

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name (former) Hickory Municipal Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 30 Third Street, SW N/A not for publication

city or town Hickory N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Catawba code 035 zip code 28601

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey J. Cross SHPO 1/10/00
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

(former) Hickory Municipal Building
Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1921-1949

Significant Dates

1921

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hook, Charles Christian-architect

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

North Carolina Division of Archives and History

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Name of Property

Catawba County, North Carolina
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.34 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	7
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3	9	5	4	1	2	0
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Zone

Easting

Northing

2

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Zone

Easting

Northing

4

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Davyd Foard Hood

organization _____ date 15 June 1999

street & number Isinglass, 6907 Old Shelby Road telephone 704/462-1847

city or town Vale, state NC zip code 28168

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name The City of Hickory, The Honorable William R. McDonald, III, Mayor

street & number Post Office Box 398 telephone 828/323-7400

city or town Hickory state NC zip code 28603-0398

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Setting and Historical Overview

The Hickory Municipal Building, a well-preserved two-story-on-basement Classical Revival-style brick building, stands at 30 Third Street, NW, in Catawba County's largest city. Situated in the northeast corner of Third Street, NW, and Trade Alley, and facing west, the building is at the west edge of the city's principal historic, early-twentieth century commercial district and one block north of the railroad tracks laid in the antebellum period. At the time of its construction in 1920-1921 and for nearly a half century thereafter, the area surrounding the Municipal Building was bustling with commercial activity. With the opening of Catawba Mall in 1968 and the larger Valley Hills Mall in 1978, both well beyond downtown Hickory and on business US 70, important commercial activity in downtown Hickory declined; however, the city's principal banks retain important offices here. Today's downtown area, which forms the setting of the Municipal Building, retains a significant number of its historical commercial buildings, including the 1912 railway station, but many of these buildings have been disfigured with remodeled facades, entranceways, and display windows. The best indication of their age and original appearance is their rear elevations on Trade Alley--a streetscape shared with the long south side elevation of the Municipal Building--where stone masonry foundations enclose basements and support unpainted walls with original brickwork, fenestration patterns, and doorways. The railway station now houses a restaurant, small specialty shops are located in buildings which once contained the larger, more lucrative operations of local and chain stores, and other storefronts have been converted to office space.

As the setting of the Municipal Building has evolved in the past quarter century, so, too, has its use. In 1977, when the city administrative offices were relocated to the new city hall, the Municipal Building was refitted for partial occupation by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments. The remainder of the building, including the auditorium, housed the Hickory Community Theatre. In the mid-1980s, the regional governmental agency vacated its offices, and the entire building was taken over by the Hickory Community Theatre which first began productions here in 1949 and celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in these premises in 1999.

The Hickory Municipal Building was designed by Charlotte architect Charles Christian Hook in 1919-1920 and erected in 1920-1921 by a crew of city workers under the supervision of city manager Rusk Griffin Henry. A special paid notice, published in conjunction with the dedication of the building on 3 November 1921, listed the total costs (\$120,831.73 inclusive of land, materials, labor, and furnishings) and the various municipal offices and services housed therein.

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Inside the walls of the buildings we have the City Administrative offices, the Council Chamber, Fire Department, Garage and Dormitory (sic) and two rooms for a future fire alarm system, a Police department with a Chief's Office, a jail with a capacity of 22 prisoners, a Water Department Work and Store Room, three public toilets, a City Court Room, a Rest Room, and last but not least an Auditorium with a seating capacity of 1160. There are 343 lights on when the Auditorium is completely lighted. 793,000 brick and 4,296 bags of cement were used in the construction of the building (HDR, 2 November 1921).

As recently as the mid 1980s, two sheets of original plans for the building survived; they cannot now be located in the city offices. However, the original disposition of spaces and functions can be partially reconstructed from the surviving fabric of the building and partial photocopies of the plans. While last mentioned in the listing above, the auditorium occupies the largest part (nearly one-half) of the rectangular building; it comprises the center and northeast quarter of the plan. The main lobby stretches from the front door eastward where it opens into the rear of the auditorium and slightly off axis with the stage. The fire department occupied the area in the front northwest corner of the building on all three levels; there were two openings on the five-bay façade for the two-truck garage on the first story, a kitchen for the firemen in the basement, and the Dormitory and restrooms on the second story which were linked by staircases.

The southwest first-story corner of the building, defined on the north by the main lobby and on the east by a corridor linking the lobby with Trade Alley, was occupied by offices for the city manager, tax collector, and clerk, a reception area, box office, and vault. The jail and the police department were located on the first and second stories in the southeast corner of the building. The four public toilets were located in the basement and accessible from a second (eastern) entrance off Trade Alley which also provided access to the balcony for black citizens, high in a third level of the building. The other offices, work, storage, and service spaces were located in the three-level tier of rooms and offices carrying along the south side of the building and overlooking Trade Alley. The auditorium, main lobby, and corridor remain virtually unchanged to the present while the jail, fire department garage, and office spaces have been refitted over the years for a sequence of uses. Through the seventy-eight years since its occupation, the building has survived with a high degree of integrity and numerous significant features of its finish, materials, and functions remain in place and reflect original uses and the fabric of a building described as "a historical landmark in the growth of the town of Hickory" (CATAWBA NEWS-ENTERPRISE, 1 November 1921).

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Description of Building

The Hickory Municipal Building is a free-standing Classical Revival-style brick building with a highly finished face-brick façade on Third Street, NW, painted brick elevations along Trade Alley on the south, a narrower, paved pedestrian alley on the north, and an unpainted east elevation. The building is covered with a three-part roof which rises in height from the west to the east. The front third of the building, two stories in height, is covered with a low hipped asphalt shingle roof. The center of the building rises to three stories in height to cover the auditorium which features a principal balcony (originally for white citizens) on the second story and upper balcony (for black citizens and now unused) on the third level. Its bulk, rising above and behind the façade is entirely blind on its sides except for a fire escape door on the north, and it is covered with a very low front-gable roof. The plane of this roof slopes on the east to meet the tallest block at the rear of the building which contains the stage and the fly area above it. This block has a flatish roof with clipped corners.

