

## THE DOWD HOUSE

### *HISTORY*

The Dowd House, built in 1879 by James C. Dowd, was once a farmhouse located on 248 acres of orchards, cotton fields and a creek. The Dowds, a prominent family in Charlotte, sold the land around the turn of the century, however, the property continued to serve as a farm until 1917.

World War I began in Europe in 1914. When America joined the fight on April 6, 1917, there was a need to mobilize troops quickly. Charlotte, after much deliberation, was chosen to get a military camp on July 13, 1917. The southwest part of the county was selected as the most suitable location, and work to build a camp began almost immediately. Since most of the area was very rural, there were very few existing buildings for the government to use.

The Dowd House was chosen as the temporary headquarters, in part because of its high elevation which provided a nice view of the camp. Additions were built on the house for the many offices that were needed. Later, the headquarters was moved to another nearby home, but the Dowd House remained the office for construction.

The property was sold after the war and returned to civilian use. The Cook family, who owned the house for the next fifty years, added a heating system, electrical wiring, and bathrooms. A basement was dug by hand, but the many additional offices were demolished. Property around the house was sold off, and the lot became comparable to other homes in the neighborhood.

Eventually, the house became the property of the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department. A \$50,000 grant, proposed by Joe Graham Foster, was awarded by the North Carolina Legislature about 1985 and enabled the house to be remodeled and refurbished with period pieces, exhibit cases, light fixtures and a security system. The property was lightly used as a museum for the next three decades and ultimately began to decay.

In 2017, through the support of volunteers and corporate citizens, the house was spruced up for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Camp Greene. In July of that year, there was a celebration paying tribute to the many soldiers who served at Camp Greene. Veterans and former area residents came together to celebrate the history of the Dowd House and Camp Greene.

That event in 2017 caught the attention of real estate developer Rob Pressley whose firm, MECA Commercial, contributed and volunteered for the celebration. Rob, and his wife Kathy, felt strongly the Dowd House deserved to be restored and preserved for future generations. In September of 2018, Mecklenburg County released an RFP to developers to present proposals to acquire and restore the property. Concerned about what might happen to the house, the Pressley's made the decision to respond to the County's request, and ultimately were successful in its acquisition. Their plan, which Mecklenburg County looked upon favorably, was to completely renovate and expand the structure, converting it to office use. The vision was for Rob's commercial real estate firm to relocate its Charlotte office to the Dowd House.

After two and half years of painstaking restoration, in March of 2023, The Dowd House became home to MECA Commercial Real Estate. The Pressley's plan to keep the home in their family for generations to come and feel honored to be its caretakers and celebrate its rich history!



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**CIRCA 1879**