> Perception of the reality of both the past and the present is greatly determined for most people by the myths which become part of their lives.
>
> Paul M. Gaston
> The New South Creed

A series of momentous developments in the physical evolution of Charlotte, N.C., began on July 8, 1890, when Edward Dilworth Latta (1851-1925), native of Pendleton, S.C., son of a wealthy planter, graduate of Princeton University, and owner of a clothing manufacturing plant in Charlotte since 1883, joined with five associates to establish the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company, locally known as the Four Cs.[1] As president of the organization Latta superintended the creation of Dilworth, Charlotte's initial streetcar suburb. Dilworth officially opened with a gala land sale that began on May 20, 1891.[2] The ballyhoo surrounding that occasion was not unlike that found on the midway of a garish carnival. Latta and his partners trumpeted Dilworth as the "prettiest resort of its character in the 'Dixie' country."[3] Two auctioneers stood in the rear of a buggy as it passed along the streets, avenues, and boulevards of the suburb. A crowd of about two thousand followed, "in hacks and buggies, on horseback and on foot, with maps in hand eagerly bidding for ground."[4]

The most definitive and comprehensive analysis of the evolution of the streetcar suburbs of an American city is Sam B. Warner, Jr.'s Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston 1870-1900.[5] With consummate adroitness and discernment Warner delineates the factors which influenced the development of Boston's streetcar suburbs dur-

ing the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Although certain aspects of his explanation of Boston's suburban growth are applicable to Charlotte, especially the dynamics of what Warner calls "romantic capitalism," others, such as the massive influx of immigrants into Boston from Europe and the nationalistic proclivities associated therewith, were not operative in Charlotte.[6] Consequently one must search elsewhere for the impulses which undergirded and shaped the activities of Edward Dilworth Latta and his associates.

In recent years historians have focused considerable attention upon the urban history of the South during the decades immediately following the Civil War, the so-called New South era. Most notable in this regard have been studies of such fast-growing inland towns as Raleigh, Greensboro, Atlanta, and Birmingham. Among the major issues which scholars have raised in these works has been the question of whether continuity or discontinuity existed between the ante-bellum and post-bellum Southern elites. James Tice Moore and Eugene J. Watts, for example, have disputed the traditional interpretation, advanced by C. Van Woodward and Paul M. Gaston, that the New South leadership represented a decisive break with the past. To their way of thinking the ante-bellum planter class continued to direct and oversee Southern society after the Civil War.[7]

In his Planters and the Making of a "New South": Class, Politics, and Development in North Carolina, 1865-1900, Dwight B. Billings, Jr., amasses an impressive aggregate of data to demonstrate that the descendants of prominent Old South families ran the towns of North Caro-

lina during the New South years. Interestingly he does not mention Edward Dilworth Latta, even though Latta was the son of an affluent South Carolina planter, a person of preeminent significance in transforming Charlotte into a major industrial and banking center of the two Carolinas, and, at least in the early stages of his career, an important textile manufacturer, the occupational group upon which Billings concentrates his research.[8] This article seeks to fill that void or oversight and to ascertain whether Latta's activities and aspirations tend to confirm or refute the interpretations which Billings advances in his provocative book.

Unlike Boston, which as early as 1850 had more than two hundred thousand people living within a three-mile radius of its center, Charlotte had a population of just over eleven thousand as late as 1890.[9] Also, Charlotte had begun to acquire a substantial manufacturing base only in the 1880's. That decade had witnessed the establishment of the town's first cotton mills, the Charlotte Mill in 1881 and the Victor, Ada, and Alpha mills in 1889.[10] Horse-drawn streetcars had appeared in Charlotte in 1887, whereas Boston had gotten them in 1852.[11] On balance, therefore, the decision of the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company to establish Dilworth seemed to defy the dictates of sound business reasoning.

The trolley network alone, which was installed by the Edison Electric Company, cost forty thousand dollars.[12] The first electric streetcar departed from Independence Square, the intersection of Trade and Tryon Sts. in the heart of Charlotte, on May 18, 1891.[13] The Four Cs operated two lines, which intersected at the Square. One extended

from the Richmond and Danville Railroad Depot on W. Trade St. to McDowell St. on the eastern edge of Charlotte, and the other or main line reached from the Carolina Central Railroad Depot on N. Tryon St. southward to Latta Park, the amusement park in Dilworth.[14]

The construction of an electric streetcar system in Charlotte in 1891 was not an unprecedented event in Southern history. Indeed the first community in the United States to obtain a city-wide trolley network was Montgomery, Ala., in 1886. Moreover it was the ability of the Union Passenger Railway to surmount the hills of Richmond, Va., in 1888 that proved the practicability of the electric streetcar as a means of urban and suburban transportation. Thereafter, at least until the Panic of 1893, the replacement of horse-drawn streetcars by the "new-fangled" trolleys spread like an epidemic throughout the South.[15] They first appeared in North Carolina in Asheville in 1889.[16] Howard N. Rabinowitz, a historian of the urban South, has pointed out that electric streetcars were especially popular in small towns, those containing approximately ten thousand inhabitants, where they served as symbols of urban maturity and thereby assuaged the ardour for economic growth and diversification felt by those individuals who belonged to the New South movement.[17]

