

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Lenoir Downtown Historic District

Lenoir, Caldwell County, CW0105, Listed 9/5/2007
Nomination by Heather Fearnbach
Photographs by Clay Griffith, April 2006



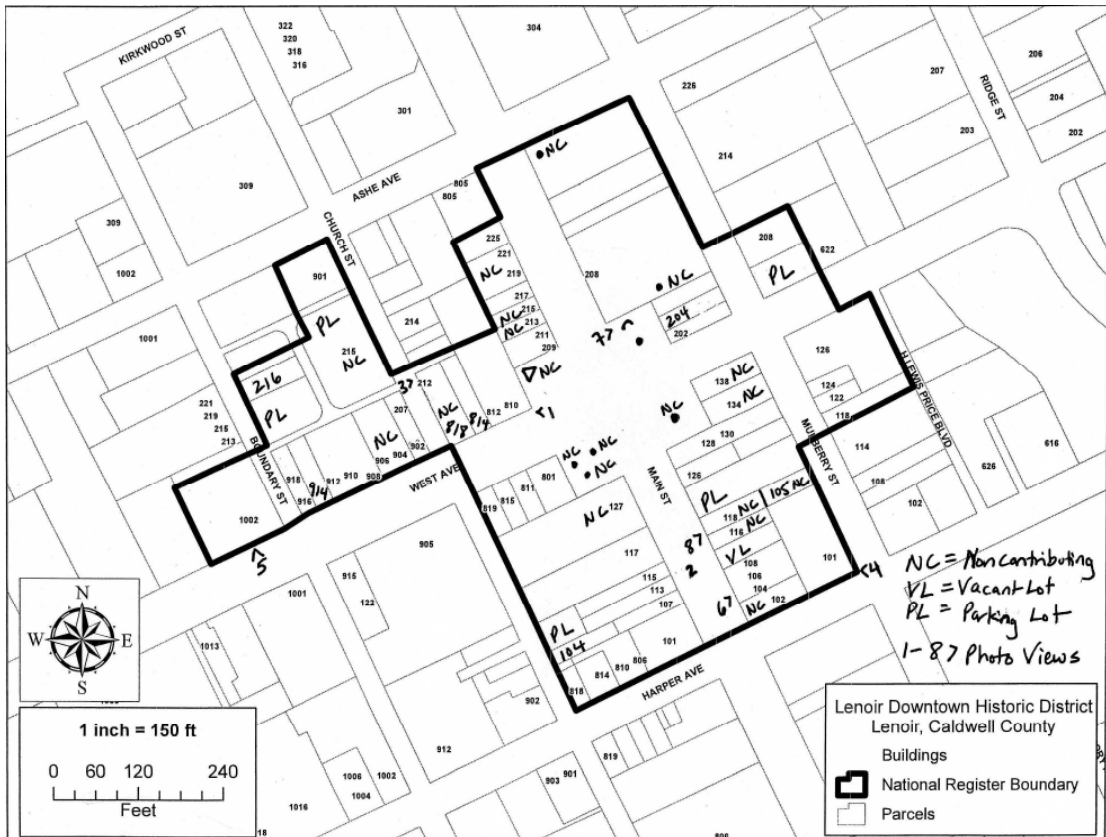
Lenoir Building, Courtney Building, Courtney Department Store



Courtney Warehouse, 212 Church Street



101 West Mulberry 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 an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Lenoir Downtown Historic District
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by Ashe Avenue, Mulberry Street, Harper Avenue, Church Street, and Boundary Street. **N/A** not for publication
city or town Lenoir **N/A** vicinity
state North Carolina code NC county Caldwell code 027 zip code 28645

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official/Title 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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet
 determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Lenoir Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Caldwell County, NC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
37	13	buildings
0	0	sites
0	2	structures
2	5	objects
39	20	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: Professional
COMMERCE/TRADE: Financial Institution
COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store
COMMERCE/TRADE: Department Store
COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant
COMMERCE/TRADE: Warehouse
INDUSTRY: Manufacturing Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business
COMMERCE/TRADE: Professional
COMMERCE/TRADE: Financial Institution
COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store
COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant
GOVERNMENT: Courthouse
GOVERNMENT: Correctional Facility
LANDSCAPE: Plaza

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commercial Style
Classical Revival
Tudor Revival
Art Deco
Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
walls BRICK
CONCRETE
STONE
roof ASPHALT
RUBBER
other SYNTHETICS: Vinyl
WOOD: Plywood

Narrative Description

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

Lenoir Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

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County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Commerce
Government

Period of Significance

1888-1959

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hampton, Martin L. (architect)
Hook and Rogers (architect)
Wetmore, James A. (architect)

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:

North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill

Lenoir Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approximately 7 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>451120</u>	<u>3974460</u>	3	<u>17</u>	<u>451400</u>	<u>3974340</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>17</u>	<u>451300</u>	<u>3974540</u>	4	<u>17</u>	<u>451260</u>	<u>3974260</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 Heather Fearnbach and Cynthia de Miranda
organization Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc. date 6/12/06
street & number 3334 Nottingham Road telephone 336-765-2661
city or town Winston-Salem state NC zip code 27104

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

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

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name Multiple owners – less than fifty
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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National Park Service

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Lenoir Downtown Historic District
Caldwell County, NC

Section 6. Function or Use (continued)

Historic Function

GOVERNMENT: Courthouse
GOVERNMENT: Fire Station
GOVERNMENT: Correctional Facility
GOVERNMENT: Post Office
LANDSCAPE: Plaza
SOCIAL: Meeting Hall
RECREATION/CULTURE: Monument/Marker
RECREATION/CULTURE: Theater

Current Function

GOVERNMENT: City Hall
LANDSCAPE: Parking Lot
RECREATION/CULTURE: Monument/Marker
RECREATION/CULTURE: Music Facility
DEFENSE

Section 7. Narrative Description

The city of Lenoir, population 18,500, is located at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains in central Caldwell County, North Carolina. The Lenoir Downtown Historic District contains the most cohesive collection of historic commercial and government buildings in the downtown area. Late-nineteenth and early-to-mid-twentieth-century brick buildings constitute the district, which includes three full city blocks as well as portions of five other blocks centered on the location of the original "square" carved out of the corners of the intersection of today's Main Street and West Avenue. Lenoir has functioned as the principal government and commercial center for Caldwell County since its founding as the county seat in 1841. Buildings in the district represent the predominant architectural types and styles executed in Western North Carolina's small county seats in the decades just before and after the turn of the twentieth century.

The streets in downtown Lenoir are arranged in a grid pattern, which, as it conforms to the topography, is not exactly situated on a due north/south axis. However, from this point forward, for the sake of clarity, the description is written as though the streets run north-south and the avenues east-west. Main Street serves as the primary north-south corridor in the district; East and West Avenues intersect Main Street at the square and function as the primary east-west traffic artery. Mulberry, Boundary, and Church Streets also run north-south, parallel to Main. Vacant lots and buildings that do not contribute to the historic character of downtown Lenoir due to age or degree of integrity are excluded from the district whenever possible,

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resulting in an irregular district boundary that conforms to the property lines of contributing buildings and streetscapes. Harper Avenue forms the southern boundary; Ashe Avenue the northern. The eastern boundary follows the rear lot lines of properties on the east side of Mulberry Street; the western boundary extends into the 1000 block of West Avenue to pick up the U. S. Post Office. First Baptist Church and First United Methodist Church occupy prominent locations just outside the district on the north side of Ashe Avenue at the corners of Main Street and Church Street. More recent commercial development borders the district on the east, west, and south sides.

Concrete sidewalks throughout downtown were replaced and the plazas around the square refurbished in 2006. As part of this project, the City of Lenoir erected a front-gable-roofed bandstand with stone posts and steps in the plaza at the northwest corner of Main Street and West Avenue. The plaza at the northeast corner of Main Street and West Avenue contains a curved stone Classical Revival-style bench with elaborately carved griffin ends and a central fountain niche situated adjacent to the south elevation of the courthouse. The bench, which dates to the 1929 courthouse remodeling, faces the 1910 Confederate Monument, a granite obelisk that was moved to the middle of this plaza from the traffic circle in the center of the square in 1964. The granite War Memorial was erected in the southeast corner of Main Street and West Avenue in 1983. The plaza in the southwest corner contains a modern sculpture, a colorful three-panel mosaic mural, and a concrete obelisk with a 1922 clock from the no-longer-extant Bank of Lenoir Building. Modern metal benches and square brick planters line Main Street and West Avenue.

The Lenoir Downtown Historic District contains fifty buildings, two structures, and seven objects, sixty-six percent of which are contributing. Most buildings are brick, one or two stories tall, and situated close to concrete sidewalks. A few three-story buildings stand at key locations around the square. Many buildings take advantage of the rolling terrain and are situated on top of full basements, which are commonly used as storage areas, but in some locations serve as additional retail or office space. Building rhythm and massing is regular throughout the district—only a few historic commercial buildings are missing from the east and west side of the 100 block of Main Street. One such location is now an overgrown vacant lot, another is a parking lot. The circa 1888, two-story, brick warehouse with Italianate eave brackets and window and door hoods at 212 Church Street is downtown Lenoir's earliest intact commercial building, while the Brutalist-style, one-story, buff-colored brick and concrete First National Bank—built on the former site of the Bank of Lenoir at 127 Main Street in 1982—is the most recently constructed.

Most buildings display decorative features such as corbelled, bracketed, or denticulated cornices; fluted cast-stone or banded brick pilasters; quoins; and arched window hoods. Metal cornices, parapets, date plaques, pilasters, and capitals ornament the facades of a few early-twentieth-century commercial buildings. The most elaborate buildings constructed during this period—the Courtney Department Store, Courtney Building, and Lenoir Building—occupy the north side of the 800 block of West Avenue. Marshall M. Courtney intended for the decorative façade of the 1897 Courtney Department Store at 818

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West Avenue to attract customers, and its cornice and parapet remain impossible to miss. A tall, slender spire surmounts a metal parapet that reads "Courtney 1897" above a deep, bracketed, Italianate cornice. Late-twentieth-century sheathing panels cover the original façade, which is probably substantially intact under its modern skin.

Courtney constructed an even more impressive Classical Revival-style façade on the existing two-story building next door at 814 West Avenue in 1908. The finely-executed, three-and-one-half-story, red brick facade features a stepped wood parapet with a central rectangular panel, a deep molded cornice embellished with dentils and modillions, brick central and corner pilasters with stone Doric and Ionic capitals, and lions head and plant motifs on sculpted terra cotta rinceau panels in between the first and second stories. An egg-and-dart border and acanthus-leaf keystone consoles ornament the arched window surrounds in the upper section of the façade.

The prominent Charlotte architectural firm of Hook and Rogers, established by C. C. Hook, designed the three-story-on-basement, two-part, brick, Romanesque Revival-style Lenoir Building at 808-812 West Avenue in 1907. Brick corner and intermediate pilasters surmounted by impost blocks and corbelled arches, a metal cornice ornamented with modillions on the corner bays, and stone window sills and lintels project an image of prosperity and permanence.

The Commercial Style of the early- to mid-twentieth century represented a complete departure from ornate Victorian-era architectural styles. A stepped parapet, brick corbelling above the second-story façade and south side elevation windows, and brick stretchers outlining the bays, windows, and entrances characterize the 1928 Belk's Department Store at 101 Main Street. The three-story, circa 1940 façade of the Bernhardt-Seagle Company, separated from Belk's by three earlier commercial buildings, manifests an identical treatment.

The influence of the Classical Revival style is evident in high-profile buildings constructed in the late 1920s, including the Caldwell County Courthouse, the U. S. Post Office, and the First National Bank Building. The 1929 Caldwell County Courthouse (NR 1979) at 208 Main Street, designed by architect Martin L. Hampton, is the most striking example. Classical massing and ornament characterize the tan brick and stone building, but an Art Deco influence is evident in the use of metal window screens with geometric patterns.

James A. Wetmore was the supervising architect for the Classical Revival-style, five-bay, two-story-on-basement, five-to-one-common bond brick U. S. Post Office at 1002 West Avenue, completed in 1930. Four full-height stone pilasters culminate at a denticulated pediment on the slightly-projecting central three bays of the façade. The three-story First National Bank Building has occupied a prominent location at 801 West Avenue since around 1930. A corbelled cornice surmounts a row of short windows in the upper

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sections of the cast-stone façade and east elevation. Bands of slightly recessed, tall, narrow windows lend the bank verticality. Fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals flank the entrance and central bay of the east elevation, carrying a classical frieze as it wraps around the building between the first and second stories.

Classicism gave way to modernism in the 1940s. The J. C. Penney Department Store constructed at 908-912 West Avenue in 1941 was a trendsetting commercial building in its heyday. The original details of the three-story, two-part, brick commercial building are now obscured by a circa 1980s metal screen over the east side of the façade and bands of dark-tinted windows on the west side, but the strong vertical lines of the fluted central-and-end-panel ornamentation on the original stuccoed façade—still visible on the west side—convey the streamlined modern aesthetic. The circa 1940 Ballew Arcade at 118 South Main Street has also been extensively remodeled, but once boasted carrera glass lettering on a moderne façade.

