CAROLINA DWELLING

er•nac′u•lar (vẽr•năk′u̇•lẽr), adj. 1. Belonging to, develope

and spoken or used by, the people of a particular place, regio

country; native; indi   ngu

as, English is our ve   ni

the native or indigen   na

as opposed to the lite   era

poetry; vernacular ex

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2. Of persons, that us   lite

language of a place; as vernacular poets; ve   ar interpr

3. Characteristic of a locality; local; as, a house of verna

CAROLINA DWELLING

Towards Preservation of Place:
In Celebration of the
North Carolina Vernacular Landscape

Edited by Doug Swaim

The nature of building is letting dwell. . . . *Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build.* Let us think for a while of a farmhouse in the Black Forest, which was built some two hundred years ago by the dwelling of peasants. Here the self-sufficiency of the power to let earth and heaven, divinities and mortals enter *in simple oneness* into things, ordered the house. It placed the farm on the wind-sheltered mountain slope looking south, among the meadows close to the spring. It gave it the wide overhanging shingle roof whose proper slope bears up under the burden of snow, and which, reaching deep down, shields the chambers against the storms of the long winter nights. It did not forget the altar corner behind the community table; it made room in its chamber for the hallowed places of childbed and the 'tree of the dead' . . . and in this way it designed for the different generations under one roof the character of their journey through time. . . .

. . . Our reference to the Black Forest farm in no way means that we should or could go back to building such houses; rather it illustrates by a dwelling that *has been* how *it* was able to build. . . .

. . . The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, *that they must ever learn to dwell.* . . .
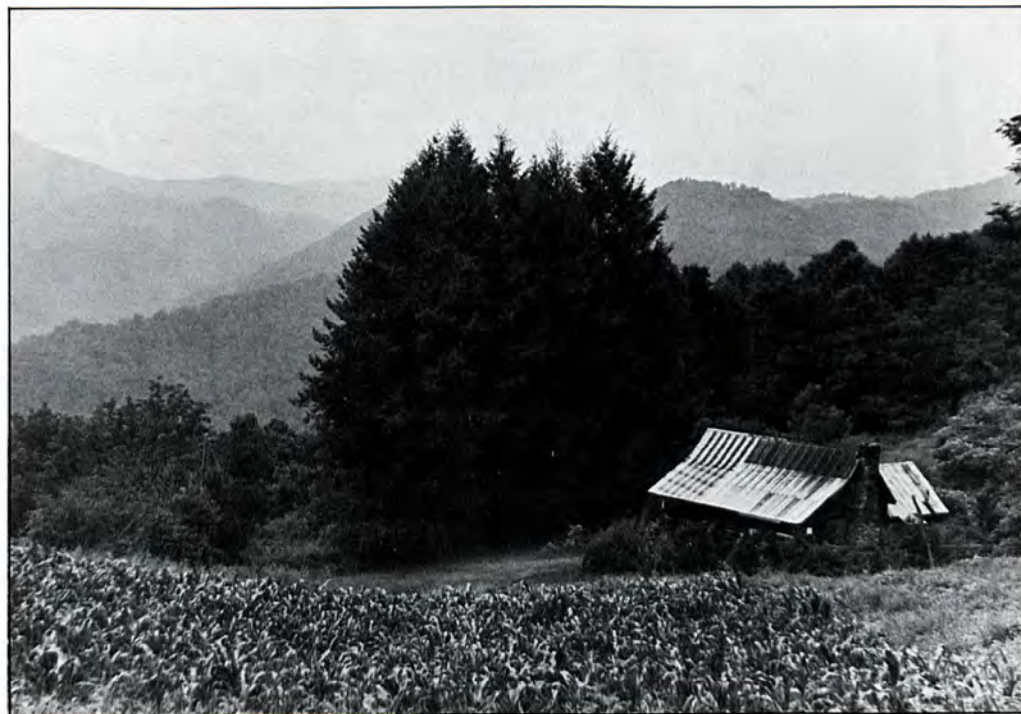
—Martin Heidegger
"Building Dwelling Thinking"

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Introduction:

Robert Stipe holds degrees in economics and law from Duke University and in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of NC at Chapel Hill. He has been Professor of Public Law and Government and Assistant Director of UNC's Institute of Government (1957-1974), Director of the NC Division of Archives and History (1974-1975), and Trustee of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (since 1971). He is currently a lecturer at the NCSU School of Design and an historic preservation consultant.

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The Conservation of Place

Eastern North Carolina: the vernacular landscape's own eloquent memorial.

This book's ultimate goal is the conservation of things and buildings and places. It seems appropriate at the beginning of such a book to inquire *why* we should be interested in the conservation of buildings and things and places, especially in an age so characteristically devoted to growth and change and bigness that an urge to conserve anything would seem to be both ethically and intellectually irrational.

The conservation and preservation of buildings and artifacts have always seemed to those in charge of our political and economic life to be an irrelevancy; at best a frill to be pursued and enjoyed by individuals of means, good education, and exquisite tastes. Concern about the conservation of place is a relatively new phenomenon lying principally in the domain of theorists and academicians—not yet even of general concern or interest to those groups and individuals who labor in the traditional "preservation" vineyard. A shared characteristic of both groups, however, is a pervasive defensiveness and self-consciousness in speaking about why they even bother. Generally they can do no better than to speak vaguely about motivations having to do with patriotism, the importance of recreation or tourism, "economic benefits to the community," and the like.

To the contrary, I believe that the aggressive pursuit of a firm public commitment to a new conservation ethic is no longer a matter of luxury or self-indulgence. In these closing years of the twentieth century, it has become a matter of urgent social necessity which is essential to the survival of the human spirit and personality.

For most of us, there are obvious justifications for conservation that cannot be denied. The threshold level of understanding would be that no civilized person, educated or not, would wish that any object or place of beauty or significance should be destroyed for any reasons other than compelling ones—whether the thing be a painting, a beautiful landscape, or a bit of architecture. But we have arrived at a time when the need for

conservation has passed beyond mere civility or appreciation. The basic need springs from a fundamental human requirement to be able to reach out and to be able to touch and feel and see those things that provide hard physical evidence of our passage in the stream of tradition. It is a need that transcends social organization or geography.

All old things and places, and some new ones, give meaning to our daily lives in ways we rarely consider except when they are gone. It is the shock of experiencing the voids they leave behind that raises the fact of their disappearance to a conscious level. In this day and age, it is a new kind of human shock, one more shattering than ever before in its impact because the pace of change has accelerated and the scale of new things and places has grown vastly larger, ever more domineering and threatening. For most of us, it is no longer merely a matter of adapting to new images and experiences. It is a matter of hiding, for safety's sake, from places and environments that somehow seem to continually threaten us and which make us feel more vulnerable and naked.

We must accept, of course, that change is inevitable, even good for us; for without change, as a British friend of mine has put it, there is no tradition. Tradition, it is asserted, is essentially the result of an evolutionary process in which new customs, ideas, artifacts and places are grafted onto accepted life-styles. And it is, at heart, the feeling of being a part of the *continuum* of tradition that gives us our psychological sense of security and well-being—of "knowing our place" in more than the accustomed social sense. Of course we must lead our lives in our own time and place as individuals. But in doing so we require the security of knowing that in acting out our lives we may be able to perform on a stage that maintains the links with those who lived and acted out their lives before us. We also require, like all others of our species, that the configuration, boundaries and props which constitute that stage be not so altered in

mid-play that we drop our lines. Remove the buildings, artifacts, landscapes and places that provide the memory of our earlier lives and we pay a price. Sometimes it is a small price and the inconvenience is a fleeting one. At other times, the price is high and the results are permanent and scarring.

Often we are confronted with the challenge: Why save a townscape, a landscape, or even a building when the book, the photograph, or the film will do? It is not the same. As my friend puts it, there are certain experiences in our lives which we cannot recall except by keeping the surroundings and circumstances in which those memories were grounded. The shadow does not capture the substance. It is both physically impossible and psychologically undesirable that we should attempt to return to the womb of time, but "choosing a past," as Kevin Lynch has said, "helps us to construct a future."

Wilmington: a fragile island.

Chapel Hill: contending urges.

In his biography, Carl Jung wrote of a difficult time in his life when he was at the mercy of his unconscious self and in a psychotic state. What kept him together was that which remained of his conscious being, telling him that he was indeed an individual, that he had a family, and that he occupied a particular house in a city that was recognizable to him. Because he was able to hang onto these reassuring thoughts that gave meaning and continuity to his life, he was able to resist going completely to pieces.

The same equation may be put with respect to a larger society of individuals: we have not a mere whimsical, exquisite need, but a compellingly human and, more likely, a biological need to have around us some of the places and environments and artifacts to which we can cling, if for no more than measuring sticks against which the calculus of our humanity can be subconsciously figured.

I believe, when all is said and done, that the central problem of conservation may be stated rather simply. That is that a gigantic, increasingly depersonalized industrial society, operating for more than a century to serve the requirements of growth, change, and profit has produced an ethic grounded in both economics and law that places the burden of proof for conservation on the wrong parties. Those who would conserve a place or a thing, our social institutions tell us, must provide compelling reasons why a thing or a place should be saved. To the contrary, it seems to me that the life-stage of our environment has intrinsic value for us *by virtue of the simple fact of its existence*. Social health—even survival—requires that this burden of proof should one day shift, and that the change, redevelopment, or destruction of existing environments should be tolerated only when there are urgent reasons for such change.

Such a bold assertion raises more questions than it answers, of course. What artifacts and places are important, and to whom? When resources for conservation are scarce, what choices are evaluated, and how should re-

sources be allocated? Who should pay?

Other contemporary issues important to the conservation of place are more difficult to define. One serious problem stems from a human tendency toward intellectual partisanship on the part of individuals and bureaucracies in the conservation movement itself. For example, some of the custodians of the existing protective machinery would insist that the "lessons of history" must always be manifest in the object to be preserved. Others tend to be specially preoccupied with styles in architecture or building—notwithstanding that "fashion" in anything is an intrinsically impermanent value. Recently, in some circles, there is an insistence on the recognition of "linkages" and "ethnicity" as essential determinants of what is important.

The net result of disparate philosophies concerning what is important to preserve has in many instances been legislation that throws a protective cloak around period buildings and history to the comparative neglect of other aspects of milieu which are equally important to the accomplishment of a humane existence, such as urban and rural landscapes. This is not to suggest that one or another approach to "value" is more or less important than another—merely to indicate that pluralism in conservation and the raising of many voices has tended to divert attention from the more basic problem, which is that the need for conservation springs more fundamentally from biological urges than cultural ones.

To date the conservation effort overall has placed a premium on three criteria of value: age, scarcity, and quality. "The oldest . . . " "The best example . . . " "The only surviving . . . " Perhaps at this moment in time these crude judgments about what should survive are the best we can do. But the contemporary resurgent interest in place, the human stage, as a thing having value and meaning in itself, and giving emphasis to biological necessity, genetic memories, and a wider variety of human motivations and experiences, seems to me to point a way out and a way forward. It recognizes man's animal nature as well as his cultural needs. The next step will be to begin to discern the outer limits of individual and social tolerances for the accommodation and assimilation of change.

My British friend has said that conservation, in and of itself, will not insure the survival of societies or individuals. It cannot promise anything. But to emphasize the conservation of place as well as things, at least returns our attention to the fundamental importance of retaining that larger stage on which we act out our lives. That is why it seems important to me to begin this book in an optimistic and even aggressive way, for there is, as we instinctively understand, a universal and deep-rooted urge to know "where we are." To be lost is to forsake one's place in the structure of the environment.

Raleigh: the eclipse of the past.

My British friend is Graham W. Ashworth, former President of the Royal Town Planning Institute and presently Professor in the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Salford. Following upon a decade of friendship and overseas collaboration on a variety of environmental conservation endeavors, we are by now mutually indebted to one another for the essence of some of the ideas and examples mentioned in this Introduction. Profesor Ashworth lectures at the School of Design on his occasional visits to America.

Editor's Introduction

Carolina Dwelling is a collection of essays that describe, analyze, trace the history and suggest the possible meanings of various features of the North Carolina vernacular landscape. The book's purpose is to provide a basis for collective reflection upon both the particularity and the process recorded in that landscape. The book was *incited* by a felt need to tend to what is here.

All along we have said that our purpose is ultimately the *conservation* of the qualities that our environment exhibits as a special place—"special" not in the sense of exceptional or surpassing, although it is certainly that in ways both good and bad, but rather in the sense of unique. Not better—just different. As I sit down to write this introduction, though, I am struck—particularly today, October 30th—by the carry of our *natural* setting in pro-

Cedar-lined Piedmont pasture.

viding that particularity. Once again the autumn color in this forested land is incredible. Sure, the oaks, those that have turned at all, are going straight to brown to remind us of a bone-dry summer, but the dogwood and red maple have been stark against the pine, and the yellow maple outside my window has passed from bright rain-slicker to a modest apricot glow. With these amazing signs to remind me how nature always turns around *this* place—and with my friends making the ritual journey to the mountains to see it full tilt reminding me of our cultural embeddedness in the natural cycle—how can I long remain upset that the peculiarity of this place is about to fade!

But then I also remember the discouragement of a flight over the Piedmont in a small plane with Project Director Shun Kanda. Looking for patterns in the spread of the small towns we chose to fly above, we were struck instead by their form*less*ness and, especially—and this is what I am reminded of now—by how few real forests actually remained below. From two thousand feet a good portion of the North Carolina Piedmont landscape appears—and I hate to say it—rather like the coat of a mangy hound. Scatterization has all but erased our woodlands. The "forests" that appear so deceptively pervasive from the ground are actually ragged strips between what is truly rampant, the small clearing. "Entropy upon the land," I remember thinking at the time.

Those who have flown to Virginia at low altitude tell me that a change in this pattern in the landscape is obvious once you cross the border. And a little research shows that in contrast to North Carolina, early Virginia had a stable government that encouraged aristocratic planters to assemble vast estates. In North Carolina, under the Lords Proprietors, not only was the future uncertain but also early law prohibited the "taking up of tracts larger than 660 acres without special permission. . . ."[1] What a discouragement that law must have been to those seeking to secure aristocratic dreams upon the soil of the "new discovered Summer Country" to the south. And thus the

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land and its climatic delights were left largely to "the dregs and gleanings of all other English Colonies," who were quite content to become solidly middle class claiming it piece by piece.[2]

So history is read on the land at two thousand feet and in the statistics that tell of a large rural population still. And the descendants of non-aristocrats continue to carve upon their small holdings. In fact, most of our land has been cleared, or at least "harvested," several times during the relatively brief history of settlement here. From the air, again, the vestigial geometries of property line and abandoned field show clearly in the patterning of our young woods. What's more, whereas our ancestors found mixed pine and hardwood forests predominating in the Piedmont, our continual trading of clearing and growth has allowed the faster growing pine to gain ascendency—so much so that the stability of much of our woodlands is called into question.

> Every given natural region has a potential top situation where all of the plants that will grow there have grown up now and all of those that will push out something else have pushed out something else, and it reaches a point of stability. If you cut all the forests and you wait many hundreds of years, it'll come to something again. . . .
> This condition, called "climax," is an optimum condition of diversity—optimum stability. When a system reaches climax, it levels out for centuries or millennia. By virtue of its diversity it has the capacity to absorb all sorts of impacts. Insects, fungi, weather conditions come and go; it's the opposite of monoculture. If you plant a forest back into all white pine, one of these days the white pine blister comes along and kills all the white pine. If you have a natural mixed forest, the white pine will be hit a little by blister rust but they won't be in a solid stand, they'll be broken up. . . .[3]

This train of thought began with my celebrating the contribution our natural setting makes towards establishing the particularity of this place. What I have arrived at is a realization that our manner of dwelling has not only

The Piedmont south of Raleigh.

significantly changed that setting—that is to be expected—but also that the alteration commonly threatens the continued existence of an important element of that setting as a sustaining and place-making ground. Let those who doubt this conclusion check today's lumber yard prices on our once common hardwoods as well as the quality of the local pine that is available, and let him visit the remote Joyce Kilmer "tree museum" for a remembrance of what time is *capable* of gathering into wood. Of course it hardly needs mentioning that this is merely one local example of the dysfunction that pervades our contemporary way of life.

Ecology—the science of organism's relationship to environment—of necessity begins with the natural ground. In the case of man, however, if it is to consider all that significantly affects the organism's well-being, it must quickly expand to include the cultural setting. At once the human disease and glory, culture is inevitably our mediating context. Optimally our cultural extensions provide both the *why* and *how* of material progress. Through symbol systems we establish meaningful intentions; with tools we seek to execute our desires. The more tightly wound the dialectic of symbol and tool the more harmonious the dwelling that results. Furthermore, unless life is to be a careening exploration of simple material possibility—hardly dwelling—the symbol, the *why*, must always remain primary. Symbol systems provide direction and nourishment to the dwelling urge.

Of course compared to nature's massive stay, our symbolic cultural ballast is light—especially in America—and vulnerable to change. Or, put another way, our cultural topsoil is thin and vulnerable to the bulldozer's blade. Evidence suggests that human societies have the capacity to mature in much the same manner as forests—that their natural evolution flows in line with a tendency towards maximum diversity and stability. Our modern western civilization, however, is like a piece of ground that is annually scraped back so as to produce maximum

new growth of a few species—monoculture. The energy feeding this new growth, as we are so painfully aware at present, comes not from the rich humus of recycled culture past but from the recently discovered, soon to be exhausted, purely instrumental petroleum fix. And our present vulnerability to a whole range of existential assaults results largely from monoculture's consequent lack of diversity and resilience and especially from its lack of symbolic depth—its lack of a *why*. The tool has taken charge and knows only how to make more of the same. Like a scrawny pine overgrowth monoculture gathers little into it that can sustain the human spirit and it is highly susceptible to a variety of plagues. Continuous rapid growth and innovation give it—in contrast to the scrawny wood—the illusion of health, but when its crude oil "stash" is depleted or cut off, withdrawal will likely be cataclismic, the illusion banished, and a paucity of real culture left behind to support corporate America's advertised meanings.

With neurotic attachment to a pioneer mentality, we continue to drive back—"expand"—the frontier of our economy. Our civilization has substituted a dreamy orientation towards future satiety for the primal dwelling experience of *being in place*. Ever inclined towards more, we scarcely notice the centered sufficiency of the present. And whenever growth's momentum flags, we "stagnate" in utter *dis*placement. Furthermore, our abstract orientation is embarrassingly evident in the environments we build: in the bland or brutal instrumentality of what directly supports production; in the tacked-on image's appeal to our sham fantasies; in the destruction and neglect of existing cultural forms and spaces along the way to profits or an imagined better; and in most new form's complete ignorance of the history and the particularity of its place in time and space. For those of us who cannot muster connecting faith with this current flowing endlessly toward a receding future—as well as for the multitude of economic misfits the current has left behind—

these environments fail to *place* us meaningfully in the world. And for revolutionaries of all stripes (many of whom I must quickly disavow any sympathy for) the only meaningful posture is one that actively resists the flow.

One does not have to agree completely with this critique to share our concern for place conservation. That we need a coherent and stable setting upon which to act out our lives meaningfully, as Robert Stipe maintains in his essay on "The Conservation of Place," is realization aplenty. Nor does the critique deny the existence of a rich countercurrent doing a dance of opposites with mass production's monoculture. Indeed, a whole syndrome of movements now advocate the cultivation and preservation of local environments, natural and man-made. Hopefully our own effort will positively and significantly reinforce the public's already considerable agitation.

Initially I said that this book's purpose is to provide a basis for collective reflection upon both the particularity and the process recorded in North Carolina's vernacular landscape. Restated in terms of the organic analogy that purpose is to "compost" some of the cultural debris that is around us so that ultimately we can nourish new growth in "the rich humus of recycled culture past." Since our contributors were not asked to employ a standard definition in determining their subjects, we can also stand back and look at the variety of their approaches as an exploration of the meaning of the concept of "vernacular" itself. And because the affective character of our environment has historically been so grounded in the vernacular landscape, we can take the occasion of that landscape's discussion to reflect upon the concept of place-meaning. Both these related secondary themes are introduced here at the beginning of the book and carried throughout in brief editorial prefaces to each article.

Professional designers and design educators generally look upon the traditional design with unabashed admiration. In *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* Christopher

Alexander celebrated the ability of "unselfconscious" cultures to produce artifacts that harmonize with their environments. In *House Form and Culture* Amos Rapoport limited his search for meaningful form determinants to vernacular or folk houses. A slew of books tend toward celebration and admiration of what Rudofsky termed "architecture without architects." The common theme in much of this work is: modern self-conscious design is doing worse. We would do well to look to the more primitive designer for guidance and inspiration.

To a degree *Carolina Dwelling* follows in the tradition of these books. It could even be considered something of a test of the more romantic notions they have sponsored. In the following essays a picture of traditional design is collectively drawn that is at once less exotic, more subtle, and hopefully at least as informative as the usual model. Significantly, this book leaves the reader who is familiar with the territory covered in a position to evaluate for himself the relative "success" of the process and its products on this soil.

Yet we are also here trying to do something quite different. In calling for essays on the vernacular landscape the intention has been to highlight the *place-making* aspect of traditional design. In its usual sense, vernacular means the locally or regionally idiosyncratic speech of ordinary people—place-rooted speech. The term has often been applied to architecture but seldom in a precise way and consequently seldom making good use of the opportunity to clearly name something new.

Architectural historians often call unsophisticated translations of high style form and ornament vernacular. In their view vernacular form always exists in relation to higher culture which it apes—usually clumsily, sometimes wittily, but never with *intended* irony. For them the individual example is the vernacularization; it does not have to be one case of a local or regional practice.

Vernacular is also commonly used rather interchangeable with "folk," as in Rapoport's *House Form and*

Culture, to name "the direct and unselfconscious translation into physical form of a culture. . . . " Rapoport does go slightly further in distinguishing vernacular building *within* the larger domain of folk tradition by stating that it is the product of tradesmen as opposed to nonspecialized folk.[4] This is about the extent of the term's specificity as it is employed by those architectural historians who specialize in astylistic buildings.

Obviously the concept could stand clarification. Returning to the original meaning of vernacular we recall that there is the sense that something widespread—a language—has become local, has become *vernacularized.* There is the sense that a vernacular is not a whole thing that appears in one place and no place else, but a local hue or coloration given to something that exists, or has existed, elsewhere as well. If we intend this sense when applying the term to the built environment, we find that we are not naming something as complete and tangible as an object, but rather the peculiar shift that culture takes when it becomes rooted in a place. Vernacular can best be understood, then, as *the place-related inflection of culture.* It has both its conservative aspect—as when a folk survival contributes to the sense of a place—and its progressive aspect— as when adaptation of a folk tradition produces a locally idiosyncratic building vocabulary. A hall-and-parlor type "coastal cottage" in eastern North Carolina exhibits both aspects: its basic two-room plan is continuous with a seventeenth century (or older) English folk tradition, while its porch and raised open foundation are adaptations to its New World context.

Vernacular as local inflection also encompasses the architectural historian's usage that I first mentioned—unsophisticated interpretation of high style. However, whereas the local adaptation of folk form often became local *practice,* the carpenter's rendering of high style ornament was likely a one-of-a-kind attempt. Because it constituted a place-making act of *possession,* I would still consider it essentially vernacular.

Historically the great majority of houses built in this state have been neither purely folk nor purely high style. Most typically the basic plan of a house conforms to local folk tradition while any ornament, inside or out, at least pretends to fashionable style. The ideas for these traditional house plans persisted through time and were rather fixed in *space*—in their region. The changing current of fashion, on the other hand, fixed each architectural style in a "period" in *time.* Thus, considering both aspects, we can imagine our typical old house as frozen in a space-time grid which to a considerable extent determined the terms of its existence. I would propose that such a schema provides a vernacular matrix that can identify the particular intersections of atemporal traditions and historical styles upon this landscape. The matrix generates highly

Duplin County "coastal cottage" type hall-and-parlor house.

vernacular forms because every intersection within it shows the inflection of its place in space and time. Reflecting this state's "middling" past, every formulation is *uniquely* oriented towards a current outside itself.

So, in brief summary, I would maintain that "vernacular" should frame the peculiar coloration, or inflection, given to culture in a place—and that such coloration can be given to any non-vernacular culture. Popular culture is even *potentially* vernacular. But if there is nothing identifiably unique about the culture of a locale, it is not vernacular and the locale could hardly hold much meaning as a place.

Robert Venturi speaks of the strip as the "current vernacular of the United States."[5] He has framed America and asked what is particular about our national material culture. And he comes up with car culture's strip. True enough. But I find his statement laden with irony. The United States is not one big place, for we are too easily lost within it. The strip is, instead, monoculture and although it does serve a function, as well as provide a clear counterpoint against which to shore up the particularity of locale, it is by and large a blatant symptom of our civilization's tendency to disease.

All of the currents that flow through this book are united in the one river: dwelling. Most of the connections should be rather evident—one, however, may not. That is our desire to *celebrate* what we find here. The source of that desire is revealed in Heidegger's etymology:

> . . . But in what does the nature of dwelling consist? Let us listen once more to what language says to us. The Old Saxon *wuon*, the Gothic *wunian*, like the old word *bauen*, mean to remain, to stay in a place. But the Gothic *wunian* says more distinctly how this remaining is experienced. *Wunian* means: To be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain in peace. The word for peace, *Friede*, means the free, *das Frye*, and *fry* means: preserved from harm and danger, preserved from something, safeguarded. To free really means to spare. The sparing itself consists not only in the fact that we do not harm the one whom

we spare. Real sparing is something *positive* and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own nature, when we return it specifically to its being, when we "free" it in the real sense of the word into a preserve of peace. To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature. *The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving.*[6]

We celebrate, then, for two reasons: first, to memorialize the dwelling that has preceded us upon this land—then, we celebrate because, as dwellers ourselves, it is *we* who are freed into the same preserve that we have offered to safeguard what surrounds us. It is *we* who, as dwellers, are set at peace. Not that it needs any explanation or justification: *we are celebrating life*. And I admit no conflict between this jubilation and the all-too-necessary critique we have already unfurled. "That the world can be improved and yet must be celebrated as it is are contradictions. The beginning of maturity may be the recognition that both are true."[7]

Footnotes

1. *Historical and Architectural Resources of the Tar-Neuse River Basin* (Raleigh, N.C.: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Survey and Planning Branch, Feb. 1977), 10-11.

2. Harry Roy Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 34.

3. "The Original Mind of Gary Snyder," *East/West* June, 1977, 36.

4. Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 2.

5. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1977), 52.

6. Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 148-149.

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Toward a Theory of Place Meaning

Most of us are vaguely aware that our physical surroundings affect our moods and actions in some way. Our continuous interaction with the environment is so commonplace, however, that we hardly stop to think about it. Once reflected upon, it is certainly obvious that some places may offer us greater or lesser comfort and enjoyment, that they may facilitate or obstruct the tasks we try to accomplish, and that they may be more or less visually appealing. Less obviously, they may remind us of places we have been before, for example the town or house in which we grew up. From a broader perspective—and less obviously still—because the built environment serves as the physical framework for our social existence, we can sometimes find in it a reflection of our cultural values, our collective view of the world and man's position in it.

If we are to understand the significance the built environment holds for us, we must begin to look at the process by which we interact with it. Above all we must address the question of how and to what extent the environment holds *meaning* for us. One approach to the subject of meaning has been to view it as the product of an interaction between our flow of present experience and things which act as symbols to signify and recall past experiences.[1] Experience may be viewed as the *medium* that grounds both our "inner" consciousness and our sensed contact with the "outer" world in one continuously changing, on-going organismic process. Within this process we become focally aware of certain phenomena and isolate them as objects (things, ideas, events) which come to stand for, and to an extent recall, some aspect of our experience. We call these reminders "symbols." It is only by means of symbols that we have access to experience in any kind of conceptual way. Through this interaction between symbols and experience we find and give meaning to the world.

The on-going dialectic of experience and symbolization of experience produces a cognitive residue, a lingering *image* of the world, which we take with us through time and apply to new experiences and objects.[2] This image acts as a *lens* through which we focus on the world. Thus it may be said that we never deal with our physical environment directly "out there" but only through our image of it. This image as it relates to some specific part of the environment can be called the *sense of place*.

We participate in the process of symbolization and image-making not voluntarily but unavoidably at every moment. What is more, the physical environment does not play a passive role in the process. It can encourage us to associate and identify with it in particular ways, and similarly it can discourage us. The sense of place is simultaneously dependent upon both the individual with his own unique history and his surroundings. The sense of a *particular* place may differ between individuals, reflecting different images of the world, and it may vary through time for a given individual reflecting his constant cycling through different levels of awareness.

Beyond the variations in our individual perceptions there is also a shared sense of place circumscribed by cultural values. This shared image of our environment may be seen to operate on various levels and includes cultural, social, psychological, and functional as well as physical dimensions. In an abstract sense we might refer to a shared image that is a subset of each individual's whole image structure. On the basis of what is shared in any particular situation it becomes possible to talk about the place qualities of a physical setting as if it had an existence independent from us. With these shared values as criteria, places become good or bad, strong or weak, interesting or dull, appropriate or inappropriate. It is shared or collective values that are at the core of the idea of place.

Only certain values, however, are relevant to the idea of place. Here we shall attempt to define a strategy for getting at these values by first positing four basic aspects or categories of place meaning. Then, by investigating the relationships between these four categories, we shall try

to elaborate the nature of meaningful places in terms of the experiential qualities they might exhibit. By this means we can begin to establish a framework for evaluating particular places and for determining the particular values they may or may not reflect. In terms of environmental design, any particular building task might be approached and evaluated in light of this framework.

Aspects of Place Meaning

We would define four aspects or categories of meaning which the concept of place must respond to: possession, identification, wholeness, and orientation.[3]

Possession refers to the sense of belonging in or having some claim on a place. To possess a place is to make it your own, not simply in the sense of legal ownership, but in the sense of mutual empathy, whereby the place becomes part of you and you become part of it. In this there is a sense of indwelling. Possession has to do with the degree to which a place can personify (symbolize) our emotions and accomodate our feelings. Through possession we relate to places on a very personal level.

Identification refers to the sense that a place reflects the social milieu within which we share a common world. It is a process of recognizing the familiar symbols and settings within which we carry out our daily activities. To identify a place is in a sense to name it by reference to past experiences. It is identification *of* the physical world *with* an acculturated world view. In terms of identification, the built environment represents "an ethnic domain made visible, tangible, and sensible."[4]

Wholeness refers to the sense that a place is a discreet entity, complete in some respects in itself. Wholeness in a place refers to how we perceive its internal relations. It need not relate to us or the world in any direct way. Wholeness is dependent on a sense of completeness, uniqueness, balance, and legibility, and while it may refer to place qualities other than the physical, these must be

evidenced in the physical reality of a place.

Orientation refers to the sense that a place is related to and part of a larger whole, and also that it is itself a larger whole within which we relate its parts. As we participate in a place, this sense of its orientation gives rise to a locational sense of our own being in the world. There is the sense that a place is part of a continuum at a number of different levels of scale and resolution. Orientation within a place must always be perceived in relationship to something else either inside of it or outside of it. There is a sense of organization, structure, order, and connectedness.

In terms of a particular place, the distinction of any one of these aspects is a fragmented abstraction of the reality. And likewise, to fully realize its potential a place must manifest each of these four levels of meaning in a co-ordinated and integral fashion. Nevertheless, the attempt to make distinctions and to define a subject matter, and then build a theory upon that definition, is an essential step towards understanding in any field. It should be recognized that there is nothing absolute about these terms. It should also be recognized that the validity of such a theory is determined on the basis of utility (how useful is it to our understanding) rather than some notion of absolute truth. Underlying any such theory are assumptions, attitudes, and value judgements about what is important to consider and what is not that arise out of a subjective view of the world.

In order to further elaborate our definition of place meaning and to develop the relationships and distinctions between the four aspects, we will use the conceptual model illustrated in Figure 1. With this word diagram, concepts which distinguish these terms may be represented opposite each other, in respective quadrants. Concepts which tie these terms together may be placed between them, along the lines of division. In this way we will try to associate each pair of terms, somewhat metaphorically, to a pair of *polar concepts*, in order to
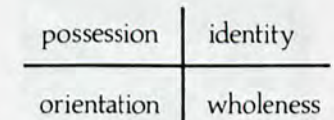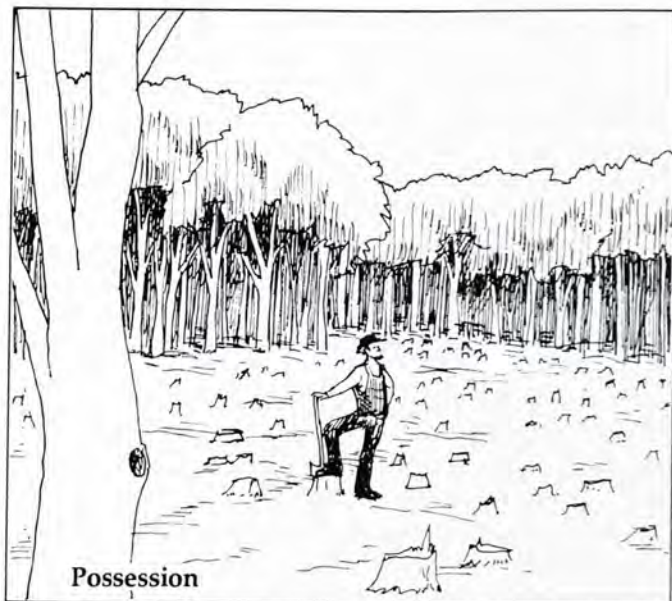
possession	identity
orientation	wholeness

Figure 1. The four aspects of place meaning.

Possession

distinguish them, and to a *unifying concept* within which they may be seen to relate. The elaborated "place diagram" that results is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

With each pair of terms we will also try to describe the experiential qualities of "good" places through which these categories of place meaning may be reflected in the surrounding environment. By "good" places we simply mean places which are more meaningful—which provide us greater opportunity to find and give meaning to the environment.

Possession - Identification
Self - Persona
Human Interaction

The distinction between these two aspects may be seen metaphorically in terms of Jung's distinction between a *self*, which is our inner being, and a *persona*, which is the face we show to the world and which clothes

the self and protects it.[5] Through possession we relate to places in terms of our inner self. Through identification we relate to places in terms of our persona. One is not better than the other, they are just different and places need to respond to both aspects. There is a dimension of everyday *human interaction* which seems to determine which way we relate to places. In response to this we alternate between self and persona. The same distinction is often made in terms of a private realm and a public realm. We are all involved in a community which sets the limits to and relates these two realms.

Good places are more meaningful in this sense because they allow us to relate to them as either self or persona as we need to or choose to. This suggests places that offer us an appropriate range of choice. We can possess and identify places more if we can change them or use them in accordance with our changing needs and moods and if we are allowed to participate at a variety of levels between the public and the private. This suggests a balance between designated spaces intended for specific purposes and undesignated spaces that may be used in a variety of ways as circumstances demand. This also suggests a balance between how familiar or strange a place may seem to us. There must be something common and familiar otherwise we cannot identify a place. If it is also strange or mysterious in some way it may challenge and stimulate us to get into it and lead to a sense of possession.

Possession - Wholeness
I - It
Archetypes

While possession has to do with place qualities that are perceived almost as an extension of our inner selves, wholeness refers to place qualities that are perceived as quite distinct and separate from us. The polar distinction between these might be expressed in terms of an *I-it*

duality. One concept which seems to relate this distinction specifically to the subject of place meaning is the concept of *archetypes*.[6] This is another of Jung's theories. Jung postulated that there is a collective unconscious shared by all members of a culture. Within this collective unconscious reside a set of timeless symbols, images, and meanings—archetypes—which are passed on tacitly through a culture, but which have great significance for us personally and collectively. When a place manifests these archetypal meanings to us there is a unity of the I-it duality. Possession and wholeness are brought together.

Good places are more meaningful in this respect because they express metaphorically a fundamental unity that each of us seeks between himself and the world. Such a sense of unity must be perceived through the suggestiveness of physical symbols that allows us to personify them and go beyond their physical existence as objects into the realm of archetypes. Examples of this are aediculated spaces which seem to center us in the universe, hearths which symbolize a life force, rooms which in their cave-like qualities symbolize the womb, and houses that may symbolize persona on the exterior and self on the interior.

Wholeness - Orientation
Figure - Ground
Systemic Behavior

Wholeness in a place has to do with qualities of uniqueness and completeness which set it apart as distinct from its surroundings. Orientation in a place has to do with qualities of connectedness and with the relationship of parts to each other and to the surrounding context. As polar concepts, wholeness and orientation might be made analogous to the idea of *figure* and *ground*. In terms of place qualities the relationship between these two can be associated to the idea of *systemic behavior*. A particular system may be defined by specifying a set of elements, the

Identification
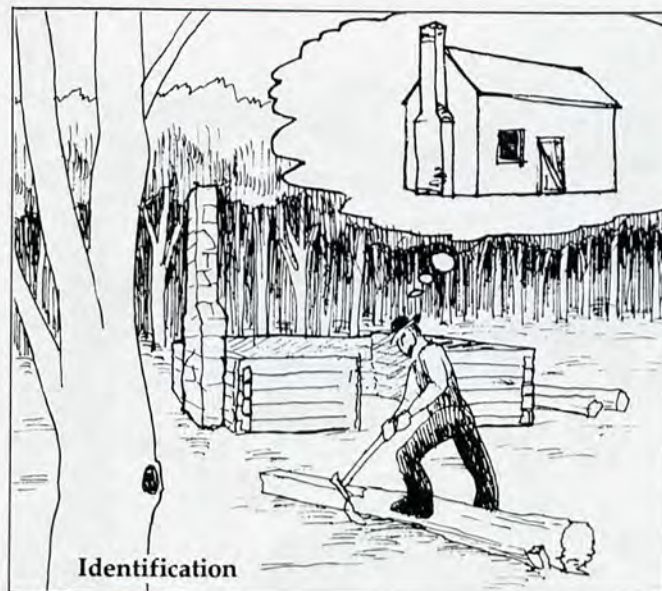
specific relationships between these elements, an external environment or context, and lastly some wholistic behavior which is not predictable from examining the relationships of the parts and which distinguishes the system from its environment. Place qualities of wholeness and orientation might be brought together and examined as a system.

Good places are more meaningful because they suggest not only wholeness in themselves as physical entities but also wholeness in relationship to their external environment in as many ways as possible. Besides being whole in itself a place may suggest wholeness with respect to such things as its orientation to the sun and other natural energies, its respect for the site conditions, and its complimentary relationship to surrounding places. As our environment has become more urbanized these external relationships have become more complex and urban places must respond to more complicated relationships and constraints. In good places there is a sense

Wholeness

of coherence and order on the one hand, and of complexity and ambiguity on the other as it relates on a variety of levels simultaneously. Good places are also more meaningful in this respect because their wholeness emerges at an appropriate scale with respect to the environment.

Orientation - Identification
Space - Time
Determinism

Orientation has to do with a locational sense of the relationship of a place to an existant three-dimensional world. Identification has to do with a historical sense of the relationship of a place to a social milieu which has been carried on and constantly changed over time. As polar concepts these terms might be related metaphorically to the opposites of *space* and *time*. Through orientation we extend our understanding of a place laterally to other places and physical phenomena. Through identifi-

cation we extend our understanding of a place vertically through time in accordance with our beliefs about what has preceded us in this world. Orientation and identification might be looked at together in terms of the notion of *determinism*. Every place is locked into this space-time grid in which its meaning has largely preceded it; that is, its meaning for us has been predetermined by our collective values and world view.

Good places are more meaningful in this sense because they confirm, in a positive way, our existence in a culture and the continuity of our present condition with the past. They fix our position and show it to us and in doing this they distinguish our culture from other times and cultures. In this there is a sense of maintaining useful stereotypes and of revealing the values implied in them to us. There is also a sense of the historical connectedness of a place to the past. This can be related to the allusion to an historical or vernacular style that relates to the contextual circumstances of a place.

Identification - Wholeness
Function - Object
Activity Setting

We come to identify a place in large part by recognizing the *functions* it is intended to serve; that is, we recognize it only as a response to our needs and actions. In an opposite vein we may sense its wholeness simply in terms of its abstract form and spatial arrangement as an *object* apart from any worldly use or purpose. These two opposites, function and object, may be related in terms of the idea of *activity settings*. This simply expresses the idea that there needs to be a correspondence between human activities and the physical form of the environment.

Good places are more meaningful in this sense because the physical setting harmonizes with our activities. There is a sense of good fit between the two. However, while it is possible to specify and designate many ac-

tivities, there are also many activities and events that it is not possible to designate but which should be allowed to happen. Good places must provide for these undesignated activities and encourage people to participate. Similarly, there must be a balance between what is fixed and what is left changeable in our buildings so that they may respond to the many changes of use they must undergo.

Possession - Orientation
Inside - Outside
Bounding Framework

We possess places by being able to put ourselves *inside* of them in a metaphorical and actual sense. There is a sense of *indwelling* when we possess a place. We orient a place to ourselves and the world by putting ourselves *outside* of them in a metaphorical and actual sense. We understand them by circumscribing them with our knowledge of other places in the world. The relationship between these poles can be associated to the idea of a *bounding framework* which creates and mediates between inside and outside.

Good places are more meaningful in this sense because they convey where we are with clarity and strength. There is a sense that within a particular place we are encouraged to relate to the world in a particular way. We orient physically in a place by moving through it and by being in it. Good places suggest a sensitivity to the way we enter and leave them and to the selective views they allow us to, from, and within them. This has to do with the way a place bounds and frames our experience, and the more vivid and ambiguous this framework is in bounding our experience and showing us many different ways to orient and possess a place, the more meaningful the place becomes.

Figure 2 summarizes the constructs presented in the preceding discussion. The framework should be seen as a

Orientation

beginning attempt to construct a theory of place meaning. It suggests that the relationship between the physical form of the environment and our shared values can only be drawn in certain ways. Some of these are described here in terms of the dimensions of place meaning that relate the four primary terms. A theory of place would seem to hold particular relevance for the fields of environmental design and architecture.

Architecture As Place-Making

By now it seems apparent that the Modern movement has failed to provide architects with an adequate theoretical base from which to practice. The attempt to deploy architecture as the flag bearer of a new age evaporated as the vision of that age failed to materialize. The slogans and manifestoes that announced the movement are now seen to conceal a very tenuous set of assumptions about the relationship of people to their environment.
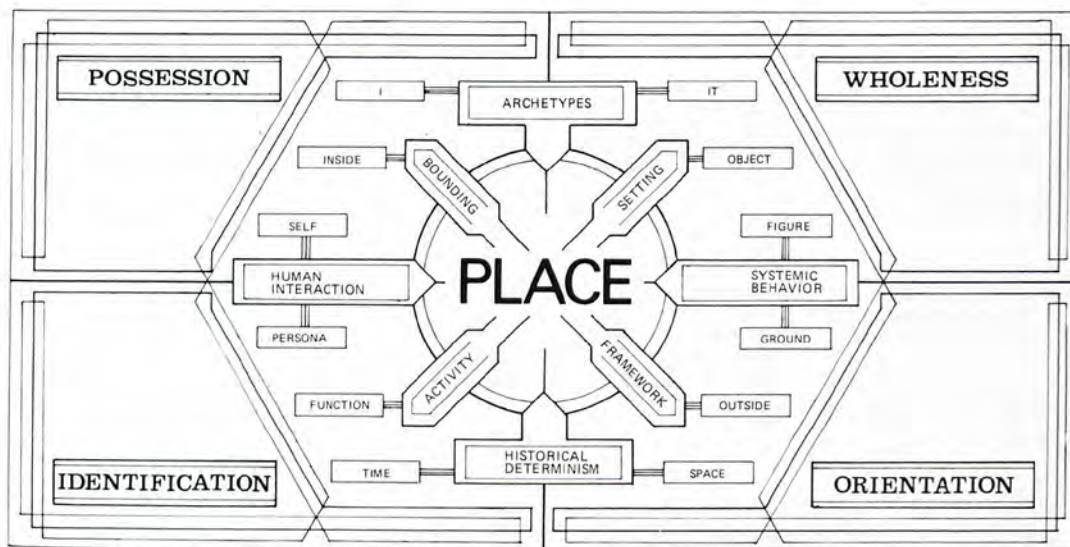
Figure 2. The elaborated place diagram.

The whole belief system and behavioral pattern of architectural practice has been called into question.

In the wake of this disintegration, various attempts have been made to construct a theory of architecture. As a rule such attempts have looked to other fields for their generative concepts in the hope that some new hybrid approach will rejuvenate the profession. The problem with each of these is that they seem only able to respond to the discipline of architecture in some partial way. On the one hand we find elaborate formalistic exercises that do not even pretend to relate to a building task; and on the other hand there are intricate strategies for setting out the building task which carry with them not the slightest formal implications. Nowhere is there a satisfactory attempt to address architecture in a direct and complete way.

The proponents of these approaches seem to have distorted the purpose of theory. As we said above, underlying any theory are assumptions, attitudes, and value judgments about what is important to consider and what is not. In architecture, these attitudes should follow from a synthetic understanding of the architectural act that informs theory, and they need to be explicitly present in any discussion of theory. When they are not, as in the present situation, theory serves more to confuse rather than clarify the problems of the profession. In short, a theory needs to address what is unique and fundamental to architecture.

Perhaps the most obvious and distinguishing fact about architecture, whether it is approached as an art or a science, is that it is lived in by people. The built environment is the physical framework for our lives, and the purpose of architecture is to first abstract the meaningful relationships involved in this and then give them concrete form. Any theory, if it hopes to adequately address the architectural totality, must begin with this concern about how the environment frames our lives individually and collectively—how it places us. Place-making, then, is not the whole of architectural activity but the essence, that which makes it unique and separate from other disciplines. This attitude is seen as crucial in view of the trend toward a multi-disciplinary approach to design. There must be some special skill which architects contribute and that is the ability to define and create place in the environment.

The concept of place addresses the question of how the environment has meaning for us, and each culture has expressed in its architecture and city planning its own unique definition of place which reflected a collective view of the world and man's position in it. As each culture has evolved, this place-making aspect of architecture has been more or less a spontaneous process as the same world view was universally and tacitly held within the culture.

With the advent of our so-called "modern" culture this situation may no longer hold true. Today there is no universally accepted value structure to organize a collective experience of the world. In fact, it is strikingly charac-

teristic of our age that we are offered a host of schemes with which to organize our experience. When these are taken together, they confront us with a relative and contradictory picture. This has contributed to the increasing dissolution of our collective life and with it has gone the spontaneous quality of place-making. If architecture is to remain relevant, architects must begin to address this process of place-making explicitly by investigating how and by what process places have meaning for us.

Conclusion

As far as the theory goes it can provide us with a definition and a conceptual overview of the subject of place meaning and with a checklist of experiential considerations. Beyond theory there need to be techniques for place-definition and place-making. The purpose of such techniques would be to operationalize this theory so that it may be applied to particular situations. Implicit in such techniques are skills that can only be gained by doing—by analyzing existing places, by attempting to build *conserving* the place qualities that are found, and by attempting to make new places.

Vernacular studies hold particular relevance for the development of the ability to define and create places in the environment. The positive value of recognizing the vernacular context was mentioned in connection with the dimension of "historical determinism." The importance of vernacular studies may also be seen on a more general level. The degeneration of the spontaneous quality of place-making has engendered a sense of placelessness about our new environments: commercial strip development, urban sprawl, anonymous housing projects. More often than not it is difficult to find a strong sense of place in these environments. If we are to relearn the art of place-making we must be able to study examples. In America with its short history the only direct, generally accessible source of places generated spontaneously and unselfconsciously may be in our mixed vernacular traditions.

Footnotes

1. Eugene T. Gendlin, *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning* (Toronto, Ontario: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), 32.
2. Kenneth E. Boulding, *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956), 3-18.
3. The terms "Possession" and "Orientation" seem to have been first associated to the idea of place in an article by Donlyn Lyndon, Charles W. Moore, Patrick J. Quinn, and Sim van Der Ryn, "Toward Making Places," *Landscape*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Autumn 1962, 38-39.
4. Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York: Scribner, 1953), 96.
5. Claire Cooper, "The House As Symbol of Self," in *Designing for Human Behavior: Architecture and the Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Land, Jon, et. al. (Strojosburg Pa.: Dowden Hutchinson and Ross, 1974), 131.
6. Cooper, 131.

North Carolina Folk Housing

Folk tradition was the major source of basic house form upon the historical vernacular landscape. The reason for this is quite simple: folk traditions evoked the same forms, or form-giving construction principles, in the same geographical locations continuously for many, many years. What is more, the vast majority of the thousands of houses constructed in this state during two hundred years of vernacular building can all be sorted into a mere handful of folk house types. Although most of these house types are not indigenous in the sense of having originated here, they can be said to constitute a domestic vernacular both because their distribution is geographically fixed and because locally standard modifications usually evolved which better fitted them to their North Carolina context. Through these houses generations of colonists and early Americans identified, no doubt prereflectively, with tradition and local precedent and oriented themselves with respect to their natural and social settings.

Figure 1. The development of the North Carolina frontier (*adapted from the* North Carolina Atlas, *Chapel Hill, 1975*).

This land called North Carolina has been lived upon now by Euro-Americans for more than three centuries in its eastern parts and for at least two in all but its remotest west. For most of that time—until around World War I—most of those who lived and died here chose their dwelling forms from a mere handful of alternatives presented them by conservative tradition and slow-moving Southern rural fashion. In many cases, perhaps the majority, even "chose" is too willful a term for what surely was an act largely predetermined by the accident of their passage in a certain space and time. Even the "finer" houses of North Carolina's rural past seldom violated the narrow lexicon of traditional folk forms, as signs of wealth and sophistication were simply draped upon the more egalitarian frame.

The folk house is primarily a *mental* fact, the embodiment of a slowly and collectively wrought idea of houseness. Once that idea is performed it is also, though somewhat secondarily, a *geographic* fact. The dwelling that results is located for good, or at least until man or decay removes it. The folk house is thus a record of mind *in place*.

Most change in traditional house form is doggedly slow. The massive mental fact only slowly turns to acknowledge what can be a rather fast changing geographic context. Consequently, we can often trace the European roots of early Americans in the forms of their houses, and we can trace their settlement patterns in the distribution of these forms upon the landscape. The thorough vernacularization—making local—of transported European notions of dwelling form took generations. When major changes occurred in the folk repertoire—as occasionally they did—we can be certain they correlated with equally major, less visible alterations in the dwelling context, be it social, economic, or ultimately psychological.

Since an anthropological concept of culture first gained currency in America during the early decades of this century, a call has repeatedly gone out for scholars to

Doug Swaim

mine the rich bed of cultural data fixed in house form and deposited so conveniently—and tellingly—along the byways of past and present habitat. Despite a few truly seminal and genuinely important studies, however, the response to this call has been to date quantitatively meager.[1] Given the vast territory over which the pattern of American folk housing is spread—the hundreds of thousands of miles of country road along which data is strung—the few serious students of the subject have managed only to sample the field. Naturally they have sampled in some promising spots, so that they often appear as solitary prospectors making repeated, and suspiciously successful, sojourns into unknown parts mysteriously close at hand. That there has been no "rush" after them must be attributed to a pervasive, but no less curious, blindness for the ordinary. And the result, as one geographer put it, is that "the genetic study of America's common architecture is currently [1971] in about the state that geology was in the early nineteenth century: 50 percent intelligent guesswork, 40 percent mythology, and the remaining 10 percent split between alchemy and hard facts."[2]

North Carolina folk housing studies today stand on only slightly firmer ground. Though no one has yet completed a thorough inventory of what is here (unfortunately, since the older of these old houses are fast disappearing from the landscape), the state has been included in several broader studies, and a few counties have been painstakingly scrutinized.[3] Still, any attempt to present an overview of folk housing in this region necessarily calls for considerable extrapolation from the known. For clarity's sake—and because so many impressions remain untested and unassimilated—it also requires that much be ignored.

What have been the major folk building traditions to have given form to North Carolina's domestic architecture in the state's three hundred year history? The picture I shall offer in answer to this question will be broadly painted. In the main, it will be a distillation and summary of the published works referred to above (the "broader studies" that include this region). Where possible and appropriate it will, of course, make use of information generated and held more locally.

There will be a measure of irony evoked in our approach to the task: the goal is to write the story of the *common* house; yet, as in most democratic ventures, the particular, even exceptional individual case must here be subordinated to the general current. Our discussion necessarily will rely heavily upon the convenience of *types*. According to Henry Glassie, the nation's leading theorist on these matters, "the primary characteristics of a usual American folk house type . . . would be height and floor plan. . . ." Although construction (material) and use should be brought out in any complete description of a material folk object, typologies must be based on form, for form "is the most persistent, the least changing of an object's components."[4] In general then, the methodology
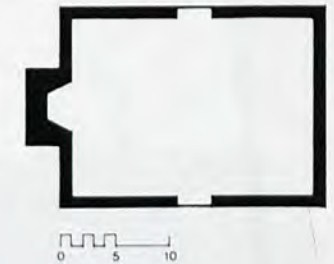

Figure 2. The one-room house type.

Figure 3. The Wilkins Place, a square one-room house north of Rocky Mount.

employed by students of folk housing has required that myriad dwelling forms discovered in the field be sorted into types based principally on floor plan and height—and then that those types be "read" as carriers of cultural information. Where we begin, the difficult task of determining types has already been addressed.

A measure of order can be brought to our typology of North Carolina folk houses by dividing it broadly into three categories based on a qualitative assessment of the forms involved: pioneer types, Old World types, and Georgian-plan types. These categories follow very roughly the order in which the various house types first appeared in this state. *It is important to remember, however, that once a type was introduced, it became a part of the local builder's repertoire and could—and often did—appear much later, after the rise and fall, so to speak, of other types.*

Figure 4. Rectangular one-room log cabin in Madison County.

Pioneer Types

The North Carolina frontier was first pushed ahead over three hundred years ago by Anglo-Virginians from the relatively populous Chesapeake Bay region who moved south looking for open land. Substantial numbers of these Virginia emmigrants settled in the area north of the Albemarle Sound beginning around 1660. By 1700 colonists arriving directly at North Carolina ports—especially at the mouth of the Cape Fear River—had joined the Virginians in advancing the frontier inland some sixty miles. Around 1750 Hillsborough and Salisbury were founded as settlers from both Pennsylvania and South Carolina, as well as from the coastal east and Virginia, began to stake out the fertile soils of the central and western Piedmont. 1800 saw the frontier following ancient Indian trails upon the slopes and into the broad valleys of the Blue Ridge. Some of North Carolina's mountainous back country remained essentially frontier until after the Civil War (Fig. 1).

Of the various dwelling forms that housed these earliest settlers no doubt the elemental one-room structure was most common (Fig. 2). All along the frontier pioneers took shelter around its all-purpose hearth. In the typical cabin, a small second-story loft made headroom scarce below but added precious space and a dry floor for the older children to sleep upon. Either a ladder or a narrow, boxed-in stairway provided access to this second floor.

So primary and second-nature is the one-room enclosure that one might doubt it is form enough to carry—or be carried by—a building *tradition*. Yet in North Carolina two such traditions can be identified in these basic structures. In the east and Piedmont the English, who lacked a significant log building tradition, built square cabins out of sawn lumber[5] (Fig. 3). The usual dimensions of sixteen by sixteen feet—which constitute the standard bay in so much traditional English architecture—are said to have possibly derived a millen-

nium ago from the "stabling requirements of oxen," or as the maximum size room comfortably warmed by a single fireplace.[6]

In the upland Piedmont and west settlers from Pennsylvania conformed to a Scotch-Irish form-giving tradition and constructed rectangular cabins approximately sixteen by twenty-two or twenty-four feet (Fig. 4). Although sometimes frame built, more often than not these rectangular cabins were constructed of logs using techniques brought to America by the Germans.[7] These log building techniques had come to predominate in Pennsylvania—where the Germans were known as "Pennsylvania Dutch"—and were carried south from that area by both German and Scotch-Irish settlers and their descendants beginning in the second quarter or the eighteenth century.[8] Spaces left between the logs were "chinked" with small bits of wood or stone and daubed with mud. Frequently the logs were covered with board siding.

The critical element in horizontal log construction is the corner joint. In North Carolina both major types of cornering techniques introduced by the Pennsylvania Dutch, V-notching and half-dovetailing, are well represented—as well as other related types including one, diamond notching, invented by English settlers after contact with the more traditional German methods[9] (Fig. 5). Long after it was discontinued for homebuilding, log construction survived, especially in the west, as acceptable for barns and other outbuildings. (Whether the recent revival of traditional log building techniques in North Carolina, primarily in the vacation home industry, represents a *continuation* of *folk* practices, is a question I will leave to the experts.)

Following English precedent, exterior gable-end chimneys heated one-room houses across the state. In the east brick was the preferred material—in the west, "rock."[10]

Of course there were early settlers—many of them genuine "pioneers" at that—who built larger homes

saddle   V-notching

square   half dovetail
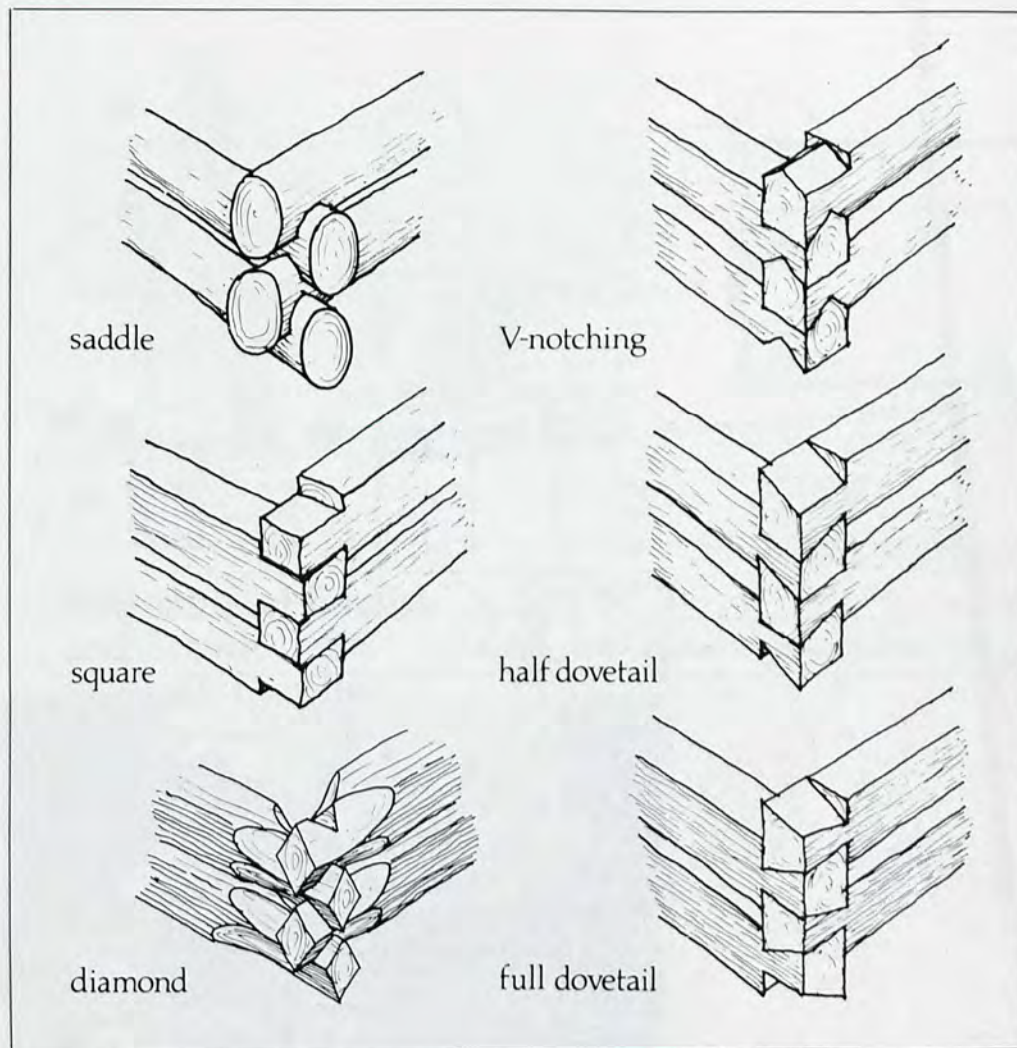
diamond   full dovetail

Figure 5. Corner timbering techniques found in North Carolina (*adapted from Kniffen and Glassie, "Building in Wood in the Eastern United States: A Time-Place Perspective," 1966*).
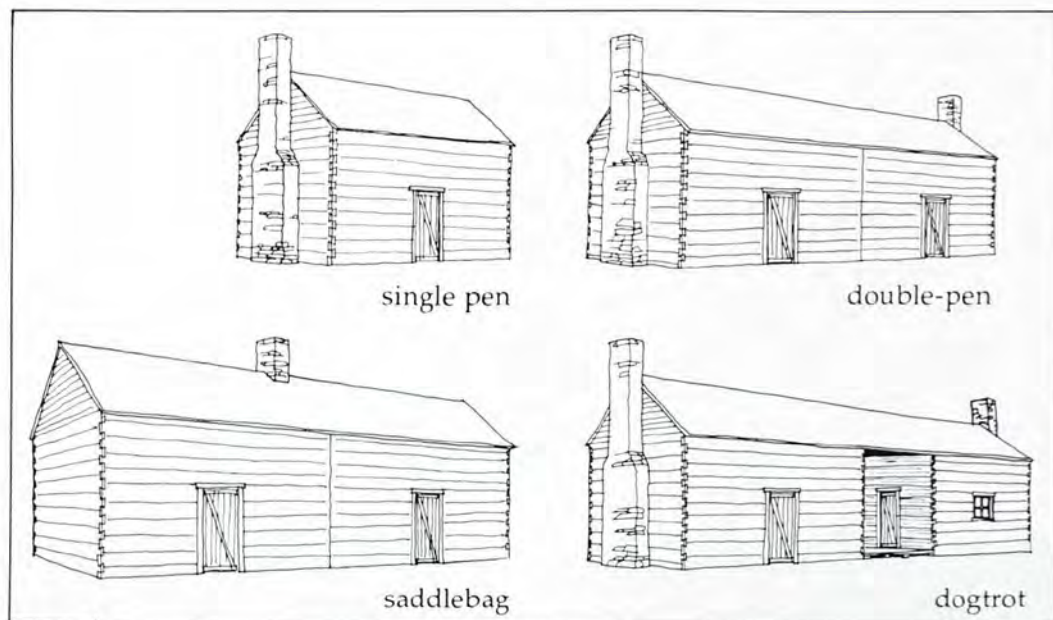
Figure 6. Standard methods of adding on to the single pen.

single pen

double-pen

saddlebag

dogtrot

Figure 7. Saddlebag tenant house east of Raleigh.

straight away. Usually though, logically enough, the one-room cabin served as the settler's "first house," in the beginning sheltering all activities. Typically it was soon surrounded by a variety of outbuildings including a separate kitchen. And eventually it was either replaced outright, and often converted to an outbuilding itself, or integrated into a larger structure.

Given the simplicity of the situation, several standard methods evolved for adding onto the original single "pen," as it was called (Fig. 6). A saddlebag house was created by adding an equal room to the chimney end of the cabin. A double-pen house resulted when the addition was made to the chimney-free end. If a floored passageway was left between the two pens, then you had a dogtrot, or possum trot, house—so named by the writers of travel guides who thought the purpose of the passageway was to shelter various family beasts in inclement weather. Actually, it was used simply as a hallway.[11] All of these twice-as-large houses eventually became recognized as types in their own right and were commonly built all-at-once, of sawn lumber instead of logs, well into this century. Saddlebag and double-pen structures serve as standard tenant housing in much of eastern North Carolina to this day (Fig. 7).

Admittedly, calling all these structures "pioneer" begins to stretch the associative potential of that term, for they are by no means the exclusive property of that era of our history. Yet the connection remains appropriate, for they all share not only the single pen's legacy of frontier usage but also elemental qualities derived of the sheltering need directly confronted. Specialization of spaces is minimal; growth is simply additive. Although we do find culture and tradition in them, the veneer is relatively thin.

Undoubtedly this kind of structure is a strong presence in our rural landscape today. What it contributes is very much *a part*, for we have traditionally been not a culture source, but a culture fringe—a land of small acreage farmers who value the direct and expedient. Early

on, this bare instrumentality in dwelling form was passed on to the noncitizen slave who, severed from black history, embraced it as his own. To this day these dwelling forms are readily associated with tenancy upon the land or with what is often the same, rural poverty. Occasionally the classic intercourse of minimum need minimally met produces a dwelling of simple beauty. More often the offspring are grey, raw, and fragile. In either case the shelter provided marks the frontier of our economy.

Old World Types

Quite often the provisional single room cabin was replaced within a few years by a more spacious hall-and-parlor house (Fig. 8). The idea for the hall-and-parlor house was brought to North Carolina by both English and Scotch-Irish colonists. Hall-and-parlor plan dwellings were common in sixteenth and seventeenth century rural England and Ireland and represent the domestic architecture of those countries prior to the assimilation of Renaissance ideas. One source traces the plan as far back as thirteenth century England.[12]

Again, English settlers from Virginia spread into northeast North Carolina during the late 1600's. North Carolina continued to receive these second-hand colonists throughout the following century. In addition, substantial numbers of English entered the colony directly during the same period by way of North Carolina ports. Then, between 1750 and 1800, thousands of Scotch-Irish entered the central and western portions of the colony by traveling long distances overland from Charleston and, especially, Pennsylvania. Reflecting the domain of the English and Scotch-Irish, hall-and-parlor houses were eventually built over most of the state (Fig. 9).

The plan is basically two rooms: the square "hall," entered directly from outdoors with a fireplace centered in the end wall, was where most domestic activities occurred; sleeping, formal entertaining, or both took place
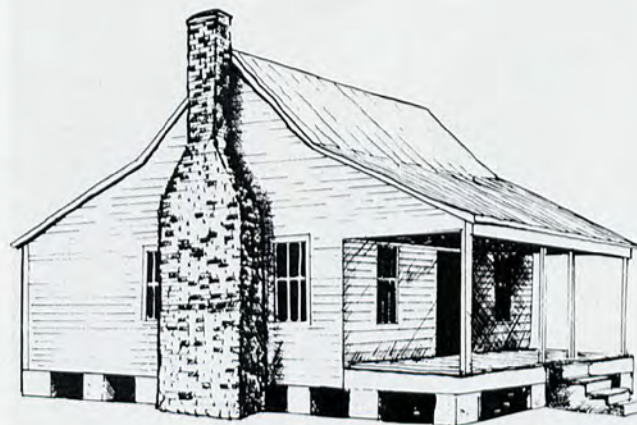

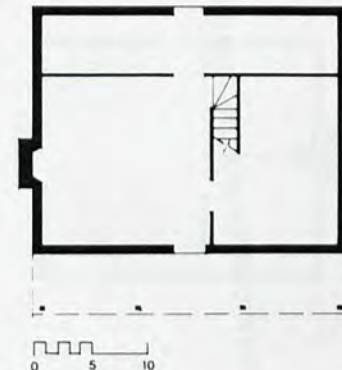Figure 8. The hall-and-parlor house type.

Figure 9. Paths by which the hall-and-parlor type was introduced into North Carolina.
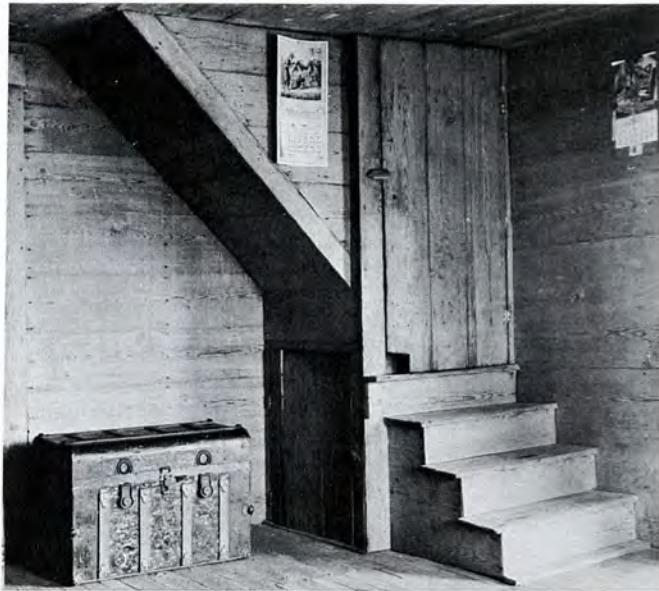
Figure 10. Boxed-in stairway in an eastern North Carolina tenant house.

Migration of Germans to North Carolina

Figure 11. Path by which the Continental plan type was introduced into North Carolina.

in the smaller "parlor." Usually a narrow, boxed-in stairway (Fig. 10)—of late medieval origin and spirit[13]—ascended in a tight, steep turn from the hall to either a sleeping loft or, especially in the region settled by Scotch-Irish from Pennsylvania, a full second story. In North Carolina, hall-and-parlor houses were regularly built with shed rooms appended to the rear and a large porch either appended to or "engaged" into the front of the structure.

The only non-English-speaking group that made a significant contribution to our domestic building vocabulary was the Germans. Beginning in the second quarter of the eighteenth century thousands of Germans—Lutheran, Moravian, and reformed Protestants of diverse European origins—began making the long journey overland from Philadelphia where they landed in America, or from the Pennsylvania countryside where their families had settled a generation or so before, down the Shenandoah Valley and the Great Valley of Virginia to the sparsely populated rolling hills of North Carolina's western Piedmont (Fig. 11). In 1753 the Moravians, a tightly-knit communal sect within this larger migration, founded the town of Salem. Most of the Germans, however, settled in more informal groups scattered farther west and south. It has been estimated that "in 1775, in the western counties of North Carolina, Germans probably constituted somewhere between 10 percent and 30 percent of the total white population."[14]

These German settlers—along with Scotch-Irish who lived beside them in Pennsylvania—brought to North Carolina the idea for a two-story three-room plan dwelling called the Continental plan house since it can be traced back to a medieval German building tradition[15] (Fig. 12). This same house type has also been called the Quaker plan because it was thought that William Penn encouraged its use in Quaker Pennsylvania. Although variations on the Continental plan have turned up in scattered examples in North Carolina's northeast, the

type's primary distribution is limited to the central and western Piedmont.

The three-room plan farmhouse of medieval Germany had a large central chimney which by the time the idea reached North Carolina had been replaced by more fashionable exterior gable-end chimneys. Corner fireplaces, a traditional Pennsylvania Dutch feature, often allowed one chimney to service both smaller ground-floor rooms. The log building skills imported by German settlers were occasionally employed in North Carolina in the construction of the early Continental plan dwellings. A preference for stone and brick as well, rather than the sawn lumber used regularly by the English, reflects the persistence of traditional Continental notions concerning the character of dwelling places (Fig 13). Conserving a traditional German building element well-suited to the Piedmont terrain, some early Continental plan houses were sited on hillsides with semi-subterranean cellars entered through the exposed downhill foundation. A wide front porch and shed rooms—sometimes with another chimney and fireplace for cooking—were often added to the North Carolina versions of this traditional dwelling type.

Far removed from their widely separate origins these Old World house types came to *share* a particular New World context. What they came to share in terms of form is an index to the regional building vocabulary of the times.

Only a few of the very earliest hall-and-parlor houses built in North Carolina were porchless (Fig. 14). Porches were first consistently added to English dwellings when they were built by colonists in the British West Indies. The West Indies shed porch soon became a standard addition to hall-and-parlor houses constructed on the coastal mainland, including eastern North Carolina.[16] Now and then a hall-and-parlor house was built with the porch structurally integrated—fully "engaged"—a solution which simultaneously allowed an increase in the size

Figure 12. The Continental plan house type in North Carolina.
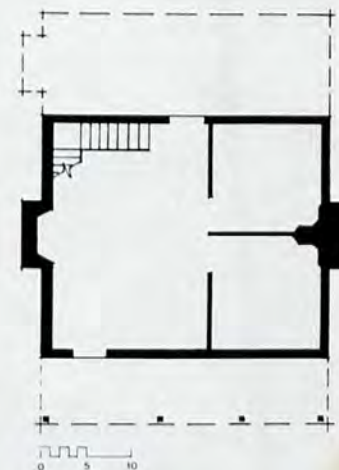

Figure 13. The Michael Braun House, or "Old Stone House," in Rowan County, built around 1770.

(Considered an I-house since it is
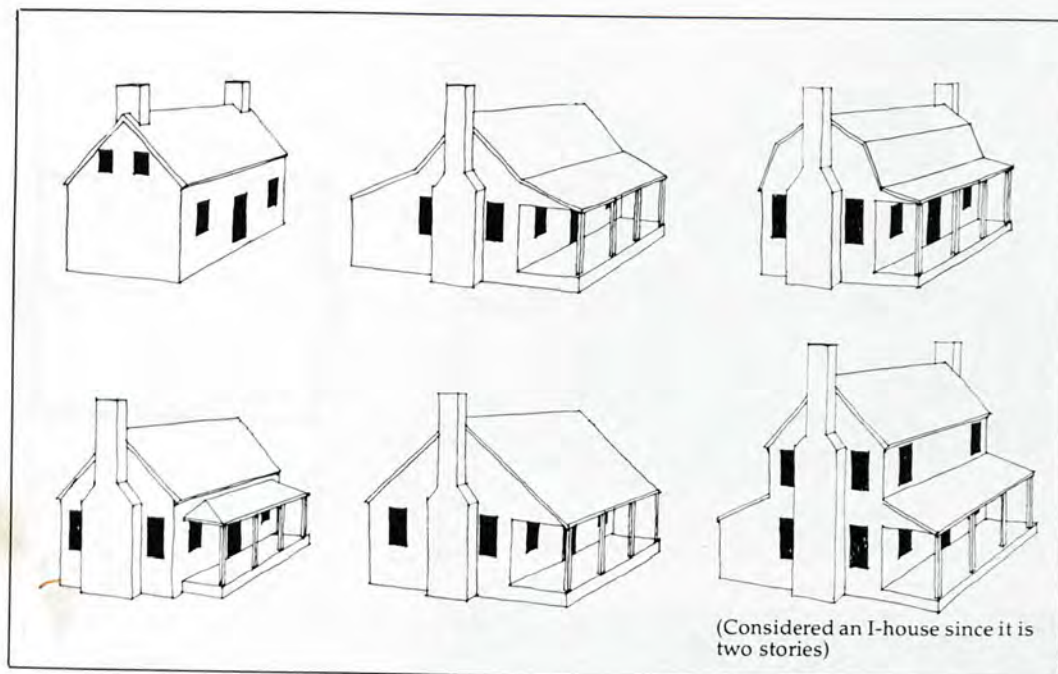two stories)

Figure 14. Variations on a
theme: hall-and-parlor houses in
North Carolina.

Figure 15. Duplin County "coastal cottage" type hall-and-parlor
house.

of the second-story loft. More common, however, is the
so-called "coastal cottage" whose picturesque double-
pitched roof serves as a reminder of the amended status of
that house form (Fig. 15). Occasionally an end bay of the
shed porch was enclosed to form a "porch room." Of
course porches were added to both Old World types
wherever they were built in the state. The lineage of those
added to structures in the Piedmont and west is, however,
more difficult to trace. Inasmuch as they were derived
from the shed appendage, likely they are distantly
English.

A feature so elementary and pervasive as the shed
room resists any attempt to identify its origin. According
to one source, though, it is "distinctly English."[17]
Throughout the state, but particularly in the southeast,
the shed stands out as a standard and often well-
articulated component of the folk building vocabulary. In
Duplin County, for instance, most nineteenth century
dwellings were constructed with rear shed rooms har-
moniously incorporated as a part of the original plans
(Fig. 16). In Duplin these narrow spaces were typically
used as sleeping chambers. Every house type mentioned
in this essay, save one, was commonly constructed with a
shed appendage.

The common context shared by hall-and-parlor and
Continental building traditions in North Carolina held for
them a common fate: to be superseded in the folk imagi-
nation by symmetrical forms born of the Georgian "revo-
lution." Before they fell from favor these assymmetrical
Old World plans were both given balancing face-lifts—
through the treatment of fenestration, entrances, and
chimney stacks—which extended their popular accep-
tance until about 1830. Except in the mountainous west
where the hall-and-parlor plan remained a housing
staple, they survived as less utilized dwelling options
throughout the nineteenth century.

These Old World houses, the few of them that remain, add surprising depth to our cultural landscape—a dimension I am inclined, perhaps hastily, to call "a touchstone with medievalism." I have been warned, however, that the hall-and-parlor plan, although definitely pre-Renaissance, is *not* medieval.[18] Likely the stout Continental plan dwelling has only slightly more legitimate claim to that legacy. So be it. Nonetheless, what I am so inclined to name remains clearly present in these silent forms and, particularly, in their relationship to the world around them: the workings of mind both strange and deeply comforting—a manner of dwelling *long* forgotten.

The mind that found meaning in these building traditions generally took pains to site its house taking full advantage of terrain. Of course ample good sites were still available in the relatively open eighteenth century landscape. The significant fact, however, is that in strong contrast to the houses of the next century these dwellings were usually located away from the road with their porched facades facing south. They were *placed in relation* to the land and the sun. Although "society" had yet to turn the head of dwelling, it was by no means absent from the cultural landscape. Style cloaked many an Old World interior and managed to explode the single Continental chimney into "balanced" Georgian duality. But for awhile at least, the public was received only across the space of a robust New World in-between. Eventually, though, the new *American* society pressed its demand for a generalized "good form"—as well as for a formal presentation of that standard—and managed to upset towards symmetry the flawed geometry of the perfectly fitting, fragile Old World web.

