Genteel Erosion: Perpetuated Abrasion within Northwest Locust Grove

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Preface: Introduction to Site & Scales

This paper and exploration focus on the on the portion of Locust Grover that is defined within the following contemporary boundaries: to the south by the 250 Bypass, to the east by Park St., to the north by Schenk's Branch curving intersection with Meadow Creek, and to the west both by Schenks Branch and the John W. Warner Parkway (Figures 1-2). The contemporary site may be described as an intersection of boundaries and thresholds due to these clearly definitive physical elements but may be understood along similar boundaries and thresholds across time due to shifts in topography, natural boundaries, and roadway infrastructure. The contemporary elevation change from the highest point of Park St. to the lowest eastern point is represented by about a 50' decrease while the elevation change from Park St. to the lowest northern point is represented by a 100' decrease (Figure 3). The watershed of the site follows this topography with runoff into the Schenk's Branch but ultimately going toward the northernmost part of the site toward the Meadow Creek watershed. This site's function can be distinguished from that which surrounds it which includes recreational development, public parks, smaller more suburban-style neighborhoods, and major roadway development. Houses along this portion of Park St. can be characterized as comparably larger, older, and as occupying larger parcels than those of the surrounding streets. These houses sit further back and slightly elevated from the busy street, often with intentional landscaping elements or older elements such as stone walls marking their street-side boundary. While the topography and landscape between the eastern houses and Park St. remain privately owned, views of the site permitted from the John W. Warner Parkway reveal a hillside of dense vegetation that almost completely obscures buildings along Park St. when foliage is full.

While the site has not experienced the same level of residential development as the land directly east to Park St., it fits within a shared theme of transition from a predominantly agricultural landscape to a more residential landscape over the last two centuries. Having founded the current context of the site, the remainder of my research will be categorized along three scales, 1) agriculture to development, 2) development to erosion, and 3) genteel erosion. The first scale will explore agricultural uses over time, exploring how the land transitions from large properties of agricultural production to smaller residential parcels. This scale will consider not only development of the build-environment and land but also of agricultural techniques employed over time. The second scale will build upon the work of the first scale by considering the contributions of development within and enacted upon the site toward erosion. The third scale too will build upon the previous scales, considering how they reinforce systems and histories of gentry of the site. In synthesis, the three scales will ultimately demonstrate how genteel systems of the site contribute to the erosion of boundaries—or perhaps the further erosion of equity and build up of boundaries that perpetuate unjust histories.

Chapter 1: Agriculture to Development

Deed records show that portions of this site in the 1850s were owned by William and Sarah Bibb as well as John and Jane Craven. Historical census records and slave schedules reveal that both William and John were slave owners. In the 1830 census, Bibb is recorded as owning 6 slaves and 1 free person of color, and in the 1850 census, Craven is recorded as a farmer owning 14 slaves. In non-population schedules of the 1850 census, Craven's property is valued at 3000

¹"Fifth Census of the United States" (Washington, DC: Records of the Bureau of the Census, 1830), National Archives, https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/909688:8058.

² "Seventh Census of the United States" (Washington, DC: Bureau of the Census, 1850), National Archives and Records Administration,

https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=8055&h=93145982&tid=&pid=&queryld=695d1d51b94baa99bd2dae4e39ac417e&usePUB=true&phsrc=kbd94&phstart=successSource.

and his "Farming Implements and Machinery" is valued at 150.3 In 1860, AJ Farish who lives on the site is recorded as a farmer with a real estate value of 23500, a personal estate value of 3200, and owner of 17 slaves with 5 slave houses.^{4 5} These property owners are included as they mark an important period of farming and agricultural practices prior to the American Civil War. Prior to the Civil War, land-use patterns on the site and within broader Virginia remained largely agricultural, utilizing large parcels of land and farming techniques such as slave labor and some hand-plowing alongside the introduction of plows. While research made it difficult to determine all of the crops throughout the site, agricultural census schedules and other farms noted on historical maps provide a general idea of site use (Figure 4). Craven, for example, in 1850 is recorded as producing 50 bushels of wheat, 1000 bushels of "Indian Corn", and 800 bushels of oats. A map of Charlottesville from 1875 further reveals agricultural sites in and near the site including Lochlyn Mills (or Cochran Mills), Sinclair's Mills, Sinclair's farm, Flannagan Vineyard, Pen Park Vineyard, and Craven's farm (Figure 5). These provide further insight into the agricultural landscape. The high number of mills, both in Charlottesville, and directly in or adjacent to the site indicate the likely prevalence of wheat, corn, and other grains.

In the early 19th century, farming technologies such as plows and fertilizer became more prevalent, changing the way land was cultivated. With the end of slavery in 1865, these practices would become the sole standard for farms in Virgina. A brochure from 1868 for Hotopp's vineyard at Pen Park (directly north of site) describes the process of preparing the soil for grape vines,

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³ "Seventh Census."

