

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Aurora Historic District

other names/site number N/A

## 2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by Middle Street, Second Street, Pearl Street,  
Chapin Street, and Eighth Street

☐ not for publication N/A

city or town Aurora

☐ vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Beaufort zip code 27806

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide X local

Signature of certifying official

Date

North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer  
Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

    entered in the National Register

    determined eligible for the National Register

    determined not eligible for the National Register

    removed from the National Register

    other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☒ public - Local  
☐ public - State  
☐ public - Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box)

- ☐ building(s)  
☒ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing |              |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 78           | 36              | Buildings    |
| 1            | 2               | sites        |
| 0            | 6               | structures   |
| 0            | 0               | objects      |
| <b>79</b>    | <b>44</b>       | <b>Total</b> |

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/secondary structure  
DOMESTIC/hotel  
COMMERCE/TRADE/business  
COMMERCE/TRADE/professional  
COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store  
COMMERCE/TRADE/department store  
COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant  
COMMERCE/TRADE/warehouse

GOVERNMENT/city hall  
GOVERNMENT/correctional facility  
GOVERNMENT/fire station  
GOVERNMENT/public works  
RELIGION/religious facility  
RELIGION/church-related residence  
FUNERARY/cemetery  
RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/secondary structure  
COMMERCE/TRADE/business  
COMMERCE/TRADE/professional  
COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

GOVERNMENT/city hall  
RELIGION/religious facility  
FUNERARY/cemetery  
RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum  
VACANT/NOT IN USE

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

MID-19TH CENTURY/Greek Revival

LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

LATE VICTORIAN/Shingle Style

LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque/Romanesque Revival

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial  
Revival

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Late Gothic  
Revival

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN  
MOVEMENTS/Commercial Style

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN  
MOVEMENTS/Bungalow/Craftsman

MODERN MOVEMENT/Ranch

OTHER/Period Cottage

OTHER/Minimal Traditional

OTHER/Vernacular Commercial

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Brick

Concrete block

walls: Wood/weatherboard

Wood/plywood/particle board

Metal/aluminum

Asbestos

Synthetics/vinyl

Brick

roof: Asphalt

Metal

other:

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**SUMMARY PARAGRAPH**

The town of Aurora is located in the center of Richland Township in southern Beaufort County, approximately 20 miles southeast of the county seat at Washington.<sup>1</sup> The town is on the west side of South Creek, a tributary of the Pamlico River. The Aurora Historic District contains buildings that primarily date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and illustrate the growth of the town into an agricultural trade and commercial hub along South Creek and, later, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad around 1908 (Photos 1 through 14). Aurora's topography is flat, and the town is laid out in a grid pattern with Main Street serving as the primary east-west road through the heart of town. The area of Main Street between Second Street and North Sixth Street serves as Aurora's commercial corridor. The historic residential buildings within the district are clustered on and around Main Street and portions of North Fifth Street and North Sixth Street.

Outside of the historic district, single-family houses and mobile homes lie to the north. Marshland that forms the banks of South Creek lies to the north and east. Houses built in the 1950s and 1960s, to house the local phosphate mine workforce, lie southwest of the Main Street commercial area in a plat called Chapin Acres. The S. W. Snowden Elementary School and additional single-family dwellings and mobile homes lie west of the Aurora Historic District.

The Aurora Historic District encompasses approximately 39 acres of land and consists of 123 resources, including outbuildings and secondary resources: 78 contributing buildings and 36 non-contributing buildings; 1 contributing site and 2 non-contributing sites; and 6 non-contributing structures for a total of 79 contributing resources and 44 non-contributing resources. Aurora's contributing resources present a range of building types including commercial, religious, civic, and residential resources. The oldest building in the district is the Henry and Susan Sugg Harding House (#2, Photo 11) that dates to around 1850, which is approximately 30 years before the official incorporation of the town. The majority of buildings within the district were constructed between 1900 and 1940, with 21 extant resources dating to the 1940s, the highest number built in any single decade. Construction in Aurora continued into the late 1940s, after which point it slowed significantly due to shifts in transportation, agricultural decline and mechanization, and population migration. Despite the loss of historic buildings, primarily between 1975 and 2020, the Aurora Historic District reflects its significance as a historically and architecturally prominent agricultural and commercial hub for southern Beaufort County. The Period of Significance for the Aurora Historic District dates from circa 1850 through 1950.

The Aurora Historic District's character evolved with different building types and styles throughout the decades. Houses constructed from the late nineteenth century through 1920 are primarily vernacular dwellings with either a single- or double-pile form. A few houses constructed during this period exhibit the form and ornament of nationally popular architectural styles, including Colonial Revival, Queen Anne, and Shingle. Houses constructed between 1920 and 1950 continued to be vernacular, with a few exhibiting the characteristics of the Craftsman and Period Cottage Revival styles. There are two churches in the Aurora Historic District: the Romanesque-style Aurora Methodist Church (#7, Photo 9) and the Gothic Revival-style Church of the Holy Cross (#28, Photo 10). The commercial buildings, constructed primarily between 1886 and 1950, are one or two stories tall, are brick or concrete block faced with brick, and display standard forms with little decoration.

<sup>1</sup> North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) survey files identify the district as the "Aurora Commercial Historic District." However, the 2009 "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey" prepared by Circa, Inc. recommended the district be called the "Aurora Historic District" to reflect the diversity of building types, which include commercial, residential, religious, and other structures. The name "Aurora Historic District" was adopted for this reason.

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Overall, the Aurora Historic District retains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling, as evidenced by its original and historic street patterns, lot sizes and configurations, and building placement within the platted and unplatted sections. Commercial and civil buildings reflect typical small-town development patterns, consisting primarily of one- and two-story brick structures with rectangular footprints, stepped parapets, and large display windows. The district's two churches demonstrate thoughtful design and retain a high degree of material integrity. Residential architecture is varied and includes vernacular forms like single- and double-pile, I-house, and gable-and-wing, alongside nationally popular styles including Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Minimal Traditional. While many buildings have undergone alterations, such as the replacement of siding, windows, or porch elements, these changes do not significantly compromise the district's overall historic character. Aurora maintains a strong degree of integrity through its diverse and well-preserved collection of buildings, which represent over a century of architectural evolution. Collectively, these resources reflect Aurora's importance as a regional center and offer a compelling visual record of its economic, social, and architectural development.

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE NOMINATED PROPERTY**

Settled in the early nineteenth century by free Blacks and incorporated in 1880, Aurora grew from a small farming community to a commercial hub for residents of southern Beaufort County. Aurora is located approximately 20 miles southeast of the county seat at Washington and lies on the west bank of South Creek, which feeds into the Pamlico River to the north. Early development was hampered by the settlement's isolation on the peninsula with a lack of sufficient roads, as well as weather-dependent water travel on South Creek and the Pamlico River. However, Aurora's proximity to major water transportation routes has played a significant role in its development and early success. NC 306 skirts along the west side of Aurora and NC 33 runs east-west south of town. As of 2023, Aurora's population was 451.

Over half of the buildings within the Aurora Historic District are residential with a commercial corridor centered on Main Street and extending along the cross streets of Fourth Street and North Fifth Street. Aurora is characterized by its flat, marshy terrain with access to South Creek along the east side of the town. Mature trees are scattered throughout the district and provide canopy to many of the homes. The streets of Aurora are oriented towards the cardinal directions.

Lot sizes in Aurora vary throughout the district due to the town's developmental period, which extended from about 1880 through the 1950s. The blocks throughout Aurora are relatively uniform and lot depths typically span a half-block. In general, the commercial lots are much smaller than residential lots and the commercial building's side walls abut one another. Many of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century dwellings were built on combined lots, providing these substantial houses with more acreage. For the most part, residential building setbacks vary slightly between 20 and 40 feet. The commercial buildings abut the sidewalks.

Outbuildings, when present, are behind the primary buildings and accessed by paved or gravel driveways. Though many properties have driveways, these features are not a prominent feature in Aurora, as buildings were built before the personal automobile was commonplace. In addition to buildings and outbuildings, manmade elements within the Aurora Historic District include streets, curbs, sidewalks, and driveways. All streets within the district are paved, and only Main Street has sidewalks. Drainage ditches are present along many of the streets, including Middle Street and Seventh Street. A canal, located north of Middle Street, lies outside of the historic district and runs parallel to the northern portion of North Fifth Street.

**INVENTORY LIST**

**Key**

**Aurora Historic District**

Name of Property

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The inventory for the Aurora Historic District is organized alphabetically by street name and numerically by address number along each street. Each resource has a heading that lists its inventory number, the address, the building type or historic property name, date of construction, and contributing status. After the heading is a description of the primary resource that includes information regarding the resource's form, height, style, construction material/method, exterior wall finish, and roof form and material. Whenever possible, resources are named for their first owner and/or occupant. This information was primarily derived from deed research. Houses and commercial buildings for which an owner or resident were not identified are listed as "House" or "Commercial Building."

Construction dates are either exact or approximate. Circa dates were determined using historic maps and aerial images, oral histories, and stylistic clues. The Beaufort County Geographic Information System (GIS) website includes tax data that includes building construction dates. Many of the buildings constructed before 1950 have approximate dates that are not accurate; however, buildings constructed after 1950 typically have more accurate build dates.

Contributing status indicates the status of the resource as either contributing or non-contributing to the historic character of the Aurora Historic District. Contributing resources are resources whose construction dates fall within the Period of Significance (circa 1850 to 1950), that possess sufficient integrity to contribute to the district's historic character, and which relate to the historic themes and areas of significance (Commerce and Architecture) of the district. Common changes found within the Aurora Historic District include the installation of vinyl, aluminum, or other synthetic siding and the replacement of windows and doors. Additions are fairly common, particularly on dwellings, and when present, they are small and are most often affixed to side or rear elevations. These changes alone or in combination with one another do not typically render a resource non-contributing. A resource is considered a contributing resource if it retains its original form, fenestration pattern, and some character-defining features. A resource is considered non-contributing if it was constructed outside the Period of Significance, it was constructed during the Period of Significance but has been so extensively altered that it no longer retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic character, or its condition has deteriorated to the point that its basic structural elements are no longer intact. Vacant lots, identified by their PIN and italicized in the text, are included in the inventory list to note their location and frequency, though they do not typically have addresses.

Survey data regarding outbuildings was limited and is included when available. Many outbuildings are located behind the primary resources and are not visible from the right-of-way. Due to their temporary nature, prefabricated sheds and carports were not counted as resources in the inventory.

The inventory list was compiled from data gathered during fieldwork in March 2024.

***Main Street***

**1. 226 Main Street – A. L. Lupton House – Circa 1926  
Contributing Building**

The A. L. Lupton House is a one-and-one-half-story frame dwelling constructed around 1926. The bungalow-form dwelling has a rectangular footprint with hipped-roof porches on the primary (south) and rear (north) elevations. The A. L. Lupton House rests on a brick pier foundation infilled with brick. Vinyl siding clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof. An exterior brick chimney rises along the west elevation.

The front porch, supported by square replacement posts, spans the three-bay primary elevation. A replacement front door protected by a glazed metal storm door occupies the center bay. Original, paired, four-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows pierce the flanking bays. Paired, one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl replacement windows with six-over-six false muntins perforate the gable. Most of the windows are original. The rear elevation is dominated by a full-width porch

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constructed of concrete block and supported by scrolled metal posts, providing access to a glazed and paneled replacement door in the center bay flanked by six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash windows.

**2. 229 Main Street – Henry and Susan Sugg Harding House – Circa 1850  
Contributing Building**

Built in the mid-nineteenth century, this two-story, double-pile I-house with Greek Revival proportions is believed to have been built for Henry and Susan Sugg Harding, and is purported to be the oldest home in Aurora. Based on available deed records and other historical documents, it could not be determined for certain if Henry and Susan Sugg Harding were the first occupants of the house. The house is comprised of a two-story, side-gabled main block with a rear ell. A hipped-roof porch spans three bays of the primary (north) elevation. The original plain weatherboards clad the exterior, and tin panels cover the roof. The house features boxed eaves and corner boards, indicative of its mid-nineteenth-century construction. A centered, exterior, stuccoed chimney rises along the east elevation. Between 2009 and 2024, the chimney on the west elevation failed and was removed. Additionally, much of the siding on the main block's west elevation is missing.

The primary elevation measures three bays wide. Square posts support the porch. The front door occupies the center bay, though the vinyl storm door is the only visible door. Four-light sidelights flank the door. One-over-one, vinyl replacement windows with fixed, vinyl shutters pierce the flanking bays. These replacement windows are found throughout the house.

The rear ell is clad in several siding materials, including original wood weatherboards, plywood, and deteriorating wood composite weatherboards. An additional replacement door is recessed on the east elevation of the ell.

**Garage – Circa 1940  
Contributing Building**

A frame, front-gabled garage lies south of the Harding House. Tin covers both the exterior and the roof. A double-leaf door, centered on the primary (north) elevation, enables access to the interior.

**Shed – Circa 1940  
Contributing Building**

A concrete block, front-gabled shed lies southwest of the Harding House. Metal covers the roof, and an opening centered on the east elevation enables access to the interior.

**3. 250 Main Street – Brothers Lodge – 1940  
Non-Contributing Building (Alterations)**

The Brothers Lodge at 250 Main Street is partially contained by a wood fence and is composed of three connected buildings. The west end is the oldest section, a 1940 flat-roofed, brick commercial building. A front-gabled addition was made to the original block in the mid- to late twentieth century. The original building is clad in brick laid in a Flemish bond, and the addition is faced with brick laid in a running bond with T1-11 siding in the gable. The roof of the front-gabled addition is clad in asphalt shingles. An exterior brick chimney rises along the primary (south) elevation of the gabled addition. Original four-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows pierce the east, west, and north elevations of the original building and are the most common window type. An entry bay, located on the west elevation of the gabled addition, features a metal awning and one-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows, in addition to plate glass windows on the primary elevation.

The central building of the Brothers Lodge is a front-gabled, concrete block building with gabled hyphens connecting it to the east and west sections. It was constructed around 1980. Metal covers the roof and vertical wood siding sheathes the gables. A metal door and two, single-light windows pierce the primary elevation.

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The easternmost section of the Brothers Lodge is the newest, constructed around 1985. This gabled, metal-frame building rests on a concrete block foundation and corrugated metal covers both the exterior and the roof. Sliding, metal sash windows pierce the primary elevation.

The business started as a grocery store and fishing supply store and gradually evolved into a full-time restaurant with accommodation for tourists. The significant additions and alterations made outside the Period of Significance render this property non-contributing.

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6567-03-7095*

**4. 290 Main Street – (former) Childcare Facility – Circa 1988  
Non-Contributing Building (Age/Integrity)**

The former childcare facility, housed in a manufactured building at 290 Main Street, is in ruinous condition with its roof caving in. The single-story, side-gable building has a rectangular footprint with a gabled entry porch on the primary (south) elevation. The building rests on a continuous concrete block foundation that has been parged, and T1-11 siding clads the exterior. Composite shingles cover the failing roof. The windows are one-over-one, metal sashes. A metal door centered on the façade is accessible by way of a wood ramp.

**5. 295 Main Street – Staley-Rutledge House – Circa 1915  
Non-Contributing Building (Alterations)**

Originally built as a Queen Anne-style residence by Dr. Rutledge around 1915, the Staley-Rutledge House was altered in the 1980s as part of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) project that converted the residence to a town hall and included the construction of a brick community center to the south. Because of these alterations, the Staley-Rutledge House is a non-contributing building.

The asymmetrical Staley-Rutledge House is a two-story frame dwelling with complex massing. The house is composed of a hipped-roof main block anchored by a two-story cross gable section toward the rear (south) and two single-story hipped-roof additions on the rear elevation. A bayed façade projection is present on the east bay of the primary (north) elevation, and there is an additional bay window projection on the east elevation. The original portico entry featured a semi-circular, double-height portico with a flat roof and a denticulated cornice supported by square columns. The replacement portico retains the same double height, semi-circular form but is now capped by a conical roof supported by round Corinthian columns. To the west of the portico, a side porch reconstructed during the 1980s CDBG project is capped by a shed roof and supported by square posts. Additional work in the 1980s included the connection of the two rear ells to create a new main entrance in the juncture between the two sections.

The house rests on a continuous brick foundation. Vinyl siding clads the exterior and composite shingles cover the roof. A denticulated cornice follows the roof's eaves, and louvred vents pierce each gable. Originally, the gables were closed with a slight overhang, and now the eaves have boxed appearance.

The windows and doors throughout the house are replacements, and original windows in the two front gables have been removed. The centered replacement front door has sidelights with a broken pediment, which replaced the original paneled door with sidelights surmounted by a fanlight. The windows throughout the house are one-over-one vinyl replacements with six-over-six false muntins.

**Community Center – Circa 1980  
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

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The Community Center lies south of the Staley-Rutledge House. The Community Center was built around 1980 and is composed of a side-gabled, Ranch-style main block with a rear section. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof.

**6. 298 Main Street – Service Station – 1947  
Contributing Building**

Built in 1947, the one-story brick service station is oriented with its primary elevation facing south. The building has a rectangular form with a flat roof and a stepped parapet along the east and west elevations. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior, and brick pilasters divide the façade into three sections. Each bay has a recessed sign panel in the frieze. Plywood covers all five bays on the primary elevation. The primary elevation includes a central storefront with garage bays in the east, east-central, and west bays, and what was likely a window in the west-central bay. There is one exposed multi-light, metal frame window on the east elevation.

**7. 327 Main Street – Aurora Methodist Church – Circa 1949  
Contributing Building**

The Aurora Methodist Church congregation erected this Romanesque-style church in 1949, replacing a nineteenth-century frame sanctuary. The church is composed of a front-gabled main block with a projecting belltower on the primary (north) elevation. Two original hipped-roof wings are located at the southeast and southwest corners of the building and are connected by a shed roof. The building is primarily clad in stone, except for the rear gable and the upper portion of the southeast wing's south elevation. All roof sections are covered with asphalt shingles. Two exterior stone chimneys are located on the south elevation of the southwest wing.

The prominent three-part belltower dominates the three-bay primary elevation. Centered on the façade, the belltower has a pyramidal roof with exposed rafter tails, concrete-capped stone buttresses, and a recessed arched entry. At the base of the belltower, the batten double-leaf front door features strap hinges. In the middle section of the belltower, three rectangular stained-glass windows are surmounted by decorative panels and arched vents. Smaller vents are present on the east and west elevations. At the top of the belltower, a stone string course lines the perimeter and sets of three panels line each elevation. On the first story of the main block, two narrow arched windows pierce the east and west bays.

The east and west elevations of the main block are identical. Two smaller arched windows pierce the north bays, and the remaining four bays are pierced by stained-glass windows. Throughout the building, the windows have concrete sills and stone jack arches.

Both the southeast and southwest wings are contemporary with the main block, though the southeast wing is slightly smaller than the southwest wing. The wings feature stone-clad exteriors and a double-banded stone cornice. Arched vent dormers pierce the primary roof slope of each wing. The east elevation of the southeast wing, which faces east, is six bays wide, with an entrance located in the south-central bay. The replacement door is protected by a gabled pent supported by large brackets. The remaining bays are pierced by one-over-one, double-hung vinyl replacement windows with six-over-six false muntins. The same door configuration is repeated on the west elevation of the southwest wing. Unlike the southeast wing, the southwest wing has a series of six windows rather than five.

At the rear of the building, a stone shed is attached to the southwest wing. The shed's roof appears to have been integrated with the wings' roofs when the latter was replaced between 1982 and 1999.

**Cemetery – Circa 1870  
Contributing Site**

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A small cemetery containing roughly a dozen marked graves lies southwest of Aurora Methodist Church. Gravemarkers date from the 1870s through the 1970s and are inscribed with the names of prominent Aurora families, including Swindell, Bonner, Hollowell, and Hooker. The cemetery has no fence, and the gravemarkers are in fair condition. The gravemarkers are oriented east–west, typical of Christian burial tradition. Most gravemarkers are marble, segmental-arch tablets with an associated footstone and a basic inscription including the name, birth date, and death date of the individual interred. The oldest marked burial is that of James Swindell, dating to 1871.

**Picnic Shelter – Circa 1995**

**Non-Contributing Structure (Age)**

A circa-1995 picnic shelter lies roughly 40 feet west of Aurora Methodist Church. The structure is supported by plain square posts capped by an asphalt shingle-clad gabled roof. The gable ends are clad in vinyl siding.

**8. 350 Main Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1940  
Contributing Building**

The commercial building at 350 Main Street is a one-story commercial building with a brick-faced façade with an arched parapet and corner piers. A metal-clad, gabled roof caps the building, and metal covers all elevations other than the façade. Brick laid in a common bond clads the façade. The primary (south) elevation has two glass storefront windows separated by a modern metal commercial door surmounted by a transom. A metal roll-up garage door pierces the west bay of the façade.

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6567-03-2290*

**9. 354 Main Street – Commercial Building – 1946  
Non-Contributing Building (Integrity)**

This one-story, flat-roofed commercial building is constructed of concrete block and has a flat roof that has collapsed. The primary (south) elevation has a plain parapet, while the east and west elevations have stepped parapets. Pilasters at the corners anchor the façade. The primary elevation features a glass storefront that has lost its glazing and a recessed metal commercial door with a transom in the center. Because the roof has collapsed, the building's condition and integrity have been compromised, rendering it non-contributing.

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6567-03-2053<sup>2</sup>*

**10. 389 Main Street – Commercial Building – 1939  
Contributing Building**

Originally built as part of a car dealership, 389 Main Street is a one-story commercial building constructed of concrete block. The building's flat roof is capped by a plain parapet on the primary (north) elevation and stepped parapets on the east and west elevations. Concrete block pilasters anchor the primary elevation, and a cornice runs above the windows and entry. The glass storefront has metal-frame windows, and a recessed modern metal commercial door occupies the center bay. The transom above the door has been covered. A wood casement window is present on the east elevation. Around 2010, a shed-roof lean-to with square posts and a metal roof was constructed off the rear (south) elevation, and an addition on the west elevation was built connecting the building to the former service station at 395 Main Street. Both the subject building and the former service station at 395 Main Street are part of the Aurora Fossil Museum.

<sup>2</sup> The commercial building that stood on this site was demolished between 2006 and 2008.

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**11. 395 Main Street – Service Station – Circa 1935  
Non-Contributing Building (Alterations)**

The building at 395 Main Street is a circa-1935 service station that has been significantly altered and adaptively reused as the Aurora Fossil Museum Learning Center. The building has a side-gabled form with a gable-front on the primary (north) elevation. A hipped-roof entry vestibule is located on the west elevation, and a circa-2010 gabled shelter with an enclosed storage area incorporated under the same roofline is situated on the rear (south) elevation. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior, and vertical wood siding sheathes the gables. Composite shingles cover the deep-eaved roof.

The primary elevation measures five bays side. Three bays pierce the gable-front, with a metal door in the center flanked by wood-frame plate glass windows. An additional window of the same type is present on the west elevation. The east portion of the façade was originally two garage bays, now enclosed with painted vertical wood siding. A circa-2010 addition on the east elevation connects the service station to the commercial building at 389 Main Street, and together the two buildings are part of the Aurora Fossil Museum and serve as the Learning Center.

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6567-03-2220*

**12. 398 Main Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1974  
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

The commercial building at 398 Main Street is a front-gabled structure built around 1974. The building has a rectangular footprint with its primary elevation facing south. Apart from the brick entry bay in the west bay of the façade, much of the building is sheathed in corrugated metal siding. Metal also covers the roof. A flat metal awning covers the brick-clad entry and protects the four glass storefront windows, which are split by a commercial metal door. These details are mirrored in the south bay of the west elevation. The windows throughout the building are metal sashes.

