

Amendment to the Landmark Designation Report for the



Liddell-McNinch House Charlotte, North Carolina

Prepared by:
Susan V. Mayer, Principal
April 2026

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Charlotte, North Carolina
<https://www.svmhistorical.com>
susan@svmhistorical.com

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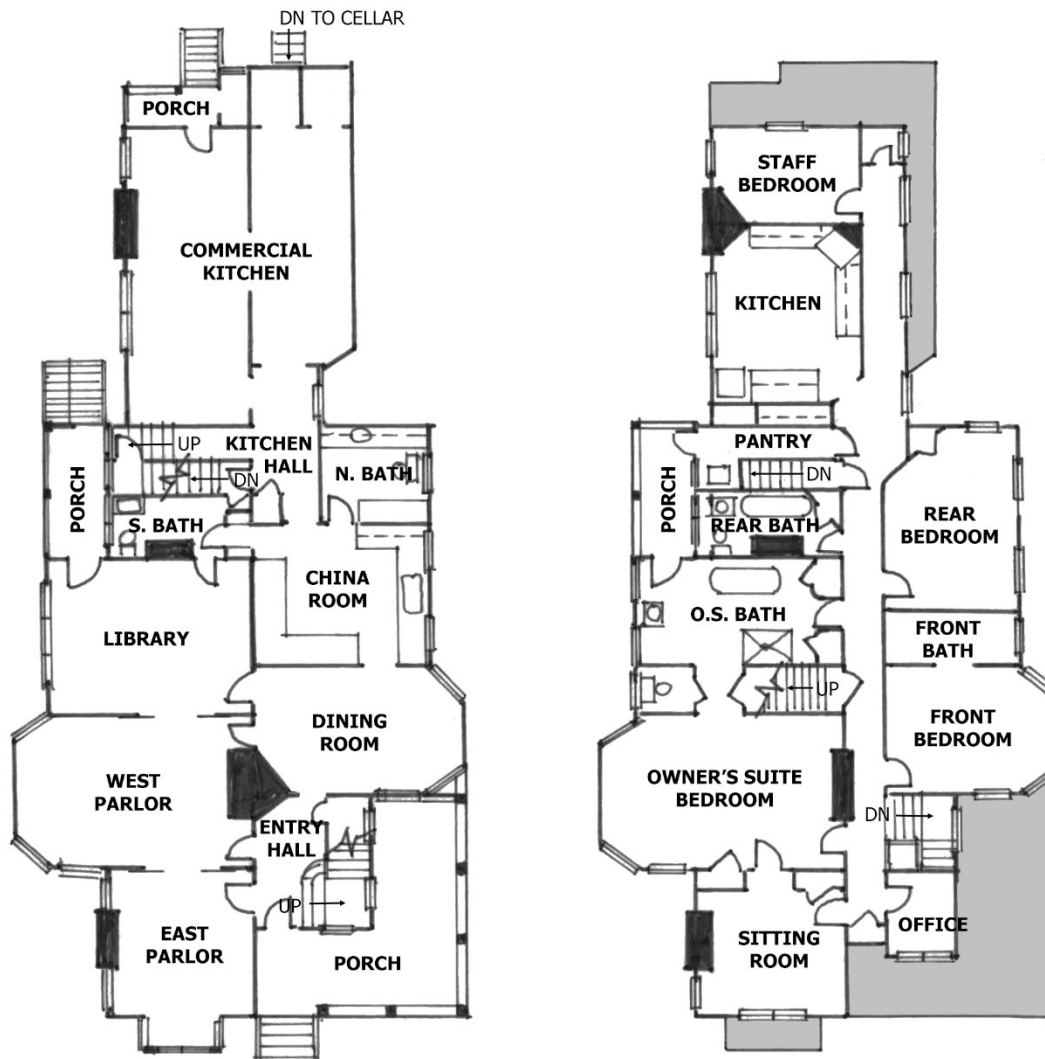
Addendum Purpose

A survey and research report written by Patsy Kinsey with an architectural description by Jack O. Boyte was submitted for the Liddell-McNinch House on October 20, 1975, to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Foundation. The property was designated a local landmark by Charlotte City Council on May 17, 1976. However, the ordinance for designation does not explicitly include the interior of the house or the parcel on which the house is located. This addendum provides added information to justify the house's interior and the parcel as part of the designation, historical context beyond 1975 to include the purchase of the house by Ellen Davis and the opening of the McNinch House Restaurant, and updated interior and exterior photographs of the property.

General Information

Historic Names of Property:	Liddell-McNinch House, McNinch House Restaurant
Address of Property:	511 N. Church Street Charlotte, NC 28202
PIN:	07803513
Deed Book & Page:	Mecklenburg County Deed Book 39467, Page 804
Amount of Land/Acreage to be Designated:	0.395 Acres
Ad Valorem Tax Value:	The 2026 Real Estate Assessed Value of parcel 07803513 which includes the Liddell-McNinch House is \$3,724,500.
Recommendation for Designation:	Interior and exterior of the Liddell-McNinch House and all of parcel 07803513.
Name/Address of Current Property Owner:	Mitchell Van Clark and Delores Clark 511 N. Church Street Charlotte, NC 28202

Floor Plan



Designation Parameters

The Liddell-McNinch House retains a majority of its original interior exterior materials. This Specific architectural features and elements include:

- Exterior wood doors and hardware
- All windows, wood sash in a variety of configurations, and hardware
 - Large 9/1 windows, typical at first floor
 - Large 9/2 windows, typical at second floor
 - Sixteen lite ocular window
 - Staircase has rectangular 11-lite window, two rectangular 30-lite windows, and paired 20/1 window
 - Small 9/1 lite window at south bathroom

- 17-lite square window at north bathroom
 - Small rectangular 12-lite window at closet under staircase
- Interior wood doors with original hardware in a variety of styles, widths, and heights
 - Five panel (2/1/2 configuration)
 - Four panel (2/2 configuration)
 - Three panel (1/1/1 configuration)
- Wood strip flooring throughout the first floor and second floor of the house.
- Scalloped wood trim with corner medallions at doorways and windows
- Wood beadboard wainscoting
- Wood waincoating in Foyer, Dining Room, and Library
- Coffered wood ceiling in Library
- Carved crown molding
- Tall wood baseboards
- Wood corner beads
- Entry Hall wood staircase including treads, railing, balusters, and newel posts
- Ten (10) wood fireplace mantles
- Tile fireplace surrounds and hearths on nine (9) fireplaces (except the Upstairs Parlor)
- Original gas (converted to electric) light fixtures according to Dee Dee Clark:
 - Foyer
 - Parlor
 - Library ceiling and sconces
 - China room sconces
 - Upstairs Parlor
 - Owner's Suite Bedroom
 - Front Bedroom
 - Rear Bedroom
 - Upstairs Hall
 - Owner's Suite Bathroom water closet
 - Kitchen Stairs

Chain of Title

Grantor	Grantee	Date	Deed Book/ Page	Notes
Mitchell Van Clark and spouse, Delores Clark	Mitchell Van Clark and spouse, Delores Clark	March 27, 2025	39467/804	See also estate file of Ellen Annette Davis (23E001716-590) who died testate 01/13/2023 in Mecklenburg County, leaving as her sole surviving heir Grantor Mitchell Van Clark.
[McNinch heirs] and Berryhill Preservation, Inc., under that certain Power of Attorney dated July 19, 1978, recorded in the Mecklenburg Registry, of the State of North Carolina	Ellen N. Davis (unmarried)	November 27, 1978	4132/251	
W. F. Buchanan and wife, Elizabeth Buchanan	Mrs. Julia I. McNinch	March 1, 1919	398/237	
American Title and Guaranty Company	W. F. Buchanan	February 24, 1919	402/115	Home Realty Corporation has amended its charter and changed names

				to American Title and Guaranty Company.
Thaddeus A. Adams and John A. Coke, Jr., trustees	Home Realty Corporation	July 2, 1918	391/420	McNinch default on deed of trust (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 321, Page 447) on 505 N. Church St.
Chas. M. Patterson (unmarried)	Samuel S. McNinch	1907	222/591	
Vinton Liddell and wife Jane Hall Liddell	Charles M. Patterson	November 23, 1904	198/24	
Charles L. Keerans and his wife F.M. Keerans	Jane Hall Liddell	November 21, 1900	152/248	Property north of the Liddell house (today 515 N. Church Street, PIN 07803547)
L.M. Wriston et. al.	Jane Hall Liddell	October 1, 1896	112/518	Property south of the Liddell house (today 505 N. Church Street, PIN 07803512)
Vinton Liddell	Jane Hall Liddell	January 3, 1893	84/554	
G. F. Bason	Vinton Liddell	July 30, 1891	77/585	
<i>Source: Register of Deeds Office, Mecklenburg County</i>				

Abstract

Statement of Significance

The Liddell-McNinch House is significant as an outstanding and well-preserved example of the Shingle Style of residential architecture in Charlotte. It is associated with notable Charlotteans, businessman Vinton Liddell and mayor S. S. McNinch. The Liddell-McNinch House has association with President William Howard Taft, who visited Charlotte in 1909 at the invitation of McNinch and spent the night in the house.

