

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 any 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 Morehead City Municipal Building

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 202 South Eighth Street not for publication N/A

city or town Morehead City vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Carteret code 031 zip code 28557

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide X locally. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey A. Crow SHPD 6/23/04  
Signature of certifying official Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State or 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 commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

_____ 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): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Morehead City Municipal Building  
Name of Property

Carteret County, NC  
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	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>5</u>	<u>2</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: GOVERNMENT Sub: city hall  
GOVERNMENT fire station  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: GOVERNMENT Sub: correctional facility  
VACANT/NOT IN USE  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Italian Renaissance  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick  
 roof asphalt  
 walls stucco  
 other \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**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

Politics/Government

**Period of Significance**

1926-1954

**Significant Dates**

1926

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Gladding, R. D., consulting engineer

Jones Brothers Builders

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

Morehead City Municipal Building  
Name of Property

Carteret County, NC  
County and State

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### 10. Geographical Data

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Acreeage of Property less than one acre

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

Zone Easting Northing  
1 18 343120 3843160  
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.)

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Beth Keane

organization Retrospective date April, 2004

street & number 2001 Metts Avenue telephone 910-815-1096

city or town Wilmington state NC zip code 28403

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### 12. Additional Documentation

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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)

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### Property Owner

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

name Town of Morehead City

street & number 706 Arendell Street telephone 252-726-5848

city or town Morehead City state NC zip code 28557-4234

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**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.

## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The 1926 Morehead City Municipal Building is a rare North Carolina example of the Florentine Renaissance style. One of Morehead City's most distinctive landmarks, the two-story building is situated on the southwest corner of Evans and Eighth streets, one block north of Bogue Sound and one block south of Arendell Street, Morehead City's principal commercial corridor. A two-story firehouse with a fire engine entrance facing Evans Street was included as a rear wing of the Municipal Building. A level manicured lawn with mature landscaping softens the architectural lines of the building on the east and north sides. Several monuments are strategically placed in front of and on the north side of the building. A narrow alley runs behind the firehouse, while a large parking lot is situated on the south side of the east-facing building. The elegant edifice was built by Jones Brothers Builders of Wilson, North Carolina, with R. D. Gladding acting as the consulting engineer.

### 1. Municipal Building

1926

### Contributing Building

The two-story brick Municipal Building with a low-hipped roof has a five-bay symmetrical façade. Pale yellow stucco walls contrast strikingly with limestone trim, including quoins, molded window surrounds, and a scrolled broken-arch pediment with a cartouche over the entrance. Molded limestone trim also encircles three sides of the building at the water table line and beneath the first-level windows.

The center three bays of the facade are treated as an in-antis porch, with two stone, full-height, engaged Ionic columns supporting a simple entablature that contains a frieze inscribed with the words, "MUNICIPAL BUILDING." Limestone quoins flank the in-antis porch. The upper level of the center section is defined at the base by a molded stone dentil course topped by free-standing rinceau with rosettes, also executed in stone. Above each of the three bays is a bank of windows, each with three nine-over-nine sash windows. The original nine-over-nine window sash have been replaced by metal sash and the decorative metal grid which originally covered the upper windows has been removed. Two recessed quatrefoil blind tracery designs are centered above the first-story outermost windows. Wide steps illuminated by ornate cast-iron lamps lead to the entrance. The original doors have been replaced with solid glass double-leaf doors in aluminum frames. The original transom has also been replaced with a glass panel inscribed with the word "POLICE" in capital letters.

The north elevation of the Municipal Building is three bays wide and faces Evans Street. Five steps flanked by an iron hand railing lead to a former central entrance. Although the entrance has been blocked on the interior by an added wall, the original two-panel, double-leaf wooden door with a metal grille over the transom is maintained on the exterior. The segmental broken-arch pediment over the door is decorated with a cartouche with a smiling male visage. Windows contain eight-over-eight sash at the first level and six-over-six sash at the second level.

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The three-bay south elevation of the building, facing the parking lot, also has a central entrance, although the door and transom are later replacements. A handicapped access ramp leads from the parking lot to the south entrance. Windows on this elevation contain six-over-six sash.

