



The Torrence E. Hemby House, c. 1953
821 Mallow Place, Matthews, NC
October 2016

The Torrence E. Hemby House, located at 821 Mallow Place in Matthews, NC, is an exceptional example of residential architecture designed by local twentieth-century architect M.R. Marsh and is representative of his partnership with Teebee Padgett Hawkins. The Torrence E. Hemby House is also significant for its associations with the life and work of influential Charlotte citizen, Torrence E. Hemby (1888-1961).

The Torrence E. Hemby House is a two-story, c. 1953 masonry Colonial Revival dwelling located on an approximately one-acre property. The five-by-two bay dwelling was constructed of brick laid in the Flemish bond and originally served as the epicenter of a farmstead for a significant Charlotte family. Today, although the surrounding land has been subdivided for residential development, the dwelling strongly conveys its original design and retains all of its character-defining, mid-century architectural detail.

Designed by local architects M.R. Marsh and Teebee Padgett Hawkins, 1953 architectural plans confirm that the building retains its original footprint and Colonial Revival character, including Marsh's interior custom-made details and finishes. Exterior character-defining features include nine-over-nine elongated arch windows on the first floor, six-over-six on the second and multi-light bays at the rear elevation. A thick, classical door surround is topped by a broken pediment at the centralized front entry and is flanked by tracery sidelights. A dentiled cornice and copper gutters line the roof. Original interior finishes, such as flooring, wallpaper, a foyer mural, mantles, hardware, custom-made cabinetry, bathroom fixtures, including showers and sinks, survive in the dwelling, as well as several service utilities and rooms associated with the dwelling's servants, such as the maid quarters, service bells, heating and cooling systems and an elevator.

There is currently no residential work identified on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Landmark List associated with M.R. Marsh or T. Hawkins. The Torrence E. Hemby House is the best example of Colonial Revival residential architecture designed by the pair, and represents the diverse work of Marsh. An identical dwelling designed by Marsh and Hawkins survives at No. 1475 Dilworth Road, but the dwelling's footprint and original architectural details have been jeopardized by late-twentieth alterations.

The Torrence E. Hemby house is also the best-preserved and representative example of the life and work of Torrence E. Hemby (1888-1961), a significant financial and philanthropic leader integral to the development and economy of early-to-mid twentieth century Charlotte. He served as president of the Charlotte Memorial Hospital, and established the Alex Hemby Foundation, a charitable organization dedicated to bolstering pediatric medical treatment and facilities in

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Charlotte, after the death of his son Alex in the early 1950s. Through the Foundation, Hemby and his family were integral in the creation of both Charlotte's Presbyterian Hemby Children's Hospital and the Hemby Pediatric Trauma Institute. As a well-known banking executive in North Carolina, Hemby served as the director of the Charlotte branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, supplying and ultimately saving the city's banking industry during the Great Depression. He also donated materials and funds during the Great Depression for the creation of a bridge in a nearby rural community, today known as Hemby Bridge, NC. The town was named in his honor, and represents Hemby's exceptional actions and far-reaching influence in the Charlotte metropolitan area during this time. While residing at 821 Mallow Place, he served as Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive for the American Trust Company of Charlotte, which ultimately evolved into Bank of America.

Hemby's previous dwellings, historically located at 8 Provide Road and 915 Providence Road, no longer survive. In addition, his obituary in the *Charlotte Observer* in 1961 confirms that the 1953 dwelling was a significant part of his life, stating he "was a man of two faces: one exposed to the downtown world of finance, culture and charity, the other looing with pride upon his farm in South Mecklenburg County." After his death, his face spanned the front page of several regional newspapers. According to the *Charlotte Observer* on December 15, 1961:

The life of Torrence Hemby, banker, is inscribed publicly and indelibly in the history books of Charlotte. It was a good life; one that enriched the city greatly...Charlotte is a better place for having had him live here.

Although the setting of the Torrence E. Hemby House has been altered, the dwelling's integrity as a mid-century Colonial Revival dwelling is significantly high. The house retains every element representative of Hemby's residency, as well as Marsh's design, and is worthy of local landmark listing.