

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

West Jefferson Historic District

West Jefferson, Ashe County, AH0475, Listed 10/5/2007
Nomination by Sherry Joines Wyatt
Photographs by Sherry Joines Wyatt, May 2005



Jefferson Avenue, looking south



Jefferson Avenue, east side, looking southeast



West Jefferson Hotel, Second Avenue view



Parkway Theatre and Ashe County Motors, 8-10 East Main Street

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 West Jefferson Historic District

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by State Street, Third Avenue, Second Street, and Wilton Avenue

not for publication N/A

city or town West Jefferson

vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Ashe code 009 zip code 28694

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

 entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

 determined eligible for the
National Register

 See continuation sheet.

 determined not eligible for the
National Register

 removed from the National
Register

 other (explain): _____

West Jefferson Historic District
Name of Property

Ashe County, North Carolina
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure
	<input type="checkbox"/> object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>50</u>	<u>19</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>50</u>	<u>19</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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

COMMERCE: department store

COMMERCE: specialty store

HEALTH CARE: pharmacy

HEALTH CARE: medical business/ office

RELIGION: religious facility

TRANSPORTATION: rail-related

INDUSTRY: Industrial storage

INDUSTRY: Manufacturing facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

COMMERCE: department store

COMMERCE: specialty store

RELIGION: religious facility

INDUSTRY: Industrial storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Commercial Style

Classical Revival

Colonial Revival

Art Deco

Moderne

Modern Movement

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Wood

Narrative Description

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

West Jefferson Historic District
Name of Property

Ashe County, North Carolina
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

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

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Community Planning & Development

Commerce

Architecture

Period of Significance

c. 1915 - 1957

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

___ previously listed in the National Register

___ previously determined eligible by the National Register

___ designated a National Historic Landmark

___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

___ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

X State Historic Preservation Office

___ Other State agency

___ Federal agency

___ Local government

___ University

___ Other

Name of repository:

Western Office, State Historic Preservation Office

West Jefferson Historic District
Name of Property

Ashe County, North Carolina
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property approx. 40 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1.	<u>17</u>	<u>4028820</u>	<u>455520</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2.	<u>17</u>	<u>4028840</u>	<u>455800</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

3.	<u>17</u>	<u>4028820</u>	<u>456600</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4.	<u>17</u>	<u>4028580</u>	<u>455500</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

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 Sherry Joines Wyatt

organization _____ date May 2007

street & number 21 E. Main St., STE 202 telephone (540) 381-3336

city or town Christiansburg state VA zip code 24073

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 More than fifty

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing 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.

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West Jefferson Historic District,
Ashe County, North Carolina

7. Description

Materials, continued

Walls:

Weatherboard

Vinyl

Other: Wood/T-111 siding

Other: Wood/board and batten

Other: Wood/German siding

Roof:

Rubber

Narrative Description

Ashe County is located in the Blue Ridge Mountains region of northwestern North Carolina. The town of West Jefferson is situated in a broad valley between Paddy Mountain and Mount Jefferson in central Ashe County. The north-south U.S. Highway 221 skirts the eastern edge of the town. South of downtown 221 intersects with N.C. 163, which runs from the southeastern part of the county to West Jefferson. N.C. 194 runs roughly northeast-southwest through Ashe County and becomes Jefferson Avenue, the primary street in West Jefferson. The historic downtown area is centered around the intersection of Jefferson Avenue (north-south) and Main Street (east-west). West Jefferson is located about two miles southwest of the county seat of Jefferson, which was chartered in 1803.

West Jefferson is the quintessential railroad town, having been established after the arrival of the Virginia-Carolina Railroad here in 1914-1915. The historic central business area of the town is surrounded by a historic residential area, primarily to the north and west. The streets in this older section of town are laid out in a grid running roughly north-south and east-west. The railroad originally came into town from the northeast curving behind (west) the buildings on Jefferson and Second Avenues¹ where the depot was originally located, facing east at the southwest corner of West Main and Second Avenue. The depot was moved during the late twentieth century about one block to the northwest to sit facing south on West Main Street. The railroad tracks were removed in the 1980s.

The West Jefferson Historic District, which retains the county's largest concentration of early to mid-twentieth-century commercial buildings, is located at the heart of West Jefferson's downtown. The West Jefferson Historic District is centered on the principle street in the downtown, Jefferson Avenue, and is primarily commercial in character with a handful of historic residences to the west. The district covers approximately twelve city blocks and includes seventy buildings of which all but twenty are contributing to the historic significance of the district. The one-story and two-story buildings are densely arranged on Jefferson Avenue with most buildings sharing party walls. The density is more irregular on Third Avenue, Second Avenue, and the cross streets with more distance between buildings being typical. The First Baptist

¹ Note: Second Avenue is sometimes referred to as Railroad Avenue and is called the "back street" by local citizens.

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Church occupies an entire block.

The district's commercial buildings reflect the popular commercial architecture of the early- and mid-twentieth century with one- and two-story brick buildings. Several are examples of the Commercial Style, while others have modest Classical Revival, Art Deco, and Modern stylistic references. A well-preserved two-story example of the Commercial Style is the c.1920 building at 3 North Second Avenue. The three-bay facade of this building is divided by pilasters and displays decorative brickwork with corbelling at the top of each bay and across the cornice. Another intact two-story example is 9-11 East Main Street, probably dating to about 1930. The stepped parapet and recessed sign panel found at 3-5 South Jefferson Avenue (c.1930) illustrate other common features of the style. One-story buildings are also common in the district with four intact examples at 10, 12, 14, and 102 South Jefferson Avenue. All of these brick probably date to the 1925-1930 period. The Commercial Style Ashe Hardware Building built about 1925 at 102 South Jefferson Avenue is one of the best-preserved buildings in the district.

In addition to the Commercial Style, buildings in the Classical Revival style were built in limited numbers in the district. Two buildings that exhibit modest Classical Revival stylistic influences are the two-story brick West Jefferson Hotel at 2-4 South Jefferson Avenue built in 1917 and Graybeal's Rexall Drugstore Building at 106 North Jefferson Avenue built about 1950. Even less common is the Art Deco style, which is found only on the two-story, stuccoed 1939 Parkway Theater at 8 East Main Street. Next door at 10 East Main Street, the Ashe County Motors-Parkway Theater was updated with a new steel enamel panel facade and the Parkway Theater marquee with distinctive Art Deco lettering about 1950. Also rare in the district is the modest Modern styling of the two-story, brick 114 North Jefferson Avenue, which dates to about 1955 and features concrete belt courses that create a strong sense of horizontality. The district also has several buildings that were built for light industrial or warehouses. These buildings typically have no stylistic references. A small area of light industrial buildings is clustered along North Third Avenue, which runs parallel to Jefferson Avenue to the east. Two prominent industrial buildings, the Dr. Pepper Bottling Company building (c.1940, 100 Block East Second Street) and the Kraft-Phenix Cheese plant (c.1935, 105 East Main Street) are located near either end of the street. Between them, the first block (00) of North Third Avenue reflects the industrial character of these two larger buildings with several one-story brick or brick and concrete block light industrial buildings with tile coping and garage/loading bays. This entire block probably dates to about 1940.

Representing an automotive-related use is the one-story brick service station at 108 East Second Street. Probably dating to about 1950, the building is typical of its period with an angled corner, plate glass storefront with transoms, and a low-pitched gabled canopy over the gas pumps. It also has a three-bay garage wing.

Marking the junction between the commercial area and the town's residential neighborhood to the north and west is the monumental First Baptist Church at 8 West Second Street; the only church within the historic district. Built in 1929, the Neoclassical Revival-style building has a pedimented portico resting on colossal classical columns.

Located at the intersection of Wilton Avenue and West First Street is the Benjamin Cornett House (the house's address is 8 North Second Avenue). The unusual orientation of the house, which does not clearly address Wilton Avenue, West First Street, or North Second Street, gives a clue to its original use. This modest one-story, gable front and wing form dwelling was the home of the foreman for the Jefferson

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section of the railroad and the tracks would have originally run in front of the house to the east.

A second building in the historic district associated with the railroad is the West Jefferson Depot located in the 200 block of West Main Street. Although relocated during the late-twentieth century around the corner from its original location near the southwest corner of Main Street and Second Avenue during the late-twentieth century, this well-preserved side-gable, board-and-batten-sheathed building remains important as one of only three remaining historic depots in Ashe County.

