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## FINAL REPORT

Comprehensive Architectural Survey of the City of Lenoir

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*Cover Image: View looking southeast from Underdown Avenue in Lenoir, North Carolina*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The city of Lenoir, North Carolina, was established in 1841 as the seat of Caldwell County. It is located near the center of the county along the valley of Lower Creek and sits between the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west and the southern peaks of the Brushy Mountains to the east. Hibriten Mountain, southeast of the city, is a prominent local landmark that rises to an elevation of 2,211 feet. Lenoir initially supported a primarily agrarian economy sustained by the narrow creeks and streams that wind through the region's fertile hills. The town grew slowly until the arrival of the railroad in the late nineteenth century, which spurred economic development and investment capital. Access to rail transport and the availability of natural resources and labor attracted textile and lumber mills, furniture companies, and related industries to Lenoir during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, transforming the western North Carolina town into a leading manufacturing center. The city's growth during this period and through the mid-twentieth century is reflected in the development and use of its land and in its diverse range of industrial, civic, and residential building forms and architectural styles.

Today, Lenoir has a population of approximately 18,000, which spreads out over an area of nearly 20 square miles from the downtown historic district, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A survey of Lenoir's architectural resources identified a remarkable collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century buildings that represent key periods of the city's development as a county seat and illustrate important aspects of its heritage.

## **II. PURPOSE**

The mission of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office's (HPO) statewide architectural survey program is to identify, record, and encourage the preservation of the state's rich and varied collection of historic buildings, landscapes, and districts. While Caldwell County was the subject of a reconnaissance level architectural survey in 1986-87, which produced dozens of files on historic properties in Lenoir, there had never been a systematic, comprehensive survey of the city. Given this need, the HPO commissioned an architectural survey of Lenoir in March 2017 to locate, document, and evaluate the city's historic resources. Following an extensive planning phase and a systematic fieldwork effort, survey files were prepared on over 350 resources, representing a diverse collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century building styles and forms.

The purpose of this Final Report is to present the findings of the Comprehensive Architectural Survey of the City of Lenoir in a narrative format using historic contexts as an organizational framework. The report identifies the primary historical themes and chronological periods that shaped Lenoir's development and analyzes the city's extant built environment within these contexts. As such, this report does not endeavor to provide a detailed, comprehensive history of the city and all of its important buildings and places or to discuss all of the people or groups that have played a role in Lenoir's history. The report tells the story of Lenoir's diverse and layered past by largely focusing on the resources and neighborhoods that were recorded as part of the survey and, as appropriate, other extant resources that were not documented. While this report acknowledges that many important buildings, such as Smith Crossroads, the Carlheim Hotel, and the Freedman High School, have now disappeared from Lenoir's landscape, chronicling these resources is beyond the scope of this document. The findings presented in this report will contribute to the understanding and appreciation of Lenoir's historic built environment and will serve as an important tool for interpreting the city's cultural heritage, guiding its stewardship, and planning for the long-term preservation of its significant resources.

### III. METHODOLOGY

Following the standards and procedures set forth in the HPO's *Architectural Survey Manual: Practical Advice for Recording Historic Resources*, the Comprehensive Architectural Survey of the City of Lenoir was divided into two phases – a planning phase and a survey phase. The planning phase was initiated in April 2017. Activities included gathering and reviewing existing survey files and National Register of Historic Places documentation, coordinating with HPO staff, attending a kick-off meeting with municipal authorities, conducting initial research, and developing a methodology for the survey phase. A Planning Phase Report concluded this initial stage of work.

The survey phase, which started in May 2017, included research, the identification of resources, fieldwork, and the preparation of survey files. The research task did not take place over a discrete period; rather, data gathering continued on an ongoing basis, guided in part by the findings of the fieldwork. Sources of information included published materials and primary sources from a range of local, regional, and state repositories. Research locations in Lenoir included the Caldwell County Tax Office and Register of Deeds for deeds, plats, and other public records; the Caldwell Heritage Museum, which holds special interest collections and maintains an extensive collection of historic photographs; and the local history room at the Caldwell County Public Library for newspapers, city directories, family histories, and other materials. Additional sources for historic photographs, postcards, maps, and other primary source documents included the North Carolina State Archives and the North Carolina Collection at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The architectural archives at the North Carolina Western Regional Archives in Asheville and at the North Carolina State University Libraries in Raleigh, as well as other locations, were sources for bibliographies, project files, drawings, and other materials. Digitized resources, such as the North Carolina Architects and Builders Database, the North Carolina Modernist Houses website, and the Hickory Landmarks Society's M. G. Crouch Lumber Company Collection offered additional source material.

The identification of resources was primarily guided by a windshield survey of Lenoir conducted by HPO staff in December 2016. This preliminary survey verified the locations of previously recorded resources, noted previously documented resources that are no longer extant, and identified recorded resources that merited updated survey files. The identification of resources was also informed by current GIS mapping data available from the county, preliminary fieldwork and evaluations undertaken during the planning phase, and consultation with local officials and members of the Local Survey Advisory Committee.

Fieldwork occurred over the course of seven days in May, June, and July 2017. On-site recordation involved completing HPO Historic Property Field Data Forms (April 2008, rev. 2012), taking digital photographs, completing sketch maps, and, in some cases, interviewing homeowners. Surveyors used field data forms to record individual historic structures (along with associated secondary buildings and landscape features), to update previously recorded resources, and to document neighborhoods or other "umbrella" areas containing groups of associated resources. Following the fieldwork, a Site Survey Number was assigned to each resource or area and a survey file was prepared. This required reviewing the field data forms and any associated notes for accuracy, preparing narrative descriptions, and entering the survey data into the HPO Survey Database. Since the individual property record is weighted toward residential buildings, the narrative description was emphasized for large industrial facilities, churches, commercial properties, and other nonresidential building types. To complete the survey files, the surveyors labeled and formatted the digital photographs onto proof sheets, delineated the sketch



maps, and compiled any relevant background information, such as historic photographs, maps, and information from city directories, deeds, or other sources.

Since the National Register of Historic Places documentation for the Lenoir Downtown Historic District was prepared within the last decade, the Lenoir survey focused on the architecture located beyond the commercial center. This included resources along early transportation corridors into the city, within residential subdivisions representative of Lenoir's early to mid-twentieth-century growth, and key industrial and manufacturing sites. An important aspect of the Lenoir survey was the documentation of landscape features. In addition to documenting elements of the vernacular landscape, the survey recorded designed landscapes by notable regional practitioners, such as Doan Reber Ogden and Aiji Tashiro. The Lenoir survey was the first time an architectural survey in North Carolina cross-referenced the Doan Reber Ogden Collection, which is housed at the state's Western Regional Archives in Asheville and includes client cards, landscape plans, and specifications. Although the statewide survey program typically focuses on resources fifty years of age or older, the Lenoir survey included buildings dating to the early 1970s. The purpose of capturing buildings from the recent past and approaching the 50-year mark was to extend the usefulness of the survey process and its products.

This Final Report explores the national and regional influences and factors that shaped the development, design, and character of Lenoir's extant building fabric. It relates the city's individual resources and districts to broad historic themes such as nineteenth-century vernacular building in western North Carolina, industrial development related to railway transportation, the North Carolina furniture industry, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century residential architecture, mill villages, twentieth-century residential development and suburbanization, and modernism. By linking Lenoir's architecture to local, regional, or national historic themes, identifying and describing common building types and styles, and highlighting significant resources or groups of resources, this report serves as a framework for decisions about the evaluation and registration of historic properties and a foundation for future preservation efforts.

#### **IV. HISTORIC CONTEXT**

##### **Colonial Settlement to the Arrival of the Railroad**

Caldwell County's first colonial settlers came to the area in the 1760s from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia in search of inexpensive and fertile farmland. Among these early pioneers was James Blair, whose homestead encompassed land in what is today the northwestern part of Lenoir and who lent his name to Blair's Fork, a small stream that ran through the area.<sup>1</sup> Blair and others were attracted to the area's abundant natural resources, temperate climate, and rich soils. The North American Land Company, a land trust founded in 1795 that at one time owned hundreds of thousands of acres in North Carolina, promoted the region in an advertisement that read: "And the lands, when cultivated, produce the most abundant crops of Indian corns, wheat, rye, barley, oats, peas, beans, and potatoes, and every species of garden vegetables, as well as all kinds of vines and fruit trees."<sup>2</sup>

While the North American Land Company was plagued by financial difficulties and migration into the state was slow through the early nineteenth century, progress was eventually made. Early settlers cleared forested slopes, planted crops along fertile valleys, and raised livestock. Some, such as Elias

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<sup>1</sup> Today, Lenoir's Creekway Drive parallels the route of the streambed of Blair's Fork.

<sup>2</sup> Nancy Alexander, *Here Will I Dwell: The Story of Caldwell County* (Salisbury, NC: Rowan Print Co., 1956), 56-57.

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Powell (d. 1832), whose land was located along Lower Creek east of present day downtown Lenoir, built mills for grinding wheat and corn. The Powell family played a key role in the early history of Lenoir. In 1841, when Lenoir was established as the seat of the newly formed Caldwell County, the first meeting of the county court took place in a storehouse owned by George Powell (1789-1875), whose landholdings by that date totaled 874 acres.<sup>3</sup> These lands became known as Powellton, which developed as an African American neighborhood after the Civil War and was largely populated by people once enslaved by the Powell family.<sup>4</sup>

Around the year 1834, George Powell's son, Elias (1812-1852), built a house on part of his father's land, which still stands today at 807 Lower Creek Drive (CW0393). (Figure 1) It is a two-story, side-gable, frame house with end chimneys and rear additions. Although changes have been made to the house over the years, including the addition of a one-story, wraparound porch with a projecting, pedimented entrance bay, the Elias R. Powell House retains its original two-room plan and is an important example in Lenoir of early nineteenth-century domestic architecture. Single-pile, two-room plans, known as hall-parlor houses, were built from the early Colonial period through the early 1900s. In the case of the Powell House, both of the main rooms were heated with fireplaces. The house is also significant as a vestige of the area's antebellum settlement patterns, when pioneers established homesteads along the fertile bottomlands and gentle hillsides of local creeks and streams.



*Figure 1: Front façade (left) and side façade (right) of the Elias R. Powell House (CW0393) at 807 Lower Creek Drive*

James Harper (1799-1879) was a successful merchant who made significant contributions to the economic and social development of the region. Harper settled in the area in the late 1820s and acquired considerable acreage along Lower Creek west of present-day downtown Lenoir where he built a home in the early 1830s that he called "Fairfield." The house was located along Spring Street (now West Harper Avenue), and Harper's store, according to family tradition, initially stood immediately west of the residence. (Later, the store was moved to an Italianate-style brick building near the courthouse.) Harper's mercantile operation built upon the commercial activities of local farmers and millers, such as the Powells, and its location roughly midway between Morganton and Wilkesboro played a key role in

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>4</sup> Meeting between Annie McDonald, Preservation Specialist, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, and members of the Freedman School Committee, Lenoir, NC, December 14, 2017.

Lenoir's nineteenth-century development and growth by serving as a link between local suppliers and outside markets.<sup>5</sup> (Figure 2)

Although most of the Harper family estate was subdivided and sold in the early twentieth century for residential development, the James Harper House (CW0383) still stands today at 1436 West Harper Avenue. (Figure 3) The house was originally built as a two-room, two-story, front-gable residence with an engaged, double-tier gallery. In contrast with the Elias R. Powell House, which had a hall-parlor plan, the Harper House had a closed plan consisting of a parlor with a fireplace and an unheated foyer with a stair. A two-story addition was added to the north gable end of the house in 1843, transforming the layout into a central-passage plan. Later building campaigns further enlarged and modified the house over the years.<sup>6</sup>

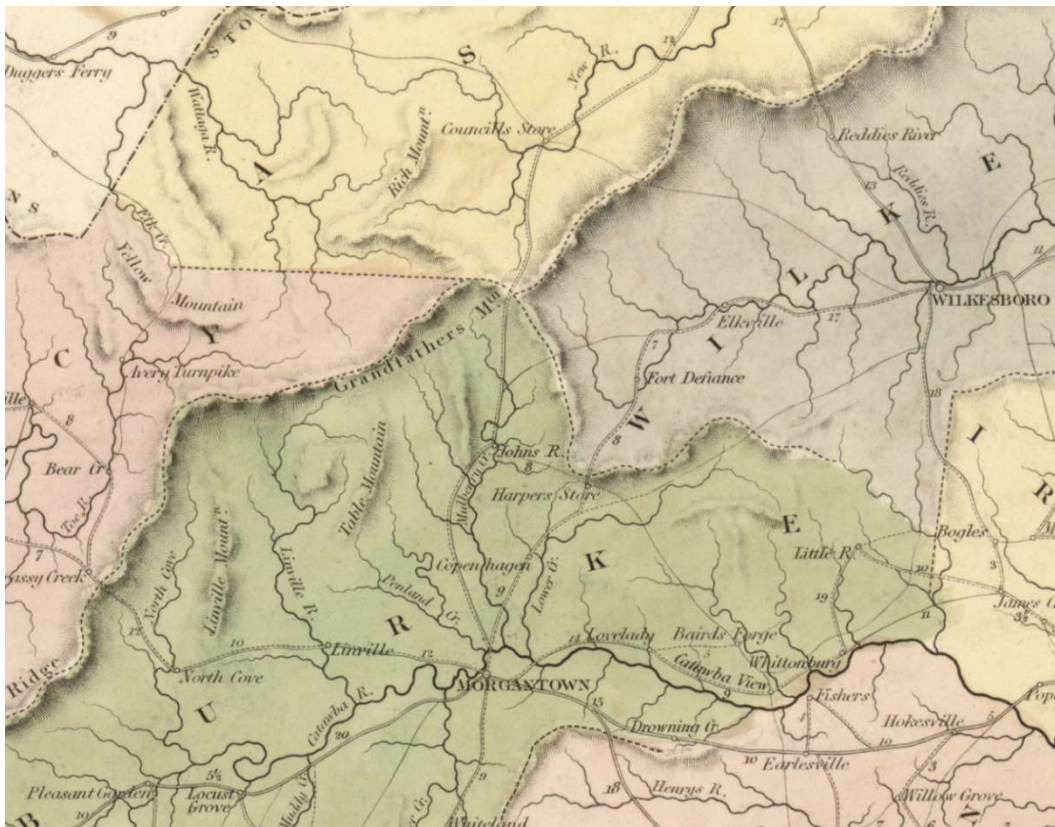


Figure 2: Detail from "Map of North and South Carolina exhibiting the post offices post roads, canals, rail roads &c," by David H. Burr, London 1839. Note the location of "Harper's Store," located roughly midway between Wilkesboro to the northeast and Morgantown to the southwest. In 1839, James Harper and two other large landowners in the area donated the property that would be consolidated to create Lenoir. (Image from the Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC)

<sup>5</sup> Davyd Foard Hood, "North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Study List Application, Fairfield (CW0383)," May 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



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Figure 3: Front façade (left) and side façade (right) of the James Harper House (CW0383) at 1436 West Harper Avenue

As a result of a new state constitution in 1835 that made sweeping changes to North Carolina's system of government representation, legislators enacted new laws that were favorable to western growth and led to the delineation of new counties throughout the piedmont and mountain regions. In 1841, Caldwell County was formed from Burke and Wilkes counties (both formed in 1777), and Lenoir was established as the county seat. The property that was consolidated to create the town was donated by General William Lenoir, James Harper, and Seth Bradshaw.<sup>7</sup> The town was named after General Lenoir, who came to the Blue Ridge foothills from Brunswick County, Virginia in March of 1775 or 1776.

Lenoir was established at the site of Tucker's Barn, a tavern run by William Tucker that sat at the intersection of two major highroads and served as a general assembly area for the region.<sup>8</sup> County seats in western North Carolina were typically laid out in a grid, adjusted, as necessary, to accommodate existing roads, streams, or other preexisting features.<sup>9</sup> Lenoir's grid plan placed the courthouse in a central square that was created by notching out the corners of the adjacent blocks. This plan was called the Lancaster square after the town of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the site of its first documented use.<sup>10</sup> (Figure 4) Lenoir's first permanent county courthouse was built on the central square in 1843. (Figure 5) Early development on the lots surrounding courthouse included a county jail, which was located on the corner of South Main Street and Spring Street (later Harper Avenue), as well as boarding houses, taverns, and stores that provided goods and services to locals as well as visitors with business at the courts. Residents built houses on the streets intersecting and surrounding the central square, and homesteads spread out over the rolling terrain that extended in all directions from the courthouse.

