Charlotte-Mecklenburg
Historic Landmarks Commission

Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House

2128 Senior Drive
Charlotte, North Carolina 28216

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission
Local Landmark Designation Report

Prepared by John Howard and Tommy Warlick

August 2025

HISTORIC NAMES OF PROPERTY

Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House; Alexander House

ADDRESS OF PROPERTY

2128 Senior Drive
Charlotte, North Carolina 28216

PIN

06917103

DEEDS BOOK & PAGE

Book 39150, Page 578

ZONING

N1-C

AMOUNT OF LAND/ACREAGE TO BE DESIGNATED

0.497 acres

AD VALOREM TAX APPRAISAL

The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of up to 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes depending upon the portion(s) of the property designated as the "historic landmark." As of January 2025, the total appraised value of the property is $293,800.

RECOMMENDATION FOR DESIGNATION

The Commission recommends the interior and exterior of the house and all of the property associated with the tax parcel for historic designation.

NAME/ADDRESS OF CURRENT PROPERTY OWNER

Helen and Alfred Alexander Living Trust
6710 Gold Wagon Lane
Mint Hill, North Carolina 28227

DESIGNATION REPORT CONTENTS

This report includes maps and representative photographs of the property, a brief historical sketch and architectural description of the property, and documentation as to why and how the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S. § 160D-945.

I. Abstract

Statement of Significance

The Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House was the home of a renowned civil rights leader whom one journalist wrote "may have been Charlotte's most important black leader." Kelly Miller Alexander, Sr. (1915-1985) was a second-generation funeral director and president of what is believed to be Mecklenburg County's oldest African American owned and managed business. However, he is best remembered for his longstanding involvement and leadership with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People ("NAACP"), including a thirty-six-year tenure as the President of the North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP Branches, a thirty-five-year tenure as a member of the National NAACP Board of Directors, and service as the chair of that National Board. Aided by his wife Margaret (1924-2022) – who worked as his executive secretary in support of his civil rights and business activities for some thirty-one years while also raising their two sons and devoting more than fifty years to community service – Alexander grew the North Carolina State Conference into the largest state conference in the U.S. Under his leadership, the Charlotte Branch of the NAACP successfully integrated the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system, convincing the U.S. Supreme Court in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* that student busing was an appropriate solution for ending segregation in the nation's schools. His work with the NAACP also included numerous investigations of and challenges to discrimination and inequality throughout the county and state in such matters as agriculture, manufacturing, employment, public facilities, housing, voter registration, education, and law enforcement.

For Alexander's efforts, his family's Senior Drive residence was one of four homes of Charlotte civil rights leaders attacked by bombs in a span of fifteen minutes in the wee hours of November 22, 1965. No one was injured, and Alexander was not swayed from his life's work. After spending much of their youth in the Senior Drive home, Kelly and Margaret's sons followed in their father's footsteps. Both active in the NAACP, Kelly, Jr. was elected as president of the North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP Branches following Kelly, Sr.'s decision to relinquish the position – as well as being elected to the NAACP's National Board and the North Carolina General Assembly – and Alfred has served as President of the family's funeral home for more than forty years. The Senior Drive home remained Kelly, Jr.'s primary residence for much of his adult life, and is currently still in the Alexander family.

The mid-century Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House is also an excellent example of the ranch-style homes built as part of Charlotte's University Park community between 1955 and 1962. Developed to provide upscale residential options for middle-class Black professionals, University Park was specifically situated along the northern Beatties Ford Road corridor in close proximity to the then-new and segregated West Charlotte High School. The C. D. Spangler Company developed the community with the assistance of Kelly, Sr.'s brother (and Senior Drive neighbor) Fred, another Charlotte civil rights leader attacked in the 1965 bombings who later became the city's first Black City Council member since the 1890s, the city's first Black mayor pro tem, and one of the first two Black senators elected to the North Carolina General Assembly in nearly 104 years.

Integrity Statement

- **Location – High:** The Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House remains at its original site of construction within Charlotte's University Park neighborhood and thereby retains a high degree of integrity of location.

- **Design – Medium:** The Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House possesses a medium degree of design integrity. The most visible change is the enclosure of the two-car garage on the front façade. On the rear façade, the open porch was also enclosed with glass block. The interior has minor changes associated with the porch encloser.

- **Setting – High:** The Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House maintains a high level of integrity as to its setting. One of the original homes in University Park, the house was constructed and still stands directly across Senior Drive from what was then the new segregated West Charlotte High School, a prime location and selling point for the new community for middle-class Black professionals. The proximity of that once-segregated school property – standing less than 115 feet from the Alexander House – offers a unique and powerful testament to the life-long civil rights advocacy of the residents of that Senior Drive home to ensure, among other advances, the integration of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system.

- **Materials – Medium:** The Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House maintains a medium degree of integrity as to the materials that are original to the home's 1962 date of construction.

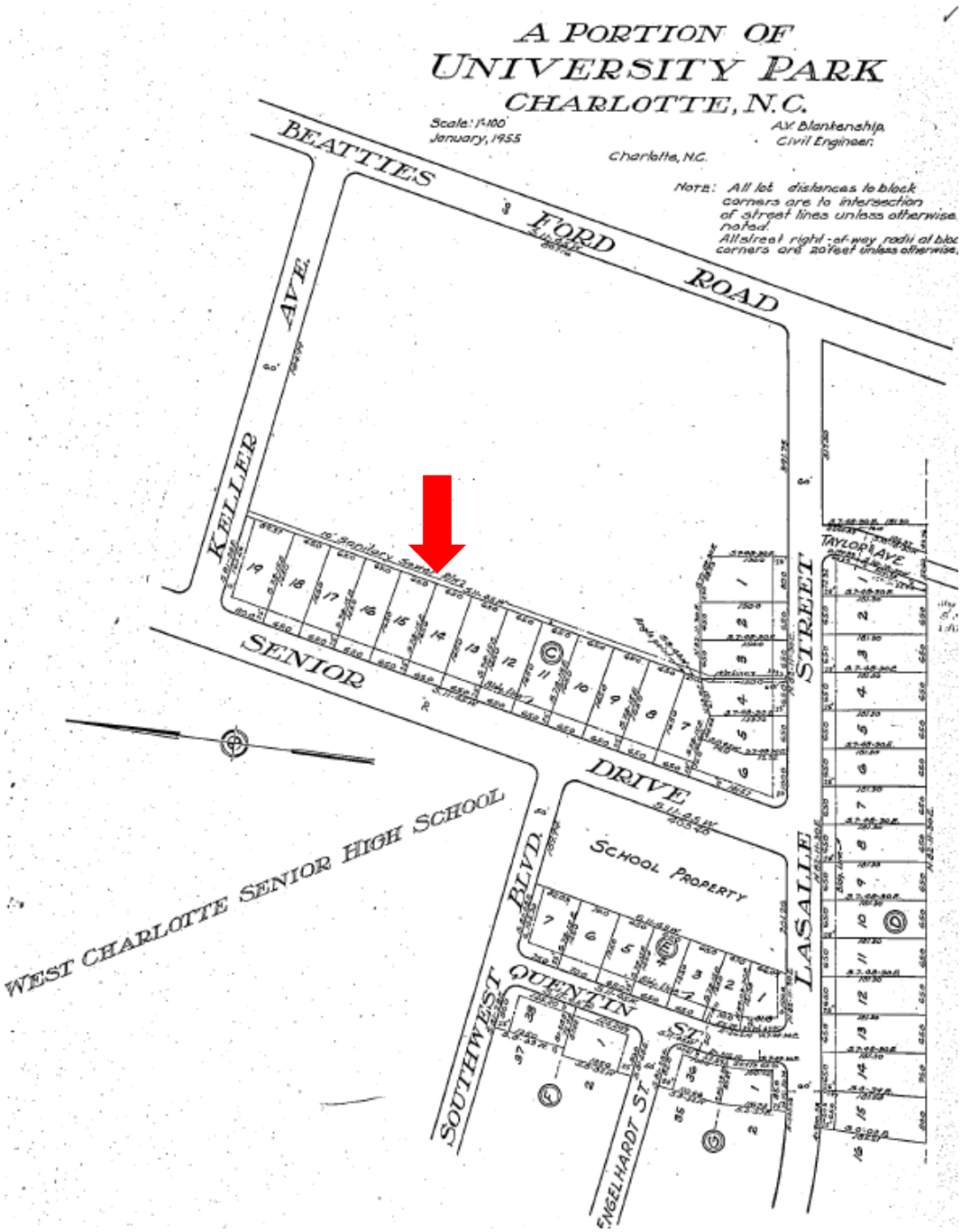
- **Workmanship – Medium:** The Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House maintains a medium degree of integrity as to workmanship. The primary façade material is textured brick including the planter along the front porch. The original roof was most likely asphalt shingle similar to the existing roof material. The front and rear porch deck retains the original terra cotta surface. The original two car garage was enclosed with a smooth, lighter color brick. Glass block was used to enclose the rear patio.

- **Feeling – High:** The Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House maintains a high level of integrity as to its feeling. The red brick mid-century home is nestled among a collection of original strikingly similar mid-century homes, comprising a substantially intact period residential streetscape purposefully located for its proximity to West Charlotte High School. The substantially unaltered house, as well as its ongoing 60+ year association with the locally prominent and nationally known Alexander family, enhance the feeling of the structure's significance within the history of Charlotte and its experiences during the Civil Rights Movement.

