

MONTFORD HISTORY AT A GLANCE



This photo, taken in 1958 by Citizen-Times photographer Malcolm Gamble, shows an African American family watching the highway grading

1965 - 1974 - Montford was included in the Federal Model Cities Program funding meant to fight the “war on poverty.” Stumptown leaders, including Phyllis Sherrill, protested insufficient sanitation services in their neighborhood as compared to other parts of the city.

1969 - Montford Community Club brought the entire neighborhood together to combat crime. The Montford Newsletter started soon after and is still published monthly.

1970s - Stumptown was all but demolished as part of Asheville’s Urban Renewal program. Streets with historic African American homeownership remained: Gray, Ocala, Harrison, Short, and Young among them.

1973 - The Montford Park Players was founded by Hazel Robinson. Early performances were in Montford Park.

1974 - Klondyke Apartments opened despite Montford homeowners, both Black and white, opposing construction, contending it would devalue their homes.

1976 - The Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County was formed, sparked by the U. S. Bicentennial and in response to threats to local buildings and sites. One of these threats was a proposal to turn Montford Avenue into a through street connecting downtown to U.S. 19/23 (future I 26).

1977 - Part of Montford was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Federal and state tax credits became available for income producing properties and private homes through the National Preservation Act of 1966.

1978 - Montford Recreation Center was dedicated. It was the fulfillment of the dreams of the neighborhood with the leadership of Oralene Simmons, who was a Model Cities Commissioner and later worked for the City of Asheville Parks and Recreation at the Montford Center (now the Tempe Avery Montford Community Center). The first Montford Tour of Homes occurred.



Black History month. Source: Oralene Simmons

1980s - Bed and Breakfast owners converted some of the larger homes to inns. This encouraged restoration and renovation by property owners.

1981 - The Asheville City Council designated a portion of Montford as a local historic district, the first of four local historic districts to come under the jurisdiction of the Historic Resources Commission (HRC) of Asheville and Buncombe County.

1983 - Hazel Robinson Amphitheater was built to house the Montford Park Players, the longest running free Shakespeare company in North Carolina.

1985 - Head of Montford development plan was created to include residential and commercial buildings (located across from the current Asheville Visitor Center).

1987 - Montford Redevelopment Plan is adopted by City Council to improve living conditions in Montford and increase property values.

1990 - Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) was started by neighbors to give loans to residents for home repairs. Later the NHS built affordable housing but did not protect it with covenants.

1993 - The Asheville Police Department located a substation at 235 Montford Avenue in the Montford Resource Center. The center served as a location to organize



Performance at the Tempe Avery Montford Center. Source: Oralene Simmons

and effect change. The neighborhood paid half the rent. The Community Club had split into the Montford Resource Center and Historic Montford (which included residents of the historic district). Historic Montford was established as a separate organization for those in the historic district.

1995 - Despite protests, the North Carolina Department of Transportation expanded Broadway Street resulting in the demolition of homes on both sides of the street.

2001 - The newly formed Montford Neighborhood Association (MNA) composed a 2025 Vision Plan, the first neighborhood to submit one to the city.



Montford Music and Arts Festival. Ben Scales on right. Source: Page Albright

2002 - The first Montford Music and Arts Festival was held to encourage visitors to the neighborhood and increase pride. The MNA helped to develop the Reed Creek Greenway plan and later partnered with UNC Asheville and Riverlink to fund a section.

2004 - Present - MNA became a nonprofit. Today the MNA sponsors events and raises funds for neighborhood improvement projects, such as refurbishing the playground at Klondyke and donating funds to the Tempie Avery Recreation Center for their programs. The MNA sponsors a Holiday Tour of Homes, the Montford Music and Arts Festival, garden tours, studio tours and more.

2009 - The Montford Listserv began to improve neighborhood communication.



Clown Day at the Tempe Avery Montford Center, Oralene Simmons left and Sharla Jefferson on the right. Source: Oralene Simmons



Structures lost to the construction of the expressway (I-240) in the late 1950s. Maps are Sanborn Insurance maps for 1925.

Map on the left: Montford Avenue west to Butterick, south of Hill Street.

Map on the right: Montford east to Broadway, south of Cherry Street

