LOWE BRONE FEAR
HISTORICA BOCIETY, Inc.

BULLETIN

VOLUME VII, NUMBER 1
WILMINGTON, N. C.
OCTOBER, 1963

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As your President, I look forward with a great deal of anticipation and enthusiasm to the coming year. With the amount of work already accomplished by the Society during the summer months, we can expect a year of valuable service to the community.

I will outline briefly the accomplishments of the Society during the summer, and what I hope we can accomplish during the coming year.

The most important job of the Society since its organization, and which is still in progress, is the acquisition of the Latimer House to be used as a headquarters building. The membership responded in a magnificent way, and as of this day we have funds available for the purchase of this fine old house.

Although the purchase price for our headquarters has been raised, finances for essential repairs and restoration must be acquired. This will cost many times the price of the building. So far our effort in fund raising has been limited to the membership of the society. We must go to the public so that our activities can have the wide base of community support which it deserves and must have to succeed. A general fund drive is in its initial stage; the membership must support the drive wholeheartedly with its time, money and influence.

The Historical Tours which will be held during the Spring of 1964 will be enlarged and will be done on a more elaborate scale. Mr. R. V. Asbury will be Tour Chairman for 1964 and under his leadership we can expect the Tours to be an outstanding success.

Your Board of Directors met with Mr. Douglas Hudson, City Planner, and Mr. John Voorhees of the North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development, in regard to the Society's participation in a land use plan for the Wilmington Historical Area. It is my hope this can be developed further during the year.

Another endeavor which I hope can be accomplished is a well organized membership drive with a membership goal of at least 200 new memberships.

Your program chairman, Mr. Stanley South, will endeavor to present to the membership programs of interest both on a local and state level.

Finally, it is my hope we can work more closely with the New Hanover County School System to promote more interest in local history.

The acquisition of a headquarters building is our greatest accomplishment and its careful restoration will be our greatest challenge. With our other projects the society has a full year ahead. This may be a very ambitious program; however, with the support of our entire organization it will succeed. Again, I look forward to working with the membership and I solicit your undivided support.

N. WINFIELD SAPP, JR.
President

The Zebulon Latimer House 1852 — Headquarters of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc.
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Mr. R. H. Sneed, 3942 Market St.
Mr. E. Reid Toms, 201 North 15th St.
Mrs. E. Reid Toms, 201 North 15th St.

MEETING
Time and Place: Friday, October 25, 1963, 8:00 P.M., St. Andrews-Covenant Presbyterian Church.
Speaker: Philip Houston Kennedy.
Subject: Folk Lore and Folk Music of North Carolina.

Philip Houston Kennedy is a North Carolinian whose interest in folk lore and folk music developed at an early age. He was a special student in Music and Communications at the University of North Carolina, 1952-1953. He continued his study of music at Columbia University and at the Juilliard School of Music in 1953-1954-1955. Mr. Kennedy received his B.A. degree in French at the University of North Carolina in 1951 and his M.A. in French at Indiana University in 1961. At present he is working toward the PhD. in Romance Languages at the University of North Carolina.

Mr. Kennedy has collected folk music extensively. “This has been done from North Carolina and the South to New England and the Midwest,” he says, “as far as my travels enabled me to go. But I have been exposed to folk music from an early age. I have lived some of my life on the farm where my father was born, some in the city both in the South and North. Always I have remained alert to the music of ethnic groups which I have met and known.”

“Originally my interest in folk music took the form of enjoyment and I will never discard a genuine enthusiasm for it,” he continues. “Next, I found collecting a gratifying aspect from the standpoint of working with people and learning from them. After this I saw the importance of being able to discuss and interpret my findings with interested people, and that is the goal whose pursuit brought me to Indiana University for graduate study in folklore. My professional interest in striving for scholarly discipline in the field was solidified by working in the Archives of Folk and Primitive Music at Indiana University.”

Of particular interest to members of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society are the following studies which Philip Houston Kennedy is currently working on:

Tidewater North Carolina To Appalachia, a comparison of regional ballad and folksong areas of tradition.
North Carolina’s Murder Ballads, local folk history near the alleged scene of the crime and other documented disaster ballads.

This will be the Society’s first opportunity to have an evening of folk music.

MUSEUM MEETING
The board of the Wilmington-New Hanover Museum, recognizing the need for more active support for the expanding Museum, cordially invites the members of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society to a meeting for the purpose of organizing a Wilmington-New Hanover Museum Association. The meeting will be held at the Museum, 115 Red Cross Street, at 8:00 P.M. on November 4, 1963.

