

May 1, 2009

This Place Matters

May is designated as National Preservation Month by the National Trust for Historic Preservation with this year's theme – **This Place Matters**. Preservation Month is set aside to raise awareness about the power historic preservation has to protect and enhance our neighborhoods and communities - the places that *really* matter to us. It provides an opportunity to celebrate the diverse and unique heritage of our community and enables us to become involved in the growing preservation movement. **This Place Matters** is what Preservation of Wilson is all about.

Each Tuesday in May we will share stories about our work, the people behind the houses, and why **This Place Matters**. We will only be able to touch the surface but hope it will generate interest in preservation and increase community support as we provide leadership in the revitalization efforts of our unique architectural heritage.

Today I write about the Old Wilson Historic District which landed another preservation buyer. The plans are to restore the J. Will Gardner House at 201 Bragg Street and return it to a single family dwelling.

Paul & Andrea Grigas, a retired couple from Nashua, New Hampshire, purchased the house. Their son, Mike, is in Wilson now and has begun the renovation process. The two-story bungalow will be converted from three rental units back to a single family dwelling. Paul is a retired contractor.

The Grigas family learned about Wilson as Paul and Andrea were traveling home from a vacation in Venice, Florida. Andrea is a quilter and while on trips they visit communities looking for quilt shops and to discover the downtowns. The day the Grigas' drove through Wilson was the first day the SOLD sign was posted in front of the Darden Douglas House which closed on March 11th.

Paul and Andrea contacted us to see if there were any other properties available. I showed them several properties but their interest stayed with the Bragg Street house. Lu-Ann Monson, City of Wilson Preservation Specialist, assisted in informing the couple on the features and requirements for renovation work on this contributing historic structure.

J. Will Gardner, who worked in the tobacco industry, bought this property in 1916. On the lot was a one-story frame house built in 1913. He soon raised the roof and built a second story as we see today. Major features include Tuscan porch columns, a central six-over-one sash window that is flanked by four-over-four sash windows, and a hip roof with projecting rafters. The house is complete with interior wood flooring and a large front porch.

The house was part of a foreclosure sale and listed at \$17,900. By the end of the day, Paul and Andrea were sitting in the office of First Wilson Properties with agent Kelly

Vick as he was writing an offer to purchase. The closing took place in less than 30 days and it all started with a SOLD Preservation of Wilson sign.