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.

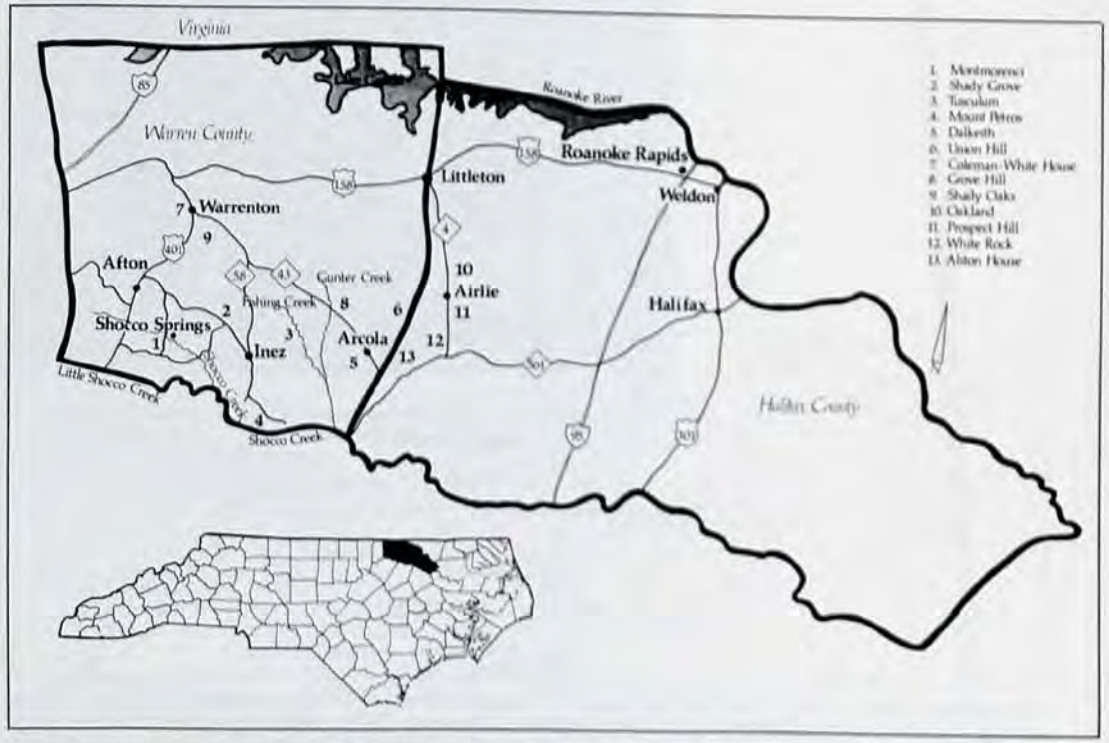
This distinctive stair decoration, plus several other clearly identifiable and seemingly original motifs, occur in their earliest form at Montmorenci. These, not the imported Philadelphia elements, were to be the hallmarks of the high-style vernacular oeuvre that rose in Montmorenci's wake. It is interesting 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

