

CLAREMONT HIGH SCHOOL HISTORIC DISTRICT  
Claremont High School Historic District  
Roughly bounded by Fifth & Third Avenues, Third Street, Second  
Avenue, & North Center Street  
Hickory  
Catawba County  
North Carolina

HABS NC-386  
NC-386

HABS  
NC-386

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
100 Alabama St. NW  
Atlanta, GA 30303

# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

## CLAREMONT HIGH SCHOOL HISTORIC DISTRICT

HABS No. NC-386

- Location: Northeast Hickory: north side of 0-200 blocks of 5th Avenue and south side of 100 block of 4th Avenue; 0-200 and part of 300 and 400 blocks of 3rd Avenue; north side 200 and 200 blocks of 2nd Avenue; 300 and part of 200 blocks of 3rd Street; part of 300 block of 2nd Street; part of 200 and 300 blocks of North Center Street; Carolina Park.
- U.S.G.S. Hickory 7.5 Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: A 17.469440.3594930, B 17.470040.3954930, C 17.467020.3954170, D 17.469410.3954190
- Present Owner: Multiple owners
- Present Occupants: Multiple occupants
- Present Use: Residential, office and institutional, commercial.
- Significance: The Claremont High School District is one of the two most intact residential neighborhoods in Hickory today and contains the homes to three generations of businessmen, professionals, and educators, many of whom played key roles in the city's development. It is a neighborhood which has been intimately associated with the educational and cultural goals of the city for over one hundred years--from the founding of Claremont Female College through its replacement, the Claremont High School, to the once-vacant school's new tenant, the Catawba County Council for the Arts. By way of the district's building stock--which contains significant examples of nearly every popular architectural style from the 1870s to the 1950s -one can trace the city's growth from a small town encircled by farmland in the 1870s-1880s, through a period of expansion in the late 1890s and early 1900s when the growing population, supported by an ever-expanding manufacturing base, sought homes on large lots away from the increasing wagon traffic and noise of the commercial district; then to a time when these large lots were subdivided and the sons and daughters of earlier residents sought homes in close proximity to where they themselves grew up. The buildings making up the Claremont High School District represent its primary period of significance from the 1870s into the early 1930s, with additional buildings dating from ca. 1935 to 1940. There are also a number of other compatible buildings, designated as fill, from 1940 into the 1950s' which are not considered contributing to the overall significance of the district.

PART I: PHYSICAL APPEARANCE OF CLAREMONT HIGH SCHOOL HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Claremont High School District is an irregularly shaped area of approximately fifty acres, its center located about one-quarter mile northeast of Hickory's central business district. Its boundaries include the following areas: three properties in the 100 block and the entire 200 block of Second Avenue; numbers 205, 213, 221, and 230 in addition to the 300 and 400 blocks of Third Street; the entire north side of the 0, 100, and 200 blocks of Fifth Avenue, as well as the south side of the 100 block; numbers 109 and 121 Fourth Avenue; four properties on the east side of North Center Street including 220, 310, 328, and 336; the entire 0, 100, 200, and 300 blocks of Third Avenue with the exception of the Central Elementary School, as well as numbers 401 and 404 Third Avenue; number 307, 3.17, and 542 Second Street; and Carolina Park.

The three streets along which the earliest development in the district took place remain the most impressive in terms of both their building stock and siting patterns. Third Avenue contains, or forms a border of, the single largest cluster of pivotal build in the city, including the Neo-Classical Claremont High School; five Queen Anne style houses, three of which are Hickory's finest representatives; three imposing early Colonial Revival houses; and an exceedingly well-detailed bungalow. All but one of these buildings is situated on large well-landscaped lots with numerous hardwoods and pines and other plantings. The three houses on North Center Street are located on large elevated lots and are more densely wooded; Fifth Avenue is a wide street and its houses are situated on fairly large lots with moderate setbacks which are well landscaped, containing a mixture of hardwoods, pines, and shrubbery. Fourth Avenue, Third Street, and Second Avenue are narrower; the landscaping is not as extensive or as uniform, and the lots tend to be considerably smaller than those mentioned above. Claremont High School is located on a large lot bounded by Third Street on the east, Third Avenue on the south, and the adjoining Central Elementary School on the west. Finally, Carolina Park, at the southeastern edge of the district, includes approximately seven acres of wooded and landscape grounds containing a tremendous variety of plant species. At an elevation of approximately 1160 feet, the school site, as well as those properties along Fifth Avenue and Third Street, occupies a plateau which falls gradually to an elevation of 1110 feet at the corner of North Center Street and Third Avenue. Three exceptions to the pattern are located at the intersection of Third Avenue and Second Street, Second Avenue and Second Street, and the 300 block of North Center Street where stone retaining walls laid up in a mosaic pattern denote the rapid change of elevation to the road surfaces.

A number of visual intrusions lend themselves to the establishment of the district's boundaries. Carolina Park, which forms the southeastern boundary, is adjacent to N.C. 127, a four-lane, north-south divided, road beyond which modern office property has been developed. One-story, brick commercial buildings lie opposite the park on Third Street, and First Street (the southern boundary) intersects Main Avenue which is parallel to the right-of-way of the Southern Railway. Small, densely-situated, and undistinguishable residences on the east side of the 200 block of Third Street are in marked contrast to those properties on the west side which

are both larger and more uniform in their setbacks. A similar condition applies to the extension of Third Avenue where a distinction is also evident in the type of materials used; the more recent brick veneer dwellings contrast with the adjacent weatherboarded homes. Modern single family residences and apartment complexes behind the rear property lines of those structures in the 300 and 400 blocks of Third Avenue represent encroachments. Residential development north of the boundary along Fifth Avenue and Maple Grove is substantially different in the nature of materials employed and non-uniform siting, as well as in stylistic development. Development of apartment houses and post-World War II Colonial Revival buildings on the south and west of the southeast corner of North Center Street and Fifth Avenue represents the most visually-intrusive boundary line. A development of ranch-type houses bounded by Fourth Avenue, First Street, Second Street, and two early 20th century houses, in addition to Central Elementary School, complete the large gap in the district. The parking lots and small-scale houses on the west side of North Center Street are in marked contrast to those on the east side. The Hickory Memorial Hospital in the 200 block of North Center Street, a large parking lot in the northwestern half of the 100 block of Second Avenue, and undistinguished residential construction on the south side of Second Avenue, comprise the remaining boundaries.

