

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Belhaven Commercial Historic District

Belhaven, Beaufort County, BF1145, Listed 4/24/2015

Nomination by Sybil Argintar

Photographs by Sybil Argintar, June 2014



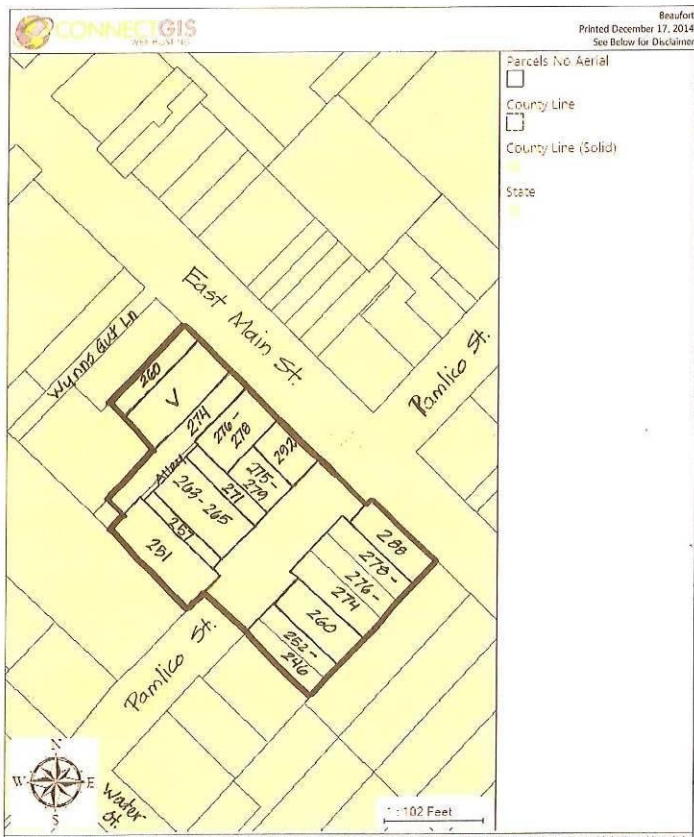
Pamlico Street, west side



Pamlico Street, east side



East Main Street, looking southeast



Beaufort County online map access is provided as a public service, as is, as available and without warranties, expressed or implied. Content published on this website is for informational purposes only and is not intended to constitute a legal record nor should it be substituted for the advice or services of industry professionals. The County of Beaufort and the Website Provider disclaim all responsibility and legal liability for the content published on this website. The user agrees that Beaufort County and its Assigns shall be held harmless from all actions, claims, damages or judgments arising out of the use of County data.

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
 Belhaven, NC
 Beaufort County

— National Register Boundary
 □ Contributing Resource
 V Vacant

12/17/2014 1:37 PM

Historic District Map

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	
<u>13</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>13</u>	<u>0</u>	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
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Commerce/Trade Sub: specialty store
Commerce/Trade warehouse
Commerce/Trade financial institution
Commerce/Trade office
Social meeting hall
Recreation/Culture theater

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Commerce/Trade Sub: specialty store
Commerce/Trade restaurant
Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Commercial Style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
roof rubber
walls brick
other wood

Narrative Description

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

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.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

ca. 1910 - 1965

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acree of Property 5.0 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1 17 352900 3933710
2

Zone Easting Northing
3
4
___ 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 Sybil H. Argintar, Preservation Planning Consultant

organization Southeastern Preservation Services date December 19, 2014

street & number 166 Pearson Drive telephone (828) 230-3773

city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28801

12. 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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state ___ zip code _____

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 1

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

Summary

The Belhaven Commercial Historic District is located in the town of Belhaven in northeastern Beaufort County, North Carolina, thirty miles east of the county seat of Washington. The historic district is roughly bounded by East Main Street on the north, and by the south, east, and west property lines of buildings lining both sides of Pamlico Street along with the west property line of 260 East Main Street. The buildings are oriented approximately forty-five degrees from true north, with Pamlico Street running roughly in a northeast-southwest orientation, and East Main Street running roughly in a northwest-southeast orientation. The district is flat topographically, with Pantego Creek, which feeds into the Pungo River, located southwest of Water Street. The commercial buildings in the district are constructed of brick with flat roofs, are set back uniformly, and are mostly one or two stories in height with one, three-story building located on the east side of Pamlico street. The district is contained within a small footprint of a half-block along both Pamlico and East Main Streets.

Outside of the district boundaries are historic commercial and residential buildings that no longer maintain historic integrity, along with vacant lots and modern buildings that post-date the district's period of significance. The commercial center of the downtown originally extended farther to the east and west along Main Street, but most of those buildings have been altered or demolished. There are scattered individual historic buildings along Main Street, but they are not contiguous to the district.

The district, which encompasses approximately five acres, incorporates within its boundaries thirteen buildings within a period of significance of ca. 1910 to 1965, forming an intact collection of buildings associated with Belhaven's commercial development during that period. The district overall has retained its architectural integrity, with most changes being the boarding up of upper story windows and modernization of storefronts, outside the period of significance, as businesses have changed through the years. The district consists of thirteen contributing buildings and one vacant lot currently in use as a pocket park.

