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# Comprehensive Architectural and Landscape Survey for Penderlea, North Carolina

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## I. Project Summary

This report is a narrative description of the survey work conducted to identify historic resources in Penderlea, North Carolina. The survey documents architectural resources in the community, addresses the key components of the landscape, and evaluates the historic significance of the identified properties. This survey is the first step in listing the community in the National Register of Historic Places. After the conclusion of the survey phase, a nomination will be prepared by the consultants to list a portion of the community as a National Register District.

This survey report is based upon both data collected during multiple days of fieldwork assessing the architectural and landscape resources in Penderlea, and research on the community. Photographs, site forms with descriptive details, and a tax parcel map were assembled for each architectural resource and are included in the survey files that accompany this report. Duplicate copies of final site forms, maps, and photos will be provided to the Penderlea Homestead Museum and the North Carolina State Historic

Preservation Office (NC-SHPO). The consulting team recognizes that there is additional local knowledge on individual properties that may not be incorporated in the survey materials.

We hope that the Penderlea Homestead Museum will see the survey as the first step in

creating an archive of information on each property and will continue to add information and anecdotes to the survey files as additional information is available.

The National Register nomination and the boundaries for a proposed National Register district will be based on this survey. The accompanying survey files include a map with suggested boundaries for the proposed National Register historic district and a list of properties surveyed by



Figure 1 - Sign on a nearby road advertising government involvement at Penderlea (Library of Congress)

address. Survey forms indicate whether each property contributes to the significance of the proposed historic district, using the assumption that the period of significance will end in 1962.

During the nomination phase of this project further discussion between the consulting team and the NC-SHPO will determine a period of significance for the proposed district, finalized boundaries and a finalized list of contributing resources for the National Register nomination.

## II. Project Objectives

Penderlea has significant associations with prominent landscape designers and planners and it exemplifies the efforts of numerous New Deal programs of the federal government. But to see Penderlea as a government project is short-sighted. Seventy-five years after its beginning the community has a vitality and cohesion that are rare, whether in an agricultural area or urban center. People here know their neighbors and have great pride in their shared history. Many families trace their connection to Penderlea back to early days and are eager to share it with others. Even residents who have moved to



Figure 2 - Children in converted CCC building for Sunday School, 1936 (Library of Congress)

Penderlea in more recent times have an understanding of the history of their property and the larger community. The Penderlea Homestead Museum aims to share the unique history of Penderlea with others and has established their collection in one of the original Penderlea houses. The Museum also has taken a central role in keeping traditions alive by arranging community gatherings such as Homestead Day. The Penderlea Homestead Museum has undertaken this survey for the creation of a National Register Historic District to recognize, honor, and protect this unique place.

### III. Project Methodology

The Penderlea Homestead Museum, with technical assistance from the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) began this historic resources survey project with the goal of listing a large portion of the Penderlea community's approximately 4,500 acres in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register recognizes buildings, sites, structures, objects and districts that are significantly associated with one or more important themes in American history. The Penderlea Homestead Museum has been the driving force behind this effort, raising awareness about their community, organizing community events, and conducting the fundraising campaign.

In consultation with the HPO, the Museum chose the consulting team proposed by Sidebottom Preservation, LLC: Richard Sidebottom, Ralph Muldrow, Sarah Fick, and James L. Ward, all of Charleston, South Carolina. Mr. Sidebottom managed the project and was responsible for collecting data on survey cards, managing the survey database, the list of resources surveyed, photo naming and organization, revisions and additions to survey data, and layout of the final survey report. Mr. Muldrow was the only survey member with a previous knowledge of Penderlea and contributed his previous research on John Nolen, collected photos and completed survey cards for a portion of the properties. Ms. Fick collected photos and completed survey cards for a portion of properties, collaborated on eligibility determinations for architectural resources, conducted thorough research on the history of Penderlea, Hugh MacRae, and the federal entities managing the project, and authored the majority of the history found in the final survey report. Mr. Ward collected GIS information and aerial images that were used throughout the project, mapped each surveyed resource based on tax parcel data, conducted research on the history of the Penderlea landscape, and wrote the landscape portions of the survey report.

Work on the project began in May of 2010 with a meeting between Richard Sidebottom, Ralph Muldrow, and members of the Penderlea Homestead Museum board of directors. During this

meeting the group discussed the history of the community and studied maps and other resources available at the Penderlea Homestead Museum. Historic research ensued in tandem with the fieldwork. *The Roots of Penderlea*, written by Penderlea native Ann S. Cottle, and scrapbooks at the archives of the Penderlea Museum provided the most detailed information about Penderlea. The museum collections include copies of newsletters, maps, photographs, and recollections of life at Penderlea, as well as objects and artifacts displayed in an original Penderlea house. Carolyn Booth's novel *A Chosen Few*, set in part in Penderlea, enhanced the project team's understanding of life for the families at the project. Research by Ralph Muldrow at the Kroch Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Cornell University was consulted regarding John Nolen. Additional information was found in the Pender County Library, including newspaper articles, maps, and data from the Pender County Geographic Information System. Interviews and recollections from long-time residents were especially helpful, as was a large collection of photographs taken in Penderlea during the 1930s by the United States Farm Security Administration that are now available online through the Library of Congress's American Memory project. These photos record the progress and conditions at Penderlea in its early stages.

The survey project team documented all buildings and structures in Penderlea and recommended which properties would contribute to the significance of a Penderlea Homestead National Register Historic District. The community was identified in 1998 during the comprehensive architectural survey of Pender County as potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The 1998 survey focused on the community buildings of Penderlea, recording seven such properties, and included a preliminary assessment of the extant houses and landscape elements. In 2009, after the Penderlea Homestead Museum expressed an interest in nominating the community to the National Register, staff of the North Carolina HPO conducted a "windshield survey" of the

entire community, noting historic structures on a topographic map. The annotated map was provided to the consultants.

Fieldwork began the week of May 24, 2010, with all members of the project team collecting data on extant buildings and landscape features. Sarah Fick joined Mr. Sidebottom and Mr. Muldrow in recording architectural resources, while Jim Ward surveyed landscape features. Penderlea residents were informed by the Penderlea Homestead Museum of the fieldwork, and they generously cooperated with team members. In total, 273 properties with at least one building or structure were recorded with photographs and HPO survey forms, including those that had been recorded previously. Unlike the typical historic survey that almost entirely evaluates architectural resources as they convey the historic significance of a place, the scale of buildings at Penderlea and their relationship to each other means little without an understanding of the agricultural landscape in which they were placed. For this reason, the survey team also evaluated properties without architectural resources whose landscape features are character-defining elements of the Penderlea community. Significant landscape features are noted in the survey report and on the survey map, and selected parcels that serve as representative examples of important landscape elements are discussed in the evaluation of survey resources. Landscape features will be justified as resource types that contribute to the significance of the proposed “Penderlea Homesteads” National Register historic district.

Pender County GIS services provided the consulting team with map layers to serve as the base of survey maps. Tax parcel identification numbers and other information from the Pender County tax assessor’s office were provided and used to key survey cards, data collected in the field and eligibility recommendations to maps of the survey area. The survey team also consulted aerial photographic images from Google Earth, tax maps, and historical maps to inform field work and to assist with checking data entered in the database. These sources as well as the online version of the

Pender County GIS proved extremely valuable in surveying landscape features and large parcels of property not visible from the public right-of-way.

Each surveyor carried a letter of introduction from the Penderlea Homestead Museum. During field survey, consultants recorded buildings in the survey area with photographs, notes about physical features, and map locations, and contacted residents to collect information about buildings, landscape, and architectural and agricultural history. Members of the community were very helpful with interviews and recollections.

A survey site number (provided by the HPO) was assigned to every tax parcel that contained at least one architectural resource. A photograph was taken of every accessible building and structure on the parcel regardless of age or historic significance. Mobile homes were recorded, either as the primary resource on a property or an outbuilding on a parcel which also included a permanent house. Photographs were taken of each building in the Lea Acres subdivision, developed during the 1970s and comprising fifty houses and a water pumping station, but the entire subdivision is recorded on one survey record.

In numerous instances, portions of properties were not visible from the public road. For properties that appeared (from aerial photography or based on the primary resource at the property) to have significant resources that were not accessible, surveyors attempted to contact the occupant at the site. Where these resources remained inaccessible, and in a few instances where team members were told not to enter properties or encountered “no trespassing” signs, notations were made in the narrative description on the survey record.

On August 16, 2010, a public meeting was held to introduce the initial findings of the survey to the Penderlea community and request local assistance in collecting additional information. Mr. Sidebottom and Mr. Muldrow explained the survey process and the historic resource types that had

been identified. Mr. Sidebottom revisited several properties during this visit to correct inconsistencies in data collection and to conduct additional interviews.

The North Carolina HPO provided the consulting team with a shell Access database which included seven previously recorded architectural resources: Potts Memorial Presbyterian Church (PD0150), the Hosiery Mill (PD0151), Assembly of God Church (PD0152), Penderlea Baptist Church (PD0153), the former Potato Storehouse (PD0154), the Firehouse and Community Center (PD0155), and the Penderlea School (PD0156). These properties were resurveyed and their records updated in the database. Additional entries were made to the database for each property surveyed. During data entry, each survey property was linked to the Pender County tax parcel number. Photograph files were named according to the NC survey manual guidelines. A report form generated from the database on each property and printed photograph proofs were compiled into paper files.

At each stage of the survey, the consulting team has received comments from the HPO staff and has incorporated those comments into final survey materials. Final versions of all site forms, maps, and photos produced by the survey team have been provided to both the Penderlea Homestead Museum and the North Carolina HPO.

## IV. Background and History of Penderlea

A traveler driving through Penderlea sees a verdant area with small, one-story houses appearing intermittently in the agricultural landscape of row crops, pastures, and gardens. It seems like the ordinary development of an agricultural community, but the planning behind this rural landscape is more orchestrated and its history more complicated. Penderlea began as a planned rural community, laid out and developed beginning in 1933 as one of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal projects on a forested tract that had been largely undeveloped since the Civil War.

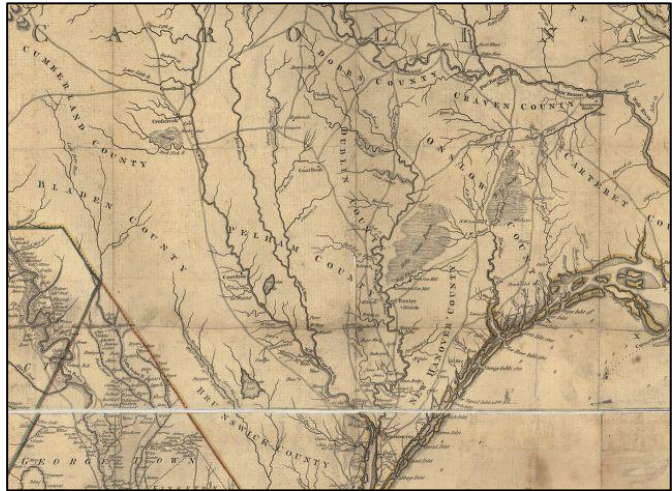


Figure 3- Henry Mouzon, "An accurate map of North and South Carolina ... from actual surveys by Henry Mouzon and others." London, 1775 (Library of Congress)

### Overview History of the Area

The Pender County community of Penderlea is located eleven miles west of Burgaw, the county seat. Pender is one of the state's post-Civil War political subdivisions; until 1875, the area of today's Pender County comprised the northern two-thirds of New Hanover County.<sup>1</sup>

This area of North Carolina was settled by British colonists in the late 1720s, and before the Revolutionary War it was crossed with roads and dotted with farms and plantations (Figure 3).<sup>2</sup> The rural economy was based on forest products - naval stores (tar, pitch and turpentine) and lumber - farming for home consumption, and among the plantation owners, rice for export. Producers found

<sup>1</sup> Ed Turberg, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Pender County, North Carolina* (Raleigh: North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, 1998), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Mouzon, "An accurate map of North and South Carolina ... from actual surveys by Henry Mouzon and others." London, 1775. American Memory, Library of Congress <http://memory.loc.gov/>. Ann S. Cottle, in *The Roots of Penderlea. A Memory of a New Deal Homestead Community* (University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2008), p. 4, identifies the landholders above Bergaw Creek as David Williams and Benjamin Robinson.

their primary markets in the port city of Wilmington. Before 1780, nearly half the landowners in New Hanover County (including today's Pender County) owned less than 400 acres.<sup>3</sup> After the Revolution, cotton planting became common on new fields cleared by lumbering, and peanuts became an important crop in the 1850s.<sup>4</sup>

The Wilmington and Weldon Railroad line (later absorbed by the Atlantic Coast Line), was completed in 1840. The track ran north-south through Pender County several miles east of the settlement of Sills Creek (no longer extant), which was just north of the area that would become Penderlea (Figure 4).<sup>5</sup>

Available nineteenth-century maps do not give the names of landowners or churches in the Penderlea area, but cemetery records attest to certain occupants, including Edward Pigford (1779-1863) and several members of his family who were buried in the cemetery at Mt. Edwards Presbyterian Church (founded 1851). The twentieth century Potts Memorial Presbyterian Church stands on the former Pigford plantation.<sup>6</sup>

Pender County had a population of 8,000 in 1875, the year it was separated from New Hanover County. About two-thirds of the county's area was given over to woodlands. By 1890, a steady migration of small farmers onto former plantation lands brought the population to 12,514 (5,967 white, 6,547 black). In the first decades of the twentieth century, growth slowed and increases were small, if any.<sup>7</sup>

In 1906, Thomas Wilson and his wife sold 10,000 acres in Pender County, which included the Pigford plantation, to Hugh MacRae, who carried out the transaction through his North Carolina Real Estate Trust Company, paying the Wilsons \$12 an acre. Although the lumber industry was

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<sup>3</sup> Turberg, *Historic and Architectural Resources*, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Turberg, *Historic and Architectural Resources*, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> "Cooke's New Map of the State of North Carolina" (New York: J. H. Colton Co., 1857) American Memory, Library of Congress <http://memory.loc.gov/>.

