

Old and New Together

2

1





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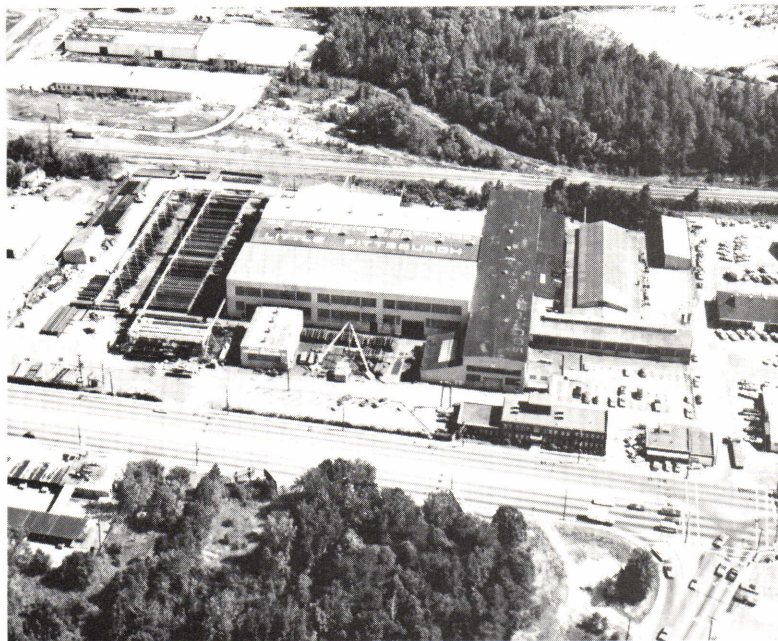
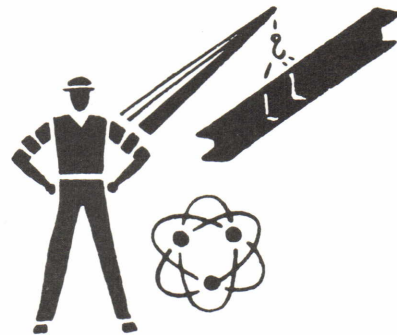
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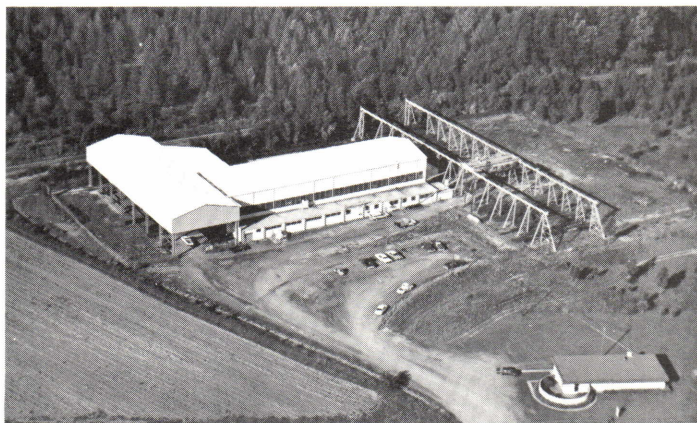
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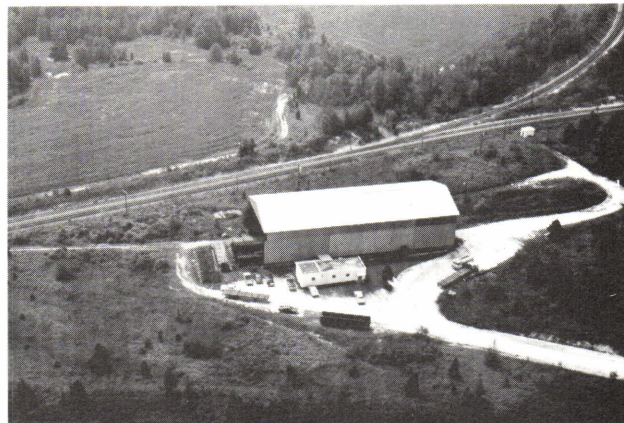
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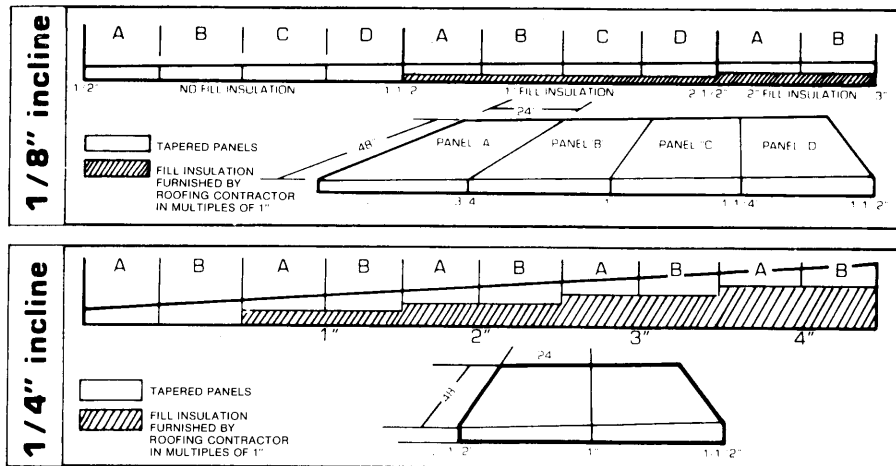
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Official Magazine of the  
North Carolina Chapter  
American Institute of Architects

January/February 1979

Editor **Ernest Wood**

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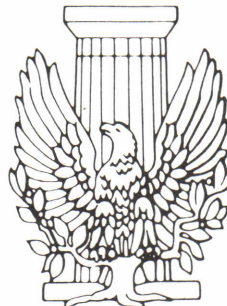
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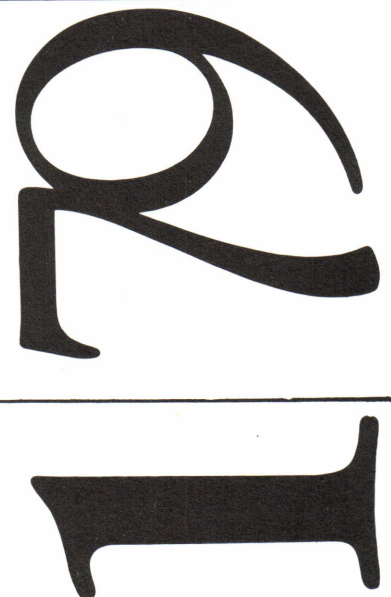
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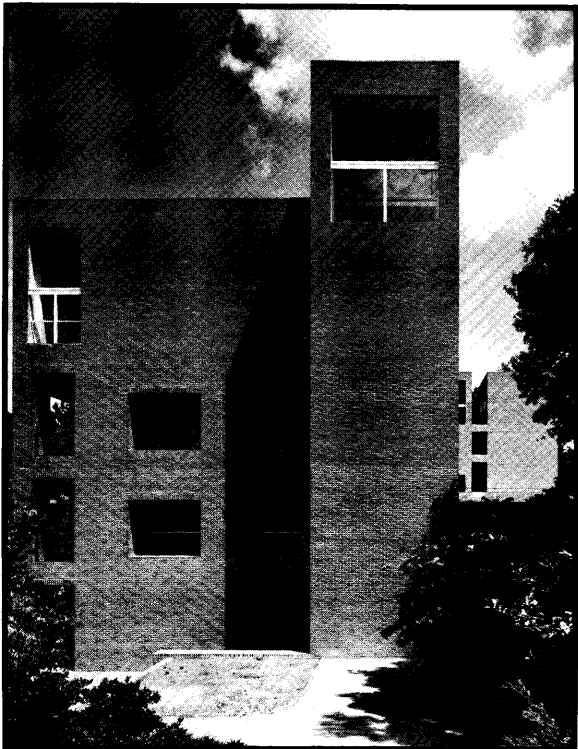
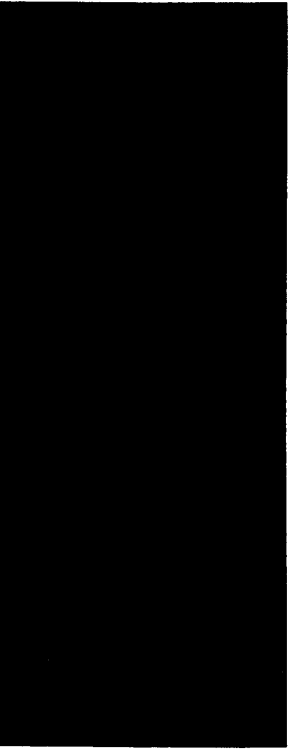
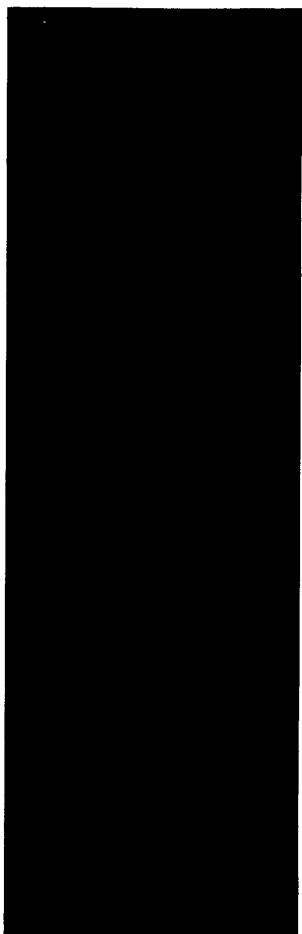
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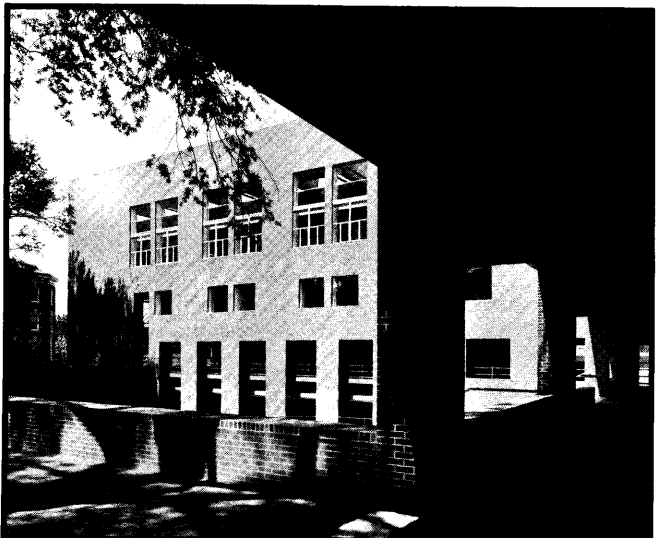
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ARCHITECTURE



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# Frontispiece

By Ernest Wood, Editor

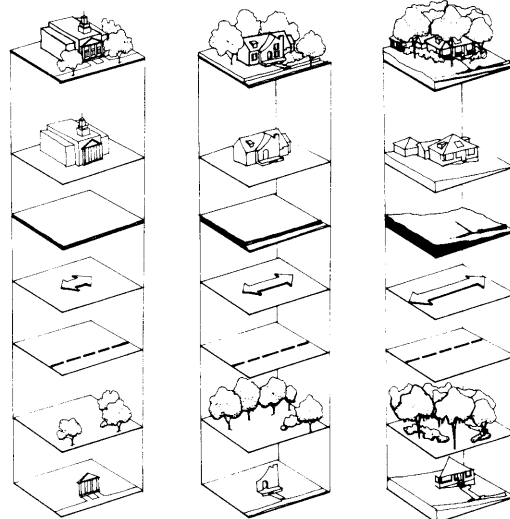
Four years ago, when the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City opened its new Lehman Wing, a limestone and glass addition to an 1880 building of limestone, brownstone and brick, *New York Times* architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable put the case enthusiastically for mixing old and new architecture, by declaring, "Past and present together are a knockout esthetic." But last year, as a speaker at a conference entitled "Old and New Architecture: A Design Relationship," sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Mrs. Huxtable's *Times* colleague Paul Goldberger presented another side of relating new to old. "The question," he said, "is as difficult a one as there is in architecture." We agree with them both. But in North Carolina, maybe we agree with Goldberger a little more.

What's difficult about mixing old and new here is that by and large the subject is virgin territory. There are many isolated examples in the state — and many of them exemplary examples, too — of additions, renovations and infill buildings, the three major building types generally associated with the subject, but there are few that occur as elements working together in a townscape or landscape. Most towns, it seems, are either still frantically trying to save their old buildings and haven't gotten around yet to adding to them or filling in the vacant lots between them, or they are still treating the subject as individual building projects, not as the urban design problem it really is. And that's the crux of the issue — urban design. We wanted to look at the way new buildings fit into larger contexts of townscape or landscape, not just at the architectural details of individual buildings. And we had trouble finding adequate examples.

Take, for example, Wilming-

ton. We made a trip to the port city late in the fall and spent a day with Charles Boney, FAIA, former chairman of the Wilmington Historic District Commission, looking at the district there. Now, Wilmington has the largest and probably the most exciting historic district in the state and the Wilmington people are quite correct when they lay claim to being the Charleston or Savannah of North Carolina. And they've had some encouraging results. Not only have they saved some wonderful old houses, but people in other parts of the city — actually outside the commission's jurisdiction — are beginning to learn from the district's example and restore their houses to the commission's standards. But aside from a few exemplary examples such as the Cotton Exchange, a retail renovation actually outside the district, and a few unfortunate examples inside the district of new buildings that one preservationist we spoke with called "Junior League Georgian," Wilmington has not yet begun to explore the possibilities of new construction, especially additions and infill, among its historic buildings. R. V. Asbury, Jr., Executive Director of the Historic Wilmington Foundation told us, in fact, that for the time being, preservationists don't really want new construction, either. There are two reasons. First, new construction, even if it is not replacing old buildings but filling gaps between them, siphons off money, energy and, if the new building is housing, residents that the historic area desperately needs. But more important in the long run, public awareness of how to add new to old is not developed enough yet; it would be better to put off new construction until Wilmington can learn from other cities' examples.

