

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Main Street Historic District  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location Bounded roughly by U.S. Hwy. 70, Garden Street, State Street,  
street & number and Logan Street N/A  not for publication

city, town Marion N/A  vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county McDowell code 111 zip code 28752

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>35</u>	<u>22</u> buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>      </u> sites
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> objects
<u>36</u>	<u>22</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
Historic and Architectural Resources in  
Downtown Marion, North Carolina

Number of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 1  
(McDowell County Courthouse)

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

William S. Poirer 2-4-91  
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Commerce/Trade: specialty store  
Commerce/Trade: financial institution  
Commerce/Trade: professional  
Government: courthouse  
Domestic: single dwelling, hotel

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Commerce/Trade: specialty store  
Commerce/Trade: financial institution  
Commerce/Trade: professional  
Government: courthouse  
Domestic: single dwelling

**7. Description** Religion: religious structure

Religion: religious structure

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Commercial style  
Classical Revival  
Bungalow/Craftsman  
Late Gothic Revival

foundation stone  
walls brick  
roof asphalt  
other wood  
iron

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Historic and Architectural Resources in Downtown, Marion, NC: Main Street

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### DESCRIPTION

The character of the heart of Marion's Main Street today is similar in many ways to Main Street of the past. Rows of brick commercial buildings, none over four stories in height, form a tight grouping of adjoining buildings lining the east and west sides of Main Street primarily between New and State Streets, the east and west sides of N. Logan Street, and the north and south sides of Court Street and Henderson Street. The First Baptist Church, built in 1914, marks the northern edge of the commercial area and forms a transition into the residential section of Main Street. This structure, built in the Gothic Revival style with Romanesque Revival elements, displays irregular roof massing, steeply pitched roofs, a large bell tower with several smaller towers at each corner, and the use of tracery in the stained glass windows. While many of the residences which formerly lined Main Street have been extensively altered or demolished, a few representatives of Marion's late 19th to early 20th century prosperity remain immediately adjacent to the commercial core, as shown by the ca. 1898 Bobbitt-Bennett House [#6], the 1921 Eugene Cross House [#2], and the ca. 1930 Blanton House [#51]. Marion's civic development continued into the 1930s, including the construction of the Marion Post Office in 1936, and the construction of the 1937 Marion Community Building and the adjacent park which still play an important role within the community.

Most of the commercial buildings date from ca. 1900-1920, with notable exceptions being the ca. 1894 former Hotel McDowell, the 1923 Courthouse, the 1932 Blanton Building, and the 1937 City Hall. City Hall is the only example of an attempt at the Art Deco style in Marion. Almost all buildings are of a simple early 20th century commercial style, but several exhibit Neoclassical influences such as the Courthouse, the Streetman building (ca. 1910), the First National Bank (1903), and the Hotel James (ca. 1909-1910). The former Hotel McDowell, the oldest building in the district, exhibits Victorian era stylistic influences.

Approximately 62 percent of the resources are contributing, with the only apparent changes being alterations of storefronts and perhaps boarding up of upper story windows (Hotel James). Non-contributing buildings in the district were either built after the end of the period of

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significance (1937) or have been altered significantly through complete covering or extensive remodeling of the facade. Examples include two commercial buildings on W. Court Street [#47-48] which date from the 1920s and 1930s, but have been completely covered by stucco and corrugated metal surfaces; the B. C. Moore and Sons buildings on S. Main [#30-31] which are covered by metal panels across the entire facade (covering segmental arched windows and brick corbelling); and 25 S. Main Street, [#27] which has been altered on the second story facade, as well as at the storefront level. Almost without exception, storefronts even on contributing buildings have been altered, but very often the original configuration is still there and/or the facade above the storefront has remained intact. In some instances, such as the Hotel James, windows have been boarded up, but identifying stylistic elements survive and often the original sashes remain behind the boards. Most likely, many of these changes took place in the 1960s, as happened in so many other small towns all over the Southeast. The immediate surroundings of the district are distinctly different, with commercial buildings set alone on lots set back from the street, scattered and considerably altered late-19th and early-20th-century residences primarily to the south of the district, and distinctly residential neighborhoods to the east and west comprising the areas outside of the downtown.

Every commercial building on Main Street today is constructed of brick. A disastrous fire in the town in 1894 essentially wiped out any wooden structures built prior to this time except for the Flemming Hotel, which was located on N. Main Street, just north of the Hotel McDowell, and was later demolished. The fire stopped at the Hotel McDowell, so this building and everything north of it was spared. A wooden bridge on S. Main Street just north of State Street, which crossed the railroad tracks below, was also burned in 1894. It was rebuilt for a time in wood, but in 1955 was completely replaced by the present exposed aggregate concrete bridge.

Despite certain changes during the past fifty years, Main Street continues to convey the overall scale and historical associations that identify the area as the heart of Marion's downtown during its period of significance (1894-1937).

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Beginning on N. Main Street, one notable alteration is the loss of what formerly was a tight hotel district comprised of the Flemming Hotel (built 1846), the Hotel McDowell (ca. 1894), and the Hotel James (ca. 1910). The Flemming Hotel was torn down in 1934 to make room for a Sinclair Oil Company Station "with every convenience of the gasoline age".<sup>1</sup> The Flemming Hotel was built very soon after the founding of the county, and probably served early travelers into Marion. The other two hotels were responsive to the increased travel to the area brought about by the arrival of the train in 1870.

Another notable change that has affected the appearance of Main Street over the years is the removal of many of the fine Queen Anne and Classic Revival houses that once lined both sides of Main Street on either side of the commercial center, many surrounded by wooden picket fences. Most of these have been lost to make room for modern commercial encroachment, and for the most part these properties are outside the boundaries of this nomination. However, there are still a few distinctive and relatively intact representatives of the residential development that occurred on or immediately adjacent to Main Street. The Bobbitt-Bennett House [#6], built ca. 1898, is an eclectic Victorian era building incorporating elements of the Second Empire, Italianate, Neo-Classical, and Colonial Revival styles. The 1921 Eugene Cross House is a 1½ story example of the Craftsman style on Main Street, built of a variety of natural materials such as stone, brick, and wood. The ca. 1930 Blanton House, located on W. Henderson Street, just off of Main Street, is a later example of a Craftsman Foursquare built of brick with battered wood columns set on brick piers delineating the front porch.

Main Street experienced its period of largest growth in the early 20th century. Before the arrival of the train in 1870, Marion, like other western North Carolina towns, was not much more than a village with a few commercial buildings, dwellings, a church, and a great deal of open land. Even up until the fire of 1894, commercial buildings along Main Street were more sparse and scattered than they are presently. It really wasn't until ca. 1900 that Main Street began to fill in and become lined with commercial enterprises on both sides of the street.<sup>2</sup> Paving of Main Street did not happen until the early 1920s.<sup>3</sup> Previous to

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this, streets were mud, with stone slab sidewalks in many places.<sup>4</sup> Other sidewalks were wide wood planks laid lengthwise.<sup>5</sup> By 1906, electric light poles were up on Main Street.<sup>6</sup> More elaborate churches such as the 1914 First Baptist Church also made an appearance at this time, adding to the overall development of the center of town.

A significant early change and important contribution to Main Street was the appearance in 1923 of the present county courthouse. Previous to this, the courthouse was a small, square, brick Greek Revival building which was only slightly set back from the row of commercial buildings to the south. When the present courthouse was built, it was set further back from the street on the same lot, up on a hill, creating a much more imposing appearance because of its siting and size nearly four times as large as the original courthouse building. The Marion Post Office, a Classical Revival building of red brick, was built in 1936 on W. Court Street. In 1937, the Marion Community Building was completed under the Works Progress Administration Program. This imposing building located at the northern edge of Main Street, is a one-and-one-half-story structure in front, three stories in the rear, stone building with a simple, rectangular form. It is surrounded on the north by a park built at the same time which includes stone piers marking the entrances, and a stone retaining wall.