**13. 400 Main Street – B. H. Thompson Store – 1886  
Contributing Building**

The 1886 brick commercial building at 400 Main Street is home to the Aurora Fossil Museum and was originally built as a store for B. H. Thompson. It is the oldest extant commercial building in the Aurora Historic District. The building shares its parcel and address with the one-story commercial building to the west. The building is composed of a two-story main block with a shed-roof addition on the rear (north) elevation. Brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior of the main block, while T1-11 siding covers the rear addition. The building's flat roof is capped by a plain parapet on the primary elevation and stepped parapets on the east and west elevations.

The first story storefront dominates the primary (south) elevation. The recessed front door has been replaced, but the flanking wood storefront windows remain intact. A fabric awning, surmounted by a decorative brick cornice, protects the storefront. Four, one-over-one, vinyl replacement windows with six-over-six false muntins and concrete sills pierce the second story of the primary elevation. The windows on the east and rear elevations have also been replaced. This commercial building shares its parcel with 404 Main Street.

**14. 404 Main Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1920  
Contributing Building**

The circa-1920 commercial building at 404 Main Street shares its parcel and address with the two-story commercial building to the east. The building serves as part of the Aurora Fossil Museum. The flat-roofed building stands one-story tall and has a rectangular form with a shed-roof addition on the rear (north) elevation. Brick laid in a running bond clads

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the exterior of the main block, and T1-11 siding covers the rear addition. Decorative brickwork accents the façade in the form of a corbeling along the parapet, a denticulated cornice below the recessed sign panel, a soldier course below the denticulated cornice, and arches above each of the two windows and two doors.

The primary (south) elevation has twin storefronts, each featuring a rectangular display window and a single-leaf replacement door, all of which are surmounted by divided-light transoms. The east display window has its original wood-sash, while the west display window has been replaced with a metal-framed window. Fabric awnings cover each of the doors and windows.

**15. 408–424 Main Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1920  
Contributing Building**

The circa-1920 commercial building is a one-story tan brick building with two storefronts divided by a brick pilaster. The building is similar in design to its neighbor to the east at 404 Main Street. The brick is laid in a running bond and used decoratively in a basket weave pattern in the cornice below three courses of corbeling. Denticulated brick lines the two recessed sign panels, and brick headers form decorative arches above the doors and windows. The building's flat roof is capped by a plain parapet on the primary (south) elevation and stepped parapets on the west elevation.

The east storefront features a metal replacement door in the west bay and a metal-frame storefront window in the east bay. The west storefront has two single-leaf metal entry doors spanned by a metal-frame storefront window. Three one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl replacement windows with six-over-six false muntins, each surmounted by blind arched transom, pierce the west elevation.

**Shed – Circa 1930  
Contributing Building**

A circa-1930 shed lies north of the building. The shed is constructed of brick laid in a common bond and capped by a front-gabled standing-seam metal roof with exposed rafter tails. A batten door is located on the south elevation. The east and west elevations each contain a wood-frame, divided-light casement window.

**16. South Side of Main Street – Fossil Park – Circa 2000  
Non-Contributing Site (Age)**

Located on the south side of Main Street across from the commercial buildings at 400–424 Main Street, the park was established by the Aurora Fossil Museum around 2018 after they purchased the parcel from the town of Aurora. Originally, four commercial structures sat on the site but were demolished between 1982 and 1993. The park is mostly grass, with the fossil pit taking up the eastern third of the parcel. Mature trees line the east, south, and west boundaries of the grassy area and a white picket fence runs along the north boundary. Concrete paths cut through the park leading to the large, centrally located picnic shelter, as well as the other shelters to the east and west. Picnic tables are scattered throughout the park.

**Fossil Pit – Circa 2010  
Non-Contributing Site (Age)**

Created around 2010, the fossil pit is enclosed by a low concrete block wall on the north, south, and west sides. Within the fossil pit, rocks, debris, and fossils sourced from the local phosphate mine operated by Nutrien are available for visitors to sift through.

**Picnic Shelter – Circa 2010  
Non-Contributing Structure (Age)**

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A circa-2010 picnic shelter lies near the heart of the grassy park. It is supported by plain wood posts and capped by an asphalt shingle-clad pyramidal roof. The picnic shelter protects several picnic benches.

**Picnic Shelter – Circa 2010**

**Non-Contributing Structure (Age)**

A circa-2010 shelter is centered on the park's western boundary. It is supported by metal posts and capped by a metal-clad pyramidal roof.

**Shelter – Circa 2010**

**Non-Contributing Structure (Age)**

A circa-2010 shelter is centered between the grassy park area and the fossil pit. It is supported by metal posts and capped by a metal-clad pyramidal roof.

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-92-9978*

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-9033 – Parking Lot*

**17. 456 Main Street – Warren's Barber Shop – Circa 1945**  
**Contributing Building**

The circa-1945 one-story commercial building is the easternmost section of a commercial block of three buildings, including 462 and 468 Main Street. The concrete block building has a rectangular form with a wing on the east elevation. The building's flat roof is capped by a plain parapet on the primary elevation and stepped parapets on the east and west elevations, all with terra cotta coping. An interior brick chimney flue projects from the eastern edge of the roofline.

Brick laid in a running bond clads the two-bay storefront on the primary (south) elevation. T1-11 siding covers both the window and door, which are further protected by a metal awning. A recessed sign panel above the storefront features a "W" formed of brick stretchers, two groups of decorative brick vents, and a border of brick headers with stone squares at the corners. Two modern paneled doors occupy the east elevation of the main block and the east elevation of the wing, each demarcated by a gabled entry porch supported by plain square posts. An additional door pierces the south elevation of the east wing. Windows are limited to the north and south bays of the east elevation, both of which are one-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows protected by vinyl storm windows.

The "W" in the sign panel refers to Warren's Barber Shop, the original occupant of the building, which later housed a soda shop.

**18. 462 Main Street – Thompson's Feed Store – Circa 1940**  
**Contributing Building**

Originally known as Thompson's Feed Store, the commercial building at 462 Main Street was built around 1940. This one-story building is the center section of a commercial block of three buildings that includes 456 and 468 Main Street and stands slightly taller than the flanking buildings. The building's flat roof is capped by a plain parapet, and brick laid in a running bond clads the primary (south) elevation. Two interior brick chimneys rise from the wall between the subject building and the building at 468 Main Street. Brick pilasters anchor the corners of the façade. A corbelled brick cornice accents the crown of the building, and a brick course defines the base of the recessed sign panel, which contains three brick vents. The three-bay storefront includes a modern double-leaf commercial door in the center bay flanked by two bays in which replacement metal-frame windows have been set into smaller openings infilled with T1-11 siding.

**19. 468 Main Street – Commercial Building – 1932**

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**Contributing Building**

The commercial building at 468 Main Street is the westernmost section of a commercial block of three buildings that includes 456 and 462 Main Street. The building's flat roof is capped by a plain parapet on the primary (south) elevation and a stepped parapet on the west elevation. Brick laid in a running bond clads the primary elevation, while the west elevation is parged over. A corbelled brick cornice accents the crown of the building, and open vents arranged in two diamonds in the divided sign panels. A brick pilaster divides the façade into two bays. The openings on the primary elevation have been resized with the remaining space infilled with T1-11 siding. A single replacement window pierces the east bay, and a modern metal commercial door and window perforate the west bay.

A pool hall was an early tenant of the building, and it now houses the Aurora/Richland Township Chamber of Commerce.

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-8148*

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-8053<sup>3</sup>*

**20. 491 Main Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1900  
Contributing Building**

The circa-1900 building at 491 Main Street is the easternmost section of a two-story commercial block that includes 495 and 499 Main Street. A one-story brick commercial building that stood adjacent to the east elevation (487 Main Street) was demolished between 2020 and 2022. The building's flat roof is capped by a plain parapet on the primary (north) elevation and a stepped parapet on the east elevation. Brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior. Full-height brick pilasters frame the façade, and a one-story brick pilaster divides the building's two storefronts. A corbelled brick cornice spans all three buildings in the block, beneath which lies a brick soldier course. Clinker bricks laid at a 45-degree angle accent the cornice.

The subject building's two storefronts were remodeled in the 1960s with new metal and glass storefronts when Heilig-Meyers Furniture occupied all three buildings in the block. Both storefronts are now partially covered with plywood. The east storefront contains five large plate-glass windows surmounted by green metal panels, while the west storefront has three plate-glass windows surmounted by coral metal panels. The entry, which is missing its door, is located in the westernmost bay and is surmounted by a transom. On the second story, plywood covers three windows that feature brick jack arches and cast stone sills. On the east and rear (south) elevations, the original one-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows have either been boarded up or have broken glass. The rear elevation contains a double-leaf door with an original divided-light, wood-sash transom in the east bay and a partially covered garage bay in the west bay.

**21. 495 Main Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1900  
Contributing Building**

The circa-1900 building at 495 Main Street is the center section of a two-story commercial block that includes 491 and 499 Main Street. The building has a flat roof with a plain parapet, and brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior. Brick pilasters frame the façade. A corbelled brick, accented by clinker bricks laid at a 45-degree angle spans all three buildings in the block, beneath which lies a brick soldier course. The storefront on the primary (north) elevation was remodeled in the 1960s with a metal and glass storefront when Heilig-Meyers Furniture occupied all three buildings in the block. The storefront contains five bays of plate glass windows with blue-colored metal panels above and below each window, though plywood covers the four west bays. A single-leaf commercial door occupies the east bay and is surmounted by a transom. On the second story, plywood covers two windows that feature brick jack arches and cast stone sills. The rear (south)

<sup>3</sup> The commercial building on the lot was demolished between 2020 and 2022.

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elevation contains an additional entrance protected by an asphalt shingle-clad, gabled portico supported by plain square posts. The first-story windows have been bricked over, and the four second-story windows are missing their sashes.

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-8118<sup>4</sup>*

**22. 498 Main Street – Aurora Hardware Company Building – 1926  
Contributing Building**

Built for the Aurora Hardware Company in 1926, the two-story commercial building at 498 Main Street has a flat roof with a plain parapet on the primary (south) elevation and stepped parapets on the east and west elevations. Brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior. A corbelled brick cornice accents the primary elevation, and brick pilasters anchor the corners of the façade. The façade has two storefronts, both of which have been altered. The east storefront is mostly covered with T1-11 siding, and a metal replacement door pierces the west side of the enclosure. A window obscured by metal grates perforates the easternmost bay. The west storefront has metal-frame storefront windows and the original, double-leaf, glazed and paneled, recessed door in the center. Five window openings line the second story, but the sashes have been removed and replaced with plywood, as is the case with the windows on the west and rear (north) elevations. As a result of the demolition of the adjacent commercial building between 1982 and 1993, the east elevation is damaged and some brick is spalling.

The commercial building at 498 Main Street has served several functions over the years. Originally, a 10-pin bowling alley occupied the second floor, while the first floor housed at various times a dentist, beauty shop, attorney's office, hardware store, and grocery.

**23. 499 Main Street – Cherry Hotel – 1914  
Contributing Building**

Originally built to house the Cherry Hotel, the 1914 building at 499 Main Street is the westernmost section of a two-story commercial block that includes 491 and 495 Main Street. Ira C. Congleton served as both the architect and builder. The building's flat roof is capped by a plain parapet on the primary (north) elevation and a stepped parapet on the west elevation. Brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior, and brick pilasters anchor the façade. A corbelled brick cornice spans all three buildings in the block. All three bays of the storefront are covered with plywood. The storefront has a central entry bay with plate-glass windows and a recessed entrance. The flanking bays were likely large plate-glass windows. All three bays are surmounted by exposed wood studs where the exterior sheathing has been removed. On the second story, four windows feature brick jack arches and cast stone sills. The windows and doors on the east and rear (south) elevations have either been boarded up or have broken glass in the original one-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows.

**24. 500 Main Street – W. T. Byran Store – 1943  
Contributing Building**

The one-story commercial building at 500 Main Street, known as the W. T. Bryan Store, was built in 1943. The building's flat roof is capped by a plain parapet on the primary (south) elevation and stepped parapets on the east and west elevations. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior. Brick pilasters anchor the façade, and a corbelled brick cornice accents the roofline. The recessed sign panel contains three decorative brick vents. The three-bay storefront features two original wood plate-glass windows in the east and west bays. In the center bay, the original door opening has been partially enclosed with vinyl siding to accommodate a new single-leaf vinyl door. A metal awning protects the storefront.

<sup>4</sup> The commercial building on the site was demolished between 1982 and 1993.

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The east elevation has three windows with brick jack arches and cast stone sills that have been bricked in. A paneled replacement door surrounded by vinyl siding is also present on the east elevation. The windows on the rear (north) elevation, matching those on the east elevation, have also been bricked in.

**25. 524 Main Street – Guilford Market – 1928**  
**Contributing Building**

Built to house the Guilford Market in 1928, the one-story commercial building at 524 Main Street now houses the Hazel W. Guilford Memorial Library. The building's flat roof is capped by a plain parapet on the primary (south) elevation and stepped parapets on the east and west elevations. Brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior and a corbelled brick cornice runs along the roofline.

A brick pilaster divides the primary elevation into two storefronts. The east storefront features the original wood-frame storefront windows divided by a glazed replacement door. The west storefront retains its original wood-frame storefront windows, in addition to its original, glazed, double-leaf, wood doors. Metal awnings protect both storefronts.

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-4108*

**26. 577 Main Street – Alex and Lona Hudnell House – 1887**  
**Contributing Building**

The house at 577 Main Street is a two-story frame I-house built in 1887 for Alex and Lona Hudnell. A rectangular, side-gabled main block anchors the house, with a later Mount Vernon porch on the primary (north) elevation and a one-story shed-roof porch off the east elevation. The rear (south) elevation has a two-story, gabled rear ell on the west side and a one-story, gabled ell with a screened porch on the east side. The house rests on a brick pier foundation infilled with lattice brickwork. Asbestos shingles clad the exterior, and metal covers the roof. Two interior brick chimneys project from the apex of the roof near the gable ends, and an exterior brick chimney rises along the east elevation of the one-story rear ell. Cornice returns accent the gable ends throughout.

The Mount Vernon porch, supported by tapered square posts spanned by a square balustrade, dominates the primary elevation. A flight of concrete steps with stepped brick wing walls provides access to the porch. The original front door, composed of two arched lights above panels, occupies the center bay of the three-bay primary elevation. A storm door partially obscures the original front door. Four-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows accented by fixed, louvered shutters pierce the flanking bays. The windows throughout the house follow the same sash pattern and material.

Modern screens and wood lattice enclose the east elevation porch, and a wood fence partially encloses the backyard.

**27. 610 Main Street – House – Circa 1900**  
**Contributing Building**

The circa-1900 house at 610 Main Street is a rare example of the Shingle-style in Aurora. The two-story, frame dwelling is composed of a side-gabled main block with a wraparound porch on the primary (south) and east elevations, a shed-roof dormer across the south roof slope, a port cochere off the west elevation, a large rear ell capped by a hipped-roof with an inset porch, and a smaller hipped-roof ell in the east bay of the rear elevation. The house rests on a brick pier foundation infilled with brick. Most of the original siding has been covered with vinyl, apart from the original wood shingles that clad the second story and gable ends. Composite shingles cover the roof, and two interior corbelled brick chimneys project from the roof near the gabled ends.

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Brick piers surmounted by tapered posts support the wraparound porch and porte cochere. A set of concrete steps with stepped brick wing walls provides porch access. The primary elevation measures three bays wide. The original multi-light front door occupies the center bay and is surmounted by a divided-light transom. Original, paired, four-over-one, double-hung wood-sash windows perforate the west bay, and a single window of the same sash pattern and material pierces the east bay. The windows throughout the house are original, matching this four-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash configuration. The second story of the east elevation features a recessed porch.

**28. 640 Main Street – Church of the Holy Cross – 1917  
Contributing Building**

Originally constructed in 1917, the Church of the Holy Cross has three distinct sections: the original Gothic Revival-style, gable-front church with a central belltower at the east end; a circa-1930 flat-roofed education wing at the center; and a circa-1945 Craftsman-style, front-gabled west wing addition. The original church is clad with brick laid in a common bond with gabled parapets accenting the front and rear roof sections. Exposed rafter tails line the east and west elevations. A concrete-capped string course continues from the façade onto the tower, with a second stringcourse running near the top of the belltower. A pointed-arch entry pierces the belltower's primary (south) elevation, and a double-leaf batten entry door is recessed beneath the arch and surmounted by a blind transom. The door features narrow boards forming crosses, with a matching cross in the transom. Buttresses divide the five bays of the east and west elevations. Within the fourth bay on both side elevations, a projection with a stepped parapet wall protrudes from the wall plane. Windows throughout the church have flat, rounded-arch, and pointed-arch forms with brick soldier course sills and lintels, and are filled with stained glass. A shed-roof addition, likely constructed in the late twentieth century, extends from the rear (north) elevation, and an interior brick chimney projects from the juncture of the church and education wing.

The circa-1945 front-gabled west wing is also clad with common bond brick, and asphalt shingles cover the roof. Decorative knee braces adorn the eaves of the front gable, and exposed rafter tails line the eaves. The primary elevation of the west wing features paneled, double-leaf doors flanked by nine-over-nine, double-hung, wood sashes, each composed of small panes surrounding a larger central pane. The windows on the east and west elevations follow the same sash pattern and material.

The circa-1930 flat-roofed education wing was expanded around 1945 and now serves as a hyphen between the original church and the west wing. An interior brick chimney projects from the east side of the roof. Though the education wing reflects two distinct construction phases with differing brick colors, both are laid in the common bond. Two windows on the education wing match the sash pattern and material of the west wing and flank a single-leaf paneled door protected by a vinyl storm door. A wood-frame belltower marks this entry.

**29. 659 Main Street – Robert H. and Clarissa Bonner Thompson House – Circa 1950  
Contributing Building**

The house at 659 Main Street is a one-story, side-gabled, Minimal Traditional-style dwelling built around 1950 for Robert H. and Clarissa Bonner Thompson. The house has a rectangular footprint with a gabled entry stoop on the primary (north) elevation. The house rests on a continuous brick foundation, and vinyl siding sheathes the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof, and an exterior brick chimney rises along the east elevation. The primary elevation measures three bays wide. The gabled entry stoop, supported by plain, square replacement posts and brackets and accessed by a flight of brick-faced steps, protects the replacement front door in the center bay. A tripartite picture window with two-over-two, double-hung, horizontal, flanking wood sashes occupies the east bay, while original three-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows pierce the west bay. Scrolled metal bars cover the windows and fixed, louvered shutters accent the windows.

**30. 672 Main Street – Church of the Holy Cross Rectory – Circa 1900  
Contributing Building**

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Originally built as the rectory for the Church of the Holy Cross to the east, the house at 672 Main Street is a two-story, cross-gable house built around 1900. The frame dwelling is composed of a T-shaped plan with two rear additions: a shed-roof section in the east bay and a gabled section with an enclosed porch in the west bay. The former rectory rests on a brick pier foundation infilled with concrete block. Vinyl siding clads the exterior, and standing seam metal covers the roof. Two interior brick chimneys project from the apex of the gable and wing sections, and cornice returns adorn the gable ends.

The three-bay primary (south) elevation features a shed-roof porch spanning the two bays of the wing. The porch is supported by turned posts and decorative brackets, and a set of concrete steps with a metal railing provides porch access. The single-leaf front door, composed of six lights over two panels, occupies the center bay. The windows throughout the house are the original six-over-six, double-hung, wood sashes accented by fixed, louvered shutters.

**Shed – Circa 1980**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A circa-1980 shed lies northwest of the house. The one-story, front-gabled shed has a rectangular main block with an open shed-roof wing on the east elevation. The exterior is clad in T1-11 siding and asphalt shingles cover the roof. The shed's primary (south) elevation is pierced by a double-leaf wood door.

**Garage – Circa 2000**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A circa-2000 garage lies north of the house. This one-story, front-gabled garage rests on a concrete foundation and is clad with T1-11 siding. Asphalt shingles cover the roof. The garage's primary (south) elevation is pierced by a modern, paneled garage door.

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-83-9129*

**31. 699 Main Street – Manufactured Home – 2003**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A manufactured home, moved to the site in 2003, occupies the parcel. The building has an elongated, rectangular form. It rests on a continuous brick foundation and is clad in vinyl siding. Composite shingles cover the side-gabled roof. The windows throughout the house are vinyl sashes.

**32. 720 Main Street – Willie Bryan House – Circa 1890**

**Contributing Building**

The two-story, frame house at 720 Main Street, known as the Willie Bryan House, was built around 1890. The dwelling has a gable-and-wing form with a one-story rear ell attached to the west side of the rear (north) elevation and a shed roof addition on the east side of the rear elevation. The foundation is not visible, as the original plain weatherboards that clad the exterior run to the ground level. Corner boards accent the corners of the house throughout. A standing-seam metal roof covers the steeply pitched roof, though the original wood shake roof is visible where metal panels have fallen away. Two interior parged chimneys pierce the apex of the wing roof, while the front-gabled projection contains an additional interior parged chimney, and a fourth exterior brick chimney is situated on the north elevation of the rear ell.

The primary (south) elevation has a partially enclosed hipped-roof porch supported by heavy, turned posts, which leads to the front door in the center bay. The windows throughout the house are the original two-over-two, double-hung, wood sash windows. A fallen tree has partially damaged the east elevation and the shed-roof rear addition.

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**Garage – Circa 1940  
Contributing Building**

A two-bay, front-gabled garage lies north of the house with its primary elevation facing east towards North Seventh Street. Constructed of concrete block, the building has a rectangular form, and standing seam metal covers the roof. Exposed rafter tails line the eaves and an interior brick chimney projects from the apex of the roof. Two metal roll-up garage doors occupy the primary elevation.

**33. 302 Main Street – Frank Bonner House – 1914  
Contributing Building**

The two-story, frame dwelling at 302 Main Street (previously referred to as 743 and 763 Main Street) was built for Frank Bonner around 1914. The Colonial Revival-style dwelling consists of a side-gabled main block with a Mount Vernon front porch, a hipped-roof wing off the east elevation, an ell off the west bay of the rear elevation, and a circa-1960 side-gabled addition off the east elevation of the rear ell. The house rests on a brick foundation, and aluminum siding sheathes the exterior. Composite shingles cover all roof sections except the east wing, which is covered by a standing-seam metal roof. The house has three chimneys: two interior brick chimneys projecting from the apex and south roof slope of the main block, and an exterior brick chimney on the south elevation of the rear ell. Cornice returns accent the gable ends.

The Mount Vernon porch, supported by plain square posts, spans the primary (north) elevation. A set of brick-faced steps with a metal railing provides access to the porch. The front door features an original glazed and paneled door with a broken pediment surround with fluted pilasters and occupies the center bay. Paired two-over-two, double-hung, wood-sash windows pierce the flanking bays. The windows throughout the house are original, following the same sash pattern and material, and are accented by fixed louvered shutters.

**Garage – Circa 1930  
Contributing Building**

A one-story, front-gabled garage lies southeast of the Frank Bonner House on an adjacent parcel. It was originally associated with a non-extant dwelling demolished between 1982 and 1993. The property is now owned and maintained by the same owner as the Frank Bonner House. The garage, partially obscured by overgrown vegetation, is clad with asbestos shingles and capped by a metal roof. The primary (north) elevation features a sliding vertical wood door and a four-light wood-sash window in the gable peak.

