



F.M. SIMMONS HOUSE

625 Hermitage Court
Charlotte, North Carolina 28207

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission
Local Landmark Designation Report
Prepared by Gate City Preservation L.L.C.

August 2020; Revised October 2020

Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Historic Landmarks Commission

HISTORIC NAME OF PROPERTY

F.M. Simmons House

ADDRESS OF PROPERTY

625 Hermitage Court, Charlotte, North Carolina 28207

PARCEL ID: 15502301

DEED BOOK & PAGE: BOOK 31500, PAGE 853

ZONING RES

Amount of land/acreage to be designated
.76 acres

Interior to be designated
☐ Yes ☒ No

Property Owner's Address:

James Jordan
625 Hermitage Court
Charlotte, North Carolina 28208

Applicant's Address:

Gate City Preservation L.L.C.
111 W. Lewis Street
Greensboro, North Carolina 27406

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I. Abstract

Statement of Significance

The F.M. Simmons House (1914-1943) is being proposed for designation because of its local architectural significance as one of the most complete expressions of Neoclassical Revival architecture in the Queen City. Its period of significance starts with its 1914 construction date and ends with the completion of the Myers Park neighborhood in 1943. Historically, the F.M. Simmons House is significant due to its status as one of the first homes constructed in the Myers Park neighborhood, one of the first planned suburban developments outside of Charlotte. With an infrastructure system planned by famed landscape architects John Nolen and Earle Sumner Draper, Myers Park became a destination for some of Charlotte's most elite citizens to build their homes. The home at 625 Hermitage Court was constructed by Floyd Macon (F.M.) Simmons, one of Charlotte's most reputable attorneys, builders, and real estate investors. Simmons built the home as a kickstarter to his planned "Hermitage Court" subdevelopment, originally meant to enhance the adjacent Myers Park. The F.M. Simmons House is historically significant due to its status as one of the earliest homes built in Myers Park and as one of the properties of F.M. Simmons.

Archaeological Comments

No known archaeological features are present at this time.

