

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District

Durham, Durham County, DH2864, Listed 4/23/2013

Nomination by M. Ruth Little

Photographs by M. Ruth Little, August 2012



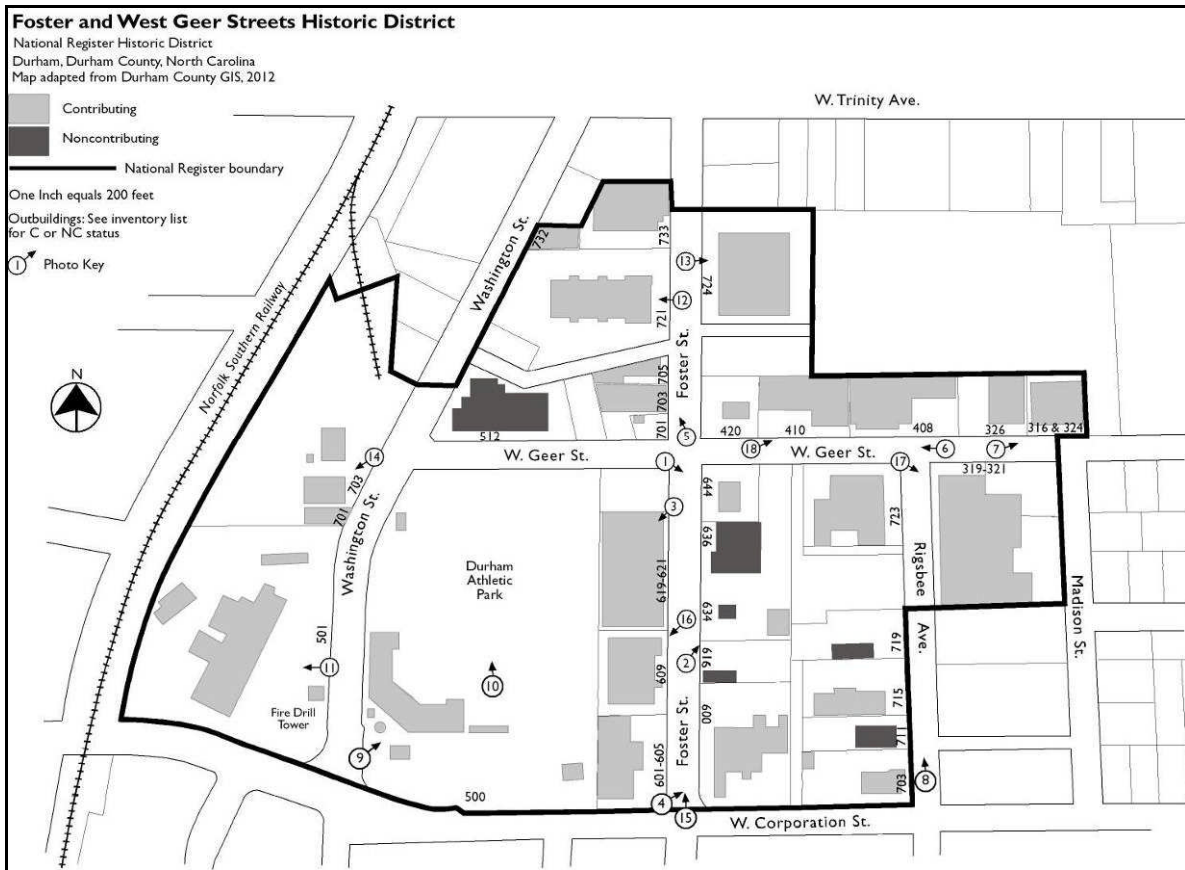
Durham Athletic Park, 500 Washington Street, view looking north



700 Block of Foster Street, view looking northwest



Royal Crown Bottling Company, 319-321 E. Geer Street



Historic District Map

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of property

historic name Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number bounded by W. Corporation St., Rigsbee Ave., Madison St., Norfolk and Southern Railroad tracks, Washington St., and north property lines of 724 and 733 Foster St. not for publication N/A

city or town Durham vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Durham code 063 zip code 27701

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide _____ locally X. See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

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

Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District
Name of Property

Durham County, NC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>32</u>	<u>14</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>37</u>	<u>14</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

4

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry/Processing/Extraction: processing site
Commerce/Trade: business
Commerce/Trade: specialty store
Commerce/Trade: restaurant
Commerce/Trade: warehouse
Commerce/Trade: financial institution
Government: government office
Government: public works
Defense: arms storage
Recreation and Culture: sports facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: business
Commerce/Trade: specialty store
Commerce/Trade: professional
Commerce/Trade: restaurant
Government: government office
Recreation and Culture: sports facility
Education: school
Vacant/Not in Use
Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Moderne
Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival
Colonial Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
roof metal
walls brick
concrete
other glass
aluminum

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/recreation

Commerce

Architecture

Period of Significance

1927-1963

Significant Dates

1927

1939

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Atwood and Nash

Carr Sr., George Watts

Davis, Archie Royal

Areas of Significance

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: _____

Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District
Name of Property

Durham County, NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. 28 acres

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

Zone Easting Northing
1 17s 688980 3986600
2 17s 689420 3986440

Zone Easting Northing
3 17s 689300 3986200
4 17s 688780 3986180
___ 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 M. Ruth Little

organization Longleaf Historic Resources date November 2012

street & number 2312 Bedford Avenue telephone 919.412.7804

city or town Raleigh state N.C. zip code 27607

12. Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

Property Owner

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

name _____

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 listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service

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**Section 7 Page 1
Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District
Durham County, NC**

Section 7: Description

Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District, a twenty-eight-acre commercial and light-industrial area of Durham, is bounded by West Corporation Street, Rigsbee Avenue, Madison Street, the Norfolk and Southern Railroad tracks, Washington Street, and the north property lines of 724 and 733 Foster Street. The irregular, hilly terrain allows for daylight basements at the rear of a number of the buildings and necessitated construction of a number of retaining walls around many of the buildings. Twenty-eight buildings were built from 1927 to 1963; four buildings were constructed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These are spaced widely apart along the grid-patterned streets, some with large paved parking lots. The north-south streets of Washington, Foster, and Rigsbee intersect the east-west streets of W. Geer and W. Corporation. The largest parcel, at 500 Washington Street, contains the Durham Athletic Park, home of the Durham Bulls baseball team until recent years. Streets are granite-curbed, guttered, and asphalt-paved, and have concrete sidewalks. Large paved parking areas and few trees create an urban, light-industrial character. The district is the north portion of the so-called Central Park area of Durham, a commercial area slated in the mid-1990s by a private citizen group for urban renewal. To the south is a light-industrial area containing a number of tobacco warehouses and Central Park, an open space created in the late 1990s to function as a recreation area and farmer's market. This area has poor integrity due to the loss of buildings and the intrusion of infill. Immediately to the west is the Bright Leaf Historic District composed of tobacco-related industrial buildings. Beyond that district and to the north and east of the Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District is dense residential development.

Contributing resources in the district consist of twenty-five principal buildings, seven outbuildings, four structures and one site (the Durham Athletic Park baseball field). Six principal buildings and eight outbuildings are noncontributing. Two of these buildings: the service station at 719 Rigsbee Avenue and the Stone Brothers and Byrd Garden Supplies building at 700 Washington Street were built after the end of the period of significance in 1963; the remaining noncontributing buildings are noncontributing because of extensive alterations. Seventy-three percent of the principal buildings contribute to the district's architectural character. Two properties are listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the City Garage Yard and Fire Drill Tower (NR 2000), consisting of three contributing buildings, and the Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store (NR 2012), consisting of one contributing building.

The earliest district buildings, the City Garage, 1927, and the Fire Drill Tower, 1928, stand along W. Corporation Street, the southern boundary of the district. R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company built a warehouse on Foster Street in 1938 and the Durham Baking Company was built on W.

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Geer Street in 1938. The ballpark for the Durham Bulls baseball team was rebuilt in 1939. A Royal Crown and Seven-Up Bottling Company was built on W. Geer Street in 1939. In the second half of the 1940s, following the end of World War II, the district filled in with three car dealerships, an oil distribution plant, two service stations, a dry cleaning plant, a tire store, the county agricultural extension office, a U.S. Naval Reserve Training Center, a carpet business and a roofing business.

The architectural character of the area consists of vernacular warehouses and distribution plants, Streamline Art Moderne-style auto dealerships and a dry cleaning plant built in the late 1930s and 1940s, and mid-century modern offices and a branch bank of the 1950s and early 1960s. All buildings are of brick or concrete block with the exception of the Uzzle Used Car Sales Office, which is frame.

The Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District buildings generally retain their original massing and simple, modern features, including, brick, concrete block, or stucco walls, flat roofs original metal casement or awning windows, use of decorative glass bricks, and large plate-glass storefront windows. They maintain a high level of integrity of materials, workmanship, design, and setting. Although interior integrity is not an issue in a historic district, the interiors of a number of the buildings were documented. The continuity of ownership that has preserved the exteriors from alterations has also maintained the interiors. Floor plans, floor, wall and ceiling materials, and doors and trim are intact and unaltered in most buildings in the district.

Inventory List:

Note: This list is arranged alphabetically by street name, east side first, then west side; north side first, then south side. The inventory is in numerical order within the sides. Dates of construction are derived from *Hill's Durham City Directories*, the 1950 Sanborn map, and from interviews with owners and tenants. The only Sanborn map that includes the district is the 1937 map, updated to 1950. The earlier Durham Sanborn map, the 1913 map updated to 1933, does not include this section of the city. Names of buildings are based on the earliest known owner-occupant.

Contributing/Noncontributing Status: All buildings are categorized as C (contributing) or NC (noncontributing) based on the following criteria: Contributing buildings were constructed prior to 1963. They also retain sufficient integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to contribute to the historic character of the district. Any building built after the end of the period of significance, in 1963, is noncontributing due to its age (NC-age). Buildings

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built before 1963 that have lost their architectural integrity because of substantial additions and/or alterations incompatible with their historic character are categorized as noncontributing because of these changes (NC-alt.). Examples of this are extensive post-1963 additions, such as a large wing or an upper story.

Foster Street, East Side

C Home Savings and Loan Bank. 600 Foster St. ca. 1959, ca. 1997.

This well-preserved mid-century modern branch bank was constructed about 1959 for Home Savings and Loan Bank at the northeast corner of Foster and W. Corporation streets. It does not appear in the 1959 *Durham City Directory* but is listed in the 1960 directory. Although it is a simple one-story, flat-roof, rectangular brick building, the unknown architect's treatment of the original flanking drive-thru entrances for autos elevated it to a dramatic example of modern suburban commercial architecture. A metal canopy stretches across the west-facing façade and is supported at each end by a curved orchard stone wall with a planter at the base and by metal pipe columns. Autos originally pulled through the canopy on each side of the building to drive-thru porte-cocheres. The main block is faced with orange Roman brick in a running bond, with an angled concrete coping. At the front and south side are large fixed-pane picture windows. The front window is concave. Other side and rear windows on the main block are smaller, grouped, fixed- and sliding-pane windows with wide concrete surrounds. The south side drive-thru porte-cochere is a flat canopy supported by metal posts and the window and wall deposit box are still in place. The front half of the building contains a tall-ceilinged open banking room, while the rear half has two levels of office spaces.