Figure 16. Two-story hall-and-parlor plan house with shed rooms, in Duplin County (also considered an I-house since it is two stories).
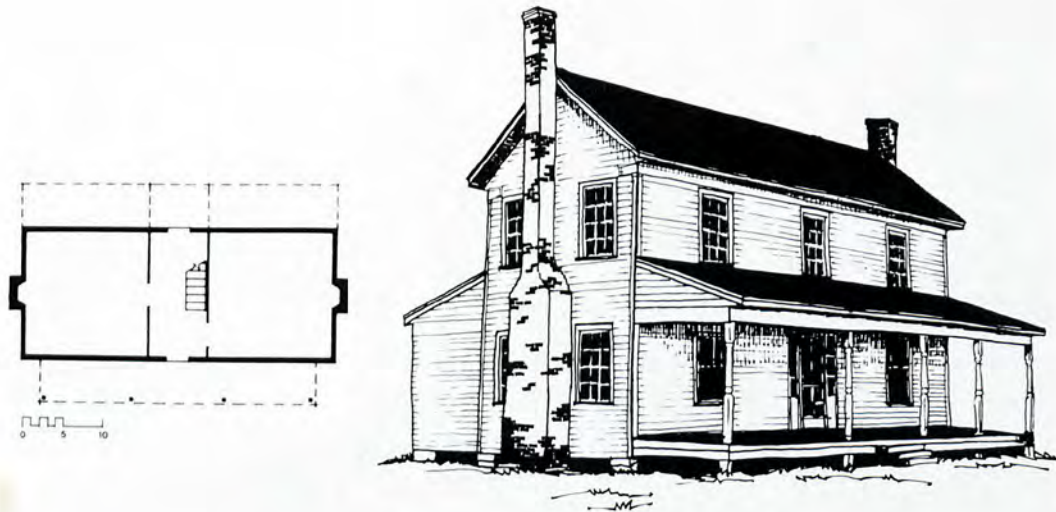
Figure 17. Central-hallway I-house type.

Georgian-Plan Types*

Renaissance ideas spread to England in the seventeenth century and were the inspiration for a new architectural style called Georgian after the three English King Georges. Following the classical aesthetic, Georgian architecture usually displayed, both in plan and elevation, a strong central feature around which other elements were balanced symmetrically. This style first appeared in the English colonies in the late seventeenth century and was popular until after the Revolution. Beginning about 1750, and for almost one hundred and fifty years afterwards, North Carolina folk architecture was strongly influenced by the Georgian model. By 1850 American folk Georgian had all but replaced the Old World building traditions that the earliest settlers had brought over from a Europe less affected by the Renaissance wave.

The central-hallway I-house (so named for rather obscure reasons[19] although it does appear rather tall and thin from the side) is perhaps the most common folk house type in the eastern United States (Fig. 17). When compared with a classic Georgian dwelling, it is easy to see it as a simplification of the Georgian idea (Fig. 18). Its central hallway, symmetrical plan, and paired chimneys all echo the English Renaissance spirit, here greatly reduced in the alembic of the folk mind. Whether the fully resolved plan first appeared in the English or American folk repertoire is not clearly known. Likely it emerged more or less simultaneously upon the two continents. If any trade of ideas did occur within the folk domain,

Figure 18. Classic colonial Georgian and central-hallway I-house comparison.

*The term "Georgian" has been used variously to name either the decorative and stylistic features of eighteenth century English and English colonial architecture or the basic formal grammer—ultimately classical—introduced in England and America via that style and evidenced in building plans and facades even after its decorative vocabulary was abandoned. In order to clarify my usage, which is the latter, I have generally employed the rather ungainly compound descriptor "Georgian-plan."

however, it doubtless flowed principally from England to the colonies.

The house's one room depth, a reduction of the classic Georgian "double pile," allowed for ample ventilation and well suited the form to this region's summers. In North Carolina central hallway I-houses were commonly built with shed rooms or, later, with ells added to the rear. Of course they almost always had a full front porch, sometimes two stories high. The addition of a rear ell allowed another—"back"—porch which usually faced east or south (Fig. 19).

This Georgian-plan folk type was first built in North Carolina around 1790 and is today common across the state. For most of the century and a-half of its popularity it symbolized agrarian prosperity and respectability.[20] No doubt it was the strength of the form as a symbol that brought its remarkable success.

The essence of the I-house is its facade (Fig. 20). With rare exception, it was built facing a roadway regardless of solar orientation. And its four rooms could not have been arranged to create a larger looking structure. Compared with a four-room "shotgun" house, for instance, the form is maximized profile. Like the defensive cat presenting the dog with an arched and exaggerated broadside, the I-house sits commanding its surrounding acreage. By the beginning of the nineteenth century an elaborated social order was emerging over much of the state's rural countryside. No doubt this newly arrived formality to life made welcome both the Georgian facade and the central hallway with its implications for reception and separation.

Figure 19. Duplin County central-hallway I-house with back porch and shed rooms.

Figure 20. Front view of the same Duplin County central-hallway I-house.
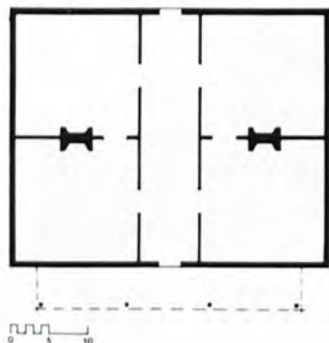
Figure 21. One-story Georgian-plan house type.

A second North Carolina type that speaks its vernacular with a formal Georgian accent is the one-story Georgian-plan house (Fig 21). Its plan is classic: central hallway, two rooms deep with embedded chimneys. Its one room height and three-bay facade, however, leave it a reduced version of the finer Georgian mansions. This is a later, more urban type than the central hallway I-house, first appearing in the state around 1850 and strongly associated with the Italianate style current about that time. Although occasionally constructed with a gable roof, the hip roof was much more common. A shallow hip and brackets were employed when the Italianate image was desired (Fig 22). In later examples, especially turn-of-the-century, the hip was so steep as to become pyramidal, the enlarged attic perhaps helping to make up for the loss of ventilation suffered in the two-room deep plan. Porches often wrap around two or more sides of these later structures. One-story Georgian-plan houses were eventually built in most parts of the state but early on were more common in the southeastern Piedmont and Coastal Plain.

Figure 22. One-story Georgian-plan house in Franklin County on a raised foundation and with Italianate and Greek Revival decorative elements.

The most popular house type in much of eastern North Carolina during the post-Civil War nineteenth century was a one-story structure with the same basic plan as the central-hallway I-house (Fig. 23). It seems quite telling that when reconstruction economies dictated a reduced building program, instead of reverting to the tidy hall-and-parlor idea, the folk builder generally chose to stay within the vocabulary of his more recently acquired competence. Apparently the needs that first drew elements of Georgian formality through the native sieve were still at large in rural North Carolina society. Either that or the house simply makes pretense—which it does anyway—to being the same *kind* of dwelling as the I-house of the more prosperous farms. Regardless, this, the quarter Georgian-plan house, is the most reined-in version of the Georgian idea to be found in our landscape (Fig. 24).

Quarter Georgian-plan houses commonly received shed or ell appendages. When "living rooms" became fashionable early in this century, the owners of many of these houses removed one of the interior partitions, destroying the hallway and creating a hall-and-parlor plan with an oversized hall. Apparently an elongated space better squared with the "living room" image.
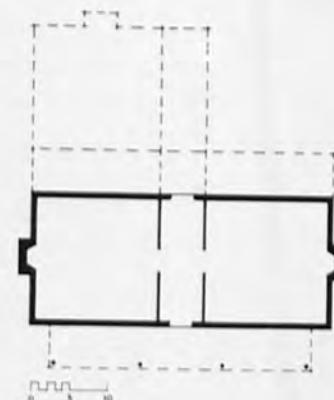

Figure 23. Quarter Georgian-plan house type.

Figure 24. Quarter Georgian-plan house in Duplin County.

The deployment of balanced symmetrical forms upon the nineteenth century rural North Carolina landscape constitutes regional evidence of a more extensive revolution that influenced American domestic architecture for over a century. In the cultural backwaters (of the folk landscape) this revolution rode a wave of rediscovered classicism initiated long before in the Italian Renaissance and first encountered in colonial Georgian forms. Ironically this primary wave was eventually reinforced by the classical *revivals* of the nineteenth century cultural mainstream. The buildings created in its wake go a long way towards establishing the character of our rural landscape today.

Considering the folk designer's keen appetite for certain elements of classical building's grammar, one must wonder at the nature and cause of his hunger. It was as if, as Henry Glassie maintains, the Georgian model's "perfect symmetry . . . crystalized an old wish. . . ."[21] According to Glassie, "this bilaterally symmetrical, tripartite design [which the folk mind distilled from Georgian composition] was the perfect end to the builder's search for architectural order."[22] Hence, the "old wish" was to *control* reality. In his *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, Glassie correlates this desire for control to a whole gamut of threats upon the late eighteenth century Southerner's security. Beyond practicality (the central-hallway I-house's suitability to the climate of the Upland South) and fashion (the utility of its image in gaining and maintaining status), he posits fear and insecurity—and thus, it seems, a rather desperate desire for control—as factors critical to the form's success. "Bilaterally symmetrical, tripartite structures mark western quests for control."[23] Perhaps. As dwellings upon the middle *North Carolina* landscape, however, these structures exhibit other dimensions as well.

Glassie, especially, would see a great gulf separating these "anonymous masks," set so "repetitiously" and "artificially" upon the land, from the humanistic Renaissance traditions that ultimately bore them. As they were

manifested upon the North Carolina landscape for over one hundred years, I would not. Granted, the facade is the essence of all three Georgian-plan types discussed here. As Glassie notes, "the mask is a face, bilaterally symmetrical, with its entrance at the lower center . . . It is a projection of the human shape—the ultimate paradigm—but it is a negation of self."[24] Here, I believe, Glassie misses the point. Facade as face is less "paradigmatic" than "archetypical"—and, consequently, in it there is potential for accessing, rather than negating, the difficult self. Admittedly, for that potential to be exploited, the *relation* of persona to archetype must be drawn out— "individuation," to stay within a Jungian vocabulary, must occur. And no doubt this is where Mr. Glassie found his middle Virginia landscape wanting.

If I were to narrow my vision to a small sample of what is here, I might be likewise discouraged. However, looking at the performances of the central-hallway I-house that span its popularity across the time and space occupied by this state's cultural landscape, I see ample variation and elaboration upon its basic form (Fig. 25). Paradoxically, in this land so very middling between the centers of fashion, the rendering of a standard house in a *popular* style—and most examples encountered at least suggest style—likely resulted in a uniquely personal interpretation. At such a remove from sophistication— lacking *savoir-faire*—the risk involved in every "stylish" performance was maximized. And the "highly vernacular" products that resulted were keenly personal presentations, if not expressions.

Every art, especially the building art, claimed Geoffrey Scott in *The Architecture of Humanism*, "needs a theme to vary, a resisting substance to work upon, a form to alter and preserve, a base upon which, when inspiration flags, it may retire."[25] As archetypical form—or even simply as projected human form—the central-hallway I-house provided such a theme in a very special way. Fledgling American society may have at first demanded a mask—that is society's best role—but in doing so, thanks

Figure 25. Three North Carolina central-hallway I-houses, *(from top down)* in Ashe, Duplin, and Granville Counties.

to the presence of the classical model, it called up the difficult self and so initiated the process of individuation which, after all, is what dwelling is all about.

We saw how the typical Old World house was oriented so that the winter sun reached deeply upon its front porch. By contrast, the typical Georgain-plan house was oriented with its proto-human face to the public road. Once called up, the mask naturally assumed its function of meeting the unknown passer-by. The folk dweller was not long—if at all—satisfied with this disassociation with the sun. By 1840, in these parts, a feature had been fully incorporated into the central-hallway I-house that renewed the dwelling's solar connection. That feature was the "ell." Even with the house's primary orientation to the road, there was always a choice of where to locate the "back porch," and most often it was placed so as to welcome the eastern or southern sun.

The "ell" has been slighted by students of folk housing. To them it is an "appendage," a "secondary characteristic" not considered in the definition of the type. And understandably so, for it is, often in combination with shed rooms, where the variation—again, the individuation—within the plan occurs. The neat typology necessarily overlooks it. The back porch, then, is where the family performed winter chores *in the sun*, and the ell, after the Civil War when kitchen and dining spaces were generally incorporated into it, was where the family gathered for mealtime sustenance. If the bilaterally symmetrical tripartite facade locates the dwelling's formal ordering intellect, then the ell locates its heart. Significantly, it also often locates its deep-seated *cultural* memory, for the ell was commonly the oldest part of the house—a recycled Old World hall-and-parlor structure or even, beneath accumulated layers of siding, a one-room log family seat. And thus the most common of our common traditional dwellings reveals itself as a richly dual, public *and* private kind of place—a not so unfit legatee of its trace of Renaissance born humanism.

If we were to identify and frame "the *typical* folk dwelling" constructed in North Carolina each year of the nineteenth century, and then view all one hundred frames in sequence cinematically, we would likely see the following scene unfold: a hall-and-parlor house set in the landscape would turn from the south and face a distant roadway, soon to be replaced by a central-hallway I-house which over the years would slowly move toward that roadway; for awhile after the Civil War a quarter Georgian-plan house would take the I-house's place, still facing the road now not so far away; and late in the century the central-hallway I-house, again, would march up to the roadside as if to catch a glimpse of the noisy carriages making their way curiously, horselessly along it a few years later. All along the roadway the scene would be repeated—houses lining the roadway, many of them by 1900 nontraditional or assymmetrical variations and combinations of traditional forms. Thus the scattered society became the linear society.[26] And down the roadway and down the railroad tracks criss-crossing the countryside came the printed page—the farmers' magazines, carpenters' guides, and plan books that put an end to the age of traditional dwelling. The transformations wrought on the carpenter's stock of ideas—transformations that proceeded slowly enough during the nineteenth century for the homeostatic fixing of practices and products that we have refered to as "types"—were soon to accelerate and make utterly fluid that stock.

The record of man's traditional dwelling is not easily analyzed. Despite dwelling's conservative inclination and artifactual expression, it is in the long run as organic as the play of mind can be. The simple picture I have painted here—dividing our regional folk traditions into pioneer, Old World, and Georgian-plan types—slights the complexity and subtlety of both the process and its formal products. Try to fit the house forms you see along any country road into the simple typology I have presented and its shortcomings will quickly become obvious.

Although the picture is crude, one hopes its outlines hold true. The three broad categories represent unmistakable landmarks in our cultural space: the imprint of the frontier experience, the surviving elements of traditional European culture, and the synthetic tide of a new American order somehow culminating a culture drift—or "wave"—that began in the Renaissance. Whether the individual types belong where I have put them or whether I could have selected more representative types are both points that warrant contention. If the debate has been initiated, we are making progress.

Footnotes

1. In 1936 Fred Kniffen inaugurated American "culturogeographic" studies with "Louisiana House Types," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, XXVI (1936), 179-193; also see Kniffen's "Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 55:4 (Dec. 1965), 549-577. In Kniffen's footsteps and eventually outgrowing his shoes, Henry Glassie is undoubtedly the nation's leading fieldworker and theorist in folk housing studies—see his *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968) for the "state of the art" as well as an overview of findings up to 1968; for Glassie's reaching attempt to *progress* the art, see *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1975); both Glassie's books have extensive bibliographies.

2. Pierce F. Lewis, "Common Houses, Cultural Spoor," *Landscape* Vol. 19, No. 2, Jan. 1975.

3. Both Glassie's books mentioned above are relevant to North Carolina studies; see also his "The Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin," in *The Study of American Folklore*, ed. Jan H. Brunvand (New York: Norton, 1968), 338-370. Thomas Tileston Waterman and Frances Benjamen Johnson, *The Early Architecture of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941); once acquainted with the field, facts about folk traditions can be sifted from this resilient foundation work. The more recent survey work done by the Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, has encompassed older folk buildings; useful surveys include the counties of the Tar-Neuse River Basin, the New River Valley, Rowan County, and Guilford County. Carl Lounsbury has surveyed the Albemarle region. I have surveyed along one road through Duplin County; see my "North Carolina Vernacular," *The North Carolina Architect* (Jan.-Feb. 1977).

4. Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture*, 8. In *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* Glassie has, *a la* Noam Chomsky and structuralism, attempted to define the rules (the competence) employed by the folk designer when executing his design (the performance); once the rules are known, then individual houses (performances) can be *related* through their application rather than simply sorted into types; the attempt is highly suggestive, yet problematic; we will stick to the "convenience" of types.

5. Glassie, "The Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin," 353.

6. Glassie, "The Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin," 351; Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, 118.

7. Glassie, "The Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin," 355.

8. Fred Kniffen and Henry Glassie, "Building in Wood in the Eastern United States: A Time-Place Perspective," *The Geographical Review*, LVI:1 (Jan. 1966), 40-66.

9. Kniffen, "Building in Wood in the Eastern United States."

10. Glassie, "Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin," 343.

11. Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture*, 78-79, 89-98; Glassie provides a more elaborate derivation of the dogtrot type. See also Waterman, 7.

12. Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, 75; Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture*, 64-66.

13. Glassie, "Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin," 342.

14. Harry Roy Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 61.

15. See Bernard Herman's "Continuity and Change in Folk Housing: The Continental Plan Farmhouse in Middle North Carolina" in this volume; for the attribution of the "Quaker" plan's usage to William Penn's directive, see Waterman, 173.

16. Waterman, 41-42.

17. Glassie, "Types of the Southern Mountain Cabin," 349.

18. Personal correspondence with Carl Lounsbury, June 1977.

19. Kniffen, "Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion," where the central-hallway I-house is viewed as an I-house subtype; Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*.

20. Kniffen, "Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion," 555.

21. Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture*, 109-112; Lewis, 20.

22. In *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture*, 96, Glassie classifies this form as a Georgian-influenced hall-and-parlor subtype; in *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, 101, it stands out as a type in its own right related more closely to the central-hallway I-house (of course in this later work Glassie is using "type" designations in a less ultimate way).

23. Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, 163.

24. Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, 170.

25. Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, 171.

26. Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, 168.

27. Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1974), 145.

28. Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, 141.

The Development of Domestic Architecture in the Albemarle Region

While conducting the field studies upon which this article is based, Carl Lounsbury sought out and recorded some of the oldest existing architecture in the state—architecture that reflects the earliest extension of Anglo-American domain south from Virginia during the second half of the seventeenth century. In sharp contrast to the preceding article's broadly painted picture of folk housing across the state, Mr. Lounsbury's description of the domestic vernacular of the Albemarle is rich with detail. Rather than focusing narrowly on "types" he manages to keep the continually emergent variety of house forms in the Albemarle in view and finds major building trends within it. Mr. Lounsbury considers all of the houses in his study "vernacular" based on architectural historian Cary Carson's definition of vernacular structures as those built "according to local custom to meet the requirements of the individuals for whom they were intended." The article is illustrated by an exceptional series of measured drawings executed during the course of Mr. Lounsbury's extensive fieldwork.

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The counties north of the Albemarle Sound and east of the Chowan River comprise a distinctive geographic region that has been known since the mid-seventeenth century as the Albemarle (Fig. 1). Historically, the movement of people, commerce, and culture into the region has come from the north, from the lower Chesapeake area of Virginia.

A traveler coming from Virginia to the northern shores of the Albemarle Sound in the early eighteenth century would have observed similarities between the farmhouses on the tobacco plantations he saw there and those he had seen along the banks of the James River in Virginia. These Albemarle houses had the familiar characteristics of the "Virginia house," a house type that developed in the Chesapeake tobacco-growing region in the latter half of the seventeenth century.[1] The Virginia house, a one-story dwelling with gable-end chimneys and either a one-room or a two-room, hall and parlor plan, was the first distinctively native style of domestic architecture to emerge in the English colonies.

The antecedents of the Virginia house are not clearly known. It has been suggested that the cross-passage house (Fig. 2, A.), a house type found primarily in the West Country and highland region of England and Wales may have been the progenitor.[2] By the late sixteenth century the configuration of a cross-passage house consisted of three rooms. The principal room, serving a variety of functions, was the hall, heated at one end by a massive fireplace. The hall was flanked on one side by an inner room which served as either a parlor or service room and at the other end by a kitchen or parlor. Chimneys were often inserted at the gable ends of the house, permitting all three rooms to be heated. A cross passage, providing the only access to the entire house, divided the hall and inner room from the third room.[3]

The cross-passage house was one of many vernacular architectural forms familiar to the first Chesapeake settlers in the seventeenth century. They were also ac-

Figure 1. The Albemarle.

quainted with house types popular in southeastern England. In this lowland region of England, the cross-passage house had been superseded by the beginning of the seventeenth century by house types organized around an interior fireplace (Fig. 2, B.). The fundamental feature of these lowland house types was the omission of the cross passage and the placing of the entrance on a long wall of the building opening onto a small lobby at the side of the axial fireplace. The elimination of the cross passage meant that lobby-entrance houses were not divided between an upper and lower end.[4]

Since Virginia's early population was a mixture of people from several different regions in England, the early architecture held to no one particular house type. Houses of both the lobby-entrance and cross-passage variety were erected by the first generation of colonists. Eventually, however, the variety of competing building traditions imported from all over England gave way in Virginia, as in New England, to standardized types of dwellings which answered local needs more exactly. By the second half of the seventeenth century a new climate, the seemingly unlimited supply of timber, and a scarcity of stone had begun to transform many of the traditional English building practices. Perhaps the greatest influence upon vernacular design, however, was the emerging pattern of plantation society.

When planters began growing tobacco, they needed a large labor force. Indentured servants from England and Ireland and, later, slaves provided that labor. The laborers who worked for the small planter no doubt often lived in the same cramped quarters as their owners. The large planters, seeking to segregate their laborers from their family, found that, architecturally, West Country and highland cross-passage houses, rather than lowland lobby-entrance houses, best suited this purpose. The living quarters of the servants and slaves could be placed beyond the cross passage in the loft over the kitchen. The domestic activities of non-family members of the house-

hold would then be confined mainly to one end of the house. In this manner the two rooms at the upper end of the cross passage became upgraded at the expense of the lower, kitchen end. Shortly after this social segregation was adopted in the South, the kitchen was detached altogether from the house. An open yard rather than the small space of a cross passage then separated the kitchen and its functions from the hall and parlor.[5]

By the fourth quarter of the seventeenth century the new farmhouse that had developed in the Chesapeake area was so different in constructional techniques from any English type that it became known as the Virginia house. Tobacco farmers universally accepted this house type.
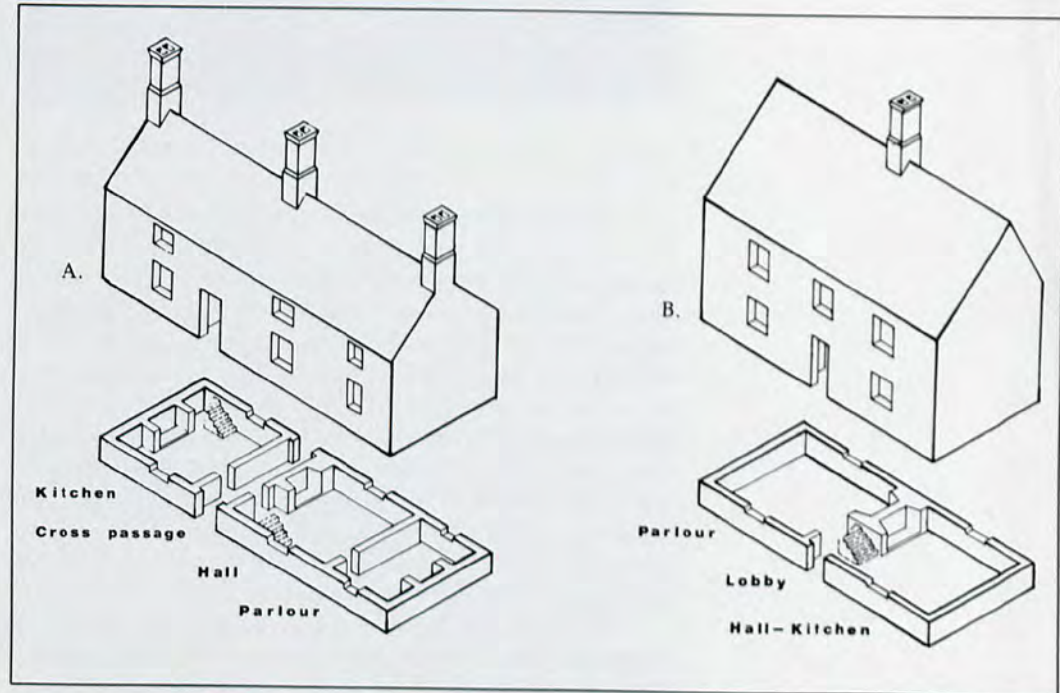

Figure 2. A. English cross-passage house. B. English lobby-entrance house.

Figure 3. Pear Valley, Northampton County, Virginia.

On the eastern shore of Virginia, in Northampton County, stands a rare surviving example of what should be regarded as the simplest form of the Virginia house, Pear Valley, a one-story frame house (Fig. 3). The exact date of its construction is unknown but is usually placed between 1660 and 1700.[6] Characteristic seventeenth century features of this one-room house are the massive end chimney, chamfered tie beams exposed outside along the eaves and indoors across the ceiling, and the diagonally set false plates. The glazed header pattern in the chimney-end brick wall and a common rafter roof are features in this cottage which are associated with the development of the Virginia house.

Perhaps one of the earliest extant houses which has all the attributes of the larger two-room Virginia house is located in Charles County, Maryland. Sarum, before alterations, was a one-story frame dwelling which was co-

vered entirely with riven clapboards. Originially, there were two main rooms on the ground floor, a hall and parlor, with a small porch tower projecting forward from the center of the building. Each room was probably warmed by a large gable-end fireplace. The attic chambers were lighted by narrow dormers and were, perhaps, also heated with a fireplace at the gable ends. Sarum, like Pear Valley, has a common rafter roof, a characteristic feature of these house types.[7]

As the first substantial number of settlers were establishing themselves in the Albemarle region after 1660, the Virginia-style farmhouse was reaching full maturity in the Chesapeake area. It is unfortunate that no houses have survived from the first half century of settlement in the Albemarle. Since the majority of seventeenth century emigrants to the area came from Virginia, however, it is likely that they brought this new style with them, building dwellings similar to Pear Valley and Sarum. The early North Carolina written records offer only a tenuous guide to the housing standards and house types of this period.

The earliest Albemarle houses must have been of very modest proportions, seldom larger than two rooms and a loft. In the 1650's, Nathaniel Batts built a house "20 foote square with a lodging chamber, and a Buttery, and a chimney. . . ."[8] Considering the size of this frame dwelling, the buttery, or storage room, must have been partitioned off from the main room, the lodging chamber. Batts probably not only slept in the chamber but carried out his trading activities and did his cooking in the same room.

Log houses or log cabins built in the Swedish or German style were not unknown to English settlements in the seventeenth century. There are some records which indicate the early existence of log houses in the Albemarle. During the 1677 disturbances known as Culpeper's Rebellion, Thomas Miller was taken to the northern part of Pasquotank precinct and there "enclosed in a Loghouse about 10 or 11 foot square purposely built

for him. . . ."[9] It may have been constructed with hewn logs, a method similarly employed in the construction of blockhouses in several other English colonies. In 1683 Governor Sothel had a log house "such as the Swedes in America . . . make" constructed on his plantation.[10] This log house was used as a storehouse and a trading post with the Indians. Log houses such as these, foreign to the English manner of building, seem to have emerged by the early eighteenth century as a prevalent dwelling type in the back regions of the colony along the Virginia border. Log houses were, however, a comparatively late arrival in the Albemarle region and never gained widespread popularity in the older coastal and river areas of settlement. Log construction was used there primarily for inferior outbuildings such as cornhouses, meathouses, kitchens, and in some instances for slave quarters. This general absence of log construction distinguishes the Albemarle from much of the rest of the North Carolina vernacular landscape.

Since a small but representative number of houses, some of them dating from the second quarter of the eighteenth century, have survived, it is possible to obtain a clearer picture of housing conditions in the eighteenth century in northeastern North Carolina than for the preceding period. Although some of the established seventeenth century floor plans—the one-room and the two-room, hall and parlor, plan—still suited many of the farmer's needs, several new ideas regarding the arrangement and function of rooms began to emerge in this agrarian society—ideas which slowly transformed the traditional patterns of domestic architecture. As we examine the remarkable developments that occurred in Albemarle farmhouses over the next 150 years, gradual changes in the domestic habits of the Albemarle family are noticeable. Two primary concerns that shaped the development of the new house types were the need for an expanded number of specialized rooms and the conscious desire for privacy. Such concerns reflected, in part, a

WEST ELEVATION

NORTH ELEVATION

N

SCALE

GROUND FLOOR PLAN
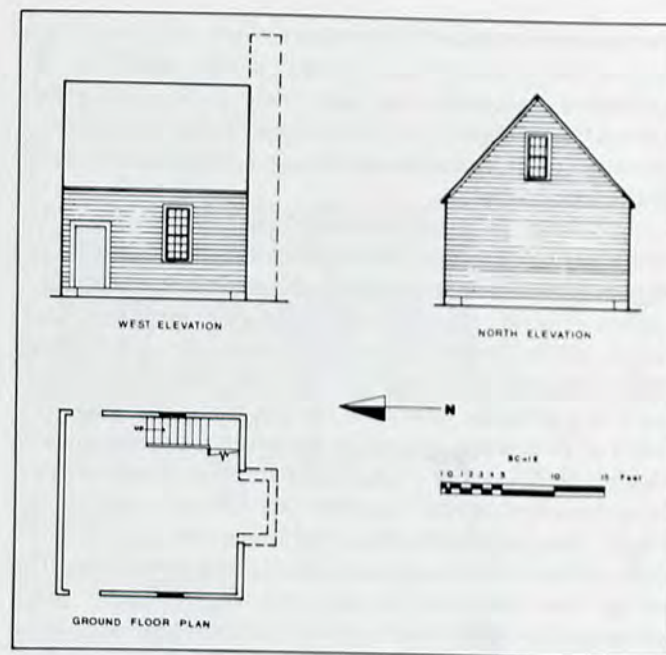
Figure 4. John Roberts House, Gatesville vicinity, Gates County.

growing sophistication of a society no longer on the fringe of civilization.

The simple one-room plan remained an important dwelling unit throughout the eighteenth century, especially in the sparsely settled interior. Until recent years three examples of the one-room house survived in Gates County. The Old Riddick House once stood north of the town of Gates near the Virginia border. Built in the early eighteenth century, it was a one-story and a loft frame house approximately eighteen feet by twelve feet. A large interior chimney was flanked by a small closet on one side and a ladder to the loft on the other. The dwelling, with its heavily battened doors, exposed ceiling beams, and small window openings, reflected characteristic seventeenth century features that survived long into the eighteenth century in this area.[11] The Freeman House and the John Roberts House (Fig. 4) show two distinctive plan im-

provements over the Old Riddick House. In both of these houses the chimney was placed on the outside of the gable-end wall, and a stairway instead of a ladder connected the loft with the room below. These two changes provided more space downstairs and upgraded the status of the loft above.

Houses with two rooms downstairs (usually a hall and a parlor) not only provided more space but allowed domestic activities to be divided between the rooms in a variety of ways. Isaac Ottwell's house consisted of a hall, closet, parlor, cellar, and a room above the stairs. Meals were prepared and eaten in the hall. Cooking utensils such as pot hooks, gridirons, frying pans, and an assortment of pots were located by the large fireplace. Ottwell and his family sat at a large table for their meals and ate from wooden bowls, earthenware dishes, and pewter plates. Also scattered about the room were several saddles, collars, chairs, a pair of scales, and three guns. The parlor was the entertaining and sitting room. Such amenities for social entertainment as glass tumblers, wine flasks, a sugar box, and a teapot and cups were located on a bureau in the room. Several chairs, a few books, a map, spectacles, cotton, calico, and other cloth attest to the fact that the parlor was used by the Ottwell family as the primary sitting room. The presence of a featherbed and a trundle bed indicates that the room, like the "room above stairs," was a sleeping chamber as well.[12]

The parlor, like the hall, was used for a variety of domestic activities. In Daniel Dupee's house it functioned as the principal eating room and the main sitting room. The parlor in John Clark's house was used for three purposes: as a dining, sitting, and sleeping room.[13] Although the domestic functions of the parlor and hall often overlapped, it appears that some distinction was made in eighteenth century inventories between the two names. In estate inventories which mention two or more rooms downstairs, the term "parlor" was rarely applied to a room where cooking activities occurred.
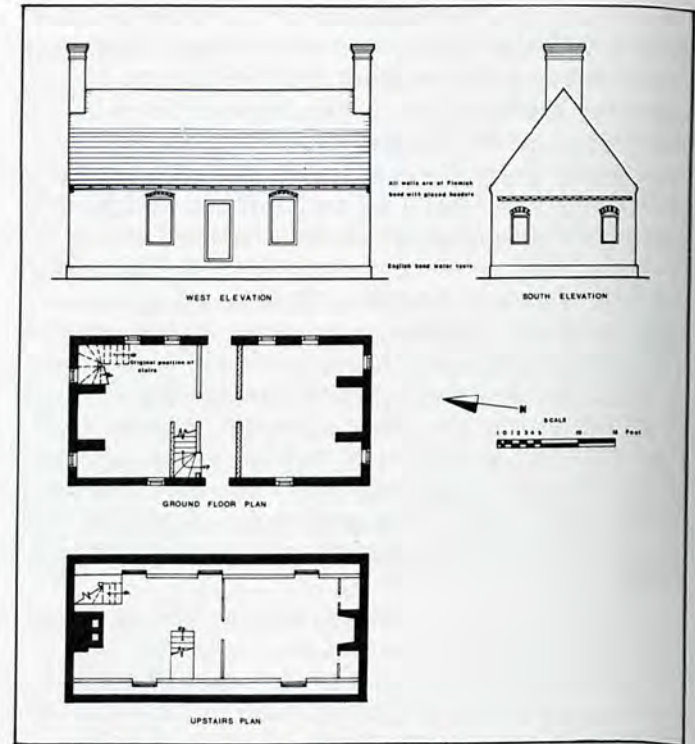
Figure 5. Newbold-White House, Hertford vicinity, Perquimans County.

In the early eighteenth century, meals could be prepared in the hall of a hall and parlor house, in a detached outbuilding, or, less frequently, in a room in the cellar. The Sumner-Winslow House, originally a one-story dwelling with a hall and parlor plan, has a large fireplace in the south room of the cellar which was probably used at one time for cooking. More often cooking activities were removed from the dwelling house to a separate outbuilding. This dependency was usually built of wood and was about twelve feet long and sixteen feet wide. The advantage of locating many of the service facilities away from the main dwelling was readily appreciated by many col-
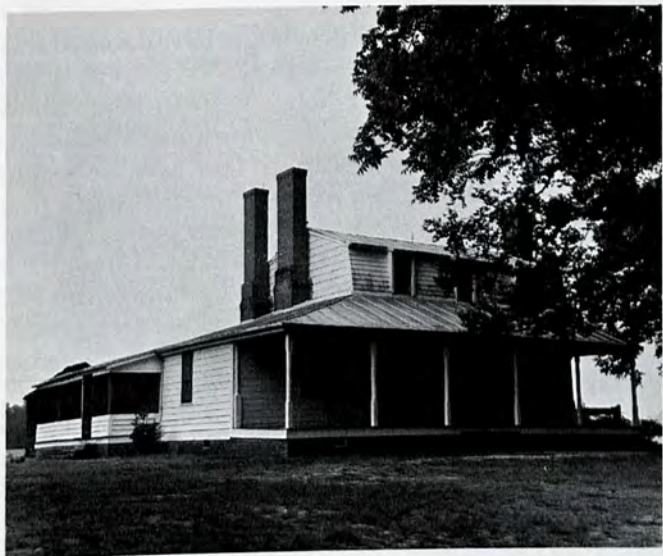
Samuel Nixon House.

onists in the South. Robert Beverly wrote in 1705 that "All their Drudgeries of Cookery, Washing, Daries, etc. are performed in Offices detacht from the Dwelling-House, which by this means are kept more cool and Sweet."[14]

A major change in the traditional house types occurred in the region in the early eighteenth century with the development of the hall-passage-parlor arrangement. The central passageway developed as the concern for privacy grew. For example, to modernize the floor plan of the Newbold-White House in Perquimans County (Fig. 5) one of the eighteenth century owners inserted a partition wall in the larger south room and thus created a narrow four and one-half foot center passageway. The old staircase in the corner of the north room was removed and a new stairway was built. It opened off the new center passage and rose through the north room. The flow of domestic traffic was then regulated between the two rooms rather than through one room to the other.
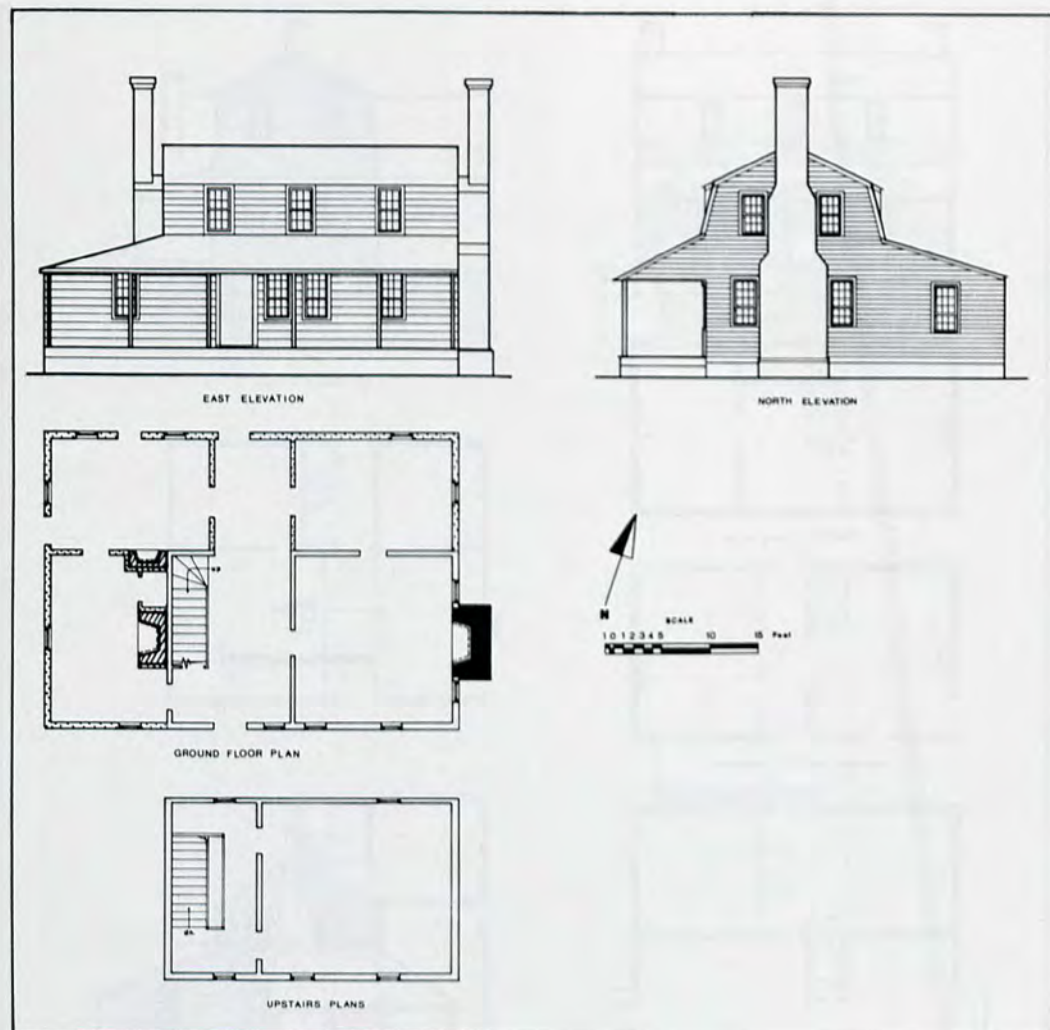

EAST ELEVATION

NORTH ELEVATION

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

UPSTAIRS PLANS

Figure 6. Samuel Nixon House, Winfall vicinity, Perquimans County.

WEST ELEVATION

PRESENT NORTH ELEVATION

PRESENT UPSTAIRS PLAN

PRESENT GROUND FLOOR PLAN

N →
SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5   10   15 Feet

GROUND FLOOR PLAN c.1940

NORTH ELEVATION c.1940

------- CONJECTURAL

Figure 7. Riddick House, Gates vicinity, Gates County.

In some of the early center-passage house types the full measure of privacy the plan might have afforded was not entirely realized. The demolished Theophilus White House, a one-story frame house built in Perquimans County in the early eighteenth century, had a rudimentary center passageway, scarcely four feet in width, which was flanked by two rooms of unequal size. Since the stairway was not located in the center passage, but in the larger room, it was still necessary to pass through the room in order to gain access to the upstairs chambers. The next logical step in creating two entirely private rooms downstairs was to place the stairway in the center passageway. In the fully developed center-passage plan, the passageway was widened to incorporate the initial run of the stairs. In the Whedbee House, a late eighteenth century frame dwelling, two equal-sized rooms flank a center passage nine feet wide. A closed stringer stair ascends along the east wall of the passage.

A second significant change in the regional house plan came with the introduction of a double depth of rooms. The desire for more space led many farmers to add a lean-to or shed extension to the back or side of their houses. In many instances, the shed rooms provided an extra bed chamber or additional storage space. Samuel Nixon, a prominent merchant in Perquimans County in the late eighteenth century, had three shed rooms added to the west side and rear of his house (Fig. 6). In this altered frame dwelling fireplaces were built in two of the three shed rooms. The west shed room was used for dining.

The integration of shed rooms with the existing hall and parlor plan created a new unified double pile floor plan which became very popular among the more prosperous farmers in the second half of the eighteenth century. In plan, a center shed room opened onto the larger front room and served as a stair passage. The stairway ascended from this back room toward the front, projecting through the smaller front room. The shed

rooms usually opened onto the stair passage rather than the main rooms. Because a gambrel roof was an accompanying feature of this type, greater space was allotted in the second story level. The status of the upstairs rooms also improved with the provision of fireplaces. The earliest example of this house type is the Myers-White House in Perquimans County which was built shortly before 1730. The Riddick House (Fig. 7) in Gates County and the Sanderson-Sutton House, White-Nowell House, and Sumnerville in Perquimans County are later eighteenth century representatives of this house type.

The logical progression in the development of the double pile house was to enclose the back rooms with the front ones under one roof. The Albertson House (Fig. 8), built in the late eighteenth century, incorporates a double depth of rooms under a gambrel roof. The ground-floor plan of this frame dwelling, two uneven front rooms and three unheated back rooms, is the same as that of Sumnerville or the Sanderson-Sutton House. The improvement in the plan came upstairs where, taking advantage of the space created by the new roof alignment, five rooms were provided. The back chambers, like the rooms below, remained unheated.

From the existing evidence it is apparent that the back rooms did not attain equal status and size with the front ones until late in the eighteenth century. This development occurred, however, only in the largest houses. Buckland (Fig. 9), a two-story frame house in Gates County, is the only surviving late eighteenth century example of the mature double-pile center-passage plan in the three counties surveyed. Four equal-sized rooms flank a broad central passageway in which a closed stringer stair ascends from the front. Chimneys at each gable end serve each of the four rooms. On inspecting the plan it is difficult to discern a specific function for any of the ground floor rooms. The physical distinctions among hall, parlor, and inferior rooms have been erased by the imposition of this symmetrical arrangement. As
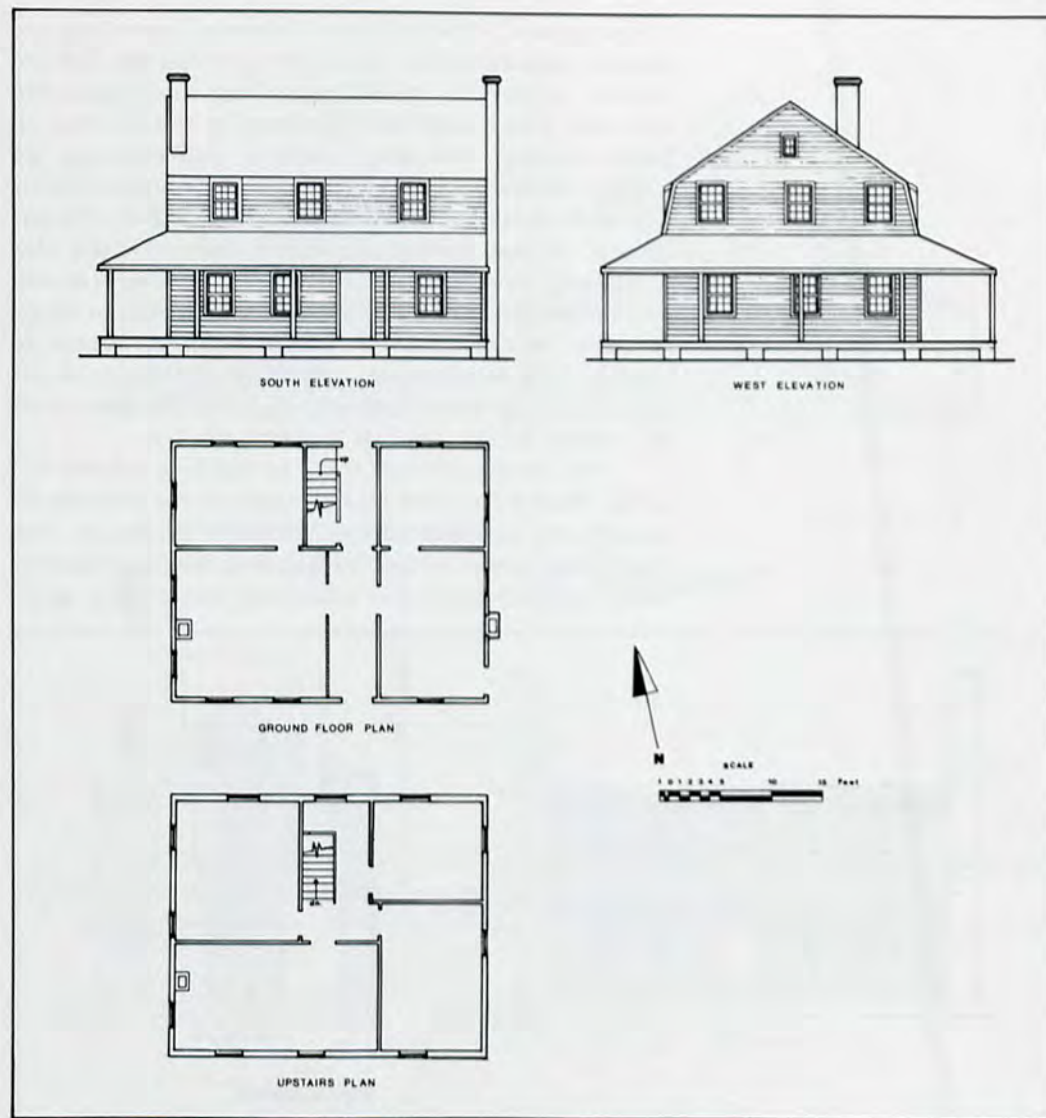

SOUTH ELEVATION   WEST ELEVATION

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

N   SCALE

UPSTAIRS PLAN

Figure 8. Albertson House, Suttons Creek vicinity, Perquimans County.

the structural differentiation between rooms disappeared, room functions also underwent change. The increased number of rooms meant that those domestic activities which had been confined to the old hall or parlor—eating, sleeping, reading, entertaining, or sitting—were dispersed to a number of rooms, each with a specific purpose: the dining room, master bedroom, library, formal parlor, or sitting room. When the downstairs rooms attained essentially the same size and appearance, such as those at Buckland, one room could as easily be designated a formal parlor or library as another. This development, confined to the larger house types in the eighteenth century, began to filter down into the smaller house types in the next century.

An unprecedented surge in building activity occurred during the first four decades of the nineteenth century and transformed the Albemarle landscape. The variety and scale of houses built during this period accentuated the discrepancies in wealth and status in this agrarian society. The relative homogeneity of the earlier vernacular landscape disappeared. A number of wealthy planters who were ambitious to display their wealth most conspicuously built large houses along the banks of the Perquimans River. Many smaller planters adopted a more modest house type which afforded new comfort and space. Most small farmers continued to build in the vernacular traditions of the region.

The building boom produced a number of changes in the character of the regional farmhouse. A significant difference between the farmhouses of the early nineteenth century and their eighteenth century predecessors was the scale of building. Houses moved away from the old low and rectangular dimensions to squarer, box-like proportions. Rooms expanded in size as well as in number. The full two-story farmhouse, no longer associated with the large and wealthy plantations, became a standard size dwelling on many farms. The symmetrical arrangement of window and door openings in the facade developed not only from new aesthetic sensibilities but from practical considerations for light and ventilation. In the hot summer weather, the need for cross-ventilation in a house was of primary importance. Most of the new houses were built on pier foundations of from one to three feet in height. The space created beneath the house provided added ventilation. As settlement spread into the low-lying swamp areas, the digging of a full cellar proved to be impractical, and the practice was abandoned.

Several new plan types appeared in the early nineteenth century. The most popular type in the Albemarle area was the side passage plan. Unlike the narrow proportions of its city cousin, the rural version of the side passage plan was as broad as it was deep. In plan, two large rooms flanked a passageway running the length of one side of the house. The stair could be placed in various positions in the side passageway. There are over twenty examples of the side passage plan in Gates, Perquimans, and Pasquotank Counties dating from about 1810 to 1840.
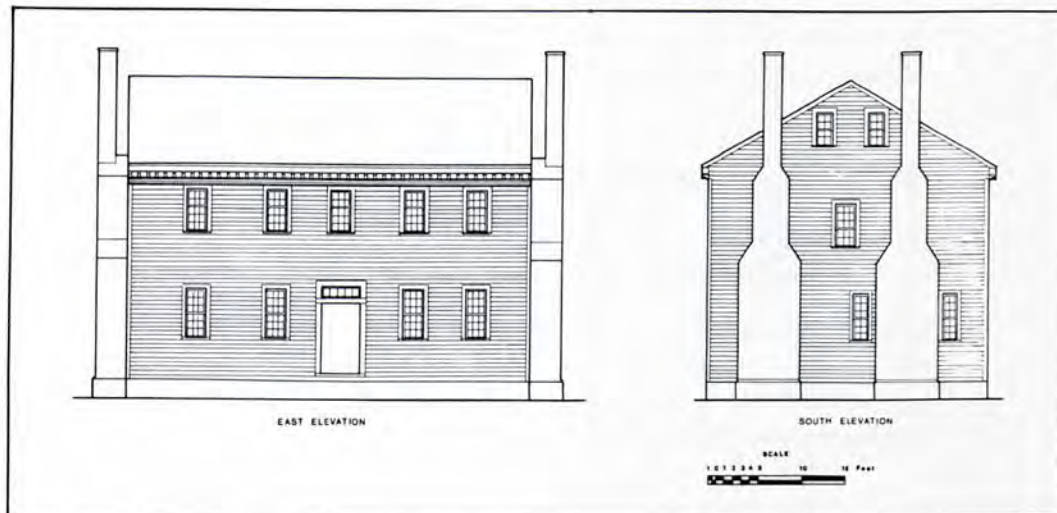

Figure 9. Buckland, Buckland vicinity, Gates County.

In lower Pasquotank County this type of house dominates the landscape. The side passage plan appears to have suited the domestic requirements of the small planter, the man who owned about two hundred and fifty to four hundred acres of land and from four to ten slaves.

By the second decade of the century the rural side passage house had reached full maturity. The plan of these houses presented a unified balance and coordination among the three main downstairs elements. The side passage extended the length of the house uninterrupted. In the Thomas Shannonhouse House in Pasquotank County and the Mitchell-Ward House in Perquimans County (Fig. 10), the side passage exceeds eleven feet in width. In most houses it ranged from nine to about thirteen feet in width.[15] The two well-proportioned rooms were warmed by separate gable-end fireplaces. Both rooms communicated with the side passage by separate entrances and with each other by a door in their partition wall. The back room in many of these houses had an exit along the back wall. In these cases, the room probably functioned as a dining room, the door providing easier access to the kitchen dependency. The front room primarily served as a parlor. Upstairs, the side passage house had from three to five rooms which were used almost exclusively as bedrooms. In the Thomas Shannonhouse House there are four rooms upstairs. Only the two rooms on the chimney side were heated.

Since the side passage plan was conceived as a complete unit, it was rarely changed later to incorporate complimentary rooms on the other side of the passageway. The Carter Farmhouse (Fig. 11) and the Hunter House in Gates County are the only extant rural examples of the expanded side passage plan in the three counties.

Two houses, the Morgan House in northern Pasquotank County and the Whit Stallings House in Gates County, are variations of the side passage house. In both houses the main entrance was shifted to the center of the gable end. This reorientation, however, did not disturb
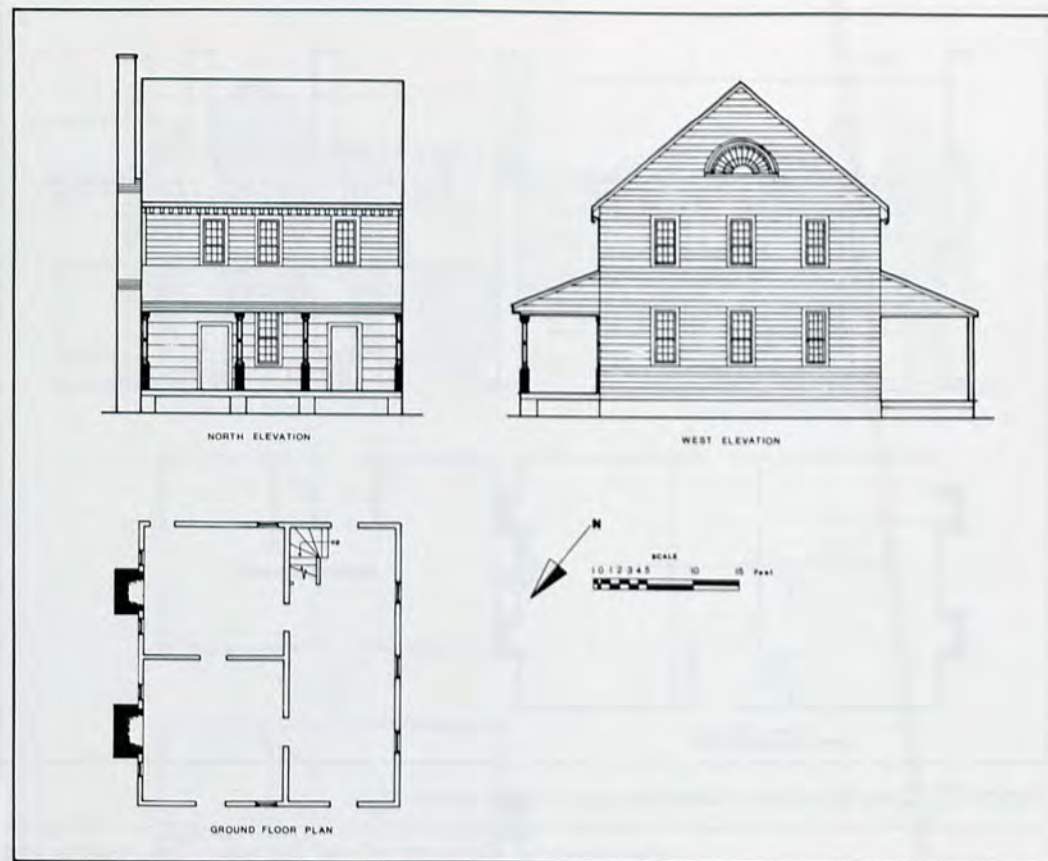

NORTH ELEVATION

WEST ELEVATION

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

N

SCALE

Figure 10. Mitchell-Ward House, Belvidere vicinity, Perquimans County.

Figure 11. Carter Farmhouse, Gatesville vicinity, Gates County.

with tenacity. The old house types, in many instances, could not offer the modern nineteenth century standards of comfort and privacy. In smaller houses a person seldom enjoyed the privacy of a separate bedroom. Often these houses were poorly constructed, providing inadequate protection from inclement weather. Slave houses, particularly, showed very little improvement over earlier one-room or two-room houses.[17] Among the free population the plan of the one-room house expanded to include shed rooms in the rear or grew to a full two stories. The Jessup House in Perquimans County has one large room with two shed rooms in the rear. The shed rooms were probably used for sleeping since there was no stair to the tiny loft over the front room.

The traditional hall and parlor plan was still favored by many farmers in the nineteenth century despite its antiquated layout. The Billups-Delaney-Ward House (Fig. 12) in Perquimans County and the Norfleet and Elbert Riddick Houses in Gates County initially had a two-room arrangement. The inherent problem of the hall and parlor plan, the absence of a cross passage, led to the insertion of a partition wall in the larger room by the owners of the Norfleet and Billups-Delaney-Ward Houses. In both houses the improvement seems to have been made shortly after they were built.[18]

Despite their formal facades and architectural embellishments, most of the larger Albemarle houses retained traditional floor plans. A common type throughout the nineteenth century was the frame two-story dwelling with one room on either side of a center passageway. Although the size of the center-passage farmhouse grew to generous proportions, the number of rooms remained the same as in the eighteenth century prototype. In many instances additional rooms were made possible by the construction of a two-story wing perpendicular to the back of the house. When the rear wing was placed in the middle of the house at the end of the center passage, a "T" plan was formed. The Jones House in Perquimans County

the essential elements of the old plan. Two rooms still opened onto a broad passageway which runs parallel to the front elevation rather than perpendicular. In the Stallings House, the heated downstairs room was the formal parlor, and the unheated room served as a dining room. There were four bedrooms and a sitting room located upstairs.[16]

If the first half of the nineteenth century was a period of innovative development in new building forms, it was also an era which saw the persistent continuation of traditional house types. In many areas plan types common to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries held on

had a two-story wing added in 1836, giving the house a "T" configuration. In the Savage and Thomas Nixon Houses, the rear wing was added to one side of each house, creating an "L" layout. After 1830, in some houses such as the Edmund Skinner House (Fig. 13), the rear wing was built as a part of the original plan.

The inspiration for the largest plantation houses did not come from traditional house types but derived from a conscious emulation of national tastes and styles. Two imposing mansions along the Perquimans River, Lands End and Cove Grove, accompanied by a sophisticated interpretation of Federal and Greek Revival details, are virtually outside the pattern of traditional domestic architecture in the Albemarle. These houses, with pattern-book designs and a double-pile center-passage floor plan, could have been found in many parts of the country.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the vernacular tradition in domestic architecture ended. It was supplanted by an architecture whose plans and ornamentation derived ultimately from sources outside the native tradition. The Civil War and Reconstruction proved to be important catalysts in this change, for these events disrupted the economic and social foundations of the region, which, in turn, altered the traditional building patterns. The Albemarle, building in a manner and scale which reflected the social and economic realities of the postwar South, became more receptive to imported tastes and new techniques.

Even before the war the demise in traditional domestic architecture had already begun. Technologically, innovations such as the invention of balloon framing in the 1830's and improvements in the manufacture of cut nails meant that houses could be built much faster and at a reduced cost. By taking advantage of these improvements more people could afford to build a house, although many of these houses were smaller in size and poorer in architectural quality than the traditional house types. The introduction of the stove just before the war modified
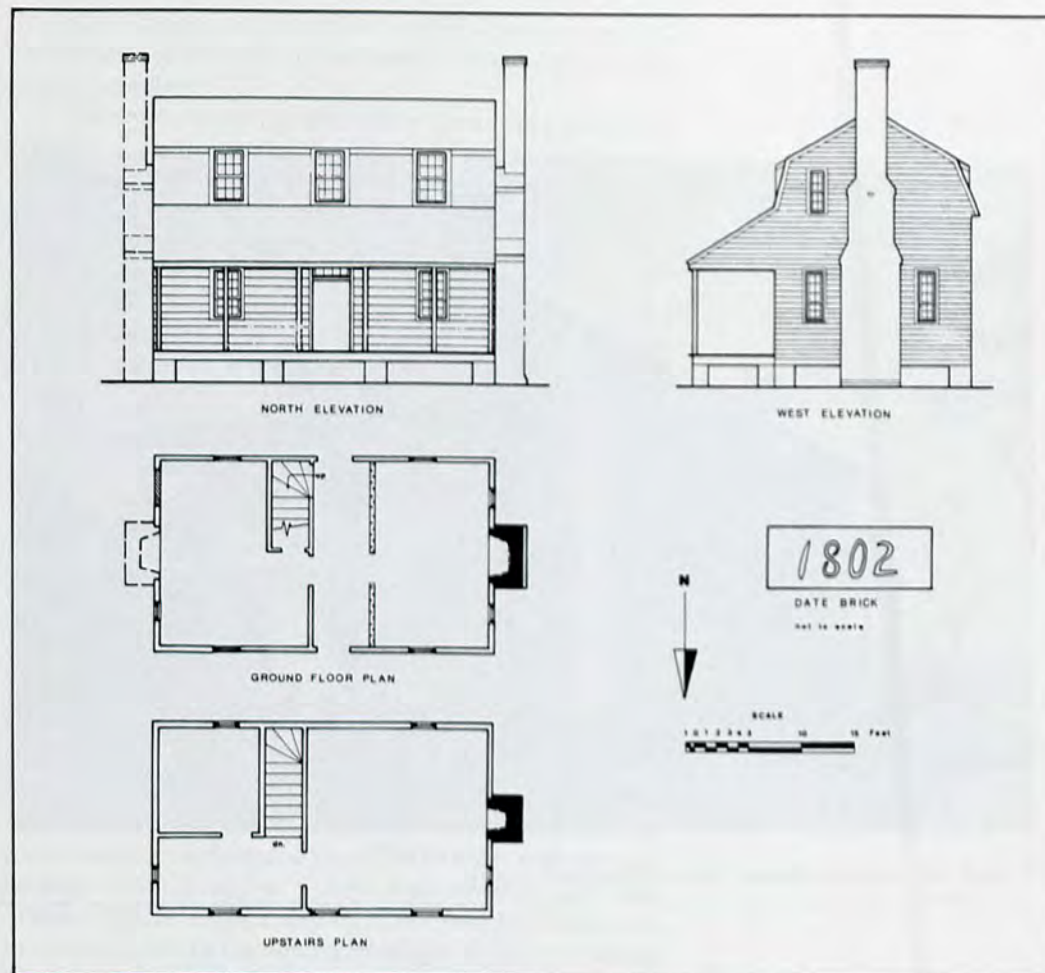

Figure 12. Billups-Delaney-Ward House, Winfall vicinity, Perquimans County.

Figure 13. Edmund Skinner House, Perquimans County.

traditional room functions. In later years the chimney gave way to the stove flue. To a few the consequence of this technological change appeared catastrophic. They believed that the "banishment" of the open fireplace signaled the end of domestic felicity. In a popular postwar journal, Paul H. Hayne lamented:

> Where, in the absence of the frank-hearted flames, is a family to assemble in evenings, to exchange those charming confidences, which are the *soul* of household life and affection?
> With no bright centre of domestic enjoyment and companionship, the ties of family are first loosened and then broken. People learn to depend upon outside excitement, to seek—each according to sex—the billiard table or ballroom. The juvenile community is neglected by its proper teachers and protectors, in a word, the entire household becomes disjointed and disorganized, and finally, for all we can tell, the "domesticities" will vanish altogether, and the idea of the "family" be ranked among the fossil conceptions of a long-forgotton age.[19]

Perhaps the greatest factor in the decline of vernacular architecture was the displacement in popular esteem of the traditional types of dwellings by ones taken from patterns in builders' handbooks. There was a popular feeling among some reformers at mid-century that the old architecture was inadequately meeting the requirements of the ordinary citizenry. The houses of most North Carolinians, many of them believed, were generally "plain and cheap" and that "sanity of mind and morals is almost impossible without suitable habitation."[20] Better architecture, it was assumed, would produce an improvement in the morality of the people. In a letter to a Raleigh newspaper in October, 1853, Professor William H. Owen of Wake Forest College, decrying the shortcomings in traditional domestic architecture, suggested that the styles in pattern books such as A. J. Downing's *The Architecture of Country Houses* and *Cottage Residences* (Fig. 14) were better suited to the needs of the people. He

Figure 14. "An Ornamental Farmhouse" from A.J. Downing's *Cottage Residences*, published in 1847.

remarked that:

> The cottage style of building is becoming fashionable, and deservedly so, as it combines more of the requirements of comfort, taste, beauty and variety than any other. It is also in less danger from storms, lightning and fires, particularly the last, which frequently breaks out in the second story. The cottage style, however, does not always reject the second story.[21]

As the nineteenth century progressed and communications improved, differences in regional styles tended to lessen. Traveling carpenters, working with pattern books under their arms, repeated popular designs wherever they went. Later in the century sawmills produced standard moldings, doors, and other woodwork. By the time mail-order catalogs advertising a complete line of building materials arrived in the Albemarle region, the vernacular tradition in domestic architecture had been all but forgotten.

Changes in living conditions occur very slowly in traditional agricultural societies. Perhaps in domestic architecture more than anywhere else the strength of tradition makes itself felt. French historian Fernand Braudel remarked that "a 'house' . . . bears perpetual witness to the slowness of civilization, of cultures bent on preserving, maintaining and repeating."[22] Yet, looking at Albemarle domestic architecture over a period of two hundred years, one sees significant changes up and down the social scale (Fig. 15). Primarily, the range in the architectural scale expanded, reflecting a growing disparity in wealth in the region. This distinction was more pronounced after 1775. Houses became more formal and specialized, permitting a greater variety of household activities. From the symmetrical mansion houses along the Perquimans River to neighboring, unadorned, one-room houses, the wide variation in housing conditions accentuated class distinctions.

The field survey provides an excellent opportunity for locating and recording the rich variety of local vernacular architecture. It also illustrates a gross neglect of North Carolina's architectural heritage. The decline in the number of farmhouses, mills, and other rural buildings continues at an accelerated pace. Of the more than seventy houses investigated in Gates, Perquimans, and Pasquotank Counties over one third of them have been demolished or are in the advanced stages of decay. A dozen more are unoccupied and may suffer a similar fate. In these three counties alone half a dozen important eighteenth century dwellings described by Thomas T. Waterman in *The Early Architecture of North Carolina* are now destroyed. With the disappearance of the vernacular farmhouse an opportunity to understand North Carolina's past culture is lost.
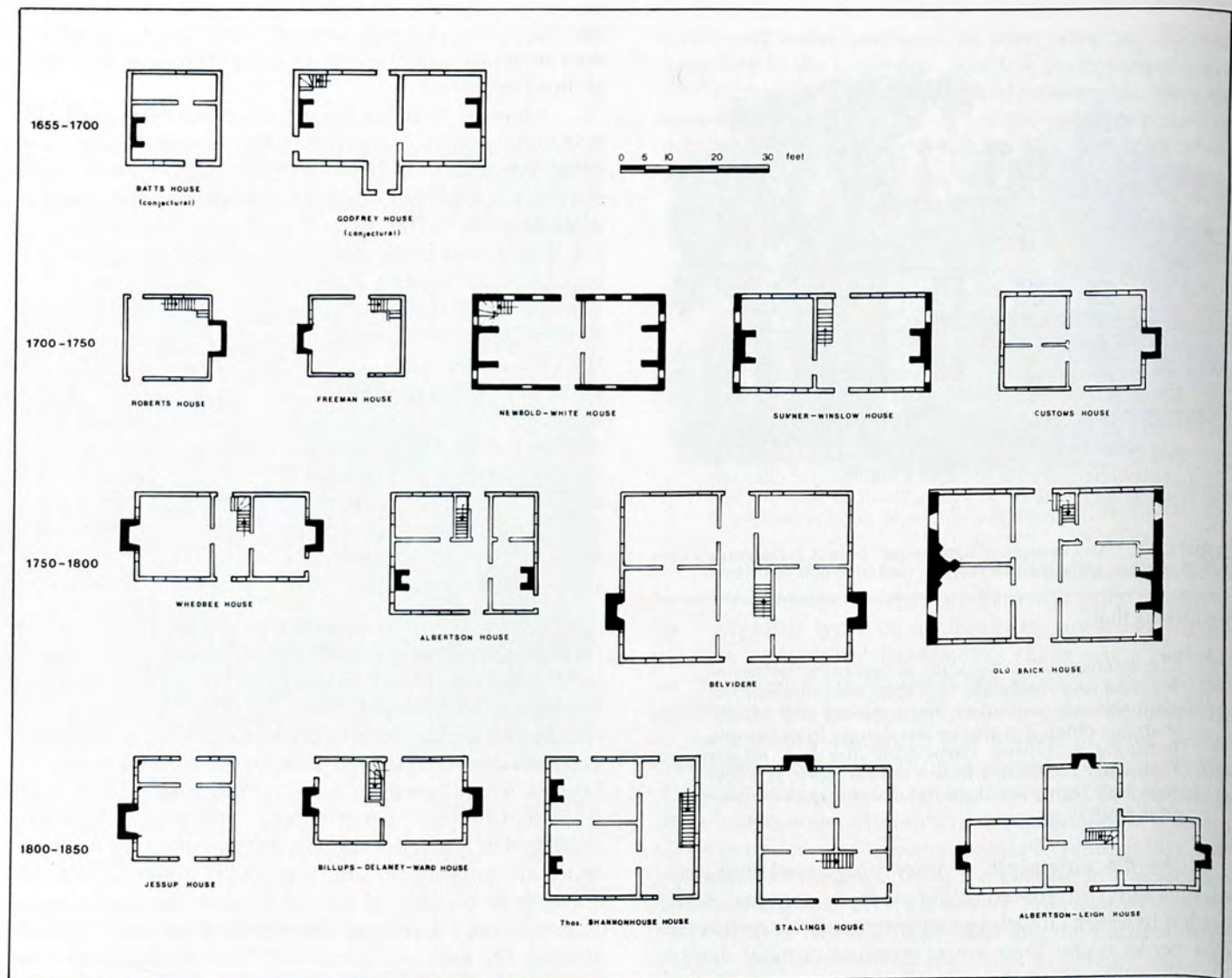
Figure 15. Comparative Albemarle house-types, ca. 1655-ca. 1850.

Footnotes

1. Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *The Founding of American Civilization: The Old South* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), 185-195.

2. Cary Carson, "Segregation in Vernacular Buildings," *Vernacular Architecture*, 7 (1976), 28.

3. Eric Mercer, *English Vernacular Houses* (London: HMSO, 1975), 37-39; J. T. Smith, "The Evolution of the English Peasant House to the Late Seventeenth Century," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, Third Series, XXXIII (1970), 139-143; Cary Carson, "The English Vernacular Houses Gone Native," paper presented at a meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians, Boston, Massachusetts, April 24, 1975.

4. M. W. Barley, *The English Farmhouse and Cottage* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), 67-68; Mercer, *English Vernacular Houses*, 60.

5. Carson, "English Vernacular Houses Gone Native."

6. Bernard Herman and David Orr, "Pear Valley *et al.*: An Excursion into the Analysis of Southern Vernacular Architecture," *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 39 (December, 1975), 316.

7. Sarum was constructed between 1662 and 1680. Cary Carson, "The 'Virginia House' in Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 69 (Summer, 1974), 181-195.

8. Norfolk County Deeds, Office of the Clerk of Court, Norfolk County Courthouse, Princess Anne, Virginia, Book C, 180.

9. William L. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina* (Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 10 volumes, 1886-1890), I, 300.

10. John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, edited by Hugh T. Lefler (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 223-224; Parker, *Higher-Court Records*, II, 312.

11. U. S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, Historic American Buildings Survey, Washington, D. C., "Old Riddick House, Gates County, North Carolina, 1940."

12. Inventory of the Estate of Isaac Ottwell, in General Assembly Laws, 1715, Inventories of Estates, 1728-1741, Secretary of State Papers, State Archives, 19.

13. Copy of mortgage from Daniel Dupee to William Heritage, July, 1763, in "Book on North Carolina Furniture of the Coastal Plain," unpublished manuscript in the Alexander Crane Papers, State Archives, Chapter 5; Inventory of the Estate of John Clark, September 18, 1719, SS Wills, 1712-1722, Book 2, 258-259; Inventory of the Estate of James Leigh, October 28, 1728, SS Wills, 1722-1735, Book 3, 217-218.

14. Robert Beverly, *The History and Present State of Virginia*, edited by Louis B. Wright (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 290.

15. A question arises as to the purpose of such wide passageways. In the side-passage plan, almost one-third of the ground-floor space was occupied by the passageway. The stairway and the front and rear entrances were easily incorporated within the wide passage. Ventilation does not seem to have been a factor in the width. Why then, the extra space, and how was it utilized?

16. Inventory of the Estate of Whit Stallings, Gates County Estates Records, State Archives.

17. An accurate description of slave houses in the Albemarle is difficult because so few, if any, identifiable slave houses remain.

18. The Billups-Delaney-Ward House is one of the earliest houses in the area which used cut nails in its construction. Lath nails which were cut from the same side and which have hammered heads were employed for the lath work throughout the house.

19. Paul H. Hayne, "Firesides and Hearthstones," *Appleton's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Art*, January 21, 1871, 79-80.

20. Thomas Henderson Letter-Book, 1810-1811, State Archives, 35; *Southern Weekly Post*, October 15, 1853.

21. *Southern Weekly Post*, October 15, 1853.

22. Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400-1800*, translated by Miriam Kochan (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 192-193.

North Carolina Coastal Vernacular

If vernacular culture is place-inflected culture, then one would naturally expect the most extreme places to produce the most striking of vernaculars. At Nags Head on North Carolina's Outer Banks—an extremity if ever there was one—such an expectation is confirmed by the structures of the Historic Cottage Row. At the same time, however, it is somewhat denied by traditional dwellings at Kitty Hawk Village. Here Steve Arnaudin offers his observations on this seeming paradox as he surveys these and other elements of the coastal vernacular mix.

Diverse dwelling forms rest on the sands of North Carolina's Outer Banks often in village-like clusters, each composed of dwellings of similar character and each cluster being dissimilar in character. Though different, each group seems to be at home on the Outer Banks. Each has its own reasons for its existence, location, and appearance.

I examined the dwellings in an area reaching from South Nags Head northward to Duck (Fig. 2). Though Nags Head existed as an active resort area over a century ago, no architectural traces of that era remain. The storms of the Banks have claimed them completely. What we are able to examine today includes a rich series of late nineteenth and early twentieth century resort homes, permanent resident dwellings, and an abundance of later resort development.

Much of the present development has gone to small, box-like structures with gable roofs and cut batten plywood siding. Larger vacation homes are also included in the present development although they appear less frequently than the smaller dwellings. In the late 1950's and early 60's a series of flat-roofed, white, concrete block and stucco houses were built predominantly in the Southern Shores area (Fig. 3). Kitty Hawk Village hosts a generous grouping of permanent residents' homes, the majority of which appear to date from the 1940's back to the late nineteenth century. They include common vernacular house types of mainland North Carolina and other stereotypical rural and small town forms of that period (Fig. 4).

The real gift to the Outer Banks beachscape is the row of weathered shingle cottages on the Nags Head shore. Most of them date from the early part of this century. I suppose I am biased in favor of these houses due to their visual appeal individually and as a group. My respect also rides with these structures for having withstood so many years of the wild storms that batter the Outer Banks. In 1976 the North Carolina Division of Archives

Steven Arnaudin

Figure 1. Nags Head's irregular row of traditional beach cottages.

Figure 2. The North Carolina Outer Banks from South Nags Head northward to Duck.

and History nominated the Nags Head cottage row for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Catherine Bishir's nomination read:

The Nags Head Beach Cottage Row Historic District, located on North Carolina's Outer Banks, is one of the few areas of late nineteenth to early twentieth century resort development along the eastern seaboard that retains essentially its original character. Along the ocean front beach, facing the Atlantic, stands an irregular row of frame cottages whose shapes, texture, color, and detail are expressive of their function and the demands for survival on the weather-tortured Outer Banks. The regular rhythm of one and two-story units, the somber gray-brown colors, the rough texture of the wood shingled walls and roofs, and the repetition of sweeping gable roofs and expansive porches relate in an almost organic fashion to the slope of the beach, to the sea, and to the light sand and the gray and blue water of the changing ocean.

Within the unit of scale and shape, several variations occur. Probably the most common house type, dating from the 1910-1940 era, is the large bun-

galoid cottage, one and one-half stories high with nearly full-width dormers extending across the front and back slopes of the gable roof to create essentially a two-story house (*Fig. 5*). The house may be two, three, four, or five bays wide, and usually features porches on at least two and usually four sides, plus any number of wings, ells and additions. Also common and usually older is a simple gable-roof two-story cottage type, three to five bays wide (*Fig. 6*). Single-story porches on two to four sides soften the boxiness of this house type.

Closely related to the two-story gable-roof house is an even more boxy form, the two-story with hip or pyramidal roof, whose highly restrained geometric quality is a foil to the sweeping expansiveness of the bungaloid cottages (*Fig. 7*). One-story cottages, too, are interspersed among the larger structures. Particularly appealing are the steep gable rooflines of some of these, which have the multi-slope gables sometimes called the "coastal cottage," with the lower shallower slope of one or both sides engaging a porch (*Fig. 8*).

Whatever the size or shape of the cottages, certain features of detail dictated by convenience, function, and custom recur; this repetition contri-
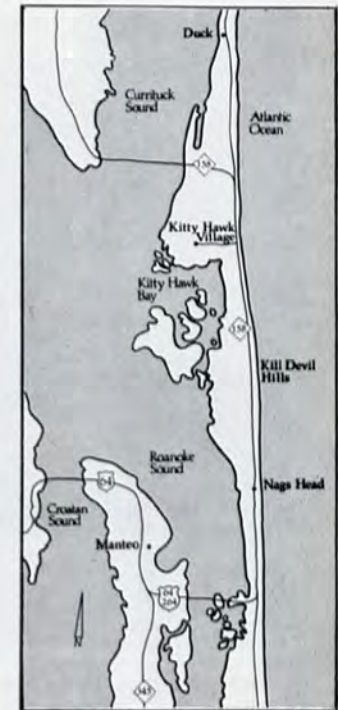
63

Figure 3. A typical late 50's "cottage" in the Southern Shores area.

Figure 4. A familiar rural North Carolina house type at Kitty Hawk Village.

butes much to the architectural unity of the district—as well as to the comfort of the residences. Cottages are consistently placed high on open foundations of timber pilings. The pilings place the houses high enough to be above low waves in case of storms, as well as making the houses more accessible to breezes. The height of the foundation varies, but it is often high enough to sling hammocks for sleeping and to hang up wet gear. Some of these foundations are screened with latticework, originally meant to keep pigs and cows from straying under the cottages. Until the mid-1930's there was no fencing and the locally owned livestock roamed at will.

