



John and Idella Mayes House (1902)
435 East Morehead St., Charlotte N.C.

Photograph By Nancy O. Albert

John Henry Mayes (1865-1947) and his wife, Cora **Idella** Mayes (1868-1939), and their youngest daughter, Idella, moved into their new home on East Morehead Street in Charlotte in 1902. Mayes was familiar with the city. He had been traveling by train to Charlotte on business since the mid-1890s. Mayes, born in England, journeyed to Charlotte from Massachusetts to sell machinery to the owners of the many textile mills that were being built in the Piedmont sections of the two Carolinas at the turn of the twentieth century. His family settled permanently in Charlotte about 1900, when Mayes was hired by the Stuart W. Cramer's textile firm as a regional salesman. They first resided in a rented home.



John Henry Mayes
(1865-1947)

John and Idella Mayes enjoyed the amenities of a bountiful, lavish lifestyle in their East Morehead Street residence. The newspaper account of their daughter Idella's home wedding ceremony in September 1914 illustrates this truth. The description is filled with superlatives. The *Charlotte News* described the ceremony as an event of "notable beauty and attended by rare elegance of detail." "The Mayes home was in exquisite bridal flora for the happy event," said the newspaper.

John Mayes escorted his daughter down the "waterfall" stairway that flares at the bottom for dramatic impact. Six art glass windows still adorn the wall at the stairway landing. They surely heightened the excitement of the nuptial. John Mayes had purchased the lace for his daughter's wedding gown in Paris. "More elegant bridal gowning," reported the *Charlotte News* "has not been seen in Charlotte." "A tulie veil, held by the traditional orange wreath, fell not too-thickly over the rich lace," the newspaper declared, "and a superb diamond was caught in the lace on the corsage." The rector of the Church of the Holy Comforter, the Episcopal congregation to which the Mayes family belonged, conducted the ceremony.



**Six Art Glass Windows At The Stairway
Landing**

Photograph By Lisa Stockton Howell



**Stairway Down Which The Bride
Walked In 1914**

Photograph By Nancy O. Albert

There were moments of sadness and tension in the Mayes household. John and his son, John Henry Mayes, Jr. (1881-1960), became estranged. J. H. Mayes, Jr. moved to Fitzgerald, Georgia in 1902, managed a mill there, served as Mayor of Fitzgerald, and resided in the town for the rest of his life. There was little, if any, contact between father and son after he left Charlotte. Interestingly, John Henry

Mayes Jr.'s granddaughter is Frances Mayes, poet and author of *Under The Tuscan Sun*. She visited the house in recent years. Even more painful for John and Idella Mayes was the death of a daughter, Katherine Mayes, in 1911 at the age of 21 months. The child was buried in Charlotte's Elmwood Cemetery. "The funeral of little Katherine," reported the *Charlotte Observer*, "was conducted from the residence" with a "large number of sorrowing friends of the bereaved parents" attending.



Grave Of Katherine Mayes (1909-1911) Elmwood Cemetery, Charlotte, N.C.

It is reasonable to infer that the architect of the Shingle style Mayes House was Willard G. Rogers (1863?-1947). Here is the evidence. First, Rogers was a colleague of J. H. Mayes at the Stuart W. Cramer Company in 1902. They were co-workers. Second, Rogers was designing his own Shingle style residence that year on East Boulevard in Dilworth; and in terms of overall massing and decorative detail the W. G. Rogers House and the John and Idella Mayes House, both of which survive, are strikingly similar. Finally, the two families frequently socialized with one another, especially Idella Mayes and Rogers's wife. Indeed, Mrs. W. G. Rogers spent the entire weekend at the Mayes House in November 1908.



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John and Idella Mayes House
435 East Morehead Street (1902)



W. G. Rogers House
524 East Boulevard (1902)

Willard Rogers was a native of Cincinnati, Ohio. He learned the practice of architecture from his father. The Shingle style he selected for his own residence and allegedly for the Mayes House is relatively rare in North Carolina, especially in urban centers such as Charlotte. It originated in the 1870s in fashionable seaside resorts in New England, including Cape Cod and Newport, and is a uniquely American design motif. J. H. Mayes lived for many years just outside Boston. Therefore, he was almost certainly familiar with the Shingle style and saw it as a symbol of high social standing.

In North Carolina, the Shingle style is most often found at historic beach resorts and mountain retreats. It never gained the level of popularity enjoyed by the Queen Anne style or the Colonial Revival style in the Tar Heel state. There are only three extant examples of the Shingle Style in Charlotte. In addition to the Mayes House and the Rogers House, there is the Liddell-McNinch House (1893) at 511 North Church Street in Charlotte's Fourth Ward.



