



1792-2018

A Study of the
Historic Context +
Physical Evolution of

Nash Square



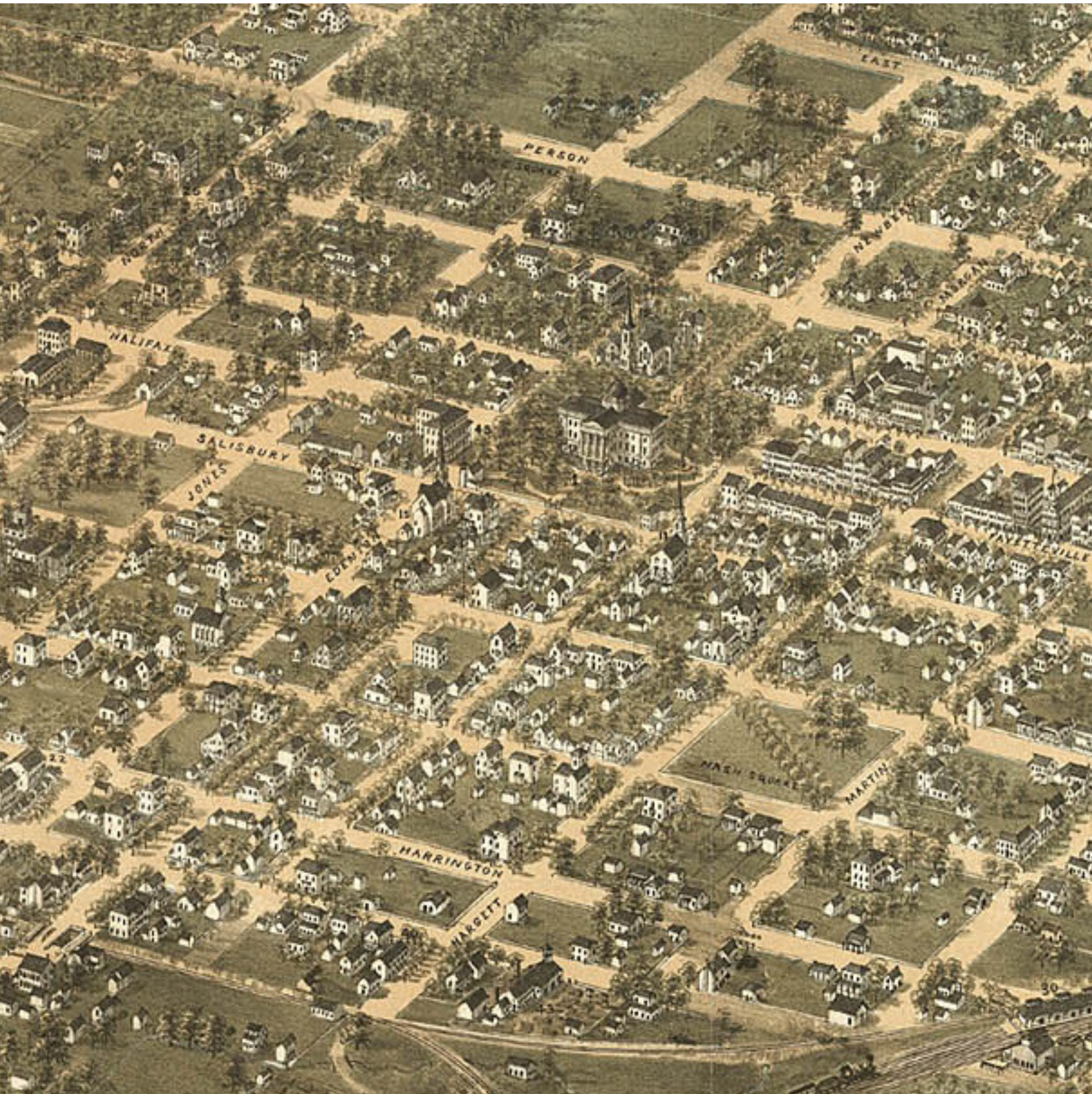
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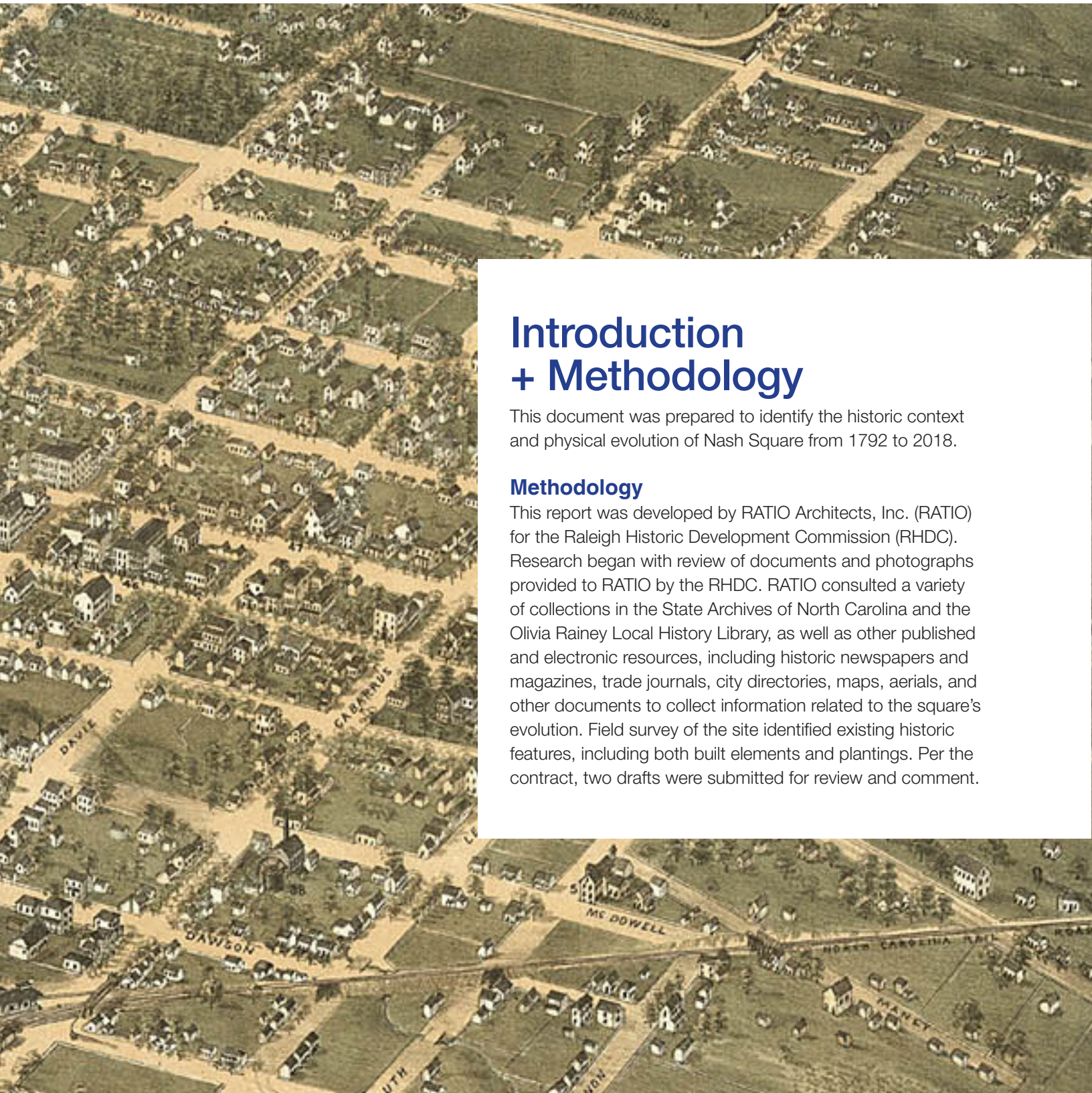
RATIO

Prepared by RATIO for the City of Raleigh
& the Raleigh Historic Development Commission

Final Report: April 2018



C. N. Drie, Bird's eye view of the city of Raleigh, North Carolina. Raleigh, 1872 (Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/75694901/>)



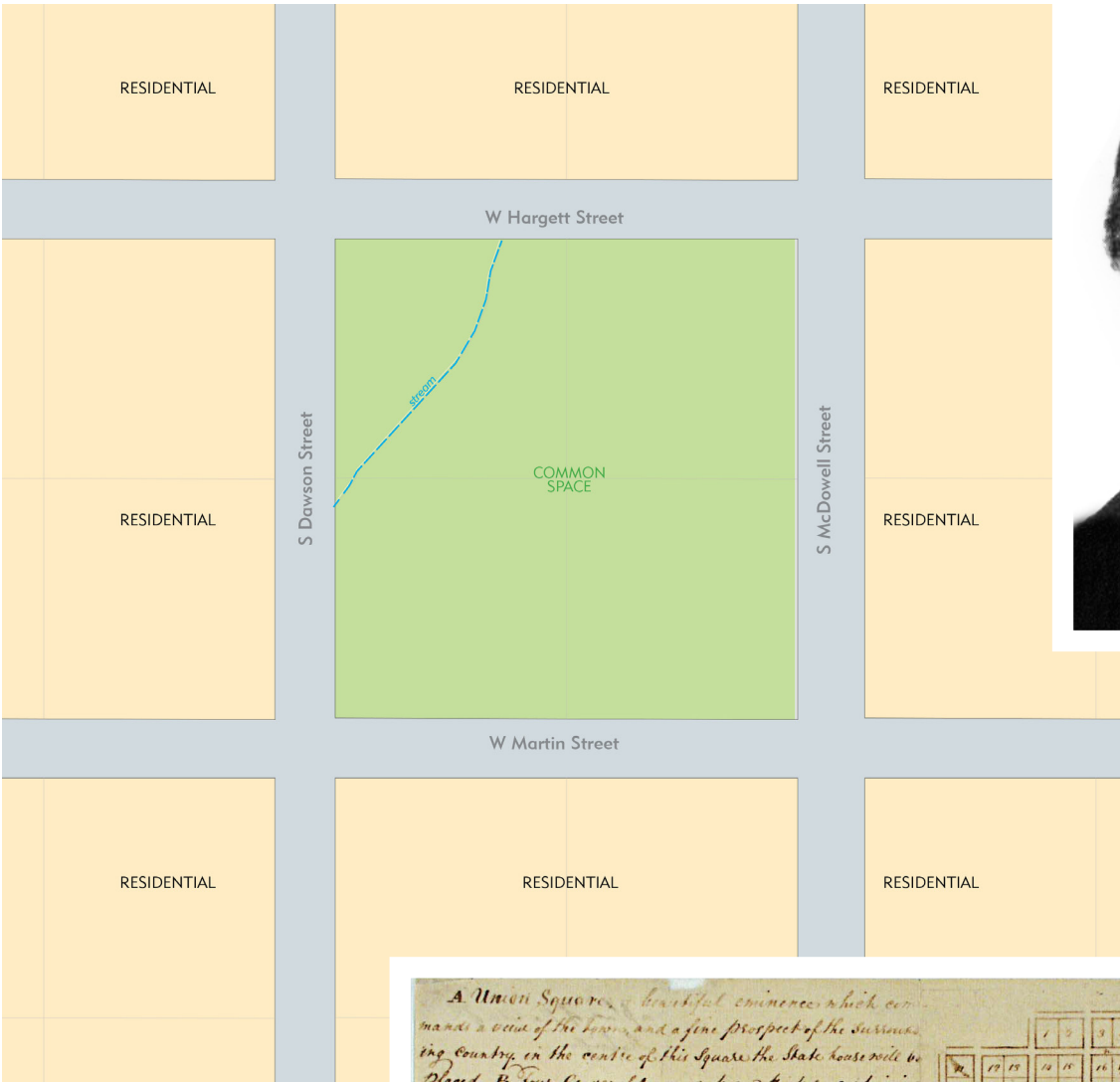
Introduction + Methodology

This document was prepared to identify the historic context and physical evolution of Nash Square from 1792 to 2018.

