

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 McMinn Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 2-6 West Main Street n/a not for publication

city or town Brevard n/a vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Transylvania code 175 zip code 28712

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.)

William S. P... 12-14-93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of 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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

<p>I hereby certify that the property is:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:) _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Signature of the Keeper</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Date of Action</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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McMinn Building
Name of Property

Transylvania County, North Carolina
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.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

"Historic and Architectural Resources of Transylvania County North Carolina (including the incorporated towns of Brevard and Rosman), ca. 1820-1941"

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

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.)

McMinn Building
Name of Property

Transylvania County, North Carolina
County and State

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.

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1899

Significant Dates

1899

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

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Architectural Description

The McMinn Building, a two-story common-bond brick commercial building ornamented with robust decorative brickwork, is located at the north corner of the square in Brevard. A landmark in the county seat's small commercial district of mostly two and three-story brick buildings, it is positioned at the crossing of Broad and Main streets--the town's two principal avenues--and across Broad Street from the Transylvania County Court House. The McMinn Building was built for mixed commercial use and ushered in a late nineteenth- and twentieth-century commercial building boom in a heretofore sleepy county seat. Clearly, the West Main Street facade with its original Mesker Brothers' iron storefronts was seen as the principal elevation of the building. These impressive frontispieces offered Brevard merchants a fashionable setting from which to sell their goods. Here there are entrances into the three storefronts at #2, #4, and #6 West Main Street. A fourth doorway, positioned between the entrances to #2 and #4 West Main Street, opens into a stairway which rises to the second story of the building and a series of eighteen rental offices arranged off a U-shaped public corridor. In use for ninety-five years as a rental commercial building, the McMinn Building is remarkably intact and well-preserved. Except for alterations to the corner storefront at #2 West Main Street and some expected changes to the interiors of the first-story stores, the McMinn Building survives to the present as an impressive turn-of-the-century commercial building and largely as built.

With elevations facing on the town's two principal streets, the rectangular brick building has a descending hierarchy of finish from the principal, corbelled brickwork of the Main Street facade, through a somewhat simpler finish on its side elevation along Broad Street, to a plain utilitarian appearance on the rear elevation which faces onto the small vacant parking lot at the rear of the lot. (This parking lot is serviced by an alley.) In typical turn-of-the-century fashion, the front corner of the building is clipped to address the town square. This angled bay contains the entrance to the corner store on the first level and a pair of windows in an arch-headed opening on the second story. The bay serves as the transition point between the consistent finish of the facade facing West Main Street and the simpler, diminishing finish of the side elevation overlooking North Broad Street.

The first-story West Main Street elevation of the McMinn Building contains three storefronts and the doorway, in its own bay, opening onto the stair rising to the rental offices on the second level. Here brick pilasters, rising through the second-story elevations, define the unequal widths of these four components of the building. At some point in the recent past the Mesker Brothers' iron storefront enframing the corner store (#2 West Main) was replaced by the present simple treatment using plain modern materials in an undistinguished fashion. The entry at #2 West Main has plate glass doors into the store and large display windows which are protected by a canvas awning.

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Next, moving west, a pair of brick piers frame the recessed doorway which opens onto the public stair to the second story. The two leaves of this original door feature four molded square panels below large glazed panes; a single-pane transom carries across the opening. A modern metal panel, above the metal awning protecting this doorway, carries the slogan "McMinn Building" and the name of an architectural firm which occupies offices in the building. The storefront at #4 West Main Street is framed between brick piers and appears to date from at least two periods. The recessed central entrance, comprised of paired mostly-glazed wood doors below a two-pane transom, is flanked by plate glass display windows set on a brick apron. A five-part multi-pane glazed transom, believed to be original, carries across the full storefront below the original Mesker Brothers' iron frieze. Its classical composition features alternating triglyphs and panels embossed with swags and ribbons.

