

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Roxboro Commercial Historic District

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Courthouse Square, Court Street, Abbitt Street, Reams Street,
Depot Street, North and South Main Streets not for publication

city, town Roxboro vicinity of

state North Carolina code 037 county Person code 145

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input 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 Multiple Owners

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Person County Courthouse

street & number Courthouse Square, Main Street

city, town Roxboro state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Roxboro Commercial Historic District reflects the development of the town as a commercial and governmental center. The coming of the railroad in 1890 precipitated the first of three major periods of commercial growth and construction activity for Roxboro, which since 1792 had been the seat of rural Person County's government and a local trading center. This growth altered the architectural character of the district. Down came the frame stores clustered around Courthouse Square on Main Street, and in their place rose, at first, individual one and two-story brick commercial buildings and then whole blocks of brick buildings. The designs of the commercial buildings which dominate the district were influenced by the town's most substantial public buildings, including the stucco trimmed, warm red brick 1883 Victorian Gothic courthouse (demolished in 1930), and the 1920 stone trimmed brick Long United Methodist Church.

Around the Courthouse Square developed a dense cluster of late 19th to mid-20th century masonry commercial buildings unified by scale and ornamental brickwork. Unity of design is also a result of a few speculative builders who developed individual blocks in the historic district in short periods of time. Major periods of building activity within Roxboro's Historic District occurred between 1890 and 1914, during the decade of the 1920s and during the late 1940s. Buildings from these eras are often concentrated on a given block in the district, vividly reflecting the pattern of the town's growth.

Anchored by the central Courthouse Square, the compact district extends three blocks along Main Street and includes one block of Depot, Abbitt and Reams Streets and two blocks of Court Street. In addition to the commercial structures, there is an important sprinkling of other types of buildings including two churches at the north and south edges of the district, a house which once served as the Community Hospital and is now divided into apartments, an Art Deco theatre, and various governmental/institutional buildings. Tobacco warehouses, once an important architectural feature on Main and Depot Streets, have largely disappeared, with only a portion of the former Hyco Warehouse, c. 1900 (#44) remaining on Depot Street, and now used as a Senior Citizen Center. The 1891 Pioneer Warehouse at Main and Reams Streets was razed for construction of the four story International Style Roxboro Building in 1949, and the Winstead Tobacco Warehouse was replaced in 1971 by the Leggett Department Store on Main near Abbitt (#61). Few intrusions and infill buildings are found within the district. These include service stations, taxi stands, and recent commercial structures. The Historic District encompasses 70 buildings: 51 buildings are pivotal and contributing structures and 19 are fill or intrusive structures.

The boundaries of the district have been drawn to focus on the commercial and governmental central core. The "downtown" area is contained naturally by parking lots which mark the east and west edges of the commercial area, and by well preserved residential areas which bracket the northern and southern edges of the Main Street commercial area. The physical development of the central business district has been influenced by the north-south ridge along which it was originally built. The land drops off sharply to the east along Depot Street, which has limited de-

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velopment in that direction. The more gradual westward slope of Reams, Court and Abbitt Streets resulted in more rapid development of these streets.

The commercial buildings in the district range in size from one to four stories, with the majority two stories, and in extent from individual buildings with a single storefront, to the four-story Roxboro Building with many tenants, with many "double brick" buildings, each with individual entrances and storefronts. Their styles reflect the various nationally popular styles and include Classical Revival, Art Deco and International, with the majority early 20th century brick commercial buildings with relatively simple ornamental details popular throughout the state. These brick commercial buildings are typical of those built during the first quarter of the 20th century in many North Carolina towns of similar size. The integrity of the buildings ranges from the nearly intact Art Deco Kirby Theatre (#25) and the Classical Revival former First National Bank (#48), to the more typical New York Fashion/Cole's Pharmacy (#19) where street level alterations have occurred but upper stories remain intact, to buildings such as the Merritt Building (#49) where the original facade was altered during the early 20th century, to a few like Green's Diamond Center (#16) where the condition of the original fabric beneath plastic or metal replacement facade is dubious.

The predominant historic fabric of the Roxboro Commercial Historic District and one of its most important elements is the late 19th and early 20th century commercial architecture. New prosperity and a building boom accompanied the completion of the Durham and Lynchburg Railroad serving Roxboro in 1890. Brick became the favored construction material, with fine decorative brickwork, for the one and two-story buildings which began replacing earlier frame structures. The earliest concentrations of these brick commercial buildings are found on the north side of the Court Street between Main and Lamar Streets, including the four buildings on the north side of Court, west of Lamar, and on the west side of North Main Street between Court and Reams Streets.

The one-story 104 Court Street (#4) c. 1890 and the two-story 36 Court Street (#11) c. 1890 are little altered examples of the remaining late 19th century brick buildings. The storefront of 104 Court Street retains both its original form with recessed entrance flanked display windows, and the original transom of prism glass which serves to diffuse light helping illuminate the rear of the store. (Prism glass transoms are a common element shared by many of the buildings throughout the district.) An unusual, decorative corbelled and panelled brick parapet with semi-circular central section is a prominent feature of this building. Perhaps the oldest, most nearly original building in the district is 30 Court Street which retains its double door entrance with original hardware, flanked by 2/2 store windows sheltered by a full facade wooden cornice supported by decorative brackets. Also interesting is the Masonic emblem incised in the keystone of the center window on the second story, and the decorative corbelled cornice and eave.

Some late 19th century buildings were remodeled early in the 20th century. An example is the two-story Merritt Building at 114 North Main Street (#49). Documentary photographs show elaborate corbelled tables at the eave and arched hood molds over

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the second story windows. While there are still six windows, the hood molds have disappeared and above them the facade has been reworked with simpler corbelling. According to old photographs other remodelings of the eaves occurred on 108-110 North Main Street (#51), while #s 50, 52, and 53 received entire replacement brick facades. The Gothic inspired 1894 Courier Building at 109 Depot Street was demolished in 1976, but one stuccoed pilaster remains as an evocative remnant (#46). It has blind lancet arches and decorative sawtooth brickwork at the eave.

The names of the builders and developers of these early commercial structures are largely unknown, with the major exception of J.A. Long. Long, who was instrumental in Roxboro's acquiring rail service, developed the entire west side of North Main Street between Reams and Court Streets between 1891 and 1908. He built first at each end of the block and then developed the vacant lots in between. The double brick building at 113-117 North Main Street (#19) was constructed in 1891 as a speculative building. The storefronts have been moderately altered with one retaining its transom of prism glass, and the second story remodeled during the 1920s with 9/1 windows with white corner blocks above panels of herringbone pattern brick. At the other end of the block, 101 North Main Street (#16) is the former People's Bank, built 1900. The original fabric is now completely hidden from view by a skin of perforated aluminum sheathing. Documentary photographs reveal it was a handsome two-story brick building with rough cut granite accents, and topped by an impressive balustraded domed cupola, which was removed in 1965. The other buildings on this block (#s 17 and 18) were constructed between 1906-1908. Each of Long's buildings differed in appearance but they are unified by their two-story scale and decorative brickwork.

Two of the most architecturally significant commercial buildings in town are the former Rose's Store which also housed the post office at 200 North Main Street (#37) constructed in 1911, and the former First National Bank at 118 North Main Street (#48) constructed in 1913. Both occupy prominent angled corner lots at Main and Depot Streets and are distinctive variations on Classical Revival style commercial architecture. The three-story red brick former Rose's Store, which also housed the post office and other offices, features elaborate quoining and paired windows with flat brick arches with limestone keystones and sills and a robust, molded metal cornice with dentils. A Roxboro landmark, the former First National Bank is an impressive two-story blond brick building with a beautiful granite block base, full height Doric pilasters and an elaborate entablature crowned by a balustraded stone cornice. Also notable are the polychrome tiles over the tall semi-circular arches with keystones which mark the first story bays. It is a good example of the best commercial architecture of the period.

The decade of the 1920s saw a great deal of commercial building activity in Roxboro, with the two and three-story brick buildings on the east side of the 200 block of North Main Street excellent examples of the popular style, with red brick trimmed with white stucco or stone the preferred materials. The buildings from 206-214 North Main Street (#s 32-36) were all developed on speculation in 1922 by the team of V. Kaplon, R.A. Walker and T. Owen Pass. The buildings exhibit a uniformity of design and decorative brick work with minor parapet variations. Approxi-

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mately eighteen other similarly styled and trimmed buildings from this era are located throughout the district and include the Wilburn & Satterfield Building at 100 South Main Street (#55) 1925, the Thomas & Carver Building at 100-102 North Main Street (#54) 1928 and the Booker Funeral Home at 110 Court Street (#2) c. 1920.

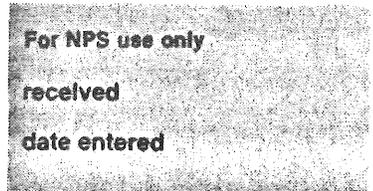
Courthouse Square is the central anchor of the district with commercial building activity surrounding the governmental center. Dominating the district is the beautiful Neo-Classical Revival Person County Courthouse, designed by Charles C. Hartman, built by George W. Kane, and completed in 1930. It is the fourth courthouse to occupy the Square with previous courthouses built 1794, 1824 and 1883. The four-story rectangular, blond brick building, with its sophisticated and unusual blend of classical and modernistic ornament was listed in the National Register in 1979. The structure adheres to the classical style with the main elevation articulated into three levels. The first floor is separated from the upper stories by a masonry belt course of octagonal panels. The main elevation features paired pilasters with flattened and stylized Corinthian caps. Above the main entablature is a crest of shell antefixes. A three-story addition was constructed at the rear of the building in 1978.

The last architecturally significant and pivotal buildings built in the district were both constructed by George W. Kane in 1949 and are neighbors on the west side of the 200 block of North Main Street (#s 24 and 25). The Kirby Theatre and the Roxboro Building present a strong, aggressively modern architectural statement in a commercial district dominated by buildings from the first quarter of the 20th century, and speak eloquently of post World War II economic prosperity. The four-story International Style Roxboro Building at 201 North Main Street (#24) is an important element in the commercial district due to its size and prominent location at the NW corner of Main and Reams Streets. Originally commissioned as office space for the Roxboro Cotton Mills, the building presents an asymmetrically balanced composition with the main, four-story block at the south (left) and a two-story block at the north (right). The horizontal emphasis of the main block is accentuated by alternating bands of buff and black cut stone panels and bands of metal trimmed windows. The recessed corner entrance is marked with a fluted aluminum column, and sleek, fluted metal trim. Streamlined stainless steel trim is also used in the interior in the lobby and elevator. The Kirby Theatre at 209-217 North Main Street (#25) is a handsome, intact Art Deco theatre. The main elevation is highlighted by fluted vertical concrete ornament. The building retains the original marquee and sign, entrance and free standing round ticket booth. A smaller, but interesting variation on the moderne theme is the two-story commercial building at 116 South Main Street (#60) c. 1950 with vertical and horizontal bands of glass bricks and ribbed aluminum trimmed storefront.

Intrusions in the district are few, and include a service station and taxi stands (#s 6, 31, and 62) and recent commercial buildings (#s 61, 66 and 70). Non-contributing elements include later remodelings such as the bank building at 112 North Main Street (#50), where the entire brick facade of an older building has been replaced. The intrusions do not severely detract from the overall impression of the district. The Roxboro Commercial Historic District survives as a clear and consistent statement of the role of Roxboro as a county commercial and governmental center.

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INVENTORY LIST - ROXBORO COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT, PERSON COUNTY

The following inventory list includes all properties located within the Roxboro Commercial Historic District, keyed by number to the inventory map.

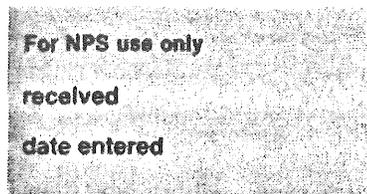
Dating: Dates are based on information available from Sanborn Insurance Maps for Roxboro: 1894, 1900, 1905, 1914, 1925, from documentary photographs in the Centennial Edition of the "Courier-Times", Dec., 1982, photographs and business histories in Person County Heritage, and from news stories in the various Roxboro newspapers, 1881-1982.