⁴ Through Ancestry.com, AJ Farish is reported to own 32 slaves but closer inspection of the primary document reveals that the actual number of persons was 17.

⁵ "Eighth Census of the United States" (Washington, DC: Bureau of the Census, 1860), National Archives and Records Administration,

https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/34478309:7667?tid=&pid=&queryId=3e57780db 51ee581df4b52f66aac7d4c& phsrc=kbd100& phstart=successSource.

⁶ "Seventh Census."

Take a three-horse plow, follow in the same furrow with a three-horse coulter, (or two single) and see that you stir every inch of soil to the depth of at least 18 inches. Then stake off your rows; if on a hillside they should be run on a level. [...] In these trenches, and around the vines, there should be used some fertilizer, as bone dust, wood soil, &c., but do not bring any heating manures in contact with the roots. [...] Provide some ditches for leading the water off to the side, to prevent washing by heavy showers.⁷

Starting in the late 19th century however, much of the outlined site began being split into smaller parcels, marking Charlottesville's transition further away from the agricultural culture that defined the counties and land around it.⁸ This is exemplified in the property of Rock Hill, currently located at the southern portion of the site at 1025 Park St.. In a document reporting the physical history of Rock Hill, the authors categorize the property's development into four periods.⁹ The first period, from 1821 to 1863, is characterized by the property's agricultural function which included a home, agricultural buildings, cultivated fields, and fences on a parcel of approximately 60-70 acres. The second period, from 1863 to 1908, categorizes the property's transition from an agricultural function to more of a country-home estate. The authors state "this shift reflected individual circumstances, but also the greater general economic tensions of the era and the increasing trend of suburbanization in the areas just north of the City of Charlottesville." The third period, from 1909 to 1959, is characterized by the property's development into "an iconic suburban residence." This is due to two primary factors: the property's reduction to a 7.7-acre parcel in 1909, and the contributions of of Dr. Henry

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⁷ WM Hotopp and H Hotopp, *The Grape Vine* (Charlottesville, VA: WM. & H. Hotopp, 1868).

⁸ Robert Fyfe Mein Duncan, "Albemarle County--A Military Terrain Study" (Charlottesville, VA, University of Virginia, 1950), 85.

⁹ Danae A. Peckler and Sean Maroney, "The Rock Hill Landscape: Charlottesville, Virginia: Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) Document Packet" (Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, July 2012), University of Virginia Special Collections.

¹⁰Peckler, "The Rock Hill Landscape," 3.

¹¹Peckler, "The Rock Hill Landscape," 3.

Porter--who owned the property for a period--to the formal and extensive landscaping of the property. The fourth period, from 1959-1983, is characterized less by physical changes but again a change in function as the property was used for Rock Hill Academy (and later the Covenant School and Christian Heritage Academy), a whites-only school that opened in opposition to the federal mandate to desegregate schools. In propose the inclusion of a fifth period which would categorize the site's current use under the Monticello Area Community Action Agency (MACAA) which utilizes the space for its offices and to serve low-income residents of Central Virginia. The fifth period maintains the theme of private ownership but represents a deviation from the other periods with an orientation toward a population that is not represented by the immediate vicinity. Each of these periods maintain their own unique characteristics but the general trend of the property from larger parcels to smaller subdivided parcels over time and across periods is worth noting (*Figure 6*).

Chapter 2: Development to Erosion

Between 18th and 19th centuries farming, scholars make a distinction in practices. In their essay on the ecological consequences of agrarian reform, authors Carville Earle and Ronald Hoffman describe this transition of farming technologies as one from "folk capitalists" with empirical experience, and those that derived knowledge from "theoretical scientific investigations and testimony." Their claim observes a change in approach to farming that introduced the plow and techniques like clean tilling--technologies that, in effect, encouraged

¹²Peckler, "The Rock Hill Landscape," 2-3.

¹³ "Our Programs," MACAA - Monticello Area Community Action Agency, 2020, https://www.macaa.org.