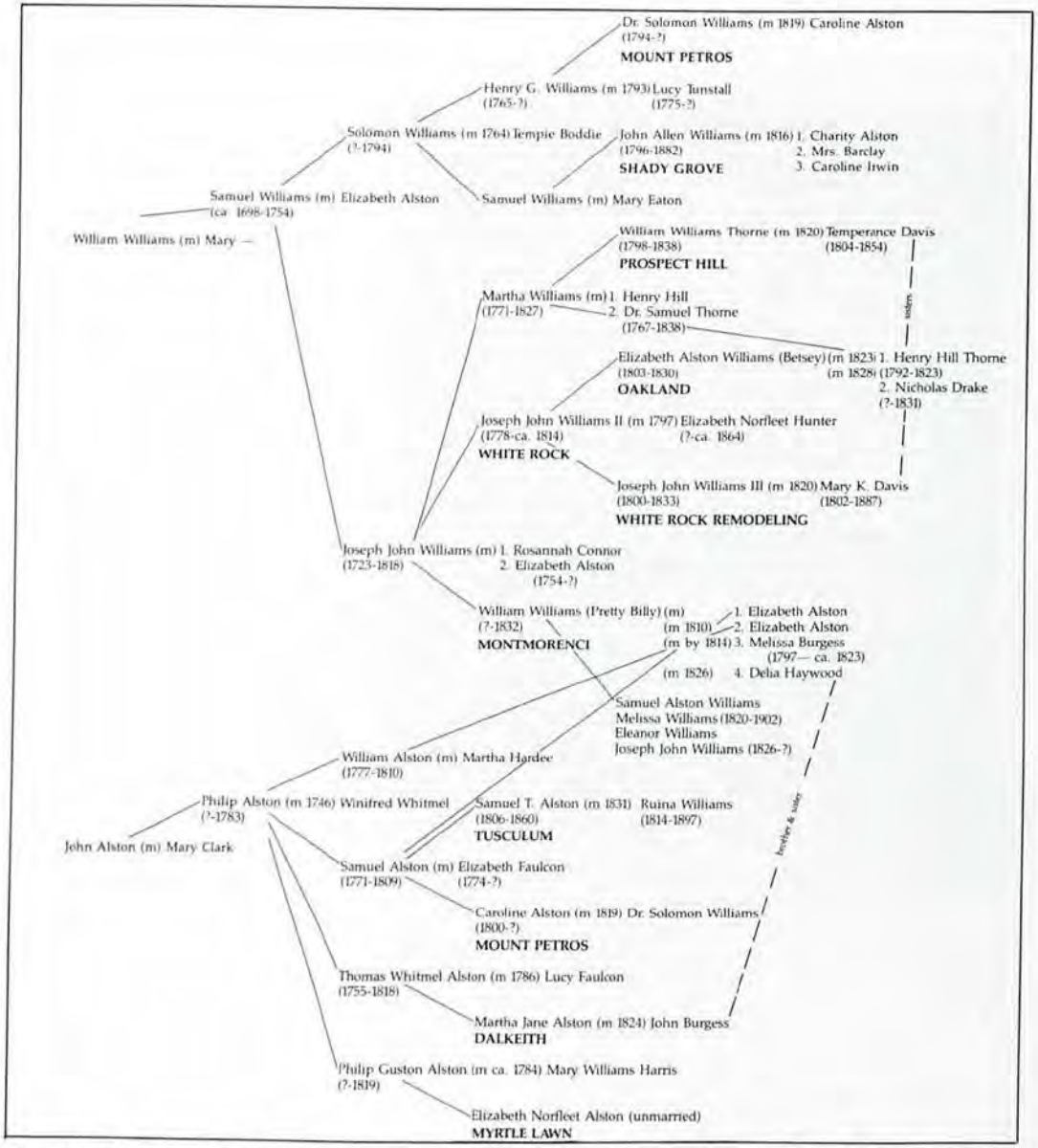
spools, augmented with gouged and molded decoration. The Palladian motif is given another form in the flanking triple windows with their "curious, baroque entablature supporting fanlights, [which] though they had leaded radii and concentric lines, were false, and were glazed with glass painted black."[23] 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 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 6. Prospect Hill. The Palladian entrance, elaborate window treatment, and other characteristic motifs occur here in their fullest combination of the whole group.

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.

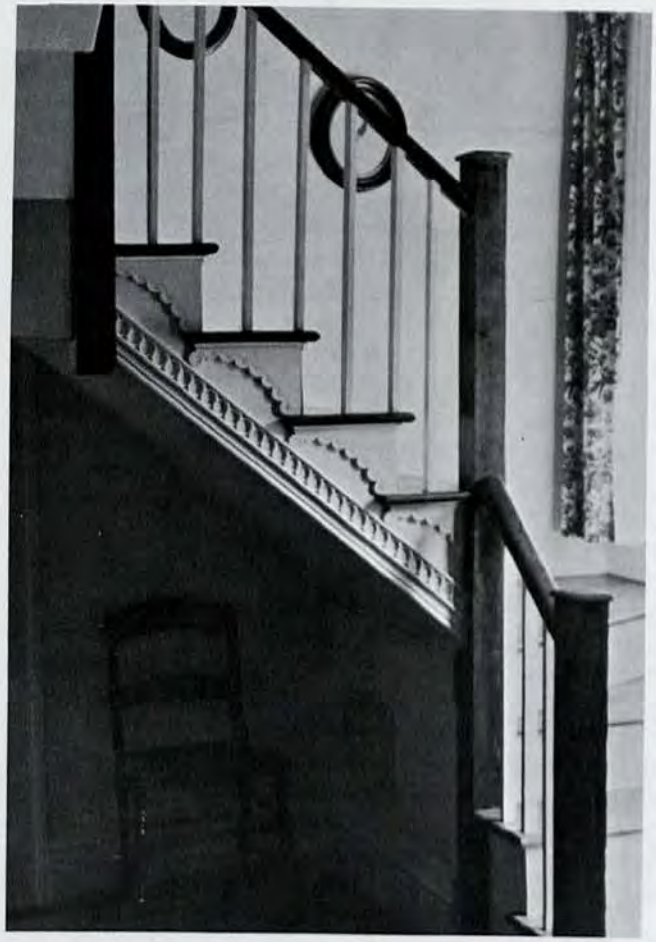


Figure 10. White Rock, Halifax County. The only known surviving example of the Montmorenci-type stair decoration, here applied to a simple straight-run stair. The exterior of White Rock, long-time seat of the Williams family, has been altered over the years.

