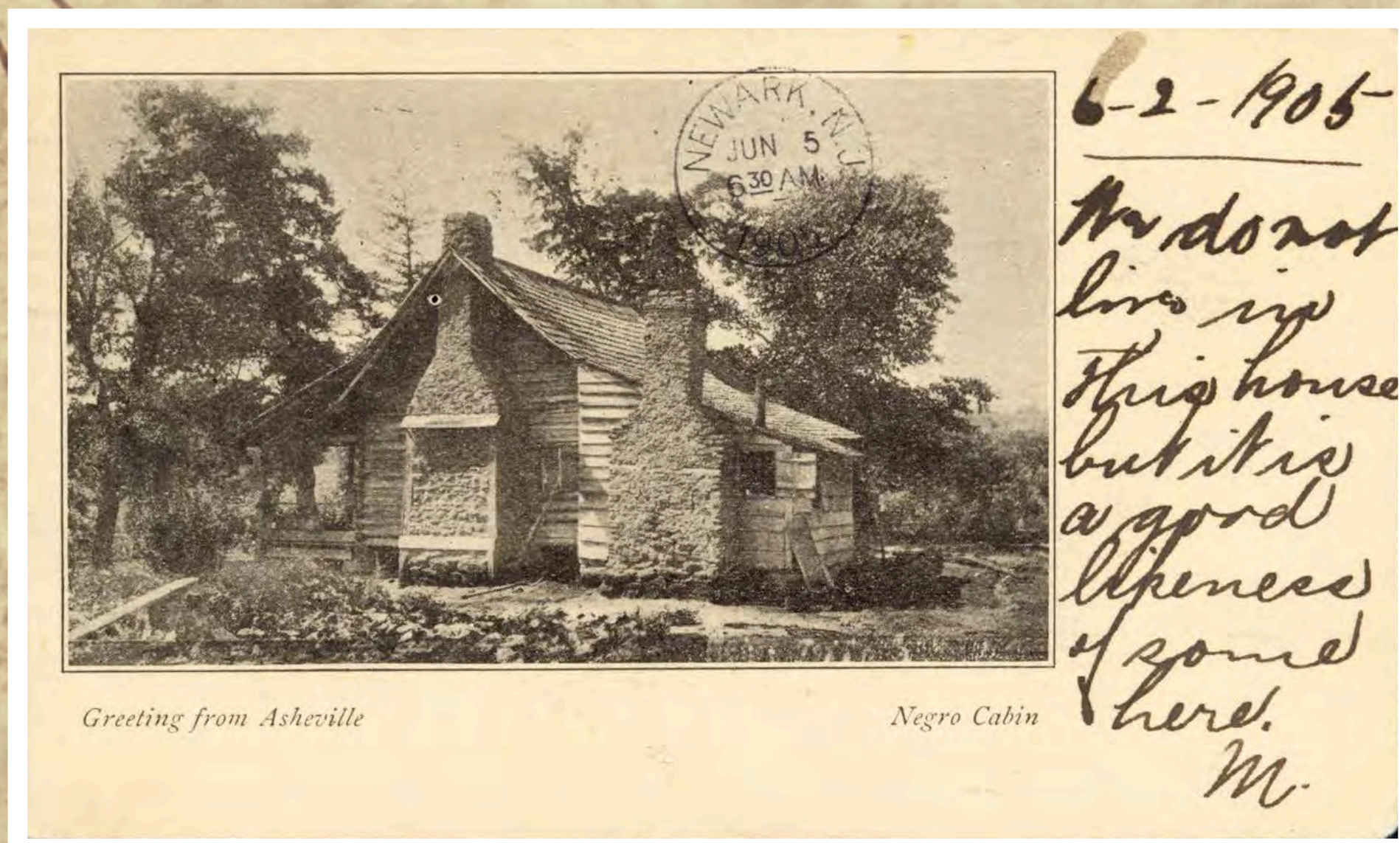


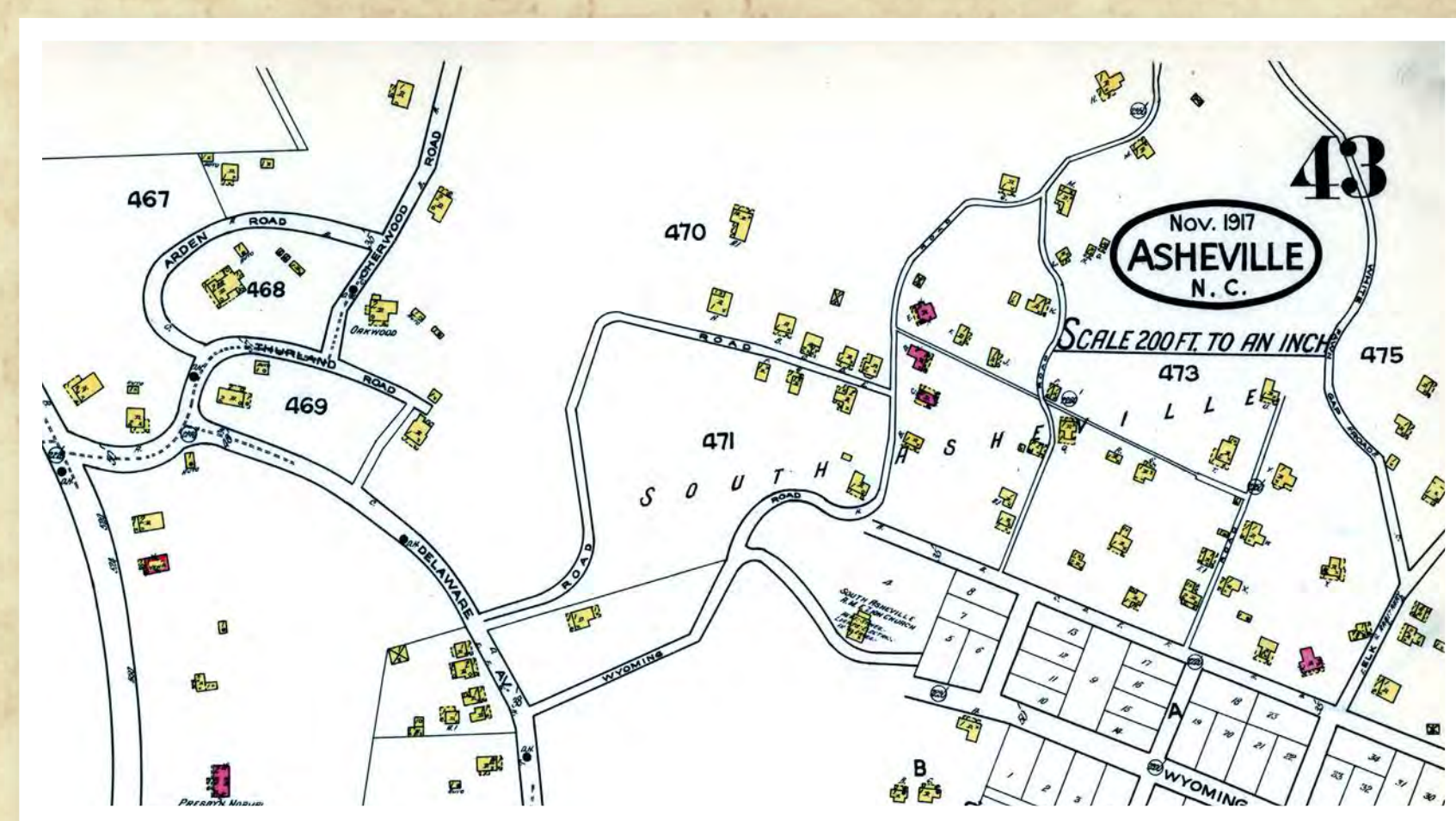
SOUTH ASHEVILLE - *Lost But Not Forgotten*

The South Asheville community was located between South Main Street (Biltmore Avenue) and the south slope of Beaucatcher Mountain adjacent to what eventually became the Asheville suburb of Kenilworth.



