

2

State of North Carolina
Division of Archives and History

Wilson COUNTY

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

Elm City QUAD

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR THEMATIC NOMINATION
Wilson County

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Elm City Municipal Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

See Continuation sheet

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Elm City

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

North Carolina

VICINITY OF
CODE

COUNTY

Wilson

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | PRESENT USE | |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL | <input type="checkbox"/> PARK |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION | <input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS N/A | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED | <input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER |

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Multiple Ownership - see continuation sheet

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Wilson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Nash Street

CITY, TOWN

Wilson

STATE

N. C.

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kate Ohno, Preservation Consultant to Wilson County November 5, 1981

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Survey & Planning Branch, Division of Archives & History (919) 733-6545

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

109 E. Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

N. C. 27611

DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Elm City Municipal Historic District is situated on a flat plain bisected by the Seaboard Coastline Railroad which runs from the northeast to the southwest through town. Elm City is a small, rural town of 1,561 inhabitants. A large part of the property within the town limits is a part of the district. composed of 119 separate parcels of land, the district includes approximately thirteen blocks. Most of the buildings in this multiple use district are low rise residential or commercial structures and most date between 1873 and 1930. During the late nineteenth century many similar railroad towns grew up in eastern North Carolina, but Elm City is one of the largest and best preserved of these towns in Wilson County. The bulk of the properties in the district are residential in character and range from the modest one-story frame cottages of the 1870s and 1880s, to the massive Classical Revival residences of the turn-of-the-century, to the large brick Colonial Revival houses of the 1920s. The residential streets are broad and lined with beautiful mature shade trees; these plantings serve to unify the variety of house forms and styles represented within the boundaries of the district. The railroad tracks divide the district approximately in half and lend a feeling of airiness and space to both the commercial district and the residential areas flanking the tracks. The railroad embankment also provides extra parking spaces to the business district and the railroad right-of-way separates the commercial core into two segments on either side of North and South Railroad streets. The business district is largely the product of a rebuilding effort after a major fire destroyed much of the commercial area in 1884. The commercial buildings are generally low rise and were built between 1884 and 1930, many out of local tan or red brick.

Although the Elm City Historic District is mainly residential, nearly thirty per cent of the buildings are commercial in nature. Nearly ninety per cent of the buildings in the district contribute to the historic and architectural significance of the district, and of these fourteen per cent are pivotal buildings. Only eleven per cent of the buildings in the district constitute an intrusion. Over half of the buildings in the district date prior to the turn of the century.

The commercial buildings are built on narrow, deep lots fronting directly on the sidewalk. The building density in this area is high and is altered by an occasional alley or vacant lot. The commercial buildings vary in height from one to three stories, but most are limited to one story. These buildings show less clearly than the residential structures the influences of national styles.

The earliest surviving map of the town was executed in 1884 by E. P. Tucke. Tucke's map indicates that the town plan has changed very little since 1884, except that the eastern continuation of Main Street is no longer called Town Creek Street. The anticipated development of the commercial core, as shown by the lot size on the 1884 map, was more optimistic than circumstances determined. The block of South Railroad Street between

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Nash and Church streets was obviously intended as commercial property, but it was never developed as such. The narrow lots in the middle of the block still show the intentions of the town's early survey. As mentioned above, the fire which devastated the business district in 1884 resulted in a new trend in building in the commercial area. The Batts & Williams Store on South Railroad Street (No. 98) is said to have been the first brick building to be constructed in town. Built of locally made tan brick and three stories in height, it is the tallest building in the business district. Like other contemporary structures in the commercial area it is simply ornamented by the use of raised brickwork. The south side of Main Street between Parker Street and Pender Street (Nos. 6-15), the north side of Main Street between South Railroad and Pender Street (Nos. 28-31) and the block of South Railroad between Main Street and Nash Street (Nos. 96 - 98) stand much as they did circa 1900. The commercial building which stands on the southwest corner of Main Street and North Railroad Street (Nos. 10-11; built ca. 1890) boasts an unusual corner entrance along with elaborate raised brickwork and segmental arch windows. Shortly after the turn of the century a new brick depot was constructed at the junction of Main Street and the railroad tracks (No. 34). This long, low, one-story brick building is unlike any other in the commercial district, but is typical of contemporary railroad depots in the region. The slate shingled dormers with their turned gable braces are handsome and the roof overhang is supported by curved brackets.

Other important buildings were constructed during the period 1910-1930. In 1912 leading merchant G. A. Barnes built a large two-story brick commercial building on Main Street (No. 37) and the similar Dawes Building (No. 100) was built in 1914 on South Railroad Street. In the early 1920s the impressive Elm City Bank (No. 33) was built. This two story brick building has an unusual corner entrance with a tiled floor that spells out "Elm City Bank" and polychrome brick trim. Few major commercial buildings were constructed in the district after 1930 although some buildings have been remodelled, notably the Elm City Clinic (No. 26) which was a frame cottage bricked over in the 1940s and used as a doctor's office, and Branch Banking and Trust (No. 28) and McKeel's Laundromat (No. 29) which were both built ca. 1900 and received new brick veneer facades since 1960.

The residential section of the district naturally differs from the commercial area. The lot size is generally considerably larger and most houses are set back further from the road than the commercial buildings. Most residential streets are lined by mature shade trees. Although not all the residential lots are landscaped, most of the pivotal buildings have handsome plantings in combination with gravelled walks or drives, fountains and plant beds. These plantings and the tree canopy beautify and unify the various residential sections.