A low hipped roof with wide overhanging eaves covers the Municipal Building. The original tile roof was replaced approximately thirty years ago with an asphalt shingle roof. Eight years ago, the height of the roof was raised when a platform or widow's walk was replaced with a full hip and additional roof shingles added. At the same time, a new vinyl soffit and fascia were added, covering the decorative sawn ends of the roof rafters.

A west-side, two-story, two-bay mid-section with a flat roof connects the Municipal Building with a contemporary two-story firehouse. Fenestration of the north elevation of the connecting mid-section includes two different-sized, six-over-six sash windows with limestone lintels on both the first and second levels. One of the larger windows on the first story is currently covered with plywood. South-elevation fenestration of the connecting mid-section includes a bank of three six-over-six sash windows with limestone lintels at the first story and two six-over-six sash windows with limestone lintels at the second floor.

The main entrance of the firehouse is located on the north elevation facing Evans Street. The corners of the building are decorated with limestone quoins. The first floor of this elevation consists of a single large garage bay with an aluminum overhead door with six rectangular windows. The overhead door replaced two sets of double-leaf, multi-paned glass doors. The opening retains the original limestone surround in which "NO-1" is inscribed at the center of the lintel. The five original second-story windows with fanlights now contain replacement one-over-one sash. The rear wall or west elevation of the firehouse is devoid of ornamental trim. The asymmetrical fenestration on this elevation consists of four bays on the first floor and six bays on the second floor. A pedestrian entrance door with a wide transom is situated at the northern end of this elevation. All window openings contain replacement single-pane sash. A chimney rises from the southeast corner of the firehouse.

A one-story addition is attached to the south side of the firehouse. A single one-over-one sash window is located on the west elevation and a pedestrian door and a single one-over-one sash window are situated on the south elevation of the addition. Both window openings contain replacement sash. Terra cotta coping lines the raised parapets on the south elevation of the firehouse and the one-story addition.

The interior of the Municipal Building has undergone little change and therefore retains integrity. The central doors open into an entrance vestibule. A sliding-glass reception window (not original) is positioned in the south wall of the vestibule. A second set of glass double-leaf doors in a metal frame (not original) separates the vestibule from an open, spacious central lobby. Terrazzo floors, molded baseboards and chair rails, plaster walls, and high ceilings define

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the central lobby. A transverse hall, terminating in the side entrance doors, separates the front (east-side) offices from the rear (west-side) offices. Several offices are accessed from the hall, while others are accessed from the central lobby. A partition wall has been added on the north end of the hall, creating a closet, thereby blocking the north side entrance door. A small jail, or holding cell, was originally located on the south side of the lobby. The room is currently utilized as an office. An open newel stair with marble treads is positioned at the rear of the central lobby. The closed string staircase is flanked on one side by a banister with alternating twisted and picket iron balusters capped by a wooden molded handrail. An elevator, added to the building in approximately 1998, is situated in the stair's wellhole. A short hall located to the left (south) of the staircase leads to several steps that descend to an entrance to the fire station.

The council chambers are located at the top of the stairs, across a small hall. The chambers consist of a single large room that spans the entire width of the front half of the second floor. The room has a modern suspended ceiling with fluorescent light panels, but retains its original molded baseboards, chair rail, and built-in cabinets positioned on the east wall. Carpeting covers the floors, while the plaster walls have been wallpapered. Several additional offices, currently utilized as storage rooms, and a bathroom are also located on the second level.

The interior of the fire station remains essentially unchanged. The first story consists of a large, open garage bay with a concrete floor. The one-story, south-side addition, divided into a kitchen and a utility room, is accessed by two doors at the back of the garage. A set of dog-leg, open-string stairs, located at the rear of the garage, ascend to the second floor of the station. The second floor includes a large open room, formerly utilized as a lounge for the firemen, and a smaller office, now a communications room for the police. The fire pole, originally located near the middle of the garage, has been removed.