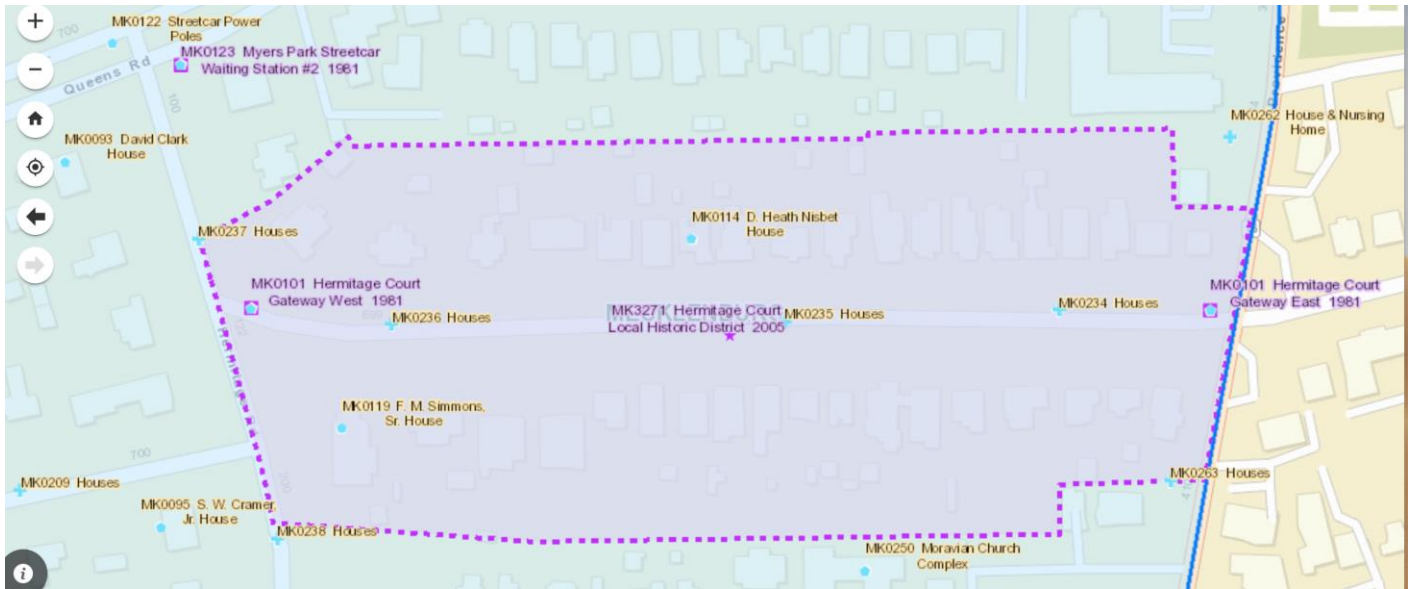
Integrity Statement

- **Location:** The F.M. Simmons House remains in its original location and is surrounded by other historic buildings and features from its period of significance (1914-1943).
- **Design:** The Neoclassical Revival architectural elements exemplify the design trends and styles of early twentieth-century, high-style, classical revival, residential architecture in Charlotte. The house has retained many of its original architectural features. Modern additions have been added to the rear of the home, but they do not distract from the original construction. The balustrade on the second level porch has been slightly altered, but the current property owners hope to restore it to its original design in the future.
- **Setting:** The house's stately setting at the entrance of the Hermitage Court subdivision, within view of the original granite entrance gates, has remained unchanged. The home's generous setback allows for a large lawn and landscaping within the English tradition. The significant historic features of its larger, Myers Park neighborhood setting are retained.
- **Workmanship:** The architectural details of the F.M. Simmons House show a high level of craftsmanship and design, specifically the complex woodwork, columns, moldings, and trims.
- **Materials:** Many of the materials from the F.M. Simmons House's original construction are still present in the home. Although there have been some minor alterations and rear additions over time, all of these alterations were done with care and materials were selected that match the original construction and style.
- **Feeling:** Because so much care was taken to match original materials when the additions and alterations were built, the feeling of the building has been preserved. Moreover, the high integrity of the home's setting and its relationship to the rest of the historic district's contributing resources and features further support the historic feeling of the residence.
- **Association:** The F.M. Simmons House is associated with the twentieth century residential development of Myers Park and Hermitage Court in Charlotte. It is still used as a single family dwelling.

Proposed Boundary Justification

The proposed boundary for Local Landmark Designation is the property's current .76-acre parcel. The parcel includes two small outbuildings of late twentieth-century construction - a one-story hipped roof brick garage, and a frame, single story, hipped roof accessory building with a full width porch supported by Ionic columns - both of which are also recommended (exterior only) for inclusion within the designation in order to maintain the overall integrity of design, setting, and feeling for the main residence.

II. Maps and Floor Plans***Mecklenburg County Tax Map***

HPOWeb Map*Aerial Map*

Date Filmed: 8/10/2020 11:00:29 AM



124

PROVIDENCE ROAD

HERMITAGE COURT

HERMITAGE ROAD

BOULEVARD

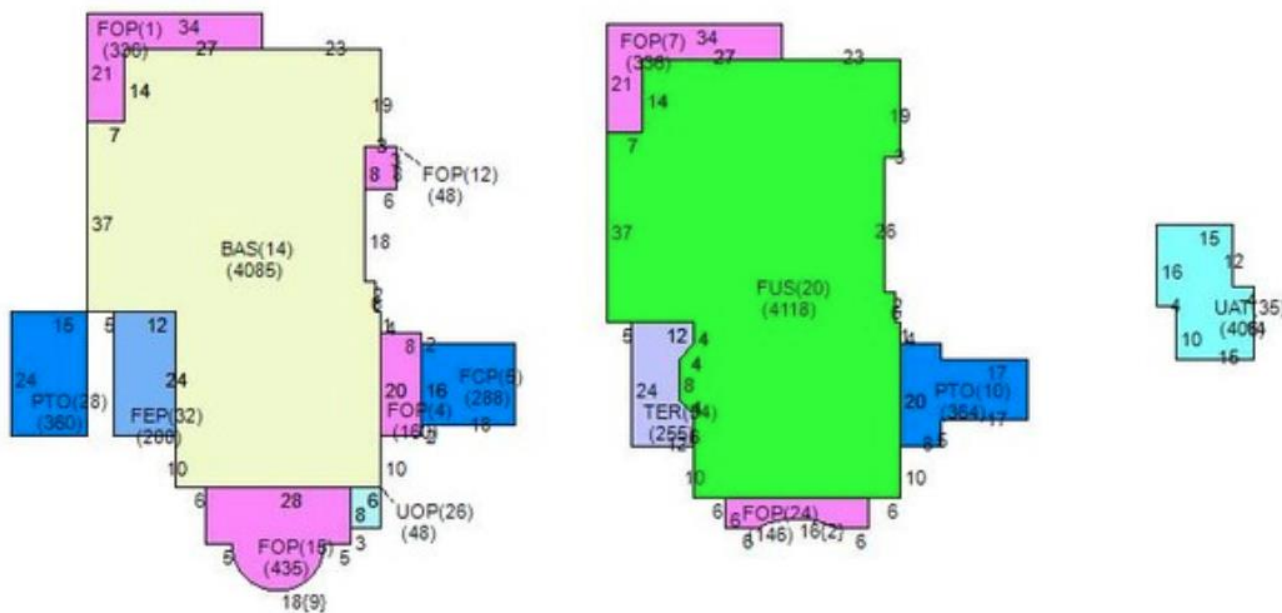
PART OF B.LK. 2 MYERS PARK

LOT 5, 7 (REVISED)

PLAT OF BLOCKS 1-2 & HERMITAGE COURT MYERS PARK

Scale: 1" = 100'

Note: See bottom of page for section above line.



