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The Balance Shifts: The Change in Town-Gown Relations in Princeton NJ as Reflected by Residential Property Development between 1890 and 1910

Adrian Trevisan

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Abstract
Early boosters of Princeton, NJ, sought to enhance its long-term success by making the town a nexus of education and transportation. By 1865, however, the turnpike and canal had been supplanted by the railroad, and wartime straightening of the rail line had left the town at the end of an unimportant spur line, leaving the town dependent on the College of New Jersey for its future. Between 1890 and 1910 the population of the town grew by fifty percent as the university expanded and affluent alumni seeking a cosmopolitan version of "country life" built mansions and estates there. As local residents attempted to construct housing for the new arrivals, rich alumni undercut them in the lucrative middle-class market by creating a company to build below-market-rate rental housing for faculty. The relationship had shifted; rather than the university existing to support the town, the town existed to support the university. This thesis provides an overview of the growth of town and university before examining in detail residential real estate development between 1890 and 1910 and the factors affecting it.

Keywords
Moses Taylor Pyne, The Prospect Company, Oliver H. Hubbard, Walter B. Harris, trolley

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THE BALANCE SHIFTS:
THE CHANGE IN TOWN-GOWN RELATIONS IN PRINCETON NJ AS REFLECTED BY RESIDENTIAL
PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN 1890 AND 1910

Adrian Trevisan

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I. Introduction

College towns are a relatively recent and underdeveloped subject of scholarly study. As one of their few academic observers notes, “There are books about company towns, mill towns, cattle towns, and black towns, but [as of 2008] not a single major work had ever been published about the American college town. While much has been written about colleges, their campuses, student life, and related subjects, writers act as if colleges exist in a vacuum, as if the lives of students and staff do not extend beyond the college grounds.” So it is for Princeton, New Jersey. There are ample histories of the town’s eponymous university but these generally mention the institution’s physical and social contexts only in passing. Conversely, while there are several publications about the town, they are coffee table books full of photos of houses, or studies of specific buildings, but they do not examine the context in which the buildings were built. The one in-depth history of the town and the university was published in 1878.

Hoping to broaden this particular segment of town-gown literature while attending to the built environment, I set out to explore residential property development in Princeton from 1890 to 1910. During that period the town’s population grew by fifty percent, spurred by the influx of affluent residents seeking a cosmopolitan version of “country life,” and the expansion of the university both in terms of population (students and faculty) and land area. Unlike the suburban areas of large cities studied in the literature, however, Princeton was an independent small town dominated by one industry—higher education—and this gave it some of the

* A note on nomenclature. The municipality of Princeton was originally formed in 1813. In 1894 the central part, containing the university, the residential districts, and the commercial district, separated from the outer part, containing mainly farms. The inner part adopted a borough form of government, the outer a township form. They were reunited in 2013. For purposes of simplicity, the municipalities will be referred to together as “the town” throughout this document. The official name of the educational institution was “The College of New Jersey” from its founding until 1896, when it changed its name to “Princeton University” to reflect its newly established graduate college. References will attempt to reflect the usage at the time, with “the university” used in general statements.
characteristics of a company town, among them the undercutting of local residential property
developers and distortion of the real estate market.

Considering this, I realized that this study period reflected the culmination of a shift in
roles and importance between the town and the university. While early residents of the town
had sought to enhance its long-term survivability by getting the nascent College of New Jersey
to move there, by 1890 the College had grown so much in relative importance that it
overshadowed the town, indeed the town existed mainly to serve it. Were this not obvious
enough, in 1896, when the College proclaimed itself a university, it even took the town’s name.
In undertaking this project I hope to set the stage for research on other college towns,
comparing the origins, development, and importance of the relationship between their town
and university. Is Princeton an anomaly or is this reversal of fortunes typical?

The body of literature studying college towns (as opposed to that studying the
institutions in those towns or the history of higher education in the United States, both
discussed below) is slim, consisting of two works. The first is Blake Gumprecht’s 2008 book *The
College Town* (quoted above). The second is a 2015 article by Daniel Bluestone entitled
“Charlottesville’s Landscape of Prostitution, 1880–1950.”4 Rather than being a historical study,
Gumprecht’s work examines the current state of college towns in order to predict their future.
Gumprecht’s thesis is that American college towns are a distinct class of community, set apart
from other small towns by the peculiarities that come with having the main industry of the town
be a large employer of knowledge workers with a transient population of young students who
arrive every autumn and depart every spring leaving the town empty in the summer. Farming
towns, mining towns, and industrial towns may all be relatively small communities dominated
by one industry, but they are not knowledge factories. Conversely, a city may have one or
several universities, but they do not dominate it due to its multitude of other economic and social endeavors.

Using a number of college town case studies, Gumprecht examines various facets of this premise to gain a more nuanced understanding. The initial chapter, attempting to define the college town, is relevant to this thesis. Other chapters are less so. The most relevant is the chapter that examines the creation and development of the college business district (separate from that of the town) in Manhattan, Kansas, home of the Kansas State University. Gumprecht digs into historic records to determine what the first businesses might have been and then charts the development of the business district, and how growth reflects greater societal changes. Chapters on student fraternities, town government, sports, high-tech research, and eccentric residents, however, tend not to go far into the past, given the book’s purpose of examining college towns today.

Bluestone’s examination of the relationship of the University of Virginia to prostitution in the town of Charlottesville, on the other hand, is more comparable to this thesis. He uses the classic historic preservation tools of Sanborn maps, newspaper clippings, alumni recollections, and court records to construct a picture of the town’s red light district, describe how it was supported by students, and highlight how both the university administration and town government turned a blind eye on it from at least the 1830s until 1950. This is a focused study, looking at one small part of the town’s history for a 125-year period, and is pieced together convincingly from scanty evidence—the topic is not one that students, administration or government had any interest in documenting, and none of the prostitutes or madams kept diaries or wrote memoirs. In comparison, this thesis will examine a publicly discussed topic—real estate development—where any holes in surviving information seems to be more the result of lack of interest than of any desire to cover it up.
With no robust body of literature examining college towns *per se*, this review must turn to bodies of related literature that provide relevant context to the story of Princeton. These focus on two principal topics: studies of suburban development around the turn of the twentieth century and studies of campus development, supplemented by works on company towns. This examination will make apparent where this study of real estate development in Princeton can be compared to existing work and where it stands alone.

In order to examine Princeton’s growth, we must first understand why it existed in the first place and how it survived until the 1890s. Daniel Boorstin’s trilogy *The Americans* follows American development from Colonial times to the 1960s. In the second volume, *The National Experience*, he examines “boosters”—mid-nineteenth century businessmen who sought to create towns or even cities from empty land by sheer willpower and enthusiasm. Although it covers a period 100 years later than, and a part of the continent well to the west of ours, examining Princeton’s early history through this lens provides vital context for the remainder of its history. Although wealthier and more refined than the boosters of the 1800s, Princeton’s colonial founders and their descendants sought to make their town the home of the College of New Jersey for precisely the same reason: to make their town grow faster, better, and stronger than its neighbors.5

Moving to the end of the nineteenth century, much of the study of suburban development has its origins in Kenneth Jackson’s *Crabgrass Frontier*, which used a study of suburban development in Philadelphia to examine the causes and methods of suburbanization across the United States. Several years later, Marc Weiss examined how property developers professionalized their field in the first half of the twentieth century in *The Rise of the Community Builders*. Rather than look at building technology, or transportation, or the economics of building, Weiss uncovered the legal and regulatory framework which enabled
the growth of national housebuilding companies. While these are illuminating studies, they are of limited direct usefulness because, as we shall see, Princeton was too small of a town for this still growing national trend to have reached it during our period of study. 6

Another line of research that grew out of Jackson’s book was on covenants—clauses placed in property deeds through which developers attempted to dictate the character of the development. Evan McKenzie’s *Privatopia* examined developers’ use of deed restrictions in planned communities to create and maintain a level of physical attractiveness in the new properties. Initially intended to be a way to ensure that noxious industries were kept at a distance from the new “Garden Cities”, and that the new properties would be kept above a minimum standard of repair and appearance, these instead became mechanisms to enforce homogeneity among residents—including the barring of racial and ethnic minorities, and tools to prevent activities which the homeowners’ association management determined was unwanted. We shall see that while covenants existed in property developments in Princeton during this time, they were relatively innocuous—limiting themselves to specifying the minimum price of houses, and details on set-backs and ancillary buildings. 7

Several urban historians have examined how people decided where to live in cities. Examples include Elizabeth Blackmar’s *Manhattan for Rent, 1785-1850*, Diane Shaw’s *City Building on the Eastern Frontier*, Mary Schweitzer’s “The Spatial Organization of Federalist Philadelphia, 1790,” and Stuart Blumin’s *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900*. All describe how even during the walking city phase of their subject’s growth, social and racial groups found ways to separate themselves. Several move on to discuss how the technological advances in urban transportation enabled these groups to separate themselves more clearly from one another when the cities and groups increased in size. Due to its modest population (ca 4,000 in 1900) and lack of urban transportation beyond
the bicycle, Princeton can be said to never have moved beyond these early stages of development. Notwithstanding this, sorting did happen, and there were clearly neighborhoods defined by income and, to a lesser extent, race.8

Writing before Jackson, Sam Bass Warner’s developed a case study of Boston’s growth, *Streetcar Suburbs*, looking in particular at technology. Published in 1962, with a second edition in 1978, this work combined works on annexation, architecture, housing, and public health published in the late 1800s and early 1900s, with local building permits, residential directories, property deeds, atlases and census records to support his thesis that Boston’s growth was the result of technological developments in transportation—particularly the electric streetcar, modern sewerage, electricity and the telephone. These developments enabled people to live farther from their place of employment than they could walk in an hour, leading to annexation of neighboring farming towns and creation of bedroom neighborhoods. Other historians seized on this seminal work to study the development of transportation in other cities and the effect it had on their growth. Examples of this include Charles Cheape’s *Moving the Masses*, John Stilgoe’s *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene*, Henry Binford’s *The First Suburbs: Residential Communities on the Boston Periphery, 1815-1860*. Binford began one of what became several streams of revisionist history arguing against Warner’s central thesis with his book, using other Boston suburbs that were not absorbed by the city as it grew to dispute the inevitability of expansion via annexation.9

Since Princeton is only twelve miles outside of Trenton, these works become relevant when we examine the relationship of the two municipalities during the second half of the nineteenth century, when rapid industrialization resulted in Trenton’s annexing several neighboring towns. The construction of not one, but two trolley lines from Trenton to Princeton begs the question, why? Was it to enable workers from Princeton to commute to Trenton?
Was it as an initial step toward annexation? Jackson’s and Stilgoe’s books, combined with John Hepp’s *The Middle-Class City: Transforming Space and Time in Philadelphia, 1876-1926* become particularly in answering this question. Jackson’s book describes how property developers built distant attractions such as amusement parks beyond the property that they wished to subdivide and installed electric streetcars to reach them as a way to create awareness and demand for their new development.  

While one could—based on Jackson—conclude that the two companies were intent on extending their lines to Princeton for this purpose, the fact that neither were owned by housing developers tends to discount it. Instead Stilgoe’s chapter on rural trolleys—describing the pleasure for urban factory workers of a weekend ride on a nearly silent, open-sided electric trolley traveling at 30 mile per hour through the rural countryside), combined with Hepp’s description of Philadelphia crowds going of the Willow Grove Park support instead the contention that Princeton was the attraction at the end of the line used to increase ridership on weekends rather than an object of annexation. Indeed, we shall see that although Trenton served as the nearest big city to Princeton for shopping and banking, it retained its independence and individuality because it was too far from Trenton for daily commuting or shopping even with the trolleys.

Turning from the town to the university, Paul Venable Turner’s *Campus: an American Planning Tradition* provides a sweeping history of campus planning in the United States, beginning with Academical Villages and contrasting the concentration of institutions in two locations in England to the dispersion in multiple locations in the colonies. It also discusses the variety of plans for the arrangement of buildings on the college property shown in the various colonial institutions, and mentions Princeton as an example of having the entire institution housed in one building. While Turner does not venture off campus, and while there is no
significant discussion of the institutions’ relationship to their surrounding communities and how
the growth of one affected the livelihood of the other, this is still helpful for understating the
rationale behind the university’s physical growth in the years preceding and during the period of
study.  

The local equivalent of this is Professor Gerald Breese’s invaluable book *Princeton
University Land 1752-1984*. Breese and assistants chronicle every change in the property
holdings of the university from its founding, property which became part of the university or
were sold by it, buildings that were constructed or demolished, and the financing that enabled
this activity. It also provides this information in a variety of organizational categories, from
chronological, to geographic, to quantity. This thesis would have been much poorer without
Breese’s book, but while it often mentions growth of the town in passing it does not include any
sort of detailed description of the town’s growth or the reasons behind it.  

A second category in the college literature is the history of education in general and
history of The College of New Jersey in particular. George Schmidt’s slim work entitled
*Princeton and Rutgers – the Two Colonial Colleges of New Jersey*, which he wrote as a
component of The New Jersey Historical Series celebrating the state’s 300th anniversary in 1964
is a useful summary, distilling the parallel histories of the institutions, identifying similarities and
differences, and their significance. Books such as Hofstadter and Smith’s *American Higher
Education*, and Schmidt’s *The Liberal Arts College* provide more depth on topics such as the
change in curriculum and composition of faculty in higher education across the United States
during the late 1800’s.  

Although not mentioning the towns in which the institutions are placed, these works
provide important context to the condition of the university when Woodrow Wilson became
president and the impetus for his radical and contested reforms. These reforms in turn led to
growth in the size and number of faculty and students with a follow-on effect on the Princeton residential property market. While James Axtell’s *The Making of Princeton University* begins with Wilson’s reforms and spends most of its time looking at the work of subsequent presidents, the first chapter provides a valuable picture of what Wilson found and how he went about changing it, including several references to the town.15

A final relevant area of scholarship is that on company towns. As the United States industrialized with water-powered factories, companies discovered that they needed purpose-built factories with large residential facilities nearby for the workers arriving from farms or across the Atlantic Ocean. This need continued as new products were invented and steam power freed industry from riverside locations. Two books, both named *The Company Town*, one by Hardy Green and one by John Garner, illustrate the development of, and problems with towns built to manufacture products such as railroad cars, steel, textiles, and chocolate. Clifford Zink’s book on the Roebling steel wire works company, *The Roebling Legacy*, and the company town it built when it opened its new Kinkora plant just outside of Trenton, NJ in 1906 offers another comparator which was similar to Princeton in time and location. While there are obvious differences between steam-powered towns built to manufacture things, and a brain-powered town16 built to manufacture knowledge (defined as a diploma), they are similar enough to provide general norms for physical and social organization. We can use them to examine Princeton to see if it can be justifiably called a company town, and understand to what extent, if any, this affected residential property development.17
II. Proto-booster Efforts 1750-1850

Education

Although the reason for the town of Princeton arising where it did (Figure 1) among the farms that dotted the road between New Brunswick and Trenton is unclear, by 1752 when the new College of New Jersey was looking to move from its initial temporary home in Elizabeth to a permanent location elsewhere in the colony, the town was established enough that four wealthy property owners—John Stockton, Thomas Leonard, John Hornor, and Nathaniel FitzRandolph—were able to contribute the “£1,000 New Jersey money, ten acres of land for the campus, and 200 acres of woodland to provide fuel” necessary to overcome other towns’ efforts and bring the college to Princeton. (Figure 2) In doing so they provided an example for the many small town “boosters” in the future who believed, in Boorstin’s words that “one of the surest ways to promote the growth of a young city was to make it the seat of a college.”