Edward Dilworth Latta was a strident spokesman for the principles and policies of the New South. Like such New South luminaries as Henry Grady, Richard Edmonds, Walter Hines Page, and Daniel Augustus Tompkins, Latta insisted that the South should discard the remnants of

ante-bellum culture and should adopt instead the system of values that had enabled the Yankees to prevail on the battlefield.[18] Above all else he was a promoter of industrialism and urbanism and of the materialism and competitive individualism associated therewith. Latta contended that only in the manufacturing districts of burgeoning cities could the people of the South acquire the pragmatic and utilitarian cast of mind that would permit them to root out the destitution and squalor that enshrouded their region. Accordingly he wanted Dilworth and its attendant trolley system to serve as the beacon that would galvanize support for a program of unremitting growth and expansion in Charlotte. "I realize we have attained that juncture," Latta declared, "when we must decide whether we will adopt the sluggish inactivity of the provincial town or aspire with zealous hope to become one of the independent cities of the new South."[19]

The advertisements for Dilworth were replete with the rhetoric of urban boosterism. Latta and his partners characterized their venture as the "inaugural movement in the march of improvement" that would cause Charlotte to become "aglow with the spirit of enterprise."[20] The Four Cs organized its workmen into "improvement squads" and also referred to its laborers as a "busy brigade."[21] Such military terminology was consonant with Latta's conception of human existence as a struggle in which the strong dominate the weak. "We must go forward or retrograde -- there is no resting point with progress," he asserted.[22] On March 14, 1891, Latta and his associates announced that they had "no doubts about the possibilities of Charlotte." "We have anticipated her doubling, yea trebling her population in the near future," they proclaimed.[23]

A favorite ploy which the Four Cs used in its promotional campaign for Dilworth was to encourage and aura of competition and rivalry by relating in its daily advertisements the accomplishments of other communities. "We show what other towns are doing," the company explained, "with the hope that the inspiration to do likewise will pervade this community to a large extent."[24] To bolster local pride the Four Cs reproduced articles from the Augusta Chronicle of Augusta, Ga., the Atlanta Journal of Atlanta, Ga., and even from the Tribune of Cambridge, Mass. Not surprisingly these accounts spoke in glowing terms about what was happening in Charlotte.[25] The Charlotte News added its plaudits in an editorial which it published on April 11, 1891. "There is more business life to the square inch in Charlotte today than can be found in any town of the same size anywhere in this broad Southland," the newspaper boasted.[26] No less laudatory were the observations of a local resident whose letter appeared in the Charlotte News on April 4, 1891. "If we all follow unitedly in the wake of the Four Cs," the writer declared, "we will build a city where we now have a town."[27]

On several occasions subsequent to the establishment of Dilworth, Latta reminded the citizenry that his contributions to the development of Charlotte had been pivotal. Always eager to vaunt his prescience he wrote to the Charlotte Observer on April 4, 1899, and boasted that he had ventured his all long before anyone had recognized that Charlotte was "to become an important city."[28] Especially enlightening in terms of explaining the considerations which had prompted Latta to organize the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company was an advertisement for the Four Cs that appeared in the Charlotte Observer on September 17, 1899. "Years ago, with faith in Charlotte, we be-

lieved she would grow and require an outlet, so we prepared for expansion and built Dilworth," Latta explained.[29] On another occasion he stated that the Four Cs created Dilworth to give Charlotte "more 'elbow room.'" "We construed that Charlotte was not begun in the hour of its inception with the idea of its ever rising to the dignity of a city," Latta declared.[30]

The evidence is clear. Edward Dilworth Latta and his partners established Dilworth and its attendant trolley system because they believed that their real estate venture would enable Charlotte to become a city. In a real sense Latta regarded Dilworth as a therapeutic measure, as a cure for the malaise and pessimism which had characterized the public mood of Charlotte during the years immediately following the Civil War. Writing in the Charlotte Observer in 1899, a local resident recalled what Charlotte was like when Edward Dilworth Latta had arrived in 1876 to establish a retail clothing store. "I remember how the damper of unfaith fell on all the budding youths of that day. It was like the blighting of flowers with a hot rod."[31] Quite simply, Latta devoted his energies, talents, and resources to changing that circumstance.

Whatever else one thinks about such New South leaders as Edward Dilworth Latta one has to admire the grit, fortitude, and imagination with which they pursued their objective. These spirited and tenacious men would leave almost nothing undone in their struggle to make the South affluent again. Latta could be a braggart, a smug and self-righteous know-it-all and, when thwarted, a peevish boor. But these qualities inhabited the "dark side" of the very attributes which enabled him to persevere, even in the face of seemingly impossible odds. The recurrent

theme of the career of Edward Dilworth Latta was survival. Once he had embarked upon his grandiose scheme of providing Charlotte with an imposing streetcar suburb, he constantly probed for the strategems and mechanisms that would keep his venture solvent.

The Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company used a series of innovative marketing techniques to attract prospective buyers to Dilworth during the grand opening of the suburb in May 1891. Salesmen were dispatched to outlying cities to spread the word about Dilworth.[32] A "great pyrotechnic display" and a balloon ascension were scheduled for the evening of May 20th, and arrangements were made for a series of baseball games between a team from each of the Carolinas, one from Winston, N.C., and the other from Columbia, S.C.[33] The most imaginative attraction involved the placement of a deed in a tin box which was suspended from a small balloon that was launched at the conclusion of the fireworks display. Whoever found the deed would become the owner of the parcel recorded thereon.[34] "Come by rail, by the wagon, the ox car or any other means," the company proclaimed.[35]