III. Architectural Assessment

Architectural Importance

In 1912, an unidentified architect composed an eye-catching façade for a residential commission of his client, F. M. Simmons. Located at 625 Hermitage Court in Charlotte, the residence is one of the most complete expressions of Neoclassical Revival architecture in the Queen City—a style influenced by national and regional trends that referenced themes of nostalgia and power during the turn of the twentieth century.

Architectural Context

An announcement in the *Charlotte News* on May 12, 1913 stated “Mr. and Mrs. F. M. Simmons are to occupy an elegant \$12,000 residence to be built by the Thies-Smith Realty Co., at the corner of Hermitage Court and Hermitage Road, Myers Park.”¹ Announcements related to new construction were common in the Charlotte press, but this news item was noteworthy for its cost. The impressive price tag was more in line for commercial construction, and residential commissions of this value were rare. The project was the priciest residential construction in Charlotte in June 1913, with other homes carrying values that ranged from \$3,000 to \$9,000. Construction moved swiftly during the summer of 1913, and by August construction on the Simmons residence was nearing completion.² By December, the couple moved into their newly completed house.³

Although the architect of this commission remains unknown, Charlotte architect Fred L. Bonfoey held a business relationship with Thies-Smith Realty, builders of the Simmons House.⁴ In 1911, Bonfoey designed a house for O. J. Thies on Elizabeth Avenue, and he designed a residence for F. M. Simmons on Eighth Street extension.⁵ Bonfoey arrived in Charlotte from Port Chester, New York in 1909.⁶ He was a well-known architect in Charlotte and Gastonia, with ties to several residential commissions in the Dilworth and Myers Park neighborhoods.⁷ Though tantalizingly close, a connection has not yet been discovered to link the architect to this specific commission.

Their house was eye-catching to receive such attention in the media, but its stature in the press might not have been serendipitous. The monumental and impressive façade composed for the Simmons residence might have been conducted by its owner and architect in order to establish premium land values for the Hermitage Place neighborhood. Perhaps Simmons was leveraging the impressive façade as a theatrical stage to appeal to potential buyers through nostalgia, or perhaps he sought to create a reference to power to attract upper-income clients to his development. The incentive for the impressive composition might have been promotional.

There is some evidence that Simmons was leveraging historical nostalgia in his commission of a grand Neoclassical mansion for his newest subdivision. A 1912 advertisement in the *Charlotte Observer* revealed the derivation of the name of the development that was inspired by Charlotte’s locally born president Andrew Jackson, “As a matter of interest to you it may be said that The Simmons Company derived the name Hermitage Court from the name of the home place of ‘Old Hickory’ Jackson, warrior, statesman. The style of architecture of the gate to President Jackson’s home will be reproduced as near as possible in the gate entrances to Hermitage Court.”⁸ Perhaps Simmons was inspired by the Greek Revival façade of Jackson’s estate, The Hermitage, near Nashville, Tennessee, for the Queen City neoclassical

¹ “A \$12,000 Residence,” May 12, 1913, *Charlotte News*, 2.

² “Myers Park Developing Rapidly – New Development,” *Charlotte News*, August 17, 1913, 3. “Mr. F. M. Simmons’ handsome residence in Hermitage Court, a beautiful part of Myers Park, is going rapidly toward completion.”

³ “Society Items,” *Evening Chronicle*, December 19, 1913, 2.

⁴ “Building Record Draws Interest,” *Charlotte News*, September 4 1919, 3.

⁵ “Many Bungalows Under Way,” *Charlotte Observer*, May 26, 1911, 5.

⁶ “A New Architect,” *Charlotte News*, January 2, 1909, 5.

⁷ *Ibid*, “Many Bungalows.”

⁸ Advertisement, *Charlotte Observer*, April 28, 1912, 3.

composition. Or, Simmons could have been spurred to commission a southern mansion by popular culture of the time.