The historic integrity of the Municipal Building is very good. The building's only major modifications since its initial construction have been to the roof, where original materials have been replaced and decorative rafter ends (still in place) covered over; the characteristic hip roof and deep eaves, however, have been retained. Despite these alterations, the Municipal Building overall continues to retain historic integrity in terms of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

**2. Fulford and Day Monument**

**1920**

**Contributing Object**

A monument situated at the southeast corner of the Municipal Building commemorates Irvin Fulford and Leonard Day, natives of Morehead City, who lost their lives during World War I. The marble monument, which is embellished with a fountain on two sides and three-light globes on top, was originally situated at the intersection of Arendell and Eighth streets, one block to the north. It was moved to its current location soon after the Municipal Building was completed. On the east face of the monument are the names Irvine Fulford and Leonard Day and

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the following inscription: "Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his country." On the west face is inscribed: "To Those Who Served, 1914-1918." Irvine Fulford belonged to the U. S. Army's Thirtieth Division and was killed on September 20, 1918, when the Hindenburg line was breached. Leonard Day was a sailor on the ill-fated warship, Cyclops, which sank in the Atlantic with all on board lost. On May 10, 1920, an unveiling ceremony took place at the monument conducted by The Daughters of the Confederacy.

**3. American Legion Monument**                      **c. 1945**                      **Contributing Object**

A monument located at the northeast corner of the Municipal Building is dedicated "to the men and women who devotedly served their country and in loving memory of the those who made the supreme sacrifice." The granite monument was erected by the American Legion.

**4. Flagpole and Armistice Marker**                      **c. 1945**                      **Contributing Object**

A flagpole stands on the north side of the Municipal Building. A cement block, commemorating the Armistice of both World War I and World War II, is embedded in the ground near the flagpole and is inscribed with the dates November 11, 1918 and August 14, 1945. Another cement block embedded in the ground to the east of the flagpole has an inscription that is indecipherable.

**5. Fire Bell**    **c. 1910**    **Contributing Object**

A large cast iron bell suspended between two iron poles is located on the north side of the Municipal Building in front of the mid-section connecting the Municipal Building to the fire station. The bell hangs above a granite block on the ground which reads: "This bell is dedicated in memory of the Morehead City Fire Department, 1910-1923; C. S. Wallace, Mayor; Gib Arthur, Chief; Dr. Ben Royal, Assistant Chief; E. Stamey Davis, Captain; Charles Styron, Lieutenant; Charlie Smith, Driver." The original fire bell was an old school bell that had served as a fire alarm until 1910 when it was replaced by this larger bell. A central alarm system was installed in 1923.

**6. Communications Tower**    **c. 2000**    **Noncontributing Structure**

A modern metal-lattice communications tower is located just south of the Municipal Building.

**7. Storage Building**    **c. 1960**    **Noncontributing Building**

A small one-story, freestanding, concrete-block storage building with a shed roof, is sited south of the Municipal Building.



## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The 1926 Morehead City Municipal Building is eligible for National Register listing for local significance under Criterion A for Politics/Government as a symbol of the increasing role the Morehead City municipal government played in providing services for and governing the growing and prosperous town. Population growth in North Carolina's towns during the early years of the twentieth century resulted in the need for expanded municipal powers and responsibilities. Many towns replaced former frame town halls with more substantial and impressive buildings designed to express the spirit of the times: a contained, classical image of prosperity and solidarity.

Morehead City's Municipal Building is also eligible for National Register listing for local significance under Criterion C for architecture. The elegant public building is a rare North Carolina example of the Florentine Renaissance style and illustrates the preference for classicism for public buildings during the first decades of the twentieth century. Built by Jones Brothers Builders of Wilson with R. D. Gladding as consulting engineer, the striking building includes many design elements characteristic of the Florentine Renaissance style: the pale-yellow stucco walls contrast with limestone trim, including quoins, molded window surrounds, and ornate pediments over the two primary entrances. A hipped roof with overhanging eaves and an in-antis porch with two Ionic columns is also indicative of the style. The Municipal Building remains Morehead City's most distinctive architectural landmark.

The period of significance for the Municipal Building begins in 1926, the year the building was constructed, and continues to 1954, a period during which the Municipal Building played a prominent role in the local government for the town of Morehead City. Government affairs after 1954 were not of extraordinary importance; because Criteria Consideration G is not met, the period of significance ends fifty years ago.

## Historical Background

In the early 1850s, a group of investors known as the Shepard Point Land Company purchased 600 acres of land on the eastern tip of the peninsula that is now the site of Morehead City. Their objective was to take advantage of the deep channel of Beaufort Inlet that led into Shepard Point to construct a port and connect it by rail to Goldsboro. Governor John Motley Morehead, for whom the town is named and a principal member of this group, initiated construction of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad in 1855, and by July 1858, rail service had been established. In 1857, Governor Morehead laid the town out in a grid pattern of city blocks, reaching to 15th Street. Each block contained sixteen lots and a service alley. The main 130-foot-wide thoroughfare (Arendell Street), bisected by the railroad tracks, terminated at the Newport River at the eastern edge of the peninsula (*Brief History of Morehead City*).