The west façade of the Municipal Building has a symmetrical five-bay division with Tuscan pilasters defining the bays while the Tuscan order is also used for the one-story portico at the center entrance. This elevation is finished with rough-cut dark-red face brick, limestone dressings, and black-and-white speckled granite, rising from a shallow base. It is laid up in common bond with recessed mortar joints. The pilasters, crowned by a full wood entablature, project forward of the bays between them which have trios of one-over-one sash windows on both stories. The wall aprons below the windows each have three shallow projecting panels, corresponding with the window openings; like panels occur on the tall bases of the pilasters. Dark green canvas awnings shade the windows. The giant order Tuscan pilasters have molded limestone bases and capitals, and brick shafts; their character is enhanced by circular disks inset in the shallow brick parapet rising above the entablature. The one-story limestone portico, protecting the center entrance at the back of the recessed porch, is the principal feature of the façade. It has speckled granite steps, paired limestone columns and shadow pilasters at each corner, and a molded, fully-developed entablature with projecting circular disks in positions above the columns on the architrave. A poured cement handicap ramp, finished with black iron railings, was erected here in 1997. It begins at street level at the northwest corner of the building and rises southward in front of the bays north of the portico to a landing poured over the top of the granite entrance. The shallow porch is paved with ceramic tile and has (white) painted brick walls and a plaster ceiling. Stepped arch-headed openings are set in the north and south side walls; the south opening enframes a flat-headed door opening into the reception area for the theatre box office while the north opening is blind. The entrance into the lobby occupies the entire east wall of the recessed porch,

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where a trio of glazed replacement doors are set below the original multi-pane glazed transom.

The painted common-bond south side elevation, overlooking Trade Alley, has a generally symmetrical yet unequal two-part division which reflects the original functions of the building. The westernmost two thirds of the elevation, with mostly corresponding arch-headed openings on the first and second stories, has a recessed doorway at near center and a second, also recessed, doorway at its east end; the first, westernmost doorway opens into the corridor leading to the main lobby while the easternmost flat-headed opening gives onto a staircase descending to the basement and rising to the upper balcony. This doorway was used by all citizens visiting the public toilets in the basement of the building and black citizens who had to climb to the upper balcony to attend events in the auditorium. The large window openings contain paired one-over-one sash windows in wood frames with cement/cast stone sills. Some of the small basement openings are bricked up. The east third of the south elevation has an altogether more asymmetrical appearance reflecting, in part, the fact that its varied-sized openings originally illuminated and ventilated the jail and police department. The arch-headed openings in the basement level have all been bricked up while all but six of the window openings on the first and second story levels have been bricked in and painted over. There are two replacement doors at the basement level at the extreme east end of this elevation.

The east elevation is the tallest of the building's four sides, features unpainted one-to-five course brickwork, and is virtually blind. A shallow inset in its southeast corner holds a wood deck ramp, overbuilt with a later wood ramp which provides access to the stage. It rises to an opening fitted with paired, original four-pane over three-panel wood doors. The original wood ramp here carried to ground level and under the catwalk which linked a door in the east wall, opening into the jail, with the expanded police offices added in 1937 in the J. C. Shuford building to the east. The main face of the east elevation, enclosing the east end of the stage and fly area, is divided into two parts of unequal height. The lower part, about two stories in height, has five small original window openings symmetrically placed to provide illumination and ventilation to the basement. Three rows of header brick form the arched heads of these openings which have all been infilled with either brick or frame sheathing. The taller, upper part of the elevation is recessed behind a trio of pilasters which rise from the lower wall to the top where it meets a stepped brick cornice.

The north end of the east elevation and northeast corner of the building is clipped and finished with knuckle-joints. The Municipal Building's north elevation, little seen because it overlooks a narrow alley, has a general three-part division which reflects the functions inside its wall. The tall east end of the elevation encloses the stage and

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fly area and is entirely blind except for a door opening at the basement level and two small arch-headed openings at its near top which have been infilled with brick. The door opening, with its arched lintel of four courses of header brick, has been partially infilled with brick and fitted with a modern metal door which opens into the theatre's basement green room under the stage. The wall above the door is divided into two towering bays by a brick pilaster. The wider center part of the elevation, enclosing the north side of the auditorium, is blind except for three door openings into the auditorium and a (fourth) door into the basement "Firemen's Kitchen"; its surface is divided into bays by shallow brick pilasters. The arch-headed doorway onto the main level of the auditorium holds original paired six, horizontal-panel wood doors positioned above the basement door and its cement well; the original cast iron stair links it with the alley. A separate cast iron fire-escape stair provides access to like doorways and doors on the main and upper balconies; it rises upward, west to east with intermediate landings. The west, front third of the elevation has a quartet of arch-headed openings on the first story which have all been infilled with brick and four window openings on the second level with two-over-two sash.

The Interior of the Hickory Municipal Building

The interior of the Municipal Building retains a high degree of integrity which is remarkable in a building that served as the city's chief municipal building from 1921 to 1977, was then partially refitted for regional governmental offices, and since the mid 1980s has been wholly occupied by the Hickory Community Theatre. During this period of seventy-eight years the principal interior spaces and general plan have remained virtually intact. The Classical Revival styling of the exterior is continued in the main lobby where its original vaulted ceiling, marble wainscot, and paneled pilasters continue to reflect its 1920s appearance. Doors at the east end of the lobby open into the auditorium which also remains well-preserved and essentially intact, despite the removal of a few, rear tiers of main-level seating and the insertion of a faux Victorian screen in 1962/1963 to create a small lobby area inside the auditorium. The laminated plywood and metal frame seating installed in 1921 by the American Seating Company on the main level and first balcony continues in use. The upper balcony, segregated for use by black citizens, and fitted with wood pew-like benches, also survives nearly intact except for the removal of some seat lengths. The auditorium comprises nearly half of the Municipal Building, and its survival to the present, together with its tiered balconies for white and black citizens, represents an important part of the integrity and significance of the building. In addition, other signal features of the building's plan finish and functions survive throughout its three levels and reflect the long history of its civic use.

