

THE ELIZABETH NEIGHBORHOOD

Change and Continuity in Charlotte's Second Streetcar Suburb

by Dr. Thomas W. Hanchett

The Elizabeth neighborhood on Charlotte's east side is the city's second oldest streetcar suburb. It was begun in 1891 along what is now Elizabeth Avenue, an easterly extension of East Trade Street which was one of the city's major business and residential streets. The present-day neighborhood includes five separate early subdivisions developed along the Elizabeth Avenue-Hawthorne Lane-Seventh Street trolley line and the Central Avenue trolley line by the 1920s. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, before neighboring [Myers Park](#) developed as Charlotte's elite residential area, the tree-shaded main boulevards of Elizabeth were among the city's most fashionable suburban addresses for business and civic leaders.

The early residential development of Elizabeth is but half its history, however. More than any other early Charlotte suburb, Elizabeth has felt the effects of the automobile as it has transformed the city. Charlotte's hospitals left the central business district for suburban Elizabeth beginning in the late teens, and now the neighborhood is the site of two of the city's three general hospitals, and two smaller medical facilities are nearby. Small neighborhood shopping clusters began to form in the twenties. By the 1950s every one of Charlotte's principal east-west traffic arteries sliced through the neighborhood. During the next two decades a private business college and one of North Carolina's largest community colleges built their campuses in Elizabeth, and a 1960s zoning plan encouraged extensive demolition of houses to allow new office development.

Today Elizabeth is a neighborhood of some one thousand structures. The area's earliest dwellings are gone and the intersection of Elizabeth Avenue and Hawthorne Lane, once the neighborhood's residential center, is now an informal dividing point between post-World War II offices to the west and early twentieth century houses to the east. The tree-shaded streets of this easterly part of the neighborhood, however, remain a picturesque and desirable residential area.

Several noteworthy historic sites survive as reminders of Elizabeth's early importance in the city. [Independence Park](#) (1905) at the heart of the neighborhood was the city's first public "Pleasure ground" and also the first civic project in the illustrious career of nationally renowned planner John Nolen. ¹ Once-prestigious Elizabeth Avenue,

Hawthorne Lane, and Clement Avenue still retain the residences of such North Carolina notables as department store pioneer [William Henry Belk \(1918\)](#), bankers and real estate developers [J. B.](#) and [W. L. Alexander \(1910s\)](#), and state senator Chase Brenizer (1912). Two nationally prominent figures in the mid-twentieth century also made their homes in the neighborhood: big-band leader Hal Kemp, and Jewish humorist and author Harry Golden.



The Belk Mansion

Residential Subdivisions: the Highland Park Development

The story of the Elizabeth neighborhood begins with its transformation from rural farmland into a patchwork quilt of residential subdivisions. The first of these was the Highland Park Company's original development along Elizabeth Avenue. It was soon followed by Piedmont Park, Oakhurst, Elizabeth Heights, and Rosemont. Before the [streetcar](#) allowed businessmen to commute from downtown jobs to suburban homes, farmers tilled the land on the rolling hillside that sloped down toward Little Sugar Creek. This stream, which I-277 now parallels in part, marked the outer boundary of Charlotte's development until the 1890s. Three country lanes climbed the long, gentle hill. ² Central Avenue, then known as Lawyers Road, took travelers toward the town of Wadesboro. What is now Seventh Street-Monroe Road went to Monroe, North Carolina. ³ Providence Road led south to [Providence Presbyterian Church](#), originally leaving town via Fourth and Caswell streets rather than along Third Street as it does now. Along the crest of the hill was a fourth lane, today's Pecan Avenue-Caswell Road. It provided a shortcut between the three other routes, a convenience for travelers who had no business to conduct down in town and wished to avoid the long climb back up the hill.

By the 1880s the area also held the city reservoir for Charlotte. A spring-fed stream was dammed to form a series of lakes where Independence Park is now. It is said that the Board of Aldermen sternly forbade wading and fishing in the reservoir until two of

their number were discovered late one night in water up to their hips, fishing poles in hand. ⁴

Changes started in 1891. The small town was coming alive with [textile prosperity](#), and its boosters strove to rebuild it in the image of a modern city. Edward Dilworth Latta took the lead when he opened the city's first "streetcar suburb," called Dilworth, south of town in May of 1891. ⁵ It was not surprising that Latta was the first in Charlotte to begin suburban development at the end of the new trolley tracks; he also controlled the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company, which operated the streetcar system itself.

The month after the first lots were auctioned in Dilworth, Latta helped form a group of investors to undertake additional suburban development. The major stockholders in this Highland Park company were not from Charlotte. ⁶Colonel James Walker and W.A. Burnett of Spartanburg, South Carolina and J.A. Porter of Asheville, North Carolina controlled the majority of the company's stock. Latta and real estate man Walter S. Alexander led the Charlotte investors, who also included prominent businessmen Walter Brem, Charles H. Duls, Heriot Clarkson, and P.M. Brown. The realty company was evidently allied with the successful Highland Park Mills, which also numbered Latta among its stockholders. ⁷ Late in 1891, the Highland Park land company purchased the H. M. and J. G. Shannonhouse farm on the hillside east of town. The price of \$7,500 for sixty-five acres included what is now the site of Central Piedmont Community College and surrounding businesses, the nucleus of the Elizabeth neighborhood. ⁸

The developers quickly opened a dirt road through the middle of their tract, extending from the bottom of East Trade Street to the top of the grassy hill. After that, however, development stalled. Latta was finding it difficult to sell lots even in Dilworth, where he had spent large sums on promotion. The town of twelve thousand people was still too small to really need streetcar commuting, and the nationwide depression of 1893 further hampered development for several years.

In 1897, as the nation came out of the depression and Charlotte's textile economy began to prosper, the pace of suburban development in the city picked up. Walter S. Alexander, a hard-driving developer and banker with his own Southern Real Estate, Loan and Trust Company, was now in control of the Highland Park Land Company. Alexander had the Highland Park concern donate a large block of land at the top of their hill to attract a Lutheran women's college. The institution was run by Reverend Charles B. King, son-in-law of tobacco magnate and Duke family associate Gerard S. Watts. ⁹ Watts gave most of the cash to build an imposing two-story brick building at the head of the dirt road, and King named his school Elizabeth College in honor of Watts' wife Anne Elizabeth Watts. Soon the hillside was known as "Elizabeth Hill"

and the fledgling neighborhood officially became Elizabeth. In October of 1897 the dirt road was rebuilt as a grand boulevard named Elizabeth Avenue. ¹⁰

Development took off in earnest in 1903 after Latta extended his existing East Trade Street trolley line up the boulevard to [Elizabeth College](#) at Elizabeth Avenue and what is now Hawthorne Lane. ¹¹ East Trade was among the city's best addresses, known as "East Avenue" in the tree-shaded blocks of fine residences that stretched from Brevard to McDowell streets. Elizabeth Avenue became a continuation of that upper-income residential area during the 1900s and 1910s.

Many of the Charlotte business leaders who would eventually own landmark mansions in Myers Park lived first on Elizabeth Avenue. Textile heir A. J. Draper, president of the [Chadwick-Hoskins](#) Mills at the time, lived on Elizabeth, as did real estate developer O. J. Thies. So did Robert Lassiter, textile industrialist, son-in-law of the Hanes textile family and president of the prestigious Southern Manufacturers Club (1916-1917).

Among the few large dwellings that survive in the 1980s is the [Richard C. Biberstein house](#) (1905) at 1600 Elizabeth Avenue. Biberstein was regarded as one of the piedmont's leading textile mill architects. ¹² Nearby is the residence of W. L. and Mamie Bruns (1913) at 1618 Elizabeth Avenue. The Bruns family ran Charlotte's prestigious [jewelry store at the Square](#). ¹³

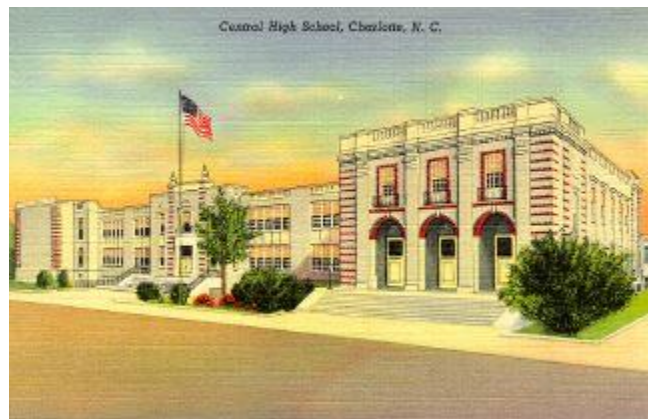


The Richard C. Biberstein House

Middle-income dwellings lined the side streets off Elizabeth Avenue. Today a few frame bungalow and rectilinear houses remain on Fourth Street, Fifth Street, Travis

Avenue, Bartow Court, and Torrence Avenue to suggest the original character of the district. Most dwellings are single-family, but there is one unusual bungalow-influenced row-house development on Bartow Court.

W.S. Alexander succeeded in attracting many of the city's leading wealthy and middle-income citizens, and the effects of their influence are still manifested in a number of ways. The area was one of five to receive a suburban elementary school in 1907 when city boundaries were expanded to take in the earliest ring of streetcar suburbs.¹⁴ Elizabeth Elementary School on Travis Avenue overlooking Independence Park is still in use. In 1920 the suburb also became the site of the city's white high school, a further indication of Elizabeth's popularity among Charlotte's leaders.¹⁵ Charlotte had operated a high school since the teens in the former First Ward School building; Central High on Elizabeth Avenue became the city's first structure built specifically for public secondary education. Designed by Lockwood, Greene and Company, industrial engineers and architects under the direction of J. Norman Pease, the building continues to function as an educational facility today and is now part of Central Piedmont Community College.



Central High School

Residential Subdivisions- Piedmont Park and Oakhurst

In 1900, work commenced on the Elizabeth area's next subdivision, a development known as Piedmont Park.¹⁶ Interested men behind the project overlapped with other suburban developments, as was so frequently the case in Charlotte. Included were [Walter Brem](#) from the Highland Park Company; B. D. Heath who was president of the [Charlotte National Bank](#); a recently-arrived real estate man named F. C. Abbott; and a young man by the name of George Stephens who would later create Myers Park. Abbott wrote in his memoirs:

The Piedmont Realty Company was organized and purchased the eighty-six acre farm of Colonel W. R. Myers located just over the city line at the intersection of Monroe Road (now East Seventh Street) and Lawyers Road (now Central Avenue). The property was surveyed by competent engineers and mapped into two hundred and eighty-six lots, and the development of Piedmont Park was started.¹⁷

Today the strangely angled street grid in this area reflects the trapezoidal property lines of the original Myers farm.¹⁸ Piedmont Park streets include Jackson, Prospect, Piedmont, Beaumont, and parts of Louise, Sunnyside, and Central. It seems likely that old Lawyers Road was renamed Central because it formed the central boulevard of the subdivision.

