

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Ahoskie Downtown Historic District

and/or common

2. Location

portions of W. Main, Railroad, Mitchell and
street & number E. Main Streets not for publication

city, town Ahoskie vicinity of

state North Carolina code 037 county Hertford code 091

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | N/A | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name see enclosed list

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hertford County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Winton, North Carolina state 27986

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Ahoskie Architectural Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date July, 1984 federal X state county X local

depository for survey records N.C. Division of Archives and History
Archaeology & Historic Preservation Section

city, town Raleigh NC 27611 state

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National Park Service

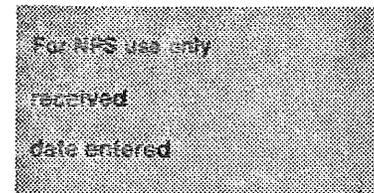
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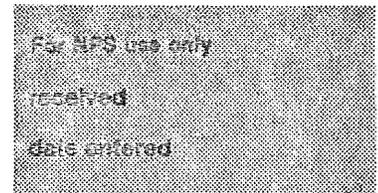


| <u>Property</u> | <u>Owners</u> |
|--|--|
| 1. (former) U.S. Post Office 201 W. Main St. ca. 1940; pivotal | Town of Ahoskie 201 W. Main St. Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 2. Mitchell Hotel 131-135 W. Main St. 1910; contributing | J.H. Mitchell Heirs c/o Ruth Bouldin 108 W. Church St. Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 3. Mitchell Hotel Annex 127-129 W. Main St. 1925; contributing | J. H. Mitchell Heirs c/o Ruth Bouldin 108 W. Church St. Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 4. Commercial Building 123-125 W. Main St. appears on 1923 Sanborn Map; contributing | Mr. John B. Walker 147 Druid Drive Knoxville, Tennessee 37920 |
| 5. Farmers-Atlantic Bank 119 W. Main St. near jct. w. Mitchell St. 1918; pivotal | Cherry, Cherry, Flythe & Overton 119 W. Main St. Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 6. Richard Theater (Gallery Theater) 117 W. Main St. 1927; contributing | The Gallery Theater, Inc. 119 W. Main St. Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 7. Hotel Comfort 111-115 W. Main St. ca. 1906 following fire; fill | R.H. Jernigan P.O. Box 8851 Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 8. J.T. Parker and J.W. Powell Buildings 105 and 109 W. Main St. ca. 1910; intrusive | Joe Parker P.O. Box 1325 Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 9. R.J. Baker Building 101 W. Main St. ca. 1910; contributing | Stuart A. Curtis P.O. Box 666 Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 10. Hertford Herald Building 102-104 S. Railroad St. ca. 1915; fill | Stuart A. Curtis P.O. Box 666 Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 11. Commercial Buildings 100 Block N. Railroad St. mid to late 1920s; contributing | Myra P. Mitchell 125 Railroad St. Ahoskie, NC 27910 |

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- | | |
|--|--|
| 12. W.D. Newsome Building 119 N. Railroad St. ca. 1905; contributing | Saluda Hall Heirs c/o Alice Hall Weaver Rt. 2, Box 245 Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 13. Garrett Hotel W. Main St. & N. Railroad St. 1925-1926; contributing | Town of Ahoskie 201 W. Main St. Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 14. Bank of Ahoskie N. Railroad St. at Main St. 1925-1926; pivotal | E.R. Evans, Jr. P.O. Box 621 Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 15. Sawyer-Browne Furniture Co. 126 W. Main St. at N. Mitchell St. 1924; pivotal | Mrs. Eula D. Garrett (heirs) c/o Norvin Garrett 416 N. West St. Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 16. E.L. Garrett Building 110-122 N. Mitchell St. 1938; contributing | Myra D. Mitchell & Herald A. Mitchell 125 Railroad St. Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 17. M.H. Mitchell Furniture Co. Annex N. Mitchell St. late 1940s; fill | Myra P. Mitchell 125 N. Railroad St. Ahoskie, NC 27910 |
| 18. E.J. Gerock Department Store 102 E. Main St. 1910; contributing | Stuart M. Curtis P.O. Box 666 Ahoskie, NC 27910 |

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Ahoskie Downtown Historic District includes business properties fronting on two of the town's earliest commercial streets, Main and Railroad, in the first blocks on either side of their intersection as well as properties fronting on North Mitchell Street to the rear of North Railroad Street. Ahoskie originated in the mid-1880s as a railroad and lumber town, and the intersection of Main Street and the railroad early became the primary business location. The railroad depot was located one-half block north of Main Street, between the railroad and Railroad Street. Ahoskie Post Office was established in 1889, four years before the town was incorporated; and the first post office was located at the southeast corner of Main Street and the railroad where the E.J. Gerock Store (17) was built later.

The town of Ahoskie is located in the level coastal plain, without any geographic or topographic features to influence its physical development. The town developed in a grid pattern oriented to the railroad and St. Johns Road (Church Street), one block south of Main Street. This grid pattern continued until the mid-twentieth century as the town developed. Even the early roads which did not conform to the grid were relocated. Hence, this early portion of the town follows a rigid rectangular grid even though the Winton Road originally passed diagonally through the block north of 100 West Main Street. When the Mitchells subdivided and sold lots in this block ca. 1890, they did not register an adequate plat and left the triangular parcel bounded by the old Winton Road and the new Main and Railroad streets in dispute. Dr. J.H. Mitchell erected a fence around the area called "No Man's Land" in 1915 and claimed it. The dispute over this parcel, in which much of the town was involved, was finally settled by the courts in 1920 when a judge declared that the parcel had been dedicated to public use and could never be obstructed or closed up. "No Man's Land" has recently been planned and developed as a landscaped parking area by the town.

The block fronts in this district first developed with small frame buildings in the 1890s when the Mitchells platted portions of their farm adjoining the railroad and sold lots for development. These blocks were subsequently redeveloped due to several fires which destroyed the original frame stores, offices and livery stables. The present cohesive block fronts of one-, two-, and three-story brick buildings date from three general periods of construction, 1901 to 1918, the mid to late 1920s, and the late 1930s. These periods of construction correspond to local and national periods of growth and prosperity.

A fire in 1901 destroyed the frame buildings in the 100 block of North Railroad Street, and the earliest extant building in the district is in this block. Soon after the fire, Fletcher Powell built a two-story brick building, the first in the town, which in the 1920s was incorporated into the Garrett Hotel and expanded to a three-story building with a new facade and interior. Another two-story commercial building, the W.D. Newsome Building (12) was built ca. 1905 across the alley from Powell's building. Named for its early owner, a black Hertford County educator and representative to the North Carolina General Assembly in the 1870s, the Newsome Building is a typical early twentieth century brick commercial building with a storefront on the ground floor and a meeting hall, known as Newsome's Hall, on the second floor. The Masons met in the upstairs hall which was also used as an early movie theater. Although the storefront has been altered, the side

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elevation and the second floor front retain their segmental arched door and window openings.

Another fire in 1906 destroyed most of the early frame buildings on the south side of the 100 block of West Main Street. Among the frame buildings destroyed was the grocery owned by A.G. Bazemore where, as postmaster, he also had the Ahoskie post office. Bazemore built Hotel Comfort (7) in 1907, a two-story brick building with two storefronts separated by the stair to the hotel rooms on the second floor. Bazemore reopened the post office in the rear of a store on one side and the hotel lobby and dining room were in the other storefront. The building, which originally had a wood two-tier veranda, has been substantially altered, and none of the original construction is apparent on the front facade or the interior. The present upper street facade dates from the 1940s and the present storefronts probably date from a remodeling in the 1960s.

There was a substantial amount of construction ca. 1910 on the south side of Main Street including the Mitchell Hotel (2), the J.T. Parker and J.W. Powell buildings (8), the R.J. Baker Building (9), and the E.J. Gerock Building (17). Dr. J.H. Mitchell tore down the small frame buildings housing his drugstore, office, ice house and livery stable and in 1910 built the three-story brick Mitchell Hotel on the southeast corner of Main and Mitchell streets. The Mitchell Hotel also had a storefront on each side of the entry and stair to the second and third floor hotel rooms. Dr. Mitchell moved his drugstore into the east storefront, and the west storefront was the hotel dining room. The adjacent two-story brick commercial building (3), built as one-story brick storefronts prior to the 1923 Sanborn Map, was remodeled by Dr. Mitchell in 1925 to a two-story building for a hotel annex. Both the annex and the original hotel have typical early twentieth century segmental arch windows in the upper floors with a corbelled brick cornice. The storefronts have been remodeled.

