

## Eastover Estate

Eastover, designed in 1934 by the Charlotte architect Louis H. Asbury for Hearne Swink, is one of the few examples of Tudor style country house architecture in Rowan County and perhaps the most accomplished of Ashbury's sixteen commissions here. Asbury opened his office in Charlotte in 1908, and during the next half century, became one of the most prominent architects in the Piedmont of North Carolina, achieving a wide reputation for his churches, schools, and residential work.

Swink's choice of Asbury as the architect of this house is not surprising. For Asbury had designed several houses in Concord for the Cannons and other prominent citizens. Perhaps a more important influence, however, is the fact in 1922, Asbury had designed for W.J. Swink a new living room for his house at 409 North Main Street, China Grove.

The house set in handsomely landscaped grounds, provides the residence with seclusion and privacy. Yet, it is located within only a mile of the Rowan County Airport and only within an approximate 20 minute drive of the new Concord Mills Mall and 25 minutes to north Charlotte. Mr. Swink was a naturalist and horticulturist. To this sprawling estate he brought and planted rare azaleas, camellias and every species of tree. In the spring there are an abundance of dogwood trees in bloom. The land also has a fresh water spring, barbeque pit, and a grape arbor.

Upon your arrival at Eastover, attention to architectural detail is evident on the exterior as well as the interior. The front entrance welcomes visitors with its cast limestone Tudor arch and half-timber gables. To the left of the entrance there is a sundial in the gable. The irregular placement of the windows and their various sizes is in keeping with the informal character of country house design in the 1920's and 1930's and reflects, as well, the asymmetrical plan, as many larger house of the inter-war period. When you walk through Eastover, think of another era when labor was plentiful and cheap\$.65 an hour for a skilled carpenter and \$.30 an hour for helpers.

Mr. Swink (1900-1975), the son of William Joshua and Anna Swift (Hearne) Swink, served in various administrative positions with Cannon Mills Company, thus following in the footsteps of his father, who was associated with J.W. Cannon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the organization and operation of textile mills. The elder Swink was manger of the Patterson Mill in China Grove, now Cannon Plant#8, and later held higher positions with the company in Kannapolis. Swink personally oversaw the construction of his country estate. It was a way of life—with a chauffeur, butler and other servants (who resided in the servants' quarters above the garage, which have since been converted into a guest house). Imagine the politicians and the people of prominence that frequented Eastover and were entertained with genteel Southern hospitality.

On May of 1791, George Washington stopped at the Brandon farmhouse, which was located near the present entrance gates of Eastover. There is a historical marker located along the roadside of the property commemorating this event.

In the 1960's, Hearne Swink deeded Eastover to Cannon Mills Foundation, which, in turn, donated the property to Catawba College. The house has had two other occupants since the Swinks, and before Mr. Wilson purchased Eastover on 1979.

Mr. Wilson, being in the construction business and an engineer, brought with him a rare sensitivity and appreciation for the design and workmanship of the original house. He understood that Eastover could still afford gracious living, but that changes would have to be made. The mechanical equipment would have to be updated for modern, functional living. He retained all the original plumbing fixtures and spared no expense of effort in locating parts to restore them and keep them in tact. The boiler located in the basement of the house is the same one that was installed as a coal furnace in 1936. It was later converted to oil and is now operating with gas. Storm window, insulation and central air conditioning have been added, and the electrical lines have been put underground so as not to detract from the natural setting. All of these additions minimize upkeep and maintenance. Interesting enough, Eastover has the lowest energy rating with Duke Power Company.

The first floor of the house was designed for entertaining and family activities, while the private quarters are contained on the second floor. While the plan of the house is asymmetrical, the decorative details and organization of the various rooms is symmetrical and formally balanced.

The entrance/stair hall and living room are particularly impressive. The handsome oak doors are original to the house and were imported from Germany. The circular staircase is very graceful with the wall following the curve of the stairs. Note that the window curves with the wall. The pickets are hand-wrought steel; the handrail is walnut. The staircase is a very nice design departure from the usual heavy wooden ones found in Tudor homes. The foyer floor is crab orchard stone from Tennessee, and the hanging lantern fixture is original to the house.

The framed prints in the hallway are selected photographs of the original plans that architect Lewis Asbury drew for Eastover. They are dated 1934. The original plans are on file at the N.C. Archives and History. These prints could be included in the sell of the house.

