

III. BURLINGTON'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

A. Introduction

Since the 1880's, Burlington has grown from a sleepy village centering around a railroad repair shop to an industrialized city where several internationally known corporations have been spawned. In the face of this rapid urbanization, many of Burlington's oldest neighborhoods have almost disappeared. Other than a few restored structures, such as the Dr. John S. Frost House at 130 Union Avenue and the Francis A. Stagg House at 317 North Park Avenue, few of the significant nineteenth century residences remain. Archival photographs prove that structures of architectural distinction abounded in the downtown area during the late nineteenth century. The major thoroughfares of Davis Street and Webb Avenue were lined with Victorian houses of the first order. However, most of these structures have been demolished and the few remaining have lost much of their definitive characteristics. Therefore, many people assume that Burlington's past consisted of only simple, undistinguished structures. Nothing could be further from the truth. In a sense, the establishment of historic districts and historic properties represents the community's response to this loss of historic structures and its commitment to preserving the remaining vestiges of Burlington's history.

B. West Burlington Historic District

Burlington's first locally designated historic district was established in West Burlington in 1987. The district consists of portions of West Front Street, West Davis Street, Fountain Place, Trollinger Street, Tarpley Street, Peele Street and Fisher Street as shown on the map on page III-4.

The architecture of this historic district is comprised of the most significant collection of the late nineteenth and twentieth century residential construction in Burlington. The approximately 160 primary structures in the district are a superb display of the variety of building types and styles that characterized Burlington's non-industrial residential neighborhoods during this period.

The westward development of the neighborhood is evident in the concentrations of Queen Anne and early period revival styles in the eastern half of the district, and later, purer period revival style houses in the west, with the 1000 block of West Davis Street devoted exclusively to period revival-style houses.

Overall, however, the district conveys a strong sense of continuity and heterogeneity due to the location of a few early structures in the western end of the district, the appearance throughout of four-square houses and bungalows built from the 1910's through the early 1930's and the existence of outstanding representatives of each of the major styles that punctuate the streetscapes as pivotal structures. Solid construction and fine craftsmanship characterize the district, which exhibits a variety of exterior materials including frame weatherboards and shingles, brick, stucco and various types of stone.

Originating as farmland owned by several of the families who sold land to the North Carolina Railroad Company for Company Shops, the area began to evolve as a residential neighborhood in the 1880's when the community's business and civic leaders sought home sites outside of the city center and away from the textile mills. For five decades, Burlington's foremost merchants, businessmen and industrialists chose the West Burlington district as the location for their fashionable houses. The visual quality of the neighborhood is enhanced by the

variety of street layouts and natural and man-made embellishments. West Front and West Davis streets are broad avenues, lined with very tall hardwoods that create a canopy over much of the pavement. An island planted with mature crepe myrtles bisects the wider 1000 block of West Davis. Trollinger and Peele streets are narrower, and Tarpley is so narrow that it is a one-way street. Fountain Place is a 1920's development whose focal point is a landscaped fountain midway between its two ends. The entrance to Fountain Place from West Davis Street is marked on either side by stone pillars and low stone walls. Its two lanes for traffic are separated by a narrow grassy median north of the fountain and an oval area to the south. Sycamore trees, Japanese Elm and Red Maple provide ample shade to the street.

The important architectural and historic heritage of this historic district was recognized nationally in 1984, when the district was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The combined elements of architecture, street design, natural beauty and unique physical features makes the West Burlington Historic District the leading example of early twentieth-century urban residential construction and development within Burlington.

C. Glencoe Historic District¹

Glencoe Mills and mill village was listed in the National Register of historic places in 1979. It was designated as a local historic property in 1997 by the Alamance County Commissioners. In 1999, the property was annexed into the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the City of Burlington and was designated a local historic district under the jurisdiction of the Burlington Historic Preservation Commission. In addition, the National Park Service is considering listing Glencoe as a National Historic Landmark, the highest designation in the United States.

Glencoe is located just north of the Haw River, off Highway 62 as shown on the map on page III-5. The 105-acre district is one of the state's most historically important industrial sites, including an 85,000 square-foot mill complex, more than 30 original mill houses, a company store, an operable hydroelectric plant, a fraternal lodge, and other associated buildings, all dating back to the early 1880s.

Reliance on water power had much to do with the development of Glencoe. In the nineteenth century, mills were often built on isolated rural sites where water power was sufficient and where property taxes were less. This isolation forced the owners to build housing to support their workers. Provisions of other necessities in the form of a retail store, church, school and athletic teams were also included in establishing the cotton mill at Glencoe.