Inventory List

Buildings are listed in alphabetical order by street name and numerical order by address. The district is oriented in a northeast to southwest direction, but for purposes of description the buildings in the district are described with those on Pamlico Street facing east and west and those on East Main Street facing north. Dating of buildings is based upon 1911, 1924, and 1933 Sanborn maps, along with documentary photos. If the original owner or long-time business occupant of the building is known, that name is given to the building. Otherwise, buildings are named commercial building. Contributing resources date to the period of significance and retain a good level of historic integrity.

East Main Street

260 East Main Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1920.

This one-story, painted brick building retains its original storefront configuration of a recessed entry and display windows. The transom is boarded over and the door is an aluminum-frame modern replacement as is the display glass framing. There is brick corbelling above the transom and at the cornice, and tile coping at the roofline. There is quoining on the pilaster on the east end of the building. There is a brick

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 2

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

addition to the rear, built after 1933, with a portion that has collapsed on the east side. The rear of the building is unpainted brick, with two small windows and a door opening. The building is freestanding, but originally was contiguous to a now-demolished building to the east (now a park). The building first appears on the 1924 Sanborn map. Both the 1924 and 1933 Sanborn maps indicate the building was in use as a store.

Vacant lot (park)

This narrow lot, which is located between 260 East Main Street and 274 East Main Street, is approximately sixty by one-hundred feet. It has been renovated in recent years into a pocket park, with a fountain, benches, and landscaping, and a winding concrete walkway which runs in a north-south direction.

274 East Main Street. Hardware Store. Contributing. ca. 1910.

The two-story, painted brick commercial building has notable window openings, with denticulated segmental arches and lintels joined by an arched band of protruding brick above, and concrete sills below. Above the storefront and at the cornice are rows of denticulated brick, with a decorative band of egg-and-dart-motif at the upper-most cornice. The bands on the lower portion of the cornice are simple indented molding. The upper façade is divided into bands of brick, with a recessed course every seven rows, and brick pilasters with quoins framing the east and west ends of the façade. The building has an altered storefront with modern materials including aluminum frame replacement door and window framing, replacement of original display windows with smaller ones and an awning. Window sash appear to be replacement one-over-one, with applied muntins. The west elevation of the building is partially painted, and there is a clear demarcation where the added rear section of the building begins. Towards the north end of this elevation there are several bricked-in arched window openings. On the rear elevation the small one-story wing which appears on all Sanborn maps is gone, with stucco where this feature was removed. There is a pitched roof at the rear, and a modern door on the west end. 1911, 1924, and 1933 Sanborn maps indicate the building was in use as a hardware store, with storage rooms to the rear.

276-278 East Main Street. O'Neal's Drug Store II. Contributing. ca. 1910.

This two-story, painted brick, commercial building has detailing very similar to 274 East Main Street in its windows and denticulated brick cornice work. It is likely the two buildings were built around the same time. The building is six bays on the second floor and has two distinct storefront bays on the first. The storefront on the east end retains its original carrara glass "O'Neal's" signage. Transoms are covered and awnings project out from both storefronts. Both storefronts retain their original configurations, but doors and display windows have replacement aluminum-framing. At the rear, windows have segmental arch openings, but have been retrofitted with new windows. There is a two-story, stuccoed addition at the southeast corner. This building connects to the building to the east, 292 East Main Street, through an interior door. The Sanborn map from 1911 indicates a bicycle repair shop was located in the west section, and a grocery in the east section. There was a one-story porch on the east section, on the facade. In 1924 a bank was in the west section, and a store in the east, but the earlier porch had been removed. In 1933 a drugstore, likely O'Neal's, was in the east section, and another store was in the west section.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 3

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

292 East Main Street. O'Neal's Drug Store. Contributing. ca. 1910.

This two-story commercial building wraps the southwest corner of East Main and Pamlico Streets. It has a corner entrance, three second story window bays facing east and five window bays facing north. Brick pilasters frame the corner entry and demarcate the edges of the building. Windows have elliptical arches with multi-light sash that are modern replacements. The corner entry has a pair of doors at the second level that likely opened onto a balcony. The existing doors are multi-light replacement French doors. The fanlight above the door appears to be original. The door at the first floor is an aluminum-frame replacement, and the transom is boarded over. The storefront facing east is comprised of six display windows above a brick bulkhead. A prismatic-glass transom spans the entire opening. The storefront facing north has ten display windows and the same transom as on the east. Both storefronts have later flat metal awnings. There is brick corbelling at the cornice, but otherwise the building is relatively plain. The rear of the building is unpainted brick with rectangular window openings. In 1911, the first floor was divided into two spaces, with a furniture store on the south and "D.G.B. & S" (dry goods) noted as occupying the north side. In 1924 and 1933 the first floor was one large open space with a retail store use noted. O'Neal's drug Store occupied this building beginning in 1931. It was opened by Prentice and Mae Leigh O'Neal. Prentice O'Neal had lived briefly in Belhaven as a young boy and returned there after he completed his pharmacy degree at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.¹ Until recently, the business still operated here, but has now moved out of downtown into a new building on the highway.

Pamlico Street

246-252 Pamlico Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1940.

