NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store

Durham, Durham County Town/vicinity, County, DH2862, Listed 6/20/2012 Nomination by Cynthia de Miranda Photographs by Cynthia de Miranda, April 2012



Overall view



Side and rear view

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 Scott and Roberts Dry C	leaning Plant, Office, and Store		
other names/site number			
2. Location			
street & number 733 Foster Street		n/a⊡ not	for publication
city or town Durham		n/a[vicinity
state North Carolina code N	IC county Durham co	le <u>063</u> zip code	27701
3. State/Federal Agency Certification			
request for determination of eligibility meet of Historic Places and meets the procedural ar	Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby s the documentation standards for registering pro ad professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Pa ational Register criteria. I recommend that this pro continuation sheet for additional comments.)	perties in the National Registrees to the National Registrees to the National Register (National Register) between the National Register (National	ster
Signature of certifying official/Title	Date		
North Carolina Department of Cult	ural Resources		
State or Federal agency and bureau			
In my opinion, the property in meets in doe for additional comments.)	es not meet the National Register criteria. (e Continuation sheet	
Signature of certifying official/Title	Date		
State or Federal agency and bureau			
4. National Park Service Certification			
I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keep	r	Date of Action
 determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. 			
conter, (explain:)			

Name of Property

5. Classification

Durham County, NC County and State

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in count.)				
(Check as many boxes as apply) (Check only one box) ⊠ private ⊠ building(s)		Contributing Noncontributing			
public-local		Ū		Ū	
public-State	🗌 site	1		0	buildings
Dublic-Federal	structure structure	0		0	sites
	object	0		0	structure
		0		0	objects
		1		0	total
Name of related multiple p (Enter "N/A" if property is not part		Number of 0 in the Nation		esources previ	ously listed
n/a		n/a			
6. Function or Use					
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions	5)	Current Fo	unctions ories from instruction	ons)	
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION: processing site		, e	PROGRESS	,	
COMMERCE/TRADE: busi	· · · · ·				
COMMERCE/TRADE: spec					
	j				
7. Description					
Architectural Classificatio	n	Materials			
(Enter categories from instructions			ies from instruction	าร)	
MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne			CONCRETE		
		walls	BRICK		
		roof	METAL		
			METAL: stee	I	
			GLASS		

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.)	Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)
☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.	ARCHITECTURE
D Property is appreciated with the lives of persons	
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.	Period of Significance
	1947
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.	Significant Dates 1947
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. 	Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked) n/a
	Cultural Affiliation
B removed from its original location.	n/a
C a birthplace or grave.	Architect/Builder unknown
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.	
Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sh	eets.)
9. Major Bibliographical References	
Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in pr	eparing 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 	 Primary location of additional data: State Historic Preservation Office Other State Agency Federal Agency

- Previously determined eligible by the National
 - Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

- Federal Agency Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Durham County Library, Durham, NC

Durham County, NC

County and State

Name of Property

10. Geographical Data	
Acreage of Property .397 acres	
UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)	
A <u>17</u> <u>689115</u> <u>3986540</u> B	C Zone Easting Northing D 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 _ Cynthia de Miranda	
organization MdM Historical Consultants, Inc.	October 14, 2011
street & number P.O. Box 1399	telephone 919/906-3136
city or town Durham	state NC zip code 27702
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 Atlas Foster Real Estate Holdings LLC (Todd Atlas, sole manager-member)

street & number	2409 Wrightwood Avenue		telephone	919 68	2 5552
city or town Dur	rham	state	NC	zip code	27705

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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Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store Durham County, NC

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store at 733 Foster Street in Durham is one of the city's few surviving examples of the Streamline Moderne style. The building stands at the top of a hill at the north end of a mid-twentieth-century commercial and light-industrial district north of the Downtown Durham Historic District (NR 1977). An elementary school housed in a brick-clad former armory building stands across the street and other light-industrial buildings line Foster Street and intersecting streets to the south. The Durham Athletic Park, a baseball facility historically known as El Toro Park and once home to the Durham Bulls minor-league baseball team, fills much of a city block southwest of Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store. Half a block north of the building are residential neighborhoods dating from the early to mid-twentieth century, including the Pearl Mill Village Historic District (NR 1985), the Trinity Historic District (NR 1986, 2004, 2008), and the North Durham-Duke Park Historic District (NR 1985).