Integrity Statement

Location	HIGH	The Liddell-McNinch House is located at its original site of construction in the Fourth Ward neighborhood of Charlotte.
Design	HIGH	The Liddell-McNinch House, built 1892 in the Shingle Style, has a high integrity of design. As noted by Jack O. Boyte in 1975 and reflected in the home's current state, "The McNinch House is an expression of this uniquely American style of the 1880's and '90s, characterized by light frame construction, irregular outlines, verandahs and balconies, steep pitched roofs, and large open interior spaces—made possible by the development of the central heating systems." ¹
Setting	MEDIUM/ HIGH	The Liddell-McNinch House is located in the Fourth Ward neighborhood of Charlotte, the last remaining historically residential section of the center city. Over the historical period of the home, commercial development has encroached along the neighborhood edges, reducing its residential nature.
Materials	HIGH	The Liddell-McNinch House retains a majority of its original exterior and interior building materials, many of which were unusual in Charlotte as examples of high-end construction and design.
Workmanship	HIGH	The Liddell-McNinch House retains high integrity of workmanship as the home of upper-class residents in the

¹ Jack O. Boyte, Architectural Description, in Patsy Kinsey, Liddell-McNinch House, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission (October 20, 1975), <https://mecknc.widen.net/s/jdvnr6cb5c/liddell-mcninch-house-sr>, accessed February 19, 2026.

late 1800s and early 1900s. The elaborate woodwork inside the house is especially reflective of the skill of artisans at this time.

Feeling	MEDIUM/ HIGH	The Liddell-McNinch House conveys a high degree of feeling as an opulent multi-story home built in the late nineteenth century and occupied by elite white Charlotte families. This feeling continues with the conversion of the first floor of the house into the McNinch House Restaurant, a high-end restaurant which embraces the historical nature of its location.
Association	HIGH	The Liddell-McNinch House has high integrity of association with notable figures in Charlotte's history. The 1975 designation reports documents the following criteria: • Events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history: President William Howard Taft visited in the house at 511 North Church Street when he came to Charlotte to participate in the celebration of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, May 20, 1909. • Associated with lives of persons: In addition to its association with a President of the United States, the house was occupied by S. S. McNinch who was Mayor of Charlotte from 1905 to 1907. Also, the house was built by Vinton Liddell, a wealthy Charlotte businessman and owner of the Liddell Company in the late 1800's. • Type, period, method of construction: This house is thought to be one of the finest examples of Queen Anne shingle style architecture in North Carolina. It has been nominated to the National Register. • Information important in history: The house is significant in American history because of the Presidential visit in 1909 to celebrate the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence signed

May 20, 1775, over a year before the national document was signed.²

² Patsy Kinsey, Liddell-McNinch House, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission (October 20, 1975), <https://mecknc.widen.net/s/jdvnr6cb5c/liddell-mcninch-house-sr>, accessed February 19, 2026.

Maps



Location Map. Source: Polaris (2026)





Boundary Map. Source: Polaris (2026)



Amended Historical Background

The amended historical background provides additional information about owners Vinton Liddell and S. S. McNinch not included in the original survey and research report. The historical boundary of the property associated with the house is explained to justify the inclusion of the parcel in the amended designation. Lastly, the historical significance of the property is expanded with discussion of the ownership and restoration of the Liddell-McNinch House by Ellen Davis, who established the McNinch House Restaurant.

Vinton Liddell

Additional information about Vinton Liddell, builder of the Liddell-McNinch House, was included in the 1976 National Register nomination:

Vinton Liddell (1859-1915) was a wealthy and successful Charlotte businessman who moved to the city in 1875, when his father founded the Liddell Company, manufacturers of machinery. After a brief period in business in Montgomery, Alabama, and marriage to Jane Hyde Hall of Ridgeway, Pennsylvania, he returned to Charlotte in 1890. Among his business connections were the Highland Park Manufacturing Company, makers of gingham, of which he was president, and the Elizabeth Mills, which he served as vice-president. He retired from active business about 1900, at the early age of forty-one, and divided his time between Charlotte, travel abroad, and his summer home at Great Barrington, Massachusetts.³

S. S. McNinch

The original designation report had little information presented about S. S. McNinch. In addition, the National Register nomination stated of McNinch, “about whom little is known.”⁴ Extended biographical information about McNinch is available today. The biography available for the Samuel Sylvanus McNinch Collection at the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library provides the following information:

Samuel McNinch, born in Chester, South Carolina, who moved to Charlotte, North Carolina at a young age, would become the Mayor of Charlotte from 1905-1907. Prior to becoming Mayor of Charlotte for one term, McNinch would serve as alderman for the fourth ward of Charlotte as well as the President of Charlotte Brick Company. McNinch is also known for founding both the Charlotte Brick Company and the S. S. McNinch Real Estate Company. During McNinch’s Mayoral

³ Mary Alice Hinson, H. McKelden Smith, and Patsy B. Kinsey, Liddell-McNinch House, National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form, (1976).

⁴ *Ibid.*

administration, Theodore Roosevelt visited Charlotte, the number of Charlotte alderman increased to 22, and the Brevard Street Library opened.⁵



Figure 1 Samuel S. McNinch. Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, Robinson Spangler Carolina Room, Samuel Sylvanus McNinch Collection, 1905-1977, Box 3.

Additional information is shared in the collection abstract:

Samuel Sylvanus McNinch lived from 1867-1929. Born in Chester, South Carolina, he would move to Charlotte, North Carolina at a young age and would become the Mayor of Charlotte from 1905-1907. McNinch became Deputy Clerk of the Superior Court at sixteen, followed by Manager of Springs and Burwell, partner of what became S.S. McNinch and Co. in 1896, and eventually bought out the Charlotte Brick Works in 1904. In addition, he served as a member of the Charlotte Board of Aldermen, a Trustee of Carnegie Library, and Trustee of the Florence Crittenden Home.⁶

⁵ Rachel Gaskin, "Biographical/Historical," Samuel Sylvanus McNinch Collection, 1905-1977, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library (2019), <https://specialcollections.cmlibrary.org/repositories/2/resources/237>, accessed February 27, 2026.

⁶ Gaskin, McNinch Collection.

Evolution of the Liddell-McNinch Property

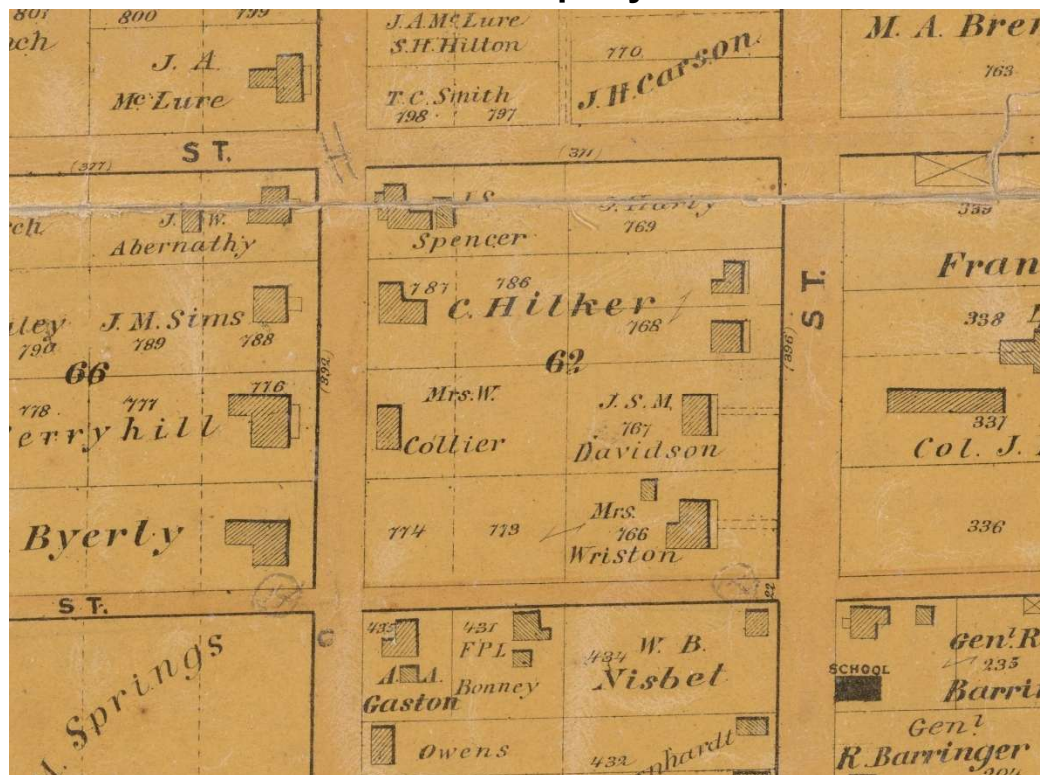


Figure 2 1877 Beers plat map of Charlotte. The Liddell-McNinch House is located on the property of J.S.M. Davidson.