#### PART II: EVOLUTION OF THE CLAREMONT HIGH SCHOOL HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Claremont High School District is one of the two relatively-intact residential neighborhoods in Hickory which reflects the city's evolution from a small town in the late nineteenth century to a burgeoning manufacturing center in the twentieth century. Within its boundaries are the large and ornate residences of businessmen, bankers, lawyers, and doctors, as well as the less elaborate dwellings of farmers and ticket agents. Claremont High School itself reflects the growth of the school age population in the 1920s, although the association with education stretches back to 1883 when Claremont Female College located to a large Second Empire style building on the site. Furthermore, Carolina Park, long before it was purchased by the city in 1904, had been a place to take a drink from its mineral spring and socialize with one's neighbors.

A total of sixty-two buildings are included in the district. Two of these are the homes of early residents who purchased large tracts of land on which they established farms. Highly-developed Queen Anne style residences can be seen in the neighborhood, as can a number of less ornate representatives of the style. Similarly, one can trace the development of the Colonial Revival style from its early association with Queen Anne forms through its formal development, including the variation of the "square house." Two structures represent the early phase, six buildings can be identified as being of the "square house" type, and seventeen can be classified as more formal interpretations, based on either Georgian or Federal style models. Bungalows are well represented in the district, both in their stylistic and chronological development, where a total of nine were built. Five Tudor Revival style residences were constructed in the area, all but one of which are quite elaborate constructions with multiple gables and period interiors. With the

exceptions of the First Methodist Church a large Craftsman-type house, the remaining structures are rather typical residences built in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.

Four periods of growth shaped the district's appearance. The first one spans a period of time between the construction of the first extant structure prior of 1875 to the erection of Claremont College in 1883 and the completion of a large Queen Anne style farmhouse in 1889. A second period of residential building activity commenced in 1895 and lasted until 1914. During that time the rapid population growth which accompanied the expanding manufacturing base contributed to the development of residential areas which were removed from the business district. Leading the way in this migration were prominent businessmen and professionals who had impressive new homes built in the district. This trend was further developed after World War I when (during the third period) the majority of the vacant lots were improved and larger residential lots were subdivided. A second generation of important and often well-to-do businessmen invested in new residences which reaffirmed the district's image as one of Hickory's finest residential areas. The City's own investment in the district at this time is evident in the erection of Claremont High School and the development of recreational facilities in Carolina Park. Finally, post World War II construction, although in some cases intrusive filled most of the remaining building lots.

#### 1874-1889

Prior to the institutional and residential development of the area enclosed within the Claremont High School District, a few individuals owned large tracts of what was then primarily vacant lots and farmland. The northern side of Fifth Avenue and lands stretching to the north were purchased by John M. and Adolphus L. (A.L.) Shuford was one of the earliest settlers in Hickory, having moved into the village from the family farm prior to the Civil War. He operated a store, into the village from the family farm prior to the Civil War. He operated a store, and flour mill for many years before establishing his farm known as Maple Grove in the mid 1870s. It was his intent to develop a large dairy farm although his death in 1885 precluded its accomplishment. In any case he was responsible for importing the first Jersey cattle to Catawba County.<sup>1</sup> The farmhouse (1) which was completed a few years before his death is an impressive expansion of a very small building which stood on the farm. His two story Italianate house was built with a central hall, four large rooms in addition to usable attic space, and a two tier front porch. His brother John Marshall Shuford came to Hickory much later and the land he bought bordered A. L.'s property to the west, although John apparently did not have a residence there.

The area which forms the eastern border of the district was purchased by Harvey E. and David M. McComb after the family had moved to Hickory in 1874 from Mecklenburg County. Both McComb brothers had been farmers in Mecklenburg County, and they established a large farm on these new lands. It is clear, however, that this was not their only source of income as they operated one of the first meat and grocery stores as well as one of the first dairies. On the other hand it is not unreasonable to speculate that a great deal of their merchandise may have come from their farm.

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\*Numbers in parentheses refer to the building numbers on the map in Appendix A.

The house which the McCombs occupied in 1874 was just outside of the district boundaries; three houses reportedly existed there prior to the development of what is now the Claremont High School District. One of these buildings, the Doll-Abernethy house (2), is just within the boundaries of the district. Although substantially altered by two owners into its present Colonial Revival form, it is said to have been built prior to 1874 for a Professor Ingold on land given to him by W. W. Lenoir, a benefactor of Lenoir-Rhyne College. Isaiah Ingold was one of the first two instructors at Union Institute in Randolph County. Union became Trinity College and later Duke University. Documentary evidence of Ingold's educational activities in Hickory, however, has not been uncovered. An 1880 deed suggests by the price paid, that a small dwelling was on the site when Isaiah Ingold sold the property.<sup>2</sup> If this is the case, then it represents the first, strictly residential construction in the district and may, in fact, pre-date Maple Grove (1).