Inspired by Latta Park in Dilworth, the Piedmont Park developers set aside six acres at the heart of their neighborhood for parkland. Winding drives and greenery extended from Sunnyside Avenue down to Seventh Street. Planted with roses by the Charlotte Garden Club in 1931 the Sunnyside Rose Garden later became a city showplace.¹⁹ It was featured on postcards and in Chamber of Commerce literature for years, until it was sacrificed to build Independence Boulevard.

As soon as the Piedmont Park subdivision had been laid out in 1900, partner Heath purchased the next piece of farmland out Central Avenue on his own.²⁰ The land straddled the single-track main line of the Seaboard Railroad, and Heath quickly sold factory sites to Barnhardt Manufacturing, a cotton concern; Cole Manufacturing, a maker of farming implements; and the Charlotte Casket Company. In 1903 he laid out the streets of a residential subdivision adjoining the factories and named it Oakhurst (not to be confused with a later Oakhurst neighborhood out Monroe Road developed in the 1940s and 1950s).²¹ The subdivision included the beginnings of what is now the Plaza-Midwood neighborhood as well as part of Elizabeth.²² Oakhurst streets in present-day Elizabeth are Bay Street, tiny Heath Court, and parts of Oakland, Lamar, Sunnyside, Hawthorne, Clement, Central, and Independence.

Much like Elizabeth Avenue, Central Avenue running through Piedmont Park and Oakhurst became a fashionable residential boulevard. The trolley from downtown ran along its center to a point just beyond the intersection of Hawthorne Lane, where it turned north into the Villa Heights neighborhood. Heath himself had a large residence on Central near Louise Avenue. His neighbors included manufacturers Cole and Barnhardt and such leading downtown merchants as furniture and piano store partners Charles M. Parker and J. O. Gardner. Perhaps the best-remembered early Central Avenue resident was J. B. Ivey, founder of the Ivey's Department Store chain. Of these fine houses, only [Parker's residence](#) remains today.²³

Off the boulevard, the sidestreets filled up with wooden Bungalow and Rectilinear style residences. Piedmont Park, closest to town, quickly attracted more than its share of the city's most important middle-income citizens. Many of the men who managed the day-to-day affairs of the city's larger businesses lived there, such as Curtis Mees, chief designer for Southern Power (406 Louise Avenue, 1913); Zebulon Vance Linker, assistant superintendent of the Charlotte Post Office (1432 East Seventh Street, 1922); and George C. Heath, manager for Hedgepeth & Rucker cotton brokers (436 Beaumont Avenue, 1916). Here, too, were the owners of Charlotte's smaller downtown businesses, with their homes grouped near those of the leading Belk and Ivey families, much as their shops were clustered in the shadow of the major department stores. Among these merchants could be found Tryon Street jeweler Charles Elam (1415 East Seventh Street, 1913); James D. Pickard, owner of the Queen City Cycle Company (528 Beaumont Avenue, 1914); Frank M. Hice, of Hice and Williamson Coffee Shop (410 Beaumont Avenue, 1928); George Dooley of Elam and Dooley Printers (620 Louise Avenue, 1918); attorney and Republican politician Jake Newell ([819 Sunnyside Avenue](#), 1914).²⁴ Two other common occupations in Piedmont Park's early years were those of bookkeeper, and -- that mainstay of Charlotte middle-income neighborhoods -- the traveling salesman.

In addition to the single-family houses there were a handful of small multi-family structures on Hawthorne Lane and Louise Street. These were located just off the Central Avenue trolley line for commuters to downtown and were also within walking distance of the Louise Mill and other factories. The most imposing of these is the Runtzler Apartments (1930) at 712 Louise Avenue. It is a three-story structure with a central hall flanked by apartments on each floor. The facade is an elegant Neo-Classical exercise in red brick with stone trim.

Residential Subdivisions: Elizabeth Heights

With Elizabeth Avenue, Piedmont Park, and Oakhurst development underway, W. S. Alexander decided it was time to develop the land beyond the end of Elizabeth Avenue. In 1904 he and his partners filed a plat for Elizabeth Heights.²⁵ It set out Hawthorne Lane (then called Kingston), East Eighth Street, and much of East Seventh, East Fifth, Lamar, Clement, Clarice, Ridgeway, and Laurel.

The most important feature of the new design was the large park at its center. The city reservoir which had occupied the hollow parallel to Seventh Street had been drained about 1900 and replaced by a new larger reservoir north of the city (today the site of the Oaklawn Cemetery).²⁶ Alexander and other adjoining landowners decided to

donate this low-lying, poorly-drained land to the city, at the same time that Abbott and Stephens donated the parkland that was to become the Sunnyside Rose Garden. The result was [Independence Park](#), which officially became Charlotte's first public park on August 1, 1904.²⁷

In November of that year the city created the Charlotte Park and Tree Commission to oversee construction of the facility.²⁸ The Commission also took on the refurbishing of two other public spaces, the old town cemetery behind First Presbyterian Church in the center of the city, and the area called Vance Square around the Post Office and United States Mint Building on West Trade Street. The Commission's executive secretary was Piedmont Park developer George Stephens and the membership consisted largely of the men who had donated the Independence tract.

By June of 1905 the Commission had made contact with several landscape architects for the purpose of soliciting proposals for the three projects.²⁹ Their final choice was John Nolen, a student completing his last year in the School of Landscape Architecture at Harvard University. The Independence project represented an important step in the designer's budding career.

In 1904, nearly a year before graduation, he began landscaping private homes in Ardmore and a West Philadelphia factory ground for Joseph Fels, the famed soap tycoon. On May 29, 1905, Nolen noted in his diary, "Definite Engagement for Charlotte, N.C. First Important landscape work." This was his first real breakthrough to civic work, thanks to the recommendation of [Harvard] President Eliot and several professors. Here Nolen began his lifelong friendship with George Stephens. Nolen was allowed to forego his final exams in order to begin the Charlotte work, but he hurried home in late June to receive his Master of Arts degree from Harvard, at commencement attended by President Theodore Roosevelt.²⁹

The choice of John Nolen was to prove extremely propitious for Charlotte and North Carolina in general. From his start with Independence Park, Nolen went on to become one of the most important landscape architects and city planners of the early twentieth century.³⁰ He executed over 400 projects nationwide before his death in 1937, ranging from private estates to masterplans for cities (including Madison, Wisconsin, and San Diego, California) to some of America's first regional plans.³¹ Nolen also helped found city planning's first professional organizations and wrote and lectured prolifically on behalf of parks and planning. Nolen's friendship with Stephens resulted in a number of North Carolina projects. These included the Kanuga Lake resort community (now an Episcopal Church retreat), Charlotte's Myers Park suburb, city plans for Asheville and Charlotte, and a major expansion of the campus of Stephens' alma mater, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Unfortunately it is not possible to determine which elements of today's Independence Park are part of John Nolen's original design. Nolen's plans for the park are lost, and are believed to have been destroyed before his professional papers were placed in the archives of Cornell University.³² It is known that winding Park Drive bordering the area was already mapped before Nolen arrived, but it is likely that he determined the park's internal geography.³³ Many of the present trees are arranged with a studied informality in keeping with Nolen's naturalistic philosophy.

Subsequently, two noteworthy Charlotte landscape architects have contributed to Independence Park. Helen Hodge, one of the first female members of the profession in the South, created the [Arhelger Memorial Glen](#) at Hawthorne Lane and Seventh Street in 1931. A stone pavilion, pool, and miniature cascade honor the memory of Lillian Arhelger, a school teacher who fell to her death while rescuing a young charge on a field trip to a mountain waterfall.³⁴ Leigh Colyer, believed to have been among the Carolinas' earliest landscape architects, is said to have added the circular rose garden that now occupies the southeast end of the park.

With the construction of Independence Park, the two blocks of Hawthorne Lane between it and Elizabeth Avenue became some of Charlotte's most desirable residential real estate. The street already commanded an impressive vista down Elizabeth Hill toward town, and it was adjacent to the tennis courts, landscaped lawns, and frequent concerts of Elizabeth College. The location attracted such affluent citizens as James Staten, a real estate man and manager of the Little-Long drygoods store. Staten commissioned local architect Franklin Gordon to design a white-columned Neo-Classical house at Hawthorne Lane and Park Drive overlooking the park in 1914.³⁵

The grandest [mansion](#) was that of William Henry Belk, the merchant who founded Belk's Department Store and built it into one of the South's largest department store chains. Belk had lived for years at the Central Hotel in the heart of the city within sight of his store. In 1918, after marrying at the age of fifty-three, he moved out to suburban Elizabeth Heights.³⁶ Belk's choice of neighborhood was a mark of the prestige that Elizabeth retained even after the 1911 opening of Myers Park. The large brick Belk residence (1918) still stands at Hawthorne and Fifth streets on the grounds of Presbyterian Hospital in Elizabeth.

Near these fine Elizabeth Hill dwellings the suburb's four leading churches were built. St. Martin's was Charlotte's second suburban Episcopal church when it opened in 1912 on East Seventh Street, just off Hawthorne Lane overlooking the park. Next came the large [Hawthorne Lane Methodist Church](#) in 1914. Oakhurst subdivision developer B. D. Heath donated the land, and department store founder J. B. Ivey raised most of the money. Both prominent parishioners lived within walking distance

of the new edifice. M.I.T.-trained Charlotte architect Louis Asbury provided its design.³⁷ Caldwell Presbyterian Church came third in 1922, located on East Fifth Street immediately west of Hawthorne Lane.

The fourth Elizabeth church surpassed even Asbury's effort in its architectural distinction. The congregation of St. John's Baptist Church purchased a large corner lot on Hawthorne Lane, at the top of the hill and across Fifth Street from the Belk Mansion. They commissioned the city's busiest church designer, James M. McMichael, based on the success of his previous East Avenue Tabernacle and [First Baptist Church](#) downtown. McMichael's design for St. John's Church, completed in 1925, is a striking steeple-less building of limestone and blond brick strongly influenced by the drawings of Renaissance master Andrea Palladio.³⁸ With the completion of St. John's Church, the Belk mansion, and the Staten mansion, Hawthorne Lane became a stunning promenade of [Neoclassical](#) architecture.

It was to be expected that Hawthorne Lane would develop as a prestigious residential avenue, as well as being a major trolley and traffic route. Well into the twentieth century, wealthy Charlotteans preferred to build their mansions on the city's busiest streets. This custom dated back into the eighteenth century when Trade and Tryon streets were lined with the city's finest houses. Elizabeth Avenue in the original Highland Park development, Hawthorne Lane in Elizabeth Heights, and Central Avenue in Piedmont Park -- all major trolley routes -- extended this pattern into the eastside subdivisions.