- **Association – High:** The Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House maintains a high level of integrity as to its associative history with the Kelly Miller Alexander, Sr. family. Together, the four members of the family have represented two generations of ownership

and leadership of what is believed to be Mecklenburg County's oldest African American owned and managed business, as well as more than 200 years of combined membership in and service with the NAACP, with prominent roles played by all four family members at the local, state, and national levels in a range of civil rights matters.

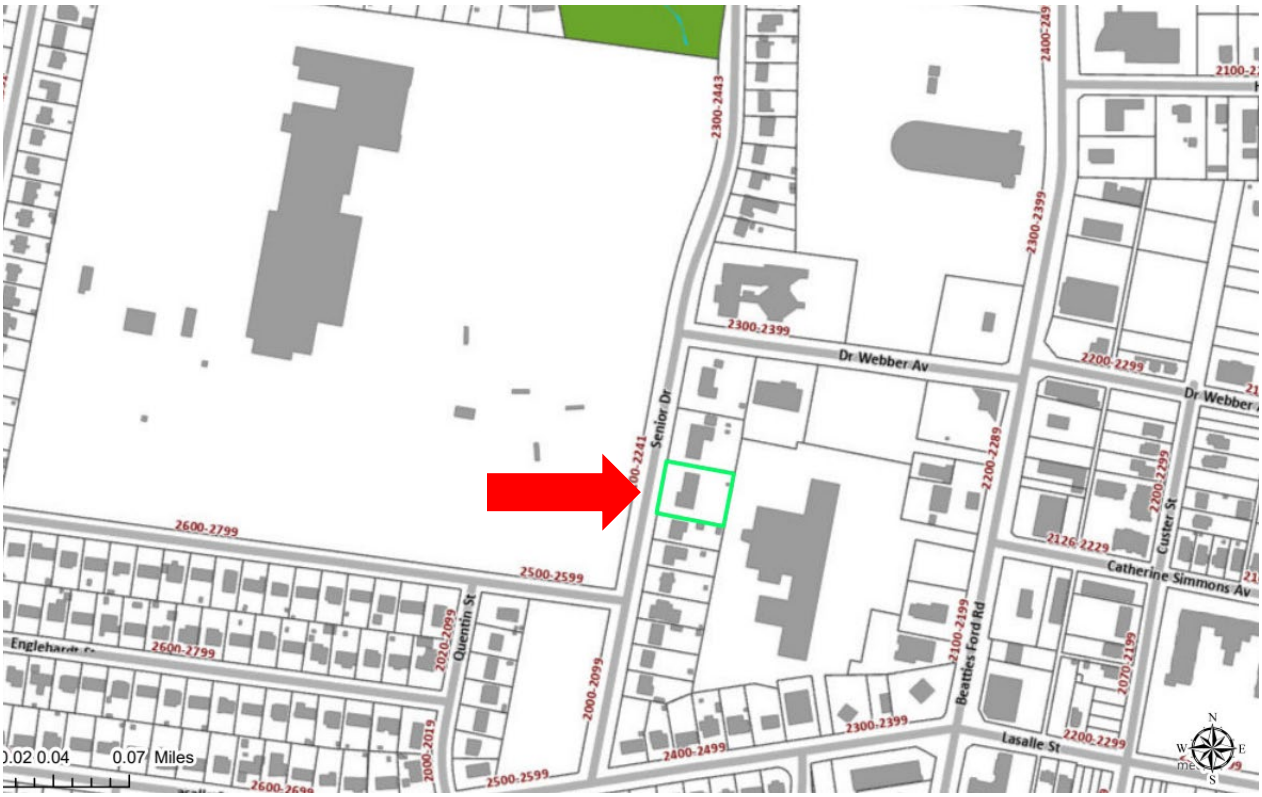
II. Maps and Chain of Title



The Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander property consists of the adjacent Senior Drive lots 14 and 15 indicated by the red arrow.

Source: Mecklenburg County Map Book 7, Page 295 (September 1955).

Mecklenburg County Tax Maps



Source for above images: Mecklenburg County Land Use and Environmental Services Agency, Polaris 3G database, https://polaris3g.mecklenburgcountync.gov/.

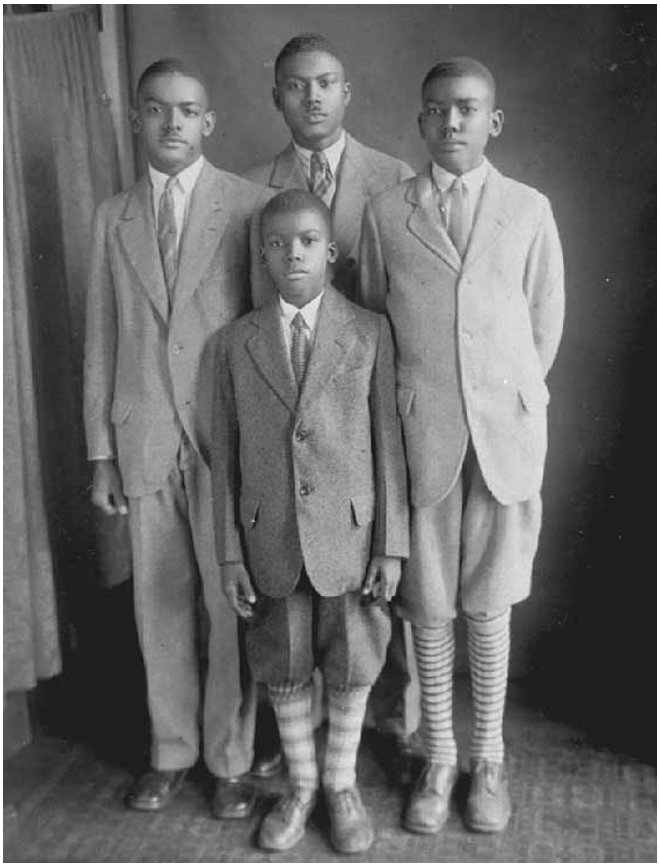
Chain of Title

Transaction Date	Grantor(s)	Grantee(s)	Book	Page(s)
October 2, 2024	Kelly M. Alexander (deceased) & Alfred L. Alexander as joint tenants with right of survivorship	The Helen & Alfred Alexander Living Trust	39150	578
March 14, 2023	Kelly M. Alexander, single, & Alfred L. Alexander & spouse, Helen Alexander*	Kelly M. Alexander (deceased) & Alfred L. Alexander as joint tenants with right of survivorship	38014	844
May 8, 1962	C. D. Spangler Construction Company	Kelly M. Alexander and wife, Margaret A. Alexander	2340	19
August 4, 1954	C. D. Spangler & wife, Veva C. Spangler	C. D. Spangler Construction Company	1700	241
December 28, 1950	George V. Keller & wife, Margaret C. Keller	C. D. Spangler & wife, Veva C. Spangler	1482	157

*Grantors acquired the property as the only children and sole heirs of the Estate of Margaret Alexander, who passed away on June 3, 2022, in Mecklenburg County.

III. Historical Background

The Alexander Family



The Alexander Brothers, circa 1928.
Front: Kelly Miller; back, left to right: Frederick Douglas, Louis Franklin, Zachariah Wilbur, Jr.[1]

Kelly Miller Alexander, Sr. (1915-1985) – whom author and former *Charlotte Observer* editor Frye Gaillard later opined "may have been Charlotte's most important black leader" – was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, on August 18, 1915. The youngest of five sons of Zechariah Wilbur and Louise Bates McCullough Alexander, Kelly was named for the noted Black sociologist Kelly Miller (1863-1939), a South Carolinian who was the first African American admitted to Johns Hopkins University and later became the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Howard University.[2]

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[1] *An African American Album: The Black Experience in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County*, Elizabeth S. Randolph ed. (Charlotte: Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County 1992), https://www.cmstory.org/exhibits/african-american-album/alexander-brothers, accessed July 16, 2025.

[2] Frye Gaillard, *The Dream Long Deferred: The Landmark Struggle for Desegregation in Charlotte, North Carolina*, 3rd ed. (1988; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 15; Ronald Smothers, "Kelly Alexander of N.A.A.C.P. Dies," *New York Times*, April 4, 1985, D30; "Biographical Note on Kelly Miller Alexander," Kelly M. Alexander, Sr. papers, Manuscripts Collection, J. Murray Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, https://findingaids.charlotte.edu/repositories/4/resources/20, accessed July 16, 2025; "Kelly Miller," U.S. Library of Congress, Digital Collections, "African American

Like their four surviving sons, Zechariah Wilbur Alexander, Sr. (1877-1954) and Louise Bates McCullough Alexander (1878-1955) were both native Charlotteans. They both attended Myers Street School. Zechariah graduated from the normal department of Biddle University (now Johnson C. Smith University ("JCSU")) in 1896, and served in the Spanish-American War as regimental sergeant major of the 3rd Regiment, North Carolina Volunteers, of the U.S. Army. Louise graduated from Scotia Seminary in Concord, North Carolina. The couple were married in or around 1906. A lifelong member of Charlotte's Seventh Street Presbyterian Church, Louise was active in several local organizations including the Southside Art and Literary Club, the Golden Hue Chapter No. 15 of the Order of the Eastern Star, the Rameses Court No. 78 of the Daughters of Isis, and the Woman's Missionary Society, and the Deaconess Board of her church.[3]

Sergeant Major Zachariah W. Alexander, Sr.[4]

Perspectives: Materials Selected from the Rare Book Collection," Articles and Essays, https://www.loc.gov/collections/african-american-perspectives-rare-books/articles-and-essays/daniel-murray-a-collectors-legacy/kelly-miller/, accessed July 16, 2025; "1910 United States Federal Census for Zechariah Alexander," Ancestry.com, https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/7884/records/20653516, accessed July 16, 2025.