Building façades in the Lenoir Downtown Historic District were updated during the 1950s and 1960s, but little new construction took place. The two-story brick Commercial Building/Masonic Hall at 104-108 Main Street, constructed in 1901, was remodeled in 1959 with a austere modernist façade composed of two yellow brick storefront bays (the north bay is wider than the south bay) separated by a central concrete-paneled bay with the Masonic emblem at the top. The circa 1925 office building at 208 Mulberry Street provides a more modest example of a mid-twentieth-century redesign with enameled-panel façade and use of glass block to replace the window on the north side of the façade and glass tile on the south.

Inventory List

The inventory list is arranged alphabetically by street name. For streets that run north to south, the east side of the street is presented first. For streets that run east to west, the north side of the street is presented first. Properties are listed by street address in ascending order.

Each historic property in the inventory is assigned a name, where possible, based on the first-known and/or a long-term occupant. Most information about these early tenants comes from the *Lenoir City Directories* (1930-1965) located at the North Carolina Collection of the Wilson Library at UNC-Chapel Hill. The city directories are sporadic through 1943, and issued biannually after that date. Following the property name, the street address is provided, followed by the date or approximate date of construction and the date or dates of any major alterations or additions. Dates of construction are based on Sanborn Company maps (published in 1902, 1907, 1913, 1921, 1927, and 1950), historic photographs, Caldwell County property record cards, interviews with local residents, city directory research, and the style and form of the building.

Finally, each resource is designated as contributing or noncontributing to the historic significance and integrity of the district. The evaluations are based on age and degree of alteration. Buildings constructed in or before 1959 are considered contributing if they retain architectural and historic integrity from the period

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of significance. Contributing resources must retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Noncontributing buildings postdate 1959 or were built before 1959 and have been heavily altered, and therefore have lost their architectural and historical integrity. Vacant and parking lots are noted.

ASHE AVENUE

South Side

Caldwell County Agricultural Building
901 Ashe Avenue, 1937, Contributing Building

Two-story-on-basement brick building executed in running bond with a seven-bay façade dominated by a full-height entrance pavilion; soldier course water table, band above stone cornice, and outline of window bays on façade; stepped parapet of pavilion inset with central stone shield; stone Tudor pointed-arch surround at pavilion entrance in lower section of stone-outlined panel above modern double-leaf glass door; auxiliary replacement door west of pavilion (originally a window location) sheltered by flat metal canopy; all window openings have been bricked up; projecting rear section is three bays wide and three bays deep; metal stairs to rear auxiliary entrances, all of which are boarded up; wood handicapped access ramp on west side of façade. East side of cornerstone reads "1936 Caldwell County" above two obscured lines, north side lists the county commissioners at the time: G. M. Goforth Jr. (Chair), W. L. Minish, and P. L. Poovey.

The Caldwell County Agricultural Building, erected at a cost of \$15,000, was dedicated on June 25, 1937. A photograph of this Works Progress Administration (WPA) building appears in the 1940 publication *North Carolina WPA: Its Story*. At that time, the Caldwell County Agricultural Building was one of fifty-five WPA-constructed county agricultural buildings in North Carolina intended to serve as meeting places for farm groups. The 1939-40 city directory indicates that the building also housed the County Library and Curb Market. By 1943, the County Agricultural agent, Agricultural Conservation Association, Home Demonstration agent, and the U. S. Soil Conservation Service were also listed as occupants. A December 24, 1944 fire almost destroyed the building, but the exterior walls were found to be stable enough to reuse. All of the books in the library were lost.¹ After the reconstruction of the interior, the same government agencies utilized the space through the 1950s, with the addition of the U. S. Farms and Home Administration and the U. S. Production and Marketing Administration in 1953-54.

¹ *North Carolina WPA: Its Story* (North Carolina Works Progress Administration, 1940); "Library at Lenoir Almost Destroyed by Fire," *Raleigh News and Observer*, December 25, 1944.

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BOUNDARY STREET

East Side

Parking Lot

Dixie Cream Donut Shop
216 Boundary Street, 1949, Contributing Building

Two-story concrete-block commercial building with a six-to-one common bond brick façade; original storefront with recessed entry sheltered by metal awning; street-level second-story entrance with transom on south side of façade; three second-story façade windows with two-over-two horizontal sash, rectangular transoms in arched heads, and metal awnings; side and rear windows have vinyl replacement sash and applied fluted surrounds with corner blocks; metal doors at first and second-story levels at rear (upper entrance accessed by metal stairs).

The Dixie Cream Donut Shop first appears on the 1950 updates to the 1927 Sanborn map and in the 1950-51 city directory; property cards indicate the building was constructed in 1949.

CHURCH STREET

East Side

Lenoir Roofing Company
104 Church Street, circa 1935, Contributing Building

Two-story, brick, Commercial Style building executed in six-to-one common bond; brick basketweave-pattern diamond-shaped medallions above arched second-story windows; rebuilt storefront with display windows and no entrance (entry now on east side of north elevation); soldier course above storefront; painted "Lenoir Roofing Company" sign on south elevation; north elevation has later brick veneer at first-floor level and stucco above.

Lenoir Roofing Company is listed at this location in the 1937-38 city directory and the building appears on the 1950 updates to the 1927 Sanborn map.

Parking Lot

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Courtney Warehouse
212 Church Street, circa 1888, Contributing Building

Two-story, brick, Italianate, commercial building with a front-gable roof, eave brackets, and corbelled, arched, brick window and door hoods; projecting arches between second-story windows shelter small niches; six-over-six sash; replacement front door; round, louvered gable vent with arched brick hood.

Early accounts of the Courtney business state that “trade in herbs, roots, and country produce became so great” that Marshall M. and R. G. Courtney had a building constructed around 1888 to use as storage space before Marshall built the Courtney Department Store (which faces West Avenue) in 1897.² The 1902 and 1907 Sanborn maps indicate that this building initially served as a warehouse. By 1913 the building functioned as a grocery store; in 1927 there was a dry goods store at this location. City directory research was inconclusive due to street address changes.

West Side

Commercial Building
215 Church Street, 1941, circa 1980s, Noncontributing Building

Heavily altered, one-story-on-basement, two-part, brick commercial building; replacement recessed storefronts, north entry has Colonial Revival broken-pediment surround; blind side walls; metal casement windows at rear and basement; tall interior brick chimney; terra cotta coping on side and rear elevations; roll-up garage door into basement at rear, metal steps provide access to street level space; concrete steps on north side lead from sidewalk to basement.

This building first appears on the 1950 updates to the 1927 Sanborn map and in the 1943-44 city directory; property cards indicate it was constructed in 1941. The Johnsie Hackney Floral Shoppe occupied the south side in 1943-44 and the War Price and Rationing Board the north side. By 1948-49 Lenoir Finance moved into the south section and Margaret’s Flower Shop, Dr. Howard E. Haller (optometrist), and Dr. Alexander F. Lupes (chiropractor) shared the north section. The south side was vacant in 1950-51, and the North Carolina Employment Security Commission and Caldwell Farm Supply operated out of the north side. The Fabric Shop, Inc. moved into the south section by 1953-54; Small Loans, Inc. utilized the space in 1955-56. The North Carolina Employment Security Commission was the sole occupant of the north section through the late 1950s.

² Nancy Alexander, *Here Will I Dwell: The Story of Caldwell County* (n.p., 1956), 187.

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HARPER AVENUE

North Side

Commercial Building
810 Harper Avenue, circa 1910, Contributing Building

Two-story, two-part, yellow brick, Classical Revival-style commercial building with rough-cut granite end and central pilasters and a denticulated cornice; a narrow granite band forms a continuous sill and a wider granite band a continuous lintel for the tall, narrow, replacement windows on the second story of the façade; brick corbelling above the granite lintels; replacement storefronts sheltered by fabric awnings; metal coping; metal panel covers top portion of cornice.

The 1913 Sanborn map indicates that the east side of this building served as a grocery and the west side an electric supply company. In 1921 lodging rooms occupied the second floor of the grocery side; the west side was an auto showroom. By 1930 Piedmont Utilities Company utilized the east side, Smithey's Department Store the west side. T. C. Hamilton lived above Smithey's. Bower's, Inc. Department Store took over both sides of the building by 1938. Walker D. Morgan lived upstairs in the late 1940s. In 1950, the shoe department of Belk's Department Store replaced Bower's. Belk's remained the sole occupant of the building through the 1950s.

Commercial Building
814 Harper Avenue, circa 1935, Contributing Building

One-story, brick, Commercial Style building executed in running bond; stepped parapet with concrete coping; very plain façade with replacement storefront and recessed entry sheltered by a flat-roofed metal canopy supported by metal brackets; diagonal board sheathing under canopy.

This building first appears on the 1950 updates to the 1927 Sanborn map and in the 1937-38 city directory. Carl B. Church operated the first restaurant in the building. West Harper Lunch moved in by 1939; Northwestern Neon Company occupied the rear. Subsequent tenants included Crisp's Place Confectioners in 1943-44; West Harper Curb Market (produce), 1945-46; West Harper Fruit Stand, 1948-49; Bower's Department Store, 1950-51 through 1955-56.

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Stine's Ice Cream Parlor
818-820 Harper Avenue, circa 1935, Contributing Building

Two-story-on-basement, brick, Commercial Style building with a plain façade executed in running bond; soldier course above storefront and windows; paired six-over-six sash on second story (façade, west side and rear); replacement storefront with recessed central entrance and auxiliary entry on east side of façade; basement entrance at north end of west elevation; truncated windows on west elevation and transom above storefront covered with vinyl siding; terra cotta coping. The 1950 Sanborn map shows the building had a one-story front porch.

This building first appears on the 1950 updates to the 1927 Sanborn map and in the 1937-38 city directory. Stine's Ice Cream Parlor was the original tenant. By 1939-40, Stine's shared the building with the Lenoir Flower Shop. Parker's Cut Rate Drugstore utilized the first floor in 1945-46, while Frank A. Parker and his family of four, Benjamin Pritchett, and Phillip C. Parker lived upstairs. Mr. Hedrick operated the Cut Rate Store (drugs and sundries) in 1948-49, with lodging rooms on the second floor. John H. Morrison purchased the drugstore and lived upstairs by 1953-54.

MAIN STREET

East Side

Commercial Building
102 Main Street, circa 1900, remodeled circa 1980s, Noncontributing Building

Two-story commercial building encased in circa 1980s stucco; fluted pilasters flank each bay of the façade and the entrance on the south elevation; projecting metal cornice at first floor level shelters display windows on façade and recessed corner entrance with replacement glass door; two-over-one sash on the second floor, large plate glass windows on the first; stepped parapet on side (south) elevation.

A two-story brick general store with a front porch and a metal cornice appears at this location on the 1902, 1907, and 1913 Sanborn maps. The porch disappears by 1921, when the building functioned as office space, a use that continued through the 1950s. In 1930, Lenoir Cotton Mills, Hudson Cotton Manufacturing Company, Whitnell Cotton Manufacturing Company, Moore Cotton Manufacturing Company, Nelson Cotton Manufacturing Company, and Caldwell Cotton Mill Company rented offices. Three of these tenants—Hudson, Moore, and Caldwell—remained in residence through the 1940s. In 1950 the building was vacant. Allen & Bernard Insurance and the Mutual Building and Loan Association occupied the building through the 1950s.

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Commercial Building/Masonic Hall

104-108 Main Street, 1901, remodeled 1959, Contributing Building

Two-story brick commercial building; originally two buildings with a 1959 façade now unifying them. Austere modernist façade composed of two yellow brick storefront bays (the north bay is wider than the south bay) separated by a central concrete-paneled bay with the Masonic emblem at the top and the words "Masonic Hall" inscribed over the recessed, double-leaf glass entrance to the stairs to the upper floor and basement; metal casement windows on second floor, replacement plate glass display windows and doors sheltered by awnings on the first floor; concrete coping and corner trim; north elevation is stuccoed.

In 1902 the south building was a general store and a hand printing business occupied the north building. By 1907 D. G. B. & S. replaced the general store and the Western Union Telephone Company replaced the printing business. Lodging rooms occupied the second floor. By 1921, the south building contained a movie theater on the first floor; the other building functions remained the same. The Masonic Hall first appears on the second floor in the 1930 city directory, at which time the Great A & P Tea Company occupied the south building and the Imperial Theater and Lenoir Amusement Company the north building. By 1945 the buildings were occupied by the Strand Theater, A & P Food Stores, and the Masonic Hall. The Western Auto Associate Store moved into the theater space in 1950 and Stop & Shop Grocery replaced the A & P. Tuttle's Jewelry occupied the Stop & Shop location in 1955. The Masonic Hall (Hibriten Lodge No. 262 A. F. & A. M.) continues to occupy the upper floor today.

Vacant Lot - 114 Main Street

Commercial Building

116 Main Street, circa 1900, remodeled circa 1960, Noncontributing Building

Two-story brick commercial building with a stuccoed, heavily-altered façade. All windows and doors have been replaced; second-story window fenestration has been altered.

A two-story commercial building at this location served first as a drug store, then as a grocery from around 1913 to 1921. By 1927 the building was absorbed into the Gateway Hotel. The 1930 city directory lists the Palace Barber Shop and Lenoir Quick Lunch as the building's occupants. In 1945 Homer Haynes operated a billiard parlor on the first floor and resided on the second floor. Dancy's Barber Shop was located in the basement. This arrangement continued until around 1955, when Young Ages (children's wear) occupied the first floor and Bishop's Barber Shop the basement.