Neoclassical Revival grew in stature after the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition revealed it's 'White City' complex designed predominantly in themes of classical Roman architecture. The Neoclassical Revival also touched on themes of southern architecture as one of many regional American styles. An extract of "The Ancestral Dwellings," a poem by Henry Van Dyke about architectural styles around the nation published in 1911 expressed the sentimentality of regional southern architecture of the period:

"I love the stately Southern Mansions with their tall white columns;
They look through avenues of trees, over fields where the cotton is growing;
I can see the flutter of white frocks along their shady porches;
Music and laughter float from the windows the yards are full of hounds and horses;
They have all ridden away, yet the horses have not forgotten;
They are proud of their name and place, but their doors are always open;
For the thing they remember best is the pride of their ancient hospitality."⁹

In addition to themes of nostalgia, Neoclassical Revival architecture sometimes served as a reference to power and wealth, as stated by architectural historian Catherine Bishir.

"Throughout America in the decades just before and after 1900, political and cultural elites drew upon the imagery of past golden ages to shape public memory in ways that supported their own authority. By commissioning monumental sculpture that depicted American heroes and American virtues in classical terms, and by reviving architectural themes from colonial America as well as from classical Roman and Renaissance sources, cultural leaders affirmed the virtues of stability, harmony, and patriotism. They were responding to sweeping changes in the nation's fabric, including national reunification after the Civil War, industrial modernization, growing immigration and social tensions, and rising American nativism, nationalism, and imperialism. Leading patrons ranged from the new princes of industry, who saw America as the site of a second Renaissance, to the embattled "native" aristocrats of various regions; they worked in concert with Beaux Arts-educated architects and artists who brought European training and ideas to their practices in burgeoning American cities. In 1893, the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago presented a spectacular display of a set of official American ideals. An ensemble of heroic sculpture and classical architecture, laid out in the formal plan and rationally divided sectors promoted by the City Beautiful movement, offered an image of a unified, stable, hierarchical Anglo-Saxon nation asserting its place in the world, an image that soon reached into communities of the North and South."¹⁰

Whether Simmons sought a nostalgic touchstone to the past or was asserting an authority of privilege has not yet been determined, but considering he commissioned the house and sold it within a short period might indicate his motivations leaned more to promotional rather than societal.

Architectural Description

Neoclassical Revival architecture is identified through use of a full-height portico supported by columns (most frequently of Roman order), with a symmetrical façade and use of classical ornamentation such as entablatures, moldings, and balustrades.¹¹ The Simmons House features a full expression of these attributes, placing it among the most notable examples of the style in Mecklenburg County.

⁹ Van Dyke, Henry, *The White Bees*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909, 34.

¹⁰ Bishir, Catherine W. *Southern Built: American Architecture. Regional Practice*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006, 256.

¹¹ McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013, 435.

Setting

The Simmons House faces north on a .76-acre lot on the south side of Hermitage Court at its intersection with Hermitage Road amid an eclectic neighborhood of Colonial Revival and Craftsman Period residences. The house stands on the southwestern-most parcel of Hermitage Court, at its intersection with Hermitage Road. Its generous setback allows for large lawn with landscaping within the English tradition, featuring casual placement of shrubs and scattered placement of mature Willow Oaks, magnolia, and understory trees. The house is accessed by a straight brick walkway aligned to the main entry from brick stairs with brick cheek walls. Lawns exist to each side of the walkway in front of the house.

At the front of the house are located the original entry gates to the Hermitage Court subdivision. These granite landmarks are recognized as a Charlotte-Landmark Historic Site. The gateway was designated as an historic site on February 23, 1981. To the west of the house, a paved semicircular driveway provides a lane from Hermitage Road beneath the porte-cochere and links a newly constructed one-story hipped roof brick garage. The garage consists of two portals, each with segmental arches and garage doors. To the east of the house is an area abutting a neighboring residence that is heavily landscaped to screen a flagstone terrace adjoining a sunroom. A brick wall encloses the rear (south) yard. Inside the wall is a richly landscaped garden and contains a frame, single story, hipped roof accessory building with a full width porch supported by Ionic columns. These private gardens cannot be seen from the street and do not impact the historic nature of the property.

Front (North) Elevation

The striking façade of the Simmons House is distinguished by a full-width, full-height wood portico that is topped by a full entablature of dentil moldings, a scrolled modillion cornice, a balustrade, and features a curved central extension. The portico is complemented by a three-quarters-width wood porch with balustrade. Both the portico and the porch incorporate wood fluted Ionic columns and pilasters. Interestingly, the porch is composed with a concave header that provides for an expanded view of the tall portico from below. The portico and porches stand on a grey slate floor that is bordered with brick.

Central to the composition of the facade is a six-paneled front door surrounded by sidelights and an elliptical fanlight. The sidelights are composed using an elliptical theme, and the fanlight is webbed. Considering the high style of the portico, porch, and entryway – other architectural features of the façade are simple. One-over-one windows feature flat surrounds and capped lintels. Clapboard siding and beadboard sheath the walls and porch ceilings, respectively. The entirety is painted white.