Perhaps the greatest change of all in the appearance of Main Street today as compared to Main Street in the past is the fact that it is just now becoming a bustling activity center once again. Some of this was lost through the construction of outlying shopping centers in the 1960s-1970s, taking some retail stores away from downtown. However, through the accomplishments of the Downtown Development Office, it is once again beginning to become a focus of activity for the community, bringing it closer to the picture of Main Street of the past.

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### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Old Landmark Will Give Way to Make Room for New Deal," Marion Progress, 22nd of March, 1934.

<sup>2</sup>Sanborn maps: 1894, 1896, 1902.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Ermine C. Neal, 14th of November, 1987.

<sup>4</sup>1905 photo, Robin Hood Collection.

<sup>5</sup>"Resident of Marion for More Than 50 Years Recalls Earlier History of Section," McDowell News, 27th of April, 1950.

<sup>6</sup>1906 postcard, Robin Hood Collection.

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### INVENTORY LIST

C = Contributing NC = Non-contributing

NOTE: Dating of properties was based primarily upon documentation available in Sanborn maps, historic photos, church records, and deed references.

Main Street, from north to south on the west side, and then continuing from north to south on the east side:

C 1. 209 North Main Street; Marion Community Building; 1937.

Completed on January 27, 1937 under the Works Progress Administration, the Marion Community Building is 1½ stories in the front, increasing to 3 stories in the rear due to the slope of the site. The stone building is basically simple in design, with a rectangular form. The parapeted gable front roofline is punctuated by lower cross gables and gabled wall dormers on the sides. Stone is of local river rock, and is randomly laid. Windows are in pairs, 6-over-6 double hung. The building overall is very plain, exhibiting a vernacular style, with excellent craftsmanship so often in evidence in WPA construction. The most striking feature of the interior of the building is the great hall, which takes up the majority of the first floor. Narrow board tongue and groove floors, knotty pine wainscot paneling, and narrow board ceiling add to the character of this room. A stone fireplace, floor to ceiling in height, is the focal point on the west wall. Behind the great room on the first floor is a kitchen, a meeting room, and two baths which were added. This meeting room, like the one downstairs, has stone walls, approximately one foot thick, and board ceiling. Doors are six-panel, knotty pine. The basement level below is used primarily for mechanical equipment. The interior of this building, like the exterior, retains its original form and character to a significant degree.

C 1A. 209 North Main Street; Community Park; 1937.

The quality of stonemasonry which appears on the building continues out into the landscape, still in use, as it was originally, as a public park. At the Main Street level, and again at the rear of the property on Logan Street, stone piers with stone caps frame the entrance to the park below. A retaining wall approximately 15' in height curves gently

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from the building and forms a distinct edge to the stone stairs leading down into the park. Rockwork is in evidence here also in a sitting area set into an embankment on the south edge of the park. A multitude of trees still remain in the park, along with tennis courts, and a picnic area. All of the rockwork was built along with the building, while the tennis courts and the picnic area are more modern additions.

C 2. 137 N. Main St.; Eugene Cross House; 1921.  
The 1½ story Eugene Cross House is Marion's most exuberant example of the Craftsman-Bungalow mode. The use of natural materials such as stone, brick, and wood adds to the quality of design of the building. The building exterior is a yellow brick veneer, with a large overhanging roof sloping towards the front of the house supported by exposed wooden rafters. This same roof extends out over the front porch, demarcated by a low stone wall of rusticated stone with beaded mortar joints and massive battered stone porch piers. Decorative, large scale wood brackets rest against these piers. A shed roof dormer extends across most of the front of the house, also supported by wooden exposed rafters. A carport with the same roof pitch as the house extends out on the north side of the building. Multiple stone chimneys project up from the asphalt shingle roof. The south side of the house is characterized by a steeply pitched gable and a small projecting square "bay". The rear of the house also portrays a steeply pitched gable and a shed roof extending out over a small rear porch, which appears to have been added. Windows are primarily 6-over-1 double hung, but some are more typically Bungalow multi-pane casement windows. The Cross house was built by Eugene Cross at the same time as two other homes on North Main, the Little house and the Pless house, by a builder named Boyles. (Interview with Eugene Cross, Jr., 11/18/87) Only the Cross house remains on Main Street, within the historic district. Eugene Cross, Sr. was the founder of Cross Cotton Mills in Marion, one of many mills begun in the town in the early 1900s, and continuing in operation today.

C 2A. Garage; 1921.  
One story double garage with side gable roof. Knee braces and exposed rafter ends in eaves. Windows are 6-over-1. Yellow brick veneer like the main house.

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NC 3. 129 North Main St.; First Union Bank; 1970s.  
Modern one story bank building, set back from Main Street with parking in front, and drivethrough entrances on the south.

NC 4. 115 N. Main St.; First Bapt. Ch. Parsonage; ca. 1930  
Two story Bungalow covered with vinyl siding, including soffits and trim.

C 4A. Garage; ca. 1930.  
One story garage with front gable roof, knee braces, and German siding, in poor condition.

C 5. 101 N. Main St.; First Baptist Church; 1914.  
First Baptist Church is an imposing eclectic example of the Gothic Revival and Romanesque Revival styles. Some of the Gothic Revival elements include irregular roof massing, steeply pitched roofs capped by finials, a large bell tower with several smaller towers at each corner, use of tracery in the stained glass windows, and corner buttresses. The entry doors are framed by segmental brick arches which terminate at brick pilasters capped by multiple rows of brick corbelling. Quoting from Ted Alexander's 1985 McDowell County Survey, "The central portion of this two-story, Flemish bond building is a long rectangular block with a steeply pitched hip roof, rounded at the rear (west facade) hip." An extremely sensitive addition was made on the north end of the building in 1949-50, for use as an education wing. Designed by architect Henry Gaines of Asheville, it follows the roofline, stepped brick detailing, and rhythm of the original building. Stained glass windows to match those in the sanctuary, are used throughout. The interior of the building retains its original form, but was beautifully remodelled in 1953 in a Tudoresque style, complete with ogee arches set into the woodwork at the pulpit. The solid walnut altar railing and paneling was designed by S. B. Hildebrand. (McDowell News, 2nd of July, 1953, "First Service Sunday in New Baptist Sanctuary.") The sanctuary configuration was changed from a fan-shaped room into a large rectangular area with a transept. Pews are mahogany finish, which currently seat 600 rather than the 450 originally. New memorial stained glass windows were also added at this time. Other original features of the building were left untouched in this remodeling, including plaster walls, chairrail, corner guards at all windows, and massive ceiling beams.

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First Baptist Church of Marion was founded on July 21, 1862, with only 15 charter members. A wooden structure to house the congregation was built in 1878, on the same lot as the present church. It was torn down when plans were made in 1912 to build a new structure. It is thought that Chesley Buchanan, a native of McDowell County, served as construction supervisor for the new building. It is not known if he drew the plans, or if an architect designed the building. Other builders who worked with Mr. Buchanan were William and George Early, and Adz Smith. B. B. Price, a prominent Marion citizen and first vice president of First National Bank of Marion, was instrumental in the building of the church, and may possibly have helped design it. (Alexander, McDowell County Reconnaissance Survey) It took two years to complete the building, because the church refused to go into debt, and paid for the building as funds became available. First services were held in the present building December 20, 1914.