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Ballew Arcade

118 Main Street, circa 1940, remodeled 2000, Noncontributing Building

Two-story brick commercial building with a stuccoed, heavily-altered façade. A large, flat-roofed canopy shelters the storefront; window and door opening shape is original, as are the second-story windows.

A one-story store selling shoes, men's clothes, and furnishings stood at this location in 1902. By 1907 the store sold feed; from around 1913 to through the 1930s it functioned as a drugstore. The 1930 city directory lists Ballew's Cash Pharmacy as the building's sole occupant. An image of the new, two-story, streamlined modern Ballew Arcade drugstore façade with carrera glass lettering appeared in the September 1941 centennial edition of the *News-Topic*. By 1945 the Ballew Arcade extended to Mulberry Street and included the pharmacy, a beauty shop, offices, and lodging rooms, most of which were accessed from a long "arcade" off Mulberry Street on the north side of the building. The 1950 updates to the 1927 Sanborn map show a two-story commercial building and the arcade in this location. The 1950 city directory lists Lucille's Sewing Room as another business operating in the building, which was known as Ballew Arcade through the 1990s.

Parking Lot

Commercial Building

126 Main Street, 1903, circa 1970s storefront, Contributing Building

Two-story, stuccoed, Classical Revival-style commercial building with banded pilasters topped by Ionic capitals; second floor windows surrounds have flat-arch lintels with granite keystones; heavily-altered first-floor façade with diagonal wood sheathing above the storefront, plate glass display windows, and a recessed central entrance with a replacement glass door; stepped parapet on side (south) elevation.

This lot was vacant until around 1913, when a two-story movie theater occupied the Main Street side of the site, and a bowling alley a building on the Mulberry Street side. The 1921 and 1927 Sanborn maps indicate that the movie theater moved to the rear of the building next door (on the north side). By 1930, the city directory lists Edna Munday, a dressmaker, and Wall Brothers, photographers, among the building's tenants. The Leader Department Store occupied the first floor of the building in 1945; Jessie's Beauty Shop; Kenneth A. Link, optometrist; and the Odd Fellows Hall were located on the second floor. The 1950 Sanborn map reflects that the building extended straight through to Mulberry Street by that time. In 1955 Lerner's Department Store took over the first floor, and Jessie's Beauty Shop was joined by Gaye Beauty Shop and the Naval Reserve Electronics Unit on the second floor.

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Commercial Building

128 Main Street, circa 1900, circa 1980s, Contributing Building

Two-story yellow brick commercial building with Arts-and-Crafts-style casement windows on the second floor; prominent original brackets and projecting cornice have been removed; small square blocks fill the holes where the brackets were attached and a flat metal cornice extends across the façade and part of the north elevation; louvered panels have been inset in long, horizontal window openings above casement windows; stepped cornice projects above original prism-glass transoms and replacement storefronts on first floor of façade and wraps around to north elevation entrance bay, where a curved, flat-roofed marquee once announced the theater location; theater entrance has been heavily altered.

The two-story commercial building at this location sold groceries and china through the 1910s. The 1921 Sanborn map indicates that the space was “being remodeled to be moving picture theatre” and the 1927 Sanborn map shows the theater and balcony location. The 1930 directory lists Joseph Robinowitz as the proprietor of a clothing store in the building, with city offices and the Universal Theater occupying the rest of the space. By 1945, the building’s tenants included the Western Auto Associate Store, State Theater, Jerry’s Beauty Shop, and James McGalliard, who rented lodging rooms upstairs. The storefront space was vacant in 1950, but the State Theater and several lawyers were in residence. By 1955, Pilkington Shoes, Pilot Life and Home Security Life Insurance companies, and the State Theater occupied the building.

Commercial Building

134 Main Street, circa 1913, remodeled circa 1980s, Noncontributing Building

Two-story brick commercial building with a stuccoed, heavily-altered façade. The building originally boasted two storefronts, a corbelled cornice, and pilasters. All windows and doors have been replaced and the storefront enclosed; two gabled porticos flank the double-leaf main entrance (one portico shelters a single-leaf entry, the other windows). A recessed entrance provides access to the rear of the building; metal casement windows are intact on the upper floor and replaced on the first.

The first building on this lot appears on the 1913 Sanborn map, when a hay and feed store operated in the north side of the building and a barber shop on the south side. The hay and feed store remains through 1927; offices replace the barber shop in 1921. By 1927, city offices and a furniture store occupied the south side. The 1930 city directory lists a milliners shop and lawyers offices in the building. By 1945, tenants included Waldensian Bakery, Pilot Life Insurance, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Knights of Pythias Hall, Loyal Order of Moose Hall, and the Woodmen of the World Hall; all but the Jehovah’s Witnesses remained in residence in 1950. By 1955 the bakery and two lawyers were the only occupants of the building.

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Commercial Building

138 Main Street, 1895, remodeled circa 1980s, Noncontributing Building

Two-story brick commercial building with a stuccoed, heavily-altered façade. The building originally boasted three bays separated by pilasters, a corbelled cornice, and windows surmounted by arched hoods at the second-floor level and a storefront below. All windows and doors have been replaced and the storefront enclosed; a nicely detailed, pedimented portico with a denticulated cornice and fluted square posts with Corinthian capitals shelters the single-leaf entrance. The north side and rear elevation are also stuccoed; a recessed entrance provides access to the rear of the building.

A two-story general store occupied this location until 1921, when the Sanborn map indicates that that building served as a warehouse and grocery. The 1930 city directory lists Caro Home Furniture Company as the building's occupant; Teague Furniture Company utilized the space from around 1945 through the 1950s.

War Memorial

Southeast corner of Main Street and West Avenue, 1983, Noncontributing Object

Granite obelisk on square base with plaques commemorating the "men and women of Caldwell County who gave their lives in the service of their country" during the first and second World Wars and the Vietnam War. The Taylor family donated the monument.

Miller Building

202 Main Street, circa 1900, circa 1920s, Contributing Building

Three-story, brick, Commercial Style building with two bays on the upper floors separated by pilasters with pyramidal wood caps; a stepped wood cornice and square corner blocks flanking the soldier course window lintels are the only embellishment; replacement windows; heavily-altered storefront; recessed side and rear entrances. The building façade may have been updated when the adjacent building was constructed.

This three-story commercial building appears on Sanborn maps from 1902 to 1950 and housed a series of clothing stores. City directories reveal that Gene Miller owned and operated a clothing store at this location from 1930 through the mid-1950s, when Lee & Robbins, Inc., clothing bought the store.

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Miller Building/Hedrick Building
204 Main Street, 1926, Contributing Building

Three-story, two-part, brick, Commercial Style building with a stepped parapet with concrete coping; brick corbelling at the top of the four recessed bays on the upper floors separated by brick pilasters; metal casement windows with soldier course lintels; two heavily-altered storefronts; recessed entrances. South storefront has large plate glass window and two single-leaf entries sheltered by a flat-roofed hood. Fluted Doric pilasters on plinths frame the windows and double-leaf door of the north storefront; plywood covers the transoms above the first floor windows (below the second story).

A two-story general store appears on the southern half of the lot in 1902. The building served as a furniture and hardware store in 1907, a restaurant in 1913, and a drugstore in 1921. The 1913 Sanborn shows a two-story barber shop on what had been a vacant lot beside the courthouse. In 1927, a three-story, two-part commercial building appears on the sites of both two-story buildings. It appears that Gene Miller may have constructed the new building, as the 1930 city directory lists the address as the "Miller Building." Occupants in 1930 were the Caldwell Power Company, three attorneys, the North Carolina Forest Service, and A. J. Bradshaw, lumber. By 1945, the north side of the building, which was known as the Hedrick Building, held the offices of Clyde R. Hedrick, a physician, and Hedrick & Yates, dentists. The 1950 Sanborn map shows a drug store in the building. Both sections of the building continued to serve as office space through the 1950s. Decontamination showers were added to the basement circa 1960, at the same time the adjacent fallout shelter was constructed.

Confederate Monument
Northeast corner of Main Street and West Avenue, 1910, moved 1964, Contributing Object

Granite obelisk on square base with inscription commemorating the "men who wore gray;" erected by the Vance Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy of Caldwell County, May 1910. The monument, originally located in a traffic circle at the center of the square, was moved approximately fifty feet to this location in 1964. This monument has been a prominent Lenoir landmark since it was erected in 1910.

Fallout Shelter
Between 204 and 208 Main Street, circa 1960, Noncontributing Structure

A grassy mound, metal door, and ventilation pipe extending approximately two feet above the ground marks the location of this underground fallout shelter.

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Caldwell County Courthouse Bench
Northeast corner of Main Street and West Avenue, 1929, Contributing Object

A curved stone Classical Revival-style bench with a central fountain niche and elaborately sculpted griffin ends is located adjacent to the south elevation of the courthouse, facing the Confederate Monument on the square.

Caldwell County Courthouse (NR-listed as part of Courthouse MPDF, 1979)
208 Main Street, 1904, 1929, 1990, Contributing Building

Charlotte architects Wheeler, Runge, and Dickey, known for their work on public buildings, designed the 1904 Neoclassical Revival red brick courthouse, which was characterized by a central dome and a pedimented tetrasyle portico. County commissioners awarded the contract for the courthouse's construction to William A. Otter and local builder E. A. Poe, who completed the \$25,000 bond project in December 1904.

The 1904 courthouse was encapsulated in a larger building in 1929. Contractors Hartley and Smith remodeled the courthouse interior—including new plumbing, heating, and wiring—and constructed the exterior shell and a jail addition on the Mulberry Street elevation between June 1928 and April 1929 at a cost of \$170,000. Martin L. Hampton designed the stylized Classical Revival-style building, executed in tan brick with stone accents.³ Classical massing and ornament characterize the courthouse, but an Art Deco influence is evident in the metal window screens with geometric patterns. Fluted stone pilasters flank the doors and windows of the central five bays of the seven-bay façade and carry a Doric frieze. Tripartite windows on the façade are surmounted by transoms with geometric metal screens at the first floor level; an elaborately-detailed entrance surround contains the inscription “Caldwell County Courthouse 1929” above the double-leaf door and transom. The projecting, one-bay wings on the north and south elevations feature the same degree of classical detailing, while the rear bays of the side elevations and the Mulberry Street elevation are more simply finished. The Doric frieze and concrete coping continue around the sides and rear of the building, but the six-over-six windows are set in modest surrounds. The centrally located Mulberry Street “County Jail” entrance is recessed with an austere surround. A skywalk connects the 1929 block of the courthouse to the 1962 sheriff's department and jail on the east side of Mulberry Street.

A 1986 bond provided funds for a large courtroom addition on the north side of the 1929 courthouse. The addition, designed by Northwest Associates and Harwood Beebe Company, Inc., was built by Wilkie Construction in 1990. The tan brick building, dominated by a full-height entrance pavilion at the corner of

³ Nancy Alexander, “Courthouse Here Freed of Debt; Celebration Scheduled April 8-9,” *Lenoir News-Topic*, April 1, 1959; “Caldwell County Courthouse,” North Carolina County Courthouses Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1979.

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Main Street and Ashe Avenue, displays stone accents and geometric motifs in keeping with the 1929 courthouse.

Caldwell County Peace Officer Memorial

Northeast corner of Main Street and Ashe Avenue, 2005, Noncontributing Object

Granite memorial with inscription "in valor there is hope" commemorating three Lenoir police officers killed in the line of duty. The Caldwell County Fraternal order of Police dedicated the monument in December 2005.

West Side

Belk's Department Store

101 Main Street, 1928, Contributing Building

Two-story, brick, Commercial Style building with a stepped parapet and three-bay façade; recessed Main Street storefront and large display windows sheltered by a flat metal canopy; brick corbelling above replacement sash on second story of façade and south side elevation; five-bay Harper Avenue elevation with display windows on lower level of eastern three bays and recessed entries on western two; brick stretchers outline the bays, windows, and entrances.

A two-story dwelling appears on this corner in 1902 and 1907; the lot was vacant through 1927. According to property cards, the building was constructed in 1928. Belk's Department Store occupied this location through the 1950s.

Commercial Building

107 Main Street, circa 1900, circa 1940s façade, Contributing Building

Two-story brick building with a circa 1940s Commercial Style tapestry brick façade executed in running bond; recessed entry flanked by large display windows sheltered by a fabric awning; decorative square brick panels above replacement sash on second story. A circa 1902 photograph shows the original storefront and corbelled cornice.

This building served as a general store in 1902 and a grocery with a photograph studio above in 1907, 1913, and 1921. This use continued through the 1930s, when Caro Stores (1930) and Ideal Food Store (1938) operated on the first floor and Teague's Studio on the second. The Fashion (women's wear) occupied the building from the early 1940s through the 1950s.

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The Guarantee Store

113 Main Street, circa 1900, circa 1980s storefront, Contributing Building

Two-story brick commercial building with a denticulated, corbelled cornice; circa 1980s recessed double-leaf replacement entry flanked by large display windows surmounted by a continuous circa 1930s prism-glass transom; corbelled arches above replacement sash on second story; metal coping; shed-roofed canopy over double-leaf service entrance at rear; stuccoed upper portion of rear elevation; brick interior chimney. A circa 1902 photograph shows the original storefront and corbelled arches over the first-floor entrance and windows.

