United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM  

1. Name of Property  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>historic name</th>
<th>(Former) Crane Company Building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>other names/site number</td>
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2. Location  

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<th>street &amp; number</th>
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<td>city or town</td>
<td>Charlotte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
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<tr>
<td>code</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>county</td>
<td>Mecklenburg</td>
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<tr>
<td>code</td>
<td>119</td>
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<td>zip code</td>
<td>28208</td>
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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 and Date]  

[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 and Date]  

[State or Federal agency and bureau]  

4. National Park Service Certification  

I, hereby certify that this property is: ☑ entered in the National Register, ☑ See continuation sheet.  

[Signature of Keeper]  

[Date of Action]  

☐ determined eligible for the National Register, ☑ See continuation sheet.  

[Signature of Keeper]  

[Date of Action]  

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  

[Signature of Keeper]  

[Date of Action]  

☐ removed from the National Register  

[Signature of Keeper]  

[Date of Action]  

☐ other (explain):  

[Signature of Keeper]  

[Date of Action]
(Former) Crane Company Building
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

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1 0 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE/WAREHOUSE

Current Functions
Cat: WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
Other: Utilitarian

Materials
- foundation: Concrete
- roof: Tar
- walls: Brick
- other: Concrete

Narrative Description: See Continuation Form Section 7, page 1
(Former) Crane Company Building
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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.)

☐ a owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
☐ b removed from its original location.
☐ c a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance  COMMERCE

Period of Significance  1928-1950  Significant Dates  1928

Significant person(s):  N/A

Cultural Affiliation:  N/A

Architect/Builder  Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance:  See Continuation Form Section 8, page 1
9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography: See Continuation Form Section 9, page 1

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
X 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 # __________

Primary Location of Additional Data:
X State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository: N.C. Department of Cultural Resources

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.39

UTM References Zone Easting Northing
17 512380 3898160

Verbal Boundary Description: See Continuation Form Section 10, page 1

Boundary Justification: See Continuation Form Section 10, page 1

11. Form Prepared By

Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc. date 12-3-00
2228 Winter Street telephone (704) 569-8130
Charlotte, N.C. 28205

Property Owner

Nolan D. Elenz telephone (704) 544-2224
4208 Rounding Rock Road
Charlotte, N.C. 28277
7. **Narrative Description**

Constructed in 1928 for a major wholesale distributor of plumbing supplies and engineered industrial products, the (Former) Crane Company Building is located at 1307 West Morehead Street, southwest of downtown Charlotte. Facing the street, the building occupies a 0.39-acre lot that was laid out adjacent to both West Morehead and the Piedmont and Northern Railway, which ran behind the property. Because of the easy access to downtown Charlotte and good railway connections, West Morehead Street developed into a thriving warehousing and industrial corridor between the 1920s and 1950s, and warehouses and factories from this period still line West Morehead and side streets. Although some of the buildings in the vicinity of the former Crane property now stand vacant, many are currently being converted to office and retail uses. Among these are the Charlotte Coca Cola Bottling Plant (1401 West Morehead), the Carolina Transfer and Storage Company Building (1230 West Morehead), the Carolina School Supply Company Building (1023 West Morehead), and the Union Storage and Warehouse (1000 West Morehead). The area’s rejuvenation has been sparked in part by the construction of nearby Ericsson Stadium. This massive, modern sports arena, erected for the city’s professional football franchise in 1996, stands along West Morehead Street several blocks east of the Crane Company Building.

The two-story Crane Building was built of reinforced concrete construction with the exposed concrete framing defining the window bays and brick curtain walls. The building has a largely utilitarian appearance expressed in its steel sash windows with concrete sills, sizable freight doors, flat roof, and simple, boxy form. The rear elevation has a stepped configuration to accommodate a series of four individual loading bays and docks. Exterior ornamentation is concentrated on the front elevation which features a parapet topped by two decorative urns, and brick spandrels laid in a herringbone pattern. The four bays across the facade are defined by projecting pilasters highlighted on the second story by alternating bands of brick and concrete. The second-story windows remain intact, but the window bays on the first story have brick infill. Modern aluminum sash windows are evident in the infilled east bay and above the recessed main entrance in the west bay. Original steel sash windows survive on the side and rear elevations.

