

## Chapter One: The Importance of History in Hillsborough

### *Hillsborough's Historic Identity*

Few towns in the United States have an identity that encompasses a 12,000-year span of time. Hillsborough, North Carolina is such a town. Originally the site of a series of Native American villages<sup>1</sup> (Ward and Davis 1999), it was the capital of North Carolina during the Colonial and early Federal period.<sup>2</sup>

It is now a small county seat town. Hillsborough's population of 5,535 includes black, white and Indian<sup>3</sup> families many of whom can document their ancestry back to a time before the creation of the United States. For these people, the history of Hillsborough is also the history of their families. History transmitted through family stories connects these people not only to Hillsborough, but also to the history of the country. Other families who have been in the area for many decades (even if not descended from the original settlers<sup>4</sup>) may also have stories that connect them to history. These insider families once controlled the town and defined its identity, but within the last twenty years an influx of incomers has changed the nature of the town. The recent

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<sup>1</sup> Although archaeological evidence has established the presence of Indian villages dating back to 1000 AD, Native Americans have occupied this region of the country for much longer. Local awareness of this long occupation is revealed by a sign on private property that reads "Indigenous Inhabitants ca. 10,000 BC."

<sup>2</sup> Residents of Hillsborough use the term "Colonial" to refer to both the late Colonial period (which ended at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War in 1783) and early Federal period (extending into the early 1800s). This study will follow the common local usage of the term "Colonial" which conflates these two periods of American history.

<sup>3</sup> In this study I use the terms for ethnicity that were used by my informants, with the exception of white informants who rarely referred to their own ethnicity. People of color usually referred to themselves as black or Indian, although they were careful to distinguish between the currently acceptable use of the term "black" (formerly used as an epithet) and the former polite usage of the term "colored."

<sup>4</sup> The term "settlers" can be applied to some of the black, white and Indian people who moved to the local area in the Colonial era. Whites settled both voluntarily and as indentured servants, blacks settled as slaves and as free blacks, and Indians returned to this region in the early 1700s after a forced relocation by the government to Fort Christianna, Virginia failed.

migrants create their own connection to history as they learn about the place and its past. They may connect to the historic landscape through church attendance, hobbies, or ownership of an historic home. Hillsborough, with its strong historic identity, its diverse population, and the presence of insiders and incomers with divergent views of history is an ideal location in which to examine the interconnections among people, place and history. As an incomer to Hillsborough I became intrigued by the role that history plays in Hillsborough's sense of place, and this led me to pursue the research that I report in this dissertation.

The importance of place in people's lives is a central theme of humanist geography (Wright 1947; Relph 1976; Tuan 1976; Ley and Samuels 1978; Adams, Hoelscher et al. 2001), which explores the relationships between people and place through human experience and awareness. Public discourse about Hillsborough often includes mention of its historic character and its small town charm as significant components of the sense of place. Sense of place is an experience unique to each individual, but for most people will include the visible characteristics of the town, such as the size, scale, proportions and appearance of the buildings, the vegetation in the yards and along the streets, and the spatial relationships among these elements. There are also intangible components of sense of place, some of which are revealed by the steady drum beat of vocabulary used to describe Hillsborough: historic, charming, quaint. Many of the elements of a historic sense of place that Tuan has described for Boston's Beacon Hill are also found in Hillsborough: the memorialization of time visible in architecture and monuments and celebrated in pageants and festivities, pride in heritage and significant events and people, and strong neighborhood and kinship ties (Tuan 1977). In this study I

explore changes to Hillsborough's historic sense of place, some of which can be credited to the shift in power from insiders to incomers. Members of these groups perceive place differently. Many insiders have an unself-conscious sense of place, which Relph describes as "above all that of being inside and belonging to your place both as an individual and as a member of a community, and to know this without reflecting on it." (Relph 1976, p. 65). Incomers must construct their relationship to place and time when they move to a community, and therefore their sense of place is a self-conscious one.

Hillsborough's historic identity is made immediately apparent to any visitor to the town through the multitude of historic place markers, more per capita than in any other locale in North Carolina. This identity differs from that of many other Southern towns in that is focused on the Colonial period rather than in the Civil War period. History is made visible here<sup>5</sup> through more than 100 buildings that date from the late 1700s and early 1800s. The survival of these historic buildings is in part a result of the relocation of the state capital from Hillsborough to Raleigh in 1789. With the move of the capital Hillsborough lost the central place functions related to state government. The town became a less important and eventually less prosperous place as North Carolina created a new core region centered on Raleigh and Hillsborough was left on the periphery. In prosperous times it is possible to tear down outdated buildings and replace them, whereas in hard times they are more likely to be preserved, as happened here.

Unlike Colonial Williamsburg, which attempts to depict historic buildings frozen in a moment in time, historic structures in Hillsborough are part of the contemporary landscape and are used as businesses, government buildings, churches and private

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<sup>5</sup> As a resident of Hillsborough who is writing from, about and for the town, I refer to Hillsborough as "here" throughout this document.

residences. The visitor with a trained eye for architecture will appreciate the careful preservation and restoration of many of these historic buildings, including the Town Hall and adjacent Town Barn where public meetings are held. The reiteration of the town's official designation as "Historic Hillsborough" on signage, in press releases from civic groups, and in local media coverage reinforces the town's historic identity.

