

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Frederick Apartments

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 515 N. Church St. not for publication

city or town Charlotte vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Mecklenburg code 119 zip code 28202

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jessie Scrows SHPO 1/29/01
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain _____)

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

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Date of Action

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Italian Renaissance Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK
TERRA COTTA

roof CERAMIC TILE

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

see continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Literature

Period of Significance

1927

1938-1940

Significant Dates

1927

1938

1940

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cash, Wilbur Joseph

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

J. A. Jones Construction Company

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Frederick Apartments
Name of Property

Mecklenburg Co., NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .548 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 514600 3898540
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing
4 _____
 See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Beth Gatza, Architectural Historian

organization _____ date August 8, 2000

street & number 428 N. Laurel Ave., #7 telephone (704) 331 9660

city or town Charlotte state NC zip code 28204

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Frederick Place, LLC

street & number 137 Brevard Court telephone _____

city or town Charlotte state NC zip code 28202

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127 and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Frederick Apartments
Mecklenburg Co., NC

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Frederick Apartments is a three-story, thirty-six unit brick apartment house built in 1927. At 515 N. Church Street, it is located in the downtown area of Charlotte, five blocks north and one block west of the center of town (where Trade and Tryon Streets intersect). The streets in this section are laid out in a regular grid pattern and the lots are long, narrow, and rectangular. The Frederick Apartment building, and its companion paved parking lot, together have 108 feet of street frontage. The building is set close to the sidewalk, separated only by a set of concrete steps leading up to a wide raised terrace. The spaces on either side of the steps are landscaped with small plantings, and an old magnolia tree at the front left (south) corner of the building stands as tall as the structure itself. The streetscape is urban in nature and contains buildings in a mixture of types, styles and vintages. Its immediate neighbors are the c. 1890 Liddell-McNinch House (a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmark) on the south, and the apartment building's paved parking lot on the north. A modern brick fire station stands across the parking lot, northeast of the Frederick. A new, large multi-family dwelling is located immediately across N. Church Street from the Frederick Apartments.

The Frederick Apartments is a solid masonry structure. The body of the building is constructed of red brick, laid up in common bond. The facade, however, is fancier and sports buff colored brick set in stretcher bond with decorative patterning in places. The facade is symmetrical, and features a center entry and a slightly projecting center bay. A set of concrete steps trimmed in brick lead up to a tile-covered raised terrace which spans the front of the building, in lieu of a porch. The building's roof is flat and not visible from the street, however, a pent roof adorns the facade, and is supported by paired, decorative brackets, and covered with flat green tiles. Together with the arched center entry, the tiled roof hints at an Italian Renaissance Revival design influence.

The green tiles on the roof coordinate with the polychrome facade detail. Colored terra cotta pieces comprise key design elements that are found around the door and windows, on a decorative panel, and on the building's nameplate. The nameplate is centered above the front door and is made of beige tiles with raised green letters spelling out "FREDERICK." The entry has double French doors and is topped by a half-round

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fanlight and a high-relief scroll keystone. The entire entry is ringed with terra cotta tiles in green with raised edging and circular designs in beige with dark red dots in the center of each circle.

Similar tile trim, though without the red dots, surrounds the windows. The trim springs from narrow cast stone sills, and is joined at the top corners by tiles with a raised floral design that consists of sculptured green leaves and dark red accents. The design on the corner pieces is three-dimensional and finely-detailed. Windows on the second and third stories (which correspond with the building's interior hallway) are paired, multi-light casements. The second floor window has a simple, wrought-iron balconet. A decorative panel between the second and third stories is comprised of a single floral tile on a light beige background that is surrounded by a soldier course of bricks, mitered at the corners, and a narrow beige edging. In the side bays, the narrow, multi-light casement windows are set in groups of ten--five taller windows side-by-side topped with five half-sized windows. Each window grouping is surrounded by the same decorative trim as the center-bay windows. Above the window groupings, between the different stories, are panels marked by chevron-pattern brick work punctuated by a single flower tile set on the diagonal.