The intact interior reveals the structural system of reinforced concrete girders, floor slabs, and piers, specifically designed to carry the extra heavy loads of a warehouse for steel plumbing supplies. Each of the two floors consists of large storage areas, with concrete floors, a center steel stairway, and corner freight elevators. The overall use of reinforced concrete, combined with brick curtain walls and steel window frames and stairs, made the building largely fireproof. The principal modifications are the series of later first floor offices divided by partition walls along the front elevation facing West Morehead Street.
8. Statement of Significance

Summary
Constructed in 1928, the (Former) Crane Company Building is recommended for the National Register under Criterion A for commerce. The well-preserved (Former) Crane Company Complex stands as a reminder of the myriad commercial warehouses and industrial complexes that by the early twentieth century had made Charlotte the leading manufacturing and distribution center of the Carolinas and a flourishing New South city. The Crane Company was a national producer and distributor of plumbing and heating supplies, valves, piping, pumps, and other engineered industrial products, and the company was a leading supplier both to the region’s burgeoning textile industry and the numerous ancillary manufacturers that served the cotton mills. By the 1920s, Charlotte and the surrounding Piedmont had surpassed New England as the center of textile production in the world, and with this explosion in mill construction, a variety of auxiliary industries that supplied the textile factories also chose to locate in Charlotte. Because the highly mechanized textile industry created a great demand for all forms of steel industrial products, several national suppliers, including the Crane Company, built their distribution facilities in Charlotte. The city’s excellent rail network and good highway connections made the city an advantageous location for both local producers and national companies that needed regional operations to serve far-flung markets.

Like a number of other wholesale distributors, manufacturers, and storage companies, the Crane Company built its warehouse to face West Morehead Street, which developed as one of the principal industrial corridors of the city and a gateway to downtown Charlotte. By the Depression, approximately sixteen substantial, two and three story, brick-veneered factories and warehouses lined an eight block stretch of West Morehead Street. Although West Morehead remains the one of the most intact, historic industrial districts in Charlotte, only seven of its pre-World War II industrial and warehousing properties survive. With its fireproof, reinforced concrete construction and brick curtain walls, the two-story (Former) Crane Company Building is one of the earliest and best preserved properties within the West Morehead Street industrial corridor.

The period of significance extends from 1928, when the building was constructed, to 1950. Although the Crane Company continued to own and occupy the building until ca. 1990, the property does not have the exceptional significance required under 36 C.F.R. 60 to extend the period of significance to within the last fifty years.
Historical Background and Commerce Context

Located within the industrial corridor of West Morehead Street along the Piedmont and Northern Railway, the well-preserved (Former) Crane Company Building stands as a reminder of the myriad commercial warehouses and industrial operations that by the early twentieth century had made Charlotte the leading manufacturing and distribution center of the Carolinas and a flourishing New South city. With the end of the Civil War, and the subsequent reconstruction and expansion of the Piedmont's rail network, leaders throughout the region envisioned a new order based on industrialization, specifically cotton production, and urban growth to replace the agrarian society of the past. These proponents of the New South ethos campaigned vigorously for the construction of cotton mills, which by World War I numbered over 300 within a 100-mile radius of Charlotte (Woodward 1951: 31; Lefler and Newsome 1954: 474-489). Charlotte, and Mecklenburg County, became the hub of the Southern textile manufacturing industry, and by the 1920s the Piedmont of North Carolina and South Carolina had surpassed New England as the leading textile producer in the world (Mitchell and Mitchell 1930; Charlotte Observer, 28 October 1928).

Textiles, in turn, attracted other industries to Charlotte, and by the 1920s, the city could boast that its 141 factories manufactured eighty-one different products (Hanchett 1993: 202). The Crane Company was just one of a number of manufacturers and distributors drawn to the city during this period by the dynamic local economy. In particular, the explosive growth of the Piedmont textile industry lured to Charlotte the numerous industries and national distributors that supplied the varied needs of the regional cotton mills. Having been the first to adopt the full-scale factory system, the textile industry was highly mechanized and automated by the early twentieth century, and thus these ancillary producers included tool and die makers, machine foundries, pump and elevator manufacturers, textile machine manufacturing companies, and chemical dye works as well as steel pipe, valve, and specialized equipment distributors like Crane. So many of these auxiliary manufacturers relocated or opened branch operations in Charlotte that the city became not only the center of the textile industry but also the leading producer of textile mill machinery and equipment in the South (Glass 1992: 57). With industrialization, the population of Charlotte soared from just 7,000 in 1880, to over 82,000 in 1929, becoming the largest city in the two Carolinas (Sixteenth Census 1940).

