

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Johnson Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 102/104 East Main Street N/A not for publication

city or town Clinton N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Sampson code 163 zip code 28328

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

John Crow SHPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

3/30/00
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Johnson Building
Name of Property

Sampson Co., NC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/department store

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Commercial Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

roof asphalt

other

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
 Commerce

Period of Significance

c. 1902-1950

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Johnson Building
Name of Property

Sampson Co., NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 117 7442310 3875838
Zone Easting Northing

2

3
Zone Easting Northing

4

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Beth Keane

organization Retrospective date August 1999

street & number 2546 Sloop Landing telephone 910-452-0963

city or town Wilmington state NC zip code 28409

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name George Wilson, president, Wilcare Facilities

street & number 118 East Main Street telephone 910-592-8948

city or town Clinton state NC zip code 28328

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Johnson Building
Sampson County, NC

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Johnson Building is a brick two-story commercial building located in Clinton's downtown commercial district. The c. 1902 building faces northwest and anchors the southeast corner of East Main and Wall streets. Lined with early-twentieth-century commercial buildings, the southeast side of the 100 block of East Main Street is situated directly across from the Sampson County courthouse. A column of deciduous trees borders the sidewalk in front of the stores. While the lower-level storefronts have been modified, many of the buildings retain their original upper-level facades. Although the Johnson Building has undergone some changes over the years, the building is currently being restored to resemble its original appearance.

Built c. 1902 for Amma Ferdinand Johnson, the rectangular building is a handsome two-story early-twentieth-century commercial structure with Classical Revival-style details. The building retains a second-period, one-story, rear brick addition.

The five-bay principal facade features double one-over-one sash windows with arched brick lintels. Ornamental detailing includes plain brick corner pilasters, recessed brick panels, a corbeled table, and projecting metal cornice with modillion blocks. A raised parapet conceals a sloping built-up tar roof.

The original entrance doors were flush with the front of the building and flanked by projecting bay windows. The bay windows were replaced in the 1960s with large plate-glass display windows. At approximately the same time, wood paneling was added around the front elevation's first-level windows and doors. The building's current restoration will attempt to duplicate the facade's original appearance.

The southwest, or Wall Street elevation, is eight bays wide. The north end of this elevation (containing two bays and divided from the remaining six bays by a plain pilaster), along with the principal facade, uses a dark red brick. The rear section of the building, including the one-story block, was laid with a lighter color brick in a five-to-one common bond. The metal cornice extends only as far as the front two-bay section of the elevation. Although the first-level windows of the southwest elevation have been filled in with brick, they retain their

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arched brick lintels. The second-level windows preserve the original one-over-one-sash windows with arched brick lintels. A corbeled beltcourse and a raised parapet runs the length of the southwest elevation.

The one-story block extends along the southeast (rear) façade. This block retains one of the original doors and several original windows. The remaining doors and windows have been filled in with brick. The second level of the two-story section retains the original window openings with arched lintels, although they are currently covered with plywood.

The building has historically accommodated two to three retail shops on the first level, with professional office space on the second level. The current configuration of the first floor includes two large open commercial spaces divided by an interior wall. While the original wood floors on the first level have been removed, the current restoration will include adding a new wood floor. The first-level ceiling retains its original pressed tin, which will be removed, restored, and put back in place. The interior brick walls are covered with wallboard.

The second level has been divided into numerous office spaces. The original wood floors, wainscotting, and tongue-and-groove ceilings remain intact. Plaster covers the walls above the wainscotting. Wide, plain molding surrounds the windows and doors. Several of the windows retain the lettering of the physicians or dentists who once occupied the interior offices. Many original paneled doors remain intact. Four large, enclosed skylights, which illuminate the second floor offices, also remain intact.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The c. 1902 Johnson Building is significant under Criteria A and C as an intact example of a two-story brick building that functioned as a symbol of the town of Clinton's business-related prosperity during the first half of the twentieth century. Since its construction, a number of retail concerns and professional practices have occupied the building facing the Sampson County Courthouse. The building, one of only a few architecturally distinct resources in downtown Clinton, retains many of the significant architectural features of the period including modest brick detailing, a decorative metal cornice with modillion blocks, arched brick lintels, and a parapet crowned with tile coping. After enduring a number of fires in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries during which its downtown buildings were routinely destroyed, townspeople replaced earlier frame buildings with brick edifices. Alfred Ferdinand Johnson constructed the building during a period when Clinton experienced prosperity due to an expanding agriculture and timber marked aided by the 1886 completion of a branch of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. The period of significance begins with the date of construction c. 1902 and extends to 1950, a period during which the Johnson Building played a prominent role in the town's commercial and professional development.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND COMMERCE CONTEXT

Clinton, the county seat is the oldest and largest town in Sampson County. Upon formation of the county from Duplin County in 1784, the town site was called Rhodes Cross Roads. In 1801, a courthouse was completed and a post office established and the name changed to Sampson Courthouse. The town was officially named Clinton, after Richard Clinton, an early political leader and the county's first register of deeds, by act of the General Assembly in 1818. The town incorporated in November, 1822. An 1834 survey established the town limits would not extend beyond one-fourth of a mile from courthouse (Bass, p. 28).