Figure 1. Detail from John Dalley’s 1762 A Map of the Road from Trenton to Amboy showing Prince Town at the center. (Courtesy of Princeton University)
The new college was quickly established. A college building, which was named “Nassau Hall” in honor of King William of Orange, was completed in 1757 and was occupied by the faculty and students. With a mission expanded beyond that of religion to training men to be “ornaments of the State as well as the Church,” it grew quickly, drawing students from colonies beyond New Jersey. With Princeton on the main road between two of the largest cities in the colonies, it was perhaps inevitable that the war should come to Princeton; a chance meeting engagement in 1777 west of town between Washington’s army as it withdrew from Trenton after the Second Battle there, and British units moving to reinforce their Army in that town ended with the Americans firing cannon at Nassau hall to dislodge the British who had
retraced there. Thankfully, the remainder of the war did not involve Princeton, and after the war both university and town were able to rebuild.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{Figure 3.} The original 4.5 acre College of New Jersey campus in Princeton, 1753. (As shown in Breese’s Princeton University Land)

The first half of the nineteenth century saw both the town and the university grow modestly. The first map showing the grounds of the university appears to have been prepared in 1787 (Figure 3), but shows only the shape of the university grounds. Although the century started out badly for the university, with armed conflict between students and faculty resulting in seven arrests and 24 expulsions from a student body of 130, conditions ameliorated and it recovered its financial and academic health. In 1852 John Bevan prepared a map of town (Figure 4) which shows how the university and the newer Princeton Theological Seminary just to
its west had grown in size, numbering eleven and three buildings, respectively, and had become
the center of town. During this period the university offered a course of study similar to its
peers elsewhere in the United States, and at the beginning of the Civil War had 314 students
enrolled.23

Figure 4. Detail from John Bevan’s 1852 Map of Princeton showing houses on either side of the College of New Jersey.
(Courtesy of Princeton University)

Transportation

Princeton proto-boosters expanded their efforts after the Revolution and establishment
of the new nation by focusing on another factor that would lead to commercial vitality and
growth in the community: transportation. In colonial times the Crown had established The
Kings’ Highway, running from Boston, Massachusetts to Charleston, South Carolina, passing
through Princeton. Many small stage lines offered passage over parts of it, coordinating service
with one another to facilitate transfers of passengers at the ends of each stretch of highway.
For Princeton this meant that two lines exchanged passengers after an overnight stay. Later
stage lines offered service from Philadelphia to Elizabeth, where passengers could catch a ferry
to New York, but still included an overnight stop in Princeton.24

In 1804 the Trenton and New Brunswick Turnpike, also known as the “Straight Turnpike”
was chartered, and was completed in 1807. As suggested by the name, this road connected
Trenton and New Brunswick in a straight line, rather than following the somewhat meandering
path of the King’s Highway. As can be seen in Figure 5, this turnpike bypassed Princeton, and in
response, Princeton landowners, seeking to maintain and even boost the town’s economic
position (again including a Stockton—Ebenezer, a nephew of John) chartered the Princeton and
Kingston Branch Turnpike Company to provide a new route between Princeton and Trenton,
shortening the King’s Highway and making it more competitive with the new road.25 One
historian surmised that “[g]ood accommodation, with several well-established inns and taverns
in Princeton and Kingston, also may have helped attract stage lines to this route even though it
was longer than the competing turnpike.”26 This meant that the “business gave life and bustle
to the community, and afforded a good market to the farmers in the neighborhood for hay,
grain, and provisions. The whole route was lined with stages day and night. The hotels were
employed to the utmost of their capacity, in entertaining and feeding passengers and horses.
Hundreds of horses could often be seen at one time in the streets, upon the arrival and
departure of coaches.”27
Even as the town’s turnpike business boomed, however, its decline was foreshadowed by the success of the Erie Canal. From its success sprang a canal craze across the United States, including New Jersey, where businessmen resurrected an idea of William Penn and proposed linking Philadelphia and New York via a canal connecting the highest points of navigation on the Delaware and Raritan Rivers, Burlington and New Brunswick, respectively. As the state’s canal craze gathered momentum a railroad craze began as well, again with a line connecting Trenton and New Brunswick as a key component of travel between Philadelphia and New York. After initially competing—and impeding each other’s progress, the canal and railroad backers changed tack and joined forces. They merged the Delaware and Raritan Canal Company with the Camden and Amboy Railroad Company to form an entity known as “The Joint Companies”—disparagingly called “the Princeton Junta” by its opponents.”28

Once again a Princeton Stockton—Commodore Robert F, great-grandson of John—was among the leaders of effort, along with his father-in-law John Potter. As one of the leaders of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Company, Stockton provided much of the initial backing,
brokered the arrangement with the railroad, and traveled to London to raise financing for it during the Panic of 1837. As it approached Princeton, the canal ran parallel to Stony Brook and then the Millstone River, about one mile east of the center of town. (Figure 6) While there were six toll offices between Trenton and New Brunswick, the main office was at Princeton, and a turning basin was constructed to handle the traffic. The railroad ran roughly parallel to the canal to its east, also with a station at the canal’s Princeton turning basin. The combination of canal turning basin and toll booth, and rail station created a small, mosquito-infested commercial district consisting of about forty buildings—about half residences and half commercial buildings including a hotel, stores, warehouses, wharves, and sheds for the mule teams pulling the canal boats. The success of the canal and railroad led to a commercial boom in town, with several streets laid out and businesses such a quarries, brickyards, lumberyards, and the Princeton Bank opening, and a nascent silk industry being planned.29

However, this economic boom proved to be of limited duration. First, the railroad and canal gradually eclipsed the turnpike as a viable means of travel between Philadelphia and New York, reducing it to insignificance. Then improvements in railroad technological increased its ability to carry freight more quickly than barges on the canal, leaving only anthracite coal and produce as cargos—excluding winter months when the canal was frozen. And finally the town’s connection to the railroad was critically weakened when sharp curves east and west of town made it into a bottleneck for vital traffic during the Civil War. A new line was laid out paralleling the Straight Turnpike, three miles to the east of town, the tracks along the canal taken up, and the station decommissioned. While outcry from Princeton’s citizens did result in a spur line connecting the main line railroad to a new station near Nassau Street in Princeton proper (rather than at the turning basin), Princeton was not on the way to anywhere any more, and the town’s economic importance declined.30
III. Comparison to Neighbors

In order to place Princeton’s development in context it is useful to compare it to some of its neighbors. Princeton is situated approximately halfway between two towns, Trenton and New Brunswick, and just east of another, Kingston. While all four towns were of similar size and had similar hopes for the future at the beginning of the nineteenth century, by the end they had gone in markedly different directions; Kingston had remained small, and had lost importance as modes of transportation changed, Princeton had remained a small town, focused on the
university, while Trenton and New Brunswick had grown into robust manufacturing cities.

Multiple factors influenced these divergent paths and it is worth examining the most important ones.

As is often the case, geography is probably the most important factor. While Kingston and Princeton were founded at a somewhat random point along the King’s Highway, both New Brunswick and Trenton were founded on rivers at the fall line. Since this quickly resulted in the establishment of ferries and bridges to cross the rivers, as well as barracks for the British Army, they became centers of commerce and travel. This included, as mentioned above, being the endpoints for turnpikes, the Delaware and Raritan Canal, and the railroad.

Kingston

In 1683 the local government directed that a foot bridge be built across the Millstone River near the house of the Kingston area’s first permanent settler, Henry Greenland. Over the next forty years the King’s Highway was developed, and Kingston grew and began to appear on maps and in documents related to it. Greenland’s grandson, Barefoot Brinson, had at least one mill, although since both a saw mill and a grist mill appear in documents it is not clear what type it was. After independence Kingston, like Princeton, was an overnight stop for stagecoaches exchanging passengers on the new Princeton and Kingston Branch Turnpike.31

Kingston, which was the half-way stopping place, was a very different place from what it is at the present day. The travellers of those days who still survive, will remember the hotels of Gifford, Joline, Stryker, Follet, Van Tilburg, Withington and others on the road, where the great throng of passengers, including distinguished public men, were accustomed to stop for meals and lodging.32

The canal and the railroad also passed through Kingston. In addition to a toll booth, Lock 8 with its lockkeeper ensured that canal boats paused as they passed through town. The railroad stopped near the locks as well. When the railroad was straightened and moved east during the Civil War, however, no spur line was laid to connect Kingston to it, a sign of
Kingston’s lack of clout in comparison to Princeton. With the turnpike irrelevant and the railroad removed, Kingston had only the canal to distinguish it from any other New Jersey farm town, and by 1890 had dwindled in population and importance.  

Trenton

The colonists who originally settled in what is now Trenton, 13 miles southwest of Princeton, selected the location because of the falls, geography (good farming land and abundant clay deposits), and its location between Philadelphia and New York. James Trent, son of the namesake of the town, received a charter to establish a ferry in about 1730 which quickly captured most of the cross-river traffic travelling between Philadelphia and New York, despite the establishment of a competing ferry slightly downriver. In 1806 the town built a 1,100 foot covered wooden bridge over the Delaware River and when the train arrived in the 1830s tracks were laid on it as well.

Trenton’s location on the Delaware River also made it a destination for farmers bringing products to sell. Clay deposits nearby provided the raw material for a ceramics industry. The town’s sawmills, gristmills and tanneries transformed raw materials into products that could be sold in Philadelphia or elsewhere in the British Empire after being floated down the river on Durham boats.

Later Trenton added political activity to these strictly commercial ones. After narrowly missing being chosen as capital of the new United States of America due to opposition from the delegates from southern states, Trenton was chosen as the state capital when the East and West Jersey were consolidated, relieving the governor from having to travel between Perth Amboy and Burlington several times a year. Following this, Trenton became the site of the first state prison which, influenced by Philadelphia Quakers, greeted arriving prisoners with the
inscription, “Labor, Silence, Penitence...That Those Who Are Feared For Their Crimes May Learn To Fear The Laws And Be Useful.”

But it was heavy industry that grew to dominate Trenton’s economy in the 1800s. The mills and tanneries were joined by an ironworks in the early 1700s, which spawned a steel mill, which in turn had a significant impact in persuading John Roebling to move his wire rope works there in 1848 from Saxonburg, Pennsylvania. By 1890, in addition to the 1883 construction of the Brooklyn Bridge (a 1,596 foot span), cable from this factory had been used to make nine other bridges in various locations including Niagara Falls (821 foot span) and Cincinnati (1,056 foot span). The number of iron businesses in Trenton grew to 23 in 1860 and 40 in 1890, employing the men of families, while their wives and children worked in the textile factories. The pottery and porcelain industries also continued to grow, earning Trenton the sobriquet of “The Staffordshire of America”

Trenton not only grew organically, but also absorbed neighboring communities. This process started in in 1851 when it annexed the Borough of South Trenton, continued with Nottingham in 1856, Millham and Chambersburg in 1888, Wilbur in 1898, Cadwalader Place in 1890, and finished with a small portion of Hamilton Township in 1910. The advent of the electric streetcar also resulted in the growth of neighboring bedroom communities such as Lawrenceville and Ewing, providing additional workers for Trenton’s many factories.

New Brunswick

Sixteen miles northeast of Princeton, Raritan Landing and Inian’s Ferry, the original settlements which would become New Brunswick, also served as points where farmers could bring produce and livestock to be loaded on coastal transports and taken to Perth Amboy or New York. The same transports could return with merchandise from those two ports, which were legal entry ports for colonial trans-Atlantic trade, while Raritan Landing and Inian’s Ferry
were not. This trade led to the establishment of grist mills and tanneries to process materials coming from inland, and warehouses and wholesalers to handle the transshipment.39

Shortly after the Revolution ended a toll bridge was built, replacing Inian’s Ferry. Because freight loaded on canal boats and railroad cars could be forwarded on to larger ports without having to be transferred to coastal transports, New Brunswick’s importance as a transshipment point dwindled as the canal and railroad prospered. Manufacturing replaced shipping in New Brunswick’s economy, with companies producing wallpaper and machinery for wallpaper making; rubber and rubber products; textiles, surgical dressings, hosiery and underwear; and boxes and floor covering. By the end of the century “the entire canal front in New Brunswick...was a dense concentration of industrial, manufacturing and warehouse structures,” which due to “initial dependence on steam power and its transmission by belt-and-pulley systems, led to multistory industrial structures.” 40 New Brunswick’s location on the railroad near major ports, helped this growth.41

Rutgers and The College of New Jersey

While Trenton’s growth took a path that included government and heavy industry, New Brunswick followed Princeton in establishing a university. New Brunswick had lost the College of New Jersey to Princeton in 1752, so when another opportunity arose in 1766 every effort was made to secure it. As with the earlier contest, this required the community to meet requirements of land and financial support, and this time New Brunswick was selected, beating out Hackensack as the location of the new Queen’s College. One historian speculates however, that while unrecognized at the time, the new institution started with a disadvantage compared to its southern sibling: while the College of New Jersey’s backers were Scottish Presbyterians, those of Queen’s College were Dutch Reform. As the new nation developed the number of Presbyterians grew vigorously and spread geographically with many becoming prosperous,
while membership in the Dutch Reform church grew more moderately, stayed concentrated in New Jersey, and amassed less wealth. While both institutions were non-sectarian, the character of their founding institutions affected the number and type of students who chose to apply to them.42

The early histories of the two institutions are similar. Challenges due to the war, which swept through New Jersey several times, were followed by post-war struggles to attract and keep paying students, and continuous fund-raising travels by presidents. Queen’s College had more trouble financially, and had closed its doors for eight years before receiving a large cash grant in 1825 from Colonel Henry Rutgers, for which it now bears his name. Both institutions also had to navigate a change in the character of their curriculum from a strong focus on religion to a broader, more secular one—although neither stood out as particularly different from the norm, and students were apparently allowed to transfer between the two institutions, and institutions in other states. This also resulted in a separation of theological studies from the institutions, first in Princeton, where in 1808 a separate theological seminary was established, and then in 1856 in New Brunswick (although the president was no longer required to be professor of theology after 1839). The institutions both benefitted from the new phenomenon of organized support from graduates; the College of New Jersey’s alumni association being formed in 1826 and that of Rutgers in 1832.43

There were also significant differences in the growth of the two institutions which affected their condition in 1890. While the courses of instruction were similar, students in Princeton generally lived on campus while those in New Brunswick lived in town with families or in or fraternity houses—the first dormitory at Rutgers was not built until 1890. Some faculty at Rutgers lived on campus while at the College of New Jersey the faculty lived in town. Since New Brunswick had always been a larger town than Princeton, and this disparity in size grew during
the 1800s, it was more able to absorb these residents and they had less effect on the housing market.44

The two institutions also had significantly different alumni bodies. As mentioned above Rutgers drew from a small, more New Jersey based pool for its students, and as a result had a smaller, less affluent group of alumni, while the College of New Jersey drew from the larger Presbyterian community as well as what one historian calls the “non-Presbyterian planter class.”45 This was reflected in alumni giving. While the Rutgers alumni pledged $140,000 for that institution’s centennial celebration in 1870, the College of New Jersey alumni typically gave more, “and instead of thousands of dollars, the college gradually accustomed itself to think in terms of millions.”46

A third event which led to different areas of focus at the two institutions was the Morrill Act of 1862. The efforts of US. Representative Justin Morrill (R-VT) to establish funding for colleges “where the leading object shall be...to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts...in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life”47 resulted in the establishment of the land-grant colleges. States were given large tracts of Federal land in the west. Western states created new universities on these lands, while eastern states sold their land to create an endowment to either create new institutions or fund departments of agricultural and mechanical arts at existing institutions.

