

FROM DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION TO SUBURBAN PRESERVATION IN
WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

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ABSTRACT

From the 1960s to the early 1980s, the local preservation community in Wilmington, North Carolina focused heavily on the revitalization and restoration of the city's downtown. During the post World War II period, when suburban consumerism drew many of the remaining downtown merchants to the postwar suburban periphery, Wilmington's preservationists focused on the city's downtown and its Central Business District (CBD). In 1962, Wilmington's local preservation community began its efforts with the creation of the city's first Historic District and the Board of Architectural Review. The preservation community started with identifying and evaluating the historic assets of Wilmington. Then the Wilmington preservation community, this included the Board of Architectural Review, analyzed the feasibility of the preservation of these buildings whether as individual structures or as a whole group. In 1966 under the sponsorship of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society local citizens and preservationists R.V. Asbury, Jr., Thomas H. Wright, Jr., Wallace C. Murchison, and Kelly W. Jewell, Jr. formed the Historic Wilmington Foundation, a non-profit preservation organization aimed at the revitalization and preservation of the city's historic resources. Mayor Dan Cameron's downtown revitalization taskforce the Downtown Area Revitalization Effort (DARE, Inc.) along with the Historic Wilmington Foundation (HWF), the city of Wilmington, and the Residents of Old Wilmington (ROW) worked together during the mid 1970s to the mid 1980s on the revitalization of the downtown through the use of preservation.

In the mid 1980s, a transition occurred in DARE and the Wilmington city government, which moved away from the use of preservation as a tool for downtown revitalization to a concentration on economic growth and development. During the late 1980s, due to a loss of support from DARE and the city government, Wilmington's local preservation community

turned its attention to historic assets in considerable need of support, the early twentieth century suburbs. The acknowledgement of the significance of early twentieth century suburbs such as Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park demonstrated the maturation of the local preservation community.

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INTRODUCTION

During the nineteenth century and even into the early twentieth century, the historic preservation movement was largely a creative outlet for wealthy women, but during the historic preservation movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, it became a major topic of debate in national and local politics.¹ After the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), preservationists had before them the monumental undertaking of preserving the United States' historic resources.² The NHPA facilitated the transformation of the federal government's role, from that of disregard for and frequent agent of the destruction of historic resources, to the promoter of responsible change and a dependable steward for future generations.³ According to the NHPA, the federal government's role in historic preservation would be led by the Department of the Interior, as the government division with the longest experience in managing, studying, and utilization of historic assets. The Department of Interior provided financial assistance, fundamental technical tools, and a wide range of knowledge on American heritage from a national perspective.⁴ On the state level, the implications of the NHPA meant the creation of State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs). The Governor of each state, appointed the State Historic Preservation Officer as part of a statewide preservation plan modified for each state.⁵

¹ Tersh Boasberg, "Historic Preservation: Suggested Directions for Federal Legislation," *Wake Forest Law Review* 75 (Spring 1976): 75.

² Jerry Herman, "The Status of Historic Preservation in Wilmington, North Carolina," 7 May 1977, Historic Preservation-Wilmington File, Drawer 7, Historic Wilmington Foundation Archives, Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Wilmington, North Carolina.

³ *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966*, Public Law 665, 89th Congress, 15 October 1966, Available from http://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/fhpl_histprsvt.pdf; Internet; (Accessed 10 October 2010); Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, "The National Historic Preservation Program: Overview," Available from <http://www.achp.gov/overview.html>; Internet; (Accessed 5 October 2010).

⁴ Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), "Report Requested by the Committees on Appropriations," Available from <http://www.achp.gov/reportrequested.html>; Internet; (Accessed 5 October 2010).

⁵ In the case of tribal lands, Federal agencies would contact/consult the Tribal Preservation Office(s) or Officer(s). "Report Requested by the Committees on Appropriations," Available from <http://www.achp.gov/reportrequested.html>; Internet; (Accessed 5 October 2010).

The SHPOs provided matching funds to support historic preservation programs throughout each state.⁶

In 1985, Dr. Robin Elisabeth Datel, a distinguished professor at Sacramento State University in California and respected geographer wrote an article for the *Geographical Review*, which addressed the changing field of historic preservation.⁷ Datel observed that, “a fundamental underpinning for public historic-preservation programs is the notion that the landscape expresses and reinforces collective identity.”⁸ In the 1960s, as part of a larger movement within the United States, the residents of Wilmington, North Carolina initiated a local preservation movement to preserve their historical and architectural treasures. Wilmington residents’ main focus began with the historical assets closest to the heart of Wilmington, the Cape Fear River, where most of the city’s major economic activity developed. This preservation effort set out to create a landscape that expressed and reinforced a collective identity for the community.⁹ The local preservationists in Wilmington intended to identify and evaluate the historic resources by utilizing the survey techniques created by the Providence, Rhode Island Plan Commission in their publication, *College Hill – A Demonstration Study for Historic Area Renewal*.¹⁰ Founded in 1956, the Providence Preservation Society, a nonprofit organization worked together with Providence’s City Plan Commission to employ private money and funds from the federal Urban Renewal

⁶ The term “matching funds” refers to a general amount of money that originates from a beneficiary. Office of Research and Development, Eastern Michigan University, “Difference between In-Kind Contributions and Matching Funds,” Available from http://www.ord.emich.edu/policy/university_pol_subdir/matchingfund.html; Internet; (Accessed 7 October 2010); ACHP, “Report Requested by the Committees on Appropriations,” Available from <http://www.achp.gov/reportrequested.html>; Internet; (Accessed 5 October 2010).

⁷ Craig Koscho, “Robin Datel: Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Geography,” *Sacramento State Bulletin* (8 February 2010): 1, <http://www.csus.edu/bulletin/bulletin020810/profile.htm> (accessed 3 March 2010).

⁸ Robin Elisabeth Datel, “Preservation and A Sense of Orientation for American Cities,” *Geographical Review* 75 (April 1985): 131.

⁹ Carol S. Gunter, *Carolina Heights: The Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood in Wilmington* (Wilmington, North Carolina: Planning Department of the City of Wilmington, 1982), 78.

¹⁰ *College Hill: A Demonstration Study of Historic Area Renewal*, Conducted by the Providence City Plan Commission in cooperation with the Providence Preservation Society and the Housing and Home Finance Agency, 1969. Information about this study available at, http://philipmarshall.net/providence/historic_districts.htm. (accessed 28 October 2010).

program to generate a study of the College Hill region.¹¹ The study of College Hill, the first urban renewal analysis to address preservation concerns became the model for preservation programs across the United States.¹² The preservation program in Wilmington used this model to plan a survey of the historical assets of its downtown. The survey conducted in the early 1960s, provided Wilmington preservationists and city planners with important information on the historical value and architectural worth of each building in its historic downtown.¹³

The strength of the national historic preservation movement during the American Revolution Bicentennial in 1976 was evident in the various municipal preservation efforts which numbered 500, a jump from less than 100 in 1965.¹⁴ Wilmington, North Carolina was the site of one such municipal effort, which started in 1962 with the City Council's creation of a historic district containing thirty-eight blocks of Old Wilmington, and the establishment of a Board of Architectural Review, which later became the Historic Preservation Commission.¹⁵ The Board of Architectural Review would later be organized to authorize all construction plans including building, altering, or demolishing of any structure in Wilmington's downtown Central Business District (CBD).¹⁶ Initially the local preservation community of Wilmington focused on the downtown's CBD. The local preservation community included the Historic Wilmington Foundation, the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society (now the Historical Society of the Lower

¹¹ *College Hill*.

¹² James P. Cramer and Jennifer Evens Yankopolus eds., *Almanac of Architecture and Design* (Atlanta, Georgia: Greenway Communications, 2005), 471.

¹³ The Division of Community Planning, City of Wilmington, *Wilmington, North Carolina: Historic Area, a Part of the Future Land-Use Plan* (Raleigh, North Carolina: The Division of Community Planning, 1964), 9.

¹⁴ Herman, "The Status of Historic Preservation in Wilmington."

¹⁵ Junior League of Wilmington. *Old Wilmington Guidebook* (Wilmington, North Carolina: The Junior League of Wilmington, North Carolina, Incorporated, 1978), 11.

¹⁶ "Proposal Would Preserve City's Historical Beauty," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 29 March 1962. Historic Preservation Vertical File, The Historical Society of the Lower Cape Fear Archives, Latimer House, Wilmington, North Carolina.

Cape Fear), Residents of Old Wilmington (ROW), the Downtown Area Revitalization Effort or DARE, Inc. (now Wilmington Downtown, Inc.), and the Board of Architectural Review.

According to Claudia R. Brown, Supervisor of the Survey and Planning Branch of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, even in the late 1970s the task of surveying the early twentieth century suburbs was colossal and time consuming.¹⁷ During the early 1970s, preservationists in Atlanta, Georgia, began working to save late nineteenth and early twentieth century suburbs such as Inman Park and Druid Hills.¹⁸ Suburbs did not gain attention from North Carolina preservationists until the early 1980s.¹⁹ Beginning in the late 1980s, the shift to suburban preservation in Wilmington demonstrated the maturation of the local preservation community, and its ability to recognize suburbs as significant historic resources.²⁰

Chapter one of this thesis examines the growth of Wilmington, North Carolina, and the subsequent development of its suburbs, which were influenced by two key factors: the spread of public transportation and the “City Beautiful” movement. The Wilmington suburbs of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights and Sunset Park serve as snapshots of early twentieth century suburban development on the periphery of the downtown area. In order to ascertain how these early twentieth century suburbs developed, it is important to understand the initial growth of the city of Wilmington.

Chapter two studies the local preservation movement in Wilmington, North Carolina and reveals the evolution of preservation efforts through the backdrop of the city’s growth. The

¹⁷ Claudia R. Brown, “Surveying the Suburbs: Back to the Future?” in *Preserving the Recent Past*, edited by Deborah Slaton and Rebecca A. Schiffer, (Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, 1995), 2.

¹⁸ Inman Park Neighborhood Association, “A Short History of Inman Park,” available from <http://www.inmanpark.org/flyer.html>; Internet; (Accessed 20 August 2010); National Park Service, *Druid Hills Historic District—Atlanta: A National Register of Historic Places Travel Itinerary*, available from <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/atlanta/dru.htm>; Internet; (Accessed 20 August 2010).

¹⁹ Brown, “Surveying the Suburbs,” 1-2.

²⁰ George W. Edwards (Executive Director, Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc.), in discussion with author, 8 April 2010.

second chapter also examines the shift of preservation efforts in Wilmington from downtown revitalization to suburban preservation; looking particularly at 1962 until the mid 1980s, when preservation of the downtown area became less of a concern of DARE and the city government and their focus shifted to growth and development. When this alteration occurred, preservationists began to look beyond the traditional ideas of preservation that protected the houses of important white men to considering new resources and expanding the city's history to include the working class.

Chapter three studies the beginning of the phenomenon of suburban preservation in Wilmington, North Carolina. The unique characteristics of suburbs are dependent upon what type of transportation shaped the suburb and which architect designed the homes, making each generation of suburban development different from the next and significant to architectural history in the United States.²¹ These differences are slowly being recognized by preservationists as significant to the history of the areas in which individual suburbs were built, and to the history of architecture in the United States. Academics such as Dolores Hayden have criticized the early twentieth century suburbs in the United States as “sprawl” or excessive development, which more suit cars and trucks than humans.²² However, this was not the case with the streetcar suburbs of Wilmington, suburbs such as Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park which catered to streetcar passengers as well as pedestrians. Wilmington city officials and Wilmington Downtown Inc. (formerly known as DARE) in *Wilmington Downtown Vision 2020: A Waterfront Downtown*, conveyed the opinion that “Suburbs lack the historical and aesthetic

²¹ Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820 – 2000* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2003), 235.

²² Dolores Hayden, *A Field Guide to Sprawl* (New York, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2004), 96.

features inherent in downtowns.”²³ Wilmington’s city officials and Wilmington Downtown Inc. failed in the beginning of the city’s preservation movement to take into account the valuable historic resources of the early twentieth century suburbs that lie just beyond the downtown. In spite of these criticisms, since the mid 1970s suburbs nationally have been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, a distinctive honor for historic landmarks and architecture.²⁴ In Wilmington suburban preservation began much later in the local preservation movement, starting with the nomination of the Carolina Place suburb to the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.

The conclusion analyzes the shift in Wilmington’s preservation movement from downtown revitalization to suburban preservation, and suggests where the local movement could be headed in the future. The recognition by the local preservation community in the late 1980s, of the value of the early twentieth century suburbs as historic resources showed that Wilmington’s preservation community matured beyond the hero worship of the grandiose buildings and birthplaces of local leaders that marked the early nineteenth century preservation efforts, and even had spilled into the early parts of the 1960s preservation movement.²⁵ In the 1990s, Wilmington and many other coastal areas experienced an economic boom that brought an increase in the construction of vacation homes, roadways, malls, golf courses, and marinas.²⁶ Even before this boom, Wilmington was in danger of losing its historic character to redevelopment and neglect. Without the cooperation between Wilmington’s local preservation

²³ Vision 2020 Steering Committee, City of Wilmington, *Wilmington Downtown Vision 2020: A Waterfront Downtown*, 1997, Project Webpage, Available from City of Wilmington Website, http://www.wilmingtonnc.gov/development_services/plans_documents/small_area_plans/wilmington_vision_2020_a_waterfront_downtown.aspx. (Accessed 31 August 2010).

²⁴ National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, *National Register of Historic Places*, Database on-line, National Register Research, National Park Service, <http://nrhp.focus.nps.gov/> (Accessed 4 June 2010).

²⁵ George W. Edwards, in discussion with author, 8 April 2010.

²⁶ University of North Carolina at Wilmington and University of North Carolina Television, “Paving the American Dream: Southern Cities, Shores, & Sprawl,” 2002, Project Webpage, Available from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington Website, <http://www.uncw.edu/smartgrowth/about/script.html> (Accessed May 23, 2010).

community, its residents, the city, state, and national preservation and government organizations, the historic fabric of the city would have been lost completely.

The preservation community in Wilmington became aware that investment in smart growth was essential to preserve the historic fabric of their city, as well as to maintain control over the growth of the city in order to prevent its redevelopment. The conclusion also examines the most recent shift to smart growth, in both the Wilmington and national preservation movements. The Smart Growth Network defined smart growth as development that serves the community, economy, and the environment; providing a framework for communities to make informed decisions about how and where they should expand.²⁷ The Smart Growth Network consists of historic preservation societies, non-profit organizations, professional associations, environmentalists, developers, real estate interests, and local and state governing entities that work together to encourage development that serves the community, the economy, and the environment.²⁸

Implementing smart growth objectives, and local and state growth plans could play a decisive role in Wilmington's ability to protect its historic downtown and suburbs.²⁹ One of the

²⁷ United States Environmental Protection Agency, "Getting to Smart Growth: 100 Policies for Implementation," 52, 2005, Available from National Service Center for Environmental Publications (NSCEP) Document Search Page, Keywords "Getting to Smart Growth" <http://nepis.epa.gov/>. (Accessed 1 May 2010).

²⁸ Groups in the network include the American Planning Association, Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the American Farmland Trust, Center for Neighborhood Technology, Congress for the New Urbanism, Conservation Fund, George Washington University Law School's Center for Sustainability and Regional Growth, Environmental Law Institute, Local Government Commission, Institute of Transportation Engineers, International City/County Management Association, Local Initiatives Support Coalition, State of Maryland, Multi-Family Housing Association, National Association of Counties/United States Conference of Mayors Joint Center for Sustainable Communities, National Association of Realtors, National Association of Local Government Environmental Professionals, National Association of Counties, National Neighborhood Coalition, National Trust for Historic Preservation, National Wildlife Federation, National Growth Management Leadership Project, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Resources Defense Council, Scenic America, National Resources Defense Council, Urban Land Institute, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Surface Transportation Policy Project, Sustainable Communities Network, Trust for Public Land, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency; United States EPA, "Smart Growth," Acknowledgements.

²⁹ National Trust for Historic Preservation, "Historic Preservation Issues Affecting You," Available at <http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/> (Accessed 21 August 2010).

issues with preserving the early twentieth century suburbs is that they are still considered the recent past. Most Americans regard preservation as the act of preserving old houses.³⁰ Only for the past few decades have Wilmington and national preservation efforts been aimed at buildings and structures that were not included in the category of great significance (those places associated with historical events or figures), structures that were more a part of the everyday.³¹ Such structures include the homes of the working class and other minorities, not just the elite and middle class. Starting in the late 1980s, the local preservation community in Wilmington began to recognize the early twentieth century suburbs as resources important to the city's history. This recognition signaled the growth of the local preservation community's commitment past the worship of national historic events and figures, to structures and buildings of architectural and historical significance both locally and nationally.

³⁰ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. *Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places*, by David L. Ames, University of Delaware, and Linda Flint McClelland, National Park Service. National Register Bulletin, (September 2002), 2-3.

³¹ National Park Service. *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 2-3.

CHAPTER ONE – BEYOND THE CITY CENTER: THE DEVELOPMENT OF WILMINGTON’S EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY SUBURBS

During the early twentieth century in Wilmington, North Carolina, residents began to move out of the dense downtown and into the newly developing suburbs on the edge of the city. In order to understand the significance of the development of Wilmington’s early twentieth century suburbs to the city’s history, it is important to first look at the history of the city’s growth and development. For a substantial portion of North Carolina’s history, Wilmington was the state’s principal port; this resulted in a city touched by many historic events such as the Civil War, the growth of the railroad industry, and World War I and II. The spread of public transportation and the “City Beautiful” movement are two key factors, which influenced the outward growth of the city of Wilmington, and the subsequent development of the city’s early twentieth century suburbs, such as Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park.

From 1720 to 1870 North Carolina led the world in the production of naval stores, and during this time Wilmington became the state’s most significant port. The importance of the port of Wilmington came from the safety of its harbor and the proximity of the harbor to the nearby naval stores producer in what is now Fayetteville, North Carolina. Naval stores included items such as tar, pitch, turpentine, and rosin; these items were vital to the survival of the British fleet.¹

In April 1733 John Watson, Michael Higgins, James Wimble, and Josh Grainger, Sr. planned a town on the eastern banks of the Cape Fear River. The men planned the town on the 640 acres of land that were royally granted to John Watson. Edward Moseley, speaker of the lower house of the North Carolina General Assembly, drew a map on which “Watson” indicated the name of town. James Wimble who obtained 300 acres of Watson’s land, created a map in

¹Tony P. Wrenn, *Wilmington, North Carolina: An Architectural and Historic Portrait* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia, 1984), 1-2.

1733 that replaced the name of the town “Watson” with “New Carthage.”² In 1735, after several more name changes from “New Carthage” to “Newton”, the residents petitioned the governor to have the town formally established. In February 1739, the General Assembly passed a bill that created the town of Wilmington. The town’s name honored Spencer Compton, Earl of Wilmington, the sponsor and mentor of North Carolina’s acting Royal Governor, Gabriel Johnson.³

In the next century, a young northern businessman who moved to Wilmington, P. K. Dickinson, was one of the chief promoters of bringing a railroad to the city, and later a leading director of the railroad. When visiting New England one summer Dickinson observed their railroad operations, and came back to Wilmington insistent and enthusiastic to the point that his idea for a railroad in the city took shape.⁴ In the 1830s, many Wilmington businessmen felt it would be good for the city to bring in the railroad, and during this time these men came together to form a stock company.⁵

According to Dr. Alan D. Watson, distinguished history professor at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, in his book *Wilmington, North Carolina, to 1861*, the state of North Carolina’s economy languished behind the other states because of “poor roads, shallow rivers, and the Outer Banks.”⁶ This changed on March 7, 1840, when the railroad line that stretched from Weldon, North Carolina to the coast in Wilmington was completed. Originally called the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad, in 1855 the corporation changed its name to the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, because the destination of the railroad moved from Raleigh to

² Alan D. Watson, *Wilmington, North Carolina, to 1861* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2003), 9.

³ Wrenn, *Wilmington: An Architectural and Historic Portrait*, 1-2.

⁴ James Sprunt, *Chronicles of the Cape Fear River, 1660-1916* (Wilmington, North Carolina: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1992), 148-9.

⁵ Sprunt, *Chronicles of the Cape Fear*, 148.

⁶ Watson, *Wilmington, to 1861*, 199.

Weldon, North Carolina. Slaves worked long hours to construct the 161.5 miles of track that ran from Wilmington to Weldon.⁷ With the introduction of the railroad, improvements in the navigation of the Cape Fear River, and the growing importance of steam navigation, Wilmington became the state's largest town and most significant port by the onset of the Civil War.⁸

During the war, Robert E. Lee and the Confederacy considered Wilmington an important asset and resource for the Confederacy. The city of Wilmington located 27 miles upriver from the ocean, was protected by Fort Fisher, and provided access to the railroads and roads that helped supply the Confederate troops even after most strongholds had been lost. Cotton replaced naval stores as the major export, and during the Civil War it surpassed all other exports with the cotton presses working nonstop. In 1864 Wilmington was unsurpassed among southern ports and it provided logistical support to the Confederate cause. At first, the war stimulated economic traffic for most of the stops along the southern railroad; soon it was devastating even for the Confederate stronghold of Wilmington. On February 22, 1865, Union forces captured Wilmington.⁹

Emerging from the Civil War, Wilmington was North Carolina's most prosperous port, despite the devastation it suffered throughout the war.¹⁰ During the 1880s, the city of Wilmington experienced a wave of technological improvements, which included the introduction

⁷ Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company, *The Story of the Atlantic Coast Line, 1830 – 1930* (Wilmington, North Carolina: Wilmington Stamp & Printing Company, 1930), 6-7; William M. Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle: The Chronological and Historical Record of the African-American Community in Wilmington, North Carolina 1865-1950*, ed. Beverly Tetterton (Wilmington, N.C.: New Hanover County Public Library, 1998), 293.

⁸ Watson, *Wilmington, to 1861*, 199.

⁹ Wrenn, *Wilmington: An Architectural and Historic Portrait*, 4-6; Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company, *The Story of the Atlantic Coast Line*, 8-9.

¹⁰ Watson, *Wilmington: Port of North Carolina*, 102.

of the telephone, electrical lights, and public water works. These advances brought the city into a new age of sanitation and development.¹¹

In 1887, Dr. John Dillard Bellamy established and became the principal owner of the Wilmington Street Railway Company, the company that introduced streetcars to Wilmington, North Carolina.¹² With the arrival of the streetcar, travel outside of the city became more convenient and affordable to a greater portion of the population. The streetcar allowed people to work downtown while giving them the freedom to move beyond the city center.¹³

On February 13, 1888, construction also began on the Wilmington Sea Coast Railroad.¹⁴ On June 15 of that year, the railroad president William Latimer commemorated the completion of the line by driving a solid silver spike at the dedication ceremony.¹⁵ The Wilmington Sea Coast Railroad (1888-1901), a steam-powered passenger line, ran from Princess Street in downtown Wilmington, by the Delgado Mill Village and then to Ocean View (incorporated as a part of Wrightsville Beach in 1899). In 1889, the train came to the beach through the work of the Sea View Railroad Company, which later that year organized into the Ocean View Railroad Company. On February 28, 1891, the Ocean View Railroad was sold to the Wilmington Sea Coast Railroad.¹⁶

¹¹ Diane Cobb Cashman, *Cape Fear Adventure: An Illustrated History of Wilmington* (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications for Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc., 1982), 76-7.