The city's earliest major architectural development begin in the early 1830s with the arrival of several merchant families from Connecticut, including several members of the Johnson family who had migrated to Sampson County from Middletown, Connecticut. Alfred Johnson (1809-1873), along with several cousins, first went to Lisbon, North Carolina, where they opened a small store. The three cousins later married three Badger sisters from

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Middletown and moved to Clinton where they established businesses and built homes on Chestnut Street.

When the town government of Clinton was reorganized by an act of the North Carolina General Assembly in 1852, Alfred Johnson became one of five newly appointed town commissioners. One of their first orders of business was to resurvey the town and prepare a plat. The corporate limits of the town were expanded to include a half-mile radius in each direction from the courthouse.

Clinton flourished as an educational, trade, and political center during the nineteenth century. After the Civil War and the destruction of the commercial district by an 1877 fire, Clinton rebounded as an agriculture and timber market, aided by the 1886 completion of a branch of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. In 1889, Populist leader and local newspaper publisher, Marion Butler, reported "remarkable improvements in town" (Bisher, p. 408).

Alfred Johnson's wife, Esther Badger, died as a young woman, leaving behind an infant son, Amma Ferdinand Johnson (1845-1921) (Bass, p. 456). Amma Ferdinand Johnson grew up on Chestnut Street in Clinton and was educated at military school and the University of North Carolina. At the age of eighteen, he left UNC to join a company of Confederate soldiers from Clinton. After the Civil War, he returned home and married Emma Bryan Pearsall. He built a commercial building on East Main Street, known as A. F. Johnson and Son, after his only child, Ferdinand Badger Johnson, went into business with him (Bass, p.456).

Ferdinand Badger Johnson, was born on Main Street in his father's home and lived there until his death at the age of ninety-four. Ferdinand became a cotton buyer for Alexander Sprunt Company until the Depression. Later, he became postmaster in Clinton and served in that capacity for fifteen years. Married three times, he had four children by his second wife, Susan Beaman Pigford. After his retirement, he served as director of the American Red Cross for seven years. Johnson also was a charter member of the Rotary Club in Clinton, a mason, and a volunteer member of the fire department (Bass, p. 456).

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In 1877, Clinton suffered a major fire, destroying A. F. Johnson's store, valued at \$3,000.00, with merchandise valued at \$1,500.00 (Bizzell, p. 34). Several years later, on January 29, 1883, Amma Ferdinand Johnson bought a lot on the corner of East Main and Wall Street (D. B. 51, p. 580) and built another commercial building. He prepared an advertising map in 1884 in which he advertises himself as a dealer in general merchandise.

Clinton suffered several additional devastating fires in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1892, fire destroyed the entire block of Wall Street. Two years later, another big fire struck Clinton destroying a number of stores. A fourth major fire in 1902 burned forty-three of Clinton's downtown buildings, taking with it practically all of Main Street (Bass, pp. 41-42).

A deed dated July, 1902, after the last major fire, established the size and ownership of each parcel on Main Street (D. B. 120, p. 321). It lists A. F. Johnson as the owner of the corner lot, measuring 76 feet, 3 inches along Main Street, extending to the corner of Wall Street. The current two-story brick building was constructed by A. F. Johnson as an investment soon after the 1902 fire.

Many businesses have been located in the Johnson Building over the years. In 1909, Fowler & Crumpler, attorneys and counselors-at-law, advertised their services in *The News Dispatch* as being located in the Johnson Building, over L. P. Barbrey's store (November 4, 1909). L. P. Barbrey and Company, dealers in dry goods, notions, shoes, hats, clothing, and millinery, also placed advertisements in *The News Dispatch* (November 9, 1911).

Several physicians retained offices in the upper level of the Johnson Building including Dr. Frank Holmes, Dr. Paul Crumpler, and Dr. Ray, a dentist. Since its completion, the first level of the Johnson Building held as many as three separate retail spaces. A 1915 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map depicts a haberdasher and two dry goods stores in the building. James Ingram Reynolds relates in "A Personal History of Clinton and Sampson County" that the first business to locate in the Johnson Building was operated by Mr. Albert Aman. After he went out of business, it was taken over by Mr. O. J. Powell. Later,

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Isaac Herwitz operated a dry goods store in the building. The next business to locate in the Johnson Building was a grocery store run by Tilman Register. Later, Milton Williamson operated a grocery store there. When he went out of business, it was taken over by Joy and Hubert Lee, who ran a cafe. Later, the Leder Brothers opened a store in that space. The third retail space in the building was operated as a dry goods store by Mr. L. P. Lull Barbrey. Moses Herwitz took over the business from Mr. Barbrey and eventually, it was taken over by Ed Fleishman and Brothers of Fayetteville (Reynolds, pp. 59-60).