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<sup>7</sup> John Hawkins, "A Brief History of Caldwell County," available from the Caldwell County Public Library at <http://ccpl.libguides.com/c.php?g=247638&p=1650007>.

<sup>8</sup> Nancy Alexander, *Here Will I Dwell: The Story of Caldwell County*, 36.

<sup>9</sup> Catherine W. Bishir, Michael T. Southern, and Jennifer F. Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 19.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas Swaims, *Carolina Dwelling: Toward Preservation of Place: In Celebration of the North Carolina Vernacular Landscape* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State University, 1978), 176.

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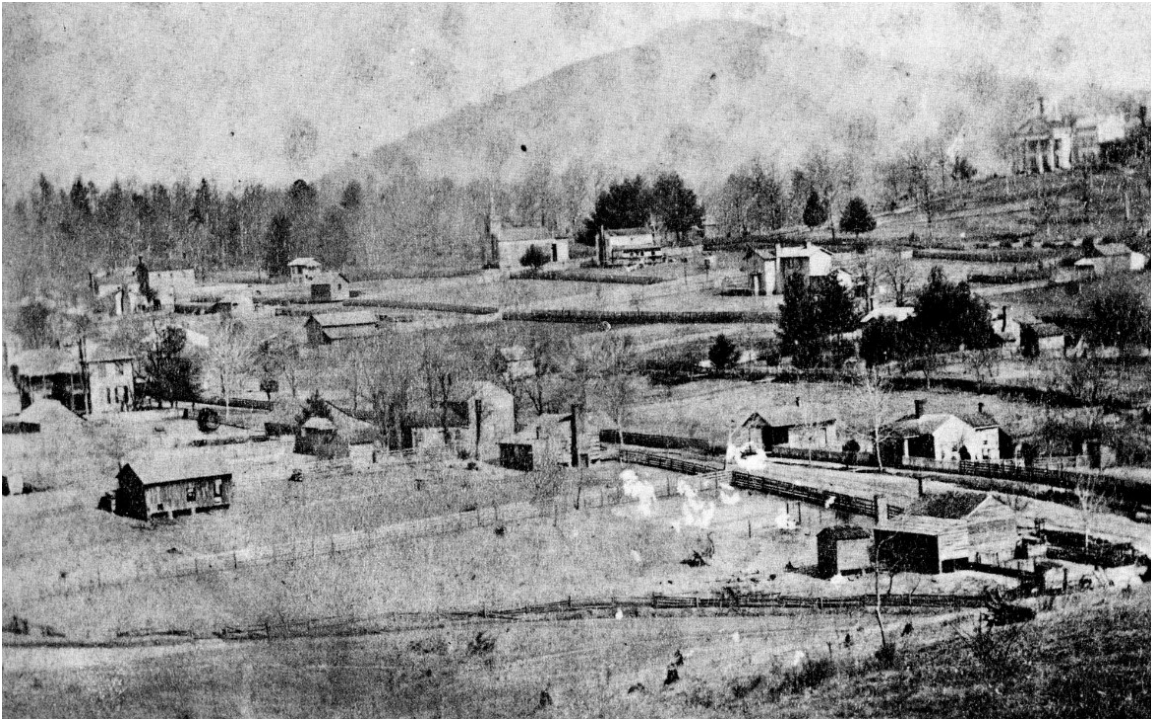
Figure 4: Map of Lenoir as laid out by surveyor Edmund Jones in 1841. The streets converging at the town square were originally called North Main Street, South Main Street, East Main Street, and West Main Street. Note the stream running through the eastern side of the grid. (Caldwell County Register of Deeds, Plat Book 2, page 11)



Figure 5: Downtown Lenoir, circa 1895, with the county courthouse (on right) in the central square. (Courtesy the Caldwell Heritage Museum and Bill Tate, Meadowood Studios)



Like the Elias R. Powell House and the James Harper House, most domestic buildings erected after the founding of Lenoir were vernacular in form and style. Early historic photographs show one- or two-story houses arranged on fenced lots with outbuildings. (Figure 6) The Reverend Jesse Rankin House at 313 Ridge Street (CW0107), which dates to the early 1840s, was originally built as a two-story log house. While log construction was typical in the region during this period, due to growth and new construction in the late 1890s and early 1900s after the arrival of the railroad, few examples of this building method survive in Lenoir. The Rankin House is a notable exception.<sup>11</sup>



*Figure 6: View of Lenoir looking east with Hibriten Mountain in the background, no date. The campus of Davenport College (top right) sat on a hill overlooking the town. (Courtesy the Caldwell Heritage Museum and Bill Tate, Meadowood Studios)*

While less common than vernacular styles, examples of Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival houses were also built in Lenoir during this period. These styles gained widespread use in western North Carolina during the nineteenth century, especially in county seats. An example is the Thomas J. Dula House (CW0394), known as “Cherryhill,” which was built circa 1859 as a single-pile, side-gable house with Greek Revival-style details. Thomas J. Dula was a local attorney and politician, and his house stood on a prominent site, high on a hill facing Main Street. (While the Dula House formerly had a Main Street address, the current street address is 608 Vance Street, which corresponds to the rear entrance.) The house has undergone substantial alteration in recent years. The full-width porch on what was originally the front (east) side of the house facing Main Street has been removed, and the entire house has been sheathed in vinyl siding.

Although the textile industry came to Caldwell County in 1851, when Samuel F. Patterson established a mill north of Lenoir, for most of the nineteenth century the area supported a population primarily of

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<sup>11</sup> The Rankin House (CW0107) has been substantially modified over the years and relocated twice, most recently in 2017.

farmers and merchants.<sup>12</sup> Local enterprises included mills, shoemakers, carpentry shops, metal smiths, hotels, and boarding houses.<sup>13</sup> The rugged terrain surrounding Lenoir made travel and trade difficult, and its growth and industrialization were relatively slow until the arrival of the railroad in 1884, which brought new opportunities for the exploitation of natural resources, increased trade, and industrial growth.

Religious organizations played an important role in the early development of Lenoir. In the late 1830s, James Harper built a modest log building with a fireplace on his homestead ("Fairfield") to provide the community with a local church.<sup>14</sup> Prior to its construction, Harper and others had to travel to Morganton for services. Although Harper donated the building to the Methodist Episcopal Church shortly after it was built, the donation came the provision that it remain interdenominational, allowing ministers in the Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Baptist churches to also have use of the building. As was common at the time, the grounds of the church served as a cemetery. Prior to the development of municipal cemeteries, churchyards, as well as domestic graveyards on family farms, were typical early American cemetery forms. Some of Caldwell County's earliest settlers were interred at Fairfield Cemetery, as it came to be known, including Robert Wakefield (1796-1852), Noah Spainhour (1811-81), and William A. Ballew (1816-98). Enslaved persons were buried in unmarked graves in a back section of the grounds. After the Methodists ceased to use the church, it was used as a school until being torn down in the 1880s. Burials continued at the cemetery, however, into the early twentieth century.<sup>15</sup>

Today Fairfield Cemetery (CW0521), which is located between Spring Street on the west and Beall Street on the east, is owned by the City of Lenoir. (Figure 7) The cemetery is characterized by a small hill, which slopes down at the western end of the cemetery to meet the grade of Spring Street. On the east, the terrain descends gradually to terminate at a stone retaining wall along Beall Street. Vegetation within the cemetery is limited to grass turf and mature trees, which are more densely grouped at the western end of the site. Understory plantings along the north and south edges of the site provide a natural buffer and screening between the cemetery and its neighboring residential parcels. An informal entrance drive (unpaved) provides access into the cemetery from Spring Street. Otherwise, there are no circulation features within the grounds. Most of the graves within Fairfield Cemetery are marked with modest stone tablets that face east and follow a roughly linear arrangement. The Ballew family lot is marked with an obelisk, a marker form that developed as an outgrowth of the neoclassical movement.<sup>16</sup> The burial dates on the tombstones within the cemetery range from the early 1840s to the mid-1920s. Many of the stones mark the graves of small children or infants.

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<sup>12</sup> Vickie Mason, "Historical and Architectural Development of Caldwell County," report prepared for the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, June 1987, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Heather Fearnbach and Cynthia de Miranda, Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc., National Register of Historic Places nomination, "Lenoir Downtown Historic District," 2007 (boundary increase 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Nancy Alexander, *Here Will I Dwell: The Story of Caldwell County*, 110-11.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel D. McLean, Jr., unpublished document titled, "The Fairfield Cemetery," reference copy available at the Local History Room, Caldwell County Public Library, Lenoir, NC.

<sup>16</sup> M. Ruth Little, *Sticks & Stones: Three Centuries of North Carolina Gravemarkers* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 15.

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Figure 7: View of Fairfield Cemetery (CW0521) on left and the gravestone of Elizabeth A. Spainhour (1802-89) on right

In 1846, the Methodists built a new church on a more centralized site closer to the courthouse, and other of denominations proceeded to build sanctuaries of their own as well. In 1848, four years after its founding, the St. James Episcopal Church (CW0111, 806 College Avenue) acquired a lot two blocks south of the courthouse square for the construction of a church, which was completed around 1851.<sup>17</sup> It was a modest, frame structure that resembled a New England meeting house and was oriented with its entrance facing north. Johannes A. S. Oertel (1823-1909), the renowned Bavarian artist and Episcopal clergyman, was a rector at St. James when he lived in Lenoir between 1869 and 1874. Oertel created several works for the church, including an elaborate, hand-carved reredos. Alterations to the church building during late nineteenth century incorporated Gothic Revival elements, including pointed arch windows and a central tower with a belfry. During the Civil War, western North Carolina suffered from raids by both Confederate and Union troops. The most notorious was Stoneman's Raid in 1865, when Union cavalry came across the mountains from eastern Tennessee destroying property and threatening civilians.<sup>18</sup> After burning the Confederate prison in Salisbury, Stoneman's men turned west and, reaching Lenoir, ransacked homes, burnt buildings, and seized St. James Episcopal Church to use as their headquarters.

As strong supporters of formal instruction, churches were instrumental in providing educational opportunities in Lenoir, which did not have public schools until 1900.<sup>19</sup> One of the earliest schools was Montrose Academy (CW0177), which was constructed around 1840 on a hilltop overlooking Main Street. Later, the Reverend Jessie Rankin, a circuit-riding minister and the first pastor of the Lenoir First Presbyterian Church, purchased the property where he established the Kirkwood School for girls. By the late nineteenth century, the school was converted to a private residence, and today, after extensive renovation, it is the home of Caldwell Hospice at 902 Kirkwood Street. The educational opportunities

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<sup>17</sup> Michael C. Hardy, *Caldwell County* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006): 21.

<sup>18</sup> Catherine W. Bishir et al., *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 31.

<sup>19</sup> Vickie Mason, "Historical and Architectural Development of Caldwell County," report prepared for the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, June 1987, 35.



offered in Lenoir distinguished it from other communities in the area. Davenport Female College, chartered in 1855, was located on land given by James Harper that sat on a bluff south of the commercial district. (Figure 6) The Music Building (CW0055), constructed in 1926 in the Neoclassical style, is all that remains of the once notable campus. The Caldwell Heritage Museum has been the steward of the building since the museum opened in 1991. In 1903, the city built a public graded school on Main Street one block north of the courthouse. This two-story, brick building was later razed for the construction of the First Baptist Church of Lenoir (see text below).

### **Industrial and Economic Growth (1884-1920)**

#### *Introduction*

The arrival of the railroad to western North Carolina ended a long period of isolation for Lenoir and similar towns that had until then been rendered largely inaccessible by the region's geography. The opportunities for economic growth created by rail transit transformed Lenoir during this period from a small crossroads community to a leading regional industrial and manufacturing center. Between 1890 and 1920, Lenoir's population rose from 673 to 3,718 residents. New residential quarters sprang up around production and manufacturing facilities and along principal transportation corridors. Since Lenoir did not develop a streetcar system, commuter travel along these routes was limited to horse and carriage and, later, automobiles. As would be expected in a town so closely tied to the lumber industry, most of the residential architecture constructed during this period was of light frame construction. Vernacular forms, such as the two-story, single-pile, I-house, were common and often featured Victorian decorative details influenced by the Italianate or Queen Anne styles.

After a ten-year effort, the Chester & Lenoir Narrow Gauge Railroad, a 110-mile freight and passenger line, opened in 1884, offering regular service between Lenoir and Chester, South Carolina.<sup>20</sup> (Figure 8) The train moved timber south from Caldwell County and cotton and cattle north from South Carolina. It also carried seasonal tourists seeking respite from the summer heat into the mountains of North Carolina. The freight business on the narrow gauge railroad was so profitable that in 1891 the state issued a charter for a second railroad to Lenoir, and service on the Lenoir & Linville Valley Railroad started later that year. Not long after its founding, this line was reassigned to the Caldwell & Northern Railroad, which was owned and operated by the Caldwell Land and Lumber Company, whose general production manager was Lenoir resident John Mathias Bernhardt. By 1894, the line extended from Lenoir northwest to Collettsville. While primarily a logging line, the railroad also offered summer passenger service. In 1897, the Chester & Lenoir Narrow Gauge Railroad came under new ownership and was renamed the Carolina & Northwestern. Six years later, the Carolina & Northwestern converted to standard gauge and assumed ownership of the Caldwell & Northern logging railroad. In the early twentieth century, the Carolina & Northwestern expanded its line to reach untapped forests even farther up the mountains. As a result, new timber operations and lumber mills were started, supplying abundant raw materials to Lenoir's burgeoning furniture industry.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Matthew Bumgarner, *Legacy of the Carolina & North-Western Railway* (Johnson City, TN: Overmountain Press, 1996), 17.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-51.



Figure 8: Photograph dated June 4, 1884, of the Chester & Lenoir Railroad on the turntable in Lenoir. (Image from Michael C. Hardy, *Caldwell County*, 96.)

### *Industrial Architecture (1884-1920)*

The availability of reliable rail transport, coupled with the region's abundant timberland, attracted lumber and sawmilling concerns, textile mills, furniture manufacturers, and related businesses to the area, and the physical development of Lenoir's industrial sites during this period was directly linked to the course of the railroad, the route for which was influenced by the town's topography and natural features. The rail line followed the level bottomland of a creek that ran generally in a southwest-northeast direction as it passed through Lenoir west of the commercial district. Mills and factories were built alongside it with rail spurs providing direct access to manufacturing sites. These industrial sites typically consisted of a series of buildings set in a linear arrangement and often banked into the gentle hillsides flanking the creek to facilitate the manufacturing process and the storage and shipment of finished goods. Most industrial buildings were one or two stories with heavy timber framing systems and open interior plans. Construction materials included brick, frame, and metal cladding. The creek provided ready access to water, which was channeled into log ponds and pumped into cisterns to supply steam engines.<sup>22</sup> Many industrial sites were equipped with a system of pipes, hydrants, and water storage structures in case of fire, and fire resistant construction practices, such as firewalls, were used. Later, buildings were equipped with sprinklers to further mitigate fire risk. Most plants were powered by steam engines fueled by wood shavings or refuse. Coal was used in addition to wood in at least one case by 1921.<sup>23</sup> While Lenoir's mills and manufacturers initially relied on natural light or lanterns to illuminate

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<sup>22</sup> Sanborn Map Company, Lenoir, North Carolina, 1902, available from North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

<sup>23</sup> Sanborn Map Company, Lenoir, North Carolina, 1921, available from North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

their factories, electricity was later introduced. Most of the industrial sites along the railroad grew in phases as required to meet demands for increased production and storage, and individual buildings were periodically refurbished and repurposed as manufacturing evolved or due to changes in ownership.

