

RALEIGH HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION APPLICATION

This application initiates consideration of a property for designation as a Raleigh Historic Landmark by the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission and the Raleigh City Council. It enables evaluation of the resource to determine if it qualifies for designation. The evaluation is made by the Research Committee of the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission (RHDC), which makes its recommendation to the full commission. The historic landmark program was previously administered by the Wake County Historic Preservation Commission but has been transferred back to the city; procedures for administration by RHDC are outlined in the Raleigh City Code, Section 10-1053.

Please type if possible. Use 8-1/2" x 11" paper for supporting documentation and if additional space is needed. All materials submitted become the property of the RHDC and cannot be returned. Return completed application to the RHDC at 133 Fayetteville St. Mall Suite 100, Raleigh NC. 27601 or mail to:

Raleigh Historic Districts Commission
PO Box 829 Century Station
Raleigh, NC 27602

1. Name of Property (if historic name is unknown, give current name or street address):

Historic Name: John W. Thompson House

Current Name: _____

2. Location:

Street Address: 1117 Hillsborough Street

City/Town/Jurisdiction: Raleigh

NC PIN Number: (can be obtained from <http://imaps.co.wake.nc.us/imaps/>)

1703292686

3. Legal Owner of Property (If more than one, list primary contact):

Name Fletcher Historic Properties, LLC - Primary Contact - P. Brock Gross Jr.

Address 109 East Green Forest Drive

City/State/Zip Code Cary, NC 27511

Email brock1931@earthlink.net Telephone 919-673-8830

4. Applicant/Contact Person (If other than owner):

Name P. Brock Gross, Jr.

Address 109 East Green Forest Drive

City/State/Zip Code Cary, NC 27511

Email brock1931@earthlink.net Telephone 919-673-8830

5. General Data/Site Information:

- A. **Date of Construction and major additions/alterations:** Orig. constr 1910 - Renovation 2003
- B. **Number, type, and date of construction of outbuildings:** 920 West Morgan Street - residential duplex - ca. 1925.
- C. **Approximate lot size or acreage:** .48 acres
- D. **Architect, builder, carpenter, and/or mason:** _____
- E. **Original Use:** Family Residence
- F. **Present Use:** Law Firm Office

6. Classification:

A. Category (check all that apply):

Building(s) Structure Object Site

B. Ownership

Private:
Public: Local State Federal

C. Number of contributing and non-contributing resources on the property:

	Contributing	Noncontributing
Buildings	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Structures	_____	_____
Objects	_____	_____

D. Previous field documentation (when and by whom): "Raleigh Inventory" survey dated November 3, 1976 by Linda L. Harris and Mary Ann Lee and "A Survey of Raleigh Architecture" - 1989 by Helen P. Ross.

E. National Register of Historic Places status:

Check one:

- Entered (date _____) Nominated
- Determined eligible (date _____) Determined not eligible (date _____)
- Nomination not requested Removed (date _____)

7. **Reason for Request:** Recognition, preservation, tax benefits

8. **Is the property income producing?** Yes No

9. **Are any interior spaces being included for designation?** Yes No

10. Supporting Documentation (Attach to application on separate sheets. Please type or print):

A. Photographs:

At least two sets of current exterior black and white photographs of all facades of the main building and at least one photo of all other contributing and non-contributing resources. If interior property is being considered for designation, please include two sets of black and white photos for these features. PHOTOGRAPHS MUST BE LABELED IN PENCIL ON THE BACK WITH NAME OF STRUCTURE, ADDRESS, AND DATE. Any additional exterior or interior views and views of other structures on the property (color, black and white, or slides) will be helpful.

B. Map:

Please include a map showing the location of the property. A tax map with boundaries marked is preferred, which can be found at <http://imaps.co.wake.nc.us/imaps/>. A sketch map is acceptable, but please note street names and number. Any other structures on the property should also be shown. Please include a "North" arrow. Map should be no larger than 11" x 17".

C. Architectural Significance:

Describe the property, including exterior architectural features, additions, remodelings, and alterations. Also describe significant outbuildings and landscape features. If the owner is including interior features in the nomination for the purpose of design review protection; describe them in detail and note their locations. Include a statement regarding the architectural significance of the property.

