

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Henderson Fire Station and Municipal Building

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Garnett Street at Young Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Henderson

VICINITY OF

2nd

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Vance

181

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

**ACCESSIBLE**

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME City of Henderson, c/o George Boyd, Mayor

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 1434

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Henderson

VICINITY OF

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Vance County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Henderson

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

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

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Henderson Fire Station, its dramatic tower rising high above its neighbors on Henderson's main commercial street, is perhaps the most striking landmark of the town. It is a handsome, functional building of rich red brick, with severely simple lines and forceful massing. The building consists of a rectangular main block, two stories high with a gable roof, and the gable end facing the street, a corner tower at the front left corner (which is also the street corner) rising roughly five stories, and topped by a shallow hip roof. A slightly Mediterranean flavor is derived from the use of arched motifs and the tall, campanile-like tower with its flat roof.

The main block is marked by three double bays. At the first level there are three openings for fire trucks, and to the right a small single door entrance. Above, three evenly spaced blind arches outlined in brick frame three double windows with four-over-four sash per leaf. The gable is slightly parapetted, and shaped at the end and apex, and accented by a brick coping. The gable is emphasized by a blind bullseye with four contrasting keystones.

The tower's verticality is enhanced by the pairs of narrow blind arched panels that rise three stories, topped by a narrow brick hood molding. Pairs of windows occur at each level, those at the first level and third being even, those at the second being staggered in a stairstep pattern. The upper portion of the tower, at fourth and fifth story level, is underlined by a molded cornice. Clocks with Roman numerals occur on the faces, and above, a series of pilasters flanking arched openings on each face. The dramatically broad overhang of the roof is carried on intersecting exposed rafters. The side elevations are more simply treated, with a series of arched and linteled doors and windows. The main block and the tower, sides and front, are unified by the stone water table, of rusticated ashlar, reaching about 4 feet in height.

The interior of the building is simply finished and has been changed over the years to suit changing technology. The first floor, of course, houses the fire trucks and the second is living quarters for the firemen. The brick walls are exposed and painted. The gleaming fire pole still reaches through a trap door from the second floor to the first. The interior of the tower is a dramatic open well with a seven-flight stair.

### Municipal Building.

Constructed in an irregular L shape around the fire station is the municipal building added in a style which blends with the fire station. It is a one-story brick structure, facing on the side street. The stone water table continues along this facade. It is seven bays long with large windows accented by stone keystones. The roofline is parapetted, with a central raised portion, and the roofline is defined by a corbel cornice and coping. The building continues along the rear and northeast side of the fire station, emerging on Garnett Street at the east corner as a small one-story, three bay extension. This building was built in the 1920s--1928 according to a date stamped on a gutter.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1908      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Robert Bunn

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Henderson Fire Station was built in 1908 by Robert Bunn of Henderson, to replace an earlier structure dating from the 1880s. With its dramatic tower rising high above its neighbors along Garnett Street, the substantial red brick building is perhaps downtown Henderson's chief landmark, and one of the handsomest buildings of its kind in the region. Adjoining it is the Municipal Building of the 1920s.

Assessment of criteria:

(A) Associated with early 20th century improvement of municipal service and safety, and improved firefighting efforts.

(C) Embodies distinctive characteristics, particularly the tower, of functional, dramatic early 20th century eclectic architecture.

Fires in antebellum Henderson were announced by frantic cries of "fire!" and the ringing of bells. Voluntary efforts to combat a blaze lacked any organized method or skill. A disastrous fire in 1870 destroyed many homes and businesses which led to a more scientific approach to firefighting.<sup>2</sup> W. W. Reavis donated a light truck, which incidentally had his initials emblazoned in gold on the side, to the town. The truck, loaded with hooks, ladders, and leather buckets was motored by manpower. At the scene of a fire two lines were formed, one for passing filled buckets to douse the flames and the other to return empties to the water source.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after arriving in Henderson in 1882, Colonel W. H. S. Burgwyn gave the town its second piece of firefighting equipment--a hand pump. The pump closely resembled a railroad handcar with two long hoses, one of which was lowered<sup>4</sup> into a cistern or well. Pumping action produced a crude forerunner of modern hose usage.