The Lenoir Furniture Company, established in 1889 and operated by John Matthias Bernhardt (1880-1935), was the county's first furniture company.<sup>24</sup> Its factory was located on a site below Prospect Avenue along the Carolina & Northwestern rail line. George Washington Finley Harper (1834-1921), one of three children of James Harper, succeeded J. M. Bernhardt as the company's president shortly after its founding. The company struggled in its first decade, with the factory laying idle for three years, but after a financial restructuring, operations resumed in 1900 as the Harper Furniture Company. (Figure 9) By 1902, the Harper Furniture Company plant consisted of four interconnected buildings. At the head of the complex were dry kilns, which adjoined a cabinet and woodworking shop. The production line then moved to a varnishing/finishing/packing building and terminated at a warehouse and shipping facility. North of the Harper site was a large lumberyard and planing mill owned by the Wilson Lumber & Milling Company. The rail line and several spurs were used to move raw and finished materials in and out of both concerns. In 1929, the Harper Furniture Company and its factory were purchased by brothers Thomas H. and James Edgar Broyhill, who operated the Lenoir Furniture Corporation and the Lenoir Chair Company, respectively. Their partnership would form the basis for what became the Broyhill Furniture Corporation.

Growth in the banking sector – the Bank of Lenoir opened in 1893, followed by the First National Bank in 1900 – provided financing that further stimulated Lenoir's growing economy. In 1896, J. M. Bernhardt established a planing mill and box factory on a broad, low-lying site along the rail line less than half a mile south of the Lenoir Furniture Company plant (later the Harper Furniture Company).<sup>25</sup> By the turn of the century, the J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory (CW0423) was Lenoir's largest manufacturer.<sup>26</sup> The plant featured a rectangular, single-story, frame factory building with a boiler room and a shavings collection room at its northwest corner, a round, brick incinerator building, two rectangular, open-sided lumber sheds, and a lumberyard. A rail spur connected the plant to the main line. The Lenoir Cotton Mill (CW0408) occupied a site just south of the Bernhardt mill and box factory. Constructed in 1902-03, the rectangular, brick building had a low-pitched gable roof and tall, segmental-arched window and door openings.<sup>27</sup> The Lenoir Cotton Mill was the largest of Caldwell County's seven textile manufacturers until the early 1920s.

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<sup>24</sup> Nancy Alexander, *Furnitureland* (n.p., 1990), 5.

<sup>25</sup> By the time Bernhardt established the planing mill and box factory, G. W. F. Harper had succeeded him as the president of the Lenoir Furniture Company.

<sup>26</sup> Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc., National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, "J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill," draft dated April 7, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc., National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, "Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. Plant," draft dated December 19, 2016.

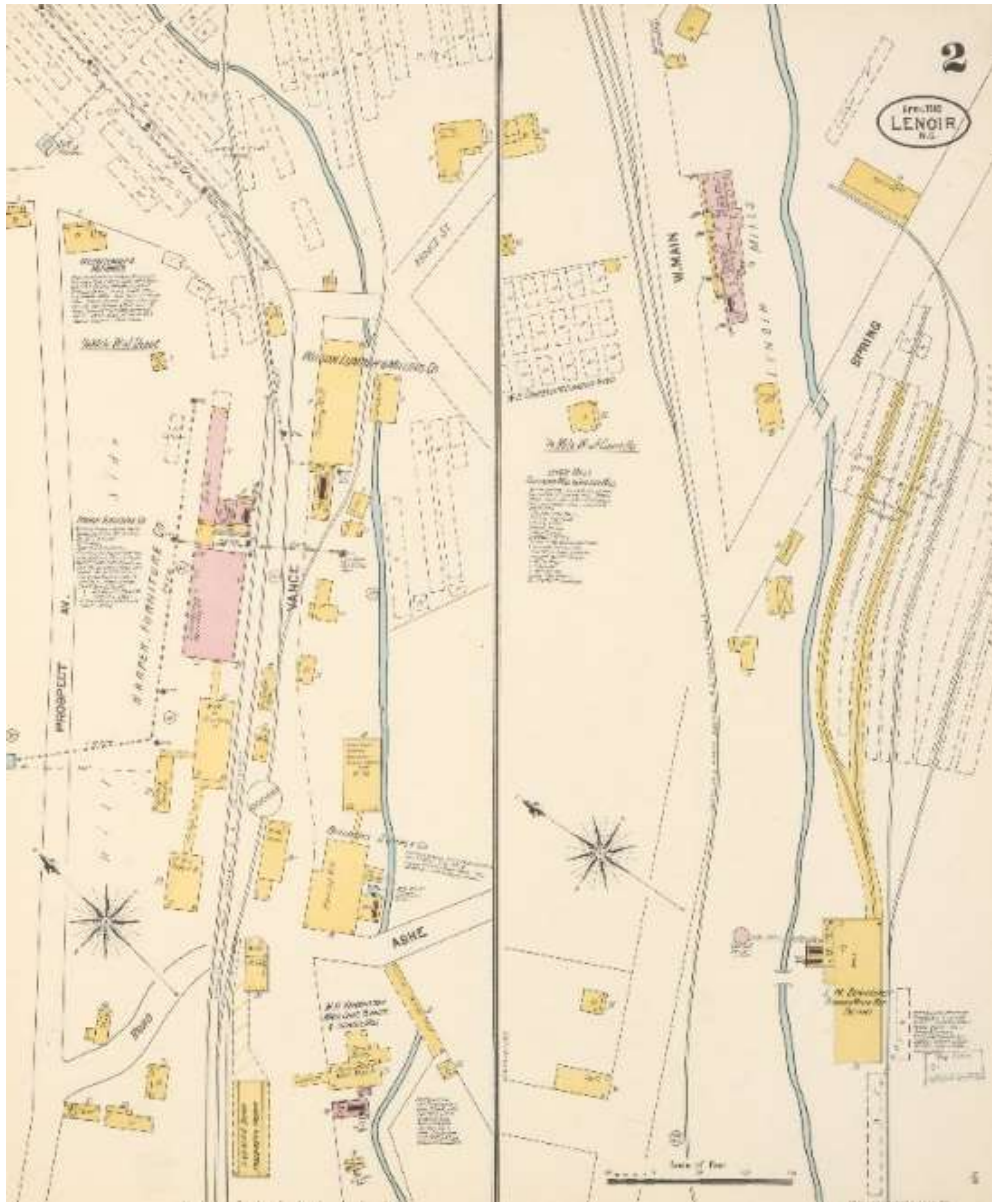


Figure 9: As seen in this 1902 Sanborn Map of Lenoir, the Harper Furniture Company plant (on left) was located below Prospect Avenue. Further south along the rail line was the Lenoir Mills and the J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory (on right). (Image from the North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)

In 1906, the Blue Ridge Bobbin and Handle Company (later the Blue Ridge Bending Company) was established on a site bound by Harper Avenue on the north and the tracks of the Carolina & Northwestern on the south. It specialized in producing parts for furniture factories. Initially, the production yard included of a one-story, frame building containing woodworking, cabinet-making, and packing rooms. At the east end of the building was the engine room and at the west was a small, attached office. Other buildings included a one-story, frame shed and a brick dry kiln. Manufacturing on the site shifted to furniture production by 1912 when the Blue Ridge Bending Company was purchased by M. L. Cornwell and Bert Stone and became the Ethel Chair Company.

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In 1908, J. M. Bernhardt acquired majority interest in the Moore Furniture Company (incorporated in 1906 by a group of stockholders that included J. P. Coffey and H. T. Newland) and consolidated it with his planing and box mill to create the Bernhardt Manufacturing Company.<sup>28</sup> The focus of the new business was the manufacture of dining room and bedroom furniture. The company's first plant (Bernhardt Plant #1) occupied the former Moore Furniture Company buildings, which were located along what is now Morganton Boulevard. The 1913 Sanborn Map for the area depicts several structures on the site, including two attached brick drying kilns, a brick engine room, and a two-story, frame building that housed sawing and planing facilities and a glue room on the ground floor and cabinet-making operations on the second floor. Across a spur from the Carolina & Northwestern line stood a three-story building that housed offices, warehouse and shipping facilities on the first and second floors, and finishing and varnishing operations on the third floor. Up the hill from the plant were seven identical one-and-a-half-story, frame dwellings, presumably for Bernhardt employees. (Figure 10)

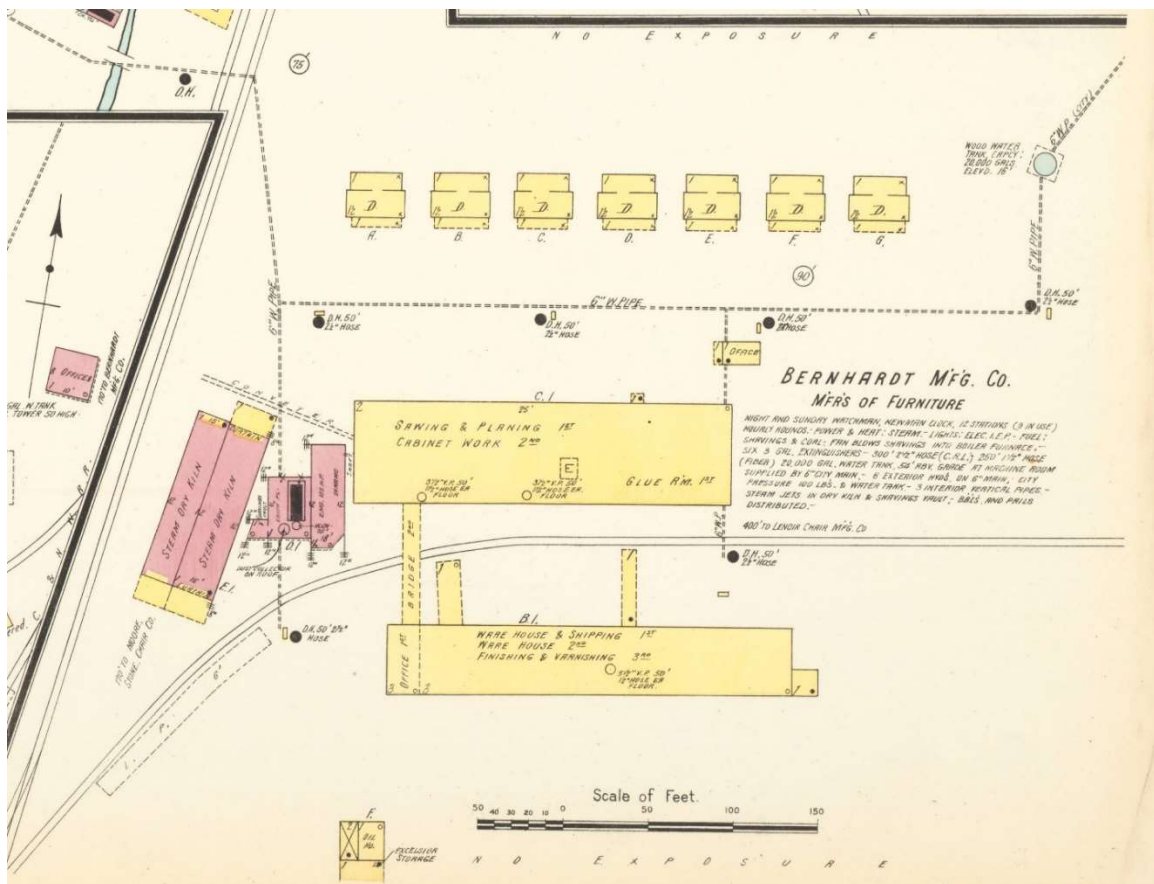


Figure 10: Detail from a 1913 Sanborn Map of Lenoir showing the production facility of the Bernhardt Manufacturing Company (now Bernhardt Plant #1). (Image from the North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)

Lenoir's manufacturers accumulated rapidly along the Carolina & Northwestern line, and, by the end of this period, the industrial corridor supported eight furniture companies, a wholesale grocer, four cotton

<sup>28</sup> Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc., National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, "J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill," draft dated April 7, 2017.



mills, a powerhouse, a mirror company, and two veneer companies.<sup>29</sup> At the northern end of the rail line, about one-and-a-half miles north of the courthouse square, was the Moore Cotton Mills Company. South from the Moore Cotton Mills was the Caldwell Furniture Company, a large lumberyard, the Harper Furniture Company, and the train depot. Beyond this to the south was a one-story, brick warehouse occupied by a wholesale grocer, the Lenoir Mills complex with its flour rollers, packers, separators, and other machinery, and two manufacturers of cotton yarns – the Steele Cotton Mill Company (formerly the Bernhardt Planing and Mill and Box Factory) and Lenoir Cotton Mills. Next along the corridor was the Ethel Chair Company (later the Fairfield Chair Company), followed by the one-story, frame building housing the Lenoir Mirror Company and the sprawling complexes of the Kent-Coffey Manufacturing Company and the Lenoir Furniture Corporation (later Broyhill). The Hudson Veneer Company, the Lenoir Veneer Company, and the Bernhardt Chair Company followed, and near the southwest corner of the corporate line was the Lenoir Chair Manufacturing Company and the filing room, bending building, and storage warehouses of the Caldwell Furniture Company Mill No. 2. While some of these buildings have been razed and the railroad no longer passes through this area, Lenoir’s extant manufacturing sites still reflect the industrial growth and development patterns of this period of the city’s history.

#### *Commercial and Institutional Architecture (1884-1920)*

In addition to an expanded manufacturing base, Lenoir’s growing prosperity during the first decades of the twentieth century was reflected in a renewed downtown district and substantial infrastructure improvements. Rapid changes during this period transformed downtown Lenoir. The city built a public school on Main Street in 1903, replaced its first courthouse with a Classical Revival building in 1904, provided electric power in 1906, and installed water mains in 1908. It tore out obsolete fencing, graded streets, and converted the main square into a traffic circle in 1910. (Figure 11) Commercial buildings, some designed by prominent regional architects, took the place of houses near the center of town. The Romanesque Revival-style Lenoir Building at 808-812 West Avenue, designed by the Charlotte firm of Hook and Rogers and completed in 1907, exemplified this trend.<sup>30</sup>

During this period, several new brick churches were built to replace earlier, less substantial, frame structures, illustrating the growing prosperity of Lenoir’s congregations and greater regional access to building materials other than timber. These churches used revival styles typical for ecclesiastical architecture of the time. The Lenoir Presbyterian Church, founded in 1852, built its first sanctuary around 1860 on a site down the street from the Kirkwood School, which also served as the home of the church’s first pastor, Reverend Jesse Rankin. In 1903, the congregation replaced its original frame building with a red brick, Gothic Revival-style edifice embellished with stained glass windows and a corner tower. (This building would later be replaced in 1969 by the current Colonial Revival-style church designed by the local architectural firm Hartley & Thompson and located at 1002 Kirkwood Street.<sup>31</sup>)

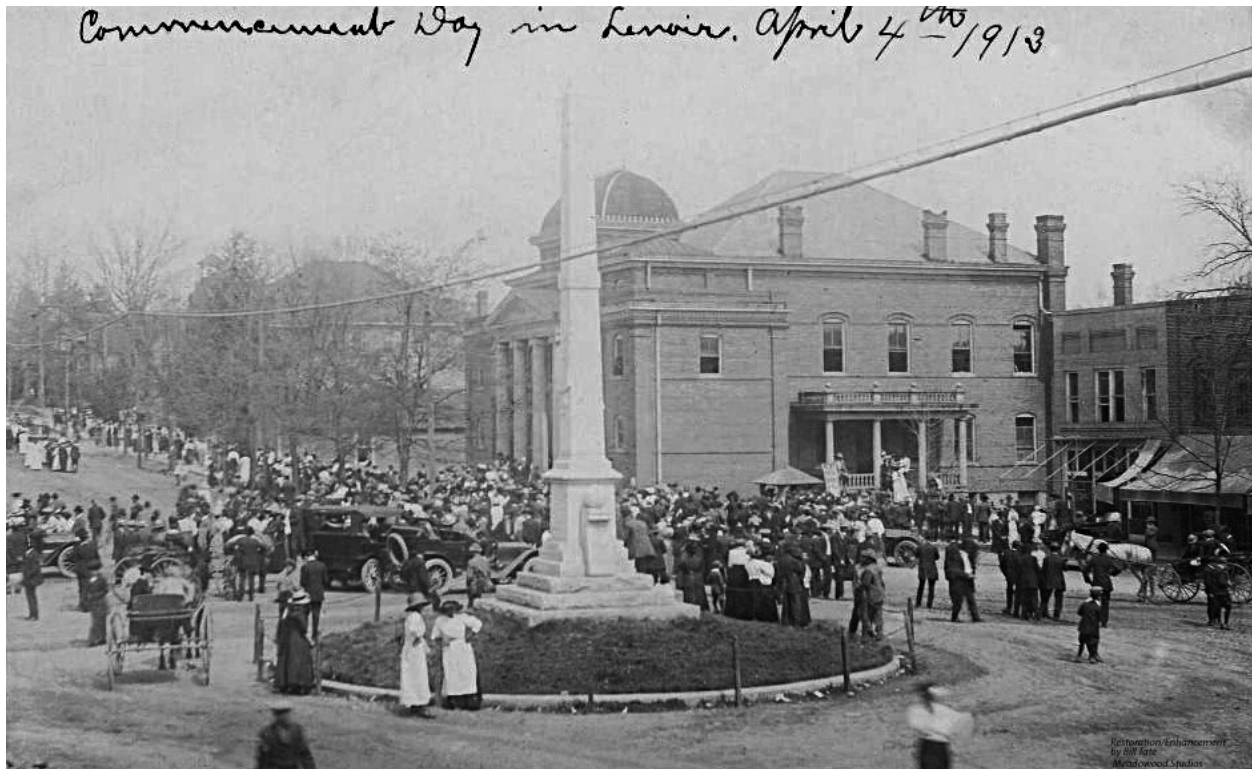
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<sup>29</sup> Sanborn Map Company, Lenoir, North Carolina, 1921, available from North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

<sup>30</sup> The Lenoir Building is a contributing building of the Lenoir Downtown Historic District (CW0105), which was listed on the National Register in 2007 (boundary increase 2013). See Heather Fearnbach and Cynthia de Miranda, Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc., National Register of Historic Places nomination, “Lenoir Downtown Historic District,” 2007 (boundary increase 2013).

