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**FINAL REPORT**

**MOORESVILLE ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY  
IREDELL COUNTY  
2015-2016**

**Prepared by:**

**Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc.  
2228 Winter Street  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28205**

**Prepared for:**

**North Carolina Historic Preservation Office  
Office of Archives and History  
Raleigh, North Carolina**

**and**

**Town of Mooresville  
Department of Development Services  
413 North Main Street  
Mooresville, North Carolina 28115**

**23 August 2016**

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## **Methodology**

The Mooresville Architectural Survey encompasses the municipal boundaries of Mooresville and its extra-territorial jurisdiction, excluding the Mooresville Historic District and the Mooresville Mill Village Historic District. The project commenced with a planning phase that included preliminary historical research and the identification of the properties to be intensively surveyed. The principal investigators began by soliciting survey recommendations from the planning department, local historians, and members of the historic properties commission. In addition, the principal investigators conducted an initial scoping, or windshield, survey of the project area to locate specific properties and areas that needed investigation. Because the survey was selective rather than comprehensive, the principal investigators decided to survey resources that represented the full range of building types found in Mooresville from its beginnings to the survey end date of 1970. The principal investigators also captured resources within the survey population that were associated with the various socio-economic and racial groups found in Mooresville. During the windshield survey, the principal investigators realized that many houses built prior to 1970 have had substantial alterations, and consequently, issues of integrity helped direct the selection of residential resources. The investigators also found during the scoping that most of the extra-territorial areas contained modern construction and that many of the remaining farms in these once rural areas had been drawn out of the Mooresville jurisdiction. Therefore, the surveyors focused most of their efforts within the historic confines of Mooresville. Because houses are the most common building type, residential architecture predominated in the survey population. However, the survey also recorded industrial properties, African American churches and cemeteries, stores, farms, schools, and recreational and community facilities.

The survey was conducted to federal and state architectural survey standards and under the supervision of Historic Preservation Office (HPO) staff. The survey was completed in accordance with the HPO architectural survey manual, "Practical Advice for Recording Historic Structures" (2008). Approximately 200 properties dating through 1969 were intensively surveyed, including approximately 50 for which HPO survey files already existed. New survey records were created for individual properties, subdivisions, and other groups of buildings, as appropriate, and existing records were updated.

The scope of work included site visits; historical research; oral histories; high-resolution digital photography; data entry in the HPO's survey database with written summaries; and updating or creating paper files with report forms generated from the database, photographic proof sheets, and other relevant material gathered during the project.

The principal investigators conducted historical research into the development of Mooresville, from its nineteenth-century founding along the Atlanta, Tennessee, and Ohio Railroad to its late-twentieth-century suburban expansion. Both primary and secondary documents were used to complete the project. These included published town and Iredell County histories; comprehensive planning studies; architectural files of the HPO and the Mooresville Historic Preservation Commission; Sanborn Maps; vertical files; National Register nominations; and interviews with property owners, planners, and local historians. The HPO's mapping service (HPOWEB) and Iredell County's GIS and real estate records were examined to identify historic resources and gather relevant survey data. The principal investigators also identified historic resources through consultation with the Mooresville Planning Department and the local historic properties commission.

## **Mooreville Historical Background Essay**

### **Contexts for Community Development and Planning, Commerce, Industry, Education, and African American Heritage**

#### Rise of a Piedmont Railroad Town: Mooreville in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Founded in 1873 along the Atlantic, Tennessee, and Ohio (AT&O) Railroad, Mooreville developed as a trading and cotton manufacturing center. The town arose in southern Iredell County in the rolling, agrarian landscape of North Carolina's western Piedmont. The ambitiously named AT&O Railroad ran only forty-five miles from Charlotte in Mecklenburg County to Statesville, the seat of adjacent Iredell County. The railroad had been constructed in 1861, on the eve of the Civil War, and was rebuilt after the conflict. Mooreville was named for landowner, John Franklin Moore, whose property encompassed much of the town. To attract development, Moore strategically donated the land for the AT&O depot and adjacent cotton loading platform before the Civil War when the small market town was known as Moore's Siding. He also gave land for Presbyterian and Methodist churches as well as for Mooreville Academy, a private school that stood on what became Academy Street. The community was incorporated as the Town of Mooreville in 1873 with town limits extending a mile around the depot which would soon mark the center of a bustling business district (Haselden 1967: 1-5; Jacobs 2007: 9-13; Phillips 1980).

By the turn of the twentieth century, Mooreville's economic foundation had shifted away from commerce to textile manufacturing. This conversion reflected the rail-oriented textile boom of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that generated urban growth and reshaped the industrial geography of the region. While the Piedmont remained primarily rural and agrarian, new textile mills dotted the railroads in the small towns and cities. The cotton mills were the principal symbols of the "New South" credo championed by civic leaders who equated urban, industrial

growth—and especially the arrival of mills—with progress. By World War I, over 300 cotton mills were operating within a 100-mile radius of Charlotte; and by the 1920s, the Piedmont had surpassed New England as the leading textile producer in the world (Glass 1992: 57-58; Bishir and Southern 2003: 52-55).

In Mooresville, the Mooresville Cotton Mills began operating in 1894 and became the town's largest textile manufacturing complex and principal employer. The plant had 5,000 spindles in place to produce cotton yarn. The original mill was located track-side on North Church Street near the town center, but in the early twentieth century, the company launched a major expansion campaign along the southern periphery of town on both sides of the railroad. A great complex of brick manufacturing buildings and adjacent frame worker housing emerged. By the 1920s, the facility comprised three major, brick mill buildings (designated as Mill Nos. 1-3) and nearly 400 mill houses on roughly 200 acres. By the Great Depression, the mill contained 40,000 spindles and 1,200 looms and employed over 2,000 people. Production by then featured a variety of dress and curtain goods, drapery and upholstery fabric, men's suiting materials, and towels. Nearly fifteen percent of the towels made in the United States came from the plant. Under successive owners, the plant operated into the late twentieth century as the largest single employer in Iredell County (Taylor 2012: 55-58; Jacobs 2007: 44-51).

On the opposite side of town, around Cascade Street, businessman Espy Watts Brawley and other investors established Dixie Cotton Mills in 1906. Sited on forty-five acres, the complex included a two-story, brick mill that manufactured cotton yarn and a small village for its workforce. By 1914, Dixie Cotton Mills had sixty-five employees, and three-to-five-room worker houses lined several streets leading to the plant. In 1934, the textile conglomerate Burlington Mills (which became known

as Burlington Industries in 1955) bought the mill and revamped it as Cascade Rayon Mills (Haselden 1967: 96-97; Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1908, 1914).

While cotton mills opened on the north and south sides of town, an industrial enclave containing a variety of manufactories took shape just north of the business district. Concentrated between North Broad and North Main streets, this section included two cotton seed oil mills, lumber yards and saw mills, a furniture manufacturing company, a flour mill, and an iron works producing farm implements and machinery. Spur lines stretched through this industrial landscape, linking the factories to the railroad (Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1914, 1925).

The Mooresville Flour Mill Company opened in this area in the late nineteenth century under the ownership of W. W. Melchor. Sited on North Main Street, the flour mill was rebuilt as a larger brick facility after a 1924 fire destroyed the original wooden building. In 1928, a group of local businessmen led by Espy Watts Brawley incorporated the business as Mooresville Flour Mill, producers of specialty flour and livestock feed. The mill remains in operation today making such regional products as Southern Biscuit self-rising flour (Jacobs 2007: 32-33; Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1914, 1925, 1950).

Another major business in this industrial zone was the Mooresville Furniture Company. The business was started by B. A. Troutman, who had moved to Mooresville with other members of the family in 1890. The Troutmans became leading community leaders, businessmen, and builders who helped fuel Mooresville's growing prosperity in the early twentieth century. The prominent Mooresville Furniture Company filled nearly an entire block above Mackey Street, facing the Mooresville Iron Works, which the Troutman family also owned. The furniture company manufactured and sold furniture in addition to a variety of dressed lumber and building materials for the town's booming

construction trade. Saw and planing mills and a large lumber yard surrounded the main manufacturing building (Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1914, 1925; Jacobs 2007: 26-28, 92).

Mooresville also had two large cotton seed oil companies which took advantage of what was otherwise a waste product of the textile industry to create an oil for cooking and cosmetics. Located across the street from the Mooresville Furniture Company, the Mooresville Oil Company began in the early 1900s while the Lorene Seed Oil Mill opened on North Broad Street in 1906. In 1911, cotton merchant S. A. Hart bought the Lorene mill and renamed it the Farmer's Warehouse and Oil Mills. The business was reorganized and expanded into one of the area's more successful cotton processing and marketing operations (Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1914, 1925; Jacobs 2007: 40-41).

Standing to the north of the Farmer's Warehouse and Oil Mills, Barger Brothers Lumber Yard and Saw Mill shipped some two million feet of lumber annually during its heyday in the early twentieth century. The timber supply came from Iredell, Rowan, and Catawba counties. By the mid-1920s, under the direction of L. Young White, the company sold building materials and formed a construction division which eventually led to the formation of the Barger Brothers Construction Company. Barger Brothers was active in the development of the North Main Street and Eastern Heights neighborhood in Mooresville as well as a wide range of major building projects throughout the region (Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1914, 1925; Jacobs 2008: 45; Haselden 1967: 97-98).

