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Located on the wooded block bounded by E. Davis Street, Broad Street, E. Webb Avenue, and Lexington Avenue in downtown Burlington, North Carolina is a complex of ecclesiastical structures built at various times which represent the development and growth of the Episcopal congregation in Burlington. The earliest structure on the site is the St. Athanasius Church, a small Carpenter Gothic chapel built in 1879-1880. Adjacent to St. Athanasius is the similarly scaled Parish House, constructed in 1887, also in the Carpenter Gothic mode. These structures served the Episcopal congregation until 1911, when the Neo-Gothic Revival edifice designed by Hobart Upjohn and named the Church of the Holy Comforter was built on a site to the west of St. Athanasius. 1926 a Parish House also in the Neo-Gothic Revival style was constructed next to the Upjohn church. The complex reached its present configuration in 1963 with the construction of the Parish House addition and Great Hall. Between St. Athanasius Church and the Church of the Holy Comforter is located a cemetery containing the grayes of the parishioners, the earliest dated 1882; the markers vary from the very simple to elaborately sculptured monuments.

The small Carpenter Gothic structure known as St. Athanasius Church reflects the long popular influence of Richard Upjohn's Rural Architecture (1852) which spread the small Carpenter Gothic chapel throughout America in the nineteenth century. St. Athanasius rests on a brick foundation and is covered with board and batten siding under a steeply pitched gable roof clad in asphalt shingles. The structure is four bays deep with bays marked by lancet arch windows in simple wood surrounds; each window contains four-over-four sash of clear glass. In the tympanum of the arch of each window, the mullion divides to separate three clear glass panes in a Y-pattern.

Centered on the front (east) gable entrance end is a double door in a pointed arch surround. Each leaf of the door contains one long horizontal panel over a square panel; rails and stiles are chamfered and the panels are fashioned of diagonal sheathing sloping downward to the shutting stile on each leaf. The tympanum above the door is similarly sheathed. Wooden steps rise from three sides to the porch landing before the door. This is covered in a steeply pitched shed roof supported by chamfered posts and braces; curvilinear sawn trim decorates the eaves of the porch roof on both sides. Directly above the porch is a small rose window with colored glass in a geometric design with fleur-de-lis and clover motifs; this window is protected by a wire mesh screen. The overhanging eaves of the roof on the gable end are supported at the front corners of the building with curvilinear sawn brackets with turned drop pendants. At the peak of the gable is a decorative insert of thin square-in-section strips of wood fashioned to resemble queenpost and collarbeam structural elements; turned drop pendants ornament the lower end of the queenpost members. A small wooden cross rises from the peak of the gable.

At the rear (west) gable end is a three-part Gothic window with small lancet arch lights flankings a taller central one; all three contain colored glass in geometric patterns with a figure of Christ as shepherd in the central light, and other elements of Christian symbolism in all three lights. An exterior brick flue rises from the cellar on the right side of this rear window.

The interior contains one undivided sanctuary space in a center-aisle plan under a spacious gabled ceiling. Walls are of white plaster. The remaining original pews have curvilinear sawn ends; additional pews constructed of horizontal slats have been added.

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In the corners at the west end of the sanctuary are small rectangular enclosures constructed of screens with pointed arch panels of varying width, one of which on each enclosure contains a pointed arch door. The tops of the screens are decorated with scalloped crenellation, and the posts supporting the screens terminate in turned pinnacles.

The roof is supported by an exposed kingpost truss system with collar beams and collar braces.

To the south of the church is a small frame parish house covered in narrow vertical sheathing. The narrow rectangular structure is one bay wide and six bays deep, with windows identical to those of the church. A single door in a pointed arch frame is set in the east gable entrance end, with a modern brick and concrete stoop is placed before it. A circular louvered attic ventilator is set in the gable above the door. The interior of this building has largely been remodeled with modern wall paneling and ceiling tile.

The Church of the Holy Comforter, designed by Hobart Upjohn in 1911, is a cruciform structure constructed of rock-faced random granite ashlar on a northeast-southwest oriented site facing East Davis Street. The facade of the church is distinguished by a four-part attached belltower at the west corner of the structure. The belltower is surmounted by a parapet with corner pinnacles which rise from corner buttresses. Each stage of the tower possesses a distinguishing feature--Gothic double leaf doors of chamfered vertical boards and a Gothic arch window on the first level, paired niches on the second level, Gothic arch windows on the third, and Gothic arch louvered panels on the fourth, or carillon level. A large stained glass Gothic window with tracery is centered in the facade of the sanctuary which rises to a parapet gable surmounted by a Roman cross at the peak. The parapet gable recurs on the chancel end of the sanctuary, on the two wings, and between the chancel and nave rooflines at the head of the crossing.