Methodology

This report was developed by RATIO Architects, Inc. (RATIO) for the Raleigh Historic Development Commission (RHDC). Research began with review of documents and photographs provided to RATIO by the RHDC. RATIO consulted a variety of collections in the State Archives of North Carolina and the Olivia Rainey Local History Library, as well as other published and electronic resources, including historic newspapers and magazines, trade journals, city directories, maps, aerials, and other documents to collect information related to the square's evolution. Field survey of the site identified existing historic features, including both built elements and plantings. Per the contract, two drafts were submitted for review and comment.

c.1792 Reconstructed Site Plan



Abner Nash
(Courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina)

A Union Square, a beautiful eminence which commands a view of the town, and a fine prospect of the surrounding country, in the centre of this square the State house will be placed. B. Four Groves of young oaks and hickory containing an acre each, neatly trimmed & grubbed. C. four open squares reserved for publick purposes, that in the e. s. corner is supposed to be a proper situation for the Governor's House. d. b. c. d. Halifax, Newbern, Fayette & Millborough Streets. e. f. g. Lane Jones & Edenton Streets. h. i. k. Morgan Hargett & Martin Streets. l. m. n. Davis, Cabarrus & Lenoir Streets. o. p. q. r. Bladenworth Parsons, Blount & Wilmington Streets. s. t. v. w. Salisbury, McDowell, Saxton & Harrington Streets. The four main streets 99 feet and the others 66 feet wide.

The annual plot is a representation of the lots reserved purchased from the State for the Duke, being the relation & location of the City to the town & the line on the west side to run the 12 hours at the back in lanes oblong lanes.

The City contains 500000 and each lot is 200000 a little in the square head of the town in the west side is clear.

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South Street

William Christmas' plan of Raleigh, 1792
(Courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina)

Survey

In 1788, the North Carolina State Legislature recommended that the state capital be relocated from New Bern to a more central location in Wake County. A 1791 act allowed the appointment of Commissioners of Location to guide the site selection and layout of the city. In 1792, William Christmas (1753 / 54-1811), a surveyor, Revolutionary War veteran, and state senator living in Franklin County, North Carolina, was appointed to survey and lay out a new capital city. Christmas' plan for Raleigh included five public squares: Union Square at the center, to house the state capitol, and "four open squares reserved for Public Purposes" in the surrounding quadrants, one (Burke Square) being identified as the site for the Governor's House.¹ The North Carolina State Legislature approved the plan and incorporated Raleigh as the new capital city and county seat of Wake County on December 31, 1792.

Name

In April 1792, the Commissioners of Location named Raleigh's southwestern square, composed of lots 118, 119, 134, and 135, after Abner Nash (1740-1786), North Carolina's second governor (1781-1782) and its representative to the Continental Congress (1782-1786).² Nash's brother, Francis Nash (c.1742-1777) was a brigadier general in the Continental Army during the American Revolution and was the eponym of North Carolina's Nash County (est. 1777) and Nashville (est. 1780), as well as the city of Nashville, Tennessee (est. 1779). The other perimeter squares were named for Richard Caswell (first and fifth governor of North Carolina), Thomas Burke (third governor of North Carolina), and Alfred Moore (Attorney General of North Carolina).

Early Appearance + Use

Nash Square initially served as open public ground, used for events and recreation as well as for grazing livestock. A stream cut across the northwest part of the square, feeding into Rocky Branch to the southwest. Some old-growth forest trees remained, and the square's hilly topography appears to have remained mostly unaltered from pre-settlement conditions. Raleigh's first water works, in operation from 1825 to 1831, included a pipe running through Nash Square very near the surface of the ground.³

Early Context

After becoming North Carolina's capital city, Raleigh's population increased from less than 700 in 1800 to more than 2,000 by 1840. It was a small city during this period, and the area around Nash Square was not heavily developed. Many surrounding blocks likely contained only a handful of buildings, with much land devoted to large kitchen gardens and livestock. The surrounding streets were of dirt and likely lacked curbs and sidewalks.

c.1850 Reconstructed Site Plan



During the mid-nineteenth century, Nash Square served as an informal public square, commonly known as “Tucker’s Field” or “Tucker’s Old Field” in reference to the Tucker House overlooking it on Martin Street.⁴

1841-1870 Public Square

Appearance

During this period, Nash Square appears to have been an uneven field containing some trees, mainly oaks and elms. A hill rose up toward the center of the south side of the square, extending into Martin Street. A path seems to have run between the northeast and southwest corners of the square during this period. In the 1850s, it was reported that wagons and other vehicles were often driven through the square, damaging the public ground.⁵ The use of the square for military drills during the Civil War likely left much of the ground as trampled dirt.

Uses

Like many urban public squares of the period, Nash Square was used for cattle grazing, public meetings, and recreation. For most of this period, it was the only one of Raleigh’s five public squares free from buildings, offering larger open space for public use. In 1844, the state legislature proposed selling the four perimeter squares for development, but public outcry ended this proposal.⁶

The Oak City Guards, a local militia and precursor to the North Carolina National Guard, drilled on the square during the 1850s.⁷ Nash Square was the center of Raleigh’s Fourth of July celebrations during the late-1850s, hosting large events with public speakers, concerts, displays of fireworks, and the ascension of hot air balloons.⁸ The square also hosted traveling variety shows that presented “chaste, interesting and amusing” entertainments including “new songs, fancy dances, comic melodies, comedies, farces, dramatic pieces, and dissolving views” inside large tents.⁹ It was also used informally, including by “groups of rude and noisy lads” who upset their pious neighbors by engaging in dog-fighting, wrestling, and marble-playing on the Sabbath.¹⁰

During the Civil War, various companies of the “North Carolina Militia for Home Defense [sic]” or “Home Guards” assembled on Nash Square for drills. Beginning in 1862, the Confederacy required three years of military service for all white men ages 18 to 35, exempting wealthy planters. As the Confederacy grew more desperate, the ages for conscription were extended to 45 and then 50 in 1864 and groups of “Junior Volunteers” were recruited in early 1865.¹¹ In April 1865, the commissioned officers of one U.S. infantry regiment under Gen. John M. Schofield camped on Nash Square.¹² After the end of the war, Nash Square resumed its use for public amusements, hosting a circus in July 1865 and a Medieval-themed “grand tournament” on December 25th, with at least 500 knights competing for prizes.¹³ In 1866, Nash Square became home to the Tar-Heel baseball club and the site of games with other local clubs.¹⁴

Nash Square hosted several important political gatherings during the Reconstruction period. The Tucker House on the south side of the square served as home to the branch of the Freedmen's Bureau, a key resource for formerly enslaved North Carolinians.¹⁵ In November 1867, Nash Square was the site of a rally of Radical Republicans, a nineteenth-century political faction that championed the rights of African Americans and total eradication of secessionism and racial injustice in former slave states. A parade included banners supporting the Union and the expansion of free speech and voting rights to African American men. This was in response to North Carolina's 1866 rejection of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, granting citizenship and equal protection under federal law to African Americans. (In 1868, North Carolina finally ratified the amendment and was readmitted to the Union.) Speakers included former North Carolina Governor William Woods Holden (1818-1892) and James H. Harris (1832-1891), a man born as a slave who had served as vice-president of the National Equal Rights Convention in 1865. The oak above the speaker's stand was decorated with lanterns and American flags.¹⁶

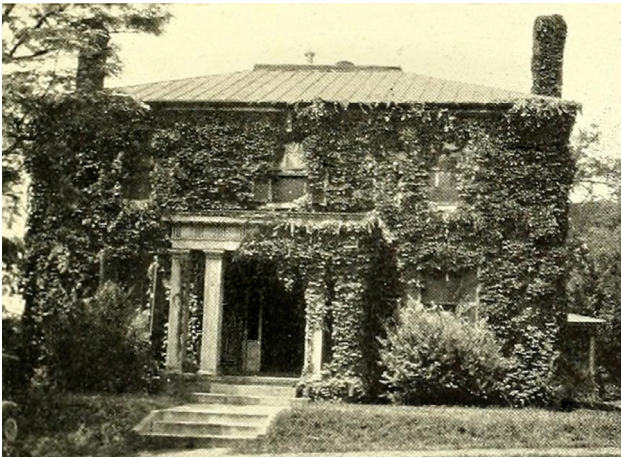
Holden, a supporter of the Union, would be elected governor again in 1868. His inauguration took place on July 4, 1868, and was celebrated by a large crowd that assembled on Nash Square and formed a procession with the Raleigh band and the Grand Army of the Republic to Union Square.¹⁷ On Decoration Day (Memorial Day) 1869, a crowd formed at Nash Square and proceeded to the National Cemetery to honor the fallen U.S. soldiers buried in Raleigh. The ceremonies included the Raleigh Brass Band, Governor Holden, the Mayor of Raleigh, the Grand Army of the Republic, soldiers, public school children, ladies in carriages, charitable societies, and civilians.¹⁸

Western Ward School / Raleigh Township Schoolhouse (1858-1872)

In 1858, the Western Ward School moved to a new frame building in Nash Square. This was one of two public schools in Raleigh, the other being the Eastern Ward School in Moore Square.¹⁹ After the Civil War, the building housed E. B. Thomas' School, W. C. Powell's School for Boys, and the Nash Square Academy.²⁰ In March 1872, the building was removed from Nash Square to allow improvement of the site as a city park.²¹ The school building's location within the square is not documented.