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The three, grouped front doors of the Municipal Building open from the recessed porch into a rectangular main lobby which stretches eastward and terminates with two pairs of paired double two-panel doors opening into the auditorium. The Classical Revival-style finish of the lobby includes a marble wainscot and paneled-face pilasters which rise to the vaulted ceiling with corresponding paneled ribs; the floor is carpeted while the upper walls and ceiling are painted plaster. There are two doors in the north side wall. The westernmost opens into the wood-paneled council room which was installed in 1962-1963 in the space (in the northwest corner) formerly occupied by the fire department garage. The second, easternmost door opens into a passage where a stair descends to the basement and a door opens into a mechanical room at the passage's north end. In the lobby's south wall is a lancet-arch enframing the box-office call window and, further east, a framed doorway giving onto the corridor which stretches southward to partially glazed doors opening onto Trade Alley. A door in the corridor's west wall opens into the suite of rooms in the building's first-story southwest corner originally occupied by the city manager, tax collector and clerk, the box office, and a small reception room. While these spaces have been refashioned over the years to accommodate different needs, portions of the original finish, door and window enframements, and other features have remained in place. The most important of these is the brick and cement vault, in the northeast corner of the suite; its original door, black with gilt decorations, is set in a frame on which "City of Hickory" is lettered in gold on the lintel, and "The Reliable Safe & Lock Co., Covington, Ky." is lettered in gold on the door.

The Trade Alley corridor also provides access to other parts of the building. A staircase, with a ca. 1960s-1970s blind railing rises in its northeast corner to the second story administrative offices of the Hickory Community Theatre. (A door opens under it to a corresponding stair which descends to the basement.) At the foot of the stair an opening in the east wall gives onto a perpendicular passage, flanked on the south by men's and women's lavatories, which terminates at a separate landing at its east end. Here paired doors in the north wall open into the auditorium, steps rise on the east wall to a door opening into the former police department (now the technical director's office and shop), and a staircase on the south links all four levels of the building with the easternmost Trade Alley entrance. This staircase, although partially enclosed for fire safety reasons, has paneled newels, a shaped handrail, and square-picket railing. The space in the southeast first story corner formerly occupied by the police department and jail, retains portions of its original finish including the metal floor and ceiling of the jail, cut-off sections of cells, and the electric control box for the cells.

The auditorium and stage comprise the center and northeast corner of the Municipal Building's first and upper levels. Good proportions, decorative detailing, and much of

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the original fabric survive, together with the original seating, to convey the character of a space that has been a gathering and performance place in Hickory since it hosted dedicatory ceremonies on 3 November 1921. In plan the auditorium is a simple rectangular space with the seating area occupying the center and west third while the stage occupies the east third of the rectangle. The main wood floor is gently ramped to the east and has carpeted aisles. The walls are finished with a combination of wallpaper, a faux-stone treatment, and painted plaster. The doors from the main lobby open into a shallow lobby-like space at the back of the auditorium which is separated from the seating by a faux Victorian screen with cast iron decoration. Original staircases on either side of the doors rise against the auditorium's west wall, to the principal balcony. These wood staircases have paneled newels, shaped handrails, and square picket railing. The auditorium-type seating is arranged in slightly curved tiers on a double-aisle plan. Upholstered laminated plywood seats and backs are affixed to metal frames whose paneled ends are marked with a capital "H." The seating in the first balcony follows this same pattern, and is on stepped platforms for better viewing. The rear half of the seating, behind a walkway, has a tongue-and-groove sheathed railing. A projection booth is enclosed in the rear, west, center of the first balcony. Doors on the south and north open onto the stairwell to Trade Alley and the fire escape, respectively. The upper balcony, used exclusively by black citizens and with no direct connection to the main floor and first balcony, has not been used in the years since desegregation. A narrow walkway carries across the front of the balcony linking the entrance off Trade Alley on the south with a fire escape door on the north; the front ends of the balcony are supported by paired triangular brackets where they meet the side walls. The pew-type wood seating in the balcony is tight, steep, and altogether lacking the comfort of the upholstered seats below. After the upper balcony ceased to be used for events here, some lengths of its seating, arranged in three tiers on the double-aisle plan, were removed to allow for the better manipulation of the stage lighting mounted on the front railing.

At the east front of the auditorium attention is physically directed to the stage by diagonal, sheathed walls which enclosed small triangular chambers in the northeast and southeast corners of the auditorium. On the first story they enclosed passages linking the auditorium with the stage that might also have been used for mechanical purposes; original horizontal panel doors open into the auditorium. Above, at balcony level, the chambers form finished boxes, also fitted with horizontal panel doors, that have since been taken over for lighting. The stage proper, protected by a velvet curtain, is an open space with painted brick walls. Controls for the scenery, curtains, etc., are ranged along the north wall. Two metal spiral stairs provide access to the dressing rooms and green room in the basement. Paired doors in the southeast corner of the stage open onto the outside ramp on Trade Alley while an adjoining door to the west opens into the workshop in the former jail.

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The basement of the Municipal Building contains a complicated series of spaces that are all now used for theatre purposes. The area below the stage, accessible by the two metal spiral stairs, includes the green room and is partitioned into dressing rooms, restrooms, and related spaces including access to the orchestra pit. A door in its north wall opens onto the alley along the north side of the building; a door in the south wall opens into the two-room area, below the workshop, which is also used for storage and work. The area under the north side of the auditorium, part of which was the kitchen and dining area for firemen, is an alternative cabaret-style theatre called the "Firemen's Kitchen." It is reached by the interior stair from the main lobby, from the east stairwell off Trade Alley, and by a door off the narrow alley on the north side of the building. The east stairwell was originally the only public entrance into the basement and provided access to the four separate restrooms for men, women, and black citizens of Hickory; in plan, these are located under the southwest corner of the auditorium, and in the near center of the building. The original black restrooms have been lost and their location incorporated into the "Firemen's Kitchen." The rooms containing the men's and women's restrooms retain their form; however, their ceramic tile work, toilets, sinks, and floor urinals appear to date from late in the interwar period or the early 1950s. The southwest corner of the basement includes a lobby under the corridor on the first story, a stair to that corridor, some small storage rooms, a second, original vault with its door carrying the same lettering as the first-story vault door, lavatories for men and women, and a large locked storage area for costumes. The lavatories have good black and white hexagonal tile which appears to date from the 1930s (or 1940s). The extreme northwest corner of the basement, the area below the fire department garage, is unexcavated. Fabric and finishes in these spaces date from the original construction and a series of refittings for varied purposes.