A documentary photo in the blog "Open Durham" shows that by the late 1960s the Miller-Hurst appliance store occupied the building. Another documentary photo in the blog shows that by 1970 the tenant was the Paradise Lounge, advertising "go-go girls." Throughout these uses, the building retained its open canopy and two drive-thrus. Paul Tesar's article on the building, "Wings of Eagles," (www.spectatoronline.com, Jan. 26, 2000) traces the building's later history as Coman's Hardware and Building Supplies from 1979 to 1997. Coman added an addition of similar design to the north side, behind the curved stone wall, which created a secondary commercial space in place of the north drive-thru canopy. The concrete block addition blends harmoniously into the façade because its front wall has a similar brick veneer and a similar full-façade plate-glass window and door. A second, lower-height frame addition was added to the east rear elevation.

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In 1997, architect Ellen Cassily purchased the building and rehabilitated it as her offices, where she continues to practice. The north space contains Altered Images Hair Designers, and another business utilizes the rear section of the north addition and the frame addition. The interior of the original main block retains the open character of a bank lobby. Although one of the two distinctive original drive-thru canopies has been replaced with an addition, the building still visually conveys its bold modernist branch bank design because the canopy and curved stone wall and planter of the north drive-thru remain in place and the front wall of the addition is nearly completely glazed, thus the missing drive-thru is visually implied. From the intersection of Foster and W. Corporation streets, the building's principal viewshed, the surviving south drive-thru is visible and the building appears to be unaltered. The Home Savings and Loan Bank retains sufficient integrity of design and feeling to be a contributing resource in the district.

NC-age Office Building. 618 Foster St. post-1965.

The one-story, flat-roofed building, apparently built as an office, has light red brick laid in a running bond on all four elevations. The two-bay-wide west façade features a recessed, plate-glass door surrounded by fixed glass panes. The remainder of the façade contains a full-length plate-glass display window with aluminum muntins angled outward from the bottom in a manner characteristic of mid-century modern design. A planter extends along the bottom of the window. Side elevations have no openings, and the rear has a single metal door. There is no listing of this building in the 1963 *Durham City Directory*. The building with its modest modernist design is intact, but because it is less than fifty years old it is a noncontributing building

NC-alt. Uzzle Motor Company Used Cars. 634 Foster St. early 1960s, 1970s.

The Uzzle Motor Company, located across Foster Street, constructed this frame used car dealership in the early 1960s. The sales office was located in the upper story of the building known locally as the "pagoda" because of its curious construction: a small wooden office with a steep hipped roof set one story in the air on steel supports. The roof flares outward on all four sides to shelter a wide concrete balcony with a metal and wooden balustrade. Walls are plywood, with one-by-four-inch battens that create a paneled appearance. Windows are narrow fixed single panes. The roof has a hipped ventilator at the peak. An open metal staircase rises from the rear elevation to the balcony. The interior of the sales office contains three office spaces and a bathroom. In the 1970s the space below the sales office was enclosed as office space, with the same plywood and batten paneled walls and narrow fixed windows as the upper level. Because of this enclosure the building has lost its architectural character. Acme Plumbing Company enlarged a warehouse next door in 1984 and has used the pagoda since that time. Acme uses the sales office as plumbing offices; the first story of the pagoda is rented to another tenant.

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C Auto Repair Building. ca. 1962. At the rear of the parcel stands a five-bay-wide, one-story auto repair building constructed for the Uzzle Motor Company Used Car business. The 1962 city directory listing of an “Uzzle Motor Company storage building” at 610 Foster Street may be this building. The concrete block building is distinguished by its shed roof, formed by cast concrete girders that project three feet beyond the façade. At the front, the girders rest on a large concrete plate that extends into a tapered support at each end. Four of the five service bays retain their original glazed garage doors; the northernmost bay is infilled with concrete block. At the north side is a metal pedestrian door. The south three bays have a higher floor level and are accessed by a ramp. This is used as storage by Acme Plumbing Company.

NC-age Coman Brothers Lumber Company Warehouse. 636 Foster St. ca. 1970, 1984. Acme Plumbing Company had occupied a building on W. Geer Street since its beginning in 1947 under W. L. Tilley Sr. In 1984, the business purchased the parcels at 634 and 636 Foster Street that contained the former Uzzle Motor Company Used Auto dealership, the Uzzle auto repair building, and an adjacent prefab steel and concrete block warehouse built for the Coman Brothers Lumber Company. The Tilleys added a one and one-half story addition to the rear of the warehouse and a wraparound porch to the west and south side that created a modernist 1980s appearance. The walls are stuccoed concrete block with the same metal as found on the shed/Mansard form metal roof on the upper half of the west wall and the rear addition. The west elevation contains a garage door bay. The main entrance, located in the rear addition, is reached via the wraparound metal-roof porch with metal posts. Windows are two-pane metal sliding type. Because the building was built after the fifty-year cut off for historic significance, it is noncontributing to the district.

C Fletcher’s Service Station. 644 Foster St. ca. 1946, ca. 2010. Fletcher's Service Station was constructed at the southeast corner of Foster and W. Geer streets by 1947, when it is listed in the 1944-1947 *Durham City Directory* as “Fletcher’s Service Station.” The station is not listed in the directories again until the 1960 directory when it is listed as “Fletcher's Gulf Service.” The Colonial Revival-style design features two intersecting pedimented gable wings, with a lower, hipped-roof office section in the center and a main entrance facing northwest. Walls are one-to-five common bond brick walls with quoined corners. Each pediment has a wooden fanlight and wooden cornices. A prominent wooden classical frieze with triglyphs extends around the gabled portion of the building. Each wing contains a service bay: one is now infilled with brick, the other has a replacement glazed wooden door. The front office section has a central replacement door and a pair of fixed single-pane windows on each side. Across the roof is a Chippendale balustrade, reproduced from a documentary photo. A third

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pedimented wing extends to the south side; an original flat-roof section beside it has a glazed wood auto bay door, a single-pane window, and a Chippendale balustrade. The rear (west) elevation contains two doors and three windows, one enclosed.

The old gas station was rehabilitated into a restaurant named Geer Street Garden several years ago. Its Colonial Revival features were restored and, in the case of the roof balustrade, reproduced in kind from old photos. The classical frieze was largely restored and the fanlights had survived intact. To the rear, a low brick wall encloses a dining patio, part of which is sheltered by a wooden and fiberglass free-standing porch. At the north and south corners of the paved parcel stand tall metal light poles of 1950s vintage. The building owner carefully restored the station's original architectural finish. No additions were made to the building, and it retains a high degree of architectural integrity.

Source: 1944-1947 to 1960 *Durham City Directories*.

C U.S. Naval Reserve Training Center. 724 Foster St. 1948, ca. 1955.

In 1948 the United States military constructed a U.S. Naval Reserve facility here, directly across from the Durham County Agricultural Extension Service. The steel frame building with brick veneer was one story tall, with an arched center entrance on the west façade, flanked by six bays of metal casement windows and two original rear wings. By the mid-1950s it had been raised to two stories. The upper story is also brick veneered, its long expanse relieved by three brick string courses between the windows, which were metal awning types. In 1963, the building was used as the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve as well as the Naval Reserve. In 1970, the facility became the Army Reserve Center. In 2003 the Central Park School for Children, a charter elementary school, opened in the building.

The large, utilitarian building features brick veneer laid in running bond, with a center front double glass door set within a segmental arch of stepped brick that contributed, along with the original crenellated roofline, to an "armory" architectural style. When the second story was added, the crenellations disappeared. All of the windows have been replaced with one-over-one metal sashes. The main entrance is set within a recessed, corbelled, segmental-arch opening and sheltered by a flat metal canopy. The interior contains a hallway that extends the width of the building, with rooms opening to the front and rear. To the rear along the south is a ten-bay-deep two-story brick wing; an equally-long one-story brick wing extends from the north end of the rear elevation. Each wing has a center hall and double-loaded rooms. Directly behind the hallway, located centrally, is a large auditorium set between the original wings. Between the auditorium and rear wings are narrow corridors open to the air.

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When the charter school opened, the interior was retrofitted with linoleum floors, dropped acoustical tile ceilings, and replacement windows. A number of the classroom doors are original glazed and paneled doors. Approximately 300 children attend kindergarten to fifth grades in this building, which has a small playground behind the building and also utilizes the large playground behind the school that was originally the grounds of the North Durham Elementary School located on North Street. The building retains its architectural integrity from about 1955, when it was raised to two stories, and the replacement windows and doors are the only significant exterior change since that time. Although adaptively reused as a school, it still conveys its original character as a U. S. Naval Reserve Training Center, thus it is a contributing resource.

Sources: interviews with John Heffernan, director, and Robert Chapman, member of Board of Directors, August 20, 2012; www.opendurham.blogspot.com, accessed August 24, 2012; 1950 Sanborn map of Durham.

C Nu-Tread Tire Company. 601 and 605 Foster St. ca. 1948.

Nu-Tread Tire Company constructed this large brick nine-bay-wide building at the northwest intersection of Foster and W. Corporation streets between 1947 and 1950, since it is not listed in the 1947 city directory but appears in the 1950 directory. The north section of the east-facing building, 605 Foster Street, was listed as the Taste-Rite Sandwich Company in the 1950-1951 directory, but this business lasted only a few years. By 1957, 601 Foster Street contained The Tire and Appliance Center, which sold GE appliances, and 605 Foster Street contained the Nu-Tread Tire Company, although the businesses were run by the same ownership. Both businesses continued to operate at least until 1963.

The site abuts the Durham Bulls baseball park to the rear (west), and the sloping site allows a full story below the street level. The standard commercial construction features one-to-five common bond red brick walls with large metal casement windows with concrete sills and concrete coping. The south end of the building contained a salesroom with a door flanked by large display windows, a soldier course above the openings, and a wraparound concrete deck with a metal railing. The four northern bays contain wood paneled and glazed garage doors. These retain painted signs for "recapping," brake service," "wheel balancing," and "wheel alignment." Two rows of gas pumps were located in front. The side and rear elevations contain large metal windows. A 1953 documentary photo in the Open Durham blog shows the original appearance of the building. Sometime after 1953 two additional service bays of similar design were added at the north end.

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About 2009, Barbara Genia Smith purchased the building and renovated it to house Accent Hardwoods, a wood flooring company that uses one of the office spaces as its showroom and the remaining spaces as a warehouse. The southernmost office space is rented to another business. Ms. Smith replaced the display windows of the office spaces with new metal and glass windows and doors. The flat-roof canopy that shelters the four service bays appears to date from the 1960s, but the metal posts are recent replacements. The large building, of standard 1940s commercial and warehouse design, retains most of its original architectural character. Although the office windows are replacements, the remainder of the building has high integrity and is a contributing building in the district.

Sources: www.opendurham.blogspot.com, accessed August 24, 2012; interview with employee Linda McGee, Aug. 22, 2012; 1947-1963 *Durham City Directories*.

C R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Prizery. 609 Foster St. 1938.