Assessment: All properties are coded by letter as to their relative value within the district, and these assessments are, in turn, coded on the inventory map. The following is an assessment key:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| P - Pivotal | Those properties which, because of their historical, architectural and/or cultural characteristics, play a primary, central or "pivotal" role in establishing the qualities for which the district is significant. |
| C - Contributing | Those properties which, while not pivotal, are supportive of, and contribute to, the historical, architectural and/or cultural characteristics for which the district is significant. |
| F - Fill | Those properties which have neither an especially positive nor an especially negative impact on the general characteristics of the district. |
| I - Intrusive | Those properties which have a definite negative impact on the historical, architectural and/or cultural characteristics for which the district is significant. |

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1. Person County Courthouse
Courthouse Square, Main Street (bounded by Abbitt, Lamar, and Court)
1930 (National Register, 1979)
P

Four-story, rectangular, blond brick building designed by Charles C. Hartman and built by George W. Kane. Unusual in its combination of classical and modernistic ornament, but adhering to the classical style with the main elevation articulated into three levels. The striated first floor is separated from the upper stories by a masonry belt course of octagonal panels. The main facade features paired pilasters with flattened and stylized Corinthian caps. The two nearly uninterrupted floors of windows have been filled in as have those on the side elevations. The attic level, located above the main entablature is topped by a crest of shell antefixes.

The interior is marked by an understated use of classical and geometric ornament. Tan ceramic bricks line the first floor walls and the floor is laid in mosaic squares of multi-color tiles. The second floor courtroom has an art-deco flavor evident in the herring-bone patterned ceiling and in the rectilinearity of the window openings. The sophisticated blend of classical and modernistic styles has been continued in the interior, creating a cohesive and comprehensive design. (From the National Register nomination.) Stone belt courses mark the three-story 16,000 square foot addition built at the rear in 1978 to house county administrative offices and a new courtroom.

This is the fourth courthouse built on this square, with previous courthouses erected 1794, 1824, 1883.

2. Commercial Building Booker Funeral Home
110 Court Street
c. 1920
C

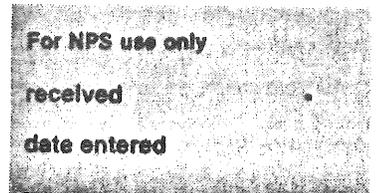
One-story brick commercial building with a parapet and panels of herringbone brickwork accented with white stucco diamonds and blocks. Four-bay storefront surmounted by a transom of prism glass and metal cornice with dentils.

3. Commercial Building
Realty World and City Barber Shop
106-108 Court Street
c. 1900
C

Two-story brick, common bond structure with simple corbelled brick cornice. On the second story are 6/6 sash replacement windows with concrete sills over real estate office which occupies the west (or left) half of building, and original 9/1 windows at the right. Storefronts are lighted by full width transom of colored prism glass.

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- 4. Commercial Building
104 Court Street
c.1890
C

One of the town's oldest little altered commercial buildings. One-story, 1:5 common bond brick building. Decorative corbelled and panelled brick parapet with semicircular central section. Moderately reworked storefront topped by split band of prism glass, under a molded metal cornice.

- 5. Former Service Station
Corner Court and Lamar Streets (fronting on Lamar) 101 N. Lamar
c. 1930
C

Simple, considerably altered Mission Style former service station with stucco walls painted tan and red tile roof and coping. Two bay garage portion at right has been extended with concrete block addition to accommodate city fire trucks. Original two-bay office portion is slightly recessed and outlined by curved arch.

- 6. City Taxi Office/Stand
42 Court Street
undetermined age
I

One room taxi stand, sheathed in standing seam metal.

- 7. Thompson's Diner
38 Court Street
undetermined age, post-World War II?
F

One-story, rectangular, four-bay wide, two-bay deep diner, main facade partially sheathed with riveted cast iron plates. Curved brick wall at west (or left) elevation. New shed roof built on top of original arched roof. Metal awning shelters main entrance.

- 8. Commercial Building
George's Pool Room
36 Court Street
c. 1926
C

Handsome, two-story brick, little altered commercial building featuring crene-lated parapet enriched by decorative corbelled panels with granite corner

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blocks. Robust, nearly full facade molded metal cornice over five original 4/1 double hung sash windows with granite corner blocks. Recessed main entrance flanked by display windows. Ghost signs painted on western elevation for "Pepsi-Cola."

9. Commercial Building
34 Court Street
c. 1915
C

One-story blond brick structure topped by curved parapet with central stucco panel. Full facade molded metal cornice with dentils and prism glass (painted white) over storefront covered with board-and-batten siding and replacement doors.

10. Commercial Building Roxboro
Secretarial and Bookkeeping Services
32 Court Street
c. 1905
C

Handsome, two-story brick commercial building. Altered storefront and replacement entrance, first floor. Richly detailed decorative brick work, second story, including corbel tables at eaves, cross-patterned panel and four 6/6 sash windows outlined in brick with robust, pyramidal granite corner blocks.

11. Commercial Building
30 Court Street
c. 1890
P

Little altered, two-story, three-bay, brick commercial structure, probably the oldest intact building in the historic district. Stuccoed storefront with large 2/2 windows and transomed double door entrance with original hardware, sheltered by full facade wood cornice supported by decorative brackets. Lighting the second story are three 3/1 double hung windows (c. 1920 replacement sashes) with concrete sills and slightly curved concrete hood molds centered with keystone. The center window's keystone is incised with the Masonic emblem. Decorative corbelling above the windows and at the eave.

12. Commercial Building
Henry Ely & Associates and Variety Record Store
26-28 Court Street
c. 1890
C

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Two-story, 1:5 common bond brick building, two storefronts, each with recessed entrance with flanking display windows. Original prism glass remains over entrance to store at west (left). Five 2/2 sash windows accented by arches of contrasting light colored brick, with a string course of the same brick echoing the arches, just above the windows. Eave decorated with brick dentils and corbelling.

13. Commercial Building
Jackson & Hicks, Attorneys
22 Court Street
c. 1890 -- storefront redone at upper story c. 1925
C

Two-story brick building with storefront remodeled in recent years; upper story facade appears to date from 1920s. Brick belt course below six 6/1 sash windows with flat arches and simple corbelled cornice.

14. Commercial Building
R & S Sporting Goods
20 Court Street
c. 1890
F

Simple corbelled cornice all that remains in view of original main elevation of this two-story brick commercial building. Replacement facade first floor of pebble dash concrete panels and on the second floor, vertical aluminum panels.

15. Commercial Building
Toufie's Eatwell Cafe
16 Court Street
c. 1890
C

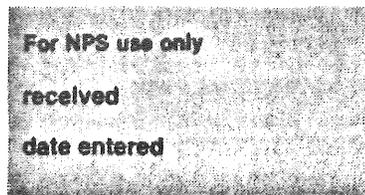
Plain brick two-story, three-bay commercial building. Simple corbelled cornice, two slightly arched windows at second story. First floor facade with black glass panels surrounding entrance and flanking display windows. Brick below windows is building's most recently installed feature.

16. Former People's Bank
Green's Diamond Center
101 N. Main Street
1900
C

The contributing status of this building is dependent on the condition of the building's original fabric, which is completely hidden from view by a sheathing

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of green perforated aluminum. Remodeled, 1978. Constructed in 1900, the building is historically important to the town as the site, until 1949, of J.A. Long's People's Bank. Old photos show it was a handsome two-story brick building with rough-cut granite accents, topped by an impressive balustraded, domed cupola (cupola removed, 1965). Square brick posts marked the recessed corner entrance, and the only remaining vestige of the former bank are the granite bases for these posts and a portion of the granite foundation.

17. Commercial Building
Cato's and Thompson-Allen Insurance Co.
105-107 N. Main Street
1908
C

Both storefronts on this two-story painted brick building have been remodeled and a large white, ribbed aluminum replacement facade covers the South (left) two-thirds of the building's second story. The second story north (right) portion displays the original facade with pedimented parapet, brick pilasters corbelled string courses and shuttered windows with rough-cut granite sills and lintels. Old photos reveal the windows are 1/1. Leggett's Department Store operated here from 1928-1970. Replacing the original striped, cloth awning are, on the left a pent roof, and on the right, a flat metal awning. The contribution of 105 N. Main (Cato's) to the district's significance is dependent on the condition of the original fabric underneath the aluminum.

18. Commercial Building
Thomas & Oakley Drugs and Fogelman's Men's Shop
109-111 N. Main Street
1906
C

Two-story, two storefront, white painted brick building. Second story windows are obscured by replacement facade material. Simple corbelled string courses. Extensively reworked store entrances sheltered by metal awnings. Drugstore has an interesting c. 1950 neon sign. J.A. Long had this building constructed, as he did every other building on this block of Main, between 1900-1908. A men's clothing store has operated here continuously since 1906.

19. Commercial Building
N.Y. Fashion and Cole's Pharmacy
113-117 N. Main Street
1891 -- main facade remodeled 1920s
C

Two-story brick building with two storefronts, divided by entrance and stairs to the second story. Molded metal cornice tops 9/1 sash windows with corner

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blocks. Below their concrete sills are panels of herringbone patterned brick centered with stucco diamond. Clothing store at south (left), and center entrance retain transoms of prism glass. Good example of 1920s ornamental brickwork.

20. Brick Warehouse
21 Reams Street
c.1920
C

Plain brick three-story, five-bay warehouse (appears 1925 Sanborn map as storage). Left bay is arched entry providing drive through access to the rear of the building. Double garage doors of diagonal tongue and groove boards. Second and third floors lighted by five, 9/9 sash windows.

21. Commercial Building
The Old Time Shop Antiques
23 Reams Street
c. 1920
C

Two-story, white painted brick, plain commercial building. Transomed entrance with sidelights, flanked by original storefront, topped by wide, 13 light transom. Second story lighted by three, 9/1 sash windows. Office of the "Courier-Times" 1957-1973. Recent storefront remodeling in colonial revival style.

22. Commercial Building
Roxboro Glass Company
25 Reams Street
c. 1926
C

One-story three-bay brick commercial building with a panel of cross-patterned brick framed by soldier courses. Sidelighted garage entrance and plate glass windows.

23. Commercial Building
27 Reams Street
c. 1912
F

Plain, one-story painted brick structure, built as a garage and currently undergoing adaptation to office use.

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24. Roxboro Building
Pope's and First Union National Bank, variety of other tenants
201 N. Main Street
1949
P

Four-story, International Style office building, constructed 1949 by George W. Kane for the Roxboro Cotton Mills. An important element in the commercial district with its size and prominent location at NW corner of Reams and N. Main Street (former site of Pioneer Tobacco Warehouse). Asymmetrically balanced composition with main four-story block of alternating buff and black bands of cut stone panels, broken by bands of metal trimmed windows. Fluted aluminum column and sleek fluted metal trim at recessed corner storefront entrance. Two story block at north (right) houses bank and features a prominent clock and vertical band of small double, window-like recessed panels of dark stone. On the interior, the lobby features walls of pink/tan marble, stainless steel grills with geometric pattern, original mail slot with angular moderne lettering, fed from the upper floors by Cutler brass trimmed chutes. Streamlined stainless steel handrail in elevator. On upper floors, painted metal baseboards and handsome stained wood and glass office doors.

25. Kirby Theatre
209-217 N. Main Street
1949
P

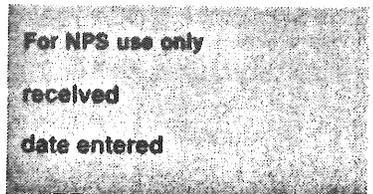
Handsome two-story blond brick Art Deco theatre constructed 1949 by George W. Kane. Fluted vertical concrete facade ornament, original theatre marquee, topped with KIRBY sign of individual light bulbs, original entrance and round ticket booth. Eleven straight headed, three-part metal trimmed awning-type windows light the second story. Some moderate alteration of first floor storefronts, but most retain fluted metal trim. Theatre retains original glass and wood doors and metal "coming attractions" boxes. This building and the neighboring Roxboro Building present a strong statement of post World War II economic prosperity and the streamlined architectural fashions of that period.

