

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Carolina and Northwestern Railway Freight Station

Lenoir, Caldwell County, CW0378, Listed 08/29/2019

Nomination by Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc.

Photographs by Heather Fearnbach, October 2018



Northeast oblique



Warehouse office, looking northwest

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 Carolina and Northwestern Railway Freight Station

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 1407 College Avenue SW

N/A not for publication

city or town Lenoir

N/A vicinity

stat North Carolina

code NC

county Caldwell

code 27

zip code 28645

e _____

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 Natural and 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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION: Rail-related

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT: Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK
CONCRETE
roof OTHER: Tar-and-gravel
other _____

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

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

Transportation

Period of Significance

1950-1969

Significant Dates

1950

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill

Caldwell Heritage Museum, Lenoir

Caldwell County Public Library, Lenoir

Carolina and Northwestern Railway Freight Station
Name of Property

Caldwell County, NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.014 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

See continuation sheet

Latitude: 35.907998 Longitude: -81.547803

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
organization Fearnbach History Services, Inc. date 12/24/2018
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 Lenoir Depot, LLC, c/o Yorke Lawson
street & number 4300 Sharon Road, Suite 526 telephone 901-412-6435
city or town Charlotte state NC zip code 28211

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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Section 7. Narrative Description

The Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station is rotated approximately thirty degrees from true cardinal direction alignment, paralleling the railroad track. However, for the purposes of this document the following description is written as if it has true north-south orientation.

Setting

Located south of Lenoir's commercial center, the 1950 freight station occupies an irregularly shaped approximately three-acre parcel bounded by College Avenue to the north, a vacant three-acre tract to the east and south, and the former Carolina and Northwestern Railway line, now operated by the Caldwell County Railroad Company, to the west. The station stands in close proximity to the railroad track in the lot's northwest section. Industrial buildings flank the railroad corridor in all directions. The 1902-1903 Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. plant (NR 2017) is east of the vacant lot and a creek. J. M. Bernhardt Planing Mill and Box Factory – Steele Cotton Mill (NR 2017), erected in 1896 and expanded through the early 1950s, stands to the northeast on College Avenue's north side. Fairfield Chair Company lies to the northwest, while Lenoir Mills, Broyhill Furniture's Harper plant, and a Broyhill Furniture warehouse are farther north.

A gravel drive provides access from College Avenue to the loading docks on the freight station's east side and a gravel parking area. The topography is flat. The area surrounding the station has not been maintained and is overgrown with vegetation. The tracks of the spur line to the east that served Lenoir Cotton Mill – Blue Bell, Inc. have been removed.

Exterior

The long, rectangular, one-story, flat-roofed, Modernist freight station encompasses a north administrative section and a large, open, south warehouse surrounded by loading docks. The fire-resistant brick, concrete, and steel structure features five-to-one common-bond red-brick walls that rise above a smooth cast-stone foundation. Slightly projecting cast-stone sills and a cast-stone belt course surmounting the windows distinguish the north section. Cast-stone coping caps the flat parapet. The linear cast-stone elements accentuate the building's horizontality. The deep concrete canopies and open shed that shelter the long concrete loading platform extending from the warehouse's east, south, and west elevations further exaggerate this effect. The roof system comprises six-inch-wide steel trusses in the north section, steel beams in the warehouse, eight-foot-long by two-foot-wide concrete roof decking panels, and a built-up (tar-and-gravel) roof.

The six-bay north elevation includes a cut-away corner entrance at its east end. The original single-leaf aluminum door has three horizontal upper panes, a flat Modernist handle, and a rectangular transom.

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Cast-stone steps lead to the recessed door. Five large two-over-two-horizontal-pane aluminum-frame sash are centered on the north elevation west of the entrance. Above the windows, the original “freight station” sign comprised of individually mounted capital block letters remains, although the “Carolina and Northwestern Railway” lettering that surmounted it has been removed.

At the east elevation’s north end, five high two-horizontal-pane aluminum-frame sash illuminate the entrance vestibule and restrooms. Aluminum-frame screens have been installed in the openings. The six-bay-long freight warehouse to the south is inset to accommodate the loading-dock entrances—six on each of the east and west elevations and one on the south elevation—that provided ample access for product transfer. The roll-up doors are intact with the exception of the north door on the west elevation, which has been removed. Most have two lower and one upper five-wood-panel rows and a five-pane section that allowed natural light to permeate the warehouse. Three taller doors (in the east and west elevations’ southernmost bays and at the south elevation’s center) have two rows of glazing. Plywood has temporarily been installed on the interior of the glazed sections to avert breakage.

The concrete and steel loading platform wraps around the entire warehouse and extends further south along the west railroad corridor, terminating with a wide concrete ramp. Steel beams and bracketed posts support the deep concrete canopies and open shed that shelter the concrete platform. A heavy-timber bumper was added to the east platform’s edge to minimize truck strike impact. The west platform has a steel edge. Steel bumpers also protect the concrete foundation at the warehouse’s southeast and southwest corners. The north warehouse door opening on the west elevation has been filled with a single-leaf hollow-core wood door and a square window (now sans glass) surrounded with plywood. Three large two-over-two-horizontal-pane aluminum-frame sash at the west elevation’s north end light the office.

Interior

Spatial use dictated the station’s interior finishes. The north administrative wing was more finely finished, with plastered walls and plaster-on-metal-lath ceilings. However, partial roof collapse has resulted in water damage in the open office that occupies most of the wing’s north section. Spalling plaster has exposed brick and cast-stone walls and reinforced-concrete roof decking. Although some brittle, square, vinyl-composition tiles remain in the office, the concrete floor slab is uncovered in most areas. The long plywood service counter at the room’s east end provided ample storage in its seven-section two-shelf base cabinet with flat-panel doors and matching drawers.

