

**Haw Creek History Report**  
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Driving into Haw Creek from busy Tunnel Road, the first thing one notices is houses. Houses line both sides of the road (sometimes several deep), cluster in the old pastures, and are built steadily higher up the mountains surrounding the valley. Foster Sondley, lawyer, scholar, and Haw Creek's most famous resident, constructed his mansion in 1902 at the end of the Haw Creek Valley as "a place where he could look to the east, the west, the north, the south, and never see a human being" (Terrell). Today Sondley's desire could scarcely be met. The population in Haw Creek has risen to such an extent that the term "rural" no longer applies. This was not always so. Longtime Haw Creek residents can remember a tranquil, close-knit community set in a decidedly rural area. Says life-long resident Harry Burnette, "We were PURE country." Over the past century, Haw Creek has seen its population grow exponentially. This growth has been reflected in all aspects of the area, from annexations and new roads to schools and the socio-economic status of residents, to the very core of the community itself: the people and their relationships to one another. The exploding population sprawl and building frenzy in Haw Creek has radically altered the area, changed the sense of community, and served as a reminder that progress, like time, marches on.

Population has been one of the most dramatic and striking changes in Haw Creek over the years. Flossie Young, aged ninety-three and Haw Creek's oldest resident, remembers a very different Haw Creek from the one that exists today. When she moved there in 1914, it contained only twelve houses, which later rose to twenty-five in the next twenty years. Today it has approximately 3,000. From roughly sixty people in the mid-1920s and early 1930s (Harry Burnette), the resident

population of Haw Creek has risen to over 5,000 in 1990 (1990 Census), and some figures number in the seven or eight thousands today. Remembers Harry Burnette: "Back then there were not that many of us. Everybody knew everybody. You knew the husband, the wife, the children and I can say the cats and dogs too, not too many years ago, but there's so many more people moving in here we lost track of who lived where." The dramatic increase in population makes it harder for community residents to develop close relationships with one another, which in turn diminishes the sense of community itself.

The steady increase in population has led to several annexations of Haw Creek, which today is almost entirely within the city limits. (Areas in Upper Sondley, Bell Road and Cisco are still part of the county.) The most drastic annexation attempt occurred in 1929, when Haw Creek stretched from just east of Beaucatcher Mountain. This annexation included, in addition to a large portion of Haw Creek, the Biltmore area and Biltmore Forest, Kenilworth, Chunn's Cove (once considered part of Haw Creek), and an area in North Asheville extending up to Windsor Road. However, in February 1935, after continued protest, Biltmore and Haw Creek were removed from the city limits. "Haw Creek was WAY out of the city limits," says lifetime resident Margaret King, whose family has been established in Haw Creek for three generations. "We were country for years," she said. In 1959 another annexation was proposed with the Blue Ridge Parkway (which runs along the eastern-most border mountain of Haw Creek valley) as a boundary line. This included Beverly Hills, Oakley, Beaver Lake and Lakeview, Chunn's Cove, and a majority of Haw Creek. Annexation was not supported by all residents, however. Some resented the higher taxes and city "image." Flossie Young states, "I wish the city had kept their promises. They haven't done anything for us—just doubled our taxes. I don't want to be in the city." Finally, in

the early 1990s, all of Haw Creek was annexed to Asheville (David Brown).

With more people comes more houses, and with more houses comes more roads. Haw Creek is no exception. Bill Dale can remember when New Haw Creek Road, the main, heavily-traveled artery in and out of Haw Creek, was just a hard-packed dirt track. “You could drive down that road and never meet another car, which was good because it was only one lane.” says Bill Dale. Margaret King concurs: “You could lay down in the street and take a nap and never have traffic.” Says Harry Giezentanner, “You could ride your bicycle right straight down the center of New Haw Creek Road and very rarely see a car—hardly as intrusive as today when you take your life in your own hands on a bicycle.” The growth in the area was reflected in both the amount of traffic on the main road and in the number of tributary roads. “I can remember...they had just finished building New Haw Creek Road when I moved there,” states Flossie Young. “About 1912 they started.” A 1927 map shows only two main roads in the valley: Old Haw Creek and New Haw Creek, along with a few small connecting roads. These roads offered the only way in and the only way out of Haw Creek. The next map is from approximately 1959 and shows several additional exiting roads along with an increase in connecting and side roads. The map from present day is strikingly larger and more complex—the number of offshoots and side roads have more than doubled.

