Montford at a Glance

Montford, with a population of 50, was incorporated in 1893. James Edward Rumbough (1861-1941), its only mayor, served until 1905 when the village was annexed by the city of Asheville. The Rumbaugh house still proudly stands on Zillicoa Street.

The Asheville Loan, Construction, and Improvement Company, chartered in 1889, was formed to develop Montford. The enterprise languished until it was taken over by lumber tycoon George Willis Pack in 1895.

George Willis Pack
(1831-1906)

The Montford historic district covers 300 acres and includes more than 600 structures representing a rich diversity of architectural styles, from Queen Anne, to Colonial Revival, arts and crafts to Neo-Classical. Most were constructed between 1890 and 1925. The Montford neighborhood represents one of the richest varieties of architectural styles in North Carolina. The adjacent area, known as Montford Hills, was dubbed a suburb of Montford and built primarily in the 1920s.

Parlor from the Hall,   J. E. Rumbough, Asheville, N. C.

In 1977 a large portion of the Montford neighborhood was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In order to further protect the integrity of the neighborhood in 1981 the Asheville City Council designated Montford its first local historic district with guidelines overseen by the Historic Resources Commission of Asheville & Buncombe County.

The Rankin House is Montford's oldest home built by prominent merchant William Rankin around 1846. His son J.E. Rankin later served as Mayor and Chairman of the Buncombe County Commissioners.

Riverside Cemetery, established in 1885 on 87 acres, is the final resting spot for some of Asheville's most prominent citizens, including Thomas Wolfe, O. Henry (William Sydney Porter), and North Carolina Governors Zebulon Vance and Locke Craig.
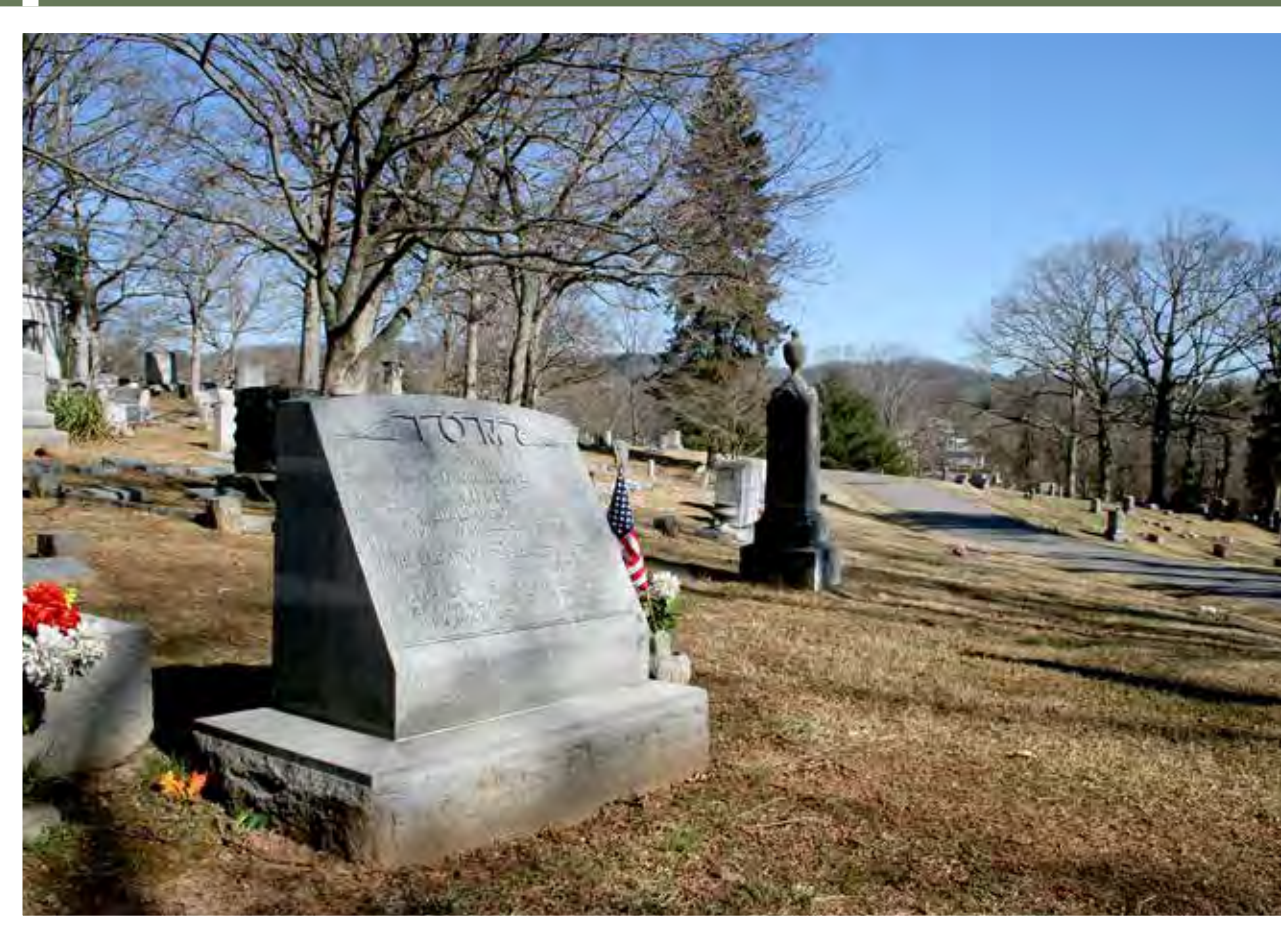
Montford has always been home to an African American population. One area of Montford was known as Stumptown, which existed from the 1880s to about 1970. Stumptown was located off Pearson Drive where the current Montford Recreation center, Hazel Robinson amphitheater and baseball fields are today.

