HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF CALDWELL COUNTY

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by
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Located in the northwestern corner of the North Carolina piedmont on the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains is Caldwell County. Carved from Burke and Wilkes counties in 1841, the evolution of the county represents a broad range of North Carolina's historical development. It harbors aspects of the agricultural, industrial, and resort development that characterize the state as a whole. From the earliest days of settlement, the broad central portion of the county, with its gently rolling hills and fertile lands, supported a population primarily of yeoman farmers who lived in relative isolation from the rest of the state and nation; these people introduced and retained a traditional architecture that endured for many generations. A small planter society developed in the early 19th century and exerted a disproportionate amount of influence in local politics and economics. The nucleus of Caldwell's plantation society was found in the northeastern part of the county in the bottomlands along the Yadkin River. Architecturally many of the plantation seats mirrored traditional architectural forms with the primary difference seen in the preference of brick over frame construction materials; several of these fine houses survive today. The spectacular growth of the county's industrial enterprises during the late 19th and early 20th century transformed Caldwell County from an almost exclusively rural economy to a predominately industrial one. The easily developed water power, plentiful and cheap labor, and abundant timberlands attracted textile, lumber, and furniture industrialists to the county. The furniture industry developed

primarily in Lenoir during the late 19th century and remains the county's largest industry. The importance of the furniture industry is reflected in the extensive operations of one of the largest furniture corporations in the nation, Broyhill Furniture Industries, whose corporate headquarters and several plants are located in Lenoir. The textile and lumber mills and mill villages that have come to characterize much of this region are found primarily in the southern and western parts of the county. Many of these settlements have lost their original economic functions and many of their original buildings no longer stand; but enough of their fabric survives to suggest late 19th - early 20th century patterns of trade as well as the nature of rural building. In the extreme north, where the county embraces the slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the splendid natural beauty attracted vacationers in the late 19th century and led to the development of the county's only example of resort architecture which is shared with Watauga County. All of these principal themes of Caldwell County's development are manifested in the historic buildings found across the county.

The 476 square mile area of Caldwell County is characterized by gently rolling to hilly terrain with numerous tracts of forest land intermingled with agricultural land. The variations in the topography become more pronounced traveling toward the northern quadrant of the county where its ruggedness merges with that of the mountain region. The Yadkin and John's rivers and tributaries course through the county in a general north to south direction with the Catawba River forming a natural border

on the southern edge of the county. Boundaries include Watauga County to the northwest, Wilkes County to the northeast, Alexander County to the east, Catawba and Burke counties to the south, and Burke and Avery counties to the west.

Within the limits of the county are several distinguishing natural and man-made features. Grandfather Mountain, at 5,964 feet, the highest peak in the Blue Ridge mountain range abuts the northwest boundary. Located on the northern border is the Blowing Rock, a well known rock formation that rises from John's River Valley creating a strong current of air that returns light objects dropped over its edge. Lake Rhodhiss, a 3515 acre lake, formed in 1924-1925 is found in the southern part of the county.

Caldwell County supports a diversified economy with the furniture industry being the primary contributor. Other goods produced include textiles, gravel, poultry, cattle, dairy products, hogs, corn, tobacco, and silage. The county's three major employers are Broyhill Furniture Industries with 4,275 employees, Bernhardt Industries with 1,786 and Kincaid Furniture Company with 1,200 employees.[1]

Demographically the county is distinguished by small towns, rural settlements, and one large population center. Lenoir, the county seat, is the only urban area and has a population of 14,076. The only towns of any size in the county are Hudson with a population of 2,888, and Granite Falls with a population of 2,580. Blowing Rock, a small mountain resort town with 1,337 people, is partially located in Caldwell County but is associated more with Watauga County due to its mountainous terrain and

corresponding economic development.[2] Among the rural settlements whose early character may still be perceived are Collettsville, Patterson, and Rhodhiss.

Early Settlement (1790-1840)

Settlement began to take place within the present boundaries of Caldwell County during the late eighteenth century but a few hunters were scattered in the area as early as the 1750s. Still part of the Indian Country, the remoteness and richness of the territory was first described by Bishop August Spangenburg, superintendent of Moriavian missions and settlements, when he passed throught the western part of the county in 1753 while searching for a suitable site for a Moriavian settlement:[3]

> ...we are now in a locality that has probably been seldom trodden by the foot of man since the creation of the world... we have been traveling over terrible mountains and along very dangerous places...

The Bishop was describing his northward expedition following the course of John's River from where it flows into the Catawba River to its source near the Blowing Rock. In reference to his campsite in the northwestern part of the county (later known as the Globe valley) he writes:

> ...one might call it a basin or kettle. It is a cove in the mountains and is very rich soil... Various springs of very sweet water form lovely meadow lands...

The Bishop's journey took him through the most rugged and mountainous terrain of Caldwell County; he failed to see the fertile lands and gentle rolling hills that characterize most of the county and would provide suitable sites for the productive farms of future settlers.

Rising land costs, higher taxes, and scarcity of available

farmland in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia stimulated migration southward into piedmont North Carolina and Caldwell County where land was cheap and plentiful. Immigrants and sons of immigrants traveled down the "Great Wagon Road" and proceeded west by settling the fertile watershed valleys of the Yadkin and Catawba rivers, gradually moving up the tributaries and creeks as the best bottomland was taken. The groups that predominated in the southward movement down the Wagon Road and formed the majority of Caldwell County's original population were Ulster Scots or Scotch-Irish, and Germans. People of English, Welsh-English, Irish, Scotch, and Huguenot extraction migrated from central Virginia and South Carolina also seeking less populated and less expensive farmlands.