Most of the residences included in the district are of the Victorian cottage type. These buildings are generally of frame and rise one story in height. The gable roof is the predominant roof type, but some pyramidal roofs are also used. This group of houses range in age from ca. 1875 to ca. 1910. Many have elaborate sawn and turned ornament, and most have

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porches. One of the earliest residences of this type to be found within the district is the Holden House (No. 113), built ca. 1875 as the Methodist parsonage. This modest central hall plan single pile cottage is sheltered by a pyramidal roof and is probably typical of residential construction during the first decade of the town's existence. The bulk of Elm City's Victorian cottages were built around the turn of the century and are slightly more ambitious than the Holden House. The A. C. Dixon House (No. 114) was built during this period and its simple box-like form and hipped roof are enhanced by the use of central cross gables, imaginatively shaped ventilators and the "Elm City porch." This particular porch treatment occurs in Wilson County only in and immediately around Elm City. The porch wraps around three sides of the house, and projecting pedimented pavilions extend from each corner; a pedimented entry usually gives access to the porch in the center of the facade. This type of porch was constructed on a number of residences in the area from the turn of the century until ca. 1910 and usually is ornamented with sawn and turned decoration. The finest example of Victorian cottage architecture in Elm City is the Deans-Doles House (No. 16) which was built ca. 1897. As well as a beautifully ornamented "Elm City porch" the house also boasts decorative sawn shingles and a palladian window in the central cross gable.

Contemporary with the town's Victorian cottages, but rather more ambitious are the Winstead House (No. 1) and the Bailey-Harrelson House (No. 58). Both houses were built ca. 1875-1880. They stand two stories tall and, like their more modest counterparts, they are richly ornamented with sawnwork decoration. The Winstead House is symmetrical with a projecting central pavilion and delicate lacy sawnwork in the gable. The Bailey-Harrelson House follows an L-plan and is more robust in its ornament. The window and door lintels are heavily molded in contrast with the sawnwork in the gables.

Still more impressive in size and ornament are the town's two monumental Classical Revival houses. The G. A. Barnes House (No. 43) was built ca. 1895-1905 and the R. S. Wells House (No. 22) ca. 1910, both for leading local merchants. These houses are very similar in size and style. The Wells House is known to have been designed by Charles C. Benton, a prominent Wilson architect. The houses are both set on large lots and are surrounded by mature trees. Both houses also boast fountains and circular drives. The houses rise two and one half stories in height and two-story porticoes with applied swag decorations dominate their facades.

There are also several handsome Colonial Revival style houses within the district boundaries. The W. G. Sharpe House (No. 80) was remodelled in the Colonial Revival style ca. 1911. The two-and-one-half-story frame house faces South Railroad Street and a generous wrap-around porch shelters the front and North Street elevations while large pedimented dormers overlook the railroad tracks. The J. W. Hays House (No. 46) was built ca. 1914 for one of the town's leading educators. It is similar in proportion to the Sharpe House, but the porch in this case is supported by Ionic columns and the central dormer has details reflecting the Bungalow style. The most

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outstanding example of the bungalow style is the Dr. Robert Putney, Sr., House (No. 54), built ca. 1919-1920 by Wilson contractor C. C. Rackley. The one-and-one-half-story masonry bungalow is stuccoed, with a bold central shingled dormer and rustic stone porch plinths carrying paired square pillars. Although a number of handsome bungalows were built in the 1920s in the district, the most impressive residences constructed during this decade were those built for L. C. and Graham Cobb (Nos. 2 & 78) and L. S. Farmer (No. 65). The Cobb Brothers contracted with C. C. Rackley to build two similar two-story brick houses with hipped roofs and Colonial Revival details. Both houses were built in 1927 and the L. C. Cobb House is distinguished by a rather handsome leaded fanlight transom over the front door. The L. S. Farmer House (No. 65) is an impressive two-story brick Colonial Revival structure with a tiled roof and a semi-circular porch entry which was designed by Solon Baias Moore of Wilson and built in 1928.

Few major residences were constructed within the boundaries of the district after 1930. The major intrusions in the district take the form of brick houses (or earlier houses which were later brick veneered) built in the 1950s and 1960s. The scale, proportion, style and to some extent the material of these residences are not in keeping with the district.

The Elm City Municipal Historic District presents a cross section of styles and periods representative of the development of a late nineteenth and early twentieth century railroad town in the central coastal plain. Many of Elm City's oldest and least altered buildings still stand within the boundaries of the district and although other structures of equal merit are located in Elm City they are not directly geographically linked to the other structures in the district, and therefore are not included.

The structures in the district are, of course, closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the properties in the district. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the district. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the properties within the district boundaries.

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Key to Inventory list:

- P Pivotal Structures which, because of their historical associations and/or architectural characteristics, play a central or primary role in establishing the distinctive qualities of the district.
- C Contributing Structures which, while not pivotal, are supportive of, or add to, the historical and/or architectural characteristics for which the district is significant.
- F Fill Structures which have neither an especially positive nor an especially negative impact on the general characteristics of the district. They may be similar in form, height, and materials to contributing buildings in the district, but cannot be considered contributing because of the date of construction.
- I Intrusive Structures whose design and/or materials are totally out of character with the historic fabric of the district, and which therefore have a definite negative impact on the district as a whole.

Numbering:

The numbering begins with the first structure on the south side of Main Street at the southwest corner of Anderson Street, and continues along this side of Main Street to the eastern edge of the district. The numbering then crossed to the north side of Main Street and continues along this side of the street to the northeast corner of Main and Anderson Streets. The numbering then continues along the south and north sides of Nash, Church, and North Streets in a likewise manner, proceeding from the western to the eastern edges of the district. The numbering then continues with the property at the southwest corner of Anderson and Nash Streets, and proceeds with property #59 on the west side of Parker Street to the southwest corner of North Street, and then crosses to the east side of the street, proceeding to Main Street. The numbering then continues in a likewise manner along the west and east sides of North Railroad, South Railroad, and Pender Streets from the southern to the northern edges of the district.