East of the office, a small entrance vestibule, restroom, and storage room span the east elevation, while storage and mechanical rooms and a restroom are on the office’s south side. In order to permit light transference from the vestibule, the partition wall behind the office service counter encompasses a five-section textured-clear-glass window and a matching single-leaf door with a textured-glass upper section. Elsewhere, single-leaf metal doors have simple steel frames. Tall metal lockers line the vestibule’s east

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wall. The restrooms retain three-quarter-height square-white-ceramic-tile wainscoting with black bullnose and base tiles. The patterned ceramic-tile floors comprise groups of four small rectangular white tiles bordering a central square black tile. Some original white marble slab stall partitions and white porcelain fixtures, including Art Moderne-style sinks with slender tapered pedestals, are intact.

A brick partition wall separates the administrative area from the warehouse to the south. A single-leaf metal door near the wall's east end provides egress. The robust steel beams that span the building's entire width beneath concrete roof decking allow the warehouse to have a completely open plan. The unpainted brick and cast-stone walls and poured-concrete floor are resilient and durable. Temporary steel shelving and dimensional lumber wall framing installed after 1994 were removed in 2018.

A small, square, vertical-board-sheathed, flat-roofed office projects from the north elevation's center. A single six-over-six double-hung wood sash pierces each of the east and west elevations. An eight-over-eight sash of the same type and a single-leaf door with a three-horizontal-pane upper section fill the south elevation.

The original freight scale just north of the south entrance on the warehouse's east elevation is a rare survival. Manufactured by Southern Railway's Charlotte Roadway Shops, the frame comprises a cast-iron classical cornice supported by two fluted columns spanned by a central brace. A weighbeam with a sliding poise hangs from the cornice. A cast-iron rod connects the weighbeam to a lever mounted under the central brace. A matching rod extends from the lever to weights beneath the wood-plank platform.

Integrity Statement

The Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station remains on its original site and the surrounding area appears much as it did during the station's function, thus allowing for integrity of setting, feeling, and association. The building retains high integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Character-defining features including five-to-one common-bond brick and formed-concrete walls, a concrete floor and roof decking panels, a flat parapet with cast-stone coping, slightly projecting cast-stone sills, and a cast-stone belt course surmounting the windows are largely intact. Some of the north section's concrete roof decking had collapsed by 2017 and the remainder is structurally comprised. However, replacement concrete decking that emulates the original panels will be installed in conjunction with the upcoming rehabilitation. As a temporary measure, the missing roof area was secured in late 2018 with plywood panels and a tarp. Although the administrative wing's interior finishes suffered water damage following the roof collapse, the floor plan and significant features such as the east partition wall with a five-section textured-clear-glass window and a matching single-leaf door with a textured-glass upper section remain. The warehouse is completely intact and the original warehouse freight scale and office are in good condition.

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Section 8. Statement of Significance

The Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station at 1407 College Avenue SW in Lenoir is locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of rail-related transportation due to its critical function as the city's sole freight transport facility during its mid-twentieth-century industrial boom. The edifice is one of only two extant Caldwell County railroad stations, and the only dedicated freight depot.¹ Lenoir's manufacturing concerns, dependent upon railroad connections for efficient and economical raw material delivery and finished goods shipping, erected plants in close proximity to the railroad tracks and freight depot. As industrial production burgeoned after World War II, the spacious, fire-resistant brick, concrete, and steel station, completed in 1950 at a cost of \$125,000, provided desperately needed increased freight handling capacity.

The freight station also merits listing under Criterion C as Caldwell County's sole example of mid-twentieth-century Modernist railroad depot architecture. The one-story, flat-roofed design manifests the Carolina and Northwestern Railway's progressive attitude and exemplifies a functionalist approach in its long rectangular form, horizontal massing, expressed structure, and open interior. The strong, durable, economical, and fire-resistant structural system comprises common-bond red-brick walls; a cast-stone foundation, sills, lintels, belt course, and coping; concrete floor slabs and roof decking panels; and steel beams and trusses. Linear cast-stone elements, deep loading dock canopies, and a long loading platform covered by an open shed accentuate the building's horizontality. The efficient floor plan encompasses a north administrative wing, most of which was an open office, and a south warehouse retaining a small vertical-board-sheathed office and freight scale. Horizontal-pane aluminum-frame sash illuminate the administrative wing, while the wood-panel loading dock doors' glazed upper sections light the warehouse. The period of significance begins in 1950, the building's completion date, and ends in 1969. Although the depot continued to function until 1994, the period after 1969 is not of exceptional significance.

Historical Background

Caldwell County residents advocated for rail service to increase connectivity to regional markets throughout the nineteenth century. However, although the Chester and Lenoir Narrow Gauge Railroad commenced constructing a privately funded 110-mile freight and passenger line to connect its namesake communities in northwestern South Carolina and North Carolina soon after the company's 1873 creation, it was not until June 2, 1884 that citizens of Lenoir, Caldwell County's seat established in 1841, celebrated the line's completion. The railroad company erected utilitarian frame freight and passenger

¹ The other, a small, one-story, weatherboarded, gable-roofed, circa 1900 building in Hudson, is a typical rural turn-of-the-twentieth century passenger and freight depot.