Prior to the formation of Caldwell County in 1841 the territory was shared by Burke and Wilkes counties formed in 1777 from Rowan County. Important early settlement centered primarily along Lower Creek, the Yadkin River valley, and Gunpowder Creek (the site of the only industry in the area prior to 1851). The early settlements included: Tucker's Barn (to become the site of Lenoir) established near Fort Grider (present site of the former Lenoir High School) an early defense outpost built around 1776; Gunpowder Creek settlement (near Granite Falls), the site of Andrew Baird's Iron Forge, established in 1792 and operated until 1824;[4] and Fort Defiance, an outpost built at the beginning of the Revolutionary War on the banks of the Yadkin River, and closely associated with the Lenoir family whose late 18th century homestead still stands close to the site

of the fort.

The economic state of the area was characterized by self-sufficient farming and home industries and did not change drastically until the introduction of industrialization in the late 19th century. Settlers cleared and cultivated the land, built their homes and farms from the virgin forest, and depended upon the bounty of the land for food, clothing, and medicines. If there was any excess produce, it was used to barter for the few things that could not be raised from the soil or gathered from nature.

As settlers continued to move into the area, the population remained principally yeoman farmers and a few merchants who owned few or no slaves and under 1000 acres of land. Shortly after the turn of the century a new pattern of development began primarily in the Yadkin River Valley. The bottomlands of this valley were rich and fertile and provided an idyllic and beautiful setting for the growth of Caldwell's planter society. Many of the early inhabitants of the valley such as William Lenoir (1751 - 1839) and Edmund Walter Jones (? - 1845) followed the Yakin River southward from Wilkesboro in the late 18th century. Others such as William Davenport (1770 - 1859) approached from the south through Burke County. Along with Dulas and Hortons, these early families would form the nucleus of the influential planter class which would influence local politics and economics prior to the Civil War. Large land owners also settled in the central and southwestern portion of the county. Andrew Baird was among the first to establish a

residence on Gunpowder Creek, as was the Corpening family on the southern portion of Lower Creek. Among the early families along the center portion of Lower Creek was the Powell family and James C. Harper.

Architecture (1790 - 1840)

Just as Caldwell County's isolation and fertile soil promoted agricultural self-sufficiency, the county's remoteness and abundant timber resources encouraged its builders to follow local architectural traditions. The buildings erected from 1790 to 1840 were, in both exterior and interior plan, vernacular. This is to say that the buildings did not reflect the fully developed architectural high styles popular in the nation's large cites, but instead followed a set of local customs rooted in traditions that were generations and sometimes centuries old. The simple but powerful influences of classicism and the environmental conditions of the North Carolina piedmont modified these traditions to create a set of building types indigenous to Caldwell and the surrounding counties.

A variety of influences produced the range of vernacular building forms available for buildings. First, there were the domestic building traditions of England, Ireland, and Germany that the early settlers brought with them to North Carolina. Among these were two-room, or hall-and-parlor, interior arrangements that were common in 16th and 17th century England and Ireland; and the Continential plan house, a two-story dwelling with a three-room plan comprising one large room and two smaller chambers on the first floor that had its origins in medieval

Germany. The three-room plan is also known as the Quaker-plan because William Penn advocated its adoption by Pennsylvania's early settlers. A second important influence on the development of vernacular architecture was the revival of classical architecture in England during the late 17th and 18th centuries. While most builders of modest means could not copy the details of the classically inspired Georgian style, many began to apply the style's symmetry to their dwellings.[5]

A final force that shaped the area's building forms were the physical conditions and settlement patterns south and west of Philadelphia. In Pennsylvania and Maryland, German, Scotch-Irish, and Welsh English alike had discovered the advantages of log construction.[6] These three groups lived adjoining each other for several decades before the movement to North Carolina began, and through contact each group appears to have borrowed those building practices of its neighbors best suited to local conditions. By the time the German, Scotch-Irish, and Welsh-English stared moving down the "Great Wagon Road", they had developed a common vocabulary of building, expressed in frame and brick as well as log construction, that they carried to their new environment.

All of the county's surviving pre-1840 houses fall into a small number of building forms. For the county's less prosperous farm families, the predominate dwelling form was probably a single-pen, story and an attic house usually of log. Almost all of these small early log houses have disappeared. One surviving

example is the Summer - Bush House, although much enlarged and veneered with brick, the vertical proportions and early stone chimney substantiate an early 19th century house form. The Reverend Jesse Rankin House is the only known two-story log house surviving from this period and is an example of substantial log construction.

The wealthier farmers erected two-story structures usually with a side gable roof and exterior gable end chimneys. Most were one-room deep (single-pile) with a two-room plan which was gradually replaced by a center hall interior plan. The basic "I-house" form (plan and height) varied little, but its proportions, decorative features, and construction material varied according to the wealth of the builder and the current popular architectural style in the countyside.

The earliest style to appear in Caldwell County was the Georgian, named for the English kings George I, II, and III who ruled while the style was fashionable in their country. The Georgian style reflected the influence of both the classical architecture of ancient Greece and Rome, and the classically - inspired designs of the Italian Renaissance and the Baroque. The Georgian style was popular in piedmont North Carolina from the late 18th century until about 1810, a full generation after it had lost favor in the nation's centers of architectural fashion.[7]

Surviving Georgian ornament is extremely rare in Caldwell. Fort Defiance, the plantation seat of General William J. Lenoir

is the most refined representation of the Georgian style in the county and one of the finest in western North Carolina. Characteristic Georgian features include a five-bay wide facade covered with beaded weatherboarding, flush gable ends, modillion blocks in the cornice, and nine-over-nine sash windows. The interior has a simple, robust finish. The raised panel, found on doors, mantels, and walls is another typical Georgian feature. Other notable interior features include arched fireplace openings, thick, molded chair rails, and two staircases - a simple boxed stair, and an open stringer stair. An 1823 side wing displays later three-part Federal mantels, sheathed wainscot, and a boxed stair. The woodgraining and marbleizing in the house is a restoration based on remnants of the original art. Elsewhere in the county, the massive double-shoulder chimney laid in Flemish bond at the William Davenport House (ca. 1807) evokes something of Georgian character.