ARCHIVES CONTRIBUTIONS SINCE MAY, 1963
We are grateful to the following persons who have contributed to the Society archives since the last meeting: Ludlow P. Strong, R. V. Asbury, Jr., Mrs. J. J. Fowler, Henry J. MacMillan, Stanley South, and Mrs. Theodore G. Empie.

Miss Elizabeth Vann, 5528 Auburn Rd., Jacksonville 7, Fla.
Dr. Edwin Wells, 303 North 10th St.

Contributing
Mr. William J. Boney, 1106 Magnolia Place.
Mrs. William J. Boney, 1106 Magnolia Place.
mitting historic preservation, but it is considered as permissive under the state statutes authorizing zoning to protect and enhance the general welfare of the community. In most instances regulations for the preservation of a historic district are an amendment to or a part of an existing zoning ordinance. The historic area amendment creates a new zone within which a special board is given jurisdiction to approve or reject all proposals for building, altering, or demolishing any structures within the zone. The powers of the board are limited to review of exterior design and construction thereby ensuring development in character with neighboring buildings and with the general spirit of the entire historical district.

Tax Exemption For the Proper Maintenance of Historical Structures—The costs of maintaining and repairing old buildings is much greater than the economic return which such buildings provide to its owner whether it is being used as a residence or an office. In order to off-set these increased costs it has been suggested that local governments provide some type of credits or exemption to historical buildings which are maintained in good repair. However, there is no precedent or permissive state legislation in North Carolina for granting such exemptions. The Vieux Carré Commission in New Orleans is empowered to make tax exemption recommendations to the City Council. This is done in special circumstances for structures having historical and architectural value and exemption by the city provided that the owners of such structures and their heirs agree by formal contract that the structures shall never be altered or demolished without the approval of the Vieux Carré Commission.

Organzing The Historical Area for Public Viewing — There are three different methods of organizing historical districts for public view, the museum village, historic trails, and open house tours. Old Salem in Winston-Salem has been set up as a museum village. For this type of display it is necessary that historic buildings be grouped closely together to be successful. New Bern and Edenton in recent years have made many renovations of their old houses and have set up a historic trail which individuals can follow. Houses are identified by plaques outside giving the name and date of construction. Open house tours of historical houses take place every spring in Wilmington. On specified days some historic houses are open to the public and visitors are urged to gather in groups to make the tour with a guide. Wilmington’s historical buildings are much too scattered for a museum village, but either or both the historic trail and open house tours are applicable.

Master Plans for Historic Areas — There are only a few cities in which master plans for historic areas have been prepared — Society Hill in Philadelphia and College Hill in Providence are the best examples. The first step in the preparation of a historic area master plan would be the preparation of detailed maps outlining the study area and showing all buildings and physical features. A land use survey would then be made to determine the detailed characteristics of the area. This would include such information as the condition of structures, valuations, architectural and historical character and the materials and widths of streets, sidewalks, and planting strips. The land use survey would be followed by an analysis and evaluation of existing conditions taking into consideration historical background and architectural significance. Basic principles or objectives would have to be formulated which would provide a sense of purpose and direction for the design of the master plan. The master plan which would be a guide to the future development of the historic area would establish future land uses and indicate the manner in which they should be developed. This would include recommendations for residences, offices, streets, sidewalks, parks, playgrounds, lights, signs, trees and other plantings.

Historic Preservation Through Urban Renewal — Urban Renewal refers to a locally initiated and administered program to eliminate slums and blight in which the Federal Government makes grant payments to cover up to two-thirds or three-fourths of the net cost of a project. To be eligible for these funds, the area, through structural and environ-

mental deficiencies, must have deteriorated to the point that it is necessary to restore it to sound condition. Through urban renewal plans could be developed to enhance the setting of historic structures by removing deteriorated structures and incompatible land uses exerting a blighting influence. Site improvements within historical areas might include the improvement of streets and sidewalks, the installation of publicly owned street lighting and utility systems and the development of local parks and playgrounds.

City Planning studies for Wilmington initiated in 1960 indicated the need to recognize and delineate an area of the City containing a significant concentration of historical structures. A cooperative study was made by the Wilmington Planning and Development Commission, the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society and the New Hanover Council of Architects analyzing and evaluating all historical and architecturally significant structures within Wilmington. The results and recommendations of this study were published in a publication, *Wilmington, Historic Area*. The Wilmington City Council then passed the recommendations in the form of an ordinance delineating a historical district and setting forth special zoning and architectural controls to help preserve the area. Under this ordinance, an architectural review committee was appointed to prevent the willful destruction of the cultural values inherent within the area.