On June 1, 1937, Homeland Investment Company sold the 132-by-150-foot parcel to R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company of Winston-Salem for \$100 (Durham Co. Deed Book 114, page 581). Reynolds Tobacco built this substantial one-story brick tobacco prizery in 1938. Gary Kueber's Open Durham blogspot theorizes that "given the size of the Durham auction market, Reynolds wanted a presence convenient to the auction warehouses to press and store tobacco for shipping to their factories" [in Winston-Salem]. The 1950 Sanborn map shows the building in its current form and indicates interior steel column construction. The eleven-bay-wide building is built of one-to-five common bond brick, on top of a poured concrete foundation, with parapet walls with terra cotta coping. The east-facing façade contains one service bay with a shed-roof porch and, at the lower north end, a group of three service bays sheltered by another shed-roof porch. Two of these bays contain original paneled doors with diagonal batten construction, and one of the door surrounds has an unusual peaked top. The other two have replacement metal doors. Both of the porches are constructed of steel frames, with corrugated metal roofs. Windows are large metal ones, each with thirty glass panes, with heavy metal screens. Several are infilled with brick. Side elevations, with stepped parapets, are eight bays wide. The south side contains two pedestrian doors. At the rear bay of the north side is a service door and an adjacent metal loading platform. The rear wall is painted "Durham Bulls" blue.

Reynolds continued to use the building at least to 1963. It has been owned by Greenfire Development Co. since ca. 2007 and is currently unused.

Sources: www.opendurham.blogspot.com, accessed Aug. 23, 2012; 1947-1963 *Durham City*

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Directories.

C Uzzle Motor Company. 619-621 Foster St. 1940, ca. 1948, ca. 1970. According to www.opendurham.blogspot.com, Wilson Uzzle started his Cadillac dealership about 1930 in an architecturally elaborate service station on E. Main Street. About 1946 he hired Durham architect Archie Royal Davis to design a new building at 619 Foster Street in the Art Moderne style. About this time Uzzle's sons Dan and Gran joined the business. It thrived here until 1969, when the dealership moved to a location on Chapel Hill Boulevard/15-501. The 2011 study list application by Durham native Charlotte Chapman states that the small north wing of the dealership was built in 1940 as Marshburn's Service Station, and was later known as Uzzle and Oakley Service and Filling. The 1947 *Durham City Directory* lists only the "Uzzle and Oakley Service Station" on this parcel. The 1950-1951 directory lists both the "U and O Esso Service Station" as well as "Uzzle Motor Co. autos." The auto showroom building was apparently built between 1947 and 1951.

The large auto dealership building, at the southwest corner of Foster and W. Geer streets, backs up to the Durham Bulls ballpark. The east-facing façade consists of a wide central showroom flanked by service bays and large glass-brick windows. The south five bays of the façade, with a lower roofline, contain a central service bay and large flanking windows. At the south end is a pedestrian door within an infilled bay. Classical Revival finishes, including Flemish bond brick veneer and a handsome molded concrete showroom window surround, distinguish the façade. The showroom has a central stepped parapet and a molded concrete coping. The bays flanking the showroom have wide concrete string courses above the service bays and windows. One window has been infilled. One service bay retains an original glazed garage door, the other has a replacement plastic door. The south side has large window openings that are now covered with plywood and a soldier course above the windows. The north side retains the small gas station wing, now remodeled with wooden walls and replacement doors and windows, and original large metal awning windows and a service entry on the main block. The rear elevation has one level of large metal casement windows, most covered with plywood, and is painted "Durham Bulls" blue. The sides and rear elevation have one-to-five common bond brick walls. The building retains a relatively high level of architectural integrity. The primary alteration is the ca. 1970 replacement of the showroom entrance and display windows with a wooden Colonial Revival-style door and flanking small-paned picture windows for Brame Office Supply. The showroom interior retains its original terrazzo checkered floor and an ornate plaster cornice.

After Uzzle Motor Company moved away to Chapel Hill Boulevard/15-501 in the late 1960s, the building housed Brame Office Supply. Later an antique business utilized the building. In 2010

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Greenfire Development group purchased the property. Green Horizon, a "green" construction company, now uses the building.

Sources: www.opendurham.blogspot.com , accessed Aug. 24, 2012; 1947-1960 *Durham City Directories*; Charlotte Chapman, Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District Study List Application, Sept. 2, 2011.

C King's Sandwich Shop. 701 Foster St. ca. 1950.

King's Sandwich Shop, a small one-story, flat-roof, painted concrete block take-out restaurant at the northwest corner of Foster and W. Geer streets, has been a beloved institution in the district since about 1950. It does not appear in the *Durham City Directories* prior to the 1950-1951 directory. According to the Open Durham blogspot it was built before 1950, but it is not shown on the 1950 Sanborn map. The building is one bay wide and three bays deep, with stepped parapet walls with terra cotta tile coping. Both the front facing east toward Foster Street and the south side facing W. Geer Street contain sliding glass windows with bracketed shelves where customers order and pick up their food. Both facades are sheltered by red metal awnings. The white and red paint scheme has apparently been in place for many years. The kitchen area in the rear of the building is illuminated by original metal casement windows. The rear contains a single door to the kitchen and separate doors for men's and ladies' bathrooms. Along the kitchen section of the south wall is a brick planter. Behind the building is a picnic area with a flat, corrugated metal roof supported by metal pipes. At the corner is a freestanding plastic sign supported on a tall metal pipe, surrounded by a concrete block base.

King's closed in 2007 and reopened in 2010 under the ownership of T. J. McDermott. McDermott and his wife updated the kitchen to meet current codes but preserved the exterior of the much-loved building.

Sources: www.opendurham.blogspot.com , accessed Aug. 29, 2012; 1947-1960 *Durham City Directories*, Charlotte Chapman, Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District Study List Application, Sept. 2, 2011; 1950 Sanborn map of Durham.

C Walton Roofing and Heating Company. 703 Foster St. ca. 1947.

The one-story brick, flat-roof rectangular building was built ca. 1947 for Walton Roofing and Heating Company. It is not listed in the 1944-1947 *Durham City Directory* but is listed the 1950-1951 directory. The three-bay-wide east façade has Flemish bond brick with glazed headers, while side and rear elevations have running bond brick. The south elevation has four metal casement windows with concrete sills and two doors that open onto a metal loading dock. The

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north elevation, accessible by a narrow paved alley, has a single metal door. The rear elevation has a single bricked-up window. The center recessed front entrance is a replacement glazed door. The flanking large display windows have concrete sills and replacement plate-glass. A vintage red and white striped metal awning shades the windows. The façade wall extends as a stepped parapet, with concrete coping. A wide recessed panel in the upper façade is painted white and has a painted sign: "Manbites Dog Theater." The independent theatre company performs original plays in a theatre housed in the rear two-thirds of the building, which has an arched roof. A bold black and white mural along the south and rear walls depict the skyline of the surrounding urban neighborhood.

Sources: 1947-1960 *Durham City Directories*, Charlotte Chapman, Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District Study List Application, Sept. 2, 2011.

C Durham Awning Company. 705 Foster St. ca. 1956.

The two-story, flat-roof, three-bay-wide brick commercial building does not appear in the 1955 *Durham City Directory* but is listed in the 1957 directory as the "Durham Awning Co." The business was still listed in the 1963 directory. Its functional construction of one-to-five common bond brick walls and metal sash and casement windows on the south side (with no openings on the north side) is elevated with modest modernist brickwork patterns on the east façade. The darker red brick façade is laid in running bond, with brick quoins at the corners and, on the upper façade, every fourth course of brick projecting as a string course. The center entrance is a replacement metal door. The flanking display windows have small-paned muntins that are likely added later. The window on the north side of the door is partially infilled. At the rear is a one-story frame section, likely added, and a small wooden addition stands to the rear of the south elevation. The second-story door to nowhere on the rear, with a metal awning, probably had a fire escape. The building retains a high degree of architectural integrity. It houses a pottery business called Claymakers.

Sources: 1944-1947 to 1960 *Durham City Directories*.

C Durham County Agricultural Extension Office. 721 Foster St. ca. 1948.

The Durham County Agriculture Extension Office, a large two-story brick, flat-roof building of modest Art Moderne style, has a cornerstone set in the southern corner of the east façade with a 1946 date and the names of the Durham County commissioners. The 1944-1947 *Durham City Directory* does not list the building, indicating that it must not have been completed until ca. 1948. The directory list of government agencies in the building included the county farm agents, the state Division of Forestry, the Soil Conservation Service, and the County Home

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Demonstration agent. One of its major functions was its curb market, housed in the rear one-story, eight-bay-wide wing. The facility had two sets of double-doors on each side and another one on the rear, allowing for easy access to the indoor market. Framed photos from the 1950s displayed inside the building document a scene from the market, where food prepared in the test kitchens located in the second story were displayed in the curb market space for passersby to enjoy.

The building retains much of its original architectural appearance, with walls of one-to-five common-bond red brick veneer and windows set in concrete string courses at the top and bottom. The main two-story block is seven bays wide and three bays deep. The central bay of the façade features a double-door with rounded reveals of ribbed concrete, a Moderne decorative feature. The central entrances on the side elevations also have a decorative Moderne treatment, a wide quoined brick surround that extends to the roof, enclosing a tall window atop the entrance. Each of these side entrances has an original flat metal awning supported by posts.

A 2004 rehabilitation reworked the entire building, replacing all visible interior fabric with the exception of the two stairways, which have handsome metal stair railings. The open rear market space was subdivided into offices. In addition to Extension offices, other tenants are the N.C. Forestry Service and the Soil and Water Conservation Service. The only alterations to the building's exterior were the replacement of the windows and doors. The original paired metal awning windows were replaced with fixed-pane windows set in black metal frames. The larger windows above the three main block entrances were replaced with the same types of black metal frames with a central circular motif. The main entrance and rear entrance doors are replacements. The four sets of double-doors along the side elevations of the rear wing have been replaced with windows. However, the flat metal awnings that sheltered these original doors are still in place.

At the front corners of the driveway on each side of the building are pairs of original large concrete gateposts with iron rings so that the driveway can be chained off.

Sources: 1944-1947 to 1960 *Durham City Directories*.

C **Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store.** 733 Foster St. 1947. (NR 2012)

The Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store, one of the city's few intact examples of the Streamline Moderne style, stands at the top of a hill. The 1947 dry cleaning building with a blond brick facade is a single-story brick structure standing on a partial concrete basement due to the slope of the lot. The building housed a plant at the back with business

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offices and a retail store up front, accounting for the Streamline Moderne façade that overlooks Foster Street to the east. Retail space, offices, storage, and restrooms occupy roughly a third of the floor plan. The single-leaf glass door and sidelight within the peaked concrete surround of the front entrance replaced a double-leaf door in the late twentieth century, but the original glass-block entrance surround remains. The east-facing façade has a stepped parapet. The concrete basement wall extends to the south to form a retaining wall. Above the wall is a concrete-paved loading dock along the building's south elevation. This building was where all of the dry cleaning was done and the cleaned items were then redistributed to the company's other retail stores for customer pick-up. The building has a chamfered wall at its northwest corner, following the boundary of the irregularly shaped parcel. The poured concrete wall of the partial basement is exposed on the rear elevation. Metal industrial awning windows pierce the sides and rear.

The dry cleaning plant is one of Durham's best surviving examples of the Streamline Art Moderne architectural style, expressed 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 flanking the central bay also transmit the machine-age energy of the building.