The Federal style (1800 - 1840) was the next architectural style to gain acceptance among Caldwell's builders. The style is so named because it became fashionable during the first years of America's independence. This style drew inspiration from a wide variety of classical motifs, and exhibited a greater lightness of form and delicacy of ornament treatment than the Georgian. Federal designs were fashionable in the principal cities of the United States between 1780 and 1820, but the style did not reach the North Carolina piedmont until after 1800 and remained in widespread use until about 1840.[8]

The major change introduced by the appearance of the Federal style was more in the interior finish of the house. In most farmhouses this applied to the treatment of the doors and mantels. Flat panel doors and wainscotting, and three-part mantels with a center plate sometimes articulated with reeding or a medallion were usually the extent of the Federal style in the county. The William Dickson House (ca. 1833), or Walnut Grove, is the best example of a traditional house with applied Federal style details in the county. The two-story frame house is also a rare example of a three-room Quaker or Continential plan. The Federal influence is reflected in a characteristic three-part mantel with reeding on the center plate and delicate scrollwork on the primary stair stringerboard. Separate front entrances for each of the two front rooms, and two interior staircases, providing access to the upstairs, was a prevalent plan among the few surviving houses of the early 19th century. A carryover from the earlier Georgian style are the modillion blocks still visible in the cornice of the rear facade.

The interior finish of the MaCaleb Coffey House (ca. 1830 ?) reflects a typical vernacular finish of hand planed vertical boards and two interior stairs; and yet has a well-executed Federal style, three-part mantel with fluted pilasters and marbleizing which hints at Greek Revival influence.

Antebellum Caldwell (1840-1861)

The antebellum period (1840-1861) saw the establishment of

Caldwell County in 1841, but other than a more convenient county seat (Lenoir was surveyed and laid out in the same year) area residents saw little change in their economic and social conditions. Caldwell County did not share in the marked economic development and prosperity of the antebelleum period that characterized other parts of North Carolina and the nation. Agricultural reform, improved overland transportation systems, and investment capital for manufacturing development were factors that would not arrive in Caldwell County until the 1880s.

The Agricultural Schedule of the 1850 Census indicates that small-scale, relatively self-sufficient agriculture remained dominate in Caldwell County. The average farm in North Carolina was 369 acres in 1850.[9] Early tax lists indicate that most farms in Caldwell County were representative of the state norm. A planter society which had been developing since the early 19th century and was characterized by land owners with more than 1000 acres and more than 20 slaves was numerically in the minority but exerted a strong influence in political, economic, social and religious affairs of the county.

The fertile Yadkin Valley bounded on the north by the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and on the south by the less precipitious Brushy Mountains proved attractive to the planter aristocracy of the county. A stretch of the upper valley became known as Happy Valley for its congenial relations among early residents. According to an 1850 tax list, included

among the families of Happy Valley were Samuel F. Patterson whose Palmyra estate encompassed 1900 acres and was valued at $10,850; Thomas Lenoir who owned 1800 acres including Fort Defiance valued at $13,000; Cloverhill, the 1200 acre plantation of Edmund W. Jones valued at $7500; and William Davenport whose 1600 acre plantation was valued at $8000. Other rich bottomland, Lower Creek in the south and central part of Caldwell and Mulberry Creek, a tributary of John's River supported affluent planter families but not what appears to be almost exlusively large acreage farms as in Happy Valley. For the most part the planter society in Caldwell represented the second generation of pioneer families.

The economy of antebellum Caldwell continued as agrarian with the principal crop being corn supplemented by cotton, tobacco, wheat, rye, and apples.[10] At a time when the state ranked first in the south in the number of cotton mills (1860), Caldwell County only had one textile mill established by Samuel F. Patterson a few miles north of Lenoir in 1851.[11] He sited the mill close to his plantation seat, Palmyra, (now the site of Patterson School). An early drawback to the mill was its remoteness from a railroad which impeded its expansion.

The Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Baptists were strong supporters of schools and academies, and established small churches and schools as the first projects of a community.

Often the church house was also the schoolhouse. None of the early church buildings survive.

The period of 1840 to 1861 saw the early stages of educational opportunities develop in the county. The state school system was greatly improved in 1853 and although there was much popular indifference to public education, the number of small, frame, one-room schoolhouses dotting the landscape increased. The quality of education received from these early public schools is questionable. Private academies, subscription schools where there were no public schools, and private tutors continued to minister to the education needs of the county and state. As early as 1841 Montrose Academy stood on a hillside in the town of Lenoir and though much altered, is the earliest surviving institutional building in the county. Davenport Female College, located in Lenior, was chartered in 1855 and was opened in 1857 by the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Main Building, an excellent example of Greek Revival institutional architecture, was demolished in 1986. The school provided early educational opportunities for women and continued to function as a coed institution from 1893 until closing in 1933.

