

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Downtown Albemarle Historic District
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Portions of S. Second St., W. Main St., and N. and S. First St. N/A not for publication
city or town Albemarle N/A vicinity
state North Carolina code NC county Stanly code 167 zip code 28001

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)
Jeffrey Cron SHPO 2/8/02
Signature of certifying official Date
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
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 or other official Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

	Signature of Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____

**Downtown Albemarle Historic District
Stanly County, North Carolina**

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: private Category of Property District

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>20</u>	<u>2</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>20</u>	<u>2</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Cat:	<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>	Sub:	<u>specialty store</u>
	<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>		<u>department store</u>
	<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>		<u>professional</u>
	<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>		<u>financial institution</u>
	<u>GOVERNMENT</u>		<u>post office</u>
	<u>RECREATION/CULTURE</u>		<u>theater</u>
	<u>FUNERARY</u>		<u>mortuary</u>

Current Functions

Cat:	<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>	Sub:	<u>specialty store</u>
	<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>		<u>professional</u>
	<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>		<u>business</u>
	<u>RECREATION/CULTURE</u>		<u>music facility/theater</u>

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Commercial Style

Materials

foundation

walls

roof

other

Stone

Brick

Stucco

Asphalt

Stone

Metal

Narrative Description : See Continuation Sheets

**Downtown Albemarle Historic District
Stanly County, North Carolina**

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- 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.)

- a owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- b removed from its original location.
- c a birthplace or a 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

COMMERCE
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance: 1898 - 1950 Significant Dates N/A

Significant person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Moody, L.A. (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance: See Continuation Sheets

**Downtown Albemarle Historic District
Stanly County, North Carolina**

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography; 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

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **Approx. 5**

UTM References: zone 17: easting 572750 northing 3911940

Verbal Boundary Description:

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

Boundary Justification:

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

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title	<u>Dwight Bassett and HPO Staff</u>	Date: <u>October 1, 2000</u>
Organization	_____	_____
Street and number	<u>3040 Yadkin Avenue</u>	Telephone: <u>(828)625-8811</u>
City or town/State/Zip code	<u>Charlotte, NC 28746</u>	_____

Property Owner

Multiple owners

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

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting 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 Service Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, D.C. 20503

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Downtown Albemarle Historic District
Albemarle, Stanly County, N. C.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Downtown Albemarle Historic District constitutes the early core of Albemarle's commercial center and lies within the area that comprised the original town limits. Located on portions of South Second Street, West Main Street, and North and South First streets, the district is made up of twenty-two commercial buildings dating from 1898 to 1940. Twenty (ninety-one percent) of the resources are contributing and one of these, the Starnes Opera House, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NR, 1995).

First Street, the district's westernmost edge and the town's major north-south street, extends along an elevated ridge affording views to the west of Little Long Creek, the railroad corridor, and rail-related buildings including the former depot. Commercial buildings stand north of the district but are isolated from it by an immense modern noncontributing building. North, south, and east of Albemarle's commercial downtown are residential neighborhoods that developed in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A small commercial and industrial area known as Five Points stands to the east of Second Street, and immediately to the east of that area is the residential Pee Dee Avenue Historic District (NR, 1998). Another commercial and industrial area known as the Albemarle Railroad and Industrial Historic District lies to the west of the Downtown Albemarle Historic District.

The Downtown Albemarle Historic District generally follows a grid pattern. The junction of Second and Main streets at the northeast corner of the district forms the heart of Albemarle and was originally the site of Stanly County's first courthouse. While the district includes the south side of the one hundred block of West Main Street, the north side of the block is omitted because of alterations to the storefronts of the mostly early twentieth-century buildings. The future removal of the most egregious modern facades might allow this nomination to be amended to include the block. The east side of the one hundred block of South Second Street, also excluded from the district, contains mostly modern buildings including the late twentieth-century courthouse.

Resources in the district are one-, two-, and three-story masonry buildings exhibiting a variety of decoration; stucco applied within the period of significance covers a few exteriors. The buildings are generally standard commercial style and range from plain to more elaborate. Several buildings exhibit stepped side elevation parapets. Many are embellished with arched lintels over windows, corbelled cornices, and dentil detailing. Decorative detailing expressed in brick, stone, terra cotta, marble, granite, stucco, metal, and wood enliven the buildings' modest overall styling. Several properties feature intact Crane patented display window frames. These copper and polished aluminum storefronts were assembled from ordered parts. Leaded glass transoms enhance Hall's Pharmacy (#12), Efir's Dry Goods (#14), the Fitzgerald Building (#15), and Morgan Furniture (#22). Some transoms in the district remain in place, but have been painted or covered with plywood to create sign panels.

The Starnes Opera House, built in 1907, is the district's most striking edifice. Granite and limestone keystones enliven its second and third floor windows. Semi-elliptical fanlights crown the second floor windows while the third floor boasts five round pivot windows with "spider web" muntin design.