The southeast and northwest elevations are supported by granite buttresses separating a series of traceried stained glass windows. A bevelled granite water table carries around all elevations above two-pane casement windows which light the basement of the structure.

The center-aisle plan sanctuary is entered at the west corner through the belltower. The interior walls are stuccoed above a high carved dado. A heavy timber Gothic arch truss system supported by wall posts and hammerbeams articulates the ceiling. chancel, with a Gothic arch ceiling and carved choir and reredos, is distinguished by a series of small Gothic arch clerestory windows and a large stained glass window with tracery rising above the altar.

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The sanctuary is connected to the 1926 Parish House addition immediately to the northeast by a passageway, which like the Parish House is constructed of rock-faced random granite ashlar similar to the sanctuary. A series of Gothic tripartite stained glass windows with diamond-shaped leading light the passageway which leads from the vestry on the north corner of the church to the Parish House. The main exterior entrance of the Parish House, located on the west corner of the structure, consists of a two leaf chamfered vertical board door surmounted by a Gothic arch accented by a checkerboard pattern of alternating concrete and rusticated granite squares. entrance is set within a recessed molded Gothic arch surrounded by Christian symbols and ornamented with applied pendants and finials. Above the entrance is an unusual four-over-four-over-eight casement window set within a plain surround beneath a parapet gable ornamented by a finial. The fenestration of the Parish House is an irregular pattern of four-over-eight casement windows on the third floor, Gothic arch windows with diamond lights and nine-over-nine sash windows on the second story, and nine-overnine sash on the first story beneath the beveled concrete water table. The structure carries a slate hip roof with tiny gabled louvered dormers accented by bargeboards.

Connected to the southeast end of the Parish House and separated from it by a roofline parapet gable is the 1963 Parish House addition and Great Hall of brick laid in running bond. While the structure has some Gothic interpretive accents and is of a similar scale to the earlier building, the addition is of an obviously modern design. The Great Hall, constructed on the southeast end of the Parish House addition paralleling the sanctuary, displays such imitations of the Upjohn design as brick and concrete buttresses separating Gothic arch windows.

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SPECIFIC DATES 1879–1880, 1887, 1911, 1926, 1963

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Johannes Adam Simon Oertel, designer Capt. William H. Turrentine, supervisor

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

of construction;
Hobart Upjohn, architect

St. Athanasius Church was constructed in 1879-1880 to serve the small Episcopal congregation in the town of Company Shops, renamed Burlington in 1887, which had been established about 1851 as the central repair center for the North Carolina Railroad. The Carpenter Gothic structure was designed by J. A. S. Oertel, a clergyman and artist who at the time was rector of the Episcopal Church in Morganton, North Carolina. The small board-and-batten covered building is one of the primary examples of the Carpenter Gothic mode in Piedmont North Carolina, a style popularized by Richard Upjohn in his Rural Architecture (1852). The church is one of the few structures surviving from the Company Shops period of Burlington's history. In recent years the church has been used as a chapel for the deaf. The small parish house adjacent to the church was built in 1887 as a gift of Lawrence S. Holt, benefactor of the church, and has served as a school

The Church of the Holy Comforter, located adjacent to its predecessor, St. Athanasius, is a large stone Neo-Gothic Revival edifice designed by the noted New York architect Hobart Upjohn in 1911. A compatably designed parish house addition was dedicated in 1926. The Church of the Holy Comforter is significant not only for its association with the careet of Hobart Upjohn, but also as a record of the growth of the congregation and its interest in the physical beauty of the church.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. St. Athanasius Church and the Church of the Holy Comforter are associated with the early social development of Company Shops, later Burlington, one of the major industrial centers of Piedmont North Carolina.
- B. St. Athanasius is an important example of Carpenter Gothic in North Carolina and was designed by J. A. S. Oertel, noted American artist and clergyman. The Church of the Holy Comforter is a representative example of Neo-Gothic Revival architecture designed by New York architect Hobart Upjohn, grandson of Richard Upjohn, whose Rural Architecture probably inspired the design of the earier building.

