“The Only Tobacco Story Left in Town”: The Interpretation of the Tobacco Industry in Durham, North Carolina

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Abstract:

This paper examines two sites commemorating the tobacco industry in Durham: American Tobacco Campus and Duke Homestead. Their development into places of collective memory differed due to prevailing historic preservation trends, but both contribute to an increasingly democratic construction of tobacco’s meaning in a Southern city. The power of public space and struggles to legitimize historical interpretations are key to Durham’s public history. The authority to tell “the tobacco story” shifted from elite whites to a more diverse population, and a one-dimensional tale of a powerful family has become a story of many people’s involvement in tobacco production, evidencing appreciation for the complex histories that make Durham a “City of the New South.”

Located in a state with a long history of tobacco production, Durham, North Carolina, has been hailed as "America's best-known tobacco town." For almost a century the city was home to the American Tobacco Company, a company that obtained a near monopoly on tobacco production in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.[1] While the city no longer depends on tobacco production as its main industry, the crop remains a vital part of Durham's history. Many reminders of the industry linger, including the Duke Homestead and Tobacco Museum, and the American Tobacco Campus. Situated in North Durham, the Homestead, which is now a State Historic Site, was once the home and tobacco farm of the influential Washington Duke. Duke's family owned the American Tobacco Company, whose growing empire included a factory and warehouse complex in downtown Durham. Now known as the American Tobacco Campus, the warehouse has been readapted for commercial and residential use.[2]

While connected to the Dukes and to the American Tobacco Company, the two sites have been commemorated differently. Duke Homestead serves as a museum of 1870s rural life, while the American Tobacco Campus preserves the brick warehouse exterior but houses restaurants, offices, and apartments. These differences are in large part a function of the prevailing trends in historic preservation during the different decades in which they were preserved. Further analysis of the context of national legislation and politics will illuminate why individuals and groups acted as they did. Yet, both sites of memory have been part of an increasingly complex and democratic construction of the meaning of tobacco in a Southern city, shifting over the years from a single triumphant story of a prominent family's rise to power to a multi-vocalic narrative acknowledging the industry's complex legacy and its implications for many people's lives.

[1] Diane Daniel, "America's Best-Known Tobacco Town," *St. Petersburg Times* (Florida), November 21, 2004; Patrick G. Porter, "Origins of the American Tobacco Company," *The Business Historical Review* 43, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 76.

[2] See Figure 1 in the Appendix for a map of the two sites' locations.

These two sites are valuable for study because of their popularity, sending their message to many visitors, and because they show how historical narratives are constructed in different kinds of venues. The power of place is key in collective memory, for physical spaces are the location where historical memory is narrated, and the public sphere has been contested along racial lines in Southern history.[3] An awareness of both the power of public space and the struggles to legitimize historical interpretations in that space are key in interpreting Durham's public history.

This paper will consider commemoration at these two sites through the lenses of historic preservation, collective identity, and relations of power to trace a change in the locus of power to narrate Durham's past. The authority to tell "the tobacco story"—a story distinctive to Durham, but part of a larger narrative of the tobacco-producing region and the entire American South—has shifted from elite whites to an increasingly diverse population, and in the process has become many tobacco stories. This transition to many voices has been imperfect, but beginning in the 1970s with the idea of a tobacco museum, varied groups of different race, gender, and class have been able to make their versions of the past heard.[4] The addition of these perspectives in the public sphere through exhibits, programs, tours, and publications rewrites a one-dimensional story of a powerful family into a story of many, sometimes conflicting, experiences of the people involved in tobacco production, evidencing a growing appreciation for the complex histories that compose Durham's identity as a "City of the New South."

A combination of primary sources from local archives and historiographic literature about Southern collective memory reveal the development of Duke Homestead and the American Tobacco Campus as sites of memory to be both unique stories and good examples of broader regional trends. Local archives at the Durham County Library, the Duke Homestead library, the

[3] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 6-7.
[4] Ibid., 11.

Duke University Archives, the North Carolina State Archives, and the Department of Cultural Resources hold primary source documents consisting of newspaper and magazine articles, newsletters, planning documents, correspondence, reports, and official records. Articles uncover individual reactions and potential conflicts regarding the sites; internal reports, planning documents, and mission statements show ideology and approach to interpretation; and newsletters and promotional literature delineate the projected message and purpose. In addition to drawing on primary sources, this study is grounded in relevant literature on historic preservation and Southern public history. The historiography of preservation, collective memory, and Southern public history provides background that demystifies the origins of the historic sites, locating them in specific historical contexts and posing critical questions about politics, power, and identity in the designation and preservation of heritage sites.

While historians and writers have been discussing "Southern distinctiveness" since before the Civil War, only recently has this discourse merged with studies of memory and public history. The search for a defined identity, an understanding of what it means to be Southern, has shaped the stories people tell about themselves and their past. But the real question is, "Which Southern identity?" There are countless variations, but some have been accorded privilege and official approval over others. James C. Cobb's book, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity*, joins the conversation started by C. Vann Woodward and Howard Zinn discussing the fabricated and political nature of the romanticized mythology of a genteel Southern past. Cobb argued that white Southern identity had traditionally been an "othering" process, placing white Southerners in opposition to both white Northerners and all blacks. And while race had been central to the creation of Southern white identity, black communities were nonetheless denied recognition of their own sense of identity. Not until the Civil Rights era were they allowed the

voice to assert themselves as Southerners. Cobb argued that "[b]e it real or imagined the most common foundation of group identity is a shared sense of a common past, and despite their mutual attachments to the South, black and white southerners clearly differed on how southern history should be represented or remembered." Thus, his approach was to analyze identity as "a *perception* of reality rather than…reality itself."[5]

Conversations about "Southern identity" developed separately from studies of collective memory, which have emerged more recently. One of the most influential books about American historical memory is Michael Kammen's *Mystic Chords of Memory: the Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. An expansive work, this book traces the emergence in the United States of a "culture with a discernible memory," or more appropriately, a "configuration of recognized pasts."[6] Ultimately, Kammen argues that the Civil War was the turning point in the formulation of a national sense of the past; the rupture of war raised awareness of the differences between past and present, and created the need for familiar traditions to foster loyalty and generate reconciliation. This need was the root of what Kammen terms "collective amnesia," or the tendency to forget troubling aspects of the past for the sake of a unified story.[7] While the book is wide-ranging and covers many expressions of historical awareness, Kammen traces several trends through the whole work: the role of myth and notions of heritage, the tendency to depoliticize the past for the sake of reconciliation, the ebb and flow of patriotism and civic unity, the use of tradition both to resist change and to push innovation, the democratization of tradition, and the role of the private sector in stewarding tradition, with the government relatively uninvolved.

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[5] James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3-6. Original emphasis.
[6] Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: the Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).
[7] Ibid., 88-90, 9-10.

A second study of collective memory is Mike Wallace's analysis of the politics of historic sites, museums, and preservation in *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*. In his chapters about American historic preservation, Wallace located the origins of preservation movements around the turn of the twentieth century as a few groups, mostly upper-class individuals, sought to preserve what they deemed to be historic buildings—namely those associated with white elites. The New Deal period brought some government involvement to preservation of more common buildings, but World War II halted this advance with a reallocation of resources. After the war, federal funds spurred suburban growth and highways; the subsequent boom threatened many historic buildings, while urban renewal programs changed downtown landscapes across the country. Preservationist forces united against the "growth coalition" and garnered support from the middle and working classes, arguing that the loss of historic buildings would lead to a "national identity crisis."[8] Their efforts culminated in 1966 with the passage of the Historic Preservation Act.

According to Wallace, the 1970s saw a broad base of support for preservation and increased adaptive reuse. The 1980s brought a backlash of conservative protest against increasing regulations; in defense, preservationists sought allies in real estate developers.[9] As market forces and profit influenced choices just as much as preservation ideology, the gentrification of downtown areas pushed out poorer residents. The alliance between preservationists and developers ended in 1986 with the loss of tax breaks for building rehabilitation, and with the 1987 financial crash. Unable to depend on developers anymore, preservationists took a different tack and updated the goals of the National Trust. In 1991, the

[8] Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 190.
[9] Ibid., 205.

Trust declared its aim to promote multiculturalism, inner-city rejuvenation, and ecology, preserving entire heritage areas and not just individual buildings.

While Cobb's work provides a framework for intellectual constructions of Southern identities and occasionally mentions uses of the past, most of the book focuses on intellectual and academic voices. Likewise, while Kammen and Wallace produce a helpful framework for American historical consciousness and preservation, their national focus glides over regional differences. W. Fitzhugh Brundage was among the first to examine Southern identities through the lens of public memory and public spaces. His introduction to the edited collection, *Where These Memories Grow,* contains important insights that are fleshed out in *A Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*.

In the introduction to *Where These Memories Grow*, Brundage criticized characterizations of the American South as a place inherently imbued with a sense of the past, arguing that "[t]he historical South that exists today is the consequence not of some innate regional properties, but of decades of investment, labor, and conscious design by individuals and groups of individuals who have imagined themselves as 'southerners.'" Brundage located the book in the broader field of collective memory studies by scholars like Maurice Halbwachs, who first articulated the idea that, in Brundage's words, "all memory is inextricably bound up with group identity."[10] Brundage argued for the constructed nature of memory. Historical events are not passively recalled intact, but are assigned a particular significance in the accepted narrative of the past that defines a group's identity. Brundage also underscored the "inherent dialectic between stability and innovation" of collective memory. Above all, representations of history were expressions of power. To sustain the legitimacy of those in power, alternate versions such

[10] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Where These Memories Grow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 3.

as black communities' representations were ignored, and the process of memory production was hidden.[11]

The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory completed the project of *Where These Memories Grow*. Continuing to challenge the idea of an essentialist "Southern" identity, Brundage traced the workings of power in historical interpretation. He argued that the authority to write a narrative of the past is located in the public space—access to which was long denied to blacks officially and in practice, although this exclusion did not stop them from forming their own counter-narratives. Public discourse became ever more equitable as blacks and whites discussed place and past in the venue of courts, zoning commissions, and legislation, yet distinct racial and political divisions remained. Brundage concluded that despite the recent changes in the South wrought by immigration, politics, and suburbanization, Southerners looked to their heritage to construct identity. While revisionist representations of the past have challenged the dominant narrative, the fact remains that those with wealth and influence establish the official version of the past. To date, white and black versions are often at odds with each other with very little synthesis.[12] The traumatic history of the South is not easily resolved, but honest exchange in a public arena that acknowledges the contested and constructed nature of the past is a necessary place to start.