The northern end of this industrial area also held the Mooresville Cooperative Creamery, built at the corner of North Broad Street and West Moore Avenue in 1914. By the 1910s, Iredell County was becoming a pivotal dairy producer, providing fresh butterfat, milk, and other dairy products to the region's cities and towns. The creamery was reorganized in 1924 as the Mooresville Ice Cream

Company following the addition of ice cream to its expanding line of dairy products. The 1950 Sanborn map of Mooresville shows the creamery with a later addition devoted to making ice cream (Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1914, 1925, 1950; [www.deluxe1924.com/history](http://www.deluxe1924.com/history)).

With the emergence of the two textile mills and all these other industries, the population of Mooresville grew in the early twentieth century. The number of inhabitants reached 1,500 in 1900 and exceeded 3,400 by 1910. By 1930, Mooresville boasted over 5,600 residents (U.S. Census, Population Schedules 1900-1930).

The townsfolk and surrounding farming population supported a thriving business district along the railroad corridor. Around 1900, commercial activity was concentrated near the depot where the railroad crossed West Center Avenue. This area contained a cluster of general stores, a post office, drug store, and bank. By 1914, the streets had been given their current names and commercial development had expanded along Main and Broad streets through the center of town. North Main Street, in particular, included two blocks of dense commercial activity between West Center and West Moore avenues. Here the two principal banks were located as well as dry goods stores, drugstores, two undertaking establishments, a hotel, and specialty stores, including a furniture business and jewelry shop. Assorted offices and apartments occupied the upper stories (Phillips 1980; Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1914, 1925).

Probably in the late 1910s, the original frame depot was replaced by the larger, brick railroad station that remains today. The new station served the giant Southern Railway system which had acquired the railroad line in 1894 and linked Mooresville to a vast new network of regional markets and northern cities. The 1920s saw the commercial district continue to advance northward along North Main Street where several auto-oriented businesses occupied subdivided lots. For example, in 1924,



Mooresville Motor Company, which had begun in 1917 as the Mooresville Garage, opened a modern dealership on North Main Street that sold and repaired Buick, Dodge, and Chevrolet automobiles. New, brick commercial buildings also rose on the south side of the district where a block of storefronts and an auto-repair shop replaced houses on the east side of Main Street near East McLelland Avenue (Phillips 1980; Poore Interview 2016).

Surrounding these flourishing commercial and industrial blocks on Main and Broad streets stood many of the town's largest houses built by its wealthiest residents. Between the 1880s and 1910s, a host of Mooresville's prominent families built stylish, picturesque residences along the 200 and 300 blocks of South Broad Street near the depot. They included physician Dr. James Young, department store owner John Pinkney Mills, and J. Frank Brawley, banker and owner of the Lorene Cotton Seed Oil Mill. As the town grew, blocks of fashionable dwellings rose on North Main Street and west of North Broad Street along Academy Street, West Center Avenue, and West McLelland Avenue (Phillips 1980, South Broad Street Row National Register Nomination; Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1914, 1925).

The periphery of the business district also featured prominent churches and public schools that served as *de facto* buffers between the commercial and residential realms. In 1875, the newly organized First Presbyterian Church erected the first church in town on land donated by John Moore at the corner of South Church Street and East McLelland Avenue. The frame church was later sold to First Baptist Church, and the Presbyterian congregation moved to a larger house of worship on South Academy Street. First Baptist Church has remained at the South Church site. Central Methodist Church opened on North Academy Street, three blocks to the north of First Presbyterian while St. Mark's Lutheran Church was constructed on North Main Street, at the edge of the town's northern industrial district (Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Map 1914; Jacobs 2007: 64-66).

During this same period, the town funded the construction of modern public schools around the edges of downtown. Into the early 1900s, the white children of Mooresville received public instruction at one-room schools or at private schools such as Mooresville Academy, situated on Academy Street. In 1905, the state legislature created the Mooresville Graded School District, and townspeople approved a \$20,000 bond to begin building schools. In 1907, the three-story, brick Mooresville Graded School was erected directly across from Central Methodist Church on North Academy Street. In 1911, North School opened at the corner of Oak Street and McNeely Avenue as the second educational facility in the school district. The school closed in 1925 when a larger building holding eleven classrooms opened its doors across the street. The new school was named Park View School for its proximity to a public park. On the south side of town, South School was erected in 1920 at the corner of Church Street and East Center Avenue. The impressive two-story, brick facility accommodated seventeen classrooms, offices, and an auditorium (Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1902, 1914, 1925; Haselden 1967: 48-50; Jacobs 2007: 73-77).

In the early 1920s, fire severely damaged the Mooresville Graded School, and the renovated building subsequently reopened as Central Mooresville High School. The up-to-date facility displayed the latest features in scholastic design, including a grand auditorium for both educational and community functions; laboratories; state-of-the-art cafeteria; and spacious athletic fields (Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1914, 1925; Jacobs 2007: 77).

All these educational facilities were constructed for Mooresville's white student population. As throughout the South, the town's African American public schools in this period were underequipped

and chronically underfunded<sup>1</sup>. In Mooresville, a two-story, frame school for African Americans was erected on West McLelland Avenue in 1907, the same year that the brick Mooresville Graded School opened for whites. The facilities for African American students improved markedly with the 1941 construction of Dunbar School, named in honor of the black poet Paul Dunbar. The substantial, red-brick, Colonial Revival building replaced the 1907 school on West McLelland Avenue. Although not confirmed, the school was probably built with funds provided by the Public Works Administration (PWA), a Depression-era New Deal program. (In 1937, a nearly identical Colonial Revival design was employed in nearby Davidson for the Davidson Colored School (later Ada Jenkins School), a project firmly documented as PWA funded.) Between 1933 and 1941, the PWA provided nationwide support for a great variety of public building projects, both large-scale and small, including thousands of schools (*Mooresville Tribute*, July 31. 1996; Gray 2006; Jacobs 2007: 78; [www.mgsd.k12.nc.us/page](http://www.mgsd.k12.nc.us/page)).

Between 1957 and 1964, the Dunbar School complex was expanded with a cafeteria building, auditorium, and additional classrooms for the high school program. Following the racial integration of Mooresville's schools in 1968, the original, 1941 Dunbar School building was razed, and the school was renamed for its esteemed principal, N. F. Woods (*Mooresville Tribute*, July 31. 1996; Jacobs 2007: 78; [www.mgsd.k12.nc.us/page](http://www.mgsd.k12.nc.us/page)).

These modern schools—both white and African American--served the town's burgeoning neighborhoods. Houses for middle- and working-class families generally appeared along streets and lanes just beyond the blocks adjacent to the depot and commercial center. The early-twentieth-

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<sup>1</sup> To help alleviate this problem, Sears, Roebuck and Company president, Julius Rosenwald, of Chicago established an eponymous fund to provide financial and design support for the construction of African American schools in North Carolina and throughout the South. Eleven Rosenwald schoolhouses were built in Iredell County in the 1920s but none in Mooresville. While they served rural communities primarily, a four-room, two-teacher Rosenwald facility, Unity High School, was constructed in Statesville (Obenauer and Brown 2015).

century pattern of streets in Mooresville consisted of a variety of modified grids oriented to the rail line as well as to the principal farm-to-market roads that angled into town. Blocks varied in size, and streets often terminated at creeks feeding into nearby Rocky River or made sharp turns to avoid waterways or steep topography. On the northwest side, the convergence of wooded creeks beyond West Moore Avenue constrained residential growth primarily to North Academy Street above West Center Avenue and was the logical location for the town water treatment plant. By contrast, the north and east sides of town were relatively unencumbered by difficult terrain and grew vigorously. The area around East Center Avenue and Magnolia and Cedar streets is the highest elevation in town and formed the heart of the Eastern Heights neighborhood which witnessed considerable development between the 1920s and 1950s (Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1914, 1925).

Eastern Heights, especially near its crest, appealed to the families of prominent businessmen and professionals but also drew the town's broad middle and working classes. They poured into Mooresville in the early and mid-twentieth centuries, finding employment in downtown businesses as well as in the bustling cotton mills, iron works, lumber yards, furniture plants, creameries, and the cotton seed oil and flour mills. They were entrepreneurs, clerks, managers, engineers, teachers, skilled craftsmen and repairmen, foremen, and laborers. The north side of Mooresville had the graded North School by 1912 and a public recreational area, Stewart Park, by the 1920s. Spearheaded by B. A. Troutman, Stewart Park was opened in 1920 and boasted a concrete swimming pool (Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1914, 1925; Jacobs 2007: 63).

With the expansion of Mooresville in this period, African American communities took shape around the outskirts of town. In Mooresville and across North Carolina, cohesive black neighborhoods emerged amidst the urban growth of the early twentieth century. They were racially segregated places proscribed by Jim Crow laws and social customs. On the north side of Mooresville, a black

community developed near Cascade Mills and around an area known as the Junction, where two lines of the Southern Railway converged. Watkins Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church was established here, as well as the African American community cemetery, and collections of one-story, frame houses lined North Broad Street, West Statesville Avenue, Cascade Street, and assorted impasses and alleyways. This black neighborhood extended several blocks east to McNeely Avenue and southwest to West Moore Avenue and the Farmers Warehouse and Oil Mill on North Broad Street. The 1925 Sanborn Map shows a small Presbyterian church (now Reid Memorial Presbyterian Church) and nearby “Hall” for African Americans on North Broad Street around the Junction (Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1914, 1925, 1950; Poore Interview 2016).

