

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic Central Fire Station

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 318 N. Greene Street

not for publication

city, town Greensboro

vicinity of

congressional district Sixth

state North Carolina

code 037

county Guilford

code 081

3. Classification

Category

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

Ownership

- public
 - private
 - both
- Public Acquisition**
- in process
 - being considered

Status

- occupied
 - unoccupied
 - work in progress
- Accessible**
- yes: restricted
 - yes: unrestricted
 - no

Present Use

- agriculture
- commercial
- educational
- entertainment
- government
- industrial
- military
- museum
- park
- private residence
- religious
- scientific
- transportation
- other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of Greensboro: T. Z. Osborne, City Manager
Office of the City Manager

street & number City Hall

city, town Greensboro

vicinity of

state North Carolina

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Guilford County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Greensboro

state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Greensboro Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records Survey and Planning Branch--Archives and History

city, town Raleigh

state North Carolina

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Central Fire Station is a substantial early twentieth century building located on the northern edge of Greensboro's central business district. It was designed in 1925 by Charles C. Hartmann, the city's foremost architect at the time, who also was responsible for the nearby O. Henry Hotel (now demolished) and the Jefferson Standard Building, both National Register properties. The Fire Station's environment was composed of two and three story commercial buildings also built during the first decades of this century in a number of period revival styles. The current construction of the Southern Life Insurance complex on the rear side of the station's block represents the intrusion of large-scale development interests in the neighborhood. The Central Fire Station is a landmark and anchor for the remaining early commercial buildings, and its preservation is important for both its own significance and for its relationship to the surrounding cityscape.

The station is a two-story, red-brick building with carved granite ornamentation. The basic mass is a plain two-story brick box, nine bays wide by three bays deep, with a front central projecting and stepped two-story front pavilion of six bays in width on the ground level. This pavilion creates the building's streetscape image. The architectural flavor of the building is basically Italian Renaissance. Six flattened arches, separated by squat Romanesque style attached granite columns, define the fire engine double-doors of the projecting block. Above, paired and arched windows illuminate the second-story recreation hall. A false, pitched-roof parapet of green terra-cotta pantiles surmounts the central section. The major block of the building has a flat roof and double-hung sash windows.

The high point of the original design was a six-story tower (85 feet tall) used for drying fire hoses and for ladder-rescue practice. It was located at the southwest corner of the building but was, unfortunately, demolished above the second story in the early 1950s because of structural problems. The need for a tower as part of the program for the building may have suggested to the architect an Italian/Mediterranean style for the building. The tower was rectangular in cross-section with the wider facades facing north and south. The long elevation contained two bays while the front and rear facades held a single line of windows. The belvedere at the top of the tower was formed of round arches, separated by brick pilasters with granite bases and entablature. A double-hipped, raised-seam metal roof topped the composition.

Inside the station was fully equipped for the comfort and amusement of the firefighters and for the protection of the citizens of Greensboro. The plain plaster walls still retain the austerity of the original interior design. A 1937 Greensboro newspaper article reviewed the facilities of the building:

The station has a recreation hall with 350 seating capacity, a dormitory, a hospital room for the first aid treatment, spacious and spotless wash rooms, a barber shop, five private offices for the officials, lockers, six gongs and two sets of poles (three to a set) one in the dormitory and one in the recreation hall.

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In addition, the fire station could accomodate nine fire engines at one time. Although a new central fire station is currently under construction, the 1925 building has remained an efficient structure for more than half a century.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1925 **Builder/Architect** Charles C. Hartmann

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Central Fire Station in Greensboro was designed by Greensboro architect Charles C. Hartmann for the city in 1925. Its construction reflected the rapid growth and rising level of municipal services in Greensboro in the 1920s, a period when the city asserted itself as a major commercial center in North Carolina and the South. The Central Fire Station was the largest of such structures in the city at the time, with subsidiary stations of smaller size. In its design Hartmann used red brick and contrasting granite trim in a Classical or Renaissance Revival style. The dramatic arcade of entrances with bold round arches springing from sturdy columns dominates the main facade. Hartmann, like most of his contemporaries, worked easily in any of several revival and eclectic styles.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. Associated with the emergence of Greensboro in the early twentieth century as one of North Carolina's leading urban centers, in the context of the period as a time of rapid new urbanization in the state, and associated with the development in Greensboro and other cities and towns of improved municipal services such as fire protection.
- B. Associated with noted Greensboro architect Charles C. Hartmann.
- C. Embodies distinctive characteristics of the popular Classical Revival style, here with a Renaissance Revival flavor, in municipal architecture; part of the impressive body of 1920s architecture that distinguishes downtown Greensboro.