The historic landscape was also preserved by the fact that commercial development after WWII took place across the river from the historic district. The shift to a mass automobile culture devastated many small downtown business districts across America as businesses relocated along the new highways constructed in the postwar era (which were often outside of the boundaries of the nearby towns) and as shoppers with automobiles favored businesses with ample parking. Development of the Daniel Boone shopping district<sup>6</sup> took place before highway access reached Hillsborough<sup>7</sup> however (see Map 1, page 5). The strip mall landscape is within the town boundaries (and thus is part of its tax base). The older downtown area did have to adjust to the new retail landscape, and lost its grocery and clothing stores, but these were replaced with antique and specialty shops that serve the tourists, and with restaurants that serve both tourists and the courthouse crowds. A few shops remain that remind residents and visitors alike of a time when shopping took place in towns rather than malls: Dual Supply is a classic small-town hardware store, and across the street from it are a bait and tackle shop and a locally owned pharmacy.

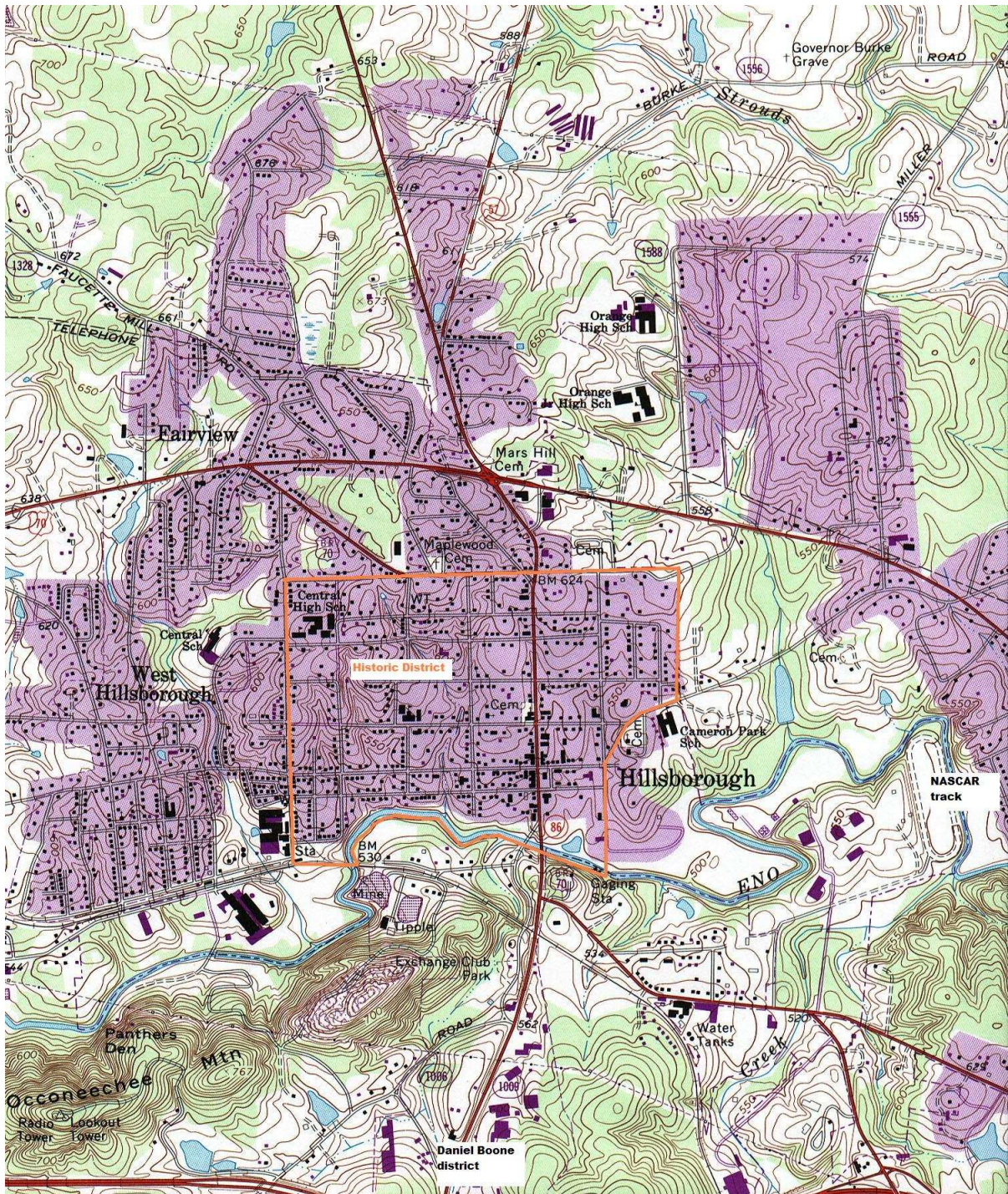
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<sup>6</sup> I use the phrase "Daniel Boone shopping district" to indicate the strip malls on either side of State Route 86 on the southern approach to Hillsborough. This area includes Daniel Boone Village, Boone Square and Churton Commons.

<sup>7</sup> Interstate 85 was completed through Hillsborough in 1960 and Interstate 40 in 1988.