Thus the complex exemplifies the continuity of the Gothic Revival style and the role of the Upjohn family as disseminators of that style.

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The Protestant Episcopal Church came late to Alamance County. Not until 1876 were there any services held, and in that year the Diocese of North Carolina registered only two communicants and six infant baptisms, all from the Company Shops community. Episcopal services, and those of other faiths as well, were held in Union Church, as interdenominational house of worship built by the North Carolina Railroad Company. With two communicants and the prospect of bringing more members into the church, the Episcopal Diocese decided to establish a mission at Company Shops.

The Right Reverend Thomas Atkinson, Bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina, assigned the task to the Reverend William Shipp Bynum who was then officiating Deacon at the Salem and Winston Mission and who, in the absence of an assigned rector, was also in charge of St. Barnabas Church in Greensboro. St. Barnabas Church was the headquarters for missionary activity in the Piedmont Region.³

Bynum began his work at Company Shops in the spring of 1877. At the Diocesan Convention of that year, Bynum reported that a small but enthusiastic congregation was forming. Some worshipers came six or seven miles to attend services, and the number of communicants in the village itself was growing. The report for 1878 was even more encouraging. The influence of the Episcopal Church had spread throughout the community, causing Bynum to predict that the mission would in a few years "grow into a flourishing Parish." 5

The year 1879 was a momentous one for the mission at Company Shops. The Reverend Robert B. Sutton arrived from Greensboro to take charge of the work. The Reverend W. S. Bynum remained as his assistant. There were thirty-three members in the congregation of which fourteen were communicants. 6 Under the guidance of Sutton and Bynum, eight members of the congregation spearheaded a drive to construct a separate Episcopal Church in Company Shops. They were Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence S. Holt, Mrs. William E. Holt, Mrs. James A. Graham, Mrs. Kirkman, Mrs. John O. Gant, Mrs. James Murphey, and Mr. Erwin proved to be the most valuable member of the group. William A. Erwin. arranged for the donation of one and one-fourth acre lot on Webb Avenue by the North Carolina Railroad Company, and he successfully engineered a fund drive that enabled complete payment for the new church without indebtedness. Erwin was aided by Lawrence Holt who agreed to pay \$500 of the cost if another \$1,000 could be raised. The \$1,000 came almost totally from members of the small congregation.

By the late spring of 1879 the money had been raised and a builder had been contracted for an estimate of the cost. O A design was prepared by the Reverend J. A. Oertel, then rector of the Episcopal Church in Morganton, and submitted to Captain William H. Turrentine who was to supervise the construction. Oertel's design apparently was influenced by Rural Architecture, a pattern book of Gothic church architecture published by architect Richard Upjohn in 1852 and widely used, especially by small Episcopal congregations for whom it was intended. Hired to do the actual

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building was John Coble, a contractor well known in the community. Construction began in the fall and by May, 1880, the structure was nearly complete. All that remained was the installation of stained glass windows in the chancel and the small circular window in the front gable. They were designed by W. T. Gernhardt of Baltimore and were installed during the summer. $^{11}\,$ On September 19, 1880, the Right Reverend Theodore B. Lyman, Bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina, consecrated St. Athanasius Church, the name used since the building's completion. $^{12}\,$

The new church had a seating capacity of 150 and was valued at \$1,500. By May, 1881, the congregation had increased only to fifty with nineteen communicants. Nevertheless, the Reverend Dr. Sutton commented that the prospects of the mission were very encouraging. So encouraging, in fact, that he added, "We now perceive that a mistake has been made in not constructing a larger building." At the conclusion of his report to the Diocesan Convention, Sutton announced his departure from St. Athanasius with the statement, "I am happy to be able to surrender it to its former most efficient missionary, the Rev. W. S. Bynum, to whose efforts . . . is mainly due the erection of the church and its present prosperity." 13

The decade of the 1880s saw St. Athanasius Church grow in both membership and interest. Led by William A. Erwin and Lawrence Holt, the congregation initiated efforts to secure the services of a fulltime rector. In 1886, the Reverend William L. Reaney of Maryland accepted the duties of Rector of St. Athanasius Church. A year later, Lawrence Holt funded the building of a small building on the church lot, which served as the parish house and later as a parish school. Holt also procured the services of a teacher, Henry T. Martin, whose pupils were Holt's children and those of his sister, Mrs. John Q. Gant. Soon children of other church members attended and the school's curriculum closely resembled that of an academy. By 1889 the church had purchased a house on Morehead Street between Broad and Mebane streets for use as a rectory. The first rector to occupy the house was the Reverend Albert Rhett Walker whose family was sufficiently large enough to fill the structure.