During the grand opening of Dilworth the Four Cs highlighted the attractions and facilities it offered in Latta Park. Amusement parks, such as Norumbega Park in Boston or Willow Grove Park in Philadelphia, were essential components of streetcar suburbs throughout the United States. Place at the end of the line they functioned as magnets to attract riders to the trolley system.[36] The Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company hired Joseph Forsyth Johnston, a landscape architect from New York City, to fashion a

lake for boating, a lily pad pond, a series of fountains, terraced flower gardens, and a network of meandering paths and drives.[37] No doubt to the delight of Latta and his associates Latta Park became a favorite retreat for the citizens of Charlotte even before Dilworth officially opened. On April 27, 1891, for example, the Charlotte News described the scene which had existed there the previous Sunday afternoon. "The winding walks and drives were thronged all the afternoon, and scores of promenaders could have been seen coming in from the park. On the boulevard there were probably a hundred turnouts while the lakeside, flower gardens and groves were dotted with pedestrians."[38] The Daily State Chronicle of Raleigh, N.C., called Latta Park "the most magnificent spot of its kind in the South."[39] Not surprisingly the Charlotte News was rhapsodical in extolling Latta for his achievements. "The people of Charlotte," the newspaper declared, "are already beginning to bless the name of E. D. Latta, whose brains, money and nerve have secured for them these heretofore unheard of privileges."[40]

The prospects for Dilworth appeared to be bright. The Four Cs sold 78 lots in May 1891 to 47 individuals, 36 of whom were residents of Charlotte or Mecklenburg County.[41] On May 29, 1891, Latta announced that the construction of a "large number of new and attractive residences" was about to begin.[42] Seemingly the momentum was irreversible. "No better evidence of the faith the people have in the future of the city could be desired than in the way this suburban ground is selling," the Charlotte News contended.[43] Despite these propitious beginnings Dilworth was not an immediate success, however. The Four Cs did sell

seventeen lots in its streetcar suburb from June 1891 until the end of the year, but the situation deteriorated markedly in 1892. Except for conveying a parcel to the Charlotte Street Railway Company, its trolley subsidiary, the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company did not exchange any lots in Dilworth during the first nine months of 1892.[44]

The first breakthrough for the Four Cs occurred on July 24, 1892, when the D. A. Tompkins Company, named for its founder and president, Daniel Augustus Tompkins (1851-1914), announced that it would build the Atherton Cotton Mill just south of Dilworth.[45] Construction began on August 23, 1892, and moved forward expeditiously until the factory, which manufactured two to four ply yarns, went into full operation in April 1893.[46] Even more importantly in terms of Dilworth's success, the D. A. Tompkins Company purchased an entire block in the suburb on February 23, 1893, and erected twenty frame cottages thereon for its mill hands.[47]

That Daniel Augustus Tompkins was the first industrialist to locate a factory at Dilworth was altogether fitting and proper, because he and Latta interpreted the world in similar ways. This similitude is not surprising when one appreciates the degree to which their backgrounds were alike. A native of Edgefield County, S.C., Tompkins had earned a degree in civil engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute at Troy, N.Y., in 1873, had been a chief machinist for the Bethlehem Iron Works in Bethlehem, Pa., and, like Latta before him, had decided to return to the South so that he might encourage the industrialization of his native region. Tompkins settled in Charlotte

in 1883, seven years after Latta.[48]

Paul Gaston observes that almost all of the New South leaders were born in the 1850's and that they became adults, therefore, during "the period of their region's greatest failure." "Quite naturally," Gaston states, "the perspective which this experience gave them sharpened their criticisms of the Old South and led them to look to the North in their search for those variables which accounted for Southern poverty in a land of plenty."[49] Tompkins and Latta were born in the same year, 1851, and both were sons of wealthy South Carolina planters. Both were educated in the North, Latta at Princeton University and Tompkins at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. But the most striking parallel was that both men eschewed the copious opportunities for economic advancement in the North and committed their energies instead to the redemption of the South.[50]

The construction of the Atherton Mill provided the impetus for the establishment of an extensive industrial district in Dilworth. By October 1895 the Charlotte Observer, which D. A. Tompkins had founded in March 1892, was calling Dilworth the "Manchester of Charlotte."[51] On January 31, 1896, it declared that Dilworth was "beginning to be not only a social but an industrial centre."[52] A reporter for the Charlotte Democrat, describing the scenes which he had encountered on a trolley ride through the suburb in the summer of 1896, remarked that he had passed a "nest of mills."[53]

The second manufacturing plant to open in Dilworth was the Charlotte Trouser Company, on March 21, 1894. Founded by Latta in 1383 and sold by him in 1892 to J. C. Burroughs and W. H. Duls of Charlotte, the firm produced between 150,000 and 175,000 pairs of men's pants per year in its

Dilworth facility.[54] The pace of industrialization quickened in 1895, when six factories were built in Dilworth. In July 1895 James Leslie & Company of Montreal, Canada, makers of card clothing, loom reeds, leather belting, and other textile mill supplies, completed its plant in the suburb. A sash cord factory, owned by O. A. Robbins of Sumter, S.C., also started up in the summer of 1395. On November 25, 1395, the Mecklenburg Flouring Mill commenced operations. Housed in a four-story building at the northwestern corner of Dilworth, it produced three brands of flour, "Princess Charlotte," "Royal Family," and, appropriately, "Dilworth."[55] A spoke and handle plant, a shirt factory, and the Park Manufacturing Company, producer of pumps, heaters, and elevators, also opened in 1895.[56]