The Daniel Boone shopping district includes car dealerships, drug stores, grocery stores, fast food restaurants, drive-through banking, dry cleaners, and all of the other necessary services for modern American life. Even our strip mall landscape contains numerous visual references to the past, from a giant statue of Daniel Boone at the entrance, to the log cabin now housing a cigarette shop, to the Big Barn conference center that actually is an old barn, to the electric street lights along Freeland Drive that are shaped like gas lamps. As corporate identities are increasingly branded onto America's shopping landscapes, the





Map 1: Topographic Map of Hillsborough. (United States Geological Survey 1994)

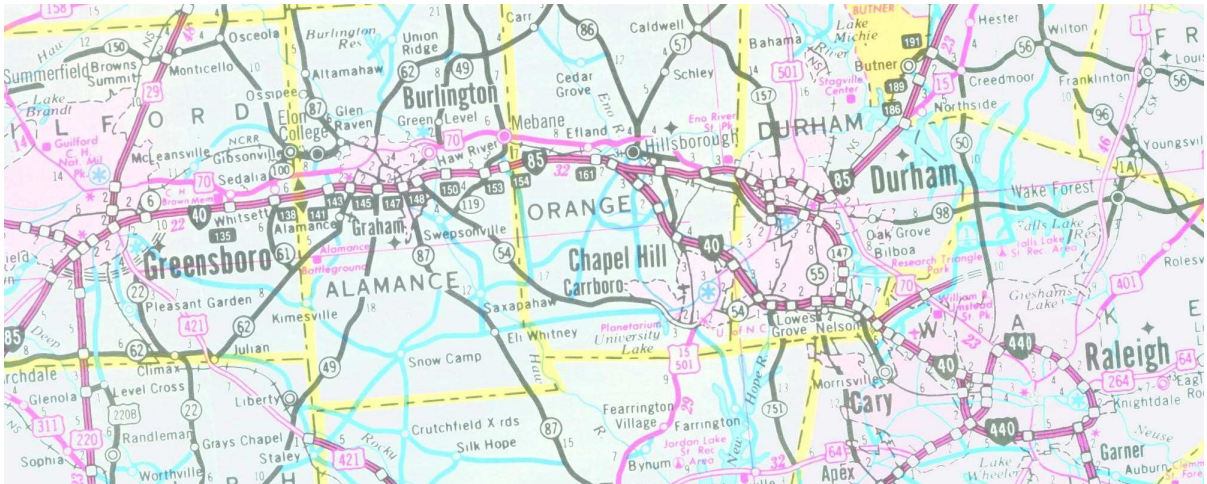
Daniel Boone district retains a quirky and distinctive character with references to local history, and with local ownership of both the mall and many of the shops. One result of



the timing of the development of the original portion of the Daniel Boone area is that although a separate strip mall landscape was created it is both connected to the original business district (both are located on Churton Street) and is separated from it by the low-lying area that includes the railroad tracks and the Eno River which creates a buffer between these service functions and the historic portion of the town.

### ***An Authentic Place Surrounded by Placelessness***

Hillsborough was formerly a textile mill town, but as the mills closed it has increasingly taken on the characteristics of a bedroom community. Situated on I-85 and near I-40, it is within commuting distance of Raleigh and Research Triangle Park to the east and Greensboro and the Triad to the west (see Map 2 below). Hillsborough is located within North Carolina's Piedmont Urban Crescent, which has experienced explosive population growth over the last twenty years. As population in the region has increased, the resulting new subdivisions, strip malls and enclosed malls, fast food restaurants and the complete domination of the automobile as a mode of travel have resulted in an increasingly generic landscape. Embedded within this landscape, however, are remnants of an older Southern culture. Small towns with distinctive and functioning downtowns, tree-shaded sidewalks, homes with porches (and people sitting on them, people who know their neighbors and their neighbors' kinship lines) are increasingly valued as dissatisfaction with the placelessness of modern life increases. Hillsborough, North Carolina is such a small town, where the scale and structures of the town create the visual impression that life in Hillsborough confers membership in a community.



Map 2: Location of Hillsborough, Interstate 85 and Interstate 40 (North Carolina Department of Transportation 2000)

During recent decades while neighboring towns and cities were experiencing rapid population growth and the mushrooming of suburban developments, Hillsborough's growth was hampered by the lack of adequate water supply and treatment. It is precisely this lack of growth that helped to preserve historic spaces and places. Suburban developments are now springing up on the outskirts of town, watered by a new reservoir. Debate about the future character and volume of growth is taking place within the context of awareness of the negative effects of rapid growth on the appearance and character of other cities and towns in the region. For people who dislike the increasing placelessness of the surrounding region, Hillsborough provides an attractive alternative, a location with authentic characteristics that represent place and time. Preservation of this historic character is often cited as a valuable goal, intimately associated with quality of life here.

### ***Personal Relationship to History and Place***

History is not only central to Hillsborough's identity, but it also frames many of the economic, social and political activities in the town. Town leaders have actively



developed heritage tourism activities, and many of these activities also enhance the quality of life for the residents. Arts and music events often have historic themes, and annual tours of historic gardens and buildings draw many tourists from the surrounding region. In fact, the town has profited from heritage tourism since long before the phrase was coined and local leaders credit some of the town's current success with the fact that tourists have been making pilgrimages to the town's historic sites<sup>8</sup> since at least the 1950s. The evolving role of history in the life of the town is the subject of Chapter 4. In this section I introduce two of the major themes of this dissertation: the role of history in individual relationship to place, and the way that history is used by individuals in their collective actions in the landscape.

Awareness of history in the landscape is very personal and idiosyncratic. Each person observes and consciously notices some features, is unconsciously aware of some, and ignores others. This awareness changes not only from place to place, but also from moment to moment, and is also susceptible to change through experience over longer spans of time. There are aspects of the historic landscape that are visible and obvious to anyone, including historical markers on the road sides, and date signs on buildings. These serve to instruct the viewer on what is valuable (to those who created the markers or signs) and how to assess the age. Some aspects of the historic landscape can only be read by the architectural cognoscenti, such as vernacular architectural styles. And the meaning of some features are obvious only to those who know the history of the town, such as the fact that St. Mary's Road was a route on the Indian trading paths.