The buff-colored brick used on the facade wraps around the corners and extends back one bay on each side elevation. The rest of the building is red brick laid up in six-course common bond. The expansive side elevations are pierced by paired, one-over-one windows at regular intervals. There is a secondary entrance on the north facade, approximately halfway back. The rear facade is five bays wide with single glazed doors in the center bay of each story that open onto a wrought-iron fire escape. There is a full basement.

On the interior, the building has a center hallway running the full length of the building, which is finished with crown molding and a chair rail. About halfway back, it opens into a stair hall on the right (north). The staircase has delicate wrought iron railings and a solid wooden handrail. There are six apartments on each side of the hallway on each floor. The apartment doors have a dark wood-grain finish and are topped by transom windows. On the inside, the apartments feature a host of original details, including solid two-panel doors and/or glazed French doors, hardwood floors, wide baseboards, two-part

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door and window surrounds, and glazed kitchen cabinet doors (in those apartments with kitchens).

The largest apartment, #101, was built for the original owner, W. Fred Casey. It has seven rooms plus two baths and spans two floors with a basement. All other apartments are smaller and range from one to four rooms (plus baths). In the early years of the twentieth century, a distinction was made between a "bachelor apartment" and a "housekeeping unit." A bachelor apartment was generally smaller, perhaps just one room and bath, with very small or no kitchen facilities or public rooms (the presumption was that a single man would not cook or entertain). A housekeeping unit, on the other hand, had a full kitchen, living and dining rooms, and was better suited to family life. The Frederick Apartments was designed with both types of units.

The Frederick Apartments is a fine building with a well-executed design. The polychrome facade with its three-dimensional clay tile detailing is unmatched in 1920s-era architecture in Charlotte. The form and layout of the building reflect the spatial organization typical to the building type, which exploded onto the Charlotte marketplace during the late 1920s. The integrity of the exterior and of the public spaces is excellent. The interior of the apartments are currently undergoing renovation. Care is being taken to retain as much original material as possible and ensure that all work is in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The 1927 Frederick Apartments, located in Charlotte's urban core, is an important product of the times and conditions in which it was built. W. Fred Casey's decision to build an apartment house on N. Church Street was a direct response to the decade's rapid population increase and the resultant need to house large numbers of new residents. It was built during a peak year for multi-family dwelling construction in the midst of the particularly active 1920s building boom. Architecturally, it is a fine example of a medium-sized apartment house whose design reflects a good degree of sophistication and an Italian Renaissance Revival influence. Its use of polychrome terra cotta design elements is unmatched in Charlotte architecture of the period. Additionally, from 1938 to 1941, it was the home of acclaimed author W. J. Cash (1900-1941) during the time he wrote his masterpiece social history, The Mind of the South. The Frederick Apartments is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for architecture, and under Criterion B for literature. The periods of significance are 1927 for architecture and 1938-40 for literature.

Architecture Context

The 1920s were boom years in Charlotte, and the combination of prosperous economic times and a burgeoning population resulted in notably high levels of building activity. Prior to 1928, the city boundaries encompassed only an area that reached from the North Charlotte to Elizabeth to Dilworth to Biddleville neighborhoods. The United States census counted 46,388 people living in Charlotte at the beginning of the decade, and 82,675 people in 1930--a total increase of seventy-eight percent, or 36,287 people.¹ A Charlotte News article from April 1927 exposed data collected by Miller Press (publishers of the annual city directory) that showed a population growth spike from 76,000 in 1926 to 82,000 in 1927, or 6,000 new residents.²

The population boom created a need for additional housing, and the construction industry responded. Although there were inevitably some minor downswings, the overall

¹ LeGette Blythe and Charles R. Brockman, Hornet's Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (Charlotte: McNally of Charlotte, 1961), p. 449.

² "Population of City Shows Growth," The Charlotte News, 16 April 1927, p. 11-A.

