

North Carolina's Birdseye Maps

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The nineteenth-century was a time of tremendous change in The United States. Great technological advances fed the assurgency of the Industrial Revolution and American capitalism. Newly built factories forever changed the American landscape and the creation of a middleclass, comprised mostly of innovative businessmen (factory owners and other small businesses owners), was the result of a surging economy. Phenomenal population increases were fueled by the arrival of thousands of immigrants who fled Europe for the promise of land in a nation full of promise. Amidst all of this change and development, America also found itself in the throes of a debilitating civil war. The clash between North and South ended in the Confederate states being absorbed into the Union but the losses suffered by the South, and the period of restoration that followed proved to retard industrialism in the South compared to the North.

The majority of the American bird's eye maps captured the growth of the nation during the nineteenth-century by focusing on the change taking place in the North. The maps were akin to modern day web pages providing information about the town, and encouraging community awareness, while demonstrating full-fledged civic pride (Kreiger, 2008). Because the plantation society of the South subsisted on a predominantly agricultural economy, bird's eye map makers took little notice of the South until after the Civil War when industry and development made its mark on the southern landscape. This paper examines six of the fourteen the bird's eye maps of North Carolina that cover the span of time from Reconstruction into the first second decade of the twentieth century, thereby providing a continuous record of post-War development.

Introduction

John Reps (1984) has suggested that approximately 5000 bird's eye maps were created during the nineteenth-century and the first two decades of the twentieth-century. The Library of Congress holds close to 1800 maps and of these, only 75 maps exist of cities in the southeast. There are fourteen maps of North Carolina cities; this total is only bested by Virginia and Georgia with 21 and 15 maps, respectively. The remainder of the southeastern states (South Carolina, Florida, Alabama and Mississippi) range from 13 maps to none. The North Carolina maps are especially interesting as they cover the entire spectrum of time from Reconstruction (1872) to the turn of the twentieth century which corresponds to what is thought to be the "Golden Age" of the bird's eye maps.

The bird's eye maps were essentially a "for profit" endeavor. Map makers focused on small towns that were easily accessible, easily drawn and easily sold. They played to the civic pride of the town's inhabitants creating flawless portraits of American aspiration while capitalizing on political and social change that affected much of the country. However, while factories were being built and immigrant farmers settled land in the North, the South remained tied to an agricultural economy managed mostly by wealthy plantation owners. Therefore, the formula used to create bird's eye maps of Northern cities was not transferable to the sprawling Southern plantations. This situation changed after The Civil War and is most noticeable in the North Carolina bird's eye maps. This paper looks at six of the maps, tracing the resurgence of the state from 1872 to 1913.

The only maps available for this study were from the on-line collection of bird's eye maps from the Library of Congress. Twelve cities were the subject of fourteen bird's eye maps (there are two maps of Asheville and two of Rocky Mount) that captured North Carolina cities. Many of the maps were created by Albert Ruger, who is thought to be the most significant of the hundreds of bird's eye map makers, and Thaddeus M. Fowler, Ruger's contemporary. Fowler, too, is one of the major map makers; his "career spanned the entire period of the [bird's eye] map production" (LOC) from directly after the Civil War (1865) until 1922.

Six maps have been chosen for this study because of their significance in tracing the history of the state after The Civil War, as well as documenting the change in use that was part of the evolution of the bird's eye maps. These maps include Raleigh, Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Black Mountain, and two maps of Asheville.

Bird's Eye Maps of Major Cities

Raleigh, 1872

This map of Raleigh (Figure 1) was one of the earliest maps to be produced of a southern city after the Civil War. Camille Drie, the artist, also created maps of Columbia and Charleston, South Carolina during the same year as the Raleigh map. Of French origins, Drie who like many other bird's eye map makers was trained as an engineer, is probably most famous for his centennial map of St. Louis, which is comprised of 110 separate bird's eye maps. Note the insets on the Raleigh map. These "vignettes" were popular ways of emphasizing important buildings and businesses on the maps. Undoubtedly, they were signs of civic pride as the inclusion of the vignettes would incur more cost to those who underwrote the cost of the map. In the case of the Raleigh map, it seems that local or state government must have commissioned the map as the yet-to-be-built state penitentiary and a "lunatic asylum" are featured in the bottom corners.