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The town grew quickly as individuals began to build single-family dwellings, stores, and hotels on the town's new blocks. The first train from Goldsboro arrived in Morehead City on June 7, 1858. The North Carolina Senate incorporated the town of Morehead City in 1860 with Bridges Arendell Jr. as mayor. By this time, the town's population had grown to more than 300. The town continued to prosper until the Civil War, during which time it was occupied by Federal troops. The war disrupted commerce and the port declined along with the town's population.

It was not until the 1880s, with the construction of the Atlantic Hotel at the tip of the peninsula, that its promotion by the railroad as the "Summer Capital by the Sea" for northern tourists began a resurgence of the area (*Brief History of Morehead City*). The village grew into a town during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Eight general stores were in business, as well as the Morehead City Ice Company. By 1896, Morehead had grown to include 1,365 inhabitants. A number of seafood dealers sold clams, fish, and oysters, and by 1905 a fish factory had opened. Since the early twentieth century, Morehead City and neighboring Beaufort's famous fisheries industry has been North Carolina's leading seafood center and one of the largest in the United States (Little, "The Historic Architecture of Morehead City," p. 10).

The Norfolk and Southern Railroad took over the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad line in 1904, marking the end of Morehead City's era as the terminus of Governor Morehead's railroad. The old railroad warehouse wharf on the bank of the Newport River continued to function until 1906 when the railroad was extended to Beaufort. From 1904 until 1907 the Norfolk and Southern Railroad leased the wharf facilities, then rerouted shipments through the port in Norfolk, Virginia, and closed down the Morehead City port. By 1908 the Norfolk and Southern Railroad had constructed a new passenger and freight depot in the center of the 700 block of Arendell Street between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> streets (Little, "The Historic Architecture of Morehead City," p. 13).

The first city hall, erected in 1893, was a two-story frame building with a one-story porch, located on Evans Street and constructed at a cost of \$175.00. A large room on the second floor served as a courtroom and a place for public gatherings. A smaller room at the front of the second floor served as offices for the town's elected officials. Fire fighting equipment was kept on the ground floor, while the jail was located along the east side of the building. Prior to 1890, the town had a volunteer "bucket brigade," but after a fire destroyed several buildings that year, the town purchased a hand-operated pumper from the Howe Engine Company of Indianapolis, Indiana. It had 750 feet of hose and was mounted on a four-wheel chassis that was drawn by hand. After another disastrous fire in 1898, a gasoline engine pumper was purchased (Yesterday and Today, p. 107).

A 1908 fire destroyed many of the town's frame commercial buildings along Arendell Street between Eighth and Ninth streets. When the gasoline pumper drained all the town's

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cisterns, it was necessary to use water from Bogue Sound to extinguish the fire. After the city water system was installed in 1910, the fire department discarded the old pumper engine in favor of a horse-drawn wagon. The wagon and horse were housed in the old municipal building. In 1915, a second company was formed and two years later, a firehouse was constructed on 13<sup>th</sup> Street for Company #2, which also had a horse-drawn wagon. In 1920, a Brockway hose truck was purchased for Company #2 and their horse-drawn hose and reel were sold (MCWC, p. 105).

A brick commercial district gradually replaced the town's frame commercial buildings during the first two decades of the 1900s. During the twentieth century's first decade, Arendell Street bordered the marshy shoreline between 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> streets. A civic improvement project undertaken by the Norfolk and Southern Railroad from 1911 to 1913 consisted of constructing a 2,400-foot-long concrete seawall between 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> streets and infilling the low marsh behind it. This project enabled the creation of the three-block extension to 4<sup>th</sup> Street, parallel to Arendell Street and one block to the south. Development was slow, however, and by 1920, no buildings had yet been constructed along the new portion of Evans Street (Little, "The Historic Architecture of Morehead City," p. 13).