Glencoe Mills, Inc. was incorporated in 1880 by James H. Holt and William E. Holt, sons of the great textile pioneer E.M. Holt. Located along the Haw River at the site of a former grist mill, Glencoe was the last water-powered mill developed by the Holts. The mill manufactures cotton plaid fabric known as Glencoe Plaids or Haw River Plaids. At its peak, the Glencoe Mill Village had nearly 50 houses, and the mill employed 200 workers. The mill village was exceptionally well planned and was considered a model for mill village development at that time.

In 1899, the mill was purchased by James H. Holt's son, Robert Holt, who built a large home on Highway 62 on the Glencoe property. Upon his death, the property passed to his sister and her heirs. It remained in the Holt family until 1997. The mill's isolated location and its distance from transportation links hastened its obsolescence. The mill finally closed in 1954, and through the years the complex was vacated house by house. The industrial buildings were used for various commercial and industrial purposes after the mill closed.

¹ Added 2/8/00

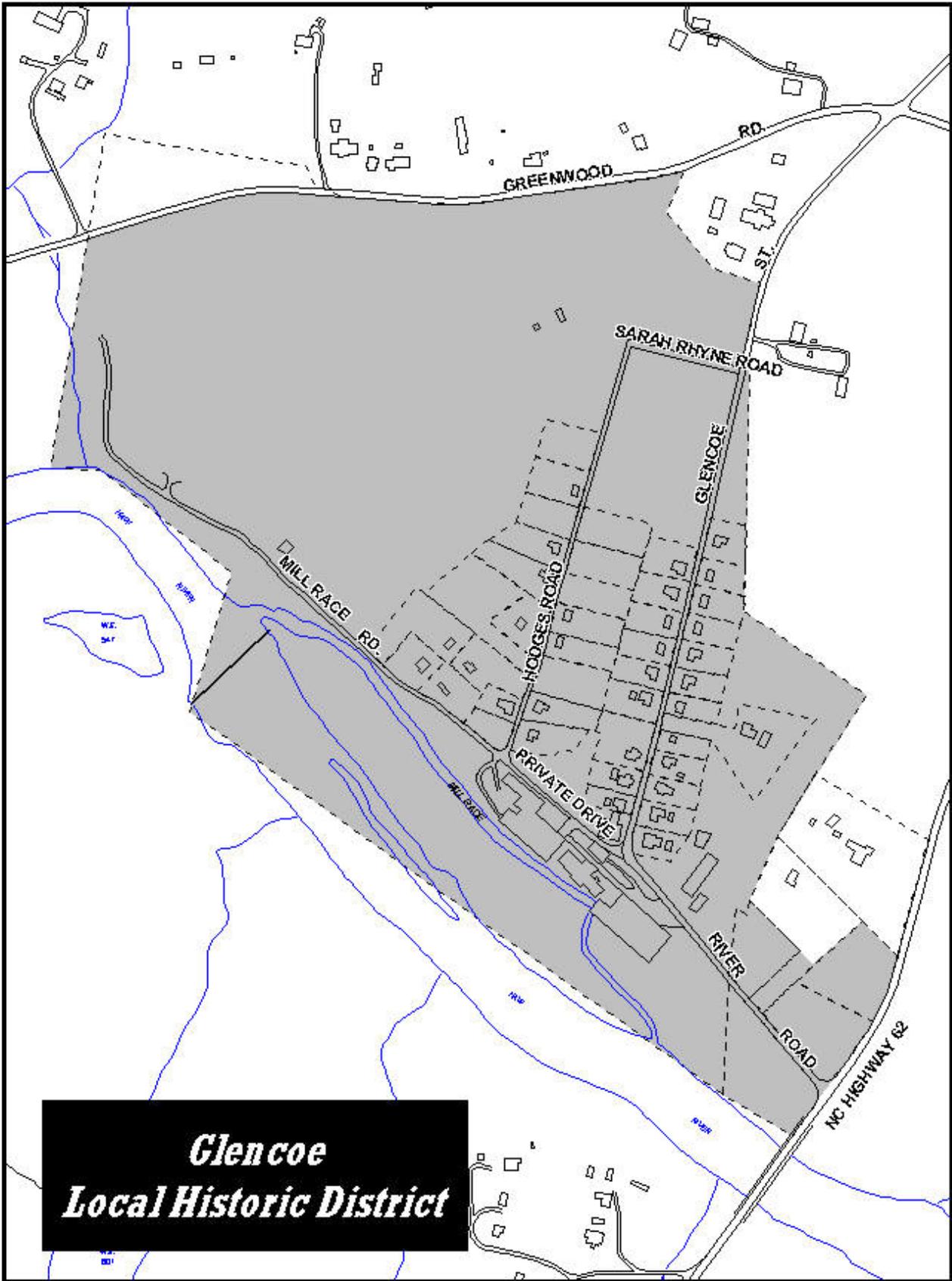
In 1997, Preservation North Carolina (PNC) purchased the property from Mrs. Sarah Rhyne and the Holt heirs. PNC developed plans for the restoration of the mill and village and for the sale of the houses to individuals for rehabilitation into single family homes.