<sup>6</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Turberg, *Historic and Architectural Resources*, pp. 37-39.

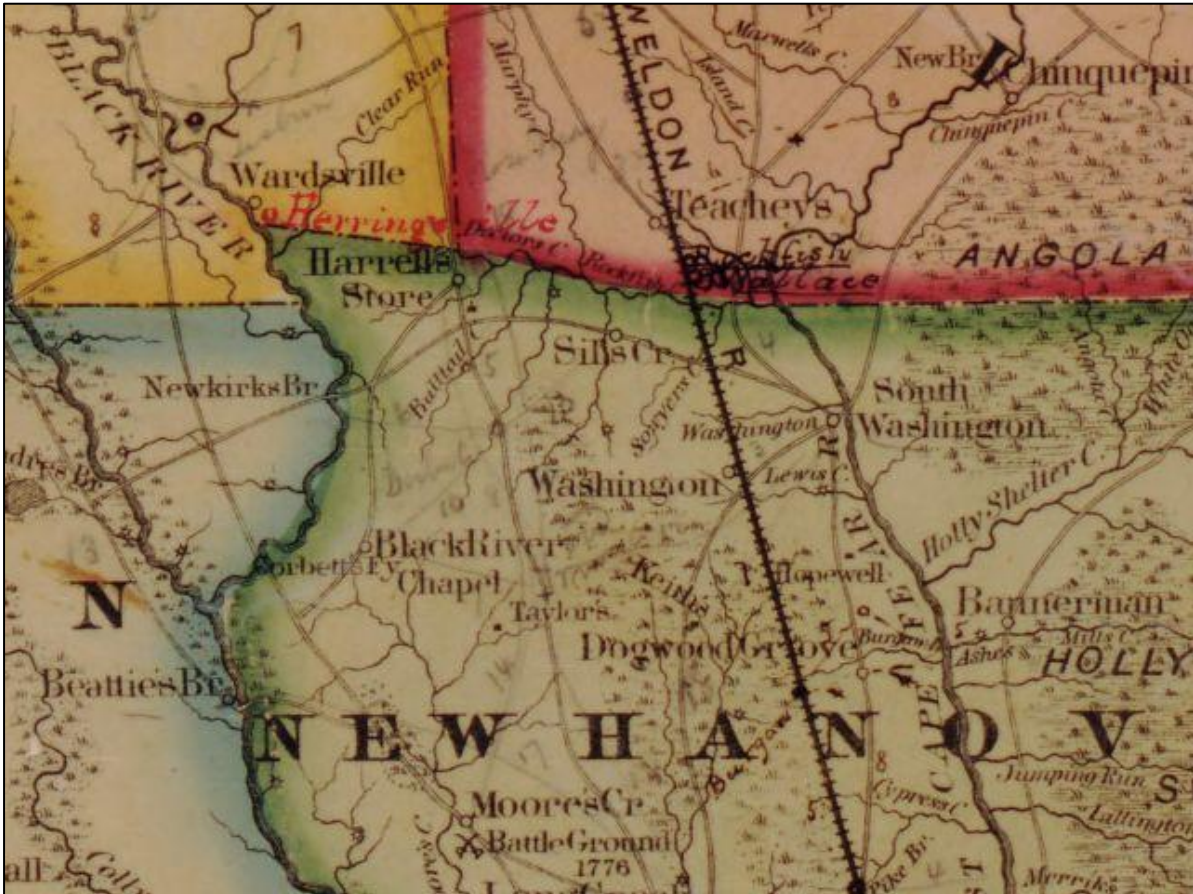


Figure 4 – A portion of “Cooke's New Map of North and South Carolina” from 1857 shows the rail line running through Wallace and Watha (Washington) with locations marked for a settlement just north of Penderlea called “Sills Creek” where today's Willard Road crosses the creek. (Library of Congress)

booming, MacRae did not timber the land. It remained unused and heavily forested until 1933.<sup>8</sup>

### Hugh MacRae, The Farm City, and John Nolen

Hugh MacRae was a Wilmington business executive and real estate developer whose successful investments allowed him to pursue an interest in agricultural improvement through crop diversification and paternalistic management. MacRae began in the early twentieth century with farm colonies populated by European immigrants, attempted a comprehensively-planned Farm City in the mid-1920s, and finally saw the creation of a complete farm town when his program was implemented at Penderlea, North Carolina. He argued that single-crop farming depleted the land,

<sup>8</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 7, 9. Turberg, *Historic and Architectural Resources*, p. 14.

and with each of these schemes, his overall goal was to diversify beyond the region's traditional cash crops of cotton, corn and tobacco.<sup>9</sup>

The son of Donald MacRae, a prominent Wilmington businessman, Hugh MacRae (1865-1951) graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1885. He began his career in western North Carolina as a mining engineer. MacRae left the mining industry in 1889, when he and his father completed the purchase of some 15,570 acres of land in Avery County, including parts of Grandfather Mountain and Sugar Mountain, and formed the Linville Improvement Company to develop a golf course and resort community.

Upon Donald MacRae's death in 1892, Hugh MacRae returned to Wilmington and soon became president of his father's firm, the Wilmington Cotton Mills Company. He became head of the Wilmington Gas Light Company, which also had an interest in an electric trolley line, and in 1902 MacRae organized the Consolidated Railway and Power Company. Through this enterprise (which became Tide Water Power Company in 1907), MacRae extended the Wilmington Street Railway to Wrightsville Beach and developed several suburban communities. In 1905, Hugh MacRae launched the Carolina Trucking and Development Company, and began a thoroughly innovative development project: to establish a chain of settlements along the railroad line, drain the land for truck farms, and settle the farms with immigrants.<sup>10</sup>

MacRae's farm colonies responded to several trends of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: North Carolina's dwindling pool of cheap farm labor, the emphasis on truck farming that followed the development of refrigerated train cars, and the flood of European immigrants into the United States. MacRae's goal of importing white European farm workers was

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<sup>9</sup> Turberg, *Historic and Architectural Resources*, pp. 40-42.

<sup>10</sup> Ben Steelman, "Who is Hugh MacRae?" *Wilmington Star News Online*. [www.myreporter.com/?p=1073](http://www.myreporter.com/?p=1073). Accessed August 18, 2011. Ralph Grizzle, "Hugh MacRae." *Ralph Grizzle's Online Portfolio*. [www.kenilworthmedia.com/cv/ourstate/people/MacRae.htm](http://www.kenilworthmedia.com/cv/ourstate/people/MacRae.htm). Accessed August 18, 2011. Robert W. Vincent, "North Carolina's First Great Colonization Movement. A History of the Carolina Trucking Development Company's Project and the Results Accomplished." *Charlotte Observer*, April 26, 1908.

endorsed by North Carolina's political leaders. For example, in 1905 Governor Robert Glenn stated, "There is nothing that the State needs more than an influx of thrifty, law-abiding people, ... We have here great tracts of unoccupied land, some of it very fertile and adapted to almost any of the staple crops. Trucking is in its infancy in North Carolina, and money is being made out of it now."<sup>11</sup>

MacRae secured options on 453,000 acres in Pender and New Hanover counties, and after soil tests, his company bought the best of the land: about 100,000 acres in five separate tracts. He employed civil engineers to survey the tracts, design drainage systems, lay out streets and farms, and select locations for houses. Each colony included a depot along the Atlantic Coast Line railway, whose refrigerated cars would carry produce to northern markets. In November 1905, MacRae hired C. L. Fisher of Missouri as his general agent. Fisher brought with him twenty farmers from Illinois, several of whom invested in farmsteads at Castle Hayne, a New Hanover County hamlet that already had a train stop.<sup>12</sup>

For each colony, MacRae hired superintendents who were experts in soils and/or agriculture. He enlisted agents in northern cities to secure "desirable foreign colonists," who were required to be men with families. New farmers put their first crops in the ground, then the company employed them building roads and ditches while they awaited the first harvest. After MacRae's colonies yielded large vegetable crops in 1907, he began publicizing his venture closer to home. In April 1908, sixty Wilmington businessmen toured his five colonies, where more than 600 farmers had settled: Castle Hayne and Marathon in New Hanover County, Artesia and New Berlin in Columbus County, and St. Helena in Pender County.<sup>13</sup>

Wealthy, well-educated, well-connected, and idealistic, MacRae was acquainted with some of the most influential land-use experts of the early twentieth century. He began considering laying

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<sup>11</sup> "The Matter of Immigration." *Charlotte Observer*, March 20, 1905. "Scarcity of Farm Labor. Sec. Bruner Writes Farmers." *Charlotte Observer*, March 26, 1905.

<sup>12</sup> Vincent, "North Carolina's First Great Colonization Movement."

<sup>13</sup> Vincent, "North Carolina's First Great Colonization Movement."

out a farm city – a planned rural community – on the 10,000-acre Pender County tract he had bought from Thomas Wilson. In 1920, MacRae asked for an opinion and recommendations from Thomas Adams, a native of Scotland who was then a consultant to Canada's Commission of Conservation. As a founding member of both the American Institute of Planners (1917) and the Canadian Institute of Planners (1919), Adams was the international leader of the new field of community planning. MacRae was sure that Adams's endorsement of the Farm City idea – both the land and the scheme – would be helpful in finding investors. After Thomas Adams expressed his favorable opinion of the project, MacRae moved ahead. He retained the partnership of John Nolen and Philip W. Foster, city and rural planners of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to lay out a schematic town using his "Wilson Tract" as an example.<sup>14</sup>

John Nolen (1867-1937) was a prominent community planner whose academic and professional training combined business, social planning, and landscape architecture. An 1893 graduate of the Wharton School of Finance and Economics at the University of Pennsylvania, he earned a Master's Degree in 1905 from the School of Landscape Architecture at Harvard University, where he studied under Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. Nolen became a fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1910, the year he joined the National Housing Association as a founding member. During the thirty years he practiced as a landscape architect and town planner, Nolen designed over 450 projects, whose scale ranged from individual gardens to subdivisions for the

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<sup>14</sup> Hugh MacRae, "Vitalizing the Nation and Conserving Human Units Through the Development of Agricultural Communities." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 63, "National Industries and the Federal Government" (Jan., 1916), pp. 278-286. [www.jstor.org/stable/1012949](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1012949). Accessed August 22, 2011. Michael Simpson, "Thomas Adams and the Modern Planning Movement: Britain, Canada and the United States 1900-1940." (London and New York: Mansell Publishing Company, 1985), cited in "Thomas Adams (1871-1940): from Carllops to the Garden Cities of Tomorrow." [www.kosmoid.net/planning/adams](http://www.kosmoid.net/planning/adams). "An American 'Farm-City'." (*World Agriculture*, Vol. II, no. 1. Spring and Summer, 1921. Amherst, MA: World Agricultural Society.) "Civic News." *The Survey* Vol. 48, April-September 1922 (Survey Associates, Charity Organization Society of the City of New York). George H. Gall, "Making Farm Life Profitable and Pleasant." (*National Real Estate Journal*, May 21, 1923) cited in *Housing*. Vol. 12 (National Housing Association, 1922). [www.googlebooks.com](http://www.googlebooks.com)

affluent to entire new towns. All the while, he wrote journal articles and served on professional committees.<sup>15</sup>