Andrew McCullough Alexander (1908-1909) – the second son of Zechariah and Louise – died in his infancy nearly eight months following his first birthday. "Facts about Louise Beatrice McCullough," Ancestry.com, https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/7276658/person/6081151480/facts, accessed July 24, 2025.

[3] "Carolinas Obituaries, Zechariah Alexander," *Charlotte Observer*, October 25, 1954, 14A; "Rites Monday For Charlotte Woman, 77," *Charlotte Observer*, November 12, 1955, 12A; "Biographical Note on Kelly and Zechariah Alexander," Kelly Alexander, Sr. Family papers, Manuscripts Collection, J. Murray Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, https://findingaids.charlotte.edu/repositories/4/resources/583, accessed July 16, 2025.

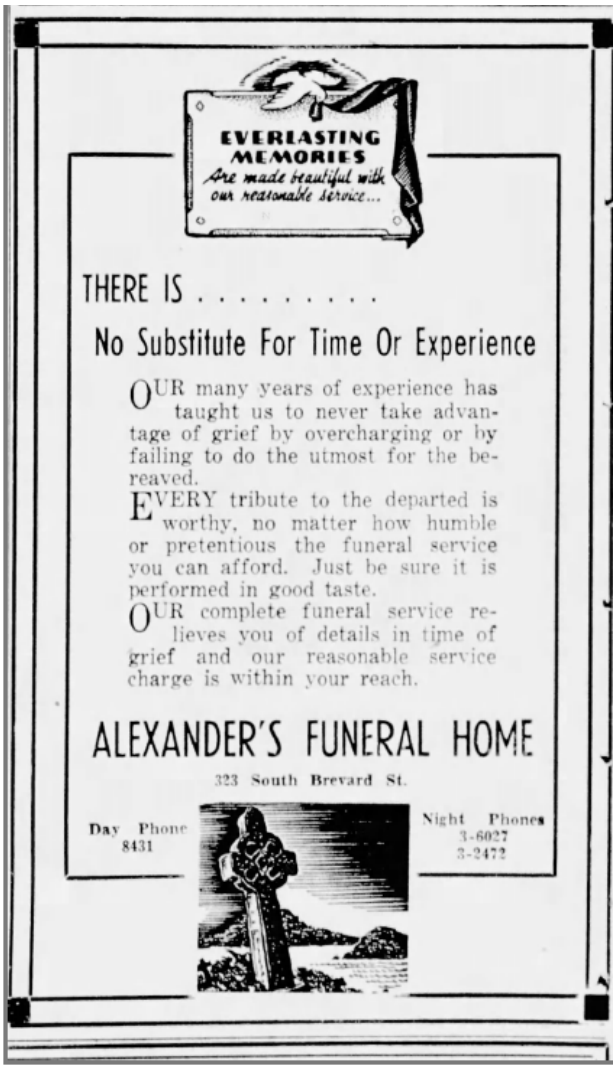
[4] Randolph, *An African American Album,* https://www.cmstory.org/exhibits/african-american-album/sergeant-major-zachariah-alexander, accessed July 16, 2025.

Zechariah engaged in several professions before establishing the Alexander Funeral Home, including as a lathing contractor in the local construction industry and bookkeeper for the W. H. Houser Brick Company. In 1902, he became Charlotte district manager of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company that later became one of the nation's largest Black-owned businesses. Zechariah retired from that position after approximately twenty-five years of service to devote his full attention to the funeral service business in which he and his sons would ultimately partner. In 1905, following the death of Thomas B. Smith – one of three partners in the Charlotte firm Coles & Smith Undertakers – Zechariah began to consider how insurance and undertaking could be combined to create a strong business. Partner Sidney Coles passed away in 1914, prompting Zechariah to purchase Sidney's interest in the funeral home from his widow. Following the 1927 death of Walter L. Coles – the firm's sole remaining original partner – Zechariah completed his acquisition of the firm by purchasing Walter's interest from his widow and renaming the business. The Alexander Funeral Home is believed to be Mecklenburg County's oldest African American owned and managed business. It quickly became a center of community and political activity for Charlotte's Brooklyn neighborhood. Zechariah W. Alexander III later became the first member of the third generation of Alexanders to work at the Alexander Funeral Home when he became a licensed funeral director and embalmer in 1955.[5]

In addition to being a successful businessman, Zechariah, Sr. was very active in his community. A longtime member of the Friendship Baptist Church, he also served as chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Second Street YMCA, member of the Board of Management of the H. L. McCrorey YMCA branch, and Deputy Imperial Potentate of the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine. Zechariah, Sr. was also a member of the Masons' United Supreme Council. In 1954, he was honored as the Imperial Potentate Emeritus in 1954. For many years, he was an active member of Unique Lodge No. 85 of the Prince Hall Free Masons, the Knights of Pythias, and the Elks. In 1937, he ran unsuccessfully for Charlotte City Council. According to his obituary, Zechariah, Sr. "was associated with most of the movements for the advancement and improvement of Negro life in this community [Charlotte]."[6]

[5] "Carolinas Obituaries, Zechariah Alexander"; "Biographical Note on Kelly and Zechariah Alexander"; Alexander Funeral Home, Inc., "Who We Are," https://www.alexanderfunerals.com/history, accessed July 16, 2025; "Charlottean Licensed As Funeral Director," *Charlotte Observer*, March 8, 1955, 13A.

[6] "Carolinas Obituaries, Zechariah Alexander"; "Biographical Note on Kelly and Zechariah Alexander"; "Second Street YMCA Board Meets Monday," *Charlotte Observer*, December 29, 1943, 3; Alexander Funeral Home, Inc., "Who We Are"; "Biographical Note on Frederick Douglas Alexander," Fred D. (Frederick Douglas) Alexander papers, Manuscripts Collection, J. Murray Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, https://findingaids.charlotte.edu/repositories/4/resources/427, accessed July 16, 2025.



Ad from *Charlotte News*, November 15, 1938, 10J.

Over the years, all four of Zechariah, Sr. and Louise's sons worked in the family's funeral home, with Zechariah, Jr. (1906-2001) and Kelly making a career of it. Son Fredrick Douglas (1910-1980) also went into public service, becoming the first Black member of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce in 1962 and of the Mecklenburg County Board of Public Welfare in 1963. He ran successfully for Charlotte City Council in 1965, becoming the city's first Black City Council member since the 1890s. In 1971, Fred became Charlotte's first Black mayor pro tem, and was elected in 1974 as one of the first two Black senators elected to the North Carolina General Assembly in nearly 104 years. Among his numerous contributions to the Charlotte community, Fred partnered with C. D. Spangler Realty Company to build University Park – the Black middle-class housing development in northwest Charlotte in which the Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House, as well as Fred's own house (next door at 2140 Senior Drive), were constructed. Zechariah, Sr. and Louise's final son, Louis Franklin (1913-1995), pursued a successful career

with the United States Postal Service and long served as a civic activist in his adopted home of Rutherford, New Jersey.[7]

Long aggrieved by the nation's relentless Jim Crow system, Zechariah, Sr. pursued the funeral service business in part to gain independence from segregation. In later years, he frequently told his sons, "The only way to be free of intimidation was to work for yourself. If the Negro community supports you, then you are free to speak out against injustice." According to nationally renowned author and *Carolina Israelite* newspaper publisher Harry Golden, the funeral home gave Zechariah, Sr., and later his sons, an "advantage. He didn't work for whites. He and his . . . sons could agitate and speak out for Negro rights. It was hard for whites to discipline them."[8]

Kelly Miller Alexander, Sr.