In terms of actual area, the largest portion of the district was owned by Henry W. Robinson. Henry's father,<sup>3</sup> Jesse Robinson, purchased a 360 acre tract of land at an auction in 1978<sup>3</sup> and it was passed to Henry when his father died. Those lands comprise the bulk of the original corporate limits of the Town of Hickory,<sup>4</sup> including much of the Claremont High School District. Jesse Robinson's use of this land is not entirely clear but Henry's ideas for it were. Between 1865 and 1870 he had the greatest portion surveyed and platted. The Claremont High School District occupies the northeastern corner of the original plat, and it was one of a number of larger plots along the northern edge of his property. With the exception of the McComb brothers and Shufords the vast majority of the lots which now comprise the district were held by Robinson.

In the 1870s and 1880s, the sparsely settled nature of the area which comprises the bounds of the district was similar to the other outlying portions of Hickory during that time. Although it had been incorporated as the Town of Hickory in 1873 and a one mile radius defined as its limits in 1879, settlement and commercial activity were clustered along the railroad tracks. The fringe areas inside the town limits were still primarily open land.

The position of the earliest roads in the district influenced greatly the direction and nature of its development. Henry W. Robinson's grid plan of streets had defined present day Third and Second avenues, as well as North Carolina Center Street and First Street, and a portion of Second Street. In<sup>5</sup> addition, by 1880, both Fifth Avenue and Third Street had been surveyed.<sup>5</sup> The extension of Second Street into the college's lot was probably not carried out until the 1913 survey of nine acres at the western edge of the property.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, a road did follow the present route of this street north of Fifth Avenue as early as 1907. A deed made at this time referred to a "public road" leading to both Moores and Icards ferries on the Catawba River. An 1886 map of Catawba County shows such a road following North Center Street, Fifth Avenue, and Route 127.<sup>8</sup> Finally, W. W. Lenoir's 1868 survey of his lands bordering

the district to the east included the eastern end of what is not Third Avenue leading to present First Avenue. This street, like many in Lenoir's plat, was proposed to be ninety-nine feet wide.

The first development in the Claremont High School District took place in 1883 when Claremont College moved to a large brick Second Empire style building constructed on a site of some twenty-two acres in what is now the center of the district. The plans for establishing a college were drawn up by the consistory of the Corinth Reformed Church of Hickory (now the Corinth Evangelical and Reformed Church, United Church of Christ) during and after a meeting in April 1980.<sup>10</sup> At the time, the members of the Reformed Church were concerned about the education of the young women in Hickory and, more especially, about their own daughters.

The imposing, expensive, three-story brick structure had a mansard roof, pedimented dormer, one bellcast roofed tower as well as a second tower, and two large porches. Instruction in the classics, art, and music could be obtained at the school. To the small town of Hickory in 1880, the establishment of the college, even though it was immediately beset with numerous problems, represented a significant step towards development. The college provided educational facilities, albeit only to those who could afford them, at a time when the public school system was in disarray. Through the hard work of the trustees, a fine faculty was almost always assembled which, no doubt, appeal to a population that valued the educational and cultural benefits that radiated from their work.

Residential development in the area around Claremont Female College really began when David W. Shuler had an exquisite Queen Anne style house (3) built at the northeast corner of Third Avenue and North Center Street in 1887. Shuler moved to Hickory for Oakwood County, Michigan, and established Hickory's first bank in 1886. Although some of the exterior ornamentation has been removed, his house remains, and may always have been, the finest example of the Queen Anne style in Hickory. An exterior which is composed of projecting and receding wall planes, as well as various sheathing materials, is complemented by an exuberant interior originally detailed by F. A. Grace, an artist and friend of Shuler's, which reveals an extensive use of ornament and wood molding.<sup>12</sup>

When Harvey E. McComb had a house (4) built in 1889 on the farm which bordered Third Avenue, it was a much more sedate example of the Queen Anne style than was Shuler's. Two stories in height and three bays wide, its prominent features include a pair of offset front gables, two small attached porches, and an interior finished with standard nineteenth century molded window and door surrounds with corner blocks, and wainscoting in the central hall.

Further development in the district did not take place until some years after Shuler and McComb moved into their new homes. The reason for this cannot be explained entirely although there may be room for some speculation. In the first place, the Shuford and McComb farms formed the boundaries of both the east and north sides. A large lot owned by Robinson and the college lots, which at that time extended to the edge of the Shuler lot, formed the space in the middle. Robinson presumably

owned the remaining lots. Neither the Shufords nor the McCombs seemed to have been interested in subdividing their property, leaving only Robinson's land available. He was certainly prepared to sell as his survey and map attests but, for some reason, he was unable to or, if he did, those People who purchased lots were "of developing them. The slow growth of the area may also have been due to the simple fact that it was not needed. Original settlement in Hickory had been concentrated along the railroad tracks and/or adjacent to the business houses. It was only at the close of the century that the middle and upper class residential areas were deliberately and necessarily extended northward away from the railroad. Whether proximity to the school was an important factor in the district's growth is difficult to discern. If it was, or became, a stimulant, it is important to note that it took quite a few years to manifest itself in actual construction.

#### 1895-1914

At the close of the nineteenth century, a second period of development commenced in the Claremont High School District, one which was to continue until 1914. Growth in the period was related to a number of factors which were changing the physical appearance of Hickory. In the first place, the population had grown from approximately 2,500 people in 1900 to slightly more than 3,700 in 1910.<sup>13</sup> Housing for this expanding population was constructed throughout the city limits, including a great deal in the district. Much of the population increase can be attributed to both the growth and development of new industries, particularly hosiery and textile mills and furniture manufacturers, in addition to the expansion of older well-established industries. Many of the businessmen and professionals associated with these companies bought lots in the district and had substantial and often very impressive homes built on them. While a number of the new dwellings constructed in the period were for recent immigrants to Hickory, two additional Patterns are evident. The houses constructed just prior to and right after 1900 most emphatically represent the development of new fashionable residential areas away from those which had been closer to the railroad tracks and the business district. Although urban expansion would take place naturally, a number of Hickory's businessmen acquired large lots near the college which were removed from the wagon traffic and noise of the downtown area. Secondly, a considerable proportion of the new houses were built for the children of earlier residents. For example, four of A. L. Shuford's sons and daughters moved into houses erected on Shuford's estate bordering Fifth Avenue. This pattern would be repeated in the later period of growth.