26. Commercial Building
Custom Framing and Creative Crafts
221 N. Main Street
c. 1912
C

An interesting contrast to the aggressively modern Roxboro Building and Kirby Theatre, is this two-story, four-bay brick commercial building with altered first floor storefront. Molded, decorative metal cornice with dentils, and

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corner antefixes at eave. Corbelled brick panel. On the second story, 1/1 sash windows with metal hood molds flank a transomed double glass and wood door, which formerly opened onto a balcony.

27. Commercial Building
Real estate office and barber shop
221 A and 221 B N. Main Street
c. 1912
C

One-story brick building with modest stepped parapet and decorative granite blocks. Altered storefronts. Working barber pole serves as sign for barber shop.

28. Office Building
Home Security Life Insurance
223 N. Main Street
c. 1950
F

One-story, three-bay, simple brick, common bond office building

29. Commercial Building
225 N. Main Street
c. 1950?
F

Plain one-story, three-bay, brick, common bond commercial building with altered storefront.

30. Long Memorial United Methodist Church
226 N. Main Street
1920
P

Anchoring the northern edge of the Commercial Historic District is this handsome two-story Gothic inspired brick church with rusticated stone trim. The congregation was founded in 1922 and built its first church at the intersection of the South Boston and Virgilina Highways. The site of the present church property was conveyed in 1854 and a small one room white frame church was erected on the three-quarter acre site. In 1906 J.A. Long purchased this building and moved it to Longhurst, a small outlying community. A new brick church was built that year and served the congregation until the present church replaced it in 1920.

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Stone trim is used lavishly on the red brick of the present church. The stone accents the buttresses and serves to create belt courses and water table. Stone marks the gable ends and eaves of the projecting corner towers with their curvilinear parapets. The offset main entrance is recessed and sheltered by a portico with three buttressed Gothic arches. The main sanctuary is fan-shaped with a vaulted ceiling. Heavy turned oak balusters surround the pulpit area and the Gothic inspired carved pews are also oak. The bright sanctuary is lighted by several notable stained glass windows, some taken from the 1906 church. The three story 1954 education building at the rear also has stone capped buttresses and blends well with the church.

- 31. Former Filling Station
Roxboro Taxi Stand/Office
220 N. Main Street
c. 1960
I

White, one-story former filling station with two-bay garage area.

- 32. Commercial building
Penny Furniture Co.
214 N. Main Street
1922
C

Two-story brick commercial building with replacement storefront and metal canopy. Stucco trimmed 9/1 second story windows with corner blocks, below a molded metal cornice. Cross-patterned brick panel with corner blocks in pointed parapet with concrete coping.

This building and the neighboring buildings at 212, 210, 208 and 206 N. Main Street were developed in 1922 by V. Kaplon, R.A. Walker and T. Owen Pass and exhibit a uniformity of design and masonry work.

- 33. Commercial Building
Person Furniture Co.
212 N. Main Street
1922
C

Similar to 214 N. Main, but with parapet panel formed by brick headers. Building is narrower than 214 N. Main and has slightly different window grouping on the second floor. Replacement storefront.

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34. Commercial Building
Person Furniture Co. Annex
210 N. Main Street
1922
C

Two-story brick commercial building with crenelated parapet with concrete coping and decorative brick panel. Heavy molded metal cornice over second story replacement windows with corner blocks. Wide band of prism glass over replacement storefront with metal canopy.

35. Commercial Building
Desert Sand Rock & Roll
208 N. Main Street
1922
C

Two-story brick commercial building. Replacement storefront windows boarded over with panelling. Above the broad prism glass transom is a profusion of pyramidal white stone corner blocks, stuccoed diamonds and panels and brick parapet with concrete coping.

36. Commercial building
The Bootery
206 N. Main Street
1922
C

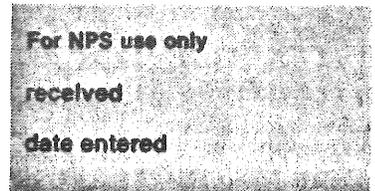
Handsome three-story brick commercial building, very similar to 208 N. Main, but with the addition of a third story and a deep metal cornice near the top of the crenelated parapet supported by paired brackets. Incongruous shake pent roof shades the replacement storefront.

37. Former Rose's Store and U.S. Post Office
200 N. Main Street
1911
P

Impressive three-story brick Classical Revival commercial building, built 1911 for J.C. and W.T. Pass, J.A. Long, Jr. and W.A. Woody. In plan the building conforms to its unusual angled corner lot which slopes downhill along Depot Street. Post Office entrance was on Depot with retail stores fronting on Main. Rose's Store occupied the first floor from 1919-1962. Segmenting the building is brick quoining, with yellow brick used on the first floor. Windows are paired with flat brick arches with limestone keystone and sills. Robust molded metal cornice with dentils.

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38. Commercial Building
Fox's Suzuki Motorcycles
110 Depot Street
c. 1910
C

Two-story, rectangular brick commercial building, little altered other than replacement display windows. 1914 Sanborn map shows this building used for carriage and harness sales and farm implements. Decorative corbelled cornice of contrasting brick. Eight, 9/1 sash windows, second story. Two storefronts divided by slightly offset original wood double door entrance set in brick arch. Transoms of prism glass top this door and the storefronts.

39. Commercial Building
Schewels House (furniture warehouse)
120 Depot Street
c. 1950
F

One-story brick veneer building with transom of glass bricks over store window trimmed with corrugated aluminum. Simulated quoining done with projecting single course of bricks. Recessed garage at west (left) with overhead doors.

40. Commercial Building
Moore's Antiques and Children's Closet
112 Depot Street
c. 1925
C

Two-story brick commercial building. Corbelled cornice, replacement storefront and ill-fitting replacement second story windows. Building victimized by unfortunate attempt to "colonialize" its details.

41. Former Community Hospital
133 Depot Street
c. 1890
C

Much altered two-story, five-bay, triple pile, brick, hip roofed house. Attached shed roofed porch carried on tapered wooden posts set on brick piers. Originally owned by Col. Dan Andrews, colorful local citizen, who ran a barroom and distillery. In 1937 the home was converted into a sixteen-bed hospital with operating room. It functioned as the Community Hospital until 1950, when a new hospital was built outside the downtown district. Now serves as the Roxboro Hotel, apartments.

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42. Commercial Building
Berry's Appliances
127 Depot Street
c. 1928
C

Two-story brick commercial building with aluminum trimmed replacement storefront. Six 4/1 sash windows with corner blocks light the second story. Three small towers project above the flat parapet with concrete coping.

43. Commercial Building
Verna's Clothing and Elam's Framing
123 Depot Street
post-World War II
F

One-story brick commercial building with plain white stucco cornice over double storefront.

44. Senior Center
121 A Depot Street
c. 1900
C

Two-story brick warehouse, once part of the Hyco Tobacco Warehouse complex, now used as Senior Citizen Center. Second story windows bricked in. New pent roofs shelter replacement entrances and windows, first floor. Seven bays deep with stepped roofline.

45. Commercial Building
Harris Department Store, optometrist, bookstore
111-117 Depot Street
c. 1914
C

Handsome, large block of two-story brick commercial building with four adjoining storefronts (three near original, one intrusively altered with pent roof and "colonial" storefront). Unified by pointed parapets with crenelations and concrete coping, enlivened with stuccoed diamonds and rectangles. Full facade molded metal cornice with original gutters. Six over one sash windows. Transom of prism glass over three of the storefronts.

46. Stuccoed Pilaster
remnant of Courier Building
109 Depot Street
1894
C

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One pilaster remains from the 1894 Gothic inspired stuccoed brick building which was built for The Roxboro Courier. Building demolished in 1976 to provide access to parking. An evocative remnant, the pilaster features blind lancet arches and sawtooth brickwork at the eave, suggestive of chimney cap.

47. The Newells Jewelry
107 Depot Street
1914
C

Charming small, three-bay, two-story painted white brick jewelry store. (1914 Sanborn map also shows jewelry store here.) Crenellated parapet above three brick panels and three boarded over windows, second story. Rusticated concrete quoining, first floor, with storefront framed by black glass panels. Interesting c. 1938 projecting neon sign with clock. Neon signage also on metal canopy.

48. Former First National Bank
H & R Block
118 N. Main Street
1913
P

Imposing two-story blond brick commercial building occupying unusual angled corner lot at Depot and Main. Distinctive Classical Revival building with well executed granite block base and richly articulated facade with full height Doric pilasters and Roman entablature with balustraded stone cornice. Polychrome tiles over semicircular arches with keystones defining first story bays. Good example of the best commercial architecture of the period. This building and the Classical Revival former Rose's across the street, are the most architecturally significant commercial buildings in the district.

49. Merritt Building
Wise Fashions
114 N. Main Street
1888
C

Constructed 1888 by J.S. Merritt as speculative building, housed People's Bank 1891-1900. Two-story white painted brick, with replacement storefront and metal canopy. Decorative corbelled cornice above six shuttered windows. Old photos reveal that the facade has been altered, early twentieth century. Originally the building had corbelled tables at the eave and arched hood molds over the windows. Original decoratively molded brick sidewalk in front of store remains.

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50. Central Carolina Bank
112 N. Main Street
replacement facade c. 1965
F

Two-story bank with blond brick replacement facade, with marble-like stone panels on first floor. Awning windows, second story.

51. Commercial Building
The Village Gate and Foushee's Men's Store
108-110 N. Main Street
c. 1900
C

Two-story white painted brick commercial building with simple stepped parapet. Sheltering the three large second story shuttered windows is an interesting molded metal cornice with dentils and applied brackets with geometric design. Surmounting the replacement storefronts is another molded metal cornice with graceful curved brackets. Pressed tin ceiling remains in Foushee's clothing store at south (right).

52. Commercial Building
Carney's
106 N. Main Street
c. 1910, replacement facade of undetermined age
F

Two-story, three-bay brick commercial building with plain brick replacement facade and storefront with metal canopy. Three second story windows boarded over.

53. Commercial Building
Attorney's office
104 N. Main Street
facade replacement of undetermined age
F

Two-story commercial building abusively altered, first with replacement facade of thin bricks, then largely covered with blue vinyl (formica?) panels divided by metal strips.

54. Thomas & Carver Building
LC's Clothing and Flower and Gift Shop
100 and 102 N. Main Street
1928
C

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Attractive two-story commercial building with simple, but pleasing brick work. Stepped parapet and corbelled cornice. Incised stone name and date panel in concrete coped parapet. Eight, 9/1 windows, second story. Replacement storefronts divided by central door to second story.

55. Wilburn & Satterfield Building
Blalock's
100 S. Main Street
1925
C

Two-story brick commercial building with incised stone name and date panel in simple flat parapet with concrete coping. Six, 6/6 sash windows below a molded metal cornice. Replacement storefront, metal canopy. First floor largely obscured by formica panel replacement facade. Original green and white tile floor in south (right) doorway which provides access to second story.

56. Commercial Building
Green's Jewelers
106 S. Main Street
c. 1920
C

Two-story brick commercial building with concrete coped curvilinear parapet. Molded metal cornice with dentils and triglyphs. Below the classically inspired cornice, the entire facade is obscured by ribbed aluminum panel and replacement storefront of formica panels. Colored glass brick sidewalk laid in concrete grid remains.