The Town of Morehead City undertook the construction of a new municipal building and fire station in 1926. It was one of several buildings erected on the new land created by filling the area north of the sea wall. A deed dated January 19, 1926, records the transfer of land from Charles S. and Nina W. Wallace to the Town of Morehead City (Carteret County Register of Deeds). The property, Lots 14 and 15 in Block 73, is described as a 100- by 100-foot lot on the southeast corner of Eighth and Evans streets (Deed Book 56, p. 309). Earle Webb, native son and Esso Oil Company executive, financed the imposing masonry Florentine Renaissance-style building (Little, p. 16).

The town's new municipal building included a fire station attached to the rear of the building. A lounge on the second floor of the fire station was equipped for members of the fire department, with sleeping cots for members on duty. In 1928, the town purchased the second combination pumper and ladder outfit for Company No. 1 at a cost of \$13,850.00. At this time the Company No. 1, housed in the new building, had seven members, while Company No. 2, still on 13<sup>th</sup> Street, had eight. In 1951, a new four-wheel-drive truck was put into service, bringing the equipment to three pumpers with ladders and one hose truck. The multifunctional 1926 Municipal Building served the town as city hall, police station, and fire station until 1977 (CIPCMWC, p. 80).

The town purchased the 1940 former United States Post Office building on Arendell Street in 1977. After renovating the building, the offices for the mayor, city administration, water and sewer departments, and city clerk were moved to the old post office. At the same time, the 1926 Municipal Building was converted for use as a police station and has remained in

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this use to the present. The fire department vacated the premises in 2001 and the police department moved their communications room to the second floor of the fire station.

**Architectural Context**

The Florentine Renaissance style, also referred to as Italian Renaissance or Second Renaissance, was very popular around the turn of the twentieth century, particularly for buildings such as libraries, courthouses, and banks that sought to convey a strong sense of integrity and security. Borrowing from the architecture of Renaissance Florence and Rome, the style was used extensively between 1890 and 1920. Major expositions, such as the world's Colombian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, helped to popularize classical and renaissance architecture nationally.

Buildings designed in the Italian or Florentine Renaissance style exhibit a studied formalism. Large buildings are organized into distinct horizontal divisions and each floor is articulated differently. Embellishments and details are based on the classical orders. Primarily a style for architect-designed landmarks in major metropolitan areas prior to World War I, the style could also found in early twentieth-century houses throughout the country (McAlester, p. 398).

Details of the Italian Renaissance style are borrowed more or less directly from the Italian originals. Among the most characteristic are recessed entry porches and full-length first-story windows with arched pediments above. The roof commonly has broadly overhanging, boxed eaves with decorative brackets beneath. Common decorative elements include quoins, roofline balustrades, pedimented windows, classical door surrounds, molded cornices, and belt courses. Stucco, masonry, or masonry-veneered walls are universal (McAlster, p. 397).

The Morehead City Municipal Building was constructed during an era of prosperity for the town, as well as the country. Civic pride was at an all-time high and the town gained several civic amenities, including a modern hospital, the Municipal Building, and a public school built in the Neoclassical Revival style. The imposing, masonry Florentine Renaissance-style Municipal Building was financed by Earle Webb, native son and Esso Oil Company executive. The building certainly appears to be architect-designed, although research thus far has not revealed the source of the design. City Council minutes dated January 4, 1926 reveal, however, that it was built by Jones Brothers Builders of Wilson with R. D. Gladding acting as consulting engineer. The Municipal Building exhibits many elements characteristic of the Florentine Renaissance style including a low-hipped roof with overhanging eaves, although the original exposed rafters have recently been encased. The pale-yellow masonry walls contrast with limestone trim, including quoins, molded window surrounds, a beltcourse, and ornate pediments over the primary entrances. Full-height engaged Ionic columns within an in-antis porch support

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a simple entablature that contains an inscribed frieze. The attached rear firehouse is also finished with stuccoed walls and limestone trim of classical design.

The Morehead City Municipal Building is a rare example of the Florentine Renaissance style in North Carolina. The 1913-14 former United States Post Office building in Greenville, Pitt County, is similar in scale and style. Designed by Oscar Wenderoth, an architect employed by the Federal government, the Renaissance-style post office has a graceful Florentine spirit evoked by its palazzo-like form, stuccoed walls, red tile roof, and arcaded loggia sheltering the entrance. Tall Italianate windows carried on consoles light the first story, and smaller, simpler ones occur in the second story beneath the broad eaves (Cotter, p. 92). As with the Morehead City Municipal Building, the quality of Greenville's former Post Office building reflected the growing stature of Greenville during its early twentieth century boom years (Bishir, p. 356).