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depots near town centers and facilitated commercial and industrial development with spur lines along its route.²

Lenoir entrepreneurs were among those who capitalized upon the opportunity for more efficient trade. Merchants including George Washington Finley Harper, Marshall M. Courtney, John Mathias Bernhardt, and George Lynn Bernhardt erected commercial buildings to serve the influx of residents and visitors. Farmers came to town to socialize, conduct business, purchase items they could not produce, and sell and ship crops and products including dried fruits, herbs, roots, cabbage, wool, and beeswax. In addition to functioning as an important agricultural market, Lenoir was promoted as a gateway to Blowing Rock and the Blue Ridge Mountains, and thus attracted a growing number of tourists.³

The Bernhardts and Harpers were also heavily involved with railroad development. G. W. F. Harper was a principle stockholder and became in 1893 the president of the Chester and Lenoir Narrow Gauge Railroad. He guided the concern through receivership to become the Carolina and Northwestern Railway in 1897. J. M. Bernhardt, while general production manager at Caldwell Land and Lumber Company (incorporated in 1892), encouraged the owners to build the Caldwell and Northern Railway. He also assisted with the route's survey. Beginning in 1893, freight cars transported lumber from the small community of Collettsville, located ten miles southwest of Lenoir, to the larger municipality's industries. A passenger line extended northwest of Lenoir in phases to Wilson Creek, Mortimer, and finally to Edgemont by 1906. The Carolina and Northwestern Railway assumed control of the Caldwell and Northern Railway in 1905 and merged the companies in 1910.⁴

Railroad proximity, sizable potential employee pools, and steam and electric power availability galvanized Lenoir's late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century transformation into a manufacturing center. Numerous industrial concerns including J. M. Bernhardt's Lenoir Furniture Company, which

² Robert D. Walker, "Can't and Never Will: Remembering the Carolina & North-Western," in Cary Franklin Poole, *A History of Railroad in Western North Carolina* (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1995), 58-67; Carolina and North-Western Railway Company, *Carolina and North-Western Ry.: Home Enterprise Developed by Home Talent and Home Money* (Yorkville, S.C.: L. M. Grist's Sons, Printers, 1915), 5-7, 40-43, 57.

³ G. W. F. Harper owned a general mercantile established by his father James C. Harper to serve Lenoir residents around 1845. On January 1, 1884, Harper partnered with his future son-in-law and John's older brother to create Harper and Bernhardt. Harper and Bernhardt reorganized in April 1886, adding G. W. F. Harper's son and the Bernhardts' Davidson classmate George Finley Harper as partner s. "Good in a Change of Gauge," *Charlotte Observer* (hereafter abbreviated *CO*), February 11, 1902, p. 4; "John Matthias Bernhardt," alumnus file, Special Collections, E. H. Little Library, Davidson College, Charlotte, North Carolina; *Lenoir Topic* (hereafter abbreviated *LT*), May 1879; *Lenoir News* (hereafter abbreviated *LN*), May 1, 1879, August 28, 1879, February 19, 1880, September 19, 1888; "Marshall M. Courtney," *Lenoir News-Topic* (hereafter abbreviated *LNT*), September 12, 1941, p. 4; "Courtney's Now Celebrating 75th Anniversary," *LNT*, May 23, 1947, p. 1; Hall E. Cobb, Jr., *A Brief Historical Sketch of Caldwell County & Lenoir* (Lenoir: n. p., 1922), 187; E. Carl Anderson, ed., *The Heritage of Caldwell County, North Carolina* (Winston-Salem, N. C.: Hunter Publishing Company, 1983), 143-144.

⁴ *LT*, June 14, 1893, p. 3; "Chester and Lenoir Railroad," *CO*, February 1, 1894, p. 2; *Statesville Record*, January 17, 1896, p. 2; "The Chester and Lenoir," *Hickory Press*, January 23, 1896, p. 2; Walker, "Can't and Never Will," 58-61.

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became Harper Furniture Company in 1900, commenced production in the late nineteenth century. J. M. Bernhardt's Lenoir planing mill and box factory, which began operating in 1896, was the town's largest manufacturing concern by 1900. In 1902, Lenoir boasted at least ten industrial enterprises, ranging from flour to lumber mills, furniture producers, and building supply companies, most of which were located along railroad lines. Downtown businesses prospered as the population increased in conjunction with industrial expansion.⁵ Sizable early-twentieth-century endeavors included Lenoir's first cotton mill. Gastonia industrialist J. D. Moore, M. M. Courtney, and other investors identified an optimal site southwest of the town's center near the Carolina and Northwestern Railway line. Stockholders organized Lenoir Cotton Mill in March 1901 and the factory was substantially complete in January 1902.⁶

In order to better accommodate Lenoir's steadily increasing freight and passenger traffic, Carolina and Northwestern Railway representative J. W. Fletcher Jr, announced in February 1914 that Elliot Building Company of Hickory had been engaged to remodel and enlarge the frame depot at 112 Depot Street. The existing building would house the freight department, while a sizable addition would encompass white and African American waiting rooms, a central office, and shed to shelter the loading platform. The project was completed in July 1914.⁷

The improved depot epitomized the municipality's prosperity. Farmers, merchants, industrialists, and other entrepreneurs who utilized common-carrier shipping and receiving services to sustain their businesses benefited from the large freight room and loading platforms. Passengers enjoyed clean, comfortable, and heated lounges where refreshments, tobacco products, and reading materials were available for purchase. The white and African American waiting rooms each included restrooms. In addition to meeting transportation needs, Lenoir's depot functioned as a gathering place and information hub where the station agent received and distributed news via telegraph.

Regular passenger and freight service continued through the 1920s. However, ridership declined during the 1930s in conjunction with North Carolina roadway improvements and increased automobile usage. Carolina and Northwestern Railway debated terminating Sunday passenger service between Chester and Edgemont in 1931, but did not make significant schedule changes until June 1937, when passenger service ceased between Lenoir and Edgemont. Freight trains operated on that portion of the line until September 23rd, after which the tracks were removed. Prominent Lenoir residents and railroad employees

⁵ "Lenoir is a Very Busy Town," *CO*, November 10, 1901, p. 3; D. P. Waters, "Caldwell County, N. C.," *LT*, June 16, 1909, p. 2; North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Department of Labor and Printing* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1910), 60-61; "What is it Worth?," *Lenoir News* (hereafter abbreviated *LN*), November 21, 1916, p. 2; Anderson, *The Heritage of Caldwell County*, 140-141.

⁶ "A Cotton Mill Assured," *Weekly News* (hereafter abbreviated *WN*), March 15, 1901, p. 4; *WN*, March 22, 1901, p. 4; "Cotton Mill Meeting," *WN*, March 29, 1901, p. 4.

