

LANDMARK



SURVEY

IDENTIFICATION

Street Address: 617 Park Street
Map and Parcel: 52-186
Census Tract & Block: 3-510
Present Owner: James Hubbard
Address: 617 Park Street, City
Present Use: Residence
Original Owner: George L. Sampson
Original Use: Residence

BASE DATA

Historic Name: Sinclair House
Date/Period: cir. 1880
Style: Victorian Vernacular
Height to Cornice:
Height in Stories: 2
Present Zoning: R-3
Land Area (sq.ft.): 94 x 193
Assessed Value (land + imp.): 4890 + 8700 = 13,590

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

This structure is typical of the Victorian vernacular houses built in Charlottesville in the seventies and eighties. Three bays, two stories, with a central gable and overhanging eaves, and L-shaped in plan with a central hall and interior chimneys, this house was a bit finer than others as it has handsome black veined marble Victorian mantles. The shaker shingles, Federal style entrance and stoop were added by the Quarles family who owned the house between 1921 and 1953.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

Julie Holladay sold the southern part of the lot of land known as "Northwood" to George L. Sampson for \$1,000 in 1878. Sampson probably built the present house which is stylistically very similar to others such as the Watson-Bosserman House on North First Street built at about the same time. Tax records indicate that the house was standing in 1889 when Charlottesville was incorporated. In 1896 Sampson conveyed the property to Charles G. Sinclair (DB 12-118) for \$3,450. He resided there until 1921 when he sold to his son, J.C. Quarles, who added the shaker shingles and Colonial Revival detailing. The house remained in the Quarles family until 1953. James Hubbard, the present owner, purchased the property in 1973 (DB 346-567).

GRAPHICS

CONDITIONS

Average

SOURCES

Alexander, Recollections
City/County Records
Miss Helen Duke
Mrs. James Hubbard

Street Address: 617 Park Street
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Present Owner: James Hubbard
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Original Owner:
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Height to Stories:
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Land Area (sq. ft.): 94 x 193
Assessed Value (land+imp)
4890 + 1200 = 6090

broad Feed. Rev. fanlight door
hall in T. section -

Historical Description

Good vict. mantles
moulding look like mid-cent.
org. slate
3 bay tin roof overhanging eaves - now shaker shingles -
was orig. L shaped -
No cent. gable -
Sinclairs - who live at Locust Grove - buy
very old -

Mustard House frame - for warmth -

Historic Description

Name of Persons Interviewed:

James Hubbard 1973 346-567

Ray Shields ex 1971 331-486

Ray Shields et ux 1970 318-486

- 50 yrs. old.

Elmer Estes 1966 282-110

Elmer Estes 1966 280-595

Ruby Quarles 1953 WB (10-104)
ceded porch & door - shingles
change roof 37-328

1921-53

J. C. Quarles from Charles G. Sinclair 1921

Sinclair from R. H. Wood, comm. 1896 12-118 \$13,450

George H. Sampson from Julia Holladay - 1878 ACDB 74-210 \$1,000
'corner of Northwood'

~~1922 - No Building listed - a false rumor~~

1913 1300 worth of Buildings

1909 " " " "

1903 1500 " " " "

1895 1500 " " " "

1889-1926 - Building listed

" from Sampson, et al.

Plat 12-118. Shows House

Conveys the southern part of the lot of land known as 'Northwood' conveyed yrs. ago by John B. Minor to Julie Holladay - appurtenances.

49-338 1851 gift.



Miscellaneous Styles Adorn Victorian Home

By LENNY GRANGER
of The Progress Staff

Borrowed motifs in mixed profusion were the order of the day in late 19th century American architecture, reflecting the rapid, chaotic growth of a nation determined to struggle beyond the trauma of the what up to that time was one of the world's bloodiest wars.

Victorian eclecticism, in architecture and elsewhere, by its very nature defies generalization. Miscellaneous styles were grafted one upon the other in a tumbling medley, at once drawing praise and scorn of its search for "a more promising end," as the optimists put it.

Charlottesville's conservatism kept a lid on some of the more exuberant tendencies of the age, thereby accomplishing two things.

It means that Charlottesville is not wealthy in her number of High Victorian buildings or the vernacular in its most eccentric forms.

But it does mean that examples of this cocky, self-confident species provide whimsical relief as they pop up, usually in singular and exceptional form, quickly eliciting from viewer an immediate response of embrace or aversion, rarely anything in between.

One of the city's finest examples of the Queen Anne style is the Marshall-Rucker house at Park Street, owned by Lloyd Smith and his wife who are both active in the Albemarle Historical Society. Mrs. Smith is also a member of the Architectural Review Board.

The architect of the sophisticated red-brick home, built in 1894, is unknown. The original

owner's wife, Carrie Marshall, apparently had dreams for it that so far exceeded their means that J. W. Marshall's fortune never quite recovered, according to Smith.