These books and the wider body of literature they represent inform an understanding of the historical circumstances surrounding preservation activities, the context of varied Southern identities, and the power relations of interpretations of the past. Clearly, the development of Duke Homestead and the American Tobacco Campus into historic landmarks was not inevitable, but rather the product of specific historic circumstances and individual decisions. With the core

[11] Ibid., 9, 11-12. See David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), for more about the uses of the past and the ways that the past is constantly changed.
[12] Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 7-8, 326.

ideas of public space and constructed collective identity framing the analysis, a chronological narrative of Duke Homestead's development will transition into a study of the American Tobacco Campus. While the key moments for Duke Homestead occurred in the 1930s and 1970s and the American Tobacco Campus's transformation happened at the turn of the twenty-first century, individuals from both groups were invested in the outcome of the other, because both sites were involved in constructing a narrative of the town's tobacco history. Woven through the narrative is an analysis of the changing state of historic preservation over time and the shifting power relations in Durham's public history experiences at both sites. Such an exercise will inform a better understanding of how Durham's construction of the tobacco industry narrative became what it is today, and what factors caused a gradual but definite shift in focus beginning in the 1970s to a more democratic distribution of authority in telling the story. The transformation of these two sites into self-conscious sites of memory marked Durham's effort to locate its distinctive identity as a Southern city, the "City of the New South." Both sites celebrate Durham's heritage as a successful tobacco-producing region. From the purview of the wealthy white elites to a democratic conversation involving multiple perspectives, Durham's story is opening up to public exchange.

Durham's tobacco story was first told through the narrative of the Duke family, starting at the Duke Homestead. Located just north of Interstate 85, Duke Homestead State Historic Site now comprises a visitor center and tobacco museum, a six-room house, and several outbuildings on about thirty-seven acres.[13] Surrounded by a landscape of trees and foliage designed to screen the site from modern roads and buildings, the site evokes a simple rural farm, belying the wealth and influence the original owners attained.

[13] See Figures 2 and 3 in the Appendix.

The Duke story was framed as that of a rags-to-riches entrepreneur. From the lowly beginnings of Washington Duke selling tobacco out of a wagon to the powerful American Tobacco Company founded by his son, James B. Duke, the story is now a legend. Washington Duke of Orange County, the patriarch of the Duke family, received land from the estate of his first father-in-law and built up the property to around 300 acres through purchases and added outbuildings.[14] Just prior to his second marriage, he built the homestead in 1852. The family farmed the land and planted some tobacco, but did not begin to manufacture and sell it until after the Civil War. Washington Duke became one of the richest men in Durham County, and he and his sons Benjamin, James, and Brodie reappeared frequently as influential characters in Durham's transformation into a New South tobacco and textile center. In 1874, the Dukes left the homestead for the growing town of Durham to continue their successful business, and in 1890, following the rapid success of the Dukes' entry into the cigarette market, consolidated five companies into the American Tobacco Company. During this period, American Tobacco bought out 250 smaller companies and also made inroads in the international market, buying a British manufacturer. By 1910, the company manufactured eighty percent of America's cigarettes, plug tobacco, smoking tobacco, and snuff, thanks in large part to the ruthless business methods and advertising of James Duke. However, because of antitrust laws the company was split in 1911,

[14] North Carolina Historic Sites, "Washington Duke the Farmer," Duke Homestead, http://www.nchistoricsites.org/duke/duke.htm. The acreages mentioned in this paper come from sources cited, but do not reflect the complex dealings with varied tracts of land owned at some point by Duke. Such a detailed tracking of all parcels is not within the scope of this paper. For more information about what happened to which parcels, see Stephen E. Massengill, James R. McPherson, and Richard F. Knapp, "Appendix B: Washington Duke's Land Acquisitions: the Making of Duke Homestead," in *A Preliminary Report of the Duke Homestead and Tobacco in America*, Historic Sites Division Library, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh (hereafter referred to as Historic Sites Division Library).

creating four major branches: American Tobacco, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco, P. Lorillard, and Liggett and Myers.[15]

After the family relocated to Durham, the home passed through two owners before returning to Duke hands. William P. Newton of Guilford County bought the land in 1883 and lived there until 1903 or 1905, after which he sold 146 acres to T. N. Allen. Then, in the 1920s, James A. Thomas, a business partner and friend of the Duke family as well as a former trustee of Duke University, urged Washington Duke's granddaughter, Mary Duke Biddle, to purchase the land to preserve her family's legacy. In April 1929, Thomas founded the Duke Memorial, "a movement inaugurated by friends of the late Washington Duke, Benjamin N. Duke and James B. Duke for the establishment of a permanent memorial by way of appreciation of the lives of these men." In 1931, Mary Duke Biddle bought the homestead and gifted it to Duke University. Thomas and Duke Professor Robert L. Flowers were the most instrumental in negotiating with Martha F. Allen, then-owner of the property, but it was Biddle who donated the $50,000 to buy the approximately 158 acres and subsequently transferred the title to Duke University. Thus, the catalysts for the homestead's preservation were the deaths of Duke family members and a concern to ensure their proper remembrance. The Memorial group's objectives included purchasing and "rehabilitating" the home site. In correspondence with donors and among each other, the Executive Committee often referred to the homestead as a "shrine."[16]

[15] As an example of the Dukes' influence in Durham, Washington Duke was a county commissioner of Durham County. Jean Bradley Anderson, *Durham County: A History of Durham County, North Carolina* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 143; Porter, "Origins of the American Tobacco Company," 59, 75.

[16] Tobacco History Corporation, *A Brief History of the Duke Homestead* (Durham: Tobacco History Corporation, ca. 1970), North Carolina Collection, Durham County Main Library, hereafter referred to as North Carolina Collection; Office of Information Services, *The Duke Homestead: a National Historic Landmark* (Durham: University Editor's Office and Manuscripts Department of W.R. Perkins Library, Duke University, ca. 1960), North Carolina Collection; "The Duke Memorial Audit Report," September 30, 1932, Duke Memorial Records, 1926-1936, Duke University Archives, hereafter referred to as Duke Memorial Records; *The Duke Memorial* (Durham: The Duke Memorial, ca. 1930), Duke Memorial Records; James A. Thomas to the Members of the Executive Committee, April 15, 1936, Duke Memorial Records. For examples of references to the homestead as a "shrine," see James A.

The Board of Trustees officially took control at the commencement ceremony in June of 1935. Reports of the event told of Biddle's desire that "the birthplace of her family be retained by the University and be readily accessible for all who might wish to come and see the origin of one of the South's chief industries." This emphasis on the industrial advancement brought by the Dukes correlates with a New South mythology identified by Cobb that fused praise for the region's industrial achievements with a romanticized vision of the Old South. Indeed, through the 1940s and 1950s, newspaper articles referred to the homestead as the "Shrine of the Tobacco Belt" and emphasized the hard work and industry that led to such wild success, the philanthropy of the family, or both. Yet the choice to preserve a simple homestead also echoes the actions of other industrialists like the Rockefellers or Henry Ford who brought massive changes to everyday life, and who nostalgically preserved the remains of a bygone life that they had altered.[17]

Thomas to Professor Robert L Flowers, December 18, 1930, and the correspondence between James A. Thomas and Mr. and Mrs. Busbee, Duke Memorial Records.

[17] James A. Thomas to Robert L. Flowers, December 18, 1930, Duke Memorial Records; "Agreement" between Miss Martha F. Allen and Murray Jones, December 19, 1930, Duke Memorial Records; James A. Thomas to Alex H. Sands, Jr., February 14, 1931; Alex H. Sands, Jr. to Mr. A. C. Lee, November 12, 1932, Duke Memorial Records; Tobacco History Corporation, *Newsletter* 2, no. 19 (Fall, 1997): 3, reprinted from *Alumni Register*, Duke University, June, 1946; Cobb, *Away Down South*, 67-68, 118 (while this "New South Creed" was not as widespread in the twentieth century, Cobb identifies its persistence through the first half of the century); "Shrine of the Tobacco Belt," *Durham Herald*, May 22, 1949; Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 316. While Biddle was a force in facilitating the preservation of the site, she was at first hesitant to donate the funds because of the cost of ongoing lawsuits. It is unclear what exactly these lawsuits were, but it is conceivable that Biddle had an interest in preserving the homestead and funding a favorable interpretation of her family. Additionally, Thomas was interested in purchasing Washington Duke's birthplace home about thirteen miles away when it came up for auction, but Biddle, other Duke descendants, and The Duke Memorial were not interested. This demonstrates that the preservation of the Duke Homestead was not inevitable, but based on factors such as price and family proximity (the Duke homestead was the birthplace of Biddle's father, Benjamin Duke, which seems to be more of a motivating factor than that her grandfather Washington Duke built it.) For other examples of celebratory newspaper articles, see W. Townsend Smith, "Original Duke Home Stands Firm Today," *Charlotte Observer*, May 10, 1953, which states that "some of the largest industries of today had a small and humle [sic] beginning. America from the very first has been a land of opportunity, and many industrious prioneers [sic] who started working with new ideas many years ago have developed them into great factories from small beginnings on the farm." Another example is Earl Wolslagel, "With Foresight and Toil: Tobacco Money Helped Bring Durham Wealth, Fame and a Fine University," *Durham Morning Herald*, September 6, 1965, quoting Duke Professor William Boyd on the men who rebuilt the South after the Civil War: "Plain men who toiled, men who never knew defeat…little resource save their unconquerable souls and their wits." Both articles are from News Service Subject Files, 1930-Ongoing, Duke University Archives (hereafter cited as News Service Subject Files).