The industrial district in Dilworth was decisive in enabling the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company to survive in the early and mid-1890's, even if the cotton mills and the homes for operatives did obfuscate Dilworth's reputation as a fashionable residential district. The twenty original Atherton mill houses constituted almost one-third of the total number of residences in the suburb in May 1896.[57] The people of Charlotte called the cotton mills "hummers" because of the deafening din which their machines produced.[58] Accidents at the Atherton Mill were numerous, such as the mangling of a worker's hands in June 1893, shortly after the plant opened, or the death of an overseer in the carding room in October 1902, when he became entangled in the belting apparatus.[59] "He was dead in six seconds," the Charlotte Observer reported.[60] Brawls and spats were common occur-

rences in the industrial district in Dilworth, where the workers and their families found themselves caught up in a highly regimented and stultifying existence.[61]

The Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company did endeavor to attract affluent and middle class residents to Dilworth, but the results were less than spectacular in the early and mid-1890's. The largest and most imposing houses which appeared in the suburb during these years were on Park Avenue or Kingston Avenue. Several survive, including the Jones-Garibaldi House (1894) at 228 E. Park Ave., the Mallonee-Jones House (1895) at 400 E. Kingston Ave. , and the Gautier-Gilchrist House (1897) at 320 E. Park Ave.[62] The Four Cs even introduced long-term mortgage financing as a device to entice prospective home owners of modest economic means. On March 13, 1893, the Charlotte Observer announced that the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company was contemplating the construction of about thirty-five houses to be "purchased on the building and loan plan."[63] A cluster of modest homes in the Eastlake style did appear on the northern or "upper" end of South Boulevard and on Caldwell Street southward from Morehead Street. "The new settlement on South Caldwell street, one of the approaches to Dilworth, looks like a small town," the Charlotte Observer stated on April 6, 1894.[64]

The Four Cs sold 20 lots in Dilworth in 1894, 25 in 1895, and the same number in 1896. These were substantial figures, especially when compared with those of 1892 and the first half of 1893. Nevertheless, as late as March 1898, there were still fewer than 100 homes in Dilworth.[65] Obviously, before Dilworth could prosper and become the teeming residential

district that Latta envisioned, it had to have more amenities than a trolley system.

Between 1894 and 1900 the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company did install an impressive array of services in its suburb. This accomplishment was all the more remarkable because the Four Cs, unlike many of its counterparts in the North and in other Southern cities, received no direct municipal assistance. In 1894 the firm erected a powerhouse on South Boulevard to generate electricity for the homes in Dilworth and for those in Charlotte as a whole.[66] In December 1894 the company began laying pipes for a rudimentary sewerage system, and it put a more elaborate network into operation in 1897.[67] On September 13, 1896, the Charlotte Observer announced that Dilworth would acquire a waterworks, "including stand pipe, hydrants and electric pumping machinery of the latest design."[68] When the system went into service almost three years later Latta celebrated the event by placing a string of lights around the top of the water tower in Dilworth.[69] The Four Cs broke ground for its gas plant in July 1898, and the facility went into full operation in May 1899.[70]

Latta Park also acquired impressive improvements during the late 1890's. A bicycle racetrack, horse racing course, a large grandstand, a football field, and a new baseball diamond opened on September 9, 1897.[71] Dedicatory ceremonies were held on May 18, 1898, for a theater in Latta Park, which offered drama each summer thereafter.[72] An expanded streetcar network with double tracks along South Boulevard and

East Boulevard went into service on April 26, 1900.[73]

On September 1, 1899, the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company began a series of daily advertisements in the Charlotte Observer. Unlike the promotional pieces which had appeared in the Charlotte News in 1891, when Latta had used hyperbole and florid phrases to convince the public that his untested suburb would succeed, these advertisements were sanguine and smug. Dilworth, Latta blustered, "has reached the stage of permanency, and is no longer attended with doubt as to her resources in perpetuity."[74] Predictably Latta bragged at length about the utilities that his company had installed in Dilworth. "Where else in the suburban world," he asked, "can you obtain railway service, gas, water, electric lights and sewerage, and all with your rent money?"[75]

In these advertisements Latta highlighted his so-called "rent money" system for enabling individuals of limited income to purchase houses in Dilworth. "Our weapon in the war against landlordism is your 'Rent Money,'" he declared.[76] "So while we have property desirable for everybody, for those in affluence, able to construct edifices after their heart's desire," he proclaimed, "our special work and calling is to aid those whose moderate income suggests a pause when the subject of a real home is talked of."[77] Repeatedly in these promotional pieces Latta emphasized the ease with which his customers could acquire property in Dilworth. "It is merely a matter of choosing your home site. We'll do the rest."[78]

Latta explained that buyers had several options open to them. They could purchase a parcel and retain it as an investment; they could obtain

a lot and hire an architect and a builder to design and erect a house thereon; or they could buy a home from the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company, either ready for occupancy or with the finishing appointments to be provided by the buyer.[79] "We will supply the money," Latta declared, "enabling you to trade with the builder upon a cash basis, and then you can settle, in the months and years to come, with your outflowing 'rent money.'"[80]

Between 1900 and 1910 Dilworth grew rapidly as the effects of Latta's full complement of utilities and his innovative marketing scheme began to take hold. Although imposing homes for the wealthy continued to appear, such as the Villalonga-Alexander House (1901) at 301 E. Park Ave. and, most notably, the Edward Dilworth Latta House (1903) on East Boulevard, and although factories still came upon the scene, including a foundry in 1902 and a machine shop in 1904 for the D. A. Tompkins Company, the majority of structures which cropped up in Dilworth during these years were homes which the Four Cs built and sold to middle class families.[81] On October 5, 1901, the Charlotte Observer reported that fourteen houses would be completed in the suburb "within two weeks."[82]

