

# IN THE DISTRICTS

*A newsletter published by the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission*

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## ■ PROFILE

### Modernism in Raleigh

**A**lthough perhaps not widely known, the Triangle has one of the most extensive collections of Modern architecture in the country. In 1948 the School of Design was established at N.C. State College, led by dean Henry Kamphoefner.

As a result, Raleigh developed a small but significant coterie of Modern architects who designed a number of landmark houses in the fashionable neighborhoods of



mid-1950s Modernism became a popular style for mainstream American houses, with practical adjustments

to form and materials. For example, most houses would not be built with a flat roof, but a shallowly-pitched roof. They were asymmetrical, long and low with deep eaves.

More conventional materials such as brick, clapboards and rough-cut stone supplanted the sleeker materials of the International style. Houses frequently featured two or more types of siding. Brick was the most popular, especially in North Carolina, with its plentiful red clay; the brick industry in the state enjoyed a tremendous boom during this period.

Windows were generally wider than they were tall. There was often a large picture window in the living room.

By the 1960s, the Mid-century Modern and Neocolonial styles hybridized, with many houses being built with Modernist proportions but Colonial-inspired details. ■



West Raleigh and Country Club Hills.

Modernism evolved from the International Style of architecture developed in Europe in the early 1920s and 30s. Introduced to America at the 1932 Exhibition of Modern Architecture in New York, the International Style was characterized by simplicity of line, absence of ornament, flat roofs, and sleek materials such as glass, steel, polished stone and concrete.

In the early post-World War II years, while most of suburban America was being built in the conservative Neocolonial style, a few cutting-edge American architects were designing landmark Modernist architecture. By the

*Three modernist Raleigh Historic Landmarks — Top: Matsumoto House, built in 1954.*

*Center: Bill & Betty Weber House, built in 1953.*

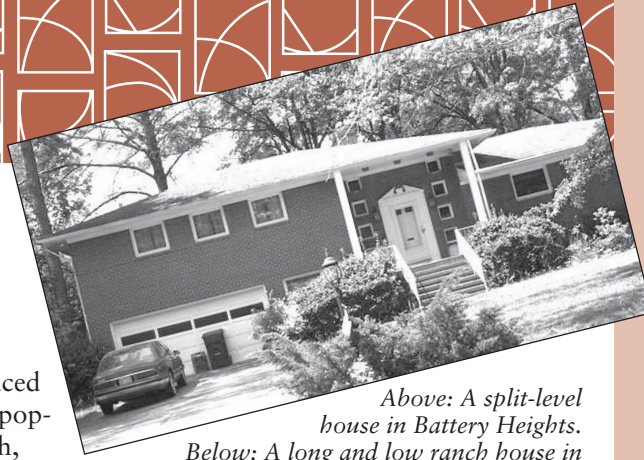
*Bottom: Henry Kamphoefner House, built in 1950.*

## ■ BUILDING VOCABULARY

### Modernist Residential Architecture in Raleigh

Mainstream America embraced Modern architecture in the popular house form of the ranch, inspired by the ranch houses of the southwestern U.S., descendants of the haciendas of Mexico. The ranch was a one-story house, but wider than the earlier bungalow or Neocolonial cottage. Postwar America was an automobile culture, so there was no need to build houses close together; the larger building lot was a consequent luxury. The wide ranch house fit comfortably on the large lot, was impressive from the front, and exemplified the long, low, and sleek attributes of the Modernist aesthetic.

Another form, popular after 1960, was the split-



*Above: A split-level house in Battery Heights.  
Below: A long and low ranch house in Longview Gardens.*

level house. One side of the split level was two stories, and the other side was one story, with an elevation somewhere between that of the two stories. This form solved the problem of the sloping lot, which was unsuited for a ranch house. ■



## ■ TECH

### CORNER



May I replace my old roof?



Original roof materials, whether metal or slate or clay tile, contribute to the historic character of a house and should be preserved as carefully as other character-defining features. Changing a roof material, furthermore, may result in a less effective roof system. The material was probably chosen based on the given conditions: slate works best on steeper roofs, while metal is a better choice for shallow slopes or flat roofs.

Maintaining your metal roof requires the same common-sense steps you take to maintain the rest of your house: keep it coated, clean, and free of leaves and other debris. A rust hole or split seam doesn't mean your whole roof is shot. Often, repairs can be made with an acrylic elastomeric membrane, applied in liquid form to the roof after an embedded mesh reinforcing fabric. These membranes are available in a number of colors to coordinate with your paint scheme, and can even be custom tinted.