The schools in Haw Creek changed with the community. The first school, built in 1848, was a one-room wooden school house only one hundred yards from the present school. A second school house was built in 1914, relatively close to where the Olive Garden Restaurant is today. A third school, built in 1924 (near the Beaucatcher Cinemas on Tunnel Road), accepted students in grades one through eleven from Haw Creek, Riceville, Oteen, Grassy Branch, and the Azalea area

(Mary Whitaker, Ethel Austin). Even with the large age range and expansive district, Haw Creek School only had an attendance of 367 students seven years after its construction, as compared to the attendance of Haw Creek Elementary (grades kindergarten through sixth), which is roughly 500 today (Lauderer). Haw Creek High School's Class of 1945 contained only twelve students. The graduating class of 1960 was 118 students, including those from Fairview, Oakley, Beverly Hills, and Haw Creek (Giezentanner). With students from those same areas, the graduating class of 2000 will be approximately 300.

The busing system reflects growth as well. The second school used wagons to transport students who lived farther than two and a half miles away until 1919, when trucks were purchased (Whitaker, Austin). Students who lived within two and a half miles had to walk. Young (Haw Creek High School Class of 1925) can remember a single, open school bus with pull-down shades used to transport all those who lived on the fringe of the district. Later, the third school employed two buses. "Haw Creek School said that if you lived within a mile of the school you had to walk. Anyone who lived beyond that mile, they got to ride the bus. We only had two buses in Haw Creek and they went up Riceville Road also." (Burnette) Today Haw Creek Elementary uses six buses and A.C. Reynolds uses four in the Haw Creek area alone.

As the people moved in, the rural lifestyle which characterized Haw Creek was replaced by a decidedly suburban one. When asked why his parents chose to move to Haw Creek, Harry Giezentanner said, "[They] basically wanted to get in the country." And country it was—"mostly farms and small acreage...not highly populated by any means." (Burnette) Most residents had small farms which were kept up on the side along with another job. However, there were a few

large scale farms “There were ten majority landowners in the 1960s—big tracts, which became subdivisions. Haw Creek, probably into the middle seventies, was totally rural.” (Giezentanner) Today Haw Creek is zoned “Low/Medium Density Residential” (2010 Asheville City Plan), and almost all of the farmland is gone. Subdivisions such as Trapper’s Run, Huntington Chase, and the Haw Creek Mews have destroyed the few remaining vestiges of rural life. Giezentanner pinpoints the great increase in population to the building boom of the seventies. When asked if, within the influx, the people themselves had changed, Margaret King remarked, “I feel like there's a lot of transients—a lot of people move in and move out.” Census figures support this: the 1990 Census Neighborhood Statistics Program (Haw Creek and Chunn’s Cove) reported that 47.3% of the neighborhood population had lived in a different house in the United States five years earlier.

When asked to describe Haw Creek, born and raised resident Harry Burnette said: “We were country when country wasn’t cool.” Haw Creek was truly country, with a rural landscape, rural economy, and rural community. The astonishing growth is reflected in the roads, the schools, the annexations, and the population itself. The great influx of people into Haw Creek provokes bittersweet sentiments from residents who have witnessed the transformation of the community; that while the progress has brought great things, such as ease in transportation and other modern amenities, it has also been the closure of an old, simple way of life. As Haw Creek has gradually been phased into greater Asheville, whether through annexation or the migration of its citizens, the country lifestyle has faded into suburbia. As Haw Creek’s oldest resident Flossie Young said, “I've got the last farm in the city.”