

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Newton Downtown Historic District

Newton, Catawba County, CT1079, Listed 5/1/2012

Nomination by Clay Griffith

Photographs by Clay Griffith, April 2011



East First Street – north side of courthouse square



South College Street – east side of courthouse square



Ervin Apartments, 113 East Second Street



Historic District Map

**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 Newton Downtown Historic District

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by Second Street, North Forney Avenue, A Street, and North Ashe Avenue not for

publication N/A

city or town Newton vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Catawba code 035 zip code 28658

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.)

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:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
___ entered in the National Register ___ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
___ determined eligible for the National Register ___ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
___ determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
___ removed from the National Register	_____	_____
___ other (explain): _____		

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	
50	8	buildings
0	0	sites
0	1	structures
5	0	objects
55	9	Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed
In the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE/TRADE/business
- COMMERCE/TRADE/department store
- COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store
- COMMERCE/TRADE/financial institution
- COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant
- COMMERCE/TRADE/warehouse
- GOVERNMENT/courthouse
- GOVERNMENT/city hall
- DOMESTIC/single dwelling
- DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
- DOMESTIC/secondary building
- RECREATION/CULTURE/Theater
- EDUCATION/Library

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE/TRADE/business
- COMMERCE/TRADE/professional
- COMMERCE/TRADE/department store
- COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store
- COMMERCE/TRADE/financial institution
- COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant
- COMMERCE/TRADE/warehouse
- GOVERNMENT/courthouse
- SOCIAL/meeting hall
- DOMESTIC/single dwelling
- DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
- DOMESTIC/secondary building
- RECREATION/CULTURE/Theater
- VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Commercial Style
- Modern Movement
- Art Deco

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation Brick
- walls Brick
Wood/weatherboard
- roof Asphalt Shingle
Metal
- other Concrete
Metal/aluminum

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.)

Property is:

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. 1860 - 1961

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:

Catawba County Public Library, Newton, NC

Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, NC

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. 9.5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u> 17 </u>	<u> 479780 </u>	<u> 3946580 </u>	3	<u> 17 </u>	<u> 480140 </u>	<u> 3946290 </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> 17 </u>	<u> 480140 </u>	<u> 3946580 </u>	4	<u> 17 </u>	<u> 479780 </u>	<u> 3946290 </u>

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 Clay Griffith

organization Acme Preservation Services, LLC date January 5, 2012

street & number 825-C Merrimon Ave., #345 telephone (828) 281-3852

city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28804

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 Anne Stedman, Mayor

street & number City of Newton, PO Box 550 telephone 828-695-4300

city or town Newton state NC zip code 28658

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.

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Section 7.

Architectural Classification

Greek Revival
Romanesque
Beaux Arts
Spanish Colonial Revival
Bungalow/Craftsman
Other: I-house
No style

Materials

Walls	Stucco Concrete block
Other	Synthetics/vinyl Stone/slate Metal/copper Glass block

Narrative Description

The town of Newton, county seat of Catawba County in piedmont North Carolina, is organized on a gridiron plan, with the courthouse occupying a full block at its center. When the town officially incorporated in 1855, the city limits were set at 1,000 yards from the courthouse in all directions. Main and College avenues are the principal north-south streets, bordering the courthouse square to the west and east, respectively. Brady Avenue (formerly Copall) lies one block to the east of College Avenue, and Ashe Avenue (formerly Orange) lies one block to the west of Main Avenue. Prior to the 1920s, the east-west streets were numbered sequentially beginning with First Street two blocks south of the courthouse. The east-west streets were subsequently renamed beginning with A Street on the south side of the courthouse square and continuing alphabetically to the south. On the north side of the square, the streets begin with First Street and continue sequentially to the north.¹

The proposed Newton Downtown Historic District encompasses nearly the full extent of commercial development that occurred at the center of town through the early and mid-twentieth century. The

¹ Sidney Halma, ed. *Catawba County: An Architectural History* (Newton, NC: Catawba County Historical Association and The Donning Company, 1991), 113-114. Sanborn maps, 1885, 1890, 1896, 1902, 1907, 1913, 1924, 1932, and 1932-1950.

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topography around Newton is gently rolling with the central blocks of downtown being relatively flat, especially the courthouse square. Surrounding the 1924 Catawba County Courthouse at its center, the square consists of a flat, grass lawn; concrete sidewalks; mature hardwood trees, and several commemorative monuments and markers. With commercial activity tightly concentrated around the courthouse square, the downtown area is surrounded by residential, religious, and industrial buildings and areas that help to define the downtown district. With the railroad tracks situated to the east of downtown and the depot located a half mile north of the courthouse, an industrial corridor extending north from Newton toward Conover formed along the railroad right-of-way. The North Main Avenue area (NR district, 1986) developed as an attractive residential section and was home to many of the city's industrial and business leaders. Catawba College stood a few blocks south of the courthouse along with prominent hotels and boarding houses at the southeast and southwest corners of the square and Eastview Cemetery to the southeast. The major churches were generally located on the blocks between the commercial and residential sections.

While Newton remained largely a rural community for much of the nineteenth century, by the late 1880s and 1890s, the general development pattern had been established, with the block of College Avenue on the east side of the square fully developed by 1885. The north side of the square was nearly complete by 1902 and the south side of the square was built out by 1907, with the exception of one corner lot. By the second decade of the twentieth century, the east, north, and south sides of the square were fully developed blocks of one- and two-story brick commercial buildings. Some of these buildings were rebuilt or had their facades redesigned at mid-century, but the overall appearance of the central commercial blocks in Newton generally reflects this period of development from the early to mid-twentieth century.²

Following the mid-1970s relocation of the courthouse and county offices to the US 321 Bypass, a half mile west of the courthouse square, downtown Newton has seen a decline in development. As a result, the downtown commercial area remains relatively intact from its late twentieth-century appearance, but it has lost much of the civic, commercial, and social activity that sustained it through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A significant number of buildings on the commercial blocks surrounding the square have first-story facades and storefronts that have been remodeled or synthetic materials applied, but the overall consistency of historic building forms and massing, materials, and upper-story façade details remains largely intact.³

The inventory list for the Newton Downtown Historic District is organized beginning with the numerical streets, which are listed sequentially, and then continues alphabetically by street name. Entries are further organized with the north side first for streets and then the south side; east side first for avenues, then west. The district inventory consists of sixty-nine contributing resources and eleven non-contributing resources. The inventory entries provide the name, address, date(s) of construction, contributing or non-

² Sanborn maps 1885-1932. Halma 1991, 119.

³ Gary R. Freeze, *She Is Not Yet Finished: A History of Newton, North Carolina*. Ed. Sidney Halma (Newton, NC: Newton Sesquicentennial Committee and City of Newton, 2005), 122-126.

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contributing status, and a brief descriptive summary of each resource within the district. A brief summary of the property’s history, when known, is provided in the inventory entry. Named properties are identified by their first, longest, or best-known occupant or function during the period of significance. Construction dates have been determined as accurately as possible by correlating information from deed research, tax records, nine sets of Sanborn maps dating from 1885 to 1950, city directories, documentary photographs, and other published sources. A significant factor that limited the naming and dating of properties in the district is the absence of city directories prior to 1955 and only selected editions to 1971.

A contributing building, site, structure, or object adds to the historic associations, historic architectural qualities, or archaeological values for which the district is significant. Contributing resources add to the district’s significance because they were present during the period of significance, relate to its documented historical significance, and possess historic integrity. A non-contributing building, site, structure, or object does not add to the historic associations, historic architectural qualities, or archaeological values for which the district is significant. Non-contributing resources do not add to the district’s significance because they were not present during the period of significance, do not relate to the documented historical significance, or no longer possess historic integrity due to alterations, disturbances, or other changes.

Classification key:	C-B	Contributing building
	C-S	Contributing structure
	C-O	Contributing object
	NC-B	Non-contributing building
	NC-S	Non-contributing structure
	NC-O	Non-contributing object

INVENTORY LIST

East 1st Street, north side

First National Bank of Catawba County, 10 E. 1st Street, ca. 1923 **C-B**

The ca. 1923 two-story First National Bank of Catawba County occupies a corner site on the north side of the courthouse square and replaced an earlier structure that had been built around 1897 as Shuford National Bank. The Spanish Colonial Revival-style façade and west elevation feature a terra cotta tiled roof, bracketed eave, and decorative brick and stone accents. The entrance was replaced in the 1960s with a metal-frame glazed storefront with recessed double-leaf doors and yellow brick knee walls. A corbelled brick arch with a stone inner band and volute keystone is centered on the façade and flanked by circular medallions displaying a diamond pattern of stone with patterned brick infill. A stone panel supported by the arch is inscribed with the name “First National Bank of Catawba County” and appears to support the row of five second-story windows on the façade. The windows are six-over-six double-hung sash. On the west side

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elevation, the first-story windows have been removed and the openings filled with brick. The two end bays project slightly and contain circular brick and stone medallions like those on the façade. Single windows in the end bays rest on stone sills, while a stone panel extends between the end bays and beneath the second-story windows. At the rear of the building, a one-story, flat-roof addition appears to have been added in the 1960s, along with a brick elevator shaft rising above the addition.

Organized by A. A. Shuford, the Shuford National Bank was erected on this prominent corner site on North Main Avenue in 1897. The local institution prospered and by 1920 the bank had deposits of \$500,000 and assets nearing \$1,000,000. In the early 1920s the bank building was extensively remodeled (or entirely rebuilt) in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. A. H. Crowell, long serving cashier, was elevated to president of the bank. Adrian L. Shuford Jr. eventually became president of Shuford National Bank, as well as Citizens Bank of Conover. In 1946, the First National Bank of Hickory merged with Shuford National and Citizens Bank to form the First National Bank of Catawba County.⁴

H&W Drug Company, 12 E. 1st Street, ca. 1898, ca. 1938

C-B

A two-story brick building housing a drug store has stood at this location since around 1900. In the early twentieth century, Clapp's Drug Store was located here. In the late 1930s the H&W Drug Company saw its fortunes improve, with Mayor Ed Haupt as the pharmacist. It appears that in the same period the façade was extensively remodeled to its present appearance.

Two-story commercial building with a Commercial Style façade composed of buff-colored brick and accented with soldier course stringcourses, decorative panels, and a corbelled cornice on the flat parapet. The upper façade contains two multi-light metal-frame sash, which replaced smaller windows installed during the late-1930s façade remodeling. The storefront has been replaced by full-height metal-frame display windows surrounding double-leaf glazed entry doors. A single-leaf glazed door and transom at the east side of the storefront opens into a stairwell to the second story. The transom above the storefront is covered with plywood sheathing.

