

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Main Street Historic District

other names/site number _____

2. Location

Both sides of Main Street, from 125 S. Main Street northward through
street & number 326 N. Main; Central Street; Washington Street N/A not for publication

city or town Rutherfordton N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Rutherford code 161 zip code 28139

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey J. Crow Acting SHPO 10/23/95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is: Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Main Street Historic District
Name of Property

Rutherford County, North Carolina
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
43	16	buildings
	6	sites
		structures
1		objects
44	22	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution
- COMMERCE/TRADE: speciality store
- COMMERCE/TRADE: department store
- GOVERNMENT: post office
- GOVERNMENT: city hall
- GOVERNMENT: court house
- RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument/marker
- GOVERNMENT: correctional facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution
- COMMERCE/TRADE: speciality store
- GOVERNMENT: city hall
- GOVERNMENT: court house
- RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument/marker
- LANDSCAPE: plaza

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Colonial Revival
- Classical Revival
- Commercial Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation Brick
- walls Brick
- Stone
- roof Asphalt
- other Metal
- Wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Politics and Government

Period of Significance

ca. 1898-1945

Significant Dates

1925

1926

1931

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Asbury, Louis H.--architect

Milburn, Heister & Company--architect

Hill & Justice--contractor

Southern Construction Company--contractor

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Main Street Historic District
Name of Property

Rutherford County, North Carolina
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. 10.75 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	17	412880	3914240
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2	17	413200	3914180

3	17	413140	3913880
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4	17	412820	3913940

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Davyd Foard Hood
organization _____ date 2 August 1995
street & number Isinglass, 6907 Old Shelby Road telephone 704/462-4331
city or town Vale state N.C. zip code 28168

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name The Honorable W. Fred Williams, Mayor of Rutherfordton
street & number 110 N. Washington Street telephone 704/287-3520
city or town Rutherfordton state N.C. zip code 28139-2404

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**National Register of Historic Places
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Main Street Historic District
Rutherfordton, Rutherford County, North Carolina

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Main Street Historic District, Rutherfordton

GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT

The Main Street Historic District in Rutherfordton, the county seat of Rutherford County, comprises sixty-six buildings, sites and (one) object which reflect the commercial development of the town from the late nineteenth century until 1945. Nearly two-thirds (thirty-eight) of the total number of resources stand on the east and west sides of Main Street between the Norris Public Library (#1), 125 S. Main Street, at the south end of the district, and the Rutherford County Court House (#38), 301 N. Main Street, which anchors the north end of the district. The remaining buildings are located on Central Street, one block west of and parallel to Main Street, on Washington Street, which is one block west of Central Street and parallel with Main and Central Streets, and on Court Street, West First Street, and West Second Street which carry westward between Main and Washington Streets. Except for the Norris Public Library (#1) and the former United States Post Office (#2) on S. Main Street, the commercial building (#23) at 138-140 Taylor Street, and the (former) Rutherford County Jail (#63) at 317 N. Washington Street, all of the buildings stand within a true rectangle bounded by Taylor Street on the east, Court Street on the south, N. Washington Street on the west, and Third Street on the north. The path of Main Street, as it passes through the historic district, lies atop a ridge and the ground drops away to the east and down to a creek and to the west. This gradation in the topography is relatively slight on the west side of Main Street; however, on the east side the drop is severe to the extent that the basements of buildings on the east side of Main Street are fully exposed on Taylor Street where they are essentially above ground.

The district is in the near center of Rutherfordton. The area to the east of Taylor Street is mixed-use in character and gradually merges with the mill housing, at the foot of the hill, associated with the Cleghorn Mill. Immediately north of the district on Main Street stand the First Baptist Church in the 400 block and the First Methodist Church in the 500 block. Across the street from the Baptist Church, and just north of the Rutherford County Court House, stand the Carrier Houses at 415 and 423 N. Main Street which were listed in the National Register in 1992. They are among the town's finest nineteenth-century dwellings and reflect the historic use of N. Main Street as one of the city's principal residential avenues. The area south of Court Street, extending down to the Charlotte Highway, is mixed commercial and office/institutional in character. During the period of significance, the west side of Washington Street, the west boundary of the district, was mainly residential; however, houses have given way to commercial and office/institutional use in the area up to the (former) Rutherford County Jail (#63): Washington Street north of the jail becomes one of the city's principal residential avenues.

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The historic buildings constructed in the district between ca. 1898 and 1945 represent the traditional architectural styles, materials, decoration, workmanship, and quality of design seen in commercial and public buildings during that period. The oldest contributing buildings in the district (#27, #28, and #34) reflect the use of corbelled brickwork to enliven the facades of nineteenth-century commercial buildings. As the twentieth century advanced the eclectic appearance of commercial buildings gave way to the use of classical pilasters and paneled brickwork which reflected the Colonial and Classical Revivals that influenced domestic, commercial, and public architecture through the opening decades of the century. This can be seen in buildings like the Commercial National Bank (#37) which dates to the late 1900s or early 1910s. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, the design of commercial architecture in the district took on a more linear character and much of the focus was on decorative brickwork forming panels, bands, and other features which ordered the facades of commercial buildings. The (former) Keeter Hardware Company Building (#31) and the adjoining Geer Commercial Building (#32) are important examples of this trend and so, too, is the (former) Geer-Warlick Motor Company Building (#49) and the two-story storefront and office building at 310-314 N. Main Street (#21). As the Sanborn Insurance Maps for the period from 1898 to 1925 indicate, most of the central business district was built up to its present appearance in the period from 1898 to 1925 with infill occurring through the 1930s and into the 1940s. Virtually all of these buildings (except #31 and #32) are of red brick and stand one or two stories in height. None of the town's commercial buildings are above two stories; however, those on the east side of N. Main Street have two- or three-story rear elevations because of the severe drop in grade. It should also be noted that many of the commercial buildings in the district retain important and mostly intact pressed-tin ceilings. These are noted in the individual entries for particular buildings in the inventory list. Important, intact ceilings exist in the (former) Southern Hotel Company Building (#9), the building at 202 N. Main Street (#12), the (former) Keeter Hardware Company Building (#31), the Geer Commercial Building (#32), among others.

The five important public buildings standing in the historic district, erected between 1925 and 1933, reflect the lasting influence of the Colonial and Classical Revivals in the design of public buildings which has persisted to the end of the twentieth century. They stand as important examples of their style in the landscape of Rutherfordton and the historic district. The Rutherford County Jail (#63) and the nearby City Hall (#50) both date from the mid-1920s: the jail was designed with a residential character by Milburn, Heister & Company to blend in with the residential buildings on Washington Street while the City Hall was designed in a rich Classical Revival style to reflect civic pride and accomplishment. That same civic pride found expression a block away with the construction of the Rutherford County Court House (#38) to the design

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of Louis H. Asbury. At the opposite end of Main Street, in the block diagonally opposite the site of the county's nineteenth-century court house, the (former) United States Post Office (#2) was designed and built in the handsome Georgian Revival style in 1931 and two years later, in 1933, the Norris Public Library was completed in a simple but handsome Colonial Revival style reflecting, in part, the character of many such buildings erected in the 1930s through the Public Works Administration.

Except for the Norris Public Library, the (former) United States Post Office and the Rutherford County Court House, which were designed as free-standing buildings on sizable lots, the buildings in the district follow the conventions for commercial architecture in small North Carolina towns. The buildings follow established facade lines and stand immediately next to each other to form continuous, uninterrupted blockfronts. Thus the principal design focus is on the facades of buildings, and their side elevations and rear walls are functional and utilitarian in appearance. The design and construction of buildings built on corner lots often reflected this advantage. The foremost of these "corner" buildings is the City Hall (#50) which has lavishly detailed elevations on both Washington and W. First Street. The Commercial Bank Building (#37) and the Geer-Warlick Motor Company Building (#49) are also corner buildings with two principal elevations which enliven the streetscape of the historic district and one's passage through it. The street pattern in the district follows a general grid pattern and the only open space is the lawn of the court house on which stands the town's memorial to the men and women of the Confederacy (#39). In 1979-1980, the town council closed W. First Street, between N. Main and N. Central Streets, to automobiles and created Main Street Park (#33) as a public amenity and as a pedestrian pathway to a public parking lot (#44) which was created at the same time at the corner of Central and W. First Streets.

The only disruption to the built-up character of the district in its period of significance has been fire and demolition. In May 1986, fire destroyed one of the town's oldest nineteenth-century commercial buildings and left a vacant lot (#19) which remains empty to the present. The other important loss of buildings in the district occurred in 1980-1981 when the city acquired and demolished six buildings standing next to each other in the northwest corner of N. Central and W. First Streets: typical of like urban renewal projects which occurred throughout North Carolina towns in the 1960s and 1970s, this project was to create additional uptown parking for the town's Main Street merchants. Except for the plantings on the court house lawn and in Main Street Park (#33), and the specimen trees which stand on the grounds of the Norris Public Library (#1) and the former jail (#63), there is little vegetation or landscape treatment in the district.

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Except for the loss of buildings to fire (#19) and demolition (#44), the present appearance of the district largely reflects the historic appearance of the district during the period of significance except on two counts. One modification, seen in small town centers and historic districts throughout the state and the Southeast, has been the renovation and remodeling of the entranceways of commercial buildings. This is part of the pattern of continued use of commercial buildings, generation after generation, by a succession of tenants and/or owner/occupants.

The buildings of the district both reflect this conventional pattern and represent important exceptions to it. The adjoining buildings (#28 and #29) at 123 and 125 N. Main Street retain either their original or very early entranceways with turn-of-the-century doors and display windows. Likewise, the building (#17) at 220-222 N. Main Street retains its original staircase providing access from Main Street to the basement level, a singular instance of this practice in Rutherfordton and one of the few which survive in the state. Other buildings retain their historic Main Street, streetside access to the offices and chambers on their second stories which were important parts of early-twentieth century life. Among these are the buildings at 115-119 N. Main Street (#27), 201-215 N. Main Street (#34), 310-314 N. Main Street (#21), and the Commercial Bank Building (#37) which provided a lobby off W. Second Street for its desirable second-story offices overlooking both Main Street and the court house lawn. A final important exception to the practice of renovation is the extraordinary survival of the handsomely detailed and recessed entrance to the (former) Keeter Hardware Company Building (#31) which survives as the finest and most intact commercial building in Rutherfordton and the historic district.

The other difference between the historic appearance of the district and its present appearance is the fact that documentary photographs indicate that the buildings were generally better maintained during the period of significance. During the period from ca. 1898 to 1945 and even into the 1960s, the district was a thriving commercial center and with Forest City, it was one of the county's two most important shopping areas. The construction of a regional mall near Forest City and the proliferation of small mini-malls has drawn most of the traditional businesses and customers away from the downtown and certainly from downtown Rutherfordton. There is only one business which continues in operation today in its original premises and that is Hill's Hardware Company which erected a two-story building (#10) on the east side of N. Main Street in 1946-1947 where it continues to do business today. As the major business concerns vacated downtown Rutherfordton, as they did most small town commercial centers in the state, in the 1970s and 1980s, the profits from rents either remained stable or fell and the result has been a certain slackness in upkeep which is also typical and affects both historic and post-historic buildings. At present most of the buildings are occupied at ground level; however, there is little use of the second story office spaces

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except at 201-215 N. Main Street (#34). One of the district's most important early-twentieth century buildings, the Commercial Bank Building (#37), stands vacant. Also vacant and unused is the former Rutherford County Jail (#63); however, local citizens are working to find an adaptive use for this extraordinary building whose significance should elevate its preservation above local politics.

The general character of the historic district survives in the cohesive and intact fabric of the forty-four historic resources which stand among a total of sixty-six in the historic district. Within this group of forty-four, the five public buildings are exceptional examples of their type and each could be individually nominated to the National Register. One, the Rutherford County Court House, is already listed in the National Register. Within the larger body of one- and two-story commercial buildings which form the majority of the district's historic resources, there are also important buildings which could merit individual attention including the Commercial Bank Building (#37), the (former) Keeter Hardware Company Building (#31), and the four-storefront block at 201-215 N. Main Street (#34) which was erected by 1904. However, neither now, nor in the period of significance, ca. 1898 to 1945, do these buildings stand alone. Instead, they stand together with intact contemporary buildings (#17, #18, #22, #41, #42, #46, #52, and #58) of like character but perhaps simpler finish and more modest appearance as well as contemporary buildings whose historic appearance has been compromised (#11, #14, and #35) and some few post-World War II buildings (#3, #10, #48, #51, and #62). And, it is all of these buildings, standing side by side or on adjoining lots, which constitute the historic central business district of Rutherfordton and the Main Street Historic District.

INVENTORY LIST OF BUILDINGS IN THE MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

NOTE: The dating of buildings in the historic district was based primarily on the series of maps produced in 1898, 1904, 1909, 1916, and 1925 by the Sanborn-Perris Map Company. The buildings which survive and are shown on the 1898 map are dated "By 1898." Buildings which do not appear on the 1898 map but are shown on the 1904 map are dated "Between 1898 and 1904," and so on through 1925. The dating of historic buildings erected between 1925 and 1945 is based on a comparison of the building fabric with deed citations on the individual property cards in the county tax office together with information gathered during the field survey and research phases of the nomination preparation project. Except in very few instances were the construction dates noted on the property cards correct: for the most part they were unreliable.

The numbering of the resources in the Main Street Historic District begins with the Norris Public Library (#1) and continues northward on the east side of Main Street to the commercial building at 320-326 N. Main Street (#22): the sequence

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then continues to pick up the single building (#23) on Taylor Street on the east side of Main Street. The buildings on the west side of Main Street (#24-#37) are listed next and followed by the three resources in the court house block (#38-#40). Next, in sequence, are the resources on the west side of Central Street (#41-#44), followed by the buildings on the north side of W. Court Street (#45-#48). The buildings in the 100 block of N. Washington Street (#49-#50) are listed next and followed, in turn, by the buildings on the south (#51-#52) and north (#53-#55) sides of W. First Street. The buildings in the 200 block of N. Washington Street (#56-#57) are followed by the buildings on the south side of W. Second Street (#58-#62). The (former) Rutherford County Jail (#63) at 317 N. Washington Street completes the listing.