Other black neighborhoods arose around Sharpe Street and East Cabarrus Avenue near Mooresville Cotton Mill No. 1 and around West McLelland Avenue just outside the western limits of town. A cornerstone of this latter neighborhood was the frame, Mooresville Colored School, replaced in 1941 by the brick Dunbar School. A Congregational church for African Americans stood nearby. The 1925 Sanborn Map shows the church along West McLelland Avenue near Charlotte Street, surrounded by one-story, frame dwellings and a small store. Finally, a smaller African American enclave emerged in the bottomland along Sharpe Street and East Cabarrus Avenue in the southeastern part of town. This area was near the Mooresville Cotton Mill No. 1 which employed some of the inhabitants (Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1914, 1925, 1950; Poore Interview 2016).

African Americans in early-twentieth-century Mooresville engaged in an assortment of jobs both within and outside the town. In common with black employment throughout the South in the Jim Crow era, some worked as field hands on neighboring farms or were day laborers for local businesses. Others held steadier employment as skilled artisans, ministers, teachers, and as workers in the cotton mill yards. Into the 1960s, the Southern textile industry typically restricted African

American labor to low-paying, racially segregated jobs that were usually outside the main manufacturing plants. Women were also employed as teachers but mostly worked as domestics for white households (Mooreville Sanborn Insurance Maps 1914, 1925, 1950; *US Census*, Population Schedules 1910, 1920).

The growth of Mooreville slowed considerably during the Great Depression although several major construction projects occurred during the decade. As noted above, on the west side of town, Central High School arose on Academy Street in 1937, following a fire that destroyed the earlier graded school on the property. On the east side of town, the four-story, red-brick Lowrance Hospital as well as the adjacent nursing school, Furchess Hall, opened in the 1930s. These two facilities occupied a large, previously vacant block flanked by East Center and Carpenter avenues and were the impetus for the growth of Eastern Heights (Mooreville Sanborn Insurance Map 1950; Haselden 1967: 78-82).

### Maturing Mooresville: The Town at Mid-Century

The development of Mooresville slowed during the Great Depression and World War II with wartime limits on construction but resumed gradually in the years that followed. The town population reached 7,000 in 1950 but declined slightly to 6,900 in 1960. The 1950 Sanborn maps show new construction primarily confined to housing around Mooresville Cotton Mills and on available lots in established neighborhoods. However, by the end of the decade and early 1960s, new houses were surrounding the town limits which remained the one-mile radius around the depot. Ranch houses appeared on newly platted lots along West Center and West McLelland avenues near the west boundary and especially on the eastern edge of town where developers laid out subdivisions east of Cabarrus Avenue and along Magnolia and Cedar streets and Glenwood Drive.

Several significant building projects occurred in this period. In 1949, Mooresville Senior High School opened in Eastern Heights, commanding the highest point at the intersection of East Center Avenue and Magnolia Street. During the 1940s and 1950s, Burlington Industries modernized its Cascade Mills plant for rayon production and acquired Mooresville Cotton Mills for making crepe and taffeta cloth as well as rayon yarn. Burlington Industries launched multi-million-dollar modernization campaigns at both mills, remodeling the principal factory buildings and installing air-conditioning and new machinery (Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Map 1950; Jacob 2007: 51; Taylor 2012).

In downtown, more and more auto-oriented businesses took over vacant parcels or replaced houses on previously residential blocks. As illustrated in the 1950 Sanborn Map, businesses selling or repairing motor cars opened on North Broad Street directly across from the depot. On street-corner lots around the periphery of downtown, enterprising entrepreneurs razed dwellings for filling stations. This transformation from residential to auto-oriented commercial development intensified through the 1950s and into the 1960s. By then, formerly residential North Main Street contained a

small shopping center and other businesses with parking lots in front for the convenience of motorists. On South Main Street, several large houses were lost to a pair of gas stations and a drive-in eatery (Mooresville Sanborn Insurance Map 1950).

To address the mounting competition from outlying businesses geared to motorists and to entice shoppers to Main Street, civic leaders commissioned the *Mooresville Modernization Plan*. Although never fully implemented, this 1957 land development scheme called for a downtown pedestrian mall, improved night-time illumination, sidewalk canopies, and the modernization of storefronts. The pedestrian mall did not materialize, but other aspects of the plan changed the appearance of the town center. In the spirit of modernizing Mooresville, Belk's Department Store, which had opened in Mooresville in 1924, covered its brick façade with sleek aluminum panels. The extant Lowrance Hospital remodeled its main entry and reclad the brick exterior in white stucco. Other property owners erected new buildings with up-to-date designs and off-street parking. The town built a new city hall with a progressive Modernist facade and a parking lot. The downtown banks followed suit. As promoted in the Modernization Plan, the new Piedmont Bank and Trust building was illuminated at night as part of a welcoming "white way" along Main Street. The town also greeted a fast-food restaurant (What-A-Burger) and a motel (the Oaks Motor Court) on South Main (Mooresville Modernization Plan 1957; Jacobs 2008: 48-56).

### Port City, Race City, and Interstate Highways: Mooresville in the late Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

While such changes demonstrated the direct impact of the motor car on Main Street, the most profound and transformative effects of the auto age would be the unprecedented mobility. As the postwar decades progressed, escalating automobile and truck travel and commensurate highway construction transformed the Mooresville area. Civic leaders viewed new highways as keys to



prosperity. Located just thirty miles north of downtown Charlotte, this area grew in the postwar years as part of the Queen City's broadening suburban domain. While rail transport had concentrated steady, orderly growth around the rail line and traditional central business district, development in the late twentieth century occurred at an extraordinary scale in the Charlotte environs which included southern Iredell County. Roadway improvement campaigns in the 1950s, notably the widening of US Highway 21 (Charlotte Highway) between southern Iredell County and Charlotte, sparked the first stage of suburbia west of Mooresville. During the next decade, the construction of Interstate highways 77 and 40 near Mooresville engendered profound suburban expansion. Interstate 77--running from Charlotte northward across the western Piedmont into Virginia—was completed through the county in 1966. The highway absorbed sections of US 21 and became the major commuting corridor between Mooresville and Charlotte. By the end of the decade, east-west Interstate 40 was constructed through the center of the county, crossing I-77 at Statesville. Interstate 40 would ultimately stretch across the country, from Barstow, California, to Wilmington, North Carolina. The intersection of the two highways inspired the county's official motto, "Crossroads of the Future", reflecting their anticipated impact on auto-oriented suburban growth (Jacobs 2008: 33-44).

Whereas the new highways drove the suburban expansion, the construction of Lake Norman in the early 1960s made this growth exceptional. The massive lake was the final of seven reservoirs built by Duke Power (now Duke Energy) for hydroelectric power along the Catawba River. These lakes extended from above Morganton near the Blue Ridge to the confluence of the Catawba and Santee-Cooper rivers in South Carolina. Lake Norman became the largest man-made body of water in North Carolina, consuming some 32,000 acres of Piedmont bottomlands with a shoreline that stretched for 520 miles—the majority in southwest Iredell County. In addition to producing electricity, the lake

was built to provide flood control and fresh water and to serve as a recreational destination for residents in a vast, four-county region (Jacobs 2008; Campbell 2013).

With the completion of Lake Norman, subdivision regulations were drawn and private property owners subdivided their land for businesses and small residential subdivisions with such provocative names as Moonlight, Catalina Cove, and Bonanza. Duke Power began selling its holdings around the lake, and public utilities were extended west of Interstate 77 to the shores of Lake Norman. The population of Iredell County consequently skyrocketed, doubling between 1960 and 2000 to surpass 122,000, and then climbing an additional thirty percent to 160,000 residents in 2010. At an unprecedented scale in this region, developers invested in houses and shopping centers to satisfy the soaring commuter market. Weekend retreats also arose, joining the new marinas and other assorted enterprises that catered to the recreation trade (Campbell 2013; *Iredell County 2030 Horizon Plan 2009, Updated 2013: 12-13*).

This development transformed the agrarian landscape of southern Iredell County. Brawley School Road, once a winding, nineteenth-century roadway, became the transportation spine connecting subdivisions around the lake. In short order, the road was widened and nearby farmsteads divided into hundreds of house lots. In 2008, the North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund reported that the county had lost some 30,000 acres of farmland—or about ten farms annually—over the past three decades. Most of the loss was occurring in southern Iredell County. The report stated, “Tractors, cattle and green space — they used to be common sights along any Iredell County road. Now, local farmers can tell you who used to own the farm where the Wal-Mart Supercenter or Iredell Memorial Hospital now stand [sic]” ([www.aroundiredell.com/growth/index.php/](http://www.aroundiredell.com/growth/index.php/); [www.ncadfp.org/documents/](http://www.ncadfp.org/documents/); *Iredell County 2030 Horizon Plan 2009, Updated 2013: 38-39, 45*).

Lake Norman proved to be a watershed in the development of Mooresville. Like the railroad and the cotton mills, the lake shaped not only development but also sense of place. Mooresville soon gained a nickname, Port City, reflecting the influence of the lake on the town. Main Street businesses advertised themselves to suburbanites as the most convenient destination for shopping and public services. Later, through a series of annexations, Mooresville extended its city limits to capture the growth. At present, the boundaries of the town encompass nearly fifteen square miles, stretching west of Interstate 77 to shopping centers, business parks, and lake-front real estate. The population of the town has grown apace, from 8,500 residents in 1980 to nearly 34,000 in 2010. Projections indicate this rapid growth continuing through at least the next decade (*Mooresville Comprehensive Plan 2006; Iredell County 2030 Horizon Plan 2009, Updated 2013: 2-3, 9; Jacobs 2008: 45*).

