



Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission

204 East Academy St. ♦ P.O. Box 771 ♦ Asheboro, North Carolina 27204

March 28, 2012

The Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission (HLPC) met in the Meeting Room of the 1909 Historic Courthouse at 145 Worth Street, Asheboro, NC, and the meeting was called to order by Chairman Hal Johnson at 2:00 p.m.

Members present were Hal Johnson, Fran Andrews, Warren Dixon, Lynne Qualls, Marsha Haithcock, Nan Kemp, Robyn Hankins, Bill Ivey and Mac Whatley. Bill Johnson was absent.

Approval of Minutes

On motion of Qualls, seconded by Andrews, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 25, 2012, as presented.

Presentation/Public Hearing for the Gatekeeper's House Landmark Designation

Chairman Johnson welcomed the members of the Asheboro Woman's Club who were able to attend and also to Asheboro City Planner Justin Luck.

Chairman Johnson noted that the only landmark designation recommendation to be considered at this meeting was the Gatekeeper's House, which is located at 312 Lanier Avenue, Asheboro, N.C. Commission member Mac Whatley shared the history and significance of the Gatekeeper's House that is being recommended for designation while Chairman Johnson provided the PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Whatley opened by stating that the house got its name because it was the gate house to the Fisher Estate and continued with the information that was included in the designation application, which follows:



The end of Asheboro's post civil war slump seems to have been signaled by a "wave" of immigration. The arrival of three young foreigners between July and November, 1886, produced a cultural impact on the town second only to the impending arrival of the railroad. The population of Asheboro had remained static for nearly a century and most families were related

in some way. Basil John Fisher, C. Slingsby Wainman, and Charles St. George Winn were the vanguard of outside residents the railroad was destined to introduce. The nationality, strange ways and free spending immediately set them apart from the Asheboro townspeople, who accorded all three the deferential title of "Captain." One tradition says that the three were British army officers retired from service in India, who had been recruited to manage one of the county's gold mines. This might have basis in fact, for the Hoover Hill gold mine was then owned by a syndicate based in London. Taking up temporary residence in the Central Hotel, all three men seem to have completed homes within the next two years.

Basil John Fisher, the wealthiest of the three men, a native of Scotland and one of three young British army officers, came to the United States in the mid 1880's to help manage a gold mine in Asheboro, N.C. Fisher acquired a 384-acre estate, which centered around Fisher's Road, now known as Sunset Avenue. The property included almost everything west of Park Street, south of Salisbury Street, north of Wainman Avenue and east of the 220 bypass, around the current area of the Courier-Tribune office. All was in the area around "Tanyard Branch." The tanyard was where Frazier Park is currently situated. Captain Fisher's home was known as the "Mansion House" and stood on the vacant lot just west of the modern Masonic Temple that faces Sunset Avenue. His home was a two and one-half story structure at least twice the size of any other house in Asheboro. Fisher had many service structures on the estate with the Gatekeeper's House being the only surviving structure. The Gatekeeper's House, constructed in 1888, remained on the original property and served as a private residence for many years. The 1890's saw the deaths of one of Fisher's young daughters (1895) and both of his British friends (buried in Asheboro's city cemetery). It may have been the weight of these tragedies that caused him to sell his estate and move to Greensboro, where he acquired a large estate. His real estate dealings in Greensboro created the elegant turn-of-the-century "Fisher Park" neighborhood, which is now a locally designated historic district. The Asheboro Fisher estate was then subdivided into eight parts, opening up much of west Asheboro to construction and development. Then, the part on Salisbury and Church Streets, was further subdivided for tiny residential lots: Asheboro's first modern subdivision, the Hoover Lots along Hoover Street. The Mansion house was sold with its own large lot, along Sunset Avenue and Memorial Street. In 1919, the Fisher mansion was converted into Asheboro's first hospital, Memorial Hospital, which was run by Dr. Hayworth, and closed in 1931. On October 21, 1934, the former mansion was completely destroyed by fire. In the Spring of 1964, the Gatekeeper's House was in danger of being destroyed because of development on the property and was offered to The Asheboro Women's Club, the Asheboro Junior Woman's Club and the Business and Professional Woman's Club. The house is now owned by the Asheboro Woman's Club after being moved to its present location of 312 Lanier Avenue, Asheboro. It is used for various club meetings, weddings, receptions, teas, and is notable for being the location of a political rally for former President Bill Clinton when he came to Asheboro campaigning for his wife, Hillary Clinton.

The homes of the three men (Fisher, Wainman, and Winn), including the Fisher Gatekeeper's House, are an example of the standard North Carolina vernacular central-gable houses, which boasted elaborate eave and porch post brackets, a sawn-baluster porch railing and arched window sashes set in pedimented frames. Such materials were available in ready-made form from local "sash and blind" factories throughout the state. The W.C. Petty Company in Archdale could have provided the trim for the houses including the Gatekeeper's House.