¹⁴ Carville Earle and Ronald Hoffman, "Genteel Erosion: The Ecological Consequences of Agrarian Reform in the Chesapeake, 1730-1840," in *Discovering the Chesapeake: The History of an Ecosystem* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, n.d.), 280.

runoff and erosion without the expensive rotation of specific crops to build up the soil. 15 16 However, the exploitation of slave labor made it easier for farmers to clear large parts of land. Without additional labor costs, farms could fallow more land, maintaining a crop rotation practice that delayed some of the ecological impacts of the technological developments. While specific data regarding pollution and erosion during the 18th through the early 20th centuries is difficult to find, it is feasible to infer that these changes in agricultural practices would have deposited significantly more sediment in Schenks Branch and Meadow Creek. Still, after the Civil War, much of Charlottesville transitioned away from agriculture, becoming primarily a center of industry. This however also would have impacted waterways in the city as mills, factories, and businesses dumped waste and pollution into waterways. This trend is visible in the broader context of Virginia with large waterways. In a 1950 thesis presented on Albemarle's terrain, the author reports, "Textiles, machine shops, and food processing plants were of the greatest importance. These industries were mainly grouped in the vicinity of Charlottesville, " and, "The Rivanna and the James are both polluted by industrial waste and sewage disposal." 17 18 This is further emphasized by infrastructure of Albemarle county which shows major railroads and highways each passing through and intersecting in Charlottesville, asserting an economy that is industry focused (Figures 7-8).

Erosion or erasure of landscape however is also seen in the constructed environment that evolves over time at the site. Returning to the property of Rock Hill, Figure 9 demonstrates changes in the presence and density over time as the property is subdivided and suburbanized.

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¹⁵ Clean-tilling follows a practice that is especially prone to wind and water erosion and is not considered a best management practice.

Sandeep Kumar and Kurtis Reitsma, "Chapter 11: Soil Tillage," in IGrow Corn: Best Management Practices (South Dakota State University, 2016),

https://extension.sdstate.edu/sites/default/files/2019-09/S-0003-11-Corn.pdf.

¹⁶Earle and Hoffman, "Genteel Erosion," 296.

¹⁷ Duncan, "Albemarle County," 85.

¹⁸ Duncan, "Albemarle County," 81.

Such changes can also be seen in images of the development of McIntire Park (*Figures 10-12*) Charlottesville's historically whites-only park is located directly adjacent to Schenks Branch on the west side. Images show changes to the landscape due to development of the park's golf course as well as due to the suburbanization along Park St.. Archaeological evidence of the McIntire Park East landscape reveals multiple curiosities along the eastern portion of Schenks Branch. These include evidence of infill likely deposited during the golf course's development, stone masonry walls topped with concrete, and multiple walls of poured concrete near the Rock Hill property which were likely intended to channel the flow of the creek and/or support a crossing over the branch.¹⁹

In 1994, a group of engineering students at the University of Virginia conducted a study of the water quality of Schenks Branch. Their results lead them to conclude that storm runoff was *not* introducing any significant pollution to the creek. One possible reason for this might be attributed to the nature of the private land surrounding the creek. On the east, the creek would be bordered by McIntire golf course, which--while questionable in its environmental sustainability--would still provide a grassy plain to absorb water and runoff as compared to a paved parking lot. On the west, the creek would be bordered by the dense foliage that obscured the backyards of the houses on Park St. which, similar to the golf course, would at least present an absorbable plain for water and runoff. Still, it becomes necessary to consider the likely erosion and erasure of landscape due to the development of the Meadowcreek or John Warner Parkway (*Figure 13*). Although the parkway was not completely finished until 2015, its planning and the community opposition toward it began in the late 1990s. With part of the parkway directly adjacent to and following the depression of Schenks Branch (*Figure 14*), it is likely that

¹⁹ Danae A. Peckler and Sean Maroney, "McIntire Park Charlottesville, Virginia Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS) Documentation Packet" (Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, July 2012), University of Virginia Special Collections, 26-27.

the movement of earth as well as loose particles and debris created from construction of the parkway contributed to pollution of the waterway. Recent projects have worked to restore a large portion of Meadow Creek to the site to the east. Justifications for the initial project cited major pollution concerns of the watershed, largely attributed to the impervious surfaces that surround the waterway. This portion of the Meadow Creek is outside the boundaries and scope of the researched site but identifies what may be similar challenges facing Schenks Branch. Efforts seem to have been made to mitigate such issues at Schenks Branch however as exemplified by Schenks Greenway, a sort of greenery trail system that mediates the space between the parkway and creek.

Chapter 3: Genteel Erosion

Some might argue that the cultural erosion of the site as an agricultural-oriented landscape is best interpreted and celebrated as an evolution of technology and industry. However, perhaps it is better thought of as an intentional erosion of a system that no longer served the interests of the genteel. Instead the evolution of the site from an agricultural to residential landscape represents a continuation of privileged accessibility. Those who owned property, farms, and slaves were likely more to have the resources and accessibility to transition away from agriculture and toward industry within a privileged level of opportunity and security while maintaining their social-physical standing within the same landscape. This is easily seen in the site's continuing legacies of slavery and inequity. Prior to the Civil War, Virginia farming almost entirely used the exploitation of slaves for labor. This is affirmed in the agricultural and census