We agree. Wilmington's approach probably is a



Elizabeth Staples

On the Cover;  
Elements of  
buildings con-  
texts in the  
Chapel Hill  
Historic District

prudent one, given the number of buildings that still need to be saved there. But we felt that despite — or maybe because of — the fact that most towns have not really come to grips yet with adding to existing neighborhoods and buildings on a broad scale, we still should take a look at the issue. We turned to another town, Chapel Hill, that had never had to face the problems of reviving either commercial or residential areas, that had an area, a university campus, to which new elements were added outside the constraints of the marketplace and which had — and this is the most important of all — a history of effective review processes to insure that new buildings are compatible with their contexts.

So what we have here is a look at some of the issues involved in adding new buildings to existing contexts as they are exemplified in one town, Chapel Hill. Bob Stipe shows one way to try for compatibility: regulating

massing, materials and other details, but allowing construction in any style. Diane Lea looks at the opposite method: dictating a style, but applying it indiscriminately to building types and sizes. We've also taken a look at the image of the campus, the reality of the campus and the way new buildings have been added there. Leaving Chapel Hill, we have some thoughts on the rural landscape, the history of additions to buildings, the problem of the old building that is now incompatible with new architecture surrounding it, and what Europeans — who have lived with this subject much longer than Americans have — think of adding new architecture to old.

It's a difficult subject. There are no real answers. So we've tried more than anything else simply to raise questions. But it's an exciting and promising — a "knock-out," if you will — subject, too. And it is certain to occupy more and more importance in the architecture of the future.



# Historic District

Seeking compatibility in buildings' contexts and details, not their style

By Robert E. Stipe

This isn't a very easy subject to write about.

Any article about design controls raises a lot of complicated issues. Issues raise hackles. When hackles are up, people are mad and don't always want to think. They'd rather argue.

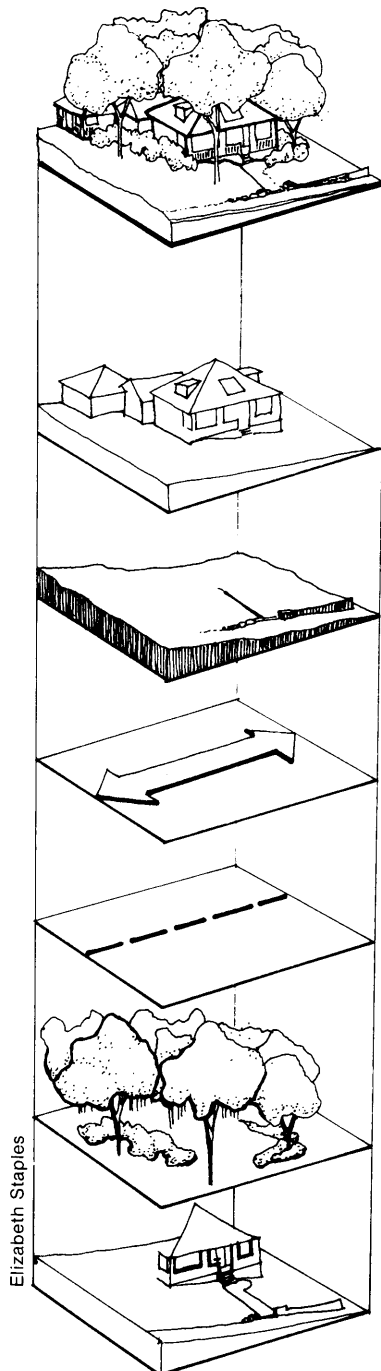
Some of the principle issues present themselves in the very words associated with the subject. What's "old?" Is something old "good" just by virtue of being old? What's "new" or contemporary? Is it "good" just because it's new? *Who* should decide what constitutes an appropriate blend of old and new, and just *how* should such matters be decided? And even before you get to these issues, how do you look at the context of the place where the blending happens? And, who is competent to do that?

To complicate matters even further, Chapel Hill has a special problem, brought on by its conscious attempt (see pages 14-19) at creating a town style: when does the "fake" become "real"? The so-called Williamsburg Tradition is strong in this town as a contextual stylistic theme, and if, as Henry Kamphoefner is said to have put it many years ago, "Williamsburg set back the cause of modern architecture in America by a hundred years," the question of whether there is any hope for good design in Chapel Hill becomes very real indeed.

It's not an easy issue, and it's an important one — not only from an environmental perspective, but also because, as former NCAIA attorney, Mayne Albright recently pointed out (*North Carolina Architect*, 6/78), there is a strong tendency for government ("them") to intervene more and more in the lives of ordinary citizens and professional designers ("us"). In a real sense, the "we-they," "them-us" attitude about our own governments is also part of the problem.

## Make No Bones About It ...

For better or worse, a *public design control system* has been set up in Chapel Hill. Our blender is an ordinance passed by the Board of Aldermen which was, in turn, specifically authorized by the state General Assembly. It's based on the so-called "police power" of the State which allows local governments to regulate the use of land, and the controls it embodies (specifically involving the fifth and fourteenth amendments to the U.S. Constitution) have been upheld as an "OK" thing to do by the United States Supreme Court in the Grand Central case in June of last year. There may be some lingering question about *how* the rules may be applied in specific situations, but the basic idea behind the rules



Breaking down a building's context shows (from top) its overall setting, architectural details, topog-

raphy, siting on lot, setback, vegetation and transition from public to private space



is most likely “OK” in the constitutional sense.

So the system is in place, not just in Chapel Hill but in more than a dozen North Carolina cities and in 500 other communities across the nation. What’s happening in Chapel Hill and in these other places is more likely to be the norm rather than the exception by the end of the century — if past trends are any indication.

The implications for architectural practice, not to mention its impact on our cherished notions about the freedom of the property owner, are nothing short of staggering. Obviously it adds both a new challenge and a host of new problems for the architect and the client. But it could also, just possibly, be an opportunity.

What is this system, and how does it work?

### The Historic District Ordinance

Back in 1975, the Board of Aldermen amended the zoning ordinance to draw some boundaries around the “historic” district in Chapel Hill. Under the amended ordinance, every property owner in the district and his architect — assuming he has one, which most owners don’t (a fact we shouldn’t lose sight of) — have not only got to comply with all of the usual zoning restrictions on the use of the building, yard requirements, off-street parking, the building code and other familiar regulations, but they have also got to go to the Chapel Hill Historic District Commission, show that commission their building plans and elevations and get the approval of that commission in the form of a special permit known as a “Certificate of Appropriateness.” If a majority of the commission likes the design (which in legal jargon means that the commission has to find as a fact that what is proposed to be built is “not incongruous with the historic aspects of the district” — whatever that means), the owner receives the Certificate of Appropriateness and may thereafter apply for all the other necessary building and zoning permits.

But if the commission *doesn’t* like the design, the Certificate of Appropriateness will be refused and everything comes to a dead halt. No other permits are allowed to be issued, and unless the owner wants to pursue the matter in court, it’s either back to the drawing board or forget the whole thing.

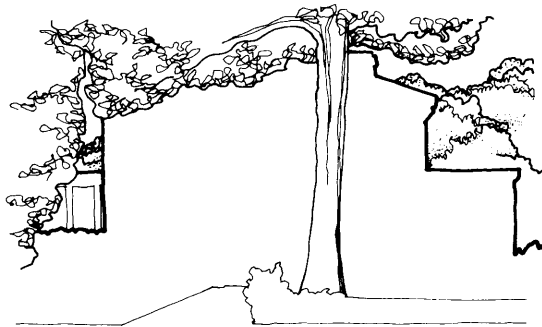
### Enter the Public ...

Not only does a public regulatory body come into the picture, but so do the neighbors, all of whom are notified of the owner’s intentions to build

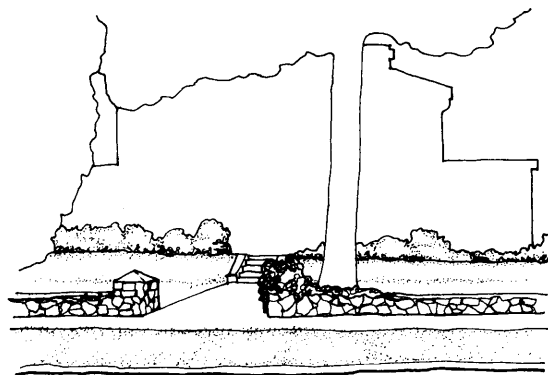
Characteristics of a house include ...



... its tree canopy ...



... its boundaries ...



... and its architectural details



Elizabeth Staples

something ( a new building on a vacant lot, an addition to an existing building or whatever), and elaborate legal procedures are set into motion to insure that everyone has his say in a public hearing. Again, at this point, it's important to remember that this system of shared responsibility for design decision-making has been before the supreme courts in a dozen or more states, and not a single state supreme court nor the U.S. Supreme Court has put a stamp of disapproval on the concept. Actually, the idea isn't even very new. Charleston, S.C. adopted the first such ordinance in this country back in the 30's.

In today's youthful jargon, this situation would be classified as "Heavy!" And it is. It presents the gut question of who decides these kinds of issues in a democratic society — roughly analogous to having to decide, when you're having your appendix out, whether it's better to have one competent surgeon in whom the patient has faith doing the operation, or whether a better result is apt to come from having a whole committee of doctors (and maybe some neighbors) poking around in your insides.

The General Assembly (which sets the ground rules for every city or county playing this game) thought about this, and the "policy" embedded in the present state historic district enabling legislation says that the "committee" approach is the better one — provided that the "committee" (the Historic District Commission) consists of a minimum of three members, a majority of whom, whenever possible, are qualified "by interest, training or experience in such field as history and architecture." (Most commissions as a practical matter have six to ten members, however.)

That, roughly, is the system and the way it works. We'll come back to it. In the meantime, what about Chapel Hill? How does it work there?

### **The Chapel Hill Setting — And the Commission's Criteria**

Before considering the design criteria used by the commission, there are a couple of things about the

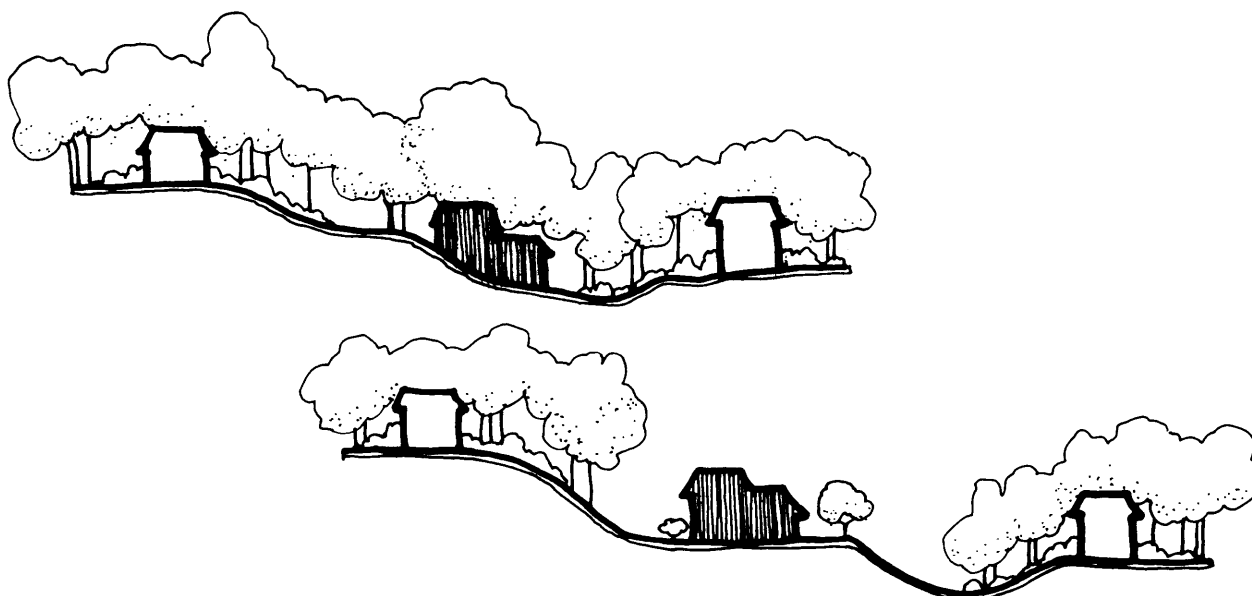
Chapel Hill Historic District that must be kept in mind. One is that the district is not an architectural gem or set-piece like Old Salem, Charleston or Williamsburg — the places that most people think of as "historic." The Chapel Hill Historic District is really what local folks would call "country carpenter," with a few buildings dating back to the early nineteenth century, with a dozen or so structures of intrinsic architectural importance (the work of notable architects, master builders and so on). Most of the buildings in the district, numbering about 400, have been built during the last 75 years W.B.A. (Without Benefit of Architect), and many of them were put up early in this century. Many buildings are younger, in fact, than some of the residents.