C 6. 35 N. Main St.; Bobbitt-Bennett House; ca. 1898. The Bobbitt-Bennett House, now McCall-Kirksey Funeral Home, was one of the first residential structures built, as closely as can be determined from deed references and Sanborn maps, ca. 1898, after the Marion fire of 1894. It is an eclectic Victorian era building incorporating elements of the Second Empire, Italianate, Neo-Classical, and Colonial Revival styles. Two stories in height, the first story is of solid brick, and the second story is now aluminum siding, originally either wood siding or slate where the mansard roof shape still exists. Heavy turned posts with composite capitals, set on piers, support the roof of the rounded wraparound porch. Windows are primarily 1-over-1 double hung with the remaining windows being 2-over-2. The original portion of the house forms an L-shape. In the 1950s a small square chapel was added at the northwest corner of the building. In the 1970s a larger chapel, separated from the original building by a walkway, was added on the south side. While the smaller chapel does alter the building's integrity, the larger chapel is distinctly separate from the original portion, and does not significantly alter the building's architectural character. Inside, the building retains much of its original architectural integrity. Extensive fretwork and turned balusters on the stairs in the foyer are particularly

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striking. To either side of the foyer are parlors, retaining their original mantels. All doorways have transoms above them. Unique, finely crafted hardware on door hinges, knobs, and locks remain intact. Original ceiling heights are retained, and a fireplace remains in every room. Bullseye motifs form the corner blocks of all the doorways. Grooved wainscotting and chairrail is still intact in downstairs rooms. Walls are plaster, approximately fifteen inches thick. The second floor also retains its original integrity. The house was converted to use as a funeral home in the mid-1940s.

While no information was available about the Bobbitt family, R.H. Bennett ran a wholesale liquor sales and rectifying business at 120 Depot Street. [Blanton's Wholesale Grocery, #3 in the Depot Historic District inventory list]

C. 7. 9-11 N. Main St.; Hotel McDowell; ca. 1894  
Four story red brick building exhibiting characteristics of the Victorian era commercial style. Intricate terra cotta and brickwork ornaments the entire building. Original porch on the second story extending across the front of the building and a balcony on the third story in place when it was in use as a hotel have been removed, but second and third story entry doors remain. Multi-paned round arched window openings, with 1-over-1 double hung windows in the center surrounded by fixed lights, adorn the second story. Pairs of 1-over-1 double hung windows can be seen on the third floor, and smaller 2-over-2 segmental arched windows are on the fourth floor. A central gable rises up in the center of the otherwise flat roofline. Brick pilasters divide the three bays of the building. One of the most striking terra cotta details are the "Greek Key" designs inset between the second story windows, surrounded by egg and dart motifs. The interior of this building retains almost all of its intricate woodworking on the upper floors. Altered storefronts. According to Sanborn maps, this building, first called the Eagle Hotel, then the Hotel McDowell, was built by 1894, making it the oldest building in the commercial district, and the only one spared in the fire of 1894. Sometime between 1894-96, a kitchen and dining room were added for use by the Eagle Hotel. By 1922, the building was known as the Hotel McDowell.

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NC 8. 7 N. Main St.; Commercial Building; 1960s.  
One story building infilled between the buildings on either side. (McDowell Hotel and Farmer's and Merchant's Bank). Covered with aluminum panels.

C 9. 1 N. Main St.; Merchant's and Farmer's Bank; ca.1902  
Two story building with round arched window openings on the second floor. All windows have been bricked in, but bricks are recessed, so configuration is still apparent. Four windows are above the storefront on the north end of the building. Two are above the southernmost storefront, with another wrapping the corner over what was originally a corner entrance. Brick has been painted and storefronts are completely altered. A 1910 photo reveals that all of the upper windows originally were simple rectangles with 1-over-1 double hung sashes and stone lintels, as evidenced by those on the south facade. A remodelling, possibly done when the Merchant's and Farmer's Bank occupied the corner unit from 1908 to 1931 (when it merged with First National Bank, yielded taller elevations, brackets in deep eaves beneath a molded cornice, and a tiled roof. Previous to 1908, a general store was located in the corner unit.

C 10. 2 S. Main St.; First National Bank; 1903.  
This building, perhaps more than any other, dominates Marion's Main Street streetscape. While only two stories tall, like the remainder of the west side of the street, its tall Renaissance Revival style dome rising more than an additional full story above the corner draws immediate attention. Originally of red brick, the building is now painted. The Neoclassically inspired building utilizes a balance of form and detail typical of this architectural style. Windows are simple 1-over-1 square double hung with transom lights above, except for those which round the corner beneath the cupola. Here, round arched windows are the key features with radiating voussoirs and keystones. Multiple raised bands of brick decorate the second story between windows. The octagonal dome features a round-arched colonnade at the drum. According to a ca. 1909 photo, there were originally 1-over-1 double hung windows within these openings.

According to Mr. Robin Hood, the building was built at a cost of \$8,000.00. As a response to the need for financing in the town after the 1894 fire, the Commercial Bank of Marion was formed. It began operations on February 10,

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1896, in a small one story brick building located where the present Streetman Building is now (31 S. Main Street). In 1902, it became a national bank, and in 1903 began construction on this building. In September 1931, Merchants and Farmers Bank merged with First National, and in 1961 First National merged with First Union Bank of North Carolina. In 1953, an extensive remodeling of the building was undertaken, (Asheville architects Six Associates, Inc.) which modernized the storefronts, changed the windows on the north facade of the building facing W. Court Street, and stuccoed this same portion of the building. Bricks were later painted white.

C 11. 6 S. Main St.; Commercial Building; ca. 1904.  
Two story painted brick building. Three segmental arched one-over-one double hung windows with brick drip molding over them on the second story. Five recessed brick panels at cornice level. Storefront altered.

C 12. 8 S. Main St; Commercial Building; ca. 1904  
Two story painted brick commercial building with some of the most elaborate brickwork on Main Street. Windows are arched, 1-over-1 double hung, with elaborate drip molding with stepped brick at the ends. Decorative brick cornice. Brick arches rise above the central doorway, also surrounded by fanciful brickwork. Building is divided into seven bays on the second story, with three windows over each storefront and one over the central door and stairs. Storefronts have been altered.

NC 13. 16 S. Main St.; Commercial Building; 1920s  
Two story commercial building covered with a false aluminum facade. Metal canopy extends out over sidewalk.

C 14. 20 S. Main St.; Commercial Building; ca. 1910  
Two story painted brick commercial building. Four bays wide on second story, with the southernmost window being narrower than the rest, and appearing to be over a common stairway to the building next door. This window is 1-over-1 double hung with drip moldings in brick above. Elaborate brick cornice with brick inset panels and stepped brick. Altered storefront.

NC 15. 24 S. Main St.; Commercial Bldg; ca. 1910  
Two story building which has been extensively altered at the

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storefront level and has been covered by a false facade of metal panels.

NC 16. 26 S. Main St.; Commercial Building; 1960s  
One story brick infill building with diagonal siding above entry.

C 17. 28-32 S. Main St.; Blanton Building; ca. 1932  
Three story yellow brick commercial building. The building is divided into seven bays, the centermost one being narrower than the rest and serving as a common stairway to the upper floors. Decorative brickwork adorns the building's facade above all windows, and in inset brick panels above the third story windows. Here, basketweave designs and diamond shapes enhance the overall appearance. Windows are multi-paned, opening outward horizontally. Glass block is set into the sidewalk in front of both storefronts and just inside the central stairway. Central door is original. The southernmost storefront retains its original form, but the northernmost one has been infilled with modern materials.

NC 18. 34-38 S. Main St.; Commercial Building; 1940s  
Two story yellow brick building. Pairs of horizontal opening casement windows divide the second story into five bays. Each window is set within a brick inset panel. Four storefronts on the lower level.

