

# THE GROWTH OF CHARLOTTE: A HISTORY

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## Introduction

For much of its history, the South was the United States' least urban region. Until the Civil War its economy was based not on trade and industrial production, which tend to spur city development, but on agriculture. Early Southern "urban centers" were villages and small towns, most located on the rivers by which cotton and tobacco were shipped out of the region.

Defeat in the Civil War and the end of slavery led Southern leaders to push for non-agricultural development. The decades following the war were ballyhooed as the "New South Era," and saw a radical transformation in the character of the region. The South developed a manufacturing base, resting largely on cotton textile production, and the small towns and villages grew rapidly into cities. Inland industrial centers surpassed the old ports in importance and population.

The new course was largely set by the 1930s. The original New South entrepreneurs turned over their projects to a younger generation of followers. Cities continued to expand in patterns established in the earlier period, and the region slowly became less agricultural and less impoverished. Leaders continued to celebrate the creation of a New South, but to a large extent the transformation had taken place, and the post-Depression decades consisted of fulfilling the goals established earlier.

The development of Charlotte, North Carolina is a model example of this regional pattern. Its history may be divided into three phases. In the first, from 1753 to 1880, Charlotte was established as an inland trading village, growing to a small town after the arrival of the railroad in the 1850s. The second phase, the New South era, saw Charlotte transformed into the Carolina's largest city, a textile and distribution center. By 1930 the city's development patterns were set and many of the skyscrapers, fine suburbs, and leading businesses we know today were in place. The third era, since the Depression, has seen economic diversification and continued steady growth which, while not as explosive as the New South era in percentage terms, has greatly surpassed it in real numbers.

The national economic cycle has provided a counterpoint to the regional trend. Charlotte's growth rate has been always upward, but the curve has been far from smooth. Since the coming of the railroads in the 1850s, if not before, the city has been firmly tied to the national economy. Charlotte's growth reflects the national

succession of boom decades and depression years, a key factor in the timing of local building activity and neighborhood development.

## II. From Village to Small Town Settlement, 1750s-1760s:

The city of Charlotte is set in the midst of the Carolinas' Piedmont region, a broad band of rolling hills that extends north and south from Virginia to Georgia between the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west and the flat coastal plain along the Atlantic Ocean to the east. Until the 1750s, what are now Charlotte and surrounding Mecklenburg county were inhabited only by Catawba Indians, for whom the Catawba River at the western edge of the county is now named. <sup>1</sup> The eastern part of the Carolinas had already been settled for over a hundred years. By the mid 18th century, the port towns of New Bern and Wilmington, North Carolina, and Georgetown and Charleston, South Carolina, flourished where major river systems emptied into the Atlantic.

The first pair of settlers within the present city limits arrived in 1753. <sup>2</sup> A plaque marks the site of the Thomas Spratt family cabin near the corner of Providence Road and Crescent Avenue two miles from what is now the city center. Thomas Polk arrived at almost the same time and built his house closer to what is today the Square. <sup>3</sup> Slowly more and more settlers arrived, clustering between Sugar (Sugaw) Creek and Irwin Creek on the hilltop that is now the Central City.

The location of this settlement was largely an accident. Most major inland towns of the era grew up where waterfalls hindered river navigation, or at the mouths of mountain passes, or where some natural resource waited to be exploited. Charlotte had none of these. It was merely a place where two Indian trails crossed in the midst of an area of good farmland, one of many crossroads in the region.

One ancient trail was by the 1750s known as the Trading Path, because traders from eastern Virginia followed it south to trade with the Indians. <sup>4</sup> In North Carolina U. S. Highway 29 follows part of this route. A spur of the path joined the Great Wagon Road somewhere near Winston Salem. The Wagon Road was the Colonies' greatest highway, stretching from Pennsylvania down through the Shenandoah Valley to North Carolina. The majority of Mecklenburg's early settlers were Scotch Irish Presbyterians who arrived at the port of Philadelphia then made their way south via the Great Wagon Road. In Charlotte this trail became Tryon Street, named after Colonial governor William Tryon.

The other trail was part of a route that took traders northwest to the Blue Ridge from Charleston. A "mixed multitude of English, Scotch, Germans, Huguenots and Swiss" followed the route up from Charleston over the years to settle in Mecklenburg.<sup>5</sup> This trail became Trade Street. At the crossroads the village grew.

#### The Courthouse Village, 1760s-1800s:

In 1762 Mecklenburg County split off from Anson County.<sup>6</sup> Several of the little crossroad communities that dotted the area wanted to be the county seat, but after a fight led by Thomas Polk, Charlotte won the honor and was incorporated in 1768.<sup>7</sup> Commissioners were instructed to lay off one hundred acres in half-acre lots on which houses would be erected. An anonymous surveyor laid out a grid-iron of streets following the order, far in excess of what was needed at the time, defining an area that would remain the entire village well into the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> At the center of the grid where Trade and Tryon streets crossed was a small square containing the county courthouse. The courthouse assured Charlotte's position as the main trading city in the county, because when farmers came to town on legal business they would naturally do some trading at the same time.

The village stayed quite small for many decades. In the earliest years Mecklenburg's rural residents were subsistence farmers, able to raise little more than the food and animals they needed to live.<sup>9</sup> Gradually small cash crops were grown: flax, livestock, and grain (which was converted to liquor for easy shipment, probably down the Catawba to Charleston).<sup>10</sup> This small trade made for little growth, and when the first United States census was taken in 1790 Charlotte had less than five hundred souls.<sup>11</sup> George Washington, passing through several years after the Revolutionary War, remarked in his diary that the hamlet was a "trifling place."<sup>12</sup>

There were moments of glory during the Revolution, nonetheless. According to tradition, on May 20, 1775, a group of county leaders signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, declaring themselves free from England more than a year before the Continental Congress took the same step in Philadelphia.<sup>13</sup> The original Declaration burned in a house fire in 1800, causing doubts about its veracity.<sup>14</sup> Today the signing date is part of the North Carolina state flag and seal, and the day continues to be celebrated in the county. The intersection of Trade and Tryon streets at the center of the city is called Independence Square in commemoration of the event.

In 1780 a Revolutionary War skirmish was fought in the area. British general Lord Cornwallis tried to occupy the hamlet, but met with such stiff local resistance that he

and his troops quickly left. Cornwallis muttered that Charlotte was a "hornet's nest," and the citizens proudly adopted the appellation as the village's nickname. <sup>15</sup>

#### The Gold Mining Center, 1800s-1850s:

Not long after the Revolutionary War, Mecklenburg County took part in an agricultural revolution that was to shape the urban development of the South. In 1793 Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin in Georgia. <sup>16</sup> The machine allowed cotton to be cheaply cleaned so that it could be spun into thread. All over the South a plantation economy quickly developed to produce short-staple cotton to fill the new demand. The plantations, run by slave labor, were largely self sufficient, producing their own food, clothing and implements and supplying adjoining small farmers. The plantations had little need for urban manufacturing or trade, except with river towns through which raw cotton was shipped to Northern or English mills.

Mecklenburg never had plantations on the scale of the rich lands of the low-country counties, but it was very much a part of the plantation economy. Eventually Mecklenburg had thirty plantations each employing twenty-five or more slaves, with dozens of smaller farms, most growing some cotton. <sup>17</sup> The finest estates were on the rich bottom lands along the Catawba River and the creeks that fed into it. <sup>18</sup> Except when there were legal matters to resolve, the plantations had little occasion to do business with Charlotte, according to Davidson College historian Dr. Chalmers Davidson, an expert on the era. <sup>19</sup> Cotton was usually shipped overland to Cheraw, South Carolina, head of navigation on the Yadkin/Pee Dee river system. If it had relied only on the plantation economy, Charlotte might well have remained the sleepy courthouse village that George Washington saw. <sup>20</sup>

Two events lifted Charlotte out of its minor place on the periphery of the plantation economy. They were the discovery of gold in 1799 and the coming of the railroad in 1852. These new stimuli assured that Charlotte would grow as a trading town.

In 1799 farmer John Reed found a seventeen pound gold nugget on his farm twenty-five miles east of the village of Charlotte, south of Concord in Cabarrus County. <sup>21</sup> Reed used the rock as a doorstep until 1802 when a jeweler recognized it as gold, setting off the United States first gold rush. As discoveries spread to nearby counties in North and South Carolina, Charlotte became the trade center of America's first gold production region. Two of the era's richest mines were less than two miles from the Square: the Rudisill near Summit Avenue between Mint and Tryon streets, and the St. Catherine near the corner of Graham and West Morehead.