Context

Raleigh saw significant population growth during the 1830s and 1840s, maintaining a population of around 4,500 during the 1850s. A boom in growth after the end of the Civil War brought the city's population to more than 7,700 by 1870. During this period, Nash Square was surrounded by residential properties. Three of the four sides were faced by half-block properties of Ruffin Tucker, William Woods Holden, and the William F. Clark estate. Substantial houses, most built in the 1840s and 1850s, housed some of Raleigh's most prominent citizens, but large amounts of open space around the public squares reflected low development pressure; Union Square was the only one of the five squares with a perimeter that had been partially defined by urban development by 1850. The stories of three of the houses built around Nash Square during this period reflect the scope of change the neighborhood would see over the next 150 years:



Presbyterian Parsonage, c.1925
(Archive.org)

Presbyterian Parsonage (1843)

204 S. Dawson Street

The Presbyterian Parsonage was a large Greek Revival brick house at the southwest corner of Dawson and Hargett Streets, built in 1843 as a gift of Frances Pollock Devereux (1771-1849) for the use of the minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Raleigh. A native of New Bern, Devereux was a member of one of North Carolina's wealthiest families and was the granddaughter of prominent American preacher and theologian Jonathan Edwards, a key figure in the First Great Awakening.²² The Presbyterian

Parsonage was regarded as one of the finest houses in Raleigh in the mid-nineteenth century. It was occupied as intended for most of its life, serving as a boarding house for part of the 1890s. The house was demolished in 1929, and a new parsonage was built in the Hayes Barton neighborhood in 1936.²³ The site contained a filling station and parking lot until the Park Devereux Condominiums were built on the site in 1999. First Presbyterian Church retains ownership of the land as of 2018.

Ruffin & Lucinda Tucker House (c.1845),
213 W. Martin Street

The half block on the south side of Martin Street, facing Nash Square, was owned by Ruffin Tucker (1795-1851) and Lucinda Marshall Sledge Tucker (1799-1867) and contained a large wood-frame house by 1847. In 1818, Ruffin founded a store on Fayetteville Street that would become one of North Carolina's leading dry goods stores.²⁴ The couple's three sons, all college-educated, operated the store after their father's death in 1851.²⁵ One son, Dr. Joseph W. Tucker, operated a medical practice out of the house from 1849 until his death in 1856 at the age of 29. A stable on the property was destroyed by a tornado in May 1851.²⁶



Tucker House c.1875
(Courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina)

During the 1850s, Lucinda Tucker was reported to keep “the finest garden in town,” known for rare shrubs and flowers, strawberries, Irish potatoes, squash, and beets.²⁷ Among her submissions to the 1856 North Carolina State Fair was “a large collection of rare shrubbery and flowers,” filberts (hazelnuts), pomegranates, a ham, and “some fine knit curtains.”²⁸ After Lucinda's death in 1867, her surviving sons, William H. H. Tucker and Rufus Sylvester Tucker, offered the house for sale. The house contained 10 rooms and sat on 2.5 acres of landscaped grounds, including a “conservatory filled with the rarest flowers, and gardens of fine vegetables and choice fruit trees, all necessary out buildings and [a] well of good water.”²⁹

In 1868, the local headquarters of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands leased the Tucker House. Commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau, the agency of the United States Department of War operated during Reconstruction to assist formerly enslaved Americans in the South. It reconnected families separated under slavery and during the Civil War, provided education for freedmen (it had been illegal for enslaved people to learn to read or write), facilitated the opening of schools and colleges for African Americans, performed marriages (slave marriages were not legally recognized), served as a legal advocate for freedmen in the face of racist local and state laws, and worked to rebuild the economy of the South on a model of employees and employers rather than slaves and masters. General Nelson A. Miles extended the Bureau's operations in North Carolina for an extra year, fearing inadequate local protection for the rights of African American North Carolinians.³⁰ Miles also installed an 80-foot-high flagpole in front of the Tucker House to display the American flag.³¹

From the 1880s through 1903, the Tucker House was occupied by Joseph Branch Batchelor (1825-1903), a prominent lawyer and advocate of women's education, and his wife, Mary Carey Plummer Batchelor (1828-1900). In 1888, the house contained the office of Mrs. D. R. Travis, M.D., specializing in obstetrics, diseases of women and children.³² During the 1890s, R. G. Reid operated the house as a boarding house, with the Batchelors in residence.³³ In 1904, Reid and his family moved into the house. By 1908, the Tucker House was occupied by the family of Charles Wommack Cooper (1862-1912), part owner of the Cooper Bros. Marble Works, later known as the Cooper Monument Company. Cooper had been a contractor in Winston-Salem and came to Raleigh in the late 1890s.³⁴ The marble works was built in the west side yard by 1909 and remained in operation until 1920, when the company was dissolved. The Tucker House appears to have been demolished in 1920-1921 to make way for commercial development, including a new office for the Raleigh Times newspaper.³⁵



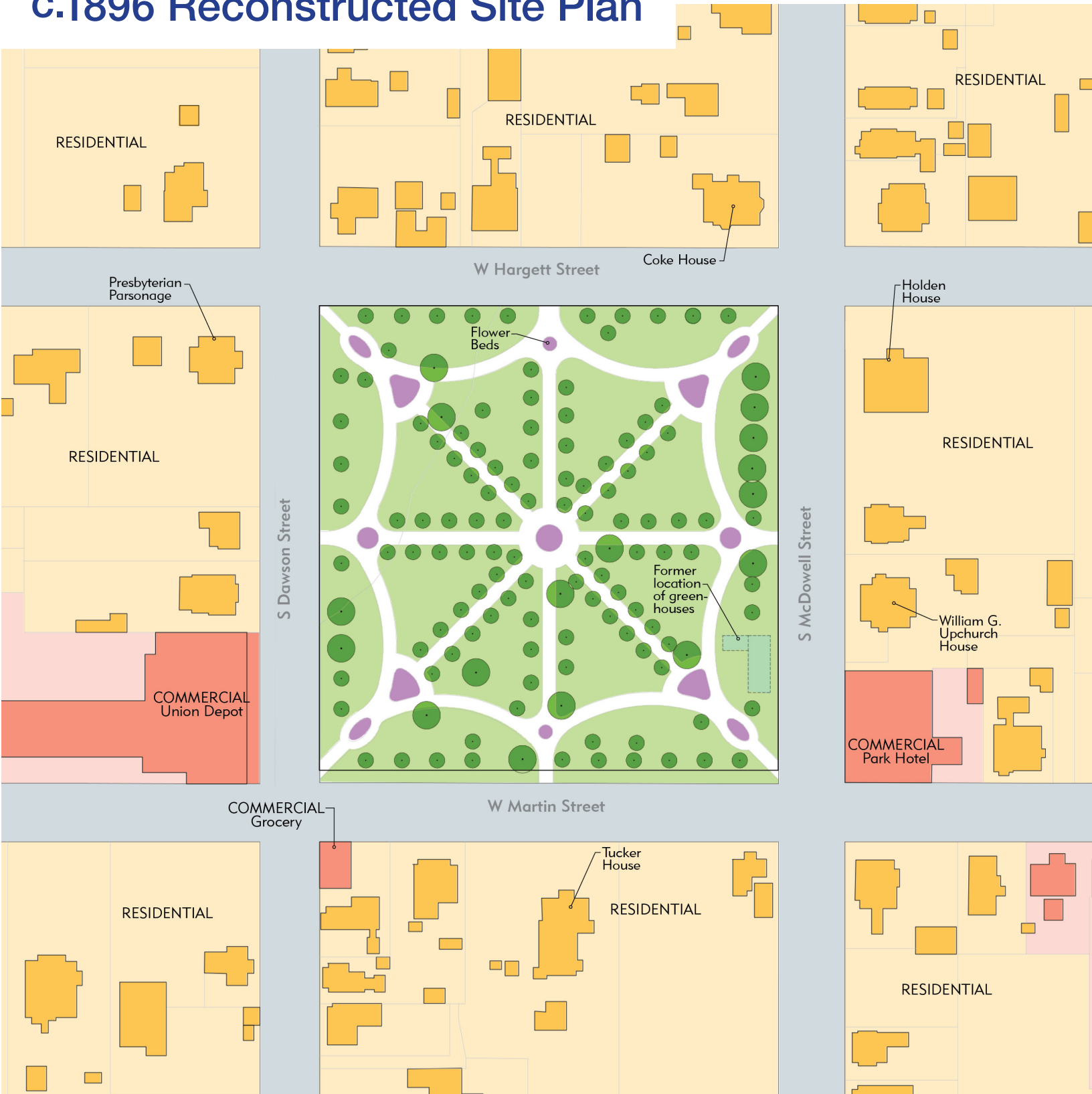
Holden House, c. 1906
(North Carolina Museum of History)

Governor William Woods Holden House
(1852), 127 W. Hargett Street

William Woods Holden (1818-1892), a North Carolina State Senator, owned the half block overlooking the east side of Nash Square by 1847. In 1852, Holden built a large Greek Revival frame house fronting W. Hargett Street, with side and rear porches overlooking Nash Square.³⁶ Holden would serve as Governor of North Carolina in 1865 and from 1868 to 1871. As governor, Holden used the power of the state to enforce new civil rights laws, battling the Ku Klux

Klan's terrorist activities and attempts to prevent African American men from voting. The struggle against the Klan became known as the Kirk-Holden War. During this period, a local newspaper reported that Holden had 100 "negroes from Newbern [sic] in camp on Nash Square, which is just across the street from his house."³⁸ Holden was impeached in 1870 by a pro-Klan legislature opposed to the enforcement of federal civil rights laws protecting African American North Carolinians. After Holden's death, his estate remained in litigation until 1907, the property was put up for sale in 1909, and the land was subdivided in 1921. The eight-story Professional Building (Milburn & Heister, architects) was built on the site in 1925.³⁹

c.1896 Reconstructed Site Plan



The State of North Carolina ceded control of Nash Square's use and maintenance to the City of Raleigh in 1872, while retaining ownership of the land; over the next 20 years, the grounds were improved as an urban park.