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Overall, the Downtown Albemarle Historic District retains integrity of setting, design, workmanship, location, materials, feeling, and association. Its commercial character sets the Downtown Albemarle Historic District apart from adjacent railroad-related and industrial areas to the west and east, respectively, and from the less-intact and more modern commercial development to the north.

INVENTORY LIST

The following list of properties is organized beginning with the southernmost building on the west side of South Second Street; progressing northward to the intersection of West Main Street; continuing along the south side of West Main Street from east to west, and then along the west side of First Street from south to north, ending at the northernmost resource in the district. The inventory provides the name, location, dates of construction and major additions or renovations, contributing or noncontributing status, and a description of each resource. Historical and architectural data is based primarily on a combination of on-site inspection, Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps (periodic series from 1902 to 1929 and a 1945 update of the 1929 series), secondary sources, local newspapers, and city directories from the period. Inventory numbers and contributing or noncontributing status are keyed to the district map.

West Side South Second Street

1. **Central Lunch**
140 S. Second Street
1929-1930/ca. 1950
Contributing building

Central Lunch has continuously operated as a restaurant since its opening in 1930. Wilbur Earnhardt established this café, then sold the business to W. T. Carpenter in 1936. George Carpenter bought the restaurant in 1970 and continues to operate the business.

The one-story, brick building was originally two bays wide and free standing until a smaller two-bay addition was built on the north side ca. 1950. Three windows and an exhaust fan bay pierce the south elevation facing King Alley. An asphalt-shingle-covered hipped roof replaced the original terra cotta tile roof on the 1930 section; remnants of tile coping and wood shingles cover the front shed roof on the addition. The interior remains much as it did when constructed.

2. **Farmers Hardware and General Store**
138 S. Second Street
1898
Contributing building

Dr. O. D. King, a local physician and real estate developer, built this edifice in 1898. For approximately one hundred years, the prominent building served as a hardware and dry goods store. From 1898 to 1924, Farmers Hardware and General Store operated here, but in only one

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storefront. In 1930, after Stanly Hardware took over the building, the business expanded to occupy both storefronts.

The two-story brick, commercial-style building is divided into two fields on its upper level and features a bold dentil course crowned by a modest stepped cornice and continuous tile coping that follows along the stepped side elevations; six 6-over-6 sash topped with arched lintels and a decorative masonry stringcourse; and a plywood-covered transom running uninterrupted over the twin storefronts. A later metal awning shields the glass and aluminum storefronts. Missing portions of modern synthetic panels covering the lower storefront reveal the original well-preserved brick.

3. **King Block I**
132-136 S. Second Street
1898
Contributing building

Dr. O. D. King built this edifice along with its neighboring buildings in 1898. Husband and wife, Samuel and Rae Kanter Friedman operated this portion of the King Block as a dry goods store for most of the first half of the twentieth century.

The two-story, brick, commercial-style building exhibits original decorative brick detailing on its upper level. Four 2-over-2 sash with arched lintels crowned with drip hoods embellished with dentils pierce the second floor; a stepped cornice inset with two horizontal panels crowns a diamond-like course over the windows that terminates at truncated corbelled pilasters on each end of the façade. A pressed metal panel tops the northern storefront which features a central entrance flanked by windows with aluminum framing; permastone has been added to the bulkhead. The southern storefront has aluminum-framed display windows and an offset single-light door and is sheltered by a wood-shingled pent.

4. **King Block II**
128 S. Second Street
1898
Contributing building

The 1929 Sanborn map indicates this building housed a furniture store on its first level and a lodge hall on the upper floor. The two-story, stucco-over-brick building features modest detailing including tile coping on the parapet and a simple raised-brick diamond motif on the flat cornice. Three 1-over-1 sash with arched lintels pierce the second floor. A pressed metal cornice crowns the storefront composed of a central entrance flanked by aluminum-framed display windows.

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King Block III
122-130 S. Second Street
1898
Contributing building

In the early twentieth century the offices of builder L. A. Moody occupied the second story of this building. The street level housed a millinery store, and in 1924 an A&P grocery.

The two-story, stucco-over-brick building features modest detailing including tile coping on the parapet and a simple raised-brick diamond motif on the flat cornice. Three 1-over-1 sash with arched lintels pierce the second floor. A pressed metal cornice crowns the storefront composed of a central entrance flanked by aluminum-framed display windows and a door to the south that allows access to the second floor.

5. **Commercial Building**
116 S. Second Street
1898
Noncontributing building

The one-story, brick building features an upper façade covered with fiberglass panels and a storefront of aluminum-framed display windows and permastone surround. Modern changes render the building noncontributing.