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pattern was one of record levels of new construction. Articles from The Charlotte News written in 1927 substantiate the local building boom. In August, the paper reported on a slump in construction but noted that "Charlotte was the only city in the state whose total building permits showed a substantial increase in July over those issued in June."³ The dip was short-lived, however, as less than two months later the same newspaper analyzed national data and exclaimed that "the greatest volume of construction operations ever carried on in this country during a single month was established in August." The article further stated that "building activities in August reached a total well above the previous record, set in July, 1926."⁴ There is no doubt that this trend reached Charlotte. On October 2, the newspaper boasted that "building operations in the Queen City surpassed those in all other Carolina cities during August."⁵ In 1927, the total value of building permits issued in Charlotte was \$5,499,364.⁶ While these figures encompass building activity of all types, a significant portion was residential. A report from the F. W. Dodge Corporation, as reported in The Charlotte News, broke down statewide figures for August 1927, and calculated that thirty-eight percent (38%) of all construction was for residential buildings.⁷

By the 1920s, the term "residential buildings" did not refer only to single-family dwellings. Beginning in the 1870s, Americans began to embrace apartment living in large, densely-populated cities such as New York, Boston and Chicago. It is generally accepted that the building type matured in New York during the late-nineteenth century. In places where land was not quite as scarce or expensive, however, apartments were slower to gain acceptance. In Charlotte, for instance, the first apartment houses appeared just after the turn of the twentieth century. It was another twenty-five years, however, before the form would explode in popularity.

³ "City Building Permit Record is Good," The Charlotte News, 21 August 1927, p. 10-A.

⁴ "New Mark in Building Seen," The Charlotte News, 11 September 1927, p. 16-A.

⁵ "Building Here Leading All N. C. Cities," The Charlotte News, 2 October 1927, p. 1-B.

⁶ Ernest H. Miller, compiler, Miller's Official Charlotte, N. C. City Directory, (Asheville: Miller Press, 1930), p. 14.

⁷ "Huge Sum in Building in State," The Charlotte News, 18 September 1927, p. 3-A.

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The number of multi-family residences in Charlotte increased significantly during the 1920s. A 1927 newspaper article explains: "conspicuously interesting as a mile post in Charlotte's steady march toward a greater city is the noticeable tendency to construct apartment houses modeled after the fashion of those in metropolitan cities."⁸ That same year, a chamber of commerce publication reported that "apartment houses, in fact, have come to be quite an important feature in the structure of the city."⁹ Analysis of the "Apartment Houses" section of the city directories is revealing. It shows that there were thirty-five named apartment buildings listed in 1920, and fifty-nine in 1925. The figures rose to eighty-seven entries under the heading in 1927, 102 the next year, and 122 in 1929. This shows that the number of apartment buildings almost quadrupled during the decade. Thirty-five of the new buildings (forty percent of the total) were erected between 1927 and 1929, the peak years for apartment construction during the period.¹⁰

In Charlotte, virtually all apartment buildings of the period stand two or more stories tall. The four-unit "quadriplex" form was popular, though larger buildings were gaining hold on the market. The largest extant apartment building from the time is the 1926 Addison Apartments at 831 E. Morehead St. (NR 1990). At nine stories tall, the Addison was originally constructed with sixty-four apartments. (In the mid-1990s, the building was altered with a large addition, replacement windows, and other changes.) Most of Charlotte's large apartment buildings of the period were a three- or four-story rectangular block with the apartments accessed from a center hall. Usually they displayed a stylish, ornamented main façade and plain brick walls on the other three facades. Among the numerous remaining examples of this type, Tryon House (built as the Guthery apartments) at 508 Tryon Street, the thirty-six-unit Jefferson at 409 N. Church Street, and the Frederick are among the more stylish. With its Italian Renaissance design highlighted by colorful terra cotta detailing, the Frederick is one of the most distinctive. The thirty-nine unit Poplar Apartments begun in 1929 at 301 W. 10th Street features Elizabethan and Jacobean motifs and a more complex plan creating a series of light wells.

