a small three-light sash window. The brick piers connect to balustrades composed of original chamfered top rails and simple original narrow balusters. The corner piers each support three tapered Craftsman Style posts. The middle pier supports two posts. The posts rest on simple wooden bases. The posts are topped with simple wooden caps with quarter-round trim. The posts support a boxed beam with a narrow band of cyma trim, probably covering a joint where boards are joined. The boxed beam is topped by wider cyma trim where the boxed beam meets the soffit. The deep soffit is sheathed with beaded board.

The house's low pitched roof, deep soffits, four-square plan, and lack of Craftsman Style architectural features identify it as a vernacular interpretation of the Prairie Style. The porch shelters a wide one-over-one window and a replacement door. The is topped with a single-light transom. The door is bordered on both sides by narrow one-over-one windows. The porch features simple clapboards used on all of the exterior walls. The courses of clapboards terminate in corner boards with a moulded round-over detail. The clapboards on the porch are topped by two-wide wide frieze boards. The horizontal joint between the boards is covered by narrow cyma trim. The porch wall is topped with wider cyma trim. The porch ceiling is beaded board.



The front elevation features two angled bay windows symmetrically set on the second story. Each bay features a center two-over-two window flanked by narrow one-over-one windows. The deep overhang of the principal roof shelters the bays. The clapboard siding terminates in builtup cornerboards with an applied quarter-round. The low pitched hipped roof features a subtle bell-cast shape. Centered above the façade is a wide low hipped-roof dormer. The bell-cast roof design is most distinctive on the relatively small roof of the dormer. The dormer features two diamond-light windows bordered by short louvered vents. The dormer is sided with wood shingles. A corbelled internal chimney centered on the house's front axis pierces the roof at the junction of the dormer and the principal roof. A second internal chimney is located to the rear of the roof ridge.



The north elevation is two bays wide and features a projecting rectangular bay window in the rear bay on the first story. The bay window is composed of a center one-over-one window bordered by two narrow one-over-one windows. Four sawn brackets support the bay window. The corner boards feature quarter-round trim. The short sides of the bay are sheathed with clapboards. The bay window is topped with a nearly flat roof. Other first story fenestration on the north elevation is limited to a single tall one-over-on window. The second story is pierced by two shorter two-over-two windows aligned with the first story fenestration. A small single-light center-tilt window is located between the double hung windows. The clapboards on the north, south and rear elevations rise from a drip cap that rests on a simple water table board.





The south elevation is three bays wide. Its fenestration mirrors the internal functions of the house, and contrasts with the formal symmetry of the façade. On the first story, moving from the front of the house, the first bay contains a single tall one-over-one window. The middle bay contains a single-light center-tilt window set low in the wall. The last bay contains a replacement two-sash casement window. The new window is roughly of the same dimensions as the window it replaced, however, a taller double-hung window may have occupied the bay. On the second story the three bays all contain two-over-two windows that are shorter than the one-over-one windows that pierce the first story. The window in the middle bay is lower than the other two, reflecting the location of an interior stair landing.



A two-story wing extends from the rear of the house. According to the owner, the house originally featured a small one-story back porch. At one point the roof featured a handrail. Later a second story was added for a sleeping porch. The porch was in poor condition and was replaced with the present narrow wing. The hipped-roof wing features an enclosed recessed porch on the first story. Wide posts are infilled with panels and fixed windows. The second story features a recessed porch. The hipped roof is topped by a small hipped dormer.

Interior

The interior of the Paul and Wilkie Beatty House has retained a high degree of integrity, and is receiving a complete renovation. Plaster walls and ceilings have been repaired, and all

woodwork has been stripped of paint. All windows and a set of interior sliding doors have been repaired.