By 1835 production was so heavy that the U. S. Treasury decided to open a branch mint in Charlotte. A fine NeoClassical building was completed in 1837.<sup>22</sup> Designed by noted Philadelphia architect William Strickland, it stood near the corner of West Trade and Mint Streets until 1933 when it was dismantled and rebuilt in the Eastover neighborhood for use as an art museum.<sup>23</sup> Between 1838 and 1861 the Charlotte mint coined more than \$5 million in gold pieces.<sup>24</sup> After the Civil War the building reopened as an assay office until 1913, though Charlotte had given up its lead in U. S. gold production with the legendary California gold rush of 1849. Gold production largely ceased in the 1910s, except for a brief flurry during the 1930s Depression, but investors still hold the mines, waiting for gold prices to rise enough to make production again profitable.

The Charlotte gold rush brought miners, engineers and metallurgists to the city, and is credited with the establishment of banks here. As important, it made the city the trading center not just for Mecklenburg, but for a region of several counties as miners brought their gold in to be assayed and smelted. By 1850 Charlotte had 1,065 people.<sup>25</sup>

#### The Railroad Center, 1850s-1870s:

More than any other event, the arrival of the railroad in 1852 set Charlotte on its way to being the largest city in the Carolinas.<sup>26</sup> When the Charlotte and South Carolina completed its track up from Columbia in that year, it was one of the first railways in the western half of North Carolina. Suddenly Charlotte had the advantage over the half-dozen similar sized villages in the region.

In 1854 the State of North Carolina began work on a state-owned railroad from Raleigh and Goldsboro to Charlotte, in part to connect the eastern cities with the railroad to Columbia.<sup>27</sup> This North Carolina Railroad, passing through Greensboro and Salisbury, made Charlotte an important railroad junction. It also made the city for the first time truly a part of North Carolina, for it was finally as easy to go east to Raleigh as it had been to go south down the river valleys to Columbia and Charleston, South Carolina.

Charlotte's importance increased with addition of two more lines in the next seven years. In 1860 a railroad company grandly known as the Atlantic, Tennessee, and Ohio began running trains out of the city.<sup>28</sup> Despite its impressive name, the line only went from Charlotte to Statesville, North Carolina. Its rails were cannibalized by Confederate forces late in the Civil War to repair more vital rail links, and it did not reopen until 1874, as part of the Atlanta and Charlotte Air Line.<sup>29</sup> In 1861 the first leg

of the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford Railroad connected Charlotte and Lincolnton, North Carolina.<sup>30</sup>

With four railroads now converging on the city, Charlotte became an excellent location for trade and industry. Between 1850 and 1860 the population zoomed from 1,065 to 2,265.<sup>31</sup> By the eve of the Civil War, Charlotte had grown from a village to a town.

In 1861 the South launched the bitter battles of the War Between the States. Though Union raiders hit nearby settlements, and it was feared that General Sherman planned to invade the town on his swing north from Georgia near the end of the conflict, Charlotte survived the war untouched.<sup>32</sup> In fact, the conflict proved to be a great economic boost for the city, as Charlotte became a center of wartime industry. The Mecklenburg Iron Works, the town's major industry on the eve of the War, cast Confederate cannon. Other factories here produced gunpowder, chemicals, woolen goods, and canteens.<sup>33</sup>

Most important, and least likely for this landlocked city, Charlotte was the home of the Confederacy's Naval Yard.<sup>34</sup> In 1862 it appeared that the existing naval yard at Norfolk Virginia, might be lost to Union forces. All machinery and stores were packed up and sent inland to Charlotte for the duration of the war. Charlotte was chosen because of its already established iron works and because of the railroad network that connected it to seaports.

The new Naval Ordinance Works, next to the Charlotte and South Carolina Railroad tracks near the site of the present Civic Center downtown, "employed some 1500 men and boys, It consisted of a smithy, foundry, machine shops, rigging loft, laboratory and other departments."<sup>35</sup> In addition to military material it turned out "the necessary repair parts to keep the South's locomotives, mining, textile, and farm machinery in running order."<sup>36</sup> Many of the workers settled across East Trade street in what is now First Ward, causing that area to be nicknamed Mechanicsville.<sup>37</sup>

Though Union troops made raids as near as Salisbury, present-day Gastonia, and Fort Mill, Charlotte never came under attack, In the closing months of the war over 1300 refugees flooded the village.<sup>38</sup> Among them was the widow of Stonewall Jackson, who stayed on to become the town's leading citizen for several decades. Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his advisers held what may have been the Confederacy's last cabinet meeting at a house on North Tryon street, whose site is now marked by a plaque.<sup>39</sup>

The refugees who stayed on and the skilled workers from the naval yard and gold mines helped to form the basis for a boom period following the war's end in 1865. In

the first half of 1867 alone, "twelve stores and some seventy-five other buildings, many of them dwellings, some of industrial character were built in Charlotte," according to local historian LeGette Blythe. "During the five years after the war the city grew remarkably, with money from the reopened gold mines and capital furnished by northern industrialists as the tonic that seeded development. In 1871 a fourth bank was established, another indication that Charlotte was fast becoming a leading industrial center." <sup>40</sup>

Population virtually doubled from 2,265 in 1860 to 4,473 in 1870. <sup>41</sup> The village had begun to rise in importance in the county with the coming of the railroads, and this trend continued as the end of slavery had its impact on the self-sufficient plantation economy of the rural areas. Charlotte contained only eight percent of Mecklenburg County's people in 1850, but rose to thirteen percent in 1860 and eighteen percent by 1870. <sup>42</sup>

An 1875 city directory summed up the changes:

Up to and even to the close of the late war, the commercial interests of Charlotte were of much smaller significance than they are now, Ten years of trade, which has poured into her lap since the last gun was fired on the 24th of April, 1865, has added materially to the wealth, influence and prosperity of the City of Charlotte. <sup>43</sup>

This prosperity was not limited to Charlotte. It was part of a nationwide boom following the Civil War, and the city's railroad ties enabled the city to take part in it, Charlotte was now tied firmly to the national economy and its fluctuations.

Charlotteans recognized how much their good fortune depended on rail links, and they used the proceeds of the postwar prosperity to build new lines. In 1872 the city added its fifth railroad, the Carolina Central, which connected Charlotte directly with the port of Wilmington. <sup>44</sup> In 1874 the rails were re-laid on the pre-war line to Statesville and new roadbed was built southeast from the city through Gastonia. <sup>45</sup> The result was christened the Atlanta and Charlotte Air Line, and soon stretched from Richmond to Atlanta. In a period when most of the capital for a new line came from local public subscription, this new construction so soon after the war was strong proof of Charlotte's economic vitality.

The key to the vitality was new trade, trade in cotton. Even before the Civil War and long before the city saw its first cotton mill, Charlotte boomed as a cotton trading center. An observer in 1875 wrote:

Up to the year 1852, the cotton raised in the vicinity of Charlotte. . .not consumed immediately through the aid of the old fashioned loom, wheel and cards was forced to seek a market. . .by being hauled to Fayetteville, Camden, Cheraw, or Charleston by wagons. . . When the completion of the Charlotte and Columbia Railroad took place in 1852, for the first time in the history of Charlotte she had an outlet -- a highway to the sea. Three years later and the iron chain which connects us with Norfolk, Virginia, was finished, and a stimulus given to the cotton trade which no other advantage could have conferred. Situated at the terminus of both roads, competition between them at once enabled the cotton dealer here to pay the very highest price for the staple.

Since that time railroads have been added to, until we have the network alluded to in the former sketch. Over the Richmond and Atlanta Air Line Railroad (originally Charlotte and Atlanta), the great short route between New York and New Orleans, and which penetrates some of the richest country tributary to our market, Charlotte has received an immense impetus to the cotton trade, The Atlantic, Tennessee and Ohio (the line to Statesville) has poured a considerable trade into our market The upper section of the Carolina Central, leading from Lincolnton to Charlotte, has been equally instrumental in increasing the cotton trade here. Countless numbers of bales have been brought to Charlotte from the direction of Chester and Rock Hill, in South Carolina, over the Charlotte, Columbia, and Augusta Railroad (originally the Charlotte and South Carolina), while the North Carolina Railroad gives the people all along its line, from Charlotte to Lexington, however paradoxical it may seem, a market in Charlotte for their cotton. <sup>46</sup>

The essay went on to trace the growth of Charlotte's cotton trade since the first line opened:

In 1855, the annual sales of cotton on this market was less than three thousand bales. In 1860, on account of this railroad influence, the trade had gradually become of more importance, and had reached twelve thousand bales . . . With the crop of 1866, business in this line was again resumed, with about the same amount in the market as in 1860 -- 12,000 bales -- since which time it has increased annually until for the fiscal year ending August 31st, 1874, the actual sales reached forty thousand bales. <sup>47</sup>

It is worth noting that four years of war, including the closing of the railroad to Statesville, had little effect on cotton production in the region.