Like most 19th Century residences, the architecture is a combination of styles. Unusual because it was originally built on stilts about five feet off the ground to better catch summer breezes, which is very similar to Indian 'bungalow' dwellings. It has a few Victorian elements: wrap-around porches and decorative moldings; but the pointed arches over each window are

reminiscent of the Second Gothic Revival. The interior has survived, thanks to several “face lifts” by Interior Design students at Randolph Community College, and the constant care by the members of the Asheboro Woman’s Club. What might be an ordinary cottage seems extraordinarily spacious due to lofty 12’ ceilings and an open floor plan. Original wavy glass panes remain in many of windows and six-inch heart pine flooring has been maintained. Recent renovations to the interior by the Woman’s Club, includes adding vintage lighting, butter colored walls and accenting the original moldings and windows. The exterior was also repaired and painted.

The Gatekeeper’s House has retained the architectural integrity of the original structure. There have been no alterations or remodeling to the exterior of the structure. In 2006, a handicap ramp was added to the east side of the house.

The statement of historical significance on the application states that the ca. 1888 Fisher Estate Gatekeeper’s House meets local historic landmark criteria as it represents identification with a person who significantly contributed to cultural, historic, and economic development of the City of Asheboro and Randolph County, N.C. Its unique location represents an established and familiar visual feature of the City of Asheboro and Randolph County, N.C.

Mrs. Mary Lee Hatley, President of the Woman’s Club, spoke about the organization and the history and updating of the house since they took ownership in 1964.

Public Hearing - Landmark Recommendation of the Gatekeeper’s House

At 2:24 p.m., the Commission adjourned to a duly advertised public hearing to consider the request of the Asheboro Woman’s Club for the Gatekeeper’s House local landmark recommendation and the resolution of support for the City of Asheboro’s designation. Chairman Johnson opened the public hearing and closed it before taking action.

Mr. Whatley added that the owners had to move the house in order to preserve it and that the last 50 years at the location where it sits now are probably more historic than the prior years. He also stated that due to it being moved, it cannot, however, be designated on the National Registry.

Mr. Ivey congratulated the Asheboro Woman’s Club for their preservation efforts.

On a motion of Ivey, seconded by Andrews, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the request for local landmark designation and the resolution of support for the City of Asheboro’s designation by ordinance of the Gatekeeper’s House as a historic landmark, as follows:

Resolution Recommending Local Historic Landmark Designation 1888 Fisher Estate Gatekeeper’s House

WHEREAS, Chapter 160A, Article 19, Part 3C of the North Carolina General Statutes provides for the designation of local historic landmarks; and

WHEREAS, the Randolph County Board of Commissioners has appointed the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission and provided opportunities for municipalities within Randolph County to designate the Commission as a joint historic preservation commission, having the authority to exercise, within the planning jurisdiction of the municipalities, all powers and duties given it by the Randolph County Historic Preservation Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, the City of Asheboro and the County of Randolph have entered into such inter-local agreement; and

WHEREAS, the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission has taken into consideration all information contained in the Historic Landmark Designation Application for the exterior of the Fisher Estate Gatekeeper's House, 312 Lanier Avenue, Asheboro, North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, State Historic Preservation Office, has given the opportunity to review and comment upon the Local Landmark Designation; and

WHEREAS, the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission conducted the required public hearing, having published legal notices with mailings to adjoining property owners; and

WHEREAS, the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission finds that the Gatekeeper's House meets the following specific criteria outlined in the adopting Ordinance establishing the Commission: (1) Critical Part of the City's Heritage by having value as an example of the cultural, economic, historic, and social heritage of Randolph County; (2) Exemplification of an architectural type distinguished by overall quality of design, detail, materials, and craftsmanship; (3) The location of the Gatekeeper's House, 312 Lanier Avenue, Asheboro, N.C., provides a unique and distinctive structure representing an established and familiar visual presence in the City of Asheboro; and

WHEREAS, the property is more specifically described as follows:

The exterior of the building located at 312 Lanier Avenue, Asheboro, N.C.; PIN# 7751609456; Asheboro Township, Randolph County, N.C.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission approves the request for local landmark designation, and recommends to the City Council of the City of Asheboro, North Carolina, that the exterior of the Fisher Estate Gatekeeper's House be designated as a Local Historic Landmark.

HLPC Regular Meeting Time & Date Change Approval

HLPC members discussed changing the Commission's regular meeting time and date to better accommodate the attendance of the members.

On a motion of Whatley, seconded by Dixon, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the change of the HLPC monthly meeting date to the fourth Tuesday of each month at 2:00 p.m., effective immediately.

Chairman Johnson noted that there will not be an April meeting. The next meeting will be May 22nd.

Adjournment

At 2:34 p.m., on motion of Andrews, seconded by Hankins, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn.

Hal Johnson, Chairman

Amanda Varner, Clerk to the HLPC