Vinton Liddell acquired the property, identified as Lot 767 of Square 62 on the 1877 Beers plat map, at a public auction in 1891.⁷ Vinton transferred the home to wife Jane Hall Liddell in 1893. They acquired part of the Wriston property south of the house in 1896 and the parcel to their north in 1900.⁸ This land comprised the Liddell-McNinch property until 1918, when S.S. and Julia McGill McNinch defaulted on a deed of trust held by Thaddeus A. Adams and John A. Coke, Jr. The property was sold at public auction to Home Realty Corporation, which rebranded to American Title and Guaranty Company. The house and its parcel were sold to W.F. Buchanan, who then sold it back to Julia McNinch.⁹ The northern portion was sold to William Frederick Casey, who developed on

⁷ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 7, Page 585.

⁸ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 112, Page 518; Mecklenburg County Deed Book 152, Page 248.

⁹ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 398, Page 237.

the site the Frederick Apartments.¹⁰ The southern portion was later the residence of Mrs. Laura Ross Hargrave and her sister El Dora Ross.¹¹

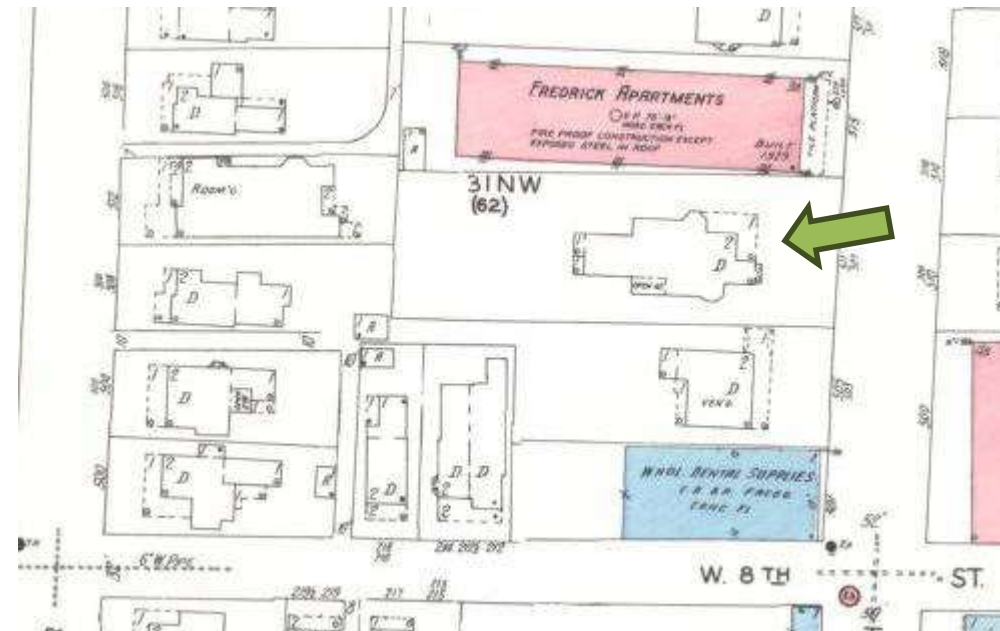


Figure 3 This 1929 Sanborn map shows the Liddell-McNinch House (south of Frederick Apartments) with its modern property boundary.

Ellen Davis and the McNinch House Restaurant

As of the date of the 1975 designation report, the home was the residence of Mattie McNinch, daughter of S. S. and Julia McGill McNinch, and John K. Slear, widower of Mattie's sister Julia McNinch Slear. Julia had died on February 18, 1975. Mattie later moved into the Wesley Nursing Center (today Aldersgate), where she died on November 13, 1977.¹² The McNinch heirs sold the property to Ellen Noles Davis in November 1978 for \$85,500.¹³ Ellen was interviewed shortly after by the *News*, and a photo of her next to a sign hung between two trees in the front yard—"This House Belongs to Ellen Davis...And She Loves It!" She received a \$10,000 matching grant from the state Department of Cultural Resources to restore the exterior and a \$75,000 loan at six percent

¹⁰ The Frederick Apartments, today Frederick Place condos, were designated a Mecklenburg County landmark in December 2000 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places in January 2001. Mecklenburg County Deed Book 618, Page 218; Mary Beth Gatza, "Frederick Apartments," Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, July 20, 2000, <http://landmarkscommission.org/2016/11/02/frederick-apartments/>, accessed February 27, 2026; Mary Beth Gatza, Frederick Apartments, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, August 8, 2000.

¹¹ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 498, Page 185.

¹² "Miss Mattie McNinch," obituary, *Charlotte News*, November 15, 1977.

¹³ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 4132, Page 251.

interest from the city fund for restoring Fourth Ward. With this funding, she planned to open the redeveloping neighborhood's first restaurant on the first floor and live on the second floor.¹⁴



Figure 4 Ellen Davis outside her new home, the Liddell-McNinch House. Laura Toler, photograph, *Charlotte News*, December 5, 1978.

The Liddell-McNinch House suffered from years of deferred maintenance. The slate roof had holes, and a chimney poured water down to the first floor. Water damage was found throughout. Ellen sanded and refinished most woodwork, including ten ornate wood mantles, moldings, and doors. She converted a nursery on the second floor into the owner's suite bathroom. The former staff quarters became her personal kitchen. The conversion was complicated, as the small room had six walls, two windows, a fireplace, and two doorways to work around.¹⁵

¹⁴ Laura Toler, "Charlotte Woman Has Plans for Old 4th Ward House," *Charlotte News*, December 5, 1978.

¹⁵ Kathleen Purvis, "An Elegant Occasion at the McNinch House Restaurant," *Our State* (April 2013), <https://www.ourstate.com/mcninch-house-restaurant-charlotte/>, accessed February 28, 2026; Jodi Helmer, "A Modern Update Inside the McNinch House," *Charlotte Magazine*, September 4, 2017, <https://www.charlottemagazine.com/a-modern-update-inside-the-mcninch-house/>, accessed February 28, 2026.

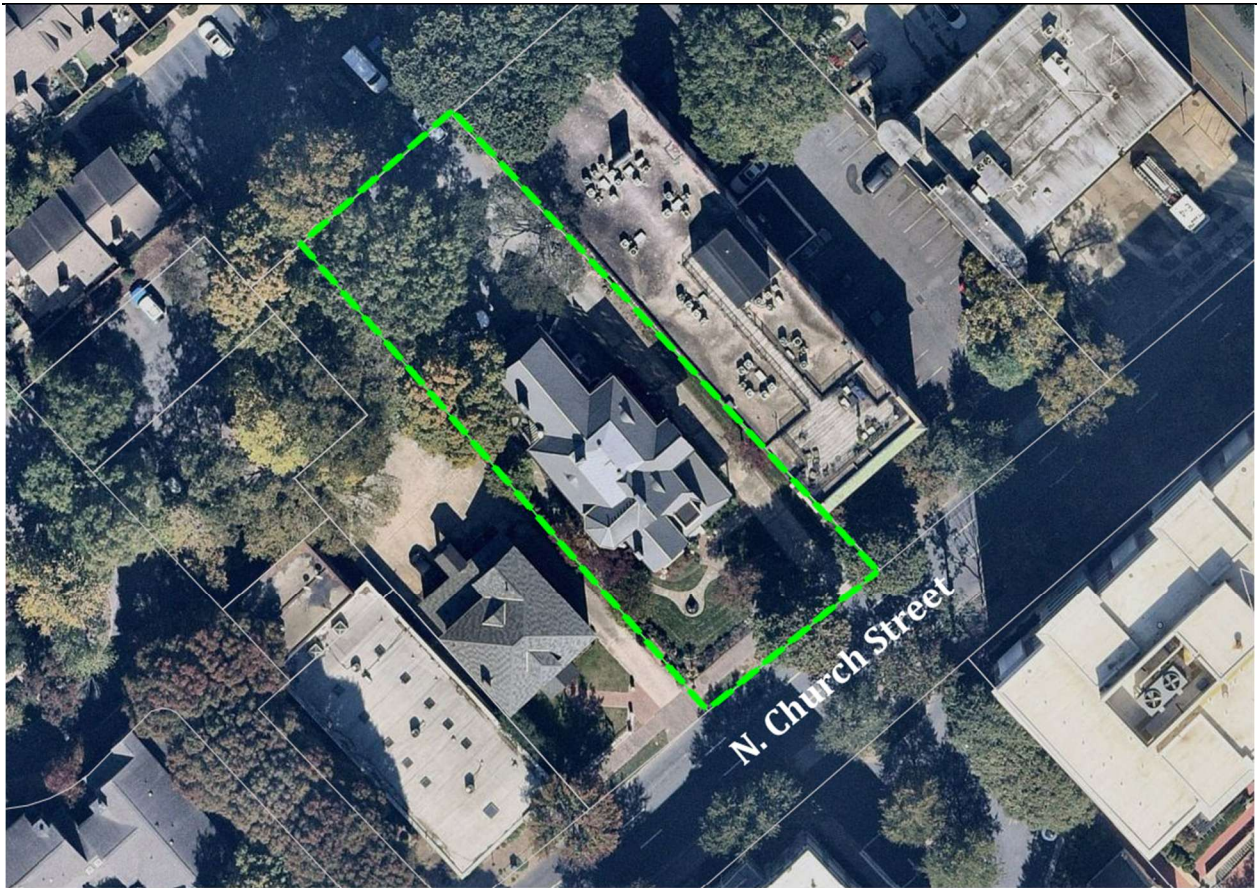
Once the first-floor kitchen was restored and upgraded to a commercial kitchen, she operated a catering business from the house. She made sandwiches, which she sold from a pushcart on weekdays at the Square at Trade and Tryon Streets. Ellen was a self-trained chef—she took cooking classes at Central Piedmont Community College but preferred learning on her own. After a decade of restoration, Ellen opened the McNinch House Restaurant in January 1989. The restaurant became known for its historical ambience and fine dining which combined French techniques with Southern ingredients. Dennis Rash, a resident in Fourth Ward and president of community development with NCNC (today Bank of America), credits the McNinch House Restaurant for attracting TransAmerica Reinsurance to move its headquarters from Los Angeles to Charlotte in 1997.¹⁶