The West Jefferson Historic District encompasses a cohesive collection of commercial buildings as well as a notable church and railroad-related buildings from the early-to-mid-twentieth century. Although some of the buildings have been altered with replacement windows, modern canopies, and replacement storefront doors and windows (often aluminum and plate glass), the district retains a good degree of integrity. Buildings built after 1957 are relatively rare in the district, although several historic buildings have had late-twentieth century facades applied to them. These facades include wood (such as T-111 siding and weatherboard), vinyl siding, and stone veneer. Buildings with facades from after 1957 are generally non-contributing to the district as their historic features have been obscured. Of the buildings built after 1957, the most architecturally interesting is the 1962 First National Bank of West Jefferson building at 1 South Jefferson Avenue. Said to have been designed by local engineer Basil Barr, this Modernist two-story building is a rare example of the style in Ashe County. The facade is divided into five bays by metal pilasters while brass circle-motif screens obscure the upper story windows in the center three bays, which are wider than the end bays. The first floor and end bays feature asymmetrical plate glass set in an aluminum framework. The building is now the town hall.

Inventory List

The following inventory is organized alphabetically by street name, followed by numerical streets in ascending order. For streets that run north to south, the east side is presented first. For streets that run east to west, the north side of the street is presented first.

Each property is noted as contributing or non-contributing to the historic district. The designation criteria were based on age and degree of alteration. Buildings pre-dating 1957 were considered contributing if they retained architectural integrity from the period of significance. Non-contributing buildings either post-date 1957 or were built before 1957 and have lost architectural integrity due to alterations, such as the application of replacement siding, replacement of original windows or storefronts, and/or the construction of large additions. Names assigned to properties are based on verified (two sources) documentation of the original owner or occupant. Without the benefit of Sanborn Maps for West Jefferson, dates of construction are largely based on architectural analysis, although a few buildings have dates verified in oral history or written sources. Bibliographical references are given in brackets [].

North Jefferson Avenue - - East Side

2 N. Jefferson Avenue McNeill's Department Store 1952 Non-contributing, integrity
One story; brick; plate glass storefront; modern mansard pent roof obscures upper portion of facade. The building still houses McNeill's Department Store. The building appears without its mansard roof in a 1960 photograph, *Images of America: Ashe Revisited*, 2002, 88. According to a newspaper article in the vertical files of the Ashe County Library, Elihu McNeill began his mercantile in Jefferson in 1889 and moved the

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business to West Jefferson in 1934. His son Robert took over the firm in 1946 and this building was built in 1952.

4 - 6 N. Jefferson Avenue Commercial Building c.1940 Contributing
Commercial Style. Two story; two storefronts; brick; plate glass storefronts surrounded by Formstone; above each storefront, slightly recessed walls with corbelling at top and two paired, six-over-six, double-hung sash windows; soldier course cornice and stack bond trim at each end of facade; modern fixed shed awnings across storefronts.

8 N. Jefferson Avenue Commercial Building c.1940 Contributing
Two-story brick building similar to 4-6 N. Jefferson, half the size (simple storefront) with replacement one-over-one windows at second story.

10 N. Jefferson Avenue Commercial Building c.1940; c.1980 Non-contributing, integrity
This one story building was heavily altered with a new facade c.1980. The facade has a front gable over plate glass storefront and T-111 siding.

12 - 14 N. Jefferson Avenue Joel Eller Building c.1947 Contributing
Two story; brick; one-over-one paired aluminum replacement windows; two storefronts; recessed entries.

16 N. Jefferson Avenue Commercial Building c.1930 Contributing
Commercial Style. Two story; brick; plate glass storefront; stepped parapet; four one-over-one replacement aluminum windows at second story; sign panel; concrete coping; soldier course lintels.

18 N. Jefferson Avenue Commercial Building c.1930 Contributing
Two story; brick and stucco; replacement windows (second floor); stepped parapet; sign panel; concrete coping; first floor facade sheathed with T-111; recessed entry; wood-shingled hip roof over storefront.

102 N. Jefferson Avenue Commercial Building c.1950 Contributing
One story; brick; large multi-light window occupies most of storefront. Appears to have been built at same time as 106 N. Jefferson.

106 N. Jefferson Avenue Graybeal's Rexall Drugstore c.1950 Contributing
Two story; brick; cast stone quoins, belt course and keystones; replacement windows; modern storefront; molded metal cornice over second floor windows. Opened by Carl and Ruth Graybeal about 1950, the couple ran a restaurant or lunch counter here (Evonne Graybeal oral history). Later, Dr. B.E. Reeves had his office in the rear of the building and Drs. C.E. Gambill and Jack Hunter practiced dentistry on the second floor. The first floor facade originally had porcelain or glass panels (*Images of America: Ashe County*, 2000, 25 and *Images of America: Ashe Revisited*, 2002, 78). This building was reportedly architect-designed (John Weaver, oral history).

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110 N. Jefferson Avenue	Miller's Jewelry	c.1950	Contributing
Commercial Style. Two story; brick; paired replacement windows; stone belt course; recessed storefront; projecting display case creates separate space for apartment entry; plate glass storefront.			
114 N. Jefferson Avenue	Commercial Building	c.1955	Contributing
Modern. Two story; brick; concrete coping; concrete belt course serving as sills and lintels at second floor windows create strong horizontality; modern fixed pent canopy; four entries, two with flanking windows.			
118 N. Jefferson Avenue	Commercial Building	c.1945	Contributing
Commercial Style. Two story; brick; paired six-over-six replacement windows; recessed storefront; unusual sign panel with both soldier and header courses; soldier course lintels.			
120 N. Jefferson Avenue	Commercial Building	c.1950	Non-contributing, integrity
One-story, heavily altered brick building with stucco. Broad gable on brackets shelters the storefront and polygonal bays flank the central entry.			
122 N. Jefferson Avenue	Commercial Building	c.1995	Non-contributing, age
One story; hip roof; T-111 siding; slit windows.			
<i>North Jefferson Avenue - - West Side</i>			
1 N. Jefferson Avenue	Commercial Building	c.1955	Contributing
One-story and two-story building; brick; plate glass storefronts; vents above storefronts in one-story with concrete coping; single entry for entire building in two-story section; two-story unit has replacement upper windows with hoods and tile coping.			
3 N. Jefferson Avenue	Commercial Building	c.1930	Contributing
One story; brick; tile coping; soldier course cornice; two storefronts with entry door and transom between; plate glass and replacement storefront; hip roof canopy added. Appears in c.1940 photograph <i>Images of America: Ashe Revisited, 2002, 75.</i>			
5 N. Jefferson Avenue	Commercial Building	c.1930	Non-contributing, integrity
One story; masonry with T-111 siding on facade; hip roof canopy; plate glass display window. The building seems to appear in a c.1940 photograph although it is pictured as being shorter than the present false front indicates, <i>Images of America: Ashe Revisited, 2002, 75.</i>			
7 N. Jefferson Avenue	Commercial Building	c.1930	Non-contributing, integrity
One story; masonry covered by T-111 siding; concrete coping; hip roof canopy. Although shorter than the present false front indicates, the building seems to appear in a c.1940 photograph, <i>Images of America: Ashe Revisited, 2002, 75.</i>			

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-
- | | | | |
|---|---------------------|--------|-----------------------------|
| 13 N. Jefferson Avenue | Commercial Building | c.1940 | Contributing |
| Commercial Style. Two story; two-bay brick; plate glass and aluminum storefront; paired replacement windows in second story; soldier course lintels; large modern metal pent canopy unites this building with building adjacent on north side, all occupied by Friendly Shoe Store. | | | |
| 13 N. Jefferson Avenue | Jackson Building | c.1940 | Contributing |
| Commercial Style. Two story; four-bay brick; storefront altered with stone veneer; paired replacement windows in second story; soldier course lintels; large metal pent canopy unites this building with building adjacent on south side all occupied by Friendly Shoe Store. Built by Bob Jackson (John Weaver, oral history). | | | |
| 15 N. Jefferson Avenue | Commercial Building | c.1940 | Non-contributing, integrity |
| One story; masonry covered by T-111 siding on facade; hip-roof canopy; plate glass and aluminum storefront; may be altered older building. | | | |
| 101 N. Jefferson Avenue | Commercial Building | c.1930 | Contributing |
| Commercial Style. Two story; brick; concrete coping; corbelling defines top of slightly recessed second story wall with paired windows; one-over-one replacement windows in segmental arch openings; storefront altered with stone veneer but corbelled cornice remains; recessed entry; plate glass and aluminum storefront. | | | |
| 103 - 105 N. Jefferson Avenue | Commercial Building | c.1950 | Contributing |
| Commercial Style. Austere, two story; brick; jalousie windows; plate glass and aluminum storefront; concrete coping. | | | |
| 107-109 N. Jefferson Avenue | Commercial Building | c.1940 | Contributing |
| Commercial Style. Two story; brick; stepped parapet; soldier course and stack bond frames paired, six-over-six, double-hung sash; shed-roof canopy on 107; soldier course-header course-soldier course detail visible above storefront at 109. Built by John A. Weaver (John Weaver, oral history). | | | |
| 111 N. Jefferson Avenue | Commercial Building | c.1950 | Contributing |
| Commercial Style. Two story; brick; aluminum multi-light second story windows; six bays; two recessed entries; concrete coping; plate glass and aluminum storefront; fabric awnings; altered lower level (stucco). Built by John A. Weaver (John Weaver, oral history). | | | |
| 113 N. Jefferson Avenue | Commercial Building | c.1950 | Contributing |
| Commercial Style. Two story; brick; concrete coping; altered lower level (stucco); modern shed canopy with gabled entry; second story replacement windows. Built by John A. Weaver (John Weaver, oral history). | | | |
| 119 N. Jefferson Avenue | Commercial Building | c.1950 | Non-contributing, integrity |