D. Historic Significance:

Note any significant events, people, and/or families associated with the property. Include all major owners. Note if the property has ever been recorded during a historic building survey by the City of Raleigh or by the NC State Historic Preservation Office. If so, who and when? (See application item 6.D.) Please include a bibliography of sources. Information regarding prior designations can be found by contacting the Survey & Planning Branch of the NC State Historic Preservation Office at 919/733-6545 or <http://www.hpo.dcr.state.nc.us/spbranch.htm>.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY Date Received: _____ Received by _____



owner

address

parcel num

account num

intersection

buffer

legend

layers

0 60 ft

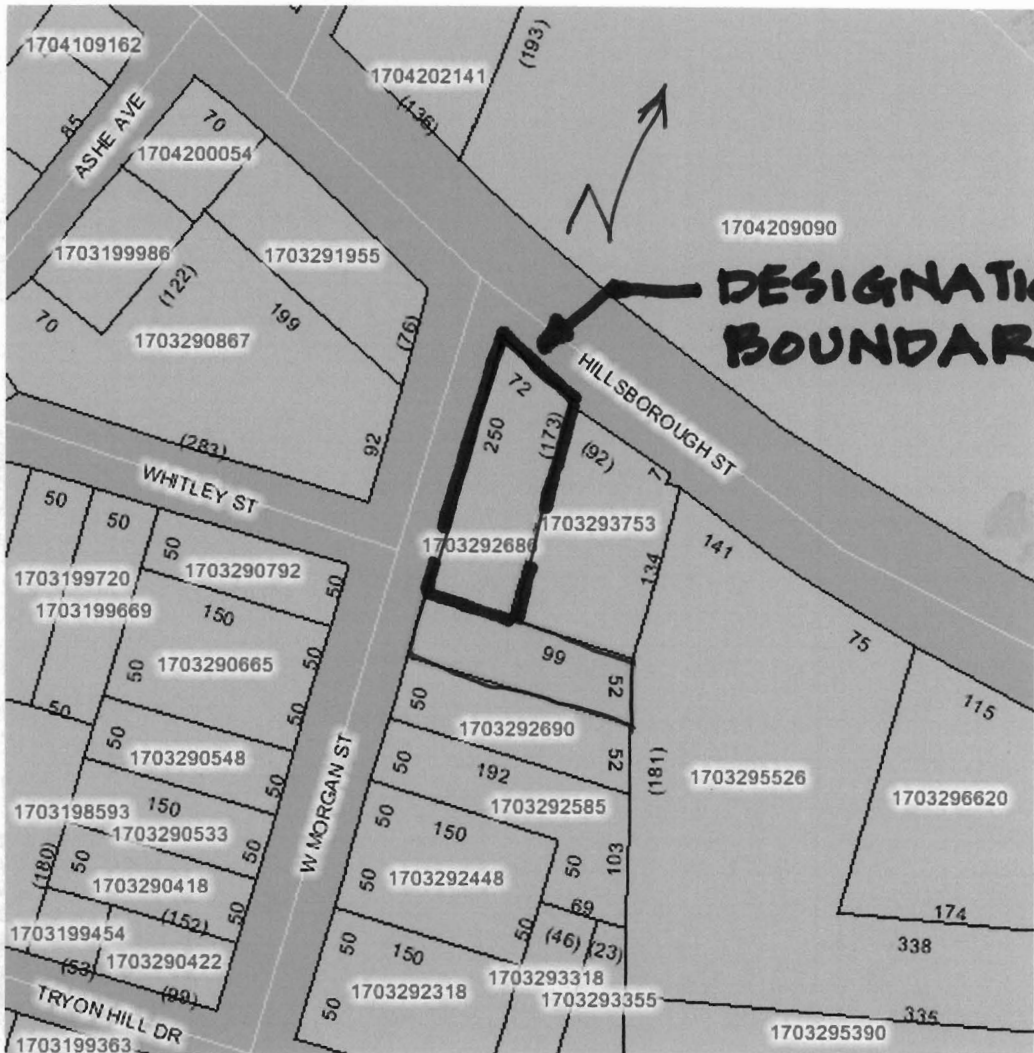
Real Estate Data and Revenue Department

Register of Deeds BOOKS! (surveys, plats & deeds)

LAYER CODES:

Raleigh Zoning Info

Soils Legend



DESIGNATION BOUNDARY

SURVEY
FAQ

WHAT'S NEW

SELECT A VIEW

- Property
- Environmental Features
- 1999 Color Orthophotography
- 1999 B/W Orthophotography
- 2002 Raleigh B/W Orthophotography

Parcel Number: 1703292686

Copyright 2002. City of Raleigh & Wake County



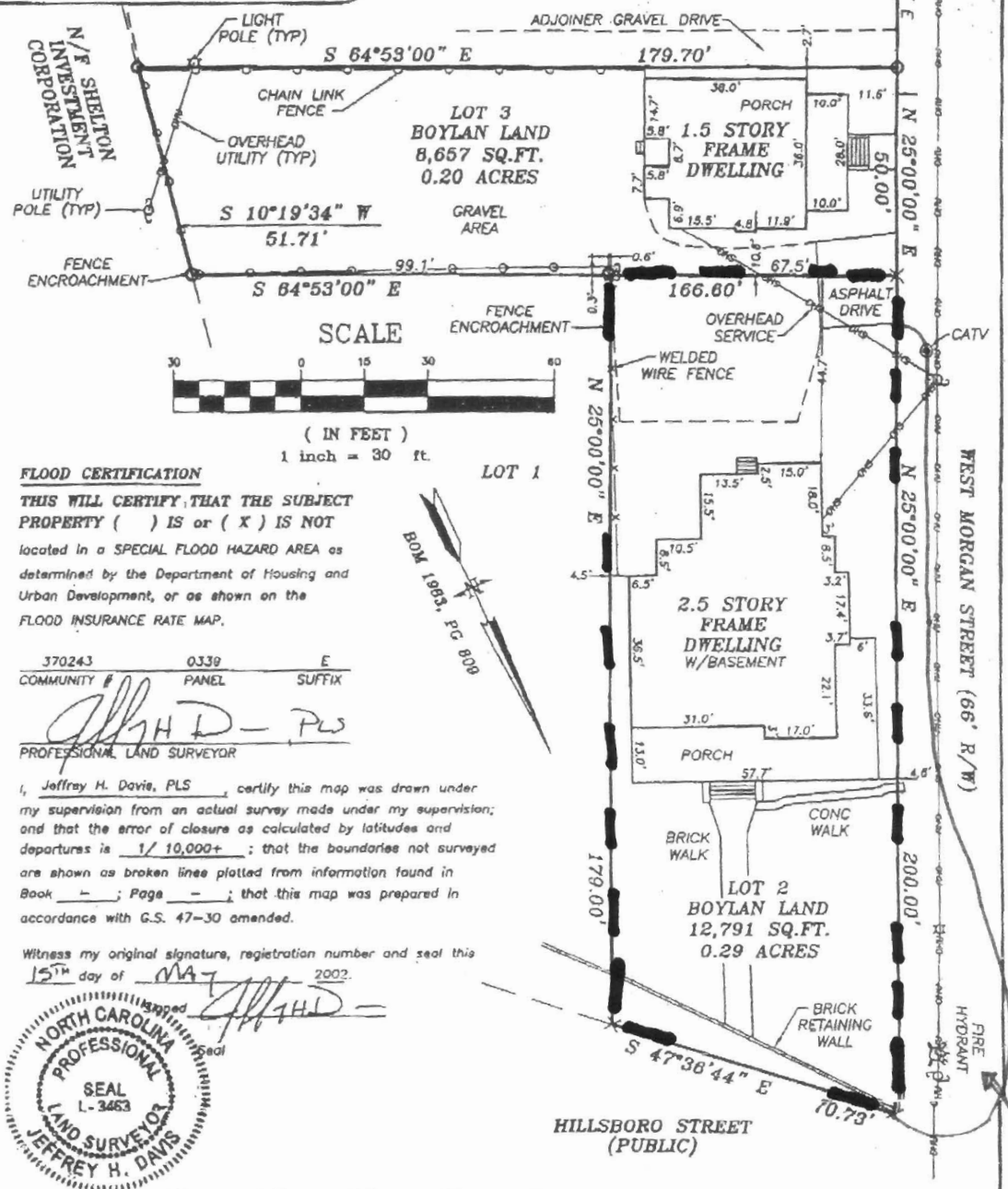
LEGEND

- EXISTING IRON PIPE
- NEW IRON PIPE
- × COMPUTED CORNER

NOTE:
THIS PROPERTY DOES NOT LIE WITHIN 2000' OF A N.C.G.S. MONUMENT.