The second stage of development in the district was set in motion when Kenneth C. Menzies, cashier at the Bank of Hickory, began to acquire lots across from the college in what is now the 200 block of Third Avenue. Between 1893 and 1897, Menzies purchased the entire block from its two owners, John W. Robinson and D. H. Aiken.<sup>14</sup> Although he resold each lot, Menzies repurchased the one on which he finally had his home built. One of the other lots, located at the eastern boundary of the block, was purchased by the Corinth Reformed Church in 1894 and, in 1895, a Queen Anne style parsonage (5) was built.<sup>15</sup> Although some three city

blocks from the church, which was located at the northwest corner of Trade Alley and Second Street, it apparently was built there because the minister, Reverend. J. L. Murphy, was at that time also the president of the college which was just across the street.

The lot which adjoined the parsonage was sold in 1897 to Shuford L. Whitener, fourtime mayor of Hickory, city alderman, and founder of one of the oldest general stores in the city.<sup>16</sup> In December of that year, he moved into what was probably a fairly large Queen Anne style house (6) built on the lot.<sup>17</sup> Kenneth C. Menzies had a Queen Anne style house (7) built on his lot in 1897 or 1898, and then had it extensively remodeled in 1909 ~~to~~<sup>18</sup> the Colonial Revival style to reflect the latest architectural fashion. After Whitener's house was constructed, three houses were built for the Menzies family in rapid succession along Third Avenue. K. C. Menzies had his house constructed about 1897 or 1898, followed by his mother's house and his brother William's house in 1902.

Development of the Menzies' parcel of land continued when K. C.'s older brother, William B. Menzies, had a large Queen Anne house (9) built in 1902 at the corner of Third Avenue and Second Street. When he arrived in Hickory, William became associated with the Hickory Manufacturing Company, a producer of building supplies, and he eventually became its treasurer and general manager. He, like his brother, was associated with the local banks and served on numerous boards. The house~~s~~ he had built for his family was designed by an<sup>20</sup> architect named Frye,<sup>19</sup> perhaps one J. Frye who was practicing locally.

Concurrent with the construction of William B. Menzies' house was the erection of another Queen Anne style residence (10) directly to the west across Second Avenue. Judge W. B. Councilll purchased a large lot in the 100 block of Third Avenue, in 1901, two years after he had moved to Hickory. A map of Hickory was made in 1915 shows Councilll's lot occupying nearly one-half of the entire block.<sup>21</sup> Councilll was a prominent lawyer who had been elected to the district Superior Court in 1900 and served until 1910. The imposing residence which he built, the first house constructed in the southwestern portion of the district, is one of the two finest and most intact Queen Anne style houses left in Hickory today.

George W. Hall had purchased a lot adjoining the H. E. McComb house in 1906,<sup>22</sup> and an imposing Neo-Classical or "Southern Colonial" house (11) was constructed on it soon after. Completed with a two story pedimented portico set on Corinthian columns, a wrap-around one story porch on small columns, and numerous classical details it stands in stark contrast to the older McComb house (4). Hall was a very prominent businessman in Hickory. In 1901, at the age of twenty-eight, he established the Hickory Furniture Company which, at the time was a pioneering enterprise in the nascent furniture industry. Having removed himself from the business when it merged with the Hickory Chair Company in 1931 he later purchased the Newton Manufacturing Company which grew rapidly under his guidance.<sup>23</sup>

Residential development in the Claremont High School District, having been concentrated in the southern half prior to 1903, rapidly shifted to the northern section after this date. The first house built along Fifth Avenue was probably the J. H. Patrick house (12). Patrick came to Hickory in 1900 and established a grocery store with J. L. Riddle (28), but he did not have this modest Queen Anne style house built until about 1903.<sup>24</sup> On land which had been part of the J. M. and A. L. Shuford estates, eight additional houses were constructed prior to 1910. The Fox-Ingold house (13) at what is now the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and Second Street was probably the first building constructed on the north side of the avenue. In 1913, Frank Ingold, owner of Ingold's Hardware store, bought the house.<sup>25</sup> Shortly after the Fox-Ingold house was built four Colonial Revival houses were constructed within a year of each other, each with the characteristic squarish forms as well as various classical features which included fanlights and sidelights, porticos, or denticulated cornices. Mrs. Elizabeth Rainey purchased a lot in 1903, located at the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and North Center Street,<sup>26</sup> and a dwelling (14) was built there soon after. The Warlick-Waggoner house (15) was constructed at about the same time. Sometime around 1904 Frank Clinard had a house (16) built adjacent to the Warlick-Waggoner house. Clinard was involved in a number of enterprises including a tobacco warehouse and the Piedmont Wagon Company, and the house's subsequent, long term owner, James L. Cilley, was associated with the First Security Trust Company and the First National Bank as secretary and cashier respectively.

The development of A. L. Shuford's estate was undertaken by his children, four of whom moved into new houses during the period prior to 1910. Florence Shuford and her husband William X. Reid had a large house (17) built at the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and Second Street on a lot purchased in 1907.<sup>27</sup> Ella Shuford and her husband Thomas M. Johnston, a bookkeeper at the Hickory Grocery Company, also bought a lot in 1907 and erected a house (18) that year.<sup>28</sup> Located in the middle of the block their large Queen Anne house is a much more sedate example of the style than is Council's (10).