¹² John Dillard Bellamy was a lawyer, a manufacturer, a businessman, and a capitalist with influence in both State and National politics. The first streetcar was introduced in Virginia by Frank J. Sprague, whose electric powered steam engine that welcomed in a new period of suburbanization in the United States; National Park Service, *Historic Residential Suburbs*, 2-3; New Hanover County, North Carolina Genealogy Web Archives, "John Dillard Bellamy," Written by Leonard Wilson, 1916, Biographies, North Carolina Genealogy Web Archives, <http://files.usgwarchives.org/nc/newhanover/bios/bellamy53gbs.txt> (Accessed 1 June 2010).

¹³ Walter H. Conser, Jr., *A Coat of Many Colors: Religion and Society Along the Cape Fear River of North Carolina* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 2006), 219.

¹⁴ Ray McAllister, *Wrightsville Beach: The Luminous Island* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: John F. Blair Publisher, 2007), 31.

¹⁵ McAllister, *Wrightsville Beach*, 31-2.

¹⁶ McAllister, *Wrightsville Beach*, 31-2.

David R. Goldfield, professor of southern history at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, indicates that by the 1890s, there was a growing spatial differentiation taking place in the urban South, which was sparked by improvements in transportation and the influence of the growing wealth of the emerging, predominately middle class.¹⁷ The Seaboard Airline Railroad set off the “City Beautiful” movement in the South, by founding organizations to improve cities at every stop from Portsmouth, Virginia to Atlanta, Georgia. These organizations were responsible for enriching the appearance of cities where the railroad stopped in order to attract northern investors to the depressed Southern regions. In North Carolina, women’s clubs led the movement to improve cities.¹⁸ The North Carolina Sorosis Club transformed the functions women performed in Wilmington society. Wilmington women impacted how the city developed socially, economically, and politically from this point on by taking action to improve their communities.¹⁹ The women of the Wilmington Sorosis Club took part in the formation of the city’s first free public library, provided domestic science education for young white women, a night school for Delgado Mill Workers, a milk station, the creation of Greenfield Lake Park, baby clinics, the opening of a Cancer Awareness Center, and the conception of the New Hanover County Museum. Women utilized the Sorosis Club as a medium to enter the public sphere and to shape public policies, and it gave women a place to learn valuable leadership skills.²⁰

¹⁷ David R. Goldfield, “North Carolina’s Early Twentieth-Century Suburbs and the Urbanizing South,” in *Early Twentieth-Century Suburbs in North Carolina: Essays on History, Architecture and Planning*, eds. Catherine W. Bishir and Lawrence S. Earley (Raleigh, North Carolina: Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1985), 11.

¹⁸ Goldfield, “Suburbs and the Urbanizing South,” 10-1.

¹⁹ Jennifer R. Lang, “Self-Improvement, Community Improvement: North Carolina Sorosis and the Women’s Club Movement in Wilmington, North Carolina, 1895-1950,” Master’s thesis, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, 2005, 10.

²⁰ Lang, “North Carolina Sorosis,” 10.

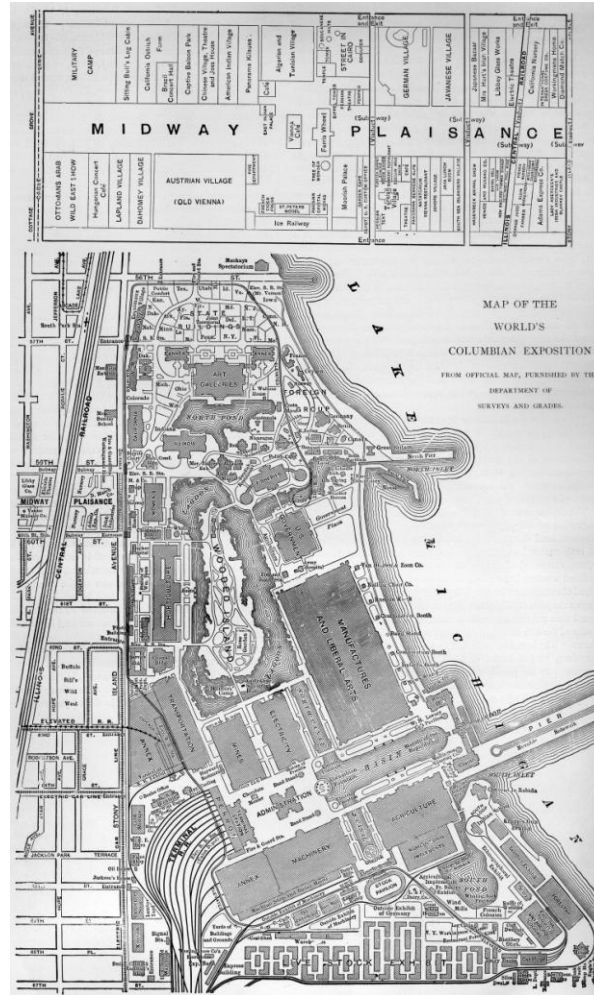


Figure 1. Plan of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. (Courtesy of Professor Jeffery Howe, *Boston College*)

In 1893, the Chicago World Columbian Exposition (World's Fair), displayed monumental presentations of architecture and grandiose planning concepts. (See Figure 1) One of these concepts brought to life at the Fair was the "White City," designed by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead. The "White City" contained all the technological advances of the time, but without the stressful and confusing characteristics of the urban life. Americans missed the key point of this design: that advanced planning would remove chaos from urban life. Instead, Americans were fascinated with the idea of classic architecture, clean thoroughfares, and

brilliant landscaping. Under the name “City Beautiful,” Americans in towns and cities started to reorganize communities to imitate the best qualities of the “White City.”²¹

The Carolina Place and Sunset Park suburbs in Wilmington, North Carolina are examples of what Southerners associated with the “City Beautiful” movement. Carolina Place was equipped with modern amenities, and yet was free of urban hassles and peacefully joined with nature through the tree-lined streets, yards, and gardening space made available for residents.²² Sunset Park built along the Cape Fear River front, was further from the downtown, and was set away from the main roads in its own enclave. The Sunset Park suburb consisted of landscaped plazas, tree-lined streets, landscaped lots, and a picturesque and leisurely locale next to the Cape Fear River.²³

Another example of the “White City” in Wilmington was the suburb of Carolina Heights, home to the who’s who of Wilmington. Many of the homes in the suburb were opulent for the era, with wrought-iron fences, brick walls, large front yards, and tree-lined sidewalks. The land, on which Carolina Heights developed, was some of the highest elevation in Wilmington. Mary Bridgers, the patron and initial developer of Carolina Heights, regarded the suburb as a “city upon a hill,” and a physical symbolism of her “heavenly home on earth” or an outward materialization of her faith in the teachings of the Christian Science Church.²⁴ The residents of Carolina Place, Sunset Park, and Carolina Heights lived in park-like environments that separated them from the ills of city life, and yet they were close enough to the city that they could walk or take the streetcar to go downtown.

²¹ Goldfield, “Suburbs and the Urbanizing South,” 10.

²² Conser, *A Coat of Many Colors*, 219.

²³ Johnnie N. Henagan, Sunset Park Neighborhood Association, Inc., “Grant Proposal for National Register Nomination of the Sunset Park Subdivision of the City of Wilmington, North Carolina.” 8 December 2000. Sunset Park Historic District Vertical Files, Planning Office for the City of Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.

²⁴ David W. Frederiksen and David K. Ohashi, *Wilmington’s Carolina Heights: A Neighborhood History* (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2007), 15.

Along with transportation technology, the end of the nineteenth-century brought dramatic transformations in the cities and towns of America. Pure water and indoor plumbing marked advances that Americans had never before experienced.²⁵ Despite the advances in American cities, the elite, the rising middle class, and with the advent of the streetcar some working class people began the exodus to the suburbs away from the modernization and overcrowding of the city.²⁶ The technological and physical changes of American cities were exciting and indeed wonderful for a rural nation of farmers; however, the change in city life was a considerable transition from the Jeffersonian ideals of the past.²⁷ According to historian David R. Goldfield, this transition did not make it hard to,

understand why the clang of the trolley, the ring of the phone, the flash of the light, and the thrust of the buildings and bridges drove Americans to seek some refuge, some port before the waves of innovation drowned their sensibilities and senses completely.²⁸

Even though Americans embraced this new technological and fast paced age, they looked to retain aspects of the past. The shift from an agrarian society to an industrial nation created social unrest, between the business owners and their workers within the city centers. City reformers and social theorists suggested that beautiful and habitable cities appealed to workers, and that workers found living in reformed and modernized cities more satisfying.²⁹ At the end of the nineteenth century, Wilmington like many places in the United States had a growing population of workers who were experiencing prosperity, thereby creating a growing middle class population. The streetcar suburbs that developed just beyond the downtown, served as the attractive middle ground between the chaotic city and the country; with the initial draw of the

²⁵ Goldfield, "Suburbs and the Urbanizing South," 9.

²⁶ Goldfield, "Suburbs and the Urbanizing South," 9.

²⁷ Goldfield, "Suburbs and the Urbanizing South," 9.

²⁸ Goldfield, "Suburbs and the Urbanizing South," 9.

²⁹ Julie K. Rose, "City Beautiful: The 1901 Plan for Washington, D.C." (Master's Thesis, University of Virginia, 1996). <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~cap/CITYBEAUTIFUL/city.html>. (Accessed on 26 October 2009).

suburbs being improved housing options. Those who lived in the suburbs just beyond the city center of Wilmington often utilized the streetcar as transportation to work; maintaining connection and with the thriving downtown.

During the first decades of the 1900s, Wilmington was the second largest city in North Carolina and the most significant port in the state. Wilmington boomed with profits from the railroad, Delgado Mills, the Alexander Sprunt and Son cotton exporting firm (one of the largest of its kind in the world at the time), several large fertilizer plants, turpentine and cotton seed oil refineries, lumber and cotton mills.³⁰ Wilmington also served as the center of operations for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad's passenger line. Fifteen arriving and departing passenger trains made their way through the city daily.³¹ When the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad (ACL) decided to bring freight operations into Wilmington, this created new jobs and a housing boom followed.³²

In April 1902, in a merger negotiated by Hugh MacRae's banking and brokerage house, the Wilmington Sea Coast Railroad combined with the Wilmington's Gas Light Company, the Wilmington Street Railway Company, the Wilmington Electric Company, and the Wilmington Dummy Line.³³ This merger formed the new Consolidated Railways, Light and Power Company headed by the new president, Hugh MacRae. That same year, Consolidated Railways, Light and Power Company converted the steam-powered locomotives to electric streetcars (also known as

³⁰Andrea Shaw, "Group Wants Carolina Place on Historic Register," *Wilmington Morning Star*, December 21, 1991, 1B. Available in the Bill Reaves Collection, Local History Room. New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina; Gunter, *Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood*, 53.

³¹Bonnie Eksten, "Carolina Heights, Carolina Place: Clang, Clang, Clang Went the Trolley..." *Real Estate Showcase*, July 4-24, 2000, 61, Historic Preservation Vertical File, The Historical Society of the Lower Cape Fear Archives, Latimer House, Wilmington, North Carolina.

³²Eksten, "Carolina Heights, Carolina Place," 61.

³³According to Beverly Tetterton, local historian and librarian, a piece of track between Nutt and Water Streets not a part of the main line was given the nickname "Dummy" line by local residents and business owners of Wilmington. Beverly Tetterton (Local Historian and Local History Librarian), in conversation with the author, Local History Room, New Hanover County Library, 29 June 2010; Frederic Nicholas, eds., *McGraw Electric Railway: The Red Book of American Electric Railway Investments* (New York, New York: McGraw Publishing Company, Inc., 1914), 210.

trolleys). Five years later, Hugh MacRae's Consolidated Railways, Light and Power Company reorganized into the Tidewater Power Company.³⁴

Many in Wilmington's growing middle class sought to move away from the city into tree-lined, landscaped suburbs. These dreams were fueled by the "City Beautiful" movement of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.³⁵ However, a suburban development in Wilmington did not occur until the early twentieth century, the first suburbs to develop were streetcar suburbs, which depended upon a streetcar line. Such developments socioeconomically, in the United States and in Wilmington, appealed to and attracted, people from the working and middle classes. The streetcar allowed "working families of moderate means," who had never been able to afford to live beyond the downtown, to realize their dreams of owning a home.³⁶

Wilmington's First Suburb, Carolina Place

During the first week of February 1906 a public auction was held at the New Hanover County Courthouse door by the City of Wilmington to sell sixty-eight acres of land outside the city, on the southeastern corner of Seventeenth and Market Streets.³⁷ The American Suburban Corporation of Norfolk, Virginia, a firm experienced in the development of suburbs, won the auction with the highest bid of \$20,000. W. D. Pender, the attorney for the American Suburban Corporation, authorized and completed the purchase of the land.³⁸

³⁴ McAllister, *Wrightsville Beach*, 45.

³⁵ U.S. Department of the Interior. National Park Service. "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form." By Allison H. Black, Architectural Historian, and David R. Black, Architectural Historian, 1 May 1992. Carolina Place Historic District, New Hanover County, NC. Section 7-10. Pg. 1-110. Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Archives, Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Wilmington, North Carolina.

³⁶ Conser, *A Coat of Many Colors*, 219.

³⁷ "Develop Suburban Lands," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 6 February 1906. Newspaper on Microfilm; Cabinet: E; Drawer 7; Wilmington, *Star News* (Various Titles), September 23, 1867 – December 30, 1906; Box: Wilmington, *The Morning Star Daily*, January 2, 1906 – March 31, 1906; Available from Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.; Gunter, *Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood*, 53.

³⁸ "Develop Suburban Lands."

Before the American Suburban Corporation developed Carolina Place, a residential suburb did not exist in Wilmington. The American Suburban Corporation saw an opportunity to make a sound investment in the growing population of Wilmington. This was not the company's first residential development, it built neighborhoods in Norfolk and Richmond, Virginia; Jacksonville, Florida; and in Greensboro, North Carolina. The American Suburban Corporation's experience with creating other residential developments gave them the knowledge of how to draw in buyers to the areas of cities which best encouraged growth.³⁹

Once the American Suburban Corporation purchased the land they started construction in Carolina Place. The city extended the water line to Seventeenth and Market Streets, and then the developers connected it throughout the suburb of Carolina Place. Then the streets and blocks of the suburb were laid. The American Suburban Corporation paid a fee to Consolidated Railways, Light and Power Company, the streetcar operator, for the extension of a line off Seventeenth and Market Street.⁴⁰ A selling point for the American Suburban Corporation, when lots in Carolina Place opened for sale in March 1906 was the availability of streetcar transportation to downtown and Wrightsville Beach.⁴¹

³⁹ Conser, *A Coat of Many Colors*, 219; "Develop Suburban Lands."

⁴⁰ "Developing the Suburbs," *Wilmington Semi-Weekly Messenger*, 20 March 1906. Newspaper on Microfilm; Cabinet: E; Drawer 5; *Evening Review*, *The Herald of the Union*, *Miscellaneous Wilmington*, *North Carolina Shipbuilder*, *Peoples' Press*, *Wilmington Advertiser*, *Saturday Record*, *Semi-Weekly Messenger*, *The Union Labor Record*, *The Weekly Commercial*, *The Weekly Post*, *The Weekly Star*, *Wilmington Chronicle*, *The Wilmington Daily Post*, *The Wilmington Herald*, *Wilmington Journal (1800's)*, *Wilmington Journal (1900's)*, *The Wilmington Messenger(Daily)*; Box: Wilmington, *Semi-Weekly Messenger*, January 2, 1906 – December 28, 1906; Available from Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina; "Street Car Line." *Wilmington Semi-Weekly Messenger*, 13 March 1906, Pg. 8. Newspaper on Microfilm; Cabinet: E; Drawer 5; *Evening Review*, *The Herald of the Union*, *Miscellaneous Wilmington*, *North Carolina Shipbuilder*, *Peoples' Press*, *Wilmington Advertiser*, *Saturday Record*, *Semi-Weekly Messenger*, *The Union Labor Record*, *The Weekly Commercial*, *The Weekly Post*, *The Weekly Star*, *Wilmington Chronicle*, *The Wilmington Daily Post*, *The Wilmington Herald*, *Wilmington Journal (1800's)*, *Wilmington Journal (1900's)*, *The Wilmington Messenger(Daily)*; Box: Wilmington, *Semi-Weekly Messenger*, January 2, 1906 – December 28, 1906; Available from Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁴¹ "Carolina Place," *Wilmington Daily Messenger*, 23 March 1906, Section 8. Newspaper on Microfilm; Cabinet: E; Drawer 6; *The Wilmington Messenger (Semi-Weekly)*, *The Wilmington Semi-Weekly Post*, *The Wilmington Sun*; Box: Wilmington, *Wilmington Messenger (Daily)*, January 2, 1906 – March 3, 1906; Available from Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.

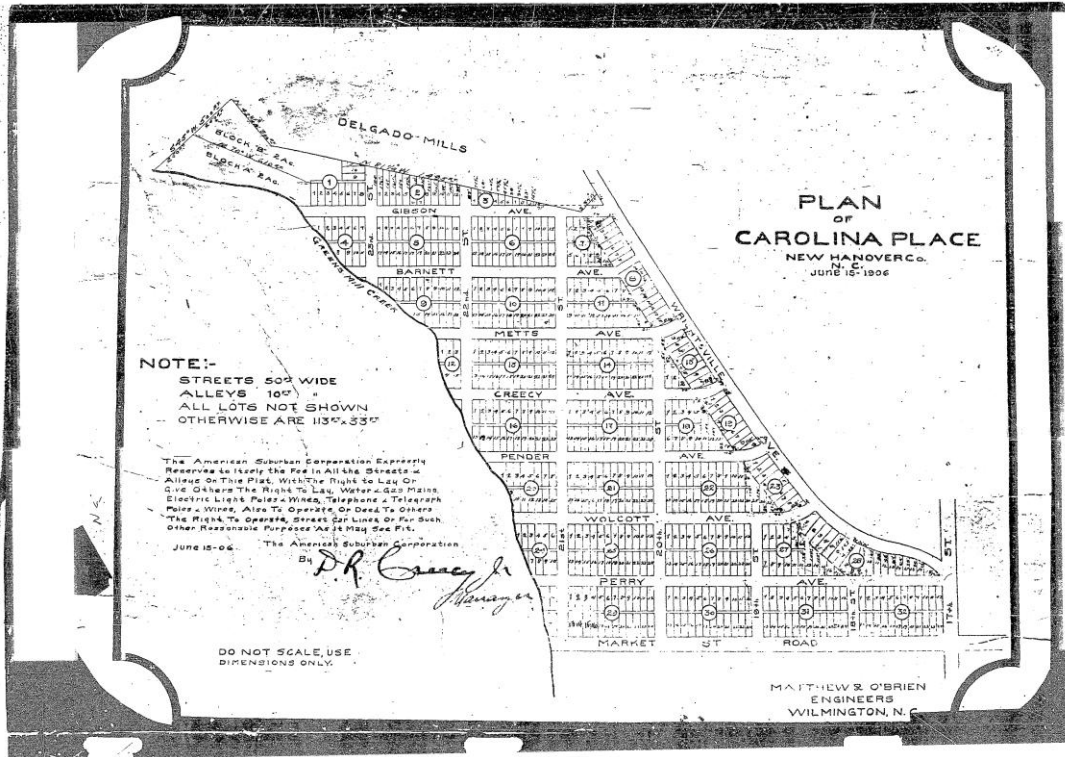


Figure 2. A 1906 plan for the suburban development of Carolina Place. (Courtesy of the New Hanover Public Library, Map Collections, Wilmington, North Carolina).

On March 23, 1906 the *Wilmington Messenger Daily* announced the opening of the sale of 500 lots of the Carolina Place suburb on the following Monday, by the American Suburban Corporation.⁴² (See Figure 2) The 500 lots were each 33 by 114 feet with the exception of corner lots which varied in size. Lots sold from between \$175 to \$350, with an additional fifty dollars for corner parcels.⁴³ The general manager of the American Suburban Corporation, Mr. B. R. Creecy, arrived that same day with a group of agents to get ready for the sale. The American Suburban Corporation opened up a local office for operations in the Southern Building in

⁴² Amongst the archival materials there has not been found a definitive reason why the American Suburban Corporation of Norfolk, Virginia, chose the name Carolina Place for the suburb; "Carolina Place," Section 8.

⁴³ "To the People of Wilmington...Greetings!" Advertisement for Carolina Place, *Wilmington Daily Messenger*, 25 March 1906, 2. Newspaper on Microfilm; Cabinet: E; Drawer 6; *The Wilmington Messenger (Semi-Weekly)*, *The Wilmington Semi-Weekly Post*, *The Wilmington Sun*; Box: Wilmington, *Wilmington Messenger (Daily)*, January 2, 1906 – March 30, 1906; Available from Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.

downtown Wilmington.⁴⁴ The development company offered an installment plan to entice buyers to purchase the lots. On this plan, buyers made payments of ten dollars down, with monthly installments from five to ten dollars paid without interest.⁴⁵ The American Suburban Corporation made Carolina Place financially available to “those of moderate means”⁴⁶ or the rising middle class and some members of the working class. Another method used by the American Suburban Corporation to entice people to buy in Carolina Place was to offer free “car service one round trip each day for twelve months, to the first six parties who begin building within 60 days and complete their houses in five months.”⁴⁷ By the end of March 1906, there were 300 applications for intent to purchase property in Carolina Place.⁴⁸

The growth of the Carolina Place suburb happened in two phases. The first phase, from 1906 to 1928, constitutes the period in which the American Suburban Corporation held possession of and promoted the property’s sale and development. The second phase started with the purchase of the lots that remained by a local realtor and developer, Richard L. Player. The second phase ended with the start of World War II. The architectural styles in these two phases included Craftsman style bungalows, Colonial Revival, Queen Anne, and Classical Revival.⁴⁹

When architectural historians and preservation consultants Allison H. Black and David R. Black examined the Wilmington city directories to see who had been attracted to the suburb of

⁴⁴ “Carolina Place,” Section 8; “The “Southern Building” was completed in 1904 for Matthew J. Heyer.” For more intriguing facts about Wilmington architecture along with delightful pictures, either visit the Local History Room at the New Hanover County Library or look to following citation for more information. Anne Hewlett Hutterman, *Postcard History Series: Wilmington, North Carolina* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 33.

⁴⁵ “Carolina Place,” Section 8.

⁴⁶ Gunter, *Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood*, 56.

⁴⁷ “Carolina Place: Buy Now While Good Lots Can Yet Be Obtained,” *Wilmington Daily Messenger*, 17 March 1907. Newspaper on Microfilm; Cabinet: E; Drawer 6; *The Wilmington Messenger (Semi-Weekly)*, *The Wilmington Semi-Weekly Post*, *The Wilmington Sun*; Box: Wilmington, *Wilmington Messenger (Daily)*, January 1, 1907 – March 31, 1907; Available from Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁴⁸ Gunter, *Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood*, 56.