Kelly Miller Alexander, Sr. and his brothers were raised on East Stonewall Street, within the Second Ward of a segregated Charlotte. Kelly attended Charlotte public schools and, as a youth, was a drum major in a segregated Boy Scout Drum and Bugle Corps. At Second Ward High School in Charlotte's Brooklyn community, he played half-back on the football team and earned the nickname "Ship-wreck Kelly." His subsequent studies included two years at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and two additional years at the Renouard College of Embalming in New York City. Before returning to Charlotte in 1939 to join his family's business, Kelly worked for a time as a chauffeur and handyman for Sam Morton, a Jewish traveling jewelry merchant who operated out of New York City. Together, while traveling through the South, the two men became well acquainted with both racial and religious discrimination. Soon after his return to Charlotte, Kelly succeeded his father as president of both Alexander Funeral Home, Inc. and the Alexander Mutual Burial Association.[9]

Kelly married Margaret Gilreece Alexander (1924-2022) on April 21, 1946. A native of Charlotte, she attended Alexander Street Elementary School, graduating from Second Ward High School in 1942. She later graduated from the North Carolina College for Negroes in Durham (now North Carolina Central University) in 1946 with a Bachelor of Science in Commercial Education. The newlyweds moved in with Kelly's parents in their Second Ward home at 415 East Stonewall Street and continued to reside in the home following the deaths of Zechariah, Sr. and Louise, until moving into their new Senior Drive home in late 1962 or early 1963. Margaret worked closely with Kelly for some thirty-one years as his executive secretary, supporting his civil rights and business activities. The couple raised two children, Kelly Miller Alexander, Jr. (1948-2024) and Alfred Louis Alexander (b. 1952). Their two sons followed in their father's footsteps, with Kelly, Jr. later

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[7] Alexander Funeral Home, Inc., "Who We Are"; "Biographical Note on Frederick Douglas Alexander"; "Fred D. Alexander: 'Man of the Century,'" *Charlotte Post*, April 17, 1980, 2.

[8] Alexander Funeral Home, Inc., "Who We Are"; Pam Kelley, "A Life of Fighting Injustice," *Charlotte Observer*, April 4, 1985, 1A, 15A (quoting Harry Golden, *The Right Time* (1969)).

[9] Kelley, "A Life of Fighting Injustice," 1A, 15A; "Biographical Note on Kelly Miller Alexander"; "Kelly Alexander Sr., 1915-1985," *Charlotte Observer*, April 4, 1985, 15A; Gaillard, *The Dream Long Deferred*, 15-16; "1996 Financial Statement of Alexander Mutual Burial Association," advertisement, *Charlotte Post*, May 22, 1997, 2A.

succeeding Kelly, Sr. as president of the North Carolina NAACP State Conference and Alfred later succeeding their father as President and CEO of Alexander Funeral Home, Inc. and the Alexander Mutual Burial Association.[10]

Margaret, known to all as "Mother Margaret," was active in all aspects of the local community, including as a member of the Alpha Lambda Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha, the Zack Alexander Assembly No. 35 of the Order of the Golden Circle, the Rosa M. Morris Chapter No. 650 of the Order of the Eastern Star, the Charlotte Chapter of the National Women of Achievement, and the NAACP. In 1995, she was named by North Carolina Governor to the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, the state's highest honorary society, in recognition for her then-fifty years of community service. A deep interest in history prompted Mother Margaret to become a talented amateur historian. She maintained scrapbooks of the activities of both the Charlotte Branch NAACP and the North Carolina NAACP State Conference, while also contributing photographs and providing oral history interviews for various university-based research projects. She also authored the autobiographical *Reflections* (2014, 2022), an imprint of Xlibris and Litprime Solutions.[11]

[10] "Biographical Note on Kelly Miller Alexander"; Alexander Funeral Home, Inc., "Obituary, Margaret Gilreece Alexander Alexander," https://www.alexanderfunerals.com/obituary/margaret-alexander, accessed July 17, 2025; *Hill's Charlotte (Mecklenburg County, N.C.) City Directory* for the years 1947 through 1963. The 1963 *Charlotte City Directory* lists the family residing on East Stonewall Street, but son Alfred recalls moving to the Senior Drive home in 1962. Transcript of Alfred Alexander Oral History Interview, 5, May 10, 2001, OH-AL0002, Civil Rights and Desegregation in Charlotte Collection, J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, https://goldmine.charlotte.edu/record/26665?v=pdf%2Caud, accessed July 24, 2025.

[11] "Obituary, Margaret Gilreece Alexander Alexander"; "Margaret G. A. Alexander, *Reflections*," Google Books, https://books.google.com/books/about/Reflections.html?id=1a3GoQEACAAJ, accessed July 17, 2025; "Margaret G. A. Alexander," Amazon.com, https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B0B94V6WQ1/allbooks?ingress=0&visitId=9b7a4ccb-2538-4ca8-8734-0e6549943df5, accessed July 17, 2025.

Kelly and Margaret Alexander (above), circa 1947.
Kelly with sons Alfred (aged 2) and Kelly, Jr. (aged 6) (below), circa 1955.[12]

[12] Kelly M. Alexander, Sr. papers, Manuscripts Collection, J. Murray Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, https://goldmine.charlotte.edu/record/18429?ln=en&p=%22kelly+m+alexander+sr%22&v=uv#?xywh=-2054%2C274%2C7206%2C3972 and https://goldmine.charlotte.edu/record/18431?ln=en&v=uv#?xywh=-1125%2C68%2C4484%2C2472, accessed July 17, 2025.

The Alexander Family and the NAACP

Like his father, Kelly became involved in community affairs early in life. He chose the NAACP as the means by which to become involved in the nascent Civil Rights Movement. It seemed an ill-fated choice at the time. Since its initial organization in 1919 by Bishop George W. Clinton of the AME Zion Church, the Charlotte NAACP Branch had long followed a pattern of brief operation followed by inactivity, dormancy, and reorganization. Bishop Clinton's Charlotte Branch went inactive in 1923. The Branch was reorganized in 1927 by Professor T. S. Jackson, who served as President for two years before resigning and handing the reins over to Kelly's father Zechariah, Sr. The Charlotte Branch again went dormant in 1931. Fred L. Wiley tried once again in 1933, with W. H. Moreland as President, but that iteration ceased operations four years later. When Kelly Alexander returned to Charlotte in 1939, the city had no active NAACP branch.[13]

Kelly M. Alexander, Sr. (on left) and inaugural members of the rechartered Charlotte NAACP Branch receiving the official NAACP charter, circa September 1940.[14]

[13] "Biographical Note on Kelly Miller Alexander"; Margaret G. A. Alexander, "History of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Branch, NAACP, 1919-1992," October 12, 1992, 2, Kelly Alexander, Sr. papers concerning the NAACP, 1948-1998, Series 2, NAACP, Charlotte, Subseries 8, Branch Materials, Kelly M. Alexander, Sr. papers, Manuscripts Collection, J. Murray Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, https://goldmine.charlotte.edu/record/22148?ln=en&p=%22kelly+m+alexander%22&v=uv#?xywh=-740%2C992%2C5983%2C3749&cv=, accessed July 16, 2025.

[14] Kelly M. Alexander, Sr. papers, Manuscripts Collection, J. Murray Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, https://goldmine.charlotte.edu/record/18436?ln=en&v=uv#?xywh=-1548%2C-557%2C9826%2C5416, accessed July 16, 2025.

In 1940, at the age of 25, Kelly led the effort to reactivate the dormant Charlotte Branch. The group he assembled submitted its charter application to the NAACP's national office in late August 1940. The application was approved by the NAACP's Committee on Branches within one week, and executive authorization was granted the following day. The official charter was forwarded to the revived Charlotte Branch on September 24, 1940, and Kelly was elected as its first President. He served in that capacity until 1944, at which time he became the Branch's unpaid Executive Secretary. Kelly held that position until his death in 1985.[15]

During its early years, the Charlotte NAACP Branch was the city's only open civil rights forum. It became highly regarded for its roundtable discussions featuring nationally significant civil rights leaders invited to lead conversations on the important issues of the day. Speakers who came to Charlotte on the invitation of the city's NAACP Branch included Adam Clayton Powell, Thurgood Marshall, Roy Wilkins, Clarence Mitchell, Jr., Martin Luther King, Jr., Ruby Hurley, Gloster B. Current, and Ralph D. Abernathy.[16]

During Kelly's association with the Charlotte NAACP Branch, its membership undertook numerous initiatives to investigate and challenge various forms of discrimination and inequality throughout the county and state in such matters as agriculture (sharecroppers and tenant farms), manufacturing (the U.S. Naval Ordinance Plant, textile industry, Douglas Aircraft Company, and Central Motor Lines), employment (mail carriers, telephone operators, bus drivers, state liquor stores, school teachers and administrators, city departments, and medical and other professional organizations), public facilities (parks and recreational resources including the city's segregated Bonnie Brae golf course, hospitals, and county homes for the elderly), housing (veterans' housing at Morris Field, and affordable public housing and rent control for Charlotteans displaced by the city's Urban Renewal campaigns), voter registration, education (integration of the local public schools, nursing and other professional schools, and the new Charlotte College, and construction and maintenance of equitable public school facilities), and law enforcement (including integration of the force and "police brutality and other wanton abuses"). In 1943, Kelly also assisted with the organization of the North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP Branches. His involvement in that endeavor led to his 1948 election as President of that body, a post he held for thirty-six years. In 1962, Kelly predicted that within the next decade, "The schools will be integrated, Negroes will hold government jobs, they will work in industry on an equal basis and all theaters will be integrated."[17]

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[15] Kelley, "A Life of Fighting Injustice," 15A; Alexander, "History of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Branch, NAACP, 1919-1992," 1-3.

[16] Alexander, "History of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Branch, NAACP, 1919-1992," 3.

[17] Ibid., 5-12; "Biographical Note on Kelly Miller Alexander"; "'I have . . . faith in democracy,'" *Charlotte News*, April 3, 1985, 10A.