⁷ "New Depot," *Lenoir Topic*, February 14, 1913, p. 11 "Addition Made to Lenoir Depot," *Charlotte News*, June 14, 1913, p. 5.

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were among 133 passengers from throughout the region who celebrated the line's history during the final run.⁸

Floyd C. Hanks remained the Lenoir station agent during the 1930s, followed by Perkins, Georgia native Dewey Hobson Thorne, previously a mayor of Maiden and a train dispatcher in Hickory.⁹ Freight commerce escalated as the economy began to recover from the Great Depression in the late 1930s. The Lenoir Board of Trade touted the city's textile mills, furniture plants, and allied industries—makers of mirrors, veneers, and other products— all of which primarily shipped and received goods via the railroad. 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 population numbered twelve thousand, triple that of 1920, and downtown included five hardware and furniture stores and four drug stores.¹⁰ By the beginning of the 1940s, thirty-three Lenoir 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 nation's second largest furniture manufacturing city. Caldwell County then contained twelve cotton mills and five hosiery mills, three of which were in Lenoir.¹¹ The city upgraded utilities and infrastructure to serve these and other industrial operations.

World War II brought new opportunities and challenges. Although industrial production and freight traffic increased, Lenoir's tourist trade diminished near the war's end when the Carolina and Northwestern Railway cut passenger service from two trains daily to a single train in response to a 1944 Office of Defense Transportation directive. The reduction made it difficult for travelers from Lenoir to make connections in Hickory and Gastonia. The chamber of commerce protested the decreased service, fearing that war-time cutbacks would eventually result in passenger service elimination. This indeed soon transpired, as the Carolina and Northwestern Railway discontinued passenger, mail, express, and baggage service on April 12, 1947. Dewey Thorne continued to manage the depot during the 1940s.¹²

⁸ "Railway Seeks to Abandon Its Line in W. N. C.," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, July 23, 1937, p. 10; "C&NW Makes Last Run on Line to Edgemont," *LNT*, September 24, 1937, pp. 1 and 6; Poole, *A History of Railroading in Western North Carolina*, 67.

⁹ Ernest H. Miller, *Miller's Lenoir, North Carolina, City Directories* (Asheville: Commercial Service Company, 1930-1941); "D. H. Thorne," *The Daily Independent* (Kannapolis), April 29, 1966, p. 5.

¹⁰ Lenoir Board of Trade and Lenoir News-Topic, *Lenoir, North Carolina* (n.p.: 1938), 3-5; *Miller's Lenoir City Directory 1937-1938*, 5-6.

¹¹ *Miller's Lenoir City Directory, 1943-1944*, 267; *LNT*, September 12, 1941, p. 1.

¹² "Is It the Beginning of the End?," *LNT*, December 22, 1944; "Entitled to Better Service," *LNT*, January 9, 1945; "C&NW Passenger, Express and Baggage Service Discontinued," *LNT*, April 15, 1947, pp. 1 and 5; 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, 1-6, 14; *Miller's Lenoir City Directories, 1941-1950*; Matthew Bumgarner, *The Legacy of the Carolina and North Western Railway* (Hickory: Tarheel Press, 1997); Southern Railway System, "Carolina and Northwestern Opens New Lenoir, N. C. Freight Station," *Ties*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (May 1950), 14.

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Criterion A: Transportation and Industry in Mid-twentieth-century Lenoir

Despite challenges from the trucking industry, Lenoir's manufacturing concerns remained dependent upon railroad connections for efficient and economical raw material delivery and finished goods shipping. Expanded freight transport facilities became imperative as the economy boomed and industrial production proliferated during the post-war years. At Blue Bell, Inc., for example, sales climbed from \$13,795,450 in 1943 to \$46,630,060 in 1950, when the company asserted that it remained the world's largest work clothes manufacturer.¹³ It is therefore not surprising that the Carolina and Northwestern Railway purchased three lots comprising about 2.5 acres in the heart of Lenoir's industrial corridor just west of the Blue Bell, Inc. plant (formerly Lenoir Cotton Mill) upon which to erect a new freight depot. Lenoir Furniture Corporation, housed in a sprawling complex to the southwest, sold the parcels in February 1949 with the understanding that the Carolina and Northwestern Railway would relocate and improve the access road on the property's west side and build a culvert to divert the creek on the east side.¹⁴ Myriad industrial concerns lined the corridor in close proximity to the freight station site. Hayes Cotton Mill was to the northwest. Fairfield Chair Company stood directly west of the station on the railroad corridor's opposite side. Kent-Coffey Manufacturing Company was to the southwest and Lenoir Chair Manufacturing Company's complex spanned the railroad further south.¹⁵

Southern Railway engineers rendered plans for the freight depot. Elliot Building Company of Hickory commenced construction in spring 1950, assisted by Lenoir contractors including Parlier and Tomlinson Plumbing and A. P. Causby Ready-Mix Cement companies. When completed in 1950, the Modernist Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station exemplified Southern Railway's progressive image. The spacious, fire-resistant brick, concrete, and steel building, erected at a cost of \$125,000, provided desperately needed increased freight handling capacity. The station was part of a five-year \$1,192,500 capital improvement campaign that included track, bridge, and trestle upgrades and new construction. At the April 17, 1950 dedication, Southern Railway vice-president John B. Hyde, who delivered the keynote address to an approximately four-hundred-person audience, emphasized the depot's importance to Caldwell County's twenty-six furniture factories and fifty allied industries, which altogether had approximately ten thousand employees. Lenoir lawyer James T. Pritchett functioned as master of ceremonies, introducing speakers including industrialists James E. Broyhill (president-treasurer of Lenoir Furniture Corporation and Lenoir Chair Company), Harold F. Coffey (president of Kent-Coffey Manufacturing Company and Union Mirror Company), W. Clyde Sudreth (National Veneer Company president, Union Mirror Company secretary, and secretary-treasurer of Kent-Coffey Manufacturing Company and Blowing Rock Furniture Company), and Emory C. McCall (Lenoir Chair Company secretary and National Veneer Company treasurer). Broyhill praised Carolina and Northwestern

¹³ Blue Bell, Inc., "Blue Bell Annual Report, 1952," pp. 1-2; "Other Corporate Reports," *New York Times*, February 7, 1950.