The one-story brick Commercial Style building has minimal ornamentation except for the basket weave pattern brick and corbelling at the cornice and the full-height brick pilasters with corbelled caps which frame the building and divide the two storefronts. The storefront on the north end has had modern lapped siding inserted within the storefront opening, along with the addition of a modern door and windows. The aluminum-frame storefront on the south end appears to be from the 1960s, but within the original opening that is flush with the façade. The rear of the building has a flat-roof metal carport added on the south end, and there are arched widow openings on the rear elevation. On the north end, a fence divides the two sides and new windows have been retrofitted into arched openings. This building does not appear on the 1933 Sanborn map, but based on its appearance and construction details, it is likely that it was built ca. 1940.

251 Pamlico Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1955.

This two-story brick commercial building has an aluminum storefront with a recessed entry framed by display windows, but the brick of the bulkheads is different than the face of the building, indicating it was perhaps added later. There is a modern replacement door on the north end leading to the upstairs. There are three, metal frame, multi-light windows at the cornice level, and no other fenestration. The rear of the building is plain brick with no fenestration. This building does not appear on the 1933 Sanborn map, the

¹ Boyette, Charles O., et al. Belhaven: The First 100 Years. Town of Belhaven, 1999, p. 53.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 4

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

latest available for the town. From field investigation, it appears to date from the 1950s. The current owner has also indicated that it dates from the 1950s. Oral tradition indicates that this was a movie theater, which moved from across the street (260 Pamlico Street) to this building. Later occupants included Rose's Department Store, which is likely when the storefront was added. The movie theater function fits with the basically unfenestrated walls of the building.

257 Pamlico Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1920.

This two-story painted brick building has two segmental arched windows in the upper story, with replacement sash. The single storefront consists of a door on the south end and a large, fixed display window. The door is a modern replacement, all transoms have been boarded over, and there is a cloth awning. The building is plain and unadorned, and according to the current owner, the building was not truncated, and there was never any corbelling or decorative brick work at the cornice. The rear of the building has an added deck and stairs leading to an apartment entrance on the second floor. The 1924 and 1933 Sanborn maps note that this building was in use as an office.

260 Pamlico Street. Cameo Theater. Contributing. ca. 1915.

This three-story brick building is the tallest building in the district. The first floor retains its original storefront configuration of a recessed entry flanked by display windows, with a door to the upper floors in the north bay. There is denticulated corbelling above the storefront and above the door to the upper floors. The second and third stories both have six bays. On the façade all windows are boarded over, with a continuous concrete sill on the second and third floors. There are denticulated segmental arches and a protruding band of contrasted tan brick arches above on the second floor. On the third floor, more elaborate brick drip hood moldings and a string course create a continuous band across the upper windows. Above the third story are two recessed panels, currently stuccoed. Tan brick quoins frame the building on the north and south ends of the façade, from the second story to the roofline. The remaining elevations of the building are much more plain, with segmental arch window openings on the third floor only, all of which are boarded over. At the rear, there is a central segmental arched door flanked by arched windows on the first floor, and windows above. Like the building at 275-279 Pamlico Street, this building does not appear on the 1911 Sanborn map, but was likely built soon after, since it is similar in detailing to the group of ca. 1910 to 1915 buildings located elsewhere in the district. The Cameo Theater was located in this building from the 1920s through the mid-1950s, when it moved across the street (251 Pamlico Street). In the 1920s, adult movie tickets were forty cents, and children were admitted for twelve cents. Adults could attend a home talent minstrel show on the second floor. The 1924 Sanborn map notes that there were club rooms on the third floor. The 1933 map indicates there was a Lodge Hall on the third floor, along with movies. It was also noted that there were iron posts and concrete floor on the first level.

263-265 Pamlico Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1920.

This one-story, painted stucco building has two intact storefront bays, each with a central recessed entry framed by display windows with stuccoed bulkheads. Transoms have etched glass designs, from post-2008, and there is a flat metal awning over each bay. The only decoration on the building is corbelling and two saw-tooth courses at the cornice. The rear of the building is stuccoed and has new multi-light windows, a central door, and a wooden pergola. The 1911 Sanborn map indicates there was an earlier

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 5

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

two-story building on this site. The existing building first appears on the 1924 map as one space, with iron interior posts, and concrete floor. These posts, along with the original pressed tin ceiling, are still intact in the building. The 1933 map notes that the south half of the building was in use for feed and cotton storage and the north side was a store.

271 Pamlico Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1910.

This narrow, two-bay, two-story red brick commercial building is framed by full height brick pilasters with quoins and corbelled caps. Windows have decorative jack arches, with one-over-one replacement sash with added muntins. There is corbelling and denticulated brick at the cornice and above the storefront. The storefront retains its original configuration of a central recessed entry framed by display windows, with an exposed I-beam with metal rosettes. The door is an aluminum-frame replacement, as are the display windows. The bulkheads are stuccoed. An awning projects over the storefront area. The rear of the building is also framed by brick flues, with two segmental-arch windows on the second floor. One is boarded over, the other has a two-over-two wooden sash window. The first floor is also two bays with a blocked-in segmental arch window and a door opening. The 1911 Sanborn map indicates a drug store was located here, with the 1924 and 1933 maps indicating a store. Floors were noted as being concrete on the first floor.

274-278 Pamlico Street. Commercial Building. Contributing ca. 1910.