This building served as the post office in 1902 and was vacant in 1907. A dry goods store occupied the building during the 1910s and 1920s. The 1930 city directory lists the Lenoir Shoe Store in this location; the Guarantee Store (a department store) moved in by 1938 and occupied the space through the 1950s.

Commercial Building

115 Main Street, circa 1900, circa 1940s façade, circa 1980s storefront, Contributing Building

Two-story brick building with a circa 1940s Commercial Style façade; slightly corbelled cornice; soldier course above replacement sash on second story; metal coping; circa 1980s recessed double-leaf entry flanked by large display windows; double-leaf service entrance at rear; stuccoed upper portion of rear elevation. A circa 1902 photograph shows the original storefront, fenestration of the second story (two windows with sidelights rather than three windows), and a much more elaborately corbelled cornice.

Sanborn maps indicate that this building was a drugstore from 1902 through the 1920s. Lenoir 5 and 10 Cent Store utilized the building during the 1930s; Wallace Inc. Dept Store moved in by 1945 and occupied the space through the 1950s.

Bernhardt-Seagle Company

117 Main Street, 1903, circa 1940 façade, Contributing Building

Three-story-on-basement, two-part, brick building with a circa 1940 Commercial Style façade; metal denticulated cornice and metal plaque that reads "G. L. B. 1903" in the center of the stepped parapet were salvaged from the 1903 Bernhardt-Seagle building façade; two recessed, altered storefronts with double-leaf glass doors, large plate-glass transoms and display windows; original transoms covered with wood; windows with soldier course sills and lintels and replacement sash on second and third stories of façade; north three large, arched, first floor window openings in rear elevation have replacement sash, south three are boarded-up; arched second-floor rear elevation window openings, third-story openings have flat lintels;

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single-leaf (recessed) and double-leaf entries to basement; two additional basement entries have been enclosed.

G. Lynn Bernhardt constructed a three-story, brick building with a scalloped parapet at this location in 1903, moving his hardware business from a mid-nineteenth-century building on the corner that had served as the James Harper and Sons General Store, the Harper, Bernhardt and Company, and the Bernhardt Hardware Company (the old building was remodeled and opened as the Bank of Lenoir in 1904). G. Lynn's oldest sons, Richmond and Matt Bernhardt, ran the business through the 1920s, selling everything from hardware and furniture to costume jewelry and candy. They added an industrial department to provide factories with goods and equipment during the early 1930s. In 1933, Richmond and Matt's younger brother, G. Lewis, diversified even further with a building supply division. The company motto during the 1950s was "Everything for the Home," reflecting the wide variety of services offered for home construction, furnishing, maintenance, and remodeling. The building supply division closed in 1968, but hardware sales were so strong that a satellite hardware store opened in the Fairway Shopping Center in Hudson in 1971. The industrial division also continued to grow, and moved to a larger facility on Creekway Drive in 1979.⁴ Bernhardt-Seagle still occupies the north section of the first floor of the building.

First National Bank
127 Main Street, 1982, Noncontributing Building

Brutalist-style, two-story, buff-colored brick and concrete bank with monolithic, windowless façade. Entry near northeast corner is highlighted by brick wall obliquely projecting from the corner; wall is taller than bank building and has a triangular cutout at entry-level. Side elevation, which faces the plaza on the southwest corner of Main Street and West Avenue, features vertical bands of concrete alternating with dark-tinted windows that blend with glass spandrels.

Sculpture
Southwest corner of Main Street and West Avenue, 2005, Noncontributing Object

Contemporary metal sculpture located in the southeast quadrant of the plaza.

Mural
Southwest corner of Main Street and West Avenue, 2001, Noncontributing Object

⁴ E. Carl Anderson, ed., *The Heritage of Caldwell County, North Carolina* (Winston-Salem, N. C.: Hunter Publishing Company, 1983), 140-141.

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Colorful three-panel mosaic mural commemorating the 150th anniversary of the incorporation of Lenoir; located in the west-central section of the plaza.

Clock

Southwest corner of Main Street and West Avenue, 1922, 2003, Noncontributing Object

Concrete obelisk with 1922 clock located in the northeastern corner of the plaza; plaque on obelisk reads “This is to acknowledge the restoration of the city clock by Mr. Curtis Moore which was done in honor of his father, Mr. Arthur L. Moore, longtime clock maker and repairman in downtown Lenoir. This timepiece had been a part of the city square since the early 1920s and was located on the side of the Bank of Lenoir Building for many years.”

Bandstand

Northwest corner of Main Street and West Avenue, 2006, Noncontributing Structure

Front-gable roof with exposed wood truss and joist system, square stone posts, a metal railing, and stone steps; located in the northwest corner of the plaza.

Commercial Building

209-211 Main Street, circa 1900, Contributing Building

Two-story stuccoed commercial building with pilasters topped with cast-metal Ionic capitals framing each of the five bays on the south elevation and at the corners of the façade; enclosed second-story windows; altered two-part storefront (south side has recessed entry) with large plate glass windows sheltered by an awning; narrow cast-metal pilasters flank first-floor storefront bays; auxiliary entrance at west corner of south elevation.

The 1902, 1907, and 1913 Sanborn maps show that the south side of this building served as a dry goods and clothing store and the north side a grocery. In 1921 and 1927 the south part was an office. By 1930, H. L. Angley, purveyor of dry goods, operated in the south section and Lenoir Fruit and Candy Company in the north. A. Clyde McCormick, a jeweler, began a long tenancy in the south side in 1937-38; his store remained in this location through the 1950s. A series of restaurants—Caldwell Café in 1937-38, M & S Grill during the 1940s and Central Café in the 1950s—operated in the north side. The Johnsie Hackney Floral Shoppe shared the jewelry store side in 1953-54.

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Commercial Building

213 Main Street, circa 1905, circa 1980s façade, Noncontributing Building

One-story brick commercial building with Colonial Revival-influenced façade; single-leaf entry with sidelights and broken-pediment surround; keystones in round arches over windows.

This lot was vacant in 1902; by 1907 a one-story brick building housed a dry goods store, and then a grocery store by 1921. The building was subsequently utilized by a variety of businesses, including Tate's Drug Store (1930), Crawford's Drug Store (1937-38), Friendly Soda Shoppe & Luncheonette (1939-40), and The Grill, billiards (1943-44). Firestone Home & Auto Supplies occupied the building from 1945 through the early 1950s. Triplett Clothing Company expanded into the space from an adjacent building in 1953.

Commercial Building

215 Main Street, circa 1910, Noncontributing Building

One-story, yellow brick, Commercial Style building with a flat parapet embellished with central cast-stone crest; heavily-altered, recessed, variegated brick veneer storefront with four tall, narrow, plate-glass windows.

The lot was vacant in 1902; by 1913 a restaurant occupied a one-story brick building at this location. The building served as an insurance office in 1921. By 1930 the Baker Company (clothing) moved in, followed by Triplett Clothing Company in 1937-38. The Triplett Clothing Company occupied this location through the 1950s, eventually expanding into the adjacent building to the south.

Commercial Building

217 Main Street, circa 1920, Contributing Building

One-story brick commercial building with a corbelled cornice; awning shelters recessed entry flanked by large display windows.

This lot was vacant in 1913; by 1921 a one-story grocery store stood in this location. Clay's Market operated in the space in 1930; City Market in 1937-38. By 1943-44, Horace B. Arnett operated Arnett's Billiard Parlor on the first floor and lived upstairs, an arrangement that continued until 1950, when the establishment was renamed City Billiards.

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Commercial Building

219-221 Main Street, circa 1900, circa 1910, circa 1990, Noncontributing Building

Stuccoed two-story commercial building with two replacement storefronts and a central door to the second story; fabric awnings shelter recessed entries flanked by large display windows; second-story windows have been replaced. A circa 1900 photograph shows the original storefront of 219 Main Street (central entry flanked by two windows, all surmounted by corbelled arches), fenestration of the second story (three windows surmounted by corbelled arches) and an elaborately corbelled cornice. The stuccoed exterior makes it difficult to determine how much of the two early-twentieth-century buildings is still in existence.

The south half of this building, a two-story brick grocery store, appears on the 1902 Sanborn map, at which time a dwelling stood on the next lot to the north. By 1907 the dwelling had disappeared, and in 1913 a narrow, one-story meat and grocery store occupied the space adjacent to the two-story grocery. Both buildings continued to function as grocery stores through the 1920s. In 1930 Clay's Grocery operated in the south building; W. H. Dingler & Son, jewelers in the north. Clay's Grocery remained in the same location through the 1930s; the jewelry store became known as Brawley's. Caldwell Wine Shop utilized the south building in 1943-44, and Wade H. McGowan and his family of six lived upstairs. The McGowan Hardware Company was located in the north building. In 1945-46 Beach's Beauty salon moved into the south building and McGowan Hardware remained in the north. The same arrangement continued through the 1950s.

Commercial Building

223-225 Main Street, circa 1905, circa 1940s façade, Contributing Building

Two-story, brick, Commercial Style building with plain façade executed in running bond; soldier course lintels; two storefronts and central door to second story; fabric awnings shelter recessed entries flanked by large display windows; wood deck connects building to concrete-block, frame (vinyl-sided) and brick addition that extends west and south behind 221. A photo taken prior to 1908 illustrates the original two-part façade of this building, which boasted a corbelled cornice, arched second-story window openings, and a wooden storefront, while the north side had a single-leaf entry flanked by two windows at street level. The 1940s brick veneer façade makes it difficult to determine how much, if any, of the two early-twentieth-century buildings is still in existence.

Sanborn maps indicate that a dwelling occupied this lot in 1902. By 1907, a two-story, two-part commercial building with a dry goods and clothing store on the south side and a drug store on the north had been constructed. The function of the south section remained the same through the 1920s, but the north section served as a "rummage sale store" in 1913 and a grocery store in 1921, bringing the total number of grocery stores on the block to four (out of ten buildings). In 1930 the Haines Shoe Store occupied the south

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side, Mrs. Nettie Andrews lived upstairs, and the Blue Bell Coffee Shop (which operated through the 1950s) was on the north side. By 1943 the Tire Sales and Battery Company utilized the south section, and remained in that location through the 1950s.

MULBERRY STREET

East Side

Commercial Building
118 Mulberry Street, circa 1920, Contributing Building

Two-story-on-basement brick commercial building; second story of façade is substantially intact, with two recessed brick panels above arched windows with keystones and replacement sash; altered storefront with replacement sash and recessed entry. Projecting copper cornice shelters first-floor façade, which has been painted to look like variegated brick; second-floor façade is painted a solid neutral color. Rear elevation is stuccoed, with a double leaf entry at the basement level and replacement sash.

A one-story grocery originally occupied this location; by 1921 a two-story brick store selling groceries and meat with storage on second floor appears on the Sanborn map. In 1927 the building housed a bowling alley. City directories indicate that in 1930 the Lenoir Recreation Parlor occupied the first floor and Mooney-Seagle Plumbing and Heating Company the second floor. By 1945 Shields Refrigeration Company was located on the first floor and Ralph R. Coffey and his family of six lived on the second floor. Shields Refrigeration remained on the first floor through 1954. The entire building was vacant in 1955.

Lenoir Fire Department No. 1
122 Mulberry Street, circa 1910, circa 1940s façade, Contributing Building

Two-story-on-basement brick commercial building with circa 1940s Commercial Style façade framed by brick pilasters and a corbelled cornice; two recessed brick panels above second-story replacement one-over-one sash windows; soldier course window lintels; replacement storefront with plate glass windows and a single-leaf glass door sheltered by a metal awning. Roll-up garage door at basement level on the rear elevation; replacement sash. An early-twentieth century photograph shows that the windows and door openings were originally arched, and that a bell tower was perched on top of a pointed parapet at the center of the façade.

The fire department, which first appears on the 1913 Sanborn map, was organized shortly after the installation of Lenoir's first water system in 1908. A 1941 article in the *News-Topic* reported that the first fire-fighting equipment included "two fine stallions, Ned and Rex; a high-heeled wagon which carried a

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limited supply of hose... a half-dozen hand-axes and tools; and a nozzle or two.” A “hose wagon” and two horses were noted on the 1913 Sanborn map. A motorized fire truck, probably the American La-France model purchased for \$6,500 in 1914 (also mentioned in the 1941 article), was listed on the 1921 map. The 1930 city directory indicates that the Lenoir Fire Department occupied the first floor and R. A. McDade the second. In 1945 Turner Furniture Company operated out of the first floor and Thomas V. Greene, the proprietor of Red Greene Sign Company, lived and worked upstairs. By 1955 Turner Furniture and Turner Realty shared the first floor and the Knights of Pythias (a community service organization established in Washington D. C. in 1864 to facilitate the healing of Civil War rifts) and Caldwell County Masonic Lodge No. 78 (organized in 1895) occupied the second floor.

Commercial Building

124 Mulberry Street, circa 1910, Contributing Building

Two-story-on-basement brick commercial building with a corbelled pendant cornice; paired, second-story windows with replacement sash and flat-arched lintels; storefront with replacement plate glass windows and a single-leaf glass door sheltered by a fabric awning. Rear elevation is stuccoed, with a roll-up garage door at the basement level and replacement sash.