Adrian Shuford, A. L. 's youngest son, had a small house (19) built sometime after his sister Ella's, although he soon moved to Conover, North Carolina. The house was then occupied by Dr. Heald, a professor at Lenoir-Rhyne college. Finally, Walter J. Shuford and his exquisitely detailed bungalow (20) built in 1909. Shuford was the owner and manager of the Catawba Seed Company; established the Hickory Milling Company; and was one of the founders of the Catawba Creamery, reportedly one of the largest such facilities in the South. His civic activities in the community ranged from the Boy Scouts to the Hickory Rotary Club.

An indication of municipal growth, as well as its development of recreational facilities for its citizens, can be seen in the city's 1904 purchase of Carolina Park (21). As early as the 1870s the park had been a favorite place for residents to gather, to partake of the mineral spring and its healing waters,<sup>29</sup> and to enjoy the pavillion.<sup>30</sup> At some point the spring dried up, apparently because a well dug on the other side of the railroad tracks tapped the water table. In 1904 the city bought the nearly seven acre parcel from John W. Robinson's estate for

\$3,275.00 and in 1909 the Civic League took responsibility for developing it. Within a year nearly \$1,100 had been raised and spent on improvements to the park which included removal of a number of trees, grading for walks and drives, digging a pond, filling unwanted holes, and planting shrubbery and grass.<sup>31</sup>

While a fine residential neighborhood was developing around it, Claremont Female College was undergoing increasingly difficult management crises. Finally, in 1909 the trustees of the college turned the facility over to the Classis of the Reformed Church of North Carolina. Upon accepting the task of restoring the financial and managerial underpinnings of the college the Classis subsequently subdivided nine acres of land which formed the western boundary of the property with the hope of raising money. Thus a whole new tract of land became available for development in the area of Claremont College. If the subdivision of the college's nine acres made new development possible it did not guarantee that it would take place. By 1915 three of the eight lots had been sold, but only one house had been built. Mrs. H. C. Dixon and her children were residing in a house (22) built in 1914 which was located on the middle lot of the three sold on Second Street.

Between 1910 and 1915 five other houses had been built in the Claremont High School District. Sometime soon after he moved to Hickory in 1911, George L. Bailey, manager of the Hickory Chair Factory, had a large two story Craftsman house (23)<sup>32</sup> constructed on a large lot which he purchased from Council in 1911. On a lot adjacent to the Shuler house, Eubert Lyerly and his wife Josephine Bonniwell Lyerly moved into a house (24) which was built about 1912. Both husband and wife made significant contributions to Hickory's development. Eubert was president of Clay Printing Company and the first publisher of the Hickory Daily Record when it made its debut on September 11, 1915.<sup>33</sup> Prior to that time he had organized the first ice and coal company in Hickory and had gone into business with J. D. Elliott and H. J. Holbrook in the Elliott Knitting Mills in 1910. Josephine became involved in establishing the Hickory Museum of Art and was an active member of numerous art and literary clubs in Hickory. Mrs. Lyerly was the daughter of George Bonniwell, a founder of the Piedmont Wagon Company.

In 1912 H. H. Miller, a ticket agent and later postmaster moved into his new house (25) on a lot adjacent to George Bailey's on Third Avenue. One of the first "square houses" in the district, it employs both weatherboards and wood shingles on alternate stories in addition to a wraparound porch. Two more bungalows were constructed in the district at this time. Ernest Herman, a postal clerk, purchased a lot between Thomas Johnston's house (18) and Dr. Heald's home (19), and the large bungalow (26) he built has characteristic features of the style. The second bungalow (27) was built for H. N. Dyer across from the Fox-Ingold house (13) and adjacent to J. H. Patrick's house (12). Dyer came to Hickory from Roanoke, operated a business related to the manufacture and sale of furniture, but left sometime soon after 1915.<sup>34</sup>

With the completion of the Dyer house about 1914 the period of building in the district which began with the Patrick and Rainey houses virtually stopped until 1918, and did not gain momentum again until the

early 1920s. This building hiatus was a direct result of the United States' increasing involvement in W.W.I. Rechanneling of industrial output during the war, combined with the post war retooling and recession, placed a tight clamp on building activity in Hickory. As noted in a 1921 issue of the Hickory Daily Record, the city "stopped its splendid growth during the war to devote its time to serving country."<sup>35</sup>

In 1916 the Reformed Church closed Claremont College, thereby ending a long period of hard work by the church to provide a needed educational and cultural facility for Hickory's young women. Although it never achieved Vaughn's dream of becoming a "Wellesley of the South", it certainly had an influence on the city's development. Claremont College's passing did not leave Hickory without an educational facility. In fact, it was the growth of the public school system after 1901 which, more than anything else, doomed the college. For example, by 1916 Hickory had built two graded schools. The closing of the college also ended a thirty-three year educational and cultural association with the neighborhood, one which would not be reaffirmed until some years later. When building finally resumed after 1918 the new-construction was scattered throughout the district.

#### 1918-1940

The Third period of sustained development in the Claremont High School District commenced in 1918 and lasted for the next twenty-two years. Those factors which contributed to the earlier growth of Hickory continued to propel the city's development at this time. A general non-farm economic boom following the war<sup>36</sup> was felt in Hickory and throughout North Carolina as new businesses and industries were established. Furthermore, growth in the urban population from 5,076 persons in 1920 to 13,487 in 1940<sup>37</sup> created an increasing need for housing, consumer and service related businesses, as well as new educational and recreational facilities. Many of the people who established these businesses chose home sites in the district -- even as out-lying areas were being developed for residential sites -- thereby reaffirming its position as one of the fashionable neighborhoods in Hickory. In addition, a renewed commitment to improving the city's amenities during this period also had a direct and lasting impact on the district with the construction of the Claremont High School and changes to Carolina Park.