<sup>31</sup> Lucy McCarl, *You Shall Be My People: A History of the First Presbyterian Church of Lenoir, North Carolina* (Greenville, SC: A Press, 2002).

Other new churches built during this period include the domed, Neoclassical-style First United Methodist Church (CW0108), at the corner of Church Avenue and Ash Avenue, which dates to 1917, and St. Stephen's Lutheran Church (no longer extant), which was built circa 1910 on the south side of West Avenue between Willow Street and Boundary Street. In the 1950s, St. Stephen's Church (CW0481) would relocate to a new location at 1406 West Harper Avenue in the Fairfield neighborhood.



*Figure 11: Early view of downtown Lenoir showing the Confederate Monument erected in 1910 and, behind it, the Caldwell County Courthouse. In 1929, the domed brick courthouse shown in this image was encapsulated into a larger building designed by architect Martin L. Hampton in the Classical Revival style. (Courtesy the Caldwell Heritage Museum and Bill Tate, Meadowood Studios)*

### *Residential Architecture (1884-1920)*

For most of the nineteenth century, the citizens of Lenoir lived within a few blocks of the commercial district centered on the courthouse or along the main transportation corridors leading into the city. As the city grew and commercial construction extended outward from the main square, many of Lenoir's nineteenth-century dwellings were demolished and new residential neighborhoods were established outside the growing downtown, each scattered with grocery stores, boarding houses, and other small commercial enterprises. Where new pockets of housing emerged, new architectural styles and building forms were introduced. Many Queen Anne-style houses were built in Lenoir, as they were throughout the United States between 1880 and the first decade of the twentieth century. The style is characterized by asymmetrical, irregular floor plans under multifaceted roof forms, extensive porches typically ornamented with elaborate spindle work, large windows, and textured wall surfaces. Local examples are one- to two-and-a-half-stories tall and of different forms with varying degrees of ornament.

Several examples of late nineteenth-century dwellings stand along West Harper Avenue (originally Spring Street), which was an early route into Lenoir from the west. The one-and-a-half story, Queen Anne-style house at 1529 West Harper Avenue (CW0491) was built in 1891. (Figure 12) It features a wraparound porch that retains its original turned posts, decorative brackets, and spindle work balustrade. A few blocks west at 1632 West Harper Avenue (CW0777) is another example of the style. (Figure 12) Built in 1900, it combines a tall, hipped roof with front and side gables. In an unusual arrangement, the horizontal block of the L is one and a half stories tall, while the front-gabled block is a full two stories, giving the house a complex roofline characteristic of Queen Anne residences. The dwelling, which has plain weatherboard siding, also features an L-shaped porch with turned posts and jigsaw-cut brackets.



*Figure 12: 1529 West Harper Avenue (CW0491) on left and 1632 West Harper Avenue (CW0777) on right*

By 1913, the area north of Lenoir's commercial district, encompassing upper Main Street, Scroggs Street, and Vance Street, featured two grocery stores, a hotel, and dozens of one- and two-story, frame dwellings. At 523 Vance Street (CW0801) stands a two-story, frame house that records indicate likely dates to the first decade of the twentieth century. (Figure 13) The house features a one-story, L-shaped front porch with a spindle work frieze, turned columns with scroll-sawn brackets, and simple wood railing. Both front-facing gables are clad with patterned shingles and feature barge boards with decorative roundels. The varied surface treatments and woodwork in evidence at 523 Vance Street epitomize the use of Queen Anne-style decorative devices on a more compact form. The Wallace A. and Kate Huntley House at 612 Main Street (CW0799), built in 1920, is a two-story, single-pile, frame house with an asymmetrical front façade and a cross-gable roof. Its partial width, one-story porch rises to two tiers in the south bay. The prominent front-facing porch gable features Queen Anne-style embellishments including patterned shingles, exposed rafters, and sunburst detailing. Similar decorative woodwork is found in the south side gable. (Figure 13)





Figure 13: 523 Vance Street (CW0801) on left and 612 Main Street (CW0799) above

In the late nineteenth century, residential areas developed along Prospect Street and the section of Norwood Street south of what is now Morganton Boulevard. Prospect Street followed along the ridge of an escarpment that overlooked Lenoir’s downtown. Norwood Street, formerly called Hickory Road, was an early transportation corridor into Lenoir from the south. Both streets boasted elevated prospects, which would have appealed to those seeking clean, healthy air, inspiring vistas, and refuge from the city. In the words of historian John Stilgoe, these residential pockets on the heights above Lenoir functioned as “borderlands,” providing homeowners with a sylvan atmosphere and views that encompassed but separated them from the manufacturing city.<sup>32</sup>

The George Mitchell Goforth House at 309 Prospect Street (CW0404) dates to circa 1900. (Figure 14) It is a two-story, frame, gable-front-and-wing house with a cross-gable roof. Clad with German-lap, wood siding, the house is embellished with Queen Anne detailing. It features a raised, full-width, asymmetrical porch, which rises to two stories in the L made by the two wings and wraps around to the north façade. The porch has turned, wood posts, lace-like scroll-sawn brackets, and a spindle work balustrade. A projecting gable with sunburst ornament highlights the porch entrance. In contrast with the Goforth House, the two-and-a-half-story house at 942 Norwood Street (CW0754), built in 1912, features a full-width, full-height, colonnaded porch, typical of the Neoclassical Revival style popular in the first half of the twentieth century. (Figure 15) Both houses are perched high atop hills at the end of long, U-shaped drives lined with trees.

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<sup>32</sup> John Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb 1820-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 56-57.

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*Figure 14: George Mitchell Goforth House (CW0404) at 309 Prospect Street*



*Figure 15: 942 Norwood Street (CW0754)*



During this period, large numbers of simple frame dwellings were built near Lenoir's mills and factories to house laborers and their families. The Kent-Coffey Manufacturing Company and the Lenoir Furniture Corporation (later Broyhill) were located east of Virginia Street along the railroad line. (Figure 16) By the early twentieth century, the blocks north and west of these industrial sites, including Factory Street, Kent Street, and Mills Street (later College Avenue), were populated with one-story, frame houses. While the west end of College Avenue is mainly empty lots today and Kent and Factory streets no longer exist, the house at 404 Virginia Street (CW0409), built in 1913, stands as a remnant of the area's early twentieth-century residential development.

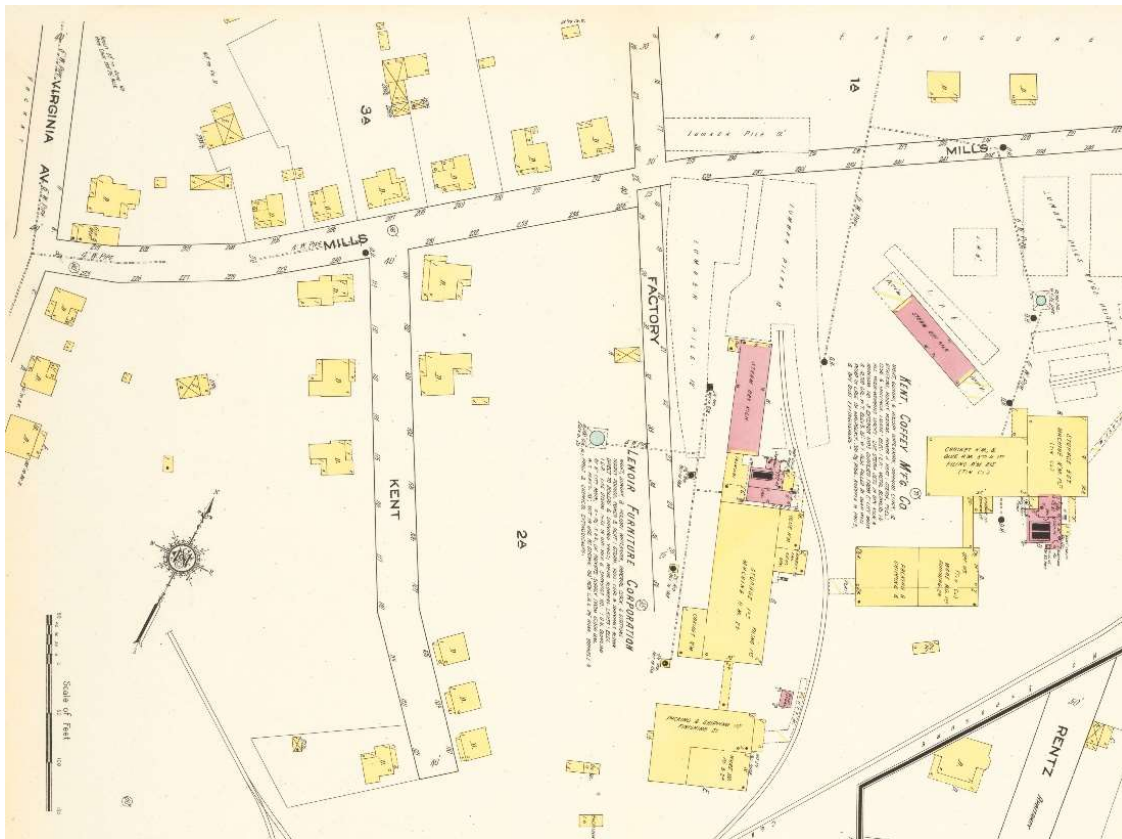


Figure 16: Detail from a 1913 Sanborn Map of Lenoir showing the Lenoir Furniture Corporation and Kent Coffey Manufacturing Company plants and nearby workers housing. Nearly all of the buildings shown on the map have been demolished over the years. (Image from the north Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)

Along the ridge that overlooked the J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory and Lenoir Cotton Mill sites was another cluster of early twentieth-century workers housing. The area, which was known as Lerinco, after the Lenoir Realty and Insurance Company, comprised what is now Spainhour Street and Underdown Avenue.<sup>33</sup> (Underdown Avenue was originally an extension of Spainhour Street. It was renamed sometime between 1927 and 1930.) Like many mill villages in North Carolina, the houses built for Lenoir's mill workers conformed to the house plans described and illustrated in Daniel A. Tompkins's textbook *Cotton Mill, Commercial Features*, published in 1899.<sup>34</sup> (Figure 17 and Figure 18)

<sup>33</sup> Lerinco was surveyed as Cotton Mill Hill during the 1986-1987 reconnaissance survey of Caldwell County.

<sup>34</sup> Brent D. Glass, *The Textile Industry in North Carolina: A History* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1992), 40; Daniel A. Tompkins, *Cotton Mill, Commercial*

In addition to the “Three-Room, Gable House” prescribed by Tompkins, other building forms found in Lerinco include the one-story, double-pile cottage with hipped roof and shed porch, such as that at 1232 Spainhour Street (CW0819), and the saltbox house with double-pile interior as seen at 1324 Underdown Avenue (CW0821). (Figure 19) Despite alterations using modern building materials and teardowns, Lerinco still retains a strong association with its history as a mill housing neighborhood.



*Figure 17: Illustration from Tompkins’ Cotton Mill, Commercial Features showing a “Three-Room Gable House” that could be built for \$325. (Daniel A. Tompkins, Cotton Mill, Commercial Features (Charlotte, NC: Daniel A. Tompkins, 1899), e-book available at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/tompkins/tompkins.html>)*

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*Features* (Charlotte, NC: Daniel A. Tompkins, 1899), e-book available at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/tompkins/tompkins.html>.

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*Figure 18: View of mill housing along Underdown Street*



*Figure 19: 1232 Spainhour Street (CW0819) on left and 1324 Underdown Avenue (CW0821) on right*

In contrast with areas such as Lerinco, some parts of Lenoir remained rural in character and sustained small farms well into the twentieth century. Torrence Circle (formerly Gilman Street) follows a meandering semicircular route that was likely shaped by the natural topography of the area. One of the earliest houses on the street, dating to 1911, is located at 132 Torrence Circle (CW0783). (Figure 20) John C. McMillan, a farmer, built the house and occupied it for over four decades. It is a one-story, frame dwelling with a gable-front-and-wing plan under a cross-gable roof. As typical of this vernacular house form, which was used frequently in Lenoir, there is a shed-roof porch located within the L made by the two wings. Another example of the form can be found just down the block at 118 Torrence Circle (CW0780).





*Figure 20: John C. McMillan House at 132 Torrence Circle (CW0783)*

While most residents lived near the courthouse, along transportation corridors, or clustered around industrial areas during this period, at least one early residential subdivision appeared – Oak View. Now part of the Maehill Park neighborhood, Oak View was located southeast of the downtown district and developed on land that was once part of a plantation called “Oak Lawn,” which was owned by Joseph Caldwell Norwood, whose wife Laura was the daughter of Thomas Lenoir. Oak View was financed by the Caldwell and Watauga Land and Timber Company, which was formed in 1888. The corporation platted approximately 36 acres encompassing what is today the northeastern part of Maehill Park (north of Woodside Place, east of Norwood Street, and south and west of Harper Avenue). On April 4, 1888, the *Lenoir Topic* reported, “The land lies splendidly, most of it is well wooded and there are a great many beautiful building sites upon it. The Company will go to work at once to clearing out the underbrush, laying out streets and avenues and dividing the property into lots and squares.” One early resident of Oak View was C. B. Harrison, a local merchant, who built a two-story, single-pile dwelling on a large, sloping lot on College Avenue in the late nineteenth century. (Figure 21) Over the years, numerous expansions and additions have been made to the house, which today is numbered 501 College Avenue (CW0379). Another resident of Oak View was George Lynn Bernhardt, the older brother of J. M. Bernhardt.<sup>35</sup> The George Lynn Bernhardt house (no longer extant) was a two-story, brick dwelling with a one-story, frame porch, rear wings, and several outbuildings.<sup>36</sup> It was located on College Avenue. After Bernhardt’s death in 1913, his widow, Lucy Richmond Bernhardt, lived on the property for many years.

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<sup>35</sup> J. M. Bernhardt’s house (no longer extant) was just down the hill from his brother’s at 211 South Mulberry (in the block bound by Mulberry Street on the west, Harper Avenue on the north, Norwood Street on the east, and College Avenue on the south).

