

PRESERVATION NEWSLETTER

DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT: WALES GARDEN

The “splendid” and “sumptuous” neighborhood of Wales Garden has long been a popular place to live in Columbia. This architecturally eclectic neighborhood was developed between 1915 and the 1950s and was designated a local Architectural Conservation District in 2008. Keep reading to find out more about “one of the most attractive parts of Columbia”!

PLANNING THE NEIGHBORHOOD

In 1912, the City Development Company (CDC) purchased 80 acres of the former Stark Plantation to develop into an exclusive neighborhood. The CDC consisted of eight original members, one of which, Edwin Wales Robertson, Wales Garden was named for. Robertson was also the president of the Columbia Electric Railway, Light, and Power Company and was thus able to ensure that the street railway system ran into Wales Garden; The streetcar operated on Saluda Avenue from 1915-1936. Early planning of the neighborhood also included ensuring the area included modern infrastructure such as access to City water and sewer as well as paved streets. The CDC’s original layout of Wales Garden included 912 twenty foot wide parcels,

the first of which was sold in December 1915. Early investors were permitted to purchase as many lots as they wished to create the lot size they desired, which is still evident today in the vastly different sized lots seen throughout the neighborhood. In the effort to establish exclusivity of the neighborhood, covenants were attached to the deeds for the early Wales Garden lots. These restrictions included prohibitions against apartments, hotels, stores and business being built in the neighborhood without permission. Other restrictions included no one-story houses, no house costing less than \$7,500, no front yard fences, no retaining walls, and no billboards. Of course overtime most of these early restrictions were relaxed or eliminated, such as allowing for one-story houses, but evidence of the early restrictions can be seen in the larger houses along the earliest developed streets between Saluda, Wateree, and Edisto.



**A NEW CITY
ON HILL IS IN
THE MAKING**

Wales Garden Will Be One of
the Most Attractive Parts
of Columbia.

Images clockwise from top: “Street View in Wales Garden” Postcard, February 1943, image courtesy of Richland Library; “New Development to be Sumptuous”, article from The State, October 19, 1913; “A New City on the Hill is in the Making”, article from The Columbia Record, March 3, 1914

**NEW DEVELOPMENT
TO BE SUMPTUOUS**

Large Sums Expended Upon
Wales Gardens.

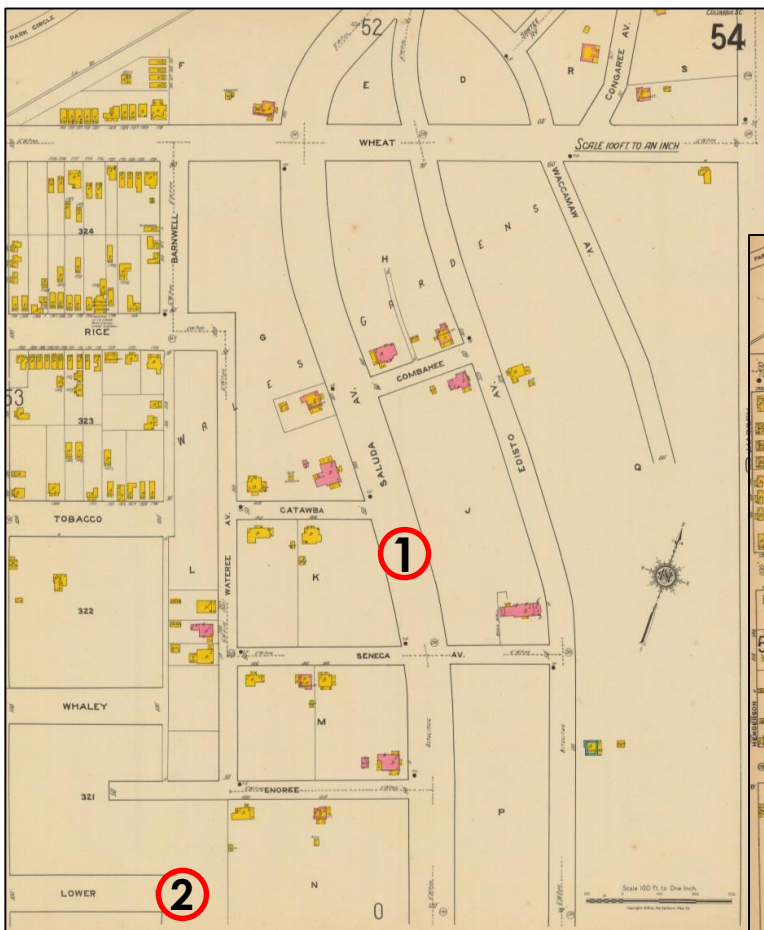
PLANS BY OLMSTEADS

Forty Thousand Dollars Already
Invested in Improvements.
Work Not Yet Completed.

Wales Gardens, a splendid residence section in the southeast corner of the city of Columbia, is being developed on a big scale by a number of Columbians. As soon as the water works and sewerage systems are put in by the city and the streets are paved, and a street car line run through the property, Wales Gardens will be placed on the market.

CAN YOU SPOT THE CHANGES?

Take a look at these Sanborn maps to see how Wales Garden developed between the years 1919 (left), 1923 (below), and 1956 (bottom).

