



**Survey and Research Report
On The Wilmore Elementary School**



1. **Name And Location Of The Property.** The Wilmore Elementary School is located at 428 West Boulevard, Charlotte, N.C.

2. **Name And Address Of The Present Owner Of The Property.**

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education
Post Office Box 30035
Charlotte, N.C. 28230

3. **Representative Photographs Of The Property.** The report contains representative photographs of the property.

4. Map Depicting The Location Of The Property.



5. Current Deed Book Reference To The Property. The property was acquired in several stages and is recorded in multiple deeds. The tax parcel number of the property is 11907801.

6. A Brief Historic Sketch Of The Property. The report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

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

8. Documentation Of Why And In What Ways The Property Meets The Criteria For Designation Set Forth In N.C.G.S. 160A-400.5.

a. Special Significance In Terms Of Its History, Architecture, And/Or Cultural Importance. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission judges that the Wilmore Elementary School possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

1) The Wilmore Elementary School is the only school that was erected in Wilmore, a working class suburb established in 1906 by the Suburban Realty Company.

2) The architect of the original section of Wilmore Elementary School was Louis H. Asbury, Sr., the first native North Carolinian to belong to the American Institute of Architects and an architect of local and regional importance. The architects of additions to the school were Martin E. Boyer, Jr. and Tebee Hawkins. Both were architects of local note.

3) Louis Asbury designed four schools for the Charlotte Board of School Commissioners. The plans were reviewed by Dr. N. L. Engelhardt, a nationally known educator. The original plans for these schools illustrate the design philosophy that influenced school plans in the 1920s. One school designed by Asbury does not remain -- Seversville. Two that survive, Morgan School and Park Hutchinson School, are local historic landmarks. The fourth, Wilmore Elementary School, has not been designated as a historic landmark. It should become a local historic landmark to give recognition and protection to all of the extant school designs in Charlotte by Asbury in the 1920s. Adding to the importance of Wilmore Elementary School is the fact that its original design was identical to that of Seversville Elementary School.

4) The Wilmore Elementary School documents the evolution of the Wilmore neighborhood from an all-white suburb of the early 1900s, to a neighborhood desegregating in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, to a neighborhood experiencing revitalization today.

b. Integrity Of Design, Setting, Workmanship, Materials, Feeling, And/Or Association. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission judges that the physical description included in this report demonstrates that the Wilmore Elementary School meets this criterion.

9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal. The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the property that becomes a designated "historic landmark." The current appraised value of the 3.28-acre parcel on which the Wilmore Elementary School is located is \$3,341,600. The property is exempt from the payment of Ad Valorem Taxes. The property is zoned R-8.

Date Of The Preparation Of This Report: November 1, 2017

Prepared By: Dan L. Morrill and Susan Mayer

A Brief History Of The Wilmore Elementary School

**Dr. Dan L. Morrill
November 1, 2017**



**The Wilmore Elementary School
Picture Taken October 1, 2017**

The history of Wilmore Elementary School must be considered within the context of the creation and the development through time of the Wilmore neighborhood, one of several streetcar suburbs that arose in Charlotte in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹ Wilmore Elementary School and its immediate community have been inextricably bound together from the school's opening in 1925, until students stopped attending in 1978, and until today.² In short, what has happened at Wilmore Elementary School cannot be separated from what has occurred in the surrounding Wilmore neighborhood and even in Charlotte as a whole.

The Establishment Of Wilmore.

In his book, Sorting Out The New South City. Race, Class And Urban Development In Charlotte 1875-1975, Thomas W. Hanchett describes the myriad factors that transformed Charlotte from a city where in the 1870s businessmen and "hired hands, manual laborers and white-collared clerks, and black people and white people all lived side by side" into a city of "neighborhoods arranged in sectors demarcated by race and class," a process Hanchett calls "sorting out."³ Hanchett continues:

By the end of the 1920s, Charlotteans had undergone a conceptual shift in their definition of a desirable urban landscape. Only a generation earlier, citizens of every kind had lived intermingled like salt-and-pepper on a grid of streets planned by the city fathers. Now Charlotteans resided in a patch work pattern of self-contained neighborhoods, each distinct in its developer-devised street system and each largely homogenous in its racial and economic makeup.⁴

Wilmore was an archetypal paradigm of a neighborhood defined by race and class, especially in its early years. Established in 1906 by the Suburban Real Estate Company, Wilmore was marketed as a convenient and affordable place exclusively for whites. F. C. Abbott (1862-1959), president of Suburban Real Estate, had used restrictive deed covenants to exclude blacks



F. C. Abbott 1862-1959

in other suburban Charlotte neighborhoods, such as Piedmont Park and Colonial Heights. He employed the same legal device to keep African Americans from renting or owning property in Wilmore.⁵ Abbott even went so far as to remove African American inhabitants from Wilmore to assure that no blacks would reside in his new working class suburb. The *Charlotte Daily Observer* of December 15, 1912, reported:

"After two years of negotiation, the Suburban Realty Company through its agent, F. C. Abbott, has acquired title to all the negro property on the west side of South Tryon street which has stood in the way of the best development of the Wilmoore property. Within 30 days about a dozen negro homes will be torn down or moved away"⁶

The first streets laid out in Wilmore were West Boulevard and West Park Avenue, where by 1910 modest Craftsman style bungalows began to appear.⁷ F. C. Abbott advertised his development as a blue collar neighborhood. "Wilmoore," his company declared, "is within five minutes' walk of a dozen manufacturing plants, so it is an ideal location for men employed in these factories."⁸ Wilmore was also marketed as a particularly affordable place to buy a lot and build a home. ". . . we offer large lots 50 by 200 ft. for the multitude and at the lowest price of any equal location in Charlotte," declared Suburban Real Estate.⁹

Wilmore developed rapidly. "Much interest is being manifested in the sale of Wilmore lots," reported the *Charlotte Observer* on October 31, 1916.¹⁰ In November 1916, the newspaper noted that "some 40 houses have been completed, or are under construction, in the Wilmore subdivision."¹¹ Churches appeared. Dedicatory services were held at "Wilmore Presbyterian Church," a mainstay of the neighborhood, in October 1913.¹² It was only a matter of time until Wilmore needed a school.



West Park Ave. Bungalow

Architects Of Wilmore Elementary School.