-
1. Winstead House
S. W. corner Main and Anderson St.
P
ca. 1875
A two-story frame Victorian house with central projecting pavillion, ornamental sawn and turned decorative motifs. Additions were made ca. 1918.
 2. L. C. Cobb House and Elm City Opera House
SE corner Main and Anderson St.
P
ca. 1900-1927.
One-and-one-half story gable roof opera house with balcony, tin sided. Two-story

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brick Colonial Revival house with tile roof. Built by Wilson contractor C. C. Rackley in 1927.

3. Convenient Market
SW corner Parker and Main Street
I
ca. 1978
One story brick gas station.
- 4-5 Gas Station
SE corner Parker and Main St.
I
ca. 1950
One story brick gas station.
- 6 Vacant lot
- 7 Commercial Building
Main Street
C
ca. 1900
One story brick commercial building.
- 8 Vacant lot
Main Street
F
Unpaved parking lot for adjacent stores.
- 9 Commercial Building
Main St.
C
ca. 1900
One story brick commercial building.
- 10 Commercial Building
Main St.
C
ca. 1900
One story, four bay brick commercial building with blind panels, corbelling, and a replacement front with a transom light.
- 11 Commercial Building
Main St.
C
ca. 1890
Two story brick commercial building with raised brick decoration, segmental arched windows and corner entrance. Lower facade altered. Said to have been built for John L. Bailey's general merchandise store.

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- 11A Commercial Building
Main St.
C
ca. 1900
One story brick commercial building with recessed frieze panels, corbelling, and an original front.
- 11B Commercial Building
Main St.
C
ca. 1900
One story brick commercial building with modest corbelling, stuccoed front, and iron columns flanking door.
- 12 Commercial Building
Main St.
C
ca. 1900
One story brick commercial building with raised brick ornament, stuccoed, iron columns flanking door.
- 13 Commercial Building
Main St.
F
ca. 1900
One story commercial building with metal siding.
- 14 Commercial Building
Main St.
C
a. 1900
One story brick commercial building with iron columns flanking door.
- 15 Commercial Building
SW corner Main and Pender St.
C
ca. 1900
One story brick commercial building with raised brickwork and iron columns flanking door; two storefronts.
- 16 Deans-Doles House
SE corner Main & Pender St.
P
ca. 1897
One story frame cottage with hipped roof and central cross gable, the finest sawn and turned work in Elm City, typical "Elm City porch" with projecting pavillions.

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- 17 W. B. Doles House
Main St.
I
ca. 1960
One story brick house.
- 18 Dr. Hedgepeth House
SW corner Main & Branch St.
P
ca. 1910
One-and-one-half story frame Colonial Revival cottage, pyramidal roof, hipped roof dormer, fine stained glass transoms and sidelights on front facade.
- 19 House
SE corner Main & Branch St.
C
ca. 1890
One-and-one-half story frame cottage with pyramidal roof, carved brackets under eaves, molded window surrounds and fine ornamental sawnwork. Hipped roof dormer added ca. 1930.
- 20 House
Main St.
C
ca. 1900
One story frame L-plan cottage
- 21 T. B. Winstead House
Main St.
C
ca. 1880
One story frame cottage with gable roof, exterior end chimneys, three-sided bay on west elevation, porch height has been altered, nice vernacular woodwork on interior.
- 22 R. S. Wells House
NE corner Main & Branch St.
P
ca. 1900
Grand two story Classical Revival house with two story portico, double gallery porch, fine interior woodwork, landscaped grounds, designed by architect Charles C. Benton of Wilson.
- 23 House
NW corner Main & Branch St.
C
ca. 1900
One story frame cottage with central cross gable, fine sawnwork.

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- 24 House
Main St.
C
ca. 1920
One-and-one-half story brick bungalow with central dormer.
- 25 House
NE corner Main and Pender St.
C
ca. 1920
One-and-one-half story frame bungalow with central dormer, aluminum siding.
- 26 Elm City Clinic
NW corner Main and Pender St.
C
ca. 1900, 1924.
One story frame turn-of-the-century cottage bricked over and converted into doctor's office joined to a one-story brick commercial building ca. 1924 with two wide brick arches concealing recessed entrance and window, built by C. C. Rackley.
- 27 Alleyway
Main St.
F
Unpaved alley between commercial buildings.
- 28 Branch Banking and Trust Company
Main St.
F
ca. 1900
One story brick commercial building with facade drastically altered to accommodate plate glass door and windows, night deposit box.
- 29 McKeels Laundromat
Main St.
F
ca. 1900
One story brick commercial building with new brick veneer facade not in keeping with the rest of the district.
- 30 Commercial Building
Main St.
C
ca. 1900
One story brick commercial building with two storefronts, original display windows, raised brickwork and nice iron columns flanking entrances.

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| 31 | Commercial Building Main St. C ca. 1900 One story brick commercial building with raised brickwork, tapered iron columns flanking doorway. | |
| 32 | Commercial Building Main St. C ca. 1920 One-story brick commercial building with step gable, patterned brick work, multiple light transom. | |
| 33 | (Former) Elm City Bank NE corner Main & S. Railroad St. P ca. 1920 Two story brick bank building with entrances on both Main and Railroad Streets, contrasting brick trim on doors and windows, corner entrance, arched windows. | |
| 34 | Elm City Depot NW corner Main & S. Railroad St. P ca. 1910 One-and-one-half story brick depot, slate shingled dormers with gable braces, long loading platform, overhanging eaves with curved braces. | |
| 35-36 | Elm City Fire Department Main St. I ca. 1978 One story metal prefabricated garage building not in keeping with the rest of the district. | |
| 37 | G. A. Barnes Store Main Street C 1912; ca. 1920. Two story brick commercial building built in 1912 with step gable and raised brickwork lower facades altered; adjacent to a one story brick commercial building ca. 1920. | |
| 38 | Vacant lot NE corner Main & Parker St. Unpaved parking lot | |
| 39 | Cox House NW corner Main & Parker St. P ca. 1900 | |

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Two story frame house, transitional Queen Anne/Colonial Revival with square porch pavillion with pyramidal roof on northwest corner, stained glass windows in stairwell. House design is attributed to John C. Stout.