A one-story harness manufacturing business originally occupied this location. By 1921 the harness manufacturing operation expanded into a two-story brick building; a tenant is not indicated on the 1927 Sanborn map. In 1930 Smith's Pool Room occupied the building, which was known as Benney's Place in 1945, the Teen-Age Soda Shop in 1950, and Heffner's Soda Shop in 1955.

Commercial Building

126 Mulberry Street, circa 1910, circa 1950s storefront, Contributing Building

Two-story-on-basement, four-bay, brick commercial building executed in six-to-one common bond; curved parapet contains a long, recessed, stuccoed, horizontal panel that once read “Caldwell Motor Company”; unique corbelled sawtooth cornice; arched window hoods with corbelled brick at corners; bricked-up windows, paired at center of façade; circa 1950s permastone storefront with replacement plate glass windows and double-leaf glass door sheltered by fabric awnings. Arched entrance bay on rear (east) elevation and double-leaf entry on south elevation at the basement level; metal stair to double-leaf, second-floor entry on north elevation. Interior retains original pressed-tin ceilings and a central stair leading to mezzanine overlooking showroom. According to the current occupants, the upper level once contained a theater. A partition wall now rests on top of the stage.

A one-story office, livery, and warehouse occupied this location in the first decade of the twentieth century. The 1913 Sanborn map illustrates a two-story brick carriage repository, stable, and harness store. The 1921

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map notes that the building contained a garage/repair shop/auto showroom on the first floor and that the second floor was vacant. The building's function was the same in 1927; the 1930 city directory lists Caldwell Motor Company and Lenoir Chevrolet Company as the building's occupants. By 1945 the W. E. Shaw Furniture Company and Stimson Motor Service shared the space. Shaw Furniture was the sole occupant by 1950 and still continues to operate out of the building.

Parking Lot

Office Building

208 Mulberry Street, circa 1925, circa 1950s façade, Contributing Building

One-story-on-basement, brick office building executed in five-to-one common bond; mid-twentieth century enameled-panel façade; original windows replaced with glass block on the north side of the façade and glass tile on the south; recessed double-leaf entry, denticulated cornice over entrance bay; two-over-two horizontal sash and single-leaf entry on rear (east) elevation.

A residence occupied this location during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The 1927 Sanborn map indicates that a one-story building on the site served as the post office. The 1930 city directory lists the U. S. Post Office and the Lenoir Electric Company as joint occupants. The offices of the Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation, a rural electrification cooperative chartered in 1941, were in the building from circa 1945 through the 1950s.

West Side

Commercial Building

101 Mulberry Street, circa 1910 (one-story section), circa 1920 (two-story section), circa 1960s façade on one-story section, Contributing Building

Two-story, brick, Commercial Style building with corner entrance, projecting stepped cornice, and brick pilaster-framed bays; brick corbelling above second-story windows; brick stretchers outline the windows and pilasters; stepped parapet on three-bay Mulberry Street elevation, which also includes two large plate glass windows with multi-pane, opaque-glass transoms and a large glass block window; replacement double-leaf glass entrance with prism-glass transom and corbelled, arched hood; large plate glass (boarded-up) window with a multi-pane, opaque-glass transom, roll-up garage door, a few six-over-six sash windows and a large glass block window on the four-bay Harper Avenue elevation; large replacement plate glass windows at second floor. The two-story corner building is connected to a one-story building by a band of six large plate-glass windows on the south side of the Mulberry Street elevation and two garage doors—one modern and one early twentieth century—on the north side.

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A residence and outbuildings occupied the north end of this lot in 1902; by 1907 the lot was vacant with the exception of a few small outbuildings. A one-story garage with a buried gasoline tank near Mulberry Street and a gasoline engine and repair shop at the rear appear on the north side of the lot by 1913; by 1921 a two-story building had been constructed, extending the complex to Harper Avenue. The buildings are labeled "Ford Service Station," in 1921, and the two-story building contained a sales room on the first floor and a stock room on the second. The 1927 Sanborn map and the 1930 city directory reflect that the complex became Phillips Motor Company, and that the building encompassed areas designated for auto sales, repairs, painting, and parts storage. Smith Motor Sales Inc. occupied the buildings in 1945. By 1950 the one-story, northern building housed Caldwell Glass and the two-story, corner building became the Burgess-Joiner Furniture Company. The industrial division of the Bernhardt-Seagle Company utilized the corner building in 1953; by 1955, the buildings served as storage.

Ballew Arcade Extension

105 Mulberry Street, circa 1945, circa 1980s stucco, Noncontributing Building

One-story stuccoed building with a stepped parapet and a recessed panel indicating the original name of the building, "Ballew Arcade." Brick pilasters frame the single-leaf entrances on either side of the façade; two plate-glass display windows occupy the central bay. A corbelled cornice extends across the façade above the windows.

This lot is vacant on the 1927 Sanborn map. By 1945, a one-story building was constructed on the rear of a building fronting Main Street (now 118 Main Street). The building is labeled "Ballew Arcade" on the 1950 updates to the 1927 Sanborn map, and the 1950 city directory indicates that Arthur L. Moore operated a watch repair business at this location. The address does not appear in later city directories.

WEST AVENUE

North Side

Lenoir Building

808-812 West Avenue, 1907, Contributing Building

Three-story-on-basement, two-part, brick, Romanesque Revival-style commercial building with brick corner and intermediate pilasters flanking each bay; stepped metal cornice ornamented with modillions above first and third stories of corner section, plain metal cornice elsewhere; one-over-one sash on façade and east elevation, six-over-six sash at rear; second-story windows on façade and all stories of the north side of the east elevation have stone sills and lintels; round-arch windows on the third-story of the façade

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are surmounted by corbelled arches that rest on the impost blocks; recessed corner entrance with replacement double-leaf, aluminum-frame glass door; recessed bay on south elevation allows for stair leading from street level to basement; original Lenoir Furniture and Hardware storefront has been altered. An early-twentieth-century photo shows the roof balustrade that once wrapped around the south and east elevations. The original decorative pressed-metal ceiling is intact throughout the first floor retail space.

This building stands on the site of a three-story brick hotel constructed by Lucius Tuttle in 1841. The hotel was demolished and the Lenoir Building—named after the Lenoir family and their successful hardware business open from 1908 through the 1950s—erected. The prominent Charlotte architectural firm of Hook and Rogers, established by C. C. Hook, designed the building. Lenoir Furniture and Hardware carried an eclectic array of supplies for local industrial concerns, from lumber to mining equipment, as well as domestic goods such as clocks, toys, and silverware.⁵ The 1913 Sanborn illustrates that a bank occupied the corner space, the hardware store paint department the northeast corner of the first floor, and an undertaker the third floor. Rooms on the second floor were available for lodging or office use. A barber shop was located in the basement of the east side of the building from the late 1930s through the 1950s. Mutual Building and Loan and Allen and Bernard Insurance, occupants of the corner space during the 1930s and 1940s, moved out around 1952, and the corner office became a clothing store. Occupants of the retail space fronting West Avenue after Lenoir Hardware closed in 1954 included Shield's Hardware and D. D. Suddreth Furniture.

Courtney Building
814 West Avenue, 1879, 1908, Contributing Building

Two-story red brick commercial building with finely-executed three-and-one-half-story Classical Revival-style façade; classical stone ornament; reconstructed stepped wood parapet with a central rectangular panel that used to display the building's name, "Courtney," and now reads "1879" to reflect the date the original portion of the building was constructed; deep molded cornice embellished with dentils and modillions; brick central and corner pilasters flanking window bays on the upper floors terminate at stone Doric and Ionic capitals; central pilaster is banded; arched window surrounds in upper section of façade have egg-and-dart borders and acanthus-leaf keystone consoles; simple stone surrounds at first- and second-story windows; lions-head and plant motifs on sculpted terra cotta rinceau panels in between first and second stories; replacement sash; storefront remodeled 2006.

⁵ "Lenoir Building," undated flyer in survey file located at the Western Office of Archives and History, Asheville; Catherine W. Bishir, Michael T. Southern and Jennifer F. Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 140.

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Marshall M. Courtney and B. M. Tuttle opened a general store at Tuttle's Crossroads (now Hartland) in 1872 and expanded the operation to Lenoir in 1879. An article in the *Lenoir Topic* on May 1, 1879 states that "Mr. Courtney is having about one hundred thousand brick [sic] made, and will erect a large and handsome two story brick store-house on the corner lot adjoining the Central Hotel." An August 28, 1879 update reports that the store was substantially complete; John Rainey painted the building in mid-February 1880. Marshall Courtney purchased Tuttle's interest in the business in 1883, partnering with his brother, R. G. Courtney, in the venture. They constructed the warehouse that still stands behind the Courtney Buildings (facing Church Street) around 1888 to store their inventory. Courtney Brothers sold a wide variety of merchandise, from farm equipment to medicine. On September 19, 1888 Marshall Courtney became the sole proprietor of the business.⁶

A two-story brick building appears on the 1902 and 1907 Sanborn maps in this location; after the construction of Lenoir Building in 1907 Courtney updated the façade, adding an additional one-and-one-half stories to the front part of the building. A 1908 article reports that "the changes...will be a great improvement to his [Courtney's] corner and will be in keeping with all of the other great changes and improvements that have been made in our town in the last few months." Courtney's sons, G. C. and Harry, established the Courtney Clothing Company in 1908 and sold men's clothing at 814 West Avenue until 1934, when they moved the operation into Courtney's Department Store.⁷ The Courtneys remodeled the storefront in 1928; the building served as the Lenoir Drug Store from the mid-1930s through the 1950s.

Courtney Department Store

818 West Avenue, 1897, 1928, circa 1960s storefront, Noncontributing Building

Three-story brick commercial building with metal parapet that reads "Courtney 1897" surmounted by a tall, slender spire; short piers with ball finials anchor parapet; plain pilasters topped with projecting arched-head pendants supported by ancones; deep, bracketed, Italianate cornice extends across façade and west elevation; façade is completely obscured but probably substantially intact behind late-twentieth-century sheathing panels; heavily-altered storefront; painted sign on west elevation reads "Courtney's Department Stores, Everything for Everybody;" corbelled brickwork on west elevation intact; windows on west elevation boarded-up. Early-twentieth-century photos show that the façade boasted corbelled brickwork and tall storefront display windows.

⁶ *The Lenoir Topic*, May 1879; *The Lenoir News*, May 1, 1879, August 28, 1879, February 19, 1880, September 19, 1888; Hall E. Cobb, Jr., *A Brief Historical Sketch of Caldwell County & Lenoir* (Lenoir: n. p., 1922), 187; Anderson, *The Heritage of Caldwell County*, 144.

⁷ *The Lenoir News*, April 17, 1908; Anderson, *The Heritage of Caldwell County*, 144.

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Marshall Courtney built Courtney's Department store in 1897 and began selling readymade women's clothing and accessories. Courtney's sons, G. C. and Marshall, became partners in their father's business in 1904. Marshall M. Courtney died in 1927; his sons completely remodeled the store in 1928.⁸ By 1948 Courtney's Beauty Salon is included in the city directory listing for this address; Courtney's Department store closed in 1961.

Lenoir Stationery Company
902 West Avenue, circa 1930, Contributing Building

Two-story, yellow brick, Commercial Style building with Classical Revival elements including four tall, narrow, cast-stone, torch-and-garland-motif panels at the cornice flanking recessed brick panels with green tile diamond insets and pressed metal panels with torch-and-garland and urn motifs above prism-glass transoms; flat-roofed canopy supported by metal rods shelters wood-frame storefront; original white hexagonal tile floor with square green tile fretwork border at entry; replacement aluminum-frame door; replacement sash on façade, side and rear elevations; metal coping.

The 1930 city directory lists the New York Life Insurance Company, Crawford's Drug Store, and Douglas Hamer Jr., physician, at this address. The Lenoir Stationery Company occupied the building from 1938 through the 1950s.

Collins-Pridmore Department Store
904-906 West Avenue, 1942, 1980s façade, Noncontributing Building

Heavily-altered, two-story, two-part, brick commercial building with stuccoed and scored façade; casement windows on second story; flat-roofed canopy supported by metal rods shelters recessed entries flanked by large display windows.

An October 28, 1941 *News-Topic* article reports that the plans for a new building to house the Collins Department Store had been approved, local builder J. F. Harper intended to break ground that week (weather permitting), and R.G. Pridmore of South Carolina was to be the first store manager. This building first appears in the 1943-44 city directory. By 1948-49 Collins-Pridmore Department Store had a photography studio. In 1955-56 "Pridmore" had been dropped from the store name.

⁸ Ibid., 143-144.

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J. C. Penney Department Store
908-912 West Avenue, 1941, circa 1980s, Contributing Building

Three-story, two-part, brick commercial building. East one-bay section has a circa 1980s metal screen over the original stuccoed façade; a flat-roofed canopy supported by metal rods shelters a heavily-altered storefront sheathed with wood paneling; recessed entry flanked by large display windows. West two-bay façade features vertical bands of stucco (applied over yellow brick veneer) alternating with circa 1980s dark-tinted windows; fluted central and end panels; flat-roofed canopy supported by metal rods over altered storefronts with recessed entries flanked by large display windows; brown-and-white mosaic tile apron and border.

