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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property
   historic name Depot Historic District

2. Location
   street & number SE end Depot St. (& bounded by railroad right-of-way) and 111 Railroad St. N/A (not for publication)
   city, town Marion of-way) and 111 Railroad St. N/A (vicinity
   state North Carolina code NC county McDowell code 111 zip code 28752

3. Classification
   Ownership of Property Category of Property Number of Resources within Property
   private building(s) Contributing Noncontributing
   □ public-local district 5 0 buildings
   □ public-State site
   □ public-Federal structure
   □ object
   Name of related multiple property listing: Historic and Architectural Resources in Downtown Marion, North Carolina
   Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification
   As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. □ See continuation sheet.
   Signature of certifying official ____________________________ Date 2-4-9□
   State or Federal agency and bureau
   In my opinion, the property □ meets □ does not meet the National Register criteria. □ See continuation sheet.
   Signature of commenting or other official ____________________________ Date ____________________________
   State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification
   I, hereby, certify that this 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 ____________________________
### 6. Function or Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)</th>
<th>Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation: Rail-related</td>
<td>Commerce/Trade: Warehouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce/Trade: Department store</td>
<td>Industry/Processing/Extraction: Manufacturing facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce/Trade: Warehouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry/Processing/Extraction: Manufacturing facility</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7. Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)</th>
<th>Materials (enter categories from instructions)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial style</td>
<td>foundation: brick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: vernacular Crafteran</td>
<td>walls: brick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>roof: asphalt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other: wood, iron</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See continuation sheet
DESCRIPTION
The Depot Historic District is a remarkably intact grouping of brick buildings closely related physically and historically to the Southern Railway depot, central in the district. The businesses associated with these buildings, such as warehousing, wholesale grocery, liquor rectifying, and drug manufacturing, all clearly relied on the adjacent transportation facilities for their operation and reason for building in this location. Buildings located outside of the district are not oriented to the railroad, or are much more modern facilities, so that the area of the depot district is a tightly compacted commercial area on its own.

The Depot Historic District is separated from the Main Street Historic District both topographically (a large hill and the railroad tracks) and through the encroachment of modern commercial buildings and parking lots between the two locations. The district itself is minimally landscaped, with only a few trees. Depot Street is paved, with sidewalks located in front of the two major warehouse buildings [#3 and #4]. Railroad Street also is paved, with sidewalks in front of the commercial buildings.

Buildings date from ca. 1894 to ca. 1935, with the majority of structures being built at the turn of the century. Styles are one, two, and four story commercial of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the depot exhibiting Craftsman stylistic influences. The earliest of the buildings included in the district dates from ca. 1894 [#3], and the most recent dates from ca. 1935 [#2] (the depot, rebuilt on the same spot where the original freight depot was located). All are brick buildings. The remainder of the buildings date from the early 20th century. Most are of a commercial style common to the late 19th to early 20th centuries, the tallest being the four story Buffaloe Building [#4]. This building, however, exhibits remnants of earlier 19th century building styles with cast iron columns at former windows and entrances into the building. The Blanton Wholesale Grocery building [#3] also exhibits detailing common to a late 19th century commercial building style including decorative brick corbelling at the cornice, segmental arches over windows, and entrance doors with transoms above.
Only minimal changes have been made to the buildings in the district, most of which are small additions to the side or rear. The Buffaloe Building [#4] has some of its original windows bricked in, and some are covered with corrugated metal, but the configuration of the storefront level remains intact, divided into bays by extant cast iron columns. It also retains its cut stone main facade and metal cornice, all of which help the structure to retain a high degree of its original architectural integrity and be a contributing property to the district. The commercial building on Railroad Street facing the depot has also undergone only minimal changes such as small additions to the side and rear, and slight alterations of the storefront.
INVENTORY LIST

C = Contributing  NC = Non-contributing

Note: Dating of properties was based primarily upon documentation available in Sanborn maps, Southern Railway Archives, and oral history interviews.

