

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UMF 1024-0018

EXP 12-31-84

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Rocky Mount Electric Power Plant

AND/OR COMMON Pearsall Machine Works, Inc.

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
217 Andrews Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
Second

CITY, TOWN  
Rocky Mount

VICINITY OF

STATE  
North Carolina

CODE  
037

COUNTY  
Nash

CODE  
127

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Harry S. Pearsall, Jr.

STREET & NUMBER  
737 Westwood Drive

CITY, TOWN  
Rocky Mount

VICINITY OF

STATE  
North Carolina 27801

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Nash County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
Nashville

STATE  
North Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

Determined eligible: No

TITLE  
Rocky Mount Central Business District

DATE  
1979

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS Survey and Planning Branch, NC Division of Archives and History

CITY, TOWN  
Raleigh

STATE  
North Carolina 27611

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The first Rocky Mount Electric Power Plant (not Pearsall Machine Works, Inc.) is located on the edge of the downtown central business district in Rocky Mount. Built in 1901 as a one-story brick facility, the power plant operated here until c 1910. Probably around 1920 the building was raised to its present height of two stories, and a rear addition was made as well. The two-story structure which incorporates the original power plant is constructed of hand-made brick laid in 5:1 common bond. The gable roof is sheathed in corrugated metal over wood and asphalt; four metal ventilators and a brick chimney stack pierce the roof. Parapet gables outlined in stretcher bond rise at the east and west gable ends.

The front, or north, facade exhibits irregular fenestration. A set of paired windows on the northeast corner of the front features short, double-segmented brick arches and six-over-six sash with wooden sills. Similar arches are found over the front (main) entrance, which contains double doors, paneled below and glazed on top, sidelights and a three part transom surround the doors, and a small, ornamental iron-work portico is attached. The other windows on the front elevation feature eight-over-eight sash with metal muntins and brick sills. Single arches of projecting brick with drip moldings frame a sliding metal door and a window on this front side. These arches are repeated on the east and west ends of the buildings. These large arched openings were originally the means through which coal was brought easily into the plant from the railroad sidetrack which ran through the yard of the power plant.

A projecting horizontal brick band runs across the front of the building at the level of the middle of the second floor windows. Ornamental, vertically-projecting bands of brick, evenly spaced between windows, extend from the eaves down to the sill levels. According to Sanborn maps, the original one-story building had a metal cornice; today a double row of projecting bricks are found under the eaves. The remains of two signs, painted on the brick, are visible on the front, each applied since the building was used as a power plant.

The east and west elevations also feature, besides the brick arches, irregular fenestration. Projecting from the south (rear) elevation is a ca. 1920, one-story addition with a skylight. Attached to this on the east side is a metal storage shelter and on the west is a large, metal pre-fabricated building.

The interior of the main block still follows the original two-room arrangement. The electric plant's turbine room now houses the front office and a large storage and materials area. The original boiler room is part of the work area of the present machine shop. All of the original brick walls survive except that portion of the rear wall which was removed to accommodate the addition. Similarities in the bricks used to construct the addition suggest they were salvaged from the original rear wall. Evidence of the original roofline can be found on the partition wall dividing the two rooms. Sanborn maps indicate that a tin-clad door joined the rooms, but this opening was moved toward the center of the partition wall when the front office was built, ca. 1945. Some original plaster remains in the turbine room area, and the turbine bases were found intact during office construction. Vestiges of a brick floor, laid in a herringbone pattern, were found in the boiler room. In recent years this brick was covered by a concrete floor. The rear, brick addition is characterized by a long clerestory, or skylight, of wooden truss design. Overhead pulley and hoist tracks, installed for use in the machine shop, are also found.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1901

BUILDER/ARCHITECT David J. Rose, Contractor

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Rocky Mount Electric Power Plant, constructed in 1901, was the first power plant in the city. Built by prominent local contractor David J. Rose at a time when less than 10% of the population of North Carolina had access to electricity, the construction of this power plant was indicative of the emergence of Rocky Mount in the early twentieth century as a commercial and transportation center in the heavily rural eastern section of the state.