The east section of this building served as the Gold Shop, which sold women's wear, and the west section as the J. C. Penney Department Store through the 1950s. A November 14, 1941 *News-Topic* article touted the new building as "one of Western North Carolina's most modern department stores."

Corada Shop
914 West Avenue, circa 1940, Contributing Building

Two-story, yellow brick, Commercial Style building with soldier course at cornice and string courses over second-story one-over-one sash windows; recessed entry flanked by large display windows.

The Corada Shop, which sold women's wear, occupied this building from the early 1940s through the 1950s.

Fidelity Building
916-918 West Avenue, 1928, Contributing Building

Two-story, yellow brick, Classical Revival-style commercial building with three-bay façade flanked by recessed-panel brick pilasters; central fluted stone pilasters are topped by decorative classical panels; four swag-and-wreath motif stone panels anchor corners of frieze inscribed with "Fidelity Building;" pressed metal panels with a torch-and-wreath central motif and an egg-and-dart border separate first and second stories; flat-roofed canopy supported by metal rods shelters recessed entries with wood doors and tile floors; prism-glass windows on façade, side, and rear elevations; metal coping.

L. E. Dimmette (1894-1982), founder of the Fidelity Insurance Agency, constructed this building in 1928. A two-story boarding house and a long, rectangular, one-story "tenement" were demolished to make way for the new brick commercial buildings which soon lined the block. In 1930, William E. Stevens and Company, accountants, and W. P. Richardson and C. R. Hedrick, physicians, occupied offices on the

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second floor. This occupancy pattern—Fidelity on the first floor and professional office space on the second—continued through the 1950s. A State Highway and Public Works Commission office was located on the second floor in the mid-1940s.

U. S. Post Office
1002 West Avenue, 1931, Contributing Building

The names of A. W. Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury, and James A. Wetmore, the Acting Supervising Architect for all federal post offices, customs houses, federal courthouses, and office buildings constructed between 1915 and 1934, appear on the cornerstone of this Classical Revival-style, five-bay, two-story-on-basement, brick post office executed in five-to-one common bond. Four full-height stone pilasters culminate at a denticulated pediment on the slightly-projecting central three bays of the façade. A denticulated cornice wraps around the façade and side elevations, which are also embellished with two-story pilasters. Keystones ornament the flat arches above the twelve-over-twelve sash on the first floor; the second-story wood casement windows have plain surrounds. All of the window sills are stone. The double-leaf, glass front doors are replacements, but the original plate-glass transom, with “Lenoir, N. C. 28645” stenciled in the center, remains. The finely-detailed entrance surround is characterized by egg-and-dart trim, a Doric frieze and a denticulated cornice. Blind-arched windows surmounted by rinceau flank the entrance. The one-story-on-basement rear wing is five bays deep and ornamented by a simple stone cornice and arched window openings, most of which have been boarded up. A one-story loading dock extends from the north elevation of the rear wing.

This building served solely as the Lenoir post office until around 1939, when it became known as the Federal Building and also housed the offices of the U. S. and North Carolina Forest Service. An article in the September 1941 centennial issue of the *News-Topic* reported that “The government recently spent \$7,000 enlarging the mailing vestibule, truck docking platform and parking area, repainting inside and outside of the building, and improving lobby facilities.” By the mid 1940s, the U. S. Farm Security Administration and the Internal Revenue Service also utilized office space. The building continued to function as the post office and federal offices through the early 1980s, when a new post office was constructed across from the fire station at 114 Ridge Street. The old post office was then adaptively reused as a restaurant, and now serves as office space.

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South Side

First National Bank Building
801 West Avenue, circa 1930, circa 1980, Contributing Building

Three-story, Classical Revival bank with cast-stone façade and east elevation; west and south (rear) elevation are stuccoed brick; flat-roofed pressed-metal canopy with classical motifs shelters slightly recessed central entrance with replacement double-leaf glass door; fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals flank the entrance and central bay of the east elevation, carrying a classical frieze as it wraps around the building between the first and second stories; bands of slightly recessed, tall, narrow replacement windows lend the façade and east elevation verticality; a corbelled cornice surmounts a row of short windows in the upper section of both elevations; the windows on the rear elevation have been enclosed. A stair and elevator tower was added to the northeast side of the east elevation around 1980.

Imposing buildings have stood at this location for more than a century. Sanborn maps show a three-story brick commercial building, which originally served as a general store, on this lot from 1902 through 1927. It appears that First National Bank demolished the earlier building and constructed a new one by 1930; the 1950 Sanborn map indicates that the bank building on the site had a steel frame and “stone” on the first floor of the façade. The 1930 city directory reveals that First National Bank and J. V. Maly, a photographer, occupied the first floor of the building; the upper floors served as office space for a doctor, a dentist, and several attorneys. The bank name changed by 1938 to Union National Bank. New tenants on the second floor included the Mallard Beauty Shop and two furniture designers. In 1943-44 the offices of the American Red Cross and Hudson Veneer Company occupied the third floor. Union National Bank merged with the Bank of Lenoir in 1958, becoming First Union National Bank. The building has served as City Hall since the 1980s.

Commercial Building
813-815 West Avenue, circa 1910, Contributing Building

Two-story-on-basement brick commercial building with intact second story and altered storefronts; central pilaster divides façade into two parts, east section is slightly wider; replacement one-over-one sash and transoms at second story; paired sash in arched window opening of east section; cast-stone window sills and lintels; slight corbelling and long, narrow recessed brick panels above windows; entrance at east end of façade leads to rooms on the upper floor; fabric awning shelters large aluminum-frame display windows on east side; lower portion of the west side façade has been covered with brick veneer and divided into two storefronts. An aerial photograph from a 1938 promotional brochure shows that this building originally had scalloped parapets over both sides of the façade.

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The 1902 and 1907 Sanborn maps show a series of one-story sheds, one of which is labeled "hitching shed," on this lot. Two-story brick buildings fill the lot by 1913, when the Sanborn map indicates that a dry goods store and milliners shop occupied the west section of this building and a book and stationary store the east section. By 1921, the east side served as a music store. Rose's Five and Ten-Cent Store moved into the east section by 1930, the Guarantee Store utilized the west section. McNairy's Drug Store occupied the east side from around 1938 through the 1950s; D. Pender operated a grocery store on the first floor of the west side and the Modernistic Beauty Shoppe the second floor. Saslow's Inc., a jewelry store, moved into the west side in 1945-46 and remained through the 1950s; the Daisy Shop, women's wear, shared the first floor. A Durham Life Insurance office, lodgers and the Modernistic Beauty Shoppe occupied the second floor. This arrangement continued through the mid-1950s, with the addition of a seamstress to a second-floor room. Cato's (women's wear) replaced the Daisy Shoppe around 1950.

Commercial Building
819 West Avenue, 1913, Contributing Building

Two-story-on-basement brick commercial building with intact second story and altered storefronts; scalloped parapet with central metal "1913" plaque; imposing metal modillion cornice includes impost blocks above brick pilasters flanking window bays; replacement one-over-one sash and transoms on façade and side elevation; cast-stone window sills and lintels; lower portion of façade has been covered with brick veneer, enclosing original storefront; brick stringcourses and lunette windows embellish lower level of west (side) elevation, brick pilasters divide upper level into three bays, side entrance at southwest corner.

The 1913 Sanborn map shows a book and stationary store on the first floor of this building and a photography studio on the second. The 1930 city directory lists the Lenoir Book Company as the building's sole occupant; by 1938 Eli's (women's wear) moved into the first floor and Watson's Barber Shop operated in the basement space. Ervin's Men's Shop replaced Eli's in 1943-44 and remained in this location through the 1950s; Watson's, Dickson and Company, grocers, moved into the basement by 1950.

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Section 8. Statement of Significance

The city of Lenoir, population 18,500, is located at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains in central Caldwell County, North Carolina. The Lenoir Downtown Historic District contains the most cohesive collection of historic commercial and government buildings in the downtown area and meets National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Commerce, Politics/Government, and Architecture. Late-nineteenth and early-to-mid-twentieth-century brick commercial and government buildings constitute the district, which includes three full city blocks as well as portions of five other blocks centered on the location of the original “square” carved out of the corners of the intersection of today’s Main Street and West Avenue. Lenoir has served as the principal government and commercial center for Caldwell County since its founding as the county seat in 1841. Buildings in the district represent the predominant architectural types and styles executed in Western North Carolina’s small county seats in the decades just before the turn of the twentieth century through the 1950s. The period of significance for the locally-significant Lenoir Downtown Historic District begins circa 1888, the construction date of the oldest intact commercial building, an Italianate-style warehouse behind the Courtney Department Store at 212 Church Street, and ends in 1959, the year an austere modernist façade was added to the Commercial Building/Masonic Hall at 104-108 Main Street. It is acknowledged that the period of significance extends into the past fifty years, and the 1959 façade is the last remodeling in the then fashionable modernist mode in the historic district. Although Lenoir’s businesses and local and county governments have continued to operate after 1959, the activities and architecture since 1959 are not of exceptional significance. With thirty-nine of its fifty-nine resources categorized as contributing, the Lenoir Downtown Historic District retains a good degree of integrity.

Historic Background and Commerce and Government Contexts

Lenoir was founded in 1841 as the seat of newly-formed Caldwell County, which was created from the existing Burke and Wilkes counties. The town, named in honor of Revolutionary War leader General William Lenoir, was sited roughly in the county’s center at the existing farm community of Tucker’s Barn, a meeting spot since the late eighteenth century. The Caldwell County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions met for the first time for several days in March 1841 “at the Store House of George Powell near the house of George Smith,” as chronicled in the minutes of the court proceedings. The court ordered five commissioners to “lay off Town lots” and appointed Edmund Jones to survey the lots. The commissioners and surveyor completed their work by May 6, according to a hand-copied version of Jones’s 1841 map published in the Caldwell County heritage book.⁹

⁹ W. W. Scott, *Annals of Caldwell County* (1930; reprint, Lenoir, N.C.: Caldwell County Genealogical Society, 1996), 5-6; Anderson, *The Heritage of Caldwell County*, 18-19; Minutes of Caldwell County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, March 1841, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

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The 1841 map had also been annotated with an unnamed person's recollections of Lenoir as it appeared between 1847 and 1853. The map shows fifty-seven town lots laid out in a grid plan. Four main streets—East Main, West Main, North Main, and South Main—converge at an unusual town square, formed by notching the corners of each block meeting at the intersection. The notching created a triangle of open space at each corner, thereby enlarging the area at the intersection to form a town square. A smaller square in the center of the intersection provided a prominent site for the county courthouse. The first permanent courthouse stood on the center square by 1843.¹⁰

The 1841 map shows a hotel, a tavern, a store, several residences, and a few vacant parcels fronting the courthouse square. Elsewhere in town stood two churches, Montrose Academy, a jail and whipping post, a doctor's office, and dwellings. Tucker's Barn stands outside the platted area, southwest of the tiny town. A stream winds through the east side of the plat, which has an irregular grid as compared to the sixteen symmetrical parcels laid out in eight blocks west of North and South Main Streets.¹¹

Lenoir, like many Western North Carolina towns, grew slowly in the years before the railroad's arrival. Educational institutions distinguished the town from other small communities in the surrounding area. In addition to Montrose Academy, two more schools opened in the 1850s. The Kirkwood School, a Presbyterian girls' academy, operated from 1857 through the early twentieth century. The Methodist-run Davenport College, a women's junior college, occupied a small campus beyond the original platted area of town. Davenport College closed in 1937 and transferred its assets to Brevard College, a fellow Methodist institution still operating in Transylvania County. Several church congregations organized by 1860, and late-nineteenth-century photographs show a few church buildings.¹²

Johannes A. Oertel, a painter and Episcopal priest, moved with his family from Tarrytown, New York, to Lenoir in 1869 to serve as rector of St. James Episcopal Church, established twenty years earlier. Oertel's son later described his family's new hometown in a biography of his father, noting the influence of the schools on the character of the town, "Lenoir at that time was an educational center of the South and several schools were there maintained." The younger Oertel's description also reveals that the small town's population was "impoverished" by the Civil War and "everything was in a sad state of dilapidation

¹⁰ Anderson, *The Heritage of Caldwell County*, 18-20.

¹¹ Ibid.; "Caldwell County Courthouse," County Courthouses MPDF.

¹² Bishir, Southern and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 19, 139, 141; "Bibliography of Materials about the History of Brevard College," an online bibliography accessed on May 15, 2006, at http://www.brevard.edu/nc_echo/bibliography_of_materials.htm).