The 1947 dry cleaning building is a single-story brick structure standing on a partial concrete basement due to the slope of the lot; low parapet walls with concrete coping hide a very slightly pitched roof supported by steel beams and columns. The building housed a plant at the back with business offices and a retail store up front, accounting for the Streamline Moderne facade that overlooks Foster Street to the east. The three-bay facade features a projecting center bay, plate-glass storefront windows, and a centered front entrance. Wide, continuous cast-stone bands at the foundation and above the fenestration introduce a bold horizontal element, and curved corners at the slightly projecting center bay convey the Streamline aesthetic. The tan brick is laid in English bond except at the center bay's rounded corners, which feature header bond.

The single-leaf glass door and sidelight at the front entrance replaced a double-leaf door in the late twentieth century, but the original glass-block entrance surround remains. All other doors in the building are original. An additional, cast-stone surround outlines the glass composition, its top band merging with the cast-stone trim across the facade above the windows. A peaked capstone of the same material tops the entrance surround. Plate-glass storefront windows flank the entrance and meet rounded glass that follows the curves of the projecting bay. A butt joint sealed with clear silicone connects the flat and curved glass pieces within an aluminum frame to achieve a nearly invisible seam. At the flanking facade bays, very wide plate-glass storefront windows, edged on each side with triple columns of glass block, rise from the bottom cast-stone band to the top band.

The side and rear elevations feature red brick laid in common bond pierced by industrial steel-sash windows. The building has a chamfered wall at its northwest corner, following the boundary of the irregularly shaped parcel. The north and west walls and the chamfered wall all feature broad windows with fixed and awning metal sash. A metal drainpipe near the east end of the north elevation directs water from the roof through the parapet to the ground. At the west elevation, the poured concrete wall of the partial basement is exposed. A pair of metal-and-glass personnel doors and a double-width

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equipment doorway with metal swinging doors allow entry into the basement, which is lit by a steelsash window.

The concrete basement wall extends to the south to form a retaining wall. Above the wall is a concretepaved loading dock along the building's south elevation. Fenestration includes four steel-sash windows, two metal-and-glass personnel doors with multilight transoms, and a metal-and-glass overhead lifting garage door. The garage door and one personnel door are sheltered by flat metal canopies. A brick stack rises at the south elevation towards the building's west end and two metal drainpipes direct rainwater from the roof through the parapet.

While the roof is hidden behind the low parapet all the way around the building, the exposed ceiling at the interior reveals a very shallow pitch with a ridge line running down the building's center from front to back. Rolled steel transverse I-beams brace the concrete-and-steel ceiling while slender metal columns support the beams at the centerline of the roof. A sawtooth skylight also runs along this line for roughly the center two thirds of the building's depth. The skylight and the large steel-sash windows provide abundant natural light into the building.

The open space beneath the skylight housed the cleaning plant. At the back southwest corner of the building, load-bearing brick walls enclose what was the drying room. Large openings in the interior north and east walls of the drying room can be closed with sliding fire doors, and steel-sash windows in the exterior west and south walls bring in light. Brick load-bearing walls enclose another room at the south side of the building near its east end. This room housed fur storage and is reached through a single-leaf metal door in its east wall, which itself is accessed through a small vestibule separating the storage room from the retail space. A single, small window high in the west end of the room's south wall is the only other opening in the room.