¹⁴ Caldwell County Deed Book 247, p. 395.

¹⁵ Norfolk Southern right-of-way map, 1974, Caldwell County Plat Book 16, p. 49.

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Railway's use of private equity rather than government subsidies to execute the improvement program. Freight station employees in attendance included agent Dewey Thorne, chief rates clerk Ed. C. Schell, bill clerk Tom Beach Jr., cashier-operator N. B. Clark, secretary Billie Greer, warehouse clerk J. M. Huntley, car clerk W. P. Marrow, and station hands H. E. Bumgarner and Walter Echols, who was the only African American in the aforementioned group.¹⁶

Dewey Thorne remained the station agent and yard master until his sudden death on April 28, 1966 at the age of sixty-eight. Adjacent industrial complexes continued to expand and utilize the station. In 1974, Ethel Chair Factory and Lenoir Mirror Company occupied plants to the west across the railroad tracks. Kent-Coffey Manufacturing Company was southwest of Lexington Mirror Company. Bernhardt Manufacturing Company and Lenoir Chair Manufacturing Company complexes were further south adjacent to a spur line. Blue Bell, Inc., to the east, remained Caldwell County's only sizable apparel manufacturer as it utilized the Lenoir plant until 1983.¹⁷

The Carolina and Northwestern Railway operated as a Southern Railway subsidiary from 1942 until Southern Railway acquired Norfolk Southern Railroad on January 1, 1974, after which it was subsumed by the larger company. Norfolk Southern was incorporated in 1980 and merged with Norfolk and Western Railroad on June 1, 1982. The Carolina and Northwestern Railway line subsequently reverted to its original name as part of the Norfolk Southern Corporation.¹⁸

Although shipping by rail declined dramatically with the rise of truck transport, local industries utilized the depot to ship and receive freight until 1994, when Norfolk Southern conveyed the seventeen-mile-long Hickory-to-Lenoir line to the Caldwell County Economic Development Commission. The Caldwell County Railroad Company, a Southeast Shortlines, Inc. subsidiary, has since operated that section of the line.¹⁹ Rail service remains an expedient and affordable means of transporting goods. Various entities subsequently leased the freight station for storage. Norfolk Southern conveyed the property to Lenoir Depot LLC on September 10, 2018. The building will be rehabilitated in conjunction with the former Lenoir Cotton Mill complex to the east.

¹⁶ Southern Railway System, "Carolina and Northwestern Opens New Lenoir, N. C. Freight Station," 13-15; "Dedication of Freight Depot Monday, 11 a. m.," *LNT*, April 15, 1950, p. 1; "400 Attend Lenoir Depot Dedication," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, April 17, 1950, p. 5; *Miller's Lenoir City Directory*, 1950.

¹⁷ Sanborn Map Company, "Lenoir," Caldwell County, August 1950, Sheets 14 and 15.

¹⁸ Norfolk Southern Corporation, "A Line in Time," <http://www.nscorp.com/content/nscorp/en/the-norfolk-southern-story.html> (accessed September 2018).

¹⁹ "Caldwell County Railroad," <http://www.ncrailways.org> (accessed September 2018).

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Criterion C: Freight Depot Architecture Context

As railroad companies developed lines during the mid-nineteenth century, rudimentary platforms, open-sided heavy-timber-frame sheds, and small frame buildings accommodated freight and passengers. By the late nineteenth century, prospering railroad concerns began replacing these temporary structures with specialized buildings. Companies employed architects and draftsmen to render station prototypes that could be easily replicated and modified with site-specific details. Utilization of these standardized plans expedited construction and reduced cost.

Civil engineer Walter G. Berg included numerous depot plans and elevations rendered for a wide variety of railroad companies in his 1893 publication *Buildings and Structures of American Railroads*. Efficient function was paramount, but aesthetics were also important. Municipality size dictated depot scale, style, and finish. Despite regional building material variation, the plans were remarkably consistent. Berg delineates four types of depots: flag, combination, local passenger, and terminal passenger. Flag depots were simple platforms or modest buildings in rural communities where travelers and shippers signaled trains to stop by waving a flag. In small towns, combination depots with minimal architectural embellishment accommodated both freight and passenger traffic. These buildings encompassed waiting rooms, offices, restrooms, freight and baggage storage rooms, and loading platforms. In some cases, combination depots included living quarters for station agents and other railroad employees.²⁰ Densely populated cities contained multiple depots erected by competing rail lines. Freight depots were simply executed, with function dictating form and finish. Regardless of size, stations promoted a railroad company's corporate identity and served as community landmarks.

As the twentieth century progressed, freight depots executed in myriad architectural styles served North Carolina communities. The Seaboard Air Line Railway and Southern Railway companies erected hundreds of modest passenger and freight depots to serve small towns throughout the nation. Early twentieth-century stations—typically one-story, narrow, rectangular, hip- or gable-roofed, brick or frame buildings with deep bracketed eaves and large multipane double-hung windows—resembled late-nineteenth-century depots in form and plan. Most displayed minimal ornamentation, with functionality driving the design. Stylistic influences ranged from Queen Anne to Craftsman. Textured or variegated brick walls and corbelled masonry cornices, belt courses, and water tables heightened aesthetic appeal at nominal expense. Brick veneer afforded a much greater degree of fire resistance than weatherboard siding and lowered long-term maintenance costs. Projecting window bays added dimension and enhanced visibility.

Freight depots contained scales for weighing shipments and sliding loading dock doors on multiple elevations. Open interiors accommodated baggage and freight handling. As this use did not require

²⁰ Walter G. Berg, *Buildings and Structures of American Railroads* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1893), 246.