Belk-Brumley Department Store, 14 E. 1st Street, ca. 1920, ca. 1940

C-B

Two-story commercial building features a stone veneer and stucco façade, flat parapet, and two windows of metal-frame sash with horizontal muntins. The recessed storefront, which most likely dates from the 1940s, is composed of double-leaf glazed entry doors with sidelights and transoms flanking a polygonal central bay. The central bay and angled side bays consist of full-height metal-frame display windows above low bulkhead walls clad with stone veneer panels. The floor lying before the storefront is terrazzo, and a cloth awning shelters the full width of the storefront. The upper façade appears to be stucco over brick, most likely a later alteration from the 1940s, and the two window openings are set within a large recessed panel.

⁴ Gary Freeze, *The Catawbans, Volume 2: Pioneers In Progress*, Ed. Sidney Halma (Newton, NC: Catawba County Historical Association, 2002), 47 and 232. Adrian Lafayette Shuford Jr. obituary, *New York Times* (January 2, 2011).

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Local businessman Julius W. Abernathy erected a building here after World War I and leased it to Belk Department Store, the first chain store in Newton. The original façade had a projecting cornice that was removed when the façade was remodeled and covered with stucco. John M. Brumley managed the store for several decades during the historic period.⁵

Commercial Building, 20 E. 1st Street, ca. 1920

C-B

Narrow two-story brick commercial building presents an altered storefront, decorative second-story panels, and corner piers on the parapet. The storefront has been largely enclosed, with only a single-leaf entry door and single fixed-sash window set within a stuccoed wall. A single-leaf replacement door in a narrow bay on the west side opens into a stairwell to the second story. A cloth awning shelters the full width of the storefront. The upper façade is composed of a recessed panel containing three replacement one-over-one double-hung windows under blind transoms. A recessed panel runs above the width of the window opening. Decorative brickwork in the parapet consists of alternate bands of soldier and rowlock courses.

Commercial Building, 22 E. 1st Street, ca. 1895, ca. 1920

C-B

A tall two-story brick commercial building with a glazed storefront, replacement mezzanine windows, two sets of three one-over-one double-hung sash on the second story, recessed panels in the upper façade, and a corbelled parapet. The storefront consists of three continuous metal-frame plate-glass display windows and an off-center single-leaf glazed door on the west side. The storefront is sheltered by a flat metal canopy hung from the façade by metal tie-rods. The four plate-glass replacement windows fill the large mezzanine skylight under a steel I-beam lintel. Originally the storefront was contained within a tall recessed opening, similar to the storefront at 102 N. Main Avenue. Around 1920, the upper portion of the storefront was enclosed to light an interior mezzanine. The second-story windows appear to be original.

Commercial Building, 24 E. 1st Street, ca. 1905

C-B

A two-story brick commercial building with a modern replacement storefront, shingled awning, segmental-arch second-story window openings, and nicely-detailed brickwork and corbelling on the upper façade. The storefront consists of recessed double-leaf glazed doors and marble veneer around the display windows. The attached, solid awning extends the full width of the façade and is clad with wood shingles. The second story windows consist of three pairs and a single one-over-one double-hung sash. The windows are topped by wood transom panels beneath arches of paired rowlock brick courses and a corbelled header course. The upper façade displays recessed panels above each window group, along with a corbelled parapet. The Newton Enterprise newspaper offices were located here around the turn of the twentieth century.

⁵Freeze 2005, 34, 65, 71-72.

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Commercial Building, 26 E. 1st Street, ca. 1905, 2010

C-B

This two-story brick commercial building has been painted white, which obscures some of brick patterning on the upper façade. The façade, however, is topped by a richly detailed corbelled parapet. The storefront was replaced in 2010 with a recessed double-leaf entry door, tall display windows, transoms, paneled bulkheads, and a dentil cornice. The three single second-story windows are replacement one-over-one double-hung sash.

Commercial Building, 28 E. 1st Street, ca. 1895, ca. 1925

C-B

A two-story brick commercial building enlivened by a ca. 1925 façade with a crenellated and stepped parapet and corbelled string courses. The storefront appears to be relatively intact with a recessed entrance, stone-veneer bulkheads, and large metal-frame display windows. A small cloth awning shelters the storefront, which is topped by a full-width transom that has been covered with plywood. The three large window openings on the second story are also covered with plywood. A decorative brick panel fills the central parapet step.

Implement Building, 108 E. 1st Street, ca. 1940

C-B

The one-story, flat-roof brick commercial building at 108 E. 1st Street is now connected on the interior with the adjacent building at (#110), but differences in the façade brick indicate that the two sections were not built at the same time. The Implement Building displays a full-width glazed storefront with central double-leaf entry doors and a transom. A decorative cast-concrete band in the upper façade extends the width of the storefront below, and the flat parapet is capped with a cast-concrete coping. A flat awning with a tall metal fascia is hung from the façade with metal tie-rods and extends the length of the building and adjacent structure.

Labeled as the “Implement Building” on a 1945 survey (Plat book 4, page 93), the building was also used by the Barringer Hosiery Mill before it was purchased by Alman Furniture Company and connected on the interior with the adjacent structure (#110).

Alman Furniture Company Building, 110 E. 1st Street, ca. 1950

C-B

The one-story, flat-roof brick commercial building at 110 E. 1st Street is now connected on the interior with the adjacent building at (#108), but differences in the façade brick indicate that the two sections were not built at the same time. The glazed storefront rests on brick knee walls and features central, double-leaf entry doors and a transom. The flat parapet is capped with a cast-concrete coping and terra cotta tile. A flat awning with a tall metal fascia is hung from the façade with metal tie-rods and extends the length of the building and adjacent structure.

Commercial Building, 112 E. 1st Street, ca. 1955

C-B

This one-story flat-roof brick commercial building presents a plain façade composed of Roman brick with two storefronts, which are separated by a central brick pier. Each storefront consists of an off-center

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single-leaf entry door and transom and an angled brick bulkhead. The storefront to the west remains largely intact with metal-frame display windows. To the east, the display windows have been removed and a wood paneled wall installed at the recessed plane of the doorway, leaving the bulkhead projecting beneath the new wall. A pair of large metal-frame windows with four horizontal lights is positioned above the bulkhead. Two small metal vents positioned in the upper façade provide the only break in the brickwork. The flat parapet is capped by terra cotta coping.

One side of the building was occupied by Newton Radio & Television Service in the 1950s. Three attorneys—Russell W. Whitener, Joe H. Evans, and William J. Sherrod—shared the other side of the building through the 1960s.

Commercial Building, 118 E. 1st Street, 1973

NC-B

One-story flat-roof brick commercial building with a continuous glazed storefront, attached flat-roof metal awning, and a metal coping. Double-leaf glazed entry doors are offset to the west with metal-frame display windows extending above a brick bulkhead. The storefront angles inward from eastern edge so that the entry is recessed, and a central brick pier stands in front of the storefront windows to support the lintel.

East 1st Street, south side

Catawba County Courthouse, 21 E. 1st Street, 1924

C-B

The two-story Neoclassical Revival-style courthouse stands on the center square of the town of Newton. Designed by architect Willard G. Rogers of Charlotte and built in 1924, the courthouse is faced with Indiana limestone and is composed of a tall five-bay center block with lower three-bay side wings. The second story of the center block contains the main courtroom and is defined on the exterior by Ionic pilasters, arched windows, and an engaged balustrade. An open balustrade rises above the entablature of the center block. The side wings are finished more simply with arched windows on the first story and a solid balustrade rising above the cornice. The courthouse is individually listed in the National Register (1979).

The courthouse square occupies a full block at the center of town and the courthouse is centrally located on the square. Sidewalks approach the building from the four cardinal directions and the grass lawn is planted with a number of mature shade trees. Five monuments or memorials have been erected on the square since the 1890s. A small granite stone with a bronze plaque located on the south edge of the square marks the location of the old town well. The plaque indicates that the well was dug in 1842 and capped in 1908. During that time, the well was the public water supply for Newton.

Matthias Barringer and Other Massacre Victims Memorial, 1897

C-O

Located at the southeast of the courthouse square, this stone obelisk was erected on July 2, 1897 in honor of Matthias Barringer and several other victims that were killed by Cherokee Indians on John's River near Morganton during General Rutherford's forced march against the Cherokee in

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1776. The granite obelisk rests on a three-stage base with a marble panel bearing the memorial inscription positioned on the east face of the tall upper stage.

Courthouse Bell, ca. 1936

C-O

Located to the northeast of the courthouse, the bronze bell originally hung in the bell tower of the earlier courthouse on this site. According to the inscription on the bell, it was cast by the Joseph Bernard's foundry in Philadelphia in 1859. After some consideration of placing the bell atop the new courthouse, it was placed on the square and supported by a pair of stone piers composed of granite blocks. The bell hangs in the narrow opening between the piers and is positioned above a stone base set between the piers. A V-shaped concrete slab rests on top of the piers and shelters the bell. A concrete slab plinth is trimmed with cut granite blocks around the edges.

Cannon, ca. 1920

C-O

A Civil War-era cannon is located on the north side of the square to the northeast of the courthouse. Located immediately to the east of the Confederate Soldiers Monument, the cannon was placed on the square in the early 1920s, prior to the construction of the 1924 courthouse. The metal cannon, which weighs 8,452 pounds, was cast by Seyfert, McManus and Company of Reading, Pennsylvania in 1865 at the end of the war.⁶

Confederate Soldiers Memorial, 1907

C-O

Erected in 1907, the monument dedicated "To the Confederate Soldiers of Catawba County, 1861-1865" stands near the northwest corner of the square. The granite monument consists of an ashlar plinth and three-stage base surmounted by a shaft supporting the figure of a Confederate soldier with the butt of his rifle resting at his feet.

Catawba County War Memorial, 1946, ca. 1955

C-O

The curved granite monument located at the southwest corner of the square was moved to this location in the mid-1950s. It was originally dedicated on Reunion Day in August 1946 and contained only the central bronze plaque bearing the names of soldiers who lost their lives in the two World Wars. It was originally erected on the grounds of the American Legion hut several blocks to the southeast, but was moved to the courthouse square in the mid- to late-1950s. Plaques honoring the fallen soldiers of other wars have been added to the memorial.