West Geer Street, north side

C Joseph A. Fargo Carpets and Rugs. 324A and 324B W. Geer St. ca. 1948.
This one-story flat-roof load-bearing brick commercial building was historically a single storefront, but is now divided into two commercial spaces numbered 324A and 324B. Walls have one-to-six common bond brick, perhaps a veneer on concrete block. The brick is painted yellow. The lot slopes to the rear, allowing a raised basement level. The three south façade bays to the west now contain La Costena Market while the east bay contains Kilombo Community Center. All façade windows appear to be original and consist of concrete sills and a glass brick border enclosing plate-glass windows. The market door is a double metal-and-plate-glass door in the central bay of the storefront. The community center door is a wooden one set into the side of the window. The west side elevation contains five windows at the street level and two at the lower level, all infilled with concrete block. The east side elevation is partially below ground level and contains no windows. The rear elevation contains four windows at the street level, all infilled with concrete block. The raised basement level has a service entrance and small windows that are also infilled with block. A tall brick chimney rises from the east side wall. Across the rear property line is a stone retaining wall.

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The building does not appear in the 1946-1947 *Durham City Directory*. In 1950 the building contains "Jos. A. Fargo carpets and rugs." By 1960 the business's name changed to "Durham Art Shop carpets and rugs."

C Paschall Bros. Plumbing Company. 326 W. Geer St. 1949.

The one-story, flat-roof, four-bay-wide commercial building was built as rental commercial space. It first appears in the 1950-1951 *City Directory* as the "Paschall Bros. Plumbing Company". In the 1970s Acme Plumbing Company moved into the building. The parcel slopes to the rear, allowing a raised basement level below the street level. The concrete block walls are exposed on the sides and rear, while the south façade is faced with one-to-five running bond brick, painted a bright red. The upper façade features four small metal casement windows with brick sills. The central plate-glass door is set in a recess with splayed plate-glass windows. Four large plate-glass windows with transoms in metal frames flank the door on each side. The window and door configuration matches the original façade, but may have been replaced in-kind. Large metal awning windows with thick stuccoed sills illuminate the sides and rear. The east side elevation has four large windows and two small windows. The west elevation contains three identical large windows, two identical small windows, and with two individual doors and a garage door near the rear. One of the doors is an original glazed and paneled door; the other door and the garage door are replacements. At the rear west corner is an interior chimney. The rear elevation has three identical large windows. The building was recently rehabilitated as the Common Ground Green Building Center, which sells recycled counter tops, kitchen cabinets, etc.

Source: www.opendurham.blogspot.com, accessed Aug. 31, 2012; 1950-1951 *Durham City Directory*.

C Weeks Motor Company. 408 W. Geer St. 1948.

Built in 1948 as the Weeks Motor Company, which sold Ford, Lincoln, and Mercury autos, this large one- and two-story, flat-roofed brick building is a nearly unaltered example of the Streamline Art Moderne style. The rounded showroom façade allows the full display of the interior through a solid glass curtain wall, shaded by a rounded flat awning with aluminum cornice. Below the windows is a dado of black carrera glass. The recessed central glass doors have been replaced by a smaller door infilled with plywood. Side elevations of the main block have stepped parapets. The east elevation of the main block has awning windows. Recessed side wings flank the showroom. The west wing contains a large wood and glazed garage door marked "exit," with a curved wall at the outer corner composed of header bricks. The east wing contains an original glazed wood entrance door and a large window of glass bricks. The entire south

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façade, including showroom and wings, has a yellow brick veneer laid in Flemish bond. A robust molded concrete cornice extends across the entire façade. To the east is a five-bay recessed wing with the same yellow brick veneer containing four wood and glazed garage doors and a single pedestrian entrance. Most openings on the wing and the side elevation of the main block have soldier course lintels. The automotive entrance bay, a wood and glazed garage door, is located in the east wall of the main block just in front of the recessed east wing. The rear elevation is a single flat wall containing thirteen metal awning windows, all now covered with plywood. A few feet behind the rear elevation, a stone retaining wall demarcates the rear boundary of the parcel.

The showroom retains four round metal posts that support the roof along the front wall and along the rear wall. The wooden parts counter for Hutchins Auto Supply is still in place across the rear of the former showroom. The showroom floor is covered with linoleum tile.

Weeks Motor Company moved across W. Geer Street into the former Durham Bakery Company building at 723 Rigsbee Avenue in 1962. Hutchins Auto Supply began operation in the building in 1962, but closed by 2000. The building is now used for furniture storage. The original Weeks Motor Company signage has been lost. It consisted of metal lettering "Weeks Motors" on the brick wall above the awning and a sizeable metal sign set at right angles above the cornice. Current signage consists of a replacement metal Hutchins Supply Co. Inc. sign set on top of the awning and painted signs on the upper panes of the showroom windows.

Sources: Charlotte Chapman's Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District Study List Application, Sept. 2011; 1950-1963 *Durham City Directories*.

C Hometown Sales and Service. 410 W. Geer St. ca. 1948.

This is a one-story load-bearing brick building constructed as Hometown Sales and Service, a car dealership, has housed a succession of functions that have left their mark on its architectural appearance. The entire façade has one-to-five common bond brick, now painted. Above the windows is a vertical brick string course; sections of vertical brick accent the upper façade. The east four-bay section abuts the sidewalk and consists of three large plate-glass windows with glass brick transoms (now covered) and one replacement entrance door with transom between the two westernmost windows. The west elevation of this block has a garage door, awning window, and a tall chimney stack. The rear elevation of this block has three large metal multi-pane windows, a smaller metal window, and a replacement plate-glass door. The west section is a recessed wing with a Moderne-style entrance and three metal awning windows. This section originally contained two garage doors that have been infilled with brick. The main entrance, located in this wing, is a double plate-glass door set in a recess, with flanking rounded sections

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of glass bricks. The building has a partially raised basement beneath its western half, with an entrance on the front accessible by a sloping driveway. The original garage door, at the basement level, has been replaced by a double glass door with glass brick sidelight. The west side elevation and the rear elevation were stuccoed at a later date. Four large metal awning windows with stuccoed surrounds illuminate the main level of the west side elevation, with four smaller ones in the basement level; four identical windows, a multi-pane window, and a plate-glass door illuminate the upper rear elevation. The rear basement elevation has single-pane awning windows. The higher ground behind the eastern half of the building is supported by a stone retaining wall.

Hometown Sales and Service constructed the building about 1948, but had left by 1950, when the Hospital Care Association Inc. occupied the building. This insurance company, established in the 1930s by George Watts Hill, later evolved into the Blue Cross Hospital Care Association Inc. The Hospital Care Association occupied the building until at least 1960. In 1965 Governor Terry Sanford's North Carolina Fund, which worked to fight poverty in the state using federal funds at the local level, moved into the building. Now known as the Trotter Building, it houses a fitness club known as "Crossfit Durham" in the eastern half and as a yoga studio in the western half.

Sources: Charlotte Chapman, Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District Study List Application, Sept. 2, 2011; 1950-1965 *Durham City Directories*.

C Texaco Service Station. 420 W. Geer St. ca. 1948.

This one-story, flat-roof, load-bearing brick gas station was constructed as a Texaco Service Station. The 1944-1947 *Durham City Directory* (a one-volume directory), does not list a building at 420 W. Geer Street, although the "Jos. A. Stewart filling station" is listed at the corner of Foster and W. Geer streets with no street number. The 1950 to 1960 directories list the "Texaco Service Station" at 420 W. Geer Street, and in 1960 it is identified as "Lee Texaco Service Station." The three-bay-wide and one-bay-deep building is nearly unaltered. The one-to-five common bond brick walls are painted white, although most of the paint has been sanded off. A triple brick string course extends around the upper walls as a decorative cornice. The western façade bay contains the original glazed and paneled door with transom and flanking wide metal multi-pane fixed windows. An identical window in the west elevation meets the front window at the corner, illuminating the station office. The east two façade bays contain the original wooden retractable garage doors. The east side elevation contains two twenty-pane metal awning windows (the center six panes are operable). Across the rear elevation are one identical window and an opening, now enclosed, that may have contained a window or a door. The rear of the west elevation contains two original five-panel wood doors with transoms for men's and ladies'

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restrooms, with a small window beside the southernmost door.

The station originally contained the Texaco name in large letters above the office door. By the later 1960s this was a Sinclair station. The front gas pumps have been removed. The station is undergoing interior renovation as a coffee shop.

Sources: Charlotte Chapman, Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District Study List Application, Sept. 2, 2011; 1944-1960 *Durham City Directories*.

C Royal Crown and Seven-Up Bottling Company. 319-321 W. Geer St. 1939.
Lloyd Brown constructed this two-story Moderne-style brick building in 1939 as a Royal Crown and Seven-Up Bottling Company. Brown's first bottling plant, built in 1925, stood on nearby Morgan Street. The plant bottled both Royal Crown and Seven-Up sodas until at least 1963, with Tru-Ade sodas added in 1955. From 1955 to 1960, the C. T. Wilson Construction Company operated here as well, likely in a rear addition.

The large plant, the largest building in the historic district, occupies the block between Rigsbee and Madison streets. The main two-story block, six bays wide and four bays deep, faces north to W. Geer Street. The flat-roof building is constructed of load-bearing brick, with a greenish-yellow brick veneer on all four elevations. The large metal casement windows on all four elevations have been replaced with plate-glass windows in metal frames. An elegant Moderne-style entrance bay forms the focus of the otherwise utilitarian design. The central entrance is set in a shallow projecting pavilion of cast-stone that terminates in a stepped parapet with a central decoratively incised panel. The double glazed-and-paneled wooden door has a decorative aluminum transom with a stepped parapet above it. One other decorative feature is the high cast-stone base on which the first-story façade windows rest. The façade has a cast-stone coping and cast-stone window sills. The west side elevation has three windows and an original garage door opening in the rearmost bay that has been infilled with a single door. The east elevation of the main block has three large windows that are boarded up.

The east side elevation has a ca. 1950 one-story wing of identical brick, configured as an automotive maintenance shop with an office in the outer corner and three garage bays in the remainder of the wing. The garage doors are wood paneled, with glazing. Windows are metal awning type. This wing, with a street address of 319 W. Geer Street, is not in place on the 1950 Sanborn map, but is listed as "Weeks Motor Company's used car department" in the 1950-1951 *City Directory*. Later auto shops that operated here include Mike's Transmission, Clark and Sorrell, and now Parrott's Automotive.

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The original rear one-story wing of the main block, eight bays deep, was used for bottle storage. It appears on the 1937-1950 Sanborn map. The west elevation of this wing contains a pair of windows, three metal garage bays, and a pedestrian door flanked by another pair of windows, while the east elevation has a covered two-vehicle loading bay and two garage bays. In the early 1970s an additional bay was added to the rear. This is a steel-frame structure with a yellow and brown brick veneer west wall that extends as a parapet roof. The west elevation contains a single tall metal garage door. The east elevation has one open loading dock and one garage bay, and is covered with corrugated metal siding. The rear, south elevation is brick veneered, with a metal double-door. Fullsteam Brewery now operates in this section.

The first floor interior of the two-story block consists of a narrow center hall with a Colonial Revival-style wooden stair to the upper floor, office spaces to the west side, and a bottling room to the east side. The upper story contains a large rear room, accessed from the first floor by a rear service stair. All floors, walls and ceilings appear to have original finishes with the exception of the office area, which was paneled in the mid-to-late twentieth century. The one-story bottle storage and garage spaces to the rear have bare brick walls and concrete floors that appear to be original.