Historical Background

William Frederick Casey (1874-1957) commissioned the construction of the Frederick Apartments in 1927. Casey, who was originally from Tennessee, moved to Charlotte in 1914, the same year he married Mae E. Cook. By trade, Casey was a manufacturer's agent of building

⁸ "City Apartment Buildings," The Charlotte Observer, 4 September 1927, p. 8.

⁹ Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, Charlotte, North Carolina: Diversified Industrial and Commercial Center (Charlotte: Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, 1927), n. p.

¹⁰ Charlotte City Directories, various years.

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materials and contractor's equipment. An advertisement in a trade publication described his company as "distributors and representatives" of a variety of items, including ornamental bronze or iron, elevator enclosures, dumb waiters, and incinerators. He also handled ornamental terra cotta roofing tile and clay products--both of which are used on the façade of the Frederick Apartments.¹¹

W. Fred Casey and Company provided materials for a variety of construction projects around the region. In Winston-Salem, his iron products were found in the North Carolina Baptist Hospital, Bowman-Grey School of Medicine (Wake Forest College), and in several buildings at the Winston-Salem Teacher's College. Incinerators he sold were installed in buildings in Durham and Greensboro, and at Fort Bragg. Glazed tile he brokered was used in the American Tobacco Building in Durham. In Charlotte, the General Dyestuff Corporation Building (2549 Wilkinson Blvd.) utilized terra cotta he procured, and Presbyterian Hospital's laundry chutes were provided by Casey's company.¹²

Fred Casey contracted with J. A. Jones Construction Company to build the Frederick Apartments. The J. A. Jones Construction Company, which has since grown into a large conglomerate, was founded in 1894 by James Addison Jones (1869-1950). They reached prominence in 1909 when they constructed North Carolina's first steel-frame skyscraper, the Independence Building (demolished in 1981) in Charlotte. They built many significant buildings locally, including the 1914 Masonic Temple (NR 1987, now demolished), the 1924 Hotel Charlotte (now demolished), the 1925 City Hall, and the 1926 Addison Apartments (NR 1990). During the 1930s, the company expanded its region and its vision. They were awarded various contracts by the Public Works Administration (PWA), built an air base in the Panama Canal Zone, and were awarded military construction contracts. During World War II, the company built a large steam power plant in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. They were subsequently contracted to build two "super-secret" uranium plants, which were instrumental in producing materials for the atomic bombs that were used by the United States during the war.¹³

¹¹ Prominent Builders of the Carolinas (Mt. Vernon, NY: Architects Publishing Co., 1940s?), p. 9-A.

¹² Prominent Builders of the Carolinas (Mt. Vernon, NY: Architects Publishing Co., 1940s?).

¹³ The Charlotte Observer, 23 October 1971, p. B-1;
Beth Laney-Smith and Karen Trodgon Kluever, Jones Construction Centennial: Looking Back, Moving Forward, 1890-1990 (Charlotte: Laney-Smith, Inc., 1989), pp. 24-26, 33, 42-44;

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The J. A. Jones Construction Company applied for a building permit on April 18, 1927, two weeks after the project was announced in the local paper. A brief article that appeared on April 2 boasted that the Frederick Apartments would have "all the modern conveniences that can be put into an apartment house." It specifically mentioned "an electrical dish washer, electric cooling and ventilation system, refrigerator and many other devices." The building permit estimates the total cost at \$125,000, but does not list the name of an architect. Instead, the word "owner" was written in and then crossed out--suggesting that Casey may have furnished the plans himself.¹⁴

It took the J. A. Jones Company about five months to complete the Frederick Apartments. The first advertisements for rental units appeared on September 18, 1927. Ads touted "exclusive modern apartments, fireproof, consisting of: Bachelor apartments, single rooms and baths, double rooms and one bath, also housekeeping apartments," and "all modern conveniences." The city directory for 1928, the first year the Frederick was listed, showed that thirty out of the thirty-six units were already rented.¹⁵

The owners themselves were among the original occupants of the Frederick Apartments. W. Fred and Mae Casey lived in unit #101 during the time they owned the building, from 1927 through 1929. Other original tenants held jobs in a variety of professional occupations. There were two dentists and one physician, several salesmen, and two insurance agents. Perhaps the most intriguing position was that of T. H. Tracy, who was an agent in charge for the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Investigations.¹⁶ Almost all of the original tenants held jobs within walking distance of the

Richard Mattson and Suzanne Pickens, "Addison Apartments" National Register Nomination, 1990; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, "Survey and Research Report on the Poplar Apartment Condominiums," 1983.