The entire residence is sheltered beneath a low hipped roof. A dormer window is located above the portico, and a flat widow's walk is located at the central roof peak. Gables are oriented both east and south of the main roofline of the historic core, and an ell shaped roofline encompasses the newest additions. Little of the roof can be seen from the ground level.

Side (West) Elevation

The west elevation features a porte-cochere, a feature used to provide covered access to the house from vehicles. The feature is present in early images and is likely an original component of the composition with its fluted Ionic columns that match the façade. The porte-cochere entryway is composed of a six-panel door flanked by sidelights featuring an elliptical theme matching the main entry.

Side (East) Elevation

The east elevation features a cutaway bay window beneath a gable. The elevation also features a double tiered, double shoulder exterior brick chimney that is original to the design. Both of these features intersect with a one-story sunroom. The sunroom, perhaps a later addition, is composed of fluted Ionic columns, an entablature with dentil moldings, and a balustrade.

Rear (South) Elevation

To the rear (south) side of the house are later extensions of the structure that carefully continue design themes of the main and older portions of the house, including clapboard siding, one-over-one windows with simple flat trim, and a cornice with dentils and scrolled modillions. These additions are distinguished from the original house by window proportion, exterior chimney placement, and porch design. These elevations are not easily viewed from the street and do not interfere nor compete with the oldest portions of the house.

IV. Historical

Charlotte in the Early 20th Century

In the early-1900s, Charlotte was experiencing a major business boom. Uptown businesses filled Trade Street and their executives began searching for homes outside of the center of the city. Lured by ample space and privacy, Charlotte's wealthiest citizens began buying property in surrounding suburban areas. The first wave of executives to settle the area known as "Myers Park" included James Buchanan Duke, president of Southern Public Utilities Company (now Duke Energy) and the American Tobacco Company. The second wave included bank presidents and real estate investors, with textile mill owners followed shortly after. Civic and commercial leaders also chose to relocate their family homes to these suburbs, including members of the families that owned major department stores, and North Carolina "Good Roads" Movement Governor Cameron Morrison.

The development of a large scale railroad system played a tremendous part in the success of Charlotte in the early 20th century. The railroads allowed already-thriving industries, such as textiles, to transport products farther and faster. By 1913, Charlotte was a railroad hub that stretched in eight different directions.¹² With the economic boom of the early-1900s, a massive population explosion occurred in the Queen City. Between 1900 and 1910 the city grew from 18,091 to 34,014 people, an 82 percent increase, larger than any other decade in the century.¹³ The population growth necessitated the development of suburbs outside the city center for families to build a home in. The "streetcar suburbs" of the early 20th century formed a ring around the city for middle and upper class Charlotteans to live within.¹⁴ These new neighborhoods epitomized the spirit and development of the New South.

Myers Park

Myers Park was built on land once owned by John Springs Myers, a member of a long-line of prominent Charlotte plantation owning families. He inherited approximately 306 acres of his ancestral homeland in 1869 and continued to buy adjoining property in the following years. Myers sought to transform his large tract of once farmland into a fine suburb for elite Charlotte residents. He began planting rows of trees along modern day Providence Road and filled his own yard with flowers and shrubs. By 1904, a newspaper advertisement mentioned a cottage in "Myers Park." While J.S. Myers had the land, he did not have the business experience to market a neighborhood far outside uptown Charlotte to the city's wealthiest families. He found this business expertise in his son-in-law, George Stephens, a notable realtor and

¹² LeGette Blythe and Charles R. Brockman, *Hornets' Nest: the Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte: McNally of Charlotte, 1961), p. 21.

¹³ United States Bureau of the Census, *Nineteenth Census: 1970*, vol. 1, part 35, table 7.

¹⁴ Hanchett, Thomas W. "The Growth of Charlotte: A History." Page 15.

businessman. Stephens recruited John Nolen, a famed landscape architect who trained under Frederick Law Olmstead, to help further develop Myers Park.

