

## Asheville <sup>[1]</sup>

# Asheville

by Lisa Gregory

[Government & Heritage Library](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, 2010.

See also: [Pisgah National Forest](#) <sup>[3]</sup>; [Biltmore House](#); <sup>[4]</sup>[Asheville](#) <sup>[5]</sup> (UNC Press)



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

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

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

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



Thomas Wolfe Memorial (Courtesy flickr user larry wfu)

<sup>[21]</sup>

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

With institutions like the [Southern Highland Craft Guild](#) <sup>[28]</sup> and a downtown district that still exhibits much of its original architecture, tourism and hospitality are some of Asheville's [chief industries](#) <sup>[29]</sup> today.

## Asheville's estimated population:

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

## Asheville's land area (square miles):

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

Data from the NC State Data Center:

## References and additional resources:

"Asheville and environs: The built environment." #

Black Mountain College Collection. State Archives of North Carolina. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/spotlights/bmc> <sup>[30]</sup> (accessed November 1, 2013).

Chase, Nan K. 2007. Asheville, a history. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. Publishers. <https://search.worldcat.org/title/141384321> <sup>[31]</sup>

[Items related to Asheville, NC](#) <sup>[32]</sup>, from the [Government & Heritage Library Digital Collections](#) <sup>[33]</sup>.

Powell, William Stevens, and Michael R. Hill. 2010. *The North Carolina gazetteer: a dictionary of Tar Heel places and their history* <sup>[34]</sup>. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. p. 571.

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Sondley, F. A. and Theodore Davidson. 1922. Asheville and Buncombe County. Asheville: The Citizen Co. <https://archive.org/details/ashevillebuncomb00sond> <sup>[36]</sup>

## Image credits:

View of the French Broad River above Asheville. nd. OP\_110. North Carolina State Archives. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/4821470718/> <sup>[6]</sup>

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

## Subjects:

[100 North Carolina Icons](#) <sup>[37]</sup>

[Cities](#) <sup>[38]</sup>

## Authors:

[Gregory, Lisa](#) <sup>[39]</sup>

## Origin - location:

[Buncombe County](#) <sup>[40]</sup>

[Asheville](#) <sup>[41]</sup>

## From:

[NCpedia.](#) <sup>[42]</sup>

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