⁴⁹ “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.” Carolina Place Historic District, New Hanover County, NC. Section 7, 1-2; 8, 97.

Carolina Place, they found a variety of different professionals who owned or rented homes. The examination revealed numerous accountants, physicians, dentists, realtors, insurance agents, local business owners, a minister, and the owner of a candy factory. There were many that lived in the suburb who worked in the building trades as well as electricians and engineers who were employed by Tidewater Power Company. The main employer for Carolina Place residents was the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, whose large office staff either owned or rented homes in the suburb.⁵⁰ According to David Black, Carolina Place “was somewhat exclusive with a cross-section of people living there – police officers, grocers, and realtors.”⁵¹



Figure 3. A March 7, 1907 advertisement in the *Wilmington Daily Messenger*, for the suburb of Carolina Place a development of the American suburban corporation that advertised “No Liquor—No Negroes and Other Healthy Restrictions,” seemingly as a way to entice buyers. (*Wilmington Daily Messenger*, Wilmington, North Carolina).

Although Carolina Place gave some working class residents a chance of home ownership, the restrictions the American Suburban Corporation placed on the deeds kept African Americans

⁵⁰ “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.” Carolina Place Historic District, New Hanover County, NC. Section 8, 98-9.

⁵¹ Shaw, “Group Wants,” 1B.

and poor whites from purchasing lots in the suburb. The American Suburban Corporation kept the latter groups from owning in Carolina Place with restrictions such as a home could not cost less than the specified \$1,500 minimum, and lots were not sold to, rented to, or transferred to African-Americans.⁵² An advertisement in the *Wilmington Daily Messenger*, stated the deed restrictions of Carolina Place in detail with the most disturbing stating, “No Liquor—No Negroes and Other Healthy Restrictions.”⁵³ (See Figure 3) Like Carolina Place, Carolina Heights’s developers set racially restrictive terms to keep the neighborhood exclusively white, a fact rarely discussed in neighborhood histories and surveys.

The Suburb of Carolina Heights

The suburb of Carolina Heights was the second residential suburb to develop in Wilmington, North Carolina. The development was built on a section of land, once a part of the Carolina Place property, which the developer Mary Bridgers purchased from the American Suburban Corporation. Mary Bridgers, developer and financial backer of the suburb of Carolina Heights, was the daughter of Colonel Robert Rufus Bridgers. Colonel Bridgers served as the President of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad and the Carolina and Augusta Railroad. These railroad companies later formed the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad.⁵⁴ When Colonel Bridgers died he left a sizeable fortune to Mary, her brother George, and her sister Emily.⁵⁵ Bridgers would become one of the “richest women in Wilmington.” In the 1880s, Mary Bridgers left Wilmington

⁵² “To the People of Wilmington...Greetings!” 2.

⁵³ “The Flood Tide of Opportunity Now Comes to You, Through the Exceptionally Attractive Bargains Now Offering in Carolina Place Lots,” Advertisement for Carolina Place, *Wilmington Daily Messenger*, 7 March 1907. Newspaper on Microfilm; Cabinet: E; Drawer 6; *The Wilmington Messenger (Semi-Weekly)*, *The Wilmington Semi-Weekly Post*, *The Wilmington Sun*; Box: Wilmington, *Wilmington Messenger (Daily)*, January 1, 1907 – March 31, 1907; Available from Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁵⁴ Gunter, *Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood*, 59; Bobby Parker, “Developer Guided by Her Dream,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 28 August 1983, 1C. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=9LssAAAAIBAJ&sjid=ihMEAAAAIBAJ&pg=3775,7670459&dq=developer+guided+by+her+dream&hl=en>. Accessed 26 February 2010.

⁵⁵ Gunter, *Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood*, 59; Parker, “Developer Guided by Her Dream.”

to attend school at the Mount Vernon Institute, Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies and Little Girls in Baltimore, Maryland.⁵⁶ In 1889, Bridgers won a music award for singing “L’ Africane” and playing on the piano one of Leschetisky’s nocturnes.⁵⁷ Bridgers utilized money her father left her travelling to New York, Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Boston.⁵⁸

According to records at the Mary Baker Eddy Library in Boston Massachusetts, Mary Bridgers first joined The First Church of Christ, Scientist in Boston known as the Mother Church on July 3, 1897.⁵⁹ During this time, Bridgers listed her address as 308 South Third Street in Wilmington, North Carolina. Mary Bridgers’s membership record also showed that she attended primary class instruction in Christian Science with religious instructor Augusta Stetson at the First Church of Christ, Scientist of New York City.⁶⁰ Augusta Stetson helped to establish the Christian Science church in New York City.⁶¹ During the early twentieth century in Southern

⁵⁶ “Pretty Graduates, The Girls Rewarded for Their Diligence in Study,” *Baltimore American*, 11 June 1891, Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=ypFDAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=grkMAAAAIAIBAJ&pg=4386,6786612&dq=pretty-graduates&hl=en>. (Accessed 20 October 2010).

⁵⁷ “Commencement Exercises,” *The Baltimore Sun*, 8 June 1889, Available from Google News Archives, [http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/baltsun/access/1644999562.html?FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:AI&type=historic&date=Jun+08%2C+1889&author=&pub=The+Sun+\(1837-1985\)&desc=COMMENCEMENT+EXERCISES&pqatl=google](http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/baltsun/access/1644999562.html?FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:AI&type=historic&date=Jun+08%2C+1889&author=&pub=The+Sun+(1837-1985)&desc=COMMENCEMENT+EXERCISES&pqatl=google). Accessed 20 October 2010.

⁵⁸ “No Doctor Called for Her, Miss Bridgers Rich Christian Scientist, Dies in Wilmington, NC,” *The Washington Post*, 11 November 1910. ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *The Washington Post* (1877-1994), 5. (Accessed 19 October 2010).

⁵⁹ Membership card for Mary Bridgers, found in record series CL0005 Membership Card File, box 18990, folder 56228, Organizational Archives of The First Church of Christ, Scientist, Boston, Massachusetts.

⁶⁰ Membership card for Mary Bridgers.

⁶¹ Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) founded the Christian Science Religion which she elaborated upon in her 1875 book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. Women at this time became filled with a sense of empowerment and through this movement of health and science found a means to obtain a place of public power. Eddy planned to turn the movement over to successful men more accepted in such positions of power, such as founders or organizers of congregations. In 1884 Augusta E. Stetson became introduced to the Christian Science Religion, there she received training as an elocutionist in order to support her husband who had fallen ill. The Christian Science religion offered Stetson a chance to become an empowered professional and religious reformer in a world run by men. In 1886, Eddy sent Stetson to establish The First Church of Christ, Scientist in New York City. Despite Stetson’s successes and the growing support of her students in New York, she would find herself facing opposition from inside the denomination with her fellow Christian Scientists saying she was overzealous. On September 25, 1909, Augusta Stetson lost her right to teach or practice the religion of Christian Science for charges of insubordination and false teachings. Rolf Swensen, “You Are Brave but You Are a Woman in the Eyes of Men”: Augusta E. Stetson’s Rise and Fall in the Church of Christ, Scientist.” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 24, no. 1 (n.d.): 75-89.

cities, the doctrines of Christian Science were out of the ordinary. According to an unknown writer for the *Wilmington Star-News*, Mary Bridgers's dedication to the Christian Science religion went against her family and public opinion.⁶² Bridgers, a free spirit, became the founding member of the First Church of Christ, Scientist in Wilmington and a successful businesswoman in a society that felt a woman's place was still in the home.⁶³

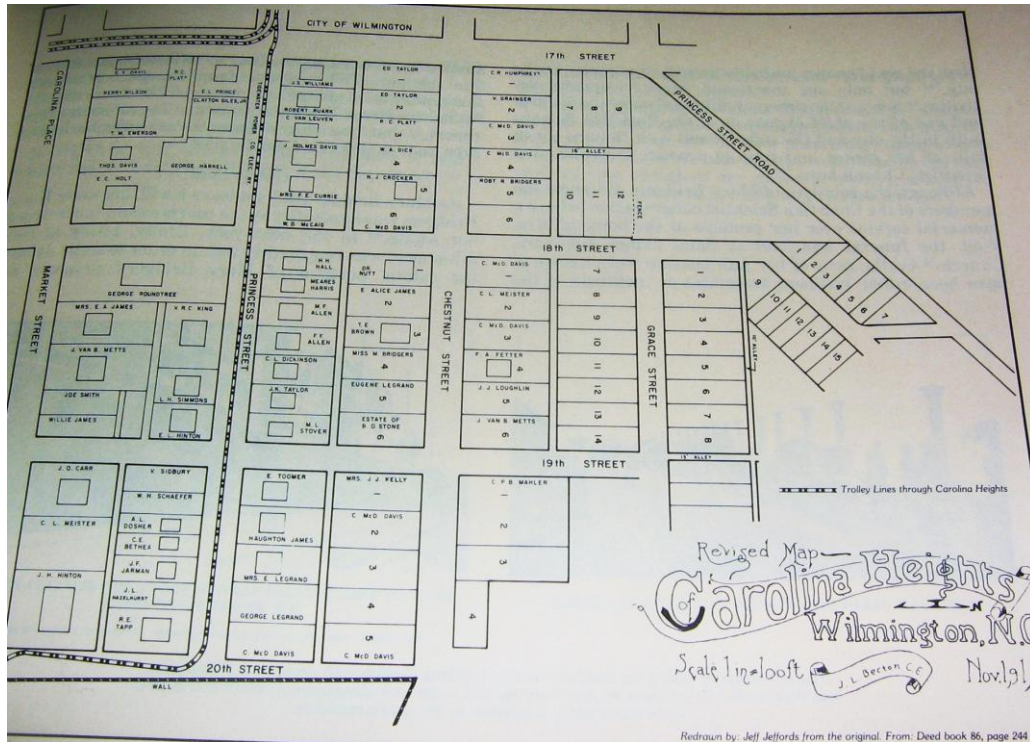


Figure 4. A redrawn scale map of the Carolina Heights suburb in Wilmington, North Carolina from November 1913. (“Carolina Heights,” *Carolina Heights: The Preservation of An Urban Neighborhood in Wilmington, North Carolina*, 1982).

In late March 1906, Mary Bridgers purchased the entire block number 32 in the Carolina Place suburb bordered by Seventeenth Street, Eighteenth Street, Market Street, and Perry Avenue.⁶⁴ Bridgers designed the suburb of Carolina Heights to appeal to the prominent and well-to-do members of the Wilmington community. (See Figure 4) She also desired to build a house

⁶² Parker, “Developer Guided by Her Dream.”
⁶³ Frederiksen and Ohashi, *Wilmington’s Carolina Heights*, 18.
⁶⁴ Gunter, *Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood*, 56.

and a suburb that kept “the surrounding vicinity on a plan with the fine church building.”⁶⁵

Bridgers planned to use her own financial resources to pay for the construction of Wilmington’s first Christian Science church.⁶⁶

In April 1907, Bridgers purchased an additional twenty-two and one-half acres of land at the cost of \$1,000 dollars an acre on the northern side of Seventeenth and Market Streets, the property located just across Market Street from the developing suburb of Carolina Place.⁶⁷ The Carolina Heights suburb was delimited on the east by the National Cemetery and Burnt Mill Creek and on the north by the Bellevue Cemetery.⁶⁸ As did investors in Carolina Place, the residents of Carolina Heights in the early stages of development utilized the streetcars of the Tidewater Power Company as a primary mode of transportation.

In the newly developing suburbs in Wilmington, Jim Crow segregation was enacted in the form of covenants placed on deeds for land, which stopped African Americans from purchasing, renting, or in any other form being transferred the title of land in these communities. In Carolina Heights the deed restrictions allowed only the most prominent white members of Wilmington society to purchase in the neighborhood. The deeds of Carolina Heights contained the following restrictions and covenants:

no liquor or ardent spirits were to be sold upon the premises; no dwelling was to be erected upon the premises to cost less than (between \$1500 to \$4500, this figure varied from deed to deed); the property was not to be sold, rented, or any other way conveyed to persons of African descent; no dwelling house was to be built with a front porch closer than thirty feet to the street; Mary Bridgers retained

⁶⁵Parker, “Developer Guided by Her Dream.”

⁶⁶Parker, “Developer Guided by Her Dream.”

⁶⁷Ben Steelman, “What is Carolina Heights?” *Wilmington Star News*, 4 November 2009. <http://www.myreporter.com/?p=4306> (accessed December 31, 2009).

⁶⁸ U.S. Department of the Interior. National Park Service. “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,” By Beth Keane, Architectural Historian, 25 March 1999. Carolina Heights Historic District, New Hanover County, NC. Section 7-10. Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Archives, Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Wilmington, North Carolina.

the fee (ownership of all streets and alleys and the right to use them for street, railway, gas, water, and sewer pipes, electric lights, posts, and fences).⁶⁹

Similar to the suburb of Carolina Place, the deed restrictions for Carolina Heights were included in the written contracts to ensure an exclusively white suburban development.

Early in 1908, Mary Bridgers and Burett Stephens, a Chicago architect and engineer, established a business relationship in which he provided his expertise and she provided the money.⁷⁰ As a protégé of Frank Lloyd Wright, Burett Stephens introduced the Prairie-style school of architecture to the development of Carolina Heights. Throughout the development of Carolina Heights there are homes such as the American Foursquare, a subtype of Prairie-style that bears Stephens's imprint.⁷¹ While the design and development of the suburb was Bridgers and Stephens's responsibility, the deRosset Development Company oversaw the improvements to streets and sidewalks along with the sewer and water installation.⁷²

In November 1908, the *Wilmington Morning Star* praised the development of Carolina Heights (See Figure 5) as

the most forward step Wilmington has taken in a long time and those behind the enterprise are deserving of the highest commendation for what has been and what is being done. It is a most splendid illustration of the fact that progress is still the watchword for Wilmington and the city is growing in spite of the cry of panic and hard times. It is to be repeated, Carolina Heights is the ideal residence locally in and around Wilmington.⁷³

⁶⁹ "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form." Carolina Heights Historic District, New Hanover County, NC. Section 8, 5.

⁷⁰ Gunter, *Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood*, 61.

⁷¹ Frederiksen and Ohashi, *Wilmington's Carolina Heights*, 17.

⁷² "Carolina Heights Development," *Wilmington Morning Star*, November 8, 1908, Pg. 5. Newspaper on Microfilm; Cabinet: E; Drawer 8; Wilmington, *Star News* (Various Titles), January 1, 1907 – April 30, 1923; Box: Wilmington, *The Morning Star Daily*, April 15, 1908 – December 31, 1908; Available from Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁷³ "Carolina Heights Development," 5.

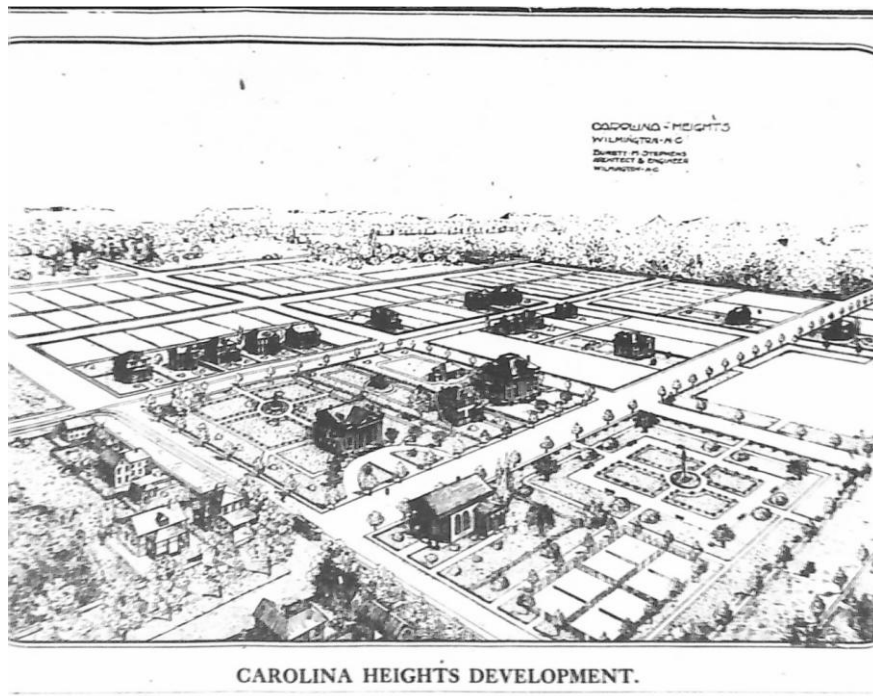


Figure 5. A sketch of the Carolina Heights suburb in Wilmington, North Carolina from an article in the *Wilmington Morning Star* on Sunday, November 8, 1908. (*Wilmington Morning Star*, Wilmington, North Carolina.)

The Carolina Heights suburb contains a broad range of architectural styles that typify the first three decades of the twentieth century. These styles include Georgian and Colonial Revival, Neoclassical Revival, cottages, bungalows, and varieties created by mixing design details from an assorted number of forms. Some houses have garages that face the alleyways, many of these are early frame garages that indicate the introduction of the automobile age to the once streetcar dependent suburb.⁷⁴

In September 1909, Stephens discovered that he was overextended financially and declared bankruptcy. As a large stockholder in Stephens's company, Mary Bridgers was named a defendant in a suit against him to foreclose the mortgage on his construction company.⁷⁵

Stephens recovered financially but he never again worked with the Carolina Heights

⁷⁴ "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form." Carolina Heights Historic District, New Hanover County, NC. Section 7, 2-3.

⁷⁵ Gunter, *Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood*, 65-6.

Development or Mary Bridgers. Despite the problems that Stephens inevitably caused Bridgers with his financial missteps, lots within the Carolina Heights development continued to sell.⁷⁶

The Carolina Heights suburb was designed with wide tree lined streets, sidewalks, brick walls, wrought-iron fences, and large landscaped yards to highlight the grander structures built in the development. Carolina Heights' most luxurious structures were constructed along Market Street. Mary Bridgers also planned for the development to contain a tennis court and a formal garden in the same block as the First Church of Christ, Scientist (of Wilmington).⁷⁷

Bridgers did not complete her vision for Carolina Heights before her death; however, the suburb continued to develop successfully.⁷⁸ Why Bridgers named the development Carolina Heights, there has not been any clear evidence found, from which to gain a fact based answer. Caroline Gunter, in her book *Carolina Heights: The Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood in Wilmington, North Carolina*, surmised that "Carolina" was meant to connect the development by Bridgers with the Carolina Place development. Gunter also deduced that "Heights" was meant to describe the elevation of the land in Carolina Heights in comparison to the relatively low elevation everywhere else in Wilmington.⁷⁹ Carolina "Heights" could have also been a comparison of the social class of the people that Bridgers had expected to occupy the development versus the middle and working class population that occupied Carolina Place.

The Riverfront Suburb of Sunset Park

Sunset Park, another key streetcar suburb that developed in Wilmington, North Carolina, was initially designed as an exclusive riverfront suburb that could have rivaled Carolina Heights.

⁷⁶ Parker, "Developer Guided by Her Dream."

⁷⁷ "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form." Carolina Heights Historic District, New Hanover County, NC. Section 8, 5.

⁷⁸ Frederiksen and Ohashi, *Wilmington's Carolina Heights*, 12.

⁷⁹ Gunter, *Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood*, 59.

The 90 feet wide boulevards which ran east-west crisscrossed the 60 feet wide streets that ran north-south to the waterfront. These north-south streets honored the names of United States Presidents in order of their term of office: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Monroe, Jackson, Van Buren, Harrison, Tyler, and Polk (although Tyler later renamed Burnett Boulevard after R.A. Burnett, the New Hanover County Superintendent of Roads of the 1930s).⁸³ The Fidelity Trust and Development Company chose this site for the development of an exclusive, first class residential park that would be located along the waterfront of the Cape Fear River about one-fourth of a mile from the Greenfield Mill Pond.⁸⁴ Mr. Bain, the circulation editor of the *Wilmington Star News*, won with his entry “Sunset Park” in a contest held to decide the name of the suburb; the prize for the winning entry was \$10.00.⁸⁵ The Fidelity Trust and Development Company planned to utilize 400 acres of the land they acquired to create a riverfront park for the residents. The developers planned to build California bungalow homes, each with building restrictions that required a setback from the sidewalk of 25 feet to insure the suburb kept a homogeneous look.⁸⁶

⁸³ *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Sunset Park Historic District, New Hanover County, NC*, Section 7, 1.

⁸⁴ Hall, “The Dram Tree and Sunset Park,” in *Land of the Golden River*, 307-8.

⁸⁵ “Mr. Bain the Winner,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 3 April 1912, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina; Sunset Park Neighborhood Association, “Sunset Park Quick Facts,” <http://www.sunsetparknc.org/property.htm>, (Accessed on 12 October 2008).

⁸⁶ Hall, “The Dram Tree and Sunset Park,” in *Land of the Golden River*, 307-8; “Another Big Development,” *Wilmington Morning Star* 7 April 1912. Newspaper on Microfilm; Cabinet: E; Drawer 8; Wilmington, *Star News* (Various Titles), January 1, 1907 – April 30, 1923; Box: Wilmington, *The Morning Star Daily*, April 2, 1912 – June 30, 1912; Available from Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.

Wilmington Must Provide for 30,000 More People!

Wilmington will DOUBLE its present population within the next ten years!
 We believe this! You believe it! EVERYBODY believes it who has analyzed the conditions now confronting Wilmington and the South.

The entire South is now just in the VERY BEGINNING of a development era which will AMAZE THE WORLD—which WILL EXCEED anything heretofore known in any other section of these United States.

The factors which will bring about this great development to the South are in GREATER VARIETY and of LARGER IMPORTANCE than any other block of States have ever had in their favor.

Stop a moment and consider them! The rich fruit and trucking lands—millions of acres, and now practically undeveloped. The new regime of diversified farming. The improvements in live stock growing. Greater development of the valuable natural resources—the minerals, lumber and water powers. Immense increase in manufacturing, wholesale and retail establishments and business. Opening of the Panama canal. Inauguration of the Inland Coastwise route. Improvements of transportation facilities on all navigable rivers. Great increase in railway mileage. Increasing popularity of all coast and inland recreation resorts.

He, indeed, must be a pessimist, who doubts what all this potential wealth and these new activities MUST MEAN to the ENTIRE SOUTH.

Do not doubt for one moment that Wilmington is certain to secure her full share of this increased population and prosperity—is certain to have a population of NOT LESS than 60,000 within the next ten years!

And the one most serious question now confronting us, is this:
 "What are Wilmington's facilities for taking care of this 30,000 additional population?"

The present city limits are restricted to a very small area—the limits were established in 1871, 41 years ago—and they have NEVER BEEN EXTENDED SINCE!

YOU KNOW it's practically impossible to rent a house in Wilmington today. YOU KNOW that the only other sub-divisions now available are of small areas—just a few blocks at the most. YOU KNOW that the city cannot extend to the North or the West, on account of the river—that it MUST extend to the East and South. YOU KNOW, too, that "Everybody's Going South."