Both Rutgers and the College of New Jersey vied for this designation (and the money that came with it), and Rutgers, with better representation in the person of Professor George Cook, was named the state’s land-grant college. In order to qualify for the Morrill funds both institutions established “scientific departments,” and both continued to follow the general trend in American higher education after the Civil War by broadening the scope of their offering to
include scientific subjects, but Rutgers’ efforts focused on agriculture, a key industry in the
Garden State. Having convinced the legislature to fund a state agricultural station (only the
third in the United State), Rutgers became the clear leader in that field, undertaking research in
biology, horticulture, entomology, and soil science, with a focus on fertilizers, pest control, and
dairy science. While this had the long-term effect of changing Rutgers from a private institution
to state-owned university, this event did not occur until 1945, well beyond the scope of this
study.48

Thus while the town of Princeton and its neighbors to the north and south may have
begun the nineteenth century looking similar in key respects, by the end of the century they had
clearly developed in different directions. By dint of their location at the fall line of rivers leading
to major cities, Trenton and New Brunswick had become trading centers, and then as
technology progressed had moved on to manufacturing becoming growing, vibrant metropolises
by 1890. Princeton’s early boosters’ attempts to make it a commercial hub by inserting itself
into the transportation of people and goods between Philadelphia and New York had fizzled as
technology had made it irrelevant. Princeton’s one strength was a university with a national
reputation and an extremely devoted and affluent alumni body. Kingston had benefited from
Princeton’s early transportation-based success, but had then shared its decline, remaining as an
example of Princeton would have become had its proto-boosters not succeeded in obtaining the
university.

IV. Princeton as College Town

What does it mean to be “a college town”? As mentioned in the Introduction, scholarly
historical literature on colleges and universities and the towns hosting them is scarce. There are
plenty of books and papers about universities: the changes in course of study, the architecture
and grounds, the ups and downs of financial health. For the host towns such as Princeton, there
are books about individual buildings or long-gone industries. But there is very little looking at
the complex relationships that tied the universities and the towns together, and how each
influenced the other.

In his 2008 book *The College Town*, Blake Gumprecht identifies ten characteristics that
distinguish college towns. All are related, in one way or another, to having a large number of
young people being taught by a large number of well-educated, relatively well-paid faculty.
While these would be absorbed with little notice in a large city, placing them in a small town has
an inordinate influence on the character of the town. While Gumprecht’s book is a study of
communities in 2008, these criteria also describe Princeton in 1898.

Of the ten, the most relevant to Princeton in 1898 are that college towns are
“comparatively affluent,” “highly educated,” and “cosmopolitan.” Even without the arrival of
wealthy alumni seeking a more country-like life, the university faculty tended to be better paid,
better educated, and (often as a result of having studied aboard) more worldly than the typical
resident of a small town in rural New Jersey. After moment’s thought it is obvious that this was
bound to give the town a different character than the farming towns around it, or the industrial
suburbs around Trenton and New Brunswick.

In addition, there is at least one other attribute that Princeton had at the turn of the
twentieth century. Many of Princeton’s faculty were alumni (68 percent when Wilson took
office in 1902, dropping to 41 percent eight years later) and they and some of the super-rich
alumni were heavily involved in the town’s government and institutions. As examples, one
faculty member served as Township Engineer, Borough Engineer, Street Commissioner and
President of the Board of Health; another ran for borough mayor in 1903, losing to a ticket that
included a third as Councilman. In 1902 five alumni and faculty members were on the board of
directors of the Princeton Bank, beating out the First National Bank of Princeton which only had one faculty member on its Board. Further research would need to be done to understand if this were an odd statistical blip due to a particular set of men and circumstances, or if this is a generalizable condition. But in either case it meant that intentionally or not, these men probably carried out their duties in ways that, if not actually favoring the university, certainly attempted not to harm it.51

V. Princeton in 1890

In 1890, when our examination begins, Princeton was a small town of about 4,200 people centered on a short main street running roughly east to west called Nassau Street, which was Princeton’s portion of the King’s Highway. The social sorting noted in histories of other towns and cities had occurred in Princeton as well. On the south side was the College of New Jersey with its 769 students and 53 faculty members occupying 29 buildings on a stretch of ground that backed up to the swampy, bug-infested Stony Brook. On the north was the town’s business district containing the stores, restaurants and hotels that catered to the College and to farmers from the surrounding countryside. East and west, and branching off of the main street, were residences, clearly delimited by income and race.

In the words of the comprehensive history of the town and university, written in 1879:

Princeton is not, in any proper sense, a business place. It wears no business aspect. The multitude of men who throng its streets daily, going to their meals, to the post office, to the depot, or who walk for exercise, are not working men, or operatives in factories, or clerks, or tradesmen, but chiefly students, professors, clergymen, strangers and retired gentlemen. There is a large amount of capital invested here, but not in manufactures, trade or commerce. There is nothing here to invite the manufacturer, but everything to repel him. There is no water power, and there are no facilities or advantages for the employment of steam in factories. Nor is there a cheap and convenient access to the great markets of the world, that would secure to it equal advantages with other competing communities.52
Although the town had grown steadily since its founding, in 1890 it was still small enough to be explored on foot. (Figure 7) Starting on Nassau Street in front at Nassau Hall at the center of the college, a pedestrian walking west would find that the town had expanded a few blocks along the turnpike (called Mercer Street at this point), and partially down the west side of the college toward the canal. Following the southern edge of the college along Canal Road the pedestrian would first pass the passenger and freight buildings of the railroad on college grounds one block north of the highway. After walking about a mile farther south on Canal Road, with the college on the left and farm fields on the right, the pedestrian would arrive
at the canal turning basin (site of the former tollbooth) hosting a small commercial district which had declined from its heyday but still consisted of a hotel, a sash and blind factory, a general store, and a liquor store boasting liquor “as cheap as any other.”

Returning to the corner of the college and moving further west along Mercer Street the pedestrian would find the small campus of the Princeton Theological Seminary, and then a smattering of houses petering out into countryside.

If instead of walking down Mercer Street, the pedestrian took the right hand fork of the road, called Stockton Street, he would enter the wealthy section of town, first passing the Episcopalian church and then coming to a number of estates carved out of John Stockton’s farm. Key among these was Morven. (Figure 8) Robert F. Stockton’s descendants had been less financially successful than he. In 1890, upon the decision of the cousin then owning Morven to sell the property, other cousins had purchased it and subdivided the land north of it to support repair and maintenance costs of the house, concluding that, “It is better that a Stockton should have the place than that Leigh, the [town] butcher, should flourish in the seat of their ancestors.”

These lots on the northern extension of Library Place were large and intended for wealthy residents. Returning to the intersection of Mercer and Stockton Streets, if the pedestrian chose instead to walk north along Bayard Lane, he would find Westland, future home of former president Grover Cleveland, and several other large houses on land formerly part of Morven, but sold in an earlier subdivision.
If our pedestrian wanted to see the unglamorous side of Princeton, he could walk directly north from his starting point on Nassau Street along Witherspoon Street, through a neighborhood of modest houses, most rented. While in 1900 these streets were inhabited predominantly by the town’s African-American residents, some whites, mostly immigrants, also lived there. Almost all residents were laborers or servants, with an occasional clerk. There were also businesses such as a livery stable, the gas works, a blacksmith, a bakery, and saloon, with James Vandeventer’s nursery—including a pond and ice house—some distance to the right. Reflecting the racial segregation of Princeton at the time, the street bore the unofficial name of “African Lane.” This neighborhood continued for several blocks, passing on the right the town’s white cemetery where the former presidents of the university rested—along with U.S. Vice-
President Aaron Burr Jr., buried at the feet of his father, the second president of the university—its “colored cemetery,” and then John Murphy’s farm, before arriving at the slaughterhouse owned by the above-mentioned Leigh. Beyond this lay farms.

Returning to the starting point on Nassau Street and walking east, the pedestrian would find older houses belonging to well-to-do residents, in the income tier beneath those in Morven, along the street with other, generally more modest houses trailing out along perpendicular streets to the north and south. About half a mile after passing St. Paul’s Catholic Church he would come to the short-lived Evelyn College for Women, and then Jugtown, a small neighborhood of potters clustered at the intersection of the highway and a road leading south to a bridge over the Millstone River and canal. Beyond these lay more farms.

If our pedestrian had turned right and walked south when reaching the eastern corner of the college, he would find himself walking down Washington Road. To his right, at the corner, very close to the street was the Scientific School, further down the street, and set back farther were Marquand Chapel and the President’s residence, Prospect House, with its garden. To his left were the college’s boiler house and some smaller buildings, followed by William Street which led to various houses. Farther along he would see the college’s observatory, built in 1878, at the northeast corner of Washington Road and Prospect Avenue. The latter street, which had been created in 1877 ran east with lots on either side which by 1890 had become the site of several student “eating clubs” which served the college in place of the fraternities which were so popular elsewhere. Behind them, between Prospect Avenue and Stony Brook was a farm owned by Jonathan Sergeant from 1770 to 1887, when it was purchased by Joseph Olden. It would go by the name “the Olden Farm” until being given to the university by alumni in 1905. Aside from the visit to the turning basin, the entire walk took place no further than ¾ of a mile from the starting point.57
VI. Demand for Residential Property

Yet while Princeton seemed sleepy in 1890, it was at the beginning of a period of change that would lead to remarkable growth and development. The town’s largest employer, the college, had been the kind of place where young men from good families came to make friends and enjoy themselves before returning home to take their place in society without working too hard or learning too much while doing so. A recent graduate who had just joined the faculty would, however, become its president and institute reforms that would vault the college into the ranks of the best universities in the world. It would also cause significant repercussions in town as it struggled with suburbanization.

Reflecting this growth, Nassau Street be macadamized and would see the erection of two new bank buildings, one, the Princeton Bank and Trust, in Dutch Revival style (Figure 9) and the other, the First National Bank of Princeton, Princeton’s first skyscraper—five stories tall with an elevator. (Figure 10) Alumnus Moses Taylor Pyne would build two new dormitories on Nassau Street and donate them to the university, one between the banks called Upper Pyne, and the other at the southeast corner of Witherspoon and Nassau Street called Lower Pyne. Lacking space on Nassau Street, respectable businesses would start to extend down Witherspoon Street.
Figure 9. Princeton Bank and Trust, note Bank Street on the left of the photo. Possibly taken in 1925. (Collection of the Historical Society of Princeton)
What caused this change? Four developments brought growth to Princeton: 1) the arrival of rich individuals who settled to the west and northwest of town, 2) a significant change in course of instruction at the university bringing with it a jump in the number of faculty, 3) growth of the university grounds which caused an increase in jobs while taking away places for the workers to live, and 4) the improvement of transportation connecting the town to the outside world. We will examine each in turn.
Arrival of the Rich

Among the first setters in the Princeton area were six Quaker families who moved to the area together from Piscataway. The families, led by six men—Benjamin Clarke, William Olden, John Hornor, Richard Stockton, Joseph Worth and Benjamin FitzRandolph—settled along Stony Brook approximately two miles west of the future location of the university on farms ranging from Worth’s 200 acres to Stockton’s 6,000. Stockton’s descendants, who were to include a signer of the Declaration of Independence, two US Senators, and the liberator of California from Mexico in 1846, among other positions, were numerous and by 1890 the original 6,000 acres had been divided and re-divided many times.\textsuperscript{58}

While up to the 1890s Princeton had been a farming town with a university in it, coming decades would see it become a fashionable place for wealthy people—often graduates of the university—to move, either to establish a country house, or to live full time in retirement or as commuter. The development that probably had the largest effect on the demographic composition of the town was the subdivision of the largest remaining portion of the original Stockton estate, Morven, noted above. This created many ample lots on newly platted streets such as Library Place, providing opportunities for the merely wealthy to build a house with a spacious yard. Above them in income were several extremely wealthy men who purchased existing estates that had been carved out of the Stockton and Olden land earlier, some with large houses that they improved upon and others empty and waiting for new mansions. The wealthiest and probably most-well-known were Allan Marquand, Moses Taylor Pyne, George Allison Armour, Junius Spencer Morgan, and Archibald Russell. Although not wealthy by their standards, former president Grover Cleveland also deserves inclusion in this group.
The first to arrive was Allan Marquand ’74, (Figure 11) who joined the faculty in 1881. Marquand had done graduate work in Berlin before receiving a PhD from Johns Hopkins in philosophy (where he invented a mechanical logical machine), and came to the college as a lecturer in logic and tutor in Latin. After President McCosh detected “an unorthodox, unCalvinistic bent” to his teaching of philosophy, he moved Marquand to the new department of Art, where he became a professor in Art History before being elected chair of the department in 1905. Marquand’s father, Henry Gurdon Marquand, had been born well-off and became rich when Jay Gould took over a railroad he owned in Missouri, buying him out for $1 million. Retiring on his new wealth, the senior Marquand became a benefactor of numerous non-profits as well as a trustee and later president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. He built a mansion on Madison Avenue, designed by Richard Morris Hunt, which contained among others, a room designed by Lawrence Alma Tadema to showcase one of his paintings. 
In 1886, Allan Marquand purchased a forty-acre, former Stockton estate containing a John Notman designed house, and renamed it Guernsey Hall, recalling his family’s European origins. (Figure 12) After living there as a bachelor with a couple of faculty friends for ten years, Marquand married in 1896, started having children and expanded the house, engaging the New York firm of Cross and Cross (his new brothers-in law) as architects. In addition to a farm that produced milk, butter, cream and vegetables the estate had a large formal garden, greenhouses, various exotic trees, and gravel drives and broad lawns.61
Marquand contributed to the town not only by buying the house and renovating it, but also by employing an ample staff to maintain it. There was the “outside” staff consisting of “a Swedish head gardener,” who lived in one of the old farmhouses on the property, and local Italian residents who lived in town and came in daily to rake the gravel drives and tend the flower beds. A coachman oversaw various coaches, plus the bicycles used by Marquand to go to the university and by his family for transportation to and from town.