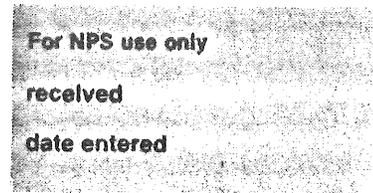
57. Commercial Building
Flea Market
108 S. Main Street
c. 1920
C

Two-story commercial building, replacement storefront with metal canopy. Boarded over second story windows with corner blocks. Stuccoed squares, rectangles and diamonds decorate the simple stepped parapet. Full height pronounced brick pilasters.

58. Commercial Building
Insurance/attorney office
112 S. Main Street
c. 1920
C

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Simple two-story brick commercial building with molded metal cornice over four second story flat arched windows. Replacement storefront with ribbed aluminum canopy topped by transom of green prism glass.

- 59. Commercial Building
Massey's Department Store
114 S. Main Street
c. 1930
C

Plain, two-story brick, 1:5 common bond, commercial building with paired 4/1 windows with flat arches. Replacement storefront framed by deteriorating black glass panels.

- 60. Commercial Building
Nina's School of Dance, and Appliance store
116 S. Main Street
c. 1950
C

Interesting, asymmetrically arranged two-story commercial building with some Moderne elements: smooth facade of grey cut-stone panels, paired metal trimmed awning-type windows on second story, vertical band of glass blocks over left bay with its tile entryway to second story. Horizontal band of glass blocks topping ribbed aluminum trim over original storefront at right.

- 61. Leggett Department Store
124 S. Main Street
1971
I

One-story beige brick department store with central recessed entrance flanked by double display windows. Ribbed aluminum pent roof. Former site of Winstead Tobacco Warehouse.

- 62. Filling Station
136 S. Main Street
c. 1960
I

Porcelain panelled service station with canopy and two garage bays.

- 63. Roxboro Baptist Church
202 S. Main Street
1950
F

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Three-story, three-bay by seven-bay, Classical Revival, brick veneer church with pedimented attached portico carried by four monumental Corinthian columns and pilasters. Asphalt shingle roof crowned by steeple. Windows on the main facade with flat arches and keystones. Neighboring three-bay Education Building features pedimented gable with returns and flattened Corinthian inspired pilasters. Recent brick and glass addition to Education Building at rear.

64. Former U.S. Post Office
Piedmont Technical College-Educational Opportunity Center
208 S. Main Street
1936
C

Typical WPA-built, Colonial Revival, one-story with basement, brick veneer 1:5 common bond, public building. Five-bays wide, five-bays deep. Flat roof with concrete coping. Double door main entrance with fluted pilasters supporting classical entablature with triglyphs, metopes, and guttae. Twelve over twelve sash windows. Loading dock at rear.

65. Commercial Building
Lewis Furniture and Long's Men's Store
117-123 S. Main Street
c. 1920
C

Two-story brick commercial building shared by two stores. Crenelated stepped parapet with white stucco diamond and rectangle decoration, concrete coping with shield shaped antefixes. Below the molded metal cornice, the main elevation is obscured by replacement, perforated aluminum sheathing. Replacement storefronts. This is the only original brick building left on this block, which has largely been taken over by the 1964 Rose's to the north and a parking lot to the south.

66. Rose's
111 S. Main Street
1964
I

One-story, brick veneer variety store. The Main Street elevation is covered by perforated aluminum sheathing and pebble dash concrete panels. The main entrance is set at a diagonal, at the corner of Main and Abbitt. Abbitt Street facade is red brick veneer. Site of former Hotel Jones.

67. Commercial Building
Attorney's Offices, Gift Shop, Beauty Shop
25-31 Abbitt Street
c. 1940
F

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Plain, one-story, painted brick commercial building with metal canopy.

68. Farmer's Supply
35 Abbitt Street
1937
C

Two-story painted brick commercial building, with central entrance flanked by two large display windows on either side. Second story lighted by thirteen 9/1 paired sash windows. Constructed 1937 by George W. Kane for Claude T. Hall. Farmer's Supply since 1943.

69. Commercial Building
Valu-Pak Drugs and Wilson's Market
41-43 Abbitt Street
1950
F

One-story plain blond brick commercial building. Plate glass storefront, with metal canopy.

70. Witfield's Barber Shop
45 Abbitt Street
c. 1965
I

Small, one-story brick barber shop. Main entrance on Abbitt Building conforms to corner lot with plate glass window on the diagonal.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates Various **Builder/Architect** Various/unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Roxboro Commercial Historic District encompasses 70 commercial and governmental buildings located within a compact, architecturally unified and largely intact eight block area, centered around the Courthouse Square highlighted by a handsome 1930 Neo-Classical Courthouse with a sophisticated blend of classical and modernistic ornament. The structures within the district represent historically and architecturally significant buildings in this small, piedmont county seat and commercial center. The area comprising the district is associated with Roxboro's slow growth as a government seat and modest trading center for the rural population after Person County's formation in 1792. The construction of the Durham & Lynchburg Railroad serving Roxboro precipitated a major period of growth from 1890-1914, with other significant periods of building activity occurring between 1920 and 1930 and during the late 1940s. The buildings in the district reflect the various, locally popular architectural styles, and include Classical Revival and Art Deco, with a predominance of early twentieth century vernacular brick commercial buildings. Commercial prosperity came late to Roxboro and architectural changes occurred slowly. Most of the structures representative of the town's primary growth periods, remain intact and continue in use, with few intrusions or infill buildings. In Roxboro's architecture can be seen the growth patterns which transformed the isolated hamlet into the lively governmental and commercial center of Person County.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. Associated with the origins and subsequent growth of Roxboro as a governmental and commercial center of Person County during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- C. The buildings within the Roxboro Commercial Historic District are representative of the distinctive characteristics of the various locally popular building styles, and include Classical Revival and Art Deco, with a predominance of early twentieth century vernacular brick commercial structures. The compact and unified district is largely intact, with few intrusions. The architecture is representative of the major periods of building activity: 1890-1914, the 1920s and the late 1940s.
- D. May be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory.

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Person County, named for Revolutionary War Brigadier General Thomas Person and located in the north central portion of North Carolina's piedmont region, was carved from neighboring Caswell County in 1792. For two years after its formation the new county temporarily established its court at the home of John Paine in the Paine's Tavern area, four miles south of what would become the county seat of Roxboro. County Commissioners were appointed and their first duty was to locate and build a courthouse and other public buildings for the new county.¹

In September, 1792, Commissioner Stephen Moore's son, Dempsey, donated six acres of land, located almost exactly in the center of Person County, as a permanent site of the new courthouse at a crossroad hamlet then called Moccasin Gap. The new town, located on a rocky hill outlined by a valley crossed by an ancient buffalo trail, was probably named by James Williamson, a prominent citizen, farmer and merchant, and a native of Angus County, Scotland. He called it Roxborough, after a Scottish shire on the English border.²

The first courthouse and jail, both log structures, were completed in January, 1794.³ Repairs to the buildings were made in 1797 and more extensive repairs were made between 1810 and 1812 -- including construction of the jailer's room located five feet from the jail so that the jailer would no longer have to endure "the nauseous and disagreeable scent common to all goals."⁴

A second courthouse replaced the early log structure in 1824. Rectangular in plan, the brick courthouse was fifty-two feet long, thirty-four feet wide, resting on a solid brick foundation with brick partitions between the court room and two jury rooms. The hip roofed building boasted panelled doors and eighteen light windows with interior trim painted a stylish "sky blue."⁵

While Roxboro may have had a fashionable courthouse in 1824, it was hardly a fashionable town. For many years after its founding, the town served as little more than a crossroads trading center for the isolated, rural, tobacco-growing county and contained a few stores, a tavern and several warehouses clustered on the public lots surrounding the courthouse.

In Person County the extent of commerce prior to 1830 seems to have revolved around the half dozen merchants who ran country stores. According to Stuart Wright, by "1835 this list had expanded [with nine other merchants] who ran retail stores in the county. Thomas Webb had an additional store in Roxboro and appears to be the only retailer there at the time."⁶ Itinerant peddlers or vendors augmented the retailers with their business probably confined to court, muster, or election days.⁷

The 1824 courthouse (and two subsequent courthouses on the same lot, one built 1883 in the Victorian Gothic style, and the present 1930 Neo-Classical one) and the surrounding lots formed the core of the Commercial Historic District which expanded very slowly along the Main Street until the boom expansion years, 1890-1914. There seems to have been little real estate activity in Roxboro during the first quarter

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of the nineteenth century, other than the purchase by the Commissioners of several lots surrounding the public square during the construction of the 1824 courthouse, enlarging the square.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, North Carolina became popularly known as "the Rip Van Winkle State" and Person County and Roxboro were no exception to this socially and economically somnolent condition. One first-person account of the character of the town in the period before the Civil War described it as "almost a frontier. High hills east and south, and hills and sullen streams north and west had always shut [its] people in and discouraged intercourse with other communities . . . streams were frequently flooded and impassable. The few bridges were often washed away. The roads were bad and getting worse. . . ."⁹

The population of Person County declined from 10,027 in 1830 to 9,790 in 1840. Both agriculture and commerce suffered and the culture of tobacco, historically the area's main cash crop, fell off. Competition grew from western states such as Missouri and Texas, which claimed not only a growing share of the tobacco market, but many of Person County's young men who migrated west to seek their fortunes.

A.R. Foushee, who grew up on a farm near Roxboro, chose in 1853 to move into the village of Roxboro, where he would remain for the rest of his long life, achieving success as a merchant and thereby becoming one of the town's prominent citizens. In 1917 the local newspaper, the Roxboro Courier, asked Foushee to record his "Reminiscences" of life in Roxboro from 1853-1917, and with his prodigious memory for people and events, he produced a remarkable document detailing the rise of Roxboro from a crossroads hamlet to the lively center of commerce in Person County. He wrote of his arrival at age fourteen in 1853 to work as a clerk at Green D. Satterfield's store in Roxboro which then had fewer than 250 inhabitants:

The village of Roxboro sat upon the rugged hills in the center of the county. Here was the courthouse and whatever currents of the outside world swept into this hilly, secluded country eddied in the village. It saw the visiting judge and lawyer from other towns, the preacher had knowledge of far-off places; trade and business brought thither all the county to exchange ideas and commodities; the slave dealer from 'down south' stopped over occasionally, the stage coach every other day or so with the noise of horses' hoofs and bugle and shouts of the driver plunged through the village pausing long enough to snatch refreshing foods and drink and to afford sight of strange passing faces. . . . The decade of the 50's was marked by great political discussion and the noise of those great constitutional debates thundered across the whole country, but in our secluded country life the reapers reaped in the summer's sun, the fall gathered its crops and the winter drew the family circle about the log fire; there was little or no industrial or commercial progress, one felt that all things would always be the same and no one desired a change. Yet surely there was a deep undercurrent of restlessness; social and industrial life was stagnating and young men were listening with credulity to the whispers of the West, the call of opportunity.¹⁰

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Foushee noted that there was neither a bank nor drugstore in Roxboro, the nearest being in Milton twenty miles away. There was no hardware store, no furniture store and no barbershop. There was one tailor shop, two or three blacksmith shops and a brickyard. Wagon shops and carpenters in the country make coffins to order. For entertainment the town offered two or three barrooms and a otel.¹¹ There was a "flourishing" Masonic Lodge but no church building of any kind in town. Worship services were conducted by circuit riders in the courthouse until a church was erected on the Main (and only) street c. 1860. The town was apparently little more than the seat of county government.