It has passed through a series of hands since that time, coming under the Smiths' ownership in the early 1960s and becoming the object of their persistent and ceaseless attention in 1968 when they decided to make it their home for life.

They do not plan to restore everything, and their intentions are not simply those of the purist. They are restoring it because Mrs. Smith says frankly "It looks better that way."

The grand proportions and asymmetrical design of Victorian construction provides a tremendous opportunity for the homeowner to release an ample imagination and any excess energy.

They were intended as practical and very liveable homes, tailor-made to the needs of the owners and flexible to enough so that subsequent owners might adapt them to their own styles of living.

The Smiths find theirs a particularly pleasant house in the summers, where high ceilings keep things cool downstairs.

Large, open interiors lend themselves magnificently to entertaining as well as to the scramble of day-to-day living for growing families.

Smith estimates that fully two-thirds of the rooms in the house are "public," thereby cementing it as a focus for family togetherness.

Irregularities in design provide vastly interesting spaces which can be used in new ways,

making this house a special one.

It was true in the days of William J. Rucker, who acquired the home in 1913 for his Charlottesville wife.

Rucker made a number of excellent improvements, one which was actually just what the doctor ordered.

He apparently prescribed sunlight for an illness of Mrs. Rucker's, so her husband saw to it that Vita glass was installed clear around what is now the living room on the first floor.

The glass was intended to filter out noxious rays, filter in beneficial ones. A tiny sunburst in the corner of one pane is still intact, the trademark of the 19th century invention.

Decorating the home has been thoughtful but not burdensomely systematic, as the Smiths over the years have picked up pieces here and there that seem to fit in.

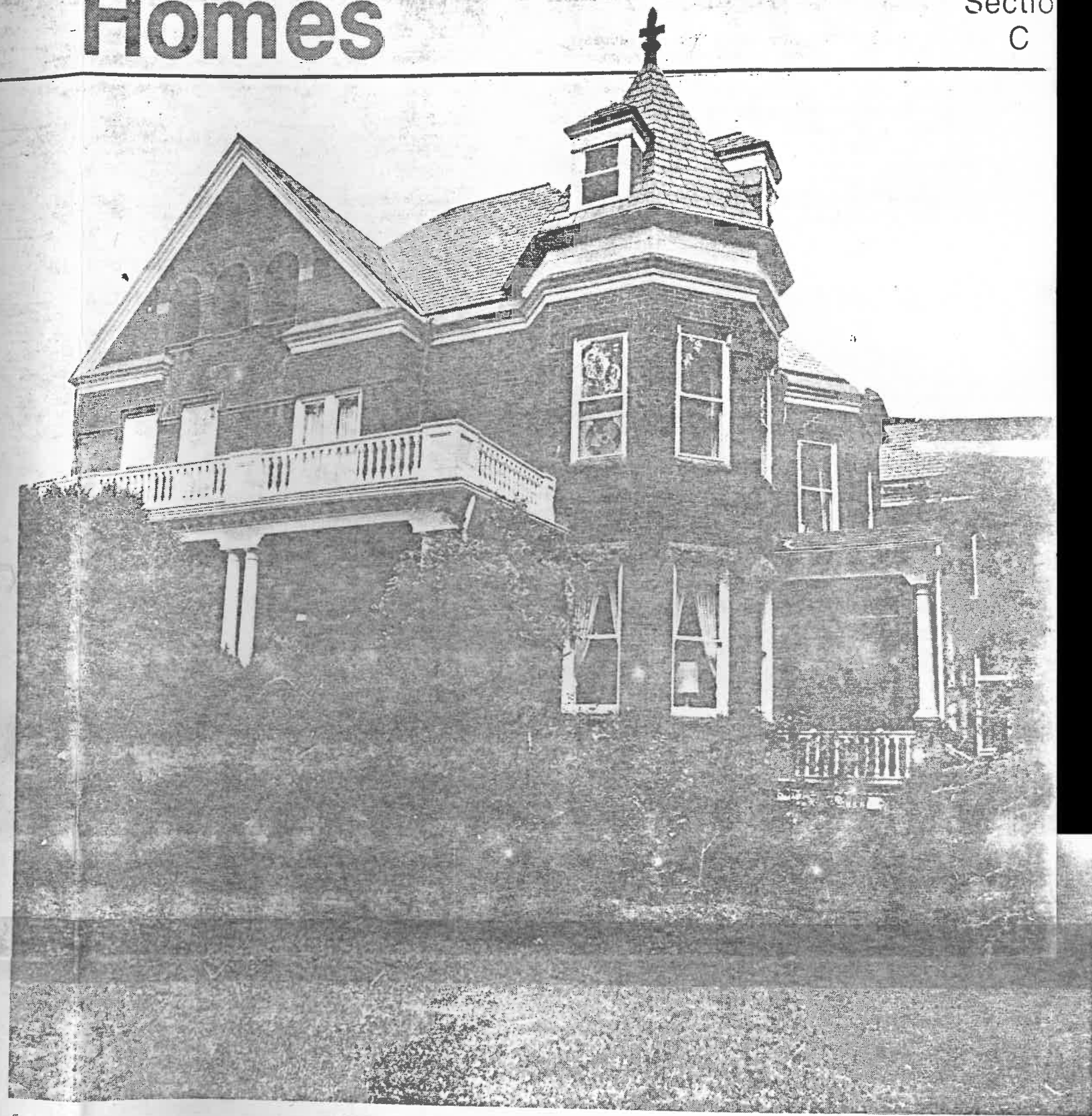
Burlap covers the living room walls in a way that is at once informal and surprisingly appropriate to what is usually considered "problem space."