1871-1900 Urban Park

Appearance

When the City of Raleigh took control of Nash Square, it was a bare, open lot with uneven ground and a few trees. The land was used for cattle grazing until its enclosure by a wooden fence later in 1872.⁴⁰ In 1873, the square was graded, removing a hill and filling low spots, and provided with a new drainage system.⁴¹ Walkways were laid out in the new park in 1874. Animals were not entirely absent from Nash Square after it was fenced: a flock of stray sheep occupied it for several days in 1876.⁴² As of 1878, it was reported that "Nash square is hilly and has a very deep ditch running through it."⁴³

The City of Raleigh entered into a public-private partnership with florist C. B. Fairchild in 1879. Fairchild was allowed to lease Nash Square and to build greenhouses on the public property in exchange for his agreement to landscape and maintain the grounds as a public park.⁴⁴ Fairchild built greenhouses but failed to carry out his proposed improvements to the park. His greenhouses, stock, and fixtures were auctioned off in 1880 to cover debts.⁴⁵ In 1881, German immigrant Henry Steinmetz purchased the greenhouses and worked with the City of Raleigh to improve the park under the terms of Fairchild's lease.⁴⁶ (see p.14)

In 1882, Nash Square underwent many improvements, transforming what had recently been called "that barren spot, Nash square."⁴⁷ The City laid a 24-inch terra cotta drain tile through the square to carry away storm water and spread 50 loads of "street dirt" (manure) dug from Wilmington Street and the public market in preparation for the planting of bluegrass seed.⁴⁸ Steinmetz laid out new walkways, planted new shade trees, and laid out flower and foliage beds.⁴⁹ Improvements continued in 1883, leading to a total of 200 new trees (mostly maples), about 100 evergreen shrubs, and the addition of new flower beds and walkways.⁵⁰ The walkways appear to have been laid out roughly as proposed by Fairchild in 1879, with north-south and east-west walkways intersecting with diagonal walkways at a center circle and another circle connecting the walkways roughly halfway between the center and the sidewalks. The configuration and appearance of the flowerbeds is not documented, but rectangular and oval planting beds were common during this period. In 1885, a sidewalk and granite curb were added along the north side of the square on Hargett Street.⁵¹ The lawns appear to have been alternately seeded in grass, clover, and peas. The perimeter fence was removed in 1889.⁵² In 1890, Nash Square was fitted with 24 cast iron benches that were manufactured by Allen & Cram of Raleigh.⁵³

Steinmetz's lease was canceled in 1892 and the City of Raleigh undertook a series of improvements to the park during 1893-1894, including filling and re-grading the west side of the square, thinning trees, re-seeding

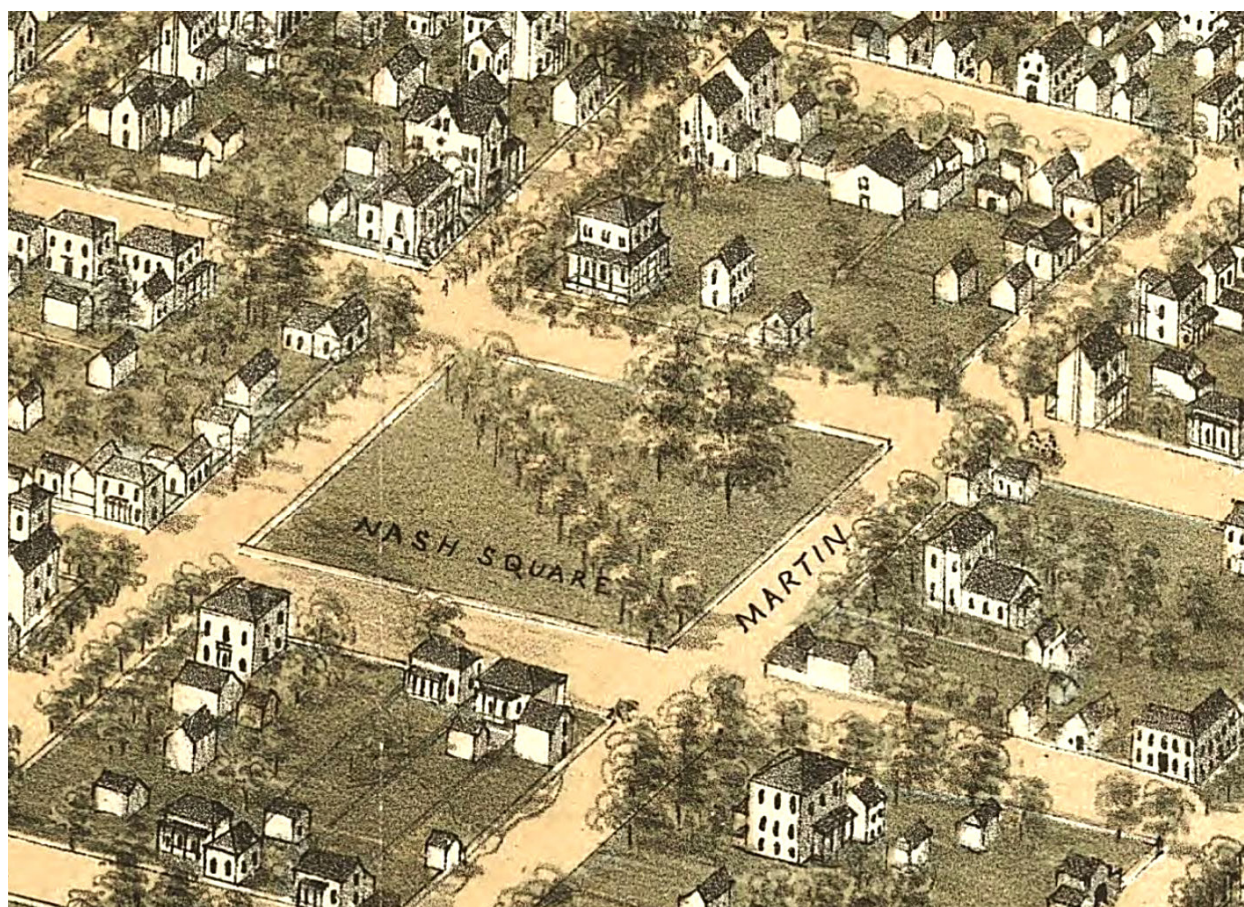
lawns, and planting roses and evergreen shrubs. In 1892, the sidewalk along the south side of Nash Square was regraded and, in 1894, the square's east sidewalk was re-graded and new curbs were installed.⁵⁴ In 1899, the perimeter sidewalks were paved with brick pavers.⁵⁵ From 1899-1900, Nash Square underwent significant changes. Walkways were paved with Macadam pavement and provided with stone gutters, a new drainage system was added to address standing water, roughly 23 dead and damaged trees were removed and about 75 new sugar maples were planted.⁵⁶ In 1900, Nash and Moore Squares were each fitted with an electric arc lamp mounted on a wooden pole.⁵⁷

Uses

During the 1870s, Nash Square hosted baseball games from teams of young African American men and matches between various white baseball clubs including the Raleigh Juniors, Raleigh Picked Nine, and Goldsboro Young Americas.⁵ A lawn tennis court was built on the south part of the square in 1890 and was said to be the best tennis court in North Carolina.⁵⁹ The Nash Square Tennis Club hosted tennis tournaments, and games were reported on the court every night during the summers.⁶⁰

Idealized bird's-eye view of Nash Square from the southwest, 1872

(C. N. Drie, *Bird's eye view of the city of Raleigh, North Carolina*. Raleigh, 1872, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/75694901/>)



During the 1870s, the South saw a backlash against the progress made during Reconstruction. Known as the “Redemption,” this movement to re-impose white supremacy led to the Jim Crow period, wherein states passed laws to strip the rights of African Americans, creating extreme levels of racial segregation that would persist into the 1960s. Some events held in Nash Square during this period reflected the larger trends of the Jim Crow period, while others did not. During the 1890s, Nash Square hosted several fundraising events for the new North Carolina Confederate Soldiers’ Home and the construction of Confederate monuments.⁶¹ Two Confederate monuments were proposed for Nash Square in the 1890s, but both were ultimately built in Union Square.⁶² William Jennings Bryan spoke to a crowd of 15,000 people in Nash Square during his unsuccessful 1896 presidential campaign.⁶³ In 1900, candidates for state office gave campaign speeches in Nash Square arguing for further Jim Crow policies to remove African Americans’ rights to public education, to vote, and to hold public office.⁶⁴

Nash Square continued to host traveling entertainments, from concerts and circuses to Native American cultural presentations. The grounds were also used for a variety of passive and active recreation, including walking, lounging, and sledding. During the bicycle craze of the 1890s, Nash Square became a popular meeting place for the Raleigh Bicycle Club to begin group rides.⁶⁵



Advertisement for Steinmetz's Green House, 1884
(*The Farmer and Mechanic*, 2 April 1884)

Fairchild-Steinmetz Greenhouses (1879-1892)

In July 1879, Prof. C. B. Fairchild, former instructor at the Baptist Female Seminary, petitioned the City of Raleigh with a request to establish a greenhouse in Nash Square to support his floral business, offering to beautify the square in return.⁶⁶ Fairchild's wood and glass greenhouses, one 100 by 25 feet and the other 50 by 15 feet, were built along McDowell Street near the southeast corner of the square and were completed in November 1879.⁶⁷ By February 1880, Fairchild advertised garden seeds, bulbs, flowers, vegetables, hanging baskets, flower pots, cut flowers and arrangements, and other garden items.⁶⁸ The greenhouses became a popular attraction, particularly during the winter months.⁶⁹ In December 1880, Fairchild's property was auctioned off to cover debts.⁷⁰ The greenhouses were purchased by Henry Steinmetz in 1881.⁷¹ Steinmetz continued operation of the greenhouses and added 75 hot beds.⁷² In 1890, Steinmetz built a new conservatory in Nash Square; it is unclear whether this replaced the earlier greenhouses.⁷³ Steinmetz demolished the greenhouses during September-November 1892 and Nash Square returned to full public use.⁷⁴

Context

The blocks surrounding Nash Square remained a fashionable residential neighborhood during the late nineteenth century. During the 1870s, older estates were subdivided, and new houses were built. The Italianate/Stick style William G. Upchurch House (1873-1874) at 219 S. McDowell Street and the Second Empire style Octavius Coke House (c.1879) at 204 W. Hargett Street reflect the range of houses Raleigh's elite built around Nash Square during this period.⁷⁵ The early-1890s saw two major developments east and west of the square: the Park Hotel and Union Depot. Raleigh's electric street railway system, begun in 1891, included stops at Nash Square convenient to both landmarks.⁷⁶

The streetscape around Nash Square saw improvements during this period. In 1892, Dawson and Martin Streets were re-graded and paved with Belgian block (rectangular stone pavers).⁷⁷



William G. Upchurch House (1873-1874)
219 S. McDowell Street, c.1920
(Courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina)

Octavius Coke House (c.1879)
204 W. Hargett Street, 1940
(News & Observer Collection, State Archives of North Carolina)



Raleigh Union Depot, c.1910
(Durwood Barbour Postcards Collection,
Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill)

Union Depot (1890-1892)

Raleigh's new Union Depot or Union Station, serving all passenger railroad lines, was built between 1890 and 1892 at the northwest corner of Martin and Dawson Streets. Three houses formerly on the site were relocated within the neighborhood.⁷⁸ The station, in the fashionable Romanesque Revival style, featured bold brick and stone masonry and deep, sheltering eaves. Its location made Nash Square the gateway to Raleigh for thousands of visitors each year. The Union Depot was a terminal station, with tracks

dead-ending at the rear of the building. Like most passenger stations built during the Jim Crow period, it had segregated waiting rooms and facilities for white and African American users. Passenger service to Union Station was discontinued in the 1950s, and the building was partially demolished. The remaining sections of the former Union Depot were extensively altered for other uses.