While the property was in Duke University's care, the university restored and refurbished the homestead, and opened it up for visitation on Sundays during the summer months. Not all of the changes made to the property were well documented, but caretakers remodeled one porch and built another, rebuilt the "first factory," remodeled parts of the house interior, and completed exterior maintenance before opening to visitors. Additionally, the Duke Memorial asked Duke family members and friends to donate furnishings either belonging to the Dukes or thought to date from the 1865-1875 period. A committee of women from Durham set up the homestead interior—perhaps a reflection of the interwar obsession with rustic Americana in certain circles, and certainly an effort to set up the newly conceived "period room"—and in the early years around 500 people visited each month.[18] The homestead was open to Duke faculty, staff, and students for various events; for example, the YWCA hosted a "Songfest" and the Duke Campus Club hosted a tea in 1936. It seems that individuals initially took charge of maintaining the property, but the Grounds Division of the university eventually oversaw the land and a supervisor lived on site. As affordable automobiles carried more tourists to historic sites and other attractions than ever before, and as interest in local as well as national history rose, the Homestead enjoyed the patronage of many visitors. During World War II, however, the University closed the site intermittently due to travel restrictions.[19]

[18] Alex H. Sands to Executive Committee, December 30, 1932; James A. Thomas to Dr. Few, August 10, 1933, Duke Memorial Records; James A. Thomas to Dr. R. L. Flowers, July 10, 1936, Duke Memorial Records; Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 311-312, 347. An inventory found in the University Treasurer Records, 1893-1979, Duke University Archives with no date but in a folder with papers from 1939 includes over thirty portraits and photographs, mostly in the parlor, including some of extended family who did not live at the homestead. A particularly anachronistic photograph is the "car and home of B. N. Duke." The photographs, bibles, rockers, textiles, clothing, furniture, and all other furnishings were valued at $9,718.

[19] "Songfest to be held Sunday at Duke Homestead," *Durham Sun*, April 30, 1936; "Duke Campus Club Entertains at Tea at Duke Homestead," *Durham Sun*, May 9, 1936; Duke University, *Employee Life* 1 (April 1968): 7, News Service Subject Files; Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 304-305, 375; Jayne Harwell, "Duke Homestead, Popular Historic Landmark Open to Public; Birthplace of Tobacco Industry Gift from Mary Duke Biddle in '35," *Durham Herald*, May 5, 1946.

This early period of the Homestead's development was typical of preservation activities at the turn of the twentieth century. For the first half of the century, wealthy private individuals directed preservation activities, while the government stayed uninvolved. Early preservationists across the country were often women who transformed historic houses into patriotic museums. In the South after the Civil War, commemoration of the Confederate cause was a role deemed appropriate for white women, accomplished by associations like the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Mary Biddle's involvement with the Duke Homestead and the help of local women fit this trend, albeit a few decades later. Additionally, the wealthy enjoyed the resources to save buildings to legitimate their own prestige, and in the first decades of twentieth century preservation was increasingly controlled by men. James A. Thomas and a group of men spearheaded the Duke Memorial to honor the family, and much of the early language treated the homestead as a monument to the Dukes. The interwar years were also a time of "democratic traditionalism," creating a historically based past for the nation and for regions of the country by fusing modernism with nostalgia. Perhaps the public spirit of preservation that inspired the Historic Sites Act of 1935 also inspired Biddle, Thomas, and the Duke Memorial group. Yet their initial motivation was to celebrate a wealthy white family, creating a narrative of memory that provided a "genealogy of social identity" for the Dukes. Furthermore, the narrative told Durham that the Dukes' rise had been an unquestionable boon for the town.[20] During the period, a few white elites owned the resources and cultural authority to decide what was important about Durham's past and which collective identity to narrate.

[20] Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, 6-8, 183; Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 12-13, 301-302, 564-565; Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 4. *The Southern Past* also contains a chapter about elite white women's clubs that claimed to interpret history for the public: "A Duty Peculiarly Fitting to Women," 12-54. For more on women's roles in house museums and the politics behind their establishment, see Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1999).

The Homestead's early message was also in line with the official narrative sanctioned by the North Carolina Historical Commission, founded in 1903.[21] The early archives mainly served to bolster the white Democratic Party by disseminating a unified civic culture of loyalty to the state and to white supremacy. The commission preserved white elite documents and claimed cultural authority for white male professional historians. It is true that Washington Duke had been a Republican when most white Southerners were Democrats and had donated to African-American institutions. And the Duke Homestead was not yet a state historic site, so the Historical Commission did not decide interpretation. Nevertheless, the story being told at the Duke Homestead in the 1930s and 1940s was one of a white Christian family rising to prominence through hard work, industrializing the South and giving magnanimously to charity—hardly outside the orthodox interpretation of the past. Moreover, the site emphasized the Dukes' importance to the nation, downplaying their Southern ties in favor of a national patriotic message. This message persisted for many years, revealed in a typical article in the *Durham Herald* from 1953. This article demonstrated a conservative interpretation that maintained white as normal and presented the Homestead as an appealing heritage tourism destination: "Families out for a Sunday afternoon drive can combine pleasure with a fascinating history lesson" and view "a museum of mid-Nineteenth Century life as well as a memorial to one of America's outstanding philanthropic families."[22] The article does not explain whose mid-nineteenth-century life was shown, but it was not the mid-nineteenth-century life that blacks experienced.

[21] Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 110-113.

[22] "Duke Homestead Again Open to General Public," *Durham Morning Herald*, July 7, 1953, News Service Subject Files. Other articles such as the *Durham Morning Herald* article from May 5, 1946, referenced above, say the homestead was "open to the public," but it is not clear anywhere how segregation impacted visitation. Duke University was not desegregated until 1961("Commemorating Fifty Years of Black Students at Duke University, http://spotlight.duke.edu/50years/), so presumably the Duke community who had access to the picnic grounds and who could use the homestead for social functions did not include any blacks.

Gaining popularity and recognition, the Duke Homestead became a National Historic Landmark in 1966; a dedication ceremony was held on April 28, 1968. Correspondence about the event again refers to the site as a shrine, confusing language of a "National Historic Landmark" with a "National Historical Shrine."[23] Those in attendance at the ceremony included Governor Dan K. Moore, Durham mayor R. Wense Grabarek, National Park Service Regional Director Jackson E. Price, State Archives Director Christopher Crittenden, Chairman of the Research Triangle Regional Planning Commission Oscar E. Ewing, Duke University President William Preston Few, and Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans, daughter of Mary Duke Biddle and trustee of Duke University and the Duke Endowment.

The remarks given at the ceremony by these dignitaries mostly focused on the greatness of Washington Duke as an individual. Following a litany of prominent North Carolinian sites, Governor Moore's comments placed the Dukes in "the chronicles of our past [that] contain the names of numerous individuals whose accomplishments are well-known both within our State and far beyond its borders." The Dukes now joined the ranks of significant financial, industrial, and philanthropic contributors. Semans emphasized the hardworking, poor, simple, tolerant, and loving qualities of Washington Duke: "this is the home of a man who from childhood thought in terms of the welfare of humanity. Simplicity and humility were never lost." Duke was portrayed as both traditional and innovative, a nonconformist of great philanthropy. Significantly, Asa Spaulding, a prominent black citizen of Durham, was chosen to represent the community of Durham at the ceremony. His speech focused on the family's compassion that "has always transcended racial lines…what might not be so well known are the donations made to Negro institutions following the turn of the century." Finally, repeating the "American dream" motif,

[23] See, for example, Clarence E. Whitefield to Mr. Frank L. Ashmore, January 17, 1968, News Service Subject Files.

Oscar Ewing's address honored "piety, hard work, frugality, and industriousness—virtues that should never seem unfashionable in America."[24]

Two opposing opinions from this time epitomize the differing narratives of the Duke tobacco story. A laudatory editorial from the *Durham Morning Herald* of April 28, 1968, entitled, "Duke Homestead a True Landmark," described it as a milestone in "personal enterprise, in the recovery of the South from war and reconstruction, in the New South of industry and progress." Praising the American spirit of initiative, industry, and intellect, the author concluded, "Here is a picture of the American dream made real." No mention was made of those who did not share in such wealth and progress, or of the countless people excluded from realizing this "American dream" by existing social structures. In contrast is a different perception of the Duke family dating from the same period, told in a humorous tone by *Herald-Sun* reporter Jim Wise. Remembering the "requisite local lore" told to him when he moved to Durham in 1966, "the streets were laid out by an asphalt truck following a cow. Planning? Buck Duke and the boys were too busy making money."[25] Not everyone believed the Dukes to be role models, but these critical opinions were kept out of the official narrative.

The Homestead's designation as a Historic Landmark took place within the context of post-World War II urban renewal and suburban growth nationwide. In 1959, the city of Durham decided to redevelop downtown. A report was released in 1960 with the city's urban renewal plan, estimated at $14 million over fifteen or sixteen years. The report declared intentions to "work closely with downtown merchants, property owners, city staff and other interested groups." Maps detailed current area and usage in neatly calculated and color-coded plates, listing

[24] "Remarks by Governor Dan Moore, Dedication of the Duke Homestead as a National Historic Landmark," April 28, 1968; "Remarks by Mrs. Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans," April 28, 1968; Asa T. Spaulding, "Duke Homestead Ceremonies," April 28, 1968; Oscar R. Ewing, "An Address for the Duke Homestead Ceremonies," April 28, 1968, all in News Service Subject Files.
[25] Jim Wise, "Bull and More and More," *Herald-Sun*, March 20, 1995.

residential, trade, public, industrial, and institutional spaces. According to the report, something needed to be done about the "obsolete buildings," traffic congestion, and parking space shortages "which plague downtown" in order for "predictions of prosperity…to become a reality." A downtown sickness prevented the city from reaching its potential, and the solution was to cut out the infected areas. Experts categorized old buildings into those that were "obsolete" and needed to be cleared, and those that were "too important to remove" and should be rehabilitated and conserved.[26] The development firm implemented the plan in 1962 when it received federal funding.