<sup>36</sup> Sanborn Map Company, Lenoir, North Carolina, 1921, available from North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.



*Figure 21: The C. B. Harrison House (CW0379) at 501 College Avenue was originally constructed in the late nineteenth century as a two-story, single-pile dwelling.*

Just west of Oak View was an area called Rectory Hill. It encompassed approximately 12 acres of land along Mulberry Street that was once owned by the St. James Episcopal Church (CW0111), whose rectory once stood at the corner of what is now Rectory Street and College Avenue. Sometime before 1911, the area was surveyed and platted, and the lane that led to the rectory was widened and deeded to the city, becoming Rectory Street.<sup>37</sup> This area, too, would come to be understood as part of Maehill Park, which was developed in the next decade (see text below). In 1911, Mark and Mary Squires purchased four contiguous lots in the Rectory Hill area on which they built a notable two-story, Neoclassical house. The house, at 221 Mulberry Street (CW0395), features a one-story, wraparound porch and a full-height entry porch with a pedimented roof supported on paired, Ionic columns. (Figure 22)

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<sup>37</sup> The area was resurveyed in 1952. See Caldwell County Register of Deeds, Plat Book 3, page 127.





Figure 22: Mark and Mary Squires House (CW0395) at 221 Mulberry Street

### **Suburban Growth (1920-1945)**

#### *Introduction*

The 1920s were a prosperous time in our nation and in Lenoir, where the expansion of local industries created new jobs that attracted growing numbers of people to the area. Despite the economic collapse of the Great Depression, by 1945, Lenoir supported fifteen large furniture manufacturing plants, two veneer plants, two mirror plants, one paper box and packing materials concern, and several other businesses that supplied materials for the furniture industry. Lenoir and its surrounding area also had seven cotton mills and a large clothing factory. Added to this were hosiery mills, machine shops, flour mills, sawmills and other industries.<sup>38</sup> The city's population rose from 3,718 in 1920 to 7,598 just two decades later. Greater Lenoir numbered over 13,400 by 1945.<sup>39</sup>

Following national trends, large landholdings around the city were subdivided, platted, and developed into residential neighborhoods of detached, single-family homes on spacious lots. New housing in neighborhoods such as Fairfield and Maehill Park diversified Lenoir's residential building stock. As more and more residents of Lenoir came to rely on automobiles for their commute, pockets of residential development were built farther afield. Lower density areas, such as Woodsway Lane, provided more privacy and larger yards. These neighborhoods offered Lenoir's growing middle class a distinct alternative to older residential areas that in many cases were clustered about mills and industrial sites.

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<sup>38</sup> Ernest H. Miller, *Miller's Lenoir, NC, City Directory, 1945-46* (Asheville, NC: Miller Press, 1946).

<sup>39</sup> 1945 Directory Census as cited in the 1945-46 city directory. See Ernest H. Miller, *Miller's Lenoir, NC, City Directory, 1945-46* (Asheville, NC: Miller Press, 1946).



*Industrial Architecture (1920-1945)*

During the 1920s, Lenoir's leading manufacturers continued to grow their businesses, which often entailed replacing or expanding older facilities. The West Harper Avenue plant of the Ethel Chair Company (formerly the Blue Ridge Bending Company) changed hands once again in 1921, when the Fairfield Chair Company was established, with James Harper Beall (1868-1954) as president. By this time, the original 1906 building had been expanded to provide the growing company with space for finishing and varnishing, and the drying kiln had been doubled in size. (Figure 23) Fairfield Chair also built a one-and-a-half-story house on the corner of Harper Avenue and Light Street to serve as an office. Redevelopment at Bernhardt Plant #1 (1528 Morganton Boulevard) during this period was the result of a fire in 1926 that destroyed much of facility, sparing only the brick drying kilns and boiler. With business thriving, a new, three-story factory was constructed before the end of 1927 on the north side of the railroad spur that traversed the site. Later, in 1936, a furniture warehouse was added to the facility on the south side of the railroad spur.



*Figure 23: Fairfield Chair Plant #1 (CW0479) in 1930 (Photo courtesy the Fairfield Chair Company)*

*Commercial and Institutional Architecture (1920-1945)*

In addition to the commercial enterprises that populated Lenoir's downtown district, large and small businesses, such as Stroupe Grocery and the Caldwell County Creamery on West Avenue and the Twilight Beauty Shop in the Freedman neighborhood, capitalized on the town's growth and flourished. The former service station at 1605 West Harper Avenue (CW0606) is an example of the small, commercial buildings constructed during this period. (Figure 24) Built in 1923, it is a one-story, brick

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building with a parapet roof and terracotta tile coping. A unique feature of the building is the square tower that rises above the central bay of the front façade. It is faced with stucco and features decorative brickwork and a parapet roof. With its load-bearing masonry walls, parapet roof, brick corbeling, and storefront windows, the two-story brick building at 1528 West Harper Avenue (CW0490) is a more typical example of Lenoir's early twentieth-century commercial architecture. (Figure 25)



*Figure 24: 1605 West Harper Avenue (CW0606)*



*Figure 25: 1528 West Harper Avenue (CW0490)*

Lenoir's segregated public school system included Central High School (CW0005) for white students and Freedman Colored High School (no longer extant). Central High, designed by the firm of Benton & Benton Architects, which had offices in Wilson, North Carolina, and Richmond, Virginia, opened in 1923. The partnership of Frank W. Benton and his brother, Charles C. Benton, Sr., which was formed in 1915, was known for its Colonial Revival and Neoclassical designs for public buildings, residences, churches, and banks in the state's small and medium-sized cities. Central High was designed in the Colonial Revival style and featured many attributes characteristic of school modernization efforts of the period, including central corridors, large classrooms, and numerous windows for light and ventilation. The West Lenoir Elementary School (CW0534) at 117 Maple Drive, completed in 1935, was built using funding provided through the federal Public Works Administration. The original building had classrooms for twelve teachers, a principal's office, library, and auditorium with seating for 500. A four-room addition was built to the south in 1951 to meet increasing demand for classroom space.

Spread across Lenoir's landscape were dozens of churches, including several prominent buildings on Main Street. In April 1923, the First Baptist Church of Lenoir (founded as the Lenoir Baptist Church in 1889) purchased the old Lenoir Graded School property at what is now 304 Main Street. At the time, the congregation's church was located at the intersection of Harper Avenue and Church Street. Although that building was just three years old, the growing congregation foresaw the need for a new and larger house of worship and therefore purchased the school site for future expansion. Thomas H. Broyhill chaired the building committee, formed in June 1923, that hired Benton & Benton – the architects of Central High – to design the new facility. Jones Brothers & Company, also of Wilson, North Carolina, managed the construction, which was complete by 1924. Constructed of buff-colored brick from Pennsylvania and Indiana limestone trim, the First Baptist Church (CW0106) featured a front portico and stepped steeple design that was familiar throughout the Atlantic seaboard in the early United States and developed from the church designs of Christopher Wren and James Gibbs in London. An attached four-story, buff brick and limestone Sunday School building was part of the original construction.

While Lenoir's St. James Episcopal Church (CW0111) did not rebuild entirely during this period, the parish renovated its mid-nineteenth-century, Gothic Revival building in 1920 and built a parish house west of the church in 1933. This one-and-a-half-story addition had a cross-gabled roof with gabled dormers. An L-shaped arcade connected the parish house and the church. (Figure 27)

Lenoir possessed many civic and social organizations, including a Kiwanis club and the Lenoir Rotary Club. The latter sponsored the construction of a community house on Harper Avenue, which was built in 1933-35 with labor provided by the federal Civil Works Administration. A log cabin with a U-shaped plan, the Community House (CW0562) typified the trend that emerged in western North Carolina in the early twentieth century of using native materials and traditional building techniques to build in a rustic revival style. (Figure 28)



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*Figure 26: First Baptist Church (CW0106) at 304 Main Street*



*Figure 27: Detail from a 1950 aerial view of Lenoir showing St. James Episcopal Church (CW0111) after the construction of the parish house. (Courtesy the Caldwell Heritage Museum and Bill Tate, Meadowood Studios)*



Figure 28: On right, the Community House (CW0562) at 385 Harper Avenue (Courtesy the Caldwell Heritage Museum and Bill Tate, Meadowood Studios)

### *Residential Architecture (1920-1945)*

The single-family homes built in Fairfield, Maehill Park, Freedman, Kentwood, West End, and other residential neighborhoods embraced the broad spectrum of residential forms and architectural styles popular in suburban communities throughout the United States in the second quarter of the twentieth century. They ranged from modest Craftsman-style bungalows and Period Cottages to more elaborate Colonial Revival and Neoclassical styles. These houses were almost universally frame structures with wood or brick cladding and asphalt shingle roofs. Stucco or stone cladding was used less frequently and limited to certain styles. Due to Lenoir's rolling terrain, many houses were banked into slopes, allowing for basement-level garages. In Maehill Park, several properties along Mulberry Street had garages along the street that were built into the slope of the lawn. Other homes had detached garages. Small-scale landscape features included retaining walls and terraced lawns. A 1926 brochure published by the Lenoir Chamber of Commerce noted that the residential sections of Lenoir were "well planned and well adapted to the topographical contours of the land."<sup>40</sup>

In communities across the nation during this period, the Craftsman style peaked in popularity. This style, influenced by England's late nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts movement, emphasized simple, informal floor plans and rustic detailing and appealed to progressive ideals that stressed simplicity and efficiency. Craftsman-style bungalows typically used natural materials, such as stone or wood shingles,

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<sup>40</sup> Lenoir Chamber of Commerce, *The Lenoir-Blowing Rock Wonderland* (Lenoir, NC: Lenoir Chamber of Commerce, 1926): n.p.

and featured sheltering rooflines and inviting porches. The bungalow, as well as the larger foursquare form, were sold by catalogs that offered detailed architectural plans for a small fee, a process that helped to democratize home building.

Another popular small-house form was the Period Cottage, which began to appear in suburban developments during the 1930s and 1940s. The type is characterized by a one- or one-and-a-half-story, side-gable form typically with off-center, front-facing gables and façade chimneys. Most Period Cottages were brick and featured decorative brickwork or stone detailing and arch-headed features. More elaborate examples utilized stone veneer and featured elements such as wing walls or side porches.

The Colonial Revival was the most prominent residential style in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century. Colonial Revival homes in Lenoir, as elsewhere, borrowed elements from Georgian and Federal buildings and typically featured pedimented entrances and entry porches, elaborate doorways and window treatments, plain or decorated cornices, pilasters, and roof balustrades. In form, the style emphasized symmetrically arranged, two-story massing under side-gabled or hipped roofs. Although not employed as frequently as the Colonial Revival, Neoclassical, Tudor Revival, and Spanish Colonial Revival styles were also built in Lenoir's residential enclaves.

### Freedman

Freedman is a historically African American neighborhood located northeast of Lenoir's downtown district. Its origins lie in the years following the Civil War when local tradition holds that formerly enslaved persons settled on land that was given to them by Reverend Jesse Rankin. The Freedman neighborhood's greatest period of growth was from the 1920s through the 1960s, when a rich commercial center developed along Finley Avenue, with houses spread across the surrounding landscape.<sup>41</sup> For decades, Freedman High School (no longer extant) stood in the neighborhood at the end of Harrington Street. Another important community landmark was the Lewis Chapel A. M. E. Church, which was located on the corner of Finley Avenue and Dimmette Street (now Healan Place) where St. Paul A. M. E. Church (CW0588) stands today. Today, the neighborhood's earliest extant houses date to the 1920s. Hartley Place is a residential street in Freedman that was named after landowner R. B. Hartley, who subdivided his land into nineteen lots in 1923. The street was set out along a ridgeline that ascends from Finley Avenue and allows for expansive views to the north. The one-story, bungalow at 508 Hartley Place (CW0592), which was built in 1928, has a hipped roof and a full-façade, front porch. Several of the houses at the south end of Hartley Place may have been built on speculation, as they have similar forms with half-façade porches and front-gable roofs. (Figure 29) Due to the street's topography, many houses are set on deep, narrow lots that drop off in the back, allowing for an exposed basement level.

Healan Place runs roughly parallel to Hartley Place to the east. While today there are no longer any houses along the west side of Healan, several one-story houses built in the 1940s along the east side of the street still stand. One typical example is the house numbered 508 Healan Place (CW0602). It is a one-story, concrete-block house with a low-sloped, gable roof and a wide entry porch supported by wood posts. (Figure 30)

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<sup>41</sup> Meeting between Annie McDonald, Preservation Specialist, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, and members of the Freedman School Committee, Lenoir, NC, December 14, 2017.



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*Figure 29: 517 Hartley Place (CW0597) on left and 519 Hartley Place (CW0598) on right*



*Figure 30: 508 Healan Place (CW0602)*

### West End

Another historically African American neighborhood in Lenoir is West End, which lies west of Prospect Street and east of Broadway and encompasses what is today Wheeler Street, Hill Street, the north end of Beall Street, and Willow Street. Although it lies in close proximity to Freedman, the two neighborhoods have distinct identities and were part of the larger African American community in Caldwell County. The neighborhood sits on a topographic rise and offers striking views of the distant mountains. At one time, the area featured several notable community-gathering places, including the West End Elementary School (now part of Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church), the American Legion Hall Post 231 at 510 Hill Street (CW0569), the Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church at 537-39 Willow Street (CW0575),

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and a local ballpark named Giants' Stadium (no longer extant). While today most of the residential resources in the area date to the 1950s and 1960s, a few older homes from the 1920s and 1930s still stand. One example is the one-and-a-half-story, Craftsman-style bungalow at 531 Hill Street (CW0573). Built around 1925, the wood-frame house has a side-gable roof with deep eaves supported on wood brackets and a large, front-facing, gabled dormer. A porch with a simple wood baluster extends across the entire front façade of the dwelling.

Fairfield

As noted earlier, James Harper was an early settler of Caldwell County who established a homestead in the early 1830s along what is now West Harper Avenue. Nearly 100 years later, James Harper Beall, James Harper's grandson and president of the Fairfield Chair Company, subdivided and sold all but 8.16 acres of his family homestead for residential development. A plat map labeled "Beall Estate" dated November 8, 1920, organized the land surrounding the James Harper House into seven blocks labeled "A" through "G." On this early plat map, the streets were named after trees – Maple, Poplar, Pine, Holly, Elm, etc.<sup>42</sup> A second plat map of the Beall estate was issued on March 5, 1924, and included additional parcels along the south side of West Harper Avenue. (Figure 31) A 1926 brochure published by the Chamber of Commerce described Fairfield as a "charming, fast-growing section" of Lenoir that offered residents stability and security.<sup>43</sup>

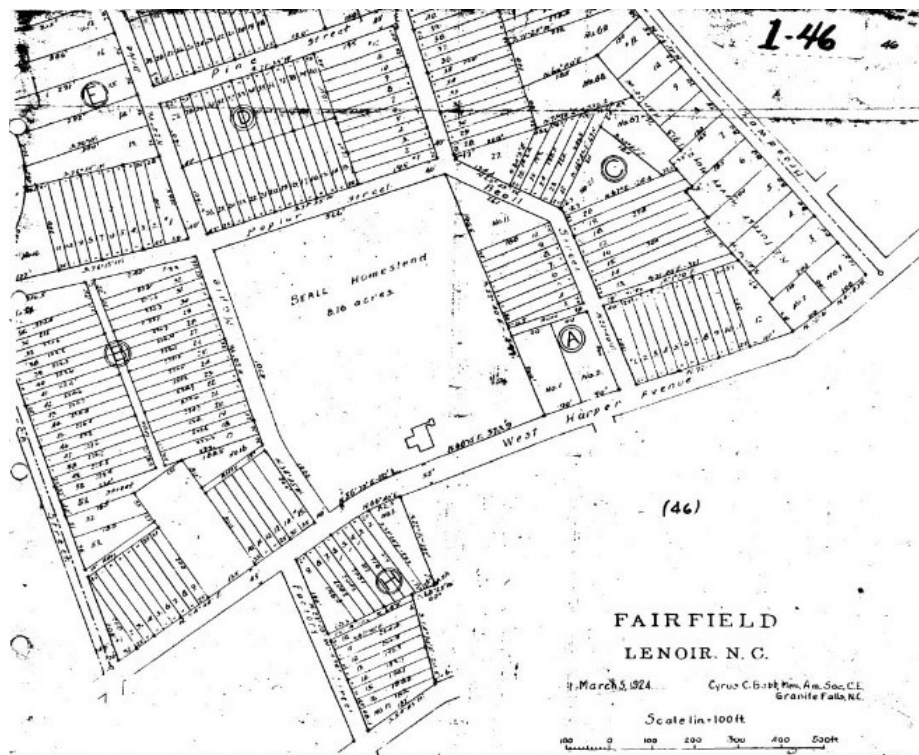


Figure 31: Plat map showing residential lots in Fairfield, 1924. (Caldwell County Register of Deeds, Plat Book 1, page 47)

<sup>42</sup> Caldwell County Register of Deeds, Plat Book 1, page 16.