In April 1924, the Charlotte Board of School Commissioners listed the improvements that would be funded if voters approved school bonds in a vote scheduled for May 6th. Among them was the "purchase of a site and the erection of the first unit of a Grammar school in Wilmore."¹³ The voters supported the bonds by "nearly 3 to 1."¹⁴ The City acquired the school site in Wilmore at West Boulevard and South Mint Street from the Suburban Realty Company on September 26, 1924. The price was \$10,000.¹⁵

Six public schools were erected in Charlotte in the mid-1920s. Louis H. Asbury, Sr. (1877-1975) was the architect of four. In addition to the



Louis H. Asbury, Sr. 1877-1975

Wilmore Elementary School, he designed the Seversville School (destroyed), the Morgan School, and the Parks Hutchinson School.¹⁶ A native of Charlotte, Asbury had helped his father build houses as a lad. He graduated from Trinity College, now Duke University, in 1900 and received his architectural training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, completing his studies in 1903. After working as a draftsman in New York City, Asbury moved back to Charlotte in 1908. He established an architectural firm and remained professionally active in Charlotte and the Piedmont until his retirement in 1956.¹⁷ Asbury made major contributions to the professional standing of architects in North Carolina. He was the first native North Carolinian to be elected to the American

Institute of Architects. Asbury was one of the founders of the North Carolina chapter of the A.I.A. and was among the initial group of architects licensed to practice in North Carolina, receiving license #4.¹⁸ Asbury designed an impressive array of structures in Charlotte and its environs. The *Charlotte Observer* editorially called Louis Asbury the "Builder Of A City."¹⁹



Morgan School



Parks Hutchinson School



Wilmore Elementary School

Asbury's designs for the Morgan School, the Parks Hutchinson School, the Seversville School, and the Wilmore School were similar in form, materials and massing. This likeness was partly due to the fact that the Charlotte Board of School Commissioners required that all school plans be reviewed by Dr. N. L. Engelhardt (1882-1960) of Columbia University.²⁰ Engelhardt believed that it was essential "to study every detail of construction and equipment in the light of standards which are (sic.) commonly being accepted to-day (sic.) in the construction of school buildings."²¹ Engelhardt used a scorecard to measure the quality of architectural plans for schools. He scrutinized the size of the playgrounds, the number of classrooms, the type of support facilities, plus many other features.²² This oversight tended to produce greater conformity in school design.

The Southeastern Construction Company received the building permit in December 1924 to start erecting the Wilmore Elementary School.²³ The first students arrived at the beginning of classes in the fall of 1925. Mrs. Ellie Blankenship was the first principal.²⁴ "We are trying to take care of our nice new building," said 5th grade teacher Juanita Helms. "We hope not to find a single mark on the building."²⁵



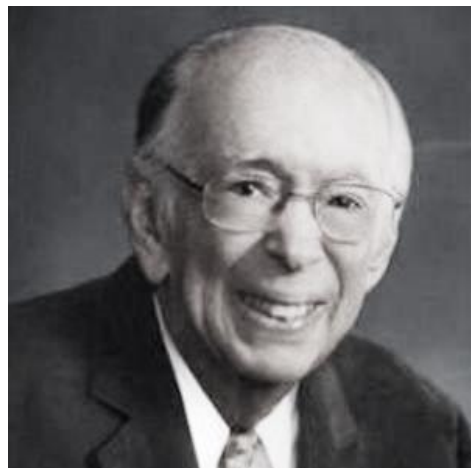
Miss Kabrich's 5th Grade Class, 1950
Only White Children Attended Wilmore School Until The 1960s

Two additions were made to Wilmore Elementary School after it was built. In March 1948, construction began on a major expansion at the eastern end of the building that included a cafeteria, an auditorium, one classroom, and a nurses' room. The architect was Martin E. Boyer, Jr (1893-1970).²⁶ Born in Glen Wilton, Virginia and reared in Charlotte, Boyer was trained in the Beaux Arts tradition at Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie-Mellon University) in Pittsburgh. Boyer was among the most prominent architects in Charlotte in the middle decades of the twentieth century. He is best remembered for the large homes he designed for Charlotte's elite, in neighborhoods like Eastover, Myers Park, and Dilworth. Also noteworthy was his superintending the relocation and reconstruction of the former U. S. Mint as the Mint Museum of Art.²⁷

The final addition to the school occurred in 1970 -- a rectangular wing projecting awkwardly from the eastern front of the building. It contained a new library, a workroom, a lounge, a classroom, administrative spaces, and two conference rooms.²⁸ The architect was Tebee P. Hawkins & Associates.²⁹ Tebee P. Hawkins (1917-2011), a native of Atlanta, Ga., graduated with a Degree in Architecture from Clemson University in 1940. He served in the military during World War Two and moved to Charlotte soon thereafter.³⁰ Until 1964, Hawkins partnered with Charlotte architect M. R. Marsh.³¹ Hawkins was responsible for designing many notable local structures, mostly traditionalist in design. These included Myers Park Baptist Church, Providence Baptist Church, Providence Methodist Church, the Myers Park Branch Library, Independence High School, and East Mecklenburg High School.³²



Martin E. Boyer, Jr. (1893-1970)



Tebee Hawkins (1917-2011)

Life At Wilmore School And In Wilmore.

Wilmore Elementary School was a cultural and social centerpiece of the Wilmore community. It's where people went to vote.³³ It's where neighborhood children gathered to play after school and during the summer. The grassy front yard at Wilmore was used for informal football games, and the playground behind the school had a baseball diamond. Doug Smith (1944-Present), a retired *Charlotte Observer* journalist, attended Wilmore for three years, beginning in 1954. "The teachers," he remembers, "were really friendly and open and invested in your education." As for Ellen Brice, the longtime principal, she had a "fiery temper." "I have heard her during my time there scream at teachers for not doing something right and scream at kids for not doing something right." "I didn't see much misbehaving," says Smith, "or lack of discipline in the school, because she ran a 'tight ship.'"³⁴

Sally Holbrook Gamble (1939-Present), was a student at Wilmore from 1945 until 1951. "We had a good time playing and being at school." But she too was wary of Ellen Brice. "She scared the starch out of me." "I loved my teachers," says Gamble. "They were either old, and old maids, . . . or else they were young." Wilmore school had a lasting impact on Sally Gamble. "I started making friends in the first grade, some of whom I still have."³⁵ "Wilmore School was the glue that held the neighborhood together," says Doug Smith.³⁶