Hanging on the walls of the first floor bathroom are framed fashion pages of the Paris edition of the Herald Tribune from April 5, 1896, newspapers Smith says his children found under the house.

One of the most notable furnishings is a huge four poster bed with satin-cushioned canopy which came with the house.

It perfectly matches the great poplar columned mantel in the first-floor guest room, and took Smith four years to re-finish.

(The attorney emphasizes that it took a professional the



THE MARSHALL-RUCKER HOUSE WAS BUILT IN 1894
Owner Lloyd Smith Has Had Serious Restoration Under Way for 10 Years

Progress Photos by John Atkins

angled windows as well as other evidence of romantic notions that prevailed in the last century, lend themselves to a variety of functions, in particular an intimate wooded platform beneath the turret where a

Smith says some of his neighbors may be willing to pitch in together to have the pool improved so it can be put back in service.

Victorian architecture, for all its fanciful renditions of

four-over-four.

The reason? Smith says the smaller panes were cheaper, and the builder was obviously not as concerned about the aes-

makes you hard-put to deny the architectural integrity of the sometimes frivolous Gilded Age.

Victorianism suffered the scorn of many an architect in the wake of modernism

onial Revival architecture and that of railroad stations as well, Lay says.

There are those who will admit that there was little of significance built between 1850

ed red-brick home, built in 1870, is unknown. The original design was a vast and interesting space which can be used in new ways.



MRS. LLOYD SMITH ON THE SIDE PORCH
Mrs. Smith is on the City's Architectural Review Board

(The attorney emphasizes that it took a professional the same amount of time to refinish an identical mantel in the yet-to-be restored drawing room just off the entrance hall.)

Interesting and unusual spaces abound, including a small cubby-hole beneath the stairway which now contains a small light and tiny furniture, a secret room for the children when they were small.

Climbing the stairs to the second floor, where most of the bedrooms are, Smith says with a sigh that the job of restoring, which has fortunately required few new building materials, is a never-ending one.

One of the most comfortable rooms in this generous and elegant home is Rucker's library, lined with glassed-in bookshelves centering on a small brass-screened fireplace.

Rucker, a local philanthropist, apparently tailored the room for himself while he was building the room below for his wife.

Probably the most interesting room in the entire house is the attic which the Smiths have converted into a recreation room for their children.

Irregular outlines, bayed and

an intimate wooded platform beneath the turret, where a game table and chairs now stand.

Pinball machines, a stereo and hanging swing keep the children occupied, while a small balcony facing Park Street 40 feet above the ground is a place where one enjoys the luxury of seeing without being seen, as if protected in the highest reaches of a well-guarded castle facade.

Indeed, it must be a magnificent spot for observing summer thunderstorms.

Livability is a hallmark in these homes. In the Duke house next door, built around the same time as an equally fine example of Victorian architecture at its best, Judge Duke was supposed to have built an octagonal library similar to an octagonal ice house he liked to sit in as a boy.

The serene and rather private grounds speak for themselves, where two large maples and a 100-year-old linden tree planted by the judge still stand.

A large swimming pool sits nicely enclosed by a border of deodar trees which also were used to screen the garden from the traffic on Park Street.

Victorian architecture, for all its fanciful renditions of a society clearly gone romantic, is still marked by practicality.

Cheaper building materials were used at the back of the house for example, Smith says, pointing to the back wall of the kitchen and stairway.

The family rooms toward the front of the house had two-over-two windows, while those that look out from the back stair-

not as concerned about the aesthetics of that part of the house.

All the refinishing is being done by Smith himself, which is no easy task. For example, he has found that it takes four or five days to take down a window and reglaze it. Multiply that by 60 windows throughout, and you've got a job on your hands that just won't quit.

A walk through a home like the Marshall-Rucker house

scorn of many an architect in the wake of modernism, according to Edward Lay, University of Virginia architecture professor, when schools abandoned teaching its history altogether and concentrated completely on new concepts.

And those who eliminate Victorian architecture because it hasn't yet passed the seemingly arbitrary 100-year mark eliminate in a sweeping gesture Col-

significance built between 1850 and 1870.

But the fact remains, in the minds of Victorian enthusiasts, that the late 19th century's eclecticism is unequalled in a style that pleased educated and rustic persons alike, a style that transformed the vernacular in America at a time that witnessed rapid advances in household technology and building techniques.