¹⁴ The Charlotte Observer, 2 April 1927, p. 9;
Charlotte Building Standards Department, Building Permit # 7629, 18 April 1927.

¹⁵ The Charlotte News, 19 April 1927, p. 4-A;
The Charlotte Observer, 18 September 1927, section 4, p. 8;
The Charlotte News, 18 September 1927, p. 14-A;
The Charlotte News, 2 October 1927, p. 14-A;
Charlotte City Directory, 1928.

¹⁶ Charlotte City Directories, various years.

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building. One third of the residents worked in one of Charlotte's new skyscrapers--five people worked in the nearby Professional Building (Tryon and 7th Streets, now demolished), and seven commuted the seven blocks to the Johnston Building (212 S. Tryon Street).

There were several long-term residents over the years. Allen W. Sutton was a sales manager at Pyramid Chevrolet Company while he lived in the building from 1928 through the mid 1940s. David H. Yarbrough was employed by the Pure Oil Company during the 1940s, working his way up from marketer, to clerk, to department manager, and finally reaching the status of special representative in 1950. Hyman Usilowitz, who lived in the building from 1945 through the early 1960s, was an assistant manager for the Reliable Loan Company. Unit #106 was rented to a photographer, L. Davis Phillips, and his wife, during the 1930s. Another married couple was Appleton F. and Addie C. Bolles, who lived in the building in the 1940s. Appleton worked for the Southerland-Helms Company (a local optician), being at various times a stock clerk, stock manager and salesman. After his death, Addie remained in the building and took a job as a magazine agent for Periodical Publishers. Another working widow at the Frederick Apartments was Mace H. Kister--an office secretary for various firms during the 1940s.¹⁷

Several long-term residents were employed in the retail sector during the 1940s and 1950s. Samuel Pittle was a salesman at the National Hat Shop. Mrs. Olive F. Dowling was a saleswoman at Montaldo's, a purveyor of better woman's clothing. Mrs. Nannie Marie Wallace worked at a local department store, Ivey's. Ivey's also employed J. Elmer Jordan and Allen S. Plexico, who both served as buyer and department manager at various times.¹⁸

Many of these working professionals stayed in residence through changes in the legal ownership of the building. Fred Casey had taken out two separate deeds of trust on the property during the construction period in 1927. Casey entered into a third deed of trust in November of that year with the J. A. Jones Construction Company and Edwin L. Jones (son of company founder J. A. Jones). Casey was apparently unable to repay the loans, which totaled \$130,000. Jones Construction Company foreclosed and took title to

¹⁷ Charlotte City Directories, various years.

¹⁸ Charlotte City Directories, various years.

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the property in September 1929. It was quickly transferred to Edwin L. and Annabel L. Jones, who retained ownership until 1972. At that time, it was conveyed to their daughter's company, Jones-Brown Realty, who held the title until 1979. Thus, the Frederick Apartments was owned by family members of the original contractor for fifty years.¹⁹ It is currently being renovated and converted to condominiums.