The storefront at #6 West Main appears to be entirely original to the 1899 construction of the building. Here the classical frieze is supported by a wide pilaster at its west end and secondary pilasters framing the recessed central entrance to the store. The west pilaster has decorative elements at its base and capital and bears a plate stamped "Mesker Bros./Front Builders/St. Louis, Mo./Pat Oct 4, '87." The glass display windows rest on a shallow paneled apron and are surmounted by unusually tall two-pane transoms. The double-leaf door opening into #6 West Main is original and identical to the one opening onto the staircase and it retains its original hardware.

The four principal bays on the second-story elevation are marked by pilasters and recessed about the width of a brick behind the corbelled parapet cornice of the building. The window openings have granite sills, arched heads, and contain one-over-one sash. There are single window openings above the easternmost two bays and three symmetrically placed windows in the bays of #4 and #6 West Main. The top of the parapet cornice is covered with a later ceramic tile coping. Two stove flues rise above the coping.

On the southeast, Broad Street elevation, the wall is divided into four bays marked by pilasters which appear to contain stove flues. They rise from the base of the building to the stepped roofline. There, the flues project above the parapet and are joined by three additional flues which rise in the walls. The pattern of door and window openings is inconsistent in the four bays. In addition to the display windows in the southernmost bay, there were originally three single windows below multi-plane transoms and a door in the remaining three bays of the first story. The northernmost window was later converted to a door and opens into a shallow stoop which rises from the sidewalk. The original doorway in the northernmost bay is fitted with its original two-leaf door below a transom. The lower half of each leaf is fitted with three panels while the upper half is glazed.

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The rear elevation has a simple utilitarian appearance and has a one-story service porch across the full elevation. The general form of the three storefronts on West Main Street is repeated here; however, the wall bears no demarcation or division into bays. Instead, there is a doorway flanked by window openings per store. The windows hold double-hung two-over-two wood sash set in a narrow simply-treated frame inside the reveal. This original arrangement is consistent throughout the building. The doorways of #2 and #6 West Main are fitted with their original two-leaf doors which are identical to the original service door on the Broad Street elevation of #2 West Main Street. The solid wood two-leaf door into #4 West Main has five panels per leaf and no glazing. On the second story elevation, there is a break in the wall indicating the open, inset light well that enables all of the offices on the second story to have outside windows. There are six window openings in the wall, five of which contain one-over-one sash; the sixth window has been closed up. There are two small square windows in the wall of #6 West Main, set between the first and second story fenestration, which illuminate the interior mezzanine.

The finish of the interiors of the three first-story stores of the McMinn Building vary in their appearance and retention of their original fabric. The interior of #2 West Main has a carpeted floor, painted walls, and a dropped ceiling of sheetboard panels with battens over the seams. There is open shelving with adjustable shelves carrying along the northwest, side wall from the front of the store for about two-thirds of the length of the wall. It has tongue and groove backing, drawers at the base of the shelf units, and appears to date from the early twentieth century. In the offset, where the enclosed public stair rises to the second story, there is a door which opens onto a closet under the stair. The front-two-thirds of the store has been simply partitioned off as the main sales space of the present tenant. The two doors and windows at the rear of the store retain their original, symmetrically-molded surrounds with corner blocks. There is an enclosed stair to the basement. A small lavatory has also been enclosed on the back of the store.

The store at #4 West Main which now houses a frame and art shop is one large space with a recent simple partition to separate the front sales area from the work area in the back half of the space. It has narrow oak flooring, running front to back, painted plaster walls above baseboards; and its original pressed tin ceiling. The design of the ceiling features square molded panels in raised perimeter frames. The cornice is embossed with anthemions. It also retains its original, symmetrically-molded window and door surrounds with corner blocks. A lavatory has been enclosed in the north rear corner with tongue and groove ceiling.