Intersecting angles of wooden members make up the porches of the cottages as well. Nearly always roofed and supported on simple posts, the porches also feature enclosing balustrades of different, simple kinds. A particularly handsome and functional feature of Nags Head cottages is the ubiquitous porch bench *(Fig. 9)*. These are benches built into and extending out from the porch balustrade, with the base beginning flush with the balustrade and the back sloping outward from the porch. This catches breezes and provides adequate porch seating without cluttering the porch with furniture. These benches are seen in the early documentary photographs of the turn of the century or so and continue to be used on new construction. A comparatively new addition to these covered porches is the sun deck, usually appended to the protected southwest corner of the cottage porch and encircled by lean-out benches.

Heavy seas and strong winds that blow sand into the cottages are plagues during the off-season. To protect against this nearly all cottages feature similar door and window treatments. Most doors have normal inner doors and outer screen doors, useful during the season. Outside the screen door, though, is a sturdy wooden batten door which is kept open during most of the season, but which is secured when the cottages are closed up *(Fig. 10.)* Also of wooden batten construction are the window shutters. Each is a single leaf, hinged at the top and held open with a prop stick. Open, the diagonal awning-like angle of the shutter provides shade and closed, shelter from storms. In winter, the boarded-up look of the windows and doors emphasizes the stern dignity of the waiting cottages—which look, as one visitor remarked, "like

a bunch of haughty old ladies."

In the early cottages, the kitchen was separated from the living area by a porch and often the ice box stood on the porch. Many of these porches have been enclosed. With few exceptions, the rear ell of the cottage projects from the north portion of the rear elevation. Many houses have porches on all four sides. If, however, porches occur on but three sides, it is generally the north side that lacks a porch. This arrangement takes advantage of prevailing breezes.

The interiors of the beach houses are finished as simply as the exteriors. Generally, there were no fireplaces originally, although some have been added. Walls are either covered with simple sheathing or, in most cases, left unfinished, with the studs and exterior covering visible. Partition walls are typically of a single thickness of wood sheathing. Doors are of whatever type was popular at the time of construction. Interior wood is generally left unpainted. Floor plans vary, but all are simple and functional. The typical 1910-1940 floor plan is a variation on the center-hall plan two rooms deep, except that the chief front room, the living room, is not partitioned from the hall but includes space normally allotted to the hall; this produces a plan with two rooms across the front and two rooms divided by a hall at the rear. To the rear of the main block is the ell, often separated from the main block by a breezeway. This space usually contains servants' quarters, children's rooms and/or kitchen.

It should be noted that nearly all the cottages are virtually without the usual trappings of architectural "style" inside and out, but rely on the simple expression of functional forms, materials, and plan for their character. This is particularly interesting since many of those for whom these houses were built either built or lived in some of the grandest and most fashionable houses of the Albemarle. (References to illustrations added.)

Increasing ease in transportation has played a key role in the rate and type of development on the Outer Banks. In the beginning and continuing to the early 1930's, the Outer Banks was "waterlocked." The only way to get there was by boat. Practically the only people who had their feet on the sands were the permanent residents and the wealthy folk who could afford to boat over and

Figure 5. A large bungaloid cottage with nearly full-width dormers, the most common house type in the Nags Head Beach Cottage Row Historic District.

Figure 6. A simple gable-roof two-story cottage at Nags Head Beach.

Figure 7. A two-story, two-room deep house with hip roof at Nags Head.

Figure 8. A "coastal cottage" at Nags Head, showing its characteristic multi-slope gable.

stay for extended holidays. The majority of these affluent vacationers were eastern North Carolinians. They were the people who owned the houses of the Nags Head row. The entire household including domestic servants would venture on these vacation trips to Nags Head and stay for months at a time. These old houses (new then) were large enough to accommodate everyone.

Nags Head remained this type of geographically exclusive summer resort community until the early 1930's when the Wright Memorial Bridge on Highway 158 was completed making the Outer Banks accessible by car. Now a different class of people could enjoy the Banks. Automobiles were becoming plentiful and practically any middle-class man could take his family on a trip to the beach and stay for a day or so. Slowly more houses appeared, scattered along the coast, and hotels increased in popularity. I would imagine a vacation in a cottage or hotel at that time would have been an enjoyable, leisurely experience in a quality environment—architecturally and in terms of landscape. Later, in the early fifties, the bridges connecting the mainland with Roanoke Island and Roanoke Island with the Outer Banks were erected. About this time the rate of construction of vacation homes accelerated considerably. Almost every family had at least one car and if their values included love of the Outer Banks, they could purchase a plot of sand, have a cottage built or buy one already built, and visit periodically throughout the year. Others desiring to make a less permanent investment could rent a cottage or be accommodated in a hotel. The concrete block and stucco structures at Southern Shores were probably the first products of large scale modern-type development. What the Outer Banks building trade has finally become is a speculative operation catering to the dreams of almost any man.

As could be expected, sea-related occupations traditionally provided the income of the folks who lived on the Banks throughout the year. Their homes are congregated primarily around Kitty Hawk Village, which was first

settled before 1790 and takes its name from an Indian place name. Today some of these year-round residents still live off the sea while others profit from serving the locals and the tourists. Transportation has changed the permanent residents' communities little. Some growth has occurred, but rapid growth has not. And the newer structures generally merge fairly well with the community settings.

The Nags Head historic cottage row made its home directly on the beach front—an appropriate location since the owners of these dwellings came to the Banks to be with the ocean (Fig. 11). On the ridge of the incline leading into the Atlantic these homes have the sight of sky and water, the sound of surf, the breeze, and immediate accessibility to the bathing pleasures of the beach. Much of the pre-1950 development also claimed prime spots immediately behind the primary dune. Only a few bashful cottages found their hosting spots further off the beach front.

In contrast to the ocean sites of the vacationers, the prime location for the permanent dwellings is on the sound side such as at Kitty Hawk Village or Duck. The ones who live on the Outer Banks choose these spots because the destructive forces of storms are not as serious, the ocean does not pose such a threat, and the vegetation is different. Trees grow here (Fig. 12). Accessibility to the water is maintained but for occupational more than recreational reasons. The sound side provides an excellent community environment. One could hardly guess that the Atlantic is only a few miles east when he is in Kitty Hawk Village or Duck proper.

Those white concrete block buildings (hardly cottages) have chosen an appropriate siting, also. The mass of them lie a considerable distance off the beach in the Southern Shores area. At the time these structures were built Southern Shores was fairly wide open to new development. Since they are not situated on raised pilings, it was probably wise to locate farther from the possibility of a wave straying too far west. The white block structures sit generously spaced. They appear as strange forms on the

Figure 9. The porch bench, a common feature of Nags Head cottages.

Figure 10. Wooden batten window shutters function as shades as well.

sand after seeing hundreds of pitched-roof houses. The only explanation for them I have come by is that they are derived from a Floridian house and construction is inexpensive. They introduce a totally different vocabulary on the Banks; material, color, and roof form are all in contrast to practically everything else (Fig. 13).

The recent development has taken much of the land that is left. The newest houses are usually built several rows off the beach where the land is cheaper. Actually it is the only place they could afford to be. I am sure most of them would rather be sitting on the front row. This contemporary development appears almost as a line of dog kennels when viewed down its roads. One house is barely distinguishable from the next. Only the group has character. The frailty of construction on some of these is in character with the cluster's image as a whole.

Together as well as individually the old Nags Head cottages are a fine sight. Though they have all been moved several times to escape receding beaches, and some were moved from the sound side, I think they remain in a group for my visual pleasure. The row appears as a very humble and harmonious environment.

Kitty Hawk Village and Duck present themselves as fairly typical community settings in that homes are clustered for common interest and neighborliness. There is, however, a distinct difference in the place as compared with an inland town. I suppose it has to do with one's unforgettable awareness that this is all connected with the sea.

A great contrast in form and character existed between the Nags Head historic cottages and their original owners' fashionable homes on the mainland. Another

Figure 11. Early Nags Head cottages sited directly on the beach front.

contrast still exists between the vacation homes and the village homes only several miles apart. The village homes and the mainland homes must represent "home" and life as it is. Cottage forms represent a symbolic dissociation with homelife. If the village homes were subject to the same mistreatment of storms as the cottages, it is possible they would have taken on quite different forms and materials. But the milder weather of the sound side allows them to conform to traditional standards.

The success of the Nags Head Row cottages as beach structures is demonstrated by the fact that many of the newer cottages borrow elements from them (Fig. 14). Their roofs, full-length dormers, and shingle siding have been repeated in scattered cottages, but the comfort feature of the porch has appeared almost everywhere.

Figure 13. Southern Shores cottage sited away from the beach.

Figure 12. Trees shelter the permanent dwellings at Kitty Hawk Village.

Figure 14. A new cottage incorporating many of the traditional cottage features.

The I-House as a Carrier of Style in Three Counties of the Northeastern Piedmont

The basic form of the typical eighteenth and nineteenth century vernacular house—its plan and height—was determined by local folk tradition. Its proportions and decorative features, however, generally depended upon the latest popular architectural style to arrive in the countryside. Thus we can today read in these houses inflections towards both time and location. And thus they placed their original inhabitants in a present made more meaningful by its identification with a known past and by its orientation towards admired, though perhaps distant, contemporary culture. In this article Michael Southern describes the modifications wrought upon a single folk house type during the century of its popularity in the northeastern Piedmont.

There appear to be two distinct schools of observers of old houses. One might be called the folkloristic or "culturogeographic" school, which was born in the 1930's with the work of Fred Kniffen and his studies of American folk housing types and their geographic distribution.[1] This approach is focused largely on traditional building forms and plans, their ethnic points of origin, their persistence through time, and their distribution through space. The second approach is that of academic architectural history, with an emphasis on the aesthetics of architectural style and its changes through time. Until recently the paths of the two groups rarely crossed. The objects of the architectural historian's study have generally been the finest, most prominent buildings—those produced to a great extent by wealth and power—considered to give expression to society's highest ideals, aspirations, and abilities at a given point in history. Lesser buildings such as the apparently numberless farmhouses, when noticed at all, have been seriously interpreted by architectural historians only insofar as they have some recognizable stylistic treatment, are interesting vernacular interpretations of academic architecture, or are extremely old. The folkloristic approach sees the great monuments as exceptions, even aberrations, and looks to the ordinary as expressive of the muscle of society, its character, its movement, and its subtle changes through history.

At times these two schools observe the same house and describe it with different vocabularies, each emphasizing its own angle of approach. In a poke at those accustomed to seeing a house only in terms of its style, Henry Glassie speaks of style as "the plastic projections of a bourgeois identity crisis."[2] Meanwhile the architectural historian may consider the folk house typologies misleading groupings of buildings that do not belong together in any meaningful way—in terms of their historical setting or architectural sophistication.

Actually, both groups could probably stand to gain at least a little from an open look at the work of the other.

Michael Southern

Most houses were built neither purely in a folk tradition nor purely in a fashionable style. There was communication, however tenuous, between the rural hinterlands and the coastal towns from the earliest times, and changes in architectural fashion taking place in the nerve centers of popular culture—Philadelphia, Boston, New York, and Charleston—were eventually carried, in modified form, to more remote areas where building traditions were firmly entrenched. In the North Carolina historic built environment we find a few houses of a totally traditional form, such as the one-room log house, fashioned again and again over a long period of time, and utterly without stylistic considerations. And we find an occasional academic building, such as the State Capitol, fully rendered in a specific historical style. Most older houses in North Carolina lie between the two, reflecting the pull of both traditional and popular culture.

Here we shall attempt a combination of both approaches with a simple exercise of looking at one "folkloristic" house type in a particular region in terms of its various stylistic manifestations. The house type under scrutiny will be Fred Kniffen's "I-house"[3]—the two-story house at least two rooms wide but only one room deep, with the main entrance on the long side (Fig. 1). This house type originated in the English folk culture. It has been identified as the dominant folk house type throughout the Upland South from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, and as the symbol of economic achievement and social respectability in a democratic agrarian society. Its popularity has been attributed to the fact that it presents to the viewer on the road the largest, most impressive facade possible for a house of only four rooms. In addition, its good ventilation properties make it especially suitable for a hot, humid Southern climate.

The region we shall examine is the Granville, Franklin, and Vance County area in North Carolina's northeastern Piedmont, a region rich in houses of this type bearing a variety of stylistic expressions. We shall interpret the houses in terms of basic style groups identified by architectural historians: Georgian, Federal, the mid-nineteenth century romantic revival styles, and Victorian eclecticism.

Figure 1. Floyd-Morris House, Granville County. This I-house has the center gable, here with shingle ornament, typical of many houses built in the region in the late nineteenth century. The chimney is dated 1896.

THE I-HOUSE IN THE
GRANVILLE-FRANKLIN-VANCE REGION

The Granville-Franklin-Vance region was settled in the first half of the eighteenth century largely by Virginians of English descent. The economy has always been based on agriculture, chiefly tobacco. While nowhere in North Carolina did the plantation system develop to the level of opulence that it did in parts of Virginia, in this region there were a number of planters and farmers of moderate means—with sizeable holdings of land and at least a few slaves—who built solid and comfortable, if rarely extravagant, dwellings for themselves and their families. Though the I-house was apparently not the first type of dwelling in the area, it appeared by the late eighteenth century and became dominant in the early nineteenth century. The earliest permanent houses were probably one- or one-and-a-half-story hall-and-parlor plans with gable or gambrel roofs. Among the earliest two-story houses were other forms besides the I-house, including a small number of double-pile (two room deep) plans, and occasional plans that appear to be complete anomolies for this region, including one Quaker plan. The first I-houses appear to be simple upward extensions of the one-story hall-and-parlor plan. The center-hall plan appeared before 1800 in I-houses as well as other types, but was not common until after 1820. By the mid-nineteenth century the symmetrical center-hall arrangement was the strongly favored plan for houses of both one and two stories, both single and double pile. Wealthier planters in the decades before the Civil War built large, double-pile houses, though the single-pile I-house form was the more common. After the Civil War the center-hall I-house dominated at least until the turn of the century.[4]

Almost all of the I-houses of every period received rear additions at some time, and unlike the rear shed additions commonly found farther east, these were usually in the form of a one- or two-story ell. In some cases these ells appear original to the house, and perhaps such houses should be given a separate typological designation or be considered an I-house subtype. For the purposes of this discussion, however, all will be considered I-houses.

THE STYLES

It should be noted here that remote areas experienced a kind of culture lag in the appearance of every architectural style. Forms that were common in urban centers became popular much later elsewhere, and once popular in the countryside, they tended to linger long after they had been superseded in the centers of fashion. Thus many of North Carolina's Georgian style buildings are considered *retarditaire*; they were "out of style" before they were built. At times certain elements, such as the Georgian raised panel door, remained in use so long as to appear to be part of the folk building tradition. As a result of this durability of accepted forms, many houses contain elements of two or more styles, and others are said to be "transitional," as if the builder was giving recognition to a new fashion that had come to his attention while simultaneously working within the bounds of a stylistic, or traditional, vocabulary familiar to him.

Georgian* (before ca. 1810)

The Georgian style acquires its name from the English kings George I, II, and III, who ruled during its ascendancy in the eighteenth century. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, English architecture changed dramatically under the influence of the Italian Renaissance and Baroque. During this period medieval forms gave way to a new formality and an interest in features of ancient classical architecture. This was the beginning of a trend that would affect Western architecture for over two centuries.

The features of the new English architectural fashion found their way to the colonies by way of pattern books, English-born craftsmen, and, in some cases, English-trained architects. In the larger urban centers and on the wealthier plantations, efforts were made to closely reproduce the characteristics of the English models. The most spectacular example of such an effort in North Carolina is New Bern's Tryon Palace (reconstructed in the 1950's), the design of English architect John Hawks. The grandest of these buildings display a strong, formal symmetry, and interiors that are lavishly paneled and molded. In most areas, however, the pattern book models were adapted to suit local tastes, needs, finances, and craftsmen's abilities. Often, simplified Georgian motifs were applied to houses of ancient, traditional English form.

The I-houses built in this region before about 1810 reflect, in varying degrees, the character of the Georgian

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*A problem arises over the application of the term "Georgian." Some writers use the term to refer to a particular house plan—the symmetrical, two-room deep, center-hall plan—that appeared as a feature of the formal Georgian architecture of England and the colonies. In the vernacular landscape of North Carolina, this plan did not find broad acceptance until well into the nineteenth century, long after the Georgian era, as a historical and even stylistic period, was past. As a result the same term is being applied by different writers to houses that have no relation in form, plan, period, or style. Here the term will be used in the stylistic and historical sense, that is, in reference to houses built before about 1810 that have Georgian stylistic elements regardless of plan.

Figure 2.   Foster House, Franklin County, late eighteenth century. This house has the symmetrical five-bay facade associated with formal Georgian architecture. Note the tall, narrow windows with nine-over-nine double-hung sash (the first floor sash has been replaced). The roof is flush with the gable ends.   The porch here is not original; early porches have rarely survived.
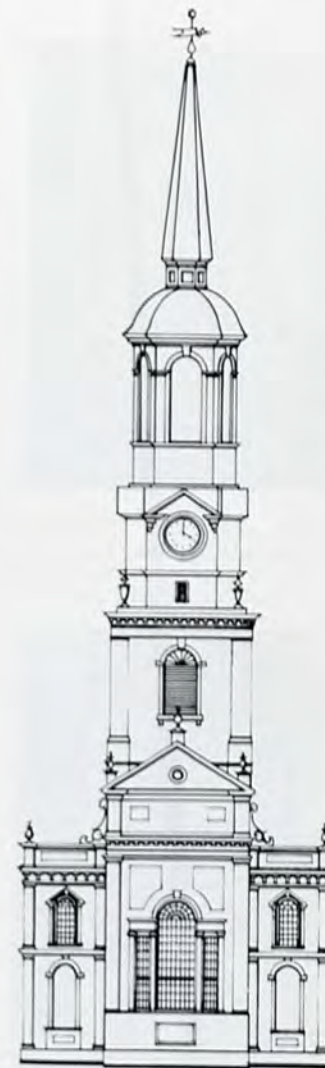
Christ Church, Philadelphia, 1727-1744, the stylish Georgian masterpiece of architect James Porteus.

Figure 3. McLemore-Canady House, Franklin County, late eighteenth century. With the raised foundation and steeply pitched roof, the facade of this house is so vertical in proportion as to be a rectangle set on end. Here the builder showed no concern for the symmetrical placement of windows and doors. Each room of the hall-and-parlor first floor has a separate entrance. Note the massive, double-shoulder chimney; the shoulders are paved smooth. The roof has been rebuilt to extend over the gable ends.

Figure 5. Georgian-type window. Nine-over-nine sash, three-part molded and mitred frame, and molded window sill. Note beaded weatherboard.

Figure 4. Young House, Vance County, early nineteenth century. This is probably the largest early I-house surviving in the region. In the mid-nineteenth century it received a two-story rear shed addition, making it a double-pile house. The exterior is in the Georgian tradition and has the "Georgian symmetry" except for the placement of the second-story central window. The interior is a curious blend of Georgian and Federal elements with Greek Revival touches dating from the time of the rear addition.

models, both in their specific features and general "spirit." These Georgian I-houses vary in some respects. Facades may be three, four, or five bays wide, and while the symmetrical five-bay, center-hall plan often associated with the Georgian is represented (Fig. 2), other examples show less regard for symmetry (Fig. 3; Fig. 4), and those of the hall-and-parlor plan sometimes have separate front entrances for each of the two rooms (Fig 3). Among the common features are proportions that emphasize the vertical dimension, so much so that the facade appears almost as a square or even a rectangle-on-end where the house is only three bays wide. Windows are tall and narrow with small panes, always nine-over-nine sash on the first story and nine-over-nine, nine-over-six (or vice-versa), or six-over-six on the second. Window sills are usually molded (Fig. 5). Chimneys are massive, most often with double, paved shoulders and free-standing stacks (Fig. 3; Fig. 6), usually built of brick laid in Flemish bond, though cut stone blocks were also used in the early period. On the gable end the roof is flush with the wall (except where later rebuilt). The cornice is boxed with pattern boards applied to the ends; sometimes the cornice is treated with modillion blocks or rows of dentils (Fig. 6). All these houses are of heavy timber, using mortise and tenon frame construction. Where the original weatherboard survives, it is molded or beaded (Fig. 5).

Interiors have a robust, simple finish. A common feature is the raised panel, found on doors, wainscots, mantels, and overmantels. Doors are six-panel hung on HL hinges and set in three-part molded frames (Fig. 7). There is always a wainscot of sheathing or of flat or raised panels. Most have enclosed stairways. Sections of Chinese Chippendale ballustrade are found on the stairs of two of these houses (other examples appear in the region in non-I-houses). Only one house has an open stair; it is a superb closed-stringer stair with heavy turned newel, balusters, and handrail. Mantels are either versions of pattern book models or are simple compositions

Figure 6. Georgian-type cornice. The cornice is boxed, and here treated with ornamental modillion blocks. The sawn pattern board at the end is a cross-section of the cornice and its moldings. The roof is flush with the gable end. Note the free-standing stack of the chimney.

of raised or flat panels (Fig. 8), sometimes with a heavy molded shelf. These are solid, well-crafted houses, built with a sense of permanence. Most of these Georgian I-houses are still inhabited.

As noted earlier, there was a good deal of experimentation in two-story house forms in the Granville-Franklin-Vance region before 1810. Of the fifty-odd known early houses with Georgian-related features, most are one or one-and-a-half stories. As planters began to build larger houses, a variety of new forms were attempted. Only about a dozen or so of these fit the I-house definition, and even these show the variation mentioned above. But the form was born in this period, and in the early decades on the nineteenth century began to dominate.

Federal (ca. 1800 - ca. 1840)

The major changes brought by the Federal style were a lightness of form, greater variation of motifs, and a delicacy of ornamentation that contrasted strongly with the heavier, more robust Georgian. The style acquires its name from its broad acceptance in the early years of the new American republic. It is sometimes called the Adamesque style after the brothers Robert and James Adam, whose flourishing architectural practice in England in the late eighteenth century was a primary source of the new ideas. The models for the Federal decorative vocabulary can be traced to mid-eighteenth century discoveries of archaeological excavations in Pompeii, Herculaneum, and other ancient cities; Robert Adam himself contributed an important study of the ruins of the palace of the Emperor Diocletian in Spalato, now Yugoslavia. Popularized by architectural books and builders' guides, these ideas found their way across the Atlantic.

In this country the style was employed with considerable sophistication in major cities of the East Coast from the late eighteenth century into the first decades of the nineteenth. In North Carolina major groups of Federal buildings are found in New Bern and in Warren and Halifax counties, and important individual examples are widely scattered throughout the Piedmont. In the Granville-Franklin-Vance region over sixty houses are known to exhibit something of Federal influences. The most elegant of these, such as Burnside Plantation House and the now ruinous Nine Oaks, both near Williamsboro, are double-pile in plan. Of the sixty, however, nearly half are I-houses, indicating the greatly increased acceptance of that house type in the early nineteenth century.

Few of these Federal I-houses display the studied elegance of academic Federal architecture in the more cosmopolitan settings. One will occasionally muster a special flourish—such as the fanlights over the doors at the John Wilson House, Franklin County—but most are

Figure 7. Georgian-type door. Six raised panels in a three-part surround.

Figure 8. Georgian mantel. Bold composition of raised panels over an arched fire opening.

Figure 9. Mitchell House, Franklin County, ca. 1820. The exterior form of this house differs little from its predecessors. It originally had a two-tiered porch. Window sills are unmolded. Note the mass of the chimney and its concave shoulders; compare with the chimney of Figure 3.

Figure 10. Federal mantel. Flat surfaces and delicate reeding and carving. This is the "three-part" format with a center plate here reeded in a herringbone pattern.

simple vernacular buildings that structurally vary little from the earlier houses. The hall-and-parlor is still often found, though the center-hall plan gained a wider acceptance, making a transom, and sometimes sidelights, necessary features for the front entrance to provide light in the hall. Facades are three or five bays and symmetrical. Windows retain nine-over-nine sash in the first story, though the molded window sill was usually abandoned for a plain one. Local builders began by this time to find the good native stone at least as acceptable as brick for chimney construction, and there are many examples of fine stone masonry. Brick was of course still used, though chimneys may be somewhat smaller in proportion and are often single-shouldered. The chimneys at the Mitchell House in Franklinton (Fig. 9), with their graceful concave shoulders, are a clear departure from the massive double-shoulder chimneys of earlier houses. Generally, however, the exterior appearance of the vernacular house changed very little from Georgian to Federal.

Major differences are seen inside. The robust, plastic moldings of the Georgian give way to flatter surfaces and thin moldings. A focal point for change is the mantel. The three-part mantel is a major feature of the Federal style, sometimes reeded or adorned with sunbursts at the center plate or end blocks, or given other carving (Fig. 10). Doors remain six-panel, though the raised panel disappears or is relegated to a secondary position on the unfinished back side of the door; the flat panels of the front are trimmed with a narrow applied molding. The wainscot is also of flat panels, sometimes with a touch of reeding or carving; sometimes it is simple sheathing. Where there is a center-hall stairway, it has open stringers, sometimes with sawn brackets, and the balusters are thin and stick-like.

The Romantic Revivals (Mid-nineteenth Century)

The second quarter of the nineteenth century saw major changes in architectural forms throughout the country. For one thing, those of the mature, ruling generation were born after the Revolution as American citizens, and the influences of the mother country were less and less in evidence. Builders and craftsmen trained in the English traditions were dead. The Industrial Revolution brought changes in the methods of building production that permanently altered construction techniques and subsequently the character of form and ornament.

Concurrent with the spread of industrialization came waves of romantic revivals in literature, art, and architecture. To some extent this romanticism was a reaction to the threat of dehumanization inherent in the machine age. In architecture, ironically, this romanticism was in turn encouraged by the presence of the machine and the new possibilities of form and ornament it brought.

The nation was self-consciously feeling its rise as a powerful democracy of international stature. Architects and builders began looking directly to Greece, Italy, and medieval Europe for formal vocabularies to give expression to the nation's emergent self-image and ideals. In some respects it was indeed a period of crisis in identity; through much of the nineteenth century popular builder's guides displayed plans and ornament for houses in Greek, Italianate, and Gothic styles, each touted as the form appropriate for the ideal American dwelling.

Figure 11. Terrell House, Franklin County. This is a good example of the Greek Revival in this region, showing the changes in proportions. The three-bay facade has large, squarish windows of six-over-six sash. The house is covered in a low-pitched hip roof. The facade is framed with wide corner posts, here fluted, and the wide frieze under the cornice is given a Greek key ornament. The porch, which is original, duplicates these ornamental features.

Figure 13. Greek Revival-type door. Two long vertical panels. The door frame is symmetrically molded with square blocks set in the upper corners. This same type of frame also appears around exterior doors and windows.
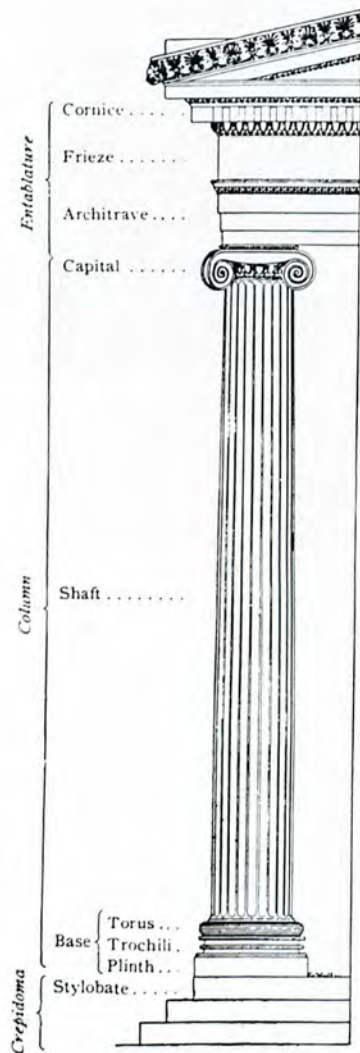
Figure 12. Marcus Carpenter House, Franklin County. A simpler gable-roof mid-nineteenth century house with Greek moldings. Compare facade with Figures 2,3,4, and 9. This house is now covered with asbestos siding.

Classic Ionic column.

Labels on diagram:
Entablature — Cornice...., Frieze......, Architrave....
Column — Capital......, Shaft........
Base — Torus..., Trochili., Plinth...
Crepidoma — Stylobate.....

The Greek Revival (ca. 1830 - 1865)

The most widespread and enduring of these revival styles was the Greek Revival. In North Carolina little was built after 1830 that was not at least touched by its influence, from the proud new State Capitol, completed in 1840, to the privy at Burleigh Plantation in Person County, adorned with Ionic pilasters. Vernacular housing was no exception. While in North Carolina there are few of the grand temple-form edifices common in the northeast, major Greek-influenced changes took place in the general conception and execution of houses throughout the state.

An examination of the mid-nineteenth century I-house in the Granville-Franklin-Vance region immediately shows this change. The form of the house almost melts, as it were; facades become lower and longer, now consistently with symmetrical three-bay divisions (Fig. 11; Fig. 12). Windows become squarish with larger panes of glass set in six-over-six sash. The low, flat hip roof becomes the norm. Weatherboard is plain, and sometimes the house is framed with wide corner boards and exterior baseboards. These elements only faintly suggest the form of a Greek temple; a much clearer reference to the Greek is seen in the hip roof or pedimented porches with classically-derived columns or square posts, sometimes fluted (Fig. 11).

Interiors follow a symmetrical, center-hall plan almost without exception, and the rooms are spacious and simply finished, again with moldings derived from popular pattern books. Front doors are generally double-leaf and flanked by sidelights and a transom to light the hall. Gone is the two- or three-part molded door frame; in its place is the symmetrically molded frame with square blocks set in the upper corners, sometimes treated with roundels. The doors themselves become two, or sometimes four, long vertical flat panels, trimmed with a wide applied molding (Fig. 13). Wainscot usually disappears, replaced with a wide baseboard. Occasionally the

baseboard and the risers of the steps are painted to resemble marble, sometimes expertly, sometimes crudely. Mantels take on a post and lintel form in a simple mimicry of Greek construction, occasionally with the flat pilasters fluted, supporting a wide lintel and a simple shelf. One of the most interesting mantels in the region is at the Marcus Carpenter House. Here the maker applied knob-like protrusions at the tops of the pilasters in a final vernacular abstraction of Ionic volutes (Fig 14). Its maker had a faint awareness of the distant Greek precedent and a feeling for its appropriateness for a Franklin County farmhouse.

A number of houses in the region are transitional from Federal to Greek Revival, retaining the older form but embellished with the Greek moldings; occasionally the reverse is true—Federal details are found in houses of the Greek form. There are many more of the variety described above, about ninety or so identified thus far, and again about half of I-house form. Others include a few more spacious double-pile houses and a large number of one-story Greek cottages.
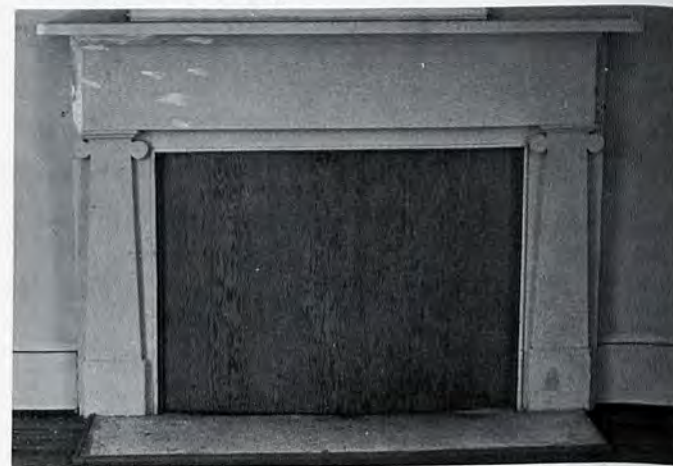

Figure 14. Vernacular Greek mantel. A simple post-and-lintel composition, with knobs at the tops of the pilasters representing the volutes of the capitals of the Ionic order.

Italianate Revival (ca. 1850 - 1860)

The Italianate Revival enjoyed a popularity nation-wide roughly corresponding to that of the Greek, and in variations persisted well into the Victorian era. In North Carolina the best known collection of buildings in this style is found at Wilmington. In the Granville-Franklin-Vance region it flourished briefly before the Civil War, with the only real difference between the Greek and Italianate Revival being in the application of ornament. Cornices are bracketed, and porches and mantels receive curvilinear ornamental detail. Most of the few Italianate houses in this region are the work of Jacob Holt, a Warrenton contractor who specialized in the style in the decade before the Civil War. Most of these are double-pile houses built for wealthier clients. One single-pile I-house exception[5] is Pool Rock Plantation (Fig. 15), where an Italianate block has been attached with a hyphen to an earlier hall-and-parlor I-house. These two houses placed together graphically demonstrate the major differences between house construction of the early and mid-nineteenth century.

Figure 15. Pool Rock Plantation, Vance County. The mid-nineteenth century Italianate front block is probably the work of Jacob Holt, a contractor of neighboring Warren County. The two-story portion of the rear section is much older.

The Gothic Revival

A third great romantic revival, the Gothic, was born as a reaction to the formal austerity of the Greek. Elements of the Gothic were quickly accepted in North Carolina as appropriate for church architecture; even the simplest gable-front rural church constructed from the mid-nineteenth century on was likely to have triangular heads over the windows in the faintest possible reflection of the cathedrals of medieval Europe. But it only rarely reached full development here in domestic architecture. There are very few of the picturesque cottages inspired from Gothic plans offered by writers like A. J. Downing in his *Architecture of Country Houses*,[6] which had considerable influence in other parts of the country. One rare example is in Vance County, the Thomas Capehart House near Kittrell. Rarely is so much as a Gothic window seen on other houses in the region; the irregular massing and steep, multiple gables were a radical departure from the building vocabu-

"An Ornamental Italian Villa" from A.J. Downing's *Cottage Residences*, published in 1847.

Figure 16. Benjamin Wyche House, Vance County, ca. 1870. An I-house with a specific reference to the Gothic Revival with the pointed-arch second story central window. The center gable, in various forms, becomes a common feature of later nineteenth century houses (Figures 1 and 17).

lary familiar both to conservative farmers and the locally-trained builders who tended to perpetuate traditional boxy forms established by the limitations of heavy timber frame construction. The absence of clear Gothic ideas in dwellings also reflects something of the way people distinguished between what was appropriate for secular as opposed to sacred space. One domestic example in our region, an I-house with a clear, if superficial, reference to the Gothic, is the Benjamin Wyche House in Vance County (Fig. 16). Here the builder placed a Gothic window at the central bay of the second story; a second, smaller window appears directly above in a steep gable set into the roof.

Late-nineteenth Century

With the Benjamin Wyche House we see a new element—the addition of a third gable placed centrally on the facade—which in one form or another became a regular feature of I-houses and related types constructed from the decade following the Civil War to the early twentieth century. Occasionally it was added to older houses as roofs needed replacement, or simply to make the house appear "up-to-date." It occurs so frequently in the Granville-Franklin-Vance region that one Franklin County native with an interest in old houses coined the term "Triple-A" (derived from the three gables or A's of the house) to distinguish the type from older houses having only the two end gables. Actually the feature was not unknown in the eighteenth century. One of the oldest houses in the state, the Cupola House at Edenton, has a small center gable, and the most academic of North Carolina's Georgian buildings—the Chowan County Courthouse, Bellair Plantation House (Craven County), and the reconstructed Tryon Palace in New Bern—all have pedimented central pavillions that at first might seem related. But these buildings were certainly the exceptions; nothing comparable was ever built in the Granville-Franklin-Vance region. As the feature disappeared for nearly a century, the prototype for the central gable is not to be found in these early buildings. More likely, the idea was taken from the Gothic Revival.[7] Another possibility is that it was derived from pattern book plans of Italianate or Tuscan villas, the best example of which in our region is the Foster House in Franklin County, a mid-nineteenth century house with a low pitched center gable that repeats the end gables precisely.

The center gable thus appears to have arisen out of pattern books and standardized plans displaying romantic Gothic cottages and Tuscan villas. The one feature that could be taken from these plans without disturbing the requirements of the accepted house form was the decora-

tive gable set at dead center on the facade. Tradition was maintained while a certain concession was made to fashion, and a balance was achieved between the two. Once the center gable was accepted in the local building vocabulary, it took a life of its own unrelated to the Gothic or Tuscan models. The gables vary widely in proportion and steepness of pitch, and often were given all sorts of machine-made, sawn, turned, and shingled ornament as the nineteenth century wore on (Fig. 17).

The I-house was built in great numbers in this region in the late nineteenth century, often in the "Triple-A" form. These houses vary from awkward, cheaply made versions to the proud, richly ornamented farmhouse that is now an American classic. Though the Triple-A I-house is a direct descendant of the early I-house down the road, it is not the same house. First there are the differences in proportion, craftsmanship, and stylistic orientation. The later house generally retains a more horizontal facade introduced in the mid-nineteenth century. Squarish windows are treated with fewer and larger panes per sash, reflecting changes in the technology of glass making. Windows and door frames are often plain boards, and weatherboards are plain. The roof overhangs at the gable ends. Chimneys are smaller and thinner, with brick laid in common bond with single, stepped shoulders, or else they are brought completely inside the gable end. Construction shifts from heavy mortise and tenon framing to light nailed frames. Components such as doors, mantels, stairs, and ornament are machine made at local mills, or shipped by rail from distant millworks specializing in architectural accessories, rather than prepared by the builder on the site or by craftsmen in the locality.

Besides these physical differences, later houses have a different social and historical meaning. The occupant of the early I-house in the Granville-Franklin-Vance region was, relatively speaking, a well-to-do man; though his lifestyle should not be falsely characterized as one of genteel antebellum elegance,[8] he probably owned a few

Figure 17. Mangum House, Granville County. Late nineteenth century. One of the more richly decorated "Triple-A" I-houses in the region.

slaves, and his house was the best that could be produced for its time and place. The Triple-A I-house is a more democratic house. Its occupant, while no pauper, was more likely a smaller, independent farmer who with his family did much of his own labor in the fields. His house was by no means the vanguard of local architecture; as the later nineteenth century brought economic recovery to the region, successful merchants and professional people in Oxford, Henderson, Louisburg, and Franklinton were building large, fashionable houses in the Second Empire, Queen Anne, and later Neo-classical and Colonial Revival styles. For so long the mark of economic success and social respectability, the I-house receded to second rung status. By the First World War it generally died out as a viable building type, replaced by a variety of popular house forms that brought a permanent break with a long-lived building tradition.

Conclusion

The I-house was the principal domestic building form in the Granville-Franklin-Vance region for about a century-and-a-half. After initially sharing the landscape with a variety of experimental house forms, it eventually emerged, in symmetrical, center-hall plan, to dominate that landscape. One might wonder why builders did not take the same materials and come up with a greater variety of building types, and why this form was chosen again and again. The idea mentioned earlier, that it presents the most impressive facade possible for a house of its floor space, is a very attractive one. Independent farmers in an agrarian democracy thus gave expression to their social and economic standing with a two-story house proudly facing the road; its meaning was clearly understood by the community and its tradition was continually reinforced. Its interior spatial organization and its suitability for the Southern environment were also factors contributing to its popularity.

While the basic formula remained the same, through time the I-house went through a variety of transformations in proportions, construction methods, and stylistic treatment. Each generation of houses absorbed changes in the means of building production, and however faintly, the reverberations of changes in architectural fashion that were occurring in distant urban centers. The occupants of these houses were not living in a cultural vacuum. They read, they traveled, and they received travelers. The coming of the railroad in the mid-nineteenth century opened up cultural as well as economic and technical possibilities. These people and their houses were touched first by the English precedents, then the romantic classicism, the industrialization, and the eclecticism that pervaded the whole of American culture. All these changes and influences eventually found their way, in a locally interpreted form, down the dusty roads and into the traditional houses of this quiet tobacco country. These houses cannot be understood solely in terms of style, but neither should style be ignored as superficiality. It is one of the many subtle ways these houses speak to us about the culture that produced them.

Footnotes

1. Fred Kniffen, "Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Dec., 1965), 549-577.

2. Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975), 158.

3. Kniffen, 553. Kniffen named the I-house after recognizing that Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana were the origins of many of the builders of the type in prairie Louisiana. He noted also that "I" was not an inappropriate designation considering the tall and narrow profile the type offers the viewer.

4. Data concerning houses, types, and distribution in this region is garnered from the files of the Survey and Planning Branch, N.C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.

5. There are several Holt versions of the I-house in Warren County and Mecklenburg County, Virginia. Holt's work also includes flourishes of Gothic character.

6. A. J. Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (Reprint of work published in 1850 by D. Appleton and Co.)(New York: Dover Publications, 1969).

7. Glassie, 158, also attributes the appearance of the center gable to the Gothic Revival.

8. Glassie, Chapter VIII. Glassie's discussion of the quality of life of most Southerners of middle Virginia is also applicable to this region.

The Montmorenci-Prospect Hill School: A Study of High-Style Vernacular Architecture in the Roanoke Valley

Historical vernacular form had its sources in two widely divergent cultural streams: folk tradition and high style architectural fashion. The vernacular landscape drew from the high style stream in at least three different ways: first, that stream provided rather "correct" ornament for otherwise traditional structures; second, it provided the initial inspiration for more personalized, idiosyncratic—sometimes crudely unsophisticated—local experiments in ornament; and third, it provided the original model for a series of folk house forms widely used in North Carolina during the nineteenth century. In this article Catherine Bishir focuses exclusively on the second of these three branches of influence.

High style vernacular ornament begins with the identification of the fashion that is to be emulated. Usually the fashionable model remains the builder's orientation no matter how unsophisticated his actual performance of it. Occasionally, as in the case of the Montmorenci-Prospect Hill school, the desire and ability to express transcends the desire to possess and forms result that shade the distinction between a vernacular and an original art. One can well imagine how such "exuberant" decor could place those who commissioned it in their own splendidly exclusive version of a known and admired cultural domain.

The energy and variety of nineteenth century American vernacular architecture are expressed not only in the unpretentious, astylistic structures of indigenous and ethnic cultures, but also in the more ambitious buildings of the increasingly sophisticated but still provincial planters and merchants who grew in wealth and numbers in the early years of the century. The interaction of a regional clientele, local craftsmen, and traditional technology with current architectural fashions produced a high-style vernacular architecture of lively individuality intensely expressive of the culture that produced it.

In the period following the Revolution, American architectural fashion still followed English models. Classicism was still predominant, but the decorative innovations of the brothers Robert and James Adam had introduced a new lightness and delicacy and a greater variety of motifs, derived from discoveries in newly dug Roman ruins. Garlands, swags, sunbursts, flowers, urns, and wreaths applied in sprightly abundance, plus a general flattening and attenuation of forms, changed the aspect of English and hence American classicism. The Adamesque
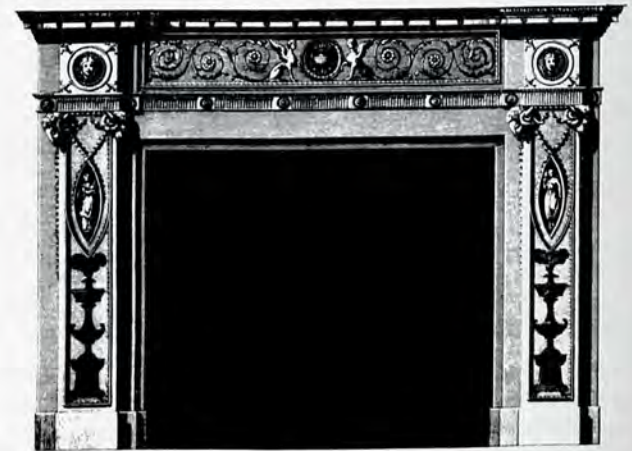

Figure 1. Mantel design by the brothers Adam, from a pattern book published in London. Such compositions inspired the Federal, or "Adamesque," style in America.

mode was dominant during the Federal period in America (ca. 1780's-1820's) and hence often carries the name Federal.

In urban trade centers like Philadelphia, Boston, Charleston, and New York, the Federal style caught on quickly and was executed expertly. Pattern books were published by the brothers Adam and by other English and American architects and designers, which communicated new fashions to builders and clients (Fig. 1).

In rural areas and provincial towns, new styles found expression less quickly, and were usually interpreted to suit the tastes and resources of the locality. Pattern books were a major source of inspiration, but many local craftsmen produced their own versions of academic motifs. Departing from bookish Adamesque examples, these regional craftsmen created identifiable localized pockets of architecture that are as vernacular as they are Federal.

Outstanding among the examples of high-style vernacular architecture in North Carolina is a group of late Federal style plantation houses located in a small area of Warren and Halifax counties. This group of houses, while sharing many of the characteristics common to vernacular Federal architecture, is distinguished by certain highly personalized and unusually elaborate detail. Mantels, doorways, windows, stairs, and other elements are treated in a distinctive fashion whose individuality sets off these houses as an identifiable entity unique in the state.

The catalyst for their construction was evidently a single great seminal house, Montmorenci[1] (Fig. 2). Probably the most ambitious house of the region, Montmorenci was a spectacular blend of vernacular energy and Philadelphia elegance. It was built, probably about 1820, for William Williams, a Warren County planter of unusual wealth and urbanity. His house, grand and novel, was at once representative of the plantation culture of the region and foreign to it, bringing both a stimulus

Figure 2. Montmorenci, Warren County. The home of William Williams with its tall portico and Palladian doors and windows was the showplace of the county. It was stripped of its woodwork in the 1930's and the elements taken to the Henry DuPont Winterthur Museum in Winterthur, Delaware. The house was later dismantled, and nothing remains of it at the site.

for change and an affirmation of the society.

The body of architecture associated with Montmorenci is expressive of a broader culture, that of the prosperous plantation society of the Roanoke Valley; an understanding of this regional culture is vital to the study of the architecture it produced. Located in the northeastern Piedmont, the present counties of Warren and Halifax were settled chiefly from Virginia in the mid-eighteenth century. By the post-Revolutionary era the region was dominated by large planters, in marked contrast to most of North Carolina. By the early nineteenth century, ownership of two thousand acres or more, and more than fifty slaves, was not unusual for the planters of the Roanoke. In 1790 Warren County was the only county in the state with more slaves than free citizens, and as time passed and agricultural technology changed, planters accrued more acres and more slaves to till them. Socially and economically the region was oriented toward Virginia. Cash crops, not subsistence farming, was the basis of the economy, and tobacco was sold by the planters in Virginia markets, usually Petersburg. With wealth and established family came political power; in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the Roanoke planters provided the state with many of its most powerful political leaders.[2]

Prosperous as the region was, it was nevertheless shackled by the bonds that made North Carolina in the early nineteenth century the "Rip Van Winkle State" and the "Ireland of America." The Roanoke Valley was accessible only by miserable roads and inadequate waterways, so that contact with other areas was difficult. There were no large cities, for the profits of agriculture went not to local towns like Halifax and Warrenton, but out of state to Petersburg and Norfolk. The economy of the region was agrarian, with nearly every person engaged in some aspect of agriculture or related trade. There was little cross-fertilization of population: with few exceptions people came from families long established in the region, living near where they were born.[3] Marriage for the upper classes and the less affluent alike was usually with folk of similar standing within the region. For the proportionately small planter gentry, marriages were within a small population from the immediate vicinity or from compatible families from nearby areas. This pattern reinforced the sense of intimacy and insularity.

Within the isolated rural context, the planters of the early nineteenth century Roanoke Valley achieved a level or prosperity and sophistication seldom rivaled in the state, a lifestyle described as the "most refined type to be found in rural North Carolina."[4] Building on the plantations and fortunes established by their grandparents' pioneer generation, these planters had the money and the desire to seek learning, pleasure, and fashion beyond that found in most of rural North Carolina.

The planters' wealth enabled them to provide their children with the classical education their cultural aspiration deemed necessary. Families sent children north to be educated, hired private tutors, or formed private classical academies. Warrenton, the county seat of Warren, was noted for its fine academies, one established as early as 1788 headed by an Irish scholar. Teachers from the north or from Europe provided instruction in Latin, Greek, composition, mathematics, and English literature, with music, painting, and the like added for girls. Many planters attended colleges and universities, with the University of North Carolina, William and Mary, and Princeton being favored. The result of this education was evident in the gracefully written letters containing frequent classical allusions and in the richly stocked libraries of the planter families.[5]

Despite bad roads, travel was a vital part of the planter life, private carriages providing some compensation for miserable roadways. Visits for weeks to plantations or town homes of friends and relatives were common. Planters seasonally met their fellow and their factors on business trips to the markets at Petersburg, Norfolk, and beyond. Occasional journeys were made to the great

northeastern commercial and cultural centers—Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia, and New York. Here at the fountainhead of culture one could find fashionable goods, manufactured items, a fine education, and sparkling society, all of a quality impossible in rural North Carolina. The influence of these cities, particularly Philadelphia, upon the plantation culture of the Roanoke Valley is inestimable. Wrote one descendant, "There is no question that for antebellum Warrenton, the omphalos was in Philadelphia. Even after the war, with [the plantation] lost, my Grandmother somehow managed to make the trek to Philadelphia."[6]

Newspapers of the day in the Roanoke Valley demonstrate the attitudes about these cities as well. Advertisements of hotels, bookshops, and manufacturers from Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Norfolk appear regularly; beside them run the advertisements of local tradesmen who declare that their own local goods are as fine and as fashionable as those of northern cities. One Warrenton cabinetmaker advertised in 1811 that his locally made furniture was "executed a la mode New York or Philadelphia."[7]

The breeding and racing of thoroughbred horses was the focus of community social and recreational life. Many planters expended much time and money in maintaining fine stables which rivaled those of Virginia in the early nineteenth century. Seasonal races, cockfights, and card games were, along with taverns and hotels, among the entertainments of Warrenton and Halifax.

The social life of the region was widely known for occasioning elaborate balls and sumptuous dinners. Adding spice to this social life were the mineral springs resorts of Warren County, Jones's Springs, and Shocco Springs, which were established in the early nineteenth century and attracted throngs of the fashionable as well as the fevered each season. At resort and ball alike, fashion was perhaps as important as social intercourse: "At a dance or on a visiting party the dress of the gentry conformed to the dictates of fashion from Charleston, Petersburg, Philadelphia, and New York. . . . The leaders of society . . . always had definite ideas as to what was the style and what old fashioned."[8]

As is always true, the character of the culture was expressed in the buildings it created. Most of the planters of the Roanoke Valley who came to maturity in the period 1810-1830 had grown up in the traditional Tidewater-type houses long characteristic of the region (see Fig. 14 below)—well-proportioned, handsomely crafted, but by the early nineteenth century old fashioned in a culture increasingly conscious of current fashion. Modishness was to be found in the Adamesque style which was gradually making itself felt in Piedmont North Carolina. Aware of the fine mercantile mansions of Philadelphia and Boston, yet far removed from the sophisticated designers and materials of these urban centers, the Roanoke planters of the early nineteenth century created an architecture that expressed with precision the character of their "opulent rural culture."

William Williams, for whom Montmorenci was built, seems to epitomize this opulent planter culture. He was the quintessential representative of his class, typical yet larger than life. As a member of the Alston-Williams family, a family of planters long rooted in the region, with connections entwined through the culture, he was very much the product of the provincial area. Yet, wealthy and well-traveled, he was able to make the journey to urban areas and enjoy the fruits of urbanity there and at home, bringing to his plantation the latest and finest fashions.

William, the son of Joseph John Williams II and Elizabeth Alston, was a colonel, then general, in the militia and was state senator from Warren County in 1814. Married to two women named Elizabeth Alston and twice widowed before 1814, he married Melissa Jane Burgess, daughter of a Halifax planter, and in 1820 the couple had a daughter, also Melissa. Widowed again, he married Delia Haywood of Raleigh in 1826 and fathered two children

before his death in 1832.[9]

"Pretty Billy," as General William Williams was known, either for his beauty or for his lack of it, possessed a fortune in land and slaves exceeded by few men in the prosperous Roanoke region. Much of his estate was inherited before 1820. Warren County tax lists of the 1820's show him with nearly six thousand acres in that county (valued at $32,545 in 1828) and as many as sixty-six slaves. At his death in 1832 William Williams owned five far-flung plantations: the home plantation (Montmorenci) of 1,600 to 1,700 acres on Shocco Creek, the Gunter Creek plantation, the Union Hill plantation, and another plantation, all in Warren County, plus his father's plantation in Halifax County. More than ninety slaves, among them several craftsmen including a carpenter named Wiley, were also to be divided among his heirs.[10]

Williams's broad acres and scores of slaves supported a lifestyle that mirrored his milieu but on a grander scale. Hints of the way of life at the Shocco plantation (Montmorenci) are provided by the household goods Williams owned at his death. His "horse and carriage and chamber furniture" were left to his wife Delia, and the inventory of goods to be sold included quantities of furniture and a wide range of kitchen and farming equipment, stock, provisions (including nine hundred pounds of pork and many bushels of wheat), lot after lot of books, much silver, demijohns of wine and whiskey, and dozens of wineglasses and accompanying decanters. More personal possessions included a backgammon box, a writing desk, a spy glass, and "one old peacock." Two objects of special significance vividly define Williams's lifestyle as expressed at Montmorenci: the volume of Lafayette's Travels and, bequeathed in his will to his nephew and executor Joseph John Williams, the latter's "sister Betsey's portrait which was presented to me by her."[11]

The Lafayette volume recalls an event singled out in family memory, the visit to Montmorenci in February, 1825, of "the Nation's Guest," the Marquis de Lafayette,

Figure 3. Montmorenci, drawing room mantel, *in situ*. The elaborate decoration, of molded composition material, is thought to be the work of Philadelphia ornament manufacturer Robert Wellford. The central panel is decorated with a scene of the Battle of Lake Erie (1814). The carved rosettes and garlands around the fire opening are similar to patterns found in other related houses.

savior of the American Revolution and the ultimate embodiment of aristocratic elegance.[12]

The portrait of William's niece Betsey, so carefully bequeathed in his will, is especially eloquent of Williams's lifestyle, for it is an icon not only of close family connections but also of the fine and fashionable goods Williams obtained during his visits to Philadelphia. Frequently in the city on business, Williams was well acquainted with its fashions, its shops, its craftsmen, its grand houses, and its prominent people. On a visit in 1822 he commissioned the portrait of Betsey to be painted by Charles Willson Peale, the eminent painter whose subjects had included George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and many others of the young nation's social and political leaders. On other visits, Williams ordered

fashionable gowns for his wife Melissa and other novelties of dress, and commissioned a gleaming yellow custom-made coach.[13]

William Williams's most impressive Philadelphia purchases, however, were no doubt those for his new plantation house which rose on an imposing site on the Shocco Creek plantation near the Shocco Springs resort. It is not known whether Williams employed a Philadelphia craftsman or designer for the planning and construction of Montmorenci, or whether (as seems likely) he used ideas gathered from grand houses he had seen, plus decorative elements obtained in Philadelphia, and worked with a local builder to create a mansion with all the grandeur local resources could muster.[14]

A Philadelphia origin for the elegant, academic composition ornament is generally accepted. One study has suggested as a source Robert Wellford's firm in Philadelphia which produced such ornament during the early nineteenth century. Comparison of Wellford's known work seems to confirm this.[15]

Surprisingly little is known with certainty of the date of construction of Montmorenci or of its local builder. The presence of a mantel decorated with a composition scene of the Battle of Lake Erie, which took place in 1814, suggests the earliest limit (Fig. 3). Enduring family tradition holds that Williams's daughter Melissa (1820-1902) was the first child born at Montmorenci and so indicates a later limit.[16] Correspondence between Williams and his wife Melissa in 1814 and 1819 is to and from their home at the Union Hill plantation, implying that Montmorenci was not yet their home.[17] Thus the years 1819-1820 seem to be the most likely for the construction of Montmorenci.

Tradition identifies a Mr. Burgess of Virginia as the builder of Montmorenci.[18] Existing documentation, while not solidly confirming the tradition, is in harmony with this attribution. A James Burgess took an apprentice to the house carpenter's trade in 1824, and otherwise appears in Warren County records in the 1820's.[19] More

telling are notes taken from a ledger recording the construction of Prospect Hill, a stylistically related house (see below). These notes, made by a descendant of William Williams Thorne (keeper of the ledger and first owner of Prospect Hill) state that "the architect for the house Prospect Hill was a Mr. Burgess and his fee according to the ledger was $1800."[20] In addition, local tradition as recorded by a memoir written in the early twentieth century cites a connection between a Mr. Burgess and yet another house in the stylistically related group—the Coleman-White House (see below).[21] No further clues have been found to identify the role of Mr. Burgess or any other craftsman in the many houses whose connections with Montmorenci and Prospect Hill suggest his inventive hand. As is so often true, the vernacular builder remains a mystery, the buildings themselves the chief document.

Montmorenci, faded as it was on the eve of its demolition, was an imposing mansion of late Adamesque grandeur evocative of the graciousness and aspirations of its owner and the culture from which it sprang. The facade of the T-plan frame structure was dominated by a full-height portico with slim columns carrying a garlanded entablature. The glory of the interior and no doubt the wonder of the county was a magnificent free-standing spiral stair.

At Montmorenci was found a lively counterpoint between the suave academic decoration and the lively vernacular woodwork. The Philadelphia elements, formally treated mantels, and door and window frames, are beautifully encrusted with graceful composition swags, garlands, rosettes, acanthus, urns, and classical scenes of academic propriety, and ceilings are enriched with an abundance of fine plaster ornament. In the local work, Adamesque motifs are the basis for a delightful series of inventions, reeded, gouged, and carved, which compliment the imported elements.

The stair seems most succinctly to express the con-

Figure 4. Montmorenci, stair, *in situ*. The elegant spiral stair was constructed in a trial-and-error fashion, recreating the grandeur of some of the finest houses of the eastern seaboard. A modified replica of the stair, with a different curve, was installed at Winterthur. The carved detail of the treads is repeated in other regional houses.

tradictory character of the house (Fig. 4). Such a splendid free-standing spiral stair was found in only the finest houses of the seaboard states, and that William Williams should insist on having one is indicative of his ambitions for his house. Yet the grand sweep of the stair was produced not by an expert designer confident of his engineering but rather by the local technology which gathered its best powers of improvisation and rose to the occasion. This "not inconsiderable" structural feat was the product of "trial and error, as during demolition it could be seen that the carriages had been reinforced again and again, until the stair became steady." Thus was the soaring elegance of a spiral stair brought to reality at Shocco Creek. The trim of the stair, apparently unique to the region, is beautifully responsive to the curving form: the treads are treated with "single, concave scrolls, edged with a series of tiny, reeded scallops,"[22] punctuated with rosettes.

This distinctive stair decoration, plus several other clearly identifiable and seemingly original motifs, occur in their earliest form at Montmorenci. These, not the imported Philadelphia elements, were to be the hallmarks of the high-style vernacular oeuvre that rose in Montmorenci's wake. It is interesting to note that, unlike most of the state's fine vernacular Federal architecture, where simple, traditional exteriors give little hint of the full-blown interior treatments, much of the distinctive character of the Montmorenci school is exterior. The modishness and individuality of the house is thus readily apparent to all, not hidden within—an expenditure of detail more than coincidentally expressive of the clientele.

Four very particularized exterior motifs are repeated again and again. Each derives from the standard classical vocabulary, but is here reinterpreted with a unique accent. A Palladian entrance is changed slightly in proportion, with sidelights shortened by the very deep entablatures carried on pilasters or colonnettes, and elements are outlined by a curious band of highly unusual turned molding resembling a fat bead and reed or string of

spools, augmented with gouged and molded decoration. The Palladian motif is given another form in the flanking triple windows with their "curious, baroque entablature supporting fanlights, [which] though they had leaded radii and concentric lines, were false, and were glazed with glass painted black."[23] An archless version of the window appeared at the second level. A motif which cannot be made out in photographs of the original house but seems to have existed is the variation on the spool molding which occurs on the long pilasters at the corners of the house. Also not visible in photographs but occurring in the Winterthur installation (see footnote 1) is a sprightly reinterpretation of the classic Doric entablature: in an otherwise sober treatment, the standard guttae at the lower edge of the triglyph are replaced by a delightfully unexpected inverted, fluted fan.

Within, the decoration of the stair is complimented by the woodwork throughout, where formally proportioned mantels, chair rails, door and window frames are richly worked with reeding, gougework swags and scallops, rosettes, and the like, all following identifiable patterns.

These motifs—seen first at Montmorenci and found nowhere else in North Carolina outside this regional school—were the hallmarks of a highly personalized style popular in the immediate cultural area for about a decade. Perhaps craftsman Burgess himself—if tradition is correct in recalling him as builder—and perhaps a wider group of craftsmen influenced by Montmorenci and Prospect Hill (see below) found these motifs flexible enough to be applied with grace to a variety of houses and to accommodate the first hints of the coming Greek Revival style in the early 1830's. Exterior details repeat the motifs introduced at Montmorenci rather literally. The interiors of the related houses, however, show great individual variation. At Montmorenci vernacular Adamesque motifs were handled with restraint as background to a collection of expensive imported elements, but in the region's related houses

the vernacular themes played so subtly at Montmorenci find far bolder and more inventive expression. Formal, classically-derived door, window, and mantel treatments are repeated, but they are enriched not with the sophisticated, classical composition ornament of Montmorenci, but instead with an unacademic array of flowers, fans, swags, rosettes, reeding, garlands, and guilloches. Eager to be modish but unshackled by academic restrictions of a more bookish understanding of classical models, the planter clientele gave the carpenter the opportunity to develop from Adamesque motifs the most inventive compositions his skill and imagination could provide.
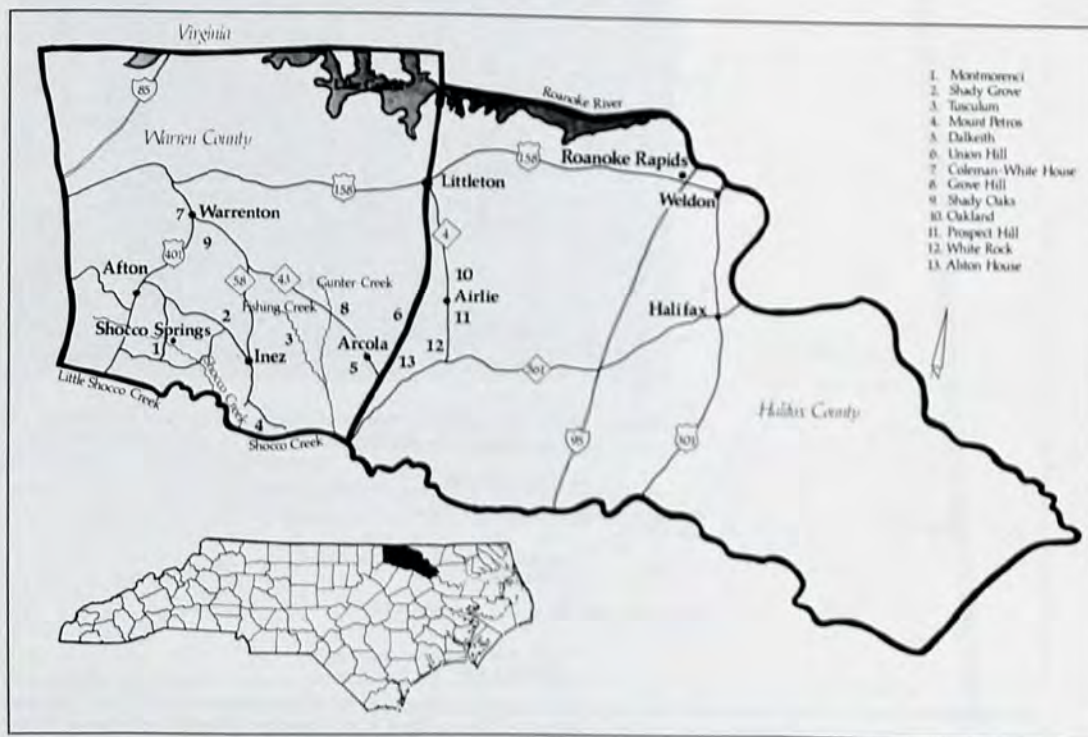
Map showing locations of houses of the Montmorenci-Prospect Hill school in the greater Roanoke Valley.
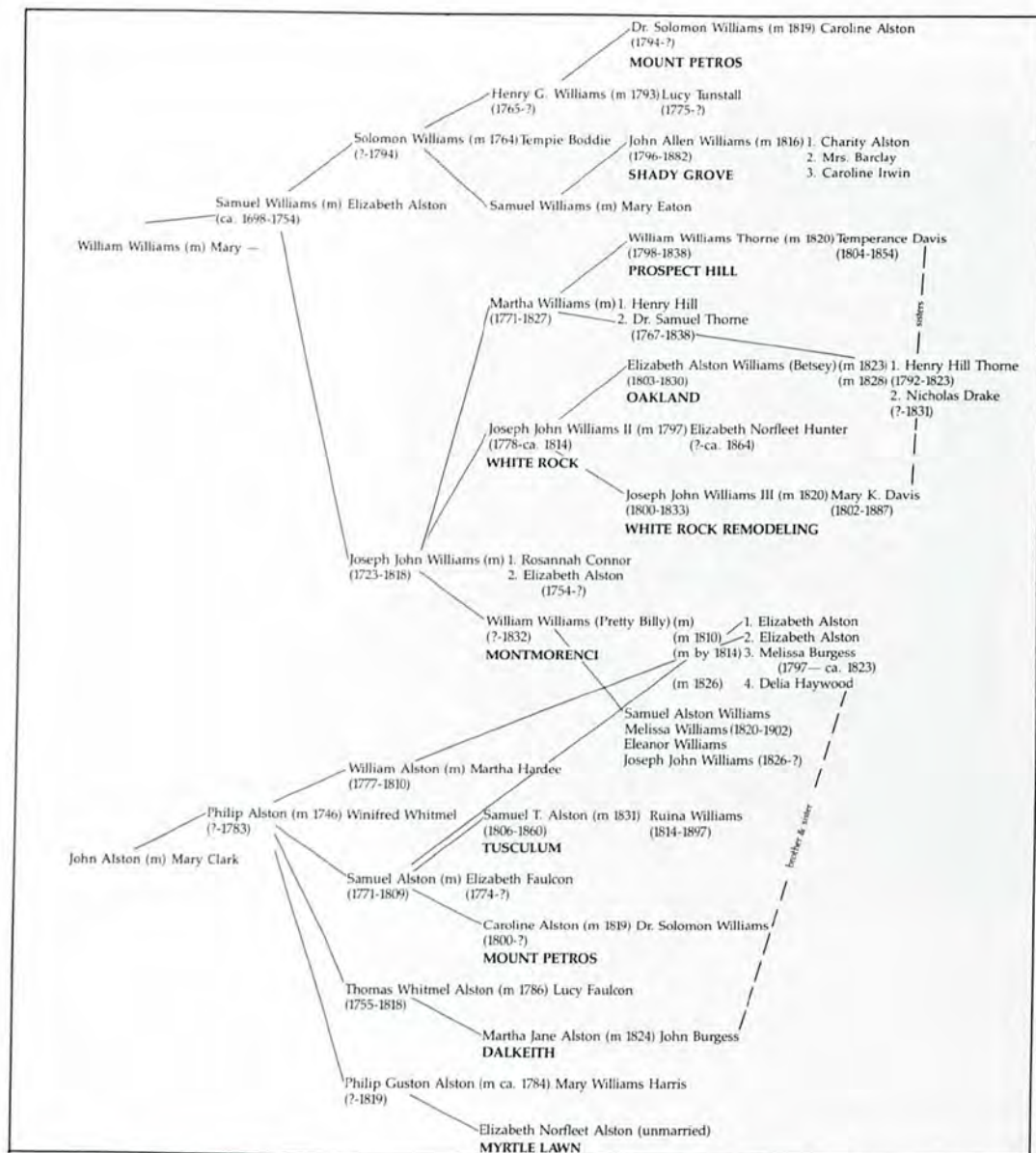
Genealogical chart relating houses of Montmorenci-Prospect Hill school built for members of Alston-Williams family. This chart was extracted from a more extensive "Unwieldy Chart, showing identity of houses in the Alston-Williams family," by Edgar Thorne, 1976. Family members not associated with houses are generally omitted.

A half dozen major houses bespeak Montmorenci connections clearly and abundantly; as many more houses employ some of the same motifs. All are within thirty miles of Montmorenci (see map) and many have close family connections (see chart). Technology and form remain traditional. All are of heavy, timber frame construction of medieval origins using hand labor (probably slaves). Foundations of most are of great cut blocks of local stone, and chimneys are exterior brick stacks skillfully laid in Flemish bond. With slight exceptions, house forms and floor plans are of the types usual in the Virginia-North Carolina area. Only in their decoration are these houses extraordinary.

Perhaps the most intimately related to Montmorenci in some respects yet most antithetical in others is Prospect Hill, located near Airlie in Halifax County (Fig. 5). It was built for William Williams Thorne, a young nephew of William Williams. Thorne married Temperance Davis in 1820. Thorne's ledger of 1825-1828 documents the construction of the house, recording a total cost including materials, labor, and architect, of $3,545.30. The exterior of Prospect Hill has a sense of proportion and unity perhaps exceeding that of Montmorenci[24], with a small, graceful entrance portico and a dramatic rear loggia. Harmoniously incorporated into the whole, the characteristic Palladian entrance, spool moldings, fan-edged cornice, and elaborate window treatment here occur in their fullest combination of the entire group (Fig. 6); if documented as the work of builder Burgess, they give Prospect Hill a central place among all of his creations.

Within, however, with the exception of a quiet and lovely curving stair (Fig. 7), grace is overwhelmed in the welter of intensely vernacular ornament that is applied with almost obsessive extravagance to every possible surface (Fig. 8). Here, it seems, perhaps no longer playing second fiddle to imported elements, or to compensate in sheer quantity for their absence, the craftsman attacked the task with more gusto than taste. Yet, though lacking in the suavity that is the spirit of the Adamesque, the work at

Prospect Hill has a vibrant energy and passion that defies condescension.

Suave restraint is serenely present, however, at the Coleman-White House in Warrenton—the only surviving house of the three known to have had the curious Palladian-derived windows (Fig. 9). Not related to the others by family ties, it was built for Dr. Littleton H. Coleman between 1821 and his death in 1825,[25] and is thus probably among the earliest in the group. The exterior, though lacking the rear loggia, is similar to Prospect Hill, and the characteristic Palladian doorway is enhanced by delicate tracery. Missing, however, is the fanciful fan entablature and spool corner molding. The center-hall plan interior seems almost severe in its simplicity, with ornament reduced to graceful incised swags and quiet reeding. Somewhat more elaborate is the fine plaster work of the ceilings. The stair is a simple one with no reference to the grandeur of Prospect Hill and Montmorenci.

Figure 6. Prospect Hill. The Palladian entrance, elaborate window treatment, and other characteristic motifs occur here in their fullest combination of the whole group.

Figure 5. Prospect Hill, Halifax County. Many of the details of the exterior of Montmorenci are seen again at Prospect Hill, a house also dismantled. Door and window details are similar, and the porch, roofline, and cornerpost treatments are characteristic of the related houses.

Figure 7. Prospect Hill. The graceful stair, while not freestanding as at Montmorenci, featured the same delicate scroll brackets on the treads, plus an interlaced guilloche molding.
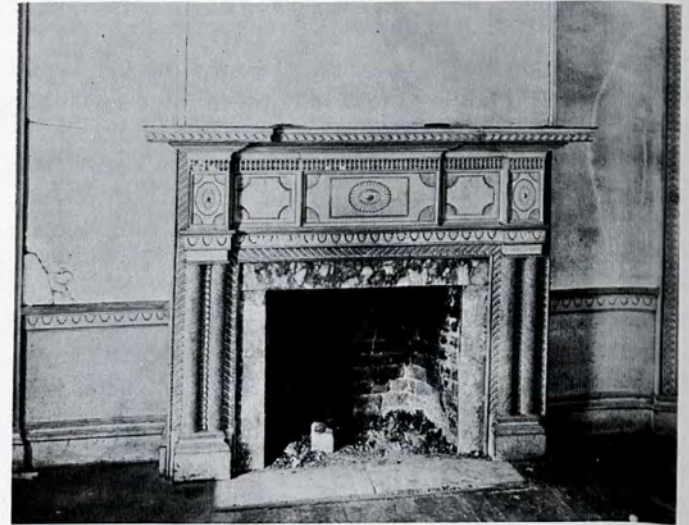
Figure 8. Prospect Hill. Carved, reeded, and molded ornament in profusion bespeak the woodworker's enthusiasm and a vernacular approach to Adamesque decorative motifs.

Figure 9. Coleman-White House, Warrenton. The detail of the windows is slightly simpler than at Prospect Hill and Montmorenci, but the treatment is essentially the same.

Figure 10. White Rock, Halifax County. The only known surviving example of the Montmorenci-type stair decoration, here applied to a simple straight-run stair. The exterior of White Rock, long-time seat of the Williams family, has been altered over the years.

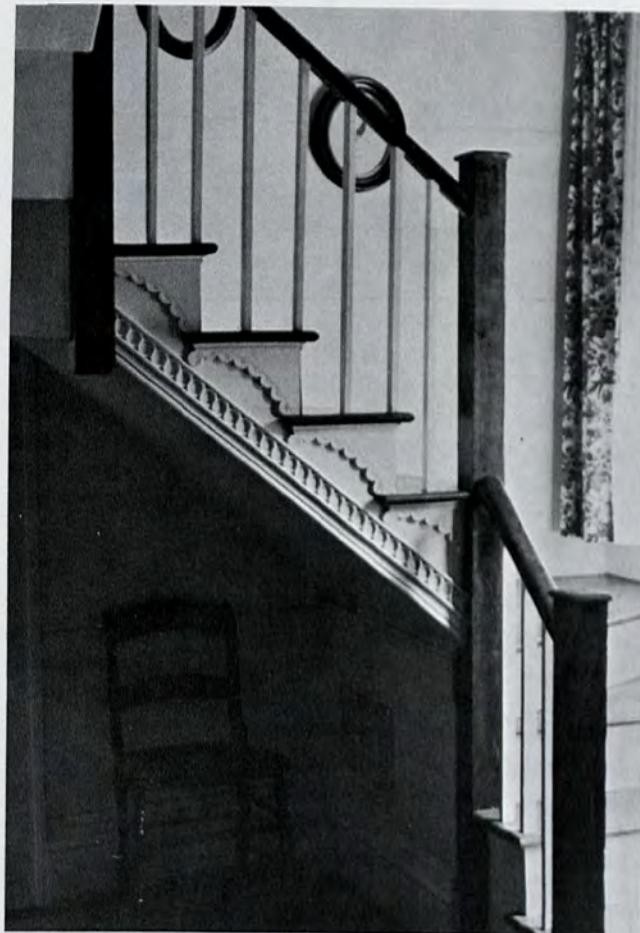In two other houses of the group, however, the detail if not the soaring grace of those stairs is recalled. The only house known to be remodeled in the Montmorenci mode was, appropriately enough, White Rock, longtime plantation seat of the Williams family.[26] It is believed to have been modernized for Pretty Billy's nephew Joseph John Williams III about the time of his marriage to Mary K. Davis in 1820, the year William Williams Thorne of Prospect Hill married her sister (William Williams may have owned the plantation at this time).[27] Young Joseph John Williams's estate inventory of 1833 expressed a typical planter lifestyle, with two carriage houses, one riding horse, seventy-six slaves, ample supplies of provisions and stock, mahogany and walnut furniture, and a library of more than one hundred thirty volumes; Wesley's works, a prayer book and bibles, *Roman History, Aristotle* and *Natural Philosophy, Pilgrims Progress* and *Paradise Lost, History of America,* one volume of *American Revolution* and a five-volume *Life of Washington, Advice to Young Ladies* and *The Female Spectator,* and Gibson on horses and Mills on cattle—these were but a sampling of the subjects of interest to a family of this milieu.[28]

At White Rock a traditional Georgian house was updated with modish elements: the vertical proportions of Adam-derived mantels are stretched to accommodate a broad early fire opening, and the three short, utilitarian flights of the stair are adorned with the graceful scalloped scroll and guilloche band (Fig. 10).

A similar treatment to the initial flight of an enclosed stair was executed at Mount Petros (since demolished) located near Inez in Warren County, and probably built for Dr. Soloman Williams and Caroline Alston who married in 1819. At this house, the entrance motif and the overdoors and mantels were handled with restraint and feature intricate geometric moldings—without the usual rather feminine flowers, swags, and garlands.

Mount Petros was one of several Montmorenci-

Figure 11. Oakland, Halifax County. The pedimented, gable-end, temple-form house was well suited to the Montmorenci-school woodwork. The porch has been reconstructed.

Figure 12. Dalkeith, Warren County. The temple-form house with characteristic cornice treatment; the porch is of a more typically classical character. The four-bay width and simply treated entrance are unusual.

Figure 13. Elgin, Warren County. Beautifully sited, this temple-form house has unusually elaborate and completely preserved finish; its flanking pedimented porches are hidden behind the trees.

Figure 14. Elgin. As is so often the case, the front portion of Elgin hides an earlier house to which the front section was appended. In this case, the "Tidewater" house, one and one-half stories with tiny dormers and full porch, is typical of the late eighteenth century dwellings of the substantial planters of the Roanoke Valley.

related houses that follow the formal, Virginia-influenced, pedimented front house form. The reorientation of the gable end to the front of the house creates an arrangement suggestive of the temple form (the plan of this temple-form house being essentially a reorientation of the side-hall plan, with a front cross-hall and two rear rooms[29]). With the addition of wings or side porches a three-part Palladian composition develops. The distinctive Montmorenci-Prospect Hill decoration was gracefully adaptable to this stylish house. In addition to Mount Petros, four other pedimented front houses in the region relate to Montmorenci and Prospect Hill: Oakland, Dalkeith, Shady Grove, and Elgin. Three of the four were built for young couples of the Alston-Williams family, relatives of William Williams.