Miss Renfrow's 3rd Grade Class
1948



Miss Sandifer's 2nd Grade Class
1947

Doug Smith and Sally Holbrook Gamble have fond memories of growing up in Wilmore. They characterize the Wilmore of their youth as a homogenous place where neighbors felt connected to one another and where children could roam freely about with no sense of fear or apprehension. "We thought we had the best neighborhood ever," Smith explains, "because we had so

much freedom to play and roam." "We never heard about crime. In general it was an idyllic place to live."³⁷ Gamble agrees. "I was completely free to roam all over that neighborhood." But roaming had its limits. Gamble described the racial boundaries that existed for black children who lived in a nearby African American enclave. "They did not come into our neighborhood although they were just three blocks away."³⁸ Smith also describes the racial separation that existed in Charlotte during his childhood. "We were instructed you don't associate with anybody of color. Colored people and white people just don't associate."³⁹



**Doug Smith (On Left) Attended
Wilmore 1954-1956**



**Sally Holbrook Gamble Attended
Wilmore 1945-1951**

The nature of Wilmore today bears little resemblance to what the neighborhood was like before 1960. Doug Smith and Sally Holbrook Gamble



grew up in an all-white, stable, seemingly unchanging working class community, where the boundaries of accepted behavior were understood and obeyed. The last half century has been very different. It has produced profound change in Wilmore, not the least being the closing of Wilmore Elementary School.

A photograph of Wilmore students taken on May 20, 1975, demonstrates

that the number of blacks living in Wilmore was on the upswing by the mid-1970s. Many of the children cheering and waving American flags in the picture are African American. The reasons for the demographic transformation of Wilmore were multiple. Federal officials advised banks to deny loans to residents of what Washington judged to be marginal older neighborhoods, like Wilmore. There was little Federal mortgage insurance offered to prospective home buyers in Wilmore. Federal urban renewal grants displaced African Americans living in center city Charlotte. This forced substantial numbers of blacks to look for other places to live.⁴⁰ Finally, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 eliminated legal discrimination based on race, thereby making protective deed covenants of this type unconstitutional.

Doug Smith remembers how unscrupulous real estate agents sought to exploit the growing apprehension felt by some longtime white homeowners in Wilmore.

*These guys would come through the neighborhood. They were called "blockbusters." They were real estate agents who would come through and knock on your door and say they wanted to make an offer on your house. I remember I was in the living room and this guy came to the door, and my dad said we were not interested in selling. And this guy said if you don't sell you're going to have a black person as a neighbor and then your property value will be zero.*⁴¹

During the 1960s and 1970s the amount of rental housing in Wilmore rose steadily. Families who had lived in the neighborhood for decades sold their homes and moved elsewhere. Doug Smith's mother sold her house in 1985. "She was afraid to live there by herself," explains Doug Smith. "She felt vulnerable because of the crime that was occurring." "The neighborhood was rough, and crime was becoming a problem. It was sad. . . ."⁴² According to Smith, it was the surging influx of large numbers of renters into the

neighborhood, not their racial composition, that destabilized Wilmore. The area was still roughly half white in the mid-1980s.

Wilmore Elementary School Closes.

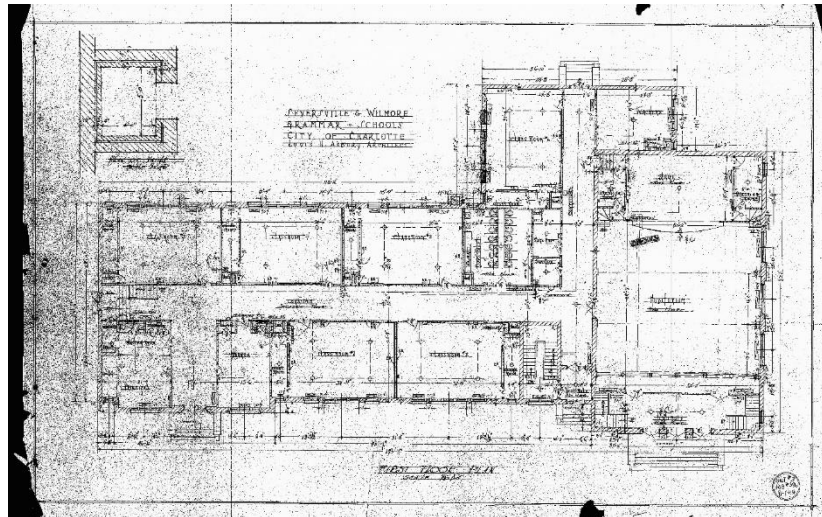
It was the racial composition of the student body of Wilmore Elementary School that caused the school to be closed. On April 23, 1969, Federal District Judge James B. McMillan (1916-1995) issued his opinion in the *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* case. McMillan directed the school board to fashion an assignment plan that would eliminate all racially identifiable schools. On February 5, 1970, McMillan told the school board how it must proceed. The judge ordered the implementation of a plan that would desegregate the entire system by means of extensive busing and pairing of elementary schools.

Wilmore School was evidencing signs of distress in the late 1970s. The percentage of African American students rose rapidly after 1974.⁴³ Covenant Presbyterian Church “adopted” the school and instituted a tutoring program at Wilmore in 1977. “We’re trying to show our love and concern for other people,” declared Covenant member Barbara Forester.⁴⁴ School Superintendent Jay Robinson (1928-2000) proposed in January 1978 that Wilmore School be shut down and that the students be reassigned to Dilworth Elementary School or Sedgefield Elementary School.⁴⁵ The School Board approved Robinson’s plan, and Wilmore Elementary ended classes in June 1978.⁴⁶ Julius L. Chambers (1936-2013), the lead lawyer for the plaintiffs in the *Swann* case, was not supportive of this action. The *Charlotte Observer* reported that Chambers “said the closing of mostly black Wilmore Elementary School last year showed officials aren’t willing to bus young white students to black communities.”⁴⁷ The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools did continue to use the Wilmore School as a Staff Development Center.