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Two story; brick, extensively altered with stucco, one-over-one second story replacement windows, and reconstructed storefront with two entries and small windows recessed behind piers; shed canopy. The building, which was built by John A. Weaver, was altered after a fire (John Weaver, oral history).

South Jefferson Avenue - - East Side

1 S. Jefferson Avenue. First National Bank of West Jefferson 1962 Non-contributing, age Modern. Rare example of the style in Ashe County; two story; pilasters define bays; steel and glass in five bays; brass circle-motif screens in upper story; recessed, glass bays (stairwells?) at each end of facade. Begun as the First National Bank of Jefferson in 1906, the institution moved to West Jefferson in 1915 [Fletcher]. The current building is said to have been designed by Basil Barr [John A. Weaver]. The building is now the town hall.

3 - 5 S. Jefferson Avenue Commercial Building c.1930 Contributing
Commercial Style. Two story; common bond brick; stepped parapet; paired one-over-one replacement windows at second story with soldier course lintels; recessed sign panel; two storefronts, one with wood shingled, pent roof.

7 S. Jefferson Avenue Commercial Building c.1940 Non-contributing, integrity
One story; stucco over masonry; stuccoed quoins; two storefronts with residential-style windows; segmental arch transom. Alterations appear to date from about 1995.

South Jefferson Avenue - - West Side

2 - 4 S. Jefferson Avenue West Jefferson Hotel 1917 Contributing
Classical influenced, two-story; three-bays wide and one-block deep; storefronts on three sides including two on north side (Main Street), one on S. Jefferson Avenue. (altered), and one on Second Avenue; double porch on rear; locally made brick; stepped parapet; corbelled brick and cast stone cornice; cast stone lintels; replacement six-over-six second-story windows; quoins; double-leaf corner entry with single column supporting upper story. Original wood hotel burned in 1916 and this building was constructed to replace it in 1917 [Ashe County Heritage, Vol. I].

6 S. Jefferson Avenue Commercial Building c.1940 Non-contributing, integrity
One story; stucco on brick; hip and gable canopy above radically altered storefront with stone veneer and narrow fixed windows. Alterations appear to date from about 1980.

8 S. Jefferson Avenue Commercial Building c.1955 Contributing
Two-story; brick; one-over-one replacement windows; two plate glass storefronts.

10 S. Jefferson Avenue Commercial Building c.1930 Contributing
Commercial Style. One story; brick; sign panel; concrete coping; corbelling above storefront; hexagonal and diamond-light transom; recessed entry; three-bay plate glass storefront.

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12 S. Jefferson Avenue Commercial Building c.1925 Contributing
Commercial Style. One story; brick; sign panel; concrete coping; corbelling; three bay plate glass facade with recessed entry. This building housed Bare-Little Company by 1938 and may have been built by them (*Jefferson Post* 3 August 1995, Ashe County Library vertical file).

14 S. Jefferson Avenue Commercial Building c.1925 Contributing
Commercial Style. One story; brick; panels with staggered corbelling above storefront; modern pent canopy with wraparound corner; reconstructed storefront; segmental arch openings on side. This building housed Bare-Little Company by 1938 and may have been built by them (*Jefferson Post* 3 August 1995, Ashe County Library vertical file).

102 S. Jefferson Avenue Ashe Hardware Building c.1925 Contributing
Commercial Style. Tall one story; brick; corbelled panels above each of three bays defined by pilasters; middle bay contains recessed entry flanked by tall multi-paned windows and reached via concrete steps; multi-light storefront windows. Ashe Hardware was owned by Bowie, Wagoner and Gambill. The store sold hardware as well as farm implements such as Case tractors. The store was later owned by Ray Hardware and used for storage. [Ashe Historical Society Newsletter, Winter, 2000]

East Main Street - - North Side

7 E. Main Street Commercial Building c. 1940 Contributing
Commercial Style. Two-story; brick; corbelling near cornice; paired six-over-six second-story windows; storefront altered with replacement plate glass windows above Formstone bulkhead; central entry with sidelights; tile coping. Now houses the *Mountain Times*.

9 - 11 E. Main Street Commercial Building c. 1930 Contributing
Commercial Style. Two-story; common bond brick; three storefronts, two with recessed entries; transoms; corbelling at cornice and above storefronts; pilasters; paired nine-over-nine replacement windows in second-story; replacement Formstone bulkheads; apartment entry in left-hand bay.

109 E. Main Street Burgess Furniture c. 1955 Non-contributing, integrity
Three-story; brick; altered with large metal shed roof; plate glass storefront; modern shed roof canopy; multi-light metal casement windows with transoms; two-bay brick addition (c.1965). The business was established in 1930 by Oscar Burgess as an antiques and used furniture store. [*Mountaineer Heritage*, Vol. 16, 1995]

105 E. Main Street Kraft-Phenix Cheese Factory c. 935; c.1955 Contributing
One story; brick; glass block windows; large metal tanks in front of building (a porte-cochere was originally in this location); several additions from the 1940s through 1960s; flat roof, two-bay garage wing to the east. Established in the 1930s, this factory, now Ashe County Cheese, tours at the plant state this is the only cheese factory of its kind in North Carolina. (Building numbering is irregular here with 109 coming before 105.)

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East Main Street - - South Side

8 E. Main Street

Parkway Theater

1939

Contributing

Art Deco. Two-story; stuccoed facade; stepped parapet; reeded pilasters at ends of facade topped by stylized finials; Art Deco medallion motif centered on upper facade; multi-light metal windows with metal grilles above modern storefront altered with shed-roof canopy. The theater was built by Russell Barr. The building originally had a balcony and 430 seats, but is now retail space.

10 E. Main Street

Ashe County Motors-Parkway Theater

c. 1925, c.1950

Contributing

Two-story; brick with cream-colored steel enamel panel facade; four, multi-light metal casement windows with transoms across upper story; stylized marquee with distinctive Art Deco lettering; recessed double entry. Begun in 1922 by Earl, Carl, and Bernard Graybeal, Ashe County Motors is thought to have built this building; they remained here until the construction of their current facility on West Second street in 1948. The Parkway Theater moved into at that time and still occupies the building. The current facade likely dates to about 1950 as it does not appear in a c.1945 photo (*Images of America: Ashe County*, 2000, 24).

106 E. Main Street

Commercial Building

c. 1920

Contributing

Two-story; brick; three bays defined by pilasters; infilled bays on first floor; middle bay containing recessed entry with stone veneer; segmental arched over paired, two-over-two windows at second story; upper story has corbelling in each bay. Now houses Ashe County Cheese Store.

West Main Street - - North Side

4 W. Main Street

West Jefferson Hardware

c. 1920, c. 1950

Contributing

Commercial Style. Two-story; brick; windows on side elevation have segmental arch heads; metal canopy over aluminum and plate glass storefront with recessed entry; transom over storefront; replacement windows in upper story; c.1950 one-story brick addition to the east with metal canopy and plate glass storefront. West Jefferson Hardware and Supply Company was founded by Harrison Tucker.