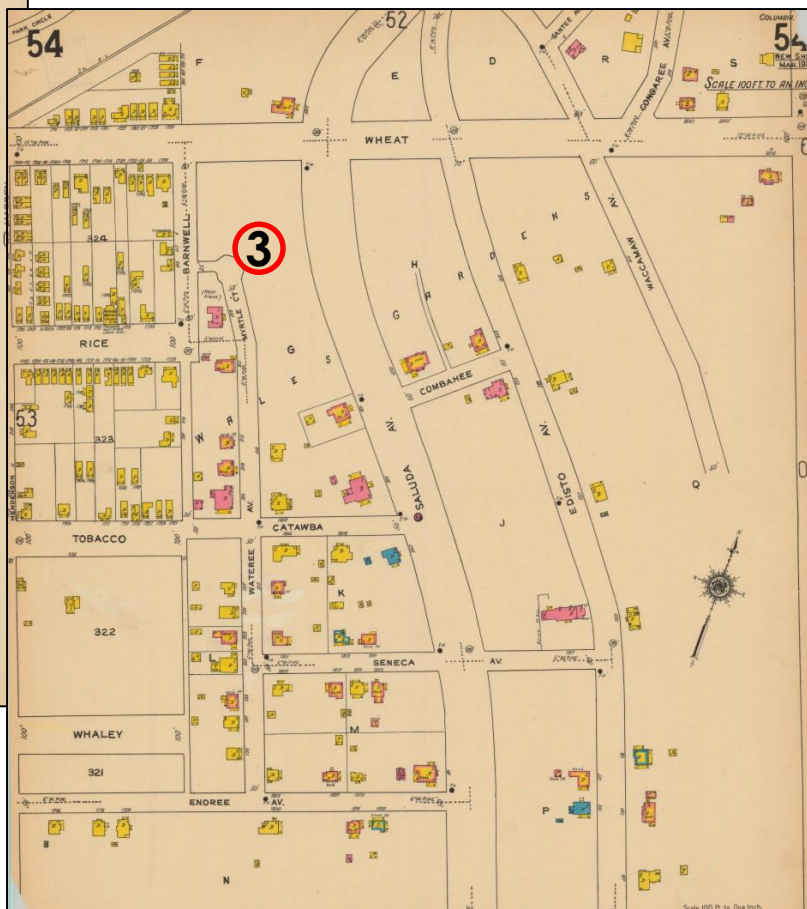


1 Early plans for Wales Garden were drawn up by the Olmsted Brothers landscape design firm (sons of renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted who designed NYC's Central Park). These early plans called for a "broad street or boulevard running southwesterly from Harden and Green Streets..." While the plans designed by the Olmsted's were ultimately rejected by the City Development Company, reference to the Olmsted designs can be seen in the wide, curving street of Saluda Avenue.

2 Lower Street, the original lower boundary of the City, was renamed in 1931 to Heyward Street for former South Carolina Governor D.C. Heyward. Today, the north side of Heyward Street is the southernmost boundary of the Wales Garden Architectural Conservation District.

3 Development of Myrtle Court started in the early 1920s and was described at the time as a "strictly high class residential development," near, but not part of, Wales Garden. The 13 proposed bungalows of Myrtle Court would be placed behind a "handsome stone entrance" and around the "large and ornamental fountain". A newspaper article from 1923 described the first "thatched roof" house in Columbia being built on Myrtle Court; the unusual faux thatched roof shape is still in use at No. 1 Myrtle Court today.

4 By the mid 1950s, Wales Garden was fully developed and largely resembled the neighborhood as seen today.



WALES GARDEN LANDMARKS

Heslep House, 203 Saluda Avenue

Built c. 1927, the Heslep-Bernardin House was constructed by J.C. Heslep, a Columbia contractor known for his work at the Richland County Courthouse and for the 1925 alterations to the First Presbyterian Church. The two-story, stuccoed house is considered the most elaborate Spanish Mission Revival style building in the city and features round-headed windows, arches, balconies, sun decks, a square tower, and a barrel tile roof. The house was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. *



Lyles-Gudmundson House, 1917 Seneca Avenue

This two-story Classical Revival style brick and marble house was built as a wedding gift for Evelyn Robertson Lyles, the daughter of a prosperous Columbia banker and entrepreneur. The house was designed by architect James Brite of New York who worked on the design of the Public Library at Jersey City, NJ, buildings at American University in DC, and who also designed a house for Robertson's other daughter across the street from the Lyles-Gudmundson house. The Lyles-Gudmundson house was added to the National Register in 1979. *



203 Saluda Avenue, Heslep House (above); 1917 Seneca Avenue, Lyles-Gudmundson House (left); Images courtesy of SC Dept. of Archives and History

Myrtle Court Fountain

The large ornamental fountain was put in place in the early 1920s as the northern terminus of the Myrtle Court development.

**Information adopted from the National Register nomination available online at: nationalregister.sc.gov/richland/nrrichland.htm*

PRESERVATION NEWS

Congratulations to our Preservation Month Main Street Scavenger Hunt winners!

First Place: Bin W. - Dual/Family Membership to the Columbia Museum of Art

Second Place: Glenna B. - \$90 gift certificate to the Columbia Art Center for a class or workshop

Third Place: Jacob B. - two tickets to Riverbanks Zoo and Garden for daily admission or zoo lights

And a big thanks to our prize sponsors and to everyone who participated in the event!

RESCHEDULED EVENTS:

Historic Melrose Scavenger Hunt

Sunday, September 16th, 1:30p.m.- 3p.m., Starts at Melrose Park (corner of Senate and Fairview)

Preservation Bike Ride

Saturday, September 22nd, 9a.m.-12p.m., Starts at the 1600 block of Laurel (behind Hampton-Preston property)
The event is free, but registration is required - please register by emailing preservation@columbiasc.gov. The ride is limited to 25 participants.

For more information on these events, please visit <https://planninganddevelopment.columbiasc.gov/historic-preservation/>



We Are Columbia

This newsletter was created by the Preservation Staff of the City of Columbia's Planning and Development Services Department. If you have any questions about your specific historic property please contact your district's preservation planner. Contact information can be found on our [website](#). If you would like to be added to our newsletter mailing list please send an email to preservation@columbiasc.net.