Now, we assert, that if Wilmington is going to double its present population within the next ten years—and it is practically CERTAIN to do so—then some substantial, permanent and satisfactory provisions MUST BE MADE for the residential requirements of these 30,000 additional peoples.

It is with a proper recognition of the foregoing facts that we have planned, projected, permanently improved, and now offer

Sunset Park for Their Homes!

Here is an area, not of a few blocks, but of 442 acres—equal to one-fourth of Wilmington's present area—containing 1,640 beautiful lots—and providing a site for the satisfactory housing of 7,500 people, or one-fourth of the increased population we may reasonably expect.

Bear in mind this fact: That NO OTHER like provision has yet been made to take care of this added population—no other provision CAN be made that will compare with SUNSET PARK.

Don't you realize that if every lot in SUNSET PARK were sold and occupied by a residence, that we have even then taken care of ONLY ONE-FOURTH of our anticipated increase in population—that three-fourths MORE of that increase, or 22,500 people, MUST STILL BE PROVIDED FOR! Think hard on that fact!

It should now be evident to the most casual observer, that SUNSET PARK is CERTAIN to be in immediate and unusual demand for residential purposes—that it will build up as a SOLID SECTION, and as an integral part of the city of Wilmington, within the coming ten years—that it will be, from the very beginning, the home of hundreds of Wilmington's best citizens.

Every one who has viewed SUNSET PARK, and acquainted themselves with our plans for its permanent improvement as a whole, agrees with us in all our predictions for its future, and admit that

Now Is the Time to Buy!

It is worth your while to read the opinions of the representative citizens who have acquainted themselves with this sub-division—most of whom will BUY, BUILD and MAKE THEIR HOMES IN SUNSET PARK.

The Fidelity Trust and Development Co.
 14 PRINCESS STREET. OWNERS. PHONE 312.

"I shall certainly be a buyer at the opening sale."
 JAMES HOWARD,
 Proprietor Bijou Theatre.

"This is something for all Wilmington to be proud of."
 D. N. CHADWICK, JR.,
 Secy. Treas. Fidelity Trust & Development Co.

"It is certainly all you claim for it."
 C. L. MEISTER,
 Chief Draftsman, A. C. L.

"The development seems a work of Aladdin's Lamp."
 GEO. HONNET,
 Jeweler.

"Truly a superb location with an assured future."
 L. W. DAVIS,
 L. W. Davis Co.

"A natural site for a high-class residential district."
 WILMINGTON EVENING DISPATCH.

"This is certainly destined to be a high-class sub-division."
 E. T. TAYLOR,
 President Navassa Guano Co.

"Investors here are certain to profit."
 J. W. BROOKS,
 J. W. Brooks & Co.

"BEST development I have ever been identified with."
 H. R. ELLSWORTH,
 Publicity Agent and Advertising Specialist on Real Estate Projects.

Figure 7. An advertisement in the *Wilmington Morning Star* for the sale of homes in the suburb of Sunset Park Wilmington, North Carolina. The Fidelity Trust and Development Company cleverly used quotes from a variety of sources, alongside the ad, that sang the praises of the development in order to entice people to purchase lots. ("Sunset Park," *Wilmington Morning Star*, October 1, 1912, Courtesy of the New Hanover Public Library, Wilmington, North Carolina).

On October 1, 1912, an advertisement in the *Wilmington Morning Star* for the suburb of Sunset Park carried the praises of North Carolina businesses, which raved that it was "a natural site for a high-class residential district" and "a superb location with an assured future."⁸⁷ (See Figure 7) Even before the developers of Sunset Park offered lots for sale, the suburb had already caught the attention of potential local and state buyers. The advertisement also emphasized the expanding need for housing in the community due to the area's increasing population numbers.

⁸⁷ "Wilmington Must Provide for 30,000 More People!" *Wilmington Morning Star*, 1 October 1912, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

This ad and several others during 1912 estimated that during the next ten years the population of Wilmington would increase by no less than sixty or seventy thousand.⁸⁸ On October 7, 1912, the Fidelity Trust & Development Company began the opening of lots in the new suburban development of Sunset Park. The developers reported a total of 147 sales to 103 buyers closed on October 7.⁸⁹



Figure 8. Photograph taken at the entrance of Sunset Park of the Philadelphia Nationals and the Baltimore Orioles on March 20, 1913. (Courtesy of Latimer House Archives, Historical Society of the Lower Cape Fear, Wilmington, North Carolina).

By 1915, the suburb of Sunset Park offered many modern conveniences. The main road of the suburb, Northern Boulevard was paved; there were concrete sidewalks, electric lights, and a water and sewage plant. Residents of Sunset Park had all of these services without the

⁸⁸ “30,000 More People!”; “Watch Wilmington-and Sunset Park-Grow!” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 3 October 1912. Newspaper on Microfilm; Cabinet: E; Drawer 8; Wilmington, *Star News* (Various Titles), January 1, 1907 – April 30, 1923; Box: Wilmington, *The Morning Star Daily*, April 2, 1912 – June 30, 1912; Available from Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁸⁹ “Big Sale Lots Sunset,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 8 October 1912, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

headaches of living in the city. Brick pergolas (See Figure 8) marked the entrance into the suburb of Sunset Park, where residents of the suburb waited for the streetcar to take them to and from work, to downtown, or even to Wrightsville Beach. Originally the Fidelity Trust and Development Company planned for pergolas of the same design to be placed at the entranceways of Central and Southern Boulevards, but when World War I broke out the exclusivity for which Sunset Park was designed gave way to wartime housing demands. The other pergolas were forgotten, while Sunset Park and Wilmington continued to grow.⁹⁰

On April 2, 1917 President Woodrow Wilson stood before Congress and asked for a declaration of war against Germany, which was granted two days later.⁹¹ The war brought the ship building business to the port of Wilmington, North Carolina. In 1918, the construction of George A. Fuller's Carolina shipyard resulted in large numbers of shipyard workers flocking to Sunset Park. Another port, the Kirby Smith's Liberty Shipyard, constructed in the same year and opened two days later than the Carolina shipyard. Workers from the Carolina and Liberty shipyard worked at the port and commuted to the suburb of Sunset Park on the streetcars of the Tide Water Power Company.⁹² The business created by these shipyards brought those in search of work to Wilmington, and with that a population boom occurred in the city. The sudden inundation of new workers to Wilmington generated a call for homes that could be quickly erected. The Fidelity Trust & Development Company recognized the need for housing, created by the new arrival of workers in Wilmington, and the suburb of Sunset Park became a lucrative opportunity for the company to fulfill this niche.⁹³

⁹⁰ J. Fred Newber, "The Story of Sunset Park's Pergolas," *Encore Magazine*, 1-7 July 1993, 27, Sunset Park Historic District Vertical Files, City of Wilmington Planning Office, Wilmington, NC.

⁹¹ George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, Brief 6th ed. (New York, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2004), 825.

⁹² Hall, "The Dram Tree and Sunset Park," in *Land of the Golden River*, 308; Cashman, *Cape Fear Adventure*, 82.

⁹³ Newber, "The Story of Sunset Park's Pergolas," 27.

On June 8, 1918 J. A. Taylor, a wholesale merchant and successful Wilmington businessman, became the president of the Wilmington based Victory Homes Company.⁹⁴ Business men of Wilmington including J. A. Taylor, C. C. Chadbourn, Phil Pearbourn, H. C. McQueen, W. H. Sprunt, Marsden Bellamy, M. W. Jacobi, and Walker Taylor founded the Victory Homes Company as a patriotic war measure to house the workers that constructed warships at the shipyards in Wilmington.⁹⁵ The Victory Homes Company operated on a grand scale to provide housing for rent or purchase to the shipyard workers.⁹⁶ The company owned sixteen vacant lots and forty-six homes. The majority of the company's property was located within Sunset Park, with the only ten lots owned within the city of Wilmington.⁹⁷ On June 14, 1921, the Victory Homes Company announced in *The Wilmington News Dispatch* that it would sell the forty-six homes it held in both Sunset Park and in the city of Wilmington, the homes would either sell collectively or as single deed purchases.⁹⁸ Once the war ended the need for the company became obsolete. The Victory Homes Company offered the homes at twenty-five percent less than a home of the same style or cost, in order to get rid of their stock.⁹⁹

On December 23, 1923, improvements began on Riverside Drive, and Northern and Central Boulevards three main streets that ran through the suburb of Sunset Park.¹⁰⁰ The Road Superintendent Burnett and Addison Hewlett, chairmen of the board of county commissioners completed a survey of these streets, which the county recently took jurisdiction over. Riverside

⁹⁴ "Officers Elected by the Victory Home Co.," *The Wilmington News Dispatch*, 8 June 1918. Bill Reaves Collection, Local History Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁹⁵ "Forty-Six Homes Will Be Offered for Sale Here," *The Wilmington News Dispatch*, 14 June 1921. Bill Reaves Collection, Local History Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁹⁶ "Housing Company Renews Contract," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 3 February 1920. Bill Reaves Collection, Local History Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁹⁷ "Housing Company."

⁹⁸ "Forty-Six Homes Will Be Offered for Sale Here."

⁹⁹ "Live in Sunset Park and Be Well and Happy," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 18 June 1922. Bill Reaves Collection, Local History Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

¹⁰⁰ "Three Streets in Sunset Park Will Be Improved Soon," *The Wilmington News Dispatch*, 5 December 1923. Bill Reaves Collection, Local History Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

Drive, and Northern and Central Boulevards temporarily improved with the use of rock, and the county tarred the streets once the weather warmed the next year.¹⁰¹ The suburb of Sunset Park saw continual growth during the 1920s, the rate of residents and prospective buyers grew to such an amount that the consumption of water increased to necessitate the installation of a second water pump.¹⁰² However, the progress in Sunset Park would soon be overshadowed by robberies and the collapse of the country's economic infrastructure.

On February 3, 1929 in the *Wilmington Morning Star* an article described an epidemic of robberies occurring in the suburb of Sunset Park.¹⁰³ As a result of these robberies residents came together to present Wilmington's Sheriff with a petition for a special officer in charge of patrolling the suburb. The residents of Sunset Park paid \$1 monthly for the protection of the police; this would go towards payment of the officer's salary.¹⁰⁴ Sunset Park began to show the first signs of what the whole country soon felt of desperation and degradation of their way of life. Before the mighty fall of the stock market and what some argue was the start of the Great Depression, Wilmington's residents and fabric were showing signs of stresses yet to come.

Like most areas of the country, during the Great Depression Wilmington experienced a lull in the construction of new homes. With the start of World War II, the shipyards in Wilmington were revived and Sunset Park saw a renewal in construction. Newport News Ship Building Company took over the Carolina shipyard, bringing enormous amounts of people into the city.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, in the rush to meet the demand for housing, the suburb of Sunset Park

¹⁰¹ "Three Streets in Sunset Park Will Be Improved Soon."

¹⁰² "Sunset Park Activity," *The Wilmington News Dispatch*, 17 May 1924. Bill Reaves Collection, Local History Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

¹⁰³ "Special Officer for Sunset Park Placed in Office," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 3 February 1929. Bill Reaves Collection, Local History Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

¹⁰⁴ "Special Officer."

¹⁰⁵ Newber, "The Story of Sunset Park's Pergolas," 27.

lost its beloved Dram Tree and its view of the Cape Fear River.¹⁰⁶ Another intrusion upon Sunset Park came in 1945 in the form of the State Port Authority, established by the North Carolina General Assembly on the old Liberty shipyard property.¹⁰⁷

By 1966 the port had doubled in size, extending all the way to the southern border of the suburb or Southern Boulevard. With time, the port grew and so did the city.¹⁰⁸ In 1988, Sunset Park's access to the Cape Fear River was cut off, possibly for good, by the installation of a 900-foot southern wharf extension.¹⁰⁹ The once enclosed community felt the burden of commercial traffic and port commerce. Sunset Park, once a suburb with a riverside view closed off from the chaos of the city, now looked out on an industrial horizon, and the encroachment of a growing city.

Like many of the other port cities in the South, the city of Wilmington, North Carolina has experienced booms and busts in its in population and economy, fluctuations that influenced the nature of the built landscape. During these fluctuating economic times, Wilmington continued to grow and move outside of the downtown, beginning with the Delgado Mill Village and the early twentieth century streetcar suburbs of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park. The "City Beautiful" movement had inspired the developers of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park to create the landscaped, tree-lined environments that gave residents the sense of belonging to a community. As industry took over Southern cities such as Wilmington, residents of these cities sought a landscape that distinguished residential uses from commercial for more than simply health reasons. Residents of Wilmington moved to Carolina

¹⁰⁶For more about the Dram Tree see Lewis Phillip Hall, "The Dram Tree and Sunset Park," in *Land of the Golden River*, 309; Ben Steelman, "The Rise of Sunset Park," *Wilmington Star-News*, 15 July 2007.

¹⁰⁷ *Sunset Park Neighborhood Architectural Survey, Wilmington, NC*. Researched and Compiled by Edward. F. Turberg, with the assistance of Beth Keane. City of Wilmington. Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc. North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources., (September 1996), ix.

¹⁰⁸ *Sunset Park Neighborhood Architectural Survey, Wilmington, NC*, ix.

¹⁰⁹ *Sunset Park Neighborhood Architectural Survey, Wilmington, NC*, ix.

Place, Carolina Heights and Sunset Park in order to move away from the industrial landscape that was defining the city. Suburbs such as Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park allowed Wilmingtonians to separate their work from their living environment, and gave their living space an attractive and peaceful feel that connected residents to a seemingly rural landscape. After World War II, the subsequent outward growth of the city's industrial center threatened the suburbs' sense of belonging to an enclosed community, which spurred residents into taking action in the late twentieth century to preserve their unique historical communities.

CHAPTER TWO – THE HISTORY OF THE PRESERVATION MOVEMENT IN WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

In the mid 1980s the political atmosphere and agenda within the organization Downtown Area Revitalization Effort (DARE, Inc.), created by Wilmington Mayor Ben Halterman, and the city government of Wilmington began to change. The move to suburban preservation was caused by political and economic changes that led to a shift from a concentration on downtown revitalization through preservation to focus on growth through development. Starting in the late 1980s, the local preservation community in Wilmington, North Carolina shifted its efforts from downtown revitalization to suburban preservation. This change revealed the growth of Wilmington's local preservation community and its acknowledgement of the significance of the early twentieth century suburbs as valuable historic resources.

Beginning in the early twentieth century, Wilmingtonians moved out beyond the downtown area and into the suburbs on the city's periphery. The continued departure to the suburbs of Wilmington residents after World War II intensified as a result of the 1944 GI Bill of Rights (Servicemen's Readjustment Act).¹ From this point the city's downtown area declined steadily. In 1947, the National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings and the National Park Service (NPS) began to urge the federal government to create a national, private non-profit preservation organization that would bring together the guidance and knowledge of preservation, and take on the task of "property stewardship that the federal government could not."² Two early supporters of creating a national preservation organization were Ronald F. Lee, northeast

¹ The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 popularly referred to as the GI Bill or the GI Bill of Rights (GI meaning "government issue") was passed by the United States Congress to quell the fears of the American people of a post World War II economic slump. An economic downturn people feared would occur due to a decrease in military spending and a sudden influx of veterans back into the workforce. The GI Bill subsidized the United States postwar economy. The GI Bill financially assisted veterans in obtaining a college education, and it allowed around five million people to buy new homes. Tindall and Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, 1047.

² William J. Murtagh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006), 25.

regional director of the NPS, and Horace M. Albright, a former NPS director.³ In 1949, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (National Trust) formed out of the evolved organization of the National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings. The National Trust was created with the purpose of combining the efforts of the federal government with those of the National Park Service to preserve the national historic resources falling prey to urban renewal, highway development, and city abandonment.⁴ The National Trust would accept contributions in the form of property and funds, while also managing properties; these were concepts modeled after the already established British National Trust and San Antonio Conservation Society in Texas.⁵

During the 1950s, Wilmington's economy slowed due in part to the end of World War II and the close of the shipyards, and also the impending loss of the city's principal employer, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad (ACL). On December 15, 1955, Wilmington received a terrible blow to its economy when the ACL announced that it was leaving for Jacksonville, Florida. Although it was five more years before all of the local offices of the ACL shut down, the announcement caused fear and doubt in the people of Wilmington about the city's future, as well as their own. As one of the largest employers in Wilmington, the ACL's relocation devastated the city, and served as a wake-up call for the local economy. Around 300 families left Wilmington during the 1960s to work elsewhere with the ACL.⁶

³ Murtagh, *Time*, 26.

⁴ Norman Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to its History, Principles, and Practice* (New York, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2000), 42.

⁵ Murtagh, *Time*, 27; Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., "Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949," *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology* 12 (1980): 20.

⁶ "Railroad's Pullout Galvanized City, Spurred Industrial Growth," *Wilmington's 250th Anniversary: the History of Wilmington and Its Place in the Cape Fear Region* (Wilmington, North Carolina: Star-News, 1989), 64; "Chamber of Commerce President Foresees Strong Business Upsurge In '60," *Wilmington Star-News*, 21 February 1960, Wilmington Promotion and Publicity, Chamber of Commerce Vertical File, The Historical Society of the Lower Cape Fear Archives, Latimer House, Wilmington, North Carolina; "Conversation with Dan Cameron", Typewritten Oral Interview, City Growth Vertical File, The Historical Society of the Lower Cape Fear Archives, Latimer House, Wilmington, North Carolina; Beverly Tetterton, *History of Wilmington*, available from New Hanover County Public Library Home Page, <http://www.nhc.gov/AgnAndDpt/LIBR/LocalHistory/Pages/HistoryofWilmington.aspx>, (Accessed 2 August 2010).

In 1956, Mayor Dan Cameron and Al Jones of Carolina Power and Lighting (now Progress Energy) gathered a group that created a combined effort to persuade new companies to come to Wilmington. This group was called the Committee of 100. The group actually consisted of more than one-hundred men, but the idea was that backers would support the Committee in efforts to recruit new businesses to the city. An advisory committee set the policies for the Committee of 100. Executive Director Hugh W. Branch and his staff were in charge of public relations and administrative tasks.⁷ The Committee succeeded in recruiting companies including General Electric (GE), DuPont, Hercules, Inc. (now Hercofina), and Corning Glass to locate their companies in the area.⁸

In 1956, in response to the industrial growth induced by the Committee of 100 and the hazard that growth posed to the historical treasures of Wilmington, the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society (now the Historical Society of the Lower Cape Fear) was organized to preserve the history of the city.⁹ Chartered as a 501 (c) (3) corporation, the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society devoted its endeavors to researching and preserving the history of the Lower Cape Fear area.¹⁰

⁷ “‘100’ Committee Brings Industry Into Wilmington,” Wilmington Promotion and Publicity, Chamber of Commerce Vertical File, The Historical Society of the Lower Cape Fear Archives, Latimer House, Wilmington, North Carolina; “Conversation with Dan Cameron,” City Growth Vertical File, Latimer House, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁸ Cashman, *Cape Fear Adventure*, 91.

⁹ Julia Yannetti, “Late 20th Century Preservation in Wilmington, North Carolina,” *The Bulletin*, (March 2008), 1-4.

¹⁰ Donations to 501 (c) (3) organizations are tax deductible for the donor. Nonprofits are able to take advantage of local property tax exemptions and sales tax refunds from both the state and local government. The drawback is that funds of a 501 (c) (3) is that the funding of such a nonprofit organization are open to public review, and legislative advocacy is limited to a small portion of the organization’s budget and agenda. Incorporation of a nonprofit organization usually requires the registration of an organization charter and bylaws with the appropriate local or state authorities. The more difficult part for the organization is the creation of an effective board of directors. J. Myrick Howard, “Nonprofits in the American Preservation Movement,” in *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Robert E. Stipe (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 314-5; Yannetti. “Late 20th Century Preservation,” 1-4; Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, “About the Society,” Latimer House, <http://www.latimerhouse.org/society.shtml> (Accessed 10 October 2008).

Despite the growing concern in the local preservation community for the loss of historical assets, Wilmington began to prosper in the 1960s as the result of work done by the Committee of 100. The Committee of 100 brought in new companies and a tourist industry that attracted people from all over the country to the different beaches and historic sites that Wilmington and New Hanover County had to offer. Organized in 1948 by Dr. Houston Moore and the Cape Fear Garden Club, the annual Azalea Festival also resulted in the expansion of business in Wilmington as people flocked from various places to see the beautiful flowers and parade.¹¹ In October 1961, the *U.S.S. North Carolina* (now referred to as the Battleship *North Carolina*) arrived at Eagles Island, and became an integral part of Wilmington's tourist industry; it stands as a memorial to those who fought and lost their lives in World War II.¹² In 1962 John Voorhees, assistant administrator of the Division of Community Planning of the North Carolina State Department of Conservation and Development recommended that the city of Wilmington create a Board of Architectural Review and a historic district to protect the historical and architectural treasures of the city.¹³ The Board of Architectural Review would authorize all construction plans including building, altering, or demolishing of any structure in the area surrounding or in the Central Business District (CBD).¹⁴ The Board could not prevent historic structures from being demolished, but they could regulate new construction.¹⁵ In June 1962, the Wilmington City Council created the city's first Historic District and the Board of Architectural Review. The Board established according to North Carolina state law, which declared it must

¹¹ Susan Taylor Block, *Belles & Blooms: Cape Fear Garden Club and the North Carolina Azalea Festival* (Wilmington, North Carolina: Cape Fear Garden Club, 2004), 23.

¹² Anne Russell, *Wilmington: A Pictorial History* (Virginia Beach: Virginia: Donning Company Publishers, 2004), 193.

¹³ "Historic District Report Studied by Planning Group," *Wilmington Star-News*, 29 March 1962, Wilmington Redevelopment Commission Vertical File, The Historical Society of the Lower Cape Fear Archives, Latimer House, Wilmington, North Carolina; "Proposal Would Preserve City's Historical Beauty."

¹⁴ "Proposal Would Preserve."

¹⁵ "Historic District Report Studied by Planning Group."

“protect and conserve the heritage of the city,” and “safeguard the character and heritage of the city by preserving the district as a whole.”¹⁶

In January 1964, the Division of Community Planning of the North Carolina State Department of Conservation and Development with research assistance from Wilmington city officials and members from both the New Hanover County Council of Architects and the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, published a study analyzing the historic resources of the downtown. The report, which was called *Wilmington, North Carolina: Historic Area, A Part of the Future Land Use Plan* and written by John Voorhees, contained a brief history of the downtown and its contents, along with his recommendations for successful preservation of the historical area of Wilmington.¹⁷ This report incorporated individual historic buildings, not suburban developments; it described the oldest surviving part of the city of Wilmington that developed along the Cape Fear River. According to the information contained in this study, the reason for initiating the survey of the historic resources of the downtown was that the original *Future Land-Use Plan* for Wilmington failed to account for these assets, those structures whose historic charm drew visitors to the city.¹⁸ With the study of these assets, the city of Wilmington and its preservationists could properly assess the feasibility of preserving the structures as individual buildings or as groups.¹⁹ In 1966, the economic turnaround in Wilmington and the vibrant new life evident in the city captured the attentions of the National Municipal League and *Look* magazine judges, who honored Wilmington with the “All American City” award.²⁰

¹⁶ “Threats to Old Buildings Led to Historic District Creation,” *Wilmington’s 250th Anniversary: the History of Wilmington and Its Place in the Cape Fear Region* (Wilmington, North Carolina: Star-News, 1989), 67.