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<sup>8</sup> One site of enduring interest is the grave of William Hooper, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

The longer the time period that one associates with a place, the more meaning can be found, and this includes both the length of time within one's lifetime, and the length of time that one's ancestors have been in association with the place. For example, the Burwell School was one of the first buildings that I visited as a tourist, prior to my move to Hillsborough, and I learned that it was a Presbyterian school for girls in the mid-1800s. As a lapsed Presbyterian I have always taken pride in the church's positive attitude towards the education of women in that period. This played a role in my decision to use the grounds as a wedding site. I was moving to the hometown of my husband and had very few connections of my own to the town. The Presbyterian history of the site was meaningful to me—the Burwell School was more than just an attractive location for an outdoor wedding. The memories of the wedding became embedded for me in the site. On a later visit to the Burwell School<sup>9</sup> I learned that the slave Elizabeth Keckley who once worked there later worked for and befriended for Mary Todd Lincoln. The formerly hidden history of African-Americans in Hillsborough continued to emerge at this specific site, as a troupe of re-enactors presented a moving and controversial performance during the Christmas Candlelight Tour in 2001 (described in Chapter 4). Most recently, a wood fence was constructed in front of the Burwell School of wood from an ancient oak at the former slave cemetery. The style of the fence recalls the time period when the school was in operation, but also calls forth memories of the tree itself, both standing above the cemetery in its glory and felled by a violent storm, and further relates to the African-American history of the town and the

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<sup>9</sup>The visit was part of Alice Eley Jones' African-American History Tour, a Duke University continuing education course held in the fall semester, 2000.

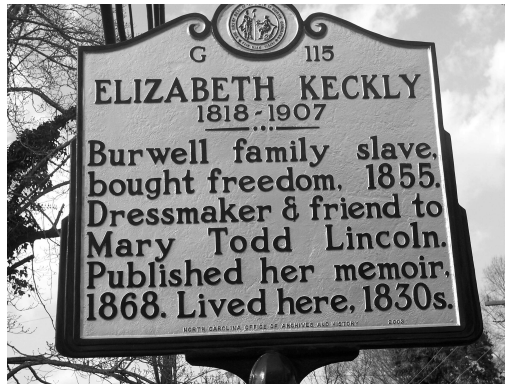


Figure 1: Elizabeth Keckly Historic Marker. (Photo: Cheryl D. Warren, 2005)

shameful past of slavery. Therefore, the Burwell School has become a focal point for me to reflect upon the emergence of the history of the contributions of African-Americans to the town. The recent addition of an historic marker (Figure 1, p. 9) commemorating Keckly's life now makes a small portion of this history visible to even the casual visitor, but for me the layers of meaning accreted in place over time.

History also plays a role in the personal identity of individuals. Indians who participated in this study described the processes through which their own awareness of their Indian identity was deepened as the tribe researched its history to support a bid for state recognition (described in Chapter 7). Black residents,<sup>10</sup> all of whom reported a multi-ethnic ancestry, reflected on their black, white and Indian ancestors' contributions to the town. Descendants of some of the earliest white families to settle in the region used the term "we" to describe the creation of not only the town, but also the creation of the nation, indicating an identification with the contributions of family members many generations in the past. Some informants took personal credit for landmark events in American history, either on the basis of their own participation (the integration of the

<sup>10</sup> Black and Indian identity overlap, as will be shown in Chapter 7.

schools) or the participation of their ancestors (the fight for the Bill of Rights). More recent incomers to the town connect their own identity to history through the ownership of an historic home, or through building a new house modeled on an historic home. Others incorporate Hillsborough's history into their own identity as they learn about the town's history, speaking of "we" as they describe events that took place when their own ancestors lived elsewhere.

History is used by developers, who give their subdivisions names that refer to local history (Cornwallis Hills, Churton Grove) and who choose architectural styles which include elements from the past. Sidewalks line the streets of some of these developments, and most of the homes are equipped with front porches. Both of these are anachronisms in an era where life takes place inside a heated and air conditioned home or at the other end of an automobile trip. A drive through one of these developments usually reveals nobody walking on the sidewalks or sitting on the porches.

### ***Bypass and Big Box: The Uses of History***

In later chapters I examine the role that history plays in the personal connections that individuals make to place (Chapter 5), and the ways in which collective actions of defense and maintenance of the historic landscape arise from these personal connections (Chapter 6). In this section, however, I illustrate the importance of history in the political and economic arenas through an examination of two related controversies: the location of a proposed bypass, and the creation of a big box retail project.<sup>11</sup> Both the proponents and opponents of these projects referred to the historic identity of the town to bolster their arguments.