100 block of W. Main Street

West Jefferson Depot

c.1915

Contributing

Although relocated a short distance during the late-twentieth century from its original site on the southwest corner of Second Avenue and West Main Street (with its broad side facing Second), this well-preserved depot is a side gable, board and batten building with a standing seam metal roof. The roof has exposed rafter tails with shaped ends and knee braces. The windows are six-over-six light and there are three rolling doors with a single, five panel wooden door on the south side. The doorways are elevated to the original height of the railroad platform.

East First Street - - South Side

8 E. First Street

Commercial Building

c.1955

Contributing

This small flat-roofed building has original brick (painted) and replacement one-over-one window flanking the central entry with replacement door; modern wood-shingled canopy over door.

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10 E. First Street Commercial Building c.1955 Non-contributing, integrity
Similar to 8 East First Street, this is a small one-story, masonry building with modern stucco exterior and plate glass windows flanking the central entry; modern rounded canvas canopy.

12 E. First Street Commercial Building c.1955 Contributing
This one-story brick-veneered corner building has subtle Moderne styling in the dark brick banding that adorns the upper facade and upper section of the North Third Street elevation. The storefront is aluminum and plate glass with a double-leaf entry with transom in the east bay of the facade. On the N. Third Street elevation and in the west bay of the facade are glass block windows.

North Second Avenue - - East Side

North Second Avenue is sometimes referred to as Railroad Avenue because the Virginia-Carolina Railroad (later Norfolk & Western) was located adjacent to the street's western edge. The railroad right-of-way is still visible on tax maps, but is not easily seen on the ground. Local citizens in West Jefferson often refer to Second Avenue as the "Back Street," a name that denotes the significance of this area during the period of the railroad's operation. Historically, Second Avenue, with the row of commercial buildings on its eastern side, served as a boundary to the open space west of the railroad tracks. This area is still open apart from the addition of the Farmer's Market in the old right-of-way. This railroad-related space was further defined by the depot and the area near the section foreman's house (8 N. Second Ave.) which served as the staging area for train servicing (water, coal, etc.). Altogether, the Back Street area was for train service, freight loading and unloading, temporary freight storage, passenger movement, and commerce.

3 N. Second Avenue. Commercial Building c.1920 Contributing
Commercial Style. Two-story; brick; pilasters divide facade into three bays; corbelling at top of bays and across cornice; tile coping; modern metal shed canopy; soldier course lintels, replacement windows. Once housed Smithey's Department Store. [John Weaver, Oral History]

5 N. Second Avenue. Commercial Building c.1955 Non-contributing, integrity
Long, one-story building now covered in T-111 paneling; metal canopy; two storefronts with plate glass and aluminum; garage bay. May have been built or used by Smithey's Department Store.

7 N. Second Avenue. Commercial Building c.1960 Non-contributing, age
One story; brick; tile coping; garage bay; single entry.

9 - 13 N. Second Avenue Commercial Building c.1955 Non-contributing, integrity
One story masonry buildings with replacement weatherboard on facade; three altered storefronts; hip-roof canopy; c.1980 alterations.

15 Block, N. Second Avenue. Commercial Building c.1980 Non-contributing, age

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Building in two sections. Southern section is one story; vertical T-111 wood sheathing; garage bay; single entry. Northern section is one story; wood siding; two storefronts; tall pent roof.

North Second Avenue - - West Side

8 N. Second Avenue. Benjamin Cornett House c.1916 Contributing

This simple, one-story, gable-front-and-wing form house is clad in vinyl siding and has a standing seam metal roof, four-over-four light windows, a center, hip-roof porch supported by square wooden posts and balustrade. It is located west of the railroad right of way and was originally owned by the foreman for the Jefferson section of the railroad.

10 N. Second Avenue. Farmer's Market c.1995 Non-contributing, age
Open, wood-frame structure with metal roof.

East Second Street - - North Side

00 Block, E. Second Street Commercial Building c.1930 Contributing

One story; brick; overhanging hip roof; large multi-light storefront windows flank central entry; rear concrete block addition. May have been a service station.

East Second Street - - South Side

4 E. Second Street Commercial Building c.1940 Contributing

Two-story; brick; double-leaf entry flanked by multi-light wood storefront windows; entries to second story at either corner with nine-light transoms; metal hopper-style windows on second floor.

108 E. Second Street Service Station c.1950 Contributing

One story; brick; subtle Moderne influences evident in the angled corner; plate glass storefront with transoms; low-pitch gable canopy; slightly projecting three-bay garage wing.

West Second Street - - North Side

8 West Second Street First Baptist Church 1929, c.1955 Contributing

Neoclassical Revival. Two story on raised basement; brick; pedimented portico on monumental columns; pediment is shingled with lunette with keystone; small side gables flank pediment; six-over-six, double-hung sash (First) and three-over-six (Second); concrete belt course, water table, and window lintels; ornate, double doors; large rear wing from c.1955 with late-twentieth century gabled roof; the square / octagonal steeple with round-head windows and vents was added after the 1950s. The congregation was formed in 1916. [*Heritage of Ashe County*, Vol. I, 74.]

North Third Avenue - - East Side

6-B N. Third Avenue Commercial Building c.1940 Contributing

This one-story concrete block building has a brick veneer facade with ten and six-light metal windows and a single entry with three-light door. The parapet is capped by tile coping.

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6-A N. Third Avenue Commercial Building c.1940 Contributing
One-story in height, this concrete block building has tile coping and brick veneer facade; garage bay; single entry with six-light door and transom. Between the garage bay and entry is a metal casement window.

North Third Avenue - - West Side

3 N. Third Avenue Commercial Building c.1940 Non-contributing, integrity
This one-story commercial building has been altered with Formstone veneer and a pent roof. The storefront has both a single and double-leaf entry with a central bank of plate glass windows. Although shorter than the present mansard roof, the building seems to appear in a c.1940 photograph, *Images of America: Ashe Revisited*, 2002, 79.

5 N. Third Avenue Commercial Building c.1940 Contributing
One-story, this brick-veneered building has three loading bays, a triple-leaf entry with multi-light doors and transoms near the north end of the building, replacement fixed windows, and tile coping. A faded sign reads "Big(?) Red Feed." the building appears in a c.1940 photograph, *Images of America: Ashe Revisited*, 2002, 79.

7 N. Third Avenue Commercial Building c.1940 Contributing
This two-story, brick veneered building has a single loading bay and a single entry with plate glass and aluminum door with enclosed transom and sidelight.

108-110 N. Third Avenue Dr. Pepper Bottling Company c.1940 Contributing
Two-story; brick; one-story wing on east and south with garage bays; six-over-six windows; two entries on north elevation; large fixed metal windows with center hopper windows on west side; one-story wing on south with two garage bays, stepped parapet, and brick banding; further south is a two-story wing with tile coping, bricked-in windows on first floor, and "Dr. Pepper-Grapette Bottling Co." sign. The plant was operated by Carl Colvard and H.R. Vannoy in the 1940s. [*Images of America: Ashe County*, 2000]

109 N. Third Avenue Warehouse c.1980 Non-contributing, age
One-story gable-roofed building has entry facing North Third Street with a gabled porch. The building is concrete block with a brick veneer facade on the North Third Street elevation. There are two garage bays on the North Third Street elevation and one on the East First Street side.

South Third Avenue - - East Side

19 S. Third Avenue Parker Tie Company c.1950 Contributing
The Parker Tie Company is a mid-twentieth-century Commercial Style building with Moderne influences. Probably built about 1950, the two-story section of the brick building is four bays wide with a two-bay section on the north end. Both sections have central recessed entries flanked by curved walls of glass block and one-story brick pilasters with concrete caps flank the glass block. The replacement storefront windows in the larger section are six fixed lights set in aluminum frames. The upper windows

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are paired, one-over-one sash, also replacements. A one-story brick wing with a plate-glass storefront extends north along South Third Street to connect with a one-story brick and concrete block warehouse with a large garage bay. Parker Tie, a building supply and hardware firm, was established in 1935.

[\[www.parkertie.doitbest.com\]](http://www.parkertie.doitbest.com)

South Third Avenue - - West Side

18 S. Third Avenue Commercial Building c.1945, c.1955 Contributing
Commercial Style. One-story, seven-to-one common-bond brick building has a stepped parapet with concrete coping; two garage bays; and single, center entry with modern door. Brick infill indicates alteration of original bays and windows. A painted ghost sign exists beneath deteriorated modern canvas canopy. Sign panel appears to be edged with header rows. A one-story, flat-roof masonry wing (c.1955) with brick veneer facade is on the south side of the building. The wing features tile coping, two single entries with modern doors, enclosed transoms, and two enclosed windows. Center door appears to have been wider originally, now partially enclosed. There is a deteriorated metal awning above doors and windows.