A director of the First National Bank, John L. Riddle, who was also a prominent businessman and co-founder of the Hickory Grocery Company with J. H. Patrick (12), had an impressive bungalow (28) built in 1918 at the northwest corner of Third Avenue and Second Street. Another residence built about the same time is the Murphy-McFarland house (29). Mrs. Essie Murphy purchased a lot behind the Reformed Church parsonage after<sup>38</sup> her husband, Dr. J. L. Murphy, a minister of the church, died in 1917. Her daughter and son-in-law John T. McFarland, also occupied the Colonial Revival house at the same time. Soon after these two houses were constructed, the Thomas P. Pruitt bungalow (30) was built at the southeast corner of Third Street and Fifth Avenue. Pruitt was a businessman and lawyer. His wife Adelyne who still resides in the house, is the daughter of David M. McComb, an early settler in Hickory, which explains in part why they were able to build on the edge of the McComb

farm. Grover P. Fowler, a traveling salesman, bought a large bungalow, typical of those found throughout the district, which had been built about 1919 on Third Avenue.

Comparison of the two sets of Sanborn Insurance maps, which shows enough of the district to be useful, reveal that between 1919 and 1925 eleven additional buildings, which are still extant, had been added within the border of the Claremont High School District. In many cases new housing was built on lots which had been subdivided as early as 1915, whereas in other areas new lots had been created from larger parcels.

The construction of two multi-family residences in the district during this boom period brought a new element to what was previously an area of single family units. This probably reflected the growing need for such housing for new urban immigrants, further induced by the proximity and availability of these building sites to downtown. The Moss Apartment (35) were built at the southeast corner of Third Avenue and North Center Street, and a duplex was built on a lot to the south (36).

A number of bungalows were built in the Claremont High School District in the period between 1918 and 1925. Included among these is the David Bowman house (40), a one story structure with a clipped, cross gable roof built in 1924. Bowman was a traveling salesman and lived in the house at least until 1942. On the lot adjacent to Cloninger's "square house" on Fifth Avenue Colin M. Yoder also had a large bungalow (41) built.

Other buildings erected in the district during the period between 1919 and 1925 have Colonial Revival and modified bungalow forms. These include the Hester house (42) on North Center Street with its wide German siding, end chimneys, and a center entrance with fanlights. Alonzo M. West's Colonial Revival style house is also a part of this group. A lot which adjoined T. M. Johnston's house (18) on Fifth Avenue was the site of a new home (43) for Rusk G. Henry and his growing family. Henry was a construction supervisor and later the manager of Hickory Novelty Company and his wife Adelaide was Johnston's daughter. The superintendent of city schools, Ralston W. Carver, had a brick veneer house (44) built about 1924 on a lot between the Shuford Whitener house (6) and the former Corinth Reformed Church parsonage (5).

When Dr. Carver chose to locate on Third Avenue it was a result of his desire to be across from the site of Claremont High School, Hickory's newest school then under construction.<sup>39</sup> In the period between the closing of Claremont College and the opening of the new school both the city and the Corinth Reformed Church had maintained an interest in upgrading Hickory's educational facilities. The city needed a new school for its growing school age population even though it had erected two graded schools and expanded one of them since 1903. In 1919 the Corinth Reformed Church offered the old college site to the city if it would erect a school with a value of not less than \$150,000.<sup>40</sup> When a bond issue was passed for \$259,000 in 1923 work commenced. C. Gadsen Sayre of Raleigh, North Carolina was commissioned to design the new school.<sup>41</sup> Opened on October 9, 1925, the Neo-Classical Revival style facility had fourteen teachers and 400 students.<sup>42</sup> The new school was an impressive

addition to Hickory's building stock, and its location in this area of the city reestablished the educational and cultural associations which had long been part of the neighborhood.

During the 1920s and very early 1930s there was also a renewed effort on the part of the city and civic organizations to upgrade the parks. This program was visible in Carolina Park where a number of additions and improvements were made. The Hickory Post of the American Legion sponsored the construction of a swimming pool in 1921, and other groups had donated a lily pool, a children's wading pool, and playground equipment. In 1922 the city authorized the construction in the park of a large stone culvert to span a small stream which ran along the park's western edge.<sup>43</sup> At the same time lights were to be installed, and permanent walkways were built to replace the existing dirt and gravel walks. During the depression WPA labor was used to keep Carolina Park maintained, and its efforts can still be seen in a number of concrete walkways which have been stamped with WPA seals. Nearly sold for commercial development in the late 1920's, the Women's Club led a campaign to preserve the park, and in 1931 the upper end<sup>44</sup> was enclosed with shrubbery, and flowers were planted throughout.

In addition to these numerous undertakings, George F. Ivey, a manufacturer in Hickory began to develop a public arboretum in the park. By the time of his death in 1952, he had planted some 250 species of trees, each labeled, and many of them imported from other countries.

Development of the Claremont High School District after 1925 was constrained by the availability of building lots. The McComb family had developed a plan to subdivide its Property which lay outside of the district boundary, but only gradually did they make lots available along Third Street. A period of nine years had passed since the Pruitt's bungalow had been constructed at the corner of Third Street and Fifth Avenue before the Warner-McComb House (46) was built next to it in 1928. Its Tudor Revival form is one of the finest in the district. The house was built for a Mrs. Warner, a widow, and her two small children. Mr. Warner had been superintendent of one of the local furniture factories, and they had previously lived near the railroad tracks.

As the construction of the Warner house demonstrates, the Claremont High School District continued to attract businessmen and other professionals who were willing to invest their money in fine homes. This is also evident in a number of other houses which were built in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Two of K. C. Menzies' sons opted to locate along Second Avenue on lots behind their father. Phillip Menzies, secretary of Menzies Hosiery Mills, had a small Neo-Colonial Revival style house (47) built around 1930. In 1931, Donald S. Menzies moved into a new home (48) which was designed by a local architect, Q. E. Herman. Donald was the president of Menzies Hosiery Mills, and vice-president of the First Security Company.