²⁰ "Meadow Creek Stream Restoration Project" (Charlottesville, VA: The Nature Conservancy and City of Charlottesville, May 2013), 1, https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/VARTF_Meadow-Creek-restoration-Fact-Sheet.pdf.

data reported on in chapter 1 which confirms that, at the least, the site under research was part of property that dozens of people were enslaved on over time and contained multiple slave residences. 21 22 Author Stephanie Camp says that, "Where slaveholders' mapping of the plantation was defined by rigid places for its residents, the rival geography was characterized by motion: the secret movement of bodies, objects, and information within and around plantation space." The researched site maintains a visibility and privilege for those who own its property while the hidden landscape of slaves remains hidden and excluded from the landscape today. Such erasure is indicative of inequity. Considering the development of the site, the elite and wealthy were still able to function within boundaries of access in an increasingly urbanized context (away from agrarian) while Black communities continued to be excluded.

Apart from inferences and deductions about the site's exclusive genteel nature, it can be directly tied to white supremacism through figures, function, and land ownership. The occupation of the site by those who served in the Confederacy (as evidenced in previous course research), by segregated education systems, and by slavery and private ownership of land, the site has continued to reinforced white supremacism, perpetuating an on-going erosion of equity and human rights. Such patterns have implications even far beyond the site. The original tract of land, of which Rock Hill is recorded as being part of, was home to Meriwether Lewis who was famously charged by Thomas Jefferson to lead the expedition of the Louisiana Purchase.²⁴ Lewis is mentioned here as an expansion of the site's white supremacism through his participation in and direct exploitation of indigenous knowledge and land for the purpose of white, westward expansion obsessed rooted in ideas of private land and ownership.

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²¹ "Eighth Census."

²² "Seventh Census."

²³ Stephanie M. H. Camp, "The Pleasures of Resistance: Enslaved Women and Body Politics in the Plantation South, 1830-1861," *The Journal of Southern History* 68, no. 3 (2002): 535, https://doi.org/10.2307/3070158.

²⁴ Peckler Sean Maroney, "The Rock Hill Landscape," 4.

Another privilege reflected in the site is its elevation in relation to the nearby waterways. With potential pollution in the current waterways and increasing risks of heavy rains and floods due to climate change, the residents of Park St will likely remain largely unaffected.²⁵ While site use and development of infrastructure may continue to develop over time, any ecological impacts upon the waterways are not likely to be immediately felt by the high elevation that rises from Schenks Branch and Meadow Creek. Those impacts will likely fall elsewhere as environmental consequences often affect the poor and marginalized who often reside at lower places in cities. Still, building upon chapter 2's discussion of the Meadowcreek Parkway, it is helpful to discuss it here further. While opposition to the parkway seems well founded and supported by environmental groups, it evokes a sort of NIMBYism.²⁶ Arguments against the parkway often cite destruction of McIntire Park as a major concern (Figure 15). McIntire Park and the Schenks Branch however undeniably act as natural barriers to land development and levels of suburbanization seen throughout the rest of the Locust Grove neighborhood. In effect, the park extends the privacy of already privately-owned land upon Park St. and perhaps even evokes a sense of the plantation landscape as residents can look out from Park St. over acres of natural features. It is possible that the Meadowcreek Parkway was perceived not only as capitalist threats toward Charlottesville but also a threat of development and of public space for Park St residents. In an exchange of emails between environmental advocates building coalitions to fight the parkway development, one man noted an issue with the proposed plan as well as its alternative. Of the proposed options, he says,

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²⁵ Niklas Hagelberg, "How Climate Change Is Making Record-Breaking Floods the New Normal," *United Nations Environment Programme*, March 3, 2020, sec. News and Stories, http://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/how-climate-change-making-record-breaking-floods-new-normal.

²⁶ "NIMBYism refers to the concept and culture of NIMBY or "not-in-my-backyard." Often evoked by wealthy and white communities, NIMBYism favors privacy and fears encroachment.

Both roads are equally bad. Why do the County, PEC and SELC only want to get rid of one of them? If this is going to be a fight for the environment, then lets dump both roads and fight this together. But if this is just going to be about keeping development out of wealthy Western Albemarle neighborhoods and putting it elsewhere, I've got better things to do than fight that battle.²⁷ ²⁸

While there were clear and valid environmental concerns with the parkway, it must be noted that the opposition toward it was not so binary and clear as may be suggested. This again reflects this scale of maintenance of the gentry, privacy, and land ownership at the cost of erosion of burdens that will inequitably be placed elsewhere.