Postcard of a typical house in a Black Asheville neighborhood, 1906.

Before 1865 South Asheville was settled by free people of color and enslaved people owned by the Smith and McDowell families. After emancipation and until 1900, South Asheville thrived with Black families that had lived in Buncombe County before 1865



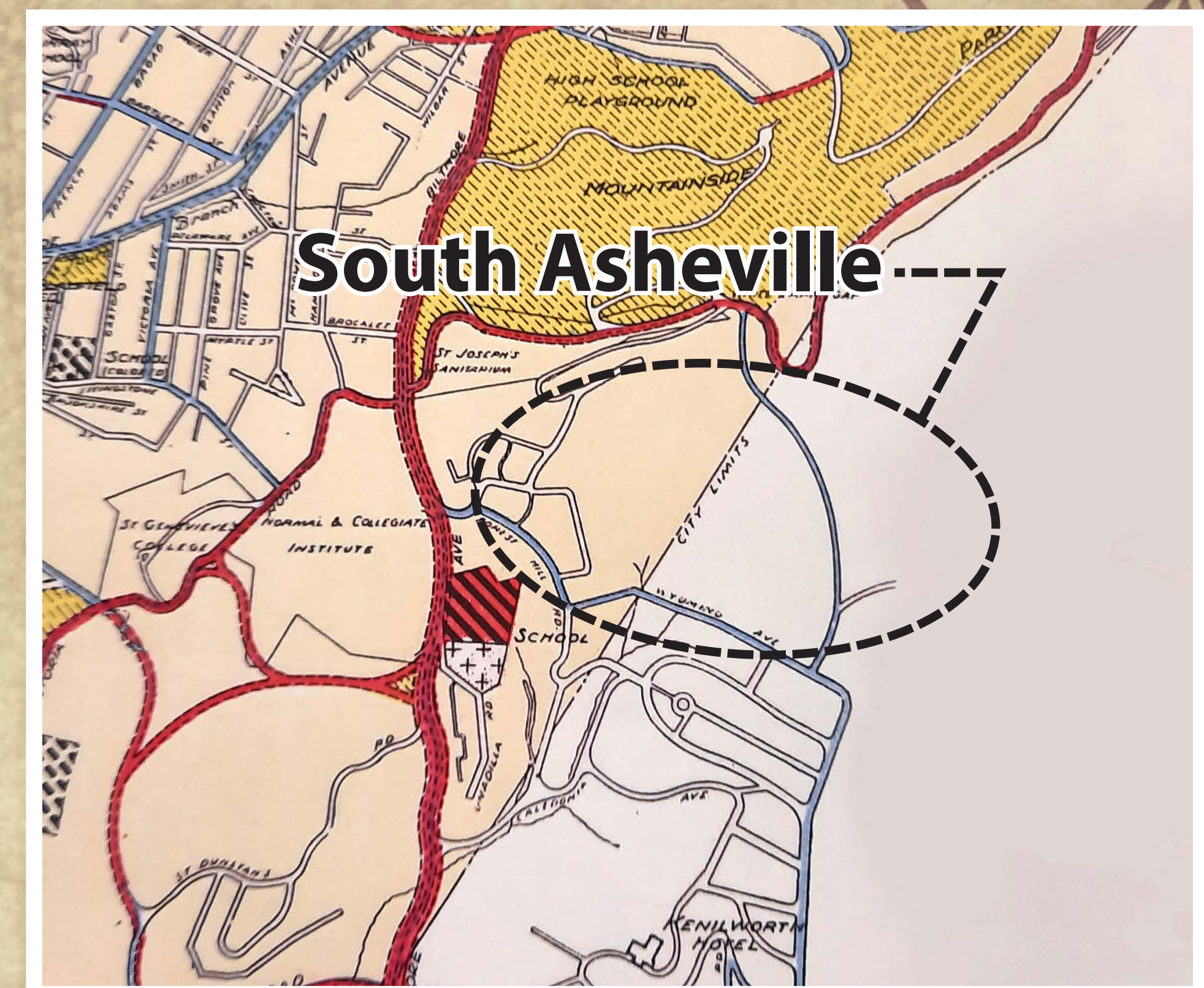
South Asheville was not laid out into streets. Homes were scattered along the hillside, accessible only by unpaved roads and foot paths. Source: ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, November 1917, sheet 43.

and were able to purchase or were given small tracts by the McDowells where they built homes, schools, and churches.

