

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR _____ THEMATIC NOMINATION

1 NAME

HISTORIC Powe House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
1503 W. Pettigrew Street

CITY, TOWN

Durham

____ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

037

COUNTY

Durham

CODE

063

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Hillhaven, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER Post Office Box 11222

CITY, TOWN

Tacoma

____ VICINITY OF

STATE

Washington 98411

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC Durham County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Durham

STATE North Carolina

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

ORGANIZATION Claudia Roberts Brown
Consultant for the City of Durham

DATE

June, 1984

STREET & NUMBER

301 E. Poplar Avenue

TELEPHONE

(919) 968-1181

CITY OR TOWN

Carroboro

STATE

North Carolina 27510

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Due to its distinctive architecture, somewhat decrepit exterior, and overgrown yard close to a busy intersection, the Powe House has become a Durham landmark with an aura of mystery about it. A mass of tall trees and thick shrubbery covers much of the property, about 1.2 acres in a shape approximating a rectangle, almost completely obscuring the view of the house from the street. The clearest view is from the southeast on Swift Ave., which bounds the east and longest side of the property. The widening of Swift Ave. in the 1970s took some of the side yard so that today the street runs quite close to the house. At the rear of the property, the East-West Expressway is at the foot of a steep embankment. The driveway is marked by stone posts on W. Pettigrew St., a narrow unpaved lane that carries very little traffic, that borders the deep front yard and separates it from the Southern Railway line and W. Main St. immediately to the north. Remnants of flower gardens and stone benches dot the front and west side yards filled with hardwoods and large, overgrown bushes, once park-like with manicured lawns and landscaping. Even from the brick front walk, it is difficult to see the house through the pair of enormous magnolias shading the porch.

Characterized by a large hip-roofed core with pedimented wings and an elaborate porch, the two-story frame Powe House built in 1900 exemplifies a popular turn-of-the-century house type. Its fairly regular form, expansive proportions and monumental elements lend the house the imposing quality that was favored by Durham's businessmen and professionals of the day. The early Neoclassical Revival style house features a symmetrical three-bay facade dominated by a one-story wraparound porch and an overlapping two-story portico at the central entrance bay. The one-story porch, supported by slender unfluted wooden columns on brick plinths with delicate Ionic capitals of terra cotta, curves around the northeast corner of the house to a porte-cochere; the opposite end of the porch is squared and has been enclosed with screening. A railing with molded handrail and square-in-section balusters connects the brick plinths.

Similar Ionic columns with heavier proportions suitable to their monumental size support the two-story flat-roofed portico which bears the additional ornament of dentils and swags in the entablature on all three sides. All of the cornices are boxed and molded and, except for those of the portico, they all have plain frieze boards beneath.

Lingering Queen Anne tendencies typical of the early Neoclassical Revival style include a two-story wind ending in a three-sided bay and capped with a pedimented gable on the east and west elevations. Tall chimneys and a gable-roofed attic dormer behind the portico accent the central hipped roof. Another

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet Powe House

Item number

7

Page

1

corbelled chimney and a hip-roofed dormer mark the long hip-roofed wing which was enlarged from one to two stories sometime between 1913 and 1937. Slate covers the entire roof.

In contrast to the strong neoclassical flavor of the porch and pediments, the detail of the main facade is distinctly Victorian. The main entrance contains double doors with single bevelled panes of glass in their upper halves.

It is topped by a segmental arched transom with bevelled glass in leaded latticework. A similar transom surmounts a short window to the east of the entrance. Both the entrance and the window have surrounds composed of smooth pilasters to the base of the transom; around the arched transom is a squared molding with raised triangles similar to sundial motifs in the corners. All of the windows in the main block are double-hung sashes; each has a single pane at the bottom and many small panes in narrow vertical and latticed muntins at the top, except for the window east of the entrance and the dormer windows which are single sashes with lattices muntins. The windows in the rear wing are nine-over-one double-hung sashes.

The main entrance opens into a large reception area occupying the northeast corner of the house. This space is marked by a large fireplace on the south wall and in the corner a two-run staircase with turned balusters and square panelled newel. A very wide center hall leads from the reception area to the rear wing. The three large first-floor rooms of the main block of the house all have corner fireplaces and French doors opening onto the center hall or reception area. Behind the doorway leading from the center hall to the rear wing, there is a back staircase. The second-story is basically the same as that of the first floor. The seven fireplaces all have neoclassical mantelpieces with slender columns in various orders and overmantels each containing a bevelled mirror; some of them have carved foliate motifs in the frieze. Wainscotting of large flush panels appears in one of the main first-floor rooms and another has wainscotting of tooled leather (now painted). Moldings are fairly wide and simple; the door and window surrounds have bulls-eye corner blocks. A partial basement is divided into utility rooms.