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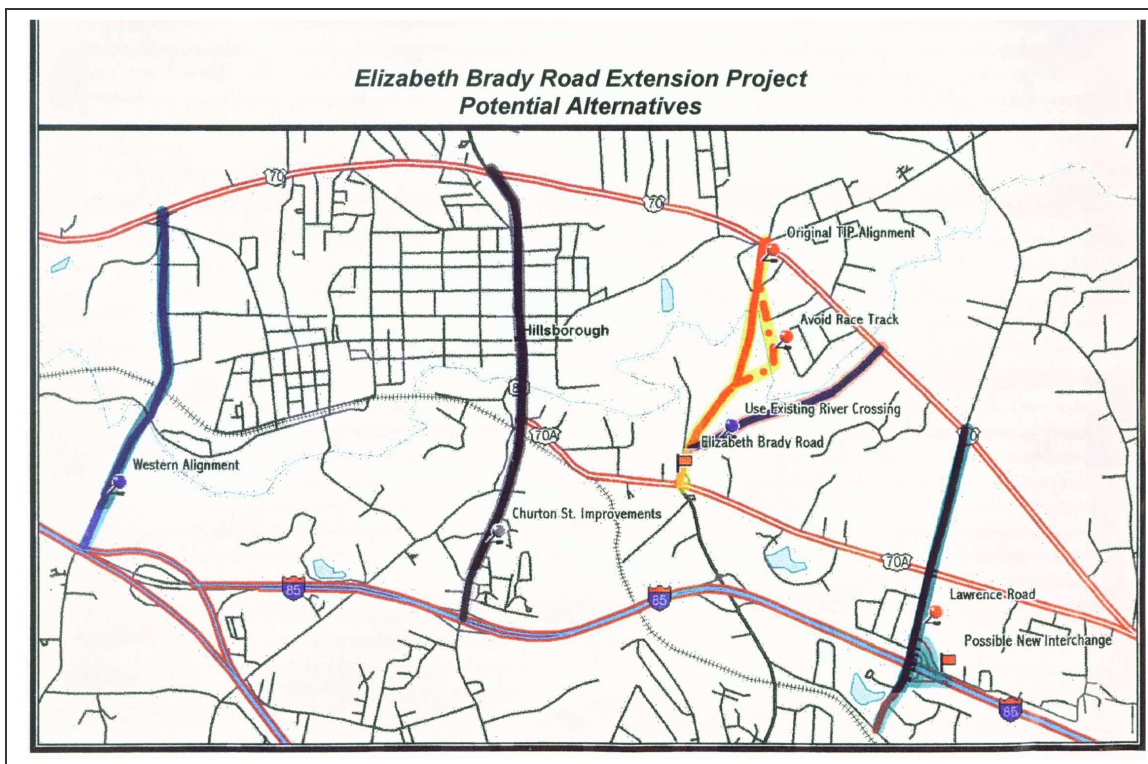
<sup>11</sup> The term "big box" refers to the size and shape of major retail projects such as very large chain discount or home improvement stores.



One of the most contentious issues over the last two decades has been the debate about the need for a bypass around Hillsborough. State Route 86 follows Churton Street, which is Hillsborough's "Main Street" (see Map 1, page 5). Route 86 is a north-south artery through the Piedmont of North Carolina and Virginia. Until 1996 18-wheel transport trucks rumbled right through the downtown business district. During the lengthy battle between the town government and the state Department of Transportation (DOT), one of the arguments made by town leaders in favor of a bypass was that the pollution and vibrations from these trucks were damaging the historic buildings on Churton Street. An alternate truck route has now been designated, and the large trucks no longer take the route through downtown on their way to and from Danville, Virginia, but an increase in commuter traffic now slows travel through town to a crawl during morning and evening "rush hour" and discussion of the need for a bypass continues.

The current consensus of opinion is that a bypass is still needed, although some residents of the rural northern part of the county object to any bypass, predicting that if a bypass is built it will encourage rapid suburban growth to the north, degrade their quality of life, and result in even more traffic. At the moment this is a minority opinion, and DOT has held a series of public meetings to explore the possible routes that a bypass could follow. All are controversial, but it is not my purpose here to examine all of the issues in the debate about the location of the proposed bypass. Rather, I examine the ways in which values and attitudes about the historic landscape have buttressed arguments in support of or in opposition to the proposed route which would follow Elizabeth Brady Road, and the way in which this proposed route is tied to larger issues in this part of Hillsborough's historic landscape.


The map of Hillsborough reveals the proximity of two very different landscapes, although to anyone traveling the current roads their close proximity is not apparent because no bridge crosses the Eno River to connect them. One of them is a landscape common to interstate highway off-ramps (south of Route 70 on Map 3, page 13). Exit 165 from I-85 leads to three gas stations, a nascent industrial area, a boat dealer, some abandoned buildings, and the local massage parlor (“Esquire Health Club, Open 24hours, All Girl Staff”). Adjacent these eyesores is a group of properties owned by Classical American Homes Preservation Trust (CAHPT)<sup>12</sup> that includes Ayr Mount, a large and



well-preserved farmhouse built in the late 1700s; several archeological sites of a Native American village, which date from the late prehistoric through the contact periods; and one of the first

<sup>12</sup> Classic American Homes Preservation Trust is a foundation that was created by Richard Jenrette to maintain the historic houses that he owns in perpetuity after his eventual death. (Brown, E., 2004)

Map 3: Proposed Route of Elizabeth Brady Road Bypass (North Carolina Department of Transportation 2004, Transportation Improvement Project No. U-3808)

NASCAR dirt track speedways<sup>13</sup> (see Map 1, page 5), now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. CAHPT has opposed the Brady  bypass which would connect these two landscapes. CAHPT purchased the speedway property in 1997, and it immediately became a weapon in the battle against the Brady site for the bypass. It was widely recognized that CAHPT's bid for National Register status for the speedway would almost certainly block the Brady bypass, and would create a buffer for the Ayr Mount and Indian village sites.

The addition of the NASCAR dirt track to sites considered "historic" in Hillsborough was controversial, and serves to illustrate the changing relationships among history, the citizens and the town (the subject of Chapter 4). Although NASCAR's appeal has broadened considerably over time, its roots can be found among working class Southerners. The noise and dust and drinking and rowdy behavior that accompanied NASCAR dirt track racing created opposition to the track among those residents who were not stock car racing fans. This track eventually became obsolete when newer, faster race cars could not negotiate it safely. NASCAR considered Hillsborough as a site for a new speedway (eventually built at Talladega, Alabama) but the town opposed it.