Conclusion

It might be helpful to revisit thinking of the site researched here within this paper as a collection of boundaries and thresholds. From large farms to smaller residential plots, the site has literally (and physically--through the use of fences) enacted boundary lines repeatedly in order to assert ownership and maintain security. While boundaries have changed over time, due to infrastructure, suburnization, natural causes of stream flow, they have reinforced and maintained a culture of private ownership and socio-economic privilege. In contrast, erosion has occurred in that the hidden landscapes of the site have largely remained hidden, even pushed out. Thresholds of the site, like slaveholders' mapping of their plantations, remain rigid. Even at the current site of what was previously Rock Hill Academy, MACAA seems oddly closed off from those it seeks to serve. The roadway is labeled as a private drive and the organization itself operates within a neighborhood that does not reflect its low-income participants. By way of three different scales,

²⁷ SELC refers to the Southern Environmental Law Center and PEC refers to the Piedmont Environmental Council.

²⁸ Kevin Lynch, "Nancy K. O'Brien Papers" (Email, Charlottesville, VA, 2004 1976), University of Virginia Special Collections.

this paper has explored both the unchanged and changed, development and erasure, hidden and visible of the northwest corner of Locust Grove over time. While additional research--especially to the current water quality and downstream effects of Schenks Branch--would be beneficial to deeper study, the information provided here provides a framework in demonstrating how genteel systems of the site contribute to the maintenance of privileged accessibility and perpetuation of erosion of equity and hidden histories.

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Illustrations



Figure 1; ARCGIS satellite map with outline of Locust Grove Study area. Yellow highlight represents the specific area of research for this paper https://uvalibrary.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=bed9327778074738b0c0e https://uvalibrary.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=bed9327778074738b0c0e https://uvalibrary.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=bed9327778074738b0c0e



Figure 2; ARGIS data shows satellite imagery of site with a blue path marking the location of Schenks Branch

https://uvalibrary.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=bed9327778074738b0c0e935c556cf45

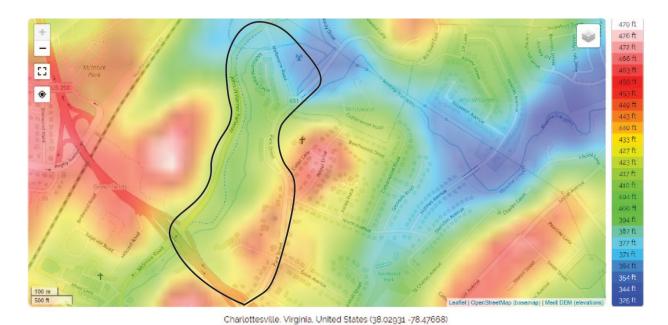


Figure 3; Current topography of site https://en-us.topographic-map.com/maps/nww/Charlottesville/

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Figure 4; Census data shows agricultural data for farms on site including those of John Watson, Andrew Craven, and William Flannagan

https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/2456525:1276?tid=&pid=&queryId= 4730456853f611bab423387b77edd798& phsrc=kbd111& phstart=successSource

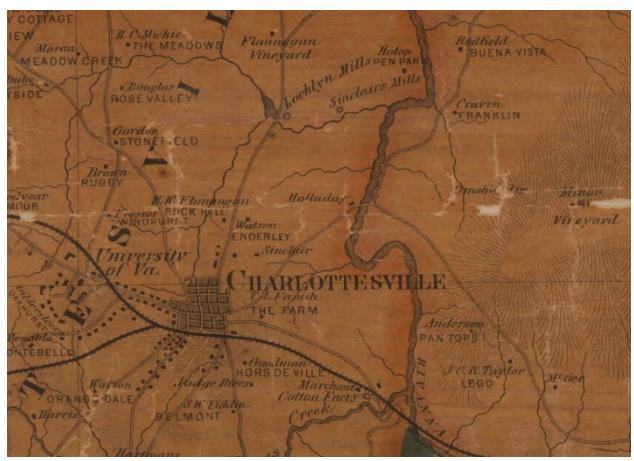


Figure 5; 1875 map of Albemarle County https://search.lib.virginia.edu/sources/uva-library/items/u2959145

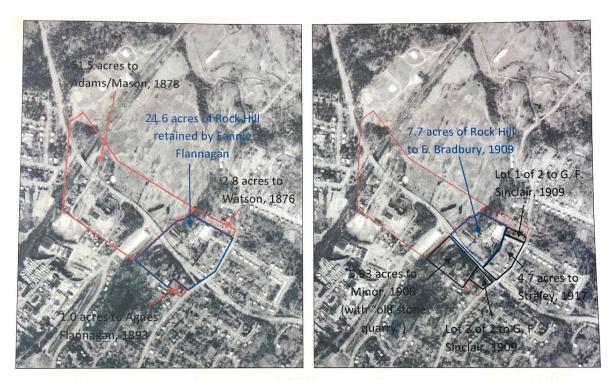


Figure 1: Rock Hill Property and Divisions, Second Period of Development: at Left, 1876–1900, and at Right, 1900–1909. Parcel boundaries based on deed references over 1966 aerial image (Dovetail, 2011; Charlottesville and Albemarle Orthophotography).