Although the Italian or Florentine Renaissance style was rarely rendered in public buildings in North Carolina, it was occasionally used in houses. The Kronheimer House in Durham is a good example of a residence rendered in the Florentine Renaissance style. The two-story brick house exhibits a hipped tiled roof and a seven-bay-wide asymmetrical façade with a recessed, arched entrance flanked on one side by a recessed porch with an arched colonade.

### **Politics/Government Context**

The colonial government, following the English tradition, established county governments for the local administration of many of the civil functions considered essential throughout the colony, including administration of the court system, law enforcement, the conduct of elections, road maintenance, and care of the poor. As settlements began to develop around seaports, trading centers, and county government seats, additional governmental functions became necessary, many of which the county government was not able to provide. Again, following the English tradition, independent municipal corporations were created to provide the additional governmental functions needed when people live close together. These functions might include organizing a town watch, building public wells, repairing streets, or providing a town market. This pattern of government, including states, counties, and towns, was in place at the time of the American Revolution (Lawrence, p. 5).

In the mid-nineteenth century, the North Carolina General Assembly revised the laws regarding municipalities. Under an act passed in 1855, all municipalities were given the same powers. They could tax real estate, liquor dealers, tickets to shows, dogs, and freely roaming hogs, horses, and cattle. They could appoint a town constable, regulate public markets, prevent public nuisances, protect public health, keep streets and bridges in repair, and regulate the quality and weight of loaves of bread baked for sale. As time passed, the General Assembly gave additional authority to individual municipalities or groups of municipalities. As a result, each

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North Carolina city or town may have a somewhat different set of powers and responsibilities (Whitaker, p. 15).

As the population in North Carolina's towns increased in the years following the Civil War, town governments were required to take on additional responsibilities. Water and sewer systems, public transportation such as streetcar systems, and electric and telephone systems were introduced during this era. Street lighting also became common and towns began spending more money on paving streets. Public health regulations received an increased emphasis, while public schools began to replace private educational institutions. Morehead City erected its first city hall, a two-story frame building, in 1893 (Lawrence, p. 5).

During the early years of the twentieth century, towns and cities grew rapidly. By 1920, twenty percent of the state's 2.5 million people lived in municipalities. More cities and towns paved their streets as automobiles became more popular. Additional water and sewer systems came under public ownership as private companies found it difficult to maintain high-quality systems and still produce a profit. Full-time police departments were established and professional fire brigades began to supplement the efforts of volunteer companies. Building codes were adopted to regulate construction and reduce hazards to health and safety. A number of towns even started their own electric utilities to bring electricity to their communities. Public libraries and public health departments were also established during this period (Lawrence, p. 8).

The national prosperity of the 1920s was reflected in many of North Carolina's towns with a great physical expansion in water and sewer systems, additional street construction, and the construction of city halls and auditoriums. Additional schools were built, the statewide system of primary highways connecting the principal cities and towns was established, and towns' boundaries expanded as new subdivisions were built. Municipal bonded indebtedness increased greatly as a means of paying for these additional services and public facilities (Lawrence, p. 8).

Like most of North Carolina, Morehead City enjoyed the decade's prosperity. By 1920, Morehead City had grown to a population of approximately 1,400 citizens. The town prospered as the local fishing industry expanded and became an important part of the local economy. The construction of a 2,400-foot-long concrete seawall and subsequent infilling of the low marshland behind it provided additional property for civic projects. The new seawall also permitted the construction of more docks, thereby allowing Morehead City to become the home of one of the most active commercial and sport fishing fleets in the United States (Little, "The Historic Architecture of Morehead City," p. 13).

The 1920s brought about a number of major civic amenities for Morehead City. The Morehead City Municipal Hospital was completed in 1920 adjacent to Bogue Sound on new land

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created behind the sea wall. In 1926, the town constructed the new Municipal Building and Fire Station, also on land created by infilling behind the sea wall (Little, "The Historic Architecture of Morehead City," p. 14). The Florentine Renaissance-style edifice symbolized the expanding responsibilities of the town's government during this era. The Municipal Building served the town as city hall, police station, and firehouse, replacing the 1893 two-story frame multifunctional town hall building on Evans Street.