- 40 Barnes House
Main St.
I
ca. 1950
One-and-one-half story Cape Cod brick house
- 41 House
NE corner Main & Anderson St.
C
ca. 1910
One story frame house, hipped roof, central dormer.
- 42 Joel Wells House
SE corner Nash & Anderson St.
P
ca. 1875
Two story frame T-plan house, three bays wide, trabeated door, latticework balustrade.
- 43 G. A. Barnes House
SW corner Nash & Parker St.
P
ca. 1875, 1905
Impressive two story frame Classical Revival house with two stroy portico, landscaped yard.
- 43A House
Nash St.
C
ca. 1920
Two story frame house with Colonial Revival porch and central dormer.
- 44 House
NW corner Nash & N. Railroad St.
C
ca. 1880
One story frame cottage with board and barren siding, corbelled gables, four-sided bay on east side, central dormer, nice sawn work trim on porch.
- 45 John Dixon House
NE corner Nash & Parker St.
C
ca. 1920
Two story frame house showing influence of the Bungalow style; shingled second story.

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- 46 J. W. Hays House
NW corner Nash & Parker St.
P
ca. 1914
Two story frame house showing Bungalow and Colonial Revival influences; wraparound porch with Ionic columns and central dormer.
- 47 House
Nash St.
C
ca. 1900; ca. 1940
One story frame cottage somewhat altered in the Colonial Revival style ca. 1940.
- 48 House
NE corner Nash and Anderson St.
C
ca. 1920
One story frame bungalow with recessed porch, aluminum siding.
- 49 Garden
Church St.
C
Greenspace; garden belonging to # 60.
- 50 House
Church St.
C
ca. 1920
One-and-one-half story brick bungalow with shingled shed dormer.
- 51 House
Church St.
C
ca. 1920
One story frame cottage with clapboard siding.
- 52 Braswell House
NW corner Church & Pender St.
C
ca. 1890
Two story frame house with central dormer, wraparound porch, sawnwork details.
- 53 House
Church St.
I
ca. 1960
One story brick house not consistent with the character of the district.
- 54 Dr. Robert Putney, Sr., House
NE corner Church & Parker St.

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P

ca. 1919-20

One-and-one-half story bungalow, masonry covered with stucco, shingled central dormer, slate roof, rustic stone columns. Built by Wilson contractor C. C. Rackley.

55

House

NW corner North & Railroad St.

C

ca. 1880

One-story frame L-plan cottage with nicely executed sawnwork bargeboards and decorative trim, aluminum siding.

56

Mobile Home

North St.

I

ca. 1970

One story double-wide mobile home.

57

House

NE corner North & Parker St.

C

ca. 1890

One story frame cottage, hipped roof, trabeated door, nicely executed brackets and sawnwork trim.

58

Bailey-Harrelson House

SW corner Anderson & Nash St.

P

ca. 1880

Two story frame L-plan house, finely molded window and door surrounds, three-sided bay window, beautifully executed sawnwork in gables.

59

House

Parker St.

C

ca. 1900; ca. 1935

One story frame cottage somewhat altered in the Colonial Revival style ca. 1935.

60

House

SW corner Parker & Church St.

C

ca. 1900

One-story frame cottage, gable roof, sawnwork decoration on porch.

61

House

NW corner Parker & Church St.

C

ca. 1900

One story frame cottage with shingled central cross gable and decorative sawnwork on porch.

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| 62 | House Parker St. C ca. 1900 One story frame cottage with shingled central cross gable and decorative sawnwork on porch. | | | |
| 63 | House Parker St. C ca. 1910 One story frame cottage with central cross gable, colonettes on brick plinths on porch, aluminum siding. | | | |
| 64 | House SW corner Parker & North St. C ca. 1900 One story frame L-plan cottage with decorative sawnwork on porch. | | | |
| 65 | L. S. Farmer House SE corner Parker & North St. P 1928 Two story brick Colonial Revival house with tile roof, pedimented dormer, semi-circular entrance porch, trabeated door, patterned brick and stone window lintels. Designed by Wilson architect S. B. Moore. | | | |
| 66 | Farmer House SE corner Parker & Church St. I ca. 1900 One story cottage brick veneered and drastically altered; not in keeping with the character of the district. | | | |
| 67 | Elm City Methodist Church SE corner Parker & Nash St. C ca. 1920 Two story brick Gothic Revival Church with stained glass windows. | | | |
| 68 | House Parker St. C ca. 1900 One story frame cottage | | | |
| 69 | Commercial Building N Railroad St. C ca. 1900 | | | |

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One story commercial building with segmental arched windows.

