

## Historical Context for the Pope House

The area where the Pope House stands today in southeast Raleigh has gone through several transformations since the early 1800s. The original state governor's "palace" was placed at the end of Fayetteville Street on the site of the present Memorial Auditorium, and it was thought that fashionable residences would be built nearby. The palace in fact stood on that property from the early nineteenth century until after the Civil War, but the area to the east was slow to develop. A few substantial homes were constructed by white families, most notably the 1855 Bagley House on East South Street. However, Rev. Henry Tupper moved Shaw University to a lot across the street from the Bagley home in 1870, and soon many new African American residents, drawn to Raleigh after the war, settled in the area. An 1872 aerial view of the city shows a number of small frame houses in the neighborhood, including several on the 500 block of South Wilmington Street (which were replaced sometime before 1896 with a 3½ story brick warehouse).

As was typical in urban areas throughout the South in the late nineteenth century, African American neighborhoods began to develop in clusters around the perimeter of Raleigh, including Oberlin, Method, Smokey Hollow, and Hungry Neck. The area known as the Third Ward, including the 500 block of South Wilmington Street, became home to black professionals and more prosperous laborers. Some white families continued to reside in the Third Ward, most notably Josephus Daniels, who married into the Bagley family and lived in their South East Street residence from the early 1890s until 1913. Though legal residential segregation did not come to Raleigh until 1906, the effects of the White Supremacy Campaign of the late 1890s had taken its toll, and by-in-large blacks and whites lived in increasingly segregated communities.



**Pope Family on the front porch, ca. 1915**

It was in the relatively prestigious Third Ward that Dr. Pope decided to build his house in 1901. Though not legally restricted from living anywhere else at that time, he certainly would have been unwelcome along Hillsborough Street or Glenwood Avenue where professional white families were building new homes. The 500 block of South Wilmington Street offered a good alternative, and was something of a buffer zone between white and black Raleigh. In fact, Dr. Pope's house faced the backs of large white-owned homes that in turn faced Fayetteville Street. Dr. Pope's neighbors included other prominent African Americans, including another doctor and a pharmacist. The location also had the advantage of proximity to his office on East Hargett Street (in the heart of the black business district), and First Baptist Church, where the family worshiped, at the corner of Wilmington and Morgan Streets.

It is not yet known who designed or built Dr. Pope's house, but there are many architectural features that can also be found in other Raleigh neighborhoods of the period, especially Oakwood. As the warehouse on the site was demolished immediately prior to the construction of the Pope house, it is possible that those bricks were re-used. The plan is that of an urban row house (two-story, side stair, dining room adjoining parlor), something of a rare form in Raleigh. The South Wilmington Street facade originally featured a one-story porch with gable roof supported by turned posts and decorated with turned and sawn millwork. A similar, smaller porch originally stood at the rear of the house. The interior finishes were restrained but elegant, including darkly varnished wood trim, doors, and floors (now painted white or finished with a light stain), an impressive stair case, and a simple but attractive stained glass window in

the front hall (similar to others in Raleigh). Dr. Pope installed the latest technology in his fine new home, including combination gas and electric fixtures (typical in the period before electricity was fully accepted), a kitchen with running water, a full bathroom on the second floor, coal burning heating stoves, and even a telephone (only number 467 in a town of about 13,000 people). Anticipating hired help, he also installed a call bell system, with buttons in each room and an annunciator in the back hall. There is some evidence that Dr. Pope saw patients in the house during the 1920s and 1930s, when his own health was failing. The small area at the rear of the back hall, adjacent to the kitchen, seems to have been originally configured to include a small hand sink (still extant) and possibly a built-in cabinet for instruments.



**Ruth and Evelyn Pope in the parlor, ca. 1912**

After Dr. Pope's marriage to Delia Haywood Phillips in 1907, the house went through a series of inevitable alterations. The first was the addition of a garage behind the house between 1909 and 1914, certainly to store their first automobile. Sometime in the 1910s the house was completely wired for electricity, and those fixtures that were not converted from gas were replaced (i.e. the central fixture in the dining room). In the 1920s the original front porch was removed, and the current sleeping porch constructed on brick piers. About twenty years later the northern half of the first floor space below the porch was enclosed with brick, as it remains today. Also in the 1940s the kitchen was remodeled, and a half-bath was added downstairs at the rear of the house.

After the deaths of their parents, Evelyn and Ruth Pope maintained the family home on South Wilmington Street, though they lived in Durham and Chapel Hill, respectively. After their retirement in the 1970s, the unmarried sisters moved back to Raleigh. Though the Pope House remained much as it has always been, the area around it had changed dramatically. The end of segregation and urban renewal had reconfigured the neighborhood once again, as prosperous African American families moved into more affluent suburbs, and homes of all sizes were demolished for businesses or parking lots. Perhaps the most evident change was the construction of the Raleigh Civic Center directly across the street from the house, followed in the 1980s and 1990s with skyscrapers that loom over the area.

In 1989 the Pope sisters began receiving professional financial advice from Stanley Dalton. Realizing that their assets were fairly substantial, and that there were no heirs, Dalton advised the Pope sisters to establish a charitable trust. With Pope family friend Edna R. Rich and attorney and C.P.A. James Cox as the other trustees, the Evelyn B. and Ruth P. Charitable Foundation was created in 1995. From the beginning there was discussion about what to do with the house and its contents, which everyone realized had historic significance. However, no one was certain how to go about converting the house to a museum, and so the decision was made to disperse the contents after Ruth's death (Evelyn died in 1995) and adapt the house for use as an office building, while retaining it as an asset for the charitable trust. The process was accelerated in early 1998, when a pipe burst in the second floor bathroom, causing extensive water damage throughout the house. With the insurance money, supplemented by Pope family funds, a major renovation began. The opportunity was used to install new plumbing, wiring, and HVAC, along with additional telephone lines. Though this was not a strict restoration, the trustees were very diligent about retaining original woodwork and fixtures, and maintaining the historic integrity of the house. As part of this process, it was decided to apply to list the house on the National Register of Historic Places. Dalton contacted Kenneth Zogry, a certified National Register consultant, in the spring of 1998. Zogry was very impressed with the house and the era that it represented, and was convinced after seeing the family papers and furnishings (which were stored during the renovation) that the house should

be preserved as a museum. The Pope House was officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places on November 22, 1999, and the following month the trustees of the Pope Charitable Foundation decided to begin the process of turning the house into a museum. The Pope House Museum Foundation was subsequently incorporated as a non-profit organization, and Zogry was employed as the first executive director on May 1, 2000.

After several years of maintaining the house while giving tours by appointment only, the Pope House Museum Foundation sold the house to the City of Raleigh in 2011. Now operated by Raleigh Parks and Recreation, the Pope House Museum is open for Saturday tours showcasing the life of one of Raleigh's most unique and influential citizens.