This one-story, painted brick, commercial building has a modern full-width pent-roof awning and four storefronts of varying widths. Field investigation indicates this is one building, since there are no breaks in the brickwork on either the front or the rear. The building has minimal ornamentation other than denticulated corbelling at the cornice and recessed brick panels. All doors and windows are modern aluminum-frame replacements. The rear of the building has several segmental arch door and window openings, most of which are bricked in, with some later door openings cut in. This building appears on the 1911 Sanborn map as having four separate stores, with the north and south ends of the building each divided into two sections. From the north end, the uses included a clothing store, a restaurant, a grocery, and a tailor. In 1924, the building was shown as having three retail stores, with one large one on the north, and two smaller on the south. The building appears as two units on the 1933 map.

275-279 Pamlico Street. Commercial Building. Contributing. ca. 1915.

This two-story painted brick building has eight window bays on the second floor and two storefronts. Windows have segmental, denticulated arches with a projecting segmental arch course of brick, detailed much the same as 274 East Main Street and 276-278 East Main street. Sills are concrete and windows are replacement one-over-one with muntin strips added. There is a saw-tooth course at the cornice with corbelling above. Storefronts have been altered with replacement aluminum-frame doors and display windows. There is a door on the south end to the second story, a modern replacement. All transoms are boarded over. The rear of the building is six bays wide, with all openings blocked in. A former door opening led to a two-story fire escape. There is a one-story concrete block addition at the southwest corner of the rear elevation. The 1924 and 1933 Sanborn maps note there are wood posts in the building. This building was not built as of the 1911 Sanborn map, but with its similarity to the two on East Main Street, it is likely that it was built soon after that. Use of the building was noted as a store.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 6

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

288 Pamlico Street. T. R. Gibbs Pharmacy. Contributing. ca. 1910.

Set at the southeast corner of Pamlico and East Main Streets, this two-story, painted, running bond, brick commercial building has a corner entry like the building across the street at 292 East Main Street. The corner is framed by pilasters at the first floor, and windows are a mixture of original and replacement one-over-one with splayed lintels and concrete sills. There is a notable pressed metal cornice with heavy brackets and modillion blocks. Architrave molding delineates the first floor from the second in the storefront area. On the north elevation, there are eight window bays on the second floor, and two doors on the first. The configuration of the corner entry and the display windows on either side are intact, but the transom windows are boarded over. Storefront doors and display windows are modern replacements, with cloth awnings. The rear elevation of the building has three bays on each floor, with altered door openings on both levels at the south end, and windows in the center and the north end. A smaller window has been retrofitted into an original door opening at the south end of the second story. The 1911 Sanborn map notes this building was in use as a drug store, likely the T. R. Gibbs Pharmacy, which it remained through at least 1924 (Sanborn map), and was noted as a store on the 1933 map.² As shown on the Sanborn maps, originally there were stairs at the rear of the building, where it appears there was a door on the south end, which is now bricked in. Documentary photos display drug store signage and a busy corner in the 1920s.

² Ibid, p. 48.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 7

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

Statement of Significance Summary

The Belhaven Commercial Historic District in Beaufort County, North Carolina, with a local level of significance, meets National Register Criterion A for its important association with the commercial development of Belhaven during the first six and one-half decades of the twentieth century. The district encompasses within its boundaries buildings that housed banks, drug stores, general stores, and movie theaters, all of which served the community as the primary commercial center until more recently when businesses began to move out of the core downtown to the nearby highways. The district also meets National Register Criterion C as a significant collection of commercial buildings, many of which date from the first two decades of the twentieth century and exhibit elaborate brick detailing. A 1940s building at 246-252 Pamlico Street is an example of the Commercial Style. The Belhaven Commercial Historic District has a period of significance from ca. 1910, the date of construction of the oldest resource in the district, to ca. 1965, covering the period of time when the business district played an important role in the commercial and economic vitality of Belhaven. The district retains historic and architectural integrity, and while the district remained as the commercial core of the town after 1965, that time period is not of exceptional significance.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Developmental History/Historic Background and Commercial Context

Founded in 1705, Beaufort County, North Carolina, was formed from Bath County, founded in 1696. By the late 1700s Beaufort County had a population of 5,452 white settlers and 1,622 black slaves. The county, located in the southeastern part of the state, is one of the largest counties in North Carolina. The Pungo River, one of the main rivers in the county, has been the impetus for great economic development in the region, including ventures such as commercial fishing, shipping, ship building, lumber mills, and mercantile trade which began as early as the eighteenth century with Bath, and continuing into the late eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries with Washington, the county seat. Lumbering and lumber mills in particular thrived in the county from the 1890s through the 1950s, serving as the biggest industry in the county. Sailing ships were built in Washington, beginning in the early nineteenth century, along with Bath, the oldest incorporated town in North Carolina.³ When the railroad arrived in 1886 in Belhaven (then called Jack's Neck), the rail and water transportation connection created an economic boom.⁴ Tourism in the late nineteenth century also played a role in the development of the county, with many steam ships bringing visitors to the area and its beautiful coastal towns.⁵ In the 1930s, many of the lumber mills closed and the lumber industry consolidated in the mid-1950s. Farming gained in economic importance in the 1930s and 1940s, with cotton, soybeans, corn, and tobacco being grown.⁶

³Sumner, Jim. "Washington Historic District." National Register nomination, 1978, p. 8-3.