Antebellum Architecture (1840-1861)

The most widespread and enduring architectural style in the state was the Greek Revival style. In North Carolina

comparatively little was built after 1830 that did not reflect some of its characteristics. The form of the house changed; facades became lower - exhibiting boxy proportions with low-pitched hip roofs. Windows became squarish with larger panes of glass in a six-over-six sash. Houses usually followed a center hall plan with two rooms on each side of the hall. Frequently gabled or pedimented porches adorned with classical columns or posts embellished these structures. These houses, however faintly, reflected the architecture of ancient Greece. Interiors were simply finished. Rooms were spacious, plaster walls and wide baseboards replaced wainscotting, doors developed two or four flat panels, and symmetrically molded surrounds with cornerblocks replaced the two- or three-part door and window surround. Mantels imitate a post and lintel form of Greek construction. The Greek Revival had reached North Carolina by the late 1820s. Its appeal began to wane in the nation's centers of architectural fashion by the early 1850s, but the style remained popular in the North Carolina piedmont into the 1870s. Most of the county's finest antebellum residences were of brick construction while the less affluent families continued to prefer frame construction.

The most sophisticated example of the style in the county and among the states best representations of Greek Revival domestic architecture is Cloverhill (ca. 1841), the handsome plantation seat of Edmund W. Jones. The two-story, brick house is located in Happy Valley, an area which supported an affluent

plantation society during the 19th century, and is distinguished from other Greek Revival style houses in the county by its classically proportioned facade beneath a low hip roof, its noteworthy Ionic porch, entrances and well-executed, double-pile interior.

The great majority of antebellum houses were much more conservatively ornamented than Cloverhill. The application of Greek Revival detail to traditional house forms remained the preferred building style. The John Eli Corpening House (1856) was the only double-pile, brick house constructed during this era besides Cloverhill.

One of the county's best preserved and representative examples of a traditional house with restrained yet handsome Greek Revival details is Riverside (ca. 1852). Built as the plantation seat for John L. Jones (a cousin of Edmund W. Jones), the brick two-story, single-pile house has a characteristic symmetrical, three-bay facade with large paned six-over-six sash windows. The entrance displays a typical composition of a two-leaf, two-panel door framed by a transom and sidelights. The detailing of the interior, arranged in a center hall plan seen in most other houses of this category, includes fluted surrounds and roundel cornerblocks, and simple post and lentel mantels.

The affluent planters may have initiated increased use of brick for domestic architecture during the antebellum period but frame houses with Greek Revival trim are also represented during

this era. Wealthy farmers who did not own into the thousands acres in terms of land built substantial frame houses. The Thomas Hoover House a two-story, single-pile farmhouse erected in 1856, and the T. J. Dula House built in Lenoir (ca. 1859) are among the good examples of Greek Revival frame houses.

Caldwell County (1865-1910)

General George Stoneman's raid into western North Carolina six days after General Lee surrendered included this area. He burned Patterson Mill, and used St. James Episcopal Church as his headquarters, but any damage done was quickly repaired. The war did devastate the economy of the South. Reconstruction caused the break up of the farms, the introduction of a tenant system of agriculture, leasing or sale of productive facilities to out-of-state interests, and the sellout of forest lands to wasteful and environmentally destructive logging operations.

The new economic system based on farm tenancy did not drastically alter life in Caldwell. Only John Witherspoon and David Horton owned more than fifty slaves prior to the Civil War. Some owned twenty or so but the typical county farmer was not dependent on slave labor for his livelihood. The new farm tenancy system provided labor and livelihood for a large class of landless, moneyless, unskilled people and supported agriculture without much capital. Census records of the county prior to 1870 list many inhabitants as farm laborers which indicates that the new labor system little affected the rural community.

Agriculture continued to be the primary source of income for

most North Carolinians after the war as it had been before. By 1870 the production of cotton and oats had reached prewar levels, and tobacco, potatoes, corn, hogs, dairy produce and beef cattle soon followed. The average size of a farm in the state decreased from 316 acres in 1860 to 142 acres in 1880 and would continue to decrease until 1900 when the average farm would be 101 acres.[12] As farm size decreased, the number of farms increased, and North Carolina continued to be characterized as a state of small farms as it had been since early in the 19th century. Caldwell County reflected this decrease in average farm size.

Statewide industrial growth and expansion in three major industries - cotton textiles, tobacco, and furniture began in earnest after the Civil War. Though lacking in coal, iron, and capital for the development of mechanized industry, the state had a mild climate, abundant and easily developed water power, cheap and plentiful labor, and the proximity to the raw materials of cotton, tobacco and lumber. Caldwell County possessed many of the necessary features in attracting industry to the county. Cotton textiles, lumber, and most importantly furniture would develop and contribute to a diversified manufacturing and agricultural economic base.

The period of 1880-1910 marked the beginning of many changes in Caldwell County. Transportation development, industrial expansion, improved farming techniques and equipment helped propell the county with an 1850 population of 6,317 into the Industrial Revolution.

The development of transportation goes hand in hand with industrialization and with only approximately 1,300 miles of railroad tracks in the state in 1880, railroads were a primary concern of this period. By 1900 North Carolina had 3,831 miles or railroad consolidated into three large systems, however, development of a supplemental highway system would not occur until into the twentieth century.[13] The railroad arrived in Caldwell County in 1884 laying part of the foundation for Caldwell's future as a furniture manufacturing center. It also served as a catalyst in the growth of small lumber and mill towns and villages. The towns of Granite Falls and Hudson are early lumber towns that developed around the railroad between Lenoir and Catawba County.

As early as 1851 there was an isolated cotton mill in Patterson (which continued to operate into the early 1900s), but with the railroad and capital from outside the county, a second cotton mill was built in 1884. P. G. Moore and N. H. Gwyn persuaded Abel A. Shuford of Hickory to become a partner in a mill to be built on Gunpowder Creek near Granite Falls.[14] (Shuford Mill Company continues to provide employment for the county). By 1902 there were twelve cotton mills and seven hosiery mills operating in the county.[15] The largest cotton mill was established by John Rhodes of Cherryville, North Carolina. The 1,500 spindle cotton mill operated from 1900 to 1914 as Rhodhiss Manufacturing Company. Sited on the Catawba River, Rhodhiss remains a textile dominated town of around 750

people and is the only surviving early 20th century mill village in the county.