Inventory List

1. Norris Public Library
125 S. Main Street
1933; 1969; 1986
Contributing Building

This small Colonial Revival-style one-story brick building, erected in 1933 and expanded in 1969 and 1986, has housed the town library for over six decades. It was named for Ethel Bowman Wheeler Norris (1875-19__), the wife of Dr. Henry Norris (1875-19__), who opened a small subscription library in Rutherfordton--the town's first library--in 1922. Between 1922 and 1933, the library occupied a number of locations including space in the City Hall (#50). This building, erected through the Civil Works Administration and the Emergency Relief Administration of North Carolina, was opened with ceremonies on the evening of 8 December 1933. The original building, facing on S. Main Street, was built on a T-shape plan with quoins framing its mixed-bond elevations and chimneys flanking its hipped roof. A pedimented gable-front pavilion, in the center of the facade's five bays, contains the double-door entrance which is flanked by Tuscan columns. The symmetrical window openings, with header course sills and flat arches, hold six-over-six double-hung sash windows. In 1969 a double-level children's area was added on the north side of the T-plan's stem. In 1985-1986 an L-shaped stack and reading area was added on the south side of the T-plan stem and across the full width of the (east) rear of the building. The interior of the library retains much of the period character of the original building including a reading room fitted up with a transitional Federal-Greek Revival style mantel: it might have been among the materials said to have been salvaged from the McEntire house on N. Main Street which were donated in 1933 to supplement the construction.

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2. (former) United States Post Office
121 S. Main Street
1931
Contributing Building

Erected in 1931, the former United States Post Office is one of a trio of unusually handsome public buildings standing in the historic district: the post office anchors the south end of Main Street in much the way the Rutherford County Court House (#38) stands as an anchor at the north end of the central business district; the third public building of this trio is the City Hall (#50). The lot here, diagonally opposite the location of the nineteenth-century Rutherford County Court House, was acquired by the United States of America in 1917. The symmetrical Georgian Revival-style design of the post office, together with its Flemish-bond elevations, the use of a balustraded parapet to conceal the Mansard roof and its dormer windows, and the quality of the limestone trim distinguish the building as one of the finer examples of small-scale public architecture erected under the auspices of James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect in the Department of the Treasury. The building rests on a basement, marked by a stone water table, and has tall first-story elevations framed by brick quoins. The five-bay facade is dominated by the tetra-style portico sheltering the double-door entrance and its transom. The windows here and on the six-bay side elevations hold twelve-over-twelve double-hung sash with molded sills and lintels. The one-story loading dock, added in 1935, and a receiving room occupy the center of the rear elevation. A new post office building was erected in Rutherfordton in the 1960s and this building was vacated by the United States Post Office. The interior of the building was renovated for use of government agencies in the early 1970s by the General Services Administration. During this conversion the main vestibule, the well-detailed stairwell, and most of the architectural finish and bathroom fittings of the second-story offices survived intact. It presently houses several governmental agencies.

3. Commercial Building
104 N. Main Street
ca. 1950-1955
Noncontributing Building

The site of this building, directly opposite (east) of the county's nineteenth-century court house, was vacant at the turn of the century and occupied by 1909 by a small building housing a restaurant which by 1916 was housing the express office: the site was vacant again by 1925. Probably erected in the early 1950s, the single-storefront building housed the Home Appliance Company in 1958. The facade of the building, with a recessed plate-glass door flanked by display windows, is covered with corrugated aluminum. The side elevation, on E. Court Street, is laid in one-to-six bond and rises to a full two-story height at the (east) rear where there is a service door onto Taylor Street.

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4. Commercial Building
106 N. Main Street
ca. 1924; remodeled later
Noncontributing Building

The site of this building, opposite the town's nineteenth century court house, was vacant through the first decades of the twentieth century and up to about 1924 when a one-story brick building was erected. In the 1930s the property was acquired by the Southern Public Utilities Company and served as their Rutherfordton office for the next five decades. In 1989 Duke Power Company, the successor to the earlier power company, conveyed the property to the Rutherfordton-Spindale Chamber of Commerce whose offices are housed here to the present. The front of the one-story-on-basement building has an off-center plate-glass entrance with a large display window to the north: the upper part of the facade is sheathed with relatively recent replacement brick laid in alternating courses of stretchers and headers. The one-to-five bond of the rear elevation probably dates to the original construction: the window openings here have header sills and soldier course lintels.

5. Commercial Building
108 N. Main Street
ca. 1925-1945
Contributing Building

The site of this building was vacant on the Sanborn map of 1925 and it is believed that this building, probably constructed in two stages, was erected in the decades afterward. The single store-front building has an off-center plate glass entrance flanked by display windows. The original textured glass transoms, above these windows, are in place but painted the same color as the brick. The upper part of the elevation has a recessed horizontal panel with horizontal banding above it. It appears that the southern "third" of the building was added shortly after the original construction: its brickwork specifically mimics the larger block. The rear of the building has an asymmetrical arrangement of windows and doors including an overhead garage door. The most recent longish-term occupant was Sterchi's Furniture Store who succeeded the local franchise of the A & P Food Company.

6. Commercial Building
112-116 N. Main Street
ca. 1925-1945
Noncontributing Building

The facade of this broad single storefront building reflects a remodeling which probably occurred in the late 1950s/early 1960s when the building was vacated

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by the local franchise of the Winn-Dixie Grocery Store Company and became a branch of the B. C. Moore's and Son department store chain. It continues to house Moore's, the successor company, to the present. The double-door plate glass entrance is flanked by large plate-glass display windows which occupy most of the lower part of the facade: it is shaded by a flat metal awning. The upper facade and the perimeter band around the windows is covered with painted metal panels: the original wire-cut brick of the facade is visible at its edges. The partially exposed north side of the building is blind. The lower level of the rear elevation, two stories in height due to the drop in grade, was altered in the spirit of the facade renovations and fitted with a like, flat awning while the window openings on the main level were infilled and the elevations painted.

7. Commercial Building
126 N. Main Street
Prior to 1898
Noncontributing Building

This small brick building, much altered and severely compromised by recent renovations, is the oldest brick building in this block of N. Main Street and was standing by 1898 when it housed a general merchandise concern. The Sanborn Map of 1904 shows it as the post office: on the 1909 map it is labeled "Express Office." On the 1916 map it is labeled as a photography studio; however, by 1925 it again housed the Express Office. In 1958 it housed an insurance agency and by 1978 it housed Hair Cutters, a barber shop, which continues to occupy it. The narrow facade is covered with modern materials and features an over-scaled shed hood which shelters the entrance and a side window. A cement block addition has been built onto the rear elevation.

8. Commercial Building
128 N. Main Street
Between 1916 and 1925; facade rebuilt in summer 1995
Noncontributing Building

Erected by 1925, this diminutive one-story brick building stood virtually intact until the summer of 1995 when the facade was completely rebuilt. The symmetrical three-bay common-bond facade features a central entrance flanked by larger display windows on either side. The rear elevation has a symmetrical three-bay arrangement with a door in the center: the flanking windows have been infilled with modern materials. In 1958 the building was occupied by the Mary Eleanor Beauty Shoppe which was still in these premises in 1977: it continues to house a hair salon.

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9. (former) Southern Hotel Building
132 N. Main Street
Between 1909 and 1916
Contributing Building

During the second half of the nineteenth century and the opening decades of this century, there has been at least one hotel in the central business district. This hotel would have been in addition to the better known Isothermal Hotel which stood further north between Washington and Main Streets. On the 1898, 1904, and 1909 Sanborn Insurance Company Maps, the Central Hotel, located midway in the east side of the 300 block of North Main, was a principal hostelry. The site of the Central Hotel appears vacant on the 1916 Sanborn Map, and this building appears for the first time with the name Southern Hotel. On the 1925 map it carries the name Central Hotel and apparently did so until it ceased to be operated as a hotel. In 1941 the building was acquired by C. W. Keeter from Columbus Forest Geer (1874-1946): Keeter opened Keeter Hardware and Furniture Company here and the company was operated by his descendants until ca. 1986/1987 when the business was acquired by its main competitor, Hill's Hardware Company. The building continues to be owned by the Keeter family and is rented by Hill's Hardware Company.

The appearance of the front of the building has been somewhat altered by the addition of a thin stucco over the original brick facade. On the first story the off-center entrance, with its double-leaf fully glazed doors, occupies the same position as the original entrance to the hotel. The remainder of the first-story elevation is occupied by plate-glass display windows set between original brick piers with decorative bands. On the second story projecting bands appear in like positions. The wall above the entrance is blind while there are two closely spaced bays to the north and two more widely spaced window openings to the south. These four window openings have arched-heads and contain one-over-one sash with flat heads. The top of the parapet wall is finished with a terra cotta coping. On the south side elevation, the first story is blind while there are five window openings on the second level, three of which retain their original two-over-two sash. On the east, rear elevation, facing Taylor Street, the fenestration on the three levels of the building differs per story. The interior of the former hotel retains a handsome and fully-intact pressed tin ceiling. The old enclosed stairway to the second story rental rooms survives at the rear of the space, while a more visible stair, rising just east of the doorway, was added in 1941 for public access to the furniture displays on the second story. On the second level a well-finished turned-member railing guards the stairwell while most of the original doorways to the individual rooms remain in place. After the purchase of the business stock in 1986/1987 by Hill's Hardware, an opening was cut in the brick partition wall between this building and Hill's Hardware Company (#10) to the north.

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10. Hill's Hardware Company Building
138 N. Main Street
1946-1947
Noncontributing Building

Cited as noncontributing only because it was erected a year or two short of the fifty-year cut-off for the period of significance for the district, this two-story brick building is actually one of the district's most historic buildings on two accounts. The first is that it is the only commercial building in the central business district--and this historic district--which continues to be occupied by its builder; and, secondly, it houses the oldest continuously operating business enterprise in the historic district. The building was erected for Hill's Hardware Company in 1946-1947 and opened to the public in 1947. The company was organized by George Frederick Hill (1890-1967) who had earlier been a salesman for the W. T. Rawleigh Company. The company continues to be family-owned and operated: Robert L. Hensley, the husband of the late Ellen Hill, is president of the concern.

The two-story brick building is laid up in common bond, and the brick is now painted a mocca color which is continuous across the facade of its adjoining sales room (#9). The first story features an off-center plate glass entrance with flanking plate glass display windows. A door at the extreme south end of the facade opens onto a stairwell which rises to the second story. The facade's second story features four symmetrically-placed window openings holding two-over-two sash. The rear of the building has two large openings, both of which are now partially infilled, on the basement ground level and three symmetrically placed windows on the second, main level. The actual second story of the building does not extend the full depth of the building, to Taylor Street. The second story, originally envisioned as rental office space, is now used for business and storage. The interior of the sales floor is finished in a range of materials and it has a doorway in its south wall which communicates with the former premises of the Keeter Hardware Company (#9).

11. (former) First Union National Bank
140 N. Main Street
1941; remodeled in the 1970s or 1980s
Noncontributing building

The present appearance of this one-story-on-basement brick building reflects features of the original 1941 building as well as the Colonial Revival style renovation undertaken by the First Union National Bank. In that renovation the Main and W. First Street elevations of the building were covered with a common bond brick veneer: a broken-pediment entrance was added to the facade and other conventional Colonial Revival features were added. The multi-pane metal

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casement windows with transoms on the W. First Street elevation were left intact as was the rear elevation of the building. The building is believed to have been erected for the First Industrial Bank of Rutherford County and later occupied by the Northwestern Bank and last by the First Union National Bank which relocated and sold this building in 1989.

12. Commercial Building
202 N. Main Street
Between 1916 and 1925
Contributing Building

This double-width one-story brick commercial building is believed to have been constructed by the Carpenter family: in 1937 Horace Lee Carpenter sold it to a group of kinsmen and it remained in extended family ownership until 1990. It has housed a succession of retail enterprises including Rose's and Eagle's five-and-ten-cent stores. Like most other commercial buildings on the east side of N. Main Street, this one rests on a basement that becomes increasingly visible as the grade drops to Taylor Street where the basement level is actually at ground level. Here the simple but impressive brickwork of the side elevation, facing south onto E. First Street, is blind on the main level while punctuated by windows in the basement level. The rear elevation is actually three stories in height, reflecting a mezzanine level at the rear of the main sales floor. It has a wide six-bay division on all three levels with intact arch-headed window and door openings. While the side and rear elevations convey the original character of the building, the front elevation was remodeled in the 1950s or 1960s. It has an off-center plate glass entrance flanked by large plate glass display windows: the upper part of the elevation, above a flat projecting metal awning, is covered with aluminum. The interior of the store is distinguished by a handsome and intact two-field pressed metal ceiling which is positioned high above the sales floor and divided by a beam supported by tall square piers. A stair at the back rises to the mezzanine level which probably originally contained the store offices.

13. Commercial Building
206 N. Main Street
Between 1916 and 1925
Noncontributing Building

Measuring some sixteen feet in width, this one-story-on-basement commercial building is one of the narrowest in the district. It appears to have been built about the time the buildings to the south (#12) and north (#14) were erected. For a period the building is said to have housed a barber shop. In 1949 it was acquired by the Citizens Federal Savings and Loan Association who occupied it until about 1971. Thereafter it housed Reid's Jewelry Store until 1981 when the concern was acquired by Jack Neff and renamed Rutherford

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Jewelers: Neff acquired the building in 1989 and continues to operate the jewelry store here.

The facade of the building, featuring an off-center plate glass entrance and display windows below a replacement brick upper wall, probably dates to ca. 1950-1955. A two-level brick addition to the rear appears to date from the same time period; it has a door on ground, basement level and two metal casement windows on the main level.

14. Branch Bank & Trust Building
210 N. Main Street
Between 1909 and 1916; remodeled in 1985
Noncontributing Building

This property is the site of one of the two oldest major banks in Rutherfordton, the other being the larger two-story building (#37) across the street at 225 N. Main Street. Both were built between 1909 and 1916 when they first appear on the Sanborn Insurance Company Map. This building was built for Citizens Bank & Trust Company which was reorganized in 1915 by W. W. Hicks. This property has been the site of banking operations continuously since that time, housing a series of banks including Union Trust Company in the 1950s and later Independence National Bank which merged in 1981 with Branch Bank and Trust Company. The current appearance of the building owes to a complete remodeling carried out by the Wilson headquarters of BB&T: there is no evidence of the original building visible. The facade of the building is covered with a common-bond white brick veneer and features a single doorway sheltered by a projecting half-dome awning. The rear Taylor Street elevation of the building is laid up in one-to-six bond and painted white: there is a single door at ground/basement level protected by an overscaled painted wood awning.