The expanding town jurisdiction has encompassed not only upmarket residential and commercial subdivisions but also corporate headquarters and NASCAR race shops. Such major corporations as Lowe's Companies, Ingersall Rand, and J.C.P. Logistics have selected large tracts around Lake Norman in Mooresville for their operations. Since the 1990s, Mooresville has also attracted over fifty NASCAR race shops and earned a second moniker—Race City USA. The town is strategically positioned at the heart of NASCAR country with race tracks in Charlotte and Wilmington, North Carolina, Bristol, Virginia, and Darlington, South Carolina. During a single October race week in Charlotte, some 35,000 fans visit Mooresville's Lakeside Business Park where many of the shops are concentrated ([www.caranddriver.com/features/goodbye-sleepy-hollow-hello-race-city-usa](http://www.caranddriver.com/features/goodbye-sleepy-hollow-hello-race-city-usa)).

Compounding the radically changing role of Mooresville in the region has been the closing of the textile mills. Cascade Mills shut down in 1982 after its labor force declined during the prior decade from 375 employees to 125 at its closing. Mooresville Cotton Mills was shuttered in 1999, ending its

long and profound impact on the town and county. The mill had remained the premier employer in Iredell County through the 1960s but, as with the region's textile industry as a whole, steadily declined in the subsequent decades, ultimately falling victim to foreign competition (*Statesville Record and Landmark*, January 19, 2014).

### Conclusion

A 2006 Mooresville planning study observed that the town has changed through the twentieth century "from a self-contained industrial community to a rapidly urbanizing, multi-faceted society." It has become "a mix of small town, suburban and urban development." Indeed, Mooresville today consists of the historic, mile-wide town of grid-pattern streets and rail-related businesses as well as miles of annexed expressways, lakefront properties, and curvilinear subdivisions (*Mooresville Comprehensive Plan 2006: 3*).

A major blow to Mooresville's historic small-town character occurred in the early 1990s when the east side of the 200 block North Main Street was demolished. Lined with a row of early-twentieth-century, brick commercial buildings, this block anchored the north side of the Mooresville Historic District (listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980). In 1991, Belk's Department Store, in this commercial block, was relocated to a Lake Norman shopping center, and the property was acquired by Duke Energy and torn down for a proposed service center that was never built. The destruction of other storefronts on the block ensued.

Otherwise, the sizable Mooresville Historic District is substantially intact, and throughout the town modern construction has focused mainly on individual buildings rather than entire blocks. Federal dollars have supported the renovations of early-twentieth-century worker housing. The African American neighborhoods as well as the Cascade Mill village have been extensively modified by

publically funded remodeling and new construction. Private investors have heavily remodeled the Mooresville Cotton Mills for modern commercial uses. By contrast, the surrounding mill village remains largely intact and forms the Mooresville Mill Village Historic District, listed in the National Register in 2012.

Throughout the town, the early neighborhoods retain their respective original scale and architectural rhythm. The residential west side around South Academy Street and intersecting avenues remains particularly well-preserved. Throughout Mooresville, numerous individual resources stand out for their historical or architectural significance. Varying widely in building type, style, and date of construction—from African American churches, to public schools, to worker houses, to drive-in eateries—they express different aspects of Mooresville’s rich history.

## **Architectural Context**

### Introduction

The architectural history of Mooresville reflects the town's development first as an agricultural market town, then a textile manufacturing center, and finally, a postwar suburban community in the North Carolina Piedmont. Its building patterns over time typify other railroad towns that performed similar roles in the region. A thriving business district of brick commercial buildings with corbelled cornices and arched upper-story windows arose alongside the railroad tracks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nearby, embowered residential streets took shape, lined with the stylish houses of the families of successful businessmen and professionals. While handsomely expressed, these residences tended to be conservative renditions of the latest national styles. The dwellings of the broad middle and working classes appeared on the adjoining streets, farther from the commercial core but often closer to workplaces. These residences were usually simpler, one-story versions of up-to-date national styles or traditional house types built by the cotton mills for their workers.

In Mooresville, as in other Piedmont railroad towns, cotton mills and mill villages emerged along the rail line at the periphery of the town. The streets in mill villages typically consisted of a limited repertoire of the familiar gable-front, side-gable, and hip-roofed forms with little ornamentation. African American communities also developed around the outskirts. As in the white neighborhoods, the historically black communities contained versions of both national styles and customary forms and expressed social and economic achievements. The town churches, civic buildings, and commercial structures displayed the popular designs of their periods of construction—from the revival styles of the early twentieth century to eye-catching, postwar Modernist modes. The postwar decades witnessed suburban expansion and the appearance of planned subdivisions with ranch houses and split-levels. Many of these subdivisions were small developments that conformed to the

familiar grid-pattern of streets found around the town center, but others, with more ambitious designs, displayed fashionably curvilinear roadways and wooded medians to convey a bucolic ambiance.

While Mooresville followed this basic model of town development in the Piedmont, its growth was also exceptional. Mooresville Cotton Mills, which dominated the south side of town with its massive buildings and work force (some 2,000 employees in 1930), boosted the town's total population and supported a substantial commercial district as well as other industries. Aside from the Iredell County seat of Statesville and the metropolis of Charlotte in adjacent Mecklenburg County, Mooresville's population of 7,000 in 1950 far surpassed the other railroad towns in these two counties and ranked Mooresville among the larger towns in the region. The commercial and industrial opportunities attracted an influential class of businessmen, professionals, and town leaders who helped shape the architecture of the town by erecting the most fashionable houses and churches, investing in real estate, and spearheading civic improvement projects. The 1957 Mooresville Modernization Plan, sponsored by these civic leaders, led to the construction of a city hall in the latest modernist fashion as well as modern banks and other commercial buildings. Finally, the completion of Lake Norman in 1964 gave Mooresville's suburban expansion a distinctive cast. As the town annexed land to capture the widespread growth near the lake, the number of historic farms and rural schools and churches in the area rapidly gave way to lakeside subdivisions and weekend retreats.

### Residential Architecture

In Mooresville and throughout the Piedmont, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed growing opportunities for new types of domestic architecture. While builders perpetuated familiar, traditional house types into the 1900s, new forms and decorative embellishment also rose to popularity. Innovative framing methods, the mass production of bricks,

nails, and milled lumber, and the rise of rail transportation made both frame and brick houses easier, faster, and cheaper to construct. Architectural catalogs with national circulations offered a variety of sawn brackets, porch posts and balusters, decorative moldings, and mantelpieces, produced at rail-oriented steam-powered plants, including the Mooresville Furniture Company and nearby Barger Brothers Lumber Yard and Saw Mill. These advances in construction and materials, and especially the widespread use of light framing methods, which consisted entirely of sawn wood members nailed in place, coincided with the rise of the national picturesque movement. Picturesque architecture encompassed such styles as the Gothic Revival, Italianate, and the Queen Anne and promoted a freedom of form and stylistic flamboyance not previously expressed within the bounds of the region's familiar building types (Bishir 1990: 273-295).

But even as the picturesque movement introduced new architectural forms and ornamentation to Mooresville, familiar building patterns persisted. In particular, traditional one- and two-story, rectangular house types, one room deep, which had held sway across the region since the eighteenth century, remained a favorite choice into the early twentieth century. Until the 1900s, many of Mooresville's wealthier landowners conservatively displayed their status and taste by updating the customary two-story, single-pile I-house type with stylish, picturesque sawnwork on the front porches and gables. The 1891 First Presbyterian Manse (ID1089) at 251 South Broad Street remains a well-preserved example. This prominent two-story, single-pile dwelling features full-height, segmental-arched windows with pointed-arched lintels, decorative king posts in the gables, and chamfered porch posts set on recessed-paneled bases. The house stands today as the most intact of the surviving dwellings within the South Broad Street Row Historic District (National Register 1980).

By the early twentieth century, Mooresville's upper and middle classes increasingly favored Queen Anne-style houses with irregular massing, jutting bays, and complex roof configurations that differed



fundamentally from the classical origins of traditional house forms and plans with its regularity and simple ornamentation. Variations of the Queen Anne style were concentrated along the premier residential blocks west of South Broad Street, including South Academy and Charlotte streets, and West Moore, West McLelland, and West Center avenues. But they also appeared on the north and east sides of town where mill owners, managers, and merchants built stylish houses near their places of work. The epitome of the Queen Anne style in Mooresville is the 1904 Espy Watts Brawley House (ID0011) (National Register 1980). Erected for a leading businessman and textile mill owner, the house commands its tree-shaded site at the north end of town near Brawley's Dixie Cotton Mill. Two-and-a-half stories high, the residence consists of a complex massing with a high hip roof, intersecting subsidiary gables, and two large rear ells. The deep, wraparound porch has a gabled entrance bay, thick, lathe-turned posts and balusters, and a porte-cochere. The front door is an interplay of incised ornamentation and spindlework.

A collection of other large Queen Anne houses stands out on the west side of Mooresville. As was common with Queen Anne domestic architecture in the early twentieth century, these houses often freely combine picturesque and classical motifs. The ca. 1904 Dr. Nicolas Moore House (ID0597) at 127 Charlotte Street mixes Tuscan porch columns and classical fanlights with an irregular massing and a variety of window shapes and surface textures. In similar fashion, the 1903 McNeely House (ID0602) at 343 South Academy Street is essentially a two-story classical box enlivened with cutaway bays, diamond-shaped window panes, and a corner turret.