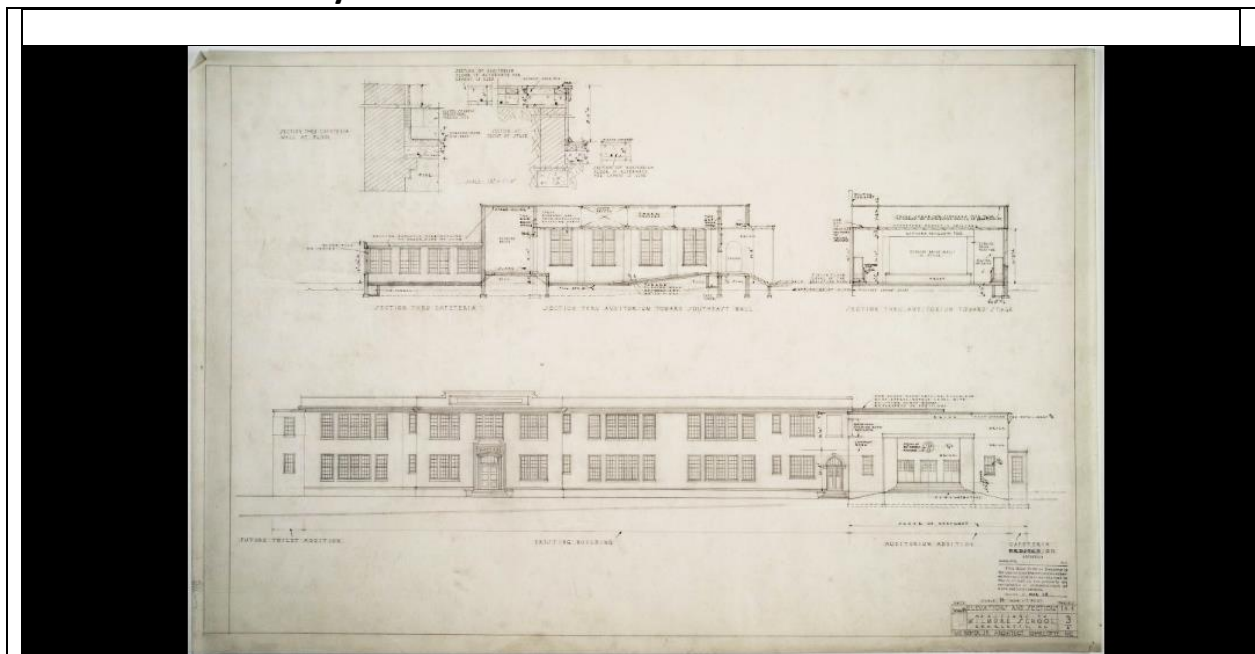
Wilmore Today.

Wilmore is no longer a distressed neighborhood. Between 2003 and 2011 the sale prices of homes over their assessed tax values increased by the highest percentage there than anywhere in Charlotte.⁴⁸ In May 2010, urban pioneers living in Wilmore succeeded in securing local historic district designation for the neighborhood, thereby encouraging its gentrification.⁴⁹ What was happening in Wilmore in the 1960s and 1970s is now moving in the opposite direction. Renters are moving out and homeowners are moving in. This process has its critics. ‘Craftsman-style homes selling for \$700,000 or more are replacing smaller homes occupied by renters,” commented the *Charlotte Observer* in October 2016. “While some homeowners can sell and make a profit, in other cases longtime tenants are pushed out, forced to move farther out to find any comparable properties to rent.”⁵⁰

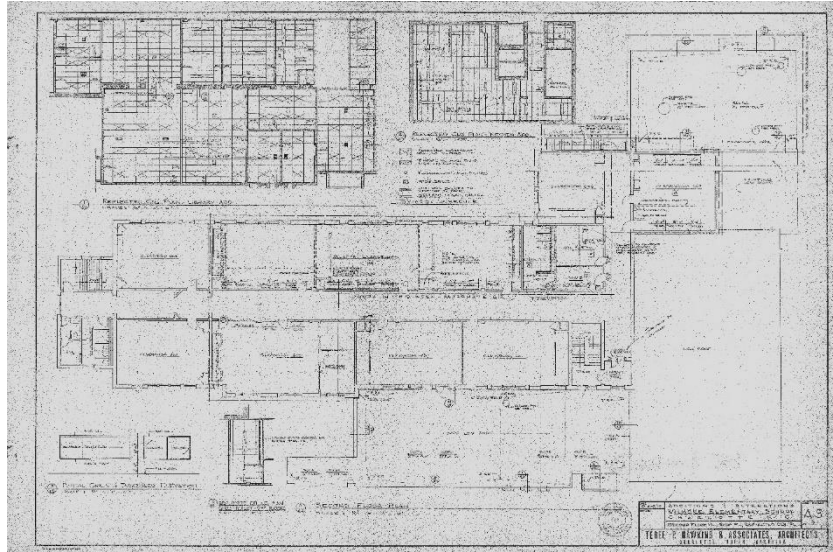
One consequence of the upsurge of property values in Wilmore is that it has put the Wilmore School property under greater developmental pressure. The current tax value of the Wilmore 3.28-acre site is \$3,431,600. A charter school attempted to lease the property in 2013. This effort was unsuccessful.⁵¹ The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools has declared the Wilmore School site “surplus property” and is seeking to identify a buyer.⁵²