Myers Park embodied a new trend of suburban living in Charlotte, North Carolina. It was the finest development of the pre-World War I suburban boom of the city. Famed planners John Nolen and Earle Sumner Draper designed the neighborhood with a naturalistic approach. They took great care in moving or planting trees and added parks and planting strips within the neighborhood.¹⁵ This new trend of private, wooded neighborhoods was common in the early-1900s in suburban centers. John Nolen planned Myers Park in 1911 with an emphasis on privacy. The neighborhood consisted of a central boulevard that split into two, eventually joining in a loop. This lollipop-shaped design also included a trolley system running down the middle and large stone gateways at the neighborhood entrance, symbolically reinforcing the elite and private status of the homes within.¹⁶ The boulevard system was the circulation route for carriages and the new motorcars, and, most importantly at first, for the streetcar. Like all early American suburbs, Myers Park was initially a "streetcar suburb" whose residents commuted to town daily on the electric trolley car.¹⁷

The John Nolen phase of Myers Park lasted until approximately 1935. At that point, the natural approach and vision of Nolen and Draper was pushed aside. In the preceding years, there was less of an emphasis on open, green space with smaller than planned housing lots. In the 1960s, much of the original neighborhood was zoned for redevelopment. It has only been in the last few years that the contributions of Nolen and Draper have come to be appreciated.¹⁸

625 Hermitage Court

The F.M. Simmons house was erected in 1913 and is one of the oldest houses in the Myers Park neighborhood. Builder Floyd M. (F.M.) Simmons erected the white-columned Colonial Revival mansion for himself at the corner of Hermitage Road and Hermitage Court, one of the first homes in the Hermitage Park subdevelopment. The grand columned house was to dominate the street where predominantly smaller bungalow style homes prevailed.¹⁹ John Nolen originally designed Myers Park as mixed use, with spaces for smaller bungalow homes and shops. Hermitage Court would be reserved for the "largest lots for leading citizens."²⁰ Simmons was a major Charlotte contractor who joined forces with Myers Park developer George Stephens to develop Hermitage Court "as a subdivision of the distinctive suburb, Myers Park. An inner circle, so to speak..."²¹ Simmons purchased the property adjacent to the center of Myers Park for the subdevelopment.

Work began on the development on March 20, 1912. The *Charlotte Observer* reported Simmons Company's Hermitage Court "will front 525 feet on Providence Road and run with that the width 300 feet to

¹⁵ Hanchett, Thomas W. "Myers Park Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, D.C.: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1987. Page 2.

¹⁶ Hanchett, Thomas W. "Myers Park Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, D.C.: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1987. Page 2.

¹⁷ Thomas W. Hanchett. "Myers Park: Charlotte's Finest Planned Suburb." Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission. <http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Myers-Park.pdf>. Page 9.

¹⁸ Thomas W. Hanchett. "Myers Park: Charlotte's Finest Planned Suburb." Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission. <http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Myers-Park.pdf>. Page 1.

¹⁹ Hanchett, Thomas W. "Myers Park Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, D.C.: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1987. Page 9.

²⁰ Hanchett, Thomas W. "Myers Park Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, D.C.: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1987. Page 82.

²¹ *The Charlotte Observer*, 28 February, 1912, page 6.

the property of Stephens Company and there connecting with the Stephen's Company's main boulevard and street car line."²² The original plans for Hermitage Court included 16 large lots, with 8 on either side of the paved boulevard through the center of the subdevelopment. Holmes Blair and Brent Drane, the same engineers for Myers Park, were used to compliment the designs of the adjacent neighborhood. Landscape architect for Myers Park, John Nolen, would also cast his "expert eye" in the development of Hermitage Court.²³ It is believed that Nolen also designed the stone pillars marking the two ends of Hermitage Court. These stone pillars were part of the original Myers Park plan, but finally carried out of F.M. Simmons in 1912. The massive gateways, constructed by Scottish craftsmen, "which lent tone and exclusiveness to the suburb which would be derived in no other way."²⁴ Eventually, Hermitage Court would encompass a total of 25 building lots.

The large lots paralleling the parkways strip in the center of Hermitage Court would feature trees such as "Savannah, Myrtle and Dogwood with ornamental electric lighting...on large Corinthian standards similar to Asbury Park, Ocean Grove, Long Branch, and Deal Beach."²⁵ Advertisements for Hermitage Court explain that the Simmons Company derived the name "Hermitage Court" from the homeplace Andrew "Old Hickory" Jackson. An advertisement stated "the style of the architecture of the gate to President Jackson's home will be reproduced as near as possible in the gate entrances to Hermitage Court."²⁶ Advertisements for the development lauded the privacy and safety the location afforded, as well as amenities such as paved sidewalks, parks, and playgrounds.