Seemingly at every turn events demonstrated that Dilworth was finally becoming the robust suburb that Latta had envisioned in 1890-1891. In 1902 the Four C's leased a large tract of land to the Mecklenburg Fair Association, which opened a huge fairgrounds in the suburb in September.[83] On July 18, 1902, the Charlotte Observer announced that the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company had just erected seven houses on Worthington Avenue.[84] In September 1903 Latta began building

a large commercial structure on South Boulevard, which housed a drugstore and a post office on the first floor and a meeting hall on the second.[85] Churches began to dot the landscape, and the Dilworth Graded School opened for classes in January 1905.[86] But the most telling manifestation of Dilworth's increasing importance occurred in April 1907, when the City of Charlotte extended its boundaries to include the suburb. Containing approximately 300 registered voters Dilworth became Ward 8 of an eleven-ward system of municipal governance.[87]

Edward Dilworth Latta was achieving his objective of inducing Charlotte to become a major industrial center of the New South. Between 1890 and 1910 the population of the city grew from 11,557 to 34,014, and eleven cotton mills opened.[88] To keep pace with this rapid expansion the Four Cs extended its trolley tracks into several streetcar suburbs which arose on the outskirts of Charlotte at the turn of the century, including Piedmont Park in March 1902, Elizabeth in December 1902, and Biddleville in April 1903.[89] In July 1910 Latta opened Lakewood Park on the western end of Charlotte and began dismantling the pavilion and the theater and draining the lake in Latta Park. He also announced that he would terminate his lease with the Mecklenburg County Fair Association, and in November 1910 Latta confirmed that he was taking the momentous step of selling his trolley system and gas plant to the Southern Power Company.[90] The Charlotte Observer stated that the money derived from this transaction would allow the Four Cs to continue in the real estate business "with even increased activity owing to the concentration of interests made possi-

ble."[91] The newspaper was right.

Latta maintained a hectic tempo of activity during his remaining years in Charlotte. In July 1911 he hired the Olmsted Brothers, one of the most prestigious landscape architectural firms in the United States, to design a curvilinear street system for the eastern end of Dilworth.[92] This new residential section opened in 1912 and quickly established itself as one of the most fashionable areas in Charlotte.[93] The Four Cs also acquired a large tract of land on S. Tryon St. and erected a lavish commercial and office complex, the Latta Arcade, in 1914.[94] In October 1920 Mayor Frank R. McNinch announced that Latta had agreed to donate the 43.4 acres of land in Latta Park to the City.[95] "There is no way to imagine even how many thousands shall hold him in everlasting remembrance for this splendid performance for the city and for the city's kids," the Charlotte News declared.[96]

One might expect that Edward Dilworth Latta lived out his final years basking in the acclaim and affection of his fellow citizens. The truth was otherwise. Indeed there is a certain sadness and poignancy to the circumstances which surrounded Latta's final acts in the city which he had shepherded toward greatness. On March 2, 1923, the Charlotte Observer contained the astounding news that Latta was placing his magnificent mansion on East Boulevard up for sale.[97] Two days later the newspaper reported that the Charlotte Hotel Company would take legal action against Latta, who refused to fulfill his commitment to purchase $50,000 worth of stock in the corporation.[98] He was miffed because the Charlotte Hotel Company had not purchased land which he owned on S. Tryon St.[99] Latta did not prevail. Consequently at the age of seventy-two

this giant in Charlotte's development sold many of his holdings in Charlotte and moved to Asheville, N.C.[100] One can imagine the consternation and dismay which the sudden departure of so powerful a figure must have produced. "The decision of Mr. Latta to sever his relation as a citizen of Charlotte where he has lived for the past 46 years," the Charlotte News lamented, "becomes a matter of community regret."[101]

Edward Dilworth Latta died in Asheville on July 14, 1925, amid plans for beginning a massive real estate venture in that community.[102] Immediately thereafter the Charlotte newspapers lauded the attainments of this man and bore witness to the import of his part in making Charlotte a major city of the two Carolinas. The Charlotte Observer characterized Latta as the "builder of a city." "He gave the town its first impetus," the newspaper avowed, "and he kept it going until the day it went forward of its own accord."[103] In the opinion of the Charlotte News, Latta was "the man who did more to make the Charlotte that it today than any other of his generation."[104] Latta is buried in Elmwood Cemetery in Charlotte. Edward Dilworth Latta, Jr. (1879-1945), also a graduate of Princeton University, was president of the Four C's until the company was disbanded shortly before his death in December 1945.[105]

Edward Dilworth Latta is a paradigm of the Old South elitist domination of post-bellum North Carolina that Billings discusses in his book. According to Billings the industrialization of North Carolina during the New South era was a process of "conservative modernization" which sought to preserve "traditional agrarian social relations."[106]

He goes on to contend that the "ethos of plantation society" was the leitmotiv of the post-bellum South and that the concomitant paternalism of the ante-bellum planters formed the foundation of the beliefs, attitudes, and behavior of the New South industrialists.[107]