**34. 760 Main Street – Mabel Baucom House – 1921  
Contributing Building**

The one-and-one-half-story Mabel Baucom House stands as an example of a bungalow-form house with minimal Craftsman-style details. Built in 1921, the house is composed of a front-gabled main block with a wraparound porch that extends to form a porte cochere off the west elevation and a screened porch on the east elevation, along with a screened shed-roof porch off the rear (north) elevation. The house rests on a brick pier foundation infilled with brick, and the original, plain weatherboards clad the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof.

Brick piers surmounted by tapered posts support the wraparound porch on the primary (south) elevation. A set of brick-faced steps with a brick wing wall enables porch access. A glazed and paneled front door occupies the center bay of the three-bay primary elevation and is flanked by paired, four-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows. The windows throughout the house are original and follow this sash pattern and material. Fixed, louvered shutters accent the windows in the gable peak.

**Shed – Circa 1950**

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**Contributing Building**

A one-story, front-gabled shed lies north of the house and is only partially visible from the right-of-way. A shed-roof addition extends from the west elevation. The exterior is clad in plywood, and metal covers the roof.

**35. 765 Main Street – House – Circa 1915**  
**Contributing Building**

The two-story frame house at 765 Main Street is an example of the American Foursquare. A hipped-roof main block anchors the house, and a wraparound porch extends along the primary (north) elevation, around to the west elevation, and out to the east side of the house to form a porte cochere. A shed-roof addition spans the rear (south) elevation. The house rests on a brick pier foundation infilled with parged concrete block. Vinyl covers the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof. A hipped-roof dormer projects from the north roof slope.

Brick piers surmounted by tapered posts spanned by a square balustrade support the porch. A set of concrete steps with brick wing walls enables porch access. The wood front door, possibly a historic replacement, pierces the center bay of the three-bay primary elevation and is composed of panels surmounted by four divided lights. A transom remains intact above the door. The windows are one-over-one, double-hung sashes but storm windows obscure the material. A replacement casement window pierces the primary elevation's west bay.

**Garage – Circa 1960**  
**Contributing Building**

A one-story, front-gabled garage lies southwest of the house on an adjacent parcel. It was originally associated with a non-extant dwelling demolished between 2008 and 2009. The property is now owned and maintained by the same owner as the house at 765 Main Street. The garage, partially obscured by overgrown vegetation, is clad with asbestos shingles and capped by a metal roof. The primary (west) has an open garage bay.

**36. 801 Main Street – George Williamson House – Circa 1910**  
**Contributing Building**

The two-story, three-bay circa-1910 I-house located at 801 Main Street was built for George Williamson. A chain-link fence encloses the parcel. The house is composed of the main block with a hipped-roof porch on the primary (north) elevation and a hipped-roof rear addition. A shed-roof and a flat-roof addition extend from the south elevation of the hipped-roof addition. The house rests on a brick foundation, with asbestos siding sheathing the exterior, and standing-seam metal covering all roof sections. An interior brick chimney pierces the apex of the main roof, and an exterior brick chimney rises along the rear addition's south elevation.

Scrolled metal posts support the front porch. A metal storm door with the letter "B" protects the original glazed and paneled front door. Divided light sidelights flank the door. The windows throughout the house are the original, four-over-one, double-hung, wood sashes.

**Garage – Circa 1950**  
**Contributing Building**

A one-story, front-gabled garage lies south of the George Williamson House. The garage is constructed of concrete block, and the gables are clad with plain weatherboards. Metal covers the roof. The primary (east) elevation includes a single garage bay opening.

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**37. 243 Middle Street – House – Circa 1930  
Non-Contributing Building (Alterations)**

Built around 1930, the house at 243 Middle Street is a one-and-one-half-story, frame dwelling anchored by a side-gabled main block with a front-gabled façade projection and a hipped-roof rear addition. The house rests on a parged concrete block foundation and T1-11 siding clads the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof. The east and west elevations each have an exterior brick chimney, and a gabled dormer projects from the north roof slope.

The three-bay primary (north) elevation measures three bays wide. The original porch was enclosed prior to circa-1960, according to aerial imagery, and the present engaged front porch was likely added at the time, spanning the two west bays of the façade. The porch is supported by square posts, and a stoop with concrete steps provides access to the replacement front door in the center bay. The windows throughout the house are either one-over-one, double-hung vinyl replacements, either single or paired.

**Shed – Circa 2010**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A front-gabled shed, oriented with its primary elevation facing east, lies southwest of the house. Vinyl drop siding sheathes the exterior, and corrugated metal covers the roof. A single bay pierces the center of the primary elevation.

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6567-03-7319<sup>5</sup>*

**38. 299 Middle Street – Mobile Home – Circa 1960  
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

The parcel at 299 Middle Street is occupied by a metal mobile home that was moved to the site in the mid- to late twentieth century. The exterior is clad in metal, and pressed metal meant to mimic rusticated concrete block covers the foundation. The original windows are four-over-four, double-hung, metal sashes, found as both single units and groups of three.

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6567-03-4335*

**39. 361 Middle Street – House – 1981  
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

Built in 1981, the house at 361 Middle Street has a side-gabled, linear form. A gabled hyphen connects the east side of the house to the front gabled garage. The house rests on a parged concrete block foundation and vinyl clads the exterior. Composite shingles cover all roof sections, and an interior brick chimney projects from the north roof slope.

The primary (north) elevation measures four bays wide with an inset porch, supported by turned posts spanned by a metal railing, spanning the two east bays. A paneled front door pierces the east-central bay and a picture window with flanking sashes perforates the easternmost bay. The windows throughout the house are original, one-over-one, double-hung, wood sashes. A modern, paneled, double-bay garage door occupies the center of the garage.

**40. 395 Middle Street – House – Circa 1940**

<sup>5</sup> This vacant lot lies west of the house at 243 Middle Street. It is owned and utilized by the same individuals who own 243 Middle Street.

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**Contributing Building**

The house at 395 Middle Street is difficult to see from the right-of-way due to overgrown vegetation. The one-story dwelling has a side-gabled form with an engaged front porch that spans the façade. The exterior is clad with rolled asphalt shingles meant to imitate brick, and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. An interior brick chimney pierces the north roof slope.

The engaged front porch dominates the primary (north) elevation and is enclosed on the east side and screened on the west side. The east elevation includes a brick-faced stoop protected by a shed-roof pent with exposed rafter tails and scrolled metal supports, beneath which a single-leaf door is protected by a wood screen door. The windows are the original four-over-one, double-hung wood-sash windows. The west elevation features additional windows of the same sash pattern and material are protected by metal awnings.

**Garage – Circa 1940**

**Contributing Building**

A front-gabled garage lies east of the house. Metal siding clads the exterior of the frame building and metal sheathes the roof.

**41. 398 Middle Street – Benjamin Thompson House – Circa 1900**

**Contributing Building**

The circa-1900 Colonial Revival-style Benjamin Thompson House is a frame dwelling anchored by a two-and-one-half-story, side-gabled main block with a screened one-story sun porch on the west elevation and a partially enclosed porch on the east elevation. The house rests on a brick foundation, and plain weatherboards clad the exterior. Metal covers all roof sections, and cornice returns adorn the gable ends. Two vented shed dormers perforate the south roof slope, and two interior brick chimneys project from the north roof slope.

The three-bay primary (south) elevation has a pent roof that delineates the first and second stories. A gabled entry stoop with flush eaves and square replacement posts marks the entry. The original glazed and paneled front door with sidelights and flanking pilasters occupies the center bay. The windows throughout the house are primarily the original ten-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows, except for an eight-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash window in the center bay of the second-story façade. A tripartite wood-sash window pierces the west bay of the primary elevation, and paired original windows perforate the east bay. Shutters with diamond-shaped cutouts accent the windows on the primary elevation.

The screened west wing sun porch is supported by three square posts at the corners surmounted by a plain frieze. An additional entry door is tucked beneath the porch. The porch on the east side of the house, enclosed at the south end, has a metal carport attachment that was added in the late twentieth century.

**42. 409 Middle Street – Aurora Body Shop Garage – Circa 1935**

**Contributing Building**

The garage at 409 Middle Street is a front-gabled building with a rectangular form. It rests on a continuous brick foundation, and plain weatherboards sheath the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof, and decorative trusswork with brackets adorn the front gable peak. The primary (north) elevation is dominated by double-bay, wood, X-batten

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doors. A fixed, two-light, wood-sash window pierces the gable peak. This building is associated with the Aurora Body Shop at 449 Middle Street.

**Mobile Home – 1990**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

The mobile home lies east of the garage and has an elongated, rectangular form. The home rests on a continuous brick foundation, with a rounded brick planter box on the west elevation. The building is clad in vertical metal siding, and metal covers the rounded roof. The windows throughout the mobile home are one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl replacements.

**Garage – 1972**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A large, side-gabled, metal garage lies south of the main garage and mobile home. The primary (north) elevation features three garage bays with metal rollup doors.

**43. 449 Middle Street – Aurora Body Shop – Circa 1940  
Contributing Building**

The Aurora Body Shop is a concrete block building constructed around 1940. The building has a rectangular, front-gable form. Wood shingles clad the gables. Composite shingles cover the roof, and exposed rafter tails line the eaves. An interior concrete block chimney rises from the apex of the roof. A batten garage door and fixed, four-light, wood window pierces the primary (north) elevation. These original four-light, wood windows can be found throughout the buildings. A single-leaf entry door and an additional garage bay are on the east elevation. A shed-roof wing clad with wood composite weatherboards extends from the south end of the west elevation and has a single-leaf entry door along its primary elevation.

**44. Middle Street – Aurora Body Shop Storage – Circa 1940  
Contributing Building**

The Aurora Body Shop Storage building is a large front-gabled, frame building that rests on brick piers spanned by pressed metal that replicates rusticated concrete block. Metal paneling clads the exterior, and metal covers the roof. Exposed rafter tails line the eaves, and an interior brick chimney projects from the east roof slope. Two large openings pierce the west elevation, and door openings pierce the center of the north and south elevations. The building is associated with the Aurora Body Shop.

**45. 598 Middle Street – House – Circa 1935  
Contributing Building**

Built around 1935, the one-story frame house at 598 Middle Street has a T-shaped plan with a front-gabled main block and a gabled wing off the east elevation. Between 1958 and 1982, an addition was built on the rear (north) elevation. A chain-link fence encloses the west portion of the parcel. The house rests on a brick foundation, and plain weatherboards clad the exterior. Corner boards accentuate the corners of the primary elevation. Composite shingles cover all roof sections, and an interior brick chimney projects from the apex of the main block.

The primary (south) elevation measures two bays wide. An original three-panel, six-light door pierces the east bay, and an original three-over-one, wood-sash window perforates the west bay. The windows throughout the original sections of the house are original and follow the same three-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash pattern, except for the rear addition, which has divided-light wood windows. The windows and doors on the original sections of the house retain their plain-capped trim.

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**46. 610 Middle Street – Bell House – 1917  
Contributing Building**

The 1917 Bell House at 610 Middle Street stands as an example of a transitional Queen Anne-Colonial Revival-style house. The house is composed of a front-gabled main block with a curved wraparound front porch and a one-story rear ell with a shed-roof addition off the north elevation. The house rests on a brick pier foundation infilled with brick, and vinyl siding clads the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof, and cornice returns accent the gable ends.

The curved wraparound porch, supported by original turned posts, dominates the two-bay primary (south) elevation and is enclosed at the south end. An original glazed and paneled front door occupies the east bay, and paired original, six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash windows pierce the west bay. The windows throughout the house are original, following the same six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash pattern, and are flanked by fixed, louvered shutters.

**Shed – 1917**

**Contributing Building**

A side-gabled frame shed lies northwest of the Bell House. It rests on brick piers and plain weatherboards clad the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof. A single opening enables access to the interior on the south elevation.

**Shed – Circa 1960**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A one-and-one-half-story gambrel-roofed shed lies directly north of the house. It is composed of a main block with a shed-roof addition off the west side. The exterior is clad in wood sheathing, and the upper level is clad with weatherboards. Asphalt shingles clad the roof. A single-leaf door opening pierces the upper level and leads onto a wood balcony supported by plain square posts.

**47. Middle Street – House – Circa 1945  
Contributing Building**

A circa-1945 house, constructed concrete blocks, occupies the lot between 610 Middle Street and 674 Middle Street. According to the survey file from 2009, the house was built to serve as temporary housing. The building has a compact, rectangular footprint with an engaged carport at the east end. Composite shingles cover the gabled roof, and exposed rafter tails line the eaves. A set of two-over-two, horizontal wood-sash windows pierce the west bay. The west elevation is missing some of its siding material and is pierced by a paneled wood door.

**Shed – Circa 1945**

**Contributing Building**

A front-gabled shed lies north of the house and has a shed-roof addition on the east elevation. The building is constructed of concrete block and capped by a metal roof. The primary (south) elevation features a single-leaf entry door, and the shed-roof addition is an open bay.

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-0352*

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-83-9279*

**48. 674 Middle Street – John Jones House – Circa 1940  
Contributing Building**

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The one-story Ranch-style house at 674 Middle Street was built by John Jones, janitor for Aurora School. The dwelling has a side-gabled form with a front-gabled façade projection and a screened, shed-roof addition on the rear (north) elevation. The dwelling is constructed of concrete block with asbestos shingles in the gables. A metal roof covers the house, and an interior brick chimney projects from the north roof slope. The primary (south) elevation measures three bays wide. A shed-roof entry stoop with scrolled metal post protects the paneled front door in the center bay. A tripartite picture window, composed of a large central vinyl window flank by one-over-one vinyl replacement windows with six-over-six false muntins, pierces the east bay. A matching one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl replacement window with six-over-six false muntins occupies the west bay. The windows throughout follow this replacement sash pattern and material.

**Shed – Circa 1940**

**Contributing Building**

A shed lies north of the house. The building is constructed of frame, clad in corrugated metal siding, and capped by a metal shed roof. The primary (south) elevation features a single-leaf entry door.

**49. 698 Middle Street – House – Circa 1900**

**Contributing Building**

Built around 1900, the house at 698 Middle Street is a two-story, frame I-house anchored by a side-gabled main block with a shed-roof front porch and elongated rear ell. Foundation plantings obscure the foundation material. Original weatherboards clad the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof sections. An interior brick chimney projects from the apex of the main block and another from the rear ell. Cornice returns adorn the gable ends of the house.

The shed roof porch, supported by original Tuscan columns, spans the primary (south) elevation. The original glazed and paneled front door with a transom occupies the center bay. Fixed louvered shutters accent the front door. Original two-over-two, double-hung, wood-sash windows pierce the flanking bays. The windows throughout the house follow this sash pattern and material, including the rear ell. Fixed, louvered shutters frame the windows.

**Shed – Circa 1990**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A frame shed lies northeast of the house. The building has a side-gabled form, is clad in vinyl siding, and is capped by an asphalt shingle roof. The west elevation has a single leaf door, and the north elevation includes a six-light, wood-sash window accented by fixed louvered shutters.

**Pearl Street**

**50. 525 Pearl Street – House – 1977**

**Non-Contributing (Age)**

The 1977 Ranch-style house at 525 Pearl Street is composed of a larger, center block with smaller flanking wings and a garage off the west elevation of the west wing. Multi-colored brick clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof. An exterior brick chimney rises along the rear (south) elevation. The primary (north) elevation features an inset porch with fluted columns, which is accessed by a flight of brick stairs with a metal railing. The original paneled and glazed front door pierces the century bay. The windows throughout the house are paired, six-over-six, double-hung, wood sashes with fixed, louvered shutters.

**Shed – Circa 1977**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A frame shed lies southwest of the house. The exterior is clad with metal siding and capped by a front-gabled metal roof. The primary (north) elevation is pierced by a single-leaf plywood door.

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**51. 575 Pearl Street – Bryan and Ginny Bonner House – Circa 1925  
Contributing Building**

The Craftsman-influenced house at 575 Pearl Street was built for Bryan and Ginny Bonner around 1925. A side-gabled main block anchors the one-and-one-half-story frame bungalow with two telescoping gabled additions off the east elevation. The house rests on a brick foundation, and aluminum siding clads the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof. A shed roof dormer spans the north roof slope, and two interior brick chimneys project from the apex of the roof.

An engaged porch, supported by tapered posts atop brick piers and spanned by a square balustrade, spans the three-bay primary (north) elevation. A flight of concrete steps flanked by brick wing walls enables porch access. The original front door has been replaced with a glazed and paneled double-leaf door with sidelights. The windows throughout the house are one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl replacement sashes with four-over-one false muntins found in pairs on the primary elevation and as single units on the side elevations. Fixed, louvered shutters adorn the windows.

**Garage – Circa 1950**

**Contributing Building**

A frame garage lies southeast of the dwelling. It rests on a concrete foundation and is clad with metal siding. A front-gabled, metal-clad roof caps the building, and exposed rafter tails line the eaves. The primary (north) elevation is pierced by a paneled garage door with a row of four lights across the top. The east and west bays are both pierced by one-over-one, wood-sash windows. Though on a separate parcel, the garage is owned by the same individuals as the Bryan and Ginny Bonner House.

**Third Street**

**52. Third Street – Garage – Circa 2020  
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A one-story, metal-framed garage occupies the lot between 564 Third Street and 298 Main Street. The parcel does not have an address. The garage has a metal-clad low-pitched, front-gabled roof, and the exterior is clad in metal siding. A paneled roll-up garage door pierces the center of the primary (west) elevation and is flanked by one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl windows, which are the standard configuration and material throughout.

**Garage – Circa 1940**

**Contributing Building**

Once associated with a non-extant house, a front-gabled, frame garage lies southeast of the house. Metal covers the exterior and the roof. A double-leaf door pierces the primary (west) elevation.

**53. 564 Third Street – House – 1916  
Contributing Building**

The house at 564 Third Street is a two-story, frame dwelling constructed in 1916. The house has a rectangular, side-gabled form with a gabled replacement entry stoop and rear ell. Sheets of plywood obscure the foundation, and asbestos siding sheathes the exterior. Tin covers the roof, and the gable ends feature cornice returns. Two interior brick chimneys pierce the apex of the roof and the east slope of the roof. An additional brick chimney projects from the apex of the rear ell.

The primary (west) elevation measures three bays wide. The gabled entry stoop is supported by plain square replacement posts spanned by a replacement balustrade. The replacement front door occupies the center bay. Paired, three-over-one, wood-sash windows pierce the north bay, and a single unit perforates the south bay. The windows throughout the house reflect this sash pattern and material.

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**Shed – Circa 1940**

**Non-Contributing Building (Integrity)**

A deteriorated shed lies east of the house. It is constructed of concrete block and has a collapsed metal roof. The primary (west) elevation is open.

**Fourth Street**

**54. 436 Fourth Street – Former Aurora Town Hall and Police Station – 1948  
Contributing Building**

The former Aurora Town Hall and Police Station at 436 Fourth Street was constructed in 1948. The one-story, flat-roofed masonry building has a rectangular form and shares its southern wall with the building at 458–460 Fourth Street, the former Fire Station. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior and metal coping lines the roof. A large metal flue projects from the west edge of the roof.

Oriented with its primary elevation facing west, the building has a symmetrical façade with two original doors composed of six divided lights above three panels that are separated by two original, two-over-two, double-hung, horizontal, wood-sash windows in the center bays. The windows throughout the building follow this sash pattern and material. Each window is also accented by a concrete sill.

**55. 458–460 Fourth Street – Aurora Municipal Complex – 1948  
Contributing Building**

The Aurora Municipal Complex is composed of three structures dating from 1948 to 1964. The oldest building, the former Fire Station, was constructed in 1948, and shares its north wall with the former Town Hall and Police Station at 436 Fourth Street. The subject building is constructed of concrete block, and brick laid in a running bond faces the primary (west) elevation. The building is capped by a flat roof with metal coping, and an interior brick chimney rises along the south elevation.

The primary elevation measures four bays wide. Two single-leaf, metal frame doors occupy the center bays. A fixed, metal-sash, plate glass window pierces the north bay, and a divided, metal-sash window perforates the south bay. Windows on the south elevation are the original, two-over-two, double-hung, horizontal, wood-sash windows, which are also on the adjacent building at 436 Fourth Street.

A six-bay, concrete block garage, built in 1958, is connected to the former Fire Station by a flat covered roof. Oriented with its primary elevation facing south towards Pearl Street, a metal-sloped roof caps the building, and the walls are exposed concrete block. The westernmost bay of the primary elevation is enclosed with T1-11 siding. The bay consists of a modern paneled door flanked by one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl replacement windows with six-over-six false muntins. The remaining five bays have metal roll-up garage doors with three lights across the center of the door.

**Water Pump Station – 1964**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

The Water Pump Station lies south of the former Fire Station. The building has a rectangular, gabled form with a shorter, flat roof addition on the west elevation. Brick laid in a common bond clads the main block's exterior, and running bond brick clads the west addition. Bricks laid in a stretcher course accent the window and door bays. Metal covers the roof.

The building is oriented with its primary elevation facing south towards Pearl Street. A modern paneled, single-leaf door with a transom pierces the west bay of the three-bay façade. Fixed, divided light wood

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windows pierce the center and east bays. An additional modern, paneled door pierces the primary elevation of the west extension.

**Water Tower – 1964**

**Non-Contributing Structure (Age)**

The metal Water Tower lies east of the former Fire Station. Towering far above the buildings in Aurora, the structure was built in 1964, at the same time as the Water Pump Station to serve the growing Aurora community.

**56. 462 Fourth Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1945**  
**Contributing Building**

Constructed around 1945, the one-story commercial building at 462 Fourth Street has a rectangular footprint and is built of concrete block with metal coping. It has a flat parapet with stepped parapets on the north and south elevations. An interior brick chimney projects from the north side of the roof. The primary (west) elevation measures three bays wide. A single-leaf door with a jalousie light pierces the north bay, and a single-bay garage door pierces the south bay. What was likely a large window in the center bay has been infilled with concrete block. The south elevation features four metal-sash, divided-light casement windows.

**57. 465 Fourth Street – House – Circa 1900**  
**Contributing Building**

The two-story, side-gabled frame dwelling at 465 Fourth Street was constructed around 1900. The dwelling is anchored by a rectangular main block with a hipped-roof front porch and two-story rear ell. Foundation plantings obscure the foundation material, and replacement vinyl siding clads the exterior. Paneled metal covers the roof. Two exterior brick chimneys rise along the north and south gable ends, and the gable ends feature cornice returns. An additional exterior brick chimney rises along the rear (west) elevation of the rear ell.

The primary (east) elevation measures three bays wide. Turned posts support the front porch, which is accessible by a set of concrete steps. The original front door, composed of a single light above three panels and protected by a vinyl storm door, occupies the center bay. Original divided sidelights flank the door. Original, six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash windows pierce the north and south bays. The original windows can be found throughout the dwelling, and fixed vinyl shutters accent all windows.

**58. Fourth Street – Garage – Circa 1940**  
**Contributing Building**

Originally built around 1940 as a restaurant, the garage north of the house at 465 Fourth Street is a one-and-one-half-story, front-gabled masonry building. Oriented with its primary elevation facing east, the building has a rectangular form. Stucco covers the concrete block exterior and asbestos shingles clad the gable. Tin covers the roof, and exposed rafter tails line the eaves.

