Reynoldstown

In 1919-21 following World War I, the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company developed housing for its employees in a program designed to help tobacco workers become homeowners. The neighborhood was first called Cameron Park for the previous owners, the Cameron family of Durham, who bought 184 acres of the Shober family farm in 1896. The Reynolds Company purchased 84 acres in 1917.

Today, Reynoldstown retains its original layout, roughly two blocks by six blocks, bounded on the north by E. 10th Street, on the east by Camel Avenue and Temple Street, on the south by Mt. Zion Place, and on the west by W. Jackson and N. Graham Avenues.

Construction began in 1919 on the neighborhood’s new streets: Jackson, Graham, Gray, Cameron, Rich and Camel Avenues between 8th and 10th Streets. Houses were modest frame bungalows of varying sizes, offered in a rent-to-own program intended to stimulate ownership in a few years. These were ready-to-build houses manufactured by the Minter Homes Company of Greenville, SC. The houses, including windows, doors, and roofing, came by boxcar with pieces cut and marked for assembly, and took from two days to a week to complete. Plaster, foundations, wiring and plumbing were bought locally. Reynoldstown retains these Minter Homes, a selection of 1-story to 1½-story side-gabled and front-gabled bungalows with inset or attached porches. Identifying architectural details include weatherboard or wood shingles, false knee braces, and exposed rafter ends. On most streets, houses were built on every other lot giving each a large side yard; however, on Jackson and Graham Avenues, the houses were smaller and built on adjacent lots without vacant lots in between.

Reynoldstown was primarily for white employees, with Jackson Street, closest to the bottomlands and with smaller houses, for black employees. The racial makeup changed dramatically with the 1931 construction of Atkins High School just a few blocks north. The neighborhood shifted from predominantly white to solidly black within one year. Although intended as a rent-to-own program, sales of the houses were not made until about 1937. Because the area had been home to African-American renters for some years, almost all buyers were African-American.

The sales initiated a second phase of construction and created a distinctive architectural pattern in the neighborhood when new houses were built on the large side lots. The resultant pattern of alternating circa 1920 bungalows and the new circa 1940 houses reveals the history of the neighborhood with its progression from renters to homeowners and
from white to black. Typical architectural styles found in the 1937-40s phase of development are the Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival and Minimal Traditional styles.

The bridge on N. Cameron Avenue was built in 1920 as the entrance to Reynoldstown. It is one of the earliest extant examples of its construction type in the eastern United States, a rare and technologically significant example of slab bridge construction with mushroom columns.

In 2008, the neighborhood was listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its significance in planned development, architecture, engineering and African-American heritage.

This information is also available at the Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission web site: http://tiny.cc/zkx2ey