The class of people to whom the site is important has changed. Originally valued by working class Southerners for its entertainment value, it is now valued by well-educated and prosperous incomers, to whom it has become part of the mythology of Hillsborough's past. It is likely that this prosperous group does not attend races at the

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<sup>13</sup> The Oconeechee Orange Speedway was in operation from 1949 to 1968.

current Orange County Speedway, and if they had lived in Hillsborough when the track was in operation, they would have been just as distressed by the noise and dust and general rowdiness that offended many of the residents of Hillsborough at the time.

Applications for National Register Historic Site status has to be forwarded by the municipality to the state and this required public hearings. Opposition to the application came from people who support the Elizabeth Brady Road bypass, and who felt that if the NASCAR track was placed on the National Register, that this might cause the DOT to choose another site for the bypass, further delaying the process. These fears proved to be justified. After years of tortuous discussion and negotiations within the town and between the town and the DOT, the issue of the bypass location remains unresolved.

The Brady Road bypass, if constructed, would lead directly to another controversial site immediately adjacent to the I-85 and Route 86 interchange. A proposal to develop a big box retail project led to vigorous public debate, some of which made reference to Hillsborough's historic landscape. Arguments for the development, which was designed to include a large Wal-Mart store and a major home improvement supplier such as Lowe's or Home Depot, included the additional tax revenues and additional jobs. Arguments against it included the negative impact on the small businesses downtown, the fact that jobs created would be low paying jobs, and the additional traffic burdens. The Historic District Commission opposed it on the basis that it was not in keeping with the size or scale of other structures in the town. One citizen spoke up at a public meeting to say that "there's something deeply hypocritical about people who want to restore historic homes but don't want the stores that sell the goods to restore those homes... It's like someone who likes a good tasty barbecue sandwich but is opposed to killing hogs"



(reported in the Chapel Hill Herald, July 27, 2001). In Chapter 6 I examine the role of the Historic District Commission in the maintenance and defense of Hillsborough's historic landscape. The site of the big box project is not in the historic district and therefore their role in this controversy was advisory only. Their arguments may have influenced the final outcome, however, which saw approval of a smaller version of the original project.

### ***Introduction to the study***

My original interest in Hillsborough as a study site pre-dates my residential move here. In the late 1980s I began to investigate Hillsborough's emerging landscape of heritage tourism. Following the participant-observer model, I attended meetings of Hillsborough's Tourism Council and assisted with event planning and presentation, serving as docent in the Alexander Dickson House during the Christmas Tour in 1988. I moved to Hillsborough in 1989 following marriage to a Hillsborough native. In 1990 a long illness interrupted the planned study of the heritage tourism landscape, and for the next ten years I became more of an observer than participant in local events. During this time I continued to follow media coverage of local events and to participate in conversations in which people discussed Hillsborough's sense of place. As a geographer living in this community, I was intrigued by the strong positive feelings towards this place that people, both insiders and incomers, reveal in their conversations. What was it, I wondered, that connects people to this place? One common thread was the value that people place on the town's history.

To discover the relationships among people, place and history I used a naturalistic method of inquiry (described in Chapter 3) in which the words and actions of the

informants of the study formed the data that I then analyzed. Following this model requires that the investigator begin with broad, open-ended questions and let the information that emerges drive the refinement of the research questions. The question that I used to describe the study to the informants was: How does history connect people to place? This immediately raises three further questions: What are the characteristics of the people who feel connected to the place? What is the nature of the place to which they feel attachment? What history links them to the place? All three of these factors have changed significantly in the time period discussed by the insider informants, roughly 1950 to the present. Consideration of these changes became important to the research.

History plays a large role in the interrelationships between people and place in Hillsborough and in this study I set out to discover how history connects people to place here. The relationship of people and place includes the way that people conceive of history, the value and meaning they attach to their perceptions of history and the role that this plays in their connection to place. Components of the relationship between history, place and an individual may include family history, knowledge of local, regional, national and global history, recent events or events long ago. These events can be actual events that have been documented, or they may be part of the local folklore and resist documentation. For example, a giant statue of Daniel Boone stands in the strip mall area named for him, although there is no documentary evidence that Daniel Boone was ever in Hillsborough. But as the late Clarence Jones, town historian, once explained to me, there is no documentary evidence that proves that Daniel Boone did not visit Hillsborough either. In this study I do not make a distinction between real and imagined history, or between history and myth. These distinctions are unimportant when considering the way

that individuals form connections to place through their own relationship to history. As Tuan has observed, “authenticity matters little” as citizens read the historical landscape. “What is needed is a sign to stimulate the imagination: the sign itself does not have to be an authentic artifact” (Tuan 1978, p. 16). Hillsborough, with history as the central component of its sense of place, and with its diverse population, is an ideal place in which to study the way that history connects people to place.

Hillsborough’s diversity includes more than just ethnic diversity. The town is home to blue collar workers and academics, to local farming families and technocrats, to writers, artists, and entrepreneurs. This diversity contributes to Hillsborough’s sense of place. Insiders perceive the increasing diversity of Hillsborough through the fact that they no longer recognize many of the people they pass as they walk through town. Insiders can spot the incomers precisely because all of the other insiders are known to them. Incomers cannot distinguish between insiders and other incomers in this manner, but there are other visual cues to the town’s diversity: the range of vehicles from trucks to Jaguars, the range of clothing styles from bib overalls to contemporary fashions. Conducting this research in Hillsborough presents an opportunity to discover the relationship between history, people, and place for a remarkably diverse group of individuals.