Sources: Charlotte Chapman, Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District Study List Application, Sept. 2, 2011; 1939-1963 *Durham City Directories*; www.opendurham.blogspot.com, accessed Aug. 31, 2012; 1950 Sanborn map.

Rigsbee Avenue, west side

C American Insurance Agency. 703 Rigsbee Avenue. ca. 1959.

Located at the northwest corner of Rigsbee and Corporation streets, this small sleek mid-century modern office building is now adaptively reused as a bar known as the Surf Club. The 1959 *Durham City Directory* lists the "American Insurance Agency" at 709 Rigsbee Avenue, but its address changed to 703 in the 1960 directory, probably because of a renumbering of buildings. The one-story flat-roofed building has red Roman brick veneer in a running bond on all four sides, with concrete coping. The two-bay-wide east façade has a modernist design with an unbroken expanse of brick in the left bay, with a higher parapet wall, and the fully glazed entrance bay at right, with an orchard stone veneer wall at the corner that projects out to support a flat metal awning. The same stone frames the display window and forms a planter beneath the window. The awning shelters the original drive-through teller window on the north side. One other metal sliding window exists in the north elevation. The south elevation has six small

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sliding metal windows; at the rear is a replacement metal door with a flat wood awning. The only alteration to the building is the replacement metal entrance door on the facade. A metal fence encloses a seating area for the bar on the north side.

C Shed. ca. 1959. To the rear is a small flat-roof Roman brick storage building of similar construction to the bank building. It has a metal front door and a rear metal industrial window. To the south side is a frame shed-roof addition that may have replaced an earlier brick section.

Source: 1959, 1960 *Durham City Directories*.

NC-alt. GMAC Insurance Corporation. 711 Rigsbee Avenue. ca. 1959, ca. 2000. The 1959 *Durham City Directory* lists the "GMAC Insurance Corporation" at 711 Rigsbee Avenue. The one-story, flat-roof brick office building of modest mid-century modern design is likely this office. The building is now adaptively reused as a bar known as "the bar." Red brick laid in running bond covers the sides and rear. There are no openings on the side elevations; the rear has a small flat-roof frame addition. The three-bay-wide facade features a central entrance with flanking bays of decorative brickwork. The north bay features brick aligned in rows, with every sixth brick recessed to create a textured surface. The south bay contains a flush wall of brick in geometric rows. The entrance has a replacement wooden double-door with transom, and the high windows above the south bay have been covered with vertical siding. A shallow mansard roof addition shelters the entrance and south bay of the facade. The new entrance and covered windows have substantially altered the facade's architectural character, making it a noncontributing resource.

Sources: 1959, 1960 *Durham City Directories*.

C U. S. Post Office Garage. 715 Rigsbee Avenue. 1963. The large one-story brick flat-roofed building, set at right angles to the street, was constructed in 1963 as a post office garage with service bays for repairing postal trucks. The building is not listed in the 1962 city directory and is under construction in 1963. In the 1964 directory it is the "U.S. Post Office garage", 713 Rigsbee Ave. About the year 2000, Massengill's Auto Service moved into the building. All four sides of the building are covered with pink brick laid in a running bond, with metal coping. The seven-bay-wide facade, which faces north, consists of an office section with a full wall of wraparound metal awning windows with painted panels above and below the windows and a recessed section containing five service bays and a glazed entrance to the office area. The garage bays have glazed and paneled garage doors sheltered by a flat

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awning that wraps across the façade to the office door. The east elevation has two metal awning windows and a double metal door; the west elevation has three metal awning windows. A frame storage shed has been added to this elevation. The rear, south, elevation has no openings.

Source: 1962-1965 *Durham City Directories*.

NC-age Elwood Automotive. 719 Rigsbee Ave. late 1960s.

Just north of the post office stands a one-story brick flat-roofed service station set at right angles to Rigsbee Avenue. Probably built in the late 1960s, this station is abandoned, its parcel enclosed with a high chain link fence, and its parking lot filled with old cars and trucks. The station has red brick walls laid in running bond, a boxed wood cornice, and a flat roof. The east half of the north façade contains an entrance and a large metal casement window; the west half contains three service bays with glazed garage doors. The east elevation has a large metal casement window and two smaller metal casements. The west elevation has a small brick wing and a frame storage shed. An old sign identifies the building as Elwood Automotive.

Source: 1963 *Durham City Directory*: not listed.

C Durham Baking Company. 723 Rigsbee Ave. 1938, ca. 1962.

The tall one-story main block was constructed in 1938 as the Durham Baking Company. The 1950 Sanborn map shows the bakery building with rounded corners on the north and east elevations. The bakery is listed in the 1947 and 1951 city directories at 403 W. Geer Street, which is the same building, but faced Geer Street rather than east to Rigsbee Avenue. This main block has stuccoed walls, a finish that appears to be original, an entrance with flanking fixed pane windows on the east elevation sheltered by a flat metal awning, and an enclosed window in the south bay. The north elevation features a secondary double-door entrance with flat metal awning and a wide stretch of fixed-glass showroom windows. The rounded corners with sections of offset panels convey the Streamlined Art Moderne style. The west side elevation has narrow metal casements that appear to be original to the bakery.

From 1955 to 1960 the bakery building was not listed in the directories. A 1962 photograph of the opening of Hutchins Auto Supply at 408 W. Geer Street shows that Weeks Motor Company occupied 723 Rigsbee Avenue by that time, and that the former bakery's walls were already stuccoed. About 1962 the company added two one-story stuccoed wings to the south, one along the east side and one along the west side. The east wing contains five service bays, each with a paneled and glazed wood garage door, and metal industrial windows on the rear. The west wing has central plate-glass entrance set within a glazed bay and one garage bay with a glazed-and-

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paneled wood door to the north and two to the south. The north elevation of this wing has two industrial metal windows. Between the two service wings is a one-story concrete block section with two service bays with paneled wood garage doors and a pedestrian door that was probably added about 1962 as well. The building is now adaptively reused as a music venue known as Motorco. With its original ca. 1938 main block and rear wings added about 1962, the building is a hybrid that retains architectural integrity from the 1962 era and is therefore a contributing resource.

Sources: Charlotte Chapman, Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District Study List Application, Sept. 2, 2011; 1947-1960 *Durham City Directories*.

Washington St., east side

C Durham Athletic Park. 500 Washington St. 1939.

In the late 1930s, Durham financier and philanthropist John Sprunt Hill funded construction of this ballpark on the site of the El Toro Ballpark, which had burned. George Watts Carr Sr. designed the 1939 concrete, brick, and steel stadium with a central section flanked by angled wings that contain a total of about 2,800 seats, now sheltered by a metal shed-roof canopy on metal supports. At the corner of the intersection stands a distinctive round, stuccoed ticket office with a conical roof and flanking gates. The stadium, of concrete construction, has a one-to-five common bond red brick veneer. The front wall facing the field is stuccoed with a raised panel motif. The stucco finish of the front wall and the ticket office are original. At each end of the front wall is a dugout. Bathrooms and the locker rooms are located under the bleachers, accessible from the rear and sides. Access to the stands is through two hallways flanking the central block containing the metal announcer's booth at the front and a concession stand at the rear. The inside corner of each hallway, with rounded corners, contains a bathroom. Most sections of the bleachers have replacement metal seats with backs.

Minor league baseball flourished in Durham from the 1930s to the 1960s, but floundered by the early 1970s. The Durham Bulls were reactivated at the end of the 1970s and the city spent \$125,000 in capital improvements for the ballpark amid record attendance between 1979 and 1982. The Durham Bulls built a new stadium, the Durham Bulls Athletic Park, in 1995 and left this one. In 2008-2009 the city gave this stadium a new lease on life by repairing and repainting the stadium, refurbishing the interior locker rooms, and adding three concession stands and a garage to the south side of the complex. North Carolina Central University plays its baseball games here.

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Sources: Roberts, "The Durham Architectural and Historic Inventory," 59;
www.opendurham.blogspot.com, accessed Sept. 17, 2012; conversation with Durham Bulls
staff, Aug. 23, 2012.

C Ticket office. 1939.

Round, stuccoed two-story ticket office with a corbeled cornice, circular tower, and exterior stair to the second level. The lower level has three ticket windows; the upper has a metal casement. Flanking gates are attached to the sides and a small stuccoed concession stand is attached to the rear.

C Concession Stand. ca. 1939.

Small shed-roof stuccoed concession stand located to north of ticket office.

NC-age Concession Stand. ca. 2008.

Concrete block shed-roof building, three bays wide, east of ticket office, with concession windows on north and south sides.

NC-age Concession Stand. ca. 2008.

Concrete block shed-roof building, one bay wide, with one large concession window on west.

NC-age Concession Stand. ca. 2008.

Concrete block shed-roof building east of stands, with five concession windows and two doors on the north and a door on the east.

NC-age Garage. ca. 2008.

Concrete block shed-roof building, at far southeast corner of property, containing two vehicle bays.

C Baseball field.

Grass baseball field surrounded by a chainlink fence.

NC-age Stone Brothers and Byrd Garden Supplies. 700 Washington St. 1968.

Stone Brothers and Byrd Garden Supplies, established in 1914, moved to this site from nearby Morgan Street in 1968 and constructed this "Strand Steel" brand prefabricated steel warehouse to house their garden supply business. C. C. Woods Construction Company, of Durham, erected the large warehouse, which has a low front-gabled roof, corrugated metal siding, and large loading bay doors in the center of each elevation. At the north door is a loading dock with a steel-beamed

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shed roof. In front, facing west toward Washington Street, stands an original brick office wing, two bays wide, with a shallow front-gable roof, a plate-glass display window across the front, and a recessed bay containing the original entrance, now replaced with a window and a display window, on the south side. A greenhouse is attached to the north side of the office wing. A hip-roof open frame shelter is attached to the south elevation. The garden supply building is an intact building that is noncontributing because it was built after 1963, the end of the district's period of historical significance.

Source: interview with George Davis, owner, Aug. 22, 2012.

C Riley's Paint Warehouse. 732 Washington St. ca. 1950.
Riley's Paint Warehouse, a small one-story concrete-block building at 732 Washington Street, was built about 1950 to the rear of Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office and Store. It first appears in the 1950-1951 *City Directory*. The concrete-block building has a west façade veneer of red running bond brick, with soldier course brick headers over the openings. The central door is slightly angled and flanked by plate-glass display windows set in wooden frames, with transoms that are now covered with wood. The northern bay is a service bay that has been infilled with brick and a double metal door. The south elevation, five bays deep, has brick veneer as well, with four original metal awning windows and a metal door in the rearmost bay. The only alterations appear to be the replacement front door and replacement front service door. The building is vacant.

Sources: 1937-1950 Sanborn map, sheet 41; 1950-1951 *Durham City Directory*.

Washington St., west side

C City Garage Yard and Fire Drill Tower. 501 Washington St. 1927, 1928, 1935, 1940s, c. 1955, c. 1965, 1999-2000. (NR 2000)

In 1927 the city of Durham constructed a large one-story brick garage containing fifteen service bays for its street maintenance vehicles. No architect has been identified for the eclectic Mission Revival-style building with dark red tapestry brick walls that rise in curvilinear parapet walls with cast-stone coping and medallions over the central and end bays. Each service bay has a round-arched opening with lunette windows set into the tops of the arches; double-bracketed hip-roof wooden tiled awnings shelter the end bays. In 1935 Belgian block granite pavers salvaged from city streets were used to construct a shed-roof rear wing, which now has replacement windows and doors. In the 1940s a small wing of granite pavers was added at the north end. About 1955 a two-story block and frame wing was added to the southwest rear, which now has

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replacement plate-glass and multi-pane windows. A small brick wing was added to the north side elevation about 1965.