NC 19. 100 S. Main Street; Commercial Bldg.; 1940s  
One story red brick building.

C 20. 10 N. Main St.; Family Barber Shop; ca. 1920  
One story red brick building with parapet roofline capped by limestone. Intact storefront configuration, except covering over of transom windows.

NC 21. 8 N. Main St.; Commercial Building; 1960s  
Two story red brick building with a band of horizontal windows on the first floor level. Brick planter inside the recessed entry.

C 22. 2-6 N. Main St.; Hotel James; ca. 1909-1910  
Three story yellow brick building built originally as the Hotel Marianna (this name still remains in the tilework at the front entrance floor), and later the Hotel James. The building is square and massive in configuration, exhibiting

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much of the simplicity and detailing of the classical revivals of the early twentieth century. Round arched windows capped by keystones and radiating voussoirs form a key feature of the first floor. The second and third stories contain projecting bay windows in the center of the row of windows. Judging by a ca. 1909 photo the windows in the bay windows were 1-over-1 double hung. They are presently boarded up. This same photo shows a balustrade above the cornice on the roof of the building, which also has been removed. The lower main elevation is divided into three storefronts. The northern two storefronts are modern replacements. The southern unit remains intact, with round-arched openings and recessed central entry and a prominent canopy on iron columns which served as a second-floor balcony. The building's most ornate feature is the iron balustrade atop the canopy.

C. F. James, a local businessman, bought the Marianna in 1931 from Earle Sumner Draper and F. E. Vogler of Winston-Salem, operating as the Marion Development Company. Mr. Draper, a landscape architect and city planner who did work all over North Carolina, had designed the landscape for the F. E. Vogler estate in Winston-Salem, and apparently then proceeded to join with Mr. Vogler in other development ventures such as this one in Marion. (Interview with Charles Aguar, August 22, 1990. Mr. Aguar has conducted extensive research into the work of Earle Sumner Draper, and had copies of the drawings done for the F. E. Vogler estate by Mr. Draper.) According to an article in the Marion Progress, dated September 17, 1931, Mr. James planned to add new furniture, parlors and an elevator. He also expanded the dining room and added a coffee shop opening onto the street. The hotel remained in operation until the early 1970s.

C 23. Southeast corner of the intersection of Main and Court Streets; McDowell County Courthouse; 1923. Currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Three story Neoclassically inspired yellow brick building designed by Hendersonville architect Erle Stilwell. Built by the Southern Ferro Concrete Company, this is Marion's third courthouse. (The Carson House was used as the county seat for a time, from 1843-1845). This building is on the same site as its 1845 Greek Revival predecessor. The building has a blocky, massive form, with a central

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projecting portion and two flanking wings. A stone belt course divides the first and second floors. Raised brick pilasters with stylized ionic capitals form divisions between the multi-paned second story windows, monumental in size. Small multi-paned windows with radiating muntins above the large windows and above the front door are a delightful feature. A projecting cornice runs the entire front of the building, with dentils a prominent feature. A smaller cornice supported by masonry scrollwork brackets frames the front door. A three story addition was made in the 1950s to the rear of the building, also of yellow brick and compatible in size, materials, and scale with the 1923 portion. In 1975, a concrete addition was built, also to the rear of the building. Neither overshadows the appearance of the original portion of the building.

C 24. 17 S. Main St.; City Barber Shop; ca. 1915.  
One story painted brick building. No ornamentation. Red brick on north side of building remains unpainted. Storefront intact. Concrete block addition at rear.

NC 25. 19 S. Main St.; Commercial Building; 1920s  
Two story commercial building completely stuccoed over. Storefront configuration there but new stone kickplates and aluminum framing on windows.

C 26. 21 S. Main St.; Neal and Blanton Bldg.; ca. 1895  
Two story commercial building, divided into five bays. Arched 1-over-1 double hung windows. Two storefronts are intact except for addition of facing stone kickplates and side piers, and aluminum framing around windows. Wood frame double doors appear original. Facade of building has smooth stucco surface. According to a photo from before 1910, this building was not originally stuccoed. It also had a projecting rounded brick parapet roofline, which apparently was removed and capped with tile. Bands of brick corbelling also were covered when the building was stuccoed.

NC 27. 25 S. Main St.; Commercial Building; ca. 1895  
Altered two story building, now used as law offices. Building has been stuccoed, and storefront opening is completely changed. Two marble piers joined by a marble crosspiece and a stone griffin marks the entrance. Second story windows appear to have been replaced with much smaller 6-over-6 double hung windows. According to the same ca.

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1910 photo as above, this building also had extensive brick corbelling at the cornice, since removed. The storefront had 2-over-2 windows on either side of the central recessed doorway.

NC 28. 29 S. Main St.; Commercial Building; 1930s  
Altered building with corrugated metal pent roof extending out over sidewalk and addition at rear.

C 29. 31-31½ S. Main St.; Streetman Building; ca. 1910  
Two story yellow brick Neoclassical commercial building, named for J. W. Streetman, its original owner and long time mayor of Marion, was completed for use as a drugstore. Second story contains 1-over-1 double hung round arched windows with radiating voussoirs. A three layer brick string course connects all windows. Keystones are a prominent feature of all windows. Quoins demarcate the corners of the second story. A particular Neoclassical feature is the central pediment above the second story complete with boxed returns and dentils which extend out into the cornice. Just above this is a parapet roofline. The storefront on the north end of the building has been altered. An original arched doorway similar in detail to the windows remains on the south end. Bricks used in this building and the Hotel Marianna, built at the same time, appear to be identical.

NC 30. 35-37 S. Main Street; Commercial Building; 1920s  
Two story commercial building. Red brick behind a false facade of aluminum panels. Altered storefronts.

NC 31. 39 S. Main Street; Commercial Building; 1920s  
Continuation of the same business. Building is also covered with false facade of aluminum panels. Judging by an old postcard (undated), this building has brick corbelling at the cornice and segmental arch windows beneath the false facade.

NC 32. 101-107 S. Main St.; Commercial Building; 1920s  
Altered one story building with corrugated metal above storefronts. All kickplates and piers between storefronts replaced with facing stone.

NC 33. 117 S. Main St.; Commercial Bldg.; 1920s  
Altered one story brick building. New storefronts and plywood panels above.

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C 34. 119 S. Main St.; Commercial Bldg.; ca. 1908  
One story brick building. Storefront has been altered slightly. Brick dentilwork at cornice level, with brick turned on edge above this.

C 35. 121 S. Main St.; Commercial Bldg.; ca. 1908  
One story brick building divided into three distinct sections and storefronts. Two northernmost storefronts retain their original configuration; the third has been altered. Brick inset panels at all cornice levels. Building has a long, horizontal configuration from north to south. Original iron storefront posts are visible on the northernmost storefront.

C 36. 131 S. Main St.; Rice and White Furniture; ca. 1902  
Two story brick building with stepped back roofline. Elaborate brick detailing at cornice level, much like 8 S. Main Street [#22]. Round arched windows on second story have been infilled with brick and smaller multi-pane windows. Storefront configuration intact. This building originally housed one of the first moving picture theaters in Marion.

N. Logan Street, from north to south on the east side only:

C 37. 28 N. Logan St.; Commercial building; ca. 1936-37.  
One story simple red brick building. Terra cotta coping along parapet roof line. Minimal brick ornamentation just below cornice level. Five bays wide, with 6-over-6 windows in front and sides.

NC 38. 26 N. Logan St.; McDowell News Building; ca. 1950.  
Two story yellow brick commercial building, five bays wide on second story and four bays wide on the first. Upper story windows are multi-paned fixed windows. Two large and one smaller glass block window can be seen on the first floor level.