The interior of #6 West Main Street has pine flooring running front to back, plaster walls with some modern sheet paneling, and a dropped ceiling of sheetboard. It is now used as a shoe shop. The rear third of the store features a mezzanine which is original to this space and illuminated by a pair of shallow windows on the rear elevation. This store was used by a department store and it seems likely that the mezzanine was used for the ladies department. The existence of the mezzanine here

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raises the distinct possibility that McMinn varied the interior finish and fitting out of the three stores to satisfy different types of use. The mezzanine is supported by chamfered posts; the sills of its floor have exposed beaded edges. On the main level there is open shelving on the northwest wall and an enclosed lavatory under the mezzanine. At the rear of the store, the door and windows retain their symmetrically-molded surrounds with corner blocks. The entrance into the basement, fitted with a five-panel turn-of-the-century door, is enclosed with tongue and groove ceiling and is set below the stair which rises front-to-back to the mezzanine. The railing features turned members below a molded top handrail which carries between square newels. This railing guards the stairwell on the mezzanine level and carries across the open southwest front of the mezzanine.

The public stairs, located behind paired doors between the entrances to #2 and #4 West Main Street, rise to the northeast to the second-story rental offices. A free-hand plan of the second story of the building is included with this nomination. Except for the installation of lighting fixtures over the years and the enclosure of a portion of the U-shaped hall, little has changed in the fabric and appearance of the hall and the offices since 1898. The stairhead on the second story is protected by two lengths of handsome railing featuring turned members below molded top handrails and turned newels topped with molded ball finials. The pine flooring is laid on the diagonal, a simple device which enlivens the public hall. The sheathed wainscot carrying between the baseboard and chair rail features flush, molded-edge boards also nailed on a diagonal. The walls above the wainscot and those in all of the offices are plaster on lath. In most offices, the original tongue-and-groove ceiling has been covered by celotex panels or dropped ceilings. The door and window surrounds throughout the hall and offices are symmetrically molded with corner blocks. The wainscot and surrounds in the hall have a dark, stained finish. Those in the offices have been mostly painted by the occupants. The majority of the doors opening from the hall into the offices feature three panels in their lower half with a large glazed pane above. Some of the office doors have solid wood five-panel doors. All of these eighteen office doors have top-hinged glazed transoms.

In plan, fourteen of the eighteen offices are arranged in a U-shaped plan along the northwest, southwest, and southeast sides of the building. Nearly all of these offices open onto the U-shaped corridor and communicate with their adjoining offices by five-panel doors. The remaining four offices are arranged in a tier inside the "U" and have windows onto the open well visible on the exterior of the building. Five (#1-#5) of the six offices situated along the southeast, Broad Street side of the building have been leased to an architectural firm which has enclosed, by glazing, the portion of the public hall that adjoins four of their five leased rooms. The large corner office, #6, and the adjoining office (#7) were long occupied by attorney Robert Lenoir Gash and are now the offices of his son Judge Robert T. Gash. The walls in #7 are painted green and the woodwork a warm rose mocca, colors which probably date from the early twentieth century. This room also houses a safe lettered with "R. L. Gash." A portion of the office (#15) in the back northwest corner has been enclosed for a public lavatory for the office occupants. Across the hall is a small enclosed service closet.

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McMinn Building
Transylvania County, North Carolina

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McMinn Building
Summary

Erected in 1899 for Nathan Van Buren McMinn, the McMinn Building is a handsome well-preserved two-story late-Victorian brick commercial building which has been a landmark in the small town of Brevard for nearly a century. Its significance is discussed in "Historic and Architectural Resources in Transylvania County, North Carolina (including the incorporated towns of Brevard and Rosman), ca. 1820-1941" in Historic Context #3, Early Industrialization, 1895-1916, and in Property Type #9, Commercial and Industrial Buildings. The McMinn Building satisfies National Register Criterion A for its significance in the area of Commerce, and National Register Criterion C for its significance in the area of Architecture.

Occupying a critical position on the north corner of the town square--at the crossing of Broad and Main streets--it was the first brick commercial building erected in the county seat of Transylvania County. In that position, it was the senior member of the group of two and three-story brick commercial buildings, erected between 1899 and the opening of World War I, which transformed the county seat from a village of frame buildings surrounding the brick court house to a small town with the appearance of prosperity and enterprise. Because of its position at the heart of the town and near the court house, the McMinn Building was a desirable address at the turn of the century and it has retained that distinction to the present.