15. Commercial Building
212 N. Main Street
Between 1916 and 1925
Contributing Building

This small, extremely narrow building--measuring eight feet in width--was built between the much earlier building to the north and the bank to the south. While the entrance level of the facade has been remodeled and fitted up with metal and plate glass display windows and a side door, the upper part of the facade survives undisturbed and reflects its simple original brick construction. A simple brick cornice carries across the parapet top. The rear of the building appears to have been rebuilt and possibly expanded in the 1950s or 1960s and is laid up in common bond; there is a door on ground/basement level and two metal windows on the main level.

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16. Commercial Building
218 N. Main Street
By 1898; rebuilt and remodeled in recent years
Noncontributing Building

This one-story-on-basement brick building is the southernmost of a quartet of one-story brick buildings (#16-#18) which appear here, at the southeast corner of Main and Second Streets, on the first map of the central business district prepared by the Sanborn-Perris Map Company in 1898. The present appearance of the building owes entirely to later remodelings so that it is difficult to determine what part(s) of the original building survives in the later encapsulation. The entrance level of the facade features a center recessed replacement door with windows to either side. The piers at the side of the storefront and the upper part of the facade are treated with battens to simulate half timbering. The two-level elevation on the rear features exposed brick on the ground/basement level with a center entrance flanked by window openings and stucco on the upper, main level: there are paired window openings here, one of which contains two-over-two window sash.

17. Commercial Building
220-222 N. Main Street
By 1898; facade probably refaced ca. 1930-1940
Contributing Building

This one-story-on-basement building is one of a quartet of brick buildings (#16-#18) which appear on the first Sanborn Map of Rutherfordton in 1898; presumably those buildings still stand as the core of the present buildings. The Main Street facade of this building appears to date to the 1930s and is sheathed with wire-cut brick. Brick piers flank a staircase which descends from the sidewalk to the basement level and the recessed storefront entrance: the upper part of the elevation features two panels below a corbelled cornice. The stairwell containing the basement entrance survives as a rare entrance of commercial architectural design: whether it was the only such example of providing Main Street access to the basement level of a commercial building in Rutherfordton is unknown. It is the only example which survives here and one of the few which survive intact in the state. It has plastered walls marked by a chairrail, a flight of wood steps, and two doors at the foot of the stair which open into individual rooms. The storefront was fitted up with the present recessed entrance in the 1970s. The rear elevation, laid up in the traditional one-to-six bond, has door and window openings on each level.

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18. Commercial Building
224-226 N. Main Street
By 1898; later veneer on facade and addition to rear
Contributing Building

This pair of storefronts, identical in appearance and apparently refitted to their present appearance in a single remodeling project, ca. 1940-1950, are two of the quartet of brick buildings (#16-#18) which appear here on the 1898 Sanborn-Perris Map. Probably erected as rental storefronts, the buildings have housed a succession of tenants in the near century of their existence. Each storefront has a recessed entrance flanked by splayed, plate glass display windows which rest on low brick aprons; the wood doors have large glass panes and are set below transoms. The ceilings of these recesses are sheathed with board and batten in a panel-like arrangement. The recesses are framed by brick piers and have a soldier course lintel across the opening. The upper part of the elevations have horizontal panels and terminate with a corbelled cornice with terra cotta coping. The north side wall of #226, facing on East Second Street, was extended eastward to Taylor Street sometime after 1925 by which time #224 had already been extended: the seam of this extension is visible on E. Second Street. The original block of the building is blind on the main level. At basement level there is a series of six arch-headed window and door openings which have been partially infilled: these have double rows of header brick forming the segmental lintel of the arch. The E. Second Street elevation of the extension has windows on the main level and windows and doors on ground/basement level. The series of window and door openings on the rear elevations of the storefronts generally retain their original configuration; however, some have been partially infilled.

19. Site of Carpenter Building
300-306 N. Main Street
Burned May 1986
Noncontributing Site

Now enclosed by a woven-wire fence, this site was the location of a two-story, double-storefront brick building which appears on the 1898 Sanborn Map of Rutherfordton. It was built by Kinchen Jahu Carpenter (1842-1928), one of Rutherfordton's important turn-of-the-century merchants. His son Jonathan Harvey Carpenter (1890-1980) operated a furniture store here for fifty-eight years. The successive maps between 1898 and 1925 indicate a range of commercial tenants: for a period the second story of the northernmost store was used as a lodge hall. Portions of the basement brick walls of the building remain visible as does the first story of the north wall which stands against the south wall of the adjoining building (#20).

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20. Commercial Building
308 N. Main Street
Between 1916 and 1925
Noncontributing Building

Like the now lost building to the south, this building was also long owned by members of the Carpenter family. It was damaged during the May 1986 fire which destroyed that building, left unrepaired, and is now deteriorated. The facade of the building, laid up in dark red wire-cut brick, features paneled piers which rise to a stepped and corbelled parapet. There are arch-headed openings on both levels of the rear elevation. The main sales floor was finished with a pressed tin ceiling which has suffered water damage.

21. Commercial Building
310-314 N. Main Street
Between 1916 and 1925
Contributing Building

This large intact triple-storefront two-story brick building is one of the most impressive commercial buildings erected in Rutherfordon during the later 1910s and early 1920s. Standing due east of the Rutherford County Court House, on the site earlier occupied by the frame Central Hotel, the building is composed as a single unit. On the ground level there are three storefronts and a staircase which rises to the office chambers on the second story. The storefronts are defined between recessed-panel piers and like elements reappear on the second-story level to divide the elevation into six symmetrical bays: the four inner bays hold paired six-over-one sash windows while the end bays have single windows fitted with six-over-one sash. There is a decorative paneled frieze across the top of the facade. Each of the entrances to the three storefronts has been remodeled at some point. Of the three, the 1940s-style entrance into #310, set between plate glass display windows above a black ceramic tile apron, is the most noteworthy. A series of flue stacks punctuate the roofline along the south side of the building as it steps down and eastward to Taylor Street. The rear elevation has arch-headed window and door openings on the ground/basement level, flat-headed window and door openings on the main level, and like window openings on the second story. While the first-floor commercial spaces have seen alterations by successive tenants, the suite of offices on the second story remains intact and conveys the period character of the original building. These offices have painted walls, molded baseboards, and molded door and window surrounds. Most of the doors feature a large figured glass pane above three horizontal panels: other doors have five horizontal panels.

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22. Commercial Building
320-326 N. Main Street
Between 1916 and 1925
Contributing Building

The materials and design of this one-story brick commercial building suggest that it was built at the same time that the large adjoining building (#21) to the south was erected. It consists of two storefronts divided by a recessed-panel pier like those which appear on that building; the outside edges of the block are framed by brick piers which rise, together with the center pier, to support a brick frieze which is decorated with ornamental brickwork panels and topped by a corbelled parapet. The entrance of #320 was rebuilt in recent years and fitted with a recessed door flanked by windows in a sheathed entranceway. The entrance into #326 appears to be original. It features a pair of mostly glazed wood doors with molded panels at their bottoms which are flanked by splayed glass display windows set on low aprons. The north side elevation, on E. Third Street, survives intact and features large arch-headed window openings on the main level and a series of shorter arch-headed openings on the ground/basement level; the easternmost of these contains paired board-and-batten doors. The building was expanded about twenty feet to Taylor Street, probably in the 1930s or 1940s, and fitted with a second large double-door onto E. Third Street. When this occurred the first story of the rear elevation was left blind and a trio of tall arch-headed windows, probably reused from the original building, was installed here on the main level. The rear elevation of #320 has three symmetrical openings on each level: these all had arched heads; however, the main center door on the ground/basement level has been altered and the other openings have been partially infilled.

23. Commercial Building
138-140 Taylor Street
Ca. 1925-1935
Contributing Building

This two-story-on-basement brick commercial building is the most impressive commercial building standing on Taylor Street. Its position to the east and downgrade from Main Street was not an auspicious one and it appears to have been long underused: for many years, probably since 1976, it has been a warehouse for Hill's Hardware Company. Laid up in mixed bond, the building has a broad first-story opening, now infilled, which originally led into the double storefronts which flanked a stair to the second story offices. The second story has a trio of paired six-over-six sash windows which illuminate the three offices across the front of the building. On E. First Street, there are window openings in all three levels: those on the main, first story are small and set

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high on the wall to illuminate the commercial sales area while those on the second story are larger and originally illuminated office space here. On the rear elevation there are service doors on the ground/basement level and a trio of large openings, now infilled, on the first and second story levels. On the south side there are recesses at the first and second story levels to receive joists for an addition here which was never built. At the basement level there is an open shed for storage. The interior of the building is surprisingly intact and features pressed tin ceilings in each of the first-story storefront spaces. On the second story, the offices are finished with plaster walls and ceilings with molded baseboards and door and window surrounds.

24. (former) Filling Station
107 N. Main Street
Ca. 1940-1941
Contributing Building

The site of this building and its lot was the location of Rutherford County's nineteenth century court house which burned in 1907. By 1909 a pair of two-story brick commercial buildings had been erected here by the Coxe Family and these apparently stood here until the construction of this building. The second story of that double-storefront building was used as the town opera house. A. Jennings Yelton operated an Esso filling station on these premises for many years, and in 1976 it became the location of Bright's Used Car Shop, the current owner/occupant. The small one-story stucco-covered masonry building is an example of many erected on the same model for local franchises of the Esso Oil Company: its design reflects a combination of Art Deco and Mission Style influences. Vertical piers with rounded tops are connected by pent shed roof elements. In plan it has two principal blocks: the south block contains the main sales area and women's and men's restrooms while the north block contains two garage service areas fitted with overhead doors. The open area of the lot is covered with poured cement.

25. Commercial Building
111 N. Main Street
Between 1904 and 1909
Contributing Building

This two-story brick commercial building appears to have been erected by the Coxe Family about the same time as the pair of long-lost stores which stood immediately south on the site of the nineteenth-century county court house. It may have shared a partition wall with those buildings since its south elevation is now covered with stucco. The building has an unusually tall Main Street elevation topped by a corbelled brick cornice. The first story has a wood, double-door central entrance set between glass display windows. The second-story has a symmetrical arrangement of four arch-headed windows with

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projecting lintels. The sash has been replaced with one-over-one sash, and the northernmost window opening has been fitted with horizontal panel door that now opens onto a metal fire escape. On the rear there is a one-story cement block addition: the original second-story wall contains four arch-headed window openings. On the north elevation, visible above the adjoining one-story building (#26), there is a painted sign reading "Geer & Son." The interior contains a now-enclosed staircase (on the south wall) with a shaped handrail and turned-member railing which rises to the second story. The exact configuration of the upper story and its floor levels is difficult to read as a secondary floor was installed when the building was used as a "dance hall." Whatever, the plaster walls, tongue-and-groove ceiling, symmetrically molded window surrounds, cornice molding, and lengths of turned railing connecting to a secondary stair on the north wall all survive in place.

26. Commercial Building
113 N. Main Street
Between 1909 and 1916
Contributing Building

The first known use of this small, narrow commercial building was as a harness shop, and it has housed a wide succession of tenants to the present. The entrance level of the building is fitted with a ca. 1960s replacement metal and plate glass side entrance, with display windows to the south, under a flat metal awning. The upper brickwork of the facade has a horizontal recessed panel below a simple corbelled cornice with terra cotta coping. On the rear, Central Street elevation, there is a door flanked by windows, all with arched heads.

27. Commercial Building
115-119 North Main Street
By 1898
Contributing Building

One of the oldest brick buildings in the central business district and one of the very few two-story nineteenth century brick stores, this double-storefront building was standing by 1898 when the Sanborn-Perris Map Company issued the first map of Rutherfordton. The south storefront was a hardware concern while the north store was a drug company: the second store housed offices. At street level, each storefront is fitted with a pair of recessed mostly glazed wood doors set between plate glass display windows fitted with black ceramic tile aprons. The floors of these recesses are paved with tile. The outer edges of the first story are marked by brick quoins and a third pier of quoins stands immediately north of the near-center door which opens onto the staircase to the second-story offices. The second-story elevation is likewise framed by quoins at its sides while a second pair of quoins rises, off-center, through the

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elevation: this suggests that the present appearance of the building owes to an early remodeling effort. Aside from these curiously placed quion piers, the second story elevation is generally symmetrical and features six arch-headed window openings similar in appearance to those on the building at 111 N. Main Street (#25). The present one-over-one sash windows with flat heads are probably not original. The south half of the rear elevation has been expanded while the north half and the second story elevation retain their arch-headed window openings. A cut has been made in the partition wall of the two storefronts and the entire building is now used as a furniture store together with the older building (#28) to the north. The walls are plaster: the south storefront has a dropped ceiling while the north storefront has a visible tongue-and-groove ceiling. The stair rises to a T-shaped hall with a quartet of offices across the front of the building and a series of rooms, some communicating and others not, down the south and north sides: a secondary hall connects these spaces with the main T-shaped hall. There have been some adjustments and rearrangement of these rooms as suites or apartments; however, most of the original architectural finish survives intact. This includes plaster walls, tongue-and-groove wainscots between molded baseboards and chairrails, symmetrically molded door and window surrounds, and original doors featuring either glazed panes above three turn-of-the-century-style panels or five horizontal panels: the doors communicating with the halls mostly have transoms.

28. Commercial Building
123 N. Main Street
By 1898
Contributing Building

From a visual point of view, this building, one of only a small group of brick stores standing in Rutherfordton by 1898, appears to be the oldest of the group. The early history of the building remains to be documented. The first-story entrance appears to be the oldest intact storefront in the historic district. It consists of a pair of partially glazed wood doors recessed between splayed windows flanked, in turn, by the larger display windows which address Main Street. These are set in reeded and molded surrounds and have aprons at the bottom and corresponding transoms. Immediately south of the storefront is a turn-of-the-century wood door which opens onto a stair to the second story area enclosed at the front of the building: (the second story was not accessible). At the extreme south edge of the building is the remnant pilaster from a cast-iron storefront. It is marked "Mesker Bros./Front Builders/St. Louis, Mo." The low second story elevation is framed at either side by brick quoins. A metal cornice carries across the top of the building. The four arch-headed window openings on the second story have been infilled with brick. Inside, there are square-in-plan columns rising to impost blocks to support the ceiling beam.