Although cotton production formed the economic mainstay of Charlotte, the city's good rail system, expanding work force, and plentiful and inexpensive electric power made the city attractive to this broad array of manufacturing companies and regional distributors. Tobacco magnate, James Buchanan Duke, and his Southern Power Company (later Duke Power Company) expanded aggressively in the region, supplying both industrial and residential clients with inexpensive electricity. With a robust industrial economy and urban prosperity came a strong commercial and financial base which served large areas of the industrialized Piedmont as well as
local consumers. As the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce boasted in a 1928 advertisement, Charlotte had emerged as a regional commercial center with a 150-mile trading radius and more than 4,500,000 consumers (Charlotte City Directory 1928).

Because of its inland location, the economic success of Charlotte was dependent upon good rail transportation. Sustaining little damage during the Civil War, the city quickly recovered and even expanded its rail network. By 1875, six railroads were routed through the city, giving Charlotte more rail connections than any other city between Washington, D.C. and Atlanta (Hanchett 1998: 72). Charlotte benefited from continued rail expansion and consolidation throughout the late nineteenth century, which created both the powerful Southern Railway system, with its connections to New Orleans and Baltimore, and the smaller, but strategic, Piedmont and Northern Railway. An interurban line linking Charlotte to scores of regional mill towns, the Piedmont and Northern served both passengers and freight on its 150-mile route. At its height of operation in the 1920s, the line generated so much traffic that its motto, "A Mill to the Mile," was accurate for much of its length (Fetters and Swanson 1974: 12; Hanchett 1998: 74 (Glass 1992: 57-58).

As the Charlotte Observer noted on June 29, 1925, many national companies, such as the Crane Company, were making Charlotte the center of their regional operations, capitalizing on the city's good transportation connections and large manufacturing base to serve Southeastern markets.

"Many new demands have come upon Charlotte Realtors [sic] during the past year for locations for building of warehouses, because Charlotte has come to be known in the sales organizations of national manufacturers throughout America as the best point in the Southeast for the distribution of products and for the location of branch plants. Some realtors here have become specialists in finding such locations to suit varying requirements, and almost every square foot of railroad footage has been analyzed and compared in price."

The newspaper also observed that "proximity to street cars, freight stations, express offices and retail districts command the higher prices" (Charlotte Observer, 29 June 1925, quoted in Morrill 1999).

Between the 1920s and the 1950s, scores of warehouses and factories were sited along the railroad corridors and adjacent roadways that cut through the city. Assorted factories and industrial supply buildings flanked the Southern, the Norfolk and Southern, the Seaboard Airline, and Piedmont and Northern rail lines, and by the 1920s, the highways running parallel to these rail corridors attracted similar development. North Tryon, North Graham, and North Davidson streets to the north of the center city, West Morehead Street to the southwest, and South Boulevard and South Tryon Street to the south became the primary industrial corridors of the city.
Where rail lines and adjoining roadways converged near the center city, factories and warehouses formed concentrated industrial districts. Southwest of downtown Charlotte, industrial activities clustered around the Mint Street yards of the Piedmont and Northern (just north of West Morehead Street) and then spread to the south and west, following the nearby Southern Railway lines to Gastonia and Columbia, South Carolina. Spur lines served blocks of industrial plants, supply houses, storage and transfer companies, and lumber yards, while workers' houses extended from the Third Ward of downtown into the Dilworth and Wilmore neighborhoods. Streets such as Mint, Camden, Graham, Cedar, Summit, West Morehead, South Tryon, and South Boulevard—as well as scores of connecting streets—underwent vigorous industrial expansion as the city attracted both local companies and national manufacturers like the Crane Company (Charlotte City Directory 1929, 1930, 1931, 1950; Sanborn Insurance Maps 1929, 1951; Hanchett 1998: 90-91).