The McMinn Building is architecturally significant in the town of Brevard as an important, and the town's earliest, brick commercial building. Built as a rental investment building, it featured three one-story storefronts facing on West Main Street. A separate entrance on West Main Street opened onto the staircase providing access to eighteen rental offices on the second story. Although some minor alterations have been effected to the first-story exterior and the store interiors, the building retains a remarkable degree of integrity in its construction and finish. The building is distinguished by handsome corbelled brickwork, original Mesker Brothers cast iron storefronts, a pressed tin ceiling, and other contemporary, original fittings in the three storefronts. However, it is the survival of the original plan and finish of the eighteen rental offices on the second story which crowns the building's architectural significance.

Since its construction the building has descended in the ownership of four generations of the McMinn family whose stewardship of the building has been laudable. The building, in turn, is the chief reminder of their prominence in the commercial and social life of turn-of-the-century Brevard.

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McMinn Building
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McMinn Building
Historical Background and Commerce Context

On 20 March 1898, Nathan Van Buren McMinn, a prosperous businessman and merchant in Brevard, wrote a three-page letter to his son John W. McMinn on the letterhead of his Southern Drug Company. On the third page of the letter, he began his final paragraph:

I think I will put a Good Brick on the Corner this fall and Save Rent. I have 8 Thousand in the Bank and 1500 in Drugs & Can put 5 thousand in a house on the Corner.

The terms "Good Brick" and "House" are the first references to the two-story brick building at 2-6 West Main Street which was erected for McMinn and has thereafter been known as the McMinn Building (TV 266). As the first brick commercial building erected in Brevard, the seat of Transylvania County, it was also the second-known brick building erected in the small town, following on the construction of the brick court house in 1873. For those reasons, for its handsome well-finished construction, and for its location on the town square (across North Broad Street from the court house) the McMinn Building has been a prominent landmark in Brevard. Because of the continued ownership in the McMinn family to the present, the rental commercial building has retained a remarkable degree of integrity and remains little-changed to the present, continuing to house commercial tenants in the first story storefronts and rental offices on the second level. With the loss of the McMinn residence and the later hopelessly compromising alterations to the John W. McMinn's Aethelwold Hotel, diagonally across the square in Brevard, the McMinn Building survives as the foremost reminder of the family's prominence in their community.¹

Nathan Van Buren McMinn (1836-1902), for whom the building was built and whose name it bears to the present, was an important figure in Brevard in the later-nineteenth century and until his death at the age of sixty-five. He was born on 25 August 1836, probably in Henderson County and perhaps in that portion that is now Transylvania County. In 1861, a portion of Henderson County and a part of Jackson County were separated to form Transylvania County; Brevard, named for Revolutionary War hero Ephriam Brevard, would become the county seat.

Through his marriage to Elizabeth "Lizzie" England, McMinn became a part of one of Transylvania County's best known and highly respected families. Elizabeth England was born on 12 October 1851, the daughter of Alexander England (1822-1896). It appears likely that the marriage occurred in 1870 or 1871. The couple's first known child, John William McMinn, was born in 1872. The next year Nathan McMinn was a witness at the marriage of his kinsman George W. McMinn to Mary M. England on Christmas Day. This union further conjoined the McMinn and England families. Members of both families are buried in the same prominent plot in the cemetery at the

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(former) Oak Grove Methodist Church in Brevard. Lizzie and Nathan McMinn acquired substantial property in Brevard and Transylvania County by both purchase and inheritance, jointly and individually: the first purchase occurred in 1873 and they would continue to acquire property until shortly before their deaths in 1898 and 1902, respectively. In the following year, 1874, the couple's first daughter Beulah McMinn was born. There would be at least two additional children born to the couple: Nathan E. McMinn, and Mary B. McMinn.