Inside “[t]here was a parlourmaid and two chamber maids. There was the cook and her two subordinates—kitchen maid, waitress...Laundry was done by two laundresses on a stove in tubs, the linen boiled, clothes ironed and starched.” There was also a furnaceman who saw to
the central furnace and the many fireplaces. The 1900 Census lists only eight residents at that address, Marquand, his wife, their two-year old daughter, one nurse from England, and four women from Ireland listed as "servant," but "servant" and "coachman" are two of the most common occupations in the Census, so the others could have been live-out employees.65

In addition to the daily employees, a hair dresser came periodically, a dressmaker came two or three times a year, and an “Armenian came annually to stay and mend the rugs.”66 The kitchen received regular supplies of ice from the iceman and the Marquands purchased their meat and fish from a store in town.67 All told, the Marquand household provided direct or indirect employment for many town residents, and they in turn needed somewhere to live, leading to the town’s growth.

In 1893 Moses Taylor Pyne (Figure 13) purchased an estate named Drumthwacket, west of Guernsey Hall, from a descendant of William Olden and began a process of expansion and development that resulted in a 183-acre estate, including park-like landscaping and a multi-level formal Italian-style garden. Born in 1855, Pyne had inherited great wealth built on his family’s involvement in Cuban sugar production, railroads and gas works. He graduated from the college in 1877, married a member of the Stockton family a year later, and in 1884, at age 28, was elected to the college’s board of trustees, serving first as chair of the Committee on Grounds and Buildings and later as chair of the Finance Committee. He reportedly kept a private train on call in at the Princeton station in case he needed to go to New York City on business.68
Pyne was instrumental in keeping the college afloat and helping it thrive. While chair of the finance committee he reportedly made up for any financial shortfalls in the college budget with a personal check. He also led activities to organize alumni support for the college, gathering and publishing information about alumni, and using it to create class lists and archives. In addition to amassing data Pyne steered the creation of the Princeton Alumni Weekly (or “the PAW”, in keeping with the university mascot, the tiger) and the first modern alumni directory. He was one of the founders of the Princeton Club of New York and encouraged alumni in other cities to follow suit. Seeing the value of alumni participation in the
governance of the college, he took a leading part in creating alumni seats on the Board of Trustees. In the words of a classmate, Pyne “virtually created the modern alumni spirit” at Princeton.⁶⁹

Pyne’s estate made Marquand’s look modest.

The whole acreage was converted into a pleasance and a model farm. Huge Tudory cow barns and sheep pens were built. The park consisted of rhododendron walks with winding paths, a zoo with monkeys, an aviary with birds of paradise; peacocks wandered, so did deer; artificial ponds and a waterfall, complete with white marble Temple of Love and appropriate swans—all were available to the local public. Only the formal garden directly back of the house was private...It supposedly took some 60 workers to maintain.”⁷⁰

In 1895 George Allison Armour, son of George Armour, a Scottish emigre who became very wealthy running grain elevators and the Chicago Board of Trade and classmate of Moses Taylor Pyne, purchased a large house on Stockton Street north of Guernsey Hall. The house had been built for US Senator Robert P. Stockton, by his father Commodore Robert F. Stockton in 1845 on a design by John Notman. The purchase included the 41-acre estate, outbuildings and furnishings of the house. Remaining it “Allison House,” Armour replaced cast-iron porches with more monumental stone ones, and added a Gothic Revival Library, designed by Cope and Stewardson, to house his collection of rare books. The 1900 Census lists only Armour, his wife, their five children, and two servants (a coachman and his wife) as residents, but presumably it required a staff similar to the Marquand’s house to maintain, being of similar size.⁷¹

Four years later, Junius Spencer Morgan II, (Figure 14) one of financier J. P. Morgan’s nephews and a graduate of the class of 1888, purchased land to the west of Drumthwacket containing the farmhouse purported to be the site of the writing of the first constitution of the State of New Jersey, demolished it, and built a large new house, designed by Cope and Stewardson. (Figure 15) He named the house and estate Constitution Hill in honor of its history, and moved there with his family. While a student, Morgan had begun collecting early editions
of the Roman poet Virgil, which he donated to the university library in 1896. After moving to Constitution Hill, he worked as Associate Librarian at the university from 1898 to 1909, “towards the end of his career there really running the institution while the head Librarian, Robinson, devoted himself to raising money and getting rare books.”72 The 1900 Census shows nine residents at Constitution Hill, Morgan, his wife and daughter, a waitress, cook, maid, valet, governess, and laundress. Presumably, as with Marquand, additional staff lived in town.73
The final super-wealthy man to move to Princeton was Archibald Russell, Moses Taylor Pyne’s brother-in-law. After graduating from the university, Russell had worked for Brown Brothers and Company, formed the partnership of Russell, Robinson and Roosevelt with Elliott Roosevelt and Douglas Robinson, Theodore Roosevelt’s brother and brother-in-law, respectively, and served on the boards of several banks and railroads, as well as that of Princeton University. In 1903 he purchased a 274-acre farm west of Constitution Hill, and hired his brother William Hamilton Russell, a partner in the architecture firm of Clinton and Russell, to design a mansion which he named Edgerstoune. (Figure 16) “In size it far eclipsed the other houses in the area. The building was over 200 feet long and about 90 feet wide. On the ground floor were a large living hall, library, drawing room, dining room, music room and billiard room, plus kitchen and various service rooms. The upstairs accommodated ten master bedrooms. Thirteen servants’ rooms were scattered throughout all three stories.”74 The estate also
contained two model farms and a two-acre vegetable garden. (Figure 17) Although the Census shows twelve people living in the house (Russell, his wife, their four children, a coachman, and servants), the two model farms must have employed many more.75

Another notable arrival during this time was Grover Cleveland, who moved to Princeton with his family in 1897 upon the completion of his second term as President. Cleveland and his wife purchased a house near Morven built by Robert Stockton in 1856 and named it Westland, after Professor Andrew West, Cleveland’s friend on the university faculty who had suggested that they look at the house. Cleveland became a visible member of Princeton daily life, joining the university as a Lecturer, delivering the annual Stafford Little Lectureship on Public Affairs,
and attending many official gatherings. He also joined the university’s board. Although

Westland was much more modest that the estates described above, seventeen people were

listed there for the census, the Cleveland family of six, nine servants and two servants’

children. 76

Figure 17. Images of the grounds from a multi-page advertisement for Edgerstoune that appeared in the Country Life

Advertiser, July 1923.
While Marquand, Pyne, Armour, Morgan, Russell, and Cleveland were only six men, it can be seen that their decision to live in Princeton had an outsized effect on the town. Each of them employed many men and women, both directly and indirectly, and aside from those who lived at the various mansions, the others needed to live in town. This drove demand for residential property, albeit at the lower end of the spectrum.

These are also only the most well-known of the many affluent people who moved to Princeton in the 1890s. The effect they had on town life is reflected in the autobiography of Stockton Axson, Woodrow Wilson’s brother-in-law, who joined the faculty in 1899. Although Axson had visited Princeton frequently since 1890, when he joined the faculty he “became thoroughly familiar with the spirit of the place” and felt that the town “was selling its birthright; [it] was in great peril of losing the simplicity of a country college town, and becoming merely a fashionable suburb for New York City.” While there had been some wealth before, it was slightly shabby, old money. “[L]ife was as simple as in any New England college town. There were a few old estates of antebellum tradition, but most of these were falling into disrepair.” By 1899, however, “people of wealth” began to move to Princeton, and either bought and refurbished the old estates or built new “country mansions” on empty land. “The village streets began to fill up with smart looking traps and horses.”

The presence of all this money changed the character of the town. “Now, these wealthy people who moved to Princeton were good people, and not one of them consciously sought to splurge or make a show of his wealth. They merely brought to the simple village the standards of life which were perfectly natural to them.” This wealth was reflected not only in real estate and transpiration but also in dress and custom.

When they entertained college professors and their wives they naturally entertained them on a scale which professors and their wives could not reciprocate without putting themselves to severe financial strains. I remember hearing Mr. and Mrs. Wilson both say
that they never knew what the word “informal” meant when they were invited to dine informally. Previously it had meant that you went in whatever clothes you had been wearing during the day. But now they went to an informal dinner to find men and women in full evening attire.  

The newcomers, often having successful careers in finance and law, did not understand academic salaries. Axson recounts a conversation between one of Mrs. Wilson’s friends and a “newcomer” in which the latter said that “the Princeton professors ought to receive more salary, for, said he, 'some of those fellows have to think twice before they break a five-dollar bill.’ And Mrs. Wilson’s friend said: As a matter of fact, we have to think twice before we break a ten-cent piece.

Despite this protestation, however, it should be noted that faculty, especially senior faculty, was by no means poor. Records for one professor show an annual salary of $3,500, Woodrow Wilson was the highest paid professor at the university, receiving $4,300 annual while department chair. Faculty may also have had additional sources of income, external speaking fees for Wilson, family wealth for others. Several, including the Wilsons, Henry van Dyke, William Libbey, Paul van Dyke, Fred Neher, and David Magie hired architects to design their new houses on the Morven tract. (Figures 18 and 19) Van Dyke and Libbey even named their houses—“Avalon” and “Thanet Lodge” respectively—a further indicator of wealth.

If each of these employed between three to five live-in servants plus additional assistance from live-out help, then it is clear to see that much of the town’s employment depended indirectly on the university. It is worth noting, as well, that all of the live-in staff listed above were white, most coming from Ireland. Presumably when employed as domestic servants, the town’s African-Americans had live-out positions.

As a final note, many of the town’s more affluent residents summered in other locations. In addition to this, the university students also left, returning home for the summer.
As a result, the town’s “floating population” of “cooks and waiters, and other employees seek summer work elsewhere” leaving “probably not more than two-thirds of our winter population,” according to the local paper.83

Figure 18. 74 Library Place. Designed by New York architect Edward Child, this was Woodrow Wilson’s second house in Princeton. (Photo by author)
Change in Course of Instruction

As the town’s major employer, changes at the university necessarily reflected on to the community. Enrollment at the university had grown very gradually until the late 1880’s when it grew sharply and then began a period of steady growth. An institution which had enrolled 519 students in 1885 found itself with 1400 twenty-five year later. While most of the students lived on campus in new dormitories, the faculty grew as well and needed housing in town. In 1885 47 faculty taught the 519 students, by 1910 that number had quadrupled to 198. This number reflects faculty named in the annual catalogue—professors and instructors of one level or another plus a few positions such as librarian—but does not include unnamed personnel such a
secretaries, buildings and grounds, dining halls etc., some of whom were probably members of the town’s African-American community.\textsuperscript{84}

Francis Landey Patton, Woodrow Wilson’s predecessor as president, had rather lax standards for both faculty and students. Writing after the fact, Wilson wrote, “Formerly, because our examinations were often less difficult or our standards less rigidly maintained than those of other universities of the same rank and reputation, a large number of ill-prepared and unstudious boys came to Princeton from the secondary schools, particularly the private schools.”\textsuperscript{85} His brother-in-law, Stockton Axson’s description was similar, while providing more detail.

[it was remarkable] to see how little a man might know about a subject and yet be able to pass an examination in the subject. Day after day the boys would attend lectures, be marked as present by the monitors, and do no work whatsoever until a few weeks before the final examination, when they would buy syllabi of the courses, which were prepared by the more intelligent and industrious students and sold at a fixed price. Many a student had passed through Princeton who never read his textbooks at all but merely read the digests made of those textbooks and of the lectures, and was able to pass his examination on this scrapped knowledge, which knowledge, of course, it goes without saying, he proceeded promptly to forget the moment he passed the examination.\textsuperscript{86}

A group of younger trustees, Pyne among them, determined to change this situation, and began pushing the university to hire young, energetic faculty members. Woodrow Wilson, who had graduated in 1879, had received a PhD from Johns Hopkins University and had written a ground-breaking book based on his thesis entitled \textit{Congressional Government: A Study in American Politics}. Based on the book, Bryn Mawr College had hired him to teach a variety of classes on history and political science. After three years he had moved to Wesleyan University. The trustees brought him to Princeton in 1890 by creating the new position of chair of jurisprudence and political economy.
In addition to being a compelling speaker, Wilson also developed strong ideas on how the university should be reformed. After some tumult, the young trustees engineered Patton’s ouster and replacement by Wilson in 1902. Wilson instituted major changes in the course of instruction and in the composition of the faculty which resulted in improvements in the quality of education at the university; it also resulted in a rapid growth in the number of faculty.87

Having been on the faculty for 12 years, Wilson had identified those faculty members which he felt were not sufficiently rigorous. Examples included Edwin Seelye Lewis, professor of French—“dull,” “a loafer who was intensely fond of playing bridge,” and who typically dismissed his classes after only half an hour; Arthur Frothingham, Jr, professor of archeology and the history of art—“a fantastically dull lecturer” whose classes were known to be easy; and Arnold Guyot Cameron, the Woodhull Professor of French—who “would not work with the department in organizing his courses; his lectures concerned everything, wererambling discourses on life in general,” but apparently did not include any instruction in French. Looking for rapid change, Wilson forced these and other faculty members out, often despite opposition from their friends among the alumni and trustees.88

Trimming “dead wood” from the faculty was not the only, or indeed primary method that Wilson had identified for the university’s rejuvenation. As was typical for universities of that time, the course of study at Princeton consisted of “passive, uninterrupted lectures and dispiriting recitative drills, both of which fostered sporadic cramming rather than ‘daily methodical study.’”89 Instead, Wilson “wanted a university in which the undergraduate’s purpose, not unlike the graduate student’s, [was] ‘to get and to take, not to receive,’ in which ‘he is not under a master, not being taught,’ but ‘is learning and...reading’ on his own with friendly guidance. In this major reversal of educational emphasis, lecturers and class work
would only supplement the independent reading and writing of the students, who would now take the initiative for their own education.”

To effect this change Wilson not only pushed out senior faculty and hired new, more energetic replacements, he also radically expanded the amount of classroom instruction. He did so by hiring fifty new “preceptors” in one year, driving the total number of faculty from 123 to 171. The preceptors conducted informal weekly meetings in which four to six students would go beyond weekly lectures through discussion and independent reading.

While these reforms were intended to change the academic quality of the university, they also spilled over on to the real estate environment in town. As noted in one history of higher education in the United States, “In the old-time college little thought was given to securing professors of great distinction, to the means by which their scholarly work could be forwarded, or to how they could be made reasonably happy and harmonious.” By 1900 this had changed, and Wilson needed to persuade the newly hired older faculty to move to Princeton and to assist them in finding a new home. Moses Taylor Pyne assisted in this, offering to build a house for one candidate to live in as long as he was at Princeton. “Others got personal help, including on-site inspections, from Wilson and chairmen in finding houses to rent or purchase.”

While most of the fifty new preceptors were unmarried and not looking to buy or rent an entire house, they also needed someplace to live. The university catalogue reports several of them living in boarding houses in town or The Bachelors. In 1901 the Princeton Alumni Weekly had described The Bachelors as “an eating and social club (of the sort requiring a whole house and modern conveniences),” and mentioned that “there are nearly thirty members and they include graduate students, fellows, and younger members of the faculty,” one can assume that not many of the fifty new preceptors were able to find space there.
Growth of Campus

Another factor to be considered when studying the development of the town of Princeton is the growth of the university, both in terms of land and the buildings upon it. As cold-bloodedly stated by Breese when writing of this time period, “It must have been apparent early that if the University were to expand its dormitories without using playing fields, and if the University were to protect its campus and structures, it must have adequate control over its neighborhood environment.”