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finished walls or ceilings, structural systems are typically completely exposed in freight rooms, as seen Lenoir. Platforms adjacent to the depot allowed for freight transfer.

Mid-twentieth-century Freight Depots

Mid-twentieth-century freight depots often manifested the Modernist architectural tenets of simplicity, efficiency, affordability, and intrinsic material expression espoused by architects including Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Albert Kahn. In such edifices, structure and materials serve as the primary design elements rather than applied ornamentation. The use of exposed brick, concrete, and steel structural elements as fundamental design components was not only aesthetically compelling, but supplied strength, durability, and fire-resistance in an economical manner.

Southern Railway's engineering department employed this approach while rendering utilitarian depot plans that could be used in numerous locations with little modification. The Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station in Lenoir, Caldwell County's sole mid-twentieth-century Modernist depot, exemplifies the company's progressive yet pragmatic approach to station construction during **that** period.²¹ The streamlined linear design epitomizes efficiency, modernity, and economic progress, conveying speed and energy through its long rectangular form, horizontal massing, flat roof, and expressed structure. The color and texture contrast between the red-brick walls and pale cast-stone foundation, belt course, and parapet coping add interest and dimension. Linear cast-stone elements accentuate the building's horizontality.

The freight station retains its original plan: a north administrative wing containing an office, entrance vestibule, restrooms, and storage and mechanical rooms, and a large open south freight warehouse flanked by loading docks. Steel beams and trusses span the building's width, eliminating the need for interior posts and maximizing visibility and functional flexibility. Fenestration is dictated by spatial use rather than symmetry. Regularly spaced horizontal-pane aluminum-frame sash illuminate the administrative wing, while multi-wood-panel roll-up loading dock doors with glazed upper sections provide natural light in the warehouse. The long open concrete-and-steel shed and canopies facilitated freight transfer. The station orientation allowed direct truck access to the docks on the east elevation. The small vertical-board-sheathed warehouse office and freight scale are also important survivals.

Depot construction slowed nationally as passenger and freight traffic declined. The Old North State Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society's 2002 inventory of North Carolina railroad buildings identifies only a few mid-twentieth-century depots, all of which are austere, functionalist buildings. Examples comparable to Lenoir's Carolina and Northwestern Railway freight station include the

²¹ Caldwell County's other surviving depot, a one-story, weatherboarded, gable-roofed, circa 1900 building in Hudson, now serves as a local history museum.

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Modernist Virginia and Carolina Southern Railway freight station at 163 South Chestnut Street in Lumberton (Robeson County, Lumberton Commercial Historic District, National Register 1989), which was erected around 1950 in conjunction with the company's capital improvement campaign.²² The one-story, flat-roofed, red brick Lumberton depot is characterized by deep eaves and a cast-stone foundation. The warehouse is taller and more simply executed than the office, which features banded brick accents and oculus windows at its west end and large multipane double-hung wood-frame sash on the south elevation overlooking the railroad. A projecting window-filled bay afforded station agents an unimpeded view of the rail line.

The Southern Railway passenger and freight station in at 58 Depot Street in Marion (McDowell County) comprises an 1867 depot enlarged in 1890, 1935, and again in 1952 with a Modernist office addition at its east end.²³ Robust Craftsman brackets support the deep eaves of the red brick main block's side-gable roof. The flat-roofed 1952 addition is executed in five-to-one common-bond dark red brick with a cast-stone foundation, window surrounds, door sills, and coping. Four-horizontal-pane steel sash with two-pane central hoppers remain on the south elevation, where a projecting bay fronts the railroad. Flat-roofed metal-edged canopies span the north and south elevations, sheltering two entrances on each wall. The City of Marion has rehabilitated the depot to serve as an event venue and offices.

²² Art Peterson, Tony Reevy, and William L. Dowdy, compilers, *A Directory of North Carolina's Railroad Structures, Second Edition* (Raleigh: Old North State Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society, 2002), 174.

²³ Ibid., 118; City of Marion, "Facility Rentals," <http://marionnc.org/Marion/pages/FacilityRentals.html> (accessed December 2018).

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Lenoir News-Topic (abbreviated *LNT*)

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Section 10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property consists of Caldwell County PIN # 2749545715 (3.014 acres) as indicated by the heavy solid line on the enclosed map. Scale approximately 5/8" = 100'

Boundary Justification

The tax parcel encompasses the property historically associated with the Carolina and Northwestern Railway Freight Station and provides an appropriate setting.

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Section 11. Additional Documentation

Documentary Photograph



Southern Railway System photograph taken for “Carolina and Northwestern Opens New Lenoir, N. C. Freight Station,” *Ties*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (May 1950), 13-15
Norfolk Southern Corporation Archives; Norfolk, Virginia

Current Photographs

All current photographs by Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc., 3334 Nottingham Road, Winston-Salem, NC, on October 24, 2018. Digital images located at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office in Raleigh.

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1. Northeast oblique (above) and 2. Southeast oblique (below)



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3. Southwest oblique (above) and 4. Office, looking east (below)



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5. Warehouse office, looking northwest (above) and 6. Warehouse, looking south (below)