In the absence of a fully developed history of Transylvania County, a complete understanding of Nathan McMinn's life and role in the commercial life of Brevard remains to be confirmed. However, certain information on the range of his activities can be gleaned from the successive volumes of Branson's North Carolina Business Directory for the years 1884 through 1897. His name first appears in the 1884 edition when he was listed as sheriff of the county and as a merchant dealing in general merchandise. The dates of his term as sheriff are unknown; however, he held the office of sheriff as late as 1887. In the 1890 edition of Branson's North Carolina Business Directory, Nathan McMinn was listed as the proprietor of a manufacturing concern which produced "Saddles and harness." Six years later, in 1896, he was cited as the proprietor of the Central Hotel, one of four hotels located in Brevard at that time. The 1897 directory contained the same listing.

The changing roles which Nathan McMinn assumed in his community and the range of those enterprises suggest something of the parallel movements afoot in the growing town of Brevard. Although outside capital was responsible for many of the major real estate and industrial projects in Transylvania County, long-established local men such as McMinn prospered in related or service businesses. The history of this late-nineteenth century expansion in the economy of Transylvania County and Brevard is discussed in two historic contexts in the "Historic and Architectural Resources of Transylvania County, North Carolina (including the incorporated towns of Brevard and Rosman), ca. 1820-1941": "Pre-Railroad Transylvania County, 1861-1894," and "Early Industrialization, 1895-1916." Nathan McMinn was an important local figure in this period and his (then new) brick building is perhaps the earliest and most intact surviving landmark in Brevard from this turn-of-the-century era of commercial expansion.

It appears likely that Nathan McMinn delayed construction on the new brick building on the square until early in 1899. (Five months after writing to his eldest son, his wife, Elizabeth "Lizzie" England McMinn died on 26 August 1898 and was buried beside her father in the family plot at Oak Grove Methodist Church.) In the fall of 1899, Nathan McMinn took his son, John William McMinn, into partnership in the ownership of the McMinn Building, selling him a one-half undivided interest in the property for \$1,500. The property conveyed by deed, dated 19 October 1899, describes it as "Being the lot on the corner of Main and East Broad Streets on which a brick building 75 x 85 is now being constructed, said lot including the said brick building." The reason

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for McMinn's sale of a one-half interest in the property to his son while the building was under construction is now unknown; however, it seems likely to have had some connection with the formation of the Brevard Banking Company. The bank had its offices in the McMinn Building and in deeds of 1902, the building would be referred to as the "Bank Building." In 1902, John William McMinn was cashier of the Brevard Banking Company and treasurer of both the town of Brevard and the county of Transylvania.

As noted, the McMinn Building was only the second brick building known to have been erected in Brevard after the 1873 Transylvania County Court House. As the first brick commercial building erected in the county seat, it is important as the senior member of a series of buildings that transformed the commercial heart of Brevard from a cluster of frame stores and houses to a square lined with one, two, and three-story brick stores, hotels, and commercial buildings within a dozen or so years beginning in 1898. Members of the McMinn family erected two of this series of brick commercial buildings between 1902 and 1904.

At present the identity of the contractor-builder of the McMinn Building is unconfirmed; however, it seems likely to have been C. C. Kilpatrick. In the 1897 Branson's North Carolina Business Directory, there were three such contracting and building concerns listed: J. A. Miller, Kilpatrick Bros., and P. B. Wilson. Of these three only the Kilpatrick brothers, C. C. and J. M., were listed in the 1902 North Carolina Year Book. The more specific reason that the Kilpatrick Brothers were the likely contractors is that C. C. Kilpatrick was erecting a second brick building, under contract, for Nathan McMinn at the time of McMinn's death in the summer of 1902. In the account of the settlement of McMinn's estate, dated 18 September 1903, there is record of nine payments, totalling \$1,802.56, made to C. C. Kilpatrick. The payment for 6 September 1902 has the explanatory notation of "Contract, Brick House." It is believed that the "Brick House" cited in the account is the two-story brick building which adjoins the McMinn Building on the west and which, in part, replicates the brickwork of the original 1899 building. In contemporary deeds it is cited as the "Nathan McMinn Building," differentiating it from the "McMinn Building" on the square.