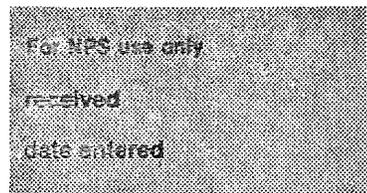
J.T. Parker and J.W. Powell built individual two-story brick stores, shortly before 1910 in the east end of the same block (8). These buildings have housed a number of businesses: in the 1920s, Parker's sons who had purchased the Hertford Herald, moved the Herald offices to the Parker building, and J.N. Vann's hardware store was located in the Powell building. In 1937, Belk-Tyler remodeled the two buildings and opened their first Ahoskie store here. After Belk-Tyler moved to East Main Street the buildings have been occupied by groceries. The storefronts have been remodeled to one storefront and the upper facade has been covered with vertical metal paneling.

R.J. Baker moved to Ahoskie in 1906 and promoted the town's development with slogans, advertising and land auctions. Baker built the two-story brick building (9) on the southwest corner of Main and Railroad streets ca. 1910. His real estate and insurance office on the second floor was within sight of his sign at the railroad depot proclaiming "Keep Your Eye on Ahoskie--Watch Ahoskie Grow." The post office leased the storefront next to Railroad Street for ten years beginning in 1912. The two storefronts have since been remodeled into one commercial space, but the interiors retain their original pressed metal ceilings. The upper facade has been stuccoed, covering the detail of the corbelled brick above the arched windows.

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Across the railroad from the R.J. Baker Building, E.J. Gerock built a two-story double-front building for his store in 1910 (18). The storefronts are defined by the pilasters which extend above the front parapet wall. The decorative corbelled brickwork and segmental arch second floor windows are typical of early twentieth century commercial buildings. The original storefronts have been replaced by contemporary fronts but the rest of the exterior retains its original character.

The Hertford Herald moved into the simple two-story brick building facing South Railroad Street (10) at the rear of R.J. Baker's building in 1915. The building has been used for various retail stores and offices since the 1920s when the Hertford Herald moved to West Main Street.

The end of the second decade of this century concluded this period of growth of Ahoskie resulting in the major landmark of the district. The Farmers-Atlantic Bank was organized in 1914 and first operated in the building next to the Mitchell Hotel. The new bank building (5), whose foundation was laid in 1918, was completed in 1919. The three-story temple-form building was the most expensive in Ahoskie up to that time. The pedimented gable front is executed in red brick with limestone details. Colossal Doric columns in antis, support a full, classical entablature and pediment. The recessed entry is three stores high with a classical entrance, also in limestone. Designed as a free-standing building, the two-story main banking hall originally had large three-part windows on the side elevations. Rental offices were located on the second floor front and the entire third floor. The Farmers-Atlantic Bank failed in the Depression after having become a "million dollar bank" by 1923. The town bought the building in 1934 and converted it to a municipal hall, courtroom and jail. The building, now privately owned, has housed various offices since completion of the municipal building in 1939. The narrow space (5a) between the bank and the Richard Theater was enclosed ca. 1935 and was the location of "Jimmy's Place," a small restaurant and snack bar. The space is now an annex for the offices in the bank building.

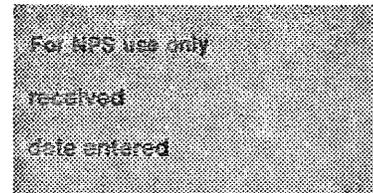
The two-story brick building to the east of the Farmers-Atlantic Bank was also built in 1918. Built as a typical commercial building, the storefront housed a small movie and vaudeville theater until it was converted in 1927 to a lobby for the new Richard Theater (6). The upper facade retains its simple two-bay brick facade. When the new Richard Theater was built, the ornate ticket booth now in the lobby was freestanding at the face of the building with a marquee over the sidewalk and recessed entry doors behind the ticket booth.

Completing the south block front of 100 West Main Street is the one-story double storefront between the Mitchell Hotel annex and the Farmers-Atlantic Bank. The brick building is shown on the 1923 Sanborn Map and was built some time after the 1906 fire in the block.

The block fronts of the north side of 100 West Main Street and of North Railroad Street are products of the 1920s, when Ahoskie recovered after the 1920 land depression

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and expanded as a regional retail trade and service center. The first new building in this block was the Sawyer-Browne Furniture Company (15), completed in 1924.¹ The three-story furniture store is unique in Ahoskie for its use of terra cotta trim. The Main Street facade combines glazed white terra cotta with cream colored brick while the secondary facade was constructed of common brick, shown in period photographs with the store's name painted on it in large letters.

Two fires in the spring of 1925 destroyed the remaining wooden structures in the first block of North Railroad Street. The fires, which threatened the new Sawyer-Browne Furniture Store, cleared the prominent Main Street and Railroad Street sites for development during the prosperous 1920s. The directors of the Bank of Ahoskie had purchased the corner site facing "no Man's Land" and had already taken bids on their new building before the fire destroyed the old frame store on the site. The new Bank of Ahoskie building (14) was completed in 1926 and occupied by it and its successor, Wachovia Bank, until Wachovia completed its new building on East Main Street in the 1970s. The two-story Beaux Arts style building is oriented toward Railroad Street with a high arched recessed entry facing "No Man's Land." Although only two stories high, the bank building is the same height as the adjacent three-story Garrett Hotel since the main banking floor is two stories in height. The Bank of Ahoskie is faced in cut limestone with large round arched windows on the Main Street facade to light the main banking room. A balustrade above the simple entablature and cornice crowns this landmark building. The building is now used for offices.

Completing the north block front of the first block of West Main Street is the Garrett Hotel (13), completed by J.R. Garrett in 1926. The three-story L-shaped hotel provides a uniform height three-story block front on Main Street and an appropriate scale setting for the Bank of Ahoskie Building on North Railroad Street. The Main Street facade has five evenly spaced double windows on the second and third floors over three storefronts. The Railroad Street facade of the hotel incorporated two earlier two-story commercial buildings, explaining the irregular spacing of the windows and the change in the floor heights. The main entrance to the hotel faces the railroad, like the Bank of Ahoskie, and is marked by a classical entrance of carved limestone. The hotel closed in the late 1940s, and the main¹ floor space was used for retail stores until the building was donated to the town in 1983. The entire building is now vacant.

The one-story brick commercial buildings in the 100 block of North Railroad Street were built in the mid to late 1920s. Originally built as four buildings, with two storefronts in each building, the first building completed is the one closest to Main Street and the one with the simplest brick parapet. The three northern buildings have dentil-type corbelled brick cornices and recessed panels of brick headers in the parapet walls. Each of the storefronts originally had large display windows flanking a recessed entry and glass transoms above, typical of the period. While most of the storefronts have been remodeled, some still retain the original display windows and recessed entry. Several of the storefronts also retain the original pressed metal ceiling.

The E.L. Garrett Building (16), consisting of seven storefronts with an open second floor hall on North Mitchell Street, was built in 1938. Unlike other earlier commercial

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buildings which typically had flat roofs and a flat parapet, the E.L. Garrett Building was built with a side gable roof. The spacing of the second floor metal casement windows set in the flush clinker brick wall is not related to the division of the storefronts below. The individual storefronts have been altered and modernized.

Adjacent to the E.L. Garrett Building is the Mitchell Furniture Company Annex (17), built in the late 1940s. Its large glass display windows, deeply recessed entry, and plain brick second story are typical of commercial buildings of that period.

Depression era programs had a great impact on the built environment of Ahoskie. Street curbs and gutters were built, sidewalks laid, water and sewer mains installed, and two sewage disposal plants were built. A new municipal building and a federally owned post office building were also built under the construction programs of the New Deal during the Depression. The (former) United States Post Office (1), completed in 1940, is an important example of contemporary federal agency architectural design and construction at the close of the depression period. The red brick and limestone Neo-Classical Revival building with federal agency moderne details was designed by the Public Buildings Administration of the Federal Works Agency with Louis A. Simon listed as the supervising architect. Although the post office is a relatively modest one-story building, the limestone center section of the front facade is monumental in scale, with four pilasters supporting a plain frieze. The main side gable roof is crowned by a louvered cupola and weathervane inspired by the Colonial Revival style. The Post Office moved from this building to its present location in 1975, and the town of Ahoskie acquired it for a town hall. The former Post Office Building is a freestanding landmark set back from the sidewalk at the West Main Street end of the Ahoskie Downtown Historic District, representing the last major period of construction included in this district.