Caldwell County's abundance of forest resources was another asset in establishing industry in the county. North Carolina and other states were large consumers of wood and the demand for this raw material attracted lumber interests. As early as 1896, the northwestern part of the county was opened due to the lumber interests. Lumber towns of Collettsville, Edgemont, and Mortimer sprung up. In 1896 the Caldwell Land and Lumber Company owned 40,589 acres in the Globe vicinity, and C. M. Ritter of Ritter Lumber Company was operating in the Mortimer area.[16] There were five lumber companies in all cutting timber in the county by 1897.[17]

The development of the furniture industry was the most influential factor in the growth of Lenoir and Caldwell County. From the first furniture factory established in Lenoir in 1889 to the present, furniture is "King" in the county and continues to contribute to a statewide industry that is leading the nation in the manufacture of wooden furniture. Caldwell County is located within an 150 mile area of North Carolina which comprises the greatest concentration of furniture manufacturing firms in the world and accounts for two-thirds of all the furniture produced in the South.[18]

In most cases, the early furniture manufacturing firms were family owned and controlled.[19] This was not the case in Caldwell with the Harpers Furniture Factory organized as a co-operative company for the manufacture of furniture just one

year after High Point Furniture Company in Hickory was established in 1888. (The High Point Furniture Company is considered the beginning of the transformation of furniture making from a general carpenter trade to a mechanized industrial operation.)[20] Not much is known about the early years of the first furniture factory in Lenoir other than it was reorganized by 1912 into the Lenoir Furniture Corporation. Another early factory was the Kent Furniture and Coffin Company incorporated in 1905 with Dr. A. A. Kent as president and principal stockholder. By 1907 there were five furniture factories, three related factories (veneer, woodworking, and planning mills), and a furniture warehouse, all within the Lenoir area which would eventually make the county seat the most heavily industrialized town in the county.[21]

Caldwell County's industrial development produced corresponding expansion in the wholesale and retail trade of its towns. Most of this growth took place in Lenoir and to a much lesser degree in Granite Falls. Between 1890 and 1902, Lenoir's population doubled and by 1907 there were 2,500 inhabitants of the town.[22] The first of two banks was established in 1893 as the Bank of Lenoir and the second followed in 1900 as the First National Bank. A building code requiring structures built in the business district be made of brick was implemented around 1895.

Domestic Architecture (1870-1910)

The forty year period following 1870 reflects the growing

prosperity of the county in its domestic architecture. A large portion of the houses included in the survey were built during this period.

The two-story, single-pile dwelling or "I-house" persisted in dominating architecture in Caldwell County as well as in most of piedmont North Carolina. These houses differ somewhat from their precursors in proportion, craftsmanship, and stylistic ornamentation. The later farmhouse exhibits a more horizontal facade introduced in the mid-nineteenth century. Construction shifted from the earlier heavy mortise-and-tenon framing to light nailed frames establishing the technology to easily alter the traditional form; two-story, ell appendages to an I-house created a popular L-shaped or T-shaped house. The roof is no longer flush with gable ends but overhangs. Chimneys are smaller and thinner, with brick laid in common bond with single, stepped shoulders but still attached to the exterior gable ends. Windows and door frames are often plain boards, and squarish windows are treated with fewer and larger glass panes per sash. Machine-made architectural elements such as doors and mantels, and ornamentation were made at local mills, or shipped by rail from distant millworks specializing in architectural accessories, rather than prepared by the builder or a local craftsman on site. The addition of a third gable placed centrally on the front facade became a regular feature of the I-house and other related types constructed from the 1870s to the early twentieth century. The gables vary widely in

proportion and steepness of pitch, and often were embellished with all sorts of machinemade, sawn, turned, and shingled ornament. The porch, perhaps the most distinctive feature of Southern architecture, became a functional appendage in addition to serving as a stylistic necessity. The portion of the facade sheltered by the porch was not weatherboarded as the rest of the exterior but often was sheathed, or covered with beaded tongue and groove boards, giving the impression that the porch was considered another room.[23] This different treatment of the facade beneath the porch was introduced earlier as seen on the Thomas Hoover farmhouse (ca. 1856), and the T. J. Dula House (ca. 1859), but appears consistently on two-story houses constructed after 1870 in the county. This porch treatment is represented in the C. M. Rader House (ca. 1892).

The Gothic Revival, a style inspired by medieval architecture that became popular in the nation's large cities during the 1840s, failed to gain widespread acceptance in the North Carolina piedmont before the Civil War. The irregular forms and the complex steeply pitched roof lines that characterized the style were alien to the symmetrical building traditions of the region. This style was quickly accepted in North Carolina as appropriate for church architecture, especially in rural areas where the most simple country church was likely to have triangular heads over the windows (a vernacular version of the gothic arch). However the influence of the style on domestic

architecture is rare, especially in this region. Gothic stylistic elements on Caldwell County's churches did not occur until shortly after the turn-of-the century and the county's domestic architecture appears little influenced. The only example of Gothic Revival styling of domestic architecture in the county is the Bendict Marcus Tuttle House (ca. 1875). The traditional, two-story, L-shaped house combines elements of the Greek Revival with a Gothic Revival fleur-de-lis motif ornamenting the bargeboards and eaves of the dwelling.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century ushered in the Queen Anne style. The style is noted for its irregular floor plans and rooflines, deep wrap-around porches, aversion to smooth wall surfaces, and the abundant use of elaborate sawnwork details. There are only three houses that reflect a true Queen Anne styling located in the county. The best rural example of this style is the D. H. Warlick House (ca. 1896-1906) in Granite Falls. The best preserved representation in Lenoir is the Leffington House (ca. 1900). The interiors are generally finished in a restrained Colonial Revival manner focusing on paneled or tongue and groove wainscotting, stairs with turned balusters rising from an oversized newel, and symmetrically molded doors and window surrounds. Mantels are generally reserved, with overmantels found only in parlors. The interior of the D. H. Warlick House is one of the most stylized in the county and features handsome woodwork throughout the house.