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29. Commercial Building
125 N. Main Street
Between 1898 and 1904
Contributing Building

Erected in the years around the turn of the century, this small brick rental building also boasts one of the oldest intact storefronts in the historic district. Like its neighbor (#28) to the south, this building has a doorway recessed between splayed windows and wider display windows which face onto Main Street. The partially glazed double-doors have molded panels at the bottom which correspond with those in the aprons below the display windows; likewise, there are corresponding transoms above the doors and the windows. The upper elevation is painted brick and topped by a simple projecting cornice. The rear of the building has a central door, now partially infilled, and tall windows to either side: the upper sash remains in place and visible above plywood infill. All three openings have flat heads. The interior of the building retains its pine floor, plaster walls, and tongue-and-groove ceiling.

30. Commercial Building
129 N. Main Street
Between 1898 and 1904
Contributing Building

This one-story brick building, dating from the turn of the century, was updated, like others in the historic district, with a new storefront ca. 1940-1950: that remodeling was one of the best of its period to survive intact to the present. The wire-cut brick facade of one-to-five bond features piers which rise to the upper elevation: it is detailed with a trio of recessed panels below the corbelled cornice. The entrance into the store, behind an open forecourt, features paired, mostly glazed wood doors with molded panels at the bottoms of each leaf. These doors are flanked by splayed display windows with bronze mounts on a white marble apron. The display areas behind the windows have oak floors. The rear of the building appears to be original and is laid up in one-to-five bond. At the west edge of the exposed south wall there is a large painted sign with the inscription "Enjoy/Red Rock/Cola." The actual rear, west elevation has a near-center door flanked by large window openings and a small third window at the north edge of the wall: the doorway is fitted with paired turn-of-the-century five-panel doors which open onto a wood stoop.

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31. (former) Keeter Hardware Company Building
133 N. Main Street
Between 1916 and 1925; ca. 1924
Contributing Building

This one-story pumpkin-colored brick building, erected about 1924 by Charles Washington Keeter for Keeter Hardware Company, is one of the most impressive commercial buildings erected in Rutherfordton in the late 1910s and early 1920s and probably the most intact of the group. The thirty-foot wide facade features an unusually handsome recessed entranceway and white tile forecourt in which the term "KEETER HDWE. CO." is spelled out in green tiles. The double-glazed wood doors are flanked by a series of display windows which recede from the front to the rear to enframe the doors: the plate glass windows have bronze mounts and a white marble apron. The display windows themselves are well-appointed with paneling and oak floors. A figured glass transom with a green interior panel carries across the entranceway: in the center of the panel the name of the store is spelled out in red glass. The second story has a three-bay division with single windows flanking a triple window. A series of paneled recesses and decorative brickwork complete the finish of the upper facade of the building.

The interior of the building is equally well-detailed and handsomely finished. The main sales floor has plaster walls and an unusually handsome pressed tin ceiling which is entirely intact. A stair in the southwest corner of the store rises to a mezzanine which carries across the rear of the building. A stair then rises upward to the second story which has a pine floor, plaster walls, and a pressed tin ceiling. The building retains many of its original fixtures including lighting; however, the most impressive of these fittings is the original freight elevator. It is positioned in the northwest corner of the building and connects the basement storage area with both the main level and the second story. It also features direct access to the loading dock on the rear of the building. In addition to the original Art Deco-style fluorescent lights the main sales area was illuminated with a skylight. The rear elevation of the building has a wood loading dock with steps at the south end. On the main level there is a center door in addition to the door, to the north, which opens directly onto the elevator. The stories have a symmetrical three-part division. The openings all feature soldier-course lintels: the windows have been infilled with sheet paneling.

The Keeter Hardware Company closed in the 1930s or early 1940s and for many years this store was owned and occupied by the Morris family who operated Morris Furniture Company on the premises. In 1989 it was acquired by the present owners who operate a decorating concern, Green River Interiors, here.

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32. Geer Commercial Building
135 N. Main Street
Between 1916 and 1925; ca. 1924
Contributing Building

This large impressive two-story pumpkin-colored brick commercial building is said to have been erected by Champ D. Geer (1860-1927): it is best remembered as the site of the local franchise of the Belk's Department Store chain. Bearing obvious design similarities with the adjoining Keeter Hardware Company Building (#31) to the south, it is a large single-storefront building. The present plate glass off-center entrance and its flanking display windows probably date to the 1960s or 1970s. A plain brick frieze carries across the center face of the building and serves as the base for the trio of large window openings symmetrically placed in the second-story elevation: paired one-over-one sash windows flank the center triple window. The parapet top of the building features recessed panels and decorative brickwork similar to that on the Keeter Hardware Company Building. The north side elevation of the building has numerous and generally corresponding window openings on both levels. The rear elevation has a basement entrance, a loading dock and entrance for the main level, and windows on the second story. The interior of the building is treated as one large space and finished with a two-part pressed tin ceiling partitioned by a center beam held up by square-in-plan columns. A stair rises on the south side to the mezzanine across the rear of the sales floor and to the second story which is also finished as one large room. A stair also descends to the basement.

33. Main Street Park
Between 135 and 201 N. Main Street
1979
Noncontributing Site

A metal plaque mounted at the east edge of the north elevation of 135 N. Main Street identifies this cultivated area as Main Street Park: it was an urban renewal project of the Rutherfordton Town Council in 1979. The park occupies the area between the above two buildings and extends from Main Street west to Central Street and serves as a pedestrian passageway between Main Street and a large parking area developed by the town on the west side of Central Street, immediately north of W. First Street. The park has brick paving and features large wood planters holding small ornamental trees and shrubs. There is a cement and brick fountain in the center.

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34. Commercial Building Block
201-215 N. Main Street
Between 1898 and 1904
Contributing Building

This handsome quartet of two-story brick commercial storefronts, first appearing on the Sanborn Map of 1904, were probably built at the same time at the turn of the century or certainly within a year or two of each other. The long Main Street elevation of the group is strongly repetitive and the block achieves a handsome presence in the streetscape. While the first-story entranceways to the stores, with their doors and display windows, have been altered over the years and are conventional in their appearance, the entrance to the second-story suites of offices remains intact. It is positioned between the two center buildings, #205 and #209; the second story has 207 N. Main Street as its address. It is surmounted by a single-pane transom. Above the transom is a tall two-vertical-pane window which adds further illumination to the stairwell: it is fitted in a molded wood surround.

A brick frieze band carries across the tops of the first-story entrances and serves as the base of the second story elevations of each unit of the building. Here brick quoins, rising from similar features on the first level, rise the full height of the second story elevation and define the three bays of each storefront unit. The window openings, three per storefront, have projecting granite sills and arched heads fitted with decorative, projecting segmental lintels; the windows are all fitted with one-over-one sash except for those in #205 which have been partially infilled. The top of the elevation is finished with three horizontal bands of projecting brickwork below the projecting corbelled cornice.

The remarkably intact south side elevation of the block is a special feature of the historic district streetscape. Here, overlooking Main Street Park, there are small windows positioned high on the first story elevation to illuminate the first-story sales floor; above, on the second story are six conventional windows with arch-headed openings. The parapet wall steps down as it extends westward and is inset with flue openings which rise above the terra cotta coping. The rear elevations of the four units of this building vary in their appearance as each of the four has descended in different ownerships and seen differing levels of maintenance. The principal features here are the arch-headed openings, many of which survive intact even if infilled, and the parapet wall of the center two stores which steps upward to the very center of the building's elevation. A one-story brick addition stands behind #201. For many years, #209 was the location of a branch of the Stamey's Store chain: a sign on the rear west wall of #209 reads "STAMEY'S INC/HOME OF/NATIONALLY/ADVERTISED MDSE."

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As noted above, the street-level doorway between #205 and #209 rises to the second-story suites of offices which retain most of their original woodwork. The stairwell is sheathed with tongue-and-groove ceiling and this ceiling reappears elsewhere in the offices and rooms. The doors, mostly of the turn-of-the-century five-panel type, are set in molded surrounds. The walls are either ceiling, plaster, or wall board. This series of offices appears to have occupied only the second stories of #201-209 N. Main Street. The building at #215 appears to have been separately partitioned. The main sales floor here retains its sheathed ceiling and a stair which rises along the south wall to a mezzanine level and then on upward along the north wall to the second story of the building which is one large space with a sheathed ceiling.

35. Commercial Building
217 N. Main Street
Between 1898 and 1904; remodeled in 1950s/1960s
Noncontributing Building

The core of this small one-story brick commercial building appears as a building on the 1904 Sanborn Map and is labeled "Bank." It was again labeled as a bank on the 1909 map; however, by 1916 it had been doubled in size by an addition to the west and was then housing a grocery store. By that time the impressive Commercial Bank Building (#37) had been erected at the corner of Main and W. Second Streets. Only a small section of the wall of the addition erected between 1909 and 1916 remains visible: in the 1950s or 1960s a second one-story brick addition was made to the rear of the building. For a long period, from at least the 1950s until the end of 1994, the building housed Smith's Drug Store. Smith's Coffee Shop continues to operate on the premises. The facade has a plate glass and metal entranceway while the upper part of the elevation is covered with vertical corrugated metal.

36. Commercial Building
219 N. Main Street
Between 1904 and 1909
Contributing Building

First occupied, by 1909, as a grocery store, this two-story brick building has had a series of commercial tenants. In 1975 the first story entranceway was remodeled to the present Colonial Revival appearance by the then tenant, Rucker Insurance Company, and fitted with a conventional door flanked by two windows. The exterior door opening onto a staircase to the second story is set on a diagonal at the south end of the entranceway. A slate-covered pent roof carries across the entranceway. The second story of the building survives intact and is laid up in one-to-five bond. The three symmetrically-positioned window openings have arch-headed openings fitted with projecting segmental lintels made up of three courses of header brick. A simple corbelled cornice

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carries across the top of the building. The rear elevation has a center door flanked by windows on the first story and two window openings on the second story: the doorway has been partially infilled and fitted with a conventional door while all the window openings have been infilled with brick. A "Drink/Coca-Cola" sign and fragments of another painted commercial sign appear on the elevation. In the 1950s the building housed the Houser Hardware Company.

37. Commercial Bank Building
225 N. Main Street
Between 1909 and 1916
Contributing Building

This handsome commercial building, erected at an important site immediately south of the 1908 Rutherford County Court House, is one of the most impressive and intact buildings of its period to survive in the central business district. Because of its corner location--with the north side facing the new court house--the building was designed with finished elevations on both Main Street and W. Second Streets. The lower half, entrance level of the Main Street elevation was remodeled in the 1960s or 1970s by the Rutherford Drug Company, a long-time tenant. It features the expected center entrance with stone-dashed panels to the south and plate-glass display window to the north: a frieze band carrying across the center of the building, above a flat metal awning, repeats the stone-dashed finish. The upper half, second story of the elevation is completely intact and laid up in Flemish bond. It has a five-bay arrangement with recessed panel pilasters defining the outside edges of the elevation and flanking the center bay which contains a large window opening fitted with three one-over-one sash windows. The flanking bays feature paired one-over-one sash windows. All the windows have granite sills. The pilasters rise to metal capitals supporting a metal frieze and cornice: these are painted a brick color. The building is crowned by a blind balustraded parapet, ornamented with decorative brickwork, and featuring a peaked gable device above the center bay.

The frieze and cornice continue down the north elevation which is generally divided into three principal bays by recessed-panel full-height pilasters rising from the granite foundation. Each of these bays contains a large window opening--now infilled--on the first story and two openings on the second story which contain paired one-over-one sash. In the westernmost of the three original bays the first story is fully occupied by display windows and two side entrances into the first-story sales floor. At some later point, perhaps in the 1930s or 1940s, a two-story brick office block was added onto the rear of the building: its north elevation is flush with the original building. It contains a replacement metal and plate glass entrance into a service stairhall and a small store/office front onto W. Second Street.

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While most of the first story has been remodeled over time, the mezzanine at the west rear retains its pressed tin ceiling and some other woodwork which appears to be original or early. The stair rising to the second story offices is wood and includes a paneled newel post, shaped handrail, and simple railing. It rises to a hall and services offices arranged along the west, north, south, and east (front) elevations of the building. The second story retains its original period character. The hall has a tile floor and plaster walls above a tongue-and-groove wainscot. Most of the wood doors connecting the offices with the hall have a large figured glass pane above three horizontal panels while the doors communicating from room to room in the suites have six horizontal panels; the hall doors have glass transoms. Most of the ceilings are covered with celotex panels; however, some have become loosened and the original tongue-and-groove ceiling is visible. There is a men's and a woman's lavatory on the south side of the hall. Although these offices are in generally good condition, it appears they have not been occupied for some time. Painted lettering on the glass panes of the doors indicate the former offices of "Hamrick & Bowen" (attorneys), "Richard Justice & Associates," and the "Green River Baptist Association."

38. Rutherford County Court House (NR)
301 N. Main Street
1925-1926
Contributing Building

The Rutherford County Court House was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 as a component of the thematic nomination, "Courthouses in North Carolina."

On 7 March 1908 the Rutherford County commissioners acquired the site of this building from Tench C. Coxe, Matilda Coxe, and John Mills, executors of the estate of Frank Coxe: the lot was bounded by Main Street on the east, W. Second Street on the south, Washington Street on the west, and W. Third Street on the north. It was described as the "Isothermal Hotel lot" and was the site of the nineteenth century hotel until it was destroyed by fire in 1894. Following that fire the Isothermal Hotel was rebuilt two blocks to the north, just above W. Fifth Street. The purchase price was \$1,000 in cash and the deed to the property comprising the site of the former county court house which had been destroyed by fire in 1907. That property was located in the northwest corner of Main and W. Court Streets. A two-story brick court house was erected here in 1908/1909 and it stood until 1925 when the county commissioners determined to erect a new court house on the site. After a decade and a half of use the early-twentieth century building was pulled down in the summer of 1925, and the site prepared for a new building.

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That new building--and the present Rutherford County Court House--was designed by Charlotte architect Louis H. Asbury Sr. (1877-1975) who would later design the Mecklenburg County Court House as well as numerous other public and private buildings in Charlotte. The massive rectangular stone-veneer building rests on a high basement and is distinguished by a handsome two-story portico in antis which stretches across seven bays of the facade and is enclosed by broad bays at either end. The building is handsomely appointed and detailed with classical elements including a balustrade which encircles the roofline. In 1994-1995, a large two-story addition was constructed on the west side of the building: it is sympathetic in design and materials.

39. Rutherford County Civil War Monument
On east lawn in front of the Rutherford County Court House
1910
Contributing Object

Typical of the many monuments to local soldiers of the Civil War erected on the lawns of county court houses throughout North Carolina, this monument features a multi-stepped granite base supporting an obelisk on which stands the carved marble figure of a soldier. Dedicated to the men and women of the Confederacy, it was erected by the Davis-Dickerson-Mills Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and dedicated on 12 November 1910.

