

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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date entered

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic Efird Building

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number 133 East Davis Street

not for publication

city, town Burlington

vicinity of

state North Carolina

code 37

county Alamance

code 011

## 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

N/A

## 4. Owner of Property

name Wachovia Bank and Trust Co. for Alma Cade Erwin

street & number P. O. Box 27836

city, town Raleigh

vicinity of

state North Carolina

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Alamance County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Graham

state North Carolina

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Architectural Inventory of Burlington has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1981-82

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N.C. Division of Archives and History

city, town Raleigh

state North Carolina

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Efird Building is the most visually distinctive of Burlington's early twentieth century commercial structures. Standing in the middle of a commercial block, the Efird Building reveals only its three-story main facade to the street. This facade, in contrast to the typical corbeled brick elevations of the surrounding, similarly scaled buildings, stands out by virtue of its materials and design. White enamelled terra cotta tile sheathes the Neo-Gothic Revival style front, governed throughout by a symmetrical, tripartite organization. The facade consists primarily of glass.

The first floor facade is stark and modern in design with almost all of its expanse taken up with plate glass windows in narrow metal frames. The two end bays are single panes of glass parallel to the street. The center entrance bay is a deep recess flanked by two more single panes of glass. (It is not certain that this lower facade is original with the construction of the building: documentary photographs indicate that it pre-dates 1949.)

It is in the upper floors that the Neo-Gothic Revival style is fully expressed. Beginning at the sidewalk, at each edge of the display windows, narrow corbeled bands of convex terra cotta tile rise uninterrupted through the three shallow, segmental arches across the top of the third-floor windows. At the interior breaks of each arch, bands of molding descend to the base of the second-story windows in pairs, recalling the compound colonnettes typical of Gothic support systems. Each of these two piers terminates at its base in a four-knobbed half-pendant. Applied "tracery" of pointed arches, quatre-foils and darts creates ordered rhythms across the rectangular spandrels between the second and third-floor windows.

Originally, the windows were filled with panes of clear glass that continued the symmetrical, tripartite theme of the facade. The almost square, second-story windows had a single large rectangular pane with a transom of three small panes. Each three-story window was divided into three vertical, multi-paned panels, with a trisected, multi-paned transom fitted into the arch above.

The ornate parapet has three sections of equal width, corresponding to the window bays below. A solid, stepped central panel is flanked by shorter panels of quatrefoil cut-outs. Short, paneled piers with rounded finials mark each section.

The rear elevation, facing an alley, exposes the basement due to the slope of the site. The elevation of common bond brick is broken by large square and rectangular windows, most of which have been filled with masonry or glass bricks.

On the interior, which is virtually intact, each floor is a single, unbroken expanse, with the exception of the rear portion of the main floor which has been partitioned for offices. On the first and second floors, the very high ceilings are covered with tin pressed into an elaborate pattern of raised squares adorned with anthemions and enframing simple yet elegant arrangements of delicate garlands and tassels. A contrasting border of guilloche surrounding a regular pattern embossed with rosettes teams with a deeply coved crown molding, also of tin, to define the perimeter of the ceiling. The third-floor ceiling of wide beaded boards has been covered with celotex tiles. All floors are wooden and the walls are plaster. On the first and second floors, a long, single-run staircase rises along the east wall; a freight elevator shaft is on the opposite wall.

The main facade was altered some time after 1949 by the replacement of the second and third-story windows with unbroken expanses of glass brick. Above the first-floor display windows, a permanent flat metal awning has been installed. The preservation of the highly distinctive enamelled tile, however, minimizes the effect of these alterations upon the integrity of the Efird Building.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1919 **Builder/Architect** unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Efir Building reflects a period of tremendous growth in downtown Burlington by virtue of its design as well as the company that built it. The Efir Department Store based in Albemarle, North Carolina, a pioneer in the "one price," cash department store, developed into a chain of fifty-four stores in the Carolinas and Virginia. It was logical that this prospering firm would choose to build a store in booming Burlington at the turn of the 1920s. The building's Neo-Gothic Revival style facade in white enamelled tile, Burlington's most distinctive storefront, was a fitting hallmark both of the success of the firm and of the city's thriving downtown.

### Criteria Assessment

- A. The Efir Building is associated with Burlington's tremendous growth from the late 1910s to 1930.
- B. The building is associated with John E. Efir's six sons who founded the Efir Department Store in Albemarle, North Carolina. A pioneer in the "one price" cash department store, the company grew to a chain of fifty-four stores throughout the Carolinas and Virginia.
- C. The Efir Building is an excellent commercial example of the ornately detailed Neo-Gothic Revival Style, appropriately used to attract customers and to proclaim the success of the store.

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Historical Background

As a delightfully fanciful departure from the typical brick facades of Burlington's commercial structures, the Efird Building expresses a period of prosperity throughout the country, across North Carolina, and in Burlington in particular. The industrial expansion that was characterizing much of the country was especially apparent in North Carolina at the turn of this century as the state's almost strictly agricultural economy began to be diversified with development of the tobacco, textile and furniture industries, which naturally benefitted retail markets. After Burlington established itself as one of North Carolina's foremost textile centers, numerous businesses--local firms as well as newcomers--began transforming the downtown with the construction of stylish brick buildings. One of these newcomers was the Efird Department Store, which opened in 1920.