Concurrently, one-story Queen Anne houses mainly for the middle class multiplied throughout town. Some examples, such as the ca. 1904 Fred M. Culp House (ID1659) at 755 North Main Street, feature steeply-pitched, cross-gable roofs with patterned sawnwork and pointed-arched vents. The Culp House also displays narrow, beaded-board siding under the turned-post front porch. Numerous

other one-story houses were distinguished by their steeply pitched hip roofs with subsidiary cross gables atop projecting bays. Large porches with decorative sawnwork wrapped around the facades. One of the earliest and most exuberant such dwellings is the John and Mamie Houston House (ID1695) at 411 West Center Avenue. The house features a panoply of decorative millwork including spindlework in the projecting roof gables, denticulated cornices, an applied jig-sawn floral motif in the gabled entry bay, and a curvilinear front porch with bracketed turned posts. Although less flamboyant, the ca. 1900 House (ID1679) at 356 North Academy Street is another well-preserved example. Sited on an elevated lot and resting on a raised brick basement, the house displays turned porch posts and balusters, sawnwork porch brackets, and tall, single and paired windows. Brick chimneys with corbelled caps pierce the high hip roof.

As in other Piedmont towns, the popularity of the Queen Anne gradually gave way in the early twentieth century to various revival styles. Architects and contractors offered clients a wide range of historical models, interpreting the popular styles of earlier eras. The favorite such style was the Colonial Revival. Its comfortable, patriotic associations and familiar classical themes appealed to Mooresville's rising middle and professional classes who selected white-frame, cubic forms capped by hip roofs and dormers and embellished with simple Colonial Revival motifs. By World War I, more historically correct, red-brick or frame models gained popularity nationwide and remained a favorite house design into the mid-twentieth century.

The Isaac Harris House (ID1088) at 330 South Main Street is the grandest and earliest of Mooresville's Colonial Revival residences. Isaac Harris, a wealthy businessman and Mooresville's first mayor, erected this stylish house in the early 1900s, extensively expanding and remodeling his existing residence on the site. What stands today is a stately, hip-roofed, cubic house with a balanced,

two-story façade, Tuscan porch columns, and a modillioned cornice. The interior features a broad center stairhall flanked by the principal rooms containing columned mantelpieces.

A collection of sizable Colonial Revival houses were built in the subsequent decade along up-scale West Center Avenue. Although varying in decorative elements, each is essentially a frame, two-story, hip-roofed box with restrained classical motifs. The ca. 1910 Kipka House (ID1701) at 361 West Center Avenue stands out for its wraparound porch with Tuscan columns on brick pedestals, pedimented roof and porch gables, and broad eaves. A 1920s, frame garage survives intact behind the house.

A later, more academic example of the Colonial Revival style in Mooresville is the ca. 1935 Dr. George Taylor House (ID1682) at 633 East Center Avenue. The main block of this two-story, red-brick dwelling has a three-bay façade with the side-hall plan and a recessed wing on the south side. The doorway is framed by a broken pediment and fluted pilasters. Topped by a cupola, the hip-roofed, brick garage is said to have been built shortly after the residence. Dr. Taylor, a physician, was instrumental in the establishment of Lowrance Hospital on East Center Avenue in the 1930s, and conveniently erected his Colonial Revival home across the street.

A small number of Mooresville home owners selected a gambrel-roofed variation on the Colonial Revival theme popularly described as the Dutch Colonial Revival. The Carrall and Mary Lee Beatty House (ID1714) at 640 North Main Street is illustrative. Built ca. 1930, the two-story, frame dwelling consists of a narrow, single-pile main block capped by the trademark gambrel roof. The roof is steeply pitched and contains shed dormers that run across both the front and rear elevations. The center entrance features a fanlight and sidelights and is sheltered by a gable-front entry porch with

paneled porch posts and a molded frieze. The Beatty House replaced a smaller, frame dwelling on the site and may have reused a portion of that house for its rear ell.

Between the late 1920s and World War II, numerous Tudor Revival dwellings, both grand and more modest versions, appeared in Mooresville to rival the Colonial Revival. These houses were built on the north and east sides of town where landowners were subdividing their farms for residential development during the period. The 1935-1936 Dr. Allen B. Sloan House (ID1043) at 745 North Main Street is exemplary. A commanding presence on its large, tree-shaded grounds, the two-story Sloan House exhibits hallmarks of the Tudor Revival style. The dwelling displays a wealth of decorative half timbering with both stucco and brick infill, a massive, front-exterior chimney, Tudor arches, bellcast roofs, wingwalls, and multiple-light casement windows. Dr. Sloan commissioned Barger Brothers Lumber Company, the town's principal building contractor, to build the residence. L. Young White, the head of the company's newly formed construction division, is reputed to have been the designer.

L. Young White also selected the Tudor Revival style for his own house (ID1683) at 143 Cedar Street in Eastern Heights. According to Mooresville historian and librarian Andy Poore (who now owns the L. Young White House), the White house and a surrounding group of Tudor and Colonial Revival cottages on Cedar Street were dubbed "Mortgage Row". They were all constructed following New Deal reforms in home mortgage terms that encouraged residential construction. The L. Young White House as well as the Joe and Virginia Thompson House (ID1689) across the street illustrate fashionable cottage renditions of the Tudor Revival style. They include cross-gable roofs, front-exterior chimneys, and a mix of ornamental half-timbering and brickwork as well as arched, diamond-paned windows, and granite trim.

Finally, a few Mooresville residents preferred more exotic revival modes. The 1920s C. Conrad Johnston House (ID601) at 320 South Academy Street express the Italian Renaissance style in its bracketed, low-pitched, ceramic-tile roof, blond-brick exterior with slightly projecting center pavilion, and blind arches above the tall first-floor windows. Serpentine classical columns highlight the elaborate entrance. Several blocks north, at 256 South Academy Street, tobacco salesman Pat Johnston built an expressive example (ID1660) of the Spanish Colonial Revival style ca. 1930. The one-story, cross-gabled residence features defining elements of the style including the low-pitched, pantile roof, stuccoed walls, casement windows, and archways leading to intimate, tiled porches and courtyards.

In a wooded dell at the northwest outskirts of Mooresville, Dr. Creighton Wrenn, a surgeon, constructed a rambling Rustic Revival cottage (ID1723) in the 1940s. The Rustic Revival style was especially popular in wooded resort settings across the country in the early twentieth century and persisted into the mid-twentieth century, occasionally appearing in more urban places such as Mooresville as an individual expression of taste or disposition. The style educated a self-conscious casualness through its irregular forms and use of native or rough-hewn materials. The Dr. Creighton Wrenn House consists of a story-and-a-half, board-and-batten main block with a series of one-story, board-and-batten wings extending from the side and rear elevations. A massive fieldstone chimney dominates the facade. The cabin-in-the-woods setting—including a pond and rough-hewn fencing—captures the backwoods ambiance that epitomized the Rustic Revival.

By the 1920s, the appeal of the historical revival styles was matched by designs derived from modern trends in domestic planning and a renewed interest in building craftsmanship. In Mooresville and nationwide, the most popular expression of this movement was the Craftsman bungalow. Featured in pattern books and architectural magazines that targeted housing for the American middle and

working classes, the bungalow was promoted as affordable, efficient, informal, and visually striking. Countless variations appeared, but the principal elements of the style included its low-slung form, wide porch with battered piers, broad, overhanging eaves with exposed rafters, and an abundance of windows. The fuller expressions of the Craftsman bungalow often featured rustic materials, such as cobblestones for porches, chimneys, and foundations and rough split shakes for sidings.

A particularly well-preserved collection of 1920s bungalows fills the west side of the 200 block of South Academy Street. They vary in materials, roof shapes, and architectural details, but share such essential elements of the type as low-pitched roofs with deep eaves, generous porches, and large windows contributing to an overall informality with an interplay of interior and exterior spaces. The Dr. Claude U. Voils House (ID1673) at 221 South Academy Street neatly illustrates a favorite national version of the Craftsman bungalow in its sweeping gable roof that forms an engaged front porch with battered piers on brick pedestals. A low, shed-roofed dormer, with shingle shakes and a bank of windows, allows natural light into the upper story.

A number of bungalows were also constructed on the east side of Mooresville. Substantial, story-and-a-half Craftsman bungalows as well as smaller, one-story models with low, sweeping roofs, knee brackets, and exposed rafters were built along East Center Avenue (see ID1725, ID1726, ID1728). The one-story Bud Farr House (ID1684) at the corner of Sycamore Street and East Center Avenue reveals the relaxed informality of the style. Topped by a low, clipped-gable roof with exposed rafters, the house has a rustic, shingle-shake exterior and lattice porch posts. The entries on the two main elevations facing Sycamore and East Center open directly into the living room.

Although not nearly as widespread as the myriad bungalows in Mooresville, Craftsman-style architecture was also manifested in other designs, particularly the two-story, foursquare house.

Builders constructed such boxy forms with low hip roofs and deep eaves to emphasize the horizontality of the massing. Some of these foursquare models kept the central hall found in the standard Colonial Revival cubic house, but others featured open plans that maximized space and suited the modern informality and efficiency of the Craftsman theme. Mooresville's most vivid example is the 1920s Hobart and Maude Birdsall House (ID1697) at 346 West Center Avenue. Constructed of variegated brick, the house has boxy, two-story massing, with a low hip roof, deep eaves, and exposed rafters. Heavy square brick piers support the off-set, hip-roofed front porch.