Latta's outlook on life was reminiscent of the days of slaves and overseers, when planters held sway over society and justifjed their suzerainty by portraying themselves as benevolent but firm father figures. In the spring of 1891, for example, Latta and his associates became almost ecstatic in their reactions to the "happy negroes" who were installing the trolley tracks for the Four Cs. "It reminds one of the cotton fields in ante bellum days to hear their jargon set to music."[108] Latta was caught up in the mood of optimistic expectancy that characterized the New South consciousness, but he did not believe that progress was inevitable. He insisted that unless the force of enlightened example awakened the rank-and-file citizens of Charlotte from their innate disposition to be slothful and lethargic, they, like the residents of any community, would wallow in a quagmire of mediocrity, if not retrogression. "Nothing contributes more forcibly to the moral condition of communities than the employment of its members," he exclaimed in 1891.[109]

On May 10, 1923, the Charlotte News published a lengthy interview with Latta in which he discussed "with evidence of emotion" his 46 years in Charlotte. Latta proclaimed that he had labored "to contribute of his means and of his leadership toward making this the industrial city of the South."[110] In 1899 in the advertisements for

his "rent money" system of home financing, Latta sounded like a father urging his timid and apprehensive children to seize the initiative and take charge of their own destiny. "Why not rise to the heights of opportunity," he asked with typical aplomb, "and be your own master, monarch of your own realm?"[111] "You are subjected to no inconvenience, no long delay and worry," Latta assured his prospective customers.[112] One can almost smell the aroma of magnolia blossoms and bourbon.

Paternalism also entails an appreciative clientele. Edward Dilworth Latta was not alone in praising the accomplishments of the Four Cs. On May 20, 1897, the Charlotte Observer stated that "no enterprise within the last decade" had been "so fruitful to Charlotte's gain as the conception of the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company."[113] The same sentiment appeared in a letter which the Charlotte Observer published on April 23, 1899. The establishment of the Four Cs, the writer maintained, "has done more, doubtless, than any other single feature to bring about the rapid and remarkable growth of the city in the last few years."[114] It was Latta's introduction of long-term mortgage financing that received the most enthusiastic acclaim. "He was the originator of the plan on an extensive scale of enabling families to own their homes out there, accepting small down payments initially for purchase of either homes or vacant lots in his extensive domain," the Charlotte News affirmed.[115]

The relationship between Latta and the employees of his trolley system was not unlike that which exists between a father and his children. Every Christmas the motormen and conductors were Latta's guests for a festive banquet at which prizes were distributed to the most productive workers.[116]

A touching illustration of the fidelity which the trolley workers felt toward Latta occurred on the occasion of his wife's death in October 1910.[117] The motormen and conductors stopped the electric streetcars for three minutes "in deference to the sorrowing president of the 4Cs, Mr. E. D. Latta, and his family," the Charlotte Evening Chronicle reported.[118] They also sent a floral arrangement in roses entitled "Gates Ajar" for display at Mrs. Latta's funeral in the Latta mansion on East Boulevard in Dilworth.[119]

Above all else paternalism was a system of social control. As long as developments conformed to his wishes Latta was happy, but he did not hesitate to punish anyone who defied his authority. In 1894 when the City of Charlotte refused to purchase or lease Latta Park he threatened to remove the trolley tracks from Trade Street, and he increased the price for transfers.[120] Latta's response to a strike in December 1903 by the motormen and conductors was to fire them all.[121] "I regret, beyond expression, the exigency of the situation, causing me to part with a body of men for many of whom I hold a personal attachment," Latta declared.[122] A major consideration in Latta's decision to sell the electric streetcar system in 1910 was his displeasure over the granting of a charter to a competing line.[123] And it was this same inability to accept defeat which caused him to move to Asheville, N.C., in 1923.[124] "Mr. Latta has been properly and rightly regarded as a pioneer in the building of Charlotte," the Charlotte News proclaimed. "A mere village with village ways and with village ambitions at the time, it lent itself plasticly to the touch of his initiative, to his acute imagination and to his dreams."[125]

Billings explains that his "methodological strategy" is to base his inferences upon "the actions of key economic and political actors." "It is important to remember that class relations are sociological abstractions that can be inferred only from the actions of real people," Billings states in the first chapter of his book.[126] Historians should welcome Billings's analytical system because it challenges scholars to scrutinize the careers of men such as Edward Dilworth Latta. Latta had his counterparts in communities throughout North Carolina. There is much work to be done.

1. Charlotte News, June 27, July 9, 1890. Charlotte Observer, July 15, 1925. Daily Charlotte Observer, April 4, 1884. R. W. Simpson, History of Old Pendleton District (Covington, Tennessee: Bradford Publishing Company, n.d.), 118-119. Edward Dilworth Latta was the son of James Theodore Latta and Angela Lott Latta. In 1851 his father purchased Ashtabula, a large plantation near Pendleton, S.C., and established one of the first herds of Hereford cattle in South Carolina. During the Civil War the young Latta lived in Asheville, N.C., and later in New York City. Latta's partners in creating the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company in 1890 were F. B. McDowell, E. B. Springs, Dr. M. A. Bland, E. K. P. Osborne, and J. L. Chambers, all Charlotteans. Unfortunately, there are no extant papers of the Four Cs or of Edward Dilworth Latta's. Consequently this writer has had to depend for the most part upon articles which appeared in local newspapers, especially the Charlotte Observer. Happily the press followed Latta's activities closely. Also, particularly during times of controversy, Latta would write lengthy letters for publicati in the newspapers of Charlotte. The Four Cs also launched highly revealing advertising campaigns, one in 1891 and another in 1899.

2. Charlotte News, May 21, 1891

3. Charlotte News, May 15, 1891.

4. Charlotte Democrat, May 22, 1891. Charlotte News, May 16, 1891.

5. Sam B. Warner, Jr., Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston 1870-1900 (New York: Atheneum, 1971), hereinafter cited as Warner, Streetcar Suburbs.