The Ahoskie business district, of which the Ahoskie Downtown Historic District is part, is undergoing a transition in use like the business districts in many towns. Primary retail stores have moved to larger, more modern facilities either within the business district or in newly developed suburban commercial areas. Space in upper floors formerly used for offices, hotel rooms, and storage is now vacant except for the Sawyer-Browne Furniture Company (now Furniture Galleries). Conditions of buildings in the historic district range from excellent to deteriorated, and all are structurally sound except portions of the Garrett Hotel. A downtown revitalization and beautification program is underway and includes parking facilities, landscaping, and facade improvements. There is an opportunity to adaptively reuse the existing commercial buildings for offices, services, and speciality shops.

¹Stanley L. Little's interview with Mr. Joe Parker, owner, the Hertford Herald, Ahoskie, NC, December 14, 1984 (notes on interview in the files of the Survey and Planning Branch, NC Division of Archives and History, Raleigh). According to Mr. Parker, the Garrett Hotel closed after World War II in the late 1940s.

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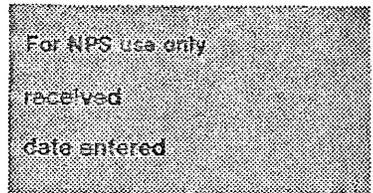
Key to Inventory List

1. All entries in the inventory are numbered and keyed by that number on district inventory map.
2. Dates of construction for individual buildings within the district were determined from a variety of sources. Sanborn Insurance Maps are available for Ahoscie for 1923 and 1930, and the 1930 edition was revised in 1940 and 1948. If no reference to the Sanborn Map is given, then the date listed was determined from local reports and historical accounts or information from property owners.
3. All properties within the district are coded to indicate their importance and relative value to the district as a whole, and these assessments are coded on the district inventory map. The following classifications are used:
 - P Pivotal. Properties which are particularly significant because of their architectural and/or historical associations.
 - C Contributing. Properties which, while not pivotal, are supportive of, and contribute to, the character of the district.
 - F Fill. Properties which have neither an especially positive nor an especially negative impact on the general character of the district. "Fill" properties may be of recent construction using more modern materials but the structure's size, scale, and placement aid in blending these newer properties into the streetscape in a fairly unobtrusive way.
 - I Intrusive. Properties whose design or materials are totally out of character with the historical fabric of the district.
 - VL Vacant lot. Grass or dirt-covered area, not used as a parking lot, but also not intended as a planned green space or park.

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Inventory List

1. (former) United States Post Office
201 West Main Street
1940
Pivotal

The former United States Post Office, completed in 1940, is an important example of contemporary federal agency architectural design and construction at the close of the depression period. Designed by the Public Buildings Administration of the Federal Works Agency with Louis A. Simon listed as the supervising architect, the Post Office building is typical of the federal government buildings of the 1930s and 1940s. Although a relatively modest one-story building, the limestone center section of the front facade is monumental in scale, with the four pilasters supporting a plain frieze. Above the cornice is a very shallow plain pediment. The main side gable roof is crowned by a louvered cupola and weathervane inspired by the Colonial Revival. Exterior walls are a dark red brick in 1:5 common bond, with a half-round rowlock brick water table at the floor line.

The Post Office moved to its present location on West Church Street in 1975, and the town of Ahoskie acquired the old building for a town hall. The lobby has been retained with its high ceiling, wood paneling, terrazzo floor, marble counter faces, and specially designed brass fixtures and hardware. The postal work areas have been remodeled for offices and a council room.

2. Mitchell Hotel
131-135 West Main Street
1910
Contributing

In 1910, Dr. J.H. Mitchell moved from this site the wooden shacks which he had used for an office, drugstore, ice house, and stables. He then built the Mitchell Hotel, Ahoskie's second modern hostelry. It was a three-story brick building with hotel rooms on the upper floors, the hotel lobby and dining room on the west side of the first floor and Mitchell's drugstore and soda fountain on the east side of the first floor. E.M. Wooten, a traveling salesman from Harrellsville, moved to Ahoskie to manage the new hotel. By 1915, the name had been changed to Manhattan Hotel and then in the late 1920s it was changed back to Mitchell Hotel until the hotel closed which according to local tradition occurred in the late 1940s.

The restaurant in the west side of the first floor was later named the Manhattan Cafe and was an institution in Ahoskie until it closed January 1, 1971. George and John Halages, two brothers from Greece, opened the restaurant in 1917 when they came to America from Greece. Eventually Tom Costas and Gus Pappas, also Greek immigrants, married the Halages sisters and ran the restaurant. A documentary photograph shows the interior of the restaurant after it was remodeled in 1942.

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The main elevation of the building faces Main Street with the two storefronts separated by the round arched entry for the former hotel lobby. Upper floor window openings on the Main Street facade have segmental brick arches with offset bricks simulating dentils. The projecting brick course at the arch level forms a hood over the front window openings. The front facade is crowned by a simple corbelled brick cornice over a dentil brick course. The side elevation is stepped at the roof level, and the windows have simple segmental brick arches with shallow hoods.

The hotel rooms on the upper floors are arranged around the central stairway which is open to the third floor. The small one-story brick wing at the rear was the kitchen for the restaurant.

The original storefronts have been remodeled or replaced although the east side still maintains a recessed entry flanked by large display windows. The upper floors, now vacant, still retain the original hotel rooms and stairs.

3. Mitchell Hotel Annex
127-129 West Main Street
1925
Contributing

The 1923 Sanborn Map shows a one-story brick building here divided into two storefronts. The second floor was added in 1925 as an annex to the adjacent Mitchell Hotel building. The storefronts have been occupied by many different businesses through the years.

The segmental arches of the second floor windows repeat the design of the adjacent Mitchell Hotel. The brick parapet has two recessed horizontal panels corresponding to the two storefronts below. The facade retains the cornice above the storefronts although they have been remodeled.

4. Commercial Building
123-125 West Main Street
Appears on 1923 Sanborn Map
Contributing

This one-story brick commercial building was built some time between 1906 when a fire destroyed all the frame buildings in this block and 1923 when the first edition of the Sanborn Map was prepared. The facade is divided into two storefronts by brick pilasters which extend above the parapet. Corbelled brick courses above and below the recessed horizontal panels in the parapet add interest to this simple commercial building. The storefronts have been occupied by many businesses and each has been remodeled.

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5. Farmers-Atlantic Bank
119 West Main Street near junction with Mitchell Street
1918
Pivotal

Farmers-Atlantic Bank, the second bank in Ahoskie, was organized in 1914 by M.D. Gatling, E.J. Gerock, J.P. Boyette, S.E. Vaughan and others. The bank was located at first in a small structure on West Main Street next to the Mitchell Hotel until this bank building was constructed. The foundation was laid in July 1918, according to a July 1918 Hertford Herald article. It was Ahoskie's most expensive building up until that time.

Originally free standing, the three-story brick building is a classic temple form with a three-story recessed entry framed by two fluted Doric columns in antis. The Doric order pedimented gable front is executed in dark red brick with limestone columns, quoins, entablature and cornice. Above the pediment is a brick gable parapet capped by limestone. The present roof, above the parapet cap, is a replacement for the original roof which was destroyed by fire in the 1970s.

The main entrance is framed by a classically inspired limestone door surround. Further distinguishing this recessed entry on the second and third floor levels are windows made up of small panes. The interior of the bank consisted of a two-story banking hall lighted by three large windows on each side. The manager's or president's office was on the second floor at the rear with an interior window overlooking the banking hall. The bank vault and work room were on the first floor below this office. A stair at the front leads to the small office on the second floor front and to the full third floor office area.

Farmers-Atlantic Bank was a "million dollar" bank by 1923 and opened a branch in Askewville as well as buying the National Bank of Murfreesboro. The bank closed in the Depression and the town of Ahoskie bought the building in 1934 for \$6,800 and converted the first floor into a municipal hall, courtroom and town jail. After the town offices moved to the Municipal Building in 1941, the building was used by the Chamber of Commerce and for other offices. The current occupants, Cherry, Cherry, Flythe and Overton, purchased the building ca. 1968.