40. Rutherfordton County Office Building
225 W. Third Street
ca. 1950
Noncontributing Building

This one-story brick office building stands on the rear, west lawn of the Rutherford County Court House and was erected to provide additional office space for county government and related programs. (It is said to have been built to house the department of social services.) The public entrance faces north onto Third Street. The building has a general L-shaped plan, common bond elevations, and a flat roof. The fenestration is generally symmetrical in its positioning. The interior of the building and its finish is typical of the period.

41. Commercial Building
117 Central Street
Ca. 1930-1940
Contributing Building

This long, narrow, rectangular brick building, sixteen feet wide and ninety feet deep, has a brick facade and stucco-clad north and south elevations. It has a front-gable roof with exposed rafter ends with asphalt shingles. The

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common-bond facade features a door and display window below a stepped parapet top. A cement block stands at the rear.

41A. Vacant Lot
Noncontributing Site

This lot is vacant, covered with gravel and volunteer grass, and is used as an informal overflow parking area.

41B. Vacant Lot
Noncontributing Site

This lot is vacant and mostly gravel covered: it is used for infrequent parking.

41C. Vacant Lot
Noncontributing Site

This lot is mostly gravel covered and it is used as parking and as an access to the small parking area behind the adjoining commercial building (#42) to the north).

42. Commercial Building
123-129 Central Street
Between 1909 and 1916
Contributing Building

This simple one-story brick commercial building, with three wide bays facing Central Street, was long the location of the Edwards Brothers Milling Company which operated here through 1977. The proprietors were William D. and Robert H. Edwards. When first built the building served a like purpose. The Sanborn Map of 1916 shows the northernmost bay housing a garage, the center bay used for storage of farm implements, and the southernmost bay containing storage of builders' supplies: in 1925 the center and north bays were labeled "Auto Repairs" indicating the continued use of the block as a garage. The entrance levels of the center and north bays are now fitted with replacement metal and glass doors and flanking display windows. The south bay is fitted with a wide overhead door. The upper brick elevation is finished with a nicely corbelled cornice. The south elevation is blind and the wall steps down and westward. The rear of the building has a door with a loading dock in the southernmost bay, an arch-headed door flanked by arch-headed windows in the center bay, while the rear of the north bay is covered over by a large gable-roof cement-block storage building which extends northward to W. First Street. In 1984 the property was acquired by Gary Wesley Camp, the proprietor of Camp Electric Company which occupies the premises.

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43. Commercial Building
133 Central Street
Between 1916 and 1925
Contributing Building

Erected in the late 1910s or early 1920s, this small brick building was first used as a warehouse: it later housed a series of tenants including Frank Dogget's tire company from the 1940s into the 1960s. In 1963 the building was acquired by Max Gardner Edwards, the current owner/occupant, who operates a furniture company here. The entranceway of the building features an off-center door flanked by plate glass display windows above a brick apron: these are sheltered by a flat metal awning which projects at the base of the infilled transom. A soldier course of brick carries across the top of the entranceway. The edges of the building are defined by brick piers which rise to frame a broad brick recessed panel topped by a simply-corbelled cornice. The building was expanded to the west in the early 1960s: an ell, projecting north to W. First Street, was added about 1984. It is brick and has a garage door opening onto W. First Street.

44. Parking Lot
Northwest corner of Central Street and W. First Street
1980/1981
Noncontributing Site

This rectangular asphalt-paved parking lot was created by the city of Rutherfordton as an urban renewal project. In September 1980, the town acquired six adjoining lots here and demolished the existing buildings.

45. Commercial Building
112 W. Court Street
Ca. 1930-1940
Contributing Building

This small L-shaped brick building contains two separate concerns at present; however, tradition suggests that it has been used for a variety of functions over the years including the town bus station. The main block, facing south to W. Court Street, has a three-bay elevation featuring a center entrance flanked by small arch-headed display windows. A pair of recessed panels are fitted in the frieze above, and the top of the building is simply corbelled and fitted with terra cotta coping. The west base of the "L" might contain some part of a small brick filling station which stood here at the corner of Court and Central Streets in 1925. It has a replacement door and double-sash window on the south, facing onto W. Court Street, and now houses the Woodmen of the World Life Insurance Society's local office.

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46. Commercial Building
202-204 W. Court Street
Between 1916 and 1925
Contributing Building

This double-storefront brick building is two stories in height and has a doorway in the center of the Court Street facade which opens onto a staircase rising to the second story. The two entranceways appear to be original and feature recessed entrances between splayed plate glass display windows on brick aprons. The east storefront (#202) has a double-leaf door with large glazed panes above two horizontal panels. The west storefront (#204 or 202A) has three horizontal panes above three horizontal panels in each of the two leaves. Each of these entranceways has a figured glass transom at the top below the soldier-course lintel. The one-to-six bond of the building is visible on the upper, second story elevation which has five symmetrically-placed window openings holding one-over-one sash: the openings have end-course sills and soldier-course lintels. The top of the building is finished with a simple corbelled cornice and terra cotta coping which continues along the north side (Central Street) elevation as it steps downward to the north. Here there are three small windows and a door on the first story and eight conventional windows with one-over-one sash on the second story. The interior of #202 has been remodeled with modern materials; however, in the north, rear of the store remnants of the original pressed-tin ceiling are visible. Next door, at #204 (202A), the entire pressed-tin ceiling remains intact and visible.

47. Commercial Building
206 W. Court Street
Between 1916 and 1925
Contributing Building

Believed to have been erected about the same time as the above building, this one-story brick commercial building has a common bond elevation of wire-cut and figured-face brick. The facade is generally symmetrical in its arrangement of openings with a near center door flanked by two windows to the east and a like window to the west and a garage opening--now infilled as a window--at the west edge of the elevation. These have end-course sills and soldier-course lintels. The three original windows are flanked by vertical recessed panels while a series of five recessed panels carry across the frieze. There is a simple parapet at the top of the building. The door is a replacement: the windows are fitted with single panes of glass.

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48. Commercial Building
210 W. Court Street
Ca. 1945-1955
Noncontributing Building

Probably erected in the decade after World War II, this building is the only major building in the central business district which is built of cement blocks with a stucco finish. The first story elevation has a large overhead garage door opening at the west edge with a conventional door flanked by large plate glass windows to the east. The second-story elevation has a symmetrical arrangement of four window openings fitted with eight-pane casement windows in wood frames. The building is believed to have been built by James B. Carnegie who acquired the property in March 1946 and long operated Carnegie Auto Parts Company here.

49. (former) Geer-Warlick Motor Company Building
108 N. Washington Street
Between 1916 and 1925
Contributing Building

This expansive one-story corner building, with broad elevations punctuated by large windows on both Court and Washington Streets, was built for the Geer-Warlick Motor Company as their sales and service quarters. W. Oscar Geer was one of the proprietors. The large windows were designed to show off the concern's motor cars and to illuminate the parts and service departments. These windows and the illumination they provided also well-served the second major tenant of the building, Special Yarns Company, who acquired it in 1947 from W. O. Geer and operated their textile concern here into the late 1970s or early 1980s. The broad Court Street elevation is generally divided into two parts. The easternmost five bays, occupying just over one-half of the elevation, has four large metal multi-pane windows and a garage door which served the service department. The three bays to the west, fitted with like multi-pane metal windows, illuminated the sales part of the concern, as did at least three of the four like windows on the Washington Street elevation. These bays are also defined by corresponding recessed panels positioned above the fenestration. The frieze at the top of the common-bond brick elevations is defined by two widely spaced rows of mouse-tooth brick: the top of the street elevations are covered with a terra cotta coping. The north end of the Washington Street elevation is fitted with a conventional door, two windows, and a large overhead garage door. The parapet top of the elevation steps down to the north. The north elevation of the building has three conventional doors and four small window openings on the west half and a cement block ell-shaped addition occupying the east half of the elevation; the addition has an overhead garage door opening onto a partially sunken driveway to Washington Street.

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50. City Hall
110 N. Washington Street
1925
Contributing Building

One of the three major public buildings erected in Rutherfordton in the 1920s and early 1930s, the Rutherfordton City Hall is an unusually handsome and richly-designed Colonial Revival-style brick building with stone/cast stone enrichments. When erected and occupied it housed all the agencies and programs of city government including the fire and police departments and it continues to house those to the present; however, some departments, including sanitation, have come to be located elsewhere. (The architect and the contractor for the building are unknown at present.) The building was erected while C. F. Geer was mayor. The rectangular building faces west onto N. Washington Street. It has a four-bay first story elevation and a five-bay second story elevation. These bays and those on the W. First Street elevation are marked by brick pilasters which rise from stone bases to stone capitals which support a stone entablature which carries across both elevations.

On Washington Street the two southernmost bays contain large overhead garage door openings fitted with partially glazed doors: these bays contain fire trucks. The north bays of the facade contain the principal entrance, in an elaborate classical doorway, and a window in the northernmost bay. The window opening contains a multi-part window consisting of a central casement window flanked by four-pane sidelights and a five-pane transom: this fenestration pattern is repeated on the W. First Street elevation. The second story windows, overlooking Washington Street, are tall arch-headed openings fitted with decorative keystones which rise, with the capitals of the pilasters, to support the Doric-style metal frieze which is continuous across the facade and down the W. First Street elevation. These large windows, illuminating the former council chamber, have central casement flanked by five-pane sidelights and multi-pane fanlights. The top of the building is finished with a blind balustraded parapet with stone blocks at the tops of the brick piers and a carved acroterion rising at the center inscribed with the date 1925.

The W. First Street elevation is eight bays wide and its design repeats the pattern seen on the facade. The only important exception is the doorway which occupies the second bay westward from the east end of the building: it opens onto a stair hall with flights descending to the town office and up to other offices and the former council chamber. The south elevation of the building reflects a like eight-bay arrangement with tall brick pilasters defining the bays. On the first story the four westernmost bays are blind while the three westernmost bays on the second story are fitted with the tall arch-headed windows seen on the facade: the other bays contain conventional windows.

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The interior of the building is well finished but not elaborately treated. The fire department occupies the south side of the building while the town clerk's office and related offices, together with the stairwell, occupy the north side. The second story is used by the police department and the fire department: the council chamber occupies the west third of the second story. The halls and offices have molded window and door surrounds: the doors either have figured glass panes above two horizontal panels, five horizontal wood panels, or five-pane turn-of-the-century panel designs. The offices have plaster walls above molded baseboards while the halls are also finished with molded chairrails.

51. Commercial Building
217 W. First Street
Ca. 1947-1948
Noncontributing Building

In May 1947 E. S. Tanner purchased the site of this building from W. O. Geer and others and it is believed that he erected this building soon thereafter. The rectangular building, measuring fifty-two feet in width and sixty-four feet in depth, is said to have been erected as a dry cleaning establishment: Service Cleaners occupied the building through the 1950s. The building is built of cement blocks and has a brick facade on W. First Street. The facade has a wide three-bay division with a central recessed double-leaf door flanked by unusually wide three-pane windows. There are three corresponding recessed panels in the upper part of the common bond brick elevation which is topped with terra cotta coping. The cement block side elevations have a number of windows to illuminate the rear work areas.

52. Commercial Building
201 W. First Street
Between 1916 and 1925
Contributing Building

Occupying the southwest corner lot at the junction of W. First and N. Central Streets, this one-story brick building has an inset corner entrance: the double-leaf glazed wood doors are flanked by sidelights with fifteen-pane transoms and surmounted by a like twenty-four-pane transom. Adjoining this entranceway there are broad display windows surmounted by figured glass transoms in both the Central and W. First Street elevations. There is a third such display window with transom at the west edge of the W. First Street elevation; however, the lower display window has been infilled with brick, leaving the wide transom intact. The broad openings have soldier-course lintels. The upper part of the Central Street elevation is finished with simple recessed panels while the W. First Street elevation is simply laid up in common bond. There is a replacement service door in the rear west elevation. A part of the interior retains the original pressed-tin ceiling.

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53. Commercial Building
214 W. First Street
Ca. 1930-1945
Contributing Building

Probably contemporary with its neighbor (#54) to the west, this simple one-story commercial building has a facade of wire-cut and textured brick laid up in common bond: the entranceway, set below a soldier-course lintel and with brick aprons across the bottom, has been remodeled in recent years with a recessed door flanked by conventional one-over-one windows in sheathing. The upper part of the elevation features a horizontal recessed panel. The long east side elevation, exposed to view by the demolition of the buildings for a city parking lot, is laid up in one-to-five bond and has six small window openings placed high on the wall for illumination of the interior. The rear of the building has two windows fitted with plywood infill for security. The interior of the building has been fitted up recently for offices with rooms opening off a central corridor.

54. Commercial Building
218 W. First Street
Ca. 1930-1945
Contributing Building

Probably contemporary with the building (#53) to the east, this modest one-story brick commercial building has a facade laid up of wire-cut and textured brick in common bond. The entranceway has brick aprons that originally served as the base of display windows flanking the entrance: now those windows have been infilled with brick and the original door replaced with metal and plate glass double-leaf doors. The top of the entranceway has a soldier-course lintel. The upper part of the elevation features a pair of recessed panels below a simply-corbelled cornice. The interior of this building is fitted up as office space. On 1 January 1954 the property was acquired by the RUTHERFORD COUNTY NEWS which continues to own and occupy the premises.

55. Commercial Building
222 W. First Street
Ca. 1945
Contributing Building

The site of this building was acquired in October 1945 by William Twitty Carpenter (b. 1903), and it is believed he set about the construction of this two-story masonry commercial building thereafter. For about fifteen years he operated Carpenter's Farm Service company here. The building was afterward the location of Dixie Farm Supply. Visible on the front of the building are the

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painted words "Dixie," "Feed," "Seed," and "Chicks." The front elevation of the building has an asymmetrical arrangement of windows and doors on both levels. On the first story, moving east to west, there is a window opening (now partially infilled), two individual door openings fitted with doors having nine panes above three horizontal panels, a broad horizontal plate glass display window, a larger doorway fitted with double-leaf six-horizontal-panel doors, and a large overhead garage opening fitted with a wood door. Because of the drop in grade to the west, the double-leaf door is serviced by a cement ramp which carries below the large plate glass window. On the second story elevation there are four openings fitted with six-over-six sash. The building appears to have been unoccupied for many years and is somewhat deteriorated.