The scope of country of which Charlotte is the commercial cotton centre. . .includes. . .fourteen counties in North Carolina and at least eleven in South Carolina. . . (S)he has reached the exalted position of being the first and principal cotton market in the state. , .. (I)n future years when we shall be able to . . .convert her into a manufacturing town, as will most assuredly be done. we may justly look forward to a brighter career of prosperity than has ever dawned upon us. <sup>48</sup>

The writer noted that Charlotte had also become an important wholesale market for a variety of goods, but, he said, "The cotton interest. . . is here superior to all others." <sup>49</sup>

The village was now a bustling small town, but it was not until the next decade that Charlotte was able to move into manufacturing. The city's integration into the wider national economy meant being part of the bad times as well as the good. In 1873 the United States began to slide into a major depression. According to historian Alan Nevins, it was "one of the worst in American history," with half a million men out of work by the beginning of 1875. <sup>50</sup> The effects were felt first in the more industrialized Northeast, but by the mid-1870s "the South -- along with the rest of the nation -- was. . . in the grip of a severe depression, and hard times did not disappear until the end of the decade." <sup>51</sup>

### III. The New South Transformation: From Small Town to City The New South Era:

Before we trace Charlotte's development from town into city, it is necessary to look at the background of the New South movement. Prior to the Civil War the people of the South saw great virtue in the region's non-urban character. Historian Paul Gaston writes that Southerners proudly "viewed the Southern way of life as fundamentally different from and superior to that of the North." <sup>52</sup> The moral "cleanliness" of the countryside compared to the "evil" of the city, and the sharply structured social system inherent in the plantation society, from planter to slave, were seen as contributing to a near-perfect society. Not only did Southerners not have large cities by the standards of the rest of the United States, they did not want large cities.

It was in this context that antebellum Charlotte existed. As late as 1860, North Carolina's largest town, the port of Wilmington, had only 9,552 people. <sup>53</sup> The port of Charleston was the region's only large city, with 40,519 residents; South Carolina's second largest city was the capital of Columbia with but 8,052. <sup>54</sup> All of the major towns were located on rivers in the coastal plain. Charlotte was back in the Piedmont

and ten miles from the nearest river. Its gold mining interests and new railroads made it North Carolina's sixth largest "urban place," but it was little more than a village with 2,265 people, an indication of the state's rural character. <sup>55</sup>

The Civil War changed the region's anti-urban bias. As Gaston writes, it "completely destroyed the myth of invincibility and made it increasingly difficult to maintain the corollary myth of superiority." <sup>56</sup> The war exposed the region as a land of "poverty in plenty," with abundant natural resources but no manufacturing capacity to utilize them. *Atlanta Constitution* editor Henry Grady traveled the region stirring Southerners to action with the woeful story of a Georgia burial:

They cut through solid marble to make his grave; and yet a little tombstone they put above him was from Vermont. They buried him in the heart of a pine forest, and yet the pine coffin was imported from Cincinnati. They buried him within touch of an iron mine, and yet the nails in his coffin and the iron in the shovel that dug his grave were imported from Pittsburgh. . . . They put him away. . . . in a New York coat and a pair of breeches from Chicago and a shirt from Cincinnati. . . . The South didn't furnish a thing on earth for that funeral but the corpse and the hole in the ground. <sup>57</sup>

Grady's tale colorfully articulated the basic theme of the age. The South had to recreate itself in an urban, industrial mold if it was to prosper. This movement for a "New South," as proponents proclaimed it, had its beginnings even before the last shot was fired in 1865, and gained momentum in the Reconstruction era of the late 1860s and early 1870s. After the 1870s depression ended, the movement blossomed. <sup>58</sup>

By that time a new postwar generation of New South leaders was in control. These men, often sons of the old planter elite, often trained in the North, unquestioningly worshipped all that was new, modern, and technological.

The battlecry of the New South era was the slogan "Bring the Mills to the Cotton." <sup>59</sup> The South's climate and soil had made it the United States' cotton grower since 1793, but the mills that turned the cotton into clothing were primarily located in New England. There had been several good reasons for this. One of the most important was that New England's rocky river valleys provided the waterfalls needed to run water-powered machinery. In the 1870s, however, steam power took over from water power. Now the mills could move anywhere that there was a continuous supply of water to make steam. Investors began to heed the New South's boosters' cries and build their mills in the South.

By the time the early New South leaders turned their power over to the next generation in the 1910s and 1920s, the change in direction had been accomplished.<sup>60</sup> The South had a manufacturing base in textiles and was diversifying into other fields. It was becoming urban, with one-fourth of North Carolina residents living in urban places, the largest of which were unquestionably cities. In contrast to the antebellum period, the South now wanted cities and eagerly financed such urban symbols as suburbs and skyscrapers, even in places which really had, as Charlotte journalist W. J. Cash observed, "little more use for them than a hog has for a morning coat."<sup>61</sup>

#### The First Boom -- the Mills Came to the Cotton, 1880-1893:

Already a leader in cotton trade, Charlotte entered the cotton manufacturing era after the 1870s depression. In 1880 the city got its first successful cotton mill.<sup>62</sup> The Charlotte Cotton Mill established by R. M. and D. W. Oates "initially contained 6,240 spindles and employed approximately seventy people, mostly women."<sup>63</sup> Part of the original mill survives on West Fifth street at Graham in Fourth ward, a one story building with arched window openings in the style of the most up-to-date New England mills of the day. The Charlotte Cotton Mill, said the *Charlotte Daily Observer*, "will add much to Charlotte's material prosperity no one doubts, and some predict that it will be the means of bringing similar enterprises into operation."<sup>64</sup>

D. A. Tompkins proved the paper right when he came to town in 1882.<sup>65</sup> A relative of John C. Calhoun, Tompkins was a native of Edgehill, South Carolina, and a prototypical New South leader who went North to earn a civil engineering degree at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He returned south to Charlotte in charge of selling Westinghouse steam engines and machinery to the new mills and industry of the region. In 1883 he struck off on his own and founded the D. A. Tompkins Company which specialized in setting up cotton mills.<sup>66</sup> The company was also a pioneer in developing cotton seed oil plants, creating a new regional industry from the previously discarded cotton seed. Over the next twenty years Tompkins' firm designed and built all or part of 250 cotton oil mills and more than 100 cotton mills.<sup>67</sup>

Tompkins authored books on mill development that set forth standard designs for mills and mill villages throughout the South. He spoke widely urging industrialization, devised investment plans to attract new mills, helped set up colleges at Clemson and Raleigh to teach textile engineers and chemists, and lobbied strenuously for favorable legislation.<sup>68</sup> Even Atlanta, which considered itself the center of the New South, recognized Tompkins' pre-eminence. *Atlanta Constitution* editor Clark Howell stated flatly that Tompkins "did more for the

industrial south than any other man." <sup>69</sup> Today historians consider Tompkins one of the most important of the New South leaders. <sup>70</sup>

D. A. Tompkins' activities helped make Charlotte the center of the developing Carolina Piedmont textile region. He also constructed four cotton mills in the city between 1889 and 1893 at the height of the nationwide building boom that swept Charlotte. Three opened in 1889 for other owners: the [Alpha](#) at Twelfth and Brevard and the Ada at Eleventh near Graham, both at what was then the northeastern edge of the city, and the Victor mill on what is now Clarkson Street which was then just outside the city to the northwest. <sup>71</sup>

The [1893 Atherton Mill](#), then far south of the city at what is today South Boulevard and Tremont streets, was all Tompkins'. <sup>72</sup> It was the first mill owned and operated, as well as erected, by his company, and Tompkins used it to demonstrate his new ideas. These included his belief that mill workers with their rural backgrounds should not be corrupted by closeness to town, indoor plumbing, or quarters more spacious than "one operative for each room of the house." <sup>73</sup> The best preserved house in the Atherton mill village has been designated a local Historic Property: a three-dimensional illustration from his influential 1899 book, *Cotton Mills: Commercial Features*. <sup>74</sup>

The boom of the 1880s attracted other cotton-related industries. By 1889 the city directory listed the four cotton mills, plus six industrial machinery sellers led by the long-established Mecklenburg Iron Works and the new Liddell foundry, three clothing factories, two cotton ginneries, one cotton oil mill and a manufacturer of cotton bagging and ties. <sup>75</sup> A fifth cotton mill opened in 1892, Highland Park Manufacturing Company #1 headed by W. E. Holt and C. E. Johnston. <sup>76</sup> With all this industrial development the town of Charlotte grew into a small city.