In essence, the historic district is just a pleasant, comfortable place with lots of ancient trees in the yards or along the streets, bordered by brick or gravel sidewalks, well-kept yards with an abundance of informal planting and an overall ambience that bespeaks of comfort, informality and continuity. It is the dwelling place of students, fraternities and sororities, a few businesses, old families and new families. It's "Vintage Village," which has an overall character that is specially revered not only by those who live there but by lots of University alumni who often return to Chapel Hill and like to remember it as it was in the "Good Old Days." Hardly a big deal by, say, Charleston or Williamsburg standards.

A second thing to keep in mind is that the Chapel Hill ordinance, unlike most other such ordinances around the country, quite emphatically and specifically *requires* that the Historic District Commission *encourage* contemporary design in new buildings and additions to existing buildings.

This is a real switch, since, when one stops to think about it, virtually *all* historic district regulations in the country are what are called "look-alike" ordinances — which is to say they are based on the principle that all new construction should look like what is already there. Here, however, is a law that says on the one hand that "congruity with the historic aspects of the district" is good, but that "contemporary design" (*not*

*Placing a building should respect topography and vegetation as at left, not as at right*



Elizabeth Staples



historic, *not* Williamsburg) is also good.

How to reconcile these two apparently contradictory design goals?

### Enter the Designers ...

At this point, the commission got lucky. Or smart. Or both.

Collectively, the Historic District Commission (two architects, several local "preservationists," two historians, a realtor, a University student, a lawyer, several homemakers, retired business executives and so on) is a fairly conservative, private-enterprise-minded group of people. From the outset they instinctively recognized that: (1) they were treading on the far frontiers of the state's "police power" by "regulating" aesthetics, (2) the so-called "historic aspects of the district" meant a lot of different things to different people, (3) they didn't want to meddle any more than absolutely necessary with private affairs and (4) their essential problem was somehow to define "the outer limits of good taste" (and we should forthrightly recognize that collective community "taste" is what it's all about) in ways that property owners, builders, architects and public officials could recognize and understand.

A major problem in setting up the machinery was that the design criteria spelled out in the legalese of state legislation and the ordinance addresses itself primarily to matters of the styling and detailing of (Capital A) Architecture and its "appurtenant features." The commission, on the other hand, recognized that preserving and enhancing the character of the district involved a much broader range of environmental design issues. At heart, it is this clear understanding of the difference between the objective of "regulating architecture" on the one hand and "maintaining the character of an area" on the other that sets the Chapel Hill operation head and shoulders above most others around the country.

But the commission had a basic problem in determining how to sell this idea in terms that

property owners, designers, and administrators could read and understand — this communication being a fundamental legal requirement of all regulatory ordinances of every kind. The problem before the commission was how to present the image of desirable end-state for the district in terms of its visual character.

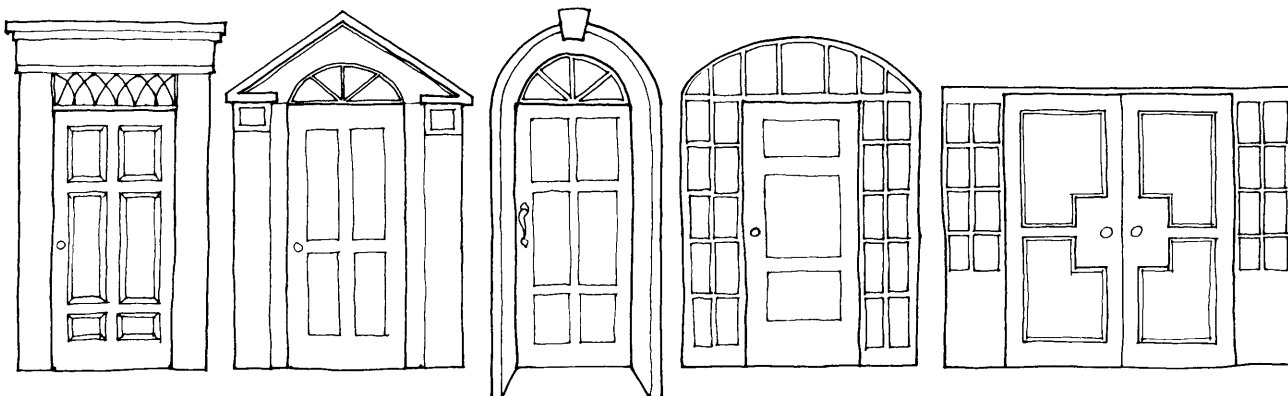
"Luck" came two years ago in the form of a team of graduate students in landscape architecture from the School of Design in N.C. State University under the patient leadership of Prof. Dick Wilkinson and with some guidance from myself. Happily, the requirements for an appropriate landscape architecture studio project matched up almost exactly with the commission's need for guidelines to support its decision-making in connection with individual applications for Certificates of Appropriateness.

The design team's final approach, after a lot of preliminary discussion and a few false starts, was to put the emphasis on the character of the neighborhood rather than dwelling on the wide variety of styles of architecture and period buildings that exist within the district. Most important, a decision was made to try to define this character in graphic terms rather than in words. There were already enough "words" in the ordinance to choke a mule. The end product of five months of work was nothing more complicated than a slide show and a publication. But the concept was sound, the graphics compelling, and best of all (notwithstanding some lumps and warts here and there) the system of analysis produced guidelines that tend to work very well in actual application.

### The Guidelines

The essential idea was that the character of the district boiled down to six essential elements: architectural form (which the law emphasizes almost to the exclusion of everything else), the conformance of individual buildings to a variety of topographic conditions in the area, the building-to-building spacing (sideways and from the street), vegetation (probably *the* predominant character-building element

*A variety of architectural details exists in the district. Here, a sample of types of doors*



Elizabeth Staples

of the district) and the handling of edges, boundaries and the transition spaces between public and private areas.

Actually, the district turned out from the standpoint of these characteristics to contain three rather remarkably different sub-areas, each of which was literally “taken apart” in an elaborate graphic matrix, analyzed and put back together to define, cumulatively, what already existed. As a member of the commissions later put it, “You people really didn’t show us things we had never seen. What you did do was to organize the idea of the place so that we could think and talk about it with a common frame of reference.”

Where analysis was completed, however, two major categories of guidelines for new and infill construction were developed. The first set of guidelines dealt with the site and its context, taking into account landscaping, the handling of parking, the design of walks and entrances, the importance of fences and walks as space-defining elements, the lighting of the district at night and the handling of signs (a relatively minor problem since most of the district is residential). The second set of guidelines was directed to individual structures, including such elements as general form and proportion, roof shapes and materials, height, setback and placement on the lot, construction materials and certain details relating to entrances and fenestrations. (The oddball among the architectural guidelines was the color factor. State law specifically requires historic district commissions to consider color in reviewing applications, but the Chapel Hill ordinance prohibits this. Ironically, this is the one factor on which many applicants actually seek the commission’s advice!)

One has to sell all of the guidelines to fully appreciate their impact. The important point is that there is a regulatory body which by and large conscientiously tries to concern itself with the larger issues of environmental design and, unlike most others, is not totally preoccupied with regulating architectural design.

There is nothing in the guidelines that requires the imitation of any earlier style of building, nothing that makes the job of coming up with well-executed contemporary infill structures more difficult. Blending the new with the old is not an especially difficult issue with this commission, since the district itself, architecturally speaking, is nothing more than a continuum of 175 years of diverse styles, materials and building technologies. The commission has a rather clearly defined image of what it favors — an image it hopes will be widely accepted by both designers and owners when, according to present plans, the guidelines are published and distributed throughout the community later this year. That community includes not only architects, but also builders, owners, tenants, lending institutions, building officials and others.

A final advantage of dealing with design at this uncharacteristically larger scale than is encouraged

by existing state law is that the Town of Chapel Hill (which is itself subject to the requirements of the ordinance, as is any private property owner), has begun to recognize *its* responsibilities to help maintain the character of the area. The town has submitted not only its designs for municipal bike paths, utility poles and street lights, telephone booths and so on for review and approval, but it has a fresh awareness of the importance of public policies with respect to such things as street tree planting and maintenance on public rights of way, sanitation facilities and street furniture. In addition to its regulatory responsibilities, the commission also has substantial and systematic input into the larger planning issues in the area through the ordinary zoning, environmental review and capital improvement processes of the planning board and Board of Aldermen.

### Where Next?

All of this paints a rather rosy picture. There have in fact been disputes and disagreements, sometimes bitter and prolonged, but they have been few in number and there are some fundamental problems remaining.

One among these is how to evolve a procedure whereby owners and their architects can meet and consult with one another in a legally correct yet constructively open frame of mind at a much earlier stage in the design process than they do now. Normally, applicants’ plans don’t come to the commission until the design development or working drawing stage, when the owner’s time and money and the architect’s pride of paternity are deeply involved and even mutually agreeable changes to plans are difficult to achieve. The commission would like to operate on the theory that there is a time in the life of every fire when it can be put out with a single cup of water. Earlier consultation with respect to the larger environmental design objectives of the commission which does not involve the commission in either pre-approval of final designs or dictate details, which are more properly the concern of the architect and his client, is essential. A related problem is that much construction within the district is done without an architect, and yet the commission is not in a position to “do” design for individual applicants.

A continuing problem is the matter of obtaining representation from the design professions on the commission itself. Presently there are two architects on the commission, without whose active involvement the system would probably have collapsed into mediocrity at the outset. Architects, quite naturally, don’t like to serve on design review boards for the simple reason that as members, they are risking the loss of a commission arising from potential conflict of interest. Nor — again understandably — do they like being put in the position of having to criticize the work of their peers.

Nonetheless, without the initial input of design-trained eyes to assess the essential character of the district and to assist the commission in formulating



its own objectives for "its" special community and without the continuing availability of substantial input from design experts, the commission would likely still be floundering — preoccupied with the structural details so heavily emphasized by state law and missing the woods for the trees.

Can the system be extended to other areas of Chapel Hill? Yes, and it doubtless will be in the future. One small neighborhood of very marginal architectural-historical importance which adjoins the original district has already been added to it at the petition of all but one property owner — perhaps some indication of the extent to which there is public acceptance of the system itself. And there are other areas of town that will likely be added in the next five to ten years, possibly including the central business district itself. Whether the design review process can be made to work in these other areas will again depend on the clarity with which predetermined images of what is desired for each area can be systematically thought through and presented. No law is stronger than the force of public opinion behind it, and that is the essential lesson of the Chapel Hill experience. Sometimes, as demonstrated in earlier efforts at "Williamsburg-ing" Chapel Hill, when the image is strong enough, it can be achieved even without the force of law to back it up.

If the design professions, most particularly architects and landscape architects, can begin to

accept that such systems *can* work — at least that they do have ability to discourage or prevent an outrageous result, if not in every case to insure that good design actually happens — there will be a net social gain for design and for the community. Turning such a process over to totally untrained eyes is unthinkable in any event.

A new willingness for the professional design communities to become actively involved in these processes, rather than merely talking about them, is absolutely essential. We have passed the point at which institutional rhetoric is helpful or very effective.

Design review and control is not new or novel. It is here to stay. There will be more and more rather than less of it. The larger public is having its say in environmental design matters, and the context is now one in which the end result is often legally binding. One can only hope that the professions will rise to the occasion. ■

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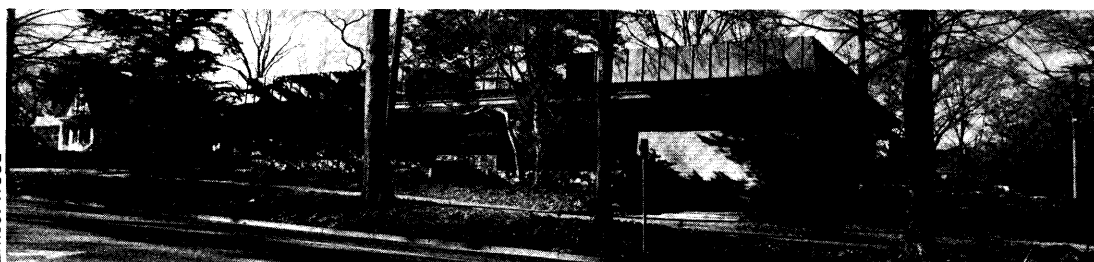
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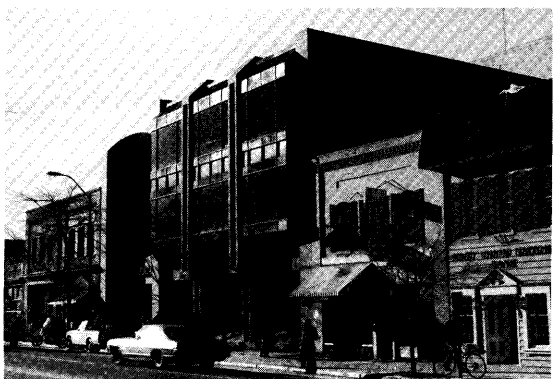
Left: A contemporary house compatible with its older neighbors uses proper roof shapes, materials and other details



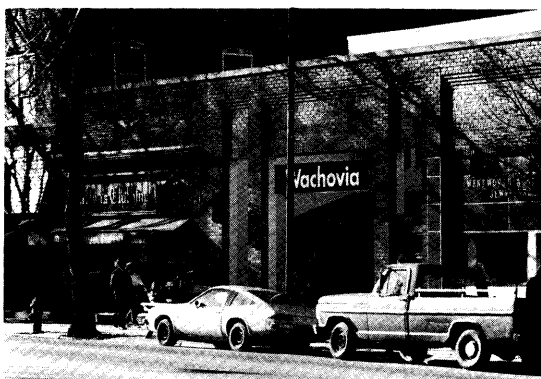
Left: This addition picks up window shapes, roof forms, materials and other details from the original structure



Left: The Chapel Hill Public Library generally meets the commission's guidelines, but its placement in a residential area is questionable



Left: NCNB Plaza, Franklin Street (outside the district), is out of scale with the surrounding buildings



Left: Wachovia Bank, Franklin Street (outside the district), is a contemporary renovation that respects its context

Ernest Wood

# Business District

Creating compatibility  
by designing buildings  
all of the same style

By Diane E. Lea

Local appearance boards, planning boards and historic district commissions often are made painfully aware of the complexity of their responsibility for formulating community architectural and aesthetic guidelines. These beleaguered souls may find it hard to believe, therefore, that during the decade 1940 to 1950 the town of Chapel Hill conceived, promoted and realized a unified design plan for its commercial district with the more or less voluntary cooperation of both the town merchants and the University of North Carolina. This phenomenon, often spoken of as "the Williamsburg-ing of Chapel Hill," contributed a great deal to the streetscape that has become associated with the image of "The Village" in the minds of generations of University alumni and town residents. In part, this plan was an effort by a self-conscious few to bring the town of Chapel Hill into a prominence befitting the seat of a great university, especially one acclaimed for the beauty of its campus. To a remarkable degree they succeeded. Despite the encroachments of a burgeoning population, traffic congestion and proliferating fast food restaurants, Chapel Hill still retains an air and appearance that is reminiscent of Hollywood's idealized college town of the 1940's.