Gaither Cold Storage Company Building, 111 E. 1st Street, ca. 1945

C-B

This one-story brick commercial building was likely built in the 1940s as a cold storage and meat packing facility. The building is composed of several blocks, which housed the various functions of the

⁶ *Catawba Weekender* (June 4, 1965), 4-5.

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business. A hip-roof office is located at the northwest corner and displays stone veneer on the façade, double-leaf metal-frame glazed entry doors, two large plate-glass façade windows, and an engaged porch. Six-over-six double-hung sash is present on the west side elevation. The section extending east from the office originally contained the meat packing area. Sometime after 1950 the building was extended east to the sidewalk on North Brady Avenue, surrounding a smokehouse room that projected from the east side of the meat packing area. The façade extending from the office block is plain brick with a flat parapet, attached shed-roof porch on square posts, and an elevated brick and concrete slab walkway that begins at grade in front of the office. A set of double-leaf metal-frame glazed doors and transom are flanked two six-over-six sash. A brick section at the rear of the building with a low-pitch gable roof contained the cold storage rooms.

House, 213 E. 1st Street, ca. 1940

C-B

Built between 1932 and 1950, according to Sanborn maps, the one-story, front-gable Craftsman-style brick bungalow features interior and exterior brick chimneys, projecting gable-roof side bays, triangular eave brackets, stuccoed gable ends, and four-over-one double-hung sash. A front-gable entry porch is supported by brick piers with an open concrete slab terrace extending to either side of the porch. The brick piers, porch balustrade, and cheek walls flanking the concrete porch steps are capped with cast-concrete caps. The soffits, porch fascia, and front-gable attic window are covered with vinyl siding.

Yates T. and Esther Martin lived in the house through the 1950s and 1960s. Mr. Martin was employed by the State Highway Department.

Garage, ca. 1940

C-B

A detached one-bay, shed-roof frame garage stands at the rear of the property. The structure, which is leaning to one side, has metal roof sheathing and weatherboards. As evidenced by hinges on the garage, the double-leaf garage doors are no longer in place and the building used for storage.

House, 217 E. 1st Street, ca. 1925

C-B

This two-story, three-bay, side-gable frame house is a good example of a popular early-twentieth century house form, the I-house. The general form and appearance of the house suggest that it was built in the opening decade of the twentieth century, but it first appears on Sanborn maps between 1924 and 1932. The house displays weatherboards, brick foundation and exterior end chimney, metal roof, cornice returns, and one-over-one double-hung sash. The central single-leaf entry is framed by sidelights and a transom (now covered) and sheltered by a one-story entry porch with a second-story balcony. Slender square posts support the porch roof and balcony, which is surrounded by a simple wood balustrade. The concrete slab porch floor extends the width of the façade and is uncovered on the sides. A one-story rear shed addition and gable-roof ell project to the rear.

Earl and Eulalia Drum lived in the house during the 1950s and 1960s with Mr. Drum's mother, Ferebee Drum, a widow. Mr. Drum was a partner, along with Matthew Adair, in the Drum-Adair Grocery.

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East 2nd Street, south side

Ervin Apartments, 113 E. 2nd Street, 1936

C-B

The Ervin Apartments is a two-story brick Colonial Revival-style building containing four apartments. The building features buff-colored brick quoins, hip-roof parapet, central single-leaf entry door with sidelights and transom, two-story shed-roof rear extension, and replacement one-over-one sash. A one-story flat-roof porch with arched spandrels extends across the façade and is supported on brick piers with a solid balustrade. A single-leaf door with sidelights on the second story opens onto the flat porch roof.

John W. and Bessie Ervin erected the apartment house in 1936, which was financed by the Citizens Building and Loan Association, according to deed records. The Ervins accumulated a significant amount of real estate in an around Newton. Through the 1950s and 1960s, a variety of tenants occupied the apartments. Gordon Ervin, an employee Newton Rayon Mill, lived here with his wife and three children. Charles Oxenford and his wife, Pauline, resided here and operated a successful photography studio on East A Street overlooking the square. Mrs. Bessie Smith and Mrs. Rose Bost each had an apartment here. Mrs. Smith, a widow, worked at the Eugene Beauty Shop, and Mrs. Bost was a stenographer for attorney Russell W. Whitener. Dr. Harold G. Lambert lived here briefly in the late 1950s.⁷

East 'A' Street, south side

Sanitary Grocery, 11 E. A Street, ca. 1905

C-B

The Sanitary Grocery occupied this building for many years, but ultimately a decline in downtown traffic led to the business closing in the late 1970s. The building is a two-story brick structure with a stuccoed façade, arched front parapet, and original two-over-one double-hung sash on the west side elevation. The storefront is composed of a central entrance with a large transom flanked by plate-glass display windows over stuccoed bulkhead walls. The single-leaf entry door and sidelights were added in the late twentieth century and replaced a set of double-leaf metal-frame glass doors. A single-leaf glazed door and transom positioned at the east end of the façade open onto stairs to the second-story. A flat metal canopy hung from metal tie-rods anchored on the façade shelters the storefront. A recessed panel is located above the storefront, and a large panel on the upper façade frames two pairs of replacement one-over-one windows. A corbelled stringcourse with arches over the windows has been covered with stucco. The west side and rear elevations are exposed brick with the exception of the last two bays on the west side, which are covered with stucco. On the west elevation, the two first-story windows are replacement plate-glass windows, but the second-story exhibits six original two-over-one sash set within segmental arch openings.

⁷ Catawba County Register of Deeds Book 274, p. 42. Numerous portions of John Ervin's estate are dispersed by various deeds throughout Deed Book 357, including several lots on the east side of the block occupied by the Ervin Apartments.

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Commercial Building, 17-19 E. A Street, ca. 1905, ca. 1970

NC-B

Two-story brick commercial building with intact storefronts but the upper façade is completely obscured by a metal false front. The applied veneer covers the entire second story and is pierced by three rectangular openings with metal grilles; one-over-one double-hung sash are barely visible through the grilles. The façade is composed of two storefronts flanking a single-leaf central entry door that accesses the second story. Each storefront consists of aluminum-frame display windows, brick bulkhead walls, and a recessed entrance containing double-leaf glass doors and a transom. A continuous transom extends the full width of the façade above the storefronts.

Commercial Building, 21-23 E. A Street, 1907

C-B

This two-story brick commercial building with a flat front parapet exhibits one intact and one altered storefront on the five-bay façade, which is divided asymmetrically. The intact storefront occupies two bays on the east side and features a wood-frame display windows, recessed single-leaf entry door with angled side walls, tall transoms, and a paneled lintel; the low bulkhead wall has been covered with stone veneer. The north storefront has been dramatically altered with brick infill, two small plate-glass display windows, and a single-leaf glass entry doors with sidelights. On the second-story, five pairs of one-over-one double-hung sash are set within peaked arch openings with articulated brick keystones and soldier-course voussoirs. The façade is enlivened with corbelled string courses, recessed brick panels on the upper façade, corbelled cornice, and a terra cotta coping.

Commercial Building, 29 E. A Street, ca. 1895, ca. 1930

C-B

This two-story brick commercial building features an intact storefront from around 1930, paired two-over-one double-hung sash on the second story, brick patterning, and a flat parapet with terra cotta coping. The storefront is composed of a recessed central entrance flanked by metal-frame display windows above brick bulkhead walls and a separate entrance on the east side to the second story. The main entrance has double-leaf metal-frame glass doors, a narrow transom, and a black-and-white checkered tile vestibule. A continuous five-light transom extends the full width of the storefront. The window openings are framed by stacked stretcher courses on the sides, soldier course lintels, and rowlock sills. The two recessed panels of basket weave brick above the windows are similarly framed with soldier and stretcher courses. The exposed east side elevation is covered with stucco and contains one metal-frame industrial window on the second story. The building was the long-time home of Charles Oxenford's photography and portrait studio. A set of brick quoins on the east side of the façade survive from an adjacent one-story Neoclassical-style printing company building that was erected around 1905.

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East 'A' Street Alley, south side

Warehouse, E. A Street Alley, ca. 1900

C-B

One-story, seven-bay brick warehouse with a shed roof is located on the alley behind the commercial buildings on the south side of E. A Street. The building's façade is composed of alternating single windows and loading or garage bays with paneled overhead doors. Three nine-light metal-frame industrial windows are located on the rear elevation and an interior brick flue rises at the rear of the building. First appearing on the 1902 Sanborn map, the building was used to store agricultural implements.

Warehouse, E. A Street Alley, ca. 1900

C-B

One-story, three-bay brick warehouse with a flat roof is located on the alley behind the commercial buildings on the south side of E. A Street. The façade is composed of central double-leaf entry doors flanked by metal-frame industrial sash with metal security bars protecting the windows. The door and window sills are cast concrete and the doors are three-panel doors. The flat parapet is capped by terra cotta coping. A single window opening located on the stuccoed rear elevation is covered with plywood.

North Ashe Avenue, east side

Methodist Parsonage, 115 N. Ashe Avenue, ca. 1860, ca. 1920, ca. 1965

C-B

Occupying a corner lot bordered by a low concrete block retaining wall, the core of this two-story, hip-roof frame house dates from the nineteenth century—1857, according to tax records. A house appears at this location on the earliest Sanborn maps, dating from 1885, with a different configuration of rear wings. The original block is three bays wide and features a low-pitch hip roof, pressed-tin shingles, two interior stuccoed brick chimneys, and nine-over-six and six-over-six double-hung wood sash. It is now covered with asbestos shingle siding. The central entrance consists of a single-leaf door framed by a transom and sidelights over wood panels. The door frame displays plain corner blocks. An attached one-story hip-roof porch, which replaced the original partial-width porch around 1920, carries across the façade and wraps around the north side, and the corner is enclosed with a continuous band of six-over-one double-hung windows. Around 1905, a one-story ell and attached shed-roof porch were built at the rear of the house. A second-story shed-roof addition was built at the rear of the house, above the porch, in the 1960s along with a one-story concrete block section adjacent to the rear ell. The interior of the original block features a center hall with two rooms on each story of the house. The stair exhibits a plain balustrade with square balusters and a tapered round newel topped by a block finial. The south room on the first story retains its exposed hardwood floor and a mantel of post-and-lintel composition supported on vernacular round columns. The mantel in the north room is composed of a wide lintel and shallow Gothic arch supported on flat pilasters.