If D. A. Tompkins had been the New South leader most responsible for Charlotte's industrial growth, Edward Dilworth Latta was the leading force in the town's physical transformation into a city. A prototypical New South leader, he was a South Carolina descendant of Mecklenburg County plantation owner James Latta, and he had traveled North to what is today Princeton University for his education. <sup>77</sup> Edward Dilworth Latta opened a clothing store in Charlotte in 1876 and soon expanded into pants manufacturing. <sup>78</sup> In 1890 he joined with five associates to form the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company, known as the Four Cs. <sup>79</sup> This company became the prime agent in Charlotte's urban development into the early twentieth century.

Horse-drawn [streetcars](#) began running down the center of Trade street and Tryon street in 1887. <sup>80</sup> In 1890 the Four Cs bought the franchise and under the personal direction of Thomas Edison completely rebuilt it as an electric trolley car line. <sup>81</sup> This

was part of a movement that swept the nation in the five years after the first reliable electric transit system was perfected in Richmond, Virginia, in 1888.<sup>82</sup>

In Charlotte electric cars started operation on two lines May 18, 1891.<sup>83</sup> One followed its overhead wire the length of Trade street from McDowell street on one edge of town to the railroad station on West Trade on the other. At the Square it crossed the second track, which ran on Tryon street from the Carolina Central station at Twelfth street all the way out South Tryon. But there the cars did not stop at the edge of the city. They kept right on going out into the farmland where the Four Cs were developing Dilworth.

[Dilworth](#) was Charlotte's first suburb, the beginning of the city we know today. Businessmen had been commuting to their new suburban homes in the big cities of the North since the 1870s, and the New South leaders were determined to bring this new urban fashion to Charlotte. The Four Cs offered both lots and completed homes for sale and used an aggressive advertising campaign to lure buyers out of the city. After an initial burst of enthusiasm, however, few lots sold. D. A. Tompkins kept the project afloat by purchasing a block at the southern edge of the suburb for his Atherton mill village in 1892.<sup>84</sup> Even with Charlotte's first long-term payment plan -- "buy a house with your rent money" ran the slogan -- there were less than one hundred houses in Dilworth as late as March, 1898.<sup>85</sup>

By the early 1890s Charlotte was a little city with big-city ambitions. The 1890 census counted a respectable 11,557 people, but still less than the capitals of Columbia and Raleigh and far behind the Carolinas' ports of Charleston and Wilmington.<sup>86</sup> Despite the fact that the town was still small enough for easy walking it now had a costly trolley network and a suburb, built and kept alive by New South leaders who believed that Charlotte's growth would soon justify them.

#### The Second Boom, 1897-1914:

In June 1893 the stock market crashed and the nation entered another depression. Nationwide this depression was felt more sharply than the one of the 1870s, but Charlotte began to pull out quickly.<sup>87</sup> H. S. Chadwick established the Louise Cotton Mill on the Seaboard Railroad outside the city to the east near what is now Hawthorne Lane and Central Avenue in 1897.<sup>88</sup> More mills quickly followed: the Magnolia in 1899, the Chadwick and the Elizabeth in 1901, the [Hoskins](#), [Highland Park #3](#) and the Mecklenburg in 1904, the Savona in 1908 and the [Johnston](#) in 1913.<sup>89</sup>

Other textile industries joined the mills during this boom which lasted until the First World War. Barnhardt Manufacturing, for instance, started in 1900 to reprocess cotton waste for upholstery padding. Several companies grew up to supply mill machinery to the region.<sup>90</sup> In 1911 Clark Publishing began printing the weekly *Southern Textile Bulletin*.<sup>91</sup> It was read throughout the South, another factor in the city's leadership in the textile field.

Though cotton remained the mainstay of the economy in this period, the city also attracted non-textile industries. Some that continue in 1982 are Charlotte Pipe and Foundry, established in 1900 and now credited "as being the oldest cast iron and soil pipe plant in America."<sup>92</sup> Cole Manufacturing, founded the same year, still produces agricultural equipment in its handsome brick factory, designed by leading Charlotte architect C. C. Hook, off Central Avenue.<sup>93</sup> In 1913 salesman Philip L. Lance began roasting peanuts and selling peanut butter crackers, a novel idea that has grown into one of the nation's major snack food companies, Lance, Incorporated.<sup>94</sup>

These boom years also saw the start of stores that became the city's three leading department stores. W. H. Belk, who had begun his merchandising career in nearby Monroe in 1888, decided to tackle Charlotte in 1895.<sup>95</sup> Charlotte today is the headquarters for more than 400 Belk stores throughout the South. Competitor J. B. Ivey started the first store of what was to be another major chain in 1900, and in 1902 the first Efid's store opened, the beginning of a regional chain that eventually merged with Belk.<sup>96</sup>

As important as the growing industries, the wholesalers, and the retailers were Charlotte's banks. They provided capital for new development not only in Charlotte but increasingly for the entire Piedmont. Many of the institutions that make Charlotte the banking center of the Carolinas today started during the boom following the 1893 depression. Charlotte National Bank, founded in 1897, grew by mergers to become part of the present Wachovia Bank and Trust Company.<sup>97</sup> Southern States Trust, founded in 1901 by real estate developers F. C. Abbott, George Stephens and Word Wood, is the basis for today's mammoth NNCB Corporation.<sup>98</sup> Present day First Union began in 1908 as Union National Bank.<sup>99</sup> In the period Charlotte's most successful capitalists moved easily from mill ownership to banking to real estate development and back again.

The boom years saw the beginning of a shift from steam engines to electric power in the cotton mills, a shift that furthered Charlotte's position as center of the Piedmont textile region. James B. Duke was an extremely wealthy North Carolina native who built the immense American Tobacco Company headquartered in New York at the turn of the century. In 1897 Duke began buying water power sites along the Catawba River, convinced that the opportunity for many dams along its gentle drop would

make it an important producer of hydroelectric power.<sup>100</sup> The electric industry was still in its experimental stage, so J. B. Duke and his brother Ben teamed with another pair of brothers, Dr. W. Gill Wylie and Dr. Robert H. Wylie, who were pioneering hydroelectric technology with the help of an engineer, William States Lee. The partners' Southern Power Company began delivering electricity to customers in 1904.<sup>101</sup> It slowly won over mill owners who had used steam, and the low rates were instrumental in attracting hundreds of additional industries to the region over the next decades. Today known as Duke Power, the company is still headquartered in Charlotte.

Duke also added the city's seventh rail line at the height of the pre-World War I boom period. His Piedmont and Northern Railway was an electric interurban line which ran from Charlotte to Gastonia beginning in 1911.<sup>102</sup> It symbolized Charlotte's power over surrounding smaller cities, whose residents would regularly ride the interurban or one of the other railroads into the big city to shop and do other business. The P & N tracks are still in use today, though they were converted to diesel power in 1950 and are now part of the Seaboard system.<sup>103</sup>

Charlotte's final new railroad came to town in 1913.<sup>104</sup> The Norfolk and Southern track came from Virginia via Albemarle and Raleigh, and today is part of the Southern. By the height of the New South boom years, Charlotte was the hub of rail lines stretching in eight directions.

With the booming economic growth came tremendous physical expansion. Between 1900 and 1910 the city grew from 18,091 to 34,014 people, an 82 percent increase, larger than any other decade in this century.<sup>105</sup> A band of suburbs sprang up completely ringing the city. Downtown, the commercial core expanded upward and outward, symbolically capped by the completion in 1909 of the [Independence Building](#) (originally Realty Building) on Independence Square, the Carolinas' first steel-frame skyscraper.<sup>106</sup>

Two maps from the period illustrate the growth. One dated 1892 shows the old grid city almost completely surrounded by farms beyond McDowell Street, Twelfth Street, Graham Street and Stonewall.<sup>107</sup> The only outlying developments are Dilworth and the proposed streets of Belmont. A single trolley line leads out of the central city.

A 1917 map by planner John Nolen shows great changes in twenty five years. Now nine streetcar lines give access to downtown from every point on the compass.<sup>108</sup> Along each line are "streetcar suburbs" following the boundaries of the old farms, creating a ring completely surrounding the old city. In fact, in 1907 the city boundaries had been expanded to reflect the new growth. The new city covered 12.76 square miles, a 570 percent jump over the previous boundary drawn in 1885.<sup>109</sup>

The prosperity and growth drew a sizable number of architects to the city for the first time. Prior to 1900 only C. C. Hook and his partner Frank Sawyer, and Frank Milburn and his protege L. E. Schwend were active in the city, all arrivals during the 1890s. <sup>110</sup> They were joined by James M. McMichael in 1901, William H. Peeps and the partners L. L. Hunter and Franklin Gordon in 1905, M. I. T.-trained Louis Asbury in 1908, and Bungalow specialist Fred Bonfoey in 1908, among others. <sup>111</sup> No longer did Charlotteans get their building designs just from published pattern books or talented local carpenters. By the height of the 1900s boom Charlotte had a true architectural community.