Between 1927 and 1931, two small houses (49, 50) had been built for Frank L. Fox and J. Carl Wolfe on the north side, 100 block, of Second Avenue, representing a further subdivision of the original Councill lot. Both of the buildings were based on the current Tudor Revival styles.

Fox was the manager of the Hickory office of Duke Power Company, and his house is the smallest Tudor Revival house in the district. J. Carl Wolfe was the founder of the Wolfe Drug Company. At about the same time that these houses were built, Shuford L. Whitener's son, James L. Whitener, had a house (51) built at the rear of his father's lot. James was engaged in the automobile and filling station business. Adjacent to Whitener's house, Ward Yoder, a piano tuner, bought the back part of Milas Sigmond's lot (34) and had a small brick veneered Colonial Revival house (52) built around 1930.

After 1931, as a result of the economic effects of the Depression, there was no construction in the district until 1935. In that year, Charlotte Cere Grothe built the first of four houses which were erected in the district before the outbreak of World War II. Her small brick veneer house (54) was simply finished. Contemporary with it is the house (55) at 123 Second Avenue, N.E. built for James C. Shuford, a businessman and the youngest son of Hickory pioneer Abel A. Shuford. It was too simply finished. The fact that Miss Grothe and James C. Shuford chose to build in this neighborhood, although on a somewhat modest scale, is evidence of the fact that the area around Claremont High School continued to retain its social status through the Depression-marked years of the early 1930s.

That status was further confirmed and re-enforced by the construction of three major houses in the district in 1938-40. Subdivision of the large lot on which the William Menzies house was located made way for the construction in 1938 of the Tudor Revival style Marshall R. Wagner House (53) at the northeast corner of Second Avenue and Second Street. Wagner operated a retail furniture store (which continues in operation today), and his house was the last, and one of the finest, of the Tudor Revival houses constructed in the district. This house and the two houses erected for David M. McComb, Jr. and Arthur H. Burgess are typical, and to the scale, of handsome houses which were erected in the district in the late nineteenth century and through the twentieth century until the Depression. In both an architectural and historical sense, they represent the coda to the period of significance for the Claremont High School Historic District. McComb was the son of David McComb, Sr., whose farm forms the site of much of this district. McComb Jr., in 1939 built his house (56) on a parcel of family land. The next year Arthur H. Burgess built an impressive Colonial Revival house at 322 Third Avenue. It is the last architecturally significant house erected in the district. Together with the McComb house it represents the end of a distinguished tradition of domestic architecture in the neighborhood around Claremont High School. The outbreak of World War II restated what was already an economic fact here.

Construction in the district since 1940 on what few lots remained has included a small World War II Colonial Revival style house for Luther G. Boliek (58), and an office (59) built in the 1950s for Dr. Hunsucker at the rear of his lot on Third Street. In addition, two intrusive buildings have been built: one (built before 1961) (60) between the houses of K. C. Menzies and Mrs. William Menzies, Sr., and the second, a one-story, two-family apartment house (61), built in the 1970s, between T. M. Johnston's home on Fifth Avenue and Maple Grove. One structure,

built in the 1930s and known as the nurses residence (62), was moved into the district in the early 1970s. Originally located behind the Richard Baker Hospital, it was moved to its present site when Glenn R. Frye Memorial Hospital (originally Richard Baker Hospital) began a building expansion program. In addition, the only church (63) in the district, and only the second institutional building, was constructed in 1951 by the First Methodist Church, the congregation's third church building in Hickory. Built on the site of the David M. McComb house, its large L-shaped plan, imposing portico, and tall belfry and steeple dominate the intersection of Third Street and Third Avenue. During this general period, a number of unfortunate changes were made to Carolina Park including the widening of Second Street (NC 127) which removed the stone culvert; the wading pool and lily pool were filled in; the playground equipment was removed; and the swimming pool filled in in the 1950s. At present, is a serene; well-maintained wooded lot with many of its unusual trees still in place and identified.

In 1972, the educational and cultural facility at the heart of the district once again was closed. Additions to the Claremont High School campus had been made in 1955, 1959, and 1963, but the ever-increasing suburban population forced the school board to reexamine the feasibility of expanding the facilities on this site. The original school building required substantial rehabilitation and, in 1972, the new additions on the site were turned into an elementary school and the 1925 building was abandoned. At one point demolition was considered, but a plan to turn the school into an arts center was put forward in 1982 and work has begun on achieving this goal.

The residential area which developed around the Claremont Female College and later the Claremont High School was, from the start, characterized by the large homes built for businessmen and professionals. Prominent early residents include bankers (D. W. Shuler, K. C. Menzies), merchants and businessmen (A. L. Shuford, David and Harvey McComb William B. Menzies), and a district Superior Court Judge (W. B. Council). Later residents such as Frank Clinard, the Thorntons, Eubert and Josephine Lyerly, Walter J. Shuford, George W. Hall, and Dr. Heald, were no less prominent, and each contributed to the growth and development of the city. When housing construction accelerated during the 1920s and 1930s, yet another generation of professionals turned to the district for their homes. Merchants such as Alonzo M. West and Marshall R. Wagner; lawyers like Thomas P. Pruitt and David McComb, Jr.; Dr. Hunsucker and the Menzies brothers added their new homes to the area's collection of fine buildings. While the neighborhood continued to attract the middle and upper middle classes, it also became home for other less prominent, but no less important, members of Hickory's growing population. Whether proximity to Claremont College had ever had an influence on the character of the neighborhood is uncertain simply because the financial and organizational problems which beset the school at its outset continued unabated. On the other hand, the area certainly benefitted from the cultural activities which were held there and later at Claremont High School. At present the Claremont High School District is still an attractive neighborhood for the city's businessmen, doctors, and other professionals who constitute the vast majority of its population.

Furthermore, with the planned redevelopment of the Claremont High School into space for the Catawba County Council for the Arts, the cultural activities which have long been associated with the district will continue.