These years also saw the first instances of "adaptive reuse," a strategy birthed in the midst of urban renewal to preserve old buildings and use them for new purposes. This compromise satisfied both the heritage interests of preservationists and the financial interests of developers. The United States was in danger of destroying its past in overzealous growth; adaptive reuse was the solution to maintaining a proper reminder of history and identity. Preservation of at least the exteriors retained the aesthetic and social value, while also saving money and generating business. Problems arose because this solution was susceptible to the vagaries of the market, and because economic interests could easily conflict with honest and serious history-telling, possibly resulting in a sanitized, commoditized heritage. But despite these perils, adaptive reuse worked in some cases.[27]

Yet the power to decide which buildings were worth preserving largely lay with white legislators and planners. While the 1960s saw the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (1966), Duke Homestead's nomination to the National Historic Landmark, a renewed

[26] Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, 186; City Planning and Architectural Associates, Chapel Hill, "Downtown Durham: A Report by the Redevelopment Commission of the City of Durham, N. C." (Durham: City of Durham, ca. 1960) 4-5, North Carolina Collection.
[27] Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, 189-190.

nationwide interest in "heritage" in reaction to rapid cultural change, and the birth of "adaptive reuse" ideas that later saved the American Tobacco Plant, this same decade also saw the devastation of Durham's historic black Hayti district.[28] Much of the "blighted area" of town that purportedly needed renewing was in this segregated neighborhood. The contrast between black and white heritage is a rich example of the insecure position that black civic space held during the Civil Rights era. Even though black Durham was touted as the "Mecca of Black Capitalism," boasted many successful businesses, and traditionally wielded more influence than many black communities in the South, the neighborhood was on shaky footing. In the name of "urban efficiency" and with more thought to tax revenue than to black heritage, the segregated neighborhood was bulldozed. While the renewal plan promised better conditions, and black leaders were on board initially, in the end the plan destroyed small businesses, left hundreds without a home, razed symbolic buildings like White Rock Baptist Church, and dragged on years longer than anticipated.[29] The process made clear who had the power to define landmarks and designate cultural significance. Despite the Dukes' proclaimed racial tolerance, philanthropy to black institutions, and the economic growth that the American Tobacco Company spurred, Durham was not exempt from the unequal power relations divided along racial lines that pervaded Southern states. Tours of Duke Homestead and of prosperous factories like the American Tobacco complex infused public space with a narrative of white success while silencing—and partially bulldozing—black stories.

Because the urban renewal of the 1960s in Durham did not keep white citizens from following highways and shopping malls to the suburbs to avoid integration, the 1970s saw efforts

[28] Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, 189; Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 534. For more on the destruction of this vibrant neighborhood, see Brundage, "Black Memorials and the Bulldozer Revolution," in *The Southern Past*, 227-269.
[29] Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 232, 234, 244, 255, 267.

to draw the affluent back downtown. The Chamber of Commerce proposed a concerted effort to revitalize rather than reinvent the downtown region, culminating in the Durham Revitalization Foundation in 1975, a coalition of business, civic, and government leaders.[30] While nothing came of this commission, it was indicative of the preservation-conscious mood of the 1970s. Historic preservation had transformed from an interest of the wealthy to an activity of ordinary Americans. The Historic Preservation Society of Durham (now called Preservation Durham) opened its doors in 1974 to protect buildings that made Durham a distinctive city of the South, becoming the largest local preservation society in North Carolina and one of nearly 6,000 other preservation societies nationwide. On a national scale, the National Historic Preservation Fund Act and the Historic Structures Tax Act of 1976 strengthened legal protections for historic buildings and offered tax incentives for rehabilitation, making adaptive reuse a more popular strategy than ever. The Historic Preservation Society of Durham and the Chamber of Commerce nominated the entire downtown Durham district for the National Register of Historic Places in 1977, the first commercial district in the state to be on the list.[31]

This decade of historic preservation also saw a crucial turning point in Duke Homestead's interpretation, moving from a focus on the Duke family to a broader and more inclusive social history. Beginning in 1971, Dr. H. G. Jones, Director of the North Carolina Department of Archives and History, expressed an interest in acquiring the site. Jones spoke with members of the Durham Chamber of Commerce to gauge interest in creating a museum at the homestead, and he subsequently met with Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans—Biddle's daughter—and Duke University President Terry Sanford to discuss a transfer. Subsequent

[30] "'The Ayes of Durham:' Selling Downtown Durham," *Durham Morning Herald*, November 4, 1973; Betty W. Mushak, "Beautification Hailed As New Durham 'Foundation,'" *Durham Morning Herald*, June 24, 1975.
[31] Carolyn Satterfield, "Duke Campus Club Sees New View of Durham," *Herald-Sun* March 15, 1978, News Service Subject Files; Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 563; Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, 197-198; Durham Convention and Visitors Bureau, *Downtown Durham Walking Tour* (Durham Convention and Visitors Bureau: 2004).

conversations agreed on partnership of Durham citizens (represented by the Chamber of Commerce), the tobacco industry, the state, and the university to collaborate and develop the site. The goals were to create an indoor museum to "tell the authentic story of the culture, manufacture and merchandising of tobacco in America," run educational programs, and use the homestead as a "living tobacco farm of the 1870s." Duke University Board of Trustees adopted a resolution to transfer the homestead to the state on December 10, 1971, contingent on its placement in the Historic Sites network and the construction of a visitor center.[32] Jones recruited community leaders and tobacco industry figures to form the Tobacco History Corporation in 1972 as a non-profit foundation to work with the Department of Archives and History on developing Duke Homestead. The group saw themselves as volunteers to advise and promote the site. American Tobacco Company leadership was included on this board. The group agreed to raise $250,000 for programs, while the General Assembly of North Carolina in 1973 set aside $285,000 for a visitor center and museum. Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company donated 6.74 adjacent acres, adding to the thirty-seven acres given to the state by Duke University.[33]

The state officially acquired the site in 1974. The objectives of the State Historic Site were to preserve the buildings and grounds and to collect tobacco-related artifacts in order to interpret "the history of tobacco and the Duke family, with particular emphasis on the latter's role in the development of the modern tobacco industry and philanthropy." The significance of

[32] H. G. Jones, "Memorandum re: Duke Homestead, Durham County," August 5, 1971, and "Matters for Discussion between President Terry Sanford of Duke University, Mrs. James H. Semans, and Dr. H. G. Jones, Director of the State Department of Archives and History," November 5, 1971, Historic Sites Division Library; Tobacco History Corporation, *To Preserve a Heritage* (Tobacco History Corporation, ca. 1980),10, North Carolina Collection; Joel Haswell, "Dream of Tobacco Museum Here Foreseen as Reality in Two Years," *Durham Morning Herald*, June 12, 1973; Ansley Herring Wegner, *History for All the People: One Hundred Years of Public History in North Carolina* (Raleigh: North Carolina Office of Archives and History, 2003), 59; Rufus H. Powell to MR. H. G. Jones, December 10, 1971, Historic Sites Division Library.

[33] Duke Homestead State Historic Site, *A Master Plan*, (1978), 25, Duke Homestead Library; "New Tobacco History Museum to Open at Duke Homestead Oct. 1," Office of Communications, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, May 30, 1989, Duke Homestead Library. The article includes a list of members of the Tobacco History Corporation.

the site lay in the fact that "in creating the great tobacco monopoly, the Dukes laid the foundation for the modern tobacco corporations which flourish today."[34] This statement put a positive label on a monopoly that drove numerous small farms out of business, but the broadened scope of the site from the Duke family to North Carolina tobacco paved the way for a more diverse and complex story.

Following the completion of a visitor center in 1976, the Division of Archives and History set to work designing exhibits for the tobacco museum, while restoration and repair took place on some of the buildings. Archeologists excavated the area in order to direct the restoration. Previous caretakers had left limited records indicating which homestead contents had actually belonged to the Dukes, so nothing was known with certainty to be original, although tradition held that a pie safe and a chest had belonged to the Dukes.[35] The team used some of the household artifacts gathered in the 1930s and supplemented items known to date from the second half of the nineteenth century. Site workers planned craft workshops and other "living history" events, such as cooking and farming demonstrations, musical performances, curing barn demonstrations, mock auctions, and a Christmas festival. A dedication ceremony for the site and museum was held on May 21, 1977, and it emphasized the strong partnership with the local community.[36]

A museum "show[ing] all aspects of the history of tobacco" had apparently been a Durham dream for a number of years and was particularly appropriate for the homestead since it was, in the words of Jones, "the birthplace of the modern tobacco industry." As far back as 1960, articles from the *Durham Sun* recorded efforts to create a tobacco museum. This discussion was

[34] Duke Homestead State Historic Site, *A Master Plan*, 2, 13.
[35] Betty Hodges, "Duke Homestead Gives Flavor of 1870 Farm Life," *Durham Morning Herald*, August 7, 1977.
[36] "Remarks for the Dedication of the Duke Homestead, by Larry E. Tise, Director, Division of Archives and History, May 21, 1977," Historic Sites Division Library.

the impetus for Jones's initiatives to acquire the homestead as a state historic site. When discussions began between the Chamber of Commerce and the Department of Cultural Resources, Ben Roberts of the American Tobacco Company stated that if there were a museum, the company would donate to it, noting that American Tobacco had already given some items to the North Carolina Department of Archives and History. In fact, American Tobacco already offered tours, with 10,000 visitors from across the country participating annually.[37]