The Williamsburg idea was first advanced in a letter printed in the March 22, 1940 edition of the *Chapel Hill Weekly*. The writer, John L. Morehead, was a member of a notable North Carolina family and an alumnus of the University at Chapel Hill. "If we could make the business block attractive like the rest

of the village," Morehead suggested, "Chapel Hill would become celebrated as one of the most beautiful places in the country." The town which Morehead held up as a model for such an endeavor was Williamsburg, Virginia.

Chapel Hill's choice of Williamsburg as a model for its main street says something significant about the community's taste and the desire for historical ties that seemed to provide part of the impetus for the Chapel Hill design scheme. The Williamsburg restoration was an important design influence in the 1920's and 1930's; it represented a particularly appealing period in American history. Even today, Colonial Williamsburg is, as critic Ada Louise Huxtable describes it, "an evocation of the past as we wish to see that past." Williamsburg's impact in the 1940's was probably even stronger than it is today, and the implication that a little town in Piedmont North Carolina could acquire a veneer of such aesthetic and historic lustre must have been seductive indeed.

Clearly, Louis Graves, influential publisher and editor of the *Chapel Hill Weekly*, found Morehead's idea appealing and added his own conclusion that "the storefronts constitute the most difficult part of the problem. If the businessmen can be interested in Mr. Morehead's idea and if cooperation can be achieved, then perhaps Mr. Morehead's hopes can be achieved."

Such an endorsement was no small matter. The influence of the *Weekly* (forerunner of today's *Chapel Hill Newspaper*) on village life in the 1940's is



Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia

Ernest Wood



impossible to imagine today. The newspaper greeted newcomers, chronicled the comings and goings of townsmen, interpreted town and University policy, commented on world affairs and fought innumerable crusades for the betterment of life in Chapel Hill as Louis Graves saw it. For the next ten years the pages of the *Weekly* heralded the arrival and extolled the virtues of every new Chapel Hill building large or small, fine or modest, that was built in the so-called Williamsburg style.

The community's response to the Williamsburg plan was almost immediate. Three members of an old and distinguished Chapel Hill family, the Mannings, decided to build a new office building with a "Williamsburg flavor" less than five months after the publication of Morehead's letter. Their choice for architect was Archie Davis of Durham, a young student of Arthur C. Nash, the University's consulting architect. (Nash was responsible for the continuation of what he described as a "Colonial-based" design plan for the expansion of the University's south campus, a plan instituted in the 1920's by the firm of McKim, Mead and White, early advocates of the Colonial Revival architectural style.)

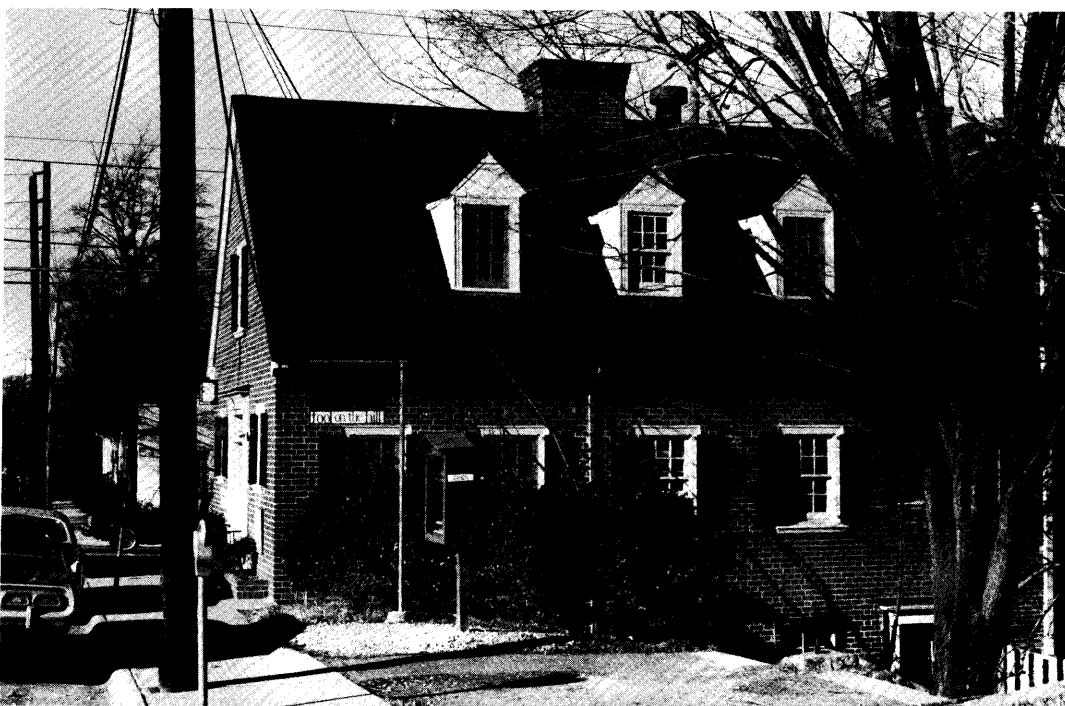
Davis brought to the project an understanding of the Colonial Revival architecture which Nash had been building for the University and a zeal for the Williamsburg plan for the downtown area. His efforts with the Manning Building, on the corner of Henderson and Rosemary Streets, were the beginning of a long association with the businessmen in the

Chapel Hill commercial district. He continued to advise them for many years, informally as well as on commission, under the aegis of the Town Planning Commission, while he served as the University's consulting architect following Nash's departure.

The Town Planning Commission grew out of a committee formed in early 1941 to consider ways of improving the appearance of the business section of Franklin Street. The five-member committee was soon designated a Town Planning Board by the Board of Aldermen and given the authority to:

*stimulate the improvement of the appearance of the streets, especially in the business section, after securing the advice of the best available consulting architect whose duty it would be to pass on the elevations of all renovated or newly erected buildings before they are renovated or erected, with a view to securing harmony in the design of the various architects employed by the owners.*

The commission held no power except the power of persuasion with which to influence the merchants to conform to its perception of how downtown Franklin Street should look. But that power was considerable in a small town. The commission's legal authority to review plans was reinforced by the town government's frequent refusal to issue building permits until the commission was satisfied. In addition, the commission members were influential individuals, and many of them remained in office for nearly the entire decade. These factors, combined with Louis Graves' unflagging support for the Colonial



The Manning Building, the beginning of "Williamsburg-ing" Chapel Hill

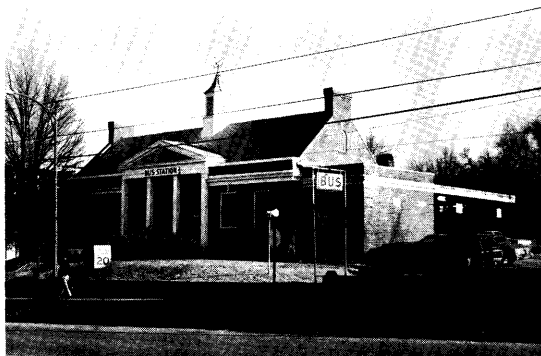
Ernest Wood



Smith-Prevost Building



The Bus Station



The Farmers' Dairy Cooperative, now Dairy Bar



Hazzard Motor Company, now Southern Bell offices



plan, constituted a nearly irresistible persuasive force. The Commission could also offer cooperating merchants architectural consultation free of charge. Their consulting architect was, of course, Archie Davis, whose expressed interest in the harmonious streetscape plan was as ardent as the commission's own.

The Williamsburg plan, as it was applied, actually derived little from the architecture of Williamsburg, Virginia, which has been described as the "last flowering of the Wren-Baroque." Instead, the architectural style embraced by the Chapel Hill plan was closer to Arthur Nash's description of the University's "Colonial-based" architecture as "a modification of the English Georgian style." Furthermore, Nash's description was inclusive "not only of buildings constructed within the strictly Colonial time bracket, but also of Post-Revolution buildings of the so-called 'Late Colonial' or 'Greek Revival' period; and even of modern building carried out in a colonial manner." This liberal interpretation of Revivalism meant that a merchant could have at his disposal myriad ornamental details with which to embellish his buildings. Columns, dormers, swan's neck pediments, cupolas and shuttered sash windows were a few of the favorites.

So the name provided a label by which to refer to the red brick storefronts with their assorted ornamentation and white trim which, beginning with the 1941 construction of the Carolina Theater in the heart of town, became the hallmarks of all new Franklin Street buildings. The Smith-Prevost Building on Columbia Street just north of Franklin was completed in the approved style just before World War II curtailed commercial construction. Carl Smith was so pleased with his building's appearance that he put up a larger Colonial building next to it in 1949.

The same eclectic Colonial Revivalism continued to dominate the new construction that flourished along West Franklin Street during the post-World War II building boom, a period which contributed such substantial structures as the bus station, the Farmers' Dairy Cooperative building, Fowler's Grocery Store and adjoining service station and the Hazzard Motor Company building.

In addition, an extension of the Franklin Street commercial district appeared in the form of the "New Building Block," a series of small, inexpensively constructed stores which stretched west beyond Fowler's grocery. To create a sense of continuity and scale in these modest buildings, Davis encouraged the use of a common wall featuring a raked parapet and false end-gable chimney motif. In addition, each storefront sported a pedimented door surround, modillioned cornice or set of dormers in recognition of the town's dominant architectural theme.

When the University Service Plants building burned, it was rebuilt on the main business block with red brick, shuttered eight-over-eight windows and a false end gable. Otherwise, though, Franklin Street's original block was Colonialized with little more than a classical cornice here and a muntined window there.





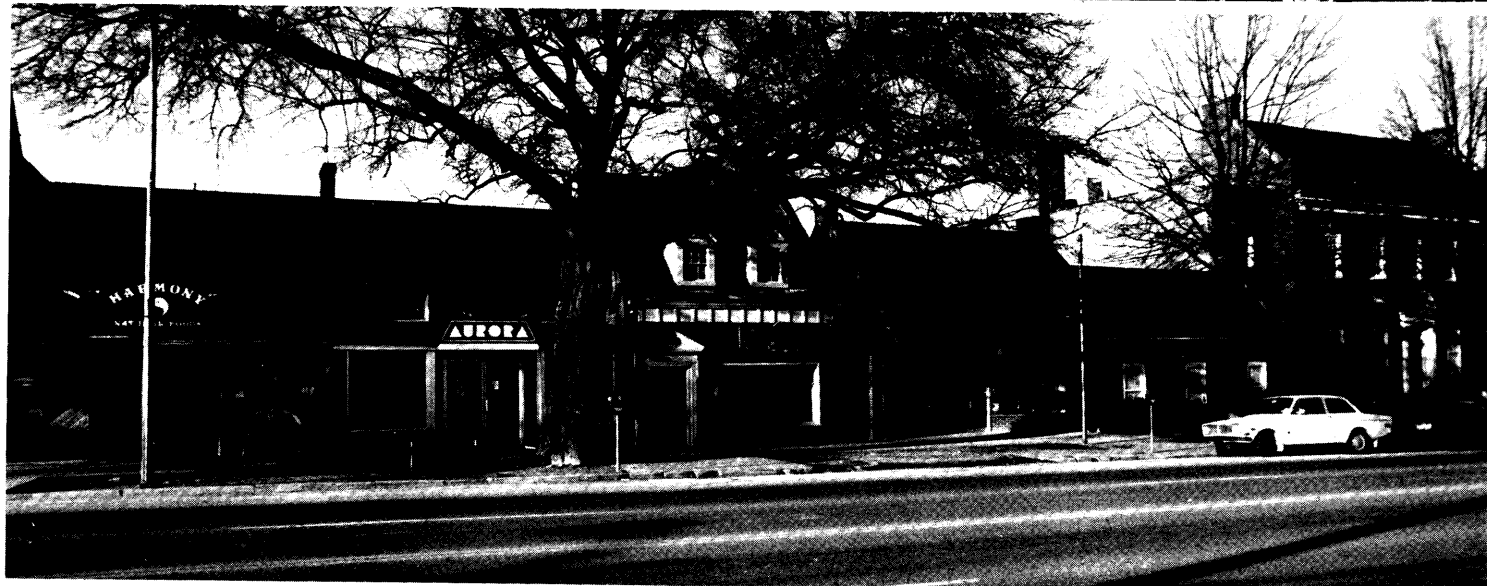
Above: Fowl-  
ers' Grocery  
Store, overall  
view and de-  
tail of entrance