Greensboro, 1891

Nineteen years after Drie's view of Raleigh was published, Albert Ruger (the "Father of the American bird's eye maps") traveled south to make maps of several North Carolina cities, including this one of Greensboro (Figure 2). The elaborate cartouche, with the inset drawings of the court house and post office, is again indicative of how the city's residents wanted their town to be portrayed. The cartouche would have cost extra, as did the inclusion of the two civic buildings. Private businesses listed in the map's

legend would also have paid extra to have their building featured on the map. The railroad and depot in the front of the map are icons of a prosperous, mercantile city with ties to other cities. The inclusion of the city's population in the map's cartouche (population=8000) speaks of a growing population and the plots of empty land that spread towards the horizon indicate that the city is ready and eager to grow even farther.

Winston-Salem, 1891

The next stop on the railroad line was Winston-Salem. Also drawn by Albert Ruger, the map of Winston-Salem (Figure 3) was drawn in the same year as Greensboro and Asheville. The population of the city at this time was 11,000 as mentioned below the map's title. The lengthy legend, an indication of the town's prosperity, may have prohibited the use of a cartouche, such as the one on the Greensboro map. The undulating landscape is an interesting facet of this map and, as in the case of the Greensboro map, Winston-Salem is depicted as having lots of room for expansion.

Asheville, 1891 and 1912

These two maps of Asheville are important for many reasons. First, and perhaps most obvious, is the increase in town size and density between 1891 and 1912. Ruger's map (Figure 4), drawn in 1891 only hints at what Asheville would look like in a little over 20 years. The tendency towards using the bird's eye maps as instruments of advertising and tourism, an evolution of the bird's eye maps in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, is also readily apparent. The vignettes on the bottom of the map refer to hotels one may like to stay in, and a "sanitarium" perhaps for those recuperating from an illness. Also included in the vignettes is a small scale map of the city's attempt to extend the length of South Main Street. The exclusion of a legend is very unusual for Ruger.

Fowler's map (Figure 5) shows the dramatic change in city size. The population has risen from 11,500 in 1890 to 31,000 twenty-two years later. While the vignettes emphasize the industry and businesses in the Asheville area, the writing at the bottom functions almost as a gazetteer, another advertising strategy that attempted to draw people to the city. Included in the text are measurements of altitude, mean temperature, atmosphere, and soil conditions, as well as road and rail conditions—a testimony to Asheville as "an ideal all-the-year-round resort."

Black Mountain, 1912

Black Mountain, North Carolina (Figure 6) is a curious mixture of text, legend, photographs and bird's eye map and is an excellent example of how the bird's eye maps deteriorated into blatant instruments of advertising at the turn of the twentieth-century. The map itself has become a quickly sketched, watercolor-like drawing that appears to play a supporting role in attracting visitors to Black Mountain "the gateway to the most beautiful mountains in all America..." Text describes many of nature's beauties that can be found in and around Black Mountain, photos (that have replaced the drawn vignette) indicate more social activities that can be found in the area and the legend gives examples of businesses and civic officials in Black Mountain. The bird's eye map has become somewhat redundant.

Discussion

The years following the Civil War were a turbulent time for many Southern cities as they began to rebuild and adjust to new social and economic changes. As the region slowly transformed into an industrial economy, investors and developers began to turn their attention to the South. Undoubtedly, the bird's eye map makers saw this as a golden opportunity to move into a new market and by 1872, one of the first cities to be drawn was Raleigh, North Carolina. However, it wasn't until seventeen years later, when industrialized southern cities demonstrated signs of growth that a first serious attempt to map North Carolina cities was undertaken by Albert Ruger. Thaddeus Fowler and others followed in Ruger's footsteps some fifteen to twenty years later, but no one map maker was ever successful in establishing a foothold in the South. There may be several reasons for this.

First, when the bird's eye map making trade became popular in the North, the map makers were concentrating on small towns that had common roots and community cohesiveness. The maps were created to celebrate civic pride. Southern cities, especially those that were once rural areas, probably didn't have the same sense of community as in the North. In addition, most new industries were the result of Northern investors, and indigenous Southerners, who had experienced a traumatic change in lifestyle as a result of the War, may have felt that they had little to celebrate.