Retail space, offices, storage, and restrooms occupy roughly a third of the floor plan. Two restrooms are at the back (west) of the building, just south of the concrete stairs leading down to the basement. Other dedicated-use spaces stretch across the front (east) of the floor plan, with the retail dry cleaning shop and two offices occupying the storefronts, while restrooms and closets occupy space between the north office and the dry cleaning plant. Walls for these rooms are of non-load-bearing terra cotta block. Plaster covers the walls in the front third of the building, but the brick and terra cotta block at the back two-thirds of the space is left exposed. Floors throughout are poured concrete and all doors are metal. The partial basement occupies roughly the back third of the building. Concrete steps at the northwest corner lead down to the basement; they have a metal-pipe balustrade along the north wall before turning south to follow the chamfered wall. The basement housed mechanical equipment, a small "button room" for clothing repairs, and another small room for repairing shoes. Square concrete posts provide support in the larger spaces. All equipment and fixtures have been removed from both the main floor and the basement.

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The building saw little change from the time of its construction in 1947. It remained in operation as a dry cleaning plant until the early twenty-first century. Changes had been made to the facade windows, but a rehabilitation in 2011 returned the facade to its original configuration.

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SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store is one of Durham's best surviving examples of the Streamline Moderne architectural style. The building expresses the style in the rounded corners of its slightly projecting center bay, highlighted with curved plate-glass windows, header-bond brick, and cast-stone banding above and below the fenestration. Glass block and expansive windows also transmit the machine-age energy of the building. The style, once prominent in Durham, has become somewhat rare due to demolition and alterations.

The building is locally significant and meets National Register of Historic Places Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The period of significance is 1947, the date of its construction.

HISTORY

Foster Street extends north from downtown Durham to Trinity Avenue. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the street was a mix of residential and agro-industrial development. Tobacco prizeries stood alongside modest dwellings on large lots, creating a haphazard look to early area maps. Today's dense residential development north of Trinity Avenue began in the same period, including the North Durham-Duke Park Historic District (NR 1985) northeast of Foster Street, the Pearl Mill Village Historic District (NR 1985) to the northwest, and the Trinity Historic District (NR 1986, 2004, 2008) slightly farther northwest.¹

In the early twentieth century, the central business district began expanding north along Foster Street. The 1913 Sanborn map shows livery stables, small shops, the city market, and a church on Foster Street. The 1950 Sanborn map reflects the dominance of the automobile, showing a proliferation of mid-twentieth-century drive-through branch banks, auto dealerships, and gas stations along the street.²

In 1947, owners of an established local dry cleaning chain reorganized their business and built a central cleaning plant and office building on the west side of Foster Street near its corner with Trinity Avenue. The Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Company's new building was a brick-clad, single-story, concrete-and-steel structure with a Streamline Moderne-style facade. Echoing the state-of-the-art image presented by the modernistic facade, the company's advertisement in the 1948 *Hill's Durham City Directory* brags that the company offers "Durham's Most Modern Fur Storage."³

¹ April 1903 Sanborn Map of Durham, Durham County, North Carolina, viewed online at <u>http://sanborn.umi.com.proxy054.nclive.org/</u> on September 24, 2011; Claudia Roberts Brown, "Trinity Historic District National Register Nomination" and "Pearl Mill Village Historic District National Register Nomination," 1984; and Dan Freedman and Brent Glass, "North Durham-Duke Park Historic District National Register Nomination," 1985.

² Sanborn Maps of Durham, 1913, 1950, viewed online at <u>http://sanborn.umi.com.proxy054.nclive.org/</u> on October 2, 2011.

³ Scott and Roberts, Inc. Articles of Incorporation, April 23, 1947, viewed online at the North Carolina Secretary of State website at <u>http://www.secretary.state.nc.us/corporations/CSearch.aspx</u>, October 13, 2011.

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Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Company had offered more than simply cleaning since its founding in 1922. Mack Frederick Scott and Charles B. "Buck" Roberts were roommates as early as 1919. The young and entrepreneurial Roberts was a tailor and managed a business with partner Dwight A. Petty. The Petty-Roberts Company provided tailoring out of a shop at 909 E. Main Street. Meanwhile, Roberts lived at 602 S. Alston Street with Mack Scott, who worked as a clothes presser, perhaps at Petty-Roberts.⁴

