

# Survey and Research Report: L.K. & Marguerite Farrar Store



## Executive Summary

The L. K. and Marguerite Farrar Store is a long single-story flat-roofed brick neighborhood grocery store built in 1938 and expanded in the 1940s by Lawrence Kenneth “L. K.” Farrar, Sr. and his wife Marguerite S. Farrar. The structure stands at 1035 Harril Street at its corner with Belmont Avenue. It is situated in the Belmont Springs section of the modern neighborhood of Belmont—a neighborhood contemporary with Elizabeth or Dilworth.

The store's most distinguishing architectural feature is a clipped corner diagonal entrance framed on either side by large window bays. The store is one of only a few street-level retail buildings left in Belmont, is the best preserved and is the finest example of retail architecture in the neighborhood.<sup>1</sup>

The Farrar Store functioned as a neighborhood grocery in Belmont and remained within the Farrar family until its purchase by the City of Charlotte in September 2014 to eliminate a troublesome business from the neighborhood. The store is located in a particularly blighted area of Belmont and is surrounded on all sides by boarded up structures inhabited by squatters and characterized by open-air drug dealing.

Despite the building's challenged location, the Farrar Store retains a very high degree of integrity. L. K. Farrar, Sr. commented publically about his reluctance to update his rental properties (even those mandated by city building inspectors) and his efforts to maintain as low an overhead as possible with the store. Thus the depressed economics of the neighborhood had a preserving effect, preventing many alterations from being made after the 1940s.

## Historic Description

By Ryan L. Sumner

### Belmont Springs:

The Charlotte Village of Belmont takes its name<sup>2</sup> from a large hill on a system of ridges that stretch from Elizabeth to the North Charlotte Mills.<sup>3</sup> Once a body of heavy woods and cotton fields,<sup>4</sup> Charlotteans in the late 19<sup>th</sup> c. dubbed the area “Belmont Springs,” after the area’s natural springs which fed into Little Sugar Creek. The property’s natural beauty coupled with its picturesque views of the city, soon transformed the expanse into one of the city’s most popular recreation spots, beginning at least as early as 1880.<sup>5</sup> Both White and Black Charlotteans enjoyed recreational activities at Belmont Springs, even if groups self-segregated and occasionally hostilities erupted.<sup>6</sup>

Charlotteans thought of the water from the springs, or at least the system’s largest spring,<sup>7</sup> as a local treasure. It was said to possess “medicinal value for various diseases to which the flesh is air”<sup>8</sup> and was scientifically analyzed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and found to be identical to the water of the Swannanoa Gap, then the purest water in the state of North Carolina.<sup>9</sup> Charlotte’s posh Central Hotel proudly served “Belmont Spring Water” to their guests. Hauling it the one and a half miles cost the hotel a dollar per day—and expense they recouped as a line item on their guests’ bills of fare.<sup>10</sup>



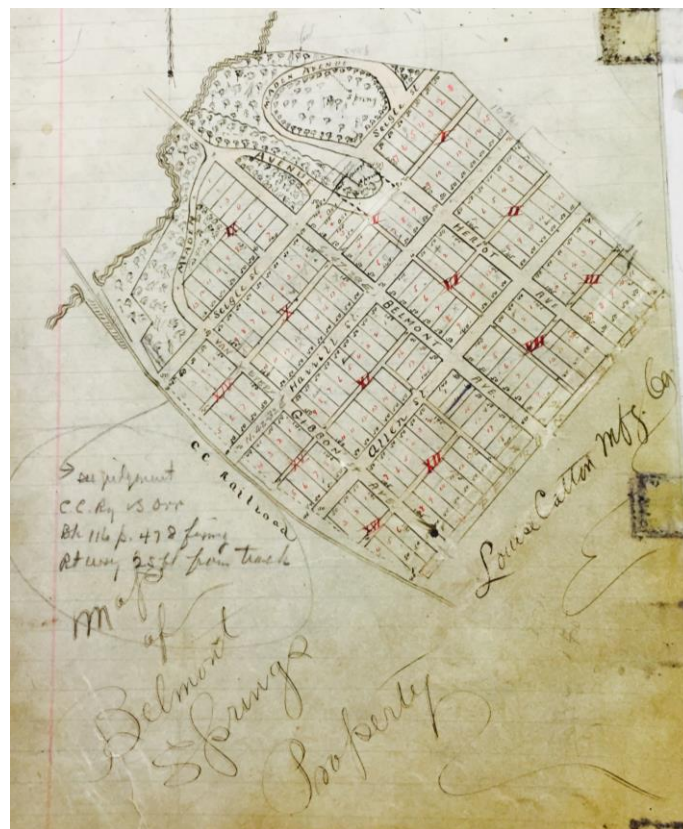
Central Hotel, courtesy of PLCMC

In 1891, local capitalists T. B. Seigle, Dr. G. M. McAden, J. S. Boyne, D. E. Allen, Dr. Robert L. Gibbon (later joined by Heriot Clarkson)<sup>11</sup> got together to purchase forty acres of Belmont Springs. *The Charlotte News* could barely contain its boosterish zeal reporting what it considered “one of the greatest land deals that has been made, next to that of the great 4C’s [Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company, who developed Dillworth].”<sup>12</sup> The group called themselves the Belmont Springs Company (hereafter,

BSC).