The three story main mill is the most significant structure on the site. It is a fine example of Victorian architecture incorporating popular features of the Italianate style. The 45-foot tower which once supported a water tank rises several feet above the roofline on the north facade.

The mill houses were built primarily along the village's two streets: Glencoe Street and Hodges Road. The mill village houses include three basic houses configurations (one story, one and a half story, and two story), some with brick nogging. The houses for the most part had hand sawn timbers, brick pier foundations, tin roofs, and simple functional design. Detached kitchens were set behind a few of the houses. Later kitchens were attached on the back of the houses forming an ell. By 1901, the attached kitchens had largely replaced the detached kitchen of which only five remain.

The intact nature of this historic district has made it one of the most important industrial sites in North Carolina. Today its rural isolation and unspoiled landscape provide a comprehensive picture of the social and commercial organization of the late-nineteenth century water-powered Southern cotton mill and mill village.





***Glencoe
Local Historic District***

IV. ARCHITECTURE OF BURLINGTON'S HISTORIC DISTRICTS

A. Introduction

Before a neighborhood can be considered for possible local historic district designation, a house-by-house survey must be conducted. Architectural details are noted, site features are recorded, and an overall assessment is made for each property. It is difficult to categorize houses by architectural style, since few pure examples are found in historic districts. Some houses were designed by architects who adhered carefully to the principles of a particular style, but most simply show stylistic influences. Many are hybrids, incorporating features from more than one style, and some are transitional in that their design is influenced by successive architectural periods.

The following sections describe four of the residential building styles found in Burlington's historic districts. Although many houses may not fit in any category precisely, features on most houses can be recognized as relating to a particular style.

B. Queen Anne (1875-1915)

Popular during the Victorian period, the Queen Anne style is characterized by irregular shapes and complex arrangements of parts. The exterior of a Queen Anne house can be quite elaborate in its use of surface materials and detailing. Originally, multiple color schemes further enhanced the variety of materials used.



Surviving examples of the Queen Anne in Burlington are usually simplified versions of the style, however. These houses are composed of an asymmetrical mass covered with a hipped or gabled roof, with projecting wings and bays. They feature broad verandahs that wrap around two and sometimes three sides of the house. Porches can often be quite decorative with intricately carved posts and railings, fashioned on a lathe. This trim is commonly referred to as “gingerbread.” More recent houses will often have round, classical columns.

The gable ends of most Queen Anne houses are covered with patterned wood shingles, and occasionally a band of wood shingles separates the first and second stories. Wood clapboard is the most common siding material.

Windows are tall and narrow, contributing to a strong vertical emphasis. Window patterns can often be a clue to the period of construction. A two-over-two window sash division suggests a fairly early house, while one-over-one indicates a later structure. Leaded or stained glass is often used decoratively for windows and doors. A trademark of the Queen Anne is a window with a border of small panes, often with colored glass, around a large pane. A small casement window of this design is often found in the gable end.

Complex color patterns were often used on the exterior of the house. Architectural details were highlighted and emphasized with color. Even on a fairly modest example of the Queen Anne, the body, trim, shutters and sash

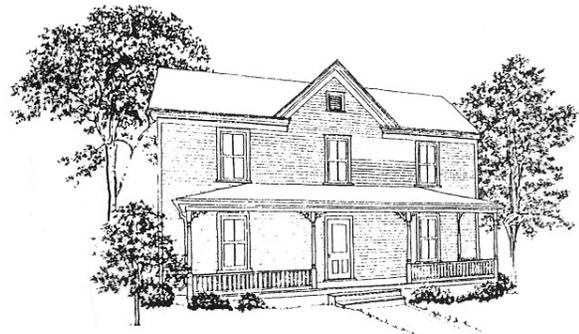
were all treated differently, and it was not uncommon for three or four contrasting but harmonious shades to be used on one house.