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.

Figure 20. Grove Hill, Warren County. A much simpler house in the neighborhood of Montmorenci and Dalkeith.

Figure 21. Grove Hill. The hallmark cornice treatment dresses up a simple facade.

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 unself-conscious 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

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, Wilmington, 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.

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

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

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.

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 colonnade 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.

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

Figure 9. Bellamy Mansion, Wilmington, 1859.

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

Figure 10. Slave gallery of the Bellamy Mansion.

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.

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

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

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-

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.

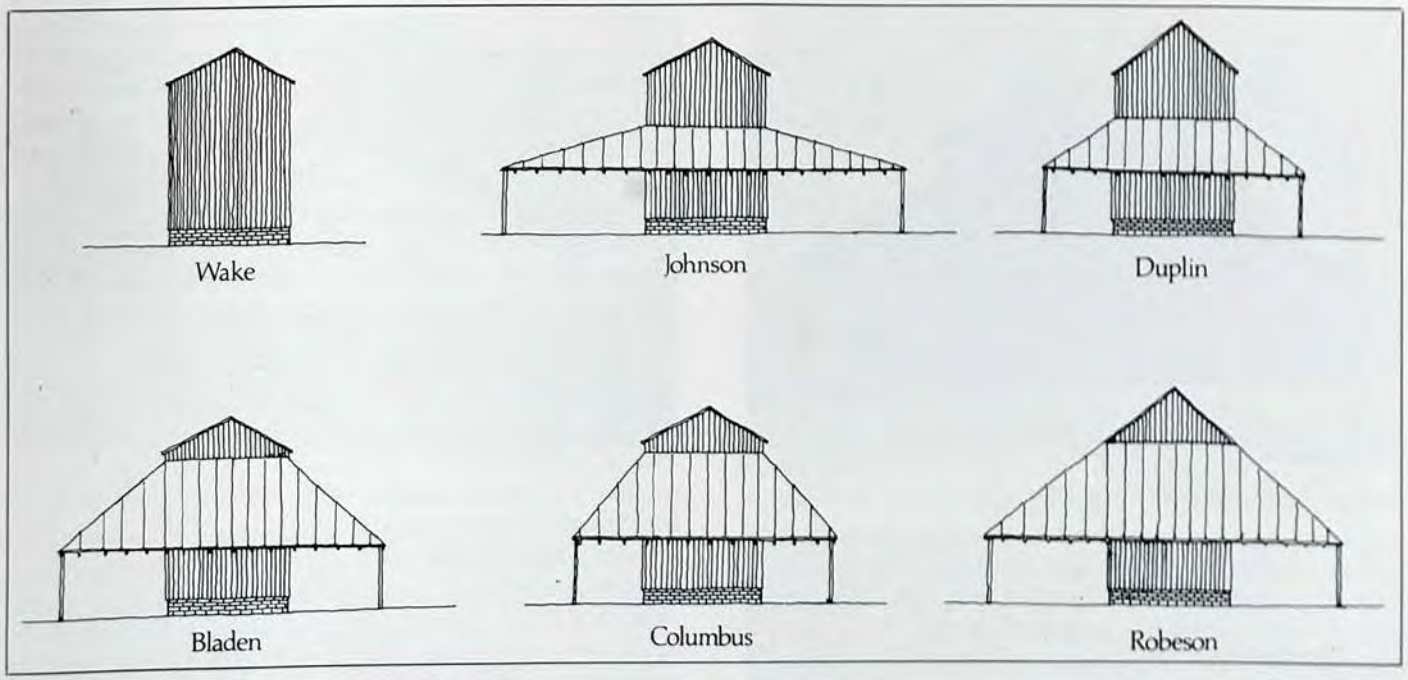
A similar form seen in a different context, Smithfield-Newton Grove vicinity.