END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Charles J. Preslar, Jr., (ed), History of Catawba County, (Salisbury, North Carolina: Rowan Printing Company, 1954), 346, hereinafter cited as Preslar, History of Catawba County.

<sup>2</sup> Catawba County Deeds, Office of the Register of Deeds, Catawba County Courthouse, Newton, Book 13, p.448, hereinafter cited as Catawba County Deeds.

<sup>3</sup> Preslar, History of Catawba County, 334. Henry W. Robinson was Jesse Robinson's only son. After Henry's death in 1883, his son John W. Robinson continued to sell parcels from this tract of land. Material on the Robinson Family history is on file at the Elbert Ivey Memorial Library, Hickory.

<sup>4</sup> Attempts to incorporate the village began in 1863 when the charter of Hickory Tavern was issued. Ratification of an amended charter was delayed until 1869 by the war and subsequent bureaucratic delays. In 1873 the charter of the Town of Hickory was enacted. The 1,000 yard limits (changed in 1879 to one mile), centered on the warehouse of the Western North Carolina Railroad, included the entire Claremont High School District. Preslar, History of Catawba County, 345.

<sup>5</sup> Catawba County Deeds, Book 14, p. 56.

<sup>6</sup> Catawba County Book of Plats, Office of the Register of Deeds, Catawba County Courthouse, Newton, Book 1, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Catawba County Deeds, Book 95, p. 332.

<sup>8</sup> Map of Catawba County, North Carolina, Surveyed and drawn by R. A. Yoder (Newton, North Carolina: R. A. Yoder, 1886), hereinafter cited as Yoder, Map of Catawba County.

<sup>9</sup> "Hickory Plat of 1868 Found Here, "Hickory Daily Record, 16 January 1962.

<sup>10</sup> "Girls School Noted in Day, "Hickory Daily Record, September 1965. SEE ALSO: James B. Harris, "A History of Claremont College," Thesis,(MA), Appalachian State Teachers College, Boone, 1951.

<sup>11</sup> Sometime around 1923 a portion of this ornamentation was removed apparently because of the owner's feeling that it was "too much." In any case, much of it is stored in the attic. See the field notes in the Shuler-Harper House file.

<sup>12</sup> F. A. Grace was also responsible for painting the frescoes and ceilings in the old First National Bank building, the Elliott Opera House, and the lobby of the Hickory Inn. All three of the buildings have been demolished. J. Weston Clinard, Clinard Looks Back (Hickory, North Carolina: Clay Printing Company, 1962), 61-2, hereinafter cited as Clinard, Clinard Looks Back.

13 Western Piedmont Council of Governments, 1970 Census Data Digest for the Unifour Complex (Hickory, North Carolina: WPCOG), A-1, hereinafter cited as WPCOG, 1970, Census Data.

14 Aiken's wife Martha E. had purchased their lot from John W. Robinson in 1890. Catawba County Deeds, Book 39 p. 150.

15 "Girls School Noted in Day, "Hickory Daily Record, 11 September 1965.

16 "Know you Neighbor, "Hickory Daily Record, 17 February, 1951.

17 Hickory Mercury, 15 December 1987.

18 Hickory Democrat, 1 April, 1909.

19 Original plans in the possession of Mrs. Kent Belmore are signed by Frye. See the file on the William B. Menzies House for photos of these plans.

20 Rev. Levi Branson, Business Directory for 1897 (Raleigh: Levi Branson, Office Publisher, 1987), 167, hereinafter cited as Branson, Business Directory for (the appropriate year).

21 Map of Hickory, North Carolina, 1915.

22 Catawba County Deeds, Book 80, p. 293.

23 "Called Father of Furniture Industry Here, "Hickory Daily Record, 11 September, 1965.

24 Telephone interview with Mr. Bailey Patrick, attorney and son of J. H. Patrick, conducted by Kirk F. Mohney, 1984.

25 Catawba County Deeds, Book 116, p. 516.

26 Catawba County Deeds, Book 70, p. 561.

27 Catawba County Deeds, Book 95. p. 332.

28 Catawba County Deeds, Book 86, p. 128. Interview conducted in 1984 by Kirk F. Mohney with Mrs. Rusk G. Henry, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. T. M. Johnston.

29 Mrs. C. C. Bost, "Reminiscences of Hickory life in Early Days,".

30 Clinard, Clinard Looks Back, 30.

31 "Carolina Park Tranquil, Scenic in All Seasons, "Hickory Daily Record, 11 September, 1965.

32 Catawba County Deeds, Book 102, p. 108.

33 "Hoisery Manufacturer Began Career in Newspaper Office,  
"Hickory Daily Record, 11 September, 1965.

34 Telephone interview conducted in 1984 by Kirk F. Mohny with Mr.  
Bailey Patrick, lawyer and son of J. H. Patrick.

35 "Now is Proper Time to Start Building Campaign,  
"Hickory Daily Record, 4 February, 1921.

36 Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, The History of a  
Southern State; North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North  
Carolina Press, 1973), p. 584.

37 WPCOG, 1970 Census Data, A-1.

38 Catawba County Deeds, Book 142, p. 476.

39 This fact was verified by Mrs. William Barkley, Carver's daughter,  
who lives in the house her father built around 1924.

40 "Brief History of Schools of Hickory Charter System, "Hickory  
Daily Record, United Daughters of the Confederacy Edition, February,  
1938.

41 Construction Plans for Claremont Central High School, from the  
files of the Community Development Department, City of Hickory, North  
Carolina.

42 "Brief History of Schools of Hickory Charter System, "Hickory  
Daily Record. United Daughters of the Confederacy Edition, February,  
1938."

43 "Carolina Park Tranquil, Scenic in All Seasons" Hickory  
Daily Record, 11 September, 1965.

44 Ibid.