Dominating this period of architecture in the countryside was the Queen Anne derived, Folk Victorian style. This style is defined by ornamenting the ever-popular traditional house form with Queen Anne details. The primary areas for the application of this Victorian detailing are the porch, cornice line, and gable ends of the dwelling. The roof-wall junction may be either boxed or open. Most Folk Victorian houses exhibit some Queen Anne detailing but are easily differentiated from true Queen Anne examples by the presence of symmetrical facades, and by their lack of use of textured and varied wall surfaces characteristic of the Queen Anne style.

Among the most impressive of the Folk Victorian dwellings is the Walter Lenoir House (ca. 1893) with an impressive two-tier, two-story porch with elaborate jig-saw cut porch detailing. The porch gable is adorned with wood shingles and a decorative apron in the apex of the gable. The Leonard B. Estes Farm (ca. 1870-1890) illustrates the more common porch treatment of a front facade, one-story porch combined with a two-story entry porch. Also present are characteristic cornices that are boxed and return, exterior end chimneys, and sheathed boards beneath the porch areas of the house. These houses also illustrate the increasing popularity of the two-story, L-shaped house.

The Colonial Revival style resulted from the renewed interest in classically derived stylistic elements in the early twentieth century. The use of Colonial Revival elements such as

slender columns and entablatured window surrounds are seen as exterior features more often on houses built in the county after 1910, but reserved Colonial Revival elements were often used on the interior finish of turn of the century houses.

Farm Outbuildings

The majority of outbuildings were built with log or frame construction in the county. In most cases the log outbuildings predate the frame outbuildings. There are very few examples of nineteenth century outbuildings, the extant buildings are barns of log construction with the exception of several brick cottages that were mid-nineteenth century servants quarters.

Among the barns included in the survey, the central passage with single or double-pens on each side is the most common plan. The double-pen log barn consists of two log pens of equal size on either side of a passage way as at the Thomas Hoover farm. The single-pen log barn with square corner notching is exemplified at the Finley Smith farm. Frequently sheds, more often of frame, were attached to the sides of the barn. The substantial expansion and over-building of barns often obscures the central log core as illustrated in an early nineteenth century barn at Cloverhill.

Balloon framing was introduced in the late nineteenth century and quickly adopted in the county. The gable-front frame barn is by far the most visible in the rural landscape. The larger frame barns still followed the central passage plan. An early example is found on the Emanuel McRary farm. A unique exception to this method of construction is a notable circular barn of mansonry construction built around 1918 as part of the Cloverhill farm complex.

Among the other outbuildings on the typical farm were the smokehouse, granaries (also called wheat houses), corn cribs, the springhouse, chicken house, pig styes, blacksmith shops, and additional miscellaneous storage buildings. It is known that tobacco was raised in the county, but surviving tobacco barns are rare.

Commercial Architecture (1890-1910)

As is typical of towns all over North Carolina, the primary commercial district of Caldwell centered in the four block area surrounding the county court house.

Commercial buildings reflect the building styles of typical late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial architecture of small towns. Buildings were brick, two- and three-story in height, with flat facades usually ornamented with restrained corbeled brick in the cornice and applied pressed metal store fronts. Window treatment might vary on each level and it was common to use square and round arched windows on the same building. Many of the commercial buildings in the county have been compromised over the years with the first level of the building suffering the most irreparable changes.

Among the typical turn of the century brick buildings in Lenoir is one notable block which contains architecturally distinctive commercial buildings. Local merchant Marshal M. Courtney built two handsome buildings (one in 1897 and the other in 1907) which retain some original detail. The three-story Courtney Building (1897) on the corner of West Avenue and Church Street retains an pressed metal cornice and is surmounted by a

large pressed metal pinnacle inscribed with the builders name and date of construction. Its sister building (constructed in 1907) features the use of stone as an accent material, framing pilasters support a well executed entablature, and round arched windows combine to create a nicely finished brick building. W. J. Lenoir's Lenoir Hardware and Furniture Building (ca. 1907) with a recessed corner entrance is another good example of commercial architecture of this block.

Church Architecture (1870-1910)

The church remained an important rural institution during the decades following the Civil War. The period of 1870-1910 saw the construction of buildings for newly formed congregations, and the replacement of several older buildings such as that of the Union Baptist congregation established in 1814, which constructed a new church in 1875. A large portion of these pre-twentieth century churches have been lost through demolition, fire, or extensive remodelings and enlargements. However, Mariah's Chapel, built around 1875 for a Methodist congregation, in the upper Yadkin Valley is characteristic of the modest rural sancturaries preferred by all denominations during this period. The unadorned gable front, frame structure has a belfry and two separate front entrances (one for men and one for women). A recessed transom crowns each doorway. The interior is modestly finished with sheathed boards.

By 1904 modest Gothic Revival elements were appearing on country churches and more stylized Gothic Revival Churches were being built in the new, industrially affluent townships. Towers, which functioned as entrances, and triangular arched

windows such as seen on Cedar Valley United Methodist Church established in the nineteenth century and rebuilt in 1905, and Littlejohn's Methodist Church established (ca. 1775) and rebuilt around 1914 were the common embellishments of rural churches constructed after 1900. The Chapel of Rest established in 1887 and rebuilt in 1918 has an exceptionally well finished interior. Another charming example of this styling is the Edgemont Baptist Church (ca. 1905), perhaps the most intact of Caldwell's early twentieth century churches. The gable front form and two stage tower retains an original weatherboard exterior pierced by round arched window and door openings. A patterned tin shingle roof shelters the church as well as the tower. The interior is handsomely finished and reflects a peaceful and luminous quality so typical of rural churches.