C 39. 20 N. Logan St.; City Hall Building; 1937.  
Two story minimally influenced Art Deco red brick building. Nine bays wide in front on second story. Center bay with doorway has decorative limestone carvings in a simple Art Deco motif. Bands of stone lintels are above the windows, which are metal frame divided into three horizontal lights. First story has two garage door bays on the north side which

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are part of the Fire Department. Limestone caps the roofline of the building with scrollwork ornamentation at the roof level above the central doorway. City Hall was built as a Works Progress Administration project begun in August 1936 and completed in 1937, at a cost of \$25,000.00.

C 40. 9 S. Logan Street; H.E. Kelly Jewelers; ca. 1928  
One story painted brick commercial structure with original storefront configuration and wood display window framing. Simple detailing, with inset brick panel at the cornice level. Original transom still exists above storefront windows and door. Metal awning added in front.

C 41. 17 S. Logan Street; Commercial Bldg.; ca. 1935.  
Two story brick commercial structure possibly originally used as a farmer's feed and seed supply. Storefront altered with modern aluminum framing, but remainder of facade remains intact. Parquet patterned brick at the cornice level and above the storefront. Second story multi-light, metal frame windows have corbelled brick above them. The lower one-fourth of all windows have been infilled with concrete. Awning in front.

Brown Drive, from west to east, south side only:

NC 42. Brown Drive (no street address, located at southeast corner of 20 N. Logan Street, on south side of Brown Drive); City Council Chamber; ca. 1960.  
One story red brick building used for City Council Chamber and offices.

NC 43. Brown Dr. (no street address; located immediately east of City Council Chamber); McDowell Arts Center 1940s  
One story brick building with three fixed pane windows and a metal awning above.

W. Court Street, from west to east on the north side of the street, and continuing from west to east on the south side of the street:

C 44. 100 W. Court St.; Marion Post Office (former); 1936  
Built in 1936 as a post office, the present McDowell County Library now occupies this simple one story plus basement Classic Revival building of red brick. The double entrance

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door on the south side of the building is framed by an architrave trim supported by simple doric columns. A rectangular fanlight lies above the doorway. An eagle is set into an arched niche above the architrave. Multi-paned double hung windows are trimmed with masonry lintels and sills. The roof is shallowly pitched, covered with tile. A masonry belt course separates the basement from the first floor, and a shallowly projecting cornice extends out from the roof of the original section of the building. A large one story red brick addition, designed by Charlotte architects Charles Morrison Grier and Associates, Inc., was added to the building in the 1960s, soon after the library moved in. The inside of the building has been altered from its original post office design, primarily through the removal of the east exterior wall for access to the addition, and the removal of an interior wall running east-west, which previously divided the post office desk from the mail room. Despite these changes, however, it is clear, both inside and out, where the addition is made to the original building.

On March 31, 1936, the United States of America purchased, for \$10,000.00, a lot on the corner of Logan and West Court Streets in Marion from W. F. Grant. (McDowell county Deed Book 80, p. 411) Soon after this date, construction began on Marion's post office. It was built at a cost of \$65,000.00. W. S. Gallimore was in charge of construction. ("Post Office Work Moving Along in Spite of Weather", Marion Progress, 13th of August, 1936) Earlier post offices had been located on Main Street. A plaque on the building lists the following men as being directly involved in its construction: Henry Morgenhaus, Jr., Secretary of Treasury, James A. Farley, Postmaster General, Lewis A. Simon, Supervising Architect, and Neal A. Melick, Supervising Engineer.

C 45. 20-28 W. Court St.; Commercial Bldg.; late 1930s One story yellow brick commercial building which steps up the street from west to east in elevation. Divided into five storefronts, all of which retain their original configuration. Transom windows are covered or blackened out, and all window framing has been changed from wood to aluminum. Decorative brickwork at cornice level and above storefronts. Carrara glass, which appears to be original, on kickplates, is still intact.

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C 46. 8 W. Court St.; Commercial Bldg.; 1920s.  
One story red brick building with decorative brickwork at the cornice level. Original segmental arch windows and door openings still intact. Three bays wide, with a large 1-over-1 window with transom on each side of the doorway. Area around the storefront opening has been painted.

NC 47. 14 W. Court St.; Commercial Bldg.; 1930s.  
Completely remodelled one story commercial building. Red brick is still visible along the sides of the building, but the front has been altered with stucco and corrugated metal above.

NC 48. 14 W. Court St.; Commercial Building; ca. 1928  
One story painted brick building, which at one time housed the Marion Industrial Bank. Facade has recessed altered storefront and brick corbelling at the cornice.

C 49. 13 W. Court Street; Commercial Building; 1920s.  
Two story brick building with minor modifications. Neoclassical details in the use of limestone carvings surrounding storefront and second story windows. Second story includes a cornice of limestone and a crest with the letter "Y". Upper story windows have been replaced with fixed panes. Turned wood spindles divide the windows. Storefront opening intact except for corrugated metal over the transom.

NC 50. 11 W. Court St.; Commercial Bldg; 1950s.  
Two story building recessed back from the street with a metal canopy extending out to the street, covering a walkway. This was formerly the location of Marion Amusement Company Theatre, built ca. 1922-28, and torn down when the present structure was built.

W. Henderson Street, from west to east, north and south sides of the street:

C 51. 10 W. Henderson St.; Blanton House; ca. 1930  
Two story brick Craftsman Foursquare building. Battered wood columns set on brick piers delineate the front porch. Simple 1 x 1 wood rail between columns on front porch. Windows are 3 vertical panes over 1, in pairs and threes. Beveled glass in the multi-paned front door sidelights and doorway. Modillions project prominently beneath the

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overhanging roof of the second story and the porch. A rock wall and steps mark the front boundary of the property, in what appears to be the same river rock used in other parts of town, including St. Matthew's Lutheran Church. One of the few remaining residences located on W. Henderson Street. Recently adaptively re-used as a restaurant.

C 52. 11 E. Henderson St.; Warehouse; ca. 1918  
Two story red brick building with a parapet roofline. Stone foundation. Freight door on front (west) of building.

C 53. 17-19 W. Henderson St.; Commercial Building; 1920s  
Two story painted brick building. No ornamentation. A pair of 1-over-1 double hung windows is located on the westernmost part of the building. The remaining four windows are 1-over-1 double hung. Storefronts and door leading to central stairway are altered.

C 54. 13-15 W. Henderson St.; Commercial Bldg; 1920s  
Two story painted brick building with bands of brick following above and between upper story windows. Keystones above each of the four round arched windows. One over one windows below arched transom lights have been replaced with three-paned horizontal configuration windows. Brick bands at cornice. Altered storefronts.

C 55. 9-11 W. Henderson St.; Commercial Bldg.; 1920s  
Red brick two story building. Three doorways open into a recessed center bay on the lower level. Each of the doors has a multi-paned fanlight above. Six 8-over-1 double hung windows above with stone lintels and a vertical band of brick beneath each. Brick banding at cornice. Altered storefronts.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1894-1937

Significant Dates

1894

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Stilwell, Erle, Architect

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

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**SUMMARY**

The historic and architectural resources of the Main Street Historic District in Marion, NC are eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A, association with events contributing to broad patterns of Marion's history, and Criterion C for their representation of late 19th to early 20th century commercial, civic, residential and religious architecture. The development of Main Street reflects the overall development of Marion, which served first as the county seat, and then, once the train arrived in 1870, also began to develop into the county's commercial center. Main Street in the 1870-1937 time period was also one of the premier places to live in Marion. Growth along Main Street in this period was immense, picking up rapidly as a result of the train's opening the town to the outside world. Development ground to a halt for a very brief period after a devastating fire in 1894, and then experienced an even greater boom time from the late 1890s on into the 1930s, especially after a second north-south rail line was built through Marion. Architecturally, the Main Street Historic District forms a distinctive grouping of primarily turn-of-the-century buildings dating from ca. 1894 (Hotel McDowell) to 1937 (City Hall). Most buildings are early 20th century commercial in style, with notable exceptions being the Victorian era Hotel McDowell, and the Neoclassical Revival courthouse, First National Bank, Streetman Building, and Hotel James. At the north end of the district, two architecturally distinctive houses, a stone community building, and the striking First Baptist Church convey the multi-dimensional nature of downtown Marion's development.