Kelly M. Alexander, Sr. (back row, far right), with some of the sixteen plaintiffs who successfully sued the City of Charlotte and its Parks and Recreation Commission to force the 1956 integration of the city's Bonnie Brae golf course. Local attorney Thomas H. Wyche (back row, far left) and Southeast Regional NAACP Counsel Spottswood W. Robinson, III, (back row, fourth from left) litigated the case, circa 1952.[18]

Many of Kelly's notable successes were associated with education. The Charlotte NAACP Branch was the first community organization to appear before the Mecklenburg County Board of Education following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), to petition for an end to segregation in the local schools. In an effort to turn *Brown* into a meaningful local compliance program, Kelly and a delegation of twenty-six Black Charlotteans – including another of Charlotte's prominent Black activists, Dr. Reginald Armistice Hawkins (1923-2007) – met with local public school officials on March 29, 1957, to discuss integration of the school system. As a result of that meeting, local school officials agreed to work with their colleagues in Winston-Salem and Greensboro to desegregate the three cities' school systems. Kelly and the Charlotte NAACP Branch organized public meetings to educate parents of Black school-age children as to the ramifications of the Supreme Court's determination of the unconstitutionality of racially segregated schools. Kelly actively recruited families to take leading roles in integration, ultimately helping the parents of forty-one students prepare and file applications seeking reassignment of those children to nine traditionally White county schools.[19]

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[18] Kelly M. Alexander, Sr. papers, Manuscripts Collection, J. Murray Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, https://goldmine.charlotte.edu/record/18434?ln=en&v=uv#?xywh=-115%2C450%2C3610%2C1990, accessed July 16, 2025.

[19] Alexander, "History of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Branch, NAACP, 1919-1992," 8-9; Gaillard, *The Dream Long Deferred*, 3, 17. The Reginald Armistice Hawkins House, located at 1703 Madison Avenue in Charlotte, has already been designated a local historic landmark by the Charlotte City Council. "Ordinance designating as an

Kelly Alexander, Sr. (at podium) conducting a meeting regarding school integration at Park Center, Charlotte, circa 1957. Reverend and Mrs. Herman Lacoste Counts, Sr., the parents of Dorothy Counts – the sole Black student admitted to Charlotte's Harding High School in 1957 – are seated to the right.[20]

Thirty-seven of those applications were declined, including one filed by Kelly and Margaret Alexander for their son Kelly, Jr. Only four applications for reassignment were approved, including one for Dorothy Counts (b. 1942), the daughter of JCSU Theological Seminary Professor of Practical Theology Reverend Herman Lacoste Counts, Sr. (1911-1979) and Olethea Elveta Wilson Counts (1911-2001). Ms. Counts was the sole Black student assigned to the all-White Harding High School. Her first day of classes – September 4, 1957 – erupted into such a shocking scene of hateful racial belligerence by the estimated crowd of 400 White adults and students that Ms. Counts' name and image appeared in newspapers around the globe. Living in Paris, France, at the time, famed Black writer and activist James Baldwin saw Ms. Counts' photograph in the Parisian newspapers and credited the power of that image for drawing him back to the United States to join the Civil Rights Movement: "When Dorothy Counts was spat on by the mob as she was trying to go to school, that was the day I decided I was coming home."[21]

Historic Landmark a property known as the 'Reginald Armistice Hawkins House,'" City of Charlotte Ordinance No. 9523-X, Ordinance Book 62, Page 99, March 18, 2019.

[20] Kelly M. Alexander, Sr. papers, Manuscripts Collection, J. Murray Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, https://goldmine.charlotte.edu/record/18424?ln=en&v=uv#?xywh=-2028%2C-221%2C9907%2C5461, accessed July 18, 2025.

[21] Alexander, "History of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Branch, NAACP, 1919-1992," 8-9; Gaillard, *The Dream Long Deferred*, 3-5; "Herman Lacoste Counts, Sr.," Ancestry.com, https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/8115711/person/232338643513/facts?_phsrc=LWg1007&_phstart=successSource, accessed July 18, 2025; "The Service of Installation for the Reverend Herman Lacoste Counts, Senior, Pastor Elect, Bethpage and Cedar Grove United Presbyterian Churches," Bethpage United Presbyterian Church, April 12, 1970, Presbyterian Collection, Johnson C. Smith University Archives, James B. Duke Memorial Library,

Integration had arrived for Mecklenburg County public schools, but it was far from a fait accompli. Although the number of Black students attending historically White public schools slowly increased, the county's schools – like the city of Charlotte itself – remained segregated for all intents and purposes. In the early 1960s, troubled by the lack of substantive progress in school integration, the closures of several of Mecklenburg County's historically Black public schools, and the diminishing job security for Black teachers, Kelly and Dr. Hawkins teamed up with Kelly's older brother Fred and the young newly arrived Black attorney Julius LeVonne Chambers to address the issue. A native of Mount Gilead, North Carolina, Chambers graduated first in his class in 1962 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Law (itself not integrated until 1950). While at the law school, Chambers was selected to be the editor-in-chief of the school's highly regarded *North Carolina Law Review*, making him the first African American to be chosen for such a prestigious office at a predominantly White southern law school. Before opening his law practice in Charlotte in 1964, Chambers earned a Master of Laws degree from the Columbia University School of Law and worked for the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund in New York City.[22]

Together, the two Alexander brothers and Hawkins sought out disenfranchised Black Charlotteans who had unsuccessfully sought improved educational opportunities for their children, including admission to the city's still predominately segregated public schools. One of those couples consisted of another JCSU faculty member, Reverend Darius L. Swann, and his wife Vera P. Swann. Prior to moving to Charlotte, the Swanns had served for nearly eleven years as missionaries for the Presbyterian Church (USA) in India, making them the denomination's first African American missionaries in a non-African country. When the couple moved to Charlotte in 1964 so that Darius could start his new faculty position, they tried unsuccessfully to enroll their six-year-old son James in first grade at the integrated Seversville Elementary School, located just two blocks from their home. Instead, James was assigned to the all-Black Biddleville School much further away from home.[23]

With the organizational support of the Alexander brothers and Hawkins, Chambers filed a petition with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education in December 1964 challenging the school system's assignment practices on behalf of seventy-nine sets of Black parents, with the Swanns as the lead petitioners. The Board dismissed the petition, prompting Chambers to file a class-action lawsuit that, after winding its way through the federal judicial system for six years, came before

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https://cdm16324.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15170coll10/id/221/rec/1, accessed July 18, 2025; "James Baldwin 20th Anniversary Commemoration: Remembering the Life and Work of the Legendary Writer and Civil Rights Activist," December 7, 2007, *Democracy Now* television series (recording and transcript of James Baldwin interview in "The Price of the Ticket" documentary), http://www.democracynow.org/2007/12/7/james_baldwin_20th_anniversary_commemoration_remembering, accessed July 18, 2025.

[22] Gaillard, *The Dream Long Deferred*, 15, 25, 17; Richard A. Rosen and Joseph Mosnier, *Julius Chambers: A Life in the Legal Struggle for Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 6, 3, 1.

[23] Gaillard, *The Dream Long Deferred*, 25; Steven Kurutz, "Darius Swann, 95, Plaintiff In a Landmark Busing Case That Challenged Segregation," *New York Times*, April 17, 2020, A28.

the U.S. Supreme Court in 1970. In *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 402 U.S. 1 (1971), the Supreme Court affirmed the Charlotte NAACP Branch's position, and Charlotte's U.S. District Judge James McMillan's 1969 ruling, that the Board of Education was effectively running "dual systems" for Black and White students. The Court likewise upheld Judge McMillan's order that busing be used to alleviate the school district's entrenched segregation.[24]

In the fall of 1965, during the early stages of the *Swann* case, two other significant events in Charlotte had drawn heightened media attention and apparently racist animosity among certain Charlotteans. The Alexander brothers, Hawkins, and Chambers were actively involved in another lawsuit seeking to integrate the annual Shrine Bowl high school all-star football game, and Fred Alexander won the election for his Charlotte City Council bid. As Gaillard described the situation, "Many whites, many thousands, in fact, who lacked the boldness, the commitment, or the final edge of meanness to experiment with dynamite, shared, nonetheless, a night rider's rage at the gathering black momentum." On November 22, 1965, at 2:15 A.M., the adjacent Senior Drive homes of Kelly and Fred Alexander were simultaneously attacked with bombs. At 2:20 A.M., another bomb exploded at Chambers' house at 3208 Dawnshire Avenue. Ten minutes later, a fourth and final bomb was detonated at 1703 Madison Avenue, the home of the Hawkins family. The four targets of the coordinated bomb attack were situated with two miles of each other. Law enforcement officials believed that each bomb consisted of four or five sticks of dynamite.[25]

Even though all four families were home asleep at the time, no one was injured by the explosions. The bomb at the Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House denotated on the front porch, just outside the window of the shared bedroom of the teenage brothers Kelly, Jr. and Alfred. Their father – who angrily insisted, "This was done specifically to kill us" – credited the brick construction of the house for saving the family's lives. The explosion ripped off the front doors of the house, tore holes and ripped gashes through its brick walls, blew out windows, and knocked open kitchen cabinets. Unofficial estimates of the damage to the house ranged between $2,500 to $3,000. The bombing received national attention and, according to the *Charlotte Observer*, "shattered the complacency of a city that prided itself on racial tolerance while largely avoiding the violence rampant in other parts of the South." The experience angered and discouraged Kelly, Sr., who later reflected, "We thought we were making better progress than that. We thought Charlotte was an oasis." Despite significant efforts by local, state, and federal investigators, no one was ever arrested or convicted of the crimes, and the matter has remained an open FBI case (codenamed CHARBOM) well into the twenty-first century. Nor did any group ever claim responsibility for the attacks. The November 22 attack came to be known as the "Pearl Harbor Day for the civil rights movement in Charlotte," as it marked "the beginning of a new and decisive

[24] Rosen and Mosnier, *Julius Chambers*, 167-68, 171-72, 183-84.