In 1999-2000 the complex underwent a certified rehabilitation as an office complex. The main garage and the outbuildings were restored and refurbished on the exterior. The garage doors were replaced with plate-glass doors and windows set in black metal frames that are functional and unobtrusive. A wide concrete sidewalk with a low brick retaining wall was added as a promenade across the entire elevation. The front yard of the facility has been landscaped into a parking lot interspersed with trees and shrubbery.

C Fire Drill Tower. 1928.

In 1928 the city constructed a fire department drill tower at the front corner of the parcel from a plan prepared by Durham architects Atwood and Nash. The handsome six-story brick tower of Colonial Revival design has a pair of blind arches rising to the top of each of its four sides. At each level of each elevation are a pair of wooden sash windows. The first story has rectangular windows with eight-over-eight double-hung sash; the second has bull's-eye windows, the third through fifth have rectangular windows with the same sash as the first story, and the top level has round-arched windows. On the east elevation is a door; on the west elevation is a metal fire escape. Firefighters used the tower for training until the mid-1970s. It is now used for storage.

NC-alt Street Sign Shop. ca. 1948.

One-story shed-roof building of granite pavers, located at the north end of the rear yard, with large frame additions at the rear and south end and replacement windows and doors.

C Employee Restroom. ca. 1948.

Small one-story granite paver building with two restrooms, metal doors, and glass block windows, located near the southwest corner of the city garage.

NC-alt Signal Shop. ca. 1948, additions from 1950s to 1980s.

One-story frame building that served as office and truck and equipment storage, as well as a traffic signal repair shop. The building has been altered with stucco and weatherboard (or hardiplank) and replacement doors and windows, making it noncontributing.

NC-age Open vehicle storage shed. 1988.

Frame structure with pole supports located north of the city garage.

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NC-age Garage. ca. 2000.

Prefab metal service garage with two service bays located at the northwest corner of the parcel.

C American Oil Company. 703 Washington St. ca. 1945.

The American Oil Company, a bulk oil and gasoline plant, was established here between a Norfolk and Western railroad spur and Washington Street prior to 1937. In 1945 Frank Erwin bought the plant and built the current building. The business is now operated by the third generation of the family. The 1944-1947 *Durham City Directory* lists the "Am Oil Co" on this site. By 1951 the directory lists both this company and the "Erwin Oil Company" on the site. The complex is a well-preserved oil distribution site. The substantial ca. 1945 brick office and garage, five bays wide and three bays deep, has reddish brown combed brick parapet walls with a corbelled brick cornice. The two northern bays of the east façade contain an arched office entrance and a paired wooden six-over-six sash window with a soldier course above and below. The southern bays contain a metal warehouse door that appears to have originally been twice as wide, but is now partially infilled with brick. Above this section are a row of three fanlights, now covered with wood. In the upper façade is a recessed panel that originally held a sign but is now blank. At the north corner and between the office door and the warehouse door are a row of vertical brick decorative panels. The north side elevation contains two pairs of wood sash like the front window and a third window now bricked up. The south elevation has no openings and the rear may have several openings but was not accessible for viewing. This nearly unaltered building contributes to the district's historic character.

C Oil Tanks. ca. 1945.

To the north, five large metal oil tanks rest on brick walls, with a low concrete retaining wall surrounding them. They are no longer in use: Erwin Oil Company's gasoline delivery trucks now fuel up directly at an offsite fuel terminal.

C Shed. ca. 1945.

Behind the tanks is a small gabled shed with corrugated metal siding that is probably original and is a contributing building. On the south elevation is a door.

C Fuel Pumping Station. Ca. 1945.

A metal platform sheltered by a tall metal roof of corrugated metal. The pumps have been removed.

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C Fuel Pumping Station. Ca. 1945.

Fuel pumps built into a metal platform sheltered by a tall metal gabled roof of corrugated metal.

C Railroad Spur. Early 20th century.

A heavy timber railroad spur extends diagonally onto the property from the northwest. This tall trestle appears to have not been used for a half-century. The 1950 Sanborn map shows a group of spurs off the main railroad line in this vicinity. These likely served the Liggett and Myers Tobacco Warehouses, built in 1927, in the 400 block of N. Duke Street on the west side of the railroad tracks.

Sources: 1950 Sanborn map of Durham; conversation with Erwin Oil Company employee, Aug. 21, 2012; Roberts, *The Durham Architectural and Historic Inventory*, 56; 1944-1947 to 1960 *Durham City Directories*; www.opendurham.blogspot.com, accessed Aug. 31, 2012.

C Warehouse. 701 Washington St. ca. 1922.

This two-story brick and metal warehouse of sharply angled form is set immediately to the south of the American Oil Company building. The 1944-1947 *Durham City Directory* lists this as the "Durham Herald newspaper warehouse". Metal siding conceals the walls, which may be of brick construction. The only visible openings are a batten warehouse door in the front and an identical door in the rear. Above each door, a metal crane extends from the top of the wall. Although the warehouse is concealed by later metal siding, the siding was likely installed over fifty years ago, thus it is a contributing building.

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Section 8: Statement of Significance

The Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District, a seven-block mixed-use commercial and light-industrial area just north of the central business district in Durham, North Carolina, developed from the 1920s to the early 1960s. Most of the buildings are free-standing low-rise edifices set on large parcels, with generous parking areas for automobiles. The earliest buildings, the City Garage Yard and the Fire Drill Tower, were built by the city of Durham in 1927 and 1928. In the late 1930s industrial plants were built on nearby parcels, and the Durham Bulls minor-league baseball park was rebuilt in 1939 after its destruction by fire. In the second half of the 1940s, following the end of World War II, the district filled in with the city's second generation of car dealerships, service stations, an oil distributorship, service industries, such as a dry cleaners and a roofing business, a luncheonette, and two government facilities: the county agricultural extension office, and a U. S. Naval Reserve Training Center. In the late 1950s and early 1960s small office buildings and a branch bank completed the architectural development of the district. The district meets Criterion A for its entertainment/recreation significance as the home base of the Durham Bulls baseball team from 1939 to 1963. Baseball was a main form of entertainment in Durham during this period, especially for the many workers employed in the city's tobacco industry, and their families. The ballpark's utilitarian brick and steel construction and its trademark round ticket office are a symbol of mid-twentieth-century Durham. The district also meets Criterion A for its significance as one of Durham's most important post-World War II mixed-use areas, with a significant collection of light-industrial plants, retail businesses, government offices and facilities, and automobile-oriented businesses. Seventy-three percent of the forty-six buildings were erected during the district's period of significance from 1927 to 1963 and contribute to its architectural and historic character. In addition, the district meets Criterion C for its architecture as an important and well-preserved collection of distinctive Streamline Art Moderne and mid-century modern commercial and industrial buildings in Durham. Although there was limited development in the district in the late 1960s and 1970s and the commercial use of the buildings continues to the present the post-1963 use is not of exceptional significance.

Historical Background

The Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District developed in the 1920s along the east side of the Norfolk and Western Railroad (now the Norfolk and Southern Railroad) industrial corridor, which extends north from Durham's central business district. The rail line served the tobacco plants and warehouses of Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company, the Erwin Cotton Mill, and the Pearl Cotton Mill in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this era, the central business district expanded north along Foster Street with livery stables, the city market, small

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shops, and houses. The 1913 Sanborn map shows houses, likely mill houses, along Foster Street all the way north to Trinity Avenue. By 1925 the street grid had been extended north of Corporation Street between the railroad tracks on the west, North Street on the east, and Trinity Avenue on the north, the area that forms the Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District. North of Trinity Avenue, dense residential developments filled in the gridded blocks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The North Durham-Duke Park Historic District (NR 1985) developed in the late 1890s as a residential suburb to the north and east of the district. The Pearl Mill Village Historic District (NR 1985) developed in the early 1900s near the 1892 textile mill west of the tracks and north of the district. The Trinity Historic District (NR 1986, 2004, 2008), north of the original Duke University campus, is a large streetcar suburb that built up from the turn of the century to the 1940s to the west of the district. By 1950, the Sanborn map documents the district's transformation from a sparsely developed area to a suburban automobile-services area with auto dealerships, gas stations, and the shops of tradesmen.

John Sprunt Hill's Homeland Investment Company likely owned most of the property in the district in the early 1900s. Through his wife, Annie Watts Hill, only daughter of George W. Watts of Baltimore, one of James B. Duke's associates in the American Tobacco Company, Hill belonged to the financial elite that controlled Durham's industries and banking institutions throughout much of the twentieth century. Hill owned controlling interest in the Durham Hosiery Mills, Durham Bank and Trust (later CCB/SunTrust), Home Security Life, Home Savings and Loan, and many other Durham institutions.¹

Since this area stood at the north edge of the central business district, the city erected a city garage, work yard, and a fire training tower here in the 1920s. The City Garage, 501 Washington Street (NR 2000), is a substantial brick garage of Mission Revival-style built in 1927 for the storage and maintenance of city vehicles. In 1928, the city built a training tower for the fire department in front of the garage. The six-story brick tower, designed by Durham architects Atwood and Nash, features a handsome Colonial Revival design with elegant arches and wooden sash windows.

Baseball became the mill town of Durham's most popular diversion by the late 1800s. In 1926, local boosters of Durham's minor-league baseball team, the "Durham Bulls," named for the Bull Durham smoking tobacco manufactured in Durham from the 1850s on, built a stadium named the El Toro at the opposite corner of Washington and Corporation streets from the city garage. The land was owned by Homeland Investment Company. In 1933, the Hill family gave the city \$20,000 to buy the park from Homeland Investment Company. When it burned in the late 1930s,

¹ Robert Chapman, email communication to author, Sept. 2, 2012.

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it was quickly replaced by a new stadium donated by Hill. The functional brick stadium, designed by George Watts Carr Sr., Durham's most prolific architect, went into service in 1939. Its most memorable feature is the round ticket office at the corner entrance. From 1932 through the 1940s, Durham was the headquarters of the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues. The classic American ball field was memorialized as the setting for the movie *Bull Durham* in 1988. After the Durham Bulls moved to a new ballpark in 1995, the old stadium was restored and now serves as North Carolina Central University's baseball stadium, as well for as other community purposes.²

The oldest industrial building in the district, the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Prizery at 609 Foster Street, was built on a parcel adjacent to the stadium sold to Reynolds by the Homeland Investment Company in 1938.³ Durham's tobacco industry dates to the 1850s. At the end of the century, James B. Duke formed the American Tobacco Company in Durham. American Tobacco Company and the Winston-Salem, North Carolina, firm of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company were two of the largest tobacco manufactories in the United States in the early twentieth century. The R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company did not build any tobacco factories in Durham, but constructed the prizery because "given the size of the Durham auction market, R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company wanted a presence convenient to the auction warehouses to press and store tobacco for shipping to their factories [in Winston-Salem]."⁴

In 1938-1939, a commercial bakery and a large soda bottling plant were erected in the district. The Durham Baking Company built its modern plant at 723 Rigsbee Avenue. The tall, one-story, stuccoed building, with rounded corners with inset panels, is apparently the earliest surviving example in Durham of the Streamline Art Moderne style.⁵ The bakery thrived until about 1955. It was enlarged to serve as Weeks Motor Company in 1962. Across Rigsbee Avenue, bottler Lloyd Brown constructed the Royal Crown and Seven-Up Bottling Company at 321 W. Geer Street in 1939. Brown had opened a bottling plant on Morgan Street in 1925 and moved here to expand his business. The two-story brick office and plant features a stylish entrance set within a cast-stone projecting pavilion that terminates in a stepped parapet at the cornice. The six-bay-wide main block was illuminated by large industrial metal sash windows (now replaced). The bottling plant remained in operation through the early 1960s.