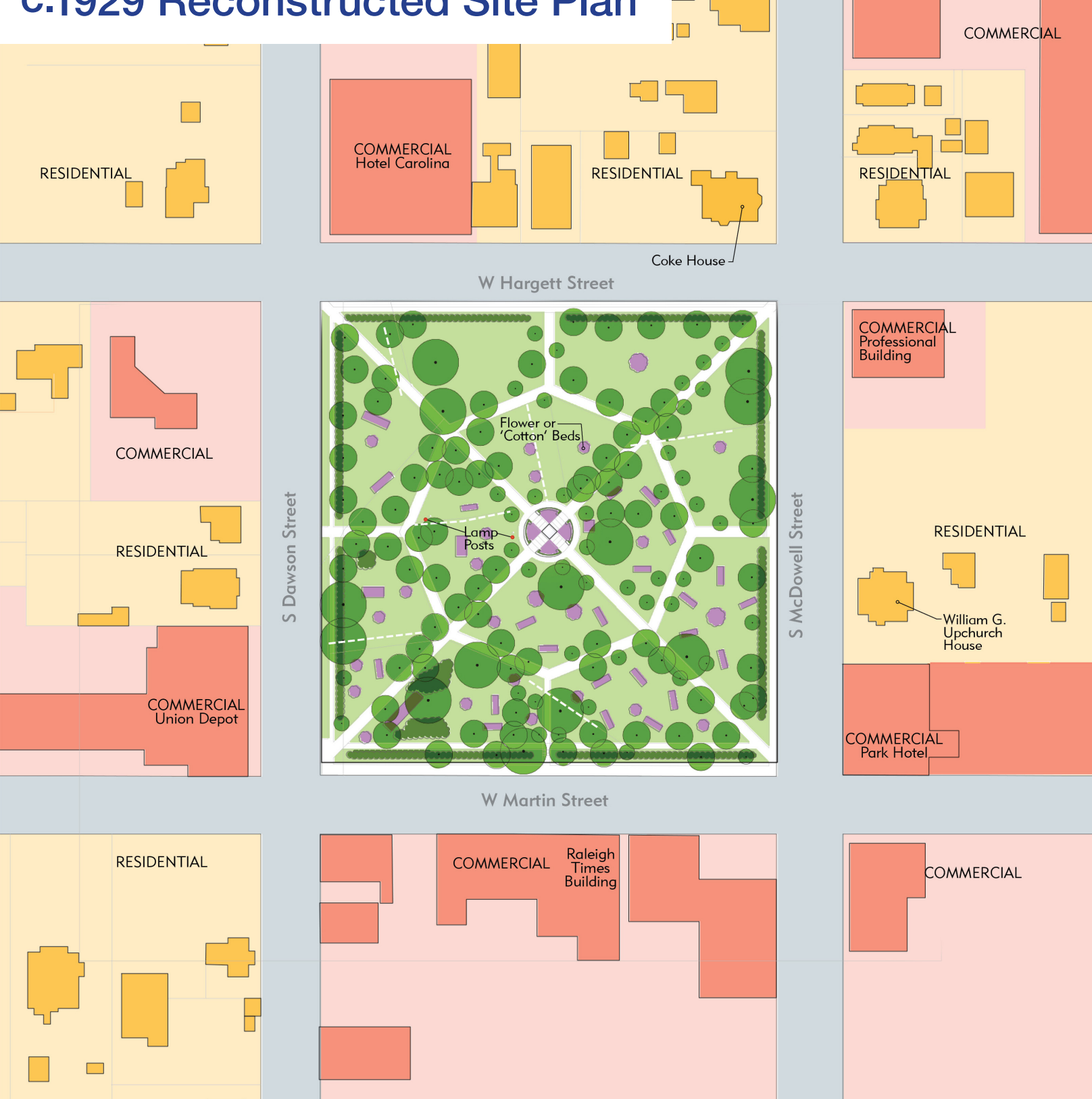
Park Hotel, 1895
(Special Collections, UNC-Charlotte)

Park Hotel / Hotel Raleigh (1892)

In 1892, the J. Ruffin Williams House (1874) at the northeast corner of McDowell and Martin Streets was demolished and replaced by the new Park Hotel.⁷⁹ The hotel was designed by Adolphus Gustavus Bauer (1858-1898), who had come to Raleigh in 1883 as an assistant of noted Philadelphia architect Samuel Sloan. Following Sloan's sudden death in 1884, A. G. Bauer established his own firm and designed many of North Carolina's major new buildings of the 1880s and 1890s.⁸⁰ The five-story brick building incorporated elements of the Italianate, Romanesque Revival, and Queen Anne styles, and featured a corner turret clad in slate and topped by a conical slate roof. The Park Hotel

was renamed the Hotel Raleigh in 1911, and a new entrance canopy and sun parlor were added overlooking Nash Square. In 1912, it was remodeled as the Raleigh Apartments, and included the creation of new storefronts along Martin Street.⁸¹ In 1919, the building reopened as the Hotel Raleigh, advertising its dining room overlooking Nash Square.⁸² The hotel continued to operate for many years under this name, and was later known as the Raleigh Hotel and the Park Central Hotel. It was demolished in 1976, and the site has been a surface parking lot since.⁸³

c.1929 Reconstructed Site Plan



Nash Square and its surroundings experienced a period of rapid development and change during the early twentieth century.

1901-1939 Urban Change

Appearance

The general path layout established in the 1880s appears to have been maintained in this period and maintenance and improvements continued. New trees were planted during 1903-1904, including many white oaks brought from the forests around Raleigh.⁸⁴ During 1905-1906, a California privet hedge was planted along the sidewalk on all four sides of Nash Square.⁸⁵ This hedge remained, in varying condition, into the 1930s.⁸⁶ New iron benches were ordered in 1907, the walkways received new gravel in 1911, and a “sanitary drinking fountain” was installed in 1913.⁸⁷ A 1913 city plan recommended that Nash Square’s improvements be carefully tailored to its function as a gateway to the city from the Union Depot.⁸⁸ The plan also recommended the addition of trash cans to address the city’s litter problem.⁸⁹ A rose arbor accented by privet hedges and flowering plants was installed over the central circle in 1916.⁹⁰ Maintenance seems to have been inconsistent and newspapers frequently reported piles of trash around the square. In 1922, the Mayor of Raleigh stated, “Nash Square to-day is little more than an open space and an opportunity,” and called for proactive planning for the future improvement of Nash and Moore Squares.⁹¹ By the late-1920s, the square’s lawns contained more than 45 haphazardly-located rectangular and circular planting beds filled with flowers and cotton.

Between 1901 and the 1920s, tobacco executive Julian Carr led a campaign to build a statue of Sir Walter Raleigh, the city’s namesake, in the center of Nash Square.⁹² The project was endorsed in the 1913 city plan but was abandoned in the 1920s and most of the funds that had been raised were lost.⁹³ In 1976, a statue of Sir Walter Raleigh was added at another location in Downtown Raleigh as a part of the city’s celebration of the Bicentennial.⁹⁴ A 1903 proposal to build a statue of Revolutionary War hero Francis Nash, brother of the square’s eponym, was never realized.⁹⁵ Similarly, a 1917 proposal to build a monument to John Haymes Mills (1831-1898), educator and founder of orphanages, at another location in Nash Square was unsuccessful.⁹⁶ In 1934, McDowell Street was widened, removing 10 feet of Nash Square.⁹⁷

Uses

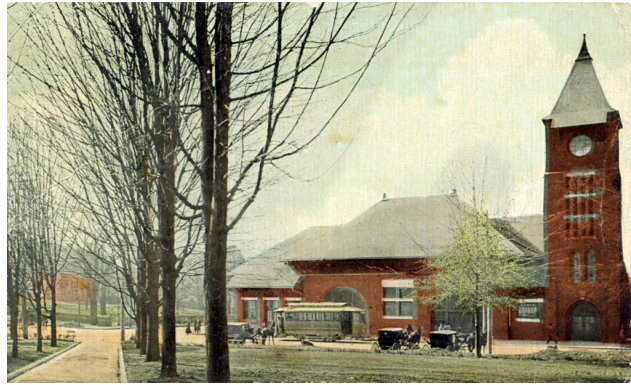
Nash Square continued to see a range of uses during this period. It was a popular place for downtown residents and children to escape to nature amid the bustle and pollution of the early twentieth century city. Walking, lounging, kite-flying, and sporting events remained popular. Newspaper reports indicate that both white and African American citizens of Raleigh used Nash Square daily. Many of these articles reflect sentiments of the Jim Crow period, calling for city leaders to “regulate” or restrict African Americans’ use of public parks like Nash Square.⁹⁸ During this period, Nash Square was the site of events held by the United Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy.⁹⁹

Baseball Bazaars, including strings of colorful electric lights and Japanese paper lanterns, were held in Nash Square on the Fourth of July in 1901 and 1902. Instead of fireworks, these events involved baseball games, concerts, vaudeville, and ice cream and cake.¹⁰⁰ Fundraising lawn parties were common, supporting groups ranging from the Nash Square Baseball Team to the Capital Hose Company to St. Luke's Home for Old Ladies.¹⁰¹ Open-air concerts were common events during this period.