¹⁷ *Historic Area*, 1; “Proposal Would Preserve.”

¹⁸ *Historic Area*, 5-9.

¹⁹ *Historic Area*, 9.

²⁰ Cashman, 91.

On October 15, 1966, Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) into law. This legislation expanded the federal government's perception of preservation to go beyond that of historical resources of national consequence, to incorporate both state and local assets. One way the NHPA accomplished this was the creation of the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). The National Register consists of "sites, buildings, objects, districts, and structures significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture" that either hold national, state, or local importance.²¹ Overseen by the National Park Service, the National Register identifies, evaluates, and protects the historic and archeological resources which have been identified for listing to the Register.²² The historic assets of the United States personify the nation's character and identity, and reveal important insight into trends and events of considerable importance to the country's history.²³

On August 2, 1966, in a meeting presided over by Lower Cape Fear Historical Society president, Kelly W. Jewell, Jr., at the downtown Wilmington Wachovia Bank, the Board of Directors for the Society discussed the creation of a non-profit preservation corporation.²⁴ The preservation corporation, called Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc. (HWF) formed through the work of local citizens and members of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society R.V. Asbury, Jr., Kelly W. Jewell, Jr., Thomas H. Wright, Jr., and Wallace C. Murchison under the sponsorship of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society.²⁵ The purpose of the Historic

²¹ Murtagh, *Time*, 51.

²² Julie Zagars, ed., *Preservation Yellow Pages: The Complete Information Source for Homeowners, Communities, and Professionals*, Rev. ed. (New York, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997), 27.

²³ Murtagh, *Time*, 51-2.

²⁴ Thomas H. Wright Jr., "A Non-Profit Corporation Was Being Formed Called 'Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc.'" (a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Wachovia Bank, 2 August 1966), File the History of the Historic Wilmington Foundation, Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Archives, Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Wilmington, North Carolina.

²⁵ Janet Seapker, "Introduction," *Rescue, Restore, Renew: A Pictorial History in Celebration of the Historic Wilmington Foundation's 35th Anniversary*, edited by Alma P. Hubbard (Wilmington, North Carolina: The Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., 2001), 8-9.

Wilmington Foundation, according to Thomas H. Wright, Jr., “was to acquire and preserve and restore historic buildings.”²⁶ The Lower Cape Fear Historical Society contributed \$3,500 in startup funds to support HWF’s purchase of threatened historic buildings, until a preservation minded purchaser came forward to buy and restore the building.²⁷ HWF sought to stop the exodus of residents and businesses to the suburbs and promote the revitalization of downtown Wilmington.²⁸

In the early years of the organization, the board members of HWF took turns cosigning on loans for houses and the board members bought the homes outright. In 1987, Janet Seapker, a former president of the Foundation, was quoted in the *Wilmington Star-News* observing, “I don’t know what the place would’ve looked like” if it were not for the “real gutsy board members who put their names (literally) on the line.”²⁹ HWF hoped that revitalizing the downtown area would bring businesses and residents back, and stop the decay of the historic city center. HWF utilized the inspiration of Lee Adler and the Historic Savannah Foundation, who drew upon the concept of adaptive use and revolving funds based on the example set by the country’s first revolving fund in Charleston.³⁰ The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines adaptive use “as the process of converting a building to a use other than that for which it was designed, e.g., changing a factory into housing.”³¹

By the early 1970s, the tables had turned and instead of the upper class flocking to the suburbs, the Historic District in Wilmington became “the most fashionable neighborhood” in the

²⁶ Wright, “A Non-Profit Corporation.”

²⁷ Wright, “A Non-Profit Corporation.”

²⁸ Janet Seapker, “Introduction,” 8-9.

²⁹ Mary Ellen Polson, “Foundation Preserves the Old Days.” *Wilmington Star-News*, 2 August 1987. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=uLkyAAAIBAJ&sjid=nhMEAAAIBAJ&pg=6205,352908&dq=suburban+preservation+wilmington+north+carolina&hl=en>. (Accessed 22 February 2010).

³⁰ Sharad J. Shah, “Killing the Golden Goose: Balancing Preservation and Development in Wilmington, North Carolina,” Master’s thesis, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, 2008, 22, 27-8.

³¹ Murtagh, *Keeping Time*, 99.

city. By recruiting buyers to homes scheduled for demolition the Historic Wilmington Foundation played a significant role in bringing new residents to the historic homes of the Historic District. Housing prices in the Historic District went from \$10,940 in 1970 to \$40,000-\$60,000 by 1977.³² Many young couples and retired people purchased homes at these lower prices in the early 1970s and restored the houses, often making the Historic District their home. According to an article in *The Hanover Sun*, “these people were attracted to the Wilmington Historic District because of low cost the old homes, as compared to other historic districts in” other cities.³³ Despite the good intentions of HWF to bring about the restoration of the Historic District’s homes, the rise in property values because of the restorations placed undue stress on home owners. The Historic Wilmington Foundation’s executive director, R. V. Asbury expressed concern in *The Hanover Sun* over the unanticipated rapid increase in land appraisals; this would discourage people from purchasing homes in the Historic District.

In early 1973, a group of residents active in preservation and in HWF formed their own organization called the Residents of Old Wilmington (ROW).³⁴ ROW aimed their focus at activities and problems that interested and troubled the residents of downtown.³⁵ The goal of this organization was to create an outlet where residents of Wilmington could have “political visibility” on issues of zoning and development in the downtown.³⁶

³² Herman, “The Status of Historic Preservation in Wilmington.”

³³ “Historic District Appraisal Skyrockets,” *The Hanover Sun*, 5 February 1975, Bicentennial Celebration in Wilmington, North Carolina File, Historical Society of the Lower Cape Fear Archives, Latimer House, Wilmington, North Carolina.

³⁴ Residents of Old Wilmington, “A Working History of Residents of Old Wilmington,” Residents of Old Wilmington, <http://www.rowilmington.org/history/working-history-row> (Accessed on 12 October 2008).

³⁵ Residents of Old Wilmington, “A Working History.”

³⁶ Residents of Old Wilmington, “A Working History”; “Warren Named Head Residents Old Wilmington,” *Wilmington Star-News*, 1 April 1973. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=JWk0AAAAIABAJ&sjid=0QkEAAAAIABAJ&pg=3849,45060&dq=residents+of+old+wilmington&hl=en>. (Accessed 14 July 2010).

The instability of the downtown was evident in an article in the *Wilmington Star-News* on April 8, 1973. Titled “Old homes demolished, value disregarded” the article described R. V. Asbury of the Historic Wilmington Foundation presenting a report about homes in the downtown to members of the North Carolina Sorosis.³⁷ Asbury attempted to stimulate interest in preserving historic homes of Wilmington because many houses in the city faced demolition due to their age and poor condition. The indifference towards the historical significance of the homes surrounding the downtown brought a sense of urgency to the call for the preservation of the remaining homes. The task of saving the downtown homes took more than one person to purchase a home and restore it; it required the restoration and preservation of entire neighborhoods, requiring the commitment of community as a whole. Asbury stated that the brick streets downtown were important to Wilmington’s historic character, and must also be preserved.³⁸

In October 1973, Janet Seapker, then a researcher for the North Carolina State Department of Cultural Resources in the Office of Archives and History, gave a lecture to the Junior League of Wilmington on historic architecture in the city that held significance with its connection to the area’s past. Seapker noted that, “Wilmington has more fine homes and buildings of historical significance than any other city in North Carolina.”³⁹ The historic homes and buildings in Wilmington represented the legacy of past generations who helped to construct one of North Carolina’s most noteworthy ports. Seapker identified her duties as a researcher for the Office of Archives and History included investigating cities in North Carolina that qualified

³⁷ “Old Homes Demolished, Value Disregarded,” *Wilmington Star-News*, 8 April 1973. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=N2k0AAAAIABAJ&sjid=0QkEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=2728,2016141&dq=old+homes+demolished+value+disregarded&hl=en>. (Accessed 21 January 2010).

³⁸ “Old Homes Demolished.”

³⁹ “Old Homes Praised,” *Wilmington Star-News*, 12 October 1973. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=Emk0AAAAIABAJ&sjid=zAkEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=4208,2448324&dq=old+homes+praised&hl=en>. (Accessed 20 February 2010).

for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Instead of a few properties or houses being placed on the Register, she advised for the inclusion of the entire Historic District.⁴⁰

Wilmington's local preservation community gained support through the aid of federal laws that helped preservationists fight against the growing deterioration of the historic downtown's Central Business District (CBD). In November 1974, after Congress passed the Community Development Act, Wilmington City Manager John A. Jones' administration created the Community Development Committee (CDC). The Wilmington City Council encouraged local citizens to participate in local government through the CDC. The Jones' administration organized the CDC by gathering a representative from each of the seventeen neighborhood assemblies, five representatives from a coalition of civic organizations, and a chairman that was elected by the CDC.⁴¹ The CDC offered a structure that facilitated two-way communication between the city government and its residents. This gave the city's residents a chance for involvement in decisions about the priorities and needs of public improvements, and it served as an opportunity to inform the public about city programs, regulations, and policies. The CDC also advised the city on how to spend the federal Community Development Block Grant funds, which emphasized the necessity to rehabilitate and restore housing, repair streets, create parks and recreation, and involvement in historic preservation.⁴²

In 1975 the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development conducted a study of Wilmington's architectural assets. The study concluded that 83 percent of the structures in Wilmington were over forty years old, with some dating as far back as the eighteenth

⁴⁰ "Praised."

⁴¹ "Crises of the 1970s," *Wilmington's 250th Anniversary: the History of Wilmington and Its Place in the Cape Fear Region* (Wilmington, North Carolina: Star-News, 1989)," 73.

⁴² "Crises of the 1970s," 73.

century.⁴³ This study provided Wilmington preservationists and the city government with an idea of the magnitude of the preservation task at hand, it also allowed for the government and preservationists to assess the feasibility of preserving these resources. Revitalization through preservation gave these historic structures a second chance at life. Since the start of revitalization in Wilmington, preservation efforts focused mainly on downtown; however, in that same year the first sign of preservation outside of the CBD came with the designation of the Market Street Mansion District.⁴⁴



Figure 9. The MacRae Building-Otterbourg's Iron Front Men's Wear Depot, located at 25 North Front Street in downtown Wilmington, North Carolina. The structure is a Renaissance Classical iron front building and is an unusual find in North Carolina. ("MacRae Building," *Wilmington, North Carolina: An Architectural and Historical Portrait*, Tony P. Wrenn, with photographs by, Wm. Edmund Barrett).

⁴³ Herman, "The Status of Historic Preservation in Wilmington."

⁴⁴ North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, "North Carolina Listings in the National Register of Historic Places by County, As of 22 October 2008," North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Office of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, <http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/nrlist.htm>. (Accessed on 17 October 2009).

On May 21, 1975, the *Wilmington Star-News* published an article about the MacRae building, located at 25 North Front Street, and the Historic Wilmington Foundation's fight to have it preserved. (See Figure 9) In the article, the unnamed writer argued that downtown needed new development and unless the MacRae building found an investor willing to put in the required work it must be demolished to make room for new construction, new growth.⁴⁵ At the time the MacRae building stood in disrepair and without an owner to complete the arduous task of restoration. A June 20th deadline before demolition hastened HWF's attempts to find a preservation-minded buyer. HWF argued that as one of the only iron-front facades of its kind the building held significance not only for Wilmington, but for the state of North Carolina as well.⁴⁶ Originally the MacRae Building had been scheduled for demolition in June 1975. However, the Historic Wilmington Foundation purchased it one week before the demolition and began their search for a new owner who would preserve the building. Bill Reaves, a staff writer for the *Wilmington Star-News*, on October 25, 1975 announced the sale of the iron-front MacRae Building to Mr. and Mrs. William A. Rusciano, Jr.⁴⁷

The Cotton Exchange opened in 1976 thanks to the work of Joseph Reeves and Malcolm Murray, partners in Harbors Associates, Realtors. These two men were able to save eight buildings from demolition when banks did not want to lend money to downtown business enterprises, because it was too risky.⁴⁸ The buildings of the Cotton Exchange tell the story of the city's waterfront shipping industry; the Sprunt Building contained the Alexander Sprunt & Son

⁴⁵ "Preservation and Progress," *Wilmington Star-News*, 21 May 1975. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=IMIsAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=1QkEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=1835,4264883&dq=preservation+and+progress+wilmington+north+carolina&hl=en>. (Accessed 22 February 2010).

⁴⁶ "Preservation and Progress."

⁴⁷ Bill Reaves, "Old Landmark Gets a Future," *Wilmington Star-News*, 25 October 1975. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=TbgsAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=4AkEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=4632,5190279&dq=old+landmark+gets+a+future&hl=en>. (Accessed 26 February 2010).

⁴⁸ Beverly Tetterton, *Wilmington: Lost But Not Forgotten* (Wilmington, North Carolina: Dram Tree Books, 2005), 143-4.

merchant house, the largest cotton exporting company in the United States during the late nineteenth century.⁴⁹ When the Cotton Exchange opened as shopping center, the once merchant house and mill building received awards of merit from both the North Carolina Preservation Society and the North Carolina Chapter of the American Institute of Architects for the adaptive reuse of the historic buildings, a valuable resource for the state and the community.⁵⁰ Presently, the shopping center contains specialty shops, art galleries, and restaurants that attract residents and visitors to Wilmington's historic downtown.

In 1976, Mayor Ben Halterman created the Mayor's Task Force on Downtown Revitalization (City Core Revitalization) to set up a non-profit corporation which would advocate different ways to preserve and revitalize the downtown.⁵¹ The non-profit organization called the Downtown Area Revitalization Effort (DARE, Inc.) commenced operations in 1977 with the mission to "facilitate and coordinate activities which will enhance the quality of life for people who live, work, play, and visit in Wilmington's historic central river area."⁵² To pursue their mission, DARE utilized the already existing preservation community in Wilmington.⁵³ Mayor Halterman witnessed the successes of the HWF and knew that preservation was the key to downtown revitalization.

According to a September 1977 piece by John Meyer, staff writer for the *Wilmington Star-News*, the "Older business districts such as downtown Wilmington cannot compete with suburban shopping centers unless they begin using more sophisticated management

⁴⁹ J.R. Killick, "The Transformation of Cotton Marketing in the Late Nineteenth Century: Alexander Sprunt & Son of Wilmington, North Carolina, 1884 – 1956," *The Business History Review* 55 (Summer 1981): 145.

⁵⁰ Tetterton, *Lost But Not Forgotten*, 144.

⁵¹ "Downtown Task Force Appointed," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 27 March 1976. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=yXQ0AAAAIIBAJ&sjid=CxMEAAAAIIBAJ&pg=2774,5301915&dq=downtown+task+force+appointed&hl=en>. (Accessed 20 June 2010).; Shah, "Killing the Golden Goose," 51.

⁵² Shah, 2; Downtown Wilmington, Inc., "History," <http://www.wilmingtondowntown.com/about/history-of-downtown> (Accessed 19 December 2009).

⁵³ Shah, 27-28; Downtown Wilmington, Inc., "History."

techniques.”⁵⁴ The article outlined a four-point program written by John Sower, director of the National Development Council, which Sower conveyed in a message given to Wilmington bankers, businesses, and government officials. Sower’s four-point program explains that for downtown to compete with the suburban malls and draw businesses back that the CBD of downtown should:

- Make public improvements, such as parking, landscaping, and lighting.
- Pass design standards that require all businesses to maintain attractive storefronts.
- Encourage long-term financing, because in a lot of older CBDs “redlining” is practiced by banks to refuse loans to failing neighborhoods.
- Promote common management, rental rates are based on the percentage of sales, both management and individual businesses share a collective interest in working together to attract more consumers.⁵⁵

In order to have revitalization efforts pull Wilmington’s downtown out of decay, the public efforts that Sower recommended needed to couple with efforts by private citizens to restore buildings they owned and sell or lease the structures to someone who would recruit respectable businesses to the Central Business District. DARE operated this four point program by working with an architect from Raleigh to put together strict architectural design standards that would force business owners to either repair a building, sell it, or lease it to someone willing to restore it. These restrictions deterred owners from allowing a property to deteriorate beyond repair.⁵⁶

In the fall of 1977, Sally Thomson, a former intern for the Wilmington-New Hanover County Planning Department, began work as the historic researcher for the Chandler’s Wharf riverfront restoration project.⁵⁷ Thomas H. Wright, one of the founding members of Historic Wilmington Foundation and member of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, wanted to see

⁵⁴ John Meyer, “Downtown Must Alter Tactics,” *Wilmington Star-News*, 22 September 1977, file DARE, Inc. Up to 1989, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁵⁵ Meyer, “Alter Tactics.”

⁵⁶ Meyer, “Alter Tactics.”

⁵⁷ John Meyer, “Wharf Project’s Down Her Line,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 26 September 1977. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=D1FIAAAAIBAJ&sjid=ExMEAAAIBAJ&pg=1972,5025624&dq=wharf+project's+down+her+line&hl=en>. (Accessed 24 February 2010).

the history of the city's waterfront recreated through docks on the waterfront at the point where Ann and Water Street met.⁵⁸ In 1978, the Wilmington waterfront museum opened as a tribute to 19th century maritime life in the port city, when sailing ships, paddle wheel steamboats, and historic vessels docked along the Cape Fear River in the downtown.⁵⁹ The two-year project proved successful and encouraged the idea among the members of DARE that downtown could be salvaged.

DARE and HWF recognized that the downtown retail spaces could not compete with the retailers of the suburbs, especially the strip malls and the newly developing Independence Mall on Oleander Drive. In 1979, when Belk-Beery and J.C. Penny left the downtown area along with other retailers and businesses DARE and the city of Wilmington recognized that downtown was no longer the city's center for shopping.⁶⁰ DARE's leaders and the city's officials concentrated on recruiting small businesses, specialty shops, restaurants, and boutiques to historic buildings.⁶¹ DARE, the city of Wilmington, HWF, and ROW understood that the suburban shopping malls and retailers did not have, the lure and charm of the historic structures of downtown.⁶²

Early in the 1980s, HWF, DARE, the city of Wilmington, its citizens, and other local revitalization advocates saw the fruits of their efforts as downtown Wilmington started to come

⁵⁸ "'Chandler's Wharf at Wilmington is Straight from 19th Century'," *The Evening Dispatch*, 3 May 1978. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=OOEbAAAAIABAJ&sjid=kIEEAAAAIABAJ&pg=6905,286832&dq=chandler's+wharf+wilmington+nc&hl=en>. (Accessed 25 June 2010).

⁵⁹ "Chandler's Wharf," *Wilmington Star-News*, 13 August 1978. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=v7ssAAAAIABAJ&sjid=LBMEAAAAIABAJ&pg=5974,2548476&dq=chandler's+wharf&hl=en>. (Accessed 25 June 2010); "City Council Votes to Rezone Chandler's Wharf," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 11 June 1981. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=cSBOAAAAIABAJ&sjid=YxMEAAAAIABAJ&pg=1382,2385139&dq=city+council+votes+to+rezone+chandler's+wharf&hl=en>. (Accessed 25 June 2010).

⁶⁰ "Closing Up Shop," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 18 October 1978. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=QusyAAAAIABAJ&sjid=LhMEAAAAIABAJ&pg=2429,3512219&dq=closing+up+shop&hl=en>. (Accessed 25 May 2010).

⁶¹ "Downtown Development Board to Guide City's Rebirth," *The Hanover Sun*, 16 March 1977, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina; "Crises of the 1970s," 74.

⁶² "Crises of the 1970s," 74.

back from the decay of the post World War II and post Atlantic Coastline Railroad departure period. The Cotton Exchange, Chandler's Wharf, Riverfest, and other downtown attractions brought visitors and residents to the heart of Wilmington to shop and enjoy the historic atmosphere. By drawing residents and developers back from the suburbs to downtown, the preservation community was unknowingly putting pressure on an untapped historic resource: the early twentieth century suburbs. The downtown area revived while the suburbs began to suffer from pressures that came from both the expanding city and developing businesses just outside the suburbs.

In 1980, DARE purchased the former Ahrens Brothers building located at 112 Market Street, a building that at the time was leased to an adult entertainment business. DARE wanted a reputable business owner to purchase and fully restore the Ahrens Building. (See Figure 10) Before the Ahrens Building could be purchased, DARE placed restrictive covenants and "reverse" clauses on the building that kept buyers from purchasing a property and holding on to it without making the necessary improvements.⁶³ If the downtown was more appealing, more businesses would move into the buildings and bring increased revenue to the downtown.

⁶³ Mary M. Gornto, "DARE Purchases Building," *Historic Downtown Wilmington 1* vol. 3 (May 1980), DARE, Inc. Up to 1989, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

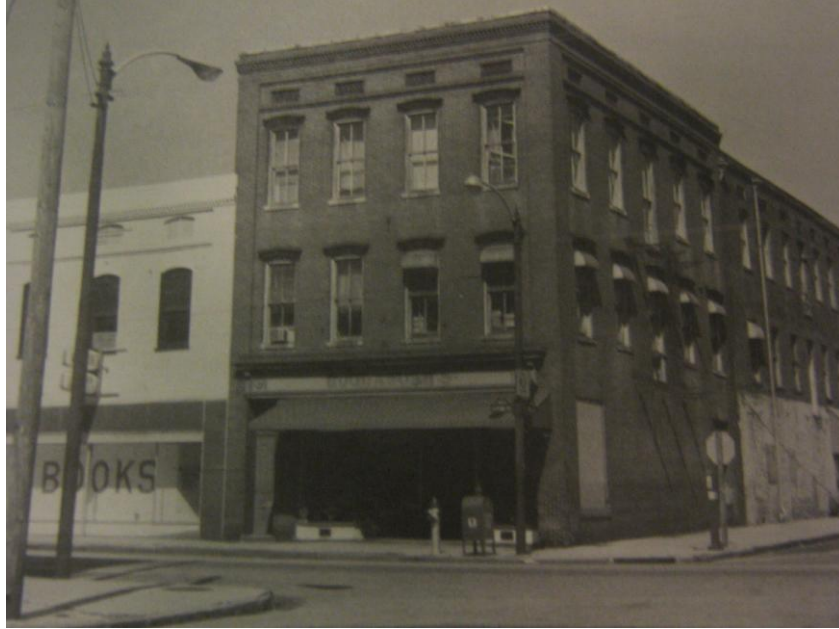


Figure 10. The B. H. J. Ahrens Building located on 31 South Front Street in downtown Wilmington, North Carolina. The structure is a three story commercial brick building with a somewhat lower level addition behind it. (“B. H. J. Ahrens Building,” *Wilmington, North Carolina: An Architectural and Historical Portrait*, Tony P. Wrenn, with photographs by, Wm. Edmund Barrett).