The history of Oakland, located within a few miles of Prospect Hill and White Rock, illustrates the complexity of family connections (Fig. 11). It was probably built for William Williams's niece Elizabeth (Betsey), perhaps at the time of her marriage to her cousin Henry Hill Thorne in 1823. Thorne was the brother of William Williams Thorne of Prospect Hill. Since Henry Hill Thorne died the year of their marriage, it is also possible that Oakland was built for Elizabeth and her second husband Nicholas Drake after their marriage in 1828. She soon died as well, and Oakland was Drake's residence at the time of his death in 1831. Oakland then passed to Betsey's brother, Joseph John Williams, and at his death in 1833 it went to his wife Mary K. Williams. She in turn sold Oakland and bought Montmorenci.[30]

Dalkeith, part of the land in the estate of Samual Alston, was near William Williams's Gunter Creek plantation (Fig. 12). The house, possibly begun by Warren County builder Thomas Bragg, was completed for newlyweds John Burgess and Martha Jane Alston; Burgess was the brother of Melissa Burgess Williams of Montmorenci (no known relationship to the builder Burgess). The couple bought the plantation in 1825, and

Figure 15. Elgin. Fan-edged triglyphs here occur on the cornice of the pedimented porch as well as on the main roof pediment. Simple entablatures over the windows are typical of the Montmorenci-related temple-form houses.

Figure 16. Elgin. Spool molding combines with colonnettes and delicate tracery in this Palladian doorway.

Figure 17. Oakland. The blind fan is a departure from the usual fanlight, but the "spool" edging and garlanded motif are typical of the regional group.

the house is believed to date from that time.[31] Shady Grove is believed to have been built for John A. Williams, who married Charity Alston in 1816. It is not certain when the house, located near Dalkeith and Montmorenci, was built.

Elgin, though perhaps the most representative of the pedimented group and most closely related to Montmorenci and Prospect Hill, was not connected with them by family ties (Fig. 13; Fig. 14). Located near Warrenton, Elgin was built during the years 1827-1832 for Elizabeth Person and Peter Mitchel. Elizabeth was the daughter of old school planter William Person, who typified the proud Roanoke gentleman. Family tradition recalls that he had denied his daughter's hand in marriage to an earlier suiter, saying, "My daughter is for no damned poor Virginian. I have quite other plans." The prosperous Scots merchant, Peter Mitchel, several years her senior, evidently suited Person's requirements, and the couple married in 1824. Person settled upon the couple a rich tract near Warrenton, which became part of their extensive plantation of two thousand acres. Her husband's long illness and death in 1846 left to the well-read, intelligent Elizabeth the role of managing the vast plantation.[32]

All four houses share the distinctive Burgess-type fan-edged cornice and spool-lined corner pilasters (Fig. 15), some having fans atop the pilasters as well. Only at Elgin, however, is the beautiful Palladian doorway repeated (Fig. 16); at Oakland a broad blind lunette occurs over the door (Fig. 17). Oakland's pedimented front leaves little room for the Palladian window treatment, which is replaced by a simple entablature. Within, all but one of these houses follows a similar plan, with a front lateral hall and two main rooms to the rear.

The familiar motifs enrich the formally handled doors, windows, mantels, and wainscots, but in each house the distinctive elements are selected and varied in a quite different way, providing great individuality of character within overall unity. Dalkeith, recalling Mount

Petros, has a masculine directness stemming from the introduction of some Greek Revival motifs and the absence of flowers and swags. At Oakland, a restrained elegance is combined with almost playful inventiveness in the handling of reeding, gouged scallops, and cables. The fine parlor mantels in particular possess much of the finesse of the simpler mantels of Montmorenci, as do the swags and flowers of the chair rail. Elgin's interior, on the other hand, achieves a satisfying blend of Oakland's restraint with a discreet spicing of the flowers, sunbursts, rosettes, and abundant reeding of Prospect Hill (Fig. 18; Fig. 19). For none of these houses is a builder known, though the Burgess attribution is appealing.

Still more houses testify to the pervasiveness of the Montmorenci-Prospect Hill influence, combining the oeuvre's distinctive elements with other details typical of later styles of the period around 1830, or incorporating isolated but identifiable "Burgess" elements into an otherwise traditional house. Here, of course, the question of authorship and influence becomes still less clear.

Tusculum near Arcola was built for Samuel T. Alston and Ruina Williams, who married in 1831. The Palladian entrance, entablature, windows, and spool moldings occur on a house of severe dignity on land Alston inherited from his father Samuel's great Gunter Creek plantation. The interior, featuring a handsomely treated stair, is a late expression of the mode with strong suggestions of the coming Greek Revival.

The distant Woodlawn in Halifax County, known as the 1833 home of political leader Mason Wiggins, is an intriguing late adaptation of many of the familiar motifs, highly personalized by the subtle and inventive use of a lifelike acorn motif, handled in a way reminiscent of the earlier fan motif.

The fan-edged cornice, spool-edged corner post, and a limited assortment of interior decoration are applied to an Alston House in Halifax County and the house called Grove Hill in Warren (Fig. 20; Fig. 21)—both

Figure 18. Elgin. Mantel carving is typical of the Prospect Hill idiom.

Figure 19. Elgin. Individualized ornament similar to that at Prospect Hill accents the elaborate overdoors in the cross-hall which terminates in a stair.

otherwise restrained traditional houses which received a soupçon of high style by association. An especially vivid motif found among the extravagances of Prospect Hill—a florid mantel with pilasters featuring a guilloche naturalized into an entwining vine pattern—crops up in more than one house in the region. At the Shady Oaks south of Warrenton, the vine mantel is part of an elaborate decorative program for the chief room of an intriguing tripartite house, rivaled only by the demonstration of the wood carver's invention on the stair. The mantel is employed also on a Franklin County house on the main road from Warrenton to Raleigh.

Great in itself, yet perhaps greater in its role as catalyst for a free-wheeling, highly creative body of related houses, Montmorenci combined vernacular invention with high-style sophistication in a way peculiarly appropriate to the larger-than-life man who built it. Wealthy beyond his compatriots, accustomed visitor to Philadelphia, the source of urbanity and culture, and host to Lafayette, "Pretty Billy" Williams brought to the rolling fields of the remote rural plantation region a house of grandeur and panache never seen there before. Here, in peculiarly satisfactory form, Philadelphia classical propriety joined with the inventions of local craftsman in a house that captured the imaginations of a generation and thus stimulated a craftsman's more inventive potential.

In these houses the contradictions of the aspiring but provincial planter elite were embodied in an unselfconscious expression of ethnic domain that transcends the very self-consciousness with which these houses were so carefully built. It was a culture where earthiness and gusto still underlay careful decorum and classical education, where an entrenched economy and traditional technology was the background for an increasingly leisured, fun-loving, and fashion-conscious lifestyle, and where satisfactions of the bottle, cockfight, and race course were esteemed along with those of a well-stocked library, polished manners, and well-ordered plantation.

This culture was forcefully expressed in vernacular architecture, in which slave labor and local materials and expertise could produce buildings whose modishness was announced in every lavish detail. Fashionable, classical motifs were admired and copied, not slavishly or literally, but with a joy in inventiveness that took none too seriously the dictates of classical propriety. Antithetical in every detail to the present world, here was a tightly unified and traditional agricultural community with a powerful sense of family and place whose aspiring expression of ethnic domain created an oeuvre at once unified and bursting with exuberant individuality.

Afterword

Not the Civil War but the changes it brought have destroyed most of this world and many of its monuments. Irony abounds. The region remains agricultural within an industrializing state, and population figures, black and white, remain little changed. Figures for poverty and outmigration of the young and talented whisper of the Rip Van Winkle years the region once escaped. The great mansions are carried off to be installed not far from the northeastern cities that inspired them. Descendants of the slaves who made the culture possible are tenants in many of the great houses, but leave when the places fall further into decay, to be replaced by stores of the other great resource that built these houses—tobacco.

Too slowly, nearly too late, and for far too few, realization is dawning that in this small region there survive vivid vestiges of a material culture unique in the world, which gives to a region now struggling for a positive identity a potential that can be gained in no other way.

Footnotes

1. Montmorenci was owned after Williams's death by a relative, Mary K. Williams. She moved to Warrenton in the late 1850's but retained ownership of Montmorenci. Falling into disrepair in the twentieth century, Montmorenci was held by a series of owners in the 1920's. In 1935 its interiors and elements of its exterior were removed for installation in the Henry duPont Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Delaware, and elsewhere. The installation was directed by Thomas T. Waterman. A replica of the stair is a prominent feature of the museum. Reports of the installation vary: recollections by men who worked at the museum include one account of its being too rickety to use in the museum and one account of the stair having fallen off the truck and broken into pieces on the way to Delaware. Winterthur maintains a file on Montmorenci in the Joseph Downs Manuscript Collection, and much information on the history of the house has been gained with the assistance of this collection. After the interiors were removed, Montmorenci served as a tenant house for a time but was taken down by 1940.

2. The social and political history of the region is obtained from several secondary and primary sources. Particularly useful books are: Manly Wade Wellman, *The County of Warren, North Carolina, 1586-1917* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959); Wellman, *The Life and Times of Sir Archie: The Story of America's Greatest Thoroughbred, 1805-1833* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1958); and Lizzie Wilson Montgomery, *Sketches of Old Warrenton* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1924), a personal memoir. Unpublished documents include the memoir of Warrenton school teacher Victoria Louise Pendleton, in possession of Warren County Historical Society; the "History of Hastings," by Ellen Mordecai, reproduced in part in *Sketches of Old Warrenton;* and "The Roanoke Valley: A Report for the Historic Halifax state Historic Site," by Elizabeth Wilborn, Jerry L. Cross, and Boyd D. Cathey (1974).

3. Census records, tax records, estates papers (North Carolina Division of Archives and History). Many of the descendants of these families remain in the region to the present, and the continuity of family memory and traditional history is an invaluable and demonstrably reliable source of local history. Access to this lode has been made possible by Warren County's unfailingly generous historians, Mary Hinton Kerr, Pantheo Twitty, and for this project by a special mentor, Edgar Thorne.

4. Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 81.

5. Montgomery, Wellman, Alumni Records of the University of North Carolina, private estates papers and guardian papers, N.C. Archives.

6. Edgar Thorne to author, November 27, 1976.

7. *North Carolina Star,* April 12, 1811.

8. Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina,* 87. See "History of Hastings," for accounts of dances and dinners and other

9. Genealogical material from Edgar Thorne and Mary Hinton Kerr, and see chart. Also marriage bonds (Warren County), wills, estates papers.

10. Warren County Tax Records, 1824-1828, N. C. Archives. No Halifax County tax records for the period are available to show Williams's holdings in that county. William Williams's will (Warren County Will Book 33, p. 443) and estates papers (N. C. Archives), plus an advertisement of a sale of his property in the (Halifax) *Roanoke Advocate* of November 1, 1832 (provided by Henry Lewis of Chapel Hill to Edgar Thorne and thence to author in 1976), identify Williams's real estate. William Williams's real estate in 1828 in Warren County was second in value only to that of William Eaton, whose 7,750 acres were valued at $44,665, and who owned ninety-four slaves. These were the only two persons in the county at this time with land valued at more than $20,000. Few households, even in the planter class, held land valued at more than $10,000 or $12,000 and thirty to fifty slaves. The wealth of the Roanoke planters, however, seems never to have been in the same league as the great eighteenth century estates of Virginia or the antebellum spreads of the cotton planters of the Old Southwest.

11. William Williams's will (Warren County Will Book 33, p. 443).

12. Family and local tradition state that General William Williams escorted Lafayette during his North Carolina tour and took him to Montmorenci to spend the night before escorting him to Raleigh. Though the visit to Montmorenci is not documented, known facts of the tour are not inconsistent with such a visit. General Williams was among those offering toasts at the elaborage dinner at Halifax held February 27, 1825 after Lafayette arrived in North Carolina—Williams toasted "The rising generation—may they follow the examples of Washington and Lafayette." When the Nation's guest and his party departed Halifax, they proceeded to Raleigh, spending one night on the road. Since the road from Halifax to Raleigh passed within a very few miles of Williams's grand and luxurious new house, a stay there, invited by a member of the escort group, seems most credible. "The Roanoke Valley," an account of "General Lafayette visits Halifax."

13. Melissa Williams to William Williams at Philadelphia, June 8, 1819, "If Mowhare Caps are worne Mary wishes you to bring her one. . . . there is two small tapes with a hook and eye sowed in the back of the Frock you carried, rip them off as they would not meet and probably they will guess at my size by that if you have a dress made." (courtesy, Joseph Downs Manuscript Collection, Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur Museum). E. A. (Betsey) Williams to Melissa, from Philadelphia to Warren County, April 13, 1819. Polk Family Papers, N.C. Archives. Charles Coleman Sellers (Peale biographer) to author, August 5, 1977. Charles Peale letters of June 9, 14, and 25, 1822, concerning portrait commissioned by Williams of Betsey, American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia.

14. Peggy Burke, "The Montmorenci Stairway: A Cultural Study," September 1, 1972, unpublished term paper for Winterthur Summer Institute, copy at Winterthur Museum. An excellent study of the house and cultural background. Ms. Burke surmises that Williams, "having seen such elaborate staircases in sophisticated urban areas and desiring one for his soon-to-be-constructed fashionable residence, commissioned a local Warrenton area craftsman, who relied upon a builders' guide as his primary source for construction details," p. 8.

15. Wellford is suggested as a source by Burke, p.6. Further investigation and comparison with a known Wellford mantel seem to support this. A Wellford mantel in the Metropolitan Museum of Art indicates strong similarities to work at Montmorenci, with both featuring a scene from the Battle of Lake Erie (1814). Robert Wellford sold plaster or composition ornament which was to be attached to mantels and other elements. Further study of Wellford and his impact in North Carolina is needed.

16. Letter from Henry Lewis, Chapel Hill, to Edgar Thorne (1976), and information obtained from Heath Long Beckwith, descendant of Melissa Williams, by Mary Hinton Kerr.

17. William Williams (Raleigh) to Melissa Williams (Warren County), December 2, 1814, and Melissa to William, December 1, 1814, and June 8, 1819; the name Union Hill is consistently used to refer to the couple's home.

18. Frances Benjamin Johnston and Thomas T. Waterman, *The Early Architecture of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941, 1947), 40-41, offers a discussion of these houses. Waterman notes in his account that "these houses" are attributed to "Burgess, a builder of Boydton, Virginia," but it is not certain if "these" include Montmorenci or only Prospect Hill and related houses. Waterman suggests possible Virginia work by Burgess as well. Waterman also notes at Montmorenci the "strange combination of urban and rustic detail." The Burgess connection with Montmorenci is somewhat tenuous, perhaps inferred from similarities of Montmorenci to Prospect Hill, where the Burgess tradition is strong. Edgar Thorne notes the ironic fact that "whatever propelled Montmorenci to its exceptional position in the Burgess *oeuvre* may also make it the least essentially Burgess of all the houses," Thorne to author, November 30, 1976.

19. James Craig, *The Arts and Crafts of North Carolina, 1699-1840* (Winston-Salem: Old Salem, Inc., Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, 1965), 349. A James Burgess obtained marriage licenses in Warren County in 1822 and 1832, and some deeds involve him. No will or estates papers were found for him in Warren or Halifax county records.

20. William Williams Thorne's ledger of the 1820's is owned by a descendant, and has not been accessible to this author. Several years ago, notes were made from the ledger by Annie B. Thorne of Littleton, and a transcription of these notes was supplied to the author by Edgar Thorne. When T. T. Waterman recorded Prospect Hill for the Historic American Buildings Survey in the 1930's, he too made notes on the ledger records; there is a variation between the two sets of notes, for Waterman gives dates for entries and adds information about plaster decoration. Both sources cite Burgess as builder, but it is not clear if this is actually in the ledger. Other pages from Thorne's ledger (not mentioning construction of the house) include entries under the name James Burgess and have been copied from the original ledger and provided to the author by the owner of the ledger. The woodwork at Prospect Hill was removed to Connecticut and the house taken down.

21. Victoria Pendleton's unpublished memoir (written in the early twentieth century to record her recollections of antebellum Warrenton) states that "This house was built by a Mr. Burges, a contractor, and he lived there for some time himself. The next time I can find out anything about it, this house was owned by Dr. Coleman." Documentation indicates that the house was built for Coleman between 1821 and 1825, but the traditional Burgess association is of interest.

22. Waterman, *The Early Architecture of North Carolina*, 40.

23. Waterman, *The Early Architecture of North Carolina*, 39.

24. Edgar Thorne to author, November 30, 1976.

25. Coleman-White House, a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, copy in Survey and Planning Branch files, N. C. Archives (as are copies of all other National Register nominations hereinafter cited); research by Charles Blume.

26. Histories of houses are from Edgar Thorne unless otherwise noted, augmented by research from estates papers, wills, marriage bonds, deeds, etc.. Contemporary accounts, correspondence, estates papers, wills, etc., indicate that the names White Rock, Union Hill, Prospect Hill, and Oakland were used as early as the 1820's and 1830's. Tusculum and Dalkeith are also believed to be early names. Montmorenci was probably so called by Williams, but the first known use of the name is during Mary K. Williams's residency there in the early 1840's. In no case is the name of the plantation a recent glamorization.

27. Joseph John Williams will, proved 1818, Halifax County Will Book 2, p. 615.

28. Joseph John Williams estates papers, 1833, Halifax County Estates Papers, N. C. Archives.

29. *See Carl Lounsbury's essay on the domestic vernacular of the Albemarle for documentation of the appearance of this house type in an adjacent area of the state. Ed.*

30. Oakland, National Register nomination, research by author; Edgar Thorne, William Thorne, letters to author; Nicholas Drake estates papers, 1831, Halifax County Estates Papers, N.C. Archives; Joseph John Williams will, 1833, Halifax County Will Book 4, p. 94; Polk Family Papers (N.C. Archives), etc.

31. Dalkeith, National Register nomination, reasearch by author; information supplied by Lula Hunter Skillman, Dalkeith.

32. Elgin, National Register nomination, research by author.

The North Carolina Porch: A Climatic and Cultural Buffer

House plans brought to North Carolina from Europe and from the Northern colonies were commonly adapted to the Southern climate by the addition of a "functional sitting porch." This traditional means of inflecting building form toward the regional environment pervades our vernacular landscape. Here Ruth Little-Stokes identifies the influences upon traditional porch form and presents a thorough typology of traditional North Carolina porches.

The porch is the quintessential "in-between" element—a kind of architectural feature that is continually being rediscovered for its ability to establish and articulate spatial relationships, in this case the very basic relationship between inside and outside. In addition, the traditional porch is usually oriented so as to establish a relationship between house and sun—or, alternatively, between house and public byway.

The North Carolina porch, popular late-nineteenth century version. This example is just east of Raleigh.

One of our most enduring images of Southern small town life is the family sitting in porch swings and rockers on the front porch after supper, exchanging pleasantries with passersby. The "sitting porch" is an appendage no genteel house in the pre-World War I South would be caught without. The porch is perhaps the most valuable Southern contribution to vernacular American domestic building. This claim might be disputed by those familiar with the exuberant porches of Victorian residences built throughout the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However a comparison of eighteenth century regional house types indicates that the functional "sitting porch" occurs only on Southern houses, and only within a subregion of the South of which North Carolina is the northernmost state. The Upland South, Middle-Atlantic States, and New England have only stoops (small entrance shelters). The presence of a porch is perhaps the most distinctive feature of Southern eighteenth century architecture, and the early North Carolina porch has a special significance as an expression of a climatic and cultural buffer element in the vernacular landscape.

During the Victorian period, when such eclectic revival styles as the Greek Revival, the Downing or Gothic Cottage style, and the Italian Villa style replaced local vernacular traditions, porches became common throughout the United States. These styles demanded porticos, porches, and piazzas as elements within the overall decorative scheme of the historical form. These spaces functioned primarily as decoration and only secondarily as sitting areas. Prior to the Victorian era, the porch as a functional sitting room between the indoors and outdoors, and as an exterior corridor between rooms, existed only in those regions of the United States with a subtropical climate. The porch as a functional appendage, rather than a stylistic necessity, is one of the most fascinating elements of early Southern domestic architecture.

The apparent correlation of the cultural South with a

Ruth Little-Stokes

humid subtropical climatic region has long provoked comment. The area traditionally defined as the South includes a subregion—a narrow coastal strip from North Carolina to the Georgia-Florida border and including the Sea Islands—which is decidedly Southern in flavor, yet stands apart self-consciously in terms of overall cultural character from other parts of the South. Though colonized directly from Great Britain, it also had significant connections with the West Indies (the Caribbean islands southeast of Florida which were colonized by England and France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). This subregion is dominated by the cities of Charleston and Savannah.[1] The eighteenth century porch is such a direct outgrowth of climate that it is not surprising that its boundaries of earliest development coincide with this subregion. In the temperate Piedmont and Mountain regions of the Southern colonies, settled predominantly by Scotch-Irish and German colonists who came via the Middle Atlantic States, a more urban, communal, Germanic building tradition shaped the eighteenth century built environment. The eighteenth century sitting porch is not an element in this tradition.

North Carolina occupies a unique buffer position where ecological and cultural elements of the Deep South and Middle Atlantic States intermingle. The state marks the boundary between the upper reaches of subtropical plant and animal species and the lower reaches of temperate species. The greatest single influence on North Carolina's eighteenth century built environment was the building tradition of the Upland South of which Virginia was a part. Yet the presence of the porch links the state with the Lowland (Deep) South. Thomas Waterman, a noted student of Southern architecture, states unequivocally that North Carolina is the northern terminus of the functional porch, and that there is an "almost complete lack of porches of the sort above the border."[2]

What is the precedent for the Southern porch? It is generally agreed that, throughout the Old South, the model for a house suited to the uncomfortable humidity and harsh sun was the West Indian house, a one-story structure set on a high foundation with a long porch extending along one or more sides (Fig. 1). This house type, so well adapted to the sultry climate, was perfected in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by European colonists of the Caribbean islands who preceeded the settlers of mainland America. This West Indian house form also penetrated far into the continent as French settlers carried it up the Mississippi River from New Orleans into Missouri. In the American Southwest, another subtropical building tradition provided the model. The earliest East Coast settlers in this hot, dry climate fused the English detached frame house with the Spanish-Mexican gallery to create another distinctive house type. In it the gallery functioned as an outdoor passageway between rooms and as protection for the soft adobe walls.

In the late eighteenth century, the academic Classical Revival style began to reinforce the functional Southern porch tradition derived from the West Indian model. The classical portico, derived from the front porches of Roman temples, served primarily as an ornate surround for the main entrance, but was often large enough to function as a "sitting porch". Among the earliest and most outstanding examples are the portico of Mount Vernon, completed by 1787, and that of Monticello, completed about 1803. Mount Vernon's portico, which extends the length of the main facade, is closer to the functional eighteenth century model than that of Monticello (Fig.2). The mature Southern porch, an integral feature of the early nineteenth century plantation house in the coastal subregion, is a blend of these two traditions, dependent upon the West Indian model in overall form, the Classical Revival model in decorative detail.

The Southern functional porch takes four major forms: the one-story gallery, the two-story (double-tier) gallery, the gallery extending the length of two or more

Figure 1. West Indies house.

Figure 2. Mt. Vernon.

Figure 3. "Clear Spring," in Craven County, ca. 1740, with original porch foundation.

Figure 4. Victorian documentary of "Clear Spring" in Craven County, showing the porch superstructure before destruction.

elevations, and the sub-gallery, or paved basement porch. North Carolina has examples of each form. The earliest known porch in North Carolina, a one-story gallery, is nearly coeval with the earliest extant buildings in the state. Although the very oldest known dwellings—the Newbold-White House in Perquimmans County, Cupola House in Edenton, and "Sloop Point" in Pender County, all built around 1725—were not constructed with porches, "Clear Spring," built about 1740 and believed to be the oldest dwelling in Craven County, does have an original porch (Fig. 3). The superstructure of the porch has disappeared, but the coquina (marl) foundation, an extension of the main foundation, still exists. The porch extended completely across the front elevation. A Victorian era photograph shows "Clear Spring" with a simple classical porch which is probably original (Fig. 4).

The double-tier porch, engaged beneath the main roof and extending the length of the main facade, and often along the rear elevation as well, becomes a typical feature of pretentious late eighteenth century North Carolina houses, whether rural or urban. Among the outstanding examples are the Burgwin-Wright House, Wil-

mington, ca. 1771, the "Homestead," Edenton, ca. 1775, "Ashland" (the John Skinner House), Perquimmans County, 1775, "Somerset" (the Josiah Collins House), Tyrrell County, ca. 1800, and the Purdie Place, on the Upper Cape Fear River, Bladen County, 1803-1809 (Fig. 5). North Carolina has no existing tradition of urban housing, and no evidence exists to show whether North Carolina's coastal towns ever developed an urban townhouse idiom such as those which characterize Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans. This is one of the most perplexing mysteries of North Carolina urban history, for every other Southern coastal state contains at least one city with pre-twentieth century row housing. Most of these cities also developed a typical urban porch which is a variation of the double-tier gallery.

The most distinctive of these is perhaps the Charleston porch. The dense urban development of Charleston necessitated placement of the narrow end of dwellings to the street, thus utilizing valuable street frontage more efficiently. A double-tier porch extends the length of the side flank, a placement which not only affords greater privacy since it is hidden from the street but also acts as a

Figure 5. Purdie Place, Bladen County, 1803-1809.

Figure 6. Coor-Gaston House, New Bern, ca. 1767, with porch finished like an interior room.

wind tunnel, channeling the prevailing breeze from the harbor through the porch length. The street end of the porch is weatherboarded and contains the only street entrance, although the entrance into the house itself is usually located in the center bay of the flank.

Wilmington, the major deep water port in North Carolina, located just north of Charleston, was perhaps the most likely area for development of the Charleston porch idiom. However, the city suffered a series of disastrous late eighteenth and early nineteenth century fires, and its present fabric dates from the mid-nineteenth century. A 1757 description of Wilmington dwellings by Peter Dubois notes: ". . . Many of Brick, two and three Stories High with double Piazas which make a good appearance."[3] Perhaps Wilmington had an urban residential fabric with Charleston type porches in the eighteenth century. The oldest known building in the city, the Smith-Anderson House, ca. 1745, has been remodelled but apparently had an original engaged double gallery along the side flank. The house is placed with the narrow end to the street and is located just a few blocks from the Cape Fear River. It may be the last remaining example of a

once dominant house type.

Isolated examples of the Charleston double gallery are found along the North Carolina coast. The most beautiful example is the Coor-Gaston House, New Bern, built around 1767 (Fig. 6). It is set narrow end facing the street with a double flank gallery. Unlike the Charleston prototype, however, the porch entrance is located in the center flank bay opposite the main entrance to the house. Nor is the street end of the porch weatherboarded, but it is distinctive as the earliest known example of the porch treated as an interior room, with flush wall sheathing, a molded cornice, chair rail, and baseboard.

The few North Carolina houses with porch ends weatherboarded in the manner of Charleston porches are quite illogically located in rural settings. "Piney Prospect," Edgecombe County (Fig.7), "Eagle Nest," Jones County, and the Preacher Ferebee House, Currituck County, all dating from the early nineteenth century, have weatherboarded end porch walls with sash windows and

Figure 7. Double gallery of "Piney Prospect," Edgecombe County, with Charleston-type porch walls.

Figure 9. Bellamy Mansion, Wilmington, 1859.

Figure 8. Partially enclosed porch stair of the Purdie Place, Bladen County.

traditional center bay entrances to the main blocks.

Both one-story and two-story galleries often function as exterior stair halls in early coastal houses in North Carolina. This placement of the stairway outside the house, accessible only from the porch, is a typical feature of mild climates, and occurs not just on modest farmhouses but on pretentious plantation houses as well. The most common arrangement consists of a recessed (*in antis*) porch, usually in the rear, with the stairs ascending from the porch floor in a single flight, the upper half of the flight enclosed within the main block of the house. Examples of this stair porch are found at "Millprong" in Hoke County and at the Van der Veer House in Bath. In another common arrangement a stairway, usually partially enclosed, is located on the gallery itself leading from one porch level to another. Typical of this arrangement are the stairs at Harmony Hall, built in the 1770's and the stairs at the Purdie Place, early nineteenth century (Fig. 8), both located on the Cape Fear River in Bladen County.

The third major porch form, the gallery which extends around two or more sides of the house, providing an exterior passageway identical in function to the colon-nade inside the Roman atrium house, is a distinctively Deep South porch form. The earliest known example of this peripteral form in North Carolina is the "Homestead" in Edenton, ca. 1775. The double gallery originally extended around the front and side elevations, but the side galleries are now enclosed as rooms. The most famous example of a semi-peripteral gallery is that of the Bellamy Mansion at Wilmington, built in 1859, which has a massively scaled Classical Revival portico extending around the front and side elevation (Fig. 9). In general, however, North Carolina porches do not begin to turn corners until the late Victorian era. During this period, throughout the United States, the picturesque Queen Anne Style transformed the relatively staid porch into a limber acrobat which performed gymnastic stunts all over the house. This flamboyant Victorian porch is beyond the scope of our present study.

The last major porch type, the paved sub-porch, developed in the coastal subregion as a logical outgrowth of the raised basement house, a climatic necessity in areas with high water tables. This form was a continuation of the *piano nobile* building tradition of European cities, where principle living spaces were located at the second story level above the unsanitary, noisy street environment. The first story was reserved for service activities, including food preparation and storage, and was generally the domain of the servants. When a porch was wrapped around a raised basement house, a basement gallery was created. Often these were paved and functioned as circulation corridors and sitting areas for the basement. The only examples of such sub-porches in North Carolina are in Wilmington and date from the mid-nineteenth century. Beneath the wrap-around gallery of the Bellamy Mansion is an excellent example of a slave gallery (Fig. 10).

North Carolina antebellum porches have many interesting construction features which reflect both practical and aesthetic concerns. Flush sheathing was often used instead of lapped siding on the wall area protected by a porch, and the porch ceiling was often plastered, giving the porch the appearance of an interior room. The most popular paint color for porch ceilings was sky blue, a tradition common to many subtropical and tropical regions of the world. Many porches were built with freestanding porch supports resting on masonry bases, with a separate foundation recessed behind the posts to support the porch floor. This retarded floor rot since water dripping from the roof was carried out beyond the porch floor. The Humphrey Williams House in Robeson County, which dates from the mid-nineteenth century, has such a porch. Another example is the Dennis Lennon House in Columbus County, also mid-nineteenth century (Fig. 11).

Double and triple leaf doors which could be folded back allowed the interior hall of some antebellum homes to be converted into a recessed porch. One of the best

Figure 10. Slave gallery of the Bellamy Mansion.

Figure 11. Detail of the front porch, Dennis Lennon House, Columbus County, mid-nineteenth century.

examples of such a double-duty interior hall occurs at the mid-nineteenth century Buckner Hill House in Duplin County (Fig. 12). Here the wide cruciform hall has a double door at each of the four exterior entrances, and one arm of the hall has sash windows in each side wall. "Vernon," the Kornegay house built in Wayne County in the mid-nineteenth century, has a triple-leafed front door which can be folded back to open nearly the entire width of the center hall to the exterior. A similar feature resulted where French doors or floor length windows were used beneath the porch instead of traditional windows. In the Isham Faison House in Faison, Duplin County, two pairs of French doors open to the facade length gallery.

Perhaps the most interesting construction feature

Figure 12. View of four-panel door which closes off one arm of the wide cruciform hall of the Buckner Hill House, Duplin County.

Figure 13. Attic ventilation window above the ceiling joists of the Jesse Piver House porch in Beaufort.

found in North Carolina porches is the primitive air conditioning system which occurs in a group of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century houses in Beaufort, a port town founded about 1713. Southern antebellum houses utilized a variety of ingenious methods of ventilation, all dependent upon orientation toward prevailing winds and adequate air flow to living spaces. The Beaufort porches, characterized by Thomas Waterman as being very closely related to the West Indian porch, are a homogenous group of one and two-story porches covered by shed extensions of the main roofs. Instead of ventilating the attic space with dormer windows which are exposed to the full sun and consequently cause glare, ventilation is provided by a system of openings in the porch ceiling. Typical examples are found at 817 Front Street and 119 Ann Street, story-and-a-half cottages whose porch ceilings contain trapdoors which open to floor level

wall openings in the attic (similar to air ducts in an automobile dashboard) to allow for full cross-ventilation in the attic space. A variation on this system is found at the Jesse Piver House, 125 Ann Street, another story-and-a-half cottage built in 1791 (Fig. 13). The front porch has no ceiling, and at the floor level of the attic story are small casement windows which open to ventilate in the same manner as the first examples. The only example of this ventilation system occurring outside of Beaufort known to the author is at "Sloop Point" in Pender County. The front porch, added in the late eighteenth century, has small square boxed openings in the ceiling through which air is channeled to the loft rooms (Fig. 14). This system was probably a common feature of early coastal houses, but only rare examples have survived. New Orleans shotgun houses of the late nineteenth century contain a more sophisticated version of the same system, consisting of factory made cast-iron ventilators located in front porch ceilings.

Figure 14. Ventilation chutes in front porch ceiling, "Sloop Point," Pender County, late eighteenth century.

Within the realm of the built environment, North Carolina's early porches are the state's most distinctive link with the Deep South. The informal, close-knit society of the "porched South" was dependent upon the casual atmosphere of these in-between living spaces. Special care should be taken to preserve these early North Carolina porches which carry such a significant geographic and cultural message.

Footnotes

1. "United States of America," *Encyclopedia Britannica,* 15th ed., Vol. XVIII, 924.
2. Thomas T. Waterman and Frances B. Johnston, *The Early Architecture of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 42.
3. Janet K. Seapker, *Wilmington Historic District Nomination. An unpublished report prepared for the National Register Office (Raleigh, 1974).*
4. Waterman and Johnston, 41.

Duplin County house in ruin.

Carolina Tobacco Barns: Form and Significance

It is difficult to imagine rural North Carolina without tobacco barns coming to mind. The following two articles provide an opportunity to move beyond stereotypical notions in our understanding of these structures commonly identified with the regional vernacular landscape. Here Ligon Flynn and Roman Stankus consider the barns as most of us usually see them, simply as forms and as forms drawing significance from their contexts.

Tobacco barns south of Raleigh in Wake County.

When considering vernacular design of the Carolinas, one cannot overlook the presence tobacco barns command in the landscape. Through the years they have endured successfully. Tobacco barns are picturesque, always different from one another, yet always immediately identifiable for what they are. These are qualities most people value, admire, and find intriguing in things, so an understanding of tobacco barns may be of some importance to designers and those interested enough to look at the environment in which we live.

To understand tobacco barns in a wholistic sense, we would have to look at them in all of their different aspects. Tobacco barns could be dealt with in at least four different ways, although all four are not of equal importance to us. First we might look at barns as *functional* things—a view that would seek to understand them as shells that play host to a given activity, the processing and curing of tobacco leaves. The physical reality of the barn in this case would be understood as a resultant of satisfying certain functions that need to take place in and around barns. Many advocates of modern architecture would hail this simplistic view. On the other hand, we could try to understand the tobacco barn as the vehicle for an *experience*. This kind of understanding, however, would be much more appropriate for a gothic cathedral than a tobacco barn or group of barns. It is one of the barn's weakest aspects, except during that time of year when the smell of tobacco curing in a barn is a sensation associated with the curing process.

We might also seek to understand tobacco barns the way most people unknowledgable about their workings see them from the road, as a special world of *forms,* or as *forms in the landscape*. In the former case, what goes on within the barn and the barn's intimate relationship with the socio-economic world is overlooked. The barns, themselves, create a world of things with a language of their own that can be dealt with solely in formal terms. The fourth aspect, that of the barns' relation to their con-

Ligon Flynn and Roman Stankus

text, encompasses much of their meaning to us. Quite obviously, the tobacco barn signifies more than is brought to light by considering it simply as a variable form or as a functioning activity setting. The tobacco barn with its own identifiable traits has embedded itself into many travelers' minds so that at a glance we can identify it as we ride down the road. The words "tobacco barn" cannot help but bring into mind an image embodying the qualities and affections we have subconsciously learned to associate with all tobacco barns.

In the following we will be looking at tobacco barns from these two aspects that we consider most important to the person outside the tobacco culture: their *relation* to the world—their meaning—and their form and its variations. Both of these aspects are of great interest in that the first deals with the very essence of barns, what gives them their identity and makes them understandable forms in their context, while the second might be especially intriguing to designers as an example of formal variation in a set of things with a given language having its own grammer. The first aspect deals with barns and how they relate to the world of other things, the second deals with the infinite variety possible using a number of simple rules within a single world of things.

A close examination of tobacco barns reveals that the features which make them most intriguing were probably not at all intentional. To those who *use* barns, they are simply things necessary for curing tobacco, nothing more; to the person not acquainted or particularly interested in tobacco curing, barns are an important part of the world in quite a different way. To the viewer outside the tobacco culture these barns represent a form type whose possibilities have been explored unconsciously and made manifest throughout the environment. Totally different meanings can be derived from one barn to the next because of slight formal differences or differences in the relationship to the environment. In architecture we commonly confront the simple notion that if we change a

Formal and contextual views of the same barn in the Smithfield-Newton Grove vicinity.

Two barns connected by a shed, Smithfield-Newton Grove vicinity.

A similar form seen in a different context, Smithfield-Newton Grove vicinity.

thing, we also change the way we perceive the thing. This is obviously true, but we often fail to see what is equally true, that objects change identity in different contexts. Two identical things mean different things in two different environments. Tobacco barns present us with a multitude of examples both of a thing changed extensively in form and of similar things placed in a variety of contexts.

We generally ascribe human traits to non-animate things, and tobacco barns are no different in this respect. The way a barn "sits," "rests," "stands," or "huddles" on the landscape depends on a vast number of variables, both formal and contextual.

The formal variations in tobacco barns are simply wrought. The major elements that change perceptably are the shaft of the barn, the roof, and the adjoining sheds. These are three simple elements, yet each small change in their geometric or material treatment affects the way we perceive the barns as a whole. The shaft can vary from shortish and squat to tall and slender, but the eye can easily discern the range of sizes understood to be barns. The material treatment of the shaft, as well as the sheds and roof, changes the image of the barn. From well-groomed, to shabby, to fearsome, each tobacco barn sits on the landscape with unique posture. The shed is significant in that it is an addition which reveals itself while hiding other things in various ways. Sheds vary tremend-

ously depending on their size and pitch and their relation to the ground and shaft. They range from a single side attachment to the complete surrounding of a barn and from nearly horizontal to steeper than the pitch of the roof. They conceal as little as a portion of one side of the barn or as much as the entire central core. A shed may appear to be an element separate from the barn or it may take on proportions such that it overpowers and obscures the shaft and endows the barn with an unmistakable monumentality. Easily manipulable and understandable variables here greatly affect the nature of the thing.

The contextual relationships which give barns their particular, sometimes powerful, attributes are again basically simple. Barns normally relate to a small number of things in a few ways. Importantly, they usually have a strong and immediately perceived relationship to a road. When this primary relationship is broken, a different meaning can be read. The barn also has certain usual relationships to fields (within, adjacent to, far from), other farm buildings, and houses. The barn normally sits unceremoniously on relatively undisturbed ground with its base and any shed supports dying into the ground uneventfully. The barn may be oriented to other tobacco barns or possibly other farm buildings but is never near a house. Very often because of the flatness of a field and the way the sheds will obscure the lower parts of the shaft, the barns
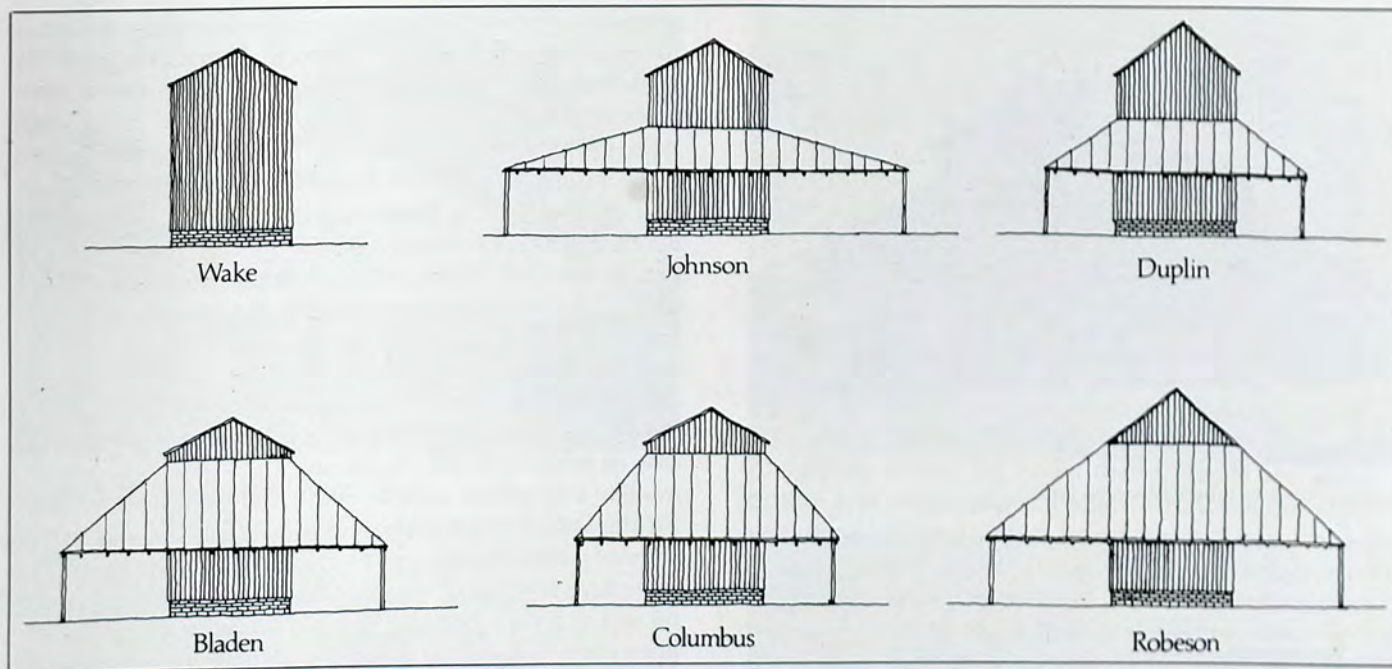
Formal range due to variations in shed attachments.

Robeson County tobacco barn as form.

The same Robeson County barn with mate.

Robeson County tobacco barn as form.

The same Robeson County barn as ritualistic form.

seem to hover over cultivated fields in the distance. Other times barns without sheds jut up like crystaline growths on a treeless horizon. Each of these images—drawn from associations that usually swirl just out of conscious-ness—depends on the particular relationship of the barn to its surroundings more than its particular form.

Often tobacco barns will be clustered or scattered about so that some relationship is present from one struc-ture to another. While only functional requirements lay behind the intentional grouping of these barns and their sheds, the passing viewer is often struck more with the sculptural form that results. In a sense, we find the usual relationship between building and person—such as holds between house and person, for example—reversed in the case of tobacco barns. The house's purpose is to accom-modate and please people, while the barn does so only incidentally. Its only purpose is to cure tobacco and in this respect people are obliged to accommodate the barn. The barn does not "need" people. People are only instrumen-tal in the barn's "desire" to cure tobacco. The passerby does not feel the same bond of a person to thing that he senses in a home; the relationship is more one of person to manipulated material, a notion much closer to sculpture than to architecture. Fascinating variations of rhythm and form can be seen in clusters of barns. With each different relationship of barn to barn, a different visual impact is felt. Some groups of barns seem to be carrying on informal conversations, while other groups seem to overwhelm by their ruggedness, proportions, the distance between in-dividual barns, and relationship to the surrounding fields and roads. Depending on the physical attributes of the barn and one's point of view, barn clusters can appear to be docile and human or, at the other extreme, monumen-tal and overbearing.

It is important to remember how our apprehension of something is biased by our point of view—literally the position from which we look at the thing. In the case of tobacco barns, I have spoken of formal and contextual

Pyramidal barn in Bladen County.

Cantilevered shed near Tabor City.

aspects—actually reflecting two different modes of apprehension. Each has its own viewing bias. When close to a barn we look primarily at its form and its formal details. At a distance our field of vision naturally includes the barn's setting, its immediate physical context. *Seeing* context, we are immediately confronted with relationship and, therefore, meaning. Of course this is a much simplified schema. While these different points of view do result in *biases*, the formal and contextual aspects can never be completely separated. For example, we know a barn because of a number of relationships particular to that barn only and, *at the same time*, related to all other barns. In other words, even when facing a barn point blank so that it fills our field of vision, a good measure of contexting occurs. We know that all barns are within a certain size range, all have a limited number of material variations, all have similar openings and lack of fenestration, and most detailing is handled at a similar level of refinement (or lack of refinement). Each barn delivers its own particular sense of being *in relation* either to this knowledge, as a tobacco barn, or to a more phenomenal, less named world, as an original thing.

The tobacco barn with all of its functionalist intent affords us much more than simply a number of different solutions to the problem of curing tobacco. It is the unconscious study of a simple form, with simple rules governing its transformations and its possible relationships to the world. Surely most all of these simple possibilities have been tried at least once somewhere in the state. Rarely are such studies of form and the massing of forms in the environment so readily or completely available just for the looking.

Carolina Tobacco Barns: History and Function

Here Laura Scism considers the history and the function of the tobacco barn—and specifically, how North Carolina's flue-curing barns differ from those in other parts of the country. Significantly, the form of the typical North Carolina barn is found to derive both from the particular curing process associated with the kind of tobacco grown in this region's soil and from the traditional sixteen-foot square building unit employed by English settlers in the construction of one-room cabins.

While variations in form, materials, and methods of construction do give many tobacco barns a local flavor, their presence is undoubtedly more commonly perceived as a regional phenomenon. For the rural dweller they may well have place-making identity, but for the traveler who lacks direct involvement in the tobacco culture they serve more to establish a definite context against which particular places stand out.
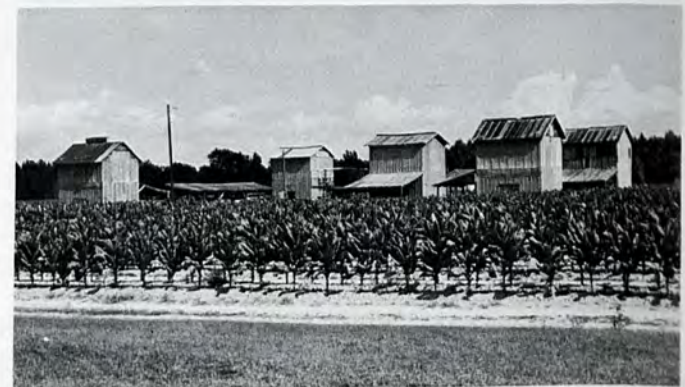
Laura Scism

Each summer, from mid-July to the first or second week of September, North Carolina tobacco farmers are busy harvesting and curing the crop for which the state is known throughout the world. The tobacco barn, where the recently harvested green leaves become the crisp, aromatic golden leaves of tobacco warehouse fame, plays a central role in all these activities. Most importantly, the tobacco crop is cured at the barn. Often, the tobacco is strung here. In fact, the barns are so essential a part of the tobacco culture that in years past the construction of one was a major event, calling for a social gathering of local farm families.

A distinctive landmark in all tobacco-growing regions, the tobacco barn is an especially common sight along country roadsides in North Carolina, the nation's leading tobacco-producing state. On a forty-six mile stretch of N. C. Highway 86 from Hillsborough to Danville, Virginia, for instance, 209 tobacco barns are visible from the road. In one six-mile stretch, thirty-six barns were counted.

The modern tobacco barn has evolved quite a bit since 1611, when John Rolfe imported America's first tobacco seeds from the Spanish-American colonies. The Jamestown growers air-cured their crop—known as Burley tobacco—and this method called for a well-ventilated barn. In fact, these early barns often had only three enclosed sides, and tobacco growers of the seventeenth century deliberately left several inches between each log to insure better ventilation.

As tobacco's popularity increased, so did the number of states where the leaf was grown. The spread to new states and new soils meant hybridization and the development of new varieties. Today, twenty-six different types of tobacco are grown in twenty-two states. Although all tobacco barns are basically alike inside, their exteriors vary from region to region, depending mainly on the curing method used, which in turn is determined by the type of tobacco grown.[1]

Dark tobacco, raised in western Kentucky and Tennessee, is the modern hybrid most similar to the Burley tobacco of John Rolfe's seventeenth century plantation. Today, only snuff and chewing tobacco require large quantities of dark tobacco, and demand for it has greatly decreased. It can be either air-cured or fire-cured; the latter method, however, is rapidly being replaced by the former. Burley tobacco, also produced mainly in Kentucky and Tennessee, is air-cured, as are the cigar-type tobaccos grown in the old free states of the North. Bright tobacco, raised in Georgia, Virginia, and the Carolinas, is flue-cured or, more recently, bulk-cured. Flue-cured tobacco and shade-grown cigar binder tobacco, which is air-cured, are harvested by priming, the back-breaking process of picking individual leaves from the stalk. These leaves are then tied on sticks and hung inside the barn to cure. In Burley and other air-curing regions, the entire tobacco plant—stalk and leaves—is harvested, then strung on sticks and cured in the barn.

Except for the flue-cured tobacco barn, which is usually a sixteen, twenty, or twenty-four foot square, curing barns are rectangular. They range in size from the relatively small fire-curing barns of Tennessee to the much larger Burley barns of the prosperous Kentucky Bluegrass region. The frame air-curing barns may be painted, as they are in the Kentucky Bluegrass area, but more than likely they will have a natural exterior, as only the most prosperous farmers can afford paint. Ventilation is important in all barns, but especially in air-curing ones. Proper ventilation may be provided by large doors at opposite ends of the barn, hinged sideboards, wooden windows or round metal roof ventilators.

The typical fire-curing barn is an unpainted frame or log structure, between twenty and thirty-two feet wide and twenty-six and forty-eight feet long. The doors at either end of the barn are wide enough for a wagon carrying tobacco to drive through the barn. Hardwood fires are set on the wagon tracks and covered with damp

Tobacco barns in the United States (*Reproduced by permission from the* Annals of the Association of American Geographers, *Volume 51, 1961, Hart and Mather*).

sawdust.

The Burley barn is the archetype of air-curing barns, and is found, in addition to Kentucky and Tennessee, in western North Carolina, southwestern Virginia, southern Indiana, and Ohio. The width of the frame structure is between twenty-eight and forty feet, its length between thirty-six and seventy-two feet (although it may be as long as three hundred feet) and its height to the eaves is between sixteen and twenty-four feet. Hinged vertical sideboards provide ventilation, and every third board can be opened and lifted out for air. Wagon-sized doors are located at each end of the barn, and a stripping shed is usually attached to the middle of one side. In the Bluegrass country of north-central Kentucky, air-curing barns are painted two colors, the ventilators contrasting with the rest of the barn. Popular combinations are white with black or green ventilators. In less prosperous Burley-growing areas, the barns are smaller than in the Bluegrass and remain unpainted. In some areas, the grower cannot afford a special tobacco curing barn, so he cures his crop in one that can be put to other uses in other seasons. Shapes and sizes of these barns vary greatly.

The air-curing barns of southern Maryland, southeastern Pennsylvania, southern Wisconsin, and the Connecticut River Valley resemble in general those of the Burley area, but each has its own peculiarities. In southern Maryland, for instance, the barns are seldom painted, and in older barns, loose boards and access doors provide ventilation. Modern barns rely on top- or side-hinged vertical sideboards. A semi-basement stripping room is sometimes part of the barn.

Folks in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, call their tobacco barns "sheds," although their average size is a rather large thirty-two feet by fifty-four feet. Usually painted white, these sheds have top-hinged vertical ventilators and special stripping cellars below. In southern Wisconsin, where cigar binder tobacco is grown, one barn houses a farmer's entire crop, and the barns, usually

twenty-eight feet wide and fifteen feet to the eaves, are as long as necessary to hold the crop. Unlike most other air-curing barns, ventilation is through round metal roof ventilators rather than hinged sideboards. The barns are usually red with wagon-sized white doors at each end and in the middle if practical. Connecticut River Valley farmers who raise shade-grown cigar wrapper tobacco house it in whopping barns that are forty feet by one hundred feet and eighteen to twenty-two feet to the eaves. Ventilation is through top-hinged horizontal, rather than vertical, sideboards, which are attached to vertical poles so that all can be opened at one time.

In size and construction techniques, the flue-cured tobacco barns of North Carolina are very similar to the log cabin homes of the early colonists. Like all examples of traditional architecture, the barns are built without benefit of floor plans. The fundamentals have not changed significantly since around the Civil War period, when metal flues were first introduced.[2]

Size is one of the most striking similarities between log cabins and the flue-cured barns. Most single-room log cabins are sixteen foot squares, as are the popular sized barns. In addition, the space between the logs of both the cabin and the barn is filled with mud or mortar chinking. Both structures have gable roofs, and the walls at the gable ends are often built of vertical or horizontal timbers. The front door in a log cabin is almost always in the center, as are those in most flue-cured barns.

Similar notching techniques are used in both tobacco barns and log cabins. The notching in tobacco barns may range from the simple square or saddle notch to the more elaborate half-dovetail. Sometimes the logs in tobacco barns are hewn; other times, they are flat on two sides and round on the others. And sometimes the logs are round altogether.

The measurements of a tobacco barn are determined by the number of "rooms" in the barn. A room is the space from the top to the bottom of the barn that lies between two poles called tiers or racks. These tiers are almost universally spaced four feet apart horizontally[3] and vertically anywhere from twenty to twenty-eight inches apart.[4] The bottom tier is usually six to nine feet from the ground.

The four foot horizontal spacing of the tiers is due to the size of the tobacco stick, a three-quarter inch by an inch-and-a-half by four-and-a-half foot stick on which tobacco leaves are strung and then hung in the barn for curing. The vertical distance is decided by the anticipated length of the tobacco leaves. A good leaf is approximately eighteen inches long and twelve to fourteen inches wide, but the size varies from region to region.[5] Leaf tips should not rest substantially on the layer beneath, but space is precious in tobacco barns and builders seldom allow much extra room vertically. Good spacing of the leaves also allows heat to flow evenly throughout the barn. Preferably, the bottom tier will be at least eight or nine feet from the ground to allow standing room inside the barn, but six-and-a-half feet is a more common height as space is precious.

Characteristically small, flue-curing barns have square dirt floors, usually measuring sixteen by sixteen, twenty by twenty, or twenty-four by twenty-four feet. In later years, some barn builders increased the distance between tier pole centers to a full four-and-a-half feet, standardizing floor measurements at seventeen, twenty-one-and-a-half, or twenty-six foot squares.[6] The smaller sizes are more common than either of the larger sizes. Height to the eaves ranges from around fourteen to twenty feet.

Rugged and sturdy in order to withstand windstorms, the flue-cured barn is built on a foundation of concrete or stone to which sills or posts are secured. The tiers must likewise be soundly built. A stick of freshly harvested tobacco weighs at least five to ten pounds, and the tiers must be strong enough to bear this weight. A twenty foot square barn, for example, may support as

Corner timbering on barns in Caswell County: (top) V-notch, (middle) square, and (bottom) half dovetail.

much as five tons of tobacco when it is freshly hung.[7] For added support in larger barns, supporting posts and cross beams extend lengthwise and crosswise inside the building, usually at intervals of sixteen inches or some other multiple of four. The barn must also be soundly constructed to assure that air enters only through the ventilator openings. There are two or more of these located slightly below ground level in the foundation wall itself. These base inlets usually open directly under the flues. In gas-curing barns, top ventilation is by means of a vent along the roof peak. Boards cover the opening and can be raised or lowered by means of ropes and pulleys to increase or decrease ventilation.

The door to the tobacco barn must likewise be well constructed to prevent undesired ventilation and to withstand the high temperatures required by the curing process. Usually five-and-a-half by three-and-a-half feet, the door may be located on the shed side of the barn. If it is here, the person who sleeps at the barn overnight during the curing process will not have far to go to check the barn temperature, and, if it is raining, he will not get wet. If the tobacco is strung at the shed, the sticks will be laid near the door so they will be easy to pass inside. But if the door is not on the shed side, a tractor with a flat trailer can be parked right outside the door, thus shortening the distance the sticks of tobacco must be carried when being put inside or taken out of the barn.

Some farmers have solved the question of where to put the door by having two. This makes cross-ventilation during the housing process possible.[8]

The shed, almost always located at the furnace end of the barn and sometimes extended to two or more sides, serves three major purposes. It provides a shady place for the stringing operation, protects the furnace from the rain, and shelters the attendant when he sleeps at the barn overnight during the curing process.

By the eighteenth century, curing with small open fires on the barn's dirt floor had replaced the air-curing of seventeenth century Jamestown. Using the open-fire method entailed setting nine to twenty fires and watching them closely day and night. By 1820, a method of curing that involved the use of flues to distribute heat throughout the barn was introduced in Piedmont Virginia. In the flue-curing process, the fire was kindled outside the barn, and flues carried away the smoke and fumes. This new method reduced fire hazards, required less fuel and more accurately regulated the curing process. By the 1830's most growers used thermometers, which also improved regulation of the process, although some farmers insisted they could judge the state of the cure by simply feeling the lower tier poles.[9] The flue-curing method was widely adopted after the Civil War. Its increased use paralleled the development of Bright tobacco, a low nicotine content leaf that earned its name because of its bright canary yellow color.

In Caswell County, where my research centered— and where Bright leaf was, in a sense, "discovered"[10]— four- and five-room barns are a common sight. To my knowledge, no three-room barns have been built in the county. The average height appears to be around fifteen or sixteen feet, although this varies considerably. And although the barns are supposed to be square, this is not always the case. One barn measured nineteen by twenty-one feet inside; another was twenty by twenty-three feet. The barns are often constructed of pine logs, but many in recent years have been covered with frame, stucco, or some other material for better insulation.

The farmer who flue-cures his tobacco can choose from wood, coal, oil, or liquid petroleum gas as his fuel. Wood was the most common choice until after World War II because of its cheapness and easy availability. Today, oil and gas are the most popular fuels.

A furnace was an essential part of any coal- or wood-burning barn. The size of the barn determined whether one or two furnaces would be used. Two cost more initially, but they are longer lasting and provide

more even distribution of heat than one. Two furnaces also would speed up the heating process.

Located at one end of the barn, the furnace, usually constructed of stone or brick, extended about one foot through the barn wall at ground level. The inner end of the furnace was attached to a flue. Early flues were made of mud and stone or by cutting trenches in the barn's dirt floor and covering these trenches with sheet iron. Twelve-inch sheet metal pipes were introduced around the Civil War, however, and it was then that flue-curing became the most popular method of curing leaf.

If the barn has only one furnace, it will be located near the center of one wall. If there are two, they will be found at opposite ends of the same wall. In a single-furnace barn, the flue extends from the furnace across the center of the barn. At the opposite wall, it connects with a flue laid parallel to the four walls of the barn and connected to either side of the furnace. The flues in double-furnace barns extend from each furnace to the opposite wall, where they turn at right angles and then stretch back towards the barn door. The flues may be joined to lead outside or there may be two smokestacks. The flues should be at least eighteen inches from the barn walls to prevent fire hazards. Most Caswell County barns have (or had) two furnaces with a central door between them.

When a barn is converted to either gas or oil, the furnace is no longer necessary and the farmer's first step is to block up the outside openings, using rocks, bricks, mud, or even cement. Oil or gas burners were then installed, one near each corner of the barn. The old flues were removed and new ones installed, extending from each burner to the corner of the wall and on up the wall through the roof.

Although some authorities claim farmers stopped building the mud-daubed log barns to avoid an earthy odor during the rainy season, my research indicates that wooden frame barns became popular mainly because of the scarcity of suitable logs. The frame barns are not
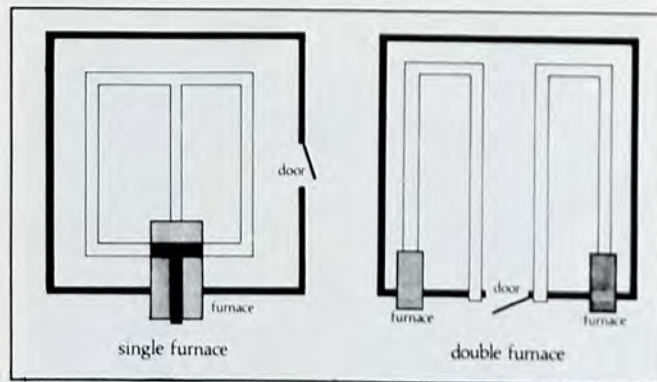
Single and double furnace arrangements.

well-insulated, so builders also used siding. Sheet metal is sometimes utilized for this purpose, but it wastes heat. The most common insulator is a double wall construction with paper between the two walls. Another procedure is lining the four-inch space between wall studs with rock wool. In recent years, concrete, tile, brick, and cinderblock have been used as siding on flue-curing barns but have proven, although fireproof and durable, expensive and unbeneficial to the curing process.[11] Builders topped their barns with corrugated iron, asphalt, cedar shingles, tin, and even thatch. Tin is the most common roofing material in Caswell County.

Concrete barns were built on the North Carolina coastal plain around 1925 and may be superior to all other construction methods, according to Nannie May Tilley in *The Bright Tobacco Industry: 1860-1929*. But in Piedmont North Carolina the old log barns are still in use (although fast being replaced by bulk-curing barns) and are vastly superior to any but the best-insulated frame barns.[12] Few log barns are being constructed today because of the scarcity of timber, but old log barns are not going to waste. Many frame barns are actually log barns with milled lumber or planks nailed over the original log structure to improve insulation. Climatic conditions and the extreme

Duplin County barn with hip roof.

Stuccoed barn in Caswell County.

heat required during the curing process tend to dry the mud chinking and cause it to fall from between the logs. The easiest, most permanent method of righting the situation is to plank over the entire barn or the offending part with either wood siding or some other material. In Caswell County, stucco was used as an exterior insulator about twelve years ago, but this material proved unsatisfactory because it prevented moisture from escaping the barn and caused the collapse of many barns.

Quite a few barns are "planked over" when they are converted from wood-curing to oil- or gas-curing. The siding is used to prevent heat loss, which is particularly important when working with expensive fuels such as oil or gas.

The importance of tight barn construction becomes apparent when one understands the flue-curing process. When a tobacco leaf is first put into the barn, 80 percent of its weight is water. After it is cured, only 20 to 25 percent of its weight is water. There is also a loss of as much as 20 percent of the dry matter of the leaf during curing. The flue-curing process is basically a two-part drying-out procedure in which the leaf is first yellowed at a moderate (ninety to one hundred degrees) temperature and a high relative humidity (80 to 90 percent), and the web and stem are then dried by gradually increasing the temperature to the 160 to 180 degree range and lowering the humidity so no discoloration will occur. Drying the leaf too fast will result in a muddy, dark discoloration of the leaf known as scalding. Drying too slowly will cause sponging, the appearance of red or brown spots on the leaf. The absence of these faults means a higher grade of leaf, which will consequently command a higher price on the tobacco market.

The construction of a tobacco barn was occasion for a social gathering of neighboring farmers and their families, just as the building of a log cabin also called for celebration. Bose Layne, seventy-eight, a Caswell County tobacco farmer for almost sixty years, noted in an inter-

view that a barn-raising was an all day affair, capped with a big dinner at the barn owner's home afterwards. Layne, who recalled attending his last barn-raising twelve or fourteen years ago, said twelve to fifteen men built the barn together. Some, because of special talents, would be called on to perform specific tasks. Layne, for example, was a notcher of logs. Two men, using ropes and poles, raised the logs to the desired barn height, which Layne said was fourteen or fifteen feet. When the logs were at least six or seven feet high, the men began putting tiers in about every three logs. By dinnertime, the core of the barn was completed. The next day, the barn-owner chinked and daubed his new outbuilding, adding the rafters and sheeting for the roof himself. If he wanted, he might also plank over the logs for better insulation.

Because logs are thick, they provide good insulation, a requisite for tobacco barns. Layne noted that frame barns are "all right" for curing tobacco, but logs are naturally better insulators. Nevertheless, logs were probably used as much out of convenience and financial necessity as any other reasons. Logs were usually cut from trees on the farmer's own land, trees which would eventually be destroyed anyway to make room for a new tobacco field or home or barn. One's own timber was always cheaper than milled lumber.

When harvesting begins, the days start early. Mrs. Layne said she rises at 4:30 a.m. and prepares breakfast for her husband. While he is in the field priming the tobacco, she gets dinner ready, cooks bread, churns butter, and milks the cow. Then she hurries to the barn, where she helps her husband by stringing tobacco. Until recently, the Laynes strung tobacco by hand at a wooden stringer, a waist-high, ┼──┼ -shaped platform about the size of a sawhorse. The tobacco stick was laid across the top, fitting into the ╲╱ -notches at each end. Women and children usually did most of the stringing and "handing leaves," the process of handing a bundle of three to four leaves to the stringer, who in turn loops the light-

weight cotton twine around both the bundle and the stick. Each stick usually holds about twenty-five to thirty bundles and weighs five to ten pounds. One person is usually responsible for laying the finished sticks down in a neat pile.

The stringing process usually goes on near the barn, either under the shed or under the shade of a nearby tree. The latter is more common, since the sheds are fairly small. The stringer usually keeps count of how many sticks have been strung. This way, she can tell the men in the field when the barn is almost full. All farmers know approximately how many sticks of tobacco a particular barn will hold, and knowing how many sticks will have to be housed also makes it possible to space them evenly throughout the barn.

Housing the tobacco begins as soon as the men finish pulling. Depending on the size of the barn and the number and ability of the men helping, this procedure could take one hour or four. Layne estimated that with two men up in the barn, straddling the tiers, two men on the floor, and one man passing the sticks in from the pile outside, a "big barn"—five or six rooms, seven hundred to nine hundred sticks—might take as long as three to four hours to house. A "little barn"—four rooms, four hundred to five hundred sticks—might take only two-and-a-half hours. But Jack Scism, who has worked with tobacco all his life, said, "If you have good people, you could finish in an hour."

Layne said he spaces the sticks about seven inches apart on the tiers. This means there are twenty-six or twenty-seven sticks on each set of tiers in a four-room barn and thirty to thirty-two sticks on each tier in a five-room barn. "That's just about the right spacing for the heating air to go through," he explained.

Although housing tobacco is a strenuous job and requires a certain degree of skill, it is not that dangerous. "I never heard of anybody falling or getting hurt," Scism said. "Housing was always my favorite part of the whole

process. It's a lot more relaxed," he explained.

The curing process begins as soon as the barn is full and the door is shut. For the farmer who still cures with wood, like Bose Layne, flue-curing means a constant vigil. "No sick child demands more constant and careful watching than a barn of the golden leaf when it is being cured by the flue process," a North Carolina editor wrote in 1888. For the grower who cures with oil, the process is not quite so arduous: a carburetor can be set to allow a certain amount of oil to enter the burners, which therefore means the temperature will remain constant. "With wood-curing, a farmer didn't get a lot of sleep," Scism recalled. "You couldn't control the temperature unless you were there. The furnace was like a fireplace: you had to keep wood on it to keep the fire up."

Layne, the only Caswell County farmer to my knowledge who still wood-cures his crop, checks the barn every hour or hour-and-a-half to add more wood to the fire. If the fire were to die out or the temperature to decrease, the lack of hot air in the flue would have an adverse effect on the drying process.

During the day, the farmer could make periodic trips to the barn to stoke the fire. In fact, the barn was usually located near the field so he could pull (or prime) tobacco and cure his crop simultaneously. But at night, it was more practical to sleep at the barn, under the protection of the shed. "I did some of my best sleeping at tobacco barns," Layne said, noting that he split the night shift with his father as a boy. "Unless you're a mighty sound sleeper, you'll have your mind on it [stoking the fire]," he added. "You'll wake up. I don't know what it is, but you'll wake up. I've never used an alarm clock." But a lot of farmers did rely on alarm clocks.

"Checking on the barn is a lot of trouble, and I don't like to go out and tend to it," Layne said. "I've been thinking about changing to oil. But I was raised with the wood. It's just natural to me."

For some, staying at the barn overnight could be-

"Bulktobac," wave of the future.

come a minor social event. Scism recalled going to the barn around dusk to keep the person responsible for the curing company. During August when the apples began to ripen, Scism said, people would take those to the barn and roast them at the furnace. Corn and potatoes were also often roasted there.

Times are changing in the flue-curing regions of North Carolina's tobacco country. Electric stringing machines are fast replacing the once familiar wooden stringers, and eventually even the harvesting process may become mechanized. While the old log tobacco barn will not disappear from the landscape any time soon, it may be obsolete in a few years. Already, rows of bulk barns dot the highways. Bulk curing requires less labor and results in a better, more desirable cure. For those who can afford them ($8,000 each), they are the wave of the future.

Men like Bose Layne who adhere to the old ways partly because "it's natural to me" are rare. In the tobacco industry, where farm help is difficult to find, an attitude like Layne's is especially unique. He remarked once during the interview, "It was a hard life, but we lived through it." Tobacco farming is a hard life, and the rugged tobacco barn serves as a symbol of that.

Footnotes

1. All information on tobacco and barns outside North Carolina is based on data contained in an article entitled, "The Character of Tobacco Barns and Their Role in the Tobacco Economy of the United States," by John Fraser Hart and Eugene Cotton Mather in *Annals of The Association of American Geographers*, 51:3 (Sept., 1961), 274-293.

2. B. C. Akehurst, *Tobacco* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1968), 170.

3. Four feet apart horizontally means four feet from the center of one tier pole to the center of another. The actual space of one tier pole would be several inches less than four feet.

4. Wightman W. Garner, *The Production of Tobacco* (New York: The Blakiston Company, 1951), 164; and Akehurst, 171.

5. "Tobacco: Heat From Oil Cures Tons of This Great North Carolina Crop," in *The Lamp*, XXIX (Jan., 1947), 21.

6. Garner, 163.

7. Akehurst, 171.

8. Housing is the process of hanging the sticks of strung tobacco in the barn. Tobacco must be housed in a single day to insure a uniform cure, and this is one reason for the popularity of the smaller barns. Even in the absence of artificial heat, leaves will begin yellowing if put in the barn.

9. Joseph Clark Robert, *The Story of Tobacco in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 219.

10. One rainy night in 1839, Stephen Slade, the eighteen year old slave of prominent Caswell farmer-politician Abisha Slade, was tending the fires in one of his master's barns. He fell asleep and awoke to find the fires almost out. He rushed to find a dry piece of wood, but the only thing he could get was a charred butt from the blacksmith pit. (Stephen was the plantation blacksmith as well as its manager.) Stephen threw the butts on the fires to revive them. The result: the yellowest, brightest, crispest, most beautifully cured tobacco in the county. People came from neighboring areas just to gape at it. Reportedly, the tobacco from that particular barn sold for $40 per hundredweight on the Danville market when other tobacco was going for $10 per hundredweight. Captain Abisha Slade gave up his political career to become missionary for the Bright leaf.

11. Garner, 164.

12. Garner, 162.

The Creation of a Vernacular Townscape: A Case Study of Spring Hope

According to the North Carolina Atlas *this state is an "urban anomaly," ranking forty-fifth in the nation in degree of urbanization. The contemporary pattern of rural dwelling on small landholdings has its roots in the history of earliest settlement when both law and unstable government discouraged the amassing of large estates. During the nineteenth century an even smaller percentage of the population lived in towns than today. So saturated was the countryside that when railroads were laid through it during the decades before the Civil War and again during the last quarter of the century, commercial centers precipitated at practically every highway crossing like beads on a string. And thus were born the sleepy Southern railroad towns—farmers' markets—so central to the region's image in fact and fiction.*

Today North Carolina's railside villages typically appear as underemployed anachronisms, with depots standing vacant or converted into warehouses or, lately, public libraries and community centers. By the yardstick of commercial expansion that our society uses to measure municipal health, these small towns are usually doing poorly. And, like everyplace else, they have become prey to car culture's dissociative influence.

With justification, Bob Klute considers the railroad village a "vernacular townscape." Recognizing that it is today highly vulnerable to change, he sets out to determine what elements of one such small town are worth saving if the town is to retain its identity and strong sense of place in the minds of its inhabitants. For the most part what he finds are definite distinctions between traditional town features that "belong" and the more contemporary development that could be "anyplace."

On the road from Raleigh to Rocky Mount, thirty-three miles from Raleigh on that road, the road becomes a road and ceases to be a highway. Until then, the highway runs two lanes in each direction, the lanes separated by a wide median and sunk between grassed embankments on either side. Along most of the way, a line of woods marks the edge of the highway right-of-way and blocks the view of the driver out into the countryside. At mile thirty-three, the eastbound lanes curve to the left, climb a slight rise, and join the westbound lanes at a crossroads. After the crossroads, there are two lanes separated by a yellow line, with gravel shoulders. There are trees and fields on either side.

At mile thirty-five, the small blue hemisphere of a water tank is visible, rising behind a line of pines ahead. The road reaches the pines and bends left to run through them. They are high on either side. Underneath them are brick ranch houses with carports and garages. Paved drives go from the carports through the wooded yards to the road. The road turns another curve. Now it is out of the tall pines, and on the right is a low and intermittent screen of young conifers. Beyond this the land is flat and bare. But it is green, even in the summer, and the green is that of suburban lawns, mown flat. In the middle of each green lawn is a brick ranch house which faces across a street to one like it. The houses, separated by the streets and the wide lawns, stretch back in foreshortened rows from the main road to the large round bulk of the blue water tower.

This is mile thirty-six from Raleigh, and it is the town of Spring Hope, North Carolina. Past the water tank and ranch houses the road turns back to the right and runs up the side of a small ridge. At the top there is a car sales lot and a gas station to the right, a Tastee Freeze and a mill outlet store to the left. From here the road runs straight down the other side of this ridge and up the side of the next where the tops of large hardwood trees are visible above the crest. At the bottom, between the two hills,

there are dilapidated frame houses and a railroad siding with a cluster of sheds.

Going up the further rise there is a glimpse of the top story of a face of storefronts to the south and right of the road over the backs and roofs of one-story buildings. If the driver turns his head as he nears the hilltop, the storefronts are in view face on and are a block-long unbroken line. There is a traffic light in the road at the hilltop. A gas station and stores face the intersection. But this is not the center of town. The center of town is the line of storefronts two blocks south. In the morning it is this line of storefronts which is first lit by the sun while the lower buildings are still in the shadow of the hill.

On the other side of the light the road goes straight on under huge old street trees, past a brick church, and then past houses. The houses are under the trees and are close to each other and close to the road which is still, however, a road and not a street. The yards of these houses are planted with smaller ornamental trees and shrubs, and the houses themselves are of different styles and types of construction. Some are made of brick and have light green shutters; some are frame houses, and whether one-story or two, they are painted white with black shutters. The road runs between them and the big, close-set street trees. Where the trees and houses end, the road turns left past fields and a few buildings and passes on to the next town.

Spring Hope is described by the people who live there as a "small town." In comparison with Raleigh and Rocky Mount it *is* small: it has a population of no more than 1600 people, about 1/100th the size of Raleigh. Spring Hope was, and is, a farm center. At one time the railroad played the major role in its economy; it brought in farm equipment and supplies, and took out farm produce. It is of lesser importance now, but its physical presence is still very much apparent in the town. The railroad tracks split the town in half, running in from the east right through the central business district. The town center, in fact, is
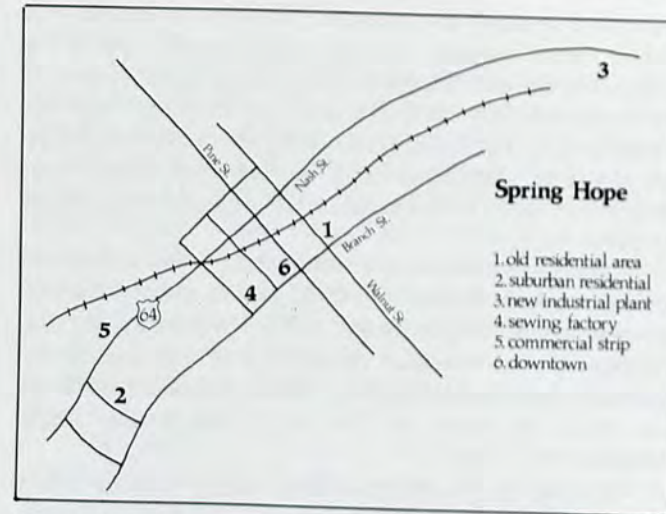

Figure 1. Spring Hope, in Nash County on Highway 64.

Spring Hope

1. old residential area
2. suburban residential
3. new industrial plant
4. sewing factory
5. commercial strip
6. downtown

organized around the railroad. The line of storefronts visible from the main road faces across Main Street to the railroad tracks and the old wooden frame depot (which is no longer used as such and is being converted into the town library). The Square formed by the tracks, the depot, the blocks of storefronts, and the section of Main Street adjacent to them is the heart of the downtown business district.

Just to the east of the downtown is the area of old residential homes and tree-lined streets through which the main road, "Highway 64," runs. These two areas, the downtown and the older residential streets, are instrumental in making Spring Hope the kind of place it is. They also form the basis for the study which this article describes.

Spring Hope was selected for study because it is a typical small town in North Carolina. By typical I mean two things. First, it is typical in population size. I found that, with its population of about 1600 people, it was well within what I identified statistically as the range for small towns in North Carolina: from a population of 1,000 to one of 2,500.

Second, Spring Hope is typical of small towns in one region of North Carolina, and typical in the sense that it embodies features of town form characteristic of towns in that area. The region embraces part of the Coastal Plain and Piedmont of North Carolina. The town form reflects the economic importance of the railroads, dating from the time of their extension westward from the eastern part of the state in the last half of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth. The railroad characteristically runs through the center of town, right down the main street, with the stores along Main Street facing it in an unbroken line of fronts as in Spring Hope. A small railroad depot next to the tracks is also typical. Adjacent to this central business district there is usually a residential area of older homes and streets with trees.