The house appears to have been built as a parsonage for the Methodist church around 1871, although it may date from earlier. Daniel and Sarah Rhine conveyed a tract to the church trustees on November 8,

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1851 for the erection of “a house for a parsonage for the use of the Methodist Episcopal South” (Deed 5/43). Unfortunately the metes and bounds description in the Rhine’s deed is difficult to reconcile with the current house parcel. On June 10, 1871, a deed from Joseph and Polly Bost to the Trustees of the Methodist Parsonage describes the current house parcel, referenced as “Lot No. 7 in the northwest square of the Town of Newton original survey of lots,” and indicates that the property is to be maintained “as a place of Residence for the use and occupancy of the Preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church South...” (Deed 8/72). The Methodist church building was located on Brady Avenue southeast of the courthouse and was completely destroyed by the 1884 tornado that tore through Newton. The Methodist congregation rebuilt its church on a new site on North Main Avenue. In 1898, trustees for the church sold the house to Miss Pinkie L. Shuford, who later transferred the property to the Newton Land and Loan Company in 1915 (Deeds 60/591 and 124/401). J. Nelson and Hazel Coley purchased the house from the Newton Land and Loan Company in 1944 (Deed 344/331). The Coley family owned a floral business, which operated from a house on the opposite of Ashe Avenue. Nelson and Hazel Coley lived in the original section of the house and utilized the rear ell and enclosed wraparound porch for the business. In the 1960s, they added a second-story extension and enclosed the rear porch area for the business operations. The Coleys maintained greenhouses on the property at the rear (east) of the house, which were destroyed by Hurricane Hugo in 1989. Although no longer used as a residence, Newton Florist and Coley’s Flowers continue to operate from the building.⁸

Carport, ca. 1970**NC-S**

Located to the south of the house, the two-bay carport consists of a flat corrugated-metal roof supported on metal pipe columns.

Shed, ca. 1945**NC-B**

Built as a storage shed in the late 1940s, likely after the Coley family purchased the house in 1944, the structure consisted of a one-story concrete block building with an open frame shed extending to the west. The metal-roof shed was later enclosed with plywood sheathing and concrete addition was built on the north side. A modern, partially-enclosed metal-roof shed on square wood posts was likely added in the late twentieth century. Plastic sheeting encloses a walkway between the shed and rear ell of the main house.

North Brady Avenue, east side

House, 25 N. Brady Avenue, 1928**C-B**

Neat one-and-a-half story brick Craftsman bungalow was built in the late 1920s. The substantial house features a side-gable roof, large gabled front and rear dormers, interior and exterior brick chimneys,

⁸ Catawba County Register of Deeds. Butch Coley, personal communication (January 6, 2012). Freeze 2005, 27-28.

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exposed rafter tails and triangular eave brackets, and nine-, twelve- and fifteen-over-one double-hung sash. The engaged full-width porch extends to form a deep porte cochere on the south side. The porch and porte cochere are supported by brick posts on brick piers with a solid brick balustrade and concrete copings. The dormers are clad with what appears to be very thin veneer bricks. A one-story shed-roof bay projects on the north side of the house, and a shed-roof rear porch has been enclosed with horizontal wood siding and multi-light wood sash on the end bay. The house occupies a large corner lot, but the southern portion is paved.

North Brady Avenue, west side

Commercial Building, 18-20 N. Brady Avenue, ca. 1955

C-B

Small one-story brick commercial building with a flat front and stepped side parapets, terra cotta coping, two storefronts, vinyl siding on the lower façade, and a metal awning. The storefronts consist of two separate single-leaf entrances set within one recessed bay and metal-frame display windows.

The building opened with Kitty's Beauty Shop on one side and the Western Union Telegraph Office on the other side. Mrs. Bessie Blue managed the telegraph office, which moved here from its previous location at 204 North Main Street.

Warehouse, N. Brady Avenue, ca. 1940

C-B

Located on the interior of the block to the rear of 18-20 N. Brady Avenue, this one-story brick warehouse has two wide entrances on its north elevation facing a grass alley. Original doors have been replaced with double-leaf wood doors and infill panels; the openings display wood beam lintels. The blind brick walls are laid in American bond and have stepped parapets on the north and south sides. The building appears on the 1950 Sanborn map and is labeled as "Roofer's Warehouse."

Commercial Building, 24 N. Brady Avenue, ca. 1964

NC-B

Small one-story brick commercial building presents an asymmetrical façade with a flat front parapet, terra cotta coping, and a flat metal-roof awning supported by tie-rods anchored in the façade. The recessed storefront consists of a metal-frame single-leaf glass door and transom positioned slightly off-center with three display windows above a brick bulkhead wall extending to the north. A low brick planter projects from the front of the building beneath the windows.

North College Avenue, east side

Commercial Building, 11-15 N. College Avenue, ca. 1900, ca. 1945

C-B

This two-story brick commercial building presents an asymmetrical façade with three storefronts. As originally built, the building displayed a heavily corbelled upper façade and an L-shape plan with a shallow

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north section. In the late 1940s, the building appears to have been remodeled with a plain façade and an addition to the rear of the northern portion. The storefronts were replaced with aluminum-frame doors and display windows over low bulkhead walls. The southern section contains a single storefront with a pair of single windows (now infilled with brick) on the second story framed by soldier course lintels and rowlock sills. A modern metal-clad shed-roof awning shelters the southern and center storefronts. The northern section is subdivided into two storefronts with a narrow recessed entry and display window at the center. A flush storefront is located at the north end of the façade and is composed of a single-leaf glazed wood door under a transom, flanking display windows over stuccoed bulkheads, and a full-width transom. A historic flat metal canopy shelters the storefront and is supported by metal tie rods anchored to the façade. Above each of the two north storefronts, the upper façade exhibits window openings filled with basket weave brick above a recessed panel in a basket weave pattern. The window openings, which also feature soldier course lintels and rowlock sills, are positioned slightly higher than the second-story windows on the south section of the building. The exposed south elevation of the building is covered with stucco and several second-story windows at the southeast corner of the building are replacement six-over-six sash. Through the 1950s and 1960s the building housed Moretz and Company, a department store.

Freeze Drug Store, 19 N. College Avenue, ca. 1906

C-B

Two-story brick commercial building with a flat front parapet, corbelled cornice, and replacement nine-over-one second-story windows. The storefront consists of double-leaf entry doors at the north end with two large display windows to the south; a cloth awning shelters the storefront. In a separate bay at the far south end of the façade, a single-leaf glazed-and-paneled wood door with a wood-frame transom accesses the stair to the second story. The upper façade features corbelled string courses and recessed panels above the window groups, which are divided into two groups of three above the storefront and a single window above the south stairwell bay.

R. P. Freeze came to Newton at the beginning of the twentieth century and ran a drug store on the east side of the square around 1906. The open interior of the store, with display cases and counters lining the side walls, was said to be the most modern of its time. Smith's Drug Store was located here from the late 1920s until its closing in 1964.⁹

Commercial Building, 23 N. College Avenue, ca. 1920

C-B

Plain two-story brick commercial building with a flat front parapet, concrete string course, and replacement second-story windows. The storefront consists of a recessed entrance flanked by metal-frame display windows above brick bulkhead walls. The single-leaf glass entry door is surmounted by a transom. At the far north end of the transom, a single-leaf door and transom access the stairs to the second story. A cloth awning shelters the full width of the façade and a soldier course lintel is just visible above the top of the awning. The second-story windows appear in two groups of three two-light sash. The concrete string course

⁹ Freeze 2005, 51, 119-120.

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serves as a continuous sill for the windows. Photographs from the 1920s depict an attached metal cornice located on the upper façade, which has since been removed.

C&H Grand Building, 25 N. College Avenue, ca. 1940

C-B

Two-story Commercial Style brick building with subtle brick details including a band of brick laid in a mouse tooth pattern, stacked stretcher brick window frames, soldier course lintels and rowlock sills, and a raised panel in the upper façade that frames herringbone brick around a diamond-shaped medallion. The symmetrical storefronts are composed of two recessed entrances with angled bulkhead walls, metal-frame display windows, and double-leaf glazed wood entry doors and a transom. The bulkheads and lower portion of the corner piers have been covered with stucco. A flat awning is hung from the façade with metal tie-rods and a soldier course lintel is just visible above the awning. On the second story, two groups of three one-over-one double-hung windows with transom are set within brick frames and within the frame are divided by wood mullions.

Erected around 1940, this building replaced a late nineteenth-century three-story building that stood on the site into the 1930s. C&H Grand, a dime store, operated here into the 1990s.

Imperial Theater, 29 N. College Avenue, ca. 1914

C-B

Two-story brick commercial building with a decorative corbelled cornice, flat front parapet, and an intact storefront with a recessed entrance. The storefront consists of double-leaf glazed wood doors, display windows over paneled bulkhead walls, and continuous transom over the full width of the storefront. At the south end, a single-leaf glazed wood door and transom open onto stairs to the second story. The transom above the main first-story entrance has been partially boarded over and filled with an air conditioning unit. The lower façade surrounding the storefront is stuccoed. The three second-story windows are covered with wood panels. A cast concrete string course located above the windows marks the beginning of the heavily corbelled upper façade.

Built around 1914, the Imperial Theater was the first movie theater in Newton and first ran silent movies. It later operated as the Grand and then the Catawba Theatre before it closed in the 1950s.¹⁰

Commercial Building, 31-33 N. College Avenue, ca. 1895, ca. 1950

C-B

Two-story brick commercial building with a plain façade, flat front and stepped side parapets, two-storefronts, and wood panels covering the second-story windows on the façade and north elevation. The south storefront remains largely intact with a recessed entrance, double-leaf glazed wood doors, wood-frame display windows above paneled bulkhead walls, and a continuous transom extending the building's full width. A pair of consoles is located at either end of the molded frieze that separates the display windows from the transom. Two turned wood posts are positioned in antis in the entrance bay, but do not appear to be original. The north storefront has been altered in the mid-twentieth century and consists of a recessed

¹⁰ Ibid., 51 and 95.

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entrance, double-leaf aluminum-frame glass doors, metal-frame display windows above brick bulkheads, and a solid metal-roof awning. A one-story brick addition was erected at the rear of the building around 1950.