Asbury's Plan For Wilmore And Seversville Schools



Boyer's Plan For Wilmore School Addition



Hawkins's Plan For Addition To Wilmore School



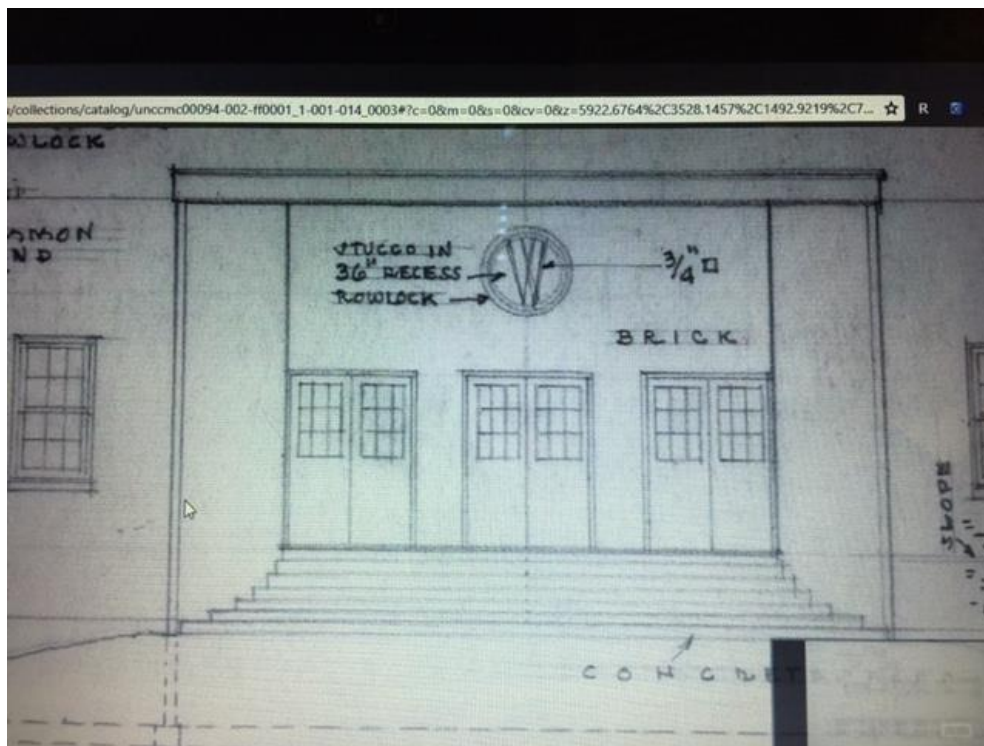
Abbott Park, Named For F. C. Abbott



Wilmore Streetscape In October 2017



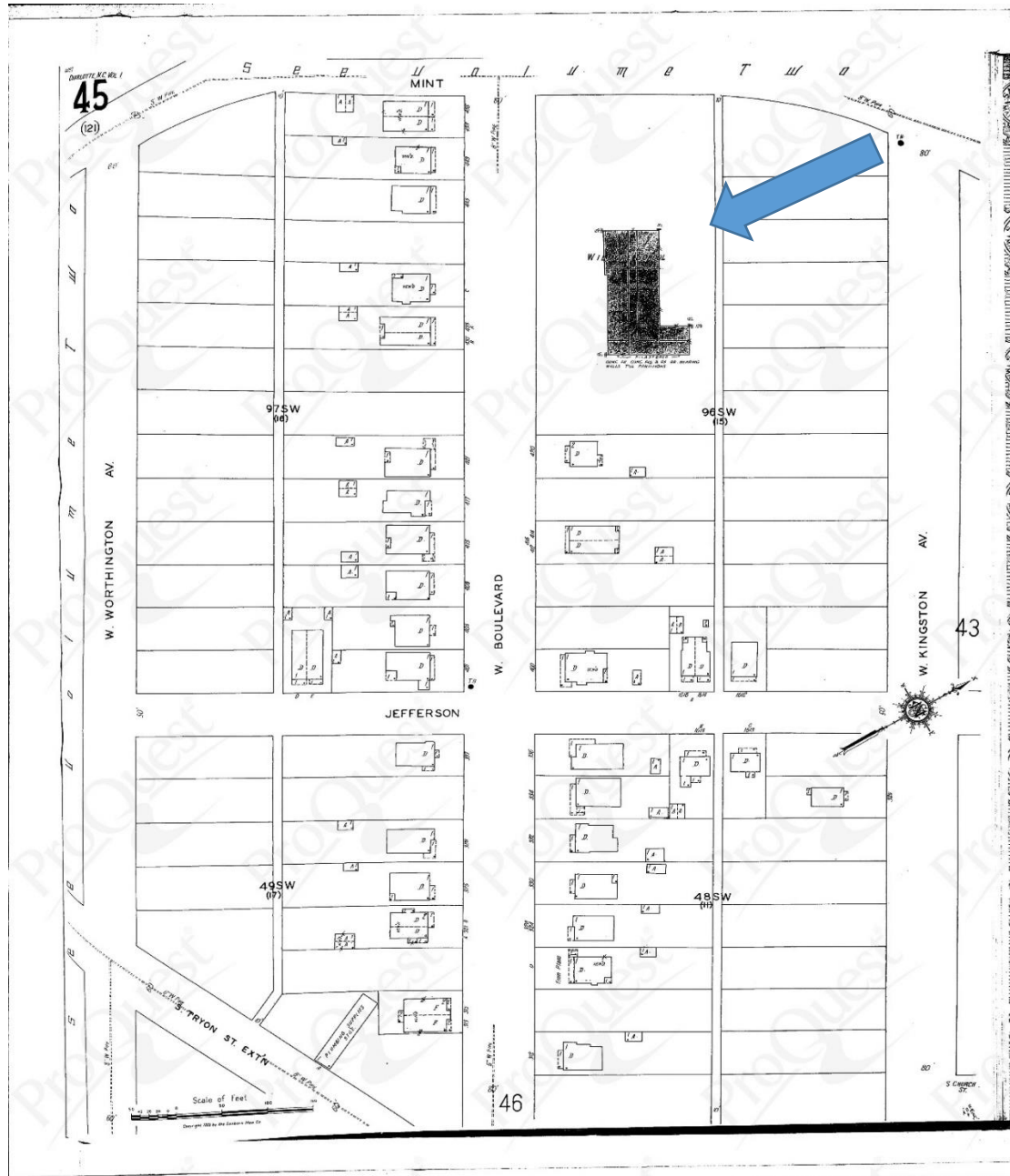
Wilmore Students Dressed For A Tom Thumb Wedding 1932



Boyer's Plan For Auditorium Entrance



1929 Sanborn Insurance Map, Volume One, Page 46.



¹ The neighborhood was named for the two families (Wilson and Moore) who sold 335 acres in 1906 to the Suburban Real Estate Company for suburban development. The *Charlotte News* stated that the name should always be spelled "Wilmoore." (see *Charlotte News*, March 14 1906; May 20,1907). As years passed, the name more commonly became known as "Wilmore." That name is used in this report.

² *Charlotte Observer*, August 28, 1945; June 18, 1978.

³ Thomas W. Hanchett, *Sorting Out The New South City. Race, Class, And Urban Development In Charlotte, 1875-1975* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 3, 8.

⁴ *Hanchett*, 224.

⁵ *Charlotte News*, April 11, 1906. Records of the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds.

⁶ *Charlotte Daily Observer*, December 15, 1912.

⁷ *Charlotte Observer*, December 5, 1906

⁸ *Charlotte News*, December 12, 1916

⁹ *Charlotte News*, September 29, 1913.

¹⁰ *Charlotte Observer*, October 31, 1916.

¹¹ *Charlotte Observer*, November 5, 1916.

¹² *Daily Charlotte Observer*, October 27, 1913.

¹³ *Charlotte Observer*, April 23, 1924.

¹⁴ *Charlotte Observer*, May 7, 1924. The Charlotte public schools were severely overcrowded, because North Carolina had passed compulsory school attendance laws. The Charlotte Board of School Commissioners rented rooms in churches to accommodate the unprecedented growth in the number of students. Half-day sessions were instituted in several schools. The mid-1920s witnessed a spate of school construction.