Surprisingly, however, Elizabeth Heights had a second prestige street in addition to Hawthorne Lane. Clement Avenue off Seventh Street was a wide, tree-lined boulevard with the large residences of several business leaders and a number of the city's most prominent lawyers. Real estate developers and partners in the Elizabeth Heights project [John B.](#) and [Walter L. Alexander](#) built a pair of huge, wood-shingled residences for themselves on the street in the early 1910s. Nearby were the dwellings of North Carolina State Supreme Court Justice Heriot Clarkson (1910), state senator Francis O. Clarkson (1924), Charlotte Chamber of Commerce co-founder and state senator Chase Brenizer (1912), and several other leading lawyers.³⁹ Yet Clement Avenue is not a major thoroughfare and never had a streetcar line.

The solution to the mystery can be found in the original plat maps for the subdivision.⁴⁰ Clement Avenue was indeed intended to be a trolley route -- the reason for its unusual width -- and was apparently planned to extend through the Oakhurst area to Central Avenue. Why the plans were changed is not known, but the result has been a secluded residential street, cut off from the pressures of automobile traffic and redevelopment that have destroyed the special character of most of Charlotte's other prestigious boulevards. With the exception of the Heriot Clarkson house, demolished

to open East Eighth Street in the 1920s, Clement Avenue today still looks much as it did in its heyday.

Off of the main boulevards, the side streets of Elizabeth Heights attracted the same sort of middle-income residents found in Piedmont Park. Harry P. Murray, who owned a tailor shop at 31 South Tryon Street, lived in a handsome wood-shingled residence (ca. 1921) facing Independence Park at Park Drive and Clement Avenue. Norman Coker, the utility executive who later became director of Duke Power and is remembered in the naming of Lake Norman, rented in Elizabeth Heights while he was waiting for his Myers Park house to be completed.⁴¹ His rental house, at East Eighth and Hawthorne Lane, is a unique example of the English Cottage style (ca. 1913).

The most famous middle-class resident was the son of Southern Railway bridge engineer T. D. Kemp. Kemp moved his family into a modest bungalow at 1604 East Eighth Street just off Hawthorne Lane in 1921. It was there that his teen-aged son Hal formed his first musical group with a younger piano player named John Scott Trotter.⁴² By the late 1930s the Hal Kemp Orchestra was one of the most popular of the so-called "sweet" sounding big-bands in the United States, responsible for such hits as "I've Got a Date with an Angel" and "You're the Top." After Kemp's death in a 1940 automobile accident, Trotter went on to become crooner Bing Crosby's musical arranger, providing the accompaniment for such classic recordings as "White Christmas." Big-band authority George T. Simon has called the Hal Kemp Orchestra of the 1930s "one of the greatest sweet bands of all time."⁴³

The Kemp house, which had been built by a local contractor named W. A. Crowell about 1911, is typical of Elizabeth Heights architecture.⁴⁴ The neighborhood's straight streets are lined with similar wood-shingled Bungalows, plus a scattering of brick and stucco dwellings in the Rectilinear, Tudor, and Colonial Revival styles. Almost all the structures are single-family dwellings, sited with similar setbacks on medium-sized lots. A smaller number of quadraplexes and duplexes are scattered throughout the subdivision, along with a couple of slightly larger multi-unit buildings from the 1920s.

Though the main part of the Elizabeth Heights subdivision was around Independence Park, a long sliver of land extended east between Monroe Road and the present-day Seaboard railroad track. The area resembles the rest of the middle-class streets in the subdivision, but has several sites of special interest. At 2421 Weddington Avenue is an old farmhouse that appears to date from the late nineteenth century, the last rural structure to survive in Elizabeth. Its earliest known occupants were Wilson and Lelia Snell in 1913, but the house is surely older than that, a legacy of the years when Monroe Road ran where Weddington is now.

A few blocks away, near where the railroad crosses Monroe Road, is the former fire department training school. Its main building, the [Palmer Fire School](#), is a handsome stone structure built with federal Works Progress Administration labor in the late 1930s. ⁴⁵ Another legacy of that decade is the huge silver orb of a city water tower perched on steel stilts at Eighth and Pecan Streets, the highest ground in this part of the city. It is one of several towers erected in 1937 when Charlotte rebuilt its municipal water supply system. ⁴⁶

The Residential Subdivisions: Rosemont

The last piece in the patchwork quilt of the Elizabeth neighborhood was, not coincidentally, also the farthest from town. Henry C. Dotger owned a fine farmhouse on the south side of Monroe Road near the present corner of Ridgeway Avenue. Dotger's lands extended from what is now Caswell Road to Briar Creek. About 1913 plans were made to develop this tract as Dotger Estates, also known as The Pines. A plat map drawn August 19, 1913, showed the first block of East Fifth Street and curving Greenway Avenue (then labeled Sixth Street) as they exist today. ⁴⁷ A unique feature of the plan was a mid-block "[trolley walk](#)." The streetcar line for the subdivision was the Elizabeth Avenue-Hawthorne Lane-Seventh Street route, and it ended on Seventh Street at Clarice Avenue. At the terminus, a sidewalk cut through the long blocks to Greenway and East Fifth Street, putting all lots in the new subdivision within a two-block walk of the trolley.

In March of 1915, Dotger sold his property to the Rosemont Company, a development firm chartered by George Watts and Gilbert C. White of Durham, North Carolina, and C. B. Bryant, W. S. Lee, Z. V. Taylor, E. C. Marshall, and Cameron Morrison of Charlotte. ⁴⁸ In 1916 Gilbert White, who was a civil engineer by profession, made arrangements with John Nolen to draw up a plan for the undeveloped portion of the tract, which was now known as Rosemont. ⁴⁹ Nolen's field assistant Earle Sumner Draper photographed the overgrown farmland, wrote a long letter answering Nolen's questions about the tract's relationship to surrounding environment, and sent maps to the firm's office in Boston where Nolen created a design.

Little is known about that scheme, except that one of Nolen's suggestions was that Fifth Street be curved to meet Seventh, an idea that was implemented. It is likely that the area was to be laid out in picturesque curves, a Nolen trademark. The Rosemont plans do not survive in Nolen's papers at Cornell University, but there is an itemized bill to White sent upon completion of the work, for a total of \$158.23. ⁵⁰

About 1918 White evidently ran into financial difficulties, and sold his property to Charlotte real estate man E. C. Griffith. Griffith had earlier laid out the Wesley Heights neighborhood and the West Morehead Street industrial district just West of town. He is best remembered today for his creation of the city's posh [Eastover](#) neighborhood in the late 1920s. In Rosemont, Griffith apparently discarded Nolen's plan, perhaps due to the costs involved in surveying curved streets and oddly shaped lots. Kenmore, Emerson, Dotger, Cameron, and Ridgeway streets, plus part of Laurel and the undeveloped blocks of Greenway, were built in an unimaginative grid of straight avenues.⁵¹ Nolen and his plan were never mentioned in Griffith's promotional material.

Griffith's method of selling real estate embodied new trends in salesmanship. For Wesley Heights, his first large project, he had hired Fairlawn Realty Company of Indianapolis, Indiana, to conduct the sale. Clarence W. Todd, who came to town as a salesman for Fairlawn, remembers:

The firm had a nationwide plan for selling subdivisions. They would set up the sales office on the site, staff it, do advertising, and so on. I worked for them in several cities -- Savannah, Georgia, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Pennsylvania -- before coming to Charlotte to sell Wesley Heights. I liked Charlotte and was tired of traveling -- I had a family -- so I just stayed with Griffith.⁵²

Griffith and Todd used the same techniques in Rosemont, and many of Todd's advertisements for the subdivision survive today. They demonstrate his skill at drumming excitement in house lots. A 1923 flyer with pictures of completed houses trumpeted:

670 HOMES ERECTED DURING 1923. The number of new homes necessary to provide for Charlotte's continued growth will increase each year. You will readily see the necessity of securing NOW a desirable lot in such a section as ROSEMONT Phone us at once for an appointment. This special offering closes June 1st."⁵³

Another flyer was a huge poster with "ROSEMONT" in three-inch letters and a map of lots with a list of prices of those still unsold. Costs ranged from \$1500 on Fifth Street near Osbourne Avenue to \$2500 on Seventh Street at Laurel Avenue. Todd's copy read, in part:

IDEAL LOCATION. Situated on high elevation amid surroundings of known character "ROSEMONT" is conceded to be the choicest home section of Charlotte. The excellent community spirit and community advantages of this particular section of the city guarantees the safety of your investment and the desirability of owning a home in ROSEMONT. . . . TERMS: Twenty percent cash and ten percent each six months are our minimum terms. Were you ever offered such a payment plan as this? Certainly not! This is not only an opportunity to save money, but also to make a small investment that will soon grow into an estate of value. ⁵⁴

A 1925 newspaper ad proclaimed a

ONE WEEK SPECIAL SALE OF ROSEMONT HOMESITES! including the new lots just developed on KENMORE AVENUE. Here is an opportunity to buy a choice wooded homesite, on a strictly residential thoroughfare, unhampered by the noise, dust, and inconvenience of traffic . . . ⁵⁵

Todd's salesmanship could be quite effective. He bought one of the Kenmore lots himself and lived there for many years.

The Rosemont section as developed by the Griffith company during the 1920s was thoroughly middle-income. Unlike earlier parts of Elizabeth it had no boulevard of imposing residences. This was indicative of a major shift in the development patterns of the city after the First World War. More and more the city came to be segregated by income. In Rosemont numerous large duplexes could be found on Greenway Avenue, often with the owner living on one side and renting the other. Small Tudor style cottages and Bungalows made up the single-family offerings. The predominant building material was brick, the favorite of most Charlotteans in the 1920s, which offered a subtle contrast to the wooden weatherboarded and shingled frame dwellings that characterized earlier sections of Elizabeth.

Non-Residential Development: The Hospitals

By the mid 1910s, residential development was underway in all of Charlotte's eastside subdivisions. Despite the number of individual developers at work and the variations in income level and age of houses, the areas were essentially alike -- tree-lined streets of residences. One could walk from The Plaza in the Chatham Estates subdivision to Louise Avenue in the Piedmont Park development to Elizabeth Avenue in the earliest Highland Park tract to Colonial Park on Providence Road in the [Crescent](#)

[Heights](#) subdivision without ever leaving residential avenues. One would never have guessed that this patchwork of similar subdivisions would eventually be considered three distinct neighborhoods.

Beginning in the late teens, various types of nonresidential development were introduced on the east side. Hospitals, small shopping areas, offices, and colleges, together with widened thoroughfares, served to differentiate one part of the area from another. By the 1960s the east side was no longer perceived by residents as an unbroken residential district. In 1979 the Charlotte City Planning Commission conducted a study that set official boundaries for three east side neighborhoods: Plaza-Midwood, Elizabeth, and Crescent Heights.⁵⁶

In the subdivisions that would become Elizabeth, new hospitals took the lead in providing the neighborhood with a special identity. In 1916 Mercy Hospital purchased a large block of the Rosemont subdivision at the intersection of Fifth Street and Caswell Road.⁵⁷ Mercy had been founded in 1906 under the auspices of the Catholic Church and had had its original quarters in a two-story frame building near St. Peter's Catholic Church downtown.⁵⁸ Charlotte architect Franklin Gordon designed its new three-story brick building in Rosemont in the Tudor Revival style, probably the first use of that architectural mode in the city.⁵⁹

Mercy's move signified the beginning of a shift of all of the town's hospitals from the central city to the less expensive land of the suburbs. Hospital directors recognized that the city's rapid population growth would likely mean continued hospital expansion -- costly, if not impossible, in the densely built-up downtown. The new suburban sites were also convenient to new upper and middle-income residential areas including, probably not coincidentally, the homes of the directors themselves.

