

# INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

Iredell County

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR \_\_\_\_\_ THEMATIC NOMINATION

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

McElwee Houses

AND/OR COMMON

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

122, 126, 134, and 140 Water Street

\_\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Statesville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

9th

STATE

North Carolina

\_\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CODE

037

COUNTY

Iredell County

CODE

097

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER Law Office

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mrs. Frank King, 122 Water Street

Mr. and Mrs. David H. Andrews, 126 Water Street (also owners of 134)

STREET & NUMBER

Mr. Bedford Cannon, Attorney at Law, McElwee, Hall, McElwee & Cannon

CITY, TOWN

140 Water Street

STATE

Statesville

\_\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

North Carolina 28677

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Laura A. W. Phillips (Winston-Salem)

ORGANIZATION

Consultant for Survey and Planning Branch

DATE

February 4, 1980

STREET & NUMBER

Archives and History

TELEPHONE

(919) 733-6545

CITY OR TOWN

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

## 7 DESCRIPTION

	CONDITION		CHECK ONE		CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	UNALTERED
<input type="checkbox"/>	GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/>	RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/>	ALTERED
<input type="checkbox"/>	FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/>	UNEXPOSED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ORIGINAL SITE
				<input type="checkbox"/>	MOVED DATE _____

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The McElwee Houses form a group of four early twentieth century Neo-Classical Revival/ Colonial Revival style houses located adjacent to each other at 122, 126, 134, and 140 Water Street, next to Statesville's commercial district. Due to the outward growth of the commercial and governmental section, this residential row is almost swallowed up by buildings of non-residential use. The smallest of the houses, 140 Water Street, is already being adaptively re-used as law offices, and it is likely that within the not-too-distant future, the other houses may also have to be adapted in order to survive. According to two of the present owners, Mrs. David Andrews and Mrs. Frank King, all of the houses were either built or remodelled by members of the McElwee family.

Numbers 122 and 126 Water Street are the largest and most impressive of the four houses. Number 122 was built ca. 1905 and is a large, two-story, 3 X 2 bay frame house with one-story Ionic front porch with deck balcony above and two-story, center bay Ionic portico. According to present owner, Mrs. Frank King, the large wood columns were shipped to Statesville from New England, and the capitals are actually terra cotta rather than wood. The front entrance features heavy, overscaled Doric pilasters with sidelights and transom. The hipped roof carries three front dormers--a large central gabled dormer with return eaves and Palladian window, and on either side, a smaller hip-roofed dormer with diamond-paned square window.

Number 126 Water Street was built in 1906 according to plans drawn by Addie McElwee Thomas, the original owner. It is similar in many ways to 122 Water Street, but has its own distinct personality. This large, two-story frame, 5 X 3 bay house has a full-height portico across the front with fluted Doric columns and paneled frieze. The main entrance has an elliptical, leaded glass transom and sidelights. Above the main entrance is a balcony, whose door with semi-circular fanlight and sidelights is Palladian in feeling. The hipped roof is accented by three front gabled dormers with return eaves, the center one being larger than the other two. The center dormer has a full Palladian window, while the smaller ones have more simple, arched windows.

Number 134 Water Street is a two-story, 3 X 3 bay frame house of somewhat smaller scale and more simple design. It features a one-story fluted Doric porch across the front and a low-pitched hipped roof with center front hipped dormer. The 1/1 windows have traceried upper sashes. According to Mrs. Andrews and Mrs. King, this house and the one at 140 Water Street were not originally built by the McElwees but were older houses which were moved slightly to their present positions (necessitating the removal of a third house to a lot across the street and remodelled by members of the McElwee family. The Sanborn Maps reveal that this took place between 1918-1925.

The last house in the row, 140 Water Street, is now used as law offices. Though the house displays ample proportions, it is noticeably smaller than the other three houses. It exhibits a strong classical feeling by making use of the same type of fluted Doric columns for its front porch as those used on 134 and 126 Water Street, and yet, its form reflects a combination of Neo-Classical Revival, Colonial Revival and Bungalow influences. The one-and one-half-story frame house has a gable roof with widely overhanging eaves, large front shed dormer and 9/1 sash windows, primarily in pairs and trios.