6. **T. C. Hearne Building**
110-114 S. Second Street
1898
Contributing building

T. C. Hearne constructed this modest two-part building in 1898. A café and office currently occupy the building. The one-story brick building features an upper façade with limestone-framed sign panels. A mid-twentieth century flat metal awning shelters two storefronts. The southern front features a recessed center entrance flanked by aluminum framed display windows and a Crane patented storefront. The northern front features aluminum-framed windows and a single-light door.

7. **J. C. Parker Building**
106 S. Second Street
1898/ca. 1940
Contributing building

J. C. Parker constructed this building in 1898. The 1902 Sanborn map shows the occupant as a men's clothing. The two-story, stucco-over-brick commercial-style building features modest detailing including tile coping on the parapet and a simple stepped cornice above four 4-point

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inset tile motifs. Stucco was applied over the brick ca. 1940. Three sash with arched lintels and crowning flat stone drip hoods pierce the second floor. A pressed metal cornice tops the symmetrical storefront composed of two central doors flanked by aluminum-framed display windows and sheltered by a flat metal awning.

8. **King Building**
102 S. Second Street
1898
Contributing building

Dr. O. D. King built this prominent Albemarle landmark in 1898. At one time he kept an office in the building. C. J. Mauney's Drug Store occupied the street-level storefront from 1898 to 1906; the Homebuilders Association occupied the upper floor early in the building's history. Beginning in 1906, the building housed men's clothing stores including Allen Clothing Store and J. Talberts, Ltd. The clothing stores' sewing room occupied the upper level.

The two-story, stucco-over-brick commercial-style building occupies the southwest corner of the former town square. The façade is similar to Dr. King's other buildings along S. Second Street in that it features tile coping on the parapet, a robust dentil band, and three 1-over-1 sash with arched lintels crowned by flat stone drip hoods. A pressed metal cornice crowns the storefront composed of a central entrance flanked by aluminum-framed display windows and a door to the south that allows access to the second floor. A canted street level entrance occupies the corner of W. Main and S. Second streets. Seven windows, identical to those on the façade, pierce the W. Main Street side of the building. This elevation also carries part of the dentil band and features a dramatic stepped parapet punctuated by five brick flues. The rear elevation, visible from W. Main Street, remains remarkably intact. The interior retains its original pressed metal ceiling and mahogany stained window trim.

[Alley]

South Side West Main Street

9. **P. J. Huneycutt Building**
119 W. Main Street
1900
Noncontributing building

R. L. Smith and Amos Biles, a town commissioner at the turn of the century, constructed this building. P. J. Huneycutt Furniture and Mortuary was the principal occupant for most of the early twentieth century. Later, after Huneycutt relocated to a new building on N. Second Street, Belk-Parks department store was located here. A pharmacy currently occupies the building.

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The front of the two-story brick, commercial-style building is covered with a later, incompatible façade, but the building retains some original character including the arched lintel windows and side stepped parapet on the east elevation. The rear elevation is remarkably intact. The storefront consists of aluminum-framed display windows and flat metal awnings. Future restoration of the façade could possibly render the building contributing.

10. Opera House/Starnes Jewelers Building (NR, 1995)

127 W. Main Street
1907/1936
Contributing building

Locke Anderson Moody, Albemarle's foremost builder at the turn of the century, erected this building for Francis Eugene Starnes, Doctor Franklin Parker, and Julius Ceasar Parker; their descendants continue to own the property. Like many of its neighbors, it was a mixed-use building with commercial storefronts on the first story and rental offices above. The performance hall on the second story sets the building apart. According to the National Register nomination, the opera house is "important as the finest and best preserved commercial building of a series, erected in the 1890s and 1900s" and as the town's most distinguished building reflecting the "emergence of the town as an important trade and manufacturing center." The salesroom of Starnes Jewelers, Albemarle's oldest continuously operating business, has occupied the first floor since 1908. From 1908 to 1913, the large performance hall on the upper levels was the "principal venue for traveling vaudeville shows, theatrical troupes, and lecturers in Albemarle." Moving pictures superceded these shows beginning in 1914.

The two-story-with-mezzanine brick, commercial-style building stands as one of the district's most stylish resources. Five round pivot windows with spider-web muntins above five paired windows with the same spider-web motif filling crowning fanlights distinguish the building. A stepped cornice tops the façade. Storefronts flank a center entrance composed a double-leaf door surmounted by a deep transom and fronted with a wrought iron gate. This door leads to stairs to second-floor offices and the former site of the opera house. Both storefronts retain aluminum framed glass display windows and single-light shop doors. In 1936, carrara glass was applied to the exterior of the first floor elevation.

12. Hall's Pharmacy Building

135 W. Main Street
ca. 1908
Contributing building

Prominent pharmacist Dr. Julius Clegg Hall operated his drugstore here for much of the first half of the twentieth century. The 1908 Sanborn map indicates a photo gallery on the second floor. Purcell Drugs later occupied the building.