The grounds of the university had been quite small—approximately 25 acres—until 1877. In that year it purchased several residential properties along Nassau Street, bringing the total size of the grounds to approximately 30 acres. In 1878 “Prospect” a 35 acre estate behind the university was purchased, doubling the size of the grounds. Ten years after that the 155-acre Potter Farm was given to the university, extending the grounds to the canal. At various points in the intervening years, the university had opportunistically purchased additional properties along Nassau Street, Washington Road, and Canal Street and by 1890 the university grounds totaled about 230 acres.

While the university often purchased smaller properties, alumni took it upon themselves to purchase larger properties in order to donate them to the university. *Princeton University Land* identifies twelve companies organized by alumni for this purpose which between 1890 and 1910 donated the Springdale Farm, the Olden Farm, the Gray Farm, and Lake Carnegie to the university. While these were farms rather than residences when purchased, their becoming part of the university prevented them from being developed as residential properties by commercial interests in town.

University property acquisition should be considered not only from the point of view of the increase in size of the university, but also in the decrease in the residential housing stock in
town. From the end of the Civil War to the beginning of President Patton’s term in 1888, the university acquired 31 houses. During Patton’s and Wilson’s terms (1888-1910), the university acquired 23 additional houses (some of which were turned into junior faculty housing). The demolition of these houses created demand for replacements elsewhere in town.98

In addition to expanding its acreage, the university also began a robust building program. The need to house and teach the many new students resulted in near-constant construction during those years. From ten buildings in 1875, the university grew to 41 in 1910. Again, much of this was financed by alumni, who generally organized themselves by class year or into corporations focused on the acquisition of a property.

The most active and affluent of these groups was the South East Club, so named because they had lived in rooms near the south entry of East College when students. (Figure 20) A taste of the club’s activities can be gathered from a letter published in the PAW in 1931 by one of its two still living members. The club met twice a year for dinner, one in Princeton, one either in New York or Riverdale-on-Hudson. Initially the dinners were purely social events, but after Moses Taylor Pyne (“Momo” to his friends) was elected to the Board of Trustees seriousness began to intrude with his “Tales of the Trustees.” With this inside source, the club members began to understand the difficulties facing the university and they began to respond, but in an idiosyncratic way fostered by their personal wealth. “I recall vividly one dinner where the discussion was on Princeton’s most immediate and pressing need. We all agreed that Dickinson Hall was so overcrowded that an additional building was needed. Cleve Dodge interrupted the discussion by saying, ‘Mo, I will go you halves on a new building.’ The result was McCosh Hall.”99
The article goes on to list Pyne Library, Upper and Lower Pyne, McCosh Hall, Guyot Hall and Murray-Dodge Hall as on-campus results of the club’s efforts, as well as Lake Carnegie, and financial support for the preceptorial system. Construction of these buildings led to demand for housing among construction workers. Once the buildings were completed, janitorial and maintenance staff also needed housing. As with employees of the estates and large houses in
the town’s western section, the additional building on campus increased demand in the lower tier of residential housing in Princeton.

University expansion as described above was intent on increasing the size and continuity of the campus facing Nassau Street in response to the new educational program, but there was also an effort to expand the graduate program. Part of Woodrow Wilson’s evaluation of the slippage of the university’s reputation compared to its peers was the weakness and small size of its graduate programs. He and the founding Dean of the Graduate School, Andrew West, had been in agreement on this when Wilson was still a department chair, but after he became president their paths diverged. West wanted a separate campus modeled on Oxford and Cambridge, Wilson wanted something smaller on the main campus to make attending class easier.

After initial delays due to the focus on getting the preceptorial system up and running, West won the first round by convincing Board of Trustees member Moses Taylor Pyne to buy a mansion named Merwick with eleven acres on Bayard Lane near Grover Cleveland’s house to house the Graduate College. The fact that West did this behind Wilson’s back caused enmity to flare and the men went back and forth for several years. West eventually won, just before Wilson’s resignation to run for Governor, by convincing two rich alumni to donate money to build a graduate college complex, designed by Cope and Stewardson, on the west side of the Springdale golf course, just behind the Theological Seminary. This led to an increase in the number of graduate students and faculty, and presumably of staff as well.¹⁰⁰ (Figure 21)
Transportation

Initially, Princeton had been connected to the outside world by the King’s Highway, which had become the turnpike in the early 1800s. This was joined by the Delaware and Raritan Canal and the Camden and Amboy Railroad, although during the Civil War the latter had moved three miles to the southeast, becoming less convenient. The late 1890s would see the arrival of a new form of mass transit, the electric trolley, so it is worth examining it to understand what effect it had on residential real estate in town.

The electric trolley was invented in Richmond, VA in 1888, and quickly spread through the country, replacing horse-drawn trolleys in cities where the advantages of speed and sanitation were obvious. Rural trolley lines were easier to construct than city ones and cost less. “The tracks followed public roads on cheaply and quickly constructed roadbeds that followed contorted curves easily and required the lightest of bridges; cars operated without expensive
signaling equipment, used stores as stations, and required only one- or two-man crews, not the five-man crews necessary to operate passenger trains.”101 By 1895 an electric trolley company had been chartered in Bucks Country, across the Delaware River from Trenton, and in 1899 the Yardley, Morrisville, and Trenton Street Railway was chartered in Trenton itself, focusing on connecting that rapidly growing small city with communities across the river. Additional trolleys snaked across the countryside, one even paralleling the railroad from Trenton to New Brunswick.102

Two lines were quickly incorporated to connect Trenton with Princeton. The first, the Mercer County Traction Company, arrived in Princeton in April 1901, following a southern route passing near the canal turning basin before arriving at a terminal adjacent to that of the railroad. The second, the New Jersey and Pennsylvania Traction Company, arrived in Princeton in November 1901 following a more northern route and entering the town at the north end of Witherspoon Avenue. (Figure 22) Both had a variety of passenger cars—open for summer and closed for winter—and freight cars which conveyed produce and dairy products from farms to market as well as bringing supplies to Princeton’s stores.103
The trolleys were opposed by three groups in Princeton. The first consisted of the wealthy landowners who had moved to Princeton’s western edge, led by Pyne. The routes passed on either side of their neighborhood, and according to a *Trenton Evening Times* article they “have come to the university town to enjoy the exclusiveness and the intellectual and physical charms of a classical suburb, ...when the clanging of the trolley gong comes, Princeton will have lost its attractiveness, its refined environments and its delightful seclusion, and then sooner or later it will lose them and their families.”

The New Jersey and Pennsylvania Traction Company, following the northern route, had obtained a collection of private rights of way from Trenton to Princeton—the last portion of which being across land owned by “that Leigh, the butcher”—and could not be stopped,
although “Captain Samuel Stockton had men go over the old historical Stockton farm and pull up all the stakes.” To the south, backers originally intended to have the Mercer County Traction Company parallel the turnpike from Trenton, entering Princeton along Mercer Street. This route would “spoil some of the celebrated driveways and be particularly obnoxious because many of the fine homes and places of the township are in the vicinity of the road that they want to cover.” In an attempt to block this, Pyne purchased three large farms, only to discover that “the Mercer Traction Company being organized under the traction act, which gives to power of condemnation of land, may go right through Mr. Taylor Pyne’s newly acquired obstruction farms, and the fact that they have been sold so recently at a certain price will tend to fix the price that the trolley company will have to pay without a lengthy litigation.” Although he failed to block the Mercer County Traction Company from entering the town, Pyne did manage to push it farther south than originally planned.

The second group that opposed the arrival of the trolleys was the university administration, because they recognized that “the students...are looking forward to the time when they can go to Trenton of [sic] an evening for 20 cents instead of paying 75 cents or a dollar to get a seat in a livery wagon. The difference means three or four extra crème de menthes at the end of the trip.” According to a journalist, “The administration of the university have always been solicitous about having too many trains in and out of the town, because long experience has demonstrated that a Princeton student is best off when he is within reach of the proctor’s eyes. The faculty have been successful in getting the railroad company to sacrifice business for sentiment and that accounts for the limited connection between the university and the rest of the universe.”

The third group, which was intertwined with the first two, was the town’s business community. As expressed by an article in The Princeton Press, they feared that local shops
would lose business to cheaper, larger stores in Trenton with resultant diminution to the community. “We fully believe that any purchasing advantages which the trolley would make convenient in Trenton, while an apparent gain would prove an ultimate loss.”

Mirroring the article in the *Trenton Evening Times*, the business community also feared that the trolleys would ruin the character of the town. “Hundreds of thousands of dollars have already been spent for properties and their improvement, and in many ways the investors have shown themselves our most public spirited citizens...With our numerous eligible building sites and many attractions, we may well believe that many others will come to Princeton if its present character is preserved. A trolley through the town would ruin it, and the loss by such an innovation would be ruinous.”

And lastly, they were concerned by what the trolley would bring. “We are more anxious about the Sunday travel and the undesirable characters which would be likely to patronize the cheap transportation” on holidays and weekend. Others shared this expectation, as shown by a brief notice in the *New York Times* entitled “Trolley Line Invades Princeton.” “The new Johnson trolley line was completed to-day to within a hundred yards of the university in front of campus. This is likely to break Princeton’s boasted traditions of seclusion, as big crowds will probably pour in from Trenton.”

To what extent did these fears came true? The anti-trolley group among the affluent seems to have resigned itself to the noise. None of the five most affluent families moved away because of it, and no mention occurs of other residents leaving Princeton because of it.

As recounted in an oral history collected in 1982, the university administrators were correct in their expectation of the student reception. One “townie” remembered that “[I]t was used a lot. There was no other transportation to Trenton. No buses then. And they’d run ‘double-headers’ two cars together to carry students back and forth. And the proctors would be
down there on the late-late when they’d come back at midnight to beat the crowds and see what condition they were in.” A student from the class of 1909 recalled

Do you know anything about the trolley car fights? The townies and the students got into fisticuff fights. I remember coming back from Trenton on Hallows’ e’en [sic] and there were townies on the car. ... One townie was there and they had this ring and shouted ‘fair play.’ These two fellows hauled off trying to knock each other off. I’m pretty sure Jennings did something to this townie that he had to defend himself. Nobody interfered. It was all in good fun.116

The bars in Princeton that catered to students: “a gin mill on Alexander Street named Andy’s that Eugene O’Neill, as an undergraduate, discovered,” “beer parties held in Keg Hollow down opposite the crew house off Washington Street,” “a couple of saloons on Nassau Street,” seemed to have survived without any trouble.117 Easier access to Trenton for the university students does not seem to have had an effect on residential real estate.

Nowhere in the oral history was any mention of Princeton residents using the trolley to do their daily shopping in Trenton. The Princeton journalists were probably correct in opining that whatever price differential there was between the two markets would be outweighed by the two hours required to go and return. There is one mention among the oral history of the trolley being used to go shopping, but not as expected. “It was five cents to go to Princeton. You’d take it if you didn’t want to take a buggy and a horse. And so, of course, on Saturday Mother’d go shopping, you know, and she’d go on the trolley and carry a basket.”118 So rather than pull business out of Princeton, the trolley may have increased it to some degree.

The trolley did cause a surge of weekend leisure travel from Trenton to Princeton, judging from an incident recounted by Stockton Axson. In 1904 Wilson had an iron fence built around the president’s house on campus because “Sunday excursions were coming from Trenton by way of two trolley lines recently built, and the Sunday excursionists were sometimes camping on one of the porches of the house to eat their lunch.”119 Ironically, this surge was
fueled by the energetic building program on campus that Moses Taylor Pyne and other alumni had paid for. Trolley companies needed a destination at the end of the line to attract weekend riders, and the university campus, much of it in striking Collegiate Gothic Revival style, was unlike any other locale near Trenton, making it a magnet for factory workers looking for an outing. The zoo at Pyne’s estate Drumthwacket may also have been an attraction. Neither of the trolley companies seem to have constructed an amusement park at the end of their lines because they didn’t need to, Princeton was a free attraction for them, requiring no construction or maintenance expenses.120

Although not quoted in the press, Princeton’s African-American residents benefitted from the trolleys. “I can remember standing out there at 7:30 in the morning to take it to school, you see. We had to go by trolley. The colored children couldn’t go to high school in Princeton, so Miss Paxton paid our fare to go to Trenton.”121 This could have increased the number of African-Americans choosing to live in Princeton. By enabling African-American students to live in Princeton and go to high school, the trolley could have encouraged their families to remain in town once their children reached high school age. It could also have removed an obstacle that discouraged African-American families with children from moving to Princeton. No evidence of either of these possibilities has yet been uncovered, however.

The last possible impact that the trolley could have had was to enable people to live in Princeton and work in Trenton. While the trolleys allowed the creation of bedroom communities in neighboring Lawrence providing housing for Trenton’s factory workers, any similar effect on Princeton is less clear.122 One resident remembered

The first job I had, my first position in Trenton, I worked out of an office at a factory where they made linoleum. At that time there was one trolley out of Princeton, the old Traction Company. It took an hour. And in clear weather I used to ride a bicycle from Princeton all the way to Trenton, and I could make it in forty minutes.123
The trolley took him longer than bicycle because he needed to transfer to another trolley when he arrived in Trenton, hardly an attractive alternative. It would seem therefore, that aside from making education more accessible for the town’s African-American high school students, and a few workers and weekend shoppers, the trolley’s main traffic in Princeton was weekend day-trippers from Trenton and freight. It seems to have had little if any effect on the town’s residential real estate market.

In addition to the new ability to take the new trolley to Trenton, since the 1830s Princeton residents had been able to take the train to New York City or Philadelphia. When the station had been moved three miles further away as part of the project to straighten the track during the Civil War this had required changing trains at the Junction, making it less convenient than just catching the train at the Basin. Sometime before 1906, however, one direct train in the morning seems to have been offered. In the words of the class of 1896’s Decennial Reunion publication, Princeton, “is now a place of suburban residence, two trolleys connect it with Trenton, [and] we have a train for commuters who live in Princeton and do business in New York.” Presumably he was not referring to Moses Taylor Pyne’s private train which often took Pyne and his neighbors to the city. The author, a member of the class of 1896 who was working and living at the university, does not specify how many cars made up the train or how many passengers were on those cars. Nor does he mention a direct return train in the evening. There were also frequent special trains arranged for events such as football games.

VII. Residential Property Developers in Princeton

The 1890s was a period of residential development both individual properties and (for Princeton) large scale tracts. Individuals had platted, built and sold one-block long streets with seven or eight houses per side, but this was the first time entire neighborhoods had been
planned. After a brief survey of builders in Princeton, we will examine five tracts that were
developed between 1890 and 1910.

Architects and Planners

As American cities grew in the second half of the 1800s, property developers became
more sophisticated. They created offerings ranging from idyllic suburbs with winding roads and
parks for more affluent customers, to rows of uniform lots on streets laid out in a grid pattern
for the less affluent. The location of these new suburbs—ever further from the center of the
city—was enabled by the development of new transportation, first the omnibus, then the horse-
drawn streetcar, and finally the electric trolley, with railroads generally serving to connect still
farther flung towns to the center.