The second hospital to leave Charlotte's central city also came to the Elizabeth neighborhood. Elizabeth College had moved to Salem, Virginia, in the mid 1910s, and in 1918 Presbyterian Hospital left an old building on West Trade Street downtown and came out to the abandoned campus.⁶⁰ Presbyterian nearly went bankrupt in the mid 1920s, but its administrators were able to enlist the aid of powerful community leaders including Duke Power president William States Lee and Ivey's Department Store executive David Ovens; the institution survived and began to grow.⁶¹ Presbyterian's first new building was erected in 1940, and over the years expansion has swallowed up the rest of the oversized block bounded by Hawthorne Lane, Fifth Street, Caswell Road, and Randolph Road. Since 1972 alone, the hospital has been rebuilt at its Hawthorne Lane location. At a cost of more than \$50 million, eleven new buildings or major additions have been completed. Several buildings, including the old Elizabeth College building, have been demolished.⁶² Only the Belk

mansion, donated to the hospital by the department store family, remains on the block, its broad lawns now paved for parking.

Mercy, on the other side of Caswell Road, has also expanded over the years to occupy a long block. Major additions included the East Wing in 1932 facing Fifth Street, the West Wing in 1939, and a Diagnostic Wing in 1952.⁶³ As with Presbyterian, the pace of expansion has accelerated in the last decade. The year 1974 saw completion of a large new wing that shifted the institution's main entrance to Vail Avenue, and-1981 witnessed the opening of a major emergency room addition facing East Fifth Street.⁶⁴

The last two decades also saw the construction of two more hospitals adjacent to the Elizabeth neighborhood. In 1966 Charlotte Eye Ear and Throat Hospital moved from its 1923 clinic downtown on Seventh Street to a new building near Third Street and Queens Road at the edge of the Myers Park neighborhood.⁶⁵ The modern structure by Charlotte architect Walter Hook is a two block walk from Presbyterian Hospital. Even closer is Charlotte Orthopaedic Hospital. Its new buildings at Randolph and Caswell, built as a nursing home in the early 1970s and converted to a specialty hospital in 1976, replaced a number of bungalows behind Presbyterian Hospital at the edge of the neighborhood.⁶⁶ Added to this tight clustering of medical facilities is Charlotte Memorial Hospital, a mile away in Dilworth. The grouping of all of the city's hospitals in or near Elizabeth has brought great pressure for redevelopment of residential areas into medical affiliated occupancies.

Non-residential Development: Stores, Offices, and Highways

In the early days, most upper-class and even middle-income suburban households did their major shopping downtown. The best grocery stores were in the center city, and they regularly made suburban deliveries. During the 1920s and 30s, this slowly started to change. At major intersections along the trolley routes in the suburbs, small clusters of shops grew up. The most common early suburban business was the drugstore with a soda fountain that served as a neighborhood gathering place for youngsters and families. These were often joined by a convenience grocery to supply necessities between orders from downtown. Large clusters also included such personal services as laundries, barbers' and beauticians' shops, filling stations, and florists.

Three such nodes developed in the Elizabeth area beginning in the twenties. The largest, at Hawthorne Lane and Elizabeth Avenue, had the Hawthorne Pharmacy, Grier's Grocery, a branch Post Office, the Charlotte Flower Shop, a dentist, a beautician, a barber, Mrs. Mamie Bruns' Jack and Jill Kindergarten, and in 1938 the

city's first neighborhood movie theatre, the Visualite (most recently Maynard's Jazz Club). Near the end of the Seventh Street trolley line, at Pecan Avenue, could be found a second neighborhood center. It consisted of a single compact building holding Stanley's Drugstore, two groceries, and a barber shop. The third node was on Hawthorne Lane at the corner where the trolley turned onto Seventh Avenue. There one could find Sheppard's Drugstore and a large Colonial Revival style automobile service station.⁶⁷

The most important suburban commercial center for the area was not in Elizabeth itself. On Central Avenue in present-day Plaza-Midwood was a large streetcar shopping strip boasting four grocery stores, three filling stations, a hardware store, dry cleaner, coffee shop and druggist by the late 1930s. Its location within walking distance but outside of what is now thought of as Elizabeth underscores the seamless pattern of residential development in the decades before the Second World War.

The year 1938 marked a turning point in the character of Charlotte's early suburbs. In that year Duke Power ended trolley service as Charlotte's middle as well as upper-income residents turned more and more to private automobiles.⁶⁸ By the 1950s increasing traffic was making the old main boulevards undesirable for fine residences. As the early generation of well-to-do owners on Elizabeth Avenue, Hawthorne Lane and Central Avenue grew old and gave up their houses, they were replaced by middle-income families in need of large, inexpensive homes, who sometimes rented instead of buying.

This sort of "decline" could sometimes unexpectedly enrich the neighborhood. Such was the case in the 1950s when Harry Golden, noted Jewish journalist and humorist, moved his home and office to a spacious and inexpensive "high-porched house built before the Great Wars on Elizabeth Avenue... one of those old-fashioned dwellings built in the days of big families and big dining rooms."⁶⁹ Golden wrote and published a unique newspaper called the *Carolina Israelite* that combined reminiscences of his New York immigrant upbringing with witty comment on current affairs. He gained national acclaim as one of the great southern liberal voices of the integration era.

His *Golden Vertical Plan of Integration*, for instance, took tongue-in-cheek note of the fact that Southerners showed no reluctance to serve Negroes at department store check-outs and even stand-up lunch counters. He proposed removing seats from all restaurants and schools, reasoning that as long as whites were not required to sit with blacks, there would be no resistance to integration. In 1958 he collected a number of his short columns in a book entitled *Only in America*. It and a subsequent volume, *For 2¢ Plain*, rose to the top of the best-seller lists, and their titles became part of the popular language across the nation.⁷⁰

Many of the era's cultural leaders visited the house on Elizabeth Avenue. Carl Sandburg came often and called Golden "an apostle of freedom, a friend and a voice of 'those who love liberty, unselfishly, everywhere.'" ⁷¹ On November 24, 1963, the morning following the assassination of President Kennedy, the Norman Luboff Choir interrupted a road trip to visit Golden, and as the author later wrote:

They gathered around me as I delivered a speech about the assassinated President, the South, and a few other subjects. And then Mr. Luboff led this majestic choir in a private concert right on my porch at 1312 Elizabeth Avenue in a drizzling rain. It was one of those moments you remember the rest of your life. ⁷²

Despite the diversity that Harry Golden and others brought to Elizabeth, in the long run the decline of the old residential boulevards split the eastside subdivisions. Once the area's strongest residential feature, the boulevards became its weakest as uses changed from residence to office. The large houses with their fine yards, Golden's included, were demolished to erect hastily-built one-story office buildings and parking lots. Heavy traffic on the streets themselves discouraged pedestrians from even walking from one part of the old subdivisions to another. Once strong spines that united the east side, Elizabeth Avenue and Central Avenue (and to a lesser extent Seventh Street) now became barriers that divided it.

The greatest barrier was a new freeway. Independence Boulevard was Charlotte's first high-speed thoroughfare when its first leg opened in 1946. ⁷³ Coming out of downtown it sliced through the original Highland Park subdivision of Elizabeth along the route of what had been Fox Avenue, a quiet residential street crossing Elizabeth Avenue just above Central Avenue. Next, the highway cut across the body of Independence Park and up the hill into the old Piedmont Park subdivision, obliterating the Sunnyside Rose Garden. Independence Boulevard, in fact, took its name from the park, and it appears that the highway's circuitous route was chosen in part to take advantage of this "free" land. ⁷⁴

From there, the boulevard cut a wide swath through the Oakhurst subdivision, transforming what had once been a tree-lined avenue of bungalows named High Street, and continued eastward out of the city.

As Independence Boulevard and the office-commercial redevelopment of Elizabeth Avenue and Central Avenue cut the east side apart, people began to consider themselves residents of "Elizabeth" or "Plaza-Midwood" or "Crescent Heights," rather than of the original subdivisions or of the east side as whole. The old Oakhurst subdivision, for example, had once been tied together by the houses that lined Central

Avenue. As stores replaced the dwellings, the tract split into two sections, one of which was now thought of as part of Elizabeth, the other as part of Plaza-Midwood. Even the names of the original subdivisions faded from memory as residents came to think of themselves as part of the larger neighborhoods, and Oakhurst, Rosemont, Piedmont Park, and Elizabeth Heights were forgotten.

This tendency was heightened as the area's commercial districts grew. As Independence Boulevard and related projects changed pedestrian and automobile traffic patterns, the small centers within the neighborhood developed more fully, and in the process reinforced Elizabeth's sense of identity. On Elizabeth Avenue, more stores replaced old residences. At Seventh Street and Hawthorne Lane, where Sheppard's Drug Store had by this time become Spoon's Ice Cream Parlor, another gas station was added. On Central Avenue at Louise and Tenth streets, a whole new center came into existence. It replaced the B. D. Heath and J. B. Ivey residences with a grocery store, convenience stores, and service station.

The greatest commercial changes took place at Seventh and Caswell streets, where there had been only the single brick building housing Stanley's drugstore, two small grocery shops, and a barber. When Independence Boulevard opened, it cut off the residences near Stanley's from pedestrian access to the stores on Central Avenue. At the same time, Independence included an exit onto Caswell Road, increasing automobile traffic. Soon three gas stations replaced houses on the three residential corners at Caswell and Seventh streets. In 1952, Stanley's Drugstore demolished several houses next to the original brick building on the fourth corner and built a small strip shopping center for themselves and a handful of other shops.⁷⁵ Research to date indicates that this structure was Charlotte's first true automobile-oriented shopping development, one with parking in front of the stores. The shops and service stations -- one later converted to a restaurant and neighborhood tavern -- together with nearby residential blocks became known informally as "Stanleyville," an indication of the strong community identity such a center could generate.

The growth of commercial centers in Elizabeth in the post-World War II era seems thus to have generally strengthened the neighborhood, despite the small loss of housing stock involved, and put a wide variety of commercial offerings within walking distance of residents. The concurrent trend toward office development along the main thoroughfares, on the other hand, had the opposite effect.

The changes, which had begun slowly in the 1950s, accelerated after 1960. In that year the Charlotte City Council adopted its first comprehensive zoning ordinance.⁷⁶ The authors of the ordinance held the assumption, widely accepted at the time, that the city's streetcar suburbs had no future in the auto age. They saw residents

leaving to commute from sprawling automobile suburbs, allowing the old neighborhoods to be zoned for non-residential development.