C 1. 111 Railroad Street; Commercial Bldg.; ca. 1913
 Two story commercial building facing the depot and railroad tracks. Currently, brick has been painted red. Building is divided into two sections, with narrow and wide brick segmental arches alternating across the front, over windows and doors. Four six-over-one windows, also with segmental arches, adorn the second story. Doors are double wide panel doors below with glass in the upper half, possibly to allow for ease of moving large items of merchandise. A small, one story addition, set back from the main facade, has been built on the east side of the building. This building in 1913 was partially vacant, and partially in use as a lunch counter or cafe. By 1918 it was used as the bottling works, and was used for retail stores by 1928 (Sanborn maps).

C 2. South end of Depot St., south side of building faces Railroad St., north side of building faces Depot St.; Freight Depot; ca. 1935
 Red brick depot building, exhibiting a Craftsman stylistic influence in its use of large overhanging eaves and prominent brackets. Hipped roof. South side still retains the outline of several arched openings, which presently are bricked in. North side is the same, only arched wood freight doors are still intact. Loading dock is still in place on both sides. A modern red brick addition, built in 1952, is attached to the east side of the building. Originally, or at least by 1894 (Sanborn maps), there were separate passenger and freight depots. Apparently, the passenger depot was similar in design to contemporary Southern Railway depots in other towns in western North Carolina, of all wood construction with large overhanging eaves and a projecting center turret. Ms. Ermine Neal (Interview, November 14, 1987) remembers that it was painted gray and was almost identical to the depot at Old Fort. The existing freight depot, of brick, appears to date from

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1935 (according to a date plate on the building). It seems likely that this building replaced an earlier brick freight depot, of the same size and configuration. Several older residents recall that there was a fire at the depot, but aren't sure when it happened. A 1902 construction contract from the Southern Railway Archives indicates that the original freight depot, which was brick, was doubled in size at that time. There is no evidence anywhere on the building that it incorporates an earlier building, so it seems likely the entire structure was indeed rebuilt for some reason, in the footprint of the building shown on the 1902 archival drawings. Charles Presnell, who worked at the depot for many years, recalls that the passenger depot was torn down when the 1952 addition was made.

C 3. 120 Depot Street; Blanton's Wholesale Grocery; ca. 1894.