When Hugh MacRae's firm, Farm Cities Corporation of America, was chartered in 1921, the prospectus touted the involvement of Thomas Adams and John Nolen and listed an advisory council of fifty prominent men and women – a cross-section of the nation's agricultural leaders, government officials, and academics. The philosophy behind the farm city was the same as that of MacRae's European colonies. He did not intend to operate tenant or sharecropper farms: farmers would buy their plots, and MacRae or his designate would direct their crop selection. The farmers would receive "expert advice and guidance, not only in raising crops, but in the organization and management of efficient cooperative associations for buying and selling. ... The town center will develop as the farms are occupied and there will follow, to such an extent as seems desirable, the establishment of industries that will be complementary to agriculture."<sup>16</sup>

The planned farm city (Figure 5) seemed feasible and attractive to many influential people with a variety of perspectives. However, the advisory council members were not investors. Construction of the farm city would be an enormous undertaking with huge up-front expenses for engineering roads and drainage systems, clearing crop fields, and building houses. In the end, the project failed without ground having ever been broken. The Farm City Corporation's most significant

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<sup>15</sup> John Hancock, *John Nolen and the American City Planning Movement: a History of Culture Change and Community Response, 1900-1940* (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, 1964). "Village of Mariemont" National Historic Landmark Nomination (U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2007). John Nolen's papers at Cornell University include his personal copies of drawings related to work for Hugh MacRae and the federal government. Numerous maps and drawings from this collection have recently been made available online through the library's website. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, John Nolen papers, 1890-1938, 1954-1960. Selected images are online at <http://library24.library.cornell.edu:8280/luna/servlet/s/y792wf>

<sup>16</sup> Incorporated in Delaware, Farm Cities was headquartered in New York City. "An American 'Farm-City'." Gall, "Making Farm Life Profitable."

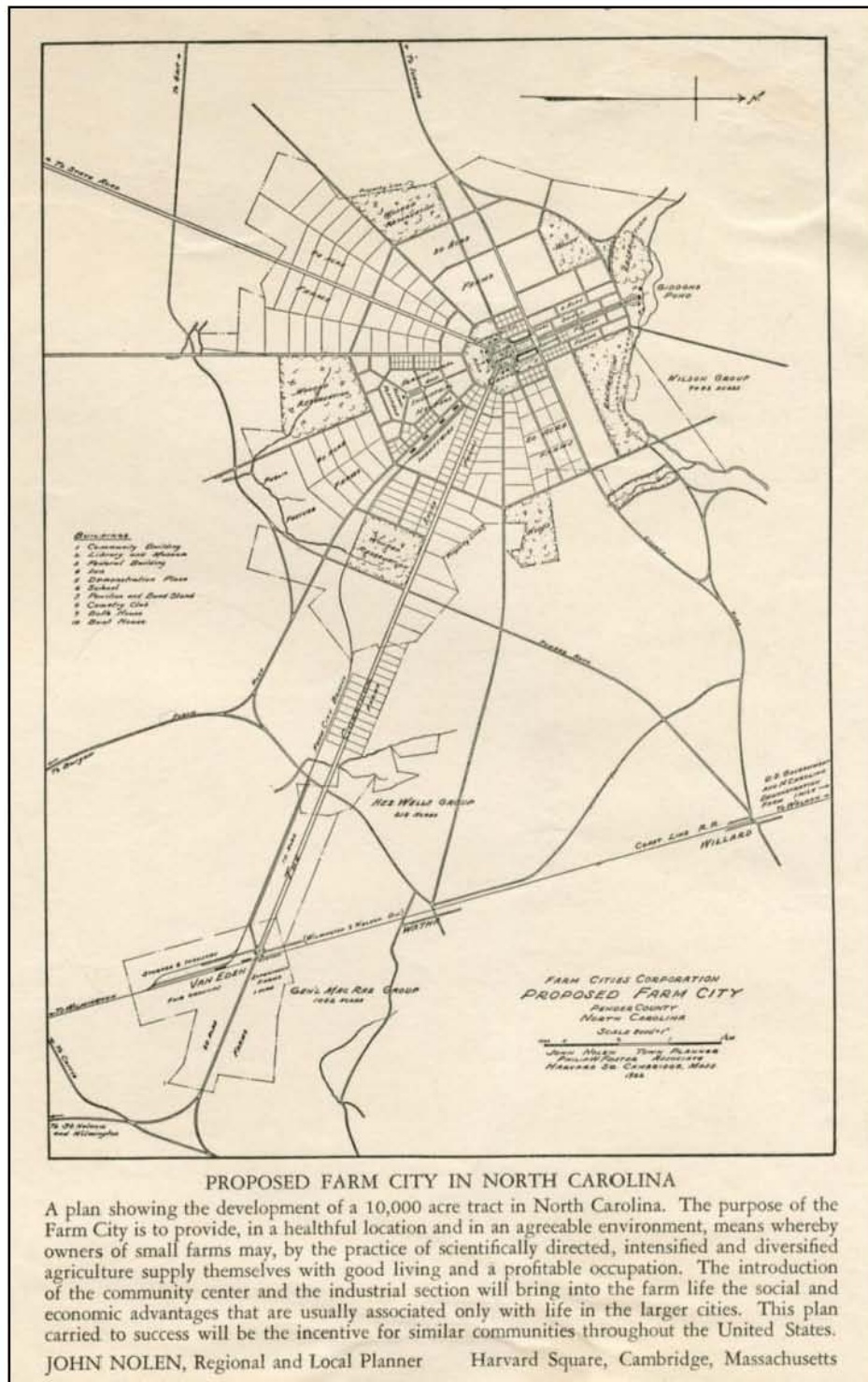
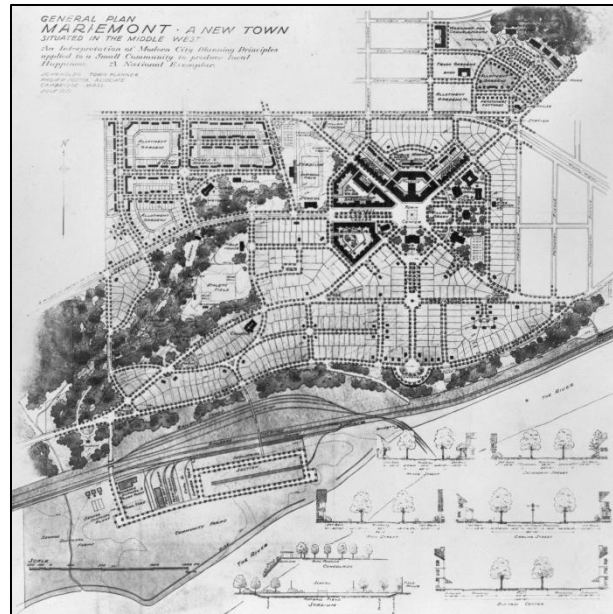


Figure 5 - A 1922 plan for the proposed "Farm City" designed by John Nolen and Philip W. Foster. The plan shows what would become Penderlea with the basic alignment of radial streets around a community center and natural drainage areas. (Harvard Graduate School of Design Library)

legacies were the professional connections forged by Hugh MacRae and the town plan designed by John Nolen. More than a decade later, a modified version of Nolen's first layout became the framework for Penderlea Homesteads.

While he was working with MacRae's Farm Cities Corporation, John Nolen and his associate, Philip Foster, were also engaged in one of Nolen's best-known plans for a new town, Mariemont, Ohio. Mariemont was intended to support the allied goals of relieving the post-war housing shortage and providing a model for improved housing and neighborhoods for working-class families. Nolen's plan, designed between November 1920 and July 1921 (Figure 6), provided the framework for all of the streets, lot lines, parks, and building placements on a 253-acre parcel. Nolen also completed plans for two communities in Florida, Belleair and Venice, and served as president of the National Conference on City Planning in 1926 and of the International Federation of

Housing and Town Planning in 1931. His *New Towns for Old*, published in 1927, remains a classic work on town planning principles in practice. In 1933, John Nolen was an instructor in the School of City Planning at Harvard University, a consultant to the Division of Subsistence Homesteads in Washington, D. C., and a board member of Penderlea Homesteads, Incorporated.<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 6 - A July 1921 John Nolen plan for Mariemont, Ohio. (John Nolen Papers, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)**

<sup>17</sup> "Village of Mariemont." John Nolen, *New Towns For Old: Achievements In Civic Improvement In Some American Small Towns And Neighborhoods* (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1927. American Society of Landscape Architects Centennial Reprint. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005). Paul Keith

### The Great Depression, The New Deal, and the Establishment of Penderlea

Immediately after World War I, American farmers prospered as agricultural prices soared in response to the enormous market in post-war Europe. Then, during the 1920s, commodity crop prices were driven down by oversupply. In 1919, cotton sold for more than 30¢ a pound, and a pound of tobacco brought 86¢. By 1931, the price of a pound of cotton was less than 6¢; about 9¢ a pound for tobacco. At the same time farm expenses were rising, and many farmers received less for their crops than it cost to produce them. For years before the 1929 stock market crash that is known as the beginning of the Great Depression, North Carolina experienced economic decline. Agriculture was the state's largest industry, and in the 1920s, half the population lived on working farms, where their income steadily dwindled. In Pender County in 1930, a rural population of 15,686 people were planting cotton, tobacco, peanuts, and a variety of vegetable truck crops on 1,984 farms that averaged eighty-one acres in size.<sup>18</sup>

Beginning in the 1930s, federal farm-relief programs paid farmers to reduce crop yields by reducing the acreage they planted in commodity crops such as cotton, tobacco, wheat, and rice: lowering production as a means to higher prices and better profits. Although crop reduction was a boon to many farmers, it also eliminated low-wage farm jobs and drove sharecroppers off the land.<sup>19</sup>

President Franklin Roosevelt battled the Great Depression through a wide-ranging group of programs known collectively as the New Deal. The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), which became law in May 1933, was one of a series of New Deal initiatives intended to move families out

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Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World* (The American Historical Association and Cornell University Press, 1959), pp. 277-293.

<sup>18</sup> Turberg, *Historic and Architectural Resources*, p. 42. RoAnn Bishop, "Difficult Days on Tar Heel Farms." *Tar Heel Junior Historian*, Fall 2010 (North Carolina Museum of History). [ncpedia.org/agriculture/great-depression](http://ncpedia.org/agriculture/great-depression) accessed August 20, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Douglas Carl Abrams and Randall E. Parker "Great Depression." In William S. Powell, ed., *Encyclopedia of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp. 527-529. Bishop, "Difficult Days on Tar Heel Farms."

of poverty by resettling them. Section 208 of Title II of the National Industrial Recovery Act authorized \$25,000,000 “for making loans for and otherwise aiding in the purchase of subsistence homesteads.” Penderlea was created as one of NIRA’s homestead communities. President Roosevelt’s Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, organized the Division of Subsistence Homesteads during the summer of 1933, selecting Milburn L. Wilson, a farm economist, as the first director of the new program.<sup>20</sup>

Wilson believed in close cooperation with state and federal agencies, agricultural guidance for homesteaders, long-term credit and a local nonprofit corporation to administer each project with the general oversight of the federal administration. Hugh MacRae, with his practical experience in creating subsistence homesteads, was a valuable advisor to Wilson.<sup>21</sup>

The Division of Subsistence Homesteads, formally organized on August 23, 1933, began planning four types of communities on which to spend the \$25 million: subsistence garden projects for urban workers, colonies for “stranded” workers (such as communities deserted by coal mining companies), homesteads for part-time factory workers, and experimental farm colonies (“experimental” because there were no studies or experience on which to base them). The federal funds were not grants, but thirty-year loans; the Federal Subsistence Homesteads Corporation was set up to loan the money to subsidiary local corporations. These local entities, not the federal government, would own the real estate and buildings and manage the projects.<sup>22</sup>

The first steps for a local group were to outline a feasible project and to set up a corporation according to the laws of the state. In both respects, Hugh MacRae and his colleagues were well-qualified to organize and manage a homestead project. MacRae proposed creating the development on his “Wilson Tract” in Pender County, using John Nolen’s earlier farm city plan to guide the

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<sup>20</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 73, 86-89, 93-94.