The Observer Building, 103 N. College Avenue, ca. 1905, ca. 1976

NC-B

The Observer Building was the long-time home of the local newspaper, the Newton Observer. The Observer merged with the county News-Enterprise in the 1950s to become the Observer-News-Enterprise, or the O-N-E as it is now known. The two-story brick commercial building underwent a substantial remodeling of its façade in the 1970s. The new façade is brick veneer that wraps around one bay on the south side elevation and displays a tall slate-covered hip-roof parapet, molded architrave, six-over-six double-hung second-story windows, multi-light display windows over wood panels, and a shallow recessed entrance bay beneath an arched pediment. The new façade has the general feeling of the Colonial Revival style while the original storefront was more typically commercial with its deeply recessed entrance, tall display windows, band of large mezzanine windows, and heavily corbelled upper façade. The south side elevation, however, remains largely intact with second-story six-over-six windows, one metal-frame industrial sash window, side entrance, and rear loading bay. A set of glazed-and-paneled doors on the second story has no exterior means of access. In 1976, new offices for the newspaper were built several blocks to the north.

Commercial Building, 105-107 N. College Avenue, ca. 1940

C-B

Built around 1940 to replace an earlier auto garage, this two-story brick commercial building features two storefronts, large second-story multi-light windows, and geometric brick patterning in the upper façade. The south storefront and second-story windows remain relatively intact, but the storefront and windows on the north side are modern replacements. The south storefront consists of a recessed double-leaf entry with metal-frame display windows above metal-clad bulkhead walls that are angled towards the entry doors. A flat metal canopy is attached to the façade by metal tie-rods. The two windows above are metal-frame industrial sash, which are framed by brick jack arches with cast concrete keystones. The second-story windows on the north side are large four-light sash. The upper façade consists of recessed panels above the window openings, projecting decorative brick bands, and a flat parapet and concrete coping with raised corner and center piers.

The Newton Billiard Parlor occupied the north portion of the building through the 1960s. The south storefront was occupied, first, by a five-and-dime store and later by Cline's Department Store.

Coley-Gurley and Lucy Lou Store Building, 111-113 N. College Avenue, ca. 1945, ca. 1955

C-B

Originally a Ford dealership, this two-story brick commercial building was altered in the 1950s with a recessed storefront, stone veneer on the first story, and stucco on the second. The attached hip-roof copper awnings were likely added in the 1970s since they do not appear in a photo of the block from the late 1960s. The original brick upper story and window openings were stuccoed in the 1950s around the time the storefront was recessed with an angled wall on the north end and two support posts—one wood and one stone. The south storefront, center pier, and north display windows are covered with stone veneer; the

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recessed wall of the north storefront is brick. The display windows are typically metal frame except for the multi-light wood sash in the recessed north wall. The entrance to the north storefront consists of a double-leaf glazed-and-paneled door with a molded surround.

The building is shown on a plat of the Hewitt Motor Company Property from 1945 (Plat 4/93), but a 1948 photograph of the façade shows a sign with the name “Hafer Motor Co.”¹¹ By 1955, the building was remodeled and divided into two retail shops with Coley-Gurley, a men’s store, occupying the south portion and Lucy Lou, a women’s clothing store, on the north side. Lucy Lou Fashions was owned and operated by Lucy Deese, a divorcee known for personal style and good taste. The Coley-Gurley store was run by Lloyd Coley and Edgar Gurley.¹²

State Theater, 117 N. College Avenue, ca. 1943

C-B

Rebuilt following a fire in 1943, the Art Deco façade of the State Theatre has suffered from deterioration over the years, but the multi-planed stepped parapet remains in place. The two-story brick building features a three-story block at the rear containing the movie theater and a one-story commercial block on the north side. The theater entrance is composed of three bays separated by wide posts; the two end bays and three of the four posts are now covered with vinyl siding. The projecting marquee appears to have been added in the 1960s and may encompass the original marquee, which was supported by three metal tie-rods attached to the façade. The second-story façade windows are multi-light metal-frame casements, and the central stepped parapet features two recessed vertical panels. The rear block of the building has stepped side parapets and four-over-four windows. The one-story wing to the north presents a stuccoed façade, flat parapet, metal-frame display window, and a recessed replacement single-leaf entry door.

The earliest theater in Newton—the Imperial—was built around 1914 one block south and operated under several names until the 1950s. The State Theater was originally built in the 1930s and had several different façade treatments over the years that reflected the exoticism of the Art Deco style. The theater burned substantially in 1943 and quickly rebuilt. Following the fire, the façade was rendered with colorful painted cornice and dark accents to contrast with the light stucco exterior.

Catawba County Library, 119 N. College Avenue, 1954

C-B

After a 1952 fire destroyed the Matthias Barringer House, which held the public library’s collection, a new library building was constructed in 1954. The one-story, flat-roof Modern-style brick building features exterior walls of brick, concrete panels, and glass, with a recessed corner entrance and a flat overhanging roof on the façade supported by steel I-beams. The recessed façade is composed of replacement fixed-sash windows and metal panel transoms set within a concrete wall. A low planting bed fills the space between the sidewalk and façade. The façade and first side bay cornice have been wrapped with vinyl siding. A slate tile

¹¹ Ibid., 94-95.

¹² Ibid., 103.

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floor provides access to the recessed corner entrance. The north elevation consists of four window groups set above a concrete wall between two brick end bays. The replacement windows appear in three groups of four and one group of two and consist of metal-frame fixed-sash topped by metal panel transoms. A secondary entrance is located in the east end bay of the north elevation. A new library was completed in 1976 three blocks southwest of the courthouse square on West C Street.

North College Avenue, west side

Commercial Building, 106 N. College Avenue, ca. 1920

C-B

The narrow two-story brick commercial building is located at the rear of 28 E. 1st Street, and it appears to have been built as an separate structure on a compressed scale. The building features a stepped front and side parapet, a running bond brick façade with soldier course lintels and rowlock sills, and one-over-one double-hung sash. A pair of windows is centered on the second story of the façade above a single-leaf glazed-and-paneled entry door with transom and a single window. A peculiar door opening is located on the façade, where the building abuts the 1st Street structure, and it is fitted with a narrow glazed-and-paneled door and transom that echo the main entrance, but is too small to be useful. The side and rear walls are laid in American bond and two interior chimneys rise above the roofline.

Abernethy Oil Company Building, 114 N. College Avenue, ca. 1935

NC-B

This one-story brick commercial building features a flat front and stepped side parapet, terra cotta coping, and a storefront altered with the addition of vinyl siding. The façade is composed of two storefronts, each consisting of a single-leaf entry door flanked by multi-light windows, and a continuous cloth awning covering the upper façade. The façade and first bay on the south side are clad in vinyl and a brick-veneer apron carries across the façade. The entry doors are replacements and the display windows have snap-in muntins. The building is laid in American bond as evidenced on the south elevation and it displays a corbelled chimney and two brick piers rising above the south side parapet. A restaurant currently occupies the building.

Claude and Iva Abernethy sold this property to the Abernethy Oil Company in 1935 (Deed 259/485). When the property was sold to the Abernethy Hardware Company, which Claude Abernethy managed since 1930, the deed refers to "two store buildings" on the lot (334/255).

Haupt Building, 116 N. College Avenue, ca. 1955

C-B

The Haupt Building is a two-story brick commercial building with buff-colored brick façade, flat front and stepped side parapets, metal-frame second-story windows, and a projecting stair tower on the north side. The storefront has been covered with stucco. The recessed entrance contains a metal-frame glass door, sidelight, and transom. An attached hip-roof awning clad with metal roofing material shelters the entrance. A secondary entrance to the second story is located at the south end of the façade and consists of a single-leaf

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glazed-and-paneled door surmounted by a transom. The four second-story façade windows are composed of a large central pane flanked by multi-light casements. On the north elevations, entrances into the stair tower and side wall are sheltered by flat-roof metal canopies supported by metal tie-rods anchored in the building wall.

City Hall and Fire Station, 200 N. College Avenue, ca. 1925

C-B

Built in the late 1920s, the two-story brick commercial building contained offices, city hall, courtroom, and fire station. The two truck bays of the fire station remain in place at the rear of the building, opening onto East 2nd Street. The building is plainly finished with minimal brick patterning and corbelling to enliven the façade. Two truck bays on the façade were filled with glass block in the late 1940s. Second-story window openings are covered with rough stucco; the first-story windows on the south elevation are boarded up. The building served the city until approximately 1976, when the new city hall was completed at 401 North Main Avenue. The building is now home to Catawba Lodge No. 248, a Masonic organization.

City Pharmacy Building, 204-206 N. College Avenue, 1961

C-B

This one-story brick commercial building features a Roman brick façade, flat parapet, concrete coping, and a continuous flat-roof awning carrying across the façade. The awning is supported by metal tie-rods anchored in the building's façade. The two storefronts are constructed of similar materials and retain their metal-frame display windows, metal-frame glass entry doors, and stone veneer bulkhead walls, but they exhibit subtle design differences. To the south the storefront has an angled bulkhead wall on the south side of the recessed single-leaf entrance, whereas the north storefront has a recessed central double-leaf entrance. City Pharmacy, which had been located for many years in the Virginia Shipp Hotel, moved to this building in the 1960s when the hotel became slated for demolition.¹³

North Carolina Employment Security Commission Office, 208 N. College Avenue, ca. 1956

C-B

This one-story commercial building is similar to the adjacent structure (204-206 N. College Ave.), but slightly smaller. The Roman brick façade contains one storefront and is one or two brick courses shorter than its neighbor. It features a metal coping, two metal-frame plate-glass display windows, and double-leaf metal-frame glass entry doors. The storefront wall angles from the north end to the recessed entrance, and a low, brick planting box extends in front of the angled portion of the storefront. The lower portion of the storefront is covered with stone veneer and the rest is brick. The building was occupied by a North Carolina Employment Security Commission Office from the time of its completion through the mid-1960s.

¹³ Ibid., 115.

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South College Avenue, west side

Owen-United Insurance Agency, 16 S. College Avenue, 1951

C-B

One-story brick commercial building is fitted with an attached hip-roof porch supported on decorative metal posts. The porch roof is slate. The building also features a terra cotta coping, stepped parapet on the north elevation, replacement one-over-one windows, and a single-leaf six-light-over-two-panel entry door. Built in 1951, the building was expanded with a one-story brick addition to the south in the 1960s. The Owen-United Insurance Agency was located here through the 1950s and 1960s. Thomas R. Owen was president of the company. Preston W. Herman served as vice-president and W. S. Isenhower acted as secretary.