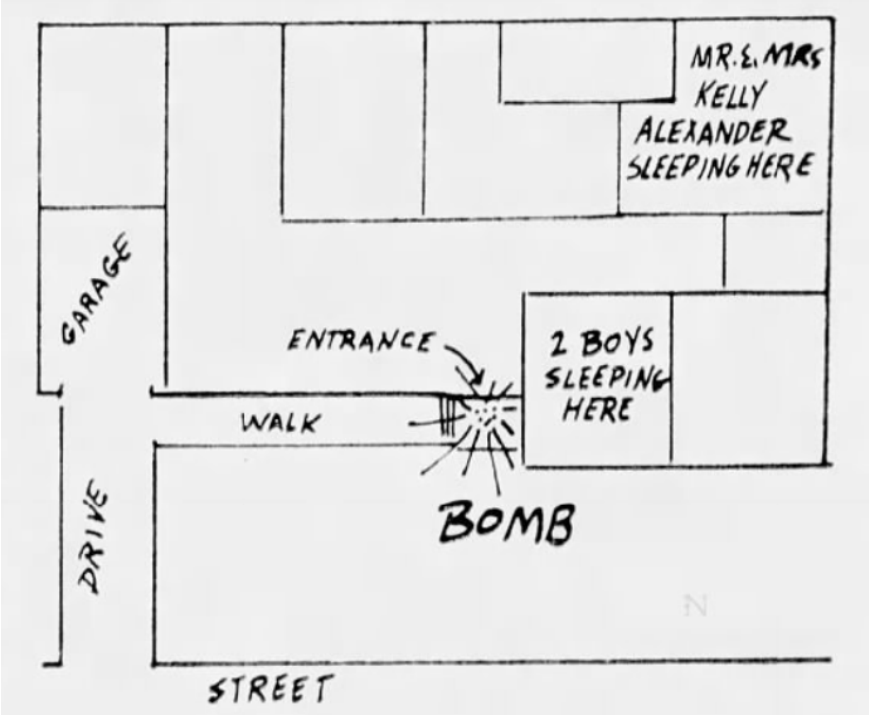
[25] Gaillard, *The Dream Long Deferred*, 28, 27; Rosen and Mosnier, *Julius Chambers*, 97-100; John York, "Law Agencies Mass To Probe Bombings," *Charlotte Observer*, November 23, 1965, 1A, 4A; Brandon Lunsford, "University Park Historical Essay," March 10, 2020, 5, http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/University-Park-Historical-Essay-EAS-edit-2.0.pdf, accessed July 21, 2025.

stage in the struggle for Negro rights." In the words of Dr. Hawkins, "The bombing was the shock that blew us together."[26]

Investigators inspecting the damage to the Kelly Alexander House, the result of a dynamite bomb.[27]

[26] Gaillard, *The Dream Long Deferred*, 27-28; Rosen and Mosnier, *Julius Chambers*, 97-100; Joe Flanders, "FBI Joins Bomb Probe," *Charlotte News*, November 22, 1965, 1A, 2A; Robert Hummerstone and Pat Carter, "This Was Done To Destroy Us," *Charlotte Observer*, November 23, 1965, 2A; York, "Law Agencies Mass To Probe Bombings"; Pam Kelley, "A Lifetime Of Fighting Injustice," *Charlotte Observer*, April 4, 1985, 1A, 14A; Jim Morrill, "50 Years Ago: Bombs ignited night of terror," *Charlotte Observer*, November 22, 2015, A29, A30; Darst Murphy, "Charlotte Bomb Victims Get Material Aid And Sympathy," *Charlotte Observer*, November 24, 1965, 1A; Lunsford, "University Park Historical Essay"; Robert Hummerstone, "New Unity Marks Negro Movement," *Charlotte Observer*, January 3, 1966, C1.

[27] *Charlotte Observer*, November 23, 1965, 1.



Map of the Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House and the location of the bomb's detonation (above) and the resulting damage to the front bedroom of sons Kelly, Jr. and Alfred (below).[28]

[28] *Charlotte Observer*, November 23, 1965, 1A, 2A.

Over the years, under Kelly, Sr.'s leadership, the North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP Branches became the largest state conference in the United States, with over 120 branches and 30,000 members. Kelly, Sr. was elected to the National NAACP Board of Directors in 1950, and became a Life Member in 1954. He served on the National Board until his death in 1985. In 1976, Kelly, Sr. was elected vice chair of the National Board. He was named acting chair of the National Board in June 1983. Formally elected to that position in January 1984, he served for two years. Kelly, Sr.'s decades of service to NAACP prompted the *New York Times* to describe him, upon his ascension to the chair of the National Board, as "the fulcrum of an uneasy shifting of power" and "a natural rallying point for board members," and earned him the nickname "Mr. N.A.A.C.P." The National Board even established the Kelly M. Alexander, Sr., NAACP State Conference President's Award to honor outstanding achievements by State Conference Presidents in Kelly, Sr.'s tradition. Ever mindful of the role of politics in the civil rights struggle, Kelly, Sr. even ran for the Charlotte City Council twice in the 1950s. Both bids proved to be unsuccessful. In October 1984, when Kelly, Sr. relinquished his presidency of the North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP Branches after thirty-six years, his son Kelly, Jr. was promptly elected to the office.[29]

Kelly M. Alexander, Sr., passed away after a sudden illness on April 2, 1985, at the age of 69. Just three days earlier, he was the keynote speaker at a regional NAACP conference in Charleston, West Virginia, where he admonished an audience of more than 600 attendees to continue working hard to grow the organization. He told the attendees, "Some of us look around and see a little progress and say we've got it made in the shade. I want you to know we're not made in the shade. . . . Some of us think that we have arrived, and we are enjoying American democracy like other folks, but we're not. That's the reason the NAACP is still in business. . . . There is much work to be done." Upon news of Kelly, Sr.'s death, Dr. William Gibson, vice chair of the NAACP National Board, described his friend as "a solid rock in the NAACP foundation, a rock that sustained over 40 years of civil rights progress. He was a giant in the civil rights movement." Acknowledging Kelly, Sr. as one of the "pioneers of the modern phase of the civil rights movement in the south," NAACP Executive Director Benjamin L. Hooks called his colleague a "fearless warrior who bowed to no foe." Judge Henry Frye, the first Black North Carolinian to sit on the state's Supreme Court, considered Kelly, Sr. the "driving force" of the NAACP in North Carolina, and North Carolina Governor Jim Martin called him "one of the state's truly great citizens. He was an example of dedication to a cause that will be an inspiration for generations to come." Charlotte mayor Harvey Gantt eulogized him by noting, "In the life of this community, we do things differently because Kelly Miller Alexander Sr. lived among us."[30]

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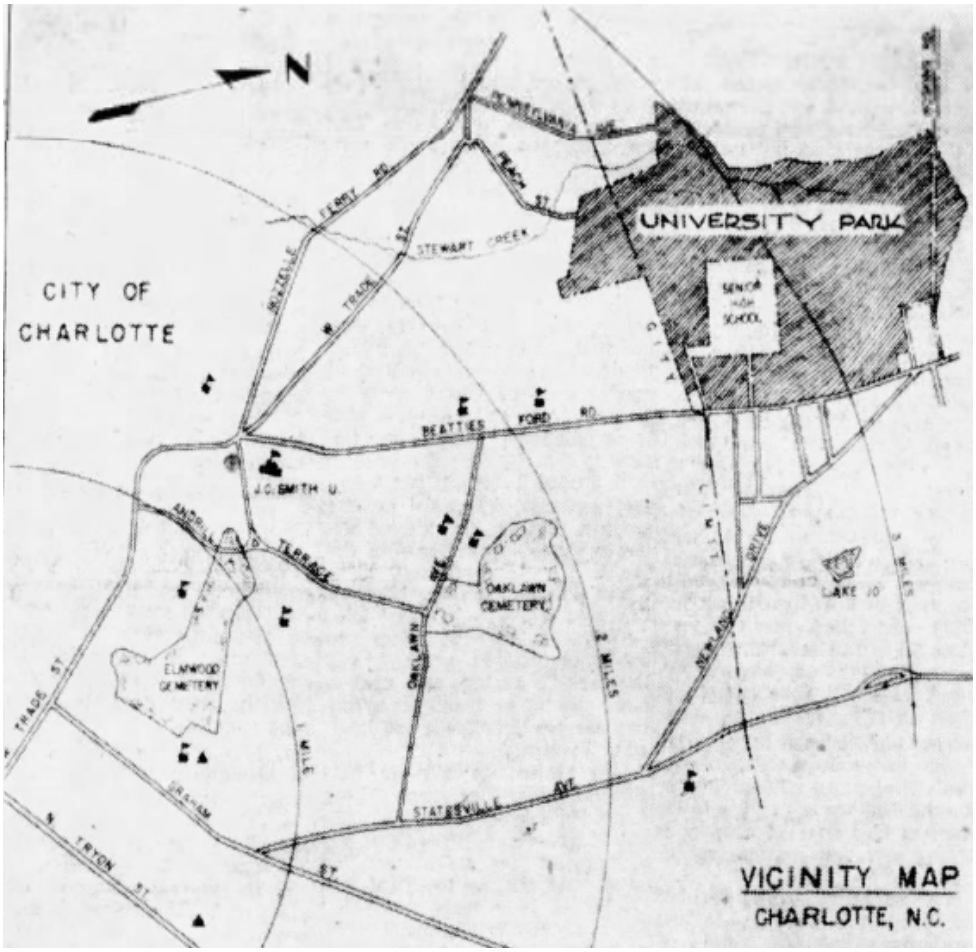
[29] "Biographical Note on Kelly Miller Alexander"; Teresa Simmons, "Kelly Alexander Sr. Knew 'Something Was Wrong," *Charlotte Post*, August 25, 1983, 1, 11; Ronald Smothers, "New Power in the N.A.A.C.P.," *New York Times*, June 13, 1983, B14; Memorandum of Benjamin L. Hooks to All NAACP Units, Board of Directors, and SCF Trustees, regarding the Kelly M. Alexander Sr. NAACP State Conference President's Award, January 3, 1993, Oklahoma Historical Society, Gateway to Oklahoma History repository, https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc1944816/, accessed July 22, 2025.