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Summary Paragraph

The town of West Jefferson is a quintessential railroad town founded at the time of the construction of the Virginia-Carolina Railroad through the county in 1914-1915. Situated in a broad valley between Paddy Mountain and Mount Jefferson in central Ashe County, West Jefferson was chartered in 1915 and quickly grew into the county's commercial center. The timber industry, which drove the construction of the railroad, dominated the town's economy during the 1910s and early 1920s. Stores, restaurants, a hotel, and boarding houses quickly followed, as did a stockyard and livestock market, further bolstering the young town. Commercial activity grew vigorously through the 1950s as retail businesses filled the downtown. The retail development was accompanied by light industries such as the Kraft-Phenix Cheese Company and the Dr. Pepper Bottling Company.

The early wooden buildings in West Jefferson were replaced by brick buildings during the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s. These brick buildings are primarily in the Commercial Style, which was popular during this period, but the Classical Revival, Art Deco, Art Moderne, and Modern styles are represented. Examples of light industrial buildings, often carrying little or no stylistic references, are also extant in the district. The Benjamin Cornett House, home to the railroad section foreman, and the West Jefferson Depot are associated with the Virginia-Carolina Railroad and are important examples of their types. Further, the Neoclassical First Baptist Church is a rare example of that style in the county. As a group, the buildings within the West Jefferson Historic District are notable as a collection of popular-style commercial, light industrial, religious, and railroad-related buildings from the c.1915-1957 period.

The West Jefferson Historic District meets the National Register Criterion A for its association with the planning and development of the town and for its significance in the history of local commerce. It is also important under Criterion C for its architecture that is representative of early-to-mid-twentieth century commercial, industrial, and religious design. The period of significance for the district begins circa 1915, the date of the earliest building in the district, and ends in 1957. The development in West Jefferson after 1957 was minimal and does not constitute exceptional significance.

Historical Background, Commerce, and Community Development and Planning Contexts

The construction of the Virginia-Carolina Railroad into Ashe County in 1914 – 1915 brought about the establishment of West Jefferson. Early in the railroad's construction, area residents assumed that the new line would come through the county seat of Jefferson on its way to its terminus in Todd. The terrain and the location of Jefferson slightly to the east of the most direct route to Todd caused railroad engineers to favor a route through West Jefferson, however. The settlement was at that time only a cluster of residences and perhaps a general store. When it became apparent that a route through Jefferson would cost an additional \$50,000, the railroad finalized their decision to bypass that town.²

Not waiting for the railroad's plans to be announced, however, a group of area citizens formed the West Jefferson Land Company. The company's members included H. C. Tucker, Thomas C. "Tam" Bowie, Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Menges, and E. A. McNeill. Tucker and Bowie were two of the wealthiest and

² Arthur Fletcher, *Ashe County: A History*, (Charlotte: Heritage Printers, Inc., 1963), 237.

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most influential men in the area and McNeill was a successful merchant in Jefferson. The company quickly acquired title to the land where the town now stands. In February of 1915, West Jefferson was chartered, and the town limits were set in accordance with the West Jefferson Land Company's plat. This plat laid out a square mile of gridded streets centered on the depot. The charter went on to name Donnelly Blevins as mayor and R. C. Barr, W. F. Hartzog, Isaac Faw, and Amos Graybeal as aldermen. Weaver Koontz was appointed constable.³

The first train passed through West Jefferson in February of 1915.⁴ West Jefferson was one of nine depots established by the Virginia-Carolina Railroad in Ashe County: Nella (aka Husk), Tuckerdale, Lansing, Warrensville, West Jefferson, Baldwin, Bowie (now Fleetwood), Riverside (now Brownwood), and Elkland (now Todd). The community that arose at each depot included varying industrial entities, businesses, hotels and boarding houses, churches, schools, and houses. While growth was notable in each of these villages and towns, the largest of the railroad towns was West Jefferson, which quickly grew into the county's commercial center.

The rich timber resources in Ashe County were the primary enticement for building the railroad, and the local timber boom that came after the train's arrival was unprecedented. New companies and their employees flocked into the county. Local people took jobs and many farmers intensified their traditional logging practices now that it was easier to get their timber to market.

The Virginia-Carolina Railroad was purchased by the Norfolk and Western line in 1919 and it became known as the Abingdon Branch, nicknamed the Virginia Creeper. The line was primarily dedicated to freight traffic, like timber, but passenger service was provided as well. West Jefferson's central location, the creation of both a lumber yard and a livestock market, and its population of energetic business people helped it grow during the 1920s into a significant place of commerce and trade.

Harrison Tucker (1873-1959) was a direct connection between the West Jefferson Land Company and the timber industry. He had begun his timber career with a contract from the United States Spruce Lumber Company to deliver 100,000,000 board feet of lumber from the Pond Mountain area of northwestern Ashe County. Later Tucker worked for the railroad as a tie and timber agent and bought much of the railroad right-of-way in Ashe County.⁵

The lumber yard was located in the open area around the depot on Second Avenue at Main Street. In 1920, the timber industry was the largest employer in West Jefferson except for day laborers. At this time there was a sawmill and a lumber yard in town and prominent men such as Harrison C. Tucker and Robert C. Barr were listed as "dealers" or "lumber men." In 1920, the lumber yard employed a manager, four dealers, an inspector, fifteen laborers, and eleven other men, including a buyer. A 1930s photograph of Second Avenue, called the "back street" by locals, shows livestock cars parked on a railroad siding beside large piles of lumber, cordwood (logs sawn to a particular length), and coal.⁶

The livestock cars in the photograph illustrate another important commodity transported on the train. The cattle pens, or stockyard, were located a short distance south of the depot near the southwest

³ Fletcher, 237, 250-251.

⁴ Ruth Weaver Shepherd, et al., *Heritage of Ashe County*, Vol. I (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Co., 1984), 58.

⁵ Shepherd, 480-481 and 1920 United States Census.

⁶ John A. Weaver, interview by Sherry Joines Wyatt, June 2006; Ashe County Historical Society, *Ashe County Revisited* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 74; and 1920 United States Census.

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corner of Ashe Street and Second Avenue. Everett Roland, who served as sheriff beginning in 1940, operated the stockyard. The livestock market located here was probably built in the 1920s and was first in the county. State-graded cattle, as well as sheep and horses, were sold there from all over the county and from surrounding areas.⁷

A brief overview of the business interests of some of the early citizens of West Jefferson is illustrative of the connections between prominent men and their entrepreneurial zeal that helped to form West Jefferson. Harrison Tucker was deeply involved in the timber industry and West Jefferson's growth. He founded West Jefferson Hardware and Supply Company (4 West Main Street) and for many years operated the Tucker Hotel. Harrison and Tam Bowie co-founded the First National Bank of West Jefferson. Bowie served as president and Harrison was the director and cashier. Tucker also produced the first electricity in West Jefferson using a steam engine and generator. Northwest Carolina Utilities Corporation built a plant with two diesel engines in West Jefferson in 1927 and acquired Tucker's lines.⁸

Thomas "Tam" Bowie (1876-1947) was an attorney and one of the original investors in the West Jefferson Land Company in 1914. Bowie was elected to the State House of Representative in 1908 and again in 1913. He served as Speaker of the House in 1915 and returned to the General Assembly in 1921, 1923, 1925, 1933, and 1935. Bowie built his brick mansion (400 West Second Street - not in West Jefferson Historic District) on a hill overlooking West Jefferson in 1916. Bowie founded Ashe Hardware (102 South Jefferson Ave.) along with a Mr. Wagoner and a Mr. Gambill. The store sold hardware as well as farm implements such as Case tractors.⁹

Robert C. Barr (1878-1965), an Ashe County native, moved to West Jefferson in 1914. Barr's wife Sallie served as the town's first postmistress from 1915 until 1922. In 1915, Barr built the original wooden West Jefferson Hotel building (2-4 South Jefferson Ave.), which also housed the post office, First National Bank, and a hardware store, which he operated. After this building burned in 1916, Barr helped form the company that rebuilt the extant brick hotel building. In addition to owning a hardware store with his brother-in-law James Gambill, Barr owned several sawmills and bought and sold lumber. In the early 1930s, he founded Phenix Chair Company in the Phenix community. In the late 1930s or early 1940s he moved the firm to West Jefferson. The plant, located at the southern end of town (215 South Jefferson Ave., not in West Jefferson Historic District) grew to be a significant employer in the county.¹⁰

These influential men were joined by other business people during the late 1910s and 1920s. Among the first businesses were those that accommodated the influx of new people coming to work on the railroad and in the timber industry such as the West Jefferson Hotel. John and Emma Richardson built a ten-room boarding house on four lots at the corner of Third Street and Wilton Avenue about 1915. Issac and Georgia Faw operated another boarding house in the 100 block of Second Street. Faw also operated a livery stable on North Jefferson Avenue with his father Bynum. Among the other early citizens in West Jefferson were Otto Parson, a merchant; Bert Jones, who served as postmaster from 1922-1938 and also

⁷ Weaver, interview and Fletcher, 109 and 214.