In the mid-1930s a one-story building with a single storefront and simple brick parapet was built in the narrow space between the bank and the Richard Theater to the east. J.H. Young operated "Jimmy's Place," a popular snack shop and restaurant, here for many years. This space is now an annex to the offices located in the bank building.

6. Richard Theater (Gallery Theater)
117 West Main Street
1927
Contributing

The Main Street facade, the present lobby area, and its second floor space were built originally about 1918 with a movie theater on the main floor and vaudeville theater on the second floor. Between 1927-28 Jesse Richard Garrett enlarged the older building by

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constructing a larger new theater to the rear. Even though this theater was built for his son Eric, the Richard Theater was named after J.R. Garrett, who was known as "the Builder of Ahoskie." Opening in September 1928, the theater today still retains the ornate cast metal seat ends bearing the initial "R."

The brick street facade has a two-bay second floor with segmental arched windows over segmental arched panels just above the storefront level. The corner pilasters extend above the parapet which sports a plain corbelled brick course below the horizontal recessed panel and decorative corbelled brick modillions at the cornice line. In 1928, a marquee carrying the theater name and space for advertising performances was suspended out over the sidewalk. The ornate ticket booth originally was free-standing at the face of the building with the entry doors just behind. Ornate playbill cases, mirrors and light fixtures completed the setting for the lobby of "Eastern North Carolina's Finest."

The 1928 auditorium is a classic rectangular box, with a shallow stage suitable for the then popular vaudeville shows and moving pictures. The balcony was entered from the rear where a separate ticket office for Negroes was located. The auditorium still has its pilasters and beamed ceiling although the decorative boxes or balconies along the side walls were removed during a renovation in the 1940s. One of the most famous features of the theater was the pipe organ which was later sold to WPTF radio station.

The Richard Theater closed as a commercial theater in 1962. However, due to the theater's importance as a community auditorium, Gallery Theater, Incorporated, was formed in 1967 and eventually acquired ownership of it for community use. Gallery Theater, Incorporated, is currently restoring the theater for permanent community use.

7. Hotel Comfort
111-115 West Main Street
ca. 1906 following fire
Contributing

Arnold Graham Bazemore was postmaster in 1906 when a fire destroyed the frame building on this site housing the post office. Soon after the fire, Bazemore built this two-story brick building with a store and post office on the left side, the hotel lobby and dining room on the right side, and twelve hotel rooms upstairs. First called Hotel Comfort, the hotel was later leased to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Holloman who had earlier rented rooms in their home on East Church Street.

The hotel was a typical early twentieth century commercial building: two storefronts at the ground floor with a door to the stair between; a five-bay second floor front with segmental arch windows flanking the center door; a corbelled brick cornice at the front parapet; and a two-tier porch with slender wood columns and a handrail at the second floor. The August 1923 Town Minutes recorded that J.R. Garrett appeared before the council to explain the reason for dismantling the porch.

The building has at some time been remodeled with a new front, both the ground floor storefronts and the second floor. The second floor front now has flat window openings with contrasting cornerblocks. A full-width panel at the parapet is bordered by a soldier course with contrasting cornerblocks. The second floor window openings on the front elevation have been bricked-in, and the second floor is not currently used.

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The hotel at different times was known as Hotel Comfort, Basemore Hotel, Holloman Hotel, and Colonial Hotel. It closed in the late 1920s or early 1930s. A barbershop has operated in the building for many years, and residents tell of the barbers building boats in the rear when business was slow. Since the hotel closed, the building has been occupied by a barbershop on one side and retail stores or offices on the other side.

8. J.T. Parker & J.W. Powell Buildings
105 & 109 West Main Street
ca. 1910
Intrusive

J.T. Parker and J.W. Powell built these two adjoining two-story brick stores ca. 1910. In the 1920s, the J.N. Vann hardware store was located in the former Parker store at number 109, and the Hertford Herald had moved from their building on South Railroad Street to the former Powell store at number 105. In 1937, both the hardware store and the printing company moved to new buildings, and Belk-Tyler remodeled the two buildings for their Ahoskie store. The building, now vacant, had been occupied by grocery stores and supermarkets since Belk-Tyler moved to East Main Street.

The ground floor storefronts have been remodeled and the second floor facade has been covered with vertical metal siding.

9. R.J. Baker Building
101 West Main Street
ca. 1910
Contributing

Raleigh James Baker purchased the weed-covered vacant corner lot next to the railroad and built this two-story brick commercial building ca. 1910. The east storefront, twenty-one feet wide on Main Street and forty feet deep along Railroad Street, was leased to the Post Office for ten years beginning in 1912; and the west storefront was used by a barbershop. The second floor was used for both living quarters and offices. Baker maintained his insurance and real estate offices in a portion of the second floor space.

The ground floor was been remodeled with new show windows and a single entrance although the interior retains its pressed metal ceilings. The second floor front and the Railroad Street elevations have been covered with a cement coating but the segmental arched window openings and portions of the corbelled brick bands and cornice have been retained.

10. Hertford Herald Building
102-104 South Railroad Street
ca. 1915
Fill

The Hertford Herald, started in 1910 by W. Glen Smith, was purchased ca. 1915 by J. Roy Parker and James A. Vinson. In 1915, the Herald printing shop was moved from a

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frame building at the northeast corner of Main and Mitchell streets to this, two story brick building which was new at the time. The Herald remained here until the late 1920s when Parker and Vinson bought the J.W. Powell Building on West Main Street and moved the printing shop there. This building was divided then into two storefronts and has been used for a variety of offices and retail stores since the Herald moved. The four bay upper facade is a common bond brick wall with a flush parapet wall and plain cap.

11. Commercial Buildings
100 Block North Railroad Street
Mid to late 1920s
Contributing

A fire in 1925 destroyed the frame warehouses and livery stables in this portion of the block enabling the various owners to rebuild the commercial buildings in this simple but harmonious manner. A photograph taken in the late 1920s shows the southern building, containing two storefronts, occupied while the four adjacent storefronts to the north were still under construction. The northernmost building containing two storefronts was not yet under construction when the photograph was taken but was completed before 1930.

The two earliest storefronts are the simplest in design with plain brick parapets and recessed horizontal panels between the brick pilasters defining the storefronts. The remainder of the block has a slightly more ornate corbelled brick cornice between the brick pilasters which define the storefronts.

These commercial buildings have served a variety of retail, service and office uses. One of the earliest was the candy store called the Sugar Bowl in the southernmost storefront. The M.H. Mitchell Furniture Company has operated continuously since 1928 in the current building which Mitchell purchased in 1928. The northern building at one time housed "Sleepy" Newsome's Oldsmobile dealership and later housed Paramount Cleaners, run by R.C. Whitehurst, who also served as town clerk for a short period.

Originally these storefronts generally had recessed central entrances with double doors flanked by large display windows. Prism glass transoms between the display windows and the brick wall above gave indirect light to the interiors of the store spaces. One prism glass transom is still evident on the southernmost storefront; and the next two storefronts still retain the basic recessed entries although the glass transoms have been closed. Most of the interiors also retain the original pressed metal ceilings and cornices although some have been obscured by lowered ceilings.

"No Man's Land" and the railroad depot site, which these buildings face, were paved for public parking and attractively landscaped in 1983-84 and provide an attractive setting for the continued use of these commercial buildings.

12. W.D. Newsome Building
119 North Railroad Street
ca. 1905
Contributing

The two-story brick commercial building built for W.D. Newsome is the only relatively intact structure remaining of those built in this block immediately following the fires of

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1901 and 1902 which destroyed most of the earlier frame structures. In the 1890s property on North Railroad Street was promoted for development by A.J. Parker, the agent for its owner, Dr. J.H. Mitchell. However, the fires of 1901 and 1902 forced the owners to build new, more substantial and modern business structures.

W.D. Newsome, the original owner of this building was a Negro educator in Hertford County and served in the North Carolina House of Representatives from 1870 to 1872. Jim Odom and Jim Hill had a store in the building ca. 1910, and the Masons had moved upstairs for their lodge meetings at that time. The upstairs hall was also used for the first movie theater in Ahoskie.

A photograph taken in the mid 1920s shows the building with a typical recessed central entry flanked by display windows. The upper facade was painted light at that time but the side pilasters and cornice were natural dark brick. Although the first floor front has been altered, the second floor front with its three segmental arch windows remains intact. The entry to the second floor hall is at the side of the building and has access along the narrow alley.