The Simmons Company would not hold stake in the Hermitage Court development for long. By September of 1913, the company planned to dispose of its holdings and sell to the highest bidder at public auction. This was shocking to many in Charlotte considering the substantial improvements and offerings that the Simmons Company had paid for in Hermitage Court, including sewer, gas and water lines, electric streetlights, and the granite gates.²⁷ Auctioneers for Hermitage Court admitted they had never seen a sale in the like before and expected no problems. Thomas Brothers Realty and Auction Company proclaimed that the sale would be one of the largest ever seen in the state.²⁸ Eventually, an auction of Hermitage Court did occur. During a public auction on September 23, 1913, newspapers reported that "bidding was spirited from the start and it was expected that the sale would be a profitable one."²⁹ However, the auction sale was called off by the Simmons Company due to a lack of interest after one sale postponement. *The Charlotte Observer* claimed that "it was generally regarded by real estate men that the class of property was too high for a successful auction."³⁰ Eventually, the lots were auctioned off, both on an individual and group basis with both private and corporate buyers. For instance, by 1916 the Charlotte Loan and Realty Company had

²² "At Hermitage Court: Active Work Started on Elegant Development East of the City - Other Activity in Real Estate." *The Charlotte Observer*, 21 March, 1921, page 6.

²³ *The Charlotte Observer*, 28 February, 1912, page 6.

²⁴ Kratt, Mary Norton and Thomas W. Hanchett. *Legacy: The Myers Park Story*. Charlotte, North Carolina: Myers Park Foundation Inc., 1986. 50.

²⁵ Kratt, Mary Norton and Thomas W. Hanchett. *Legacy: The Myers Park Story*. Charlotte, North Carolina: Myers Park Foundation Inc., 1986. 50

²⁶ *The Charlotte Observer*, 28 April, 1912, page 3.

²⁷ "Hermitage Court to Be Auctioned Off." *The Charlotte Observer*. September 14, 1913. Page 11.

²⁸ "Sale Postponed." *The Charlotte Observer*. September 20, 1913. Page 6.

²⁹ "Crowds Attend Lot Sale at Hermitage Court." *The Charlotte News*. September 23, 1913.

³⁰ "Sale Called Off." *The Charlotte Observer*. September 24, 1913. Page 8.

contracted the Ben Pillow Construction Company to construct “17 modern homes on Hermitage Court.” while the EC Griffith Company had also purchased lots.³¹

Two months before the Simmons Company auctioned off Hermitage Court, F.M. Simmons purchased property at 405 East Trade Street with the intent to build an “elegant, three story structure.” The two upper floors of the property could contain large, lavish apartments, while the bottom floor would contain storefronts. Simmons invested in Trade Street for its excellent location in proximity to suburban neighborhoods such as Myers Park and Hermitage Court. Simmons’ colleague John Nolen expressed that no other street in Charlotte possessed the advantages of retail development like Trade Street.³² Perhaps it is F.M. Simmons new investments in the development of Trade Street that served as the catalyst for giving up the holdings of Hermitage Court.

Floyd Macon (F.M) Simmons and Family

F.M. Simmons and his wife began living in the home at 625 Hermitage Court in late 1912. The couple only lived in the residence for a few years, but remained on Hermitage Court according to an oral history with Floyd “Chunk” Simmons, son of F.M. Simmons.³³ The family eventually moved down the street to 522 Hermitage Court, where they lived for several decades. F.M. Simmons was one of the most prominent developers and contractors in Charlotte. He was an attorney and president of a lucrative development firm, the Simmons Company, that operated an office at 45 North Tryon Street.³⁴ He was also a successful football coach at nearby Davidson College from 1909-1910.³⁵

F.M. Simmons married Eleanor Alexander, a member of the Alexander family, a prominent Mecklenburg County family, on November 22, 1911.³⁶ The Alexander family was one of the founding members of the county and their influence stretched for generations. F.M. and Eleanor’s son, Floyd “Chunk” Simmons, lived an eccentric life after his time on Hermitage Court (though he would live in the neighborhood for much of his life, eventually settling at 404 Hermitage Court). Floyd “Chunk” Simmons was the youngest of the couple’s three children, which also included daughters Suzane and Betty. A natural athlete, Floyd Jr. was the star of Central High School’s football team in 1940. He attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and, after graduation, served with the 10th Mountain Division in World War II, where he was awarded a Purple Heart. After the war, he won bronze medals in the Decathlon in the 1948 London Olympics and 1952 Helsinki Olympics.³⁷ At the end of his athletic career, he moved to California to pursue film. He held several film roles in the 1950s, though his best known role was as Commander William “Bill” Harbinson in “South Pacific” (1958).³⁸

³¹ “Contracted for 17 New Homes on Hermitage Court.” *The Charlotte News*. May 12, 1916. Page 1.

³² “To Build on East Trade Hunter Lot.” *The Charlotte Observer*. June 28, 1913. Page 8.

³³ “An Interview with Floyd “Chunk” Simmons” at the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2007. North Carolina Digital Heritage Center. <https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/24744>.

³⁴ Piedmont Directory Company. Charlotte, North Carolina City Directory [1913] . Digital NC, digital archives. <https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/25435?ln=en>.