From its origins in 1855 as a Chicago brass and bell foundry, the Crane Company emerged in the early twentieth century as an international manufacturer and distributor of plumbing and heating supplies, valves, fittings, pipe, and pumps. Because the textile industry, the manufacturers of cotton by-products, and the machine and equipment producers all created such a great demand for engineered industrial products, several national suppliers built distribution facilities in Charlotte. In addition to Crane, several other steel pipe and plumbing supply companies located branch operations in the city. Nearby on West Morehead, the Grinnell Company, a manufacturer of fire extinguishers and sprinkler systems, the Mott-Southern Company, a division of the J.L. Mott Iron Works of New York, and the Standard Sanitary Manufacturing Company of Pennsylvania, all had built manufacturing facilities or wholesale warehouses in Charlotte by the late 1920s (Charlotte City Directory, 1927-1929).

Soon after the turn of the twentieth century, Crane began expanding into eastern markets from its Midwestern and western base with the 1903 acquisition of the Eaton, Cole and Burnham Company of Bridgeport, Connecticut. At the end of World War I, the company underwent further expansion with the opening of international operations in Canada, England, and France, as well as the establishment of additional branch offices in the U.S. (Kepos 1994: 133-134). Charlotte was selected as the location for one of Crane's new east coast offices, and in 1928, the company constructed its warehouse at 1307 West Morehead Street (Charlotte City Directory, 1928). The 1929 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for Charlotte depicts the two-story, brick warehouse and denotes its 1928 building date and fireproof construction. The Crane Company's choice of reinforced concrete construction reflected national trends in factory and warehouse design of the period. Reinforced concrete construction and brick curtain walls made the building virtually fireproof, and the great strength of the concrete structural system reduced the number of
vertical members needed for interior support, so that even multiple-story factories and warehouses could be built with open interiors unbroken by numerous piers. Such open and flexible plans greatly increased the storage capacity of warehouses (Alexander 1991: 108-109).

The West Morehead Street location was a strategic one for the newly built supply facility. In 1927, West Morehead Street, formerly a minor roadway at the outskirts of the center city, was extended westward across Irwin Creek to connect downtown with Wilkinson Boulevard. Completed in 1927, Wilkinson was the first four-lane highway in North Carolina, and the route linked Charlotte to the booming textile center of Gastonia and the surrounding mill towns of Gaston County. West Morehead Street also ran parallel to the interurban Piedmont and Northern Railway, which Wilkinson Boulevard followed westward into Gaston County. Benefiting from rail and highway connections and proximity to the Piedmont and Northern's Mint Street yards and freight station, the West Morehead Street corridor quickly became prime industrial real estate.

In 1920, there was only one industrial operation, a foundry, located along West Morehead, but with its new highway connections, sales and construction along the thoroughfare were brisk between 1927 and 1930. Also during the 1920s, the Piedmont and Northern constructed a north-south spur line that crossed West Morehead along the east side of Irwin Creek to connect with the Southern Railway, and this rail expansion fostered further development. By 1930, an eight-block stretch of West Morehead, reaching from the Southern Railway to Wilkinson Boulevard, contained seven warehousing facilities as well as a variety of manufacturing and foundry operations. In 1927, the four-story Carolina Transfer and Storage Company Building, built of flat slab construction with a utilitarian brick exterior, was constructed at 1023 West Morehead (across from the Crane Building) and the two story Union Storage and Warehouse, with its brick exterior and restrained classical detailing, was completed several blocks to the east. In 1928, the year the Crane Building was constructed, the Carolina School Supply Company also built a multiple-story, brick warehouse with Gothic Revival stylistic elements across the street from Union Storage. Although no longer extant, an imposing, four-story warehouse and office building (1926) for the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company stood at the corner of West Morehead and Cedar Street, next to Union Storage. Development continued until the 1930s. On the eve of the Depression, the two-story, Art Deco Charlotte Coca-Cola Bottling Plant and the Grinnell Company complex, encompassing a two-story, brick office building and a massive factory with the distinctive sawtooth monitor roof, had been added to the emerging industrial district along West Morehead.