The BSC, sold off their land holdings to builder John Harrill, fresh off his Groveton development north of Charlotte in 1896.<sup>13</sup> Harrill named his new development “Belmont Springs,” and immediately began clearing land, and laying out the streets, which he named after himself and the original investors of the BSC. In less that 44 days from purchasing the land, he'd already started construction on a palatial nine-room house, the first of many lavish homes he promised.<sup>14</sup>

County Surveyor J.B Spratt<sup>15</sup> usually drew the plat maps in this period, but the 1896 plan for Belmont Springs was created by a “Mr. Stone,” brought in from western North Carolina to take some work off the surveyor's hands. *The Observer* was especially impressed with the loveliness of Stone's map conveying John Harrill's vision for the neighborhood.<sup>16</sup> The plan consisted largely of a grid pattern of intersecting streets with lots backed by alleyways, centered on the intersection of Harrill Street and Belmont Avenue.



Belmont Spring Plat Map, Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds

The defining features of Harrill's plan are its preservation of green space and sensitivity to waterways. In the northwest section of the map, the grid pattern breaks up and a park is imagined along the banks of Little Sugar Creek—an antecedent to today's Sugar Creek Greenway. Harrill planned McAden Avenue to wind in a long serpentine shape across the neighborhood, protectively looping around two active springs and

interrupting Seigle Street's straight passage through the development by carts with a pedestrian a foot bridge to span one of the creeks and give a view of one of the natural springs.<sup>17</sup> Lots began to sell. FAST. *The Charlotte Observer* gleefully trumped new sales figures.<sup>18</sup>

It wasn't long before other private developers began jumping into the game as well. In 1900, Clayton O. Brown bought a large section of farmland north of The Old Country Home Road (modern Parkwood Ave) for his Villa Heights subdivision. Two years later Brown hopped south of The Old Country Home Road to secure the holdings for a subdivision he called Sunnyside. George M. Phifer, whose family had held on to some bits of the old W.F Phifer plantation, filed a plan for "East End" in 1903—a new development that stretched north from the Belmont Springs subdivision to Villa Heights.<sup>19</sup> In later years, these different subdivisions, along with the Louise Mill Village, would all collectively come to be called simply "Belmont."

All this building took a major toll on the local environment. *The News* hailed the development of the area, predicting it's becoming "a garden spot, the loveliest retreat in and around the Queen City."<sup>20</sup> But by 1909 more than 3,000 people lived in the new developments surrounding the springs and Charlotteans began complaining about construction's adverse effect on the purity of the water. Especially disconcerting was that Belmont Graded School sourced their drinking water from the spring—despite the Sanitary Department's discovery of contamination on three occasions prior to September 1909.<sup>21</sup> The confirmation of sewer contamination by bacteriologist Dr. H. P. Bartlett prompted City Physician, W. K. Reid, to close the largest Belmont Spring in 1915, apparently for good.<sup>22</sup>

### **Class Conflict:**

In the 1890s, there was little reason to think blue-collar manufacturing and a posh resort-like suburb couldn't exist side-by-side. The BSC seems to have worked quite hard to attract the Louise Mill to the area, edging out Groveton as the new home for the industrial concern.<sup>23</sup> BSC executives even hoisted a flag from the tallest hill in the area to celebrate "Belmont Springs" being chosen as the site for the Louise Mill<sup>24</sup>. The Louise's mill town, with its 45 cookie-cutter tenement houses, bordered Harrill's residential development to the southeast at Pegram Street, so named for one of the Louise directors.

It worked in Dillworth—but historian Tom Hanchett explains in *Sorting Out the New South City* that the development model of white-collar homes next to a mill village, didn't translate to Belmont Springs.<sup>25</sup> The first hurdle facing the neighborhood was politics—the millworkers largely aligned themselves with the populist political movement, in direct opposition to the interests of the Spring's elite residents. Fears regarding smallpox among the mill villagers, led to police raids and forced vaccinations. Relations between textile labor and capitalist industrialists grew so strained that Louise workers walked off the job in November 1897—the largest such labor action in Charlotte to that point.

Newspaper accounts fanned fears of violence in the Mill Village, reporting on a disgruntled and drunken mill hand's shooting up of the Louise Mill with a firearm. Then in

the winter of 1901, *The Charlotte News* pinned the blame for a series of fires in the mill village and the burning down of the Louise Superintendent H. H. Boyd's new \$2000 home on a "firebug [arsonist] in the Louise settlement."<sup>26</sup> These tensions proved too much for the elite suburbanites Harrill sought to attract. They pulled up stakes and left for the larger streetcar suburbs, leaving Belmont Springs to develop from then on as the core of Charlotte's first working-class neighborhood.<sup>27</sup>

Charlotte city directories of the early 1910s illustrate this transition. The residents of Belmont (and adjacent Villa Heights) are overwhelmingly listed in the directories as having working-class occupations—the vast majority of residents worked at the Louise or one of the other nearby mills with most blocks having at least one resident working in the building trades as a carpenter, plumber, brick mason, etc.<sup>28</sup>

### **Working-class neighborhood:**

It was in this white blue-collar class-conscious world that Lawrence Kenneth Farrar, Sr. (1908-1996) grew up. The son of a casket maker who lived on Harrill Avenue,<sup>29</sup> L. K. broke out of the neighborhood in his early twenties to find white-collar employment uptown at the Southern Bell Telephone & Telegraph Company.<sup>30</sup> However, the job did not last. At the height of the Great Depression, L. K. followed his uncle Conrad Farrar into the grocery trade. In 1935, L. K. took over the old "Belmont Cash Grocery" at Belmont Avenue's corner with Harrill Street, renaming it after himself.<sup>31</sup> This first wooden-framed store was modest in size and built into the side of a dwelling.<sup>32</sup>