Ellen passed away on January 13, 2023. Her nephew Mitchell Van “Mitch” Clark and spouse Delores “Dee Dee” Clark inherited the house and restaurant, which continues operation today.¹⁷

¹⁶ Purvis, “An Elegant Occasion”; Cameron Holtz, *Fourth Ward Charlotte: A Neighborhood History* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2023), 102; “About,” McNinch House Restaurant, <https://www.mcninchhouserestaurant.com/about>, accessed February 28, 2026.

¹⁷ “Ellen Noles Davis,” obituary, <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/charlotte/name/ellen-davis-obituary?id=38712473>, accessed February 28, 2026.

Architectural Description



The architectural description of the Liddell-McNinch House in the 1975 survey and research report written by architect Jack O. Boyte eloquently describes the architectural elements and details of the house. Boyte referred to the house as “the only remaining example of Shingle Style architecture in Mecklenburg County, and is probably one of the outstanding examples in North Carolina.”¹⁸

The amended architectural description will directly quote the 1975 architectural description by Jack O. Boyte, which only provided a general description of contributing interior features. This amendment will supplement the Boyte description with the more detailed Section 7 architectural description by Mary Alice Hinson and H. McKelden Smith in the National Register of Historic Places nomination form, completed in 1975 and listed in the Register in January 1976.

¹⁸ Boyte Architectural Description.

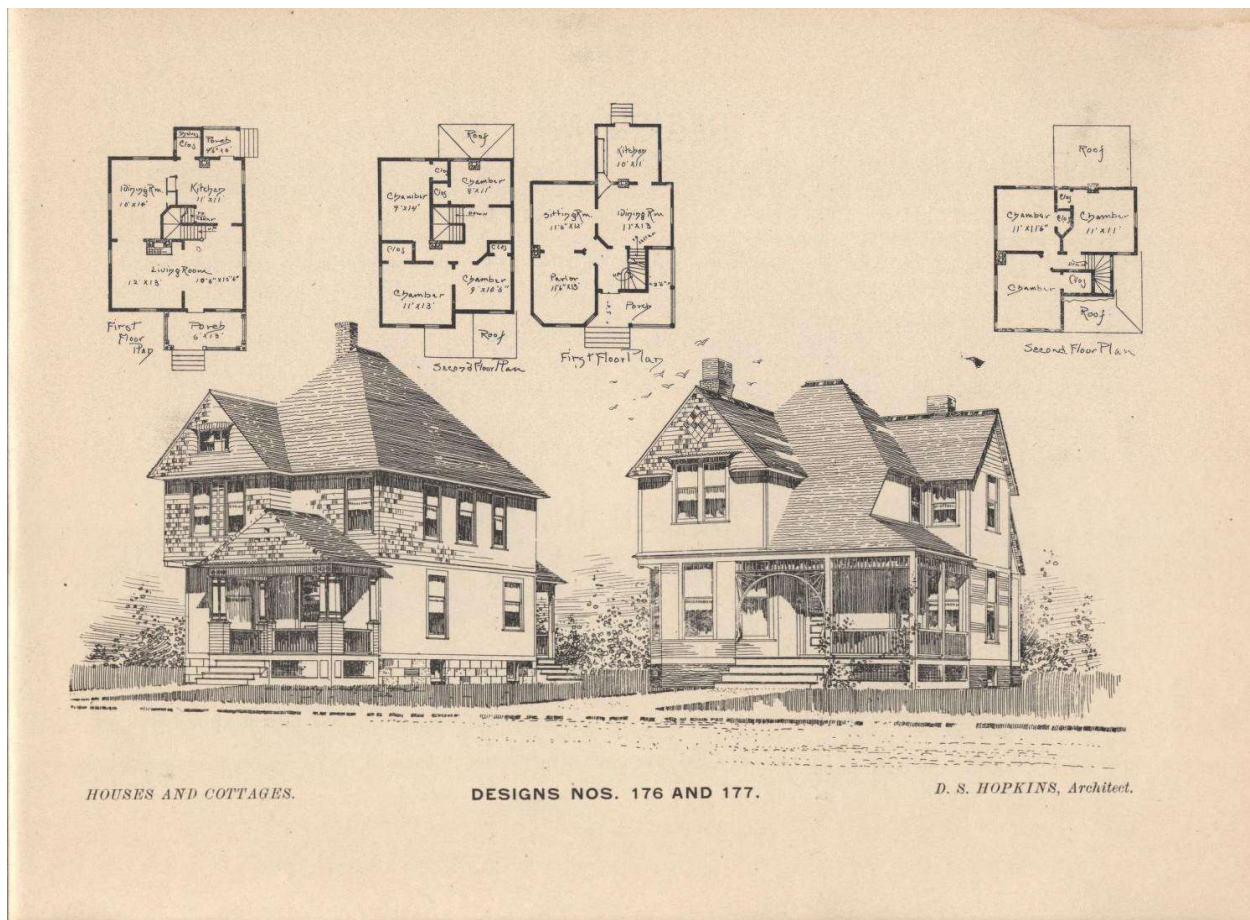


Figure 5 These homes from an 1893 plan book by Michigan architect D. S. Hopkins show the Liddell-McNinch House incorporated contemporary architectural trends.

While information has not been found on the designer of the Liddell-McNinch House, many contemporary plan books show similar floor plans, roof orientations, and architectural details. For instance, home design no. 177 by architect D. S. Hopkins of Grand Rapids, Michigan, published in 1893, displays a similar façade roof at the wraparound front porch.¹⁹

Records show that a building permit was applied for on November 30, 1962, to make \$400 of repairs to the slate roof. A permit application was made on August 16, 1962, to “replace hand fired coal gravity hotvair (sic) with oil fired hot air furnace” and all ducts.²⁰ Ellen said she put at least \$50,000 in repairs and restoration in the first years of her

¹⁹ D.S. Hopkins, *Houses and Cottages, Book No. 6* (Grand Rapids, MI: D.S. Hopkins, 1893), 79-80, <https://archive.org/details/DSHopkinsHousesandcottagesbookno60001/>, accessed March 4, 2026.

²⁰ Building Permits, microfilm, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.

ownership. This included \$9,000 in general repairs in spring 1980 and \$39,000 to reroof the entire house and install new gutters in summer 1980.²¹ In fall 1993, the house was repainted and the front porch was restored. The contractor found that the house was sagging, so floor joists were also replaced.²²



Figure 6 This photo of the Liddell-McNinch House was likely taken in the 1970s. A note on the back, likely written by Mattie McNinch, reads, “511 Church St, N. Dad moved into this in 1907.” Samuel Sylvanus McNinch Collection, 1905-1977, Box 3.

Exterior Description

The entirety of Boyte’s 1975 exterior description is included here to serve as a basis for comparison:

The exterior of this two story, and sometimes three story house rises from a high brick foundation wall which is covered with cement stucco. Under much of the rear of the house is a service cellar which is well lighted with foundation wall windows. The entire perimeter foundation wall is, for that matter, pierced with window sash ventilators at regular intervals. From the foundation wall the first floor starts from a

²¹ “Building Permits,” *Charlotte News*, March 25, 1980; M.S. Van Heckle, “Business Beat,” column, *Charlotte Observer*, June 1, 1980.