Another reason why the bird's eye maps were not popular in the South could be due to the time of their creation. By the end of the nineteenth-century the maps had lost some of their appeal and by the twentieth-century (as seen in the Black Mountain map) the map itself was only a supporting document in the tourism trade. Oddly, the maps experienced

juxtaposition with the vignettes and legends. What had once been supporting material to the map became the center of interest while the map was pushed further into the background. What had once been considered a piece of fine artwork was now replicated and given away by the thousands to invite tourism and business into a particular city.

The North Carolina bird's eye maps showed a state in flux, but one that responded well to the challenges following the Civil War. The map of Raleigh in 1872 shows a town expanding and growing into a capital city. Greensboro and Winston-Salem are bustling cities full of potential to become industrialized, and the maps of Asheville and Black Mountain speak of a thriving tourist trade near the end of the nineteenth-century and into the twentieth. These maps and other North Carolina bird's eye maps demonstrate how quickly the state rebounded from the War to become part of the Industrial Revolution and a leader in the tourism trade.

References

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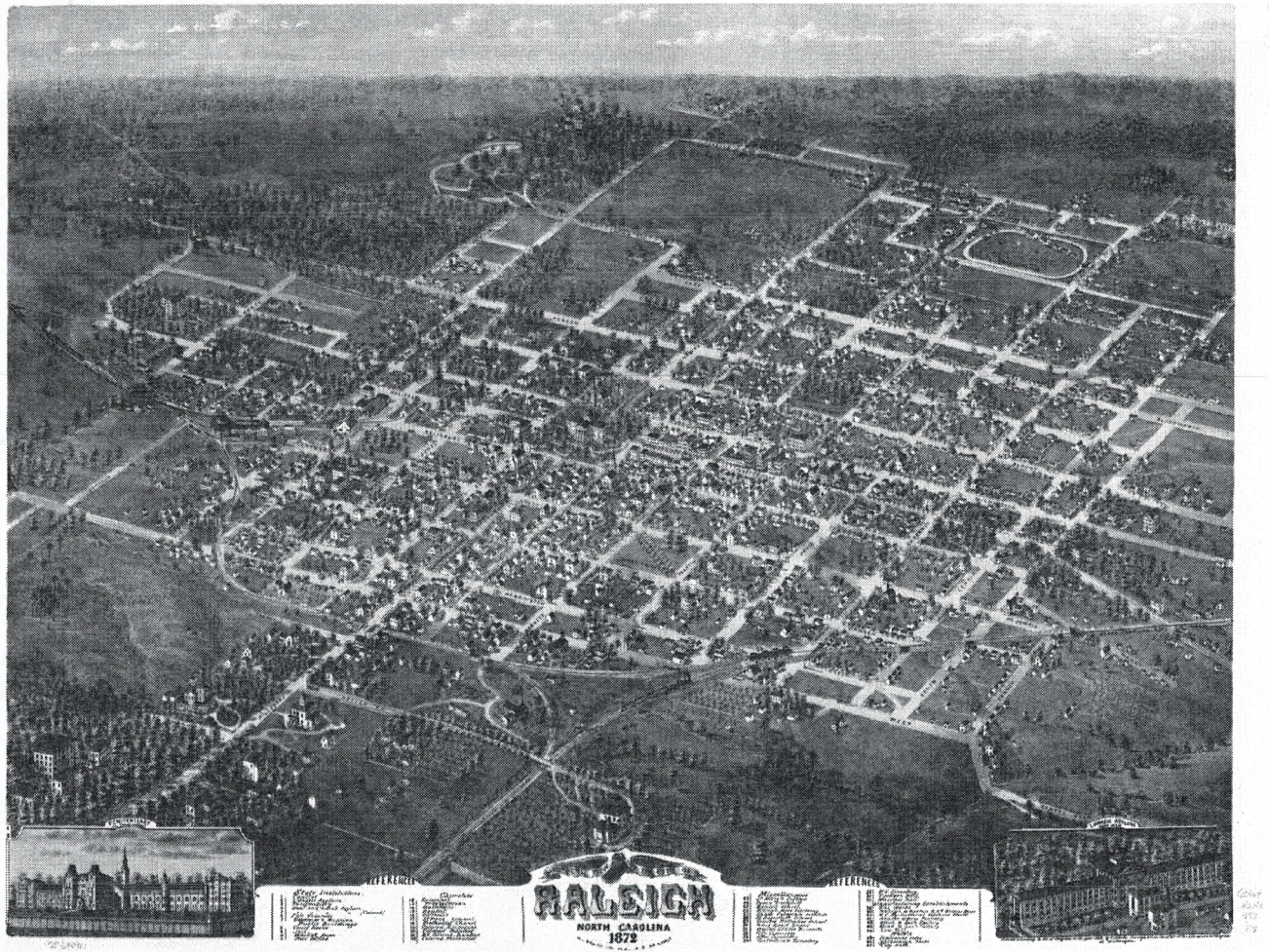