The Main Street Historic District is significant in the area of architecture for its intact group of primarily early 20th century brick commercial buildings in a range of styles that represent rapid growth and expansion of commercial Marion. It is also important for the example of the work of a prolific western North Carolina architect, Erle Stilwell, who designed Marion's McDowell County Courthouse, built in 1923. It is significant in the area of commerce for the role it played in the economic well being of Marion, and for being a center for the county for banking, retail, and professional office space. Finally, the Main Street District is significant in the area of politics/government for serving as the location for the county courthouse, as well as the local city hall, where both local and county-wide legislative actions took place. The integrity of the area remains substantially intact, and the above mentioned criteria and areas of significance make it clearly eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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**HISTORIC CONTEXTS**

Architecture

Main Street in Marion contains an intact grouping of late 19th to early 20th century architecture, representing a significant development in the commercial center of Marion from the arrival of the train in 1870 to the late 1930s. Among the many outstanding properties are the ca. 1894 Hotel McDowell[#7], the 1903 First National Bank [#10], the 1914 First Baptist Church [#5], the 1921 Eugene Cross House [#2], the 1923 County Courthouse (National Register) [#23], and the 1937 Marion Community Building [#1]. In addition to these, the ca. 1898 Bobbitt-Bennett House [#6] is the oldest residence on Main Street, helping to complete the picture of late 19th century life in Marion and its miraculous recovery after the 1894 fire.

The Hotel McDowell is perhaps the best example of a Victorian era building in Marion, and is especially important because it is the only building spared in the fire of 1894. Its intricate terra cotta detailing and intact interior make it one of the most significant buildings on Main Street. The First National Bank is significant for being a fine example of a Neoclassically inspired turn-of-the-century commercial building which dominates the streetscape due to its large projecting corner cupola. First Baptist Church is a significant example of eclectic architecture combining aspects of the late Gothic Revival and Romanesque Revival styles. The Bungalow/Craftsman style Eugene Cross house is one of the most intact residences on Main Street and perhaps the finest example of this style in Marion. It incorporates many features of the style, both inside and out, including irregular massing, porch with battered piers, and interior elements such as built-in cabinetry, ice box, laundry chute, and massive fireplaces. The level of highly skilled workmanship is evident throughout, representing the best Marion had to offer at the time. The Courthouse is significant as being one of the best examples of a 1920s Neoclassical Revival style building in western North Carolina and is important, too, for its association with Hendersonville, NC architect Erle Stilwell. Finally, the 1937 Community Building is significant as an excellent local example of a Works Project Administration building which utilized native stone and employed excellent craftsmanship throughout.

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While these are some of the more striking buildings along Main Street, the remainder, as an intact grouping, are representative of a pattern of development of downtown areas in many small western North Carolina towns. They form a tight, cohesive district, and display the use of late 19th to early 20th century designs and materials available at the time for commercial, civic, religious, and residential architecture.

Commerce

The Main Street district in Marion has remained significant as the county's center of retail, banking, and professional offices since the town's founding in 1843. Business did not begin to "boom" in Marion, however, until the train arrived in 1870. Major building began to take place then, laying the foundations for a strong commercial center which withstood a devastating fire and subsequently re-built in the closing years of the 19th century on into the early 20th century. The fire did not stop development, and today Main Street Marion is still important as the largest commercial area in McDowell County and the seat of county government.

Politics/Government

Downtown Marion remains today, as it has since the town's founding, the seat of government for McDowell County. While many small towns in other parts of the state no longer utilize their historic government buildings, Marion has continued to house its government offices in the 1923 Neoclassical Revival style courthouse and in the more recent 1937 City Hall building. The 1936 post office building, built similarly to many other post offices around the state during its time period, is important as another center of government involvement in the downtown area.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Situated among a series of gently rolling hills at the base of the Black Mountains of western North Carolina, Marion was laid off as a town in 1843. All of Marion at this time consisted of what now includes the downtown area. Developed as a planned town and surveyed May 10, 1843, by Benjamin Burgin and David Chandler, the town was bounded roughly on the west by Logan Street, on the north by a group of lots just north of Fort Street, on the east by Garden Street, and on the south by Henderson Street.<sup>1</sup> Main Street, as it remains today, was the major north-south route where

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commercial development of the downtown had its beginnings. On August 2, 1843, "cutting out of the public streets" began, with timber on the streets being sold at public and private sale.<sup>2</sup> Two years later, the first courthouse was completed on Main Street, in the Greek Revival style. It served the town until the present one was built further back on the same lot in 1923. Early businesses along Main Street, before the coming of the railroad in 1870, included 16 merchants, a hotel (the Marion Hotel), and several lawyers' and doctors' offices.<sup>3</sup> Marion essentially remained a small village for many years, serving primarily as the seat of government and a center of commercial activity for farmers in outlying areas.

The impact of the railroad, arriving in Marion in 1870, was felt rapidly. Over a period of less than twenty years, Main Street began to develop into a bustling commercial center of the county. By 1884, many hotels and boarding houses had sprung up along Main Street. Twenty-two merchants ran businesses including two milliners, twelve general stores, one jeweler, one druggist, one grocer, and one real estate agent.<sup>4</sup> Businesses supporting the obvious boom in growth included builders and contractors, cabinet and furniture makers, a planing mill, and a millwright.<sup>5</sup> Marion's population more than doubled between 1884 and 1900, from approximately 350 to 765.<sup>6</sup> By 1894, Main Street was beginning to fill in with commercial enterprises, real estate offices, hotels, and residences.<sup>7</sup> The first ordinances enacted by the Town of Marion on July 1, 1892, with James Morris as mayor and W. M. Blanton, W. McDowell Burgin, J. L. Morgan, B. B. Price, and R. J. Burgin as aldermen, indicate the range of activity flourishing on Main Street in the 1890s:<sup>8</sup> License taxes in varying amounts had to be paid annually by those involved in trades such as merchant, peddler, auctioneer, photo artist (or "persons taking likenesses of the human face"), life or fire insurance agent, huckster or trader, livery stable, or owner of a Circus Company (\$20.00 for each separate exhibition). Five dollars for each separate exhibition had to be paid by "...every person or company exhibiting within the corporate limits Stage or Theatrical Plays, Sleight of Hand performance, Rope or Wire Dancing, Jumping and Tumbling, and menageries..." For each billiard or pool table in town, \$75.00 had to be paid annually, and \$500.00 had to be paid for each barroom annually (perhaps to discourage this

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business!). Every merchant in town had to pay taxes, as did real estate agents, doctors, restaurants, and the railroad company. In addition to these taxes, it was unlawful, with a \$5.00 fine in most cases, to feed animals in the streets or to drive livestock in a disorderly manner, to willingly destroy shade trees, to deface any church, school, fence, or walk or remove any sand or stone from streets or sidewalks, or to deface signposts, lanterns, or lamp posts.