<sup>43</sup> Lenoir Chamber of Commerce, *The Lenoir-Blowing Rock Wonderland* (Lenoir, NC: Lenoir Chamber of Commerce, 1926): n.p.



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Early residents of Fairfield included J. H. Dinglehoef, the manager of the Lenoir 5 & 10 Cent Store, and his wife Lula. In 1925, the Dinglehoefs purchased Lots 4, 5, and 6 of Fairfield block “D” to build a two-story house, which was complete the following year. With its paired, arched openings and moldings, the Dinglehoef House (CW0503) featured unusual architectural details for houses in the neighborhood. (Figure 32)

In December 1922, Laudie E. Dimmette, an executive of the Fidelity Insurance Agency, purchased lots 13, 14, and 15 of block “C” in Fairfield on which he built a sturdy foursquare at what is now 108 Beall Street. The foursquare, typically a two-and-a-half-story house with an interior plan having four evenly sized rooms on each floor, was a popular early twentieth-century domestic form. (A decade and a half after building in Fairfield, the Dimmettes would relocate to Maehill Park to a house designed by the Winston-Salem firm Northup & O’Brien. See text below.) Finley H. Coffey and Harold E. Coffey, president and vice-president respectively of Lenoir’s Kent-Coffey Manufacturing Company, both built notable Colonial Revival-style foursquare houses in Fairfield in the 1920s. (Figure 34 and Figure 33) Finley’s property comprised lots 1, 2, 3, and 4 of block “C,” now 1344 West Harper Avenue, while Harold built his house just down the street on lots 13, 14, and 15 of block “B,” now 1504 West Harper Avenue. The Harold E. Coffey House was featured in the 1926 Chamber of Commerce brochure as an example of the “modern trend of the new generation” of residential architecture in Lenoir.<sup>44</sup>



*Figure 32: J. H. and Lula Dinglehoef House (CW0503) at 205 Beall Street*

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

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*Figure 33: Finley H. Coffey House (CW0385) at 1344 West Harper Avenue*



*Figure 34: Historic photo (date unknown) of the Harold E. Coffey House (CW0385) at 1504 West Harper Avenue. (Courtesy the Caldwell Heritage Museum and Bill Tate, Meadowood Studios)*



The one-and-a-half-story, Craftsman-style bungalow at 116 Beall Street (CW0496), built around 1925, has a spacious ground-level front porch that extends across the entire width of the house. (Figure 35) Typical of the Craftsman style, the porch has brick piers that support square, tapered posts and a front gable with projecting eaves and cutout brackets. By the early twentieth century, this style of residential architecture had become admired by many as the ideal suburban home and was built frequently in Fairfield and other neighborhoods.



*Figure 35: 116 Beall Street (CW0496)*

### Maehill Park

At the same time that Fairfield was being platted, another subdivision was being laid out across town to accommodate Lenoir's burgeoning middle and upper-middle classes. In 1922, the Buffalo Power Company, a land development company chartered in 1919 by three local business leaders (Thomas H. Broyhill, his brother James Edgar Broyhill, and Roby Sylvester Crisp) bought a large tract of land from the Norwood family and organized a residential development that they would call Maehill Park. The subdivision, which was surveyed and platted in 1924, encompassed Highland Avenue and parts of Norwood Street, Hibriten Avenue, and Pennton Avenue. Maehill Park abutted Oak View, which was also developed on land once belonging to the Norwoods, as well as Rectory Hill. Perhaps in an effort to differentiate Maehill Park from its counterparts, the Buffalo Power Company had a large masonry archway built on Norwood Street to mark the entrance to the subdivision from the north. Although the archway no longer stands today, evidence of the gateway entrance to Maehill Park can be seen today in the change in character of the tree lawn and sidewalk near 401 Norwood Street.

On March 3, 1923, shortly after embarking on the Maehill Park project, James Edgar Broyhill and his wife Satie purchased a large, frame house at the corner of Norwood Street and College Avenue. The house, which had been built around 1905, was a two-story, double-pile house with a wraparound porch featuring turned columns and balusters and scroll-sawn brackets. Broyhill's purchase of the house at that time may have been a gesture to signal to potential homebuyers that Maehill Park was a safe and desirable neighborhood in which to buy a home and raise a family. Today the J. E. Broyhill House (CW0380), located at 601 College Avenue, is owned by the Caldwell Arts Council.

While Maehill Park's residents represented a wide range of middle- and upper-class workers, many property deeds included racially restrictive covenants that limited African Americans from buying real estate in the neighborhood. When Aurelius D. Huffines purchased his property on Highland Avenue from the Buffalo Power Company in November 1945, for example, the deed carried a list of twelve restrictions.<sup>45</sup> The first prohibited the purchase, lease, or occupation of the property by African Americans. Others addressed setbacks, outbuildings, and other issues related to the character of the property and the quality of the house design.

Whereas many of the homes in Maehill Park and other neighborhoods were constructed by builders using pattern books or catalog designs, some residents commissioned professional architects to design or build additions to their homes. Notable firms and practitioners with projects in Maehill Park included Louis H. Asbury (1877-1975), an important and prolific Charlotte architect, who worked on the H. E. Merritt House on Hibriten Street in 1929, the Winston-Salem firm of Northup & O'Brien, one of the most distinguished architectural firms in the state during the first half of the twentieth century, and Charlotte-based architect George Rhodes. Northup & O'Brien designed the home of Laudie E. Dimmette, the president of the Fidelity Insurance Agency, in 1938, and a residence for George H. Bernhardt two years later. The Japanese-American architect and landscape architect Aiji Tashiro (1908-1994) also worked in Maehill Park during this period, designing residential landscapes for high-profile clients such as John Christian Bernhardt.

The new houses built in Maehill Park embraced popular national trends in residential design. Two fine examples of Craftsman-style bungalows in the neighborhood include the James C. Hogan House (CW0390) at 416 Hibriten Avenue and the Garland Jones House (CW0396) at 430 Norwood Street. (Figure 36) James Hogan and his wife Joyce built their two-story house in 1928. It features a complex roofline comprised of four, low-pitched, overlapping front gables with deep eaves and exposed roof rafters and a partial width front porch that wraps around to the south façade. The Garland Jones House, built in 1932, features distinctive half-timbering in the front and side gables of the main roof. The house has a generous porch with tapered, square, brick columns, a square balustrade, and a tile floor.



*Figure 36: James C. Hogan House (CW0390) at 416 Hibriten Avenue on left and the Garland Jones House (CW0396) at 430 Norwood Street on right*

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<sup>45</sup> Caldwell County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 213, pages 282-283.

The Merritt-Bernhardt House (CW0693) at 406 Hibriten Avenue was built by Herbert and Blanche Merritt in 1924. (Figure 37) The two-story, brick veneer, Colonial Revival-style house was designed by Charlotte-based architect Louis H. Asbury, whose portfolio included several projects in Lenoir. The front façade features a centrally located door, balanced fenestration, and wings that mirror one another in size and ornamentation. Shortly after the house was completed, the Merritts rehired Asbury to make a few alterations to the original design, including modifying the entry porch and adding a false chimney. In 1968, the residence was sold to George Alexander Bernhardt, who grew up nearby at the Colonial Revival-style house known as “Homewood” (CW0702). Homewood, located at 202 Woodside Place, was built in 1933 for furniture manufacturer John Christian Bernhardt. (Figure 38) It was designed by architect George Rhodes, who modeled it after the Federal-era Homewood House in Baltimore, Maryland (1801-08). The house has a five-part plan that consists of a main block connected by hyphens to pavilions. Along the roof of the main block are arched dormers filled with wood casement windows. A decorative cornice runs along the roofline, and the front door has an elaborate surround that features an arched opening, a fanlight, fluted pilasters, and a dentil course, all topped by a pediment. The gardens and grounds at Homewood were designed by Aiji Tashiro, who was trained as both a landscape architect and architect. Site features include a winding driveway, brick footpaths and retaining walls, and a formal garden. (Figure 38) Tashiro was born in Rhode Island and studied landscape architecture and the University of Cincinnati. After graduating in 1933, he worked for the city of Cincinnati then entered into private practice. In 1939, he was offered a position at Appalachian State University (then Appalachian State Teachers College) in Boone, North Carolina. During World War II, Tashiro evaded internment and spent a few years in Lenoir. After the war, he had a firm in Hickory, North Carolina, with architect D. Carroll Albee. It was during this period that he earned his architectural license. In addition to Homewood, Tashiro completed many residential, commercial, and public projects in Lenoir.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The professional and business files of Tashiro are archived at the North Carolina State Archives, and a project list is available at <http://www.ncmodernist.org/tashiro.htm>.





Figure 37: Merritt-Bernhardt House (CW0693) at 406 Hibriten Avenue



Figure 38: Homewood (CW0702) at 202 Woodside Place designed by architect George Rhodes and landscape architect Aiji Tashiro

Across from one another on Norwood Street are two fine examples of the Colonial Revival style. (Figure 39) The first, at 407 Norwood Street (CW0640), is a two-story, brick house built in 1934. The house exemplifies two common characteristics of the style – a symmetrical center block flanked by one-story side porches and a prominent, gabled entry porch sheltering an entrance with a glazed surround. With its gambrel roof and multi-bay, shed-roof dormer, the house across the street at 406 Norwood Street (CW0639) falls into the subcategory of Dutch Colonial. A distinctive feature of the house is the steeply pitched, gabled hood that breaks the roofline over the front door.

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Figure 39: 407 Norwood Street (CW0640) on left and 406 Norwood Street (CW0639) on right

In 1931, John B. and Marjorie Galvin purchased two lots on Mulberry Street and soon after built a noteworthy Spanish Colonial Revival-style house on the property. (Figure 40) The two-story, stucco house at 211 Mulberry Street (CW0676) features an arched entryway with decorative Spanish Colonial Revival flourishes, including terra cotta tile steps. At the back of the house is a loggia that opens onto a generous patio paved with bricks. The house is prominently sited on a hill with a terraced lawn. At the base of the lawn is a rough-cut stone retaining wall and a garage, which also features Spanish Colonial Revival elements, including a red tile roof that matches the house. In 1938, the Galvins bought an adjacent lot to the south on which they built an outdoor swimming pool, one of the first in the city. Two pool houses were built into the hillside behind the pool. (Only one remains today.)



Figure 40: Two views of the Galvin-Templeman House (CW0676) at 211 Mulberry Street

In 1925, local attorney L. Spurgeon Spurling purchased lot 15 in section “D” of Maehill Park where he built a two-story, frame house that blended Colonial Revival-style features with Neoclassical elements. (Figure 41) The house features a full-height, full-width colonnaded porch crowned with a parapet. The wide band of trim beneath the cornice of the roof is a typical feature of the Neoclassical style. In this case, the band is made up of undecorated boards. In the center bay of the front façade is an elaborate door surround in which the door and its fanlight and sidelights are encased in a larger, pedimented enframement. An undated historic photograph of the property, which appears to be from the late 1920s, indicates that there have been a few minor changes to the house since its original construction – the pediment was added over the fanlight at the front entrance and the roofline balustrade has been altered.





Figure 41: L. Spurgeon Spurling House (CW0696) at 414 Hibriten Avenue

Other examples of Neoclassical style residential architecture in Maehill Park include the house at 310 Hibriten Avenue (CW0689) and the Fred A. Thompson House at 501 Norwood Street (CW0397). (Figure 42) The first is notable for its full-height, full-width portico, which is supported by slender Ionic columns. The latter, built in 1924, features a two-story portico with monumental Corinthian columns supporting a full entablature.

In January 1935, Emory C. McCall, an executive at the Lenoir Chair Company, purchased lot 21 in section “D” of Maehill Park. The side-gable roof and the slender porch columns of the McCall House at 514 Highland Avenue (CW0722) are characteristic of the Neoclassical style’s later phase of popularity (about 1925 to 1950). What is unusual, however, are the house’s asymmetrical wings – one-story, side-gable on the east and one-and-a-half-story, cross-gable on the west. An undated photograph of the property indicates that few changes have been made to the house since its original construction in 1937. (Figure 43)



Figure 42: 310 Hibriten Avenue (CW0689) on left and Fred A. Thompson House (CW0397) at 501 Norwood Avenue on right

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Figure 43: Historic view on left and current view on right of the Emory C. and Hattie McCall House (CW0722) at 514 Highland Avenue (Image on left courtesy the Caldwell Heritage Museum and Bill Tate, Meadowood Studios)

Winston-Salem architects Northup & O'Brien were commissioned to design the Laudie E. and Nannie H. Dimmette House (CW0706) at 401 Highland Avenue in the late 1930s. (Figure 44 and Figure 45) Known as "La Ravine," the house, which was completed in 1938, is an unusual example in Lenoir of the French Eclectic style, which drew inspiration from French domestic architecture. While the house's street façade stands two and a half stories in height, the sloping site provides for a three-and-a-half-story rear façade. The property's lot extends all the way to Pennton Avenue, providing room for an expansive rear garden.



Figure 44: Laudie E. and Nannie H. Dimmette House (CW0706) 401 Highland Avenue



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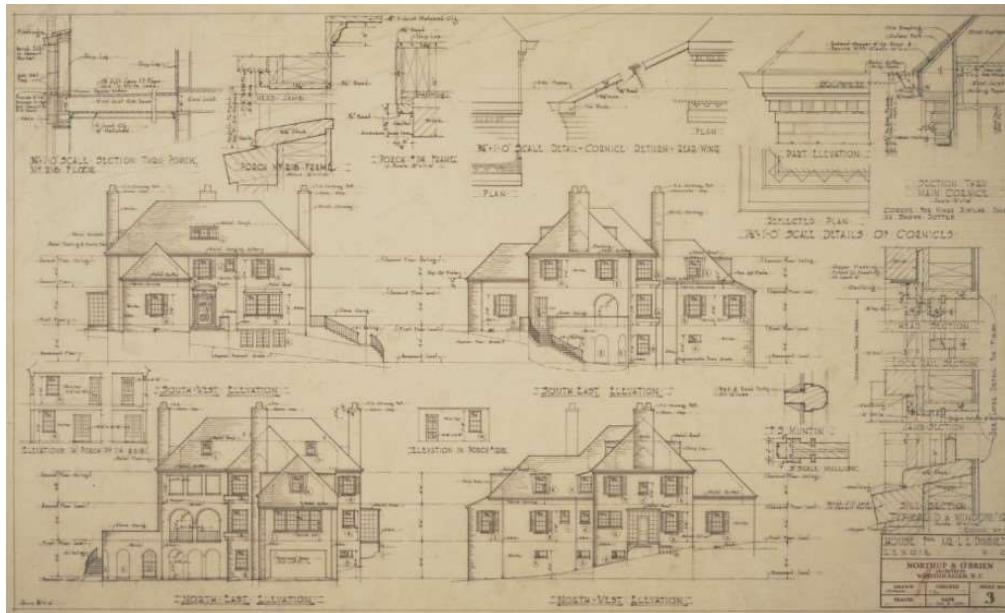


Figure 45: Northup & O'Brien, "House for Mr. L. E. Dimmette, Lenoir, NC, Sheet 3." (Northup & O'Brien Architectural Records, 1907-1980, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, NC)

Typical of the Tudor Revival style, the two-story house at 515 Mulberry Street (CW0679), built in 1926, features a steeply pitched, side-gable roof, a prominent front-facing gable, decorative half-timbering, and a massive, stone chimney. Another distinctive example of the Tudor Revival style is the Edward Crisp House (CW0398) at 504 Norwood Street, which was built around 1927. (Figure 46)



Figure 46: 515 Mulberry Street (CW0679) on left and the Edward Crisp House (CW0398) at 504 Norwood Street on right

Dating to circa 1930, the one-story, brick house at 215 Norwood Street (CW0621) is a typical Period Cottage in its form, materials, and architectural features. (Figure 47) It is a one-story, brick-veneer house with a modest side porch engaged under a side-gable roof. A steeply pitched, front-facing gable forms a sheltered entrance for the front door, which is set in a round-arched opening. The Period Cottage-style house at 628 Pennton Avenue (CW0736) is notable for its use of stone. (Figure 47) Built in 1934, the one-and-a-half-story house has an asymmetrical form, overlapping, front-facing gables, and massive, stone chimneys on the side and front façades.