Figure 1. Raleigh, North Carolina, 1874. Drawn by Camille Drie. Downloaded from The Library of Congress, 8/7/2009.

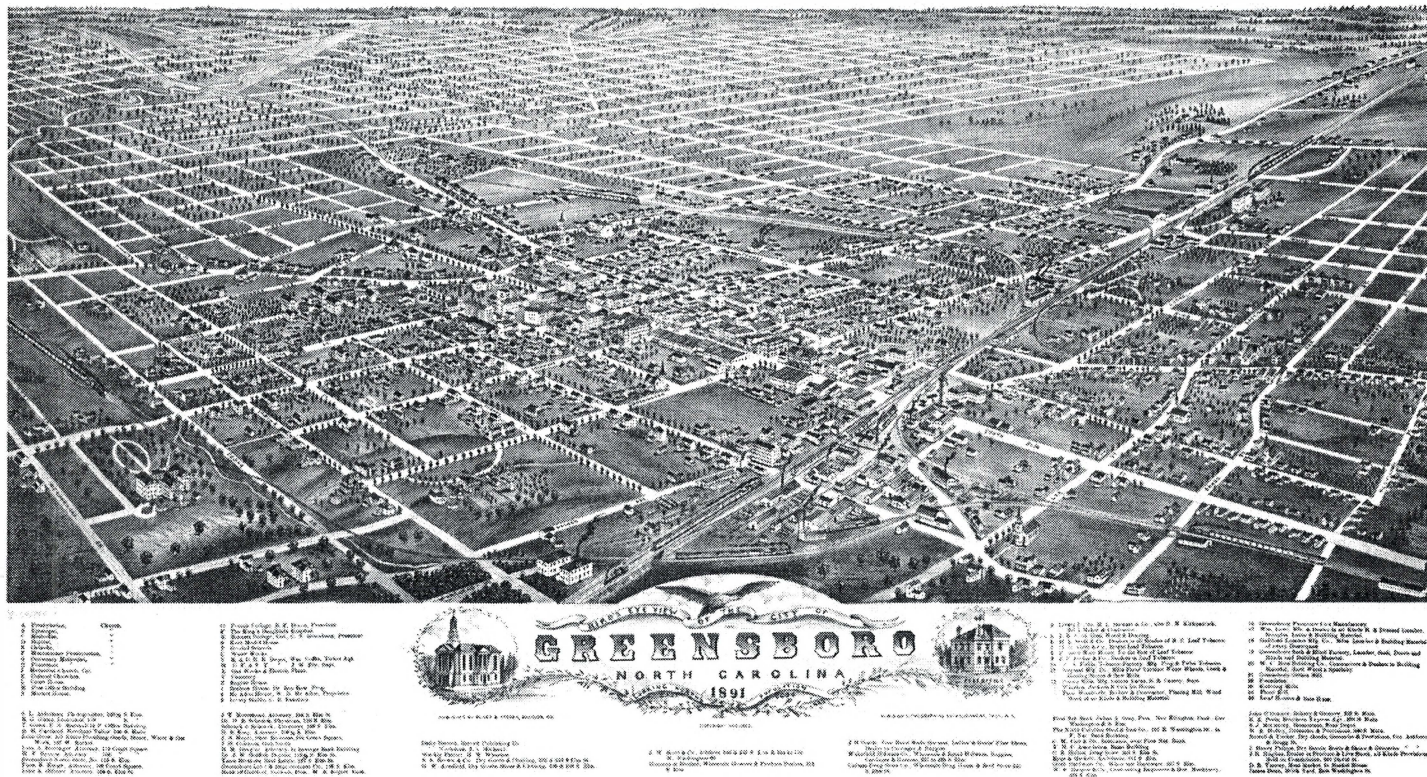
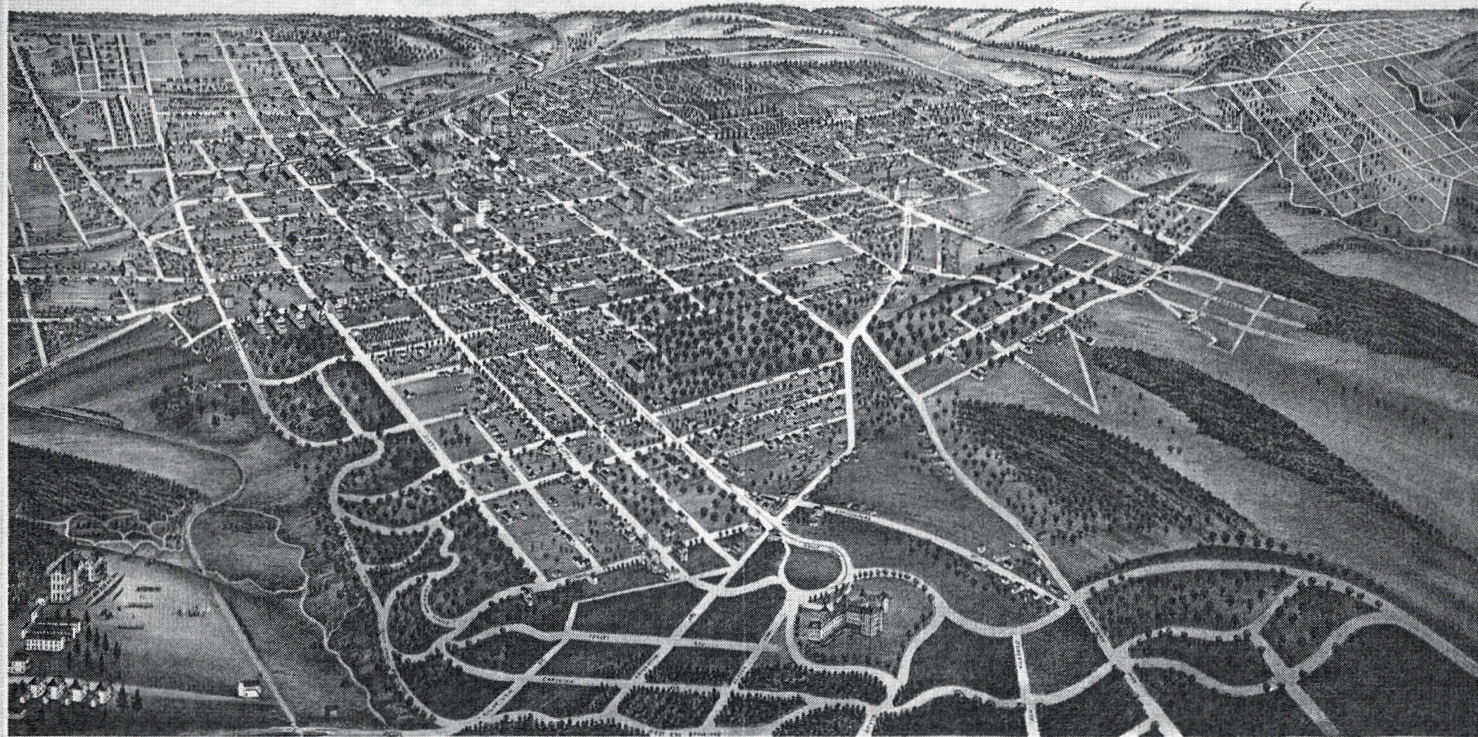


Figure 2. Greensboro, N.C., 1891. Drawn by Albert Ruger. Downloaded from The Library of Congress, 8/7/2009



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE
TWIN CITIES.
WINSTON-SALEM,
NORTH CAROLINA.

POPULATION 1890, 4,194

1891.