- 70 Alleyway
North Railway St.
F
Alleyway between two adjacent commercial buildings.
- 71 Commercial Building and Ice House
N Railroad St.
C
ca. 1900
One story brick commercial building with segmental arch windows; one story brick ice house at rear of lot, also ca. 1900.
- 72 (former) Elm City Town Hall
SW corner N. Railroad and Nash St.
C
ca. 1900; 1920
Two adjoining one-story brick buildings, one ca. 1920 with step gable and stuccoed facade; the other ca. 1900 with raised brickwork. Metal tower with bell adjacent.
- 73 House
N. Railroad St.
I
ca. 1950
One-and-one-half story brick Colonial house, not in keeping with the district.
- 74 House
N. Railroad St.
I
ca. 1980
One-and-one-half story frame house not in keeping with character of the district.
- 75 Duplex Apartments
SW corner N. Railroad and Church St.
I
ca. 1940
One story brick duplex, not in keeping with the district.
- 76 House
NW corner Railroad and Church St.
C
ca. 1900
One story frame cottage with shingled central crossgable and sawnwork ornament on porch
- 77 House
N. Railroad St.
C
ca. 1900
One story frame cottage with shingled central crossgable and sawnwork ornament on porch

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- 78 Cobb House
 SW corner N. Railroad & North St.
 P
 1927
 Two story brick Colonial Revival house with hipped roof, Ionic columns on porch. Built by Wilson contractor C. C. Rackley.
- 79 House
 S. Railroad St.
 C
 ca. 1900
 One story frame cottage.
- 80 W. G. Sharpe House
 NE corner S. Railroad & North St.
 P
 ca. 1900; 1911
 Built as a one-story frame cottage at the turn of the century, this house was raised to two-and-one-half stories and remodeled in the Colonial Revival style ca. 1911; has large pedimented dormers, wraparound porch and latticed transom and sidelights on front door.
- 81 Winstead-Garner House
 SE corner S. Railroad and North St.
 P
 ca. 1890
 Two story frame house with hipped roof and central cross gable, typical "Elm City porch" wraparound porch added ca. 1918.
- 82 House
 S. Railroad St.
 C
 ca. 1910
 Two-story frame Colonial Revival Bungalow with shingled second story, second story bay window, and central shingled dormer.
- 83 House
 NE corner S. Railroad & Church St.
 C
 ca. 1920
 One-and-one-half story frame bungalow, central shingled dormer; aluminum siding.
- 84 House
 SE corner S. Railroad and Church St.
 C
 ca. 1915
 One-and-one-half story frame bungalow with clipped gables, replacement wrought iron porch posts in front, turned porch columns and balusters on north elevation, and round porch pavillion with conical roof.

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- 85 Vacant lot
S. Railroad St.
C
Greenspace
- 86 Vacant Lot
S. Railroad St.
C
Greenspace with small storage building set at rear property line.
- 87 Vacant lot
S. Railroad ST.
C
Greenspace.
- 88 Vacant lot
S. Railroad St.
C
Greenspace
- 89 House
NE corner S. Railroad & Nash St.
C
ca. 1900
One-story frame cottage with central cross gable.
- 90-91 Commercial Building
SE corner S. Railroad St. & Nash St.
C
ca. 1920
One story brick commercial building with three storefronts.
- 92-93 Commercial Building
S. Railroad St.
C
ca. 1920
One story brick commercial building with two storefronts.
- 94 Commercial Building
S. Railroad St.
C
ca. 1920
One story brick commercial building with one storefront.
- 95 Vacant lot
S. Railroad St.
F
Unpaved lot between commercial buildings.

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|--------------------|---|---|------|----|
| 96 | Storage Building S. Railroad St. C ca. 1900 One story brick storage building with false front. | | | |
| 97 | Commercial Building S. Railroad St. C ca. 1900 One story brick commercial building with raised brickwork and iron columns flanking recessed entrance, facade slightly altered. | | | |
| 98 | Batts & Williams Store S. Railroad St. P ca. 1900 Three story brick commercial building - tallest in town - with raised brickwork and arched windows on third floor. | | | |
| 99 | Commercial Building S. Railroad St. C ca. 1920 One story brick commercial building. | | | |
| 100 | Dawes Building SE corner Railroad & Main St. C 1914 Two story brick commercial building with step gables, four bays wide, with raised brickwork, lower facade has been altered. | | | |
| 101 | Commercial Building S. Railroad St. C ca. 1900 One story brick commercial building with raised brickwork. | | | |
| 102 | Carolina Telephone & Telegraph Building S. Railroad St. C ca. 1900 One story commercial building; facade has been altered. | | | |
| 103 | Fred Carter House SW corner Pender & Wilson St. P ca. 1890 Two story frame house with hipped roof, broad central crossgable, peaked ventilator in gable, elaborate sawn and turned decorations. Detached kitchen in rear. | | | |

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- 104 T. W. Williams House
 NW corner Pender & Wilson St.
 P
 ca. 1890
 One story frame L-plan cottage with sawn and turned ornament on porch, in gables and under eaves.
- 105 House
 Pender St.
 F
 Ca. 1920
 One story frame house; altered.
- 106 Storage Building
 Pender St.
 F
 ca. 1900
 One story frame storage building with tin siding behind # 12-14.
- 107 House
 Pender St.
 C
 ca. 1925
 One-and-one-half story frame Dutch Colonial Revival' gambrel roof. shed dormer, somewhat altered.
- 108 Dr. Brooks House
 Pender St.
 C
 ca. 1920
 One-and-one-half story frame bungalow with central dormer, rustic stone porch columns, aluminum siding.
- 109 House
 SW corner Pender & Nash St.
 C
 ca. 1900
 One story frame cottage with broad central cross gable, lacy sawnwork ornament on porch
- 110 House
 NW corner Pender & Nash St.
 C
 ca. 1900
- 111 House
 SW corner Pender & Church St.
 I
 ca. 1900
 One story frame cottage altered to Cape Cod style in 1950s and aluminum sided.
 Not consistent with the character of the district