56. Filling Station
202 N. Washington Street
Between 1916 and 1925
Contributing Building

This rectangular one-story brick building, labeled "Auto Repairs" on the 1925 Sanborn Map, is the oldest surviving filling station in the central business district and probably the oldest in the town of Rutherfordton. It was one of two filling stations located in this block on the 1925 map: the second one, standing in the southeast corner of Washington and W. Second Streets, was a much smaller facility and has been pulled down. In 1926 M. L. Justice sold the completed building to the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, and in 1959, the successor company, Esso, sold the property to the Humble Oil Company: in 1973 Exxon, their successor firm, conveyed the station property to the Robbins Oil Company which, in 1992, sold it to the present owner/operator Don West. For many years, the station was operated by Hubert W. Hodge as Hodge's Service Station. The intact building is typical of its period in its design, finish, and materials. It has a three-bay elevation on W. First Street with a garage opening in the center bay and windows in the flanking bays: there are three corresponding recessed bays in the upper part of the elevation. When built, the front elevation, facing onto Washington Street, had a projecting porte cochere which covered the pair of gasoline pumps here: it has been lost. Otherwise, the building is nearly as built with the sales office in the south third, ladies and men's lavatories in the center section, and two large service stalls with overhead garage doors in the north end. The ladies lavatory, accessible from the exterior of the building, retains its original horizontal panel door; the men's lavatory survives inside together with other finishes and features of the original building. The Victorian-style double-leaf main door is reused from the former building of the town's First Baptist Church.

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57. Commercial Building
210 N. Washington Street
Between 1916 and 1925; addition ca. 1945-1950
Contributing Building

This small rectangular building consists of two blocks, virtually identical on the exterior: the earliest of the two is the south block which appears on the 1925 Sanborn Map of Rutherfordton and was then identified as a "Battery Repair Shop." It is a masonry building of hollow tile with brick veneer. It has a window, now fitted with glass bricks, and a garage door, now infilled and fitted with a conventional door, on its Washington Street facade. A recessed panel is positioned in the upper elevation between projecting bands of corbelled brick, the uppermost of which is the building's cornice. The addition on the north virtually repeats this pattern of openings and the facade finish and here the large garage opening is fitted with an overhead garage door with glazing. The window contains glass brick and they are probably original. The building's long north and south elevations are blind. For the past three decades, at least, the building has housed C & H Wholesale Company, a partnership organized in 1946 by two veterans of World War II, George A. Callahan and Jethro H. Hodge.

58. Commercial Building
201-205 W. Second Street
Between 1916 and 1925
Contributing Building

The buildings standing at #201, #205, and #209 W. Second Street first appear on the 1925 Sanborn Map of Rutherfordton and it seems likely, given their appearance, that they were built about the same time: the virtually identical design of the brick fabric of #201 and #205 suggest that they were built as a pair of storefronts. Of the two buildings, #201 survives the most intact. The entranceway includes a recessed double-leaf mostly glazed door and its flanking splayed display windows which rest on a brick apron. Visible through the display windows are the iron columns which actually support the lintel carrying across the opening. A triple course of corbelling, carrying two rows of soldier-course bricks, carries across the parapet top of both 201 and 205 W. Second Street. The entranceway of #205 has been remodeled in recent years and refitted with a center door and windows set in vertical sheathing. The interior of #201 retains its original tongue-and-groove ceiling. An arch-headed doorway on the Central Street elevation has been partially infilled and refitted with a conventional door.

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59. Commercial Building
209 W. Second Street
Between 1916 and 1925
Contributing Building

Probably contemporary with the double storefront (#58) to the east, this one-story brick commercial building has a simple facade of common bond brick and a west side elevation laid up in one-to-five common bond. The entranceway has been partially covered over in recent years with vertical sheet sheathing; however, the original double-leaf recessed door with a two-pane transom remains in place and intact: each leaf of the door features a large pane of glass above three horizontal panels. The splayed display window to the east survives in place as well. There is a conventional door and a window at the south edge of its west elevation.

60. Commercial Building
217 W. Second Street
Ca. 1935-1945
Contributing Building

This residential-looking Colonial Revival-style building, together with the related gable front building to the immediate west, appears to have been built late in the interwar period. Known as the Southern Bell Telephone Company building for its long-term tenant, the building consists of three principal blocks, laid up in one-to-five bond, stretching north to south. The front block, covered with a cross-gable roof has a classically detailed doorway and a pair of eight-over-eight sash windows in symmetrical positions. The windows have painted cement sills and painted flat arches fitted with keystones. The window openings on the side elevations of this front block are treated with the same refinement. The center block of the building is covered with a front gble roof and the rear block, perhaps added, has a flat roof.

61. Commercial Building
2__ W. Second Street
Ca. 1935-1945
Contributing Building

Similar in styling to its neighbor to the east, this small rectangular brick commercial building is laid up in one-to-six bond and finished with simple Colonial Revival detailing. The gable-front building has a shallow enclosed porch on the east side which projects toward W. Second Street: double window, holding paired six-over-six sash, with a painted cement flat arch like its neighbor's, is set in the face of the main block. The building has window openings on its side and rear elevations and louvered vents in both front and rear gable ends. This building was long used as the Southern Bell Telephone Company business office.

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62. Commercial Building
223 W. Second Street
Ca. 1950-1960
Noncontributing Building

This small rectangular brick veneer building is laid up in common bond and has terra cotta coping along its parapet top. The front elevation has a center door and flanking windows, above a brick apron, of metal and plate glass. The east side elevation is blind while the west side has a single window at its south end. The rear of the building has a door and a single window. In the 1970s the building housed Taylor's Restaurant; it now has a sign "M & R Bail Bonding" on its west elevation.

63. (former) Rutherford County Jail
317 N. Washington Street
1923-1924
Contributing Building

Residential in its design and appearance, this large brick building served as the public jail for Rutherford County for half century from its completion in 1924 until the mid 1970s. The property on which it stands was acquired on 8 February 1923 from J. L. Taylor. The architect for the building has been identified as Milburn, Heister & Company, and Hill & Justice are said to have been the contractors. The jail cells and related mechanical work was supplied by Manly Jail Works of Dalton, Georgia. Unassuming in its appearance, the building is one of the most important in the central business district on both historical and architectural grounds. Because of its extraordinarily intact and well-preserved condition it holds statewide significance as an important example of penal architecture from the early twentieth century and it is believed to have few peers in the state which survive in such a little-altered condition.

In appearance the building consists of two principal blocks: the front two-story with-attic gable-front block, facing on Washington Street, served as the jailer's residence and also housed the offices and reception areas while the three-level rear ell, covered with a hipped roof, contains the actual jail cells. The front part of the building has a two-bay facade with a one-story Tuscan porch sheltering the entrance into the jailer's residence. He and his family occupied the front half of the building and there is a single door on the first story which connects with the rear half of the front block which contains offices and receiving areas; this area is defined on the exterior by shallow projecting bays on the north and south elevations. This is the area where prisoners were received, processed, and prepared for placement in the cells. There are entrances into this area from both the north and south. The rear block of the building, housing the jail cells, stands three stories in

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height. In actuality the rear block is a heavy, solid masonry shell which contains the steel cells positioned in three levels directly above each other. It appears that parts of this penal machinery were assembled on site--particularly the steel platforms between the cells and the outside masonry wall--while other parts were assembled in the factory in Georgia. Virtually all of the mechanical fittings and features of the jail and its cells remain intact and in place.

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Summary Paragraph

The Main Street Historic District in Rutherfordton, comprising the commercial and governmental center of the small Foothills town, holds local significance in the areas of architecture, commerce, and politics and government in the history of Rutherfordton and Rutherford County. Established in 1787 as the county seat of Rutherford County, Rutherfordton has existed as the center of county government for over two centuries. The handsome Classical Revival-style court house (#38), designed by Louis H. Asbury and completed in 1926, represents that important role and it is the third in a series of successive impressive county court houses which have been erected within the boundaries of the historic district. The former Rutherford County Jail (#63), also erected in the mid 1920s, further emphasizes the role of Rutherfordton as the seat of county government. The Rutherfordton City Hall (#50), also dating from the mid 1920s and still the center of municipal offices and functions, reflects the district's role as the site of local city government. Two additional public buildings, the Norris Public Library (#1) and the former United States Post Office (#2), also reflect the district's role as the civic center of the town and county seat and reflect functions of local and national government. While owing its origins to its political role in the life of Rutherford County, Rutherfordton also emerged as the county's trading and commercial center in the nineteenth century and it continued to exercise this function, on a shared basis with Forest City, through the twentieth century interwar period. The district, comprising nearly all of the significant commercial buildings erected in the county seat between ca. 1898 and 1945, reflects this important role in the economic life of the town and county. Architecture, the district's third area of significance, is represented in the cohesive group of commercial and public buildings situated along the streets in the district. Certain of these buildings are important in their own right as examples of skillful design, craftsmanship, and the use of traditional materials; however, as a group, they achieve significance as a reflection of public and commercial architecture that is unequaled in the town and Rutherford County.

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CONTEXTSRutherfordton--An Introductory Historical Overview: 1787-1865

In 1779, Tryon County, named for the Colonial Governor Sir William Tryon, was separated to form new counties whose names would reflect the struggle for American independence. The eastern part of Tryon was set aside as Lincoln County and named for Major General Benjamin Lincoln of Massachusetts who was serving as the commander of the Southern department of the Continental Army. The western part of old Tryon County, comprising a large area that today includes parts or all of Cleveland, McDowell, and Polk Counties, was created as Rutherford County and named for another leader in the Revolutionary War effort, Griffith Rutherford (1721-1805), who like many men of their time had also been important figures in Colonial North Carolina. Initially the county seat was established at small settlement known as Gilbert Town, located about eight miles north of Rutherfordton near the present-day community of Gilkey: it was named for William Gilbert (d. 1790) who was a member of the House of Commons when the act creating Rutherford County was passed. During the course of the war, Gilbert was accused of being a loyalist and fell into both political and financial difficulties: he is said to have removed to Charleston, South Carolina, in 1786 and to have remained there until 1788/1789 when he returned to Rutherford County. During his relocation to Charleston, the decision was made to move the county seat from Gilbert Town. A tract of fifty acres, comprising the core of present-day Rutherfordton, was purchased from James Adair on 7 September 1786 and in 1787 the North Carolina legislature authorized the town commissioners to lay off the town in half-acre lots in a town that was to be known as "Rutherford." Two of the lots were to be retained for public use, including the site of a court house.¹

It is unknown, at present, when the first court house was built in Rutherfordton--as it came to be known--or what the building looked like. The first permanent court house building, a handsome two-story-with-attic brick building with boldly-stepped parapet ends, was not built until 1836: it stood in the northwest corner of Main and Court Streets and served as the court house for Rutherford County until it burned on 24 December 1907. However, as the town lots were sold to both investors and local citizens, some building in the new town took place. A court house and jail were apparently standing by July 1796 when James Miller was appointed as treasurer of public buildings and instructed to make certain improvements to them and to build a pair of stocks. Two years later, in 1798, a post office was established at Rutherfordton and Alexander M. Gilbert was named postmaster. These public buildings were joined by hotels, private dwellings, and the town's first stores.

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Relatively little is known--or published--which provides a clear description of the character and appearance of the town of Rutherfordton during the opening three decades of the nineteenth century; however, it was the principal westernmost town in North Carolina in that period and achieved some measure of stature on that account. In 1825 the town's first church, a Methodist church, was organized and it survives today as the First Methodist Church: the congregation's present 1920s building stands two blocks north of the court house. In the late 1820s, the discovery of gold deposits in Burke and Rutherford Counties (and elsewhere in the Piedmont) prompted events which would have important impacts on the growth of the county seat.

One of the most important was the arrival of Christopher Bechtler Sr. (1782--ca. 1842), a German gunsmith and goldsmith, in Rutherfordton in 1830. On 30 July 1830, he had an advertisement in the NORTH CAROLINA SPECTATOR AND WESTERN ADVERTISER for a shop dealing in watch and clock making, jewelry, etc. situated opposite the tavern of William Twitty. When appeals for the creation of a North Carolina branch of the United States Mint failed, Bechtler opened a private mint just to the north of Rutherfordton in 1831 where he produced gold coins in denominations of \$1.00, \$2.50, and \$5.00. In 1832 Bechtler produced the first \$1.00 gold coin minted in the United States and it was not until 1849 that the United States Mint began producing that coin. Although Congress approved the creation of branch mint in Charlotte in 1835 and it was completed and opened in 1837, Bechtler's private mint flourished in the later 1830s. Bechtler's health apparently began to fail in 1840 and in that year he conveyed his mint to his son Augustus Bechtler (____-1846). Bechtler Sr. died in 1842 or 1843. The shop was continued by his son until his death and afterward by other members of the family for some years; however, the California Gold Rush of 1849 brought a virtual end of the minting operations in Rutherfordton and Rutherford County. Between January 1831 and February 1840 a total of \$2,241,840.50 in gold coins was produced by the Bechtler mint.

The operation of the Bechtler mint brought a great deal of attention to the small mountainous county seat of Rutherfordton: it brought both visitors and new settlers to the region. Among the visitors to Rutherfordton to see the mint and meet Christopher Bechtler was G. W. Featherstonhaugh who left an account of his visit on 19 September 1837, quoted in part below:

I reached Rutherfordton at half past one P. M., where, to my great pleasure I got a room to myself at Mr. Twitty's, a very intelligent and obliging landlord. Here I made a clean and comfortable repast, during which Twitty crowned my satisfaction by producing a bottle of excellent London brown stout, of which he had received a hamper. Such a long period had elapsed since I had met with such a treat, that this noble bottle, of which I took every drop, made me forget all past annoyances; and after taking a very pleasant walk in the environs of this pleasing village, I retired to a nice clean bed.

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One of the buildings which Featherstonhaugh would have been in the "pleasing village" of Rutherfordton was the new county court house which was completed in 1836. The handsome two-story-with-attic brick building, with tall stepped parapet ends, stood on the northwest corner of Main and Court Streets (#24) and faced east. The two-story portico which appears in documentary photographs of the court house probably dates from later in the antebellum period. Although the brick walls of the building were pulled down after the 1907 fire gutted its interior and it is lost, there are two surviving buildings which indicate the character of building and the quality of craftsmanship in the county seat in the years between the peak production at the Bechtler mint and the Civil War: both stand on N. Main Street just beyond the historic district. The former St. John's Episcopal Church, a diminutive Greek Revival frame building, was erected on N. Main Street (at #702) in the late 1840s and consecrated on Ascension Day 1851. It served the town's small Episcopal congregation until 1900 when a new stone Episcopal church, at 912 N. Main Street, was consecrated as St. Francis Church. The former Episcopal church survives virtually intact; however, the town's other landmark building from this period, the house built by Harvey Dewey Carrier (1797-1890) in the 1830s (or 1840s) has had its transitional Federal-Greek Revival finish overbuilt with later-nineteenth century Victorian-style ornamentation. Carrier, a native of Massachusetts, came to Rutherfordton in 1822 and opened a metal works shop on N. Main Street, just beyond the district where the First Baptist Church stands. His antebellum house stands on the west side of N. Main Street at #423.