Buck Roberts was also a student; upon graduating from Duke University in 1922, he and Scott established their dry cleaning business. Petty-Roberts had apparently closed, and Petty himself seems to have left Durham. Initially, Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Company provided "cleaning and pressing" at 909 E. Main Street, Petty-Roberts Company's old location. By 1940, Scott and Roberts had a plant at 710 E. Main Street, an office at 302 N. Mangum Street, and a branch location at 702 Fayetteville Street. That year, Roberts and his wife Ethel bought out Mack Scott but retained the company name.⁵

Buck Roberts, who managed the business, died suddenly in 1946. At the time, the company had two retail branches in addition to the plant on E. Main Street and the office at 302 N. Mangum Street. In 1947, Ethel Roberts and two partners, James Marvin Franklin and R. H. O'Neal, registered a North Carolina corporation under the name Scott and Roberts, Inc. Within the week, the entity purchased the parcel on Foster Street. The company built the new plant, office, and store building in 1947 and put it into operation by 1948. A retail dry cleaning store occupied the central front room, flanked by offices, restrooms, and the fur storage room. Dry cleaning equipment filled the middle section of the building and a drying room occupied the southwest corner. Garage doors on the west end of the south elevation led out to a loading dock so that trucks could deliver clothes to and from branch stores. The company maintained its Fayetteville Street branch and had, by this time, added branches at E. Main Street, and W. Main Street. J. M. Franklin managed the plant and Ethel Roberts, president of the corporate entity, apparently managed the business.⁶

Scott and Roberts, Inc., was dissolved in 1987. The building continued to function as a dry cleaning plant and store until early in the twentieth century. In 2011, the building was purchased by a local real estate developer for redevelopment.⁷

⁴ Hill's Durham City Directory (Richmond: Hill Directory Company, 1919-1922); W. C. Dula and A. C. Simpson, eds., Durham and Her People: Combining History and Who's Who in Durham (Durham: n.p., 1951) 168-169.

⁵ Hill's Durham City Directory (Richmond: Hill Directory Company, 1922, 1940); Durham and Her People.

⁶ Durham Morning Herald, February 1, 1946; Scott and Roberts, Inc. Articles of Incorporation; John M. and Eunice W. Riley to Scott and Roberts, Inc., April 30, 1947, Durham County Deed Book 172, page 220; Hill's Durham City Directory (Richmond: Hill Directory Company, 1946-1948).

⁷ Scott and Roberts, Inc., Articles of Dissolution, October 27, 1987, viewed online at the North Carolina Secretary of State website at <u>http://www.secretary.state.nc.us/corporations/CSearch.aspx</u>, October 13, 2011.

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ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store is a fine example of the Streamline Moderne style, the most intact iteration remaining in Durham. Characteristic elements of the Streamline Moderne style include an overall austerity, smooth surfaces, strong horizontal emphasis, flat roofs, and rounded edges; it was a style evocative of the swiftness and energy of modern transportation. Materials distinguishing the style include glass block, polished metal, formica, plywood, and black glass. The Streamline Moderne style was generally employed in the 1930s through the 1950s and was most often used in commercial, industrial, and transportation-related buildings; it follows that it is generally found in urban settings. In Durham, the "machine age aesthetic" of the 1930s had manifested itself in commercial and office buildings in the Art Deco style. By the 1940s, the aptly named Streamline Moderne style had replaced the more decadent predecessor style in Durham, as elsewhere. In fact, the Streamline Moderne style had a deep influence on vernacular commercial architecture throughout the country.⁸

The Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store is an excellent example of the style and Durham's most intact Streamline Moderne-style building. The facade is characteristically simple with Moderne-style details concentrated at the rounded corners of the slightly projecting center bay. The curves are rendered in glass at the shop windows, in cast-stone at the decorative bands above and below the fenestration, and in header-bond brick in the wall area above. Glass block, a popular Moderne-style building material, surrounds the main entrance and flanks the plate-glass windows at the two side bays of the facade.