Dilworth prospered, and dozens of new subdivisions were created in these years, completing the city's first suburban ring. More research is needed in county plat records before they can all be identified. Many have passed from memory, absorbed in larger neighborhoods. Even F. C. Abbott, a leading real estate developer in the period, had forgotten some early ones by the time he wrote the memoirs that are today one of the best sources on Charlotte growth. Only a few of the important developments can be named here.

The first post-depression suburb was [Elizabeth](#) on the east side of the city. Developed in 1897 by W. S. Alexander's Highland Park Land Company, it now forms a small part of the Elizabeth neighborhood. <sup>112</sup> Other subdivisions encompassed by present-day Elizabeth neighborhood include Piedmont Park, created by Piedmont Realty (F. C. Abbott, George Stephens and B. D. Heath) about 1899 from the old W. R. Myers farm, and Oakhurst, begun circa 1900 by B. D. Heath. <sup>113</sup> This last was not the present neighborhood known as Oakhurst but rather a subdivision along Central Avenue between Louise Street and Thomas Avenue.

W. S. Alexander also platted the northwest side's first streetcar era suburb in 1897. <sup>114</sup> Western Heights, north of West Trade Street below what is now Johnson C. Smith University, was originally settled by whites. In 1913 an important event took place further out Beatties Ford Road. Charlotte's first streetcar suburb developed by black capitalists for black residents opened. <sup>115</sup> It was called [Washington Heights](#) after black educator Booker T. Washington. Street names honored the city's leading black residents, J. S. Saunders and Thad Tate, as well as national black leaders Booker T. Washington and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. A second "colored suburb" called Douglassville was platted along Oaklawn Avenue on the other side of Beatties Ford Road shortly thereafter, today part of the area known as McCrorey Heights. <sup>116</sup>

Two turn-of-the-century streetcar suburbs called Woodlawn and Irwin Park platted the avenues between Sycamore and Cedar streets in what is now called Third Ward downtown. <sup>117</sup> The old Vail dairy farm roughly between Providence Road, Caswell

Road, Vail Avenue, and Laurel Avenue was platted as Colonial Heights and [Crescent Heights](#) between 1907 and 1913.<sup>118</sup> The Pegram-Wadsworth Land Company developed large parts of north Charlotte including Matheson Avenue and Pinckney Avenue beginning about 1907.<sup>119</sup> Abbott Realty created Wilmore on the old Wilson and Moore farms at the end of South Mint Street in 1914.<sup>120</sup> About the same time Chatham Estates began selling lots along the Plaza, Thomas Avenue, and Nassau Avenue, today the heart of [Plaza Midwood](#).<sup>121</sup>

The finest developments of the pre-World War I boom years were Myers Park and an extension of Dilworth, the city's first suburb. They showed the New South spirit at its best. George Stephens, son-in-law of one of the county's largest landowners, was a banker and real estate developer whose characteristically "New South" belief in modernity extended to city planning. He hired John Nolen, a budding national leader of the new profession, to lay out the vast suburb of [Myers Park](#) south of the city in 1911.<sup>122</sup> Stephens' backing allowed Nolen to devise a "unified suburban design" for the 1220 acre tract far in excess of the small city's needs at the time. Detailed down to the individual lot plantings, it was a state-of-the-art achievement that had few parallels in the South or elsewhere in the United States. Myers Park became a model for numerous other suburbs in the region, and Nolen went on to become one of the United States' most important early planners.

At the very same time, another planning firm of even greater stature was at work in Dilworth. Edward Dilworth Latta, the city's New South streetcar and real estate magnate, had hired the famous Olmsted Brothers of Boston to plan what is today the Dilworth Road East and West area.<sup>123</sup> The Olmsted Brothers' father, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., is known as the founder of American city planning and his sons matched his standard of excellence in projects ranging from the White House grounds to the Duke University campus. The Olmsteds' work in Dilworth was not as extensive as Nolen's in Myers Park, but their design has been as enduringly popular.

The fact that two planning firms of the Olmsteds' and Nolen's character were active at the same time in this small city of 34,000 is remarkable. It shows the civic pride of the New South era, and also the city's prosperity in these textile boom years. It is a testament to the first generation of New South leaders, men who were willing to get the best of what was new, even if it meant going outside the region and spending a great deal of money to do so. The planners' work represented almost as radical a change in the city's fabric as had the first suburb twenty years earlier. Nolen's and the Olmsteds' designs caused the city to forever abandon its tradition of grid-iron planning, and to instead adopt the use of tree-lined winding residential streets which followed the natural landscape.

Not all of the era's New South leaders were as thoughtful in their adoption of big city ideas. At the same time that Myers Park and Dilworth were being landscaped, downtown was stripped of its trees in the name of New South progress. Tryon Street was to be lined with electric lights and become "The Great White Way," a small-time imitation of New York City's Broadway. Visiting Cambridge landscape architect Paul B. Forest protested that the scheme was "the grossest error," but Mayor C. A. Bland, his Board of Alderman, and Duke Power had their way.<sup>124</sup> In winter of 1912 the trees came down.

Charlotte's rate of expansion dropped somewhat in the late teens when U. S. entry into World War I put a stop to most civilian construction. By that time, however, Charlotte was clearly a city. It was headquarters of a large textile region, with a diversified economic base including banking, power generation and wholesaling. A bustling mass transit system, the backbone of big-city growth, now served an expanding ring of suburbs. In the 1910 census Charlotte pulled far ahead of Raleigh in population and finally overtook the port of Wilmington to become North Carolina's largest city, symbolizing the shift in the state's economy from cotton and tobacco export to textile production.<sup>125</sup> Only the port of Charleston, South Carolina, remained larger in the Carolinas, and Charlotte was catching up fast.

#### The Third Boom, The Roaring Twenties:

Nationwide the World War I lull in construction continued through a mild postwar depression that lasted until the early 1920s. Charlotte proved no exception to the national trend. Beginning about 1923 the city underwent a period of tremendous growth which lasted until the Great Depression of 1929.<sup>126</sup> Large sections of present day Charlotte date from this period of prosperity.

The 1920s, unlike the city's two earlier booms, seem to have been a period of consolidating previous gains rather than setting new directions. By the twenties the first generation of New South leaders was either dead or ready to pass their power on to younger decision makers. D. A. Tompkins died in 1914, George Stephens departed for Asheville in 1922, and Edward Dilworth Latta made the same move shortly before his death in 1925.<sup>127</sup> In the hands of their successors, economic development, urban growth and even architecture followed increasingly conservative patterns.

The city continued to develop as a distribution center. By 1920 more than 700 traveling salesmen lived here, a large percentage of the workforce.<sup>128</sup> They sold not only textile related products but an increasingly diverse array of goods. Film Row along Church Street was built beginning about 1925 as the motion picture distributing

center for North and South Carolina.<sup>129</sup> By 1929 the Chamber of Commerce could boast:

All national film companies maintain exchanges in Charlotte and the movie establishments of the Carolinas are served through this city. The aggregate volume of business transacted annually by these film exchanges is approximately \$2,250,000.<sup>130</sup>

Sometimes distribution led to other things. The Ford Motor Company made Charlotte a distribution point for repair parts for the South in the early teens, and by 1915 was shipping parts in quantity for Charlotte laborers to assemble into complete automobiles.<sup>131</sup> In 1925 Ford opened a vast new assembly line plant on Statesville Road that turned out 300 Model Ts per day for the Southern market.<sup>132</sup>

In the 1920s the Victor Corporation, later RCA Victor, chose Charlotte as a regional distribution center for its radios, phonographs, and records. When the company began to send field teams south to record phonograph records, Charlotte's Victor operation became a major recording center. WBT radio, the earliest station in the Carolinas, was instrumental in attracting top talent to the city, and the city's large population of mill workers drawn from rural areas provided an eager audience for early country music stars.<sup>133</sup> Such well known performers as the Carter Family, Grand Old Opry star Uncle Dave Macon, and bluesman Luke Jordan recorded for Victor in Charlotte beginning in 1927.<sup>134</sup> The most important records were made by Bill Monroe, who began his recording career in Charlotte from 1936 to 1938.<sup>135</sup> Monroe went on to found the "Bluegrass Boys" string band, credited with popularizing "Bluegrass" music and providing its name.<sup>136</sup>

Vital to Charlotte's growth as a distribution center was the network of paved highways that began to converge on the city in the 1920s. They were the result of North Carolina's "Good Roads" program initiated in 1921 by Governor Cameron Morrison who was, not coincidentally, a Charlotte resident.<sup>137</sup> The new highways helped the city to continue to grow as a wholesaling point, and also to develop as a trucking center for the whole southeastern United States.