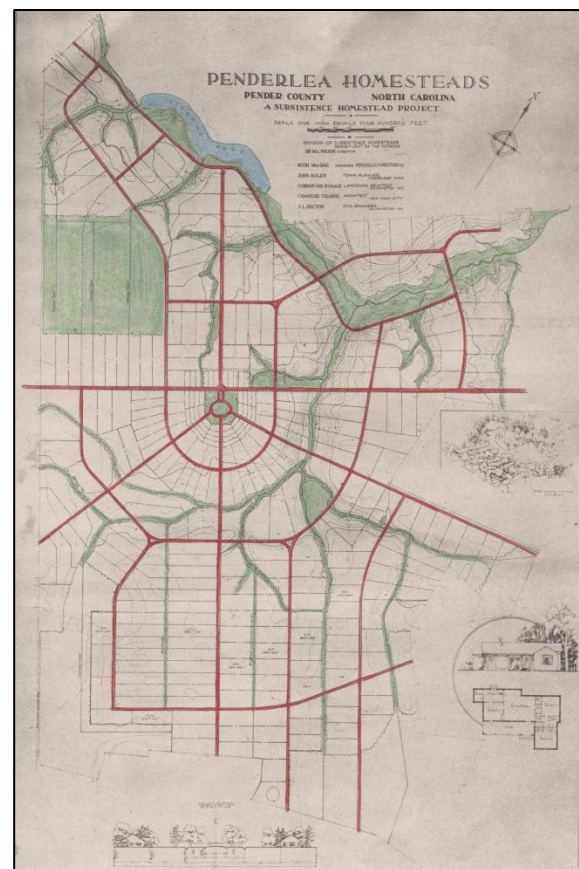
<sup>21</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 96-101.

<sup>22</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 97-98, 106-107, 110.

development. The Division of Subsistence Homesteads accepted MacRae's opinion that the production of ten-acre farm plots would be sufficient not only to feed each family, but also to provide enough crops to sell, enabling homesteaders eventually to buy their farms. The State of North Carolina agreed to furnish roads, Pender County promised to provide a school, and Penderlea Homesteads, Inc. soon received its corporate charter. (MacRae had named the enterprise, appending "lea," an Old English word for an open field, to Pender.)

In November 1933, one million dollars of the Division of Subsistence Homesteads' twenty-five million dollar authorization was designated for Penderlea, which thus became the first experimental farm colony of the National Industrial Recovery Act. Here, financially distressed families could buy a small farm, become part of a community of farmers, and have access to government agricultural expertise. Fertilizers and other modern methods would increase yields, while co-operative marketing and processing facilities reduced expenses.<sup>23</sup>

John Nolen was a member of the board of directors of the Penderlea corporation, which hired Hugh MacRae as project manager and hired



**Figure 7 - Updated 1937 Plan for Penderlea Homesteads by John Nolen (John Nolen Papers, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library)**

<sup>23</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 16, 31. Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, p. 281. Marcia G. Synott, "Hugh MacRae, Penderlea, and the Model Farm Communities Movement." In William S. Brockington, ed., *The Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association* (South Carolina Historical Association and University of South Carolina Aiken, 1987), pp. 53-65. Department of Cultural Resources, Highway Historical Marker Program. "D-91: Penderlea Homesteads." [www.ncmarkers.com/Markers.aspx?sp=search&k=Markers&sv=D-91](http://www.ncmarkers.com/Markers.aspx?sp=search&k=Markers&sv=D-91) Accessed August 18, 2011.

his brother, Nelson MacRae, and his son-in-law, Julian W. Morton, as part-time assistant project managers. In February 1934, the corporation bought from Hugh MacRae 4,550 acres of the Wilson Tract, paying \$7.10/acre, much less than MacRae had paid in 1906. Nolen modified his 1922 “Farm City” plan slightly, laying out an orderly design with a symmetrical crescent providing a focal point, a generally regular street grid modified to skirt creeks and bays, and farmsteads each with ten acres of land (Figure 7).<sup>24</sup>

Given the earlier plantation history of the area, the Penderlea site was not the “virgin forest” some called it, but in 1933 it was heavily wooded with only about twenty acres of cleared high ground. While this would be an asset to the residents, whose houses would be pleasantly shaded with mature trees, it presented enormous challenges to the community’s builders.<sup>25</sup>

The huge initial costs of clearing the land, building roads and drainage systems, laying water and sewer lines, and installing electricity infrastructure were offset through use of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) manpower. One of the most successful of the New Deal agencies, the CCC paid young men to work on conservation projects: planting trees, building fences, and terracing hillsides. The CCC had at least sixty-six camps in North Carolina and operated until 1942.<sup>26</sup>

The CCC set up a camp for workers at Penderlea along the west side of Wood’s Branch Creek, just north of the east



Figure 8 - Early land clearing at Penderlea (Library of Congress)

entrance to the project on North Carolina Highway 11. Enrollees constructed their own barracks buildings, mess hall, and commissary. By the autumn of 1934, MacRae had used CCC labor to clear

<sup>24</sup> Synott, “Hugh MacRae, Penderlea.” Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, p. 281, states the per-acre price as \$7.10; Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, p. 15, gives a per-acre figure of \$6.50.

<sup>25</sup> Synott, “Hugh MacRae, Penderlea.” Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 281-282.

<sup>26</sup> Abrams and Parker, “Great Depression.”

about 1,500 acres, build sixteen miles of roads, and erect ten houses. (The CCC labor was supplemented by some of the early homesteaders, who dug ditches and cleared fields for wage income that was essential while their first crops grew from seed to harvest.) Although there was a great deal of manual labor, diesel tractors took over the heavy job of pulling tree stumps.<sup>27</sup>

Penderlea's first homesteaders were literate families recruited through advertisements placed by the Division of Subsistence Homesteads in national farm magazines and local newspapers. Applicants were evaluated by the local corporation, which investigated their farm experience, health, "habits," stability and financial status. MacRae's group targeted "submarginal" farmers, especially those from eastern North Carolina, who were either owners of small tracts of poor land or landless tenant farmers. Racial segregation was part of American community life, urban and rural, in the 1930s, and Penderlea was no different. The community was limited to white Protestant families. During its early planning, the Penderlea Homesteads Corporation recommended purchase of two tracts owned by a black farmer because it was "not desirable to have two or three colored families" within the new community. (There were several resettlement communities for African Americans in North Carolina, the best-known being the part of Roanoke Farms now known as Tillery, in Halifax County.)<sup>28</sup>

The Division of Subsistence Homesteads was originally a decentralized organization that left management of project details to the local homestead corporations. By March 1934, interagency wrangling in Washington resulted in a reorganization that gave the federal corporation sweeping control of local projects. Each was assigned a federally-appointed project manager and accountants,

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<sup>27</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 281-286. Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 17-23. The CCC camp was located on the northeast portion of the property at 5131 Highway 11 (PD0351). Although nothing remains of the camp, several outbuildings recorded in the survey resemble the CCC buildings, with the best example used as an outbuilding at 269 Weber Road (PD0549). A photo of the camp site in the Pender County Library collections is accessible online:

<http://cdm16360.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15239qs/id/2756/rec/1>

<sup>28</sup> Synott, "Hugh MacRae, Penderlea." Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 7, 141, 115-116, 200-201, 281. "History House Museum, Concerned Citizens of Tillery." [www.cct78.org/history-house.html](http://www.cct78.org/history-house.html) Accessed August 20, 2011.

while the local corporations were reduced to purely advisory entities. M. L. Wilson, who had championed local management, resigned as director of the Division of Subsistence Homesteads and was replaced by Charles E. Pynchon, a businessman and housing expert.<sup>29</sup>

Although Hugh MacRae remained at Penderlea as a federal employee for a few weeks after Wilson's resignation, he stridently opposed the federalization of the Division of Subsistence Homesteads, appealing directly to President Roosevelt. Ickes and Pynchon reacted angrily to MacRae's having gone over their heads to the president, and the bitter aftermath lasted for months. While the farm community program cycled through successive agency changes in Washington, each side in the Penderlea debate accused the other of poor planning and mismanagement. The charges against MacRae were that he had picked poor land, that he had spent too much on land clearing and infrastructure, and that ten-acre plots were too small to provide both subsistence and cash crops. MacRae's rejoinder was that the centralized management Ickes had imposed was incapable of developing a local community. Nevertheless, after May 1934, a committee in Washington chose the families who would become Penderlea homesteaders, selecting from recommendations made by the local committee. Criteria included United States citizenship, children in the family (or a couple young enough to have children), physical ability, and farming experience.<sup>30</sup>

Penderlea was becoming a reality. One month after construction began in the spring of 1934, the first resident, J. S. "Sut" Austin, arrived. Although their house had not been built, his wife Katie Bell and son Nick soon came from Duplin County to join him. They stayed in a portable "shack" for their first season at Penderlea, as did the second family, Bruno and Jo Van Bavel, who had moved from Castle Hayne. Anticipating the new arrivals' need for garden produce, planners had arranged a project garden where Sut Austin and other early settlers were employed. The vegetables they grew

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<sup>29</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 118-120, 122, 124.

<sup>30</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 123-126, 284. For more about the MacRae-Ickes contretemps, see also Synott, "Hugh MacRae, Penderlea."

went to a community cannery managed by a home economics agent and staffed by Penderlea's female residents. The food they put up fed the settlers during their first winter; the next year they would grow their own vegetables and can their own food at home. Four or five more families moved into the ten-acre farmsteads during the year 1934.<sup>31</sup>

The Division of Subsistence Homesteads had been enacted in haste, and the original legislation left unclear whether it was to be a permanent or temporary agency. To avoid a debate in Congress or the courts, President Roosevelt set up another independent agency, the Resettlement Administration. On May 15, 1935, all the property and assets of the Division of Subsistence Homesteads were transferred to the Resettlement Administration, which was headed by Undersecretary of Agriculture Rexford G. Tugwell. Tugwell's division inherited a number of separate agencies and programs and their jobs of constructing communities, selecting settlers, managing communities, and eventually selling the properties.<sup>32</sup>

The Resettlement Administration determined that Penderlea's ten-acre farmsteads planned by MacRae and Nolen were too small. The community plan was redrawn, retaining Nolen's layout of roads and community center while rearranging plot boundaries to provide 150 farmsteads, each of about twenty acres. A contract was let for sixty-five houses. By September 1936, the Resettlement Administration had completed 142 houses and outbuildings at Penderlea, and by January 1937, 112 farmsteads were occupied. In April 1938, when fifty new homes were being completed, 141 families were at Penderlea.<sup>33</sup>

Although W. H. Robbins, who came in as project manager in 1936, remained until the 1940s, other federal employees came and went, and directives from Washington often ignored the realities of homestead life. Idealistic and driven by details, Penderlea's first federal planners required that

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<sup>31</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 32-34. Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 285-291.

<sup>32</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 128-129, 145-159, 181. Tugwell resigned at the end of 1936, and his Deputy Administrator, Dr. Will W. Alexander, became head of the Resettlement Administration.

<sup>33</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 284-286.

only purebred livestock could be brought onto the project. Loans were available for purchase of purebred animals, but pedigreed stock was not readily found in eastern North Carolina and several of the early homesteaders already owned a milk cow or a few pigs. Within a short time, they forced the regulation to be overturned.<sup>34</sup>

In light of the strict rules, it is not surprising that the first several years of Penderlea's settlement were volatile, with some families staying only a season or a year. Potential homesteaders submitted to medical exams and provided reference letters from their pastors. When they moved to their new farmsteads, they executed personal notes for the livestock, seed, feed, and fertilizer issued to them. Once in residence, they kept detailed financial records, down to the few cents a woman spent for hair-care, for regular auditing by management. Programmatic changes and doubts about the residents' future opportunity to buy a farmstead drove some of them beyond frustration; others could not repay their start-up loans and saw a future of increasing debt. More than fifteen percent of the homesteaders left the project during the year 1939.<sup>35</sup>



Figure 9 – Examining soil conditions in a cornfield at Penderlea, August 1936 (Library of Congress)

The Division of Subsistence Homesteads had begun with the intention of keeping some restriction on land titles in order to limit speculation and increases in real estate prices. But the settlers and many members of Congress thought that anything less than fee-simple ownership would deny full attainment of the American dream. The Division compromised: a homesteader could purchase over thirty years at three percent interest, but he would not receive title before five

<sup>34</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. xvi, 32-33.

<sup>35</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, p. 30. Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, p. 286.

years had passed and until he had paid three-quarters of the price.<sup>36</sup> Without the title, of course, he could not sell, mortgage, or borrow against the property.