By the 1940s, domestic construction was driven in large measure by the town's flourishing textile industry. Both the Mooresville and Cascade mills, under the ownership of Burlington Industries, increased production during the war and continued expansion in the postwar years. By this period, many textile workers, returning from the war, were purchasing or renting new housing away from the traditional mill village. They were joined by many other new residents employed in a wide range of supporting occupations. The prevalent residential style for this burgeoning work force was the Minimal Traditional. A national style between the mid-1930s and early 1950s, the Minimal Traditional house is typically identified by its side- or cross-gable roof with close eaves, and restrained decoration. Most examples are relatively compact, one-story houses, often with sizable chimneys. Walls were clad in a range of materials from wood, to brick, to stone. In contrast, during the 1940s, Harry Hobbs, a local house painter, built his Minimal Traditional cottage (ID1708) at 246 East Statesville Avenue that is extraordinary for its construction of cut blocks of granite. The well-preserved Hobbs residence features a large, front-exterior chimney and heavy, square, fluted porch posts while the rolling terrain of the generous double lot holds a creek-side, outdoor granite fireplace and granite steps that ascend the side hill to the front porch of the house, making the house the centerpiece of a bucolic ensemble in stone.

Influenced by national residential trends and the centrifugal pull of new highways and Lake Norman, Mooresville's development in the postwar decades was increasingly suburban. Beyond the town limits on the west side, developers platted small, lakeside subdivisions with catchy names such as Bonanza and Catalina Cove. On the eastern outskirts, along such streets as Cedar, Magnolia, East Cabarrus, and Glenwood, blocks of ranch-style and split-level houses rose. Characterized by linear and L-shaped forms with low-pitched roofs, minimal embellishment, and efficient floor plans, ranch houses dominated suburban housing on a national scale in this period. The ranches in Mooresville during the 1950s were sometimes simply brick-veneered rectangular boxes with horizontal-sash windows that were leased to mill workers. However, larger models for middle-class homeowners also appeared. They were built as infill in established neighborhoods as well as in peripheral subdivisions.

For example, at the eastern terminus of Cedar Street, landowners Joel and Dorothy Brawley platted the Forest Hills subdivision in the early 1950s. The rolling terrain was subdivided into about twenty large residential lots overlooking a wooded median. Dr. William Jackson Scott, principal of Mooresville High School was among the first residents. Occupying a rise of land, the Dr. William Jackson and Grace Scott House (ID1762) is a low, rectangular, hip-roofed, brick ranch house. Large windows and brick chimneys mark the living room and corner den. The Scotts' stylish garage has flared brick walls and horizontal bands of wooden slats along the north side facing the street. By the end of the decade, similar ranch houses for the middle class filled Forest Hills.

Amidst the postwar appeal of suburban ranch houses, which were conservative expressions of Modernism, a small number of residents deviated from the norm to choose distinctively Modernist designs. Derived from the prewar works of European architects and the International Style of design, the postwar Modernist movement was purposely radical in both philosophy and execution.



Modernist architecture eschewed the conventional historical references that had characterized American building for an emphasis on a clean geometry of form, horizontality, an absence of applied decoration, and the innovative use of modern materials. Although Modernism became most popular for institutional and commercial projects, it also influenced domestic design in North Carolina.

The house (ID1669) at 276 South Academy Street is a rare example of Modernist-inspired domestic architecture in Mooresville and also stands in contrast to neighboring houses, most of which date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although unusual for the town, variations of this simple, small-scale model appeared across the state in the 1950s and early 1960s, typically surrounded by more conventional ranch houses in middle-class subdivisions around Charlotte and other cities. Oriented gable end to the street, the mostly brick, one-story house is capped by a low-pitched roof with deep eaves that forms an engaged carport on the north side. The north wall of the carport features a decorative masonry screen. The narrow façade of the house includes a wood-sash picture window as well as a continuous upper window that conforms to the shape of the front-gable and forms a clerestory to light the living room. Cast-stone siding fills the west side of the façade and contrasts with the prevailing red brick. A freestanding carport appears to have been added soon after construction of the house and stands beside the engaged carport for the family's second car. The detached carport has a flat, metal roof supported by metal hairpin posts.

## Civic Architecture

Civic buildings are often hallmarks of urban ambition and progress. From their beginnings into the late nineteenth century, schools were the principal architecture in the civic realm of Mooresville. Schools have been erected and subsequently replaced or expanded to address growing educational needs and changing social norms. The two-story, frame Mooresville Academy (now gone) was erected in 1874 on Academy Street soon after the incorporation of the town, and Academy Street was named for this institution. About 1907, the much larger, three-story Mooresville Graded School was built on Academy Street. Constructed of brick, the new building was designed with Neoclassical Revival symmetry with rows of evenly spaced, arched windows crowned by a broad pediment above the entrance bays. Gutted by fire in 1923, the building was extensively rehabilitated and enlarged in 1935 as Mooresville Central High School. In the 1960s, this high school was demolished, save for the gymnasium, which was adapted for use by present-day Mitchell Community College on the site.

Located on the south side of town near Mooresville Cotton Mills, the impressive South School was the first educational facility in town built during the statewide school consolidation movement. Erected in 1920, South School represented school construction during the Progressive Era in its two-story, red-brick, classical façade, roomy classroom bays filled with tall windows, and multiple-purpose auditorium. South School, too, was later demolished.

The construction of what is now Mooresville High School (ID1681) for whites in 1949 represented a new period of scholastic architecture. During the postwar decades, school buildings in Mooresville reflected the prevailing Modernist movement that was influencing all aspects of American design. Modernist architecture became a popular choice for institutional as well as commercial works where strikingly modern designs and materials conveyed forward thinking. Commanding the highest ground in the Eastern Heights neighborhood, the expansive, two-story high school displays a stark

red-brick exterior interrupted by rows of horizontal-sash windows. Pairs of tall, recessed brick panels flank the main entrance. A Modernist, flat-roofed, concrete canopy curves around the glazed and steel-framed entranceway. In 1962, the auditorium was added to the north side of the school. Capped by a low, broad gable-front roof, the auditorium retains its upbeat, zig-zag entrance canopy with tapered piers. Its lobby features terrazzo flooring. Although the 1949-1962 high school remains clearly visible, major brick additions in 1991 and 2001 now surround the south and east sides, obscuring these elevations.

For African American students in Mooresville, the 1941 opening of Dunbar School marked a major advancement in scholastic design. The modern, brick facility on West McLelland Avenue, which replaced a frame school built in 1907, displayed a stylish Colonial Revival façade. The pedimented main entrance featured a double doorway capped by a fanlight with cast-stone accents. Rows of large, double-hung, nine-over-nine windows flooded classrooms with natural light. The building was probably erected with the support of the Public Works Administration (PWA), a federal New Deal program, because its design closely matched the PWA-funded Davidson Colored School (1939) in nearby Davidson. By the early 1960s, the 1941 school building was part of a larger complex of buildings but was finally torn down in 1968 during the reorganization of the racially integrated Dunbar School.

As with Mooresville High School on the east side of town, the 1950s-1960s Dunbar School complex (later N.F. Woods School) (ID1649) survives today as an illustration of postwar scholastic architecture. The school was designed by the Shelby, North Carolina, firm of V.W. Breeze and Associates, architects of numerous schools after World War II in the western Piedmont. Adapting the new brick facility to the sloping terrain of the site, the architects designed a main, flat-roofed building

for classrooms and offices and an attached, barrel-vaulted gymnasium. The great bands of classroom windows that once filled the main façade and symbolized modernity have been partially enclosed. Although schools were the predominant form of civic architecture in Mooresville, the Modernist N.C. Army National Guard Armory (ID0917) on North Broad Street is a unique example of public architecture. Determined eligible for the National Register in 2006, the blonde-brick armory, with its horizontal-sash windows and geometric form, exemplifies a standardized, one-unit plan used for armories in North Carolina through the 1950s and 1960s.

### Commercial Architecture

Mooresville's central business district expresses the town's prosperity and commercial development of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Oriented to the railroad tracks and depot, blocks of one- and two-story, brick commercial buildings along Main and Broad streets today form the Mooresville Historic District (National Register 1980). Although the east side of the 200 block of North Main Street within the historic district was demolished in the 1990s, other areas are well-preserved. They contain rows of facades displaying a panoply of decorative cornices with brick corbelling and metalwork, arched upper-story windows, and shopfronts with display windows flanking entrances. The prominent Bank of Mooresville/Turner Hardware Building (ca. 1908) at 107-115 North Main Street within the historic district is noteworthy for its blond-brick façade and rusticated granite archway and trim.

Beyond the town's commercial core, small corner groceries serving the neighborhoods appeared through the early twentieth century. By the 1920s, some also included gas pumps for motor cars. The 1925 Sanborn Map of Mooresville depicts eleven such groceries. Until April 2016, the ca. 1910 Cook's Grocery (ID0919), at the intersection of Patterson Avenue and North Broad Street, stood as a rare survivor. Determined eligible for the National Register in 2006, the store is now in deteriorated

condition, but the frame building retains its simple rectangular form with a stepped parapet and double-leaf entrance flanked by large, two-over-two windows. A well-preserved example of the corner grocery store is the George Brantley Store (ID1790) at 195 West Statesville Avenue. Built ca. 1938, this brick store has its two original doors and large display windows. The store is strategically positioned on the road to Statesville at Oak Avenue, allowing the business to capture both local neighborhood custom as well as passing motorists.