All four houses have been well preserved by descendants of the McElwees.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

\_\_\_\_\_ NATIONAL

\_\_\_\_\_ STATE

  X   LOCAL

## 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The McElwee Houses on Water Street form a family compound of four houses either built or remodelled during the early twentieth century by members of John H. McElwee's family and still owned and well-maintained by McElwee descendants. The four classically-influenced houses are closely related in style, and two--122 and 126 Water Street--are among the most impressive Neo-Classical Revival style houses in Statesville. The McElwees were a prominent family of industrialists during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

## CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. The McElwee Houses are associated with the early twentieth century growth and prosperity of Statesville and more specifically are sophisticated reflections of the personal wealth resulting from late nineteenth and early twentieth century industrial and commercial development in Statesville.
- C. The McElwee Houses represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose stylistically interrelated components reflect the distinctive characteristics of classically-influenced styles popular during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Built during the first decade of the century, the grandiose houses at 122 and 126 Water Street are among the best domestic examples of the Neo-Classical Revival style in Statesville, while at the same time they reflect some influence from the Colonial Revival style. Of somewhat smaller scale are the houses at 134 and 140 Water Street, remodelled between 1918 and 1925. Both are accented by fluted Doric porches with the same type of well detailed columns as those found on 126 Water Street, and while both show strong influences of the Neo-Classical Revival and Colonial Revival styles, the form of the house at 140 Water Street also reflects a strong suggestion of the Bungaloid style.

The four houses at 122-140 Water Street represent the remains of the McElwee family compound--an arrangement which largely fulfilled the dream of family patriarch John H. McElwee.

John H. McElwee and his sons were prominent Statesville industrialists during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. McElwee was a native of South Carolina. During the Civil War he worked as a merchant in Columbia, and in this occupation came to Iredell on occasion to purchase supplies for the Confederate army. In 1864 he and his bride moved to Elmwood where shortly after the war he formed a partnership with T. A. Burke for the manufacture of tobacco.<sup>1</sup> McElwee family tradition states that John H. McElwee was influenced to go into the tobacco business by James R. Green of "Bull Durham" fame, and that McElwee and Green together developed the "Bull Durham" label. Descendents add that J. H. McElwee fought in court for many years to be able to continue labeling his tobacco "Ante-Bellum Durham Tobacco" with a picture of the bull as his trademark. He finally lost this battle.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, he is credited with beginning the tobacco trade in Statesville, where he had moved in 1870.<sup>3</sup> Though McElwee's factory burned several times, he continued in the business and later branched off into the warehouse business and other enterprises.<sup>4</sup>

In 1920 McElwee's sons tried to shift from roll-your-own smoking tobacco to cigarettes, but under pressure from larger companies were not successful in this venture.<sup>5</sup> By this point, however, the sons had already begun to diversify, for in 1919 they had become involved with the Carolina Parlor Furniture Company.<sup>6</sup> After World War II another furniture manufacturing company was organized by the McElwees.<sup>7</sup>

John H. McElwee's house was a large, three-story Mansard style structure on Water Street near N. Center Street and opposite his tobacco factory and tobacco warehouse. As McElwee's family grew to adulthood, it became his great desire to have his sons and daughters continue to live surrounding him. His dream was partially fulfilled. Of his seven children, two never married and so remained in the family home. William Henry McElwee, who was in the lumber business, married in 1902 and built a fine Neo-Classical Revival style house ca. 1905 at 122 Water Street next to his father's house. This house is still owned and occupied by William Henry McElwee's daughter. Addie McElwee married David S. Thomas in 1901 and in 1906 they built an equally impressive Neo-Classical Revival style house at 126 Water Street, to the plans of Addie McElwee Thomas.<sup>8</sup> David Thomas was an organizer of the North State Veneer Company in Statesville. The Thomas' daughter is now the owner/occupant of this house, as well as the owner of the house at 134 Water Street. East of the house at 126 Water Street were three smaller houses built during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Between 1918 and 1925, one of these houses was moved to a location across the street, while the other two were moved slightly to provide more spacious lots, aligned along the facade line of the other McElwee houses, and

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

<sup>1</sup>Homer M. Keever, Iredell Piedmont County (Iredell County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), p. 257.