Links to information on the technical aspects of repair and maintenance of historic structures are being added to RHDC's website, [www.rhdc.org](http://www.rhdc.org). ■

## ■ SPOTLIGHT

### Modernist Neighborhoods

Four post-World War II Raleigh neighborhoods are being considered for designation as National Register historic districts:

**BATTERY HEIGHTS:** This neighborhood in the heart of southeast Raleigh was developed with custom homes after the war and features an excellent collection of well-preserved Mid-Century Modern ranch houses on wooded lots.

**CAPITOL HEIGHTS:** Sandwiched between St. Augustine's College and the Oakwood Cemetery, this neighborhood was built soon after World War II for returning veterans and their new families. It features small, simple Cape Cod cottages in the Neocolonial style. Most were financed by the Federal Housing Administration or Veterans Administration.

**LONGVIEW GARDENS:** This large neighborhood on both sides of New Bern Avenue was begun just before the war. It features curvilinear streets, a golf course, a traffic circle, and very large lots. Most of the earliest houses are in the Neocolonial style, followed by a large number of Mid-Century Modern ranch houses.

**MADONNA ACRES:** Just east of St. Augustine's College, this neighborhood comprises one long street with four small cul-de-sacs. It was begun in 1960, and features a number of well-preserved ranches and split-level houses with Modernist features. Many of the original residents were associated with the college.



*Capitol Heights houses feature Neocolonial details.*

## ■ CHALLENGES

### After-the-Fact Applications

The COA Committee has noted a rise in the number of applications filed after-the-fact; that is, after work has begun or been completed. City code requires that a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) be obtained before work begins in a historic district. It also makes good sense: after-the-fact applications, while possible to process, generally delay the schedule of work and may increase the cost of a project.

After-the-fact applications require all exterior work to stop until a COA is issued, and the commission and staff must review the application as if the work has not yet begun. Unapproved new work that does not meet the *Design Guidelines for Raleigh Historic Districts*, regardless of cost or scope, will have to be removed.

Save yourself the risk and expense of removing work or paying fines — get your COA approvals before starting work. A list of work and information on the COA application process may be found at [www.rhdc.org](http://www.rhdc.org).

## ■ WITHIN THE COMMISSION

### Six Properties Designated Raleigh Historic Landmarks

RHDC recently recommended six properties for RHL recognition. The Raleigh City Council designated the properties on September 1.

The 1917 Lemuel & Julia Delany House (210-212 N. State St.) in Idlewild, built by physician Lemuel Delany and his wife Julia, a St. Augustine's College instructor, is a good vernacular example of the Classical Revival style of architecture. The 1900 Dr. M.T. Pope House (511 S. Wilmington St.) is a rare and early example of an African-American residence built of expensive, high-quality materials with stylish workmanship.

The 1923 St. James AME Church (520 Method Rd.), a Gothic Revival brick church in Method, is an example of the stylish churches that anchored historically-prosperous African American communities.

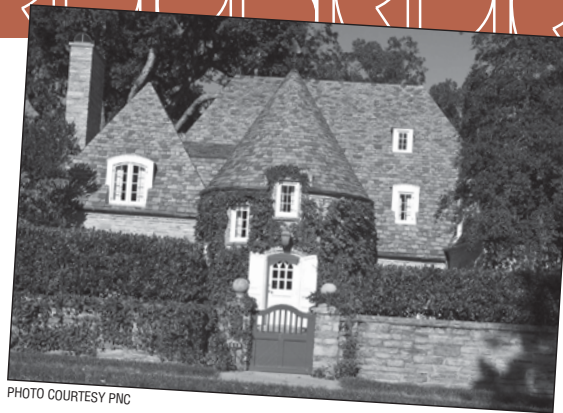


PHOTO COURTESY PNC

*Recently designated Raleigh Historic Landmark, the Truman & Annie Laurie Williams House & Gardens.*

The 1953 Bill & Betty Weber House (606 Transylvania Ave.) is an excellent example of Modernist style executed in collaboration with architectural master George Matsumoto.

The 1956 Paul & Ellen Welles House (3227 Birnamwood Rd.) is a split-level Modernist house designed by Kenneth McKoy, an early graduate of the N.C.S.U. School of Design.

The 1939 Truman & Annie Laurie Williams House & Gardens (910 Harvey St.) is a rare local example of the Norman French style featuring a landscape designed by renowned landscape architect Charles Gillette. ■

## ■ UPDATE

### Latta Site Considered for Landmark Designation

The site of historic Latta House and University may be redesignated a Raleigh Historic Landmark based upon findings from a recent archaeological survey performed at 1001 Parker Street in historic Oberlin.