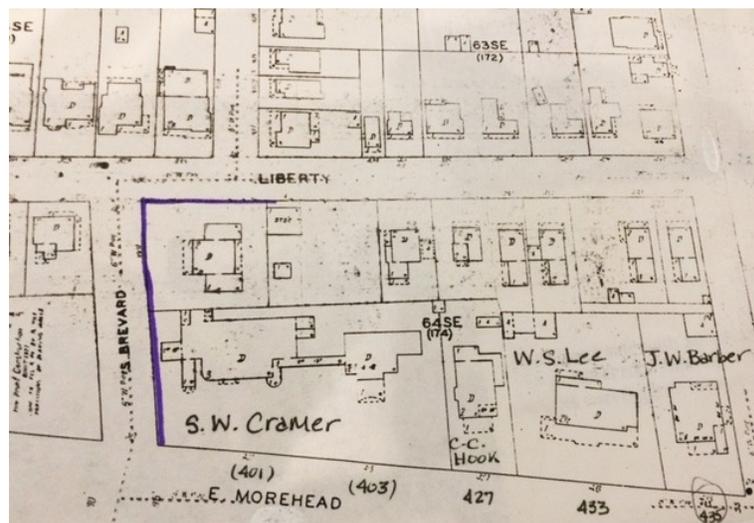
Liddell-McNinch House (1893)
511 North Church Street

The Shingle style takes its name from the uninterrupted use of wooden shingles to clad the exterior walls of a building. Facades are generally asymmetrical, such as

one encounters on the rear façade of the Mayes House. Steeply-pitched roofs and large porches are also common features of the Shingle style.



This Photograph Of East Morehead Street c. 1925 Shows The Nature Of The Streetscape Within Which The John And Idella Mayes House Was Initially Located. The Building On The Left (The Current Location Of The Dowd Y.M.C.A.) Was Originally Charlotte Central High School. Later It Became Alexander Graham Junior High School. The Mayes House Is At The Extreme Right Of The Photograph. The Large Residence Next Door Was The Home Of William States Lee, The Head Engineer At Duke Power Company.



This 1929 Sanborn Map Shows Who Lived On The Block. J. W. Barber Acquired The Mayes House In 1926. Next Door Was The Home Of William States Lee, A Leader Of Duke Power Co. Noted Local Architect C. C. Hook Lived In The Next House. At The Western End Of The Block Was The Large Estate Of Stuart Cramer. In The 1940's And 1950's It Was Occupied By Kuester's Restaurant. Many Charlotteans Remember Eating There.

The elaborate interior features of the John and Idella Mayes House are mostly remarkably well preserved. These include original crown moldings, wainscoting, stenciled baseboards, fireplace surrounds, balustrades, and newels. A metal candlestick electric light sits atop the newel at the bottom of the “waterfall” stairway from the upper floor. In keeping with the Shingle style, the major public rooms flow easily one into another to create a “living hall” suitable for large public occasions, such as the wedding ceremonies for Idella Mayes in 1914, for her younger sister Elizabeth Mayes in 1924, and for the funeral of Katherine Mayes in 1911.



**The Living Hall In Deteriorated Condition
(1993)**



Fireplace Surround In Dining Room
Photograph By Lisa Stockton Howell



Hallway Baseboard



Candlestick Light



Hallway Radiator

The most consequential and longest lasting impact J. H. Mayes had upon the North Carolina textile industry occurred in 1906. Mayes and his partner, Lawrance A. Dodsworth (1871-1932), acquired a large tract of land on the South Fork River in Gaston County, North Carolina and constructed a textile mill and a large mill village beside the Southern Railroad tracks between Belmont and Lowell. They named the new town Mayesworth, later Maysworth. Stuart Cramer (1868-1940) purchased the mill in 1915. In 1922, Cramer bought the entire town and renamed it Cramerton. It still has that name today.



Front Of Mayes House (1993)



West Elevation Mayes House (1993)

John Henry Mayes ended the last vestiges of his employee relationship with Stuart Cramer in 1910 and established his own firm. In the early years he was successful, first in his customary role as a sales broker for textile machinery manufactured in the North, later as the builder and president of textile mills. But the 1920s were not kind to Mayes. He experienced economic misfortune, and his behavior became increasingly worrisome. In July 1926 he lost consciousness when he inhaled excessive amounts of carbon monoxide while working on his automobile in the Mayes House garage. Later that month Idella Mayes found her husband lying in bed with a German Luger pistol beside him. J. H. Mayes had shot himself in the chest. Luckily, the bullet had barely missed his heart and had hit no vital organs. The family rebuffed rumors of attempted suicide and insisted that both incidents were accidental. But one thing was undeniable. John Mayes was forced to sell his home on East Morehead Street to J. W. Barber in 1926. John and Idella

had to leave the house which had been a place of splendid upscale living and painful loss just a few years before. Mayes had mortgaged his house and could not make the payments.

