

THOMAS WOLFE'S ASHEVILLE, 1900-1920

Thomas Wolfe wrote about his hometown of Asheville, North Carolina the way he remembered it from his childhood. He changed the name to Altamont. The Asheville he knew was a growing city. The third largest in our State. People visited from around the world to enjoy the beautiful mountains and cool, clean air.

It was difficult to get to Asheville before 1880. There were no railroads or highways to help people move through the rough mountain terrain. The town only had about 2,600 people living near a public square surrounded by dirt roads, wood houses, and farmland.

Great change came when the railroad arrived in 1880. Trains moved people through the mountains quickly and comfortably. More people came to Asheville to stay. There were soon restaurants, theaters, hotels, parks, and an electric trolley system. Hospitals opened in Asheville for sick people who came to rest and breathe the mountain air to hoping to cure lung ailments. By the time Thomas Wolfe was born in 1900, the town had become a small city of 14,000 people, a place for tourists to visit and sick people to rest. The city doubled in size by 1920.

Thomas Wolfe's left home for college when he was almost 16 years old. Everywhere he lived and travelled he missed his hometown. When he became a writer, he used his childhood memories to create plays, books, and short stories. He wrote about fictional people and places very similar to the people and places of his real life. As a result, his life and works are a great way to learn about the Asheville he knew 100 years ago.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

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Circle the best answer to the following questions.

1. When Thomas Wolfe was born in 1900, Asheville's population was around _____.
 - A. 2,600
 - B. 5,000
 - C. 14,000
 - D. 100,000

2. People were beginning to come to Asheville to enjoy the mountain _____.
 - A. hikes
 - B. air
 - C. water
 - D. people

3. The railroad came to Asheville in _____, bringing tourists and growth.
 - A. 1900
 - B. 1880
 - C. 1770
 - D. 1910

4. Many sick people came to Asheville hoping the mountain air would cure them of many illnesses, especially _____.
 - A. heart diseases
 - B. lung ailments
 - C. stress
 - D. heat exhaustion

5. Thomas Wolfe left Asheville when he was almost _____ years old.
 - A. 10
 - B. 20
 - C. 13
 - D. 16