On the south side of West Morehead, behind the Carolina School Supply Company warehouse, Duke Power Company erected an electrical equipment warehouse on the newly installed Piedmont and Northern spur. Behind Duke Power, the McClaren Rubber Company plant, a stone cutting operation, an air filter manufacturer, a branch of the Union Carbide Corporation, and the large foundry operations of Charlotte Pipe and Foundry Company also built along the Piedmont
and Northern rail frontage. Most of this area on the south side of West Morehead has been leveled for redevelopment, leaving only the Duke Power warehouse and Charlotte Pipe and Foundry. Within the once densely developed industrial district spanning both the north and south sides of West Morehead, only seven factory or warehouse properties remain along the thoroughfare from the boom years of the early twentieth century (Sanborn Map Company 1929; Charlotte City Directory 1920, 1929).

Along with the Carolina Transfer Company, Union Warehouse and Storage, the Coca Cola Bottling Plant, the Grinnell Company office building, and the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, the Crane Building was one of six properties oriented to West Morehead that was built of fireproof construction, designed with reinforced concrete framing and brick curtain walls (Sanborn Insurance Map 1929). The promise of virtually fireproof construction made reinforced concrete a popular structural choice for public buildings as well as factories and warehouses. A collection of other warehouses and factories built in Charlotte between the 1920s and World War II, as well as some public schools and public housing, automobile showrooms, and downtown apartment buildings and department stores, utilized the new concrete technology. The 1951 Sanborn Map of Charlotte depicted a total of fourteen reinforced concrete framed warehouses and factories within downtown or the outlying industrial districts. With the exception of five that remain on West Morehead, none survives intact. One of the more notable examples was the Power Building (1927) in downtown Charlotte. Now lost, this multiple story, reinforced concrete and brick facility commanded the corner of Church and First streets near the Piedmont and Northern rail yards. The building consisted of a block-long row of electrical supply wholesalers along First Street and a main office section facing Church. Also located in the center city is the former Query, Spivey and McGee Company property near the Southern Railway at the corner of Fifth and College streets. Home to a former hardware supply company, this five-story, concrete and brick building (1925) has been heavily altered, and in the past twenty years has been converted to professional offices (Sanborn Insurance Map 1951).

By World War II, downtown Charlotte had become exclusively a commercial and business center, and little of its industrial fabric has survived. West Morehead Street and the city's other historic industrial areas continued to attract factories and warehousing facilities through the 1950s. However, in the early 1960s, Interstate Highway 85 was constructed on the north and east sides of the city, reorienting much of Charlotte's industrial geography and leaving the older industrial areas vulnerable to abandonment and demolition. Over time, a significant portion of Charlotte's historic industrial fabric has been lost. Some of the original occupants along the West Morehead corridor, such as Crane, Carolina Transfer and Storage, and Coca-Cola, continued to operate at their original locations until the 1980s and early 1990s, but other properties became vacant or underused as manufacturers and wholesalers relocated to outlying highway frontage. In recent years, however, there has been a renewed interest in the area because of the easy access provided by Interstate Highway 77 (just east of the former Crane Company building), which
bisects West Morehead Street, and because of increased commercial development near the new football stadium, which has an entrance along West Morehead Street. The Crane Company continued to operate from its West Morehead warehouse until ca. 1990 after which the property stood vacant for several years. Currently, the building is undergoing rehabilitation (Charlotte City Directory 1930, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1992).
9. Bibliographic References


Charlotte Observer. 29 June 1925.


Nichols, John R. “Choice of Type of Construction,” Architectural Forum (September 1923): 99-104.


10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description
The nominated property conforms to current Mecklenburg County tax parcel No. 07325407.

Boundary Justification
The property being nominated consists of the original 0.39-acre parcel on which the Crane Company Building was constructed and which conforms to the current tax parcel.

Photographs
The following information pertains to each of the photographs:

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1. Front (North) and West Elevations, View Looking South.
2. Setting, View Looking Northwest along West Morehead Street.
3. Main Entry, Front (North) Elevation, View Looking East.
4. East Elevation, View Looking West.
5. West Elevation, View Looking Southwest.
7. Rear (South) Elevation, View Looking Northeast.
8. Interior, First Floor Storage Room, Looking towards Rear.