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 tremendously 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 consciousness—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 structure 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 accommodate 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 instrumental 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 individual 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, monumental 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

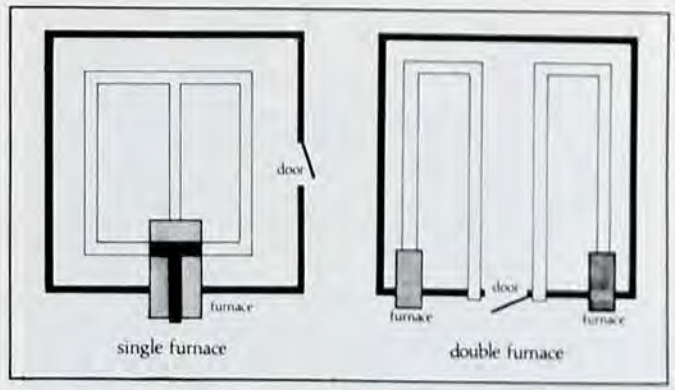
more even distribution of heat than one. Two furnaces also would speed up the heating process.

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 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.



Single and double furnace arrangements.

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 X -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 lightweight 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 become 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.

"Bulktobac," wave of the future.

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,

Bob Klute

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

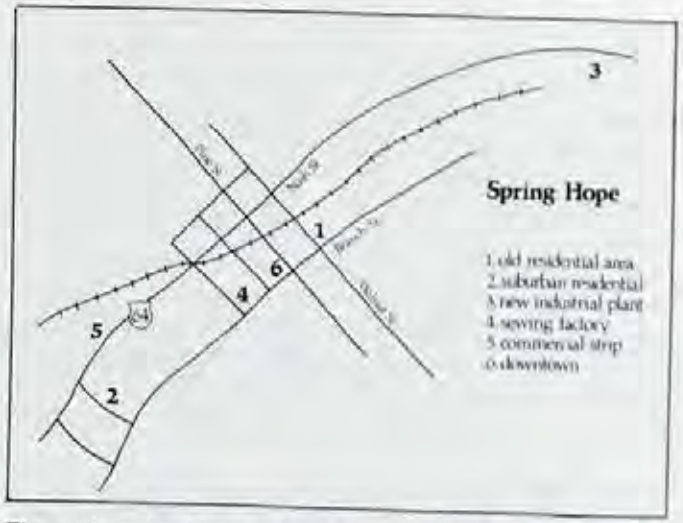


Figure 1. Spring Hope, in Nash County on Highway 64.

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 storefront 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:

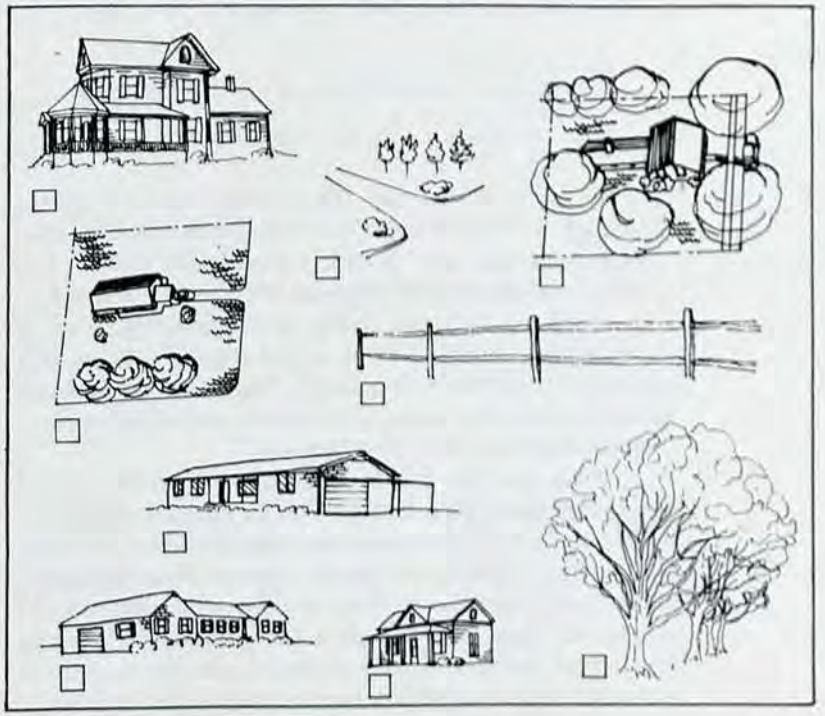
> Heart of the town's life . . .
> . . . nucleus of the town . . .
> Spring Hope wouldn't be the same without Main Street.
> This is our town.
> Only one place in the world looks like this: Spring Hope.