While the Queen Anne is usually a two story house, a one-story version is also commonly found in Burlington. This house incorporates the plan and some of the detailing of its two-story counterpart, and is often referred to as a Queen Anne cottage.

The Triple-A Farmhouse, which was popular in the Piedmont at the turn of the century, was often embellished with Queen Anne trim. This is a simple house, with a central-hall plan. The house gets its name from the roof which is composed of two end gables and a central gable facing the front. Ornamentation is usually limited to turned and sawnwork porch details.



QUEEN ANNE COTTAGE



TRIPLE-A FARMHOUSE

C. Revival Style (1900-1930)

The first part of this century saw a revival of interest in many building styles of Europe and colonial America. In part, the public was reacting to Victorian excesses in architecture. Typically, early twentieth century houses in Burlington were distinguished by a general symmetry in the arrangement of their parts and by the exercise of restraint in architectural ornamentation.



DUTCH COLONIAL REVIVAL



TUDOR REVIVAL

The Neo-Classical Revival style emphasized classical forms. Key elements included round porch columns inspired by the classical orders, cornices with modillion blocks or dentil molding, and pediments. Colonial Revival houses employed the basic plan and details of the originals but on a much larger scale. The Tudor Revival style was a romantic interpretation of the architecture of medieval England.

Windows of the revival styles often have multiple light divisions, and shutters are common. and transom lights. Instead of a full front porch, there may be a front portico and a side porch with matching details.

The best examples of revival architecture are in the 1000 block of West Davis Street and on Fountain Place.

D. Bungalow (1905-1930)

By far the most common historic house style in Burlington is the bungalow. The style originated in California at the turn of the century, and spread eastward with the help of pattern books. The bungalow was an enormously popular house for the middle classes because of its practical features.

The long, narrow shape of most bungalows was ideally suited to the 70 foot by 150 foot lots of typical 1920's subdivisions. Narrow lots allowed the developer to take maximum advantage of the newly available public infrastructure: paved streets and sidewalks, water and sewer lines, electrical and telephone service, and public transportation.

Bungalows are normally single story houses, although they can be one and a half and even two stories. They usually have gently sloping gable or hip roofs with wide overhanging eaves. Roof beams and rafters are almost always exposed.

A common bungalow form has the gable end facing the street, with the gabled porch roof set to one side. Occasionally the roof will be brought forward to cover the front porch. "Knee" brackets supporting the roof are a common feature.



BUNGALOW (CHALET TYPE)



BUNGALOW (ONE STORY)

Some bungalows are more correctly labeled Craftsman houses. This means that they were influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement which flourished in California in the early part of the twentieth century. The design philosophy accompanying this movement emphasized the relationship between man-made structures and their natural surroundings. Craftsman houses were constructed with natural materials such as native stone. Wood shingles (either left unpainted or stained rich, dark colors) were used for siding and roofs.



*FOURSQUARE
WITH
CRAFTSMAN DETAILING*

E. American Foursquare (1905-1930)

The term “American foursquare” was coined in recent years to make a category for all those charming two-story, box-shaped houses that fill early twentieth century neighborhoods in this country. Like the bungalow, the American foursquare reflected a trend toward simplicity and efficiency in residential construction. It was a practical house because it provided ample living space on its two floors, requiring only a minimum amount of land.

Hip roofs with deep overhanging eaves are typical of the American foursquare. The eaves are either open like the bungalow, or closed if the house is influenced by some other style. Construction materials and detailing are often similar to the bungalow, but details were borrowed from various styles including the Neo-Classical, Colonial Revival and even Frank Lloyd Wright’s Prairie style.



*FOURSQUARE WITH
COLONIAL REVIVAL DETAILING*



*FOURSQUARE WITH
QUEEN ANNE DETAILING*

F. Southern Vernacular Mill Housing-1800’s¹

Glencoe houses were designed to be simple and functional, but attention was paid to quality construction. Construction details in Glencoe houses include brick nogging, timber framing, brick pier foundation, and tin

¹ Added 2/8/00

roofs. The size of the houses varies from three to six rooms, but the average room size in the houses is 16' x 16'. The mill houses consist of three basic types:

Type 1: Originally a four room, two-story side gable with an end chimney, this house has a one story front porch supported by four unornamented posts. One-story kitchen ells were added to the rear of the houses by 1910. Some original, detached, board and batten kitchens still exist. These kitchens are typically one-story 20' x 12' structures and usually have a porch.

Type 2: Originally a two room, one-story side gable with a central chimney, this house has a front porch. Rear kitchen ells were also added to these structures.



TYPE 1 VERNACULAR MILL HOUSE