North Main Avenue, east side

Carolina Furniture Store, 109 N. Main Avenue, ca. 1920

C-B

This two-story brick commercial building has been modified with remodeled storefronts, replacement second-story windows, and a thin stucco veneer on the lower façade. The façade is composed of two storefronts framed by brick pilasters running the full height of the building, corbelled cornice, and a flat parapet. A large recessed panel above each storefront is further subdivided into three bays with recessed brick panels in the upper façade; the panels contain header brick patterns that are partly obscured by the painted façade. The recessed storefronts are reminiscent of a common historic storefront design and consist of an offset single-leaf entry door and metal-frame plate-glass display windows above a stuccoed bulkhead wall. Carolina Furniture Store was located in the building for several decades through the mid-twentieth century.

North Main Avenue, west side

Rhyne Hardware Company Building, 22 N. Main Avenue, 1903

C-B

The freestanding, two-story, three-bay brick Romanesque Revival-style commercial building was erected in 1903 after a fire destroyed an earlier one-story building on this site. Now converted to offices, the building displays a replacement metal-frame glazed storefront, decorative brick panels on the upper façade, brick pilasters, segmental-arch window openings, and a corbelled cornice. Decorative metal flower-shaped caps are located in the three recessed panels above the storefront, in line with the second-story window arches, and at the center of the cornice. Now painted solid white on its side and rear elevations, the north side elevation (facing 1st Street) was originally painted with advertisements. Windows throughout have been replaced.

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Mrs. P.O. Carpenter Building, 100-102 N. Main Avenue, ca. 1902, ca. 1990

C-B

Built around the turn of the twentieth century, this well-detailed two-story brick Romanesque Revival-style commercial building anchors a block of mostly early twentieth-century commercial structures and features recessed storefronts, brick pilasters with corbelled capitals, and arched second-story window openings with corbelled brick hoods. The detailing continues on the second story of the south elevation with four recessed panels and a pair of arched windows in each of the first two bays. Carpenter's General Merchandise store was located at 100 for much of the twentieth century and by the 1970s, the façade had been covered with an aluminum false front. Mrs. P.O. Carpenter—Cora—opened the department store on the square in the 1890s, but moved to this location in 1905. Walter Cooke bought the business and changed the name to Carpenter-Cooke Department Store. When the false front was removed in the 1990s, the painted sign for "Mrs. P.O. Carpenter" remained intact above the storefront. Subsequent rehabilitation removed the mid-twentieth-century display windows from the deeply-recessed storefront to create a sheltered dining patio, painted over the façade sign, and replaced the original two-over-one windows with one-over-one sash.

The nearly intact storefront at 102 is composed of a tall, recessed entrance with angled display windows and transoms and slender cast iron columns supporting a steel I-beam lintel. The single-leaf metal-frame glass entry door and sidelights are likely a mid-twentieth century replacement. For much of the second half of the twentieth century, the Main Avenue Barber Shop was located here.

Commercial Building, 106 N. Main Avenue, ca. 1915

C-B

This two-story brick commercial building has a central single-leaf metal-frame glass door and transom. It is flanked by recently-constructed large single pane front windows. A secondary single-leaf wood door to the second story is located at the south end of the façade. Five, one-over-one sash window openings are on the second story and they are topped by concrete lintels and a continuous concrete sill. Recessed square panels are positioned above the window openings in the upper façade and two of the panels contain metal vents. A decorative brick band on the parapet consists of a corbelled soldier course framed by a stretcher course above and below.

Newton Wholesale Grocery, 108-112 N. Main Avenue, ca. 1915

C-B

Built for the Newton Wholesale Grocery in the late 1910s, this one-story brick commercial building presents a heavily corbelled cornice, corner pilasters, and upper façade panel. The façade is composed of two storefronts with a center bay that may have originally been a third storefront, corbelled string course, three recessed panels above the storefront bays, and the corbelled parapet. Two cast-iron columns frame the center storefront bay. The two storefronts consist of a recessed single-leaf entry and transom, metal-frame display windows on brick bulkhead walls. In the center bay, the bulkhead wall is divided into two sections of different heights. It seems plausible that the area of the lower bulkhead wall was originally a recessed entrance that has been filled in.

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Commercial Building, 114 N. Main Avenue, ca. 1930

NC-B

Small one-story brick commercial building with two altered storefronts separated by a brick pier. The storefronts have been covered with vinyl siding, and each consists of a replacement single-leaf entry door and a two-light display window. The entries are centered on the façade. A metal awning extends the full width of the façade. Only a few courses of brick parapet are visible above the awning, and the flat parapet has a metal coping.

Commercial Building, 118-120 N. Main Avenue, ca. 1922

C-B

This two-story brick commercial building rises above its one-story neighbors and displays a tall, flat parapet that is adorned with simple brick panels and four, small vent openings. The second-story windows are replacement one-over-one double-hung sash. The storefronts have been altered and include a recessed central entrance framed by stone-veneer walls containing projecting window displays. The single-leaf entrance is flanked by sidelights. The south storefront is recessed only slightly and is accentuated by rounded piers at the corners. The single-leaf glazed-and-paneled door has a sidelight to one side and is surrounded by plate-glass display windows and transoms. A single-leaf replacement door to the north side of the façade provides access to the second story. This entrance is accented by rounded piers at the corners.

Commercial Building, 122 N. Main Avenue, 1998, ca. 2008

NC-B

Unadorned one-story, flat-roof brick commercial building with a central entrance and plate-glass windows on the façade and north side elevations was built in 1998. The building displays brick quoins and soldier course window lintels. Originally built for a doctor's office, the building was never occupied by the physician and was subsequently used for a series of restaurants. In 2003, The Corner Table, a non-profit organization, purchased the building and relocated their soup kitchen to this location. The building was expanded with a rear wing and covered patio around 2008.

Eagle Building, 200-204 N. Main Avenue, ca. 1920

C-B

Built sometime between 1913 and 1924, this three-story brick building served as the temporary courthouse while a new structure was being erected on the square in 1923-1924. It is one of only two three-story buildings in the downtown district. The building is relatively plain with two storefronts, decorative brick panels, soldier-course lintels, and cast concrete sills. The storefronts, which are replacements, feature pilasters on paneled bases and molded frames for plate-glass display windows and transoms. The windows may be original one-over-one double-hung sash with a row of square attic windows located on the upper façade. A flat-roof canopy hung from the exterior wall by metal tie-rods is located at the southwest corner of the building and shelters a double-leaf entrance on the south elevation.

In the 1930s, Smithey's Department Store opened in the Eagle Building and included a grocery section.

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Commercial Building, 206 N. Main Avenue, ca. 1928

C-B

Two-story brick commercial building with a pair of intact storefronts, decorative brick panels on the upper façade, soldier course, string course, and replacement one-over-one second-story windows. Each original storefront is composed of an off-center recessed entrance to the south, wood-frame display windows, and a leaded-glass multi-light transom. The entry doors contain a single large glass pane and are topped by single-light transoms. The brick is laid in American bond, and the flat parapet is capped with a cast-concrete coping. A shed-roof frame pavilion is located on the roof of the building near the rear. An attached one-story shed-roof porch on square wood posts is located at the rear of the building.

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Statement of Significance

Summary

The Newton Downtown Historic District is a cohesive collection of commercial buildings organized around the Catawba County Courthouse in Newton, North Carolina. The town developed slowly as the county seat during the nineteenth century until an 1883 railroad connection gave rise to industrial development that helped to shape the town. The courthouse square served as the center of civic, social, and commercial activity from the founding of the town in the 1840s to the mid-1970s, when the official functions of the courthouse moved to the new Catawba County Government Center on the US 321 Bypass. By the turn of the twentieth century, the square was framed by one- and two-story brick commercial buildings interspersed with older two-story frame houses. The commercial area expanded and evolved through the twentieth century, with the buildings reflecting popular architectural styles. The Newton Downtown Historic District is locally significant under Criteria A and C in the areas commerce and architecture. The buildings within the district and the businesses and functions associated with them substantially contributed to the growth and development of Newton during the period of significance. The courthouse drew county residents to Newton for court and government business, and its important function was supplemented by city and professional offices, banks, general and specialty stores, and movie theaters. Local businesses and industries supported the growth of Newton's population in the early and mid-twentieth century and contributed to the physical character of the town and its central courthouse square. The architecture of the buildings is also representative of the styles, materials, and methods of construction typical of commercial buildings in the early twentieth century. The predominantly one- and two-story brick buildings exhibit a wide range of brick patterning and corbelling, concrete and stone accents, and smooth stucco facades that express stylistic variations from Romanesque Revival to Spanish Colonial Revival and Commercial Style to Art Deco. The period of significance for the district begins in ca. 1860 with the construction of the simple Greek Revival style Methodist church parsonage at 115 North Ashe Avenue and ends in 1961. The post-1961 period is not of exceptional significance, with commercial development continuing through the 1970s.

Historical Background and Commercial Context

Newton is the county seat of Catawba County, North Carolina, which was formed from Lincoln County in 1842. Development of the town began in 1843 with the first residents, a hotel, post office, and several stores. Among the early families to establish themselves in Newton were the Bosts, Dellingers, McCorkles, Shufords, and Smyres, whose presence has been influential throughout the history of the town.

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The sale of town lots financed construction of a brick courthouse and jail, erected in 1845-1846, and the town gradually grew outward from the courthouse square.¹⁴

The Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) entitled “Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, North Carolina” (NR, 1990) speaks to the significant changes experienced by Newton in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, especially following the widespread growth of manufacturing in Catawba County, which benefitted from its proximity to transportation and water sources, as well as its productive agricultural land. As a result, the county boasted one of the most diversified industrial economies in the state. Around the beginning of the twentieth century, Newton witnessed a period of substantial expansion with an influx of population, new businesses and industry, and residential development. New factories brought new residents to Newton, which saw its population more than triple between 1890 and 1920.¹⁵

Newton’s location in relationship to the nearest rail line proved to be an obstacle to development in the mid-nineteenth century, but as the county seat, people were naturally drawn into town for governmental and cultural activities and for commercial trading. The Western North Carolina Railroad (WNCRR), which would connect Salisbury with Asheville, passed to the north of Newton, but local promoters advocated for a three-mile spur line extending south and connecting to Newton in 1860. The WNCRR connection brought steady growth through the late nineteenth century with new brick and frame stores and houses built around the courthouse square and gradually radiating outward. Due to the alignment of the railroad’s spur line, the depot was located well north of the courthouse and development logically followed in that direction. Catawba College, organized in 1851 by the Reformed Church, stood two blocks south of the courthouse and marked the south end of town through the nineteenth century.¹⁶

A narrow-gauge railroad, the Chester and Lenoir, linked Newton and Hickory with South Carolina in 1883. The line, which ran along the east edge of Newton, gave Newton two railroad connections and firmly established its commercial operations. The railroads helped foster a period of prosperity that, by the turn of the twentieth century, gave Newton an appearance of success with a recently enlarged courthouse occupying a tree-shaded square, newly-paved streets, stylish well-built houses, and nearly complete blocks of wooden and multi-story brick commercial buildings surrounding the square. Despite the improvements at the center

¹⁴ Ibid., 1-7.