THIS SURVEY IS OF AN EXISTING PARCEL OR PARCELS OF LAND.

ALL CREEKS, EASEMENTS, BUFFERS, FLOOD LIMITS & SETBACKS TAKEN FROM BOM 1911, PG 113.



FLOOD CERTIFICATION

THIS WILL CERTIFY THAT THE SUBJECT PROPERTY () IS or (X) IS NOT located in a SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREA as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, or as shown on the FLOOD INSURANCE RATE MAP.

370243 0339 E
COMMUNITY # PANEL SUFFIX

Jeffrey H. Davis
PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYOR

I, Jeffrey H. Davis, PLS, certify this map was drawn under my supervision from an actual survey made under my supervision; and that the error of closure as calculated by latitudes and departures is 1/10,000+; that the boundaries not surveyed are shown as broken lines plotted from information found in Book -; Page -; that this map was prepared in accordance with G.S. 47-30 amended.

Witness my original signature, registration number and seal this 15th day of MAY 2002.



A.J. FLETCHER FOUNDATION

LOTS 2 & 3, BOYLAN LAND
1117 HILLSBOROUGH STREET
920 WEST MORGAN STREET
RALEIGH NORTH CAROLINA

DATE: 05-15-2002
SCALE: 1" = 30'

TURNING POINT SURVEYING PLLC

4113 JOHN S. RABOTEAU WYND
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA 27612
FAX 510-8742 PH 781-0234

DESIGNATED PORTION OF PARCEL

TO AREA BEAUTIFY?

Historic Landmark Designation Report

John W. Thompson House 1117 Hillsborough Street Raleigh

Prepared for Fletcher Historic Properties, LLC

October 30, 2004

Revised: November 3, 2004

by M. Ruth Little

Longleaf Historic Resources, Raleigh

John W. Thompson House Architectural Significance

The John W. Thompson House, 1117 Hillsborough Street (southeast corner of Hillsborough and Morgan streets), is a large two-and-one-half story frame house. A tall hipped roof with wide corbelled eaves and five hipped dormers caps the imposing dwelling. It is predominantly Colonial Revival in style, with some picturesque features identifying it as "Southern Colonial." These are Queen Anne-style decorative details such as the diamond-paned upper sash windows on the first story, the wraparound porch, and the bracketed bay window on the east side. Two tall chimneys, one interior end chimney and one interior chimney, rise above the roof.

The five-bay wide house, which faces north to the campus of St. Mary's College across Hillsborough Street, retains almost all of its original fabric. The walls are sheathed with narrow weatherboards. The elegant entrance has a double-leaf glazed and paneled door with a fanlight and sidelights with beveled, diamond-paned glass set in lead muntins. A paneled classical surround encloses the entrance.

The house is accessed from Hillsborough Street by a brick sidewalk that leads to wide concrete steps with granite-topped spandrels at the center porch entrance. The one-story porch has a low hipped roof, ten Doric columns, and a railing with substantial balusters and a molded handrail. Although the Doric pilasters set into the front and side wall of the porch are original, the columns are reproductions. The porch wraps around the west side, where a pair of French doors with diamond-paned muntins open onto the porch from the parlor.

A variety of windows with wide facings fill the house with light. First story windows are double and tripled one-over-one sashes. The upper sashes have diamond-paned muntins. On the west side, the dining room is illuminated by a group of four fixed windows with diamond-paned muntins. On the east side, the library has a shallow bay window supported by corbeled brackets. The three fixed windows in the bay have been replaced with solid glass. On the second story, a triple-leafed Palladian-type window occupies the center bay above the main entrance. The center leaf is fixed; the flanking windows are double-hung sash. The upper sashes have a multitude of small square muntins. The remaining upper windows are nine-over-one sashes set individually. The five attic dormers contain nine-pane fixed windows.