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 . . ."

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

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.

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."

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.

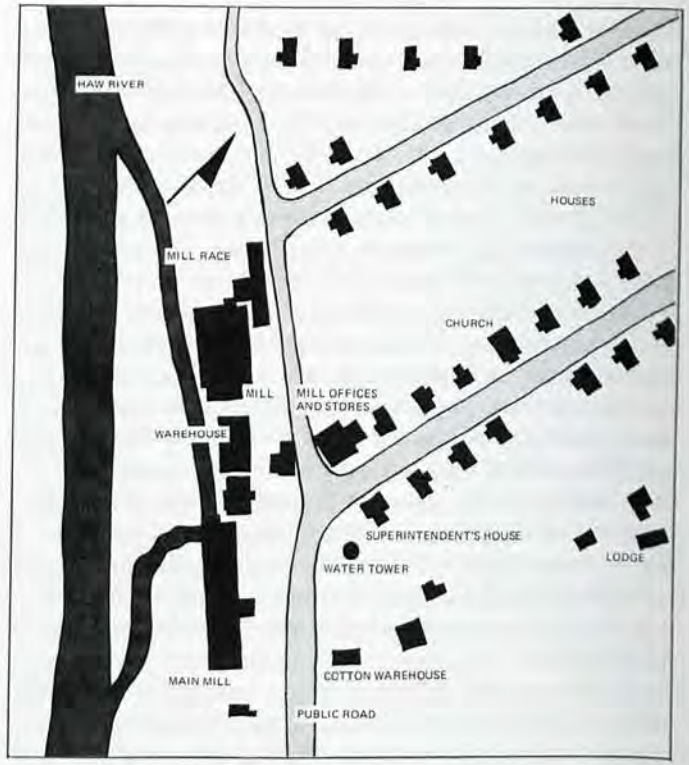
Most of the mill population has died or left the village. Glencoe is essentially a ghost town. What remains, however, is a classic representation of the "mill hill." A stone dam across Haw River is located some four hundred yards west of the mill. The mill race is lined with stone retaining walls and 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 ornamentation reflects the proud ambition of its builders. A warehouse and finishing mill stand just west of the mill.

An early twentieth century scene at Glencoe.

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.

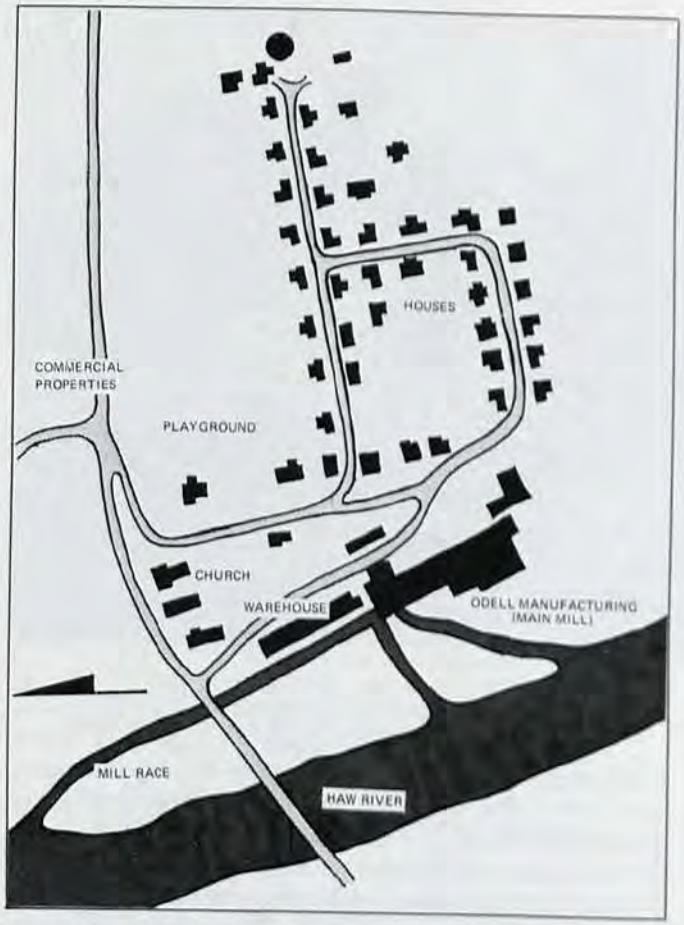
The church stood (until winter, 1976) in the middle of the residential section. It was a one-story frame structure with a steeple projected from its stair tower. The other structures—the barber shop and lodge hall—are similarly situated in the center of the residential area. They are undistinguished 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.

