

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Trinity Historic District Boundary Increase 2

Durham, Durham County, DH2656, Listed 1/9/2008
Nomination by Heather Wagner
Photographs by Heather Wagner, November 2006



Façade view



Entrance detail

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
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Section 1 - Name:

Trinity Historic District Boundary Increase 2
Other Names: The Great A & P Tea Company
Servall Dry Cleaning and Pressing
Earley B Ragland
Bob's Confectionary

Section 2 - Location:

209-215 N. Gregson Street
Durham, North Carolina, 27701
Durham County (063)

Sections 3: State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State or 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 or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Sections 3: National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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): _____

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Section 5 - Classification:

Ownership of property: Private
Category of property: District
Name of related multi-property listing: Historic Resources of Durham (Partial Inventory: Historic Architectural Properties)
Number of resources within property: 1 contributing 0 non-contributing
Number of resources previously listed in the National Register: 731

Section 6 – Function:

Historic function: COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store
Current function: COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

Section 7 – Description:

Architectural Classification: Commercial

Materials:

foundation: Brick
walls: Brick
roof: Synthetic

The Great A & P Tea Company building stands at 209-215 North Gregson Street on the south end of the Trinity Historic District, a predominantly residential district. Across Gregson Street to the east is the Durham School of the Arts (formerly the Julian S. Carr Junior High School included in the Trinity Historic District). The properties to the immediate north, bordering Lamond Avenue, are modern, one-story commercial buildings (not listed as contributing buildings to the district). To the immediate south, bordering on Morgan Street, is a gravel parking lot; historically, however, two houses stood on that site. Behind the property, bordering on Albemarle are an asphalt parking lot and several historic houses.

The lot on which The Great A & P Tea Company building stands is wedge shaped and follows the footprint of the building. The lot is 94.35 feet on the east side and runs along at 350 degree arc. The south end of the lot is 55 feet wide, the west end 81.7 feet, and the north end 7.6 feet. The south, west, and north boundaries are straight lines and are roughly square (See tax map). The building is also wedge-shaped and is roughly centered on the lot. It has an approximately 91 feet arced facade on the east side. The south, west, and north walls are 49.5 feet, 79.3 feet, and 6.3 respectively. The building opens directly to the public sidewalk and right of way and has a very narrow lot

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surrounding the other sides of the building. The lot itself slopes up to the rear of the building where the ground level is approximately five feet higher than the street level.

The Great A & P Tea Company building is a one-story brick commercial building erected between 1927 and 1929. The building was constructed of brick laid in a common bond pattern and features four storefronts along a bowed façade, each with a stepped parapet. The facade displays decorative brickwork in a rectangular pattern formed by rowlock and header courses with a square masonry piece at each corner. There are two of these rectangles stacked atop one another in each bay. The top of each storefront, directly above the transom, is marked by a soldier course with a square masonry block at each end. Patterns of rusticated brick differ in each of the storefronts' stepped cornices. Breaks in the bond pattern delineate each bay and give the illusion of brick pilasters along the façade of the building, though they do not protrude from the building as traditional pilasters do. Bay 215 extends to the far north end of the building (within the smallest part of the wedge) and contains a window opening measuring roughly forty-two inches wide by thirty-six inches high.

Three of the four storefronts (bays 211, 213, and 215) remain largely intact. These bays retain their original plate-glass windows encased with metal frames, tiled aprons and entry floors, and glass doors with wood frames. Each are tiled in a different color and slightly different pattern made up of square and hexagonal tiles; however, it is clear that they were all constructed at the same time and are original to the building. The remaining storefronts have beadboard ceilings in the recessed entries. Bay 211 has been altered slightly. The tile has been removed from the aprons in the recessed entry walls and replaced with metal sheets with a brick pattern. Bay 213 retains its original glass transom, though it has been painted. Bays 211 and 215 have replacement transoms and bay 215 has a metal awning covering its transom. Bay 209 was removed entirely (likely in the 1980s) after a fire damaged the end bay. A plywood entry with a poured concrete side-entry was constructed in its place. The rear of the building features small square four-pane windows and larger window openings that likely held nine-pane windows.