Because the Powe House is badly in need of paint, it gives the appearance of being in much worse condition than it actually is. In 1981, a city inspection identified approximately thirty code violations, all of which were rectified by the tenants. The house was very sturdily built with good materials, and today it remains structurally sound.

The structure, of course, is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning use patterns, social standing, and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident if the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probably that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

_____ NATIONAL

_____ STATE

___X___ LOCAL

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION	
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE	
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE	
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	X EDUCATION	__MILITARY	X SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER	
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION	
X 1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	X INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		__INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1900

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Although it is badly in need of paint and largely obscured from view by overgrown foliage, the architecturally distinctive Powe House stands as the only intact and structurally sound representative of a small but imposing group of West Durham houses built by textile industry executives at the turn of this century. The builder of the house, Edward Knox Powe, spent the last thirty-seven years of his career in the industry with Erwin Cotton Mills Company in West Durham, first as General Superintendent of the firm's No.1 Mill and later as Production Manager of both the No.1 and No.4 mills. Like most prominent industrialists of his day, Powe served as a director of a variety of companies, invested in real estate, and was active in both religious and civic affairs. He is best remembered, however, for his sincere interest in and benevolence toward the Erwin Cotton Mills work force in West Durham. He was especially concerned about the children, particularly their education, and quietly helped many pay the expenses of studies beyond the grade school level.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. The Powe House is the most impressive tangible symbol of West Durham's textile industry executives, a significant stratum of the mill village community who directed the operations of the mill as well as the day-to-day life of the factory worker.
- B. The Powe House was built by Edward Knox Powe, first General Superintendent and then Production Manager for approximately thirty-seven years of the Erwin Cotton Mill Company's No.1 and No.4 mills. Powe's strong personal interest in and philanthropy for his work force became legend in West Durham.
- C. Built in 1900, the Powe House is a distinctive example of the early Neoclassical Revival style, a mode favored by textile and other industrial leaders throughout North Carolina at the turn of the century.

With the rise of Erwin Cotton Mills in the early 1890s, the village of West Durham began to take shape around the No. 1 Mill. Blocks of houses were built near the mill to accomodate its initial work force and dozens of additional houses were constructed when the mill doubled in size in 1896. As the textile company prospered, West Durham acquired the other customary trappings of a community. Schools and churches were established, shops opened on Ninth St., and the housing stock was broadened with privately built dwellings. While all sorts of popular house types were built by individuals at the periphery of the company-owned property from the turn-of-the-century into the 1920s, there is no question that West Durham's most distinctive houses of the period were those built by the Erwin Cotton Mills executives and their relatives.

Around the turn of the century, brothers William Allen Erwin and Jesse Harper Erwin and their brother-in-law Edward Knox Powe all erected large houses for their families on adjacent tracts facing W. Pettigrew St., just to the southeast of the No. 1 Mill and the company's headquarters. At the east end of this row, mill president Benjamin N. Duke's sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. John C. Angier, had built their imposing house around 1890. (See map.) Today, the Angier House is altered by the loss of architectural detail and the application of aluminum siding; Hillcrest, the home of mill namesake, general manager and director William Allen Erwin, was razed and replaced with a modern nursing home in 1974; and Sunnyside, the home of Jesse Harper Erwin, a director of the Erwin Cotton Mills and general manager of the Durham Cotton Manufacturing Company in East Durham, has fallen into a severely deteriorated condition since its conversion to apartments. Only the Powe House stands virtually intact, offering a symbol of Edward Knox Powe's success in the business world and his contributions to his community.

Born on January 19, 1863, near Salisbury, N.C., Edward Knox Powe was the eldest son of William Ellerbe Powe and Catherine Elvira Tate Powe, both from Burke County, N.C. Around 1869, the Powes returned to Burke County, and in 1875 they settled in Morganton where Edward completed his formal education. When he was eighteen years old, he embarked upon his long career in the textile industry

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Durham County Register of Deeds, Durham County Courthouse.

Durham Morning Herald and Durham Sun clippings, 28-30 September 1929.

The Heritage of Burke County. Morganton, N.C.: The Burke County Historical Society, 1981.

Watkins, Mrs. Claudia Powe. Interview in Durham, N.C.; March, 1984.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.238 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A

17

618,715,0,0

3,98,6300

B

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C

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D

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Durham County Tax Map 146, block 5, lot 13.