Knowledgeable of the local market, Nathan McMinn wisely built a mixed-use building on the square. It provided commodious space for the Brevard Banking Company and merchants on the first story and offices for the town's increasing rank of professionals and companies on the second story. The three first-story rental storefronts, each twenty-five feet in width, were covered with typical cast iron fronts manufactured by Mesker Brothers of St. Louis, Missouri. The later first-story rental storefront on the adjoining Nathan McMinn Building, at 8 West Broad Street, features a pair of tall cast-iron Corinthian columns flanking the entrance.

On 5 August 1902, Nathan Van Buren McMinn died and was later buried beside his wife

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in the England/McMinn family plot where his grave is marked by a variegated marble obelisk erected by the Butler Marble Works at a cost of \$700. McMinn died intestate and his estate was administered by his eldest son and business partner, John William McMinn. The real estate holdings comprising the real property of Nathan McMinn was surveyed by A. L. Hardin, the county surveyor. Since 19 October 1899, John William McMinn had held a one-half interest in the McMinn Building property. In the division of Nathan McMinn's estate by the commissioners's deed of 18 September 1902, his one-half interest in the building was equally divided among his other three children: Beulah McMinn Zachary, Nathan E. McMinn, and Mary B. McMinn. They were each allotted a one-sixth undivided interest in the lot at the corner of Main and Broad streets and the building which was then called the "Bank Building." The personal property was divided among the four children and the estate was settled by 18 August 1903. A year later, in 1904, when the new Methodist Church was built in Brevard, the McMinn Window was given in memory of Nathan and Lizzie McMinn by their four children.

Like his father, John William McMinn (1872-1918) rose to prominence in his community and served for periods of time around the turn of the century as treasurer of both Transylvania County and the town of Brevard. He was also cashier of the Brevard Banking Company and treasurer of the Brevard Water Works. Following in his father's footsteps as the proprietor of the Central Hotel, John McMinn erected a handsome three-story hostelry diagonally across the square from the McMinn Building in 1903-1904. He operated it as the Aetholwold Hotel, named for his wife Ethel (1880-1971), until his death in 1918. For the next forty years until her death in 1958, Beulah McMinn Zachary, the widow of William Woodford Zachary (1862-1913) was the senior member of the family. Over the course of years, the shares in the McMinn Building were either inherited or purchased by Beulah McMinn Zachary and her daughter and heir, Elizabeth Zachary Vogler (1901-1993), who died without issue on 20 March 1993. Elizabeth Zachary Vogler was a graduate of the Brevard Institute (1917), Salem College (1923), and received an M.A. from the University of North Carolina in 1940. From 1925 until 1941, she was Dean of Girls at Salem College. After 1941, she and her husband, H. Harold Vogler (died 1989) operated Vogler's Jewelers in Winston-Salem. In her will she bequeathed the McMinn Building to Kayron McMinn Laska, the granddaughter of John William McMinn.

From 1898 to the present, the McMinn Building has been the address of an important roster of commercial enterprises, stores, attorneys, doctors, and other professional men. Waightstill Avery Gash had an office here at the turn of the century and his stationery bore "McMinn Building" as his address. Later both Robert Lenoir Gash and D. L. English, the judges in the county court, had offices here that were convenient to the nearby court house. Judge Robert T. Gash, who now manages the building, continues to rent the corner office overlooking the square. After the Hendersonville and Brevard Railroad failed, it was reorganized as the Transylvania Railroad Company in 1897 and the new railroad company, too, had its offices in the McMinn Building. The corner storefront at #2 West Broad Street has housed a series of (mainly) drug

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stores or pharmacies, while #4 and #6 West Broad Street have been the addresses of groceries, a restaurant, a department store, and other concerns. Presently, the storefronts house the White Squirrel Shop (antiques and gifts) at #2, Frame Up (an art, crafts, and frame shop) at #4, and Jack R. Williams's Shoe Shop in #6. Upstairs, in addition to Judge Gash's office, are the offices of Eckert Realty, Cocoon Interior Design, and a suite of offices undergoing renovation for a new tenant. Its critical position on the square in the county seat has always made the McMinn Building a desirable location for a shop or an office.