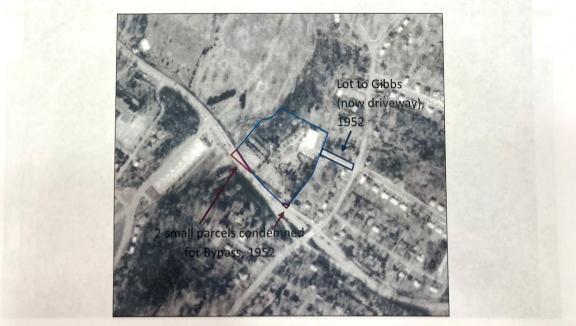


Figure 2: Rock Hill Property and Divisions During Third Period of Development (1909-1959). Parcel boundaries based on deed references over 1966 aerial image (Dovetail, 2011; Charlottesville and Albemarle Orthophotography).

Figure 6
Satellite images of Rock Hill property show its parcel division over time from 1876 to 1959
Danae A. Peckler and Sean Maroney, "The Rock Hill Landscape: Charlottesville, Virginia:
Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) Document Packet" (Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, July 2012), University of Virginia Special Collections.

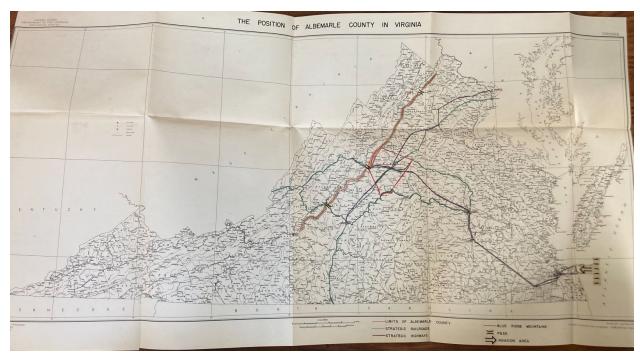


Figure 7; Position of Albemarle County within Virginia Robert Fyfe Mein Duncan, "Albemarle County--A Military Terrain Study" (Charlottesville, VA, University of Virginia, 1950).

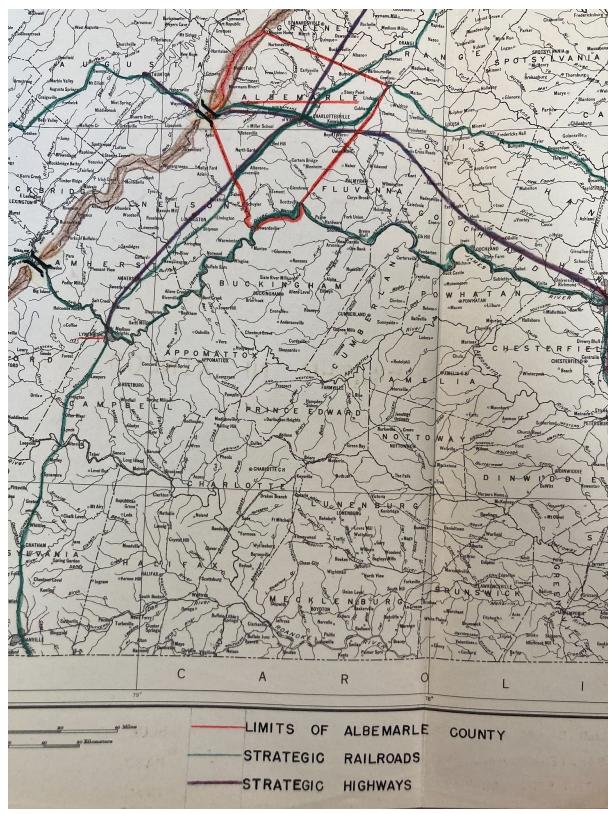


Figure 8; Transvergence of railroads and highways in Charlottesville Robert Fyfe Mein Duncan, "Albemarle County--A Military Terrain Study" (Charlottesville, VA, University of Virginia, 1950).