Section 8 – Significance:

A rare example of an intact commercial building within the predominantly residential Trinity Neighborhood, The Great A & P Tea Company building at 209-215 N. Gregson Street is significant under Criterion A for its contribution to neighborhood development in the Trinity Historic District in the early twentieth century. The existing district encompassed buildings erected between the 1890s and 1940. While The Great A & P

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Tea Company was constructed toward the end of that period of significance, it has a direct connection to the district and its residents.

The Trinity Park and Trinity Heights neighborhoods (recorded collectively as the Trinity Historic District) were platted at the turn-of-the-century and experienced rapid growth and expansion in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Unlike other neighborhoods in Durham, which were tied closely to the tobacco industry, the Trinity Historic District, adjacent to Trinity College, had a focus on providing services for a growing number of middle class residents, many of them professors or staff of the college.

The neighborhood was overwhelmingly residential with only a handful of churches, schools, and three small commercial buildings. While the churches and schools were scattered throughout the neighborhood, commercial buildings were both more scarce and tended to be located at the perimeter of the neighborhood. The (former) Watts Grocery Store, at 1202 Watts Street, is a small front-gable frame structure. The building appears in the city directories as a grocery store in the late 1920s, but may have existed even earlier. It is now used as an office space and does not contribute to the district, because of extensive alterations. The Graham's Grocery building, just three blocks away at 505 N. Gregson Street, was also constructed in the 1920s. It is a brick, four-bay building with large plate-glass windows and glass transoms. The building, now vacant, is similar in style to The Great A & P Tea Company and is listed as a contributing structure in the Trinity Historic District.

Constructed in 1927-1929, The Great A & P Tea Company building is the most physically intact example of commercial architecture in the district. The building first appears in the 1929 city directories, with three of the four bays vacant. From 1930 to 1940, the building housed The Great A & P Tea Company, Servall Dry Cleaning & Pressing, Earley B. Ragland (listed in the city directories as a soft drinks store), Bob's Confectionary, and Rocket Shop Confectionary. Though it stands just one block north of Main Street, the small one-story building held businesses that were clearly oriented to the residential neighborhood to the north. The Great A & P Tea Company was the largest of three groceries in the district and the soda shop and confectionary benefited from their proximity to the Julian S. Carr School across the street. Other similar businesses accessible to resident of the Trinity Historic District were generally concentrated along Ninth Street (on the west side of the Trinity College Campus) or in the downtown area (approximately a half mile east).

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The Great A & P Tea Company building was located on the south end of the Trinity Historic District, within a block of commercial and industrial buildings along Main Street. The buildings along this portion of Main and Morgan Streets, just south of The Great A & P Tea Company, were oriented to the automobile, with dealers, mechanics, and other similar services. Additionally, one block further to the south and east stand Brightleaf Square and the Liggett & Myers complex, tobacco warehouses and cigarette manufacturers that had little, if any, connection to the Trinity Neighborhood. Conversely, from its construction in the late 1920s until about 1940, The Great A & P Tea Company building provided food-, home-, and even student-related businesses that catered to the early residents of the Trinity Historic District. The building is a contributing structure to the district and its earliest businesses catered to the residents of this pivotal early twentieth-century neighborhood.

Section 9 – Bibliography:

Brown, Claudia Roberts. Trinity Historic District. National Register Nomination, 1984.

Hill's Durham City Directories, 1929, 1930, 1934, 1944, 1955, 1960. Microfilm copies at the Durham Public Library.

Little, M. Ruth. Trinity Historic District Boundary Increase. National Register Nomination, 2003.

Roberts, Claudia P. and Diane E. Lea. *The Durham Architectural and Historic Inventory.* Durham: City of Durham and Historic Preservation Society of Durham, 1982.

Section 10 – Geographical Data:

Acreage of Property: .063 acres

UTM Reference: 17 / 688490 / 3986120

Verbal Boundary: property pin # 0821-07-79-137

Boundary Justification: Boundary includes the lot historically associated with The Great A & P Tea Company building.

Section 11 – Form Prepared By:

Heather M. Wagner, Design & Preservation Consultant

Trinity Design-Build

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Durham, North Carolina, 27701

919.321.8344

July 24, 2007