13. Garrett Hotel
West Main Street & North Railroad Street
1925-1926
Contribution

J.R. Garrett considered plans for a new hotel in 1920, but his plans as well as others were delayed by the depression in the fall of 1920. In the early 1920s, Ahoskie was becoming a regional trade center, and the Chamber of Commerce mounted a campaign to have a new hotel built in Ahoskie. In 1923, Garrett made plans for the hotel which he then financed and constructed. The hotel was leased to J. Haywood Dukes and the "leading hostelry of all this Northeastern era" formally opened in July 1926.

The three-story L-shaped building fronts on both North Railroad Street and West Main Street, with the hotel entrance on North Railroad Street facing the railroad depot and "No Man's Land." Except for the hotel entry, the ground floor storefronts were rented for other businesses including the Applebaum clothing store in the Main Street section. The North Railroad Street section incorporates two earlier two-story brick commercial buildings, one of which was the Fletcher Powell Building reputed to be the first brick store in Ahoskie (ca. 1901). Since ca. 1915, Garrett had operated a general merchandise store in this earlier building, first with Pembroke Baker and later with Roberts H. Jernigan. The hotel wraps around the site on which the Bank of Ahoskie trustees had decided in 1923 to build their new building.

The Main Street and Railroad Street facades are both faced with a cream colored brick accented with limestone trim. The hotel room windows on the second and third floors are all paired with three-over-one sash. However, the fenestration of the two facades is distinctly different. The Main Street facade has five regularly spaced bays in the upper floors; and the windows have stacked bond jambs, soldier course brick lintels, and limestone corner-blocks. Window spacing in the Railroad Street facade is irregular because the earlier two-story buildings were incorporated into the new three-story hotel. Windows on this facade

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have solid limestone lintels, and a limestone block in the parapet carries the name "Garrett Hotel" and the date, "1925." The main entry to the hotel is marked by the Doric order entrance constructed of limestone.

The interior spaces on the main floor have been remodeled through the years to suit the various commercial uses of the spaces; the hotel rooms on the upper floors remain relatively intact except in deteriorated areas.

The hotel and its dining room remained the social center of the area until it closed in the late 1940s. In recent years only the main floor commercial spaces have been occupied and now the entire building is vacant. The property was deeded in 1983 to the town of Ahoskie, which still owns the property. The structure's primary value is its exterior which maintains the streetscape of 100 West Main Street, tying together the Sawyer-Browne Furniture Company and the Bank of Ahoskie. The Railroad Street facade also completes the setting of the Bank of Ahoskie as well as maintaining the railroad depot-oriented commercial block. The interior of the hotel structure is deteriorating, and the spaces and type of construction may not be adaptable for new uses. However, the street facades should be retained and the interior reconstructed to maintain the character and setting of the two streets.

14. Bank of Ahoskie
North Railroad Street at Main Street
1925-1926
Pivotal

The Bank of Ahoskie, the oldest bank in Ahoskie, was founded in 1905, beginning operations in a small one-story frame building in the middle of the south side of the 100 block of East Main Street. The frame building was soon replaced by a small brick building which remained the bank's office until this building was completed in July 1926. The bank directors debated for many years whether to build a more substantial building. Finally, after the recovery from the 1920 depression, the directors voted in 1923 to build a new building on this site; and in 1925 bids were opened and contracts let for construction. Part of the mid-1920s construction boom, the new Bank of Ahoskie building was the cornerstone of the newly built business block on West Main and North Railroad streets. The bank's main entrance, like that of the Garrett Hotel, faces "No Man's Land," which had become the town's center, rather than Main Street.

The two-story building is designed in the Beaux-Arts style and faced with cut limestone. Smooth finish walls are set on a simple base at the sill height of the first floor windows. The main floor is double height with a high ceiling banking room lighted by the five round arched windows along Main Street. The bank's main entrance is recessed under the tall arched opening facing North Railroad Street. The entrance to the upper floor offices, at the west end of the Main Street facade, is a smaller scale, classically detailed entry. The bank's second floor, at the third floor level of the adjacent Garrett Hotel, is marked by a simple belt course at the window sill level. The building is crowned by a full entablature and balustrade. A panel set in the balustrade on the east side carries the name of the bank.

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The Bank of Ahoskie closed during the depression for nine months in 1932 and again in 1933 for eighteen days following the federal bank holiday. However, the bank was able to reopen permanently and eventually merged with Wachovia Bank. The building has been used for offices since Wachovia Bank moved to its new building on East Main Street.

15. Sawyer-Browne Furniture Company
126 West Main Street at North Mitchell Street
1924
Pivotal

The Sawyer-Browne Furniture Company, incorporated in 1924 by J.L. Sawyer and A.M. Browne, built the first new building in this block that same year as Ahoskie recovered from the 1920 depression. The Main Street facade incorporates decorative glazed terra cotta, the only example of its use in Ahoskie. Faced with a cream colored brick, the front facade is framed by a decorative terra cotta garland, with base blocks, window heads and sills, and parapet cap all made of white, glazed terra cotta. Decorative plaques and a date shield in the parapet are also made of glazed terra cotta.

Fires in 1925 destroyed all the frame buildings in this block, leaving only this new building and two earlier brick buildings on North Railroad Street. Although ownership of the building and the business have changed hands, the building has been altered very little, and it is still used for a furniture store.

16. E.L. Garrett Building
110-122 North Mitchell Street
1938
Contributing

E.L. Garrett built this utilitarian commercial building in 1938 as Ahoskie recovered from the depression and expanded its retail, wholesale, and service businesses. The first floor storefronts have been adapted to a variety of uses since the building was built. The second floor, faced with clinker brick and roofed with a gable roof instead of the more typical flat roof, housed a roller skating rink when the building was initially opened. The entrance to the second floor skating rink was at the northern end of the Mitchell Street facade. The skating rink operated for only a short period of time and the second floor has since been used for warehouse space.

17. M.H. Mitchell Furniture Company Annex
North Mitchell Street
Late 1940s
Fill

M.H. Mitchell built this building in the late 1940s as an annex to his furniture store which fronted on North Railroad Street. The building's large glass display windows,

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recessed entry, and plain second story are typical of commercial structures built in the late 1940s. The M.H. Mitchell Furniture Company has been in continuous operation since 1928 and still occupies this building.

18. E.J. Gerock Department Store
102 East Main Street
1910
Contributing

The Roanoke-Chowan Times noted in an October 1910 edition that "Mr. E.J. Gerock is having a large brick store, that, when completed, will be perhaps, the most handsome in town." This comment in the "Ahoskie Locals" referred to this two-story brick building at the southeast corner of East Main Street and the railroad into which Gerock moved the store he had established in 1907.

The Main Street facade is divided into three sections with pilasters which extend above the front parapet wall. The storefronts have been altered but the second floor and parapet remain intact. There are two segmentally arched window openings in each of the three sections with corbelled brick bands defining the parapet. Decorative brickwork forms recessed horizontal panels in the parapet, and a corbelled brick cornice with dentils extends between the molded pilaster caps. The Railroad Street elevation is simpler with hooded segmental arched windows set in the 1:7 common bond brick wall.

S.E. Applebaum later went into partnership with E.J. Gerock at this location, and Gerock sold his remaining interest to Applebaum and retired in 1938.