Two story warehouse/commercial building. Decorative brick at cornice level. Brick drip moldings over second story windows. Segmental arches in brick over first story windows and door. Second story windows are four-over-four with original wavy glass still intact. First story windows alternate between four-over-four and six-over-six windows. Bottom half of some windows are boarded over. Entrance door appears original with glass transom above. Two arched four-over-four windows exist on north side of building. There is a two story brick addition, ca. 1959, followed by a one story metal addition to the rear, neither of which detracts from the original building's integrity due to the fact that they are located to the rear and cannot be seen from the front elevation of the building. The south side of the building (facing the depot) has two rows of four-over-four arched windows, and a second entrance with a segmental arch over it. Over the years, this building has been utilized as a wholesale liquor sales and rectifying business run by R. H. Bennett, and later W. W. Cooper (ca. 1894-1908). W. W. Cooper, according to Sanborn maps, enlarged the building sometime between 1898-1902, doubling its size. By 1913, the building was used for Blanton's Wholesale Grocery, which it remained until bought for use as a warehouse by Laughridge Furniture Company.
C 4. 2 Depot St.; former Buffaloe Building; ca. 1908
Four story rusticated stone faced building used originally as a whiskey cutting factory. Former display windows in front are bricked in. Windows may have been there as a way to admit light, rather than for display, since the building's use has always been manufacturing. (It became a hosiery mill after its whiskey-cutting days). Simple stone lintels adorn each window; windows are covered with corrugated metal. Three rows of seven windows each are located on the front (west side) of the building. Six windows form six bays along the southern side of the building as well, on the second and third floors only. An arched doorway and two other windows have been bricked in on this side. All but the front of the building is made of brick, with the rusticated stone wrapping the front corners of the building to form quoins. The north side of the building is also six bays across, as on the south, except there are several more window openings of a display size bricked in on the first floor. The storefront window openings are framed by iron posts. The building also retains a decorative metal cornice above the storefront, and a large transom window above the front door. A one story brick addition has been made at the rear. A livery stable was originally located on this site. This building may have been part of W. W. Cooper's wholesale liquor business across the street. By 1913 (Sanborn maps), half the building was vacant, and half was a feed store. In 1918, half the building was used as the Elizabeth James Hosiery Mills, and half was the drug manufacturing business of S.B. Pennick. Elizabeth James Mills was another enterprise of C. F. James, later owner of the Hotel James. He began this business in 1916. S. B. Pennick opened his store in May of 1914, soon after discovering that McDowell County was a rich source of rare plants and herbs to make botanical drugs. His warehouse served as a purchasing station for these plants, which many farmers brought into town to sell. Pennick advertised all over the Southeast. He later opened a New York office and transferred his operations to Asheville. (Mildred Fossett, History of McDowell County, p. 113-115). By 1928, this building had become the location for Novelty Hosiery Mill Company, and has remained as a hosiery mill ever since (Charles Clevenger Hosiery Mill today).
C 5. Immediately adjacent to 2 Depot St., to the east; Commercial Building; 1911.
Simple, one story brick commercial building with the construction date of 1911 hand inscribed into the concrete in the side. Storefront framework is intact, although windows and door glass are boarded over. Decorative brickwork at cornice. Building is presently vacant.
8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally  ☐ statewide  ☑ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria

☐ A  ☐ B  ☑ C  ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)

☐ A  ☐ B  ☐ C  ☐ D  ☐ E  ☐ F  ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Transportation

Period of Significance

ca. 1894-1937

Significant Dates

ca. 1894

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

☑ See continuation sheet
SUMMARY
The Depot Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C. In contributing to broad patterns of Marion's history, the Depot Historic District represents a distinct historical era in the town's history. Marion, like so many other western North Carolina towns, remained essentially isolated and very rural until the arrival of the railroad. When the railroad finally arrived in Marion in 1870, it spurred a period of economic and architectural growth that continued into the 1930s, and has yet perhaps remained unparalleled. It contributes greatly to the pattern of development of Marion through the businesses, industries, and residences it helped to create and nurture, as well as creating its own distinct commercial section of town. Businesses at the depot such as planing mills, wholesale liquor sales, flour mills, wholesale groceries, tanneries, livery stables, and later bottling works and auto repair shops, clearly depended upon rail transport for their success and survival. Architecturally, the district represents a group of distinctive commercial structures dating from primarily the turn of the century to the 1930s. For all of the above stated reasons, then, the Depot Historic District in Marion is significant in the area of architecture, for the primarily turn-of-the-century commercial building styles represented, as well as the Craftsman-influenced depot, in the area of commerce for the businesses the arrival of the train helped to create and to succeed, and in the area of transportation for the association the district has with the depot building itself and all it represents as a center for both passsenger and freight transportation which influenced a period of significant growth in Marion's history from 1870-1937.

HISTORIC CONTEXTS
Architecture
The buildings in the Depot Historic District represent an extremely intact grouping of late 19th to 20th century commercial, warehouse, and transportation structures. Especially notable are the ca. 1894 Laughridge Furniture Company Building and the ca. 1908 Buffaloe Building. Both are excellent examples of warehouse and manufacturing structures of the era, with exterior detailing such as segmental arches over windows, decorative brick at the
cornice, quoins, and rusticated stone. The commercial structures on Railroad Street also form a highly intact grouping of early 20th century structures of this type. While the passenger depot no longer exists, the current freight depot (ca. 1935) is significant because it is so similar to many other early 20th century depots in western North Carolina, simple, functional, and Craftsman in design. All these buildings together are representative of this era of Marion's developmental history from 1870 when the railroad arrived, up to the late 1930s.