A small concentration of intact Streamline Moderne-style buildings exists just north of the downtown commercial district, along Foster, Rigsbee, and West Geer streets. The city's best extant examples are in this area, including Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store as well as the original Weeks Motor Company building (1948) at 402 West Geer Street. Weeks Motor features curved corners, metal coping, a strong horizontal profile, and glass block. The original, very large, plate glass storefront windows with rounded corners do not survive; neither does the original metal signage that once topped the flat canopy above the broad storefront. The former Durham Baking Company (ca. 1938) at 723 Rigsbee Avenue is a simple and apparently the earliest surviving example of the style locally. It features smooth stucco walls with rounded corners and metal coping.

Other examples are even smaller or more modest. A double-storefront, brick-clad retail building at 1104 Broad Street (1946) has a single curved corner and chrome-edged canopy; its curved glass storefront window does not survive. A tiny former service station (ca. 1950) at 1001 North Mangum

⁸ Marcus Whiffen and Frederick Koeper, *American Architecture: 1607-1976* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981), 331-332; Claudia Roberts Brown, "Historic Resources of Durham" Multiple Property Documentation Form, 20-21.

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Street expresses the style with a rounded wall featuring glass block, curved metal coping, metal lintels at the front shop windows, and a smooth tile exterior.

Another surviving example has been heavily modified. The Durham Lions Club Workshop for the Blind (1947) at 1810 East Main Street retains its curved bay of glass block and some industrial steel sash windows, but other window bays have been infilled with brick. Additions made to either end of the building have altered its original scale and proportions. The two-story addition at the east side changes the horizontal emphasis and removes the focus from what was originally the main entrance. The contrasting coping has been painted brick red, erasing the horizontal highlight that once finished the exterior walls.

A prominent Streamline Moderne-style bus station served Durham for a few decades in the middle of the twentieth century. Built around 1942 at the corner of Dillard and East Main streets, the singlestory, flat-roofed building had a brick exterior with contrasting coping, large window openings filled with glass block, and a three-bay facade with a taller, slightly projecting center bay. A rounded canopy with wide metal coping at the street entrance to the building underscored a marquee-type sign with rounded top. A much larger canopy wrapped around the side and rear elevations to shelter passengers as they boarded and exited the buses. The building was demolished in 1998.⁹

The Streamline Moderne style influenced the look of other industrial and transportation-related buildings in Durham. Several extant buildings in and around the central business district have characteristics in common with the Streamline Moderne style but lack a full enough treatment to be considered examples of the style. A ca. 1939 storage warehouse at 321 West Geer Street has curving walls at an entry; these are rendered in glass block. The Durham Agricultural Building and Curb Market (ca. 1946) at 721 Foster Street has a similar rounded entry treatment in brick rather than glass. Small service stations at 701 North Mangum Street (ca. 1936) and 2907 Roxboro Road (ca. 1946) have smooth, rounded wall surfaces as well.

The loss of the Streamline Moderne-style bus station, which predated most of the better examples in Durham and likely influenced others to build in the style, is unfortunate. However, the Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store, while more modest than the demolished bus station, remains an excellent example of the Streamline Modern style. Its prominent location at the top of Foster Street in a light-industrial and commercial corridor reflects the physical and economic growth of Durham in the mid-twentieth-century and preserves an important architecture style from that time.

⁹ Archival photographs of the bus station are posted on the Endangered Durham blog at <u>http://endangereddurham.blogspot.com/2006/08/old-bus-station.html</u>.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store is shown as a solid line on the accompanying map labeled "Tax Map" and includes the entire parcel identified as 0822-20-90-0760.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store boundary is drawn to include the entire parcel historically associated with the building.

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Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store Durham County, NC

PHOTOGRAPH INFORMATION

All photographs taken by Cynthia de Miranda. Photos 1-3 taken April 11, 2012; all others taken September 1, 2011. The digital files are stored at the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office in Raleigh.

- 1. Façade and north elevation, showing streetscape at west side of Foster Street, view southwest.
- 2. Façade, view west.
- 3. Façade, view northwest.
- 4. South elevation, view northeast.
- 5. West (rear) elevation, view northeast.
- 6. Northwest elevation, view southeast.
- 7. North elevation, view southwest.
- 8. Interior at front entrance, view southeast.
- 9. Interior at dry cleaning plant, view southeast.
- 10. Interior showing skylight, view east.