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/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |
| Specific dates | various | Builder/Architect | various/unknown | |

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Origins of the town of Ahoskie and the Ahoskie Historic District lie in the concurrent development in the mid 1880s of large-scale sawmills and related logging operations in the area and construction of the railroad between the Norfolk area and Tarboro through present day Ahoskie. Logging sidings near the railroad's intersection with existing roads attracted the initial settlers of the town in the mid 1880s. Soon shopkeepers opened general stores to supply the loggers, setting the entrepreneurial character and regional role of Ahoskie which was incorporated in 1893. In 1899 a major sawmill located in Ahoskie, spurring growth both directly through its operation and indirectly through the rail line built to carry logs to the mill which also provided passenger and freight service to Windsor, the adjoining county seat. With combined growth of rail transportation in the late 1800s and boosterism of the town, Ahoskie overtook the earlier river-oriented towns of the region by 1910. Ahoskie soon became the retail trade and wholesale distribution center for the Roanoke-Chowan area and provided financial services as well as markets for the area's major cash crops. Improved roads in the 1920s expanded Ahoskie's retail trade area and strengthened its role as a regional wholesale distribution and market center. Structures in the historic district represent several periods of construction, from the early 1900s to 1940, and are oriented to Main Street and the railroad at their intersection. The modest one-, two-, and three-story brick buildings provided facilities for retail trade, hotels, banks, entertainment, and government services. Most of the buildings are typical commercial buildings with brick facades above storefronts, creating a cohesive streetscape, representing Ahoskie's major historical periods of development.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. Representative of eastern North Carolina's twentieth century commercial development oriented to rail transportation. Development began in 1885 with construction of a logging railroad, and the first platting of business lots occurred ca. 1890 when the Norfolk and Carolina Railroad converted the logging railroad to a standard gauge, common carrier railroad. Redeveloped as required by fires and economic conditions, the district represents Ahoskie's most important section of its early twentieth century business district with structures dating from three general periods, 1901-1918, the mid to late 1920s, and the late 1930s.
- B. Associated with several locally prominent families, in particular the Mitchells and the Garretts. Dr. Jesse H. Mitchell and J. Arthur Mitchell, sons of Col. George H. Mitchell by the two daughters of Luke McGlohon, owned the 498-acre farm through which the railroad passed and on which Ahoskie initially developed. The Mitchell brothers platted

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Criteria Assessment:

- C. Embodies typical early twentieth century commercial styles popular throughout North Carolina during this time; reflects three distinct building periods expanding from standard brick commercial forms to Neoclassical Revival and Colonial Revival ones; as a district, represents a significant cohesive urban setting and scale oriented to the main business street and the intersecting railroad so typical in the growth of eastern North Carolina's urban agricultural centers.

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The town of Ahoskie is located in southern Hertford County, one of North Carolina's older counties. Originally a part of the Bertie Precinct (formed 1722), Hertford was formed by an act of the General Assembly in 1759 which was to become effective May 1, 1760.¹ However, the origins of Ahoskie and the Ahoskie Downtown Historic District are much more recent and lie in the concurrent development in the mid-1880s of large scale sawmills and related logging operations in the area and construction of the railroad between the Norfolk area and Tarboro through present day Ahoskie.

The late nineteenth century was a period of extensive railroad construction and, especially in the Coastal Plain of North Carolina, a period of reorientation from water transportation to rail transportation. The other major circumstance in the development of Ahoskie was the presence of individuals and families who were not hindered by traditions and memories of the old ways. Once conditions were favorable, individuals were available to promote and develop a new industrial and commercial center, making land available and recruiting outside capital as needed.

The lumber industry was an important factor in Ahoskie's founding and later development. Logging and milling, along with the naval stores industry, had been important since the Colonial period in the flatlands because of the good supply of oak, gum, cypress, and pine.² Early mills were private, hand operated pit saw rigs. A few water powered mills were located in the area but the flat land and sluggish streams were not generally suitable for water mill development. In the late nineteenth century steam powered mills and a market for sawn lumber spurred development of larger mills. Rails known as "bogey" tracks were laid through the forests of Bertie and southeastern Hertford County to carry logs to mills located on navigable waterways.³

In 1885 a logging rail line was completed traveling from Hertford County through what was to become Ahoskie on to Bertie County to supply logs for the mill of Joseph T. Tunes at Catherine Creek in Hertford County. This logging line later became the Chowan and Southern Railroad in 1887.⁴ In 1889, A.G.M. Serpell of Norfolk, Virginia, organized the Norfolk and Carolina Railroad to provide rail service from Pinners Point in the Norfolk area to Tarboro. The right-of-way of the Chowan and Southern Railroad was purchased, straightened and reconstructed for the new railroad.⁵ The first passenger train passed over the completed tracks in 1890, with passengers completing their trip to Norfolk by barge from Pinners Point.⁶ In 1900, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad was formed by a consolidation of several smaller rail lines, including the Norfolk and Carolina, dominating rail transportation in the coastal plain.⁷

The first large scale sawmill in Ahoskie was erected in 1888 across Church Street from the Baptist church.⁸ J.C. "Cad" Jenkins sold timber rights on the Jenkins plantation to Wright Powell, a Powellsville sawmill operator, bringing in outside capital to develop Ahoskie's first industry. The mill boiler blew up in 1888, destroying the mill, killing the foreman and injuring Powell. Powell's son, Fletcher, a clerk in W.W. Cockey's commissary in Bosley, North Carolina, interested Cockey in investing in rebuilding the mill and expanding it to include a cotton gin and commissary. The firm of Cockey and Powell began operations in the fall of 1888, with the commissary located at the present day corner of Church Street and Catherine Creek Road being the third in

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Cockey's expanding mercantile operation. In 1889, Powell moved the commissary closer to the railroad, renting a store at the intersection of Main and Catherine streets.⁹

James A. Copeland, a moderately well-to-do farmer living about two miles north of this emerging commercial center on the Winton Road in the California area, began to work for the narrow gauge railroad that brought logs to Tunis' mill in 1888 and then worked for the new Norfolk and Carolina Railroad as their agent.¹⁰ In September 1889, he opened a post office, and in the application for the new office, named it Ahoskie after the old Baptist church that had been organized in the area in 1804.¹¹

Ahoskie was not yet incorporated in 1890 and there probably were not fifty people living within the present day Ahoskie corporate limits.¹² However, the logging and milling operations, the railroad, the post office, and the associated commercial trade became the nucleus for the town. The first three years of the 1890s prepared the way and set the pace for future development of the town. This period witnessed the first mass migration of outsiders into town, most of them coming from nearby farms in Hertford and Bertie counties. There was a spirit of progressiveness which Ahoskie residents later credited for the new town's growth. "These people came here with the idea of making money," said one oldtimer of 54 years. "They were not bound by tradition nor awed by aristocracy. The place had no vested interests to defend the status quo, and no status quo to defend."¹³ The agricultural and market conditions of the period including the very poor crops of 1889 and the panic of 1893, probably encouraged migration from area farms to the new town and investment and employment in commerce.¹⁴

A.J. "Jack" Parker is credited with initiating the movement to incorporate because of his interest in real estate.¹⁵ The bill to incorporate the town of Ahoskie was enacted into law January 24, 1893. The first major development of the town took place in the years immediately after its incorporation. The Mitchells cut up a portion of their farm into lots and streets and sold off the two blocks adjacent to the west side of the railroad between Church and North streets. Small frame store buildings soon went up along North Railroad Street facing the railroad depot.¹⁶

The period from 1893 to 1899 was a time of gradual growth with no particular mass migration to town. "They were folks who came to town to 'make a living' and to become a part of the new settlement. There were no manufacturing plants to lure them, nor to attract them in large droves; Ahoskie was then . . . essentially a 'service' town, a meeting place for the population of surrounding areas, and the trading center for well defined areas in Hertford and Bertie counties . . ."¹⁷ By late 1898, Ahoskie had become the railroad center of the surrounding area, and a half-dozen or so merchants were doing business, profiting from the breakup of the "Big Store" operated by Cockey & Powell. There were also at least two horse and mule stables, operated by Dr. J.H. Mitchell and E.L. Hayes.¹⁸

A number of years after incorporation, Ahoskie was selected as the site for the largest single manufacturing plant the town would have for over fifty years. It was the

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band sawmill of the Branning Manufacturing Company, a corporation owning two large mills, in Edenton and Columbia and vast tracts of forest land in Bertie County. A rail line from Powellsville to Jacocks Landing on the Cashie River about twelve miles from Windsor served the company in Bertie County, although separately incorporated.¹⁹

Branning Manufacturing Company had decided to extend their logging rail line to Ahoskie where they would relocate their Edenton mill. The Ahoskie site was chosen because it was nearer the forests and finished lumber could be shipped directly by rail to market. The mill was ready for its first run on April 23, 1899. The new mill represented an investment of a quarter million dollars and employed more than one hundred men in the two corporations. The mill continued in operation for twenty-five years. During that time most of the economic life of Ahoskie was built around the mill and railroad, and it depended upon them for its industrial payroll.²⁰

The first census after Ahoskie's incorporation recorded a population of 302 in 1900, and by the end of the decade Ahoskie had grown to 924, the largest town in the county. In 1900, Ahoskie was still a small town with individual one and two-story frame stores, offices, and warehouses. However, a fire in 1901 destroyed the entire block of North Railroad Street between Main and North streets, resulting in its rebuilding.²¹ Fletcher Powell built the town's first brick store (13) on his site near the middle of the block and the second brick store (12) was built in 1905 for W.D. Newsome.²² Also in 1905 the Bank of Ahoskie was organized.²³ Beside the growth in retail stores, other businesses in the early 1900s were sawmills, cotton gins, an ice plant, a laundry, and a number of horse and mule stables.