In order to drive demand, developers often built a trolley line through the property they
had purchased to a desirable destination, for example, Willow Grove Park just outside of
Philadelphia. Passengers going to the park would see the land and decide that maybe they
should buy a lot and build a house. Other developers, such as Ashton Tourison, George
Woodward and Frank Mauran in Philadelphia’s Mt. Airy upper middle-class neighborhood, took
advantage of existing lines to more distant communities to build houses on intervening land,
often with sophisticated offerings.126

As an example of the scope of this work, one article from 1920 stated that in a career
spanning more than thirty years, Tourison “has gleaned such an accurate knowledge of human
desires in the matter of houses that he now builds scores of them without waiting for orders or
probable purchasers. He finishes each house completely, even to the wall papers and the plants
upon the lawn. And the buyers, he says, ‘rarely alter anything, even the wall paper.'” Tourison’s
company involved his four sons, “[o]ne is a master mechanical engineer, one an architect, and
one a lawyer, all of which professions are useful in the real estate and building business” and
offered a variety of designs in styles such as Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, Neo-Georgian and Victorian.127

Property developers in cities gradually moved from selling land to selling entire communities including schools and shops as well as houses. They also followed the professionalization trend in the United States and organized the National Association of Real Estate Exchanges in 1908 (changed to National Association of Real Estate Boards in 1916), with explicit professional qualification, exams, and credentials, as well as coining the term “realtor.” While the twenty-year period we are examining includes the creation of the NAREE, we can assume that it did not immediately affect real estate activities in the small, rural market of Princeton.128

We are fortunate to have an abundant selection of Sanborn fire insurance maps (almost one every five years between 1885 and 1918), plus the 1905 Lathrop Atlas, and while they obviously only include streets that met some threshold for number of structures, they provide a picture of Princeton’s development. Princeton began as a strip of houses and stores along the stretch of the King’s Highway facing the University. By 1845, while the town was still not large enough to have evolved beyond the walking city, it had developed enough to have sorted itself socially. The main residential district had extended slightly east and west, and the African-American neighborhood had developed to the north. The town grew gradually, first with streets perpendicular to Nassau Street, and then with parallels to Nassau Street connecting the perpendiculars, but without any apparent grand plan. Individual streets were extended or laid out and then deeded to the town. There were no large-scale developments until the 1890s, and even then they were large-scale only in comparison to preceding efforts in Princeton.

The closest example of the 1890s suburb developer to be seen in Princeton’s early history was Charles Steadman. Born in New York in 1790, by 1813 he had moved to Princeton
and by 1830 had become partner in a lumberyard and drygoods business. He also became a sort of property developer, purchasing and subdividing land on which he built more than 70 buildings of various sizes between 1825 and 1845. Although a sizable output, a quick calculation yields an average of 3.5 buildings per year, quite modest in comparison to later suburb developers.129

Builders

The names of several builders appear in documents relating to construction in Princeton between 1890 and 1910. While Matthews, Stillwell, and Updike appear in relation to individual houses, Warren is tied to a larger output. Nonetheless, all seem to have been small operations, building houses purchased as kits, designed by others, or probably modeled on those in pattern books.130

In 1896 the Princeton Bank and Trust Building opened new offices at 14 Nassau Street in a handsome Dutch Colonial brick building designed by New York architect William E. Stone, who also designed several houses on Library Place before his early death in 1905.131 That same year Bank Street, an approximately 500 foot long perpendicular to Nassau Street, opened next to the new bank. (Figure 9) Thomas Jewell, who owned the street, engaged local builder Benjamin Warren to build sixteen double and single Victorian houses. Although one source claims that the street was nicknamed “Brides’ Row” due to the number of young faculty who chose to live there, the 1900 Census lists only one faculty member (Edwin Lewis, “Professor of Romance Languages”). The others residents listed occupations such as physician, dentist, clergyman, butcher, gardener, boot & shoe dealer, drug store clerk, and locomotive fireman.132 Residents were young however: with the exception of the physician and the clergyman and his wife everybody was under the age of 40, and most were in their twenties. With the exception of two black live-in servants, all the residents were white, with a mix of native-born Americans and
European immigrants. Described as “modest residences...gather[ed] close to the street and to one another” these houses sit on 20 foot by 60 foot lots, which they almost fill. (Figures 23 and 24) Rents were reportedly about $20 per month.133

Figure 23. Bank Street (Photo by author)
Warren went on to build a combination of single, double, and boarding houses on new streets on the northeast outskirts of town. In the words of Edward, one of Warren’s four sons who worked for him,

And then we started to build some houses of our own, you know, double houses. We built all the Madison Street [sic], and we built from Jefferson to Moore on the north side of Wiggins Street. And up Moore and Jefferson as far as Hawthorne Street—the corner of Wiggins and Moore was nothing but a cornfield when my father bought it. Professor Harper owned all that land and my father bought it off of him.134

Looking back from 1979 on his work as a young man, Warren compressed the time frame on the houses they built. Bank Street opened in 1896. Madison—which appears in the 1902 Sanborn, but not the 1895—opened shortly thereafter; only a few houses appear in the 1902 Sanborn, but all lots on the street are filled in the 1905 Lathrop Atlas. The stretch of Wiggins Street he mentions is bare in 1902, partially filled in 1906, and completely filled in 1911. Jefferson, the newest street he mentions, is only partially filled in 1918. The timespan is also
conveyed by the style of house on the streets. Bank Street houses are Victorians, Madison Street houses are Victorian shading into vernacular Colonial Revival, Wiggins houses are all vernacular Colonial Revival, and Jefferson Street are Lewis kit houses. Thus while Warren constructed many of the houses in Princeton he did so in an incremental fashion over a thirty year period.\textsuperscript{135}

**Morven**

As mentioned above, when Stephen Stockton sold Morven in 1890 because he could no long afford to live there, a distant cousin purchased the property. She did not have the financial resources to live there either and quickly moved to subdivide and sell the property. The “Map of the Morven Property” is dated 1900, but bears the note “Surveyed and drawn by E. Sandoz 1890.”\textsuperscript{136} (Figure 25) With the existing town streets of Stockton Street to the south, and Bayard Lane to the east, it shows the Morven house, flanked by the Princeton Inn and a row of lots on Library Place. Many of the lots show the owner’s name, including that of Woodrow Wilson and Grover Cleveland. While Wilson had moved to Princeton in 1890, Cleveland had not arrived until 1897, reinforcing the supposition that the plat was prepared in 1890 and the names added in 1900.
Figure 25. Sandoz’s Map of the Morven Property, dated 1890, modified (probably updated with names) in 1900. (Courtesy of Princeton University)

This development appears to have filled in fairly quickly. Of the twenty lots on Library Place, fourteen bear names on the map. The other streets, filled in more slowly with four of ten lots on Hodge Avenue bearing names, and none on Boudinot Avenue and Hunter Place (quickly renamed Morven Street). One account written for alumni three years later notes:
The most notable development of the town in late years has been out to the northwest, on the extensive Stockton property. This, which ten or fifteen years ago was a big farm, is being divided up into streets and lots. The new homes built during the past year or two include the large Tudor house [on Library Place] of Dr. David Magie '59, who has moved from New York to Princeton...Farther out on the other side of the street Prof. Jesse B. Carter '93 has a quaint Elizabethan house, and still farther, at the corner of Library Place and Hodge Avenue, is the large English house of the family of A. M. Hudnut '81. One of the newest streets is called Morven, which leads out of Hodge Avenue parallel to Library Place and between that and Bayard Lane. Here are the new houses of Professor H. D. Thompson '85 and Dean S. R. Winans '74, the latter of which is not yet completed. This street opens into Boudinot Place, which runs approximately east and west from Bayard Lane to Library Place. The new houses here are those of J. MacN. Thompson '94, the Curator, and Mr. H. C. Bunn, the Assistant Treasurer of the college. Out on Bayard Lane, just beyond Mr. Cleveland’s, is the Italian house of Professor John H. Finley, built a year or two ago.\(^{137}\)

The Lathrop Atlas, published two years later in 1905, (Figure 26) shows this construction continuing with only one lot on Library Place without a name and eight without houses. The other streets have generally filled in, although some large lots seem to have taken the place of the ones on the Sandoz map—some old (the S. W. Stockton estate) and some new (Mrs. Frances E. Hudnut’s “Wopowog” and A. L. Frothignham Senior, “Hortus Inclusus”). Interestingly, while Sandoz projected Library Place and Hodge Avenue to continue in straight lines after their intersection, by 1905 they and streets beyond them had adopted graceful curves, a nod, perhaps to Llewellyn Park or one of the suburbs designed elsewhere by Olmsted and Vaux.\(^{138}\)
As might be gathered from the number of houses with names, this was a luxury development. Lots were large—180 feet deep on one side of Library Place and 200 feet on the other, and wide—the narrowest were 75 feet, but the rest were at least 100 feet, with some reaching 200 feet. Houses were designed by architects from New York and Philadelphia in a variety of styles.\(^{139}\)

James Vandeventer

Sometime around the middle of the 1800’s the Presbyterian Church sold off the 20 acres north of Nassau Street that it had been left to it by Dr. Thomas Wiggins when he died in 1804. Part was purchased by the new gas-light company, and part, including a pond, was purchased by James Vandeventer for use as a commercial nursery. (Figure 27) As the town grew and the land become more in demand, Vandeventer decided to sell it as residential property. Although no
maps exists of the original plat, this appears to have happened sometime between 1880 and 1900. The continuation of Washington Road which became Vandeventer Avenue appears on the 1885 Sanborn streets and the cross street named Park Street (now Place) appears on the 1890 Sanborn. By 1902 Park is extended east to Moore Street, and a new Madison Street extends north from Park to Wiggins, although (as mentioned above in the section about Warren) many lots remain empty.

The houses on Vandeventer Avenue are of a different character than those on Park and Madison. The Vandeventer houses are larger, with larger lots, and many have three stories. (Figures 28 and 29) Some are twins. The occupations of residents in 1900 included mason, electrician, tailor, carpenter, restaurant keeper, school teacher and school principal. Park has no
single houses, all the houses are twins or boarding houses. The four appearing in the 1900 census were occupied by a photo studio saleswoman, an electrician, a day laborer, and a resident who did not specify an occupation. Madison is all single houses, but they are small and have two stories. It did not appear on the 1900 Census. Based on this it would appear that Vandeventer was aiming at the middle of the real estate spectrum, or slightly below it.\textsuperscript{141}

\textbf{Figure 28.} 31-33 Vandeventer Avenue. (Photo by author)
There was [sic] three big merchants in Princeton when I was a boy, and they were all Leigs. They were three brothers. One had a meat market; one a grocery store; and one a clothing store.” Albert Leigh, the one with the meat market, was described as having “many irons in the fire,” and supplied his store on Nassau Street from a complex north of the African-American neighborhood, which included a slaughterhouse, a small sausage factory, a small corn cracker, and a coal house. An occasion where he needed to borrow $17,000 to pay for a shipment of cattle, and had to send a young accountant to Trenton to borrow the money from a bank (he returned “with a pistol beside him on the seat of the buggy”), led him to found the First National Bank of Princeton in 1893.
In 1905 Leigh subdivided the land between the slaughterhouse and the African-American neighborhood, platting 162 small lots on two new streets, Leigh and Birch Avenues. (Figures 31 and 32) Most lots were 30 feet wide, with lots 1-107 being 100 feet deep, and lots 108-162 being 125 feet deep. Although the northern of Princeton’s two trolley lines entered town on the far side of the Birch Avenue lots, it is hard to believe that enough differential in the cost of living would exist to compensate for the hour-long daily commute to Trenton, so Leigh must have expected the vast majority of his buyers to be local Princeton residents. Given the location of the lots, with Princeton’s African-American neighborhood between them and Nassau Street, many white residents would not have wanted to live there, so it seems safe to conclude that Leigh intended to sell most of them to Princeton’s African-American residents.144
It is unclear why Leigh chose to close the slaughterhouse complex and turn the land into residences. Perhaps after opening the bank he was looking to simplify his business activities,
and was able to locate a supply source elsewhere for the butcher shop that was cheaper and
less complex than running his own slaughterhouse. Perhaps watching the growth of the
university and of the eating clubs, he saw the number of Princeton’s African-Americans working
there in service positions and recognized that the university’s growth would require growth in
the African-American population as well. It is also unclear how quickly Leigh thought the land
would be sold. The 1895 Sanborn map of the existing streets in the African-American
community shows open lots on the existing streets, so there was no urgent demand for new
land for additional houses. (Figure 33) In fact, the lots only filled gradually until the creation of
Palmer Square in the late 1930s displaced residents north. Immediately successful or not,
Leigh’s subdivision—at the opposite end of the income scale from the Morven tract—ensured
that any additional residential property development in town would be targeted at white
residents with incomes in the middle of the spectrum.\textsuperscript{145}
Figure 33. 1895 Sanborn Map, plate 7, showing density of housing. (Courtesy of Princeton University)
Oliver H. Hubbard

Oliver “Ollie” Hubbard was born on a farm in Mount Lucas just north of Princeton in 1867, and attended Princeton Public schools until age 12, followed by two years at the Trenton Business College. After working in Trenton for two years, he returned to Princeton, working in a bank for a short time before joining the Princeton real estate firm of Marsh & Wright at age 17. After striking off on his own three years later, he bought Marsh & Wright in 1894 at age 27 and by 1906 was “one of the chief operators in the real estate market.” In 1900, at age 33, he married Maria Lilla Mershon, who came “from one of the oldest colonial families in New Jersey.” After returning from their honeymoon, the couple moved into the historic Beatty House—famed for having been the property of one of Alexander Hamilton’s aides at Yorktown and for having hosted the Marquis de Lafayette for one night during his 1825 tour of the United States—while Oliver worked from a nearby office on Nassau Street.