⁴<http://www.norfolksouthernhs.org/briefNSHistory.html> "Brief History of the First Norfolk Southern Railroad". Accessed December 15, 2014.

⁵ Van Camp, Louis. Beaufort County, North Carolina. Arcadia Publishing Company, 2000, p. 7.

⁶ Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 8

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

Belhaven, first settled in the 1880s as the fishing and farming community of Jack's Neck, was officially incorporated on March 6, 1899, at the height of the county's economic prosperity. The town was called Belle Port in 1891, then Belle Haven for a short time, before it was incorporated as Belhaven.⁷ A system of government with a mayor and five commissioners was set up, meeting for the first time in May 1900. The first mayor of the town was J. W. Lupton. The town immediately levied a tax to repair streets and build sidewalks.⁸

Located where Pantego and Pungo Creeks join into the Pungo River, part of the intracoastal waterway, and only ten miles from Pamlico Sound, Belhaven was situated geographically to thrive, with its railroad and water transportation system linkage. In 1886, the Albemarle and Pantego Railroad was under construction, set into motion by the establishment of the John L. Roper Lumber Company, founded by Belhaven resident John A. Wilkinson.⁹ The Albemarle and Pantego Railroad, completed before 1891, when it became part of the Norfolk and Southern Railroad Company, began north of Belhaven, at Mackey's Ferry (now Mackeys), and ended at Belhaven, with water transport out of Belhaven to the sound. The train route from Mackeys connected to larger routes to the west.¹⁰ Belhaven resident John A. Wilkinson was vice president of the Norfolk and Southern Railroad Company in 1891, and the railroad owned the steam ship *Haven Belle* which ran in and out of Belhaven. The lumber industry continued to thrive in the first decade of Belhaven's founding history, from 1899 through 1909, as did agriculture, fishing, and oyster packing houses. The town began to gain a reputation in the first decade of the twentieth century as a resort community, with many visitors arriving in the town by steam ship and staying in the hotels that were located in the downtown. Many businesses opened to support the growing local and tourist population, and many homes were built by steam ship captains. A barber shop, a hotel, a post office, a store on Water Street which provided supplies for oystermen, and a wharf with a freight house were some of the businesses established in this decade.

By 1900, the town had grown from seventy-eight in 1890 to 700 people.¹¹ The proximity to the water helped Belhaven to grow. A major business, which began operating ca. 1900, was the Old Dominion Steamship Company which operated two passenger and several freight lines into Belhaven, apparently as a port-of-call of the Delaware-based company. In 1901, the Belhaven Marine Railway was established, and in 1903 the Norfolk and Southern Railroad Company built a depot.¹² The Roper Lumber Company produced 124,000 feet of lumber per day, employing 900 individuals, the majority of whom were African

⁷ Bullock, Marshall. "Belhaven City Hall." National Register nomination, 1980, p. 8-1 and Boyette, Charles O., et al. Belhaven: The First 100 Years. Town of Belhaven, 1999, p. 2.

⁸ Belhaven: The First 100 Years, p. 2.

⁹ Ibid, p. 8.

¹⁰ <http://www.norfolksouthernhs.org/briefNShistory.html>; Belhaven: The First 100 Years, p. 8 and "About Belhaven From Time to Time", *Beaufort-Hyde News*, September 18, 1975.

¹¹ Belhaven: The First 100 Years, p. 8.

¹² Marine railways were not railroads, but were short tracks which extended from the shoreline to the water and were used to move boats onto land to undertake repair or maintenance of boat hulls below the waterline. They were essential to the rail and water transportation industry.

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/marine%20railway>

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 9

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

American. The Norfolk and Southern Railroad shipped lumber, fish, cotton, corn and building materials out of Belhaven.¹³ By 1903 there were three hotels and boarding houses, two architects, one barber, one baker, three bicycle dealers, three butchers, one carriage manufacturer, two builders, three dry goods stores, one ice house, one jeweler, one druggist, three oyster dealers, three fish and oyster factories, six general merchants, two millineries, eight retail grocers, five ship builders, one telegraph office, one telephone exchange, and one wholesale grocer in the town.¹⁴ In 1905, the Bank of Belhaven opened at the corner of Main and Pamlico Streets, and the Interstate Cooperage Company, a subsidiary of Standard Oil, opened for business in 1906, making barrels for oil transport.¹⁵ Fred L. Voliva started a hardware store on Pamlico Street in 1906, supposedly the first brick building built downtown.¹⁶ By 1907 the population of Belhaven had again increased, with 2,512 residents.¹⁷ By the end of its first decade as an incorporated town, Belhaven was home to six lumber companies, employing several hundred workers.¹⁸