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Greensboro's Central Fire Station, designed by architect Charles C. Hartmann, opened in 1926 at the inauguration of the city's paid fire department and has remained in continuous service since that time. The headquarters of a department that now employs 296 firefighters, the Central Fire Station, marked by six brass fire poles inside and an arched, stone front, is one of the best surviving examples of early 20th century fire stations in North Carolina.

For nearly a century, Greensboro fire protection was very much a volunteer affair.

The city's first fire code was enacted in 1833, requiring each household to possess two ladders (one reaching from the ground to the eaves, the other from eaves to roof comb) upon penalty of a five dollar fine.¹ Still, the city had no fire fighting apparatus until 1849 when, after a conflagration almost destroyed the business district, a hand-brake or pumping engine made in Baltimore and dubbed "General Greene",² was purchased for \$600.³ (Today the General Greene stands in the Greensboro City Museum).

Also as a result of the 1849 blaze, the city's first volunteer fire company was organized.⁴ In 1884 the city purchased a chemical fire fighting engine to assist the volunteers;⁵ the next year it added a LaFrance pumper. In 1913 the city shifted to its first motor driven truck.⁶

The fire department remained a volunteer operation until June 1, 1926.⁷ At that time the city and its municipal services underwent a substantial transformation occasioned by a 1923 expansion of Greensboro's city limits from 2 to 16.9 square miles and a population jump from 19,861 to 43,525.⁸

Under the leadership of Greensboro's first city manager, Pennell C. Painter, and mayor E.B. Jeffress (1925-29),⁹ the city undertook a capital improvement program that included extensive widening and paving of its streets and the addition of more sewers, a one billion gallon reservoir, and more overpasses and traffic lights.¹⁰ As part of that program, \$300,000 was allotted to building two fire substations on the north and west of Greensboro, to remodeling the Southside and West End stations, to adding pumpers and alarms, and to the construction of the Central Fire Station on North Greene Street.¹¹

The Central Fire Station was unusually graced in that it was designed by noted architect Charles C. Hartmann, whose works include the Jefferson Standard Life Building in Greensboro as well as other

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commercial buildings in Greensboro, High Point, Fayetteville, Burlington, and Hickory.¹² Located one block north of Bellemeade Street and the city's business district, the station was completed by contractor Charles W. Angle in 1926.

As the Central Fire Station was finished, Greensboro made the shift to an "all paid" firefighting force, employing 47 men in 8 companies to operate its 10 pieces of equipment at 5 stations.¹³ Within a year the city's fire loss decreased by \$200,000, and the U. S. Chamber of Commerce awarded the Greensboro Fire Department its 1927 grand prize for the lowest fire loss and most improved equipment and organization of any department in a city of 50,000 to 100,000 population.¹⁴

Over the years the Central Fire Station remained the headquarters for the city's vaunted firefighting force. It also served at various times as the site of Sunday school classes, a "deaf and dumb convention", a wedding, a funeral, band concerts, revivals, and during World War II housed up to 435 soldiers at a time.¹⁵

After World War II the residential neighborhood surrounding the Central Fire Station began to disappear as suburbanization gained sway leaving the station in an increasingly isolated geographic position. The only substantial physical changes ever made at the Central Fire Station also occurred during this period as the administrative offices on the building's north side were renovated and the upper stories of the tower were demolished.¹⁶

The Greensboro fire department continued to grow, boasting 102 men, 10 companies, and 7 stations in 1951, 120 men in 1956. In 1959, two years before the fire department was integrated, 20 men were on duty around the clock at the Central Fire Station, handling approximately four calls per day.¹⁷

Today Greensboro employs 296 firefighters (four are women) in 14 stations to handle its 23 active fire engines. But the Central Fire Station now accomodates only 7 1/2 firefighters at any one time, according to current chief R. L. Powell, Jr.¹⁸

Powell led the movement in the late 1970's to close the Central Fire Station, where his office was located, and the Yanceyville Street station, and to consolidate them in one structure on North Church Street. Powell's reasons for closing the Central Fire Station were that it was not "energy efficient", in that it was costly to heat and cool, especially since it did not lend itself to isolating equipment to keep it cooler than the

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building's work and living quarters, and was "in a marginal state of repair", at least as far as its electrical and plumbing system were concerned.¹⁹

The Central Fire Station is slated to be closed on July 1, 1980. Its future is unclear.

Architectural Significance:

The basically Italian Renaissance character of the building helped to relate it to the O. Henry Hotel and Annex, one half block away, which was also a red brick and stone detail composition by Hartmann. The Italian Renaissance was a major design source for early twentieth century hotels, apartment buildings, and large office/commercial structures. Both the proximity of the O. Henry Hotel to the Fire Station site and the popular image of Italian feudal and later towers probably influenced Hartmann's choice of the Renaissance derived style for the building.

