

David and Ernestine Weaver House
Landmark Designation Report
Prepared for the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission

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By Landmark Preservation Associates, Raleigh, NC

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Circa, Inc.

Architectural Significance

Exterior Description

The 1922 David and Ernestine Weaver House is a two-story frame dwelling that combines elements of the Queen Anne and Craftsman styles. The south-facing house stands at 1203 East Lane Street and has a two-story ell that attained its present form in the 1920s or 1930s. Gray-green asphalt siding was added about 1952. The asphalt-shingle hip-and-gable roof features pedimented gables with half-round louvered vents. The foundation has brick piers with cinder block infill (the latter added in the mid-twentieth century as required by city ordinance), and interior flues are brick. A slightly projecting two-story bay window rises on the left side of the front elevation.

A one-story porch extends across the front and wraps around the east side, although the east end was enclosed as a sun room about 1930. The porch stands on Craftsman supports with slightly tapered square-section wood posts on brick pedestals. Other features of the porch include a beaded matchboard ceiling and a concrete floor that replaced wood flooring, probably in the mid-twentieth century. Above the front porch is a smaller second tier with rubber-membrane roofing from the late twentieth century and metal supports and railing added in the late 1940s. Most windows are one-over-one sash, those in the bay with decorative upper sashes, but the sun room has eight-over-eight windows. There is an enclosed (originally screened) two-tier porch on the side of the ell with several decorative windows. Modern security grills have been added to first-story windows. The front entry has Craftsman sidelights and a door with small beveled glass panes in a Craftsman-influenced arrangement.

Interior Description

Typical interior features include plaster-and-lath wall and ceiling finishes, wood floors (oak in the main first-floor rooms), molded baseboards and door and window heads, and panel doors. The front entry opens into a room referred to as the "reception hall" in a 1922 construction contract. The room contains a two-run closed-stringer stair with square-section newels and balusters and molded handrails. The spandrel has recessed and molded panels with vertical beaded matchboard infill. On the east end of the room a French door with a crystal door knob opens into the sun room, which has a beaded matchboard ceiling like the rest of the porch. The original waterfall-profile weatherboard siding of the house is visible in this room (as it is in the enclosed ell porch). A door with a beveled mirror panel leads from the north side of the reception hall to a small rear "telephone hall" (so called by the family) that connects to the ell porch.

On the west end of the reception hall a bifold French door opens into a front room referred to as the "parlor" in the 1922 contract. The parlor has a corner fireplace with a two-part mantel. The lower section is painted brick with corbels that support a thick bull-nosed wooden shelf. The upper section has small colonnettes and a beveled mirror in a gold-painted frame. A second bifold French door leads from the parlor into the dining room (so named in the 1922 contract). The dining room corner fireplace backs up to the one in the living room, and it has a similar brick lower section. The upper section has a beveled mirror in a gold-painted frame, but instead of colonnettes there are ribbon and bellflower carvings to either side.

A swinging door with a small window connects the dining room to a pass-through pantry with built-in china shelves. The pantry leads to the original kitchen, now referred to as the "breakfast room" by the family, although it is used as a laundry room. Through a second swinging door is the present kitchen at the north end of the ell. The present kitchen has a flue in the northwest corner, a triangular-plan pantry in the northeast corner, an old sink, and glass-fronted cabinets with beaded matchboard backings and decorative hinges.

The old and new kitchens have doors that open to an enclosed porch on the east side of the ell. Changes in the height and sheathing of the porch ceiling (plain board and beaded matchboard) seem to relate to the early enlargement of the ell. A stair with square-section newels and balusters rises in the porch, and a door leads to a small water closet projection. A stair in a beaded matchboard enclosure descends under the reception hall stair to a partial basement.

The second floor is more plainly detailed than the first. The stair from the reception hall rises into a center passage that serves bedrooms and a bathroom. The front end of the passage leads to a second-tier porch entry with a glass panel; the back end connects to the enclosed second tier of the ell porch. The two east bedrooms have doors that open into a common shaft-like attic access. The flue from the parlor and dining room fireplaces rises up through the west bedroom and has a paneled casing. The south ell room has a beaded matchboard ceiling and walls. The north ell room has a plywood ceiling and walls and three corner closets. Two of the corner closets are triangular in plan; one opens into the south ell room rather than the north room; the other has a decorative window that receives light from the enclosed porch.

Landscape Features

The concrete walk flares where it meets the front porch. To the right side of the walk is a round fishpond with a fountain consisting of a concrete urn and a concrete statue of a boy

pouring out a vessel (the boy's head has been broken off since before the 1940s). The ruins of two ca. 1950 cinder-block garages stand to each side of the house at the back of the lot. A brick pavement for automobiles formerly existed on the east side of the house. Trees and shrubs stand on the lot.