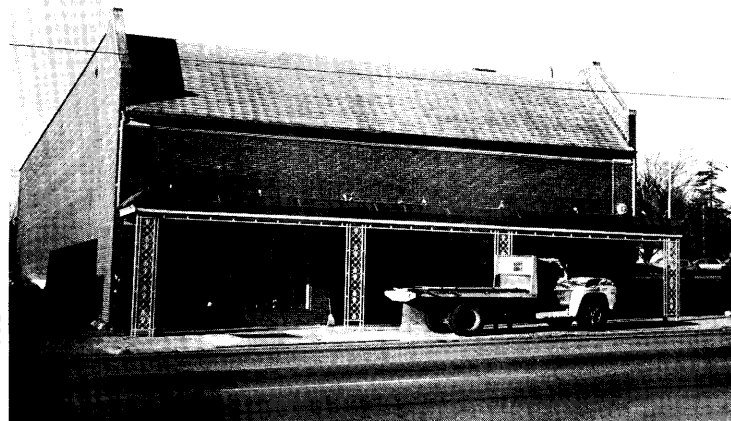
Below: Views  
of the "New  
Building Block"  
on West  
Franklin Street



Ernest Wood



Belk-Leggett-Horton fits the "Williamsburg" motif, below, but has wrought iron details, right



The last major addition to the streetscape came in 1951, when Belk-Leggett-Horton's new red brick building was built on West Franklin Street. The store basically fits the "Williamsburg" motif, but the architects agreed to add a series of white wrought iron porch supports, at the suggestion of Planning Board member William Carmichael, who had become enamored of wrought iron while attending a Sugar Bowl game in New Orleans.

By the early 1950's, however, the forces that had joined to insure the voluntary implementation of a unified architectural concept in Chapel Hill's commercial district were being significantly eroded. New people with new ideas about architecture and city planning were appointed to the Planning Board. Henry Kamphoefner, Dean of the School of Design at N.C. State University in Raleigh, objected strongly to the Williamsburg plan for Chapel Hill as something "akin to ancestor workshop." Although new downtown and campus buildings were still built in the mode defined in the 1940's by Davis, the momentum behind the unified townscape plan was lost. Louis Graves' *Weekly* moved on to other crusades. The Planning Board made no references to its Building Design Committee.

How do we evaluate a phenomenon like "the Williamsburg-ing of Chapel Hill" today? What implications does it have for people who must try to frame intelligent policies for a town's aesthetic and physical growth? There are valid criticisms that can be raised against the plan that Davis and the town of Chapel Hill developed. The streetscape design was not indigenous to Chapel Hill. It was a loose adaptation of a borrowed architectural style that had no roots in central North Carolina. The execution of stylistic elements was often poorly done. Considerations of cost and the informal nature of the professional consultation on individual buildings resulted in little that is satisfying to those interested in pure reproduction architecture. At best, Chapel Hill accepted with good grace architect/theorist Robert Venturi's recent proposition that "most architectural problems are of the expedient type," and moved forward a scheme to promote continuity of scale, materials and ornamentation at the expense of design innovation and quality.

While the Williamsburg plan has been significant in the architectural history of Chapel Hill, it has not had the wide-spread and enduring impact that its earliest promoters may have envisioned. The town's planning and appearance commissions have moved with better-than-average success to maintain compatibility of textures and tones in newer downtown buildings, but officials have not enforced strict conformity with the Neo-Colonial style that is still prominent on and near Franklin Street.

Interestingly, the most remarkable and lasting value of the Williamsburg-ing may be its symbolic value. In the space of ten years, Chapel Hill identified, adapted and imposed upon itself an outward form (which some may call a facade) that reflects a community's self-image. From an undistinguished village of the 1930's, Chapel Hill consciously created of itself The Village



in the 1940's, complete with architectural — and by implication historical — associations with old Williamsburg, Virginia. Architect Davis seems to have known then what Venturi would state 30 years later, that “the use of conventional elements in ordinary architecture evokes associations from past experience.” Brick facades and false chimney rooflines formed the illusion of a local history, borrowing associations from the past experience of others.

Chapel Hill also captured in its Williamsburg village, in the physical elements of the townscape, something like an eighteenth century sense of human scale that has become very important to subsequent generations of townspeople. Ten years after “Williamsburg” had ceased to be an operational term, Chapel Hillians rose up to contain (with partial success) the height of a new downtown bank building on grounds that the building would be out of scale with its surroundings on Franklin Street.

The Williamsburg-ing of Chapel Hill created an architectural character in the downtown area that is much easier to recognize and to deal with than are the more subtle elements of character present in most communities. In that regard, the illusion has become the reality. It is the total effect of the Chapel Hill

streetscape that we respond to. Its textures of earth-grown materials, its tones and its scale are comfortable and evocative. Lost to our mind's eye are the pasted-on architectural ornaments, sometimes awkward juxtapositions and the gaping hole in the Franklin Street facade where the rectangular columns of University Square and Granville Towers (built on the site of the 1940's “Williamsburg” based Chapel Hill High School) rise. It all works together somehow and invites new architecture — from “phoney-Colony” to post-modern — to blend in texture and scale with the 1920's storefronts of East Franklin Street and the Neo-Colonial structures that were the infill of the 1940's.

The Chapel Hill experience emphasizes the need for those concerned with a community's architectural and aesthetic character to consider the distinctive features of the townscape, the motivations that created those features and how those features help to substantiate the essential character of the community. There is a real human dimension to all this, as Louis Graves suggested in his editorial column of October 20, 1950. After listening to a talk on recent population figures for the growing town, Graves reported, the wife of one of the last Planning Commission members still left on the new Board turned to him and said, “But we ought to keep it looking as much like a village as possible.” ■

*Citizen opposition reduced the size of NCNB Plaza, but the com-*

*plex still towers over the original village and the “Williamsburg” buildings*

**Diane E. Lea**, a resident of Chapel Hill, is editor of **The Preservationist**, the quarterly newspaper of the Historic Preservation Society of North Carolina. This article is based on two research projects she conducted as a graduate student in landscape architecture at the N.C. State University School of Design.





# University Campus

Discovering that reality  
doesn't meet the image  
— but doesn't detract,  
either



Ernest Wood

By Ernest Wood

*It's bad enough that they had to put a new wing on that old building. But I don't see why they couldn't have done it in the same style as the other old buildings.*

UNC Alumnus

Alma Mater is a sensitive subject. Not only should it have the winningest football team (Rah!), the brightest students (Rah!) and the best parties (Rah!), but it absolutely (absolutely) must have one of the most beautiful campuses in the country. There must be hundreds of colleges and universities that by now lay claim to the title "One of the most beautiful campuses in the country."

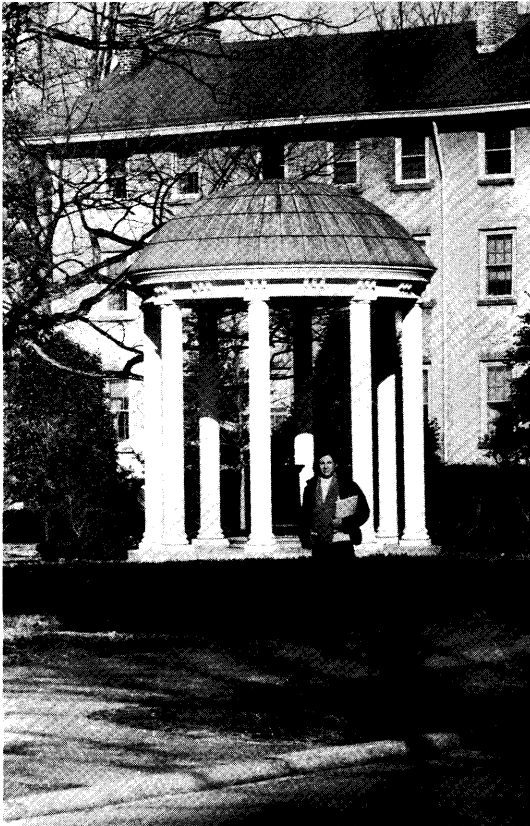
Put near (or at) the top of that list the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The students are proud of it. The alumni are proud of it. The townspeople are proud of it. But all that pride does get in the way sometimes. People even have objected to adding new walkways across campus quadrangles. Gordon Rutherford, campus planner: "Every trustee wants the campus to be just like it was when he was here. The only problem is none of them were here at the same time."

The problem is, the university and the town take very seriously their reputation as "The southern part of heaven." And that reputation includes not only warm weather, an exciting intellectual atmosphere and a lively social atmosphere, but, naturally, one of the most beautiful campuses in the country. Just as the celestial heaven means billowy white clouds and pearly gates, the Southern heaven means red brick buildings with white trim details, graciously laid out quadrangles, plenty of trees. The Old Well, the campus symbol, is a dome supported by little white columns. A genteel Southern university is Georgian architecture. And for years, UNC consciously tried to mold itself into that image. At the end of World War I, the campus had, perhaps, 20 buildings. Then came the building boom and the Georgian mania and by the time it was over in 1966, some 180 buildings (according to a count by John Allcott, retired chairman of the UNC Art Department who is working on a history of the campus architecture) had been put up in the style. That's a lot of red brick. It's certainly enough to establish a campus image. (Rah!)

But a funny thing happened on the way to that image. People put up buildings in other styles, too. They stick up over the Georgian revival. Or they peek around corners. They are constant reminders that image is not reality. Not even in heaven.

Left: Main quadrangle, University of North Carolina

Right: The Old Well, campus symbol



Left: Saunders, Manning and Murphey Halls, adjoining the main quadrangle.

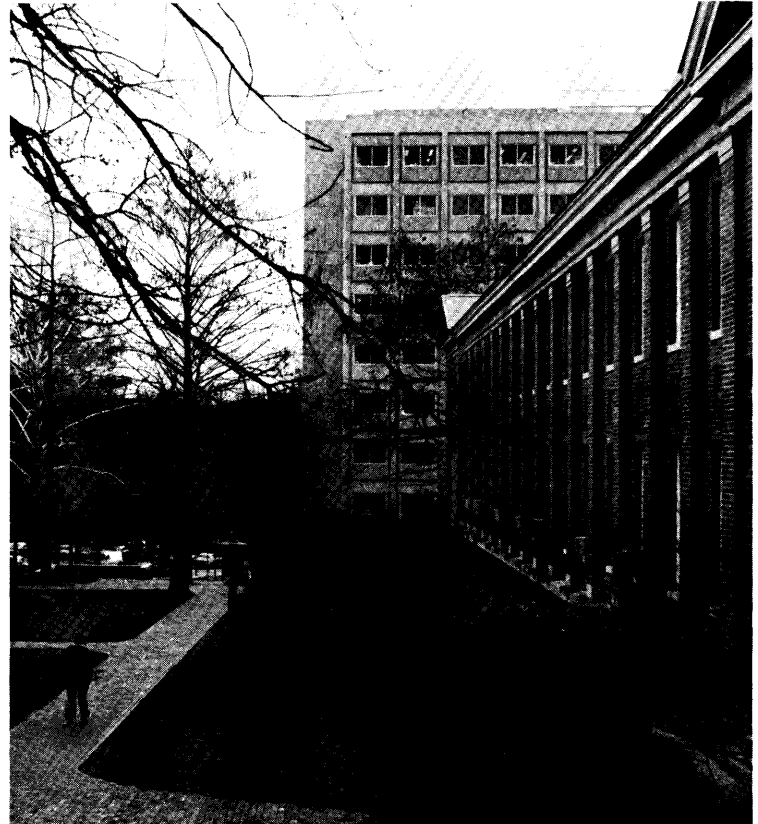


Left: Gardner and Haynes Halls, adjoining the quadrangle

Right: Graham Memorial and "Silent Sam," Civil War monument



Right: Ackland Art Center, a late "Georgian" entry



Below: The new Kenan Chemistry Laboratories loom over Venable Hall

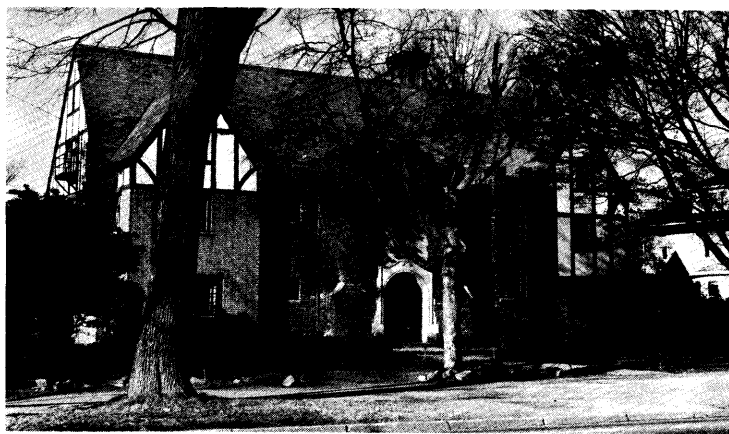
Right: detail,  
Smith Hall



Left: detail,  
Battle-Vance-  
Pettigrew Halls



Below: ATO  
Fraternity  
House

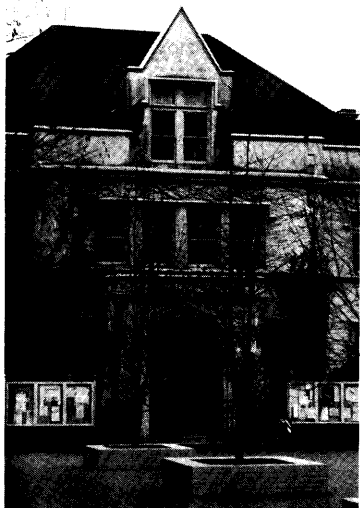
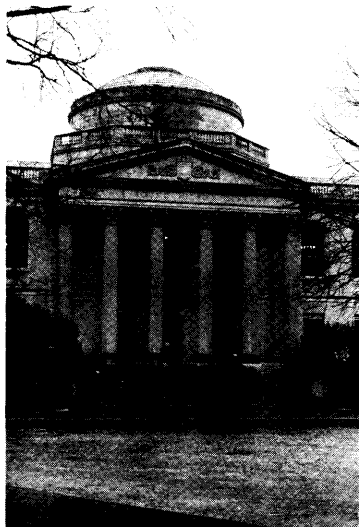


*The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill purveys a kind of subliminal red-brick-aura which upon scrutiny vanishes, revealing a wide variety of architectural styles and building materials ... Happily, the campus is more a happening than a museum.*

An architect designing  
a new building on campus

The subject of today's lesson is architectural archaeology. Are there fragments of other architectural styles among the so-called Georgian style buildings on the UNC campus?