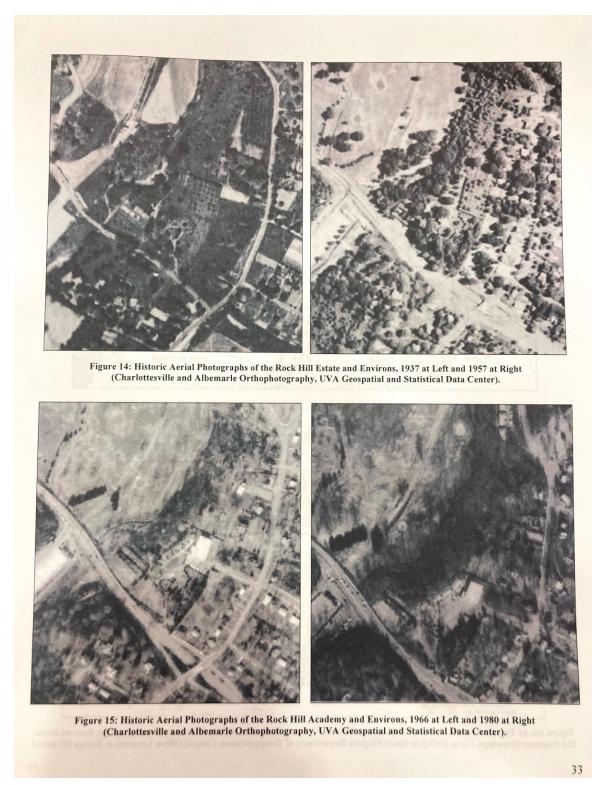


Figure 9; Aerial photographs of Rock Hill property show landscape changes from 1937 to 1980 Danae A. Peckler and Sean Maroney, "The Rock Hill Landscape: Charlottesville, Virginia: Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) Document Packet" (Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, July 2012), University of Virginia Special Collections.

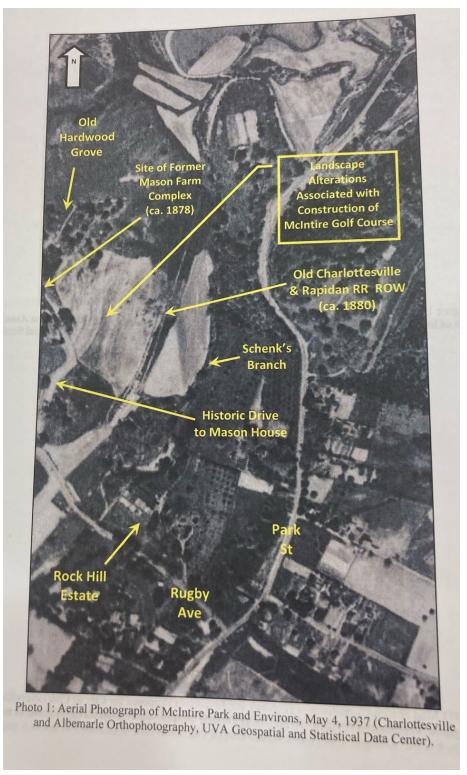


Figure 10; 1937 aerial photograph of McIntire Park with annotations Danae A. Peckler and Sean Maroney, "The Rock Hill Landscape: Charlottesville, Virginia: Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) Document Packet" (Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, July 2012), University of Virginia Special Collections.

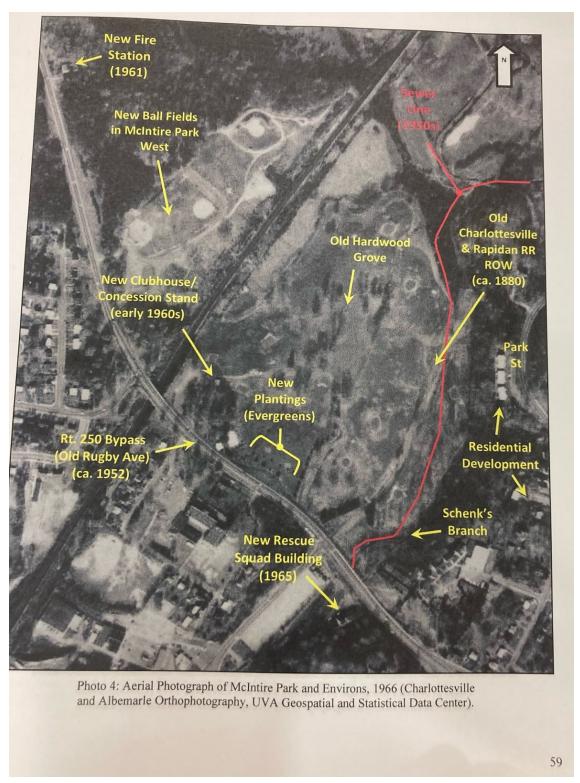


Figure 11; 1966 aerial photograph of McIntire Park with annotations
Danae A. Peckler and Sean Maroney, "The Rock Hill Landscape: Charlottesville, Virginia:
Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) Document Packet" (Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, July 2012), University of Virginia Special Collections.