Figure 47: 215 Norwood (CW0621) on left and 628 Pennton Avenue (CW0736) on right

### Kentwood Park

The hilly residential neighborhood of Kentwood Park, located a few blocks south of the downtown commercial center, was initially surveyed and platted in 1925 by Dr. A. W. Dula on land that had been owned by Dr. A. A. Kent, whose estate was located behind the campus of Davenport College (now Caldwell Heritage Museum) on what is now known as Vaiden Street. At the time of its initial development, the subdivision was at the southern edge of the Lenoir city limits. It consisted of twenty-one blocks traversed by a gridlike pattern of streets with names that may have been chosen to allude to the rustic, yet scenic character of Dr. Kent's estate – Grove, Mountain View, West View, and Riverside. Despite offering “every modern convenience of city life,” including paved streets, sewer and water lines, and a profusion of trees and shrubbery, initial development during the late 1920s and 1930s was slow, limited to a cluster of houses built along Kentwood Street and Main Street.<sup>47</sup> Today, the earliest extant houses in the neighborhood include the bungalows at 809 Grove Avenue (1929), 409 Kentwood Street (1930), and 402 Mountain View Street (1931). (Figure 48)



Figure 48: 809 Grove Avenue (CW0794) in Kentwood Park

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<sup>47</sup> Lenoir Chamber of Commerce, *The Lenoir-Blowing Rock Wonderland* (Lenoir, NC: Lenoir Chamber of Commerce, 1926): n.p.

## **Postwar Development (1945-1975)**

### *Introduction*

The period after World War II was a prosperous one for many of Lenoir's furniture manufacturers. A national demand for home and office furnishings allowed companies to expand and diversify. Like many cities across the United States, Lenoir experienced a suburban housing boom, fueled by increased automobile ownership, advances in building technology including prefabrication methods, and the availability of low-cost, long-term mortgages. Lenoir's city limits expanded as streets and boulevards extended outward, opening up new land for subdivision and creating fringe areas with low densities. Developments such as Lakeside Terrace Circle created a suburban landscape entirely dependent on the automobile.

In 1958, the city supported just one local architecture firm, Coffey & Olsen, which had its offices at 329 East Harper Avenue.<sup>48</sup> Regional architects and landscape architects working in Lenoir during this period included architect Eric Goodyear Flannagan (1892-1970), of Henderson, North Carolina, Asheville architect Henry Irven Gaines (1900-1986), landscape architect Aiji Tashiro, and landscape architect Doan Reber Ogden (1907-1989). Flannagan, whose career spanned over forty-five years, specialized in educational and health-related facilities. He designed the Caldwell Memorial Hospital on Mulberry Street, which opened in 1951. The architect Henry Irven Gaines was a partner of the short-lived firm of Beacham, LeGrand, and Gaines in the 1920s and a founding member of Six Associates, which was established in 1942 and developed into the largest architectural practice in western North Carolina during the post-World War II period. Gaines made a successful living designing furniture manufacturing plants and showrooms for Broyhill, Kent-Coffey, and Bernhardt, among others.

### *Industrial Architecture (1945-1975)*

Although the Bernhardt Furniture Company was successful throughout the first half of the twentieth century, it entered a particularly prosperous period in the years after World War II. As American soldiers returned home and purchased houses, demand for furniture increased significantly nationwide. In the 1950s and 1960s, Bernhardt built new plants or purchased and renovated existing plants, many of which were along Morganton Boulevard.

In 1957, the Bernhardt Furniture Company built a new plant at what is now 1904 Morganton Boulevard. Initial construction at the facility included a one-story, brick building with steel, awning windows. It had an open floor plan with areas assigned for cutting, building, finishing, and packing. The following year, the company expanded the plant to the north with the construction of drying kilns. (Figure 49) By the end of 1958, the plant had an L-shaped plan. A western addition to the main room built in the 1960s doubled the square footage devoted to manufacturing. Today the facility, known as Bernhardt Plant #5 (CW0825) includes a two-story central warehouse at the plant's southernmost end, which was built circa 1999-2000.

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<sup>48</sup> Ernest H. Miller, *Miller's Lenoir, NC, City Directory, 1957-58* (Asheville, NC: Miller Press, 1958).



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*Figure 49: Former drying kilns at Bernhardt Plant #5 (CW0825) at 1904 Morganton Boulevard*

A few years later, in 1961, Bernhardt constructed a significant addition at its first plant, Bernhardt Plant #1 (CW0823) at 1548 Morganton Boulevard. Today, this facility is comprised of three principal buildings – a 1936 warehouse, which is constructed of brick on three sides and metal sheeting over timber frame on the fourth (south) side, a circa 1937 boiler house, and the 1961 addition. The latter is built of masonry and clad with a combination of materials – running bond, brick veneer on the east and west and corrugated metal on the south and on the north where the wall extends above the roofline of the 1936 building. (Figure 50)



*Figure 50: Bernhardt Plant #1 (CW0823) at 1548 Morganton Boulevard with a view of the 1936 warehouse on left and a view of the boiler house on right*



In 1964, the Bernhardt Furniture Company obtained seventy-five percent of the stock of the Hibriten Furniture Company, which occupied the former Lenoir Chair Manufacturing Site at 1540 Morganton Boulevard. Proximity to Bernhardt's Plant #1 allowed the company to more easily integrate the Hibriten site into their operations. From autumn 1966 into the following spring, Bernhardt undertook a comprehensive rebuilding program at the facility. A majority of the buildings were demolished, except for a lumber storage building northwest of the railroad track, which was built in 1946. New construction began with three dry kilns and a two-story manufacturing building. The new building was expanded to the west in winter 1966 and spring 1967. When it was completed, the new facility had approximately 300,000 square feet of floor space. The lumber storage building was later attached to the main plant building. Known as Bernhardt Plant #3 (CW0824), today the facility specializes in office case goods. (Figure 51)



*Figure 51: The industrial site at 1540 Morganton Boulevard, Bernhardt Plant #3 (CW0824), has been home to three furniture manufacturing firms since the early twentieth century.*

Bernhardt was not alone in its company-wide modernization and expansion program during this period. In the 1950s and 1960s, Broyhill Furniture Industries made significant alterations to the Broyhill Harper Plant (CW0765) on Prospect Avenue, and today (under new ownership) it contains 937,000 square feet spread across five attached, one- to three-story, brick buildings. (Figure 52) The Fairfield Chair Company facility also evolved to fulfill the processing and product development obligations of a furniture company with a global market. Today, the property, which has been known as Fairfield Chair Plant #1 (CW0479) since the late 1990s when the company added a second factory, occupies an entire block, bound by Harper Avenue to the north, Beall Street to the west, Light Street to the east, and College Avenue to the south. (Figure 53)

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*Figure 52: Broyhill Harper Plant (CW0765) at 501 Prospect Avenue*



*Figure 53: Fairfield Chair Plant #1 (CW0479) at 1331 West Harper Avenue*



*Commercial and Institutional Architecture (1945-1975)*

The intersection of Pennton Avenue and Harper Avenue was developed as a commercial area in the years following World War II when three one-story, brick buildings were built between 1945 and 1948. While the buildings at 106 Pennton Avenue (CW0559) and across the street at 109 Pennton Avenue/239 Harper Avenue (CW0560) were designed for the automobile age, with parking areas fronting the buildings, the storefronts at 316-320 Harper Avenue (CW0561) abutted the sidewalk, reflecting earlier commercial forms. (Figure 54)

Facing an influx of members following the end of World War II, Lenoir's American Legion Post No. 29, founded in 1919, built a new meeting hall at 401 Main Street (CW0796). (Figure 55) The Streamline Moderne building, completed in 1949, features a central tower adorned with a stone bas-relief depicting a kneeling soldier. The muscular form and strong lines of the sculpture evoke public sculpture of the New Deal-era Works Progress Administration.



Figure 54: 109 Pennton Avenue/239 Harper Avenue, A (CW0560) on left and 316-320 Harper Avenue (CW0561) on right



Figure 55: American Legion Post No. 29 (CW0796) at 401 Main Street



As Lenoir's population swelled, area churches found their congregations growing in number. The Zion United Church of Christ (CW0745) constructed a new building on College Avenue around 1950. The church, which is faced with brick and has a U-shaped plan, features Gothic Revival elements, including buttresses, a rose window, and pointed arches. Those congregations that did not build new churches during this period expanded their campuses instead. In 1949, the First United Methodist Church (CW0108) built an education building, which was enlarged once in 1959 and again two years later. Lenoir architects Coffey & Olsen designed the chapel and education building for the First Baptist Church (CW0106), which were completed in 1958. A major remodeling of St. James Episcopal Church (CW0111) in 1963 added a new sanctuary, sacristy, organ loft, and narthex. In addition, the church was reoriented to face south so that its entrance faced College Avenue. More recently, a two-and-a half-story addition was added to the north end of the parish house.

In addition to expanding their manufacturing operations during this period, Lenoir's furniture companies also commissioned the design and construction of new corporate offices and showrooms that often used contemporary architectural styles and forms. A notable example is the headquarters and showroom opened by Broyhill Furniture Industries in 1966. Located at 1245 Blowing Rock Boulevard (CW0744), the Formalist-style office building recalls the work of modernist master Edward Durrell Stone and became a symbol of the company's corporate identity. (Figure 56) The Fairfield Chair Company showroom at 1909 Hickory Boulevard (CW0743), built in 1970, was designed by architect John Erwin Ramsay (1915-1991). It featured an innovative form composed of massive, cantilevered concrete slabs resting on pedestals faced with natural stone. (Figure 57) Site features wrapped around and under the main building blocks, integrating architecture with landscape. Ramsay was a strong proponent of modern architecture and designed many award-winning projects. His body of work included residences and commercial buildings, as well as courthouses and other public buildings. Describing the opening of the Fairfield Chair Company showroom, Ramsey stated: "People were amazed that we could cantilever a building 20 feet in four directions...they had never seen anything like it before..."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Juanita Bouser, *John Erwin Ramsay, FAIA: Portrait of an Architect* (n.p., 1984), 32.

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Figure 56: Former Broyhill Showroom (CW0744) at 1245 Blowing Rock Boulevard (Courtesy the Caldwell Heritage Museum and Bill Tate, Meadowood Studios)



Figure 57: Former Fairfield Chair Company Showroom (now the J. E. Broyhill Civic Center) at 1909 Hickory Boulevard (CW0743)

Modernist design principles also guided the development of two prominent public buildings in Lenoir – the Caldwell County Sheriff’s Department and Jail, constructed in 1958-63, and the Lenoir Fire Station No. 1, completed in 1969. (Figure 58) The Sheriff’s Department and Jail (CW0169), at 214 Mulberry Street, is comprised of a one-story sheriff’s department at the north end and a three-story jail on the south end, which is connected to the Caldwell County Courthouse (at 216 Main Street) by an elevated walkway across Mulberry Street. The entrance to the Sheriff’s Department features a notable flat-roofed entrance pavilion with a decorative concrete-block screen. Fire Station No. 1 (CW0563), which is located at 602 Harper Avenue, is a two-story building with a concrete block frame and a wood truss roof. The walls are clad with buff-colored bricks laid in a running bond, and the front and rear façades are articulated with a series of narrow, slightly bowed, cast-stone pilasters. When the fire station was completed in 1969, it offered modern amenities such as central air conditioning and heat and individual bedrooms and bathrooms for on-duty firefighters. The design featured an interior hose tower, drive-through engine bays, and offices for administrative staff.



Figure 58: Caldwell County Sheriff’s Department and Jail (CW0169) at 214 Mulberry Street on left and Fire Station No. 1 (CW0563) at 602 Harper Avenue on right

### *Residential Architecture (1945-1975)*

Lenoir’s postwar homebuyers demanded affordable, single-family homes that reflected modern consumer preferences. As a result, both Minimal Traditional dwellings, which offered simplified versions of prewar Colonial Revival styles, and suburban Ranch houses were built in great numbers during this period. These styles provided efficient floor plans that met the changing needs and preferences of middle-class American families. With the popularity of Ranch-style houses, which placed all the living space on one floor, low rooflines, broad chimneys, picture windows, carports, and exterior patios became common features of postwar suburban communities. While infill construction continued in historic residential neighborhoods, new areas were established in outlying areas of town reflecting national trends in postwar development and regional planning.

#### In-Town Residential Development

In 1949, James Harper Beall subdivided his family estate, “Fairfield,” once again. A plat map indicates that the family’s remaining 8.16-acre parcel was reduced by more than half, with new residential lots created to the north, west, and east of the Beall’s early nineteenth-century house. It was at this time that Fulton Place, which runs perpendicular to Poplar Street, was laid out. Also in the 1950s, a few of the larger blocks platted on the original map of Fairfield that had not yet been sold were further subdivided. A plat map dated October 1951-March 1952, for example, lays out the subdivision of Linwood, which



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comprised part of Fairfield's block "F" and included Holly Street (now Holly Court). The Minimal Traditional and Ranch houses built along Fulton Place, Holly Court, and Maple Drive in the 1950s and 1960s are typical of Fairfield's postwar infill development. (Figure 59)



*Figure 59: 307 Maple Drive (CW0536) on left and 301 Maple Drive (CW0535) on right*

While the C. B. Harrison House and a few other Oak View dwellings still stand today as vestiges of Maehill Park's initial development, other early twentieth-century houses were demolished during the post-World War II period and the land that they stood on was subdivided and redeveloped. In the 1950s, for example, the George Lynn Bernhardt house on College Avenue was demolished, and the property was surveyed and platted as Bernhardt Circle. At least three of the lots were sold to Bernhardt descendants for minimal consideration. New construction also occurred in Maehill Park on lots that had been left undeveloped, resulting in the character of the streets seen today. While the Colonial Revival style remained popular, postwar infill included mainly Minimal Traditional and Ranch-style houses.

The Leslie D. Hines, Jr., House (CW0663) is a one-and-a-half-story, Colonial Revival residence built in 1965 on a sloping site at 508 College Avenue in Maehill Park. The initial landscape design for the house was by Asheville landscape architect Doan Reber Ogden, a prominent designer and teacher in western North Carolina in the second half of the twentieth century. Ogden's plans for the Hines House called for a sloping front lawn framed on three sides by curved planting beds. In the backyard, a curved, brick retaining wall separated the lawn and patio area from the motor court. (Figure 60) Ogden also provided landscape designs for the Dr. James H. and Ann M. Segars House (CW0733) at 506 Pennton Avenue in Maehill Park and the Paul H. Broyhill House (CW0749) at 135 Claron Place.