The primary (east) elevation measures two bays wide and is pierced by two single-bay, metal roll-up garage doors. Original, paired, two-over-two, wood-sash windows pierce the east gable peak. Fixed louvered shutters accent the windows. Metal-sash, horizontal sliding windows pierce the north and south elevations.

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*Vacant Lot – PIN 6567-02-0978<sup>6</sup>*

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6567-02-0919<sup>7</sup>*

**59. 470 Fourth Street – Aurora Bus Station – Circa 1940  
Contributing Building**

Built in the 1940s, the Aurora Bus Station is a one-story brick building with a rectangular form and a late twentieth-century gabled, concrete block addition off the rear (east) elevation. The exterior of the original block is clad in brick laid in a common bond, while stucco covers the rear addition. Composite shingles cover all roof sections, including the original hipped roof with deep, overhanging eaves. Two single-leaf, replacement doors pierce the north and south bays. Three original, four-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows occupy the west elevation, which fronts Fourth Street. A set of four glass block windows perforates the north elevation.

**Garage – Circa 1940  
Contributing Building**

Oriented with its primary elevation facing west towards Fourth Street, a side-gabled, brick bus garage lies to the west behind the Aurora Bus Station. Brick laid in a common bond clads the exterior, and metal covers the roof. Exposed rafter tails line the eaves, and an interior brick chimney projects from the east roof slope. The primary elevation is lined by bay openings with batten doors. An additional, single bay pierces the south elevation. Four original, arched, six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash windows line the west elevation.

**60. 560 Fourth Street – Commercial Building – Circa 1950  
Contributing Building**

The circa-1950 commercial building at 560 Fourth Street is a one-story, flat-roofed commercial building with a stepped parapet along the north and south elevations. Metal panels cover the exterior. The primary (west) elevation measures five bays wide and most of the bays are covered with plywood. The north-central bay is pierced by a tall double-leaf door. The three south bays feature an original, glazed and paneled, single-leaf door flanked by windows.

**Shed – Circa 1950  
Contributing Building**

A one-story, shed-roof concrete block building lies south of the commercial building and is partially obscured by vegetation. The north elevation includes two single-leaf door openings, both of which are missing their doors.

**North Fifth Street**

**61. 207 North Fifth Street – Bonner-Cherry House – Circa 1870  
Contributing Building**

This two-and-one-half-story house was built around 1870 as an Italianate-style dwelling by John B. Bonner. At an unknown date, the house was updated to reflect the changing tastes to the Victorian style, though many of these architectural details have now been removed. The house may have been enlarged and subsequently used as a hotel by the Cherry

<sup>6</sup> This is a vacant lot, located between the House at 465 Fourth Street and the Garage (#58), which is owned by the same individuals as the Garage (#58).

<sup>7</sup> This is a vacant lot, which is owned by the same individuals as the Garage (#58).

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family after they took possession of the property in 1901 and before they built the Cherry Hotel on Main Street, though this could not be confirmed based on available records.<sup>8</sup>

The frame dwelling has a rectangular footprint with a shed roof porch that spans the primary (east) elevation and a one-story, hipped-roof addition off the rear (west) elevation. The house rests on a brick pier foundation that has been infilled with brick. Aluminum siding clads the exterior and the original, plain weatherboards are exposed where the aluminum siding has been removed. Composite shingles clad the jerkinhead roof. Three dormers with gable returns perforate the primary roof slope and one perforates the rear roof slope. Two exterior brick chimneys rise along the south elevation, one of which has been capped.

The front porch, supported by plain square posts, features a central gable with decorative knee braces. The porch has lost its brackets and frieze. The primary elevation measures three bays wide. The original, double-leaf front door occupies the center bay, and features arched panels above square panels. An aluminum storm door protects the original door. The door surround features a divided light transom and divided light sidelights. The south bay extends out to the east, while the center and north bays are flush. Paired, two-over-two, wood-sash windows pierce the north and south bays. This fenestration pattern and materials are found throughout the house. All window and door openings feature prominent lintels.

A two-story bay window with five faces occupies the east bay of the north elevation. Narrow, one-over-one windows protected by metal storm windows pierce the bay window, and metal board-and-batten siding clads the exterior.

The rear (west) elevation is comprised of a one-story, hipped-roof addition on the south side; a gable-roof addition on the north side, and a later hipped-roof addition attached to the north elevation of the gable-roof addition. The windows throughout the rear additions echo the two-over-two, wood-sash pattern found on the main block.

**Garage – Circa 1940  
Contributing Building**

A one-story, front-gabled garage lies west of the Bonner-Cherry House and is accessible via Chapin Street. The frame building rests on a concrete block foundation, and asbestos siding covers the exterior. Composite shingles clad the roof. Double-leaf doors occupy the center bay of the primary (south) elevation, and a square, fixed-light window pierces the east bay.

**Pumphouse – Circa 1940  
Contributing Building**

A concrete block Pumphouse lies northwest of the Bonner-Cherry House. Composite shingles clad the roof and exposed rafter tails line the eaves.

**62. 375 North Fifth Street – House – Circa 1945  
Non-Contributing Building (Alterations)**

Built in 1945, the house at 375 North Fifth Street has been subject to alterations. It is anchored by a side-gabled main block with an engaged front porch and gabled projection on the primary (west) elevation and a shed roof addition off the south elevation. The house rests on a continuous brick foundation, and asbestos shingles cover the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof, and an interior brick chimney projects from the west roof slope.

The primary elevation measures four bays wide, with the porch supported by plain square posts with decorative brackets spanning the two north bays. The porch protects the paneled replacement front door. A set of original, six-over-six,

<sup>8</sup> Beaufort County Register of Deeds, Book 111, Page 138.

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double-hung, wood-sash windows pierce the south bay, but the remaining bays have one-over-one, double-hung vinyl replacement windows with six-over-six false muntins. Fixed, louvered shutters accent the windows. An original divided fanlight pierces the front gable peak of the gabled projection.

**63. 403 North Fifth Street – William T. and Minnie E. Hudnell House – Circa 1900  
Non-Contributing Building (Integrity)**

The circa-1900 house at 403 North Fifth Street is a deteriorated two-story house with a two-story wing on the north elevation and a one-story ell off the rear (west) elevation. Built for William T. and Minnie E. Hudnell, the lot is heavily overgrown, and the house is vacant. Vegetation obscures the foundation materials. The original plain weatherboards sheath the exterior. Metal covers the roof. A wraparound porch extends across the primary (east) elevation and onto the north and south elevations. The house has a side hall plan and a paneled front door protected by a wood screen door. The original six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash windows remain in the second story of the primary elevation.

**64. 441 North Fifth Street – William A. Thompson Jr. and Sallie Carr Thompson House – Circa 1920  
Contributing Building**

Built around 1920 for William A. Thompson Jr. and Sallie Carr Thompson, the two-story frame, Colonial Revival-style house at 441 North Fifth Street stands on a spacious, overgrown lot. The house features a rectangular form with a hipped-roof front porch and a port cochere on the south elevation. The overgrown foundation plantings obscure the foundation, but at least one brick pier is visible. Aluminum siding clads the exterior and composite shingles cover the hipped roof. Two interior brick chimneys project from the north and south roof slopes.

The primary elevation measures three bays wide. Original square posts spanned by a simple, square balustrade support the porch, which is accessible by a flight of wood steps. The replacement, double-leaf door occupies the center bay and has an intact transom. Original, tripartite windows composed of eight-over-one flanked by four-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows are found throughout the house. The south elevation features a porte cochere, which is supported by square posts atop brick piers.

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-6010<sup>9</sup>*

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-6017*

**65. 550 North Fifth Street – Garage – 1972  
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

Built in 1972, the metal frame building at 550 North Fifth Street is a tall, one-story garage. It rests on a concrete slab foundation and corrugated metal covers the exterior and the low-pitched, front-gabled roof. A modern, roll-up garage door pierces the primary (west) elevation.

**66. 590 North Fifth Street – Aurora Jail – 1939  
Contributing Building**

The rectangular, Colonial Revival-style, hipped-roof Aurora Jail was built by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1939. Constructed of brick laid in a common bond, the building features decorative brickwork in the form of a water table, an arched surround for the front door, and a denticulated cornice. A metal roof covers the building, and two interior brick chimneys project from the north and east roof slopes. The primary (west) elevation measures three bays wide, with the

<sup>9</sup> This parcel was previously occupied by the Rupert Bonner House, which was demolished around 2020.

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front door centered on the façade and obscured by a metal storm door. The flanking bays are pierced by original eight-over-eight, double-hung, wood-sash windows. The north and south elevations are each four bays wide with two of the original eight-over-eight, double-hung, wood-sash windows in the west bays, and two original, multi-light, metal-sash windows in the east bays. Two of these multi-light, metal-sash windows appear on the rear (east) elevation.

According to the survey file for the Aurora Jail, the original double jail cell and magistrate's office remain intact on the interior.<sup>10</sup>

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-4381<sup>11</sup>*

**North Sixth Street**

**67. 107 North Sixth Street – Jack and Willie C. McWilliams House – Circa 1935  
Contributing Building**

The circa-1935, one-and-one-half-story dwelling at 107 North Sixth Street is a Period Revival Cottage built for Jack and Willie C. McWilliams. A side-gabled main block anchors the dwelling and features a front gable bay on the primary (west) elevation, a façade chimney, a north wing, a gabled projection on the south elevation, and a shed roof addition on the rear (east) elevation. The exterior is clad with brick laid in a running bond, and composite shingles cover the roof. An exterior brick chimney rises along the north elevation, and two additional chimneys rise from the east roof slope.

The primary elevation measures four bays wide. The original, arched and recessed front door occupies the south-central bay and is protected by a shed roof extension. A brick landing with a semi-circular set of brick steps provides access to the door. Three one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl replacement windows with six-over-six false muntins pierce the front gable projection and represent the standard sash pattern and material found throughout the house. An original, six-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash window perforates the north bay, and original multi-light, wood casement windows are situated in the south bay.

The north wing has an additional original entry door on the primary elevation composed of six lights over panels, protected by a storm door, and flanked by original, six-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows.

**Garage – Circa 1950  
Contributing Building**

A two-story, two-bay concrete block garage lies behind the house to the east. The primary (west) elevation is clad with asbestos shingles at the ground level and rolled asphalt shingles on the second story. The south bay features an original paneled roll-up garage door. The center bay of the second story has a single-leaf door opening.

**68. 310 North Sixth Street – House – 1946  
Contributing Building**

The one-and-one-half-story house at 310 North Sixth Street stands as an example of a front-gabled bungalow with Craftsman-style details. The main block of the house has a rectangular footprint with a gabled addition on the south elevation, a projection on the north elevation, and shed-roof dormers on the north and south roof slopes. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof. Two interior chimneys project from the roof: one

<sup>10</sup> Aurora Jail (BF1009) Survey File. On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>11</sup> The circa-1900 house that occupied the site was demolished prior to 2008.

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on the main block's south roof slope and the other from the apex of the gabled addition on the south elevation. Exposed rafter tails line the eaves, and decorative knee braces adorn the front gable.

The primary (west) elevation measures three bays wide. An entry portico supported by tapered square posts surmounted by a flat roof with a square railing occupies the center bay. A set of concrete steps enables porch access. The entry portico protects the original glazed and paneled front door. Original, paired, four-over-one, wood-sash windows pierce the flanking bays. These windows can be found throughout the house.

**69. 414 North Sixth Street – J. G. Rutledge Jr. and Junie N. Rutledge House – 1940  
Contributing Building**

Built for J. G. Rutledge Jr. and Junie N. Rutledge in 1940, the Minimal Traditional-style house at 414 North Sixth Street is a one-and-one-half-story building composed of a side-gabled, rectangular form with gabled additions off the north elevation and rear (east) elevations. Vinyl siding clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof. Two gabled dormers, with original six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash windows, project from the west slope of the roof.

The asymmetrical, four-bay primary (west) elevation features a gabled entry stoop supported by thin fluted columns. The stoop protects the front door, which is composed of three lights over two vertical panels and is protected by a vinyl storm door. Original six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash windows pierce the remaining three bays. The original windows are found throughout the house. The gabled north wing is clad in T1-11 siding and a modern, one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl sash window pierces the west elevation. An additional single-leaf door pierces the north elevation of the north addition and is flanked by the same vinyl-sash windows. The rear elevation includes an additional entry door protected by a vinyl screen door and is accessed by a flight of concrete steps. To the north of the door is a three-light, wood-sash window.

**Garage – Circa 1945  
Contributing Building**

An elongated, one-bay garage lies to the east behind the house. It rests on a concrete block foundation, and vinyl siding clads the exterior. Metal covers the roof. A modern, paneled garage door occupies the south elevation, oriented towards Pearl Street. A five-paneled, wood door and a six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash window pierce the west elevation.

**70. 415 North Sixth Street – Charles G. and Jessie Midyette House – Circa 1900  
Contributing Building**

The Queen Anne-style house at 415 North Sixth Street was built around 1900 for Charles G. and Jessie Midyette. The two-story frame house has a complex massing typical of the Queen Anne style. The house is anchored by a rectangular main block with two-story gabled projections on the primary (east) and rear (west) elevations. A one-story ell projects from the rear elevation of the main block, with a shed-roof addition attached to its rear elevation and additional shed-roof addition on the south bay of the main block's rear elevation. The house rests on a brick pier foundation. The original weatherboards clad the exterior, and diamond shingles sheath the gables throughout the house. A metal roof covers the house. Two interior brick chimneys project from the roof, as does a gabled dormer on the east roof slope of the main block. Both the front gable and the gabled dormer have closed gables with a heavy cornice and a finial, and the side gables feature cornice returns.

The expansive one-story wraparound porch dominates the primary elevation. The hipped-roof porch features two front gables with finials and is supported by Tuscan columns surmounted by a plain frieze. The balustrade has been removed. The south bay of the primary elevation features a cutaway bay window within the front gable projection. The single-leaf front door is set back into the central bay of the house. The windows throughout the house are primarily one-over-one,

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double-hung, wood-sash replacement, found both in pairs and as single units. Some original two-over-two, double-hung, wood-sash windows remain, particularly on the second story of the main block and the rear projection. The rear ell and rear shed-roof addition feature four-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows.

**71. 429 North Sixth Street – House – Circa 1915  
Non-Contributing Building (Alterations)**

Built around 1915, the one-story frame dwelling at 429 North Sixth Street has a complicated roofline due to additions on the south and rear (west) elevation. The dwelling is anchored by the original gable-and-wing form. A gabled rear addition was added between 1938 and 1958, and a shed-roof carport was added to the dwelling's south elevation before 1993. The house rests on a continuous brick foundation, and plain weatherboards clad the exterior. Standing seam metal covers all roof sections.

The hipped-roof porch defines the primary (east) elevation. Square replacement posts spanned by a square balustrade support the porch. The single-leaf entry door is set back into the porch and obscured by a vinyl storm door. A divided sidelight flanks the south side of the door. The house's visible windows are the original, two-over-two, double-hung, wood sashes. The south elevation has a shed-roof carport supported by plain square posts. The carport covers an additional single-leaf entry door.

**72. 434 North Sixth Street – Tut and Loma Bonner House – 1933  
Contributing Building**

The Tut and Loma Bonner House, built in 1933, is a one-story dwelling anchored by a side-gabled main block with a gabled entry porch on the primary (west) elevation, and gabled wings with additions on the north, south, and rear (east) elevations. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof. Exposed rafter tails line the eaves, and a brick chimney projects from the west slope of the roof.

The replacement front door occupies the center bay of the three-bay primary elevation. The gabled entry porch, supported by fluted columns and sided with shingles, protects the door. Paired, one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl replacement windows, which are found throughout the house, pierce the flanking bays.

The north elevation has a shed-roof addition on the west side and a gabled addition on the east side. Both elements are clad with wood shingles. And a one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl replacement window pierces the west elevation of the shed-roof addition. The north elevation includes a gabled wing on the east side and an enclosed porch on the west side. The enclosed porch features a cluster of three square posts at the corners and has decorative knee braces in the eaves. A set of three one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl-sash windows pierces the west elevation. The wing is clad with brick laid in a running bond, while the enclosed porch is clad with wood shingles. The rear addition is not visible from the right-of-way.

**Shed – Circa 1990**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A front-gabled shed lies directly east of the house. The frame building rests on a raised foundation enclosed by wood lattice, and the exterior is clad with plywood and weatherboards. Asphalt shingles cover the roof. A two-bay, shed-roof porch spans the primary (west) elevation. A single-leaf door pierces the south bay, and a paneled garage door perforates the north bay.

**Garage – Circa 1965**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

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A two-bay, front-gable garage lies east of the house. The frame building has a plywood exterior, and metal covers the roof. Exposed rafter tails and decorative knee braces adorn the eaves. A set of double-leaf doors and a single-leaf door enable access to the building on the west elevation.

**Shed – Circa 1975**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A front-gabled, frame shed lies east of the garage. Plain weatherboards clad the exterior and asphalt shingles cover the roof. The primary (west) elevation is pierced by a single bay door clad with diagonal wood weatherboards.

**Shed – Circa 1990**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A gambrel-roofed shed lies east of the house. The frame building is clad with weatherboards and asphalt shingles cover the roof. A single leaf door pierces the primary (west) elevation.

**Carport – Circa 1990**

**Non-Contributing Structure (Age)**

An open, wood-frame carport lies north of the gambrel-roof shed. The carport is capped by an asphalt shingle-clad, front-gabled roof and supported by plain square posts.

**73. 465 North Sixth Street – Max F. and Dorothy Thompson House – 1928  
Contributing Building**

The 1928 Max F. and Dorothy Thompson House is a one-and-one-half-story, frame dwelling with a cross-gable plan and shed-roof porch that extends across the façade and onto the north elevation to form a carport. Part of the porch on the south elevation is enclosed with vinyl siding. The rear elevation has a gabled projection. The house rests on a continuous brick foundation, and brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior. Composite shingles cover all the roof sections, including the front gable with a sloping eave and the shed-roof dormers on the east and south roof slopes. An interior brick chimney rises from the south roof slope of the front cross gable.

The primary (east) elevation measures four bays wide and is protected by the porch, which is supported by replacement posts and a square balustrade. A set of concrete steps with a metal replacement railing provides access to the porch. The front door occupies the north-central bay and is obscured by an aluminum storm door. Original paired, four-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows perforate the north- and south-central bays. The north bay features a double-leaf glazed and paneled door with a transom that leads into a sunroom. The original windows can be found throughout the house, including a single unit in the front gable and a ribbon of three in the dormer.

**Garage – Circa 1940**

**Contributing Building**

A two-bay garage lies southwest of the Max F. and Dorothy Thompson House. The building is constructed of concrete block, and the front gable is clad with rolled asphalt shingles. Metal covers the roof. Original wood-paneled garage doors occupy the two bays on the primary (east) elevation.

**Shed – Circa 1940**

**Contributing Building**

A small brick shed lies northwest of the dwelling. The exterior is clad with brick laid in a running bond, and the building is capped by an asphalt shingle-clad, front-gabled roof with exposed rafter tails.

**74. 493 North Sixth Street – House – 1973**

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**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

The building at 493 North Sixth Street is a linear Ranch-style house that was built in 1973. The house has a rectangular footprint with an engaged carport at the north end. Brick laid in a running bond clads the exterior, and vinyl drop siding encloses the carport. Original drop siding clads the gable ends, and modern metal covers the side-gabled roof. An interior brick chimney projects from the west roof slope.

A circa-2015 shed-roof porch, supported by plain square posts spanned by a square balustrade spans the entry and north bays. A storm door obscures the front door. The windows throughout the house are the original, two-over-two, double-hung, horizontal wood sashes. A modern, double-leaf door pierces the center of the enclosed carport.

*Vacant Lot – PIN 6557-93-2315<sup>12</sup>*

**North Seventh Street**

**75. 424 North Seventh Street – House – 1956  
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

The house at 424 North Seventh Street is a one-story, Ranch-style dwelling with an elongated form built in 1956. The house is anchored by a side-gabled main block with a front-gabled projection on the primary (west) elevation and garage wing connected by a short hyphen off the south elevation. A shed-roof addition projects from the rear (east) elevation of the hyphen. The house rests on a continuous brick foundation, and vinyl siding clads the exterior. Composite shingles cover the roof, and the gable ends feature cornice returns while the eaves are nearly flush with the exterior walls. An interior brick chimney projects from the apex of the roof.

The primary elevation of the main block measures four bays wide. The original front door with three horizontal lights occupies the north-central bay. A tripartite picture window with flanking sashes occupies the south-central bay, which pierces the front-gabled section. The windows throughout the house are one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl replacements. The hyphen towards the south end of the house has an original, glazed and paneled door, and the garage includes two, modern roll-up garage doors.

**76. 454 North Seventh Street – House – 1961  
Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

The building at 454 North Seventh Street is a compact, one-story house that was built in 1961. The house rests on a continuous brick foundation, and vinyl drop siding clads the exterior. Modern metal covers the side-gabled roof. The primary (west) elevation measures three bays wide, with the entry stoop situated in the center bay. The replacement front door occupies the center bay, and the flanking bays are pierced by paired, one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl replacement windows with six-over-six false muntins, which can be found throughout the house.

**77. 588 North Seventh Street – Cuthrell House – Circa 1945  
Non-Contributing Building (Alterations)**

The Cuthrell House at 588 North Sixth Street was built around 1945. The one-story frame dwelling is composed of a side-gabled main block with a gabled addition off the north end. An additional, shed-roof addition projects from the east elevation of the gabled addition. An enclosed porch spans the primary (west) elevation and compromises the dwelling's original side-gable form. The house rests on a continuous brick foundation. Asbestos siding covers the main block and

<sup>12</sup> The circa-1919 Wilbur Miller House that occupied the parcel was demolished around 2012.

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north wing, and vinyl siding encloses the porch. Composite shingles cover the roof. The roofline features cornice returns at the gable ends, and an interior brick chimney projects from the east slope of the roof.

The primary elevation has been heavily altered by the enclosure of the porch. The door to the porch is vinyl and the screens that line the west and south elevations of the porch obscure the front door. The windows are predominantly paired, one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl-sash replacement windows with six-over-six false muntins accented with fixed vinyl shutters. The exception to this is the paired, two-over-two, double-hung, horizontal wood-sash windows in the north wing.

**Garage – Circa 1975**

**Non-Contributing Building (Age)**

A single-bay garage with a front-gable main block and shed roof wing on the south elevation lies southeast of the Cuthrell House. T1-11 siding clads the exterior, and composite shingles cover the roof. A garage bay opening pierces the front-gabled section of the garage and a double-leaf door covered with T1-11 siding occupies the west elevation of the south wing.

**INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT**

Overall, the Aurora Historic District possesses integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The district encompasses the town's historic commercial, civic, and residential core, roughly bounded by Middle Street, Second Street, Pearl Street, Chapin Street, and Eighth Street. Although the district has experienced some loss of historic resources and infill construction on previously vacant lots, the relationships among the district's extant resources and infrastructure continue to illustrate Aurora's development as a regional commercial hub. The district's gridded street pattern, established by W. H. Cunningham in the mid-nineteenth century and expanded by surveyors R. T. and R. R. Bonner at the time of the town's incorporation in 1880, remains intact. Original building setbacks and lot sizes and configurations are largely unchanged, preserving the historic spatial relationships between buildings and the street. Aurora's setting retains its historic character due to the district's remote location on the southern Beaufort County peninsula and the community's relationship with South Creek to the east, both of which were central to Aurora's development as a commercial center.