The Homestead site's Master Plan from 1978 detailed the themes that guided interpretation. Interpretive themes included the history of tobacco in North Carolina and the Duke story, using the Duke family experience as a window into the lives of Piedmont farmers. Other points were the rise of new industry after the Civil War, and a history of philanthropy and higher education. No longer would the Duke Homestead be only a memorial to a privileged family; it would try to explore how tobacco affected the lives of all kinds of people in Durham. Site manager Jim McPherson stated, "The farm will be not so much a memorial to the Dukes as to the history of tobacco." In alignment with trends of American populism and pluralism of the 1960s and 1970s, McPherson wanted the site to tell a more inclusive story than before, representing the perspectives of different classes and ethnicities in tobacco production. Planners

[37] Kathryn D. McPherson, "From Seed to Cigarette: Tobacco Stars at New Museum," *Durham Morning Herald*, May 15, 1977; Joel Haswell, "Dream of Tobacco Museum Here Foreseen as Reality in Two Years," *Durham Morning Herald*, Jun 12, 1973; "Group Here is Pushing Proposal for National Museum of Tobacco," *Durham Sun*, December 13, 1960; H. G. Jones, "Memorandum re: Duke Homestead, Durham County," August 5, 1971, Historic Sites Division Library; Ida Kay Jordan, "Tobacco Museum Idea Talked Again," *North Carolina Leader* (Raleigh), July 21, 1971; J. L. Crumpton to Mr. Joseph Kolodny, Managing Director of the National Association of Tobacco Distributors, March 2, 1964, Duke Homestead Library. J. L. Crumpton, President of the Tobacco History Corporation, was the loudest voice in discussions about a museum, writing, "A museum of the scope we have discussed will help to give the tobacco industry the 'shot in the arm' which would be desirable at this time." Significantly, this was the same year the surgeon general's warning on the dangers of tobacco use was issued. In the end, it seems as though Durham lost out in a bid for a *national* museum, and a National Tobacco Textile Museum was established in Danville, Virginia. Editorials from the *Durham Morning Herald* indicate that some thought Virginia was a more representative location, as the industry truly started there and many small companies rather than just a few large ones remained. However, as Durham did establish the Tobacco Museum at the Duke Homestead, the public was satisfied. See "Danville's Tobacco Museum," Readers' Views, *Durham Morning Herald*, August 15, 1971. See also Kammen's discussion of expanding local and regional museums on specialized topics and the potential for controversy, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 635-641.

hoped to cooperate with the industry, the city, and local schools. Visitation increased dramatically in the late 1970s: in 1975 there were 7,509 guests, and by 1977 there were 24,086.[38]

As the historic site gained popularity, administrators saw the need to expand. In the 1980s, a campaign was launched to raise funds to update the museum exhibits. The North Carolina General Assembly appropriated $150,000 for the project in 1985, and the new exhibits were slated to open October 1, 1989. The fundraising appeal was infused with nostalgia, as the opening letter from Governor James Hunt in the brochure, "To Preserve a Heritage," stated: "Somewhere in the midst of our industrial and technological success, we almost lost an opportunity to preserve a rich and fascinating chapter in the history of this State and indeed, the Nation." (No credit was given in this statement to the two women who were instrumental in ensuring the site's preservation or to the Duke University employees who maintained the grounds for forty years before it became a State Historic Site, although they are mentioned later in a timeline.) The brochure praised the accomplishments of the Duke family, whose "names became synonymous with the advancement of religion, higher education, and philanthropy in the state; men who made history not only in tobacco, but also in electric power and textiles."[39]

But in addition to appealing to emotional notions of the past, site planners sought to interpret a broader tobacco story and incorporate more voices. For example, current and former American Tobacco Company employees gave interviews about their work and volunteered to help restore antique machines. This goal resulted in a museum exhibit that addressed the production of tobacco from field to store, and included excerpts of actual workers' opinions and

[38] News Release, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, June 7, 1978; Duke Homestead Library; Duke Homestead State Historic Site, *A Master Plan*, 78, Duke Homestead Library.
[39] A. Dale Coats to Ms. Dian Lehr, February 9, 1989, Duke Homestead Library; *To Preserve a Heritage*, 1, 5, North Carolina Collection.

experiences.[40] It is difficult to discern if these employees and retirees were representative of the gender and ethnic composition of the workers, yet their cooperation represents a more democratic approach than just the industry leaders' participation in the Tobacco History Corporation.

Meanwhile, other programs continued this democratizing trend and capitalized on post-industrial longing for a simpler past, as well as interest in "living history." With the goal to "accurately portray the 1860's life style of a rural middle class North Carolina farm family," staff set up living history weekends, demonstrating cooking, crafts, music, and clothes washing. The site initiated the "To Work the Land" program in 1986, interpreting farm life in the Piedmont region in 1870. Costumed interpreters demonstrated both farming activities and domestic skills. A thoughtful article from the spring 1991 issue of the Homestead's newsletter titled, "Life in the Farm: The Female Perspective," wondered how women could be incorporated into the site interpretation. "When interpreting a farm site," author Valerie Jones asked, "do we only interpret what happened in the fields, the predominantly male side of farm life?...Where does women's history come in?" Other articles discussed social history questions related to the industry, such as worker-employer relationships, black churches, and small farmers' organizations.[41] These articles indicate a willingness, first expressed when the site was transferred to the state of North Carolina, to address the more complex and potentially polarizing issues of race, gender, and

[40] A. Dale Coats to Mr. W. I. Jones, November 5, 1985, Duke Homestead Library; A. Dale Coats to Mr. Worth Bowles, November 5, 1985, Duke Homestead Library; A. Dale Coats, "Manager's Report," *Newsletter* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 1.

[41] Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 618-619; "Costume Research Planned for Duke Homestead," *Newsletter* 5, no. 1 (Winter 1984):1-2; *Newsletter* 5, no. 2 (Spring 1984); Duke Homestead State Historic Site, *To Work The Land Planning Outline*, June 6-8, 1991, Duke Homestead Library; Valerie Jones, "Life in the Farm: The Female Perspective," *Newsletter* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 1; "Tobacco and Religion: Durham Factories and the Emergence of Religious Congregations," *Newsletter* 13 no. 2 (Summer 1992): 4; "The Farmers' Alliance," *Newsletter* 15 no. 2 (Summer 1993): 5.

class. While such issues were slow to influence the museum's exhibits, they filtered into guided tours and special programs.

In addition to new questions about tobacco history, the quarterly newsletters of the Tobacco History Corporation reflected awareness of the industry's decline in the 1970s and 1980s, spurring the preservation and retelling of the industry's role in North Carolina history. Tobacco History Corporation President Billy Yeargin wrote, "[T]obacco has given this country its lifeblood, as well as a way of life. Our heritage has a richness which should be the envy of all who study it."[42] While many auction houses in Durham once sold the tobacco of local farmers, by 1988 they had all shut down. The annual mock tobacco auction, held as an educational activity at the Homestead, was the only tobacco auction in Durham for the first time in 117 years, enhancing the sense of loss and making the site's work all the more poignant. Along with the disappearance of auctions once so common in Durham, the American Tobacco Plant closed in 1987. A *Morning Herald* article echoed sentiments of loss and nostalgia for a more vibrant tobacco industry, noting that the Duke name was now associated with basketball and electric power, but had once been renowned for its tobacco connection. With the nationally declining tobacco market and the abandonment of most warehouses in town, Duke Homestead site manager Dale Coats stated, "We're the only tobacco story left in town."[43]

Yet the changes that left abandoned tobacco warehouses in Durham also made room for other uses of these buildings, and another chapter of the tobacco story; as Durham experienced a major transition away from an industry that had formed the city's foundation, nostalgia urged the remembrance of times past and the conservation of these industry buildings, including the

[42] Billy Yeargin, "President's Corner," *Newsletter* 8, no. 3 (Summer 1987): 4.
[43] John E. Tackett, Jr., "Homestead Hosts Durham's Only Sale," *Newsletter* 9, no. 4 (Fall 1988): 1; Jim Wise, "That New World Weed: Duke Homestead's Tobacco Museum Our Roots' Shrine," *Durham Morning Herald*, September 29, 1988.

American Tobacco complex.[44] For some years during its operation the American Tobacco factory offered public tours, providing another venue where the public could hear Durham's tobacco story. Yet, even one of the largest manufactories in Durham suffered from the market's decline and closed in 1987, forcing 1,000 workers to find other employment or work sixty-five miles away in the Reidsville plant.[45]

The decline of the tobacco market coincided with a worldwide recession in the mid-1970s, slowing real estate development and encouraging adaptive reuse across the United States, including Durham's tobacco warehouses. Preservation interests increasingly allied with real estate, creating a "partnership" between public and private sectors. Rehabilitating historic buildings—with the definition of "historic" being expanded to include a wider variety of buildings that previously had not been deemed significant—was justified by economic revitalization, with the historical value being secondary. This public-private partnership was the model for the adaptive reuse of Durham's tobacco warehouses.[46] The Brightleaf District was renovated in 1981 as a seminal case, converted to commercial use with restaurants and shops, and others followed. But in 1986, under President Ronald Reagan, national legislation began to rescind some of the tax incentives that had formerly encouraged preservation and cut funding for the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The financial crash of 1987 further stalled developers.[47] Preservationists found their real estate partners unable to help; the alliance had

[44] Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 619. See Figure 4 for a map of the American Tobacco complex.
[45] Ida Kay Jordan, "Tobacco Museum Idea Talked Again," *N.C. Leader* (Raleigh), July 21, 1971; M. B. Regan, "American Tobacco Will Close Two East Coast Facilities," *The Washington Post*, September 1, 1986. Jordan's article discusses tours "traditionally" offered at American Tobacco and Liggett and Meyers, so they must have been offered for a number of years. They were well attended, with an estimated 10,000 visitors annually at American Tobacco and 20,000 at Liggett and Meyers.
[46] Chris Graham, "The Bull City: An American Experience," *Newsletter* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 7; Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, 199, 203, 205, 231-233; Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 615, 675. Imperial Tobacco Company left Durham in 1962; the last tobacco warehouse closed in 1987, and American Tobacco left the same year. Liggett and Meyers remained, but with fewer workers.
[47] City of Durham, *Downtown Durham Visions Competition*, (Durham: City of Durham, 1986) North Carolina Collection; Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, 204-205, 224-225; "Brightleaf Alive at 25," *Durham News*, December

been a gamble, successful for a time but at the mercy of profit motives and economic currents. This national climate helps explain the slow progress of the American Tobacco Complex's development and the unsuccessful attempts to complete such a large renovation project.