The university was an African-American coeducational institution founded in 1892 by Rev. M.L. Latta, a freed-slave and teacher, to educate underprivileged and orphan children in Raleigh's black community.

The property was also the site of the former Latta residence, which lost its Raleigh Historic Landmark designation

when it was destroyed by fire in 2007.

In 2008 City Council appointed RHDC to administer an archaeological survey of the property, conducted by archaeological consultant ESI. The purpose of the survey was to recover possible artifacts and data from this important site, which might also help tell the story of the property during the school's heyday.

On August 4th RHDC presented City Council with the archaeological survey report. The site is managed by the City of Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department. *A copy of the report is available at [www.rhdc.org](http://www.rhdc.org)* ■



*Top: A shoe polish bottle found at the Latta site. Bottom: ESI consultants at work*

■ AROUND THE RHDC

**RHDC Meetings**

**RHDC Business meetings:** 11/17, 12/15. 7:30 AM, Rm. 305, Avery C. Upchurch Gov't. Complex

**Certificate of Appropriateness Comm.:** (Application deadline & meeting date) 11/19 for 12/7; 12/16 for 1/4/10. 4:00 PM, Rm. 305, Avery C. Upchurch Gov't. Complex

**Community Awareness Committee:** 11/3, 12/1. 4:00 PM, Rm. 312, One Exchange Plaza

**Research Committee:** 11/5, 12/3. 7:30 AM, Rm. 312, One Exchange Plaza

**Commission Members**

Curtis Kasefang (Chair), Jane Forde (Vice-Chair), Marni Vinton (Sec'y./Treas.), Fred Belledin, John Branch, Matthew Brown, Jannette Coleridge-Taylor, Stephen Cruse, Nick Fountain, Esther Hall, Robert Runyans, Barbara Wishy

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 Historic Boylan Heights: www.boylanheights.org  
 Downtown Raleigh Alliance: www.godowntownraleigh.com

■ AT YOUR SERVICE

**Community Conversations**

During the past year RHDC's Community Awareness Committee has hosted several Community Conversations, events intended to spark dialogue about local historic preservation issues. The Raleigh community has turned out for multiple programs that addressed the topics of historic preservation and sustainable development, design tools for neighborhoods, the economic benefits of historic preservation, and the federal and state historic preservation tax credit programs. Speakers have included nationally-known preservationists,



Attendees learn about tax credits at a January Conversation.

including Charleston Mayor Joe Riley, economist Don Rypkema, and design expert Pratt Cassity. On October 10th RHDC hosted "Oberlin in October," which featured the history of historic Oberlin, the Reconstruction era in Raleigh, and the recent archaeological survey of the Latta University site. ■

To view conversations, visit [www.rhdc.org](http://www.rhdc.org)

■ A B R O A D E R

**V I E W** The RHDC serves as City Council's official historic preservation advisory body to identify, preserve, protect, and promote Raleigh's historic resources. Raleigh has multiple historic preservation resources

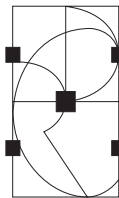
available to its citizens: the Raleigh City Museum ([www.raleighcitymuseum.org](http://www.raleighcitymuseum.org)); Capital Area Preservation, a Wake County nonprofit organization ([www.cappresinc.org](http://www.cappresinc.org)); Preservation North Carolina, N.C.'s statewide nonprofit organization ([www.presnc.org](http://www.presnc.org)); the N.C. State Historic Preservation Office, part of the State's Department of Cultural

Resources ([www.hpo.ncdcr.gov](http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov)); the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a national nonprofit organization ([www.preservationnation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org)); the National Park Service, the keeper of the National Register of Historic Places ([www.nps.gov/history](http://www.nps.gov/history)); and last, but not least, RHDC ([www.rhdc.org](http://www.rhdc.org))! ■

**COA Tally**

Major work (comm. review):	June '09	July '09	Aug. '09	Sept. '09
Approved as submitted	1		2	
Approved w/ conditions	4	3	3	4
Approved in part/ denied in part				
Denied			1	
Deferred		1		
Minor work (staff approved):	13	8	10	20

Staff support for the RHDC is provided by the Raleigh Department of City Planning, [www.raleighnc.gov](http://www.raleighnc.gov).



**RALEIGH HISTORIC DISTRICTS COMMISSION**

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 email: [rhdc@rhdc.org](mailto:rhdc@rhdc.org)

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