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- 112 House
SE corner Pender & Church St.
F
ca. 1930
One-story frame cottage with central chimney somewhat deteriorated.
- 113 Holden House
NE corner Pender & Nash St.
C
ca. 1875
One story frame hip roof cottage; typical "Elm City Porch" with projecting pedimented pavillions added after 1912.
- 114 A. C. Dixon House
SE corner Pender & Nash St.
C
ca. 1900
One story frame cottage with central cross gables with diamond-shaped ventilators, typical "Elm City porch" with projecting pedimented pavillions and delicate sawn-work and turned ornament.
- 115 House
Pender St.
I
ca. 1960
One story brick house not consistent with the character of the district.
- 116 House
NE corner Pender & Wilson St.
C
ca. 1890
One story frame cottage with hipped roof, trabeated door, fine sawn and turned ornament. Small frame watch repair shop, contemporary with the dwelling, on the property facing Wilson St.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

____ NATIONAL

____ STATE

 X

____ LOCAL

| PERIOD | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | |
|----------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| ___PREHISTORIC | ___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | ___COMMUNITY PLANNING | ___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <u> X </u> RELIGION |
| ___1400-1499 | ___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | ___CONSERVATION | ___LAW | ___SCIENCE |
| ___1500-1599 | ___AGRICULTURE | ___ECONOMICS | ___LITERATURE | ___SCULPTURE |
| ___1600-1699 | <u> X </u> ARCHITECTURE | <u> X </u> EDUCATION | ___MILITARY | ___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| ___1700-1799 | ___ART | ___ENGINEERING | ___MUSIC | ___THEATER |
| <u> X </u> 1800-1899 | <u> X </u> COMMERCE | <u> X </u> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | ___PHILOSOPHY | <u> X </u> TRANSPORTATION |
| <u> X </u> 1900- | ___COMMUNICATIONS | ___INDUSTRY | ___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | ___OTHER (SPECIFY) |
| | | ___INVENTION | | |

SPECIFIC DATES

1873 - 1930

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Unknown (see individ. entries)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The town of Elm City is a small railroad community exhibiting the finest examples of late nineteenth and early twentieth century architecture in any town its size in Wilson County. The town owes its existence to the efforts of Judge George Howard, a prominent citizen of Tarboro who in 1873 acquired a site for the community along the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad and sold parcels to incoming residents. Originally incorporated under the name Toisnot, the town was christened "Elm City" in 1913 and grew rapidly due to the ready availability of local financing and the presence of several industrial and commercial concerns. Because few structures of architectural significance were constructed after 1929, the historic character of the town has been preserved to a great degree. Elm City has a variety of impressive turn-of-the-century commercial buildings with unaltered facades as well as a surrounding residential area comprised of the bulk of the town's earliest houses and its oldest church building. The Elm City Municipal Historic District encompasses the most cohesive group of architecturally significant commercial, residential, educational, and ecclesiastical structures in the town, the visual quality of which is unified and enhanced by tree-lined streets.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. Representative of the development of a late nineteenth century railroad town in North Carolina's central coastal plain, Elm City developed along the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad line passing through Wilson County.
- B. Associated with a number of locally prominent individuals, including Judge George Howard, the developer of the town; and with leading merchants George A. Barnes and R. S. Wells, both of whom commissioned monumental Classical Revival residences.
- C. The Elm City Municipal Historic District encompasses the most cohesive group of architecturally significant commercial, residential, educational, and ecclesiastical structures in the town. These buildings were executed in a variety of period styles during the most dynamic period of the town's growth.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Elm City district presents a picture of a prosperous small railroad town in the central coastal plain of the late 1920s. The architectural significance, more than the historical associations of the combined properties in the district, make Elm City outstanding. In comparison to the other small towns in Wilson County, Elm City presents the finest examples of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial, residential and religious architecture. The town of Lucama, of similar vintage, also possesses much of its pre-World War II character, but its buildings are not so ambitious and the district is slightly less cohesive. The commercial area of Elm City is in a better state of preservation than that of Wilson, the county seat, although Elm City's commercial buildings are fewer and seldom rise above one story.

Elm City, Wilson County's second largest town, had its origins in a community called Joyner's Depot. Joyner's Depot was established circa 1846 to the northeast of the present town as a direct result of construction of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad which when completed in 1840 was the longest rail line in the world. Joyner's Depot, located in the northeastern corner of what later became Wilson County, was surrounded by some of the richest land in the area, as well as being near some of the largest farms in the eastern part of the county. The community grew and prospered, supporting several merchantile establishments, a post office, a brick hotel and numerous houses in addition to the depot. By the early 1870s citizens in every section of the county were struggling to recover from the negative effects of the Civil War. The growth of the community around Joyner's Depot, however, was stifled by the refusal of the Farmer family, who owned all the surrounding property, to sell any land.¹

According to an early twentieth century history of Elm City the citizens of Joyner's Depot "were a progressive people and wanted to own their own homes and business houses." Impetus for new progress came in the early 1870s. Judge George Howard, a powerful and prominent citizen of Tarboro, became acquainted with the situation, and when he found he could acquire a site on the railroad tracks about a mile southwest of Joyner's Depot from Thomas Gray Dixon and Jacob H. Barnes, he elected to act as the developer for the new town. Howard received assurances from the president

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Batts, Ocie. "Elm City, N. C. Centennial 1873-1973." Unpublished Manuscript in the collection of the Wilson County Public Library.
- Branson, Levi. Branson's North Carolina Business Directory. Raleigh, N. C.: Levi Branson, 1883, 1890, and 1896.
- Map of Toisnot by E. P. Tucke, made July 10, 1884.
- Nixon, A. The North Carolina Yearbook and Business Directory. Raleigh, N. C.: np, 1910.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approx. 43 acres.

UTM REFERENCES See continuation sheet also.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | 18 | 241160 | 3966370 | B | 18 | 241570 | 3966480 |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |
| C | 18 | 241580 | 3966480 | D | 18 | 241320 | 3965800 |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet and enclosed map with boundaries of the district outlined in red.