The rear elevation contains a one-story hip-roofed ell. A two-story wing, lower and narrower than the main block, also extends from the rear elevation. This contains a center service stair and flanking small rooms containing bathrooms and closets. The rear entrance is located in a small hip-roofed room that was added about 1930 in place of the original rear porch. This room is finished with identical narrow weatherboard walls as the original house, and tall multi-paned wooden casement windows. The rear door is a 2003 replacement. A set of wooden steps and a connecting handicapped access walkway with wooden railing provide access from the paved parking area set behind the house.

The exterior retains excellent architectural integrity. During the 2003 rehabilitation, the following alterations were made to the exterior. The deteriorated front porch columns were replaced with “polystone” reproduction columns. The triple-leaf diamond-muntined window in the rear, center second-story bay of the service wing was moved to this location from the rear second-story wall of the main block. (In its original location, the window illuminated the second floor stair landing.) Above the stair landing, the former location of this window is now an opening into the service wing. The rear door is a replacement. All other fabric was repaired and rehabilitated.

The interior of the John W. Thompson House likewise retains excellent architectural integrity. The house contains 4,500 square feet, with approximately 13-foot ceilings, plaster walls, and ornate classical decorative trim. Throughout the house are plaster walls and ceilings, wide molded surrounds, paneled doors, and original narrow wooden floors. The first floor contains the traditional Georgian center hall two-room-deep plan. The main entrance opens to a large entrance foyer with a screen of four classical fluted columns that leads into the rear stair hall. The stair rises, with two landings, to the second floor. The open-string is decorated with ornate stair brackets. An ornate classical newel, simple balusters and molded handrail enclose the stair. To the right of the hall, the front parlor and rear dining room are reached through paneled pocket doors. To the left of the hall, pocket doors open to the front library. A bedroom on the left rear is accessed from the rear of the stair hall. Each room contains a brick fireplace and hearth with a Neoclassical Revival-style wooden mantel. The hall, parlor, dining room and library have tall, flat paneled wainscots. In the rear service area of the first floor, the left rear bathroom is still in place, although it has been remodeled. The butler’s pantry located between the dining room and rear kitchen has been converted to an office, as has the kitchen itself.

The second floor contains a large center stair hall with a curved railing that overlooks the first floor hall. Four corner bedrooms open up from the center hall. Between the two front bedrooms is a small room, illuminated by the front Palladian window, that may have been a nursery or a sewing room. An enclosed stair to the attic is accessed from a door in the front wall of the hall. An original bathroom is located between the two west bedrooms. The small rooms flanking the rear service stair in the two-story wing contain closets. Each of the bedrooms retains its original Neoclassical Revival-style mantel and brick fireplace and hearth.

The 2003 rehabilitation returned the Thompson House to its original 1914 appearance. A minor amount of original fabric was replaced on the interior. The flooring in the entrance foyer, stair hall, and original kitchen was replaced with new floorboards. The original kitchen was removed and the space converted to an office. The two original bathrooms were remodeled. The triple-leafed diamond muntin window originally located in the rear wall of the upper stair landing was moved in 2003 to the rear wall of the service wing. In its place is a boxed opening.

Noncontributing duplex. Ca. 1925. To the rear, facing Morgan Street, is a formerly separate parcel that is now combined with the Thompson House parcel. It contains a

small one-and-one-half-story frame duplex. The duplex is not associated with the architectural and historical significance of the Thompson House.

John W. Thompson House Historical Significance

Summary

The John W. Thompson House, 1117 Hillsborough Street, built in 1914, has architectural significance as one of a small group of grand dwellings remaining from the early twentieth century along Hillsborough Street between the Capitol and Oberlin Road. This stretch of Hillsborough Street was lined with the homes of some of Raleigh's most prominent citizens in the early 1900s, but most of them have been demolished. The two-and-one-half story frame house has the Southern Colonial Revival style favored by wealthy North Carolinians during this era. Its broad wraparound classical porch, diamond-paned windows, and French doors convey an atmosphere of gracious hospitality. During the 1989 Raleigh historic architecture survey, architectural historian Helen Ross praised it as "another excellent remnant of Hillsborough Street's early residential focus. Situated at the corner of two busy thoroughfares and opposite St. Mary's College, this dwelling commands attention, but alas cars go too fast to pay their homage."