⁸ Shepherd, 480-481 and Fletcher, 237-238.

⁹ Survey File for Thomas Bowie House, 2006 and "Ashe Historical Society Newsletter," Winter, 2000.

¹⁰ Shepherd, 150-151.

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served as mayor; dentists Dr. Cicero Gambill and Dr. Edgar Dow Jones; druggist Dr. Clifford Ray; merchants T. E. Parker, Elihu A. McNeill, and Mack and Fannie Poe; and Professor R. E. L. Plummer, who was a teacher at West Jefferson High School and later became county school superintendent.¹¹

By 1920, there were eight merchants living in West Jefferson, which had a population of 462 people. These merchants operated a restaurant, a root and herb company, a farm and grocery supply, a dry goods store, a grocery wholesale house, three grocery stores, and a general store. Additionally there was a barber shop, butcher shop, machine shop, automobile repair shop, two liverys, two blacksmith shops, and a harness shop. The five carpenters operating here in 1920 illustrate the high level of construction in town at this juncture. Professionals in town included two bank cashiers, two physicians, a druggist, two dentists, a photographer, and a lawyer. The railroad employed five men living in town: the agent, the watchman, and three laborers.¹²

One of the earliest businesses in West Jefferson was begun by John A. Weaver, Sr. (1889-1979), who came to the fledgling town in 1914 from the nearby Friendship community. In a wooden building near Faw's livery on North Jefferson Avenue, he operated a unique set of businesses catering to train travelers; a soda fountain, a shaving parlor that offered baths, and a clothes cleaning and pressing shop. Later he ran a "jitney" or taxi service.¹³

Many of the new businesses in town were begun by entrepreneurs living outside of West Jefferson. Bare-Little Company, for example, was begun in 1922 by William J. Bare with his brother-in-law Mont Little and brother Jess Bare. The company, located at 12-14 South Jefferson Avenue, sold farm supplies and was a long-standing business in West Jefferson, closing in 1995. William J. Bare's home (2531 NC Hwy 16, S.) is located east of Jefferson.¹⁴

The growth of West Jefferson and the accompanying decline of Jefferson are evident in the population statistics. In 1890, the population of Jefferson was 350, but by 1920 it stood at only 196. In 1920, only five years after its founding, West Jefferson was home to 462 people. By 1930 it had grown to 704, while Jefferson had only 296.¹⁵

The commercial growth of the 1920s continued with vigor during the 1935-1950 period. Businesses founded in West Jefferson at this time included Parker Tie Company (19 South Third Ave.) in 1935 and the Dr. Pepper Bottling plant (108-110 North Third Ave.) about 1940. The plant was operated by Carl Colvard and H.R. Vannoy in the 1940s. Burgess Furniture (109 East Main Street) was established in 1930 by Oscar Burgess as an antiques and used furniture store. McNeill's Department Store was established in Jefferson in 1889 by Elihu McNeill, but the rapid commercial growth in West Jefferson lured the firm to move there in 1934. Robert McNeill, the son of Elihu, took over the firm's operation in 1946 prior to the construction of a new store at 2 N. Jefferson Avenue in 1952. Russell Barr built the Art Deco Parkway Theater (8 East Main Street) in 1939. Originally housing 430 seats, the theater became an important part of the town's social activity. Graybeal's Rexall Drug Store was another important building

¹¹ Ibid., 58-60 and 1920 United States Census.

¹² 1920 United State Census.

¹³ Weaver, interview; Shepherd, 497; and Ashe County Historical Society, 65.

¹⁴ *Jefferson Post*, 3 August 1995, vertical file, Ashe County Public Library and Clarice Weaver, ed., *Heritage of Ashe County*, Vol. II (Charlotte: Delmar Printing Co., 1994), 71.

¹⁵ *Mountain Times Almanac*, 1994, vertical files at Ashe County Public Library.

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in town life. Opened by Carl and Ruth Graybeal about 1950, the couple ran a popular restaurant or lunch counter here. Later, Dr. B.E. Reeves had his office in the rear of the building and Drs. C.E. Gambill and Jack Hunter practiced dentistry on the second floor.¹⁶

Like many towns in rural North Carolina, during the early and mid-twentieth century Saturday afternoon and evening was the busiest time in West Jefferson. John Weaver recalls that people from all over the county came into town to shop, enjoy a movie, or just sit in their cars and watch for people to visit. Social events included the annual March of Dimes dance at the Community Building and gospel singings or revivals at the churches. The arrival and departure of the trains in West Jefferson were marked by intense activity as people boarded and disembarked and goods were loaded and unloaded. Many people planned their trip into town around the train schedule in order to witness the activity. The Norfolk and Western schedule published in *The Ashe Recorder* on April, 28, 1921, shows that the train left Abingdon, Virginia, every day except Sunday at 9:50 in the morning and arrived at West Jefferson at 2:09 before continuing south the the end of the line in Todd. On its return trip, the train stopped in West Jefferson at 7:47 pm.¹⁷

While the growth of the railroad was clearly the major transportation development in Ashe County during the second quarter of the twentieth century, its impact was paralleled by significant improvement in the county's roads. The *Ashe Recorder* in April of 1919 carried several editorials lobbying for the passage of bonds for road construction. Large sums of county money were spent on road and bridge construction from 1916 through 1925 and this spending was encouraged by the Ashe County Good Roads Commission established in 1919.¹⁸ Increasingly, the county turned to state funding for roads, particularly after the "Good Roads" governor, Cameron Morrison (1921-1925), set the stage for state-supported road improvements. In 1928, Ashe County commissioners attempted to induce the state to take over more road maintenance. With a population of 22,000, they argued Ashe was one of the largest counties in the region, yet only seventy-five miles of its roads were state-maintained.¹⁹

The improvement of transportation via roads and the railroad encouraged tourism in the county. An early aspect of the tourist industry was the interest in the healing qualities of mineral springs. The first Ashe County spring to open was Thompson's Bromine and Arsenic Springs in Crumpler, north of West Jefferson, where a hotel was constructed in 1888. Other area springs included Shatley Springs near Crumpler (1887) and Glendale Springs Inn (1895) located in southeastern Ashe County.²⁰ While statistics for the number of visitors during the early twentieth century are not available, we can surmise from the early twentieth century construction of buildings like the West Jefferson Hotel and the Tucker Hotel (located in West Jefferson, not within the historic district) that there were greater numbers of visitors after the construction of the railroad in 1914.

¹⁶ *Mountaineer Heritage*, Vol. 16, 1995; undated newspaper article, vertical files at Ashe County Public Library; Evonne Graybeal, interview, 2005; www.parkertie.doitbest.com; and *Images of America: Ashe County*, 2000.

¹⁷ *The Ashe Recorder*, April, 28, 1921, vertical files at Ashe County Public Library.

¹⁸ Fletcher, 100-103 and *Ashe Recorder*, 17 April 1919, microfilm available at the Ashe County Public Library.

¹⁹ Fletcher, 105.

²⁰ "A Wonderful Spring! Thompson's Bromine Arsenic Water - Springs in Ashe County, N.C.," advertisement accessed via New River Notes website; and Catherine Bishir, et al, *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1999), 208-210.