### Criteria Assessment:

- A. The Power Plant was crucial to the extensive growth and progress of early twentieth century Rocky Mount, being the first electric power generating plant to be established there at that time.
- B. The power plant is an early example of brick commercial construction in Rocky Mount and is associated with David J. Rose, prominent local builder known throughout eastern North Carolina in the early twentieth century. Rose was responsible for a great deal of the early built environment of Rocky Mount, much of which survives today.

OMB 1004 0018  
EXP 12-31-84United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet Significance

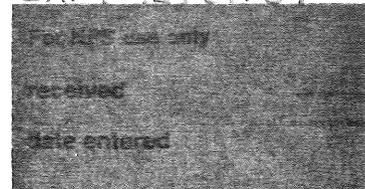
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Rocky Mount began as a small crossroads community based around the Falls of the Tar River about 1816. A diversified economy and a favorable location on major railroad lines (beginning in 1840) encouraged the steady and prosperous growth the town enjoyed through the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The latter years of the nineteenth century saw the general national trends of growth and prosperity reflected in North Carolina. One of the important factors in this industrialization was the development of electric power. Electricity first appeared in North Carolina at a factory in Salem in 1881 but the state, being overwhelmingly rural, did not experience the widespread use of electric power until the 1930s and 1940s when the Rural Electrification Administration brought power to those rural areas. Only a limited network of power lines spanned portions of the state during the early days of electricity in this state (in the late 1800s). However, even this restricted use of power helped to stimulate the growth and spread of factories and speed up industrialization in North Carolina. By the turn of the century, many progressive cities were enjoying electricity. Rocky Mount, experiencing its own "boom period" of growth into an important eastern North Carolina trade and transportation center, followed the trends during these years of the late 1800s and initiated steps that led to the availability of electric power there.

In November, 1900, the town commissioners appealed to the North Carolina General Assembly to pass the "Sewerage, Electric Light, Graded School, and Water System Extension Bill"<sup>2</sup> which would allow Rocky Mount to issue bonds for the construction of an electric light plant. In March, 1901, a special local election was held and, as a result, the Board of Commissioners was authorized and empowered to issue bonds and levy a special tax in accordance with the act of the General Assembly, ratified at its session of 1901, entitled "An act to authorize the town of Rocky Mount to issue bonds for the establishment of an electric plant, a sewerage system, and other purposes." At this same time Mr. J.L. Ludlow offered to take charge of the new project, as constructing engineer, for a fee of \$3,000.00. He proposed to contract for the work, purchase equipment, and prepare all necessary plans. The Board accepted his proposal.<sup>3</sup> Bids were taken for the construction of the power plant, and Contractor D.J. Rose was awarded the contract to build a power plant at a revised cost of \$2105.00 and to buy the engine, boiler, and other supplies as well for the plant.<sup>4</sup>

David J. Rose was to become well-known in Rocky Mount. Born in 1861 in Johnston County, Rose began his construction business in Wayne County in 1888 and moved to Rocky Mount in 1892. He was one of the first one hundred men in North Carolina to receive a General Contractor's license. Associated with Samuel S. Toler and W.G. Stephenson, D.J. Rose led Rocky Mount's most prolific building firm, which was responsible for over twenty buildings in that town alone, many of which are still in use today. Among the structures Rose's company built are the important Emerson Railroad Shops, the Masonic Temple, and a variety of tobacco warehouses.<sup>5</sup> A 1906 industrial edition of the Rocky Mount Record stated that the D.J. Rose and S.S. Toler Company was the largest contracting firm in eastern North Carolina and probably all of North Carolina. One businessman, who had given Rose a \$20,000.00 contract, declared that he would not give it to any other contractor, for he knew that D.J. Rose and Company would put first-class material in its construction where the contract called for it.<sup>6</sup> According to the Record this sentiment and respect for Rose was held by all people who knew of the company's work.