Let's begin with Arthur C. Nash, the university's consulting architect who, in association with the firm of McKim, Mead and White of New York in the 1920's was responsible for the university's version of Georgian Revival. Nash was a true eclectic, a graduate of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. So while he designed the Graham Memorial (Georgian Revival) he also designed the Wilson Library (Greek Revival). So even the father of the campus's espoused image was willing to adopt different styles from time to time. That approach certainly was appropriate, for the campus of Nash's day already had a range of architectural styles. There was Greek Revival — most notably the Playmakers' Theater by A. J. Davis. And there was old Gothic (or adaptations thereof): The YMCA, Swain Hall, Battle-Vance-Pettigrew. Again, Gordon Rutherford: "There really is, on balance, just a whole bunch of styles and for the most part the buildings that are on campus reflect what was being done at the time."



Above: Wilson  
Library

Above, right:  
YMCA

Right: Play-  
makers Theater



JoAnn Sieburg-Baker



Left: Phillips  
Hall, left, with  
addition



Right: Brauer Hall, addition to School of Dentistry

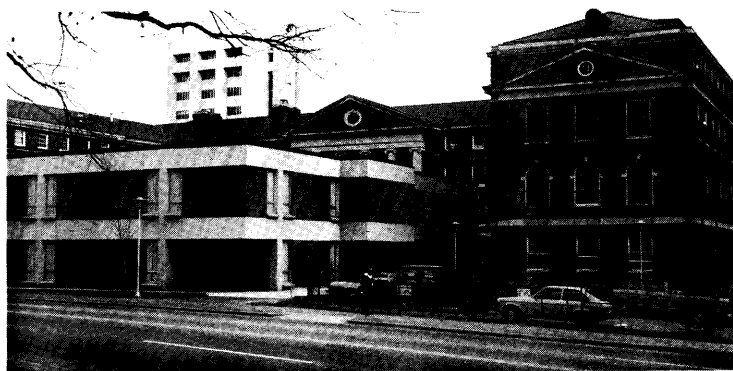


For today's time, that dictum has meant modern architecture. The first big break with Georgian came in the early 1960's with Chase Cafeteria, a Miesian styled building that not only had no red brick in it, it had no brick at all. Other modern buildings followed. At N. C. Memorial Hospital, sometimes the new actually tried to hide the old stage-set Georgian. But in most places, the new played off the height, massing and materials of the old and especially off the green spaces and patterns of open land on campus. One more time, Gordon Rutherford: "We're asked several times, 'How do you control the architecture on your campus?' And we say, 'Well, it becomes a function of the architect you pick.' We don't give any mandate and say 'Make the building like the next building.' We say, 'Here's a problem.' It becomes a design problem for the architect and he's got to solve it." The result is a whole bunch more styles, all variations of modernism according to the time and place.

The modern buildings don't give in to the image. But in future time, the image of the old, Southern university may rise again. Emerging trends of Post-Modern architecture are pointing toward a new attention to historical styles. The architectural heritage here may be custom made for trying it out. But it will always be true, class, that the proper description of the architecture at UNC is not really "Georgian." That is, unless we don't look too hard at the other styles on campus. ■

**Ernest Wood** is not an alumnus of the University of North Carolina, but he grew up in Chapel Hill. He is editor of this magazine.

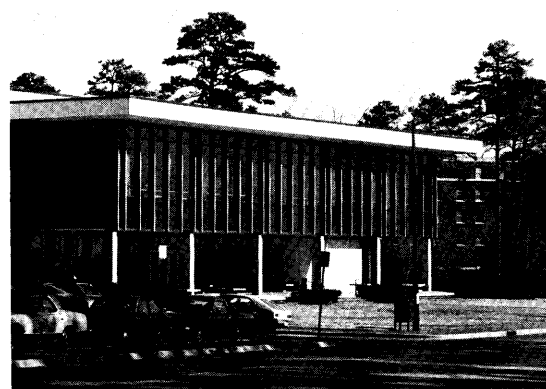
Right: New East (foreground) and Davie Hall addition



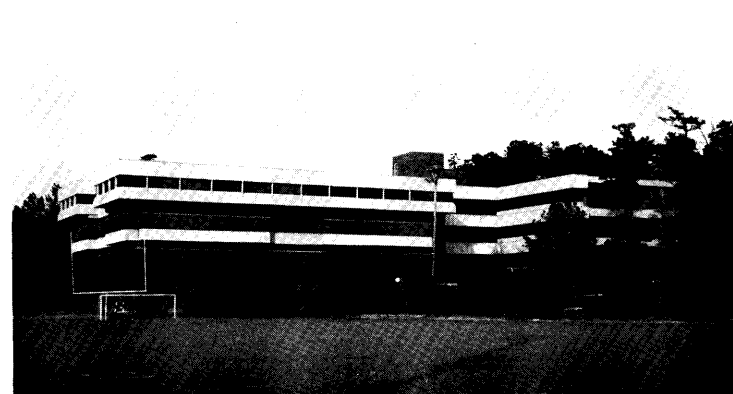
Above: Health Sciences Library (foreground); pre-clinical education building (rear) and Mac-Nider medical school building (sandwiched in the middle)



Left: Carroll Hall addition



Left: Chase Cafeteria



Below: Law School

# Landscape

As spaces between buildings grow, compatibility becomes harder to define. And to enforce.

By Ernest Wood

... I mentioned that the farm equipment dealers have all moved out to the more spacious highway strip. Actually this is no new development, but in the years to come, it is safe to say, it will assume spectacular proportions. We will have to develop an appreciative eye for this double row of immense, gleaming, bright-colored machines—tractors, combines, harvesters, pickers of all sorts, bulldozers, landplanes, wheel scrapers, self-propelled irrigation and spraying systems, balers, trailers, trucks, not to mention stacks of aluminum pipe and gas storage tanks, all of them more magnificent than their current versions—and more expensive ...

The rural highway strip lined with new farm machinery is already an impressive spectacle. It would be even more impressive and more efficient if it were properly and imaginatively laid out. This is the sort of improvement which the highway designer or the landscape architect is quite capable of undertaking. The urbanist problems of small towns are on a small scale, perhaps, but agricultural mechanization, potentially the source of local employment in servicing and repairs, has brought serious traffic and parking hardships with it.

J. B. Jackson

*Durants Life-saving Station, Cape Hatteras*



Wes McClure

Thirteen years ago, in his essay entitled "The New American Countryside: An Engineered Environment" published in his *Landscape* magazine, J. B. Jackson was concerned about the increasing mechanization of farms, the decreasing rural population and the corresponding changes in the rural landscape. Had he addressed the issue beyond the farm, however, he might have mentioned more than farm machinery lined up along the rural highway. He might have mentioned residences (single family, multi-family and mobile), cemeteries, churches, shopping centers, general stores, hospitals, schools, marinas, radio and television stations and transmission towers, motels, flea markets, golf courses, warehouses, gas stations and much much more. For just about every conceivable use of land appears in the rural landscape today. Very little, however, is being done about its growth, either studying or controlling it or making sense out of the way the new relates to the old down the road.

But what can be done? And in a landscape such as rural North Carolina, where zoning often is still either nonexistent or brand new and where the residents often oppose any land regulation at all, what *should* be done? Is rural North Carolina, with its pre-engineered buildings, fast food restaurants, discount department stores, brick ranch houses, billboards, long stretches of forest and farmland and, of course, its farm machinery dealerships, true Americana, a twentieth century vernacular? Is Robert Venturi's statement, "Main Street is almost all right," even more true for the country highway than for the city strip?

Here are two answers. Neither is adopted yet, but they point out some possible directions. One attempts to deal with an area which is rural today but is rapidly urbanizing as a commercial strip. The other addresses land which today is largely undeveloped and which for the most part will remain that way, for it is protected by the federal government.



U.S. 64,  
Knightdale,  
east of Raleigh

The first deals primarily with site planning. The second speaks to both the site and the building that will go on it. A characteristic they share, however, is a concern for the way a building relates to the land and performs on the land as much as—or even more than—the way the building looks and the way it relates to its neighbor.

The New Strip: In Wake County, the roadways around Raleigh and on the outskirts of the smaller, outlying communities already have received a considerable amount of development. But between the city and the towns, there remain many undeveloped stretches of land. To guide the development of that land, the Wake County Planning Department has proposed a new highway zoning ordinance of a “preventive medicine” type that is more a reaction to the failures of existing development than an attempt to work within the context of that development—the way a similar ordinance in the city might aim for architectural com-

patibility between new and old.

It is, frankly, aimed at protecting the highways—to protect them from becoming so strangled by traffic that they cannot function—more than it is aimed at protecting the buildings along the roadside. For it comes from a recognition that the relationship between a highway and the development it services is a special one, that these elements are more interdependent than they are in an urban area and that the entire development will die if the highway dies.

Beginning with the notion that in the rural landscape a building is less noticeable than the topography and other natural elements, that rural areas have a scale—from fields to forests and even including the sky—that is much greater than the city's, the Planning Department under planner Richard Toppe set out to define a way to integrate buildings into the landscape. The department also recognized the patchwork of uses in the rural areas and the fact that

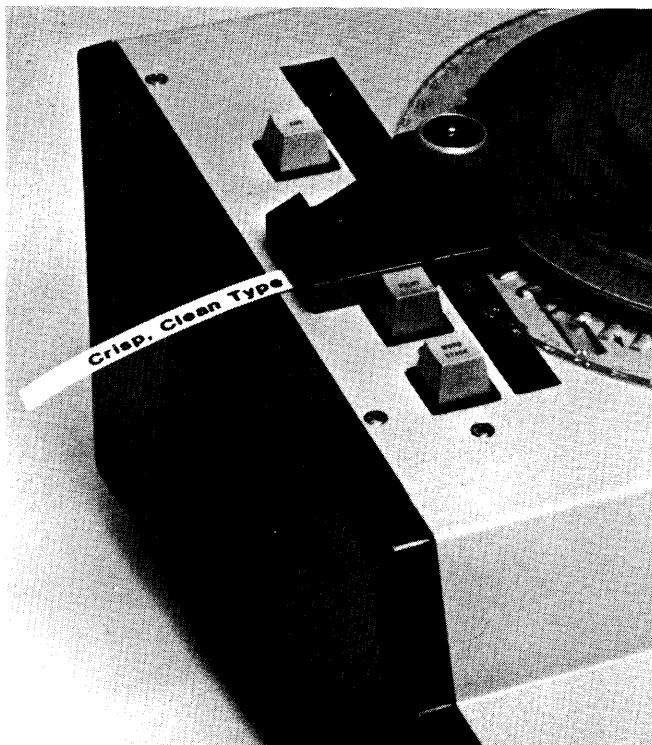
these buildings along the highway are most important—symbolically as well as practically—for their economic impact. Any sign of prosperity is welcomed for many rural people, long subject to poverty. Design is a low priority if it exists as a priority at all. The ultimate concern for the planners, then, was how these varied functions worked together on the rural scale, not how to regulate architectural design.

The result was an ordinance for all U.S. and N.C. numbered highways that considers the way a building performs on the land and with the highway as the most important fact for new development. New buildings must meet specified performance standards for such concerns as noise, ground water consumption, water runoff, buffering, outdoor storage and display, signs and parking. The ordinance even allows developers freedom to build larger buildings on a given piece of land than previously allowed—provided they meet the performance standards.

For now, the results of the new ordinance are hard to predict. Will developers, forced to think about performance of their buildings, also begin to think about design? Or will it be business (almost) as usual? Some visual improvement is bound to come, if only from the landscaping and buffering standards. But once the ordinance is adopted, any noticeable effect still will be five to ten years in coming, estimates planner Toppe. Even near the city, there is a lot of land left to develop. Influencing that development by ordinance means pecking away at old, objectionable details and hoping the new, improved details will affect the whole.

The Shifting Sands: Meanwhile a Raleigh architecture and landscape architecture firm, MTMA Design Group, is preparing a design manual for government development on the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, a 75 mile long string of fragile barrier islands off the North Carolina coast. This plan, too, begins with the context





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of building in an attempt to show how development might better be handled in the future.