¹⁵ Barbara M. Kooiman, “Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, North Carolina” Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1990, Survey and Planning Branch, Historic Preservation Section, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, E17-E18. Gary R. Freeze, *The Catawbans: Crafters of a North Carolina County, 1747-1900* (Newton: Catawba County Historical Association, 1995), 364. Bill Sharpe, *A New Geography of North Carolina*, Vol. III (Raleigh: Sharpe Publishing Co., 1961), 1161-1176.

¹⁶ Freeze 1995, 220-223. Freeze 2005, 8-10.

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of town and new industries located along the railroad, Newton existed within a largely rural setting as evidenced by small farming operations located inside the city limits.¹⁷

By 1900 most of the city's 1,500 residents lived along the street grid extending out from the courthouse square, and a building boom was set in motion as county residents began moving into town looking for work at one of the Newton Cotton Mill's two plants or the new hosiery mill owned by D. J. Carpenter. In 1902, streets to the south of Catawba College were opened for development. The Building and Loan Association, organized in 1904, doubled its shares after a year. Historian Gary Freeze reports that housing was in such short supply around 1905 that the new Presbyterian minister could not move to town because a suitable rental could not be found. The town installed a water system by 1908. Although electric lights had been introduced in Newton by 1901, the town's rapid expansion required an upgraded electric plant, which was not completed until 1909. The population grew to 2,316 by 1910.¹⁸

In addition to its manufacturing and educational opportunities, Newton drew people to the courthouse for government functions. During court week, the population would swell with farm families who came to town to conduct business—both civic and commercial. Many people still camped at the edge of town and milled around the square during the day. Two hotels stood at the southeast and southwest corners of the square. The Second Empire-style St. Hubert's Inn, completed in 1889, stood on southwest corner and its fashionable accommodations were attractive to visitors from the North, who came to the area to participate in national bird dog field trials. The Haynes Hotel occupied the southeast corner but was replaced in 1906 by the three-story Virginia Shipp Hotel, named for its proprietress. The Virginia Shipp Hotel was a fixture of the courthouse square into the early 1960s, when it was demolished to make way for a new bank building. The Summerow House, a summer boarding house, was located one block south on College Street and became the Piedmont Hotel in 1910. Beginning in 1889, the Old Soldiers Reunion drew crowds to Newton during the summer to recognize the county's Civil War veterans with parades and festivities around the courthouse square. The Soldiers Reunion continues to the present day as a significant multi-day patriotic celebration with events primarily centered on Newton's square.¹⁹

At the beginning of the 1930s and the onset of a nationwide economic depression, Catawba County remained somewhat insulated from the harshest conditions experienced in some areas of the state and nation. Newton's diversified economic base, especially its industries, helped to keep residents employed and productive. Many manufacturing plants cut operating hours, but workers were able to keep their jobs. Times were difficult, to be sure, but by 1937 more than 2,000 Newtonians held industrial jobs, twice as many as before the Depression. Federal relief agencies stepped in to provide additional jobs and public improvement projects that city leaders utilized to the benefit of the city as a whole. In particular, the construction of two

¹⁷ Freeze 1995, 236-238. Freeze 2002, 45-47. Halma 1991, 115.

¹⁸ Freeze 2002, 47, 49-51. Kooiman, E18. Halma 1991, 119-120.

¹⁹ Freeze 2002, 47-48. Freeze 2005, 31, 49-50. See Sidney Halma, ed., *Looking Back, Marching Forward: One Hundred Years of Soldiers Reunion* (Newton, NC: Catawba County Historical Association, 1989), n.p.

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new government buildings to the southwest of the square pointed to the promise of better times ahead. Constructed 1937-1938, the new one-story Colonial Revival-style post office stood on the site of St. Hubert's Hotel. Directly adjacent and to the south, a new multi-story Art Moderne building was completed in 1939 for county offices and a jail. Around the same time, the State Theater, an Art Deco-style movie house, opened on North College Avenue and became the second movie theater in Newton, joining the old Imperial Theater one block to the south.²⁰

County population growth following the Depression mirrored increases in industrial production, with 180 plants manufacturing more than 100 different products. While Hickory gained recognition in the 1940s as the fastest growing city in North Carolina, the rest of the county also benefitted from the growing industrial base and employment opportunities. The announcement of a new General Electric plant near Newton in 1955 called for substantial new construction work and an estimated 1,200 new jobs. Newton's downtown reflected the prosperity with new infill construction of commercial buildings. A number of Newton establishments were modernized with redesigned facades, new veneer materials, or new storefronts and displays. Businesses with new storefronts included the Eagle Stores at 24 and 26 East 1st Street and the Dixie Home Store at 33 North College Avenue.²¹

The last two houses on the square—the McCorkle House and Shipp House, both on the west side—survived into the 1950s before they fell to new construction. The strikingly modern Catawba Savings and Loan Building, erected in 1957, went up on the site of Matthew McCorkle's mid-nineteenth century house. Similarly, a new public library one block from the square on North College Avenue, was built after the Matthias Barringer House, which held the library and a small museum, burned in 1952. A&P Grocery was the first tenant in the new Haupt Building, which was built around 1955 on North College Avenue. The building's second story contained offices for a range of professionals and services—physician's office, dentist, optometrist, insurance agents, attorneys, beauty salon, and the Newton-Conover Chamber of Commerce. The grocery moved in the 1960s and the first floor was converted to offices.²²

The construction of the General Electric plant to the west of Newton signaled the beginning of highway-oriented commerce as many Newtonians drove to the new plant for work, spending more time on the roads and in their cars. In 1964, plans were announced for the nine-store Villa Park Shopping Center on US 70 Bypass. Catawba Mall, located on the bypass nearer to Hickory, opened in 1968, and a shopping center in Newton on the US 321 Bypass was built in 1970. Despite the increasing outward pull of shopping opportunities, Newton merchant Robert Dellinger opened Dellinger's Department Store on Brady Avenue in 1964, one block east of the square. The predominant influence of the courthouse square as the center of

²⁰ Albert Keiser, Jr., and Angela May, *From Tavern To Town, Revisited: An Architectural History of Hickory, North Carolina* (Hickory: Hickory Landmarks Society, 2004), 17-18. Freeze 1995, 373. Freeze 2002, 80-86.

²¹ Keiser and May, 18. Freeze 1995, 374-376. Sharpe, 1169.

²² Keith Wood, "The Judge McCorkle House," *Observer-News Enterprise* (January 13, 1967). Freeze 2005, 155-118.

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Newton's civic, commercial, and social activity started to fracture in the 1960s, with the closing of stalwart businesses such as Smith's Drug Store and the Virginia Shipp Hotel, which was demolished.²³

Further physical changes in the community reflected the pervasive influence of independent automobile travel in the late twentieth century. The City of Newton built a new city hall in 1975, moving several blocks north of its cramped quarters on North College Avenue and Second Street. The county government began construction of a centralized campus on the US 321 Bypass in 1976. Situated one-half mile west of downtown Newton, the new Justice Center effectively stilled the historic functions of the square. Historian Gary Freeze commented that "living during the late 1970s seemed like being in a centrifuge machine to many Newtonians, spinning them outward in wider circumferences."²⁴ While the Justice Center was under construction, Valley Hills Mall near Hickory opened and sparked another round of store relocations, including the Belk-Brumley Store on the north side of the square. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Newton's population continues its incremental growth but the migration of businesses to the principal transportation corridors around the city has undermined the character and economic vitality of the Newton's historic downtown.²⁵

Architectural Context

Much of the early architecture of Newton, specifically structures dating from before 1900, has been lost in the intervening decades of prosperity and expansion. Commercial interests built the town over more than once during the early twentieth century—replacing buildings lost to fire, erecting larger and more modern facilities, and improving the town's amenities. The nineteenth-century frame commercial buildings around the courthouse square were gradually supplanted by one-, two- and three-story brick buildings. As the blocks surrounding the square were built out in the first decades of the twentieth century, the brick commercial buildings formed a frame around the nineteenth-century brick courthouse and its eventual successor, the jewel-like Beaux-Arts-style building designed by architect Willard G. Rogers and built in 1924. Similar to the physical arrangement of downtown, the architectural context begins with the centrally located courthouse, moves to the surrounding commercial and public buildings, and concludes with residential structures.

The Catawba County Courthouse (NR, 1979), with primary east and west elevations and axial symmetry, stands at the center of a full, landscaped block. Faced with Indiana limestone, the courthouse is composed of a tall center block with Ionic columns framing arched window bays and two lower wings. The

²³ Freeze 2005, 118-120.

²⁴ Ibid., 124.

²⁵ Ibid., 122-126.

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square surrounding the courthouse has long been the center of civic and social activity in Newton with shade trees planted in the nineteenth century, concrete sidewalks added in 1905, and commemorative markers and memorials added during the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The loss of the original courthouse functions in the late 1970s to the new Catawba County Government Center and Justice Center, located on the US 321 Bypass half a mile to the west, significantly impacted the vitality of the square. The courthouse building now houses the Catawba County Museum of History.

Commercial architecture within the Newton Downtown Historic District is dominated by one- and two-story brick buildings representing a range of stylistic and decorative influences, including Romanesque Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Commercial Style, are interspersed with examples of relatively plain, utilitarian brick structures. Individual examples of Modernist-inspired buildings and the Art Deco State Theater within the district help to enrich the streetscapes. Two warehouses located on the alley behind the buildings fronting East A Street were built around 1900, ranking them among the oldest commercial structures in town. The buildings are plainly executed with solid walls, large loading bays, and small windows befitting their function. These utilitarian structures offer a contrast to the majority of commercial structures that defined the streetscapes surrounding the courthouse square.²⁶

Good examples of buildings influenced by the Romanesque Revival Style occupy the first three blocks of North Main Street. The façade of the Mrs. P. O. Carpenter Store at 100-102 N. Main Avenue was covered with a metal veneer for the last quarter of the twentieth century. When the veneer was removed in the 1990s, it revealed the brick detailing of the façade including pilasters, arched window openings, and a corbelled cornice. Built around 1902, the ornate brickwork hints at the earlier Romanesque style of commercial architecture popular in the 1890s. Other buildings in the block, however, are slightly more restrained in their detailing. The 1903 Rhyne Hardware Building at 22 N. College Avenue is a two-story brick structure with a corbelled cornice, segmental arch window openings, and deep recessed panels on the upper façade. The ca. 1915 Newton Wholesale Grocery at 108-112 N. Main Avenue is a one-story brick building with a richly corbelled parapet and pilasters at the corners.