Henderson's first fire station, constructed in the late 1880s, was built of pine covered with layers of corrugated iron and was painted red. It stood on Garnett Avenue about midway between Young and Montgomery streets. Rising above was a tower with four open sides and a bell whose coded ringing signaled the location and duration of a fire.<sup>5</sup> In the early 1890s, a Mr. Nelson, who had helped<sup>6</sup> install the town's water system in 1892, instructed the men in firefighting techniques. By 1905 Henderson's fire department consisted of a group of volunteers with some training and a one-horse wagon containing the firefighting equipment. It is of interest also that the black citizens of Henderson had a separate firefighting force consisting of volunteers and a two-wheel hose vehicle pulled by the men. Jim Gill, a barber, was largely responsible for the well<sup>8</sup> organized operation which was rated among the best black fire companies in the state.

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The present Henderson Fire Station was constructed in 1908 when T. J. Southerland was mayor. The designer and builder was Robert Bunn, a native of England who came to Henderson from Canada about 1879. He established a business as a contractor/builder and operated it until his death in 1917. Bunn constructed many buildings in Henderson including the town hall, the old Presbyterian Church and parsonage, cotton mills, and the old part of a bagging mill.

Sometime after 1908 the town of Henderson initiated a series of events closely paralleling the antics of the Keystone Cops. First an oversized, overweight truck was purchased that was so heavy ordinary horses could not budge it. Instead of obtaining a lighter vehicle, the town fathers decided to buy two very large work horses. These were able to move the truck, but they were so slow that structures burned to the ground before they reached the scene. A large downtown fire in 1914 dramatically illustrated the problem.<sup>10</sup>

Following the 1914 conflagration, fire chief Eugene Faulkner recommended that the town purchase one of the new motor driven trucks. On March 15, 1915, the town council favorable passed the motion "that a fire truck with a pumping engine be purchased and that a fire-alarm system be installed in the station."<sup>11</sup> Thus the Henderson Fire Department entered the modern age and, though many interior changes may have been made to keep abreast of the latest equipment and techniques, the fire station's exterior remains almost as it was built in 1908. The Municipal Building was added to the rear in the 1920s.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Samuel T. Peace, "Zeb's Black Baby:" Vance County, North Carolina (Henderson, 1955), p. 303, hereinafter cited as Peace, "Zeb's Black Baby."

<sup>2</sup>Peace, "Zeb's Black Baby," p. 293.

<sup>3</sup>Peace, "Zeb's Black Baby," p. 304; and Henderson Daily Dispatch, undated clipping in survey file, Archeology and Historic Preservation Section, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Henderson Daily Dispatch.

<sup>4</sup>Peace, "Zeb's Black Baby," p. 304; and Henderson Daily Dispatch.

<sup>5</sup>Peace, "Zeb's Black Baby," p. 304.

<sup>6</sup>Henderson Daily Dispatch; and Peace, "Zeb's Black Baby," p. 304.

<sup>7</sup>Peace, "Zeb's Black Baby," p. 304; and Henderson Daily Dispatch.