Company Shops became known as the city of Burlington in 1887. ¹⁸ The population growth of the community was reflected in church membership. In 1892 St. Athanasius became a parish in the Diocese of North Carolina and the school became a parish school that operated until well into the twentieth century. About 1896, an addition was constructed to the one-room school giving it its present appearance. ¹⁹ As the Reverend Dr. Sutton had predicted, however, the congregation was outgrowing the church space. By late 1908 plans were being made to erect a new church on a lot donated by Lawrence S. Holt on Davis Street. The new lot adjoined the rear of St. Athanasius's lot, and in 1909 construction of the Church of the Holy Comforter began. Holt financed the new structure which was designed by New York architect Hobart Upjohn. Hobart B. Upjohn (1876-1949), grandson of Richard Upjohn, continued the family tradition of ecclesiastical architecture. Working in the Gothic Revival and Colonial Revival styles, he designed a large number of buildings including many churches and church additions. Several

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examples of his work are in North Carolina. The new church was completed in 1911 and consecrated by the Right Reverend Joseph Blount Cheshire, Bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina. 20 In 1926 the congregation dedicated the Parish House. In 1963 an addition to the Parish House and Great Hall was constructed.

When the congregation moved into the new church, St. Athanasius was used as a chapel for the deaf. The Reverend Mr. Fortune commuted from Durham for more than thirty years to give regular services in the old church. ²¹ In recent years, the deaf ministry, now performed on an irregular basis by the Reverend Barry Kramer, switched to the old parish school, known locally as the "hut." ²² Occassionally, special services are held in St. Athanasius, but most of the time, the old church stands as a historical monument to the establishment of the Episcopal Church in Alamance County. It is currently maintained and kept in repair by the Church of the Holy Comforter.

THE DESIGNER OF ST. ATHANASIUS

Johannes Adam Simon Oertel was born in Furth, Bavaria, on November 3, 1823. He was inclined towards a life with the church, and by the age of thirteen, he had begun preparations for work as a Lutheran missionary. Oertel, however, soon exhibited considerable artistic talent which earned for him the privilege of studying under J. M. Enzing-Muller, a Munich engraver. By the time he left for the United States in 1848, he was an accomplished artist.

Oertel set up a studio in his Newark, New Jersey, home and began an artistic career that carried through the first decade of the twentieth century. Though art was his first love, Oertel never abandoned his childhood dream of becoming a missionary. His feelings for the church found expression in his paintings, nearly all of which either depict religious dogmas or are embedded with religious symbolism. His first masterpiece became known as "The Rock of Ages" and earned him a national reputation. The most famous of his works was the "Redemption" series, a collection of four large paintings depicting the redemption of mankind. These Oertel donated to the University of the South along with a number of minor works. "The Walk to Gethsemane" hangs in the National Gallery in Washington, while the Washington Cathedral exhibits three of Oertel's better paintings: "It is Finished," "The Church Militant," and "The Burial of Moses."

Oertel's artistic genius lay in his ability to design forms, which was far superior to his use of color. This special talent earned him the privilege of designing the decorations for the House of Representatives in the United States Congress. Throughout his long career, he was frequently called upon to design and draw plans for churches, or parts thereof, the most notable being the woodwork for the reredos of the Cathedral at Quincy, Illinois. This achievement was even more remarkable because Oertel was eighty-four years old when he completed the designs.

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His determination not to abandon church work forced J. A. Oertel to enter a second career. In 1852 he became a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, probably as a result of his marriage to Julia Adelaide Forrey the year before. For about ten years he served as a lay reader in Westerly, Rhode Island. He received his deacons' orders in 1867 and began travels that ultimately covered numerous residences in seven different states and the District of Columbia. Many of his paintings hang in churches from New York to North Carolina.

Oertel's association with North Carolina began in 1869 when he moved to Lenoir to take charge of a small rural church and two missions. To help provide income, he established a school for girls in his home, but it did not prove as successful as he had hoped. He was elevated to the priesthood in 1871 and remained in Lenoir for five years thereafter. Oertel then decided to move to Morganton to become rector of the Episcopal Church there. After serving the North Carolina Diocese for nearly nine years, Oertel left for Florida. Among his major contributions to the state was his design for a new church at Company Shops, now Burlington, which he made in 1879. The little Gothic structure still stands on its original site.