The Commercial Style developed in response to the more ornate and textured Romanesque Revival Style commercial buildings of the late nineteenth early twentieth centuries and utilized simple two-dimensional brick patterning and contrasting materials to enliven otherwise unadorned brick buildings. Commercial Style buildings are typically rectangular in plan with flat roofs behind stepped or shaped parapets, recessed storefronts, soldier and header course lintels and sills, and large windows often arranged in groups. The three-story Commercial Style Eagle Building at 200-204 N. Main Avenue was erected in the late 1910s; it served as the temporary courthouse in 1923 while the new structure was going up and for many years housed a Smithey's Department Store. It is the only surviving three-story building in the commercial district and one of only a small number that were built in Newton. The Eagle Building displays continuous lintels above the storefronts and windows composed of a stretcher, soldier, and header courses; cast concrete

²⁶ Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture* (Washington, DC: The Preservation Press, 1987), 16-19.

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window sills; and basket weave patterning and header courses at the cornice. The old City Hall and Fire Station at 200 N. College Avenue, built in 1925, retains its overall scale, form, and massing, along with simple brick patterning on the façade and the second story of the south elevation. The building at 29 E. A Street, which was home to Charles Oxenford's photography studio, features an intact ca. 1930 façade and storefront with a recessed entrance, full-width transom, soldier-course lintels, header-course sills, and upper façade panels in a brick basket-weave pattern. The C&H Grand Building at 25 N. College Avenue, built around 1940 on the site of the Gaither Block on the east side of the square, is a later example of the Commercial Style with twin recessed entrances.²⁷

While the district is composed of mostly common twentieth-century brick commercial buildings, several examples of other popular architectural styles are also represented. One of the most visually striking buildings in the district, the First National Bank of Catawba County occupies a prominent corner site on North Main Avenue. Originally Shuford National Bank, the bank was erected on this corner in 1897, but in the early 1920s it was extensively remodeled (or entirely rebuilt) with Spanish Colonial Revival-style elements including a terra cotta tile hip-roof parapet, bracketed cornice, and a tall arched entrance. The bright roof tiles, cornice, cast-stone accents, and white window sash offered a lively contrast to the deep red brick walls. Later alterations to the entrance and first-story windows on the side elevation have muted the visual effect, but it remains one of the most distinctive buildings in town.

Another distinctive building is the Art Deco-style State Theater (ca. 1937) with its stucco-covered stepped parapet façade. As a modern and primarily decorative style, Art Deco enjoyed a brief period of popularity in the 1930s, especially for movie theaters where its exotic themes and stylized decorative motifs enhanced the escapist fantasies of the movies. Originating in Europe, Art Deco drew from the world of art and exotic cultures before crossing the Atlantic and adding new technology and industrial design to its mix of influences in the United States. The State Theater presented a simplified version of the style on its façade, emphasizing the sculptural forms, with a cascading parapet, planar relief, multi-color accent bands, and neon marquee (now gone). Behind the two-story entrance lobby, however, the screening rooms were housed in a plain three-story brick structure.

As the town emerged from the effects of the Depression and World War II in the mid-twentieth century, the facades of a number of downtown commercial buildings were remodeled, replaced, or simply concealed in an effort to update their appearance. The fussiness and rich detailing of late-nineteenth architecture appeared increasingly out of step with the twentieth century's technological advances. The new facades applied to older buildings reflected the aesthetic of the day. Modern architectural design gained exposure through the later works of renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright and publication of *The International Style* (1932), which illustrated the ideas developed at the German Bauhaus promoting architectural forms as pure volume, horizontally composed geometry, flat roofs, flush walls, and cantilevered projections. The austere, almost abstract geometric forms of the style were thought to transcend national and

²⁷ *Good for Business, A Guide to Rehabilitating the Exteriors of Older Commercial Buildings* (Milwaukee, WI: Department of City Development, City of Milwaukee, 1985), 14-19.

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historical traditions. To keep up with the times stuccoed facades offered a cleaner, more modern look and were employed on the Sanitary Grocery at 11 E. A Street, which dated from around 1905, and the Belk-Brumley Department Store 14 E. 1st Street, built around 1920. In both cases, the stucco barely conceals the original brick corbels and panels that lie beneath. Other treatments were more dramatic, eliminating almost all texture and depth from the façade.²⁸

Built in 1954, the former Catawba County Library at 119 N. College Avenue is the best example of modern architectural design from the mid-twentieth century in the district. The building is a one-story, flat-roof brick building with rectilinear geometry, large window groups, cast concrete wall panels, and a cantilevered roof overhang sheltering the corner entrance. The library moved to a new, larger building in 1976.

Most often, however, post-World War II commercial buildings reflected changes brought about by the availability of new materials, technological advances, and increasing popularity and reliance on the automobile. In downtown Newton, new construction typically featured plain facades, plate-glass windows, and aluminum-frame storefronts. The Haupt Building, erected around 1955 at 116 N. College Avenue, is a two-story structure with a buff-colored brick façade, flat parapet, and metal-frame industrial sash on the second-story. In the next block of North College Avenue, two one-story commercial buildings (#204-208) were constructed on the north side of the former City Hall. Both structures feature flat parapets, metal-frame plate-glass windows, and Roman brick facades with stone veneer on the bulkheads or lower wall. They also utilize angled storefronts, which became increasingly popular in the post-war period. Angled storefronts often directed visitors toward a small exterior lobby and an asymmetrical entrance, while providing some shading, additional display area, and the sense of a more dynamic approach.

The few surviving residential structures in the commercial district of Newton range in age and style from Greek Revival to Craftsman bungalows. The core of the Methodist church parsonage at 115 North Ashe Avenue is thought to date from the late 1850s (ca. 1860), although it has been subsequently altered and enlarged. The main block is a two-story, three-bay, single-pile frame dwelling with twin interior chimneys, center passage, and large nine-over-six and six-over-six double-hung sash. The partially enclosed wraparound porch, one-story rear ell, and two-story shed-roof rear addition were grafted onto the house in the twentieth century, when it was used as a both residence and popular florist business. Originating with a simple I-house form, referring to its two-story three-bay single-pile form, the house shows little stylistic embellishment beyond a simple Greek Revival-influenced single-leaf entry framed with sidelights and a transom, vernacular mantels in the two first-story rooms, and the central stair. At the east end of 1st Street, a two-story, three-bay, single-pile frame house (#217) dates from the turn of the twentieth century. Covered with weatherboards and capped by a side-gable roof, this I-house is typical of rural farmhouses found throughout the county.

In the early twentieth century the bungalow became the predominant residential type across the state. Cheaply and easily built, bungalows ranged in size and detail and proved exceedingly popular for their

²⁸ Catherine W. Bishir, *North Carolina Architecture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 451-455.

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honest expression of structure, site adaptability, and use of local materials. The Craftsman Style, which derived from the work and writings of Gustav Stickley, developed the bungalow form to include a dominant roofline to define the scale of the house, deep eaves, multiple gables or dormers, integrated porches, large windows, and open floor plans. Built in 1928, the house at 25 N. Brady Avenue is a fine example of a one-and-a-half story brick Craftsman bungalow complete with large front and rear gabled dormers, exposed rafter tails and triangular eave brackets, twelve- and fifteen-over-one windows, and a broken-pitch roof that engages a full-width porch, which, in turn, extends to form a porte cochere. The Craftsman-influenced house at 213 E. 1st Street is a more restrained front-gable brick dwelling with an attached front-gable porch, triangular eave brackets, and four-over-one windows.

A rare example of multi-family housing in the district, the Ervin Apartments is a two-story brick Colonial Revival-style building containing four apartments. Built in 1936, the building features buff-colored brick quoins, hip-roof parapet, and a central single-leaf entry door with sidelights and transom. The one-story flat-roof porch with arched spandrels extending across the façade is supported on brick piers with a solid balustrade. A single-leaf door with sidelights on the second story opens onto the flat porch roof. Tenants included families, young married couples, and single women and widows.

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Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The district boundary is shown by a heavy black line on the accompanying map entitled "Newtown Downtown Historic District" at a scale of one inch equals approximately 107 feet.

Boundary Justification

The nominated boundary for the Newton Downtown Historic District includes the concentration of contiguous historic resources that developed as the central business district of Newton, loosely organized around the courthouse square. The boundary encompasses the greatest concentration of pre-1961 contributing resources within their appropriate settings. Most boundary lines follow streets and property lines.

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All photographs of Newton Downtown Historic District in Newton, North Carolina by Clay Griffith of Acme Preservation Services in April 2011, unless otherwise noted. Digital images kept at the Survey and Planning Branch of North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office in Raleigh, North Carolina.

1. Catawba County Courthouse, 21 E. 1st Street, oblique view to southeast
2. Methodist Parsonage, 115 N. Ashe Avenue, façade
3. Mrs. P.O. Carpenter Building, 100-102 N. Main Avenue, oblique view to northwest
4. Commercial Building, 29 E. A Street, oblique view to southwest (photo June 7, 2011)
5. Eagle Building. 200-204 N. Main Avenue, and Commercial Building, 206 N. Main Avenue, façade
6. First National Bank of Catawba County, 10 E. 1st Street, façade (photo June 7, 2011)
7. City Hall and Fire Station, 200 N. College Avenue, oblique view to southwest
8. C&H Grand Building, 25 N. College Avenue, façade (photo June 7, 2011)
9. House, 25 N. Brady Avenue, façade
10. State Theater, 117 N. College Avenue, oblique view to southeast
11. (former) Catawba County Library, 119 N. College Avenue, façade
12. North Carolina Employment Security Commission Building, 208 N. College Avenue, façade
13. Streetscape, north side of E. 1st Street (10 block), view to northeast
14. Commercial Building, 17-19 E. A Street, façade – non-contributing resource