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The two-story pressed-brick, commercial style building features an upper story bracketed cornice embellished with a sunburst motif and hanging pendants. Four 12-over-1 window openings, including a paired window crowned with a divided fanlight, pierce the second floor façade. A cornice over three rectangular single-light windows tops the first floor shopfront. The original storefront has been altered and currently features three 1-over-1 windows and a single-light door with a transom. A door to the second floor occupies the west end of the façade.

13. **Commercial Building**
141 W. Main Street
ca. 1922
Contributing building

Its restoration nearing completion, this two-story brick, commercial style building features a storefront with central entrance, flanking wood-framed display windows, and transoms, while a Palladian window arrangement, pilasters, corbelling, decorative metal vents, and a decorative parapet mark the upper façade. The narrow, westernmost bay has a round-arched entrance leading to the staircase to the upper floor.

14. **Efird Dry Goods Store**
145 W. Main Street
1903
Contributing building

Efird Dry Goods operated here from 1903 until 1926. A beauty supply shop currently occupies one half of the building. The two-story blond brick, commercial-style building features quoining at its front corners and dividing the façade. Three 1-over-1 sash windows inset in round arch surrounds highlighted with marble keystones and sills occupy each side of the second floor. A prominent cornice surmounts the double storefronts which feature leaded glass transoms and inset entrances flanked by glass display windows.

15. **Fitzgerald Building/Roses 5&10**
151 W. Main Street
1927
Contributing building

Dr. W. C. Fitzgerald, father-in-law of Dr. Julius Clegg Hall, constructed this building. A 5 & 10 occupied the main storefront originally. The 1929 Sanborn map indicates that the Tarheel Club convened in an upstairs meeting room on the second floor.

The two-story brick, commercial-style building features a center parapet with inset limestone sign bearing the date of construction and name of the building. Limestone coping crowns the upper facade; just below the cornice the stone repeats in a beltcourse. Nine 1-over-1 windows with flat transoms accented with limestone corner blocks pierce the second floor. Large banks of display

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windows flank the center, recessed entrance. A full-width transom tops the storefront. The First Street elevation features small first-floor windows and a single-leaf entrance with fanlight sheltered by a half-round hood. The second floor features five pairs of windows identical to those on the Main Street side. Limestone coping tops this elevation.

East Side South First Street

16. **The Enterprise Steam Print Building**
123 S. First Street
1922
Contributing building

Locke Anderson Moody, Albemarle's leading early twentieth-century contractor, constructed it. *The Enterprise* was Albemarle and Stanly County's newspaper from 1898 to the late 1920s when it became *The Stanly News & Herald*. The Enterprise also served as the town's primary printing press for invitations, fliers, and other printed material. A. C. Huneycutt, mayor of Albemarle and a local attorney, worked as the paper's publisher for many years.

The two-story brick, gable-roof building features a prominent front stepped parapet highlighted with concrete coping. Despite later brick infill of the front openings and the reduction in size of the windows on the south side elevation, the building retains its original light industrial character.

West Side South First Street

17. **Commercial Building**
128 S. First Street
ca. 1929
Contributing building

This building originally functioned as a plumbing shop. The one-story brick, commercial-style building features a stepped parapet, recessed sign panel and storefront with a large display window and recessed north entrance.

18. **Lowder Hardware Building**
124 S. First Street
ca. 1922
Contributing building

Lowder Hardware store operated here from ca. 1922 until 1932 when it moved to "the Big Store" (#19). The modest two-story brick, commercial-style building features two 12-over-1 sash on the second level; sash with the same window configuration continue—individually and in pairs—on the north elevation facing the vacant lot. The storefront consists of a single door flanked by two large display windows; a door on the south end of the façade leads to the second floor.

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[Vacant Lot]

West Side North First Street

19. **"The Big Store"**
103 N. First Street
1898
Contributing building

This building has remained a landmark in downtown Albemarle since its construction. It was first called "The Big Store" in an advertisement appearing in a local newspaper in 1898. Eford and Wiscasset Mills operated the store for its employees until 1903, when Morrow Brothers and Heath took over the space for their business, which remained successful until 1932. Lowder Hardware and Company occupied the former "Big Store" from 1932 until 1995. In 1998 a restaurant opened in the newly restored building.

The prominent two-story, stucco-over-brick commercial-style building stands at one of Albemarle's busy intersections. Its most conspicuous feature is the four-tile star motif periodically punctuating the façade and the brick beltcourse that undulates above the segmental arches of the windows. Tile coping finishes off the flat parapet on the front elevation. Ten 1-over-1 sash with arched heads and stone sills pierce the second floor. The three storefronts consist of double-leaf doors between display windows; at the middle storefront, the entrance is recessed. Bands of raised brick suggestive of quoins flank the storefronts and the door at the north end providing access to the staircase to the second floor.