But Hubbard appears to have felt that he could do more than sell other people’s houses. In 1899 he purchased Ann Cottrell’s farm next to that of John Murphy on the northern edge of Princeton. Eight years later—the reasons for the delay are unknown—he registered a Map Showing A Plan of Lots and Streets, dividing the part of the farm closest to Princeton into 70 lots—57 numbered 1-30, 32-44, and 77-90, and 13 unnumbered—on streets surrounding a trapezoidal block. Given the trapezoid, there were many irregular lots, but those that were regular were 50 feet wide by 150 feet deep as on the Jefferson Road tract. (Figure 34)
Although no advertisements for the lots have been found, there are some indications that Hubbard intended this neighborhood for members of Princeton’s middle class—not Library Place by any means, but the rung beneath it in Princeton’s social hierarchy. On May 7, 1907 the Trenton Evening Times noted that “Excavations for two handsome new residences to be erected on Hamilton avenue [sic] are now being made.” One, a three-story Victorian house on the most prominent corner in the tract, was being built by Hubbard—presumably as an example to sell to a future buyer rather than as a new residence for himself and his wife, since the new house would not have the historic cache of the Beatty House. (Figure 35) It is interesting to note that this house is almost identical to one which the Princeton United Methodist Church had built as
its parsonage at 34 Wiggins Street in 1899-1900, with the addition of about two feet to the third floor, making it habitable. (Figure 36) Hubbard is mentioned as bring Chairman of the Trustees of the Church in 1915, so it would be reasonable to hypothesize that he had been involved in building the parsonage and, satisfied with it, used modified plans and the same builder for his new model home six years later. Hubbard was unable to sell this house during his lifetime, and appears only to have been able to rent it from 1908 to 1909 to Emily Parmly and her son Theodore.150

Figure 35. 2 Hamilton Avenue. Note additional height above second floor windows (band of gray) compared to 34 Wiggins Street. (Photo by author)
The buyers of two additional houses give an indication of Hubbard’s target market. The second house, a slightly smaller three-story Victorian farther down Hamilton Avenue at number 8, was being built by Charles A. Seidensticker, cashier of the Princeton Bank. (Figures 37 and 38) The decision may have been prompted by Seidensticker marrying, because the 1900 Census lists him as a single man boarding at 240 Nassau Street, and later references mention his family. Seidensticker was presumably able to get favorable mortgage terms from his employer. Tellingly, although the small newspaper article announcing the beginning of construction appeared in May 1907, the deed is dated January 7, 1909, so Hubbard appears to have extended favorable terms of some sort to Seidensticker in order to be able to demonstrate interest in the project to the public. The third lot, still further down Hamilton Avenue at number 14, was sold to George Sterzl, Princeton’s Assistant Postmaster, in 1908; he also erected a three-story
Victorian house. (Figure 39) He does not appear in the 1900 Census, so his antecedents are unknown.152

Figure 37. 8 Hamilton Avenue, undated. Note empty fields in background. (Collection of the Historical Society of Princeton)

Figure 38. 8 Hamilton Avenue. (Photo by author.)
In addition to finding the right sort of buyer, Hubbard also took measures to establish the tone of the neighborhood. The deeds included a brief covenant specifying that “a single dwelling house only shall be placed upon this lot which shall cost not less than $5000 and the said house shall not be nearer than 40 feet to the front fence line.” To maintain this image Hubbard moved the Cottrell farmhouse from where it stood on Moore Street—from the 1905 Lathrop atlas and the 1906 Plan it appears to be across Hamilton Avenue from Hubbard’s new house, either in the corner lot or straddling the property line with the next lot on Moore Street—to a new location outside of the tract, bordering on a working-class neighborhood where it still stands today. ¹⁵³ (Figure 40)
Hubbard’s naming of the streets in the tract is also worth some consideration. The west side of the Cottrell farm extended down Moore Street, so Hubbard did not change that name. The south side of the farm, however, abutted the cemetery of the Catholic Church, without being cut by an east-west parallel to Nassau Street. Hubbard connected the development to the existing street grid by continuing Wiggins Street, angling it slightly to the north, probably to parallel the property line with the cemetery. Rather than name this street Wiggins, however, he chose to name it Hamilton Avenue. The reason for this name is undocumented. Moore Street was named after a Princeton resident who was a captain of militia during the Battle of Princeton.154 Perhaps because of this Hubbard chose to name it after John Hamilton, a Princeton landowner in colonial times—although Hamilton did not own this tract of land.155

In any case, the new Hamilton Avenue ran east for about 820 feet to where it met Chestnut and turned left. Curiously, although laid out as an extension of the Chestnut Street
which ran perpendicularly north from Nassau Street, this Chestnut Street did not connect to it. Perhaps Hubbard wanted to create an exclusive enclave. The lots at this corner, and those running up the east side of Chestnut, are not numbered in the 1906 plat, indicating, perhaps, that Hubbard intended to sell them last, leaving open the possibility of connecting the new Chestnut Street to the existing one.

The borough council accepted Hamilton Avenue as a public highway on June 6, 1907.156 Three years later, in June 1910, it received a petition asking that the name of Wiggins Street be changed to Hamilton Avenue. According to the newspaper, “The petition had many signatures, but there seems to be many opposed to the change in the time-honored name, and a remonstrance is being circulated which will be presented to the Council at its next meeting.”157 The street was never renamed, so presumably the remonstrance outweighed the petition. No source is given for the petition, but Hubbard would seem a likely candidate, although—as with so much about this project—the rationale is unclear.158

As a final note, Hubbard was not able to sell many of the lots before his death in 1925. The 1927 Sanborn maps—the first to show any of the streets of the tract—show the three houses on Hamilton Avenue and one house across the street. (Figure 41) Moore has the four singles and one double built by Warren, and two singles facing them. Hawthorne has nine houses. Chestnut Street has been continued down from Nassau Street, eliminating two lots. Twenty years after Hubbard had opened the tract for sale, nineteen out of 68 lots had been sold—28%. Hardly the results Hubbard had hoped for when he bought the farm from Ann Cottrell in 1899.
At the bottom of page 399 of the March 23, 1907 issue of the Princeton Alumni Weekly was a two-column-wide headline “The Prospect Houses.” The article began:

One of the most pressing needs in Princeton, since the marked increase in the teaching staff of the University two years ago, is that of comfortable homes at a moderate rental for the families of the younger members of the faculty and others connected with the University. This need is about to be met by the development of a residential park adjacent to Lake Carnegie, along the eastern end of Prospect Avenue.\textsuperscript{159}

After a description of the organizers and the project, and a sketch of the development, the article included the information that the town would extend Prospect Avenue to the proposed new residential section. “The Prospect Company will develop Princeton Avenue with similar improvements, and lay out the fifty-acre tract in park style, the new avenues to be curved to suit the topography of the section.”\textsuperscript{160} After a description of the houses and lots
Each lot will be approximately of eighty feet frontage and 200 feet depth, affording plenty of space around the houses”), the article said that “The architects are Prof. Walter B. Harris '86...and Francis G. Stewart '96 of New York.”

A typed report (presumably by Harris) in the university archives sheds additional light.

In October, 1906, Prof. Harris submitted first to Mr. Pyne, and later to Mr. Palmer, plans for houses to be built for and rented to professors and instructors in the University on a tract of land adjoining the University property on the East...These houses were estimated to cost from $4000 to $6000 each, and were to rent from $20 to $30 per month. It was thought best, after due consultation and deliberation, to improve the class of house, choosing better materials and paying more attention to architectural effect and detail, it being almost certain that with a better class of house the remaining property would be more attractive and hence find a better sale than if cheap and insignificant houses were erected. It was also decided that the additional expense might fairly be charged to development or advertisement so that the rentals might still remain within the reach of all. Prof. Harris, therefore, was authorized to proceed with a scheme which he suggested, viz: a series of houses planned on English cottage lines and finished in oak and chestnut with attractive details and cement stucco exteriors. Prof, Harris estimated that the increased expenditure for houses on this style would be from $6000 to $8000.

At Harris's suggestion the original lessees were given a menu of upgrade options, e.g. fireplace in study, servant’s water closet in basement, extra closet in bedroom, for correspondingly higher rents, $0.50, $0.25, and $0.10 per month respectively, “to give individuality to each house.”

On December 29, 1906, Pyne, his son, Edgar Palmer, and H. A. Lindsay incorporated the company. Early that February, Prof. Harris submitted plans for seven houses, and was directed to solicit bids from builders. After sending the plans to three builders in New York City and three in Princeton, the Company chose Benjamin Warren of Princeton (mentioned above) on March 8, agreeing to pay him $250 on top of the cost of each house. Warren’s bid for the first eight houses ranged from $5,189 to $7,500. Construction began March 21. At the March 8 meeting, company leadership also decided that it should have leases signed before starting construction, and since Harris was able to get sixteen leases signed, the Company increased the number of houses to eighteen, nine to be completed by November 1, and nine by May 1, 1908.
At an April 23 meeting an additional house was added for a Mr. Bogart, an alumnus, but there is no explanation of why, or if the intent was to rent to other alumni in the future. The white stucco exteriors of the new houses arising from the fields resulted in the nickname, “The White City,” recalling the Chicago World’s Fair ten years earlier.164 (Figures 42 and 43)

Figure 42. Houses of “The White City,” looking down Western Way beginning with 138 Fitzrandolph Road. Undated, but probably 1907 or 1908 since the houses are completed but their yards are unfinished. (Collection of the Historical Society of Princeton)
It is interesting to compare these houses to those proposed by Hubbard on his Hamilton Avenue tract. The Broadmead lots are irregular, but generally larger than the Hamilton lots. The original intent was to build houses that cost $4,000 to $6,000 but after the upgrade described above the new price range was $6,000 to $8,000. The covenant on the Hamilton lots required a minimum cost of $5,000 per house. Both required one single house per lot. The Prospect Company houses would be more luxurious than the Hamilton houses, but they would be affordable since they were all to be rentals, with prices ranging from $29.50 to $45.00 per month. We have no records of rents in Princeton for houses of comparable size and quality, but since the stated intent of The Prospect Company was to provide affordable housing for faculty, rather than to maximize profits, we can assume that these rents were near the bottom of the range of rental prices, if not below it. By constructing this subsidized housing The Prospect Company effectively reduced the potential customer base of the Hamilton tract drastically, even more so if alumni were included as potential renters.\textsuperscript{165}
According to the article in the PAW, the idea seems to have been Harris’:

This movement for the building of comfortable houses at a moderate rental for those connected with the University was first broached at Princeton about five years ago, when it was becoming apparent that the limited building area on the other side of town would sooner or later place the available building lots beyond the reach of most of the younger members of the faculty. At that time Professor Harris suggested to several of the trustees that a section be developed to the east of the college for residential purposes.166

This would have been 1901, at a time when he was serving as Borough Engineer ("designed Northwest sewer system"167) and had just become President of the Board of Health. Being involved in town government in this manner he probably had a better idea of what would be needed to house faculty than most people. As noted above, he would also be in a position to ensure that town government viewed the project favorably, and provided assistance such as extending Prospect Avenue.

Walter B. Harris

Walter Harris was born in Princeton in 1865, son of the college treasurer. (Figure 44) After graduating from the university with a degree in Civil Engineering in 1886 he worked for railroad and coal companies for three years before returning to the university as an instructor in civil engineering, becoming assistant professor in 1895. In 1899 he was named professor and asked to set up the university’s new Department of Geodesy.† He remained on the faculty until 1934. In addition to teaching at the university, he was also involved in the town government, serving as Township Engineer, Street Commissioner, Borough Engineer, and President of the Board of Health.168

† “Geodesy is the science of accurately measuring and understanding the Earth’s geometric shape, orientation in space, and gravity field.” (https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/geodesy.html)
Sometime in the late 1890s Professor William Libbey, who lived in a large house known as Thanet Lodge, (Figure 19) purchased the large lot adjoining it, just north of the end of Bank Street, and in 1903 decided to develop it, turning to Harris for assistance. Harris divided it into several lots arranged around a central figure-eight-shaped road which exited on to Bayard Lane, which Libbey named Greenholm (“green island”). In 1908 Harris, who had been living on the eastern expanse of Nassau Street midway between the Catholic Church and Jugtown, began building a house on Greenholm, perhaps receiving a discount from his fellow faculty member for having “designed and constructed Greenholm.” In the next few years four others were built. Shortly thereafter, Harris became involved in the Prospect Company project.

In 1909, as Hubbard was trying to sell lots on Hamilton Avenue, Harris got into Princeton real estate on his own. John Murphy having died, his heirs (including, coincidentally, Albert S. Leigh) sold his farm to Harris for $29,000. This was the farm across Witherspoon Street from the African-American neighborhood. Harris and Murphy must have discussed this earlier because in about 1910 Harris drew up a Map of Proposed Addition to Princeton, N. J. (Figure 45) in which
the entire farm is subdivided into residential lots. The lots vary in size slightly—those facing Witherspoon Street are 195 feet deep (perhaps allowing for a greater setback from a major street), while the rest are 155 feet deep (except between two existing street where they are 145 feet), and all are 50 or 60 feet wide—generous compared to those in Leigh’s subdivision and similar to Hubbard’s.

Figure 45. Map of Proposed Addition to Princeton New Jersey. Dated 1900 in pencil, the map includes the Hamilton Avenue tract, dating it after 1907. (Courtesy of Princeton University)

Harris seems to have started selling his lots later than Hubbard, and had more luck selling them. He dated his involvement in the development of the land as “1916-27,” writing “Designed and constructed Jefferson Road Tract” under “Other activities” on a form he completed for the university in 1928. Similar to the Hamilton tract, the property deeds for these lots include covenants. Single houses were required to have a minimum construction cost of $3,000, rather than $5,000. The tract differs from Hubbard’s Hamilton tract, however, in that double houses were also permitted, with a minimum construction cost of $5,000. While the
1927 Sanborn map (Figure 41) shows almost all of the lots sold, many of the houses are doubles. This implies that Harris observed the rate of sale in the Hamilton tract and adjusted the price for his lots downward.173

VIII. Similarities and Differences to Company Towns

The industrial revolution in the United States led to the rise of the “company town,” a community dominated by one industry—often one company—which provided housing for its workers. This began with the introduction of water-powered textile mills in the northeast and spread to other areas with the introduction of steam power and the birth of new industries. Notable examples include Pullman Illinois, constructed in the early 1880s for workers at the Pullman Palace Car Company, Hershey Pennsylvania, constructed in 1904 for workers at the Hershey Chocolate Company, Gary, Indiana constructed in 1906 for workers at U. S. Steel, and Chicopee, Georgia, constructed in 1925 for workers at a textile mill. Although there are obvious differences between these towns and Princeton, the construction of the White City by The Prospect Company has noticeable similarities, and it is worth examining how Princeton might be considered to be a company town.174

Company towns often seem to have been started with mixed purposes. The core business reason was to provide workers for factories, but there was often also a paternalistic intent to uplift the workers by providing a model town with modern amenities such as paved streets, sewers, electricity, parks, and libraries. Since workers could not be expected to buy houses of this sort on a factory salary, the company built the town and rented to the workers at affordable (but not generous) rates. Rental buildings were also provided for social organizations such as churches. By placing the factory and town close together, workers would not have to
waste time or money in their daily commute. Workers would be grateful for the benevolence of the company, and strikes would be avoided.¹⁷⁵

In reality, this often meant that workers were placed in a more subservient position to management than they might have been otherwise. Since workers and their social organizations could only rent, they could be evicted at short notice if they engaged in activities, such as work stoppages, that displeased management. Some towns, such as Pullman, had “company inspectors,” purportedly to ensure that houses were kept in good repair, but who also kept an eye on attitudes and activities to ensure that they were not offensive.¹⁷⁶

Although no doubt the residents of The Prospect Company houses would have been horrified to hear it, Princeton could also have been compared to a nearby company town, Roebling, New Jersey, also being constructed in 1906 just outside of Trenton for workers at the new Kinkora Works of Roebling’s steel wire factory. The Roebling Company too, recognized the difficulty of finding “comfortable homes at a moderate rental” for its workers, and claimed to be constructing the town, to avoid “the time and expense involved in compelling the employees to travel between Trenton and the new mills below Kinkora.”¹⁷⁷ The Company proudly announced that rents in Roebling—$8 to $14 per month—were half those in Trenton. (The Prospect Company’s rents ranged from $30 to $45). The streets were paved and bordered with shade trees. “The only requisite is for a man to do his work well and to behave himself as a householder and a citizen,” the Roeblings were reported to say.¹⁷⁸

So, how did the White City compare to other company towns? On the surface there were many similarities. Good houses were provided at affordable rents—possibly even below market rate, and were placed near to the workplace in pleasant surroundings. However, the paternalistic and controlling aspects of factory company towns were absent. There appear not to have been any inspectors in the White City as there were in some towns, and salaries at the
university did not fluctuate with demand for product, which kept rents affordable. Because the
university experienced none of the business downturns that led to unilateral change in the
terms of the agreement between landlord and worker, and since there appear to not have been
any social scandals involving professors, or academic ones involving them teaching in a way that
the university would have found objectionable, we have no evidence of friction between
residents and landlords, so we are left to wonder if there ever would have been occasion for
residents of the White City to have been turned out of their houses. Nonetheless, White City
residents were company employees, and the awareness that their employer and their landlord
worked hand in glove must have hovered in the background, even if it did not affect work
performance or attitude in a noticeable way.