² Claudia Roberts, Diane Lea, and Robert Leary, *The Durham Architectural and Historic Inventory*, 59.

³ Chapman interview; Durham County Deed Book 114, page 581 and Durham County Plat Book 11, page 41. The surveyor was S. M. Credle, a long-time local surveyor whose firm still exists as Credle Engineering.

⁴ Gary Kueber, Open Durham blog, <http://www.opendurham.org/category/neighborhood/central-park>. Accessed Sept. 4, 2012; Catherine Bishir and Michael Southern, *A Guide to the Architecture of Piedmont North Carolina*, 189-192.

⁵ Cynthia deMiranda, "Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store National Register Nomination," 8.6.

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World War II diverted all activity away from the homefront, and construction in the district ceased from 1941 to 1945, as it did elsewhere in Durham. When the post-war boom began, automotive services rather than light-industrial plants were built on the remaining parcels. An American Oil Company (Amoco) distributorship had been built in the late 1930s beside the railroad tracks north of the city garage. Frank Erwin acquired the business in 1945 and built an imposing new office and garage, tank storage facility, and pumping stations. The tall one-story brick building is distinguished by a row of lunette windows over the entrance and garage doors. The Erwin Company still operates this facility, although their trucks now transport oil and gas direct from a terminal rather than storing it onsite. The company supplies fuel to a number of gas stations in Durham.⁶

Three auto dealerships, two gas stations, and a tire store moved into the district in the next few years. Uzzle Motor Company, Weeks Motor Company, and Hometown Sales and Service built large and stylish auto showrooms with attached repair shops that represent the second generation of auto showrooms in Durham. When Wilson Uzzle moved his Cadillac dealership from an ornate gas station on E. Main Street to 619 Foster Street about 1948, he hired local architect Archie Royal Davis, a prolific practitioner of the classical revival style, to design his new building. A Flemish bond brick veneer façade and molded cast-stone surround set off the large showroom windows. A wide cast-stone cornice emphasizes the horizontality of flanking bays with garage doors and large glass brick windows. Although the showroom windows and entrance have been infilled with a late twentieth-century Colonial Revival-style façade, the interior of the showroom retains its gleaming checkerboard terrazzo floor and an ornate plaster cornice.

Weeks Motor Company's Ford, Lincoln, and Mercury dealership at 408 W. Geer Street is one of the two finest Streamline Art Moderne buildings in Durham. The 1948 showroom features rounded corners, rounded glass windows with a black Carrera glass base, and a rounded aluminum awning. To one side of the showroom is a garage door with a curved brick end wall; to the other side is a large glass brick window. The yellow brick veneer is laid in Flemish bond, with all header bricks in the rounded corners. A robust curved concrete cornice emphasizes the façade's horizontality and undulating profile. In 1962, Weeks Motor Company moved across the street into the old Durham Baking Company. Their 1948 building has a striking similarity to the Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store of 1947, which also features a yellow Flemish bond brick veneer, rounded corners of header bricks, and curved glass display windows. Perhaps designed by the same architect, these are the finest Streamline Art Moderne buildings surviving in Durham.⁷

⁶ Author interviews with Erwin Oil Company family and staff, Aug. 23, 2012; Hill's *Durham City Directories*, 1947-1960.

⁷ deMiranda, "Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store National Register Nomination," 8.6.

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Fletcher's Service Station and a Texaco Service Station were built on opposite corners of Foster and W. Geer streets just after the end of the war. Both likely represent standardized architectural designs promoted by the gasoline companies. Fletcher's Service Station's Colonial Revival design with pedimented gables with fanlights and Chippendale roof balustrades conveyed a comfortable domestic character, while the Texaco Service Station's utilitarian modern design represented a progressive future. Nu-Tread Tire Company built a large utilitarian brick building at 601 Foster Street about 1948, where they sold tires and GE appliances.

Durham County and the federal government constructed government offices facing each other in the 700 block of Foster Street in the late 1940s. The early twentieth-century city market on Foster Street, close to the central business district, was replaced with a handsome Moderne-style Durham County Agricultural Extension Office with a curb market. The cornerstone was laid in 1946; the building completed in 1947. The offices of county farm agents, the Soil Conservation Service, and the County Home Demonstration agents were located in the front two-story section, while the curb market took up the large one-story rear wing. Ample parking was provided to the sides and rear of the building. Across the street, the U. S. Naval Reserve Training Center was erected in 1948 on a parcel purchased from Homeland Investment Company. The one-story brick armory had a crenellated roofline in keeping with its armorial function. By 1955, it had been raised to two stories. In the 1960s, the building housed the Marine Corps Reserve as well, and in 1970 became the Army Reserve Center.⁸

Remaining parcels along Foster and W. Geer streets were developed with office/warehouse buildings for local building supply companies. Walton Roofing Company (703 Foster Street); Durham Awning Company (705 Foster Street); Joseph A. Fargo Carpets and Rugs (324 W. Geer Streets); and Paschall Bros. Plumbing Company (326 W. Geer Street) erected one- and two-story brick buildings with salesrooms facing the street and warehouse facilities to the rear. These buildings have simple decorative brick trim and large display windows on the facades.

In keeping with the district's suburban automobile character, its only restaurant during the period of historical significance is King's Sandwiches, a small take-out establishment on the northwest corner of Foster and W. Geer streets. The utilitarian concrete-block building, built about 1950, has take-out windows on the front and side. During Durham Bulls baseball games at the ballpark one block away, King's Sandwiches would have competed with the ballpark hotdogs sold at concession stands and hawked by vendors.

⁸ 1960-1970 *Durham City Directories*; Chapman interview, Aug. 22, 2012.

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In 1940, the south edge of the district remained residential, with houses along the north side of Corporation Street and heavy woods in most of the block between Foster and Rigsbee streets. Suburban offices appeared on these parcels from 1959 to the mid-1960s. A branch bank and two insurance offices were built about 1959; a garage for the U.S. Post Office and a service station were built in the 1960s. With the exception of the bank, these are small utilitarian brick buildings. The Home Savings and Loan Branch at 600 Foster Street, built in 1959, is the most dramatic modern-style building in the district. Its bold canopy, supported at each end by a curved stone wall, sheltered flanking driveways leading to drive-through banking windows.

By the 1960s, the auto dealerships began to move to more prominent locations on the outskirts of Durham where they could erect larger buildings with more spacious car lots. Uzzle Cadillac moved to Chapel Hill Boulevard/US 15-501 in the late 1960s. The auto showroom of Hometown Sales and Service at 410 W. Geer Street served in the 1950s and 1960s as offices for two innovative agencies: Hospital Care Association, Inc. and the North Carolina Fund. In the 1930s, George Watts Hill, son of John Sprunt Hill, had founded the Hospital Care Association, Inc., the first such company in North Carolina and the fourth oldest in the nation. During the 1950s the company had their offices here. In 1961 Hospital Care Association built a new headquarters on S. Duke Street. After a 1968 merger the firm evolved into the present Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina.⁹

In 1963 the former auto dealership at 410 W. Geer Street became the Durham headquarters of the North Carolina Fund, a state- and federally-funded non-profit that devised experimental projects to lessen minority poverty and to further the cause of Civil Rights. It was the model for such national programs as Head Start and Vista.¹⁰ Gov. Terry Sanford said the following in 1963 at the inauguration of the program:

It is not enough to have here the most powerful nation in the world and then admit we are powerless to find ways to give our young people training and job opportunities. In North Carolina we want to go into a few communities and say to the leaders of school and government and welfare and health and charity, let's see if together in a few neighborhoods near here we can't break the cycle of poverty and give these children a better chance.¹¹

⁹Jean Anderson, *Durham County: A History of Durham County, North Carolina*, 305.

¹⁰ Robert Korstad and James L. Leloudis, *To Right These Wrongs: the North Carolina Fund and the Battle to End Poverty and Inequality in 1960s America*.

¹¹ <http://www.opendurham.org/buildings/410-w-geer-st?full>. Accessed Sept. 6, 2012.

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The North Carolina Fund encouraged communities around the state to create local agencies called "Community Action Programs" (CAPs). For five years, the agencies implemented "innovative and experimental actions" with the input of low-income members of the community. Durham's program, called "Operation Breakthrough," administered by civil rights activist Howard Fuller, contributed greatly to advancing the local Civil Rights movement of the 1960s.¹²

Business in the district declined during the 1970s and 1980s and many of the buildings became empty. Weeks Motor Company, the remaining auto distributor, moved away in 2000. By this time a new identity was emerging for the area. Two local doctors, Curt Eschelmann, MD, and Alan Wilcox, MD, named the area Durham Central Park in 1994 and began efforts to revitalize the area. Initial funding for these efforts came from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with help from the city and Downtown Durham, Inc. A farmers' market pavilion was built at 502 Foster Street, just south of the Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District, by the Durham Farmers Market, which has been in business since 1998. Major funding for the pavilion came from Durham Central Park, the city, Self-Help, and a variety of local businesses and donors.¹³ In the mid-1990s, Manbites Dog Theatre, a local playhouse, had taken over the old Walton Roofing and Heating building at 703 Foster Street. Gary Kueber began to write an internet blog called "Endangered Durham" (now named "Open Durham,"), which posted documentary photos and historical sketches of older buildings. In 2002 Robert Chapman, his wife Vicky Patton, and others converted the old U.S. Naval Reserve Training Center at 724 Foster Street into the Central Park School for Children, an innovative charter school. In 2007 Chapman's company, Traditional Neighborhood Development Partners, LLC, converted 410 W. Geer Street into an event center, with a yoga studio and fitness gymnasium in auxiliary spaces. In 2010 the Fullsteam Brewery opened in the rear wing of the old Royal Crown Bottling Company at 321 W. Geer Street, and Motorco music hall opened in the old Durham Baking Company at 723 Rigsbee Avenue. In 2011 Chapman's company converted Fletcher's Service Station into a restaurant called Geer Street Garden. The Central Park area is now becoming the mixed-use residential and commercial neighborhood envisioned by Durham activists for the past several decades.

Entertainment and Recreation Context

The Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District meets Criterion A for its entertainment and recreational significance as the home of the Durham Bulls minor league baseball team from 1939 to 1963. Durham was a baseball town for most of the twentieth century and the Durham Bulls

¹² Ibid., Anderson, *Durham County: A History of Durham County, North Carolina*, 357-359.

¹³ <http://www.durhamcentralpark.org/people/founders/>; <http://www.durhamfarmersmarket.com/about.html>.

Accessed Dec. 11, 2012.