Wake County Public Schools held commencement picnics and parades in Nash Square in 1915 and 1922.¹⁰² During World War I, Nash Square, being adjacent to Union Station, was the site of several events around the departure and return of soldiers. A 1917 Memorial Day parade included both white and black men drafted and being sent to fight in World War I.¹⁰³

Context

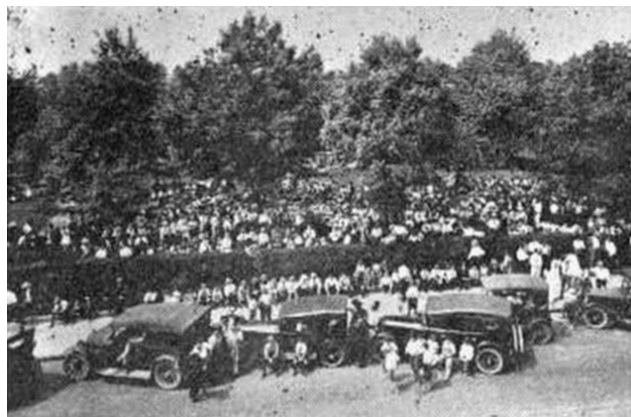
The perimeter of Nash Square saw evolving uses during the early twentieth century. It remained a fashionable residential neighborhood into the 1910s. Commercial development crept west along Martin Street from Salisbury Street during the 1900s and 1910s and along Hargett Street during the 1920s.¹⁰⁴ Like many core urban neighborhoods, the area around Nash Square faced simultaneous pressures during this period: land became more and more valuable for dense development while pollution and congestion rendered the area less desirable for residential use.¹⁰⁵ A sign of the neighborhood's change was the opening of the Nash Square Pharmacy in the Raleigh Apartments (Park Hotel) in 1915; the store was open 24 hours per day, seven days per week to serve the busy neighborhood around the Union Depot.¹⁰⁶ By the 1920s, the north and east sides of Nash Square had seen the demolition of earlier detached houses and the construction of the eight-story Professional Building (1925) and the nine-story Hotel Carolina (1928-1929). Streetscape improvements continued during



View southwest toward Union Depot, showing tree-lined walkway, 1913
(Durwood Barbour Postcards Collection, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill)



View southeast toward Park Hotel / Hotel Raleigh, c.1915
(Oak City Preservation Alliance)



A crowd in Nash Square listens to Raleigh Times staffs' live readings of AP reports on a boxing match in Jersey City, 1921
(*The Fourth Estate*, 9 July 1921)



View of Nash Square looking southeast, c.1940
(Courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina)



this period. In 1908, McDowell Street was paved with Macadam pavement.¹⁰⁷ The west sidewalk along Dawson Street was regraded in 1910.¹⁰⁸ Some of the surrounding streets were later repaved with asphalt. The 1913 city plan recommended consolidation of lampposts, signage, and overhead utility lines to reduce visual clutter in downtown streetscapes, but these recommendations were not carried out.¹⁰⁹

Hotel Carolina

The nine-story Hotel Carolina, also known as the Carolina Hotel, was built at the northeast corner of Hargett and Dawson Streets between 1928 and 1929. It was designed by local architect Harrison A. Underwood (1888-1949), a graduate of Duke University and the president of the Carolina Hotel Apartment Company, developer of the building.¹¹⁰ The hotel contained 40 apartments and 250 guest rooms, each featuring a radio and a private bathroom. The first floor included a barber shop, soda fountain, and cigar store.¹¹¹ The hotel became popular with members of the state legislature and politician Sam Ervin (1896-1985) was a long-term resident.¹¹² A 1972 plan for downtown Raleigh proposed demolition of the hotel for expansion of the city's municipal government complex.¹¹³ By the time it closed in 1976, the hotel, then called the Milner Carolina Hotel, was known for low-rent rooms occupied by prostitutes and as a gathering place for members of Raleigh's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community.¹¹⁴ The hotel was demolished in the late-1970s and the six-story Raleigh Municipal Building, now the Avery Upchurch Municipal Complex, was built on the site in 1984.

Hotel Carolina, c.1930
(Durwood Barbour Postcards Collection,
Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill)

c.1955 Reconstructed Site Plan



Like many urban public spaces, Nash Square experienced a period of decline during the decades after World War II but benefited from a return to the city movement at the turn of the twenty-first century.

1940-2018 Reinvention + Rediscovery

Appearance

Pressure from local civic organizations and garden clubs led to Nash Square's 1939-1940 redesign in preparation for Raleigh's 1942 sesquicentennial. The plan was based on a 1934 design competition with submissions of eight designs by landscape architecture students at North Carolina State University.¹¹⁵ The winning entry was prepared by Arnold Peterson (1908-1991), a native of Batavia, Illinois, who graduated from NC State with a degree in Landscape Architecture in 1934. Peterson was hired as Raleigh's City Landscape Engineer in 1939, and his first project was the improvement of Nash Square.¹¹⁶ Peterson prepared a plan for the project in November 1939, with detail drawings dated June 1940. The new design maintained the diagonal walkways and created a circular walkway halfway between the center circle and the outer sidewalks. The outer edges of the diagonal walkways split around square islands with planting beds and new ornamental brick walls with integrated concrete benches. The corner brick walls and new perimeter hedges enclosed the square and helped to reduce the visual intrusion of heavy automobile traffic on the surrounding streets. New concrete walkways, subsurface drainage, and concrete steps appear to have been installed as a part of this project.

The project was built by the Works Projects Administration (WPA), a New Deal agency that created jobs by employing low-skilled workers on public works projects. The WPA employed 15 to 35 men on the project over a period of five months in 1940, completing the improvements at a cost of roughly \$25,000.¹¹⁷ Many existing trees were removed, and new trees were planted. Large numbers of new shrubs were installed, with a mix of popular landscape plants of the period, including many highly invasive exotic species now known to threaten North Carolina's native ecosystems. The square's center circle was designed to hold a large fountain, but a lamppost and shrubs were installed instead. A 1945 proposal to build a statue of Daniel Boone (1734-1820) in Nash Square was never realized.¹¹⁸

From the 1950s through the 1970s, nearby businesses provided funds to the City for the planting of flowers and shrubs in Nash Square.¹¹⁹ In 1954, shrubs were trimmed and the brick walls at the corners of the square were lowered from roughly four feet in height to roughly 18 inches in an attempt to discourage crime.¹²⁰ In 1968, shrubs around the perimeter of the park were removed and brighter lighting was added.¹²¹ In 1975, the City began covering the brick walls at the corners of the square with artificial stone, citing the material's lower cost than brick masonry. The project was stopped after public outcry, particularly from the design community, at the change to the square's character.¹²² In 1976, the artificial stone was removed, and the brick walls were repaired.¹²³

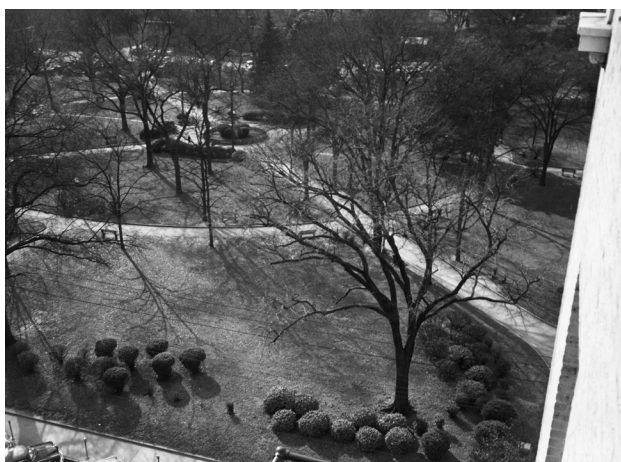
In 1999, the City installed lights in Nash Square's trees, up-lighting their canopies at night.¹²⁴ By 2014, this system was no longer operational. Since the 1970s, a handful of new monuments and memorials have been placed in the square. In 1976, the Wake County Historical Society added a plaque to one of the brick walls noting the square's namesake, Abner Nash. In 1985, a bronze statue of Josephus Daniels by Greensboro sculptor Janos Farkas was installed in the northeast part of Nash Square.¹²⁵ Daniels (1862-1948) was the long-time owner and editor of Raleigh's News and Observer newspaper, served as Secretary of the Navy (1913-1921), and as U.S. Ambassador to Mexico (1933-1941).¹²⁶ During the celebration of Raleigh's bicentennial in 1992, a time capsule was placed under the center of Nash Square by the City of Raleigh Bicentennial Task Force. In 2006, the North Carolina Fallen Firefighters Memorial was installed in the center circle. Designed by Carl W. Regutti, the privately-funded project includes a central bronze statue, granite blocks and plaques, slate pavement, and scalloped brick walls.¹²⁷ In 2008, Raleigh's Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Department installed new site furniture, including accessible seating.

Uses

Nash Square continued to be used for passive recreation and public gatherings during this period. In 1942, the square hosted public concerts dedicated to the World War II effort.¹²⁸ As Raleigh's population left the urban core for the post-World War II suburbs, urban public spaces saw less use and less pressure for regular maintenance. During the late-1940s and 1950s, Nash Square became known as a place for public alcohol consumption, prostitution, sexual activity, fights, and criminal activity.¹²⁹ During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, urban public spaces like Nash Square often saw rallies and assemblies by groups both supporting and opposing equal rights for all



View of Nash Square from the Professional Building, 1954
(News & Observer Collection, State Archives of North Carolina)



View of typical corner condition, 1954
(News & Observer Collection, State Archives of North Carolina)

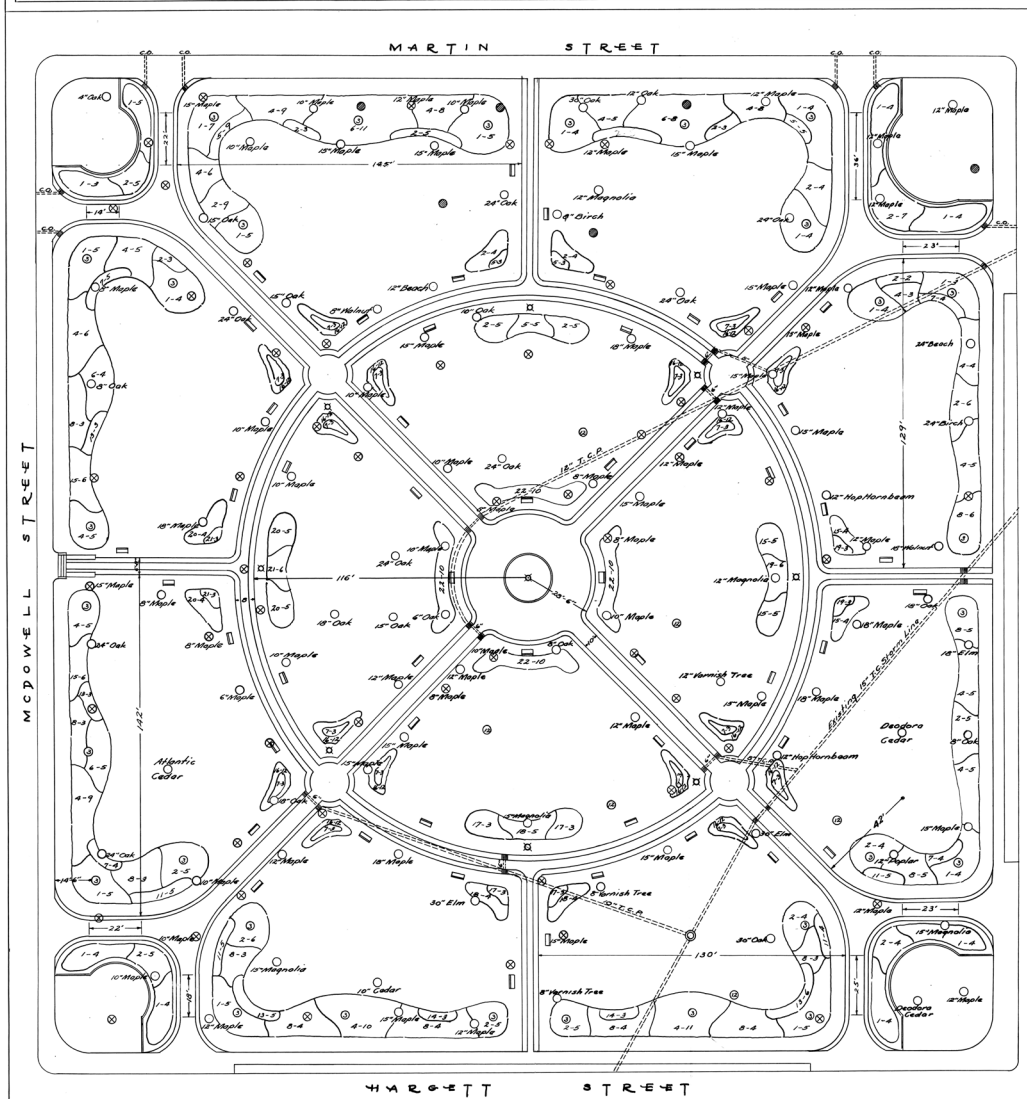


Typical view of walkways and mature trees, 2017
(RATIO)