20. **Lowder Hardware Annex**
107 N. First Street
ca. 1908/ca. 1913
Contributing building

The rear portion of this building was constructed ca. 1908 (or possibly earlier) as a warehouse. Sanborn maps indicate that the front portion of the building had been built by 1913 and was operating as a seed store. The austere one-story, stucco-over-brick building features a flush off center (to the south) storefront consisting of a single-leaf door and flanking display windows. Three-tile star motifs near the cornice match those on "The Big Store" (#19).

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21. **Commercial Building**
121 N. First Street
ca. 1940
Contributing building

The one-story brick, commercial-style building features an aluminum-framed glass storefront, tile coping along the cornice, and a flat metal awning.

22. **Morgan Furniture Building**
129 N. First Street
1924
Contributing building

J. W. Efird erected this building for his son-in-law, Finch Morgan, who operated a furniture store and undertaking business here for approximately twenty-five years. Several furniture concerns operated in the building during the twentieth century including Stanly, Maxwell Brothers, Collins, Setzler, and Hinson furniture companies. In 1984, it was converted to a mini-mall, a renovation that was accomplished without compromising the building's status as one of Albemarle's finest early-twentieth century commercial resources.

The two-story, brick, commercial-style building features brick pilasters that delineate the entrances and rise to a parapet capped with limestone. A prominent upper level bracketed wooden cornice crowns six bays consisting of pairs of 1-over-1 sash windows above the storefronts and a single sash window above the door providing access to the second floor that separates the two storefronts. A cornice extends along the façade just above a leaded glass transom positioned over the storefronts.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Downtown Albemarle Historic District, a roughly five-block area encompassing portions of South Second Street, West Main Street, and North and South First streets, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an intact and cohesive collection of representative late-nineteenth and twentieth century commercial architecture. The district is also eligible under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its association with the commercial development of the city of Albemarle from 1898 to 1950, a period during which the district served as the town's most significant and intact commercial area.

Established in 1857, Albemarle experienced slow growth until the Yadkin Railroad came through the town in 1891 leading to the formation of prosperous industries. The opening of Efirm Manufacturing Company in 1896, followed by Wiscasset Mills in 1899, fueled the development of an active downtown where sturdy and stylish brick buildings replaced fire-prone wooden commercial edifices constructed during the town's earliest building phase. One of the landmarks of downtown Albemarle was the company store (#19) opened in 1898 to serve the employees of both Efirm Manufacturing and Wiscasset Mills. The early twentieth century drew more industry to the Stanly County town and prompted further development of Albemarle's commercial downtown. Buildings constructed in the first few decades of the 1900s that housed furniture stores, hardware businesses, five-and-dimes, and the offices of the local newspaper stand nearly unaltered in central Albemarle.

The Downtown Albemarle Historic District contains a fine collection of one, two, and three-story brick commercial style buildings reflecting the town's era of prosperity and displaying an array of stone, brick, and pressed metal decorative elements. In the mid-twentieth century, stucco was added to the exterior of several buildings. The most opulent resource is the 1907 Starnes Opera House (#11) featuring round pivot windows with spider web muntins and a moderne carrera glass façade added in 1936. More subdued, but equally impressive is the prominent King Building (#9) situated at the southwest corner of South Second and West Main streets. Drip hoods crown arched-head second floor windows and a saw-tooth cornice finishes the upper parapet.

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Historical Background

Smith's Store, the first known settlement in what is now Stanly County, was established in 1826 at the crossroads of the Old Turnpike Road, connecting Fayetteville and Salisbury, and the Old State Road, connecting Raleigh and Charlotte. Mr. George S. Smith owned the store and served as first postmaster. After David Kendall, Ebenezer Hearne, George Smith, and John Freeman petitioned the state legislature to establish a new county west of the Pee Dee River, Stanly County was formed in 1841 from Montgomery County. Nancy Almond Hearne donated fifty acres for the town of Albemarle, which was to be located at Smith's Store. Albemarle was chosen as the name in order to commemorate North Carolina's first county. Surveyors laid out the town limits, which were bounded by North and South streets and Fourth and First streets to the east and west. The surveyors divided the plat into seventy-two lots, which were sold at a public auction to raise money for the construction of the courthouse and jail.

Before the completion of the county courthouse, court sessions were held at the home of Nancy Hearne. The first courthouse was built in 1843 in the center of the intersection of Main and Second streets, an area later referred to as the square. In 1867, the courthouse was relocated to the northeast corner of Main and Second.

When Albemarle incorporated in 1857 it was a modest settlement. Residential and commercial development was concentrated along Second and Third streets. Businesses included two grog shops, a cabinet shop, and the Marshall Hotel. The town also had a post office and a Methodist meeting house. Seven houses, four of which were log, stood in Albemarle. Even by 1891, the population did not exceed 300 and there were only about six frame commercial buildings standing in town.