A great deal has been done by individuals and groups to help preserve historic structures in Wilmington. But a great deal still remains to be done. At the present time the architectural review committee is most anxious to have a master plan developed for the historic district. This would become a guide for their decisions as well as the decisions of local land owners and the municipality. It is hoped that planning and civic action for the preservation of Wilmington’s historic district will continue so as to make it one of the best examples in North Carolina.
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

By John Voorhees

During recent years more and more members of historical societies, city planners and ordinary citizens are asking themselves how they can best preserve the historical character of their communities. In many of our urban areas history has left some charming residential areas or a number of individual structures which incorporate some of the best traditions of our past. Tree lined streets, brick pavements, and the beauty of past architectural styles and building techniques reflect a manner of living which contrasts sharply with our own.

Two major forces are changing the shape and content of our cities—a constantly changing technology and an ever expanding population. Technology has changed our mode of transportation to the automobile and made many innovations in the materials and construction of our buildings and residences. An expanding population slowly changes the structures of the urban area creating population pressures on different types throughout the community. These forces are slowly obliterating our ties with the past. Buildings with significant architectural character are being converted to modern monstrosities or torn down, and historical places are being surrounded by commercial uses which dominate the scene and steal the value of setting. Instead of preserving historical character, “progress” seems to lower all improvements to a mediocre value. History is diluted until it is unrecognizable; architecture is lost within a maze of automobiles and asphalt.

The best example of preserving our historical heritage is Williamsburg, Virginia where the colonial capital of Virginia has been reconstructed by the Rockefeller Foundation. It consists of over four hundred buildings furnished with the furniture and artifacts of the colonial period. But Williamsburg is not representative of the ordinary community in which the preservation of local residences and other historical and architecturally significant structures are desired.

One of the major differences is the fact that in most communities, historical buildings are not concentrated closely within any one area, but scattered throughout a larger area interspersed with houses of many different qualities, with community facilities such as fire stations, churches, and schools and with commercial facilities from offices to used car lots. This means that preservation is not a primary interest of property owners.

The second difference and one which many people feel is foremost, most communities do not have the financial resources of the Rockefeller Foundation—money enough to purchase land and buildings and re-construct in all aspects historical properties.

The third difference is that historical development in most communities encompasses more than one particular period in history. Historical structures in Wilmington were found covering a period of two hundred years including the following architectural styles: Colonial, Post Colonial, Georgian, Gothic Revival, Classic Revival and Victorian.

Efforts to preserve our community’s historical character will have to be a cooperative effort of individual property owners, city government and community organizations interested in historical preservation. Individual property owners within a historic district will need to assume the enthusiasm and responsibility of maintaining their properties in the best possible manner to retain its historical character. City government will have to foster planning and enact regulations which will help owners within the historic district preserve their properties. Local historical and professional organizations will have to assume the responsibility for proper development of a historic district and take the initiative in sponsoring the many organizational and legal steps necessary to properly preserve the area.

There are a number of different actions which a community may take to help promote historical preservation. None of these actions is a solution by itself, but is part of a larger program. As already mentioned—it takes action by everyone involved.

The Contemporary Use of Historic Buildings—Part of the problem of preserving older houses is making them an active asset within the community. This most often means that different ways must be found for making each building earn sufficient income for its proper maintenance and repair. Structures that are lived in and used assist in their own survival by generating their own need. Historic areas are attractive places in which to live or have offices because of the integrity of the architecture, the sense of human scale in the environment, and the prestige and value of living in and owning an authentic antique structure.

Historic Area Zoning and Architectural Control—The most common method of regulating historical buildings and districts is through zoning. This is the method which Winston-Salem has used in protecting Old Salem and that established by the Wilmington City Council for its Historic Area. At the present time there is no special state legislation per-

Editor’s Note: John Voorhees is head of the Special Projects Section, Division of Community Planning of the State of North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development. When Mr. Voorhees was working on a Future Land-Use Plan for Wilmington he was struck with the necessity for preserving as much as possible the old residential area. Mr. Voorhees wrote Wilmington, Historic Area, the text of the study, and stated in his introduction, “During the process of developing the Future Land-Use Plan for Wilmington, it became evident that some of the more important development characteristics were not being properly assessed. Wilmington had a charm which could not escape the attention of its many visitors and a great part of this charm seemed to be generated from the older section of the city. Here was a sturdy beauty, civic design and individual development which our existing survey techniques did not properly recognize.” The conception of the Wilmington Historic Area was Mr. Voorhees’. Wilmington should be grateful for his vision.