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and neglect.” Still, J. A. Oertel spoke warmly of the residents of Lenoir, apparently quite taken with his new hometown.¹³

The depressed economic state Oertel described continued for nearly two decades. The 1870 and 1880 industry and manufactures schedules of the federal decennial census show few industries in Lenoir; those that existed—mills, shoemakers, carpentry shops, metal smiths, and blacksmiths—catered to the immediate population. Lenoir and the nearby Watauga County community of Blowing Rock (developed by Lenoir industrialist James C. Harper) were known as summer resorts, however, contributing a modest seasonal tourist industry. Lenoir, being a county seat, had a number of hotels and boarding houses in town and tourists took advantage of these accommodations as well.¹⁴

The Chester & Lenoir Narrow Gauge Railroad arrived in 1884, changing everything for the quiet town. Local investors from Lenoir and other points along the prospective railway financed the 110-mile freight and passenger line originating in Chester, South Carolina and terminating in Lenoir. The railroad had the immediate effect of making Lenoir an agricultural market. Farmers from the surrounding area brought crops by the wagonload to be shipped on the narrow gauge line, including dried fruits and herbs, roots and cabbage, wool, beeswax, and other products. The rail line boosted the tourism industry as well, making Lenoir a “gateway” to Blowing Rock and the Blue Ridge Mountains. Merchants took advantage of the influx of farmers and tourists and opened shops in Lenoir. But not until the 1890s, more than a decade after the railroad’s arrival, did Lenoir begin its transformation into a manufacturing center. Harper Furniture Company started production just before the end of the nineteenth century, presaging a manufacturing boom that would last for decades.¹⁵

Another rail line, built in 1893, connected Lenoir to Collettsville, located several miles southwest. The Caldwell & Northern Railway carried lumber cut from around Collettsville to Lenoir’s mills, which

¹³ J. A. Oertel’s *A Vision Revealed: The Life Story of Rev. Johannes A. Oertel* quoted in Scott, 65.

¹⁴ Ninth Census of the United States, 1870: Caldwell County, North Carolina, Industry Schedule, National Archives, Washington, D. C. and Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: Caldwell County, North Carolina, Manufactures Schedule, National Archives, Washington, D. C. (microfilm, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh); Ernest H. Miller, *Miller’s Lenoir City Directory 1939-1940* (Asheville: Commercial Service Company, 1938), 7; Anderson, *The Heritage of Caldwell County*, 18-19.

¹⁵ Robert D. Walker, “Can’t and Never Will: Remembering the Carolina & North-Western,” in Cary Franklin Poole, *A History of Railroading in Western North Carolina* (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1995), 58-67; Lenoir Chamber of Commerce, “A Protest Addressed to the Office of Defense Transportation...in respect to...the Past, Present, and Future Passenger Train Service of the Carolina and North Western Railway,” 1945, 3, 14; Bishir, Southern and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 140.

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supplied the city's furniture manufacturers. By 1902, Lenoir boasted at least ten manufacturing concerns, including flour and lumber mills, furniture and box producers and building supply companies. In 1903, the much-used Chester & Lenoir line was upgraded to standard gauge; it had by this time been reorganized as the Carolina & North Western Railway. The line eventually became a subsidiary of the Southern Railway. In the meantime, the Caldwell & Northern evolved into more than just a logging railroad by extending a passenger line northwest of Lenoir, first to Wilson Creek, then to Mortimer, and finally to Edgemont by 1906.¹⁶

Although Lenoir's industrial plants were physically oriented along the rail line, west of the town's center, the manufacturing boom had a significant effect on the commercial area surrounding the courthouse square. Shops and other commercial buildings began replacing residences on the blocks closest to the square. Gasoline street lamps were installed downtown in 1890. Several prominent men, including Major G. W. F. Harper, who had operated as a private banker for some time, organized the first local bank in 1893. The group incorporated the Bank of Lenoir over a decade later, and opened a first-floor office in the brick building that housed the Harper and Bernhardt mercantile store on the southwest corner of South and West Main Streets (the building is no longer extant). The bank, which boasted Lenoir's first telephone exchange in 1895, was strategically located at a prominent corner in the most heavily developed commercial block in town. Drugstores, butcher shops, and businesses selling men's clothing, general merchandise, hardware, furniture, groceries, and china lined the block. The central blocks of West Main and North Main were also largely commercial at the turn of the century, while East Main remained far less developed. First Baptist Church of Lenoir, established in 1889, built a modest frame church, later enlarged and embellished with a corner tower, just outside the commercial area at the southwest corner of Spring (later Harper) and Church streets. Lenoir showed definite signs of sophistication in commercial architecture by 1897, when Marshall M. Courtney built an elegant, three-story, brick department store with an Italianate cornice and pressed-metal parapet on West Main Street at its corner with Church Street.¹⁷

The center of town changed rapidly in the first decade of the twentieth century. The city constructed a large brick graded school building on North Main Street, a block north of the square, in 1903. In 1904, the county erected a new courthouse on the east side of North Main Street, in the block between school and the square. Charlotte architects Wheeler, Runge, and Dickey, known for their work on public buildings, designed the Neoclassical Revival-style courthouse, which was characterized by a central dome and a

¹⁶ Walker, "Can't and Never Will," 58-67; 1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Lenoir.

¹⁷ Bank of Lenoir, "60th Anniversary Souvenir" May 4, 1954, at the North Carolina Collection in Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; *Citadel of Faith: A History of the First Baptist Church of Lenoir, North Carolina, 1889-1989* (Lenoir: Forbes Printing, 1989), n.p.; 1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Lenoir; Bishir, Southern and Martin, *Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 140; Anderson, *The Heritage of Caldwell County*, 59.

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pedimented tetrasyle portico. The county demolished the original red brick courthouse, temporarily emptying the square. Brick commercial buildings continued to fill vacant lots or to replace frame houses and stores on the blocks closest to the square. Electric power was available in Lenoir on April 6, 1906. Capping off the decade's changes, the city converted the square to a traffic circle in 1910 and installed a monument to Confederate soldiers in the center; the triangular open space at each corner remained. The heart of Lenoir now had the look of a busy and prosperous county seat, with fashionable brick shops, a substantial school, an elegant courthouse and a classical monument as a focal point to the avenues bringing residents and visitors to the center of town.¹⁸

As Lenoir continued to grow and expand in the 1910s, the city changed some street names, perhaps in response to public criticism of the confusing street name and numbering system as remarked upon in a March 25, 1904 *Lenoir News* article: "our own citizens get much confused at times trying to locate houses or give directions. And a stranger would be completely bewildered if he had an occasion to find a given residence...." East and West Main Streets were renamed East and West Avenues, and Spring Street became Harper Avenue.¹⁹

New businesses capitalized on the town's growth during the first decades of the twentieth century, and their success was reflected in the construction of a number of brick commercial buildings embellished with brick corbelling and arched windows in the center of town. The prominent Charlotte architectural firm of Hook and Rogers, established by C. C. Hook, designed the impressive three-story-on-basement brick Lenoir Building at 808-812 West Avenue in 1907. Marshall M. Courtney updated the façade of his building next door in 1908, adding an additional one and one-half stories to the front part of the existing two-story building. A 1908 article reports that "the changes...will be a great improvement to his [Courtney's] corner and will be in keeping with all of the other great changes and improvements that have been made in our town in the last few months."²⁰ Lenoir's religious institutions continued to prosper; First Baptist Church replaced its original frame building in 1913 with a new brick church on the same site, at the corner of Harper Avenue and Church Street. First United Methodist Church's new sanctuary, completed at a cost of \$37,000 in 1918, stood north of downtown at the corner of Ashe Avenue and Church Street.²¹

¹⁸ "Caldwell County Courthouse," County Courthouses MPDF, 1979; Bishir, Southern and Martin, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 139-140; 1902, 1907 and 1913 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Lenoir; Anderson, *The Heritage of Caldwell County*, 59.

¹⁹ John O. Hawkins, "News from 1904," *News-Topic*, August 8, 2005; 1907 and 1913 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Lenoir.

²⁰ *The Lenoir News*, April 17, 1908.

²¹ *Citadel of Faith*, n.p.; "A History of the Methodist Church in Caldwell County, 1841-1962," 32-33, from the files of First United Methodist Church.

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The city upgraded its educational buildings in the 1920s, selling the graded school north of the courthouse so that it could construct separate grammar and high schools, both several blocks removed from the center of town. First Baptist Church bought the old graded school in 1923, demolished the building, and erected a new Neoclassical Revival-style church designed by Benton and Benton of Wilson, selling its 1913 church building to the Zion Reformed Church.²² Several stylish new commercial buildings, including the Fidelity Building, were constructed on West Avenue west of Church Street in 1928.

The most dramatic change to downtown Lenoir in the 1920s was the encapsulation of the 1904 courthouse in a larger building. Contractors Hartley and Smith remodeled the courthouse interior—including new plumbing, heating, and wiring—and constructed the exterior shell and a jail addition on the Mulberry Street elevation between June 1928 and April 1929 at a cost of \$170,000. Martin L. Hampton designed the stylized Classical Revival-style building, executed in tan brick with stone accents, and a striking curved stone bench with a central fountain niche and elaborately sculpted griffin ends located adjacent to the south elevation of the courthouse, facing the Confederate Monument on the square.²³

While Lenoir continued to thrive, the lumber industry around Edgemont and Collettsville began to die in the 1920s, in part due to a 1916 flood that devastated mills, washed away parts of the railroad track, and destroyed the village of Mortimer. The passenger service on this line also declined as automobile ownership increased and road building expanded access from Lenoir to surrounding areas. Tourists could now motor around the mountains in their own cars. Passenger rail service to Edgemont stopped in 1938.²⁴

The economic depression of the 1930s followed soon on the heels of the decline in logging revenue. The North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration attempted to mitigate the impact of hardship in Lenoir by funding civic projects such as grading and improving streets, installing a sewer line, controlling mosquitoes, dispensing surplus commodities, repairing City Hall, constructing a community building and park, and funding staff positions at the library between 1932 and 1935.²⁵ Few new buildings were constructed in the downtown area during the mid-1930s, although the two-story, brick, Caldwell County Agricultural Building, erected in 1937 by the Works Progress Administration, is a notable exception. The

²² 1921 and 1927 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps; *Citadel of Faith*, n.p.

²³ Nancy Alexander, "Courthouse Here Freed of Debt; Celebration Scheduled April 8-9," *Lenoir News-Topic*, April 1, 1959; "Caldwell County Courthouse," North Carolina County Courthouses Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1979.

²⁴ Walker, "Can't and Never Will," 62-67.

²⁵ J. S. Kirk, Walter A. Cutter and Thomas W. Morse, ed., *Emergency Relief in North Carolina* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1936), 460-461.

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building was one of fifty-five WPA-constructed county agricultural buildings in North Carolina intended to serve as meeting places for farm groups.²⁶

In 1938, the Lenoir Board of Trade and the local newspaper published a promotional brochure touting the town's many assets. Twelve furniture plants employed thousands of workers, and related manufacturers—makers of mirrors, veneers, and other products used by the furniture industry—provided more jobs. Lenoir had three hospitals, three residential suburbs, and a Donald Ross-designed golf course, and was said to be the state's fastest growing city since World War I. The brochure lists the population at twelve thousand (triple the 1920 population), including suburbs within a half-mile of town. The brochure also boasts that Lenoir's commercial district had "8 department stores, 2 variety stores, 32 grocery stores, 2 jewelry stores, 5 hardware and furniture stores, 6 cafes, 2 hotels, 3 banks, 2 building and loans, 3 picture shows, 4 drug stores, 15 filling stations, 3 five and ten cent stores, 1 stationery store, 3 automobile supply stores, [and] 10 insurance representatives." The 1937-38 city directory mentions that the city was home to a "large trucking concern" which took advantage of the "modern well-paved highways radiat[ing] in every direction" from Lenoir.²⁷

By the beginning of the 1940s, thirty-three industrial plants provided work for five thousand people and local manufacturers sold products in Canada and Mexico as well as in every state. An article in the September 1941 Centennial edition of the *News-Topic* claimed that Lenoir was the "second largest furniture manufacturing city in [the] United States." There was some new construction downtown, with a few businesses—the Center Theater, J. C. Penney Department Store, and Ballew Arcade—embracing the new streamlined modern design aesthetic. Most construction projects were put on hold, however, due to materials shortages during World War II.²⁸

Lenoir's tourist trade was impacted near the end of the war when the Carolina and North Western Railroad cut passenger service from two trains daily down to a single train in response to an appeal from the Office of Defense Transportation, which had requested that passenger service defer to war needs. The reduction made it impracticable for passengers from Lenoir to make connections in Hickory and decreased the likelihood that they would make connections in Gastonia. Since the line out of Lenoir still went only to Chester, the connections were invaluable to passenger service. The chamber of commerce mounted a

²⁶ *North Carolina WPA: Its Story* (North Carolina Works Progress Administration, 1940).

²⁷ Lenoir Board of Trade and Lenoir *News-Topic*, *Lenoir, North Carolina* (n.p.: 1938), 3-5; Ernest H. Miller, *Miller's Lenoir City Directory 1937-1938* (Asheville: Commercial Service Company, 1936), 5-6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

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response to the decreased passenger service, fearing that the rail line was taking advantage of the war-time shortages to eventually eliminate passenger service altogether.²⁹

The population of greater Lenoir grew to 15,106 by 1950. Business in downtown was quite brisk, and city directories reflect few vacancies in available commercial space. Several building facades were updated with enameled metal panels. Established religious institutions expanded to accommodate growing congregations during this period. First Baptist Church added a chapel and education building, designed by Coffey and Olson, in 1957-58.³⁰ First United Methodist Church began planning the expansion of their 1949 education building in 1959, completing a fellowship hall in 1961.³¹

Most of the commercial blocks surrounding Lenoir's central square were built out by the 1950s. Buildings such as the sheriff's department/jail, constructed in 1962 on the east side of Mulberry Street opposite the courthouse, replaced modest residences. In order to mediate traffic congestion at the center of town, the Confederate Monument was moved to the northeast corner of the square in 1964, the median removed, and traffic lights installed. This created a four-way stop at the intersection but further eroded the town square of the city's original design. The triangles of open space at the corners of each block converging at the square remain; the last trace of that original design.³² A new fire station occupied a corner lot at the intersection of Harper Avenue and Ridge Street by the end of the 1960s.