Architectural Context

The architectural context of the McMinn Building is discussed in "Historic and Architectural Resources of Transylvania County, North Carolina (including the incorporated towns of Brevard and Rosman), ca. 1820-1941" in Property Type 9, "Commercial and Industrial Buildings." It is described as the "oldest and finest commercial building" in Brevard. Indeed, the McMinn Building is significant as the oldest and finest commercial building in Brevard. It is also significant in the architectural history of the county seat as an important, early example of a mixed use rental building--with three stores on the first story and rental offices on the second story--and for the remarkable degree of integrity which it has retained to the present. On the first level, parts of two of the three original Mesker Brothers iron storefronts which faced on West Main Street remain intact. The handsome corbelled brickwork of the elevations also survives intact. The interiors of the stores have seen varying alterations, however, in each instance and as discussed in the architectural description, signal original/early fittings or furnishings remain in place, principally a pressed tin ceiling, shelves, and wall finishes. This is unusual in buildings which have been in constant use by a succession of tenants for ninety-four years. On the second story, however, the plan and finish of the rental offices remain intact to an altogether remarkable degree. Here, only extremely minor alterations/changes have done little to compromise the turn-of-the-century office interiors. Their simple, imposing presence and appearance are of broad importance, an honor shared by the like, remarkable second and third-story interiors of the later (1906-1907) Brinkley Hotel in Plymouth, N.C. (Plymouth Historic District, 1991).

The same economic factors which caused Nathan McMinn to prosper in the later nineteenth century and enabled him to build his new brick building in 1899 likewise altered the appearance of Brevard in the final years of the century and the opening decades of the twentieth century. For twenty-five years from its completion in 1873 until the construction of the McMinn Building in 1899, the Transylvania County Court House was the only known brick building in Brevard. (That distinction may even hold to the entire county.) The court house, occupying the east corner of the square at the crossing of Broad and Main streets, was surrounded by frame stores, houses, churches, and other necessary buildings which lined the small town's unpaved streets. The arrival of the Hendersonville and Brevard Railroad in 1895, its

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successful reorganization as the Transylvania Railroad in 1897, and its eventual incorporation into the Southern Railway system, provided the means by which this dramatic evolution in the town's fortunes and appearance occurred. This and related economic factors is discussed in "Early Industrialization, 1895-1916," the third historic context in the "Historic and Architectural Resources of Transylvania County, North Carolina."

The construction of the two-story brick McMinn Building in 1899 was the first important step in the series of efforts which saw the frame stores and warehouses of the commercial district replaced with brick buildings and the county seat's more imposing houses of its merchant and professional class covered with stylish pebble-dash or built in brick. Within a few years, the court house and the McMinn Building were joined by two additional brick buildings on the west and south corners of the square. The (now much altered) Picklesimer Block (TV 291) was built on the south corner--across Main Street from the McMinn Building. In 1903-1904 John W. McMinn erected a three-story brick building (TV 295) in which he operated the Aethelwold Hotel until his death in 1918. It was probably the most imposing commercial building erected in Brevard in the early twentieth century and featured a granite-trimmed corner entrance diagonally opposite the corner entrance to the McMinn Building across the square, a separate and well-finished porch sheltering the hotel entrance on South Broad Street, bracketed eaves, and Colonial Revival style gambrel-roof dormers punctuating the roofline of more conventional hipped roof dormers. The removal of the building's third story, the loss of the hotel entrance porch, and the alteration of other elements of its finish have sadly compromised the building.