<sup>2</sup>Interview by Laura A. W. Phillips with Mrs. David H. Andrews and Mrs. Frank King (granddaughter of John H. McElwee), Statesville, N. C., November 26, 1979, hereinafter referred to as Interview; Keever, pp. 257-259.

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.5 acres (approx.)

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	5,1,0	1,6,0	3,9	6,0	0,6,0	B						
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			
C							D						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All of Tracts 35, 36, 37, & 38 of Block A, Map 6J-1, Statesville Township, Iredell County, consisting of four four-sided lots together measuring approximately 295' X 223'.

The property being nominated consists of the four houses and the city lots on which they stand.

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Iredell County

McElwee Houses

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

### Significance

#### Historical Background

remodelled so that they would more closely resemble the classicism of the McElwee houses at 126 and 122 Water Street. Number 134 Water Street was remodelled by Thomas Newton McElwee, who was in the tobacco business with his father and who married in 1920. In 1916 Elvy McElwee married W. E. Selby and they remodelled the house at 140 Water Street. This house now has been converted to the Statesville office of the law firm of McElwee, Hall, McElwee, & Cannon. Bedford Cannon, the owner of the house, is the son-in-law of William Henry McElwee, Jr.<sup>11</sup>

John H. McElwee's dream was partially thwarted in several ways. When another son, Dr. Ross McElwee, married, no land was available for acquisition on Water Street between N. Center and Tradd Streets. Ross McElwee did at least remain close by, building a Regency Revival style house at 404 West End Avenue (see No. 152 in the Mitchell College Historic District). According to the granddaughters of John H. McElwee, he wanted to build a large kitchen and dining room behind the complex of houses on Water Street so that all the family could dine together. However, he was unable to acquire the neighboring land for this purpose.<sup>12</sup>

John H. McElwee died around 1925, and around twenty years ago his large house was demolished for a parking lot.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the other McElwee houses on Water Steet remain a unified complex, both visually and as a symbol of close family ties.

FHR-8-300A  
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McElwee Houses

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Footnotes (Cont'd)

<sup>3</sup>Keever, p. 257.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 357.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 365.

<sup>8</sup>Interview.

<sup>9</sup>Keever, p. 358.

<sup>10</sup>Interview; Sanborn Insurance Company Maps, 1918 and 1925.

<sup>11</sup>Interview.

<sup>12</sup>Letter, Mrs. David H. Andrews to Mr. Conrad Crooks, March 27, 1979, in Iredell County Historic Inventory file; Interview.

<sup>13</sup>Interview.

East Broad Street-Davie Ave. Hist Dist.

Statesville

Iredell Co., Statesville West

Scale 1:24000

UTM References: Zone 17

A Easting 510980 Northing 3960640

B 510710 3960060

C 510280 3959940

D 510280 3960210

E 510880 3960730

ID 302

Morrison Mott House

332 N. Center Street, Statesville

Iredell Co., Statesville West Quad

Scale 1:24000, less than one acre

UTM References: Zone 17

Easting 509915 Northing 3960355

ID 35

McElwee Houses

122, 126, 134, & 140 Water St., Statesville

Iredell Co., Statesville West Quad

Scale 1:24000, Approx. 1 1/2 acres

Easting 510160 Northing 3960060

ID 31-23

Mitchell College Hist. Dist.