The Thompson House has historical significance as the residence of John W. Thompson, noted Raleigh judge and civic leader, from about 1914 to his death in 1934. The house has been known for the past half-century as the home of the National Opera Company, a grassroots arts organization supported and guided by Raleigh businessman A. J. Fletcher. Fletcher located his opera company in the house in the early 1950s, and it remained here until the year 2000 when it relocated to the North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem. Although this facet of the house's history happened in relatively recent years, its association with Fletcher's opera company will become an important part of its significance in years to come.

Historical Background

John W. Thompson (1850-1934) was one of Raleigh's most prominent citizens. A descendant of Lieutenant Swan Thompson, who served under Colonel Joel Lane in the Revolutionary War, John grew up on the plantation of his father, Michael Thompson, north of Raleigh. He was educated at the old Horner Academy near Oxford and at Wake Forest College, and married Miss Sallie Ellington of Pittsboro in 1874. In 1884 he moved to the town of Raleigh and was active in business and civic spheres for the rest of his life. Always a staunch Democrat and a staunch Baptist, he helped to establish Raleigh's educational and humanitarian institutions. In the 1880s, as a member of the Watauga Club, he was one of a small group of men who proposed the establishment of the North Carolina Agricultural and Mechanical College, now North Carolina State University. During the administration of Governor Aycock, he served as chairman of the board of directors of Dorothea Dix Hospital.

No information was found on his early career. In 1912 his occupation was given as “timber/mineral lands,” which he practiced at his office in downtown Raleigh. At this time the Thompson family lived at 418 Halifax Street near the state Capitol. President Wilson appointed him judge of the Cristobal Court in the Panama Canal Zone, where he served from 1913 to 1920. From his return until his death in 1934, he was associated with the New York Mutual Life Insurance Company. Judge Thompson attended the First Baptist Church and belonged to the William G. Hill Masonic Lodge. He and his wife Sallie raised six children, three boys and three girls. Two of his sons preceded him in death.

In 1934, when he died at his home of a heart attack, the *News and Observer* published an obituary with a photograph. The next day, Joseph Daniels, editor of *The News and Observer*, eulogized his “long life and a full one” in an editorial:

Upon the streets, at every important community gathering he was, with his great figure and his big domed head, a familiar sight....He will be missed in Raleigh not only because he was one of the city’s wisest citizens but because in all the 84 years of his life he was one of the best of its citizens, strong, honest, kind and true.¹

The house on Hillsborough Street was Judge Thompson’s residence during the final two decades of his life. In 1910 John Thompson purchased lot 2 of the Boylan Land, approximately seventy feet by 200 feet, for \$1,576.² The sellers were four women and the husband of one of the women, apparently heirs of the Boylan Land, which had been subdivided in 1885. No mention is made of a house in the deed. The Thompsons apparently built the house soon afterward on this lot at 1117 Hillsborough Street, then at the corner of Harrison Avenue (now renamed Morgan Street). The 1913 city directory does not contain a listing for the house, but the 1914 Sanborn Map shows the house in place, almost exactly as it stands today.³ The Thompsons had the house built from 1913-1914 while they were in the Panama Canal Zone. Several of their grown daughters lived at home, thus they probably kept the household going during their parents’ absence. It is also possible that Judge Thompson only served in the Canal Zone during part of the year and lived in Raleigh the other part.

In the 1920s and 1930s John, Sallie, and their three daughters, Lillian, Elizabeth and Daisy, lived in the home on Hillsborough Street across from St. Mary’s College. Elizabeth, the artistic daughter, was operating the Peacock Alley Tea Room, where she sold antiques, in 1925. In the 1930s she worked as an interior decorator.⁴ Following John’s death, Sallie and her daughters continued to live in the house. Sallie must have passed away in the late 1930s. By 1941 the only remaining member of the family who lived in the house was Lillian. In 1950 the homeplace was owned by Elizabeth W. Thompson.

¹ “John W. Thompson,” *The News and Observer*, Raleigh, July 10, 1934.

² Wake County Deed Book 248, page 396.

³ Sanborn Map, Raleigh, 1914: sheet 74.

⁴ Raleigh City Directories: 1925, 1930.