¹⁵ *Charlotte Observer*, September 27, 1924.

¹⁶ *Charlotte Observer*, July 19, 1924; April 10, 1925. According to the records of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Facilities Department, Parks Hutchison School was designed by "Louis H. Asburn" (sic.); this is obviously a typographical error. Furthermore, Louis Asbury's Job Book (UNCC Special Collections, Louis H. Asbury Papers) indicates his taking on a school project shortly after the purchase date of the Parks Hutchison land; the job was designated "Eleventh Ward." Apparently "Eleventh Ward" was the original name for the school as Superintendent Harding indicated that Eleventh Ward was opened to relieve congestion in the First and Fourth Ward Elementary Schools (*Charlotte News*, September 5, 1926), and Parks Hutchison School was built in very close proximity to both of these schools. The 1927 Charlotte City Directory illumines the matter by indicating that Miss Fanny Eaton was the principal of "Hutchison Avenue School." This portion of Graham Street was named Hutchison Avenue at the time. Miss Eaton was also listed as principal of "Eleventh Ward School."

¹⁷ Ryan L. Sumner and Dr. Dan L. Morrill, "Survey and Research Report on the Parks Hutchinson School," Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, September 1, 2002. Hereinafter cited as Parks Hutchinson School.

¹⁸ <http://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000449>

¹⁹ *Charlotte Observer*, March 24, 1975.

²⁰ *Charlotte Observer*, June 25, 1924.

²¹ N. L. Engelhardt, *A School Building Program For Cities* (New York City: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1918), 54.

²² The scorecard was developed by George Strayer, a collaborator.

²³ *Charlotte Observer*, December 30, 1924.

²⁴ *Charlotte Observer*, August 28, 1925.

²⁵ *Charlotte Observer*, November 22, 1925.

²⁶ *Charlotte Observer*, March 7, 30, 1948.

²⁷ <http://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000589>

²⁸ *Charlotte Observer*, July 19, 1970.

²⁹ Archives of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Schools.

³⁰ <http://www.tributes.com/obituary/show/Tebee-P.-Hawkins-91218754>

³¹ *Charlotte Observer*, September 5, 1977.

³² <http://www.tributes.com/obituary/show/Tebee-P.-Hawkins-91218754>

³³ It was Precinct 22 (Charlotte Observer, June 21, 1978).

³⁴ Interview of Robert Douglas Smith by Dan L. Morrill, October 10, 2017.

³⁵ Interview of Sally Holbrook Gamble by Dan L. Morrill, October 11, 2017

³⁶ Smith

³⁷ *Smith*.

³⁸ Gamble.

³⁹ Smith

⁴⁰ The Federal Government was largely responsible for the transformation of Wilmore. Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal of the 1930s ushered in an era of increased federal activism. Especially impactful in influencing neighborhoods like Wilmore was the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC). The HOLC sent appraisers throughout the country to map neighborhoods according to credit risk. Finished maps were sent to banks and real estate appraisers, where they were used to determine approval or disapproval of loans to home buyers and other borrowers. Wilmore did not fare well. It was awarded HOLC Criteria C, meaning Wilmore was "characterized by age, obsolescence, and change of style; expiring restrictions or lack of them; infiltration of lower-grade population" The consequences of a low HOLC rating for older established neighborhoods were weighty. It prompted lenders to look elsewhere for investment. Other federal programs that encouraged disinvestment in many established communities were the FHA and VA mortgage insurance programs. They also preferred new, outlying suburbs. Also far-reaching was the fact that federal money became available in the early 1960s for "slum clearance." Between 1960 and 1967, the Charlotte Redevelopment Authority "razed a large African American community known as "Brooklyn," thereby displacing 1,007 African American families. Blacks had to find another place to live. "The Brooklyn project," writes Hanchett, "made no pretense at creating better quarters for residents." Among the neighborhoods to which Charlotte's displaced African Americans began to migrate in the 1960s was Wilmore. For a full treatment of this subject, see *Hanchett*, 224-256.

⁴¹ *Smith*.

⁴² *Smith*.

⁴³ <http://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/475/1318/1688324/>

⁴⁴ *Charlotte Observer*, April 18, 1977.

⁴⁵ *Charlotte Observer*, January 26, 1978.

⁴⁶ *Charlotte Observer*, January 30, 1978.

⁴⁷ *Charlotte Observer*, July 9, 1978,

⁴⁸ *Charlotte Observer*, January 4, 2011.

⁴⁹ *Charlotte Observer*, May 19, 2010.

⁵⁰ *Charlotte Observer*, October 2, 2015.

⁵¹ *Charlotte Observer*, August 7, 2013.

⁵² Email from Peggy Hey to Dan L. Morrill, September 25, 2017.

Architectural Description



Aerial view of Wilmore Elementary School looking north.

Wilmore Elementary School is located at the corner of West Boulevard and Mint Street in the Wilmore neighborhood southwest of uptown Charlotte. The L-shaped building is situated at the southeastern edge of the rectangular lot and fronts West Boulevard. The lot is completely paved and marked as a parking lot from its previous usage as a CMS staff development center. The building may be divided into four components for the purposes of this architectural description: the original 1925 building and 1948 classroom addition; the 1948 auditorium and cafeteria additions made in 1948 and 1970; a stair/bathroom tower added in 1948; and the library/administrative addition in 1970.

The original building and classroom addition is two stories in height, six bays long, and one bay in depth. It forms an L-shape with a one-bay by one-bay section on the northwest portion of the building. The auditorium is one story, although almost equal in height to the two

story building, one bay wide, and one bay deep. A second story extends from the auditorium adjacent to the original building and is one bay wide and one bay deep. The cafeteria addition is located behind the auditorium, and is one story in height, two bays wide, and two bays deep. A stair/bathroom tower is located at the west end of the 1948 classroom addition. Lastly, the library/administrative addition, located immediately in front of south elevation of the original building, is one story, two bays deep, and three bays wide.

The school includes a number of architectural elements which are common throughout. The building is clad in brick with a metal-capped parapet wall and what appears to be a flat gravel roof. The original building has stone water tables on all elevations with additional stone details on the south elevation. Wood double-hung windows comprise the majority of the fenestration and are presented either singular or in groups of three; any windows which differ in configuration or materials shall be called out. Above the windows are brick soldier course lintels and at their base brick sills. Many windows have been boarded up to allow for HVAC access, and most first floor windows are covered with protective metal screens. Many second floor window panes are broken, however.