Architectural Discussion

The 1922 Weaver House combines elements of the Queen Anne and Craftsman styles. The chief Queen Anne characteristics are the dwelling's asymmetrical form and hip-and-gable roofline, and the two-story front bay window. Queen Anne influence rarely extended past the 1910s in white Raleigh neighborhoods such as Glenwood. Its use here suggests the cultural conservatism of Weaver and/or his first builder, J. C. Moring, who gave the house its basic form. Craftsman details such as the porch supports and brick mantels were standard during the 1920s. Certain details of the house including the pedimented gables with lunette vents, the style of the decorative window sash, and the upper sections of the mantels suggest influence from the Classical Revival Style, which occasionally blended with the Queen Anne Style.

Some uncertainty pertains to the evolution of the rear ell. The ell may have begun as a one-story one-room wing to which a second story was added and an extension made in the 1920s or 1930s (the period suggested by finish details). However, certain construction features and the somewhat ambiguous wording of the 1922 contract suggest the ell was originally two stories in height, and that the modification involved the two-story extension on the north gable end. The relevant passage in the contract--a list of work to be performed by David Weaver's second builder, Edward Fincher--reads: I agree to furnish . . . screen for Back Porch up and down Stairs Front Door Screen ... The qualifier "up and down" implies a two-tier back porch and hence a two-story ell.

Historic Significance

Summary

The David and Ernestine Weaver House is significant for its association with Raleigh's African-American community during the early and mid-twentieth century. David H. Weaver was involved in a number of business and real estate ventures, including the management of the Masonic Dance Hall and Young Men's Social Club. As state booking agent for the New York-based Gale Agency he helped bring nationally known performing artists to Raleigh. In 1922 Weaver contracted with J. C. Moring to build his two-story frame house, which was completed by Edward Fincher. The house blends elements of the Queen

Anne and Craftsman styles¹.

Historical Discussion

The Weaver House is located in the Idlewild subdivision, platted in 1908. As depicted on an 1872 aerial perspective of Raleigh, the area appears to have been largely agricultural in character, although a cluster of small one-story houses stood a block east of the Weaver House across Tarboro Avenue. Located adjacent to Saint Augustine's Normal School, founded for the training of black teachers in 1867, this group of houses may represent the origins of the later African American neighborhoods of Idlewild and College Park (the latter located to the east of Tarboro Avenue). According to long-time neighborhood resident Mildred Taylor James, interviewed in 1989, "I was told that the area was laid out for affluent whites to live [in] but they never took it." A black developer is said to have acquired much of the area and to have developed it as an African American subdivision².

In May 1922, Maggie L. Scott, a widow, sold part of lots number 19 and 20 in Idlewild to David H. Weaver (1895-1973). An earlier owner was Joseph J. Weaver, suggesting a family association with the property before David's purchase. David was the son of Levi (or Lev) and Sarah Moore Weaver, and he was raised in the house at 1307 East Lane Street in the College Park neighborhood across Tarboro Avenue from Idlewild. City directories from the 1910s and 1920s identified Levi Weaver as a laborer and porter and Sarah Weaver as a domestic servant and cook. David Weaver attended Saint Augustine's College and worked as a laborer, a porter, and a clerk in the 1910s. He married Ernestine Snyder Hill (ca. 1899-1987) in the mid-1910s, and in 1918 he enlisted and was stationed with the rank of private at a military base near Charlotte. Upon his return to Raleigh Weaver resumed his line of work before taking a position as a "mechanical dentist" and janitor with white dentist E. B. Howle in 1922³.

Construction work on Weaver's house appears to have been underway in April 1922, before Weaver formally acquired title to the house site. On April 8 Weaver wrote an \$800 check to builder J. C. Moring in "part payment on contract for building house." At the end of the month he paid Moring an additional \$800 in "payment on building house." The second payment might suggest completion of the house; however, according to Weaver family

¹Alpha L. Howze Jr., Dan Becker, and Lemuel T. Delany Jr. personal communication.

²Little, "College Park/Idlewild Mini-district Phase I Survey;" "Bird's Eye view of the City of Raleigh;" and Simmons-Henry and Edmisten, *Culture Town*, 116, 136, 155. Some evidence points to a date earlier than 1908 for the inception of the Idlewild neighborhood. Mildred Taylor James was born in a house at the corner of Idlewild and Lane streets, located in the subdivision, in 1905 (*Culture Town*, 153). A plat in the county records entitled "Addition to Idlewild" shows the subdivision in its present form and appears to be dated 1893 (Wake County Deed Book 127, p. 124).