To your left is the den. It is paneled in knotty pine. The room contains a built-in bar on one wall, and another wall has a secret compartment for hiding treasures.

To your right is the kitchen. This room was completely gutted and redesigned in 1979. It is a chef's delight with features like a built-in grill. The floor is ceramic tile. The stained glass, retrieved from a church being torn down, is ingeniously incorporated into the window treatment. The cabinet located next to the window was once the ironing board cabinet and was converted into a very nice spice rack. The screened porch off the kitchen has a slate floor and a large slate slab shelf, which is a perfect place for cooling pies. In 2002 the stove, microwave, gas range and the refrigerator were updated.

Through the swinging door is the breakfast room. There are cabinets from the floor to the ceiling for storing crystal, china, and silver. Incorporated into the cabinets is a long sideboard, great for serving dinners.

The French doors to the dining room open onto the original flagstone terrace that has recently been reset. The Swinks added the brick patio in the 1950's. Note the interesting brick work and cast stone railing.

Originally the living room had 20-foot ceilings, and there was a semicircular balcony extending from the upstairs hallway door. The window, while still of impressive proportions, originally extended two floors high and the fireplace breast were of stone. In 1952, the Swinks decided to lower the ceiling, do away with the balcony and change the fireplace to be more in keeping with the handsome Georgian pediment doorways. There is a small hole in the ceiling that is a light for a Christmas tree, which is located in front of the window. The stones from the fireplace were carefully removed and numbered, and are stored on the property now. The space above the living room now serves as a second story storage room. It still contains the original ceiling with its carved and applied ceramic moldings.

The library overlooks an expansive brick patio and lovely rose garden. The walls are of hard maple. At the same time the Swinks lowered the living room ceiling, they extended this room, adding the bow window, which has reverse glass. When you go to the patio, you will see that it is a mirror from the outside during the day, and at night the glass becomes a mirror from the inside. Both the satellite and receiver equipment that are used in this room will be included with sell of Eastover. The gas logs are new, installed in November of 1999.

The guest room has a very spacious closet and its own bath. The tile in the bathrooms in the house, are original, as are the sinks, tubs, and toilets.

### **Second Floor**

The second floor contains four bedrooms and three full baths. The bedroom on the west end of the house (presently used as an office) was originally used as a sleeping porch when the house was first built. Notice how the windows wrap around this room. The small room located next to the stairs is the butler's room. There are push buttons through out the home to alert the butler.

### **Third Floor**

This is a very large bonus room. It works great as a game room. This space is cooled but not heated. There is a door leading to the attic, with still more space.

## **Basement**

The laundry room is located in the basement with an oversized double wash sink and a laundry shoot coming down from the second floor and first floor. The water holding tanks are located in the room next to the boiler. Eastover also has its own wine cellar with ample shelves and bins, and a pantry room with shelves for canned goods. The crawl space underneath the house is accessed through the basement and is almost large enough to allow you to walk under the house.

## **Guest House**

What is now used as a guesthouse, used to be the old servants quarters. When Mr. Wilson bought Eastover he converted it into a guesthouse using the old doors as a bar & head board. The light fixtures came out of the old Yadkin hotel in Salisbury.

## **Patio**

This is probably one of the best places to observe the fine architectural detailing. The bricks are oversized, handmade Virginia plantation bricks. The roof is clay tile. When you look at the gable, please note the carved verge board. These carvings are said to have been a gift to Hearne Swink from the Finches of Thomasville, owners of the Thomasville Chair Co. The patio has a permanent wet bar, great for outdoor entertaining. The brick wall surrounding the patio contains built-in lighting. The large yard is encompassed by a wooden fence, which stretches along the driveway and down both sides of the property.

## **Driveway**

The driveway at first glance appears to be just gravel, but the entire stretch of the driveway is actually surface treatment asphalt, with the gravel on top. This natural looking driveway is lined with full grown English boxwoods (fifty-six total on the property), and there are four antique lanterns, retrieved from an old bridge in Rocky Mt., N.C. that light the way along the driveway in the evenings.

\*\*\* Note that the property crosses the road and goes to the railroad tracks. The pine trees serve as a buffer against any noise from trains. This particular area contains an abundance of blackberry bushes, which are great for picking in the summer months.