After 1900 additional Black families from Georgia, South Carolina, and areas east of Buncombe County moved to Asheville, looking for better job opportunities, many settling in South Asheville. Some worked for others as butlers, maids, cooks, drivers, carpenters, and



Hired help in the Chiles home in Kenilworth, 1927.



Kenilworth Road was the boundary between white Kenilworth and Black South Asheville. This South Asheville had previously been called Clayton Town, Clayton Hill, Brackettville, or Brackett Town. 1922 City Planning Proposal map.

brick masons. Some, including shoemakers, tailors, and brickmakers, opened their own businesses.



View of "the Negro Colony near Asheville, April: 1892."

In South Asheville there were no building codes. Structures were built using any available materials. The city did not provide water, electricity, or garbage collection. Homes had

no plumbing or electricity. Water for washing or drinking came from nearby springs or creeks.

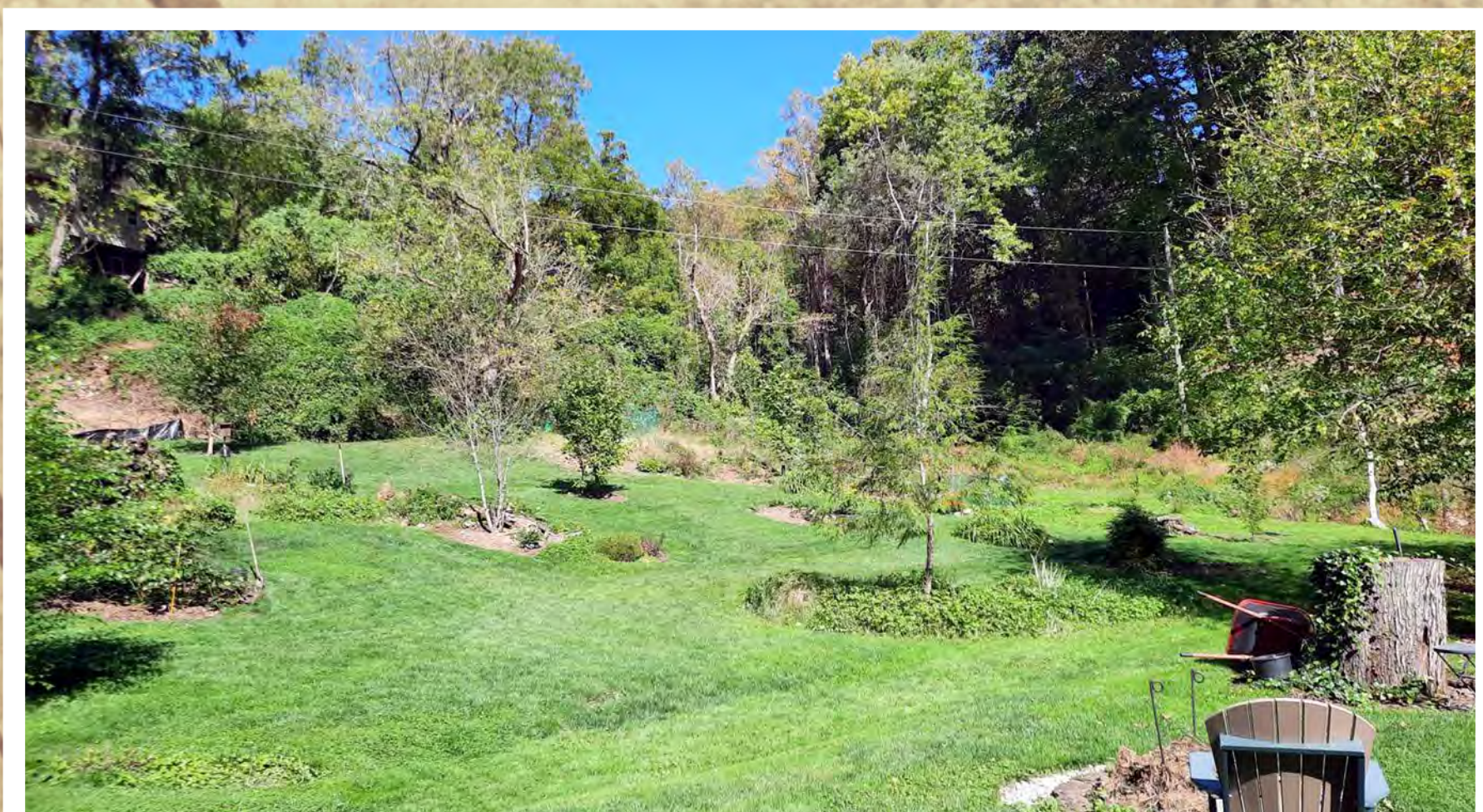
The Land Timeline

1790s – Col. Daniel Smith (1757-1824) bought thousands of acres near the French Broad River in Buncombe County that had been the home of the Cherokee nation, waging war against them. He was the first person in his branch of the Smith family to enslave people.

1831 – James McConnell Smith (1787-1856), Daniel's son, purchased an additional 254-acre tract from Lorenzo D. Patton, which included South Asheville.

1840s – James McConnell Smith constructed a home at 283 Victoria Road, Asheville. Slaves built the house and ran his many businesses. By this time, he owned seventy slaves.

1856 – When he died, James McConnell Smith left his daughter, Sarah Smith McDowell, property that included South Asheville.



The Gibsons had many animals, including cows and chickens, as well as vegetable gardens and fruit trees, whose bounty they shared with the community. Photo of the cow pasture as it looked in 2021. Photo credit Sharon Fahrner.

1857 – Sarah and her husband, William McDowell (1823-1893), purchased the (Smith McDowell) house and supported the development of a settlement for their forty enslaved people as well as free people of color on their land.