Oertel lived to be eight-six years of age, continuing his art until his death. He died on December 9, 1909, at the home of a son in Vienna, Virginia.

FOOTNOTES

Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of North Carolina. <u>Journals of the Annual Conventions</u>, 1876-1881 (Goldsboro and Raleigh, 1876-1881), Journal of the Sixtieth Annual Convention, 1876, p. 115. Subsequent journals cited by number of convention, date, and appropriate page number.

The Reverend Lewis Schenck, "Episcopal Church Starts in 1876." The Daily Times-News (Burlington), May 9, 1949, hereinafter cited as Schenck, "Episcopal Church Starts in 1876." The Reverend Mr. Schenck used church records and Diocesan records to compile his historical sketch; therefore, it is far more reliable than most newspaper accounts. See also The Church of the Holy Comforter, Episcopal. Church Directory, 1975-1976 (typed booklet), 4, hereinafter cited as Church Directory.

 $\frac{3}{\text{Sixty-first Annual Convention, 1877}}$, pp. 107-110; and $\frac{\text{Sixty-third Annual Convention, 1879}}{\text{Convention, 1879}}$, p. 195.

⁴Sixty-first Annual Convention, 1877, p. 110.

⁵Sixty-second Annual Convention, 1878, p. 81.

 $\frac{6}{\text{Sixty-third Annual Convention, 1879}}$, p. 195; See also $\frac{\text{Sixty-fifth Annual Convention, 1881, p. 148.}}{\text{Convention, 1881, p. 148.}}$

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⁷Schenck, "Episcopal Church Starts in 1876." See also <u>Sixty-fourth Annual Convention</u>, 1880, p. 159.

⁸The lot was deeded to R. H. Battle, William R. Cox, and the Right Reverend Thomas Atkinson, officials of the North Carolina Diocese of the Episcopal Church in America, on March 19, 1880, after construction of the church had begun. Alamance County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Alamance County Courthouse, Graham, Deed Book 8, p. 44. See also Sixty-fourth Annual Convention, 1880, p. 159.

⁹Schenck, "Episcopal Church Starts in 1876."

¹⁰Sixty-third Annual Convention, 1879, p. 197.

¹¹ Sixty-fourth Annual Convention, 1880, p. 159. The completed building was dedicated in the late summer of 1880. See "Address of the Bishop" Sixty-fifth Annual Convention, 1881, pp. 69-70; and Schenck, "Episcopal Church Starts in 1876."

^{12&}quot;Address of the Bishop," <u>Sixty-fifth Annual Convention</u>, 1881, pp. 69-70. See also <u>The Gleaner</u> (Graham), September 15, 1880.

¹³Sixty-fifth Annual Convention, 1881, p. 148.

¹⁴Schenck, "Episcopal Church Starts in 1876."

¹⁵ Schenck, "Episcopal Church Starts in 1876"; Church Directory, 4; and Julian Hughes, "I Would Like To Be A Child Again--Just For One Night," The Daily Times-News, December 21, 1954, hereinafter cited as Hughes, "I Would Like To Be A Child Again."

¹⁶Schenck, "Episcopal Church Starts in 1876."

¹⁷Schenck, "Episcopal Church Starts in 1876."

¹⁸Burlington was not incorporated, however, until 1893. Private Laws of North Carolina, 1893, p. 64. See also William S. Powell, The North Carolina Gazetteer (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 76.

 $^{^{19}}$ Schenck, "Episcopal Church Starts in 1876"; and Hughes, " I Would Like To Be A Child Again."

²⁰Church Directory, 4; and Schenck, "Episcopal Church Starts in 1876."

²¹Schenck, "Episcopal Church Starts in 1876."

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Information supplied by the Office of the Reverend Roderick L. Reinecke, Rector of the Church of the Holy Comforter, March 10, 1978.

Sketch abstracted from Allen Johnson, Dumas Malone, and others (eds.), <u>Dictionary of American Biography</u> (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 20 bols., 1928; index and supplements), XIII, 630-631. For more detailed biography, see J. F. Oertel, <u>A Vision Realized: A Life Story of Rev. J. A. Oertel, D.D.</u> (Milwaukee: The Young Churchman Company, 1917).