²² “New Life for an Old House,” *Charlotte Observer*, May 2, 1994.

heavy molded wood water table with narrow, white painted, beaded lap siding (a Queen Anne detail). At the top of the first floor windows the siding flares out to a molded band from which rise green stained wood shingles laid in tight narrow courses, and all smooth sawn (no rustic effect was sought). The second floor exterior reflects the imaginative irregularity of the second floor plan. A turreted three story bay on the South side is topped with a glass enclosed octagonal “sun room” where turned wood half columns form the mullions. A gabled window faces the front over a sweeping verandah which turns down the North side of the house and is covered with a wide sloping roof which flows gracefully up to the crest of the highest roof. In the upper front gable is a round garret window with small divided lights, trimmed with a wooden voussoir which forbids even the smallest plain wall surface. This bulls-eye window is repeated in the side wall of a side two story wing which extends to the North. This wing has angled corners with windows in the angles at each floor. The exuberant, many surfaced roof is covered with slate shingles laid in varying patterns, including round “fish scale” and pointed “diamond” courses in mid slope - details which were suggested as early as 1850 by A. J. Downing in “Architecture For Country Houses”. At the roof ridge over the center, high portion of the house, and on prominent display is a row of crest tiles - also suggested by Downing. Rising here and there above the roof are brick chimneys with imaginative corbeled caps. Facing the North from the front gable roof is an “eyebrow” garret window. A detail emphasizing the rich variety of this architectural style. At the rear, South corner is a finely detailed second floor balcony opening off the master bedroom. The delicate turned balusters, molded rail cap and turned wood columns and pilasters enclosing this covered balcony, reflect the same elements found at the first floor verandah.²³

The exterior of the Liddell-McNinch House is largely unchanged from the above 1975 description. The windows at the attic porch (referred to by Boyte as the “sun room”) have been removed. The stuccoed brick foundation is covered with mesh fabric and wood lattice. The only change to the building footprint is at the rear north elevation. A small 2’ exterior addition to the first floor at the dishwashing/pantry section incorporates the shingle sheathing of the upper level into its sloped covering. It is sheathed in wood lattice over mesh fabric, covering exterior venting in the kitchen, with wood weatherboard siding at a small rear section. Solid composite fencing conceals gas meters, HVAC units, and other utility elements.

Hinson and Smith provide a description of the window fenestration throughout the house:

²³ Boyte Architectural Description.

Windows of various sizes and shapes (square, rectangular, and round) arranged in various groups open from equally various interior spaces. A combination of sash is in evidence, among them two-over-two, six-over-six, and sixteen-over-one. The dominant design is a simple pattern forming rectilinear lights in the upper sash over a single pane in the lower.²⁴

Images from slides taken ca. 1975, ca. 1980, and ca. 1990 in the Liddell-McNinch House files at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission are included within the architectural description.

²⁴ Hinson, Smith, and Kinsey.

Façade/East Elevation



Looking southwest from northeast corner of property



Looking northwest from southeast corner of property



Looking west



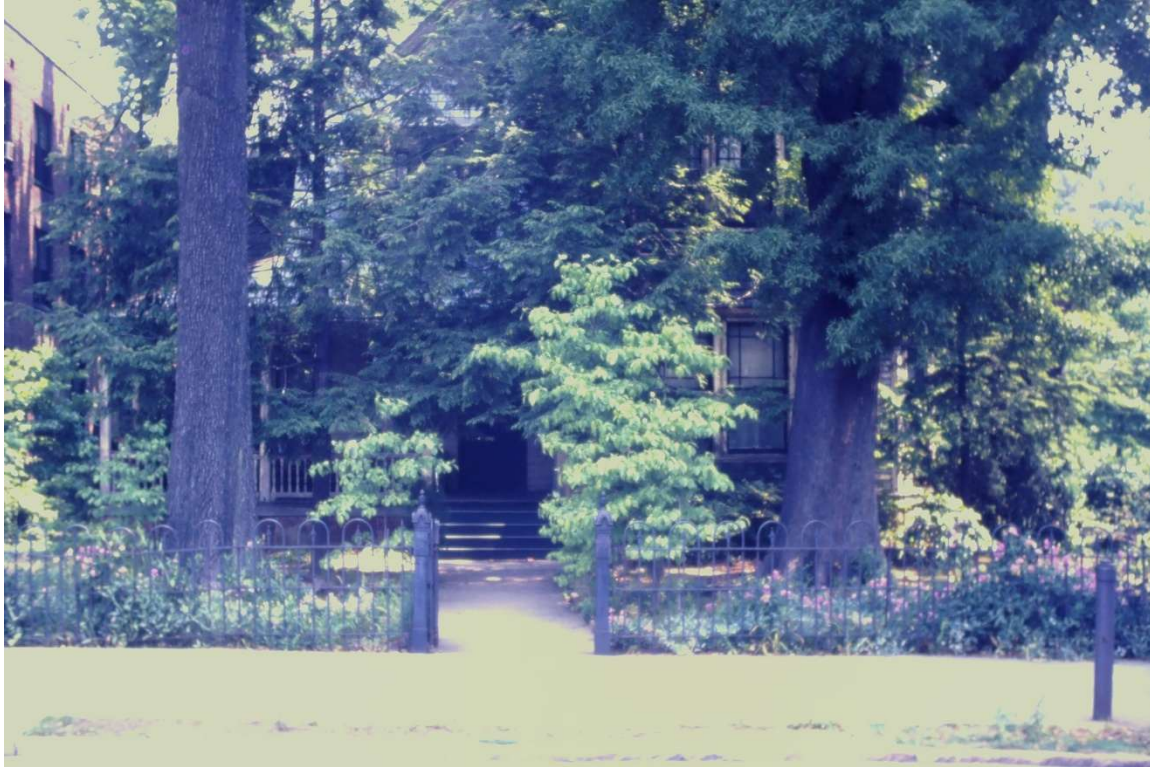
Front porch looking southwest



Gable and eave detail of two-story façade bay



Front door



Façade/East Elevation, ca. 1975



Façade/East Elevation, ca. 1975



Façade/East Elevation, ca. 1975



Façade/East Elevation, ca. 1975



Porch at Façade/East Elevation looking North at Frederick Apartments, ca. 1975



Façade/East Elevation under renovation, ca. 1980



Façade/East Elevation under renovation, ca. 1980



Façade/East Elevation, ca. 1980



Restored Façade/East Elevation ca. 1990

South Elevation



Looking northeast from adjacent parcel



View of attic porch looking west also showing roof rake details, front chimney of south elevation, and interior chimney