Literature Context

During the late 1930s, the Frederick Apartments was home to the acclaimed author, Wilbur J. Cash (1900-1941), who is best known for his seminal social history The Mind of the South. Cash was born Joseph Wilbur Cash in Gaffney, South Carolina (he later changed his name to Wilbur Joseph Cash), and moved across the state line to Boiling Springs, North Carolina at the age of twelve. He developed an interest in journalism while a student at Wake Forest College in the early 1920s. After graduating in 1922, Cash held a variety of teaching posts and writing jobs, including brief periods with The Charlotte Observer in the summer of 1923, and The Charlotte News in 1926. He was influenced by the writer H. L. Mencken, and contributed seven articles to Mencken's magazine American Mercury between 1929 and 1934. One article in particular, titled The Mind of the South, was brought to the attention of Blanche Knopf, wife of publisher Alfred A. Knopf. She asked Cash for a book proposal and he willingly complied. They came to an agreement in 1930, but the book got a slow start. Cash wrote little for the next two years, and then sporadically during the mid 1930s. In early 1936, he finally submitted 306 pages to Knopf, which resulted in a contract for the entire book. Cash continued to work on the book off-and-on through the late 1930s, delaying the stated deadline several times.²⁰

Meanwhile, to produce income, Cash joined the staff of The Charlotte News in November 1935. He continued living at home with his parents, who in 1932 had moved

¹⁹ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 671, page 435; Deed Book 684, page 67; Deed Book 754, page 7; Deed Book 753, page 119; Deed Book 765, page 151; Deed Book 853, page 569; Deed Book 891, page 89; Deed Book 3416, page 79; Deed Book 4184, page 265.

²⁰ Clayton, W. J. Cash, pp. 93-99, 112-13, 150-51;
Fred Hobson, Tell About the South: The Southern Rage to Explain, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), p. 252;
McKay Jenkins, The South in Black and White: Race, Sex, and Literature in the 1940s (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. 65.

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to a brick bungalow in Shelby, North Carolina. He wrote there and also in the back room of his aunt's place of business, the Boiling Springs Post Office. After two years with the newspaper, he was promoted to associate editor and moved to Charlotte in the fall of 1937. He stayed for a short time at the Selwyn Hotel (no longer standing), before moving to the Frederick Apartments in 1938. Cash first rented unit #210a, and later moved upstairs to #308. Both were small, one-room apartments with no kitchen. It was at the Frederick where he was most productive in writing The Mind of the South, and where he completed the manuscript in July 1940. He also courted and married his wife while he lived there. Cash wed Mary Ross Northrup on Christmas day, 1940, and they began their married life in his apartment at the Frederick, which they found too small for two people. In early 1941, Mary's mother moved away, and the newlyweds moved into her apartment at the Blandwood Apartments on S. Tryon Street. The apartment at the Blandwood was larger, and Mary delighted in housekeeping there.²¹

The Mind of the South is an intensive study of Southern sociology. In it Cash postulates that the South is unique, and that the Southern mindset is unlike that of any other region in the country. Indeed, he felt that the South is "not quite a nation within a nation, but the next thing to it." The book is his explanation of the roots and causes of "a fairly definite social pattern--a complex of established relationships and habits of thought, sentiments, prejudices, standards and values, and associations of ideas..." which he observed as a distinctively Southern view. The book explores such themes as race, class, individualism, religion, politics and industrialization.

The book was published in February 1941. Virtually all of the reviews were positive, and it was immediately recognized as being an important work. Newspapers and magazines throughout the state and region sang its praises. The national press even reviewed the book--Time magazine, The New York Times Book Review, and The New

²¹ Charlotte City Directories, 1938-41;
Clayton, W. J. Cash, pp. 94, 112-13, 147-49, 163-65;
William S. Powell, ed., Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), pp. 339-340;
Joseph L. Morrison, W. J. Cash: Southern Prophet, (New York: Alfred E. Knopf, 1967), pp. 76, 84, 106-109;
Joseph M. Flora and Louis D. Rubin, Jr., Southern Writers: A Biographical Dictionary, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1979), pp. 71-72;

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Republic all had good things to say about Cash's volume.²² Time magazine was quoted as saying "anything written about the South henceforth must start where he leaves off."²³ The publication of the book and its glowing reviews gave Cash a certain degree of prominence. It led to a Guggenheim fellowship, which he eagerly accepted. He and Mary traveled to Mexico City, where he was to spend the next year writing a novel. Cash had difficulty adjusting to Mexico City, and suffered a variety of mental and physical ills. He committed suicide by hanging himself on July 1, 1941, in the midst of an emotional breakdown.²⁴ Regrettably, he never lived to witness the impact his work was to have on future generations of scholars.