After American Tobacco left Durham in 1987, two developers tried and failed to convert the complex for adaptive reuse. As early as 1989, J. Adam Abram of Adaron Group proposed development of "American Campus," a commercial center composed of residences for Duke visiting faculty, community art space, and a branch of the Museum of Life and Science. The plan was to employ up to 6,000 people, and was backed by Adaron Group, Duke University, and Glaxo-Smith-Kline pharmaceutical company. However, the plan failed to raise enough funds or to account for parking spaces, a problem that resurfaced in later proposals; the plan also encompassed additional property not yet acquired. The Durham City Council did not approve Abram's idea. Furthermore, in 1990 a popular vote struck down a bond referendum for a new Durham Bulls baseball stadium next door, which indicated an unwillingness to shell out tax dollars for renovation and parking spaces at American Tobacco as well.[48] In 1996, Blue Devil Ventures planned to convert the complex into office, retail, and apartment space. Unable to produce the necessary funds, the company focused on another set of old warehouses, West Village, instead.

Despite changing motivations, stalled incentives, and discouraging results of the American Tobacco plan, Durham conservation efforts continued in the 1990s. The City of Durham adopted a Downtown Durham Historic Preservation Plan in 1989. Durham's efforts to

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2, 2006. See also Michael Wells, "Remaking Durham: Tobacco Warehouses Recycled," *Newsletter* 8, no. 2 (Spring, 1987): 4 and Barbara Diamonstein, *Remaking America: New Uses, Old Places* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1986). From 1986 to 1991, Brightleaf Square was featured in a traveling exhibition of the same name created by the Smithsonian Institution.

[48] Mike Collins, "American Dream: Developers Have Grand Plans for Old Tobacco Plant," *Spectator*, October 12, 1989; Cliff Bellamy, "From Historic Relic to Downtown Jewel? Political Landscape Bodes Well for Long-Hoped-For American Tobacco Project," *Herald-Sun*, August 22, 1999.

embrace its heritage, include constituents of varied classes and ethnicities, and reinvigorate the town's economy for the good of all citizens echoed the mission statement of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Adopted in 1991, the statement proclaimed the Trust's goals to "foster an appreciation of the diverse character and meaning of our American cultural heritage and to preserve and revitalize the livability of our communities by leading the nation in saving America's historic environments." In 1994, the Façade Improvement Grant Program sponsored by Downtown Durham, Inc., a group committed to reviving the downtown district, offered grants in the downtown area "to promote development that is physically, historically, and architecturally compatible to downtown buildings." In 2000, the City of Durham released the "Downtown Durham Master Plan," with the goal of making Durham a key economic, touristic, and historic link in the Triangle region. In the meantime, the Duke Homestead was flourishing and continued to contribute to the city-wide commemoration of the tobacco industry. In 1997, it hosted a reunion for former American Tobacco workers and developed two temporary exhibits about the company and its closure. In 1999, the Tobacco History Corporation was changed to the Duke Homestead Education and History Corporation to reflect the site's wider goals.[49]

Finally, it seemed that the American Tobacco Campus might become a reality. In 1998, Jim Goodmon, president of Raleigh-based Capitol Broadcasting Company, which owned the Durham Bulls baseball team, WRAL-TV5, Fox 50, and WRAZ-TV, expressed interest in the American Tobacco project. After years of neglect, the complex was decrepit; it was a landscape of barbed wire, broken windows, dust, and decaying wood. Securing GlaxoSmithKline

[49] Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, 230; Downtown Durham, Inc., *Downtown Durham, Inc., Façade Improvement Grant Program* (Durham: Downtown Durham Inc., 1994), North Carolina Collection; "American Tobacco Worker Reunion Planned for October 5," *Newsletter* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 8; Wegner, *History for All the People*, 59.

pharmaceuticals as an anchor tenant, Capitol Broadcasting Company plans moved forward.[50] In 2000, an initial plan was drawn up but scrapped due to disagreements over the amount of public and private funding needed for parking spaces. In the same year, however, City Councilman Howard Clement and Mayor Nick Tennyson expressed optimism about public support for a tax increase to help the American Tobacco project, and all but two councilmen agreed. Also in 2000, the American Tobacco factory gained entry to the National Register of Historic Places, qualifying for tax credits. The designation restricted the alterations that could be made to the buildings, preserving the historic structure in the subsequent development. Tennyson hoped for redevelopment of the complex instead of destruction, for "the thing you can never buy is the fact that it's one hundred years old...I believe that the American Tobacco proposal is going to work because there's real value in that kind of real estate."[51] The connection with the prestigious Duke family is not mentioned, but it is likely that age was not the only factor in its preservation. Age did not prevent the destruction of other buildings in Durham that were not associated with powerful and wealthy families.

Finally, after a decade of disuse and decline and four years of negotiations, on August 5, 2002, Durham City Council and the county commissioners unanimously approved a $43.2 million subsidy, authorizing the writing of legal contracts. The final version of the plan in April 2003 agreed to $21.5 million from the city and $14.9 million from the county for parking decks. The plan included renovation of nearly one million square feet of space and over 3,500 jobs;

[50] Claudia Assis, "American Tobacco Project Lights Up," *Herald-Sun,* August 27, 2002; Cliff Bellamy, "From Historic Relic to Downtown Jewel?: Political Landscape Bodes Well for Long-Hoped-For American Tobacco Project," *Herald-Sun*, August 22, 1999; Anne Krishnan, "Historic Building Welcomes First Tenant," *Herald-Sun*, June 25, 2004.

[51] Ronnie Glassberg, "City Eyes First Tax Hike in Six Years; Officials Say American Tobacco, Downtown Plans Would Benefit," *Herald-Sun*, May 5, 2000; Ben Evans, "American Tobacco Hits New Hurdle," *Herald-Sun*, July 4, 2002; Ronnie Glassberg, "American Tobacco Factory is Named Historic Place," *Herald-Sun*, November 9, 2000. Apparently, the building was supposed to be added to the Register in the 1980s, but American Tobacco withdrew the request.

analysts predicted $1.65 million in property tax revenue from the project. A new 440,000-gallon water feature known as Bull River flowed through the campus. The Lucky Strike logos on the smokestack and water tower symbolized "a time when some of the world's most famous advertising was created for Durham-made products."[52] The preservation of the building's brick warehouse architecture, the river, and the artwork were symbolic of Durham's prominence in the South as a tobacco town. The project received national attention; developers in Boston and Philadelphia contacted Downtown Durham, Inc., in order to learn more about the project. While not the first adaptive reuse project in Durham, it was the largest historical renovation in the state at the time.[53]

As the plan unfolded, boosters claimed that the American Tobacco project would promote economic development, historic preservation, arts and culture, and city growth. Gone was the rhetoric of a "shrine" to the great men of Durham's past. Most of the newspapers emphasized the project's economic value. Although not explicitly stated, the fact remained that unlike the Duke Homestead that first passed through the hands of a few wealthy influential people, the American Tobacco project required public support. That is, power relations certainly influenced who had the final say in the project, but public votes and editorial forums in the newspapers ensured that this was a city project. The unanimous city and county vote demonstrated that the local governments were committed to downtown revitalization. After the August 5, 2002 vote, City Councilman Howard Clement told the *Durham Herald-Sun*, "In my twenty years of service to this community, serving on this council, I don't recall having ever considered a proposal as promising as this one for revitalizing downtown Durham." Dozens of

[52] See Figure 5.
[53] Ben Evans, "City, County Rally around American Tobacco Plan," *Herald-Sun*, August 6, 2002; Claudia Assis, "American Tobacco Project Lights Up," *Herald-Sun*, August 27, 2002; Durham Convention and Visitors Bureau, *Downtown Durham Walking Tour* (Durham: Durham Convention and Visitors Bureau, 2004), North Carolina Collection; "Truly Historic Projects," letter to the editor, *Herald-Sun*, February 23, 2005.

concerned citizens attended the meetings and showed their support by wearing yellow tags that read "American Tobacco – Make It Happen." In an August 4, 2002 editorial in the *Herald-Sun,* Chamber of Commerce VP of Economic Development Ted Conner claimed the city was on the verge of great downtown growth if stakeholders could agree on a public-private partnership. Attracting varied users, the American Tobacco project was going to be "the catalyst for making downtown Durham a unique destination in the Triangle." Conner viewed American Tobacco as key to a healthy downtown, which in turn was the face of the community and the core of its identity. [54]

Furthermore, the proposal brought together groups of different races from the Durham community. Members of the Renaissance Group, self-described as "a diverse group of twenty-four Durham residents who care deeply about Durham," expressed support for the project in a newspaper editorial. The group was formed in 1996 as a mix of black and white business, education, and social leaders.[55] The authors of the editorial expressed the need for Durham to unite and embrace public-private investments. American Tobacco was a perfect example of the kind of "smart growth" the city needed. Citing efficient land use, good leadership, prime location, job creation, attraction of other investors, and sustainable economic and social development, American Tobacco was going to "serve as a symbol of a forward-looking Durham community."[56]

Most of the arguments in favor of the project were based on economic value. However, some groups, including the Tobacco History Corporation, had noted the complex's historic value ever since it was abandoned. In the "Editor's Note" in the Fall 1988 *Newsletter,* Guy Smith