Resources within the Aurora Historic District retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Seventy-eight resources contribute to its significance. The commercial corridor along Main Street retains a cohesive collection of one- and two-story brick and concrete block commercial buildings that together convey the character of a thriving small town commercial district at its peak. Many retain their historic massing, rooflines, corbelled cornices, recessed sign panels, and decorative brickwork, which together convey the architectural character and economic prosperity of Aurora during its Period of Significance. While some storefronts have been modified through the installation of replacement doors, infilled transoms, and altered fenestration at ground level, the upper stories of the commercial buildings generally retain their original window openings, cast stone sills, and brick jack arches. These upper-story features, largely unchanged from their historic configuration, provide sufficient integrity to communicate the buildings' historic and architectural significance even where ground-floor alterations have occurred.

Residential and civic resources within the district similarly retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic associations. Most contributing houses retain their historic forms, massing, rooflines, and distinctive architectural details such as original porches, decorative woodwork, and historic fenestration patterns. While a number of houses have received later siding materials, such as aluminum, vinyl, and asbestos shingles, and some have replacement siding and doors, these alterations are generally reversible and do not obscure the overall historic massing or form of the buildings. Importantly, many contributing houses retain original windows, doors, and exterior cladding materials that directly reflect the craftsmanship and materials of their period of construction. Notable examples of high-integrity residential resources include the circa-1900 Charles G. and Jessie Midyette Houses at 415 North Sixth Street (#70), which retains its original

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weatherboards, diamond shingles, wraparound porch, and Tuscan columns; the 1887 Alex and Lona Hudnell House at 577 Main Street (#26), which retains its original front door and wood-sash windows; and the 1921 Mabel Baucom House at 760 Main Street (#34), which retains its original weatherboards and four-over-one wood-sash windows. Civic resources, including the Aurora Jail and the former Town Hall and Police Station, retain a high degree of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, with the Aurora Jail retaining not only its intact exterior but also its original double jail cell and magistrate's office on the interior. Collectively, the Aurora Historic District retains sufficient integrity to convey its historical significance as a regional commercial hub for southern Beaufort County and its architectural significance as a cohesive collection of commercial, civic, and residential resources representing nearly a century of development.

**STATEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL**

(TBD by OSA)

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** N/A

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

Circa 1850–1950

**Significant Dates**

1880, 1908, 1940

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Congleton, Ira C., Architect

Weisiger, Thomas, Builder

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

**SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Aurora Historic District is significant under National Register Criterion A at the local level in the area of Commerce for its role as the primary commercial hub for the rural communities of southern Beaufort County from its establishment in the 1860s through the mid-twentieth century. The area that would become Aurora was first occupied by Native Americans and later settled in the early nineteenth century by free Black families who named their community Betty Town. Around 1856, William H. Cunningham arrived in southeastern Beaufort County, forced the free Black population from the area,

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purchased the land that would become Aurora, and laid out a gridded pattern of streets on land prized for its fertile soils and proximity to navigable waterways. Aurora's early growth was slow but deliberate. Cunningham actively recruited settlers through newspaper advertisements promoting the area's agricultural potential and natural resources, and by 1872, a small but growing community of farmers, merchants, and professionals had established themselves in the new town. Aurora's strategic location along South Creek, which provided access to the Pamlico River and, ultimately, to ports along the eastern seaboard, gave it a commercial advantage over other communities on the peninsula. This waterborne commerce, combined with the fertile soils of Richland Township that made the area one of the state's top potato-producing regions, drew residents and businesses to Aurora and enabled the town to develop from a small settlement into a community with general stores, specialty shops, hotels, professional services, and civic institutions within just two decades of its founding.

In the late nineteenth century, townspeople and local farmers came to downtown Aurora for its general stores, groceries, the post office, professional services, and civic activities. With the county seat at Washington lying approximately 20 miles to the northwest, residents of southern Beaufort County had difficulty accessing larger markets due to poor roads and the difficulty and expense of navigating South Creek and the Pamlico River. Specialty stores such as millineries, harness shops, blacksmiths, and barbers also served the community, and hotels accommodated businessmen and out of town guests. Through the turn of the twentieth century, Aurora was a crucial hub for residents across the peninsula, which was difficult to access and dotted by swamps, savannahs, and pocosins that severely hindered transportation to larger metropolitan centers like New Bern, Washington, and Beaufort. The arrival of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad in 1908 spurred a development boom in the growing community. Although numerous other nearby stations, including Royal, Edward, and Blounts Creek, were established along the line, none grew to the density or prominence of Aurora. Rather than displacing Aurora's commercial role, the railroad reinforced and expanded it, solidifying the town's position as the primary regional center for southern Beaufort County.

As the twentieth century progressed, Aurora's population fluctuated. Changes in agricultural practices and transportation routes diminished Aurora's role as a commercial hub for residents of southern Beaufort County. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, residents and town officials hoped that the discovery of phosphate, a rock mined primarily for use in fertilizer production, would breathe life back into Aurora's economy and community. The anticipated growth from phosphate mining did not materialize, and Aurora's population continued to decline throughout the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century.

The Aurora Historic District is significant under Criterion C at the local level in the area of Architecture for its distinctive collection of commercial, religious, civic, and residential buildings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The district's extant resources reflect three broad periods of development, each represented by a distinct layer of the built environment. The earliest period, from roughly 1850 to 1880, is represented by a small number of vernacular dwellings, including the circa-1850 Henry and Susan Sugg Harding House and the circa-1870 Bonner-Cherry House, which predate the town's formal incorporation and reflect the modest character of Aurora's early settlement.

The second and most significant period of development, from 1880 to 1920, saw Aurora grow into a substantial commercial center. The replacement of early frame commercial buildings with brick structures along Main Street, beginning with the 1886 B. H. Thompson Store, reflects the town's growing economic prosperity. The high-style residences constructed during this period, including the circa-1900 Queen Anne-style Charles G. and Jessie Midyette House and the circa-1900 Shingle-style house at 610 Main Street, speak to the wealth generated by Aurora's agricultural economy and its emergence as a regional hub. The arrival of the railroad in 1908 accelerated this development, with the construction of the Cherry Hotel at 499 Main Street and the Aurora Hardware Company Building at 498 Main Street, marking the peak of Aurora's commercial building activity.

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The third period, from roughly 1920 to 1950, reflects the town's gradual economic contraction. New construction during this period shifted toward more modest building types, including bungalows, Minimal Traditional dwellings, and utilitarian concrete block commercial buildings, and reflects both the national economic pressures of the Depression era and the declining agricultural economy that Aurora navigated through the mid-twentieth century. Together, these three layers of development create a cohesive and legible record of Aurora's rise and decline as a regional commercial center, making the district a distinguishable entity whose buildings collectively convey the town's history even where individual resources may lack distinction.

The Aurora Historic District's Period of Significance begins circa 1850, with the construction of the Henry and Susan Sugg Harding House, the earliest surviving building within the district, and ends in 1950 to capture the impact of the loss of the railroad and to illustrate the decline in both new construction and updates to existing buildings after that time.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The following historical narrative documents the development of Aurora from its origins as a free Black settlement through its emergence as the dominant commercial hub for southern Beaufort County's isolated rural peninsula. The history of Aurora's growth, rooted in its strategic access to navigable waterways, fertile agricultural lands, and a concentrated network of commercial and civic institutions, directly supports the district's eligibility under Criterion A in the area of Commerce. The built environment of the Aurora Historic District is the physical record of this history, representing nearly a century of commercial, civic, and residential development in a community that served as the market center for residents across a geographically isolated region of eastern North Carolina.

**Early Aurora Area History**

Located in southern Beaufort County in the heart of Richland Township, Aurora lies on the west bank of South Creek, a tributary of the Pamlico River to the north. The county seat of Washington and the town of Chocowinity lie approximately 25 miles northwest of Aurora. NC 33 terminates 15 miles east of Aurora at the Intracoastal Waterway, which divides mainland Beaufort County from Goose Creek Island. Aurora's proximity to navigable waterways has played a vital role throughout its history, as has the abundance of natural resources such as fertile black soil, hard and softwood forests, and underground phosphate deposits. These geographic and natural conditions, particularly the access to South Creek and the Pamlico River, established the foundation for Aurora's eventual emergence as the commercial center of southern Beaufort County.

The area that became Aurora was first inhabited by Pamlico, or Pomouik, Native Americans. Following the Tuscarora War, the Pamlico were slaughtered as part of a treaty between the Tuscarora tribe and British colonists who still saw the tribe as dangerous.<sup>13</sup> Any surviving Pamlico tribe members were likely enslaved by or integrated into the Tuscarora tribe.<sup>14</sup>

As early as the late eighteenth century, free Black families began settling along South Creek in southeastern Beaufort County, and established a community that became known as Betty Town, the precursor to present-day Aurora.<sup>15</sup> The community took its name from Betty Hodge, whose husband Isaiah Hodge owned at least 300 acres of land.<sup>16</sup> The precise

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<sup>13</sup> Ruth Y. Wetmore, "Pamlico Indians," in *Encyclopedia of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Wetmore, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> William S. Powell, *North Carolina Gazetteer: A Dictionary of Tarheel Places* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968),

16.

<sup>16</sup> Leesa Jones, "A town known by many names," *Washington Daily News*, August 7, 2023.

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boundaries of Betty Town are unclear from the written record. The community may have been confined to the Hodge family's landholdings, or it may have encompassed a broader area that local people collectively referred to as Betty Town.

Though relatively little research has been conducted on the Betty Town community, census records offer insight into the free Black community in Beaufort County and South Creek. Isaiah Hodge appears in the 1810 U.S. Census as the head of a Beaufort County household of 10 free "colored people" and one enslaved person.<sup>17</sup> His neighbors included other free Black families headed by Edy Hodge, Peter Hagen, James Bloomfield, William McKey, and Cullen Hudnell.<sup>18</sup>

The 1830 census is the first to divide the county into sections, which provides a clearer picture of communities like Betty Town.<sup>19</sup> Hodge appears in the 1830 U.S. Census in the South Creek section of Beaufort County with a household of 10 people.<sup>20</sup> His free Black neighbors included Cullen Hudnell, William Hill, Thos. Bowen, Jno. Moore, Jno. Blango, and Mary Kuse.<sup>21</sup> In total, 118 free Black residents were living in South Creek at the time of the census.<sup>22</sup> By the 1840 U.S. Census, that number had declined slightly to 104 free Black residents in South Creek.<sup>23</sup> Although no one with the name of Isaiah Hodge appears in the 1840 census, a household headed by Isaac Hodge included 15 individuals, and other familiar surnames such as Moore and Hudnell are also present.<sup>24</sup>

The 1850 U.S. Census documents 178 free Black residents in the township, forming a well-established community with multiple extended households, particularly the Moore, Hodge, and Hudnell families, living in close proximity to one another.<sup>25</sup> Most adult men were listed as laborers, though some, including Richard Moore, Jordan Moore, George Hagins, and Isaiah Hodge, owned real estate valued between \$90 and \$300.<sup>26</sup> This suggests a kin-based settlement pattern marked by economic independence and social cohesion. By 1860, the free Black population of South Creek had grown to 232 individuals with many bearing the same surnames as in 1850, including Moore, Hudnell, Hodge, Godett, and Simpson.<sup>27</sup> While many worked as laborers or farmers, a number held property, including William Moore (age 23) who owned \$400 in real estate and \$300 in personal estate, and Isaac Simpson (age 75) who held \$1,500 in real estate.<sup>28</sup> Altogether, the census records from 1810 to 1860 reveal a growing free Black community along South Creek, which was distinguished by intergenerational family networks, land ownership, and a degree of economic self-sufficiency.

The only building that survives from this early period of Aurora's development, and the only one believed to predate William Henry Cunningham's arrival, is the Henry and Susan Sugg Harding House at 229 Main Street (#2, Photo 11). Traditionally, Henry and Susan Sugg Harding, a white couple, have been identified as the original owners. However, based on the estimated construction date of 1850, this seems unlikely, as the couple did not marry until 1867.<sup>29</sup> It is more plausible that the property previously belonged to Susan Sugg Harding's parents, Benjamin Hardy Sugg and Nancy

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1810.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1810.

<sup>19</sup> Townships were not established in North Carolina until the adoption of the North Carolina Constitution of 1868.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1830. A search through the 1820 U.S. Census did not return any conclusive results for Isaiah Hodge, and the 1840 U.S.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1830.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1830.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1840.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1840.

<sup>25</sup> The 1850 census is the first to list all household members, including their names, ages, and occupations; however, it does not identify relationships within the household. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1850.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1850.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1860.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1860. Further research into the 1870 and subsequent censuses, will and probate files, land deeds, Freedmen's Bureau papers, and court records is likely to yield additional insights into the Black community in and around present-day Aurora before and after the Civil War.

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1900.

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Cunningham. Another possibility is that the house originally belonged to a free Black family, although deeds and other historical records have not confirmed the home's original ownership. No maps from the Betty Town era have survived, making it more difficult to determine the property's early history and original owners with certainty. That this building survives as the only pre-Cunningham resource in the district underscores both the thoroughness of Betty Town's destruction and the significance of the site as the foundation upon which Aurora's was built.

**Establishment of Aurora, 1860–1880**

The establishment of Aurora in the late 1850s and its early growth through 1880 set the stage for the town's emergence as the primary commercial center of southern Beaufort County. Although Aurora's first two decades were marked by slow growth and geographic isolation, the town's strategic location along South Creek and Cunningham's active recruitment efforts laid the foundation for a commercial hub that would serve the peninsula's rural communities for nearly a century.

In 1856, Methodist clergyman Reverend William Henry (W. H.) Cunningham came to Beaufort County from Lenoir County, likely recruiting students for his school, the Lenoir Institute.<sup>30</sup> During his visit, Cunningham became aware of the valuable lands and natural resources in southern Beaufort County along the west side of South Creek, then known as South Dividing Creek. Around the same time, Isaiah Hodge passed away, likely between 1857 and 1858.<sup>31</sup> The exact sequence of events that followed is difficult to reconstruct from surviving records, and the accounts that do exist are fragmentary and sometimes contradictory. However, what is clear is that the transfer of Betty Town's land from the Hodge family to Cunningham involved foul play.

Isaiah Respass, a prosperous Beaufort County merchant, landowner, and mayor of Washington, gained legal control of the Hodge family's lands by calling in debts that had accumulated during Isaiah Hodge's final years.<sup>32</sup> Respass sold the lands at auction, and Cunningham purchased them in 1859. Altogether, Cunningham came to own over 1,000 acres on South Creek, including the land that had comprised Betty Town.<sup>33</sup> Cunningham began advertising his new town, which he called Aurora, in newspapers across North Carolina, though a contemporary visitor who investigated his claims found little more than ruins and pine saplings where a thriving community was supposed to have stood.<sup>34</sup> Secondary sources indicate that Cunningham laid out the town's gridded pattern of streets following the purchase, though no primary sources have been found to confirm this.<sup>35</sup>

The only known contemporary account of Betty Town's demise is an anonymous letter published in the *North Carolina Times* on January 25, 1860. No accounts written from the perspective of Betty Town's residents have been found to date. The letter's author, writing under the name "John Veritas," had traveled to South Creek after reading Cunningham's glowing advertisements and found the area largely deserted. He reported that local residents still called the area Betty

<sup>30</sup> Circa Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, 2009, 6.4; Jayne Stanley Silliman, "The Story of Old Aurora," Collection, Articles on Aurora, Hazel W. Guilford Memorial Library, Aurora, NC. Cunningham has also been found in sources as Cunniggim. For the sake of clarity and consistency throughout the report, the more common spelling of Cunningham is used.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1850; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1860; Beaufort County Register of Deeds, Book 32, Pages 264 and 265.

<sup>32</sup> David Cecelski, "Remembering Betty Town," *davidcecelski.com*, July 14, 2025, <https://davidcecelski.com/2025/07/14/remembering-betty-town/>.

<sup>33</sup> Beaufort County Register of Deeds, Book 32, Pages 264 and 265; Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File. On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>34</sup> John Veritas [pseud.], letter to the editor, *North Carolina Times* (Washington, North Carolina), January 25, 1860.

<sup>35</sup> Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File. These original plans for Aurora are not known to exist today, though it is suggested that later surveyors, R. T. Bonner and R. R. Bonner, followed Cunningham's original plans.

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Town and had little knowledge of any town called Aurora.<sup>36</sup> His account describes how, after Cunningham claimed the land, Betty Hodge and her family refused to leave. Betty Hodge sent her son to Washington to consult an attorney who advised them to hold their ground.<sup>37</sup> According to Veritas, Cunningham responded by hiring a man to destroy the chimneys of Betty Hodge's house, and when that failed to get her to leave, Cunningham and a group of "vigilantes" attacked the home, pulling down portions of the structure and tearing off the roof.<sup>38</sup> Betty Hodge was forced to flee her home, and ran to her son's home nearby. As Veritas described it, the group "inhumanly beat him [Betty Hodge's son] and his wife, as a punishment for consulting Mr. Warren [the attorney], when about to be robbed of his land."<sup>39</sup> Veritas reported that by the time of his visit, the law had intervened and Betty Hodge had been restored to her property. However, later accounts and census records from 1860 indicate that the family was no longer present on South Creek by the time of the enumeration, suggesting that whatever legal protection was afforded to Betty Hodge and her family was short-lived.

Stripped of legal rights that had been curtailed by state legislation in the 1830s, including the right to testify against white citizens in court, the community had no meaningful legal recourse. Most of Betty Town's residents ultimately emigrated to Ohio, and by the time of the 1860 census, the community had all but vanished.<sup>40</sup> In 1885, a few heirs of Isaiah Hodge, then living in Ohio, hired attorney E. S. Simmons to file suit against the citizens of Aurora. The case reportedly fell through when an unrecorded deed from Isaiah Hodge to Isaiah Respass was discovered.<sup>41</sup> Cunningham subsequently renamed the site Aurora.

Despite Cunningham's ambitions, Aurora's early growth was slow. W. H. Cunningham and Reverend John W. Litchfield founded Aurora United Methodist Church in 1860.<sup>42</sup> The congregation first built a frame chapel, which has since been demolished. Aurora United Methodist Church Cemetery lies south of the church and contains roughly a dozen marked burials, the earliest of which dates to 1871. To attract settlers to his new town, Cunningham actively advertised Aurora in newspapers across North Carolina, promoting the area's fertile lands, natural resources, and commercial potential. Business directories for the late 1860s suggest that most commercial activity in Beaufort County was concentrated in Washington. The only known commercial enterprises near Aurora at that time were two steam-powered grist mills and sawmills, which demonstrate the area's agricultural character. One was operated by the Springer brothers roughly six miles to the northeast in the community of South Creek, while the other was operated by a man named Willard in the non-extant community of Durham's Creek, roughly six miles to the northwest. Ruff & Brothers operated a water-powered grist and sawmill in the community of Blounts Creek, roughly 10 miles northwest of Aurora. The nearest post offices were in South Creek and Blounts Creek.<sup>43</sup> The absence of commercial activity in Aurora itself during this period makes the town's subsequent rise all the more significant.

Aurora's strategic location along South Creek played a crucial role in its development. The confluence of the Pamlico and Pungo rivers northeast of Aurora forms the Pamlico Sound, which provided access to ports along the eastern seaboard. The Tar River forms the headwaters of the Pamlico River at Washington and was navigable inland to Greenville and Tarboro. Because of its location among these major bodies of water, South Creek served as a stopping place for both freight and passenger vessels, and many boats used Aurora as their home port. This waterborne traffic encouraged both settlement and commercial activity in the area, and Aurora's position near the confluence of these waterways established

<sup>36</sup> Veritas, letter to the editor, *North Carolina Times*, January 25, 1860.

<sup>37</sup> Veritas, letter to the editor, *North Carolina Times*, January 25, 1860.

<sup>38</sup> Veritas, letter to the editor, *North Carolina Times*, January 25, 1860.

<sup>39</sup> Veritas, letter to the editor, *North Carolina Times*, January 25, 1860.

<sup>40</sup> "The Past And Present History of Aurora, N.C.," *Washington Progress*, June 8, 1916.

<sup>41</sup> "The Past And Present History of Aurora, N.C." *Washington Progress*, June 8, 1916.

<sup>42</sup> The frame church was replaced with the present-day stone church around 1949. Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File; Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.5.

<sup>43</sup> Rev. Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory 1869* (Raleigh, NC: Branson & Jones, 1869), 18.

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the conditions that would allow it to emerge as the dominant commercial center of the Beaufort County peninsula, a role it would sustain for nearly a century.

By 1872, Cunningham's efforts at recruiting people to move to Aurora yielded modest results. One of the earliest references to Aurora is in the 1872 *North Carolina Business Directory*, which offers a glimpse into the early development of the town. From the outset, Aurora's economy was dominated by agriculture (corn), lumber (shingles), naval stores, and fish.<sup>44</sup> The business directory listed eight farmers in Aurora, including W. H. Cunningham who owned 1,500 acres valued at \$7,000 and S. T. Carrow with 657 acres worth \$4,870.<sup>45</sup> Although Aurora's 1872 population is not known for certain, the growing community was served by several businesses that included a grocery and liquor store and a general store.<sup>46</sup> The town also supported three physicians, while the remaining four doctors in Beaufort County all resided in Washington.<sup>47</sup> This concentration of medical professionals may indicate Aurora's rapid rise to prominence in the region, as it was the only community on the entire peninsula, an area of roughly 600 square miles, with any physicians at all. Three Methodist churches operated in Aurora: Durham's Creek, Aurora, and Campbell's Creek.<sup>48</sup> Aurora Academy, presided over by Sarah Hooker, wife of Methodist minister Rev. Dr. Erasmus Roscoe Hooker, was the town's only school.<sup>49</sup> Even at this early stage, Aurora was already functioning as the peninsula's primary provider of commercial, medical, educational, and religion.

The 1874 map of *Pamlico [sic] River, North Carolina* illustrates Aurora's isolation from the surrounding region (Figure 1). With the Gum Swamp and Bay City Pocosin spread across nearly 35,000 acres to the south and southeast, the 1,700-acre Beacham Savanna to the north and northwest, and a 3,000-acre swamp to the west, the small settlement of Aurora was tightly confined and cut off from the rest of the peninsula. Though published in 1874, the map provides an excellent illustration of Aurora based on surveys conducted between 1869 and 1873. The map shows the street layout, with present-day Main and Fifth streets, along with what appears to building locations and field under cultivation. This geographic isolation, rather than limiting Aurora's commercial significance, reinforced it. With no other substantial community within easy reach of the peninsula's residents, Aurora became the destination for commerce, community, and civic life.

The only extant building representing the 1870s is the Bonner-Cherry House at 207 North Fifth Street (#61, Photo 12). Likely constructed in the 1870s as an Italianate-style residence, the house was later modified and appears to have been converted into a hotel operated by the Cherry family, an early indication of Aurora's role as a destination for travelers and businesspeople from across the region.

<sup>44</sup> Rev. Levi Branson, *The North Carolina Business Directory* (Raleigh, NC: J. A. Jones, 1872), 28.

<sup>45</sup> Branson, *The North Carolina Business Directory*, 28.

<sup>46</sup> Branson, *The North Carolina Business Directory*, 30.

<sup>47</sup> Branson, *The North Carolina Business Directory*, 30.

<sup>48</sup> Branson, *The North Carolina Business Directory*, 28–30.

<sup>49</sup> Branson, *The North Carolina Business Directory*, 30. The location of Aurora Academy is unknown.