A sign that The Mind of the South stands as a classic is the fact that the book is still studied and actively discussed sixty years after its publication. In 1979, William S. Powell described it as "the product of exhaustive reading, perceptive observation, and creative insight," and as "a brilliant masterpiece that transcended the limitations of his own and the historian's craft."²⁵ Richard Walser in 1970 called it "perhaps the most intellectually influential book ever to come from North Carolina."²⁶ In 1983, English professor Fred Hobson said that "by the 1960s The Mind of the South had become a sort of Southern testament, the first work on the South suggested to outsiders, the book Northern civil rights workers carried with them on their Southern forays. One exaggerates only mildly in suggesting that Cash became more than an author and The Mind of the South more than a book: together they came to constitute a school of Southern thought, an intellectual force, to be drawn on, cited, and contested."²⁷ This survey of the evaluations of scholars reveals that the book has held a significant position in its field of study.

²² Clayton, W. J. Cash, pp. 164-68.

²³ Clayton, W. J. Cash, p. 167.

²⁴ Clayton, W. J. Cash, pp. 179-91;
Powell, North Carolina Biography, pp. 339-40.

²⁵ Powell, North Carolina Biography, pp. 339-40.

²⁶ Richard Walser, Literary North Carolina. (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1970), p. 47.

²⁷ Hobson, Tell About the South, p. 247.

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Cash is known to have worked on The Mind of the South in three places: at the Boiling Springs Post Office (between 1929 and 1932), at his parents house in Shelby (between 1932 and 1937), and in his apartment at the Frederick (after 1937). Though he may have logged many hours on his Underwood manual typewriter in Boiling Springs and Shelby, little of the early manuscript found its way into the finished product. He threw away 60,000 words in 1932, and discarded another draft in 1935.²⁸ Bruce Clayton in W. J. Cash: A Life states that "from late 1938 until June, 1940, when he made major progress on his manuscript, Cash was writing far less for the newspaper, approximately 51 pieces, many of them slight (28 the first year, 23 the second). Obviously, his newspaper writing kept him from his book. But it is also true that Cash did substantial work on his manuscript after his duties with the newspaper increased significantly and after he had moved out of his parents' house and into an apartment in Charlotte."²⁹ Therefore, of the three sites, the Frederick stands out as being the most significant in terms of Cash's productivity on the book.

²⁸ Jenkins, The South in Black and White, p. 65.

²⁹ Clayton, W. J. Cash, p. 114.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATAVerbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the nominated parcel correspond with the legal description found in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 9981, page 850. The lot has 108 feet of street frontage and is 229 feet deep. It is tax parcel #079-035-14.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated parcel correspond with the legal description and tax parcel.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

The following information is the same for all of the photographs:

Name of the property: Frederick Apartments

Location: 515 N. Church St., Charlotte, NC

County: Mecklenburg

Name of Photographer: Mary Beth Gatza

Location of Original Negatives:

North Carolina Division of Archives and History

Survey and Planning Branch

4618 Mail Service Center

Raleigh, NC 27699-4618

Date of Photographs: March 2000

Photographs:

- A. View from east
- B. Facade
- C. View from west
- D. Doorway detail
- E. Facade detail
- F. Window detail