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of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad that if he would acquire the land, clear it, and lay out streets that the railroad depot would be moved to the new site. (Robert R. Bridgers, president of the railroad, was a Tarboro man like Howard, though by 1873 he was living in Wilmington.) The one-half square mile site was acquired, surveyed and streets were constructed. In the spring of 1873 lots in the new town were sold at auction, but Howard retained certain parcels and donated them for religious, educational and fraternal uses. He donated another lot at the rear of the depot for use as a cotton yard, reflecting the importance of this crop to the county's economy during this period.²

In December, 1873, the town was incorporated under the name of Toisnot,³ an Indian name used to identify a swamp which is located to the west of the town. The new town grew up quickly. In 1874, Harris Winstead built the town's first hotel.⁴ Residential and commercial development of the town followed hard on the heels of the construction of the Winstead Hotel. Some houses were moved from the vicinity of Joyner's Depot to the new town,⁵ but far more new houses were built than moved. Watson, the author of The History of Toisnot-Elm City, described the development of the town: "The town was built very rapidly and, since timber was so cheap and much of it was secured within the corporate limits, every home was built of wood and mostly of one story type."⁶ A post office and a depot were constructed in the center of town.⁷ The first church was the Methodist Episcopal Church, built circa 1873 on the northeast corner of Pender Street and Church Street which is presently used by the Primitive Baptist Congregation (No. 113).⁸ Four other churches, including the Primitive Baptist, the First Baptist, the Missionary Baptist (white and black congregations) and Johnson Chapel Baptist churches were established within fifteen years of the town's incorporation.⁹

The citizens of Toisnot, like those in Wilson, were interested in the establishment of superior schools. Judge Howard donated a double lot on the corner of Branch Street and Wilson Street for a school building.¹⁰ Another school was established on the lot on Church Street given to two fraternal organizations.¹¹ Both the Toisnot Female School and the Toisnot Graded School existed by 1884.¹²

In the same year the town acquired the Cedar Grove property which now serves as the town cemetery.¹³ A plan showing all the streets and property lines within the town limits was drawn in July, 1884.¹⁴ Unfortunately for the town's ambitions a major fire devastated the business district in November, 1884. Over \$17,800 worth of property was lost, but the Wilson Advance stated "We have great confidence, however, in the enterprise and progress of Toisnot and expect to see handsome brick stores erected before many months on the site of the old buildings."¹⁵ The commercial section was indeed rebuilt in brick and many of the brick stores which still stand in Elm City date from this period. The first commercial building constructed in town is said to have been a barroom, but soon the town boasted a variety of establishments: a sawmill, stables, a coach maker, a boarding house,

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an undertaker, a blacksmith, a bowling alley and an ice house.¹⁶ Elm and oak trees were planted along the streets¹⁷ and such ambitious residences as the Bailey-Harrelson House (No. 58) and the Winstead House (No. 1) were built.

The 1890s was a decade of expansion for all of Wilson County as well as Toisnot. A controversy over the town's name began during the summer of 1890. John S. Pridgen suggested that the name be changed from Toisnot to Elm City because of the lovely shade trees. After several changes the town was permanently christened "Elm City" in 1913.¹⁸ The town's population showed a steady increase in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as was the case of most of the towns in the county situated on a railroad line. In 1890 the population was 525 and it increased in six years to 800.¹⁹ By 1910 the population had increased to 1,200, close to the 1970 estimate.²⁰

Two more churches, the First Presbyterian²¹ and Holy Trinity (Episcopal) Church,²² were organized and constructed in the early years of the century as was the Elm City Opera House (No. 2). One reason for the physical expansion of the town was the availability of local financing. The Elm City Bank and Toisnot Banking Company were both organized at the turn of the century and provided much encouragement for local building projects. Industry, particularly in the form of building supplies, also formed an important segment of the town's economy. By 1902 John L. Bailey's Toisnot Improvement Company was manufacturing brick locally.²³ Lumber was also vital to the local economy. Rock Ford Manufacturing Company and the Dennis Simmons Lumber Company were both established circa 1907.²⁴ The increased pressures of industry and a growing population forced the town to face the fact that improved municipal services were in order. The first waterworks was powered by a windmill²⁵ and in the early years of this century the electric lights were used only at night, the generator being turned on at dusk and switched off at midnight.²⁶ Dr. E. G. Moore, a local physician, established a sanatorium on Branch Street,²⁷ providing the first hospital facility outside the county seat. The town continued to place a priority on excellent schools and on July 20, 1904, a contract for a fine new school was awarded to John C. Stout, an experienced Wilson architect.²⁸

Elm City's continuing prosperity in the twentieth century is evidenced by its architecture. Leading merchants like George A. Barnes and R. S. Wells commissioned monumental Classical Revival residences (No. 43 and No. 22), and many one-story Victorian cottages were built in all the residential sections of town. In 1903 a new brick depot was built in Rocky Mount and the old frame depot was moved to Toisnot (Elm City).²⁹ By 1909 this depot had been destroyed by fire and the present handsome brick depot was constructed shortly afterwards (No. 34).

About 1914, leaders of the black community organized the first high school for blacks in the county,³⁰ and in 1918 the County Bchool Board applied for permission to establish an accredited high school in Elm City.³¹

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The present Gothic Revival brick school (now Elm City Middle school) was built circa 1920. Fine residences continued to be built during this period including Dr. Robert Putney's handsome bungalow (No. 45). Paved streets, a Tudoresque Woman's Club building and other refinements came to Elm City in the 1920s, and the town continued to flourish until the economy was interrupted by the depression.

