

IN THE DISTRICTS

A newsletter published by the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission

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■ PROFILE

Speaking The Vernacular

When it comes to historic buildings, “high” architecture has a way of grabbing the headlines; grand, stylish homes just have that extra allure. Yet basic, more understated “vernacular” homes have an equally important story to tell.

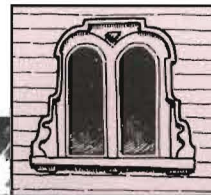
The language of vernacular houses is rooted in the local building tradition. Simple massing, floor plans, and detailing are its tell-tale signs, hallmarks of the cultural roots, personal tastes, and the commonly-chosen materials of native builders.

Raleigh’s historic districts provide numerous examples of both approaches. “High” architecture permeates the Blount Street Historic District. Historically one of the city’s most desirable addresses, the area today offers a visual index of fashionable turn-of-the-century building styles. The nearby Oakwood Historic District presents considerable contrast—mainly smaller houses on smaller lots, with minimal ornamentation.

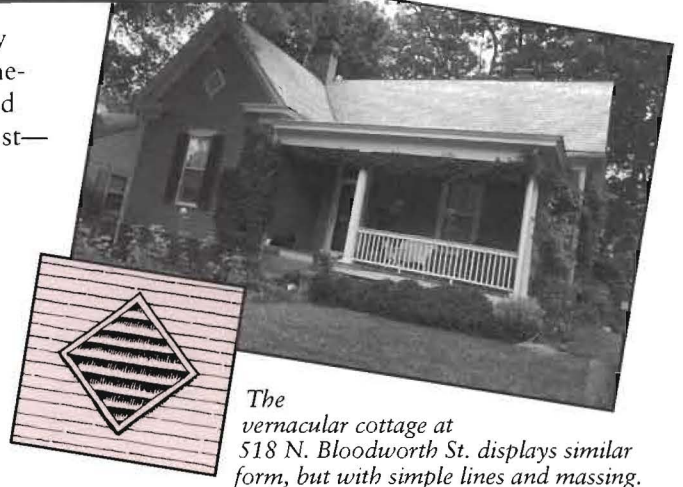
Not surprisingly, simple economics accounted for much of the difference. Blount Street residents could afford showplace size, master builders, and custom millwork. The shopkeepers, clerks, and merchants of Oakwood relied more on small-scale contractors and carpenters, who bought stock materials from local supply firms.

For design inspiration, they turned to pattern books, regional precedents, and their own ingenuity.

Victorian-era cottages, three-gabled “Triple A” homes, and bungalows were among the architectural results. The fact that so many were built—and many still survive—attests to both their original popularity and the lasting practicality of their design. While high style architecture ever inspires, vernacular houses continue to serve as the basic building blocks of Raleigh’s historic neighborhoods. ■



The Merrimon-Wynne House (526 N. Wilmington St.) embodies high Italianate architecture.



The vernacular cottage at 518 N. Bloodworth St. displays similar form, but with simple lines and massing.



■ WITHIN THE COMMISSION

The Raleigh Comprehensive Architectural Survey

What's "historic" about Raleigh? The Raleigh Comprehensive Architectural Survey has the answers.

The product of a multi-year effort sponsored by the commission, the survey serves as the cornerstone of historic preservation planning in the city. It features a neighborhood-by-neighborhood inventory of properties with intact historic features, providing the basis for identifying prospective Raleigh Historic Landmarks and Districts, as well as National Register properties and areas.

It also offers a graphic portrait of the city's growth. Examples such as the mill village of Caraleigh, "street-car suburbs" like Glenwood, the 1920s estates of Hayes Barton, and



The G. Milton Small, Jr. office, cited by the survey as one of the city's foremost modernist buildings, is now listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

downtown commercial areas are profiled, along with overviews of early FHA and VA construction and even landmark "modern" houses of the 1950s and '60s. Also of note are rural dwellings now absorbed into the city's suburban fabric.

A copy of the survey report, with maps, is on file in the commission office; individual property reports are archived at the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office. All are readily available for public reference. ■

■ UPDATE

Mansion Square Inn

On August 2, the North Carolina Medical Society began the demolition of the circa 1880 structure. The RHDC wishes to thank Capital Area Preservation, the Society for the Preservation of Historic Oakwood, North Carolina Theatre, and Mr. Rodney McGhee for their concerted efforts to save the building.