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Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet Powe House

Item number 8

Page 1

when he went to work as a clerk for the Altamahaw Cotton Mills in Alamance County.¹ The Altamahaw Cotton Mills were operated by the Holt family, with whom William Allen Erwin, a family friend also from Morganton, already was associated as assistant treasurer and general manager of the E.M. Holt Plaid Mills;² presumably, Powe's relationship with Erwin was a primary factor in his taking the job in Alamance County.

Powe's career took another decisive turn in 1892 after Erwin was solicited by Benjamin N. Duke and George W. Watts to become a managing partner³ in a new textile venture to be located close to the western limits of Durham. Erwin, who oversaw every aspect of establishing the new business, named for him, and its surrounding village, hired Powe to serve as General Superintendent of the Erwin Cotton Mills' first mill. In the late 1890s Powe was promoted to the position of Production Manager of the No.1 Mill. In 1910, when the management of the new adjacent No.4 Mill was⁴ added to his duties, Powe was appointed as one of the directors of the company.

Powe married Erwin's sister, Claudia Josephine Erwin, on October 14, 1896 and moved with his new wife to a small house on a lane south of the mill that was later named for him.⁵ A little more than three years later, for \$3,210 Benjamin N. Duke and his wife sold the Powes a 4.12-acre parcel of land "known as lot number 38 of survey made July 28, 1884 by Isaac N. Link for J.K. Watkins, and conveyed to Benjamin N. Duke by J.W. Swift"⁶ by the deed recorded in book 18, page 526 at the Durham County Register of Deeds. The frontage of the Powe's property on the railroad tracks and W. Pettigrew St. was less than 100 feet, but it extended several hundred yards south to Hull St. A small house on the tract was moved to the west when the Powes began construction of their house at the turn of the new century.

Although Powe had become well-to-do financially, he and his wife chose to build a house that was fashionable without being pretentious. The house reflected the status of its builder only in its scale, which is comfortable without being grand, and in its monumental portico. According to his daughter, Powe didn't believe in unnecessary frills, as indicated by the reserved detailing of the interior. True to his love of the outdoors, Powe paid a great deal of attention to the grounds, which he cultivated with a wide range of plantlife. He retained a gardener to help maintain a large vegetable garden and vineyards behind the house. Red and white raspberries, pecan trees, and many types of fruit trees were planted, including fig, cherry, quince and pear; apple trees lined each side of the front yard. At the rear of the property there were two houses that pre-dated the Powe House, one of which the Powes gave their daughter Claudia upon her marriage to Warren Byers Watkins around 1930; later the Watkins built another house for themselves on part of the family garden plot. (All three of these houses have been destroyed.)

Like most of Durham's industrialists, Powe pursued a variety of interests. In addition to serving as a director of the Erwin Cotton Mills, he was on the

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Powe House

Item number 8

Page 2

boards of the Alpine Cotton Mills in Morganton and the Oxford Cotton Mills in Oxford, N.C., both controlled by the Dukes and Watts and managed in part by W.A. Erwin.⁸ Powe also was a director of Durham's Fidelity Bank (established by the Dukes), the West Durham Building and Loan Association, and the Long Leaf Pine Corporation. His real estate investments in Durham included the Powe Apartments on N. Buchanan Blvd. in Trinity Park.¹⁰ He is remembered as an active and devoted member of St. Phillip's Episcopal Church in Durham where he was a vestryman,¹¹ taught Sunday School and served on different occasions as senior warden.

It was Powe's abiding concern for his community, particularly the West Durham mill village, that set him apart from many of his fellow textile manufacturers. He demonstrated his humanitarianism in part by long-term service on official boards. For more than fifteen years he was an active member of the Durham County Board of Health and served for twenty-eight years as chairman of the school boards for Northside and Southside schools, the two institutions in the West Durham school district.¹² Powe also took an active role in the day-to-day life of the mill village. Although W.A. Erwin received most of the credit for such advances by Erwin Cotton Mills as shortened work days; promotion of better child labor laws, and recreational facilities for his workers, Powe's devotion to the mill's work force, though not recorded in published histories, was felt by many West Durham residents. He maintained personal contact with many of the workers and their families during frequent walks throughout the blocks of company-built houses and often donated rose bushes and other plants for his employees to grow in their yards. His special concern, however, was the education of the workers' children. At a time when it was virtually impossible for a mill worker to pay for children's higher education, Powe quietly paid the tuition and related expenses for many of the brightest West Durham students.¹³