I maintain that these elements of the townscape exemplify a vernacular town form, one that is a response to the conditions of a particular area, represents a tradition derived from these conditions, and is created by the people who inhabit or use the town. It is, then, a creation of what Amos Rapoport calls the "folk tradition," defined as being "much more closely related to the culture of the majority and life as it is really lived than . . . the grand design tradition. . . ."[1] Rapoport equates this folk tradition with the creation of vernacular artifacts, primarily houses. I extend the definition of artifacts to include town form. My usage also embodies the dictionary definition of vernacular, as "belonging to, developed in, and . . . used by, the people of a particular place, region, or country. . . ."[2]

There are other elements of town form typical of small towns, and typical within the last few years. These are associated with the highways which increasingly bypass the towns and draw an assortment of business enterprises such as fast-food restaurants, gas stations, car sales lots, convenience stores—in essence, strip development—out to the edge of town. This development may be a kind of *popular* architecture or urban form, but it is not really vernacular as I define it here. It is derived from a popular culture that is nationwide, and is not related to any particular region.[3]

All of the typical elements which I have been discussing were observed and catalogued during a two day survey by car of about a dozen small towns. As a result of this survey Spring Hope was chosen for this study. Spring Hope has very good examples of the typical downtown and older residential area, but it does not yet have much of the type of development associated with a bypass. Currently a bypass is being constructed around the town to the south, from the crossroad west of Spring Hope where highway 64 becomes a two lane road to a point east of the town. In other small towns in this area of North Carolina the completion of a bypass has served as an instrument for change, bringing the older and the

newer types of town form into conflict. The outcome of this process is usually a deteriorating and lifeless downtown which is no longer competitive with the new section of strip development out on the bypass.

Although not directly associated with a bypass, suburban housing developments and new industrial plants located outside the town are also examples of this conflict between an older town form, associated with the economic history of the area, and a newer form, associated with changing economic conditions and a national car-culture.

However, the bypass around Spring Hope is not yet finished, and there is no development along it. While some highway development exists along U.S. 64 going through town, the downtown is still viable, and it is still the main business area.

Spring Hope is thus an excellent candidate for a town conservation program which seeks first to assess the possibly destructive effects of change and then to find ways of adjusting to it or guiding it. Two types of planning programs, historic preservation and revitalization, are used by professional planners to address these problems. Historic preservation seeks to ameliorate the effects of change by preserving those elements in the town environment which are critical to the sense of the place as it has existed in times past. Towards that end the preservationist selects those structures or areas which are exemplary of important architectural traditions and periods and which form an important link with the past. By maintaining this link a continuity is established from the past through the present and into the future. While preservation is applied to both residential and commercial structures and areas, revitalization is more usually aimed at the downtown business area of a city or town. It attempts, through the renovation and reuse of existing facilities, to make an aging downtown area competitive in the present. When applied to small towns, both of these programs would come under the rubric of town

conservation.

In programs of this kind some method of evaluation must be used to determine which structures or what elements of an area are critical to maintaining its identity as a place. In the case of the vernacular artifact, those who use the artifact and live with it on a daily basis are the most knowledgeable judges of its value in the town environment. So, how do the residents evaluate their town environment; what are the criteria which they use to judge; and what are the *elements* in their townscape which they consider important? The questionnaire which I used in the study of Spring Hope was designed to determine just these things.

Two versions of this questionnaire were distributed, both of which contrasted the older with the newer examples of town form. In the first version, three pairs of pictures were used: one pair showed examples of the old and new residential scenes, one pair showed industrial scenes, and one pair showed commercial. For example, the pair of residential pictures contrasted a scene of a shady tree-lined street with old homes with a scene of a relatively new suburban development at the edge of town. The industrial pair pictured an older downtown sewing factory contrasted with a new large plant located outside of town. The commercial pictures contrasted a panorama of the downtown area with a scene showing some of the new development—the Tastee Freez, a gas station and the mill outlet—along U.S. 64 as it enters the town.

All of the pictures represented actual scenes in Spring Hope. They were line drawings taken from photographs made in the town, and were intended to typify the kind of development which they portrayed. The photographs are reproduced in Figures 2 and 3.

The second version of the questionnaire abstracted individual elements from the pairs of pictures used in the first version—such as structures, trees, cars—and scrambled those from the old scenes with those from the new.

Figure 2. Residential:
A. The older residential area.

B. The newer suburban development.

Figure 4 shows an example from each of the two versions of the questionnaire: A. reproduces the pair of residential scenes from the first version, and B. reproduces the individual residential elements from the second version.

The residents of Spring Hope who filled out the questionnaire were told, in the case of the first version, to choose one of each pair of pictures in response to each of three questions. For the second version, respondents ranked each of the individual elements displayed, also in response to three questions. The questions were: "Which are most (and least) typical of Spring Hope?"; "Which are most like (and least like) the way Spring Hope should be?"; and "Which are most (and least) worth preserving in Spring Hope?" The first question is aimed at eliciting information about the things the residents feel typify small towns and comprise their vernacular; the second tries to determine how they value these elements; and the third takes the general statement of the second and applies it to a specific purpose, that of preservation planning.

For people filling out the first version of the questionnaire, answering the questions involved choosing one picture as "most . . . "—the other picture becoming, by default, "least. . . . " For the second version respondents had to rank elements along a range running from "most . . . " to "least. . . ." Respondents for both versions were also instructed to put written comments next to their choices, explaining the reasons for their selection.

Questionnaires were distributed to more than a third of the households in Spring Hope. Of the 201 questionnaires delivered, 89 were filled out and returned.

The majority of people filling out the questionnaire felt that the scenes showing the older residential area and the older commercial area, the downtown, were most typical of Spring Hope. The majority also felt that these two scenes were most like the way Spring Hope should be, and most worth preserving. The written comments

attached to the pictures and to the individual elements indicate a consistency in the way these examples of town form were evaluated for all three questions. The same consistency also holds true for their opposite numbers, the suburban subdivisions and the highway strip development.

The most valued individual elements of the Spring Hope townscape are trees, and next to them the old store-front buildings of the downtown and the large old homes in the older residential area. By "most valued" I mean that these elements, above all others that were pictured, were considered to be most typical, most like the way Spring Hope should be, and most worth preserving. These elements are most clearly identified with Spring Hope, and therefore they are most desirable, both in the sense of wanting more of them in the town, and in the sense of keeping what is there.

Not only the individual elements themselves but also the ways they are put together into the complete scene are important to this identity. The fact that a street has big old trees and old homes on it contributes to its identity, but also contributing is the fact that the trees are close-set on relatively narrow streets which allows them to form a continuous canopy overhead; that the old homes are not all alike and are of a variety of sizes and types; and that the homes are close together, although they are sited different distances from the street and their lots are of different dimensions. The nature of the interrelationship between the individual parts, the homes and trees and the street, gives a place its particular character, and gives it its "sense of place."

Residential elements which are least typical, least like the way Spring Hope should be, and least worth preserving are found in the examples of suburban development. The small brick ranch houses which all look alike and the lack of trees and vegetation are cited as reasons for the low value. While the subdivision pictured is commended for its "spaciousness" due to the wide

Figure 3. Commercial:
A. The commercial strip on Highway 64.

B. The old downtown business district.

streets and the large lots, the cookie-cutter sameness of those lots and the identical siting of the identical houses stimulated comments about its sterility and barrenness. The way that the individual elements are related functions here to convey a "sense of no-place"—a place like any other suburb.

The same pattern of evaluation prevails for the commercial scenes and elements. The line of storefronts downtown is *the* business district of Spring Hope. The older stores along Main Street are the focus of the downtown's identity. There are three reasons why this is so. First, the way the stores are related to each other contributes to this identity: they do not stand singly but together. Because they stand together they create a downtown greater than the sum of the individual stores. By contrast, the highway development along U.S. 64 does not possess this identity as a particular place. The individual businesses were not perceived as comprising a single entity, like the downtown, but were variously described as being spaced far apart or placed haphazardly.

Secondly, the identification of the downtown with the entire town of Spring Hope is related to the *central* location of the stores and what that implies:

Heart of the town's life . . .
. . . nucleus of the town . . .
Spring Hope wouldn't be the same without Main Street.
This is our town.
Only one place in the world looks like this: Spring Hope.

By contrast, again, the highway development lacks this identity. It conveys a sense of every place, or no place at all:

Looks like every other place . . .
. . . doesn't feel like it belongs in the town . . .
. . . can find it almost anywhere . . .

Figure 4. Examples from the two versions of the questionaire: A. The first version: the two residential scenes.

B. The second version: the individual residential elements.
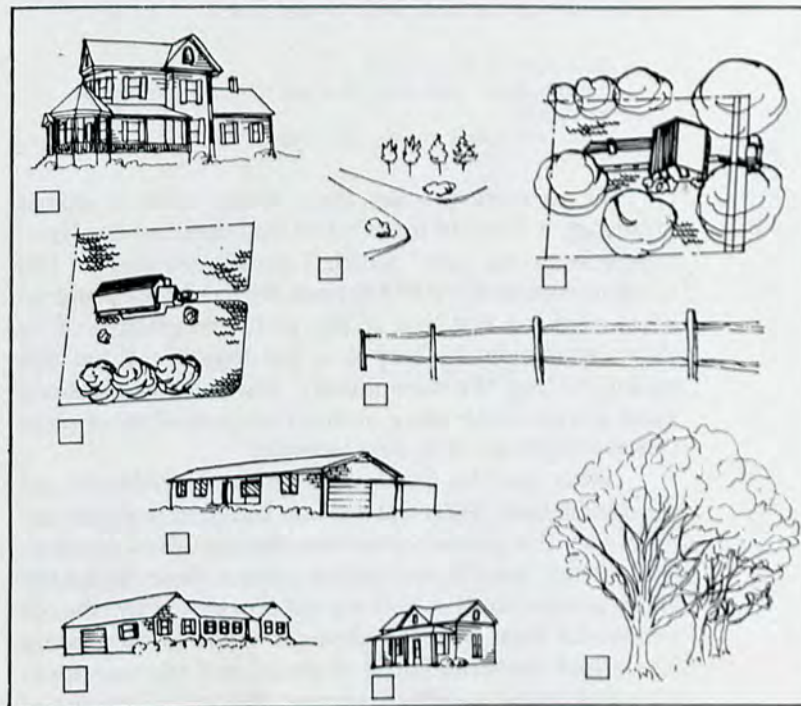
These businesses are "out on the highway," and while they line the highway which passes through town, they are not of the town itself. They are peripheral, and the old downtown is central. When Spring Hope residents evaluate their town, centrality seems to equate with a high identification with the town, while a peripheral location equates with a lower degree of identification. A figure-ground effect is evident here, with the dense town center as figure and the loosely built periphery as ground or as merging into the ground of the country surrounding the town.

Of course more goes into the making of a place than the ordering of its component elements or its location relative to other places—memories, for one thing. The third reason for the downtown's identity is that its stores and buildings are rich with memories:

> This speaks of our past . . .
> Let our great-grandchildren see what a town depot looks like.
> Our first stores are on this street.

To be more precise, these things carry a shared meaning—a sense of history and tradition and the "continuity with the past" which I mentioned earlier. The newer development has not been around long enough to have anything like this accrue to it, irrespective of its shortcomings in the way it is put together. What this means is that the downtown's historical associations make it a *particular* place, rather than just a *kind* of place like the highway strip development.

What goes for the downtown also goes for the old residential area. Its central location and historical associations give it a greater value than the suburban development. Thus, three factors which foster a sense of identity and place are found in both the old downtown and the old residential area: first, the physical nature of these areas (the actual elements found in them, and the way these elements are put together); second, the central location of these areas; and third, the meaning which these places have for the residents through shared associations.

I have not discussed the responses for the industrial scenes and elements. The older sewing factory possesses the three attributes which I just mentioned above, and it is clearly identified by the respondents with Spring Hope —the majority judged it as being most typical. However, the industrial plant outside of town rather than the sewing factory is valued as being most like the way Spring Hope should be and most worth preserving. There are two reasons for this. First, the respondents do not want industry, with its connotations of noise, dirt, pollution, and so on, to be identified with their town, especially not right downtown where it is very visible. Second, the new industry means higher wages, better jobs, and a better standard of living.

"Heart of the town's life . . . . "

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" . . . like every other place . . ."

Footnotes

1. Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), 2.

2. William Allan Nielson, ed., *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd ed. (Springfield, Mass,: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1949).

3. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977), 52. Venturi, however, considers this to be an example of a "current vernacular of the United States."

A vernacular town form, as it is defined here, is derived from the conditions pertaining in a particular area. It in turn creates a particular place in the minds of the people who use it on a daily basis. The economic history of the area which includes Spring Hope fosters a particular pattern of town form. The continued usage of this town form by generations of residents engenders many associations with the past through personal experiences. A sense of place is created. Vernacular form thus lends itself to creating a sense of *particular* place.

On the other hand, the contemporary popular form of the highway strip, the suburbs, and the industrial plant create a sense of a *kind* of place. It is possible that with the passing of time, and with use, this new development will accumulate its own set of attachments and associations and will be remembered nostalgically by the residents of Spring Hope as a particular place. I doubt it, simply because the downtown and the old residential street with trees were there first, and the primary identity of the town is invested in them. For this reason, if no other, vernacular townscapes are important to save—for when they go, so goes the town.

Southern Mill Hills: Design in a "Public" Place

The Southern mill village is one feature of our vernacular landscape whose place-making contribution cannot be celebrated without an attendant critique. For some the mill village is a symbol of agrarian displacement and institutionalized marginality. Its instrumental basis is undeniable. At the same time, it has filled a necessary role and has tempered industrialism's harsh demands with a good measure of common-sense humanism. The mill village has acted as a buffer between the machine and the rural personality of the Southern working public. Due to the preserving control of the mills, many mill villages retain much of their original flavor today, carrying nineteenth century forms into the last quarter of this century.

Here Brent Glass, who directed an inventory of North Carolina historic engineering and industrial sites in 1975, presents an informed view of the Southern mill village.

Ca. 1885 letterhead for the Glencoe Mills, showing the mill and adjacent power plant.

In many parts of Piedmont North Carolina, taking a job in a factory has been known for generations as "public work." Long before government employment programs made this expression popular during the New Deal, thousands of rural North Carolinians migrated from farm to factory in search of a job in the "public," a job that would pay a weekly or monthly wage.[1] It is a simple expression yet it captures an important historical experience. The movement into "public work" transformed the social structure and cultural landscape of the Piedmont. It began slowly in the 1830's and 1840's, accelerated in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and mushroomed dramatically between 1900 and 1925, especially during and after World War I. The implications of this movement were not lost upon contemporary observers. By 1906, one journalist noted that "when a state . . . builds almost two hundred cotton mills within twenty years . . . evidently a great economic change is indicated. When, with almost imperceptible immigration, from 150,000 to 200,000 persons are transferred from the country—perhaps from the very farms where they and their ancestors have lived for more than a century—to live in towns or factory villages, and receive their pay in wages rather than in commodities, the social changes must be equally important."[2]

It is not the purpose of this paper to evaluate the social and economic ramifications of industrialization in the Piedmont. It is my intention, instead, to examine the *physical* environment of "public work." What were the constituent elements of North Carolina's most traditional working places? What was the function of these elements? How did they change either in form or function over time? To address these questions, I will 1) describe two nineteenth century cotton mill villages along Haw River; 2) analyze the evolution of the mill village as a building form through the 1920's; and 3) suggest the historic function of the mill village and its contemporary function in providing a sense of place.

The first "public jobs" were found in cotton mill

villages. This is essentially an ironic development because a less public place could hardly be imagined. Mill villages were isolated communities situated along the major rivers of the Piedmont. The riverside location offered waterpower to drive machinery and humidity for cotton threads. Up until the early 1890's most mills built in North Carolina were situated at water power sites. Typical of the nineteenth century villages were Glencoe and Bynum along Haw River.

Glencoe was one of several mills built by the Holt family of Alamance County. Edwin M. Holt and his sons pioneered in the manufacture of textile products beginning in 1837 and introduced one of the South's first brand name fabrics—"Alamance Plaids." Around 1880, James and William Holt organized a small mill three miles north of what was then called Company Shops (now Burlington). Until the mid-1950's Glencoe Mills operated a manufacturing plant of about four thousand spindles and two hundred looms. Since that time the mill building has been used for storage and as a mill outlet for carpet and other fabrics.

Most of the mill population has died or left the village. Glencoe is essentially a ghost town. What remains, however, is a classic representation of the "mill hill." A stone dam across Haw River is located some four hundred yards west of the mill. The mill race is lined with stone retaining walls and runs into the wheel house where a turbine is *in situ*. The wheel, gear fittings, governor, main shaft, and flywheel are in place. An electric generator also remains. Thus the entire power system, as well as evidence of the development of water power in the small mill village, is clearly visible. The mill building itself is virtually unaltered except for a one-story addition (ca. 1950) in front. The three-story brick mill with its stair tower, corbelled cornice, quoined stucco corners, and heavily stuccoed window labels is typical of dozens of small Piedmont mills built in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It is a simple structure, yet its ornamenta-

An early twentieth century scene at Glencoe.

tion reflects the proud ambition of its builders. A warehouse and finishing mill stand just west of the mill.

There have been few intrusions in the Glencoe village itself. All spatial and physical relationships of its structures have survived. Northwest of the mill across SR 1598 are the mill office and company stores (ca. 1900). Facing the office and directly north of the mill is the superintendent's house, a two-story frame structure with a porch that extends around the west and south side. The mill, warehouse, office and stores, and manager's house form a compact unit at the south end of the village providing manufacturing and management functions.

The final elements in the village include the residential and social units comprised of workers' housing, a
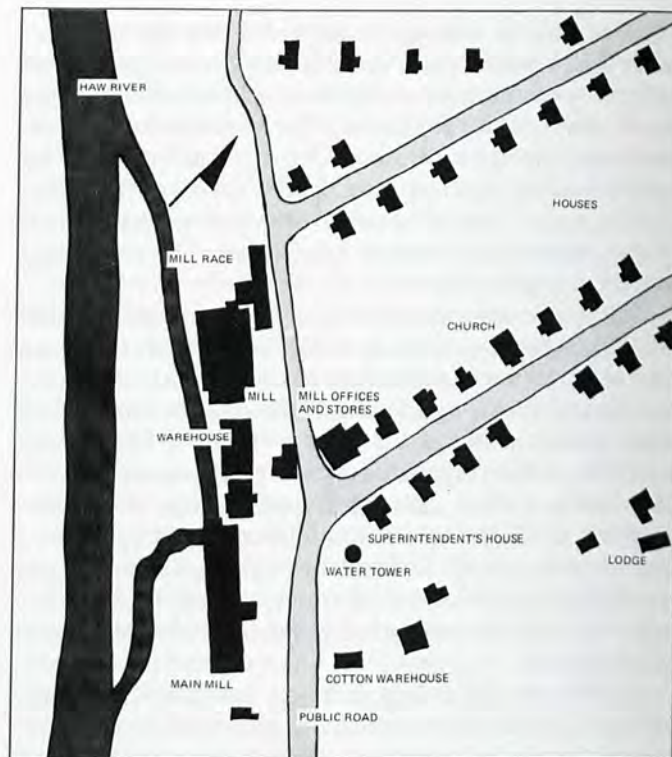
A recent view along one of Glencoe's residential lanes (prior to winter 1976 when the church roof collapsed).

Site plan of Glencoe village.

church, lodge hall, barber shop, and garden space. The older mill houses are surprisingly well-built. In fact they are identical to the superintendent's house except for the extended porch. About two dozen of these frame houses are two-story "I" structures—four rooms with brick nogging and hand-sawn timbers. Several houses have their original separate kitchens of board and batten construction at the rear. There is no indoor plumbing and each pair of houses shares a well (with wood winches) and outdoor bathroom privees.

The church stood (until winter, 1976) in the middle of the residential section. It was a one-story frame structure with a steeple projected from its stair tower. The other structures—the barber shop and lodge hall—are similarly situated in the center of the residential area. They are undistinguished frame structures. Taken together with the church, however, they form a social unit within the village as a counterpart to the managerial and commercial buildings at the south end.[3]

The southernmost mill village along Haw River is at Bynum in Chatham County. Cotton manufacturing began there in the mid-1880's under the management of Luther Bynum and other local merchants. In the late 1890's J.M. Odell of Concord purchased the mill property and it has

operated under his name to the present. Bynum, or Bynum's Mill as it was called in the nineteenth century, was a more self-contained commercial and industrial center than Glencoe. A grist mill and cotton gin shared the race with the cotton mill. Several commercial establishments lined Bynum's main street. A public school stood east of the village. In this respect Bynum stood one step closer to the economic and social realities of the twentieth century. Yet its physical form differed only slightly from Glencoe's mill hill.

Bynum is today actually a second generation mill village. The mill, commercial properties, and many residences have been built in the twentieth century, often on the site of their nineteenth century predecessors. The mill building, for instance, is a two-story brick structure built in 1916 after a fire destroyed the original three-story frame mill. Much of the housing was constructed after World War I. This new construction, however, is located within the nineteenth century village.

Consequently, Bynum derives its form from the nineteenth century model of which Glencoe is perhaps North Carolina's best example. The mill is built into a steep bank along Haw River. A warehouse stands just east of the mill. Directly north is the Methodist Church (ca. 1890), frame with brick veneer. The dwellings nearest the church and mill are large two-story structures. In them lived the minister, merchants, and mill managers. The mill hill gently rises to the east and contains a village of forty-four houses laid out along a truncated figure-eight street pattern. A playground, ball field, and garden space are within the village. One nineteenth century store— Atwater-Lambeth—stood beside the church. The remaining commercial properties are located within walking distance just north of the village but not on mill hill. Nevertheless, these stores have always maintained a close relationship with the mill. Bynum's largest store is operated today by a former mill worker whose parents took up "public work" in the 1890's.[4]
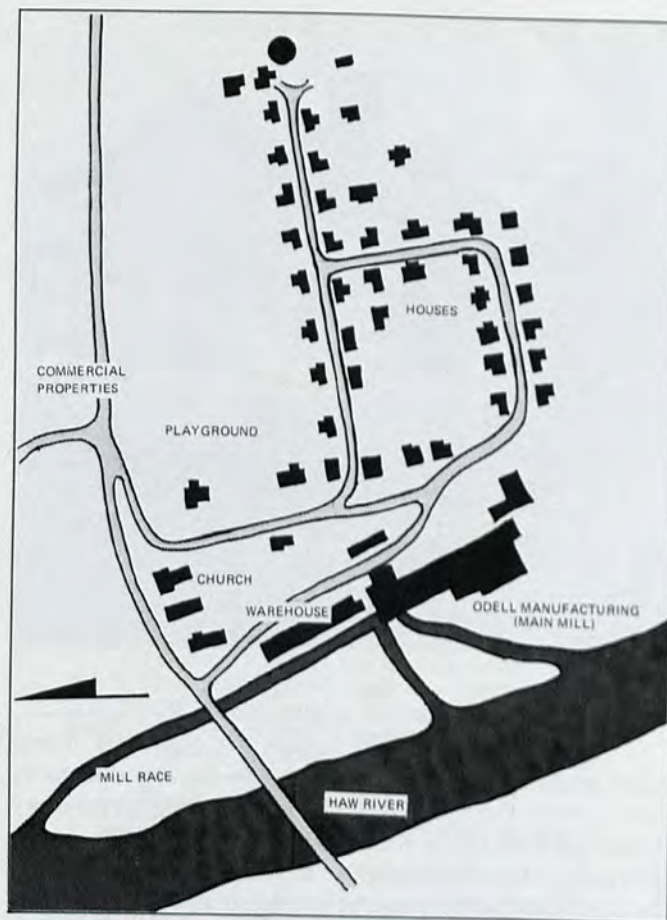
Site plan of Bynum.

Contemporary street scene at Bynum.

Over half of the mill houses are one-story three-room buildings with porches, some having one-room extensions at the rear. There are a few scattered two-story dwellings built in the nineteenth century. The other residences are one-story with four or five rooms. They follow the basic plan of Bynum's predominant house type with extensions added at a later date. All structures are frame. There is no indoor plumbing. What is most striking about the entire plan is that the "new" construction (ca. 1920) not only follows as a group the pattern laid out in the nineteenth century but also individually reproduces the one-story, three-room house type developed before 1900.

The villages at Glencoe and Bynum are representations of a nineteenth century vernacular form. The persistence of the nineteenth century form is perhaps the single most significant contribution of the Southern mill hill. It has dominated the built environment of three generations of Southern workers. The setting, scale, and structure of the mill hill grew out of conscious design as well as the functional need for motive power, labor, and raw materials. Another, perhaps secondary, consideration was the welfare of the labor force and the need for churches and community services. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, this form had become ubiquitous on the Piedmont landscape.

Who built the mill villages? More importantly, did these communities evolve from a standard or model? The principles of planning and design as applied to industrial communities were well-established by the time construction began at Glencoe and Bynum. Robert Owen's village New Lanark in Britain and the Lowell community in Massachusetts were well-known efforts to provide an orderly working environment.[5] With the influx of Northern machinery and machinists into the South, the notion of factory housing and community services was also introduced. William Gregg of Graniteville, South Carolina, was among the first to integrate the functions of manufacturing, housing, and management. In North Carolina's Piedmont, the physical development of public working places does not appear to follow any particular model. The appearance of the mill village resulted from individual choices made by individual mill operators. Standards for design were dictated by environmental and economic factors, not through former models or guides. Slowly a communications network seems to have developed in which operators shared information on management, finance, and technology. Edwin M. Holt of Alamance County, for example, established a close relationship with Francis Fries of Salem and exchanged information through correspondence and personal contact. Their association no doubt influenced the industrial design elements in their respective regions.[6]

The concerns and collective wisdom of Southern

industrial pioneers later found written expression in trade journals and technical manuals. One popular journal, the *Manufacturer's Record* of Baltimore, published a vast array of news for Southern industrialists including developments in textiles, iron and steel, railroads, and building technology. It offered advice on political economy, machinery, and labor. An issue of 1888, for example, recommended "Cheap Homes for Workmen":

> Good dwellings at low rents is one of the essential features of a prosperous manufacturing town, as the better class of mechanics will not put up with inferior accommodations nor with exorbitant rents . . . Contented laborers, well housed and well fed, are essential to the prosperity of any industrial enterprise. Cheap homes but good homes will attract good laborers who can afford to and will work for much lower pay than where houses are scarce and rents high.[7]

Most influential of all publications in this period were the textbooks of Daniel A. Tompkins, engineer and mill operator of Charlotte. Tompkins began to systematically analyze the technology, financing, and marketing activities of the cotton industry in the 1890's. In 1899, he produced a volume called *Cotton Mill: Commercial Features* for the "use of textile schools and investors." Over the course of seventeen chapters, Tompkins prescribed standards for raising capital, bookkeeping, power, machinery, and fire protection. He also included sections on "Labor" and "Operatives' Homes" in which the specifications for a typical mill house were set forth as follows:

FOUR-ROOM MILL HOUSE

The following is a list of the work the contractor is to do.

(1) Build. . . . houses of four rooms each with pantry and halls as per plans attached, which are a part of the specifications under this contract. Build one small outside closet for each house.

(2) All sills of houses to be set on brick pillars; pillars to be not more than 8 feet centre to centre. The foundation of pillars to be not less than 10" below surface of ground, and more if nature of soil requires. The lowest pillar to be not less than 24" above surface of ground. The pillars at all corners of house to be three brick square and those intermediate to be two brick square.

(3) All sills of houses to be 6" x 8" good sound lumber. Corner posts to be 4" x 4". Braces 2" x 4" and to extend to within 2" of top of corner posts. Plates, studs and rafters 2" x 4". Sleepers of floors to be 2" x 8", and joist overhead 2" x 5". One row of bridging to each room for sleepers and joists.

(4) Window sills 2" thick, and window, door and corner stiles 1-½" thick and to show 5" face. Window and door cappings on outside to have a weather drip on top 1" thick and overhanging 1", to be beveled and rabbeted.

(5) Boxing on gables and under eaves to be 10" and finished with suitable moulding. Frieze boards to extend 10" below boxing. All roofs covered with good sound sawed pine shingles.

(6) Weatherboarding to be ¾" thick and show 5-¼", to be of novelty pattern which will be selected by the President of the Company.

(7) Flooring, tongue and grooved, 1" thick and not more than 4" wide.

(8) Wainscoating to be placed in front hall and kitchen, and to be of tongue and grooved ceiling not more than 4" wide, with beads and suitable for capping.

(9) Washboards 1" x 10" (including moulding) to be placed around all walls in houses.

(10) All window and door facing inside to be 4" wide and furnished with band moulding. The doors in house except front and closet doors to be 2'-8" x 6'-3" and 1-¾" thick, O.G. with 4 panels. Front doors to be 3' x 7' and to have neat glass panels, which will be selected by the President of the Company. Closet doors to be 2'-6", O.G. 1-¼" thick with 4 panels. Large doors to be hung with not less than
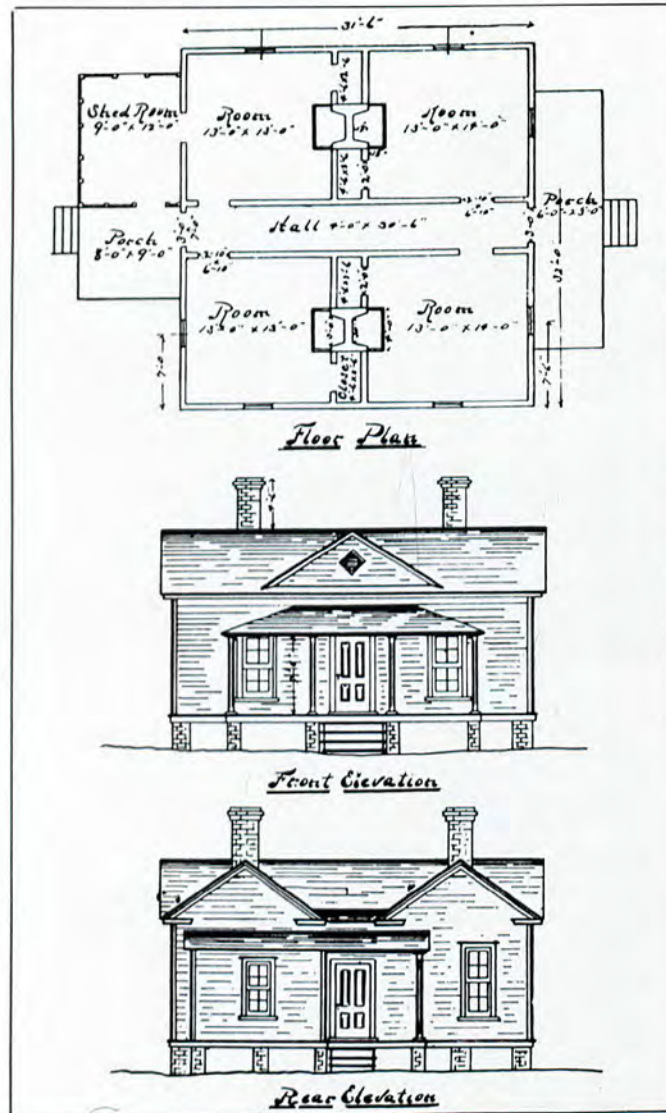
"Four-room Gable House, Cost $400," from Tompkins' *Cotton Mill, Commercial Features,* published in 1899. This design for a small mill house utilizes a traditional nineteenth century regional plan type.

3-½" butt hinges and furnished with good knobs and locks with brass or wrought iron keys. Closet doors to be hung with not less than 3" butt hinges and furnished with good locks and good keys. Closet walls to be lathed and plastered same as room walls. Closets to contain shelves.

(11) All windows except that in pantry to have good substantial frame of sufficient size to hold two sash of six 10" x 14" lights each, and are to be furnished with a suitable catch to lock and hold sash.

(12) All interior walls, except those of rear hall to be plastered, with three coat work, including skim coat. Picture moulding to be placed around top of walls.

(13) Two fire places are to be built in houses, as shown on plans, each to have neat and substantial mantle. Chimneys to be built of brick on a good solid foundation. Fire places to be 3' wide at front and 30" wide at back; 30" high and 14" deep, and flues to be of sufficient size to give a good draft. Hearths to be laid with hard burnt brick and 13" wide from jams or face of chimney. Chimneys to extend at least 4-½" above comb of roof. All chimney flues to be cleaned down and plastered inside. A flue of sufficient size is to be provided in room back of front hall for stove pipe connection. On top of kitchen a flue of safe fire height is to be built to receive stove pipe.

(14) Piazza to be built in front of house as shown on drawing, sills to be 4" x 6" set on brick pillars not more than 8" square. Sleepers 2" x 8" joist 2" x 4", width of porch to be 5 feet, and to be covered with beaded ceiling and then shingled same as house roof. Flooring to be the same as in house. Porch roof to be plain shed roof with pitch enough to give good drain. Pitch of main roof on house to be about 40 degrees or one foot lower than a square. Porch column to be 4" x 4" with central portion turned to some neat pattern, and brackets of suitable design placed on each side of columns at top. Back porch is to be latticed as shown on drawing. Steps of sufficient height and width are to be placed at front and back porches.

(15) Lumber to be good second grade, not absolutely free from knots but no large or loose knots, and no piece wholly knotty.

(16) Studs to be not more than 20" centers. Sleepers and joists to be not more than 24" centers. Blinds to be placed on all windows. They are to be two piece blinds with adjustable shutters, and are to

be hung with substantial catch hinges, and to have catches on inside.

(17) Houses to be painted with two coats paint on outside, including steps and all exposed wood, except shingle roof. Also two coats inside on all exposed wood surfaces. All paint used to be of good quality. The houses may be painted with two or three different colors; the colors and trimmings to be selected by the President or his representative.

(18) The contractor is to take the ground as it is, and deliver a turn key job, following the specifications and also the drawings attached. The intention is that the contractor shall make a complete job. If any details are omitted in this writing, the contractor shall furnish such details nevertheless without extra charge. All work to be done in a substantial and workmanlike manner.[8]

Tompkins carefully prescribed the necessary community facilities for each village including a half-acre lot for each home. He encouraged home gardening "as being conducive to general contentment among the operatives themselves" and emphasized the central fact of industrial life in the Piedmont:

> The whole matter of providing attractive and comfortable habitations for cotton operatives . . . be summarized in the statement that they are essentially a rural people. They have been accustomed to farm life . . . . While their condition is in most cases decidedly bettered by going to the factory, the old instincts cling to them.[9]

What Tompkins was writing was hardly a revelation to his colleagues but instead a codification of the nineteenth century industrial experience. His book brought together the essential knowledge that had been mostly acquired by oral tradition, trial and error, and economic reality. Its publication in 1899 introduced planning and design elements into the construction of mill villages. What had been chiefly a vernacular and spontaneous form in the nineteenth century would become a conscious creation in the twentieth. Mill engineers, manufacturers, and even landscape architects devoted much time, energy, and

talent to the question of mill village design. One company, E. S. Draper of Charlotte, was engaged by several manufacturers in North Carolina to provide landscape and street plans for villages in Gastonia, Spindale, and other western Piedmont mill districts. Draper's plans, which survive in the North Carolina Collection at Chapel Hill, emphasized the basic elements of the village almost as classical form. Each community has an entrance where a school and community building are located. House lots are spacious and streets are laid out in irregular geometric patterns. Open space, parks, and recreational areas are carefully designated. In at least one plan, common space for gardens and pasture land is provided. Mill buildings and warehouse are screened by abundant plantings of trees.[10]

In fact, the mill is integrated so completely in Draper's plans that it is no longer the focal point of the community. It is as if the village might exist without the
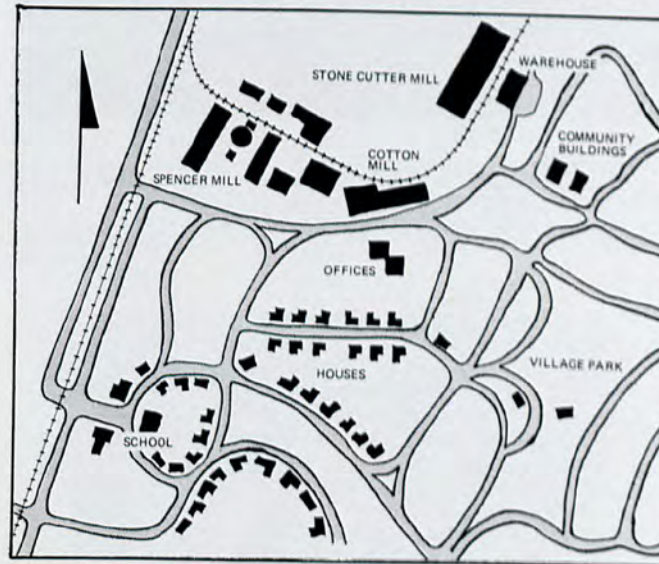
E. S. Draper's plan for the mill town of Spindale, dated May, 1920.

Well-maintained "company houses" in China Grove.

mill. In other words, the functional derivation of the mill hill is erased. The plans are typical of the conscious, even self-conscious, efforts of designers to develop a standard for the mill hill and to include those elements characteristic of the nineteenth century form. The first quarter of the twentieth century saw leading textile men like Stuart Cramer (Cramerton), James W. Cannon (Kannapolis), and Julian S. Carr (Carrboro) competing to create "model mill villages" replete with welfare activities and even forms of participatory government. (In Carrboro, for instance, the Durham Hosiery Company established a workers governing unit called "Industrial Democracy" which provided a system of representation for grievances and work regulations. Here a New England village concept was transported to the Southern mill hill setting.)

The central contradiction of these early twentieth century villages was that while they followed the basic nineteenth century form, they were now set in an urban environment. The use of steam power in North Carolina mills became widespread by the late nineteenth century and was universal by the time Tompkins wrote his textbook. Electric powered mills were already commonplace by 1910. A sophisticated rail system was finally in place in North Carolina by 1900. These factors made possible the selection of cities and small towns for mill construction rather than water power sites. Stripped of its riverside moorings, it might have been logical for the mill village to also shed its rural appearance. Yet an analysis of the work of Draper, Cramer, and their contemporaries reveals an effort to make the urban mill hill as rural as possible and in some ways more rural than its country cousin. Tompkins' observation that "the old instincts cling" to the mill population seems to apply to their villages as well. There was little reason to retain the nineteenth century form but it was precisely this form that prevailed in virtually every village constructed between 1900 and 1925. The community design that developed along the rivers of the Piedmont dominated industrial

North Carolina. Industrial centers like Greensboro, Charlotte, Gastonia, Concord, and Roanoke Rapids were not really cities but instead a loose collection of mill hills connected by a central business district. Rail lines and major highways form boundaries for the village. To a large extent their pattern can be traced today. The evolution of these urban districts and their origin in the nineteenth century mill village design has important implications for urban planners as well as students of vernacular design.

The question remains about the purpose of the mill village. The central physical elements of the nineteenth century mill hill—the mill, company store, workers' housing, the church—shaped its character. Here was a working place. It was also a walking place. Its scale was such that all goods and services, and all social interaction could be reached without public or private transportation. The textile industry traditionally employed men, women, and children. Therefore, the village offered family units rather than individual apartments or row housing. Open space—gardens and grounds—was another characteristic of the village to accommodate the rural background of the workers. Therefore, Even as the design served the values and concerns of mill operators, the early mill villages were equally attractive to farm families who desired to live and work together as they had always done. There was the additional benefit of neighbors nearby and essential community functions like the church within the village. The purpose, then, of the nineteenth century mill hill was to provide a constant supply of inexpensive laborers for the mill operator. It was also designed to provide a transition for the worker coming off the farm into "public work." In oral interviews conducted throughout the Piedmont the sense of security and community found in villages like Glencoe and Bynum is widespread. In small towns and urban centers as well there is obvious affection for neighbors and places within the existing mill district. One oral history interviewee in Carrboro, for instance, has told of moving out of the village to the countryside

only to return because she and her husband missed the neighborliness of the village.[11]

There is no denying, however, that the design of the mill hill made it particularly vulnerable to the control of the mill operator. Having built the housing, churches, and schools, having provided jobs, having control of the company store, and in many cases having provided teachers, ministers, and social workers, the mill owner was uniquely situated to regulate the rhythm of life in the village.[12] There is little question that mill operators were aware of their power and used this power regularly. From the outset, the design of the village served this desire to control. In Bynum, for instance, Luther Bynum allegedly roamed the village at night to see that all his employees had gone to sleep. D.A. Tompkins apparently considered the same issue when he advised mill owners to consider a rural location. "An important advantage of locating in the country," he wrote, "is that employees go to bed at a reasonable hour and are therefore in better condition to work in day time."[13] The migration of mill villages to urban centers did little to diminish this concern for control. E.S. Draper's plans show overseer's houses strategically placed on major intersections of the village. Similarly, a study of Cramerton, Stuart Cramer's model mill village, has concluded that design reflected social structure:

> The vertical occupational structure of the mills is reproduced in these [living quarters]. Brooklyn and Eighth Avenue were held by overseers. The houses here are on a slight rise, close to the mill office and farther away from the mill than the workers' houses. The Cramer mansion was set above the town, on Cramer Mountain, and overlooks the town and river. Access to the estate is also detached from the town. The road winds with a very majestic effect to the top of the mountain. Distance and elevation, closely related dimensions, reinforced . . . the perceived distances in status, at least to the degree that status relates to the organization of the mill.[14]
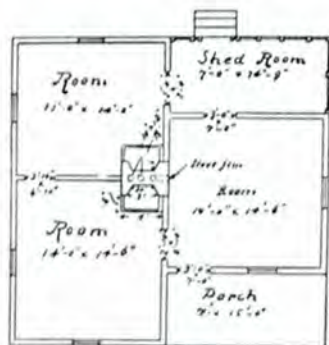
Floor Plan

Front Elevation

Side Elevation

"Three-room Gable House, Cost $325," from Tompkins' *Cotton Mill, Commercial Features,* published in 1899.

Regardless of location, there was a parallel between the increasingly self-conscious village design and the less personal management style of the new generation of mill owners who dominated North Carolina's textile industry following World War I. Furthermore, an important part of this pattern was the growing alienation of the worker in his work and within his community. Perhaps no observer has better captured this phenomenon than W.J. Cash in *The Mind of the South*:

> . . . the physical and social gulf which we have seen already opening appreciably by 1914, was now widening again, and more signally and rapidly. If the houses in the multiplying new suburbs were still not often really grand by Yankee standards, they were a good deal grander than the South had ever known on any extensive scale before and far more numerous. Lifting proud faces, freshly white and red and yellow, from a semi-forest of cool green foliage and over wide lawns, trim hedges, and spacious, winding avenues, they pointed the contrast with the parched dinginess of the mill villages . . . And in the streets and upon the new concrete highways, ever more sleek and splendid automobiles were thronging, to inflame the mill worker's envy.
>
> True, as I have said, his own housing had sometimes improved. And in many cases, particularly if his family were large, he would be able to hold on to an automobile of sorts . . . [but] the automobile our mill-hand held on to would commonly be a limping old jalopy, fit to incite titters downtown.
>
> But if the physical gulf was growing wider, the social gulf was opening even more broadly. As the towns expanded, the big-house people in the larger places no longer knew even the lesser burghers or anybody at all save his own immediate business and social associates. In such a place the mill worker might wander the streets all day now without ever receiving a nod or a smile from anybody, or any recognition of his existence other than a scornful glance from a shop-girl.[15]

The scene Cash described explains in part the bitterness and frustration that produced the strikes of 1929 and 1934. These struggles explicitly revealed the depth of the worker's resentment toward his condition and a major part of this condition was the mill hill itself—his physical environment. Not the sale of mill housing in the 1939's and 1940's nor small wage increases nor better working conditions could erase the memories of the village as an agent of social control. These feelings have lingered to the present. For some, persistence of the nineteenth century form is synonymous with second-class citizenship.

On the other hand, there is something compelling and rich about the mill hill in its contemporary form. Perhaps it is as an alternative to the plasticity of the suburbs. Mill villages do provide housing for large segments of lower and middle income North Carolinians who cannot purchase or rent what today's market produces. There are lessons for modern living here. Here are examples of people living closely together and cases of mixed-use where different activities occur within the same geographic location. In the mill towns are lessons about how we can live in smaller houses, consume less energy, and produce less waste. First-rate home gardening can be found here. And in the mill hill with its walking space and openness, we find a pattern of living less dependent on the automobile. There is also the positive associated values residents sustain through generations. In spite of or perhaps because of the years of hard work and struggle, there can be found a sense of identity and pride in Piedmont mill communities. It can be found in the neatness of the homes and in the well-kept gardens. It can be found in the memories of the mill workers and in the recollections of their sons and daughters. One Carrboro resident articulated this feeling during an oral history interview:

> I think I'll always have a really strong feeling about the mill because my granddad always worked there and my aunt and uncle lived over in some of the mill houses for years. Behind the mill there used to be a big resevoir with a big fence around it, and my

granddad always used to fish in there, and we loved to go with him . . . I think some of my happiest times, really. . . . There was a grassy hill all around the resevoir and we spent hours rolling, running up and down that . . . slope, you know, in the evening. . . . I learned to roller skate on the sidewalks at the mill, and rode my bike on the sidewalks at the mill, walked with my boyfriends under the trees at the mill and it will always be a really memorable place. I explored it, I wandered around it, you know, everything.

Recognition of the Piedmont mill and mill village as an object of serious consideration for conservation has come slowly. Yet within the past few years attention has been focused upon the possibilities of the built environment in these "public" places. After years of neglect, the mill in Carrboro has been recycled as a small shopping village, once again a site of economic and social importance. A grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development has allowed progressive housing officials in Chatham County to rehabilitate the Bynum mill village and sell the homes to former workers at subsidized rates. Even in Glencoe, where nearly three quarters of the housing stock is abandoned, there are plans to nominate the village to the National Register of Historic Places and to stabilize the existing buildings for future use. In a word, the mill hill has proven its resiliency as a vernacular design. It has survived the migration to the cities in the early twentieth century and the migration to the suburbs in the 1950's. It has been refined over the years but retains its essential nineteenth century form. It is this form that allowed for the basic needs of a rural population. These needs have proven to be universal. Proximity to workplace, easy access to community services and open space, avenues of social interaction—these are qualities of any well-balanced living space. The mill hill has provided this balance in its design. In this sense, it remains North Carolina's first and most authentic "public" place.

Footnotes

1. Valerie Quinney, "Textile Women: Three Generations of Women in the Mill," *Southern Exposure* Volume III, Number 4 (1976), 66-72.

2. Holland Thompson, *From Cotton Field to Cotton Mill* (New York: Macmillan, 1906), 1-2.

3. Brent D. Glass, *North Carolina: An Inventory of Historic Industrial and Engineering Sites* (Washington, D.C., National Park Service, 1975), 16, 95.

4. Lewis Durham, Interview with Brent D. Glass, 1976. Southern Oral History Program, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

5. John F. Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America, 1776-1900* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1976), 55-106.

6. Francis Henry Fries, Papers of Francis Henry Fries (1880-1931). Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

7. Richard Edmunds, editor, *Manufacturers' Record* (Baltimore June 1888), 12.

8. Daniel A. Tompkins, *Cotton Mill, Commercial Features* (Charlotte, D.A. Tompkins, 1899) 119-121.

9. Tompkins, 117.

10. E.S. Draper, Plans for Spindale Mills and Village (1920). North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

11. Ruth West, Interview with Valerie Quinney (1975). Chapel Hill Historical Society, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

12. Liston Pope, *Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1942), introduction.

13. John Snipes, Interview with Brent D. Glass (1976). Southern Oral History Program, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

14. Woody Connette, Tom Hatley and Roger Manley, "Cramerton, North Carolina: A Piedmont Mill Town" (unpublished honor's thesis, Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina 1974), 22.

15. W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, Inc., 1941), 273-274.

Guilford County: The Architectural Traditions in an Exclusively Vernacular Landscape

When McKelden Smith says that the antebellum domestic landscape of Guilford County was "exclusively vernacular," he means that every house built in that part of the state before 1860—with a single exception—was either an improvisation or a product of a locally-held building tradition. Specifically, he means that there was no sophisticated high style architecture in the county. With surprisingly few qualifiers the same could be said of most other sections of the state at that time. Unfortunately, we learn, most of Guilford's historical vernacular landscape has been "obliterated." In Greensboro, for example, less than a dozen buildings stand today that are over one hundred years old. And the surrounding countryside has fared only slightly better. In contrast to high style architecture, the history that is recorded in the vernacular landscape is not likely to be found written in books as well, so when the physical record is gone—"obliterated"—that history is lost forever. Obviously it does little good to despair at this loss of cultural "memory," except to highlight the present need for conservation. Our loss stands as all the more reason to celebrate both what remains of our traditional vernacular landscape and the efforts of those who, like Mr. Smith, are seeking to interpret the puzzling picture that it presents.

The surviving architectural artifacts of the antebellum domestic landscape of Guilford County are, with only one exception, exclusively vernacular. Compared to the architecture the eastern part of North Carolina produced in its relatively vigorous mercantile centers and on its more prosperous plantations, Guilford County (like most areas of the Piedmont) was another world. For more than a hundred years, from the earliest days of settlement in the mid-eighteenth century until the Civil War, the vast majority of people in rural Guilford County eked out a subsistence level living on small farms with few if any slaves, operated small cottage-scale industries, and built houses that reflected their modest economy, simple lifestyles, and the difficulties of isolated back-country living.

Most of *modern* Guilford County, on the other hand, would be unrecognizable to the farmers and modest entrepreneurs who established small farmsteads and small communities in the rolling countryside of the "west," as the antebellum Piedmont was then known. Today Guilford is North Carolina's second most populous and industrialized county. It contains two major urban centers (Greensboro and High Point) and a large dispersed population that occupies a typically anonymous, sprawling landscape of industrial plants, commercial strips, and extensive suburbs. The merits and deficiencies of modern growth and development notwithstanding, the modern city, its suburbs, and present day rural settlement patterns have not, it must be admitted, co-existed compatibly with the vernacular antebellum landscape. The situation in this county, increasingly more critical, epitomizes the problems facing the student of vernacular architecture and the preservationist.

Anyone interested in closely describing the history of building in Guilford County using existing structures as documents would find it hard going. Interpreting the data for this county (and other similarly urbanized areas) is extremely difficult because the destruction of early architecture due to the pressures of commercial develop-

ment and industrial expansion has been and continues to be immense. The main obstacle facing the historian in the field is not that the evidence remains unexamined or undiscovered, but that it has been to a shocking extent obliterated. In her 1975 survey of Greensboro, for example, Ruth Little-Stokes was able to find only sixteen buildings built before 1879, and a fourth of these have been destroyed since her inventory was published.[1] The difficulties of drawing conclusions about the early architecture of the city are obvious. For example, a study of modern Greensboro would indicate that Blandwood (see Fig. 13 below), a villa-style house built in 1848, had no effect on architectural taste in that city. Actually, the several houses subsequently built in that style have been demolished, leaving only the prototype and, at first glance, a false impression of this phase of Greensboro's architectural history.

In the rural and suburban areas, this problem is only slightly less severe and somewhat more difficult to deal with, because there are fewer readily available sources of documentary material to suggest the quantity and type of lost buildings. Generalizations about the vernacular architecture of the early Guilford County landscape must inevitably be propped up by qualifiers, such as "judging from the distribution of surviving examples . . ." or "the only such building remaining in the county. . . ." The number of references to significant rural structures that no longer exist, a few of which are illustrated by documentary photographs, make it perfectly clear that detailed conclusions about the architectural history of the county are impossible to make. Qualified generalizations must substitute for quantitative and definitive descriptions of architecture and environmental conditions in the county's antebellum years.

A generalization that everybody agrees on is that the area described by the county's present-day boundaries was settled primarily by people moving south along the Philadelphia Wagon Road and the paths through the

Figure 1. Manlove Wheeler House, late eighteenth century. Though houses of this type were once common in eastern North Carolina, only this rare example survived until recent times in Guilford County. This 1972 photograph shows the dilapidated structure with a later addition and replacement chimneys. The house was eventually demolished, further obscuring the record of the county's eighteenth century architecture.

Figure 2. John Haley House, 1786. This extensively "restored" museum house was probably the largest and certainly the most substantial dwelling of its day in Guilford County.

ings such as the Georgian style, gambrel-roofed Manlove Wheeler House (destroyed) built in the western part of the county (Fig. 1). In the early nineteenth century a one-story, coastal-type cottage with engaged porch and Federal style details was built on the eastern side. These buildings and others (if any) like them, however, appear to have had little influence on other Guilford County architecture.

Unfortunately for historians, no body of architecture dating from the first fifty years of settlement exists to give an accurate picture of living conditions, architectural expression, and artistic accomplishment in early Guilford County. Only one *documented* building, the John Haley House in present day High Point, survives (Fig. 2). Haley's house, important and distinctive enough to appear on the Price-Strother map of 1808, was constructed in 1786, a date the builder conveniently recorded in the gable end. The one-story Flemish bond brick building cannot, however, be said to typify the eighteenth century Guilford settler's house. Only one other eighteenth century brick house is known to have been built in the county. Presumably most people lived in simple one-room log houses and worshipped in log churches, buildings appropriate to the subsistence economy and the general difficulties of life on the frontier (Fig. 3). Eli W. Caruthers, writing in 1842, stated that David Caldwell's brother's house (destroyed), a two-room log house, was "like most others in the country at that time."[3] The relatively ephemeral quality of log buildings and the great difficulties of dating them correctly impede accurate estimates of the popularity of log houses. There is good evidence, however, that even people of means built with logs cleared from the fields. The McLean House near Sedalia (destroyed and partially removed to the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts in Old Salem) was an important one-room log house with a massive stone end, clearly built as a permanent house. The McLean family lived in it well into the twentieth century. The so-called Smith House near Whitsett, probably the home of a German settler, is a two-story log house

valleys beginning in the 1740's and continuing until the outbreak of the Revolution. By the 1780's a traveler to the North Carolina Piedmont found "this part of the country . . . very thickly inhabited. . . ."[2] It was an ethnically diverse group of people that included Quaker settlers of English and Welsh extraction, Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, and Germans of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches. Though difficult to visualize today, as it happened the Quakers tended to gather in the western part of what later became known as Guilford County, the Germans made their homes in the east, and the Scotch-Irish settled in-between.

Though the penetration of the area by pioneers moving south dominates the settlement pattern (a penetration reflected to some extent in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century architecture of the region) there was, of course, some drift of settlers from the eastern part of the state. Some settlers constructed coastal-type build-

featuring Georgian style mantels and six panel doors suggesting a permanent house of substance and some pretension.

Guilford's earliest body of architecture dates from the early nineteenth century. Thomas Waterman's generalization that the nationality of settlers was not usually reflected in architectural forms and styles holds true.[4] The Quakers and other settlers in the vicinity and at least one family of German descent did, however, build a distinctive and durable collection of brick buildings surviving primarily in the Jamestown and north central area of the county—a collection significant not so much for the obvious antiquarian charms for which it is chiefly valued today but for its ethnic cohesiveness and fundamental consistency in form, plan, and materials, and for its vivid illustration of a changing architectural vocabulary within the context of a relatively autonomous, Piedmont cultural tradition.

Thirteen domestic buildings, one building thought to have been a meeting house, and another originally used as commercial property survive from an unknown quantity of brick buildings constructed from the late eighteenth century until the 1840's when the tradition appears to have died out. The immediate sources for the earliest houses of this type along with a number of similar structures of frame construction, were the Middle Atlantic States, particularly Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Among the surviving examples, the Haley House and the Mendenhall House (Jamestown, ca. 1819) are the most transparently derivative of mid-Atlantic models—the former probably because the memory of Pennsylvania or New Jersey architecture, or architecture influenced by that region, was fresh in immigrant Haley's mind, the latter because Richard Mendenhall, though several generations removed from his family's Pennsylvania origins, was sent back to Chester County, Pennsylvania, to learn a trade, and he returned with a renewed knowledge of Pennsylvania architecture.

The fashion of building in brick, however, was not limited exclusively to the western part of Guilford County as the distribution of surviving examples would indicate. For example, Waterman identified the Somers House in what later came to be known as Gibsonville, ". . . built," he said, "by a Delaware River settler, as it illustrates to perfection the Salem County, New Jersey, house type." Waterman thought that the house, which burned in the 1960's, was built about 1780.[5]

The model for early nineteenth century Guilford County brick houses was a two-story, three-bay, Flemish bond, gable roof structure of either the so-called Quaker plan with three rooms on the ground floor, or the two-room "hall and parlor plan," with segmental arched windows, wood shake roof, and end chimneys—a house type of Mid-Atlantic polyglot origins. Individual builders subjected their designs to numerous variations depending on their resources, tastes, the drift of architectural fashion,

Figure 3. Log House, date uncertain. Little is known of the history of this structure. It typifies the early Guilford settler's dwelling and is representative of nearly every important surviving log structure in the county.

and their exposure to developments elsewhere.

House plans, for example, were variable but were derived from a few well-defined choices. Frequency of the hall and parlor and Quaker plans is about even. Three of the larger examples feature one-story, one-room wings attached to the largest room. Richard Mendenhall's store, which resembles a domestic building, features a heavily modified Quaker plan, in which the entrance opens into the chambers and the hall is reduced in width (Fig. 4). The Stephen Gardner House (Jamestown vicinity, 1827) belongs to the regional school of brick construction but features a four-bay facade and a center hall representing a transition between the traditional plans and the fully developed center hall plans that appeared regularly in the county in the mid-nineteenth century.

Easily observable changes in construction techniques occurred over time as forms became adapted to environmental conditions. End chimneys, for example, integrated into the wall of the earliest brick houses, such as the Haley and Mendenhall Houses, became exterior. Brick bonding moved from Flemish to common, as one might expect. One transitional example is the Stuart House (date uncertain, High Point vicinity) where the builder laid the facade in Flemish bond and the sides and rear in common. The tendency for window design was away from the arched opening to the flat opening.

It seems clear that builders of brick houses and indeed houses of most types during the period detailed their work with an eye to style using ornamental details from which much can be learned. The Haley House contains a full, if simple, program of standard Georgian-type ornament. Richard Mendenhall brought back a renewed interest in Georgian detail from Pennsylvania and, though sparsely distributed, details containing some richly retarditaire, vernacular elements survive.

Though house form remained traditional, a tendency in the larger and later brick houses was toward abandonment of the plain and retarditaire homespun de-

Figure 4. Mendenhall Store, ca. 1820. This reasonably undamaged commercial building was constructed on a domestic plan and features retarditaire stylistic elements and irregular makeshift details. It is the county's earliest surviving commercial structure.

tail and acceptance of stylistic trappings more in keeping with the architectural mainstream of eastern North Carolina and the rest of the nation. The Beeson House (High Point vicinity, date uncertain) with its original or early wing, is among the best examples of a vernacular Federal style interior in a brick house. Wainscoting, mantels, door and window surrounds, and other details have typical Federal forms and moldings with some left-over late Georgian flavoring. Its consistency (more remarkable than the design itself) indicates that residents of early nineteenth century rural Guilford were interested in and able to absorb changing tastes in architectural detail when they could afford it, and actively sought out these fashions. The Charles Benbow House (said to have been built about 1820) near Oak Ridge indicates a similarly strong interest in style (Fig. 5; Fig. 6). Benbow's application of detail was the least inhibited of any builder. He combined Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival elements in the same design, creating a decorative program that was individualistic and innocently creative.

Figure 5. Charles Benbow House, ca. 1820. Constructed by one of the county's most prominent and financially successful families, this house displays elements of typical regional brick construction and design as well as some details from emerging national styles.

Frame buildings of the first rank built by Quakers did not differ substantially in plan and form from brick houses beyond the inherent differences between wood and masonry. The so-called Hunt House, a late Georgian hall and parlor frame building with a wing, is similar in many respects to the Richard Mendenhall House. The largest houses were of two stories with hall and parlor or three-room plans and simple stylistic detail. Some period detail was found in many of the smallest and most unpretentious. Occasionally detail was exceptional, such as at the Mark Iddings House (Jamestown vicinity, ca. 1825), a building distinguished by individualistic, possibly unique, lozenge-shaped lock rails, a rare survival of spontaneous, vernacular artistic creativity in the county (Fig 7; Fig. 8).

Until about the late 1830's, Guilford County residents continued to construct the one- or two-room log house (the largest examples of which occasionally rose to

Figure 6. Charles Benbow House. Interior detail shows typical painted and grained Federal style door with painted inlay set in a robust and fully developed Greek Revival surround.

Figure 7. Mark Iddings House, ca. 1825. Heavily "restored," though its basic form remains relatively intact.

Figure 8. Mark Iddings House. Detail of door shows lozenge-shaped lock rail.

two stories), the saddlebag plan log house, and the two- or three-room frame and brick houses. John Low, a farmer of German descent who built a brick house sometime in the 1820's in the Whitsett vicinity, opted for the center hall, single pile, symmetrical, five-bay design he had heard of or seen elsewhere (Fig. 9). It was a highly unusual departure from the typical Guilford County house, and though it must have been an object of some local fame evidently did not have much, if any, immediate effect on other building during the period in its vicinity. Interior details are a striking combination of sophisticated, late Federal motifs that were probably not made locally, and plain, picturesque designs of foliated patterns, a feature one is tempted to attribute to the area's Germanic folk traditions (Fig. 10).

Related to the Low House is the Martin House in Summerfield. Built about 1840, the two-story brick house is a nearly mature transitional house between the Gardner House and the fully developed center hall plan. Martin's builder designed a center hall, double pile plan house, one of the largest and most ambitious domestic projects undertaken in the county to that date, but placed corner fireplaces in the rooms reminiscent of traditional fireplace design in the earliest of Guilford County brick houses.

Antebellum architecture in Guilford County from the early days of settlement until the 1830's is reflective of a society that was isolated culturally, economically, and politically from the eastern part of the state. Architecture was rooted principally in the traditions of the Middle Atlantic States, and though influenced to some degree by fashion popular in the east, remained provincial, persistently traditional, and richly vernacular. Poor roads, the difficulties of communication, lack of trade advantages and capital, reticence of the politically dominant east to sponsor internal improvements, and ethnic differences between the regions (manifested, for example, by the Quaker interest in manumission and pacifism and the persistence of

German linguistic traditions in the eastern part of the county) kept Guilford County apart from developments elsewhere. The appelation "Rip Van Winkle State," as contemporary historians referred to early nineteenth century North Carolina, was particularly apt for the Piedmont.

As conditions began to improve in the twenty or thirty years preceding the War, however, architecture began to drift toward the mainstream. During this period of increasing prosperity and modest urban growth, traditional folk patterns disappeared among the largest and finest houses. These absorbed the center hall plan and were replete with appropriate stylistic detail. As in the Federal houses, quality in eclectic designs ran the gamut from the creative, individualistic vernacular patterns to clunky copies of the national models. The adaptation of larger, more standardized patterns by the wealthiest builders during the immediate antebellum period was a function of the relative increase in affluence illustrated by the establishment of fledgling textile and mining industries and the construction of the North Carolina Railroad in the 1850's connecting the east with the west.

In the county's western region, the Greek Revival was the most popular choice of style among the best informed. The Elihu Mendenhall and Isaac Benbow Houses were plainly detailed, center hall plan houses but were the largest constructed in the area to that date. The most sophisticated Greek Revival style building was the Shubal Coffin House (ca. 1840) in Jamestown, a plain center hall plan building that featured showy Greek Revival details on the exterior that were remarkably modern for the region (Fig. 11). The Italianate was most popular in the eastern part of the county, where a number of large and relatively well-detailed structures were built. Most notable is the Ingle-Kraus-Hodge House, with a particularly significant porch featuring highly unusual details and some trim typical of the work of Warrenton architect Jacob Holt or an unidentified pattern book used by him (Fig. 12).

Figure 9. Low House, 1820's. This east Guilford County brick house has received hopelessly inappropriate wings and door treatment.

The biggest, most ambitious houses of this period in the rural areas of the county illustrate the tendency for builders to abandon their indigenous cultural traditions and to seek plans and details from the stylish areas of the state, but they were usually awkwardly composed and were inevitably simple and plainly finished in keeping with earlier architecture of the region. Unlike the ambitious builders of Greek Revival and Italianate houses, builders of the simplest houses held on tenaciously to the hall and parlor plan and the plainest applied treatment. Formally and spatially their mid-nineteenth century houses differed little from early nineteenth century dwellings. Often, however, they contained simple acknowledgement of architectural trends, particularly the Greek Revival, from which, for example, corner blocks and two panel doors derived.

The most sophisticated buildings, almost in a class by themselves, that were built in antebellum years were located in Greensboro, a town which the railroad helped to make the county's leading commercial center. Affluence, urbanization, and increased communication with

Figure 10. Low House, located in the heart of Guilford's German settlement. Interior detail shows Greek Revival style door surround with unusually treated corner block. Other details are fully developed Federal style.

Figure 11. Shubal Coffin House, remodelled to present appearance ca. 1840. This plain center-hall plan house was vigorously treated on its facade with Greek Revival detail, the most elaborate surviving in the county. Despite its obvious crudity by academic standards, its owner consciously strove for the latest stylistic image.

Figure 12. Ingle-Kraus-Hodge House, ca. 1850. In addition to its remarkable porch, the house contains a range of stylistic elements, including Italianate and Greek Revival motifs.

other centers of population caused the displacement of local tradition in architecture among the richest citizens. Leading the city was Governor John Motley Morehead who imported designs by New York architect A. J. Davis for his impressive villa-style house (Fig. 13). Blandwood, as it was called, was soon followed by a series of relatively sophisticated dwellings that were indicators of the future directions architecture would take after the War, away from the traditions of the exclusively vernacular landscape.

Except in the rural areas of the county, where the plainest styles of post-bellum architecture featured many of the characteristics of antebellum building types, particularly in tenant housing, Guilford County architecture differed little from that in most other places in North Carolina. Standardization of formal characteristics and decorative detail increased at about the same rate as in-

dustrialization. Vernacular design traditions quickly died out—a familiar pattern observable just about everywhere. The body of architecture that was added to, and in many cases replaced, existing buildings, was often of high and occasionally exceptional quality, but the attitudes and ambitions of late nineteenth and twentieth century builders in the cities, and the changing lifestyles and increasing affluence of rural dwellers resulted in the disposal of the antebellum landscape to an extensive degree. The heart of the problem facing preservationists in Guilford County is that the local history of the area (except for events of transcendant significance) is no longer of great value to most people. That no county history has been written since 1902 is indicative of the general disinterest in history in the area. The vernacular buildings of the antebellum landscape are no longer representative of the tastes, lifestyles, economic status, and ambitions of Guilford County citizens. The artificially reconstructed museum "villages" containing buildings moved from

other sites and the house museums are the only expressions of serious interest in old buildings in the county and, their merits and faults aside, are illustrative of the nearly complete detachment of modern life from its folk origins. There is not much reason to be optimistic about the future of vernacular architecture in rapidly urbanizing areas like Guilford County; nonetheless, a reevaluation of the greatly diminished stock of vernacular building is the standardized landscape's last hope for architectural distinction.

Footnotes

1. Ruth Little-Stokes, *An Inventory of Historic Architecture, Greensboro, N.C.* (Raleigh and Greensboro: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Dept. of Cultural Resources and City of Greensboro, 1976).
2. William Seymour, *A Journal of a Southern Expedition, 1780-1783* (Wilmington Delaware: The Historical Society of Delaware, 1896), 19.
3. E. W. Caruthers, *A Sketch of the Life and Character of the Reverend David Caldwell, D.D.* (Greensboro: Swaim and Sherwood, 1842), 208.
4. Thomas T. Waterman, *The Early Architecture of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 173.
5. Waterman, 176.

Figure 13. Blandwood. The structure was remodelled to its present appearance ca. 1848 by it's owner, Governor John Motley Morehead. Only the main block of the house and remnants of an arcade survive.

Continuity and Change in Traditional Architecture:
The Continental Plan Farmhouse in Middle North Carolina*

Various currents of tradition and of fashion crossed one another on our historical landscape. At their intersections material culture was often precipitated that fixed both in form and place the particular mix of the historical moment. Most often it was the progressive, mutating demand of style played against conservative folk tradition that became thus recorded in construction. In the case of early Americans of non-English stock tradition was also subject to the acculturative draw of the dominant Anglo-American environment, which contributed a significant third element to the mix.

In this article Mr. Herman draws on his considerable experience both in the field and in academia to read in "a single early nineteenth century farmhouse," built by a German-American, inflections toward these three contending currents that brought "continuity and change" to the vernacular landscape. Mr. Herman aptly terms the resultant of these currents the "regionally indigenous architectural compromise," giving simultaneous recognition to the dynamic as well as its geographical ground. In his "emblematic" example of that compromise he finds evidence of identification with Old World German folk tradition, with New World Georgianization, and with elements of Anglo-American building practice. Importantly, in focusing on a "single material statement" he is brought in the end to reflect upon the vernacular builder's exercise of free will in the personalization and possession of the ideas and values at large in his day.

Through the surveying, recording, and interpretation of traditional American architectures the dynamic of geographical migration and formal sylistic change has increasingly occupied the attentions of cultural geographers, folklorists, and architectural historians. In the last quarter century folk architectural expression has been studied more and more as part of the body of human interrelationships documenting the recognition, maintenance, and perpetuation of culturally familiar and conservative statements of self as reflected in commonly held notions of dwelling and work space. At the same time there has developed an equal concern with the processes of innovation where overlays of new, often externally introduced ideas are combined with older concepts producing indigenous, sometimes idiosyncratic, unselfconsciously founded expressions of house form, construction, and style. The resultant compromises between tradition and innovation have been variously ascribed by students of vernacular architecture to the singular nature of the American frontier with its mass settlement migrations,[1] to formal and sylistic evolutionary sequences,[2] or to the subtle mediation of certain oppositions found within the cultural and contextual matrix of the historical moment.[3] Whatever the cause, it is the fact of regionally indigenous architectural compromise and the relationship of that compromise to its American antecedents and counterparts which forms the focus of this essay centered on the description of a single early nineteenth century farmhouse situated in the North Carolina piedmont.

Emblematic of the problems inherent in the issues of cultural diffusion, continuity, and change is the John Stigerwalt House (Fig. 1), a three-room plan, brick dwelling built around 1811 and located in southern Rowan County.[4] Because the factor of settlement pattern exercises such a vital role in understanding the play of historical forces on the piedmont region of North Carolina, a brief

note on the early settlement of Rowan County is introduced at this point. Up to the period of 1730 to 1750 the major proportion of settlement in North Carolina was centered in the eastern reaches of the colony below the natural barrier of the fall line. The population, and by extension the social customs and material culture, of this area was predominantly English in origin. From about 1740 to 1750, however, North Carolina was subjected to one of the largest cultural migrations in eighteenth century America as more than sixty thousand settlers moved into the piedmont reaches of the colony. While some of these settlers came from the eastern areas of North Carolina, the vast majority had started in southeastern Pennsylvania and trekked down the long Valley of Virginia and into the open piedmont of North Carolina. Numerically, the large majority of these settlers were Scotch-Irish, but several thousand were also Palatinate Germans representing the third wave of a mass emigration from the Continent that had begun in the mid-seventeenth century.[5]

It was during this period that Rowan County received its first substantial influx of settlers composed mainly of Scotch-Irish and Germans. One of the principal factors contributing to the heavy settlement of Rowan County at this time was its position at the juncture of two vital wagon routes:

> . . . Rowan County was made accessible by a network of two great thoroughfares, one running east and west and the other north and south. The Trading Path stretched from Fort Henry (Petersburg, Virginia) westward into Rowan County where it crossed the Yadkin River at Trading Ford and continued on . . . The other highway extended south through the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, into North Carolina as far as the Trading Path, which it joined just east of the Yadkin River.[6]

From 1750 on into the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century settlers continued to pour into the Rowan County region. Between the period of 1750 and 1770 the

Figure 1. John Stigerwalt House, Rowan County, North Carolina, built about 1811.

population in this area increased nearly four fold with the only setback occurring during the course of the French and Indian War from around 1756 to 1760. By the close of the eighteenth century Rowan County had become one of the most populous and prosperous counties in North Carolina.

As the German and Scotch-Irish settlers moved into Rowan County they brought with them the material memories of their European homelands and the working out of these ideas on American soil. Although it has been noted that these two immigrant groups tended to congregate in separate communities[7], there was a constant overlap and interchange of goods, services, and ideas. The most visible expression of the confluence of these forces is contained in the traditional architecture which trans-
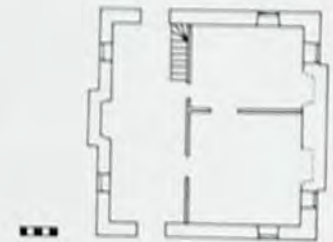

Figure 2. John Stigerwalt House, first floor plan. A twentieth century frame lean-to addition has been omitted for clarity.
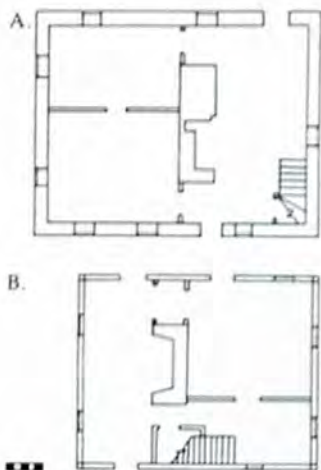
Figure 3: A. Stone Continental plan house, vicinity of Applebachsville, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, built about 1770; B. Log Continental plan house, vicinity of Souderton, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, built mid-eighteenth century. The stair in B was moved to its present location in the late nineteenth century.

formed the North Carolina frontier into a cultural landscape. Within this historical and acculturative framework the John Stigerwalt House is significant as a statement of the older concepts of Continental or Germanic house form and as a marker of the gradual breaking up of conservative, ethnocentric notions of houseness.

Built on a three-room plan (Fig. 2), the John Stigerwalt House stands as a nineteenth century variant of the Germanic hall-kitchen dwelling. Long recognized in southeastern Pennsylvania as a distinctive house type, the hall-kitchen or Continental plan house was described as early as 1924 by Henry Mercer. Although Mercer's avowed research intentions lay in attempting to pinpoint the origins of log construction in the United States, he did note that many Pennsylvania-German dwellings were characterized by a large central fireplace serving a single room running the depth of the house and backed by one or two smaller, seemingly unheated rooms.[8] In 1933 G. Edwin Brumbaugh independently elaborated on the formal characteristics of the Continental plan house:

> Two rooms on the first floor generally sufficed, a narrow kitchen and a wider living room, with chimney between. The great cooking fireplace thus occupied most of one long side of the kitchen and it is probable that "German stoves" of tile or iron backed up to the chimney in the larger room on the other side.[9]

Robert Bucher, in 1962, described the hall-kitchen plan house as "the direct result of the Continental tradition of life," and as being distinguished by a large central fireplace around which were arranged a large kitchen (*Kuche*), a parlor (*Stube*), and downstairs chamber (*Kammer*),[10] (Fig. 3, A. and B.). In 1968 Henry Glassie, re-evaluating Bucher's definition, rejected the criterion of log construction as immaterial to the recognition of a formal type, and at the same time Glassie accepted and elaborated on Bucher's other defining characteristics.[11]

The Pennsylvania Continental plan farmhouse then,

Figure 4. Pott Log House, vicinity of Lobachsville, Berks County, Pennsylvania, built mid-eighteenth century. In ruins, the Pott House provides a rare cross section of the formal features of a Continental plan house including a two, rather than three, room plan and large central fireplace.

is typically a three-room plan dwelling arranged around a large central chimney pile with a great cooking hearth opening into a kitchen running the depth of the house and generally containing a stair to the second floor or attic level (Fig. 4). Behind the kitchen on the other side of the central chimney are one or two rooms. The larger of these is the parlor which was commonly heated by means of a ceramic tile or five-plate cast-iron stove fueled from the kitchen through an opening in the rear wall of the hearth. The third and smallest room is a narrow downstairs chamber. The chamber was frequently left unheated, although there are indications in extant houses that the partition wall dividing the chamber and parlor could straddle the stove thus providing heat for both rooms.[12]

European antecedents for the center chimney, three-room hall-kitchen plan are pan-Germanic in distribution.[13] Known as the *Flurkuchenhaus* this dwelling type has been recorded in various forms from the upper Rhine Valley north to the Baltic Sea and east into Moravia

Figure 5. Continental plan log house, vicinity of Hosensack Station, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

Figure 6. Continental plan log house, Newmanstown, Berks County, Pennsylvania. Similar small scale hall-kitchen plan houses comprise a significant portion of eighteenth century village architecture in other nearby towns such as Kleinfeltersville and Schaeffertown.

and Silesia. The basic form is the same as found in New World examples, although the house is frequently part of a long house complex with stabling for livestock built onto one end of the dwelling and opening directly into the hall.

In Pennsylvania the Germanic hall-kitchen house was constructed of either stone, horizontal log, or half-timbering. They were one or two stories in elevation with a steeply pitched roof often flared at the cornice and containing a double attic (Fig. 5). Most roofs appear to have been wood shingled, but in the Oley Valley vicinity of Berks County evidence for locally fired clay tile roofs survives on numerous smaller domestic structures. While most fieldwork in Pennsylvania has focused on rural examples of this type, early photographs of York and Lancaster show the acceptance of the Continental plan dwelling as suitable for urban housing needs, and in the towns of Womelsdorf, Schaefferstown, and New-manstown (Fig. 6) these compact structures continue to comprise a significant portion of the village architecture.

In terms of diffusion the center chimney hall-kitchen house can be traced along with other plan types the entire length of the Shenandoah Valley and on into middle North Carolina. Relatively pure examples of this tradition have been recorded from Shenandoah to Franklin County, Virginia,[14] (Fig. 7; Fig. 8) and in For-sythe County, North Carolina.[15] In eighteenth century North Carolina and Virginia, however, variations began to appear in the Continental plan. As five plate iron stoves became increasingly difficult or too expensive to obtain, additional hearths were added to the central chimney pile.[16] The extra fireplaces appeared cut into the rear face or jambs of the kitchen stack, as small diagonally placed corner fireplaces built off the main pile and fronting the interior of the parlor, or as triangular piles with separate hearths for each room. As in Pennsylvania two and four room variants of the three-room plan were also erected.

As Germanic families grew more settled in their New World situations, the Old World norms of house form

Figure 7. Snapp House, first floor plan, vicinity of Fischer's Hill, Shenandoah County, Virginia, built mid-eighteenth century.
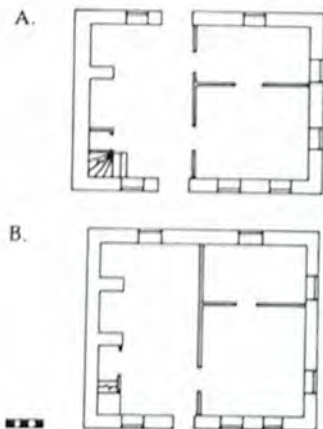
Figure 9. Pennsylvania Farmhouse plan dwellings showing the Continental plan interior without the center chimney mass and placed in a superficially symmetrically balanced four-bay facade: A. Vicinity of Applebachsville, Bucks County, Pennsylvania; B. Vicinity of Hereford, Berks County, Pennsylvania. Both houses were erected in the mid-nineteenth century.