The ordinance zoned nearly half of Elizabeth for demolition. When the plan was approved, homes still ringed Independence Park and lined much of Elizabeth Avenue and Central Avenue. A report on these blocks by the city's Planning Commission two years after the ordinance was adopted acknowledged that "this tract is still extensively residential ..." and noted that "the housing has been fairly well maintained..." with even those few structures identified as "deteriorated" in reality needing only minor repairs.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the plan decreed that all of Central Avenue, Elizabeth Avenue, Travis Avenue, East Seventh Street, Park Drive, Caswell Road, and parts of Hawthorne Lane, Torrence Street, East Fifth Street, Lamar Avenue, and Clement Avenue were to become non-residential.

The zoning ordinance proved to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. When houses came on the market, new families were discouraged from buying because of non-residential zoning. At the same time, real estate speculators were attracted who bought up dwellings, rented them with minimal maintenance long enough to recoup the purchase cost, and then demolished them in order to sell the cleared land at a profit for office development. This activity was quite common in Charlotte neighborhoods and in other American cities in this era.⁷⁸ In Elizabeth, demolition sometimes exceeded demand for new construction, and lots occasionally remained vacant for years, particularly along Central Avenue.

In the 1980s, twenty years after the zoning ordinance, only one resident remained on Elizabeth Avenue and almost all of the homeowners who had once looked out over picturesque Independence Park were gone. Central Avenue, Travis Avenue, Caswell Road, and the first blocks of Torrence Avenue and East Fifth Street were similarly non-residential, as were large parts of East Seventh Street. The comfortable homes that once spilled down Elizabeth Hill from Hawthorne Lane to Sugar Creek were no more.

The attitudes expressed in the 1960 zoning ordinance were also evident in the administration of Independence Park in the period. City officials came to view the glen as merely a source of cheap land for municipal projects. The first structure in the park had been the city armory in the late 1920s.⁷⁹ The process started in earnest in 1937 when Memorial Stadium took much of the lower end of the park.⁸⁰ After the Second World War, Independence Boulevard took another large section of land. In the 1950s the present Park Center auditorium replaced the fire-damaged armory. It held the Park and Recreation Department offices and was quickly followed by a complex of garages, storage areas, and parking lots for the county's park patrol cars. In 1965,

additional greenery at the other end of the park was replaced by an Arts and Crafts Building surrounded by parking lots.⁸¹

Today, Independence Park no longer forms an unbroken green path through the neighborhood all the way to the edge of the center city, as John Nolen envisioned it.⁸² Yet the park has been strong enough to survive all the intrusions and still provide a tree-shaded interlude in the heart of Elizabeth. The Arhelger Memorial glen, tree-lined walks and playing fields, and the colorful rose garden continue to be the neighborhood's collective focal point.

The 1950s and 1960s also saw construction of two college campuses in Elizabeth. The first came in 1958. It was Kings College, a business and secretarial school founded in 1901 by John Hugh King.⁸³ With the postwar boom in both birthrate and Veterans Administration tuition assistance, Kings College decided to move from its original site in a South Tryon Street building downtown to a more spacious suburban campus. Local builder C. D. Spangler, an alumnus of the institution, built a cluster of International style brick buildings on the edge of Independence Park, where houses had once stood, and leased the new campus to the college.⁸⁴

Central Piedmont Community College was formed in 1963 by the North Carolina General Assembly.⁸⁵ Classes were originally held at scattered sites, including the former Central High School on Elizabeth Avenue which had recently been replaced by new Garinger High School. In the mid 1960s, CPCC began assembling land around the former high school and demolishing residences to build a large modern campus. Among the houses to be lost was Harry Golden's home and office, demolished for a parking garage. A granite tablet with a bronze plaque was erected to mark the site, and the author himself moved to 1701 East Eighth Street nearby where he spent the rest of his life. Today the chunky white International style buildings of the CPCC campus, all designed by J. N. Pease Associates, occupy all of the formerly residential blocks flanking Elizabeth Avenue between Kings Drive and Independence Boulevard.

To the Present

By the 1970s, the Elizabeth area looked much different than it had in its heyday fifty years earlier. The trolley tracks were gone and few remembered the names of the five separate subdivisions that had grown up along them and merged into a single neighborhood. The earliest section of Elizabeth, the Highland Park development flanking Elizabeth, had lost almost all of its fine homes. The neighborhood's most

influential residents had moved on to Myers Park and later developments. Independence Boulevard and strip office development along older major streets had cut the neighborhood off from others on the east side.

Yet Elizabeth remained a desirable residential neighborhood with a strong sense of identity. The streets of comfortable dwellings off the main boulevards were now shaded by a canopy of half-century-old willow oaks, and they began to attract new, young residents. Mercy and Presbyterian hospitals, Kings College and Central Piedmont Community College had taken large numbers of houses, but in the process had given Elizabeth a distinctive identity within Charlotte. The growth of the "Stanleyville" and Elizabeth Avenue commercial districts had contributed in this respect also. Drawing customers from the hospitals and colleges as well as the neighborhood itself, they developed one of the city's most lively mixtures of specialty shopping. At this writing Elizabeth has Charlotte's only jazz club, two art galleries and two graphic arts stores, a rare record shop, the city's oldest delicatessen and one of its few neighborhood natural foods groceries, and establishments that regularly present blues and folk music.

About 1970, area residents created the Elizabeth Community Association.⁸⁶ They were concerned that continuing office and institutional expansion, along with traffic and zoning decisions, might overwhelm the remaining residential sections of the neighborhood. The Association was one of several groups formed during this period in the city's old streetcar suburbs as the impact of the 1960 zoning ordinance began to be fully felt.

The Association's first successful effort came against a plan that would have built large cloverleaf interchanges along Independence Boulevard at Hawthorne Lane and Pecan Street. In the mid 1970s the group campaigned against rerouting Independence Boulevard along the Seaboard Railway track through the neighborhood.⁸⁷ Later, they convinced the Park and Recreation Department to stop using Independence Park tennis courts as parking areas. The group also boosted the neighborhood's sense of community with an annual festival in Independence Park. In the 1980s the Association is working with developers and with the city's Planning Commission on a Small Area Plan that will direct the course of future growth and change.

Yet, despite the efforts of the community association and the continued popularity of the neighborhood as a residential area, the threats that have dogged Elizabeth since the 1940s have not abated. The hospitals continue to purchase and demolish homes, and Presbyterian Hospital has recently begun to demolish properties in the Elizabeth Avenue commercial district as well. On Seventh Street, Hawthorne Lane, and Central Avenue, homes continue to fall for office development and parking as the hastily-built commercial and office structures that sprang up on Elizabeth Avenue in the 1960s no

longer command high rent. Independence Boulevard will be widened to eight lanes in the late 1980s, and traffic engineers would like to also widen Seventh Street. It remains to be seen in what form the Elizabeth neighborhood will survive.

Notes

¹ Dan L. Morrill, "[Independence Park: Survey and Research Report](#)" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1980).

² Butler and Spratt, "Map of Charlotte Township, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, From Recent Surveys..... 1892." Copies are in the collections of the History Department of the Mint Museum, Charlotte, and the City of Charlotte Historic Districts Commission.

³ There is some evidence that Seventh Street between McDowell and Caswell street is not very early, dating probably from the late nineteenth century. The main easterly way out of town in early years began where East Trade Street bears right off of today's Elizabeth Avenue, just past McDowell Street. From there, a traveler climbed the hill via the present-day route of East Fourth Street. Near the top of the hill was a "Y" at what is now Caswell Road. It is certain that this intersection is extremely old, for the town's first settler, Thomas Spratt, built his cabin nearby, and stones from a late 18th century cemetery have been excavated in the vicinity. If the traveler took the right fork of the "Y", he headed out toward [Providence Presbyterian Church](#). If he took the left fork, he headed toward Monroe. Indeed, the first plat map of what is now Greenway Avenue called intersecting Caswell Road "Monroe Road" ,it and the street is listed as such on page 925 of the 1925 city directory.

⁴ F. C. Abbott, *Fifty Years in Charlotte Real Estate, 1897-1947* (Charlotte: privately published, 1947?),p . 7-8 . The reservoir was created in 1882 and drained in 1900, according to LeGette Blythe and Charles R. Brockman, *Hornets' Nest: the Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte-McNally of Charlotte, 1961), pp. 180, 381.

⁵ Dan L. Morrill and Ruth Little-Stokes, "Architectural Analysis: Dilworth: Charlotte's Initial Streetcar Suburb" (Charlotte: Dilworth Community Association, 1978), section 2, p. 2.

⁶ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: Record of Corporations, Book A, p. 235. According to this record, Porter contributed \$12,500, Walker and Burnett each subscribed \$10,000, Latta and Alexander each put in \$5,000, Brem gave \$1,500, and the rest each added \$1,000.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁸ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: Deed Book 81, p. 1; see also Deed Book 81, p. 55.

⁹ Abbott, pp. 17-18. Dan L. Morrill and Nancy B. Thomas, "[Elizabeth](#)" in the New South Neighborhoods brochure series (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1981). For a view of the building see the *Charlotte Observer*, July 14, 1897.

¹⁰ *Charlotte Observer*, October 31, 1897.

¹¹ Morrill and Thomas. The line opened in December of 1902.

¹² *Charlotte Observer*. September 13, 1931. *The Journal: Worcester Polytechnic Institute*, November, 1931, p. 30. Biberstein's papers are now in the collection of the archives of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. The firm's job book indicates it designed hundreds of mill structures, as well as public buildings, and occasional houses and stores throughout the Carolinas, Virginia, parts of Georgia and Tennessee, and as far afield as Texas and Bombay, India.

¹³ Data on individual houses in this essay came primarily from the city directory collection in the Carolina Room of the Charlotte Public Library. Janette Greenwood assembled these data, assisted by Joseph Schuchman and Thomas W. Hanchett. Biographical data came from the directories, supplemented with research in the vertical files at the Carolina Room, and Blythe and Brockman's *Hornets' Nest*. Additional sources, when used, are indicated in footnotes. For simplicity, current street numbers are used throughout this essay, even when numbering has changed over time. Dates of construction for Elizabeth houses are generally accurate within two years.

¹⁴ Harry P. Harding, "The Charlotte City Schools" (Charlotte: typescript by the Charlotte Mecklenburg School System, 1966), pp. 31, 64. A photocopy of this report is in the Carolina Room.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Abbott, p. 9. See also *Charlotte News*, March 26, 1982.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The boundaries of the W. R. Myers farm are shown on the Butler and Spratt map.

¹⁹ Morrill, "Independence Park . . ." A postcard view is in the collection of the History Department of the Mint Museum, Charlotte.

²⁰ Abbott, p. 18.

²¹ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: Deed Book 195, pp. 28-29.

²² Heath's Oakhurst overlapped parts of the present-day Plaza-Midwood neighborhood, as well as Elizabeth. The first blocks of Clement, Pecan, Thomas and Hamorton just off Central Avenue in Plaza-Midwood are Heath's contribution to that neighborhood.

²³ William Huffman, "[Charles M. Parker House: Survey and Research Report](#)" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1983).