Within this trio of turn-of-the-century commercial buildings on the square--and within the larger context of the commercial center of Brevard--the McMinn Building retains the presence of a historic building in a streetscape of contemporary (and later buildings) which have mostly been altered to some degree. Its survival as an architectural landmark in the town of Brevard can be attributed, principally, to two factors. The first is that it was seen as an important building in its day and it has retained that distinction to the present. The second factor assuring its survival has been the continued ownership of the McMinn Building in four generations of the McMinn family to whom it has been a source of income and pride.

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FOOTNOTE

1. The principal source of information on the McMinn Building is District Court Judge Robert T. Gash, an attorney who has managed the McMinn Building for the late owner, Elizabeth Zachary Volger, and her estate. Since the late-nineteenth century when W. A. Gash was given power of attorney for the minor Mary B. McMinn in the settlement of her mother's estate, the McMinn and Gash families have had close professional and social relationships which have continued to the present. Notes of the author's conversations and interviews with Robert T. Gash are in the possession of the author. Information on the context of the McMinn Building and the history of Brevard was gleaned from "Historic and Architectural Resources of Transylvania County, North Carolina" which represents the first systematic, chronological narrative history of Transylvania County. Interviews with Brevard residents, principally Rowell Bosse, also enabled the author to gain a fuller understanding of the history of Brevard. Mr. Bosse provided to the author a photocopy of Nathan McMinn's letter to his son in which he proposed the construction of the McMinn Building. Notes of those interviews as well as records of gravestone inscriptions at Oak Grove Cemetery and Gillespie Evergreen Cemetery are in the possession of the author. Transylvania County Public Records in the Transylvania County Court House were also useful as were successive volumes of Branson's North Carolina Business Directory which are cited in the text.

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Rowell Bosse, interview by Davyd Foard Hood, 8 January 1993, interview notes are in the possession of the author.

BRANSON'S NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS DIRECTORY, 1884. Raleigh, N. C.: Levi Branson, 1884.

BRANSON'S NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS DIRECTORY, 1890. Raleigh, N. C.: Levi Branson, 1890.

BRANSON'S NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS DIRECTORY, 1896. Raleigh, N. C.: Levi Branson, 1896.

BRANSON'S NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS DIRECTORY, 1897. Raleigh, N. C.: Levi Branson, 1897.

Robert T. Gash, interview by Davyd Foard Hood, 29 October 1992, interview notes are in the possession of the author.

Transylvania County Records, North Carolina State Archives, Archives Building, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroup: Estates Records).

Transylvania County Records, Office of the Register of Deeds, Transylvania County Court House, Brevard, North Carolina (Subgroup: Deeds).

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is Parcel BRE-6-2-A-02-008 which appears on Transylvania County Tax Map BRE-6-2-A.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses all that property both historically and currently associated with the McMinn Building.

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The following numbered list of photographs is a schedule of photographs included in the nomination for the McMinn Building. The following information applies to all photographs unless otherwise noted:

Name of Property: McMinn Building
2-6 West Main Street
Brevard
Transylvania County
North Carolina

Photographer: Davyd Foard Hood

Date of Photographs: 29 October 1992

Location of Original Negatives: Division of Archives and History
109 East Jones Street
Raleigh, North Carolina
27601-2807

1. Overall view of the McMinn Building, looking north.
2. View of the West Main Street elevation of the McMinn Building (including the Transylvania County Court House), looking east.
3. View of the storefront at 6 West Main Street (and a portion of #4), looking northeast.
4. View of the pressed tin ceiling in the store at 4 West Main Street, looking southwest.
5. View of the railing protecting the stairwell and mezzanine in the store at 6 West Main Street, looking south.
6. View of the second story hall including the railing protecting the stair which rises from the first story, looking southwest.
7. View of the second story hall including entrances into offices #13-15 (left) and #18 (beside fuseboxes), looking northeast.
8. View from office #6 (Judge Gash's) into hall, looking north.