In 1981, Eugene W. Merritt, Jr., executive director of DARE, stated in an interview for the *Wilmington Morning Star* that he was placing “‘emphasis’ on renovating buildings in the 100 block Market Street (including the Ahrens Building) and the 0 and 100 blocks of South Front Street.”⁶⁴ DARE and HWF desired to revitalize downtown and to clear the area of pornographic shops, strip clubs, and other unattractive businesses. DARE wanted to make the downtown more family oriented and tourist friendly.⁶⁵

During the mid 1980s, political shifts within the leadership of DARE took place that influenced the organization’s policy on the use of preservation for revitalization. The previous executive directors of DARE, Eugene W. Merritt, Jr. and Mary Gornto used preservation to

⁶⁴ John Meyer, “DARE May Get Building,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 23 October 1981, file DARE, Inc. Up to 1989, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁶⁵ Meyer, “Get Building.”

revitalize the downtown of Wilmington. Eugene W. Merritt, Jr. served as the executive director of the Downtown Area Revitalization Effort (DARE, Inc.) from mid 1978 to early 1982. In the early days of the organization's founding, Merritt urged the city and county to financially support the group, and assisted in raising funds from private contributors. Merritt saw his "primary duty as marketing downtown," in order to bring revenue and life back to the decaying city.⁶⁶

The executive director to follow Eugene W. Merritt, Jr., Mary Gornto began working with DARE in 1979 as community relations director, and advanced quickly to the position of assistant executive director the following year.⁶⁷ In 1982, Gornto was appointed executive director of DARE, a position in which she stayed until she resigned on September 24, 1984, to become the assistant county manager for New Hanover County.⁶⁸ Following Gornto was growth minded Robert T. Murphrey. As former president of Commercial Realty he encouraged the growth and development of downtown.⁶⁹

Forces other than the leadership shifts in DARE's infrastructure influenced the change that the organization and the city of Wilmington witnessed in the mid 1980s. DARE executive director, Robert T. Murphrey emphasized that these tax credits proposed for elimination by the Reagan administration were valuable in the revitalization efforts of downtown and their removal

⁶⁶ John Meyer, "Downtown Group Has New Director." *Wilmington Morning Star*, (Wilmington, North Carolina) 23 May 1978. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=0bosAAAIBAJ&sjid=PBMEAAAIBAJ&pg=2877,4481559&dq=downtown+group+has+new+director&hl=en>. (Accessed 25 February 2010).

⁶⁷ Shannon Brennan, "Mary Gornto Quits DARE to Assume County Position," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 1 September 1984. File: DARE, Inc., Up to 1989, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁶⁸ Brennan, "Mary Gornto Quits DARE."

⁶⁹ Debbie Norton, "DARE Director Likes Momentum," *Wilmington Star-News*, 16 October 1984, file DARE, Inc. Up to 1989, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

would hinder preservation work in Wilmington.⁷⁰ A local architect Ligon B. Flynn confirmed that several preservation projects downtown “would not have been possible without the tax credits... That legislation sparked most of the revival and reuse of buildings in downtown Wilmington.”⁷¹ The tax breaks gave investors the extra incentive needed to purchase a building to renovate rather than to demolish, with the additional benefit of the removal of blight from the downtown.⁷²

According to Robert T. Murphrey, during his tenure as executive director, DARE maintained an excellent track record in the revitalization of downtown. Under Murphrey’s term DARE accomplished three jobs:

- The stabilizing of the tax base of the downtown. DARE had increased the tax base from \$35 million to more than \$60 million.
- Bringing new jobs into downtown. Around 500 jobs were created.
- To eliminate blight. One hundred renovations or more were made.⁷³

On one hand, the past executive directors of DARE Eugene W. Merritt, Jr. and Mary Gornto focused preservation on the revitalization of downtown. On the other hand, Robert T. Murphrey, a former vice president of Commercial Reality, had a background in real estate that influenced him in utilizing development for the growth of downtown. Murphrey started with attracting developers and investors to building a hotel/convention center, and with finishing uncompleted projects of previous administrations, such as the river taxi. Murphrey was adamant that through DARE he wanted to provide more loans to assist in revitalization projects downtown. However, this attitude contradicted that which was expressed in a piece written by Debbie Norton for the

⁷⁰ Kevin Cox, “Towns Fear Slowed Work if Credits Lost,” *Wilmington Star-News*, 13 January 1985, file DARE, Inc. Up to 1989, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁷¹ Cox, “Towns Fear Slowed Work.”

⁷² Cox, “Towns Fear Slowed Work.”

⁷³ Norton, “Director Likes Momentum.”

Wilmington Star-News titled “DARE director likes momentum.”⁷⁴ In this article Murphrey stated that, “I want to see more active business recruitment for downtown...The only goal I have and think DARE has is to get out of the downtown revitalization business, to get the downtown to the point where it’s going and it’s thriving.”⁷⁵ Murphrey conceived that moving beyond the business of downtown revitalization and preservation would strengthen Wilmington’s economy by bringing in new business and cementing a solid foundation for the city.

Ed Turberg, an architectural historian and then chairman of the Historic District Commission, pointed out that despite what DARE did for the merchants and buildings downtown, DARE misunderstood the motives behind the revitalization and preservation of downtown.⁷⁶ The reason for the revitalization and preservation of downtown was to stop the loss of the historic resources that made downtown and Wilmington unique, and to maintain “a sense of orientation” for the residents and visitors of the city.⁷⁷ In the mid 1980s when DARE transitioned to an administration that promoted development, the focus of downtown revitalization began to move away from the use of preservation as a tool for economic growth and development. Robert T. Murphrey, DARE’s executive director, came to see preservation as a hindrance to the growth of the city. As this transition took place, the preservationists of the Historic Wilmington Foundation and the local preservation community shifted their focus to resources outside of the city center. By the late 1980s, preservation efforts in the early twentieth century suburbs began to take shape as the Historic Wilmington Foundation assisted communities in their efforts to save their sense of place.

⁷⁴ Norton, “Director Likes Momentum.”

⁷⁵ Norton, “Director Likes Momentum.”

⁷⁶ Beth Newsome, “Supporters Work to Save 1940 Theater.” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 9 July 1983. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=aOgyAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=qRMEAAAAIIBAJ&pg=4003,2576393&dq=historic+wilmington+foundation+and+dare&hl=en>. (Accessed 5 January 2010).

⁷⁷ Datel, “Preservation and A Sense.”

Since the early 1980s, residents of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park faced encroachment upon their suburbs by outside commercial contractors, and fought against the infringement of new development in their communities. In May 1989, preservationists in Wilmington focused attention on the three early twentieth century suburbs of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Winoca Terrace as the center of the local celebration of National Preservation Week activities. These suburbs were recognized as significant to Wilmington's history, and showed the pattern of the city's expansion through the technology of the streetcar. Carolina Place was the earliest of the streetcar suburbs to develop in Wilmington. Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Winoca Terrace were all built centered on the streetcar as the main mode of transportation. Sunset Park, a suburb that changed its design to meet the needs of shipyard workers after the outbreak of World War I, was also developed around the streetcar line. One characteristic that set Sunset Park apart from the other developments in Wilmington was that the construction of homes focused on the bank of the Cape Fear River; where later the Liberty and Carolina shipbuilding companies built their operations for the war efforts.

Preservation in Wilmington began in the early twentieth century, gathering support from the community in the early 1960s. During this time period, it became clear that in order for preservation efforts in Wilmington to succeed it would take cooperative efforts between residents, local, state, and federal preservation and government organizations. The success of the local preservation movement during the 1960s fed into the growth and strength of preservation in downtown Wilmington in the 1970s and early 1980s. However, a shift occurred in the downtown that moved focus away from preservation to economic growth and development. While this move occurred, another change arose in the late 1980s and preservationists transferred their main concentration to the preservation of the early twentieth century suburbs. While the recognition of

the working and middle class history of the early twentieth century suburbs served as an important milestone in the local preservation movement, preservationists failed to recognize the damage being done to Wilmington's historic resources by DARE's support of developer based agendas.

CHAPTER THREE – “PRESERVATIONISTS HEAD FOR THE SUBURBS!”

In the 1970s, while the city of Wilmington, North Carolina and its preservation community focused on downtown revitalization and preservation. Elsewhere in the United States in cities such as Atlanta, Georgia, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century suburbs started to gain the attention of preservationists. However, Wilmington’s preservation community did not begin preserving suburban neighborhoods until the late 1980s.

By the mid 1980s, executive director Robert T. Murphrey had declared that the Downtown Area Revitalization Effort (DARE, Inc.) would no longer be in the business of preservation. At this point while a shift occurred in the preservation movement in Wilmington, residents of local suburbs fought against outside development and changes proposed by developers to occur within their own neighborhoods. Residents of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park fought rezoning efforts by outside developers that threatened the close-knit and quiet existence of these suburbs.

On May 13, 1989, in the *Wilmington Morning Star* an article titled “HEAD FOR THE SUBURBS: Preservation boosters step into 1900s,” writer Clifton Daniel addressed how the preservation activities of the Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc. (HWF) focused on the three streetcar suburbs of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Winoca Terrace. The local celebration of National Preservation Week that year was centered on these three suburbs and emphasized the significance of their history and architecture.¹ Since the early 1980s, the residents of the streetcar suburbs of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, Sunset Park fought the growing post World War II suburban fringe development and the looming threat of the expanding city of Wilmington.

¹ Clifton Daniel, “HEAD TO THE SUBURBS: Preservation boosters step into 1900s,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 13 May 1989. Available from the Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=Tr8sAAAAIABAJ&sjid=cBQEAAAAIABAJ&pg=6197,4860253&dq=preservationists+headed+to+the+suburbs+wilmington+north+carolina&hl=en>. (Accessed 5 February 2010).

Residents of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park were roused to preservation efforts to save the sense of place and historic character created by the original homes and landscape of these streetcar suburbs.

The Preservation of Carolina Place

The preservation of the Carolina Place suburb has been important to the history of Wilmington because of the neighborhood's link to so many important milestones in America's and Wilmington's past, as well as the architectural styles that are contained within the neighborhood. The push to nominate the suburb of Carolina Place for the National Register of Historic Places began with student volunteers for Historic Wilmington Foundation who took photographs of approximately half of the primary resources in the suburb. A portion of the preliminary research was published in the book by Carol Gunter *Carolina Heights: The Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood in Wilmington, North Carolina*.² Allison H. Black and David Black, preservation consultants for Black and Black Consultants of Raleigh, conducted the remainder of the research for the field survey and were responsible for including a balance of photographs of both the primary and the secondary resources, along with historical research of these resources. Also, these consultants were required to compile the survey files with multiple structure forms which included labeling the photographs and negative envelopes. Allison H. Black and David Black researched the information for the historic interpretation that would be used for the nomination for the National Register of Historic Places.³

² Carol Gunter in her book *Carolina Heights: The Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood in Wilmington, North Carolina*, discussed the three suburbs of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Winoca Terrace. Gunter examines the development history, key houses, and National Register nominations of these suburban communities; Gunter, *Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood*, i-90.

³ David Scott, Wilmington, North Carolina to Black & Black Consultants, Raleigh, North Carolina. "Request for Proposal for the Carolina Place National Register Nomination," 19 June 1991. Available in Drawer 19, Historic Preservation Folder, Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Archives, Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Wilmington, North Carolina.

In 1990, the HWF initiated correspondence with Lloyd D. Childers, Grants Administrator for the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office to inquire about HWF's eligibility to co-sponsor National Register nomination projects with the certified local government in the Wilmington community.⁴ The Historic Wilmington Foundation's executive director David Scott was an accomplished architectural surveyor and builder experienced in working on preservation and architectural surveys as the former research and construction director for the Historic St. Augustine Preservation Board in Florida. This ideal background provided HWF with experienced and strong leadership.⁵ In 1991, Scott wrote a letter to the residents of Carolina Place informing them of work being done to nominate their suburb for the National Register of Historic Places. He wrote to stir the interest of residents to get involved in the designation process by having a community meeting where residents could ask questions and suggest how to continue with the project. Scott, a resident of Carolina Place, personally cared about the success of the nomination, and perhaps this motivated him to supervise this project.⁶

In that same year, Scott sent out a request for proposals to architectural history firms seeking a professional consultant or consultants to prepare the National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Carolina Place.⁷ Allison H. Black and David Black preservation consultants conducted the architectural survey, with the guidance and support of the Local

⁴ Lloyd D. Childers, Grants Administrator, Raleigh, North Carolina to David Scott, Wilmington, North Carolina. Typewritten Letter, 19 December 1990. "Local Organizations Eligible for 1991 CLG Grant Funds." Type Written Letter, Historic Preservation File, Drawer 19, Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc. Archives, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁵ "Foundation Has New Director." *Wilmington Morning Star*, 23 June 1989, 2C. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=o8AsAAAAIABAJ&sjid=UxQEAAAAIABAJ&pg=4534,2999552&dq=david+scott+executive+director+of+historic+wilmington+foundation&hl=en>. (Accessed 29 August 2010).

⁶ David Scott, Wilmington, North Carolina to Carolina Place Residents.

⁷ David Scott, Wilmington, North Carolina to Black & Black Consultants, Raleigh, North Carolina. "Request for Proposal for the Carolina Place National Register Nomination." 19 June 1991. Type Written Memorandum. Available in Drawer 19, Historic Preservation Folder, Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Archives, Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Wilmington, North Carolina.

Coordinator, David Scott.⁸ The consultants followed the guidelines as set forth in *The North Carolina Historic Preservation Office Survey Manual: Instructions for Recording Historic Resources* (also referred to as *NC Survey Manual*), supplementary guidelines provided by the State of North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, which contained details of the project that the consultants developed.⁹

Working with the city of Wilmington, the Historic Wilmington Foundation (HWF) received a certified local government grant from the State Historic Preservation Office of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History.¹⁰ The grant would help the Historic Wilmington Foundation and the city to prepare the nomination for the National Register.¹¹ The budget for the National Register nomination was \$8,300. The city of Wilmington funded the project with \$3,500 in cash, and the Historic Wilmington Foundation supplemented that with \$770 of in-kind services. In 1991, a certified local government grant from the State Historic Preservation Office was given in the amount of \$3,000.¹²

A “certified local government grant” is funding created to assist certified local governments. The 1980 amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 created certified local governments.¹³ These amendments improved the formal structure of preservation programs in each state by aiding the establishment of relationships between the local governments.¹⁴ A “certified local government grant” is usually small, often ranging between

⁸ “Request for Proposal for the Carolina Place National Register Nomination.”

⁹ Lloyd Childers, Grants Administrator, Historic Preservation Office, North Carolina Division of Archives and History. “Project Description and Contract for Carolina Place Survey and National Register Historic District Nomination.” Type Written Letter, October 1990, Wilmington, North Carolina. Available in the Historic Wilmington Foundation Archives, Drawer 19, Historic Preservation Folder.

¹⁰ “Request for Proposal for the Carolina Place National Register Nomination.”

¹¹ “Request for Proposal for the Carolina Place National Register Nomination.”

¹² Lloyd Childers, “Project Description and Contract for Carolina Place.”

¹³ Elizabeth A. Lyon and David L. S. Brook, “The States: The Backbone of Preservation,” in *A Richer Heritage*, ed. Robert E. Stipe (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 84-6.

¹⁴ Lyon and Brook, “The States,” 84-6.

\$5,000 and \$10,000.¹⁵ These grants aid local communities, such as Wilmington, in vital preservation work.¹⁶

On December 21, 1991, in an article in the *Wilmington Morning Star* David Scott stated that “the designation is an honor and will help maintain the character of the neighborhood.”¹⁷ Wilmington’s first suburb recognized by a National Register of Historic Places nomination meant that the local preservation community acknowledged the significance of streetcar suburbs to the historic fabric of Wilmington; it also marked a trend which had begun in the mid 1970s elsewhere in the United States of recognition of suburbs as historic assets. The resources of the Carolina Place neighborhood are still intact and much of its original character has been maintained, thanks in part the work of residents to retain their sense of place.¹⁸ On December 31, 1991, the “Our Views” section of the *Wilmington Morning Star* recognized that the nomination of Carolina Place to the National Register could “help protect and stabilize the area, which offers some of the best low-cost housing values in town.”¹⁹ The National Register nomination would bring historical recognition for the neighborhood and possibly help save it from the wrecking ball.

¹⁵ Lyon and Brook, “The States,” 84-6.

¹⁶ Lyon and Brook, “The States,” 84-6.

¹⁷ Shaw, “Group Wants,” 1B.

¹⁸ Mark Ippolito, “Suburb Seeks Spot in History,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 17 August 1992, 1B. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=MbgsAAAIAIAJ&sjid=qRQEAAAIAIAJ&pg=3365,687219&dq=suburb+seeks+spot+in+history&hl=en>. (Accessed 25 February 2010).

¹⁹ Ippolito, “Spot in History,” 1B.



Figure 11. A map from 1991 Carolina Survey and National Register Historic District Nomination Project. The map indicates the boundaries of the potential district. (Document Courtesy of the Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Wilmington, North Carolina).

On August 31, 1992, the Carolina Place Historic District became the newest listing from Wilmington on the National Register of Historic Places, and it would be only the third Wilmington neighborhood to make the list. (See Figure 11) The other two neighborhoods are the Historic District and the Market Street Mansions District.²⁰

According to then Historic Wilmington Foundation Director, David Scott the suburb of Carolina Place with its “bungalow-style homes,” which was “uniquely American...it was working class neighborhood.”²¹ For Americans, bungalows represented a victory of modern and rational thinking over the chaos of old ways. Many houses in the Carolina Place Historic District were influenced by the creation of the bungalow style of architecture and are historically linked

²⁰ Mark Ippolito, “Suburb Makes Historic Place List,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, (10 September 1992, 5B. Historic Preservation Vertical File, The Historical Society of the Lower Cape Fear Archives, Latimer House, Wilmington, North Carolina.

²¹ Shaw, “Group Wants,” 1B.

to the American reaction against Victorian style.²² The most prevalent style of the 1920s in Carolina Place was the bungalow. One such bungalow was built in 1929 for Wilmington City fireman J. Elmo Reece. The J. Elmo Reece House is a Craftsman-influenced bungalow with a gable roof extending over its engaged porch.²³

Understanding the significance of these architectural gems means digging into the past and uncovering the history of who owned the house and property. The greater connection to the history of Wilmington is made through looking at the people who designed or owned the homes, and the bigger role they played in the history of the city. A few examples can represent the neighborhood as a whole. The first home constructed in Carolina Place was the Richardson-Rogers house, located on the northwest corner of Wolcott Avenue and 20th Street.²⁴ On April 27, 1906, the *Wilmington Morning Star* publicized that the Cooper and Davis architectural firm had drawn up plans for a house that would cost \$2,800 for Mr. R. R. Richardson, a district agent for the Equitable Life Insurance Company. The home would later be owned by B. B. Rogers, who was a local contractor.²⁵

January 31, 1992, Nellie Walker Jones the owner of the Collins-Jones house sold the property to the executive director of the Historic Wilmington Foundation, E. David Scott. The land was located on 1920 Market Street in lots 14-15 of Block 30 of Carolina Place.

²² Larry R. Ford, *Cities and Buildings: Skyscrapers, Skid Rows, and Suburbs* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press), 146.

²³ "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form." Carolina Place Historic District, New Hanover County, NC. Section 8, Pg. 105, Section 7, Pg. 68.

²⁴ "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form." Carolina Place Historic District, New Hanover County, NC. Section 8, Pg. 102.

²⁵ "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form." Carolina Place Historic District, New Hanover County, NC. Section 8, Pg. 102, Section 7, Pg. 32; "Build in Carolina Place," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 27 April 1906. Newspaper on Microfilm; Cabinet: E; Drawer 7; Wilmington, *Star News* (Various Titles), September 23, 1867 – December 30, 1906; Box: Wilmington, *The Morning Star Daily*, April 1, 1906 – June 29, 1906; Available from Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.



Figure 12. Photograph of Collins-Jones House in the Carolina Place Historic District in Wilmington, North Carolina located on 1920 Market Street. This two-story Dutch Colonial home was originally built for Walter M. Collins. (“Carolina Place,” *Carolina Heights: The Preservation of An Urban Neighborhood in Wilmington, North Carolina*, 1982).

The Dutch-Colonial Style house originally built for Walter M. Collins has a history that can be traced back to the original purchase of the property on November 6, 1908, from the American Suburban Corporation. (See Figure 12) The first person to buy the property was C.J. Kelloway with the restrictions including the house could cost no less than \$1,500.00. On December 19, 1913, Walter M. and Wilella F. Collins purchased lots 14 and 15 from William and Mamie M. Struthers carrying the restrictions which came with the original property deed from the American Suburban Corporation. In September 1946, the year after the death of her husband Wilella F. Collins sold lots 14 and 15 of Carolina Place to Willie A. and Nellie Harker Jones, Sr.²⁶

²⁶ “Collins-Jones House Historical Chronology,” Carolina Place File, Bill Reaves Collection, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.



Figure 13. Photograph of the Smith-Willoughby house, one of the oldest homes in the Carolina Place Historic District in Wilmington, North Carolina, located at 1902 Market Street. (Courtesy of the Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Wilmington, North Carolina).

One of the oldest contributing resources in the Carolina Place Historic District is located at 1902 Market Street, the Smith-Willoughby house. (See Figure 13) Burret Stephens, an architect and a brief associate to Mary Bridgers in the Carolina Heights project, he designed the Smith-Willoughby house in the Craftsman style for Mrs. Lisette Smith; she was the widow of Andrew Smith. In 1922 the property was transferred to Julius E. Willoughby, Chief Engineer with the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, and it remained in the family until 1960.²⁷ The house contains a distinguishing characteristic in its hand-operated Pullman elevator.²⁸

In many other communities it is the initiative of local residents and local preservation organizations that make the difference between a valuable piece of history being lost or saved. Also, it seems that in many communities the focus has been in the past on the gentrification of neighborhoods instead of maintaining original character. The credit can be given here to David

²⁷ “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,” Carolina Place Historic District, Wilmington, New Hanover County, North Carolina. Section 7, Pg 9; “Smith-Willoughby House,” New Hanover County Public Library Digital Archives, Wilmington, North Carolina. http://cdm15169.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p15169coll2&CISOPTR=317&CISOBX=1&REC=1 (Accessed January 28, 2010).

²⁸ “2009 Azalea Festival, Historic Wilmington Foundation Home Tour Special,” Published Article in *The News*, Spring 2009, A Publication of Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Wilmington, North Carolina.

Scott, the Historic Wilmington Foundation, the City of Wilmington, and to the residents of Carolina Place for fighting to save the suburb's original working class and middle class character.

Preservation of Carolina Heights

After witnessing the success of early preservation efforts and achievements in downtown Wilmington, such as the expansion and listing of the Wilmington Historic and Archeological District to the National Register. Residents of the suburb of Carolina Heights were encouraged by the Community Development Committee to take part in neighborhood preservation efforts.²⁹ The residents of Carolina Heights took part in the Community Development Committee by voicing their concerns over developers attempting to rezone the suburb beyond residential use. For example, the Holt Wise Mansion, owned by the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, desired to rezone the house for commercial use so that the university could turn it into offices. The residents of Carolina Heights and Winoca Terrace refused to accept the push of developers who sought to alter the historic character of their neighborhood. Residents stood together as a community to preserve many of the homes and gardens that made the suburb unique to Wilmington. The cooperation between the residents, the Historic Wilmington Foundation, and the local, state, and national preservation and government entities resulted in the successful nomination of the Carolina Heights Historic District.