In 1936, the Resettlement Administration redesigned the purchase plan. As each homestead community was completed, the Administration would turn it over to an association made up of the residents. The association would hold title to the land, execute lease or purchase contracts with homesteaders, and pay taxes and insurance. Individuals would buy homesteads from the association on a forty-year contract, at three percent interest. The purchase price would be set by the homesteader's ability to pay and a reasonable appraisal of the property.<sup>37</sup>

In 1936, forty percent of American farmers were still tenants or sharecroppers with no hope of owning land. Therefore, on September 1, 1937, the Resettlement Administration was renamed the Farm Security Administration (FSA) and expanded. In addition to its construction programs, the new agency would purchase land and sell it to qualified tenants on long terms. In 1936-1937, the FSA purchased 9,833 acres adjacent to Penderlea, where it planned to build another 158 homesteads of thirty acres each (Figure 10). Only fifty units were added by the end of this phase of the project in 1938.<sup>38</sup>

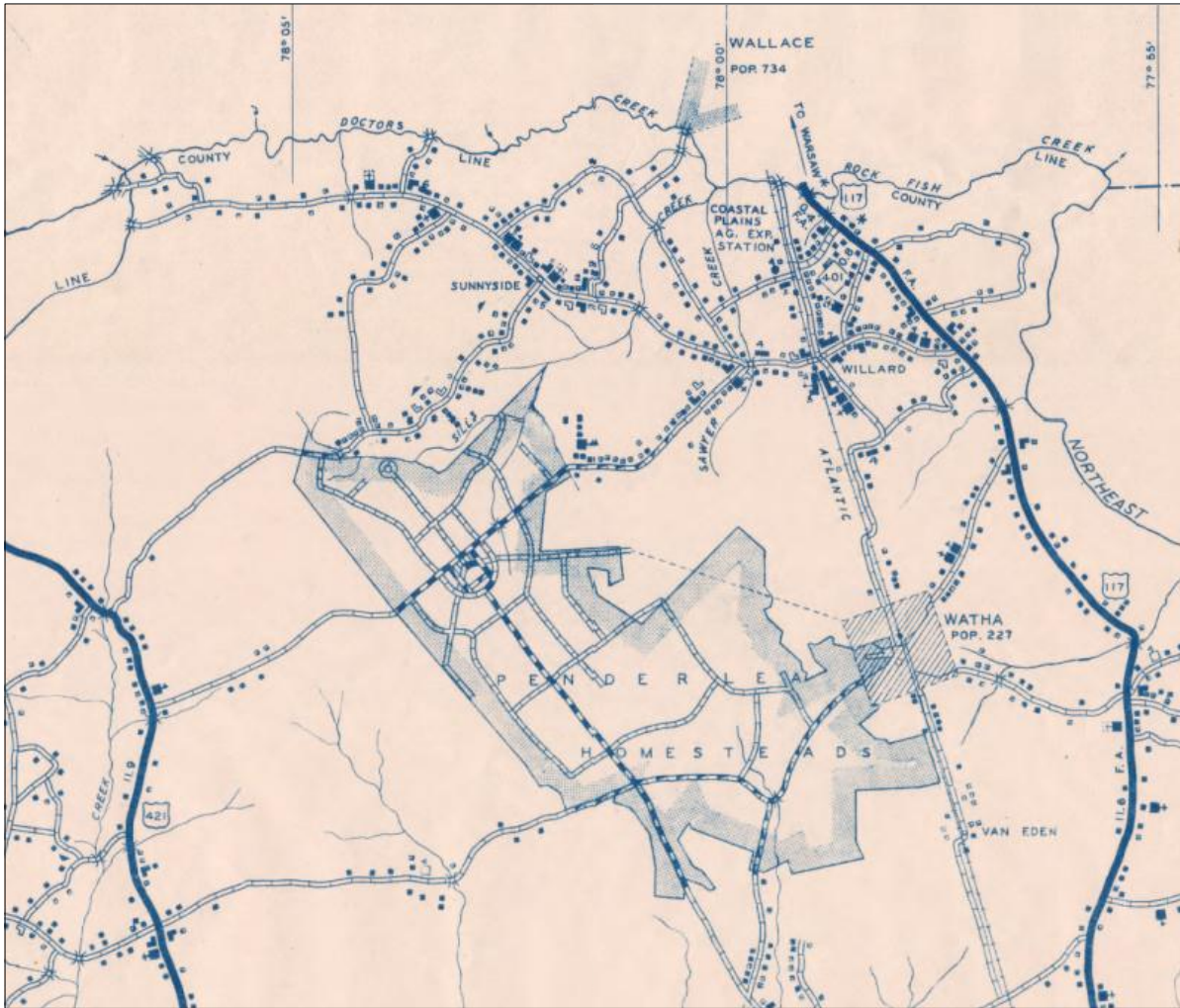
The Farm Security Administration sent a sociologist to study the Penderlea homesteaders in 1940. He found them dissatisfied with many aspects of the community's management. Most of all, they were pessimistic about the potential of buying their farms. They could get no answers about when they would get a purchase contract and whether they would ever gain clear title. At the end of 1942, the Farm Security Administration changed Penderlea again. The farmsteads were made larger, and their number reduced from 192 to 109 (eighty-two surplus houses were rented to defense workers.) Fifty new farmers from the western North Carolina mountains arrived in 1943. In that

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<sup>36</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>37</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, p. 215.

<sup>38</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 182, 285, 291.



**Figure 10 - Penderlea project in 1938 showing extension of federal lands to the south (North Carolina State Highway and Public Works Commission, North Carolina State Archives)**

year it was found that 159 families had come and gone from Penderlea during its decade of settlement, but there were still three homestead families who had been there since 1935. The project was showing economic stability as many homesteaders were actually making money from their farms.<sup>39</sup>

When the Farmers Home Administration, successor agency to the FSA, began preparations to sell the homesteads, the FHA created larger farms by selling about fifty houses for removal from

<sup>39</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 285-292. Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 45-47.

Penderlea, and consolidating the newly vacant parcels into adjacent farms. The surplus buildings were relocated throughout eastern North Carolina.<sup>40</sup>

### The Agricultural Community

Farming was the backbone of Penderlea's economy. Hugh MacRae and the administrators of various federal agencies had planned for homesteaders to grow food for



Figure 11 - Penderlea House moved to Cavanaugh Street in Wallace, NC. (Sidebottom)

their families and truck (vegetable) crops for cash income. The Coastal Experiment Station five miles away at Willard, opened in 1917, was an asset to Penderlea's managers and farmers. Grape planting, particularly scuppernong and muscadine varieties, was emphasized during the 1930s.<sup>41</sup>

The residents soon learned that there was not a large local market for truck crops and preferred to grow tobacco instead. Most of them had grown tobacco before coming to Penderlea, and they were familiar with its cultivation and processing. Several homesteaders built tobacco curing barns before federal restrictions on tobacco acreage halted their plans. In 1938, the project manager announced that the farmers who had built barns would be allowed to plant two acres of tobacco. The regulations were then changed in Washington, so that any farmer could receive a tobacco allotment – the right to plant a certain acreage in the crop.<sup>42</sup>

Some residents saw dairying as a profitable enterprise and established dairy operations when given the opportunity to diversify their farms. In 1940-41, Reece Lefler borrowed enough money to build a dairy barn (see Site PD0449) and buy the equipment. By the mid-1940s, there were

<sup>40</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, p. 56.

<sup>41</sup> Turberg, *Historic and Architectural Resources*, p. 42.

<sup>42</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, p. 286. Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 52-53.

thirty dairies in the vicinity of Penderlea. By the 1990s there was only one dairy still in operation at Penderlea, which has shut down.<sup>43</sup>

In 1943, the federal government deemed the Penderlea community “complete” and planned no further construction. The Farmers Home Administration relinquished the project and sold the homesteads. In March of 1943, the first nine Penderlea farms were bought by homesteaders at \$3,020 each. To create larger farms, some as much as 150 acres, several families bought tracts adjoining their own. By December 1944, forty-eight homesteads had been sold; by the end of June 1945, sixty-six. By 1947 all the homestead farms had been sold, most to their residents. The homesteaders’ co-operative was dissolved.<sup>44</sup>

Over the next ten years, the landscape at Penderlea changed in several ways that reflect the end of federal involvement. Farm lands were consolidated into larger agricultural operations. In many cases houses and their immediate outbuildings were subdivided from the system of fields that defined the original homesteads. Larger outbuildings, such as silos, barns and sheds, were constructed to serve the agricultural operations and the equipment used to work them.

### **Penderlea’s Community Center**

In August of 1937, construction began on the community center, which comprised the administration/community building, health clinic, a house for teachers, potato-curing house, cane-syrup mill, a new cannery, co-operative store, warehouse, gristmill, and vegetable grading house. In addition to supervising the farming, the Resettlement Administration also set out to develop opportunities for families to earn enough to eventually buy their homesteads. In the summer of 1937, it guided the organization of the Penderlea Mutual Association and loaned it \$30,670 to

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<sup>43</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 41, 53, 76.

<sup>44</sup> Alfred Griffen was the first to buy; Reece Lefler the second. Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 53-58. Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 292-293. North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, “D-91: Penderlea Homesteads.”

operate the gristmill, store, warehouse, potato house, grading and packing shed, syrup mill, cannery, and a gasoline filling station. The co-operative general store was essential to homestead families, many of whom did not have cars. Besides a full range of dry goods and small hardware items, the store provided a barbershop and beauty parlor.<sup>45</sup>

The most important component of Penderlea's community center was the county school, a complex of several buildings accommodating classrooms, gymnasium, auditorium, home-economics



**Figure 12 - Views from the watertower showing progress at the Penderlea community center including the school buildings on the left and the cafeteria on the right. (Photo provided by Ann Cottle)**

building, school-bus garage, and a vocational shop. The Pender County Board of Education had consolidated two other school districts, Willard and Watha, into the Penderlea School District. The new school was not complete when the school year began in August 1937, so pupils from Willard and Watha joined the Penderlea children in classes held in the warehouse and one of the CCC's former barracks buildings. Because the auditorium was not complete in the spring of 1938, Penderlea School's first graduation exercises took place in the library.<sup>46</sup>

The disconnect between Washington and Penderlea is illustrated by the experience of the school's first principal. The Resettlement Administration had paid for the school buildings and contributed \$1,400 toward the principal's pay. With the approval of Pender County's school superintendent, the Administration selected A. P. Olmstead, a recent graduate of Teachers College

<sup>45</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 285-291. Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 36-41.

<sup>46</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 36-38.

at Columbia University, to be principal. Olmstead began work in August 1937, implementing an “experimental progressive” program that stressed practical courses – trades training. Local parents insisted on a traditional academic education for their children, and in 1938 the county school board dismissed the principal over the objections of the Resettlement Administration.<sup>47</sup>

By 1938, it had become clear that small vegetable farms could not support the homesteaders. The Farm Security Administration (the federal agency that had absorbed the Resettlement Administration) assisted them in organizing a new co-operative, the Penderlea Farms Homestead Association, then extended a \$750,000 loan to the association to build a hosiery mill at the northeast edge of the community center. Through a managerial agreement with the Dexdale Hosiery Mills, the Penderlea Farms Homestead Association erected “one of the best hosiery mills in the South.” Initial prospects were good for the mill, which made silk stockings, but output and profitability declined in the early 1940s as a result of wartime material shortages, and the business suffered when employees left for better-paying defense jobs in Wilmington. In 1943 the mill was not meeting its operating expenses; moreover, many of the 100 employees did not live at Penderlea. The Dexdale Mills recommended closing and liquidating the property, which was sold in 1944.<sup>48</sup>



**Figure 13 - Newspaper photo showing Bruno Van Bavel and tenant Richard Deal cutting flowers on Van Bavel's land (Pender County Public Library Digital Archive)**

In 1949, Concentrate Manufacturing Corporation, a subsidiary of the Roger and Gallet perfume company, bought the mill plant. Under

<sup>47</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 192, 287. Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, p. 38.