The last decade of the nineteenth century was pivotal for the sleepy town of Albemarle. In 1891 the Yadkin Railroad was built through Albemarle on its way from Salisbury to Norwood in the southeast corner of Stanly County. The arrival of the line changed Albemarle forever by attracting industry and business to the community. Textile magnate James William Cannon of neighboring Cabarrus County and Stanly County businessman Irenus Polycarp Efird opened the first mill of the Efird Manufacturing Company in 1897, the same year the first passenger train rolled into Albemarle. Two years later Cannon opened Wiscasset Mills on property adjoining the Efird complex.

As the mills prospered and expanded, Albemarle's population grew steadily, spurring the development of the town's commercial areas and creating the need for residential areas surrounding downtown. At the end of the century grand dwellings began to rise along West Main Street and Pee Dee Avenue. In the heart of the town, one-, two-, and three-story brick buildings housing dry goods stores, hardware businesses, furniture concerns, and professional offices quickly replaced the early frame structures. Initially, commercial development occurred along South Second Street. Nine edifices built in 1898 survive along the west side of the street in the Downtown Albemarle Historic District (entries 2 to 9), including five built by physician and real estate developer Dr. O. D. King (entries 2 to 5 and 9). Tied directly to the new mills in town was "the Big Store" (entry 19), a retail business established in 1898 in a two-story brick

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building on the corner of West Main and North First streets to cater to the employees of the Efirnd and Wiscasset mills.

By 1900 Albemarle's population had reached 1,382. New industrial concerns had opened including Albemarle Roller Mills, Albemarle Furniture and Manufacturing Company, I.W. Snuggs Planing and Mill, and R.L. Sibley Planning Mill. The establishment of these plants coincided with the opening of new commercial enterprises in downtown Albemarle, such as Efirnd Dry Goods Store and P.J. Honeycutt Furniture & Mortuary. The 1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps indicate that a drugstore, shoe store, bank, post office, hardware store, jewelry store, grocery store, bakery, and five-and-dime store were operating on the west side of South Second Street. A law office occupied the second floor of the King Building (entry 9) at the corner of West Main and South Second streets.

Just a few years into the new century, Albemarle stood as the center of civic, commercial, and industrial activity in Stanly County. The town boasted three textile mills, two building material factories, a furniture factory, roller mill, ice plant, saw mills, banks, two newspapers, two hotels, and thirty-two shops and stores. By 1908 several additional businesses had opened downtown, including a barber shop, bottling works, restaurant, laundry, men's clothing store, and a marble cutting operation. The town's population grew to more than 2,100 citizens by 1910. The Winston-Salem Southbound Railroad's commencement of passenger and freight service to Albemarle in 1912 further added to the potential for the downtown's commercial growth.

Community life in Albemarle was bolstered in the first decade of the twentieth century with the construction of churches for Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists. In 1907-1908, on the south side of Main Street, Francis Eugene Starnes and Doctor Franklin Parker built the Opera House/Starnes Jewelers Building (entry 11), one of Albemarle's most distinctive surviving commercial buildings of its era, with retail space on the first floor and a performance hall above.

Downtown's next major growth phase began around 1915 and was spurred on by the expansion of Wiscasset Mill in 1918 and growth in other area industries and businesses. During this decade, Albemarle took on a more "citified" appearance with the addition of several new buildings. In 1922, Lowder Hardware established itself in a new building (entry 18), *The Enterprise* moved into a new building on South First Street (entry 16) containing state-of-the-art steam presses, and the modestly scaled yet handsome building at 141 West Main Street (entry 13) was constructed with retail space on the first floor and offices above. Two years later, J. W. Efirnd built the Morgan Furniture Building for his son-in-law, Finch Morgan, who opened Morgan Furniture there. Dr. W. C. Fitzgerald, a local dentist, built the Fitzgerald Building in 1927 (entry 15). Stanly Hardware took over Farmers Hardware in 1922 and in 1930 expanded to occupy both storefronts of its building on South Second Street (entry 2). In a long-established trend, professional offices continued to occupy the upper floors.

According to Donna Dodenhoff in *Stanly County: The Architectural Legacy of a Rural North Carolina County*, "Even after the great stock market crash of 1929, and the onset of hard times, joint federal, state, and local public works projects allowed Stanly County to continue making progress in agriculture, education, housing and in the quality of life for both urban and rural dwellers." Carolina Power and Light

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Company's construction in 1928 of the dam that created Lake Tillery brought jobs as well as recreational opportunities. In 1930, approximately twelve percent of Stanly County's population of 33,216 lived in Albemarle, which boasted 3,493 residents.