1865 – The McDowells slaves were emancipated.

1881 – The Smith McDowell house was sold out of the McDowell family, but part of the cemetery land was owned by the McDowell family until 1981.

1889 – Lazarus Clayton was among the first Black landowners in South Asheville after emancipation. Clayton property was located where Thurland Avenue, Norfolk, Dalton, Williams and McLain Streets, and Battle Road are now.

1890s – Kenilworth began to be developed. The area around the cemetery and the small South Asheville community was known as Kenilworth.

1912 – Sarah Buchanan purchased property on Beaucatcher Mountain, offering 307 lots for sale. St John "A" Baptist church purchased one of these lots, but few others sold.

1918 – South Asheville was listed in the Asheville City Directory as a "Colored settlement southeast of Kenilworth Park" with sixty-seven families, two churches, a cemetery, a public school, and a grocery store.



Smith McDowell house 1875 now home to the Western North Carolina Historical Association (WNCHA). Photo courtesy of WNCHA.

1922 – John Henry and Cora Lee Gibson moved their family to Asheville.

1927 – Dr. W. L. Dunn purchased most of the Buchanan subdivision and kept the property undeveloped. He gave or sold lots to residents of South Asheville. At this time a portion of South Asheville was annexed to the Town of Kenilworth with much controversy.

1931 – Another portion of South Asheville was annexed to the City of Asheville.

1950 – George and Louise Mauldin Gibson purchased a house at 12

Thurland Avenue.

2000s – Beaucatcher Heights development began on formerly undeveloped property. Large expensive homes replaced older small cottages and changed the South Asheville neighborhood.

2018 – Riverlink's Name That Creek program designated Gibson Creek.

2020 – South Asheville Cemetery Association (SAC) and the Kenilworth Residents Association (KRA) installed a creek side sign at Gibson Creek.

2022 – KRA along with a Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County grant placed a history sign in Kenilworth Park.