Front chimney looking north



Two-story porch looking east



Rear chimney looking north



Second story of two-story porch looking west from owner's suite bedroom



South Elevation looking west, ca. 1975



South Elevation, ca. 1975



South Elevation, ca. 1975



South Elevation, ca. 1975



South Elevation, ca. 1975

Rear/West Elevation



Looking northeast



Door to cellar looking east



Interior of storage closet at north side of rear porch



Rear/West Elevation, ca. 1975



Rear/West Elevation, ca. 1975

North Elevation



Looking southeast from north property line



Rear section looking south



Oculus window at rear section looking south



Window and gable eave detail in two-story bay section looking southeast



Typical upstairs window, nine-over-two configuration

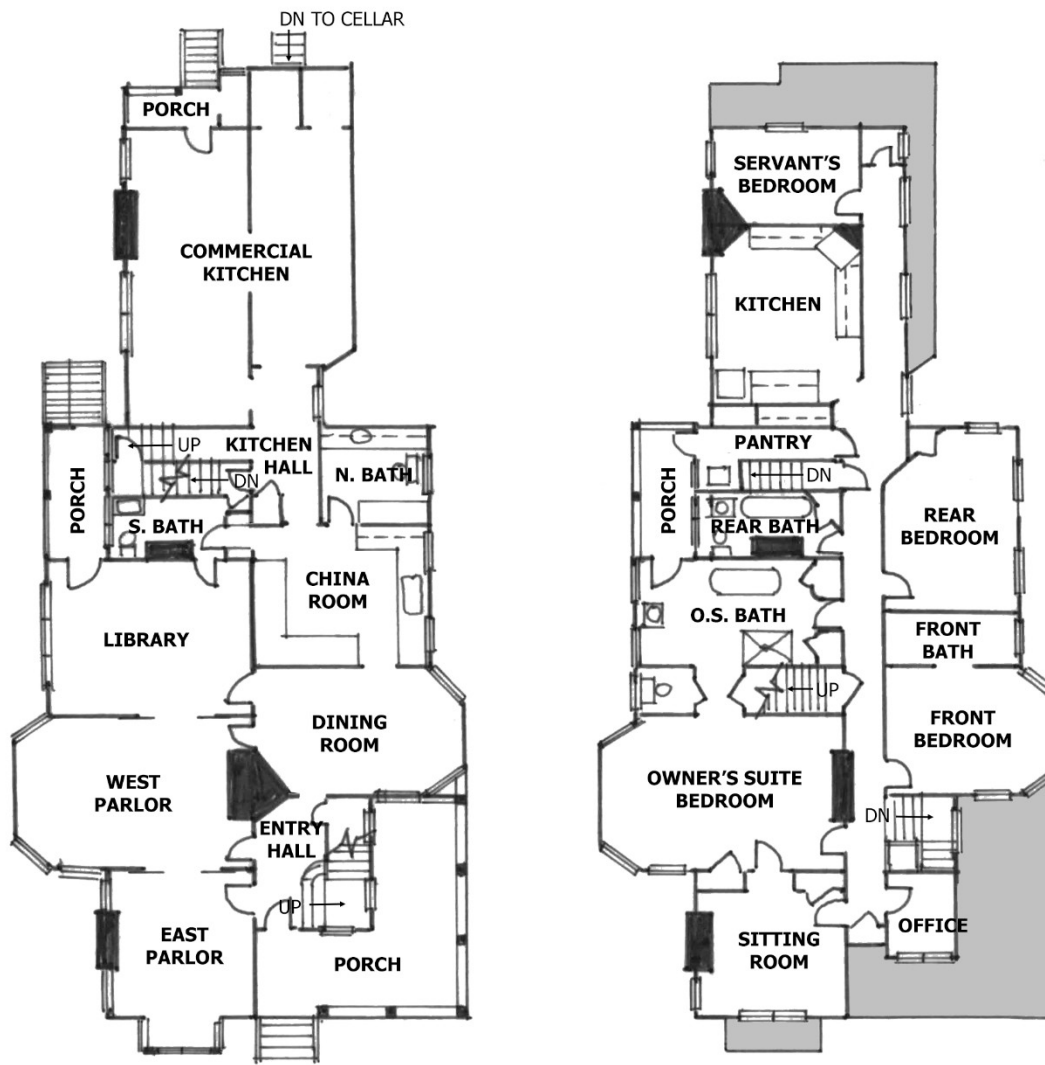


North elevation looking west, ca. 1975



North Elevation looking east, ca. 1975

Interior Description



Boyte described the interior of the Liddell-McNinch House as “richly ornate as any in the city.”²⁵ The house retained a majority of its interior finishes in 1975, and most are extant today. As he noted,

The interior walls are wainscoted with finely detailed oak paneling. Interior doors, windows, mantles, and architraves are of oak. The interior finishes are uniformly rich in design and contribute to the warmth of the house. The hardware and lighting fixtures are all original, even the gas chandeliers which have been electrified.²⁶

²⁵ Hinson, Smith, and Kinsey.

²⁶ Boyte Architectural Description.

The Liddell-McNinch House counts ten fireplace openings. Mantles and tile surrounds and hearths reflect the 1975 description by Boyte:

As one might expect, the mantels in the house are highly ornate. Most of them are of a popular Colonial Revival form, shelves supported by colonnettes with mirrored overmantels flanked by a second tier of miniature orders. All the mantels are different. Arched fire openings with elaborate grates, tiny glazed colored brick, stylized classical orders, typical classical style moldings, and a range of delicate applied swags, ribbons, filigree, and other ornament a la mode are liberally distributed.²⁷

Hinson and Smith provided this general overview of the bathrooms in the house in 1975: “Most of the original bathroom fixtures are original, such as porcelain sinks with turned legs and curvilinear tops, gargantuan tubs, and the simple vertical tongue and groove wainscots and molded chair rails.”²⁸ Most of the bathroom fixtures have been updated. A large clawfoot tub is extant in the second floor bathroom, which also has its original wood wainscoting and chair rail. However, the owner’s suite bathroom has been renovated with a large glass shower enclosure and composite clawfoot tub.

First Floor

Boyte provided a general description of the first floor layout of the Liddell-McNinch House:

From the reception foyer one enters the first of three large rooms along the South side connected with wide pocket doors which, when open, create an expansive single space of impressive proportions. The open stair starts in the reception foyer and rises in three runs along the side wall through a vaulted well two stories high.²⁹

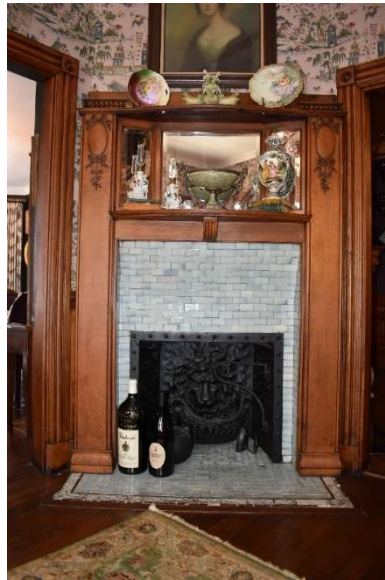
Since 1975, the house has been transformed into the McNinch House Restaurant on the first floor. This has resulted in renovation of the kitchen into commercial space. The three rooms mentioned above by Boyte have been converted into dining spaces, with the pocket doors open to create the expansive space he described.

²⁷ Hinson, Smith, and Kinsey.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Boyte Architectural Description.

Entry Hall



The entry hall of the Liddell-McNinch House provides a sense of the high integrity of feeling, materials, and workmanship to be found throughout the house. The fireplace features original wood mantle with three-piece mirror, tile surround, and tile hearth. The elaborate wood paneling in the foyer is also found in the library and dining room. Three doorways lead to the east parlor (door blocked by seating), west parlor, and dining room.

The description by Hinson and Smith provides additional detail:

From the hall, doors open into two parlors and a dining room. The surrounds, which are highly plastic, are symmetrically molded with cornerblocks and molded roundels. The doors themselves feature heavily molded raised panels in mitred frames. The original hardware is relatively simple, with oval knobs and curvilinear

plates. Other appointments, including gas chandeliers and sconces (now electrified), are also original.³⁰



Looking from the Staircase in the Entry Hall to the West Parlor, ca. 1975

³⁰ Hinson, Smith, and Kinsey.

East Parlor



The east parlor is one of the three rooms along the south side of the first level converted into dining spaces for the restaurant. The fireplace features an original wood mantle and debossed tile surround.



West Parlor



The west parlor also features an original fireplace with wood mangle and tile surround and hearth. The square black tile in front of the firebox is likely not original. The large openings from the west parlor into the library and east parlor have eight-panel wood pocket doors with original hardware. Doors flanking the fireplace lead to the entry hall and dining room.



Library



In contrast with the airy brightness of the two parlors, the library is a darker space abound in rich dark wood. The tile fireplace emphasizes the feeling with cast iron trim and ornamentation. The top trim of the wainscot follows the fireplace to form a mantle. A staff bell button is located on the east wall of the library between the doorways to the dining room and west parlor.

On the west wall, an exterior door opens to a side porch. Another doorway in the northwest corner of the room leads to the south bathroom, though it is blocked by furniture.

Hinson and Smith described the woodwork in the library:

The library, beyond the dining room, is the most elaborate room in the house. The wainscot consists of double tiers of square panels in molded frames with slightly raised portions in their centers. Above is a stylized entablature with heavily molded "architrave" and "cornice", the latter serving as a chair rail. Decorating the "frieze" are scrolls (sic) of foliage on a rough textured field. The ceiling is complex and intricately ornamented. Dividing the room are large beams with molded edges forming giant cofferlike (sic) sections. Each section is surrounded by a molded cornice, and the flat sections of the ceiling itself feature raised panels of various sizes in molded frames, forming a regular pattern.³¹



Library looking into the Dining Room, ca. 1975

³¹ Hinson, Smith, and Kinsey.

Dining Room



China Room



The china room features large built-in cabinets along wrapping the east and south walls. A counter runs the entirety of the north wall, wrapping to the west wall with shelving above.

South Bathroom



The south bathroom is entered from the china room. It has doors to the library and cellar stairs that are blocked with furniture.

North Bathroom

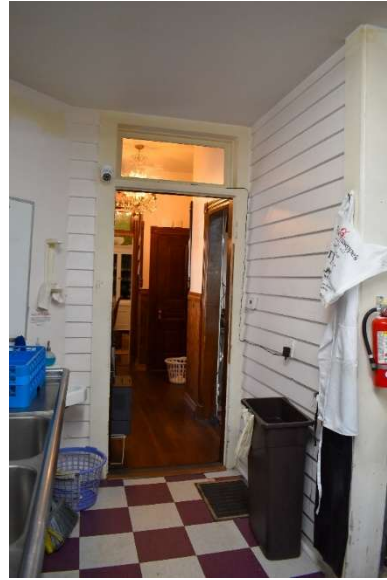


Kitchen Hall



The kitchen hall accesses the cellar, kitchen stairs, and kitchen.

Commercial Kitchen



The commercial kitchen is the most extensively renovated area of the Liddell-McNinch House. Hinson and Smith described the kitchen and pantry as it was in 1975:

Even the pantry and kitchen are little changed. The simple shelves, cupboards, countertops, and appointments are still evocative in backstairs terms of the Edwardian lifestyles suggested by the architecture of the front rooms.³²

Ellen Davis renovated the kitchen for commercial use before opening the McNinch House Restaurant in 1989. A stovepipe cover marks where a stove once vented through the chimney. The original exterior door has been retained. Flooring is vinyl composite tile. Exterior sheathing is present on the north side of the wall separating the kitchen from the dishwashing/pantry area and west side of the wall to the kitchen hall.

³² Hinson, Smith, and Kinsey.