The Efird Department Store was founded by members of the Efird family, long-time leaders of Stanly County in south-central North Carolina. By the late nineteenth century, the several branches of the family were established in the county as landowners, farmers, merchants and industrialists. One branch included I.P. Efird who in 1896, with his son John S. Efird and J.W. Cannon, the founder of Cannon Mills, organized the Efird Manufacturing Company, Stanly County's first, and for several decades foremost, cotton mill. Another branch of the family included John Emery Efird, a prominent farmer and large landowner who had thirteen children.<sup>2</sup> John Emery Efird's several sons worked together to found Efird Department Stores. Oscar Ogburn Efird, who compiled the Efird family genealogy, reports that

...with sound, honest principles of merchandising, honest values, good service and great executive ability, they developed a chain of fifty-four department stores throughout North and South Carolina and Virginia. Their chain of department stores was one of the largest retail organizations in the Southeast. They were pioneers in the plainly marked, one price, cash department stores.<sup>3</sup>

Six of Efird's sons were owners of the department store chain and closely associated with its management. Hugh Martin Efird is credited with founding the chain; John Bivens was an owner, a president of the chain and later Chairman of the Board of Directors; Edmund Lilly Efird was treasurer of the company and manager of the Winston-Salem, North Carolina store; John Ray Efird managed the Columbia, South Carolina store; Paul Haywood Efird was a director; and Jasper Wilson Efird established the Rock Hill, South Carolina store and later became buyer for all of the stores, with offices in New York City. Also known as philanthropists, the Efird brothers made many donations, including the library at Wingate Junior College, a dormitory at Wake Forest University, and scholarships to several schools in North and South Carolina.<sup>4</sup>

The exact date of incorporation of the Efird Department Stores has not been determined. A January, 1913 document in the Stanly County Record of Corporations records the "Change of Name of the Stanly Supply Co. to Efird Department Stores of Albemarle, Inc." This document is signed by J.W. Efird and H.M. Efird, who probably are Jasper W. Efird and Hugh Martin Efird, respectively.<sup>5</sup> Three months later, the same officers filed a "Certificate of Change of the Efird Department Store of Albemarle, Inc. to Efird Dry Goods Co."<sup>6</sup> This firm,

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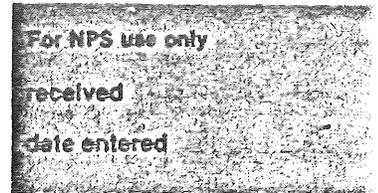
however, was dissolved in September, 1923.<sup>7</sup> In April of 1923, John E. Efird and Sons, Inc. was founded in Albemarle "to conduct a general mercantile business"; its officers were J.B. Efird, president, E.L. Efird, and P.H. Efird.<sup>8</sup> It appears that the department store, established at the turn of this century, continued doing business as the Efird Department Stores after reorganization in 1923.

At the close of the 1910s, recognizing that Burlington was in the beginning of a growth cycle, the Efirds decided to open a branch of their department stores in this city. Although the architect and contractor of the building remain unknown, the flamboyant Neo-Gothic Revival style design of the main facade of the building reflects the self-confidence of its owners and their understanding that an elegant distinctive front would proclaim their success and attract customers. Constructed in approximately 1919, the store is first listed in the Burlington City Directory for 1920-21 as "Efird's Department Store," with an advertisement proclaiming the firm as "Originators of Carolina's one price cash store."<sup>9</sup> The phrase "one price" refers to Efird's fair alternative to the practice by many early department stores of selectively charging customers varying prices for the same, unmarked merchandise. City directories throughout the 1920s list Joseph B. Efird of Charlotte, North Carolina, as president, Edward L. Efird of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, as secretary-treasurer, and Jasper W. Efird of New York as vice-president. The 1929 directory lists B.B. Brown as manager, and states that the store carries a "Complete line of dry goods, notions, shoes, clothing, men's furnishings, ladies' and children's ready-to-wear, trunks, leather bags, carpets, rugs, etc."<sup>10</sup>

The Efird Department Store remained at 133 East Davis Street until the early 1930s when it moved out of the Efird Building and into the adjacent Troxler Building, now known as the Cammack Building. The Efird Department Store remained in business until September, 1946, when the Efird family sold their business to Belk Brothers, Inc., of Charlotte, North Carolina.<sup>11</sup> In Burlington, Belk moved the local Efird stock to its store on Front Street. The Efird Building at 133 East Davis Street has remained continually occupied until the present. In the Efird Building, the Efird Department Store was succeeded by Alamance Book and Stationery Co. until the late 1940s. They were followed by Neese-Shoffner Furniture Co. until the early 1970s, and hence by Clapp Brothers Furniture Co., which occupies the Efird Building today.