After World War II, most new commercial endeavors in Mooresville were designed with motorists in mind. The new shopping centers were planned with ample parking and eye-catching features. Illustrating this trend was Port City Shopping Center which was constructed in the early 1960s as one of the first significant commercial efforts to attract the new Lake Norman residents and the nascent suburban market. The simple, linear shopping center is set back from North Main Street to make way for the front parking lot. Its original form survives intact though the row of stores has been extensively remodeled with modern stucco and new signage.

Gas stations, which appeared mainly as independent, box-and-canopy filling stations in the 1920s, soon multiplied under the control of large corporations. Distinctive building designs, logos, and color schemes identified gas stations with specific petroleum companies. The 1959 Mooresville city directory lists nineteen gas stations, including those operated by such big oil companies as Sinclair, Esso, Texaco, Pure Oil, Red Star, and Amoco. Blackie's Esso Service Station (ID1086) at 204 South Main Street is representative of the early postwar gas stations. Constructed in 1950, its oblong form containing the office and two service bays and such Spanish Colonial touches as the red-tile parapet, stuccoed façade, and Mission-style pilasters illustrate a popular design for Esso stations.

By the 1950s and 1960s, both North and South Main streets included small commercial strips with gas stations, fast-food restaurants, and stores geared to passing motorists. On South Main Street, the What-A-Burger drive-in restaurant (ID1087) opened beside Blackie's Esso about 1963. The drive-in features a Modernist zig-zag canopy with flared concrete columns extending from the small restaurant building to the sidewalk. The concrete-block restaurant retains its blond-brick façade, diamond-shaped concrete blocks on the north elevation, and terra-cotta tile interior flooring. The towering, star-crested What-A-Burger sign also stands intact. Located nearby on South Main Street, the mid-1960s Quality Plus Dry Cleaners (ID1658) presents a showy zig-zag roof and glass façade to passing motorists. Like the What-A-Burger drive-in, the dry cleaners clearly illustrates the Modernist, space-age aesthetic that shaped the country's roadside commercial design between the 1950s and early 1970s.

On the north side of the business district, the major banks also selected Modernist designs for their postwar buildings. Between the late 1950s and early-1960s, First National Bank (ID1705), and Mooresville Federal Savings Bank (ID1704) constructed new buildings on North Main Street with sleek facades and attached canopies for drive-through service. Mooresville Federal Savings Bank (now First Community Bank) at 347 North Main Street remains particularly intact. The bank building embodies key Modernist principles in its flush walls and machine-smooth glass and stone surfaces. The expansive glass-filled portion of the façade reveals the main lobby, with its terrazzo floors and black marble wall, and the original aluminum stairway to offices on the second floor.

### Industrial Architecture

The town's rail-oriented industrial buildings included the textile manufacturing plants on the northern and southern outskirts of Mooresville as well as a variety of smaller-scale factories, sawmills, and a flour mill just north of the commercial core. All these operations were constructed

and expanded through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, creating industrial landscapes of manufacturing buildings, warehouses, storage silos, and tall water towers that were clearly distinct from other areas of town. By the 1910s, the expansive Mooresville Cotton Mills complex on the south side of town and the smaller Dixie Cotton Mills (later Cascade Mills) on the north side included two-story, rectangular brick mills with tall segmental-arched windows and low gable roofs with monitors typical of Piedmont cotton mills. Inside these mills, the “slow-burn” mill construction of heavy timber posts and beams allowed for largely fireproof, open work spaces. Both the Mooresville and Cascade plants grew in later decades, adding more manufacturing facilities, updating machinery for new product lines, installing steel posts and beams, and remodeling exteriors. During the 1940s and the 1950s, under the ownership of Burlington Industries, the facades of both facilities received face-lifts for new offices and entrances, while original windows were bricked in to accommodate modern air conditioning.

Although Mooresville Cotton Mills (ID0910) on South Main Street has been extensively altered and adapted for commercial uses in recent years, Cascade Mills (ID1703), now mostly vacant, still displays its mid-twentieth-century design. Between 1941 and the early 1960s, Burlington Industries commissioned Barger Construction Company, based in Mooresville, to execute a series of expansions and renovations to the mill. Probably in the early 1940s, with the industry expanding dramatically for wartime production, the main red-brick façade was remodeled to accommodate new office space. This principal elevation features narrow bands of blond brick that are framed in cast stone and hold small vents on the upper story and steel-frame windows on the lower. The recessed center entrance is also trimmed in cast stone as well as dignified by broad brick pilasters. A 1920s, riveted, steel water tower with a conical-roofed tank still stands nearby. The surrounding brick manufacturing and warehousing buildings were either constructed or enlarged between 1941 and the postwar

decades so that the existing plant comprises expanses of windowless, brick walls with terra cotta coping.

The Cascade and Mooresville mills were the epicenters of larger industrial villages containing streets of standardized worker housing for mill hands and their families. Erected and owned by the mills, these houses formed cohesive communities on the north and south sides of town. Listed in the National Register in 2012, the 160-acre Mooresville Mill Village Historic District contains hundreds of one-story and story-and-a-half, frame dwellings conforming to a few basic types. Typical of mill villages throughout the region in the early twentieth century, they are common regional forms and by the 1920s included simple variations of the bungalow style. As in other mill villages, many illustrate model house types that had been promoted by the noted Charlotte mill engineer, Daniel Augustus Tompkins, in his influential publication, *Cotton Mill: Commercial Features* (1899).

On the north side of town, a much smaller collection of mill houses surrounded Cascade Mills. The 1950 Sanborn Map of Mooresville shows several dozen worker houses lining the streets bordering the manufacturing complex. Portions of present-day Cascade Street, Spencer Street, and Selma Drive have early-twentieth-century, frame houses with the side-gable, hip-roofed, and L-shaped plans commonly erected for mill housing. However, they have been modified by modern additions and replacement sidings, windows, porches. Demolitions have altered the architectural rhythms and patterns of these and other nearby streets. Modern residences also now fill sections of the mill village.

Situated on the west side of town, the ca. 1920 Mooresville Water Pump and Filter Station (ID1717) retains much of its original setting and historical feel. The two-story, brick pump station occupies wooded bottomland along a winding tributary of Back Creek. Well-suited for a water treatment plant,



this area along West Moore Avenue remains sparsely developed. The flat-roofed, square pump station is reinforced-concrete construction, highlighted by such Romanesque Revival elements as decorative corbelling and a rusticated base.

### Religious Architecture

From the late nineteenth century onward, religious buildings in Mooresville evinced the spiritual values and aesthetic preferences of their congregations. Located within the Mooresville Historic District (National Register 1980), the imposing First Presbyterian Church on West McLelland Avenue is a brick, Gothic Revival edifice that expresses its position as one of the town's major religious institutions. Built in 1899 and expanded in 1915, the design features twin towers—one a soaring, four-stage bell tower with stained-glass windows in elegant, Art Nouveau patterns and rusticated granite trim. First Presbyterian Church added a large educational wing in 1925 which was subsequently replaced circa 1960.

Indeed, all the town's principal churches witnessed major renovations or rebuilding campaigns through the early and middle twentieth centuries. Erected in 1967, Central Methodist Church (ID1716) on North Academy Street is the Methodist congregation's third church on or adjacent to this site. The first building was a frame church about 1877 across the street from the present location. In 1908, a new and larger brick church arose on the site of the present house of worship. A fashionable, Gothic Revival building, the church had a prominent entrance tower at one corner and stained-glass windows befitting the growing congregation. The present church is a modern rendition of familiar Gothic Revival themes. A soaring, pointed-arch arcade distinguishes the façade. The three main openings of the arcade correspond to the three large, paneled doorways. Grand stained-glass, Gothic Revival windows with tracery crown these doorways and complete this prominent elevation.

Mooreville's key African American churches were also remodeled or rebuilt to serve expanding memberships and assert their roles in the community. In 1941, members of Reid Memorial Presbyterian Church (ID1690) on North Broad Street gave their one-story, weatherboarded, gable-front sanctuary a modern brick veneer and installed handsome, pointed-arched stained glass windows. A stained-glass transom was also added above the main entrance in the center bell tower. The church tower, as well as cornice returns and denticulated cornice were elements of the original design of the church which was probably erected in the early 1900s by an African American Episcopal congregation.

A short distance north of this church, on Cascade Street, Watkins Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church (ID0918) was rebuilt in 1942. The church had been organized in 1897, and the present one-story, twin-towered, brick building replaced the existing house of worship on the site. The 1925 Sanborn Map records a small, rectangular church building of weatherboard construction at this location. The 1942 edifice remains little changed. Two strong, crenellated entry towers of different heights flank the gable-front sanctuary. Other distinguishing features include round-arched, stained-glass windows with transoms, a round, stained-glass window in the front gable, and rock-faced granite keystones and sills. Versions of such twin-tower churches, varying greatly in scale and architectural execution, were popular choices among growing African American congregations throughout North Carolina in the early twentieth century.

Sited on Mooreville's western outskirts along Brawley School Road, Morrow's Chapel United Methodist Church (ID1657) features an early-twentieth-century frame arbor. The African American church was established here in 1872, and the church building was rebuilt in 1913 and again in its current brick-veneered form in 1955. The arbor appears to have been constructed between 1913 and the 1920s. A rare surviving early-twentieth-century arbor in Iredell County, it is a large, open

structure with a distinctive standing-seam metal, gable-on-hip roof supported by heavy, peeled posts. Sited near the church cemetery within a rural setting, the arbor remains well-preserved and in use with rows of wooden benches and a platform pulpit.