²⁹ Gunter, *Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood*, 78; Bobby Parker, "Any Old House Just Won't Do," *Wilmington Star-News*, (Wilmington, North Carolina) 30 July 1983. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=ksE0AAAAIIBAJ&sjid=gxMEAAAAIIBAJ&pg=6391,4427045&dq=any+old+house+just+won-t+do&hl=en>. (Accessed 25 February 2010).

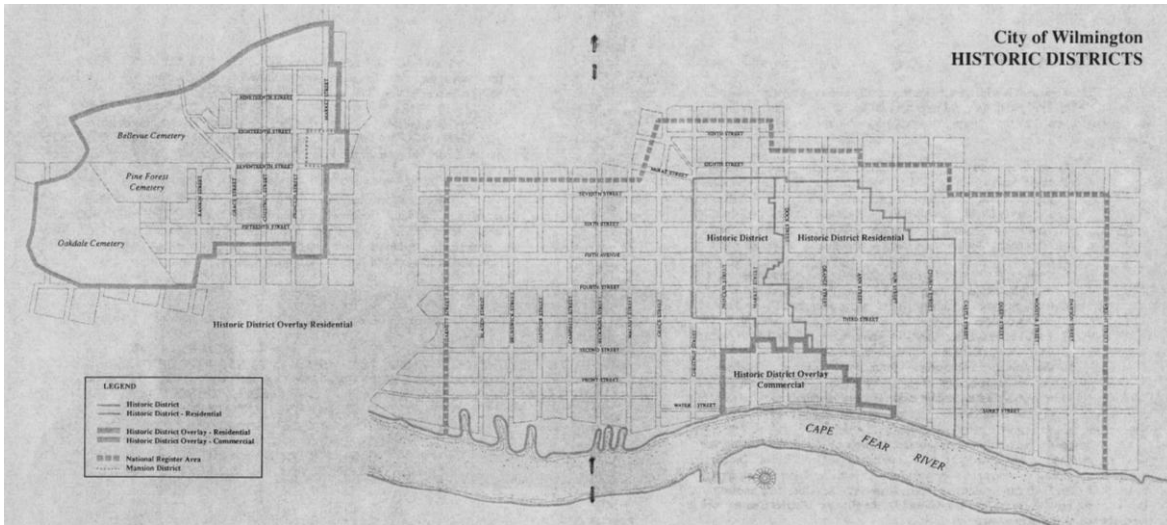


Figure 14. Sketches of the Wilmington Historic and Archaeological District and the Historic District Overlay for Wilmington, North Carolina. (Courtesy of the Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Wilmington, North Carolina).

In August 1977 the Wilmington City Council amended the city zoning ordinance to establish the Historic District Overlay that was comprised of 253 structures out of which 225 were residential structures. (See Figure 14) The Historic District Overlay contained a rich collection of historic structures the majority of which were a part of the suburb of Carolina Heights, and were greatly influenced by the Chicago school of architecture brought to Wilmington by Burett Stephens.³⁰ A senior planner in the city’s Planning and Development Department stated that “The Overlay is a designation give for one purpose, and that purpose is to review exterior changes.”³¹ The Historic District Commission reviews only those changes to a property that are visible from the public right-of-way, and not all sides of the property.³² The

³⁰ Beth Newsome, “Common Commitment Unites Neighborhood,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 12 May 1983. Newspaper on Microfilm; Cabinet: G; Drawer 4; *Star News* (Various Titles), August 1, 1984 – February 15, 1988; Box: *Wilmington Morning Star*, May 1, 1983 – May 15, 1983; Available from Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.; Gunter, *Preservation of an Urban Neighborhood*, 4-5, 8.

³¹ Bobby Parker, “You Can’t Change History,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 18 September 1983, 1C. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=qMYsAAAAIBAJ&sjid=ghMEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=6149,4806196&dq=you+can+t+change+history&hl=en>. (Accessed 26 February 2010).

³² Deborah Sheetenhelm, “Wilmington Has Varied Architectural History.” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 25 June 1986, 7. Newspaper on Microfilm; Cabinet: G; Drawer 4; *Star News* (Various Titles), August 1, 1984 – February 15, 1988;

Historic District Overlay in Wilmington was set up to make certain that any projects that cost over \$12,000 or more required that the owner of the property submit a pre-application with detailed architectural plans to the Historic District Commission; these detailed plans are to include sketches of what has been planned for the property and photographs of what exists.³³ The area which the city of Wilmington considers part of the Historic District Overlay is bordered to the west by 13th Street, to the south by Market Street, to the east by the National Cemetery, and by Bellevue and Oakdale Cemeteries on the north.³⁴

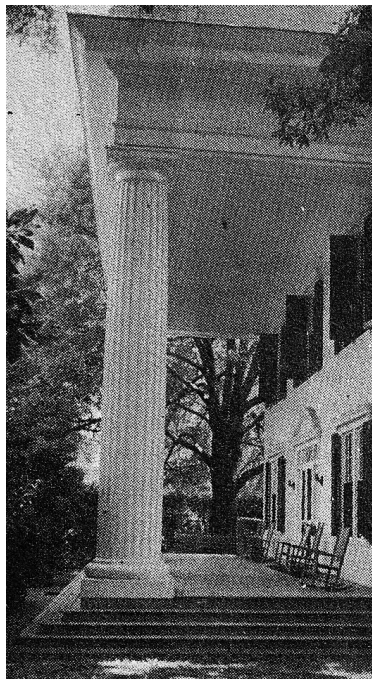


Figure 15. Bridgers-Brooks Mansion located at 1710 Market Street in the Carolina Heights Historic District in Wilmington, North Carolina. (Courtesy of the Historical Society of the Lower Cape Fear).

In 1981 Glenda and Merlin Bell purchased the Bridgers-Brooks Mansion which is located at 1710 Market Street. (See Figure 15) The mansion was started in 1910 by Mary Bridgers the

Box: *Wilmington Morning Star*, June 1, 1986 – June 30, 1986; Available from Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.

³³ Parker, "You Can't Change History," 1C.

³⁴ Sheetenhelm, "Varied Architectural History," 7.

developer of Carolina Heights.³⁵ Glenda Bell had grown up in Wilmington and day-dreamed about mansions in Carolina Heights when she was younger. On a return trip to visit Glenda's family, Merlin and she fell in love with the Bridgers-Brooks Mansion. The restoration of the home was taken on fully by the Bells, instead of being conducted by a preservation organization such as the Historic Wilmington Foundation, or a larger entity such as the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW).³⁶

On April 26, 1983, residents of the suburb of Carolina Heights addressed the Wilmington City Council regarding the rezoning of the neighborhood retail district into a commercial restricted district. Specifically, the developer was seeking to transform a vacant building into a group of small shops. Instead of supporting the efforts of residents to keep the developer out, the councilmen gave the developer time to bring the issue back before city council. The developer used the delay as a chance to seek a special use permit instead of asking to rezone the area. The special use permit allowed for the city to have a greater power over the quality and type of development that would go into the vacant building.³⁷ One resident of Carolina Heights, Sonya Thompson a twenty-three year resident of Wilmington, had sat on the Historic District Commission for four years. She had been vocal for the other residents of Carolina Heights who were concerned about the growing pressure placed on the suburb by commercial and business developers. Thompson stated that the neighborhood had always been a "close-knit neighborhood,

³⁵ Bobby Parker, "Painstaking Work Gives Mansion New Life," *Wilmington Star-News*, 28 August 1983, 1C. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=9LssAAAIBAJ&sjid=ihMEAAAIBAJ&pg=6457,7671211&dq=painstaking+work+gives+mansion+new+life&hl=en>. (Accessed 26 February 2010).

³⁶ Bobby Parker, "Painstaking Work Gives Mansion New Life"; Frederiksen and Ohashi, *A Neighborhood History*, 28-31.

³⁷ Beth Newsome, "Board Pleases Some of the People," *Wilmington Morning Star*, April 28, 1983.

but the threat of encroachment by commercial and office uses on its fringes has in recent years brought residents even closer.”³⁸

An army of activists was not needed to improve the Carolina Heights neighborhood according to a May 1983 article in the *Wilmington Morning Star*; it would just require a “handful of people with a common commitment,” this handful of people shared “sense of neighborhood,” which brought the residents together under the goal of restoring and retaining the historic character of their suburb.³⁹ Around two-hundred and twenty families lived in the suburb of Carolina Heights in 1983. The suburb was a mixture of noble mansions, bungalows, cottages, and prairie style homes that are located north of Market Street, between 14th Street and the National Cemetery. A meeting was scheduled for May 12, 1983 at 7:30 pm at the Temple Baptist Church by Sonya Thompson to discuss the concerns held by residents of Carolina Heights about the threat of development on the suburb.⁴⁰

The Holt-Wise Mansion located at the corner of 18th and Market Streets was designed by Burret Stephens in the Neoclassical Revival-Style for Edwin C. and Delores Holt. In 1916, the Holts sold the mansion to Jessie Kenan Wise. (See Figure 16)

³⁸ Beth Newsome, “Common Commitment Unites Neighborhood,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 12 May 1983. Carolina Place File, Bill Reaves Collection, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

³⁹ Newsome, “Unites Neighborhood”

⁴⁰ Newsome, “Unites Neighborhood.”



Figure 16. Photograph of the Holt-Wise Mansion located at 1713 Market Street, in the Carolina Heights Historic District in Wilmington, North Carolina. This Neoclassical Revival Mansion once was home to the president of the Delgado Cotton Mill. (“Carolina Heights,” *Carolina Heights: The Preservation of An Urban Neighborhood in Wilmington, North Carolina*, 1982).

In 1968, after the death of Jessie Kenan Wise the heirs to her estate donated the mansion the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW).⁴¹ In June 1983 the Holt-Wise Mansion was in desperate need of a complete rehabilitation. The periodic touch ups “just to keep it from going down too much,” were simply just a fresh coat of paint and other minor repairs.⁴²

UNCW’s Chancellor William Wagoner lived next door in the brick mansion known as the Kenan House. Chancellor Wagoner stated that “it would take some expense to fix it up.”⁴³

Tuesday, May 27, 1986, the special-use permit for offices to be placed in the Holt-Wise Mansion was denied by a one vote margin. Residents of Carolina Heights had submitted a formal petition that protested the special-use permit. The residents were concerned that offices would

⁴¹ Frederiksen and Ohashi, *A Neighborhood History*, 34.

⁴² Laura A. Mercer, “Historic Home Bides its Time,” *Wilmington Star-News*, 19 June 1983, 1B. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=rQKKVauEoioC&dat=19830619&printsec=frontpage>. (Accessed 24 February 2010).

⁴³ Mercer, “Bides its Time,” 1B.

increase traffic and impede on the residential feel, obstruct on-street parking, and most importantly it would endanger children playing in the neighborhood. There was also the concern that allowing the offices would invite other types of development to the suburb. Resident Glenda Bell stated that “I thought the purpose of zoning was to protect neighborhoods...It’s true that building needs to be restored. But they have had the building for a very long time. They could use it for residential uses or they could sell it.”⁴⁴

Similar to the problem DARE and the Historic Wilmington Foundation faced with buyers and owners of downtown buildings, the owner of the Holt-Wise Mansion had not found a profitable use for the building and had allowed it to fall into disrepair. In April 1987, UNCW Vice President for Business Affairs R.O. Walton Jr. reported that money to restore the interior of the Holt-Wise Mansion was not available. The exterior was in need of paint to prevent structural deterioration and paint would help improve the outward appearance.⁴⁵

After six years of trying finally in December 1991 the City Council granted UNCW the special use permit it needed to convert the Holt-Wise Mansion into office and meeting spaces.⁴⁶ In 1991, with the prompting by UNCW Chancellor James Leutze a plan was put into place to restore the Holt-Wise Mansion that had been gifted to the school in 1968. According to Carl Dempsey the associate vice chancellor for business affairs, just to return the mansion to a functional state would require around \$600,000, this included new plumbing and electrical systems. The plans for the mansion include the restoration of the downstairs to make it available

⁴⁴ Mercer, “Bides its Time,” 1B.

⁴⁵ Tricia Robertson, “UNCW Takes Bids on Paint, Renovation Remains in Future,” *Wilmington Star-News*, 26 April 1987. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=OLwsAAAAIABAJ&sjid=-hMEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=5324,3331012&dq=uncw+takes+ bids+on+paint+renovation+remains+in+future&hl=en>. (Accessed 23 February 2010).

⁴⁶ Laura Batten, “84-year-old House to be Restored,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 10 March 1993. Available from Google News Archives. <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=I4dOAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=rxQEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=4121,3590520&dq=84-year-old+house+to+be+restored&hl=en>. Accessed 1 December 2009.

to the public for receptions, meetings, and small seminars. The upstairs would be used as offices and a guestroom.⁴⁷

In March 1993, UNCW Chancellor James Leutze announced that the eighty-four year old Holt-Wise Mansion would be saved by a \$400,000 loan the UNCW Alumni Association received from the United Carolina Bank. Bob Walton, vice chancellor for business affairs stated that \$400,000 should cover the major work on the house, with an additional \$100,000 needed for landscaping and other minor repairs.⁴⁸ In this instance where UNCW wanted a special-use permit to create offices and meeting rooms, the residents of Carolina Heights were afraid the project would depreciate the historic value of their neighborhood. In reality the mansion serving as offices was an impressive example of adaptive use that allowed the neighborhood to maintain its historical integrity. Chairman Sonya Thompson an adamant advocate against “spot-zoning” of any kind in Carolina Heights stated that “We are not suggesting that we are changing our attitude against spot zoning... This is a very special case. There’s a chance we will lose this house if something isn’t done.”⁴⁹ Instead of risking losing a valuable asset of the Carolina Heights suburb, the Historic District Commission conceded to the desires of UNCW to construct office spaces inside the Holt-Wise Mansion. In this case residents, UNCW leadership, and Historic District Commission officials were eventually able to find a compromise that resulted in the restoration of the mansion, a result in which all parties were interested.

⁴⁷ Alison Feldman, “Trustees Approve Plan to Restore Mansion for Office, Living Space,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 26 March 1991. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=67QsAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=syYEAAAAIIBAJ&pg=2529,3967805&dq=trustees+approve+plan+to+restore+mansion+for+office+living+space&hl=en>. (Accessed 25 February 2010).

⁴⁸ Batten, “House to be Restored.”

⁴⁹ “Plan Approved for Mansion,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 26 February 1986. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=GgIzAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=1BMEAAAAIIBAJ&pg=3547,7750543&dq=holt+wise+mansion&hl=en>. (Accessed 26 February 2010).

In July 1994, Wilmington's Historic District Commission put on hold for one year a plan for a new parking lot for St. Paul's Episcopal Church, which had a growing congregation and an increasing parking problem. The church wanted to move two houses in Carolina Heights in order to make room for a fifty-eight space parking lot. Residents of Carolina Heights objected to the moving or demolition of the houses because the parking lot would harm the value of the neighborhood, and the homes were a barrier between their homes and the noise, lights, and strip mall on Market Street. Residents even feared the lot would attract more crime to their neighborhood. The Historic District Commission hoped that St. Paul's and Carolina Heights residents would come to a compromise about the parking lot and houses during that year.⁵⁰

During the first week of May 1995, Tom Trovato and Rennee Watkins found a way to rescue the Joseph M. Block House at 1618 Princess Street. They decided to purchase the home and move it. However, many of the residents of Carolina Heights disliked this strategy, especially who closer to the two homes scheduled for demolition. Also, residents preferred the houses stay on site with no parking lot constructed.⁵¹ Virginia Wright Frierson a resident of Carolina Heights circulated among her neighbors a petition against the destruction of the houses.⁵² Unfortunately, according to local historian Beverly Tetterton despite the one-year delay that the Historic District Commission placed on the Joseph M. Block House, St. Paul's did not find anyone interested in purchasing the home and it was torn down.⁵³ One of the two houses survived, the house next to the Joseph M. Block House was saved when it was relocated to 411

⁵⁰ "Year May Give Church Time to Find Solution," *Wilmington Star-News*, 10 July 1994. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=rQKKVauEoioC&dat=19940710&printsec=frontpage>. (Accessed 26 February 2010).

⁵¹ Dana Weber, "Neighbors Oppose House Plan." *Wilmington Morning Star*, 5 May 1995, 2B. Newspaper on Microfilm; Cabinet: G; Drawer 7; *Star News* (Various Titles), December 16, 1992 – April 30, 1995; Box: *Wilmington Morning Star*, May 1, 1995 – May 15, 1995; Available from Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁵² Weber, "Neighbors Oppose House Plan," 2B.

⁵³ Tetterton, *Lost But Not Forgotten*, 17.

Castle Street.⁵⁴ J. Myrick Howard addresses whether or not the relocation of a building should be considered a victory or defeat for preservationists in chapter sixteen of *Buying Time for Heritage: How to Save Endangered Historic Property*. According to Howard the National Register of Historic Places maintains that “a building’s National Register designation is removed when it is relocated, and its chances of being relisted in the register are limited. The property owner (or other applicant for the listing) must demonstrate that the building had to be moved and that no alternatives were available to save it on site.”⁵⁵ In the case of the Joseph M. Block House, it was preferable to save it from demolition, even if this meant the home moving the property. Unfortunately, the cost of legal fees and the time and money required to relocate the house made the property too expensive to maintain. For St. Paul’s demolishing the house and building a parking lot became the practical choice. When the cost of saving a house outweighs the benefits, without a preservation minded owner or purchaser, the home’s fate can be expected to end with a demolition. In the case of the Joseph M. Block House, if the 1997 tax credits had been in effect in 1995, this may have given the church an incentive to find a use for the home or a buyer. The tax credits would have resulted in new income as opposed to the cost of demolition and the construction of a parking lot.

On June 4, 1997, the North Carolina General Assembly approved Senate Bill 323, an act that allowed “an income tax credit for expenditures to rehabilitate historic structures.”⁵⁶ The law made it more cost effective to rehabilitate a historic structure than it would be to construct a new one. Wilmington, North Carolina benefited significantly from this law. In that same year,

⁵⁴ Tetterton, *Lost But Not Forgotten*, 17.

⁵⁵ J. Myrick Howard, *Buying Time for Heritage: How to Save an Endangered Historic Property* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 125.

⁵⁶ North Carolina General Assembly, Session Law 1997-139, *Credit for Rehabilitating a Historic Structure*, Senate Bill 323, 1997 Session, June 4, 1997. <http://www.ncleg.net/enactedlegislation/sessionlaws/pdf/1997-1998/s11997-139.pdf>. (Accessed February 14, 2010).

hundreds of buildings in downtown Wilmington qualified, according to Historic Wilmington Foundation executive director Liz Buxton.⁵⁷ Carolina Heights had large number, around 300, that would qualify for the new tax credits.⁵⁸ According to the North Carolina General Assembly in order to qualify for the tax credits, structures must be on “the National Register of Historic Places or is certified by the State Historic Preservation Officer as contributing to the historic significance of a National Register Historic District or a locally designated historic district certified by the United States Department of the Interior.”⁵⁹ The law took effect on January 1, 1998.⁶⁰

Carolina Heights and Winoca Terrace are both streetcar suburbs developed during the early 1900s, but they were developed as separate neighborhoods by different developers. Carolina Heights was the suburb for the well-to-do of Wilmington designed by Mary Bridgers with influence from the architect Burret H. Stephens. Carolina Heights represented a suburb designed for the notable citizens of Wilmington and elsewhere.⁶¹ Thomas H. Wright of the local development firm J.G. Wright and Sons designed Winoca Terrace.⁶² In 1998, Beth White a resident of Carolina Heights spearheaded the push to get the suburbs of Carolina Heights and Winoca Terrace nominated a National Register Historic District. The groundwork for the application was laid by architectural and historic researcher Beth Keane, and as a part of her research she studied all 445 homes in the neighborhoods. Financial assistance for the application

⁵⁷ “It Will Pay You to Preserve History,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 5 September 1997. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=SIE0AAAIAIBAJ&sjid=zSYEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=6081,1262915&dq=it+will+pay+you+to+preserve+history&hl=en>. (Accessed 24 February 2010).

⁵⁸ “Preserve History.”

⁵⁹ NC General Assembly, Session Law 1997-139, *Credit for Rehabilitating* <http://www.ncleg.net/enactedlegislation/sessionlaws/pdf/1997-1998/sl1997-139.pdf>. (Accessed February 14, 2010).

⁶⁰ NC General Assembly, Session Law 1997-139, *Credit for Rehabilitating* <http://www.ncleg.net/enactedlegislation/sessionlaws/pdf/1997-1998/sl1997-139.pdf>. (Accessed February 14, 2010).

⁶¹ Steelman, “What is Carolina Heights?” <http://www.myreporter.com/?p=4306> (Accessed December 31, 2009).

⁶² “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form,” Carolina Place Historic District, Wilmington, New Hanover County, North Carolina. Section 7, Pg 2.

came from the Historic Wilmington Foundation which sought a \$3,600 federal grant and contributed \$500 of its own funds. The residents of Carolina Heights and Winoca Terrace used \$1,200 collected from a 1997 tour of homes in these suburbs the city of Wilmington matched that figure. Liz Buxton, executive director of the Historic Wilmington Foundation, stated that the majority of the money from the tour paid for necessary research for the National Register application.⁶³



Figure 17. Carolina Heights National Register Historic District Map for Wilmington, North Carolina. Part of larger National Register Historic Districts Map of the city of Wilmington. (Courtesy of the City of Wilmington, North Carolina, <http://www.wilmingtonnc.gov>).

The Carolina Heights Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places on July 29, 1999, with a boundary increase added to the register on November 30.⁶⁴ (See Figure 17)

⁶³ Tricia Vance, “Carolina Heights, Winoca Terrace: Neighborhoods Aim for Historic List,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 29 October 1998. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=Gd8dAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=uB4EAAAIAIBAJ&pg=3157,5496688&dq=carolina+heights+national+register&hl=en>. (Accessed 21 January 2010).

⁶⁴ “National Register Listings in North Carolina,” Carolina Place Historic District, Wilmington, New Hanover County, North Carolina; North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, “North Carolina Listings in the National Register of Historic Places by County, As of October 22, 2008.” North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office,

The Preservation of Sunset Park

The 1950s and 1960s were the era of the post World War II suburban boom; this period signaled a decline not only for downtowns but also for older suburbs such as Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park. In the 1970s and 1980s, Wilmington experienced a revival of its historic downtown. At the same time, the streetcar suburbs of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park faced encroachment from the expanding city.

The streets and boulevards of Sunset Park Historic District look much like they did when the Fidelity Trust and Development Company first laid out the suburb in 1912. Originally the suburb of Sunset Park was designed by the Fidelity Trust and Development Company as an exclusive neighborhood for the more well-to-do residents of Wilmington. Sunset Park developers quickly changed the design intent for the neighborhood with the onset of World War I when Wilmington became a premier port for ship building. Sunset Park soon became home to shipyard and railroad workers as the need for housing in Wilmington grew. During the period between World War I's conclusion and the start of World War II construction within the suburb dwindled. Once World War II commenced, the construction in the shipyards revitalized and stirred development activity in Sunset Park.⁶⁵ Segments of the impressive pergolas that marked the entrance where Northern Boulevard intersects with Carolina Beach Road still exist as a reminder of the grandiose plan developers had for the suburb before housing needs trumped design.⁶⁶

The 1980s marked a time in the suburb of Sunset Park when the crime of the neighboring low-income housing complex of Dove Meadows spoiled the quiet, enclosed neighborhood. Built

Office of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, <http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/nrlist.htm>. (Accessed on October 17, 2009).

