

MARGARET G. BIGGER'S PIEDMONT COURTS NEWSLETTERS, 1969-1990

.5 cu. ft. (1 document box)

ABSTRACT

North Carolina's oldest public housing development, Piedmont Courts, was located on the corner of Seigle Avenue and 10th Street in Charlotte. Piedmont Courts was originally segregated, and slated for lower-income whites, while Fairview Courts, near Statesville Avenue was built to house black residents. As desegregation spread during the 1960s, black citizens were able to move into Piedmont Courts as well. By the 1980s, Piedmont Courts had become dilapidated, and criminal problems and drugs were plaguing the community. The city received millions of dollars to tear Piedmont Courts down in 2006, and replaced it with Seigle Point Apartment Homes at the same location.

This collection contains newsletters.

ACCESS

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PREFERRED CITATION

Cite as: Margaret G. Bigger's Piedmont Courts Newsletters, 1969-1990, Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

ACQUISITION

Presented by Margaret G. Bigger, March 2010.

Processed by Hannah Cox, 2015.

HISTORICAL NOTE

Piedmont Courts was North Carolina's oldest public housing development. Martin Evans Boyer, Jr., who had designed homes in Eastover and Myers Park, was the architect. Harold Bursley, who had assisted in planning the town of Greenbelt, Maryland, was the landscape architect. Piedmont Courts began in 1940 as temporary, affordable housing

for whites, eventually becoming popular with returning World War II veterans and their families. It was built on a former “shantytown” site, and was designed as two-story apartment homes with interior walkways and play areas for children. Most residents liked the concept, and enjoyed their time there, forming social and community bonds. A similar, though less elaborate housing project, Fairview Courts, was opened for blacks near Statesville Avenue in the same year. Constructed by the Charlotte Housing Authority, both Piedmont Courts and Fairview Courts, were funded by a loan from the United States Housing Administration.

By the 1960s, Charlotte began integration, and black families moved in to Piedmont Courts, some due to the federal urban renewal program. Although aimed at eradicating slums and providing better housing for residents, the federal urban renewal program caused many problems in Charlotte. Homes were first bulldozed in the Brooklyn neighborhood, which was home for many of the city’s black citizens. Some middle-class families were able to buy homes elsewhere, however many of the working-class families ended up in public housing units such as Piedmont Courts, and poverty became more concentrated. As with many such depressed areas, over time crime, drugs, and violent activity increased, and Piedmont Courts was no longer considered a good neighborhood in which to live. Problems escalated, eventually culminating in a November 1985 shootout that left seven people injured. In the years following, the Piedmont Courts community continued to face difficulties, and the complex was eventually demolished in 2006. It was replaced by Seigle Point Apartment Homes, a mixed-income development. Today, some former residents of Piedmont Courts continue to hold an annual reunion, and relish the friendships and memories that they made there.

This collection contains newsletters accumulated by Margaret Bigger, who served as a liaison between Seigle Avenue and Myers Park Presbyterian churches. Harold Dillehay was the first Executive Director of the Charlotte Housing Authority, and also a member of the Myers Park Presbyterian Church. He contacted the Mecklenburg Presbytery, and encouraged programs aimed at serving those in both Piedmont Courts and Fairview Courts. Seigle Avenue Presbyterian and its later preschool, were created to serve the families in the Piedmont Courts housing project. Ms. Bigger worked as a nearly full-time volunteer in the community for 25 years, and continues to cherish her friendships made at Piedmont Courts.

REFERENCES

Charlotte Housing Authority. “Demolition of Piedmont Courts Begins.” May 11, 2006. <http://www.cha-nc.org/page.asp?urh=PressReleases&mode=view&id=17&year=2006>

Hanchett, Dr. Thomas W. "The Belmont-Villa Heights-Optimist Park Survey Area," Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1985.

<http://www.cmhpf.org/kids/neighborhoods/belmont-et-al.html>

The Learning Collaborative. "Our History." <http://www.tlccharlotte.org/about-us/our-history/>

Morrell, Dr. Dan L. "Reconnaissance Survey of Superblock/Apartment Projects in Charlotte-Mecklenburg," Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 2006.

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RELATED MATERIALS

Bigger, Margaret G. *Small Church with a Big Mission: The History of the First 50 Years of Seigle Avenue Presbyterian Church*. Charlotte, NC: A Borough Books, 1995. (CALL NUMBER: NCR 285.1756 M43c S459)

Housing Authority—Projects. (CALL NUMBER: NCR VERTICAL FILES)

Housing Authority—Projects—Piedmont Courts. (CALL NUMBER: NCR VERTICAL FILES)

Housing Authority—Projects—Piedmont Courts—Piedmont Piper. (CALL NUMBER: NCR VERTICAL FILES)

Housing Authority—Projects—Piedmont Courts—Renovation. (CALL NUMBER: NCR VERTICAL FILES)

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Margaret G. Bigger Collection of Piedmont Courts newsletters contains news from the Piedmont Courts community from the initial issue in August 1969, to the final issue in June 1990. The bulk of the collection dates from 1969-1985.

The Piedmont Courts newsletter, titled the *Seigle Avenue Mothers Invention*, was edited and published by the Mothers Club and Seigle Avenue Presbyterian's sister church, Myers Park Presbyterian, for nearly 21 years. The newsletter included community events, articles by and about residents, and information on community action. *Christian Outreach*, another publication in the collection, was published in conjunction by the two

churches, and focused on events held at the church and community outreach opportunities.

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