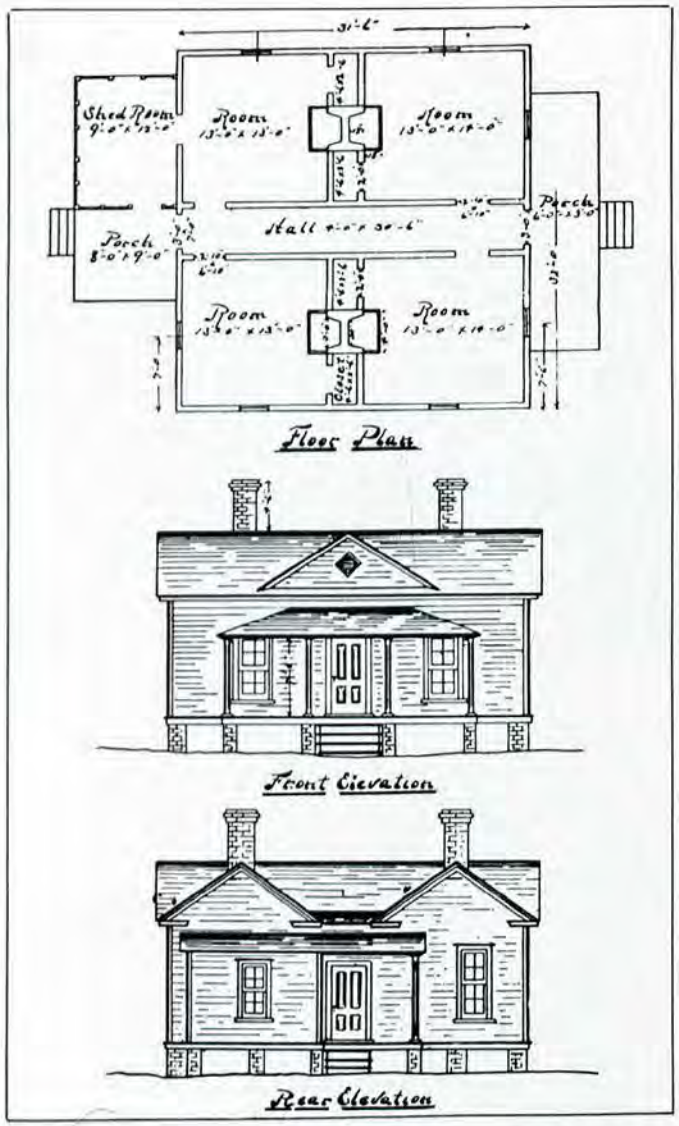
(6) Weatherboarding to be ¾" thick and show 5-¼", to be of novelty pattern which will be selected by the President of the Company.

(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.

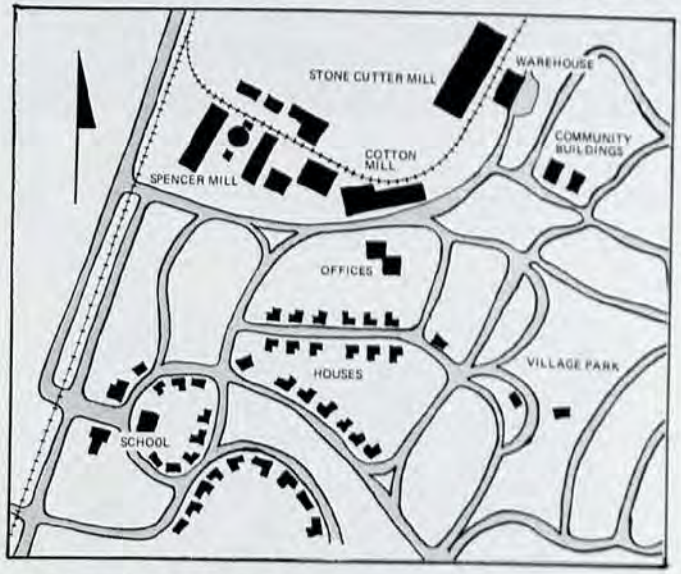
(18) The contractor is to take the ground as it is, and deliver a turn key job, following the specifications and also the drawings attached. The intention is that the contractor shall make a complete job. If any details are omitted in this writing, the contractor shall furnish such details nevertheless 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.)