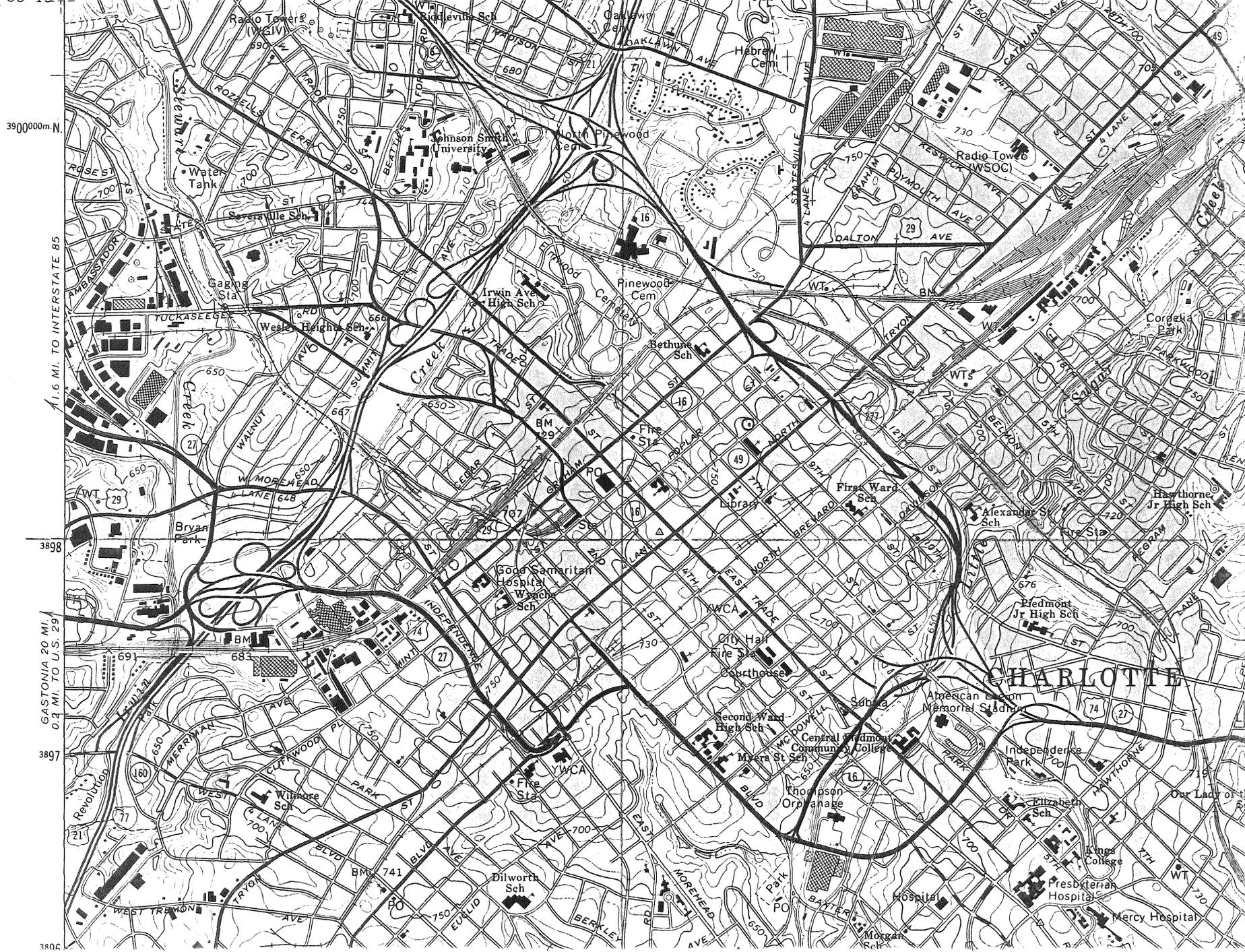
4824 IV SW
ATN ISLAND LAKE

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

515 N. Church St.
Charlotte, Mecklenburg Co., NC
E 514600 N 3898540
zone 17

charlotte East Quad

80° 52' 30" 35° 15' HOMESTEAD 3.4 MI. 513000m E. 514 1.8 MI. TO INTERSTATE 85 515 50' 516 4 MI. TO INTERSTATE 85 STATESVILLE 40 MI. CONCORD 18 MI.



3900000m N.
1.6 MI. TO INTERSTATE 85
3898
GASTONIA 20 MI.
0.3 MI. TO U.S. 29
3897
3896

CHARLOTTE