The front door opens into a foyer containing a turning staircase with a landing. The stairs; handrail, balusters, treads and trim are pine, and were originally stained dark. The handrails are deeply moulded and terminate in square newel posts. The posts feature a band of cyma recta trim and simple cap with more cyma recta trim. Balusters are turned with an unusual four-bead detail in the middle of the turned section. The handrail terminates on the second story in a two piece newel pilaster. A turned pendant hangs from the newel pilaster.

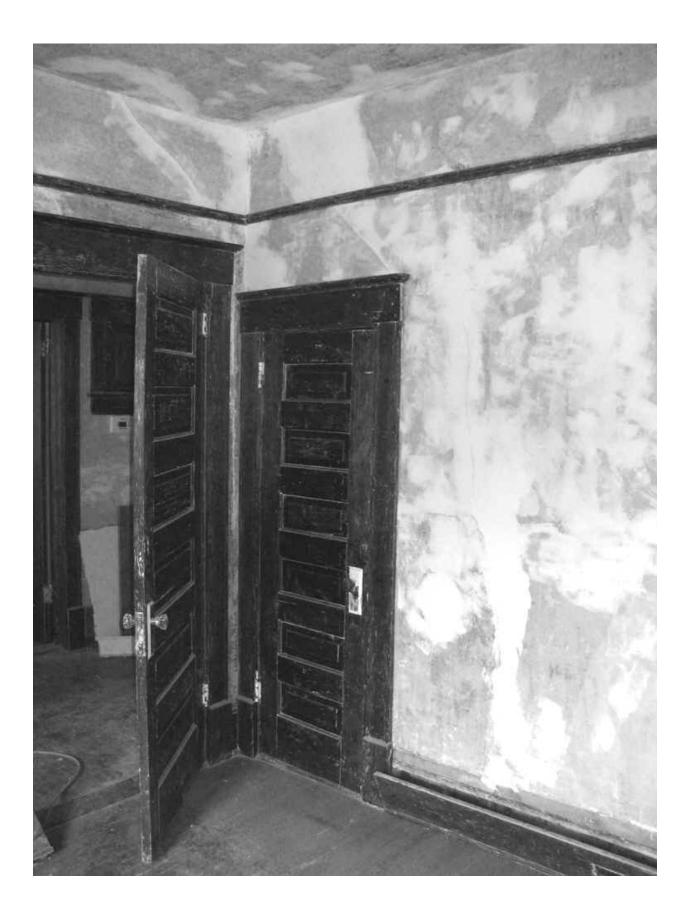


The foyer opens into a dining room. The dining room connects to a living room via sliding panel doors. The rooms feature tall baseboards topped with moulded cyma recta trim, picture moulding, and narrow pine flooring. All windows and doors are bordered by fluted jam trim, and feature moulded casing caps. Door trim features starter blocks. The living room contains a simple large fireplace surround. In contrast to the pine woodwork throughout the house, the mantle is crafted from walnut. The mantle surround is composed of a deep box shelf supported by Doric columns that rise from square bases. The columns rest on a concrete hearth that was once tiled. The firebox is surrounded by replacement tile. The simple design of the fireplace surround reflects the vernacular Prairie Style architecture of the house. While impressive and well crafted, the other interior architectural features are not specifically related to the Prairie

Style. The woodwork elements found in the Paul and Wilkie Beatty House were utilized for decades in Charlotte, from the late Queen Anne Style homes of the turn of the century to the late Craftsman Style homes of the 1930s.



The front rooms on the second story both contain fireplaces. The room over the foyer features an oak two-shelf fireplace surround with a large mirror set between the shelves. The shelves are supported by short posts with moulded trim. The firebox contains a cast iron coal grate. The bedrooms feature pine six-horizontal-panel doors with original hardware, and short six-panel closet doors. The front room over the living room features a pine fireplace surround with fluted pilasters. The second story hallway contains a recessed fuse box is covered by a panel door, and features the same trim installed around windows.





The remodeled rear wing is connected by a new door opening on the second story. The remodeled wing feature new woodwork that replicates the woodwork found in the original sections of the house.