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**Figure 1:** Detail view of Aurora on the 1874 map of Pamlico River.<sup>50</sup>

**Aurora's Slow and Steady Growth, 1880–1907**

The period from 1880 to 1907 represents the critical phase of Aurora's history in which it transitioned from a small agricultural settlement into a regional commercial center. The town's formal incorporation in 1880, rapid population growth, and expanding commercial infrastructure during this period all demonstrate Aurora's emergence as the dominant market town for the southern Beaufort County peninsula, a role it achieved without a railroad connection and despite significant geographic isolation. The built environment that survives from this period, including the 1886 B. H. Thompson Store (#13) and the high-style residences constructed by Aurora's most prosperous merchants and landowners, are the physical expression of this commercial prosperity.

Aurora was officially incorporated on March 29, 1880.<sup>51</sup> Land surveyors R. T. and R. R. Bonner followed Cunningham's early gridded plan for the town and expanded upon it.<sup>52</sup> Census records from the same year show Aurora's total population

<sup>50</sup> U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, *Pamlico River, North Carolina* (Washington, DC: U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, 1874).

<sup>51</sup> Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.5.

<sup>52</sup> Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.5.

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of 81 people living in 19 households, including 60 white residents, 10 Black residents, and 11 residents identified as mixed-race.<sup>53</sup> The vast majority of Aurora's residents were involved in agriculture and held occupations such as farmer, farm laborer, blacksmith, and harness maker. T. P. Bonner served as the community's physician, August Eisle was a pattern maker, and John B. Whitehurst operated a sawmill.<sup>54</sup> Winnie Jarmin, a Black servant, worked for the W. H. Cunningham household.<sup>55</sup>

By the time of its formal incorporation in 1880, Aurora had begun to establish itself as a commercial and social hub for residents throughout southern Beaufort County. The town boasted a variety of civic, commercial, social, recreational, and religious organizations, making it a vital center for Richland Township. As a result, Aurora served nearby unincorporated communities such as Idalia, Small, and Harding, which lacked these amenities. The rapid expansion of Aurora's commercial, civic, and residential infrastructure over the following decades, despite the absence of a railroad connection, further demonstrated the town's ability to draw commerce and population from across the isolated southern Beaufort County peninsula, reinforcing its role as the region's primary market center well before the railroad's arrival in 1908.

In 1887, residents of Aurora and the surrounding peninsula, frustrated by their geographic isolation from the Beaufort County seat in Washington, advocated for the creation of a new county with Aurora as its center.<sup>56</sup> A newspaper article from February 1887 describes the efforts of Dr. A. B. Chapin, Major T. G. Sparrow, T. F. Mayhew, and J. B. Bonner to establish "Richlands County" to avoid having to ride 30 or 40 miles over "bad roads to transact a few minutes of business."<sup>57</sup> The proposal reflected a desire for more direct access to government services and infrastructure. Despite gaining some attention, the effort ultimately failed in February 1888, and the region remained part of Beaufort County.<sup>58</sup>

Census records, business directories, and newspapers from the time illustrate Aurora's increasingly diversified economy. Agriculture remained a major part of Aurora's economy during this period, with farmers growing cotton, rice, and corn. Due to the fine, sandy loam and high mineral content of the Richland Township's soils, potatoes became the most grown crop in the township, making the area one of the state's top potato-producing regions.<sup>59</sup> Between 1900 and 1910, North Carolina's potato production increased by 26 percent, due in part to the substantial number of potatoes harvested in Richland Township.<sup>60</sup> Aurora's role as the commercial hub for this agricultural bounty, providing farmers with access to general stores, specialty merchants, transportation links, and banking services, was central to its significance as a regional market center.

South Creek and other nearby waterways played a vital role in Aurora's economy, supporting both fishing and seafood processing and serving as conduits for the movement of crops and goods to larger markets. Aurora functioned as a modest port in its own right, though Washington served as the primary regional hub for trade and commerce. Around the turn of the twentieth century, several Aurora residents owned and operated vessels that traversed these waterways. Bryan Tripp Bonner owned the *Cobb* and the *Virginia Dare*, both two-masted schooners used for transporting goods and fishing.<sup>61</sup> The Litchfield family owned and operated the *Dependence*, which carried groceries and farm supplies between Aurora and Washington, as well as a tug called *Lola*.<sup>62</sup> Newspapers from the time list regular ferry schedules connecting Aurora to

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1880.

<sup>54</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1880.

<sup>55</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1880.

<sup>56</sup> "The County of Richlands," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), February 2, 1887.

<sup>57</sup> "The County of Richlands," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), February 2, 1887.

<sup>58</sup> "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), February 28, 1888.

<sup>59</sup> Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.6.

<sup>60</sup> Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.6.

<sup>61</sup> Silliman, "The Story of Old Aurora," Ursula Fogleman Loy and Pauline Worthy, *Washington and the Pamlico* (Washington, NC: Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 490.

<sup>62</sup> Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.8.

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Washington and Ocracoke, serving both passengers and cargo.<sup>63</sup> Among the vessels operating on these routes, the *Hatteras*, a passenger steamer, was one of the first to carry passengers between Aurora and Washington.<sup>64</sup> This network of waterborne commerce placed Aurora at the center of a regional trading system that connected the peninsula's farmers and residents to larger markets, a function that no other community on the southern Beaufort County peninsula was positioned to perform.

Despite the advantages of its water access, Aurora's relative isolation from larger markets hampered its economic and population growth. Water routes were subject to seasonal weather conditions, and the inefficiencies of indirect overland connections made travel slow and unpredictable. Overland routes were similarly hindered by limited infrastructure and wet conditions, especially during rainy weather. Without a reliable means of transporting goods and people, Aurora remained at a disadvantage compared to towns like Washington. Rumblings in newspapers from the 1880s suggested a railroad line might finally link Aurora to larger markets, fueling hopes for economic expansion, but it was not until 1907 that these aspirations materialized.

By 1884, the number of merchants and tradesmen in Aurora increased dramatically from two in 1872 to 11. They included John B. Bonner's general store, John W. Chapin's drug store, and a cattle dealer named Jolly Selby.<sup>65</sup> Newspaper articles also detail the variety of stores and commercial enterprises that opened in Aurora during this period. In 1885, William A. Harvey opened one of Aurora's first hotels in addition to the livery stable he operated.<sup>66</sup> In 1886, Sallie Ham Thompson opened a hotel and livery stable, which was built by her son, Benjamin H. Thompson.<sup>67</sup> William H. Gaskins built an ice house, likely located near the grocery store he operated.<sup>68</sup> Benjamin H. Thompson built several stores during this period, including the two-story brick building at 400 Main Street (#13), which now houses a portion of the Aurora Fossil Museum and stands as the oldest surviving commercial building in the district.<sup>69</sup> Mary Snell, along with a Mrs. Weisiger, opened a millinery.<sup>70</sup>

Aurora's growing population, agricultural prosperity, and access to South Creek's waterways created favorable conditions for manufacturing growth between 1890 and 1900. The town boasted a lumber plant, barrel factory, and cotton gin owned by the J. B. Whitehurst Company, enterprises that both supported and benefited from Aurora's agricultural economy.<sup>71</sup> William H. Gaskins continued his work as an ice dealer, and Dixon & Bonner and F. F. Cherry were tobacco dealers.<sup>72</sup> While no early maps of Aurora show the locations of these manufacturing enterprises, it is likely that they were situated east of Second Street along the banks of South Creek. To serve the growing population and businesses of the community, the

<sup>63</sup> "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), June 4, 1885; "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), August 23, 1885.

<sup>64</sup> "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), June 4, 1885; "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), August 23, 1885.

<sup>65</sup> Rev. Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory for 1884* (Raleigh, NC: Levi Branson, 1884), 132.

<sup>66</sup> "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), May 28, 1885.

<sup>67</sup> "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), October 19, 1886; "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), December 14, 1886.

<sup>68</sup> "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), July 14, 1885. Based on available information, it is believed that Gaskins' ice house and grocery store are non-extant.

<sup>69</sup> "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), January 26, 1886.

<sup>70</sup> "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), May 12, 1886. Newspapers also documented the activities of Black residents, though much more sparingly. In 1885, the Black citizens of Aurora formed their own fire company called Excelsior. A Black-owned business, operated by men named Donaldson, Ham, and Moore, opened in the same year, and sold "oysters, beef, ham, and cabbage." "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), May 28, 1885; "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), November 10, 1885.

<sup>71</sup> The News and Observer, *The North Carolina Yearbook 1902*, 83–84.

<sup>72</sup> The News and Observer, *The North Carolina Yearbook 1902*, 83–84.

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Bank of Aurora opened its doors in 1903, a significant milestone that further cemented Aurora's status as the financial and commercial center of the peninsula.<sup>73</sup>

The remarkable expansion and success of Aurora's formative years instilled in residents the hope for future prosperity. As one newspaper author wrote in 1887, "We have a banker and broker, a jeweler and a milliner, a coach shop and two blacksmiths and several carpenters. We are coming to the front."<sup>74</sup> By 1890, Aurora's population had grown to 150 people, an 85 percent increase from 1880, making it the third largest town in Beaufort County behind Washington and Pantego.<sup>75</sup> Sixteen merchants and tradesmen operated in Aurora, including 9 general stores, 3 grocers, 2 carpenters, 1 drug store, and 1 saloon.<sup>76</sup> The town even supported a newspaper called the *Progressive Age*, which ran between 1893 and 1896.<sup>77</sup> As Aurora modernized at the turn of the twentieth century, telephone wires were installed from Aurora to the Pamlico County line beginning in 1896.<sup>78</sup> By any measure, Aurora had established itself as the commercial, civic, and social center of the southern Beaufort County peninsula.

As the twentieth century dawned, Aurora's population growth continued. According to the 1900 census, the population totaled 312 people, including 195 white residents and 117 Black residents, together representing 75 households.<sup>79</sup> Aurora's town government included a mayor, clerk, treasurer, tax collector, chief of police, a Board of Aldermen, and a school committee, a full complement of civic institutions that further distinguished Aurora from the unincorporated communities it served.<sup>80</sup>

Aurora's growing population prompted the opening of Aurora Academy, a private school for white children led by principal R. T. Bonner, in the 1880s.<sup>81</sup> A public school opened in 1896 and operated alongside Aurora Academy until the latter closed in the late 1890s.<sup>82</sup> In 1905, construction began on a graded school for white children, located on Sixth Street at the west end of town, touted in a newspaper article as a "modern up-to-date and commodious structure, furnished with the latest school apparatus."<sup>83</sup> Around 1915, another school building was constructed, which was demolished at an unknown date.<sup>84</sup> In 1916, Beaufort County built a frame school for Aurora's Black children; this building has also been demolished, and its original location remains unknown.<sup>85</sup>

Churches in Aurora served as both spiritual and social hubs, providing gathering places for worship, events, and socializing. The Aurora United Methodist Church continued to serve Aurora residents as the first established congregation. A second congregation, the Church of the Holy Cross, was an Episcopal organization founded in the 1880s. J. B. Bryan donated a lot of land in the 600 block of Main Street for the construction of a church, and the original chapel was completed in 1886.<sup>86</sup> The congregation built the present-day Gothic Revival-style church at 640 Main Street (#28) in 1917, after which the chapel

<sup>73</sup> This building is believed to no longer exist.

<sup>74</sup> "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), August 23, 1887.

<sup>75</sup> Rev. Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory 1890* (Raleigh, NC: Levi Branson, 1890), 95.

<sup>76</sup> Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory 1890*, 95.

<sup>77</sup> Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File. No copies of the *Progressive Age* are known to exist.

<sup>78</sup> "Aurora Articles," *The Washington Gazette* (Washington, NC), April 30, 1896.

<sup>79</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1900.

<sup>80</sup> The News and Observer, *The North Carolina Yearbook 1902* (Raleigh, NC: The News and Observer, 1902), 83–84.

<sup>81</sup> "Aurora Academy," *New Berne Weekly Journal*, March 1, 1888.

<sup>82</sup> "Aurora Articles," *The Washington Gazette* (Washington, NC), March 19, 1896; "Aurora Articles," *The Washington Gazette* (Washington, NC), October 1, 1896.

<sup>83</sup> "Aurora Items," *Washington Progress* (Washington, NC), May 25, 1905.

<sup>84</sup> Insurance Company of North America, "Beaufort County Public School Insurance Report, 1935," On file, George H. and Laura E. Brown Library Local History/Genealogy Room, Washington, NC.

<sup>85</sup> Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.7.

<sup>86</sup> Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.9; "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), April 6, 1886.

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was moved and converted into a parish house.<sup>87</sup> The parish house was replaced in 1932 with the existing brick building west of the chapel, and a 1935 breezeway constructed in 1935 connects the two structures.<sup>88</sup>

Reverend Braxton Cragg founded a Baptist congregation in Aurora in 1898.<sup>89</sup> In 1902, the congregation erected a non-extant frame church at the southeast corner of Main and Second streets on land donated by A. B. and Lizzie M. Chapin.<sup>90</sup>

Aurora's Black residents were served by at least two congregations. Saint Jude's was an African American Episcopal congregation established around the turn of the twentieth century. The church building, likely constructed around 1915, remains vacant at the terminus of North Fifth Street outside the Aurora Historic District boundary.<sup>91</sup> St. Paul AME Zion was established in 1903. The congregation first worshipped in a "little wooden hut on a small plot of land" on the "former Colored Folk Street" (now North Fifth Street) "that was donated to black people by the white people in town."<sup>92</sup> In the 1920s, the original church building was destroyed by a storm, and the congregation purchased a lot on Railroad Street where they erected a frame church.<sup>93</sup> The second church building suffered the same fate, and the present-day church, constructed of concrete block, was completed in 1966.<sup>94</sup> This building lies outside the Aurora Historic District boundary, and the congregation remains active. The presence of multiple religious congregations serving both white and Black residents reflects the breadth of Aurora's role as a community center for the peninsula's diverse population.

Many of Aurora's residents were farmers, yet an increasing number of individuals had occupations such as merchant, shop owner, grocer, horse dealer, and hotel operator.<sup>95</sup> W. W. Moore operated a barbershop; John M. Litchfield, a hotel; Samuel T. Selby, a butcher shop; W. H. Hall, an insurance agency; and William T. Bryan, the telephone exchange.<sup>96</sup> Women were employed as teachers, clerks, dressmakers, "sales ladies," midwives, and domestic servants. Many of these in-town jobs encouraged individuals to live in town near their workplaces, contributing to a growing demand for local housing. As a result, a substantial amount of residential construction took place between 1880 and 1907.

Newspapers encouraged people to move to Aurora, with one anonymous author stating that "if you know of anyone enquiring for rich lands or a rapidly growing town be sure and send them to Aurora."<sup>97</sup> Demand for housing prompted town officials to open additional streets to accommodate new construction in 1888.<sup>98</sup> Whether these additional streets were included in the original plat or created through an entirely new one remains unclear. One newspaper article noted

<sup>87</sup> Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.9.

<sup>88</sup> Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.9.

<sup>89</sup> Crestena Oakley, "A Brief History of the Town of Aurora," Collection, Articles on Aurora, Hazel W. Guilford Memorial Library, Aurora, NC.

<sup>90</sup> Beaufort County Register of Deeds, Book 112, Page 204; "Aurora Baptist Church Notes Membership Growth," *Washington Daily News* (Washington, NC), August 19, 1952. After 1975, the church building was sold to and used by Phillips Chapel Methodist Church. In 2008, the building was condemned and demolished and the lot is vacant. Beaufort County Register of Deeds, Book 722, Page 724. Circa, Inc., Phillip Chapel AME Zion Church (BF1015) Survey File. On file, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC.

<sup>91</sup> "Aurora Articles," *The Washington Gazette* (Washington, NC), October 24, 1895.

<sup>92</sup> St. Paul AME Zion Church, "History," St. Paul AME Zion Church, accessed April 2024, <https://jbdesign4u7.wixsite.com/stpauls/history-of-st-paul>.

<sup>93</sup> St. Paul AME Zion Church, "History," St. Paul AME Zion Church, accessed April 2024, <https://jbdesign4u7.wixsite.com/stpauls/history-of-st-paul>.

<sup>94</sup> St. Paul AME Zion Church, "History," St. Paul AME Zion Church, accessed April 2024, <https://jbdesign4u7.wixsite.com/stpauls/history-of-st-paul>.

<sup>95</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1900.

<sup>96</sup> The News and Observer, *The North Carolina Yearbook 1902*, 83–84.

<sup>97</sup> "Aurora Items," *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), May 28, 1885.

<sup>98</sup> "Aurora Items," *New Berne Weekly Journal*, February 16, 1888.

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that the “carpenters are so busy that we can’t get an old gate hung on new hinges.”<sup>99</sup> There were “no vacant dwellings in...town and more than one family in some of them.”<sup>100</sup> Thomas Weisiger, a local builder, constructed many of Aurora’s early houses and was kept busy as growth continued.<sup>101</sup>

Early residential development concentrated in areas adjacent to Aurora’s commercial corridor.<sup>102</sup> Aurora’s growth, rooted in agriculture and waterborne commerce, enabled its most prosperous merchants and landowners to build fine houses in nationally popular architectural styles, physical expressions of the wealth generated by Aurora’s commercial success. The Charles G. and Jessie Midyette House at 415 North Sixth Street (#70, Photo 13) stands as the finest surviving example of a Queen Anne dwelling constructed around the turn of the century. Also constructed around 1900, the Shingle-style house at 610 Main Street (#27), though slightly altered, reflects the same era of prosperity. Several finely finished I-houses further demonstrate Aurora’s growth during the period, including the I-house at 698 Middle Street (#49), built around 1900, which retains its original windows and Doric porch columns. Taken together, these residences represent the peak of Aurora’s pre-railroad prosperity and stand as architectural evidence of the town’s commercial significance during this period.

**Aurora’s Era of Prosperity, 1908–1920**

The arrival of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad (A.C.L.) in 1908 marked the beginning of Aurora’s most prosperous period and confirmed its status as the dominant commercial center of southern Beaufort County. Rather than creating Aurora’s commercial role, the railroad amplified and extended it, connecting the town’s already well-established network of agricultural, commercial, and civic enterprises to larger regional markets. The buildings constructed during this period, including the Cherry Hotel, the Aurora Hardware Company Building, and the modest dwellings built to house Aurora’s growing workforce, reflect the community at the height of its commercial influence.

Because of Aurora’s isolated location, transportation networks prior to the arrival of the railroad were limited to steamboats on the Pamlico River and a network of poor overland routes, both of which could be hampered by seasonal weather conditions. Despite the community’s early desire for a rail connection, the A.C.L. did not arrive until 1908. The A.C.L. passed through Aurora as it ran between Washington and its terminus at Vandemere in Pamlico County (Figure 2).<sup>103</sup> The railroad had two passenger cars, a baggage car, and freight cars that transported Aurora’s agricultural and timber products to larger markets.<sup>104</sup> Its arrival solidified Aurora’s existing commercial dominance, linking the town’s established network of agricultural, retail, and civic enterprises to larger regional markets and enabling it to reach the height of its influence as a hub for southern Beaufort County. Although the A.C.L. created several new stations in the region, including Royal, Edward, and Blounts Creek, none grew to rival Aurora’s density or commercial prominence.

In 1910, the population totaled 440 citizens, including 255 white residents, 114 Black residents, and 71 mixed-race residents.<sup>105</sup> The various races within Aurora tended to live along the same streets; however, higher concentrations of Black and mixed-race residents lived along Pearl, Second, and South streets (now North Fifth Street). The population

<sup>99</sup> “Aurora Items,” *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), November 3, 1885.

<sup>100</sup> “Aurora Items,” *Washington Progress* (Washington, NC), October 29, 1889.

<sup>101</sup> “Aurora Items,” *The Daily Journal* (New Bern, NC), July 1, 1885.

<sup>102</sup> Census records indicate that Black and white residents lived amongst one another and were not segregated. However, there were streets with higher concentrations of Black residents, including Pearl and Second streets. In a history of the St. Paul AME Zion Church, located at 410 Railroad Street and outside of the Aurora Historic District, the north end of Fifth Street was formerly known as “Colored Folks Street.”; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1910; St. Paul AME Zion Church, “History.”

<sup>103</sup> Circa, Inc., “Beaufort County Municipalities Survey,” 6.8.

<sup>104</sup> Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File; Circa, Inc., “Beaufort County Municipalities Survey,” 6.8.

<sup>105</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1910.

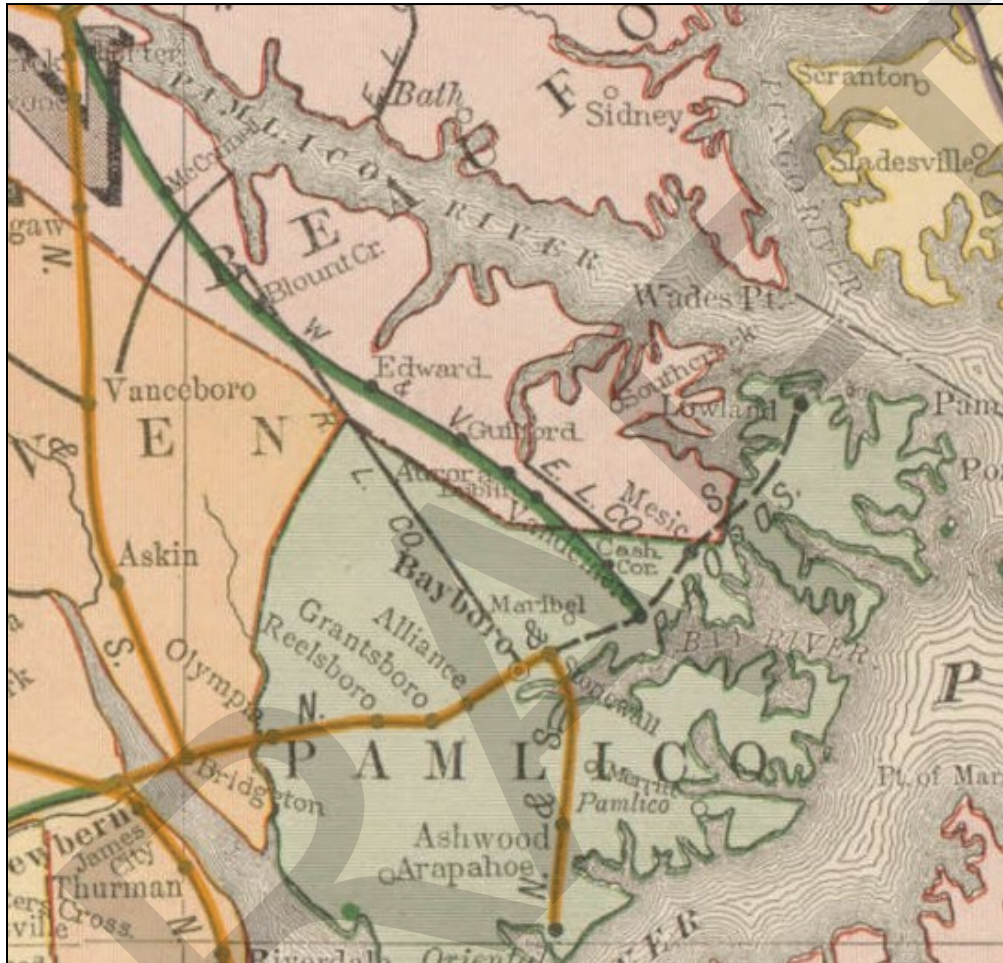
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increase from 312 in 1900 to 440 in 1910 reflects the direct impact of the railroad on Aurora's commercial activity and residential growth.<sup>106</sup>



**Figure 2:** The first railroad map to show the stop in Aurora from 1909.<sup>107</sup>

Aurora's development in the 1910s is illustrated in the 1914 *Rural Delivery Map* produced by the United States Postal Service (Figure 3). Centered on Main Street, Aurora's commercial corridor continued to expand. In 1910, there were 15 general stores, three livery stables, and a hardware store.<sup>108</sup> The town's train depot was rebuilt in 1910 after the first one burned.<sup>109</sup> The Cherry Hotel at 499 Main Street (#23, Photo 4), owned by F. C. Cherry, was completed by architect and builder Ira C. Congleton of Washington in 1914.<sup>110</sup> The Cherry Hotel, as well as the now-demolished McWilliams Hotel on Fourth Street, were built to serve businessmen and seasonal tourists from the north who traveled to the area to hunt deer, ducks, geese, and turkey in the fall and winter.<sup>111</sup> The arrival of the railroad in 1908 likely expanded access to Aurora for these visitors, bringing additional revenue to the town's hotels and business. The continued investment in commercial

<sup>106</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1910.