The L-shaped second-story office area of the Municipal Building, occupying the west front of the building and a tier of rooms along Trade Alley, reflects changes over the long history of the building, and little original fabric is visible. Renovations and partitioning in the 1970s for the Western Piedmont Council of Governments and in the 1980s for the Hickory Community Theatre have resulted in rooms of undistinguished, conventional character. The partition walls forming offices in the northwest corner of this floor have since been removed to create a rehearsal hall in this space.

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Summary

The Hickory Municipal Building, completed in 1921 and occupied as the principal offices of city government until 1977, is an imposing Classical Revival-style two-story brick building standing at 30 Third Street, NW. It occupies a site in the northeast corner of Third Street and Trade Alley that by 1890 became the location of the town's first city hall; that building, like this one, housed the town's fire department, jail, and other municipal offices. As the town grew from a population of 2,535 in 1900 to one of 5,076 in 1920, the role and size of city government expanded; the need for a larger facility became increasingly apparent in the late 1910s. In the spring of 1919 when Joseph Duckworth Elliott (1855-1930) ran for mayor he made the erection of a new municipal building, including a large auditorium, a part of his campaign. Mr. Elliott, the president of the First National Bank and the Elliott Building Company, and a leader in other business enterprises, had served as mayor for several terms beginning in 1892 and he was easily elected for a new term. Planning for the new facility advanced through the summer of 1919 and on 7 October Charles Christian Hook, a leading North Carolina architect, was hired to design the municipal building. Owing to the fact that Mayor Elliott was a well-known builder with projects throughout North Carolina, and Rusk Griffith Henry (1892-1947), the Hickory city manager, had supervised the construction of the United States Post Office in Hickory in 1913-1914, the city council decided to erect the building as a public project with local workmen supervised by Mr. Henry. The building was completed in the fall of 1921 and dedicated in elaborate ceremonies on 3 November; it housed all the offices and services of city government in addition to providing a large auditorium for all manner of public entertainment, road shows, and civic events.

The Hickory Municipal Building satisfies National Register Criteria A and C and holds local significance in the areas of architecture and politics/government. Designed by Charles Christian Hook, the building stands, with the former United States Post Office, as one of the city's two important surviving early-twentieth century Classical Revival-style public buildings; it is an important local example of the style favored for civic architecture in the United States in the decades following the World's Colombian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. The Hickory Municipal Building's local significance in the area of politics/government is twofold. First, it survives as one of a relatively small number of such buildings erected in the 1920s which reflects the growing presence of municipal governments in the period in North Carolina. Secondly, it attests to the ambition of progressive local governments to consolidate municipal services in a single structure embodying the civic virtues of their town and city. Erected on the site of the city's first known city hall, the Hickory Municipal building is important in the history of Hickory for its role as the city's principal public building which housed city offices

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and services for over half a century from 1921 until it was vacated and city offices moved to a new city hall in 1977.

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North CarolinaSection number 8 Page 11 Historic Background, Architecture, and Politics/Government Significance

The city of Hickory, first known as Hickory Tavern and after 1873 as the town of Hickory, has its origin in a small log tavern established here at the intersection of important eighteenth-century public roads. The two most important of these were a principal east/west road, known as the Sherrill's Ford Road, which linked Salisbury with Morganton to the west, and a second road which stretched to the southeast and linked the interior of North Carolina with Charleston, South Carolina. The third road led to the Horse Ford on the Catawba River. As important as these roads were, the more important factor leading to the development of a town here was the building of the Western North Carolina Railroad; designed to link Salisbury, already a principal terminus on the North Carolina Railroad, with far western North Carolina, the railroad had been built from Salisbury into Hickory by 1860 and some seventeen miles further west by the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. A station had been built here by December 1863 when the first attempt to charter the town described Hickory Tavern as one mile square with its center being the depot of the Western North Carolina. That effort failed, in large part because of the Civil War. On 14 December 1869, the original charter was amended by the State Legislature and Hickory Tavern officially came into being on the first Monday of January 1870, when commissioners held a municipal election; Marcus Yoder was elected mayor. Mr. Yoder served as mayor until 1874, and near the end of his tenure, on 18 December 1873, the charter of Hickory Tavern was superseded by the charter for the "Town of Hickory" with a corporate limit 1,000 yards in all directions from the "depot warehouse" of the Western North Carolina Railroad.¹

The town of Hickory grew steadily in the 1870s and 1880s. During this period, commercial and manufacturing concerns increased in size and number and the city government took on a visible presence. This increase can be traced in the successive editions of BRANSON'S NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS DIRECTORY, beginning with the 1867-1868 edition. Further understanding can also be gained from an examination of the successive maps of Hickory published by the Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, beginning with a single sheet dated March 1885. In 1885, the commercial center of Hickory was the two to three block area along the north and south sides of the Western North Carolina Railroad, centered on the depot and station (then on the north side of the tracks); this area remained the center of Hickory until the late 1960s/1970s when a process of decentralization and "Urban Renewal" forever dispersed government offices and important commercial activity. The railroad depot was then located on the north side of the parallel tracks of the Western North Carolina and the Chester and Lenoir Narrow Gauge railroads, nearly due north of the present station erected in 1912 on the south side of the tracks. A two-block stretch of one, two, and three-story mostly frame commercial buildings stood between Shuford (now

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First) Street, NW, and Watauga (now Third) Street, NW; they faced south to the railroad and across an open area designated as "Railroad Property" that would subsequently become Main Avenue, NW, and Union Square. Although not designated as a street, the lane that became Trade Alley is visible and served as the link between the above stores and the warehouses on the north side of Trade Alley. The front (west) third of the site that became the location of this building was then occupied by a four-storefront two-and-a-half story frame block facing west onto Watauga Street; warehouses stood to the east. The town's second important group of commercial buildings was on the west side of Watauga Street, facing east. The town's two hotels, the Central Hotel and the Western Hotel, stood on the south side of the tracks along Lincoln Street which terminated at its west end in front of the Abernathy Brothers Livery Stable. Two small tobacco factories stood to the northwest, in the northwest corner of Watauga and Atwood (now First Avenue, NW); however, most of the manufacturing plants, including the Piedmont Wagon Company (NR, 1985), stood some distance from the center of town.