By April 1938, L. K. and his spouse Marguerite (1909-2003)<sup>33</sup> were ready to grow their business. The pair purchased the vacant lot diagonally across the intersection from their first grocery to build a new store.<sup>34</sup> The new spot once boasted a two-story residence, but had been sitting vacant for six years.<sup>35</sup> The new concrete block-fronted-by-brick building featured a clipped corner diagonal entrance and large display windows—definitely a step up.<sup>36</sup> The venture seems to have prospered initially—the Farrars expanded their place of business with a rearward addition in 1941. The war years saw food rationing and L. K. served in the Civil Air Patrol,<sup>37</sup> but business remained profitable enough for L. K. to double the store's width within a few months of WWII's conclusion.<sup>38</sup>

The Farrars' large store, with its central location, undoubtedly played an important role in the everyday lives of Belmont residents—a neighborhood where a great many people walked to work.<sup>39</sup> The store even extended its services by delivering foodstuffs to neighbors living too far to comfortably carry their groceries home.<sup>40</sup> Regarding the important role of neighborhood shopkeepers in blue-collar neighborhoods, Tom Hanchett writes, "Mill workers and others who spent ten to twelve hours per day at their factories, six days a week, seldom had time, energy, or means to travel downtown to the groceries and department stores patronized by more wealthy suburbanites."<sup>41</sup> Neighborhoods such as Belmont once contained grocery stores or small general merchandise stores on almost every corner. Now barely a handful remains.<sup>42</sup>

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the economic situation in Belmont began to change again. Jobs dwindled as the textile mills and other industries closed, moved, or began to rely more heavily on mechanization.<sup>43</sup>

## Urban Renewal:

Developed during the era of "Jim Crow," Belmont existed as a whites-only enclave for approximately 80 years—its segregated status protected by race-restrictive deed covenants that were actually encouraged by the US Federal Housing Administration after the Great Depression.<sup>44</sup> That all began to change after the Charlotte Redevelopment Authority razed eight blocks of the African American neighborhood of Brooklyn between 1960 and 1977, displacing over 1000 families.<sup>45</sup> With few affordable options, and no new housing constructed to replace what fell to the bulldozer, many of the Charlotteans dispersed by these efforts began migrating to Belmont.<sup>46</sup>

Like the fear-fueled exodus of Belmont Spring's elites sixty years earlier, the influx of large numbers of African Americans touched off a wholesale evacuation by the neighborhood's white residents. In 1960 African Americans made up only 1% of Belmont's residents. Ten years later, they comprised 88% of the neighborhood.<sup>47</sup> The Farrars were one of the few white families who stayed.

The destabilization brought on by rapid population turnover, abject poverty, high unemployment rates, and disinvestment by absentee landlords, took such a toll on the neighborhood that its housing was crumbling by the mid-1960s. The city pumped \$2.7-million of federal Neighborhood Improvement Project (NIP) funds and over \$700,000 of local bond money into the neighborhood between 1968 and 1972, bringing 840 homes up to minimum standards.<sup>48</sup>

Unfortunately, the NIP fixes didn't last. The program was criticized for using cheap materials that quickly fell apart. NIP's focus on the neighborhood's poorest residents also meant its beneficiaries were the least able to maintain the newly improved homes. "NIP came in through the city and splashed some paint on houses that did not last," Rev. Paul Drummond of the community's St. Paul Baptist church explained. "Another organization built three or four houses, but they did not stay."<sup>49</sup> To be fair, the task was overwhelming. It was originally estimated that 30% of Belmont's structures were below code standards, but once inspectors got into the area they found that number closer to 80-90%.<sup>50</sup>

After NIP, Belmont continued to deteriorate. The neighborhood saw a 32% drop in population between 1970 and 1985 and a 5% loss of housing stock.<sup>51</sup> The 1980 census revealed the community as having the city's second highest poverty rate,<sup>52</sup> yet the area received no federal funds between 1972 and at least 1987, when the UNCC Urban Institute reported that 41% of the residences in the neighborhood were in a deteriorated shape and home to the worst housing in the city.<sup>53</sup> In 1989 the Observer described conditions in Belmont as "a mish-mash of a few primly kept bungalows, but mostly burned out and boarded-up houses. In many where people still live, roofs leak, floors are rotten, rats crawl. Some don't even have heat or running water."<sup>54</sup>

The city stepped up efforts to deal with these problems in the late 1980s. They assigned the area the city's only full-time housing inspector. They created both a special neighborhood task force made up of municipal staffers, residents, and landowners and

a litter enforcement team to combat overgrowth, abandoned autos, and lots strewn with trash.<sup>55</sup>

### Charlotte's Most Dangerous Intersection:



Times had been rough for Belmont and the Farrar Store for decades, but the invasion of crack cocaine in in the late 1980s and 1990s saw a severely impoverished neighborhood become terrorized by violent drug dealers.

The outlaw market place offered the best paying job in a neighborhood. Belmont's young people with a 63% dropout rate and 80% unemployment (unemployment for adults in the neighborhood was 50% at this time) were especially vulnerable to the allure of dealing the addictive drug, which could pay \$1000 per week. "It's so easy to sling around here," said Ken Morris, a former Belmont drug dealer whose mother turned him in. "Crack really changed the neighborhood. People got hooked fast. They'd do anything for it. They'd steal TVs or they'd give us their cars until they came up with the money."<sup>56</sup> The crime rate soared to five times the city average in the early 1990s.