³⁵ “An Interview with Floyd “Chunk” Simmons” at the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, 2007. North Carolina Digital Heritage Center. <https://lib.digitalnc.org/record/24744>.

³⁶ *Floyd M. Simmons and Eleanor Alexander Marriage License*. Ancestry.com. North Carolina, Marriage Records, 1741-2011 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.

³⁷ *The Charlotte Observer*, 20 March, 1985.

³⁸ “Obituary for Floyd “Chunk” Simmons.” *The Charlotte Observer*, 2 April, 2008.

*Chain of Title***1. Book 31500 Page 853**

- a. Recorded on January 17, 2017
- b. Grantor: Christopher R. Smith and Susan A. Smith
- c. Grantee: James Jordan and Mary Margaret Jordan

2. Book 18403 Page 874

- a. Recorded on February 28, 2005
- b. Grantor: Thomas Humphries and Nancy E. Humphries
- c. Grantee: Christopher R. Smith and Susan A. Smith

3. Book 07647 Page 841

- a. Recorded on January 28, 1994
- b. Grantor: Carolyn Hammond Brye
- c. Grantee: Thomas Humphries and Nancy E. Humphries

4. Book 4754 Page 0968

- a. Recorded on December 1, 1983
- b. Grantor: Robert Suarez and Miriam Suarez
- c. Grantee: John N. Blackwelder and Sally H. Blackwelder

V. Finding Aid for Photographs

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- Fig. 10: Doors
- Fig. 11: Porches
- Fig. 12: Architectural Details

VI. Bibliography**Deed Books**

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VII. Appendix

Appendix 1

“Myers Park Residences.” Early development of Myers Park, 1918. Photographed by W.H. (Bill) Sumner. Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, image ID [H_2000_01_436_05.jpg](#)



Appendix 2

“Entrance gate to Myers Park.” The trolley entrance gate to Myers Park was located at Fourth and Queens Road. The main gate is gone, but the side shelters remain. Designed by John Nolen and built by the Stephens Company of Winnsboro, South Carolina, the structure is made entirely of granite. Photographed by W.H. (Bill) Sumner, 1912. Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Image ID [MP_2000_03_029_32.jpg](#)



Appendix 3

“Walkway in Myers Park.” An early view of a walkway in Myers Park before homes and major infrastructure were completed. . Photographed by W.H. (Bill) Sumner, 1890. Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Image ID [MP_2000_03_028_31.jpg](#)



Appendix 4

“Landscaping in Myers Park.” With the assistance of James B. Duke, plans were made to install larger, more mature trees along the streets in Myers Park. Theodore King, who worked for Duke, oversaw the operation which took place in 1916 and the winter of 1917. Photographed by W.H. (Bill) Sumner, 1916. Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Image ID [MP_2000_03_002_02.jpg](#)



Appendix 5

Gates to Hermitage Court and the residence of F.M. Simmons, who developed Hermitage Court. Hermitage Court was meant to be a separate, but cooperative, neighbor to Myers Park. Reprinted in *Legacy: The Myers Park Story* by Mary Norton Kratt and Thomas W. Hanchett, 1986.



Appendix 6

Western Entrance Gates to Hermitage Court, *The Charlotte Observer*, 3 November, 1912, page 9.



Appendix 7

Black & white photo of a white, two-story columned home with porticoes during the early days of Myers Park in Charlotte, NC. The home was located at 625 Hermitage Court and belonged to Floyd M. Simmons. Titled as "Ye Weste Gayte." Photo by Underwood & Underwood, NY and published by Stone Barringer Book Co. (p4961)

Myers Park, Charlotte, North Carolina. 1899-1979. Retrieved from the Digital Public Library of America, <http://digitalcollections.uncc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15483coll1/id/44>.



VIII. Figures

Fig. 1: Setting



Fig. 2: Landscape Features



Fig. 3: Front (North) Elevation



Fig. 4: Side (West) Elevation



Fig. 5: Rear (South) Elevation



Fig. 6: Side (East) Elevation



Fig. 7: East Elevation Bay



Fig. 8 Siding



Fig. 9: Windows



Fig. 10: Doors



Fig. 11: Porches



Fig. 12: Architectural Details



I, THE UNDERSIGNED, HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE STATEMENTS ARE TRUE AND ACCURATE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF; AND SUPPORT LANDMARK DESIGNATION OF THE PROPERTY DEFINED HEREIN.

I also acknowledge that the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission may require additional information.

Signature of Owner

Date

Signature of Owner

Date

I also acknowledge that the designation includes the exterior, exterior features and details of all structures; and land, unless otherwise noted in the report. Any alterations of the property and/or features designated, requires an approved *Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)* issued by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission.

Signature of Owner

Date

Signature of Owner

Date