The second decade of Belhaven's development (1910 – 1919) was one of the busiest in terms of new businesses and new construction in the town. This decade included, in 1910, the construction of the city hall, a public dock, the fire department within the city hall building, and a power plant.¹⁹ As the population grew, so did the number of businesses. Businesses serving the population by 1911 included one bank, four doctors, five drug stores, two attorneys, one insurance agent, seventeen general merchants, five fish and oyster companies, two wholesale grocers, two hotels, and eleven manufacturers. Some of these included the John L. Roper Lumber Company; Woodside Lumber Company; Belhaven Lumber Company; Interstate Cooperage; J. A. Wilkinson ice, grist, and cotton gin; Belhaven Pine Oil Works, J. J. White and W. O. Jarvis Ship Railways; Belhaven Overall and Shirt Manufacturing Company; Belhaven Bottling Works; and Tooty Milling Company (grist mill).²⁰

In 1913, a powerful hurricane hit Belhaven, resulting in over \$350,000 in damage. All houses along the Pungo River were destroyed, and there were reports of over five feet of water in many shops.²¹ The town recovered, and by 1915 there were one bank, three doctors, two drug stores, three attorneys, three insurance agents, forty-nine general merchants, three fish and oyster houses, two wholesale grocers, four hotel and boarding houses, three livery stables, ten manufacturers, two jewelers, one newspaper (*Belhaven Citizen*), two brokers, one auto garage, one undertaker, one baker, three blacksmiths, and one amusement company in business.²² In four years, from 1911 to 1915, the commercial district of Belhaven had expanded rapidly, with most businesses from 1911 remaining and many new businesses opening. A

¹³ *Belhaven: The First 100 Years*, pp. 10 – 12.

¹⁴ *North Carolina Yearbook*. Raleigh, North Carolina: *The News and Observer*, 1903, pp.93 – 101.

¹⁵ *Belhaven: The First 100 Years*, p. 12.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 26.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 12.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 23.

²⁰ *North Carolina Yearbook*. Raleigh, North Carolina: *The News and Observer*, 1911, p. 90

²¹ *Belhaven: The First 100 Years*, p. 23.

²² *North Carolina Yearbook*, 1915, pp. 105-106.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 10

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

few were lost, possibly due to hurricane damage, but overall the trend was towards business expansion and growth in the town. Transportation in the town in this time was still primarily horse and buggy or bicycle, but automobiles were beginning to make an appearance. In 1917 the town bought a generating plant, and downtown was the center of social activity. Moonlight sailing on the river, followed by dances at the Community House, was a popular activity for locals and tourists.²³

From 1920 to 1929, the fishing industry in Belhaven expanded tremendously. The W. G. Ruark Company, processing crabs, grew to be the largest processor in the United States, employing 225 workers, and running six fishing boats.²⁴ August 28, 1928 marked the opening of the last link in the waterway for sailing from Pamlico Sound to Boston along the Intracoastal Waterway, and the town of Belhaven became a major stopping point and port along the Waterway for both commercial and passenger vessels.²⁵

The 1930s in Belhaven, as in the rest of the country, witnessed a slowing down of the economy in the midst of the Depression years. Businesses in 1932 included some companies which advertised in the local newspaper, Belhaven Fish & Oyster, Cash Grocery, Riddick & Windley Hardware, O'Neal's Drug Store, Guaranty Bank & Trust Company, and Belhaven Candy Company. A new business which opened in 1939 was the Beaufort-Hyde Motor Company (selling Ford automobiles), and it continued to operate, but likely on a smaller scale due to the difficult economic times.²⁶ In total, in 1932, there were one barber shop, a pool parlor, two restaurants, one Chevrolet agent, one optician, eleven merchants, one undertaker, two auto garages, one bakery, two wholesale merchants, a saw mill, two drug stores, three attorneys, two filling stations, two presses, five groceries, one jeweler, one theater, one seed store, three doctors, one department store, one insurance agency, one dentist, one general store, one butcher, and one printer.²⁷

Some of the major industries, including Roper Lumber Company, closed in the mid-1930s, but the crab, oyster, fish, and hunting industries continued to thrive.²⁸ The Cameo Theater, operating on Pamlico Street (260 Pamlico Street) served as an inexpensive source of entertainment, with adult tickets at forty cents and children at twelve cents. The Dr. Pepper Shop, a local soda and sandwich shop, sold a plate of food for fifty cents.²⁹ Prentice O'Neal opened O'Neal's Drug Store in 1931.³⁰ Two of three banks in operation in the 1920s in Belhaven, Farmers Bank and Bank of Belhaven, apparently closed, with only one bank, Guaranty Bank & Trust Company, operating in the 1930s.³¹ In the 1930s, the number and types of

²³ Belhaven: The First 100 Years, p. 24.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

²⁷ Directory of Beaufort County, North Carolina, 1932. Located at BMH Regional Library, vertical files. Washington, North Carolina.

²⁸ Belhaven: The First 100 Years, p. 12 and p. 49. John A. Wilkinson, founder of Roper Lumber Company, was killed in an automobile accident on February 6, 1932.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

³¹ North Carolina Yearbook. Raleigh, North Carolina: *The News and Observer*, 1925, p. 35 and 1937, p. 42.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 11

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

businesses had diminished from what was in the town in its prime development years, but other types of businesses had opened.