Architecture Context

Many of the first commercial buildings in Lenoir, as indicated by Sanborn maps and early-twentieth-century photographs, were simply finished, one-and two-story, frame, weatherboarded structures with full-width front porches. None of these early buildings survived the late-nineteenth-century growth and expansion precipitated by the arrival of the railroad and the success of the furniture industry.

The oldest intact commercial edifice in downtown Lenoir is a circa 1888, two-story, front-gable roofed, brick building at 212 Church Street, which exhibits the Italianate style in its eave brackets and arched brick window and door hoods. Marshall M. and R. G. Courtney had the building constructed to use as a warehouse before Marshall built the Courtney Department Store in 1897.

²⁹ Chamber of Commerce, 1-6.

³⁰ "Citadel of Faith," n.p.

³¹ "A History of the Methodist Church in Caldwell County, 1841-1962," 32-33.

³² Anderson, *The Heritage of Caldwell County*, 49.

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A number of commercial buildings in the district were constructed around the turn of the twentieth century. These brick buildings, typically one- or two-stories tall, were embellished with brick corbelling, pilasters, arched window hoods, and decorative parapets evocative of the Italianate style. A series of three two-story circa 1900 buildings on the west side of the 100 block of Main Street (107-115) epitomize this style, although some of the decorative brickwork has been obscured by circa 1940s Commercial Style façades. The Guarantee Store at 113 Main Street is the most intact, exhibiting a denticulated, corbelled cornice and corbelled arches above the second-story windows. A tapestry brick façade covers the corbelled cornice of the building at 107 Main Street, but the second story fenestration is intact. The commercial building at 115 Main Street has been more extensively altered, with the 1940s façade covering all of the original corbelling and the second-story window fenestration being changed to allow for three narrow windows rather than two windows with sidelights.

The circa 1900 commercial building at 209-211 Main Street exhibits another trend in early-twentieth-century commercial building ornamentation, the use of metal decorative elements. Pilasters topped with cast-metal Ionic capitals frame each of the five bays on the south elevation and at the corners of the façade, and narrow cast-metal pilasters flank the first-floor storefront bays. The commercial building at 819 West Avenue, erected in 1913, has a central metal “1913” plaque in the scalloped parapet and an imposing metal modillion cornice which includes impost blocks above the brick pilasters flanking the window bays. The Bernhardt-Seagle Company building at 117 Main Street retains a metal denticulated cornice and metal plaque that reads “G. L. B. 1903” in the center of the stepped parapet; both elements were salvaged from the 1903 Bernhardt-Seagle building façade and incorporated into the circa 1940 façade.

The most elaborate commercial buildings constructed during this period—the Courtney Department Store, Courtney Building, and Lenoir Building—occupy the north side of the 800 block of West Avenue. Marshall M. Courtney intended for the decorative façade of the 1897 Courtney Department Store at 818 West Avenue to attract customers, and its cornice and parapet remain impossible to miss. A tall, slender spire surmounts a metal parapet that reads “Courtney 1897” above a deep, bracketed, Italianate cornice. Late-twentieth-century sheathing panels cover the original façade, which is probably substantially intact underneath its modern skin.

Courtney constructed an even more impressive Classical Revival-style façade on the existing two-story building next door at 814 West Avenue in 1908. The finely-executed, three-and-one-half-story, red brick façade features a stepped wood parapet with a central rectangular panel, a deep molded cornice embellished with dentils and modillions, brick central and corner pilasters with stone Doric and Ionic capitals, and lions head and plant motifs on sculpted terra cotta rinceau panels in between the first and second stories. An egg-and-dart border and acanthus-leaf keystone consoles ornament the arched window surrounds in the upper section of the façade.

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The prominent Charlotte architectural firm of Hook and Rogers, established by C. C. Hook, designed the three-story-on-basement, two-part, brick, Romanesque Revival-style Lenoir Building at 808-812 West Avenue in 1907. Brick corner and intermediate pilasters surmounted by impost blocks and corbelled arches, a metal cornice ornamented with modillions on the corner bays, and stone window sills and lintels project an image of prosperity and permanence. The roof balustrade that once wrapped around the south and east elevations is no longer intact.

The Commercial Style of the early- to mid-twentieth century represented a complete departure from ornate Victorian-era architectural styles. Patterned masonry; sparingly-used tile, concrete, stone, or terra cotta insets; shaped parapets; and bands of large rectangular windows distinguish these otherwise austere commercial buildings. A stepped parapet, brick corbelling above the second-story windows, and brick stretchers outlining the bays, windows, and entrances characterize the 1928 Belk's Department Store at 101 Main Street. The three-story, circa 1940 façade of the Bernhardt-Seagle Company, separated from Belk's by three earlier commercial buildings, manifests an identical treatment. The circa 1920, two-story section of 101 Mulberry Street exhibits the same Commercial Style elements and additional twentieth-century design features such as a prism-glass transom above the entrance, but also harkens back to earlier styles with its projecting stepped cornice and corbelled, arched entrance hood.

A few commercial and government buildings in downtown Lenoir were executed in the Classical Revival style, a popular choice since the turn of the twentieth century for buildings intended to symbolize "democratic ideals, inspire patriotism, and elevate public taste."³³ The 1929 Caldwell County Courthouse (208 Main Street), designed by architect Martin L. Hampton, is the most striking example. Classical massing and ornament characterize the tan brick and stone building, but an Art Deco influence is evident in the use of metal window screens with geometric patterns. Fluted stone pilasters flank the doors and windows of the central five bays of the seven-bay façade and carry a Doric frieze. Tripartite windows on the façade are surmounted by transoms with geometric screens at the first floor level; an elaborately-detailed entrance surround contains the inscription "Caldwell County Courthouse 1929" above the double-leaf door and transom.

James A. Wetmore was the Acting Supervising Architect for the Classical Revival-style, five-bay, two-story-on-basement, five-to-one common bond brick U. S. Post Office at 1002 West Avenue, completed in 1930. Four full-height stone pilasters culminate at a denticulated pediment on the slightly-projecting central three bays of the façade. A denticulated cornice wraps around the façade and side elevations, which are also

³³ Catherine W. Bishir, *North Carolina Architecture*, portable edition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 457.

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embellished with two-story pilasters. Keystones ornament the flat arches above the twelve-over-twelve sash on the first floor.

The Classical Revival style was also a popular choice for bank buildings, as they attempted to convey a sense of financial responsibility and security through brick and stone. The three-story First National Bank Building has occupied a prominent location at 801 West Avenue since around 1930. A corbelled cornice surmounts a row of short windows in the upper sections of the cast-stone façade and east elevation. Bands of slightly recessed, tall, narrow windows lend the bank verticality. Fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals flank the entrance and central bay of the east elevation, carrying a classical frieze as it wraps around the building between the first and second stories. A flat-roofed pressed-metal canopy with classical motifs shelters the slightly recessed central entrance flanked by original sconces.

The 1928 Fidelity Building at 916-918 West Avenue is a more modest Classical Revival-style commercial building. Central fluted stone pilasters topped by decorative classical panels distinguish the two-story, yellow brick building's three-bay façade. Four swag-and-wreath motif stone panels above recessed-panel brick pilasters anchor the corners of the frieze inscribed with "Fidelity Building;" pressed metal panels with a torch-and-wreath central motif and an egg-and-dart border separate the first and second stories. Even the two-story, yellow brick, Commercial Style Lenoir Stationery Company, constructed around 1930 at 902 West Avenue (the opposite end of the block), manifests Classical Revival elements in its tall, narrow, torch-and-garland, cast-stone panels at the cornice and the pressed metal panels with torch-and-garland and urn motifs above the prism-glass transoms.

Classicism gave way to modernism in the 1940s. The J. C. Penney Department Store constructed at 908-912 West Avenue in 1941 was a trendsetting commercial building in its heyday. Period newspaper articles proclaimed it to be "one of Western North Carolina's most modern department stores."³⁴ The original details of the three-story, two-part, brick commercial building are now obscured by a circa 1980s metal screen over the east side of the façade and bands of dark-tinted windows on the west side, but the strong vertical lines of the fluted central-and-end-panel ornamentation on the original stuccoed façade—still visible on the west side—convey the streamlined modern aesthetic. The circa 1940 Ballew Arcade at 118 South Main Street has also been extensively remodeled, but once boasted carrera glass lettering on a moderne façade.

Building façades in the Lenoir Downtown Historic District were updated during the 1950s and 1960s, but little new construction took place. The two-story brick Commercial Building/Masonic Hall at 104-108 Main Street, constructed in 1901, was remodeled in 1959 with a austere modernist façade composed of two

³⁴ "Penney Store Here One of the Most Modern in Western North Carolina," *News-Topic*, November 14, 1941.

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yellow brick storefront bays (the north bay is wider than the south bay) separated by a central concrete-paneled bay with the Masonic emblem at the top. The words "Masonic Hall" are inscribed over the recessed, double-leaf glass entrance to the stairs to the upper floor and basement. Bands of metal casement windows on the second floor, plate glass display windows and doors on the first floor, and concrete coping and corner trim reflect the mid-century modern aesthetic. The circa 1925 office building at 208 Mulberry Street provides a more modest example of a mid-twentieth-century redesign with its enameled-panel façade and use of glass block to replace the window on the north side of the façade and glass tile on the south.

A 1986 bond provided funds for a large courtroom addition on the north side of the 1929 courthouse. The addition, designed by Northwest Associates and Harwood Beebe Company, Inc., was built by Wilkie Construction in 1990. The tan brick building, dominated by a full-height entrance pavilion at the corner of Main Street and Ashe Avenue, displays stone accents and geometric motifs in keeping with the 1929 courthouse.

Lenoir's Downtown Commercial District contains the largest and most intact collection of commercial and government buildings in Caldwell County. Other small communities such as Rhodhiss, established in 1900 as a mill town, and Edgemont, the western terminus of the Caldwell & Northern Railroad, contain a few commercial buildings, but nothing on the scale of the county seat. Coffey's General Store, a frame building constructed during Edgemont's early-twentieth-century boom period as a logging center and resort town, is distinguished by a parapet and a recessed entrance.³⁵

Downtown Morganton (NR 1987), in neighboring Burke County, was substantially rebuilt after an 1893 fire swept through the central business district. Two-story, brick commercial buildings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries line East and West Union streets and the intersecting blocks of Green and King streets. Corbelled cornices and pilasters distinguish a row of six brick buildings in the 100 block of East Union Street, much like the buildings on the west side of the 100 block of Main Street in Lenoir. Later buildings exhibit more eclectic design influences. The tiled pent roof of the Alva Theater evokes the Spanish Colonial Revival style, while the designs of the stuccoed Mimosa Theater and the Tate Block were inspired by the Art Deco style.³⁶

North Wilkesboro, northeast of Lenoir in Wilkes County, was established in 1890 as the western terminus of the newly constructed Northwestern North Carolina Railroad from Winston. Most of the one-and two-story brick buildings in its Downtown Main Street Historic District (NR 2002) were constructed between 1890 and 1930. Particularly distinctive edifices include the second Bank of North Wilkesboro (1923), a

³⁵ Bishir, Southern and Martin, *Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, 147.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 149.

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two-story Neoclassical Revival building executed in brick and stone with full-height, inset Doric columns dominating the façade; and the adjoining Hotel Wilkes (1923), a five-story building with a red brick shaft above a stone base and cornice; both attributed to architect Charles C. Benton of Wilson.³⁷ Benton also designed Lenoir's Neoclassical Revival First Baptist Church in 1923.

³⁷ Ibid., 130; Laura A. W. Phillips, "Downtown Main Street Historic District," North Wilkesboro, Wilkes County, National Register of Historic Places nomination, 2002.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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10. Geographical Data

UTM References, con.

5. Zone 17, 45110 Easting, 3974300 Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Lenoir Downtown Historic District are indicated by the bold line on the enclosed map. Scale 1" = 160'

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Lenoir Downtown Historic District are drawn to encompass the greatest concentration of historic commercial and government buildings in the downtown area constructed during the period of significance—1888 to 1959—that contribute to the historic and architectural character of the district. The area immediately outside the district is characterized by later commercial, governmental and institutional development.

Photograph Catalog

All photographs by Heather Fearnbach and Clay Griffith, Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc., 3334 Nottingham Road, Winston-Salem, NC, on April 28, 2006. Digital images located at the North Carolina Office of Archives and History Western Office in Asheville, North Carolina.

1. Lenoir Building, Courtney Building, Courtney Department Store, 808-818 West Avenue
2. Commercial Buildings, The Guarantee Store, 107-115 Main Street
3. Courtney Warehouse, 212 Church Street
4. Commercial Building, 101 Mulberry Street
5. U. S. Post Office, 1002 West Avenue
6. Commercial Building/Masonic Hall, 104-108 Main Street
7. Caldwell County Courthouse Bench, Northeast Corner of Main Street and West Avenue
8. Commercial Building, Ballew Arcade, 116-118 Main Street