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Road improvements also encouraged visitors to the area. National trends towards automobile vacations in the 1930s and 1940s were epitomized by the construction of the scenic Blue Ridge Parkway beginning in 1935. Stretching nearly five hundred miles along the crest of the Blue Ridge, the parkway was largely constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The idea of the parkway encompassed both relief in the form of CCC jobs for the region's impoverished residents, but it also held the promise of bringing economic benefit over the long term through the tourism the parkway would promote.²¹

In West Jefferson, commercial growth in the early twentieth century was accompanied by industrial development. Among the earliest was the establishment of the Kraft-Phoenix Cheese Corporation during the 1930s. Dairy farming was an important feature of Ashe County's agriculture during the early and mid-twentieth century. The Kraft-Phoenix factory was the county's first successful cheese plant. It had been preceded during the mid-1910s by smaller, short-lived cheese plants scattered throughout the county. A circa 1940 photograph of the plant at 105 East Main Street shows large stacks of metal milk cans beside the building. These cans were filled on the county's dairies and collected each day by the company milk trucks. Through the 1960s, the milk routes were maintained throughout the county and the cheese plant had grown to employ fifty people. In the early 1960s, the plant bought more than 1,500,000 pounds of milk per month in the spring, summer, and fall down from about 3,900,000 pounds of milk a month in 1954.²²

West Jefferson's economy was also closely linked to the quick ascension of tobacco as a major agricultural product in the county between 1930 and 1950. Tobacco had been grown in Ashe County since the nineteenth century, but in 1925 a new air-cured variety, Burley tobacco, was introduced. Burley tobacco was better suited to Ashe County's cool climate and encouraged an increase in production from 3,249 pounds harvested in 1920 to 12,981 pounds in 1930. The county's tobacco crops continued to increase rapidly with 473,787 pounds produced in 1940 and 1,100,563 pounds in 1950.²³ Initially, most farmers took their crop to market at Abingdon, Virginia, until the construction of the Tri-State Tobacco Warehouse (104 Long Street, not in West Jefferson Historic District) in West Jefferson during the 1940s.²⁴ During the 1950s, the promotion and excitement generated by the crop is evident in the annual tobacco festival marking the opening of the tobacco market. The November 30, 1950, event included a parade, prizes for downtown shoppers, a festival queen chosen from representatives from each school, and a square dance.²⁵

Another cash crop prominent in the county during the early twentieth century were beans, both dried and fresh, for which a market was established by Charles Pritchard in 1942 at the corner of Second Avenue and Ashe Street (near the livestock and tobacco markets) in West Jefferson in 1942. The market,

²¹ Harley E. Jolley, *The Blue Ridge Parkway*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1969), 55 and 69 and Bishir, 210.

²² Fletcher, 204; *The State*, 28 August 1954, photocopy in Ashe County Public Library vertical files; and Linda Burchette, "Cheese: it has a proud history," *Jefferson Post*, 6 October 1994, vertical files at Ashe County Public Library. Note: Kraft operated the cheese factory until 1975 when it was sold to then-manager Chesley Hazelwood. He renamed the enterprise Ashe County Cheese, which is still operating today as the state's only cheese factory

²³ *U.S. Agricultural Census*, 1920 and 1930.

²⁴ Shepherd, 14.

²⁵ *The Skyland Post*, 30 November 1950, microfilm available at Ashe County Public Library.

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which sold 100,000 bushels of snap and pole beans in its first year, provided an important, easily accessible place where local farmers could sell their crops.²⁶ While the agricultural markets are not part of the West Jefferson Historic District, they were an important factor in the success of the commercial enterprises housed within the district's buildings.

After World War II, the dominance of agriculture in Ashe County's economy lessened. Increasingly farmers found off-farm work to supplement their agricultural income. North Carolina statistics from 1947 show that 4.2 percent of the county's population was employed in industry, primarily in the fields of lumber or furniture. Robert Barr's Phenix Chair Company (at 215 S. Jefferson Ave., outside the West Jefferson Historic District) was one of the important firms in the county during the postwar era. Expansions of the company during the 1940s and 1950s led to the firm employing 280 people in two shifts in 1963. These workers could produce 700 chairs an hour. The company, which was purchased by Thomasville Furniture in 1964, had 400 employees in 1983. A large portion of the lumber was still obtained from local sources and kiln-dried at the plant.²⁷

Despite the growth in the manufacturing sector in the county during the 1950s, an increasing number of county residents, primarily young people, were moving away. The censuses show that between 1950 and 1960 there was a decrease in population of about 2,100, entirely in the rural townships; while both Jefferson and West Jefferson showed small gains as factories in and near these towns flourished. In 1960, West Jefferson reached a population of 1,000 and Jefferson, 814, up from 871 and 359 respectively in 1947. By 1970, however, the population of West Jefferson had declined and stood at only 889.²⁸

As is true throughout North Carolina, Ashe County lost most of its manufacturing base during the 1990s, including Phenix Chair. The abandonment of the Norfolk and Western Railroad branch line through the county in 1977 foreshadowed the decline in manufacturing.²⁹ The petition for abandonment in 1972 shows that in 1971-1972 only 246 carloads of freight were shipped, primarily from companies like Thomasville Furniture's Phenix Chair plant. These numbers were far below the required minimum of thirty-five carloads per route-mile required by the Interstate Commerce Commission regulations.³⁰

By the late 1990s, however, West Jefferson had begun to tap into another economic engine – tourism. Always a part of the county's history with Healing and Glendale Springs and, later the Blue Ridge Parkway, tourism has become a driving force in the town's economy. For a number of years, Ashe County Cheese Factory had catered to this niche market and was joined by a variety of art galleries and a few new restaurants in West Jefferson's historic commercial buildings. Long-standing businesses such as

²⁶ Shepherd, 14; *Jefferson Post* 11 September 1997, Ashe County Public Library vertical file; and *The State*, 28 August 1954, photocopy in Ashe County Public Library vertical files.

²⁷ "Thomasville...Making Quality Products," *Jefferson Times*, 21 November 1983, vertical files of Ashe County Public Library; "Within Human Memory," special section, *Jefferson Post*, 5 July 1991, in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library; Bill Sharpe, editor, *North Carolina a Description by Counties*, Warren Publishing Co., 1948, photocopy in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library and Fletcher, 235; and "Thomasville...Making Quality Products," *Jefferson Times*, 21 November 1983, vertical files of Ashe County Public Library.

²⁸ Sharpe; Fletcher, 56; and vertical files at Ashe County Public Library.

²⁹ Passenger service was discontinued in 1962.

³⁰ North Carolina Utilities Commission, "Statement of Carload Freight Shipped from West Jefferson, July 1971 thru June 1972," Interstate Commerce Commission Docket No. AB-10 (Sub-No. 3) 1973, in vertical files of Ashe County Public Library and Thomas H. Blevins, *A Brief History of the Virginia Creeper*, (privately published, 2003), 12.

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West Jefferson Hardware (4 West Main Street) and McNeill's Department Store (2 North Jefferson Avenue) are still in business and they continue to serve the local population and visitors even as big-box retailers locate on the outskirts of town.

Architectural Context

During the post-1915 period in Ashe County, wealth and commercial development became concentrated in West Jefferson precipitating the construction of many one and two-story masonry buildings in several widely popular architectural styles. Documentary photographs of West Jefferson show that the town had a number of wooden commercial buildings through the 1920s. These were largely replaced during the 1930s through the 1950s with the brick buildings that are extant today. The West Jefferson Historic District features buildings with elements of the Commercial Style, Classical Revival, Art Deco, Art Moderne, and Modern styles all of which were built at various times across North Carolina. In fact, buildings erected from the late 1910s and 1920s, through the 1950s in West Jefferson are virtually indistinguishable from commercial buildings found elsewhere in the state during this period.

The most common style among the district's commercial buildings is the Commercial Style. Developed in the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Commercial Style reflects a simplified aesthetic that was a reaction against the ornate detailing common among late nineteenth-century buildings. Features of the Commercial Style include patterned masonry walls, shaped or stepped parapets, and a relatively flat appearance with simple ornamentation. In West Jefferson, the Commercial Style is most often expressed in modest corbelled cornices, low-relief brick pilasters separating facade bays, recessed storefronts, sometimes with transoms. Many of the commercial buildings in the district are two stories tall featuring a two-part facade delineating the first floor commercial level from the second floor apartments or offices, which are often served by private entries on the first floor facade. A well-preserved example of a Commercial Style building in West Jefferson is 9-11 East Main Street. Probably dating to about 1930, this two-story, common-bond brick building has three storefronts with transoms. Commercial-style features include corbelling at the cornice and above storefronts and plain brick pilasters divide the facade. Also from about 1930 is 3-5 South Jefferson Avenue. A stepped parapet, typical of the style, ornaments this two-story, brick building, as do the soldier course lintels and the recessed sign panel. Built c.1940, 107-109 N. Jefferson Avenue carries a stepped parapet over each of the two storefronts. There are recessed sign panels below each parapet. Soldier course and stack-bond brickwork frames paired, six-over-six, double-hung sash on the upper story and a soldier course/header course/soldier course banding ornaments the storefront at 109. These stylistic features may also be behind the modern shed canopy of 107.