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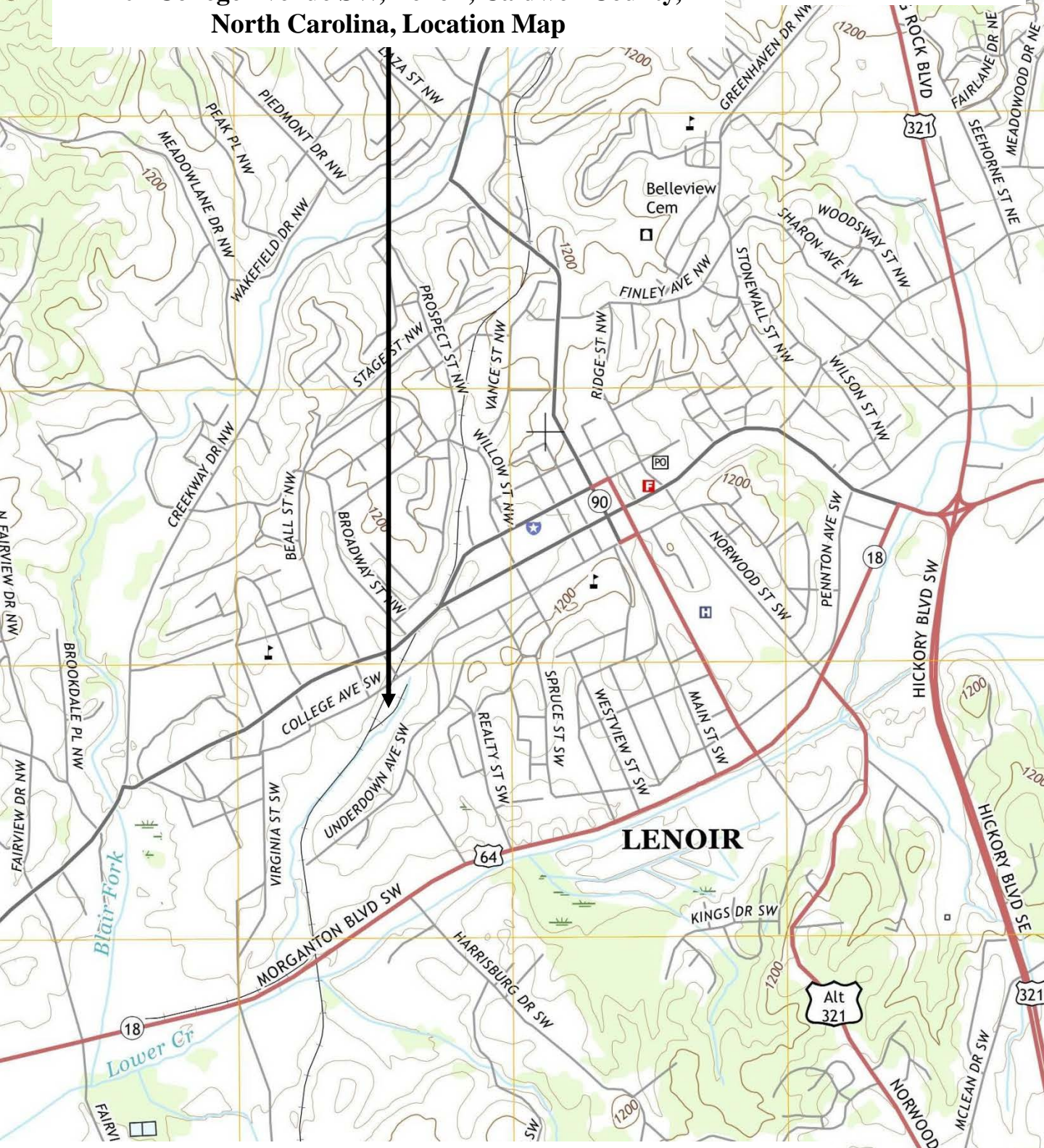
Carolina and Northwestern Railway Freight Station
Caldwell County, NC



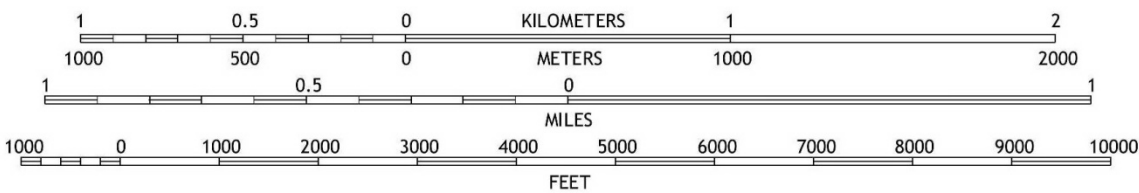
7. Freight scale near warehouse's southeast corner

Carolina and Northwestern Railway Freight Station
1407 College Avenue SW, Lenoir, Caldwell County,
North Carolina, Location Map