Soon the Farrar Store discovered itself positioned at the most violent corner in the city of Charlotte.<sup>57</sup> In 1994, when Belmont itself averaged three reported crimes and a violent attack every day, *The Charlotte Observer* reported that the area in front of the Farrar Store, (which they dubbed “The Intersection of Danger”) was one of the most perilous spots in all of Charlotte. In a two-year-span, 101 violent crimes occurred in close to the store—a man was beaten to death, four women were raped, seventy-six people were shot stabbed, beaten with fists, bottles, wooden boards, rocks, even a shovel and a baseball bat.<sup>58</sup>

Like other shopkeepers (and residents) in the neighborhood, L. K. Farrar responded to the high levels of crime by fortressing his building. He installed heavy chain-link fencing around all the store's doors and windows. He ceased delivering groceries after his drivers' trucks were robbed, placed a shotgun behind the meat case and began working with a pistol visibly protruding from under his apron.<sup>59</sup> A newspaper article from the period pictures L. K. Farrar opening his store, an employee armed with shotgun standing guard as he works the lock.<sup>60</sup>

During an attempted armed robbery in the store parking lot, Farrar shot an assailant and chased him down the street: “I don't go out seeking trouble, but I don't duck if it comes at me head on.”<sup>61</sup> Some Belmont leaders openly censured L.K Farrar for not participating with community groups. An assessment he disagreed with, saying that while he didn't give to charities, he helped the community by keeping his overheads low and selling on low margins.<sup>62</sup>

In 2000, the same year an eight-day gun battle ripped through the neighborhood, CMPD began installing street barricades, sunken concrete posts with chains, into some neighborhood streets. The goal was to make it difficult for strangers buying drugs to cruise through an area and get away quickly. The barriers also allowed police to seal off an area fast. But residents complained that the barricades were too inconvenient and advertised the neighborhood's crime problems. They petitioned for their removal four years later.<sup>63</sup>

Crime continued to get worse. In 2003, it reached six times the city average, prompting the city to create a new master plan for the area and seek federal grants to demolish the Piedmont Courts public housing project.

### **Buying Out Crime**

By 2007, Belmont's crime rates, while improved, still more than doubled the rest of the Charlotte and city officials began exploring a controversial new strategy for combatting crime in the neighborhood—buying up to seven of twelve neighborhood stores identified as crime magnets in order to tear them down. The Farrar Store sat at the center of the controversy.

The Farrar Store, owned by L. K. “Ken” Farrar, Jr.(1952- ) since his father's death, topped CMPD's list of problem properties. Sixty-eight arrests, including six for assault and an armed robbery, were made within with in 500 feet of the store the previous year.



Captain Mike Smathers, explained that after working crime scenes for five years in the neighborhood, “I just can't count how many times I'm within eyeshot of one of those places [the Farrar Store or the nearby Stewart & Perina Store], or I'm there.” He further explained that the stores draw repeat customers who buy beer or wine, then loiter urinate and cause other problems.<sup>64</sup>



L. K. "Ken" Farrar, Jr. Image courtesy of the Charlotte Observer (3/1/2007)

The tactic proved highly controversial and implementation dragged out under the weight of political disagreement, mayoral vetos, additional studies, and re-scaling efforts. Elected officials and the media debated the use of tax-payer funds on an untested venture<sup>65</sup> and worried about setting an expensive precedent.

The people of Belmont agreed that the crime around the stores was a major problem—however, they split on what to do about the stores or the stores' role in it. Many residents, too poor to own automobiles, worried about buying groceries within walking distance or if they'd be able to afford the new shopping center the city promised they'd bring in at the outer edge of the community. Parkwood Food Mart one of the targeted grocers had a reputation for fresh food and allowed low-income customers to purchase on credit.<sup>66</sup>

Resident Mildred Sneed liked the Downtown store, but said in her opinion the city could raze the other eleven, because groups of teenagers crowding the entrances made getting inside impossible. Teresa Reid, who lived across from the Farrar Store, hoped the city cleanup would start with the store closest to her home. “My first priority is to get the people off the corner,” she told a community meeting in late 2008, going on to describe coming home from work to find people leaning on her fence, smoking crack, and urinating in her back yard.<sup>67</sup>

Storeowners protested that they couldn't be held responsible for crimes occurring outside their doors. Only two or three of the stores are mentioned by in the press coverage of the measure—but the Farrar Store is mentioned by name in all but one of the articles in *The Charlotte Observer*. Ken Farrar complained publicly about being singled out and seemed suspicious of the Council's promise that buyouts would be voluntary, "After being in a building for 40-something years, I'd hate to go, but the City of Charlotte is going to take it no matter what I think. You know that."<sup>68</sup> By December 4, 2008 political momentum for the large-scale buyouts had faded.<sup>69</sup>



Earl Foster and Louise McManus, shopped at the Farrar store for over 40 years. Image courtesy of the *Charlotte Observer* (3/1/2007).

While things have improved in Belmont, especially with the demolition of the Piedmont Courts Housing Project, drug problems persist and recent violent crimes have many residents worried. Two police officers were fired upon in 2009 at the corner of Harrill Street and Belmont Avenue, in front of the Farrar Store. Though not as dangerous as in the 1990s, CMPD Deputy Chief Kerr Putney explained, "We still have remnants of the criminal element here and drugs are a big part of that."<sup>70</sup> In July 2012, an unknown assailant shot Matt Hawkins in the head, while he and his wife worked to renovate a Belmont home.<sup>71</sup> "Since then, I feel like I've had to look over my shoulder at least 100 times, said Darrell Varney, who is employed in the neighborhood."<sup>72</sup> In May 2013, assailants firing from a moving vehicle shot three men standing outside a Belmont convenience store, painted with a "Stop the Violence" mural.<sup>73</sup> As of this writing, dealers still sell drugs openly at the corner of Harrill Street and Belmont Avenue—with

both lone dealers and groups utilizing lookouts to avoid police patrols.<sup>74</sup>

Though the original effort to buy out all of the neighborhood stores ended in 2008, reports from CMPD about “extreme criminal activity, gun running, running major league drug activity, major league gang activity that has the tenancy to be destabilize neighborhoods”<sup>75</sup> around the Farrar Store prompted the city to purchase the site from Ken Farrar in 2014.<sup>76</sup> The city gave him an above-market value and it didn't even make the paper. The city currently plans to tear down the store and other buildings on the same deed—although Councilperson Claire Fallon expressed hope that the city could find a buyer.<sup>77</sup>

*By Ryan L. Sumner*

### **Architectural Description:**

The body of the long single story flat parapet roofed store is concrete block fronted by brick with internal load bearing support provided by steel columns and a wooden rafter system.