Although Hickory did not officially become a "city" until its charter was revised on 11 March 1889, it had already undertaken civic improvements that reflected its growth in the 1880s and a new status among the towns in Catawba County. On 14 December 1886 the town of Hickory purchased a lot in the northeast center of Watauga Street and Trade Alley from Abel Alexander Shuford (1841-1912) and his wife (Catawba County Deeds, Book 29, pp. 576-578). The price for the rectangular lot, measuring twenty-eight feet in width on Watauga Street and fifty feet in depth, was \$300. By July 1890, when the Sanborn-Perris Map Company issued the second of its insurance maps of Hickory, the city of Hickory had erected a two-story brick building on this lot. Identified as "City Hall," the building is further described as "Engine Ho." and "City Prison." Thus, by the summer of 1890 this property was the location of the offices and functions of city government, and it remained the principal location of city government for eighty-seven years.

During the next three decades, until 1919 when efforts toward this building began, the city of Hickory grew as the industrial and commercial center of Catawba County; the expanding functions of city government kept pace with this growth. The nineteenth-century city hall, believed to have been the first building erected for that purpose in the city, gradually became inadequate due to larger, more diverse municipal needs. Through these years the uses of the building appear to have evolved, while the city also expanded its real estate holding in this block. On the third and fourth editions of the Sanborn insurance maps, issued in February 1896 and April 1902, respectively, the building was labeled "City Hall"; however, on the fifth edition of March 1907 only the term "Hose Ho." appears. On the successive Sanborn insurance maps of 1913 and 1919 the building is labeled "Fire Dept." and "Lock Up." Short of extensive research

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into the history of city government, the matter of determining which city offices remained in the city hall, together with the fire and police departments is problematic. But by 1919 some functions of government had been relocated to the two-story brick building which stood at the east end of Union Square; the northeast quarter of that building, which also housed "Moving Pictures" on the first story, is labeled "City Offices" on the map. Meanwhile, on 4 December 1902, the city purchased the large lot immediately north of the City Hall for \$1,500 from David W. Russell (Catawba County Deeds, Book 68, pp. 156-157). The lot was the same depth (fifty feet) as the lot purchased from the Shufords in 1886; however, it had a sixty-five-foot frontage onto Watauga Street. A two-story three-storefront frame building stood on the lot in 1902 but by March 1907 the city had erected an "Iron Clad" building on the west front of the lot which was identified on the 1913 and 1919 maps as the "City Tool Ho." By the end of 1919 the combined holding here, the site of the ca. 1887-1889 brick City Hall and the metal-covered storage building, was destined as the location of this building.

In Hickory, as elsewhere in North Carolina, the late 1910s and 1920s were years marked by important progress in public works, school consolidation, and the construction of an impressive range of public, institutional, commercial, industrial, and residential buildings which reflected a new prosperity, a growing population, and a rising ambition by civic leaders to better their community. The construction of a new municipal building was but one of a series of projects in Hickory that represented an unprecedented investment in public facilities. In 1919, the year in which Charles Christian Hook was hired to design the Municipal Building and additional land was secured for its construction, the Hickory City Council was undertaking the construction of a new water works plant, paving streets and sidewalks, pressing forward with arrangements for a new library building, making improvements to its school facilities, and it bought a new fire truck from the American LaFrance Company. It was also the year in which Joseph Duckworth Elliott, one of the city's most prominent businessmen and civic leaders, was elected mayor for his eighth term of office.

Among the many men and women who came to Hickory in the later nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries and made their fortune in its commercial and industrial expansion, Joseph Duckworth Elliott (1854-1930) was preeminent. He was also the single person most instrumental in the construction of this new city hall for Hickory that would serve as the seat of municipal government for over half a century. His role in the construction of public buildings was not limited to this building alone; he was chairman of the Catawba County Board of Commissioners in 1921 when the new, Classical Revival style courthouse (NR, 1979) was erected, and he was mayor of Hickory when the Elliott Carnegie Library (NR, 1985), named for this brother-in-law John Worth Elliott (1856-1918)--and Mrs. Elliott--was financed and built. Born in

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Laurens, South Carolina, and raised in Iredell County, North Carolina, Mr. Elliott followed his father's profession as a building contractor. He continued that trade after moving to Hickory in 1887, and he quickly built the three-story Elliott Opera House on the west side of Watauga Street, diagonally opposite the city hall site. In 1908 he formed the Elliott Building Company in partnership with John Worth Elliott and the latter's brother, Henry F. Elliott. Through the course of a business career in Hickory that spanned just over four decades, he was an investor in many concerns and served as an officer and board member of those and other commercial and civil associations. He was a founder of the First National Bank of Catawba County, and after the death of Abel Alexander Shuford in 1912, he became president and held that position until shortly before his death. Early in that period, ca. 1915, he oversaw the dramatic remodeling of the bank's brick headquarters, at the west end of Union Square and about 100 feet south of this building, into a richly-detailed Classical Revival-style building (HDR, 5-6 May 1930, 26 February 1938).

During his campaign for mayor in the early spring of 1919, Mr. Elliott pledged his efforts toward the construction of a new municipal building and auditorium; on taking up the office of mayor on 5 May he moved quickly toward that end (HDR, 27-28 March, 8 April 1919). During the summer he and the city council simultaneously considered two possibilities; one was the purchase and renovation of the existing, nearby Methodist Church building on Morganton Street (now Main Avenue, NW) and the other was to build a larger new city hall on the site of the existing city building. The city council turned for advice to Charlotte architect Charles Christian Hook, while it considered the purchase of property on the east side of the existing city hall lots (Minutes, 15 and 24 July, 2 September 1919).