Oakwood South Extension

On August 1, the Raleigh City Council extended the southern boundary of the Oakwood Historic District along South Bloodworth and East streets to the south side of Morson Street. The district now encompasses all areas associated with the Oakwood neighborhood's period of historical significance. Welcome!

Umstead State Park

On June 30, the National Park Service approved the nomination of Umstead State Park (originally known as the Crabtree Creek Recreational Demonstration Area) to the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination was spearheaded by the RHDC, in cooperation with the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office.

■ TECH

CORNER

Q. My house seems to be dissolving—peeling paint, rotting eaves, leaking gutters. Why all this so suddenly?

A. Water is the greatest natural enemy of any building. Several systems work together to provide protection: roofing, flashing, gutters and downspouts, siding, paint. When any one or more of these systems begins to fail, damage from water infiltration can really accelerate.

The roof is obviously the first defense against moisture; trying to squeeze one more year out of a deteriorated roof

rarely yields an economic benefit. Loose or rusted flashings should be promptly repaired or replaced before water penetrates attics or walls. Windblown rainwater can actually run uphill on a roof and over/under poorly detailed flashing; pinpointing a troublesome leak may involve looking elsewhere from the point where water damage is observed.



Gutters and downspouts serve to channel water away from the building before it gathers in sufficient volumes to overwhelm roofing, flashing, siding, and paint. Plant debris can easily thwart that job. Leaf-clogged gutters can lead to water overflow and ice damming, often with disastrous results. What's more, many plant materials contain acidic compounds that slowly eat away metal; cleaning is a must! In addition, be certain the ground slopes away from the foundation, and that downspout leaders are long enough to kick water far from basements or crawlspaces.

By adopting a regular inspection and maintenance program, you're sure to prevent a tidal wave of problems. ■

■ GUIDE LINES

COAs Part II: The Review Process

As soon as a Certificate of Appropriateness application reaches the RHDC, formal review begins. Minor work proposals go to staff for evaluation; the COA committee considers major projects (see last issue's column).

The foundation of project review is the RHDC's *Guidelines and Standards for the Rehabilitation of Early Raleigh Neighborhoods and Buildings*. Proposals in the Moore Square district are also assessed according to the *Guidelines for Exterior Rehabilitation for the Moore Square Historic District*; changes to state-owned properties are evaluated under the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*.

Exterior changes can take almost infinite form. As such, the *Guidelines* are designed not so much as hard, fast rules, but as a framework for decision making, a practical means for maintaining district character while accommodating change. (Naturally, applicants are encouraged to consult the *Guidelines* as their project is being planned, before filling out a COA application.)

Project review requires distilling a proposal into its component parts, as well as assessing its overall character. Separate sections of the *Guidelines* address each of these components—basic shape and form, window and door patterns, roof pitch, etc.—with text providing an overview of the topic, definitions of related terms, and notes on traditional principles of construction.

While the *Guidelines* specifically prohibit certain changes—the use of vinyl siding, or removing important architectural details, for example—more often they form the basis for interpretation by staff or the COA committee. In the case of new materials or design concepts—the use of “dimensioned” shingles, or detailing of new, infill houses—contemporary considerations sometime play a hand. More frequently, historical building practices provide guidance.

Ultimately, in reviewing COA applications, context is the top consideration; achieving a “fit” with the special character of the building and the district is the review process' foremost goal. ■

■ AT YOUR

SERVICE

The RHDC Staff: “On Call”

When it comes to Certificate of Appropriateness applications, help is just a phone call away. The RHDC staff is available during regular business hours (8:30 a.m. – 5:15 p.m.) for consultation and assistance with all aspects of the COA process.

Maintenance is an on-going concern for owners of historic properties. The staff can provide suggestions for both preventive and remedial work. Other times, the desire is for more extensive change. Staff can assist in interpreting the district guidelines, and perhaps suggest additional design options.

Want to review the literature? On file at the RHDC office is a variety of technical publications, plus information

on specific restoration products and trade services. Just want guidance putting together an application? The RHDC staff is happy to assist applicants in determining what's needed for project review—or just with the basics of filling out the COA application.