East Morehead Street has been transformed in the twentieth century. A quiet, fashionable, residential street when the Mayes House was built in 1902, when there were virtually no automobiles in Charlotte, East Morehead gradually morphed into the major arterial thoroughfare it is today. The graceful, tree-lined median in front of the Mayes House was eliminated. Independence Boulevard was completed and began dumping large numbers of automobiles onto the street in 1950. The last tenant of the Cramer House left in the mid-1950s. Alexander Graham Junior High School relocated to Runnymede Lane in 1958, and the former school building on East Morehead Street was destroyed. The Central Y.M.C.A., now Dowd Y.M.C.A., opened on the former school site directly across the street from the Mayes House in May 1960. Increasingly, homes along East Morehead were demolished or converted to adaptive reuses. Once part of a congested residential district, the John and Idella Mayes House became the only original house extant in the entire block.



Central, Now Dowd Y.M.C.A, Under Construction (1959)



Rear Of Mayes House (1993)



Mayes House East Elevation (1993)

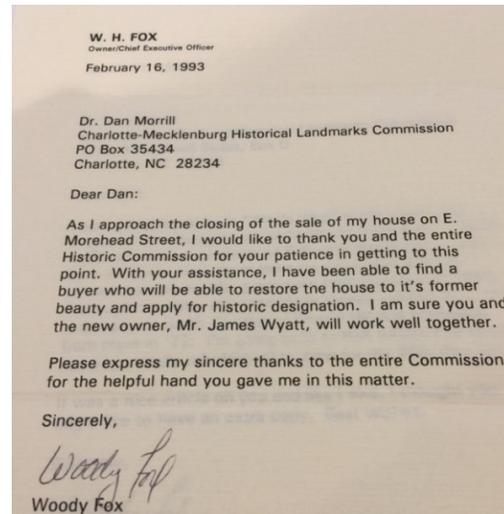
The Mayes House had a series of owners from 1926 until 1993. The last was Walter H. **“Woody”** Fox, who purchased the then abandoned Mayes House for investment purposes. The exterior of the house was bedraggled, but the interior features were still largely intact. This made the Mayes House suitable to become a Halloween Haunted House in 1991. The public attention drawn to the house caused the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission to take note of its special architectural significance. The Commission voted to begin the process of designating the Mayes House as a historic landmark but agreed to delay making a recommendation to the Charlotte City Council until the owner supported the designation. Meanwhile, Fox decided to list the property for sale in hopes that a buyer would come forward who would preserve the Mayes House. On February 16, 1993, Fox notified the Historic Landmarks Commission that attorney James Wyatt would purchase and restore the Mayes House. The Charlotte City Council did make the John and Idella Mayes House a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmark in June 1993. The Mayes House was listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places in August 1993.

James Frank Wyatt III (1958 – Present) hired Evco Construction Company to restore the Mayes House in 1993. Reared in Barrington, Illinois, Wyatt developed an abiding interest in history and architecture as a child and adolescent, partly from visits he made to nearby Chicago, partly from summer stays at a relative’s farm at Vincent, Alabama. Wyatt also has an ancestor who was King George III’s architect and who is buried in Westminster Abbey. Wyatt considered becoming an architect.

Wyatt graduated with high honors from Vanderbilt University in 1979 with a degree in economics and from Duke University Law School in 1982. He practiced law in Georgia before moving to Charlotte in 1986. He rented an office in the Law Building on East Trade Street and began developing his practice as a litigator.



Mayes House As Halloween Haunted House In 1991



Letter From "Woody" Fox To Dan Morrill (February 1993)

Wyatt understood the economic wisdom of purchasing a place in which to have his office rather than continuing to rent. On one of his frequent visits to the Dowd Y.M.C.A Wyatt noticed the For Sale sign in the front yard of the Mayes House. Put off by the deteriorated condition of the outside of the building, he nonetheless decided to take a look inside.

Wyatt was delighted to see that the interior features of the Mayes House were largely intact. "It was remarkable," he remembers, "with its art glass windows all unbroken and its waterfall staircase still there." Wyatt understood that the house was vulnerable to vandalism and would most likely be lost unless someone stepped up to save it. Wyatt did just that. He spent more than \$300,000 to bring the Mayes House back to its original glory and to make it serve as a modern law office. All the wiring was replaced. All the plaster was replaced. Two new interior walls were added, one on the first floor and another on the second, plus a glass wall was added adjacent to the stairway and hall on the first floor. According to Wyatt, his clients "love coming to the house" and are delighted by its sophisticated design. He loves it too.



Workers Restoring The John And Idella Mayes House (March 18, 1993)

By: Dr. Dan L. Morrill

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