At its meeting on 23 September 1919, the city council listened to Mr. Hook's appraisal of the church building, and it accepted his recommendation against buying and renovating it for public use (Minutes, 23 September; HDR, 24 September 1919). The mayor and members of council also discussed the purchase of lots adjoining the city property on the east from the estates of A. A. Shuford and Mr. W. H. Ellis (1836-1906), a pioneer Hickory merchant. Two weeks later, on 7 October the body approved councilman James Lenoir Cilley's motion to hire Mr. Hook to prepare plans and specifications for a new municipal building for Hickory. The architect's preliminary plans for the municipal building were reviewed and accepted by the city council on 2 December 1919 and he was directed to proceed with the preparation of working drawings for the building (HDR, 3 December 1919). Meanwhile, the city had acquired the tracts necessary for its construction. On 31 October 1919 the city purchased the lot immediately adjoining the old city hall lot on the east and fronting on Trade Avenue for \$4,800 from the daughters of Mr. W. H. Ellis (Catawba County Deeds, Book 148, p. 120). Three weeks later, on 20 November 1919, the executors of the A. A. Shuford

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estate conveyed the brick warehouse and lot located on the east side of the above Ellis tract, also fronting on Trade Avenue, for \$4,500 to the city of Hickory (Catawba County Deeds, Book 141, pp. 537-538). Later, on 24 April 1922, the city would acquire a long narrow strip of land on the east side of the total holding to create a fourteen feet wide alley on the east side of the building; the property was purchased from James Campbell and Elva Shuford (Catawba County Deeds, Book 164, p. 516). By the end of 1919 the city of Hickory had acquired the property necessary as the site of the ambitious new city hall and auditorium, and Charles Christian Hook was completing the detail drawings necessary to put the project out to bid.

During the first three months of 1920 the plans for the Hickory Municipal Building were completed, the project was twice advertised for bid, and a locally unprecedented decision was made on its construction. Mr. Hook completed his work on the drawings by 20 January 1920 when the city council approved a motion to authorize the city manager, John W. Ballew (1870-1940), to advertise for bids. The bids were to be opened on 24 February. Prior to that date two events critical to the history of the Municipal Building occurred. John W. Ballew, having served as city manager of Hickory for four years, resigned his position at the beginning of the month (HDR, 4 February 1920). In the interest of the city's ongoing projects (the new water works and the city hall), he agreed to remain on the job until a successor was chosen. On 10 February, a week after his resignation was accepted, the city council passed a motion to hire Rusk Riffin Henry (1892-1947) as city manager. In its account of the city council meeting, the HICKORY DAILY RECORD explained Mr. Henry's particular qualifications for the post.

The new manager . . . was born in Eau Claire, Wis., and has been with the Stiles Construction Company of Chicago for the past 9 1/2 years as superintendent of construction. He built the Hickory post office here in 1913-14, is familiar with all sorts of building, has been engineer for sewer and water construction and has handled large bodies of men. Mayor Elliott and other members of council felt that in the large amount of work to be done here this year Mr. Henry will save the city his salary in his ability to supervise the construction of the sewer disposal plant and the municipal building (HDR, 11 February 1920).

As events proved this appraisal was all too prescient.

On the 24th of February, when the bids for the new municipal building were opened, only two had been submitted: one for \$118,000 by the Elliott Building Company, and a second one for \$128,800 by John P. Little & Sons of Charlotte. James Lenoir Cilley made a motion to award the contract to the Elliott Building Company (Minutes, 24

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February 1920; HDR, 25 February 1920). Although the city council did not recognize the potential conflict of interest, outcry immediately arose over the issue of the city awarding such a major contract to a company of which its mayor was president and principal stockholder. At its next meeting, on 2 March, the city council decided to reopen the matter and advertise for new bids to be received on 23 March (HDR, 3 March 1920). Three bids, ranging in price from \$117,900 to \$131,000, were received and reviewed at the 23 March meeting; however, the city council decided to reject all three. In retrospect, the decision on the erection of the building might have been made by gentlemen's agreement before the bids were opened. Councilman George Scott Watson (1883-1956) then moved the following resolution which was approved unanimously.

That the City Manager of the City of Hickory, is hereby directed and empowered to advertise and secure material, labor and any and all materials and labor that may be necessary in the erection of the Municipal building, and that said work be begun as soon as possible, and that the said City Manager shall have the general supervision and shall be in full control and authority in the erection of said building (Minutes, 23 March 1920).

Through the remainder of 1920 and during the months leading up to the dedication of the Municipal Building on 3 November 1921, the city council discussed and approved a series of measures concerning the construction of the building. The contract for heating the building had been awarded to Frank Bernard Ingold of Hickory in February. On 21 December the council awarded the contract for millwork for the Municipal Building to J. H. Wearn of Charlotte (Minutes, 21 and 28 December 1920). Next, the contract for wiring the building was let in the amount of \$1,800 to John M. Stephens (Minutes, 18 January 1921). Two weeks later the plumbing contract was also let to Frank B. Ingold for \$3,816 (Minutes, 1 February 1921). The contract for the metal roof of the new city hall was awarded to James Campbell Shuford (1888-1974) and his Hickory Plumbing, Heating and Tinning Company at the same meeting at which the council approved the contract for "Marble etc" for the building to the McDaniel Federal Company (Minutes, 22 March 1921). At its next weekly session the councilmen awarded the contract for painting the new building to Abee & Yount for \$880. As the building was nearing completion the city sought bids for seating the auditorium. Five bids were received and opened on 19 July including two from Hickory manufacturers: the Fulmer Furniture Company in which former city manager John W. Ballew held a principal interest, and the Southern Desk Company of which George Franks Ivey was president. The contract was awarded to the American Seating Company whose metal frame and laminated plywood seats remain in use in the auditorium to the present (Minutes, 19 July 1921). During the summer the fire department occupied the north side of the building which was completed first. Finally,

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on 4 October a motion was passed authorizing the city manager "to buy the necessary furniture for Municipal Building" (Minutes, 4 October 1921). The city council held its first meeting in its new chambers in the Municipal Building on Tuesday, 25 October (Minutes, 25 October 1921).