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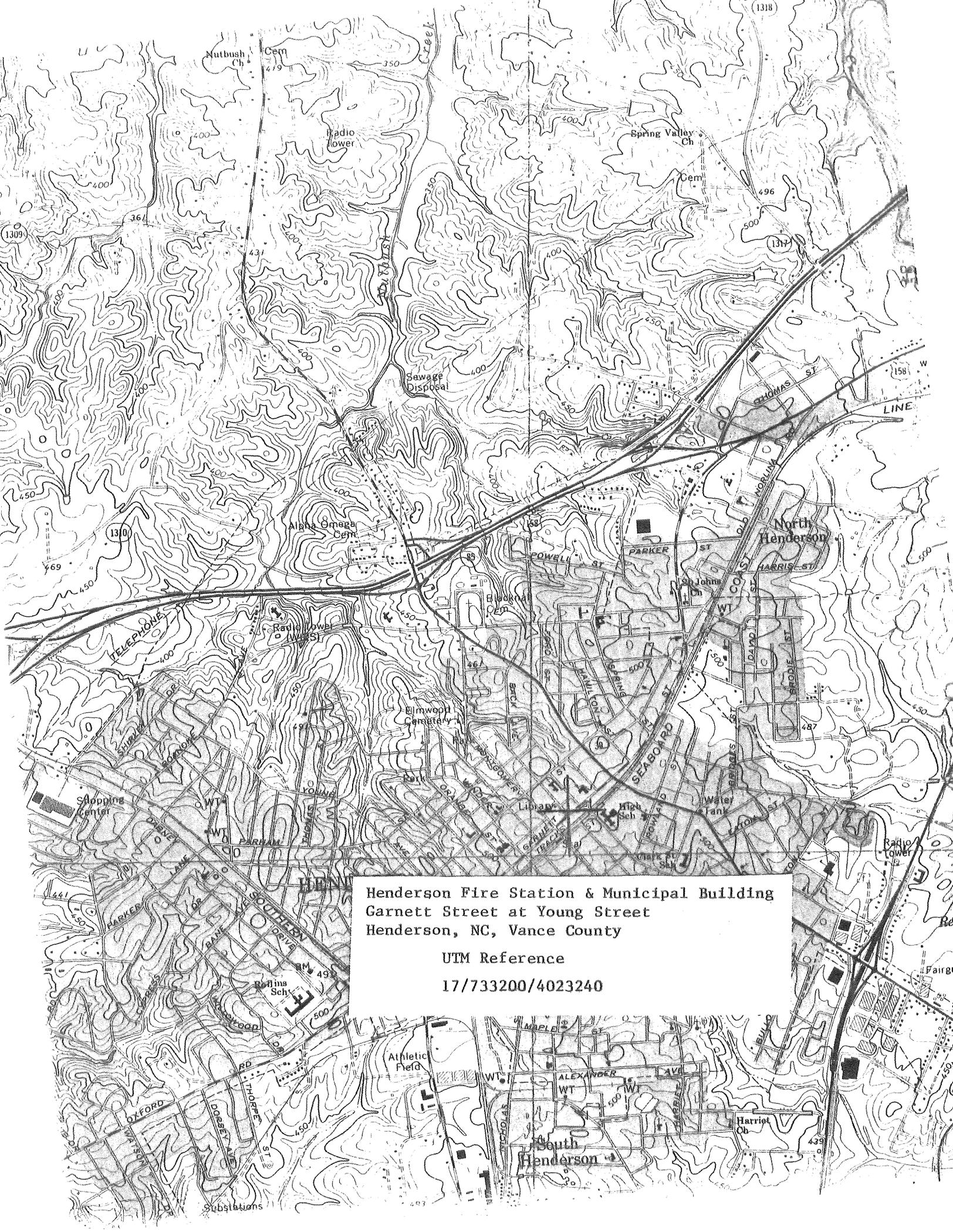
<sup>8</sup>Peace, "Zeb's Black Baby," p. 304.

<sup>9</sup>Inscription on station cornerstone; and Mrs. J. C. Cooper, interview with Bertha Bunn of Henderson, ninety-six year old daughter of Robert Bunn, November 3, 1977, information relayed to researcher by phone on the same date.

<sup>10</sup>Peace, "Zeb's Black Baby," p. 305.

<sup>11</sup>Peace, "Zeb's Black Baby," p. 305.





Henderson Fire Station & Municipal Building  
Garnett Street at Young Street  
Henderson, NC, Vance County

UTM Reference  
17733200/4023240