Main Street Marion, then, by the early 1890s, was bursting with energy and promise. No one ever would have suspected that literally overnight the town would be destroyed. On Sunday morning, November 25, 1894, a fire broke out on Main Street which consumed everything in its path. It began in a wooden structure behind the courthouse known as "the Ark," and spread rapidly south down Main Street, destroying the jail, McCurry and Nichols Clothing Store, W. B. Ratcliffe's Store, William Blantons' General Store, Thomas Medd's Variety, the wooden railroad bridge, as well as any other stores and homes along the way.<sup>9</sup> When it reached the Neal home and burned it, the wind changed, and the fire began to burn a swath north, up Main Street, burning the Dellinger Hotel, the homes of the Craigs, Halliburtons, and Dales, A.B. Gilkey and Son Grocery, and William McDowell Burgin's General Store.<sup>10</sup> The fire stopped just before the Eagle Hotel (now the Hotel McDowell, #7). Damages were estimated at over \$100,000.00, and the town at the time had only \$12,000.00 in fire insurance.<sup>11</sup> The town was devastated, and sent out an appeal to surrounding counties for assistance.

The task of rebuilding the town at first surely must have seemed hopeless. But rebuild it did, and by the turn of the century had exceeded what Main Street Marion had previously been. Building outside the devastated area also was extensive and included such residences as the Bobbitt-Bennett House, which, in its eclectic Victorian design and brick exterior, reflected the era's prosperity. One of the most important events to take place during this period was the founding of Marion's first successful bank on February 10, 1896, the Commercial Bank of Marion. This bank formed to help rebuild the town and provide some regulated financing for those in need.<sup>12</sup> In 1902, this became First National Bank, and in 1903 completed what is still today a landmark structure in downtown Marion [#10].

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In addition to the building boom that took place on Main Street after the 1894 fire, Marion's infrastructure improved greatly at the turn of the century as well. Telephone service was available in Marion by 1898. The franchise for it was awarded to B. B. Price and J. W. Kirby.<sup>13</sup> In 1904, the first of several bond issues, in the amount of \$30,000.00, was passed for establishing a water system. Water lines were installed in 1907-08.<sup>14</sup> Disbursements of the town for 1907 included a street fund with \$3,886.28 spent for water and sewerage.<sup>15</sup> Sidewalks, stone slab along Main Street, were in place by 1905.<sup>16</sup> Electric poles were in place by 1906.<sup>17</sup> The first autos made their appearance by 1914, but streets were not paved until the 1920s.<sup>18</sup>

General stores, hardware stores, drugstores, restaurants, and more housing continued to appear along Main Street in the early years of the 20th century. Businesses advertising in the "Report of the Public Schools of McDowell County for the School Year 1908-09" included J. Clay Conley's livery and feed stables; Gaston and Tate; W. R. Gruber, agent for Weaver Pianos and Organs; J. D. Blanton's General Store; McCall and Conley; McCall Bros, undertakers; J. W. Streetman, druggist; Price Hardware Company; the Eagle Hotel; Dr. J. G. Reid; and McDowell Realty and Insurance Company. In 1912 to 1914, the Baptists replaced their 1878 frame building with the large and stylistically distinctive brick Gothic/Romanesque Revival style church [#5] on Main Street at the corner of Main and Fort Streets. Life was easygoing in Marion in these years. Whiskey was one of the largest industries in town, for sale at saloons on Main Street.<sup>19</sup> People from all over the county came into downtown Marion on Saturday nights.<sup>20</sup>

A 1912 Chamber of Commerce brochure listed two banks, nine attorneys, a bakery, one clothing store, three dentists, five physicians, three druggists, three dry goods stores, three hotels, two hardware stores, general merchandise stores, two millineries, two photographers, one lumber store, three real estate companies, two restaurants, one shoemaker, and two barbers in Marion, the majority of which were located on Main Street.<sup>21</sup> Streets were noted as being wide and well kept, with cement sidewalks on business streets and gravel walks elsewhere. A motion picture theater had opened on Main Street, at the corner of Main and

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State Streets, by 1913.<sup>22</sup> By 1922, another had opened on the west side of Main Street.<sup>23</sup> More restaurants and more auto repair shops opened on Main Street and streets adjacent. Houses lined either side of Main Street north and south of the commercial area. Main Street Marion in 1923 boasted a new courthouse, several department stores, drug stores, groceries, watch repair shop, garages, hardware stores, and impressive new houses such as the large stone bungalow built for the Eugene Cross family [#2].

Ms. Ermine C. Neal, who was a teenager in Marion in the 1920s, recalls the following images of Main Street at the time:<sup>24</sup> North of Dr. Reid's house on S. Main Street and Crawford Street was the Dr. Ashworth house. South of Dr. Reid's house were residences of many other families including the McCalls, Justices, Neals, Morrises, Blantons, Jonases, Gileses, and Morphews. Many of these families owned and ran businesses downtown. There was a picture show in what is currently the Rice and White Furniture Company building [#36]. Then, on north up the east side of Main Street was the Marion Progress newspaper office, a grocery, her father's variety store, the railroad bridge, Blanton's General Store, the post office, and another grocery. Houses lined East Henderson Street. Beginning just north of Dr. Ashworth's home on the west side of Main Street was a vacant lot, then Kirby's Grocery Store. Down West Henderson Street were Dr. Kirby's offices and more residences. Further up this side of Main Street were three millineries, McCall's General Store, a shoe store, a hardware store, the banks (Merchant's and Farmer's and First National, #9 and #10), and the hotels. Residences lined both sides of North Main street as well. Main Street was where everyone went to shop and for recreation. Movies cost 10 cents. Life on Main Street, family, and church, were the primary events of daily life.

Another Chamber of Commerce brochure, entitled "57 Facts About the Lake City of the Mountains and McDowell County", published ca. 1936, points out that Main Street, even in the years after the crash, was still a bustling place. Fourteen passenger and thirty-five freight trains arrived daily. Hotels, restaurants, and boarding houses were still thriving businesses on Main Street. Two movie theaters, two newspapers, a new courthouse, a new post office, several wholesale groceries, as well as the industrial growth in the

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Historic and Architectural Resources in Downtown Marion, NC; Main Street  
Section number 8 Page 8 Historic District

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area, all helped to add to the commercial activity on Main Street in the mid-to-late 1930s. In 1936, the new post office was completed, designed by supervising architect for the Treasury Department, Lewis Simon.<sup>25</sup> A new community building, on North Main Street, was completed in 1937 under the Works Project Administration. There really were no major bank failures in Marion in 1929. First National Bank merged quietly with Merchant's and Farmer's in 1931, but never once considered closing its own doors to business.<sup>26</sup> Life certainly slowed down to a degree in the 1930s, because money was scarce. Marion was fortunate, however, in being able to withstand the economic hardships relatively well.<sup>27</sup> Main Street was still the "shopping center of the county," with drugstores in particular being a popular gathering place on Saturday nights.<sup>28</sup>

The biggest impact and change to Main Street, as in most small towns everywhere, was the arrival of the outlying shopping centers in the 1960s. Physical changes to buildings took place then, too, as a means to make historic buildings look more modern. Shoppers were drawn elsewhere. Today, Main Street is again evolving as "the place to be" for shopping, office space, and entertainment. Main Street is now on the verge of becoming once again the focus of community life it once was.