In 1929, the old frame public school building was replaced with a new handsome brick school built in the Neoclassical Revival style. Further civic improvements undertaken by the town government in the 1920s included the paving of Arendell Street, the main commercial street in Morehead City. At the same time, the passenger railroad station was divided into two sections and moved to its current location at the southwest corner of Arendell and 6<sup>th</sup> streets, also on land created by the placement of fill behind the seawall (Little, "The Historic Architecture of Morehead City," p. 14).

The town's boundaries gradually expanded during this time period, as new zoning requirements were put in place. A fence crossing 14<sup>th</sup> Street, built to keep cattle from roaming into the town limits, was first moved to 18<sup>th</sup> Street and a few years later to 22<sup>nd</sup> Street in order to allow room for expansion. Additional streets were paved and Highway 70 connected Morehead City to points west all the way to the Tennessee line (Little, "The Historic Architecture of Morehead City," p. 14).

Newly developed recreational amenities in the 1920s, including the construction of White's Pier by a private developer and a new dance pavilion on Bogue Banks, established Morehead City as a resort destination. The town's government responded by providing additional street lighting, water and sewer services, and police and fire protection. Mayor Luther Hamilton oversaw the expanding role of the town government during the time when the Municipal Building was constructed.

As a result of the Great Depression, municipal services were cut back in the 1930s. The state assumed responsibility for non-municipal roads in 1931 and for a minimum level of public education in 1933. Independent school districts were abolished. Federal public works programs built many municipal improvements. The Public Works Administration (PWA) financed construction of a new Morehead City Port Terminal in the mid-1930s, replacing the old terminal that had been closed since 1907. The newly constructed terminal added a much-needed boost to Morehead City's economy. A new post office, constructed by the PWA in 1940, served as the town's principal post office until 1977, when the city purchased the building. The mayor's office, city clerk's office, and town administrator's office are currently housed in the building. In 1937, a Colonial Revival-style brick civic center and library, located on Evans Street near the Municipal Building, was donated to the town by Morehead City benefactor Earle Webb.

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Another boost to Morehead City's economy occurred in 1936 when the state of North Carolina purchased a private toll bridge to Atlantic Beach, allowing free access for the first time to the beach, thereby increasing the town's desirability as a tourist destination (Little, National Register nomination, p. 48).

During World War II, Morehead City was an important wartime seaport employing a number of military personnel. A housing shortage in the town resulted in the construction of a number of houses for military families. As the population increased during and shortly after the war, capital expenditures to improve and expand water and sewer infrastructure, pave and rebuild streets, and expand other public services were also increased. Service standards for law enforcement and fire protection, garbage collection, and other primary services were raised in Morehead City, as elsewhere in the state.

Morehead City continued to grow rapidly in the 1950s due to the improvement of Highway 70, the opening of Fort Macon as a state park, and the development of Bogue Banks and Atlantic Beach as one of the most popular seaside resorts in North Carolina. A number of yacht basins and the fleet of fishing charter boats on the waterfront transformed Morehead City into one of the outstanding sports fishing centers on the Atlantic Coast (Little, National Register nomination, p. 48). The town responded to the increased growth by continuing to expand its municipal services in order to provide a safe environment for its citizens and its visitors. Throughout this period of major expansion and development, the Municipal Building remained the seat of Morehead City's government.

Although the city moved its governmental offices in 1977 to the former federal post office building, the police department continues to occupy the 1926 Municipal Building. The town council also continues to hold its meetings in the council chamber room on the second floor of the Municipal Building. The 1926 Florentine Renaissance-style Municipal Building, the most distinctive architectural landmark in Morehead City, symbolizes the importance the public attached to its municipal government in the prosperous years of the 1920s.