6. Warner, Streetcar Suburbs, 1-14.

7. Sarah McCulloh Lemmon, "Raleigh-An Example Of The 'New South,'" North Carolina Historical Review XLIII (Summer 1966), 261-285. Eugene J.

Watts, The Social Bases of City Politics: Atlanta, 1865-1903. Contributions in American History, No. 73 (Westport, Conn., and London, England: Greenwood Press, 1978). Samuel M. Kipp, III, "Old Notables and Newcomers: The Economic and Political Elite of Greensboro, North Carolina, 1880-1920," Journal of Southern History XLIII (August 1977), 373-394. Carl V. Harris, Political Power in Birmingham, 1871-1921, (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1977). James Tice Moore, "Redeemers Reconsidered: Change and Continuity in the Democratic South, 1870-1900," Journal of Southern History XLIV (August 1978), 359-378. C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951). Paul M. Gaston, The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), hereinafter cited as Gaston, The New South Creed.

8. Dwight B. Billings, Jr., Planters and the Making of a "New South": Class, Politics, and Development in North Carolina, 1865-1900 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), hereinafter cited as Billings, Planters.

9. Warner, Streetcar Suburbs, 179. LeGette Blythe and Charles Raven Brockmann, Hornets' Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (Charlotte: McNally, 1961), 449, hereinafter cited as Blythe and Brockmann, Hornets' Nest.

10. Charlotte Democrat, January 6, 27, 1888. January 11, February 1, March 1, 1889. Charlotte Observer, February 5, 11, April 3, May 27, August 21, December 21, 1880. March 2, 9, 1881. August 4, 1895.

11. Charlotte Home Democrat, January 7, 1887.

12. Charlotte News, February 12, 1891.

13. Charlotte News, May 19, 1891. Morning Star (Wilmington), May 22, 1891.

14. Charlotte News, March 19, April 23, May 23, 1891.

15. John Anderson Miller, Fares, Please. A Popular History Of Trolleys, Street-Cars, Buses, Elevateds, And Subways (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960), 56, hereinafter cited as Miller, Fares, Please. Howard N. Rabinowitz, "Continuity and Change: Southern Urban Development, 1860-1900," in Elaine A. Brownell and David R. Goldfield (eds.), The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South (Port Washington, N.Y., and London, England: National University Publications, Kennikat Press, 1977), 113, hereinafter cited as Rabinowitz, Continuity and Change.

16. Sarah McCulloh Lemmon, "Raleigh-An Example Of The 'New South,' North Carolina Historical Review XLIII (Summer 1966), 283.

17. Rabinowitz, Continuity and Change, 113.

18. Henry Woodfin Grady was editor of the Atlanta Constitution. Richard Hathaway Edmonds was publisher of the Manufacturers' Record. Walter Hines Page, a native of Cary, N.C., worked in the mid-1880's for the State Chronicle in Raleigh, N.C. Daniel Augustus Tompkins was Charlotte's leading prophet of the New South and publisher of the Charlotte Observer.

19. Charlotte Observer, July 17, 1894.

20. Charlotte News, March 14, 1891.

21. Charlotte News, March 17, 1891.

22. Charlotte Observer, July 17, 1894.

23. Charlotte News, March 14, 1891.

24. Charlotte News, March 28, 1891.

25. Charlotte News, March 19, 27, May 18, 1891.

26. Charlotte News, April 11, 1891.

27. Charlotte News, April 4, 1891

28. Charlotte Observer, April 4, 1899.

29. Charlotte Observer, September 17, 1899.

30. Charlotte Observer, October 11, 1899.

31. Charlotte Observer, April 23, 1899.

32. Charlotte News, May 13, 1891.

33. Charlotte News, May 20, 1891.

34. Charlotte Democrat, May 22, 1891.

35. Charlotte News, May 16, 1891.

36. Miller, Fares, Please, 115.

37. Charlotte News, March 14, 1891.

38. Charlotte News, April 27, 1891.

39. Daily State Chronicle (Raleigh), May 19, 1891.

40. Charlotte News, June 3, 1891.

41. For transactions of the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company during May 1891, see Mecklenburg County Deeds, Office of the Register of Deeds, Charlotte, Book LXXVII, 447, 437, 589, Book LXXVII 435, 444, 449, 452, 461, 459, 464, 466, 469, 477, 480, 482, 484, 487, 493, 497, 530, 528, 544, 553, 559, 617, 620, 615, Book LXXXVII, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, hereinafter cited as Mecklenburg Deeds.

42. Charlotte News, May 29, 1891.

43. Charlotte News, May 20, 1891.

44. Mecklenburg Deeds, Book LXXXI, 28, 45, 114, 107, 110, 176, 380, 583, Book LXXXIV, 240, 267, 265, Book LXXXVII, 509, 510.

45. Charlotte Observer, July 24, 1892.

46. Charlotte Observer, October 4, 1892.

47. Mecklenburg Deeds, Book XC. 310.

48. Howard Bunyan Clay, "Daniel Augustus Tompkins: An American Bourbon" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1950), 25, hereinafter cited as Clay, "Daniel Augustus Tompkins."

49. Gaston, The New South Creed, 48.

50. D. A. Tompkins also was a strong advocate of the diversification of Southern agriculture.

51. Charlotte Observer, October 23, 1895.

52. Charlotte Observer, January 31, 1896.

53. Charlotte Democrat, July 2, 1896.

54. Charlotte Observer, July 31, 1892, December 9, 1893, March 22, 1894.

55. Charlotte Observer, January 18, February 6, May 9, 10, June 7, 20, July 21, August 3, 6, 14, November 6, 24, 26, 1895.