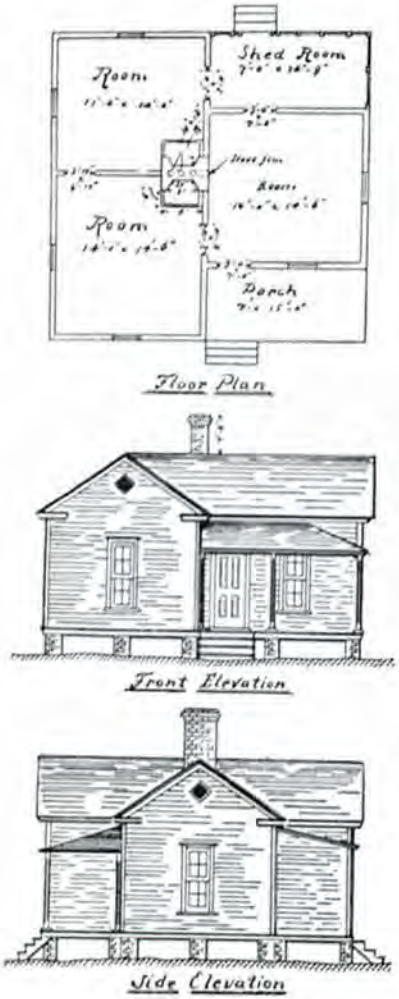
The central contradiction of these early twentieth century villages was that while they followed the basic nineteenth century form, they were now set in an urban environment. The use of steam power in North Carolina mills became widespread by the late nineteenth century and was universal by the time 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]



"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

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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.
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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.

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 buildings 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

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 industrialization. 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, unself-consciously 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

*With special thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Paul Edward Young and Katherine Knott, who made the fieldwork for this study both possible and enjoyable.

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 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.

Figure 1. John Stigerwalt House, Rowan County, North Carolina, built about 1811.

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.

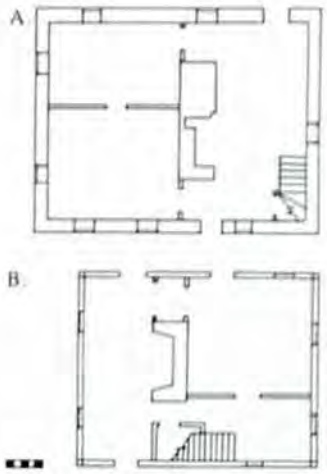


Figure 3: A. Stone Continental plan house, vicinity of Applebachsville, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, built about 1770; B. Log Continental plan house, vicinity of Souderton, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, built mid-eighteenth century. The stair in B was moved to its present location in the late nineteenth 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 Newmanstown (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 Forsythe 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 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.

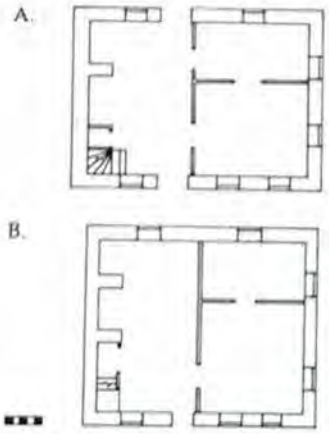


Figure 9. Pennsylvania Farmhouse plan dwellings showing the Continental plan interior without the center chimney mass and placed in a superficially symmetrically balanced four-bay facade: A. Vicinity of Applebachsville, Bucks County, Pennsylvania; B. Vicinity of Hereford, Berks County, Pennsylvania. Both houses were erected in the mid-nineteenth century.

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

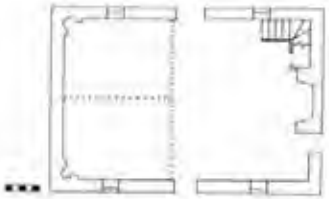


Figure 11. Red Hill, first floor plan. The plan of Red Hill and the Wallis House, which formerly stood in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, show the final interior balance wrought in the hall-kitchen plan house. Instead of a disproportionate parlor and chamber arrangement, two dimensionally equal rooms 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.