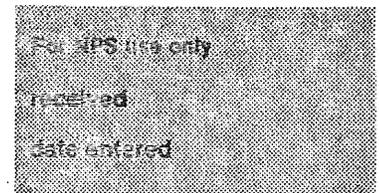
The second disastrous fire occurred in the business district in 1906, burning all the buildings on the south side of the 100 block of West Main Street.²⁴ A.G. Bazemore, who was postmaster at the time, owned about half of the block razed by the fire including the frame grocery where he operated the post office. Immediately after the fire Bazemore built Hotel Comfort (7).²⁵

Cotton continued to be the major money crop produced in this area in the early 1900s although peanuts had been introduced and were gradually becoming an important crop.²⁶ Tobacco had just entered the picture but growing was mainly confined to the southeastern part of the county. The first tobacco warehouse in Ahoskie was "The Hub" which had its first tobacco marketing season in 1907.

The end of the first decade of the twentieth century saw Ahoskie's arrival as a town, the largest in Hertford County, and the marketing and railroad center of a large surrounding territory. Raleigh James Baker moved from Harrellsville to Ahoskie in 1906 and became one of its greatest boosters, erecting a sign near the depot proclaiming "Ahoskie--The Coming Town Between the Two Rivers."²⁷ From 1909 through 1912 much of the business district developed with new one-and two-story brick buildings replacing earlier

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frame buildings being torn down or already leveled by fires.

The first autos appeared in Ahoskie in 1908, initiating the auto dealerships and garages which eventually replaced the livery stables and coach and buggy shops. Although not evident for many years, the appearance of autos foretold the reorientation from rail transportation upon which Ahoskie was founded and flourished to highway transportation.

In February 1910, W. Glen Smith started the first newspaper, The Hertford Herald, later changed to The Hertford County Herald, providing a vehicle for local news and advertising.²⁸ The town matured in the five-year period before World War I. In 1914, the Farmers-Atlantic Bank (5), the town's second bank, was organized. A basket factory was started in 1915, becoming one of the major county industries in future years.

Ahoskie's growth and prosperity continued with the demand World War I created for agricultural products and lumber from the area. The town began an ambitious public works program after World War I including water and sewer systems, the power plant, a town cemetery, and street improvements. Land values soared after the war. Post-war inflation ran its course and the crash came in late 1920. Lowered prices paid for 1920 farm crops made the depression come more quickly and felt more keenly in the Ahoskie area than in other communities which had not taken advantage of the boom to expand their activities and improve their facilities.

The 1920s saw Ahoskie recover from the 1920 land depression, and, while the town did not increase in population as rapidly as in previous decades, the period was one of the town's most significant in terms of public improvements, construction, commercial expansion, and social organization. The town continued its public works program interrupted by the 1920 depression. Bond indebtedness of the town increased until some predicted that "industry would not move in where such high tax rates prevail," or that "people would not move to a bond-ridden town."²⁹ The opposite proved to be true: the town grew in size and importance, and its residents began to enjoy the comforts and conveniences provided.

The 1920s were a period of road building throughout the state following passage of the North Carolina Highway Act and a \$50 million bond issue in 1921.³⁰ Improved roads and more dependable autos and trucks increased Ahoskie's trade area and strengthened both retail and wholesale trade.

The Branning Manufacturing Company closed permanently in 1925 along with the Wellington and Powellville Railroad, the mill subsidiary.³¹ Mill operations had been interrupted for a number of years, so many employees had already found other jobs and the closing was not a great shock to the town's economic life.

The 1920s were the period of greatest construction in the town's history. A growing population, maturing institutions, and new and expanding businesses combined with the period's prosperity and optimism, resulted in construction of much of the physical environment of present-day Ahoskie.

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Two fires in 1925 destroyed all the frame buildings in the first block of North Railroad Street leaving only the W.D. Newsome Building and the Garrett & Jernigan Building (built ca. 1901) on Railroad Street. The Bank of Ahoskie finally decided to build their building (14) at the corner of Main and North Railroad in 1926. In 1923, J.R. Garrett had announced plans for a new hotel (3) which opened in 1926.

In the twenty year period following the advent of the automobile in Ahoskie in 1908, new building types and new auto-related business began to appear in the town. By the early 1920s, gas pumps began to disappear from the fronts of general stores and reappear in the fronts of a functional new building type--the filling station. These buildings were specifically designed to service the needs of the automobile. Likewise, auto dealers and repair shops began to make the transition from livery stables to buildings also designed for their purposes. These auto-related businesses were as essential to the automobile as the blacksmith shops, coach making shops, and woodworking places were to the horse and buggy days.

The Depression stopped the growth of Ahoskie as it did for the rest of the nation and world. Farm prices were already dropping in 1929, even before the stock market crash in November of that year. The per-hundred-pound price of tobacco fell from a high of \$51.15 in 1919 to \$8.97 in 1931. Peanuts dropped to \$.60 per hundred pounds from \$5.00 to \$8.00 per hundred pounds earlier.³² Wholesale and retail trade dropped, businesses closed and individuals and companies went bankrupt. The complex national economic structure with its over-production, over-expansion of credit and mountainous debts in comparison with income had crashed. The Farmers-Atlantic Bank (5) failed in 1930, with a mountain of uncollectable loans made during the easy money period of the 1920s.³³ The Bank of Ahoskie (14), which voluntarily closed for nine months in 1932, was able to reopen permanently in 1933 soon after the national bank holiday.

The Ahoskie town council was also faced with huge debts incurred for municipal improvements and with declining revenues because of defaulting tax payers. Annual payments for street paving assessments were also postponed by property owners.³⁴ Construction of new homes and businesses was almost at a complete standstill from 1930 until late 1933. A number of retail businesses had folded up and left empty stores to rent. Rental homes, apartments, and rooms were for the most part empty and those that were being rented were bringing only nominal rent.³⁵

Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1933 and with the beginning of the New Deal, economic conditions showed signs of improving by late 1933. Crop prices gradually began to rise under New Deal programs of controlled production and improved agricultural practices. Most noticeable, however, were the construction programs of the New Deal. These programs put many people to work on a wide variety of projects. In Ahoskie, the water and sewer project placed 18,000 feet of pipe and constructed two sewage plants, providing modern sewage facilities throughout the town. Forty blocks of curb and gutter were laid, and over thirty-five blocks of concrete sidewalks were also constructed under the WPA. The most visible products of the New Deal Construction programs in Ahoskie are

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the Municipal Building, built in 1939 with aid from the Work Projects Administration and from bonds issued by the town in 1938 and the United States Post Office (1) completed in 1940 under the auspices of the Public Buildings Administration.

By late 1933 and early 1934 economic conditions showed signs of improving. Several businesses in Ahoskie began new construction such as the annex to W.H. Basnight & Co. and an addition to C.C. Hoggard's store.³⁶

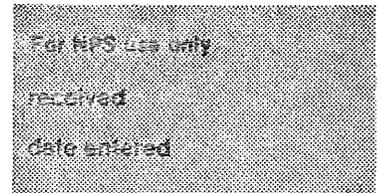
The local economy had recovered enough that the five-year period before World War II was the greatest home building era in the town's history. There was also a marked expansion of retail, wholesale, and service establishments.

The war years were prosperous ones as Ahoskie flourished with expanded markets for agricultural products. Retail and wholesale trade continued to expand as the local economy improved. The shortage of construction materials during the war resulted in another building boom in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The business district expanded east along Main Street and west into the 200 block of West Main Street. The first blocks of Catherine, Maple and Rheu streets, north of Main Street were developed for fertilizer warehouses and machinery dealers in the late 1930s and again after World War II.

Changes in locations of retail trade and service occurred in the 1970s as they became more oriented to auto traffic. Exposure to large traffic volumes and easy auto access to convenient parking as well as large modern buildings were factors in the relocation to East Memorial Drive of many retail and service businesses in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus Ahoskie's built environment continues to change and adapt as needs and conditions change.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Jerry Cross, "Hertford County Historical Research Related to North Carolina Highway Improvement Project R-96, Ahoskie Bypass", in "North Carolina Statewide Archaeological Survey: An Introduction and Application to Three Highway Projects in Hertford, Wilkes, and Ashe Counties" assembled by Mark A. Mathis (unpublished manuscript, North Carolina Division of Archives and History); David Leroy Corbitt, The Formation of the North Carolina Counties 1663-1943 (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1950), 122.