The untimely demise of the grand Coleman house (photo below left) inspired the Montford community to take action to save its historic buildings. Today the Asheville Chamber of Commerce Visitors Center and Lenoir-Rhyne University (photo below right) are located on the site.
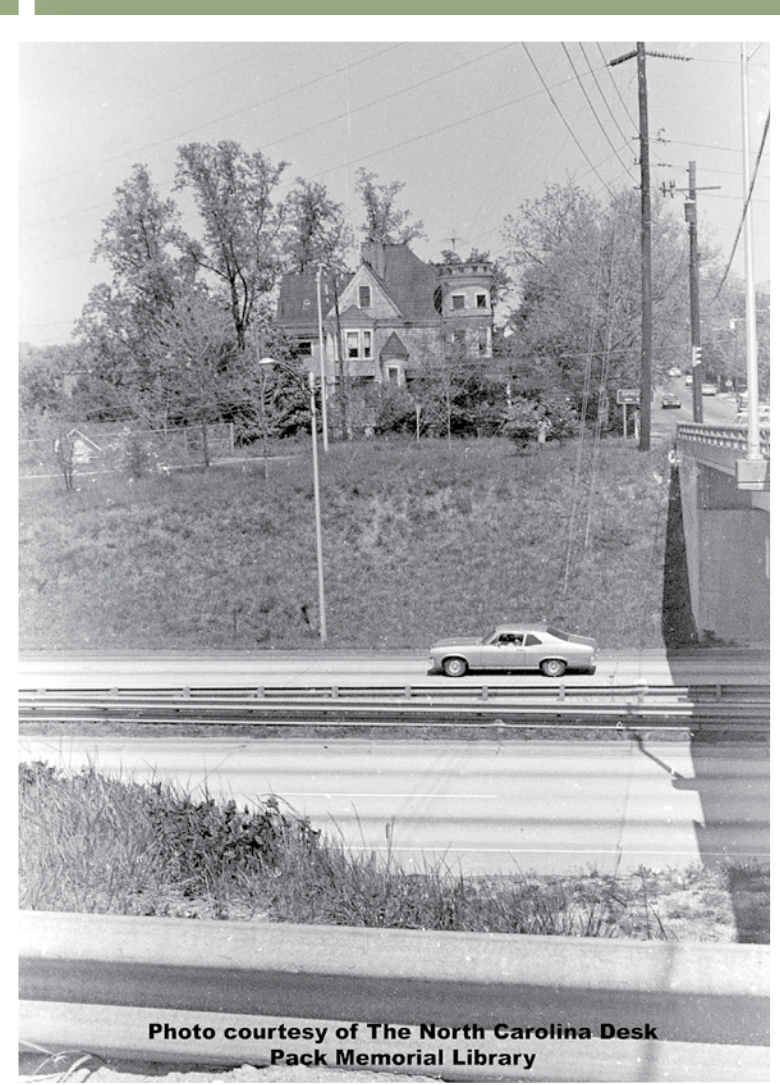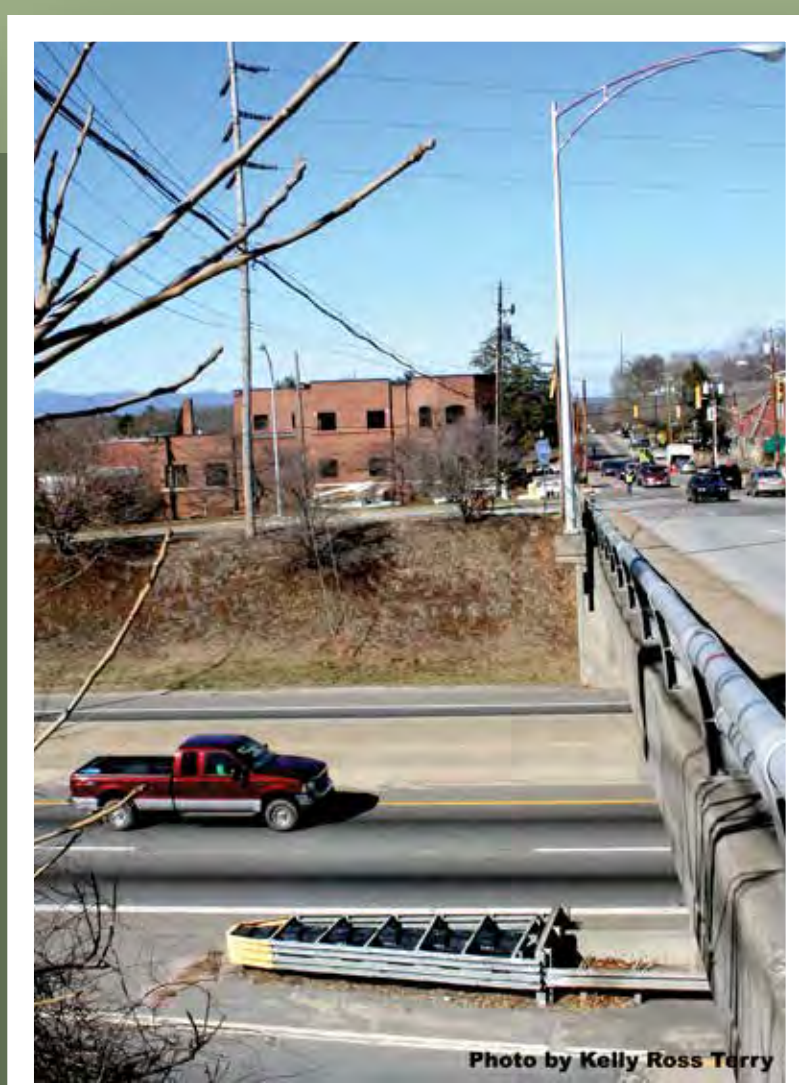
Several residents found immortality in Thomas Wolfe's autobiographical novel, *Look Homeward, Angel.*

The old Highland Hospital, located off the northern end of Montford Avenue, was the scene of a deadly fire in 1948. Among the victims was Zelda Fitzgerald, wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Zelda Fitzgerald

Thomas Wolfe