The architectural description of Wilmore Elementary School will move from west to east around the building, beginning at the southwest corner of the classroom addition and original building, followed by the auditorium, cafeteria, north elevation, and west elevation of the building. The library/administrative addition will be described last, for this section is very different aesthetically, and its placement contrasts with the older portions of the school.



South elevation showing 1925 original building, 1948 classroom addition, 1970 library/administrative addition, and 1948 auditorium.

The original 1925 building and 1948 classroom addition form the principal portion of Wilmore Elementary School. This section is two stories in height and eleven bays long. It is constructed of load-bearing running bond brick walls with a stone-topped water table.



South elevation of 1925 original building and 1948 classroom addition with 1970 library/administrative addition visible.

The first bay of this principal portion of Wilmore Elementary School is the 1948 classroom addition, comprised of an arrangement of three 9-over-9 windows flanked by single 12-over-12

windows, an arrangement repeated on other elevations, as well as a continuation of the stone cornice and water table from the original building. The second bay contains a small single 4-over-4 window. At the next three bays, the south elevation slightly projects out from the mass of the building, indicating its hierarchy as the former entrance to the school. The parapet of this section is also stepped with a decorative band of stone just above the stone cornice that characterizes the original aesthetic of the architecture. This projecting section features a stone-framed entry, now filled in with brick and a 9-over-9 window flanked by 3-over-3 sidelights. The stone border is arched over the former doorway topped with a relief pattern. A carved stone sign proclaims the school name and its date of establishment, "Wilmore 1925", at the top. A triplet of windows—a 9-over-9 window flanked by 6-over-6 windows—are situated directly above the entry. These windows are also set to either side of the entry on both floors. The library/administrative addition is located at the remainder of the first floor of the south elevation. However, the fenestration of the second floor remains unobscured. The sixth bay is a mirror of the second bay, with a small single 4-over-4 window immediately adjacent to the projecting section of the elevation. The seventh and eighth bays feature a group of three 9-over-9 windows flanked by single 12-over-12 windows. The remaining three bays, adjacent to the auditorium, includes a small 4-over-4 window, a pair of 9-over-9 windows, and a narrow 9-over-9 window above what was once the secondary entrance to the building.



South elevation of the 1948 auditorium.

The auditorium was planned to be a part of the original school but appears to have been removed from the building program. It was added to the school in the 1948 addition. Unlike the running brick bond of the original building, the auditorium as well as the cafeteria addition done at this time feature common bond brick walls. The common bond extends to the top of the porch and window heads, then transitions into a wide band of Flemish bond bordered on top and bottom with brick rowlocks. The auditorium has no parapet and is capped with a flat cool roof. The windows of the 1948 auditorium and cafeteria additions have cast sills, in contrast with the brick sills of the original 1925 building. Behind the auditorium is the cafeteria, built in 1948 and expanded in 1970. A classroom was also added to the second floor with the 1948 addition,

located above the cafeteria adjacent to the original building. The west elevation of the auditorium has no fenestration.

The south elevation of the auditorium is three bays wide and is dominated by a protruding porch with convex brick walls supporting its flat roof. Three solid steel double doors are evenly spaced within the entry, which is set back from the face of the building. Above the doors is a circle of recessed stucco with a brick rowlock border framing a steel “W”. Flanking either side of the entry are single 6-over-6 windows.



East elevation of the 1948 auditorium and 1948 and 1970 cafeteria addition.

The east elevation of the auditorium is five bays wide. A single 6-over-6 window, similar to those on the south elevation, is located near the left corner, and four evenly-spaced pairs of 9-over-9 windows are centered on the elevation. A classroom was added on behind the

auditorium and above the cafeteria addition in 1948. Four bays wide and one bay deep, it connects with the second floor of the original building. The east elevation has four pairs of 9-over-9 windows. The north elevation has a single 9-over-9 window at the corner above the roof of the cafeteria and a roof access ladder.



East elevation of 1948 cafeteria addition and second-floor classroom added to the back of the auditorium.



East and north elevation of the cafeteria addition.

The cafeteria addition to Wilmore Elementary School is one story in height, three bays wide, and three bays deep. The east elevation of the cafeteria may be divided into two sections comprising the 1948 addition and 1970 addition, which are easily delineated by the use of common and running brick bond respectively. All bays are contained within the 1948 section. The first three bays each have a pair of 9-over-9 windows. The fourth bay is a double-width door opening filled in with brick, with the former loading dock remaining. The remainder of the east elevation has no fenestration.



North elevation of the cafeteria addition and the north wing of the original 1925 building.

The north elevation of the cafeteria is three bays wide. A shallow flat overhang extends over a low loading dock. An inset steel door with vision light and sidelight and transom along with a former opening now bricked in are centered on the dock. The second and third bays have a horizontal 4-light metal window and a rectangular louvered opening. The west elevation of the cafeteria has no fenestration.

The north elevation of the principal portion of Wilmore Elementary School is comprised of the original building and the classroom addition, with a one bay by one bay wing extending north from the east end of the building. The north elevation of this one bay section has steel vision light double doors at each floor. An aluminum covered walkway extends along the west elevation of the cafeteria from the first floor door, while metal stairs with a landing run from a covered porch on the second floor down along the north wall. This section's west elevation has a group of three 9-over-9 windows flanked by single 12-over-12 windows on both floors, the

common window arrangement utilized on the original building. This elevation as well as the north elevation of the original building have stone water tables.



North elevation of the 1925 original building and 1948 classroom addition.

The north elevation of the original 1925 building and 1948 classroom addition is eight bays wide. Four bays have a group of three 9-over-9 windows flanked by single 12-over-12 windows at each floor. To the left of the first bay are narrow 6-over-6 windows and a brick chimney. Between the four bays are small 4-over-4 windows at each floor. At the first bay, a stairway runs down below grade to a door for basement access. The west elevation of the 1948 classroom addition has no fenestration.



North (left) and south (right) elevations of the 1948 stair/bathroom wing.



West elevation of the 1948 stair/bathroom wing.

The west wing of Wilmore Elementary School is comprised of the stepped-back portion of the classroom addition, the stair/bathroom tower, extending west from the principal portion of the building. The aesthetics of this wing are a simpler modern style with no stone ornamentation in contrast with the 1925 section of the building. The north elevation of this wing features a pair of single-light windows centered in the wall. The west elevation has steel double doors with vision lights slightly off-center on the wall which open to a small porch with stairs to ground level. A pair of single-light windows are located on the second level immediately over the doors. The south elevation of this section is punctured with single 8-over-8 windows centered in the elevation at each floor.



