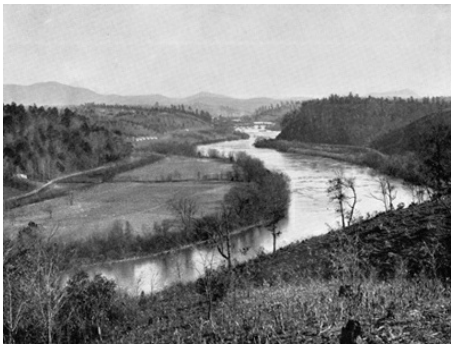
Asheville [1]

Asheville

by Lisa Gregory
Government & Heritage Library [2], 2010.

See also: Pisgah National Forest [3]; Biltmore House; [4]Asheville [5] (UNC Press)



View of the French Broad River above Asheville (Courtesy North Carolina State Archives)

[6]Asheville, whose namesake is North Carolina governor Samuel Ashe [7], is located in Buncombe County [8] in Western North Carolina at the edge of Appalachia [9]. Situated in thick forests [10] along the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers, the area was heavily traveled and settled by Native Americans, especially the Cherokee [11], before Europeans moved into the area after the Revolutionary War [12]. Originally called "Morristown," it was renamed "Asheville" and incorporated in 1797.

Expansion of the western part of North Carolina, including Asheville, remained slow until the Buncombe Turnpike [13] (1828) and Western North Carolina Railroad [14] (1880) made inroads to that part of the state. The area's remote but increasingly accessible nature contributed to its therapeutic use for those suffering from illnesses like tuberculosis [15].

In 1887, George Washington Vanderbilt [16] commissioned Biltmore House [17], built by Richard Morris Hunt [18] with landscaping designed by Frederick Law Olmsted [19] and surrounded by a sprawling 125,000 acre estate. The Biltmore Forest School [20], begun in part to train forest managers for the estate and nearby Pisgah Forest, was the first forestry school in America. The estate, which contributed greatly to Asheville's standing as a retreat and tourist destination, still draws large numbers of visitors today.

Thomas Wolfe Memorial (Courtesy flickr user larry wfu)

[21]

In addition to its natural attraction as a destination along the Blue Ridge Parkway [22], Asheville also has a history of drawing artists to the area. The author Thomas Wolfe [23] was born in Asheville in 1900 and described a fictionalized version of Asheville in his first novel, *Look Homeward, Angel.* [24] Other renowned twentieth century authors who found their way to Asheville include William Sidney Porter (O. Henry) [25], F. Scott Fitzgerald [26], and Carl Sandburg. [27] Black Mountain College [28], an experimental college designed to educate the whole student through living in a close-knit community, brought numerous artists, authors, and thinkers of the 20th century to the Asheville area during its brief existence (1933-1957).

With institutions like the Southern Highland Craft Guild [29] and a downtown district that still exhibits much of its original architecture, tourism and hospitality are some of Asheville's chief industries [30] today.

Asheville's estimated population:

1980: 54,022
1990: 61,855
2000: 68,889
2008: 78,313

Asheville's land area (square miles):

1980: 29.09
1990: 34.118
2000: 40.921
2008: 44.230

Data from the NC State Data Center:

References and additional resources:

"Asheville and environs: The built environment." #

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Image credits:

View of the French Broad River above Asheville. nd. OP_110. North Carolina State Archives. https://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/4821470718/ [6]

Thomas Wolfe home. 2004. Image courtesy of flickr user larry wfu.https://www.flickr.com/photos/larrywfu/348226736/ [21]

Subjects:
100 North Carolina Icons [38]
Cities [39]
Authors:
Gregory, Lisa [40]
Origin - location:
Buncombe County [41]
Asheville [42]
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