The first official acknowledgment of Powe's community service occurred in 1928 when the Northside School on Ninth St. was renamed the E.K. Powe School in his honor.¹⁴ Additional accolades were forthcoming the following years upon his unexpected death at the age of sixty-six. In an editorial, the Durham Morning Herald described him as "one of those rare examples of mankind who can be paid deep-feeling tribute without having to keep something in the background. He was nearly the ideal type of citizen, executive, and industrial leader as can be found."¹⁵ In a resolution passed on January 25, 1930, the Erwin Cotton Mills Board of Directors declared,

In addition to being a most valuable man to the Company in the manufacture of its product, Mr. Powe was greatly beloved by all of the employees of

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Powe House

Item number 8

Page 3

the Company and the confidence and esteem which he inspired in the hearts of the employees in the mills and their families constituted a most valuable asset to the Company. His entire service to the Company was of such high order that his death not only brought the realization to his fellow-directors of a very grave loss to the company. Mr. Powe was equally well beloved and esteemed in the city of Durham, where, in his church and civic activities, he made hundred of friends and at his death was generally considered one of the most beloved and useful men in the community.¹⁶

Mrs. Powe continued to live in the house she and her husband had built until her death in 1943. Claudia Josephine Erwin Powe's active religious and civic life also was conducted in a "modest and unassuming manner." She taught Sunday School at St. Phillip's Episcopal Church and for many years served as president of the church's Women's Auxiliary; she also served many years on the board of directors of Watts Hopsital. Mrs. Powe was the first chairwoman of the Durham Chapter of the Red Cross and served for approximately twenty years as chairwoman of the chapter's committee on production.¹⁷

After her death, the Powe House was sold to Dr. and Mrs. Bennett Watson Roberts. In addition to maintaining the house as their home, Dr. Roberts, a pediatrician, conducted his practice in two of the first-floor rooms. Also an investor in real estate throughout Durham, Dr. Roberts sold the south end of the Powe tract for development as Alastair Apartments in the 1950s.¹⁸ Later, much of the property between the apartments and the Powe House was acquired by the North Carolina Department of Transportation for the East-West Expressway.

In 1971, Dr. and Mrs. Roberts sold the Powe House to Hillhaven, Inc.¹⁹ The company now owns the entire 1500 block of W. Pettigrew St. and operates a nursing home at its west end. Used by Hillhaven as a residential rental property, the Powe House has been maintained by several long-term tenants at their own expense; although they found the cost of improvements such as new paint, which are largely cosmetic in nature to be prohibitive, they have attended to necessary structural repairs. Hillhaven plans to demolish the house within the year to make room for additions to the nursing home. Efforts are being made by a Durham citizen to move the house to a nearby site where it would be converted to a school, a most appropriate adaptive reuse.

NOTES

¹Claudia Powe Watkins, "Powe, Edward Knox," in The Heritage of Burke County (Morganton, N.C.: The Burke County Historical Society, 1981) entry 561.

²"Erwin, William Allen," in The Heritage of Burke County, entry 248.

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet Powe House

Item number 8

Page 4

³Robert F. Durden, The Dukes of Durham, 1865-1929 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978), pp. 128-45.

⁴Resolution of the Erwin Cotton Mills Board of Directors mailed to Mrs. E. K. Powe 1 February 1930, in the possession of her daughter, Claudia Powe Watkins, of Durham.

⁵The Heritage of Burke County, entry 561; and interview with Claudia Powe Watkins in Durham, 1 March 1984.

⁶Durham County Register of Deeds (DCRD), deedbook 20, page 562.

⁷Watkins interview.

⁸"Funeral Services for E. K. Powe, Sr., To Be Held Today," Durham Morning Herald, 29 September 1929; and Durden, pp. 139-40.

⁹"Funeral Services:..."

¹⁰Durham County Clerk's Office, will book 4, page 252.

¹¹"Funeral Services..."

¹²"Edward Knox Powe is Laid to Rest Sunday Afternoon," Durham Sun 30 September 1929; and "City Schools Began in 1882," Durham Sun 24 March 1983.

¹³Watkins interview

¹⁴"City Schools Began in 1882."

¹⁵Durham Herald, 30 September 1929.

¹⁶Resolution of The Erwin Cotton Mills Board of Directors.

¹⁷Claudia Powe Watkins, "Powe, Claudia Josephine Erwin," in The Heritage of Burke County, entry 560.

¹⁸Watkins interview.

¹⁹DCRD, deed book 376, page 292.

13

SOUTHERN

PETTIGREW

1515
259.6



15

1511



14

1507
145

1503
80



13

5

AVENUE

Power House

ST

6.1EE

250.95

EAST - WEST

144