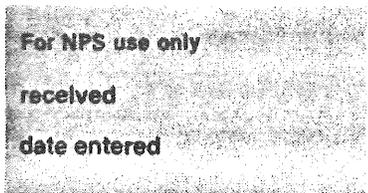
Roxboro, however, was not alone in her village status: only thirteen cities in the state had populations of over 1000 in 1860 and most of these owed their existence and significance to the fact that they were the seats of justice of their respective counties.¹² For Roxboro the nearest rail shipping point was Henderson, thirty miles to the east. "Freighting was done largely by wagons from Petersburg, Richmond, and Lynchburg in Virginia. Tobacco was hauled in hogsheads to these markets and the wagons brought back loads of merchandise for the merchants."¹³ Foushee related that, commercially, the biggest day of the year was the meeting of the Superior Court in November: "It seemed as if everybody tried to come to Tuesday of November court . . . it was also market day for homemade chairs, flax and spinning wheels, slays for the loom, clock reels, wool hats, shoes, leather, all home production."¹⁴ Some of the county's tobacco was sold by wagon and peddled "Down the Country" in eastern North Carolina. There were numerous small tobacco factories in the county and after hand processing, the plugs or chunks were loaded on wagons and driven east (very little tobacco was grown beyond Granville and Warren counties) where it was sold to small stores or individually to farm houses. Federal revenue taxes enacted after the Civil War and the wider markets made possible by the railroad after 1890 largely ended this home industry.

Agriculturally, a great boon to the tobacco industry was the discovery of the immediately popular "bright" tobacco in 1839, and its perfection for commercial use in the early 1850s. The bright leaf tobacco was the product of both an accidentally discovered charcoal curing process, and the thin, sandy, ridgeland soil of the tobacco belt of Person, Granville, Warren and Caswell Counties. These counties combined produced 82% of the state's total tobacco output. Of course, slave labor contributed greatly to the economic viability of tobacco farming. According to the 1850 census, there were 4,893 slaves in Person, 45% of the total population. Person County had a sound economic base and a lively middle class, even if the real wealth lay in the hands of the large planters and slave owners. Before the Civil War there were at least four tobacco factories in Roxboro and four others in the county. These were profitable, established businesses, and though the war would disrupt the labor force, by 1870 Person would again claim six tobacco factories and increased revenues.

In 1855 the town of Roxboro was incorporated, and Foushee noted that "much sport [was] made over it by the people in and out of town -- they called it 'The

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city' and the mayor, 'The Lord Mair.'" (To this day, Roxboro remains the only incorporated town in Person County, and the only town of any size or economic importance.) At this time the shabby appearance of the town and its streets became a concern. Foushee reported that

. . . up to this time we had practically no sidewalks and the streets or roads through the town were very narrow, only sixteen feet wide. They were worked by the county road hands and overseers just like the county roads. Mud holes were stopped up with pine brush and poles with a little dirt thrown over them. Town lots were enclosed with rail fences except that some of them had a plank fence or paling to the front yards. Very few of the houses had ever been painted and there was only one brick house in town. This was a small house on the corner of Main and Abbitt used by Reade Hamlin as a general store.¹⁵

About this time Roxboro's interest in acquiring a railroad began to increase, although it would be thirty more years before the town would be successful in its quest. As early as 1849 petitions were sent to the General Assembly requesting that "great Public necessity exists for a Rail Road through Person County." Several routes through the county were surveyed as early as 1852, but political considerations dictated that the railroad would pass through Orange County and Hillsborough (the home of Governor Graham), and no extension reached Person County. Another attempt was made in 1859 when the General Assembly passed an act to incorporate Washington & Leaksville Railroad Co. Person County and eight other counties joined forces to raise the capital stock, but time ran out before the outbreak of the Civil War. "Person again failed to get a rail connection out of obscurity."¹⁶

Despite the cataclysm of the Civil War, Person County and Roxboro apparently did not suffer as much as many other counties and towns did. Businesses remained open and some new ones, including a bank and two general stores were actually begun then, although they would be forced to close before 1865. Schools stayed open and churches continued to conduct monthly services. As wars often do, this one to some extent stimulated the local economy, and Roxboro's population rose to almost 400 people between 1860 and 1865. Foushee recalled that "these newcomers added much to the business and social status of the town." When he returned from military service to rejoin his former employer G.D. Satterfield as a partner Foushee found Roxboro

little changed from the days when I first knew it, except that many of the familiar faces were gone. The end of the war seemed to have brought new ideas; the individual demanded a place and a reward no matter what was his family backing. Businesses of various kinds sprang up and the new men showed scant respect for social and business ideas that once prevailed. New men from families formerly of little note in the community came into power and influence and jostled the old in the way. Energy, business ability, and general

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efficiency were the watchwords, that opened the door of success now.
We were living in a new world.¹⁷

The major economic losers in Person County were the large land owners and the upper class. But the county had a larger middle class who had, before the war, just begun to realize the benefits of their own and slave labor. Even with that labor source gone, they regressed economically only to the level they had known during the 1840s. They would adapt to the changed times and conditions, and the underlying source of Person's economy, the fine tobacco producing land, was still there waiting only to be tilled. The war ended in April, in time to get the spring crops in, and that fall's harvest was bountiful. Also, the relative isolation of Roxboro enabled many small mills based on the local market to become reestablished.

Improved farming techniques compensated for reductions in both acres of improved farmland and the labor supply. The same reductions also fueled a trend toward local industrialization. The demand for tobacco and the rise of the cigarette industry following the war led to the increased importance of tobacco factories in the Roxboro economy. "Between the end of the War and 1872 nine 'manufactories' were either newly established or reestablished. Eight of those were tobacco factories. Four located within Roxboro township."¹⁸

Roxboro was, by the early 1870s, on the road to industrial development. Apparently the streetscape was improving in appearance as one of its residents noted in an 1875 letter: "I now write to you to know if you will be at Roxboro on the 13th of April, as I will endeavor to reach that beautiful City on that day if not sooner."¹⁹ With economic development came other signs of growth. There is some evidence that a newspaper had been established in 1877; however, the first documented publication of a newspaper in Person County is the first issue of the weekly Roxboro Herald, March 10, 1881, published by the Whitaker and Hunter firm. A few copies of this short-lived newspaper are extant and provide through advertisements and copy a glimpse of the local economy. A.R. Foushee advertised that his store was the "headquarter for Bargains" where could be found the "new American Sewing Machine, Pacific & Anchor Brand Guano, Notions, Groceries, Hardware, tinware, crockery ware, hats and caps." And if you were short of cash to pay for these enticing goods, "All Kinds of Produce Taken for Goods."²⁰ A new shop had just opened in rooms over Long's Store selling millinery and offering "dress making and fitting in the latest style," with Misses Pheraba and Sallie Thaxton, proprietresses. J.A. Long's Store, also represented in the advertisements, was the "Double Brick Store," headquarters for dry goods and drugs. He shared the advertisement and the building with G.C. Mitchell. Long offered for sale "domestics, groceries, shoes, hats, sewing machines and clothing, and Mitchell sold drugs, medicines, paints, oils, confectioneries, fancy goods, fertilizers and chemicals. Apparently all of these establishments were located on Main Street. The earliest Sanborn map of Roxboro was published in 1894 and a double brick store is located in the center of the only real block of mercantile stores, on the east side of Main across from and just north of the courthouse.

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The need for a railroad took on great urgency in the 1880s, though it would be a long, arduous decade before success was achieved. The John C. VanHook Papers contain a petition to the General Assembly reporting that "a great public necessity exists for a railroad through Person County and hereby petition your honorable body to grant a charter with as liberal provisions as may be consistent with Law, for a Narrow Gauge Railroad running from Milton in Caswell, via Roxboro and Oxford to the Town of Henderson and there connecting with the Raleigh & Gaston railroad." Ten signatures accompany the petition; however, a letter to "Uncle George" concerning family matters is penned on the reverse of this petition and dated October 18, 1879. Perhaps VanHook was so discouraged by the community's reluctance to tax itself or to vote the needed bonds, that the petition was never sent. More likely, it is an extra copy, for the momentum was building, spurred on in large part by the new newspaper The Person County Courier (established 1885) and its indefatigable publisher and Roxboro booster, J.A. Noell.

Regarding the several short line railroads already in the state, Noell wrote in the September 22, 1885 issue:

. . . we cannot now estimate the value of such a road to our people except by comparison with other less fertile sections and the amount of business done by other roads. We know of not a single instance where any class of citizens in any section in which railroads have been built are suffering from the effects of the opening of the route; and on the contrary, we know that railroads everywhere have been of incalculable benefit to the people.

In 1887 Noell urged his readers to invest in Roxboro real estate because the railroad was sure to come and when it did there would be an immediate need for a bank, planing mill, "first class hardware store," warehouses and more tobacco factories. He challenged his readers: "Roxboro has a bright future — who says she has not."

Twenty-six attempts had been made between 1850 and 1889 to obtain a spur line or direct connection with the other state railroads. The credit for finally obtaining a branch of the Durham & Lynchburg Railroad (now Norfolk & Western) largely goes to J.A. Long, and for his achievement he is considered "the builder of modern Roxboro."²¹ He wrote dozens of letters and buttonholed influential people far and wide in a single-minded pursuit of his goal. Long faced great opposition from rural, tradition-bound Person residents, who were less than enthusiastic about voting themselves a new tax, but Long and Noell prevailed. Long would be rewarded by becoming the town's wealthiest citizen. He founded the People's Bank and the Pioneer Warehouse and his speculative building largely shaped the Commercial Historic District.

The Courier breathlessly reported on nearly every mile of tract laid and tried, with little success, to wait patiently. The issue of February 18, 1890 reported: "The Lynchburg and Durham Railroad still not across the Dan River. We in Roxboro try to be patient but it is hard. Our hopes are so high of what we will do when it gets here and of the bright future for our town." On May 22, 1890 the first train

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arrived in Roxboro and The Courier's exhilaration was boundless: "THE FIRST TRAIN [!] HURRAH FOR ROXBORO[.] She is At Last Connected with the Outside World[.] Three Cheers for Mr. J.A. Long for his Untiring Energy, & Devotion to the Best Interest of Person County in Giving His Time & Means to this Object. . . . Everyone [the first passengers] wore a happy smile that seemed to say the future of Roxboro was safe."

The growth of Roxboro after the railroad was phenomenal. The population tripled between 1883 and 1893, from 450 inhabitants to 1200. Many of the old frame stores on Main Street were torn down and whole blocks of brick buildings rose in their place. "Like many North Carolina towns, its leaders and builders saw the permanence and quality of brick building as an important sign of urban progress. This, coupled with more money and the easier availability of brick, meant that thousands of brick commercial buildings rose throughout the towns of the urbanizing state to replace older frame buildings."²² Many of the buildings comprising the Roxboro historic district were built during the decade of the 1890s and remain in use today. A.R. Foushee recalled:

During this period the town took on a pronounced air of growth. Carpenters, brick layers and painters were busy providing houses to shelter the new citizens; the saw, hammer and trowel made music on every side in a way unknown before. Quite a lot of property changed hands; a number of brick stores and shops were constructed to take the place of the wooden houses.

The current outlines of the historic district rapidly began to take shape as new streets were laid and land speculation became the business of the day. A large advertisement in The Courier July 3, 1890 announced that 100 lots were to be sold at auction: the "lots conveniently and beautifully located and streets have been laid off and nicely graded, giving sidewalks to each." The advertisement went on to say that Roxboro had a population of four or five hundred, seven stores and others under construction including

two drug stores, two millinery stores, two carriage factories, one harness and saddle factory, three repairing shops, one flour mill, one saw mill, two tobacco factories already built, the Farmer's Alliance making arrangements to build a very large tobacco factory, one large brick warehouse for the sale of leaf tobacco is nearing completion and others to be built, and several prize houses will be erected in time for handling the 1890 crop. We do not claim that Roxboro will be a magic city, but do believe that owing to the advantages of the location, this is a fine opportunity for an investment. No Danger of a Relapse.

The auction was reported to be "a great success" and doing "more to advertise Roxboro than anything that has yet been done."

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In anticipation of the railroad The Courier reported, on December 15, 1887, that two new streets were laid off in the town and Main Street was "considerably widened. One of the streets runs between the old warehouse and jail (Jail Street, now called Court Street) and the other between the residences of R.K. Daniel and J.T. Sargeant, which has not yet been completed." (This would be called Mountain Street and then Depot Street when the depot was located June, 1889. The road was resurveyed at this point so that it would not run through Daniel's grove and garden.)