POPULATION 1890, 14,905

Winston-Salem, N.C., 1891. Drawn by Albert Ruger. Downloaded from The Library of Congress, 8/7/2009

Winston-Salem, N.C., 1891. Drawn by Albert Ruger. Downloaded from The Library of Congress, 8/7/2009

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Figure 3. Winston-Salem, N.C., 1891. Drawn by Albert Ruger. Downloaded from The Library of Congress, 8/7/2009

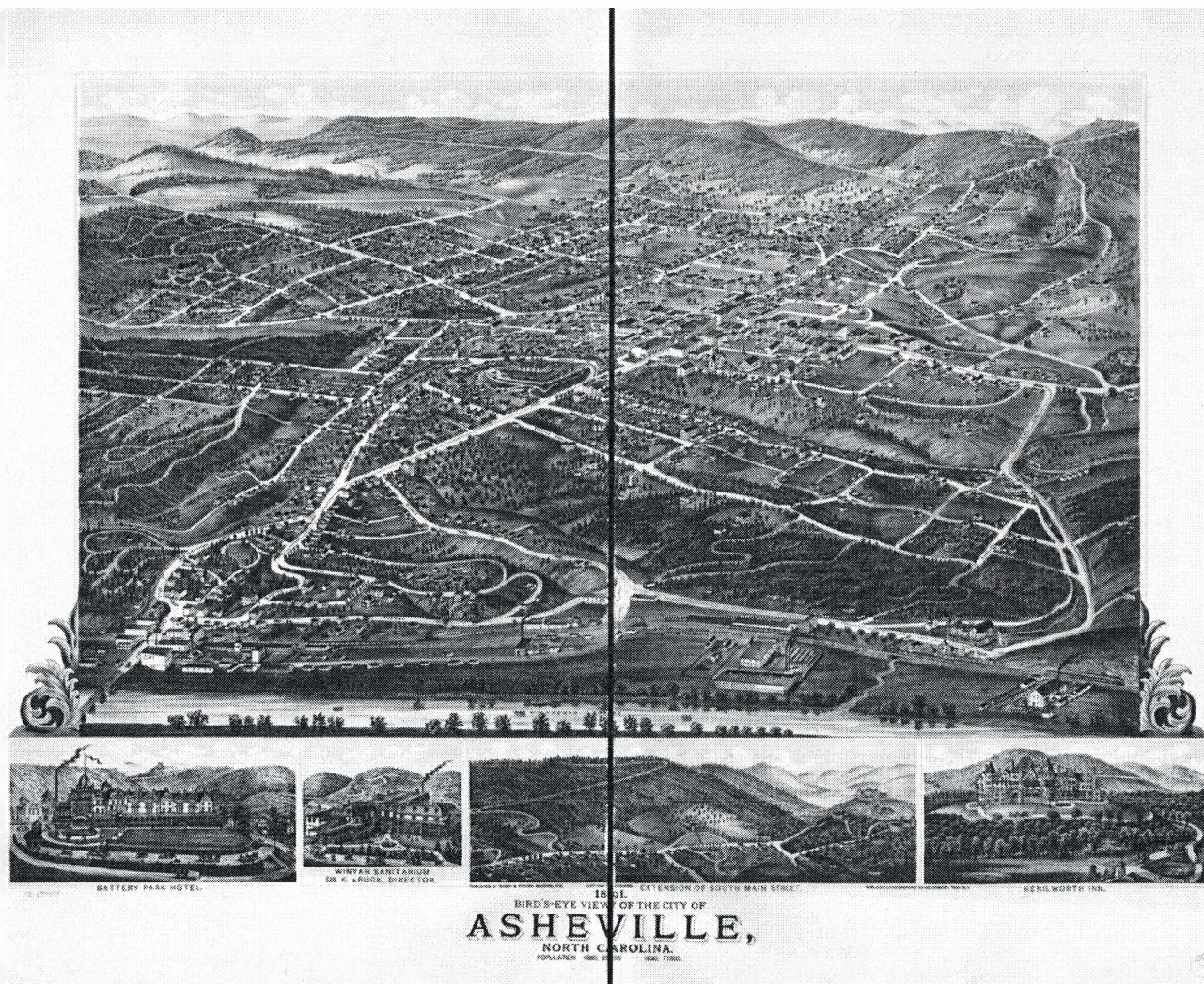


Figure 4. Asheville, N.C., 1891. Drawn by Albert Ruger. Downloaded from The Library of Congress, 8/7/2009.