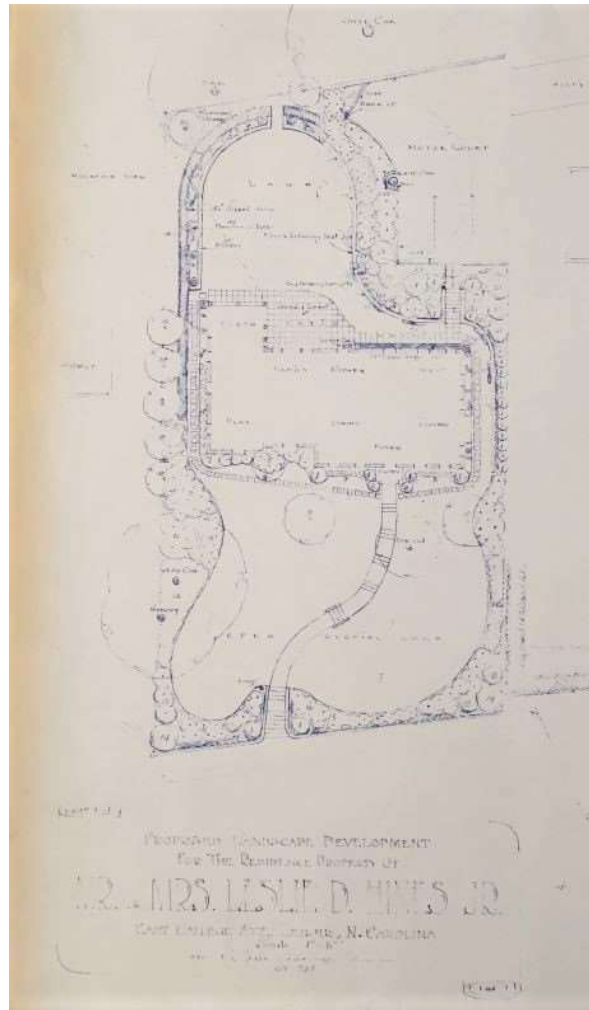


Figure 60: Doan Reber Ogden landscape plan for the Leslie D. Hines, Jr., House (CW0663) at 508 College Avenue (Doan Reber Ogden Papers, 1952-1984, North Carolina Western Regional Archives, Asheville, North Carolina)

The Homeseekers Land Company resurveyed and replatted Kentwood Park in November 1945 (revised March 1946), which initiated the second phase of the neighborhood's development. Colon and Pauline Prestwood purchased two lots in Kentwood Park from the Homeseekers Land Company on May 22, 1948. Their house, at 522 Mountain View Street (CW0790), was completed in 1948 and is an early example of the Ranch style. (Figure 61) Colon Prestwood was a superintendent at Bernhardt Furniture Company. The Prestwoods were typical of the Kentwood's homebuyers during this period, which included officers and middle managers employed by the local furniture companies, as well as police officers, teachers, stenographers, clerks, and accountants. The one-story, frame house at 512 Mountain View Street (CW0830), which dates to 1948, demonstrates the modest form and minimal detailing of many Kentwood Park houses being built during this period. (Figure 61) It is clad with asbestos shingles and rests on a brick foundation. The three-bay front façade is symmetrically arranged under a side-gable roof, and the front door surround features fluted pilasters and an entablature adorned with a three-leaf clover.



*Figure 61: The Prestwood House (CW0790) at 522 Mountain View Street on left and 512 Mountain View Street (CW0830) on right*

The Freedman neighborhood blossomed in the postwar era as its commercial and residential areas grew symbiotically. This African American community benefitted from numerous businesses along Finley Avenue, which was densely developed at the time. Enterprises in this self-sufficient neighborhood included two restaurants (the Knotty Pine Grill and the Paramount), a tea room, taxi service, two barber shops, and a service station. Felder's Grocery Store on Harrington Street prepared sandwiches for African American students who attended the now demolished Freedman High School that was located nearby. In 1972, to recognize Lenoir's – and Caldwell County's – rich African American heritage, community leaders established the arts and culture-focused Harambee Festival, which celebrated its forty-fifth year in 2017.<sup>50</sup>

#### Suburban Residential Development

During the national postwar suburban boom, Lenoir's list of residential subdivisions grew to include the neighborhoods of Holloway Hill, Lenoir Heights, Miller Hill, Pennwood Heights, Tremont Park, and Westbrook. New developments such as Lakeside Terrace Circle and Joycetown were established in more peripheral locations relative to the downtown district. These neighborhoods featured a range of mid-century domestic styles and offered affordable housing to Lenoir's growing middle class.

One of the developers of Lakeside Terrace Circle was Rubin Drum, the owner of Drum's Drive-in Theatre, who purchased 16 acres on land from John McLean in 1959, which he subdivided into residential lots. He placed restrictions on the types of houses that could be built in the area. The exterior of the residences had to be "brick, rock, or wood," and exteriors of cinderblock or asbestos siding were prohibited. Contractor Ben B. Pope, of Pope Builders, purchased several lots in the neighborhood and built houses on them, including 2324, 2325, and 2327 Lakeside Terrace Circle, among others. Early homeowners included Everett T. Abernathy, a representative for Wood-Mosaic Industries, and Dewey D. Hawkins, an assistant at the Blowing Rock Chair Company.

Typical of early freeway suburbs whose residents relied on automobiles for their commute, the houses in Lakeside Terrace Circle are set on generous lots with broad turf lawns and long driveways that access attached garages or carports. The architecture includes Split Level and Ranch-style houses constructed with brick veneer or a combination of brick and siding. The Ranch houses have long, low profiles and typically feature attached garages or carports. The Bill Joe and Carol Littlejohn House (CW0566) at 2325

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<sup>50</sup> Meeting between Annie McDonald, Preservation Specialist, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, and members of the Freedman School Committee, Lenoir, NC, December 14, 2017.



Lakeside Terrace Circle stands out for its use of featherboard siding (also called live edge or wavy edge). (Figure 62) The front-gabled, Contemporary house at 2346 Lakeside Terrace Circle is a notable form for the area. As typical of the style, it features a low-pitched, front-gable roof, overhanging eaves, a blend of brick and wood wall cladding, and lacks any traditional detailing. (Figure 62)



Figure 62: Bill Joe and Carol Littlejohn House (CW0566) at 2325 Lakeside Terrace Circle on left and 2346 Lakeside Terrace Circle (CW0568) on right

By the mid-twentieth century, Lenoir's economy had grown to such an extent that the town limits could no longer sustain new industries and the residential developments that predictably followed. In 1943, Lenoir resident J. C. Hogan, manager of the Hickory Fibre Company, purchased a large tract south of the city for a plant as well as a residential development he named Joyceton, which was located along Norwood Street below Southwest Boulevard.<sup>51</sup> The railroad passed through the area just west of Norwood Street, and other manufacturers soon followed. In the years immediately following the end of World War II, the Blowing Rock Chair Company, the Singer Furniture Company, and the Lenoir Mirror Company also built facilities in Joyceton.<sup>52</sup> While this area was outside the city limits at the time of its development, it has since been incorporated into Lenoir.

The Joyceton neighborhood west of the railroad tracks and south of Southwest Boulevard was developed as the Zeb V. Johnson subdivision, which was surveyed and platted on September 10, 1952. The majority of houses in the area are one-story, Ranch-style houses constructed in the 1950s, such as the residence at 2327 Vine Street (CW0810). (Figure 63) Built in 1956, it has an asymmetrical, one-story shape with a low-pitched, hipped roof that extends over a carport on the north façade. The house is clad with brick veneer and features banked, sash windows and glass block. Later development in the area occurred along Melrose Street, where the houses date to the mid-1960s.

Emerald Place is a residential street located southeast of the intersection of Southwest Boulevard and Morganton Boulevard. It was platted in 1958 as Mountain View Terrace, and the street was originally called Grandview Street. Approximately thirty residential lots line the street, and residential development consists primarily of one-story, brick veneer, Ranch houses from the 1960s. According to

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<sup>51</sup> The oldest structure on the Hickory Fibre Company site, located at 2510 Norwood Street, dates to 1944.

<sup>52</sup> Nancy Alexander, *Here Will I Dwell: The Story of Caldwell County*, 200.

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tax records, the earliest houses on Emerald Place were built in 1959, including 807 Emerald Place (CW0813), 923 Emerald Place, and 901 Emerald Place. (Figure 64) Later infill includes houses built in the 1980s and 1990s.



*Figure 63: 2327 Vine Street (CW0810)*



*Figure 64: 807 Emerald Place (CW0813)*



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Seehorn is a residential street located east of Blowing Rock Boulevard (Route 321) near its intersection with Hospital Avenue. At least part of Seehorn Street was platted in 1957 as part of a development called Robinwood Court. Typical of many postwar suburban developments, many lots along Seehorn Street are generously sized, offering space for deep, broad front lawns. The area is characterized by Minimal Traditional and Ranch style houses primarily from the 1950s. The house at 730 Seehorn Street (CW0609) exemplifies the qualities associated with the Ranch style. It has long, horizontal massing, a low-pitched, side-gable roof, and a carport. While the majority of the houses along Seehorn Street are built with brick veneer, a few use a combination of materials, such as the house at 726 Seehorn Street, built in 1959, which is clad with brick and stone.

Standing apart from the tract housing that spreads across many of Lenoir's postwar suburban neighborhoods are a few examples of architect-designed houses that represent "high style" residential design of the modern era. The Allene B. and William Stevens House (CW0748) at 153 Hillhaven Place sits on a secluded, wooded site on a hill overlooking Hickory Boulevard south of its intersection with Wilkesboro Boulevard. (Figure 65) The asymmetrically massed, Contemporary-style house was completed in 1963 and represents the stylistic aspirations of many people who were building houses at the time. It has a long, horizontal form and three wings under a cross-gabled, slate roof. The roof has recessed copper gutters and deep, overhanging eaves that protect the stone façade and large expanses of plate-glass windows. The front entrance is set under a gabled porch paved with Virginia greenstone. It is composed of massive, wood, double doors flanked by plate-glass windows set behind sculptural bronze screens. On the south side of the house are two perpendicular wings that frame a patio paved with greenstone. Interior rooms feature custom-built details and fine wood finishes, including parquet floors and wood paneling. The Stevens House is an important example of the work of designer Aiji Tashiro, who designed both the house and grounds in close collaboration with the Stevens family.



*Figure 65: Allene B. and William Stevens House (CW0748) at 153 Hillhaven Place*



In contrast with the modern lines of the Stevens House is the Neo-French-style house at 135 Claron Place built for Paul H. Broyhill. (Figure 66) Completed in 1966, the Paul H. Broyhill House (CW0749) was designed by architect W. Frank McCall Jr. (1916-1991) and built by the M. G. Crouch Lumber Company. Landscape architect Doan Reber Ogden designed the grounds. By the late 1960s, domestic architectural trends began to shift away from Modern styles toward traditional shapes and detailing. Architect Frank McCall, Jr. was a prolific postmodern architect based in Moultrie, Georgia, who specialized in traditionally styled domestic architecture.<sup>53</sup> The Paul H. Broyhill House has a symmetrically arranged, H-shaped plan under high, hipped roofs with brick chimneys and dormers with rounded tops. The front façade is centered around a prominent entryway that features a curved pediment, corner articulation resembling quoins, and paneled, wood, double doors under a semicircular fanlight. A series of French doors along the back façade provides access to a bluestone patio.

The formal landscape design developed by Ogden for the estate complemented the symmetrical massing and form of the house. As originally designed, the landscape in front of the house featured an axially arranged entrance gate and an open lawn that was defined by an oval drive. The drive was surrounded by curved segments of brick wall and clipped hedges that separated the formal entrance from the heavily wooded areas beyond. The original appearance of the landscape behind the house is less clear, as two sets of drawings exist, each with different plans for the private area north of the house.<sup>54</sup> In each plan, however, the north-south axis is emphasized by a an open lawn flanked by a double allée of shade and ornamental flowering trees in one scheme and by rectilinear beds of annual and perennials in the other.



Figure 66: Paul H. Broyhill House (CW0749) at 135 Claron Place

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<sup>53</sup> William R. Mitchell, Jr., *The Architecture of William Frank McCall, Jr., FAIA: A Complete Designer in the Classical Tradition* (Savannah, GA: Golden Coast Publishing Co., 1985).

<sup>54</sup> Doan Reber Ogden Papers, 1952-1984, North Carolina Western Regional Archives, Asheville, North Carolina.

## **V. Survey Results and Recommendations**

The Lenoir Downtown Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007 for its local significance in the areas of architecture, commerce, and politics/government. In 2013, a boundary increase added four additional contributing resources, bringing the total resource count to forty-three. In addition to the Lenoir Downtown Historic District, the city has six individual properties that are listed on the National Register – Lenoir High School at 100 Willow Street (listed 1990), the Edgar Allan Poe House at 506 Main Street (listed 2001), Mary’s Grove (Rabb House) at 2121 Harper Avenue (listed 2001), Lenoir Grammar School (East Harper School) at 506 Harper Street (listed 2006), Lenoir Cotton Mill - Blue Bell, Inc. Plant at 1241 College Avenue (listed 2017), and the J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory - Steele Cotton Mill at 1201 Steele Street (listed 2017). The Caldwell County Courthouse is also listed on the National Register as part of the Courthouses in North Carolina thematic nomination (listed 1979). Prior to this effort, National Register study list applications had been prepared for approximately eight additional resources, and individual survey files were completed for approximately eighty-five additional buildings. Most of the latter were documented as part of a survey of Caldwell County in 1986-87.

The goal of the Comprehensive Architectural Survey of Lenoir was to survey approximately 480 new resources – 300 documented in individual records and the remainder in approximately ten districts or “umbrella” areas based on relationships among building types or development patterns – and to update approximately forty previously recorded resources in individual records. This target was exceeded. The documentation effort concluded with 383 survey files – 325 new individual survey records, thirty-eight updated individual survey records, nineteen new neighborhood/area survey records; and one updated neighborhood/area survey record. While 83 percent of the resources surveyed were single-family houses, other building types included apartment buildings, commercial buildings, churches, industrial plants, warehouses, and an elementary school. Although no parks were documented, one nineteenth-century cemetery was surveyed.

At the conclusion of the survey phase, ten individual properties and two historic districts were recommended for the National Register Study List. These resources were selected because they possess historical and architectural significance within the contexts of Lenoir’s development and represent a range a building types, architectural styles, periods of development, and geographical location. The Study List recommendations included: the Coffey-Bradshaw-Triplett House (CW0756), the Asa and Louise Moore House (CW0797), the Galvin-Templeman House (CW0676), the Allene B. and William Stevens House (CW0748), the Broyhill Harper Plant (CW0765), Fairfield Chair Plant #1 (CW0765), Lenoir Veneer Company (CW0834), the First Baptist Church of Lenoir (CW0106), American Legion Post No. 29 (CW0796), Broyhill Furniture Headquarters and Showroom (CW0744), Maehill Park Historic District (CW0614), and Fairfield Historic District (CW0480).

Over the course of the Lenoir survey project, several areas of interest for potential future study and/or documentation were identified. Although the Lenoir survey cross-referenced the Doan Reber Ogden Collection, housed at the state’s Western Regional Archives in Asheville, a similar effort could be made with the Aiji Tashiro Papers at the North Carolina State Archives. Tashiro’s project list includes multiple commissions in Lenoir, and a survey of his extant work would lead to a better understanding of his contributions to the design field. Architect Henry Irven Gaines, with the firm Six Associates, built the later part of his career working on commissions for North Carolina’s furniture manufacturers. A review of his projects in Lenoir may also identify resources for future documentation.

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A broader look at the surviving resources of the West End, Powellton, and Freedman areas would contribute to the history and cultural heritage of African Americans in Lenoir and Caldwell County, particularly when studied in conjunction with the many minority communities in unincorporated areas of the county. Although not a historically African American neighborhood, another in-town residential neighborhood that would benefit from more intensive survey is the upper Main Street area.

While the industrial plants and warehouses of several leading furniture manufacturers were surveyed as part of this project, namely Bernhardt, Broyhill, and Fairfield Chair, other plants, such as Caldwell Furniture in the Valmead neighborhood north of downtown, were not recorded and would benefit from research and documentation. The businesses that supplied materials for the furniture industry, such as veneer and mirror companies, also had an important role in the city's development and extant examples may warrant investigation. Lastly, the Caldwell County Creamery complex (later Coble Dairy Products), which still stands today at 1124-1132 West Avenue, may deserve documentation. Dairy farming was a key component of Caldwell County's agricultural economy, and the Caldwell County Creamery was an important local cooperative that manufactured and sold milk products throughout the region.



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