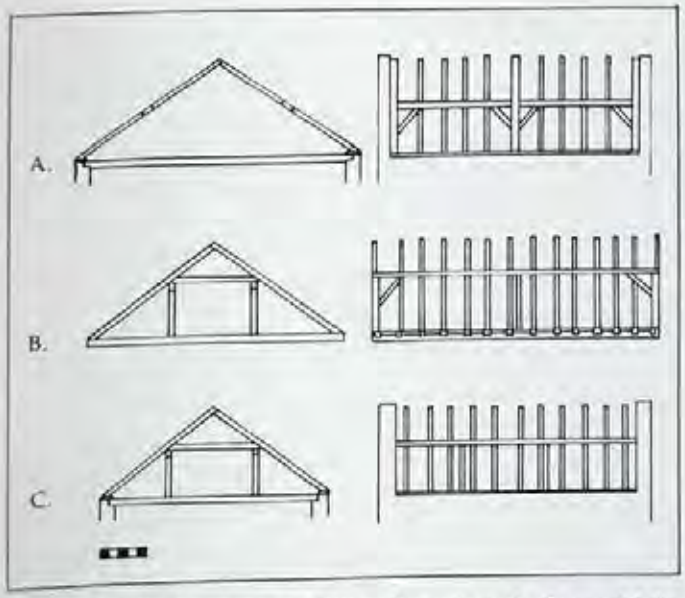


Figure 18. Roof framing: A. Butt purlin, principal rafter roof, John Stigerwalt House; B. Through purlin, common rafter roof, Snapp House, Shenandoah County, Virginia; C. Through purlin, common rafter roof, Jesse Horne House; vicinity of Applebachsville, Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

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 1800. 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.

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.

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.

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 Workmanship* (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

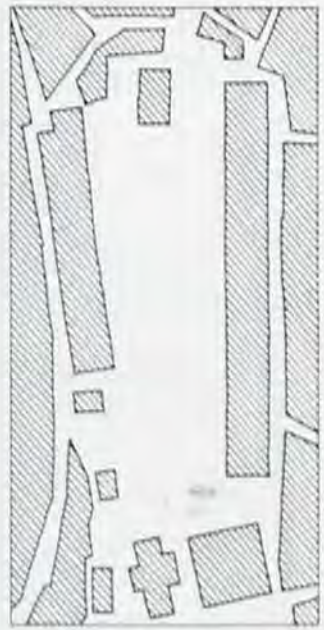
the General Assembly and the localized administration of state law. An elected board of county commissioners, by authority of enabling state legislation, performs important administrative duties at the county level. Comprehensive in scope, these responsibilities range from taxation and zoning to law 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

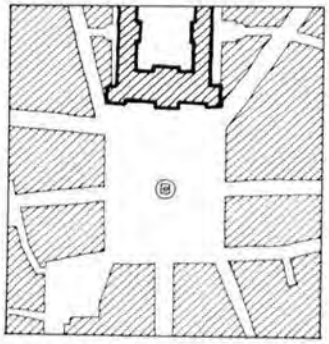
The modern courthouse square has descended from the central public square common in Europe from medieval times. The perceived need to provide places of social, commercial, and governmental import has generated similar public spaces in otherwise widely differing cultures. The public square has been a 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 lifeblood 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 Edenton Courthouse Green, laid out in 1750.

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

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]

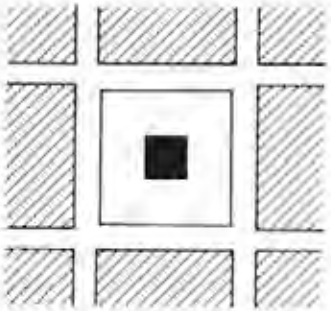
Seen in person or by recollection, the square's symbolic content is available and visible to all.

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.

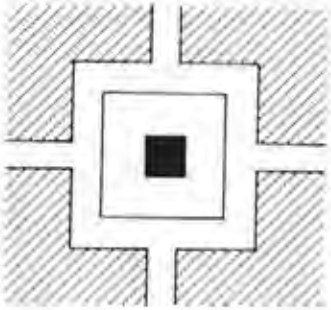
TYPES

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 central 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.

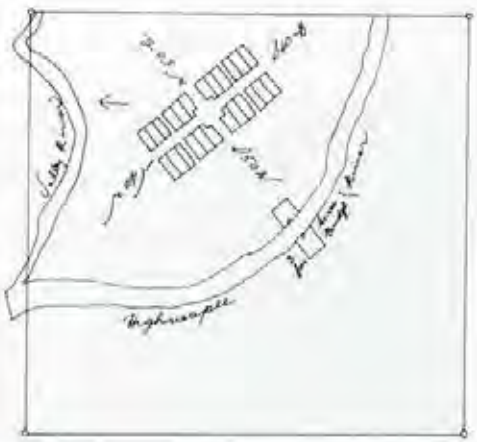
For the first seventy-five years, the courthouse square was the literal as well as the social center of the city. A survey of Winston just prior to its merger with Salem

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.