The store's symmetrical entrance façade, laid up in stretcher bond, faces east out diagonally across the corner of Harrill Street and Belmont Avenue and is recessed from its flanking elevations by a depth of one brick header. Beneath the metal-over-stone-capped parapet<sup>78</sup> wall, spans a short decorative signband inset with a single decorative concrete pendant. A tripartite transom and sidelight windows, separated by aluminum muntins, frame the double glass entrance doors. This entryway along with the large showcase windows on the flanking elevations were clearly designed to invite window-shopping and allow visual access and natural light into the store, but these features are currently covered in heavy security fencing that gives the building a foreboding fortress-like appearance.<sup>79</sup>

The store's north-east elevation is six bays wide and fronts Belmont Ave. As this elevation is on most on display to foot traffic, it boasts the fanciest brickwork—common bond with varying rows of stretchers between header rows. The signband motif re-occurs on this elevation, only longer and with three diamond-shaped pendants. The elevation's dominant feature is the large fixed two-over-two sash display window supported by a sill of brick headers. Four small square windows on two course brick sills once fenestrated this elevation, but have been in-filled with masonry. A heavy stone plinth at the bottom left corner anchors the wall visually to the corner entrance.



The six-bay-wide southeast elevation in stretcher bond makes up the final part of the building's public face. The familiar signband motif reappears twice, though only once with the diamond-shaped insets. During the store's early days, pedestrians along Harrill Avenue found two large fixed three-over-three showcase windows supported by brick sills to tempt them into purchasing the grocer's goods. Mirroring it's sister elevation, a heavy stone plinth flanks the corner where this elevation abuts the entryway. A second stone plinth is inset near the bottom center of the wall, to the right of a well concealed seam that likely marks the original width of the building before it was expanded in the 1940s.<sup>80</sup>



The four bays of the southwest elevation face into the parking lot. Originally, four square windows on brick header sills pierced the wall. With those windows filled in, this elevation is essentially one big blank wall—one that appears to have attracted graffiti (now cleaned) in the past. The brick is laid in common bond with varying distances

between header and stretcher rows. On this elevation as well as the back, there are some bits of haphazard bonding and variation in the color of the brick—likely representing frugal use of building materials.



The three bay wide rear northwest elevation is the most utilitarian and least public part of the store. It's where supplier's deliveries of goods arrived by the truckload and stockboys departed for inter-neighborhood deliveries. The brick is laid in common bond with varying distances between header and stretcher rows. Two windows, apparently tied to the buildings ventilation system, and a distressed wooden dock door pierce the elevation. A vertical seam in the brickwork indicates expansion in the 1940s. An L-shaped loading dock of brick, concrete block, and poured concrete extends from the base of the right-side and supports and improvised and lean-to shed. Of the brick in the building, only the loading dock shows spalling and physical damage—no doubt a result of delivering trucks backing into it over its long life.



At the time of this writing, the interior is not accessible, but much can be determined without going inside. With the shelving and other store fixtures removed, the interior of the structure is mostly open space. The floor has a visible checkerboard pattern, but its age and material can't be determined from a distance. Wallboard has fallen or been pulled from the walls exposing the cinderblock super structure. Parts of the ceiling have fallen, exposing the rafters<sup>81</sup>—whether this is from a roof leak, moisture from being open to the elements, or vandalism is unknown. Vandalism seems likely as scavengers appear to have removed all of the light fixtures, ductwork and other metal objects. A row of load-bearing steel support beams bisect the space, marking the store's pre-1946 width. Newspaper stories mention storerooms in the rear section of the store and the meat freezer is visible in the 2007 *Charlotte Observer* photo below—but it is unknown to what extent these features remain extant.



Image courtesy of the Charlotte Observer (2007)

To the non-engineer, the building appears to be in very solid condition (a building inspection has been requested). Other than the loading dock, the structure's brickwork is all straight with no spalling, excepting what appear to be some bullet holes, and the mortar seems intact.

In the five months since the store closed, the building has suffered cosmetically. The front door contains two bullet holes and the right-side display window has a bullet hole in one pane and two others have shattered. One of its aluminum muntins is bent. However, these issues are easily surmounted. Roof leaks can be patched, shattered windows and frames replaced, bullet holes filled, and the loading dock rebuilt to code.

---

<sup>1</sup> One could argue that it is among the best two examples, but the two-story pharmacy located at Belmont and Pegram is slated for certain demolition at the time of this writing and the Historic Landmark Commission has decided not to intervene.

<sup>2</sup> **Belmont** is derived from "Belle Monte," **French for "beautiful hill."**

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Charlotte Observer*, June 18, 1904, Page 8

<sup>4</sup> That the area still contained cotton fields as of 1898 is confirmed by an add for East End appearing in *Daily Charlotte Observer*, June 18, 1904, Page 8. Belmont and much of the surrounding area had originally been part of the W. F. Phifer Plantation.