Staircase



The description by Hinson and Smith reflects the current appearance of the staircase:

The hall functions as the entry and stair hall. It is a small space with corner fireplace dominated by a massive closed string stair rising in a well in three short flights. Heavy turned newels punctuate each change in direction. Turned balusters support a heavy molded handrail. Intermediate spandrels between the newels form a stepped pattern and complex network of turned and plain elements. Wainscoting in the hall is equally elaborate. Designed in two parts, the lower consists of vertical tongue and groove beaded boards, above which is a tier of panels and molded chair rail.³³



³³ Hinson, Smith, and Kinsey.



Second Floor

Boyte provided a synopsis of the second floor:

On the second floor a long central hall runs the length of the house offering side doors to an astonishing variety of room sizes and shapes. No two alike, and all richly decorated with oak trim and delicate fret work arches. A number of hall doors include transom windows which provide natural light for the interior hall area. In the entrance hall is a tiled fireplace with a carved oak mantel. In all important rooms are carefully detailed fireplaces with varying mantel styles, reflecting colonial influences.³⁴

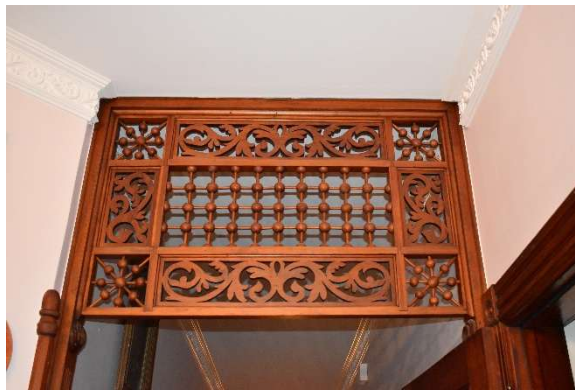
The description by Hinson and Smith was also brief:

Upstairs the plan is somewhat simpler though still irregular. As below, surrounds are symmetrically molded with corner blocks. These frame four and five paneled doors. The front portion of the house features bedrooms opening from a small hall. To the rear rooms are arranged along a corridor. Between the hall and corridor is an elaborate screen at ceiling height dropping about three feet. In the central section and in each corner are wooden balls held in regular repeating patterns by tiny wooden spokes. To all four sides are symmetrical sawwork ornaments depicting stylized foliage.³⁵

³⁴ Boyte Architectural Description.

³⁵ Hinson, Smith, and Kinsey.

Hall



The hall may be divided into two sections—the long front portion from the staircase to the rear stair, and a shorter rear section. These sections are divided by an original wood scrollwork panel, beyond which the hall widens and angles to the north to access the kitchen and staff bedroom.

Office



The small office is under the shed dormer on the front elevation.

Sitting Room



The sitting room has an arched cased opening with original wood scrollwork and a doorway to the owner's suite bedroom.

Owner's Suite Bedroom

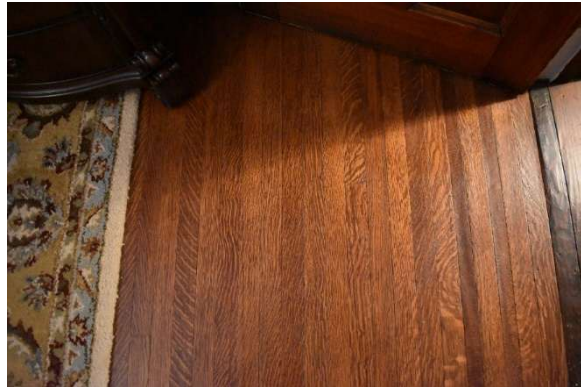


Owner's Suite Bathroom



The owner's suite bathroom was renovated by Ellen Davis in ca. 2005 to include a large walk-in shower enclosure.

Front Bedroom



The front bedroom has an arched cased opening with original wood scrollwork. The opening leads to the front bathroom, which is currently used as a closet.

Rear Bedroom



Rear Bathroom



Kitchen

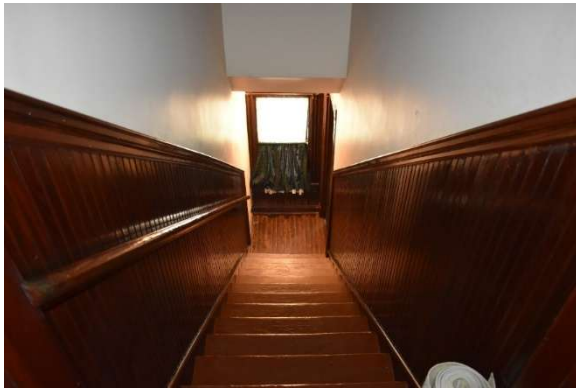


Ellen Davis created the kitchen in the 1980s for her personal use. It has been renovated more recently as evidenced by the modern countertops, hood, and range.

Staff Bedroom



Kitchen Stairs



Attic



The attic is accessed from a doorway at the upstairs hall. The space is large and may be traversed without stooping. It has wood flooring. A 14-lite wood door with flanking windows leads to the sunporch on the south elevation.

Cellar



The cellar is accessed from stairs at the kitchen hall. A second doorway at the south bathroom also opens to the stairs. Windows in the foundation wall are extant but are covered at the exterior and interior. The cellar has an exterior entrance at the west elevation.

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Liddell-McNinch House



This report was written on October 20, 1975

1. Name and location of the property: The property known as the Liddell-McNinch House is located at 551 North Church Street, Charlotte, North Carolina 28202.

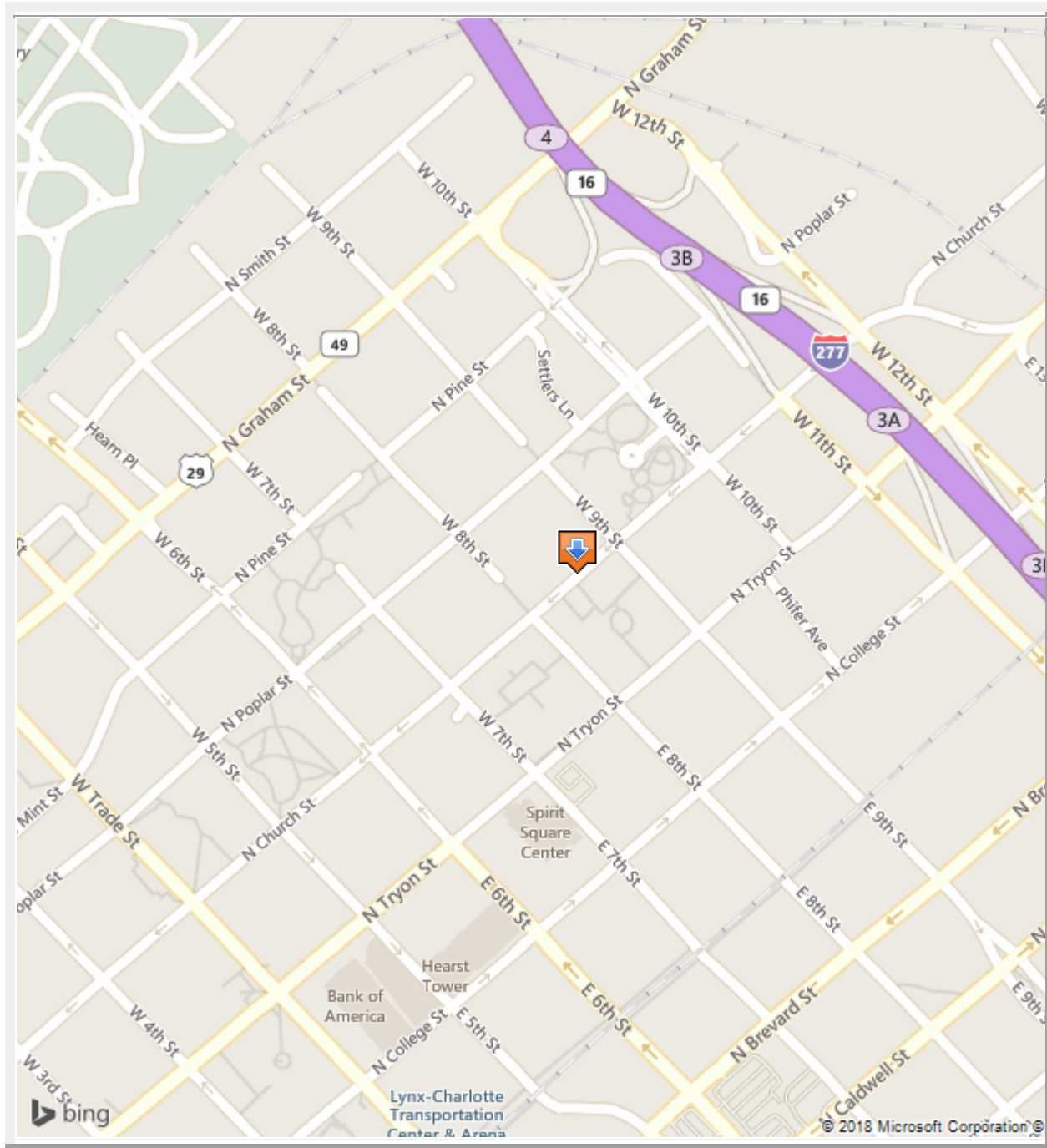
2. Name, addresses, and telephone numbers of the present owners and occupants of the property: The present owner of the property is: the S. S. McNinch Heirs.