The Winston-Salem Southbound discontinued passenger service three years later, but freight service endured as demand increased. Albemarle's economy remained relatively healthy through the worst of the Depression and experienced renewed growth through the recovery era and beyond, into the 1950s. In the surrounding county, agriculture continued to contribute to that growth despite employing an increasingly smaller percentage of residents as industries such as Alcoa, at Badin, and the power company at Lake Tillery expanded.

With the development of Quenby Mall in 1960, downtown Albemarle began to be depleted of retail outlets. Professionals and businessmen already had started relocating their offices from the upper floors, and as other shopping centers were built outside the historic central business district, the downtown area continued to decline, hastened by shrinkage of the textile industry in the county and throughout the state into the 1990s. A number of area industries that diversified remained in business, but most textile manufacturing jobs moved outside the country. Since the mid-1990s, however, strong local efforts to capitalize on Albemarle's wealth of historic buildings in the downtown area have resulted in the rehabilitation of several properties and a trend of revitalization that shows no signs of abating.

Architectural Context

The major influences on downtown Albemarle's commercial district have been the building of the textile mills and the development of two adjacent railroads. Each phase of new building in downtown coincided with the opening or expansion of the textile industry or the development of the rail lines, the latter of which not only contributed to prosperity manifested in new construction but also provided readier access to the full gamut of building materials not produced by local sawmills. The resulting architecture was typical of small to moderately-sized railroad and industrial towns across the state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The vast majority of the commercial buildings were one or two stories in brick with modest embellishments ranging from corbelled cornices to molded metal cornices in the upper main facades. Additional stylistic features often consisted of round-arched window openings, quoins, ornamental metal vents, decorative window lintels, and shaped parapets. Buildings of the late 1930s and 1940s tend to be more simply detailed, with ornamentation restricted to simple flat, rectilinear courses of brick at openings and cornices.

Most of the district's storefronts have had some degree of alteration, but many retain their pressed metal cornices and leaded transoms (although many of the transoms are now covered). One building, the T. C. Hearne Building of 1898 (entry 7) continues to display a Crane patented metal storefront. Many of the alterations occurred in the late 1940s and 1950s and consisted of the installation of new aluminum-framed plate glass display windows and glass doors. One of the district's most distinctive storefronts is the result of a 1936 remodeling that has gained significance in its own right: the application of black carrara glass and the installation of aluminum-framed display windows and doors at the Opera House/Starnes Jewelers Building (entry 11) creates a distinctive contrast to the elaborate turn-of-the-century upper façade

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featuring round-arched windows at the second story and round windows at the third. Constructed in 1907, this building is downtown Albemarle's most exuberant reflection of the economic boom era spanning the turn of the twentieth century.

A handful of Albemarle builders and their contracting companies based were responsible for the vast majority of the town's construction from the 1890s through the 1940s, but only one, Locke Anderson Moody (1862-1938), has been positively identified with a building in the Downtown Albemarle Historic District. According to Donna Dodenhoff in *Stanly County: The Architectural Legacy of a Rural North Carolina County*, Moody was a master builder who supervised small building crews and usually worked from his own plans or published plans that he copied. He is known to have built houses, institutional buildings such as the Stanly County Courthouse of 1893, and many commercial buildings including the Opera House/Starnes Jewelers Building. The fact that Moody occupied offices on the second floor of the King Block (entries 3-5), built in 1898, may suggest that he constructed this series of buildings as well. Dodenhoff also states that D. A. Holbrook, Albemarle's most prolific contractor of the early twentieth century, and J. D. Harwood erected many of the brick buildings in the business district, but positive identifications have yet to be made.

In the scale of its buildings and their architectural design, the Downtown Albemarle Historic District resembles a number of business districts in other small to moderately sized piedmont railroad towns. For example, the commercial district in Norwood, another Stanly County manufacturing town on the Yadkin railroad line, also had numerous commercial brick buildings constructed at the turn of the twentieth century. A portion of Norwood's Main Street is one of the county's best preserved rows of early twentieth-century commercial buildings, with remarkably intact facades that feature prominent corbelled brick or pressed metal cornices and original storefronts. Norwood is less than ten miles from Albemarle, and it likely that Moody and other area contractors were responsible for construction in both districts.

The downtown Albemarle district merits comparison to certain National Register districts in other counties of the region. To the southwest, in the small town of Waxhaw in neighboring Union County, the commercial section of the Waxhaw Historic District (NR 1991) consists of blocks of one- and two-story brick buildings, mostly from the early twentieth-century, that line the railroad tracks running through the center of town. The Siler City Commercial Historic District (NR 2000) in Chatham County also has a considerable number of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century buildings, as well a numerous more simply styled buildings from the 1920s through the late 1940s. Closer to Stanly County, the Wadesboro Historic District (NR 1999) in neighboring Anson County is several blocks larger than the Downtown Albemarle Historic District, encompassing a courthouse square and buildings dating back to the late eighteenth century, but much of its commercial architecture tells a similar story of economic boom times associated with the arrival of the Cheraw and Salisbury Railroad ca. 1885 and the Winston-Salem Southbound in 1911.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Downtown Albemarle Historic District is shown by the heavy black line on the
accompanying portion of Stanly County tax maps, at a scale of one inch to one hundred feet.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the Downtown Albemarle Historic District encompasses all commercial buildings
erected during the period of significance (1898-1950) and are largely intact which together form a
discrete and cohesive unit in the center of Albemarle's business district.