Few building of any architectural significance were constructed in Elm City after 1929. The farm economy that is so profoundly related to the economy of the town was disrupted until very nearly the beginning of World War II. After the war Elm City, like many small towns, suffered a housing shortage and a number of newer residences were built on the north side of town. Few of these were constructed within the proposed historic district boundaries. Very few new commercial structures were built, but a new town hall, located on Railroad Street was constructed. A new spurt of growth has taken place recently due to the success of the locally founded Teledyne Thermatics Company and the construction of the Donelly Marketing facility east of town of Rt. 301. Both companies are located on the outskirts of town outside the proposed historic district. A number of new subdivisions have been built outside the older areas of town to accommodate the increased population from these expanding industries.

The proposed Elm City Historic District with its variety of late nineteenth and early twentieth century styles of building accurately reflects the most dynamic period of the town's growth to date. The combination which lies within the district of an intact commercial section surrounded by cohesive contemporary residential areas makes the district an excellent one. The large number of intact commercial buildings, with unaltered facades, is an unusual feature as is the architectural integrity of more than ninety per cent of the residences. The lovely tree-lined streets beautify and unify the historic fabric of the town. The district includes not only the bulk of the town's earliest residences but its oldest church building and the present home of its oldest congregation.

Footnotes

¹J. T. Watson, The History of Toisnot-Elm City From 1873 to 1932. Elm City: Rotary Club and the Cox-Putney Post, American Legion, 1932, hereinafter cited as Watson, Elm City.

²Watson, Elm City.

³Private Laws of North Carolina, 1873-1874, C.17.

⁴Watson, Elm City.

⁵Watson, Elm City.

⁶Watson, Elm City.

⁷Watson, Elm City.

⁸Watson, Elm City.

⁹Ocie Batts, "Elm City, N. C. Centennial 1873-1973", unpublished manuscript in the collection of the Wilson County Public Library, hereinafter cited as Batts, "Centennial".

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- 10 Watson, Elm City.
- 11 Watson, Elm City.
- 12 Branson's North Carolina Business Directory. Raleigh: Levi Branson, 1884.
- 13 Watson, Elm City.
- 14 Map of Toisnot by E. P. Tucke, July 10, 1884.
- 15 Wilson Daily Times, (Wilson), November 21, 1884.
- 16 Watson, Elm City.
- 17 Watson, Elm City.
- 18 Watson, Elm City.
- 19 Branson's North Carolina Business Directory. Raleigh: Levi Branson, 1890 and 1896.
- 20 A. Nixon, The North Carolina Yearbook and Business Directory. Raleigh: 1910, hereinafter cited as Nixon, Yearbook.
- 21 Batts, Centennial.
- 22 Episcopal Church Diocesan Report, 1902.
- 23 Nixon, Yearbook, 1902.
- 24 Nixon, Yearbook, 1907.
- 25 R.D.W. Connor, History of North Carolina. Volume V, N.Y.: Lewis Publishing Co., 1919), 256-257.
- 26 Author's interview with William G. Sharpe, a longtime resident of Elm City, hereinafter cited as Sharpe interview.
- 27 Postcard view "Martha Moore Home", Elm City, circa 1908.
- 28 Wilson County School Board Minutes, July 20, 1904.
- 29 Sharpe interview.
- 30 List of committees of Elm City High "which will open on the third Monday in October, 1914."
- 31 Wilson County School Board Minutes, May 6, 1918.

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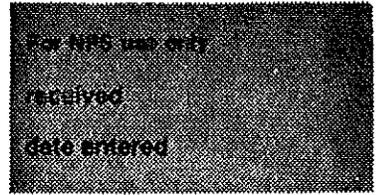
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BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The Elm City Municipal Historic District, bounded roughly by the northeast side of North Street, the southeast side of Branch Street, the southwest side of Main Street, and the northwest side of Anderson Street, includes the greatest number of intacy structures in the oldest section of town. The earliest development of the town was centered around the railroad depot which lies at the center of the proposed district. The earliest industrial sites in town, the Dennis Simmons Lumber Company and the Elm City cotton gin, lie to the south of the proposed district, but have not been included since the Dennis Simmons Lumber Company has been demolished and the Elm City cotton gin lies considerably south of the proposed district with no contiguous parcels joining the proposed district and the gin site. Most of the earliest residential and commercial properties in town lie within the district boundaries, although some contemporary structures are located outside the district's proposed boundaries they are generally either altered or of a lesser design quality. On the southeastern boundary of the district the surrounding buildings are contemporary with those of the district, but they are more altered and generally in a greater state of disrepair. Mobile homes are also interspersed with the older buildings in this area. On the eastern boundary of the district threr are several turn-of-the-century Victorian cottages, especially facing Nash Street, but these have been altered more than their contemporaries in the district. Also in this area are several brick duplex apartments facing Church Street and a modern brick house and a recently remodelled church fronting on Pender Street at the corner of North Street. The Elm City School also forms a part of the district's eastern border and although the main block of the school dates from the 1920s its many alterations and additions make it unsuitable for inclusion in the district. On the northeastern corner of the district no more buildings are present, only open fields which lead to the town cemetery some distance away. The northern extension of Parker Street is dominated by modern motels with little in common with the character or style of the district. On the southern boundary of the district is located a large mid-twentieth century church surrounded by some early twentieth century residences of lesser design quality than those in the district, intermixed with some 1960s and 1970s brick ranch homes. The rather irregular boundaries of the district reflect to some extent the haphazard development of the town in the residential areas. Although other buildings of significance are located inside the town boundaries these buildings are not physically linded to the proposed district, and are scattered in the surrounding area.

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Photographs

The survey which resulted in the nomination of the Elm City Historic District was conducted in 1980-81. At that time photographs were taken of the district and those photographs are included in the nomination. The district was revisited in the spring of 1985 by staff members of the Survey and Planning Branch of the Division of Archives to determine what changes had occurred in the district. The photographs enclosed accurately depict the condition and character of the Elm City Historic District.