The dedication of the Municipal Building on Thursday, 3 November 1921, was much heralded in the HICKORY DAILY RECORD (HDR, 1-5 November 1921) which published a series of long articles, shorter news stories, advertisements by its suppliers, and the program for the day. An article on 2 November informed readers of the local men and companies who participated in the construction and furnishing of the building under the headline "New Municipal Building Home Product." Mayor Joseph Duckworth Elliott presided over the ceremonies which began at 2:30 p.m. and were attended by mayors and dignitaries from Charlotte and other towns and cities in the region. An exhaustive account of the ceremonies was published on 4 November under the front-page headline "Great Celebration Marks Opening of New Building." Although it was not officially a part of the dedicatory ceremonies, the mounting of a historical pageant on the stage of the new auditorium on Tuesday evening, 8 November, christened the stage as the scene of future dramatic presentations (HDR, 5, 7, 9 November 1921). This dramatic interpretation of the history of Hickory was staged as a fundraiser for the Elliott Carnegie Library which was built under the supervision of City Manager Henry in 1922 and dedicated in 1923.

The erection of the Hickory Municipal Building marked an important milestone in the history of the city. An editorial in the HICKORY DAILY RECORD praised the construction of the building and Mayor Elliott's role in its success.

No greater asset to the city of Hickory could be conceived of than the municipal building and auditorium which will be opened with elaborate ceremonies this afternoon and tonight. With the turning over of this building to the public, there will be instilled a greater pride in all the citizens of Hickory in its progress, and the auditorium, aside from affording a long-needed place for assemblies, will stimulate other building, and individuals will keep pace. Hickory will be given an impetus worth thousands of dollars to it (HDR, 3 November 1921).

Erected and furnished at a cost of \$120,831.73, the building provided space and offices for every department of city government. An itemized list of the costs was published in a special notice published by the city council.

Inside the walls of the building we have the City Administrative offices, the Council Chamber, Fire Department, Garage and Dormitory (sic) and two rooms for a future fire alarm system, a Police Department with a Chief's Office, a jail

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with a capacity of 22 prisoners, a Water Department Work and Store Room, three public toilets, a City Court Room, a Rest Room, and last but not least an Auditorium with a seating capacity of 1160 (HDR, 2 November 1921).

The three public restrooms were located in the basement of the building and were accessible through a side entrance on Trade Alley. Large spacious rooms provided separate facilities for white men and women while a third chamber housed small, separate restrooms for black men and women. This same entrance provided the only access to the segregated black balcony at the top of the building.

In Hickory as in other cities in North Carolina, the construction of municipal buildings or city halls in the 1920s reflected the larger, expanded role of municipal governments and the consolidation of city services in a single building which quickly became the focus of civic pride. The Hickory Municipal Building is one of the first in this series of imposing buildings erected in the 1920s throughout the state. These city halls, along with numerous new county courthouses in North Carolina dating from the first three decades of the twentieth century, were mainly Classical Revival-style buildings. Their appearance reflected the powerful influence of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago on architectural design in the United States, and particularly that of public and institutional buildings. While their form and detailing were based on Greek and Roman buildings of antiquity, and the style held important associations with the culture and accomplishment of those ancient civilizations, these twentieth-century Classical Revival-style buildings were seen as important modern buildings that reflected like values and civic accomplishments. The style was also favored for banks, educational buildings, and churches throughout North Carolina and the nation well into the 1930s. There is no accident in the fact that the three major civic buildings erected in Catawba County in the early twentieth century--this building, the Catawba County Court House, and the United States Post Office in Hickory--are all Classical Revival style. The Municipal Building in Gastonia, designed by the local firm of White, Streeter & Chamberlain in 1925, is an elegant classically detailed building which remains in use by the city. The Classical Revival-style Rutherfordton City Hall of 1925 also housed the fire department; Rutherfordton, unlike Hickory, has seen little growth in the second half of the twentieth century, and its building remains in use, containing the fire department, the police department, and the town's principal administrative offices. The Rutherfordton building as well as the contemporary, classical city hall in Salisbury are listed in the National Register as components of historic districts. But the best known of this group is probably the City Building in Asheville (NR, 1976), an extravagant Art Deco building of 1926-1928, ambitious in size and cost, that remains the city's principal municipal building today.

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From its dedication in 1921, the Municipal Building was the center of local government for fifty-six years, until February 1977 when the building was vacated by Hickory's administrative offices for the new building some four blocks to the east at 76 North Center Street. The spaces allocated for various functions served their purposes well for the first decade or more; however, in the 1930s, two important changes occurred. In fall 1934, in an effort to supplement city revenues, the auditorium was leased and operated as the Paramount Theatre. A large marquee bearing the Paramount name was mounted on the front of the building above the center doors which became the movie theatre entrance; the original auditorium box office and lobby were also leased to the theatre company (HDR, 26 February 1938). While the fire department continued to use its quarters without change, new doors were installed in the southernmost bay of the façade for use by the city offices.

In March 1937 the office of Police Chief E. W. Lentz and larger quarters for the police department were constructed in the back of the J. C. Shuford building at the rear of the Municipal Building, and a metal catwalk was erected to link the new facilities with those, including the cells, which remained in this building (HDR, 26 February 1938). In 1949 the auditorium became home of the Hickory Community Theatre. Over time even that improvement did not meet the needs of a growing city and in 1959 the police department vacated this building entirely for a new modern police department on First Street, NE. The next large department of city government to depart the 1921 building was the city fire department for which a large new facility was erected in 1961-1962 at 19 Second Street Drive, NE, which remains the central station for an expanded fire department. With the removal of the police and fire departments, other offices of city government expanded into their former spaces. The first story bays and interior formerly occupied as the garage for two fire trucks were closed up and refitted as a new city council chamber in 1962-1963 to designs prepared by architect James E. Biggs who also designed renovations to the auditorium, including a faux Victorian screen, modern stage and house lighting, and other improvements.