Another advantage is that the scale of the town is appropriate to this pursuit: the town is large enough to have several distinctive landscapes with differing relationships to history, and at the same time it is small enough that the contribution of all of the parts to the whole can be understood. For example, I asked one of the informants of this study which of the historic homes were still in the hands of the families who had built them.

She knows where all of the significant historic properties in town are, she knows who lives in them now, and she knows which families have histories that extend back to the Colonial period. This depth of knowledge would not be possible in a major city such as Baltimore, my former place of residence.

Not only is Hillsborough an ideal place to study these questions, but my personal characteristics and family relationships also place me in an advantageous position to address them. As a resident of Hillsborough I am a participant-observer in community life. I have lived here for fifteen years, long enough to know how the town functions and what the important issues are. My position is that of “resident alien” (Hauerwas and Willimon 1989): I bring an outsider’s perspective to my understanding of the place, but through marriage into a local family I have access to the insider’s perspective. I will never have the same relationship to place that an insider born and raised here will have, but I hear the stories that insiders tell and observe the network of social relationships in which they are embedded.

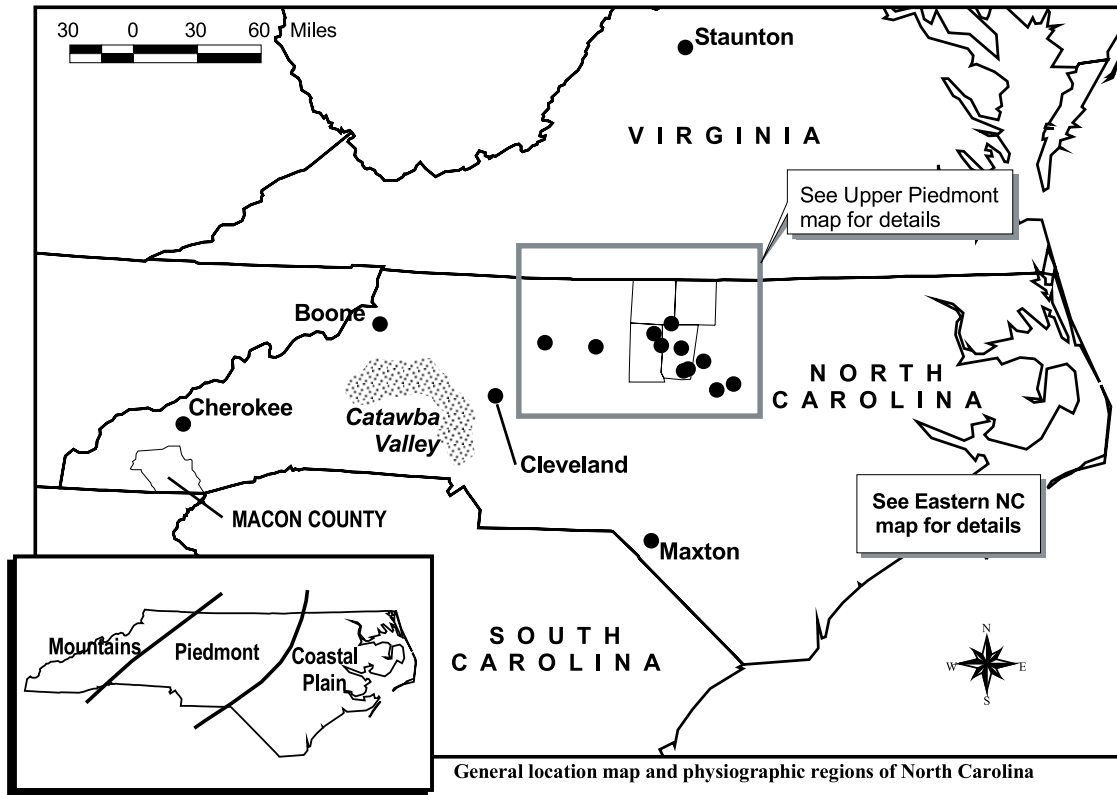
The relationships between people and place can best be explored in two ways: by talking to people and listening both to what they say and what they do not say; and by observing their actions in the landscape. Only through talking and listening can one examine individual perceptions, and discover individual internal life-worlds. To discover the means by which the historic landscape is maintained and defended I attended meetings of Hillsborough’s Historic District Commission. To discover how history connects people to place I used an ethnographic approach. I interviewed 32 people, singly and in small groups, in their homes or mine, or by walking and driving around historic sites. The interview questions were designed to elicit each person’s interest in