West elevation of the 1970 library/administrative addition.



South elevation of the 1925 original building with west elevation of 1970 library/administrative addition.

The library/administrative addition was made in 1970. It is situated directly in front of the original building extending west from the auditorium and became the new entrance to the school. The library/administrative addition is two bays deep and four bays wide. The first bay of the west elevation features five-pane metal storefront windows under a fluted concrete header which is connected to the original building. A mechanical room extends west from the library/administrative addition, on which a steel door under a louver comprises the fenestration on the north elevation and another metal louver centered on the west elevation. At the south elevation, the mechanical room is visually separated from the remainder of the library/administrative addition by recessed brick at the southwest and southeast corners of the room. A rectangular metal louver is visible at ground level.



South elevation of the 1970 library/administrative addition.



South elevation of the 1970 library/administrative addition.

The first three bays of the southern elevation of the library/administrative addition features three narrow windows flanked by brick headers in a stepped configuration. A fluted cast header caps each window. The fourth bay is the new entrance to the school. This bay is set back but has a porch covering comprised of a stepped brick wall with a cast fluted header, under which is a metal storefront with double doors. A brick knee wall lines either side of the steps leading to the entrance.



First floor hallway of the original 1925 building looking east to west.

The interior of Wilmore Elementary School is largely comprised of classrooms similar in size and arrangement. A large central hallway (photo above looking west on first floor) runs through the first and second floors of the original building and classroom addition. Stairwells are located at the east and west ends of the building. Dropped acoustic ceiling tile has been installed throughout the building, but the original plaster ceiling remains above as do the transoms above classroom doors. The floors have been carpeted throughout. Room configurations were greatly changed in 1978 after the school had transitioned to a CMS staff development center.



First floor cluster classroom (1970 alteration) looking west.



Typical classroom as seen on second floor.

The three classrooms on the north side of the first floor were altered in 1970 to form one large cluster classroom. Accordion dividers are installed to separate the spaces. Classrooms on the south side of the first floor, as well as all of the second floor, are separate.



1948 auditorium looking north.



1948 auditorium looking south.

The auditorium remains largely original, though the seating has been replaced with stadium seating that includes swing-arm desks. The stage has been walled in, and a dropped acoustic tile ceiling installed.



View of 1948 cafeteria addition looking south.

The cafeteria has been altered with equipment removed and cubicles installed.

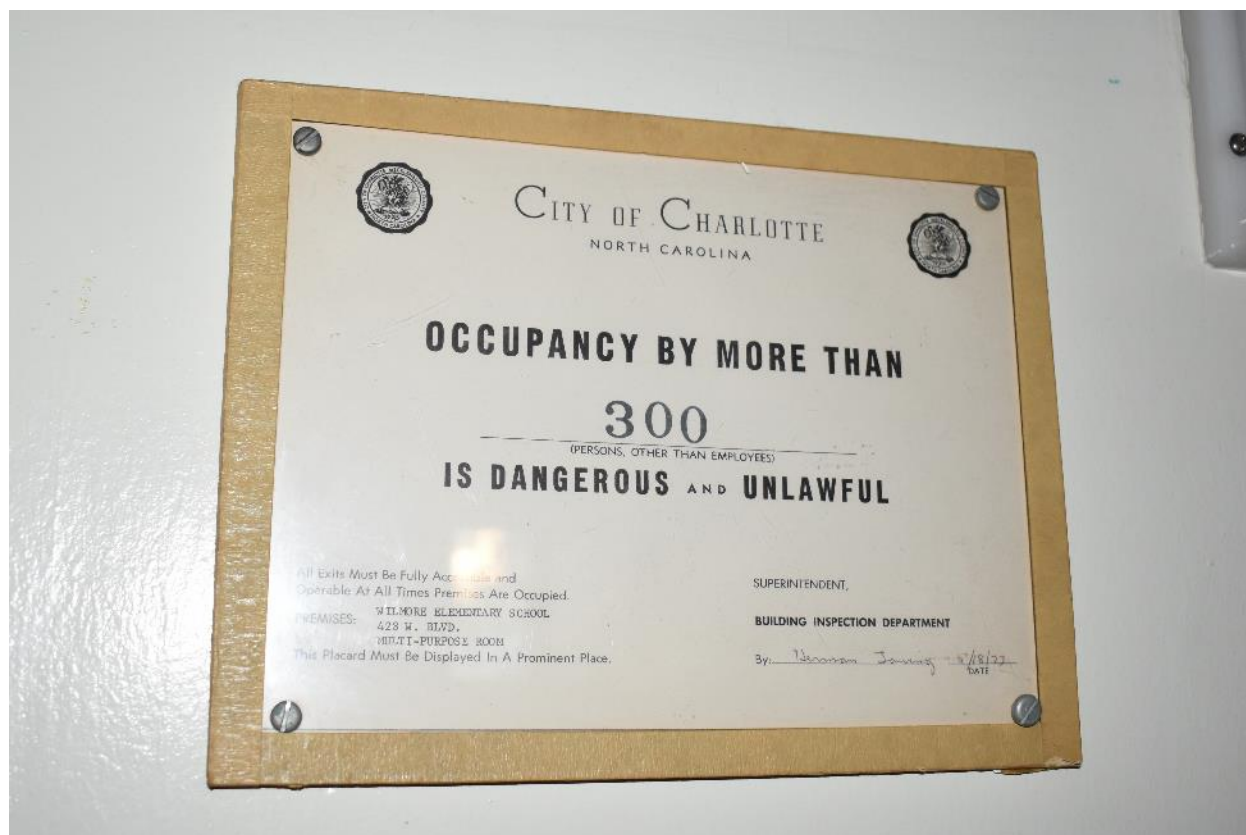


1970 library looking west.



Entrance foyer and administrative section of 1970 library/administrative addition looking north.

The library/administrative addition contains the library and administrative spaces as well as an entrance foyer. It also served as the new entrance to the school. This 1970 addition is characterized by its use of stacked bond concrete masonry unit construction, which is visible in the interior of the building.



Ca. 1973 occupancy placard still hangs in the auditorium.



Plaster ceiling visible under acoustic tile ceiling in the first floor hallway of the original 1925 building.



West stairwell looking northeast, located in stair/bathroom tower of the 1948 addition



A variety of previous paint colors are visible under the chipping paint in the west stairwell.



East stairwell, located in the original 1925 building.



Second floor hallway, looking east from the 1948 classroom addition.