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Though no longer associated with the S.S. Toler firm (the two are now independent), the D.J. Rose Company is still in active construction business today.

The acquisition of a suitable lot for the light plant was accomplished in April, 1901, when the commissioners paid J.A. Taylor \$520.00 for a lot near the corporate limits of Rocky Mount, located between Church Street and Franklin Street and along the Nashville Branch of the Atlantic Coastline Railroad.<sup>7</sup> The lot's present address is 217 Andrews Street.

Minutes from a Board meeting on May 17, 1901, state that the \$40,000 worth of bonds approved by the General Assembly had been sold to Rudolphe Kleybolte and Company and were to be issued for the purpose of securing and maintaining an electric light system.<sup>8</sup>

One last measure taken by the commissioners in October, 1901, completed the extensive preparations for the coming of electricity to Rocky Mount. The Board of Commissioners secured a contract with the Atlantic Coastline Railroad for the city to construct a sidetrack into the yard of the plant from the main tracks.<sup>9</sup> This would facilitate easier unloading of coal from the railroad cars into the generators at the power station. The tract was laid and still exists though unused.

On January 1, 1902, the electric lights were turned on in Rocky Mount. Soon afterwards, the town commissioners ordered the gas company be requested and required to remove all glasses from their lampposts within three days and that all parts of said fixtures above ground be removed within thirty days.<sup>10</sup> The power plant created much excitement in town, with people reportedly coming out to watch the steam-driven generators at work. The plant served another purpose for a short while which was important in light of Rocky Mount's service as a railroad town. A steam siren was mounted on one of the steam boilers for the purposes of alerting citizens and rescue crews of accidents along the tracks. The siren didn't last long, however, because the signal caused so much anxiety among railroad families every time it blew.<sup>11</sup>

The presence of electricity enhanced the years of boom and prosperity (1900-1925) in Rocky Mount greatly. It was one of the major urban improvements which upgraded the social and economic life of citizens there. Rocky Mount was already on its way to becoming an important railroad, textile, and tobacco center and the availability of electric power served to help the town attract those industries which brought additional prosperity and business. Rocky Mount's publicly-owned utilities were widely known to be outstanding among North Carolina municipalities, another attractive incentive for businesses requiring electric power to consider locating there.

It was inevitable that the rapidly growing town would outgrow the generating capabilities of the small power plant on Andrews Street and by 1909 it had. A new plant, still in use today, was completed about 1912 on the banks of the Tar River and the town began to advertise for the sale of the old plant. Mr. Samuel Breen rented the building between 1910 and 1912, at \$20.00 per month, for his mattress manufacturing business.<sup>12</sup> Breen made several temporary additions to the building, but none survive.

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Continuation sheet Significance

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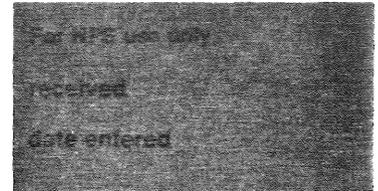
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Between 1912 and 1916 the plant was leased, for \$25.00 per month, to the Jenkins-Daughtry Machine Shop. On March 2, 1916, the major reported the sale of the old light plant to Samuel F. Jenkins and John M Daughtry for \$6,000.00.<sup>13</sup>