<sup>107</sup> Henry C. Brown, *Railroad map of North Carolina, 1909* (Chicago, IL: Rand McNally and Company, 1909).

<sup>108</sup> The News and Observer, *The North Carolina Year Book and Business Directory 1910* (Raleigh, NC: The News and Observer, 1910), 86–90.

<sup>109</sup> "Aurora Depot Burned," *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, NC), May 5, 1910.

<sup>110</sup> "Aurora Depot Burned," *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, NC), May 5, 1910.

<sup>111</sup> Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File; Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.6.

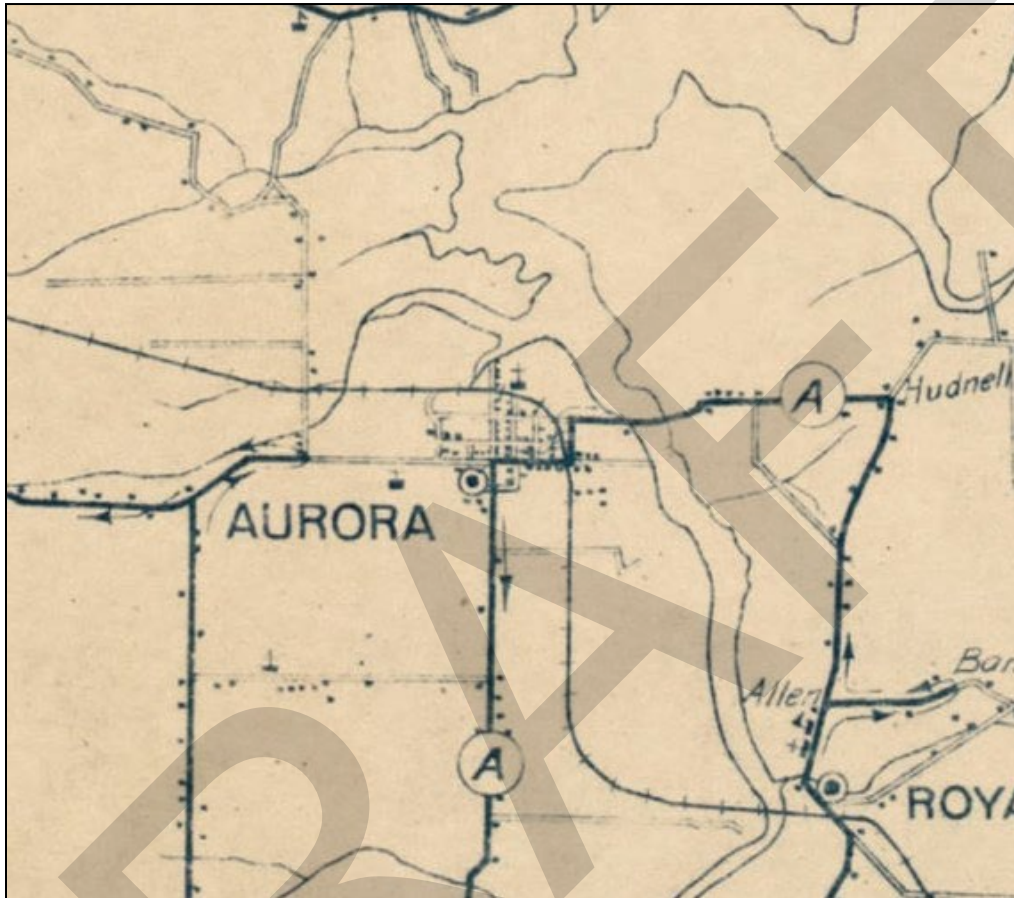
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infrastructure during this period, including the construction of the Aurora Hardware Company Building at 498 Main Street (#22) in 1926, echoes the success of Aurora's merchants and business owners and the hope for Aurora's future.



**Figure 3:** The 1914 Rural Delivery Map created by the United States Postal Service showing Aurora and its growth.<sup>112</sup>

The Aurora Fair, held for the first time in 1909 on a vacant lot south of Aurora Methodist Church outside the Aurora Historic District boundary, offers some of the clearest evidence of Aurora's regional commercial significance during this period.<sup>113</sup> From the outset, the fair drew visitors from throughout Beaufort County, as well as Pamlico, Craven, and Pitt counties.<sup>114</sup> Just six years after its inception, the Aurora Fair attracted more than 6,000 visitors.<sup>115</sup> The fair's ability to draw visitors from across multiple counties underscores Aurora's role not merely as a local market town but as a regional center of commerce and community life for a broad swath of eastern North Carolina.

Houses constructed between 1908 and 1920 were more modest in character than the high-style dwellings built by Aurora's most prosperous residents around the turn of the twentieth century. The Colonial Revival-style Frank Bonner House at 302 Main Street (#33) was constructed in 1914, and the American Foursquare house at 765 Main Street was built around

<sup>112</sup> United States Post Office Department, *Rural delivery routes, Beaufort County, NC* (Washington, DC: United States Post Office Department, 1914).

<sup>113</sup> "Aurora Holds Second Agricultural Fair and Corn Show," *Washington Daily News* (Washington, NC), November 12, 1910; Louis Van Camp, *Images of America: Beaufort County, North Carolina* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 80.

<sup>114</sup> "Aurora Holds Second Agricultural Fair and Corn Show," *Washington Daily News* (Washington, NC), November 12, 1910; Van Camp, *Images of America*, 80.

<sup>115</sup> "Over 6,000 Persons Attended The Fair At Aurora Yesterday," *Washington Daily News* (Washington, NC), November 12, 1915.

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the same time. Other houses constructed during this period were more modest, typically taking the form of single-pile, side-gabled dwellings, such as the George Williamson House at 801 Main Street (#36) and the house at 564 Third Street (#53). The diversity of house sizes and forms constructed during this period reflects the range of socioeconomic conditions of Aurora's residents, from the prosperous merchants and professionals who could afford high-style homes to the farmers, tradespeople, and laborers who built more modest vernacular dwellings. Together, this varied residential stock illustrates the breadth of the population that Aurora's commercial economy supported and attracted during its most prosperous years.

**Aurora in Flux, 1920–1955**

The period from 1920 to 1955 represents a pivotal transition in Aurora's history, during which the economic foundations that had sustained the town's commercial prominence began to erode. The mechanization of agriculture, the decline of the potato market, the loss of the railroad, and shifting transportation patterns all gradually undermined Aurora's role as the region's primary commercial hub. Yet even as these forces took hold, Aurora continued to function as the commercial and civic center of the southern Beaufort County peninsula, as evidenced by the continued construction of commercial buildings, civic infrastructure, and housing throughout the period. The buildings constructed during these decades, including the group of commercial buildings at 456, 462, and 468 Main Street, the Aurora Bus Station, and the town hall and fire station, document both Aurora's resilience as a commercial center and the beginning of its gradual decline.

Beginning in the 1920s and into the 1930s, Aurora's population fluctuated. Aurora's total population was 523 in 1920, including 321 white residents and 202 Black residents.<sup>116</sup> By 1930, the population had decreased by 18 percent to 429, including 287 white residents and 142 Black residents.<sup>117</sup> Several factors likely contributed to this decline. The mechanization of farming reduced the need for agricultural labor, prompting both white and Black residents to seek employment elsewhere. Notably, Aurora lost 30 percent of its Black population during this period, a decline likely accelerated by the Great Migration, as many Black Southerners relocated to the Northeast, Midwest, and Western states in search of better economic opportunities and relief from racial discrimination.<sup>118</sup> Both the 1920 and 1930 censuses recorded most individuals as involved in agriculture, though a wide range of other occupations were also listed, including an automobile salesman, a fire insurance agent, cooks for private families, carpenters, telephone operators, and electrical workers, suggesting that Aurora's economy was slowly diversifying.<sup>119</sup> The population rebounded between 1930 and 1940. According to the 1940 U.S. census, Aurora's population increased slightly to 492, and by 1950 it had reached 525 residents, the highest it had ever been.<sup>120</sup> This population rebound, despite the ongoing agricultural decline, shows Aurora's continued importance as a commercial and employment center for the peninsula's residents.

Aurora's economy primarily relied upon agriculture through the 1950s. Agricultural goods, primarily Irish potatoes, as well as lumber and fish, were shipped to larger markets at Washington and New Bern by boat along South Creek and by rail on the A.C.L. rail line. During the 1930s, Esso-Standard and Sinclair Oil installed docks on South Creek at Aurora, reflecting the town's continued importance as a local port and distribution point.<sup>121</sup> The presence of these fuel docks supported the fishing and agricultural industries by providing a reliable supply of fuel for the boats and vessels that moved goods along South Creek and the Pamlico River, reinforcing Aurora's role as a commercial hub for the surrounding rural communities even as broader economic pressures mounted.

<sup>116</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1920.

<sup>117</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1930.

<sup>118</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1920; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1930.

<sup>119</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1920; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1930.

<sup>120</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1940; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1950.

<sup>121</sup> Loy and Worthy, *Washington and the Pamlico*, 490–491.

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In the mid-twentieth century, several shifts in agriculture had a major impact on the community. The first was the trend toward mechanized farming, which replaced manual labor. Until the twentieth century, most farms relied heavily on human and animal labor to complete tasks. In 1900, nearly 21.6 million animals were used for labor on farms across the United States.<sup>122</sup> By 1930, that number had dropped to 18.7 million, while the number of tractors had reached 920,000.<sup>123</sup> The shift toward mechanization accelerated after World War II, with the number of tractors reaching 2.4 million by 1945.<sup>124</sup>

At the same time, per capita potato consumption in the United States declined in the 1940s, and competition from potato farmers in California and Idaho intensified.<sup>125</sup> Local potatoes did not ship well due to a blight caused by a soil deficiency.<sup>126</sup> Corn and cotton markets also declined around the same time.<sup>127</sup> Since potatoes, cotton, and corn had been the mainstays of Aurora's economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the declining demand and outside competition severely dampened what had once been a thriving agricultural market. Because Aurora's commercial significance was so deeply rooted in its role as a market center for the peninsula's agricultural economy, the collapse of that economy struck at the foundation of the town's commercial prominence.

As farms became increasingly mechanized, the rise of truck farming also affected Aurora's farmers. Truck farming refers to the commercial production of fruit and vegetables for market, typically involving transportation of these perishable goods over short distances to nearby towns or cities. While truck farming granted farmers access to larger markets, it also intensified competition. Oftentimes large-scale operations could lower costs, therefore, undercutting the smaller-scale farmers. The rise of truck farming also contributed to the decline of the railroad, which had depended heavily on agricultural freight, further weakening one of the key infrastructure links that had sustained Aurora's commercial role.

In the 1940s, the A.C.L. tracks were taken up, ending rail service between Washington and Vandemere in Pamlico County and severing Aurora's connection to larger markets.<sup>128</sup> This loss marked a major shift in transportation for the town as rail, once essential to moving people and goods, had become increasingly obsolete. The rise of automobile travel, coupled with significant improvements to roads and bridges, contributed to the railroad's decline on the peninsula. The Aurora Bus Station at 470 Fourth Street (#59) was constructed around 1940, providing residents with an alternative means of connecting to Washington and other regional destinations as the railroad era drew to a close. However, by 1953, the Seashore Transportation Company had curtailed bus service between Washington, Aurora, and Oriental, citing that Aurora residents were primarily using the service to transport parcels rather than passengers, a telling sign of the town's diminishing role as a destination for regional commerce and travel.<sup>129</sup>

Transportation in and around Aurora was further transformed during the 1930s and 1940s. NC 33, which connects Chocowinity and Aurora, was completed after 1931, and by the late 1940s, traffic had shifted away from Main Street to a new southern corridor, bypassing the town's commercial center.<sup>130</sup> Around the same time, the wood bridge that crossed

<sup>122</sup> Carolyn Dimitri, Anne Effland, and Neilson Conklin, "The 20th Century Transformation of U.S. Agriculture and Farm Policy," Economic Information Bulletin Number 3, Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture, 2005.

<sup>123</sup> Dimitri, "The 20th Century Transformation of U.S. Agriculture and Farm Policy."

<sup>124</sup> Dimitri, "The 20th Century Transformation of U.S. Agriculture and Farm Policy."

<sup>125</sup> Loy and Worthy, *Washington and the Pamlico*, 492; Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.9.

<sup>126</sup> Loy and Worthy, *Washington and the Pamlico*, 491.

<sup>127</sup> Loy and Worthy, *Washington and the Pamlico*, 492.

<sup>128</sup> Loy and Worthy, *Washington and the Pamlico*, 492.

<sup>129</sup> "Seashore to Cut Eastern Service," *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, North Carolina), September 22, 1953. The Seashore Transportation Company sold the bus station to a private citizen in 1960. Beaufort County Register of Deeds, Book 512, Page 172.

<sup>130</sup> Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.8.

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South Creek at the eastern end of Main Street was replaced with a concrete bridge linked to NC 33, further facilitating automobile travel and integrating Aurora into the growing highway network.<sup>131</sup>

New construction in Aurora continued steadily from 1920 to 1955, though not at the same pace as in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Figure 4). New commercial buildings were erected along Main Street to serve the needs of both town residents and those in more rural areas. A series of three buildings were built between 1930 and 1945 (456, 462, and 468 Main Street; #17, 18, and 19). The original tenants of two of the buildings are known: Thompson's Feed Store (462 Main Street; #18) and Warren's Barber Shop (468 Main Street; #19) (Photo 5). Transportation-related buildings were also constructed during this time, including the Aurora Bus Station at 470 Fourth Street (#59) and two service stations, with one at 395 Main Street (now part of the Aurora Fossil Museum, #11, Photo 6) and the other at 298 Main Street (#6). The Brothers Lodge opened at 250 Main Street in 1940 (#3), beginning as a grocery and fishing supply store before gradually evolving into a full-time restaurant with lodging accommodations for tourists.<sup>132</sup>



**Figure 4:** This 1938 aerial photograph is the first of its kind to show Aurora's development.<sup>133</sup>

Civic construction also occurred during this period. The Aurora Jail (590 North Fifth Street, #66, Photo 7), built in 1939 using funds and labor from the Works Progress Administration.<sup>134</sup> In 1942, a fire destroyed three businesses and a residence along Main Street. According to a newspaper account, the fire started in Lucille Dudley's dry goods store and spread to the J. B. Bryan and Son merchandise store, a shoe shop operated by J. H. Fagan, and to Annie Snell's two-story house, while also heavily damaging the Aurora Hardware Company building. Though the town's response was slow,

<sup>131</sup> Circa, Inc., "Beaufort County Municipalities Survey," 6.8.

<sup>132</sup> "Aurora Landmark Sold," *The Pamlico News*, November 13, 1980.

<sup>133</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, *Aerial Photograph, 1938*, accessed April 2024, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/46796525855/in/album-72157680104684838>.

<sup>134</sup> Aurora Commercial Historic District (BF0464) Survey File.

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possibly due the demands of World War II, Aurora eventually constructed a town hall with an attached fire department (436 Fourth Street, #54, Photo 8) in 1948.<sup>135</sup> The town hall served as a community gathering place and housed a health center. One fire truck served the area, which was the “only motored method of fighting fire.”<sup>136</sup>

Alongside commercial and civic construction, approximately 42 houses were built in Aurora between 1920 and 1955, most of which were either bungalows or Minimal Traditional-style dwellings. The shift toward these smaller, simpler building types reflects both the national economic pressures of the Depression era and the declining agricultural economy that Aurora navigated through the mid-twentieth century. The continued construction of housing during this period demonstrates the modest but steady growth Aurora experienced as the mechanization of farming reduced the need for agricultural labor, prompting families to leave farms and seek employment and housing in town, a pattern that sustained Aurora’s residential base even as its commercial economy faded.

The community remained committed to education throughout the 1920s and 1950s. In 1928, a two-story, brick Colonial Revival-style high school for white students was erected on the large tract of land north of Middle Street between NC 306 and Seventh Street.<sup>137</sup> It was built to accommodate the consolidated rural schools in the area, likely replacing the 1915 school building, and served both elementary and high school students despite being named Aurora High School.<sup>138</sup> Aurora’s Black students were also served by a school in town, constructed in 1916 and subsequently demolished at an unknown date.<sup>139</sup> Its original location has not been determined.<sup>140</sup>

As Aurora moved into the second half of the twentieth century, the population began to decrease from 525 residents in 1950 to 449 residents in 1960.<sup>141</sup> In 1950, the Bank of Aurora was transferred to Guaranty Bank and Trust Company of Greenville, North Carolina, a transaction that foreshadowed the broader erosion of Aurora’s role as a self-sufficient regional commercial hub, as the forces of mechanization, agricultural decline, and shifting transportation patterns gradually undermined the conditions that had sustained the town’s commercial prominence for nearly a century.<sup>142</sup>

**Phosphate in Aurora, 1955–1975**

The period from 1955 to 1975 represents the final chapter in Aurora’s history as a functioning regional commercial hub. The discovery of phosphate near Aurora in the late 1950s offered the prospect of reversing the town’s decline, but the anticipated economic transformation never materialized. The failure of the phosphate boom to generate the expected population and commercial growth marked the effective end of Aurora’s role as the primary market center for southern Beaufort County, a role it had sustained for nearly a century.

<sup>135</sup> Dr. John B. Bonner, “Aurora Is Trading Center For Richland Township Area,” *Washington Daily News* (Washington, NC), August 17, 1951; Aurora Planning Board and North Carolina Division of Community Planning, *Community Facilities Plan & Public Improvements Program* (Aurora, NC: Aurora Planning Board, 1968), 12.

<sup>136</sup> Bonner, “Aurora Is Trading Center for Richland Township Area;” Aurora Planning Board and North Carolina Division of Community Planning, *Community Facilities Plan & Public Improvements Program*, 12.

<sup>137</sup> “Flood Delay Opening of Aurora High School,” *The News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC), October 17, 1928; Circa, Inc., “Beaufort County Municipalities Survey,” 6.7. The nearest Rosenwald School to serve the area’s Black children was the Ware Creek School, more than 10 miles to the northwest in the vicinity of Blounts Creek.

<sup>138</sup> “The ups and downs of the Aurora schools,” *The Pamlico News*, May 15, 1991. Circa, Inc., “Beaufort County Municipalities Survey,” 6.7.

<sup>139</sup> “The ups and downs of the Aurora schools,” *The Pamlico News*, May 15, 1991. Circa, Inc., “Beaufort County Municipalities Survey,” 6.7.

<sup>140</sup> “The ups and downs of the Aurora schools,” *The Pamlico News*, May 15, 1991. Circa, Inc., “Beaufort County Municipalities Survey,” 6.7.

<sup>141</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1950; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1960.

<sup>142</sup> “FDIC Will Advance Funds For Transfer Of Bank Of Aurora,” *Washington Daily News* (Washington, NC), July 11, 1950.

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While Aurora could not rival the economic scale of larger regional municipalities like Washington and New Bern, it remained an important local hub and market center for the rural communities of southern Beaufort County's peninsula. However, the town experienced a steady decline in population and economic activity between 1955 and 1975, compounding the agricultural challenges that had already taken hold in the preceding decades. By 1960, Aurora's population had dropped to 449 residents, reflecting the ongoing exodus of farmers and their families as agriculture became less viable.

Phosphate, a mineral used in making fertilizer and animal feed, was discovered near Aurora in the late 1950s. Beaufort County is situated on the Albemarle Embayment, which covers the northeastern part of the state and contains the fossilized remains of reptiles, fish, and sea mammals. The discovery of phosphate brought renewed hope to Aurora at a time when its population was in decline. In a 1963 newspaper article, town officials and representatives of TexasGulf, Inc. stated that "phosphate reserves here spell well for the development of the industry," and predicted that "the town has got to go," with the expectation that Aurora would "join the ranks of growing towns in the nation."<sup>143</sup> These optimistic predictions reflected the widespread belief that the mine could restore Aurora's commercial vitality and reverse the population decline that had been accelerating since the loss of the railroad.

In the 1960s, TexasGulf, Inc. began purchasing land near Aurora for an open-pit mining operation, offering farmers above market value for their lands. Many farmers accepted, as making a livelihood in agriculture had become increasingly difficult as markets shifted to large-scale farming operations. In 1964, TexasGulf, Inc. officially opened its phosphate mining and refining operation outside of Aurora and re-laid tracks along the former A.C.L. route to move the mined phosphate.

Aurora residents hoped that the phosphate mine would boost industry and reverse the town's economic decline. Chapin Acres, a small subdivision southwest of downtown, was laid out in 1965 from Chapin family lands in anticipation of growth. When Aurora failed to see significant population growth after the mine's opening, North Carolina State of the University of North Carolina at Raleigh's (now North Carolina State University) School of Design partnered with town officials and residents to chart a path for further development (Figure 5).<sup>144</sup>

<sup>143</sup> "Aurora Welcomes Texas Gulf People," *Washington Daily News* (Washington NC), June 8, 1963.

<sup>144</sup> Ernie Wood, "Aurora Mines Her Future," *The News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC), September 14, 1975.

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**Figure 5:** A photograph of Aurora's commercial corridor from 1966, looking east down Main Street from its intersection with North Fifth Street.<sup>145</sup>

Despite the best efforts of town officials and residents, Aurora never grew as anticipated following the opening of the mine. Rather than relocating to Aurora, many mine employees and other professionals chose to live in larger nearby communities like Washington, Greenville, and New Bern, commuting to work and limiting the residential growth that town officials had hoped the mine would bring. As a result, there was no major increase in population, and construction continued to slow alongside the broader economy. The mine's failure to generate residential and commercial growth in Aurora illustrates a fundamental shift in the town's relationship to the regional economy. Whereas Aurora had once drawn commerce and population to itself by virtue of its central location and concentration of services, it now found itself unable to compete with larger, better-connected communities for residents and investments. Nevertheless, the mine remained the largest taxpayer and employer in Beaufort County and one of the largest phosphate mines in the United States. By the mid-1970s, the mine was operated by PCS Phosphate, a subsidiary of PotashCorp, which later merged with Agrium to form Nutrien of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.<sup>146</sup>

**Aurora Today, 1975–Present**

The period from 1975 to the present documents the continuing decline of Aurora as a regional commercial center and the community's efforts to preserve and revitalize what remains of its historic built environment. The loss of historic commercial buildings, continued population decline, and storm damage have diminished the district's fabric, while recent preservation and revitalization efforts offer some hope for the future of Aurora's historic downtown core. Overall, the resources that survive within the Aurora Historic District represent the physical legacy of a community that served as the dominant commercial hub of southern Beaufort County for nearly a century.