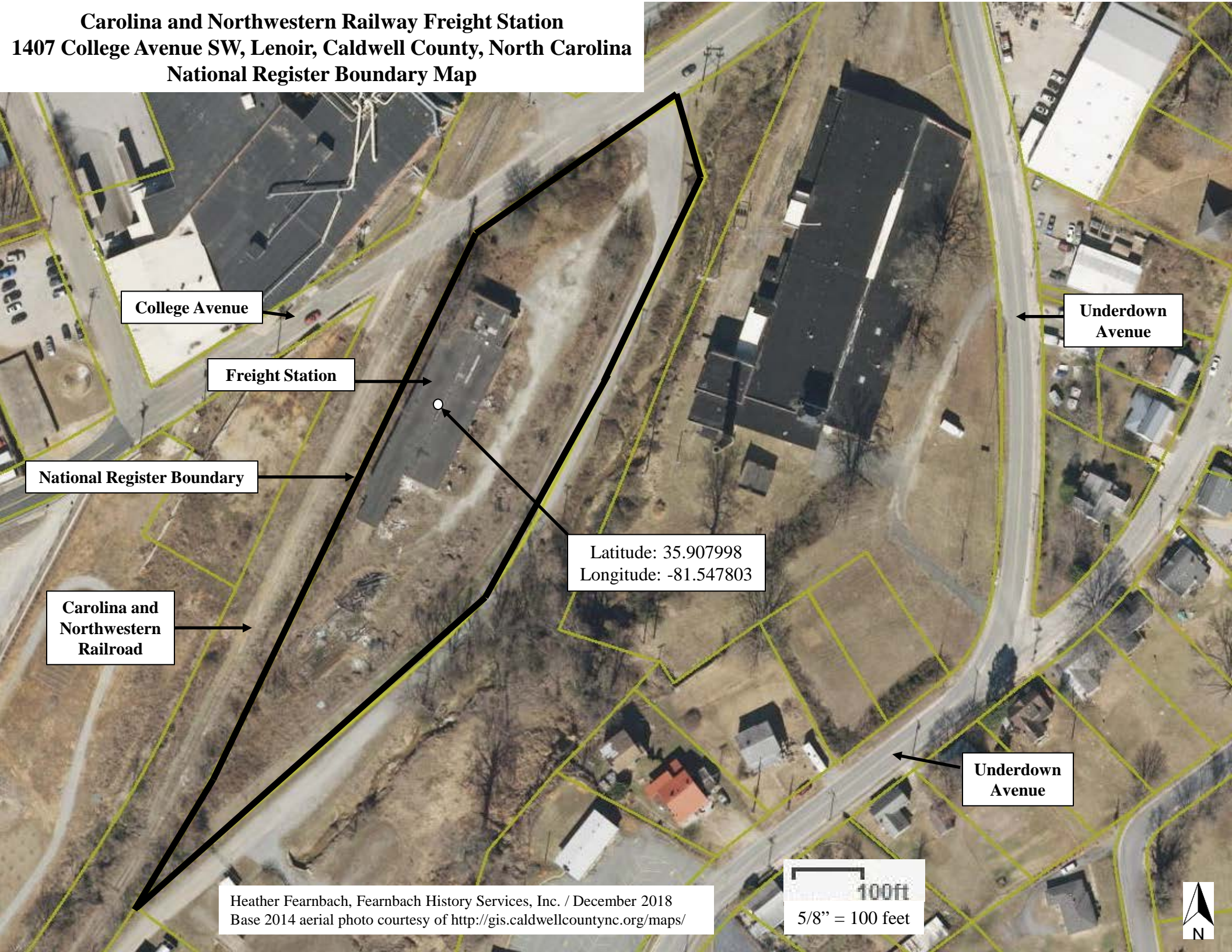
U. S. Geological Survey
Lenoir Quadrangle, 2016



SCALE 1:24 000



Carolina and Northwestern Railway Freight Station
1407 College Avenue SW, Lenoir, Caldwell County, North Carolina
National Register Boundary Map



College Avenue

Freight Station

National Register Boundary

Carolina and
Northwestern
Railroad

Latitude: 35.907998
Longitude: -81.547803

Underdown
Avenue

Underdown
Avenue

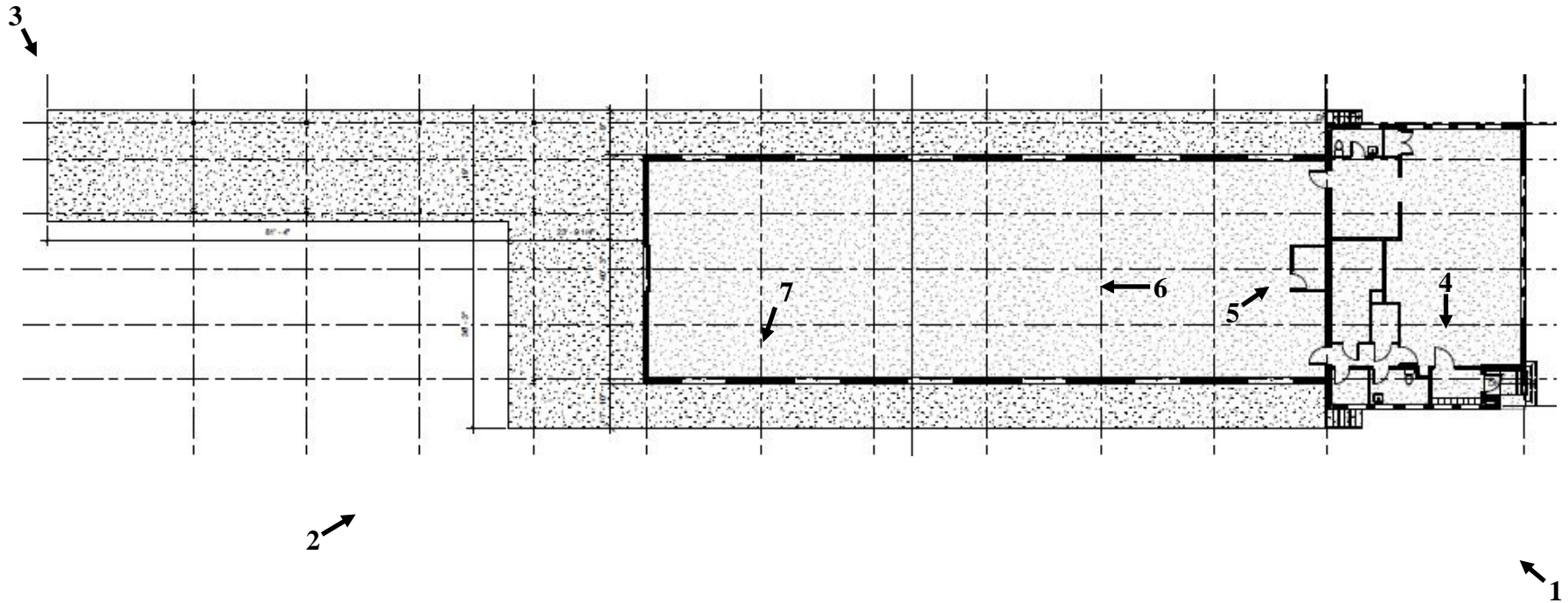
Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc. / December 2018
Base 2014 aerial photo courtesy of <http://gis.caldwellcountync.org/maps/>

100ft
5/8" = 100 feet



Carolina and Northwestern Railway Freight Station
1407 College Avenue SW, Lenoir, Caldwell County, North Carolina
Floor Plan and Photograph Key

Floor plan drawn by Rowhouse Architects and
photograph views annotated by Fearnbach History Services, Inc. in April 2019



Not to scale N →