The three elements that determine the context of the seashore have been identified as climate, natural systems and the way people have lived on the land in the past. Further analysis of the context created by historic architecture (as part of the way people lived) has centered around the village vernacular, the cottages at Old Nags Head and the maritime architecture—the lighthouses and lifesaving stations. Coupling these analyses with an underlying assumption that change—sometimes catastrophic change—is the natural condition for the islands, the architects and landscape architects at MTMA have come up with a set of design implications for further development that range from broader planning issues of how a building is sited to more specialized architectural issues of scale, materials, passive energy features for warming and cooling and the use of traditional details such as porches, shutters and lattice screens. The next phase will be to determine a set of design guidelines. As now envisioned, however, the guidelines will accommodate two divergent (though both already well established) approaches to design—the “organic” building which blends with its surroundings and the “articulated” building which consciously stands out. In either case, the design guidelines—through an emphasis on the climate and the natural systems of the region—will attempt to make the buildings “fit” their environment. Whether they are “organic” or “articulated,” the buildings will relate to each other because they relate to their common context created by the natural environment and the architectural traditions that environment spawned in the past.

These guidelines, however, will apply only to the buildings that the federal government will construct in often isolated areas of the

seashore—the visitor centers, interpretation centers, day use facilities, education buildings, campsites, administrative buildings and employee housing. And what effect the government's study and the buildings subsequently constructed will have on private development in and around the towns that are a part of the seashore still is years away—if any effect occurs at all. Influencing development by example is at best an unpredictable business.

Postscript: These two plans for designing the rural landscape are so new they are not out of the proposal stage yet. Elsewhere, however—most notably in Europe—fitting a new building into an existing landscape is not a new concern at all. One of many examples occurs in England with the Dartmoor National Park Planning Committee which as early as 1955 published a 64 page booklet outlining the problems of building in its park that included guidelines about siting a building and such architectural concerns as use of materials, traditional details, color, ornamentation and fenestration. In another case, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England published a booklet in 1957 called “Your House on View” which set out more general principles for houses in any setting. “The main problem to be solved here,” the booklet said in a statement that pretty well summed up the entire subject, “is to make a new house look at home in the town, in the village or in the countryside; for it is against its background that a new house will be judged—and made welcome or otherwise. Each locality has its own building tradition, in character with the landscape and springing from the same cause—the geological formation of the region. This variety of landscape, emphasized by the local building tradition, is a valuable heritage and should be cherished.” ■

**Ernest Wood** is editor of this magazine.

# History

Adding, subtracting, remodeling. Architecture has a long tradition of making changes

By Catherine W. Bishir



N. C. Division of Archives and History



Expanding, remodeling, recycling older buildings to make them spacious and convenient enough for contemporary use receives growing attention today, motivated by the recognition of mounting costs of new construction and admiration of quality in older buildings. Private homeowners and businessmen alike tax their own imaginations and those of their architects and contractors to design suitable, affordable methods of updating existing buildings to current needs. Some seek to retain and even reproduce the character of the old; others obliterate or over-build around the existing structure; still others couple a boldly new form with the existing component.

This is nothing new.

Almost as soon as people built buildings, they found they weren't quite big enough, or modern enough or *something* enough. And they set to improving the situation — sometimes by abandoning the older structure and building anew but more often by keeping what they had and adding on. They added a room, a story, a porch, an ell or an entire new section that might equal or even dwarf the original.

These composite structures in



Above, left: Elgin, Warren County

Above: Ivey Hill, Halifax County

Left: Hard-scrabble, Durham County

which successive generations added their own contributions, each in the prevailing style and suitable scale of his era, provide unusually interesting subjects for the architectural historian, social historian or archeologist. They provide the owner or visitor with hints that previous generations were more like ours in their passion for improvement and expansion than we might suppose. They may provide today's designers with models for study when planning a contemporary reworking or addition to older buildings today.

Only a few decades ago, the "restorationist" point of view often demanded destruction of the accretions of generations or centuries, a return to the first identifiable phase of building. Recent preservation philosophy, however, recognizes the value of each phase and of the cumulative total.

The monuments of Europe acknowledge spectacular changes in taste and space needs. Hampton Court juxtaposes late medieval Tudor with early neoclassicism in a Janus-like palace. Windsor Castle, Chartres Cathedral and scores more boast centuries of creativity and change.

The changing requirements of North Carolinians as well as those of kings and queens created composite buildings, reflecting stages of this state's historic architecture. Industrial complexes, institutional buildings and chiefly residences from the 18th through the 19th and early 20th centuries show the hands of different generations of users and builders and, occasionally, architects. Each solution to the problem of updating and expanding is different. It is perhaps the incredible variety of approaches to expansion and

remodeling developed by long-ago builders that is most striking. Yet a few threads of similarity run through many of the buildings.

Most important is the builder's frank acceptance and acknowledgment of his own time of construction. Until the late 19th century, there was generally little attempt to hide the fact that new construction had taken place or to pretend that the new was old. The form of the expansion and the detail of the finish were almost always in the current style of the period of construction, proudly stating the fashionable ambitions and improved financial resources of the owner and the currency of the builder. In contrast to many conscientious present-day expansions of older buildings, past builders not only let the older structure stand for its own time but also insisted on the new one expressing its time with equal clarity. There was seldom an effort to reproduce in the new form or detail of the old, to persuade the viewer that the new was original to the old.

At the Mordecai House in Raleigh, for example, and at Elgin in Warren County, traditional houses of the 18th century were retained while more formal houses were constructed to create a new, fashionable and reoriented facade, reflecting growing wealth and expectations of the late 1820s. The solid brickwork of the 1786 addition to the medieval half-timber construction of the original 1768-1769 building of the Single Brothers House in Salem made no attempt to reproduce the original but blended with other new work of the developing Moravian town.

At the same time, however, most builders of these eras seem to have had a strong sense of scale, which along with technological limitations of construction methods restricted the size of new construction. Most expansions and additions acknowledge the scale and often



Left: *Independence Building, Trade and Tryon Streets, Charlotte*

Below: *Old East, UNC Campus, Chapel Hill*



something of the form of the existing building while reflecting the quality of their own time. Scale and proportion unite the two sections of the Single Brothers house despite their different construction techniques. Sometimes, as at Hardscrabble, a two-part house in Durham County dating from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a subsequent section creates a mate of equal size to the existing element. At Elgin as at the Mordecai House the new relegates the old to the status of a wing or ell. Sometimes the expansion takes the form of secondary ells or wings. Yet nearly always there is a balance in the relationship of new to old, so that the two stand in some sort of reasonable ratio with one another.

The generation that added to Ivey Hill in Halifax County in the mid-1800s reoriented the Hardscrabble approach and placed the new house in front of the older one, facing perpendicular to it, so that the two face now at right angles. At Stagville in Durham County, the orientation of both sections remained the same, and the older house appears as a one-story wing beside a ca. 1799 two-story addition.

A similar approach was used in expanding log houses, one "pen" at a time, as seen at the McCurdy House in Cabarrus County and many others. The lateral line-up approach was expanded further at Red Hill in Vance County, where three sections from the late 18th and early

19th centuries formed a simple left-to-right cadence, all facing the same direction. At Kelvin Grove near Scotland Neck, huge flanking wings doubled the size of a massive central block in the antebellum era, and extensions to the rear continued the process. The glamorous temple-form dwelling of the 1840s at Orton Plantation near Wilmington was expanded in the early 20th century by the addition of one-story wings and rear appendages.

By the early 20th century, technology made vertical as well as linear expansion possible. When the skyscraper at the busy corner of Trade and Tryon Streets in Charlotte was erected from designs by Frank Milburn in 1908 and 1909, it was the tallest building in the state at 12 stories and the first example here of steel frame skyscraper construction. By 1927, it was no longer remarkably tall, as the growing city had followed its example in ever-higher new buildings. It was remodeled and two additional stories frankly attached atop it.

Complete overbuilding, leaving the older building evident only on the interior, was not unusual. This was a major project even for a prosperous homeowner. On June 8, 1838, Franklin County planter Nicholas Massenburg wrote in his farm journal, "Nearly finished raising and fitting second story to dwelling house and also raise the new wing, added to the main building . . ." The work of carpenters and masons and plasterers continued through summer and fall. On October 31 he wrote, "Building has greatly delayed the ingathering of the crop . . . the cotton . . . is suffering for the want of gathering, as the strong hands have been engaged about the house all the fall." The house, finished by Christmas, retained early Federal elements of the old dwelling, while the Greek Revival ones current in 1838 were used in the second story and wing.





Thoroughgoing—and often quite sophisticated—remodeling and expansion changed existing buildings into entirely new compositions. The sturdy but plain traditional buildings of the late 18th and early 19th centuries gained popular stylishness and formality amid the growing classicism and romanticism of the mid-19th century. In the 1840's, the University of North Carolina embarked on a campus improvement plan. New York architect A. J. Davis boldly remodeled the ancient brick walls of Old East (1795-1796) and its pendant Old West into a pair of larger, fashionable Tuscan buildings with deep bracketed eaves and dramatic end window arrangements.

Near Morganton, a traditional two-story brick dwelling characteristic of substantial Piedmont houses of the ca. 1800 period was retained but completely disguised when its owners and an unknown

builder created a formal new Greek Revival temple-form composition, with the older house at one end of a loggia with columns.

In New Bern between 1904 and 1908, local architect Herbert Simpson fearlessly reoriented and expanded a grand old Georgian house for the Bishop family. Though he retained elements of its ancient construction and rich woodwork recalling the town's splendor in the days of Tryon's Palace, he completely redesigned the pre-Revolutionary house into a fashionable Neoclassical Revival mansion, where the boldness of two eras of classicism coexist in lively complement.

Less self-conscious in growth were the buildings where expansion was accretive over the years, where indeed the structure "grew like Topsy." The Thomas Wolfe House in Asheville is a good example (see page 30). Wolfe recalled



that his mother Julia Wolfe (Eliza in the novel *Look Homeward Angel*) "added eight or ten rooms as cost of only \$3,000," creating new halls, a bath, a sleeping porch and more, with all the construction "after her own plans and of the cheapest material."

The restored Wolfe home is a warren of rooms added over the years, *tripling* the original size of the house. The Horace Williams House in Chapel Hill began as a small structure following a novel octagonal form; over the years it was encapsulated by various wings and extensions.

Changing industrial needs and the growth of volume have shaped factories and mills across the state. A vivid recapitulation of successive industrial styles is visible from the Durham Freeway: the linear history of tobacco factories seen in the American Tobacco Com-

pany complex, which begins with the bracketed Italianate of the late 19th century and ends with the sleek plainness of the mid-20th. The dramatic riverside Kerr-McGee Fertilizer Factory near Williamston combines varied forms and sizes in a composition of accretive origins but powerful unity.

We can know very little of the builder's planning process a century ago when he approached the problem of expanding or remodeling an existing structure, reusing the work of a century before him. We can see in what he produced, however, a certain respect for the existing scale, a frank pride in current style and the newness of his own work and an irrepressible energy and ingenuity in solving the problem. ■

Catherine W. Bishir is head of the Survey and Planning Branch, N.C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.



Top, left: Red Hill, Granville County

Top, right: McCurdy Log House, Cabarrus County

Above: Kerr McGee Mill, Martin County

# Conservation

Sometimes, old buildings are the ones that do not fit in

By Keith Morgan

They are everywhere, especially in cities and towns: historically or architecturally significant structures that have lost their contexts. They are the product of both negative and positive forces in twentieth century society, and what to do about them has plagued and confused politicians, architects, planners and preservationists. Even more puzzling is what influence they should exert on new architecture built around them.

Where did they come from — how did it happen? The answers are as complex as the recent history of the built environment. Contributing factors include transportation advances, notably the mass acquisition of automobiles that began to pull the heart out of the American city soon after the turn of the twentieth century. Equally destructive were the ideals of European modernism which held total contempt for history and preached a *tabula rasa* approach to architecture and planning and led to the urban renewal blight of the 1950s and '60s. A political mentality that saw only growth as healthy further fanned the demolition flames while the preservationists' sentimental attachment to the isolated landmark permitted or encouraged the forfeiting of entire neighborhoods and localities.

What are these structures? The classic example is a dwelling of some scale, architectural pretension and local historical association that was deserted by the family in moving to the suburbs after World War II — if not before. The house somehow escaped demolition at the hands of the urban renewalists because it was of



Left: Wolfe House, Asheville, hemmed in

Michael Southern

such obvious importance that the cry of "Philistine" would soon have been raised. The houses around it were razed, however, and as new construction went up next door the old house soon became an anomaly in its own neighborhood.