More new skyscrapers joined the Independence Building downtown, reflecting the economic growth. In 1924 a group of Charlotte business leaders realized their vision of a grand hostelry and meeting place for the city. Their ten-story Hotel Charlotte is today listed in the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>138</sup> Textile magnate R. Horace Johnston hired New York City architect W. L. Stoddart to create the sixteen story Johnston Building in 1924, a landmark on the skyline for decades to come.<sup>139</sup> Two years later the twenty-story First National Bank tower (now known as One Tryon

Center) arose a block north on Tryon Street, and the ten story Wilder Building opened nearby at the same time. <sup>140</sup>

Retailing and banking continued to expand as well. Iveys and Efirds built large new stores on North Tryon Street in the decade and the third major department chain, Belks, greatly enlarged its East Trade premises. New bank buildings sprung up, from the towering First National to the delicate three-story Greek temple built for the Industrial Loan and Investment Bank on Church Street. The biggest news in banking was the opening of a branch of the Federal Reserve in 1927. <sup>141</sup> Charlotte already had "more banks, capital, deposits, and resources than any other city in North Carolina." <sup>142</sup> The new facility maintained the cash reserves of the region's banks and made cash loans to them, moved currency and coins in and out of circulation, and provided swift inter-bank check clearing, and it gave Charlotte a new financial edge on other cities in the area. <sup>143</sup>

In 1928 the city boundaries expanded to encompass a total of nearly twenty square miles, reflecting the new growth. <sup>144</sup> Suburbs continued to grow but became increasingly segregated by economic class. Developments of the 1890s-1910s had usually combined a grand boulevard of wealthy homes with side streets for the middle class. Piedmont Park, for instance, had fine Central Avenue and modest Jackson Avenue, and the Olmsted's Dilworth had both impressive Dilworth Road and homey Sarah Marks. Even Myers Park had Dartmouth Road bungalows along with its Hermitage Road and Queens Road mansions. The 1920s suburbs, by contrast, were all of a piece. Only middle class people lived in Roslyn Heights off Rozells Ferry Road, created in 1923-25. <sup>145</sup> Only the city's wealthiest lived in Eastover, built off Providence Road under the direction of landscape architect Earle Sumner Draper during the 1920s. <sup>146</sup>

Even the style of the homes became conservative by the late 1920s. Charlotte's early New South leaders had experimented freely with the newest styles, Victorian variations in the 1890s, the Rectilinear, Bungalowoid, Colonial Revival, and Tudor Revival styles of the 1900s through early 20s. By the late 20s, however, the Colonial Revival was adopted as the single acceptable architectural motif, with Tudor Revival variations being the only alternative. While this was part of a nationwide return to historical motifs in architecture, it seems to have been particularly rigid in Charlotte. Endless blocks of Myers Park, Eastover, and the new streets of Dilworth were developed in the 1920s with variations on the two-story brick Colonial box.

At the end of the decade 82,675 people lived in Charlotte, a 78 percent increase in just ten years. <sup>147</sup> The city pulled ahead of Charleston to become the largest in both Carolinas. The Piedmont textile manufacturing region had triumphed over the old coastal agricultural export region.

In 1927 textile production in the South officially surpassed that in the old New England area.<sup>148</sup> Charlotte was on the crest of the wave. It was, according to the city directory:

the center of a textile manufacturing territory having 770 mills, operating over 10,000,000 spindles, and consuming more cotton than any other section of the world. . .the largest center in the South for textile mill machinery and equipment, practically all the large companies in the United States and England handling their entire business in the South through Charlotte offices and plants.<sup>149</sup>

Not only did suppliers have representatives in the city, but increasingly the textile mills themselves had Charlotte offices, and many of the mill owners lived not in the small mill towns that dot the Piedmont but in Myers Park and Eastover. At the center of networks of railroads and now paved highways, Charlotte continued to build a broad economic base of banking, distribution, and wholesaling, in addition to textiles.

#### IV. To The Present:

##### The Great Depression and Beyond, 1929-1983:

The stock market crash of 1929 triggered the United States' greatest depression. In Charlotte the rate of growth fell sharply as it did elsewhere across the nation. But, perhaps due to the diversity of the local economy, growth did not stop altogether as it did in many U. S. cities.

Between 1930 and 1940 the city population increased by 18,224 people, finally topping one hundred thousand, a respectable 22 percent rise.<sup>150</sup> Though the number of building permits issued fell, streets of new houses continued to spring up even in the early thirties at the depth of the Depression. Building activity increased in the last months of the decade, then dropped to nothing when U. S. entry into World War II (1941-45) necessitated building restrictions.<sup>151</sup>

It took the nation most of the rest of the 1940s to replace supplies of building materials depleted by the War. By 1948 the country was ready to build again and an unprecedented boom occurred.<sup>152</sup> The returning G. I.s, ready en masse for homes of their own, were aided by the new Veterans Administration mortgage program and the recently established Federal Housing Administration loan guarantee program.<sup>153</sup> With these, almost anyone could afford a house. This was a great change from the pre-war era when the "suburban dream" had been mainly for the middle and upper class, even with programs like Edward Dilworth Latta's "buy-with-your-rent-money."

Beginning in 1948 a whole new ring of suburbs sprang up around Charlotte. As before, these included middle class areas, like Maryland and Sterling streets at the edge of Myers Park. Now, however, there were also blue-collar suburbs, such as Smallwood Homes out West Trade Street. After the initial postwar boom came a brief lull in the early fifties, then steady growth into the 1960s.<sup>154</sup> Much of the built environment of present day Charlotte dates from this postwar era.

The backbone of this new development was no longer the streetcar system, which ceased operation in 1938.<sup>155</sup> Starting with Independence Boulevard in 1946, a network of expressways and widened thoroughfares cut through the city.<sup>156</sup> They sped commuters to distant new suburban tracts and also, to the surprise of their proponents, encouraged businesses to leave downtown for new sites in the cheap farmland at the edge of the city.

When the U. S. began its Interstate Highway program Charlotte became a center in this new net also. The first local leg of east-west I-85 opened in 1958, eventually linking the city with Atlanta, Durham, and Richmond.<sup>157</sup> In 1965, construction began on north-south I-77 through the city, a link to Columbia, South Carolina, Roanoke, Virginia, and the Midwest.<sup>158</sup> The Interstates reinforced Charlotte's position as the Piedmont's distribution center, particularly for trucking. According to some observers, only Chicago is home base to more tractor trailer rigs today than Charlotte.<sup>159</sup>

The rise of trucking is one of three major changes in Charlotte's economy since the 1920s. The second is the declining importance of textiles. Textile production still dominates the region around the city, but in Charlotte itself all of the mills that hummed sixty years ago are now silent and cotton buyers no longer throng Brevard Court downtown.

With the decline of textile activity has come the growth of banking. It is almost as if the descendants of the textile entrepreneurs gradually purified their trading activities to the point that the cotton disappeared, leaving a trade purely in money. Charlotte has become the financial center of the Carolinas. Deposits held by banks operating in Mecklenburg exceed that for any comparable area between Philadelphia and Dallas, and bank offices dominate the Charlotte skyline.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>1</sup> LeGette Blythe, "'Tis a Gude Place," in D. R. Reynolds, ed., *Charlotte Remembers* (Charlotte: Community Publishing Co., Inc., 1972), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Danyne Romaine, *Mecklenburg: a Bicentennial Story* (Charlotte: Independence Square Associates, 1975), p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Norton Kratt, *Charlotte: Spirit of the New South* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Continental Heritage Press, Inc., 1980), pp. 18, 23, 24.

<sup>5</sup> James W. Clay, ed., *Atlas of Charlotte Mecklenburg*, 2nd ed. (Charlotte: Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 1981), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> LeGette Blythe and Charles R. Brockman, *Hornets' Nest: the Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte: McNally of Charlotte, 1961), p. 21. See also David L. Corbett, *The Formation of the North Carolina Counties, 1663-1943* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives & History, 1950), p. 147-148.

<sup>7</sup> Romine, pp. 14-15.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Chalmers G. Davidson, telephone interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, August, 1982.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Romine, p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Dick Young, Sr., "The Presidents Come to Town," in D. R. Reynolds, ed., *Charlotte Remembers*, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> Blythe and Brockman, pp. 31-62.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Kratt, pp. 32-35.