### Conclusion and Proposed North Carolina Study List Properties in Mooresville

The development of Mooresville is represented in the 2015-2016 architectural survey of the town and its extraterritorial jurisdiction. The survey recorded approximately 200 resources, including fifty previously inventoried buildings. The recorded resources spanned the development of Mooresville, from the late nineteenth century to 1969 and included the residential, commercial, civic, industrial, and religious architecture addressed in the above essay. Although Mooresville's neighborhoods vary in architectural integrity as well as architectural and historical significance, the survey included resources from all the major residential areas, both white and African American. The survey excluded the two largest National Register historic districts—Mooresville Historic District and the Mooresville Cotton Mill Village Historic District—because both had already been documented for their nominations. The Mooresville Historic District (1980) concentrated on the historic central commercial district while the Mooresville Cotton Mill Village Historic District (2012) encompassed the expansive mill village associated with the Mooresville Cotton Mill on the south side of town.

As a result of the 2015-2016 survey, the following resources are recommended for the North Carolina Study List. As defined by the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, the Study List is “a preliminary step in the review of potential nominations to the National Register of Historic Places . . . . The Study List identifies properties and districts that are likely to be eligible for the National Register, giving the green light to sponsors and staff to proceed with a formal nomination with

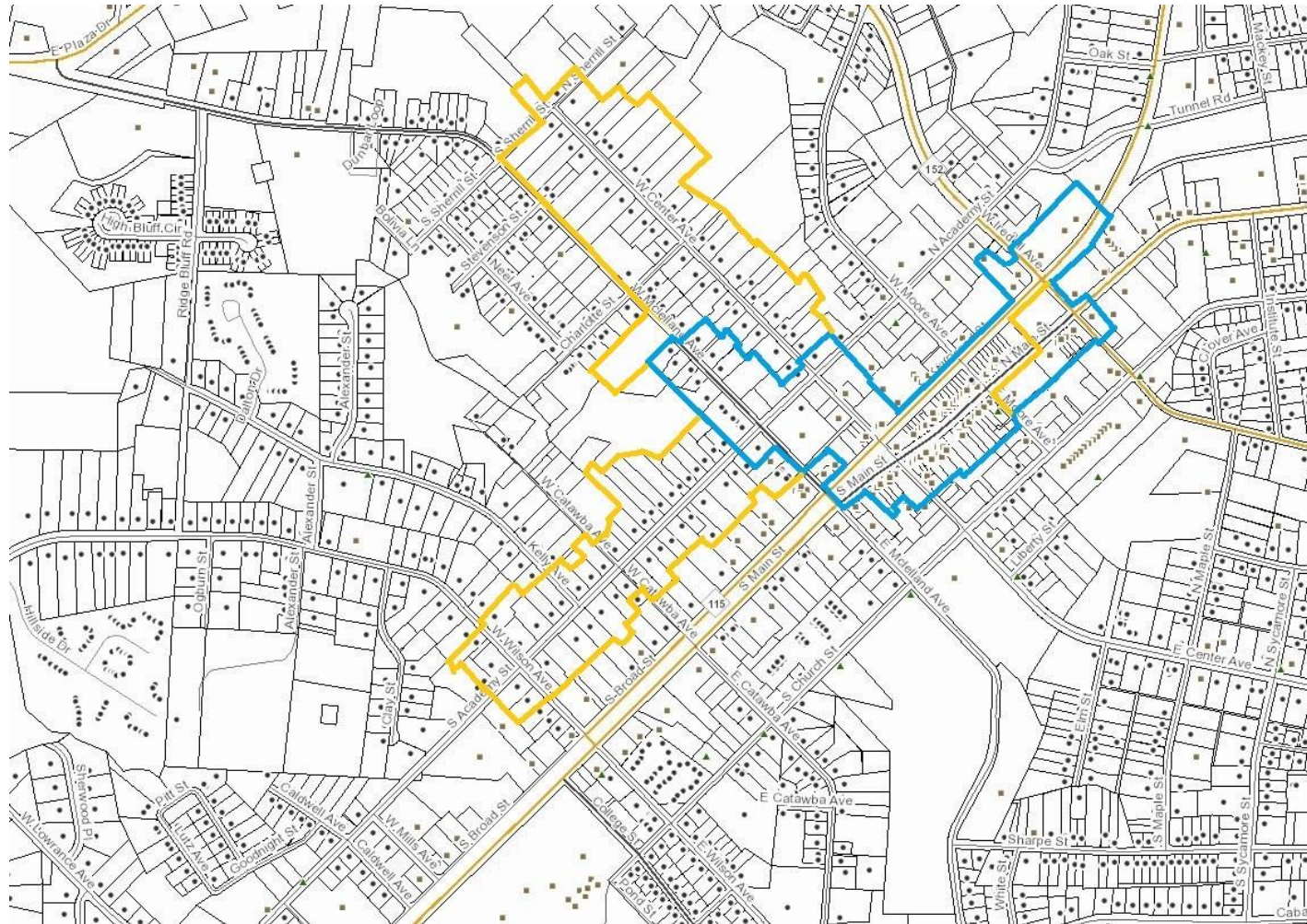
reasonable assurance that the property can be successfully nominated” (<http://www.hpo.dcr.state.nc.us/stdylist.htm>).

The Study List is also an effective tool for local preservation planning. When derived from a citywide architectural inventory, such as the present Mooresville survey, the Study List defines the potential significance of specific properties and districts and may help stimulate preservation activity at the local level. Because the Town of Mooresville has established a Historic Preservation Commission, the Study List may identify historic properties for designation as local historic landmarks. The Study List presentation following a survey may also encourage private property owners to sponsor National Register nominations.

This survey identified sixteen (16) individual properties and one (1) amendment to an existing historic district for the Study List. The Mooresville Historic District Boundary Amendment (ID1779) would both expand and reduce the boundary as defined in the 1980 National Register nomination (**Figure 1**). The principal investigators recommend that the western boundary be expanded along portions of South Academy streets and West Center and West McLelland avenues. These areas are primarily residential and comprise substantially intact, late nineteenth and early-twentieth-century houses that fit within the existing areas of significance—Architecture, Community Planning/Development, Commerce, Health/Medicine—and the period of significance for the historic district. The proposed boundary amendment would also reduce the district boundary where modern construction has replaced historic commercial buildings on the east and west sides of the 200 block of North Main Street. It should be noted that reducing the boundary along North Main Street would eliminate one contributing resource, the U.S. Post Office (ID0070), from the historic district. This governmental building retains its integrity and should be considered for individual nomination to the National Register.

The individual resources identified for the Study List are found in **Table 1**.

**Figure 1**  
**Mooreville Historic District**  
**Proposed Boundary Amendment**



Mooreville Historic District  
National Register Boundary  
(Shown in Blue)



**Table 1. Individual Resources Recommended for the Study List**

Property Name	Survey Number	Date of Construction	Address	Area(s) of Significance
<b>Residential Architecture</b>				
<b>Queen Anne</b>				
William D. and Adele Templeton House (LD)	ID0912	ca. 1907	353 South Academy Street	Architecture
Thomas and Janie Brawley House (LD)	ID0600	1906	319 W. Wilson Avenue	Architecture
<b>Tudor Revival</b>				
Dr. Allen and Charlotte Sloan House (LD)	ID1043	1935	745 N. Main Street	Architecture
<b>Renaissance Revival</b>				
C. Conrad Johnston House (LD)	ID0601	ca. 1927	320 S. Academy Street	Architecture
<b>Civic Architecture</b>				
Winnie L. Hooper Center	ID1735	1965	221 Sherrill Street	Social History, Ethnic Heritage-African American
N.C. Army National Guard Armory (DOE)	ID0917	ca. 1955	720 N. Broad Street	Architecture, Military History
<b>Commercial Architecture</b>				
George Brantley Store	ID1790	ca. 1938	195 W. Statesville Avenue	Commerce, Architecture
Mooreville Federal Savings Bank	ID1704	ca. 1965	347 N. Main Street	Commerce, Architecture
What-A-Burger Restaurant	ID1087	ca. 1963	210 S. Main Street	Commerce, Architecture
<b>Industrial Architecture</b>				
Cascade Mills	ID1703	1906, 1941-1960s	500-598 Brookwood Drive	Industry, Architecture
Mooreville Water Pump and Filter Station	ID1717	ca. 1920	422 W. Moore Street	Industry, Architecture

<b>Property Name</b>	<b>Survey Number</b>	<b>Date of Construction</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Area(s) of Significance</b>
Morrow's Chapel United Methodist Church Arbor	ID1657	ca. 1920	1536 Brawley School Road	Architecture, Ethnic Heritage-African American
Reid Memorial Presbyterian Church (ID0918)	ID1690	ca. 1900, 1941	336 N. Broad Street	Architecture, Ethnic Heritage-African American
Watkins Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church	ID0918	ca. 1942	103 Cascade Road	Architecture, Ethnic Heritage-African American
<b>Cemetery</b>				
Mooresville Colored Cemetery (Green Acres Cemetery)	ID1753	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> century, 1959	650 Ashe Alley	Social History, Ethnic Heritage-African American
<b>Agricultural Buildings</b>				
Brawley-Millsaps Log Barn	ID1782	ca. 1885	2255 Statesville Highway	Architecture



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