Reconstruction, Railroads, and Industrialization: Rutherfordton and Rutherford County from 1866 through 1898

The three decades in Rutherfordton's history in the period following the Civil War were years marked both by strife and important advances in the economic life of the county seat. They were also the years in which the first important steps were made in the textile industry which quickly expanded throughout Rutherford County in the early twentieth century and made it one of the most important centers of textile production in North Carolina. As events would prove most of this development would occur outside of Rutherfordton, and other parts of the county would grow quickly and prosper while Rutherfordton's growth seemed slow in contrast. By the turn of the century Rutherfordton would cease to be the largest town in the county.

A total of 1,734 men from Rutherford County served in fourteen companies during the Civil War. That was close to fifteen percent of the 1860 population of 11,573 persons in Rutherford County. How many of these men died during the war is not known for certain: neither is the number of wounded tabulated. However, historians generally agree that life in Rutherford County during the war was no

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more tumultuous than the years of Reconstruction which followed. Black enfranchisement had resulted in a new majority of Republican voters in the county, and in the post war elections the antebellum leadership was swept from office. Problems with county finances and taxation also fueled the already tense political situation. During this period the Ku Klux Klan gained a stronghold in the county. The newspapers published in Rutherfordton also figured largely in exacerbating the debate. THE RUTHERFORD ENQUIRER, the last of the town's antebellum newspapers, ceased publication during the war. On 2 May 1866, J. B. Carpenter and R. W. Logan began publication of THE RUTHERFORD STAR which developed into a bitterly partisan newspaper supporting Republican positions. The newspaper was published only until 14 September 1867. The equipment was then sold to Randolph Abbot Shotwell in February 1868 who began publishing THE WESTERN VINDICATOR which espoused opposing political views. In June 1868, THE RUTHERFORD STAR began publishing again and for a period the two newspapers engaged in harsh debate. Matters came to a head in the summer of 1871. On 11 June members of the Ku Klux Klan are said to have broken into the offices of THE RUTHERFORD STAR and destroyed type and equipment. A Republican member of the state legislature was also threatened and whipped. In response, Judge R. W. Logan, also Republican, called upon the president for federal troops to maintain order. On 27 June 1871, sixty-five men under Capt. V. R. Hart, comprising Troop C, 7th U. S. Calvary, arrived in Rutherfordton and they remained in town until 12 March 1872. Gradually, the tensions lessened and social, economic, and political life returned to relative stability.

The first and best insight into commercial life in Rutherfordton in this period is gained through the entries in BRANSON'S NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS DIRECTORY which first appeared in an edition for 1867-1868. There were seven merchants listed in Rutherfordton: John M. Craton, Clark & Sumner, Carpenter & McArthur; J. L. Fagg, John Jones, Mitchel & Suttle, and Daniel May. Four lawyers had offices in the county seat: Joseph L. Carson, Michael Justice, G. W. Logan, and G. M. Whitesides. There were three doctors--John M. Craton, Thomas S. Duffy, and John N. Harris; the town's two dentists were John Jones and B. H. Padgett. Carter Burnett was cited as the proprietor of the Planter's Hotel. The second edition of the directory was published in 1869 and it contained expanded listings. The number of lawyers and doctors remained almost the same; however, the directory included the names of some eleven persons and firms who were engaged in manufacturing in the county seat as buggy and wagon makers, blacksmiths, and saddle and harness makers. There were also eleven merchants or mercantile firms listed including most of those listed in 1867-1868 as well as new enterprises. There were also three flour and grist mills listed for Rutherfordton; however, whether all three actually stood in town or in the surrounding countryside cannot be answered at present. At the close of the decade the population of Rutherford County was 13,121, and the population of Rutherfordton was 479.

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The listings for Rutherford County in the 1872 edition of the NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS DIRECTORY reflect further changes in the character of the commercial, manufacturing, and professional life of the town, much of which was carried on within the confines of the historic district. Under the heading "Merchants" a total of thirty individuals and firms were listed as located in the county: sixteen of that number had Rutherfordton as their post office while the remainder were located throughout the county. The number of "Manufactories" decreased to six: Rutherfordton was the location of cabinet-making and wheelwright shops, a tannery, and a tobacco manufacturer. There were seven lawyers doing business in the county seat as well as five physicians and three dentists. There were four mills grinding corn into meal and wheat into flour, and all operated a saw mill in conjunction with their milling business. While there might be some questions as to whether all of these business houses, offices, and mills were actually located in the town or within its wider post office territory, there is no doubt that the two hotels, the Village Hotel and the Burnett House, were located in town as were the Rutherfordton Male Academy and the Rutherfordton Female Academy. The NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS DIRECTORY FOR 1877-'78 shows relatively little change in the makeup of business houses and professional men in the county seat except that the percentage of Rutherford County merchants located in Rutherfordton dropped from just over fifty percent in 1872 to about thirty-three percent. In the 1877-1878 listing six of the thirty-four merchants had Burnt Chimney as their post office: Burnt Chimney would be renamed Forest City within a few years, and, as is already stated, it would eventually outgrow Rutherfordton.

The town of Rutherfordton grew in the 1870s and into the 1880s, and the size of its mercantile community likewise increased, particularly in the 1880s. In 1880 the population of Rutherford County was 15,198 and the population of the county seat grew likewise. In the category of "Merchants and Tradesmen" Rutherfordton had sixteen individuals and firms listed, a figure double the next highest number in that category. There were six general line merchants listed in Forest City (formerly Burnt Chimney) and one lumber dealer, Trout & Co. Surprisingly the number of listed manufactories decreased in Rutherfordton as did the number of flour, corn, and saw mills. The number of the county's lawyers remained stable and it is worth noting that all--three partnerships and three individuals--were located in Rutherfordton in 1884. There were seven doctors and one dentist in the county seat. A new category, "Local Corporations," was added in the 1884 directory and the Western Star Lodge, No. 91 of the Ancient Free & Accepted Masons in Rutherfordton was listed here alone.

The decade of the 1880s was critically important in the history of Rutherfordton and Rutherford County for other reasons. Railroad service had been a dream in the county since the antebellum period; however, it was not

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until 1887 that the Wilmington, Charlotte, and Rutherfordton Railroad--later known as the Carolina Central and as the Seaboard Air Line Railroad--reached Rutherfordton. The construction and opening of this line proved to be the key factor to general growth in the county and the county seat. The more important impact of rail service is that it was the final necessary element for the development of the textile industry in the county. Two men proved to be the leaders in the industrialization of Rutherford County: Raleigh Rutherford Haynes (1851-1917), a native of the county, and Simpson Bobo Tanner (1853-1924). In 1887, Haynes, Tanner, and J. S. Spencer, a Charlotte investor, began the construction of the Henrietta Mills at Henrietta in the southeastern part of the county.

During the following three decades these two men, in partnership with each other, in partnership with others, and a third man Jacob F. Alexander (1859-1925), erected and managed an important series of textile mills that forever influenced life in the county. While several of these mills were established in Forest City, others gave rise to new company towns with the names Alexander Mills, Cliffside, Henrietta, and finally Spindale in 1916. The history of the textile industry in Rutherford County and its tremendous growth in the decades at the turn of the century is a subject beyond this nomination; however, the fact that most of this development took place in parts of the county beyond Rutherfordton proved to be a factor in the slow growth of the county seat as a commercial center in this same time period. Most of this development occurred to the southeast of Rutherfordton, closer to Forest City, and as a result the population of Forest City came to outrank that of Rutherfordton by 1900 and Forest City would remain the largest town in the county for the rest of the twentieth century. Its stores and business houses would also prove to be the principal competitor of those in the county seat, and as history proves, its commercial district would eventually enlarge in size beyond that of Rutherfordton. Thus, the significance of the Main Street Historic district in the area of commerce is as the principal center in the commercial life of the county seat and as one of the two principal business districts in Rutherford County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The year 1898, rather than 1900, was chosen to end this discussion of the late nineteenth century history of Rutherfordton because 1898 is the first year in which the Sanborn-Perris Map Company issued a map of the county seat. A reading of that map in combination with the Rutherford County entries in the NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS DIRECTORY of 1896 (and 1897) provide a useful view of life in the county seat on the eve of the turn of the century. The map, comprising one sheet, principally represented the buildings on Main Street beginning about two blocks south of Court Street where the nineteenth century county jail is shown at the intersection of present day Charlotte Road (US 221/US 74) and South Main Street. The map illustrated both sides of Main Street

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north to Second Street and thereafter only the east side of N. Main Street through the 500 block. Thus, about one-half of the area comprising the historic district is represented on the map. In addition to the brick jail and the 1836 court house--both now lost--there were at least nine brick stores standing on Main Street or on Court Street at its junction with Main along with a like number of one and two-story frame business houses. Of those nine one and two-story brick stores, six (#7, #16, #17, #18, #27, and #28) still stand in the district. Two of this number (#7 and #16) have been substantially altered; however, the commercial buildings at 220-222 N. Main Street (#17) and 224-226 N. Main (#18) retain sufficient aspects of their original appearance as to be contributing. The two buildings (#27 and #28) standing next to each other at 115-119 and 123 N. Main are impressive buildings whose present appearance substantially recalls their original appearance. The map also provides a drawing of the Rutherfordton Cotton Mill, erected in the 1890s on the side of Cleghorn Creek, downgrade and east of Main Street; it was the only significant textile mill erected in Rutherfordton in the nineteenth century.

In the way of hotels, the Sanborn Map showed the Central Hotel standing in the near center of the east side of the 300 block of Main Street, directly opposite the present day court house (#38); however, THE NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS DIRECTORY listed only the Guthrie House as a hotel in its 1896 edition while five boarding houses were noted as operating in Rutherfordton. The frame Isothermal Hotel, on the site now occupied by the court house (#38), had burned in 1894. On the professional side, the six lawyers listed were all located in Rutherfordton which also boasted five doctors and two dentists. In the listing of "Manufactories" there were eleven concerns noted as operating in Rutherfordton; however, these were clearly relatively small operations and certainly small in comparison to the Florence Cotton Mills at Forest City and the Henrietta Mills #1 and #2 at Henrietta. In the way of "Merchants and Tradesmen," Rutherfordton clearly was the leading commercial center in the county with a total of forty-three individuals and concerns in comparison to twenty-four in Forest City. Prominent on this list was the firm of Carpenter & Morrow which operated a general merchantile line. The partners, Kinchen Jahu Carpenter (1842-1928) and D. F. Morrow, are also credited with establishing the first bank in Rutherfordton in 1891 in their store. Under the listing of "Local Corporations," the Citizens Building and Loan Association is cited with K. J. Carpenter as president, and there is also an entry for "Private Bank, Rutherfordton" with Carpenter and Morrow as partners. The partnership later dissolved; however, Carpenter would remain as president of the Citizens Building and Loan Association until his death on 9 July 1928. In the listing of "Mills," Rutherfordton was the location of one corn and flour mill and three steam saw mills: they were operated by W. H. Hector, attorney Matt McBrayer (1852-1922), and R. W. Hyder. In 1898, as the century neared its end, Rutherfordton was a small but thriving town functioning as both the county seat and a commercial trading center for much of the county.

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Despite the fact that much of the industrial development in Rutherford County was occurring outside of the county seat, Rutherfordton continued to grow and prosper during this period. Much of the central business district was built up with one and two-story brick stores and the district achieved the appearance it would retain for decades to come, and largely to the present. During this period, the county government erected not one but two impressive Classical Revival-style court houses successively on the site of the nineteenth century Isothermal Hotel. In the way of civic improvements, it would also erect a new jail (#63) in the mid 1920s to replace the two-story brick jail on S. Main Street. The city government under the leadership of Mayor C. F. Geer erected its first, very impressive municipal building which has continued to house city offices and departments to the present. As the economic boom of the 1920s came to an end in 1929, both the city and county citizens could look with pride upon their county seat--and its buildings.

In the years between 1898 and 1904 when the second mapping of Rutherfordton occurred by the Sanborn Map Company, additional brick commercial buildings were added to the streetscape of Rutherfordton's business district. The most impressive of these is the quartet of storefronts (#34) comprising 201-215 N. Main Street which survives remarkably intact to the present and remains an important part of the Rutherfordton streetscape. The rental block included three one-story storefronts, a separate streetside access to offices above them, and a fourth two-story building at #215 for larger concerns. In addition there were two adjoining one-story store buildings (#29 and #30) erected at 125-129 N. Main Street which stood immediately north of the two brick stores (#27 and #28) that were built before 1898: the building at 125 N. Main retains its original entranceway. Also during this period, a group of businessmen including J. L. Morgan, attorney Edward J. Justice (1867-1917), John Craton Mills (1874-1916), and Dr. Theodorich Birchett Twitty (1842-1909), a Civil War veteran and state legislator, joined together and organized the Commercial Bank of Rutherfordton. Six years later, in 1906, the Citizens Bank of Rutherfordton was organized and opened with H. L. Carpenter as president. Another important event in 1906 was the opening of the Rutherford Hospital by Dr. Henry Norris (1875-19__) and Dr. Montgomery H. Biggs (1870-1948) at the edge of town on the campus of the former Rutherford Military Institute which had failed in 1894.

The final edition of the NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS DIRECTORY was issued in 1897 and in its wake a new publication appeared which served the same purpose. This new directory, THE NORTH CAROLINA YEAR BOOK, was published by the News and Observer Company in Raleigh and appeared on an annual or biennial basis: in 1902 its listings were first arranged county by county. Instead of the simple all-inclusive listings of "Merchants and Tradesmen" and "Manufactories" which

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appeared in the earlier directories, the new business directory identified and listed these individuals and firms by the products they sold or manufactured. The entries for Rutherfordton in 1902 indicate a wide range of shops, manufacturers, tradesmen, and professionals. Among these are: "Barber Shops," "Butchers and Dealers in Cattle," "Contractors and Builders," "Dealers in Carriages," "General Merchandise," "Retail Grocers," as well as "Dentists," "Doctors," "Lawyers," "Music Teachers," "Plumbers," "Painters," and "Paper Hangers."