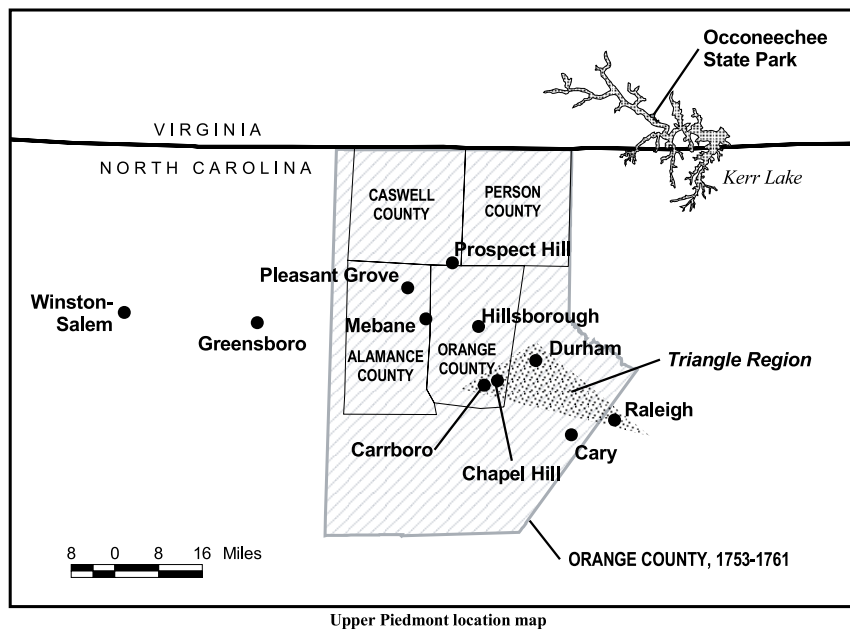
history, length of time of association with Hillsborough, and opinions about the person's sense of history and connection to place. (See Chapter 3, Methodology, and Appendix A which includes the interview questions.) With the goal of including many different voices and perspectives, I interviewed people from the three major ethnic communities (black, white, Indian) whose personal or family connections to Hillsborough spanned a continuum of time. The versions of history perceived by different groups of people all contribute to Hillsborough's historic identity. Hillsborough therefore provides a laboratory in which to examine the role of history in fostering a sense of place, and in the way that history mediates the connection between people and place.

### ***Locations discussed by the study informants***

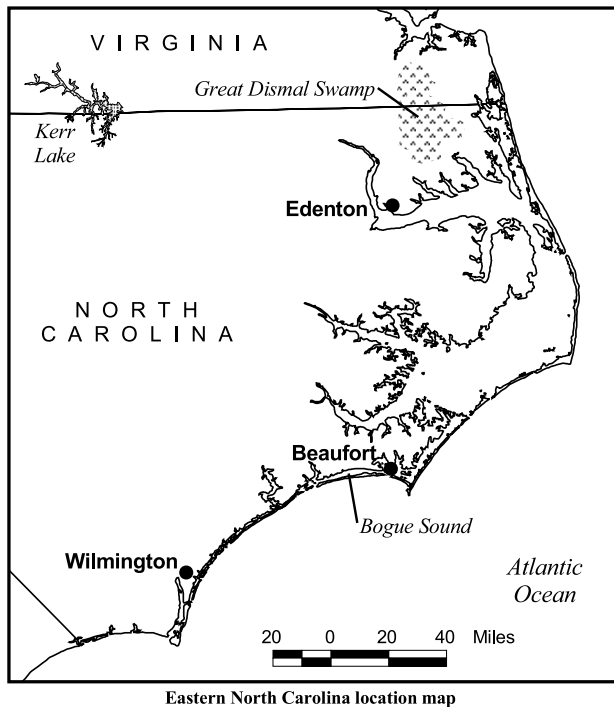
The informants of this study, both insiders and incomers, often discussed Hillsborough by comparing it to other places. For some of them, their own place of origin provided an important reference point. These maps include the locations mentioned by the informants.



Map 4: Locations in North Carolina and Virginia. (Cartography by G. Rebecca Dobbs, 2005)



Map 5: Locations in the Upper Piedmont Region of North Carolina. (Cartography by G. Rebecca Dobbs, 2005).



Map 6: Locations in Eastern North Carolina. (Cartography by G. Rebecca Dobbs, 2005)

### ***Local Lessons for the Global World***

The processes taking place within Hillsborough are also occurring in other places throughout the world. Globalization and time-space convergence have brought the wider world to small places that formerly functioned within a local or regional context. Many of these small places have received an influx of incomers with different values and different perspectives on place. Multinational corporations increasingly control the commercial landscape and threaten the existence of local businesses. These forces are at work in major cities too, of course, but as Grady Clay has observed “the slower pace and lessened intensity of events in small towns, dead ends, quiet hamlets and placid

backwaters offer(s) endless occasions to see the bigger picture writ small, the larger problem in the bare-minimum version" (Clay 1987, p. 14).

The connections among history, people and place influence the decisions that people make about actions in the landscape. An examination of these connections will illuminate the complex web of social, economic and political interests within Hillsborough. This does not mean that a study of the sense of history is the only way to examine the interplay of these interests, but in Hillsborough this sense of history provides a common thread running through many aspects of the life of the town and its people. Thus the study provides a lens to examine the way a community functions.

As globalization creates an increasingly generic and placeless landscape, those characteristics that give local places a unique and distinctive sense of place are increasingly valued. As connection to place erodes in generic places, a close look at a small distinctive community provides the opportunity to examine the relationship between people and place. How does this connection arise, or how is it created? What are the implications for the community if its members feel a sense of connection to the place? Connected people strengthen communities, and a strong sense of place contributes to a feeling of connectedness. Knowing how people connect to their places holds significance for anyone who strives to improve communities, such as geographers, planners, policy makers, or community activists.

## ***Conclusion***

Hillsborough's people are diverse in income, class, ethnic identity, religion, place of origin, education, and other ways. In this study their voices tell us how history connects them to this place. The conversations we had allow me to tell a story about

Hillsborough that illustrates the role of history in the life of the town and in the way it connects people to place. It is not a complete story, and it is not the only story that could be told. It is my own interpretation of the stories that have been told to me by the people who were kind enough to share their views during this study. It is my hope that those who participated and who read this study will find it a fair and credible representation of Hillsborough.