One-story buildings are also common in the district. Four of the most intact Commercial Style examples are at 10, 12, 14, and 102 South Jefferson Avenue. All of these brick buildings probably date to the 1925-1930 period. The buildings at 10 and 12 South Jefferson Avenue are similar with three bays. Commercial Style elements include recessed sign panels and transomed storefronts. The building at 14 South Jefferson Avenue is smaller than its neighbors, with only two bays, and it is ornamented with staggered corbelling over the remodeled storefront. One of the best-preserved buildings in the district is the c. 1925 Ashe Hardware Building at 102 South Jefferson Avenue. Although only one-story in height, the building is tall and rests on a raised foundation well above street level. The three bays of the facade are

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defined by pilasters and each bay features more ornament than is often found on the district's Commercial Style buildings with corbelling at the cornice and projecting bands of brick above the transomed storefront that features historic multi-light windows. The recessed entry is reached via concrete steps.

The Classical Revival style is also represented in the district by two intact buildings: the West Jefferson Hotel at 2-4 South Jefferson Avenue and Graybeal's Rexall Drugstore building at 106 North Jefferson Avenue. The brick West Jefferson Hotel was built in 1917 and is one of the oldest buildings in the district. It is also one of the most architecturally distinctive with dual facades—one addressing the prominent Jefferson Avenue and Main Street intersection with storefronts and a corner entrance, and the other addressing the railroad tracks (now removed) with a two-tiered porch. The hotel lobby and commercial spaces occupied the first floor while hotel rooms took up the second. Classical Revival elements of the hotel include the prominent corbelled brick and cast stone cornice that encircles the building, the cast stone lintels, and brick quoins. The Graybeal's Rexall Drugstore building features some of the same Classical Revival elements, albeit on a much smaller building. These elements include cast stone quoins as well as cast stone belt course and keystones. There is a molded metal cornice over replacement windows on the second floor. Old photographs of Graybeal's Rexall Drugstore show glass panels sheathing the first floor storefront originally. According to local resident John Weaver, this two-story brick building was architect designed and constructed about 1950.

The 1939 Parkway Theater at 8 East Main Street is the only Art Deco-style building in the district. This two-story building has a narrow, stuccoed facade with a stepped parapet and fluted pilasters. The pilasters are topped by stylized finials at each upper corner of the facade and are joined by a stylized Art Deco motif centered on upper facade. Next door at 10 East Main Street, the original one-story Ashe County Motors building built about 1925 was updated with a new steel enamel panel facade and a second story about 1948 as the theater expanded into this building. The building carries the Parkway's marquee with distinctive Art Deco lettering over a recessed double entry.

The two-story brick building at 114 North Jefferson Avenue from c. 1955 has modest Art Moderne styling with concrete coping and concrete belt courses that serve as the sills and lintels for the second floor windows creating a strong sense of horizontality not seen in the district's earlier buildings.

There are also a handful of small-scale industrial buildings in the district such as the Kraft-Phenix Cheese plant at 105 East Main Street and the Dr. Pepper Bottling Company (108-110 North Third Street). The architecture of these buildings is characterized by very modest architectural detailing and the presence of garage bays. Built about 1935, the Kraft-Phenix Cheese plant is a one-story brick building with glass block windows and large milk storage tanks in front of the building. There is a garage bay addition to the east. The Dr. Pepper Bottling Company building is a two-story brick building with one-story garage/loading bay wings extending from the east side and rear (south). Built about 1940, the brick building has six-over-six and metal hopper-style windows. Metal hopper-style windows, or in the case of the Kraft-Phenix plant, glass blocks, are often found in industrial buildings. The first block (00) of North Third Avenue also has several examples of light industrial buildings. The buildings in this block are primarily one story being constructed of brick or brick and concrete block. The use of concrete block and brick veneer facades on some buildings in this block illustrate the expedient and utilitarian manner of their construction. Details like tile coping, garage/loading bays, and simple doors also illustrate the functional design of light industrial buildings. This entire block probably dates to about 1940.

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The use of the Neoclassical and Colonial Revival styles was common among urban churches in North Carolina during the early twentieth century, but they are seldom seen in Ashe County. The First Baptist Church (8 West Second Street), dating to 1929, is the only historic Neoclassical Revival-style church in the county. The two-story brick church rests on raised basement and carries a pedimented portico on monumental columns. Other classical motifs include a lunette with keystone in the pediment, concrete belt course, water table, and window lintels.

Also, two architecturally important buildings are associated with the Virginia-Carolina (later Norfolk and Western) Railroad. Nine depots were built in Ashe County between about 1914 and 1916, and only two survive, one at West Jefferson and the other at Brownwood. The c.1915 West Jefferson Depot located in the 100 block of West Main Street is the more intact of the two, featuring a side-gable rectangular building sheathed in board and batten siding with a standing seam metal roof. Photographs taken by O. Winston Link in the late 1950s of many of the stations on the Norfolk and Western line in Ashe County and southwestern Virginia show that the West Jefferson depot is an example of a standard design used by Norfolk & Western's predecessor, the Virginia-Carolina Railroad.³¹ The depot was originally located on the southwest corner of Second Avenue and West Main Street (with its broad side facing Second Avenue). In the late-twentieth century, the depot was moved a short distance northwest and is currently located on the north side of the 100 block of West Main Street. The new location is compatible with the building because it is a short distance from the original site. Further, the building can still be viewed from the "back street" (Second Avenue) of West Jefferson and thus maintains the historic link between the depot and the area where the railroad tracks and freight loading and storage areas were historically located. More importantly, the depot continues to be a contributing resource in the historic district because of the importance of the building architecturally as the best-preserved example of a Virginia-Carolina Railroad depot remaining in the county.³²

The Benjamin Cornett House, located near the end of Wilton Avenue at 8 North Second Avenue, was the home of the railroad section foreman. This house is thought to be a unique example of a railroad-built residence in Ashe County. The simple, one-story, gable-front-and-wing form house is clad in vinyl siding and has a standing seam metal roof, four-over-four light windows, and a center, hip-roof porch. It is located west of the railroad right of way.

The c.1950 service station at 108 East Second Street is illustrative of a building type that came with the growth of automobile ownership. Following national trends, automobile ownership in Ashe County rose dramatically between 1930 and 1950. The U.S. Agricultural Census recorded for the first time in 1930 the number of cars and trucks on farms in the nation's counties. Ashe had a total of 950 automobiles in this year, but by 1950 that number had jumped to 1,993. The one-story, brick service station located at 108 East Second Street is a well-preserved example of a service station with an angled corner and plate glass storefront with transoms in its main section. The canopy over the gas pumps is indicative of the building type and is here a low-pitched gable-roof. Also common on service stations of

³¹ O. Winston Link, *The Last Steam Railroad in America*, 2000.

³² Note: The Virginia-Carolina Railroad depot at Todd (the Elkland Depot) is an earlier building moved to Todd from Virginia after the original Elkland Depot burned and is thus, of a different design. The Brownwood Depot remains in situ, but is in a deteriorated condition.

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the area are garage or service bays either within the main building mass, or often as a wing. This station has a three-bay garage wing.

As a collection, the buildings within the West Jefferson Historic District and retain a good level of historic integrity. The dense character of the historic development is intact and streetscapes within the district are well preserved.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the West Jefferson Historic District is shown as a solid line on the accompanying 1"=200' scale map entitled, "West Jefferson Historic District."

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the West Jefferson Historic District encompasses the greatest concentration of pre-1957 contributing resources within their appropriate historic settings. Most boundary lines follow roads and property lines.

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All photographs are of:

West Jefferson Historic District, Ashe County, N.C.

Date: July 2005 Photographer: Claudia Brown

Location of negatives: State Historic Preservation Office, Asheville

1. 00 block N. Jefferson Ave., East Side
2. 100 block N. Jefferson Ave., East Side
3. 00 block S. Jefferson Ave., West Side
4. West Jefferson Depot, 100 block, West Main St.
5. First Baptist Church, 8 W. Second St.
6. Ashe Hardware Building, 102 S. Jefferson Ave.
7. Parkway Theater and Parkway Theater-Ashe Motor Co. Building, 8-10 E. Main St.
8. West Jefferson Hotel, 2-4 S. Jefferson Ave.
9. West Jefferson Hardware Building, 4 W. Main St.