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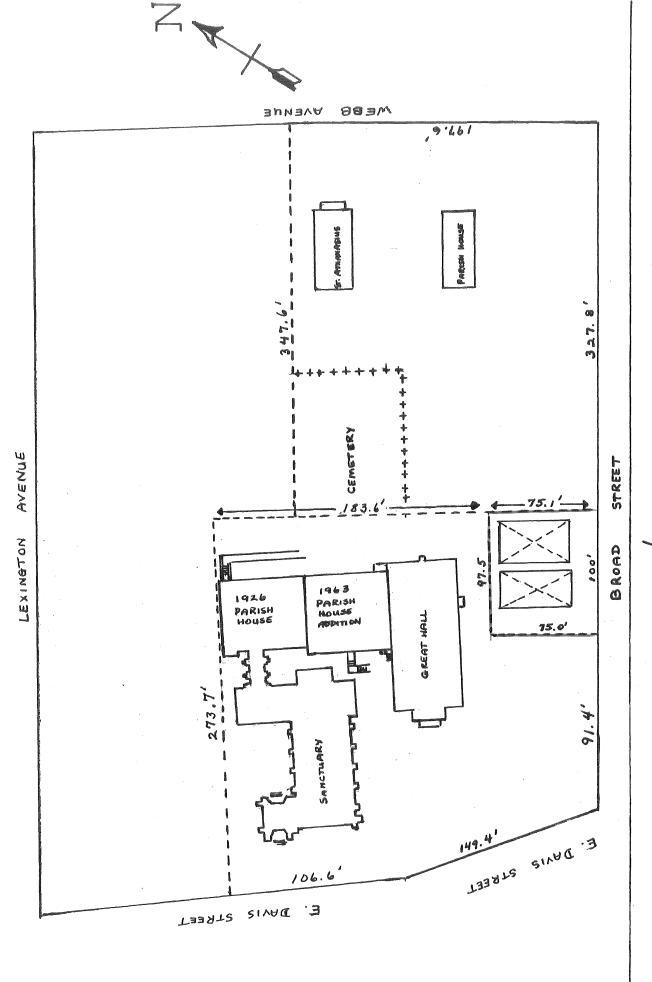
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A[1,7] [6] [4,0] [9,6] [3]	.9 9,5 0,4,0 DRTHING	B ZONE E	ASTING N	IORTHING
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G L L L L L		H		
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The area immediately arour	nd St. Athanasi	us and the Ch	urch of the Ho	ly Comforter in the
block bounded by East Davi		d Street, Eas	t Webb Avenue	, and Lexington
Avenue. See attached plat	J-	IES OVERI APPINO	STATE OR COUNTY	/ BOLINDA PIES
=1017/122 07/1720 7/WB 0001	WILLS FOR FROID EAT	ILO OVENEAL I INC	JOIATE ON COOKIT	BOONDAMES
STATE	CODE	COUNTY		CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY		CODE
Survey and Planning ORGANIZATION	Branch; Signif:	icance prepare		and David W. Parham, Cross, Research Bra
N. C. Division of Arch	ives and Histor	сĀ	TELEGILONI	
STREET & NUMBER 109 East Jones Street			TELEPHONI (919) 733-	
CITY OR TOWN			STATE	
Raleigh			North Carol	ina 27611
12 STATE HISTORIC PRI				
NATIONAL	D SIGNIFICANCE OF T STATI	E	LOCAL X	
As the designated State Historic Preserv hereby nominate this property for inclus		/\		
criteria and procedures set forth by the N		ogistoy dija cortiny t	ling it has been even	dated according to the
OTATE HIGTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER	CICALATURE	JAMM 101	m	
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER S	SIGNATURE	Vaa. CE	DATE.	
TITLE State Historic Pres	ervation Office	er	DATE	March 8, 1979
FOR NPS USE ONLY I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROF	PERTY IS INCLUDED I	N THE NATIONAL	REGISTER DATE	
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGI	STER			
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION				
	and a contract to the contract of the contract	pagagagagaga terlik dan pagagan bilang 1996 bilang dan pagagan dan kelabahan	 - 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1.	



EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE MOLY COMFORTER - BURLINGTON, N.C. ST. ATHANASIUS EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND PARISH HOUSE

GAREA OUTLINED IN RED IS NOT INCLUDED IN THIS MOMINATION