While the 1930s generally were hard for many families, downtown was still a busy place on Saturdays, with shops often staying open until midnight. The town built a log community building and park in 1935, with fish fries often being held on the grounds.³² The Belhaven Electric Plant opened on September 7, 1936, and a new school, funded by the Works Progress Administration, opened in the town in 1937, along with a new public library.³³

Through the 1940s downtown Belhaven continued to be the center of commerce and social life for the community. Businesses included a theater, drug stores, a hardware store, five and dimes, restaurants, and department stores. Additionally there were two sawmills and two seafood canning plants in the town. World War II impacted the town's economy in a positive way, with the seafood industry in particular experiencing a period of expansion and growth due to military food supply orders.³⁴ Blue Channel Corporation, a crab meat packing plant, purchased land in Belhaven in the 1940s to open a second plant (the first was located in Beaufort, South Carolina). The business employed 125 workers and produced 2,500 cases of crab meat per week.³⁵ Hodges Oyster Company opened in the early 1940s, and soon became one of the largest oyster packing companies in the world, operating seventeen boats.³⁶ Some businesses slowed down during the war years, but once the war ended, in the late 1940s, several new businesses opened, including Jones & Snell Equipment Company, Voliva Furniture Company, Colonial Grocery, Tots and Teens, and Griffins Watch Repair Shop.³⁷ Additionally, River Forest Manor, formerly the John A. Wilkinson House, opened, serving locals and visitors meals and providing lodging for the tourists.³⁸

The lumber industry in Belhaven continued to thrive in the 1940s. It was also a time when many social clubs were formed including the American Legion Women's Auxiliary in 1946, the Pungoan Book Club in 1940, and the Matcha Pungo Garden Club in 1949, whose members focused upon beautification projects in the town. The Pungo District Hospital opened in 1947. A marina was built in the 1940s in Belhaven, providing a stopping point for private yachts and commercial ships along the Intracoastal Waterway.

³² Belhaven: The First 100 Years, p. 53. It is not known if the community building was built using Federal community assistance funds.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 49, 51.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 12

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

The late 1940s and the 1950s were considered to be the “era of prosperity” for the town.³⁹ A *Washington Daily News* article dated August 8, 1951, noted that Belhaven was the “metropolis of the Pungo River region.”⁴⁰ The economic vitality of the downtown was further strengthened by the formation of the Belhaven Chamber of Commerce in 1952.⁴¹ Belhaven by this time had become the second largest town in the county, after the county seat of Washington, with a population of 3,290. It had become the distribution point for oil, food, building supplies, and seafood. There were seven groceries, three clothing stores, two furniture stores, two car dealers, two dry cleaners, two drug stores, five doctors, one dentist, one wholesale distributor, one newspaper, one farm equipment store, one bank, one laundromat, one movie theater, one convenience store, railroad and bus stations, a barber shop, a beauty shop, two sawmills, and several plumbers and electricians. Residents of surrounding communities would come to Belhaven to shop on Saturdays.⁴² There were three major hurricanes, Connie, Hazel, and Diane, that hit Belhaven in 1954 and 1955, but as before, after each storm the town cleaned itself up, buildings were repaired, and the community continued to thrive.⁴³

With Belhaven still serving as an active seaport, and with most businesses still located in downtown, the early 1960s were considered “the age of the young and the restless” and optimism remained high.⁴⁴ The Belhaven Memorial Museum opened in 1962, and soon moved to the second floor of the original city hall building.⁴⁵ Downtown remained as a central focus for the community, with new businesses continuing to locate there. Rose’s Department Store, which was the town’s largest department store in the 1960s, located in downtown. The structure burned in 1969. The store was re-built, however, in the building that now houses an Ace Hardware Store, outside of the historic district.⁴⁶ The annual Fourth of July parade continued in the downtown, as it does today.⁴⁷ Three major fires occurred in the downtown in the late 1960s, the Belhaven Fish & Oyster Company, located on Water Street, bordering the downtown, south of the historic district, in 1967 (later re-built); Rose’s Store on October 11, 1969, and on November 16, 1969 one at the Belhaven Manufacturing Company (also later re-built).

Downtown Belhaven, as noted above, served as the commercial center of the town through most of the twentieth century. Businesses located there beginning in the 1910s, and expanded and thrived, with new commercial ventures locating there through the years. The existing buildings in the historic district serve as a reminder of the importance of the commercial core to the town. Second only to the county seat of Washington, Belhaven’s commercial center served the local and the visiting population of the town.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 80.

⁴⁰ Ibid. This article is referenced in *Belhaven: The First 100 Years*, as noted.

⁴¹ <http://www.pamlico.com/belhaven.html> “Belhaven, North Carolina”. Accessed January 9, 2015.

⁴² *Belhaven: The First 100 Years*, p. 80.

⁴³ Barnes, Jay. *North Carolina’s Hurricane History*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1998, p. 19, p. 106, and p. 110.

⁴⁴ *Belhaven: The First 100 Years*, p. 95.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid, pp. 95 and 102.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 102.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 13

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

Through the years, commercial buildings located primarily along Main Street and north Pamlico Street have been demolished and replaced by new buildings, or altered. Some of the alterations were in keeping with the trends towards modernization of historic buildings in the 1970s and 1980s and later, but some were likely lost due to severe damage from hurricanes in the 1950s and fires in the 1960s. It was only in recent years that businesses began to locate further out of town, closer to the highways, with additional competition from strip shopping malls located closer to major crossroads. Downtown is currently part of the Small Towns Main Street Program, and businesses are once again locating in historic buildings in the commercial core as the town experiences new economic opportunities within its historic downtown setting.