²⁴ William Huffman, "[Jake Newell House: Survey and Research Report](#)" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1983).

²⁵ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: Map Book 222, p. 202. See also Map Book 332, p. 290.

²⁶ Blythe and Brockman, p. 381. For photos of all the city's early water installations, see "Fifth Annual Report, Superintendent Charlotte Water Works," 1904, in the files of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Utility Department.

²⁷ Morrill, "Independence Park . . ."

²⁸ Prominent Elizabeth resident Heriot Clarkson is said to have drawn up the enabling legislation that the state government passed in order to allow Charlotte to create such a commission. Francis O. Clarkson, Sr., telephone interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, May, 1984.

²⁹ *Charlotte News*, June 6, 1905. *Charlotte Observer*, June 6, 1905. Citations courtesy of Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

²⁹ John L. Hancock, "John Nolen and the American City Planning Movement: a History of Cultural Change and Community Response, 1900-1940" (unpublished

Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1964), pp. 41-42. A copy of this work is in the general collection of Atkins Library at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

³⁰ Nolen's job book is included in his papers at Cornell University. It lists all of the firm's projects sequentially. See also Dan L. Morrill, "[Independence Park: Survey and Research Report](#)" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1980).

³¹ John L. Hancock, *John Nolen: A Bibliographical Record of Achievement* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Program in Urban and Regional Studies, 1976), pp. 13-17. Nolen's Professional papers are now in the collection of the Cornell University Department of Manuscripts and Archives, Ithaca, New York.

³² Kathleen Jacklin, interview with Thomas W. Hanchett at Cornell, December 1981. The City of Charlotte Park and Recreation Department, successor to the old Commission, no longer has copies of Nolen's work, and in fact retains no correspondence or drawings from that period. The Carolina Room of the Charlotte Public Library does have a slim folder of general correspondence relating to the Commission, but no specifics on the Nolen plans.

³³ *Charlotte News*, February 2, 1904; March 8, 1904.

³⁴ This information is recorded on bronze plaques at the site.

³⁵ The information that Gordon was architect comes from the city's water permit records. In the 1920s, Staten sold Little-Long and established a women's apparel shop that shared space with another fledgling women's clothing shop, Montaldo's.

³⁶ LeGette Blythe, *William Henry Belk, Merchant of the South*. rev. ed. (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1958) p. 112.

³⁷ Paul Stephens, "Six Landmarks of Elizabeth Heights" (Independent study paper submitted to Dr. Dan L. Morrill, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 1980), pp. 16-21.

³⁸ *Charlotte News*, March 15, 1925.

³⁹ Information on the Clarkson family courtesy of Francis O. Clarkson, Sr., interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, May, 1984.

⁴⁰ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office.

⁴¹ For more on Cocke see Joe Maynor, *Duke Power, the First Seventy-Five Years* (Charlotte?: Duke Power Company, 1979?). Norman Cocke's house in Myers Park stands in 1984 at 816 Harvard Place.

⁴² *Charlotte Observer*, March 1, 1932; April 12, 1933; December 22, 1940. See also Roger D. Kinkle, *The Complete Encyclopedia of Popular Music and Jazz, 1900-1950* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1974), entries 542, 1003, 1841.

⁴³ George T. Simon, *The Big Bands*, rev. ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1974), p. 287.

⁴⁴ Dorothy Fry, "Crowell-Kemp House: Survey and Research Report" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1984).

⁴⁵ *Charlotte Observer*, February 28, 1950. *Charlotte News*, April 9, 1976.

⁴⁶ For a photo of the newly-completed fire tower, see "Annual Report, 1938-39, City of Charlotte, North Carolina." A copy is in the collection of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Utilities Department.

⁴⁷ "Plat of a Portion of the Dotger Estate" in the files of Lawyers Title Company, Charlotte. See also Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, Map Book 322, p. 120. It is not certain whether Dotger was directly involved in the development. Dotger's house was demolished to permit construction of the present Tillett Eye Clinic.

⁴⁸ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: Corporations Book 4, p. 270; Deed Book 337, p. 455; Map Book 332, p. 120; Order and Decree Book 31, pp. 378-383. The sale was complicated by the fact that Henry C. Dotger had not received the farm outright when Andrew J. Dotger had transferred it to him in 1899. Henry Dotger and Andrew's executor, the Fidelity Trust Company, were required to get a court order giving them permission to sell. A summary of the proceedings read in part, "by deed executed April 26, 1899, recorded in book 134, p. 479, in the Office of the Register of Deeds of Mecklenburg County, Andrew J. Dotger conveyed about eighty acres of land . . . to Henry C. Dotger and his wife Bertha M. Dotger, for and during their lives . . . with remainder in fee simple to children of Henry C. Dotger and wife . . . Said land, being unproductive of income and subject to heavy taxes [an order was made by Mecklenburg County Superior Court, January Term, 1912] authorizing the sale of said land and the investment of the proceeds . . ." This order allowed Henry Dotger to begin subdividing the old farm for lot sales. It is not possible to determine why Dotger sold out to the Rosemont Company.

⁴⁹ A "Map of Rosemont, Charlotte, N.C." dated July, 1916, exists in the files of Lawyers Title Company, but it shows only the first block each of Greenway, East Fifth and Ridgeway. The correspondence between White and Nolen, and Draper and Nolen, is in Nolen's papers, collection 2903, in the Department of Manuscripts and Archives at Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office: Map Book 3, pp. 13, 321.

⁵² Clarence W. Todd, interview with Thomas W. Hanchett in Charlotte, August, 1983.

⁵³ Flyer in the files of Lawyers Title Company.

⁵⁴ Flyer in the files of Lawyers Title Company.

⁵⁵ *Charlotte Observer*, October 24, 1925. Citation courtesy of Janette Thomas Greenwood.

⁵⁶ "Neighborhood Definition Study" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission, 1979). This report noted that the concept of "neighborhood" was fairly new to the city: "There are a few exceptions such as Myers Park, but until recently, even such renovated inner city neighborhoods as Dilworth and Elizabeth did not have immediate recognition."

⁵⁷ Charles M. Strong, *History of Mecklenburg County Medicine* (Charlotte: News Printing House, 1929), pp. 96-98.

⁵⁸ Ibid. For a photo-history of Mercy, see the booklet "Seventy-fifth Anniversary, Mercy Hospital" (Charlotte: Mercy Hospital Public Relations Department, 1981).

⁵⁹ Gordon's obituary is in the *Charlotte Observer*, September 25, 1930.

⁶⁰ Henry Bostic, Jr.?, "History of Presbyterian Hospital," undated mimeographed essay in the files of the Public Information Office, Presbyterian Hospital. See also Strong, pp. 92-94.

⁶¹ Bostic.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ "Seventy-fifth Anniversary, Mercy Hospital."

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Peggy O'Neal and Kay Garrett, "Charlotte Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital: Adaptability Means Progress," in *Southern Hospitals* (January-February 1984), pp. 14-18. Kay Garrett, telephone interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, January, 1984. Garrett is Public Relations Director for the hospital. See also Strong, pp. 100-101.

⁶⁶ Jean Crawford, telephone interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, December, 1983. Crawford is Director of Nursing for the hospital.

⁶⁷ In 1984 Sheppard's is Spoons Ice Cream Parlor, and the service station houses a laundry and offices of a construction firm.

⁶⁸ Dan L. Morrill, "[Myers Park Streetcar Waiting Stations: Survey and Research Report](#)" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1980).

⁶⁹ Harry Golden, *Only in America*.(New York: World Publishing Company, 1958), pp. 15, 114.

⁷⁰ Golden's other books include *Enjoy, Enjoy!* , *Carl Sandburg, Forgotten Pioneer, You're Entitled, Mr. Kennedy and the Negroes, So What Else is New?, A Little Girl is Dead, Ess, Ess, Mein Kindt*.

⁷¹ Carl Sandburg, forward to Harry Golden, *For 2¢ Plain* (New York: World Publishing Company, 1959), p. 15.

⁷² Harry Golden, *So What Else is New?* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1964), p.201.

⁷³ Dan L. Morrill, "The Road That Split Charlotte," *Charlotte Observer* "Parade" magazine section, May 2, 1982, pp. 12, 15, 19.

⁷⁴ Information courtesy of Mary Louise Phillips, on file at the Carolina Room of the Charlotte Public Library.

⁷⁵ J. Lawson Stanley, Sr., telephone interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, January, 1984. See also *Charlotte Magazine*, March, 1983.

⁷⁶ Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission, "The Charlotte Mecklenburg Comprehensive Plan (draft)" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission, 1973), p. 4.

⁷⁷ Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission, "Residential Blight in Charlotte, September, 1962" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission, 1962), pp. 30-31. This document has a wealth of data on the city, mapped by census tract, including race, ownership, use, and condition of housing.

⁷⁸ Dave Howard of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Commission, interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, July, 1984. For more on the process in general in post-war American cities, see Peter Wolf, *Land in America: Its Value, Use and Control* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), p. 409. Leonard Downie, Jr., *Mortgage on America: the Real Cost of Real Estate Speculation* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), pp. 3, 7. For a description of the process at work in another Charlotte neighborhood, see *Charlotte News*, April 11, 1980.

⁷⁹ Morrill, "Independence Park".

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Though Nolen's detailed plans for Independence Park are apparently lost, his vision for the overall project and its place in Charlotte is documented in John Nolen, "Civic Survey, Charlotte, North Carolina: Report to the Chamber of Commerce" (Cambridge, Mass.: typescript, 1917). The only known surviving copy of this report is in Nolen's papers at Cornell.

⁸³ Material in the files of Wayne Pritchett, King's College Director of Education, supplemented with an interview with Ms. Pritchett by Thomas W. Hanchett in Charlotte, February, 1984.

⁸⁴ Ibid. and C. D. Spangler, interview with Thomas W. Hanchett in Charlotte, April, 1984.

⁸⁵ "Central Piedmont Community College Catalog, 1982-1984" (Charlotte: CPCC, 1982), pp. 4-5.

⁸⁶ Shelley Blum, telephone interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, February, 1984.

⁸⁷ Don Carroll, telephone interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, February, 1984. Pam Patterson, telephone interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, February, 1984. Both are past presidents of the Elizabeth Community Association.

SIGNIFICANT SITES IN THE ELIZABETH NEIGHBORHOOD

360 Caswell Road	Bishop Edwin Penick House (1923-24)	
901 Central Avenue	Charles W. Parker House (1903-04)	HP
506 Clement Avenue	Francis Clarkson, Sr., House (1924)	
509 Clement Avenue	John Baxter Alexander House (1913)	
523 Clement Avenue	Walter L. Alexander House (1915)	
604 Clement Avenue	Thad A. Adams House (1909c)	
622 Clement Avenue	Jones-Brenizer House (1912)	
1600 Elizabeth Av.	R. C. Biberstein House (1905)	
1618 Elizabeth Av.	William L. Bruns House (1913)	
200 Hawthorne Lane	William Henry Belk Mansion (1918)	
300 Hawthorne Lane	St. John's Baptist Church (1925)	
322 Hawthorne Lane	James L. Staten Mansion (1912c)	
801 Sunnyside Av.	Rev. George Detwiller House (1903c)	HP
2601 E. 7th Street	Palmer Fire School (1937)	
1604 E. 8th Street	Bing-Kemp House (1917)	
1701 E. 8th Street	Cocke-Golden House (1913)	
1812 E. 8th Street	Harry A. Zeim House (1910)	
Hawthorne Lane near Seventh Street	Independence Park (1904)	HP NR
off Seventh Street opposite Clarice	Trolley Walk (1913c)	

(**HP** indicates sites already designated by City Council as local historic properties. **NR** indicates sites already listed in the National Register of Historic Places.)