Arnold Peterson's plan for Nash Square's redesign, November 1939 (City of Raleigh)

PLANTING LIST							
No.	Name	Quantity	Size	No.	Name	Quantity	Size
1.	<i>Ligustrum lucidum</i>	90	3'-4" DB	13	<i>Forsythia suspensa</i>	20	3'-4"
2.	<i>Elaeagnus parviflora</i>	120	2'-3"	14	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	10	2'-3"
3.	<i>Cornus florida</i>	30	3'-6"	15	<i>Abelia grandiflora</i>	30	2'-3" BB
4.	<i>Ascanthopanax pentaphyllum</i>	110	2'-3"	16	<i>Berberis verruculosa</i>	200	9'-12" BB
5.	<i>Jasminum nudiflorum</i>	15	18'-2"	17	<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>	12	2'-2 1/2" DB
6.	<i>Pyracantha yunnanensis</i>	30	3'-4" BB	18	<i>Rhododendron catawbiense</i>	15	2 1/2'-3" DB
7.	<i>Berberis julianae</i>	70	15'-18" BB	19	<i>Kolkwitzia amabilis</i>	12	2'-3"
8.	<i>Elaeagnus fruticosa</i>	50	3'-4"	20	<i>Calliopsis americana</i>	18	2'-3"
11.	<i>Nandina domestica</i>	20	1 1/2'-2" DB	21	<i>Calliopsis purpurea</i>	12	2'-3"
12.	<i>Quercus rubra</i>	6	7'-8"	22	<i>Ilex cornuta</i>	40	1 1/2'-2" DB

SYMBOLS	
○	Existing tree to remain
⊖	Tree to be removed
⊗	Tree has been removed previously
⊞	Wood-Concrete Park Bench
⊙	Proposed Tree
⊠	Park Light Pole
⊡	Curb Catch Basin
⊞⊞⊞	Terra cotta Storm Sewer
⊞	Brick Manhole
—	Cable for Park Lighting System
C.O.	Curb Outlet for storm line.



PROPOSED PLAN FOR
NASH SQUARE
 RALEIGH, N. C.



SCALE 1" = 20'

DRAWN BY: ARNOLD PETERSON
 CITY LANDS ENGINEER

DATE: NOVEMBER 1939
 PREP'D IN DEPT. OF PUBLIC WORKS

Americans. In 1966, while Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke to more than 5,000 people at North Carolina State University, a group of about 1,550 Ku Klux Klan members paraded through downtown Raleigh and assembled in Nash Square. Black and white civil rights activists who had been in the square were removed by Klan “security guards.”¹³⁰

Nash Square hosted an “Arts in the Parks” program during Raleigh’s celebration of the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976.¹³¹ By the late-1970s, Nash Square was a popular location for downtown workers’ lunch breaks but was widely regarded as a place for homeless people and panhandlers.¹³² By 1985, the square was regarded as an “oasis” within downtown Raleigh.¹³³ The square was taken over by rats in the late-1980s.¹³⁴

Downtown revitalization at the end of the twentieth century boosted public appreciation of spaces like Nash Square. Since 2006, Nash Square has been the site of an annual ceremony honoring fallen firefighters. The square is currently used for passive recreation by the public and as a site for recess excursions from a nearby school.

Context

The perimeter of Nash Square became predominately commercial before World War II. The third quarter of the twentieth century saw the demolition of several large, urban buildings around the square—including the Park Hotel/ Hotel Raleigh and the Hotel Carolina—to create surface parking lots, draining the neighborhood of residents and visitors while facilitating automobile-dependent suburban flight. The surrounding streetscape saw many changes during this period. During the 1950s, Dawson and McDowell Streets were converted into one-way high-speed automobile thoroughfares. An unrealized 1958 plan for widening McDowell Street would have taken part of the east side



Josephus Daniels Statue (1985)
(RATIO)



Abner Nash Plaque (1976)
(RATIO)



North Carolina Fallen Firefighters Memorial (2006)
(RATIO)



Raleigh News and Observer Building (1954-1956, John Knight, architect)
(RATIO)



Raleigh Municipal Building (1959-1960, G. Milton Small, architect)
(RATIO)



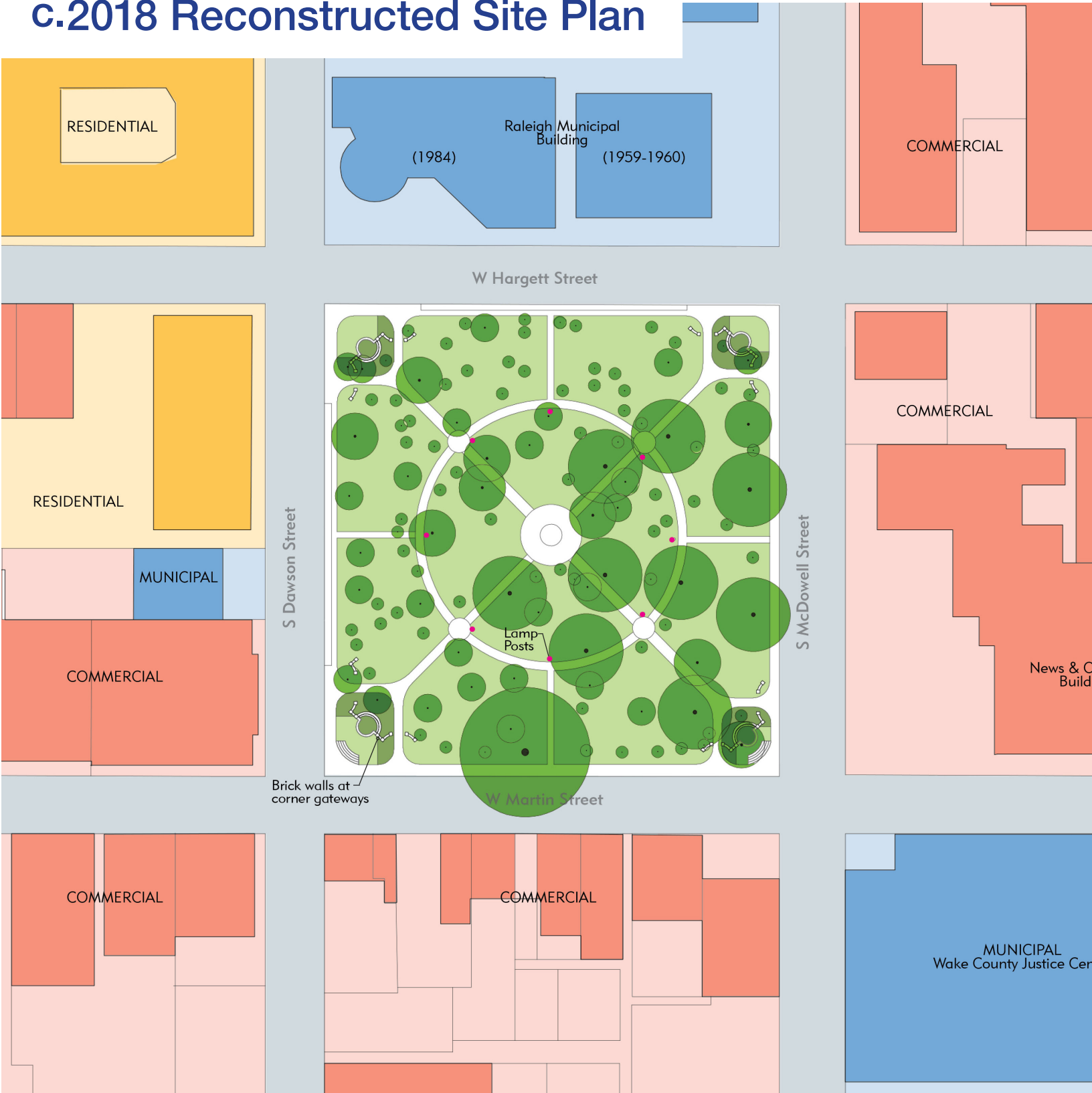
Raleigh Municipal Building (1984)
(RATIO)

of the park to add rows of diagonal parking. Earlier street pavements were covered by asphalt. Street trees were almost entirely absent around the perimeter of the square from the 1950s through the 1980s, reflecting the barren streetscapes typical of late twentieth century American downtowns.

The 1950s saw significant development around the perimeter of Nash Square. In 1953, a new Fire Station No. 1 opened at 220 S. Dawson Street.¹³⁵ Between 1954-1956, the *Raleigh News & Observer* newspaper built a new headquarters at 215 S. McDowell Street. Designed by John Knight of William Henley Deitrick & Associates, the building featured a main block raised on pilotis and upper floors shaded by a brise-soleil.¹³⁶ Between 1959-1960, the Raleigh Municipal Building, designed by prominent Modern architect G. Milton Small Jr. (1916-1992), was built on the site of the Octavius Coke House at the northwest corner of Hargett and McDowell Streets.¹³⁷ The 1960s and 1970s saw the phased expansion of the Southern Bell Telephone complex at the northeast corner of Hargett and McDowell Streets.