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Notes

- 1 Oscar Ogburn Efird, The History and Genealogy of the Efird Family, privately printed 1964, p. 464.
- 2 Ibid., p. 57.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 71-72.
- 4 Ibid., pp. 72-74.
- 5 Stanly County Record of Corporations, Vol. 3, 1906-1925, #10718.
- 6 Ibid., # 110223.
- 7 Ibid., no number.
- 8 Ibid., # 23171.
- 9 Burlington City Directory, 1920-21. The building does not appear on the 1918 series of the Sanborn Insurance Maps for Burlington, N.C.
- 10 Burlington City Directory, 1920-21, 1924-25, 1927, 1928, 1929.
- 11 Burlington City Directory, 1930, 1950s, and Efird, p. 72.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheets

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Burlington, N.C.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	7	6	4	0	6	4	0	3	9	9	5	1	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Block 2, Lot 8, Burlington Tax Maps, Map #1

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
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state		code	county		code
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# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Claudia P. Roberts

organization Consultant to the City of Burlington

date March 15, 1983

street & number 422 South Lexington Avenue

telephone 227-3603 Ext. 79

city or town Burlington

state North Carolina

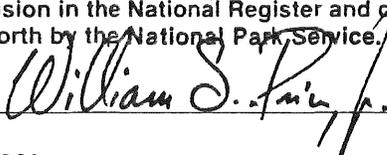
# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title State Historic Preservation Officer

date November 16, 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

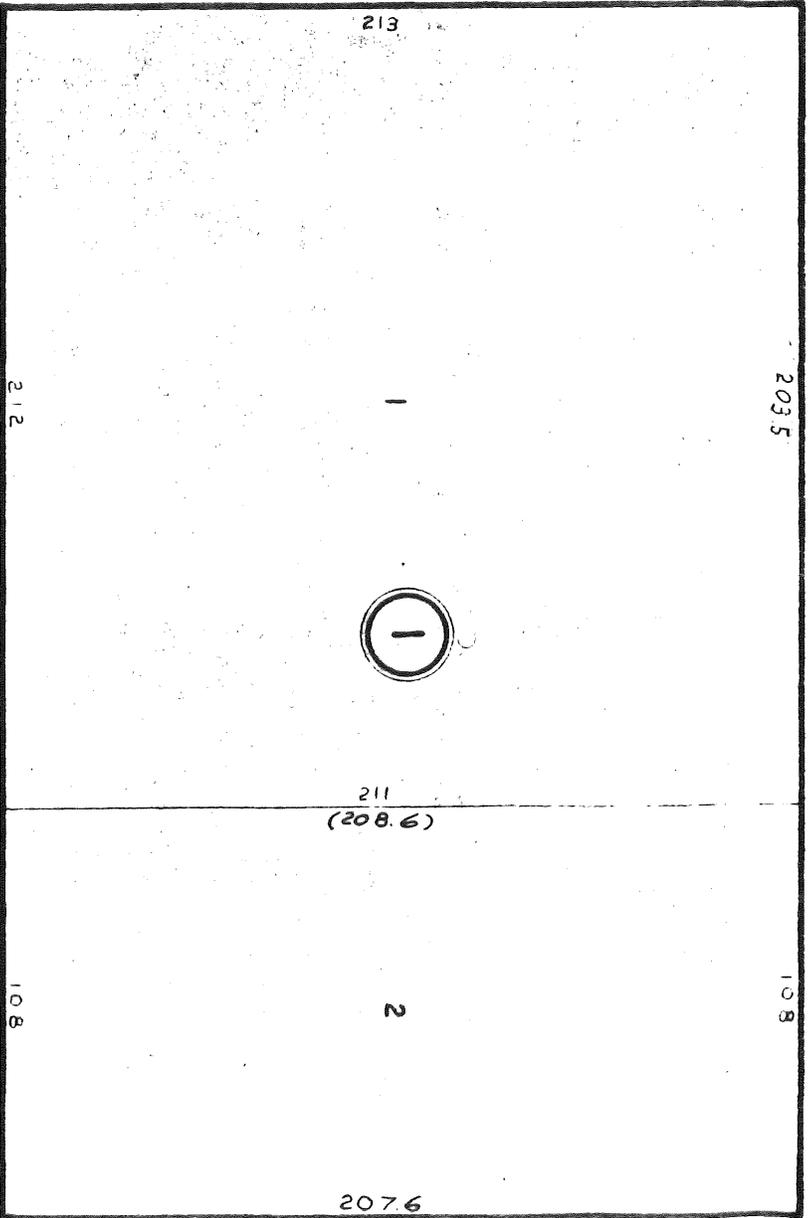
date

Chief of Registration



6

MOREHEAD



S. SPRING

8

ALAMANCE COUNTY, N. C.

SCALE	TOWNSHIP	DATE
1" = 50'	BURLINGTON	1948

MAP 1 BLOCKS 1-2-3



NEESE - SHOFFNER FURNITURE Co.