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Continuation Sheet

Historic and Architectural Resources in Downtown Marion, NC: Main Street  
Historic District  
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FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>McDowell County Map Book 1, Page 1.
- <sup>2</sup>Mildred Fossett, History of McDowell County, p. 12.
- <sup>3</sup>North Carolina Business Directory, 1869.
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid, 1884.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup>North Carolina Business Directory, 1890.
- <sup>7</sup>Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1894.
- <sup>8</sup>"First Ordinances of Town of Marion, NC, July 1, 1892" (Robin Hood Collection, McDowell County Library).
- <sup>9</sup>Marion-McDowell 1843-1968 Quasiquicentennial Celebration, unpublished, 1968.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup>Interview with Robin Hood, 19th of November, 1987.
- <sup>13</sup>"Phone Service Arrived Before Piped Water", McDowell News. 1950 Special Edition.
- <sup>14</sup>1908 photo, Robin Hood Collection.
- <sup>15</sup>McDowell Democrat, weekly newspaper, 1907.
- <sup>16</sup>1905 photo, Robin Hood Collection.
- <sup>17</sup>1906 photo, Robin Hood Collection
- <sup>18</sup>Interview with Ermine C. Neal, 14th of November, 1987
- <sup>19</sup>"Handy Bowman, 86, Recalls Early Times When He Was a Barber on Main Street", McDowell News, 8th of August, 1968.

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Historic and Architectural Resources in Downtown Marion, NC: Main Street  
Historic District  
Section number 8 Page 10

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Chamber of Commerce, "Marion, 1912"

<sup>22</sup>Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1913.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 1922.

<sup>24</sup>Interview with Ermine C. Neal

<sup>25</sup>Interview with Antoinette Lee, from her manuscript, "Architects to the Nation: History of the Office of the Supervising Architects of the U.S. Treasury Department", 12th of September, 1988. According to Ms. Lee, Lewis A. Simon, born in 1867, started to work for the U.S. Treasury department in 1896. By 1915, he was promoted to Chief of the Engineering and Drafting Division, where he remained until 1934. From 1934 until he retired in 1941, he was supervising architect of the Treasury Department, with his name on over 1000 buildings across the country, including the Marion Post Office. Many of the post office buildings were from standardized designs, but many were designed by private architects with Simon putting his name on them as a representative of the Treasury. It is uncertain which buildings he designed himself, but he was supervising architect on another western North Carolina post office in Boone, built in 1938. This is an even more intact building, with a WPA mural inside, and still in use as a post office. Another post office, dating from 1932-33, is located in Wadesboro, NC, and is of a Classical Revival style like the Marion one. Supervising architect for this building was James A. Wetmore, who retired before Simon took over in 1934.

<sup>26</sup>Interview with Doris Hill, 9th of November, 1987.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:  
Western Office, Archives & History  
Asheville, North Carolina

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 21 acres

UTM References

A 

17	408420	3949430
Zone	Easting	Northing

C 

17	408910	3949010
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E 17 408440 3949140

B 

17	408590	3949570
Zone	Easting	Northing

D 

17	408740	3948920
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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is indicated by the bold line defining the area labeled Main Street Historic District as shown on the accompanying sketch map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn to include the greatest concentrations of Contributing resources and their associated settings along and immediately adjacent to Main Street which reflect the historical development of the commercial center of Marion.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sybil Argintar Bowers, Preservation Planning Consultant  
 organization Bowers Southeastern Preservation date August 31, 1990  
 street & number P.O. Box 15722 telephone (704) 253-1392  
 city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28813

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Section number 9 Page 1

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Historic and Architectural Resources in Downtown Marion, NC: Main Street  
Section number photos Page 1 Historic District

## PHOTO LIST: MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Name of Property.....Main Street Historic District

City and State.....Marion, North Carolina

Photographer.....Ted Alexander, 1985 photos  
Sybil A. Bowers, 1987-88, 1990 photos

Date taken.....1985, except where noted otherwise  
All 1985 and 1987-88 photos have  
been field verified in 1990.

Location of original.....Western Office, Archives & History  
negative Asheville, North Carolina

Photo A  
Main Street  
Looking southwest along the west side of Main Street.

Photo B  
Main Street  
Looking southwest. Bobbitt-Bennett House in foreground.

Photo C  
Main Street  
Looking southwest. Former McDowell Hotel in foreground.

Photo D  
Main Street  
Looking west.

Photo E  
Main Street  
Looking southeast along east side of Main Street.

Photo F  
Main Street  
Looking northeast along east side of Main Street.

Photo G  
Marion Community Building; 209 North Main Street  
Looking northwest at front facade.

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Historic and Architectural Resources in Downtown Marion, NC: Main street  
Section number photos Page 2 Historic District

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Photo H  
Marion Community Building; 209 North Main Street  
Rockwork around the grounds

Photo I  
Marion Community Building; 209 North Main Street  
Interior great hall.

Photo J  
Eugene Cross, Sr. House; 137 N. Main Street  
Looking northwest at front of house.

Photo K  
Eugene Cross, Sr. House; 137 N. Main Street  
Exterior window detail.

Photo L  
Eugene Cross, Sr. House; 137 N. Main Street  
Interior kitchen cabinetry.

Photo M  
Eugene Cross, Sr. House; 137 N. Main Street  
Interior doorway.

Photo N  
First Baptist Church; 101 N. Main Street  
Looking northwest at front of church.

Photo O  
First Baptist Church; 101 N. Main Street  
Interior sanctuary.  
October, 1987.

Photo P  
Bobbitt-Bennett House; 35 N. Main Street  
Looking west at front facade of house.

Photo Q  
Bobbitt-Bennett House; 35 N. Main Street  
Interior hallway detailing.

Photo R  
McDowell Hotel Building; 9-11 N. Main Street  
Looking southwest at front facade of building.

Photo S  
McDowell Hotel Building; 9-11 N. Main Street  
Second floor interior hallway.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Historic and Architectural Resources in Downtown Marion, NC; Main Street  
Section number photos Page 3 Historic District

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Photo T

Hotel James Building; 2-6 N. Main Street  
Looking northeast at front facade of building.

Photo U

First National Bank Building; 2 S. Main Street  
Looking southwest at front facade of building.

Photo V

Blanton Building; 28-32 S. Main Street  
Looking west at front facade of building.

Photo W

McDowell County Courthouse; S. Main Street  
Looking east at front of building.

Photo X

McDowell County Courthouse; S. Main Street  
Exterior window detail.

Photo Y

Streetman Building; 31-31½ S. Main Street  
Looking east at front facade of building.

Photo Z

N. Logan Street  
Looking southeast along the east side of N. Logan St.  
August 1990

Photo AA

W. Court Street  
Looking northeast along the north side of W. Court Street  
August 1990

Photo BB

W. Henderson Street  
Looking southeast along the south side of W. Henderson St.  
August 1990

Photo CC

Warehouse; 11 E. Henderson Street  
Looking northeast at front of building  
August 1990



3952  
42'30"  
ALL PROPERTIES ARE LOCATED  
IN MARION, NC, McDOWELL  
MARION WEST QUAD  
ZONE 17

MAIN STREET HISTORIC  
DISTRICT

- A: N 3949430  
E 408420
- B: N 3949570  
E 408590
- C: N 3949010  
E 408910
- D: N 3948920  
E 408740

N 3949140  
E 408440

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CH.  
N: 3949200  
E: 408350

MAIN ST. HISTORIC  
DISTRICT

DEPT HISTORIC DISTRICT  
N: 3948850  
E: 408540

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
N: 3949020  
E: 408320

ST. MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN  
CHURCH  
N: 3949020  
E: 408320  
40'

3947

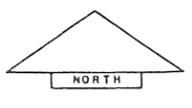
3946

4.5 MI  
 33 MI  
 4655 IN HWY  
 (MARION EAST)  
 4.5 MI  
 23 MI  
 1465 IN HWY  
 RUTHERFORDTON





MARION, NORTH CAROLINA



# SKETCH MAP

HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES OF DOWNTOWN MARION, NC

MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT AND DEPOT HISTORIC DISTRICT

□ CONTRIBUTING

▨ NON-CONTRIBUTING

1, 2, ... INVENTORY NUMBERS

Ⓐ PHOTO AND DIRECTION OF VIEW

*Amendment map Nov. 2, 1994*