---

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Charlotte Observer*, May 27, 1880, Page 3, is the earliest newspaper account I can find of the site being used for a church picnic and the paper reports on such events (church picnics, school outings, general recreation, etc.) regularly there after. Also, "Belmont Spring to Be Improved," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, July 29, 1880, page 3, details plans to make the spring more useful as a park. See also "Picnics," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, May 10, 1896, page 1; *Daily Charlotte Observer*, July 31, 1896, page 1, "Picnics;" "Preaching at Belmont Springs," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, June 13, 1897, page 4. In reporting on the sale of Belmont Springs to the BSC, the *Charlotte News* claimed on May 27, 1891 that "Thousands of people have visited this site in years gone by."

It is likely the popularity of the spot for recreation was greatly boosted by easier access after the northward extensions of Brevard, Caldwell, and Davidson Streets in the 1880s and 1890s. See: Hanchett, Thomas W. "Belmont-Villa Heights Survey Area." In *Charlotte and It's Neighborhoods: The Growth of a New South City (1850-1930)*. Urban Institute of the University of North Carolina Charlotte, 1986, p13-14.

<sup>6</sup> "Fracas at Belmont Springs," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, April 16, 1895, Page 4. "Shot in the Shoulder," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, Mar 31, 1891, Page 4. "Picnics," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, May 10, 1896, Page 1. "Picnics" *Daily Charlotte Observer*, July 31, 1896, Page 1. "Preaching at Belmont Springs," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, June 13, 1897, Page 4. *Daily Charlotte Observer*, May 14, 1893, Page 5.

<sup>7</sup> The main spring appears to have been in what is now Cordelia Park.

<sup>8</sup> "Belmont Spring to Be Improved," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, July 29, 1880, page 3.

<sup>9</sup> "Belmont Heights Sold," *Charlotte News*, May 27, 1891, p1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* *The Evening Chronicle*, Sep 18, 1909, Page 4

<sup>11</sup> "Belmont Heights Sold," *Charlotte News*, May 27, 1891, p1. "Belmont Springs Company," *Charlotte Observer*, January 14, 1896, p4. Pegram Street, the southeast boarder between Belmont Springs and the Louis Mill property was unnamed in the Belmont Springs Platt Map, [it was written in later] but is named after M.P Pegram, Sr one of the directors of the Louise Mill—Ashley, Neville, *Survey and Research Report Louise Cotton Mill* (August 2, 2013) available online at: <http://www.cmhpf.org/Louise%20Cotton%20Mill%20Survey%20and%20Research%20Report3.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> "Belmont Heights Sold," *Charlotte News*, May 27, 1891, p1.

<sup>13</sup> "Groveton" *The Daily Charlotte Observer*, December 9, 1893, p4. "Mr. Harrill's New Town," *The Daily Charlotte Observer*, January 22, 1896, p1.

<sup>14</sup> "Mr. Harrill's New Town," *The Daily Charlotte Observer*, January 22, 1896, p1. "Building," *The Daily Charlotte Observer*, March 6, 1896, p4.

<sup>15</sup> The Spratt family dominated the County Surveyors office for generations. Kays Gary, an *Observer* columnist in the 1960s wrote that no one could remember another name [besides Spratt] in the county surveyors office. Though there is no longer an elected County Surveyor, the Spratt family is still in the Charlotte surveying business, operating as Spratt & Brooks, Inc.

<sup>16</sup> "Two Pretty Maps," *The Daily Charlotte Observer*, April 29, 1896, p4. Stone also drew the map for the town of Owensville, near Victor Mills.

<sup>17</sup> The spring was not preserved for long. This area was cleared for the creation of Belmont Public School No. 4. *Maps of the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company*, Charlotte, 1911, p75

<sup>18</sup> "On a Boom," *The Daily Charlotte Observer*, May 11, 1897, page 4. "A Survey," *The Daily Charlotte Observer*, May 30, 1896, page 4.

<sup>19</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. "Belmont-Villa Heights Survey Area." In *Charlotte and It's Neighborhoods: The Growth of a New South City (1850-1930)*. Urban Institute of the University of North Carolina Charlotte, 1986. "Suburban Charlotte," *The Charlotte News*, Jun 15, 1903, p5.

<sup>20</sup> "Belmont Heights Sold," *The Charlotte News*, May 27, 1891, p1.

<sup>21</sup> *The Evening Chronicle*, Sept 18, 1909, p4. "While the Various Boards Deliberate," *The Evening Chronicle*, Sept 24, 1909, p3.



---

<sup>22</sup> The Charlotte News, July 10, 1915, p2. This is apparently the last mention of Belmont Springs water in either the *Charlotte News* or *Charlotte Observer*, which have been digitized and are key word searchable through the 1930s at newspapers.com.

<sup>23</sup> "Mill News," *The Daily Charlotte Observer*, March 11, 1896, page 4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. "A March Booklet," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, March 19, 1896, page 4.

<sup>25</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. *Sorting out the New South City: Charlotte and Its Neighborhoods*. UNC Press, 1993, p102.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*: *Charlotte News*, "Fire," Jan 4, 1901, Page 1; *Charlotte News*, "Another Blaze at the Louise," Jan 7, 1901, Page 1; *The Charlotte News*, "Firebug at Louise Mill," Feb 25, 1901, page 1.

<sup>27</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. *Sorting out the New South City: Charlotte and Its Neighborhoods*. UNC Press, 1993, p102.