Commerce
The district is significant in the area of commerce for its association with Marion's greatest period of economic growth as the commercial center of McDowell County. While many of the buildings were rail related businesses and storage facilities, others, such as the Buffaloe Building, developed as a manufacturing facility due to the availability of materials brought to Marion by the train. This building remains today as a hosiery mill, one of many manufacturing plants in Marion. Support businesses, such as utilities offices, auto repair shops, and bottling works, housed in the commercial buildings on Railroad Street, make these buildings important, too, for the commercial and developmental associations they have with Marion's history.

Transportation
The district is significant in this area for its association with the railroad and the resulting economic boom this brought to Marion beginning in 1870 and continuing into the late 1930s. Without the railroad Marion would never have developed into the commercial center of the county, which it remains today.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
The arrival of the railroad in Marion, like many other towns in western North Carolina, marked the end of one era and the beginning of another. Not only did the railroad physically impact upon Marion through construction of the tracks through an otherwise undeveloped section of town, but its greatest impact was perhaps felt secondarily through the businesses, tourism, and building opportunities it helped to spur forward. It was another ten years before the train
finally made it over the mountains to Asheville, but Marion served as an important link or gateway to this great event. Marion, once the train arrived, was no longer destined to be a small rural county seat for McDowell County, but would soon see new businesses, residences, and industries abounding.

Located down a steep hill from Main Street, the area of land that later became the railroad depot, tracks, and related commercial facilities was once an underdeveloped tract of land owned by the Neal family (Interview with Ermine C. Neal, 11/14/87). It remained this way until the railroad reached Marion in 1870. A period of growth began then, which developed into what remains today. In addition to the buildings still extant, by 1894 there was a separate freight and passenger depot for the travel in and out of the area that had become so popular by this time. A common sight in the late 19th and 20th centuries were the horse-drawn carriages which waited at the depot to carry visitors back and forth to the hotels on Main Street. Livery stables were also located by the depot, as were several smaller dwellings. A tobacco factory, as well as a tannery and grist mill (businesses also reliant upon the railroad) were located across from the depot on Railroad Avenue. The depot section of town must have been a bustling place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with up to fourteen passenger trains and thirty-five freight trains arriving daily (1930s Chamber of Commerce brochure entitled "57 Facts About the Lake City of the Mountains").

The smaller commercial section that developed around the depot grew primarily at the turn of the century, but it is likely that as early as 1872 there were flour, corn, and saw mills located near the depot, which continued in operation for many years. The number of hotels and boarding houses increased at this same time, a direct impact of the train's arrival, making travel to the area more convenient. By 1884, there were four boarding houses and three hotels listed in Marion, as well as a planing mill, which was another business directly related to train transportation. Several more corn and flour mills had also sprung up at this time. In 1894, a livery stable, a small dwelling, a tobacco factory, and Blanton and Morgan's
Tannery and Grist Mill had all been built by the depot. (All of these businesses were located in buildings around the present district, all of which are now gone). R. H. Bennett's Wholesale Liquor Sales and Rectifying had opened in one of the still extant brick warehouse buildings [#3]. By 1902, Bennett had moved his business across the street facing Railroad Avenue, and the building was enlarged and developed into another wholesale liquor business by W. W. Cooper. McCall Roller Mills (flour) was in operation, as was the Marion Tanning Company (formerly Blanton and Morgan) and a planing mill. (All of these were also located around the present district and are now gone). 1908 Sanborn maps indicate another large building was constructed across from the Bennett building by this time [#4], with half of the building in use as a wholesale grocery, and half for wholesale liquor. Industry had begun to develop in the area by this time as well, including Catawba, McDowell, and Western Furniture companies, businesses also clearly dependent upon rail transportation for their success. By 1913, W. W. Cooper's business had become Blanton's Wholesale Grocery, a business which continued on into the 1950s. Blanton's Wholesale Grocery [#4], begun in 1898, depended on the railroad for shipping of goods to independent retailers throughout the region. Merchants also came by wagon from neighboring counties to buy and sell goods at Blanton's. Once the Clinchfield Railroad, as well as this one run by Southern Railway, were completed, goods could be shipped almost entirely by rail.