The present occupants of the property are: Kiss Mattie McNinch and Mr. John K. Slear, widower of Julia McNinch Slear

Telephone: 332-4391

3. Representative photographs of the property: Two photographs of the structure are included in this report.

4 A map depicting the location of the property: This report contains a map depicting the location of the Liddell- McNinch House.



Click on the map to browse

5. Current Deed Book reference of the Property: Mecklenburg County Deed Book 222, page 591; Tax Book 78, page 35, lot 13.

6. A brief historical sketch of the property:

The property at 511 North Church Street was bought by Vinton Liddell in 1891 for \$3,000 from G. F. Jason who was commissioned to sell the land according to the case of Laura B. Davidson vs. Montrose Davidson. (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 77, page 585) The Beers Map of 1877 shows a structure on the lot. It is not known whether this structure was burned, moved, or torn down, but, according to Mr. J. W. McClung, Jr., whose family lived across Church Street, the house that stands on that lot now was built by Mr. Liddell. Mr. McClung notes that Mr. Liddell, officer of a machine company was teased about the construction price of his house which was reported to be \$35,000. In 1904 Mr. and Mrs. Liddell sold the property to Charles M. Patterson, a bachelor, who paid \$18,000 for it. The deed (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 198, page 124) states that the property was "known as the Home Place of Vinton Liddell". Mr. Patterson sold the property to S. S. McNinch in 1907 (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 222, page 591)



HON. S. S. McNinch, Mayor of Charlotte

Mr. McNinch served as Mayor of Charlotte from 1905 to 1907. In 1909 he traveled to Washington, D. C , to personally invite President William Howard Taft to speak at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg May 20th celebration. President Taft accepted the invitation, came to Charlotte and visited in the McNinch home on North Church Street.

The Liddell-McNinch house is of the Queen Anne/Shingle style. Participants of the Fourth Ward Preliminary Survey sponsored by the Commission in March 1975 felt that it was possibly the finest representative of that style in North Carolina. It has been nominated to the National Register. The exterior of the house is covered with shingles on the upper portion, clapboards on the lower portion, and the roof is of patterned slate. Tower, wings, gables, and porches are massed together and topped with an eye-brow window. The interior has fine, richly molded

woodwork, upstairs and down. The fireplaces are all tiled and there is a three-way fireplace opening into the foyer, library, and dining room.

7. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria set forth in NCGS 160A-399.4:

a. Historical and cultural significance: As has been stated, the property was purchased and occupied by a former Mayor of Charlotte. His descendants still live there. In 1909 the President of the United States visited in the house. It was built, apparently at great expense, in a popular style of the period, And, it is thought to be one of the finest examples of that style, Queen Anne/Shingle, in North Carolina.

b. Suitability for preservation and restoration: The house is in its original state, with very few changes, and has been maintained well through the years. It could be preserved easily. It is located in an area that is being studied for an intown residential neighborhood with a turn-of-the-century atmosphere; therefore, it would fit into the plan either as a residence or house museum.

c. Educational value: This house is a fine example of the Queen Anne/Shingle style architecture of the late 1800's. The interior, too, shows the richness and craftsmanship of that period.

d. Cost of acquisition: The property is not for sale at this time.

e. Possibilities for adaptive or alternative use of the property: The structure is quite large and has many possibilities. However, the interior is so fine, that, in my opinion, it would be most desirable that it be maintained as a residence and used alternatively as a second choice for preserving it. If it is intended for adaptive usage, I would urge the Commission to use its influence to the extent it can, to discourage efforts to destroy the interior.

f. Value: 1974 assessed value is \$26,510.

g. The administrative and financial responsibility of any person or organization willing to underwrite all or a portion of such costs: Since the house is not for sale this cannot be determined. The occupants plan to maintain the structure as their residence indefinitely.

8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria established for inclusion on the National Register:

a. Events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history: President William Howard Taft visited in the house at 511 North Church Street when he came to Charlotte to participate in the celebration of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, May 20, 1909.

b. Associated with lives of persons: In addition to its association with a President of the United States, the house was occupied by S. S. McNinch who was Mayor of Charlotte from 1905 to 1907. Also, the house was built by Vinton Liddell, a wealthy Charlotte businessman and owner of the Liddell Company in the late 1800's.

c. Type, period, method of construction: This house is thought to be one of the finest examples of Queen Anne shingle style architecture in North Carolina. It has been nominated to the National Register.

d. Information important in history: The house is significant in American history because of the Presidential visit in 1909 to celebrate the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence signed May 20, 1775, over a year before the national document was signed.

9. Documentation of why and in what ways the property is of importance to Charlotte and/or Mecklenburg County: As has been mentioned over and over, the house was visited by a President of the United States on a date which is significant to City-County history, Its architectural style is perhaps the finest example of its kind in the state, It was owned and occupied by a Mayor of Charlotte and is occupied by that Mayor's family now. Descendants of Mayor Sam McNinch are still active in the business, educational, and political communities of our city.

For the above reasons the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission believes that the structure known as the Liddell-McNinch House meets the criteria for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

10. Report prepared by: Patsy Kinsey for the Historic Properties Commission

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Architectural Description

By Jack O. Boyte

The home of Mrs. S. S. McNinch is the only remaining example of Shingle Style architecture in Mecklenburg County, and is probably one of the outstanding examples in North Carolina. This house reflects the sensitive and graceful refinement of the widely popular Queen Anne style which developed out of the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. This style was influenced by Colonial Architecture as well as by the exquisite architectural woodwork in the Japanese section of the Exhibition, particularly in the interior trim and fret work.

The McNinch House is an expression of this uniquely American style of the 1880's and '90s, characterized by light frame construction, irregular outlines, verandahs and balconies, steep pitched roofs, and large open interior spaces - made possible by the development of the central heating systems.

The exterior of this two story, and sometimes three story house rises from a high brick foundation wall which is covered with cement stucco. Under much of the rear of the house is a service cellar which is well lighted with foundation wall windows. The entire perimeter foundation wall is, for that matter, pierced with window sash ventilators at regular intervals. From the foundation wall the first floor starts from a heavy molded wood water table with narrow, white painted, beaded lap siding (a Queen Anne detail). At the top of the first floor windows the siding flares out to a molded band from which rise green stained wood shingles laid in tight narrow courses, and all smooth sawn (no rustic effect was sought). The second floor exterior reflects the imaginative irregularity of the second floor plan. A turreted three story bay on the South side is topped with a glass enclosed octagonal 'sun room' where turned wood half columns form the mullions. A gabled window faces the front over a sweeping verandah which turns down the North side of the house and is covered with a wide sloping roof which flows gracefully up to the crest of the highest roof. In the upper front gable is a round garret window with small divided lights, trimmed with a wooden voussoir which forbids even the smallest plain wall surface. This bulls-eye window is repeated in the side wall of a side two story wing which extends to the North. This wing has angled corners with windows in the angles at each floor. The exuberant, many surfaced roof is covered with slate shingles laid in varying patterns, including round 'fish scale' and pointed 'diamond' courses in mid slope - details which were suggested as early as 1850 by A. J. Downing in "Architecture For Country Houses". At the roof ridge over the center, high portion of the house, and on prominent display is a row of crest tiles - also suggested by Downing. Rising here and there above the roof are brick chimneys with imaginative corbeled

caps. Facing the North from the front gable roof is an 'eyebrow' garret window. A detail emphasizing the rich variety of this architectural style. At the rear, South corner is a finely detailed second floor balcony opening off the master bed room. The delicate turned balusters, molded rail cap and turned wood columns and pilasters enclosing this covered balcony, reflect the same elements found at the first floor verandah. The interior of the house, which is directly reflected in the variety of the exterior, shows a remarkably free use of interconnecting spaces on several levels. From the reception foyer one enters the first of three large rooms along the South side connected with wide pocket doors which, when open, create an expansive single space of impressive proportions. The open stair starts in the reception foyer and rises in three runs along the side wall through a vaulted well two stories high. The interior walls are wainscoted with finely detailed oak paneling. Interior doors, windows, mantles, and architraves are of oak. The interior finishes are uniformly rich in design and contribute to the warmth of the house. The hardware and lighting fixtures are all original, even the gas chandeliers which have been electrified. On the second floor a long central hall runs the length of the house offering side doors to an astonishing variety of room sizes and shapes. No two alike, and all richly decorated with oak trim and delicate fret work arches. A number of hall doors include transom windows which provide natural light for the interior hall area. In the entrance hall is a tiled fireplace with a carved oak mantel. In all important rooms are carefully detailed fireplaces with varying mantel styles, reflecting colonial influences. This house assimilates, with its varied details, the originality and charm of the 'shingle style', a thoroughly American architecture, consequently it is of first importance in the developing plans for preserving Charlotte-Mecklenburg's architectural heritage.