The most dramatic change in the history and use of the building occurred in 1977 when all the remaining offices of city government were moved out of the 1921 Municipal Building into a new city hall designed by Robert L. Clark and Unifour Design Architect. The last city council meeting was held here on Tuesday, 15 February 1977; the fully occupied new building was dedicated on 22 May 1977 (HDR, 19 and 23 May 1977). The auditorium and adjoining spaces in the old Municipal Building remained the home of the Hickory Community Theatre; the former city offices were refitted and partially remodeled to designs prepared by Robert L. Clark for use by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments. In the mid 1980s, a phased plan for the renovation of electrical and mechanical systems of the theatre, dressing rooms, and offices for the company was developed by architect Craig M. Copper of

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Hickory; these improvements were implemented as funds allowed. During this period the Western Piedmont Council of Governments vacated the building. In 1987 the Hickory Community Theatre became the sole occupant of the building, which continues to be owned by the city of Hickory. Alterations and improvements to the Municipal Building have occurred as necessary to improve it as a performance space; the most recent of these occurred in 1997 when the façade was restored to its original 1921 appearance and a handicap ramp was installed on the front of the building.

Endnote

1. The sources used in the preparation of this nomination are cited in the bibliography. Information obtained from the minutes of the Hickory City Council and from the HICKORY DAILY RECORD are cited internally.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The property included in this nomination, 0.34 acres, is Catawba County Parcel Number 3702-07-59-0858.

Tax Map.

Boundary Justification

The property included in this nomination is the acreage comprising the site of the Hickory Municipal Building and the two public alleyways on the east and north sides of the building. This parcel comprises the contiguous lots acquired in 1886 (redeeded and re-recorded in 1889), 1902, 1919, and 1922 by the city of Hickory.

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Photograph Schedule (the following information applies to all photographs)

1. Name of property: (former) Hickory Municipal Building
2. Location of property: Catawba County, North Carolina
3. Photographer: Davyd Foard Hood
4. Dates of photographs: photographs A through E, and H, 16 May 1999
photographs F and G, 4 June 1999
5. Location of original negatives: North Carolina Division of Archives and History,
Raleigh, North Carolina

Photographs

- A. Overall view of the Hickory Municipal Building, looking east/southeast.
- B. View showing east (rear) and north side elevations of the building, looking south/southwest.
- C. View of main lobby looking east to doors opening into auditorium.
- D. View of lobby area immediately inside auditorium, showing the pair of staircases rising to the main balcony, looking southwest.
- E. View of seating on all three levels of the auditorium and fire escape doors on north side, looking northwest.
- F. View of the stage as set for the opening of "Sylvia," looking southeast from the main balcony.
- G. View of the black balcony, looking north.
- H. View in the former jail area (now work shop), showing metal ceiling and outlines of cell partitions on floor, looking northwest.



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(GRANITE FALLS)

UNITED STATES
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GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

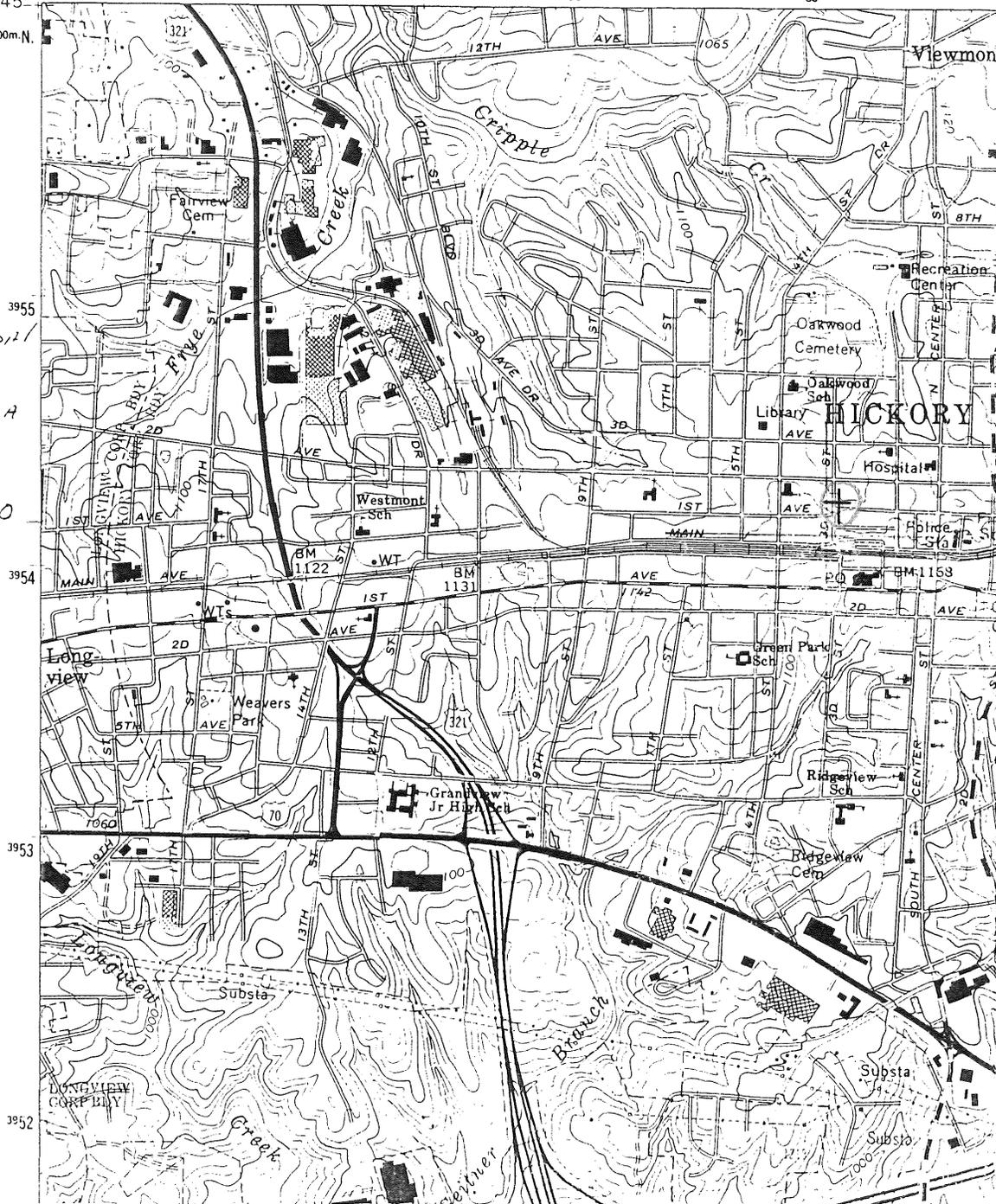
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