Hartmann had first come to Greensboro in 1918 to supervise construction of the O. Henry Hotel for the New York City firm of William L. Stoddard. Julian Price, president of the Jefferson Standard Life Assurance Company, invited Hartmann to return to Greensboro in 1922 as architect for the Jefferson Standard Building, a terra-cotta skyscraper in the heart of the business district. Hartmann acted as the city's leading architect during the second quarter of the twentieth century, designing the Northwestern Bank Building, Greensboro High School, Julian Price's home "Hillside" (NR), and other large residences. His beaux arts training in New York provided a high standard for architectural design in Greensboro through the early 1960s.

The architectural significance of the Greensboro Central Fire Station is derived from Hartmann's ability to combine the requirements of "utility and delight." The station is basically a utilitarian building that embodies all of the modern conveniences and efficiency that the progressive Greensboro citizens of the early twentieth century admired and demanded in their public services. At the same time, the station presents a dignified street presence that was designed to make it an individual landmark while contributing to the character of its neighborhood. Despite recent changes in its environment, the Greensboro Central Fire Station continues to represent these essential qualities of good design.

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Footnotes

1. Arnett, Ethel Stephens and Jackson, Walter Clinton Greensboro, North Carolina (Chapel Hill, N.C. The University of North Carolina Press, 1955) Page 29
2. Albright, J.W. Greensboro 1808-1904 Facts, Figures, Traditions, and Reminiscences (Greensboro, N.C. Joseph J. Stone and Company, 1904) Page 105
3. Caldwell, Bettie D. Founders and Builders of Greensboro 1808-1908 (Greensboro, N.C. Joseph J. Stone and Company, 1925) Page 288
4. Albright, Greensboro 1808-1904 Page 107
5. Ibid., Page 107
6. Greensboro Record (Greensboro, N.C.) December 26, 1959
7. North Carolina State Firemen's Association Program of the 65th Annual Convention of the North Carolina State Firemen's Association (Greensboro, N.C., August 1952) Page 23
8. Greensboro Chamber of Commerce Greensboro: Master Key To The South's Best Markets (Greensboro, N.C. Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, 1924) Page 7
9. Lewis, McDaniel Address at a Testimonial Dinner in Greensboro Country Club (Greensboro, N.C. Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, May 27, 1955) Page 2
10. Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, Greensboro: Master Key Page 7
11. North Carolina State Firemen's Association Program Page 23
12. American Historical Society, Incorporated North Carolina--Rebuilding an Ancient Commonwealth Volume 3 (Chicago and New York, American Historical Society, 1928) Page 295
13. Greensboro Record (Greensboro, N.C.) September 3, 1951
14. Greensboro Daily News (Greensboro, N.C.) August 8, 1937.
The 1920s brought rapid growth to the city.

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15. Greensboro Record (Greensboro, N.C.) September 3, 1951.
16. Jacobs, Barry Interview with R. L. Powell, chief of the
Greensboro Fire Department January 3, 1980
17. Greensboro Record (Greensboro, N.C.) December 26, 1959.
18. Powell interview
19. Greensboro Record (Greensboro, N.C.) February 23, 1978.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Albright, J.W. Greensboro 1808-1904 Facts, Figures, Traditions, and Reminiscences
Joseph J. Stone and Company, Greensboro, North Carolina 1904

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Greensboro

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	7	6	0	8	8	4	0	3	0	0	2	8	4	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

The area included in the Greensboro Central Fire Station nomination is the land on which the building sits. It is bounded on the North, East, and South by office and commercial buildings and on the West by N. Greene Street.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Barry Jacobs, Consultant: History
Keith N. Morgan, Preservation Planner: Architectural Description

organization Archives and History
Survey and Planning Branch date November, 1979

Archaeology and Historic Preservation Section
street & number 109 E. Jones Street telephone 733-6545

city or town Raleigh, state North Carolina 27611

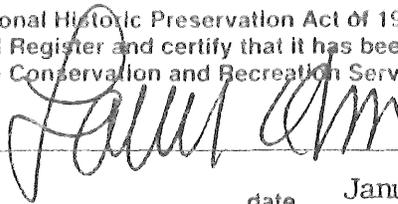
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title State Historic Preservation Officer

date January 10, 1980

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Albright, J.W. Greensboro 1808-1904 Facts, Figures, Traditions, and
Reminiscences Joseph J. Stones and Company, Greensboro, North Carolina
1904