The forerunner of the Jenkins-Daughtry Machine Shop had been established in 1901 by Tom E. Samuel F., and Perry Jenkins (all brothers) and Leon Pearsall, a brother-in-law. This machine shop was located on S. Main Street. In 1912 the co-partnership agreement between these men was dissolved and John M. Daughtry bought out the interests of Leon Pearsall, Tom and Perry Jenkins, becoming a partner with Samuel Jenkins in a new venture, Jenkins-Daughtry Machine Shop. It was at this time that the business moved into the old electric light building. About 1920 the building was enlarged to accomodate machinery and a foundry for the Jenkins-Daughtry Company. The depression and lean years of the 1930s brought a decline to the business, but it never completely closed. In 1944 Harry S. Pearsall, Sr. bought Daughtry's share and the business became Jenkins-Pearsall Machine Works. Harry S. Pearsall, Jr. became a partner in the family business in 1964 and had it incorporated in 1977.<sup>14</sup> Pearsall Machine Works, Inc. thus carries on today a family business tradition that dates back to 1901 in a building, of the same era, which played so important a part in the early development of Rocky Mount.

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<sup>1</sup>Michael O'Quinlivian, "A Century of People, Purpose, Progress; Rocky Mount, North Carolina 1867-1967," Rocky Mount, N.C. Centennial Commemorative Book, 1867-1967.

<sup>2</sup>"Rocky Mount's Electric Lights Turned On In 1902," Evening Telegram (Rocky Mount). July 6, 1976.

<sup>3</sup>Town Commissioners' notes (Rocky Mount), March 29, 1901

<sup>4</sup>Evening Telegram

<sup>5</sup>Kate Mearns, Central City Historic Buildings Inventory - Rocky Mount, N.C. (Rocky Mount Central Cities Revitalization Corporation, 1979), see appendix.

<sup>6</sup>Rocky Mount Record, "Rocky Mount: One of the Best, Most Progressive, and Fastest Growing Cities in North Carolina," 1906 edition, p. 98.

<sup>7</sup>Evening Telegram

<sup>8</sup>Town Commissioners' notes, May 17, 1901.

<sup>9</sup>Town Commissioners' notes, October 18, 1901.

<sup>10</sup>Town Commissioners' notes, February 6, 1902.

<sup>11</sup>Evening Telegram

<sup>12</sup>Town Commissioners' notes, June 2, 1910.

<sup>13</sup>Town Commissioners' notes, March 2, 1916

<sup>14</sup>Mr. Harry S. Pearsall, Jr., present owner of the building, interview July, 1980.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approx. 2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	24,73,4,0	3,98,03,2,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Property is bounded on the north by the Atlantic Coastline Railroad right-of-way; on the east by a line running approximately 10 feet from the east side of the building southward to a ditch; on the south by a ditch; and on the west by Franklin Street. See sketch map.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A			N/A
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Beth Pearsall, Survey Assistant

ORGANIZATION Survey and Planning Branch

DATE

Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section April 9, 1981

STREET & NUMBER North Carolina Division of Archives and History

TELEPHONE

109 East Jones Street

(919) 733-6545

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

North Carolina 27611

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*William S. Pearsall*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

May 15, 1982

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

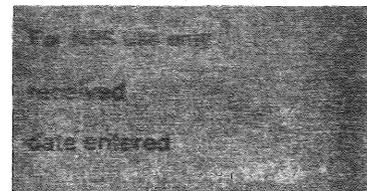
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Bibliographic References Item number 9

Page 1

Mearns, Kate. Central City Historic Buildings Inventory: Rocky Mount, N.C. Central City Revitalization Corporation, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, 1979.

Nash County Deed Books. Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History (microfilm).