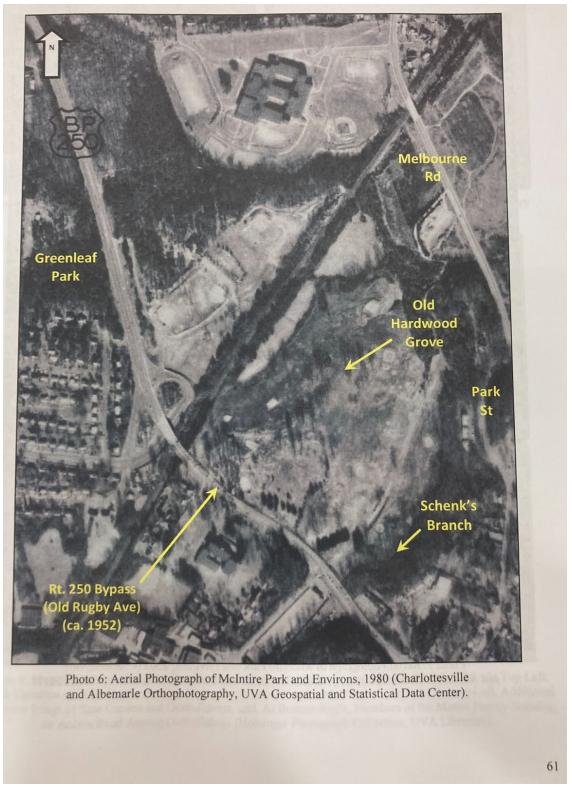


Figure 12; 1980 aerial photograph of McIntire Park with annotations Danae A. Peckler and Sean Maroney, "The Rock Hill Landscape: Charlottesville, Virginia: Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) Document Packet" (Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, July 2012), University of Virginia Special Collections.

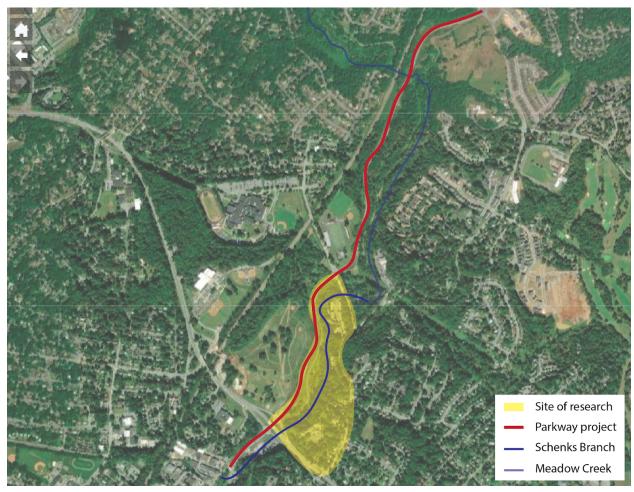


Figure 13; ARCGIS satellite imagery overlaid with parkway annotations https://uvalibrary.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=bed9327778074738b0c0e935c556cf45



Figure 14; Border of Rock Hill property, view from Schenks Branch Danae A. Peckler and Sean Maroney, "The Rock Hill Landscape: Charlottesville, Virginia: Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) Document Packet" (Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, July 2012), University of Virginia Special Collections.

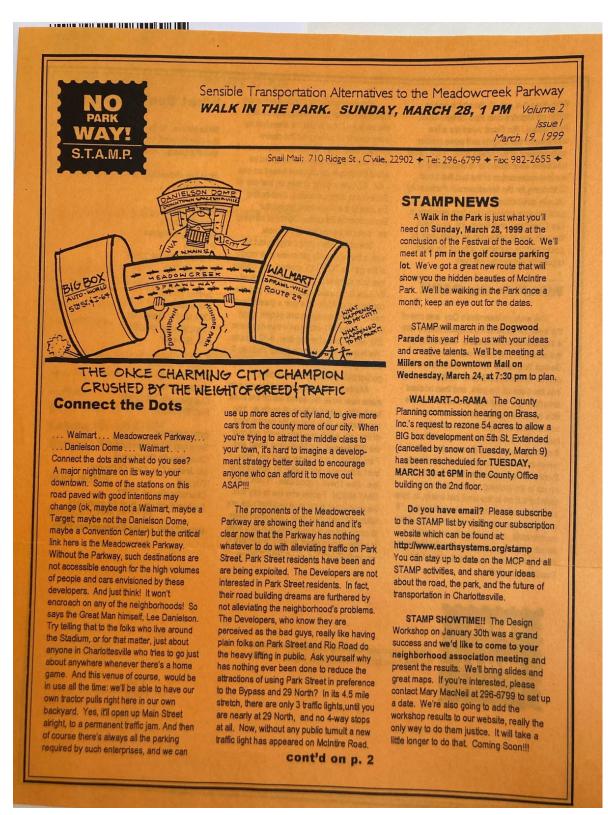


Figure 15; Advocacy campaign and newsletter against the parkway development "Sensible Transportation Alternatives to the Meadowcreek Parkway," present-1998.