1918 Sanborn maps indicate even further development by the depot. Blanton's, of course, remained in place. Elizabeth James Mills, an early enterprise of eventual owner of the Hotel James, C. F. James, had opened where the former wholesale grocery and liquor businesses were located, across from Blanton's [#4]. This business was begun in 1916, and manufactured sixty dozen mens half hose per day. It remained in this location until 1922. The James Mills shared the same building with S. B. Pennick's botanical drug business, begun in May of 1914. Pennick, an entrepreneur, had discovered that McDowell County and western North Carolina were rich in rare plants and herbs to make botanical drugs. The warehouse served as a purchasing station for these plants, brought from outlying counties by
local farmers. A lumber mill and Marion Leather Company (formerly Marion Tanning), located on the south side of Railroad Street, west of Morgan Street, were also in business at this time.

Several buildings of rail related businesses opened across from the depot on Railroad Avenue over the early part of the 20th century as well. [#1] (While there are three buildings located here, only one is included in this nomination due to significant alterations to the two westernmost ones). Housed in these buildings between 1908-1928 were the Telephone Office Shop, Marion Light & Power, printing and electrical motor repair, bottling works, a restaurant, and retail stores.
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Historic and Architectural Resources in Downtown Marion, NC: Depot Historic District

Section number 8  Page 6

FOOTNOTES

1 Interview with Ermine C. Neal, 14th of November, 1987
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid, 1884.
5 Ibid.
7 Ibid, 1902.
8 Ibid, 1913.
9 "Wholesaler, A. Blanton Grocery, was Established Prior to 1900, McDowell News. 1959. undated.
10 Pictorial Rotogravure Edition, Marion Progress, 1934
9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings

Survey # ________________________________
Record # ________________________________

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 2.25 acres

UTM References

A 1,7 0,8 5,4 0,3 9 8,5,0
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is indicated by the bold line defining the area labeled Depot Historic District as shown on the accompanying sketch map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn to include resources and their associated settings which have retained their integrity and which are historically related to the depot and transportation development in Marion.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sybil Argintar-Bowers, Preservation Planning Consultant
organization Bowers Southeastern Preservation
street & number P.O. Box 15722

See continuation sheet

city or town Asheville state NC
telephone (704) 253-1392
zip code 28813
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


Neal, Ermine C. Marion, NC. Interview on 14th of November, 1987.


Southern Railway Schedules, 1905.
PHOTO LIST: DEPOT HISTORIC DISTRICT

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Name of Property ........ Depot Historic District

City and State .......... Marion, North Carolina
Photographer ............ Ted Alexander, 1985 photos
                        Sybil A. Bowers, 1987-88, 1990 photos
Date taken .............. as noted below.
                        All pre-1990 photos have been
                        field verified in 1990.
Location of original ..... Western Office, Archives & History
                        negative Asheville, North Carolina

Photo A
Railroad Street
Looking west towards district.

Photo B
Railroad Street.
Looking southeast at commercial building along Railroad St. (entry
1 in background); altered buildings outside district. August 1990.

Photo C
Depot.
Looking northwest.
October 1987.

Photo D
Depot.
Exterior door detail.
October 1987.

Photo E
Laughridge Furniture Company; Depot Street
Looking west at front facade of building.
September 1988

Photo F
Buffaloe Building; Depot Street.
Looking southeast at front facade of building.
September 1988