Figure 8. Continental plan log house, vicinity of Fischer's Hill Shenandoah County, Virginia. This dwelling displays the characteristics of the three-room plan house as found in Germanic-settled areas of Pennsylvania. The one-story rear ell is also of log construction.

and construction were gradually altered under the impact of the balanced aesthetic of the Georgian architectural style. Everywhere in the mid-Atlantic region the neoclassical symmetry of the tripartite center-hall plan wielded an enormous influence that would dominate American vernacular architecture from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. Within the framework of this changing aesthetic, the Continental plan house retained its skeletal form but with significant changes. The three-room interior division remained intact, but the large central chimney was discarded in favor of chimneys placed at either gable end. One end stack served a large open hearth in the old hall, while the other furnished a small heating

hearth in the parlor. The downstairs chamber continued to remain unheated. With the central chimney pile removed, the facade was rearranged into a center door, three or four bay front (Fig. 9, A. and B.). Where the front of the dwelling was four bays across, the center frequently contained two doors to heighten the illusion of a formal symmetry which did not exist. Traditional builders were simply reluctant to completely surrender old and familiar notions of house form and compromised by accomodating the traditional hall-kitchen plan in seemingly up-to-date facades.

Identifying this compromised hall-kitchen plan in a dressed up facade as the "Pennsylvania farmhouse," Henry Glassie summarized the situation:

> The plan is like that of peasant dwellings in Switzerland and the Rhine Valley. Its depth and proportions, products of the late Medieval Continent, are not completely incompatible with the Georgian intent; its plan is not wholly unlike the two-thirds Georgian house subtype. This similarity surely supported acceptance of the new Georgian form, and it facilitated the merger of the old and new forms into the type most common in the heartland of the mid-Atlantic area from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, to Frederick, Maryland. The flattish roof and external quasi-symmetry of the common house type fool scholars into assigning its origin to England and neoclassicism. But that shell masks an aged Continental interior.[17]

It is precisely the dynamics of continuity and change in traditional architecture that led Thomas Waterman into assigning the hall-kitchen plan house as it appeared in the North Carolina piedmont to an Anglo-American point of origin.[18] Waterman recognized the vital heterogeneity in architectural forms built in the culture hearth of the eighteenth century Delaware River Valley, and in other writings is cognizant of the three-room Continental plan house, its European origins, and its diffusion into the Valley of Virginia and North Carolina piedmont. Still, citing an essay by William Penn, he chose to ascribe the

three-room hall-kitchen plan to multiple ethnic roots while naming the Quakers as the key bearers of this tradition.[19] In deference to Waterman, it should be noted that in southeastern Pennsylvania, especially in Chester, Berks, Montgomery and Bucks counties, there is a "Penn plan" house type (Fig. 10, A. and B.). In elevation and plan these dwellings are quite different from the Continental plan house and seem to be drawn from urban antecedents. The Penn plan house is characterized by a hall-parlor or three-room plan where a board partition wall separates a small parlor from a narrow passage containing a stair to the upper floors of the house. The gable follows the long side of the dwelling with the principal entrance into the hall located on the short lateral facade. The Penn plan house then, is two rooms deep with a single large interior end chimney pile containing either two corner fireplaces or a large cooking hearth abutted to a smaller heating fireplace. Examples of this plan type are commonly of stone or log fabric in rural areas and of brick construction in urban situations. The formal influence of the Penn plan house, however, does not appear to have spread much beyond the parameters of its original occurrence in southeastern Pennsylvania where it remained a viable plan alternative well into the nineteenth century.[20]

Part of the basis for Waterman's logic in attributing the hall-kitchen Pennsylvania German farmhouse as it appears in North Carolina to English Quaker origins may lie in the breaking up of the massive center chimney pile, a feature held by many folk architectural historians to be a dominant and necessary characteristic of this plan type. With the central stack exploded into smaller end chimneys, the hall-kitchen plan ceases to be as strikingly Continental in origin and representative instead of more ethnically anonymous late eighteenth and early nineteenth century formal conceptions in American vernacular building.

The transformation of the Continental plan house into the Pennsylvania farmhouse noted by Glassie and the Quaker plan dwelling identified by Waterman was a parallel and broadly contiguous development. At the same time the changes in the hall-kitchen plan were occurring in the Pennsylvania countryside, similar alterations were being affected in middle North Carolina. The Ezekial Wallis House,[21] now demolished, built about 1788 in Mecklenburg County, and Red Hill (Fig. 11; Fig. 12), erected around 1790 in Rockbridge County, Virginia, illustrate the formal characteristics derived from the Continental plan house. The dwelling is entered through a door opening directly into a hall containing a large open fireplace against one gable wall and often intended as a cooking hearth, and also containing a set of stairs leading to the second floor. Set off from the hall by a partition wall were two smaller parlors or chambers. Unlike their Pennsylvania cousins these two rooms tend to be dimensionally equal with each served by its own heating fireplace. The overall effect is the continuation of the hall-kitchen formal tradition, but tempered by increased concern with interior as well as exterior symmetry.

The John Stigerwalt House (Fig. 13) of Rowan County emerges from this broad scheme of architectural continuity and change as being at once the clear image of older Continental concepts of house form as well as a marker of the gradual breaking up of conservative notions of houseness under the dual forces of acculturation and accession to style. Two stories in elevation, the Stigerwalt House is built on a nearly square three-room plan. The principal entrance into the house leads into a hall running the full depth of the structure and containing a single heating fireplace and a stair to the second floor. Opposite the hall and set off by a thin beaded vertical plank partition wall are two smaller rooms, a roughly square parlor and smaller downstairs chamber. Each of the smaller rooms also contains a heating fireplace facing directly into the room and joined in a single exterior end chimney pile. As a dwelling type based on the characteristics of form, the Stigerwalt house stands as a variant of the Continental
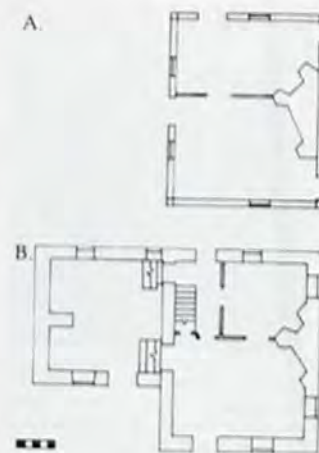

Figure 10. Penn Plan houses: A. Log Penn Plan house, vicinity of Marple, Delaware County, Pennsylvania, built late-eighteenth century; B. Three-room plan variant of Penn Plan hall-parlor house type, vicinity of Marshallton, Chester County, Pennsylvania, mid-eighteenth century.
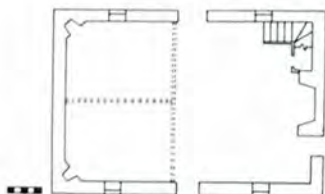
Figure 11. Red Hill, first floor plan. The plan of Red Hill and the Wallis House, which formerly stood in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, show the final interior balance wrought in the hall-kitchen plan house. Instead of a disproportionate parlor and chamber arrangement, two dimensionally equal rooms have been partitioned against the hall. The hall is also considerably enlarged allowing for the accommodation of a balanced three-bay facade.

Figure 12. Red Hill, vicinity of Lexington, Rockbridge County, Virginia, built late-eighteenth century.

Figure 13. John Stigerwalt House, gable end showing patterned brickwork.

plan house. The same shattering of the central chimney pile as in the Pennsylvania farmhouse type and its Southern analogs is evident in the Stigerwalt House; however, the removal of the central blockage is not accompanied by a corresponding effort at creating a symmetrical and balanced bay system. Instead, the fenestration hearkens back to eighteenth century two-bay facades of Continental plan houses in the Valley of Virginia. Visually a third bay is introduced on the facade of the Stigerwalt House through the application of glazed header brick diaper work framing an inset stone sundial, but the fenestration still echoes a century old Pennsylvania-German building tradition.

Constructurally, the Stigerwalt House represents both the maintenance of and departure from the modes of building associated with the Continental plan dwelling. In the earliest examples of this type log and stone were the favored materials, but with the Georgianization of the plan in the early nineteenth century brick and frame also began to be widely used. In the region of the Delaware River Valley, though, where the Pennsylvania farmhouse was constructed of brick, the masonry was typically laid in either Flemish or common bond with little or no effort at ornamentation save an occasional date board placed high up in one gable end. Patterned brickwork employing glazed or vitrified headers laid in Flemish bond to create a checkerwork effect—or more complex bonds producing tightly knit diaper or lozenge work, chevrons, zigzags, or dates and initials—were employed in many eighteenth century buildings. For the most part patterned brickwork in the mid-Atlantic region was part of an Anglo-American decorative tradition reaching from southern New Jersey west to York, Pennsylvania, and scattered throughout the tidewater and piedmont zones of North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland[22] (Fig. 14). In Rowan County the figured end chimneys of the Alexander Long House (Fig. 15) and the John Stigerwalt House exhibit the continuation of this tradition, while the gable end of the Boys' School in Old Salem illustrates its acceptance by eigh-

teenth century North Carolina German builders.[23]

The use of patterned brickwork in the Stigerwalt House enhances both gable ends and the principal facades of the dwelling. Laid in Flemish bond the glazed headers are arranged in stacked lozenges on each end chimney (Fig. 16) and as a figured framework for the sundial set in the facade (Fig. 17). The use of glazed header brickwork in the Stigerwalt House is not incompatible with the Germanic origins of the plan. Rather the formal and decorative constructural features represent the acculturative melding together of varying architectural characteristics in the production of a house that is the extension of a decidedly Continental formal tradition and, at the same time, an impressive statement of considerable affluence and prestige. The logistics of laying a two-story brick wall in evenly executed Flemish bond are difficult enough and required the skills of an accomplished mason. Accordingly, the working in of patterned brickwork only rendered construction more laborious, time consuming, and expensive. In some extant eighteenth century buildings the difficulties besetting the masons were so overwhelming that they simply abandoned their decorative efforts halfway up the face of the structure and finished the wall in as simple a manner as possible.[24] The patterned sections in the brick fabric displays considerable competence on the part of masons at a period in American building where such decorative practices were rapidly disappearing from the vast body of vernacular architecture.

In the roof framing of the John Stigerwalt House constructural features more closely identified with Delaware River Valley folk building reappear (Fig. 18). Built on a principal rafter system, the roof framing is intact despite heavy damage caused by fire when the house was struck by lightning about 1972. The principal rafters are joined by butt purlins which are further supported by short down braces. The common rafters, carrying the nailing strips to which the shingles were fastened, lie across the back of the purlins. All rafters are morticed and tenoned at

their apex and their feet are fixed to three inch thick board false plates running the length of the roof and resting atop the flush surface of the masonry walls and second floor ceiling joists. There was no provision for a frame cornice and the exterior walls are consequently finished with a whitewashed five-course molded brick cornice at their juncture with the base of the roof.

Principal rafter systems with both through and butt purlins were widely used in Anglo-American building in New England and parts of the mid-Atlantic region,[25] but their appearance in the South is generally found in association with either extremely early English colonial dwellings or in the parameters of the architectural flow from Pennsylvania to North Carolina. In the latter area principal rafter and purlin roofs continued in use well into the

Figure 14. Chambliss House, Salem County, New Jersey, built mid-eighteenth century, altered mid-nineteenth century.

Figure 15. Alexander Long House, vicinity of Salisbury, Rowan County, North Carolina, showing patterned exterior end chimneys bearing initials and hearts.

first half of the nineteenth century. Examples of principal rafter roof framing exhibiting the broad continuity of this constructural feature can be located from Pennsylvania to Virginia and North Carolina.

Because of the necessity of modern changes, the interior of the Stigerwalt House retains comparatively little of its early trim. On the ground floor a simple molded chair rail, vertical beaded plank partition walls, and a single Federal period mantel remain. The plastered walls of the first floor and the unfinished walls of the second floor have been paneled over within the present occupant's lifetime. Significantly, none of the surviving original trim reveals any decidedly ethnocentric characteristics.

The use of beaded partition walling is common to much eighteenth and nineteenth century vernacular housing throughout the breadth of the mid-Atlantic region. The mantel and chair rail display popular, rather than folk, antecedents stemming from the stylistic affectations of Federal period American architecture.

In the sum of its decorative, constructural, and formal features the John Stigerwalt House represents the continuity of particular folk building traditions and abandonment of others. The Stigerwalt House is a synthetic expression reflecting at once multiple ethnic traits and an underlying Germanic basis for the three-room Carolina plan house type found throughout the region. As

Figure 16. Stigerwalt House, detail of lozenge work in the east gable end.

Figure 17. Stigerwalt House, detail of inset stone sundial framed by glazed header arch.
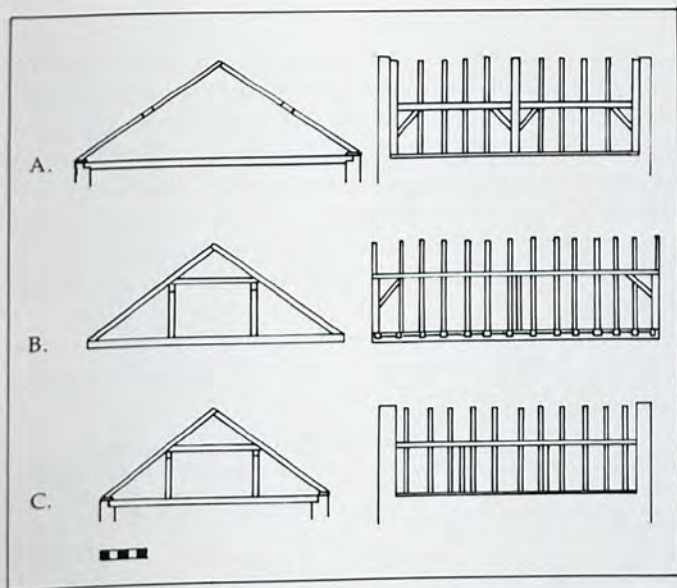
Figure 18. Roof framing: A. Butt purlin, principal rafter roof, John Stigerwalt House; B. Through purlin, common rafter roof, Snapp House, Shenandoah County, Virginia; C. Through purlin, common rafter roof, Jesse Horne House; vicinity of Applebachsville, Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

the nineteenth century advanced in the southern North Carolina piedmont many of the Germanic features which distinguish the Stigerwalt House were generally abandoned. The three-room hall-kitchen plan with its affinities to the Georgian derived double-pile, side-hall plan was retained, but its proportions were altered in other contemporary dwellings to bring it more into accord with the Georgian ideals of balance and symmetry. Thus, the two-bay Germanic fenestration of the Stigerwalt House is lost in favor of three and five bay, center door facades (Fig. 19; Fig. 20).

Keith Otterbein, in a recent monograph on the vernacular architecture of an island community in the Bahamas, attributes change in folk building to two needs, that of prestige and that of convenience:

. . . a change in architectural features (style) meets the prestige need and a change in the number and arrangement of rooms (form) meets the need for conveniences. These two concepts, style and form, can be related to another set of concepts, diffusion and evolution. These are concepts which identify two different processes.

. . . the acceptance of a new style from outside the community leads to the replacement of a previous style, while the use of floor space changes gradually with one floor plan developing out of another.[26]

To interpret vernacular housing entirely from these precepts is to do a disservice to the intent and competence of the designer and builder. Intent, it is argued, may never be fully known, but competence—the ability to produce perceivable ideas—is manifest in all material and verbal expression. Otterbein's notions of need, evolution, and diffusion then, explain only the broadest aspects about the issues of continuity and change in folk housing. A dwelling, or any other artifact, is more than an object, it is the perceivable image of choice in the context of self and situation.

The John Stigerwalt House, and the three-room plan Carolina house as a formal type, can be interpreted from the viewpoints of evolution and diffusion. This perspective, however, documenting only passage, fails to account for the actual dynamics of change. Change is wrought in material culture, not in terms of broad historical movements, but in human response, either collective or individual, to the values in these movements and to particular commonly held ideas. Woven into such a response are the variables of competence and choice. Human beings, as John Ruskin observed, are not intended to be evaluated as human machines geared and adjusted to spew out endless, easily typed and catalogued material expressions.[27] But as Henry Glassie notes, builders necessarily function within certain culturally and cognitively set mental structures where variations within the confines of tradition occur in the actualization of expression.[28] Whether this

Figure 19. Matthias Phifer Log House, vicinity of Third Creek Church, Rowan County, North Carolina, built about 1806. This small Continental plan dwelling displays a transitional two-bay second floor, three-bay ground floor combination. The shed element with independent chimney is original and common in the locale.

factor be labeled "workmanship of risk"[29] or "unconscious process,"[30] it is the final exercise of individual free will that differentiates one material expression from another. Within this conceptual framework the John Stigerwalt House can be viewed as the continuation and extension of commonly shared notions of Continental and American building traditions in the middle North Carolina landscape, and as the subtly personal reworking of these ideas through the realization of a single material statement.

Footnotes

1. See: Fred Kniffen, "Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 55:4 (December, 1965), 549-577; John J. Mannion, *Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 138-164; and Wilbur Zelinsky, *The Cultural Geography of the United States* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 88-94. See also: J. T. Smith, "The Concept of Diffusion in its Application to Vernacular Building," in Geraint Jenkins, editor, *Studies in Folklife: Essays in Honour of Iowerth C. Peate* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 59-78.

2. See: Hugh Morrison, *Early American Architecture from the First Colonial Settlements to the National Period* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952); Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1969).

3. Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia: A Structural Analysis of Historic Artifacts* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975).

4. The John Stigerwalt House is a well-known Rowan County landmark; see: Frances Benjamin Johnston and Thomas Tileston Waterman, *The Early Architecture of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 176, 193, 284.

5. See: Guion Griffs Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 8-14; James G. Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 196), 211-216.

6. See: James Brawley, *Rowan County: A Brief History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources Division of Archives and History, 1974), 2.

7. Johnson, 12; Leyburn, 216.

8. See: Henry C. Mercer, *The Origin of Log Houses in the United States* (Doylestown: Bucks County Historical Society, 1976 reprint), 16, 22-24.

Figure 20. John Cowan House, vicinity of Bear Poplar, Rowan County, North Carolina, built about 1820. This later house is a good example of the Continental plan made regular and given a more fashionable symmetrical three-bay facade.

9. G. Edwin Brumbaugh, "Colonial Architecture of the Pennsylvania Germans," *Pennsylvania German Society Proceedings*, XLI, Part II (Lancaster: Pennsylvania German Society, 1933), 28.

10. Robert C. Bucher, "The Continental Log House," *Pennsylvania Folklife*, 12:4 (Summer, 1962), 14-19; and Robert C. Bucher and Isaac Clarence Kulp, Jr., "Bau-Typen in Goschenhoppen: Eighteenth Century Building Types in Goschenhoppen," *The Goschenhoppen Region*, II:1 (Peterkett, 1969), 4-7.

11. Henry Glassie, "A Central Chimney Continental Log House," *Pennsylvania Folklife*, XVIII:2 (Winter, 1968-1969), 32-39.

12. An example of a partition wall falling directly on a five-plate iron stove is at Schiefferstadt, Frederick, Maryland. Schiefferstadt, however, is not of the hall-kitchen house type, but represents instead, a comparatively rare New World example of the through-passage house (*Durchgangigenhaus*).

13. See: Paul Klopfer, *Das Deutsche Baurern und Burgerhaus* (Leipzig: Alfred Kroner Verlag, 1915), 1-84; August Meitzen, *Das Deutsche Haus in seinem Volksthumlichen Formen* (Berlin: Dietrich Reiner Berlag, 1882), *passim*; Rudolf Merringer, "Das Bauernhaus und dessen Einrichtung, *"Studie Studien zur Germanischen Volkskunde*, XXI (Wien: Mittheilungen des Anthro Gesellschaft, 1891), *passim*; and Gustav Rank, *Das Bauernhausformen im baltischen Raum* (Wurzburg: Holzner Verlag, 1962), 43-54.

14. See: Mabel M. France, *Primitive Architecture: Lifestyle 1776-1976, Franklin County and Southwestern Virginia* (Ferrum: by the author, 1976), 6; Dell Upton, personal communication re. Anglin House, (December 14, 1976); and Isaac Long Terrell, *Old Houses in Rockingham County 1750-1850* (Verona, Virginia: McClure Press, 1970), 8-9, 25, 35-36, 60-62, 124-125.

15. Johnston and Waterman, 192.

16. Thomas Tileston Waterman, *The Dwellings of Colonial America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950), 44.

17. Henry Glassie, "Eighteenth Century Cultural Process in Delaware Valley Folk Building," *Winterthur Portfolio 7* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia for the Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum, 1972), 41-42.

18. Johnston and Waterman, 173-178.

19. Waterman, 43. Describing the three-room plan type, Waterman noted, "The north central part of North Carolina, largely settled by Pennsylvania emigrants coming down through the Piedmont and Valley of Virginia, was the great center of Quakers and the Quaker type plan in all its phases. Most of these houses are two full stories high and built of either local field stone or brick, often in the latter case with elaborate patterns in glazed header brick."

20. See: Eleanor Raymond, *Early Domestic Architecture of Pennsylvania* (New York: William Helburn, Inc., 1931), Plates 69 and 70; also see: Margaret Berwind Schiffer, *Survey of Chester County, Pennsylvania, Architecture Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Exton: Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., 1976). Based on HABS and HABSI material recorded in Chester County, Schiffer's book provides a valuable cross section of Pennsylvania English and German vernacular architecture.

21. Johnston and Waterman, 174-175, 195.

22. See: Paul Love, "Patterned Brickwork in Southern New Jersey," *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, LXXIII:3 (July 1955), 182-208; Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, *The Virginia Landmarks Register* (Richmond: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, 1976), 176; Johnston and Waterman, 45, 64, 65, 199-201; and Henry Chandlee Forman, *Early Manor and Plantation Houses of Maryland* (Easton, Maryland: by the author, 1934).

23. William J. Murtaugh, *Moravian Architecture and Town Planning: Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Other Eighteenth Century American Settlements* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 123.

24. Bernard L. Herman and David G. Orr, "Pear Valley Et Al.: An Excursion into the Analysis of Southern Vernacular Architecture," *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 39:4 (December, 1975), 321.

25. Norman M. Isham and Albert F. Brown, *Early Connecticut Houses: An Historical and Architectural Study* (New York: Dover, 1965 reprint of 1900 edition); and Dell Upton, "Board Roofing in Tidewater Virginia," *Association for Preservation Technology Bulletin*, VIII:4 (1976), 22-43.

26. Keith F. Otterbein, *Changing House Types in Long Bay Cays* (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1975), 99.

27. See: John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Volume II (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier and Son, 1900), 159-167.

28. Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, 19-21.

29. David Pye, *The Nature and Art of Worksmanship* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1968), 7-10.

30. Christopher Alexander, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 55-70.

The North Carolina Courthouse Square: Particularizing Time and Place

As we have seen, this state's tradition of rural dwelling holds many implications for the vernacular landscape. One is that counties, county seats, county courthouses, and courthouse squares have all played an unusually important role in the region's historical development. Relative to the rural dweller's sense of place—his image of his landscape—the focal position of the county seat and courthouse is undoubtedly critical. Here Paul Haynes traces the traditions and symbolism embedded in the courthouse square and describes the evolution of five typical squares in North Carolina.

The courthouse square at Burgaw, North Carolina.

A square, the courthouse in its grove the center; quadrangular around it, the stores, two story, the offices of doctors and lawyers . . . each in its ordered place; the four broad diverging avenues . . . becoming the network of roads and byroads . . . But above all the courthouse: the center, the focus, the hub; sitting looming in the center of the county's circumference . . . protector of the weak, judiciate and curb of the passions and lusts, repository and guardian of the aspirations and hopes.

—William Faulkner
Requiem for a Nun

The courthouse square pervades the North Carolina townscape, forming the core of most of the state's one hundred county seats. Since the state's beginnings on the shores of Albemarle Sound more than three hundred years ago, the judicial setting has been the treasured possession of its parent county, distilling notions of community and authority into tangible form. North Carolina's colonial settlement provided a diverse context for the early development of the courthouse square. Ascendent with the rise of the county unit, the square has been an evolving entity, reflecting state, county, and community development. This article examines the ancient legacy, historical role, and evolution of the North Carolina courthouse square.

Any discussion of the courthouse square in North Carolina must begin with its close relationship to the county unit. In North Carolina the county forms the most significant political subdivision below the state level. The county unit is employed throughout the country; however, it bears special significance for North Carolina and much of the South dating from the region's colonial history. English settlers in North Carolina introduced the county unit as early as the late seventeenth century.

Predominantly rural in makeup, with 55 percent of the population still classified as nonurban, North Carolinians have traditionally identified most strongly with the county. It forms the territorial basis for representation in

the General Assembly and the localized administration of state law. An elected board of county commissioners, by authority of enabling state legislation, performs important administrative duties at the county level. Comprehensive in scope, these responsibilities range from taxation and zoning to law enforcement and justice. Within limits set by the legislature each county functions as an autonomous entity.

As settlers moved westward across the state during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries new counties were formed to provide more locally responsive units of government. The location of the county seat became a major point of contention in emerging counties, at stake both economic and political power. Due to the semi-autonomous nature of the county government and its ability to tax and finance the courthouse and related buildings, the county seat tended to act as a magnet for businesses, attracting people from all corners of the county. In western counties the county seat, containing courthouse and square, was often the marker in the wilderness by which a newly formed county gained identity. In order to maintain their dominance in the legislature, political forces in the eastern part of the state insisted time and again when western states were created that a corresponding county be formed in their region by subdividing an existing county. This tactic both contributed to the proliferation of counties and reinforced the primacy of the county during this period of North Carolina's growth. The administration of justice, officially conducted for the state by the county, has historically—until the late 1960's—been largely in the hands of county employees. Although judges, district attorneys, and clerks of court are today state employees, they are still elected by local popular vote (a recent amendment to appoint judges on the basis of merit was defeated in the General Assembly). The county courthouse is built and maintained solely by the county. This strong county tradition and the county's important position in the state's political heirarchy are two major reasons for the ornate courthouses and elaborate squares built during the first two centuries of the state's history.

HISTORY

The modern courthouse square has descended from the central public square common in Europe from medieval times. The perceived need to provide places of social, commercial, and governmental import has generated similar public spaces in otherwise widely differing cultures. The public square has been a recurring response to this persistent communal desire. Early cities in the Middle East contained central open courts, usually enclosed by temples and royal residences, which were used for ceremonial purposes. This arrangement concentrated religious and political power and prestige in a single awe-inspiring enclosure. The plans of these early cities often took the form of a square divided into four quadrants by two axes, with the central square at the intersection. This configuration carried religious meaning as a mandala symbolizing heaven and earth. Jung writes: "Whether in classical or in primitive foundations, the mandala ground plan was never dictated by considerations of aesthetics or economics. It was the transformation of the city into an ordered cosmos. . . ."[1] Although stripped of its religious overtones, the square with cardinally radiating streets has remained a popular urban form to this day.

The Greeks and Romans each constructed their own interpretations of the public square. Greek cities contained column-lined agorae, central open areas which served as common meeting places for business, political, legal, religious and entertainment activities. Although sometimes a regular square or rectangle, agorae usually were only approximately rectilinear in configuration, a striking contrast to the exquisite geometric precision of Greek temples. The square's ability to facilitate social
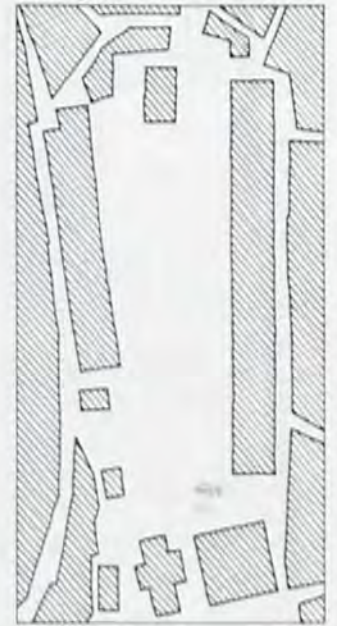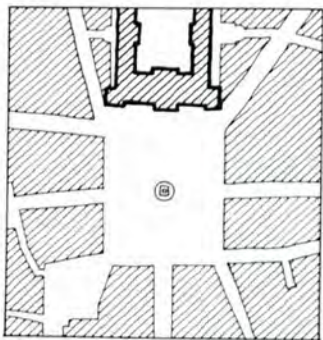

Plan of the ancient Greek agora at Assos, Greece.
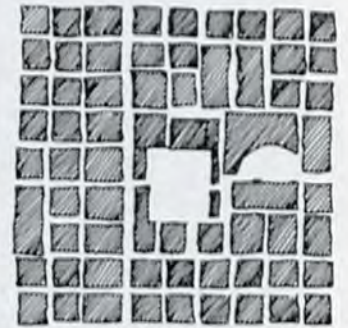
Plan of the Roman colonial town of Timgad showing the centrally placed forum.

Plan of the Place Royale at Rouen in eighteenth century France.

interaction was evident in the forums of later Roman cities and colonial towns. The forum was the site for marketing as well as judicial and public business. The Roman basilica, a court of civil litigation and house of public meeting, commonly stood fronting on the forum, emphasizing the relationship of the government to the public.

In medieval Europe the town market square encouraged contact primarily through trade. Trade was the life-blood of medieval towns and people regularly came from the surrounding areas to the square to market their goods and to obtain necessities.

The Renaissance and Baroque periods provide the first instances of squares specifically designed to accommodate governmental edifices. The axial plans of Baroque cities created vistas along broad avenues, ultimately focusing on the elaborate palaces of ruling monarchs. Although colonists in the New World were influenced by this tradition, their early towns were rarely as ambitious (Philadelphia and Savannah, with their main avenues regularly punctuated by squares, are notable exceptions). The English settlers in North Carolina brought with them images of the grandiose as well as the common from which they constructed their towns and squares. While the image of a square was often grand, the surrounding town context was usually by economic necessity and historical reality more common and utilitarian.

The designation given to a square in the colonies, as in the Old World, frequently referred to its primary use. While most squares containing a courthouse were known simply as "courthouse square," the term "town common" was once used in several locations. The term "common," of English origin, traditionally referred to communally owned, fenced open areas used for grazing and storing cattle at night. Any common containing a courthouse doubtless never accommodated cattle; still the name underscores the concept of the courthouse setting as communally held property. Courthouse squares at Murphy and Hillsborough were formerly known as commons.

The courthouse "green" is a less frequent type of courthouse square. It bears a close relationship to the New England town green, a grassy area which faced or contained important buildings. The green at Edenton, a large grassy rectangle lying between the Chowan County Courthouse and the Albemarle Sound, is one of the oldest courthouse squares in the state. The square is still known as "courthouse green."

The courthouse square is predominantly a small town phenomenon; it seldom survives as the town center in communities grown beyond twenty-five thousand. In North Carolina small towns comprise the majority of county seats, many having populations of less than five thousand. In these towns the courthouse square serves numerous needs for different people. Most basically the square provides a place for county government. Besides the courthouse, the square may contain the jail and other related county administration buildings. The desire of the county to locate additional facilities on the square has led in several counties to the expansion of the courthouse to the limits of the square and has dictated the construction

The Edenton Courthouse Green, laid out in 1750.

of a new courthouse elsewhere. The square has similarly been by tradition the commercial center of the town. Business of all types was conducted on the square and in some counties the market stood adjacent to the courthouse. Until the mid 1800's, the market house stood next to the courthouse on the town common at Hillsborough. The commercial function of the square has declined in recent years concurrent with the growth of suburban shopping sites easily accessible by automobile.

At another level the courthouse square has historically provided a crucial element for social interaction. Geographer Edward Price writes:

> The square brings together those who work there, those who come to do business, and those who come merely to visit and loaf. The square provides more room for socializing and a more attractive setting than a downtown devoted only to business and traffic. And it belongs to everybody. Different sides of the square became the meeting places for different social groups on court and market days.[2]

The courthouse square in the county seat is rife with symbolism. Both the square's form and ornamentation (trees, monuments, etc.) supply a rich store of meanings to the residents of the encompassing county. The square is usually both the literal and symbolic center of the county. The square and courthouse are often the county's most oppulent manmade forms. The courthouse square psychologically anchors the county in space and time. Through its primal geometry the square constitutes a symbolic mandala. The significance of the mandala form in architecture is noted by Carl Jung and Anelia Jaffe:

> Every building, sacred or secular that has a mandala ground plan is the projection of an archetypal image from within the human unconscious onto the outer world. The city, the fortress and the temple become symbols of psychic wholeness, and in this way exercise a specific influence on the person who enters or lives in the place. . . . Such things cannot be thought up but must grow again from the forgotten depths

> . . . amalgamating the uniqueness of present day consciousness with the age old past of humanity.[3]

Seen in person or by recollection, the square's symbolic content is available and visible to all.

The courthouse square draws much of its form and identity from its surroundings. The streets and buildings lining the square in towns across the state individually color each square. The stately white wooden houses lining the town common at Edenton bespeak the city's past as a cultural enclave of civilized English life. The courthouse stands at one end of the green commanding a vista of the Albemarle Sound. This courthouse setting is one of the few in North Carolina which is distinctively European in character, with the courthouse at the edge instead of the center. The view across the square is emphasized rather than the view from edge to center. More typically, the courthouse squares at Graham and Roxboro are bordered by the modest brick storefronts of rural trade centers.

TYPES

The provision of a square for the courthouse is accomplished in two major ways within the grid street pattern predominant in this state and country. One quarter of North Carolina's county seats have squares occupying the central block in the grid plan of the town. The block square generally utilizes the entire square or rectangular block and focuses on the courthouse in the center. The square is typically planted with grass and shade trees and crisscrossed with walks. Fine examples of the block square can be found at Warrenton and Morganton. Each has a large verdant square, a shady retreat in the town center.

Variations on the block square include all those courthouse settings which occupy only part of their blocks. Such settings include the site of the Hall of Justice at Winston-Salem as well as others, such as the setting for the Vance County Courthouse, which are relegated to a
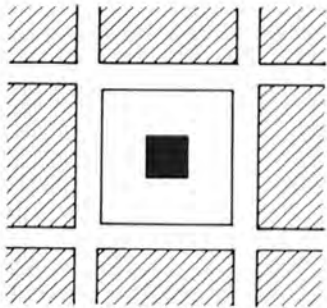
The block square.
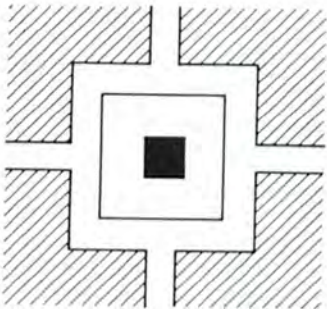
The Lancaster square.

slice out of the middle of the block. Partial block squares are present in another third of the counties.

The second and more dramatic type of courthouse square occurs at the intersection of the county seat's main streets. This type of square is known as the Lancaster square, after its first documented use in this country at Lancaster Pennsylvania. In early North Carolina towns, a square of one acre was typically provided at the meeting of these streets by notching out the corners of the adjacent blocks. The courthouse was placed in the center of the square, with streets skirting its edges. The Lancaster square, although the most striking, is also the least resistant to traffic congestion by virtue of its being "in the road." Consequently few of these once common squares remain in the state today. Existing examples are at Pittsboro, Whiteville, Graham, Carthage, Mocksville, and Lincolnton—small islands centered in busy intersections.

A common alternative to the Lancaster square places the courthouse on one corner of a primary intersection. Such a courthouse, close to the street, usually has little or no grounds of its own. This arrangement is common in county seats like Murphy where the courthouse has been moved from an earlier square. The corner site combines the positive feature of prominent location with a minimal land requirement where real estate is costly. One quarter of the counties have courthouse settings of this type.

Some counties, such as Davidson and Cleveland, have never defined a courthouse square. Others, such as Currituck and Stokes, have remained too rural to enclose a square but have placed their courthouses in prominent roadside settings. The Stokes County Courthouse stands on the brow of a hill; the Currituck Courthouse stands with its back to the sea surrounded by open fields.

CASE STUDIES: FIVE COURTHOUSE SQUARES

The histories and descriptions of the five squares that follow are not intended as thorough and exacting records. They illustrate, as would brief walking tours, these courthouse squares as evolving and significant features of their respective townscapes. These squares have been chosen because they represent a range of situations, because historical material for them was available, and, significantly, because they seem to embody the concept of a particular place marked for a special purpose.

Winston-Salem - Forsyth County

Winston-Salem's history is the record of two western Piedmont towns founded side by side geographically but totally apart in terms of purpose. The Moravian town of Salem began as a well-planned religious community. Winston, established in 1849 as the county seat, grew up as an industrial boom town based on the manufacture of tobacco products.

Unlike its neighbor, early Winston possessed little that was "planned." The only order in the new town derived from the laying out of a certral square for the courthouse and the incorporation of two streets, Salt and Main, extended from Salem. The city's central block-type courthouse square consisted of a large, slightly raised rectangular dais bounded by a low brick retaining wall. Beginning in 1850, three successive courthouses occupied the square. The second courthouse, built in 1892, was a notable example of Romanesque Revival architecture. After barely twenty years, the building was demolished and a new courthouse built in the more current Classical Revival Style. Practical necessity did not call for a new building—only fashion. The newer structure was built on the foundations of the previous courthouse.

For the first seventy-five years, the courthouse square was the literal as well as the social center of the city. A survey of Winston just prior to its merger with Salem

showed most of the city's businesses clustered a few blocks deep on all sides of the square. The square was the focus for numerous public ceremonies. On July 4th, the annual parade originated at the square and moved south along Main Street. According to Adelaide Fries, an historian writing on Winston-Salem: "During court week everybody in the county came to town and everybody in town went to courthouse square, not so much for the purpose of attending to legal affairs as to mingle with the crowds and have a general good time."[4] Over the years a distinction arose between courthouse square and the earlier Salem Square. Winston Square became the site of festivities and parades while Salem Square, befitting its more ecclesiastical past, became the site for more solemn ceremonies.

By the late 1960's it became clear to the county that a new court facility was needed. The existing courthouse had been added to until it filled the square. A new courthouse, the Hall of Justice, was built one block south of the previous courthouse on the edge of the busy downtown. The new seven-story Hall of Justice stands to one edge of its site across a multi-level plaza. Although more restricted in function than the previous square, the elevated tree-planted plaza forms a pleasant urban space raised above the busy street level. The plaza is a popular lunch spot, well used during the week. To the east and west of the Hall of Justice are two similar open plazas in front of the neighboring Federal office building and a modern bank building. These three visually linked plazas have established a new scale of public open space in the downtown area. They lack the intimacy of the older city fabric but collectively reflect the increased scale and complexity of our institutions.

The evolution of the courthouse setting at Winston-Salem illustrates the impact of county and city growth on the form of the traditional courthouse square. Faced with burgeoning space requirements, high land costs, and ever-present congestion, county commissioners are often forced to seek a suitable courthouse site away from the historical setting. The setting for the Forsyth Hall of Justice represents a combination of new requirements and older values, providing both functional accommodation and desirable public space in the downtown.

(top left) The Winston Courthouse Square in the mid-1800's. (top right) View of the square containing the 1892 courthouse. (bottom left) The 1926 courthouse on the square. (bottom right) The 1974 Hall of Justice overlooking its plaza.

(top left) The one-acre square forming the Commons at Murphy, as it appeared in the mid-1920's. (top right) Plan of Murphy denoting the square, from an 1838 survey by James Whitaker. (bottom) The square today, in view of the present courthouse.

Murphy - Cherokee County

Cherokee County owes much of its heritage to the Cherokee Indians who inhabited the mountainous western region of the state. The county seat of Murphy began in the late 1820's as an Indian trading post sited at the confluence of the Hiawassee and the Valley Rivers. In 1838 the Indians were removed west by troops in accord with a treaty and the county was established the following year.

The original square in Murphy was created by the convergence of what would become the town's four main avenues. The corners of the blocks overlooking this intersection were notched out to provide a one-acre square known as the Town Common. The square, of the Lancaster type, was sited with views into the surrounding mountains. The former trading post contained little industry and after the departure of the Cherokee it saw only as much commerce as the courthouse and related law offices could support.

The first courthouse, a temporary wood structure, was built in 1840 on a corner of the square. A more permanent brick building was built in its center four years later. A succeeding courthouse was built in 1868 on the same site. The third permanent courthouse, built in 1891, was located on a corner site one block away from the square. It was replaced in 1926 by the present courthouse. The one acre square, a grassy area bounded by its encircling streets, received a large confederate monument and fountain flanked by cannons which still existed as late as 1939.[5] Subsequently the square was removed and paved over as an intersection. Although the intersection is still referred to as "the commons" by local citizens, all that remain of that former public space are its extensions—the "notches"—into the surrounding blocks, today used for parking. The old site of the courthouse, the city's center, is today layered with asphalt and busy with traffic.
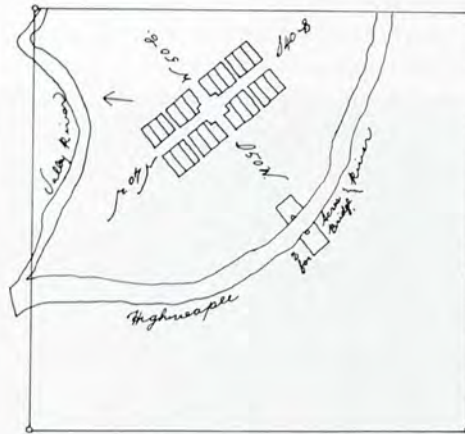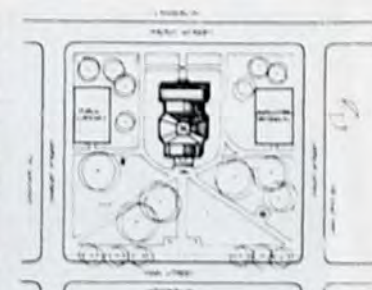
Warrenton - Warren County

The northern Piedmont town of Warrenton was founded in 1779, the same year as the formation of Warren County. The only building then on the town's future site was a granary where grain was collected to finance the Revolution. Warrenton was laid out by William Christmas, who would later lay out the State Capital of Raleigh. The first courthouse was built in 1783 on the central square which had been set aside in the original platt. The block square was large enough to accommodate the prison and stocks in addition to the courthouse.

After the Revolution Warrenton emerged as a prominent town in the northern, tobacco-rich region of the state. For more than half a century preceding the Civil War the town was known as a center of culture where men "prominent in the state and nation made their homes and where numerous private schools and academies flourished." Before 1860 well-to-do plantation owners found life in Warrenton gay, "with elaborate dinners and balls, horse racing, card playing and 'cocking mains' between prize birds."[6]

It was within this context that the square was enlarged in the early 1850's to form a larger block and a new courthouse built occupying the place of honor in its center. Tree-shaded walks provided an inviting setting for court, commerce, and socializing. After the Civil War, however, Warrenton lost its special gleam, its hotels and its gay plantation-based life, and reverted once more to a typical, quiet North Carolina small town.

The courthouse square has changed little during the past century. Today the square is a spacious, verdant space still crisscrossed by tree-shaded walks. People fill the square during pleasant weather, occupying the benches along Main Street and lounging against historic markers on the grounds. Drawing the life of the town into itself, the square functions both as a social center and as a dignified judicial setting.

Warrenton's case is a rare example of a square being enlarged over its history. Depicting an affluent constituency's grand intentions frozen by war, the square offers tangible evidence of Warrenton's past.

(top left and right) The Warrenton Square prior to the existing 1908 courthouse. *(bottom left)* The square today. *(bottom right)* Plan of the square today.
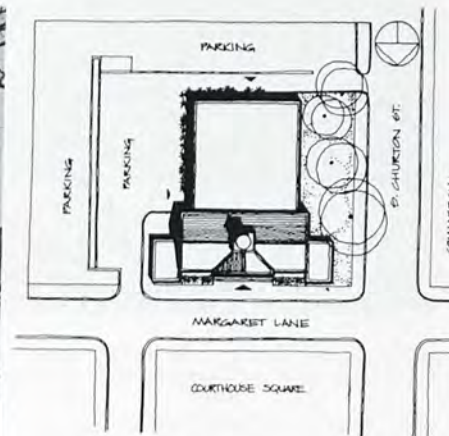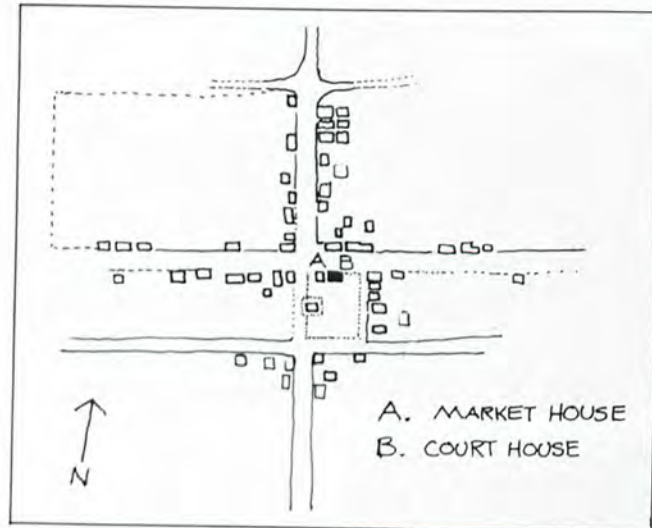
Hillsborough - Orange County

The Piedmont town of Hillsborough, the seat of Orange County, is set in the fertile Eno River Valley just east of the low Occoneechee Mountains. The town dates from 1754 when it was platted by William Churton, a surveyor for the Lord Proprietor of the region, Lord Granville. Subsequently known as Orange, Corbinton, and Childsburg, the town received its present name of Hillsborough in 1766.

During its early years Hillsborough provided an unusually urbanized setting for its courthouse and square. Its streets had been paved in 1781 by order of Lord Cornwallis who, anticipating a British victory, sought to establish the town as an urban cultural center. From the beginning, the courthouse square occupied a prominent position. Known as the Town Commons, it was the site of the courthouse as well as the market house, jail, pillory and stocks. In 1846 the grounds gained notoriety by the addition of a gallows. The courthouse and accompanying buildings ringed the perimeter of the square, which provided a spacious lawn. The square was the setting for judicial activities as well as the conduct of business and public gatherings.

A later courthouse was built on the same site and the market house next door demolished. Around the same time the size of the square was reduced by half with the introduction of a street through the middle of the square, parallelling Main Street. The form of the square remains essentially the same today. This historic courthouse building still stands and serves as a museum.

The present and larger courthouse, built in 1952 in response to increased space needs, is sited on a quiet side street behind and below the courthouse square. The newer building, with its entrance facing along the axis of the older courthouse, utilizes the existing square as its own, integrating practical considerations with established tradition. The square itself remains an active and well-maintained public space—a link with history and a valued public artifact.

A. MARKET HOUSE
B. COURT HOUSE

N

PARKING

PARKING

PARKING

E. CHURTON ST.

COMMERCIAL

MARGARET LANE

COURTHOUSE SQUARE

(top) Partial plan of early Hillsborough, from a 1768 map by C. J. Sauthier. *(bottom left)* The courthouse square today. *(bottom right)* Plan showing the neighboring courthouse built in 1952.

Wilmington - New Hanover County

The coastal county of New Hanover was formed in 1729, making it one of the oldest in the state. The county seat of Wilmington, located near the mouth of the Cape Fear River, officially dates from 1739 when it was granted incorporation by the General Assembly's Wilmington Town Act. Actually the city was begun six years earlier by friends of Governor George Burrington who sought to move the county seat from Brunswick, sixteen miles to the south. Plans for the disposition of the new town were completed in April of 1739. The town was subsequently laid out by a surveyor, William Gray, with a spot designated for "the townhouse" at the center of the original street grid. The settlement was known consecutively as New Carthage, New Liverpool, and Newton before its incorporation as Wilmington. The 1739 Town Act also authorized the completion of a temporary courthouse begun in anticipation of the town's establishment as the county seat.

The original courthouse stood in the middle of its square, an open area formed by the intersection of Market and Front Streets, the town's major avenues. From its inception, the square was a focus for community activities. Public meetings were held there and the area under and around the raised courthouse, known as the "shambles," was used for marketing meat and produce. Andrew J. Howell, an historian writing on early Wilmington, portrays the square as a bustling hub of community life.

> In the early days, many of the leading citizens of the community lived, not in the town, but on their extensive plantations nearby. . . . Wilmington, however, was the center of their business and public interests, and here they met to discuss questions of government and matters of general interest. The old courthouse, located a block from Market Street dock, was the gathering place of the men of affairs, and there transfers of land and slaves were made. [7]

After suffering its third fire in 1840, the courthouse was abandoned and a new one built nearby. The original courthouse was demolished and the intersection paved over to accommodate traffic. However, to this day the intersection is known as Exchange Corner and is still a local gathering spot. The third and present courthouse

(top right) Partial plan of early Wilmington, from a 1769 map by C. J. Sauthier. *(top left)* The site of the original courthouse square, still known as Exchange Corner. *(bottom)* The current courthouse setting, two blocks east.

was built in 1893 on a corner site two blocks away from the original courthouse square. Although a prime location and a heavily trafficked intersection, the site has not gained the significance of the former square.

Exchange Corner in Wilmington illustrates a typical progression in the history of a courthouse square. The early square, increasingly congested and too small for an expanding courthouse is vacated for a larger, less trafficked site nearby. As is often the case, the later courthouse occupies a prominent corner site. The older square, even though paved over, retains much of its image as a significant place in the town.

The courthouse square in North Carolina has historically supported a rich diversity of uses and meanings. Traditionally a gathering place, the square, through the facilitation of human contact, has manifested the social, cultural, economic and judicial life of the community. As community life has changed, the courthouse square has evolved in answer to its users' changing needs. Early nineteenth century Warren County required a square in keeping with the splendor of its surrounding plantation life. Counties across the state constructed court settings reflecting their affluence, or aspirations, and strove to maintain them as visible examples of community pride. The past fifty years, however, have wrought significant changes to certain aspects of the traditional courthouse square.

With respect to its functional aspects the courthouse square remains much the same as it did in colonial times. It still contains the courthouse, grown larger and more complex. If anything the functions of the county are more consolidated today. The jail, formerly located a respectable distance from the courthouse, usually shares the same roof, as do county administrative offices. As always, to be functionally adequate the square must, most basically, provide needed *space*. Squares that were intitially given generous areas have accommodated numerous additions to the courthouse without harm to the quality of the public space. The large square at Warrenton contains two county administration buildings in addition to the enlarged courthouse, yet remains green and spacious.

The focal point of the county and a place traditionally marked with the county's most ornate building and monuments, the square is often still the hub about which county life symbolically revolves. Civic pride, institutionalized and enduring, is vested in the square, its scrupulous maintenance standing as a testament. The residents of a county identify strongly with their square, especially in the smaller, more closely-knit communities. Local opposition to a proposed alteration of the square usually runs high. "We want the square the way it is," is the common response.

Over the years the most significant change has occurred in the courthouse square's role as a setting for social interaction. The past fifty years have witnessed radical changes in both our social norms and our methods of communication. Until recently, human communication was dependent upon face to face contact which necessitated public places where interaction could occur. Business of all kinds as well as ceremonies, addresses, and every type of public interaction was common on the square. The histories of the squares discussed above are colored largely by the social activities for which they provided the stage.

The social function of the courthouse square has declined in importance at the same time that remote forms of communication have proliferated. It is no longer necessary to go to the square to do business, converse with friends, or view public meetings or addresses. Through the telephone, radio, and television and other forms of remote communication we can attend to these activities from the comfort of our own homes or offices. Edward Hall has remarked on this tendency: "The Spanish plaza and the Italian piazza serve both involvement and polychronic functions whereas the strung out Main Street so characteristic of the United States reflects not only our structuring of time but our lack of involvement in others.[8]

The diminishing social import of the courthouse square is evident in large cities and small towns alike; however, small county seats still retain vestiges of social functions once common. In Haysville, Clay County, Saturday is market day, with farmers selling produce on the square and townspeople buying and visiting with their neighbors. Local craft fairs are held on the courthouse square at Wilkesboro.

The automobile has similarly had a strong impact on the courthouse square as well as on downtowns in general. The square has historically been the most easily and commonly accessible point in the county. This attribute held true so long as most roads led to the county seat and slower modes of transportation made a central location a necessity. With the advent of the automobile, however, ease of access became a relative matter, and the centrality of the courthouse square becomes almost purely symbolic as many points are now as easily accessible.

Several cities in North Carolina have made recent attempts to utilize the concept of the square in their new courthouse settings. Mecklenburg and Guilford counties, two of the most urban in the state, have built new courthouses near the existing ones, leaving large public spaces—squares—between the old and new buildings. The new Guilford courthouse square features terraced planting and convenient underground parking. Attempts such as these reflect the continuing popular appeal of the courthouse square.

Despite the dissipation of historic social functions, the square continues to be a pervasive element in the North Carolina townscape, embodying traditions of central county government and community identity. It is obviously not possible to reinstate the square's lost social function—functions better suited to another era. The desire for county identity which contributed so heavily to the ascendancy of the square in the beginning remains the force responsible for the square's persistence today. Stripped of most ancillary functions the courthouse square retains its original and most fundamental role as the symbolic heart of the county and physical core of the county seat.

The Guilford County government complex with new courthouse, center, and old courthouse, right.

Footnotes

1. Anelia Jaffe, "Symbolism in the Visual Arts," in *Man and His Symbols*, Carl G. Jung, ed. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1964), 243.

2. Edward T. Price, "The Central Courthouse Square in the American County Seat," *Geographical Review* 58:57.

3. Jaffe, 243.

4. Adelaide L. Fries, *Forsyth, A County on the March*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), 65.

5. The Federal Writers' Project of the Federal Works Agency, *North Carolina, A Guide to the Old North State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1939), 445.

6. *North Carolina, A Guide to the Old North State*, 476.

7. Andrew J. Howell, *The Book of Wilmington* (Wilmington, 1927), 30.

8. Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1966), 105.

North Carolina Country Churches:
Explorations in the Mountains and the Tidewater

Some aspects of culture are less likely candidates for vernacularization than others. The church is one example. Its universal language basically resists local inflection. At the same time, however, that language has been faceted into multiple denominational dialects. During her studies of North Carolina country churches Eliza Davidson found that denominational affiliation was a much stronger determinant of church form and character than was locale. Hence, though her thorough inventory did reveal the subtle influence of local environments, it brought more clearly to light the pattern of religious preference on the back roads of this state—and how nuances of conviction can be read in their physical expressions upon our vernacular landscape.

The sacred place is the archetype of all places—where order was first created amidst chaos. Rural dwelling has traditionally oriented itself by such clearings in the wilderness, be they the sacred hearth or the founding church. In North Carolina where rural dwelling yet thrives, country churches remain the stays of a conservative brand of belief that brings fundamentalist order to the land.

Organized religions are universal and fundamental cultural phenomena bearing the marks of the particular societies in which they are born and of all the societies in which they subsequently live. Expressions given to Christianity in both architecture and worship have varied considerably through history and among cultures. In the American past, Christianity assumed new forms and also extended traditional forms established in the countries from which the settlers came.

In North Carolina one finds transplanted churches, indigenous American churches, and more prominent than either of these, churches like the Baptist and the Methodist which germinated abroad but matured as legitimate denominations in this country. This diversity has spawned a rich but extremely complex architectural inheritance, further complicated by continuous expansion and transformation of Protestant sects.

The North Carolina countryside abounds with churches varying widely in age, scale, and expression, but together bearing witness to a pervasive Protestant tradition and a heritage of rural living. Next to dwellings and farm structures, churches are the most frequently found buildings in the rural landscape. Because the majority of North Carolinians still live in rural areas, country churches remain an ongoing contemporary phenomenon as well as the traditional rural focus for both social and spiritual life.

In addition to their sheer abundance, churches embody especially strong cultural significance. Because church forms emerge from the spiritual core of man, particularly from group consciousness, they constitute a rich and extremely challenging category of vernacular structures to explore. The potential scope of a study of country churches, then, is tremendous. Windows open to group meaning, custom and symbology, to social and architectural history, and most important, to the relationship between culture and form exhibited in the sanctuaries themselves.

Eliza Davidson

The explorations summarized in the following pages generated both detailed factual information and vivid firsthand experience. My initial intention was to assess the physical character of rural churches in all their existing forms, omitting none on the grounds of age, aesthetics, or denomination. My goal was to obtain a comprehensive, unbiased image of North Carolina's country churches today, based not on stereotype or personal taste, but on concrete experience.

To establish an information base I surveyed every rural sanctuary in two complete counties. I selected counties which were consistent in possessing an untainted rural character but contrasted in location, topography, and cultural heritage. The counties were Alleghany, which lies in the Blue Ridge Mountains, and Hyde, which borders Pamlico Sound. At each site I sketched a roughly-scaled site plan, noted exterior features on a standard form, and photographed the building, its details and surroundings. Whenever possible I noted interior features, diagrammed sanctuary arrangements, and took interior photographs. I focused upon documenting the country churches as physical entities, although cultural and spiritual dimensions strongly influenced my experience of the physical.

I believe that this in-depth, comparative approach has generated a more complete picture of North Carolina country churches than could have been gleaned from a more generalized, topical examination. The human eye is selective; the memory, subjective. The portraits which follow present the most important findings to emerge from my inventory. A multitude of specific topics also presented themselves for possible subsequent investigation. The content here presented is more descriptive than interpretive, this initial study for me having been introductory rather than conclusory in nature, focusing on exploration rather than explanation of church patterns within the rural landscape.

Findings: Alleghany County

Alleghany County's sixty-five churches represent eighteen different religious groups, many more than were found in a 1929 survey of North Carolina's country churches. Presently one active church exists for every 140 citizens. All but five of the sanctuaries belong to white congregations, and seven-eighths are rural. My survey covered fifty-four buildings, all non-urban.

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, oldest black church in Alleghany. This elegant handbuilt pulpit—far older than the building—forms the focus of an otherwise totally spare interior.

Scranton Christian Church, Hyde. Handcrafted pews and straw fans contribute to the simple, traditional quality of this sanctuary; by contrast, the outside has been "modernized."

Since 1929 the growth of churches has far outstripped population growth, brick has replaced wood as the dominant construction material, and multi-room structures on the whole have superseded single-room buildings. In 1929, one-room frame churches were almost universal. Obviously, many additions and replacements have occurred since then; in fact, four out of ten Alleghany County churches postdate World War II, and two-thirds of existing sanctuaries replace earlier buildings.

Alleghany's rural churches express strong denominational characteristics, yet also reflect the era of their individual construction. This influence transcends sectarian bounds. I found recent churches generally to be larger and more complex than older churches, using more modern, more expensive materials for their construction. Ironically, these substantial structures for the most part serve diminished congregations, square footage expanding as if to compensate for lost membership.

A painful example of this phenomenon exists in a homely modern brick church which stands in front of a graceful frame predecessor. The new building has over two-and-a-half times the area of the old. Given a congregation of only twenty-five, however, one must ask why the original one thousand square foot sanctuary was not considered adequate. The new facility must engulf the worshippers and preclude intimacy. Although congregations traditionally have tried to give to "God's house" their best, recently more and more emphasis seems to have fallen upon expressing devotion and church strength through physical facilities.

Protestantism provides a sometimes slender unifying thread among the church designs: the Missionary and Primitive Baptist sects, for example, embody in the scale and detail of their respective facilities strongly contrasting approaches to worship. Primitive Baptist congregations, traditionally abhorring Sunday Schools, church societies and domestic or foreign missionary work, maintain simple, unembellished church buildings. The older sanctuaries in particular impress one with their great spareness, purity, and uniformity. Natural light gives the interiors a luminous and peaceful quality.

The Missionary Baptist churches represent a proslytizing, expansive tradition oriented toward emotional experience and religious conversion. Their sanctuaries thus are embellished by extroverted steeples, pointed windows, and lateral extensions for Sunday Schools and social activities, with colored glass, organs, and religious images within to enhance the inspirational atmosphere. To discuss the generation of church form independent of denominational differences clearly is impossible.

Very few of Alleghany County's country churches are abandoned or completely disused. Six had additions or renovations underway when I visited them, and several others showed evidence of recently completed work. In every church I witnessed efforts by members to maintain or upgrade their facilities. In Alleghany "improvements" frequently take the form of razing an older sanctuary and replacing it with a more modern one. Neither adaptive use of other buildings nor moving churches themselves is popular.

Over half of the structures surveyed have undergone exterior alterations in the form of renovations or additions, and 57 percent of documented interiors have been changed through remodelling or refurnishing. Only one-fifth of the inventoried buildings have remained totally unaltered, the majority of these having been built since 1960. Small-scale changes predominate, reflecting a frequent desire to update sanctuaries despite a lack of major resources or a compelling practical necessity to perform alterations. Subjective motives seem to generate most renovation and replacement activity.

Nearly three-quarters of Alleghany County's churches are Baptist, reflecting the fact that Baptist churches were the first to take root in the county, around 1793. Because Baptist congregations could act autonomously and ordain clergy from within, the sect became a

self-perpetuating, grassroots movement without need for trained ministers or external organization. The absence of hierarchical control did, however, lead to multiple schisms within the body: Primitive, Missionary, Union (abolitionist), New Covenant, and Regular Baptists emerged through the years. Although Southern (Missionary) Baptists form the largest Protestant denomination in both the United States and North Carolina, in Alleghany County their churches are outnumbered four to one by those belonging to other Baptist sects.

Methodists arrived in the county soon after the Baptists, but never gained great strength. Today their churches constitute only 9 percent of the total. German Dunkards (now Church of the Brethren) and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who entered Alleghany after 1885 today maintain small followings despite the fact that most of Alleghany's population are German or Scotch-Irish in descent. Seven more denominations, all latecomers, have single churches in the county. Historic church buildings are distributed among the older religious groups. Consistent with this finding, the earliest surviving sanctuary is a modest, archetypal Primitive Baptist church, built in 1875.

Church names in Alleghany County follow a distinctive pattern. No churches are named for saints, and few utilize overtly Christian references. Eleven have adopted place names from the ancient Near East, some of which have strong Biblical connections (Mt. Sinai, Zion), some not (Shiloh, Macedonia). The fact that half of these names refer to mountains suggests a desire on the part of these Blue Ridge congregations to identify their home mountains with ancient holy peaks.

The largest number of churches, however, take names from natural elements in the immediate environment. References to plants, mountains, valleys, and water bodies abound, whereas references to human settlements and individuals are extremely rare. The picturebook beauty of Alleghany County seems to have made its mark upon those who organized and named the churches.

The original Piney Creek Methodist Church (1910)—vacant and decaying—stands behind its rambling brick successor.

The oldest standing church in Alleghany County, Piney Creek Primitive Baptist Church exemplifies the utterly plain appearance characteristic of all Primitive and Regular Baptist sanctuaries.

Mt. View Regular Baptist Church. Natural illumination and bare furnishings create a serene transcendental atmosphere.

(top) Pleasant Grove Regular Baptist Church. Identified by white walls visible afar, by gable end facing the road, and by light and sign above the door, this church in its setting is typical of Alleghany's isolated older frame sanctuaries. *(bottom left)* Pine Fork Missionary Baptist Church experiences its third addition since the late 1950's; light-up crosses on sign and steeple say "Jesus Saves." *(bottom right)* New Home Missionary Baptist Church. Church and cemetery uphill to one side command a fine view of the Blue Ridge landscape.

When read together, the church names sound lyrical and evocative, recalling images of idealized pastoral scenes (Laurel Glenn, Mountain View, Glade Valley).

Throughout history church architecture has aspired upward, as if reaching heavenward. That high spots are favored as church settings in Alleghany County, then, should be no surprise. A large majority of sanctuaries command hilltop sites; only a few are situated in valleys. Most are visible afar as landmarks, quietly asserting God's supremacy over the landscape.

For all but the brick churches, white is the universal exterior color, suggesting purity and also highlighting the sanctuaries against their natural surroundings. The buildings are set apart further from nature through careful attention to site control and order. Woods are pulled back from the churches and open lawns maintained. Trees rarely are allowed to grow in front of the line of the main facade, although symmetrically planted shrubbery is not uncommon. Most of Alleghany's churches face a road at short distance, with symmetrical entry facades, axial walks and steps. Nearly half address intersections.

Formality and order always characterize the front view, whereas the sides and rear frequently give way to more informal, nonrectilinear definition. Open groves are common, often sheltering long picnic tables at sites where churches house only the worship space. Vehicular access exists on nearly all the church sites; often it is treated as an additional formal element.

Cemeteries are found at over two-thirds of the church sites in Alleghany County. The majority are located uphill from the sanctuary (closer to heaven?), clearly demarcated by fences. Most are large, lying beside the church but occasionally behind or facing the church across a road. None are undefined, and none surround the sanctuary on multiple sides. The graveyards are treated as distinct, formal elements reinforcing the general orderliness of most church sites. The deliberate isolation and strong order characterizing Alleghany's rural church set-

tings indicate man's desire to distinguish human ground from the natural, and divine ground from the terrestrial.

Church sites proved consistent in many respects, but by contrast I found interiors to vary tremendously according to denomination. Finishes and furnishings ranged from handcrafted and simple to manufactured and lavish. Most of the interiors were architecturally simple spaces, with gently-curved or sloped ceiling edges distinguishing the spaces from secular chambers. For the most part fancy trimwork was absent and consistent colors and materials emphasized the continuity of surfaces. White walls and ceilings predominated, but were not universal like white exteriors.

Furnishings became a decisive character generator in the context of the relatively simple shells. To me the simplest interiors were the most stunning, perhaps because naturally-finished, uncluttered spaces are so rare in our culture, also because the very spareness conveys a pervasive spirituality. Interior alterations generally moved in the direction of synthetic materials and elaboration of furnishings, often inadvertently weakening the coherence of the intuitively-generated original designs.

Because all of Alleghany County's rural churches are Protestant, their sanctuary arrangements show remarkable uniformity. The standard plan includes double rows of pews occupying half to three-quarters of the length of the room, the sanctuary being rectangular in shape but not greatly elongated. A pulpit platform projects from the center front wall or from an apse several feet toward the congregation. Directly beneath the focal pulpit rests a simple altar, and behind it, a bench, plain chairs, or a group of imposing "preacher's chairs." The historically and symbolically generated sanctuary layouts are not unique to Alleghany County, but occur both in Hyde County's otherwise varied interiors and in Protestant churches, urban and rural, throughout the United States.

(top) This large tent, pitched behind the tiny Full Gospel Church near Sparta, accommodated a week-long June revival with an evangelist from Virginia. (bottom left) The interior of the Pine Fork Baptist Church (also opposite page) exhibits heavy use of modern materials and furnishings; embellishments within the sanctuary and extensions adjacent to it mark it as Missionary—not Primitive or Regular—Baptist. (bottom right) The congregation of Landmark Union Baptist Church has maintained in original condition its pre-1900 sanctuary rather than modernizing or replacing the building. The simple white interior exhibits great integrity of design.

Findings: Hyde County

Sixty churches are found in Hyde County today. Because at present the county has no incorporated towns, all sixty can be considered country churches. My inventory included fifty-six of the sanctuaries. In fundamental contrast with Alleghany County, over 40 percent belong to black congregations. Although Hyde's population has fallen by one-third since 1930, the number of white churches has declined negligibly, and the number of denominations present has increased by half. The loss of vitality among existing churches, however, must be considerable.

Congregations are small, poor, or both small and poor in Hyde County, a fact borne out by the low incidence of new sanctuary construction and by the infrequent use of brick as a building material. Over two-thirds of the churches surveyed were frame structures, sheathed with wood or asbestos siding or a combination of the two. Several black churches were concrete block, but almost no white churches utilized this material, indicating both the lower economic status of nonwhite congregations and the relative newness of their sanctuaries. Although the proportion of multi-room churches has increased more than threefold since 1929, large facilities are distributed unevenly among the sects.

Steeples or belfries and colored glass windows, stereotypical church features, appear far more frequently in Hyde than in Alleghany County. Contrasting denominational profiles may account for this difference, for few austere Primitive Baptist-type churches are found in Hyde County. In addition, Hyde's lack of dramatic settings places a heavier burden upon the architecture itself to identify the sacred setting. Traditional church symbols thus become particularly important.

I found four Hyde County churches that were completely abandoned and falling into decay. Four additional buildings, perhaps more, were disused but still furnished and physically sound. Numerous other sanctuaries appeared to house infrequent activity, their posted enrollments averaging about twenty. The great majority of Hyde County churches are at least marginally alive, their facilities embodying decades of growth and change. Totally unaltered sanctuaries are rare. Of churches for which I obtained both exterior and interior information only one in six appeared completely unchanged. Remarkably, four of the unaltered structures dated from the nineteenth century. The only unaltered black church, built in 1945, was abandoned two decades after its construction.

On the whole, exterior changes were more prevalent than interior changes—among black churches, over twice as common. White churches revealed exterior renovations or additions only half as frequently as black churches, but more of these changes were major in scale. The percentages of remodelled or refurnished interiors fell much closer together for the two groups. Altogether, nearly three-quarters of exteriors and 60 percent of documented interiors have been subjected to physical transformations, both figures higher than in Alleghany County.

A high replacement rate among the mountain county's churches—three times that of Hyde—seems to have precluded a certain measure of renovation and expansion activity. Over half of Hyde's black churches, however, replace earlier sanctuaries, suggesting that the original structures were insubstantial or functionally and symbolically inadequate. Because Hyde is considerably poorer and less populous than Alleghany but supports nearly the same number of churches, incremental alteration becomes more economically feasible than replacements. At only one site in the county did I witness construction activity of any kind.

For similar reasons, moving sanctuaries and adapting existing surplus structures proved to be much more common practices in Hyde County than in Alleghany. At least four, perhaps nine, Hyde County churches are adapted schools or dwellings—all but one of these belong

to black congregations. No adaptive use whatever was found in Alleghany County, and only one church there had been moved—then merely reoriented on its site. In Hyde, several structures have been moved upon or to their sites, reflecting the less ominous geographical constraints of flat coastal topography versus mountains. One Methodist church was moved twice and in the end adapted for use as a private dwelling, in which role it persists today. Traditionally the sharing of structures by churches and schools was common in both counties, reflecting the paucity of public buildings and the close interaction of community institutions in rural areas.

Hyde County's earliest religious body was the Anglican Church. As the official colonial church, it was maintained through unpopular, mandatory tithes. After the Revolution the sect apparently dwindled, and, reconstituted as the Episcopal denomination, it never regained strong favor. Four humble sanctuaries and three small congregations exist in the county today. The Methodist sanctuaries existing today are more numerous, more elegant, and better kept than their Episcopal counterparts.

Quakers lived in Hyde County in the latter 1700's, but their congregation converted to Primitive Baptist in 1808, other Primitive Baptist churches forming later in the century. The all white Missionary Baptist sect did not arrive in Hyde until 1907. Black Baptist churches, by contrast, formed immediately after emancipation and today make up half of the county's active black congregations. Baptist churches—black, white, and Primitive—together claim one-third of the sanctuaries found in Hyde County. Unlike Alleghany, other sects are also strong, notably Christians and, among white residents, Methodists.

The Disciples of Christ, now fragmented into multiple white and black bodies like the Baptists, originally entered Hyde County in 1855. The evangelism of the Disciple Christian movement must have generated great numbers of converts, black and white Christian-type churches today constituting close to one-third of Hyde

(top left) The new Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church is reflected in a window of the old sanctuary. (top right) This tiny, nameless church has been extended at both ends from a simple cabin-form structure; the belfry window illuminates nothing inside but completes the symmetry of the front facade. (bottom left) An unidentified recent church stands in the shadow of its lingering ghost predecessor which was abandoned but never razed. (bottom right) Sawn plywood provides the identifying, sanctifying decoration for an abandoned but fully-furnished black church.

Antebellum Amity Methodist Church is Hyde County's oldest, perhaps also its largest, most elegant, and best preserved sanctuary. Its congregation depleted, the church is on the verge of closing its doors.

All Saints Episcopal Church, unused for over a decade, stands unlocked facing the road in the community of Fairfield: the building and its setting distill rudimentary church-defining elements.

Located miles from any settlement on a dirt road at the edge of a corn field, St. Mary's Church of Christ exemplifies both the extreme isolation of many black churches and the strong identifying role of traditional architectural features.

County's total sanctuaries. Half of the black congregations in Hyde are Christian, half Baptist. Christian bodies are most numerous among white congregations, followed closely by Methodist churches, then Missionary Baptist, Episcopal, and Primitive Baptist churches. Other sects are thinly represented in the county today; none were historically prominent.

The oldest church standing in Hyde County is probably Amity Methodist Church, a beautiful Greek Revival structure with a slave gallery, dating from 1852. Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church, a 1799 Quaker meeting house renovated or else replaced in 1854, may predate Amity. In addition, St. John's Episcopal Church, rebuilt in 1875, probably reused the form and materials of an eighteenth century Anglican chapel. Two more antebellum sanctuaries, also Methodist but smaller than Amity, still survive. The majority of the historic church buildings belong to Hyde County's earlier denominations. Almost 60 percent of Hyde's church buildings predate 1920, although over 40 percent of black sanctuaries postdate World War II and only three black churches are known to date from the nineteenth century. Overall, Hyde County possesses far more historic and far fewer modern churches than Alleghany.

Swamps, pine forests, dark fields planted in soy and corn, and half-decayed, time-worn settlements characterize the Hyde County countryside. Lacking elevation changes, the county gains strong physical definition from the marsh-fringed sound and from centrally-located Lake Mattamuskeet with its cypress islands and myriad flocks of wild birds. The landscape is unique and intriguing, but not archetypically picturesque like Alleghany County. Perhaps this unusual character, combined with long settlement, accounts for the lack of natural allusions and the preponderance of human and community references in the names of the county's churches.

Community names identify one-third of the churches in Hyde County, and human names identify an

additional quarter of the total. References to natural elements appear in few of the church names, most of these being included in place names. These proportions illuminate a strong contrast with Alleghany County, where identification with the natural environment is overwhelming. Another contrast lies in the fact that four times as many Hyde County churches have adopted overtly religious names, close to half of the total. A great number of the sanctuaries, particularly black churches, bore no identifying sign on either building or site, necessitating secondary research to discover names.

The preceding general statistics obscure the fact that black and white churches follow very different naming patterns. On the whole, black church names have a more poignant, personal quality than white church names which are simple and expedient, or traditional. Half of the white churches but only one of the black churches are named for local communities. Religious allusions enter nearly two-thirds of black church names, contrasted with fewer than one-third of white church names. Most saints' names adopted by black congregations commemorate saintly people rather than official saints; words like "faith" and "pilgrim" are recurrent. These emotion-laden church names indicate to me an emphasis on religious experience rather than institutional identity among black congregations.

Hyde County's physical character creates an entirely different typical church setting from Alleghany County. Hills, so heavily favored as sites in Alleghany, do not exist in Hyde, and impressive vistas are rare. Despite the contrast in environments, a number of prevalent site features are repeated including the presence of lawns, the formality and axial symmetry of front yards, and the pattern of churches facing the road squarely at relatively short distance. Besides prevailing topography, the most striking differences in Hyde County's church settings compared to Alleghany County's are the prevalence of churches in populous rather than isolated surroundings,

and the general absence of cemeteries.

Burying grounds were present at only three of ten churches compared to seven of ten in Alleghany County. Extreme low elevations and high water tables make graveyards impossible at many church sites in Hyde County. Family and community cemeteries (Soule and Fairfield) have helped fill the role of church burying grounds. At sites where graveyards do exist, none are fenced, and most encircle the church rather than lying discretely at one side or to the rear of the sanctuary as is the case with Alleghany County cemeteries.

Many more black than white churches are found in isolated locations. In addition, numerous white churches occupy sites commanding intersections, while black churches all occupy more secluded settings, whether through deference or choice I do not know. Finally, white church sites tend to be more formal, "finished," and adorned with paved paths, symmetrical shrubbery and prominent signs than are the black sites. Overall, the white churches appear extroverted and intentionally impressive next to the more private, interior-oriented black churches of the county.

Sanctuary interiors vary considerably in Hyde County, depending on both race and denomination. A difference in total atmosphere emerges from the selection of furnishings in concert with the treatment of the architectural shell. The interiors of the black churches exhibited a more uniform character than the white churches, to which denominational influences imparted much diversity.

I found Methodist interiors to be the most enriched and regal, a pattern repeated less lavishly by Episcopal churches. Lofty, vaulted or pointed ceilings distinguished the Episcopal sanctuaries, flat ceilings with sloping or curving edges characterizing most other church interiors, as in Alleghany County. The Primitive Baptist churches were utterly plain inside and out, strongly resembling their Alleghany County counterparts.

Missionary Baptist and Disciple-type sanctuaries appeared similar, with simple but well-finished shells containing comfortable manufactured furnishings consistent within individual sanctuaries but varying in age among churches. Images of Christ usually occupied the axial front wall, other wall decorations being few. Choirs were usually prominent and pulpits always focal in the arrangement of the sanctuaries.

Black church interiors resembled their white Baptist and Christian counterparts in both layout and furnishings. A few very humble black sanctuaries echoed Primitive Baptist interiors, their spareness and reduction to essential features generating an intensely moving atmosphere. One sensed, however, that much of this austerity was not the chosen so much as the possible form of expression for impoverished congregations. Decoration otherwise abounded inside black churches, in the form of devotional images, plastic flowers, and fabric covers, pillows and railing curtains. Piano tops often assumed a shrinelike appearance.

The furnishings were less consistent in age and style than in white sanctuaries, old handbuilt pews frequently being retained in remodelled interiors. Major, unilateral renovations probably are beyond the means of most black congregations. Often a few impressive looking new items were featured (preacher's chairs, carpeting, lighting fixtures). Choirs figured especially prominently in these sanctuaries, signaling the importance of music to worship among the black congregations.