The Thomas Wolfe house in Asheville is a symbol of the problem. Surrounded by commercial uses and overshadowed by an adjacent high-rise hotel, the building is the only vestige of late Victorian propriety in a once-domestic neighborhood. A second characteristic example, especially in North Carolina, is the rural antebellum farmhouse that has been "adaptively abused" for agricultural purposes, while a brick ranch and mobile home have been moved into the foreground. But buildings are not alone in suffering this fate; historic landscapes are sometimes harder to recognize, but they can be equally "left behind." Take, for example, Nash or Moore Squares in Raleigh. These beautifully landscaped



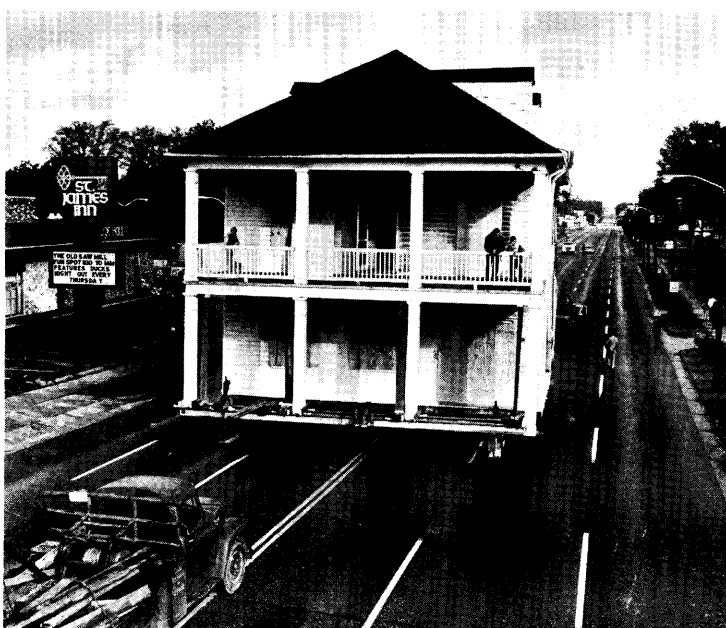
Left: Hinsdale House, Raleigh, overshadowed

Keith Morgan

parks, intended as green foils to center city architecture, are now surrounded by supermarkets, parking lots and unused or underused commercial buildings.

How to save these landmarks has been the focus of much innovative thinking. In high-density areas, the transfer of development rights (the sale of air rights over landmark buildings to adjacent property owners) has provided a

mechanism to ease the financial pressures upon a building that cannot achieve the "highest and best" use of a site. Historic preservationists have organized to identify, document and restore these structures and have promulgated legislation for historic properties commissions and for tax deferrals, incentives and disincentives. "Adaptive reuse" has encouraged a more liberal approach to rehabili-



Left: Horne House, Fayetteville; some- times moving is the only answer

tation rather than restoration, modifying buildings with sensitivity to serve contemporary purposes for which they were never designed. As the "old building freaks" have gained maturity, they have produced firm evidence that renovation of old buildings is generally less expensive and more labor-intensive and energy-conservative than new construction.

Yet the problem of relating new construction to the old — or the old to the new — remains.

The solutions to "environmental correction" for these buildings are as varied as the causes of the problem. There are two extreme approaches, one calling for the reconstruction of now-vanished neighboring buildings, the other calling for the wrecking ball. Neither is justifiable as a general rule. Moving is usually a live option, but playing Monopoly with buildings destroys the intangible quality of integrity of setting and creates

neighborhoods that would never have existed. However, if moving is the *only* method for saving a building worth saving, then do it! If possible, the landmark should be removed to a neighborhood that approximates the age, scale and quality of its original setting. The historic building preserve, a miniature zoological park where buildings are on display like endangered species should be reserved, however, for only those structures that cannot be recycled in some way.

When a building is retained *in situ*, what concessions should be made in rebuilding its environment? Historic district commissions in North Carolina and elsewhere have developed design guidelines for new construction in historic neighborhoods. The best of these guidelines have emphasized abstract principles, such as massing, scale, setback and height-to-width proportions which are intended to produce homogeneity within the district. Extending this

attitude to all new construction in the area of a landmark building, however, is hardly desirable or practical. A single structure should not be allowed to become the stereotype for all new design and construction in its immediate environs.

Slowly, compromise and sensitivity are becoming the watchwords in neighborhoods where historic properties remain. A period of soul searching by the architectural profession is encouraging a reversal in the attitude that history is evil and a burden on society. A casual and even whimsical incorporation of historical motifs in recent architecture is a healthy sign for the future surroundings of isolated landmarks. Yet, this new historicism must not become the facile solution to an intricate problem. If mishandled it could result in fake-Mansard-roofed structures around a Second Empire mansion or a block of Williamsburg reproductions crowding the true colonial survivor. Only the imaginative and innovative use of historical forms will enhance and not degrade the integrity of a landmark.

To be successful, the designer of modern structures adjacent to an historical building should consider the quality

of the original structure, the traditional and actual use of the neighborhood and the relation of both to the city and locality in general. Maintaining the historic sense of place in new architecture can be a legitimate and stimulating challenge. Determining that sense of place will be one of the architect's major tasks. Local materials, vernacular fenestration, abstracted academic detail or traditional land use patterns may provide the crucial touchstone to bridge the separation between history and the present. The architect of new structures in old neighborhoods has a responsibility to assess what remains and what has vanished in the environment and to relate his designs to those factors. Yet, at the same time, he must not be so tied to the past that he subverts the honest expression of contemporary ideals and demands. The true test will be our ability to create new structures for modern purposes which can also reflect the historic character of a place and respect the scattered earlier monuments that were left behind. ■

**Keith Morgan** is a preservation planner with the Survey and Planning Branch, N. C. Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.



# People

For NCAIA's new president, the job is keeping in touch with the practicing architect

By Ernest Wood

Architecture, as Lib Lee sees it, has a lot in common with a Doris Day movie. The movie presents beautiful, happy people. Architecture presents design and aesthetics. But behind both, there's a not-so-glamorous reality, a reality that means Doris Day has to brush her teeth and pay income tax, too, and that means the architect has to worry about running an office and meeting building codes. "The days of having much fun are pretty much over," says Lee. "You're not doing much design if you're designing for the codes." Yet these realities are the things that she says she'll be dealing with as 1979 president of N.C. Chapter of AIA because these are the things that affect so many architects every day. A recent chapter questionnaire on architectural liability insurance drew the largest response of any questionnaire the chapter has sent out. Ever. So with that in mind, Lee says, "Overall, I'd like to think that the state organization can be helpful to the people out there, if you can get some better communication and find out what the people out there need."

Some of those concerns for the chapter in the upcoming year, she predicts, will be the architectural practice act, up for revision in the General Assembly, a need for continuing education programs for architects and a need for better communication between architects, clients and the public. But, she says, "I'm not the kind of leader who dreams up things for people to do. I'd rather they tell me what to do."

When it comes to the Institute helping the individual practitioner however, Elizabeth B. Lee knows whereof she speaks. She first



Elizabeth B. Lee, AIA

Ernest Wood

became active in AIA because as an architect in the small eastern town of Lumberton, where hers is one of only two architectural offices, she needed the contact with other professionals that the Institute provides. Her involvement over the years led to her election as not only president of NCAIA but as the chapter's first woman president.

There may be some significance in the fact that Lee is the first woman president of NCAIA in the same year that the General Assembly will consider (once again) both the Equal Rights Amendment and the architectural practice act. But she doesn't quite believe it herself. "You end up being the first woman president of NCAIA because you were the first woman to come along," she says, simply. She also was the first woman graduate of the N.C. State University School of Design, an accomplishment she plays

down, too, saying that entering a male dominated profession 25 years ago was not so much "a big deal" as it is now, with women's heightened awareness of their careers. "It's just the profession you picked out."

So she studied mathematics at Salem College in Winston-Salem for two years and then entered the five year architectural program at the School of Design in 1947. She received her B.Arch with honors in 1952, interned with W.A. Coleman in Kinston for three years, worked one year for Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in New York and then returned to her native Lumberton to open her own office in 1956, just four years out of school. "I didn't know that you just don't open an office at that age," she says now. But her office has flourished. In 1973, she added a partner, Ronald W. Thompson, also a Lumberton native. Lee & Thompson, Architects today has a diversified practice typical of

a small town architectural firm, consisting of about 60 per cent commercial and governmental and 40 per cent residential work. One pet project of the past few years was to rehab an old storefront building constructed in 1898 for the firm's own offices.

If she has a pet project for her year as NCAIA president, it would have to be to get continuing education programs for the architectural profession off the ground in North Carolina. It would be a strictly volunteer program. "People know what they need to know and they know where their gaps are," says Lee, who has dealt with this issue already as a member of the AIA's national Continuing Education Committee. But it would be something, she feels certain, the architectural profession both wants and needs. "I think there are too many things that have come up fast," she says, pointing to the new energy section of the state building code as an example of laws that will force architects to pay attention to subjects that have changed radically since they were in school.

Education, however, would have as its final goal more than just technical expertise; it would have as its goal improving the way architects deal with all those not-so-glamorous details that go into making up their profession. The glamour of architecture is design; the reality of architecture is office practice; the bottom line often is sheer management. And improving the architect's ability to cope with the bottom line to Lib Lee is, or should be, a major concern of the Institute. ■

**Ernest Wood** is editor of this magazine.

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# Critique

In Europe (and the U.S.) history is an opportunity (and a constraint) for the architect

By Paul Tesar

Setting aside considerations of local variations in laws, codes and regulations—are the attitudes of today's European and American architects different from one another when faced with the task of designing buildings for historical contexts?

I think not. Being educated and more or less consciously rooted in the tradition of Modern Architecture, they both have developed the inevitable love-hate relationship to old buildings, structures which equally appeal to feelings as they elude the intellectual grasp. The increased exchange of ideas and experiences, the general similarity of problems facing urban cultures today, has brought the architectural consciousness—historic or otherwise—of the Old and the New World together, for better or for worse. Or has it?

Last summer, when I was teaching a seminar in Vienna, I had the opportunity to observe a class project for an infill site in Vienna's historic downtown, a narrow slot between Historic Eclecticism on the one side and genuine Baroque on the other. The focus of the task was simply to address the perennial issues connected with projects in confining historic contexts. Assignments like this are not untypical in Europe, where most urban sites have a historic context to some degree. What made it interesting to me, however, was the response: all students chose to deal with the context by contrast or juxtaposition. Existing buildings were tacitly seen as a constraint, if not a threat, and all designs took an assertive posture. It seemed just another occasion to play off one's own cool, clean, technical contemporary self-confidence against the somewhat over-ornamented, passionately playful, dust-covered surroundings.

Out of curiosity, I assigned the very same task to a class of graduate students at the School of Design at N.C. State University last fall. As I suspected, almost all students chose to deal with the context by making their buildings akin and sympathetic to the surroundings. Existing buildings were implicitly regarded as an opportunity, if not a seduction, and most designs gleefully submitted themselves to their dominating presence.

Are these results indicative of some more general difference in attitude between American and European architects today? No, certainly not in such a clear-cut way. There are too many unconsidered variables in such a comparison to draw any general conclusions and the similarity of concerns exceeds the differences by far. But in spite of international crossfertilization and strong regional and personal differentiations on both sides of the Atlantic, there are still a number of design issues dealing with historic questions where I find American and European architects, though not necessarily on opposite ends, but certainly at different points on the spectrum of possible answers.

To begin with, the abundance of history, subconsciously assimilated during the formative years, colors many historical things as a burden and a liability in the minds of many European architects. It was inherited from yesterday and stands in the way of changing conditions. Consequently, one cannot become sentimental about any queer old building, and educated discernment is essential in all instances. In the United States, on the other hand, I presently perceive an unprecendented interest and enthusiasm for the country's architectural heritage and some of the uncritical

sentimentality that so often parallels it.

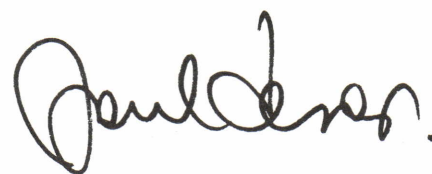
Secondly, in Europe there appears to exist a greater willingness to let old buildings be old, more often by default than by intention. The significant differences between "new old" and "old old" buildings arise from the way they look as well as the way they feel. The former often tend to assume an identity of pretty, museum-like curiosities, cleanly and colorfully exhibiting their intricacies to the passer-by. The latter are less conspicuous, less demonstrative, and their qualities reveal themselves only after some effort by the perceptive observer. Partial deterioration seems to imbue them with a poetic dimension, but also with a greater propensity to disintegrate into the poetic dust that covers them. U.S. born post-modernism gives in to the same slightly decadent temptation in a different way: it proposes to build new romantic ruins.

Furthermore, many buildings in Europe have been around for such a long time, that they have experienced not only partial destructions, additions, and stylistic metamorphoses, but also often concomitant changes in use. Issues of stylistic purity are overlapped by those of a "history of use." Restoring a building, for example, that started as a nave of a Gothic church, then served as a baroque riding school, later was adapted to a customs building during the 19th century, and now is a showroom for a used car dealer raises several complex

questions. What is the "original condition" of such a building to which it should be restored? To what extent is it legitimate to remove the stylistic prejudices of former generations and to replace them with our own? Aren't the traces that use leaves behind as much worthy of preservation and restoration as those features that refer to the year of the original completion of the building?

I suppose architects always must have had an ambivalent relationship toward historic buildings in the presence of their own edifice. They represent both: constraint and opportunity, threat and temptation. Inevitably they force us to put our values on the line. Particularly when we are young we seem to think we have to take sides, choose between right and wrong, for or against history, for feeling or for intellect. Later we learn to live with such contradictory impulses—restraint, but it may take the maturity of a lifetime to thrive on the friction they create and to learn to reconcile them in buildings that are respectful without being submissive and self-confident without being arrogant.

But whether exaggerated enthusiasm or arrogant snobbery, these impulses are but different manifestations of a basically healthy and positive relationship to historic buildings. Their enemies are ignorance, narrow economic thinking and ideological blindness. And they are the same—here, there and everywhere. ■



Paul Tesar, a native of Vienna, Austria, is assistant professor of architecture at the N.C. State University School of Design.



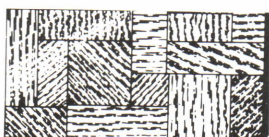
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