<sup>48</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 287-292. Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 49-50.

supervisors relocated from New York, residents of Penderlea and nearby areas staffed the factory, and some Penderlea residents changed their fields to flowers to feed the plant. Bruno Van Bavel, one of the first homesteaders, purchased an additional homestead and converted a portion of his eighty-four acres to flower gardens (Figure 13). The concentrate plant closed in 1966. In 1967, the Holt Hosiery Company bought the plant, operating it until 2005 when the mill closed a final time.<sup>49</sup>

Regardless of their difficulties with management, Penderlea residents were solidifying their ties to each other and their new community. In the spring of 1937, they organized a Community Sunday School, which first met in the mess hall of the abandoned CCC camp (Figure 2). When a Community Church was organized in 1940, it met in the school auditorium. The Community Center and community buildings have evolved in several ways since original construction. In 1940, the Farm Security Administration deeded title to the school, teacherage, and principal's house to the Pender County Board of Education. By 1943 the Penderlea Mutual Association had repaid less than \$8,000 of the Resettlement Administration's \$30,000+ operating loan, because the gristmill, store, warehouse, potato house, grading and packing shed, syrup mill, cannery, and gasoline station were rarely used. In 1947, the Penderlea Baptist Church leased a tract of land on the north side of the community center. They erected a sanctuary and classrooms in a building program that lasted the entire decade of the 1950s.<sup>50</sup>

Community buildings changed to house new institutions and to privatize community resources. The Potato Warehouse became a community store, known as the "Big Store" when Julian Mills bought the property in 1950. In 1952, the building burned, leaving only its large warehouse and a metal water tower on the lot. The business was replaced by a new gasoline service station and store at the junction of Highway 11 and West Willarlea Road in 1955. Responding to the loss, a local

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<sup>49</sup> Clipping from *Wilmington Star*, captioned photo by staff photographer Lawrence Wofford (date unknown) in Pender County Public Library Digital Archive. Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 49-53.

<sup>50</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 285-291. Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. xvi, 39, 64, 68-69. Nina Dorman Marks, "Penderlea Baptist Church" (unpublished manuscript).

fire department was established. The Penderlea Volunteer Fire Department first used a garage on the Hosiery Mill property, then in 1979 converted the school vocational building as a fire station. A modern fire station at 4005 NC Highway 11 was built in 2000.<sup>51</sup>

Although there have been many changes to the landscape and buildings since the privatization of Penderlea, the experiment of creating a planned agricultural community has succeeded in one enduring way: it created a cohesive community. Penderlea resident, teacher, and author Ann Southerland Cottle takes a long view of the community in the twenty-first century:

Many of the residents are those who came to the project in the early years – or they are second- and third- generation descendants of the original settlers. Some reared in Penderlea left to seek their fortunes and then returned as soon as they could. Others who cannot move back to live come back for visits as often as possible. Many of the homesteaders who have moved away are brought back eventually to the peaceful, sloping cemetery at Potts where they are laid to rest. And in one of the most longstanding traditions of the community, homecoming day, the first Sunday in November at Potts Memorial Presbyterian Church, finds the sanctuary overflowing with former members and residents who have come “home.”<sup>52</sup>

## V. Landscape

Penderlea Homesteads is a substantially intact example of the United States government’s effort to develop new rural communities during the Great Depression. First conceived by Hugh MacRae as a planned agricultural community, it is unique as a rural development designed by John Nolen, a celebrated town planner and landscape architect.

The area’s natural aspect is an important part of Penderlea’s distinctive cultural landscape. Located in North Carolina’s eastern coastal plain, the area’s underlying geology is marine formed

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<sup>51</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. xviii, 56-57. Pender County Deed Book 570, page 229. Pender County GIS.

<sup>52</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, p. 82.

limestone overlaid with fairly deep sandy loam.<sup>53</sup> Its vegetation has been traditionally pineland flats. The area is accented by occasional pocosins and Carolina bays, which tend to be wetlands with deep peat soils and distinctive vegetation. Its topography is generally flat with distinctly rolling side slopes (5%) at the boundaries leading to the various creeks or canals.

Located on the site that Nolen and MacRae selected for the unrealized farm city in 1920, Penderlea was bounded by natural watercourses, an engineered canal, and straight property lines. Part of the northern boundary of the community is defined by Sills Creek, which flows east-southeast through Gideon's Pond, continuing its course through farmsteads whose north property lines were set by surveyor's straight boundaries. A branch of Sills Creek called "the Canal" and Bee Branch define the northeastern boundary of Penderlea, while the east and south boundaries of the community were drawn along the property lines of various tracts assembled by MacRae. Along the straight western boundary of the community, a primary drainage canal was engineered in the 1930s. The boundaries planned for Penderlea's original development are still apparent today and the character of the historic landscape is reinforced by maintenance of the drainage systems, road patterns, and agricultural land use.

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<sup>53</sup> <http://www.geology.enr.state.nc.us/usgs/coastalp.htm>



Figure 14 – Aerial photograph of Penderlea showing intact road systems and agricultural fields throughout the majority of the community (Google Maps)

Penderlea's roads and streets were laid out according to John Nolen's plan for the community but built by the State Highway and Public Works Commission. Therefore, the road system became part of Pender County's larger transportation network. North Carolina Highway 11 runs east-west through Penderlea's community center, connecting Willard to US Highway 421. Pelham Road leads drivers from the community center area to Watha, and Penderlea Highway extends generally southeast toward Burgaw.

Nolen's original plan for Penderlea Homesteads represents a significant and distinguishable entity still in evidence on the land today. The assemblage of buildings, farms, roads and drainage systems retains its integrity as a rural agricultural community.

### Roads and community layout

Penderlea's hierarchy of public buildings and private farmsteads reinforces the overall sense of a planned rural district. The original infrastructure, the roadways and drainage works engineered in the 1930s, is a character-defining feature of the community. The road system defines the central

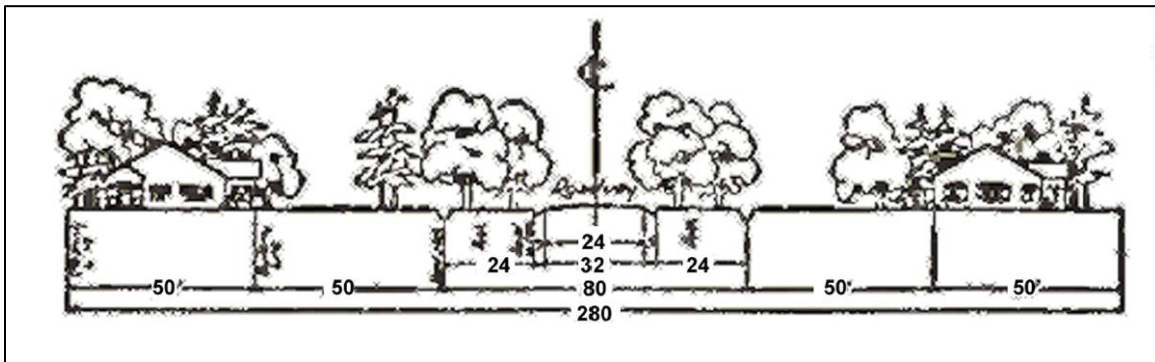


Figure 15 - Section of Road and ditches (Conkin)

area for community facilities, laid out as a "horseshoe." This half-oval form is a signature feature of John Nolen's town plans, which he used in Kingsport, Tennessee, and Venice, Florida. He also included prototypical examples in his papers and presentations.

Radiating from the community center, the roadways are lined with individual farmsteads. The rights-of-way extended about twenty-four feet to each side of the roads, not only to allow for substantial drainage ditches on public land, but also to retain existing large trees for shade, aesthetic value, and erosion control.

### **Field systems and ditches**

The roadside ditches in the public rights-of-way were essential components of the drainage system engineered in the 1930s. Sufficient drainage was essential to successfully growing row crops, but expenditures for site preparation became a controversial aspect of Penderlea's early development. Even with the significant cost savings of using CCC labor, expenses for draining and clearing the land were more than it was worth at the time of development.

Smaller ditches connecting to roadside ditches and natural streams drained Penderlea's individual farmsteads. These features were commonly dug along property lines, separating two farms while serving each of them. As farmers enlarged their holdings through purchase of adjacent tracts, the drainage ditches were maintained, providing for a continuity of farm use and landscape appearance despite changes in farm management. Because adequate drainage remains necessary for Penderlea's farmers and gardeners, the improvements carried out by the federal government in the 1930s remain a functional and visible part of this farming community.

### **Evaluating Landscape Parcels**

Considerable portions of the survey area have no architectural resources but contribute to Penderlea's character-defining agricultural landscape. They are noted on the survey map designated by tax numbers. Typical ten-acre parcels that maintain their open quality, ditches, and agricultural use include 2382-84-5206, 2382-92-5815, and 2382-92-6680, all in the southern section of the survey area.

Larger plots contributing to Penderlea's sense of time and place as a planned agricultural community include 2392-24-8317 in the lower section, PD0367 just north of Pelham Road on the eastern boundary, and 2383-43-1185 in the central area adjacent to Raccoon Road. These three parcels have been combined into larger tracts as part of Robbins Nursery from about 1960; however, they remain in agricultural use. The change in land-use to nursery farming is part of Penderlea's historical development, and because it maintains the original ditch and drainage system it is visually compatible with small-scale farming (see PD0326, Robbins Nursery and Office, 200 Raccoon Road).

By comparison, a modern large-scale poultry operation occupies certain other tracts. While not interfering with the agricultural infrastructure, the poultry farm interrupts the historic setting of the older buildings and outbuildings as well as small-scale farmsteads. Such a parcel is 2383-02-9830 - a large tract just outside the western boundary. Two other parcels within the proposed district (2383-90-1539 – a slightly smaller forty-four acre tract on the eastern edge, and PD0514 - along the eastern boundary) are non-contributing but proposed for inclusion in the district in order to draw a boundary that takes in adjacent contributing parcels.

## VI. Architectural Resources

### Residential Buildings

The residential buildings within the survey area include frame houses that were built as part of the original homestead project, mobile homes, and ranch-style houses built since the 1950s. A handful of Colonial Revival-inspired houses constructed after 1980 also were recorded within the survey boundaries.

Designs for the Penderlea farmhouses and outbuildings were prepared by the New York City firm of Stearns and Stanton. A 1917 graduate of MIT and formerly professor of architectural design there, Chandler Stearns was a son of the late John Goddard Stearns, who had been a partner in the prestigious Boston firm of Peabody and Stearns. The Minimal Traditional-style houses Stearns designed for Penderlea have much more in common with the federal construction carried out on military bases and federal shipyards in the 1930s than they do with the vernacular farmhouses of eastern North Carolina.<sup>54</sup>

Before Penderlea was even under construction, there were bureaucratic disagreements in Washington about the questions of house size and amenities. President Roosevelt and his Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes wanted small buildings without interior plumbing, expecting that homesteaders would be able either to install plumbing or hire others to do it. M. L. Wilson, director of the Division of Subsistence Homesteads, believed that as permanent residences, the houses should be of comfortable size, with plumbing installed. Eleanor Roosevelt, the president's wife and a housing advocate in her own right, agreed with Wilson. Their position won out. The architect was commissioned to design modest houses, ranging in size from 1,000 to 1,400 square feet. All had running water, kitchens and bathrooms with indoor plumbing, and electrical wiring (the

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<sup>54</sup> Richard M. Candee, ed., *Portsmouth: The Neighborhoods and Architecture of New Hampshire's Oldest City* (Portsmouth, NH: Portsmouth Advocates, Inc., 1992). Sarah Fick, *City of North Charleston Historical and Architectural Survey* (Charleston, SC: Preservation Consultants, Inc., and South Carolina SHPO, 1995). Turberg, *Historic and Architectural Resources*, pp. 20-21, 32-36, 49-53.

infrastructure for which became a substantial expense of the project), but they relied on fireplaces or wood stoves for heat.<sup>55</sup>

### Penderlea Houses

The one-story frame houses known locally as “Penderlea Houses” are variations on a theme, residences that were rectangular in plan with one or more wings at the front or side(s) and small porches. Eighty-eight remaining Penderlea houses were surveyed for this project. At least 142 houses are known to have been built at Penderlea; many of them were demolished or moved from the community during the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>56</sup>

The extant houses feature a handful of architectural designs and variations. Records of the Division of Subsistence Homesteads and its successor agencies have not been consulted for this survey, so we cannot speculate how many discrete house types were designed, how many of each were built, or how they were distributed within the community. Instead, the surveyors organized the survey sites into categories called “Types,” finding seven common forms and several unique house plans. The “unique” forms were probably matched by buildings that have been lost.

In most cases the buildings recorded during this survey have been altered in some way, the most common alterations being the addition of synthetic siding on the walls and asphalt shingles on the roof to replaced original cedar shingles dipped in creosote.<sup>57</sup> According to older members of the community and the historic literature, the original wood siding on many houses was replaced with asbestos just a few years after construction. The buildings’ very shallow eaves with no gutters or downspouts, a hallmark of the Minimal Traditional design vocabulary, allowed water running off the roof to drip down the walls, deteriorating the original wood siding. Another common improvement

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<sup>55</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, pp. 114-115. Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 24-26. A fond memory for older residents is the 1937 visit by Eleanor Roosevelt. The citizens presented a pageant, *From Settlement to Resettlement*, in her honor, and their families still talk about the visit. Several Penderlea families have photographs of Eleanor Roosevelt holding their relatives as children, seventy-five years ago.