⁶⁵ *Sunset Park Neighborhood Architectural Survey, Wilmington, North Carolina*. Researched and Compiled by Edward F. Turberg, with the assistance of Beth Keane. City of Wilmington. Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc. North Carolina Department of Resources, (September 1996), i-iv.

⁶⁶ Newber, "Pergolas," 27.

in post World War II the former Riverside Apartments became known as Dove Meadows, when it was purchased in the early 1980s, by privately owned group of New Jersey investors, whose main contact was Harvey Coleman of Ramsey, New Jersey.⁶⁷ The suburb's reputation during the mid 1980s became bad enough that after 6pm pizza delivery drivers avoided the area.⁶⁸ The growth of the port along with its commerce and commercial trade burdened the suburb and threatened its sense of place.⁶⁹ In 1988, a 900 foot southern wharf extension was built at the North Carolina State Port Authority along the Cape Fear River; this blocked the riverfront view of Sunset Park residents, replacing beautiful scenery with a hard-modern day industrial one.⁷⁰

Early in the 1990s the residents of Sunset Park started the hard work necessary to preserve their quaint riverside suburb. The suburb had become the latest victim of the growing ambitions of the developers of Wilmington. The efforts to preserve Sunset Park paralleled that of the movements that had taken place earlier in the preservation movement in Wilmington, North Carolina, where residents took charge of their community as industry and time changed their sense of place.

⁶⁷ Due the state of disrepair the Dove Meadows complex owners were notified by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of the acceleration on their federally backed mortgage. New Jersey investors decided to look for a buyer instead of attempting to appeal HUD's decision. In January 1999, HUD foreclosed on the Dove Meadows property. The Wilmington Housing Authority purchased and demolished Dove Meadows, developing single-family homes with the idea to rename it Sunset South. Cory Reiss, "New Homes Could Sprout on Complex's Rubble," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 1 January 2000. Available in the Dove Meadows Folder, North Carolina Room Subject Files, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington, North Carolina; Bettie Fennell, "Housing Authority to Buy Dove Meadows, Plans to Replace Units," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 2 August 2001, Available in the Dove Meadows Folder, North Carolina Room Subject Files, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington, North Carolina; Bettie Fennell, "Feds Shed Owners if Rundown Dove Meadows," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 16 February 1998, 1A. Available in the Dove Meadows Folder, North Carolina Room Subject Files, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington, North Carolina; Patrick Gannon, "Housing Development Rises Out of Troubled Past," *Wilmington Star News*, 16 March 2005, 1A. Available in the Dove Meadows Folder, North Carolina Room Subject Files, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington North Carolina.

⁶⁸ Steelman, "The Rise," 1D.

⁶⁹ *Sunset Park Neighborhood Architectural Survey*.

⁷⁰ *Sunset Park Neighborhood Architectural Survey*.

Under the leadership of Tony DeCarolis and Donald Lieseke, residents of Sunset Park garnered enough interest within their community to create an organization to combat encroachment of the growing city. On April 8, 1993, the Sunset Park Neighborhood Association held its first meeting, during which residents of Sunset Park gathered their forces to solidify their long fight against outside developers.⁷¹ Sunset Park residents saw their neighborhood as a secret enclave separate from the chaos of city life, and the residents believed that the encroachment by the growing city as threatening to destroy their community and their sense of place within the larger context of the city.⁷² A National Register Nomination would encourage people to renovate their homes, because of tax credits available to National Register home owners.⁷³

The Sunset Park Neighborhood Association sought out the assistance of the Historic Wilmington Foundation in applying for a certified local government grant to conduct an architectural survey of Sunset Park.⁷⁴ The Historic Wilmington Foundation (HWF) with the assistance of Beth Keane, historical researcher, applied for a certified local government grant from the city of Wilmington.⁷⁵ The certified local government grant which HWF applied was for \$4,800, and the city of Wilmington was to give \$3,200 to go towards funding the survey.⁷⁶ In

⁷¹ Mark Robinson, "Neighbors Organize to Advocate Improvements in Sunset Park," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 10 February 1994, 2B. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=qaksAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=IBUEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=5831,3342517&dq=neighbors+organize+to+advocate+improvements+in+sunset+park&hl=en>. (Accessed 24 February 2010).

⁷² Robinson, "Neighbors Organize," 2B; Richard Myers, "Activist Seeks to Unify Spirit in Sunset Park," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 10 March 1993. Available from Google News Archives, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=uaosAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=rxQEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=1855,3324733&dq=tony+de+carolis+sunset+park+neighborhood+association&hl=en>. (Accessed 25 February 2010).

⁷³ "National Register Listings in North Carolina," Sunset Park Historic District, Wilmington, New Hanover County, North Carolina; North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, "North Carolina Listings in the National Register of Historic Places by County, As of October 22, 2008." North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Office of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, <http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/nrlist.htm>. (Accessed on October 17, 2009).

⁷⁴ "Sunset Park Architectural Survey Grant Applied For," Published Article in *The News*, Spring 1995, A Publication of Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc., Sunset Park Historic District Vertical Files, Planning Office, City of Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁷⁵ "Sunset Park Architectural Survey Grant Applied For."

⁷⁶ "Sunset Park Architectural Survey Grant Applied For."

September 1996, Ed Turberg a respected historical researcher and preservation consultant, with the assistance of Beth Keane, completed an architectural survey of Sunset Park. The survey laid the foundation for the application for the National Historic Register of Historic Places.⁷⁷

On August 17 1997, residents of Sunset Park openly voiced their concern in the *Wilmington Star-News* over the growing threat of crime and reduction of the quality of life posed by Dove Meadows, a low-income housing complex.⁷⁸ Dove Meadows was located just blocks from the Sunset Park on some of the very same streets named after United States Presidents as the suburb. Dove Meadows was plagued with crimes such as drug dealing, shootings, fights, and stabbings that residents of Sunset Park were concerned would spill into their tranquil neighborhood. The crime issues and dilapidated state of Dove Meadows put the complex itself in danger of losing federal funding if the title-holder of the privately owned development did not come up with solutions for these problems.⁷⁹ Residents of Sunset Park also worried about the bars on Carolina Beach Road and the derelict behavior that disturbed the peace of the suburb. The residents along with members of area churches sought assistance from the North Carolina State Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission and the Division of Alcohol Law Enforcement to deny these local bars alcohol permits, but received no cooperation at the time.⁸⁰ Despite the frustrations with the bars, residents still had worries concerning Dove Meadows. Hunter Thompson, then president of the Sunset Park Neighborhood Association claimed that in order to

⁷⁷ Johnnie Henagan, "A Special Meeting of the Greater Sunset Park Neighborhood Association, Inc. Will Be Held," *The Dramtree: The Sunset Park Neighborhood Association, Inc., Newsletter*, 24 June 2004, 1, Sunset Park Historic District Vertical Files, Planning Office, City of Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁷⁸ Hannah Mitchell, "Saving Sunset Park, Residents Unite to Preserve Quality of Life in Old Neighborhood," *Wilmington Star-News*, 17 August 1997, 1A, 6A. File Sunset Park, Local History Room Subject Files, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁷⁹ Mitchell, "Saving Sunset Park," 1A.

⁸⁰ Hannah Mitchell, "Sunset Park Residents Find No Easy Answers to Crime Worries." *Wilmington Star-News*, 21 August 1997. File Sunset Park, Local History Room Subject Files, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

solve the problem we need “to get all of the stakeholders in a room and begin the process of” addressing the concerns of residents.⁸¹

Later that month, the Sunset Park Neighborhood Association, Harvey Coleman and Associates the owners of Dove Meadows; the Wilmington Housing Authority; the New Hanover County and Wilmington Police; Darlene Fete, a representative of the United States Department of Housing and Development; and the Wilmington City Council met to address the problems of high crime rates contributed to the Dove Meadows complex.⁸² Hunter Thompson noted that little progress was made with these groups. Thompson acknowledged that in order for some improvement to occur the residents of Sunset Park and their neighbors in Dove Meadows would have to work together without relying on “the powerful” to crackdown on crime.⁸³

In 1998, Johnnie Henagan became the president of the Sunset Park Neighborhood Association. Johnnie and Ilse Henagan spearheaded the initiative to have Sunset Park placed on the National Register.⁸⁴ On December 8, 2000, Johnnie Henagan wrote to the Grants Administrator for the State Historic Preservation Office, he stated that “we feel we have reached the point where it is essential to move forward with application for the National Register Nomination, before the neighborhood is further threatened by commercial encroachment.”⁸⁵ The Sunset Park Neighborhood Association dedicated themselves to gaining recognition for their suburb as an important historical asset of the city of Wilmington.

On the afternoon of January 23, 2001, the Wilmington City Council met to consider applying for a state grant that would assist in paying a researcher to draft a history of the suburb

⁸¹ Mitchell, “Saving Sunset Park,” 6A.

⁸² Mitchell, “Crime Worries,” 1B.

⁸³ Mitchell, “Crime Worries,” 1B.

⁸⁴ Robinson, “Neighbors Organize,” 2B.

⁸⁵ Johnnie Henagan, Wilmington, North Carolina, to Grants Administrator, Raleigh, North Carolina. Typewritten Letter, 8 December 2000, Sunset Park Historic District Vertical Files, Planning Office for the City of Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina.

of Sunset Park, and to complete the application for the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.⁸⁶ Mary Gornto, then City Manager, stated that the “state would pay \$3,600 and the city would pay \$2,400 of a \$6,000 grant,” and the city would “apply for the grant, but it was the Sunset Park Neighborhood Association” that inquired about the application.⁸⁷ The City of Wilmington Planning Office administered the grant and matching funds.

In 2002 the efforts of Mr. Johnnie Henagan and the Sunset Park Neighborhood Association, and Historic Wilmington Foundation succeeded when they received a grant approval from the State Historic Preservation Office.⁸⁸ The grant was for \$4,500 and the city was to match that with \$1,000, while the Sunset Park Neighborhood Association provided \$1,300 of the remaining costs for the National Register application.⁸⁹ Beth Keane, who had worked with Edward F. Turberg on the Sunset Park architectural survey, was hired by the city of Wilmington to complete the National Register application.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Bettie Fennell, “Area Seeks Spot on National Register,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 23 January 2001. File: Sunset Park, Local History Room Subject Files, North Carolina Room, New Hanover County Library, Wilmington, North Carolina.

⁸⁷ Fennell, “Area Seeks Spot.”

⁸⁸ “Sunset Park Architectural Survey Grant Applied For.”

⁸⁹ “Sunset Park Architectural Survey Grant Applied For.”

⁹⁰ “Sunset Park Architectural Survey Grant Applied For.”



Figure 18. Graphic representation of the Sunset Park Historic District in Wilmington, North Carolina. (Courtesy of the Planning Office for the City of Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina).

In December 2003, the hard work of the Historic Wilmington Foundation and the Sunset Park Neighborhood Association paid off in the form of a listing on the National Register of Historic Places for the suburb of Sunset Park, now referred to as the Sunset Park Historic District.⁹¹(See Figure 18)

Sunset Park contains several homes that have received plaques from the Historic Wilmington Foundation which recognize their historical significance to the neighborhood and to

⁹¹ NC State Historic Preservation Office, “North Carolina Listings in the National Register.”

the city of Wilmington.⁹² The Chadwick-Teague house at 416 Central Boulevard was one of the homes that made the Sunset Park neighborhood significant. (See Figure 19)



Figure 19. The Chadwick-Teague house, in Wilmington, North Carolina was one of the first homes built in the Sunset Park Historic District. The house is located at 416 Central Boulevard, one of the main thoroughfares of the suburb. (Photography Courtesy of Andy Hight, SunsetParkNC.org).

One of the first residences in Sunset Park, a craftsman style home built for David Nicholas Chadwick Jr., Secretary-Treasurer of Fidelity Trust and Development Company, Developer of Sunset Park and his wife, Ethel Hopkins.⁹³ Arthur Franklin Teague purchased the home in 1957, a Master Mason of the Wilmington Lodge 319, A.F. and A.M., Barber; and his wife, Elizabeth Ann Cutchin.⁹⁴ The 1930 Watts-Easton house, a bungalow built as rental property for Sarah

⁹² Yannetti, "Late 20th Century Preservation."

⁹³ Sunset Park Neighborhood Association, "Sunset Park Property History," <http://www.sunsetparknc.org/property.htm>, (Accessed on October 12, 2008).

⁹⁴ "Sunset Park Property History"; The Grand Lodge of [North] Carolina of Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons (of A. F. and A. M.) was formed in 1787; "Grand Lodge of North Carolina, Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons, 1806 – 1987," North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina. http://www.archives.ncdcr.gov/ead/eadxml/org_grand_lodge_nc_masons.xml (Accessed 11 October 2010).

Catherine Davis.⁹⁵ Another significant home built during the Second World War would be the Harper House on Jefferson Street. It is a one-story, ranch style home in an L- Shape. (See Figure 20) The property was purchased 1 October 1954 by Wade H. and Ingrid Harper.⁹⁶



Figure 20. Photograph of the one-story ranch style Watts Easton house in the Sunset Park Historic District in Wilmington, North Carolina. (Photography Courtesy of Andy Hight, SunsetParkNC.org).

The suburb of Sunset Park has a diverse architectural range of residences erected from 1912 to the 1960s, a majority of which were built from 1940 to 1943 when the North Carolina Shipbuilding Company expanded its facilities along the Cape Fear River.⁹⁷ The success of preservation in Sunset Park can be seen through the homes that still retain their historical integrity, and through the streets which are laid out in much the same way as the developer platted them in 1912. The residents of the Sunset Park Neighborhood Association drew in support of the local, state, and federal organizations in order to get Sunset Park placed on the

⁹⁵ “Sunset Park Property History.”

⁹⁶ “Sunset Park Property History.”

⁹⁷ *Sunset Park Neighborhood Architectural Survey*, iv.

National Historic Register.⁹⁸ The Sunset Park Neighborhood Association proved that it is possible to have a successful outcome by working cooperatively with the local, state, and federal preservation organizations and government entities.⁹⁹

While preservationists elsewhere in the United States began to recognize suburbs as viable historic resources as early as the mid 1970s, not until the late 1980s did suburban preservation efforts begin in Wilmington, North Carolina. Residents of Wilmington suburbs began preservation efforts earlier, fighting against an expanding downtown and the post World War II suburban commercial and residential development. One of the key efforts of the residents of these suburbs was the nomination of their suburbs to the National Register of Historic Places. Nomination to the Register did not guarantee preservation, however it gave recognition to suburbs of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park as historically significant to the community, the state, and the United States.

⁹⁸ Yannetti, "Late 20th Century Preservation."

⁹⁹ Yannetti, "Late 20th Century Preservation."

CONCLUSION

After World War II, as Wilmington experienced the loss of the Atlantic Coastline Railroad and the shipbuilding business, the city's downtown and its Central Business District (CBD) began to decay. This period was also marked by the departure of residents from the downtown to the newly developing post World War II suburbs. The decline of Wilmington's downtown soon followed, mirroring that of downtowns elsewhere in the United States, as merchants began to follow residents to the suburbs. In 1962, the residents of Wilmington saw the historic resources of downtown become victims to urban renewal and decay, the Wilmington City Council created the city's first historic district of thirty-eight blocks of Old Wilmington and established the Board of Architectural Review.¹ Coinciding with the National Preservation movement of the 1960s, the residents of the local preservation movement in Wilmington, North Carolina, took on the goal of revitalizing and restoring the historic downtown. Wilmington's local preservation community consisted of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, the Historic Wilmington Foundation (HWF), Residents of Old Wilmington (ROW), the Downtown Area Revitalization Effort (DARE, Inc.), and the Board of Architectural Review. The local preservation community in Wilmington focused on the revitalization of the city's historic downtown and CBD.

During the late 1970s, Wilmington's preservation community experienced many successes in the restoration and adaptive use of many downtown buildings, creating a flourishing downtown tourist trade. Wilmington's downtown prospered once again, despite the construction of a new shopping mall in the post World War II suburban periphery. DARE and HWF understood that downtown could not compete with the prices and variety of the mall; however

¹ *Old Wilmington Guidebook.*

the downtown offered visitors and shoppers a unique historical riverfront shopping experience in the restored buildings and structures of Chandler's Wharf and the Cotton Exchange. While the downtown thrived, the early twentieth century suburbs just outside the downtown and its CBD began to feel the pressure of the development spreading outwards from both downtown and the postwar suburbs.

When the downtown showed signs of life again, Robert Murphrey, the executive director of Downtown Area Revitalization Effort (DARE, Inc.) began to see historic preservation as a hindrance to the downtown's continued economic growth. Murphrey guided DARE away from historic preservation practices and redirected it towards growth and development. Without the support of DARE and the city government, preservationists turned their attentions towards assets outside of the CBD and focused on the preservation of the city's historic suburbs. In the late 1980s, the shift to suburban preservation that occurred in Wilmington, North Carolina showed the maturation of the local preservation community, and its capability to acknowledge suburbs as viable historic resources.

Just as the buildings downtown played significant roles in the history of Wilmington so too did the houses and structures in the suburbs of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park. While the downtown saw a resurgence of its economy, the suburbs of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park experienced the stress of encroachment on their neighborhoods and their sense of place. Residents of each of these suburbs gathered together to form associations to protect the historic character of their communities. The residents of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park sought out the Historic Wilmington Foundation to assist them in the research and work necessary for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. One of the main issues these suburban residential groups faced was the attempt

by developers to have parts of their neighborhoods rezoned for commercial uses. According to Beth L. Savage, an architectural historian with the National Register of Historic Places, and Marilyn Harper, a historian with the National Register of Historic Places, a National Register of Historic Places Nomination for a property or properties meant:

- The property(s) would be recognized for its importance to the community, state, and the United States.
- Private property owners could do what they want with their property, granted that no Federal license, permit, or money was involved.
- Owners have no obligation to open their properties to the public, to restore them, or even to maintain them, if they choose not to do so.
- Federal agencies whose projects affect a listed property must give the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on the project and its effects on the property.
- Owners of listed properties may be able to obtain Federal historic preservation funding, when funds are available. In addition, Federal investment tax credits for rehabilitation and other provisions may apply.²

Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places often encourage people to restore and maintain their homes as a matter of pride in their community.³ Placement on the National Register of Historic Places gave the suburbs of Carolina Place, Carolina Heights, and Sunset Park the protection they needed from development.

Preservationists of the late nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries had questions to answer, such as what should be preserved and what should be protected? In an era of overcrowded cities and green-revolutions, smart growth became the buzz word for many of the preservationists of the twenty-first century. Since the early 1990s, Wilmington's preservation community has experienced success in many designations to the National Register of Historic Places and has found vast support in the community. However, local preservationists faced incidents including

² Beth L. Savage and Marilyn Harper, *My Property is Important to America's Heritage What Does That Mean?* U.S. National Register of Historic Places, Department of the Interior, National Park Service (Washington, D.C., 1993), 3-4.

³ Robinson, "Neighbors Organize."; Sunset Park Architectural Survey Grant Applied For."; Myers, "Activist Seeks to Unify."

the destruction of a residential block of historic homes on the northeast corner block of Seventeenth and Castle Street. The block was cleared by the New Hanover County Alcohol Beverage Control Board to make way for a new warehouse and parking lot.⁴ In order to deal with these kinds of issues preservationists in Wilmington, and all across the United States need to answer the questions above and stress to their community the importance of conservatively using its resources and making use of these instead of stressing the existing infrastructure with new construction. Preservationists need to comprehend the impact of smart growth on the national and local preservation movements, and come up with comprehensive long term plans which are actually implemented.

Anthony Flint, a journalist for twenty years and an author at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, argued in his book *This Land* that suburbs “easily fit the bill as places for smart growth, simply because they already exist.” Flint also stated, “Before a single acre of countryside gets bulldozed, the smart growth movement says, the prudent and efficient and responsible thing to do is to use up and reinvent that existing space first.” As an alternative to the auto-dependent “sprawl” that has increasingly become a part of Wilmington’s landscape, the owners of early twentieth century suburbs just outside of the city center have the ability to provide more affordable housing choices that are within walking or biking distance of the downtown. The more suburbs that spread out from the existing infrastructure or city center create additional strain on a city’s economy because it has to extend basic necessities such as road, water, and sewer networks, and schools to these new developments.⁵ By following the ten principles of smart growth formulated by the Smart Growth Network, preservationists in Wilmington can

⁴ Historic Wilmington Foundation, “2008 Most Threatened Historic Places List,” Available at <http://www.historicwilmington.org/documents/Most%20Threatened%2008.pdf> (Accessed on August 28, 2010).

⁵ United States EPA, “Smart Growth,” 52.

create an attractive community that provides an array of both housing and transit choices for residents. The ten principle of smart growth are:

- Mix land uses.
- Take advantage of compact building design.
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Create walkable neighborhoods.
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
- Preserve open space, farmland and natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.
- Provide a variety of transportation choices.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.⁶

The shift to utilizing smart growth not only to preserve, but also to guide the development of a community, is a recent trend across the United States.⁷ Smart growth provides a solution for cities like Wilmington whose growth patterns are “highly dispersed.”

During the late twentieth century in the United States, preservationists were faced with many issues, from growing city populations and changing urban and suburban landscapes. Across the United States many cities have been faced with the dilemma of how to preserve their historic landscape, while still allowing for sustainable growth and sound fiscal health.⁸ For this dilemma to be solved two complementary plans are required, a growth plan and a preservation plan. A growth plan, describes where a city’s growth and change should occur, and defines the nature and concentration of this growth. Preservation plans require goals, principles, and evaluation criteria and regulatory protocols set for the designation of historic landmarks, properties, or districts; it is also important to define what efforts or works can be deemed as

⁶ United States EPA, “Smart Growth,” ii.

⁷ UNCW and UNC Television, “Paving the American Dream,” Available from the UNCW Website, <http://www.uncw.edu/smartgrowth/about/script.html> (Accessed May 23, 2010).

⁸ Lewis K. Rodgers, “The Delicate Balance of Historic Preservation in Suburbs,” *The Washington Post*, 27 February 2010. Available on from *The Washington Post*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/25/AR2010022506643.html>. (Accessed 13 July 2010).

preservation.⁹ In the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries, there was a shift in public and private preservation policies, which resulted from a change in the attitudes of the residents of Wilmington, North Carolina and the city government towards suburbs. Once viewed as encroachment and blight on the landscape, suburbs created during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries began in the late twentieth century to be recognized by residents and Wilmington's local preservation community and government as viable historic assets.¹⁰

⁹ Rodgers, "Preservation in Suburbs."

¹⁰ Rodgers, "Preservation in Suburbs."

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