The main difference, however, is of intent. From the documents we have, The Prospect
Company was formed purely to benefit the university by making it easier to hire and retain
junior faculty. As with the need for a laboratory building or a lake, wealthy alumni solved a
problem by reaching into their pockets and pulling out cash. Little if any thought seems to have
been given to any larger considerations.

While building a new laboratory building on university grounds would have had little
effect on the town beyond short-term employment for construction workers and long-term
employment for cleaning and maintenance staff, building faculty housing off-campus was
another matter. Socially it meant that the White City became an enclave to itself. Everybody’s
neighbor was a faculty member at the university so there was no opportunity to run into a bank
cashier or a postmaster or a dentist or any of their family members when walking the dog or
going downtown to dine. Economically it had the same short- and long-term employment
benefits, but it completely overlooked the effect on the town’s real estate market.
One can wonder how the town would have been different if the members of The Prospect Company had created an endowment to provide a housing allowance for junior faculty instead of simply building houses for them. This would have provided a steady source of income to the town as faculty members arrived and were promoted instead of the one-time outlay to Benjamin Warren for the construction of the White City, followed by the payment of rents back to The Prospect Company. Since Harris’s Jefferson tract sold at a relative low price point, while Hubbard’s Hamilton tract did not at a slightly higher one, we can assume that a faculty housing allowance would have allowed spend more money for a house than they did in the Jefferson tract. Ollie Hubbard would have been happy, and other neighborhoods might have changed in tone as well.

IX. Conclusion

Had they been able to visit Princeton as it stood poised at the beginning of the twentieth century, the four men who provided the money and land to bring the university to their small town 150 years earlier would have been satisfied. Their educational strategy for the town’s long-term prosperity had succeeded, even though a more conventional strategy focusing on transportation had failed. In fact, the university’s success, based on an affluent student body, engaged wealthy alumni, and strong leadership, meant that the town had not only survived, but thrived. That success also rested on external elements, however, that could not have been foreseen.

Much of the university’s success rested on the wealth and involvement of its alumni, in particular Moses Taylor Pyne. Pyne had personally kept the university afloat financially during dark days and had organized the other alumni to provide support in the long term. Alumni participation in the Board of Trustees led a drive to recover (or one might say, create) an
environment of academic rigor and achievement that pushed the university to a leading position among its peers. And the South East Club and similar alumni groups fueled acquisition of land and construction of buildings to house the growing, energized university.

As the only large employer, the university had an outsized influence on the development of the town. The development of the Morven tract by wealthy residents—many of them alumni and faculty—provided service sector jobs which fueled the town’s population growth. The alumni-fueled growth of campus both in size and enrollment did the same. But alumni involvement in the success of the university also resulted in it growing inexorably, absorbing properties adjacent to the campus and farms farther afield, knocking down houses and damming a river. There was no way to oppose this nor do any of the town’s residents appear to have had any desire to.

Wealthy alumni residents—who had access to a private direct train to New York—also sought to block the arrival of the trolley. They feared its negative influence on the character and make-up of the town, without any consideration of the benefits that it might provide to less-wealthy citizens. And rather than responding to a need for affordable housing on the part of junior faculty with a solution that would benefit the town, they reverted to the default response that had served them well in the face of inadequate academic and dormitory space on campus: pulling out their checkbooks and building it.

Roles had changed; rather than the university existing to ensure the town’s health, as its founders had intended, the town had come to exist to support the university. The College of New Jersey even took the town’s name, underlining that the two were no longer separate entities. At times the university and its alumni did not get their way—the trolleys to Trenton come to mind—but these were few and far between. In general university alumni and
employees formed the leadership of the town as they did of the university, and ensured that
everything went developed favorably.

As there seem to be no other studies of the growth of university towns in this period we
cannot say how typical this was. It seems safe to say that most universities did not have alumni
as affluent as Princeton did, nor locations as favorable. Consequently, they may have had to
cooperate more with their surrounding towns in planning their growth. Additional scholarship is
needed to develop a robust picture of how “normal” university towns developed in order to
understand what aspects of Princeton’s were unusual.
Endnotes

1 Blake Gumprecht, *The American College Town* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), xvi.

2 Clifford Zink’s recent book on the Princeton eating clubs is one of the few books providing a serious historical study of one aspect of off-campus life; its focus is the change over time on one Princeton street.


11 Princeton’s continued independence (it remains a separate municipality within Mercer County today), and the creation of bedroom communities for factory workers closer to Trenton would also weigh against the annexation theory.


20 Boorstin, The Americans, 155.


22 Greiff, Gibbons, and Menzies, Princeton Architecture, 43-46. The architect of Nassau Hall is unknown, although Greiff mentions three men involved in its construction, surmising that they may have designed it as well.; quote from Broderick, “Pulpit, Physics, and Politics”; cited in Birkner et al., New Jersey, 51

23 Schmidt, Princeton and Rutgers - The Two Colonial Colleges of New Jersey, 32–33, 66; Birkner et al., New Jersey, 110. This thesis will not discuss the Theological Seminary in any great detail because it was much smaller than the university, and because its alumni tended not to become extremely wealthy, and consequently did not have a large direct or indirect effect on the residential property market in the town.


26 Greiff, “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form - King’s Highway Historic District,” 65.

27 Hageman, History of Princeton and Its Institutions, 1:229.


40 Listokin, Berkhout, and Hughes, 7.

41 Listokin, Berkhout, and Hughes, 3–7.
42 Schmidt, Princeton and Rutgers - The Two Colonial Colleges of New Jersey, 5, 55, 58–59.
43 Schmidt, 17–30.
44 Schmidt, 42; Breese, Princeton University Land, 53–64.
45 Schmidt, Princeton and Rutgers - The Two Colonial Colleges of New Jersey, 66.
46 Schmidt, 69.
49 See any of Arcadia Publishing’s vast Images of America series. (www.arcadiapublishing.com)
50 One of the historic studies is a 2015 article in Buildings and Landscapes by Daniel Bluestone entitled “Charlottesville’s Landscape of Prostitution, 1880-1950,” which examines (as much as possible from sketchy records) the brothels in Charlottesville which were supported by an almost exclusive student clientele from the University of Virginia. There are obvious parallels between the two institutions and towns, and if similar establishments existed in Princeton, the neighborhood most similar to the Garrett Street neighborhood in Charlottesville where they were located would be the African-American neighborhood immediately north of Nassau Street. Confirming this tentative hypothesis would require substantial research and good luck in the areas of historical records. If they did indeed exist, the arrival of the trolleys to Trenton might have provided reform elements among the town’s and university’s official and unofficial leaders to push for their closure. In any case, in the same way that 1960s urban renewal was seized upon by Charlottesville’s leaders to erase this embarrassing blot on the clean-cut colonial, collegiate image that the town cultivated, the creation of Palmer Square in the late 1930s would have erased any physical trace in Princeton, with the same result on the town’s desired public image.
52 Hageman, History of Princeton and Its Institutions, 1:15.
55 The name comes from the Theological Seminary library.
56 Accepted wisdom in Princeton is that the residents of this neighborhood were exclusively African-American. This may have been true in later years, but the 1900 Census shows residents to be both black and white.
63 Burt, 6. I am indebted to Clifford Zink for his comments on the convenience of bicycles and automobiles compared to horse and carriage. The latter needed to be harnessed and hitched at home, and then attended to somehow at the destination, while the latter could just be parked and left.
65 Burt, 7.
66 Burt, 6.
67 Burt, 6.
78 Axson, 112.
80 Axson, 113.
84 “Princeton University Catalogues”
88 Axtell, 52–59.
89 Axtell, 63.
90 Axtell, 63.
93 Axtell, 61–62.
95 Breese, *Princeton University Land*, 54.
97 Breese, 67–77.
98 Breese, 36, 38–41, 191–94.

106 Axtell, The Making of Princeton University, 373–401. It is unclear what use the university put Merwick to after moving the Graduate College to its new facilities, but in the 1950s it was combined it with an adjoining estate as a site for 154 housing units for junior faculty. Breese 46.

107 Stilgoe, The Metropolitan Corridor, 293.


110 “Princeton and Trolley Road,” Trenton Evening Times, May 10, 1899.

111 Entry to Princeton across Leigh’s land can be seen in Lathrop, Atlas of the City of Trenton and Borough of Princeton, Mercer County, New Jersey, 21.

112 “Princeton and Trolley Road.”

113 “Princeton and Trolley Road.”

114 “The Trolley.”


119 Axson, Brother Woodrow, 125, 271 n10.

120 “Street Railway Parks,” Street Railway Journal, 1901.

121 “Streetcar Reverie,” 7.

122 I am indebted to Dennis Waters for taking the time to share his research on the development of Lawrence and how it was affected—and effected—by the construction of the trolley lines.


124 Bostwick, A History of Princeton ’96, 117. Although Allan Marquand’s daughter (born 1900) recollected that “I believe Mr. George Armour, as a director of the Pennsylvania Railroad, arranged for one through train to New York in the morning and back in the late afternoon so that he and his friends need not change at Princeton Junction.” Princeton Recollector May 1975, Armour does not appear to have been a director of that company. In his article “Princeton Grandees” Burt ascribes the special train to Moses Taylor Pyne, which is more likely.

125 See https://theprince.princeton.edu/princetonperiodicals/cgi-bin/princetonperiodicals using the search term "Princeton Special"


by Seidensticker, B) the lot at 12 Hamilton is empty in Sanborn maps for 1927 and 1943 and now contains a split-level colonial, probably from the 1950s.

152 “Deed for 8 Hamilton Ave. from Oliver Houghton Hubbard and Lilla Mershon Hubbard to Charles A. Seidensticker (Bk 314, Pg 578),” January 7, 1909, Mercer County Clerk’s Office; “Princeton (May 7, 1907)”; “Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900,” District 0054, Image 15; “Deed for 14 Hamilton Ave. from Oliver Houghton Hubbard to George J. Sterzl (Bk 305, Pg 231),” April 1, 1908, Mercer County Clerk’s Office.


154 According to Hageman, “he is credited with distinguished bravery in having, with the aid of a few men, burst open the door of the college and demanded the British force then taking refuge in the building, to surrender, which they instantly complied with.” Hageman, History of Princeton and Its Institutions, 1:189.

155 Hobler and Silvester, Princeton - On the Streets Where We Live. The Hamilton Avenue entry cites John and S. A. Hamilton as owning land north of Nassau Street, although Hageman puts it south of Nassau St. Their reference to Edward Tanners article “The Street with Eight Names” is puzzling, since it does not discuss the origins of the Hamilton Avenue portion of the street.

156 “Princeton Council Takes New Street.”


158 Unfortunately, none of Hubbard’s business records survive. According to Wanda Gunning, long-time historian in Princeton, “Professor Gerald Breese told me that all of the records of the Hubbard agency were put out on the curb as trash after the death of Ollie Hubbard’s partner and brother-in-law, Irving W. Mershon (in the 1960s). Pieces of this material were saved by the building department employees of Princeton University and Professor Breese rescued some items for the Historical Society.”


160 “The Prospect Houses (3/23/1907).”

161 “The Prospect Houses (3/23/1907).”

162 Walter B. Harris, “Brief Outline of Prof. Harris’s Relation to the Prospect Company from the Time of Its Inception to Date,” April 1907, Faculty Housing: “Preceptoria” - The Prospect Houses; Robert Judson Clark Papers, AC208, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library., Mudd Library, Princeton University.

163 Harris.

164 Breese, Princeton University Land, 73; Harris, “Brief Outline of Prof. Harris’s Relation to the Prospect Company from the Time of Its Inception to Date.”

165 Harris, “Brief Outline of Prof. Harris’s Relation to the Prospect Company from the Time of Its Inception to Date.”

166 “The Prospect Houses (3/23/1907).”

167 Harris, “Personnel Record.”

168 Harris.

169 Hobler and Silvester, Princeton - On the Streets Where We Live.

170 Harris, “Personnel Record”; “Princeton Improvements,” S87. Travel limitations impose by the coronavirus prevent the title search which would have shown if the initial title included a covenant specifying the minimum cost of these houses.


172 Harris, “Personnel Record.”

173 “Deed for 111 Jefferson St. from Walter B. Harris and Wife to Elmer B. Harris (Bk 392, Pg 338),” June 27, 1916, Mercer County Clerk’s Office.

174 While the university did not own The Prospect Company, two of its four directors were alumni and on the university’s board, and when the company as dissolved, its shares were given to the university, so in practical terms it was a company town.
177 Zink, The Roebling Legacy, 111.
178 Zink, 111.
179 Faced with a similar situation in the 1970s, with rising real-estate values putting house in town out of the reach of faculty, Princeton University is reported to have developed a scheme where it would provide financing for faculty members buying houses in town in return for first right of refusal when the faculty member chose to sell. Closure of the Mercer County Clerk’s office due to the Coronavirus prevents me from investigating this and obtaining a sample property deed.
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“Deed for 8 Hamilton Ave. from Oliver Houghton Hubbard and Lilla Mershon Hubbard to Charles A. Seidensticker (Bk 314, Pg 578),” January 7, 1909. Mercer County Clerk’s Office.

“Deed for 14 Hamilton Ave. from Oliver Houghton Hubbard to George J. Sterzl (Bk 305, Pg 231),” April 1, 1908. Mercer County Clerk’s Office.

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Deed for Farm from Ann E. Cottrell to Ollie H. Hubbard (Bk. 228, Pg. 358),” March 21, 1899. Mercer County Clerk’s Office.

Harris, W. B. “Map Showing Plan of Lots and Streets For Mr. O. H. Hubbard, Princeton, N.J. (Map No. 175) Designed and Surveyed by W. B. Harris, C. E.” Princeton, NJ, August 1, 1906. Mercer County Clerk’s Office.
Harris, Walter B. “Brief Outline of Prof. Harris’s Relation to the Prospect Company from the Time of Its Inception to Date,” April 1907. Faculty Housing: “Preceptoria” - The Prospect Houses; Robert Judson Clark Papers, AC208, Princeton University Archives, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Mudd Library, Princeton University.
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“Princeton (May 7, 1907).” *Trenton Evening Times*. May 7, 1907.


Sandoz, E. “Map of the Morven Property.” 100 feet to one inch. Princeton, N.J., Published ; Surveyed and Drawn 1890 1900. Mudd Library, Princeton University.


“Street Railway Parks.” *Street Railway Journal*, 1901.


Appendix A - A Map of the Trenton and New-Brunswick Turnpike-road.

A Map of the Trenton and New-Brunswick Turnpike-road. Undated, but probably between 1800 and 1810. (Courtesy of Library of Congress)
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