56. Charlotte Observer, May 22, August 4, September 26, 1895.

57. Charlotte Observer, May 20, 1896.

58. Charlotte Observer, December 24, 1892.

59. Charlotte Observer, June 28, 1893.

60. Charlotte Observer, October 14, 1902.

61. Charlotte Observer, July 17, 1902.

62. Charlotte Observer, September 8, 1894.

63. Charlotte Observer, March 13, 1893.

64. Charlotte Observer, April 6, 1894.

65. Mecklenburg Deeds, Book XCVIII, 54, 52, 514, 523, 532, 587, 579, 581, 583, 585, Book CI, 12, 179, 227, 353, 561, 596, Book CIV, 156, 161, 392, 441, 444, 588, Book CV, 58, 139, 145, 142, Book CVIII, 131, 139, 174,

196, 384, 571, 623, Book CX, 46, 193, 422, 423, 489, 635, Book CXII, 66, 68, 121, 134, 153, 261, 356, 402, 495, 497, Book CXVI, 12.

66. Charlotte Observer, September 30, 1894.

67. Charlotte Observer, December 4, 1894, October 14, 1897.

68. Charlotte Observer, September 13, 1896.

69. Charlotte Observer, May 24, 1899.

70. Charlotte Observer, July 29, 1898, May 6, 1899.

71. Charlotte Observer, September 9, 1897.

72. Charlotte Observer, May 18, 1898.

73. Charlotte Observer, April 27, 1900.

74. Charlotte Observer, September 12, 1899.

75. Charlotte Observer, September 5, 1899.

76. Charlotte Observer, September 30, 1899.

77. Charlotte Observer, October 10, 1899.

78. Charlotte Observer, October 20, 1899.

79. Charlotte Observer, September 23, October 14, 22, 24, December 10, 1899.

80. Charlotte Observer, December 22, 1899.

31. Charlotte Observer, March 10, 1901, March 27, November 6, 1902, March 2, November 8, 1904.

82. Charlotte Observer, October 5, 1901.

83. Charlotte Observer, March 8, April 6- September 30, 1902.

84. Charlotte Observer, July 18, 1902.

85. Charlotte Observer, September 3, 1903.

86. Charlotte Evening Chronicle, June 19, 1909, June 11, 1910. Charlotte Observer, March 30, June 29, July 6, 15, 27, 28, September 28, November 24, 30, December 11, 14, 1897, January 25, March 4, April 7, May 28, 1898, February 1, April 25, December 10, 12, 1899, September

1, November 20, 1900, November 18, December 26, 1901, May 8, September 21, 1902, April 16, 17, August 8, 1903, March 15, 25, July 17, October 6, 1904, January 3, 18, 1905, February 27, 1913.

87. Charlotte News, April 11, 17, 1907.

88. Blythe and Brockmann, Hornets' Nest, 449. Charlotte Democrat, June 19, 1891, January 8, 1892. Charlotte Observer, August 18, August 31, 1892, April 12, 1893, May 20, 24, November 19, 1896, June 1, 1897, January 11, June 27, 1900, January 14, February 11, March 8, 17, July 4, 25, August 12, September 15, 1901, February 27, June 18, November 30, 1903, August 4, November 19, 1904.

89. Charlotte Observer, March 21, December 13, 1902, April 25, 1903.

90. Charlotte Evening Chronicle, July 9, November 28, 1910. Charlotte News, June 12, 1910.

91. Charlotte Observer, November 27, 1910.

92. Charlotte Evening Chronicle, June 22, July 1, 1911.

93. Charlotte Evening Chronicle, February 1, 1912.

94. Charlotte Observer, January 16, 1915.

95. Charlotte News, October 3, 1920. Charlotte Observer, October 3, 4, 1920.

96. Charlotte News, October 4, 1920.

97. Charlotte Observer, March 2, 1923.

98. Charlotte Observer, March 4, 1923.

99. Charlotte Observer, March 13, 1923.

100. Charlotte Observer, May 11, 1923.

101. Charlotte News, May 11, 1923.

102. Charlotte Observer, July 15, 1925.

103. Charlotte Observer, July 15, 1925.

104. Charlotte News, July 15, 1925.

105. Charlotte Observer, December 19, 1945.

106. Billings, Planters, 125.

107. Billings, Planters, 102.

108. Charlotte News, March 20, 1891.

109. Charlotte News, April 21, 1891.

110. Charlotte News, May 10, 1923.

111. Charlotte Observer, September 22, 1899.

112. Charlotte Observer, October 22, 1899.

113. Charlotte Observer, May 20, 1897.

114. Charlotte Observer, April 23, 1899.

115. Charlotte News, July 15, 1925.

116. Charlotte Observer, December 25, 1898, December 24, 1899.

117. Charlotte Observer, October 10, 1910.

118. Charlotte Evening Chronicle, October 11, 1910.

119. Charlotte News, October 11, 1910.

120. Charlotte Observer, May 4, June 2, 1894.

121. Charlotte News, December 8, 1903.

122. Charlotte Observer, December 5, 1903.

123. Charlotte Evening Chronicle, June 22, 1910.

124. Charlotte Observer, May 11, 1923.

125. Charlotte News, May 11, 1923.

126. Billings, Planters, 8.