²Alan D. Watson, Bertie County: A Brief History (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1982), 57.

³J. Roy Parker, The Ahoskie Era of Hertford County, 1889-1939 (Ahoskie: Parker Brothers, Incorporated, 1939), 559, hereinafter cited as Parker, Ahoskie Era.

⁴Parker, Ahoskie Era, 492.

⁵Benjamin B. Winborne, The Colonial and State Political History of Hertford County, North Carolina (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1906) also published as The Colonial and State History of Hertford County, North Carolina (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, Inc., 1976).

⁶Parker, Ahoskie Era, 493.

⁷Hugh Talmadge Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, North Carolina: The History of a Southern State (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, Third Edition, 1973), 517, hereinafter cited as Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina.

⁸Parker, Ahoskie Era, 511-512.

⁹Parker, Ahoskie Era, 513-514.

¹⁰The Hertford Herald, March 16, 1906.

¹¹Parker, Ahoskie Era, 496.

¹²Parker, Ahoskie Era, 499.

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¹³ Bill Sharpe, A New Geography of North Carolina (Raleigh: Sharpe Publishing Company, 1954-1965), 868.

¹⁴ Parker, Ahoskie Era, 412-413.

¹⁵ Parker, Ahoskie Era, 543.

¹⁶ Parker, Ahoskie Era, 539.

¹⁷ Parker, Ahoskie Era, 547.

¹⁸ Parker, Ahoskie Era, 553.

¹⁹ Parker, Ahoskie Era, 555, 561. Jacocks Landing is also known as Wellington. After the Brannings built their rail line, the demand arose for the line to serve the local plantations with regular freight service. Based upon their legal counsel, the Brannings decided to organize it as the Wellington & Powellville Railroad Company. Thus, it was a separate corporation although owned by the same persons that operated the mills.

²⁰ Parker, Ahoskie Era, 555-557.

²¹ Parker, Ahoskie Era, 571.

²² Parker, Ahoskie Era, 586.

²³ Parker, Ahoskie Era, 582.

²⁴ Parker, Ahoskie Era, 584.

²⁵ Parker, Ahoskie Era, 532.

²⁶ Vanatta, E.S., and F.N. McDonald, Soil Survey of Hertford County, North Carolina (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 10; Parker, Ahoskie Era, 588.

²⁷ Parker, Ahoskie Era, 593.

²⁸ Parker, Ahoskie Era, 610.

²⁹ Parker, Ahoskie Era, 665.

³⁰ Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 600.

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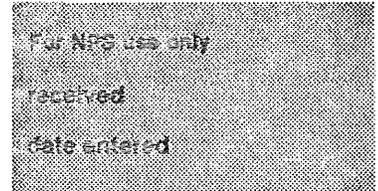
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31 Parker, Ahoskie Era, 657.

32 Parker, Ahoskie Era, 694.

33 Parker, Ahoskie Era, 693.

34 Parker, Ahoskie Era, 696-697.

35 Parker, Ahoskie Era, 698.

36 Parker, Ahoskie Era, 698.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approx. 7 acres

Quadrangle name Ahoskie, NC (1982)

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification The boundary of the Ahoskie Downtown Historic District is shown as the area within the dotted line on the accompanying map entitled "Ahoskie Historic District." NOTE: Please note USGS map error in placement of city hall. Enclosed city map with historic district identified provided to clarify correct Ahoskie street pattern

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

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Philip Letsinger, Consultant
Stanley L. Little, Historical Assistant
 organization Eastern Office
NC Division of Archives & History date

street & number 117 W. 5th St. telephone (919) 752-7778

city or town Greenville state North Carolina 27834

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature William J. Rupp

title State Historic Preservation Officer date March 5, 1985

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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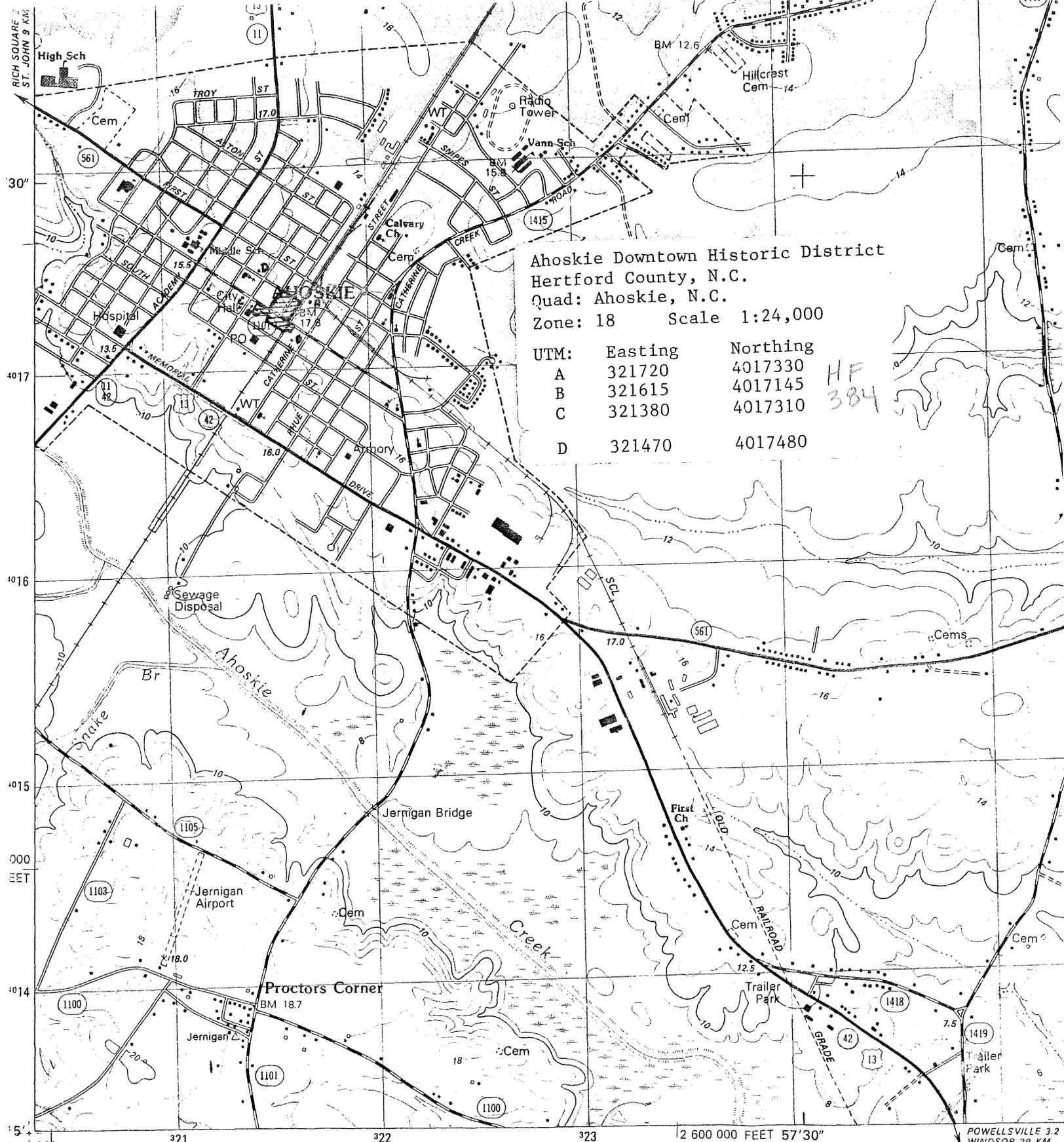
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Continuation sheet Major Bibliographical References Item number 9

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Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and North Carolina Geodetic Survey

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1975. Field checked 1977. Map edited 1982

Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: North Carolina coordinate system (Lambert conformal conic)

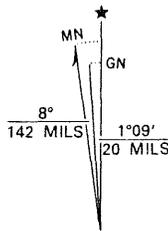
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 18

1927 North American Datum

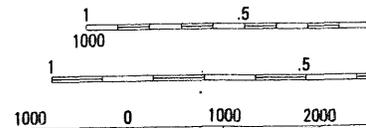
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983

move the projection lines 12 meters south and

28 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks



UTM GRID AND 1982 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



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AHOSKIE MAP

Downtown Historic District