<sup>28</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. "Belmont-Villa Heights Survey Area." In *Charlotte and Its Neighborhoods: The Growth of a New South City (1850-1930)*. Urban Institute of the University of North Carolina Charlotte, 1986, p3.

<sup>29</sup> *Charlotte City Directories*, 1909 and 1920 (parents shown residing at 218 N Harrill Av) 1923- Conrad H. Farrar shown as grocer living and working at 1201 Belmont Ave, the corner with Harrill Street. L. K. Farrar also said he was born only a few blocks from the store.

<sup>30</sup> L. K. Farrar started at Southern Bell T&T some time during 1928. *Miller's Official Charlotte, N.C. City Directory [1929]*. He is variously listed as a "clerk" and an "auditor of receipts." At that time, Southern Bell T & T had offices at 302 South College, At the corner of East Third and College Street, and on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor of the Johnston Building.

<sup>31</sup> *Hill's Charlotte (Mecklenburg County, NC) City Directory*, 1934, 1935, 1936.

<sup>32</sup> **Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Charlotte, NC (1929) and Charlotte City Directory, 1934**

<sup>33</sup> Marguerite co-operated the store with her husband and remained active in the business until her own death. "Death Notices, Margurite Farrar," *Charlotte Observer*, October 7, 2003.

<sup>34</sup> *Mecklenburg County Deed Book*, p118.

<sup>35</sup> The lot's previous home is visible in the 1911 and 1929 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps*. *Hill's Charlotte City Directory* shows the lot as vacant between 1933 and 1938, though there are clearly people in residence in 1932 and previous editions. If the parcel is listed as vacant in the 1933 directory it makes sense the demolition occurred in the previous year.

<sup>36</sup> The original building permit for the main structure does not survive. 1939 is the first *Charlotte City Directory* listing of the Farrar Grocery at it's new location, so it's safe to assume building was complete the following year. Also, *City of Charlotte Building Permit: No. 4603*, October 27, 1938 indicates construction of a (possibly "frame"?-it's illegible) structure at the rear of 1035 Harrill, likely referring to a storage shed visible in the 1950 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*. This timeline for the creation of the business and the building of the store is also confirmed by an interview with L. K. "Ken" Farrar, Jr. in an *Observer* article about the store on March 1, 2007.

<sup>37</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, "Death Notices, L. K. Farrar, Sr.," October 21, 1996

<sup>38</sup> *City of Charlotte Building Permits: No. 7215*, July 2, 1941; No. 1009, January 3, 1946.

<sup>39</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, "No Easy Way Out," by Liz Chandler, November 13, 1994.

<sup>40</sup> Mellnik, Ted, "Admired and Reviled, Landlord Fights City Hall," *Charlotte Observer*, August 23, 1989, *Observer Online Database*.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>42</sup> Sumner, Ryan L., *Belmont Commercial Buildings Survey*, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Jan 31, 2014. Hanchett, Thomas W. "Belmont-Villa Heights Survey Area." In *Charlotte and Its Neighborhoods: The Growth of a New South City (1850-1930)*. Urban Institute of the University of North Carolina Charlotte, 1986, p3

<sup>43</sup> Chandler, Liz, *Charlotte Observer*, "No Easy Way Out," November 13, 1994, Taking Back Our Neighborhoods insert. *City of Charlotte, 1987 Belmont Revitalization Plan*.

---

<sup>44</sup> The FHA's rationale was that African Americans buying homes in white neighborhoods brought down home values and would jeopardize federal investment. In 1948, the SCOTUS ruled in *Shelley v. Kraemer* that racially restrictive deed covenants, while not themselves unconstitutional, cannot be enforced due to the Equal Protection clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The *North Carolina History Project*, available online at: <http://www.northcarolinahistory.org/commentary/309/entry>

<sup>45</sup> UNCC, "The Brooklyn Oral History Project," 2003, Available at: <http://www.history.uncc.edu/publichistory/pages/oralhist/brooklyn/briefhis.htm>

<sup>46</sup> Staff editorial, *Charlotte Observer*, "Improving Belmont," May 14, 2003.

<sup>47</sup> Chandler, Liz, *Charlotte Observer*, "No Easy Way Out," November 13, 1994, Taking Back Our Neighborhoods insert.

<sup>48</sup> Hagg, Richard, *Charlotte Observer*, "Belmont: Groups seeking Lasting Changes for Neighborhood," Mecklenburg Neighbors insert, May 27, 1987, p1.

<sup>49</sup> Perlmutter, David, *Charlotte Observer*, "Belmont Hopes For a Renaissance," April 24, 1989. Observer Online Database.

<sup>50</sup> Martin, Bradley, *Charlotte Observer*, "Housing Program Has Improved Only 30% of Belmont Dwellings," Feb 8, 1970, Vertical file clipping in "Neighborhoods-Belmont," available at PLCMC Carolina Room.

<sup>51</sup> City of Charlotte, *Belmont Revitalization Plan* (1987).

<sup>52</sup> Mellnik, Ted, *Charlotte Observer*, "Belmont Housing is worst in city," January 11, 1987.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Hagg, Richard, *Charlotte Observer*, "Belmont: Groups seeking Lasting Changes for Neighborhood," Mecklenburg Neighbors insert, May 27, 1987, p1.

<sup>54</sup> Perlmutter, David, *Charlotte Observer*, "Belmont Hopes For a Renaissance," April 24, 1989. Observer Online Database.