In 1933, Ferdinand Badger Johnson, a widower, sold part of the building to C. R. Rich for \$7,500.00 (Deed Book 466, p. 298). At the time, Roses Five and Ten Cent Store occupied the first level of the building. The following year, Johnson, and his third wife, Maude, sold the remainder of the building to C. R. Rich for \$20,000.00 (Deed Book 458, p. 535). Mr. Rich held onto the property until his death in 1989. Roses Dime Store continued to operate in the building until 1979 (City Directories 1960-1979). Ed Fleishmans Brothers, Inc., a men's clothing retailer, occupied the second retail space until approximately 1979. Several additional businesses, including Cato's, Faircloth's Sporting Goods, and Pumping Iron, have rented space in the Johnson Building during the 1980s and 1990s (City Directories 1980-1998).

The property was sold to Curtis Ronald and Laura C. Giles in 1989 (Deed Book 1092, p. 399). Willcare Facilities purchased the property in 1996 and is currently renovating the building (Deed Book 1230, p. 348). Near the end of the twentieth century, Clinton remains the governmental, industrial, commercial, and cultural center of Sampson County. The town contains older residential neighborhoods, a relatively intact early twentieth century commercial district clustered around the 1904 courthouse and several suburban shopping centers. Industrial diversification in the outlying areas produce such products as lumber, fertilizer, boats, livestock feed, and furniture (Bass, p. 82).

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The overwhelming bulk of Sampson County's surviving early commercial buildings date from the first decades of the twentieth century. Two-story brick commercial structures are found in

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Salemburg, Roseboro, and Clinton. These brick structures are essentially expanded versions of the one-story variety and were given a heightened sense of stylistic ornamentation, usually in the form of a metal cornice or decorative stone lintels and sills (Sampson County Multiple Resource Nomination, p 14).

Clinton's earliest major architectural development began in the early 1830s with the arrival of several merchant families from Connecticut who built notable Greek Revival homes. These industrious families were also responsible for the development of an early commercial district in the town. Frame commercial buildings lined Main Street across from the county courthouse as early as 1850.

Clinton endured four major fires in the downtown district during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, regularly destroying entire blocks of frame buildings. Clinton suffered its worst fire in 1902 during which much of the commercial district was destroyed.

Following the 1902 blaze, Clinton's businessmen and merchants immediately began rebuilding. Structures were exclusively brick and generally plain or simply embellished with corbeled brickwork. In Clinton, as in towns across North Carolina, brick buildings with iron fronts or other manufactured metal trim became hallmarks of commercial prosperity (Bisher, p. 329).

The commercial district of Clinton, surrounding the central courthouse square, contains the county's greatest concentration of two-story brick commercial buildings. A few feature pressed-metal facades such as the Powell Building (102 East Main Street), with its superb Classical Revival metal front.

The Johnson Building, however, is representative of the majority of Sampson County's commercial buildings constructed around the turn of the twentieth century. Simple decorative brickwork including corbeling, paneling, and pilasters, were employed to embellish the buildings' exteriors. Combined with the rhythms and contrasts produced by arched and square openings, a rich and lively commercial architecture was created in the towns of southeastern North Carolina.

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9. Bibliography

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- Bisher, Catherine W. North Carolina Architecture. Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990.
- Bisher, Catherine W. and Michael T. Southern A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Eastern North Carolina. Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Bizzell, Oscar M. Heritage of Sampson County, North Carolina 1784-1984. The Sampson County Historical Society in cooperation with Hunter Publishing Company: Winston-Salem, 1984.
- Butchko, Tom An Inventory of Historic Architecture, Sampson County. Contemporary Litho: Raleigh, NC.
- Butchko, Tom Sampson County Multiple Resource Nomination, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1979, 1985.
- Clinton City Directories, 1960-1998.
- The News Dispatch*, advertisements, November 4 and November 9, 1911.
- Reynolds, James Ingram A Personal History of Clinton and Sampson County. Clinton, April, 1991.
- Sampson County Deed Books, Office of Register of Deeds, Sampson County Courthouse.
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1915 and 1926, Sampson County Library files.

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The Johnson Building
Sampson County, NC

10. Geographic Data

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 3977 according to the Tax Map 2405.09 of Clinton,
Sampson County, North Carolina

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all of the property historically
associated with The Johnson Building.