<sup>56</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, p. 24.

<sup>57</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, p. 26.

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to address this condition is the extension of the roof eaves further away from the wall. These characteristic alterations were generally undertaken before 1962 and are considered historic changes that have achieved significance in their own right.

Also within the period of historic significance are many of the additions to original houses. In many cases, it has not been possible to determine the exact construction dates for improvements. However, the Penderlea houses were designed to allow for expansion, with several of the architects' original drawings indicating areas for future additions (see Figures 18 and 28). Additions to houses, unless stylistically or proportional out of scale with the original building, have generally been considered a natural progression of the historic building unless the date of the enlargement is known to be within the past fifty years. The survey site forms note additions as alterations, and the evaluations of integrity are liberal for houses with compatible additions that date to before 1962.

## Type 1

These are side-gable houses with a front-gable extension at one side of the façade and a small side gable wing without window openings (intended as a pantry) at the opposite end, engaged as an extension of the rear wall. An inset porch along the front covers an entry at one or both outer bays. The chimney sits in front of the ridgeline near the end with the side-gable wing and marks the division between main living area and kitchen. Six Type 1 houses were recorded as part of this survey. The best examples of the Type 1 plan are the Austin House (PD0319, the first house in the project) and the house at 2293 Crooked Run Road (PD0461).



Figure 16 - Austin House at 4581 Pelham Road, PD0319

Figure 17 - 2293 Crooked Run Road, PD0461

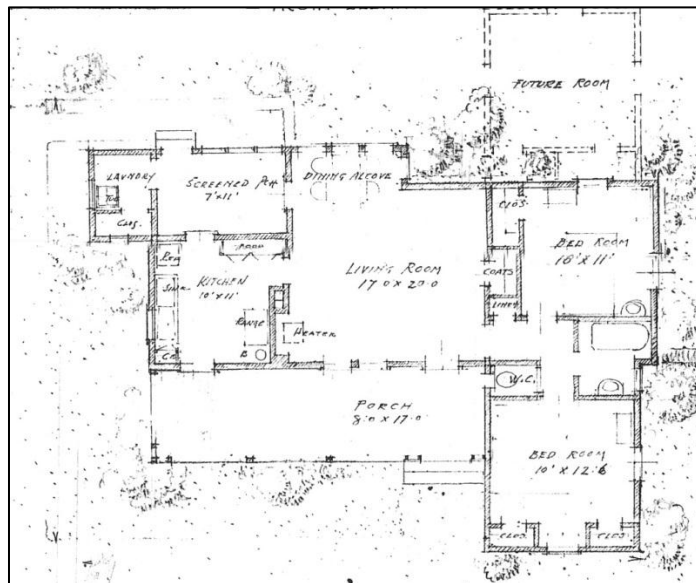


Figure 18 - House Type 1 (John Nolen Collection, Cornell University Library)

## Type 2

This small house plan features a side-gabled core with two window openings on the main facade. The chimney is centered between them, in front of the ridgeline. At both ends are side-gabled wings. At the façade of larger wing is an inset porch which covers the gable-end entry. Seven Type 2 houses were recorded as part of this survey. The best example of this type is the Murphy House (PD0373) at 1675 Crooked Run Road.



Figure 19 - 1675 Crooked Run Road, PD0373



Figure 20 – 6526 Highway 11, PD0518

### Type 3

This is a larger plan, having a side-gable core and lateral gable wings at both ends. One wing has an inset porch with entry into the gable end of the main core. The chimney is just behind the ridgeline at the entry end of the house, dividing the kitchen from the main living area. Three unevenly-spaced openings on the main façade feature two single windows and a double window opening. Three Type 3 houses were recorded as part of this survey. The Gurganous House at 130 Garden Road (PD0321) is an essentially intact example of this type, the only evident change being the insect screening at the porch.



Figure 21 - Gurganous House at 130 Garden Road, PD0321



Figure 22 – 1947 Crooked Run Road, PD0372

#### Type 4

Nineteen examples of the Type 4 design were recorded. This small plan has a side-gable core with four unevenly spaced windows on the main façade and a lateral gable wing at one end. The porch is inset at the wing, with entry into the gable end of the main core. The ridgeline chimney and paired windows at the entry end of house mark the separation between kitchen and main living area. A very clear example of the type is the house at 9060 Penderlea Highway (PD0346).



Figure 23 - 10003 Penderlea Highway, PD0332



Figure 24 – 9060 Penderlea Highway, PD0346

## Type 5

This plan has a side-gable core either three or four bays wide and a lateral gable wing at one end engaged as an extension of the rear elevation. The width of the wing varies among the examples surveyed. The front façade of the house has a center entry and windows at the outer bays, with a shed porch, less than full-façade, constructed as an integral extension of the main roofline. The ridgeline chimney is set near the wing end. The house at 1980 Crooked Run Road (PD370) is a good example of the type, retaining its characteristic mass, plan, and roofline. Twenty-eight Type 5 houses were recorded as part of the survey.



Figure 25 - 10138 Penderlea Highway, PD0331



Figure 26 – 1980 Crooked Run Road, PD0370



Figure 27 – Photo from December 1934 showing an unidentified Type 5 house at Penderlea (Cornell University Library)

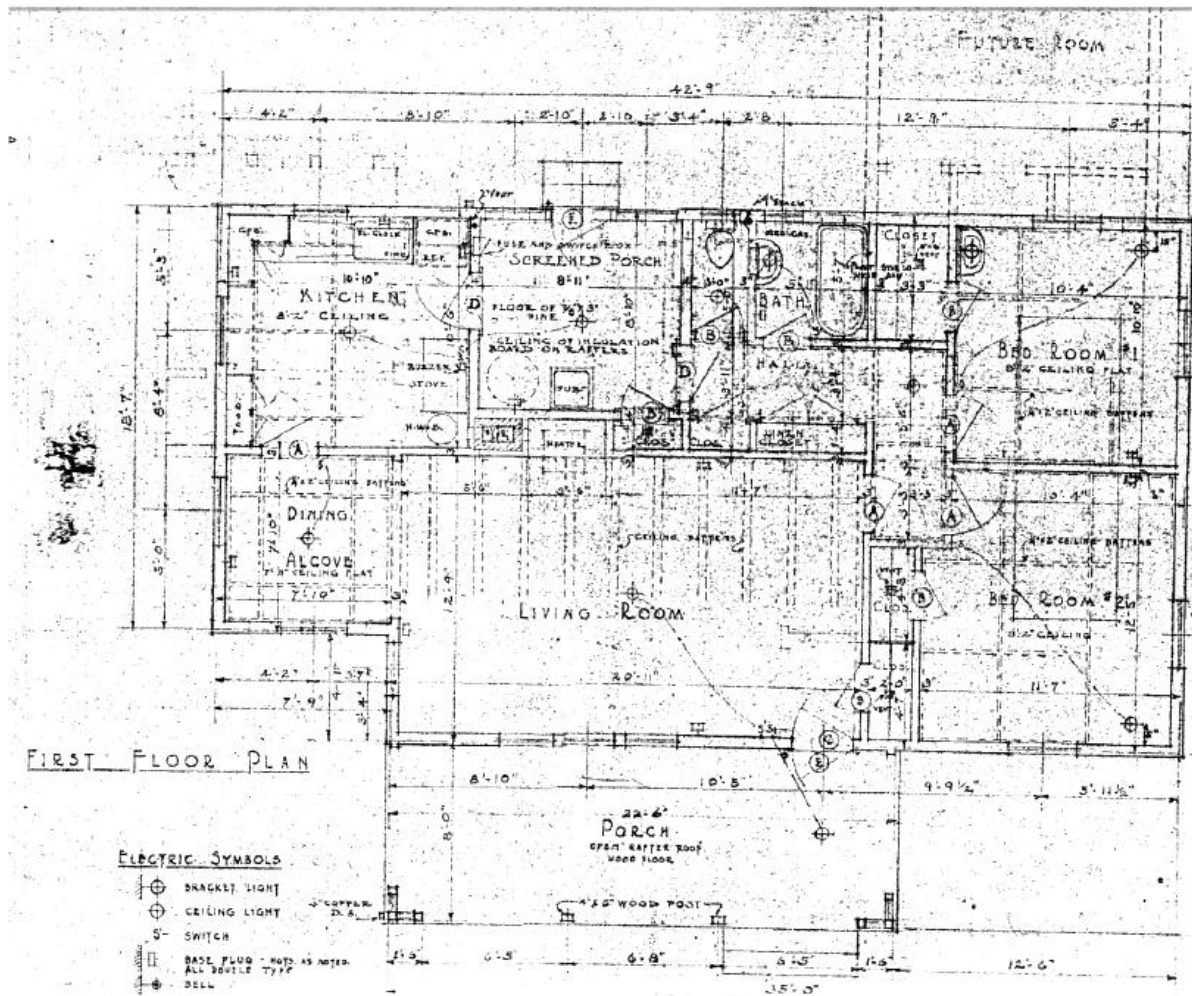


Figure 28 –Type 5 House Plan (Cornell University Library)

### Type 5A

Type 5A houses are variations of Type 5 but with seven examples, they can be categorized separately. There are three chief differences from Type 5: the lateral gable wing is engaged as an extension of the three-bay façade, instead of with the rear plane, the chimney is at the front slope of the main roof, marking a separation between the main room and the wing, and the engaged front porch is a narrow shed portico. A good example of Type 5A is the house at 9341 Penderlea Highway (PD0395).



Figure 29 – 725 Crooked Run Road, PD0394



Figure 30 – 9341 Penderlea Highway, PD0395

## Type 6

This small house type with an irregular plan has a side-gable core, three bays wide, with a front gable wing at one bay and a small lateral gable wing, engaged with the plane of the rear wall, at the opposite end. There is an inset entry porch across the façade, and the ridgeline chimney is set toward the lateral wing. Six Type 6 houses were recorded as part of the survey. A clear example of Type 6 is the house at 804 Garden Road (PD0490).



Figure 31 - 804 Garden Road, PD0490

### Houses Not Included in Typology

Twelve Penderlea houses appear “unique,” that is, no other extant buildings with identical plans were found in the survey area. Many of these houses have experienced alterations that make identification as a type uncertain. Additionally, a number of houses were relocated off the project in 1943-1944, and it is likely that some of the unique houses have counterparts among the Penderlea houses now standing in nearby communities.

### Outbuildings

The original Penderlea farmsteads each had a series of support structures located just behind the house that defined a work yard. These utilitarian structures had a uniform appearance from one farmstead to another and are identifiable by their design and materials. The pump house and wash house supported domestic functions. The barn, corn crib, chicken house, and hog house served animal and crop management. Tobacco curing barns began to appear in Penderlea before 1938, and in 1940-1941 the first dairy buildings were erected.

### Pump Houses

The pump houses are small, barely head-high inside, and have a simple shed roof that slopes from front to back, board-and-batten siding, and a batten door. An overhead wire tied them to the



Figure 32 – Pump house in 1936 (Library of Congress)

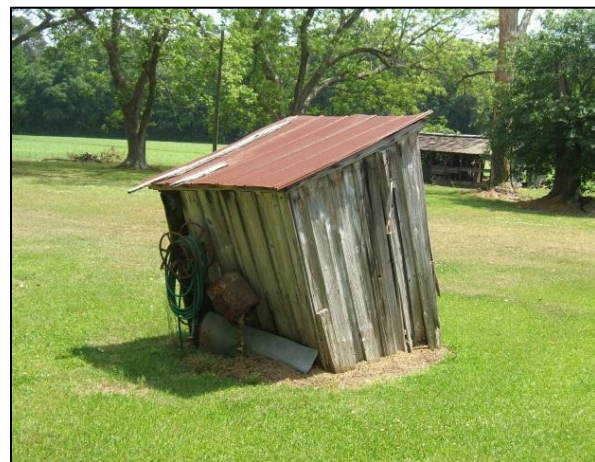


Figure 33 – Pump house at 130 Garden Road, PD0321

electrical system of the house, which was in turn connected to the power lines installed as part of Penderlea's original site engineering. Nearly all of the remaining pumphouses have been rebuilt or substantially altered with replacement siding, roofing, and doors. Only one example was recorded that retains its original siding, at the Gurganous House (PD0321) at 130 Garden Road. The structure is close to collapse.