[30] Ted DeAdwyler, "Kelly Alexander Sr., civil rights leader, dies," *Charlotte News*, April 3, 1985, 1A, 10A; "A Vision of Road Ahead," *Charlotte Observer*, April 4, 1985, 14A; Smothers, "New Power in the N.A.A.C.P."; Ted DeAdwyler, "Admirers Saddened, Reflective," *Charlotte Observer*, April 4, 1985, 15A; Bruce Henderson, "Alexander eulogized as man who spoke out," *Charlotte News*, April 8, 1985, 6A.

In one of his final interviews, Kelly, Sr. discussed what drove his life's work: "From a child up, I detested segregation, segregation of people. I detested one group of people having opportunity that all the citizens could not have. It was an obsession with me as a young person to eradicate the evils of this type of society – one white and one black – which gave the dominant group everything, while the blacks got the crumbs off the table."[31]

University Park



Vicinity Map that accompanied the 1954 press release announcing development of University Park.[32]

The Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House is located in Charlotte's University Park neighborhood. Formed in the late 1950s, the neighborhood is located off Beatties Ford Road and LaSalle Street within the city's historic West End. University Park developed around the new West Charlotte High School that had moved north up Beatties Ford Road to Senior Drive in the mid-1950s, followed by the University Park Elementary School in 1958. The two segregated schools

[31] "Legacy of Justice," editorial, *Charlotte Observer*, April 4, 2025, 18A.

[32] *Charlotte News*, September 4, 1954, section 2, page 1.

enrolled only Black students. Developed in four phases between 1955 and 1962, University Park soon grew into a suburban community of ranch-style homes for a growing Black middle class looking to settle in suburban areas beyond the JCSU campus. It became the home for several notable civic leaders, professionals, and educators, as well as numerous Black businesses, churches, and schools. Eugene "Genial Gene" Potts, one of the South's first full-time Black radio announcers, and Charlotte's first Black female radio announcer "Chatty" Hattie Leeper both called University Park home. The community owes its existence in large part to the efforts of Kelly, Sr.'s older brother (and University Park next-door neighbor) Fred Alexander.[33]

University Park was one of several northwest Charlotte communities created specifically for Black Charlotteans along the Beatties Ford corridor, starting in 1913 with the Washington Heights streetcar suburb. It was soon followed by McCrorey Heights, an effort led by JCSU President Henry L. McCrorey to create a prestigious community for middle-class Black families. University Park continued that northward progression of Beatties Ford development.[34]

In addition to his role as Vice President at the Alexander Funeral Home, Fred Alexander worked for several years with Charlotte developer C. D. Spangler, Sr. (1932-2018) and his company, managing the 680-unit Double Oaks apartments developed in the 1940s by the White builder on sixty acres along Statesville Avenue. That project, consisting of low density units for returning Black World War II veterans and low-income Black families, was supported in part by the Federal Housing Administration's FHA 608 program. Spangler – who would later own the Bank of North Carolina and become president of the University of North Carolina system – founded the C. D. Spangler Construction Company after coming to Charlotte in the mid-1920s. His company built several Charlotte area communities, including Selwyn Village, Shamrock Hills, Tryon Hills, and Westfield for White residents and Double Oaks and Newland Road for Black Charlotteans.[35]

Based on his Double Oaks collaboration with Spangler and his belief that middle-class Black professionals would welcome upscale residential options comparable to their White counterparts, Fred teamed up with Spangler to create University Park. The partnership proved to be fortuitous. As a director of the Southern Fidelity Mutual Insurance Company, a subsidiary of the highly regarded Durham Life Insurance Company, Fred was able to convince the company's board of directors to provide financing for the University Park project. Meanwhile, Spangler's successful FHA-backed Double Oaks project facilitated the FHA's provision of long-term mortgages for University Park homebuyers. Announced in September 1954, plans for the 473-acre University Park community contemplated the construction of 1,200 homes at a development cost of $9 million. The community achieved national recognition and, according to the *Charlotte News*, was "the site of the first Parade of Homes for Negroes in the United States." By 1960, University Park houses were priced between $11,750 and $14,500. According to the building permit issued in June

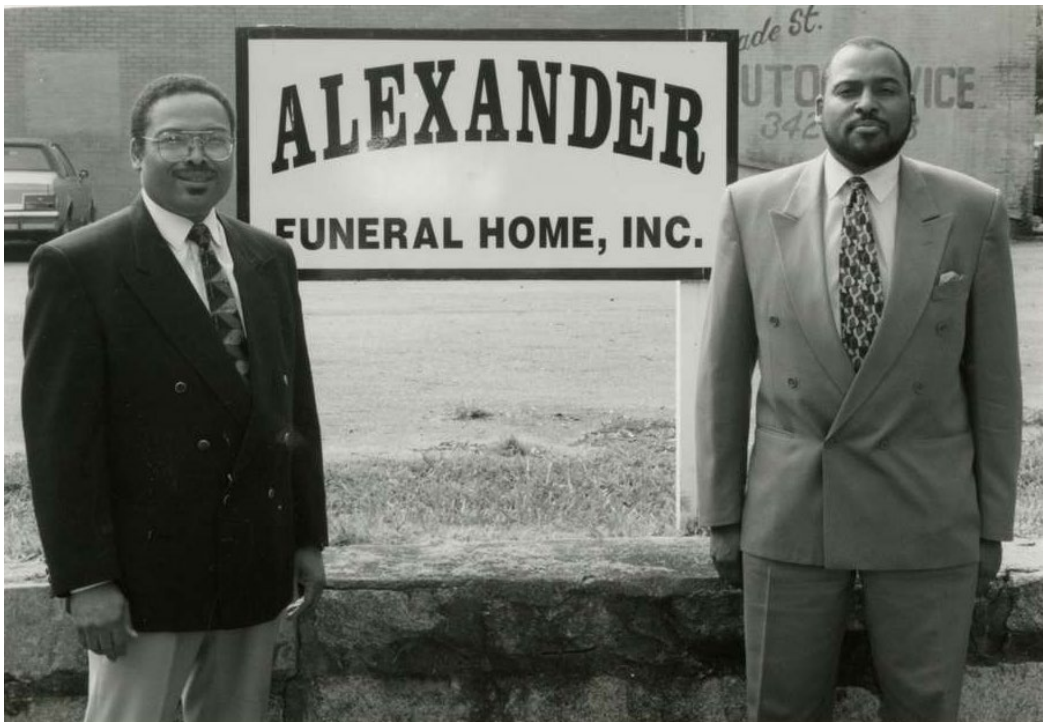
[33] Lunsford, "University Park Historical Essay."

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.; Tim Funk, "Spangler To Head UNC System," *Charlotte Observer*, February 1, 1986, 1A, 4A.

1962 for the seven-room Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House, the construction cost for the Alexander home was $19,800. The contractor was Paul K. Helms.[36]

Kelly M. Alexander, Jr. and Alfred L. Alexander



Kelly, Jr. (left) and Alfred Alexander (right) at the North Irwin Avenue location of the Alexander Funeral Home, circa 1980s.[37]

Sons Kelly, Jr. and Alfred represent the third generation of funeral directors to operate the Charlotte-based Alexander Funeral Home. Their parents' University Park house has remained in the Alexander family since its original construction. Following the completion of his undergraduate studies and Master of Public Administration degree at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Kelly, Jr. returned to Charlotte in the early 1970s to help manage the family business, moving back into the Senior Drive home with his parents. The house remained his primary residence for much of his adult life.[38]

Kelly, Jr. followed in the footsteps of both his father and his uncle Fred. By the age of 11, the younger Kelly had founded a Junior Youth Council of the NAACP. In addition to assuming his father's presidency of the North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP Branches in 1984,

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[36] Lunsford, "University Park Historical Essay"; Emery Wister, "$9 Million Development For Negroes Is Planned," *Charlotte News*, September 4, 1954, section 2, page 1; "Spangler Stars 22 Dwellings For Inspection," *Charlotte News*, April 21, 1962, 2B, 5B; "Public Record – Building Permits," *Charlotte News*, June 12, 1962, 9A.