More than one speculative builder was erecting commercial buildings. In March, 1888 The Courier reported on the construction of the

. . . Merritt Building on Main Street [at Depot]. Our live and energetic young townsman, Mr. J.S. Merritt has now about completed his large and handsome new brick building . . . and it will be filled with a large stock of hardware in a few days by J.A. Carver & Co. Mr. Merritt in building such a handsome structure not only shows his desire in ornamenting and beautifying our town, but shows explicit confidence in the railroad prospect.

The post office was moved to this building and in 1890 another tenant was added when the "instantaneous photography shop" of Newell & Jones located in the second story where they installed a large skylight so as to "give satisfactory results."

The growing tobacco market caused the construction of prize houses in which tobacco was stored (1894 Sanborn map shows eight, mostly on lots behind the court-house), and eventually a stemmery plant which opened in 1897 and employed 100 hands. In 1889 J.A. Long donated a lot on Jail Street to the Person County Farmer's Alliance to build a tobacco factory. He completed his own Pioneer Tobacco Factory at Main and Reams Streets in time to be the first warehouse open for the 1890 selling season. Hyco Warehouse soon followed on Depot Street. Long continued his speculative building, and in January, 1892 The Courier described his new multi-purpose structure on the western corner of Main and Reams Streets across the street from his immensely successful Pioneer Warehouse:

Until recently the front of the new brick store erected for Mr. J.A. Long and occupied by W.J. Johns & Co. grocer, was concealed by the scaffolding. Now that this has been removed a handsome front has been disclosed to view. The building is of brick, two stores . . . 100' long by 30' wide. The entire front of the store is of glass, the framework of which is surrounded on the sides, above by painted and white lined brick work. Above this commodious store are a number of rooms which will soon be occupied as office and bedrooms by lawyers and dentists and others . . . The building is an ornament to Roxboro and its erection is only another evidence which that progressive and energetic citizen, Mr. J.A. Long gives of his faith in the future of our town. Mr. Henry Field was the contractor, and the building is a standing advertisement of his skill.

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Hotels and boarding houses in town included the Winstead Hotel at the northeast corner of Main and Depot Streets. The three-story portion of the rambling frame structure was moved by Col. C.S. Winstead from Caswell County. Its front facing wing may have been erected as early as 1860 and served as a short-lived bank operated by Judge Edwin Reade and Col. Winstead.²³ The Dowdy Hotel was located on the corner of Abbitt and Main and was probably built c. 1895. It does not appear on the 1894 Sanborn map (nor does Abbit Street), but does on the 1900 map along with Abbitt Street. The street did not then extend to Lamar but was a short, dead end street apparently constructed to serve the new hotel.

A stylish new, Victorian Gothic courthouse had been completed in 1883 replacing the 1824 courthouse which had become too small "and of an antiquated style." Designed by architect Lyndon Swaim of Greensboro and built by C.W. Brown of Hillsborough, the building boasted a prominent central four-sided clock tower by which the suddenly awakened and vibrant business community would keep time until the fourth, and current, courthouse was built in 1930. Photographs of the Victorian courthouse show the two-story building was constructed of brick, trimmed with stucco, with a gabled roof covered with tin.

Two banks, the Farmer's Bank and People's Bank, had been organized by 1893; there had been none a decade earlier. The new streets were dirt and mud until the town bought a rock crusher in 1895 and macadamized Depot and Main Streets that year. Other municipal services soon arrived. In 1897 the city water works and the Roxboro Telephone Company were established. The Courier assured its readers that "telephones will be placed all over town soon and we will be helloing to our heart's content."²⁴ The Courier relocated in 1894 to its new two-story Gothic Revival building on Depot Street where it would remain until the building was demolished in 1957 (one white stucco pilaster remains).

J.A. Long began building the Roxboro Cotton Mills at the foot of Depot Street in 1899 heralding the beginning of what became a major Roxboro industry, textiles. The close of the century saw optimism high for Roxboro's continued industrial expansion. The railroad had changed the face of Main Street. Gone were the unpainted frame stores and in their place were the blocks of sturdy, handsome, brick buildings which line the eastern side of Main south of Depot and the northern side of Court Street. New buildings continued to be built along the western side of Main and along Depot Street.

Other North Carolina towns began to take notice of this new activity and on January 3, 1900, The Roxboro Courier reprinted on page one a story from the Raleigh News and Observer:

. . . The year 1890 witnessed the completion [of the Norfolk & Western line]. The town was then a mere village of 400 people, having a courthouse and a jail. There was then not a dollar invested in manufacturing enterprises. Today there is more than \$75,000

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invested. The Roxboro Cotton Mill will begin work Jan. 15 . . . tobacco stemmery, Woodson, Long & Co. [employs] 100 laborers . . . Noell Bros. Pants Co., 35 laborers . . . Brooks & Carver cannery, rapidly increasing. All of these industries were established since 1897. The year 1899 witnessed the largest increase in the prosperity of Roxboro in its history. . . . People's Bank and Farmer's Bank merged Another cotton factory being discussed. Roxboro will do three times the volume of business in 1900 that it did in 1899.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, building activity accelerated and basic conveniences continued to arrive. Telephones were more widespread and "eventually lines run out into the county; the city water system improved, and Roxboro finally awoke from its educational silence with the building of the Roxboro Graded School. Building on Main Street continued with stores being completed to fill remaining space between the west side of Main Street from Reams Avenue to Court Street and the city of Roxboro metered and sold water for the first time."²⁵

Rapid growth stimulated further improvements but created some problems also. Complaints about the municipal streets were frequent and loud. The Courier complained in 1912: "Our streets are simply awful and it is almost dangerous for a lady to try to go about the town, that is unless she is an expert at walking a log." A.J. Tranger wrote to The Courier in June, 1911: "the city streets look like an army of Central American revolutionists, without a presentable front, lacking in uniformity and ready to fall to pieces." An unsigned advertisement in a February, 1915 issue complained of "\$11,000 spent on roads last year and what do we have -- mud, mud, more mud, and worse mud." The increasing popularity of the easily mired automobile finally resulted in the passing of a bond issue in 1917 enabling the county to finish macadamizing the roads.

The novelty of the first public telephone booth was noted in The Courier in November, 1903: "A splendid telephone booth has been placed in front of Morris' Drug Store, where you can close the door, use the phone and not be heard outside." In January, 1911, the Morris Telephone Company "connected with the long distance . . . you can now talk over the Southern Bell anywhere you like." More poles and wires were added to the streetscape when electricity was installed in April, 1910, and people flocked to the downtown stores to see the lights turned on.

J.A. Long continued to erect buildings on Main Street between 1905 and 1908. The west side of Main between Reams and Jail (Court Street) was developed. In the fall of 1905 he built "two elegant stores . . . between the hardware store and People's Bank (bank stood at the corner of Main and Court streets)." In May, 1906 "a nice granolithic (crushed granite and cement) sidewalk" was laid in front of his block of buildings on the west side of Main. He developed lots on this block in the spring and summer of 1908. In March The Courier reported that "Mr. J.A. Long is placing the brick on the grounds to build a block of stores from the Morris-Webb Drugstore to the People's Bank"; in October the tenants began to move in.

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The growing town was hard pressed to keep up with the need for an adequate sewerage system. In April, 1907 a sewerage pipe was installed 'to carry off the waste water from the stores on the east side of Main Street and those on Depot Street will connect with it.' The Courier editorialized in March, 1909, about the slow progress of a city-wide system and complained the city fathers "made a most deplorable mistake, that of allowing citizens to put in private sewerage systems throughout the town . . . they should put a stop to open sewerage across a public thoroughfare . . . the citizens and tax payers of those streets have to cross these filthy open sewers every time they go back and forth from their homes and places of business." Other sanitary problems were more readily solved: in July, 1906 a petition was circulated by the local health officer to have the pigs driven from town, and the newspaper was "glad to see that so many of our people are signing."

Development attention moved south and was focused on the east side of south Main below Abbitt Street when in March, 1910, S.B. Winstead tore down an old (c. 1810) building housing a meat market preparatory to building a new block containing two or three brick stores and a large brick tobacco warehouse. The Courier approved: "While there have been many improvements made here in the past few years nothing which has been done will be quite so great an improvement as tearing away of these old buildings and replacing with a handsome brick block." Winstead announced the opening of his new warehouse and was particularly proud of its electric lights making it "one of the best lighted warehouses in the state." This building was enlarged in 1913 by adding fifty feet to the rear. (It was razed in 1967 when the Leggett building replaced the landmark.)

The post office had temporary quarters on Depot Street, including an office in the Courier Building and one near the Hyco Warehouse, before ground was broken in February, 1911 for the three-story building at the northeast corner of Main and Depot. The developers -- J.C. Pass, W.T. Pass, J.A. Long, Jr. and W.A. Woody -- proposed to use as commercial space those fronting on Main and to locate the post office in the side fronting on Depot. This handsome brick Classical Revival building conforms to its oddly angled corner site and still retains its original storefront display windows. (Rose's variety store operated there from 1919 to 1962 when a new store was constructed at the corner of Main and Abbitt.)

This building and the former First National Bank across the street are perhaps the most architecturally significant buildings in the historic district. The bank building, completed in August, 1913, is two-story Classical Revival with full height pilasters, Roman entablature and parapet. It also conforms to an angled corner lot. It is an unusually grand building in the Roxboro streetscape and is a reflection of the town's prosperity in the early twentieth century.

Other buildings erected on Main Street in 1915 were the new garage and showroom for the Ford motor cars sold by the Crowell Motor Company located on north Main next to the Pioneer Warehouse. This white brick building featured a new innovation, a ladies' public restroom.²⁶ Further south on the other side of Main, a store was

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remodeled by J.A. Long to house "The Grand" movie theatre. This was one of the "real up-to-date movie shows . . . the front being of marble and tile, seating 300 people."

The decade of the 1920s, a major building period in Roxboro, brought many changes to the face of the town. All of the remaining old frame buildings on Main Street were torn down and replaced by brick structures, most of which remain today. There was also a great deal of discussion about tearing down the old Victorian courthouse. The jail was condemned and torn down in 1928, but the building of the new courthouse was not accomplished until 1930.

The east side of the block of Main north of Depot Street was developed in 1922 by V. Kaplon, R.A. Walker and T. Owen Pass. The Courier found the three-story building built by Kaplon "especially imposing" and predicted that when the rest of the block was completed later that summer it would "be easily one of the handsomest blocks in town."

The last vacant lot on Main Street close to the courthouse was sold in August, 1923 for \$500 per foot of frontage. The sixty foot lot was purchased by Messrs. Wilburn and Satterfield and the Kirby brothers, the former planning to erect a store (opened September, 1925) and the latter a movie house. The Palace Theatre opened October 1, 1924, and was a great success. (The Kirbys later built a new Art Deco theatre in 1949 on the west side of north Main, which still stands and is used as a civic center.)

During the 1920s new businesses were "sprouting up by the handful" or expanding. In a notice dated April, 1922, the mayor and town policemen prematurely announced the end of the decade's building boom, which in reality would only be ended by the Depression:

To Automobile Parkers, Speeders, & Mufflers: During the building boom in the town of Roxboro so much of the street space was utilized by the contractors and builders with building material, the parking ordinances have not been strictly enforced but the boom is over now and the streets must be cleaned up and all rubbish removed therefrom, an all parking ordinances must be observed. . . .

With the crash of the stockmarket in 1929 and the Depression, the boom was over for everyone. Hardest hit were the Person County farmers, many of whom lost their farms during this period. All three of Person's textile mills remained open, however, even though wages were slashed. Roxboro apparently held its own, as it had through other lean times, with only one bank, The People's, temporarily closing in 1933 and reopening the same year after reorganization. Building activity in town was at a near standstill, with the major exception being the erection of the new courthouse. In keeping with Roxboro's pattern of lengthy deliberations before approval of major new publicly funded improvements, planning for the courthouse began as early as

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1919. The county commissioners had been taken to task by a Superior Court judge and grand juries for the deplorable conditions of the old courthouse and especially the jail. The commissioners were called into court to show why they should not be held in contempt for failing to carry out the judge's order for a new jail. The jail was condemned and torn down in 1928 and, for a time, prisoners were taken to Hillsborough or Yanceyville for housing. After an unsuccessful bond issue in 1928, bonds were finally approved and bids opened in August, 1930. Demolition and construction began by George W. Kane & Co., low bidder at \$133,000.