Service is the watchword of the RHDC staff. Feel free to call for an appointment, and let us know how we can be of help. ■

RHDC Executive Director Dan Becker (right) discusses front porch renovation options at 111 N. Bloodworth St. with owner William Boyce.



■ CITY GOVERNMENT

Raleigh: A Certified Local Government

The Certified Local Government program is a prime example of “preservation partnership” in action. Administered by the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office (NCHPO), the CLG program combines federal, state, and local preservation efforts.

As a CLG, a local government maintains a preservation commission with qualified staff, actively sponsors historic resource surveys, and encourages nominations of historic properties to the National Register.

City funding for preservation projects is supplemented by state grant

funds, drawn from federal allocations. The NCHPO annually sets aside 10% of its preservation funding solely for CLG-sponsored projects. The state also offers CLGs technical assistance and training.

Currently, there are 33 CLGs in North Carolina. Each government has designated its own preservation body to initiate and administer CLG projects; in Raleigh, that group is the RHDC. Local CLG efforts have included the completion of the Raleigh Comprehensive Architectural Survey and planning for the Yates Mill restoration. ■

AROUND THE RHDC

RHDC Meetings

RHDC Business meetings:

10/17; 11/21; 12/19; 1/16; 2/20; 7:30 AM,
Rm. 305, Avery C. Upchurch Govt. Complex

Certificate of Appropriateness Comm.:

Application deadline & meeting date:
10/23 for 11/6; 11/16 for 12/4; 12/14 for 1/2;
1/22 for 2/5; 2/19 for 3/4; 4:00 PM,
Rm. 305, Avery C. Upchurch Govt. Complex

Public Relations/Education Comm.:

10/19; 11/16; 12/21; 1/18; 2/15; 8:30 AM,
Rm. 303, Avery C. Upchurch Govt. Complex

Research Committee:

10/5; 11/2; 12/7; 1/4; 2/1; 12:00 Noon,
Rm. 303, Avery C. Upchurch Govt. Complex

Contacts

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RHDC staff:	
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Doug Hill	890-3666
Historic Oakwood:	
David Philbrook, Pres.	834-0887
Boylan Heights Association:	
Rhonda Maurer, Pres.	834-6991
Downtown Raleigh Development Corporation:	832-1231

BEFORE / AFTER

Those passing by 528 E. Jones St. have witnessed a dramatic turnabout in the property's appearance during the past several months. The c.1890 home is undergoing extensive renovation, with the improvements most evident up front. The top photograph dates from last October; the bottom picture was taken in August of this year. Owner Richard Rivoire removed the failing 1930s porte cochere and returned the porch roof to its original shape, replaced wrought iron porch posts and brick piers with wood columns, and installed a raised wooden porch floor in place of an aging concrete pad.



A B R O A D E R

V I E W

The RHDC enjoys a special relationship with the Wake County Historic Preservation Commission. Created in May 1992, the WCHPC serves both as a partner and a coordinating agency for county-wide preservation efforts. Within the city of Raleigh, the WCHPC

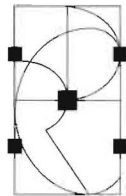
reviews proposed changes to individual historic landmarks located outside the districts. That same authority extends to all other locally-designated landmarks and districts in the county (except in Wake Forest, which maintains its own municipal commission). The WCHPC prepares the historic preservation elements of county or municipal comprehensive plans (outside Raleigh and Wake Forest) and recommends designation

of historic landmarks and districts to the county commission or town councils. In addition, it conducts educational programs, and oversees the promotion and distribution of the 1994 book *The Historic Architecture of Wake County, North Carolina*. The commission can be contacted through Robin Quinn of the Wake County Planning Department, at 856-6327.

COA Tally

Major work (comm. review):	May 95	June 95	July 95	Aug 95
Approved as submitted	1	1	2	1
Approved w/conditions	4	3	3	6
Deferred	1	1	2	1
Denied		1		1
Withdrawn		1	1	
Minor work (staff apprvd.):	11	18	8	13

Staff support for the RHDC is provided by the City of Raleigh Planning Department.



RALEIGH HISTORIC DISTRICTS COMMISSION

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The mission of the RHDC is to serve as City Council's official historic preservation advisory body to identify, preserve, protect and educate the public about Raleigh's historic resources.