In 1908 the first brick churches were erected in rural Caldwell County. The more elaborate brick sanctuaries of the First United Methodist Church of Granite Falls (1908) and Lower Creek Baptist Church of Lenoir (burned in 1942, rebuilt in 1943) illustrate the growing prosperity associated with the lumber, furniture, and textile industries developing in the county. These churches varied from their rural counterparts in the use of more "academically correct" architectural elements such as gothic arched windows, decorative colored glass, support buttresses, and decorative brickwork.

Continued Economic Growth (1910-1940)

The period of 1910-1940 saw Caldwell County's economy following the prosperous trends of state and national growth.

Interest in improving and building roads, the development of hydroelectric power, in addition to general economic expansion and consolidation continued the process of industrialization. Railroad tracks were still being laid so that by 1920, 5,522 miles of railroad covered the state, and 1921 ushered in the beginning of North Carolina's "good roads era".

Two natural disasters, floods in 1916 and 1940, setback the economy of both years. Farms throughout the county were heavily damaged and crops were destroyed. The lumber towns of Mortimer and Edgemont suffered severly and became only ghosts of their former selves. Granite Falls, Hudson, Collettsville and Lenoir faired better and suffered no permanent damage. Mainly due to the 1916 flood, one of the larger lumber ventures in Caldwell County failed.

W. J. Grandin of Pennsylvania came to Caldwell County around 1908 with aspirations of personally building "Watauga and Yadkin River Railroad" and operating a double band lumber mill. He bought 66,000 acres of timberland in Watauga, Wilkes and Caldwell counties and laid out the new town of Grandin. At one time there were 32 houses, a boarding house, general store, blacksmith shop, railroad depot, school building, and two mill buildings plus equipment making up the community. The 1916 flood destroyed most of the railroad bed which was in the flood plain of the Yadkin River. Grandin tried to rebuild but the Grandin Lumber Company went bankrupt.[24] Surviving as a reminder of W. J. Grandin's dream are a boarding house now used as a private residence, and two large frame mill buildings used as storage barns.

New furniture, lumber and textile mills were still being established by local capital. Between 1907 and 1913 Bernhardt Furniture Company, Lenoir Chair Manufacturing Company and Lenoir Cotton Mills were among the new industries. But just as significant as the development of new industry was the consolidation of the already established mills and factories in the 1920s. J. L. Nelson and associates formed the Nelson chain of mills by purchasing Caldwell Cotton Mills. The newly formed Nelson Mills consisted of five mills with a total of 35,000 spindles.[25] Duke Power purchased Rhodhiss Manufacturing Company in 1919 which became in 1925 the first mill in the county converted to electric power. Broyhill Furniture Industries purchased the stock of Lenoir Furniture Corporation in 1929, thus forming the core of the present company. Caldwell County helped underwrite North Carolina's ranking as the leading industrial state in the South and the nations fifth largest producer of wood household furniture on the eve of the depression.

The Great Depression that began in 1929 affected Caldwell County as it did other parts of the state. Many businesses closed, farmers lost their farms, and companies and businesses went bankrupt. Mills and factories ran only part-time and some closed entirely. The county population continued to rise as unemployed urban people went back to the rural countryside. A Civilian Conservation Core (CCC) camp was built in Mortimer in 1933 but mostly washed away in the 1940 flood. Early statistics

representing the labor force of Caldwell's number one furniture industry are scarce, so the increase of 41% from 1934 to 1941 could be weighted by layoffs during the depression and the prospects of World War II.[26] As Caldwell prepared for the second World War, the town of Lenoir had eleven furniture factories, two veneer plants, and two mirror concerns.[27]

Architecture (1910-1940)

During this period the domestic architecture in Lenoir began to distinguish itself from rural architecture. The need for increased, substantial housing for mill managers and owners, as well as modest housing for mill and factory workers created a diversified housing inventory in Lenoir. Among the early residential neighborhoods to develop was Maehill Park. T. H. Broyhill of Broyhill Furniture Industries purchased a substantial tract of land southeast of Lenoir's business district in 1924 and sold off large residential lots. Many of the city's substantial houses were built in this area. J. H. Beall also developed part of his ancestral plantation, "Fairfield", as middle income housing. Mill housing was developed along Virginia and Kent avenues, and Spainhour Street, but industrial expansion since 1930 has wiped out many of the mill houses except along Spainhour Street. The area of Spainhour Street is called Cotton Mill Hill and is covered with small frame houses erected around 1913 by Lenoir Cotton Mills.

Further evolution of the rural house was witnessed after 1910 when the one- and two-story, double-pile house, sheltered

by a hip or pyramidal roof, became a popular form. This type had first come to North Carolina about 1850 and had a long tradition of use in the Deep South.[28] By adding gable projections, clipped bays, and bay windows, the asymmetrical form characteristic of the Queen Anne style was achieved; and by retaining a symmetrical form and adding classical porch and window treatments, the Colonial Revival style was achieved. Often elements of both styles were combined to create an eclectic house. Among the rural examples of this house type are the James Collett House (ca. 1915), and the Karl P. Throneburg House (ca. 1910) which has a clipped bay and a turrett.

Examples of the Colonial Revival style built in Lenoir are more refined than their rural counterparts. Built generally in the 1920s the detailing and use of brick reflect the prosperity the town was experiencing. The Finley E. Coffey House (1924) is a handsome examples of this style in brick, and the Jake Seagle House (ca. 1927) of frame construction is also representative of the styling.