The Savage House (1850) with the Latimer House (1852) in the background. The Savage House has been purchased for his future retirement by Dr. William Crowe of Roswell, Georgia, formerly pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, N. C.
.comments on the historic area
by douglas R. Hudson
wilmington city planner

Cities start out smaller than optimum size and improve their efficiency by growth for a time, but growth if unplanned can destroy efficiency. The older neighborhoods of Wilmington, once the thriving suburbs of a young city, have been by-passed by modern homeowners and left to face a slow death at the hands of unplanned commercial encroachment. These neighborhoods represent the roots from which the city grew and these roots must remain healthy for the city to maintain efficiency and realize its full growth potential. We cannot hope to turn back the pages of time and recreate the style of living that once prevailed in these older neighborhoods. Many of the homes are beyond repair; the ethnic and economic composition of the city has changed, and the automobile has replaced the horse and buggy. New uses for the land compatible with a modern age must be found for these neighborhoods. The use may be Residential, Commercial, Institutional, Recreational, Historical, or a combination of these, but whatever is developed should not destroy that which has gone before but instead blend with it and gradually reestablish a new character as strong and as identifiable as that which once prevailed. In this way the entire metropolitan complex will be strengthened.

It was found after making a careful analysis of the City of Wilmington that the city’s rich historic heritage contributes significantly to its present day character and, although possibly unrealized by the average citizen, this heritage plays a key role in the formation of the city’s image. As a result of this analysis, a portion of the city containing a majority of the historic buildings has been placed under the protection of a Historic Zone. This action has contributed greatly toward the rehabilitation of a large section of the older city. Continued study is now needed to determine what future steps need to be taken to preserve other areas of the city, as well as the Historic District, and at the same time make these areas self-sustaining units of the city.

Plans can be made but will have little hope of being implemented unless an enlightened public aware of the intangible benefits of its historic heritage can be aroused.

A Master Plan for the Historic Area—The Next Step
by henry j. MacMillan
chairman of the architectural board of review for the Wilmington Historic Area

In his article on Historic Preservation in this issue of the Bulletin Mr. Voorhees has indicated that the next logical move to be taken is the preparation of a careful study of the Wilmington Historic Area. The study is preliminary work for a master plan which may be carried out step by step over a period of years.

The directors of the Historical Society and the Board of Architectural Review agree with Mr. Voorhees that it is necessary to chart our course. How do we proceed?

The city would have to apply for Federal assistance for making a master plan. Approval of the application would be necessary. The Urban Renewal Administration has stated that planning assistance “701” funds may be used for making such a plan. It is hoped that the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society will support the planning phase in every way possible.

The Wilmington Historic Area starts off with certain assets. Already there are many institutions which lend it stability: the churches with the oldest established congregations in the city, the Catherine Kennedy Home, the Saint John’s Art Gallery, the Latimer House (new headquarters of the
society), the Miller-Motte College, the two museum houses. These all help to form a solid foundation for the growth of the district.

There is a recent trend in the thinking of urban planners—the realization of the great emotional asset of belonging to a neighborhood. The giant housing developments where each apartment is a uniform unit, where all community activities are institutional in nature fill a need without doubt. The convenience of regimentation however, cannot replace the satisfaction to the individual of having a place that is uniquely his own. How well Wilmington’s Historic Area can be adapted to that special need of contemporary living! How many places are there where one can live in quarters which reflect one’s personality, walk through tree-lined streets to worship in a beautiful church, walk to the theater, walk to the bank or to the corner grocery? All the elements of a neighborhood setting exist in their most delightful character in the Historic Area. Think how advantageous this can be for the retired person we hear so much about these days.

Retired people and people generally expect more than they used to. They want a better environment and this includes a desire for aesthetic qualities as well as material comforts. The Wilmington Historic Area offers houses of all the major American architectural periods which can be restored or adapted for modern living. As an alternative to forming and executing a master plan we have the prospect of facing disintegration of our charming old neighborhoods. This dread picture is described by Howard Moody in Christianity and Crisis in this way:

“A city is dying when it has an eye for real estate values but no heart for personal values, when it has an understanding of traffic flow but no concern about the flow of human beings, when we have competence in building but little time for ethical codes, when human values are absent at the heart of the decision-making and planning and governing of a city—it is dead and all that is left is decay.” Then he quotes T. S. Eliot, in “The Rock”:

Though you have shelters and institutions, 
Precarious lodgings while the rent is paid.
Subsiding basements where the rat breeds
Or sanitary dwellings with numbered doors
Or a house a little better than your neighbors;
When the Strangers say: “What is the meaning of this city?
Do you huddle close together because you love each other?”

What will you answer? “We all dwell together
To make money from each other?” or “This is a community?”

Handsome old houses available in the Historic Area

The Classic Revival Honnet House (1882)

Classic Revival Bellamy House (1850)

LOWER CAPE FEAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY
WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

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