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**Section 10: Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The boundaries of the nominated property coincide with the boundaries delineated for lot 6386.19.0983, Carteret County tax maps. The lot measures 100 by 100 feet.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundary encompasses the original parcel of land associated with the building, which retains its historic integrity

**Photographs:**

Information pertaining to all photographs

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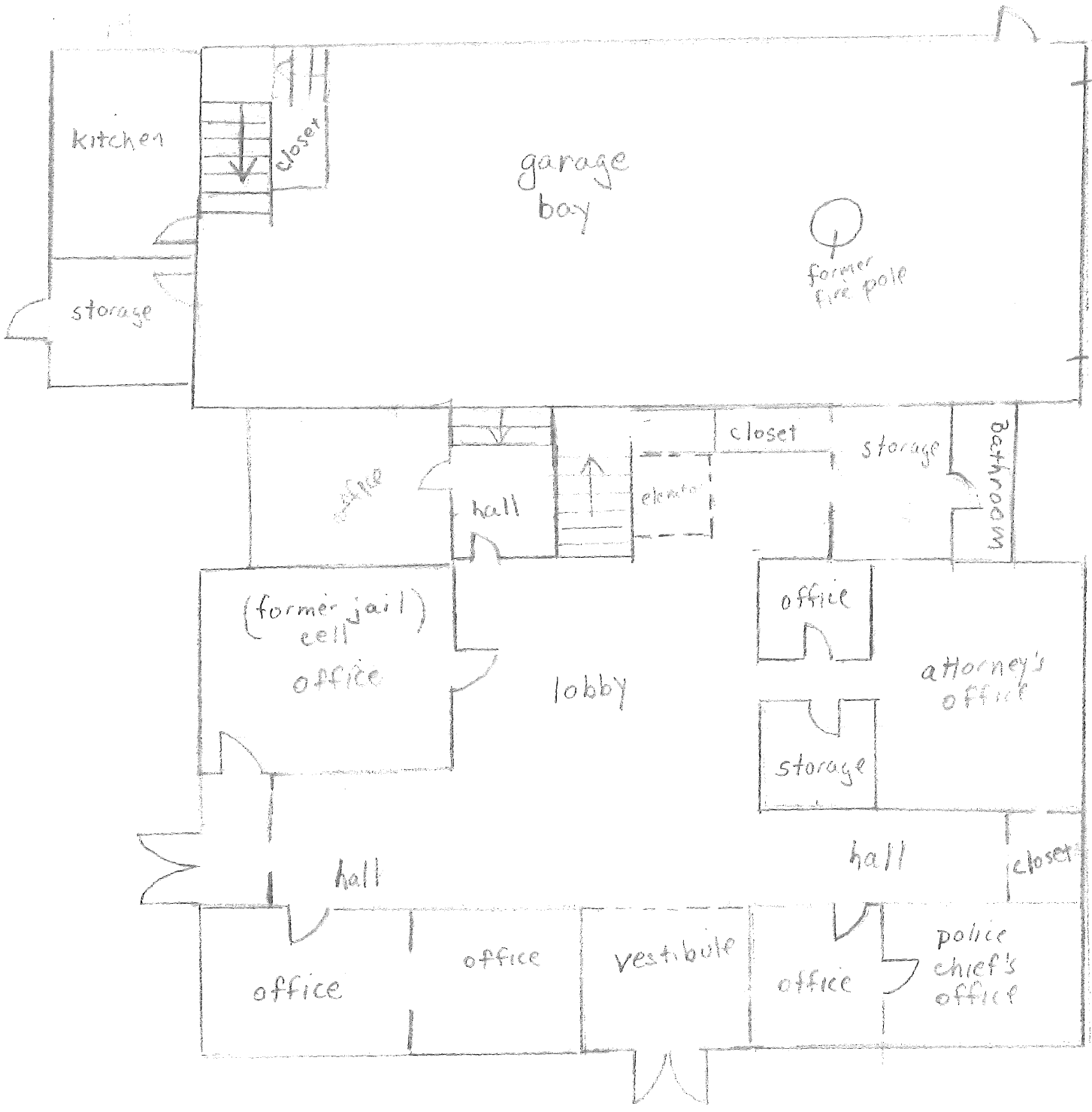
Photographer: Beth Keane

Date of Photographs: April, 2003

Location of original negatives: North Carolina Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina

Photograph number and view

1. East and north elevations, looking SW
2. East and south elevations, looking SE
3. South elevation, looking N
4. North elevation of fire station and west elevation, looking SE
5. Interior: Lobby of first floor.



MOREHEAD CITY MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
 FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
 NOT TO SCALE