The corner stone of the new courthouse was laid October 13, 1930, and W.D. Merritt, head of the Roxboro Bar Association spoke at the ceremony about his mixed feeling at seeing the old courthouse go:

For 30 years I have looked out from my office window across the street upon that rugged old building, lacking in beauty and architectural design. High up on the front was the old clock with its four board faces and its large hands and ponderous bell. It was a faithful time piece, and it furnished the time for the town and the surrounding community. Its bell served as the fire alarm, and many a night it called the people from their beds and peaceful slumbers to engage in fighting fires. . . . A courthouse is the most essential and important of any building in the county. This is the one building that all of us hold in common, and by reason of our citizenship in common, we are the owners of the courthouse in common. It is the only building whose doors ever stand ajar to every citizen of the county and through which he can pass at any time without invitation. . . .

Construction on the beautiful, four-story, Neo-Classical building, designed by Charles C. Hartman, continued at a good pace and the building was opened in March, 1931 and dedicated April 22, 1931. Some citizens admired the fine architecture at close range. The first jail break from "Person County's new bastille" occurred April 8, 1831, when three prisoners took leave of it "by sliding down a rope fastened to a stone projection on the roof."²⁷

One new addition to the town and Main Street was the Leggett Department Store which moved, in 1931, into a renovated storefront next to the People's Bank. There was one deletion -- an old, small office building on the southwest corner of Courthouse Square was torn down. Other minor changes to the streetscape during the Depression included the addition of a neon sign to the Palace movie theatre and the widening of the north end of Main Street employing 108 men from the National Re-Employment Service. Other government work projects included the WPA's painting of ROXBORO in large yellow letters on the roof of the Winstead Warehouse to aid passing fliers. Roxboro's economy was improving by Christmas, 1939 and The Courier reported on December 23 that "The heaviest Christmas buying in several years is pouring an

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enormous amount of money into local trade channels, and according to The People's Bank is being reflected in customer checking accounts."

During the first half of the 1940s, while Person County and the world were preoccupied with the Second World War, building activity was again at a near stand-still. Downtown would remain much the same with an occasional minor remodeling of a storefront to accompany the earlier addition in 1940 of the Kirby & Ledbetter Building on the west side of north Main, which housed a grill and fountain, a flower shop, clothing store and a dairy products store.

Throughout the war years there was much deliberation regarding traffic congestion on Main Street and plans to improve Madison Boulevard in order to create a loop that would bypass Main Street for through traffic (constructed, 1948). Lack of parking spaces and the appearance of Main Street became concerns. A parking lot was constructed in 1940 "in the vacant area adjoining the Hyco Warehouse on Depot and the rear of the east side of the business district."²⁸ The Courier opined: "We especially want to call attention to one thing and that is the appearance of our Main St., which is an eyesore to everyone. It is narrow, a very grave and unfortunate mistake which cannot be remedied now, but we can make it more inviting by removing all unsightly telegraph and telephone wires and poles, and signs hanging over the sidewalks."²⁹

Optimism was high as the war ended and a new building boom was predicted: "Roxboro is growing and just as soon as building material is made available and a few lots are put on the market you are going to see this town jump. You are going to see new residences and new places of business spring up in all kinds of places, and Roxboro will be on its way."³⁰

An important Main Street landmark, the 1890 Pioneer Warehouse at the corner of Main and Reams, was torn down in 1947 for the construction by George W. Kane of the four-story International Style Roxboro Building. This building, which dominates the business district, was commissioned by the Roxboro Cotton Mills as office space for itself and a variety of other tenants, including the peripatetic People's Bank (now First Union National Bank after 1969 merger) which has known three Main Street locations: 1891-1900 in the Merritt Building at the southeast corner of Main and Depot,³¹ 1900-1949 at the corner of Main and Court, and 1949-present in the Roxboro Building.

Another major change in the face of Main Street was the construction of the Art Deco Kirby Theatre, just north of the new Roxboro Building, adjoining the Kirby-Ledbetter Building built in 1940. Building continued on the theatre over a sixteen-month period from April, 1948 until August, 1949 when the 1,000 seat theatre opened. George W. Kane constructed the two-story, yellow brick building with its fluted concrete facade ornament. The theatre remains unchanged and intact today with the original metal trimmed marquee, entrance, and free standing round ticket booth.

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These two modern buildings add variety to the streetscape and are representative of the strength of the local post war economy, just as the neighboring brick blocks reflect the boom periods, 1890 to 1914 and the 1920s. The prosperity of the early 1950s also resulted in much construction activity outside the historic district, spurred on in large part by the formation, in 1953, of the Roxboro Development Co., which successfully encouraged diversified industrial development in the county.

This industrial expansion of the 1950s continued into the 1960s. The Durham Morning Herald announced in 1953: "In the past 18 years Roxboro has enjoyed a sharp increase in population, industrial expansion and increased business activity. . . . By bringing in new industry and encouraging more diversification in agriculture Roxboro is counting on continued growth."³² In 1957 the Durham paper noted that "the end of World War II brought new blood back to Roxboro . . . and it is from this time that many folks in the area measure the new era. Others feel that the years 1950-53 were the city's turning point. But whatever year it began, the last decade has seen a marked increase in the city's industrial payroll spearheaded by the Roxboro Development Corporation . . . the industrial payroll alone nearly equals the annual farm income of the entire county."³³ The Durham Morning Herald again brought its readers up to date on the nearby city's economic progress in 1964: ". . . since the Development Corporation's formation Person County is literally booming with industry . . . payroll has more than doubled since the [formation] of the RDC and retail sales are up \$7.5 million. . . . It is said that there is probably more construction underway in Person County than any other county comparable in size in the nation."³⁴

An important downtown landmark was lost in 1961 when the Roxboro Hotel, at the southwest corner of Main and Abbitt, was razed to make way for a new Rose's Department Store. This lot had been a hotel site since the late 1890s when the Hotel Dowdy was built, followed in 1909 by the three-story, mansard roofed Hotel Jones. It remained the major city hotel, despite changes in ownership and names, until its destruction.

During the 1960s shopping centers became a nationally widespread commercial phenomenon. With convenient locations near growing residential suburbs, a wide variety of shops, and ease of parking, they posed a threat to many aging downtown shopping districts. Roxboro's first shopping center was built in 1963 on Madison Boulevard, the road constructed as a bypass to the west of the central business district. The downtown merchants responded to this competition for the shoppers by forming a Downtown Merchants Association. Their first project was a study aimed at improving parking and the appearance of downtown. The next year on a "face-lifted block on Main Street, businesses opened their doors."³⁵ Included in the block between Abbitt and Gordon were Rose's, Long's Men's Shop and Lewis Furniture Company. A series of studies of the downtown commercial district was prepared for the city of Roxboro during the 1960s. These studies examined the present condition and economic health of the district and suggested a preliminary plan for future development.

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"The Central Business District Study," prepared by North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development, Division of Community Planning in December, 1965, addressed the growing concern of downtown deterioration of the aging building stock, inadequate parking, and traffic congestion. The study noted that over 90% of the retail trade occurred in the core area, but predicted that a high percentage would be difficult to maintain with the future outlying shopping centers. However, the 1963 shopping center and a second one, built in 1969, appear not to have had the devastating effect on the downtown shopping district experienced by many small towns. Throughout the period, Roxboro residents apparently remained attached to their older, traditional shopping district. Also, new parking lots were constructed and now there is ample and convenient parking to serve the stores. Today there are few vacant storefronts in the Commercial Historic District, and the downtown streets are alive with businessmen, shoppers, and people passing the time of day with friends and neighbors.

"The Central Business District Study" contains results of a customer survey and found a high sense of shopping loyalty to Roxboro, with 60% of the shopping dollars spent downtown. Those surveyed were generally pleased with downtown and rated the stores and employees "good." The study also suggested that the downtown area be densely developed so as to appeal to pedestrians, who had been given little consideration in comparison to the automobile. "Pedestrians are in constant conflict with vehicular traffic at every intersection . . . sidewalks not in very good repair . . . with only spot patching or filling, . . . which has had the effect of destroying the original unifying appearance."³⁶ The study went on to report that signage for the various shops presented no uniformity, and most appeared as an afterthought with the confusion of shapes, sizes and colors contributing to visual clutter and confusion. The study recommended a unified attempt to coordinate improvements in the sidewalks, signage, and awnings and cautioned Roxboro against trying to imitate Durham, Burlington or Raleigh in its downtown development. "There is no reason," the report stated, "to believe that Roxboro will ever be anything but a small town for many years to come, and for this reason, it should plan its growth accordingly."³⁷

In 1983 plans are proceeding for a variety of downtown redevelopment projects which will address some of the various concerns of the 1960s study. Perhaps it is fortunate that the various suggestions have been taken under such lengthy consideration. Now the government leaders and merchants appreciate the unique fabric of the Roxboro Commercial Historic District, and their new plans seek to enhance the unique collection of predominantly early twentieth century commercial buildings. The enduring face of downtown Roxboro might well have been lost if the studies had been hastily embraced during the 1960s era of "urban renewal," which all too often meant urban destruction and the disappearance of potential historic districts.

A c. 1916 promotional pamphlet published by the Person County Business Men's Association, contains a statement as true today, as it was then: "We have scores of mercantile firms all wide awake and ready to lend a helping hand to the stranger who casts his lot in our midst."³⁸ Roxboro is a sturdy, vital community, rich in architecture which reflects its growth since 1890 to the present, and is representative of the best of piedmont North Carolina's small towns.

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The structures, of course, are closely related to the surrounding environment. Archeological remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structures. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archeological record. Therefore, archeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the district. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development in the district.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ Madeline Hall Eaker, ed., The Heritage of Person County, (Winston-Salem: Hunter, 1981), p. VII, hereinafter cited as Eaker, Heritage.

² Alexander R. Foushee, Reminiscences: A Sketch and Letters Descriptive of Life in Person County in Former Days, (Durham: Seeman, 1921), pp. 33-34, hereinafter cited as Foushee, Reminiscences.

³ Eaker, Heritage, p. VII.

⁴ Stuart Thurman Wright, Historical Sketch of Person County, (Danville, Virginia: Womack, 1974), p. 62, hereinafter cited as Wright, Historical Sketch.

⁵ Wright, Historical Sketch, p. 63.

⁶ Wright, Historical Sketch, p. 62.

⁷ Wright, Historical Sketch, p. 62.

⁸ Wright, Historical Sketch, p. 64.

⁹ Foushee, Reminiscences, p. 15.

¹⁰ Foushee, Reminiscences, pp. 10-11.

¹¹ Foushee, Reminiscences, p. 23.

¹² Wright, Historical Sketch, p. 69.

¹³ Foushee, Reminiscences, p. 27.

¹⁴ Foushee, Reminiscences, p. 28.

¹⁵ Foushee, Reminiscences, p. 37.

¹⁶ Wright, Historical Sketch, p. 75.

¹⁷ Foushee, Reminiscences, pp. 14-15.

¹⁸ Wright, Historical Sketch, p. 137.

¹⁹ John C. VanHook to Thomas, March 5, 1875, John C. VanHook Papers, 1865-1882, Manuscript Department, Duke University Library, Durham.