In 1948 A. J. Fletcher, Raleigh businessman and arts advocate, founded the Grassroots Opera Company in a house near State College. Fletcher is chiefly known as the founder of the Capitol Broadcasting Company, parent company of Raleigh's premier television station, WRAL. In 1952, when neighbors of the house complained about the noise of the opera school practices, he purchased the Thompson House from Elizabeth Thompson and moved the opera company into it.⁵ The house, with its sign over the front door identifying it as the "Grassroots Opera Company" (later the National Opera Company) was the company's home for fifty years. In 2002 current owners, P. Brock Gross Jr. and Robert Birch, purchased it from the A. J. Fletcher Foundation. The Fletcher Foundation, which has continued Mr. Fletcher's philanthropy since his death in 1979, endowed an Opera Institute at the North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem in the year 2000. Known as the A. J. Fletcher Opera Institute, this new home has replaced the old opera school facility at 1117 Hillsborough Street.

In 2003 the new owners undertook a thorough and sensitive rehabilitation of the Thompson House under the supervision of architect Mark Davenport. The completed house has been leased to the law firm of Blanchard, Jenkins, Miller, Lewis & Stylers as their offices. In recognition of the careful restoration of the house, the project received a 2004 Sir Walter Raleigh Award for Community Appearance in the category of historic preservation.

Architectural Context

The John W. Thompson House was first surveyed in 1976 by Linda Harris and Mary Ann Lee, and is pictured on page 165 of their *Raleigh Historical Inventory*. It was again recorded by Helen Ross during her 1989 comprehensive historic architecture survey of Raleigh. Both Harris and Lee and Ross considered it to be one of a group of significant and endangered vestiges of Hillsborough Street's early twentieth century residential grandeur.

The Thompson House fits generally into the Colonial Revival style that was popular nationally in the early twentieth century. Yet certain features reminiscent of the Queen Anne style give it a picturesque quality that fits into a mode known as the "Southern Colonial." This hybrid was applied by North Carolina architects to grand houses for the state's business and industrial elite in the first fifteen years of the twentieth century. Two Raleigh architects, Charles W. Barrett and William P. Rose, worked in this style. C. C. Hook of Charlotte and Frank P. Milburn of Washington D. C. also designed residences in this mode in Raleigh in the early twentieth century.⁶ From a national perspective, the Southern Colonial is a version of the Queen Anne, Shingle Style, and Colonial Revival built for wealthy Northeastern clients by architect Henry Hobson Richardson of Boston and New York architects McKim, Mead and White.

⁵ Howard E. Covington, Jr., *Uncommon Giving: A. J. Fletcher and A North Carolina Legacy*, 69-72.

⁶ Interview with Catherine W. Bishir, Raleigh, February 21, 2002.

The premier architect of the Southern Colonial in Raleigh was Charles W. Barrett, who published a book about 1900 of his North Carolina dwellings entitled *Colonial Southern Homes*. The most notable example of the style surviving in Raleigh is the Raleigh Historic Landmark-designated Goodwin House, 220 Hillsborough Street, now the North Carolina Democratic Party headquarters. An example of the later phase of the style, the house has a grand colossal portico with one-story porches extending out the sides, a form that became the quintessential symbol of early twentieth century success. It was designed by William P. Rose. Similar houses that surely stood along Raleigh's principal residential avenues of Hillsborough Street, N. Wilmington Street, and New Bern Avenue have disappeared.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bishir, Catherine W. Interview with the author, Raleigh. February 21, 2002.

Covington, Howard E. *Uncommon Giving: A. J. Fletcher and A North Carolina Legacy*. Raleigh: A. J. Fletcher Foundation, 1999.

"Death Comes To Judge Thompson," Obituary, *The News and Observer*, Raleigh, July 9, 1934.

Gross, P. Brock, Jr. Co-owner of 1117 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, interview with the author, October 28, 2004.

Harris, Linda and Lee, Mary Ann. *An Architectural and Historical Inventory of Raleigh, North Carolina*. City of Raleigh Planning Department and Raleigh Historic Properties Commission, 1978.

"John W. Thompson," In Memoriam, *The News and Observer*, Raleigh, July 10, 1934.

Raleigh City Directories: 1911-12 to 1941.

Ross, Helen P. 1117 Hillsborough Street Survey File, Raleigh Historic Architecture Survey, North Carolina Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, 1989.

Sanborn Map, Raleigh, 1914: sheet 74.

Wake County Deed Book 248, page 396.