[37] *Charlotte Post* Collection, James B. Duke Memorial Library, Johnson C. Smith University.

[38] Jim Morrill, "50 Years Ago: Bombs ignited night of terror," *Charlotte Observer*, November 22, 2015, A29, A30.

Kelly, Jr. served as President of the Charlotte NAACP Branch and was elected to the National Board of the NAACP in 1970, later chairing the National Board's economic development committee. His service as president of the North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP Branches garnered Kelly, Jr. the National NAACP Outstanding State Conference President Award, the organization's award named in his father's honor. Like his uncle Fred, Kelly, Jr. ran for public office, getting elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives in 2008. Elected to a total of eight terms, he served in the General Assembly for fourteen years. All the while, he continued to serve as Chief Financial Officer for the Alexander Funeral Home and taught at several North Carolina institutions, including JCSU, Central Piedmont Community College, Queens University, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and North Carolina Central University. Kelly, Jr. also served on numerous boards and commissions, including the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, the Friendship Community Development Corporation, and the North Carolina Martin Luther King Jr. Commission. He passed away in 2024.[39]

Of the two Alexander sons, only Alfred benefitted directly from their father's efforts to desegregate the county's schools. He graduated from West Charlotte High School – located across Senior Drive from his family's home – in the first year of school integration (1970-1971), and served as cochair of the school's student council. He subsequently graduated from North Carolina Central University and the Gupton Jones College of Mortuary Science in Decatur, Georgia. Alfred continues to work as president of the family's funeral home, a role he has served since 1980. Active in the Charlotte NAACP Branch, he has served as its President and chaired its political action committee for several years. Alfred has also served on the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Commission.[40]

IV. Architectural Assessment

The parcel considered for landmark designation as the Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House contains one contributing resource, the circa 1962 Alexander House including one accessory building in the rear yard. The perimeter of the rear yard is enclosed by an aluminum chain link fence.

The Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House is located in the University Park neighborhood on Senior Drive, across from West Charlotte High School in northwest Charlotte and behind the University Park shopping center. The parcel is just under a half-acre in size on a flat lot with mature landscaping in the front and rear yards. A grand magnolia tree is located in the rear yard and mature evergreen boxwood shrubs in the front yard.

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[39] Louise Lione, "Civil Rights: The Family Plan," *Charlotte Observer*, November 18, 1984, 1E, 4E, 5E; Alexander Funeral Home, Inc., "Obituary, The Honorable Kelly M. Alexander, Jr.," https://www.alexanderfunerals.com/obituary/kelly-alexander-jr, accessed July 24, 2025.

[40] Lione, "Civil Rights: The Family Plan," 5E; Alfred Alexander Oral History Interview, 2; "NAACP Life Membership Banquet A Success," *Charlotte Post*, September 19, 1991, 9A; Alexander Funeral Home, Inc., "Who We Are"; "Want to Get Involved?" advertisement for the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Commission, Charlotte Observer, September 26, 1999, special advertising section, 4.

The Alexander House has a medium degree of integrity as to materials. The primary façade material is textured brick including the planter along the front porch. The original roof was most likely asphalt shingle similar to the existing roof material. The front and rear porch deck retains the original terra cotta surface. The original two car garage was enclosed with a smooth, lighter color brick that was most likely constructed after the bombing incident in 1965.

The Alexander House is a fine example of a traditional ranch style home popularized in California in the 1950s that eventually made its way eastward well into the 1960s, making it the most popular housing style in the country at that time. The façade is three bays wide with traditional Ranch style features such as a low pitch hip roof, wide eaves, metal frame casement and sliding glass windows, a large central picture window, double entry doors, and a small front porch roof supported by a squared wood post that ties into the planter bed.

The rear elevation has a series of horizontal and vertical metal frame windows and three entrances. The small stone patio leads to the glass block and picture window enclosed porch. The original doorway to the converted garage remains.

The interior floor plan is largely unchanged from the original 1962 design. Most prominent features are the wide openings leading into the living room and dining areas and the exposed,

unpainted textured brick. The original brass plated fireplace is intact as well as the chimney that extends approximately four feet above the roof.

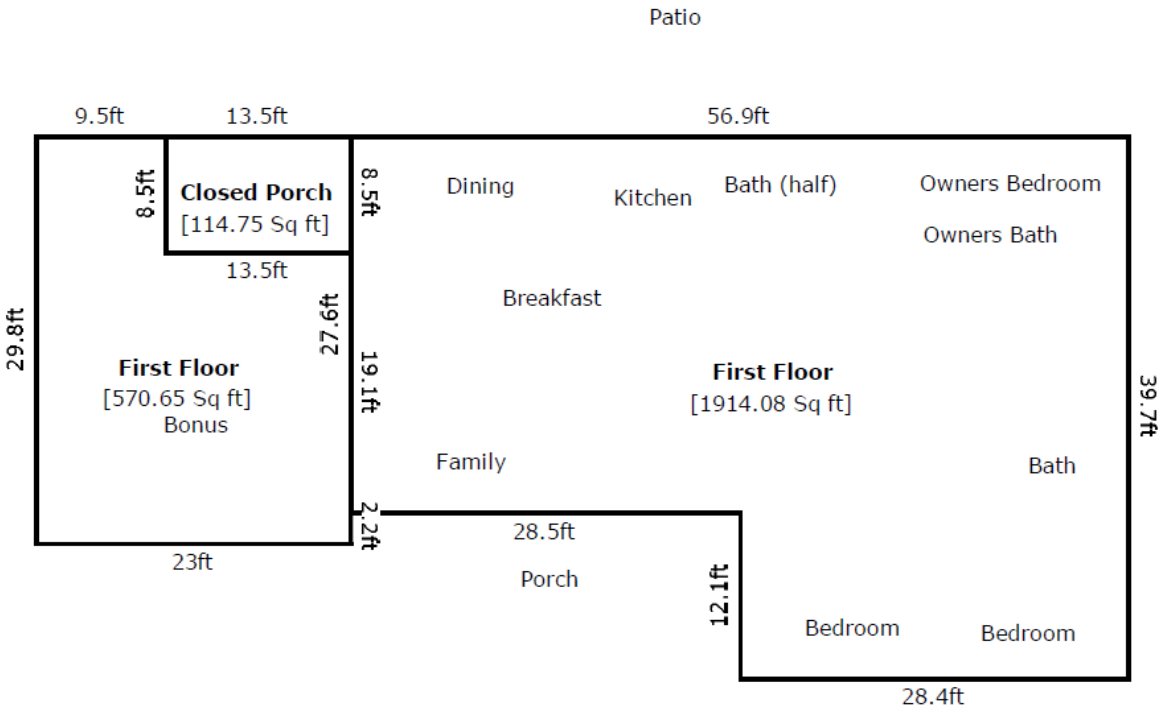
Interior material features include original wood paneling in the bedrooms, cedar plank in the bedroom closets, original wood doors, original tile in the bathrooms, and original asbestos tile flooring in two bedrooms. As a result of the bombing incident the front picture window was replaced. The remaining original windows are metal frame.

A popular feature in higher end ranch houses in the 1950s-1960s and early 1970s were intercom systems with AM/FM radios. In the Alexander house the intercoms were located in the kitchen area, family room, and bedrooms.

The family room retains a wood built-in cabinet/bench and vertical wood paneling that leads to the patio.

The bedrooms retain the same vertical wood panels as the family room. The bedroom closets have original wood doors and horizontal cedar paneling inside. The original flooring is asbestos tiles, uncovered in one of the rooms.

The window arrangement is a combination of high ribbon type horizontal windows in the bedrooms, large vertical windows on the rear elevation, and small square windows in the bathrooms.



Floor Plan of Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House

Interior Designation Parameters

In order to recognize the historical and architectural significance of the Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House, it is recommended that the landmark designation include the entire interior of the house. The property owner has provided written consent for interior review of the building pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 160D-947(b). Character-defining interior features of the interior of the house include but are not limited to the following:

Kelly M. and Margaret G. A. Alexander House

Features Located Throughout the House
Exposed unpainted textured brick
Original wood room and closet doors
Original metal frame windows (with the exception of the front picture window in the living room)
Wide openings leading into the living room and dining areas
Wall-mounted intercom system with AM/FM radios (master station located in the kitchen area; substations located in family room and bedrooms)
Vertical wood paneling

Living Room
Original brass plated fireplace

Family Room
Wood built-in cabinet/bench and shelves

Enclosed Patio
Original terra cotta surface

Bedrooms
Horizontal cedar paneling in closets
Original asbestos tile flooring in two bedrooms

Bathrooms
Original tile

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