One final point about black church interiors is that very few were accessible. Of the active black churches I visited, only three were left open, while thirteen were locked. At four more sites a church member unlocked the building for me, one apologetically expressing fear of fugitives, vandals, and thieves. By contrast, well over two-thirds of white churches were left open. This discrepancy is ironic but understandable. Many open white sanctuaries contained antiques and other furnishings of considerable monetary value, whereas the locked black sanctuaries with visible interiors seldom appeared to contain expensive furnishings. Obviously, value is defined to a large extent by the possessor. Blacks, who historically have had far less material wealth than whites, in Hyde County attentively protect what is theirs.

In addition to Hyde's black sanctuaries, a high proportion of all Alleghany County churches surveyed were locked. The frequent isolation of both groups of churches makes close surveillance an impossibility. Conversely, the presence of most white Hyde County churches in settled areas assures a certain inherent security for the facilities. Perhaps in locking their sanctuaries black congregations also are expressing deeper alienation and distrust of an often hostile dominant culture. To desire to protect one's most intimate and cared-for institutions from threats—real or sensed—is understandable.

Concluding Thoughts

Vernacular forms, like genetic traits, survive through inheritance and alter through mutation. Individual building acts—each part imitative, part adaptive—together form cumulative patterns recording shifts in historical, cultural, and geographical influences. We read these patterns most clearly in groups of functionally kindred structures (houses, barns, mills, etc.).

In rural North Carolina, practical living requirements flavored by ethnic traditions have generated a vernacular typology of dwelling and working places. With country church forms, the additional, complicating variable of denominational character enters the equation. This factor plays a pivotal role in rural church construction, but figures little if at all in the evolution of secular structures. Some sects adhere so closely to denominational tradition in determining church form that little room is left for grassroots influences. Industrial process, with its capacity to generate simultaneous multiples

without human intervention, also in many cases has reduced the role of vernacular process in church design. Not all country churches, then, can be considered truly vernacular structures.

Patterns in the forms of country churches which I surveyed appeared extremely simple in outline but complex and subtle in detail. Protestantism and basic Christian ritual unified the designs and determined fundamental sanctuary form, a fact alluded to earlier in relation to the uniform nature of interior plans. Many elements can be traced back as far as the earliest basilican churches. Universally identified characteristics like horizontal spatial sequencing (symbolizing progressions from profane to sacred zones) and vertical hierarchy (symbolizing transcendence and honoring the divine) date from pre-Christian history. In the building of churches humans repeat universal forms and thus create the image that eternal forces both outlive and overpower the transitory and the unstable.

Overlaying the nearly immutable physical framework one finds strong denominational elements interwoven with historical, ethnic, and geographical influences. Only by breaking apart these intertwined threads can meaningful vernacular, rather than universal, patterns be described. The formal language of churches—even Protestant alone—includes a multitude of vernacular dialects which do not easily yield to analysis and description. I have herein described many of the common phrases in these dialects. A more complete codification might logically be the next stage of research. I have tried to convey in my findings the richness and a little of the detail of the cultural record left by North Carolinians past and present in their country churches.

(top left) Soule Methodist Church. Regal, elegant, traditional, but not ostentatious, this gleaming, jewel-like interior presents one end of the spectrum of both wealth and religious approach in Hyde County. (top right) Hill's Chapel Church of Christ. At the opposite end of the spectrum, this tiny black sanctuary was converted from a one-room schoolhouse. Hardly recognizable as a church from the road, within it is a quintessentially sacred place. (bottom) Swan Quarter Baptist Church. This middle-class Missionary Baptist sanctuary represents a prevalent approach: graceful old shell, pews, pulpit, and altar coexist with modern carpet, synthetic paneling, acoustic tile ceiling, and inexpensive devotional images.

Site Selection of Pre-1940 Mountain Houses

Tradition-oriented societies adjust their designs incrementally to successfully mediate between their needs and resources. The mature solution to a task supports a stable equilibrium between culture and its context. Innovation is brought to bear only as changing needs or resources suggest the potential for an improved situation. Inasmuch as the mediating design reflects its location in the world—and traditional designs usually do since their location was a primary resource—we are calling it "vernacular." As outsiders, the vernacular landscape allows us to read the conformity geography requires—or once required—of culture. Conversely it places the insider-resident in systemic orientation to his natural setting. Here geographer Robert Keber makes a case for looking at the site selection process once commonly used upon demanding Appalachian terrain as an instance of place-related folk design.

Before the advent of technology enabling extensive alteration of a building site, houses built in Appalachia were constructed on a carefully selected site. Many factors were considered in the site selection process including availability of potable water, accessibility of roads, microclimate, and availability of building materials. The selection process resulted in placement of the house or other structure in a manner minimizing disruption to the environment of the site and maximizing the utility of the topographic characteristics. Such careful placement produced stable man-land relationships and contained lessons on energy conservation which can be applied today. The purpose of this paper is to argue that the vernacular design process includes a site selection procedure which, at least in the case of Appalachia, forms a legitimate folk art. Although well-sited structures can be found throughout Appalachia, examples shown here are drawn from northwestern North Carolina.

Unselfconscious Architecture

Christopher Alexander divides all cultures into two categories, selfconscious and unselfconscious.[1] Unselfconscious cultures are those where form-making is learned informally through imitation and where successful forms persist through slow stages of incremental alteration. By operating within tradition's framework—by using native materials, tools, and form-making techniques—unselfconscious cultures can produce forms which are in equilibrium with a dynamic environment. That is, the vast network of subsystems which make up their environment's ecology are stable and the man-produced form does not act as an external force impinging on that stability. In the case of dwellings, the person who makes the structure usually lives in it. Modifications to a traditional form which do not "work" are corrected immediately. Via a process resembling natural selection, dysfunctional elements are simply not repeated. Over an

extended period of time the total design adapts to the environment finding an equilibrium without misfits.

In a selfconscious culture design becomes a discipline where principles are taught in a classroom rather than on the job. Buildings are constructed by non-users with materials and techniques that are not readily "at hand." Within such a context serious misfits between materials and the local environment, or between intended and actual use of interior space, can, and do, develop. Change in form is not evolutionary, but sudden, as a designer "learns from his mistakes" and produces a second structure different in form from the first without correcting the original.

The early settlers of Appalachia could not tolerate many such misfits. They were moving into a region having a rugged terrain and relatively harsh winters. Survival demanded that misfits between form and environment be made minimal or be eliminated. By attending to the building traditions that grew out of successful homesteading around him, by using materials available on or near his site, and by "fiddling with" the structure that he built and lived in over the years, the Appalachian builder adapted the form of his dwelling to the demanding local environment. In other words, within the context of an unselfconscious culture, he produced a form which satisfied his needs yet sat in harmony with the topography of the site.

Physiology of the Blue Ridge

The physiography of Appalachia varies widely producing numerous environmental contexts for man-land relationships. Western North Carolina lies entirely within the Blue Ridge Province. Westward into Tennessee and Kentucky, the Ridge and Valley Province and the Cumberland Plateau are met.[2] Much of the research on folk architecture in Appalachia has focused on the Cumberland Plateau. Site selection criteria appropriate to that area are not identical to criteria in other physiographic regions

of Appalachia. The Cumberland Plateau is characterized by an undulating surface dissected by young valleys having narrow floors, steep sides, and a high downstream gradient. These young valleys are the "hollows" beloved by folklorists and songwriters. The first settlers claimed the best, most fertile land at the base of the valley. Subsequent generations were forced to move further upstream onto more rugged, less productive land. This sequence played a major role in the intense poverty of the inhabitants.[3]

Conditions in the Blue Ridge differed considerably. Although portions of the region are extremely rugged— i.e., the Smokies—other areas are gently rolling to almost flat. The Asheville Basin, for example, is a major agricultural area in the state. Many smaller streams and rivers have floodplains of sufficient size to support row crop agriculture. The valleys are often wider having a lower downstream gradient than streams in the Cumberland

Figure 1. Single pen house along Riddle Fork Creek, Watauga County.

Plateau. By the early nineteenth century, however, most tillable land in the Blue Ridge had been claimed, prompting the second wave of settlers to move further west.

Figure 1 shows a house in Watauga County, North Carolina, built sometime before 1900. The alluvial area in the foreground is approximately 2000 feet long (18.4 acres). In the portion where the house sits, Riddle Fork

Figure 2. Ca. 1920 house along Elk Creek, Watauga County.

Creek has a gradient of less than four percent. Figures 2 and 3 show houses situated along Elk Creek in Ashe and Watauga Counties, North Carolina. The valley floor ranges between 500 and 600 feet wide and has a downstream slope of one percent in a section 8000 feet long.

Row crop agriculture is not only possible in the Blue Ridge, but for many years provided the basis for the local economy.[4] A primary factor in selecting a house site under such circumstances was to insure that it was compatible with farming practices. Easily worked alluvium is not plentiful; therefore a minimum of infringements were made on it. Note that in each example the house is placed at the point where the alluvial flood plain yields to the mountainside.

Factors in Site Selection

Numerous factors are considered in the vernacular site selection process. These are subsurface water, slope, surface water, location relative to workable land, soil type, vegetation cover, substrata characteristics, rock outcrops, erosion areas, aspect, prevailing winds, visual attractions, and accessibility to roads. Of course, ideal conditions of all thirteen factors are seldom, if ever, found. Compromise among factors often in conflict was necessary. The fact that so many houses built prior to 1940 are well sited is a tribute to the builders' skill in evaluating site features.

In western North Carolina six factors predominate as requirements in a good house site. They are proximity of gravity flow spring water, aspect, protection from west and northwest winds, accessibility, easy slope requiring little preparation or excavation, and location adjacent to tillable land. Potable water is necessary not only for household consumption, but also as a coolant for farm produce, especially milk. Most often springs were the source of this water. Ideally the water would flow through

a cooling house near, or attached to, the main structure. The house in Figure 2 has a cooling pantry directly off the kitchen. If running surface water (location on ponds was not favored) was not present, spring water would be impounded for use by livestock.

Prior to 1940 wells were not common in Appalachian North Carolina. The abundance of reliable springs and the difficulty of digging through rock often found near the surface precluded most wells. Mobile drilling rigs are a post-1945 phenomena. Table 1 indicates the heavy reliance on springs and, to a lesser extent, streams in 1940.[5] The small number of houses having indoor running water were located in the towns of Boone, Blowing Rock, West Jefferson, and Jefferson. In Watauga County 78 percent of farms had no indoor running water while in Ashe County 90 percent had none. The ability to drill to potable groundwater at any depth altered reliance on springs and dramatically changed the impact of this factor in site selection.

Microclimate factors such as aspect and location relative to prevailing winter winds are important considerations when selecting a building site. Structures built by traditional craftsmen, with a few churches excepted, were never placed on the top of a hill. (Although the energy savings of a site shielded from the winter storms is obvious to many homeowners, the number of "view" sites sold by contemporary land developers indicates it is not obvious to everyone.) A southern aspect was desirable as a means of warming the structure during the winter. Pro-

Table 1. Source of Household Water, 1940.

	Ashe Co.		Watauga Co.		Total	
Dwelling units		5233		4146		9379
Running water in dwelling unit	13.7%	716	33.9%	1408	22.6%	2124
Running water within 50 feet	36.5%	1906	24.9%	1034	31.4%	2940
Other water supply within 50 feet	22.3%	1171	16.5%	682	19.7%	1853
Other or not reporting	27.5%	1440	24.7%	1022	26.3%	2462

Figure 3. Ca. 1920 house along Elk Creek, Todd, N. C.

tection from the summer sun was often provided by nearby deciduous trees but such shading is not mandatory in the cool mountains. The house in Figure 1 faces east but because there are no east-west ridges nearby it is open to the full extent of the winter sun. The house in Figure 3 faces northeast. Mountain folklore maintains snakes are seldom found on the north slope of a mountain. However, this tale does not seem to direct many houses to that slope. The house is protected from prevailing winter winds, at least partly, by a cedar windbreak.
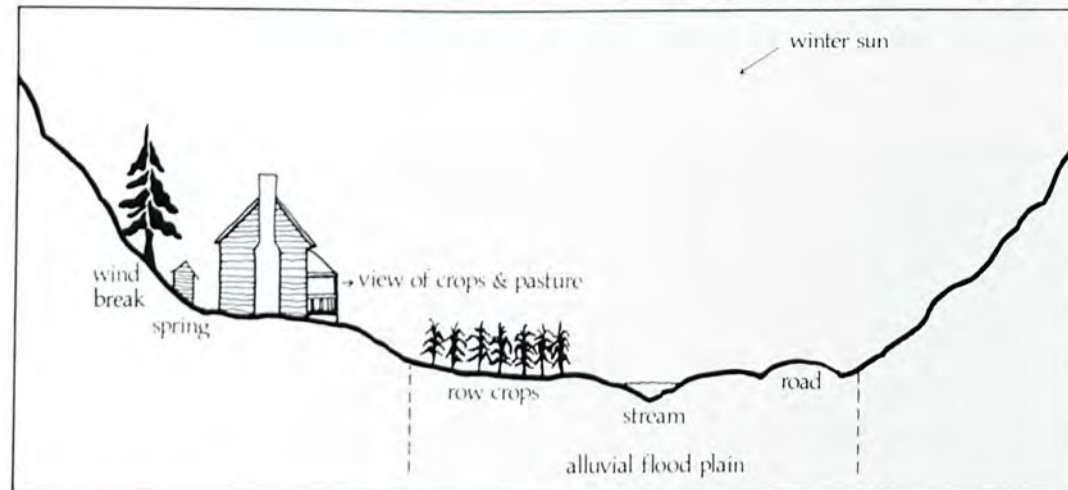
Figure 4. The ideally sited Appalachian house.

Accessibility to roads is required but a location adjacent to a main road is not prized. A buffer of several hundred feet crossed by a driveway is preferred. Tradition holds that the front entrance to a house should not be hidden by trees, so distance, not vegetation, insures privacy. Isolation from the road network is not sought because, as one person who moved to the roadside after 70 years in an isolated house said, "I got tired after toting a million tons of stuff since I was a kid."

To the traditional builder, a good site requires little, if any, alteration to its "lay." That is, removal of dirt and rock or fill requirements were minimized. Throughout western North Carolina, bedrock is covered by a thin layer of soil and vegetation. Until recently excavation was done by hand labor. To avoid such a difficult task, the structure was usually elevated above the ground, which also served to prevent entry by rodents and snakes and to prevent accumulation of water during heavy rains.

A much favored site, as Figures 1 and 2 attest, is at the point where the alluvial floodplain meets the hillside. Here springs often percolate from the ground, tillable land is not disturbed, the hillside provides protection, and the front porch permits a view over fields and pasture. A location here also indicates an awareness of the damage soil creep could inflict on a structure placed further upslope. Thus, the "ideally sited" Appalachian home would appear much as illustrated in Figure 4.

Of course, the site selection process, like other folk arts, allows variation within a set of rules. Often patterns of land ownership, the aesthetic attraction of a particular site, or the idiosyncracies of people lead to selection of a homesite which meets few of the criteria listed above. Figure 5 is a house in Ashe County, North Carolina. Built around 1870, the house faces east from a narrow cove. Outbuildings lie near the house which sits within 30 feet of a paved road that formerly was a railroad track. In spite of these obstacles, the attraction of the New River (foreground) was sufficient to outweigh any negative aspects.

Conclusion

The vernacular landscape in western North Carolina cannot be understood without analyzing the factors determining site selection of mountain homes. The site selection process results from a more or less unselfconscious tradition which valued utility over aesthetics. Well-sited structures, especially houses, used natural features such as slopes, springs, and aspect to conserve energy and harmonize man's presence with the local ecology.

Footnotes

1. Christopher Alexander, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1964).
2. Nevin M. Fenneman, *Physiography of Eastern United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., 1938).
3. Harry M. Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, (Boston, Little, Brown & Co., 1962).
4. Julian Yoder, *The Economic Geography of Watauga County*, N.C. (Boone, Appalachian State University Library, 1941).
5. "General Charasterics," Part 4 in *Census of Housing*, Vol. II (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1940).

Figure 5. Gabled house, ca. 1870, along the New River, Ashe County.

The Architecture of the New River Valley

In 1976 during the controversy sparked by a proposal to dam the New River, a team from the Historic Preservation Section at Archives and History was sent to survey the architecture in the stretch of the New River Valley in North Carolina that the proposed dam would flood. The intention was to see whether anything was there that warranted stopping the project or, if not, to at least record what was there before it was inundated. As Davyd Hood, who was a member of that team, here reports, what was found was not grand or exceptional architecture. It was, in fact, something much rarer: a building fabric still intact and eminently expressive of a manner of dwelling closely defined by its topographic setting—a manner of dwelling encouraged by the containment of the valley to remember its traditional past and to build continuously with that past well into this century. Luckily for us, and especially for those who live there on fourth and fifth generation farms, a gamut of ecological concerns overturned the dam proposal, and the New River Valley is still a refreshingly whole and coherent part of our vernacular landscape.

In 1827 and 1828, Dr. Elisha Mitchell, the geologist and professor of chemistry at the University of North Carolina, visited Ashe County. After a climb to the top of Negro Mountain (now Mt. Jefferson), he wrote, "And a rugged ascent it was! Some of the plantations in view presented a noble appearance, but oh, what an ocean of mountains!" Later he recorded "that in all his travels over Ashe he found only log cabins." These notes, probably written while Dr. Mitchell was a guest of his good friend Meredith Ballou, define the character of the New River Valley: a magnificent undulating landscape created by an "ocean of mountains"—a splendid beauty and topography that, in its complexity, predestined the nature of society in the New River Valley and the order achieved in it.

The section of the New River Valley which is formed in North Carolina's Ashe and Alleghany counties had been explored as early as 1740 by Major Abraham Wood. Its closest inspection came in 1752 when Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg and his party searched the region for a suitable site for a Moravian colony. They rejected the New River Valley owing to their inability to secure the 100,000 acres which they considered necessary for their settlement. The difficulty of access to the valley was probably a second, and strong, consideration.

While hunting parties organized in Virginia made expeditions into the valley after the visit of Wood and Spangenberg, the valley did not begin to receive its first permanent settlers until the decade before the Revolutionary War. Defeat for the Regulators at the Battle of Alamance in 1771 was the first spur to settlement in the valley which was far removed from British authority. This effort to avoid British influence was accompanied by the gradual westward expansion of settlement in North Carolina and the parallel move south of younger brothers and sons of Virginia families. The Gambills, among others, came from Wilkes County in the 1770's. Settlers from Virginia came mostly from Grayson County, which

stretches across the northern borders of Ashe and Alleghany. It is in this three-county area that the New River Valley is formed. Captain John Cox (1739-1818), a Regulator, was originally from Montgomery County, Virginia, but had moved to Grayson County settling on the New River. After the Revolutionary War he purchased land in North Carolina at the mouth of Cranberry Creek on the New River and resettled there; others followed a similar pattern. These familial and geographical relationships were to remain a predominate influence on the settlement of the New River Valley in North Carolina. The facility of transportation and communication with Virginia served to reinforce these interests as Ashe and Alleghany counties were removed from much real contact with the rest of North Carolina. This factor contributes to the area's uniqueness in the state and includes the New River Valley with those other North Carolina communities—most notably Warrenton—located along the Virginia-North Carolina border which being familially and economically tied to Virginia are culturally more a part of Virginia than North Carolina. The results of this relationship are as tangible as they are intangible.

In 1799, Ashe County was established to include "all that part of the county of Wilkes lying west of the extreme height of the Appalachian mountains." The State Government had earlier tried to interest citizens in settling in the valley and had begun to make land grants to veterans of the Revolutionary War to encourage settlement in the mountains. One of these was a grant to Martin Gambill on January 1, 1798, signed by Governor Samuel Ashe.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, several grants were made to individuals for setting up iron forges. Meredith Ballou, among others, had visited Ashe County in the late 1790's and found rich iron ore deposits in the hills along the North Fork of the New River. The specific grant to Ballou was not located during our efforts but the Ashe County Court, "acting under Chapter 293, Public Laws of 1788, which authorized a land grant of up to 3,000

Figure 1. The Grassy Creek Valley, Ashe County. The fore and middle ground of this photograph show a part of the large Greer Family Farm set in an undulating landscape typical of the valley. The road follows the curves along the base of the hills and separates the rich creek bottoms from the upland which was used for grazing. In the immediate foreground is the John Jones House, ca. 1904, while in the distance to the right is the Robert Livesay House, ca. 1914.

acres to any person who set up a forge and produced 5,000 pounds of iron," at the August term, 1807, made a grant to Daniel Dougherty "for the use of the Iron Works that the said Daniel Dougherty built on Bigg Helton." At the November term, 1807, another grant of 3,000 acres went to Thomas Calloway "for setting up an iron forge with required production." The mining industry's early profitability and need for workers encouraged settlement in the valley sites of the iron forges and along the banks of the nearby creeks and river. These early settlements grew naturally into farm complexes, and since the iron industry flexed forward and later declined, the farms grew in importance as families came to depend exclusively on farming for their sustenance.

That the iron industry played a vital part in the settlement of the New River Valley and Ashe County is without question; however, the major and long term economic motive for settlement in the valley was agriculture. Dr. Mitchell had predicted as much in a diary entry during August 1828. He reiterated those characteristics of the valley described by the Moravian leader Spangenberg: the richness of the soil, the abundance of water and timber, and the existence of sufficient mineral resources to complete the collective body of natural resources with which and from which man could create a sustaining life and a society with his neighbors.

It is in the satisfaction of housing demands for this evolving agrarian community of families, and in its agricultural economy, that the architectural character of the New River Valley has been formed, and it is almost exclusively in these terms—in the development of this agricultural economy—that an architectural analysis of the New River Valley should be interpreted. Settlement, growing prosperity, and agrarian success are each exhibited in an architectural product and have marked the degree of building sophistication aimed for, achieved, and as importantly, maintained.

But geography was the most influential factor in the evolution of the society, economy, and the correspondent architectural character of the New River Valley. The cutting of the New River's course through the land created a landscape of great complexity with steep hills and narrow valleys—Mitchell's "ocean of mountains." The rolling, richly covering topography with the river's sinuous bends and tributaries and the parallel curves of the hills created pockets among the hills and along the river bottoms—neatly tailored farmsites—in which the early settlers established and developed their farms (Fig. 1). The hills enclosed and framed them in an unique isolation which encouraged the introversion of subsistence farming and an independent family life. The geography thus necessitated a close, specific, and complimenting relationship between the farm and its supporting fields and required the tight grouping of farm structures—houses, barns, granaries, silos, smokehouses, corncribs, root cellars, springhouses, poultry sheds, tobacco barns, and equipment sheds. There is no trace here of the formal eighteenth century plantation plan of the Coastal Plain, but rather the strength of organic response—a quality achieved in the course of agrarian development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The major factor in the development of the social order has been agricultural—the tilling of a small self-contained family farm unit. Since the state's economic history has been written mainly in agricultural terms—up to the introduction and development of textile mills—such could be expected in the New River Valley. In the Coastal Plain and the Piedmont there were markets available and methods of transportation for getting goods and produce to them. Transportation opportunities diminished as one moved inland from the coast and away from the Virginia and South Carolina borders so that in the mountains agricultural practices never developed along commercial farm lines, but rather as the means of sustaining the family unit. Thus the size of farms changed slowly and unnoticeably, increasing and decreasing only

Figure 2. The Samuel Cox House, Ashe County. This full two-story log house is typical of the second generation of log building in the valley. The log construction of this house is visible under the shed porch where the weatherboards have been removed. The form of the porch is original to construction while its roof and supports have been replaced.

with the division of a family farm or the combination of farm units as a result of marriage. It is this factor which has encouraged the relative evenness of the buildings there. Farms of similar size could and did support families and operations of approximately the same size and scale. In consequence the houses themselves are similar in size, material, and design.

A most important consideration here is that this pattern of agrarian development has seen only the most minor changes in the seams of its weaving. Interruption has been insignificant. The terrific economic and social disruption of the Civil War, and more especially its aftermath, which had such a major impact on the quality and character of life and style in the Coastal Plain was scarcely felt here. And this is another of the factors that make the architectural fabric of the valley so unique—a piece of even homespun. Indeed, it has a character which has developed independently and indigenously; pressures of

style and social change have been at a minimum. There are, of course, variations in this pattern with buildings which break the mold or move ambitiously beyond it, but the homogeneity of the buildings as a group remains intact and inviolate. The tie of the building to the soil is a principal factor in the aesthetic cohesiveness. What of the nature of an area that exhibits such oneness? A closed story? Building which occurred after the first decades of the twentieth century does appear foreign; the chain of response to the life-forces of the soil were broken. Building in the middle years of the twentieth century was for housing a family unit whose ties were exterior to agriculture and their income earned elsewhere. And in a rural area when such buildings are constructed—their site and function no longer dependent on immediate environmental factors—they are never integrated but appear as intrusions in the natural order of a former culture.

Another important factor for consideration here is the definite absence of the Georgian, and the minimal presence of the Federal, styles and building traditions which exerted considerable influence on the architectural character of much of the rest of the state. At the same time there is little evidence of the Greek Revival style which so dominated antebellum building in the state. The history of architecture in the New River Valley is therefore a story of building which occupies one time and place and of extraordinary homogeneity and sameness of building type, form, shape, material, and ornament—the oneness of the response to repetitive demands. This repetition and sameness is never boring but, because of its unpremeditated functionalism, is as natural in the landscape as the very trees and hills of the terrain. One of the most striking characteristics of the building of the New River Valley is this containment of time in architectural practice, from the early nineteenth century to the valley economy's peaking at the turn of the century. This is a very short period from an exterior point of view but it seems, after survey, to be a perfect length of time to allow for the expression of the full

Figure 3. The Samuel Cox House, Ashe County. The full dovetail joints of the log construction are well illustrated here where the weatherboards have been removed.

cycle of wood construction: from the most simple log cabin, through the hewn house, the early frame house, to the elaborateness of mechanical crafting of wood in a final stage which approaches overreaching.

The pioneers who settled in the New River Valley, having come from similar topographies to the north and east, were familiar with the valley and its special character. That they chose the valley and remained there reflects their acceptance of its brand of agrarian life. The earliest building form was, as noted earlier, the log cabin, built as shelter for Virginians who organized hunting parties in the valley. These first structures were only meant to be temporary housing and consequently were quickly, and rudely, built. A similar practice was followed when settlers—and many of the above hunters numbered among them—came to stay. The first requirement was to provide immediate shelter for the settler, his family, and any domesticated animals. The fact that none of these buildings remain owes as much to this matter of expediency as to a series of floods (including the major floods of 1916 and 1940) which washed many houses away. Most of the early homesteads had been staked out along the river and its tributaries on whose banks the early transportation routes were established. The double pen, or dogtrot, form was ideal for this purpose. Two "pens" or "blocks," square or rectangular in shape, were built with a passage several yards wide between. The family could live on one side and the other could be used as a barn and granary to store foodstuffs for the family and animals. The animals could seek shelter in the passage. Alternatively, the second block itself became a stable with the passage between used for storage. This early architectural form sheltered all the activities and functions of the homestead-farm under one roof. The history of New River Valley architecture is the story of the disposition of each agricultural function to its individual building—the evolution of the farm complex.

As necessity prevailed—with the growth of the fam-

ily and the increased productivity of the farm—a new log house was built on whose construction more time and skill were expended. The old log cabin often became a granary or stable. It is this second generation of log construction which provides the first structures for our study. They are usually of half- or full-dovetail construction, built of hand-hewn logs and have either dry-laid or mortared stone exterior chimneys. In form they range from one story, story-and-a-half, to a full two stories. As log construction was utilized during the entire nineteenth century, it is not possible to date houses by a progression from the one-story to the two-story house, for size and quality of construction depended on the resources of the builder at all times.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Samuel Cox (1811-1868) built a two-story log house on a tract of land given him by his father in 1832. His house is one of the best preserved and most original of the valley's log houses (Fig. 2). It stands on a hilltop overlooking the site of the Cox Homestead "on the waters of Cranberry Creek and the South Fork of the New River." The house has dovetail construction and appears to have always been weatherboarded, for bark remains on some of the logs and much of the clay daubing remains in place (Fig. 3). A stone chimney—common in the valley—stands on the east gable end. While the shed porch appears to be original, the one-story frame ell was added in the early twentieth century by the builder's son. The interior of the first story followed a two-room plan—as did many log houses—and is finished with flush sheathing. An enclosed stair provided access to the second story which was left as one large room.

Built about 1870, some ten or fifteen years later, the William R. Neaves House is similar to the Cox House but has a shorter second story (Fig. 4). There are no windows on the second story front elevation. This reduced height two-story house is sometimes called a one-and-three-quarter house and is a type which was frequently built in

Figure 4. The William R. Neaves House, Ashe County. The North Fork of the New River flows in front of this house sited on the first terrace above the banks of the river. The planks of the low-water bridge which is the only access to the house are visible in the lower right corner.

Figure 5. The rootcellar at the William R. Neaves House, Ashe County. Stone was gathered from the river and fields to construct the facade of this outbuilding built into the side of the hill behind the house.

the valley. In or about 1895 a two-story frame addition was made to the log house on the gable end opposite the stone chimney. At this time a shed porch was carried fully across the five-bay front (west) elevation providing good views of the North Fork of the New River, which flowed in front of the house and separated it from the public road. Behind the house a stone root cellar was built into the hillside (Fig. 5). It has a gable roof with a weatherboarded gable front. The other outbuildings—all frame—are in a row to the south of the house on the same low plateau above the narrow bottoms.

An alternative to enlarging the family log house with frame additions was the construction of a new house. In the early 1880's, Robert Gambill (1834-1913) constructed a two-story frame house near his father John Gambill's log house (Fig. 6). After the completion of the new family house, the old log house was used as an outbuilding. A family cemetery on the hilltop above the house contains the graves of John Gambill (1802-1879) and his descendants. The farm is in its fifth generation of family ownership.

Figure 6. The Gambill-Crouse Farm, Alleghany County. The two structures spanning the ownership of this farm by the Gambill and Crouse families are set on a terrace below the hill at whose top is located the family cemetery. The permanence of the "final resting place" strongly influenced the choice of the hilltop as the site of cemeteries.

Frame construction and weatherboarding became a part of the valley's architectural vocabulary in the mid-nineteenth century. The earliest use of weatherboards was on the gable ends and the later sheathing of log houses. At the same time board and batten doors were often replaced as were window sash. New windows were also cut into walls. Perhaps a new mantel was installed. These changes certainly enriched the buildings and denoted an improved status for the owner. Often doors taken out of the newly-improved houses were put to a second use on granaries, smokehouses, and root cellars.

One of the oldest frame houses is the William Weaver House, whose associated bottom lands stretch for just over a mile along the South Fork of the New River (Fig. 7). The oldest portion of the house is the two-story three-bay main block built shortly after William Weaver purchased the property in 1845. In 1890, his son Andrew added a one-story ell containing a kitchen and pantry. About five years later he extended the ell to include a dining room and raised it to two stories in height. At the same time he added the richly decorated two-tier porch across the front elevation, which today shows traces of its original blue, chartreuse, and white painting scheme. The farm, which is now owned by Fred Weaver, Andrew's son, retains outbuildings dating from the three generations of the Weaver family ownership. William Weaver (1787-1876) and his three generations of descendants, excepting his grandson Fred, are buried in a family cemetery on a hilltop to the southeast of the house. Fred Weaver is without heirs, his family having preceded him in death.

The group of buildings whose appearance predominates in the New River Valley were either built or remodeled in the years between 1885 and 1915. It was during those years that the third and fourth generations of the early families of Ashe and Alleghany counties were requiring larger or newer quarters for expanding families. These builders include the Gambills, the Greers, the Blevins, the Neaves, the Reeves, the Sturgills, the Phipps, and the Waddells. It was also a period in the agricultural

After the new house was constructed the old house, as noted earlier, was used as a stable or granary. During the nineteenth century many log barns, granaries, and smokehouses were also constructed. They were later altered and added to, and thus perhaps several early log structures are still standing. This series of alterations and additions, and sometimes rebuildings, makes very difficult the determination of a date of construction for most of them. The degeneration of construction methods adds a further problem here. It is fair to say that the better built log buildings were generally on the more prosperous farms and it is principally these which have survived.

Figure 7. The William Weaver House, Alleghany County. One of the oldest frame houses in the valley was expanded by the addition of the second story to the ell, the two-tier full-facade porch, and the shed addition on the river side which replaced all but one bay of the shed porch.

development of the valley during which farming practices provided abundant produce that could be sent to the nearby markets, especially Marion, Virginia, which was the nearest railroad connection and to which an improved road was begun in 1887.

The pioneers who came into the valley in the late eighteenth century had brought with them a breed of cattle named "Devon," developed in Devonshire, which had been introduced to America in the early seventeenth century. This breed came to be known as the "Shorthorn" and proved to be ideal stock for the New River settler. They were raised by farmers for the market throughout the nineteenth century. The raising of these cattle and crops of corn, hay, and grains provided a stable basis for farming in the valley.

During the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century there began a transition from subsistence farming to cash crops. A study issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture stated:

It was not until about 1880 that Ashe began to make any considerable progress along agricultural lines. A few good plows had been introduced as early as 1872, but these were exceptions. Before this time nearly all of the farm implements in the county were homemade, the iron being taken from mines in the country. The cutting and shucking of corn was practiced for the first time in 1882, and about the same time wheat growing over the entire county began. The first grain drills were introduced in 1884. Scarcely any commercial fertilizers were used prior to 1891.

In tandem with the flow of produce out of the valley, money became available to purchase sawn, turned, and molded woodwork which was either locally produced by the nascent lumber industry or brought into the valley by the railroad. The farmer and house-builder was no longer dependent on his own skills with woodworking tools for the ornament of his farmhouse but had at his disposal a catalogue of brackets, braces, turned posts, spindles and balusters, bargeboards, moldings, and other devices which became a part of the vocabulary of local building. A belated Italianate influence together with that of the Stick Style and the Queen Anne is seen in frequent and combined harmony on the houses which were built or remodeled in this period.

It was the collective effect of these three factors—the need for new or additional housing, a rising prosperity, and the availability of architectural details—operating throughout the valley between 1885 and 1915 which produced so cohesive and interesting a collection of the "turn-of-the-century white farmhouses" of the American imagination. Interestingly, many of the houses in the valley were not always white; some remained unpainted for decades after their construction while others have only painted facades (Fig. 8). Mrs. Clyde Cox, the owner of the L. F. Young House (see Fig. 17 below), remembers that when she came to the house as a young bride, it was painted red with yellow and white trim, and that a trellis of pink roses carried across the front porch.

In plan there was a preference for the rectilinear blocks of earlier log houses arranged in either a "T" or "L" plan. The ends of the blocks are sometimes bayed. The houses are all three bays wide on the front elevation, two stories in height, clad in weatherboards and have either interior or exterior gable-end chimneys. Roofs are either hipped or gable, or a combination of the two. The interior generally follows a center-hall plan with equal size rooms on either side, usually a parlor and bedroom. The kitchen and a dining room are contained in a one- or two-story ell.

Porches are of two major types. The first is a one-story porch (see Fig. 8 above) which is carried across the full front elevation of the house, sometimes wrapping around the corner of the house and continuing along its side. Its shed or hipped roof is supported by turned posts with brackets and connected by spandrels and balustrades. On some houses this porch was two-tier (see Fig. 7 above) and sometimes engaged under the house's gable roof. The second type is the more impressive two-story gable-fronted porch (see Fig. 10 below) centered on the front elevation and protecting the entrance on each story. The gable-fronts most often feature imbricated patterns of diamond, rounded, and other-shaped shingles which are framed by jigsaw-cut bargeboards on sometimes bracketed eaves. Spandrels of varying complexity and finish often fill the peak of the gable. Behind the porch and set in a flushly sheathed bay, molded surrounds enframe the doors with fixed sidelights and transoms decorated by jigsaw-cut ornament. Window surrounds are similarly

Figure 8. The Poindexter Blevins House, Ashe County. Built in the first years of the twentieth century this two-story, three-bay, frame house puts its best face forward. The front porch became a living room for summer visits and was perhaps the most elegant space in the house, here decorated with bracketed profile posts connected by a balustrade (part of which has been lost) and the entrance surround ornamented by lengths of circles.

Figure 9. The Burgess Cox Waddell House, Alleghany County. Perhaps the most typical of the New River Valley farmhouses, the Waddell House enjoys the architectural inventiveness enabled by the scroll saw and other commercial crafting of wood.

molded with naive cornices projecting above. Blinds were frequently a part of the scheme but most have been lost or removed. On the "L" plan back porches are arranged in the interior of the "L" and sometimes connect to a springhouse. On the "T" plan porches may surround the ell with a springhouse, pantry, or storage room breaking the encirclement.

The Burgess Cox Waddell House, the William H. Billings House, and the John M. Pierce House are particularly representative of the architectural character of domestic building in the New River Valley at the turn of the century, and exhibit the range of building form and ornamental woodwork used at that time. Mr. Waddell (1864-1946) built his house (Fig. 9) in 1889 and inscribed the date on the lintel of the surround enframing the window in the porch's gable front. The two-story three-bay frame house has a two-tier center-bay porch on the front elevation, exterior end brick chimneys on the gable ends, and a one-story ell and shed room on the rear elevation. The porch remains as built except for the first-story railing which is now lost. Behind the porch the entrances are set in flush sheathing and flanked by sidelights and transoms whose patterned sawnwork was seen frequently throughout the valley.

Mr. Billings (1838-1935), the bottler of Billings' Bitters and one of the richest farmers in the valley, purchased a part of the extensive Parsons family farm and erected his house in 1898 (Fig. 10). The form of the house is nearly identical to that of the Waddell House and consists of a two-story main block with a one-story ell. Mr. Billings' prosperity is indicated, however, by the rich detailing of the porch, the brackets set under the eaves, and the diamond patterned fringe on the drip molding of the window surround. The chimneys were built inside the house and rise above the hipped roof. The Parsons family cemetery is located on the farm. Mr. Billings is interred there with the earlier owners of the farm.

Unlike the porch on the William Weaver House,

Figure 10. The William H. Billings House, Alleghany County. The use of decorative woodwork is seen here at its best on the two-story pedimented porch which with the other ornament under the eaves and on the window surrounds transforms this otherwise simple and typical frame house into the seat of a prosperous landowner and businessman.

Figure 11. The John M. Pierce House, Ashe County. Visible behind the right hand bay of the front porch are the three bays of the original log house which was expanded with frame additions in 1881 and 1892 when the house arrived at its present appearance. The baluster-shaped flat railing on the second story was also used on the first story but was replaced about 1930.

Figure 12. The John F. Greer House, Ashe County. One of the largest and most ambitious of the late-nineteenth century frame houses in the valley, this seat of the important Greer family has richly ornamented front and rear porches while the eaves are supported by paired brackets set above the fenestration and at the corners of the house.

Figure 13. The John Jones House, Ashe County. This T-plan frame house having a rather simple Colonial Revival porch and gable fronts featuring imbricated shingles and robustly sawn spandrels was built about 1904 as the seat of another Greer family farm. Its outbuildings are arranged in a semi-circle on the terraces behind the house.

which is attached, the two-tier porch on the John M. Pierce House is engaged under the house's gable roof (Fig. 11). While the posts and balustrade on the porch's first story were altered around 1930, the second story remains as built in 1892. It has a five-bay division with the two outside bays enclosed as sleeping rooms. The three center bays act as a loggia having a scroll-sawn vase-shaped railing.

At the turn of the century the Grassy Creek community was one of the leading agricultural communities in the New River Valley and with its rich collection of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century buildings is a vivid reminder of the quality of rural life in the valley. The Greer family were the most prominent landowners in the community, holding six farms on contiguous property. The development of this complex of family-related farms is inextricably bound to the history of the agricultural economy of the valley. Four generations of the Greer family, beginning with Aquilla Greer who settled there in the

early nineteenth century, maintained farms along Grassy Creek. About 1885 John F. Greer built a large and richly ornamented house as the seat of a farm which he established in the mid-century (Fig. 12). Similar to the William H. Billings House, its two-tier porch has a different, lace-like system of ornament; the brackets are used here in pairs. The two-story ell, set in the middle of the rear elevation is circled by a one-story porch also boasting a fine railing. John F. Greer's son, W. C. Greer, who later owned the house, increased the farm's production, enlarged its complement of outbuildings, and raised his children there. His children—four of whom built houses in the creek valley—were the last of the family to build in the valley. About 1904 Mr. Greer's daughter, Mrs. John Jones and her husband, built their house on a farm southeast of her father's (Fig. 13). The lavish decoration of the earlier houses in the Grassy Creek community is retained only on the gable fronts with imbricated shingles and spandrels. The house, aside from its asymmetrical plan,

has a formality which is new to the valley, an influence of the emerging Colonial Revival.

In architectural terms, the farm complex—the house and its outbuildings—was built according to a hierarchy of values in style as well as in sophistication of construction. The farmhouse occupies the first level followed by the barn which is the largest building in the complex. The first floor of the barn, the stable level, is frequently of log construction set on a stone foundation with frame construction used for the second level and haylofts above. The log construction can be either single or double pen. The older and better barns are sheathed with weatherboards and covered by a gambrel or gabled roof. The gambrel roof was the best as it allowed for more storage in the haylofts (Fig. 14). Eaves and gables are often ventilated. Board and batten sheds are frequently added at either side for stabling or storage.

Granaries can also be of log (Fig. 15) or frame construction and covered by weatherboards or board and batten and set on a dry-laid stone foundation or on stacked stone piers. Roofs were gabled or shed. Large bins were built to store separately the several grains. As noted earlier, log houses were sometimes given a second function as granaries. Corncribs are more varied in form. There could be a single crib covered by a shed roof or a double crib with a wagon passage between covered by a gabled roof (Fig. 16). A third method was to include it in the corner of the granary. They are almost always of frame construction with ventilated sheathing.

Poultry houses and privies are of frame construction with board and batten or weatherboard sheathing and shed roofs. Smokehouses are also frame constructed with weatherboard or board and batten sheathing. The brick smokehouse is an exceptional building. There are three in the valley; two of them—one at the W. C. Greer farm and a second at the L. F. Young farm—are in the Grassy Creek community. Woodsheds, as well as hay and equipment sheds, were generally simple structures and clad in board

Figure 14. The main barn on the John F. and W.C. Greer Farm, Ashe County. A typical New River Valley barn, this one—built about 1910—is set on a stone foundation and covered with vertical sheathing and a gable roof. The central entry provides both storage and access to the stables on either side.

Figure 15. A log granary on the Alex Woodruff Farm, Alleghany County. Built in the nineteenth century the granary is on raised wood piers to protect its contents from the nesting of rodents. As is frequently seen on log smokehouses the roof is extended on the front gable end to shelter the entrance.

Figure 16. A corncrib on the John F. and W.C. Greer Farm, Ashe County. The double pens of this crib flank the central entryway; the loft above was used for storing hay or straw. The wood shingle roof is probably original.

Figure 17. The L.F. Young Farm, Ashe County. Here a group of the farm's shed-roof outbuildings, including the pigsty, poultry house, and equipment sheds, are linked by a board fence. The weatherboarded gable-roof building is the smokehouse. The farmhouse which began as a two-story log house built about 1840 (the block beside the gable-end chimney) was tripled in size in 1893.

and batten or plain vertical sheathing. An exception is the splendidly unique octagonal board and batten woodshed at the Robert Livesay House, Grassy Creek.

Springhouses and root cellars were, when possible, built into the hillside and of stone construction, either dry-laid or mortared (see Fig. 5 above). They could also be freestanding, or attached directly to the farmhouse at the end of the kitchen ell. The interior walls of both springhouse and root cellar were almost always stuccoed, and later cemented. The springhouse had a cooling trough for milk cans. The root cellars had wood bins for potatoes, apples, onions, turnips, and cabbages and shelves for "canned goods."

The tobacco barns are generally the most recently constructed farm buildings. They are framed with a sheathing of vertical boards spaced to allow for an air flow to cure the tobacco. While not a building, but nevertheless an important feature, an apple orchard was planted at almost every farm.

Each of these farm complexes has an individual character and situation and is unique in the disposition of the house, the barn, and the other farm outbuildings about the property (Fig. 17). They are working museums of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century agrarian building forms and methods of both log and frame construction, weatherboard, board and batten, and vertical sheathing. Since these farm buildings were constructed or added onto as the crops increased or production diversified during a period of some one hundred years, their study is an agricultural history of the New River Valley.

Public buildings in the valley were built on simple, straightforward plans with the composition of their elevations reflecting the manner and ornament of contemporary domestic building. The Grassy Creek Methodist Church remains as built in 1904 and owes its elegance to the prosperity of Grassy Creek at that time (Fig. 18). The church is of frame construction with shingles in the gable ends above the weatherboarding and on the middle sections of the corner bell tower/steeple. Flat lancet arched surrounds enframe the windows, doors, and louvered openings in the bell tower. Inside, the ceiling follows the pitch of the roof and the interior is fully finished in tongue and groove boards which, like the pews, have an oak varnish. Complimented by red upholstery and enriched by light filtering through the finest stained glass windows in the valley, this interior and building superbly recall Grassy Creek at its best.

Containment is an important concept to remember when discussing the architecture in the New River Valley. We have noted before that the geographic configuration of the valley largely predetermined the organization of farms. The hills wrapped, and to a considerable degree isolated, the farms within their breasts. This physical containment extended to the psychological and reinforced the self-sufficiency of the life on the farm on both emotional and economic levels. The processes of birth, life,

and death were all effected within the confines of the family farm. On a significant number of farms we found small cemeteries containing several generations of a particular family and their married kin. Thus the entire history of the farm and its owner-workers was contained on its grounds and read in its fields, buildings, and cemetery—a record of exactness and accuracy superior to tax lists and census reports. These cemeteries, generally located on the highest point of ground on the farm, are enclosed by fences of stone, metal, or wood. Plantings of box bushes, crepe myrtle, cedars, and sometimes lilac are interspersed among the granite, marble, and fieldstone markers.

The valley did not yield to the transitory and disposable qualities of external values. "New ways were built upon the old. They did not supplant the traditions of the past. . . . " Because New River Valley architecture was built on this principle, and because its inhabitants resolved themselves to live thereby, much has been preserved.

Not only have the buildings long served the purposes for which they were built but to a remarkable degree the farms are owned by descendants of those who homesteaded them. This continued ownership is one of the most important factors in the maintenance of cultural values in the area. The fact that one is farming land which has been owned by one's family for three or four generations and on which these generations are buried has instilled a love of place which is seen in the architecture and its position in the landscape. This relationship of man, architecture, and landscape has preserved a way of life in the valley and the architecture which shelters it.

Figure 18. The Grassy Creek Methodist Church, Ashe County. Churches dominated the valley's social life; Grassy Creek Church was the center of the prosperous society there. Built in 1904, its asymmetrically composed elevations are covered with weatherboards and round-edged shingles.

Homeplace:
Images and Impressions of an Appalachian Settlement

Dwelling (the verb) turns on a still point accumulating structure across the moment of its gyration.

Heidegger talks about dwelling as "the building that cultivates growing things and the building that erects buildings." Here Terry Shook shares what he has discovered about the manner of his ancestors' dwelling on a slope of the southern Appalachian Mountains. The kin he recalls cleared the mountainside for settlement, cultivated crops and built upon it, and in so doing gave expressly vernacular form to the landscape.

No pilasters, sculptured architraves, or Eastlake tracery—this is just an old house that is the foremost physical remnant of a lifestyle that was somehow common to rural life everywhere yet special in it's own indigenous way. Mountain culture is not one of homogeneity, but one of differences arising from the ruggedness and isolation of the mountain slopes in contrast to the relative freedom of the valleys. Those on the slopes were engaged in the activity of living directly with and from the land using whatever skills or tools they could make or afford.

I have a special interest in this old place because it is the homestead of a great-great-grandfather of mine. But even though the place was a small part of my childhood, it held no great fascination for me until I began to recognize the strength and beauty in its permanence, and to appreciate its simple, but very special uniqueness.

Historical accounts of the beginnings of Macon County are hard to come by. An 1891 history by a local Dr. C. D. Smith cites the primacy of the settlers' daily struggle for survival in a demanding setting as the reason for the lack of any written description of events and lifestyles within pioneer Macon County.[1] The lands within the county were once a part of Haywood County and were acquired by a treaty between the Cherokee Nation and the State of North Carolina during the years 1817-1819. Even though most of the section was sold by highest bid to two people, the land was soon parceled and resold, with an area along the valley of the Little Tennessee developing into a settlement fairly quickly.[2]

This settlement officially became the town of Franklin in 1855, and from then on the town and the immediate larger farms developed a relatively "cosmopolitan" culture in comparison to the small farms on the slopes of the mountains.[3] The 1860 *Franklin Observer,* "Devoted to Religion, Temperance, Education, Agriculture, Literacy, Art, Science, News, and General Intelligence," regularly published national newsbriefs and associated editorials, moral teachings, legal pronounce-

ments, railroad bulletins, grocers' and druggists' advertisements: "10,000 negroes saved yearly—Planters take notice—Jacob's Cordial Is The Only Sure and Positive Remedy Before the People in Dysentery, Diarrhea, and Flux—Never Fails. . . ."[4]

Wayah, Nantahala, Cartoogechaye, and Ellijay are among the Indian names for geographically identifiable divisions of the county, with the usual name-giving element being a stream and/or valley, or some precipice. One was either "on" Nantahala, "up" Ellijay, and so on. By 1880 commercial and residential structures had been constructed within Franklin that were not unlike buildings in any other small Southern town; but in the countryside (where "deer were plentiful and bear fairly prominent") one-room log cabins were still very much the rule: "Sometimes we would see a more prosperous building of two and three rooms, but not often."[5] And for those on the slopes a passable road was a rarity—"trail" being the more appropriate nomenclature. Slopes of thirty to forty percent were not uncommon, and therefore instead of wagons, sleds incorporating locust or hickory runners were used for work and general transportation. In addition, numerous trails were carved through the forest—principally along the ridges—to neighboring houses. It was not uncommon for one to visit friends after a day's work, even if the walk was a mile or two through rough terrain.

Superstition was very much a part of the mountain culture. When tomatoes were introduced they were referred to as Love Apples, considered "pizen" at first, and when finally accepted were still thought to be fruits of passion.[6] Witchcraft, spells, and the like were accepted phenomena, almost directives within daily life. For example, the people accepted as fact that when clearing land the stumps had to be burned "on the dark side of the moon," or else the ground would die.[7]

My great-great-grandfather was a Mincy. It is held that the Mincy—or Mincey—name is French in origin,

1 House
2 Barn
3 Storage
4 Springhouse
5 Garden
6 Cultivated Crops
7 Hemlock Windbreak
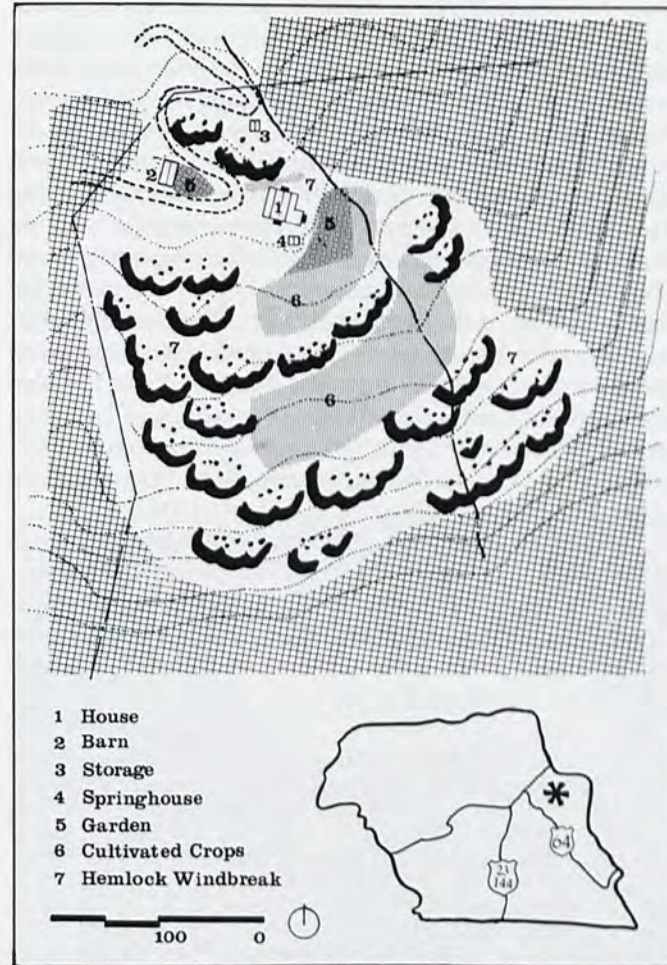
Location of Mincy place in rural Macon County, with site plan showing planting and buildings.

and that four Mincey brothers first settled in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia around tie mid-eighteenth century[8]; however, no records have been found to support this family held belief. The first known record that has bearing upon this place notes the date of birth of R. Henry Mincey in Burke County, North Carolina, on December 4, 1834. Sometime before 1860 this Henry Mincey moved into Macon County along with his mother and a brother. No record of where he lived before 1867 exists. That he married a woman from the cove on the opposite side of the ridge is known. The first record of Mincy ownership of property is recorded in a land grant from the State of North Carolina dated 1867, for twenty-eight acres of land as registered with the Register of Deeds in 1883. The recorded purchase price of fourteen cents per acre is especially low compared with the $2.19 per acre rate offered in an 1888 edition of the *Franklin Press*.[9]

The original house was a one-room log affair and stood within the garden east of the present structure. Legend has it that the house was extensively damaged when a large log rolled down the mountain, striking the house in the fireplace. No written records of the earliest days of the homestead exist.

> At this point it is only just to say, that not in every instance are the lands of this section adapted to fruit raising. This arises, not from the poverty or inadaptability of the soils, but from the frosts in early spring, which affect this section in a very unequal manner. The mild open winters have the effect, in the least exposed situations and on the mountain slopes and coves having a direct southern exposure, of advancing blossoming time of the trees. It is no uncommon thing to see peach trees in bloom, in some localities in the county, early in March, these blooms are, of course, destroyed by frost.
>
> A feature peculiar to mountain regions, which is present to a very marked degree in this plateau country, is the thermal, warm or no frost belts, as they are variously termed. These bodies of warm air, wherever they occur, prevent damage to vegetation by late frosts in the spring and the early ones of the fall.
>
> The location of these warm belts of course varies greatly. The contour of the country determining the level in each particular instance.
>
> The mountain sides, ridges and elevations, wherever these belts occur, are free from the late and early frosts which have destructive effects on lands along streams and in the basins and depressions of the plateau, leaving the vegetation of these thermal zones unharmed. This condition continues until the freezes of approaching winter occur.
>
> There is no great regularity or general rule in the establishing of these localities, and no general level to be observed, local conditions alone governing, and experience and observation of at least one season is necessary to accurately delineate the area of each individual location. When located with accuracy, however, these zones afford the greatest advantage to the fruit culturist.

The area of the original grant lies completely within one of these isothermals, which is a condition of nocturnal inversion of the cool mountain-top air with the lighter and warmer air of the valleys. This inversion usually begins about sunset and continues until sunrise the next day.[10] Whether Henry Mincy knew of the existence of this thermal belt before he applied for the grant and decided to raise fruit on the land is not known; that he did organize his life and the land by the orchards is the history and significant form-giving legacy of this place. And orchards may have been on the land when he acquired it. At the time of her death, Henry's wife Polly supposedly said that the old "Indian Red" peaches were over one hundred years old. Numerous varieties of apples—Rome Beauty, MacIntosh, Wolf River, Delicious, Winesap—all were grown on the grounds along with peaches and two types of cherries, plus vineyards.

How Henry Mincy marketed the fruits from the orchards is unclear. It is doubtful that many were shipped to outside markets given the state of transportation within the county (the Southern Railroad line did not appear until 1904, and it was located at Dillsboro, twenty-two

miles away).[11] However, some of the elderly citizens of the area state with certainty that the family had a contract in the latter part of the nineteenth century to distill apple brandy for the Federal Government—"legal whiskey" as they call it. One gentleman even went so far as to name the "gager," or person responsible for testing the product for alcoholic content and for the general inspection of the facilities. Others, most importantly various members of the family, know nothing of this "whiskey business" and contend that only vinegar and apple cider were manufactured. It is a certainty that the apples were transformed into some liquid as witnessed by the old machinery for peeling and crushing the fruit. And it is also well known that a number of illegal "stills" did exist within the general area, with some saying that even though the Mincy's did not engage in "moonshining," one of Henry's sons would alert the others to the coming of the Federal agents up the creek, which resulted in a domino effect of gunfire signals throughout the area.

After the death of Henry the orchards and the house were taken over by one of his younger sons, Charles G. Mincey (b. October 12, 1867), or "Cap" as he was generally called, who succeeded in keeping the place intact by buying out the claims of the other children, and by virtue of his assuming responsibility for the welfare of his mother Polly until her death. Cap married a woman with drive and a strong business mind, one Nannie Jane Higdon (b. December 4, 1877), who was successful in directing the purchase of additional lands from surrounding neighbors and was undoubtedly instrumental in the expansion of the orchards. By the first years of the new century the commercial manufacture of brandy, vinegar, and cider had ceased as the crop from the expanded orchards was being shipped to the markets of Charlotte and Atlanta to be sold to the highest bidder.

To say that fruits were "shipped to market" gives the false impression of a very comfortable economic situation. Actually, the whole family was engaged in a number of activities that helped to keep the place functioning productively. They tended the garden, worked the orchards, tended grain crops for the animals, sold tombstones, trapped and sold hides, kept weather records for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, boarded school teachers—and Cap ran a general store (from which people say he never collected a cent). But within this small isolated community of Ellijay the Charley Mincys were socially very prominent and outgoing people. Whenever a salesman or other visitor needed a place to stay, he was sent to the Mincys', and folks other than the immediate household were always on hand for lunch or dinner, either by virtue of Cap's direction or by just stopping by. Barn raisings, square dances, my grandparents' wedding —all of those intimate social gatherings that one would expect to find in close rural communities occurred here.

The present structure dates from around the mid- to late 1880's. The house is of post and beam construction using locust wood as foundation piers on flat rocks as a foundation base. The structural framing of the building does not display the rigidity and careful attention to detail one would expect to find; the joinery and quality of materials are not on the same level as, say, those in a fine dovetailed log structure. The interior walls were (and in some rooms still are) of rough sawn oak, liberally plastered with newspapers and flour paste wallpaper. This was done not only for decoration but, more importantly, to help keep out the wind and cold. With the exception of the front facade, the exterior of the house has been changed substantially. In high contrast to the building's other exterior walls, now graced with commercial twentieth century pine siding, the front facade is sheathed with butt-jointed poplar boards and displays the house's
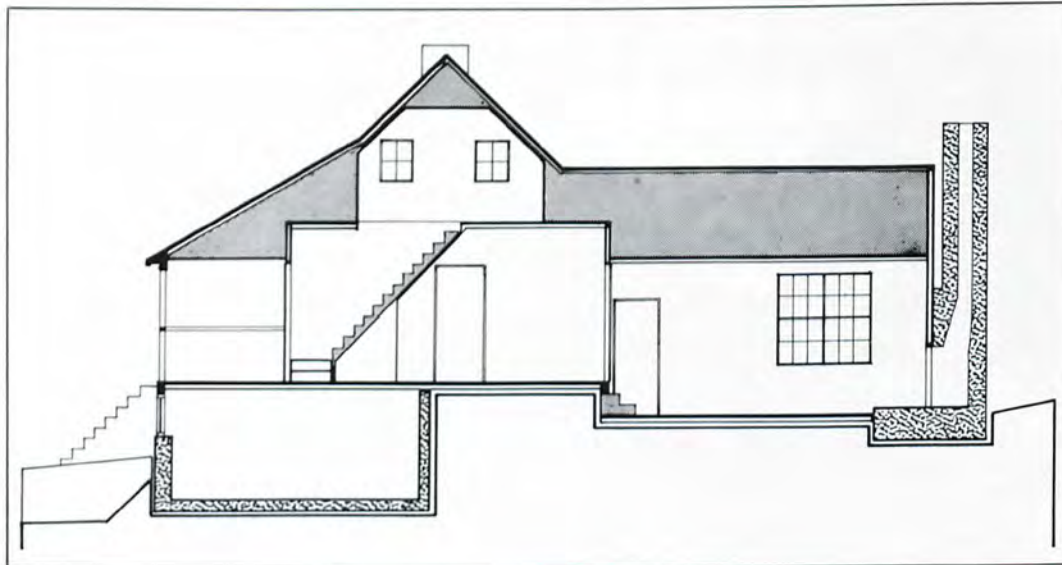
Section and first- and second-floor plans of Mincy house.

1930 window added

1940 oak shakes removed

1930 walls added

6

8 Bedroom

1940 chimney removed

1890? new kitchen

1890? window covered

1930 chimney removed

1955 stove added

1955 cookroof

1

2

3

4

5

1955 stonework removed

1 M.Bedroom Living Room
2 Bedroom
3 Living M.Bedroom
4 Old Kitchen
5 New Kitchen
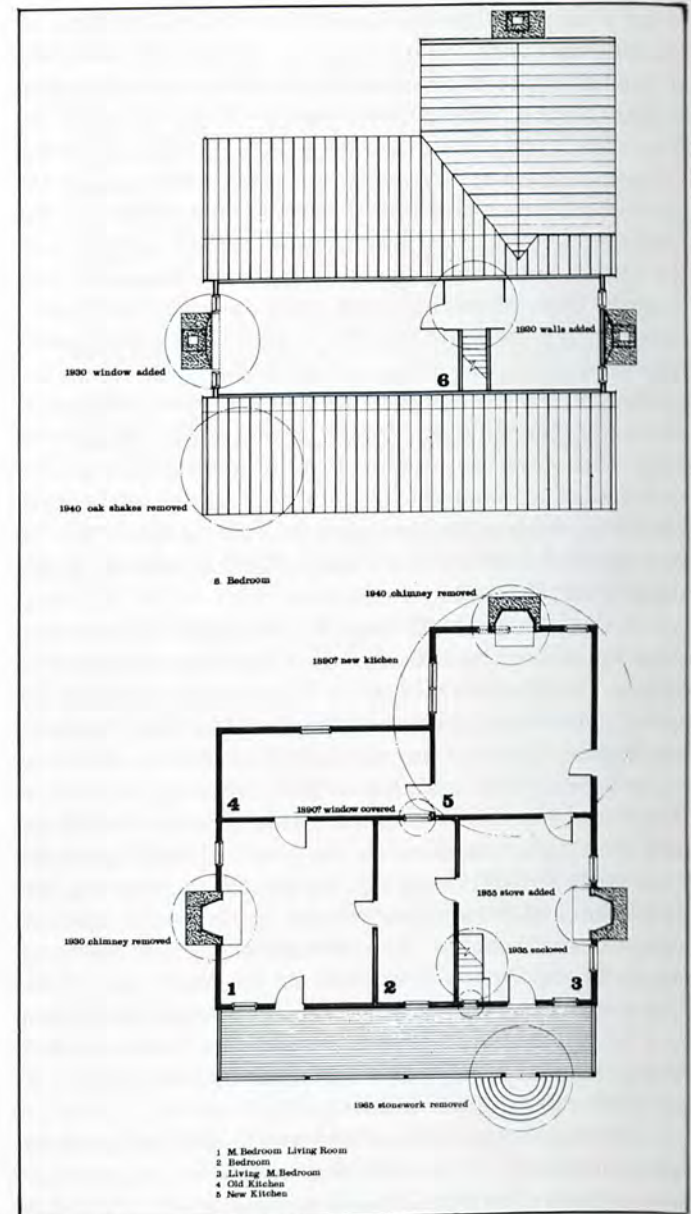
most notable details: walnut doors, door frames, and window trim. Measuring approximately 2'-10" by 6'-3", the doors all exhibit a three-peg corner system of bracing and have panels that are hand faceted on one side and flush on the other. All of these pegged doors, which occur throughout the house, are in generally fine condition despite obvious heavy use.

The "old kitchen" exists only as a memory in the minds of those living who long ago heard references to it. A small back porch with a shed roof was once where the "new kitchen" is now. The mud-chinked chimney of the new kitchen, along with the one that served the old master bedroom, suffered neglect from lack of use, with one being torn down for its stones sometime after a wood cooking stove was purchased and with the other simply falling apart and, in ruin, providing the impetus for repairing that side of the house. Even today the northern exposure shows extreme signs of weathering despite the existence of a large stand of hemlocks, undoubtedly planted to serve as a windbreak when the structure was built.

Each of the main downstairs rooms has served at alternate times as living room and bedroom. The north-ernmost room was the original master bedroom of Henry and Polly Mincey until their death. Upon marrying, Charles moved into a nearby log cabin, only to move back with a young daughter in order to take care of his parents. The room that was the living room became the bedroom of Charley and Nannie Jane. After the death of his parents Charley allowed his children to use their bedroom as a living room.

None of Cap's children took over the homeplace as he had from his father. His two sons received their rightful shares of the lands when they were married and built places of their own. The daughters married and moved away, all but my grandmother settling in the Charlotte area. The attraction of the outside world through ever increasing communication and contact was undoubtedly

a lure away from the relatively isolated life and work at the homeplace; new industries moved into the area with jobs and steady cash incomes more attractive than the familiar, hard work in the orchards. In short, all of the elements of a changing, modern society became immediate forces for dissolving this type of place. Only through the maintenance of the house and gardens by two of the family kin have traces of the place remained for the family to return to once a year for a reunion and "dinner on the grounds."

My father has now purchased the property with the intention of restoring the house and grounds in preparation for a time when he can retire to tend the orchards. The existence of a strong geographic organizing element in conjunction with one man's memories and desires may prove to be forces that will stay this dwelling place on into the last half of the twentieth century.

Afterword

Tin roofs, coal heating stoves and wood cooking ovens (and finally electric ranges), manufactured pine siding, screen doors—options presented the rural dweller through exposure and availability, his choices increasing the introduction of standardized elements into the existing mosaic. Thus the additive nature of the vernacular is perpetuated, now in a more technologically direct— consumer selective—way, as opposed to the traditional interpretative, hence personal, fashion. Vernacular architecture is above all else a process rather than a product. The workings of this process involve the accumulation and transfer of those bits and pieces of items from past association as collected by memory, as reinforced by value and tradition, but constantly modified by the increasing availability of new pieces into the system.

We may not care for the results of twentieth century vernacular aesthetically, but we cannot deny its existence in those places where the plethora of products and values of contemporary society are meshing with traditional practices and ways of doing things. No doubt all of the families of late nineteenth century rural Macon County had access to information about artifacts and lifestyles within contemporary society: only now with the increased availability of products through steady and higher incomes has the interpretative element of the vernacular been replaced by standardized components in an almost emulative fashion of "contemporary" life. The photograph of two houses clearly illustrates the translation of a 140 year old model into a twentieth century reproduction using exterior plywood, concrete slab, and concrete block. Its similar form cannot be denied, and it is by form unlike anything one would find within the town. In the city, rapid discontinuous change has given the tract house as the next generation's symbolic, associative antecedent, as opposed to this reenactment of fifth generation continuum.

But this system of old form/new elements may well be on its way to disintegration even in the most rural areas, with the proliferation of tourist cabins and, of course, the tract house providing the new pattern of house form in sympathy with twentieth century jobs, entertainment, and values.

Footnotes

1. Dr. C. D. Smith, *A Brief History of Macon County* (Franklin: Franklin Press, 1891), 3. In addition to an historical account of the county, the pamphlet also contains an exhaustive treatise concerning the proper method of settling civil disputes with fists instead of with knives and guns, along with the associated social and psychological ramifications of these actions dutifully explained.

2. Smith, 3.

3. "Centennial Edition," *Franklin Press*, June 16, 1955.

4. *Franklin Observer*, March 16, 1860.

5. "Centennial Edition," *Franklin Press*.

6. "Centennial Edition," *Franklin Press*.

7. "Centennial Edition," *Franklin Press*.

8. David L. Mincey, *Mincey, Quo Modo Pervenisti?* (unpublished manuscript).

9. Advertisement, *Franklin Press*, April 21, 1888.

10. Henry Stewart Jr., *Macon County* (Blue Ridge Association Press, 1902).

11. Stewart, *Macon County*.

Highway 64, in Postcards

Up until this point little has been said about a contemporary vernacular landscape, implying perhaps that none exists. Of course that is not so. Our environment is increasingly filled with artifactual expressions of blandly homogeneous popular culture; however, if we enlarge our perspective to include the whole contemporary fabric, we find before us a vernacular mix that includes an abundance of popular culture, vernacularizations of popular culture, as well as the potent stays of our vestigial historical landscape. This article reflects an attempt by a group of landscape architecture students to frame the contemporary vernacular mix using the state's traditional east-west roadway as a sampling device.

US 64—or as folks usually say, "Highway 64"—came into existence in 1926 when the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (formed in 1914) selected from established primary roads in each state the main interstate routes and set up a uniform numbering and signage system to facilitate cross-country travel. From its eastern terminus in Whalebone on the North Carolina Outer Banks, US 64 stretches unbroken across three-fourths of the continent to Farmington, New Mexico, where it dead-ends into US 550.

Of course the evolution of Highway 64's roadbed began long before 1926, before man even, with the paths worn along river banks and mountain ridges by animals following the line of least resistance in their search for

Mountains **Piedmont** **Coastal Plain**
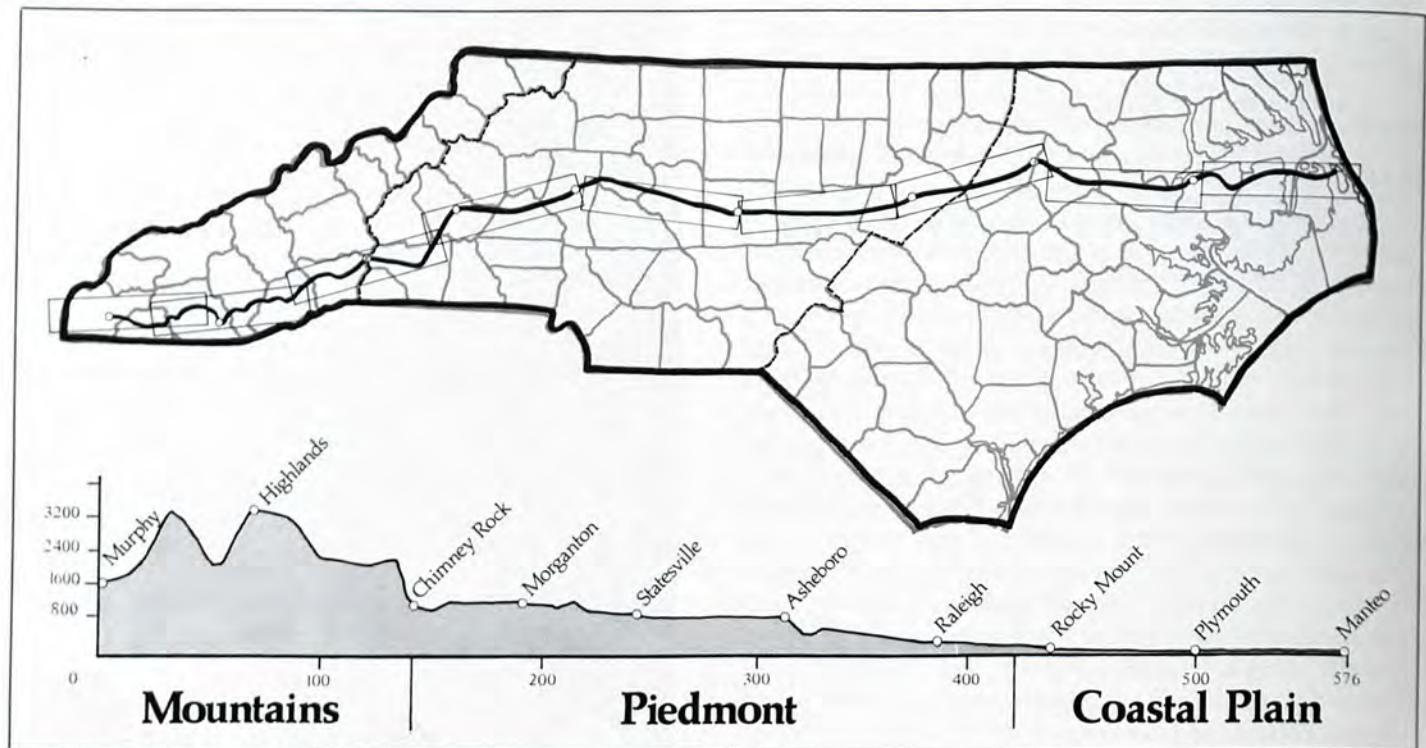
Linda Dahl, Tracy Segner, and Whitney Talcott

Farmed Bottom Land Near Murphy

The severe terrain of the Mountain region limits farming to the gentler slopes of the valleys. Rich bottom lands are usually reserved for crops of corn or Burley tobacco, while outbuildings and houses are sited on dryer, less-precious slopes adjacent to the floodplain.

Through the gap, down the mountain, the dark forest tunnel opens to an unexpected view across a mint green valley. The valley farm is the mountain's preserve.

Family Farm Pleasant Valley, N.C.

Vercher's Grocery and Gas

Tom Johnson's old store—built in 1937 and "the oldest in these parts"—was moved here and converted into a house when the highway was widened to four lanes about 1971. The Vercher's Grocery and Gas dates from 1947 and serves "locals from Georgia" and tourists. Until recently the store was a precinct center for Polk Co., Tennessee.

THESE PLACES ARE A DIME A DOZEN— PREDICTABLE—AS DEPENDABLE AS MOM AND POP.

THE VERCHERS HIGHWAY 64 MURPHY, N.C.

food and habitat. Later, Indians traveled surprisingly long distances along these same paths consolidating and connecting them into trading routes. When white settlers began migrating from the north and south and coastal east into Piedmont and western North Carolina during the mid-eighteenth century, these ancient Indian trading routes emerged into prominence from their obscure and silent past. Portions of Highway 64 follow these prehistoric trails.

Some older eastern sections of the road saw service as colonial post roads. Other portions were first laid out during the second quarter of the nineteenth century as a part of the statewide effort to link county seats, and a good stretch of Piedmont roadbed has been identified by at least one source as contiguous with the mid-nineteenth century plank road running west from Raleigh.

Although the idea for a "Western Turnpike" connecting Raleigh with Asheville was proposed as early as 1842 by Governor Morehead and a route actually surveyed a few years later by geologist Elisha Mitchell, traditional sectional differences within the state, continued reliance upon major trade routes running principally north and south *out of* the state, plus the disruption brought by the Civil War all helped delay the development of a consolidated east-west route for three-quarters of a century. Railroads actually contributed more to the improvement of cross-state transportation during the nineteenth century.

Until 1879, when Mecklenburg County first levied a road tax, construction and maintenance of roads remained under local control with the township as the unit of authority. As in colonial times every able-bodied citizen was required to work on local roads a number of days each year or pay for a substitute laborer. By the turn of the century about one-third of the state's counties adopted "the Mecklenburg plan" and abandoned the use of citizen labor. In these counties road taxes paid for the construction of miles of macadam and sand-clay "highways."

Spurred on by a burgeoning "good roads movement" the state legislature of 1915 established the State Highway Commission to facilitate county roadbuilding efforts. In 1917, under Woodrow Wilson, Congress voted Federal aid to state highway programs. In 1921 North Carolina's state government assumed authority over five thousand miles of primary roadway and began raising roadbuilding funds through the sale of bonds, a gasoline tax, and licensing fees on the increasingly popular automobile. Five years later the U.S. highway system was overlaid upon the various state networks. And, during the Depression North Carolina's legislature removed secondary roads from county control, thus consolidating all authority for the planning, construction, and maintenance of the state's roads in Raleigh.

Frontiersmen established an outpost for trading with the Cherokee at the junction of the

64 in the Cullasaja Gorge

At 1,200 million years of age, the Appalachian Mountains are among the oldest in the world. On its course through the Blue Ridge, Highway 64 often hugs gorges, streambeds, and gaps—following nature's paths through the rugged terrain.

The air is a bouquet of hemlock and white pine, rhododendrons and mountain laurel damp from the cool spray of tumbling water.

Travel & Tourism Promotional Dept. Raleigh, N.C.

Jackson's Gifts and Gemstones

This typical roadside stand selling regional specialties in the Cullasaja Gorge west of Highlands has been in operation six years. Mr. Jackson comes from Florida for the summer tourist business in the N.C. mountains and returns to Florida for the winter season.

Mr. Jackson's sharp eye for trade can catch a tourist in a wink. Says they, "Can't go away with money. I don't care if it's moldy even. Can't let 'em leave with money."

Mr. Tourist B. Wary Tobacco Road North Carolina

Highlands

Sapphire Country

The area around present-day Sapphire Lake was first called "Sapphire Country" (for the blue of the mountains as well as for the locally found gems) about 1898 during promotion of several newly established summer resorts. Today, the Sapphire Valley resort development, headquartered in restored Fairfield Inn, covers thousands of acres and offers second homes, condominiums, golf courses, and lodges.

Real estate. A real estate if you can afford more than the usual ¼ acre vacation with folks from Atlanta, Greensboro, Charlotte. Manner-curved turf.

The Joneseys Sapphire, N.C.

"Triple A" I-House Near Bat Cave

The I-house is the Upland South's most common folk house type. In N.C. it was popular during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from Murphy to Manteo. Here, as is common through the mountains, the Freeman House clings to the roadside.

THE BASIC FORM IS SO FAMILIAR, BUT HERE IT COMES AND GOES MORE QUICKLY, CLINGING TO THE ROADSIDE AROUND THE BEND. SOME PRIMITIVE HARMONY IS ANNOUNCED IN THE LOWER FLOORS' ASSYMMETRY — ITS TWO DOORS ONTO THE PORCH.

THE FREEMANS HIGHWAY 64 BAT CAVE NORTH CAROLINA

Hiawassee and Valley Rivers around 1830. This same spot, known since 1851 as Murphy, is North Carolina's westernmost county seat and the first town encountered on Highway 64 after crossing into the state from Tennessee some twenty miles back west. East of Murphy 64 follows the route of the so-called "Unicoi Turnpike," a major Indian trading path, for several miles through the farmed bottom land along the Hiawassee River. No doubt much of the westernmost portion of Highway 64 follows aboriginal trails.