<sup>16</sup> Blythe and Brockman, p. 103.

<sup>17</sup> Chalmers G. Davidson, *The Plantation World Around Davidson* (Davidson, N.C.: The Mecklenburg Historical Association, 1969), p. 19.

<sup>18</sup> Today, Beatties Ford Road, parallel to the river, passes near many of these houses including Latta Place, Holly Bend, and Cedar Grove. See Davidson, *The Plantation World*. . . , passim.

<sup>19</sup> Davidson interview. A note at the end of the 1810 federal manuscript census for Mecklenburg County indicates that in that year the county had "103 cotton gins. . . .3512 bags of cotton. Each bag about 250 wt. . . . and all sent to market principally Charleston, South Carolina."

<sup>20</sup> A good example of a sleepy Southern courthouse town that never developed further is Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia, the hamlet where the Civil War ended, today preserved by the National Park Service.

<sup>21</sup> Mary Frances Barnes, "Eureka! Gold!," in D. R. Reynolds, ed., *Charlotte Remembers*, p. 71.

<sup>22</sup> "Report to the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historical Properties Commission from the Mint Museum of Art," 1975, on file at the Properties Commission.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. and Barnes, p. 78.

<sup>25</sup> Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, "1950 Census Data" (Charlotte. Chamber of Commerce, 1950). This report conveniently includes citywide and ward data back to 1850.

<sup>26</sup> Blythe and Brockman, p. 260.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. John Gilbert and Grady Jefferys, *Crossties Through Carolina* (Raleigh, N .C.: The Hellos Press, 1969), p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> Blythe and Brockman, p. 261. Gilbert and Jefferys, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Researcher Janette Greenwood has found an 1864 appeal to Charlotte slave owners to donate workers for track "repair." It may be this crew that took up the rails. *Western Democrat*, July 5, 1864.

<sup>30</sup> Blythe and Brockman, pp. 261-262. Gilbert and Jefferys, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, "1950 Census Data."

<sup>32</sup> Janette Thomas Greenwood, "On the Home Front: Charlotte During the Civil War" (Charlotte: History Department of the Mint Museum, 1982), p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Ed Smith, "Drama in April 1865," in D. R. Reynolds, ed., *Charlotte Remembers*, p. 33.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, February 20, 1927. <sup>38</sup> Clyde Osbourne, "The War: Charlotte's Role," in D. R. Reynolds, ed., *Charlotte Remembers*, p. 31. The Charlotte Chamber of Commerce's "1950 Census Data" compilation puts the city's population in 1860, on the eve of the War, at 2,265.

<sup>39</sup> The marker at 700 North Tryon Street, placed in 1977 by the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, reads, "Confederate Cabinet with President Davis held last full meetings April 22-26, 1865, in a house which was located here."

<sup>40</sup> Blythe, p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, "1950 Census Data."

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Beasley and Emerson's Charlotte Directory for 1875-76*. . (Charlotte?: Beasley and Emerson, publishers, Observer Job Office, printer, 1876?), p. 139.

<sup>44</sup> Blythe and Brockman, p. 261. Gilbert and Jefferys, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> Blythe and Brockman, p. 261. Gilbert and Jefferys, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> *Beasley and Emerson's Charlotte Directory for 1875-76*. . . . pp. 131-141.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 140, 142.

<sup>50</sup> *Dictionary of American History*, rev. ed., vol. 5 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976c), p. 207.

<sup>51</sup> Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: a Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p. 41. See also Broadus Mitchell, *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1921), pp. 62, 146 and further Broadus Mitchell and George Sinclair Mitchell, *The Industrial Revolution in the South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1930), p. 29;

<sup>52</sup> Gaston, p. 21.

<sup>53</sup> *U. S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census: 1880, Part II, Social Statistics of the Cities: Southern and Western States*, p. 93.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 105.

<sup>55</sup> James W. Clay, et al., ed., *North Carolina Atlas: Portrait of a Changing Southern State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p. 54.

<sup>56</sup> Gaston, p. 22.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>58</sup> There has been debate among scholars concerning the opening of the New South era. Broadus Mitchell maintained that its flowering began in 1880. C. Vann Woodward in his pathbreaking *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951) defended the dates set forth in the book's title. Dwight Billings, Jr., in *Planters and the Makings of a "New South:" Class, Politics and Development in North Carolina 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979) looked to the close of the Civil War. Gaston systematically traced the term to its first use in 1862, then showed how the movement grew to full strength in the 1870s and 1880s.

<sup>59</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, "Carolinas Industrial Edition," March 2, 1928. Gaston, p. 38. Mitchell, pp. 113, 146, 157.

<sup>60</sup> Most scholars have noted the difference between the early New South leadership and subsequent generations. Mitchell wrote, "when the student of Southern industry meets one of the few surviving members of this company, he at once feels himself in touch with the spirit that was the South's salvation." A successor to this first generation, "exalting in what has been called 'juvenile capitalism,' had little of the affection of the old man for the enterprise." pp. 104-105. The change is a central point

of Gaston's book" "At the opening of the new century several fundamental patterns had been established. . .(and) the New South movement itself was simultaneously ended." p. 221.

<sup>61</sup> W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), p. 224. The book was originally published in 1941.

<sup>62</sup> Dan L. Morrill, "A Survey of Cotton Mills in Charlotte, North Carolina. . ." (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1979), p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> *Charlotte Daily Observer*, May 27, 1880, quoted in Morrill, "A Survey of Cotton Mills. . .," p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Kratt, pp. 75-77. (Morrill says 1883, see note 64).

<sup>66</sup> Dan L. Morrill, "Atherton Mill House: Survey and Research Report" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1981).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, May 17, 1981.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted in Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Gaston lists Tompkins, Grady, Manufacturers Record founder R. H. Edmonds, Raleigh newspaper editor Walter Hines Page, and Louisville newspaper editor Henry Watterson as "the principal spokesmen for the emerging New South movement." pp. 48-52. See also Mitchell and Mitchell. pp. 9, 78-80; Mitchell, pp. 109-110, 117, and passim; Billings, pp. 124-125.

<sup>71</sup> Morrill, "A Survey of Cotton Mills. . .," p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> Morrill, "Atherton Mill House. . .". 73. 74.

<sup>73</sup> Quoted in *Charlotte Observer*, May 17, 1981.

<sup>74</sup> Morrill, "Atherton Mill House.

<sup>75</sup> *Hirst's Directory of Charlotte. . .* (Charlotte: Hirst Printing and Publishing House, 1889), pp. 41-61.

<sup>76</sup> Morrill, "A Survey of Cotton Mills. . .," p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> Morrill, "Edward Dilworth Latta. . ." manuscript, p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Dan L. Morrill and Nancy B. Thomas, "Dilworth" in The New South Neighborhoods brochure series (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1981). Kratt, p. 87. Morrill, "Edward Dilworth Latta. . ." manuscript, p. 11.

<sup>79</sup> Kratt, p. 78.

<sup>80</sup> Morrill, "Edward Dilworth Latta. . ." manuscript, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Dan L. Morrill and Ruth Little-Stokes, "Architectural Analysis: Dilworth: Charlotte's Initial Streetcar Suburb" (Charlotte: Dilworth Community Association, 1978), section 2, page 2.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., section 2, p. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Morrill, "Edward Dilworth Latta. . ." manuscript p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., pp. 10, 12.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>86</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census: 1940, vol. 1, pp. 772, 976.

<sup>87</sup> Woodward, p. 265. "There was also a depression in the South, and the indications are that it lasted longer and was more heavily felt, in some respects, than in other parts of the country."

<sup>88</sup> Morrill, "A Survey of Cotton Mills. . .".

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> D. R. Reynolds, "Business, Finance and Industry" in D. R. Reynolds, ed., *Charlotte Remembers*, p. 159.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Blythe and Brockman, p. 275.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. Dan L. Morrill, interview with Thomas W. Hanchett, September, 1982.

<sup>94</sup> Blythe and Brockman, pp. 276-277.

<sup>95</sup> Reynolds, "Business, Finance and Industry," p. 151.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Joe Maynor, Duke Power, *The First Seventy-Five Years* (Charlotte?: Duke Power Co., 1979?), p. 14.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32. Kratt, p. 68.

<sup>102</sup> Thomas T. Feters and Peter Swanson, Jr., *Piedmont and Northern, the Great Electric System of the South* (San Marino, California: Golden West Books, 1974), p. 15 and *passim*. William H. Huffman, "Piedmont and Northern Railway Station: Survey and Research Report" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1982).

<sup>103</sup> . Feters and Swanson, Jr., pp. 127-142-145.

<sup>104</sup> Blythe and Brockman, p. 263. Gilbert and Jefferys, p. 9.