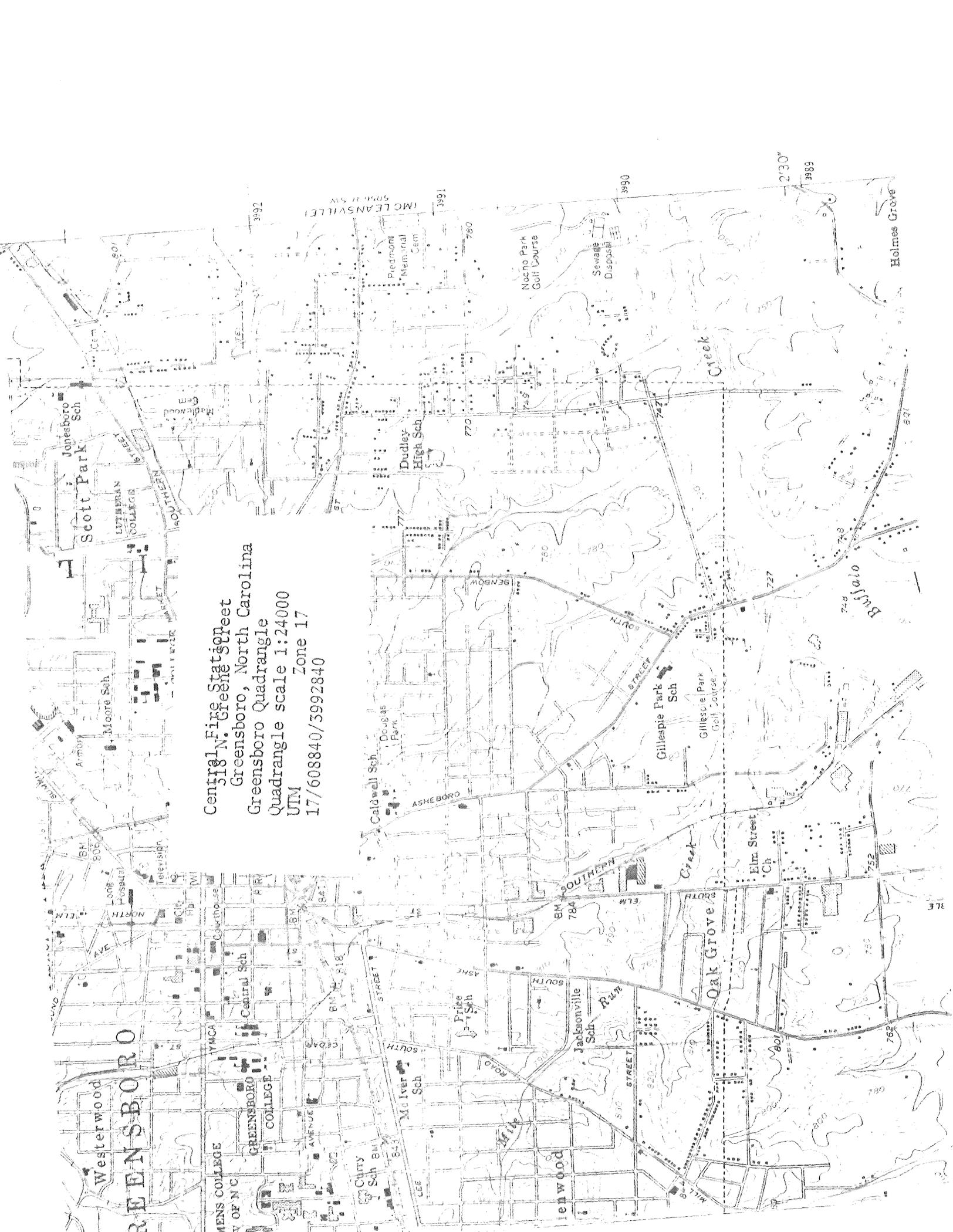
Greensboro Chamber of Commerce Greensboro: Master Key to The South's Best
Markets Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, Greensboro, North Carolina 1924

Greensboro Daily News, Greensboro, North Carolina August 8, 1937

Greensboro Record, Greensboro, North Carolina September 3, 1951 and February
23, 1978

Jacobs, Barry Interview with R. L. Powell, chief, Greensboro Fire Department
Greensboro, North Carolina January 3, 1980

North Carolina State Firemen's Association Program of the 65th Annual Convention
of the North Carolina State Firemen's Association Greensboro, North Carolina
August, 1952



Central Fire Station
 318 N. Greene Street
 Greensboro, North Carolina
 Greensboro Quadrangle
 Quadrangle scale 1:24000
 UTM Zone 17
 17/608840/5992840