When the state took control of primary roads in 1921, the sections of present-day 64 then in existence through the rugged terrain between Murphy and Brevard were either "unimproved" (primitive), "graded" (scraped over by either a horse-drawn sledge or a crude tractor-like machine), or "topsoil" (built up with a sand and clay mixture or with transported topsoil). In 1927 the section just west of Brevard, climbing the heavily wooded ridges of the Blue Ridge in the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests, was "macadamized" with crushed stone and gravel and paved a few years later with portland cement. Highlands—at 3,835 feet the highest town in the state—Sapphire, and Cashiers had all been popular summer resorts for the wealthy and influential since the late nineteenth century, and perhaps this fact hastened road improvements in the area. The remaining stretches of the western route were paved a few years later, around 1933-35.
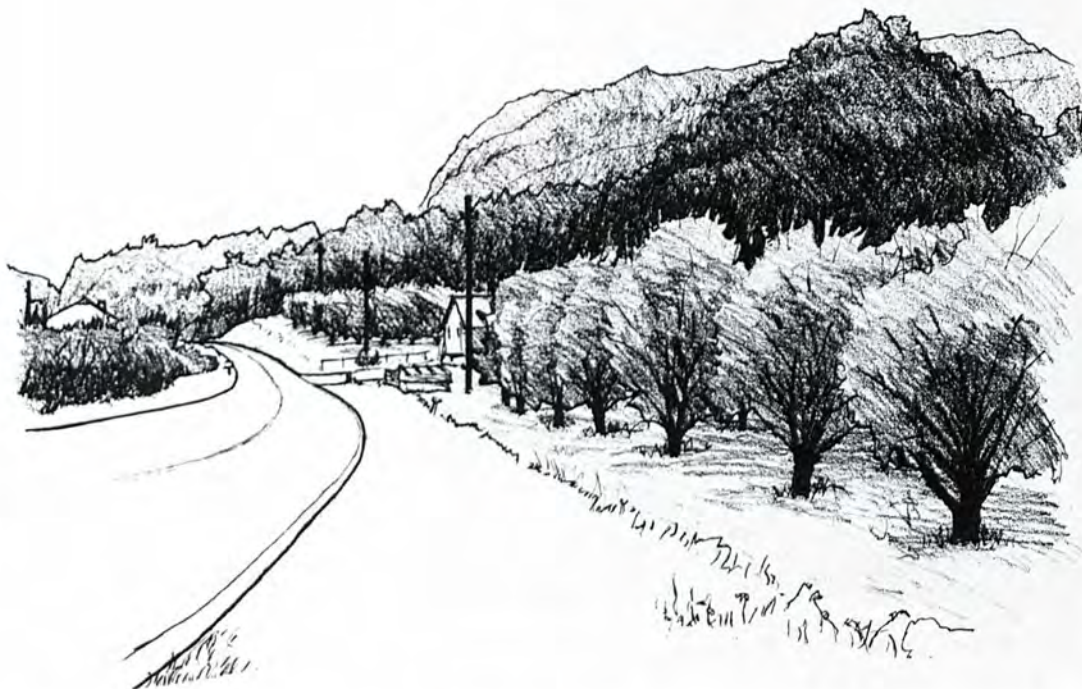
Truck Garden

Most mountain farms are small, producing fruit and vegetables to sell to local stores, off the back of a pickup truck in town, or at a stand along the road. Houses on these small farmsteads are typically frame boxes with improvised additions and embellishments. This scene is near Hendersonville.

On saturday morning
we saw the folks
selling tomatoes and
watermelon at the
square. Wasn't a
big rush to buy —
but then no big
rush to sell, either.

The School of Dragon Post Card Company

RALEIGH N.C.C.
JAN
3
19 8
U.S.P.O.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

harry smith
rt: 64
horse shoe,
n.c.

Near Fruitland

Chimney Rock, N.C.

Capitalizing on a local natural feature, Chimney Rock has become one continuous roadside stand offering the tourist regional, as well as "made in Japan" wares. Trinkets are displayed in profusion, becoming a part of the signage and helping to create an atmosphere of gaiety and tinselly opulence.

During the summer
season every Saturday's
a fourth of July.
what a counterpoint
to the surrounding
natural spectacle!

Tourists Galore
Tight Squeeze
Chimney Rock, N.C.

Ranch House with Kitchen Garden

Most North Carolinians have agrarian roots. In the suburbs or small town residential areas—anywhere there is room—these roots will be manifest in "kitchen gardens." Often a farmer will plant a garden close to his house, away from his acreage.

This man probably
works at the mill
down the road — but
his roots are stubbornly
rural and agricultural.

Ralph little
highway 64
valdese, n.c.

Joe's Fresh Produce, Souvenirs

Joe's is the classic roadside stand, featuring fruit, cider, curios, picnic tables, and homemade signs strung up and down the road for a mile. It thrives on the seasonal tourist traffic around Lake Lure.

WE STOPPED FOR COLD WATER-
MELON ON A HOT AFTERNOON.
JOE SLICED IT AND WE
CARRIED IT ACROSS THE
ROAD TO A PICNIC TABLE.
CARS WHIZZED BY.
  WE SPIT SEEDS.

S.B.I
SCHOOL OF DESIGN
RALEIGH, N.C.

For about forty miles through Transylvania and Henderson counties, from Rosman to Edneyville, Highway 64 traverses a gently rolling plateau-like landscape slightly over two thousand feet above sea level. Cool late-summer nights caused by air drainage from higher altitudes make this region ideal for growing apples Orchards and warehouses line the road near Fruitville, and cider stands seemingly get tucked into every other curve throughout the region.

After Edneyville, 64 drops rapidly into Hickory Nut Gorge and Bat Cave. Until 1947 the route continued north out of the gorge joining Raleigh-to-Asheville US 70 at Old Fort. In 1947 it was rerouted down the "scenic" gorge past touristed Chimney Rock— today second only to Cherokee as N.C.'s quintessential roadside stand—and in hairpin turns around the cove-tangled shore of Lake Lure, a 1928 resort development. The descent into Hickory Nut Gorge brought 64 out of the mountains; beyond Lake Lure the mountainous backdrop recedes and the road, and somewhat grateful driver, accept the simple up and down of the Piedmont foothills.

The section of road from Rutherfordton north to Morganton—which follows a portion of the "Old Cherokee Path to Virginia" and affords views of the 2,500 foot South Mountains—was one of the last stretches of 64 to be paved, receiving a bituminous surface treatment in 1939 shortly before the Chimney Rock-Rutherfordton route was designated "Alternate US 64."

Near Statesville

At Morganton 64 crosses I-40, the latest of three major Raleigh-Asheville thoroughfares, and joins US 70, which as NC 10 was the oldest. All along the road between Morganton and Hickory the small communities for which the highway is Main Street seem to have suffered a measure of decline as a result of I-40's drain of transient business. Still, 64 carries one of its higher volumes of traffic along this stretch and the flavor of the area is that of a transportation corridor. Along the six- and eight-lane Hickory bypass, which carried I-40's traffic until just recently, a full-fledged commercial strip—64's most extensive within N.C.—has grown up in the last decade and a half. Ten miles beyond Hickory, however—close to the spot where for the motorist heading east the mountains fade into a blue haze in the rear view mirror for the last time—traffic dies down somewhat and the road again enjoys the easy roller coaster of Piedmont farm terrain. This is dairy country. Catawba, Iredell, Davie, and Davidson Counties have the largest percentages of pastureland in the state. Ten miles before Statesville 64 crosses the Catawba River, the first of the broad and muddy Piedmont waterways.
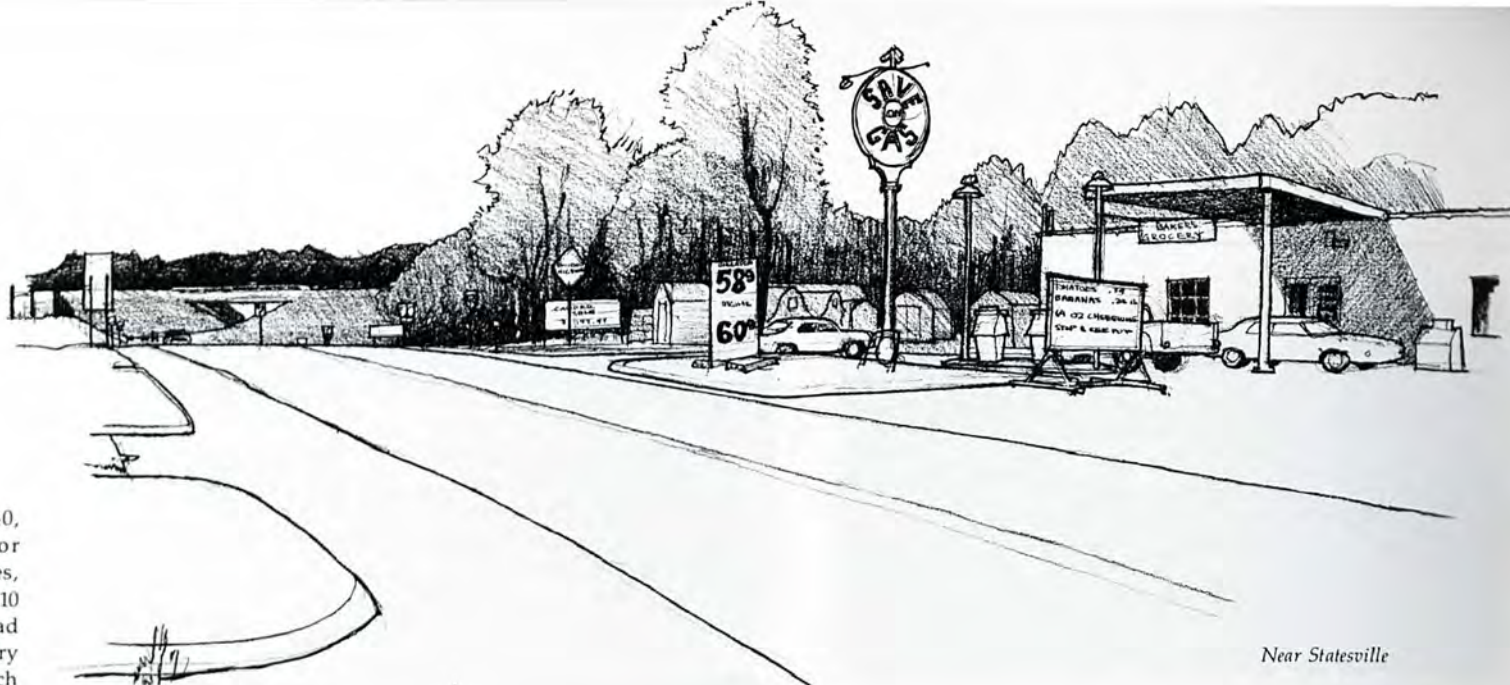
Rural Industrial Site

Among Southern states only Texas leads N.C. in industrial production. This manufacturing is dispersed throughout the state making the rural industrial site with its generous acreage and suburban landscaping a common scene. The plant pictured here is near Morganton.

HOW YOU GONNA KEEP 'EM DOWN ON THE FARM?

JIM GRAHAM
AG. COMMISSIONER
RALEIGH, N.C.
27611

The School of Design Post Card Company

Strip Development at Hickory

Highway 64's purest examples of strip development occur along the Hickory and Asheboro by-passes where the commercial building of the last decade-and-a-half could respond afresh to the opportunity of an adjacent automobile-oriented consumer population.

FOUR LANES AND STOP LIGHTS, EXHAUST FUMES, SIGNS SHOUTING "GAS" AND "BURGERS" AND WHICH WAY TO GO. I DON'T ADMIRE THIS PLACE BUT I'M AS AT HOME HERE AS I AM IN FRONT OF THE 6:30 NEWS.

HOWARD JOHNSON'S HIGHWAY 64 BYPASS HICKORY, N.C.

Pasture Near Statesville

The topography of the Piedmont, along with the sandy-clayey soils that are well-suited to producing grass and grain, provide the necessary ingredients for dairy farming. Rolling pastures of wheat and fescue, defined by forests of Virginia pine and mixed hardwoods, are common to this region.

a carpet of grasses neat between dark woods. Barbed wire boundries become in time, red cedar "breaks" thanks to the cardinal & mockingbird who sit eat sing and leave their calling cards.

Carolina Dwelling School of Design Raleigh, N.C.
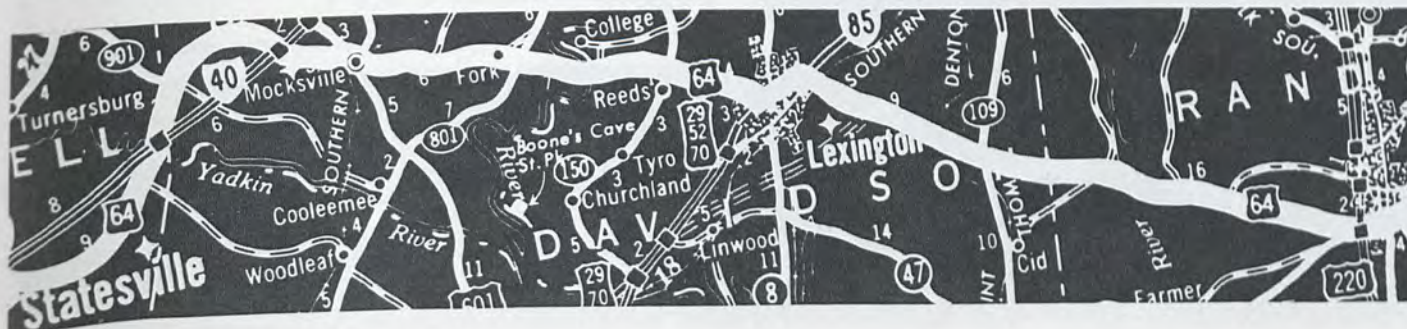
In 1926 US 64 was created primarily from Old NC 90 which ran from Lenoir to Statesville and from Statesville along our present route all the way to Colombia, in Tyrell County. Past Statesville the road heads north for a stretch through fine rolling pastureland and mixed pine and hardwood forests. The section of Old NC 90-become-US 64 between Mocksville and Lexington—an ancient winding roadbed lined with some of the route's most primitive houses—was topsoil before 1926 and was first paved in concrete in 1929. About seven miles out of Mocksville, in what is now pasture, one can see an old log tobacco barn, the first flue-curing barn visible from the road when heading east.

Highway 64 first bypassed Lexington in 1952; in 1977, while construction on I-85 continues to the southeast, 64 joins temporary I-85—and its 23,000 vehicles per day—in a fast race around the city. Much of the present roadway from Lexington to Asheboro was first opened in the early 1950's, Old 64 winding its way less directly through the timeworn Uwharrie Mountains. The newer road speaks plainly of progress in the roadbuilder's art: on approaching Asheboro one can see two lanes of concrete straight ahead no less than four miles across the tops of wooded hills.
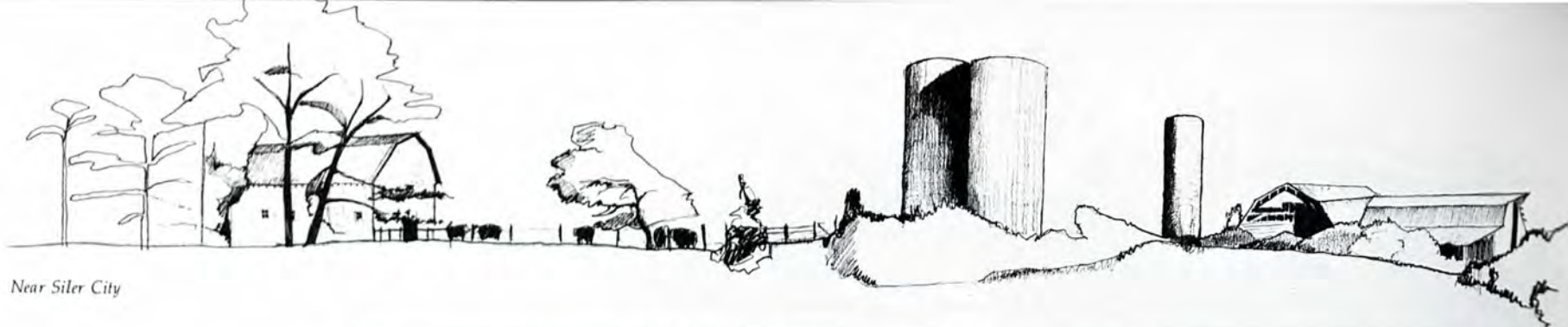
Near Siler City

Asheboro's four-lane bypass has collected some strip development since it opened around 1960. About seven miles east one passes a more traditional roadside establishment, the Blue Mist Barbecue, home of Route 64's finest.

According to *The North Carolina Gazetteer* Siler City grew up at the junction of the Raleigh-Salisbury and Fayetteville-Greensboro plank roads, which places Highway 64 upon this mid-nineteenth century Raleigh-Salisbury roadbed. That this route dates back even further is suggested by the presence of the ca. 1827 Alston-Degraffenried Plantation House, situated with obvious relationship to the byway about four miles before Pittsboro. Pittsboro was incorporated in 1778 and likely its crossroads were existent even then. The classic crossroads courthouse obliges motorists to circle beneath it even today.

Halfway between Pittsboro and Raleigh, shortly past the dry B. Everett Jordan lakebed and the curious four-lane causeway 64 takes across it, Earlie Goodwin lives in a one-room log house that has been inhabited by kin for generations—since before the Civil War. The logs have been covered with asbestos shingles. Only the massive stone chimney clues the observant motorist.

Darnell's Grocery

Built in 1934, Darnell's is a typical N.C. roadside store selling a little of everything to its local customers and essential convenience items to transients. Drink machines, an ice cooler, and a pay phone—all conspicuously displayed—help standardized brand-name signage lure the passing motorist.

Not like going into a 7-11 store. Here you step into the shade—or maybe up close to a space heater. Sit and talk and eat yer sardines right here. Nobody'll mind.

*The Darnells
Highway 64
Near Bynum,
N.C.*

Piedmont Farm Near Pittsboro

The white two-story farmhouse has always been a symbol of agrarian prosperity and respectability. When shaded by ancient oaks, as here, it becomes a symbol for enduring relatedness as well. What could better typify N.C.'s Piedmont?

They pop up over the horizon, protected and hidden by giant limbs bringing images of ten children home-made ice-cream and dawn to dusk work.

*The Family Farm
Highway 64
Piedmont, N.C.*
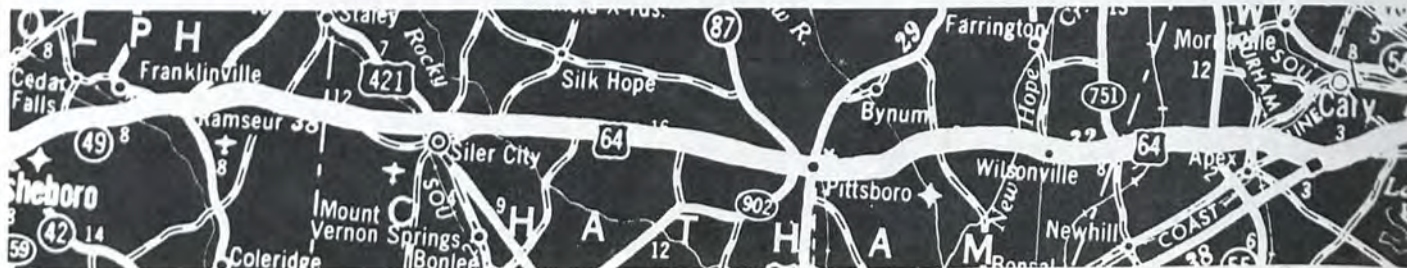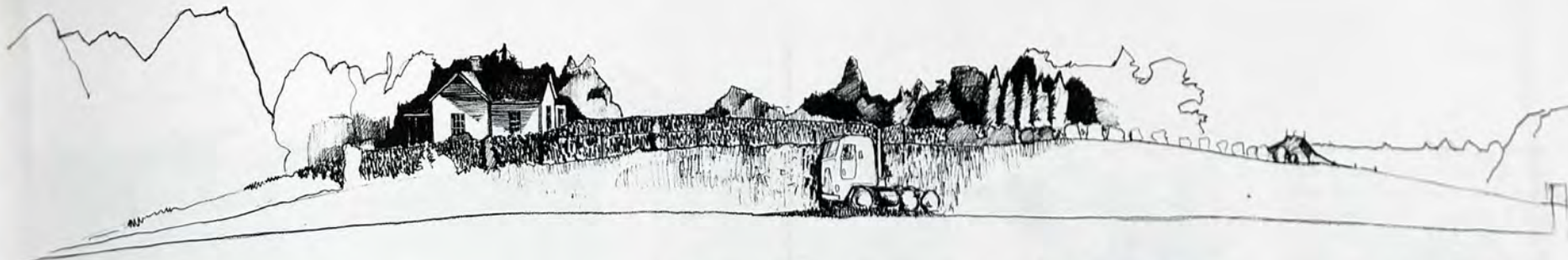
West of Spring Hope

Roadside Trailer Park

North Carolina produces over ten thousand mobile homes annually. From Murphy to Manteo they are the most common house type along Highway 64. Sited in "parks" as rural mill housing, alongside farmhouses for the extended family, and taking over former plantation shade trees—they provide a flexible, economical answer to short-term housing needs.

LIKE ROWS OF CORN THIS
NEW "CROP" APPEARS IN
ONCE PRODUCTIVE FIELDS.
WHEN WILL THEY BE
HARVESTED?

N.C. MOBILE HOMES
                ASSOCIATION

RALEIGH
NORTH CAROLINA

Quarter-Georgian House

This one-story rendering of the common two-story central-hallway farmhouse was popular in southeastern N.C. during the post-bellum nineteenth century. The extra gable, a folk borrowing from the Gothic Revival, has earned the house the nickname "Triple A." This house is near Momeyer.

THIS IS IT, FOLKS, THE TITLE SCENE:
A "CAROLINA DWELLING." A BLUNTLY
ECONOMICAL HUMANISM — FAINT
REMEMBRANCE OF SOMETHING
CLASSICAL — SYMMETRY AS
SEVERE AS OUR SEASONS — HINT
OF A CAROLINA SPRING.

THE STUDENT PUBLICATION
VOL. 26
SCHOOL OF DESIGN
RALEIGH, N.C.

The School of Design Post Card Company

The Highway 64 that leaves Raleigh's "beltline" bypass for Rocky Mount today is only distantly kin to the topsoil county road that began at the end of New Bern Avenue before 1920. The newest four-lane road has been gradually reaching out from the city, replacing and bypassing Old 64—a true country road—and bypassing Raleigh's bedroom communities, since the early sixties. The twenty thousand vehicle per day traffic volume, including considerable commuter traffic, makes this 64's busiest stretch in the state. The new Interstate-like roadway is now complete for well over half the distance from Raleigh to Rocky Mount. Construction on the remaining sections is underway. At present the road takes a route directly through Rocky Mount, affording the motorist a cross section of this large but typical eastern N.C. railroad town.
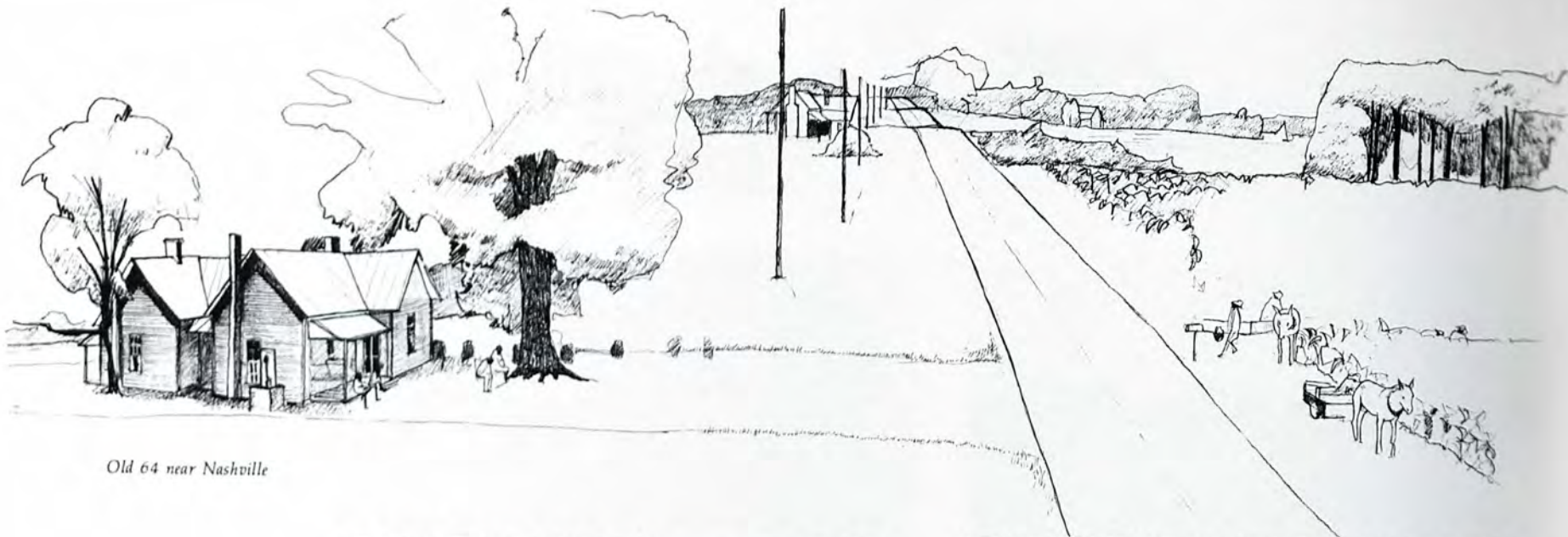
Old 64 near Nashville

Grady's No. 90

After more than sixty years the oldest operating gas and grocery on the road, No. 90 is a classic vestigial reminder that US 64's roadbed was NC 90 prior to 1926. Many such old style stations cannot accommodate today's large vehicles under their vintage porte-cocheres.

CONTINUITY'S THE WORD HERE.
GRADY'S LIVED IN THE BACK
ROOM ALL HIS LIFE. HE WAS
BORN THERE! HIS FAMILY
ALSO FARMS.

TEXACO OIL CO.
NEW YORK/
LONDON/
TOKYO

The School of Design Post Card Company

Grain Buying Station

The operator of this grain buying station—one of about seven hundred in the state—serves as an intermediary between the farmer and the national, sometimes international, market. Activity peaks at fall harvest time when corn, soybeans, and wheat are graded, moisture-checked, dried, and either shipped off by rail or held on speculation of a price increase.

I didn't know what this thing was. Thought it had something to do with fertilizer! Wrong.

mr. mid L. man
highway 64
everetts, n.c.

No. 90's in a Row

Here the most popular house plan offered by the "State College" Agricultural Extension Agency serves the purposes of the farmer-developer who finds profitable residential potential in his fields fronting Highway 64. Between Williamston and Plymouth there is ample precedent for his developing 64 as Main Street.

IRONY ABOUNDS IN THESE EXTRUDED RANCH HOUSES SET SHOULDER TO SHOULDER IN AN ABANDONED FIELD.

MR. FARMER D. VELOPER
WHYNOT
NORTH CAROLINA

Robersonville
Eastern N.C. Railroad Town

Towns sprang up at every major crossing when track was laid in eastern N.C. during the decades before the Civil War. A measure of late-nineteenth century prosperity is reflected here along Robersonville's tree-lined streets. Tobacco warehousing brings a seasonal bustle to this otherwise sleepy farming center.

Half an hour in town walking around taking pictures and the policeman wants to know what's going on. He was young and black. Some things change — some don't.

Robersonville P.D.
Robersonville,
N.C.

Rocky Mount gets its name from ledges over which the Tar River falls. Past Rocky Mount on Highway 64 the landscape flattens noticeably. This is the Coastal Plain, where N.C.'s oldest settlements are found, and where younger communities precipitated along the railroad tracks and roads that crisscrossed the countryside during the nineteenth century. Route 64 follows the nineteenth century Seaboard Coast Line Railway closely from Rocky Mount to Plymouth and serves as the Main Street for many of the small communities that dot the way.

This is some of N.C.'s most productive farmland. Roadside fields are consistently larger and flatter than back west. Farm compounds, clustered under old shade trees and set back from the road at the end of processional drives through corn or tobacco, alternate with rows of recently built box homes set in the edges of fields, their drives and mailboxes punctuating the shoulder irregularly. Tall stands of pines separate one immense scene from another. Ubiquitous makeshift stores front the road and offer comfort and relief from the monotony of the flatland roadway. Occasionally a trailer sits usurpingly amid the ancient shade trees that crumbling coastal mansions have left behind. Occasionally vestigial chimney stacks stand in silent pairs amongst the old trees.

Plymouth, a sleepy lumbering center established on the Roanoke River in 1725 was bypassed early—1949—and today is aging gracefully.

Just past Tarboro

No. 90 Landscaped

The "State College" Agricultural Extension Agency sends its No. 90 house plan to thousands of North Carolinians annually. Here the reduced ranch's carport has been enclosed to make a "den," and the yard has received heavily symbolic—thoroughly vernacular—embellishments.

THIS PLACE COMMUNICATES ENOUGH
FOR A BOOK! THERE'S A "DECK"
OUT BACK, LIGHTNING RODS ALONG
THE ROOF — IT'S ALL HERE—
A POPULAR STORY TOLD WITH
A REGIONAL TWANG.

BOB VENTURI
PHILADELPHIA
PA.

The School of Design Post Card Company

Simp's Bar-B-Q and Gas

Simp's combines elements of the gas station, convenience store, and traditional "Bar-B-Q" restaurant. The place is family-run and enjoys both a regular local and transient clientele.

A stack of family
snapshots sits on
the counter. Bar-B-Q
sandwiches come on
fresh hamburger rolls.
Small coke in the
bottle with a straw.

The Simpsons
Highway 64
Eastern N.C.

The School of Design Post Card Company

Flatland Farm Compound

These coastal flatlands produce large quantities of corn, soybeans, and tobacco. The agricultural compound may include large equipment barns, tobacco barns, and grain silos. Generally outbuildings are grouped near the farmhouse to help define the farm space against the vacant landscape. The farmhouse faces the road at a distance, claiming its broad fields.

THE EARTH IS FLAT AND RICH,
THE ROWS STRAIGHT AND LONG,
CROPS GROW TALL AND GREEN
WALLING THE ROAD IN SUMMER
— MILE AFTER MILE.

FAMILY FARM
SCUPPERNONG
NORTH CAROLINA

Mann's Harbor Marina

This road- and shore-side establishment supplies not only the usual gas and groceries but also marine services, motel and camping facilities, and a snack bar. This unusual combination of amenities meets the needs of both tourists and local commercial fishermen.

ADAPTATIONS TO THE
NEEDS OF THE FOLKS
WHO JOURNEY HERE —
AN AESTHETIC OF
SERVICES RENDERED.

MR. FISH R. MAN
SMALL TOWN
NORTH CAROLINA

Until agribusiness recently bought up, cleared, and drained large parcels of swampland, most of what lay east of Plymouth was considered too wet and silty for extensive farming. Lumbering and fishing, instead, supported the area's earlier settlers. Still, fields of corn, potatoes, and soybeans claim large acreages amongst the tall pines that line Highway 64 between Plymouth and Colombia. The route's last tobacco barns are seen in absolutely flat fields a dozen miles east of Plymouth.

This section of 64 east of Plymouth was sand and clay until about 1927 when it was paved in concrete up to Colombia. Before about 1954 the traveler made his way east from Colombia by gravel roads and by ferries across the Alligator River and Croatan Sound. About the same time that this last stretch of 64 was finally paved in 1954, bridges were opened connecting Manteo, on piney Roanoke Island, with the mainland. Today the last twenty-five miles of roadway before Manteo cross the scrubby-wooded and marshy landscape of Dare County alongside a drainage canal scooped out during construction of the road. The canal's brackish black swamp water poses a striking contrast to both the clear rushing streams of 64's mountain gorge west and the broad muddy rivers of the rolling Piedmont, and, as much as anything else in the environment, announces the traveler's arrival at North Carolina's eastern extreme.

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North Carolina, A Guide to the Old North State (1939):
An Approach to the Vernacular Landscape

In this article Jerrold Hirsch considers the most extensive North Carolina "guidebook" ever published from the point of view of its approach to the vernacular landscape. The book was a product of the Depression-era Federal Writers' Project and, as we learn from Mr. Hirsch, was more formatively a product of that era's revived interest in the old question, "Who is an American?" Identity and place are two sides of the same coin. The person who knows who he is knows where he is. Similarly, displacement is identity crisis. The continuing search for an American identity, then, is also a search for a landscape properly called "America." For the writers of this 1939 North Carolina guide that landscape was as much a thing to be created as it was a thing to be discovered. By hanging historical facts and anecdotes upon the physical features of the vernacular landscape, they sought to create an environment that would invite public exploration. Taking a path complimentary to our present analytical and extractive efforts, they attempted to infuse the physical landscape with place-making symbolism.

Beginning on the fourth page of this article and continuing in the outside column is a brief essay by Mr. Hirsch on the Farm Security Admininstration's photographic documentation of the rural landscape of the thirties.

American identity and nationality have always been problematic. Who is an American? What is an American? The classic answer that St. John de Crevecoeur offered almost two hundred years ago to his famous query, "What then is this new man the American?," was based on the assumption that the American was "either a European, or the descendant of a European."[1] The passage of time has not made the answer any clearer, it has only shown the inadequacy of previous answers. Thus, historian Robert Wiebe observes that "each generation [of Americans] has had to rediscover America, for its meaning has been a problem that could not be ignored nor resolved. . . . " And time and again Wiebe finds that "try as they might, most Americans, most of the time stopped short of encompassing the nation. . . . Each generation passed to the next an open question of who really belonged to American society."[2] Nevertheless, another student of American life argues that this very problem is our hope: "But the promise of America—the unfinished society—has been that it is a pluralism of groups and individuals who seek grounds for unity."[3] The Federal Writers' Project, a New Deal relief program, tried to rediscover America, to encompass the nation, and to provide grounds for unity.

Not only were writers in the 1930's trying to rediscover America, as so many commentators then and since have pointed out, they were also trying to redefine America. The work of the Federal Writers' Project was part of this effort. The studies published by the Writers' Project tried to broaden the definition of who and what was American. To answer such questions the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) offered new materials—ex-slave narratives, folklore and folksong, and the life histories of ordinary people. In the American Guide Series, guidebooks to every state in the union and to numerous cities and counties, the FWP tried to provide the nation with a "road map for the cultural rediscovery of America."[4]

The starting point for these guides was the vernacu-

lar landscape, though it is unlikely any Project writer would have ever used that term. *North Carolina, A Guide to the Old North State* is an example of how the Project guides used the vernacular landscape. The guides were a way of looking at, approaching, and finally infusing the landscape with emotional and symbolic content—the guides tried to create a sense of place.

National FWP officials developed visions of the work they thought was needed to fill important cultural lacunae. In the nature of the circumstances their visions and programs were related to the dominant concerns of their times. As employees of the Federal government they could hardly avoid contemplating the relationship between government and culture, and ultimately between culture and democracy. To a remarkable extent their visions were translated into programs and a body of accomplishment.

Henry G. Alsberg, national director of the FWP, talked about creating guides to America that could be sold in "tea-houses" and "up-to-date" gasoline stations.[5] The American Guide Series, by playing on the multiple meanings of the word "guide" in determining its purpose and theme, satisfied for a while Congressional skeptics and found a worthwhile use for many relief workers who may have lacked literary talent but who had an irreplacable love and knowledge of *their* local communities.

For most Project employees writing guide books was relief work. The FWP was part of the Works Progress Administration. WPA's goal of providing meaningful work for the unemployed rather than the much maligned work for the unemployed rather than the much maligned "dole" was extended to writers. Because the philosophy of the WPA emphasized putting people to work at tasks which related to their skills, something more appropriate than manual labor had to be found for unemployed white-collar workers, and in keeping with the WPA philosophy it would have to be work which had "social usefulness."[6]

While writing guidebooks provided Project officials with answers to practical problems facing their agency, it also offered a way of fulfilling larger visions: "There are no adequate local guides let alone a national guide in existence in this country today; while every other civilized country in the world possesses a substantial guidebook."[7] Cultural nationalism could be promoted on practical economic grounds: "The American Guide Series can bring back part of the six hundred million dollars spent in the average years by American citizens on travel outside this country. . . . many Americans do not realize what there is to see right here at home. . . ."[8] And Alsberg wrote the secretary of the Pennsylvania Rotary club that "the quickening of interest in local sites will cause an improvement of traffic through the development of tours in and about each city. . . . doubtless your city's restaurants, hotels, boarding houses, and commercial establishments would welcome transient customers from out of town. . . ."[9]

But Project officials also claimed that the American Guide Series, "will be far more than a tourist enterprise; it will represent a survey of America's past and present, such as has never before been undertaken by any organization."[10] They were convinced that both in scope and content the guidebooks were unprecedented: "No previous guidebooks were concerned with the historical, social, and economic backgrounds of the places they described. . . ."[11] The guides "will amount to an encyclopedia of American folklore, scenery, climate, historical backgrounds, famous landmarks, national parks and monuments, historical figures, native customs, products, handicrafts, sports, arts, educational facilities, agricultural and industrial developments. . . ."[12] The FWP guidebooks tried to document an indigenous American culture.

In any attempt to understand the 1930's, one student of the subject argues, "no fact is more significant than the general and even popular 'discovery' of the concept of culture"[13]—culture, not in the traditional view as the achievement of great thinkers and artists of the past, but

in the anthropological sense. For example, in *Knowledge for What?* (1939) Robert S. Lynd defined culture as "all things that a group of people inhabiting a common geographical area do, the ways they do things and the ways they think and feel about things, their material tools and their values and symbols."[14] From this point of view American culture was not a European import, but something Americans had always possessed, only they had overlooked it. Now they sought to rediscover it. What they discovered was a pluralistic American culture. The guidebooks contributed to this rediscovery.

Cultural pluralism offered a basis for national integration that was inclusive, not exclusive, and democratic, not coercive—a form of unity based on cultural understanding, not merely the technical and administrative ties of a large bureaucracy. It complimented New Deal programs that attempted to address the problems of farmers, industrial workers, blacks, and ethnic groups; it gave them cultural "recognition." One historian argues that the New Deal was "a social revolution completing the overthrow of the Protestant Republic. . . ."[15] Perhaps. At least it was a change in cultural direction. The definition of American culture and nationality was enlarged; it was rediscovered. It is easy to forget how dominant a narrow vision of America had been. The Republican presidents of the 1920's were not only representatives of a conservative philosophy, but were physical symbols of an America that defined itself as white, Protestant, middle-class, and rural.

Key FWP officials contributed to the idea of cultural pluralism that emerged in the 1930's. The guidebooks were, in part, a product of that idea. They also provided the evidence to prove the theory. To rediscover American culture meant to note and examine the life and creations of neglected regions, ethnic groups, and social classes.

In the 1930's there was a renewed emphasis on the regional diversity of American culture. Scholars such as Howard Odum, a sociologist who emphasized a regional approach to Southern life, and Lewis Mumford, whose writings tied together such diverse topics as urban history, the history of technology, American literature, and American architecture, praised the FWP guides as a contribution to a renewed appreciation, understanding, and assessment of the regional aspects of American culture.[16] Originally the FWP planned to issue five regional guides and a one volume national guide. Though these plans were abandoned in favor of state guide books, the regionalist idea influenced the work of the FWP. The very organization of the FWP, with its local field workers, state directors, regional directors, and national officials, helped create guides that combined a state, regional, and national perspective. National FWP officials welcomed materials that emphasized regional diversity and culture.

Benjamin Botkin, national FWP folklore editor, was an articulate regionalist. Botkin was the son of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania. He grew up in Boston, studied English literature at Harvard and Columbia, and taught at the University of Oklahoma. He was editor of the serial *Folk-Say, A Regional Miscellany*, which was an important part of the southwest renaissance from 1929-1932. Botkin's own career was an illustration of America's cultural pluralism.[17]

Even before he joined the FWP Botkin had argued that in the work of regional writers, "legend and landscape, custom and character, idiom and dialect, folk and culture—pioneer, aborigine, and immigrant—lowland, hill and brush country, backwater, prairie, desert, mountain and timber—are uniting to produce the New Regionalism of speech tradition, and local culture."[18] But Botkin wanted also to avoid a nostalgic regionalism. He thought a line needed "to be clearly drawn between the acculturative and the contra-acculturative phases of regionalism." Contra-acculturative regionalism, he argued, "makes the mistake of identifying culture with a particular trait or complex, a particular way of life—that of the Agrarian South, for example. . . ."[19] Instead he saw "re-

gionalism as integrative within differentiation and decentralization," and as the basis for a modern America.[20] Botkin thought the FWP could contribute to a regionalist approach to American culture.

Ethnic groups were also rediscovered as a part of American culture. Rather than talking about "Americans" and "immigrants," ethnic pluralists argued that there were many different kinds of Americans.[21] Martin Royse, director of the Writers' Projects's social-ethnic studies denied that the culture of older American groups constituted the American civilization to which immigrant groups made "contributions." In many American communities, he pointed out, the immigrants were a majority of the population. Royse argued "that in such communities these people are the American people. Their culture is contemporary American culture . . . not merely a contribution to American culture." American culture in Royse's view was a composite of cultures.[22]

A pluralistic vision of American culture could not ignore black Americans. Sterling Brown, black poet and national FWP editor for Negro affairs, wrote poetry that reflected on the history and experience of ordinary black people. He tried to incorporate into his poetry a black folk voice and point of view. While on the Writers' Project Brown stressed an historical approach that viewed the culture of black Americans as a significant part of a larger American culture.[23] Brown suggested and developed black studies the FWP could undertake. He also reviewed state guidebook material to see if it gave adequate attention to blacks. With the support of other national FWP officials Brown was able to persuade Southern states, such as North Carolina, to include more material about blacks.

Brown wanted material about the life and history of ordinary blacks as well as about the black elite. His ideas reflected the broad and democratic view of culture that was influential in the 1930's. As one black historian argued: "The historian may become more penetrating if he turns away a little from the articulate professional classes

From the FSA Files:
The Rural Landscape of the Thirties

It is my belief that such houses as these approximate, or at times by chance achieve, an extraordinary 'beauty'. . . .

The houses are built in the 'stinginess,' carelessness, and traditions of an unpersonal agency; they are of the order of 'company' houses. They are furnished, decorated and used in the starved needs, traditions and naiveties of profoundly simple individuals. Thus there are conveyed here two kinds of classicism, essentially different yet related and beautifully euphonious. These classicisms are created of economic need, of local availability of materials, of local-primitive tradition: and in their purity they are the exclusive property and privilege of the people at the bottom of the world. . . . it seems to me necessary to insist that the beauty of a house, inextricably shaped as it is in an economic and human abomination, is at least as important a part of the fact as the abomination itself: but that one is qualified to insist on this only in proportion as one faces the brunt of his own 'sin' in so doing and the brunt of the meanings, against human beings of the abomination itself.

—James Agee
Let Us Now Praise Famous Men:
Three Tenant Families (1941)

"Negro sharecropper house, near Olive Hill, N.C.," 1939, Dorothea Lange, FSA.

These Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographs are paradoxical documents. My aim is to illuminate some of these paradoxes and their relation to the vernacular landscape.

The FSA offered tenant farmers low-interest, long-term loans to buy their own family-size farms and aided migrant laborers by providing sanitary and well-run labor camps. The FSA's accomplishments were modest, but their dreams were utopian—family farms instead of tenancy, co-operative farming, decent living conditions for migrant laborers, racial equality, and a revived sense of rural community. Today the FSA is remembered because of its photographic section.

Initially the aim of the FSA photographers was to document rural poverty and its causes and thus to justify and explain the agency's program. The photographs were propaganda. Gradually, the FSA photographers assumed the task of documenting American culture in its rural, small-town, and even urban aspects. Some of the FSA photographs focused on man-made problems that could be changed. Others pointed to the dignity of common people and ordinary objects. Many did both.

During the 1930's Southern poverty, especially the situation of the sharecropper, became one symbol of the nation's economic plight. Reformers emphasized the negative economic and social aspects of Southern life. They tended to portray the Southern poor as brutalized and helpless. In this way they hoped to elicit support for change. In the process they often stripped the poor of their strength and dignity, patronized them, and solicited a condescending pity which, because it required so little effort and knowledge, was often vague and transient.

In *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* James Agee transcended the conventional cliches that had come to dominate writing on sharecroppers. It was the record of a sensitive, poetic, and ruthlessly honest man's effort to grasp the meaning of the lives of three tenant families, to capture the beauty and tragedy, and its spiritual significance: " . . . this beauty is made between hurt but invincible nature and the plainest cruelties of and needs of human existence in this uncured time, and is inextricable among these, and as impossible without them as a saint born in paradise."

He saw the beauty in the symmetry and stark simplicity of their houses: " . . . nowhere one ounce or inch spent with ornament, not one trace of relief or disguise," and yet "the grain differing in each foot of each board, and in each board from any other."

"Church, Cedar Grove, N.C.," 1940, Jack Delano, FSA.

"Negro farm near Beaufort, N. C.," 1938, John Vachron, FSA.

to the welfare, feelings and thoughts of the common folk—the domestic servants, the tenant farmers, the dark men on the streets."[24] And Brown's FWP colleague Benjamin Botkin envisioned a new American history: a "history produced by the collaboration of the folklorist and the historian with each other and with the folk; a history of the whole people . . . in which people are the historians as well as the history, telling their own story in their own words—Everyman's history, for Everyman to read."[25] This emphasis on the common people had cultural implications. A white critic argued that "the contributions of the Negro to American culture are as indigenous to our soil as the legendary cowboy or the gold-seeking frontiersman."[26] The FWP guidebooks, ex-slave narratives, life history collections, and other ethnic and minority studies reflect this outlook.

A vision of American culture that acknowledged its regional and ethnic diversity inevitably called attention to such occupational groups as lumberjacks, coal miners, steel-makers, textile workers, and sharecroppers. Project officials argued that in the common people, their folkways and folklore, was the basis for an American national culture. Students of folklore had traditionally viewed folklore as a remnant of the past destined to disappear under the impact of industrial development. Interest in folksong, for example, had been limited to a search for variations of English ballads. John Lomax and other scholars who studied cowboy and Afro-American songs, gradually broadened this narrow concern into a study of all American folksong.[27] Benjamin Botkin, who talked about "folk-say" and "living-lore," argued that folklore was a combination of tradition and creative responses to contemporary situations. He stressed the regional, occupational, and ethnic basis of American folklore.[28] John Lomax served as national folklore editor for the FWP from 1935 until Botkin succeeded him in 1938. Underlying Lomax's and Botkin's ideas about an American folklore was the democratic assumption that the sources of a soci-

ety's creative expression is in its folk-culture. This view of American culture can be traced back to Emerson and Whitman.[29]

The 30's approach to cultural pluralism was historical. History could be used to acknowledge and analyze American diversity and its regional ethnic and folk sources. It could document an American Way of Life—a phrase that first became common in the 1930's. Historical writing in the 1930's was insular and nationalistic, but not isolationist or chauvenistic; it was native and continental, but not nativist.[30] Often it was based on a broader view of who and what was American than had been true of earlier histories. This was true of the American Guide Series, which, using the vernacular landscape as a starting point, created a pluralistic history of the United States.

The FWP guidebooks rooted the search for an American culture to the land itself. Reviewers noted that "the task" the Writers' Project set itself, "was the monumental one of rediscovering America, practically an unknown continent to most of us." Benjamin Botkin, in a review of Project work argued that the rediscovery of America was linked to "the realization that the American land mass was a new continent." It was not, he thought, the awareness of an explorer penetrating virgin territory, but "that of a philosopher who reflects upon a conquered continent and finds in it and in himself the meaning of the conquest."[31]

Such cultural and philosophical goals were firmly grounded in attention to significant detail. Readers were alerted that though the mileage between different sites in the tours had been checked several times, the readings on their odometers might differ slightly. Such factors as the way different drivers handled curves could never be standardized.[32]

The attention paid in guidebook tours to the vernacular landscape placed them in a tradition of American writing that proceeds from the assumption that material reality is the starting point for contemplating non-material matters. As one American art critic argues, "the

need to grasp reality, to ascertain the physical thereness of things, seems to be a necessary component of the American experience. . . . "[33] If Moby Dick is to have symbolic meaning, Melville feels he must give the whale corporeal reality. The chapters on different types of whales must be accurate if we are not to get lost. Similarly, tour mileages and physical descriptions of local sites must be accurate if we are to be able to contemplate the things that happened at a particular place—events that can only be imagined, not seen:

> At 121.5 m. [from Creedmoor on US 15] is the junction with dirt Wire Rd., so named when a telegraph line was run beside the road; it was part of the ante-bellum stage route between Cheraw, S. C. and Fayetteville.
> Right on this road to the LAUREL HILL CHURCH (R) 2.6 m., a weatherboarded building with an octagonal cupola and two doors in the front gable end. One of General Sherman's buglers carved his name in the belfry in 1865.
> In the graveyard is buried Duncan McFarland, Congressman (1805-1807) and wealthy landowner. Tradition relates that he once rode horseback all the way to Washington, but slaves had to cut a bridle path to the road before he could set out on his journey.[34]

The guidebooks were a systematic and collective effort. There was no room in them for an individualistic point of view or for a report on travel as the author's record of personal growth or discovery. But they were designed to facilitate the reader's personal growth and discovery: "We are not regimenting travel; we are endeavoring to cover all main routes, indicating the preferable ones, and then permitting tourists to make up their own combination of routes as best suits their purpose."[35]

The guides were written for a number of different audiences. They described a pluralistic nation, and they had to satisfy a pluralistic public. The tourist was never forgotten, but he was never the only audience: "We aim to make the work not only of value to historians, scientists,

teachers and their students, but to businessmen and those interested in the vast industrial resources and machinery of the United States."[36] Guidebooks, national FWP director Henry Alsberg argued, could inform and educate: "When the work is completed, there will be available for the first time in the history of the United States a combination guidebook and social history of the country."[37]

The guidebooks were divided into three sections: general essays, descriptions of the state's major cities, and the automobile tours. In these sections was room for material that emphasized regional qualities, ethnic and racial diversity, folklore, and history. What the guidebooks did was to document significant aspects of American culture. They constituted a cultural inventory. Governor Hoey of North Carolina referred to his state's guide as a "complete inventory."[38]

In this approach culture was a static concept. It was more than the arts of a small elite, but in the case of the guidebooks broadening the concept meant only being more inclusive. Thus while the North Carolina guide had an essay on "The Arts," and one on "Architecture," it also had essays on "Sports and Recreation," "Folkways and Folklore," and "Eating and Drinking." Culture was a peoples' way of life. So there were essays on "History," "Agriculture," "Modes of Travel," "Industry and Labor," "Public Education," and "Religion." And minority groups like Indians and Negroes were viewed as part of the larger culture, and thus deserving of an essay. But of culture as a process, the way people learn values and behaviors, there was little in the North Carolina or any of the other guides. Some of the special FWP studies groped toward a concept of culture as process. None of this was exceptional in the decade. *Culture in the South* (1934), a collection of varied essays, never defined the term culture. Fundamentally it argued that Southern culture was varied, neither exclusively agrarian nor industrial. The pressing need of the time seemed to be to broaden the concept, to include a wider variety of groups and ac-

tivities, to celebrate diversity.[39]

The Southern guidebooks reflected a sense of regional identity. In the North Carolina guide the emphasis on tradition and folkways was accompanied by an acknowledgement of the changes wrought by the industrialism of the New South. The essays in the guide indicated an awareness of contemporary problems, a realization of the impact of the depression and the New Deal on the state, and a guarded optimism about the future. Both the essays and the tours show that "North Carolina has become industrialized without losing its rural character."[40] Governor Hoey sounded a theme that was re-echoed throughout the essays: "North Carolina has made phenomenal progress notwithstanding many handicaps during the past forty years, and the State has come a long way. There is yet much to be done."[41] Other Southern guides sounded a similar theme.

The second section of the guide, "Cities and Towns," also required careful editorial work and research. National officials cautioned, "avoid long lists of societies, clubs, churches, schools, and the like. Do not make your city material . . . a substitute for the classified telephone directory."[42] For the most part the North Carolina guide avoided this problem.

The aim of the city descriptions was to provide a brief characterization of the city's contemporary functions, its physical environment, and history. Thus, Durham "is a modern industrial city in the Piedmont. The universal demand for tobacco, coupled with the genius of the Duke family is exemplified in long rows of red-faced factories where thousands toil daily, filling whole trains with their products. Here was created the fortune that endowed Duke University."[43] This is followed by a brief description of the business section and the city's neighborhoods, white and black. The guide also attempts, in broad strokes, to portray Durham at work. A brief history of the city is then given. This history emphasizes origins, turning points in the city's biography,

momentous events. Not unexpectedly Durham's brief history is also a brief biography of the Dukes. The description ends with two paragraphs on Durham's black community.

Some of the other city descriptions ended with references to the city's "cultural" achievements. The Charlotte section mentions such groups as the Community Concert Association, the Charlotte Festival Chorus, and the music department at Johnson C. Smith, a black university. Other sections, like the one about Fayetteville, ended with a reference to economic revival and growth. As important as the city descriptions was the listing of points of interest. In this listing cotton mills were included as well as churches, the city shipyards as well as the county courthouse. But the real illustration of the guide's cultural pluralism is in its automobile tours and their approach to the vernacular landscape.

In the 1920's critics of American life, such as Charles Merz, wrote scathingly of the American and his automobile. Merz wondered, "Where are they going? Why are they speeding? What do they hope to find?" As to whether it all made any lasting impression he answered, "Impression? Yes impression of a never-ending road, a thousand farms, grade crossing signs, back axles, towns passed through at twenty miles an hour."[44] Like many of the cultural critics of the 1920's Merz worked hard at making his point, almost compulsively, but offered little in the way of an alternative.

Modern in concept the North Carolina and other FWP guides recognized the triumph of the automobile. The tours constructed for the motorist were the heart of the guides. Initially, North Carolina FWP officials doubted the tours could be made "readable, because of the machinery, route numbers, mileages, directions, interruptions for side tours, etc."[45] Yet by the time the North Carolina guide was ready to be published they agreed that if any of the material needed to be cut to reduce the size of the manuscript, it should come from the essays not the tours.[46]

"County courthouse, Halifax, N.C.," 1938, John Vachron, FSA.

"Tobacco auction warehouse, Wendell, N.C.," 1939, Marion Wolcott, FSA.

The photographs assembled here do not have the coherence of the Walker Evans photographs that preceded the text of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.* Yet keeping in mind Agee's vision one can see in these FSA photographs of the North Carolina vernacular landscape documents of cultural achievement and rural poverty, the strength of tradition and the need for change. Halifax, for example, has an impressive courthouse with a Corinthian portico and a dome. And the FWP's North Carolina guide informs us that "from a platform in front of the first courthouse on Aug. 1, 1776, Cornelieus Harnett . . . read the Declaration of Independence to the assembled citizens who carried him through the streets on their shoulders." The photograph reminds us that on this same site a neatly lettered sign, "COLORED," near a water-fountain was also part of the landscape. In Wendell the tobacco warehouse's massive solidity dominates the street as tobacco dominated the surrounding countryside. While tobacco overshadowed everyone, some people overshadowed others.

The houses in the other photographs are clear evidence of rural poverty—tin roofs, crooked steps, windows that will not stay open, the absence of trees, the crops right up to the house. Who would willingly choose to live in them? Progress, FSA officials assumed, would be to get people into something better. Who would want to deny it? Nor is this a dead issue. Substandard housing in North Carolina is still a major problem.

The use of the lean-to as an open-air garage foreshadows the carport. The automobile next to the tenant shack can give us a false sense or prosperity. There is a joke about a Russian official claiming Russians would never understand the novel or movie *The Grapes of Wrath* because they would wonder why, if the Joad family was so poor, did they have a car. Americans should be better able to understand that paradox.

There are, however, things to admire and study in these houses. The log house with the tin roof also has a chimney that is an achievement. The plants on the porch reflect a love of color, a striving for beauty. These tenants may be portrayed as degraded by some observers, but they are doing their best to avoid degradation. The breezeway where these black sharecroppers gather is, in structural terms, only distantly related to the traditional dogtrot, but the function is similar. Here they gather in the shade to socialize and draw strength from each other.

"Negro tobacco tenant's home, Wake Co., N.C.," 1939, Dorothea Lange, FSA.

"Sharecroppers home for lunch, Upchurch, N.C.," 1939, Dorothea Lange, FSA.

"The tour form," Henry Alsberg claimed, "can contain as excellent material and skillful writing as any sonnet or ballade."[47] Whatever conclusions one might draw as to content, there was little doubt that the rules for tour writing were as strict as those for composing a sonnet. Mileage and directions had to be precise. The various tours had to be intermeshed one with the other. Within the tours was the place for the local legend, notes on the careers of local celebrities, and all types of Americana which had no place in the general essays:

> At the western edge of Columbia, paved US 64 crosses the Scuppernong River, a black winding stream. The name is derived from askup'-onong (Algonquin, *at the place of the sweet bay tree*). Tradition says scuppernong grapes were discovered by the two brothers Alexander nearby in the 18th century. In 1819 Senator Nathaniel Macon sent two bottles of scuppernong wine to Thomas Jefferson at Monticello, describing it as 'the best in America.'

And,

> It is said that anyone who eats a fish caught under the Scuppernong River Bridge will ever after wish to make his home in the neighborhood. . . . [48]

The object—house, jail, tavern, cemetery, church —offered the occasion to introduce the traveler to the economic, social, and cultural history of the place:

> THE LILESVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH, organized in 1777, is one of the oldest Baptist congregations in the State. Here preachers Tirant (Methodist) and Durant (Baptist) debated from sunrise until dark on the question of infant baptism. The first log church was succeeded in the 1840's by a frame building with a slave shed in which the Negroes, required to accompany their masters to church, were separated from the white congregation by a low wall that permitted them to see the preacher and hear services without being seen. The present white frame building, with a square belfry over the small vestry, was erected in 1871.[49]

The guides used material reality to transport the traveller into another world; to make him ponder the juxtaposition of past and present. Following the tours the traveller could view the built environment not only as evidence of the present, but like an archeologist, as the revelation of the successive phases of a civilization:

> ROPER, 42 m. (13 alt., 660 pop.), a farm village, was formerly a busy settlement called Lees Mill, which served the needs of the wealthy planters of Tyrell County in Colonial days.
> At the close of the 17th century, Capt. Thomas Blount of Chowan, a blacksmith and ship's carpenter, settled on the eastern bank of Kendricks Creek. Later he bought the Cabin Ridge plantation where the town of Roper stands, and in 1702 built the first mill in this section. He died in 1706, and his widow married Thomas Lee. In time both the mill and the settlement were called Lees Mill. The mill was used continuously until 1920. Only the water wheel and a small part of the building are left to mark one of the earliest developments of water power in North Carolina.[50]

No longer, as one critic commented, "will the travelling motorist have any excuse for regarding the road as merely the shortest distance between two points."[51] The writers of the Vermont guide thought that through the tours "the visitor may become conscious of our landscape in a genuine, a three-dimensional fashion."[52]

The tours created a sense of place, though no tour description said "now you are in North Carolina and you can tell because. . . ." An alert traveller, following, for example, the first tour in the North Carolina Guide, from the Great Dismal Swamp to Shallotte, would know that more than a geographical designation, eastern North Carolina was a particular place. Other people had been there before the traveller and had left evidence that they had preceded him, and their descendants continued to live there in their way and manner. The guides infused the landscape with emotional and symbolic content.

Not only was the Great Dismal Swamp there for the tourist to visit, but the guide also let him compare his observations with a selection from Colonel William Byrd's *Description of the Dismal with a proposal to drain it* (ca. 1730). This reminded the traveller that Colonel Byrd had preceded him, and so also had runaway slaves and other fugitives. The same tour also takes the traveller through Winton, North Carolina, a town named for the DeWinton family of England. Here, too, past and present occupied common ground.

> During the War between the States the town was burned except for one log cabin. The first courthouse was set on fire in 1830 by Wright Allen, who sought thus to destroy a forged note. He was exposed, tried, and publicly hanged on the courthouse grounds. Winton levies no local taxes; its revenue is derived from municipally owned and operated farm lands. Citizens protested so vigorously against the noise, smoke, and dust of trains that the railroad tracks were laid 30 miles away. Winton was the birthplace of Richard J. Gatling (1818-1903), inventor of the Gatling gun.[53]

Which of these events were most important? The guide did not say; the tours contained no thesis. The traveller would have to draw his own conclusions.

The road itself often had qualities that reflected a particular place:

> South of Windfall US 17 crosses the broad Perquimans River, which rises in the Great Dismal Swamp and flows southeast to Albemarle Sound. The hard-surfaced highway is built on what was formerly a corduroy road that had as its foundation a causeway placed by the Indians. The road is bulwarked on both sides by curved sheets of corrugated iron, bombproofs salvaged from World War supplies. The causeway leads to a modern drawbridge. As early as 1784 there was a floating bridge here supported on whisky barrels.[54]

Passing through Gatesville one discovers a link between contemporary social life and historical folkways.

> Here is annually held the Fishermen's (February) Court . . . which developed after slaves had been freed, as a day on which Negro labor was employed for the fishing season. . . . People still observe the occasion by coming to town, with no set purpose other than meeting old friends, seeing and being seen.[5]

The guides describe history from a local perspective, they emphasize origins rather than developments, events rather than trends. History revolves around a particular site. The guides give no indication that some historical events are more significant than others. For the traveller at Fort Fisher Beach the guide offers no comment on the significance of the Civil War in terms of national destiny or human freedom:

> . . . the Site of Fort Fisher, Confederate stronghold during the War between the States. The only remains of the emplacement are stretches of grass-grown breastworks, marked by a monument to northern and southern soldiers who fought in the battle (Dec. 20, 1864-Jan. 13, 1865). The Federal fleet alone, in two attacks, fired more than 2,000,000 pounds of projectiles. Cannon balls and skeletons of men have been found on the beach where the ocean is washing away the earthworks.[56]

What guides did do was forge a link between physical artifact and human events. And thus they enriched the imagination and offered the traveller a chance to share this place with those who had been there before, and to contemplate his fate and theirs. Through an emphasis on the local and the particular, the idiosyncratic and the anecdotal, the FWP guides incorporated material that reflected regional diversity, ethnic pluralism, and local folkways.

Project workers and critics were convinced that the FWP guides were an important contribution to American culture. For some project workers contributing to the guides gave them a sense that they were part of a large and significant effort in rediscovering America. They were like the American writer Malcom Cowley described in *Exiles Return* (1931) as searching for a "sense of belonging to something, of living in a country whose people spoke his language and shared his interests." These writers, Cowley argued, had "wandered for years in search of treasure and then came back . . . to dig for it at home."[57] Looking back at the same phenomena, the historian Richard Pells argues that "intellectuals were trying to overcome their sense of loneliness and isolation."[58] During the 1930's the depression crisis at home and the rise of fascism abroad shook American confidence, but these events also led Americans to search for what was worthwhile in their own traditions. One did not have to be a writer who had gone to Paris in the 1920's to want to rediscover America.

FWP officials always argued the guidebooks were more than simple travel books. Harry Hopkins, federal relief administrator, expressed this attitude succinctly. In his opinion the American Guide Series was giving Americans the opportunity "to understand the contrasting character of the forty-eight States and to realize how the contribution of each has brought about the unity of the whole."[59] Ordinary fieldworkers shared with national officials a feeling that work on the guidebook was special. In this vein, Francis L. Harriss, a North Carolina field worker, wrote Harry Hopkins:

> The great value of these Guides lies in the fact that they will provide the information, in tabloid form, which will interest our restless people in the life progression of our country, an interest in the human chain of which they are part, stretching over the vast soil of their country in which their lives are rooted. Every part of the whole area being linked up with every other part. These Guides will provide us the knowlege of each other we need to root us in a common heritage, a common interest.[60]

Under the pressure of events this grand theme became a part of the national war effort. This can be seen in the 1941 script of an Oregon radio broadcast designed to publicize the work of the FWP. It re-echoed themes found in the letters of Project officials, prefaces to the state guides, and the comments of various critics, but with a significant new twist:

[FWP Spokesman:] . . . we pride ourselves on having compiled a book with, if you pardon us for taking ourselves seriously—a purpose. That purpose is the understanding of America through intimate knowledge of the scenes and people around us. And to understand America is to love America.

[Announcer:] That, it seems to me, is an assurance of loyalty.[61]

They then went on to describe the Writers' Project's contributions to the National Defense Program. In honor of national guide week in the fall of 1941, President Roosevelt issued an official statement: "The guides will serve to deepen our understanding of ourselves as a people and hence promote national unity."[62] The guides as a contribution to cultural pluralism complimented New Deal reform efforts, while the guides as a contribution to national unity complimented the Roosevelt administration's war effort.

Not only the format of the guidebooks, but the way they were put together accounts for their multi-varied portrait of America. National officials, state directors, and local field workers contributed ideas and information to the guides. The raw material from which the guides were finally composed came from the field workers. In North Carolina many of them had been school teachers or librarians. A job with the FWP was superior to the dole, but it was still relief; many longed for a "real" job. Unpredictable cutbacks in the funding led to severe reductions in employment. Buffeted by the ill winds of the time, unsure of their place in human affairs and never knowing when

"Plows and tobacco barn, Caswell Co., N.C.," 1940, Marion Wolcott, FSA.

"General store, Stem, N.C.," 1940, Jack Delano, FSA.

Other aspects of the farm are of visual interest. These plows convey balance, movement, proportion, and a strength that is directly related to their function. The log tobacco barn is a rich reminder of traditional construction skills in a land blessed with ample forests. In the materials of their daily lives farmers found metaphors for their situation, the means to create their own idiom. In a life history collected by the Federal Writers' Project, the wife of a tenant farmer commented, "we seem to move around in circles like the mule that pulls the syrup mill. We are never still, but we never get anywhere."

The Southern agricultural system that these tenants were part of was not new in the 1930's. It took shape in the post Civil War period. After the Civil War the country store emerged as a necessary element in a one-crop farm system. Merchants were blamed for exorbitant interest rates and accused of dishonest credit practices and unreasonable mark-ups. However, while some merchants were dishonest, it was the system rather than the individual merchant who was to blame.

One can look at the Southern country store and see how it fitted into an agricultural system that impoverished the region. But one would also want to notice the country store that was more than a place where goods were sold. Around the stovepipe members of the community gossiped, discussed domestic affairs and the state of the crops, debated political issues, and talked about religion.

In the end there was always religion. Not all the problems these people faced could have been rectified by social and political reform. Southern churches largely ignored political and social issues and focused exclusively on those joys, mysteries, and tragedies that transcended human understanding or control. Some would argue they should have shown more social concern—more concern for a Christian sense of just social relations. Nevertheless, these churches had an important place in the life of their community and fulfilled important needs of their members. Often the congregation could afford only simple structures; but as these photos show, simplicity could have dignity and express reverence. Related to the church was the cemetery where the community, no matter how poor, honored its dead.

The vernacular landscape of rural Southern poverty is a record of human creativity in the face of hardship—evidence of the resources of the poor. The question is, can we *conserve* aspects of this creativity, of this landscape, without *preserving* the conditions that in so many ways stifled and limited these people? "For what does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul."

"Negro church, Caswell Co., N.C.," 1940, Marion Wolcott, FSA.

"Red clay Negro cemetery, Person Co., N.C.," 1939, Dorothea Lange, FSA.

their next paycheck would be their last, still the average field worker kept on sending in the material he gathered from previously unexamined records, local informants, and his knowledge of the area about which he wrote.[63]

Most field workers were rarely able to suppress their constant desire to editorialize. Writing of the poverty in Washington County after the Civil War, one field worker noted the uphill struggle fought by its inhabitants until "today Washington County is just beginning to cash in on a dream and an ideal."[64] There were many other such comments that revealed more, perhaps, than their authors realized. One project worker expressed her own version of ethnic pluralism: "Most foreign born residents of Asheville have proved valuable citizens." But there were limits to her definition of who and what was American: ". . . and they embrace the Jewish faith. Otherwise they are largely American."[65]

There were other limitations. The absence of any significant number of Negro employees handicapped the district offices' attempts to gather material on blacks in their area. State director Edwin Bjorkman commented "upon the remarkable ignorance of the white citizenry as to what Negroes are doing."[66] Bjorkman also thought that the Negroes had contributed little to the culture of North Carolina that merited attention: "When I am asked to tell what the negro has contributed to the culture in such different cities as Winston-Salem and Elizabeth City, I feel something like despair."[67] Pressure from national FWP director Henry Alsberg, and Sterling Brown, national FWP editor for Negro affairs, guaranteed some attention for the North Carolina Negro. Here traditional Federalism with its motto of "E Pluribus Unum," contributed to cultural pluralism.

What may have happened to Project writers, and what may have accounted for the enthusiastic response of critics, was that either in writing or using the guide individuals were involved in an interpretation of an American landscape they could relate to, a landscape in which they

could feel at home. As one commentator put it, "Each of us in the United States has his own America."[68] The guidebooks had included something of everyone's America.

It was not as a contribution to the national defense effort that such students of American culture as Bernard De Voto and Lewis Mumford praised the guides. De Voto referred to the guides as "an educational and even a patriotic force, an honorable addition to our awareness of ourselves and our country." Before, tourists had "only Socony and local barkers to rely on,"[69] and those sources were as thin then as they are now. Mumford knew that Americans would travel, and the automobile would be their means of transportation. Travel could still serve its classical function of educating men; but travellers would need guides. The American Guide Series, he wrote, was "the first attempt, on a comprehensive scale, to make the country itself worthily known to Americans."[70] The guides, Mumford thought, could put us in touch with ourselves. Like other intellectuals of the 1930's, he thought a detailed knowledge of American life would be the basis for a revived national art. The guides could contribute to the regional understanding he thought was necessary for a sound future. Finally the guides were addressed to every American. Thus Mumford argued "these guidebooks are the finest contribution to patriotism that has been made in our generation."[71]

Reviews of the North Carolina guide in the state newspapers were overwhelmingly favorable. Generally they echoed themes that had appeared in the reviews of prominent national critics. One reviewer, however, added a significant point: "It is a monumental work, worth many times the cost of production; a monument indeed to the government that authorized it; a monument to the directors, editors, and workers generally—men and women who produced it."[72] What the reviewer seemed to be saying was that these monumental guides commemorated not only the nation's history and culture, but the

generation of the 30's which chose to rediscover them. This was a monument that affirmed American nationhood while it broadened the definition of who and what was American. These guidebooks were not critical assessments of America. One can find critical facts in the guides, but the overriding context is celebratory. In this framework good facts and bad facts alike were evidence of American diversity.[73]

The Writers' Project interpreted the nation's vernacular landscape so as to create a monument to America's cultural pluralism. It provided no definite answer to who and what was American, but it did insist that any answer would have to be broadly inclusive. At the same time it sacrificed any attempt to critically assess where the nation had been and where it was going. Never did it try to determine what would hold this pluralistic culture together. It assumed that an acknowledgement that this was a culturally pluralistic nation was a good starting point. What, however, were the underlying values that could bind Americans together? The guides provided no answer. They, like other works in American literature, from Walt Whitman's songs of the road to John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* (1962), pointed to the road as a metaphor for discovery and symbol of unity. Project officials envisioned a diverse and inclusive national community, but they never confronted the question of whether all the parts were compatible. Were all aspects of various regional, ethnic, or folk cultures valuable? Which were not? Were they all equally valuable? Different travellers would have different answers, but in any case they would find part of their answer in the guides. The recognition and defense of cultural pluralism as a positive aspect of American life was an invaluable contribution to the creation of a democratic culture. Nevertheless, contemporary Americans starting from that point will need and want to make critical assessments of American life and culture.

Thus a modern approach to the vernacular land-

scape here in North Carolina, and nationwide, will differ from that of the Writers' Project. The Writers' Project *made* buildings indigenous. It linked facts of local significance to a building and thus made the building part of local tradition. Project workers were not actually concerned with whether the building reflected an indigenous style or outside influence. More significantly they did not see buildings as expressions of a cultural *process*, and towns and regions as cultural *patterns* on the land. They did not see buildings as an image of a people's view of the world—a house as a universe in microcosm. A different approach would let buildings speak to us—let them answer questions concerning process and pattern. Why did a past builder use a particular form for a building designed to perform specific functions? What do these choices reveal about that builder, his world, and his view of his place in that world?[74] The guides provided brief architectural descriptions and then quickly moved on to make some connection between the site and an event worth noting. Reading evidence from the building itself one will want to move on less quickly.

Still, in the end, Americans will do well not to abandon the FWP approach. Associations are important elements in creating and conserving place. And there is little evidence that travellers today are given any aid in relating to the vernacular landscape. The term "rediscovery" may still be used by *Time* magazine in a bicentennial cover-story focusing on travel, but the article is without much depth or meaning.[75] True, our affluence has transformed the landscape of our everyday lives into freeways, suburbs, and shopping centers—a world that appears to be far removed from our traditional image of the South. But that is because interstate highways and bypasses whiz us by that which reminds us of our past and a present that is more diverse and idiosyncratic than we usually acknowledge.

A former Project member who is now a critic of the Project and its work, writes that "in its fantasy of One

America, [the Writers' Project] promoted the belief that the mere assembly of American data could be the equivalent of a great collective creation."[76] Perhaps FWP officials sometimes confused assembling facts with creative acts, but most of the time they saw the guidebooks clearly as a starting point. Still, the questions they faced remain for us to struggle with: Who is an American? What is an American? What are the ties that bind us together? How do we begin to answer these questions? Part of the answer still lies in the vernacular landscape.

Footnotes

1. J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, *Letters From an American Farmer* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925, originally published in 1782), 54.

2. Robert Wiebe, *The Segmented Society: An Introduction to the Meaning of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 90, 95.

3. Richard E. Engler, Jr., *The Challenge of Diversity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), ix.

4. Grace Overmeyer, *Government and the Arts* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1939), 112.

5. Alsberg to Edwin Bjorkman, State Director North Carolina FWP, January 6, 1936, Records Group 69 (RG69), central correspondence files of the Works Project Administration, (WPA), Federal Writers' Project (FWP), Editorial Correspondence, National Archives, Washington D. C. (hereinafter cited as Ed. Corsp.).

6. United States Federal Works Agency, *Final Report on the WPA Program: 1935 - 1943* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1947), iii, 63.

7. Alsberg to A. F. Cleveland, vice-president in charge of traffic, Association of American Railroads, October 3, 1935, U. S. National Archives and Records Services, *Records of the FWP Relating to Henry G. Alsberg and George W. Cronyn, 1935 - 1935*, RG69, central correspondence files of the WPA (Washington, D. C.: General Services Administration, 1968). Microfilm available from Washington State University (hereinafter referred to as Alsberg-Cronyn Files).

8. Response to the critical remarks made by Alf London, the Republican Presidential candidate in Cleveland Ohio, October 12, 1935, the response is not titled, dated, or signed,

Alsberg-Cronyn Files.

9. Alsberg to John Doe, September 30, 1935, Alsberg-Cronyn Files.

10. George W. Cronyn, national FWP associate director, to Rollo Ogden, editor, *The New York Times*, January 28, 1936, Alsberg-Cronyn Files.

11. Cronyn to W. T. Couch, southeast regional director, September 28, 1937, Federal Writers' Project, Papers of the Regional Director, William Terry Couch, University of North Carolina Library, Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, North Carolina (hereinafter FWP-Couch papers).

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15. Gilman M. Ostrander, *American Civilization in the First Machine Age, 1890 - 1940* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 318.

16. Howard W. Odum and Harry Estil Moore, *American Regionalism, A Cultural-Historical Approach to National Integration* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938), 428-429, 457, 615. Lewis Mumford, "Writers' Project," *New Republic*, LXXXXII (October 20, 1937), 306-307.

17. Benjamin A. Botkin, ed., *Folk-Say, A Regional Miscellany* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1929-1932).

18. Botkin, "The Folk in Literature: An Introduction to the New Regionalism," *Folk-Say*, (1929), 17.

19. Botkin, "Regionalism and Culture," *The Writer in a Changing World*, ed. Henry Hart (New York: Equinox Cooperative Press, 1937), 140-141.

20. Botkin, "Regionalism and Culture," 154.

21. See for example Louis Adamic's various books, especially *My America, 1928 - 1938* (New York: Harper & Row, 1938), 187-262; and the discussions of ethnic pluralism in R. Alan Lawson, *The Failure of Independent Liberalism, 1930-1941* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 12-13; and John Higham, *Send These to Me, Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), 196-230.

22. Joseph S. Roucek, Caroline F. Ware, Martin W. Royse, "Approaches to the Study of Nationality Groups in the United States: Summary of the Discussion," ed. Caroline F. Ware for the American Historical Association (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 86-89. See also the brief description of Royse in Jerre Mangione, *The Dream and the Deal, The Federal Writers' Project, 1935-1943* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1972), 277-285; and Social-Ethnic Studies File, RG69, WPA, FWP, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

23. Brown was an occasional contributor to Botkin's *Folk-Say* volumes. Good examples of Brown's poetry and his approach to black literature can be found in *Southern Roads* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1932) and *The Negro in American Fiction* (Washington, D. C.: The Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1937). Brown's correspondence and proposals in Negro Studies File, RG69, WPA, FWP, National Archives, Washington, D. C., give an overview of Brown's contribution to the FWP and the problems he had to cope with. See also Jerrold M. Hirsch, "Culture on Relief, The Federal Writers Project in North Carolina, 1935-1943," (unpublished Masters thesis, University of North Carolina, 1973), 17-18, 42-47.

24. Lawrence Reddick, "A New Interpretation for Negro History," *Journal of Negro History*, XXII (January, 1937), 27.

25. Botkin, "Folklore as a Neglected Source of Social History," ed. Ware, *Cultural Approach to History*, 309.

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ver·nac′u·lar (vĕr·năk′u·lẽr), adj. 1. Belonging to, developed in, and spoken or used by, the people of a particular place, region, or country; native; indigenous;—now almost solely of language; as, English is our vernacular tongue; hence, of or pertaining to the native or indigenous speech of a place; written in the native, as opposed to the literary, language; as, the vernacular literature, poetry; vernacular expression, words, or forms.
2. Of persons, that use the native, as contrasted with the literary, language of a place; as vernacular poets; vernacular interpreters.
3. Characteristic of a locality; local; as, a house of vernacular construction.