[54] Anne F. Krishnan, "American Tobacco Touted as Catalyst," *Herald Sun,* August 27, 2002; Ben Evans, "City, County Rally around American Tobacco Plan," *Herald-Sun,* August 6, 2002.
[55] Jennifer Talhelm, "Group Forms to Help Unite Durham," *Herald-Sun*, July 27, 1997; "First Union Wagers Big Bet on McConnell," *Triangle Business Journal*, May 29, 2000, http://www.bizjournals.com/triangle/stories/2000/05/29/tidbits.html?page=all [accessed March 6, 2013].
[56] John Atkins and Willie Covington, "It's Time to Close American Tobacco Deal," *Herald-Sun*, June 2, 2002.

thought that past warehouse projects should be a model for future adaptive reuse, including for American Tobacco. "It would be very sad if these proud old buildings were torn down," he mused, "for they, more than anything, represent the heritage of Durham." In the same issue, an article called, "Durham's Tobacco Legacy," traced changes in the city's skyline in recent decades as commercial structures replaced or accompanied former tobacco warehouses. Some of the tobacco buildings were "victims of the increasing value of land in Durham," but "many of these buildings constructed at the turn of the century were found to be such beautiful and sturdy structures that they were adapted to other uses such as apartments and offices." Author William Holloway concluded that "although Durham's face is changing every day, it seems difficult to imagine Durham without a token of tobacco architecture. It is almost as if the builders were trying to insure immortality by constructing sturdy buildings which they knew could be used for several lifetimes." Perhaps Holloway was overly poetic, but clearly for him and presumably for others the historic value motivated his hopes for American Tobacco as much as economic considerations. Many other statements alluded to a generic heritage value, as typified in the sentiments of Mike Hill, vice president and general counsel of Capitol Broadcasting Company, who expressed in a 2007 *Triangle Real Estate* publication: "I think there is a unique character to these buildings that most people appreciate."[57]

Detractors from the project also cited economic reasons. Some doubted the development could attract enough investors willing to wait for a long-term pay off. Connor's editorial, "Next Step in Downtown Renaissance," noted hesitation on the part of the community and public officials to invest such a large sum of public funds in the project, wondering if it was worth the return. Furthermore, some feared that the development might simply take business from other

[57] Guy Smith, "Editor's Note," *Newsletter* 9 No. 4 (Fall 1988): 3; William B. Holloway, "Durham's Tobacco Legacy," *Newsletter* 9 No. 4 (Fall 1988): 5; Ashley Arnold, "Revitalizing American Tobacco," *Triangle Real Estate*, Summer 2007.

parts of town, "in effect cannibalizing one central city retail area to build up another." Representatives of Durham's Ninth Street commercial district complained that Capitol Broadcasting Company was actively trying to recruit businesses to move to American Tobacco, and letters to the editor in the *Herald-Sun* expressed disappointment at such efforts. Finally, a leader of the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People worried that a tax increase to fund the project would hurt the poor.[58]

In any case, plans for the renovation continued. Complying with Historic Landmark regulations, many project managers designed décor to reflect the warehouse architecture. Mirroring the collaboration between Duke Homestead site manager Dale Coats and former American Tobacco workers, the Historic Preservation Society of Durham mediated conversations between former American Tobacco employees and project planners to record their stories for the next occupants, although these stories are not on display for visitors to see. The conversations reflected pride in their connection with the American Tobacco Company. Just as the Homestead grounds had served as a community meeting place for Duke University groups and subsequently for all of Durham with living history and craft programs, American Tobacco Campus planners wanted the complex to be a space for community gathering, showcasing local art exhibits and offering events on the lawn.[59]

The project broke ground in the summer of 2003. Duke University president Nan Keohane spoke at the ceremony, recalling James Buchanan Duke as founder of both the university and the American Tobacco Company. Bill Shore, director of U. S. community partnerships at Glaxo, noted that his grandfather had worked in the complex, highlighting

[58] Paul Bonner, "Ninth St. Raps American Tobacco; Group Says Redevelopment Trying to Lure Its Businesses," *Herald-Sun*, September 21, 2004; "Letters to the Editor," *Herald-Sun*, September 27, 2004; "American Tobacco Project: Poor Will Benefit, Too," letter to the editor, *Herald-Sun*, June 7, 2000.
[59] Anne Krishnan, "Historic Building Welcomes First Tenant," *Herald-Sun*, June 25, 2004; Claudia Assis, "American Tobacco Project Lights Up," *Herald-Sun*, August 27, 2002.

community ties to the project. Echoing the individualistic and positivistic language used earlier in the Duke Homestead narrative, Jim Goodmon was quoted as saying, "I've always believed you can do anything you want to do if you stick with it and if you work on partnerships." In June of 2004, the first tenants of the new American Tobacco Campus, Glaxo employees, moved in. An article in the *Herald-Sun* highlighted community involvement and the legacy of American Tobacco. The father and grandmother of Sue Wallace, a Glaxo employee in the new offices, had both worked for American Tobacco in the complex. The American Tobacco Campus, while not the first renovation project of tobacco warehouses, was a catalyst for stalled downtown development and a model in its scope and success. Durham's "residential renaissance" had been started by the American Tobacco project, as it attracted hundreds of workers to the downtown area, and other companies were able to capitalize on the project's success.[60]

The first decade of the twenty-first century saw increasing focus on arts, history, and culture in Durham as the town continued to shape its image as a post-industrial town. While seeking to become a pillar of the Triangle area, many insisted on preserving a distinct identity. The Convention and Visitors Bureau under CEO Ryan Bowman sought to "defend Durham's brand," hoping to remain distinct despite growing associations with the Triangle region.[61]

A key component of "Durham's Brand" was the tobacco industry that had been the engine of Durham's growth. The Historic Preservation Society of Durham developed tobacco

[60] Ben Evans, "Groundbreaking Brings Dream to Reality for Downtown Plan," *Herald-Sun,* June 17, 2003; David Newton, "Going All In, All Downtown: Greenfire Pumps Millions into City," *Durham News*, March 3, 2007; Nancy E. Oates, "Goin' Downtown," *Durham News*, August 12, 2006; City of Durham, *Downtown Durham Master Plan* (Durham: City of Durham, 2000) North Carolina Collection.

[61] "Talking Art and Culture," *Urban Land Institute Magazine* (March, 2005); Paul Bonner, "Bullish on Durham: Convention and Visitors Bureau Builds on City's Distinct Identity," *Herald-Sun*, February 26, 2004. The "Talking Art and Culture" article references *The Rise of the Creative Class* by Richard Florida (New York: Basic Books, 2002), a best-selling book describing the emergence of a new social class, the "creative class," who used creativity in their professions and gravitated to urban centers with vibrant technological, artistic, and diverse centers. Raleigh-Durham is high on Florida's Creativity Index. I chose to exclude Florida's theories because he comes from an economic and political standpoint rather than a historical one, and the subject quickly becomes tangential. However, his insights are relevant to Durham's fused identity as a historic and innovative place, and the marriage of urban development with historic preservation is typified in the American Tobacco Campus project.

heritage walking tours, which incorporated diverse perspectives on the industry through oral histories. As tour participants walked through warehouse districts, they heard stories not just about the Dukes, but also about the daily lives of warehousemen, auctioneers, machine operators, farmers, and children both black and white. In this narrative, the American Tobacco complex was the symbol of "transitions and community identity," as Durham transitioned from the industrial "Bull City" to the "City of Medicine."[62]

Despite extensive changes in Durham, "the tobacco story" continues to be told, and the boundaries of this heritage are widening. While the term "heritage" has multiple meanings, sometimes the word is a "euphemism for selective memory because it entails, in functional terms, what history has customarily meant in everyday practice."[63] Although the retelling of the past is necessarily selective and the tobacco industry has meant different things to different people, the incorporation of class and racial perspectives at Duke Homestead and the addition of new venues for telling the story allow a more democratic narration. While the "heritage syndrome" often remembers an idealized, clean, and non-controversial version of history, writers of Durham's tobacco heritage since the 1970s have increasingly complicated the narrative of benevolent white patrons to place other people towards the center and address more sensitive issues of class and race. As a city of the "New" South, issues of slavery and segregation need to be treated honestly. These topics have received consideration in the pages of newsletters, in thematic tours, and in some exhibits in the Tobacco Museum such as an enslaved man's role in discovering new tobacco curing methods. Residents or visitors seeking to understand Durham's identity as a Southern tobacco town now have a richer, more nuanced constellation of stories to

[62] Jim McPherson to Secretary Betty Ray McCain, March 20, 2000. Historic Sites Division Library; Historic Preservation Society of Durham, "Tobacco Tour," 2002, 1, 33.
[63] Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 625.

hear, stories that were once silenced but are now legitimized by their presence in public places claiming cultural value.

Many Southern museums have been quick to address race and class privilege in the antebellum South, but more hesitant to point out more recent manifestations of racial inequality.[64] Durham's historic sites are no exception. The homestead could do more to discuss the slaves that worked the tobacco fields before the Civil War, and the workers that were hired to work in the factories.[65] Public historians face conflicting interests from the stakeholders in the stories they tell, and while it is their duty to represent all sides, the Tobacco History Corporation brought many powerful industry voices to the table that may have sometimes made it challenging to promote serious, sometimes critical, history at the site. The American Tobacco Historic District also faces challenges from shareholders, a risk run by all historic preservationists who try to balance profit with history. Historic preservationists walk a fine line between commercial success and historic narrative, which sometimes unfortunately devolves into "heritage for sale." American Tobacco Campus contains minimal interpretation about its past, with a few blueprints and photographs on display but no text, while the website focuses on the Duke narrative.

Still, these interpretations have come far from the elevation of a single privileged white family. The Tobacco Museum contains voices of numerous post-bellum workers, and seeks to interpret the homestead as a window into the lives of other white Piedmont small farmers. The

[64] Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 318.