Architecture Context

The architecture within the Belhaven Commercial Historic District spans a construction period of approximately forty-five years. Many of the earliest commercial buildings in Belhaven were wood frame. It was not until the turn of the twentieth century, that more substantial brick buildings were constructed. Local historians note that the first brick building was built in 1906, but this has not been confirmed, since the first available Sanborn maps for the town date from 1911.⁴⁸ Buildings within the district are primarily one and two stories tall, with many of the earlier buildings exhibiting similar decorative brick detailing that adds to the distinctive architectural character of the district. Two of the best examples of this are the buildings located at 274 (Hardware Store, ca. 1910) and 276-278 East Main Street (O'Neal's Drug Store II, ca. 1910), with their denticulated segmental arched window surrounds and façade cornices, and on 274 East Main Street, brick quoining on the facade. The only three-story building in the district, the ca. 1915 Cameo Theater (260 Pamlico Street), exhibits many of these same features, including denticulated corbelling above the storefront, denticulated segmental arches at all window openings, brick drip moldings on the third floor window openings, and brick quoins in a contrasting tan brick on the north and south ends of the façade. The T. R. Gibbs Pharmacy (288 Pamlico Street, ca. 1910) has a notable pressed metal cornice with heavy brackets and modillion blocks. Later buildings, dating from ca. 1920, are more plain in appearance, with the exception being the commercial building at 260 East Main Street, which, like some of the earlier buildings, has brick quoining on the east end of the building, and corbelling at the cornice.

The only Commercial Style building in the district, the one-story 246-252 Pamlico Street, ca. 1940, has almost no ornamentation on the façade with the exception of a basket weave brick pattern and corbelling at the cornice. This building is typical of the style, popular in America from 1900 to 1930 and later. Generally a reaction to the more ornate Italianate, Queen Anne or Romanesque Revival styles of the late nineteenth century, it maintained the basic commercial form of one or more storefront bays on the first floor and windows on the upper levels, but simplified the details. Ornamentation, if any, usually consisted of contrasting construction materials, such as concrete and tiles, and some patterned brick on facades. Buildings could be one, two, or three stories in height.

⁴⁸ Belhaven: The First 100 Years, p. 26.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 14

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

Belhaven's Commercial Historic District is much smaller than the commercial core of downtown Washington, the county seat. Buildings in Washington do display some similar styles and many date to the same time as those in Belhaven. However, they generally tend to have more elaborate brick detailing than those in Belhaven. They were built over a longer period of time, ranging from the mid-nineteenth-century Greek Revival style to the early-twentieth-century Neoclassical.⁴⁹ This would be typical of a county seat, since the governmental, banking, and commercial center of the county would tend to support greater wealth and more elaborately designed, substantial buildings.

While Belhaven's buildings overall are not as elaborate in design as many of those in the county seat of Washington, it does retain a significant number of notable buildings. Belhaven was a thriving community during the period of significance, and several elaborate brick buildings, along with those with more plain designs, were constructed in this time period.

⁴⁹ Sumner, Jim. "Washington Historic District". National Register nomination, 1978, p. 7-9.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number 9, 10 Page 15

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

Section 9 - Bibliography

Barnes, Jay. North Carolina's Hurricane History. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Beaufort-Hyde News. "About Belhaven, From Time to Time". September 18, 1975.

Boyette, Charles O., et al. Belhaven: The First 100 Years. Belhaven, North Carolina, 1999.

Bullock, Marshall. "Belhaven City Hall". National Register nomination. 1980.

Directory of Beaufort County, North Carolina. Washington, D.C.: H. P. Webster Publishing, 1932.

Ehringhaus, Mrs. J. C. B. North Carolina Almanac and State Industrial Guide. Raleigh, North Carolina: Almanac Publishing Company, 1953.

Historic Property Survey Files. Belhaven, North Carolina. North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources. Archives and History. Located in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The News and Observer. North Carolina Yearbooks. 1901, 1093, 1905, 1907, 1909, 1911, 1915, 1925, 1937. Raleigh, North Carolina.

Sanborn Map Company, Belhaven, North Carolina maps. 1911, 1924, 1933.

Van Camp, Louis. Beaufort County, North Carolina. Arcadia Publishing Company, 2000.

Section 10

Boundary Description

The boundary of the historic district is shown on the accompanying Beaufort County tax map by a heavy black line, at a scale of one inch equals 102 feet.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the district include the largest concentration of contiguous contributing properties dating from the period of significance, ca. 1910 through 1965.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number Photos Page 16 Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Beaufort County, North Carolina

Belhaven Commercial Historic District
Photographs

The following information applies to all photographs, except where noted.

Name of property: Belhaven Commercial Historic District
 Belhaven, Beaufort County, North Carolina
Photographer: Sybil H. Argintar
Date of photos: June 2014
Location of digital negatives: North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office

1. Streetscape, East Main Street, view southwest
2. Streetscape, East Main Street, view southeast
3. Pocket park, East Main Street, view south
4. Streetscape, Pamlico Street, view southwest
5. Streetscape, Pamlico Street, view southeast
6. Streetscape, Pamlico Street, view northeast