BISHOP EDWIN PENICK HOUSE
1923-1924
360 Caswell Road

Bishop Edwin A. Penick was a religious leader of state and regional significance. A native of Kentucky, he had come to Charlotte in 1919 as rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church downtown. Three years later, at age thirty-five, he was elected Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of North Carolina. Ten years later he became Bishop for the

state, and served in that capacity for twenty-seven years. At his death in 1959 he was senior bishop of the Episcopal Church of the United States.

Penick oversaw major changes during his tenure. The diocese grew dramatically in membership and number of clergy. He pushed suburban ministry, including the founding of Christ Church, Charlotte, which soon became the diocese' largest parish. Penick also laid the groundwork for a home for the aging, which was established after his death as the Penick Memorial Home in Southern Pines, North Carolina.

Penick and his wife Caroline had this two story, wood-frame residence built in 1923-1924, and lived here into the 1930s. It is an example of the Rectilinear Four Square mode popular in Charlotte in the first decades of the twentieth century. Currently an antique shop, it is in good original condition.

CHARLES W. PARKER HOUSE
1903-1904
901 Central Avenue

The Charles W. Parker house is believed to be Charlotte's earliest example of the Four Square house type. Around the turn of the century, architects all over the country tired of the overly-elaborate ornament and eccentric massing of the Victorian styles and began searching for a more efficient-looking and "honest" architecture. Among the products of that search were the rediscovery of the straightforward Colonial style, the invention of the radically new Prairie style of Chicago architect Frank Lloyd Wright, and the creation of a more moderate non-historic mode now called the Rectilinear style by some architectural historians. Rectilinear designers used the popular floor plans developed in the late nineteenth century, but gave them clean-cut rectangular exteriors with geometric trim carefully chosen to resemble no historic prototype. The Four Square house type, with its cube-shaped exterior, hip roof, corner entry hall, and off-center front door, was a product of this Rectilinear trend.

Charles W. Parker was a rising young entrepreneur when he moved into his large new house on posh Central Avenue in 1904. He was cofounder of the Parker-Gardener furniture store (which became Parker-Gardener Music in the Great Depression and continues as a major Charlotte piano dealer in the 1980s). His efficient-looking Four Square house reflects the businesslike tastes that might be expected in such a man. Under its hip roof are four upstairs rooms and four downstairs rooms, plus a rear kitchen wing. Exterior walls have horizontal double-groove "novelty" siding, and a

band of stucco under the eaves. All trim is relentlessly geometric, down to the square balusters on the broad front porch which are turned at a forty-five degree angle.

FRANCIS O. CLARKSON, SR., HOUSE
1924
506 Clement Avenue

Francis Clarkson was a leading lawyer and judge in Charlotte. He served as state senator in 1931. His house is built on what originally were the grounds of the residence of his father, Heriot Clarkson. The elder Clarkson was also a distinguished lawyer, serving as Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court from 1923 to 1942. Heriot Clarkson was one of the city's most active civic leaders, beginning in the 1880s, playing an important role in the beginnings of the Carnegie Library, the Park and Tree Commission, the Florence Crittendon Home, and also the Textile School at North Carolina State University. The original Clarkson house was demolished to open East Eighth Street at about the time this cottage was built, and today the Francis Clarkson house is perhaps Charlotte's best early architectural reminder of this influential family.

The Francis Clarkson, Sr., residence is a cozy example of Bungalow style architecture. Set far back from Clement Avenue, the cottage is sheltered by tall trees. It is a small, one-story structure with rustically wood-shingled walls, and a wide-eaved gable roof. An airy front porch is supported by simple square posts, and it extends at one side to shelter the driveway.

<u>WALTER L. ALEXANDER HOUSE</u>
1915
523 Clement Avenue



The Walter L. Alexander house and its next-door neighbor the J.B. Alexander house are the grandest residences dating from the prestigious early years of Clement Avenue. Walter L. Alexander's 1915 dwelling is similar to J.B. Alexander's earlier residence except for different chimney placement, simpler window treatment, and a stone-columned porch. It is a large two-and-one-half story wood-shingled structure with wooden brackets supporting its wide eaves. The main gabled roof has front and side gabled wings, and a gabled front dormer. The massive wrap-around front porch extends at one side to form a porte cochere over the driveway. The residence's site is crucial to its design, a spacious area made up of three standard building lots to allow side gardens.

Walter L. Alexander was nephew of J.B. Alexander, and the son of W.S. Alexander, the main developer of Elizabeth Heights. Like the rest of his family, he was a major real estate developer in the region, working as salesman for his father's Southern Real Estate Loan and Trust Company when he moved into his new house. One of his best known projects, in the 1920s, was the development of the posh Mayview Manor resort and surrounding residential areas in Blowing Rock, North Carolina. Subsequent owners of his Clement Avenue residence include W.C. Wilkinson and his wife Rosalie. Wilkinson was president of the Merchants and Farmers Bank, and had insurance and textile interests. Wilkinson is remembered today in the naming of Wilkinson Boulevard, a major westerly thoroughfare. Admiral Percy Foote was listed at the Clement Avenue address in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1970s the residence was

converted to apartments, and in 1984 lawyer Dan Clodfelter is returning it to single-family use.

<u>JOHN BAXTER ALEXANDER HOUSE</u>

1913

509 Clement Avenue



The John Baxter Alexander house is the earliest and most impressive of a group of three Alexander residences that dominate this section of Elizabeth. Walter L. Alexander lived next door at 523 Clement, while sister Miss Jennie Alexander lived in a large duplex at 1803 East Eighth Street (now separated from the Clement residences by a pair of comparatively recent quadraplex apartments). All were in the Bungaloid style, built of wood with wide, bracketed eaves. Walter's is a two-and-one-half story gabled structure with stone chimneys, and a stone-columned porte cochere. Walls are covered in rustic wood shingles, a Bungalow characteristic, and the double-hung windows have quaint diamond-shaped panes in their upper sash. A massive porch wraps around the front and side of the house overlooking Clement and East Eighth Streets, with a large circular pavilion highlighting the corner. The porch's Doric columns on stone posts, together with use of Palladian windows on the body of the house, give the design a bit of Colonial Revival flavor. The residence's siting is an important part of its design: the house commands its corner lot, and relates strongly across its generous side yard to the similarly-styled W.L. Alexander House.

John Baxter Alexander began his career in the wholesale drug business, and by 1900 was active in real estate with his brother Walter S. Alexander, developer of this neighborhood. John served as vice-president of the Highland Park Company, who began Elizabeth's development, and was also an officer of Walter S. Alexander's Southern Real Estate Loan and Trust Company, which completed the project. John became president of Southern Real Estate in 1924 and served to his death in 1943. Pearl B. Vaughn was the dwelling's second owner, who ran the house as a furnished rooms establishment. Today the residence, still in good original condition inside and out, is being converted to five residential condominiums.

THAD ADAMS HOUSE

c 1909

604 Clement Avenue



This delightful dwelling is the Elizabeth neighborhood's only early example of Dutch Colonial architecture. Built about 1909, it is one of the oldest residences in the neighborhood. The one-and-one-half story frame structure has a bell-cast gambrel roof. There is a central front dormer with returns and a Palladian window, flanked by a pair of smaller, triangular gables with fanlights. Quarter- and half-circle attic vents decorate the main gambrel ends of the house. A cool, shed-roofed porch shades the front of the dwelling, with a small pedimented section marking the entrance. The porch has slender Doric columns in keeping with the Colonial motif. The sophistication and delicacy of the dwelling's design is an indication that it was the

work of a skilled architect, perhaps C.C. Hook, who introduced the Dutch Colonial style to Charlotte and designed such landmarks as the Duke Mansion and City Hall. The setting of the Adams house is almost as important as its architecture. It is set on a corner lot under huge old oak trees, with a large garden area at one side.

Thad A. and Emma F. Adams purchased the land from Heriot Clarkson in 1908 , and took out a water permit to begin construction of their house in September of that year. Adams was a lawyer with offices at 112 South Tryon Street. The Adams owned the house until the 1960s, except for a brief period in the 1920s when Adams went bankrupt. Insurance man W.E. Price took possession in 1925, and allowed the Adams to continue to live there until they could buy it back three years later. In 1962 the family sold the house to Persette and John Carter, who lived there until they sold it in 1980 to John and Elizabeth Hazel, the current occupants.

622 CLEMENT AVENUE
1912
Jones-Brenizer House

According to the city directory, this house was built in 1912. It was owned and occupied by J. Lawrence Jones, a partner in the law firm of Flowers and Jones. The chain of title shows that Jones purchased the corner lot in 1910 from the Southern Real Estate Loan and Trust Company. Jones and his wife Ernestine lived here until 1926 when Chase Brenizer, a fellow lawyer, bought the house. Brenizer was a prominent civic and political leader in the region. He served as state senator from Mecklenburg County, was the chairman of the Mecklenburg County Board of Elections, and was one of the three original incorporators of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce.

Brenizer at first maintained the house as rental property, but he and his wife Louise moved into it in 1937. Brenizer technically lost the property in a foreclosure action in 1931 at the depth of the Great Depression, but the property reverted to his mother-in-law Etta G. Norvel, who gave it to her daughter in 1953. Chase Brenizer died in 1956, and Louise Brenizer continued to own the property into the 1980s.

When the Jones-Brenizer House was erected in 1912, it was one of the first residences on prestigious Clement Avenue. It is a two-story clapboard sided structure. Its massing is complex, in the Victorian manner, with a main hip-roofed block and small gabled sidewings. Decoration is very plain, however, in keeping with the prevailing

fashion in the 1910s. There is little trim beyond returns in the gables and doric columns supporting the wrap-around porch.

RICHARD C. BIBERSTEIN HOUSE

1905

1600 Elizabeth Avenue



Richard C. Biberstein is reputed to have been one of the most active designers of cotton mills in the South in the boom decades of the early twentieth century. A native of Texas and a son of a German engineer, Biberstein went north to Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Worcester, Massachusetts, to earn a degree in mechanical engineering. In 1887, five years after his graduation, he came to Charlotte as an engineer for the Mecklenburg Iron Works, the city's oldest industry which was then turning its attention to the new field of textile machinery production. After five years with Mecklenburg Iron Works, Biberstein worked for mill owner and designer H.S. Chadwick, and then for Stuart Cramer, who was perhaps the region's premier mill designer. Biberstein formed his own architecture and engineering firm about 1903, and it continues in business in the 1980s as Biberstein, Bowles, Meacham and Reed, Inc.