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have functioned as Durham's favorite sports team since around 1902, when they were known as the Durham Tobacconists (they became the Durham Bulls in 1912). The El Toro Ballpark, which was built in the late 1920s on this site, served as home to the Bulls beginning in 1926 and was purchased by the Bulls in 1933 and renamed Durham Athletic Park. The stadium burned in 1939 and was immediately replaced.¹⁴ The Durham Athletic Park in the district functioned as the Bulls's home base, except for a 1970s hiatus, until 1993 when the current stadium was constructed in downtown Durham. Like other blue-collar mill towns in piedmont North Carolina, baseball was Durham's favored sport, perhaps due to the friendly rivalry developed by the factory teams of the city's tobacco and textile mills in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The 1939 Durham Bulls baseball park attracted generations of fans to the district.

The Durham Bulls nurtured generations of baseball stars for the Major Leagues. By 1940 the Bulls were a farm team for the Brooklyn Dodgers. They were then established as a Red Sox Farm Club in 1945, became the Detroit Tigers farm team by 1948, and then a Houston Colt .45s farm team by 1962.¹⁵ In 1968 the team merged with the Raleigh Pirates baseball team, becoming known as the Raleigh-Durham Mets, and folded in 1971. In 1980 the Bulls were reborn as a farm team for the Atlanta Braves. The 1988 movie "Bull Durham" made the Bulls one of the most recognizable minor league franchises.

The Bulls played their last home game at the Durham Athletic Park in 1993, then moved to a new stadium south of downtown built for them by the city of Durham. While the team is very successful in its new stadium, Durham citizens have a strong nostalgia for the old ballpark, whose utilitarian brick and steel construction and its trademark round ticket office with conical roof have become a symbol of mid-twentieth-century Durham. The historic buildings surrounding the stadium--a R. J. Reynolds Tobacco warehouse, a tire warehouse, the Durham Fire Tower, the City Garage, and King's Sandwiches--form an industrial backdrop that enhances the blue-collar character of the district. The Durham Athletic Park's appearance epitomizes blue-collar baseball.¹⁶

Commercial and Industrial Context

The Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District also meets Criterion A as the only intact mid-twentieth-century commercial and light-industrial suburban district in Durham. From the 1930s to the 1960s several mixed-use areas with free-standing commercial, industrial, and business

¹⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durham_Bulls, Accessed Dec. 3, 2012

¹⁵ This is generally a team or club whose role is to provide experience and training for young players, with an agreement that any successful players can move on to a higher level at a given point.

¹⁶ "Durham Athletic Park," <http://www.opendurham.org/buildings/durham-athletic-park>, Accessed Nov. 28, 2012.

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buildings set on large parcels containing surface parking developed in Durham. The Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District developed directly north of Durham's downtown core. After World War II, car dealerships relocated from Durham's Main Street to larger parcels along Foster and Geer streets, building impressive showrooms. Gas stations and a large tire store followed. A showy modern branch of Durham's hometown bank, Home Savings and Loan Bank, was built in 1959 as the area reached the apex of its commercial significance. Similar areas existed on all sides of the business district, to the west along West Main Street between Buchanan and Gregson streets, to the east along Pettigrew Street, and to the south along Fayetteville Street. These areas included service stations, a Coca-Cola bottling plant, laundries, and lunch restaurants. Because of their proximity to the central business district, many of the buildings have been destroyed for transportation improvements and surface parking and these districts have disappeared.

During the later twentieth century a similar collection of small free-standing commercial buildings and light-industrial plants developed along Hillsborough Road (Highway 70 Business) in Old West Durham between Hillandale Road and LaSalle Street. Most of this road is lined with houses, gas stations, and auto repair garages. The 3100 block of the road contains a cluster of small commercial buildings, including an electrical contractor, a paint store, and a Hispanic market. Several blocks west, at the northeast intersection of Hillsborough Road and LaSalle Street, stands a large ca. 1970 Coca Cola Bottling Plant. Its vast scale, deep setback from the road, front suburban lawn, and extensive parking lot mark it as a modern highway-oriented industrial plant that differs dramatically from the 1939 Royal Crown and Seven-Up Bottling Plant in the Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District, leaving the district as the only intact mid-twentieth-century light-industrial and automotive area remaining in Durham.

A succession of adaptive reuses in the past half-century has preserved the Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District. As the auto dealerships moved out in the 1960s, their spaces were creatively used by socially progressive private and government agencies, such as the Hospital Care Association and the North Carolina Fund. In the same spirit, the old buildings are being converted into new uses today: the military training center has become a charter school; a gas station functions as a restaurant, and an auto dealership is a music hall.

Architecture Context

The Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District meets Criterion C for its local architectural significance from 1927 to 1963. It contains a number of architecturally-distinctive Streamline Art Moderne and mid-century modern buildings designed by some of Durham's leading local architects of the early and mid-twentieth century. Atwood and Nash served as campus architects

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for the expansion of the University of North Carolina campus in Chapel Hill in the 1920s, where they created a distinguished Colonial Revival style for the university. In Durham their largest project was the 1920s Colonial Revival-style campus of North Carolina Central University. They also erected a number of Durham public schools. In 1928 Nash created the festive, eclectic twin exhibition halls at the North Carolina State Fairgrounds in Raleigh.¹⁷ In the district, Atwood and Nash designed the 1928 Fire Training Tower at 501 Washington Street in an elegant Colonial Revival style.

Durham auto showrooms of the early automobile age, distinguished by classical ornament rendered in limestone and marble, were built along East Main Street in the 1920s. George Watts Carr Sr. of Durham, who learned architecture through a correspondence course, designed the Johnson Motor Company Building, 326 East Main Street, as one of his first commissions. The limestone building with a classical frieze and paneled metal windows was built in the early 1920s. Carr was one of Durham's most successful and eclectic architects during the second quarter of the twentieth century.¹⁸ After the ashes of the burned baseball park cooled in 1939, Carr designed a new stadium for the Durham Bulls. The now-beloved landmark of concrete, brick, and steel has a whimsical round ticket office. Carr's son Robert Winston Carr ("Judge"), born in 1921, took over his father's practice in the 1950s and 1960s. Robert Carr absorbed such principles of modern architecture as open floor plans, large windows, and low roof planes while earning his architecture degree at the University of Pennsylvania.¹⁹

The Streamline Art Moderne style, popular from the 1930s to the 1950s for commercial, industrial, and transportation-related buildings, is the defining style in the district. It is characterized by a strong horizontal emphasis, flat roofs, rounded edges, and a general austerity. Although the architects for the two premier Streamline Art Moderne buildings in the district--Weeks Motor Company and the Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store (NR 2012), both of 1947-48—are unknown, the Carr firm is a likely candidate. Weeks Motor Company is a Streamline Art Moderne auto dealership with an undulating façade of yellow Flemish bond brick veneer and curved plate-glass showroom windows. The similarity of the Scott and Roberts plant to Weeks Motor Company indicates the same unknown architect likely designed both buildings, which are the finest remaining examples of this postwar style in Durham. Once prominent, the style has become somewhat rare due to demolition and

¹⁷ <http://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000500>. Architects and Builders web site, N. C. State University Libraries: entry on Arthur C. Nash 1871-1969.

¹⁸ Robert W. Carr and Robert W. Carr Jr., interview with the author, March 29, 2005; Roberts, Lea, and Leary, *Durham Architectural and Historic Inventory*, 36.

¹⁹ M. Ruth Little, "Forest Hills National Register Historic District Nomination," 72-73, 79.

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alterations.²⁰

Architect Archie Royal Davis, who came to Durham in the 1930s to work for George Watts Carr, became a leading practitioner of the Colonial Revival in mid-twentieth century Durham and Chapel Hill.²¹ Davis designed the Uzzle Motor Company's showroom at 619-621 Foster Street, as a wide, low Streamline Art Moderne building with a modern Classical Revival-style entry surround, large multi-paned windows, and a Colonial Revival-style interior.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the mid-century modern style, characterized by the use of steel and glass, cubical forms, and the absence of ornament, was promoted in Durham by nearby Raleigh and Chapel Hill architects as well as by local firms. In 1958, G. Milton Small, affiliated with the School of Design of Raleigh's North Carolina State College, and his partner Joseph Boaz served as supervising architects for the five-story steel and glass Home Security Life Insurance Building at the southwest corner of W. Chapel Hill and Duke streets. One of the first commercial buildings in the mode popularized by German architect Mies van der Rohe, the steel and glass tower is elevated above the ground on steel columns. Raymond and Rado of New York City were the principal architects.²²

One of the most dramatic mid-century modern buildings in Durham is the Home Federal Savings Bank at 315 E. Chapel Hill Street, beside the U.S. Post Office in downtown Durham. Its design, described by an architectural guide as "a golden-finned building with rounded corners," is attributed to an unknown St. Louis architect.²³ The boldest modern building in the district is the Home Savings and Loan Bank at 600 Foster Street, built in 1959. Customers drove beneath a metal canopy extending from each side of the façade, supported at the outer ends by a curved orchard stone wall. The architect of this exuberant branch bank is unknown.

²⁰ deMiranda, "Scott and Roberts Dry Cleaning Plant, Office, and Store National Register Nomination," 8.6.

²¹ M. Ruth Little, *The Town and Gown Architecture of Chapel Hill, North Carolina 1795-1975*, 71; Davis was still working in the same office, at 111 N. Corcoran St., with George Watts Carr in 1955. [1955 Durham City Directory].

²² Catherine W. Bishir and Michael T. Southern, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Piedmont North Carolina*, 200-201.

²³ *Ibid.*, 196.

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Section 10: Boundaries

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of the Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District is shown by a heavy black line on the accompanying Durham County tax map at a scale of 1 inch = 130 feet.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary is drawn to include the densest concentration of contributing resources associated with the Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District while excluding blocks to the south consisting of large parking lots, non-historic residential apartment buildings on the east and north boundaries, and historic Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company warehouses along N. Duke Street on the west side (Bright Leaf Historic District NR-1999).

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Photographs:

Foster and West Geer Streets Historic District
Durham, Durham County, North Carolina
NC SHPO

All photos were taken by M. Ruth Little in August 2012.

1. View of southeast and southwest corners of W. Geer and Foster streets, from NE.
2. View of 634 and 636 Foster Street, view from SW.
3. Uzzle Motor Company, 619-621 Foster Street, view from NE.
4. Home Savings and Loan Bank, 600 Foster St., view from W.
5. 700 block of Foster Street, view from S.
6. 723 Rigsbee Ave. and 400 block W. Geer Street, view from W.
7. 326 and 324 W. Geer Street, view from SW.
8. 700 block of Rigsbee Street, view from S.
9. Durham Athletic Park, 500 Washington St., view from S.
10. Durham Athletic Park baseball field, view from SE.
11. Fire Drill Tower, 501 Washington St., view from E.
12. Durham County Agricultural Extension Office, 721 Foster St., view from E.
13. U. S. Naval Reserve Center, 724 Foster St., view from W.
14. Erwin Oil Company, 701 Washington St., view from NE.
15. Nu-Tread Tire Company and R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Prizery, 601 and 609 Foster Street, view from SE.
16. R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Prizery, 609 Foster Street, view from NE.
17. Royal Crown Bottling Company, 319-321 W. Geer Street, view from NE.
18. The Trotter Building, 410 W. Geer Street, view from SW.