³Alpha L. Howze Jr. personal communication; Wake County Deed Book 393, p. 212; Raleigh National Cemetery Grave Locator; and Hill directories.

tradition Moring left town before the project was finished. Weaver then contracted with builder Edward Fincher of 1008 East Martin Street to complete the house, and the detailed contract, dated August 4, 1922, survives. The contract suggests most rough construction work had been completed by the time Fincher took over, as the front and back (ell) porches existed and windows, siding, and roofing are not mentioned, implying they were already present. The contract called for the parlor and dining room mantels to be selected by the owner, but in actuality Fincher appears to have built the brick lower section of each mantel and added the manufactured upper sections. He also agreed to correct mistakes made by Moring and to provide his client with a "turn key job all work don [sic] in work-man-like manner for the sum of \$2,668.75."⁴

In the early 1930s David Weaver launched his career as a "successful real estate and business man," in the words of his 1973 obituary in Raleigh's African American newspaper, *The Carolinian*. In 1934 Weaver became manager of the Masonic Dance Hall, located in the Masonic Temple Building at 427 South Blount Street. The Masonic building, also known as the Prince Hall Masonic Temple Building, was erected in 1907 to provide meeting space for fraternal organizations as well as space for entertainment, offices, and retail stores. The Masonic Building stood at the edge of Raleigh's African American commercial district centered on East Hargett Street, and it was a vital component of the economic, social, and institutional life of the black community. Here, from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s, Weaver operated the Young Men's Social Club, a beer garden, a billiard parlor, and the Weaver Soda Shop. The soda shop was an outgrowth of a pharmacy that had been operated in the building by Weaver's niece's husband, a Mr. Roberts, and it sold cold drinks, ice cream, nabs (cheese crackers), and cigars. The soda shop also had a juke box.⁵

Weaver played piano and was a member of a band known as the Capital City Aces. His musical abilities and his contacts in the community commended Weaver to the Gale Agency of New York City, which made him its North Carolina Dance Promoter. In this capacity, according to his obituary, Weaver "booked big-named bands and musical events. Many well-known musicians were among his cherished friends." Duke Ellington and Count Basie were among the musicians booked by Weaver for performances at Memorial Auditorium. On their visits to Raleigh, Duke Ellington and others stayed at the home of Lemuel and Julia Delany, located across the street from the Weaver residence. Other measures of David Weaver's stature in the community were his memberships in the First Baptist Church, the American Legion, the Masons, and Shriner No. 177. Weaver was very active in the IBPOE (Elks) and held a number of offices including Exalted Ruler of the local lodge and State Deputy in the state lodge.⁶

⁴ Alpha L. Howze Jr. personal communication; David Weaver papers.

⁵ *The Carolinian*, August 18, 1973; Brown and Bushong, "Masonic Temple Building;" and Hill directories.

⁶ Alpha L. Howze Jr. and Lemuel T. Delany Jr. personal communication; *The Carolinian*, August 18, 1973.

Weaver's grandson, Alpha Lewis Howze Jr., visited with his grandparents beginning in the 1940s, and he recalls aspects of life in the Weaver household during the period. Howze's uncle Lewis Blackman and his wife Sadie occupied the bedroom over the kitchen. Uncle Lewis maintained the coal furnace in the basement. Another uncle, Levi, also lived in the house, and together Alpha and Levi attempted to build chicken houses on the lot. The reception hall contained a juke box for Alpha and his cousins to dance to, and Alpha's Aunt Sadie briefly used the sun room as her sewing room. Howze recalls that a Mr. Ricks, a nephew of his grandfather's, built the goldfish pond and fountain in the front yard, as well as a fountain at the family homeplace at 1307 East Lane Street. Ricks more often worked as a painter; he did a painting of a deer for the Weaver Soda Shop.⁷

After David Weaver's death in 1973 the property passed to his widow, Ernestine. After Ernestine's death in 1987 the property passed to her daughter, Vivian Weaver Howze (b. 1917), who taught at the Newell Elementary School in Charlotte. The house is now occupied by Mrs. Howze, her son Alpha Lewis Howze Jr., a public service representative at the Saint Augustine's College library, and Alpha's wife.⁸

⁷ Alpha L. Howze Jr. personal communication.

⁸ Ibid.; *The Carolinian*, August 18, 1973.

Bibliography

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Boundary Description and Justification

The entire .13 acre lot, Pin Number 1714108351, is being designated. The lot is delineated on the attached Wake County Tax Map.



South façade



South and West facade



West and North façade



East and South facade