According to Biberstein's daughter Constance, the family moved to this elegant residence on Elizabeth Hill in 1905 (the house first appears in the city directory in 1907). The house is of the Four Square type, a two-story cube with a hip roof and a one-story wraparound front porch. Its white clapboard siding, modillion cornice, and doric porch columns provide a Colonial Revival flavor. The straightforward styling is indicative of the concern with efficiency that might be expected of an industrial engineer like Biberstein, and in fact it was he who drew the design. The downstairs was remodeled by his son H.V. Biberstein to provide office space for the family business, probably in the 1940s. Constance Biberstein, now in her nineties, continues to live in the house and is now the last resident on the street.

WILLIAM L. BRUNS HOUSE
1913
1618 Elizabeth Avenue

William L. Bruns was a leading Charlotte jeweler in prosperous textile decades of the early twentieth century. A native of Columbia, South Carolina, he was drawn to Charlotte as a young man. In 1896 he co-founded Garibaldi and Bruns Jewelers with Joseph Garibaldi. Bruns specialized in engraving and Garibaldi in watch repair. The business was incorporated in 1925, and in 1936 Bruns bought the Garibaldi stock. After William Bruns death in 1937, his family continued to operate the business, including daughter Elizabeth. Ann Bruns who was termed the "matriarch of Charlotte Jewelers" at her death. The handsome [Garibaldi and Bruns Building](#) on South Tryon Street just off the Square was a Charlotte landmark from the 1910s into the 1980s, when it was demolished to create Independence Plaza Park.

In October of 1913 William L. Bruns and his wife Mamie bought this lot on Elizabeth Avenue and by 1915 were living in this handsome house near the top of Elizabeth Hill. The residence is in the Rectilinear style, a clean-cut architectural mode often favored by Charlotte businessmen in the years before World War I. The two story house consists of a cube-shaped main block with small side wings, under a slate-covered hip roof. Beyond the massive stone porch and delicate brackets in the eaves, the house has little decorative trim. In addition to housing the Bruns family, the residence also held the Jack and Jill Kindegarden organized by Elizabeth Bruns in the 1930s for neighborhood children, After Mamie Bruns death in the 1940s, the house was rented for a variety of nonresidential uses. In the 1980s it houses a collection of small shops, including the People's Health Food Store which has glassed-in part of the spacious front porch for a restaurant area.

WILLIAM HENRY BELK MANSION

1918

200 Hawthorne Lane



William Henry Belk was one of the leading merchants of the New South era. From a job in a Monroe, North Carolina, hardware store, he founded his own dry goods emporium in that city in 1888. By 1895 he was ready to take on the big city of Charlotte. The Belk Department Store quickly became the Carolinas' largest retail establishment, with a five story building on West Trade Street. Belk began opening branches throughout the South, often in partnership with existing dry goods merchants in the towns. He created Belk Store Services, with headquarters in Charlotte to act as buyer and support service for the chain. In the 1980s Belk is the Southeast's largest department store chain, with over 350 stores throughout the region.

William Henry Belk was a single-minded businessman who remained "wedded to his store" in its early years, living across the street in the Central Hotel. In 1915, at age 53, he finally married and his wife, Mary Irwin Belk, persuaded him to move out to suburban Elizabeth. She purchased nine acres on Hawthorne Lane from Elizabeth College, then in financial trouble, in 1917. The Belks moved into the college president's house on the site, but soon Belk's cousin Bob Dunn convinced the merchant that he needed a finer residence. The old dwelling was moved to Caswell Road (and later demolished), and this brick mansion was erected in 1918. It is an elegantly subdued expression of the Colonial Revival style. The long seven-bay main block has a hip roof with modillion cornice and delicate dormers. A tuscan-columned portico flanked by brick piers frames the entrance with its elaborate sidelights and fan light. The interior, which once held six bedrooms and six baths, is now office space for Presbyterian Hospital and the grounds are a parking lot.

ST. JOHN'S BAPTIST CHURCH

1925

300 Hawthorne Lane

The large sanctuary of St. John's Baptist Church commands one of finest sites in east Charlotte, across Fifth Street from the Belk Mansion, on the crest of Elizabeth Hill overlooking the center city. According to a church history:

The formal beginning of the Baptist eastern effort was a dinner held in December, 1921 ... before that dinner a small band of men from the First Baptist Church had gone to the roof of the Realty Building [later known as the Independence Building, which stood at the Square until 1981] and scanned the eastern suburbs. They spotted a vacant lot at the corner of Fifth Street and Hawthorne Lane. There was unanimous agreement among that group: "That's the site of the new Baptist Church. "

The lot was purchased from J.H. Cutter for \$15,000, and by January of 1922 the new congregation was worshipping in a temporary wooden building of the site. Formal organization came March 26, 1922, under the name "St. John's." Some members complained the name sounded Episcopalian but member Mrs. C.C. Withers retorted that "Our friends the Episcopalians don't have a monopoly on the saints." The 293 member congregation called South Carolina native the Reverend Joseph Gaines as their first pastor.

In April of 1924 the congregation chose architect James M. McMichael to design a permanent church building. McMichael was the area's busiest church designer, and he was well known to the congregation for his earlier design of [First Baptist Church](#) on North Tryon Street (now Spirit Square). A year later Goode Construction of Charlotte began work on the edifice. McMichael was known for his steeple-less churches, and St. Johns is no exception. The Neoclassical structure is strongly influenced by the drawings of Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio. It features a pedimented front portico supported by fluted Ionic columns. Side pavilions echo the front with pilasters. Walls are of beige brick with limestone trim, giving the whole structure a stony hue that recalls ancient Roman temples. Tall arched windows on the sides include noteworthy stained glass. An education wing (1952-1953) and youth wing (1971) were later added to the rear of the building by local architect M.R. Marsh, who had begun his career in McMichael's office.

Over the years, St. John's Baptist Church has been known for its non-traditional stand on a variety of subjects. Dr. Claude U. Broach, pastor from 1944 to 1974, was an

outspoken proponent of racial integration in Charlotte. He was also instrumental in steering St. John's toward involvement in the Elizabeth community, including church sponsorship of a Child Development Center and Week Day School in the 1970s. St. John's, along with Myers Park Baptist Church, took the position of accepting new members without baptism by immersion, and split with the Mecklenburg Baptist Association over the issue in 1967.

JAMES L. STATEN MANSION
c 1912
322 Hawthorne Lane

The James L. Staten mansion is the most imposing residence in the Elizabeth neighborhood. It was designed by Franklin Gordon, one of Charlotte's leading residential architects, in the Neo Classical style. A massive two-story portico with a Classical frieze and large fluted Corinthian columns dominates the front facade. The main entrance has delicate sidelights and a fanlight, and is flanked by a pair of French windows. The main block of the house continues the Neo Classical theme with a hip roof, modillion cornice, and a pair of one-story side porches with Doric columns. Unlike the Belk mansion nearby, the Staten residence retains its residential grounds, including a curving drive and a tree-shaded front lawn overlooking Independence Park.

James and Lillian Staten took out a water permit to construct their fine residence in 1911, and by 1914 were living in the mansion. Staten was general manager of the Little-Long Company, an early downtown department store, and also acted as Vice President of the Southeastern Land Company. Mrs. Staten was a civic leader who is credited with organizing the Charity League of Charlotte, originally the Junior Hospital Guild of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, in 1921.

During the Great Depression, a number of others joined the Statens in their big house. The 1931 city directory lists widow Mrs. C.V. Hershel, Southern Public Utilities Company assistant manager C.B. Miller, in their big house. The 1931 city directory lists widow Mrs. C.V. Hershel, Southern Public Utilities Company assistant manager C.B. Miller, Jr., and his wife Lillie, and traveling textile salesman F.M. Shannonhouse, Jr., and wife Hazel. By 1941 the house continued to have a variety of roomers, but the Statens were gone. In 1959 Miller and Kerns converted the mansion to a funeral home, and they continue to use it as such in the 1980s. Miller and Kerns rent the house from next-door-neighbor St. John's Baptist Church, which is considering making the old mansion an "international house" for foreign students in Charlotte.

REVEREND GEORGE DETWILLER HOUSE

c 1903

801 Sunnyside Avenue



The Rev. George Detweller House is Charlotte's finest surviving example of a one story Queen Anne Victorian residence. It was built about 1903, near the end of the Victorian era, one of the first dwellings to be erected in the new suburban subdivision of Piedmont Park. The basic house is a one-story, hip-roofed, rectangular block. A brick and wood-shingled round turret with a bell-cast "witches cap" roof marks the corner. There is a triangular gable with wood-shingled trim over the entrance, and an asymmetrically placed front dormer in the main roof. A wide wrap-around porch with Doric columns and turned balusters dominates the Sunnyside and Piedmont street sides of the dwelling. Tall windows in a variety of widths break up the wall surfaces, all with segmental brick arches.

George and Mattie Detweller, raised in the Midwest, came to Charlotte in 1902. Reverend Detweller had been called to be pastor of the prestigious Trinity Methodist Church downtown on South Tryon Street (merged with another church in 1927, and

continues as First United Methodist on North Tryon today). Mrs. Detwiller is said to have helped design the house and oversee its construction, but she only lived there two years before her husband was called to another town. The couple continued to have strong Charlotte ties, however, and when Reverend Detwiller died in 1914 his body was returned to Charlotte for a large funeral. Subsequent owners of the house have included John Elmer Dye, whose son played jazz on the living room piano with young neighbor Hal Kemp, who went on to be a celebrated big-band leader. Medical doctor Joseph H. McLeskey owned the residence in the 1930s, and Dwight and Virginia Casey lived there from the early 1940s to 1978, when they sold it to renovation contractor Michael M. Normile.

PALMER FIRE SCHOOL

1937

2601 East Seventh Street



The rough-faced rock meeting hall of the Palmer Fire School is one of the few buildings in Charlotte built of native stone. It was erected in the late 1930s by laborers supplied by the Works Progress Administration, a Depression-era relief agency. The structure, along with its accompanying training tower and grounds, were said to have been the first such facility in the South, according to a 1950 newspaper story on the School's founder, Chief Hendrix Palmer:

They tore down the old rock tan yard building, which at one time belonged to Mayor Victor Shaw's father, and hauled the materials to the site of the present hall. "That's a

unique set-up out there," beams Palmer. "Nothing like it in the country, except at Brookline, Massachusetts."

The one-story meeting hall has a castle-like exterior of random-coursed stone with a crenellated parapet of concrete. Over the round-arched front entrance is the seal of the Charlotte Fire Department carved in stone. Above, the words "Palmer Fire School" are set in the concrete parapet. Nearby is a five-story brick tower with windows on each level, to allow firemen to practice rescues from multi-story buildings. The Fire Department moved to a new training center in 1976, and today the tree-shaded grounds are set to become a city park.