[65] Washington Duke purchased an enslaved black woman, Caroline, in Hillsborough for $300 in 1855 (Anderson, *A History of Durham County*, 120). On two tours that the writer took, one guide mentioned her and another did not. The website (http://www.nchistoricsites.org/duke/wduke.htm) mentions her without a name, and states that he "perform[ed] most of his duties without the benefit of slaves." The text then goes on to mention that he hired slaves; if this logic is followed, the slaves that he hired did not benefit him. Both tour guides did mention this practice. One mentioned hiring immigrants for the factories, while the other did not. As for discussing slavery in the museum, the only significant mention is an exhibit about Stephen, the slave who discovered the process of curing brightleaf tobacco. While an entire section is devoted to the accidental discovery, the fact is not discussed that the enslaver, Abijah Slade, reaped any and all rewards. However, *Gold Leaf* research articles indicate much more social and racial awareness that has been harder to incorporate into exhibits simply because of lack of funding. See Jane Ray, "Students' Research Yields Fresh Information about Caroline, Washington Duke's Slave," *Gold Leaf* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 1.

conversations about the use of the American Tobacco buildings during project development indicated a forum for debate, and the open conversation continued through interpretation offered by the Durham Preservation Society. These efforts to transform public spaces into more democratic forums, capturing the reality and complexity of individual voices often suppressed because of their race or status, can be a model for other communities seeking to fully understand and embrace their past. More diverse voices are being involved in the public spaces of Durham, and the tobacco heritage—a Southern identity—is increasingly constructed not as a monolithic story, but as a collection of many different identities that make up Durham.

Appendix

Figure 1: Map of Durham, North Carolina

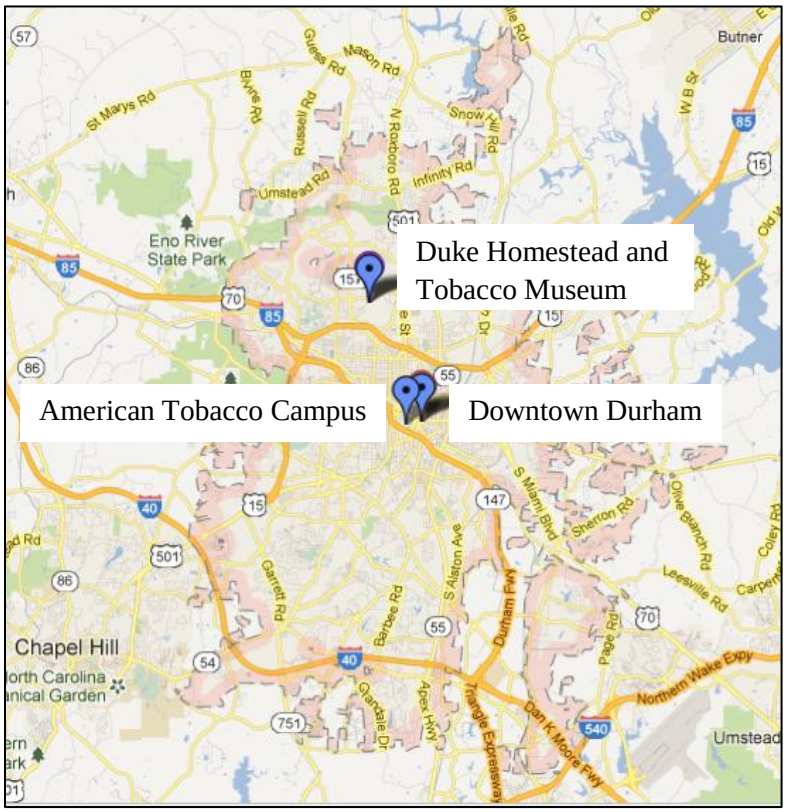

Figure 2: Map of Duke Homestead Historic Site. From Linda Funk, ed., *The Duke Homestead Guidebook* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1978), 17.

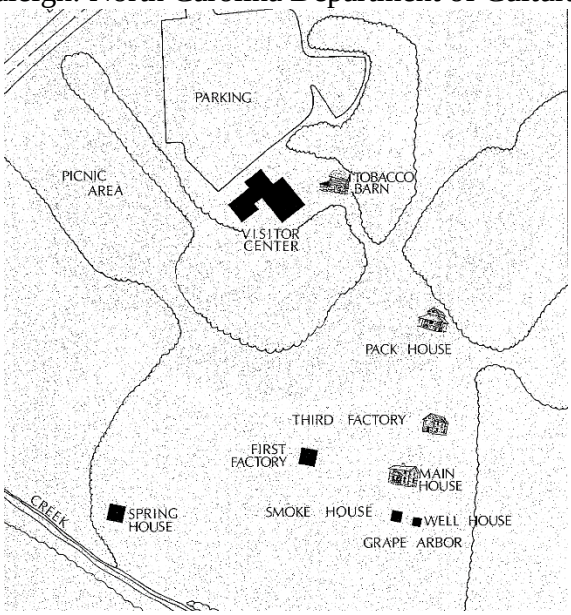

Figure 3: Duke Homestead. Courtesy of Dukehomestead.org.

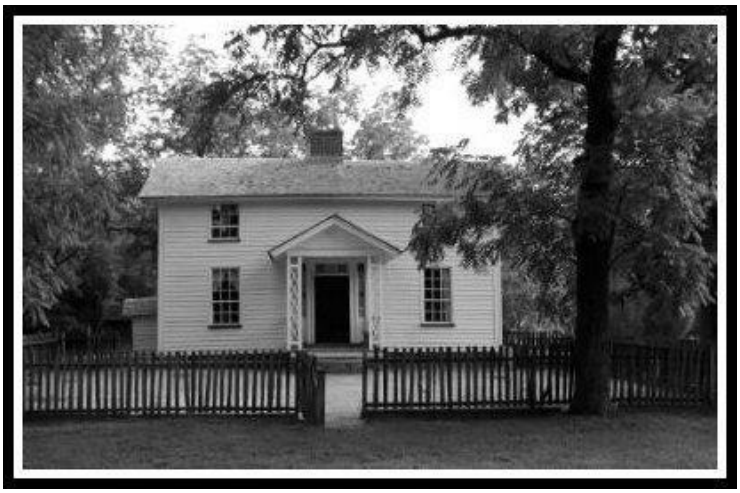

Figure 4: Map of American Tobacco warehouses, 2000. Courtesy of North Carolina Collection, Durham County Main Library, Durham, NC.

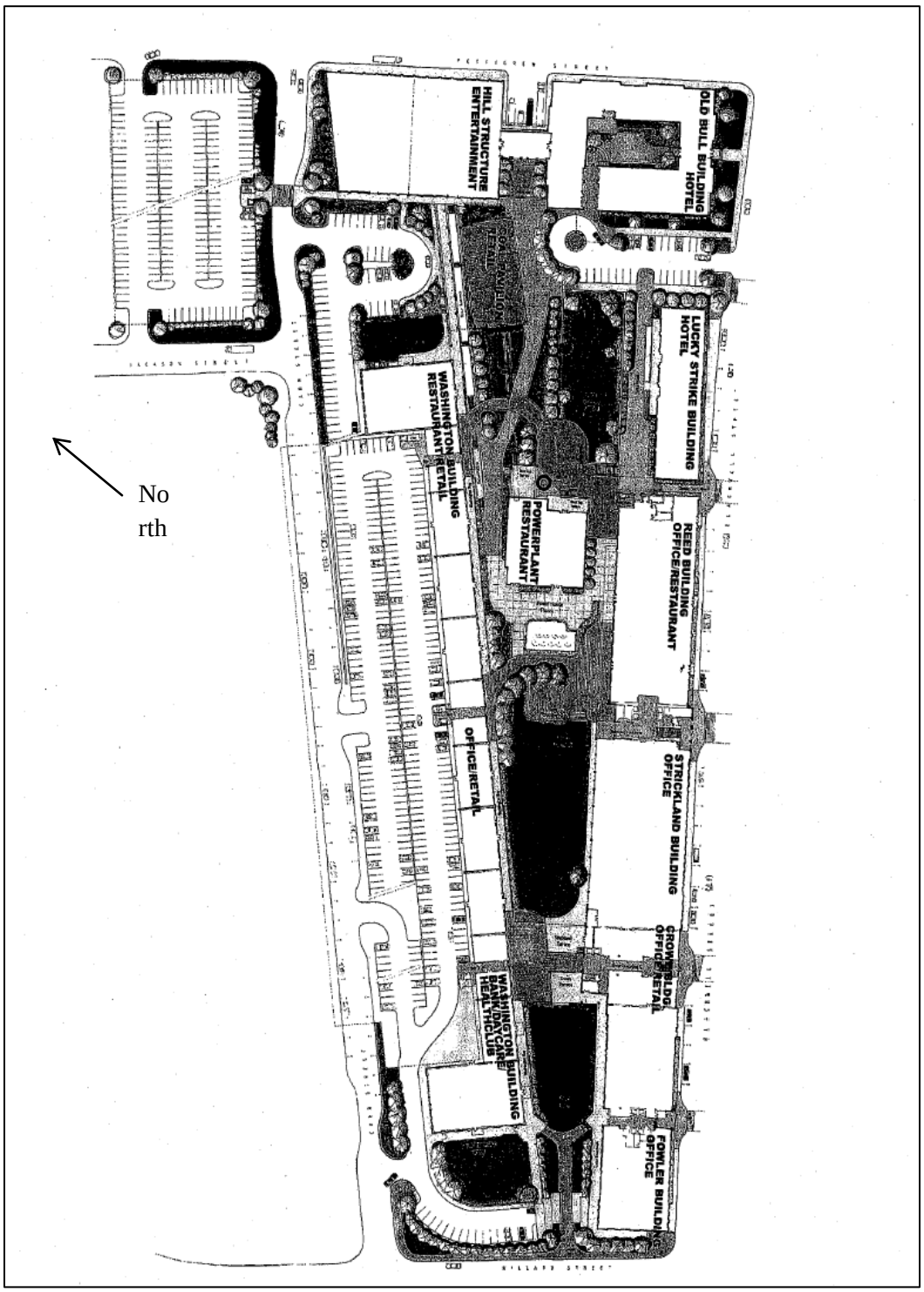

Figure 5: Smokestack and water tower at the American Tobacco Campus. Courtesy of LearnNC.org.

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