A 1972 plan for central Raleigh called for the expansion of a municipal government complex to cover the block north of Nash Square and the demolition of the blocks to the south and west for redevelopment with a mix of high-rise and low-rise housing.¹³⁸ The construction of the Avery Upchurch Municipal Complex (1984) on the site of the Hotel Carolina and the Wake County Justice Center (2010-2013) at the southeast corner of Martin and McDowell Streets reflects the continuing expansion of institutional uses around the perimeter of Nash Square. Beginning in the 1980s, the area around Nash Square saw the adaptive reuse of historic buildings and the construction of medium-density infill housing.¹³⁹

c.2018 Reconstructed Site Plan



Summary of Findings

Appearance

Nash Square's appearance changed significantly during the century after 1792, evolving from an uncultivated piece of common land to a manicured urban park. The next 50 years saw less dramatic changes to the square's design and the subsequent decades saw cycles of neglect and reinvestment. The presence of large deciduous trees, particularly oaks, has been a key aspect of the square's character throughout its history. The basic plan of paths radiating out from the center of the square was introduced in the 1880s and achieved its current form during the 1939-1940 redesign. The intensity of plantings, particularly shrubs and flowers, has varied through the square's periods of development and change.

Use

Nash Square has served as a community gathering place for Raleigh residents and appears to have functioned as the city's primary public square for much of its history. Its uses have ranged from passive recreation to organized sports, from lawn parties to political rallies, and from military drills to school recess time. The wide range of uses reflect Nash Square's role as a designated public space for use by all members of the Raleigh community.

Significance

Nash Square is significant as one of the two perimeter squares—the other being Moore Square—that remains a public greenspace as intended in William Christmas' 1792 plan for Raleigh. The square's importance as a public space increased as the city grew and is evidenced by the campaigns of improvement between the 1870s and the present day. Nash Square is a significant cultural landscape, having served as a key public gathering space for Raleigh residents—for social, political, cultural, and military events—since the mid-nineteenth century. It is significant as a designed landscape, the work of Raleigh landscape architect Arnold Peterson, and as a civic improvement implemented through a New Deal jobs program. The period of significance for Nash Square's surviving historic fabric is suggested as 1792-c.1955, encompassing the square's creation and evolution through its major redesign in 1939-1940. The evolution of Nash Square and the blocks around its perimeter mirror the patterns of growth and change in the Raleigh community between the 1790s and the 2010s.

Integrity

Evaluation of Nash Square's surviving historic fabric from the period of significance considers the seven aspects of integrity used in evaluating properties' eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Nash Square retains a high degree of integrity in the areas of location, occupying the same ground since 1792. It retains a moderate to high

degree of integrity of design to the 1939-1940 redesign by Arnold Peterson. Its setting retains a moderate degree of integrity. It retains a moderate to high degree of integrity of materials and workmanship, with many trees of considerable age as well as hardscape and corner brick walls from the period of significance. Nash Square retains a high degree of integrity of feeling, remaining a sheltered, green oasis amid the bustle of downtown Raleigh. It retains a moderate degree of association with events during its period of significance, something that could be heightened by interpretation of the site's history in future improvements.

Three character-defining elements associated with the 1939-1940 project remain, some of which were retained from earlier periods of the square's history:

Paved Walkways: Peterson's design retained and formalized the walkway configuration first laid out in the 1880s, creating new entrance conditions at each corner.

Plantings: Vegetation has been a key aspect of Nash Square's character throughout its history. The form of existing tree plantings follows the design intent of the 1939-1940 project. Several trees that predate this redesign survive as key natural landmarks in the square, providing a connection to Nash Square's earlier history. The high tree canopy over the square has been a defining feature since the 1930s and reflects the long-term goals of earlier planting campaigns. Smaller ornamental trees, some possibly predating the 1940 project, are also significant aspects of the designed landscape. Understory plantings, including shrubs and smaller ornamental plants, have changed frequently since the 1940s and do not follow the intent of Peterson's design.

Brick Walls: The corner entrances retain low brick walls that were a key component of the 1939-1940 redesign. Although the walls were reduced in height in 1954 and their outer benches were later removed, they continue to frame gateways into Nash Square as intended in Peterson's design.

Nash Square retains many elements that post-date the period of significance. These include site furniture (trash cans, benches), site lighting, contemporary monuments and memorials, and contemporary plantings unrelated to the site's historic planting plan.



Large deciduous trees like this oak have been key to Nash Square's character for more than a century (RATIO)



Base of a large oak along Martin Street, where the grade was lowered in 1892 (RATIO)



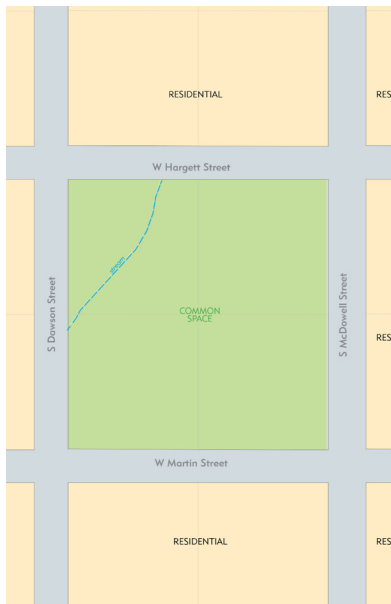
Corner brick walls (1940/1954) with contemporary planting beds (RATIO)



Concrete steps and walkway (c.1940) (RATIO)



Contemporary site furniture, signage, and lighting do not disrupt from the character of Nash Square (RATIO)



c.1792



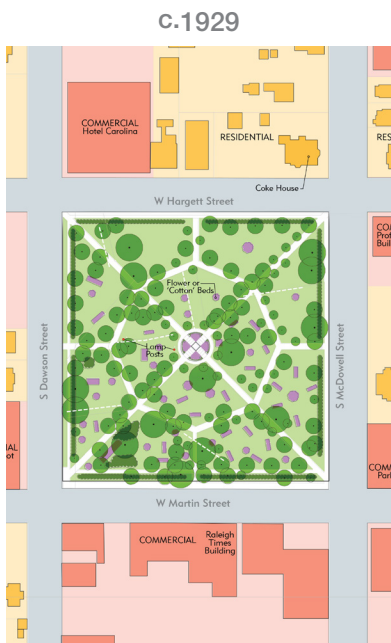
c.1850



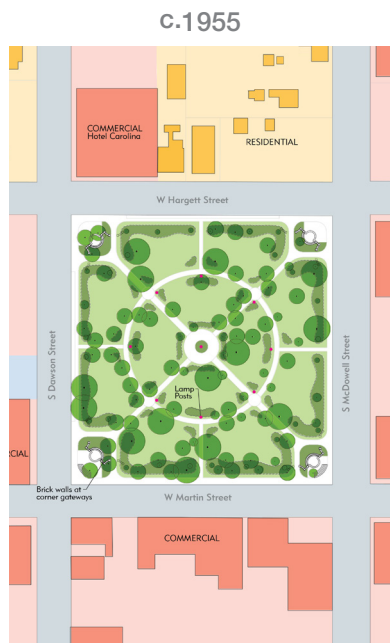
c.1896

Major design features that have been consistent throughout the history of Nash Square

- Strong edge framing the square
- Consistent cross grid paths w/interior circular connection
- Central feature
- Dense tree canopy of diverse tree species
- Anchor/arrival points at each corner



c.1929

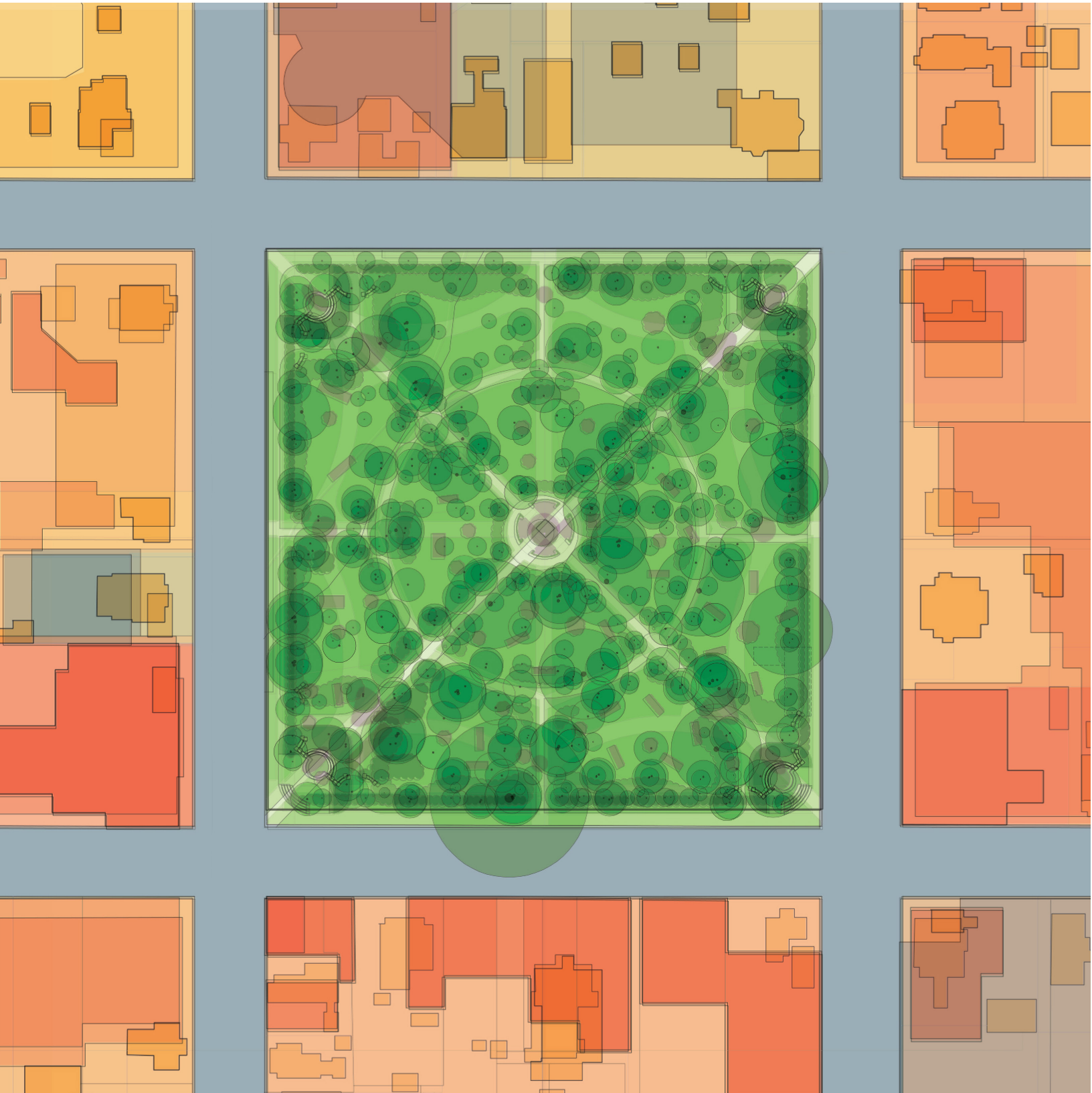


c.1955



c.2018

Overlay of All Six Periods of Development



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