<sup>105</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Nineteenth Census: 1970, vol. 1, part 35, table 7.

<sup>106</sup> Dan L. Morrill, "The Independence Building: Survey and Research Report" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1977).

<sup>107</sup> 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.

<sup>108</sup> John Nolen, "Civic Survey, Charlotte, North Carolina: Report to the Chamber of Commerce" (Cambridge, Massachusetts: typescript, 1917), oversized handcolored map. The only known surviving copy of this survey, a treasure trove of data on the city, is in John Nolen's papers at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

<sup>109</sup> "City of Charlotte, North Carolina: Indicating Years in which Corporate Limits Extended, Area and Population," Charlotte map 3, in the map case at the Carolina Room of the Public Library.

<sup>110</sup> Dan L. Morrill, "Charlotte City Hall: Survey and Research Report" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1980). Morrill, "The Independence Building. . .".

<sup>111</sup> Dan L. Morrill, "North Carolina Medical College: Survey and Research Report" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1979). Dan L. Morrill, "Court Arcade: Survey and Research Report" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1980. *Charlotte Observer*, February 21, 1925. *Charlotte Observer*, September 25, 1930. Dan L. Morrill, "Charles Moody House: Survey and Research Report" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1981). William H. Huffman, "Jake Newell House: Survey and Research Report" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1982).

<sup>112</sup> Dan L. Morrill and Nancy B. Thomas, "Elizabeth" in The New South Neighborhoods brochure series (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1981). *F. C. Abbott, Fifty Years in Charlotte Real Estate, 1897-1947* (Charlotte: privately published, 1947?), pp. 17-18.

<sup>113</sup> Abbott, pp. 9, 18, 26.

<sup>114</sup> Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, map book 101, p. 1.

<sup>115</sup> Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, map book 230, p. 228. C. H. Watson, ed., *Colored Charlotte: Published in Connection with the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Freedom of the Negro. . .* (Charlotte: A.M.E. Zion Job Print, 1915), pp. 6, 22, 27, 30.

<sup>116</sup> Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, map book 230, p. 258. Watson, pp. 6-7.

<sup>117</sup> Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, map book 224, p. 100; map book 230, pp. 9, 230; map book 332, p. 189; map book 3, p. 47; map book 722, p. 570; map book 165, p. 663.

<sup>118</sup> Abbott, p. 25. Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, map book 230, pp. 20, 24, 143, 222; map book 218, p. 419.

<sup>119</sup> Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, map book 230,

<sup>120</sup> Abbott, pp. 25, 27.

<sup>121</sup> Abbott, p. 18. Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, map book 230, pp. 162-63, 206-207, 306-307.

<sup>122</sup> Dan L. Morrill and Nancy B. Thomas, "Myers Park" in the New South Neighborhoods brochure series (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1981). For more on the creation of Myers Park see the section of the present report on that neighborhood.

<sup>123</sup> Olmsted Brothers, job 5109 "Dilworth": sheet 7 and revisions. Drawings are on file at the Olmsted National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts. For more on the creation of the neighborhood, see the Dilworth section of the present paper.

<sup>124</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, June 27, 1982.

<sup>125</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Nineteenth Census: 1970, vol. 1, part 35, table 7, and vol. 1, part 42, table 7.

<sup>126</sup> "City of Charlotte."

<sup>127</sup> Morrill and Little-Stokes, section 2, p. 12. *Charlotte Observer*, July 2, 1922; Hey 17, 1981.

<sup>128</sup> "Facts: Charlotte, North Carolina" (Charlotte: Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, 1920c). In John Nolen collection, Cornell University Archives, box 23, folder 2.

<sup>129</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, February 28, 1950.

<sup>130</sup> "Know Charlotte, Queen City of the South" (Charlotte: Chamber of Commerce, 1929). Pamphlet in the collection of Lindsay Wiggins of Charlotte.

<sup>131</sup> Kratt, p. 101.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* and Blythe and Brockman, p. 301.

<sup>133</sup> Blythe and Brockman, p. 386. Radio proved a deciding factor in the emergence of Nashville as the major Southern recording center by the 1940s. Its station WSM had a clear channel signal that beamed the Grand Old Opry live country music show across much of the United States. Top stars tended to gravitate there.

<sup>134</sup> Brian Rust, *The Victor Master Book*, vol. 2. (Stanhope, New Jersey: Walter C. Allen, 1970), pp. 146-148, 406-408, 571, 583-585, 599-604. John Rumble, Oral Historian for the Country Music Foundation, Nashville, letter to Thomas W. Hanchett, June 15, 1982. *Charlotte Observer*, July 18, 1982. The Delmore Brothers whose music lives on in the playing of Doc Watson today, the Blue Sky Boys who authored the country standard "Are You From Dixie?", and the Morris Brothers who popularized the song "Salty Dog" are among the dozens of other entertainers who recorded at the Charlotte studios. There is evidence that Decca and other companies may have used the facilities as well.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. Jim Ringer, *Bossmen: Bill Monroe and Muddy Waters* (New York: Dial Press, 1971), pp. 29-32. Monroe recorded in Charlotte with his brother Charlie. Many of the songs from these sessions are still in print on the RCA album "Feast Here Tonight." As the last sessions were being recorded, Bill decided to break with his brother and create a new, larger band with fiddle, banjo, and bass in addition to guitar and mandolin. The first edition of the "Bluegrass Boys" recorded in Atlanta two years later and their early sound owed much to the previous Monroe Brothers recordings.

<sup>136</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1980), p. 812, defines bluegrass music as "a style of American country music that grew in the 1940s from the music of Bill Monroe and his group, the Blue Grass Boys."

<sup>137</sup> Dan L. Morrill, "Morrocroft: Survey and Research Report" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1979).

<sup>138</sup> Edward S. Perzel, "Hotel Charlotte: National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," 1975. On file at the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

<sup>139</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, January 20, 1924. *Charlotte Observer*, May 6, 1978.

<sup>140</sup> City directories, 1920-1930.

<sup>141</sup> "The Charlotte Branch, Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond: Fiftieth Anniversary, 1927-77," pamphlet in the files of the Carolina Room of the Charlotte Public Library.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> *Charlotte Observer*, "Carolinas Industrial Edition," March 2, 1928. Business: North Carolina, 3:7 (July 1983), pp. 35-38.

<sup>144</sup> "City of Charlotte, North Carolina: Indicating Years in which Corporate Limits Extended, Area and Population," Charlotte map 3, in the map case of the Carolina Room of the Charlotte Public Library.

<sup>145</sup> Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds Office, map book 3, pp. 34-35.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317.

<sup>147</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Nineteenth Census: 1970, vol. 1, part 35, table 7.

<sup>148</sup> Mitchell and Mitchell, p. 3. In 1927 the South had 62% of the mills in the United States, and the value of North Carolina's product surpassed the former U. S. leader, Massachusetts.

<sup>149</sup> "Miller's Official Charlotte, N.C., City Directory" (Asheville: The Miller Press, 1929), p. 8.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> City of Charlotte, "Growing Bigger" (Charlotte: City of Charlotte, 1953), p. 11.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* *United States Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1975), series N 111-117, N 156-169.

<sup>153</sup> Henry J. Aaron, *Shelter and Subsidies: Who Benefits from Federal Housing Policies?* (Washington, D. C.: The Brookings Institution, 1972), pp. 77-80. See also Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University and the M.I.T. Press, 1962), pp. 117-124. According to Eric Clark at Charlotte's First Union bank, another important factor was development of the logarithmic mortgage formula that allowed continuous equal payments. Previously house loans had consisted of a series of separate "notes", each for a lump sum due at intervals of several months. The new formula was created by Fischer at the University of Chicago in the early 1930s, according to Clark.

<sup>154</sup> City of Charlotte, "Growing Bigger." United States Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics*. . . , series N111-117, N156-169.

<sup>155</sup> Dan L. Morrill, "Myers Park Streetcar Waiting Stations: Survey and Research Report" (Charlotte: Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission, 1980).

<sup>156</sup> Dan L. Morrill, "The Road that Split Charlotte," *Charlotte Observer*, May 2, 1982, "Parade" section, pp. 12, 15, 19.

<sup>157</sup> *Charlotte News*, undated 1980s clipping in the "Charlotte Roads and Highways" vertical file in the Carolina Room of the Charlotte Public Library.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Roy Covington, "Truck Stop," *Charlotte Magazine*, July-August, 1969, p. 18. See also *Charlotte Observer*, 1975 article in the "Charlotte Trucking" vertical file in the Carolina Room of the Charlotte Public Library.

<sup>160</sup> Greater Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, "Research Report: the Charlotte Economy" (Charlotte, Greater Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, 1981).