The Neoclassical style, an elaborate, classically derived style, never achieved much popularity in the county. Examples of the style with its large boxy form and characteristic monumental porch carried by classical columns are none-existant in the countryside. Of the three houses built in this style in Lenoir, the Mark Squire House (ca. 1913) is the first. Another handsome example is the Fred Thompson House built in 1924, one of the first houses in Maehill Park.

As early as 1913 the bungalow style appeared in Caldwell County as seen in the erection of James Beall's Summer House on then rural Harrisburg Drive. The style gained increasing favor during the mid to late 1920s. The adoption of the bungalow style, which emphasized low exterior profiles and irregular interior plans, marked the final break with the county's traditional house building practices. The bungalows erected in rural Caldwell were modest and simply detailed expressions of the idiom. They incorporated the style's basic elements: one or one-and-a-half story houses with gable front or side gable roofs, usually with engaged porches, exposed rafters and triangular brackets. There are some brick but the majority are weatherboarded, usually with woodshingles in gables and dormers. The interiors are informal and usually finished in a restrained Colonial Revival manner. The Lula Hickman House (1925) is a good example of rural bungalow styling with its simple brick gable front form and engaged porch. A distinctive bungalow built during the late 1920s is the Garland Jones House.

School Architecture (1870-1950)

The first records of Caldwell County Public Schools date back to 1885 when there were 58 districts with at least one, one-teacher school in each district. By 1900 there were more than 100 of these one-teacher schools in operation.[29] Supplementing public education, which only had a budget of $4,137.27 for 1885, were private academies such as those in the Globe, Hartland, Hibriten and Granite Falls areas. Several frame

school houses which predate 1885 still survive. Among the oldest are the Lingle School (ca. 1880s) a one-room school in Hudson, and the Lower Creek Academy (ca. 1870) a two-room school in the Gamewell vicinity. The Lingle School now serves as a museum and Lower Creek Academy has been used as residence since the 1920s.

A significant educational facility, which began as a "working farm" in the county, is Patterson School, established in 1909. Samuel Legerwood Patterson bequeathed his Palmyra estate to the Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Western North Carolina for a "spiritual, cultural, and vocational school for boys." The second son of Samuel Finley Patterson (1799-1874), one of the earliest settlers in the county, Samuel L. Patterson served as the North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture for thirteen years. He was instrumental in developing and expanding the departments services to the people of the state. Palmyra encompassed 1350 acres (second in the county only to the Lenoir estate of 1361 acres) and was valued at $10,000 in 1897. The plantation house "Palmyra" was used for classes and a dormitory until it burned in 1922. No longer a working farm, the school became coed in 1971 and is now a preparatory school.[30]

Lenoir did not have public schools until 1900. Churches, private tutors, and academies took care of education in the small town. There was a surge of interest in education in the county during the 1920s and 1930s possibly due to the improved roads that made bus transportation feasible and new public

education laws passed by the General Assembly. Larger brick elementary and secondary schools were constructed. By 1924 Central High (former) Lenoir High School was occupied and other high schools were completed in King's Creek and Collettsville in 1925 and 1928. By 1930 fifty-six schools existed and in 1932 the first school for blacks was built. Early in the 1950s the state entered the educational picture with increased financial aid for school buildings. Additional schools were built, old ones improved, and all one and two-teacher schools were abolished.[31] These buildings exhibit the restrained Colonial Revival detailing that typified much school architecture throughout the United States during the 1920s to the 1950s.

Summary

Furniture is still King in Caldwell with Lenoir, the "Furniture Captial of the South," as its county seat. In 1981 45% of Caldwell's labor force was employed in furniture industry jobs. Broyhill Industries is the largest furniture corporation in the state with annual sales of about $275 million and a total labor force of 6600, and the number one employer of Caldwell County. The county continues to be strongly industrial and especially in Lenoir, the population continues to increase as evidenced by the suburbs growing up around the town.

Footnotes

1. Chamber of Commerce, 1987 county employee statistics.

2. U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Twentieth Census of the United States, 1980.

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4. E. Carl Anderson, Jr. and Jonn O. Hawkins, eds., The Heritage of Caldwell County, North Carolina, (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Co., 1983), pp.11,238-239.

5. Doug Swaim, "North Carolina Folk Housing" in Carolina Dwelling, ed. Doug Swaim, (Raleigh: North Carolina State University, School of Design, 1978), pp.33-39.

6. Ibid., p.31.

7. Michael Southern, "The I-House as a Carrier of Style in Three Counties of the Northeastern Piedmont", Carolina Dwelling, pp.73-74.

8. Ibid, pp.75-76.

9. Hugh T. Lefler, History of North Carolina, (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1956), p.391.

10. "Agricultural Progress of Caldwell County", Lenoir News-Topic, Centennial Edition, 12 September 1941, sec.11, pp.1-2.

11. Ibid.

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13. Ibid., p.586.

14. "Granite Falls Shows Steady Growth", Lenoir News-Topic, Centennial Edition, 12 September 1941.

15. "Lenoir Cotton Mill", The News, 24 January 1902.

16. "Caldwell County 1896 Tax List".

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25. "B.B.Hayes Is Official of College Mill", Lenoir News-Topic, Centennial Edition, 12 September 1941, sec.1, p.7.

26. "Lenoir Area Ranks High In Industrial Activities", Lenoir News-Topic, Centennial Edition, 12 September 1941, sec.6, p.1.

27. Ibid.

28. Henry Glassie, Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), pp.109-111.

29. Anderson, Heritage of Caldwell County, p.52.

30. Ibid., pp.219-220.

31. Ibid., p.52.

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