<sup>145</sup> *Daily Reflector*, *Aurora Downtown*, September 1966, photograph, East Carolina University Digital Collections, <https://digital.lib.ecu.edu/9063>.

<sup>146</sup> Nutrien was formed through the result of PotashCorp (PCS Phosphate) and Agrium, both Canadian companies.

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Discoveries made during phosphate mining became the foundation for the Aurora Fossil Museum. Established in 1976, the museum educates visitors about geology, paleontology, and the prehistoric history of coastal North Carolina. Its extensive collection includes Megalodon teeth, whale vertebrae, shark teeth, corals, and shells, as well as geological exhibits detailing prehistoric marine environments. Many of the specimens come from the nearby Nutrien mine, which has yielded fossils dating from the Miocene and Pliocene epochs (roughly five to 23 million years ago). Today, the museum plays a key role in education and tourism in Beaufort County and hosts the annual Aurora Fossil Festival, which draws large crowds.

Since 1990, Aurora's population has declined by approximately 10 percent each decade.<sup>147</sup> The town has also lost several historic resources, including four commercial buildings demolished in 1992 as part of a downtown revitalization effort, among them the Aurora Theater.<sup>148</sup> Hurricane Irene made landfall in August 2011, and dropped 14 to 15 inches of rain on Aurora and spawned several tornadoes. Residents experienced significant flooding, though aerial imagery suggests that few, if any, buildings were demolished as a direct result. Additional flood damage occurred in September 2018 when Hurricane Florence struck the area.

In recent years, the community has renewed its focus on preservation and revitalization of the historic downtown core. The Aurora Fossil Museum has expanded its presence, and Nutrien has expressed interest in rehabilitating vacant commercial buildings. These efforts reflect a growing recognition of the historic district's value as a record of Aurora's commercial history and its potential as an economic and cultural asset for the broader community.

**Summary**

Aurora is significant under Criterion A: Commerce at the local level for its role as the primary commercial hub for the rural communities of southern Beaufort County from its establishment in the 1860s through the mid-twentieth century, a period during which its merchants, farmers, and civic institutions shaped the economic and social life of Richland Township and the broader peninsula. Relatively isolated on a peninsula and far from Beaufort County's seat at Washington, Aurora's central location in Richland Township and its access to South Creek and the Pamlico River enabled it to become a hub not only for local farmers and residents, but also for those living in unincorporated communities throughout the peninsula. Aurora developed substantially in the late nineteenth century despite lacking a railroad connection, with commerce centered on a rough network of roads and waterways. By the time the A.C.L. arrived in 1908, Aurora had already grown into an important local center. While other communities developed along the new rail line, Aurora's prior development and central location enabled it to surpass other nearby communities and rise to a regional hub through the first half of the twentieth century. Today, Aurora retains a substantial concentration of commercial, residential, religious, and civic resources that embody its historic associations.

**ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT**

Aurora's architecture is locally significant as a cohesive collection of commercial, civil, religious, and residential buildings dating from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Altogether, the district's resources illustrate Aurora's rise, peak, and gradual decline as the commercial center of the southern Beaufort County peninsula. The built environment reflects each phase of this narrative. The town's earliest surviving buildings are modest vernacular frame dwellings, consistent with a small agricultural settlement. As Aurora's commercial economy grew in the 1880s and 1890s, frame commercial buildings along Main Street gave way to more permanent brick construction, beginning with the 1886 B. H.

<sup>147</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 1990; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Schedule, 2020.

<sup>148</sup> Tracy D. Boyd, "Old Buildings Take Tumble In Aurora's Downtown Project," *Washington Daily News* (Washington, NC), December 26, 1992.

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Thompson Store, a shift that paralleled similar patterns in larger eastern North Carolina towns like Washington but was exceptional for a community of Aurora's size and isolation. The high-style residence construction around the turn of the twentieth century, including the Queen Anne-style Midyette House and the Shingle-style house at 610 Main Street, are expressions of the wealth that Aurora's agricultural economy and commercial prominence generated for its prosperous merchants and landowners. At the same time, vernacular single-pile and double-pile dwellings, Craftsman bungalows, and later Minimal Traditional houses that make up most of the district's residential stock reflect the broader population of farmers, tradespeople, and laborers who were drawn to Aurora by its concentration of commercial and civic activities. This range of residential architecture, from high style to vernacular, illustrates the socioeconomic diversity of a community whose economy supported both prosperous merchants and working families, all within a compact town grid.

The district's architectural character is also distinguished by what it reveals about the constraints and opportunities of its setting. Aurora's geographic isolation on the peninsula meant that building materials, skilled labor, and stylistic influences arrived more slowly and selectively than in well-connected towns such as Washington and New Bern. As a result, even the district's most prominent buildings are restrained interpretations of national styles, using local materials and building traditions. The commercial buildings along Main Street display corbelled brickwork and shaped parapets but are typically smaller in scale in comparison to larger communities. This blend of national stylistic design with vernacular constraint gives the district a character distinct to Aurora, reflective of a small town whose commercial prosperity enabled architectural ambitions that exceeded what its size and isolation might otherwise suggest. Nearby unincorporated communities like Small and Bonnerton contain only scattered houses, small roadside stores, and churches, and lack the density, variety, and architectural ambition found in Aurora. This contrast underscores Aurora's significant role on the peninsula and is evidence of the town's commercial prominence.

**Commercial and Civic Architecture**

Aurora's commercial architecture is concentrated along the north and south sides of Main Street, extending from Second Street to North Sixth Street. These buildings were erected between 1886 and 1974, with the majority built between 1886 and 1950. Following late nineteenth-century development patterns, the earliest commercial buildings in Aurora were likely one- or two-story frame structures clad in weatherboard, though none have survived. As business flourished, the earlier frame buildings were replaced with fire-resistant brick structures that reflected growing financial prosperity. This pattern of development was common throughout eastern North Carolina, including larger towns like Washington. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, brick was widely encouraged for commercial construction due to its fire resistance, durability, and versatility. Aurora's commercial buildings, constructed primarily of brick or concrete block, exhibit vernacular designs with limited architectural detailing in the form of brick corbelling. The commercial buildings generally have rectangular footprints, flat roofs concealed behind stepped parapets, recessed storefronts, and large display windows.

The oldest surviving commercial building in the Aurora Historic District is the 1886 B. H. Thompson Store at 400 Main Street (#13, Photo 3). This austere two-story building is constructed of brick laid in a common bond. Although its original front door has been replaced, the flanking wood storefront windows remain intact. The façade features decorative brickwork across the first story, a brick cornice, and concrete windowsills.

The most prominent stretch of commercial buildings is located east of Main Street's intersection with North Fifth Street. These two-story brick buildings line both sides of Main Street, with the Aurora Hardware Company Building on the north side. Constructed in 1926, this building features common bond brickwork, a brick cornice, and corner pilasters. While the storefronts have been altered, they retain their original form and second-story window openings. Opposite the Aurora Hardware Company Building, the buildings at 491, 495, and 499 Main Street line the south side of Main Street (Photo 4). The Cherry Hotel (#23), completed in 1914, stands out for its decorative brickwork, including a belt course separating the first and second stories, brick jack arches above the second-story windows, and a second-story belt course that spans the

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façade and follows the curve of the arched windows. The adjacent buildings at 491 and 495 Main Street (#20, #21) contain three storefronts divided by pilasters, with parapets adorned with clinker bricks arranged at a 45-degree angle to create diamond-shaped accents.

A group of three buildings at 456, 462, and 468 Main Street illustrates the last phase of historic commercial construction trends from the 1930s through the 1940s (Photo 5). Anchoring this group is Thompson's Feed Store (462 Main Street; #18), a one-story brick structure with a tripartite façade, brick pilasters at the corners, and a brick cornice crowing the façade. To the east stands Warren's Barber Shop (456 Main Street; #17), constructed of concrete block and clad in brick laid in a running bond. A distinctive sign panel above the storefront features a "W" formed of brick stretchers, referencing its original owner and operator, Calvin D. Warren.

Similar in design to Aurora's commercial architecture, the town's civic buildings are one-story, brick-faced structures. The former Aurora Town Hall and Police Station (436 Fourth Street, #54) and the Aurora Municipal Complex (458–460 Fourth Street, #55) were built by the town in 1948 (Photo 8). These buildings, which share a firewall, are constructed of concrete block and the façades are clad in brick laid in a running bond. Their lack of architectural detailing reflects their utilitarian role in the community. In contrast, the Aurora Jail (590 North Fifth Street, #66, Photo 7), built by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), exhibits limited classical architectural influences. Capped by a metal-clad hipped roof, the brick jail features a symmetrical exterior with a denticulated cornice. Its eight-over-eight, wood sash windows and decorative door surround lend it an air of mid-nineteenth-century design influence. In addition to its intact exterior, the interior retains its original double metal jail cell and magistrate's office.

**Religious Architecture**

There are two churches in the Aurora Historic District. The Gothic Revival-style Church of the Holy Cross (640 Main Street, #28, Photo 10) was built in 1917. The brick building features a batten, double-leaf door and buttresses that divide the bays of the side elevations. The original window openings have flat and rounded arches that are filled with stained glass. Constructed around 1949 as a replacement for an earlier frame church, the Aurora Methodist Church (327 Main Street; #7, Photo 9) is a strong example of the Romanesque style. It is constructed of stone, and its central belltower is a prominent feature. A recessed, arched entry pierces the belltower.

**Residential Architecture**

Houses within the Aurora Historic District vary in size and architectural style. Older houses are primarily concentrated along Main Street, North Fifth Street, and the adjacent side streets. Many houses in Aurora can be described best by their forms, and do not display strong stylistic features. Vernacular dwellings in various forms are scattered throughout Aurora and date to between 1887 and 1950. These residential forms include single pile, double pile, and gable-and-wing.

Single-pile dwellings appear a handful of times in the Aurora Historic District, with construction dates between 1900 and 1925. The house at 698 Middle Street (#49) is a highly intact dwelling with a single-pile, I-house form with a rear ell. The original weatherboards clad the exterior, and cornice returns adorn the side-gabled ends of the roof. The front porch, which spans the first story of the three-bay façade, features the original Tuscan columns and the windows throughout the house are the original two-over-two wood sashes. Another example of a single-pile house is the George Williamson House (801 Main Street; #36). The house has a rectangular, side-gabled form with a hipped-roof front porch. Aluminum replacement siding clads the exterior, and the original standing-seam metal covers the roof. Original four-over-one, wood-sash windows remain intact.

An early example of a double-pile house is the Alex and Lona Hudnell House (577 Main Street, #26, Photo 14). Built in 1887, the house has a side-gabled main block with a Mount Vernon porch addition on the primary (north) elevation. The

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original front door features two arched lights above panels. Four-over-one, wood-sash windows, which date to the 1920s or 1930s, are found throughout the house.

The Willie Bryan House (720 Main Street; #32) was built around 1890. This two-story house has a gable-and-wing form. The house retains its original weatherboard siding; two-over-two, wood-sash windows; and the original cedar roof shingles are visible beneath the metal. Porch posts suggest the house had limited Victorian-style details.

There are several dwellings that exemplify nationally popular architectural styles. This includes Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Craftsman-style houses, Period Revival Cottages, and Minimal Traditional dwellings. Houses of these styles are primarily located west of North Fifth Street.

There are seven Craftsman-style bungalows within the Aurora Historic District, which date to between 1921 and 1946. The Mabel Baucom House (760 Main Street; #34) was built in 1921. The one-and-one-half-story house features paired, original, four-over-one, wood-sash windows and the original multi-light and paneled front door. The expansive front porch is supported by tapered wood posts atop brick piers. Details, such as decorative knee braces, have been removed from the house. An altered, but well-executed example stands at 575 Pearl Street (#51). The Bryan and Ginny Bonner House is a side-gabled dwelling with a shed dormer that spans the front (north) roof slope. The windows throughout the house are paired four-over-one, wood sashes. Like the Mabel Baucom House, the Bryan and Ginny Bonner House has a front porch supported by brick piers surmounted by tapered posts.

Outside of the Craftsman style, the bungalow form prevails seven times within the Aurora Historic District. These are typically dwellings with front-gabled, three-bay forms with minimal architectural detailing; however, side-gabled forms also appear, albeit less frequently. The A. L. Lupton House (226 Main Street; #1) was built around 1926. This one-and-one-half-story house features a simple, front-gabled form and retains its four-over-one, wood-sash windows on the first floor.

The Colonial Revival style appears five times in the Aurora Historic District, all of which date to between 1900 and 1966. The Benjamin Thompson House (398 Middle Street; #41) is one of the oldest examples of the style in Aurora. Though altered and updated to have Craftsman-style, multi-light windows, the Benjamin Thompson House features original weatherboard siding, dormers on the roof, cornice returns on the gable ends, and a screened porch off the west elevation that is supported by Classically inspired posts. Another well-executed example of the Colonial Revival style is the circa-1920 William A. Thompson Jr. and Sallie Carr Thompson House (441 North Fifth Street; #64). The two-story dwelling has a symmetrical façade with a Classical entry porch. The building is capped by a hipped roof pierced by two interior brick chimneys.

Two houses in the Aurora Historic District exhibits details of the Queen Anne style, which was popular in the United States between 1880 and 1910. Common characteristics of Queen Anne-style dwellings include steeply pitched roofs, a complicated footprint often with a front-facing gable, bay windows, and an asymmetrical façade. The circa-1915 Staley-Rutledge House (295 Main Street; #5) has been significantly altered through the replacement of the original porch, doors, and windows; the eaves have been boxed in; and vinyl siding has been installed. Despite these alterations, the house retains its complicated footprint, typical of the Queen Anne style. The circa-1900 Charles G. and Jessie Midyette House (415 North Sixth Street, #70, Photo 13) is another two-story, cross-gable example of a Queen Anne-style house. The house retains many of its original materials, including the plain weatherboards, the diamond-shaped shingles in the front facing gables, finials on the gables, the wraparound porch with Tuscan columns, and the cornice returns. Overall, the Midyette House is the best example of a Queen Anne-style house in the Aurora Historic District.

The house at 610 Main Street (#27) is the only example of a Shingle-style house in Aurora. Though most of the exterior has been covered with vinyl siding, parts of the west elevation reveal intact shingles that cover both the gable and the

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second story. Other features include the inset porch, and the banks of windows in the shed-roof dormer. Perhaps the most intriguing feature of the house is the cutaway porch on the second floor of the east elevation.

The circa-1915 house at 765 Main Street (#35) exhibits all the features of an American Foursquare-style dwelling, including the square floorplan; low-pitched roof with overhanging eaves; two stories with a wing, porch, and/or porte cochere; and an off-center front door. The windows have been replaced. This is the only example of an American Foursquare in the Aurora Historic District.

Two examples of the Period Revival Cottage are found within the Aurora Historic District with construction dates ranging from 1928 to around 1945. The circa-1935 Jack and Willie C. McWilliams House (107 North Sixth Street; #67) is a good example of a house with Tudor stylistic tendencies, including a brick exterior, front gabled projection, façade chimney, and original arched entry door.

The Minimal Traditional style is found three times within the Aurora Historic District. These dwellings, which date to between 1945 and 1956, are small in scale with simple architectural forms and minimal detailing. The J. G. Rutledge Jr. and Junie N. Rutledge House (414 North Sixth Street; #69) is an example of a one-and-one-half-story, side-gabled Minimal Traditional dwelling. The house has a simple form with a gabled entry stoop and the windows throughout the house are the original six-over-six wood sashes. A few Minimal Traditional-style houses exhibit Ranch-style tendencies as they are elongated but retain their simple form with flush eaves and minimal detailing.

**Summary**

Aurora's architecture creates a sense of time and place that is specific to the southern Beaufort County peninsula. The district's three broad layers of development, the modest vernacular buildings of the pre-incorporation era, the brick commercial blocks and high-style resilience of the 1880s through 1920s, and the bungalows, Minimal Traditional dwellings, and utilitarian civic buildings of the mid-twentieth century correspond directly to the economic trajectory documented in the Criterion A narrative. This shift from frame to brick commercial construction along Main Streets marks the moment Aurora's merchants had sufficient capital and confidence to invest in permanent buildings. The high-style residences of the town's most prosperous families document the peak of that prosperity. The simpler dwellings and concrete block commercial buildings that followed reflect the contraction of the agricultural economy and the loss of the railroad. Together, these resources form a cohesive and distinguishable entity whose buildings collectively convey Aurora's narrative from isolated settlement to regional commercial center and its gradual decline. This narrative is visible within the district's architecture even where individual buildings may lack distinction.

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— "Aurora Articles." October 24, 1896.

*Washington Progress* (Washington, NC). "Aurora Items." November 22, 1887.

— "Aurora Items." October 29, 1889.

— "Aurora Items." May 25, 1905.

— "The Past And Present History of Aurora, N.C." June 8, 1916.

Wetmore, Ruth Y. "Pamlico Indians," in *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Wood, Ernie. "Aurora Mines Her Future." *The News and Observer* (Raleigh). September 14, 1975.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been  
Requested)  
☐ previously listed in the National Register  
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
designated a National Historic Landmark  
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Name of repository: **Office of Archives & History**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): **BF0464**

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 39 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum, if other than WGS

|           |                   |                    |           |                   |                    |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <u>35.3051705</u> | <u>-76.7841473</u> | <b>2</b>  | <u>35.3045276</u> | <u>-76.7841397</u> |
|           | Latitude          | Longitude          |           | Latitude          | Longitude          |
| <b>3</b>  | <u>35.3040434</u> | <u>-76.7845150</u> | <b>4</b>  | <u>35.3035606</u> | <u>-76.7851408</u> |
|           | Latitude          | Longitude          |           | Latitude          | Longitude          |
| <b>5</b>  | <u>35.3023460</u> | <u>-76.7886965</u> | <b>6</b>  | <u>35.3023430</u> | <u>-76.7899563</u> |
|           | Latitude          | Longitude          |           | Latitude          | Longitude          |
| <b>7</b>  | <u>35.3039699</u> | <u>-76.7932077</u> | <b>8</b>  | <u>35.3044803</u> | <u>-76.7932131</u> |
|           | Latitude          | Longitude          |           | Latitude          | Longitude          |
| <b>9</b>  | <u>35.3053049</u> | <u>-76.7924750</u> | <b>10</b> | <u>35.3059528</u> | <u>-76.7913935</u> |
|           | Latitude          | Longitude          |           | Latitude          | Longitude          |
| <b>11</b> | <u>35.3059699</u> | <u>-76.7900648</u> | <b>12</b> | <u>35.3057017</u> | <u>-76.7865677</u> |
|           | Latitude          | Longitude          |           | Latitude          | Longitude          |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The National Register boundary of the Aurora Historic District is illustrated by the heavy black line on the accompanying "Boundary & Coordinates Map," created by Donald Rowe in April 2025. The boundary encompasses approximately 39 acres. The district is roughly bounded by Middle Street to the north, Second Street to the east, Chapin and Pearl streets to the south, and Eighth Street to the west. The district's boundary is described as starting at the northeast corner of the parcel for 226 Main Street and running 232 feet south before turning west and extending 113 feet; thence turning south and extending 175 feet; thence turning west and extending 100 feet; thence turning north and extending 30 feet; thence turning west and extending 87 feet; thence turning south and extending 210 feet; thence turning west and extending 228 feet; thence turning north and extending 167 feet; thence turning west and extending 82 feet; thence south and extending 43 feet; thence turning west and extending 100 feet; thence turning south and extending 122 feet; thence turning west and extending 193 feet; thence turning north and extending 169 feet; thence turning west and extending 152 feet; thence turning north and extending 44 feet; thence turning west and extending 70 feet; thence turning north and extending 33 feet; thence turning west and extending 74 feet; thence turning south and extending 28 feet; thence turning west and extending 161 feet; thence turning south and extending 647 feet; thence turning west and extending 376 feet; thence turning north and extending 414 feet; thence turning west and extending 412 feet; thence turning north and extending 183 feet; thence turning west and extending 551 feet; thence turning north and extending 186 feet; thence turning east and extending 226 feet; thence turning north and extending 298 feet; thence turning east and extending 90 feet; thence turning south and extending 126 feet; thence turning east and extending 234 feet; thence turning north and extending 358 feet; thence turning east and extending 395 feet; thence turning south and extending 18 feet; thence turning east and extending 175 feet; thence turning south and extending 209 feet; thence turning east and extending 234 feet; thence turning southeast and extending 41 feet; thence turning east and extending 412 feet; thence turning southeast north and extending 127 feet; thence turning east and extending 185 feet; thence turning south and extending 127 feet; thence

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turning east and extending 566 feet; thence turning south and extending 64 feet; thence turning east until reaching the starting point.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundaries of the 39-acre Aurora Historic District were determined according to the density of contributing structures built between circa 1850 and 1950. The boundary includes the extant resources historically associated with Aurora's role as a commercial hub for southern Beaufort County, as well as the civic, religious, and residential buildings that served the larger community. Altogether, these historic resources illustrate Aurora's success in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a commercial hub for southern Beaufort County. The district excludes properties to the north of Middle Street and south of Pearl Street. Many of these properties have been significantly altered, demolished, or were constructed outside the Period of Significance, which is circa 1850 to 1950.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Olivia Heckendorf/Architectural Historian

organization Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc.

date June 2026

street & number 525 Wait Avenue

telephone 262-305-0055

city or town Wake Forest

state NC

zip code 27587

e-mail heckendorf@rgaincorporated.com

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** Aurora Historic District  
**City or Vicinity:** Aurora  
**County:** Beaufort County  
**State:** North Carolina  
**Photographer:** Olivia Heckendorf  
**Date Photographed:** March 2024

**Photo 1 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_001*

View east along Main Street from its intersection with North Fifth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

**Photo 2 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_002*

View east along Main Street with the Church of the Holy Cross to the left, within the Aurora Historic District.

**Photo 3 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_003*

View northwest of the commercial block on the north side of Main Street at its intersection with Fourth Street, showing the B. H. Thompson Store building on the right, within the Aurora Historic District.

**Photo 4 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_004*

View southwest of the commercial block (491, 495, and 499 Main Street) on the south side of Main Street at its intersection with North Fifth Street, showing the former Cherry Hotel on the right.

**Photo 5 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_005*

View north of the Warren's Barber Shop, Thompson's Feed Store, and commercial building (right to left) at 456, 462, and 468 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

**Photo 6 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_006*

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View south of the commercial building and former service station at 389 and 395 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

**Photo 7 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_007*

View east of the 1939 Aurora Jail at 590 North Fifth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

**Photo 8 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_008*

View northeast of the former Aurora Town Hall and Police Station and Aurora Municipal Complex at 436 and 458–460 Fourth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

**Photo 9 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_009*

View south of the 1949 Aurora Methodist Church at 327 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

**Photo 10 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_010*

View north of the 1917 Church of the Holy Cross at 640 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

**Photo 11 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_011*

View south of the circa-1850 Henry and Susan Sugg Harding House at 229 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

**Photo 12 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_012*

View northwest of the circa-1870 Bonner-Cherry House at 207 North Fifth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

**Photo 13 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_013*

View west of the circa-1900 Charles G. and Jessie Midyette House at 415 North Sixth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

**Photo 14 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_014*

View south of the 1887 Alex and Lona Hudnell House at 577 Main Street, within the Aurora Historic District.

**Photo 15 of 15**

*NC\_Beaufort\_AuroraHistoricDistrict\_015*

View northwest along North Sixth Street, within the Aurora Historic District.