Statesville

Iredell Co., Statesville West

Scale 1:24000

UTM References: Zone 17

A Easting 508840 Northing 3960600

B 508950 3959400

C 508950 3959110

D 508110 3959790

ID 173

Key Memorial Chapel

150 E. Sharpe St., Statesville

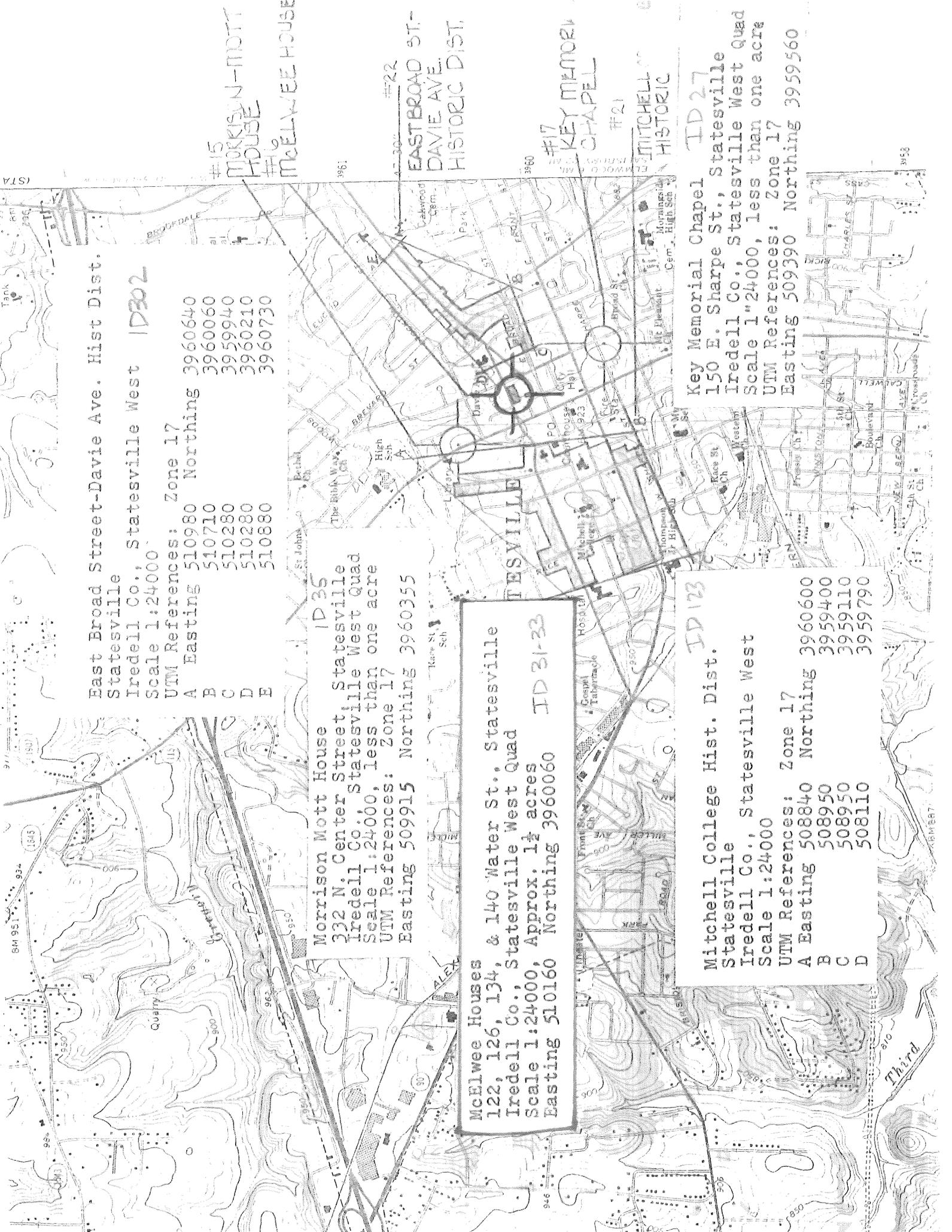
Iredell Co., Statesville West Quad

Scale 1:24000, less than one acre

UTM References: Zone 17

Easting 509390 Northing 3959560

ID 27



#15 MORRISON-MOTT HOUSE  
#16 McELWEE HOUSES

#22 EASTROAD ST.- DAVIE AVE. HISTORIC DIST.

#17 KEY MEMORIAL CHAPEL

#21 MITCHELL COLLEGE HISTORIC

Third

(STAT)

3453

3457