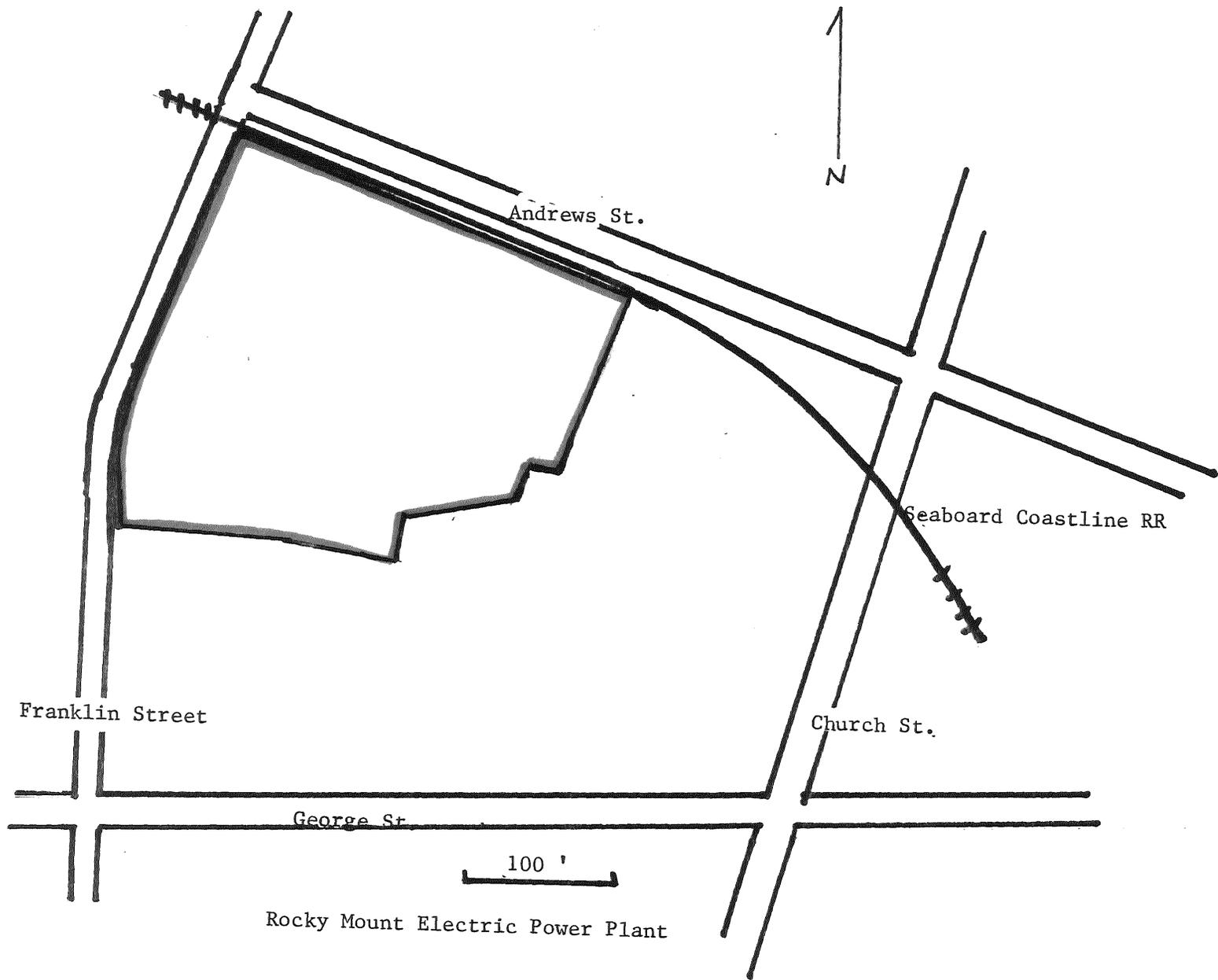
Pearsall, Mr. Harry S., Jr. Interview, July, 1980.

Rocky Mount Centennial Commemorative Book 1867-1967. Rocky Mount Centennial Executive Committee, 1967.

(Rocky Mount) Evening Telegram, "Rocky Mount Electric Lights Turned on In 1902," July 6, 1976.

Rocky Mount Record. "Rocky Mount: One of the Best, Most Progressive, and Fastest Growing Cities in North Carolina." 1906 edition.

Town Commissioners' notes. (Rocky Mount) May 1900 - May, 1902; July 1908 - March, 1916.



Rocky Mount Electric Power Plant  
Rocky Mount, N. C.  
Rocky Mount Quadrangle  
Zone 18 Scale 1:24 000  
18 247340/3980320