On Christmas Eve 1907, the Rutherford County Court House caught fire and the interior of the tall brick building was gutted. Apparently, the fire was slow in burning and virtually all of the county's public records were saved: the county seat had no fire-fighting equipment at that time. Although the walls of the 1836 building were left standing, the county commissioners determined not only to erect a new court house but also one at a new location. Late in 1907 or early in 1908 they engaged H. L. Lewman of New York to design the new court house. On 11 April 1908, they acquired from Tench C. Coxe and the executors of his father's estate a block-size tract of land, lying between N. Main and Washington Streets and W. Second and W. Third Streets, as the location of the new public building. In the transaction they conveyed the former court house property to Coxe, in exchange. The third edition of the Sanborn Map Company's map of Rutherfordton, issued in 1909, showed the plan of the county's new court house, well situated on its lot and facing east onto N. Main Street. The large rectangular Classical Revival-style brick building, crowned by a richly-detailed cupola with an inset clock, was finished and opened in November 1908. The other principal addition to the streetscape of Rutherfordton's commercial district was a three-building block which had been constructed by the Coxe Family on the site of the burned court house. While two of these three storefronts have been lost, the northernmost building (#25) in the block survives in use today.

In 1910, the lawn in front of the court house became the site of a handsome classical monument (#39) memorializing the lives of the county's soldiers in the Civil War. Many of the town's 1,062 citizens turned out for the parade and ceremonies. In the following year, 1911, a modern new hospital was completed and dedicated on 9 March. That same day, a fire destroyed the Central Hotel standing on the east side of N. Main Street opposite the court house. Later in the year, the city undertook work on a municipal water and electric light system.

In the years between 1909 and 1916, when the fourth of the Sanborn Map Company's maps of Rutherfordton was issued, additional buildings and improvements had been added to the town center. Several of these are especially noteworthy. The creation of a municipal water system had enabled the town to establish a volunteer fire department. A building, now lost, was

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erected to house the fire-fighting equipment: ironically it stood on the east side of N. Main Street, in the 100 block, opposite the site of the burned court house. Further north in the same block, a two-story brick building (#9) had been erected for the Southern Hotel. In the next, 200 block of N. Main, a one-story brick bank (#14) was erected by the Citizens Bank and Trust Company: the bank had been reorganized in 1915 by W. W. Hicks (1877-19__). During this same period, the Commercial Bank of Rutherfordton erected the large impressive Classical Revival-style brick building (#37) which stands in the southwest corner of N. Main and Second Streets. Its second-story rental offices, overlooking the lawn of the court house and the newly-erected Civil War monument, became the most desirable in town. The town post office was located in the building (#16) at 218 N. Main Street while the town telephone exchange was located on the second story of 201 N. Main (#34). "Moving Pictures" were shown in a building, now lost, that stood in the southeast corner of N. Main and E. First Streets. The streetscape on the west side of the 100 block of N. Main Street was enhanced with the construction of a one-story brick building (#26). Although Central Street was not shown as such on the 1916 map, it did represent the development which had occurred in the area bounded by present-day Central Street on the east and Washington Street on the west. Most of this construction was frame; however, a three-unit brick building (#42) presaged the future building up of Central Street. These buildings also reflected the shift which was occurring as town residents made the transition from horse-drawn carriages, buggies, and wagons to automobiles and trucks. In this area were buildings associated with both means of transportation and bearing identification as: "Livery," "Sales & Boarding," "Stge: Old Wagons," "Wagon Repository," and "Garage, Capcy 40 Cars." Many of these buildings would be demolished and replaced by existing buildings by 1925.

Following on the completion of the court house in 1908 and a group of commercial buildings in the late 1900s and early 1910s, the period between 1916 and 1925--when the fifth map of Rutherfordton was issued by the Sanborn Map Company--was marked by even more important building projects in downtown Rutherfordton. It was during this period that the district was largely built up to its present appearance. At the outset, it should be noted that the building boom of this period was not confined to the central business district. Handsome, well-detailed houses were erected along N. Main and Washington Streets and in other neighborhoods in the city. The county seat also gained two impressive new church buildings in these years. Both the town's Baptist and Methodist congregations pulled down their existing churches in the 400 and 500 blocks of N. Main Street, respectively, and erected important new buildings on those sites which continue in use today as places of worship by those congregations. A third major building, the new Isothermal Hotel, was completed in this period, also at the edge of the district. The large two-story brick building was built in the 600 block of N. Washington Street: it no longer stands. In short these buildings reflected the same

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post-World War I prosperity that influenced the construction of significant buildings in the central business district.

The two costliest building projects undertaken in this period were the construction of the town's first City Hall (#50) at the corner of Washington and W. First Streets, completed in 1925, and a new court house (#38) for Rutherford County. The 1925 Sanborn Map contained a notation to the effect that the existing (1908) court house was "Being Removed July 1925." The new court house, designed by Louis H. Asbury of Charlotte, was completed by the Southern Construction Company in 1926. Meanwhile, the county had erected a modern new jail (#63) to replace its nineteenth century facility. Another important public building from this period in Rutherfordton is the Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School, completed in 1925 about midway between Rutherfordton and Spindale.

There were also important, impressive commercial buildings erected on N. Main, Central, and N. Washington Streets as well as on the cross connecting streets. Charles Washington Keeter (1876-19__), the founder of Keeter Hardware Company, erected the finest of this group as the premises of his store (#31). Next door, to the north, Champ D. Geer (1860-1927) erected a large rental store building (#32) in the same pumpkin-colored brick that mark both buildings for their time. In the block opposite the court house, a new two-story brick building (#21) was erected on the vacant site of the former Central Hotel and contained storefronts on the first story and offices on the second. A one-story block (#22) was added to the north to complete this (300) blockfront of brick buildings just as new buildings (#12 and #13) in the northwest corner of N. Main and E. First Streets filled out the east side of the 200 block of N. Main.

Numerous buildings were erected in the two blocks between Central and N. Washington Streets and Court and W. Second Streets. A pair of typical and well-finished one-story brick stores (#43 and #52) was erected at the corner of Central (then called Trade Street) and W. First Streets. On the west side of Central Street, between W. First and W. Second Streets, a total of nine storefronts were erected between 1916 and 1925. From their appearance on the map it seems likely that these were erected as blocks rather than individually. Six of these buildings were acquired and demolished by the city in 1980-1981; however, the trio of storefronts (#58 and #59) which face onto W. Second Street and north to the Court House survive in use to the present.

The map of 1925 indicates yet another important change which had taken place in the life of Rutherfordton: the transition from horse-drawn vehicles to motor-powered cars and trucks had been completed. W. Oscar Geer (1888-19__) erected a large many-windowed one-story brick building at the corner of Washington and W. Court Street as the premises of the Geer-Warlick Motor

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Company, a Ford dealership. (In 1926 Geer was elected to the office of register of deeds for Rutherford County and he held that position, by reelection, through the 1930s.) On the west side of N. Washington Street, in the 200 block, three buildings were completed in the late 1910s or early 1920s to serve the new motoring public. The most impressive of these is the brick filling station (#56) which survives largely intact and in use as an auto repair shop to the present. A smaller filling station in the opposite northwest corner of the block has been pulled down; however, the simple brick building (#57) labeled "Battery Repair Shop" on the 1925 map still stands and is used by a wholesale concern. Thus, by 1925 Rutherfordton boasted a well-built up central business district and one which saw increased trade in the years up to the Crash of 1929.

Rutherfordton, 1930-1945: The Slow Years

The effects of the Crash of 1929 were not slow in coming to Rutherfordton, despite its relative physical remoteness in western North Carolina, far away from New York and Wall Street. On 28 February 1928 Rutherfordton's two principal banks, the Commercial Bank and the Citizens Bank and Trust Company, had merged to form the Rutherford County Bank and Trust Company. Less than two years later, on 4 February 1930, the Rutherford County Bank and Trust Company closed its doors forever. A financial crisis was at hand, and the opening of a branch bank of the Union Trust Company of Shelby in Rutherfordton two weeks later helped but slightly. It would be years before the commercial community of Rutherfordton would recover and regain the economic stability of earlier days.

While the mood appeared unpromising, two important federal construction projects in the early 1930s served to not only lift the spirits of the county seat's citizens but also to make important additions to the quality and character of life in Rutherfordton. The first of these was the construction of an unusually beautiful Georgian Revival-style post office (#2) on the southeast corner of Main and Court Streets. It was completed in 1931 and occupied by the United States Post Office until a new totally undistinguished building was erected in the 1960s. The second project, erected through the Civil Works Administration and the Emergency Relief Administration, was the construction of the Norris Public Library (#1) on the lot immediately south of the post office. The small yet well-finished Colonial Revival-style building was designed by Louis H. Asbury, who had earlier designed the Rutherford County Court House: it was completed and opened in 1933.

In the years leading up to World War II, there was very little construction activity in the business district of Rutherfordton: the standing buildings seemed to serve every purpose except in a few instances. Late in the 1930s, the Southern Power Company acquired the existing building (#4) at 106 N. Main

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Street and fitted it up as their local offices. Other buildings were added here on the east side of the 100 block of N. Main Street which, as late as 1925, was the least built-up block in downtown Rutherfordton. Across Main Street, the filling station (#24), on the site of the nineteenth century court house and the later Coxe buildings, is believed to have been built ca. 1940-1941 and thus the last building erected in the district in the interwar period. The pair of domestic-looking office buildings (#60 and #61) facing onto W. Second Street are also thought to date from this period. As with other places in the nation, there was little permanent construction during World War II; however, at war's end the pent-up need for buildings was released. In Rutherfordton the final building erected in this district in the period of significance is believed to be the building (#55) erected by William Twitty Carpenter to house his agricultural supply business. He purchased the property in October 1945 and probably set about building at that time.

Rutherford, 1946-1995: A Half Century of Changes

Within a year of the war's end, there were two buildings undertaken in the central business district whose construction essentially completes the build-up of the downtown. James B. Carnegie acquired a lot on W. Court Street in March 1946 where he is believed to set about building the two-story masonry building (#48) in which he operated Carnegie Auto Parts. That same year George Frederick Hill (1890-1967) built a new well-finished two-story brick building in which he opened Hill's Hardware Company in 1947. It remains an irony in the history of Rutherfordton that the company is the oldest single business in the central business district that remains in existence on the same premises in which it started operation. It is also the only business in the district which operates in a building which it constructed.

While the functions of government and commerce continued in the central business district of Rutherfordton through the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s brought about changes that would have a lasting impact on the social and economic life of the city. In the 1960s, the Isothermal Hotel, long a favored stopping place for travelers, was pulled down and a Winn-Dixie Grocery Store was erected on its site. This action, while occurring outside the district, was a portent of the change to come. In 1971, a large shopping center with regional appeal was erected on the US 74 bypass which had been constructed to remove non-local traffic from the highway which connected Forest City, Spindale, and Rutherfordton. The local store in the Belk's Department Store chain vacated 135 N. Main Street (#32) and reopened in the Tri-City Mall. The loss of this major downtown department store was a wound from which the central business district has not recovered. As of summer 1995, there are only five businesses in the historic district--in addition to Hill's Hardware Company (#10)--which currently occupy the same location they did in 1970. They are: Reid's Jewelers/Rutherford Jewelers (#15); Forest M. Edwards Insurance Company

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(#34); the Rutherford County News Company (#54); C & H Wholesale (#57); and Kut & Kurl Beauty Shop (#58). Louis W. Nanney continues to use his former real estate office (#59) for personal business. Two businesses in the district, the Blossom Flower Shop (#12) and the Rucker Insurance Agency (#36), were located elsewhere in downtown Rutherfordton in 1970. Excepting these concerns all the others, in business here in 1970, have either ceased to exist or relocated away from the historic central business district. In their wake have arrived a new group of businesses including antique stores, restaurants, small service companies, and an interior decorating company, among others.

Endnote

1. The sources used in the preparation of this nomination are cited in section 9, Major Bibliographical References. Three of these were of the greatest value: the series of maps of Rutherfordton issued between 1898 and 1925 by the Sanborn-Perris Map Company and the Sanborn Map Company; the sequential volumes of the NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS DIRECTORY published between 1867 and 1897; and Clarence W. Griffin's THE HISTORY OF OLD TRYON AND RUTHERFORD COUNTIES published in 1937 and reprinted in 1977. Because the information in a single sentence might come from two or more of the above three sources and others in section 9, it was infeasible to prepare the numerous endnotes that would have been required. Where information from the Sanborn Maps and the entries for Rutherford County found in the NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS DIRECTORY is used in the text, there is usually a specific reference to the source.

2. Thomas Featherstonhaugh, "A Private Mint in North Carolina," THE MAGAZINE OF HISTORY, IV (October 1906): 220.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Main Street Historic District are drawn on the Rutherford County Tax Map #50 included in this nomination.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Main Street Historic District are drawn to include all those commercial and public buildings erected during the period of significance which form a discrete and cohesive group in the center of Rutherfordton.

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Additional Documentation

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Main Street Historic District--Schedule of Photographs

The following information applies to all of the photographs included in this nomination.

Name of Property: Main Street Historic District (MSHD)
Rutherfordton
Rutherford County
North Carolina

Photographer: Davyd Foard Hood

Date of Photographs: 20 August 1995

Location of Original Negatives: North Carolina Division of Archives and History
109 East Jones Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2807

1. MSHD: (former) United States Post Office, looking northeast.
2. MSHD: Buildings, East side, 100 block, N. Main Street, looking northeast.
3. MSHD: Buildings, 133-225 N. Main Street, looking northwest.
4. MSHD: Commercial Bank Building and the Rutherford County Court House, looking northwest.
5. MSHD: Buildings, East side, 300 block, N. Main Street, looking east/northeast.
6. MSHD: Buildings, 201 W. First Street and West side, 100 block, N. Central Street, looking southwest.
7. MSHD: Buildings, 202 N. Washington Street and North side, 200 block, W. First Street, looking northeast.
8. MSHD: City Hall, looking southwest.
9. MSHD: Buildings, 108 N. Washington Street and North side, 200 block, W. Court Street, looking northeast.
10. MSHD: (former) Rutherford County Jail, looking northwest.

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 1 September 1995 (DFH)

- Contributing Resource
- ⬡ Non-contributing Resource
- ▨ Boundary

Scale: 1" = 50'
 ↗ indicates angle of photograph

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