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- 20 The Roxboro Herald, July 21, 1881.
- 21 Bill Sharpe, "Person Relaxes Like the East, but Performs Like the Piedmont," The State, March 10, 1956, p. 21.
- 22 Jerry L. Cross and Durward T. Stokes, Ph.D., National Register of Historic Places Inventory -- Nomination Form, "Graham Historic District," 1983, Item number 7, p. 3, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.
- 23 The Courier-Times, Centennial Edition, December, 1982.
- 24 The Roxboro Courier, July 28, 1897.
- 25 The Courier-Times, Centennial Edition, December, 1982.
- 26 The Roxboro Courier, Industrial Edition, January 21, 1917.
- 27 The Courier-Times, Centennial Edition, December, 1982.
- 28 The Courier-Times, Centennial Edition, December, 1982.
- 29 The Courier-Times, Centennial Edition, December, 1982.
- 30 The Courier-Times, April 22, 1946. The Roxboro Courier and The Person County Times merged in 1943.
- 31 The Manuscript Department of Duke University Library has two c. 1908 post-cards in its North Carolina Postcard Collection of exterior and interior views of the People's Bank at Main and Court Streets. The building had an impressive domed cupola, removed in August, 1965.
- 32 Durham Morning Herald, June 28, 1953.
- 33 Durham Morning Herald, July 21, 1957.
- 34 Durham Morning Herald, April 19, 1964.
- 35 The Courier-Times, Centennial Edition, December, 1982.
- 36 North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development, Division of Community Planning, Central Business District Study: Roxboro, North Carolina, (Raleigh, December, 1965), p. 31.
- 37 North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development, Division of Community Planning, Central Business District Study: Roxboro, North Carolina, (Raleigh, December, 1965), p. 45.

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38 Person County Business Men's Association, Roxboro, North Carolina, ([North Carolina]: n.p., n.d.), n.p. Pamphlet, [c. 1916?] in North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.

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Continuation sheet Boundary Justification Item number 10 Page 1

The boundaries of the Roxboro Commercial Historic District have been drawn to include all those properties which would contribute historically and/or architecturally to the district. The commercial, "downtown" area is contained naturally by parking lots which border the east and west edges of the area, and by well preserved residential areas which bracket the northern and southern edges of the Main Street commercial area.

The compact district includes portions of North and South Main Street, Reams, Court, Abbitt and Depot Streets.

The northern boundary follows the side lot line of the commercial building at 225 North Main Street and the side lot line of the Long Memorial Methodist Church at 226 North Main. This line excludes the neighboring residential structures to the north.

The eastern boundary follows the rear lot line of Long Memorial Methodist Church, extending south to Depot Street, then along the side lot line of the commercial building at 122 Depot Street, then along the side lot line including the former Community Hospital at 133 Depot Street, excluding recent commercial structures to the east. The boundary line follows the rear lot lines of the commercial buildings on the south side of Depot Street and thence south, following the rear lot lines of the commercial buildings on Main Street and excluding the parking lots that border these buildings to the east.

The southern boundary is drawn to include the WPA-built former post office at the SW corner of South Main and Academy Streets, and to exclude the recent commercial buildings to its south.

The western boundary follows the rear lot lines of the commercial buildings on Main and Abbitt Streets, and excludes the residential area south of Gordon Street and the recent governmental and commercial buildings west of Lamar Street. The district includes the four commercial buildings on Court Street west of Lamar Street, and excludes the parking lot to their west. The line continues east along the rear lot lines of the commercial buildings on Court Street, thence north along the side lot line of the commercial building at 27 Reams Street, excluding the parking lot to the west. The western boundary continues north along the rear lot lines of the commercial buildings on North Main Street, excluding the recent commercial buildings and residential areas to the west and north.

9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheets

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 20 acres approximately

Quadrangle name Roxboro NW/4

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	7	6	8	0	6	3	0	4	0	2	9	6	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

1	7	6	8	1	0	0	0	4	0	2	9	4	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

1	7	6	8	1	0	0	0	4	0	2	9	2	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

1	7	6	8	0	6	8	0	4	0	2	9	0	3	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

see continuation sheets

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patricia S. Dickinson, consultant

organization Division of Archives and History

date October 1, 1983

street & number 109 East Jones Street

telephone (919) 733-6545

city or town Raleigh

state 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. Price, Jr.

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date October 20, 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

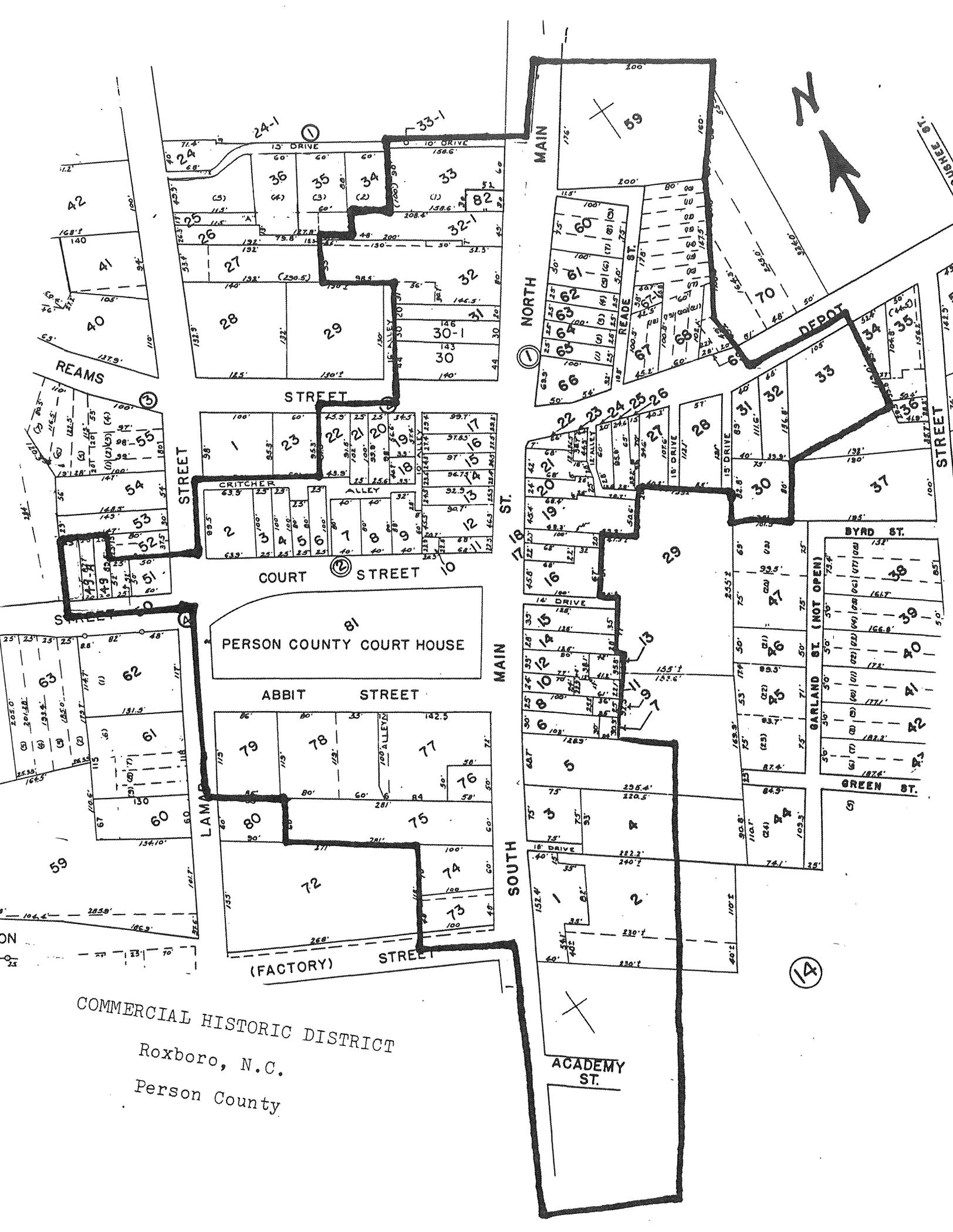
date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

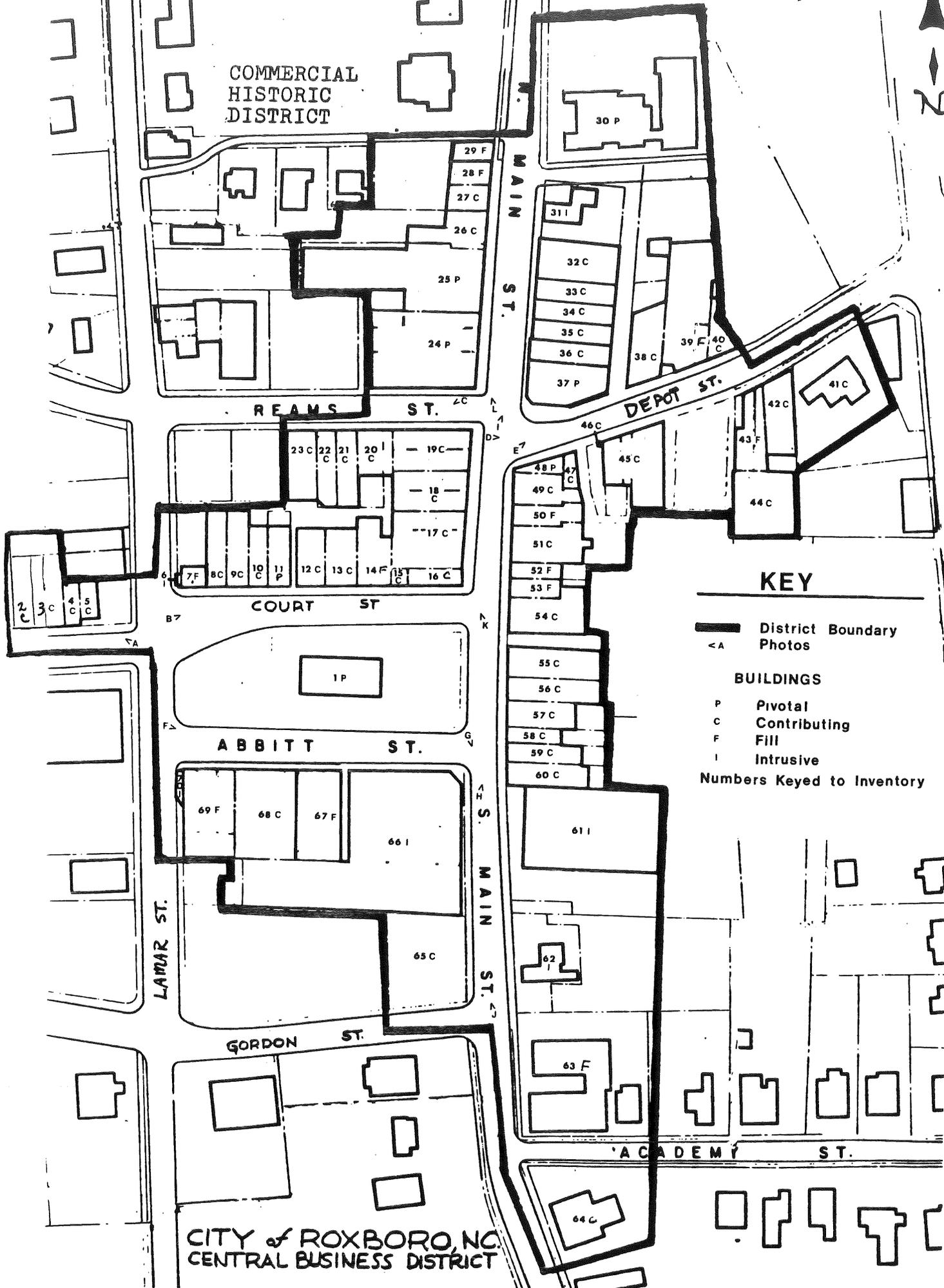
date

Chief of Registration



COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT
 Roxboro, N.C.
 Person County

COMMERCIAL
HISTORIC
DISTRICT



KEY

-  District Boundary
 -  <A Photos
- BUILDINGS**
- P Pivotal
 - C Contributing
 - F Fill
 - I Intrusive
- Numbers Keyed to Inventory

CITY of ROXBORO, NC.
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