### Wash Houses

These small rectangular buildings set on concrete pads are clad in novelty siding and have a low front-gable roof and a batten entry door at one end. The dirt-floored interior of the one-room wash house is dominated by the stove, a brick firebox with metal exhaust flue and a concrete cap shaped to hold the circular iron wash basin. When they butchered pigs, many families also used the wash pot to scald the carcass for cleansing and removing the bristles.



Figure 34 – Wash house, 9221 Penderlea Highway, PD0349



Figure 35 – Wash house, 235 Raccoon Road, PD0328

Only nineteen wash houses were positively identified during the survey, and most of them have been altered or enlarged, typically by removing the stove to create an open storeroom. At several properties without a wash house structure, the brick stove and concrete pads remain. Since

the original Penderlea corn cribs and wash houses are similar in dimension and shape, there were an additional seven instances where it could not be determined whether an outbuilding was a wash house or a corn crib due to alterations.

### Barns

The barn is the largest of the original Penderlea outbuildings. The rectangular board-and-batten building has a gable roof with flush eaves and a louvered vent, details shared with the Penderlea houses. Large single doors centered at the gable ends gave access to the interior, which was divided by one or more partitions and had wood flooring in all or part of the ground floor. A wood-floored upper loft was accessed through a loft opening at one end of the barn. A splayed extension of the roof provided an open shed on one side, which was used for equipment storage or fenced as an animal stall.



**Figure 36 – Original Penderlea barn at 5135 Penderlea Highway, PD0351**

With the primacy of tobacco farming in Penderlea between the 1940s and 1960s, several of the barns were modified to store leaves that were smoked in separate buildings. For this reason, Penderlea barns are frequently referred to as “pack houses.” Common alterations over time include new exterior siding, openings added or infilled, and added sheds and wings. The distinctive size and form of the barns can often be discerned despite extensive changes and renovations. Thirty-four Penderlea barns dating to the 1930s were surveyed with the most intact examples found at 5135 NC Highway 11 (PD0351), 1221 Crooked Run Road (PD0384), 725 Crooked Run Road (PD0394), and 2114 Raccoon Road (PD0536).

## Corn Crib

The corn cribs are virtually identical in scale and form to wash houses, rectangular buildings with a gabled roof and novelty siding. At one gable end is a single door, at the other a bin opening for loading corn. The corn crib was set on a foundation of low brick piers, with stout wood flooring to deter rats. The original construction made the corn crib an easy structure to move, and many have been relocated within the community. As is typical of all the historic outbuildings, most have



Figure 37 – Corn crib at 4825 Highway 11 (front), PD0369



Figure 38 – Corn crib at 4825 Highway 11 (rear), PD0369

been altered with new exterior siding, roofing material, or additions. Twenty-four corn cribs were identified as part of the survey. Since the original Penderlea corn cribs and wash houses are similar in dimension and shape, there were an additional seven instances where it could not be determined whether an outbuilding was a wash house or a corn crib due to alterations.

## Chicken Houses

The original chicken houses are rectangular board-and-batten structures without flooring and with a shed roof sloping from front to back that extends as an overhang across the front of the building that is supported by four braces. Protected from rain by the roof overhang, the upper front half of the chicken house was left open for ventilation and screened between the four posts. Two of these small single-purpose structures remain at PD0332 at 10003 Penderlea Highway and PD0393 at



Figure 39 – Chicken house in 1936 (Library of Congress)



Figure 40 – Chicken house at 10003 Penderlea Highway, PD0332

9330 Penderlea Highway. The remainder of the eleven chicken houses that were recorded in the survey have been heavily altered or are later examples.

### **Tobacco and Dairy**

Although there was initial tension between homesteaders and the federal government concerning tobacco and dairy farming at Penderlea in the 1930s, both became part of the Penderlea landscape. Architectural and landscape features of these operations were included in the survey. Programs of the Coastal Experiment Station in Willard facilitated tobacco's rise to become Pender County's major cash crop during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>58</sup> Ten purpose-built tobacco barns were recorded; there is a good example at 940 Crooked Run Road (PD0392). These square plan buildings with tall frame walls were built with a simple gable roof. Four of those surveyed were heavily altered or in a dilapidated condition.

Reece Lefler established the first dairy at Penderlea in 1940-1941 on his property at 1724 Sills Creek Road (PD0449) and others quickly followed his lead. By the mid-1940s, there were thirty dairies in the Penderlea area but the number of these on the Penderlea project acreage has not been determined. Anecdotal information suggests that there were a number of dairy operations whose buildings and enclosures have disappeared, such as a small dairy complex formerly

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<sup>58</sup> Turberg, *Historic and Architectural Resources*, p. 42.

associated with the farmstead at 9330 Penderlea Highway (PD0393).<sup>59</sup> Although they were commonplace into the mid-twentieth century, remnants of dairy operations were recorded at only five survey properties.

### **Small-scale Structures and Landscape Features**

Penderlea's planned farmsteads reflected a vision of European-style village agriculture that would encourage good husbandry, with farmers producing fruit, vegetables, and flowers rather than the traditional soil-depleting southern crops of corn, tobacco, and cotton. The domestic and farm outbuildings near each house were built by federal agencies, while residents were encouraged to add ornamental and useful plantings. Management endorsed muscadine grapes, which were being promoted by the Coastal Agricultural Experiment Station, and a sturdy arrangement of post-and-wire supports for the vines. According to residents, the grapes growing on arbors at several farms are the original stock planted in the 1930's (see PD0407, Savage House at 9610 Penderlea Highway).

Although Penderlea's farmers never produced enough vegetable crops to both feed themselves and allow significant cash sales, the soil was well-suited to row crops, and most families grew a large part of their own food supply. A number of remarkable private vegetable gardens remain at Penderlea today.

Paddocks and small-scale animal husbandry are still in evidence on several farms (for example, see PD0507 at 5050 Pelham Road), but the survey did not identify any chicken houses being used for their original purpose. The modern facilities where chickens are kept for egg and meat production are a complete departure from traditional poultry management. The non-historic industrial chicken farm structures are incompatible with Penderlea's sense of time and place as a residential agricultural community. While properties such as 1500 Crooked Run Road (PD0378)

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<sup>59</sup> Interview with current owner Barry Fussell May 25, 2010. Mr. Fussell explained that when his parents purchased the property there was a dairy barn on the back portion of the property that is now subdivided from his land. Ann Cottle mentions three other families, the Rays, Murphys and Southerlands (her own family), who began dairying in the early 1940s. Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 41, 53, 56.

retain open space that conveys their agricultural nature, the intrusion of large-scale poultry sheds diminishes the feeling of the original homestead plan.

Street trees, foundation plantings, vegetable fields and flower gardens lend a distinctive rural aspect to Penderlea, and are common even on properties without historic buildings. Trees and seasonal crops are transitory in nature, but their presence at Penderlea is an important domestic characteristic of the community's sense of place (a good example is PD0328 at 235 Raccoon Road).

### **Community Buildings**

#### **Penderlea School (PD0155)**

The first large community building constructed at Penderlea, the school complex is physically and figuratively the center of the community. Originally providing classes for all grade levels, the Penderlea School is now a county elementary school. The complex was designed as a series of one-story brick classroom wings centered around a library and administration building, with a frame gymnasium and brick auditorium flanking the front of the school. The late-twentieth century cafeteria annex is an obvious alteration, but it does not overwhelm the school's sense of time and place as a "modern" educational complex of the 1930s.

#### **Administration Building (Willarlea Community Center or Ruritan Building) (PD0334)**

Built in the 1930s as the administration building for the federal project, the frame structure with an S-shape plan held the offices of the project director, overseer, and other federal agents. The building retains much of its original fabric: windows, doors, and interior finishes. The interior is divided into a large open room at the center of the building, a dining room and kitchen in the south wing, and a series of partitioned offices at the north side of the building. Alterations to the office partitions are the only visible interior changes.

**Vocational School/Firehouse (PD0155)**

First constructed to house offices of Penderlea Homesteads Corporation, this building has been converted several times to meet the community's evolving needs. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, it was the location of Penderlea's vocational school. In the late 1970s, after the county school board conveyed the building to the Penderlea Volunteer Fire Department, it was altered with large vehicular openings for the community's fire trucks. Although a new purpose-built fire station has been in use since 2000, the vocational school is often referred to as the "firehouse." The building is currently used by Penderlea Assembly of God Church as a fellowship hall.<sup>60</sup>

**Community Store Warehouse (Potato Storehouse, PD0154)**

Penderlea's potato warehouse was part of the failed federal attempt to create communally-managed agricultural and industrial enterprises. The building became a community store that was known as the "Big Store" when Julian Mills bought the property in 1950.<sup>61</sup> In 1952, the main building burned, leaving only the warehouse and a metal water tower on the lot. The warehouse is a long frame building with a lateral gable roof. Its numerous entry openings and loading docks have been altered to divide the building into apartments.

**Hosiery Mill (PD0151)**

Built ca. 1939, this is the only industrial building in the survey area and one of the most prominent architectural properties at Penderlea. The exterior of the rectangular one-story brick building retains Art Deco and Streamline Moderne details largely intact. Vertical brick banding frames window and door openings on the east and west ends of the building. The side elevation extending along NC Highway 11 is dominated by the expanse of glass block filling most of its length. The smokestack and water tower on the property are two of the most prominent vertical elements in the Penderlea landscape.

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<sup>60</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, p. 70.

<sup>61</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 56-57.

The hosiery mill was retooled as a perfume factory in 1949. After that plant was closed in 1966, the mill reopened as a hosiery mill in 1967, and closed again in 2005. It is presently unused.

### **Religious Buildings**

There are several religious buildings within the survey area representing different Christian denominations. Most of the structures substantively date to post-1960. No churches were built at Penderlea until after the Farmers Home Administration had liquidated federal ownership, because of the strict guidelines set by the Resettlement and Farm Security administrations. Before any church could be erected, the governing agency had to approve a written request signed by at least twenty-five heads of families. At that point, the group could lease a plot of land for two years, and after the agency approved construction plans, they could start the church building when they had seventy-five percent of the construction money in hand.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, interdenominational Sunday services were held in the community buildings for years, while other groups met in private homes.

#### **Potts Memorial Presbyterian Church**

In 1945, the community church called its first full-time pastor, Rev. William Burris, and supply pastor, John R. Potts. In November 1945, a majority of communicants elected to join the Presbyterian denomination, and the church was chartered as Potts Memorial Presbyterian Church. The congregation acquired two buildings from nearby military installations. Potts Memorial Chapel, dedicated in 1946, was a surplus chapel building at Fort Fisher, in New Hanover County, which the congregation dismantled and rebuilt on their property at the corner of Highway 11 and Garden Road. In 1948 the congregation purchased a larger chapel, which they dismantled and moved from Camp Davis, in Onslow County. The new sanctuary was rebuilt and dedicated in June 1949.<sup>63</sup> In their

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<sup>62</sup> Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World*, p. 199.

<sup>63</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 64-68.

original form these buildings may have had wood siding, but were covered with the current asbestos siding as part of their transfer to Penderlea.

The Potts Memorial Presbyterian property includes a cemetery that pre-dates the MacRae farm city and federal Penderlea development projects. Started as the Pigford family cemetery in the 1850s, it became the principal burial ground in the area, recognized by most local denominations as the primary community cemetery. The property is also the location of many community festivities. Shade trees sheltered the east side of the large church building until a series of storms in the 1990s downed many of them. Only a few of these larger trees survive.

### **First Baptist Church**

Penderlea Baptist Church was organized in 1946 and like Potts Memorial Presbyterian, held its first services in the school auditorium. In 1947, Rev. A. L. Benton became the first full-time pastor of Penderlea Baptist Church, and the church leased a tract of land on the north side of the community center. In 1950 construction began with the present rear wings. The church was finished with brick veneer in 1953 and a larger sanctuary and classrooms were completed in 1959.<sup>64</sup> Located at the head of Eleanor Roosevelt Road, Penderlea Baptist Church is a prominent marker of the community's continuing development after federal involvement.

### **Penderlea Assembly of God Church**

Penderlea Assembly of God Church began in 1949 and soon erected a building with lumber salvaged from two dismantled barns. Later the congregation bought a lot at the corner of Highway 11 and C. R. Dillard Road, where the present brick sanctuary was dedicated in the 1980s.<sup>65</sup>

### **Penderlea Pentecostal Holiness Church**

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<sup>64</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 68-69. Marks, "Penderlea Baptist Church."

<sup>65</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 69-70.

The Penderlea Pentecostal Holiness Church on Burgaw Road stands on a lot that was just outside the homesteads project. The first building was completed in 1955, and is now an annex to a modern sanctuary.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Cottle, *Roots of Penderlea*, pp. 70-71.

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