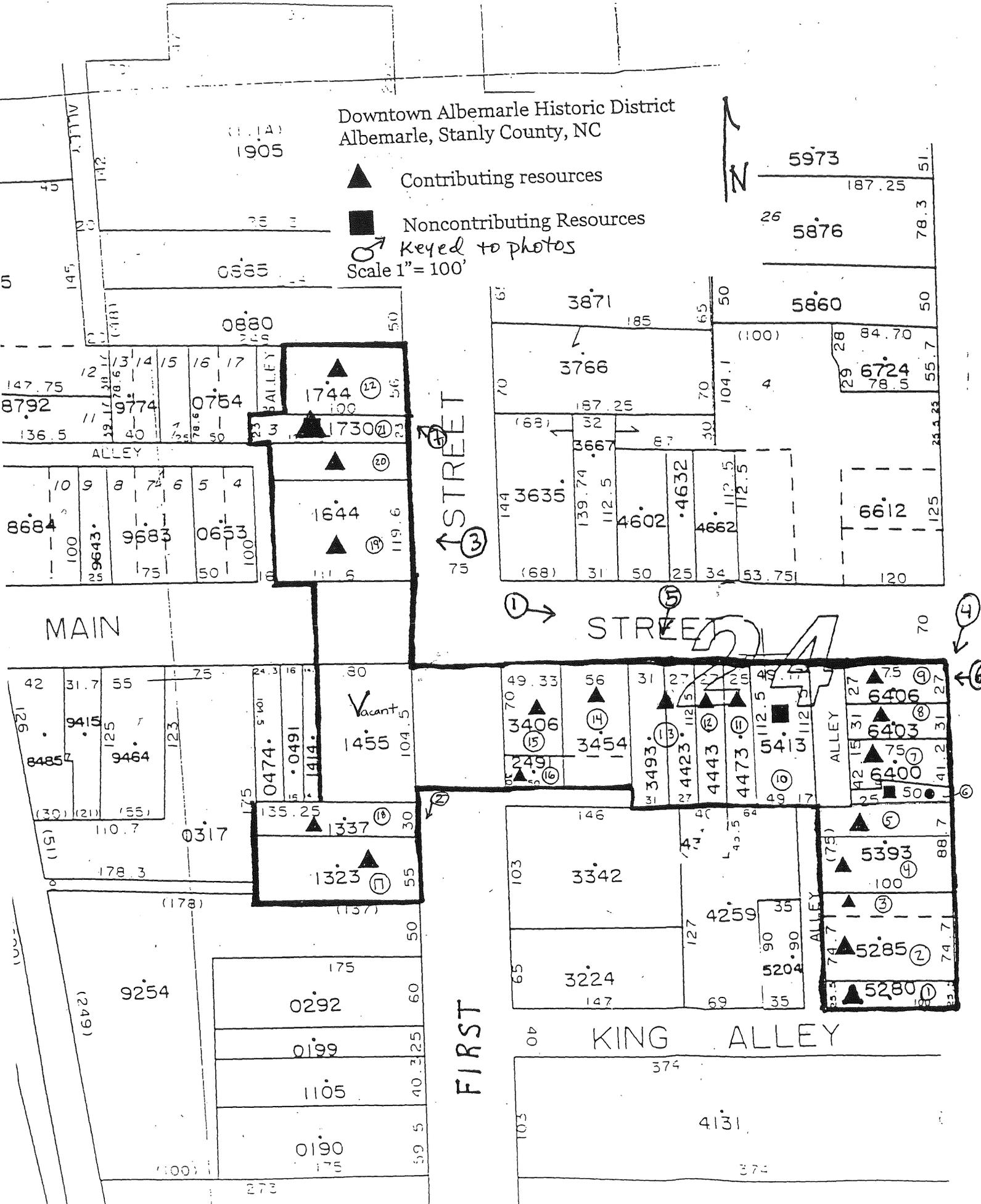
Downtown Albemarle Historic District
Albemarle, Stanly County, NC

▲ Contributing resources

■ Noncontributing Resources

♂ Keyed to photos

Scale 1" = 100'



Downtown Albemarle Historic District

17° 57' 27.50" / 3911940

Sandy Co., N.C.
Albemarle Quad

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
RALEIGH, NC

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