<sup>55</sup> Israel, Mae, *Charlotte Observer*, "Belmont Proposal Unveiled," August 23, 1989. Mellnik, Ted, *Charlotte Observer*, "New Enforcement Team Sweeps Neighborhood," by Ted Mellnik, August 20, 1989. Mellnik, Ted, *Charlotte Observer*, "Belmont Housing is worst in city," January 11, 1987. Mellnik, Ted, *Charlotte Observer*, "Belmont Neighborhood Revival Planned," December 11, 1987. Mellnik, Ted, *Charlotte Observer*, "Woman Puts Faith in Run-Down Area," By Ted Mellnik, August 9, 1987. Available from Observer Online Database.

<sup>56</sup> Chandler, Liz, *Charlotte Observer*, "No Easy Way Out," November 13, 1994, Taking Back Our Neighborhoods insert.

<sup>57</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, "What Measures would aid Belmont in its Struggle," November 13, 1994, PLCMC Carolina Room Vertical File for Belmont Neighborhood.

<sup>58</sup> Chandler, Liz, *Charlotte Observer*, "No Easy Way Out," November 13, 1994, Taking Back Our Neighborhoods insert.

<sup>59</sup> Mellnik, Ted, "Admired and Reviled, Landlord Fights City Hall," *Charlotte Observer*, August 23, 1989, Observer Online Database.

<sup>60</sup> Chandler, Liz, *Charlotte Observer*, "No Easy Way Out," November 13, 1994, Taking Back Our Neighborhoods insert.

<sup>61</sup> Mellnik, Ted, "Admired and Reviled, Landlord Fights City Hall," *Charlotte Observer*, August 23, 1989, Observer Online Database.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>63</sup> Crouch, Michelle, *Charlotte Observer*, "Anti-crime Street Barricades to Go," Sept 7, 2004. Observer Online Database.

<sup>64</sup> Lacour, Greg and Erica Beshears, *Charlotte Observer*, "Anti-Crime Tactic: Tear Down Shops-City Wants to Buy, Then Demolish 7 Belmont Stores to Combat Blight," Feb 24, 2007. Lacour, Greg, *Charlotte Observer*, "Buying Out Crime – City Council Wants to Close Problem Groceries in Charlotte's Belmont Neighborhood, Inconveniencing Residents and Risking an Expensive Precedent," March 4, 2007. Observer Online Database.

<sup>65</sup> Avis Vidal, a professor of urban planning at Wayne State University, said she could think of no municipalities that had ever tried buyouts of stores to curb crime. . Lacour, Greg, *Charlotte Observer*, "Buying Out Crime – City Council Wants to Close Problem Groceries in Charlotte's Belmont Neighborhood, Inconveniencing Residents and Risking an Expensive Precedent," March 4, 2007. Observer Online Database.

---

<sup>66</sup> Oliver, Julia, *Charlotte Observer*, "An Inconvenient Controversy," August 25, 2008. Observer Online Database.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>68</sup> Lacour, Greg and Erica Beshears, *Charlotte Observer*, "Anti-Crime Tactic: Tear Down Shops-City Wants to Buy, Then Demolish 7 Belmont Stores to Combat Blight," Feb 24, 2007. Lacour, Greg, *Charlotte Observer*, "Buying Out Crime – City Council Wants to Close Problem Groceries in Charlotte's Belmont Neighborhood, Inconveniencing Residents and Risking an Expensive Precedent," March 4, 2007. Observer Online Database.

<sup>69</sup> Wootson, Cleve R., *The Charlotte Observer*, "**Police Seeking Suspect After Officer Fired Upon,**" by Cleve R. Wootson, December 4, 2008. Observer Online Database.

<sup>70</sup> Oliver, Julia, *Charlotte Observer*, "An Inconvenient Controversy," August 25, 2008. Observer Online Database.

<sup>71</sup> Cooke, Megan, *Charlotte Observer*, "**Man Shot by Intruder While Renovating House Near Uptown,**" July 11, 2012. Ruebens, Lindsay, *Charlotte Observer*, "**Victim Took Pride in Renovating Homes,**" July 14, 2012.

<sup>72</sup> **WBTB News, "Neighbors Worried Shooting a Sign of Crime's return to Belmont Neighborhood" Television News Report. July 11, 2012 (available online at: <http://www.wsoc.tv/news/news/local/neighbors-worried-shooting-sign-crimes-return-belmont/nPrPK/>)**

<sup>73</sup> Steele, Cameron, *Charlotte Observer*, "Three Shot in Charlotte Drive-by Shooting Friday," **May 25, 2013.**

<sup>74</sup> I observed this activity personally on nearly all of a dozen plus visits I made to the store at different times of the day.

<sup>75</sup> Office of the City Clerk, *Charlotte City Council Meeting Minutes*, June 23, 2014, Minutes Book 136, Page 870.

<sup>76</sup> *Mecklenburg County Deed Book 29461*, pg 102-105. The city also purchased two residential structures and a mid-century automobile service center previously assigned to that property's deed.

<sup>77</sup> Office of the City Clerk, *Charlotte City Council Meeting Minutes*, June 23, 2014, Minutes Book 136, Page 870.

<sup>78</sup> The original stone cap is now partially obscured by a damaged metal flashing that appears of much more recent origin. Photographs of the building from 2007, show the parapet capped with ceramic copings—many of which can be found on the ground outside the store.

<sup>79</sup> These fences have been in place at least since 1989, having been mentioned in a *Charlotte Observer* Article from that year.

<sup>80</sup> *City of Charlotte Building Permit No.7215*, dated July 2, 1941, "to install addition to store building." *City of Charlotte Building Permit No.1009*, dated January 3, 1946, "to build addition." That the reward addition occurred prior to the width expansion is evident by the seams in brickwork and the lack of a seam on the southwest elevation.